A 15 years old girl in Diffa, the extreme southeast of Niger, where she has been living with her parents for 3 years. They had to flee their home village because of the danger of Boko Haram. UNICEF, with funding from Germany’s Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), is supporting the Regional Directorate for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection here to lead a Community Child Protection Approach. Through this programme, community workers mediated with this girl’s family to save her from child marriage.

**CORNELIUS’ CORNER**

The second semester of 2021 has been a dynamic period marked, in particular, by the launch of UNICEF’s new Child Protection Strategy (2021-2030) in August and the reemergence of opportunities to spend more time in the field. The Strategy development process was a lengthy one and it is gratifying to now move to the stage of operationalizing this renewed vision resulting from the invaluable contributions of so many of you, our multisectoral partners and stakeholders. Over the past months, as I have engaged with our diverse allies (civil society, donor community, other programme sectors, etc.) in launching the Strategy, I have been encouraged by the enthusiastic reception and resonance I have encountered in these conversations.

Strong consensus has emerged on issues such as the need to deepen efforts to prioritize and scale-up proven approaches on primary prevention in both development and humanitarian contexts; to continue to strengthen the social service workforce as an essential component of child protection systems; to invest further in access to justice; to jointly address violence against women and violence against girls and boys; and to deepen intersectoral collaboration for child protection, particularly with education and social policy. UNICEF’s recently approved Strategic Plan for 2022-2025 represents another cornerstone which will help us translate these priorities into action.

In addition to this extensive engagement on our new Child Protection Strategy, I have also been re-energized by the opportunity to be back in the field, having been in Syria, Jordan and Sicily over the past months, witnessing how our work on the ground is making a difference for boys and girls. In my travel throughout Syria, I witnessed, for example, the need for stronger support programmes for children who have been affiliated with armed groups. This is true especially for girls, many of whom face being married off to an older man as their only protection mechanism when returning to their communities steeped in patriarchal traditions. Mental health issues and risks from landmines and unexploded ordnances remain other areas of concern and priority in this context. I won’t forget being in a community, with many bombed out buildings filled with unexploded ordnances, in which a boy showed me a replica of such a weapon which he had just made in an awareness raising activity in order to teach other children about associated risks.

In Sicily, I was moved by the difference that a Safe Space for migrant and refugee women and girls can make for them in offering opportunities to socialize, as well as to get support from specialized staff, including for survivors of gender-based violence.

We continue, as well, to take advantage of technology to engage virtually with work being done on the ground. Last month, I very much enjoyed participating in a virtual visit exchange with
our partners from The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation to our programmes in Tanzania and Yemen. The visit provided an opportunity to better understand the contribution of flexible funding modalities in child protection systems strengthening work both in development and humanitarian contexts, supporting sustainable programming that can be responsive to shifting realities. The exchange was a rich conversation which left valuable contributions for the country offices, as well as regional and global level colleagues.

We were able to jointly delve into our child protection systems strengthening work in Tanzania and hear the perspective from actors who make up the system, including a case worker, foster parents and a police officer. We also had the chance to discuss in detail our work in Yemen with children affected by armed conflict, a context in which the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Child Rights Violations has identified more than 10,000 children killed or maimed (a Grave Child Rights Violation as defined by the UN Security Council in its Resolution 1612). UNICEF’s programme in Yemen not only supports the MRM, but also the children impacted by the conflict, including those who are survivors of war injuries, such as 11-year-old Imad who lost both legs to an explosive ordnance. Through the virtual visit, we learned of Imad’s love for soccer and his dream of an operation that will allow him to play again. In the meantime, he is receiving specialized psychosocial services through a UNICEF supported programme.

In August, The Joint UNICEF-UNFPA Programme to End Child Marriage hosted another virtual visit for its Steering Committee, this time to Uganda, with an exciting programme involving the in-country representation from Government, civil society, and a young person. We hope to promote more multi-level virtual exchanges with partners, and especially involving field level colleagues, as a valuable mechanism for mutual learning and critical reflection.

