GOAL AREA 5
Every child has an equitable chance in life

Global Annual Results Report 2020
Telma Paz, 36 years old, and her children, 11, 9 and 4 years old, benefit from the Bono Familia programme granted by the Government of Guatemala, with support from UNICEF and the World Bank. Telma sells pancakes and works as a seamstress. When a national lockdown was declared on 9 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she was unable to leave her home and her income was seriously affected. She says, "With the money I received, I was able to buy food for my children ... I used some of the money to buy flour for pancakes and fabric to make reusable masks, which I'm selling now." At the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF and the World Bank supported the design and implementation of the unconditional Emergency Cash Transfer programme that identifies poor families during times of confinement measures by tracking electricity consumption. More than 2.5 million families were reached across Guatemala, equivalent to approximately 70 per cent of households, resulting in the largest social protection programme in terms of investment and coverage in the country's history.
Expression of thanks

UNICEF is funded entirely through the voluntary support of millions of people around the world and our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF takes this opportunity to thank all partners for their commitment and trust.

The Goal Area 5 team would like to acknowledge and thank our key thematic donors. Thematic funding offers flexibility for long-term planning and sustainability of programmes. These funds ensure ongoing strategic, technical and operational support for the rights of the most marginalized. Under the current UNICEF Strategic Plan, Norway, Spain and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF have provided global thematic funding to Goal Area 5. In 2020, Sweden and the Italian Committee for UNICEF provided country-level thematic funding.

As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has pushed humanity to its limits, flexible resources like thematic funds and regular resources are more important than ever. These funds will allow UNICEF to move swiftly to address the rights and well-being of the most vulnerable and marginalized first, leverage ongoing investments and address unmet needs.

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

“Every child should have equitable opportunities in life. Fulfilment of children’s rights is a cornerstone in the achievement of sustainable development.

Social protection is a shared priority for Norway and UNICEF. Cash transfers are a cost-effective, efficient measure to assist vulnerable groups.

Without legal proof of identity, children are left uncounted and invisible. By strengthening birth registration systems, more children are included in social security systems. With access to education, health and other welfare services, girls and boys are less vulnerable to modern forms of slavery such as child labour and sexual exploitation. UNICEF is a global pioneer in birth registration as well as in advancing the use of disability data, and thus a key partner for Norway in our efforts to reach those furthest behind. We value our cooperation in areas that are highly important to Norway, including combating modern slavery and harmful practices, as well as achieving gender equality and full inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF is a highly trusted partner of Norway, with whom we endeavour to work in ways that maximize impact and effectiveness. Reliable and flexible funding is a priority for our support to the United Nations system and UNICEF. The UNICEF–Norway Disability Partnership is an example of an innovative mode of support that allows us to target disability inclusion efforts within the framework of UNICEF’s Strategic Plan. This unearmarked funding allows UNICEF to pursue the interventions and workstreams that most effectively strengthen the impact for children with disabilities across all the areas of UNICEF’s work.”

- Dag-Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, Norway
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, 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 5 in 2020 and reviews the impact 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

Prerona Tanti, 18 years old, of Sapon Tea estate in India, is a member of a girls’ club and an avid footballer. She was selected for the district football team but was not able to go due to lockdowns put in place to curb the spread of COVID-19.

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Anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF’s universal mandate is to safeguard the rights of all children. The results under UNICEF Goal Area 5 build on the principle of leaving no one behind, tackling key dimensions of discrimination and inequalities that prevent the realization of children’s rights, while upholding the rights of children affected by humanitarian crisis through the Core Commitments for Children and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNICEF works to reduce child poverty by influencing fiscal policies and mechanisms; enhance coverage and adequacy of child-sensitive social protection systems; address discrimination, including on the grounds of age, gender identity and disability; increase the participation, voice and agency of children, adolescents and young people in civic life; and amplify child rights in human rights mechanisms.

In 2020, UNICEF supported 156 countries and invested over US$533 million in Goal Area 5 to provide children with an equitable chance in life. This includes humanitarian action in 112 countries, with related expenses of US$255 million.

Key results achieved in 2020

At outcome level, the numbers of children reached by cash transfer programmes, as a critical component of social protection systems, and the civic engagement of adolescents exceeded 2021 targets. At output level, progress rates were above 90 per cent for all five result areas under Goal Area 5. Progress was mixed across other Goal Area 5 outcome indicators despite high performance meeting all output milestones.

A total of 111 UNICEF offices engaged in advocacy efforts to place child poverty high on national agendas, and the organization quickly assessed the rippling impact of COVID-19 with over 70 socioeconomic impact assessments and 62 country-level child poverty analyses in 2020. UNICEF-supported cash transfer programmes reached over 130 million children in 93 countries in 2020, more than doubling the 51 million in 78 countries in 2019. The organization’s social protection response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic enabled a more inclusive recovery and created unique entry-points to strengthen social protection financing and partnerships. Furthermore, 61 countries – almost twice the 2017 baseline number – had strong or moderately strong social protection systems. UNICEF continued to strengthen shock-responsive social protection systems in 16 countries, enhancing its impacts in fragile and humanitarian contexts. In 2020, UNICEF supported 48 countries to make their social protection systems more responsive to disability, up from 36 in 2019. UNICEF achieved an almost tripling in country offices reporting that they have intentional gender objectives for their social protection work, from 29 countries in 2019 to 90 countries in 2020. This demonstrates growing attention to addressing the needs of women and men, girls and boys; the transformative potential of social protection; and the importance of gender equality outcomes and transforming harmful gender norms to reduce poverty.

UNICEF worked with governments, development partners and International Financial Institutions to protect and leverage resources for children as part of the COVID-19 response and to ensure public finance reached the poorest and most disadvantaged children (see Figure 2). A total of 124 UNICEF country offices (up from 120 in 2019) engaged with governments in public finance to strengthen social sector budgets for child rights. Public finance work covered all social sectors, with the greatest number of country offices focused on social protection education and health, followed by child protection, early childhood development (ECD), nutrition, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

UNICEF efforts contributed to strengthened social sector budgets in 55 (of 124) countries in various public finance dimensions. A strengthened social sector budget refers to the actions undertaken by UNICEF country offices in terms of evidence, provision of policy and technical advice, and capacity-strengthening, which have led to tangible results in social sector financing and ultimately contributed to improved access to services for children, including the most disadvantaged.

In 2020, some 7.2 million adolescents (53 per cent girls) across 122 countries participated in or led civic engagement interventions through UNICEF-supported programmes – exceeding the 2021 target of 5.2 million. While COVID-19 measures restricted in-person participation, online platforms for adolescents expanded and offered new opportunities. In addition, 39 countries supported the development of 66 adolescent-friendly policies, surpassing the 2020 milestone of 37 countries.

UNICEF worked to address the impact of the pandemic on children with disabilities who are at risk of being left even further behind. Disability-inclusive development and humanitarian programmes reached more than 2.2 million children with disabilities across 144 countries in 2020. In emergency response contexts, 44 per cent of UNICEF country offices systematically included children with disabilities.

As the pandemic compounded the impacts of gender inequality, UNICEF redoubled efforts in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and strengthening gender data and analysis across programming.
Looking ahead

In 2021, UNICEF faces a critical double challenge: working towards countering the negative trends in poverty reduction caused by COVID-19, conflict and climate change, while continuing to accelerate efforts to meet the SDGs. This entails supporting all countries to measure and monitor child poverty — both monetary and multidimensional — while increasing the evidence base on the policies and programmes that effectively address and end child poverty. In partnership with the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, UNICEF will also capitalize on high-level opportunities related to SDGs reporting to encourage countries to measure, monitor and address child poverty, in line with the SDG target of ending child poverty and the commitment to leaving no child behind.

Given the magnitude and scope of this double threat, and the long shadow it will cast, UNICEF will strengthen its advocacy and programming efforts to help connect this immediate crisis response with priorities for inclusive recovery centred around a child poverty reduction agenda. The organization will continue to collaborate with key partners to move from evidence on child poverty to action for an inclusive recovery, especially through rapid expansion of inclusive and gender-transformative social protection systems, including cash transfers and child benefits, and in fragile and humanitarian contexts. Social protection should be at the centre of an inclusive recovery that protects and strengthens social protection spending and enhances the capacity of these systems to respond to shocks rather than the temporary expansion of programmes.

Taking a rights-based approach is central to the work of UNICEF to ensure the poorest and most disadvantaged children have equitable access to services. The organization will safeguard critical social spending to ensure that financial resources are used efficiently and effectively, and mobilize additional resources for inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery. Moreover, the consequences of economic and fiscal policies on children and their families will be tracked through social spending monitoring. UNICEF will also focus on child rights and evidence-based advocacy to make the investment case for protecting priority social spending for children that is gender responsive and inclusive of those with disabilities. Technical support to national governments to protect and transform social spending for children will be enhanced and UNICEF will support adapting national budgets to the new demands, including the equitable roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines.

UNICEF will continue to accelerate results for women and girls, building the evidence base of ‘what works’, and promoting cross-sectoral collaboration. This includes strengthening family-friendly policies, promoting gender-responsive parenting, and transforming gender-discriminatory norms in early childhood and those relating to GBV and other harmful practices. Working with all partners — including the private sector — to address discrimination and harmful stereotypes against children based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, age and other factors will also be prioritized.

In 2021, UNICEF will continue to work with governments and other partners and increase advocacy at all levels for disability-inclusive policies and programmes and continued meaningful participation of persons with disabilities. This will be critical to building back better and paving the way for transformative, accessible and inclusive societies for all children.

UNICEF will improve the development of knowledge, collection and dissemination of reliable data disaggregated by sex, age and disability, and implement innovative, inclusive programmes. However, more investment and prioritization of disability-inclusive development is needed to build the capacity of systems across sectors at national level. Capacity-building on disability inclusion for front-line workers in all areas is also important to sustain progress at the community level. UNICEF will continue to scale up results to reach more children with disabilities, their families and communities with inclusive programmes and services.

The organization will continue to systematically create space for children, adolescents and young people to engage in policy issues that affect their lives, especially within the evolving context of demands for more equitable opportunities to participate.

Together with its partners, UNICEF is accelerating efforts globally and at country level to create meaningful and safe platforms for children and young people’s participation. This includes providing opportunities for children, adolescents and young people to develop their skills, lead change, and design and implement solutions that address problems they face in their daily lives.

UNICEF will work to find alternative ways to reduce the digital divide and to reach children, adolescents and young people who do not use or do not have access to social media platforms, especially those from vulnerable communities.

In humanitarian contexts and as highlighted in the Core Commitments for Children, UNICEF will continue to deepen its responsiveness to children and adolescents’ needs by engaging them systematically in decision-making across sectors and throughout all phases of the humanitarian programme cycle. The organization will continue to advocate for greater investment in education, protection and meaningful participation of children, adolescents and youth in development,
preparedness, response, transition and recovery. Efforts will continue to ensure children, adolescents and young people participate in building back better national policies and plans.

In 2021, UNICEF will improve the availability of data on adolescents and roll out a measurement instrument that captures the participation of adolescent girls and boys across cultures and socioeconomic contexts.

UNICEF will also continue to raise the profile of child rights in national and global forums through advocacy and engagement with national and international human rights mechanisms, governments, civil society organizations and other partners. The organization and its partners will continue to support child rights monitoring and to hold Member States accountable for their obligations set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and their commitment to leaving no child behind as set out in the Agenda 2030.

[Infographic: Result Highlights]

- 7.2 million adolescents in 122 countries participated in civic engagement (compared to 4 million in 2019), surpassing the 2021 target of 5.2 million.
- 124 UNICEF country offices worked with governments and partners to protect and leverage resources for children (up from 120 in 2019).
- Over 130 million children received cash transfers in 93 countries, up from 51 million in 78 countries in 2019.
- 61 countries had strong or moderately strong social protection systems, almost twice as many as in 2017.
- An estimated 2.6 million mothers, fathers and caregivers across 87 countries were reached through UNICEF-supported parenting programmes. This included gender-responsive parenting, positive discipline and mental health support for families, resulting in a 14 per cent increase in those reached compared to 2019.
- UNICEF saw an almost tripling in country offices reporting that they have intentional gender objectives for their work supporting social protection programmes or systems (from 29 in 2019 to 90 in 2020).
- Disability inclusive programmes reached 2.2 million children in 144 countries compared to 1.7 million in 2019.
- Over 152,000 children with disabilities were provided with assistive devices, inclusive products and emergency kits in humanitarian situations, exceeding both the 2019 total of 138,000.
Strategic Context

Monia, 23 years old, from Tafileh, Jordan, obtained a degree in law from Mu’arah University in 2019. After graduation, she enrolled in a UNICEF-supported digital skills training programme. She says, "The past year during COVID-19 had its advantages and disadvantages. If I hadn’t taken the courses – and if I still wasn’t able to use a computer – I’d have been lost. But the programme gave me hope, especially during this difficult period of time, that life is still going on and that there are new projects, and more room for creativity."
Global developments and trends in the situation of children

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an era-defining challenge which has put a sobering spotlight on inequalities in every country, laying bare the increasing risk to children growing up in poverty, exclusion or conflict. Just before the year that UNICEF celebrates 75 years, the pandemic brought unprecedented socioeconomic upheaval impacting children and adolescents everywhere. The most harmful effects have fallen on the poorest countries and communities. Those that were already marginalized and disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility, conflict and other crises have slipped even further behind. In addition, economic pressures, social isolation, uncertainty and disruption to daily routines have heightened household tensions during lockdowns and placed significant stress on children and their families. What began as a public health emergency quickly spiralled into a formidable test for global development and for the prospects of the next generation.

COVID-19 struck a world that was already off track towards fulfilment of the SDGs. With less than 10 years remaining to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Decade of Action requires accelerated progress at global, local and individual levels to ensure we build back better for the next generation. The compounding impacts of climate change, conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic – the triple C – have sharpened existing inequalities, with major reversals across many child rights indicators. The fragility of development gains has been exposed as more households and children are pushed into poverty, and with the exacerbation of exclusion and vulnerability of girls; children with disabilities; children belonging to ethnic, racial and other groups facing discrimination; along with refugee, migrant and displaced children; and children in humanitarian settings.

A key impact seen in 2020 is the reversal of progress on poverty reduction. After nearly a quarter century of steady global declines in extreme poverty, important progress around SDG 1 – ending poverty in all its forms – has been halted by the compounding impacts of the pandemic. COVID-19 had a devastating impact on child poverty, bringing the total number of children in multidimensional poverty to 1.2 billion worldwide. This is a 15 per cent increase in the number of children living in deprivation in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) since the pandemic hit in early 2020.1

The pandemic is especially affecting three groups of children in poverty – it is severely worsening the situation of already poor and vulnerable children, most of them in rural areas and contexts affected by conflict, fragility and displacement; those who emerged from poverty in recent years and are quickly falling back; and finally, children who had not experienced poverty before, but who are now falling into poverty, creating the ‘new poor’. The new poor are changing the profile of global poverty and are more urban, often working in the informal sector, and have an above-average level of education. These compounding impacts often overlap with the social exclusion dimensions of poverty such as gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, caste, sexual orientation, migration status – further exacerbating vulnerability to poverty and widening inequalities. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened inequities in access across most social services for children.

An emerging global economic crisis has been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic with severe, long-lasting impacts expected. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicted a 4.4 per cent global contraction for 2020. It has also exacerbated the risk of a debt crisis for LMICs that has been rising since the 2008 global financial crash. According to the IMF, a quarter of LMICs – home to 200 million children – are currently already in, or at high risk of, debt distress.2

Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has created major pressure on public budgets and social sector spending as governments faced decreased revenues and increased pressure, particularly on health and social protection spending for the pandemic response. Meanwhile, spending cuts in some countries have affected sectors such as education and spending on nutrition programmes, such as school feeding. Child protection budgets have also been affected, potentially related to declines in service delivery.3

Globally, spending on social sectors is slowly increasing, but is still far from adequate to meet coverage gaps and ensure access to services for children, especially in low-income countries and for the poorest and marginalized children. In health, education and social protection sectors, spending in low-income countries is a fraction of total spending. Only around 1 per cent of global health spending is in low-income countries and of these, out-of-pocket spending is greater than that of government. In addition, only 10 per cent of public education spending is reaching the poorest 20 per cent of children in these countries. Global social protection spending is just over 10 per cent of gross domestic product GDP on average, but in low-income countries only 1.3 per cent of GDP is spent on formal social protection. Moreover, the proportions of overall spending specifically for children and their families tends to be small (below 10 per cent). The overall financing gap to meet the Social Protection Floor was estimated at US$527 billion, prior to COVID-19. As a consequence of the pandemic and its impact on global poverty levels, this cost has increased to US$1.2 trillion.
The impact of growing poverty and inequality is a major obstacle for the realization of gender equality. Twenty-five years after the historical Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the visionary agenda to achieve women’s rights and empowerment – the COVID-19 pandemic has threatened to undermine years of progress made towards gender equality. The pandemic has exacerbated gender inequities and rights violations in many areas, including women’s participation in the economy, girls’ education, child marriage, GBV and unpaid care work by reinforcing underlying and pervasive gender norms and stereotypes about women and girls’ status and roles in society. In some countries, cases of domestic violence have increased by 30 per cent. Furthermore, fragile gains made to end child marriage are seriously at risk and UNICEF estimates that 10 million additional child marriages that could otherwise have been averted may occur before the end of the decade.5 Progress to eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM) is similarly under threat, with estimates by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) counting an additional 2 million cases occurring over the next decade that would otherwise have been averted.

As more people have been staying at home during the pandemic due to lockdowns and other measures, data from 38 countries confirm that, while both women and men have increased their unpaid workload, women are still doing the bulk of it, and getting more help from daughters than sons. On average, women have added an extra 5.2 hours per week for childcare, compared to 3.5 extra hours for men,6 meaning that in most countries since the pandemic began, women spend over 30 hours per week solely on childcare – almost equivalent to the average time spent at a full-time job per week. Even before the pandemic, in more than five of six countries with available data, girls aged 10–14 years were more likely than boys of the same age to spend 21 or more hours on household chores per week, affecting and compromising their participation in schooling and play.

The pandemic has also intensified the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities. It has increased their risk of exclusion, poverty and lack of access to crucial services and susceptibility to physical and psychological violence at home while living in lockdown. Children with disabilities and their caregivers face unique challenges because of COVID-19. For example, while social distancing has been widely promoted as the best strategy to avoid transmission, that advice may not be realistic for people who care for children and youth with disabilities who may require assistance with daily tasks.

Adolescents face heightened isolation, anxiety and stress resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. They are experiencing changes to routines and social infrastructure, which ordinarily foster resilience to challenging events. COVID-19 deepened social inequalities, including digital inequalities. In an increasingly connected world, the digital divide remains a significant barrier to equitable participation. Many young people – especially girls, indigenous children, afro-descendant children, children belonging to minority groups, children with disabilities, those affected by poverty and those living in rural areas – continue to lack access to the internet.7 Remote learning – especially online through the internet – has been widely adopted in response to the pandemic. Digital access provides opportunities for remote learning, life skills, parenting support and adolescent engagement. However, at least 463 million (31 per cent) of school-age children worldwide cannot be reached by remote learning programmes.8 Yet the role of young people as positive agents of change is especially important in a world that is increasingly young. Today’s 1.2 billion adolescents (ages 10–19 years) are adversely affected by these challenges, but they are also a crucial resource for innovative social change.

Social justice movements around the world have surged with momentum as millions have stood up against pervasive and deeply rooted injustices – including racism and the lasting impacts of colonialism – and were sensitized to the intersectionality of these issues in working together for change. Children, adolescents and youth were centrally involved in these efforts, playing an active role in
promoting awareness on COVID-19, fighting discrimination and xenophobia, providing support to their peers and communities and influencing national response plans.

The next UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 will be anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and other United Nations human rights instruments. It will outline the results to be achieved for children towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and set out strategies to achieve the intended results and enabling internal organizational factors.

For Goal Area 5, the biggest shift in the next Strategic Plan will be the elevation of UNICEF’s Social Policy agenda that underscores child poverty, supported by critical programming instruments, including poverty measurement and advocacy, social protection and public finance management. This aims to ensure that every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free of poverty. Social protection is a critical intervention to reduce child poverty and inequality, including in humanitarian crises and fragile contexts. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the rights to social security and an adequate standard of living.

The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 recognizes eliminating child poverty and ensuring access to social protection as critical priorities towards achievement of the SDGs. UNICEF has sharpened the focus of its work in this Goal Area and increased the emphasis on inclusive, gender-transformative and shock-responsive social protection as a driver for integrating the most disadvantaged and excluded children, including in fragile contexts and humanitarian crises.

Developed in tandem with UNICEF’s new Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan, this Strategic Plan emphasizes structural and norms change to transform the underlying drivers of gender inequality, and reflects an intersectional approach to the compounding social exclusion and marginalization related to factors like poverty, racism, disability and migration. In the area of disability inclusion, UNICEF will continue to focus on the twin-track approaches of mainstreaming and targeted, disability-inclusive child protection, in both humanitarian and development programming. Particular areas of focus are children in residential care, violence in the home and mine action. In working with children, adolescents and young people, UNICEF will take the lead from them, in line with their right to be heard on decisions that affect their lives, to make sure the organization works on the issues that concern them the most and meets their expectations. Strengthening the engagement with children, adolescents and young people as resources and problem solvers who offer valuable perspectives and insights will contribute to more effective, relevant and sustainable results.

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Goal Area 5 theory of change

UNICEF programming is systematically guided by the human rights-based approach and the provisions and principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments. Goal Area 5 programming aims to ensure that every child has a fair chance in life, by reducing child poverty, combating discrimination and ensuring inclusion.

The theory of change to reach Goal Area 5 results through programming in the areas of multidimensional poverty, social protection, public finance for children, gender equality, children with disabilities, and adolescent development and participation is shown in Figure 1.
FIGURE 1: Goal Area 5 theory of change

Goal Area 5

Outcome 5

Girls and boys are provided with an equitable chance in life

Outputs

- Countries have developed national plans to reduce multidimensional child poverty
- Countries have strengthened national social protection systems to address the needs of the most disadvantaged children
- Countries have institutionalized measures to involve adolescents in decisions affecting their lives and communities

Assumptions

- National capacity for engagement
- National commitment on inclusivity and equity
- Availability of data and evidence of good practices
- National promotion of participatory processes
- Access in humanitarian contexts
- Availability of funding for UNICEF engagement

Areas of work

- Child Poverty
- Public Finance for Children
- Social Protection
- Gender Equality
- Children with Disabilities
- Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement

Change Strategies

- Programming excellence
- Stronger advocacy
- Leveraging resources
- Private sector engagement
- Awareness raising
- Addressing social norms
- UN coordination and collaboration
- Fostering innovation
- Data and evidence
- Community mobilization and civil society engagement
- Parenting education and involvement
- Social monitoring

Enablers

- (a) Internal governance
- (b) Management
- (c) People
- (d) Knowledge and information systems
Results: Child Poverty – “Ending child poverty by 2030”

Nana Kwadwo and Nana Kwesi at home in Aburi in the Eastern Region of Ghana. UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to design distance learning programmes accessible via the internet, television and radio, to ensure that children continue learning as they stay home due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Poverty in childhood has lifelong impacts on a child’s physical, cognitive and social development, and has consequences on the full range of children’s rights, diminishing their life chances and ability to realize their full potential. Child poverty casts a long shadow over social mobility. Failure to protect children from poverty has devastating effects not only on children themselves, but also bears serious implications for future generations and societies. Given that children are overrepresented among those living in poverty, early interventions and investment in children and their families are central to breaking the cycles of poverty.

Children experience poverty as deprivations in their lives, including that of nutrition, water, health, education and shelter – referred to as multidimensional child poverty. In addition, a family’s standard of living, reflected in monetary or income poverty, is a critical element of the deprivations children experience.

In supporting countries to formulate contextualized responses to address child poverty, UNICEF works to systematically integrate child poverty as a central issue in national development plans, national agendas, policies and programmes.

UNICEF’s approach to address child poverty focuses on:

- Supporting universal national measurement of child poverty in all its dimensions
- Advocating using child poverty measurement in order to place child poverty high on national agendas
- Using policy analysis and engagement to influence policies and programmes to reduce child poverty
- Placing child poverty as the highest priority in national development plans and poverty reduction strategies

While the last three decades have witnessed unprecedented progress in poverty reduction, in 2020, when the world’s most vulnerable children and families were faced with the rippling socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19, this progress saw a complete reversal, with devastating impacts on the lives of children across the globe. Specifically, the current situation is putting at risk the possibility of children to realize their right to social security and an adequate standard of living while also the duty of States to make sure adequate resources and investments are allocated to realize their economic, social and cultural rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The emergency cash transfer from the Government provided some immediate relief. We were able to buy some food but even this support has not been enough to make ends meet. Our family is suffering. Just imagine how it was for those who were already struggling before COVID-19.

— Wasana, a recipient of Sri Lanka’s cash transfer programme supported by UNICEF

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and child poverty

SDG 1 on ending poverty in all its forms includes three key poverty indicators/measures which UNICEF tracks at global and national levels, namely:

- Indicator 1.1.1 on ending extreme monetary child poverty by 2030 (children struggling to survive on less than purchasing power parity US$1.90/day)
- Indicator 1.2.1 on halving monetary child poverty as nationally defined by 2030 (children living below national poverty line)
- Indicator 1.2.2 on halving multidimensional child poverty as nationally defined by 2030
Sisters receive educational materials and colouring books during a visit from a social worker and psychologist to their home in Bilokurakyne, Eastern Ukraine. The girls had been studying away from home at a childcare institution but returned to their family due to COVID-19 restrictions. Now they regularly meet with a social worker and psychologist who monitor conditions and help their family to adapt to their situation. UNICEF Ukraine works with regional and local partners to support children and families in vulnerable communities, as well as to equip front-line responders in Eastern Ukraine with protective supplies and technical guidance.
Results achieved and challenges in 2020 towards ending child poverty by 2030

Summary of global results

In 2020, UNICEF invested US$35 million on child poverty and public finance interventions. Examples of key areas of investments included about US$3 million toward child poverty measurement and US$4 million in child poverty analysis, such as profiling, mapping and identifying drivers of children’s multidimensional and monetary poverty, as well as modelling and simulating policy options. Over US$3 million supported the development or strengthening of national policies to address child poverty. Close to US$9 million was invested in interventions aimed at improving budget allocation, the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure, and transparency, accountability and participation.

The organization quickly assessed the rippling impact of COVID-19 with over 70 socioeconomic impact assessments and 62 country-level child poverty analyses in 2020. UNICEF and the World Bank updated global estimates on children living in extreme poverty and developed global projections with Save the Children on the impact of the crisis, signalling the need for concerted government action to protect children and their families from being further thrust into poverty. This was possible thanks to its established work on child poverty, which now includes 142 country offices. As of this year, 66 countries have routine measurement and reporting on multidimensional poverty, and 79 on monetary poverty.

To translate evidence into action, 111 UNICEF offices engaged in child poverty advocacy efforts (see Figure 2) and in 31 countries this evidence led to policies and programmes that contributed to child poverty reduction.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on child poverty

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, UNICEF and Save the Children partnered to project the impact of the crisis on both monetary and multidimensional poverty. It was projected that up to 142 million more children could be pushed into monetary poverty, bringing the total number of children living below the national monetary poverty line in LMICs to 728 million by year end.