Meanwhile, as the COVID-19 context shifts globally, we are reminded that there are many urgent and devastating crises impacting millions of children which require our immediate action. In Afghanistan and Ethiopia, for example, we have become acutely aware of how we must improve our response to early warnings of imminent child protection violations, whilst at the same time we have been able to employ learnings from past humanitarian emergencies to provide an immediate and coordinated response.

I hope you will enjoy this last Child Protection Update of 2021, which includes information on many important advocacy, research and technical developments over the past semester. Though we undoubtedly face many challenges during these complex times, it is encouraging to see such advances consistently integrated in policy and practice, along with the continuous momentum we propel together in ensuring protection for every child.

Find UNICEF’s Child Protection Strategy in Arabic, English, French, Spanish, along with a Technical Annex and summary versions here.
The second half of 2021 has been filled with important developments for several topics within UNICEF’s thematic priorities. Some of these have included:

- In the framework of the International Year to Eliminate Child Labour, the new ‘Global Estimates on Child Labour’, published by UNICEF and ILO in June, sounded an alarm on stalled progress in making true on the global promise to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2025.

  The study reveals that at the start of 2020, prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour, or 1 in 10 children worldwide. Seventy-nine million children – nearly half of all those in child labour – were in hazardous work directly endangering their health, safety and moral development.

  In the past four years, for the first time since 2000, the world did not make progress in reducing child labour. The absolute number of children in child labour increased by over 8 million, while the proportion of children in child labour remained unchanged.

  The Global World Congress on Justice with Children, provided the pivotal moment for UNICEF to launch its new 10-year ‘Reimagine Justice for Children’ agenda, with the UNICEF Executive Director calling for six key interconnected and mutually reinforcing actions that can be adapted to countries’ contexts to achieve just, peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16) for all children. This agenda lays out a new bold vision for child justice reform calling for more intentional efforts to combat discrimination in child justice systems and a strong commitment to empower children and youth. Most importantly, it calls to end the detention of children in all its forms. This agenda draws from the results achieved during the COVID-pandemic in justice reforms and the safe release of children from detention. New global data on ‘Detention of children in the time of COVID’, shows that since the start of the pandemic over 45,000 children have been released from detention in at least 84 countries. This is historic – we have never seen the release of so many children on this scale. The evidence is clear, it is more than possible to ensure children have access to justice -even in the midst of a global pandemic. It is even possible to end the detention of children. We must double down in our efforts.

- Recently published research on female genital mutilation (FGM) includes a global review of evidence on the ‘Effectiveness of Interventions Designed to Prevent or Respond to FGM (brief)’ that synthesizes and assesses the quality and strength of existing evidence on FGM interventions from 2008 to 2020. Findings suggest that health education, community dialogues with parents and religious leaders, the use of media and social marketing efforts, and formal education for women and girls are examples of interventions that have a strong body of evidence to justify wider implementation as part of comprehensive efforts to eliminate FGM.

- Marking the 25th Anniversary of the Graça Machel Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore and SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba issued a Joint statement revealing that the UN has verified 266,000 grave violations against children in more than 30 conflict situations across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America over the past 16 years, since the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism was established under UN Security Council Resolution 1612. This sobering account includes more than 104,100 children killed and maimed, 93,000 children recruited and used in fighting and support roles, 25,700 children abducted, and another 14,200 child victims of sexual violence. They highlighted concrete progress achieved in protecting children in armed conflict situations, such as the Paris Principles to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups, now endorsed by 112 member states, and the Safe School Declaration to strengthen the protection of education from attack and restrict use of schools and universities for military purposes, endorsed by 112 member states. However, only 18 of the 61 parties to conflict listed in the annexes of the 2021 Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict have a joint Action Plan or similar commitments with the UN to prevent grave rights violations against children. SRSG Gamba and ED Fore rang the alarm again and called on all parties listed by the Secretary General in his report on Children and Armed Conflict to agree and adhere to an Action Plan to protect children and take concrete measures to end and prevent violations against children.
 Violence against children in the Ukraine remains a serious challenge and COVID-19 only aggravated this even more. According to the Office of the Prosecutor General, in 2020, more than 5,200 children suffered from severe crimes.

Following the President’s Decree “On Urgent Measures to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence, and Protect the Rights of Victims of Such Violence.” signed in 2020, UNICEF partnered with the Government in introducing a comprehensive child protection and justice model – also known as Barnahus- aiming to avoid the re-victimization of children subjected to violence, exploitation and abuse and ensure comprehensive individual assessments and assistance.

Barnahus is an interdisciplinary and interagency specialized centre for children who are victims or witnesses of violence (including sexual and domestic violence and human trafficking) which works as a child-friendly structure, under one roof, where law enforcement, criminal justice, child protection services, medical and mental health workers carry out criminal investigation and child welfare assessments in parallel. It ensures that children receive comprehensive psychological, social, medical, informational, legal, and other services based on an assessment of their needs and considering age, gender, health, and other individual factors. At the same time, it allows the adaptation of criminal proceedings to the needs of children by creating an environment aimed at reducing anxiety, preventing psychological trauma, and facilitating the receipt of robust information for judicial purposes.

For UNICEF Ukraine, the sustainability of the model and its national ownership are central to its success. The initiative brought together several line ministries and key justice structures and envisages the use of sub-regional or local budgetary funds to ensure Barnahus centres remain operational, while UNICEF ensures the capacity building of child protection and justice professionals (the multi-disciplinary team) working with children and provides technical support for the establishment and equipment of centres.

To date, three Barnahus centres are being established in 3 regions of the Ukraine. Given the strong commitment from the Government and building on the momentum of the partnerships at national and regional levels, the decision was made to expand the geographical coverage of the project and include 3 more regions where centres are planned to be opened in 2022.
BOLIVIA: HELPLINE FAMILIA SEGURA (SAFE FAMILY)-A LIFELINE FOR MANY FAMILIES

On March 12th, 2020, with the arrival of COVID-19, the Bolivian government declared the first preventive measures, followed by a strict lockdown. Immediately, UNICEF understood the need to reach children and parents with emotional support, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children’s mental health, but also to reduce the risk of violence at home. On 1st April, only three weeks later, Familia Segura had been established and received the first calls. This agile reaction was possible thanks to the flexibility of UNICEF’s Global Thematic Funding.

Familia Segura offers comprehensive psychosocial counselling, stress coping mechanism and self-care strategies to parents/caregivers and children and adolescents. It has a national coverage, including rural and urban areas throughout the country. It provides service in indigenous language by experts in child and adolescent mental health.

What started as mental health and parenting counselling services has now turned into a key element of the child protection system in Bolivia. The helpline is increasingly receiving calls from children and women suffering or witnessing violence. Familia Segura has established referral services with police and child protection services, strengthening the linkages among services and hence promoting a better and more friendly access to response services.

As of October 2021, Safe Family has received 45,580 calls nationwide, providing psychosocial support and counselling to thousands of children and adolescents and their families. Approximately 60% of the calls made to Familia Segura are from children and young people between 8 and 25 years of age. Many children (30 % of all calls) report violence between their parents or suffering violence from their parents/caregivers.

I’m very sad. I haven’t slept for many days because my dad got ill with COVID in El Alto. My mum is selling things so we – I have 4 brothers and sisters – can have something to eat. My dad might die because he is seriously ill and he is the one who pays for the food in our house.

Testimony of an 11-year-old boy who reached out to the call centre.

During the time of strict quarantine, from 22 March to 31 May, we recorded a considerable increase in cases of violence involving children and adolescents, as many as 3414 cases. 108 were reports of rape, and 2869 cases were reports of violence within the family. The partnership between Familia Segura and the Bolivian Police allows us to provide psychological support to children and women survivors of violence, including sexual violence and rape. It also helps to make those suffering from violence aware of their rights and encourage them to report incidents.