FIGURE 2: UNICEF support to child poverty, 2020

| Advocacy placing child poverty at centre of national agendas | 111 |
| Convene stakeholders around the importance of addressing child poverty | 74 |
| Support the government to utilize child poverty measurement | 74 |
| Design of policies to address child poverty | 72 |
| Capacity-building for child poverty measurement | 68 |
| Multidimensional child poverty measurement | 57 |
| Monetary child poverty measurement | 35 |
| Support/Collaboration with non-government partners to measure child poverty | 24 |

Source: UNICEF (2020)
In addition, the number of children living in multidimensional poverty may have soared to approximately 1.2 billion as a result of the pandemic. Not only are more children experiencing multidimensional poverty, but the poorest children are getting poorer as well (see Figure 3).

COVID-19 is particularly affecting three different groups of children in poverty:

- It is severely worsening the situation of children who were already poor and vulnerable, most of them in rural areas and contexts affected by conflict, fragility and displacement.
- Those who had managed to emerge from poverty in the last years are quickly falling back into it.
- And finally, there will be children who had never experienced poverty before who are now falling into poverty. They are ‘the new poor’ and are mainly in urban areas, from families working in the informal economy, with parents who have above-average levels of education.

Country-led projections and analyses confirm this upward trend in poverty. UNICEF Egypt estimates that between 0.6 and 2.5 million additional children were at risk of falling into poverty due to the crisis. UNICEF Tunisia projected a 19–25 per cent increase in child poverty. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF Timor-Leste signalled a fourfold increase in the number of vulnerable households who did not have any form of income. In Cambodia, a socioeconomic impact assessment showed drastic reduction in income of female-headed households and twice more households experienced a reduction of children’s food intake.

FIGURE 3: Impact of COVID-19 on children

Source: UNICEF (2020)
COVID-19 policy advocacy based on child poverty analysis

Having an established routine measurement and reporting programme for child poverty, along with solid partnerships in place, was critical for guiding evidence-driven responses to COVID-19. This led to a quick turnaround in both real-time monitoring and analysis projecting the impact of the crisis on child poverty by the end of 2020 and beyond. Some of the regional analysis included the following:

- UNICEF regional offices were instrumental in turning evidence into powerful policy advocacy products during and following the crisis. In their report Recover, Rebound, Reimagine, the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office predicted that an additional 22 million children in Southeast Asia and the Pacific may fall into poverty in 2020.

- In COVID-19: A Catastrophe for Children in Sub-Saharan Africa – Cash transfers and a Marshall Plan can help, the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office highlighted that child poverty rates increased dramatically in most countries in the region and emphasized the importance of cash transfers for vulnerable populations.

- UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti and Europe and Central Asia Regional Office showed in Supporting Families and Children Beyond COVID-19: Social protection in Southern and Eastern Europe and Central Asia the mechanisms through which COVID-19 can affect children and the need for future public policies to be optimized in the short and medium terms to protect child outcomes.

- Through a series of analyses, the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office demonstrated how social protection for families with children and adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean was key to addressing the impact of COVID-19.

- The Regional Office for South Asia seized the opportunity to showcase the potential of universal life-cycle transfers for addressing the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

FIGURE 4: COVID-19 and UNICEF-supported child poverty and socioeconomic analysis in 2020

Source: UNICEF (2021)
Country partnerships to monitor the socioeconomic impact of the crisis, with focus on children living in poverty

UNICEF country offices were deeply engaged in real-time monitoring of the socioeconomic impact of the crisis to inform mitigation responses (see Figure 4). For example, UNICEF Nepal established a Child and Family Tracker to assess the socioeconomic impacts of the crisis in real time. In Egypt, the organization supported repeated telephone-based assessments providing crucial information for evidence-based programming and government response. In Madagascar, UNICEF and the World Bank supported the National Institute of Statistics to carry out a rapid survey on the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. UNICEF Sri Lanka launched a nationally representative telephone survey to assess the impact of the crisis and UNICEF Morocco supported rapid phone surveys and microsimulations.

Furthermore, in Georgia, UNICEF commissioned a microsimulation model estimating the impact of the crisis on child poverty, contributing to the Government’s decision to introduce one-time, universal cash assistance to all children. In Honduras, the Social Affairs Office, the Inter-American Development Bank and UNICEF simulated the impact of the crisis on child poverty, highlighting that poverty was 2.5 times higher in households with children compared to those without. As a result, the Social Affairs Office added families with children under 5 years of age to the government vulnerability index to focus on social welfare programmes as part of the crisis response.

UNICEF collaborated with United Nations partners in a number of countries to highlight the impact of the crisis and chart child-sensitive recovery plans, for example, in Rwanda, Namibia, the Philippines and Uruguay. Furthermore:

- A socioeconomic assessment launched by UNICEF Jordan highlighted the negative coping mechanisms households were forced to adopt during lockdown. In the absence of adequate social protection support initially, the impact of these measures were felt most acutely by women and girls.

- In El Salvador, UNICEF provided estimates on the impacts of the crisis on both monetary and multidimensional child poverty, and developed a mitigation and social protection strategy for households with children.

- In Maldives, building upon the recently launched national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), with UNICEF support, vulnerable populations and families in need of support during the crisis were identified, using selected MPI indicators and administrative data on vulnerable families.

- In Myanmar, building on its long-standing support to the government Maternal and Child Cash Transfers programme (MCCT), and in collaboration with UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF led the pillar on resilient and pro-poor social protection of the Socioeconomic Response Framework.

In addition to distributing critical supplies, UNICEF and Foundation for Slum Child Care are advocating for increased cash amounts and a universal approach of the Child Support Grant scheme to help families tackle new burdens and ensure that no child is left behind due to COVID-19 crisis.
Case Study 1: Malaysia: Supporting an equitable recovery from COVID-19 through strengthened social protection for low-income families

In Malaysia, joint research by UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) generated powerful evidence of the impact of the crisis and the heightened vulnerability of women and children in low-income urban families. The research stimulated intense public and political debates throughout the year. In response, the Government’s first coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) stimulus package allocated US$2 billion in temporary cash transfer support to low- and middle-income households, including 3.5 million children. Later in the year, the Government announced a revision of the eligibility criteria for its main means-tested child benefit, which will extend coverage by up to a factor of 10.

The ‘Families on the Edge’ study monitored the impact of the pandemic on low-income families through surveying 500 households in Kuala Lumpur over the course of nine months. It also provided insights on the relevance, adequacy and accessibility of key COVID-19 mitigation policies and other social services for this vulnerable group. In addition to four survey rounds, the study was complemented by a documentary film and photography by children, elevating the voices of girls and boys most affected by the crisis. Results of the assessment showed that low-income families headed by females were particularly vulnerable to economic shocks, with 32 per cent of the household heads suffering from unemployment compared to the national average of 5.3 per cent. Low-income families were also found to have lower access to social protection, nutritious diets, health care and other critical services. During his visit to one of the communities participating in the study, held the day after its launch, Malaysia’s Prime Minister stated his intention to increase social assistance for low-income families.

One month later, the Prime Minister announced a new stimulus package, Prihatin Rakyat, which allocated an additional US$2 billion in temporary income support for low- and middle-income families. The joint UNICEF/UNFPA research subsequently demonstrated that these temporary government measures were critical in preventing families from falling deeper into poverty. However, follow-up surveys also revealed that employment opportunities remained limited for many families, particularly female-headed households and households affected by disability, and that longer-term social assistance was required to safeguard child well-being.

In response, the Government expanded the coverage and level of the transfer of its means-tested child benefit, expecting to increase the number of beneficiaries from 69,000 to at least 600,000 children. At the same time, cash transfers to low-income families with two or more children under the Bantuan Prihatin Rakyat programme were also increased.

In addition to the ‘Families on the Edge’ research, UNICEF led the development of a joint United Nations proposal to strengthen the social protection system and initiated several strategic dialogues with the Malaysian Government throughout the year. Through a series of policy briefs, the organization provided consolidated, multisectoral, actionable recommendations to various government agencies for consideration, during the development of the 2021 budget and Twelfth Malaysia Plan.
Quality, routine, nationally supported measurement of child poverty builds knowledge and understanding of its impact on child rights and its scale, scope and equity dimensions, setting a foundation for creating policies and programmes to reduce poverty. As shown in Figure 5, to set the foundation for contributing to ending child poverty by 2030, sixty-six countries now have routine measurement and reporting on multidimensional poverty (65 in 2019), and 79 on monetary poverty (73 in 2019).

For the first time, a United Nations SDGs portal included multidimensional child poverty indicators, both disaggregated national multidimensional poverty measures as well as child-specific multidimensional poverty measures.

This was possible thanks to advocacy from an inter-agency working group on multidimensional poverty (SDG 1.2) led by UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank.

UNICEF continued to co-chair, with Save the Children, the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty – a 20-member organization of key stakeholders and global advocates for ending child poverty. The coalition published an advocacy brief to prompt countries to reflect on their efforts to measure and address child poverty in their SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) (see Box ‘Are countries committed to ending child poverty by 2030?’). UNICEF also continued to work with multiple countries on child poverty analysis (see also Figure 6).

- In Maldives, the National Social Protection Agency and the National Bureau of Statistics officially launched the country’s first national MPI. With support from UNICEF, the Maldives Government is currently using this analysis to determine the multidimensional vulnerability of children and their families in the country.
- UNICEF Gambia supported the development of the country’s first child-friendly monetary poverty analysis and Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, which was used for advocacy for increased public finance for child-related services.
- The National Institute of Statistics in Albania developed, with UNICEF support, first-time data on child deprivations – a building block towards addressing multidimensional poverty.
Building capacity to address child poverty

Routinely measuring child poverty is at the core of understanding, communicating and eradicating child poverty. In order to ensure integration of child poverty measures within the national statistical processes, it is key to build capacity and increase ownership of child poverty measurement at the local and national levels as described below in the five dimensions of systems-strengthening. COVID-19 has highlighted the vital importance of measuring and responding to child poverty like never before, offering the opportunity to systematically measure child poverty and response. In 2020, UNICEF provided support on measuring, reporting and analysing child poverty, including the impact of the pandemic on child deprivations, supporting governments to understand the nature of poverty in their countries and appropriate policy and programme responses.

In Algeria, Ecuador, Guyana, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Madagascar, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa and other countries, UNICEF partnered with national statistical offices, and other partners such as UNDP and the World Bank, to analyse multidimensional child poverty. Furthermore:

- In China, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of national partners to prioritize and integrate multidimensional poverty analysis into national policies, exploring models to measure and monitor child poverty, and forging technical partnerships with think-tanks and academia to address evidence gaps on child poverty.
- In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a child poverty technical working group was set up to support provincial vice governors to renew their commitments to reducing multidimensional child poverty by a quarter by 2025 through focused interventions and enhanced budgeting, monitoring and reporting on child-related indicators.
- In Liberia, UNICEF partnered with the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; and Ministry of Finance and Development Planning to develop a Liberia-specific concept and methodology for child poverty analysis focusing on developing capacities of relevant partners to adopt a child poverty module in the next round of the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, in partnership with the World Bank.

Child poverty in fragile contexts

Children living in countries that experience conflict and fragility are particularly vulnerable to poverty, which is especially worrisome given the growing numbers of countries affected by both recurring disasters caused by natural hazards, and protracted crises associated with fragility, conflict and violence. About 41.6 per cent of children who live in these contexts reside in extremely poor households, compared to 14.8 per cent of children in other countries19 – with a projected increase of those living in extreme poverty prior to COVID-19.
Are countries committed to ending child poverty by 2030?

As part of fulfilment of the SDGs, countries committed to cut child poverty in half by 2030. As we enter the Decade of Action, the time has come to accelerate efforts to achieve this ambitious and critical goal – especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, which is set to push back important progress made in poverty reduction.

UNICEF and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty conducted a thorough review of past SDG VNRs to assess countries’ efforts to address child poverty. Among the 179 VNRs from 2017–2020, less than a third reported on monetary child poverty (SDG indicator 1.2.1), and only 22 on multidimensional child poverty (SDG indicator 1.2.2). In 2020, forty-five VNRs were submitted, with 11 countries reporting on monetary child poverty and 9 on multidimensional child poverty. On a positive note, more countries discussed comprehensive and targeted policies and programmes being implemented to reduce child poverty. Out of 33 countries which did so, some examples stand out:

- Austria highlighted their plans to launch a National Action Plan on Poverty Prevention in 2020, with special emphasis on children, women and older persons.
- Honduras adopted an integrated approach to addressing child poverty through programmes such as the Better Life Bonus (Conditional Cash Transfer) scheme, School Feeding Programme and Healthy Housing Programme – which are implemented under the Better Life Management Platform.
- Several countries emphasized child-sensitive, universalistic programmes as part of their response to child poverty. Estonia, for example, increased the value of its universal child grants and the allowances for children with disabilities. Malawi scaled its social cash transfer programme nationwide as part of the roll-out of the new National Social Protection Programme in 2018.
- To address the multiple, overlapping dimensions of child poverty, countries showcased measures to strengthen access and delivery of quality social services. In Kenya, these include: free primary school education, subsidized secondary school initiatives, and expansion of technical and vocational educational training.

The majority of VNRs acknowledged the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, yet explicit focus on children living in poverty was largely missing from the analyses – despite children’s extreme vulnerability to monetary and multidimensional poverty. With the impact of the crisis on child poverty expected to be severe and long term, achieving SDG 1 targets will require urgent and sustained efforts. Routine child poverty measurement, monitoring, data and evidence-informed comprehensive policy response will be critical to these efforts.
Even in these precarious situations, UNICEF works hard to measure and highlight the plight of children living in poverty and advocate for policies and programmes to address it:

- In South Sudan, UNICEF led the development of the United Nations socioeconomic response plan with UNDP in order to advocate for priority national budget allocations to mitigate the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on vulnerable children and women.

- In Azerbaijan, UNICEF supported a Rapid Needs Assessment in selected districts affected by the escalation of conflict in and beyond the Nagorno-Karabakh region, assessing social sector impacts and needs of children and vulnerable families within crisis context.

- In Afghanistan, UNICEF – together with partners in the National Statistical Office and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative – assessed the potential impact of COVID-19 on household incomes by conducting a microsimulation of multidimensional poverty. Findings were used to update the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan and to advocate for additional resources for vulnerable households in the wake of the pandemic.

- UNICEF Iraq leveraged its ongoing partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Planning and the World Bank to generate evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on poverty and vulnerability, highlighting that two out of five children were living below the national poverty line, double the rate in 2018. UNICEF also launched an index to capture children’s vulnerability, showing that one in two children are suffering deprivation in more than one well-being dimension. This swift engagement on the evidence and advocacy front was paralleled with close engagement with and technical support to the Ministry of Planning in the design and roll-out of a one-off ad hoc cash transfer to households affected by COVID-19. The scheme benefited 2.1 million households affected by COVID-19 socioeconomic impacts.

Advocacy to address and end child poverty

COVID-19 brought more attention to children living in poverty, with data and evidence on child poverty playing a critical role in raising awareness in the context of the crisis, and informing national planning, policies and programmes to address child deprivation.

UNICEF partnered with the World Bank to update global, regional and national estimates of extreme child poverty, highlighting that children were more than twice as likely as adults to be living in extreme poverty (see Figure 7). Furthermore, extreme poverty is increasingly more concentrated among children. In fact, children made up a larger share of the global extreme poor in 2017 compared to 2013. The youngest children are most affected, along with those living in conflict and fragile contexts, in rural areas and in female-headed households. The greatest burden of extreme child poverty is in Africa, which is home to almost two thirds of the world’s extremely poor children. Because these estimates were made prior to COVID-19, they serve as a critical baseline from which to determine the impact of the crisis. They also provided useful global advocacy content for the importance of addressing the socioeconomic impact of the crisis to protect children and their families in poverty (see Figure 8).

In Chile, based on the study ‘Born and Grow-up in Poverty and Vulnerability’ produced in partnership with civil society and academia, UNICEF ran a public awareness campaign through radio and social media to highlight the irreversible, lifelong negative impacts of poverty on children, which has been exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis (see Figure 9). By joining forces with strategic allies such as Pontifical Catholic University, World Vision and Fundación Colunga, the campaign helped strengthen legal and policy framework to promote social protection of children and families.

Similarly, in Peru, UNICEF conducted two studies to assess monetary child poverty and other socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, including on health and education-related indicators. The study results and its recommended policy and response measures were launched through two online events, with a panel of researchers and government representatives. The findings were cited and commented on by political analysts, economists and researchers on television, print and online media.

In Cambodia, UNICEF’s Reimagine campaign – which highlights the multidimensional impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular on the poorest and most vulnerable boys and girls – helped amplify voices of marginalized children, reaching 3 million people digitally.

In Argentina, UNICEF projected an increase in child poverty and highlighted the impact on female-headed households, informal and unemployed workers, and families living in slums. The studies – publicly presented with wide media impact – included policy recommendations focused on expanding social and income protection measures, promoting universal nonconditional schemes and protecting budget allocations aimed at mitigating the effect of the crisis on children. This evidence, together with advocacy and communication strategies, allowed UNICEF to engage with the highest level of decision makers to inform and tailor public policies. This led to a report on the social protection system, conducted in collaboration with the University of Buenos Aires, which contributed to the Government’s decision to expand the Universal Child Allowance for Social Protection to reach 1 million children without coverage.
Progress in fight against child poverty could be wiped out by Covid, says report

UN and World Bank call for structural changes to tackle the effects of the pandemic on children, who make up half the world’s poor

- Coronavirus - latest updates
- See all our coronavirus coverage

Source: Kaamil et al. (2020); World Bank (2020)

FIGURE 8: Data and evidence on child poverty

34.6% of children living in a household where the head has no education are extremely poor, compared to around 3% where the head has tertiary education.

291.8 million children (24.5%) in rural areas live in extreme poverty versus 62.3 million in urban areas (7.9%).

Education of the household head matters

Poverty risks are highest amongst the youngest children

Children living in female headed households are more likely to live in extreme poverty

Extreme child poverty is more prevalent in countries prone to conflict

Source: Global Coalition to End Child Poverty (2021)
Finally, in Ukraine, data and evidence produced through the report *Fighting COVID-19 in Ukraine: Initial estimates of the impact on poverty* gained significant press coverage, with over 600 mentions and a total reach of over 77 million views in media and over 6 million in social media. Coupled with strategic engagement with key government officials, the advocacy campaign achieved concrete results for children – bringing back the previously suspended Baby Box programme. This programme is a critical universal childcare support for families with newborn children, which provides essential goods needed to care for a child during the first, most critical days of life, as well as educational materials for young parents on topics such as early childcare, vaccination and breastfeeding.

These efforts, aligned as described below in the five dimensions of systems-strengthening, create commitment at every level, in addition to coordinated policy and programmatic actions as well as critical funding to ensure children’s rights are fulfilled. As COVID-19 highlights the extent of poverty and vulnerability among children, the opportunity to strengthen the inclusion of child poverty into national guiding documents has grown.

The Central Statistics Agency and UNICEF Ethiopia launched the results of a multidimensional child poverty analysis, tracking progress towards SDG 1.2 on poverty reduction. It showed that child poverty is a major challenge in Ethiopia, with 88 per cent of children living in multidimensional poverty in 2016 compared to 90 per cent in 2011. Moreover, large geographical inequalities exist: the percentage of multidimensionally deprived children in rural areas is more than double that of children residing in urban areas. The introduction of child poverty indicators was proposed and accepted for inclusion in the upcoming Ten Years Perspective Development Plan.

UNICEF Côte d’Ivoire developed the 2019 Situational Analysis and seven policy briefs assessing the previous National Development Plan, which led to the identification of evidence-driven priorities for the upcoming plan that explicitly addresses barriers and bottlenecks affecting children.

Thanks to their child poverty-related analysis and advocacy for social protection reform, UNICEF North Macedonia contributed to a fivefold increase (from 2016) in the number of children benefiting from poverty reduction transfers, including a 147 per cent increase between 2019 and 2020. The overall adequacy of cash benefits also doubled, contributing to a decrease in child poverty rates. For example, a family with two school-age children in which both parents are unemployed is now receiving approximately US$188 – up from US$89 prior to the reform.

In Thailand, an estimated 1.4 million children received emergency top-up cash transfers thanks to rapid assessments of the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic – a collaboration between UNICEF and the Royal Thai Government, United Nations agencies under the United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection, Thailand Development Research Institute and the Civil Society Coalition for the Universal Child Support Grant.
Looking ahead

The socioeconomic turmoil created by COVID-19, compounded by the impacts of climate and conflict, has halted and, in some countries, reversed years of poverty reduction progress, with long-term implications. Nevertheless, in the midst of the crisis the debate about child poverty – the cascading child rights violations it gives rise to, and the collective response it calls for – gained momentum. Governments, international organizations and other stakeholders rallied around the urgency to protect children in poverty from the worst impacts of the pandemic. This has not only strengthened the immediate response, but creates an opportunity for a strong focus on measuring and responding to child poverty in the future.

COVID-19 not only pushed more children into poverty, but further increased inequality among and within countries. Growing evidence shows that those who had managed to emerge from poverty in previous years are quickly falling back; additionally, a generation of ‘new poor’ has emerged, including children living in urban areas and those whose parents and caregivers are working in the informal sector. In addition to long-standing child poverty, including in fragile contexts and rural areas, the new poor will create new challenges to already overstretched social protection systems.

In 2021, UNICEF faces a critical double challenge: working towards countering the negative trends in poverty reduction caused by COVID-19, conflict and climate change, while continuing to accelerate efforts to meet the SDGs. This entails supporting all countries to measure and monitor child poverty – both monetary and multidimensional – while increasing the evidence base on the policies and programmes that effectively address and end child poverty. In partnership with the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, UNICEF will also capitalize on high-level opportunities related to SDG reporting to encourage countries to measure, monitor and address child poverty, in line with the SDG objectives of ending child poverty and leaving no child behind.

Given the magnitude and scope of this double threat, and the long shadow it will cast, UNICEF will strengthen its advocacy and programming efforts to help connect this immediate crisis response with priorities for recovery centred around a child poverty reduction agenda. Finally, UNICEF will continue collaborating with key partners to quickly move from evidence on child poverty to action for an inclusive recovery, especially through rapid expansion of social protection systems, including cash transfers and child benefits, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts.
Results: Public Finance for Children – “Protecting the rights of children through greater and more equitable investments”

A mother with her baby receiving the first payment of the cash transfer programme in Madagascar.

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UNICEF’s work on public finance for children supports countries to articulate their obligations under Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and General Comment No. 19 (2016) to ensure social sector budgets are developed and executed with a child rights perspective. This entails helping governments allocate sufficient public resources for sectors and services that are critical for children; improving the efficiency and effectiveness of those resources; distributing them equitably, with special focus on disadvantaged children; strengthening the transparency and accountability of those public financial systems; and promoting citizens’ participation in budgetary processes. UNICEF’s key focus on a rights-based approach to financing is closely related to SDG 1, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, with focus on indicators 1.1.a.2 – proportion of total government spending on essential services, and 1.b.1 – proportion of government spending towards health and education that directly benefit the monetary poor.

In the current UNICEF Strategic Plan, Public Finance for Children (PF4C) has been a key programming instrument used by the organization to address child poverty, by influencing the mobilization, allocation and utilization of domestic public financial resources for greater, more equitable and sustainable results for children. Strengthened social sector budgets are key in reducing monetary and multidimensional poverty. UNICEF’s PF4C framework focuses not only on the adequacy of spending, but also on the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and equity of social spending. To make social sector budgets work for children, UNICEF focuses on four key action areas: to generate the evidence to inform public finance sector reforms and to advocate for greater and better public investments; to engage in budget processes to influence allocation decisions and improve social spending for children; to empower citizens, including children and young people, to participate in budgeting processes; and to support domestic resource mobilization to expand financing of key social services.

In 2020, COVID-19 created significant pressure on national budgets and social sector spending. According to a UNICEF Socioeconomic Survey, 96 of 148 countries experienced growth in health expenditure and 78 countries reported increased social protection spending in response to COVID-19. However, 19 countries saw a decrease in budget expenditure in one or more social sectors in response to the pandemic. The education sector was the most affected by spending cuts, with 16 countries (10.8 per cent) reporting a drop in expenditure. Spending on school feeding and nutrition programmes in schools has decreased in several countries. Child protection budgets were also affected, with 10 countries recording budget cuts. Around 5 per cent of countries experienced reductions in WASH and nutrition spending, respectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted child rights, specifically, the right to financed social services. Governments face decreased revenues and increased pressure on spending for pandemic response. However, this crisis has also created an opportunity for transformative thinking about investments in children. To respond to the COVID-19 socioeconomic crisis, UNICEF developed a Road map for Inclusive Recovery for Children calling for safeguarding and transforming social spending for children, for the effective and efficient use of resources to ensure inclusive social service delivery for all children, and to mobilize additional resources. The organization also focused on prompting partnerships and renewed advocacy efforts for financing for development, and augmented evidence around social spending and adapted PF4C capacity-building programmes.

Results achieved and challenges towards protecting the rights of children through greater and equitable investments

Summary of global results
In 2020, UNICEF worked with governments, development partners and International Financial Institutions to protect and leverage resources for children as part of the COVID-19 response and to ensure public finance reached the poorest and most disadvantaged children. A total of 124 UNICEF country offices (up from 120 in 2019) engaged with governments in public finance to strengthen social sector budgets for child rights. They worked in all five dimensions of the UNICEF Global PF4C Programme Framework, namely: sufficiency, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and equity of social sector budgets (see Figure 10).

In 2020, UNICEF’s public finance work covered all social sectors. The largest number of country offices worked on social sector budgets in social protection, education and health, followed by child protection, ECD, nutrition and WASH (see Figure 11). UNICEF’s sector-focused PF4C
FIGURE 10: Number of countries reporting (124) on engaging with governments on public finance, by dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Reporting Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency, Accountability and Participation</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF (2020)\(^{31}\)

FIGURE 11: Country offices (total 124) working on public finance for children, by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Country Offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C4D</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate and Environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents and Youth</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF (2020)\(^{32}\)
engagement aims to increase and improve social sector spending and to tackle public financial management challenges that hinder the scale-up of equitable and efficient service delivery.

Achieving sustainable change in national budgets for improved adequacy, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and equity is a long-term process of systems-strengthening and requires extensive advocacy, policy dialogue and technical support. In 2020, UNICEF’s efforts contributed to strengthened social sector budgets in 55 (of 124) countries in various public finance dimensions. A strengthened social sector budget refers to the actions undertaken by UNICEF country offices in terms of evidence, provision of policy and technical advice, and capacity-strengthening, which have led to tangible results in social sector financing and ultimately contributed to improved access to services for children, including the most disadvantaged.

Promoting adequate investment for children’s rights

UNICEF engages with governments at central and decentralized levels to influence sufficient resource allocations to ensure the right of every child to social services. The organization anchors its work on evidence-based and context-driven solutions to protect, expand and transform public social spending for children, while ensuring fiscal sustainability and the stability of public budgets (see Case Studies 1 and 2).

When public resources are insufficient to finance social services for children, UNICEF focuses on leveraging international resources, including complementary/blended private sector finance. In 2020, the organization engaged with governments in 112 countries at central and local levels to promote sufficient investments in social sectors. Expanding social spending for COVID-19 response and recovery was a key area of focus of UNICEF in many countries.