Colonel Juan Carlos Alarcón, National Director of the Police Task Force to Combat Violence (FELCV)
Protection concerns remain paramount in the Syria crisis. Children face protracted and multiple displacements; violence; family separation; psychosocial distress; depleted coping mechanisms; and the widespread destruction of basic services. Of the 13.1 million people in need of protection services, 5.9 million are children. Fifty-one per cent of respondents in assessed communities reported that family violence was an issue of concern. Seventy two per cent of communities surveyed reported early marriage (up from 47 per cent in 2020; often affecting girls) and 84 per cent that children are forced to work rather than study (up from 67 per cent in 2020; with boys more likely to be involved in hazardous forms of labour and girls in domestic work.). An estimated 10.3 million boys, girls, men and women are living in areas contaminated with explosive ordnance.

UNICEF mental health and psychosocial support in Syria helps children and their caregivers to identify difficult experiences and learn how to build their resilience. The programme has supported children and families to learn and use age-appropriate psychosocial skills targeting children and their families to protect them from psychosocial distress, abuse, violence and exploitation; improve their emotional and social well-being; and strengthen their coping mechanisms and resilience. Children learn how to understand their own feelings, taking a learning path through the best understanding of their emotional world and how to deal with challenges they face. Divided up by age group (6-9, 10-12, 13-18), children participate in 16 sessions over a two-month period. This is achieved through community-supported child friendly spaces (CFSs) and community-based child protection mechanisms and processes.

In the wake of COVID-19, UNICEF and partners developed a range of COVID-19 awareness messages to support families to deal with new pressures on family relationships and the psychosocial wellbeing of children and to improve parenting skills related to the pandemic. Weekly videos posted on Facebook reached 170,111 children (89,744 girls) and 85,189 parents (56,391 women) with COVID-19 prevention messages, as well as remote psychosocial support, helping parents to better deal with the additional stressors caused by the pandemic and providing tips for positive parenting and nurturing care during the pandemic and beyond.

To reinforce community-based efforts, a psychosocial support manual was designed to be implemented in schools, since children will not be able to fully learn if student mental and psychological wellbeing is not supported. This will be reinforced by a structured parenting programmes to improve developmentally appropriate practices by parents and address parents’ emotional wellbeing.

From January to October 2021, 168,609 children (85,991 girls; 1,334 children with disabilities) and 36,532 caregivers (30,687 women) have participated in the psychosocial support programme. This success to date has been a direct result of the generous support of the Central Emergency Response Fund, Governments of Germany and Japan, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. Pre- and post-assessments reveal an improved psychosocial wellbeing in 56 per cent of participating children, up from 49 per cent mid-2021. UNICEF, with its partners, is focusing more on providing structured psychosocial support, which shows development in the whole program implementation and led for better results.
UNICEF supported hundreds of children who were separated from their families at the Kabul airport during the large-scale evacuation of thousands of Afghans in the weeks before the United States (US) withdrawal from Afghanistan in August.

Between August 23 and 28, while evacuations were ongoing, UNICEF deployed child protection specialists to Hamid Karzai International Airport to immediately identify and register unaccompanied and separate children (UASC) and provide care and protection inside the airport. During this period and under particularly challenging conditions, UNICEF registered around 160 unaccompanied children, of whom more than 140 travelled outside the country and more than a dozen were reunified with their families in Kabul.

U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration (PRM) requested UNICEF’s support to identify, register, and care for the UASC evacuated by the United States Government. UNICEF responded immediately, rapidly deploying specialized child protection staff and our standby partner experts to Doha, Qatar, and Ramstein airbase, Germany.

During the evacuations and in the weeks following, UNICEF provided technical and operational expertise as well as interagency coordination on family tracing and reunification, setting up operations in Doha and Ramstein. The US brought most unaccompanied children to these two locations where UNICEF and International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided child protection and family tracing services. In both Qatar and Germany, an adapted version of the CP Information Management System Primero was deployed to support family tracing and reunification, as well as coordination amongst concerned agencies.

UNICEF coordinated closely with PRM globally and locally to facilitate and accelerate durable solutions and family reunification in the United States and in third countries where such pathways exist. UNICEF also collaborated with IOM, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In Doha, since 25 August, UNICEF and partners have registered around 250 unaccompanied and separated children, some with family links to the US or to third countries and others with no links outside of Afghanistan. UNICEF worked with the Government of Qatar (GoQ) and the Qatar Charity for the provision of temporary care for these children in facilities outside the US air base. UNICEF, IOM, and UNHCR worked jointly to conduct Best Interest Determination panels with the US and Qatari governments to determine viable pathways for long-terms solutions in the best interest of these children.

In Germany, UNICEF deployed a team from 27 August to 17 October. During that period, UNICEF and partners registered about 140 unaccompanied and separated children, likewise, some with family links to the US, to third countries or with no links outside of Afghanistan.

UNICEF’s main objectives were to prevent additional family separation at every stage, promoting family unity and reunification, above all. UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore issued a statement regarding the protection of UASC. The US Government agreed to allow children separated from their parents or usual caregiver to remain with a trusted adult they had travelled with, if in their best interest, upon arrival in the United States. More recently, the US Government issued policy granting a legal pathway for family reunification for unaccompanied children who went to the United States; their parents and siblings can join the child for a durable solution in the US. This policy for family reunification sets a strong precedent for decisions based on the best interest of the child.

UNICEF is pleased that the vast majority of UASC evacuated from Afghanistan have successfully been placed with family members or reunified with parents. While a minority of children have been placed in alternative care, efforts for reunification with parents will continue.
PROMOTING SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE STRENGTHENING IN THE REGION

During 2021, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific, together with ASEAN, have led the #StandTogetherforSocialWorkers campaign to raise awareness of the critical role the social service workforce plays in the lives of children, families and communities in the region.

The need to tackle negative public perceptions of the social service workforce was recognized in the Hanoi Declaration for Strengthening Social Work for Cohesive and Responsive adopted by the ASEAN Heads of State in November 2020; this campaign is a key contribution to the implementation of the Declaration.

While the job of a social worker is skilled, complex and challenging, in most South-East Asian countries, social work is still not recognised as a profession by law. Instead, they are viewed as carrying out charity work. Limited public understanding of their role and value impacts demand for services and investment in social work.

The campaign message is clear – we must collectively recognize the invaluable contribution of the social service workforce and ensure they are effectively supported to be equipped to provide vital support to communities and the most vulnerable in our societies, including children.

Strengthening the social service workforce is at the heart of UNICEF’s engagement on child protection and reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized, including children with disabilities and children affected by migration. In 2019, UNICEF and the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance undertook a mapping of the social service workforces in East Asia and the Pacific. The mapping highlighted significant challenges, including very low ratios of social workers per population, few countries with a professionalised workforce, and poor public perceptions of social workers. UNICEF supported the development of the Hanoi Declaration. To translate the declaration into action, ASEAN Member States, with UNICEF’s support, developed a regional roadmap, which was adopted in October 2021.

In 2022, UNICEF will support the development of operational guidance, including the role of social workers in the social protection system and other key sectors, the minimum ratio of social workers per population unit, and continue to support the regional public perceptions campaign on the newly created ASEAN Social Work Day. In addition, UNICEF continues its support to developing other capacity building materials and structures; policy development and evidence building.
MALAWI: INVESTING IN ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE

The Government of Malawi, UNICEF, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), key development partners, UN Agencies, CSOs, other child rights agencies, faith and traditional leaders have reaffirmed their commitment to end child marriage in Malawi. The pledge was made in response to findings of studies on ending child marriage carried out by the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW), UNICEF and the IMF.