In Myanmar, UNICEF evidence generation and advocacy in response to COVID-19 contributed to a US$176 million budget allocation increase to social sectors by mid-year 2020. The organization scaled its work with the Ministry of Planning, Finance and Industry and with relevant parliamentary committees to enhance the measurement of child-focused public expenditure and identify key actions to improve budget allocations for social sectors.

In Nepal, UNICEF contributed to a US$23 million increase in annual allocations for social protection to expand cash transfers to an additional 550,000 children under 5 years old. This was possible due to a combination of advocacy, evidence and technical engagement, ranging from a high-level meeting of children with parliamentarians to the development of an evidence-based case for investment and technical support for costing and financial analysis for the expansion of child grants.

In Oman, UNICEF is engaging with the Government to protect social spending in a high-income country against the backdrop of the impact of COVID-19 and a sharp drop in oil prices, which has placed pressure on public spending. The organization is engaged with the Ministry of Finance and line ministries to advocate for protecting and expanding social spending in underfunded areas, such as ECD and children with disabilities. UNICEF also led a fiscal space analysis that provided key recommendations on how to generate budget efficiencies to finance child rights.

In Ukraine, UNICEF expanded its partnership with the International Financial Institutions, academia and the private sector to leverage resources for children for COVID-19 response and recovery. UNICEF proactively engaged with the private sector, expanding its partnership, and mobilized over US$2 million to bridge key financing gaps.

In Kenya, UNICEF supported the National Treasury and Planning in the update of the Standard Chart of Accounts – the main framework for effective budget cycle management. This enabled disaggregated reporting of revenue, allocation and expenditure to social sectors for greater transparency and monitoring of social spending. The organization also supported the automation of the Controller of Budget reporting system, contributing to more efficient release of resources to spending units as well as reporting on resources utilization, with disaggregated expenditure reporting by age and gender. To strengthen the capacity of county governments to integrate evidence on the needs of children into policies, plans and budgets, UNICEF supported county-led budget briefs in all 47 counties in Kenya, which triggered counties to review annual development plans and enhance budget allocations for nutrition to mitigate high levels of child stunting.

In Sri Lanka, UNICEF published sectoral Budget Briefs and a Public Expenditure Review on Nutrition in collaboration with the World Bank, which led to reaffirmation of the President’s commitment to tackling child malnutrition within the next five years. In Nigeria, UNICEF conducted social budgeting studies and strengthened the capacity of 12 states to measure the share of public spending in health, education, nutrition, child protection, WASH and/or social protection benefiting children in poor households. This led to the identification of available fiscal space, gaps and efficiency gains in public expenditure in sectors affecting children, marking important progress.
Case Study 2: India: Engaging with the Government to expand social spending at national and state levels to ensure the right of every child to nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene

In India, UNICEF gathered evidence on public spending on children and advocated for gradual equalization of states’ expenditure on social sector programmes for children. This led to a recommendation for a grant of US$1.5 billion to address child malnutrition; and earmarking of 50 per cent of the grants to local governments for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

In India’s federal system, around 80 per cent of social sector spending is the responsibility of state governments. UNICEF conducted a study on public expenditure for children in close consultation with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and presented this evidence to the 15th Finance Commission (FC). The organization recommended an equalization grant for the states that needed support in health; nutrition; education; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and child protection. Evidence was shared with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to shape their own recommendations for the 15th FC.

These actions have resulted in increased grants to address critical issues for children. The FC recommended a nutrition grant (equivalent to US$1.5 billion) to the state governments in 2019 for 2020/2021, recognizing the right to nutrition as a “human capital issue that cannot wait to be addressed.” This grant is being disbursed to all state governments in two instalments in 2020/21, increasing investments in nutrition under the flagship of the Integrated Child Development Services programme. The 15th FC also proposed equalization grants for education and health, in 2021–2022 onwards. These conditional grants will further enhance spending for children.

Finally, the 15th FC earmarked 50 per cent of grants to local governments – Gram Panchayat – in rural areas and smaller cities for WASH, in addition to improving air quality in India’s heavily polluted larger cities. These results reflect the culmination of continued efforts in evidence generation and advocacy, paving the way for wide recognition among fiscal policymakers of the importance of investing in cognitive capital in early childhood.
Making public spending on children’s rights more efficient and effective

Focusing on efficiency and effectiveness of public budgets is key to ensuring the equity and sustainability of social sector financing. UNICEF supported governments in generating savings in public budgets for redirection to priority social spending with impact on child rights and long-term human development. In 2020, the organization worked in 113 countries to promote efficient and effective investments in social sectors. Evidence generation, engagement with budgetary processes and systems-strengthening have been key to promoting efficient and effective budgets.

In Namibia, UNICEF’s analysis on sectoral budgets for education, social protection and health and evidence-based advocacy helped reinforce the Government’s commitment to social sectors. The analysis and advocacy influenced the government’s spending efficiency, which positively impacted social sectors, with allocations reaching 51 per cent of the total budget in the Mid-Year Budget review for the 2020/2021 financial year (up from 47 per cent in the previous year), representing an overall increase of 4 per cent in social sector spending.

In Tunisia, UNICEF generated evidence and supported the government in redirecting funds from fuel subsidies towards social protection for children, including the expansion of the Universal Child Grant. As part of the COVID-19 response, and in collaboration with UNICEF and the IMF, the Government partially reduced these fuel subsidies and used the savings to finance a cash transfer for 623,000 families with children impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Armenia, UNICEF and the Government generated evidence on effectiveness of expenditure, leading to an additional budgeted US$295,000 to fund preschool education services in 201 settlements in the country.

Making public social spending more equitable

While adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of public spending is key to financing social services, it is also critical to ensure that an equitable share of resources reach all children.

Equity in accessing social services is strongly correlated to fiscal equity, to ensure that public resources are spent on services for those who need them most and to reduce poverty and inequality. In 2020, UNICEF worked in 113 countries to promote budget equity, which is an integral part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 4 and General Comment No. 19, which calls for fiscal equity so public budgets benefit all children, including the poorest and most disadvantaged children. Fiscal equity is key to equitable service delivery, and to ensuring that every child realizes the right to social services.

In Belarus, UNICEF generated evidence and advocacy to inform the utility subsidy reform and improve the coverage and equity of social spending. The ‘Commitment to Equity’ study34 supported by UNICEF – selected as one of its best research efforts in 2020 – considered the impact of taxes and social transfers on household incomes and multidimensional child poverty. The study included policy responses to support the expansion of social protection for vulnerable households and to reduce multidimensional child poverty. It found that expanding social protection programmes for all households with children, covering single parents and multi-child families not receiving other child benefits, could be supported by phasing out inefficient utility subsidies. These findings contributed to financing the expansion of a cash transfer programme to families with children as part of the COVID-19 response.

In Costa Rica, UNICEF collaborated with the National Child Welfare Agency and the University of Costa Rica to develop a national methodology to measure public budget investment for children and adolescents. This helped improve the response to the Convention on the Rights of the Child Committee Observation on General Comment No. 19, which called for promoting effectiveness, efficiency, equity and transparency in decision-making related to public budgets, and to reduce inequities facing children from indigenous, afro-descendants and migrant communities, and children with disabilities.

In Peru, UNICEF supported developing a methodology to estimate public spending on children and the analysis of public spending on child protection. The first report was used to improve the national estimates of public spending on children, while the second one to identify the existing gaps in spending on protection of children from violence. In addition, UNICEF advocated for the implementation of recommendations derived from its technical assistance to the Ministry of Education for the 2018–2019 budget formulation, which improved the preparation of 2021 budgets for the distribution of textbooks and educational materials for schools, including intercultural bilingual education, across regions, and thus ensuring equitable access of children from minority groups.
Transparency, accountability and participation

Transparency of social sector budgets and citizen participation in budgetary processes contribute to improved public oversight, improved public fund allocations and spending, and improved social spending for key child rights. In 2020, UNICEF worked in 119 countries in this area.35

UNICEF worked with the Government of Zimbabwe to institutionalize budget transparency in all aspects of public finance and promote citizen participation. Working directly with the Parliament, Ministry of Finance, Audit Office and social sector ministries, the organization supported the establishment of a Transparency Reform Matrix, which is a tool for monitoring transparency standards. Through these efforts, Zimbabwe improved its Open Budget Index score to 49 (from 23 in 2017) (2019 survey results).36

In Egypt, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, UNICEF launched the Budget Transparency series, which provides simplified reports of the State’s general budget. This included financial allocations for child-relevant sectors and useful guidance for citizens and youth on how to read the budget and engage in the budgetary and SDG financing processes. Transparency scores have improved compared to 2017, with the Open Budget Index score increasing to 43 (from 41), public participation to 15 (from 11) and budget oversight to 50 (from 39) (2019 survey results).37

Noteworthy and innovative PF4C approaches

COVID-19 placed significant pressure on public budgets, especially in already fiscally strained nations. Building partnerships to leverage resources for the COVID-19 crisis and improve social spending for children was a common feature in 2020 across all regions (see Case Study 3).

In Mongolia, and under the United Nations Joint Programme on ‘Rolling Out an Integrated Approach to the SDG Financing in Mongolia’, UNICEF conducted a Social Sector Budget Review aimed at generating evidence to promote visibility of children in government budgeting processes and informing strengthened effectiveness of public expenditure on children. In addition, UNICEF will support the introduction of programme-based budgeting in social sectors and build relevant capacity. The organization contributed to Citizens Budget development when it was first introduced three years ago, as well as advocated for child-friendly spending of the local development fund, which is decided by citizens’ votes.

In Argentina, UNICEF’s advocacy and technical and financial assistance advanced the institutionalization of PF4C work and encouraged meaningful budget debate for resource allocation for children. At the provincial level, it provided policy advice at high government levels to protect and expand resources for children in COVID-19 response and recovery. UNICEF supported costing of ECD strategies and engaged in budget discussion with provincial ministries of finance to secure funding for 2021, under the framework of the SDG Fund. The Country Office advocacy efforts contributed to the Government’s commitment to increase the allocation of social funding and investment in children.

In Ghana, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Finance to accelerate public finance systems-strengthening to better support COVID-19 response and recovery. Funds from a joint United Nations SDG funding proposal were used to introduce gender- and child-specific SDG coding in the chart of accounts, which aims to track funding to ensure it is focused on SDG targets, and to promote citizens’ participation in the budget process. This was achieved through the revision and dissemination of Public Finance Management social accountability templates to districts and online channels.

UNICEF continued to mobilize and work with a broad spectrum of partners to strengthen social sector budgets. In Viet Nam, the organization leveraged its partnership with the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the IMF and GIZ, in the formulation of the 2021–2030 National Finance Strategy. UNICEF and partners ensured investment in human capital development and social spending for children as key components of the Strategy. The organization also developed budget briefs for evidence-based advocacy and engaged with the World Bank, ADB and the Netherlands Embassy to advocate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance to increase investments in WASH, with targets linked to sanitation, hygiene and stunting.

Working in partnership

Partnerships are at the core of the PF4C programme, including those with UNDP, ILO and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, along with the IMF, the European Commission and the International Budget Partnership. At regional and country levels, a broad spectrum of partnerships and collaborations have been critical to the PF4C work, especially as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery. Collaborations with UNDP and the IMF at both global and country levels were redirected towards COVID-19 financing response and recovery.

In partnership with the European Commission and ILO, eight UNICEF country offices received support to work on social protection financing. The organization continued supporting the Integrated National Finance Frameworks, solidifying our engagement in the Secretary-General’s Financing for Development in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond Initiative (FFDI) for sustainable and inclusive recovery.
Case Study 3: Madagascar: Leveraging resources to promote adequate and transparent social spending for COVID-19 response and recovery

In response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, UNICEF advocacy focused on supporting those most affected by the lockdown through expanded cash transfers for the urban areas most impacted. As co-lead of the Cash Working Group, UNICEF coordinated the preparation of a nationwide cash emergency response strategy in March 2020. The strategy was implemented and led by the Government with support from partners. After an initial contribution from the World Bank (US$10 million), an additional US$5 million was leveraged from United Nations agencies (World Food Programme, United Nations Development Programme and UNICEF), the European Union (EU) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to support expanding the coverage of unconditional cash transfers to urban areas to reach 368,000 families.

With technical inputs from UNICEF, the social protection response strategy was included in Madagascar’s COVID-19 social emergency response plan and subsequently into the national multisectoral emergency plan. The organization also successfully advocated for the expansion of social protection (cash transfers in particular) as one of the indicative measures supported by the Rapid Credit Facility tranches made available by the International Monetary Fund in April and August 2020.

UNICEF also worked with development partners to improve the transparency of COVID-19 financing in Madagascar. The organization used the latest transparency assessment by the International Budget Partnership for evidence-based advocacy and identified concrete policy recommendations to improve transparency in light of the additional resources received to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF organized a virtual launch of the assessment, contributing to the public debate on budget transparency and the formulation of a government plan to strengthen public financial management. The organization contributed to establishing a COVID-19 fund through a governmental decree, dedicated to financing the implementation of the national multisectoral emergency plan, which can be monitored online.

UNICEF collaborated with the Government of Madagascar and international partners to respond to the COVID-19 crisis while contributing to long-term public finance systems-strengthening related to budget transparency.
The SDG Fund is a new multi-partner initiative aimed at closing the financing gap to achieve the SDGs through concerted action by the United Nations system. UNICEF received US$13.8 million in 43 countries to improve financing of social services, especially through the Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF) from Joint Programmes.

In Costa Rica, for example, UNICEF is the lead agency for the SDG Joint Fund, in collaboration with UNESCO, UNFPA, and the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The joint programme is centred on strengthening the INFF and the financing architecture of the SDGs, with a specific focus on improving public spending and results-based budgeting in the education sector.

In Lesotho, where UNICEF is the lead agency, the organization leveraged the INFF, in collaboration with UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund, to support the Government to develop strategies for investments in the SDGs. This includes promoting an enabling environment through enhanced national capacity on public finance, generating evidence on key investments and exploring engagement with the private sector.

Public finance for children in fragile and humanitarian contexts

Conflict and fragility significantly impact the ability of governments to expand social spending through taxation and borrowing, constraining fiscal space for financing social services. In such settings, international – especially humanitarian – funding is critical for child rights. COVID-19 added a major layer of complexity to these contexts. Investing in resilient and risk-informed public finance management systems for shock-responsive social spending has been a key area of focus, which comes with many obstacles. In complex humanitarian settings there are key challenges encountered in leveraging humanitarian financing to strengthen risk-informed national systems, and in bridging the humanitarian and development nexus. However, regardless of these enormous difficulties, UNICEF has been able to engage with governments, development partners and International Financial Institutions to finance social sectors.

In South Sudan, UNICEF engaged with the Government on public finance systems-strengthening to protect and expand social spending. The organization supported the development of a Public Finance Management dashboard to track state budget preparation and reporting progress, generating evidence and advocating for increased allocations for education, health and COVID-19 response. UNICEF also supported the Government in the generation of evidence on budget transparency, while the regular release of Citizens Budgets online helped engage citizen participation into budgetary processes. This has contributed to an increase in the Open Budget Index and Public Participation scores to 7 (from 5) and 11 (from 2), respectively, compared to 2017.

Looking ahead

In 2021, UNICEF’s PF4C work will focus on developing and implementing its internal road map on financing inclusive response and recovery towards COVID-19. Specifically, the focus will be on three priorities – safeguarding critical social spending, ensuring that financial resources are used efficiently and effectively, and mobilizing additional resources to scale up critical systems.

To make such an ambitious agenda actionable, UNICEF will focus on social spending monitoring to track the consequences of economic and fiscal policies on children and their families on a routine basis, by communicating about timely publications and disseminating data. There will also be a focus on evidence-based advocacy to make the investment case for protecting priority social spending for children. UNICEF’s technical support to national governments will be further augmented to protect and transform social spending for children and support adapting national budgets to the new demands, including the equitable roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, through partnerships with international development partners, specifically, international and regional financial institutions, UNICEF will focus on leveraging resources towards sustainable and inclusive fiscal responses that focus on the realization of child rights. United Nations collaboration will be further strengthened, including with UNDP as a key partner, to support the FFDI and the INFF, while ensuring they are led and adopted by national governments.

A rights-based approach to financing will be central to UNICEF’s PF4C work to ensure the poorest and most disadvantaged children have equitable access to services. To enable national leadership on public finance for children, the organization will step up capacity-building initiatives to support governments’ reporting obligations on financing, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 4, and SDG reporting on adequate and equitable social sector spending.
Results: Social Protection – “Strengthening social protection systems”

Shopkeeper Isatu with her son, Roy. Their family relies on the proceeds from market sales to survive. Cash disbursements have helped Isatu to transform and grow her business.

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As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.2 billion children live in multidimensional poverty. Not only is the pandemic deepening poverty across all dimensions of a child’s life – including health, nutrition, education, housing, water and sanitation – but the poorest children are getting poorer as well. In addition, families and children face further social exclusion and discrimination (explicit and implicit) linked to social characteristics such as gender identity, ethnicity, race, disability, geographic location, or migratory status. Such exclusion and discrimination further exacerbate poverty and inequality.

Social protection systems-strengthening not only takes into account the removal of financial and social barriers, but more fundamentally promotes the realization of human rights – including the right to social security – and responds to people’s experiences of multiple deprivations and multidimensional poverty to a decent living, further strengthening the social contract between the state and its citizens. Social protection addresses economic and social vulnerabilities to give every child an equal chance.

UNICEF supports systems that include a holistic and evidence-based policy, strategy and legal framework that responds to the needs across the life course as shown in Figure 12. This strategy ultimately works towards the progressive realization of rights-based and universal social protection, supported by strong implementation of programmatic and administrative elements, alongside case management, social workforce strengthening and sectoral linkages. Ultimately, building and further strengthening multisectoral social protection systems provide support to children and their families. UNICEF supports national systems-strengthening across policy, programmes, operations, shock responsiveness and inclusiveness, providing support across these areas at every level.

Following the action areas of the organization’s social protection framework, UNICEF supports the expansion of social protection systems for children, including through:

- A foundation of evidence
- Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessment
- Policy, legislation and financing
- Policy and strategy development, coordination and financing

**FIGURE 12: Components of a child-sensitive social protection system**

Source: UNICEF (2019)
Integrated programme areas of child-sensitive social protection systems
- Expanding and improving cash transfers for children
- Cash plus – connecting cash transfers to information, knowledge and services to increase the impact of social protection
- Expanding and improving health insurance
- Supporting childcare and adolescent employability
- Administration and integrated service delivery

Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts
- Strengthening national shock-responsive social protection systems
- Linking humanitarian cash transfers (HCT) to social protection systems
- Inclusive social protection
- Gender-responsive social protection
- Disability-inclusive social protection

Results achieved and challenges in 2020 towards strengthening social protection systems

Summary of global results
It was an unprecedented year for social protection. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the vital importance of social protection to address child poverty and be able to respond in times of crisis. At the same time, the ongoing crisis also highlights some significant challenges, including significant coverage gaps for children from disadvantaged populations, who are disproportionately affected by the crisis and also the least covered by social protection schemes. For instance, significant gaps remain in terms of coverage, despite the commitments in SDG 1.3 to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, and by 2030 to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. Globally, only 45 per cent of people are covered by even one social protection benefit, and only 29 per cent are covered by comprehensive social security systems. The challenges range across the social protection programming – only 1 in 5 workers receive any form of benefit, and 28 per cent of persons with disabilities receive a benefit. Older people fare somewhat better, with 68 per cent receiving a pension globally. For children, the picture is less rosy – for example, 2 out of 3 children have no access to cash benefits, although there is significant variation across regions, with almost universal coverage in parts of Europe, to 1 in 8 children covered in sub-Saharan Africa, where rates of child poverty are highest.39

There are also significant adequacy gaps, with marginalized groups – including girls, children with disabilities and migrant children – not effectively covered. In terms of disability, as discussed by the ILO, there is increasing awareness that monetary poverty for persons with disabilities is largely underestimated because household income or consumption does not always take into account disability-related costs. As of 2018, only 27.8 per cent of persons with severe disabilities worldwide receive a disability benefit.40 In terms of gender, despite important progress and innovations, in the context of the COVID-19 response, only 18 per cent of social protection responses were gender sensitive.41 Similarly, only in 14 per cent of countries were new or expanded COVID-19-related government social protection measures fully inclusive of refugees in the country (12.6 per cent were partially inclusive).42

Finally, underlying these challenges are significant gaps in financing for social protection. It is expected that the pandemic will also result in a more restrictive budgetary environment.

Social protection efforts have been the leading response to the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and UNICEF has supported governments to build inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems as part of the COVID-19 response in 115 countries. Moreover, UNICEF-supported cash transfers reached over 130.7 million children in 93 countries.

Sixty-one countries now have strong or moderately strong social protection systems – almost twice as many as in 2017. In addition, 79 country offices are now working on building shock-responsive social protection systems and there has been an increase from 9 to 16 countries reporting systems that are ready to respond to a crisis, surpassing the overall Strategic Plan target of 15 countries by 2021.

UNICEF has also significantly scaled up efforts to make social protection systems more inclusive. UNICEF saw an almost tripling in country offices reporting that they have intentional gender objectives for their work supporting social protection programmes or systems (from 29 in 2019 to 90 in 2020). Work on disability-inclusive social protection also accelerated, with 48 countries now working...
to make their social protection systems more responsive to disability in 2020, up from 36 in 2019. These results were achieved through tailored support to national social protection systems (see Figure 14).

UNICEF social protection expenditure in 2020 was over US$323 million, with cash transfers accounting for US$173 million through new and/or parallel national systems or government systems (US$70 million). In addition, the organization invested over US$21 million to provide governments with technical support to develop or expand national cash transfer programmes. Significantly increased investment of US$18.8 million was made to strengthen social protection systems to become more shock responsive, up from US$3.5 million in 2019.

Strengthening of social welfare workforce received investment of US$4 million. In addition, US$3 million was spent to improve the linkages between cash transfer programmes and other services and information (including on essential family practices, livelihoods, psychosocial support). Finally, US$25 million was spent to develop or improve national social protection strategies, policies and legislation.

FIGURE 13: Number of countries where UNICEF works across key action areas of inclusive social protection systems, 2019–2020

A foundation of evidence

| Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessment | 102 | 87 |

Integrated programme areas of child sensitive social protection systems

| Coverage and adequacy of cash transfers | 84 |
| Cash Plus | 56 | 60 |
| Health insurance | 29 | 48 |
| Childcare and adolescent employability | 28 | 56 |
| Social welfare workforce and direct outreach | 56 | 65 |

Policy, Legislation and financing

| Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessment | 103 | 95 |

Administration and integrated service delivery

| Integrated administrative systems | 63 |

Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts

| Shock-responsive social protection | 79 |
| Linking humanitarian cash transfers to social protection systems | 56 | 43 |

Countries working towards inclusive social protection

| Gender-responsive social protection | 90 |
| Disability-inclusive social protection | 48 |

Source: UNICEF (2020)
Strengthening social protection systems

COVID-19 required a rapid expansion of social protection interventions, which allowed for an opportunity to build and strengthen national social protection systems in a variety of contexts (see UNICEF’s Social Protection Response to COVID-19). In 2020, sixty-one countries now have strong or moderately strong social protection systems – almost double the case in 2017. Figures 14 and 15 highlight this growth globally and by region.

FIGURE 14: Number of countries that have moderately strong or strong social protection systems, globally and by region, 2017–2020

Source: UNICEF (2020)
Supporting global partnerships on social protection

UNICEF remained an active partner across inter-agency social protection groups and programmes in 2020, with coordination and joint work becoming increasingly important in the context of COVID-19 response. The organization led the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board in developing the inter-agency joint statement on the COVID-19 response and led with WFP the social protection pillar of the Secretary-General’s Socioeconomic response to COVID-19. In addition, UNICEF continued its active participation in the inter-agency subgroups on gender-responsive social protection, and co-chaired the group on shock-responsive social protection, both of which supported inter-agency publications and brought together stakeholders and practitioners towards a common social protection response. The organization works closely with United Nations partners. For example, it partners with ILO and the Global Coalition on Social Protection Floors, in an innovative partnership on social protection and public finance (see Box ‘Social protection systems-strengthening and public financial management: a multi-country and multi-partner programme’). With WFP, UNICEF supports countries’ shock-responsive social protection, including a major joint programme in the Sahel (see Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts section).

UNICEF collaborated with the World Bank to strengthen national social protection systems across countries, including strengthening their gender responsiveness and providing real-time global updates on social protection response. As part of the Universal Social Protection partnership, UNICEF and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) launched a global report on universal child benefits, connecting the role of universality in rapid social protection and scale-up with COVID-19 response. (For more information on this report, see Box ‘UNICEF and partners are at the forefront of promoting the global debate on expanding child benefits towards universality.’)
UNICEF’s support across the key action areas of social protection systems

A foundation of evidence: Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessments

Generating evidence and knowledge to inform policies and programmes was instrumental in determining social protection priority needs and responses to the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, work in this area increased from 87 to 102 countries, with a focus on multidimensional poverty; socioeconomic impact assessments and real-time surveys; social protection systems assessments (including readiness assessments); and research and impact evaluations.

In Nepal, UNICEF began conducting monthly telephone surveys with 7,000 households in May 2020 to monitor the social and economic impact of COVID-19. The findings of the surveys revealed significant income loss in families, especially the poorest, worsened food security, and anxiety among children due to the extended restriction measures. Results were used by the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Finance, provincial governments and municipalities to inform COVID-19 response planning and programming, including expansion of the child grant (for children under 5 years) to 11 new districts.

Policy and strategy development, coordination and financing

Social protection systems-strengthening is at the core of UNICEF’s strategy to support countries in eliminating poverty in all its forms. The organization supported 103 countries to strengthen their social protection strategies and legal frameworks, including financing and coordination mechanisms at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis.

For example, Kenya revised its social protection policies and legal frameworks at the county and national levels. Through UNICEF support – including developing a 10-year Social Protection Investment Plan – a revised Social Protection Policy and five-year Social Protection Strategy were submitted to the Cabinet. Meanwhile, a universal child

Social protection systems-strengthening and public financial management: a multi-country and multi-partner programme

The ‘Improving Synergies Between Social Protection and Public Finance Management’ programme provides medium-term support to Angola, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Nepal, Paraguay, Senegal and Uganda. It aims to strengthen their social protection systems at the national level and contribute to sustainable financing. The programme is funded by the EU and jointly implemented by UNICEF, ILO and the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, in collaboration with national partners and EU delegations in each country. This is one of the first multi-country and multi-partner social protection and public finance management programmes in the world.

In 2020, the programme contributed to the following:

- Developing a financing strategy for the next social protection policy in Burkina Faso.
- Drafting the monitoring and evaluation framework for the cash transfer programme for pregnant women and children under the age of 2 and linking it to the National Social Protection Council Monitoring and Evaluating framework in Cambodia.
- Supporting a social protection policy eligibility assessment for potential EU budget support in Ethiopia.
- Enabling all participating countries to adjust their programmes in response to COVID-19 through design, modelling and costing of social protection responses.

I am pleased to acknowledge the consistent support of UNICEF in the expansion of South Africa’s social protection programmes, which have contributed significantly to our development objectives by expanding services that promote and protect the rights of vulnerable children, including almost universal access to birth registration, basic education and primary health care. The child support grant now reaches over 65 per cent of South Africa’s children, and is playing a vital role in supporting children and families during the economic impacts of COVID-19.