The commitment to invest more to end child marriage in Malawi was signed by the Ministry of Gender, the Judiciary, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home Affairs, Traditional Authority Chowe of Mangochi, a 16-year-old child marriage survivor from Mangochi representing all Malawian children, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, IMF, the EU, Public Affairs Committee (PAC), World Vision International, OXFAM, Girls’ Empowerment Network, Irish Embassy and the Norwegian Embassy among others.

The commitments to save girls from child marriage are in line with the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and will be followed up through the National Task Force on Ending Child Marriage.
COTE D’IVOIRE INCREASES BIRTH REGISTRATION RATES DESPITE COVID-19

Between 2015 and 2018, timely birth registration⁴ followed a declining trend in Côte d’Ivoire. More children were registered after the legal delay of free registration than those registered right after birth, leading families to face costly court procedures representing a major obstacle for birth registration in the Francophone African countries.

To revert this trend, and to remove one of the main barriers to the registration process as reported by parents - the distance to the registration centre - UNICEF supported in 2018 the establishment of an institutional agreement between the Ministries of Interior, Health and Justice to set up a birth registration service within health platforms. Since then, with a special birth registration process, including forms and registers, midwives are mandated by law to document birth declarations for children who are born in maternities; and health and vaccination agents to declare children who are born at home but who come in for vaccination. The birth declaration forms are sent from the health service to the nearest civil registration office for registration in the state registry and signature by the civil registrar. While birth certificates are not yet available at the health service level, the system automatically captures for registration all newborn babies and those coming for vaccination.

During the COVID-19 crisis, UNICEF continued to support newly established registration services allowing for continuous service delivery. In early 2021, the new service model was scaled up and is now available in 100% of maternities and immunization centres across the country. The 2020 annual statistical report of birth registration confirmed the success of the initiative: unlike some other countries in the West and Central Africa region, Côte d’Ivoire has managed to increase timely birth registration rates during this year. The rate is currently at 65 %.

Moving forward, UNICEF will invest in quality assurance of the new birth registration service within health platforms in view of standardizing the registration process. At the regional level, through a strategic partnership with the African Union, UNICEF is working to ensure the experience of Côte d’Ivoire inspires and informs other countries struggling with similar bottlenecks, showing that universal birth registration on the African continent is indeed a reality within reach.

#foreverychild
#legalidentity
#NoNameCampaign
In September, the Day of General Discussion (DGD) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Alternative Care placed children and young people’s ideas at the centre of the agenda. UNICEF prepared this video in which children and families around the world are interviewed on this topic. As a member of the planning team, UNICEF played a key role in shaping the themes and the agenda of the DGD. UNICEF supported the organization of an entire online DGD, a first ever for the CRC Committee, that resulted in unprecedented participation of more than 1,200 persons from over 100 countries. UNICEF also provided extensive support through the provision of international sign and American Sign Language, as well as live closed captioning services that made all the sessions of the DGD more accessible to children and youth with disabilities, an over-represented population in alternative care institutions worldwide.

In 2020, adolescent girls across the globe filmed their lives during lockdown in season 1 of ‘Coping with COVID’. A year later, they’re standing up to reclaim their hopes for a fair future.

In the first season, 16 girls told us their stories about life during COVID-19. Lockdown measures meant to stem the spread of COVID-19 tore millions of children from quality learning, nutritious diets and mental health care. But for girls, disruptions also came at the cost of their safety.

The risk of gender-based violence and harmful practices has risen during the pandemic. And many girls kept from school will never return, their childhood stolen by child marriage or pregnancy. This year, 8 girls are back in season 2 of ‘Coping with COVID’, and they’re challenging taboos, taking the lead and speaking out.

Media Coverage: The launch of the Global Child Labour Estimates in June drew significant attention.

UNICEF was mentioned in 2,542 print and online articles, including 198 in top-tier outlets, plus an additional 11 top-tier broadcast interviews on the subject, as recorded by our media monitoring service between 9-24 June.
For over a decade, UNICEF has prioritized child protection systems strengthening (CPSS) as a key approach to child protection programming. In response to the 2018 evaluation of UNICEF’s work on CPSS, and guided by UNICEF’s new Child Protection Strategy (2021 – 2030), UNICEF has published ‘Child Protection Systems Strengthening: Approach, Benchmarks, Interventions’ to accelerate programming in this area. This publication offers a comprehensive framework to guide investments in CPSS going forward and outlines: 1) key considerations that shape the CPSS approach, including programme-impact pathways, and seven elements of child protection systems critical to be achieved as “intermediate outcomes” essential to strengthen child protection systems; 2) CPSS benchmarks introducing a systematic way of measuring the progress made in CPSS along the programme-impact pathways over four phases of systems strengthening; and 3) CPSS interventions articulating key priority areas of work and a suggested method to identify a menu of priority CPSS interventions that are relevant to the national context.

Knowledge, evidence, and learning are critical parts of the acceleration of solutions and actions to end violence against children. This shared vision brought together more than 400 practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from around the world on 14 September, 2021, to learn about the latest evidence on violence against children prevention and response and reflect on how we can more effectively generate and use evidence to catalyze action to end violence against children. The event, “Evidence Matters: Taking stock of the evidence on preventing and responding to violence against children” (recording) organized by UNICEF Office of Research- Innocenti was part of the Solutions Summit series hosted by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, which spotlights progress and momentum towards identifying effective solutions and programme strategies implemented by UNICEF and partners in different contexts.

Of immediate relevance around the globe, the ‘Framework for Reopening of Schools’ highlights the need to re-establish regular and safe delivery of essential services- including protection referrals- as part of the back-to school process. Another recent publication on ‘Action to End Violence against Children in (and around) Schools’ provides a review of 25 programme interventions as well as eight detailed case studies. This review focuses on the 2018-2020 period, 2018 being the year when the #ENDviolence campaign adopted a more targeted focus on ending violence in and around schools and the Safe to Learn initiative was established. This report aims to complement the’ Safe to Learn Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool’ by detailing concrete examples on the range of interventions and programme strategies implemented by UNICEF and partners in different contexts.

The ‘2020 Annual Report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change’ and the ‘2020 Annual Report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage’ capture the experience of the Joint Programmes and their partners in preventing, mitigating, and responding to increased risks during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the programmes’ achievements despite facing an unprecedented global crisis. An accompanying video for the FGM programme features statements from donors, partners, champions, youth, ambassadors, and more, along with key results from 2020.

The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage hosted a global, virtual meeting 19-21 October – titled ‘Brilliant Minds, Bold Approaches, Better Results’. With over 360 attendees over the 3 days and 18 sessions, it brought together experts from across the world who shared the latest evidence and programme experiences on girl empowerment, gender transformation, working in the COVID-19 context, digital engagement, and working in humanitarian contexts: all with the aim of determining a pathway to end child marriage in this decade of action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.3 by 2030. Learn more through all session recordings, summary drawings and a summary video.

Also new is the ‘Technical Note on Girls’ Education, Empowerment, and the Elimination of FGM’ that seeks to demonstrate and deepen linkages between
education and FGM, as well as present related strategies to advance girls’ education and eliminate FGM and the ACT Framework Package, which is a macro-level M&E framework containing a compendium of indicators to track and measure social norms change resulting from social and behavior change interventions addressing FGM.

From the Spotlight Initiative and UNICEF comes ‘Stories of Hope, Courage and Chang in Latin America and Africa’ which documents work to end violence against women and girls and contains individual human interest stories and key data from programming in these regions. Another joint report released in July by UNICEF and UNHCR, shows that in many countries women can face ‘Sex Discrimination in Birth Registration’, through legislation and cultural norms, which obstructs or hinders their ability to register births, exposing their children to the risk of becoming stateless.