– Hon. Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development, South Africa
benefit is being considered. County-led legal frameworks were endorsed in 2020, contributing to the long-term sustainability of ongoing cash plus initiatives (e.g., cash top-ups targeting the most vulnerable children to mitigate the adverse effects of the COVID-19 crisis).

Integrated programme areas of child-sensitive social protection systems

Expanding and improving cash transfers for children

In response to the pandemic, UNICEF enhanced its support to countries to improve and expand national cash transfer programmes to reach more children and their families. Over 130 million children from 93 countries (a significant increase from 51.2 million children in 2019) in both humanitarian and development contexts were covered by UNICEF-supported social protection programmes (see ‘Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts’ section).

UNICEF also continued to support countries towards increasing the coverage of long-term national cash transfer programmes for children, building on its work on universal child benefits (see Figures 16, 17 and 18). For instance, Armenia’s ageing population, combined with low birth rates, led to a series of policy initiatives, including a categorical universal childcare allowance in the form of cash for children up to the age of 2. This allowance does not cover families in the informal sector, and the Government is presently considering a complete universal child benefit, including for families with children whose parents do not have a registered job.

Now more than ever, as the economic fallout of COVID-19 threatens to roll back years of progress in reducing poverty, universal child benefits can be a lifeline. They can protect vulnerable families from deepening levels of poverty and deprivation and can save countries from catastrophic societal and economic impacts.

– Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF

FIGURE 16: Number of girls and boys reached by cash transfer programmes through UNICEF-supported programmes

Source: UNICEF (2020)
FIGURE 17: Number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2020, global

![Bar chart showing number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2020.](chart17)

Source: UNICEF (2020)\(^{20}\)

FIGURE 18: Number of children with disabilities, in humanitarian settings, and children living under the national poverty line benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2020

### Children with disabilities
- 2019: 826,356
- 2020: 699,939

### Children in humanitarian settings
- 2019: 8,487,014
- 2020: 81,112,521

### Children living under the poverty line
- 2019: 32,891,108
- 2020: 33,261,390

Source: UNICEF (2020)\(^{21}\)
UNICEF and partners are at the forefront of promoting the global debate on expanding child benefits towards universality

In June 2020, UNICEF and ODI launched the report, Universal Child Benefits: Policy issues and options, as part of the Universal Child Benefit Initiative, a collaboration to promote evidence-based decision-making on policy and programmatic instruments linked to the design and implementation of universal child benefits. The launch of the report was accompanied by a series of webinars and facilitation of shared perspectives through policy briefs and blogs looking at the universal child benefits in the context of COVID-19. The report highlights the potential impacts of universal child benefits on child poverty, with benefits equivalent of 1 per cent of GDP reducing child poverty by as much as 20 per cent, while additionally highlighting the benefits to social cohesion and sustainable political support. Finally, the report has a strong focus on sustainable financing and affordability, outlining pathways to achieve universal coverage through progressive realization of coverage over time.

Cash Plus: Connecting cash transfers to information, knowledge and services to increase the impact of social protection

Given the multidimensional face of poverty, it is important to recognize that while cash transfers have a significant impact on child outcomes, financial barriers alone are not the only challenge families face. In 2020, through its ‘Cash Plus’ programme, UNICEF supported 60 countries to connect cash transfer beneficiaries to information, knowledge and other services critical to children’s health, development, protection and well-being.

For example, in Timor-Leste, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion to integrate health and safety concerns in the design of the cash transfer programme, including training for personnel implementing the programme. The Cash Plus scheme provided more than 300,000 brochures with messaging on COVID-19 prevention, handwashing, infant and young child feeding, and physical distancing.

Expanding and improving health insurance

UNICEF helps link recipients of social protection programmes – often the most vulnerable children and families – to health insurance programmes. At the same time, it also supports governments to define a minimum package of health services under universal health coverage. In 2020, work was under way in 19 countries to support governments to expand and improve health insurance coverage for children and their families.

For example, in Ethiopia, UNICEF supported the Government’s integration of the Urban Productive Safety Net Programme into the Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) scheme. This led to the enrolment of all 66,000 Addis Ababa Permanent Direct Support clients into the CBHI with a fee waiver. At the national level, approximately 12 million children benefit from the CBHI. The Ethiopian Health Insurance Agency now incorporates social protection concepts and principles around equity in its strategy.
Madagascar: Delivering a harmonized and coordinated social protection response

Social protection in Madagascar was fragmented and UNICEF has been supporting the government to strengthen the national social protection system since 2016. This strong engagement proved effective in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple ways:

- Promoting a rapid and unified response to COVID-19: UNICEF mobilized the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), UNDP, the EU, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), through the Cash Working Group, to support the Government’s strategy to ensure a rapid and unified response. The social protection response – locally known as Tosika Fameno (‘filling the gap’) – focused on 10 major cities, reaching more than 368,000 vulnerable households (8,500 directly supported by UNICEF) whose income was severely affected by confinement measures. This rapid mobilization was possible thanks to earlier efforts aimed at strengthening inter-agency coordination through the Cash Working Group for shock-responsive social protection responses in the country – part of the national social protection strategy put in place in 2019.

- Inclusive social protection: With the WFP, ILO and UNFPA, UNICEF supported the Government in strengthening its social protection system and making it more sensitive to the needs of vulnerable households, with a focus on gender and people living with disability. An integrated package of social protection interventions was put in place with a combination of cash transfers, GBV protection schemes, agricultural insurance and livelihood activities.

- Sustainable financing and recovery: UNICEF contributed to leveraging over US$15 million for the social protection response to COVID-19 through the Cash Working Group. Advocacy efforts to increase the fiscal space for social protection is under way, and UNICEF will contribute to how social spending is defined (and therefore protected) under the new the IMF Programme, and will work with the World Bank to carry out an evaluation of the efficiency of social spending with the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Emelie Rasendrasoa, 49 years old, is widowed and became paraplegic when her legs were paralysed over a year ago as a result of a botched medical procedure. Without crutches, she cannot move on her own and must rely on relatives for help. Emelie now lives with her son, her daughter-in-law and their child in Ambanidia, one of the more populated districts of Madagascar’s capital, Antananarivo.
UNICEF works towards enhancing quality childcare services and family-friendly policies, particularly for working mothers; and improving access to employment, job placement and skills-development programmes for adolescents and youth. COVID-19 further increased the care burden on women and adolescent girls, given that schools, childcare centres and informal care arrangements were not available due to lockdown measures. UNICEF continued to advocate for transformative social policies to ensure that the rights of people needing care, unpaid caregivers and paid care workers are protected. In 2020, twenty-eight UNICEF country offices supported childcare and adolescent employability efforts.

In Ecuador, UNICEF leveraged the U-Report to build resilience and adolescent participation through an initiative called DreamLAB, a collaboration with UNDP. Considerable focus was placed on the mental health of children, adolescents and caregivers, as a mechanism to cope with the pandemic and to ensure that the most vulnerable families had access to social protection programmes.

UNICEF supports expansion and strengthening of the social welfare workforce, including the role they play in building connections between social protection programmes and the most vulnerable children and families. Effective case management and referral mechanisms require close collaboration between social protection and child protection expertise, placing UNICEF in a unique position to support governments in this regard.

In 2020, UNICEF strengthened this support in 65 countries and territories. For example, in response to the pandemic in South Africa, UNICEF worked with the Government to not only top up the social grants for children but to strengthen the role of the social welfare workforce to create linkages for children receiving the grant to other services, reaching 12.8 million children. In total, 352 social workers were equipped with case management tools to monitor the well-being of children in real time.

The Joint SDG Fund creates opportunities for in-country collaboration on social protection across the United Nations family

With a strong country presence and track record in chairing or co-chairing social protection development partner groups, UNICEF has played a critical role leading and coordinating social protection responses at the country level, participating in 33 of 36 social protection initiatives selected by the Joint SDG Fund. The Fund has allowed partners to contribute to a more systems-focused, coordinated, innovative and effective response with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable families disproportionately impacted and often left behind.

In Malawi, concerted technical support across the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF was provided to the government’s Crisis Interventions to Address the Effects of COVID-19 Master Plan. This included the design of a new emergency urban cash transfer programme, needs assessments, targeting strategies, coordination, as well as grievance mechanisms to increase transparency and accountability of the programme.

In Saint Lucia, the Government identified social protection as the critical instrument to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Coordinated efforts across WFP, UNDP, UN Women, ILO and UNICEF helped support universal shock-responsive social protection, with rapid expansion of social assistance to support the most vulnerable communities.

In Viet Nam, a Rapid Assessment on the Social Assistance Needs of Children and Families in the Context of COVID-19 was completed by ILO, UNFPA, UNDP and UNICEF. Recommendations to amend the Government’s response package led to the introduction of e-services to expedite service delivery and cash transfers to vulnerable communities.
Administration and integrated service delivery

Integrated administrative systems enhance coordination among different programmes and improve efficiency by simplifying processes, effort, time and resources. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of these systems, with child-sensitive information allowing for better and rapid planning, design, implementation and monitoring. UNICEF worked in 63 countries to support integration of administrative systems in 2020.

For example, in Equatorial Guinea, with support from UNICEF and the IMF, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality launched their first Social Guarantees Programme (Decree 43-2020) to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The Programme reached the most vulnerable population, targeting 11,118 vulnerable households. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality – in collaboration with UNICEF, the Civil Registry and the NGO BiriaElat – developed a digital application for the Single Social Registry. In its pilot phase, out of 35,788 identified vulnerable families, the application collected data on 25,000 families, including data on GBV.

In Guatemala, UNICEF supported the creation of an innovative platform that includes electronic registrations and electronic signatures to identify, register and pay benefits to families receiving an emergency cash transfer based on their energy consumption. More than 2 million poor and vulnerable families are being reached across the country, representing 70 per cent of households in Guatemala. It is the largest social programme in the country’s history in terms of coverage and investment.

Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts

Strengthening national shock-responsive social protection systems

COVID-19 shed light on the importance of risk-informing social protection systems to respond to crises. As of 2020, seventy-nine UNICEF country offices are working on building shock-responsive social protection systems, up from 56 in 2019. The number of countries with strong national systems readiness (see Figure 19) increased to 16, from 9 in 2019, surpassing the overall Strategic Plan target of 15 countries by 2021.

This upward trend was partly influenced by the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action released by UNICEF in 2020, which – for the first time since its launch in 1998 – includes sector-level commitments on social protection. The Core Commitments will guide efforts towards strengthening social protection in humanitarian situations, including by linking direct provision of HCT with social protection systems. Furthermore, the pandemic provided an opportunity to stress-test the readiness and resilience of these efforts and government social protection systems (see Case Study 4).

In Brazil, UNICEF partnered with CONGEMAS (National Association of Social Assistance Municipal Departments) to strengthen the emergency responsiveness of social assistance services to support the most vulnerable families. Two guidebooks were developed based on evidence from a nationwide survey on how to adapt central services to cope with COVID-19.

FIGURE 19: Trends in the number of countries with national cash transfer programmes that are ready to respond to crises

Source: UNICEF (2020)
Case Study 4: Jordan: Operational and swift response helps strengthen the agility of the national social protection system

At the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF supported the Government of Jordan with a swift and coordinated shock-responsive social protection response, building on the preparedness and maturity of the existing system. Support ranged from helping to formulate the National Social Protection Strategy, expanding the National Aid Fund (NAF), to enhancing and implementing the national unified registry and digital payments. These were achieved specifically through:

- Evidence generation: UNICEF – in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – produced an inter-agency rapid needs assessment covering multiple sectors. The analysis showed an immediate impact on refugees and vulnerable Jordanians in terms of their ability to access food, income and medical needs, which influenced programmatic and policy response.

- Coordinated and intentional response: To address the needs of vulnerable Jordanians, UNICEF – in collaboration with the World Bank – provided support to the Ministry of Social Development and the NAF to activate the national social protection system, identifying options and measures to enhance social assistance and integrated social protection services, reaching almost 400,000 beneficiaries. UNICEF support included targeting, registering and setting up grievance redressal mechanisms using RapidPro, an innovative digital communication tool that supported identification and enrolment of almost 240,000 unregistered families. Furthermore, refugees who were unable to access these services received additional critical support when UNICEF expanded the Hajati-Cash Transfer Programme (a cash intervention supporting vulnerable refugee families), allowing coverage of an additional 18,804 children (50 per cent girls and 15 per cent having a disability or a chronic illness). As part of these efforts, UNICEF co-chaired the Common Cash Facility to ensure that the combined scale of cash transfers of multiple agencies resulted in a reduction in delivery costs and increased complementarity in service provision.

- Strengthening shock responsiveness: The national social protection system played a key role in responding to the crisis, and work on preparedness and strengthening different components of the system, including coordination mechanisms and management information systems continues. Building on this experience, UNICEF is working with the Government to strengthen the existing system and to articulate a new shock-responsive social protection chapter to the National Social Protection Strategy, which UNICEF helped develop and launch.

Sidra, 13 years old, is in sixth grade. “Mom bought us shoes, notebooks, pens, sharpeners and erasers,” she says excitedly. “I love them so much because the old ones were ruined … I like school. I want to learn here and paint and read and write!” Sidra, whose family fled the war in the Syrian Arab Republic, lives in Jordan with her family, including her five siblings. Her mother, Amina, says, “Hajati helped solve a lot of the challenges that we face ... It’s impossible to keep your children in school when you have no stationery, school bags or shoes ... Now I have dignity.” She continues, “Hajati support comes in the form of a cash withdrawal. It makes a difference not to have to queue up at a charity to receive help.”
To facilitate outreach and support to recipients in Ghana and enhance assistance during the COVID-19 crisis, UNICEF supported guidance and communication materials for front-line staff and recipients of the Livelihoods Empowerment Against Poverty programme on safe movement during the pandemic, with a top-up amount added to cover beneficiary travel costs.

In Mongolia, prior to the pandemic, UNICEF conducted a feasibility assessment of shock-responsive social protection measures for children, which confirmed that the Government’s mechanisms to distribute child benefits were the most suitable to reach children during shocks. Using the lessons learned from the UNICEF-supported shock-responsive cash transfers pilot conducted the year before, the Government effectively responded to the pandemic with a top-up of the Child Money Programme. An ADB assessment concluded that this response benefited the most vulnerable communities more than any other policy intervention.⁵⁴

In Honduras, UNICEF trained 48 officials (41 women and 7 men) from the 37 priority municipalities on social protection in emergencies, including the use of a simple tool developed by the organization for planning, operationalizing and delivering the horizontal – or benefits in kind – expansion of food kits. This capacity-building strategy facilitated delivery of social protection assistance to 27,195 people (6,475 households) as part of the response to the humanitarian crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and tropical storms Eta and Iota.

Linking HCT to social protection systems

UNICEF is committed to delivering HCT where government systems are not able to scale up – and doing so in ways that support the development of national systems. In 2020, some 2.5 million households in 50 countries were reached through UNICEF-funded HCT programmes. Of these, 591,461 households were assisted by providing funding to governments to scale up social cash transfers in 18 countries, and 1.7 million households were reached through direct delivery of HCT.

UNICEF has been leading this work globally by co-chairing the Grand Bargain Cash workstream subgroup, which links humanitarian cash with social protection to generate knowledge and facilitate learning, while also working at country level. Results are impressive, with approximately 81 million children supported by an expansion of national social protection and the direct implementation of HCTs (see Figure 20).

With support from the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), UNICEF and WFP supported national social protection responses in response to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 in Mali, Mauritania and the Niger. This joint programme follows a twin-track approach to assist populations impacted by the crisis and, at the same time, build nutrition-sensitive, child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection systems. A learning and knowledge management component will help draw lessons, which can shape the design of future programmes in similar contexts.

In many cases, UNICEF seeks to utilize or mirror one or more components of existing social protection systems. For example, in Zambia, previous experience supporting social protection system expansion in response to droughts placed UNICEF in a unique position to support the government with a social protection response to COVID-19. This entailed provision of top-ups to existing beneficiaries of the Social Cash Transfers (SCT). In addition, a horizontal expansion of the SCT was implemented to temporarily add other vulnerable groups (e.g., informal workers affected by closures and restrictions). The expansion mirrored the SCT in design and the implementation was undertaken in close coordination with the Government. The Yemen Emergency Cash Transfer project was launched in 2017 in partnership with the World Bank to maintain the social transfer programme for the poorest and most vulnerable individuals and families. Since its inception, eight case payment cycles have been implemented to reach over 1.43 million households. In 2020, a top-up of 45 per cent of the base benefit amount was provided to all beneficiaries in the eighth cycle to help them cope with the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. The intention is for this programme to transition to a national entity in 2021.
FIGURE 20: HCT beneficiaries reached by type of assistance and HCT beneficiaries by country

Social Protection and HCT beneficiaries reached

81,045,885
Total number of children reached through Social Protection and HCT

5.96% 0.54% 1.79%
Through the provision of TA
Through use of National System
Through use of parallel system
Through use of a mixed system

Social Protection and HCT beneficiaries by country

Indonesia: 30,013,738
Morocco: 9,147,193
Iraq: 6,500,000
Nigeria: 6,000,000
Sri Lanka: 4,200,000
Yemen: 4,052,171
Guatemala: 4,000,000
Malaysia: 3,500,000
Thailand: 1,400,000
Dominican Republic: 1,183,903
Mongolia: 1,183,779
Kenya: 1,026,500
Iran: 1,000,000
Georgia: 914,000
Republic of Mozambique: 864,991

Source: UNICEF (2020)
Inclusive social protection

Inclusion is one of the core principles of UNICEF’s social protection work. It represents the commitment that all areas of social protection programming are responsive to the needs of all children and caregivers and promote inclusion and equity. Thanks to support from the United Kingdom and Norway in 2020, UNICEF made significant progress in strengthening gender-responsive social protection and social protection for persons with disabilities.

Gender-responsive social protection


This organizational shift towards gender-responsive and transformative programming was prompted by new thought leadership, research, practice and innovation. It was also the result of partnerships at all levels, including with national governments, the SDG Fund, the EU-ILO-UNICEF programme, the World Bank, and the Gender-Responsive Social Protection programme of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom-funded Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Research Programme, launched in 2020, produced a new organizational Conceptual Framework on Gender-Responsive and Age-Sensitive Social Protection, generating evidence on gender-responsive and age-sensitive social protection: what works, why and how.

With the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 significantly affecting women and girls, the response was rapidly escalated both globally and at the country level. The number of UNICEF country offices supporting social protection programmes with gender-related objectives increased substantially from 29 in 2019 to 90 at the end of 2020, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts. Figure 21 outlines the types of gender-responsive social protection interventions that UNICEF supported, and examples of the types of results being targeted in its community of practice.

In Burundi and Madagascar, UNICEF is reviewing the gender responsiveness of the social protection systems in collaboration with national governments and other partners, and has identified specific areas where adaptations can be made, including integrating a gender lens into cash ‘plus’ components and supporting the design of new programme interventions designed around the needs of women and girls.

FIGURE 21: Gender-responsive programming and social protection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social protection programmes targeting specific results (number of countries)</th>
<th>Type of gender-responsive programming (number of countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support to caregivers</td>
<td>Labour market policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child marriage</td>
<td>Public works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-based violence</td>
<td>Cash Plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ Education</td>
<td>Cash Transfers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF (2020)
In India, UNICEF is providing technical support to several government-led adolescent-focused cash plus programmes, such as a cash transfer programme, reaching 9.9 million girls, linked to objectives on education and child marriage. In Argentina, UNICEF supported a gender-sensitive socioeconomic analysis of the impacts of COVID-19, including impact on employment levels and informality, and price increases of basic food basket items and poverty levels, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, to inform social protection and public finance work.

UNICEF is working with the Government of Sierra Leone to extend training on GBV and psychosocial support to front-line social protection workers, and to create more effective referrals to specialized GBV response services as part of the rapid adaptation and scale-up of the existing national social safety net programme during COVID-19. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF provided technical support for the design, implementation and evaluation of the national adolescent-focused cash plus programme. This builds on a strong social protection system and includes an economic transfer, livelihood and life-skills training, mentoring, and HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights services. A rigorous evaluation indicated that the programme contributed to delayed sexual debut among girls, increase in knowledge about contraception and HIV, increase in gender-equitable attitudes among boys, decrease in depression, and decrease in experience of sexual violence amongst girls and perpetration of physical violence amongst boys.

Disability-inclusive social protection

In 2020, UNICEF supported 48 countries to make their social protection systems more responsive to disability, up from 36 in 2019. This included complementary and temporary targeted expansion of the Government’s cash transfers programmes to 2,700 families with children with disabilities in the Dominican Republic and the provision of cash plus support to 2,932 children with disabilities (67 per cent boys, 33 per cent girls) in Armenia.

UNICEF continued investing in accessible and comprehensive disability assessment mechanisms and information systems. In the Syrian Arab Republic, a new information management system supported by UNICEF has already registered over 234,000 people living with disabilities. In Mongolia, the organization supported the pilot programme on a registration and certification system for persons with disabilities in different regions, benefiting approximately 300,000 persons with disabilities, including children.

These instruments are critical to help governments provide much needed cash and services to children with disabilities and their families in times of crisis and beyond. UNICEF will continue to scale its investment in disability-inclusive social protection in 2021, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Looking ahead

Learning from the COVID-19 crisis, there are important strategic priorities for UNICEF’s work in social protection in 2021. The crisis has highlighted the low social protection coverage of children that limited the ability of systems to respond. UNICEF will deepen its focus on increasing coverage by social protection systems, including issues of adequacy and linkages with social services.

The crisis also highlighted the particular vulnerabilities and disadvantages faced by women and girls, children with disabilities and their families, and children on the move. UNICEF will significantly expand its work on inclusive social protection, increasing programming in these areas so that social protection programmes have clear objectives, appropriate design and operational modalities to reach disadvantaged groups.

UNICEF is uniquely positioned – due to both its extensive work on social protection and consistent presence before, during and after crises – to support countries in strengthening their preparedness with appropriate policies and operational mechanisms, and through supporting the development of national systems where they are not strong enough to respond.

Lessons from the 2008 financial crisis showed that expansions in social protection can be followed by austerity. Past experience shows how impactful the failure to build resiliency through these systems can ultimately prove. Social protection should be at the centre of an inclusive recovery that protects and strengthens existing social protection spending and enhances the capacity of these systems.
Results: Gender – “Promoting positive gender norms and socialization”

Children play a game in an inclusive kindergarten in Armenia.
© UNICEF/UN0416533/Margaryan
As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has said, “And just as they are losing their paid employment, many women face a huge increase in care work due to school closures, overwhelmed health systems, and the increased needs of older people. And let’s not forget the girls who have had their education cut short.”

Tackling restrictive gender norms and promoting positive gender socialization is a major cross-cutting priority for UNICEF. These discriminatory norms take multiple forms— from channelling girls towards certain toys and activities when they are babies to restricting their movement and education when they are adolescents, and to women taking on the lion’s share of household and childcare burden within families and homes. The discriminatory norms that start during early childhood do not just end after childhood and adolescence— there is increasing evidence that shows how unequal gender norms are one of the most significant determinants of unequal gender outcomes for women and men.

An important mechanism by which children learn socially accepted behaviours— i.e., norms— is through their parents. How parents behave towards children and towards each other is an important way for children to learn from their first role models. Other important mechanisms or agents through which children are socialized into gender roles include teachers, peer, media and games.

To achieve equitable outcomes across goal areas (see Figure 22), as well as SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment for women and girls), and the United Nations Common Chapter results on gender equality, UNICEF defined ‘positive gender norms and socialization’ as a flagship area of work in the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan. The organization aims to ensure that all programming is gender responsive or gender transformative and therefore takes a norms-based approach to core programme design that addresses gender-specific needs and transforms harmful gender norms, roles and power relations between women, girls, boys and men. To achieve the vision of a more gender-equal world and the empowerment of women and girls, UNICEF actively engages boys and men. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 outlined a twin-track approach to gender programming by integrating gender equality for girls and boys across all goal areas of the Strategic Plan, while recognizing the rights and particular needs and vulnerabilities of adolescent girls through five targeted priorities. UNICEF promotes gender equality for children from birth through adolescence by addressing the gender-specific discrimination and disadvantages that typically affect girls the most, but which can also affect boys.

Pre-existing socioeconomic, gender and race inequities were exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19. This heightened traditional gender roles at home and led to increased stress, especially for female caregivers with limited resources and access to services. Disruption to essential services due to the pandemic led to an increased burden of childcare and household responsibilities on female caregivers, as well as the risk of GBV during lockdowns.

UNICEF works across the life course of children to create an enabling environment for sustainable and at-scale results in the area of gender norms change through the following programming principles:

- Programme design based on child rights and evidence of prevailing gender norms.
- Interventions tailored to context-specific needs.
- Holistic, cross-sectoral programmes that engage individuals, families, communities and the legal or policy environment.
- Clear methodology for monitoring progress on gender norms change.

FIGURE 22: Addressing discriminatory gender norms and promoting positive gender socialization cuts across all UNICEF programmatic goal areas and is essential to achieving results for all children.
Following a global mapping of its ongoing gender socialization programmes in 2019, UNICEF identified certain sectors for priority interventions to promote positive gender norms and socialization. These areas include ECD and parenting, education and school curriculum, harmful practices and gender stereotypes in marketing.

To examine the emerging results of which norms to shift the transmission of conventional gender norms change from childhood and adolescence, UNICEF undertook a joint study with the ODI in 2020 to document and measure change in gender norms and socialization under the Gender Thematic Fund.

The Fund received essential contributions from Canada and Luxembourg that helped facilitate this research. The study documented several promising gender socialization initiatives across multiple regions and countries, including those that received funding through the Gender Thematic Fund (see Figure 23). Some of the initial results are included in this chapter. More research is needed to build the evidence base, document results and systematically invest in programming, monitoring and evaluation.

FIGURE 23: Example of countries implementing programmes on promoting positive gender norms and socialization

Source: UNICEF (2020)
Results achieved in 2020 and challenges in promoting positive gender norms and socialization

In 2020, forty-nine UNICEF country programmes across all regions carried out interventions to confront gender-discriminatory roles and norms and promote positive gender socialization, including in the pandemic context—an increase of four since the 2019 report. The percentage of countries with at-scale programmes to address gender discriminatory practices is shown in Figure 24.

Gender-responsive parenting

Gender-responsive parenting applies key principles such as gender equality and inclusion and promotes positive gender norms and socialization in order to transform imbalanced power structures in families and future generations.

UNICEF strategies for gender-responsive parenting include engaging fathers and male caregivers in caregiving and domestic responsibilities, as well as social and behaviour change communication through multimedia platforms (see Case Study 5).

In 2020, the organization redoubled efforts to increase awareness among parents, children and communities through online platforms to emphasize parenting support and social norms and behaviour change interventions. An estimated 2.6 million mothers, fathers and caregivers across 87 countries were reached through UNICEF-supported parenting programmes. This included gender-responsive parenting, positive discipline and mental health support for families, resulting in a 14 per cent increase in those reached compared to 2019.

FIGURE 24: Percentage of countries with at-scale programmes addressing gender-discriminatory roles and practices among children

Source: UNICEF (2020)
UNICEF also developed a technical note on gender-responsive parenting in 2020 to guide its programming in this area, which also covers children and adolescents with diverse gender identities and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (or questioning), and others (LGBTIQ+).

Building on the research from ODI, engaging male caregivers in parenting and childcare is an effective mechanism to shift gender norms. UNICEF engages fathers and male caregivers through behaviour change and other mechanisms in parenting education and childcare. For example, in the United Republic of Tanzania, in partnership with the Government and British Broadcasting Corporation, UNICEF supported the roll-out of a wide-scale multimedia initiative on parenting reaching 2.4 million adults (8.4 per cent of the adult population). Surveys showed that 67 per cent of parents and caregivers increased their positive parenting ability, benefiting an estimated 3.2 million children.

In Timor-Leste, a pilot ‘Fathers Network’ project involving fathers in role-modelling gender-responsive behaviour has been incorporated into UNICEF’s broader parenting programme, under which more than 10,000 parents from 87 villages completed 10 modules of parenting education. About 125 households received parenting education support through home visits. The curriculum addresses general parenting, health, nutrition, early childhood stimulation and positive gender socialization. Parents were encouraged to discuss the critical role of fathers in child development and share personal childrearing experiences.

In South Africa, in partnership with Sonke Gender Justice, UNICEF supported training for 152 social service professionals to reach about 3,000 parents in the MenCare 50:50 programme, which offers a platform for parents to improve their caregiving skills; and critically reflect on issues around gender roles, reproductive decision-making and nonviolent discipline. In Burundi, UNICEF supported the creation of 1,065 community-based solidarity groups, which facilitated access to good parenting training for 93,670 parents (62,865 mothers and 30,824 fathers).
Case Study 5: Serbia: Digital tools to support parents during COVID-19-related lockdowns and school closures

Disruptions to essential services, as well as closures of childcare centres and schools due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic created a need for more digital platforms to support parents and their children. Parent Buddy, a free application for smartphones, was developed with the City Institute of Public Health in Belgrade, Serbia, to reach parents of children aged 0–6 years with individualized, evidence-based and interactive information on child health and nutrition, gender-responsive parenting and nurturing care, and support for parents’ mental health and well-being. The app directly addresses parents’ insecurity and confusion about the overwhelming amount of parenting information on the internet, offering a trusted source of current, accurate information from recognized experts and authorities in an easy-to-use format. Content is pushed to users tailored to the age and developmental needs of children, and immunization and other health schedules can be easily tracked. The app also provides up-to-date messaging on COVID-19.

Parent Buddy was downloaded by 6,300 parents in the first three months of its launch and continues to be optimized further based on user feedback. It is available in multiple languages and will be launched in nine additional countries in Europe and Central Asia (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan). According to Edin Hadžibegovic, father of two: “For me it is very valuable. I can follow the development of my children simultaneously with my wife, by managing our children’s profiles through my personal phone.”
Family-friendly policies

UNICEF increased support for family-friendly policy interventions in 2020, supporting governments in 46 countries (see Case Study 6). Fast-tracked by the COVID-19 crisis, the organization accelerated engagement with the private sector to promote family-friendly policies, including paid parental leave and flexible working arrangements, to alleviate the burden of care on women and to support work and family life balance. Two weeks after WHO declared the novel coronavirus disease a pandemic, UNICEF issued a report with recommendations for businesses to mitigate the socioeconomic consequences on workers in operations and supply chains.

Numerous regional offices, country offices and national committees have advocated for gender-responsive and family-friendly policies to be a central pillar in COVID-19 response and recovery measures. In July 2020, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF held a virtual event on how businesses can support caregivers during and after the crisis, with speakers from Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft and Unilever. UNICEF published guidance with one of the world’s largest investment funds on how child rights can be advanced and protected in company supply chains. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF supported virtual conferences in 10 countries, reaching over 1,800 private and public organizations with key asks on employment protection and family-friendly policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Geralda Novembe, 31 years old, picks up her 10-month-old daughter, Jean Anne Dorine Miyara, at the CODEVI textile factory’s childcare centre where Jean Anne is cared for while Geralda works. Jean Anne is one of 147 children, from newborn to 6 years, cared for at the centre during the workday. The factory encourages mothers to take breastfeeding breaks to support their children’s health and development. Geralda says, “I can work in peace when I know my baby is cared for, played with and fed. If I didn’t have access to this, I might not be able to work and earn, or I’d have to look for someone to take care of my baby at home. I know I wouldn’t feel at peace with that. I know people that don’t have this support; they had to leave their jobs.” Investing in family-friendly policies is good for families, businesses and economies. But for too many parents around the world, family-friendly policies – such as paid parental leave, breastfeeding breaks, childcare and child grants – are not a reality.
An unexpected outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the spotlight on the ability – and willingness – of governments and companies to protect employees and their families during the unprecedented emergency. Against a backdrop of widespread school and day-care closures disrupting children’s education, there are urgent concerns about children’s protection and well-being. In too many places, young children are left alone without adequate care while parents return to work – not because they want to but because they have no choice. In other instances, women are forced to drop out of the workforce due to the lack of affordable childcare.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF is supporting parenting classes in collaboration with the Government and provided family-friendly policy support focused on the garment and footwear sector – which has a largely female workforce – working with the industry association at the national level to scale up efforts. This work was made possible by private sector partnerships with funding from Disney and Target.

In China, UNICEF is helping to build better work environments by integrating the work on family-friendly policies into WHO’s ‘Back to Work’ campaign. By partnering with WHO and using the guidance on flexible work arrangements and other good family-friendly workplace practices, employers receive practical advice on how to create safe work environments as they prepare to re-open. In addition, UNICEF is engaging with Chinese industry associations, chambers of commerce, companies and civil society organizations on its Family-Friendly Workplace initiative. “UNICEF’s guidance helps employees strike a balance between childcare duties, family obligations and work duties, as well as consider the special needs of pregnant and breastfeeding workers,” said Cynthia McCaffrey, Representative of UNICEF China. “Employers need to protect the workplace while reducing social stigma and preventing discrimination.” For example, UNICEF’s partnership with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions on flexible work arrangements, childcare and extended family leave, and psychosocial support to deal with COVID-19-related stressors reached about 590,000 employees.
Addressing discriminatory norms through gender-responsive school curriculum

In a year when most schools around the world remained closed and education moved to the virtual world, gender-responsive curricula became more important than ever before. Given the increased risk of girls dropping out of school, COVID-19 also highlighted the need to address the gender digital divide, which is driven by unequal norms in access to digital technology and resources between girls and boys. UNICEF continued to support countries to improve the gender responsiveness of their teaching and learning systems, contributing in 2020 to 42 per cent of countries (52) having gender-responsive education systems, compared to 38 per cent in 2019. In addition, 44 countries with UNICEF-supported programmes had taught and learning systems that integrated gender equality principles into education programming, training and measurement activities, representing 42 per cent of countries reporting, compared to 40 per cent in 2019. Addressing gender-discriminatory norms and stereotypes as they affect adolescent girls’ abilities – including digital skills and skills in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) – as well as their employability, remains a priority. In 2020, some 7.7 million children – over 3.2 million girls – participated in UNICEF-supported skills development, empowerment and employability training programmes.

Gender-responsive school curricula and teacher training are essential to address gender-discriminatory norms in education. For example, in Viet Nam, UNICEF supported the Government to expand inclusive and gender-responsive online teacher training and production of videos and other digital, television and radio learning resources (with sign language and subtitles in multiple ethnic languages). This was critical during the COVID-19 pandemic for both students and teachers, benefiting 20.9 million students, about half of them girls. UNICEF also included gender-responsive programming priorities in its education interventions in Viet Nam, focusing on learning needs and tackling the digital divide of the most vulnerable boys and girls. For example, the organization introduced augmented and virtual reality (AVR) education solutions in Viet Nam’s remote mountainous provinces, where students do not benefit from teachers qualified in STEM subjects. These AVR education solutions are empowering 28,500 children, including 13,750 ethnic minority girls.

In India, UNICEF supported the Jaagriti initiative focused on integrating gender equality into government school curricula and engaging a range of stakeholders, including school management committees, teachers and parents in support of gender equality. In the pilot phase of the initiative, teachers of grades 6–8 in 100 schools were trained to deliver the Jaagriti curriculum. Topics included: understanding gender, productive and reproductive roles, double work burdens, gender-based discrimination and GBV, patriarchy and taking action for change. A qualitative and quantitative impact evaluation found that 65 per cent of girls and 74 per cent of boys reported greater awareness of gender biases, stereotyping, discrimination and inequality, with 76 per cent of parents reporting that boys had started helping with domestic activities at home.

Multimedia platforms are also important tools for addressing gender-discriminatory norms. In Egypt, UNICEF continued to support the Dawwie girls’ empowerment initiative, which engages adolescent girls and boys and their communities to change how they see and talk about girls. Over 1 million people have been reached through Dawwie digital platforms and 46 per cent of participants in the digital literacy programme demonstrated increased understanding of gender equality.

Addressing gender norms linked to violence and harmful practices

Discriminatory gender norms and beliefs are root causes of GBV and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. They safeguard entrenched systems of beliefs and practices that make decisions about adolescent girls’ bodies, sexuality and options; ignore girls’ own voices; restrict their rights and opportunities; and suppress their potential. As outlined in the Strategic Context, during the COVID-19 pandemic global lockdown, GBV increased significantly, with evidence pointing to a rise by as much as 30 per cent in some countries. Many were trapped at home with their abusers during lockdown. In response, UNICEF scaled up its GBV programmes.

Both the UNFPA–UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and the UNFPA–UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation apply gender-transformative approaches. In 2020, to strengthen normative and operational guidance to countries, a technical note on gender norms and their critical association with ending child marriage was developed and disseminated by the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Many interventions are grounded in community-based social and behaviour change communication linked to gender socialization. For example, UNICEF-supported child marriage-related programming used multimedia platforms to communicate, educate on and deliver services; support virtual safe spaces; and engage adolescent girls and their families in over 20 countries in 2020. As a result, nearly 6 million adolescent girls were reached with prevention and care interventions, 300,000 more than in 2019. In Somalia, the flagship Communities Care Programme, which focuses on transforming inequitable gender norms that drive GBV, was scaled up to target child marriage, teenage pregnancies and sexual violence, reaching 600,000 people (488,000 women and girls).
Case Study 7: Ecuador: Raising girls’ voices

UNICEF is committed to raising girls’ voices, and empowering them as rights-holders, leaders, problem-solvers and agents of change in their communities. Interventions emphasize girl-led and girl-centred approaches to foster leadership and civic participation. In 2020, over 7.2 million adolescents (53 per cent girls) across 122 countries participated in and/or led civic engagement interventions in humanitarian and development programme settings, a significant increase from 2019 (4 million).

For example, in Ecuador, UNICEF, Plan International and other partners supported 10 adolescent girls in preparing a Shadow Report which was presented at the 77th session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee in 2020. In Iraq, UNICEF upheld young people, including girls, as agents of change, notably by broadening young people’s voice and association. Re-championing of gender-responsive programming became more crucial in 2020, with increased focus on addressing exclusion challenges faced by adolescent girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, including their social mobility. In working with partners and communities, including adolescent girls, approaches to foster their equitable voice and participation in activities were adapted to local contexts, enabling UNICEF to deliver needed services and opportunities. Nearly 7,000 young people – including around 3,000 girls – demonstrated acquired leadership by identifying and addressing problems in their communities, and collectively engaged in finding local solutions to solve them.

Belen Perugachi, 16 years old, (third from left) is the youngest member of the Rights Protection Council of Cayambe Municipality. At the age of 12, she joined a UNICEF-supported initiative that empowers young people to speak up about important issues with the local authorities. Her ascent to Vice President in 2019 marked the first time a teenager was elected to the post. Belen now advocates for indigenous rights on the global stage. She says, “I tell indigenous girls like me in Latin America to stand up for their rights and feel proud of their traditions. I want people in rural areas to have the same opportunities as people in cities.”
In Kenya, UNICEF’s continued support to end FGM and child marriage reached 98,675 persons (51,311 female; 47,364 male) with targeted trainings, community-led dialogue sessions, a celebration of international events, school clubs and outreach programmes. In Burkina Faso, 87,285 adolescent girls (118 per cent of the annual target) received prevention and care services for child marriage. In addition, 46,255 adolescent boys were trained on positive masculinities and are now contributing to the abandonment of child marriage. The musician Smarty, who was appointed UNICEF National Goodwill Ambassador in Burkina Faso in 2020, travelled across the country with his flagship song ‘Ombre de la Nuit’ to contribute to the ‘Don’t call me Madam’ campaign against child marriage. In all, 335,202 people (182,706 women and girls) supported the abandonment of FGM and child marriage through community discussions; and awareness campaigns reached more than 3 million people via mass media, social networks and a press caravan.

In Papua New Guinea, as part of the Spotlight Initiative, U-Report has been a crucial element of UNICEF’s flagship gender-responsive programme. By the end of 2020, some 6,000 U-Reporters initiated dialogues with young people on issues related to violence, gender and social norms to create a social movement that embraces positive cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs that reject violence against women and girls.

In Timor-Leste, in partnership with the national civil society organization (CSO) Ba Futuru, the Spotlight Initiative expects to reach over 100,000 people through television and social media, and over 2,500 people through face-to-face film screenings and small group discussions in three target municipalities. This work will build on Ba Futuru’s popular edutainment film series, ‘Domin Nakloke’ (Unlocking Love), on healthy relationships, sexual harassment and domestic violence, and will include the production of two new episodes and other printed social and behaviour change communication materials.

Positive gender portrayals in media and advertising

Initiatives to address gender stereotypes in media and advertising have exciting potential to influence gender norms at scale. Media – including social media – and advertisements are powerful drivers for reshaping or reinforcing gender and other intersectional stereotypes including across race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and age. Adolescent girls are often subjected to harmful beauty standards that can affect their body confidence and self-esteem, while adolescent boys can be subject to toxic masculinities. In India, UNICEF continued to partner with the public television broadcaster Doordarshan to develop guidelines that challenge gender stereotypes in content development and programming, with examples of good practice and checklists to translate the guidelines into positive action. This model of private sector self-regulation is intended to institutionalize gender-aware programming and ensure its sustainability.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, to challenge gender stereotypes in marketing and advertisements directed towards young people, UNICEF undertook a research study with representatives of media, marketing, advertising, academia, and young consumers of their products. The study found evidence of a shift towards gender-sensitive advertising in the past five years. UNICEF launched a mapping report and toolkit for engaging business on gender and marketing and continued to engage with industry advocates, including the Unstereotype Alliance and the World Federation of Advertisers. A guide was published in collaboration with UN Women on promoting positive gender roles in marketing and advertising in the context of COVID-19. UNICEF also initiated research projects to build an evidence base and to develop guidelines for action that are continuing in 2021. This includes the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media on the impact of advertising in India on young people.
Case Study 8: UNICEF and the LEGO Group: Aiming to inspire future generations through diverse and inclusive role models

Product advertising for children is often gendered, shaping gender roles and expected behaviour early in children’s lives. To address stereotyping in advertising and products for children, UNICEF embarked on a new partnership with the LEGO Group in 2020. Kathrine Kirk Muff, VP of Social Responsibility for the LEGO Group says “Since 2015, the LEGO Group has been a close partner of UNICEF, working together to implement and advocate for the Child Rights & Business Principles with the goal to support safe, responsible and playful learning opportunities that help equip children with the breadth of skills needed to thrive in the 21st century. We have a shared ambition to build a more equitable world for all children enhancing and protecting children’s rights, and recently we initiated work together to develop and adopt policies that have a positive impact on promoting diversity and inclusion. Play is crucial to how children develop. Through play, children have a safe space to explore the world, let imagination run wild and be exactly who they want to be, unconstrained by barriers or stereotypes, and toys can have a positive impact in showing children the diversity of the world.”

Two workshops held in 2020 with LEGO staff focused on sharing insights on how to define and avoid stereotyping; why diversity and inclusion related to gender, race and ethnicity, disability and families and caregivers matter for child development; and what a common framework for moving towards transformative communications and products entails. LEGO and UNICEF are working together to develop a ‘Best Practice Playbook’ – internal guidelines for LEGO and a case study.
Promoting rights-based, positive, non-discriminatory gender norms remains a programming priority for UNICEF and has the potential to drive transformation of discriminatory norms across all dimensions of women’s and girls’ lives at scale. The organization will continue to accelerate results for women and girls, build the evidence base of ‘what works’ and promote cross-sectoral collaboration. UNICEF’s strategic priorities include family-friendly policies, gender-responsive parenting, transforming gender-discriminatory norms in early childhood and those relating to GBV and harmful practices. It also includes working with the private sector to address harmful stereotypes across gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability, age and other factors affecting children’s mental health and well-being (see Case Study 8). There is growing interest among media and advertising representatives in tackling issues of stereotyping (including toxic masculinities) and bias – also informed by anti-racism activism – to move towards diversity, equity and inclusion. In the context of women’s increased domestic care responsibilities because of the COVID-19 pandemic, advertisers and marketers can play a proactive role in challenging gender norms and discrimination.

Sustainable resources are critical for programming on gender norms that inherently require continuous long-term programmatic work. UNICEF aims to mobilize flexible resources through the Gender Thematic Fund and partnerships to achieve long-term transformation in discriminatory gender norms and practices. Thematic funding for gender equality has been invaluable for our work on promoting positive gender norms and socialization, and for providing resources in programme areas for which funding is typically more difficult to mobilize. We are grateful to our Gender Thematic Fund donors, in particular Canada and Luxembourg, for enabling this work.
Results: Children with Disabilities – “Supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential”

Olive Utayisenga, 24 years old, with her twin daughters, Celine and Fiona, in Rwanda. At 17 years old, Olive gave birth to twins with albinism. Her daughters face discrimination from community members and Olive has noticed this affects their confidence. She believes this is clear evidence of the work that needs to be done.

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Globally, at least 1 child in 10 has a disability and 80 per cent live in developing countries. Children with disabilities are one of the most excluded and marginalized groups and often face multiple challenges in realizing their human rights. Almost 50 per cent of children with disabilities are out of school and in some countries up to 60 per cent of institutionalized children have disabilities. They are often invisible in policy planning, national information systems and service delivery. Moreover, children with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with risks they face further intensified due to increased exposure, serious complications and socioeconomic impacts. COVID-19 exacerbated barriers faced by children with disabilities to access basic services and life-saving information, including barriers in accessing handwashing facilities (due to inaccessibility of facilities and/or physical impairments) and in accessing information about COVID-19 and prevention measures.

Guided by the SDGs and aligned to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), UNICEF is mandated to safeguard the rights of all children. UNICEF’s child rights mandate, reinforced by the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (UNDIS), provides the framework to make disability an integral component of our policies, programmes and operations – both in development and humanitarian action.

The Strategic Plan provides a clear framework to scale up disability-inclusive programming at country level, and this cuts across all goal areas. A specific result in Goal Area 5 states: “Girls and boys with disabilities are reached by accessible and inclusive programmes and services to participate in society.”

This is the way we need to reimagine the world – don’t do anything for us without us!

A lot of people think the biggest hurdle we face is the lack of accessibility. It’s actually not. Removing the physical barriers is indeed crucial, but far more critical are the attitudinal and behavioural patterns of the able-bodied. If those change, the rest will follow as a domino effect. … We have a strong voice and a strong will. So, don’t “give” us a voice, we already have such, but just make the effort to listen to that voice – even if we are telling you inconvenient truths. We are the best experts in our own experiences. And if you are willing to give us a chance to tell our stories (yes, the chance is missing!), you would know what the best ways are – in a post-COVID world – to make classrooms more inclusive, to provide specialized education on topics that are otherwise taboo (e.g. sexual education for adolescents with disabilities), to make urban and rural environments more accessible, to make policies more respectful, to make workplaces more flexible, to make media more ethical, to make families more confident and to make young people with disabilities more independent.


Maria Alexandrova, 19, living with cerebral palsy, is an advocate for other adolescents with disabilities in Bulgaria.
Results achieved and challenges in 2020 towards supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential

This chapter reports on results related to disability-inclusive programmes and interventions in areas such as health, education, WASH, child protection and social policy. Additional information can also be found in the UNICEF Global Annual Results 2020 Reports for other goal areas. UNICEF global expenses on disability inclusion can be measured across the whole Strategic Plan. Inclusion of children with disabilities in programmes and services is reflected in the expenses of targeted activities captured under Goal Area 5 and across all goal areas. Global expenses on the inclusion of children with disabilities in UNICEF 2020 programmes and services was US$239 million.

In 2020, UNICEF disability-inclusive development and humanitarian programmes reached 2.2 million children with disabilities across 144 countries, up from 1.7 million across 142 countries in 2019. Informed by the CRPD and guided by a twin-track approach, disability is mainstreamed across all programmes and services to ensure the right to inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society is on an equal basis. The twin-track approach also recognizes that disability-specific interventions are needed to address and eliminate barriers – for example, by providing assistive devices such as eyeglasses, hearing aids and wheelchairs to support the inclusion and participation of children with disabilities.

A total of 44 per cent of UNICEF humanitarian responses (28 of 64 countries) systematically provided disability-inclusive programmes and services in 2020. This reflects increased access to humanitarian programmes and services for children with disabilities using a wide range of actions, such as improved physical accessibility of premises and facilities, accessibility of communications, strengthened processes for the identification of children with disabilities and supporting participation of persons with disabilities in humanitarian response. (See UNICEF Humanitarian Action Annual Results Report 2020.)

Globally, over 152,000 children with disabilities were provided with assistive devices and products and emergency kits in humanitarian situations. At country level in Senegal, for example, 360 children with visual and hearing impairments were provided with accessible digital learning materials and assistive devices.

Children with disabilities are one of the most invisible populations. The biggest barrier to their inclusion and participation is stigma and discrimination that is present in all levels in every country of the world, and which keeps children hidden at home, many times subject to neglect, exploitation and violence. The lack of accessibility to the built environment and transportation, to communication and information, and to assistive technology (AT), keeps children with disabilities from accessing community services such as health, education and social services, as well as participating in daily life activities such as going to church or playing in the park with other children. All these factors are multiplied in crisis and humanitarian situations. As a consequence, lack of data – both in population and administrative levels – is both a cause of their invisibility and a consequence of the barriers that impede their full participation in society (see Case Study 9). The lack of research on the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities also contributes to the invisibility of this population worldwide.

These barriers, combined with poverty – which is often the case for families with children with disabilities – result in regular community services not being designed or implemented to include them. These factors increase exclusion and place children with disabilities at the margins of society. To identify and bring in children with disabilities to participate, be welcomed, and equally served in their communities, effective outreach strategies conducted in consultation with children with disabilities and their families are required.

The real impact of exclusion and invisibility in the lives and survival of children with disabilities was highlighted by the pandemic in 2020. For instance, violence, exploitation and abuse were exacerbated as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns, cutting children off from key support services, including services that assured their mental health and well-being. The very serious impact of lack of accessibility to WASH and service facilities in general, as well as inaccessible information and communication among others, was made clear, as these became life-saving resources for the whole population. For example, over 80 per cent of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia reported disruptions in access to disability-related health services such as rehabilitation and AT services.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities and those belonging to other marginalized groups. Furthermore, the pandemic had an unprecedented impact on education systems worldwide in 2020 and children with disabilities were among those most at risk of falling behind because of school closures. They were less likely to benefit from distance learning solutions as many lacked support, internet access, accessible software and learning materials. In at least half of countries responding to the UNICEF Socioeconomic Impact Survey of COVID-19 Response (September 2020), governments failed to adopt measures aimed at facilitating learning for children with disabilities (e.g., provision of instruction and devices/materials accessible to children with disabilities, such as sign language for television/online learning). However, even though the pandemic caused significant challenges for children with disabilities and their families,
it also presented a unique opportunity to address long-standing systemic inequalities in education, such as the enhancement of accessible digital learning materials, among others. (See UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 2 for more information.)

Strengthening data for children with disabilities

The lack of reliable disaggregated data leads to low visibility and marginalization of persons with disabilities in general and children in particular. As highlighted in the SDGs, disaggregated data collection is critical to inform inclusive policy and programme planning and service delivery to ensure that no child is left behind.

UNICEF continues to strengthen its collection of disability data, tools and methods through the Child Functioning Module (CFM) launched in 2016 with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics. The CFM provides a standard way to identify, at the population level, the proportion of children aged 2–17 years with functional difficulties in different domains, including hearing, vision, communication, comprehension, learning, mobility and emotions (see Figure 25).

Leonardo Moreira Conceicao, whose mother is hearing impaired, wears a protective mask to protect against the spread of COVID-19 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. The masks were designed so that lips can be read and make communication possible among hearing-impaired people even while wearing masks.

FIGURE 25: Breaking the cycle of invisibility related to persons with disabilities

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Source: UNICEF (2020)
Surpassing the 2021 target, 37 survey reports have been released since 2018 with data on children collected through the CFM (see Figure 26). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) reports produce data on child well-being that are disaggregated by disability, helping to make children with disabilities more visible, including to policymakers. In Turkmenistan, the release of MICS data in 2020 was used to update the United Nations Common Country Analysis, and to prepare the analysis by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on leaving no one behind – Inequality of Opportunity: Who are those left behind? – providing evidence for programme planning and COVID-19 response. The data on people with disabilities also contributed to the Situation Analysis on Children and Women and laid the foundation for the collection of additional data through a designated survey under the socioeconomic response plan.

FIGURE 26: Number of countries implementing UNICEF–Washington Group data module on child functioning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Milestone 2020</th>
<th>Target 2021</th>
<th>Result 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOAL AREA 5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF (2020)

FIGURE 27: Number of children with disabilities provided with assistive devices and products through UNICEF-supported programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Milestone 2020</th>
<th>Target 2021</th>
<th>Result 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOAL AREA 5</td>
<td>86,500</td>
<td>95,200</td>
<td>152,725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNICEF (2020)

UNICEF also provided technical assistance to countries for the collection of survey data on disability. The Kyrgyzstan Ministry of Education and Science was supported to establish a functional Education Management Information System (EMIS) launched for data entry by all educational organizations in March 2020. Data entry for 2019–2020 and 2020–2021 academic years was completed by all schools, with UNICEF assisting school managers and EMIS focal points to validate existing and complete missing data. The new EMIS tracks all children’s inclusion and participation in quality education, including children with disabilities, and is linked to other health and social development sector databases to monitor, refer and seek cross-sectoral solutions to the barriers some children face, including children with disabilities.

UNICEF published resources, including Producing Disability-inclusive Data: Why it matters and what it takes on how to implement best practices to generate better quality and more inclusive data on children with disabilities. The report Children with Disabilities: Ensuring their inclusion in COVID-19 response strategies and evidence generation describes the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on children with disabilities and the increased risks they face related to access to WASH services, prevalence of infectious respiratory infections symptoms, and access to learning opportunities within the household.

Providing AT and services to enable inclusion

The availability of AT and related services is a crucial element in the process of inclusion of children with disabilities in education, family, social and civic participation activities, yet only 5–15 per cent of those who need AT can access it. AT includes software such as screen readers and communication keyboards as well as a variety of devices, ranging from wheelchairs and hearing aids, to eyeglasses, white canes and prosthetics. In connection to AT products, there must also be referral, assessment, prescription, purchasing, fitting, training, maintenance, repair and replacement services (see Case Study 10). UNICEF works with partners on making improvements to public policies and procurement strategies worldwide for scaled-up access to AT.

In 2020, UNICEF offered governments assistance with AT-related procurement by creating a ‘priority product list for persons with disabilities during COVID-19’. It also increased the provision of AT and accessible products, reaching over 152,000 children, exceeding both the 2019 total of 138,000 and the 2021 target of 95,200 (see Figure 27). This includes 77,734 children with disabilities provided with AT such as hearing aids, white canes, wheelchairs and braille equipment, as well as 74,991 children reached with emergency kits.

UNICEF is also working with suppliers to improve generic products with the adoption of Universal Design principles so that more products are accessible to all children with and without disabilities. Examples of products based on Universal


design principles include adaptive clothing, accessible furniture, and barrier-free environments.

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UNICEF is also working with suppliers to improve generic products with the adoption of Universal Design principles so that more products are accessible to all children with and without disabilities. Examples of products based on Universal
Design include a clock with braille numbers in addition to conventional ink numbering, making the same product usable by both children who are blind and those who can see. Another example is accessible and inclusive playgrounds placed in public spaces so all children can play together.

UNICEF continued to partner with the Governments of Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as WHO, International Disability Alliance and other partners through ATscale. This includes collaboration on the AT2030 initiative funded by the United Kingdom, as well as with other key actors on projects which target AT improvements that are both systemic and sustainable.

In Serbia, UNICEF supported an online platform, KonekTas, to enable continued service delivery to the most at-risk children, as well as the national child helpline (NADEL) with functionality such as chat messaging and chatbots to provide alternative ways for reporting abuse. In Kosovo, UNICEF’s ‘visa4children’ campaign, led by child rights advocate Rijad Mehmeti – a 14-year-old adolescent with cerebral palsy – included an exhibit of 120 wheelchairs and backpacks installed in a central Pristina square in May 2020. It triggered an impressive response from donors, private and public institutions, and resulted in increased investments for children with disabilities in the country.

Inclusive humanitarian action

Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized in any crisis-affected community and children with disabilities face particular risks and human rights violations. UNICEF works to ensure children and adolescents with disabilities have equal access to services and humanitarian assistance. As reflected in the updated Core Commitments to Children released in 2020, UNICEF is committed to promoting the rights of children with disabilities impacted by humanitarian emergencies by strengthening their inclusion and participation across all areas of programming (see Figure 28).

During 2020, UNICEF continued to advance disability-inclusive humanitarian action. The organization leads the disability work stream of the United Kingdom FCDO–United Nations Humanitarian Single Business Case, working with other United Nations agencies, the International Disability Alliance, and Humanity and Inclusion to strengthen disability inclusion in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans. Since the establishment of the initiative in 2017, there has been a marked improvement in disability inclusion in these plans. UNICEF also co-led the establishment of and co-chairs (together with the International Disability Alliance and CBM-Global) the Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.
brining together organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), United Nations entities and NGOs to promote disability-inclusive humanitarian action, including through the roll-out of the 2019 Inter-agency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

In emergency contexts, 44 per cent of UNICEF country offices systematically included children with disabilities in their response efforts (see Figure 29). In Mozambique, the organization provided technical support to the national and Sofala disability working group for participation in emergency response, and over 1,000 persons with disabilities in Sofala and Manica were provided with basic community-based rehabilitation services, assistive devices, legal assistance, remote psychosocial support and hygiene kits. In the Syrian Arab Republic, 1,274 children with disabilities from internally displaced and host communities in Aleppo and Idlib Governorate were provided with education services through nine implementing partners. A total of 14,150 children with disabilities were supported through formal and non-formal activities.

In Rwanda, UNICEF adapted multimedia communication materials on Ebola virus disease and COVID-19 to the needs of persons with different types of disabilities, reaching 8,700 persons directly and 60,000 persons through scaled-up interventions by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities.

UNICEF Eritrea supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to provide mental health and psychosocial support to families and children, including 850 children with disabilities through community-based rehabilitation volunteers and social workers. (See UNICEF Annual Humanitarian Action Results Report 2020 for more information.)

Identifying and supporting young children with developmental delays and disabilities

Early childhood is critical for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. Optimal brain development requires a stimulating and nurturing environment, adequate nutrients and social interaction with attentive caregivers. The 2030 Agenda, including its child-related targets and indicators, is rooted in international human rights treaties, including both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the CRPD, and stresses that all children with disabilities have the right to develop “to the maximum extent possible”.

UNICEF advocates for CRPD-compliant inclusive ECD policies and programmes for children with disabilities. This takes a twin-track approach, strengthening mainstream and targeted interventions such as making existing community ECD services inclusive of children with disabilities, as well as ensuring that they have access to early screening, identification and early intervention, and that caregiver and workforce capacity are developed (see Case Study 9).

In Namibia, UNICEF continued to partner with InterTeam and EU to support the Government’s ‘RightStart’, a national ECD awareness-raising campaign. The campaign – which communicates key messages about age-appropriate play, child feeding, hygiene, early learning and early identification and access to services for children with disabilities – reached an estimated 1.6 million viewers (over 70 per cent of Namibia’s population). In addition, 632 parents of children with disabilities were reached through targeted information and support services. UNICEF also partnered with Side-by-Side Early Intervention Centre and strengthened the capacities of 707 disability service providers and parents for the early identification of disabilities, assessment and referral to services. The trainings equipped parents with skills to handle stigma and discrimination, prevent and identify abuse and violence towards children with disabilities, and COVID-19 prevention. (See UNICEF Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 1 for more information.)
Case Study 9: UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office: Giving every child a voice

UNICEF supports innovation and research to improve educational outcomes for children with disabilities. In 2020, a pilot programme, ‘Giving Every Child a Voice’, was tested to determine its effectiveness in improving communication skills for children with developmental delays. The programme was developed by UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office and the Office of Innovation, in partnership with CIREHA and Global Symbols. It was piloted in Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Under this programme, children use symbols to express simple requests as well as far more complex concepts. Open symbol sets were created to support local languages. An app called Cboard can be used to turn tablets into augmentative communication devices. The online training package can be customized to any language.

Over the six-month implementation, 99 per cent of children showed progress (evaluated by parents and professionals), particularly in competency, self-esteem and adaptability, and in overcoming communication difficulties. Parents spoke of their children’s new-found ability to make requests; they also showed higher levels of confidence in vocalizing, an expanded vocabulary, improvements in speech development and lower levels of frustration.

These results suggest that the Cboard app is a cost-effective model of intervention. It is easy to use and the symbol sets can be shared with multiple countries and communities, allowing scalability even for languages spoken by a small number of people. Interventions with younger children produced the best results, but interventions with older children were also effective. The involvement of parents and teachers was crucial to its success. A mother in Croatia said: “Our son accepted it [the Cboard] better than we thought. Now he has a way to ask us and communicate. Before when he wanted something, he would grab our hands and point to the item he wanted. A few days after he started using Cboard, he would say “Mama daj” (Mom, give me). And press on the image of sandwich on the tablet.”

Speech therapist Natasa Sreckovic Milenkovic visits Srna Staic, 4 years old, and assists her to master verbal communication with the help of Cboard. After a few months Srna moved from a phase of non-verbal communication to speaking and using new words and simple sentences.
Furthering inclusive education

UNICEF spent about US$14 million directly on inclusive education for children with disabilities in 2020, with US$10 million (71 per cent) spent on systems-strengthening activities such as ensuring that countries have disability-responsive EMIS and laws and policies that establish the right of all children to receive quality education. In addition, the organization spent almost US$75 million on activities that indirectly or partially addressed support for the education of children with disabilities.

Disability-inclusive education enables all children and adolescents with disabilities to enjoy their right to education on an equal basis with their peers. UNICEF works with partners to promote accessible and inclusive learning spaces and materials. More importantly, it works with teachers and school administrations to promote inclusive attitudes and a mindset of support for all children. It does this through teacher training and online capacity-building, collecting data for evidence building and monitoring of progress.

UNICEF worked in 115 countries to strengthen laws, policies and plans to support inclusive education. For example, in Lesotho, following advocacy from the Lesotho National Federation of Organizations of the Disabled, the Disability Equity Bill was passed in Parliament in November 2020, paving the way for implementation of the inclusive education policy to begin in 2021. In Malaysia, implementation of the ‘Zero Reject’ policy has led to over 20,000 children with disabilities enrolling in school.

In Nepal, despite school closures, UNICEF provided critical support to 16 municipalities with inclusive education activities focusing on disability inclusion and mother tongue education. During 2020, the organization also worked closely with partners to ensure that plans and activity designs for inclusive education were also compatible with social distancing. The individual needs of children with learning disabilities were more easily recognized in the smaller learning circles by newly trained teachers who might not have otherwise recognized the children’s needs in large classrooms.

In Papua New Guinea, UNICEF helps the Government ensure that its efforts to expand the early childhood education (ECE) provision are done from an inclusive perspective. UNICEF Australia, in partnership with local civil society organizations and provincial divisions of education supported the creation of 51 new ECE centres, enabling 128 children with disabilities to be mainstreamed into a total student population of 3,781 children. The same inclusive approach has been applied to the 260 ECE centres established since 2018. Through these interventions, the ECE participation rate of children with disabilities in UNICEF-targeted schools increased to 2.4 per cent in 2020 from 1.8 per cent in 2018.

Protecting the rights of children with disabilities from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

Every child has the right to live free from violence, exploitation and abuse, and child protection systems must be in place to help children access vital social and protection services, including accessible justice systems. UNICEF works with governments to support national protection systems to adopt policies and programmes informed by child rights approach and by reliable data and evidence, including on children with disabilities.

Children with disabilities who have experienced violence in 2020 were reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services supported through UNICEF programmes, with 24,227 boys and girls with disabilities across 55 countries supported, compared to 16,030 across 42 countries in 2019.

Approximately 52,000 girls and boys were reached with psychosocial support across 57 countries – a significant increase compared with 29,000 in 27 countries in 2019. For example, in Morocco, 9,400 children, parents and primary caregivers – including 1,096 children with disabilities – were reached through community-based mental health and psychosocial support.

UNICEF Zimbabwe supported the National Case Management System for Child Protection and Enhanced Realization for Children with Disabilities expansion to 25 districts, ensuring that 66,000 girls and boys who experienced violence received services, including 8,000 children with disabilities.

In Montenegro, the Association of Youth with Disabilities, supported by UNICEF, provided psychological and legal support to 250 families with children with disabilities – assisting 817 family members (139 children).

In Honduras, UNICEF, in collaboration with Special Olympics Honduras, organized 28 virtual workshops focused on strengthening the capacities of caregivers of children with disabilities, benefiting 321 families and 402 children with disabilities. (See UNICEF Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 3 for more information.)
Improving access to water and sanitation for children and adults with disabilities

Access to clean drinking-water and sanitation is a human right. For persons with disabilities, lack of access to quality WASH services impacts their survival, access to health care, education and work opportunities. Approximately 820,000 persons with disabilities were reached with safe water and 350,000 with basic sanitation in 2020. For example, in Burkina Faso, UNICEF reached 477,142 people with emergency WASH services in five priority regions (Centre-Nord, North, Sahel, Est and Boucle du Mouhoun), where approximately 2,121 people with disabilities benefited from hygiene kits and 1,220 from latrine construction.

In Uganda, UNICEF supported improvements to WASH infrastructure in 65 schools across the country, including construction of a five-stance disability-friendly exclusive toilet block for girls with a menstrual hygiene management system (incinerator and changing room with shower) and a mass handwashing system supported by a solar-powered uninterrupted water supply system.

The right to clean, accessible and equitable water and sanitation has become even more critical in the context of COVID-19. UNICEF released a Fact Sheet on Handwashing Stations and Supplies for the COVID-19 response in May 2020, including disability accessibility and highlighting requirements for accessible and acceptable construction. In partnership with the Red Cross of Serbia, as part of the COVID-19 emergency response, 53,271 Roma were reached with family hygiene kits, including 1,185 children with disabilities. (See UNICEF Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 4 for more information.)

Strengthening social protection mechanisms for children with disabilities

For children with disabilities, the risk of poverty is higher due to lack of educational opportunities and increased cost of living with a disability, among other factors. As also described in the Social Protection section of this report, UNICEF is dedicated to a rights-based approach to social protection, with highest priority to reaching the most vulnerable, including girls, children with disabilities, refugee and migrant children and their families, among others, through inclusive social protection interventions.

A total of 826,356 children with disabilities were reached with UNICEF-supported cash transfer programmes across 31 countries in 2020, reflecting an increase from 699,939 children reached in 2019 across 21 countries.

UNICEF’s Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) released a Regional Issue Brief on Inclusive Social Protection Systems for Children with Disabilities in Europe and Central Asia, with a mapping of different social protection programmes available for children with disabilities in the Europe and Central Asia region. As part of the immediate COVID-19 response in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF – through partnerships with local centres for social welfare and CSOs – assisted 100 affected families with children with disabilities through several direct support services in three municipalities.

Jointly with other development partners, UNICEF country office in the United Republic of Tanzania supported the Government to launch the second phase of the Productive Social Safety Net, which provides three types of cash transfers in Mainland and Zanzibar, including “a vulnerable group transfer for households with children aged (0–18) and households with persons with disabilities”. The introduction of cash transfers for children and adults with disabilities marks a progressive step towards leaving no one behind (see Case Study 10). In 2020, the disability allowance programmes coverage in Cambodia increased to reach over 16,000 additional people with disabilities compared to 11,000 in 2019.

Reducing stigma and invisibility through advocacy and communication

Stigma and discrimination are key barriers to inclusion of girls and boys with disabilities. UNICEF works to transform attitudes and social norms around disability to support the full inclusion of children with disabilities in society.

The COVID-19 crisis shifted many priorities and created an urgent need for inclusive Risk-Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE). UNICEF strived to ensure that RCCE approaches were inclusive of persons with disabilities in community-led responses, collecting data disaggregated by disability and reinforcing local capacity and solutions. The organization issued a guidance note on Risk Communication & Community Engagement for COVID-19 – Engaging with Children and Adults with Disabilities in March 2020.

At country level, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Mozambique engaged with local OPDs to ensure key behaviour-focused messages on COVID-19 prevention were responsive to and accessible for persons with disabilities.

UNICEF Mongolia – in partnership with the Mongolian Association of Sign Language interpreters – produced animations with prevention messages for children in sign language, reaching over 18,000 persons with hearing impairment. UNICEF continues to work on the abandonment of harmful social norms towards persons with disabilities and to promote inclusion. In Belarus, the baseline survey for the multi-year national campaign,
Case Study 10: Myanmar: Rights to social inclusion and social protection for children/persons with disabilities

According to the Intercensal Survey data (2019), the prevalence of disability in Myanmar is 12.8 per cent; however, due to lack of disaggregated data, little is known about children with disabilities, particularly those under age 5 years. Since 2018/2019, UNICEF has been supporting the Government of Myanmar, especially the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MoSWRR), to initiate registration/certification of persons/children with disabilities in three pilot areas (Kayin State and Yangon and Bago Regions), with active participation of OPDs. The programme aims at generating lessons learned on operationalizing an integrated model of basic social services at community level (social welfare, rehabilitation, health, education, etc.) to support gradual roll-out with government budget. Such a mechanism is critical for enabling effective and equitable access to social protection, and to provide important data for policy planning.

Once the disability certification process is finalized, the MoSWRR will use it to provide social cash transfers as part of the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategic Plan (2014).

A lengthy consultation process starting in 2018 allowed the development of assessment tools in line with the CRPD committee recommendations and the country's legal framework.

A three-tier screening registration model was established to facilitate greater access. It does not imply a difference in benefit rights, but is rather a mechanism to filter cases from those that are more complicated and require a medical opinion. This functional approach to disability assessment is imperative in Myanmar, where there are limited medical resources. The screening tiers are:

- Tier 1 screening – Obvious disability registered at community level without medical assessment
- Tier 2 screening – Disability that is not obvious, but can be assessed, done at the township hospital level
- Tier 3 screening – Referral to a specialist for verification

Pilot implementation of the programme in 2020/2021 resulted in approximately 60,247 children with disabilities and 123,434 persons with disabilities registered. In response to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), in May 2020, implementation was adjusted from in-person to remote assessment by applying an online/offline user-interface application.

This programme makes a direct contribution to facilitate access of Myanmar’s vulnerable children to social protection, essential assistive devices, health care, inclusive education and disability-related services through disability-targeted and inclusive service provision. UNICEF will continue its investment in registration and certification by supporting direct implementation of the model with OPDs, CSOs and community social workers.

Disability registration carried out by a trainee during the Disability Registration Supervisor Training in Ta Yoke Hla village, Hpa Ann township, Kayin State.
‘Just Kids’, revealed that 64 per cent of respondents had negative emotions when thinking about children with disabilities, such as pity, grief, sympathy, and feelings of inferiority or regret. With the onset of COVID-19, communication channels were modified to intensified use of social media, video and radio outreach. Messages were created to raise awareness about the isolation that children with disabilities and families face daily, linking these feelings to those felt by many people during the COVID-19 crisis. A 2020 survey revealed a 9 per cent reduction in the public’s lack of knowledge about children with disabilities and a 4 per cent increase in the number of respondents who saw children with disabilities as children first.

In 2020, thirteen country offices implemented programmes funded by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, working with other United Nations agencies to fulfil the rights of children and adults with disabilities. New funding included a global collaboration grant to support countries to design and implement disability-inclusive response and recovery plans for COVID-19, and support to UNICEF South Africa in partnership with UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen disability inclusion.

UNICEF is working to improve its disability inclusion at policy, programming, practices and human resources levels and is committed to mainstreaming UNDIS, including across communications and internal processes. For example, inclusive programmes for children with disabilities were an integral part of all 16 of the Country Programme Documents approved by the UNICEF Executive Board in 2020.

As part of UNICEF’s commitment to make employees with disabilities a priority, a Disability-Inclusive Human Resources Management guidance was released in August 2020 to ensure that UNICEF becomes an accessible and inclusive organization for employees with disabilities, free of stigma and discrimination, and with provision of reasonable accommodations. To support this process, UNICEF’s Reasonable Accommodation Fund was increased from US$50,000 to US$300,000 in January 2020 on an annual replenishment basis.

During 2020, the organization took the opportunity of most staff working from home to accelerate construction of accessibility improvements. Projects were completed in 11 UNICEF offices through the Greening and Accessibility Fund. These included installation of ramps and door widening (Kyrgyzstan) and accessible bathroom construction (Headquarters New York, India, North Macedonia and Sierra Leone). Now 49 per cent of UNICEF’s country, regional and Headquarters offices have achieved at least level one of accessibility requirements.

UNICEF and Norway are embarking on an innovative Partnership Framework on Disability Inclusion to support children with disabilities. The framework takes a cross-sectoral approach to accelerate disability-inclusive programming. At the end of 2020, Norway committed NOK 169.4 million (approximately US$19 million) to be implemented through global and local activities. The Partnership Framework offers an innovative structure of flexible funds for 2021 that will allow strong organizational capacity in preparation for the new Strategic Plan. UNICEF will strengthen its capacity in critical areas involving Headquarters Divisions, the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and eight Eastern and Southern Africa country offices across the development–humanitarian peace nexus.

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Strategic Partnership for Disability-inclusive Programming

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UN Collaboration Highlight

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Looking ahead

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest systems gaps were exposed, yet the crisis also provided the opportunity to reimagine systems for all people. This will be critical to ‘building back better’ and paving the way for transformative, safer, accessible and inclusive societies for all children.

Prioritization of disability-inclusive development is needed to build capacity across sectors at national level. In 2021, UNICEF will continue to work with governments and other partners to advocate and scale up disability-inclusive enabling environments that generate services to support full and sustainable inclusion and participation. The organization will also invest in strengthening the capacity of front-line workers and developing a set of learning materials to build awareness and understanding of disability-inclusive programmes in both development and humanitarian action. A strong component of this package will be the community engagement and social and behavioural change to address stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities.

To inform inclusive programmes and services, UNICEF will continue to develop knowledge, collecting and disseminating reliable disaggregated data on children with disabilities, including administrative data across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. The organization is investing in a global research agenda on children with disabilities and calls for the fulfilment of child rights and disability rights, and on academic communities to join efforts in finding solutions to full inclusion and participation of children with disabilities and their families.

UNICEF will invest in the development of a global resource pack on effective community engagement and social behaviour change approaches to address ableism, stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities. The organization will combine its capacity in programmes and procurement to promote accessibility, availability and affordability of AT and inclusive products, including digital technology and innovations.

Based on the assessment of needs, UNICEF Supply Division will work towards ensuring products and associated services are available and accessible so that programmes, governments and other partners can procure the supplies needed to support programme goals. Achieving results in AT will enable important contributions to strategic priorities around children and families with disabilities across all programmatic pillars, and towards providing integrated support for girls, boys and caregivers with disabilities.

Aseel, 8, reads with friends in Za’atari refugee camp in Jordan. Aseel was partially paralyzed after undergoing surgery at eight months old. UNICEF provided her with this customized wheelchair, making it easier for her to move independently and focus in school. Aseek says, “Now I am able to pay more attention to the teacher. My back does not hurt any more and I am starting to get better at school.”
Results: Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement – “Supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future”

Adolescents in Peru as part of their campaign, ‘Stand up and raise your hand for adolescents girls and boys, #REIMAGINE a better Peru’.

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The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on adolescents aged 10 to 19 years further exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and inequalities in 2020. The past year has seen an increase in adolescents who are hungry, isolated and facing violence, as well as those who face deep economic hardship.

Climate change, deepening inequality, geophysical disasters, long-standing conflicts, growing youth unemployment, highly polarized political discourse, and other twenty-first century challenges present significant obstacles to the fulfillment of adolescents’ rights. International agreements related to children and youth emphasize the importance of participation and civic engagement. Yet despite these calls to action, young people still face unequal opportunities when it comes to participation and civic engagement. Young people’s capacities are often underestimated.

Furthermore, discriminatory social and gender norms undermine the roles and contributions of young people and there are insufficient government investments in equitable and sustainable structures and processes for adolescent participation.

In total, 188 countries imposed country-wide school closures during the pandemic, affecting more than 1.6 billion children and youth; at least 463 million – or 31 per cent – of schoolchildren worldwide cannot be reached by digital and broadcast remote learning. As described in the Strategic Context of this report, the pandemic and related lockdowns are also affecting young people’s mental health. Finally, social and economic disruptions linked to the pandemic increase the likelihood of child marriage, and of early and unwanted adolescent pregnancy. The world’s 1.2 billion adolescents are deeply affected by these challenges.

Adolescent participation and civic engagement also enhance individual development and transferable life skills. Adolescence is a critical period of identity formation, growth, learning and physical and neurobiological development. Opportunities to participate increase young people’s self-esteem and their communication, negotiation and problem-solving skills, and lead to better relationships, which enhance resilience and well-being. Research also shows that young people’s civic engagement is associated with higher educational outcomes, improved mental health, and income levels in adulthood.

Adolescent participation and civic engagement are also crucial investments in long-term positive social outcomes. Young people use their enhanced confidence and skills to strengthen civil society and increase accountability of governments and corporations – resulting in more relevant and effective policies on education, health, protection, justice and care, and enhancing social cohesion and peacebuilding.

To achieve the 2030 Agenda, adolescents must be able to live peaceful and healthy lives, think critically, engage civically, create and pursue economic opportunities, use digital tools and new technologies safely, and seek, receive and impart information and ideas in ways that translate into positive individual and societal development. They must be able to exercise their rights and be able to actively examine, question and change discriminatory attitudes, norms, laws and policies that disempower certain groups.

There are signs of progress. A growing number of structures for young people’s participation and representation enhance opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among young people and duty-bearers. There is also an expansion of informal, creative online and offline platforms and initiatives by young people for civic engagement and activism. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated innovative and youth-driven solutions, especially in the digital space and via youth volunteer initiatives.

Adolescents are a crucial resource towards a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world. Throughout history, civically engaged young people have been a powerful force for change. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 enshrines the right of every child to express their views freely in matters affecting them and for these views to be taken seriously.
Results achieved and challenges towards supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future

UNICEF promotes adolescent participation and civic engagement as a goal, as a principle of rights-based programming, and to achieve specific sectoral results. This is well-reflected in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which recognizes and advances the realization of adolescents’ rights across every goal area.

The total global investment in adolescent participation and engagement, appropriate policy development, and routine engagement of adolescents in UNICEF programme planning and the programme cycle was over US$43 million in 2020. Key investments included nearly US$37 million spent on adolescent participation in civic

FIGURE 30: Number of adolescents participating through UNICEF supported programmes

Number of adolescents who participated in or led civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF supported programmes in development and humanitarian contexts.

![Diagram showing number of adolescents participating in 2019 and 2020.](image)

2020

Of these adolescents, number who participated in or led climate and environmental action civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF-supported programmes.

Source: UNICEF (2020)
engagement initiatives, and US$22 million in humanitarian contexts – resulting in over 7.2 million adolescents (53 per cent girls) across 121 countries participating in and/or leading civic engagement interventions in humanitarian and development settings, exceeding the 2021 target of 5.2 million (see Figure 30). Investment in multisectoral policies supporting the development and participation of adolescents was US$5.5 million in 2020, and US$870,000 was spent on adolescent engagement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNICEF programmes.

Amplifying climate change-related skills and advocacy was a key area of UNICEF’s work, with 760,000 adolescents engaging in climate change solutions (see Case Study 11). Additionally, 39 countries supported the development of 66 adolescent-friendly policies, surpassing the 2020 milestone of 37 countries.

While COVID-19-related measures constrained in-person engagement, online platforms for adolescents increased and provided new opportunities. Adolescents participated in programme planning, monitoring and evaluation in many ways at global, regional and country levels. Fifty-nine per cent of 128 UNICEF country offices consulted with adolescents in programme planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. While only 16 per cent of country offices met the targeted minimum of 50 per cent of adolescent girls and those from marginalized backgrounds, the unmet 2020 target of 40 per cent can be partly attributed to COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

Engaging adolescents ranged from efforts in Mozambique to develop a child-friendly version of the upcoming Country Programme Document; to work in Brazil, where UNICEF fostered the creation of a National Youth and Adolescent Consultative Council to support policy development to strengthen youth participation. The Council comprises 24 representatives from traditionally excluded groups, including afro-descendants, adolescents with disabilities, LGBTQ+ youth, migrants and youth from impoverished urban centres.

The following sections provide examples of UNICEF work in adolescent participation and civic engagement, through promoting investments in four strategic areas:

1. Influencing legislation and policies
2. Building skills and capacities of both adolescents and adults
3. Addressing social norms that hinder participation
4. Creating and institutionalizing sustainable mechanisms and opportunities
Influencing legislation, policies and budgets

Influencing legislation, policy formulation and budget allocations that are responsive to children’s and adolescents’ rights and supporting youth participation and civic engagement is key to our work. UNICEF also facilitates the intentional and meaningful engagement of adolescents and builds partner capacity to institutionalize and lead these processes (see Case Study 11).

In Azerbaijan, UNICEF continued scaling up the Youth Advisory Councils model to five additional districts as part of the National Strategy 2020, which aims to create nationwide Youth Advisory Councils within District Executive Committee structures. Over 3,400 adolescents took part in district consultations to identify young people’s concerns. Their top concerns were youth unemployment and environmental challenges, including those posed by the pandemic, such as the lack of hygiene supplies and low awareness of COVID-19-related risks. As a result, council members and youth codesigned solutions that will be introduced this year as COVID-19 restrictions loosen.

In Peru, UNICEF and national/subnational government sectors supported the creation of the National Network for Adolescent Participation, which brought together over 50 adolescent organizations to work collaboratively and present authorities with a declaration on their vision for young people. A technical group made up of 14 CSOs and led by the Ministry of Education was also formed to support adolescent participation.

Throughout the Pacific Islands, young people actively participated in government processes. In Solomon Islands, 838 adolescents (431 females) participated in consultations for the first National Children's Policy. In Fiji, a series of national consultations engaged young people in the development of the National Youth Policy. In Tonga, a key recommendation from Ministers of Parliament was to establish and finance Youth Councils in all 17 constituencies to enable government to better address youth needs.
Case Study 11: Mongolia: Adolescents and air pollution

Current trends show that the majority of adolescents living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are exposed to air pollution above WHO recommended levels. While the response to air pollution is often driven by the needs of young children, pregnant women and the elderly (who are the most vulnerable to its effects), there is increasing focus on air pollution’s impact on adolescents. This is not only due to their health and developmental needs, but also to the active role they play in raising awareness and advocating for air quality policies to be more adolescent centred.

In Mongolia, adolescents are contributing their valuable insight, time and knowledge to mitigate the harmful effects of air pollution. With UNICEF support, adolescents from Ulaanbaatar are actively involved as Air Pollution Youth Mappers, engaging in data collection activities to document the adverse effects of air pollution levels in the city, developing community maps of air pollution and sharing this information widely. In 2020, adolescents used the Air Quality Index data they gathered to develop and disseminate awareness messages and materials to their peers, teachers and parents – including data about air quality levels, the sources of air pollution, the impact of air pollution on health, and practices for combating air pollution.

UNICEF and the Scouts Movement of Mongolia have now formalized a partnership agreement to scale messaging and action for and by adolescents to reduce the adverse effects from air pollution. In 2020, in Bayankhongor (the most polluted province in Mongolia) UNICEF and partners launched the Youth for Clean Air Network (YouCAN) programme to continue adolescent-led air quality monitoring and dissemination of evidence-based information. In 2021, YouCAN will expand into four additional provinces and two districts in Ulaanbaatar.

For more information, please see: UNICEF Mongolia AYE Case Study.
Building skills and capacities of adolescents

UNICEF approaches skills-building by strengthening systems to integrate life skills into education systems, using community platforms to reach the most disadvantaged, working with adults to support adolescents and young people, applying experiential and innovative approaches, and using digital platforms. In 2020, one hundred UNICEF country offices supported skills development programmes, reaching 7.7 million children and adolescents (6 million in humanitarian settings). The organization also supported 61 countries to institutionalize gender-equitable approaches to skills development within training systems to ensure all children have equal opportunities.

In India, the India chapter of Generation Unlimited – YuWaah – was launched in 2018, with UNICEF support. By focusing on engagement, learning, skills development and employment of young people, YuWaah supports a generation of empowered young change-makers in India. In 2020 YuWaah reached 20 million young people with career guidance, engagement and other opportunities through various initiatives and partnerships.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF is a leading partner supporting the Government’s skills development programme for learning, empowerment, active citizenship and future employability. In 2020, some 28,533 teachers from lower secondary schools and vocational and training centres were trained to facilitate social innovation clubs, with 631,379 adolescents (48 per cent females) participating. Adolescents learned how to address and develop solutions to community problems using a human-centred design approach. Of these, 847 lower secondary school children (436 females) participated in programmes to address COVID-19 challenges.

In Bhutan, UNICEF collaborated with the Scout Association to engage 3,811 scouts (2,213 females) in the Ministry of Health’s campaign on COVID-19 preventive behaviours. These adolescents led an online and face-to-face advocacy campaign to promote COVID-19 preventive behaviours and disseminate life-saving messages across the nation. In all, 7,617 young people (4,276 females) across 20 districts were reached with messages through these volunteers.

Nina Py Brozovich, 17 years old, founded Fridays for Future in the Plurinational State of Bolivia. “From a very young age, my parents have been interested in environmental issues. We do not waste anything and recycle and reuse the things that we can. They have also led me to places where I have been able to create a relationship with the environment, with respect and care. When I realized it was in danger, I decided to take care of it. Last year my dad, who had read an article about the Fridays for Future movement, told me what Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg was doing. We as young people have the capacity and the strength to put climate change first, to make our authorities understand that they will not be able to continue ignoring this problem and that they have to combat it now.”
Addressing social norms

UNICEF works to foster enabling environments for adolescent engagement by identifying and addressing social norms that impede them from being heard and making choices about their own lives.

In Chad, 151,000 people, including 91,291 children and youth, were reached by a UNICEF-supported network of 786 trained youth mobilizers engaged in sensitization, participation and advocacy activities in their communities. The focus in 2020 was on COVID-19 prevention and sensitization, including on countering rumours and stigmatization.

In Iraq, nearly 40,000 young people (17,454 girls) contributed to COVID-19 response through offline and online platforms and channels. Approximately 7,000 young people (nearly 3,000 girls) demonstrated leadership by identifying and addressing problems in their communities, and collectively engaging in finding solutions. The mainstreaming of young people’s civic engagement also expanded nationally, with young people participating in the country-wide ‘Back to Learning’ campaign, promoting good hygiene practices in vulnerable communities, and continuing to focus on addressing social norms, including GBV.

In Mali, UNICEF supported over 3,400 adolescents in 24 municipalities (1,360 girls) to promote peaceful coexistence. Through community dialogue, home visits and focus group discussions with community members, adolescents reached 120,901 people (65,225 women and girls). Adolescents learned through the Do’Kaydara training system (a synthesis of traditional education models) and built skills on positive norms and peaceful coexistence. At least 8 million youth were also reached with COVID-19 messages conveyed by 439 peers in all regions.

In Zimbabwe, UNICEF built the capacity of communities, families and adolescents to prevent violence, reaching 48,015 parents and 47,831 adolescents (29,912 girls) in seven districts. The work included engaging parents and adolescents in structured dialogues to challenge social norms that condone or perpetuate violence.

Fostering sustainable mechanisms and platforms for adolescent participation and civic engagement

Through all its work, UNICEF strengthens platforms for adolescent participation, helps adolescents develop the skills they need to form and voice their opinions, and supports adolescents to create solutions and lead change. Together with partners, UNICEF focuses on the institutionalization of systematic adolescent participation in decision-making processes in schools, communities and governance.

Platforms in schools

Schools offer systematic opportunities for adolescents to practise participation, influence decisions and become civically engaged. UNICEF broadens these opportunities by influencing the by-laws and guidelines governing the work of student councils; supporting capacity-building for school officials and adolescents themselves; and strengthening social action in schools. In the context of COVID-19, UNICEF worked to support adolescents with distance learning opportunities that are equitable and inclusive, emphasizing both the transmission of knowledge and the development of key skills that are necessary to succeed in school, at work and in life.

In Kyrgyzstan, following COVID-19 school closures, the Girls in Science (STEM4Girls) project promptly adapted all capacity-building events to an online format, preparing 290 girls as peer trainers, to lead online learning sessions for their schoolmates on topics such as gender equality, gender stereotypes, GBV, how to prevent child and forced marriages and sexual harassment, STEM, choice of profession, as well as communication and leadership skills.

In Colombia, UNICEF worked with partners to implement 75 school peace initiatives and promoted the leadership of 1,252 students (639 females). In all, 111 schools used new online tools that supported the participation of 24,110 students (12,296 females) in workshops to manage emotions, learn alternative conflict resolution methods, promote gender equality and prevent COVID-19 infection.

In Eritrea, the Ministry of Education embraced UNICEF’s Adolescent Toolkit for Expression and Innovation. The Toolkit is designed to develop adolescents’ life skills using arts, design thinking, creativity and innovation (see ‘Strategic partnerships’ section). UNICEF provided kits to 100 school clubs, reaching more than 13,000 students (4,780 female). The organization also trained 353 school club facilitators and supervisors to equip them with skills to conduct activities and train facilitators.
Platforms in communities

Community spaces provide an important platform for civic engagement among adolescents. In 2020, adolescent and youth volunteerism continued to evolve as a leading mechanism to empower adolescents and young people as role models and advocates, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In India, the pandemic and critical deficit in human resources led to extensive reliance on and engagement with volunteers. UNICEF engaged 524,587 youth (15–24 years) and 1,522,805 volunteers from CSOs and community structures to disseminate accurate information on COVID-19, provide peer-to-peer psychosocial counselling, combat stigma and discrimination, and raise awareness on use of masks. In recognition of youth leadership potential, UNICEF formalized its partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to engage 6 million adolescent and youth volunteers to meaningfully participate in youth-focused programmes.

In South Africa, mothers2mothers in collaboration with UNICEF implemented the Peer Mentor Project, aiding the National Department of Health to scale up interventions for pregnant and postnatal adolescent girls and young women in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal Provinces since 2017. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, an e-service delivery platform was integrated into the routine face-to-face service delivery platform. In addition to peer-via-phone interactions, Peer Mentors also established WhatsApp support groups that provided a virtual platform on which clients could engage. This programme saw a significant increase from an enrolment of 5,395 in 2019 to 14,870 pregnant or breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women in 2020. (See UNICEF Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 1 for more information.)

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF supported community-based social initiatives aimed at bringing together adolescents, their families and communities of different ethnic and religious groups, internally displaced persons, refugees and host communities for peaceful coexistence and cooperation for social change. In all, 300,383 adolescents and youth (151,269 females) participated in these civic and social cohesion activities.
Media and digital spaces

Social media platforms and digital communication channels are a powerful way to reach adolescents quickly and in large numbers; they have become essential resources during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Case Study 12).

In 2020, UNICEF’s digital engagement tool, U-Report – a free open-source mobile platform – gained 3.9 million new users, and was deployed in 12 additional countries, bringing the total to 76 countries (connecting almost 13 million users, of which 41 per cent are adolescent girls and young women). A COVID-19 chatbot reached 6 million young people and their communities with important information on staying safe. Through U-Report globally, over 25 million responses on COVID-19-related outreach were received, informing programmatic intervention by UNICEF and its partners, and providing important opportunities for young people to influence and inform interventions.

Argentina had one of the longest lockdowns in Latin America, and data suggest adolescents at home were often hyper-connected and highly exposed to online risks. UNICEF supported a ‘Digital Rap Contest’ for adolescents to raise their voices on key protection issues such as cyberbullying, sexting, digital footprint and grooming for exploitation. The contest included workshops for adolescents who live in foster homes and prisons to empower them to produce content. In all, 285 videos were received, 3 of which won prizes. UNICEF also supported online TED-Ed clubs, reaching 16,000 students across the country.

In China, UNICEF focused on meeting the mental health needs of adolescents during the pandemic, partnering with the China Youth League to engage adolescents and young people in developing related programmes and materials. Initiatives included the development of a podcast series on adolescent mental health to support young people in their return to school. UNICEF also built a new partnership with a
In March 2020, nearly 8 million young people aged 10–30 years went into lockdown in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis in Malaysia. They had to rapidly adapt to a more digital existence: schooling online, learning from the about internet how to protect themselves and others, and seeking digital socialization and connection. Adolescents and youth with disabilities faced challenges with this transition. Online platforms were often inaccessible to them, and caregivers were not prepared to assist in digital learning.

UNICEF first used U-Report polling to understand the concerns and experiences of Malaysian adolescent and youth, including those with physical, learning, psychosocial, speech, hearing and/or visual disabilities. Responding to findings, UNICEF Malaysia, the Childline Foundation, and StudyHub Asia developed @KitaConnect. Based on RapidPro technology, the @KitaConnect channel is a dedicated virtual space for adolescents and youth. It is designed to inform, offer support, connect, and inspire action for and by youth. The developers integrated accessibility and inclusion into the channel from the outset, including the option for closed captioning and subtitles, and the ability to support sign language interpretation and language translation. The platform also aimed to build connection between those with and without disability; for example, by offering sign language classes for students with and without hearing impairments.

As of October 2020, @KitaConnect had engaged more than 390,000 young people through online sessions, challenges, feedback and competitions, with nearly 5,000 participants self-declaring as having a disability.

Future plans include diversifying the @KitaConnect networks for wider representation of the youth disability community, and involving young leaders from the Special Olympics in peer-to-peer trainings on topics of interest to all adolescents and youth. UNICEF and partners will also continue to build the capacity of partners and vendors in disability-inclusive content.

For more information, please see: UNICEF Malaysia AYW Case Study.101

private technology company to jointly launch the ‘Caregiver and Adolescent Indoor Exercise Online Challenge’, aiming to reduce adolescents’ anxiety and strengthen connections and interactions between family members. The Challenge garnered 11 million views with 4,300 videos uploaded by adolescent users; 95 per cent of participants indicated they found it helpful to get back to or start exercising. In total, around 23 million adolescents received mental health information and/or participated in online challenges through China’s multimedia approach.

In Egypt, the National Girls’ Empowerment Initiative, Dawwie, reached over 1 million people, with 60,000 engaging in online conversations promoting behaviours related to self-efficacy and management, acceptance of diversity, and communication skills towards reducing the acceptance of harmful practices.

In Bulgaria, UNICEF worked with young people with disabilities to create their own online content sharing their experience, advice and role-modelling to influence their peers during the COVID-19 lockdown. On UNICEF Bulgaria’s social media alone, the youth-authored materials reached 2,382,797 people and engaged 40,720 people. They were also shared via global channels like Voices of Youth.
Local governance platforms

UNICEF supports meaningful adolescent participation and engagement in local governance, including influencing by-laws to be inclusive of the voices of children and adolescents, supporting mechanisms for children to influence local plans and budgets, and building capacity of children and adolescents to meaningfully engage.

In Sri Lanka, UNICEF and the Batticaloa Municipality signed a memorandum of understanding to help Batticaloa become the first Child Friendly City in Sri Lanka. Despite disruption caused by COVID-19, the municipality made significant achievements in adolescent participation and child-friendly infrastructure improvements, such as a virtual dialogue between the mayor and adolescents on issues affecting their well-being; active participation of youth in assisting the Municipal Council on COVID-19 safety measures; and a first-ever presentation of the municipality budget to children and youth.

In Malawi, UNICEF worked with district councils to promote the participation of children and adolescents in local development processes. Eleven Area Development Committees and more than 120 Village Development Committees will be engaged in 2021 on capacity-building in community engagement and social accountability, including in how to incorporate child rights in both humanitarian and development planning.

Opportunities for adolescent participation in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic presented new challenges for adolescents and youth and added pressures to already fragile contexts. As a leading humanitarian actor, including in the COVID-19 response, UNICEF placed significant effort on engaging adolescents and youth and prioritizing their needs. Of the 7.2 million adolescents reached in 2020, over 5 million were young people living in humanitarian settings such as Colombia, Eritrea, Iraq, Mali and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNICEF’s work resulted in increased global attention to young peoples’ needs and opinions, as well as increased recognition of their capacities to positively impact society.

A highlight achievement of 2020 was the endorsement of the IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises. This resource was the result of an extensive inter-agency process led by UNICEF and the Norwegian Refugee Council under the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This flagship document, the first of its kind, sets the standards and principles to facilitate the systematic inclusion of, and engagement with, young people in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts. Adolescent priorities and commitments were also included in UNICEF’s revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action to ensure they have equitable access to services and programmes and are systematically and meaningfully engaged.

Throughout 2020, UNICEF continued its partnership with U.S. Fund for UNICEF scale up implementation of the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation. This was especially important for the COVID-19 response, as the kit process led adolescents through a journey of continued learning and skills-building, ensuring that adolescents have the competencies needed for resilience amidst adversity. The kit was utilized across education, mental health, innovation, and other cross-sectoral programmes, particularly in Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon and Tajikistan through remote support (online and offline) for adolescents. To date, UNICEF has reached almost 340,000 adolescents in 19 countries through the kit and adapted COVID-19 package.

The organization also successfully advocated for integrating adolescent and youth participation and engagement in the governance of the PROSPECTS partnership (see ‘Strategic partnerships’ section).
Strategic partnerships

Among the year’s most exciting partnerships was working with the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action (consisting of more than 60 organizations, including United Nations agencies, civil society, youth-led organizations and donors) to accelerate action on working with and for young people in humanitarian settings.

UNICEF is an active member of the Inter-agency Network on Youth Development, which coordinates efforts by different United Nations organizations to support implementation of the United Nations Youth Strategy. UNICEF’s contribution to implementation of the Strategy in 2020 focused on the roll-out of a reporting dashboard. The dashboard, already used by nearly all United Nations country teams, brings the adolescent and youth agenda to the core of the 2030 Agenda and represents a powerful tool for advocacy and programming.


Global collaboration for adolescent engagement was further strengthened through a partnership with the Netherlands on the Youth at Heart forum, bringing together over 1,700 people (including youth volunteers, activists, artists, entrepreneurs). This led to the endorsement of the Youth At Heart Principles developed with and by young people.

At country level, 2020 saw a wide range of exciting country-level partnerships, including social media and technology partners (e.g., TikTok in South Africa and Vietnam; Kuaishou and BiliBili.com in China); private mobile companies (e.g., MTN in Côte d’Ivoire and TIGO Millicom in Honduras); and youth-led organizations (e.g., the Scouts in Algeria, Bhutan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India and Mongolia).

Generation Unlimited (GenU) – Youth Engagement

A key partner in UNICEF’s work to support young people as change-makers and co-creators of solutions that improve their lives and their communities is GenU – a partnership bringing together the private sector, governments, multilateral organizations, civil society and young people. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, GenU reprioritized its focus on four strategic priorities, one of which is engaging young people’s empowerment and agency for action. GenU also identifies scalable innovations and co-creates solutions with youth. One of the GenU initiatives UNICEF leads is Reimagine Education, a global partnership to reach children and young people with digital learning solutions and where youth engagement is a key strategy. In 2020 the partnership reached more than 100 million young people (aged 10–24) in over 40 countries, and accelerated the scale-up of digital platforms for learning, skilling, entrepreneurship and empowerment to change the trajectories of young people’s lives in the wake of COVID-19.

Together with UNICEF and partners, GenU has also massively scaled youth volunteering initiatives; one example is with the Global Volunteer Initiative, which supports 35 UNICEF country offices and 9.6 million volunteers (84 per cent of whom are young people) across the globe working on issues from education and violence to stunting and clean air. (See UNICEF Annual Results Report 2020 – Goal Area 2 for more information.)
Looking ahead

Children, adolescents and young people are central to the work of UNICEF. During the COVID-19 response, children, adolescents and young people were actively engaged in spreading awareness, fighting xenophobia and supporting their peers and communities. Efforts will continue to ensure they are engaged and participate in building back better national policies and plans.

There is a great need to systematically create space for children, adolescents and young people to engage in policy issues which impact their lives, especially with increased demands for more equitable opportunities to participate and engage. UNICEF, together with its dedicated partners, is accelerating efforts globally and at country level to create sustained platforms for young people’s participation, and to provide opportunities for children, adolescents and young people to develop their skills, lead change, and design and implement solutions that address problems they face in their daily lives.

One of the key lessons learned in 2020 is the need to find alternative ways to reach children, adolescents and young people who do not use or do not have access to digital technology, including access to the internet and mobile phones. Given the digital divide, it is important to ensure that any engagement includes those from vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Parents and caregivers also play an essential role in influencing how adolescents interact with the complex, interlinked factors that shape their development. Building on parents’ existing strengths and equipping them to provide support to their adolescent children through parenting programming is a key priority of UNICEF, with the potential to have a profound positive influence on adolescent development.

In the humanitarian space, actors must be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of children, adolescents and young people by engaging them systematically in decision-making and processes, across sectors and throughout all phases of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle. UNICEF is working closely with inter-agency partners to advocate for greater resource investments in the meaningful participation of children, adolescents and young people in development, preparedness, response, transition and recovery.

To improve the availability of data on adolescents, an Adolescent Data Portal (delayed from 2020) will be launched in 2021. It will contain data on more than 20 indicators of adolescent rights and well-being. Additionally, UNICEF will continue to develop and roll out a measurement instrument that captures adolescent girls’ and boys’ participation across cultures and socioeconomic contexts. Cognitive testing is already under way for this instrument and will be followed by field-testing. Once launched, this instrument can be used by all countries to collect internationally comparable, nationally representative and statistically sound data.

UNICEF will also continue to support the GenU partnership, with a particular focus on providing technical and knowledge leadership in the areas of secondary education, skills development and young people’s participation and civic engagement.
Systems-strengthening


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UNICEF contributes to strengthening the performance of national systems such as social policy, education and health, as more effective and resilient functioning systems will lead to an improvement in child well-being, child outcomes, and ultimately in the realization of child rights. A systems approach reinforces human and child rights since it recognizes those who have been left behind and those whose trust has been broken due to failure of the system and holds States accountable to meeting their obligations as duty-bearers to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children, adolescents and young people. UNICEF works to influence, strengthen and support national systems at entry-points where there are evidence-based gaps which are context-specific and change over time. In addition, the organization supports not only the normative and policy aspects but also the broader capacities and structures that enable the system to deliver.

UNICEF systems-strengthening is multidimensional and recognizes that national systems are connected and impacted by global and regional systems, and that in turn, national systems need to be effective at the local level. A systems approach implies the enhancement of a collective contribution towards a shared vision. It recognizes both formal and non-formal systems (institutions, community structures, faith based etc.). Systems are comprised of interconnected components that need to be in place with established roles and accountabilities. For example:

- Governance (legislation, policies, guidance, strategies, management), including at the local governance level
- Coordination (platforms that add value, coherence for collective action)
- Financing (budgets, strategies, etc.)
- Human and technical capacities needed for implementation (technical knowledge, formal and informal workforce, incentives, accountability/analysis of information/ transparency, informal, technology, etc.)
- Delivery modalities for implementation (physical reach/coverage/access; of quality; sustainable; child rights and gender based)

In addition, UNICEF works to effect change by strengthening staff capacity to provide normative guidance and advice for disability inclusion and gender socialization programmes, as well as to continue building the evidence base on ‘what works’ for transforming harmful norms. UNICEF’s contribution to strengthening the collection of sex- and age- and disability-disaggregated data is also an important aspect of systems-building. Having disaggregated data makes a difference in the way budgets are allocated and programmes are designed. Moreover, disaggregated data help to provide a more complete picture by capturing intersecting inequalities and persistent gaps. Such data are essential for identifying key challenges and opportunities to accelerate progress towards achievement of the SDGs.

Analysing systems in terms of being resilient to shocks (economic, political, conflict, climate, etc.) is another important dimension of UNICEF’s support to systems-strengthening. Building resilient and shock-responsive systems is an integral part of systems-strengthening and reinforces our approach to the development–humanitarian linkages. Understanding risks and threats, preparedness and mitigation, resilience and adaptation are part of systems-strengthening.

The year 2020 brought about both challenges and opportunities as UNICEF supported governments to move through these milestones. The routine work of measuring child poverty and developing national plans of action took a back seat to the urgent COVID-19 response, yet at the same time child poverty has been more visible and addressing it more urgent than ever. UNICEF country offices have provided significant support to countries to move forward, with 74 country offices convening stakeholders around child poverty; over 50 supporting measurement; over 100 advocating around child poverty; and over 70 supporting governments with policy and programme responses.

However, this work does not always translate into increased priority for child poverty in national systems. Encouragingly, in an analysis of the VNRs of the SDGs, 33 out of 45 countries reporting in 2020 included child poverty responses. The policy and programme response to the impacts of COVID-19 on child poverty have been impressive, with 200 countries strengthening their social protection responses and significant increases in financing going to children. However, important questions remain as to whether these represent long-term systems responses to child poverty or short-term reactions to the COVID-19 crisis.

A systems approach to addressing child poverty

Addressing child poverty – both monetary and multidimensional – requires a coherent and organized systems approach. As outlined in the Global Coalition and UNICEF SDG Guide to End Child Poverty: A world free from child poverty, this approach can be broken down into five milestones: (1) building a national pathway to end child poverty; (2) measuring child poverty; (3) child poverty advocacy; (4) policy and programme change; and (5) developing or integrating child poverty into national plans of action to achieve the SDGs.
National systems-strengthening has been a key focus of UNICEF in most countries, including fragile and humanitarian contexts, with the aim to ensure public finance management systems are better equipped to finance social services for children in an equitable and efficient manner. This has included capacity-building of ministry of finance staff at central and local levels in equitable planning and budget execution, supporting governments in programme-based budgeting, ensuring transparency accountability and credibility of public budgets, and building budget monitoring capacities in ministries of finance and line ministries.

A systems approach to social protection aims to provide a coordinated and harmonized response to the multidimensional vulnerabilities across a life cycle. Strengthening social protection systems is crucial to effectively address the multiple and compounding needs and deprivations that children face across their life-cycle, and the importance of a systems response has proven critically important during the COVID-19 response. The unprecedented scale of the crisis underlined both the ability of national systems to respond and to do so at scale: international support and direct transfers were only a fraction of the overall response. The stronger national systems are, the more able they are to scale up to respond to emergencies.

UNICEF assesses the strength of national systems across five areas: policy, programmes, operations, shock responsiveness and inclusiveness. The organization provided support across these areas in over 100 countries. Particularly important in the COVID-19 response was the shock responsiveness of social protection systems and their ability to respond quickly and scale up as needed. There was a significant scale-up, with 27 additional countries working in this area and continued progress with 16 countries reporting their systems as moderately or strongly ready to respond to crisis – highlighting both a positive trend, but also the significant work ahead. Overall, noteworthy headway was made in systems-strengthening with 61 countries – almost double the 2017 number – reporting strong or moderately strong national systems.

Gender-transformative change

Whilst COVID-19 has reinforced gender inequalities around the world, there is also renewed opportunity to influence rights-based normative shifts and disrupt gender-discriminatory norms and practices, which cut across all UNICEF goal areas. As with its work in other goal areas, the organization is committed to working with both the private and public sector in strengthening legal frameworks, policies, investments and business practices that can contribute to promoting positive gender socialization under Goal Area 5. An important area for gender-transformative change is in legislative and policy reform measures in response to the pandemic that provide comprehensive social protection and care, including childcare. Increasingly, companies and governments are recognizing that family-friendly policies support both women and men to balance work and family life, and help to create more balanced, diverse and inclusive workforces. 107 Social protection systems that address gendered risks over the life-cycle and provide support in situations of poverty, vulnerability, or crisis play a vital role in protecting children and their families from poverty and insecurity, and help them cope with crisis, recover from shocks and support them through life-cycle transitions.
High-level Priorities towards the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals

A child pretends to hold a camera while playing at a UNICEF child-friendly space in Fada, Burkina Faso, where psycho-social support is provided to children from displaced families.

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UNICEF will define its next Strategic Plan in 2021, addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while contributing to accelerate the commitments under Agenda 2030. Specifically, the new Strategic Plan will deepen our unique comparative advantage in promoting and strengthening rights-based inclusive systems, while also scaling up innovative approaches and partnerships to ensure an inclusive and sustainable recovery for every child.

The compounding impacts of climate, conflict and COVID-19 has generated unprecedented impacts on children, reversing important progress in terms of child poverty and inequality across all regions of the world. Moreover, despite commitments under the SDGs, many countries are facing critical challenges in systematically measuring child poverty, and even more are not always able to regularly monitor and report progress towards SDG 1-related goals. It is more urgent than ever to support countries to prioritize and respond to child poverty. This includes focusing on people more deeply entrenched in poverty, as well as the new poor, including children living in urban areas and in fragile contexts. These changes make achieving the SDGs on child poverty even more challenging and urgent given the relationship between poverty and child deprivations. To accelerate progress, UNICEF will continue to prioritize enhancing capacities for universal and routine measurement of monetary and multidimensional child poverty, while also strengthening its capacity in addressing the critical compounding drivers and identifying innovative strategies to reduce child poverty across all contexts.

It will be crucial to ensure an inclusive and equitably financed post-COVID-19 recovery across the dimensions of child poverty, including the continued and sustainable expansion of inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems. UNICEF will focus on implementation of an Inclusive Recovery Road Map, aimed at protecting and transforming social spending that includes fragile and humanitarian settings, continued support for government capacities to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and equity of social sector budgets, while also aligning and leveraging public and private sector new financing options to enhance inclusive social sector systems, facilitate innovation and ensure inclusive and sustainable recovery for every child.

The social protection response to COVID-19 and UNICEF’s work in supporting governments was unprecedented in 2020, where more than 200 countries expanded their social protection coverage. With their flexibility, global thematic funds will continue to play a key role in enabling rapid response to crises and in strengthening UNICEF’s work on social protection. The pandemic highlighted significant gaps in overall social protection systems, which require prioritization and investment, including coverage, adequacy, systems-strengthening and financing. For instance, the importance of national social protection systems was highlighted to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and prevent devastating losses. In this context, it is essential to continue to prioritize enhancing the strength of national social protection systems. This includes increasing coverage and adequacy of social protection, including cash transfer programmes that benefit all children, while also scaling up systems that are able to effectively respond to shocks and multiple risks, and at the same time enhancing specific response and preparedness capacities, including in humanitarian and fragile contexts.

UNICEF will continue to prioritize the effective social protection coverage of all children, while scaling up efforts to ensure that programmes are adequately designed and implemented to address specific vulnerabilities and deprivations. This includes a renewed commitment to scaling up around gender-responsive and transformative social protection, care work and family-friendly policies; disability-inclusive systems; and supporting systems that are responsive to territorial disparities, as well as ensuring the effective inclusion of displaced children and families.

UNICEF’s new Gender Plan and Policy will be developed in 2021 and include gender-transformative and girl-led approaches to uplift girls’ voices and leadership. Gender equality is the responsibility of all UNICEF staff, and strong accountability mechanisms and gender expertise to do this well are needed across the organization. This entails strengthening dedicated gender expertise and sector gender champions. This may, for example, mean recruiting more women for IT positions and more men for health positions, as well as being more open to and supportive of staff with diverse gender identities.

UNICEF will also strengthen its engagement with adolescents and young people as rights-holders and change agents who offer valuable perspectives and insights that contribute to more effective, relevant and sustainable results in both development and humanitarian settings. This will build on successes under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including accelerating efforts to generate and utilize data and evidence to determine priorities and advocacy, and strengthen outcome-oriented collaborations to deliver a holistic agenda across sectors. The new Strategic Plan will identify priority areas where UNICEF and its partners are well positioned to contribute towards accelerating results in this age group. These include promoting adolescent mental health; supporting pregnant and parenting adolescents; ending child marriage; providing equitable access – including digital access – to learning opportunities; and engaging youth in climate change. UNICEF will build on existing partnerships and explore new opportunities to partner with adolescents, young people and youth networks as equal constituents, in meaningful and safe ways, and to contribute to the delivery of programmatic priorities. By empowering adolescents and young people to claim their rights as well as build their agency to civicly engage and lead change within their societies, we are contributing to accelerating results for adolescents.
In support of the next Strategic Plan, UNICEF will frame a Disability Strategy, Action Plan and Guidance for disability inclusion across its programmes and operations. A global research agenda on children with disabilities, informed by human rights, gender equality and social justice, will complement the Disability Strategy to inform effective interventions for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities. The organization will also establish a Global Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities that will generate robust and relevant statistics on children with disabilities for decision-making and advocacy. UNICEF will continue to strengthen the inclusion of children with disabilities in the COVID-19 response and will work with WHO to develop practical guidance on disability considerations in COVID-19 vaccinations. Finally, UNICEF will work to strengthen consideration of public health emergencies into existing guidance and tools for inclusion of children with disabilities in humanitarian action, based on learnings from the COVID-19 response.

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

“Spain considers the defense and the protection of children’s rights a cornerstone of our foreign policy, and as part of our engagement and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Accordingly, the Spanish Cooperation has kept a long-standing strategic cooperation and has supported UNICEF’s work, as it is uniquely positioned to lead a global and holistic response to guarantee the protection and promotion of children’s rights as well as a privileged role to strengthen the monitoring and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In order to support the achievement of Goal Area 5 (“Every child has an equitable chance to life”) according to UNICEF’s Strategic Plan 2018–2021, we work hand by hand with UNICEF in the area of social inclusion. Spain does this through flexible thematic funding to support long-term processes needed to make significant impact, to develop social protection mechanisms that reduce poverty and discrimination, and to increase health and well-being.

The Spanish Government has a strong commitment with the principle of leaving no one behind, particularly no child, to ensure every girl and boy is protected and has a fair chance in life.”

– Angeles Moreno Bau, Secretary of State for International Cooperation, Spain
# Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>assistive technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVR</td>
<td>augmented and virtual reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBHI</td>
<td>Community-Based Health Insurance (Ethiopia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFM</td>
<td>Child Functioning Module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19</td>
<td>coronavirus disease 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRPD</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAPRO</td>
<td>East Asia and Pacific Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECARO</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESARO</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>early childhood development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>early childhood education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC</td>
<td>Finance Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCDO</td>
<td>Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFDI</td>
<td>Financing for Development in the COVID-19 Era and Beyond Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM</td>
<td>female genital mutilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>gender-based violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GenU</td>
<td>Generation Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCT</td>
<td>humanitarian cash transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFF</td>
<td>Integrated National Financing Frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACRO</td>
<td>Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTIQ+</td>
<td>lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (or questioning), and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMIC</td>
<td>low- and middle-income countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENARO</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoSWRR</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (Myanmar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPI</td>
<td>Multidimensional Poverty Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAF</td>
<td>National Aid Fund (Jordan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODI</td>
<td>Overseas Development Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPD</td>
<td>organization of persons with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PF4C</td>
<td>Public Finance for Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCCE</td>
<td>Risk-Communication and Community Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSA</td>
<td>Regional Office of South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT</td>
<td>Social Cash Transfers (Zambia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>science, technology, engineering and math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDIS</td>
<td>United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VNR</td>
<td>Voluntary National Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCARO</td>
<td>West and Central Africa Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouCAN</td>
<td>Youth for Clean Air Network (Mongolia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endnotes


6. ‘Whose Time to Care’.


9. Multidimensional child poverty is defined as proportion of children deprived in the immediate aspects of their lives, in areas such as nutrition, health, water, education and shelter.

10. Monetary child poverty is defined as the proportion of children living below a national or international monetary poverty line.


• Argentina: <www.unicef.org/argentina/informes/pobreza-desigualdad-infantil-covid19>
• Tunisia: <www.unicef.org/tunisia/rapports/impact-des-mesures-de-confinement-associ%C3%A9es-%C3%A0-la-pand%C3%A9mie-covid-19-sur-la-pauvret%C3%A9-des>

18 UNICEF, Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs).
24 See UNICEF Social Policy Twitter channel: <https://twitter.com/UNICEFSocPolicy?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor>.
28 Ibid.
31 UNICEF, Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs).
32 Ibid.
35 2020 is the baseline year for collection of this data; therefore, no updated data have been compiled at this point.


41. UNICEF’s next Gender Policy and Strategic Plan – Background Paper on Gender Responsive Social Protection, forthcoming.


43. Ibid.

44. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.


46. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.

47. UNICEF’s Social Protection Response to COVID-19.


49. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.


53. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.


55. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.


60. UNICEF, *Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs)*.


66. Ibid.
67. All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
69. UNICEF’s work on GBV, child marriage and FGM is addressed further in the Annual Results Report – Goal Area 3.
72. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Six countries released survey data in 2018: Belarus, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Gambia, Georgia, Ghana and Iraq. Fourteen in 2019: Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mongolia, Montenegro, Pakistan (Punjab), Sierra Leone, Suriname, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. Seventeen countries and territories in 2020: Algeria, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Kosovo, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, North Macedonia, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Serbia, Tonga and Turkmenistan.
77. An updated Situation Analysis on Children and Women is in progress.
81. UNICEF, Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs); indicators from the UNICEF internal annual monitoring system of country-level programming results (based on output indicator 5.e.3); and output indicator 5.e.1 data from UNICEF internal monitoring (Supply Division).
83. UNICEF, Strategic Monitoring Questions (SMQs); indicators from the UNICEF internal annual monitoring system of country-level programming results (based on output indicator 5.e.3).
84. In Papua New Guinea, only 8 per cent of 4- and 5-year-old children have access to ECE services.
85. These figures are mostly based on estimates. UNICEF is working to strengthen the quality of disability-disaggregated data related to WASH.
88. It is important to note that the COVID-19 cash transfer programme has provided a top-up to routine cash.
90. Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cuba, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mali, Paraguay, Serbia, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uganda.
91. See <www.youtube.com watch?v=gKk6Cbz6vUY&t=2s>.

92. Level 1 accessibility requirements are an accessible entrance, restrooms, meeting room and workstation.


96. Situation Analysis of Young People’s Participation and Civic Engagement.

97. Ibid.

98. UNICEF, Results Assessment Module data (RAM).


103. <www.youthcompact.org/>.


106. Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Kenya, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Turkey.

Annex: Financial Report*

*All funding data as of 6 April 2021, pending audit and certification.

UNICEF Income in 2020

In 2020, total income to UNICEF increased by 13 per cent compared to 2019, reaching an all-time high of US$7,219 million. This was largely due to an increase in earmarked funds to specific programmes (other resources) income, which grew by 14 per cent, up from US$5,029 million in 2019 to US$5,748 million in 2020. Although un-earmarked funds (regular resources) income also increased, to US$1,470 million in 2020 compared to 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*

Note: * Figures are based on ‘income’, which here represents contributions received from public sector and revenue from private sector.
‘Other resources’ contributions increased by 13 per cent compared to 2019, and contributions to UNICEF’s 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, 2018–2020, of thematic funding being 14 per cent of all ‘other resources’ in 2020. The increasing overall amount of thematic funding, as well as 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 funds, 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, the organization encourages partners to channel more contributions through these soft-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; supplementary to RR and intended for a specific purpose, such as an emergency response or a specific programme in a country/region.

**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>Total Contributions</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>$3,798m</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$3,857m</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$3,938m</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$4,677m</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$4,583m</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$4,945m</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$5,600m</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>3%</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. They act as an ideal complement to regular resources, as they 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 burden 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 the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden 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>.

FIGURE A1-3: Thematic contributions by thematic pool, 2020: US$438 million
Goal Area 5 income in 2020

In 2020, partners contributed US$102 million ‘other resources – regular’ for Goal Area 5 – a 52 per cent increase over the previous year. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of ‘other resources – regular’ to Goal Area 5, at 99 per cent. The top five resource partners to Goal Area 5 in 2020 were the Government of Germany, the European Commission, the World Bank, and the Governments of Norway and Sweden (see Figure A1-6). The largest contributions were received from the Government of Germany through the grant ‘Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic through Social Protection Systems in the Sahel’, and for ‘Strengthening National Systems for Improved Access to Equitable and Integrated Basic Services in Iraq’, and from the World Bank for the emergency crisis response project in Yemen (see Figure A1-7 and the main text of the report for results on these programmes).

FIGURE A1-4: Goal Area 5 ‘other resources – regular’ contributions, 2014–2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>US$ millions</th>
<th>Thematic</th>
<th>Non-thematic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>US$64M</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>US$43M</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>US$60M</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>US$52M</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>US$60M</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>US$67M</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>US$102M</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIGURE A1-5: Total Goal Area 5 funds received by type of resource partner, 2020: US$102 million

Private Sector
US$979,868
1%

Public Sector
US$101,456,149
99%
### FIGURE A1-6: Top 20 resource partners to Goal Area 5 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>Germany*</td>
<td>115,477,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>European Commission*</td>
<td>47,183,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>World Bank*</td>
<td>27,164,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Norway*</td>
<td>19,169,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sweden*</td>
<td>17,117,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>United Nations Joint Programme</td>
<td>7,418,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>7,119,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>UNDP-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes*</td>
<td>5,304,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Swiss Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>1,651,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1,187,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1,062,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>896,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>696,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>641,538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>424,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Swedish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>168,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Italian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>165,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>UNICEF Egypt</td>
<td>129,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Turkish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>59,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Council of Europe Development Bank</td>
<td>54,945</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## FIGURE A1-7: Top 20 contributions to Goal Area 5, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
<th>Grant Description</th>
<th>Resource Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>32,258,065</td>
<td>Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic through Social Protection Systems in the Sahel</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</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>3</td>
<td>24,738,976</td>
<td>Fourth Additional Financing for the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project*</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>23,658,280</td>
<td>Maternal and Child Cash Transfers for the First 1,000 days of Life in Kassala and Red Sea, the Sudan</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>19,169,401</td>
<td>Disability Inclusion Partnership*</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>9,361,600</td>
<td>Social Protection, Zambia</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8,392,226</td>
<td>Child Guarantee Scheme – Establishing a European Child Guarantee and Financial Support, ECA Regional Office*</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>7,962,309</td>
<td>Strengthening of Service Provision for Children in Iraq*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7,765,830</td>
<td>COVID-19 Emergency Response Project, Lebanon*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,889,858</td>
<td>Social Protection Response to the COVID-19 Epidemic in Zambia</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5,973,716</td>
<td>Social Protection, Angola</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5,623,620</td>
<td>Emergency Reactivation of the Social Welfare Fund Cash Transfer Programme, Yemen</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5,042,238</td>
<td>Child Sensitive Social Protection in Refugee Hosting Districts of West Nile, Uganda</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4,319,406</td>
<td>Joint Programme on Social Protection in Zambia</td>
<td>United Nations Joint Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3,548,742</td>
<td>Integrated Social Services and Response in Eastern Ukraine*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3,522,900</td>
<td>Adolescents and Youth as Agents of Change in Rohingya Refugee Camps and Host Community, Bangladesh</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3,424,941</td>
<td>Joint Program on Local Governance Phase III, Somalia*</td>
<td>UNDP-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3,205,471</td>
<td>Non-Thematic Support to Multisectoral Response to COVID-19 UNICEF in Bangladesh*</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3,099,178</td>
<td>Joint Programme for Social Protection in Mozambique</td>
<td>United Nations Joint Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 social protection, inclusion and governance reached US$22 million, with US$6.8 million received in 2020, of which more than 97 per cent came from public sector partners. The Government of Sweden was the largest thematic resources partner in 2020, providing 90 per cent of all thematic social protection, inclusion and governance contributions received (see Figure A1-10).

Of all thematic social protection, inclusion and governance contributions that UNICEF received in 2018 to 2020, some 32 per cent were global-level contributions. 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 (see Figure A1-8).

**FIGURE A1-8:** Social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding contributions at country, regional and global levels, 2018–2020

**FIGURE A1-9:** Spotlight on global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding contributions, 2018–2020
Under the current UNICEF Strategic Plan, the Governments of Norway and Spain have contributed 99.8 per cent of all global social protection, inclusion and governance 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, four partners contributed thematic funding to social protection, inclusion and governance, compared to five partners contributing in 2019. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the Government of Spain for global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding, and from the Government of Sweden towards social protection, inclusion and governance activities in Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan.

The 2020 allocations of global thematic social protection, inclusion and governance funds were made on a needs-based formula for country offices’ regional allocations and for regional office allocations, based on country offices’ stated intention/commitment to meet one or more relevant Strategic Plan targets on child poverty, social protection, Public Finance for Children (PF4C) or local governance (see Figure A1-11). Further prioritization criteria were:

- Least-developed countries
- If a country office had the opportunity and a plan to make tangible progress towards one or more of the Strategic Plan targets for social policy
- If steps had been taken to incorporate attention to adolescents, disability and gender into the social policy work
- If a country office had demonstrated a capacity to absorb funds and had a funding shortfall for its planned social policy activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional office</th>
<th>Country/other office</th>
<th>US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>31,969.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>40,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>71,969.81</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>18,560.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>15,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>93,560.76</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eswatini</td>
<td>20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>19,166.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>79,166.80</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>13,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>20,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>10,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>10,560.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>40,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>93,560.76</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FIGURE A1-1: Allocation of global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding to country offices, 2020: US$719,698

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional office</th>
<th>Country/other office</th>
<th>US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>71,969.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td>71,969.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>30,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>27,575.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td>57,575.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>86,363.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total country offices</strong></td>
<td>86,363.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>64,772.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Office of Research</td>
<td>7,196.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation Office</td>
<td>7,196.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Regional offices</strong></td>
<td>86,363.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: EAP, East Asia and Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.
The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal (open.unicef.org) and the results achieved with the funds, 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.

Transparency

Follow the flow of funds from contribution to programming by visiting <http://open.unicef.org>.
Goal Area 5 expenses in 2020

Note: Expenses are higher than the income received because expenses comprise total allotments from regular resources and other resources (including balances carried over from previous years), whereas income reflects only earmarked contributions to Goal Area 5 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) standards 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 A1-12: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2020

- **SAFE AND CLEAN ENVIRONMENT**: US$127 million (2%)
- **SOCIAL PROTECTION, INCLUSION AND GOVERNANCE**: US$533 million (9%)
- **CHILD PROTECTION**: US$712 million (13%)
- **EDUCATION**: US$1.2 billion (20%)
- **HEALTH**: US$1.4 billion (25%)
- **WASH**: US$995 million (17%)
- **NUTRITION**: US$656 million (12%)
- **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT**: US$67 million (1%)
- **HIV AND AIDS**: US$52 million (1%)

FIGURE A1-12: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2020
In 2020, global expenses for Goal Area 5 programming totalled US$533 million, including funds used in a cross-thematic manner or to cover operational and other costs. This constitutes an increase from US$497 million in 2019 (see Figures A1-13 and A1-14). The highest expenses took place in Yemen (US$116.4 million), Turkey (US$60.6 million), Jordan (US$39.2 million) and Lebanon (US$34.5 million) (see Figure A1-18).

FIGURE A1-13: Expense trend for Goal Area 5 by year and fund type, 2014–2020

FIGURE A1-14: Goal Area 5 expenses in 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results area</th>
<th>Other resources – emergency</th>
<th>Other resources – regular</th>
<th>Regular resources</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty / Public finance for children</td>
<td>3,687,441</td>
<td>12,624,295</td>
<td>37,734,019</td>
<td>54,045,755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>164,819,944</td>
<td>170,426,825</td>
<td>47,570,395</td>
<td>382,817,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent empowerment</td>
<td>17,499,209</td>
<td>27,524,693</td>
<td>24,033,690</td>
<td>69,057,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender discriminatory roles and practices*</td>
<td>2,192,042</td>
<td>6,871,521</td>
<td>4,044,888</td>
<td>13,108,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with disabilities**</td>
<td>6,413,670</td>
<td>3,216,149</td>
<td>3,977,158</td>
<td>13,606,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>194,612,307</td>
<td>220,663,483</td>
<td>117,360,150</td>
<td>532,635,939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * The expenses of US$13.1 million on ‘gender-discriminatory roles and practices’ only refer to the programme expenses tagged against the positive gender socialization work under Goal Area 5. This value does not reflect the positive gender socialization work under other goal areas. Furthermore, this value does not reflect the complete UNICEF gender expenses in 2020. UNICEF expenses on gender-transformative programming in 2020 was US$1,190 million, which is 20.8 per cent of total 2020 expenses. For the consolidated financial report on income and expenditure related to gender equality in 2020, please refer to the UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2020 – Gender equality.

** Global disability-related expenses are calculated on the basis of disability-specific budget codes and activities tagged using the disability tag, which is applied to all activities globally. The disability tag has multiple levels, and a methodology has been established that includes different proportions of expenses tagged based on the tag rating (principal/significant). The amount reported here for global disability-related expenses is a portion of expenses reported in each goal and results area.
FIGURE A1-15: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by results area, 2020

Children with disabilities
US$13,606,977
3%

Gender discriminatory roles and practices*
US$13,108,452
2%

Adolescent Empowerment
US$69,057,592
13%

Child Poverty & Public finance for children
US$54,045,755
10%

Social Protection
US$382,817,164
72%

Note: * The expenses of US$13.1 million on ‘gender-discriminatory roles and practices’ only refer to the programme expenses tagged against the positive gender socialization work under Goal Area 5. This value does not reflect the positive gender socialization work under other goal areas. Furthermore, this value does not reflect the complete UNICEF gender expenses in 2020. UNICEF expenses on gender-transformative programming in 2020 was US$1,190 million, which is 20.8 per cent of total 2020 expenses. For the consolidated financial report on income and expenditure related to gender equality in 2020, please refer to the UNICEF Global Annual Results 2020 Report – Gender equality.

FIGURE A1-16: Thematic expenses for Social Protection, Inclusion and Governance by region and results area, 2020
### FIGURE A1-17: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by region and funding source, 2020 (US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Other resources – emergency</th>
<th>Other resources – regular</th>
<th>Regular resources</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>108,040,920</td>
<td>120,349,132</td>
<td>13,934,036</td>
<td>242,324,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>64,073,863</td>
<td>8,529,060</td>
<td>5,486,478</td>
<td>78,089,401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA</td>
<td>3,622,604</td>
<td>36,919,062</td>
<td>23,156,170</td>
<td>63,697,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
<td>5,602,904</td>
<td>17,138,035</td>
<td>21,531,008</td>
<td>44,271,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>5,612,982</td>
<td>9,779,809</td>
<td>22,620,852</td>
<td>38,013,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>3,579,959</td>
<td>12,374,792</td>
<td>7,363,392</td>
<td>23,318,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>3,088,209</td>
<td>4,985,195</td>
<td>14,188,798</td>
<td>22,262,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>990,866</td>
<td>10,588,397</td>
<td>9,079,415</td>
<td>20,658,678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>194,612,307</strong></td>
<td><strong>220,663,483</strong></td>
<td><strong>117,360,150</strong></td>
<td><strong>532,635,939</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ, headquarters; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

### FIGURE A1-18: Top 10 expenses for Goal Area 5 by country/regional programme/headquarters division, 2020 (US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Other resources – emergency</th>
<th>Other resources – regular</th>
<th>Regular resources</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>22,405,045</td>
<td>92,304,744</td>
<td>1,710,161</td>
<td>116,419,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>60,515,066</td>
<td>28,005</td>
<td>93,084</td>
<td>60,636,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>23,994,211</td>
<td>13,578,519</td>
<td>1,592,563</td>
<td>39,165,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>29,797,613</td>
<td>3,977,738</td>
<td>759,738</td>
<td>34,535,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>18,359,297</td>
<td>153,345</td>
<td>1,508,677</td>
<td>20,021,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>55,364</td>
<td>11,209,480</td>
<td>895,843</td>
<td>12,160,687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>632,213</td>
<td>4,434,926</td>
<td>6,886,383</td>
<td>11,953,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Palestine</td>
<td>660,519</td>
<td>4,467,145</td>
<td>4,221,725</td>
<td>9,349,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4,859,465</td>
<td>961,334</td>
<td>3,113,828</td>
<td>8,934,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>26,699</td>
<td>2,396,499</td>
<td>6,009,541</td>
<td>8,432,738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### FIGURE A1-19: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by cost category and fund type, 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost category</th>
<th>Other resources – emergency</th>
<th>Other resources – regular</th>
<th>Regular resources</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CONTRACTUAL SERVICES</td>
<td>11,572,481</td>
<td>24,311,012</td>
<td>22,151,726</td>
<td>58,035,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES AND FURNITURE</td>
<td>107,476</td>
<td>145,573</td>
<td>540,474</td>
<td>793,523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL OPERATING + OTHER DIRECT COSTS</td>
<td>5,542,521</td>
<td>9,482,694</td>
<td>10,046,427</td>
<td>25,071,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCREMENTAL INDIRECT COST</td>
<td>12,433,791</td>
<td>12,206,793</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>24,640,665</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAFF AND OTHER PERSONNEL COSTS</td>
<td>15,344,529</td>
<td>31,321,321</td>
<td>58,253,520</td>
<td>104,919,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPLIES AND COMMODITIES</td>
<td>21,358,987</td>
<td>3,156,939</td>
<td>4,026,488</td>
<td>28,542,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSFERS AND GRANTS TO COUNTERPARTS</td>
<td>126,443,407</td>
<td>137,564,272</td>
<td>18,115,619</td>
<td>282,123,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAVEL</td>
<td>543,378</td>
<td>-980,727</td>
<td>1,962,429</td>
<td>1,525,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>1,265,736</td>
<td>3,455,604</td>
<td>2,263,388</td>
<td>6,984,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>194,612,307</strong></td>
<td><strong>220,663,483</strong></td>
<td><strong>117,360,150</strong></td>
<td><strong>532,635,939</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional information by result area

Social protection, child poverty and public finance for children

Within Goal Area 5, the highest proportion of expenses in 2020 were under the social protection results area and constituted US$323.5 million. The largest proportion of these funds was spent on the delivery of cash transfers, either through new or parallel systems (US$173 million) or government systems (US$70 million). UNICEF invested over US$21 million to provide governments with technical support to develop or expand national cash transfer programmes, and US$18.8 million to help strengthen social protection systems to become more shock responsive.

Strengthening of the social welfare workforce received investment of US$4 million, and US$3 million was spent to improve the linkages between cash transfer programmes and other services and information (including on essential family practices, livelihoods, psychosocial support). US$25 million was spent to help develop or improve national social protection strategies, policies and legislation.

Globally, UNICEF spent US$35 million on child poverty and public finance interventions in 2020. Of these funds, about US$3 million was invested in child poverty measurement and US$4 million in child poverty analysis, including profiling, mapping and identifying drivers of children’s multidimensional and monetary poverty, as well as modelling and simulating policy options. Over US$3 million contributed to the development or strengthening of national policies to address child poverty. Close to US$9 million was invested in interventions aimed at improving budget allocation, the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure, and transparency, accountability and participation.

Disability

UNICEF global expenses on disability inclusion can be measured across the whole Strategic Plan. Inclusion of children with disabilities in programmes and services is not only reflected in the expenses of targeted activities captured under Goal Area 5, but rather cuts across all goal areas, including education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and early childhood development (ECD).

In addition to the disability-specific budget codes, UNICEF uses a ‘disability tag’, which is mandatory for UNICEF offices to assess all activities in terms of disability inclusion, making it possible to measure expenses on disability across all goal areas of the Strategic Plan. As such, global expenses on the inclusion of children with disabilities in UNICEF 2020 programmes and services was determined to be US$239 million, reaching over 2.2 million children with disabilities in 144 countries.

Adolescents

The total global spending on adolescent participation and engagement, appropriate policy development, and routine engagement of adolescents in UNICEF programme planning and the programme cycle was US$43.2 million in 2020. A total of US$36.9 million was spent on adolescent participation in civic engagement initiatives, including US$22.1 million in humanitarian contexts – resulting in over 7.2 million adolescents participating in or leading civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF-supported programmes. The amount spent on developing multisectoral policies supporting the development and participation of adolescents was US$5.5 million in 2020, and US$870,000 was spent on routine adolescent engagement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNICEF programmes.
An adolescent girl sits in a classroom in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan. UNICEF is committed to supporting all adolescents in developing and reaching their full potential, while encouraging their participation and civic engagement. Using multi-sectoral and gender-based approaches, UNICEF promotes a focus on girls’ education, prevention of child marriage, promoting Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) kits and providing gender-sensitive WASH facilities for girls in schools.