The impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, underpinned by violence, inequities, increased natural disasters, and environmental degradation, made growing up challenging for children in the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA). The ECA comprises eight independent states (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago) and four overseas territories (Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, the Turks and Caicos Islands). Each are classified as a high- or upper-middle-income country. According to latest population data, children under 18 years of age total just over half a million and account for 25.9 per cent of the overall population in the subregion.

The countries and territories in the ECA have historically been among the Caribbean region’s highest performers. The 2020 Human Development Index (HDI) shows ECA countries and territories as either ‘very high’ or ‘high’. However, the impressive development gains disguise significant disparities within and between countries and territories. These disparities have been further accentuated by people on the move.

In 2021, the political landscape across the subregion was calm, but changes offered opportunities for UNICEF to further position the children’s agenda at the highest national level. Four ECA countries and territories held elections during this period. The Turks and Caicos Islands held a general election on 19 February, followed by Saint Lucia on 26 July. In both instances, a new government was elected with a landslide victory for the then opposition. In Tobago, House of Assembly elections were held on 6 December to elect members following a deadlock created by the 27 January 2021 elections, which resulted in a tie between the two main parties. In Barbados, presidential elections were held on 20 October to choose the country’s first president, an office established as part of Barbados becoming the world’s newest republic on 30 November. Parliament in Barbados was also dissolved on 27 December, paving the way for a general election on 19 January 2022.

Analysis from national budget briefs produced in 2021 based on 2020 data for select ECA countries and territories, showed poor budget execution rates in key social sectors. These important levels of underspends indicate that budget allocations to ministries that directly benefit children are not being spent and/or ministries are facing broader public finance management issues. This indicates the importance of improving budgetary planning processes and institutional capacity to ensure effective implementation.

All ECA countries and territories except for Montserrat continued to experience periodic spikes in COVID-19 cases during 2021. Following the first confirmed case in March 2020, the subregion had recorded a total of 169,612 cases and 3,992 deaths by the end of December 2021. Governments commenced the roll-out of national vaccination plans in February 2021 and by 31 December, an estimated 1.1 million persons were fully vaccinated ranging from 25 to 70 per cent of the eligible population across each country/territory. While the impact of COVID-19 has varied widely across the subregion, in part reflecting the size and importance of the tourism sector, for most ECA countries and territories, rising levels of debt was a significant factor anticipated to further constrain fiscal space. Economies were hit hard, with GDP estimated to have contracted by 17 per cent in 2020 and grew by 0.92 per cent in 2021, according to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. Public debt projected to reach 90 per cent of GDP in 2021. Economic recovery is expected to be slow for countries and territories and may require reduced government spending with impacts on basic services.

The pandemic also continued to affect all education institutions and to disrupt schooling for half a million children in the ECA, as a result of increased school closures and resumption of online classes. The cancellation and postponement of examinations also impacted the transition from primary to secondary schools, and from secondary school to tertiary education. It also delayed the physical transition from pre-primary to primary schools.

During extended periods of lockdown, and in a context of overall economic and social distress,
children and adolescents are at high risk of domestic violence. The likelihood of this occurring is heightened by the already high prevalence of violent discipline in the ECA, where the physical abuse and corporal punishment of children are ubiquitous. The 2011-2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) found that 60-70 per cent of children experienced some form of physical and/or psychological violence in the month prior to the survey. Violence in and around schools is a growing concern. The Global School-Based Health Survey show that bullying and physical fighting are common. The extent of child sexual violence in the ECA is hard to determine, but perception studies found that 57 per cent of adults maintained that child sexual abuse was a major problem with around 70 per cent of 2-14-year-olds subject to this practice. Among them, between 50 and 60 per cent had been physically disciplined. Young women and girls were also at higher risk of experiencing gender-based violence (GBV), intimate partner violence or sexual exploitation.

On the humanitarian front, natural hazards forced the displacement of children and their families in the subregion. Following the La Soufrière volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on 9 April 2021, approximately 22,000 people needed support, including over 4,800 children, following the mandatory evacuation of 30 villages. In addition to the loss and damage of homes, the country lost between 80 and 100 per cent of vegetation in the affected zones.

Political and economic instability in neighbouring countries in Latin America resulted in further population movements into the ECA. At the end of 2021, just over 21,500 Venezuelan migrants and refugees were in Trinidad and Tobago, 18 per cent of whom were children. As social assistance remained inadequate for Venezuelans in the country, different humanitarian actors provided support. Despite access to these services, Trinidad and Tobago has not yet afforded migrant children access to education through their national system. Over 4,000 migrant and refugee children continue to rely on education support through alternative platforms.

### Major contributions and drivers of results

Programming in 2021 was influenced heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing humanitarian responses. While some funding and interventions were reoriented to support national responses to the pandemic and emergency, progress was made in reimagining UNICEF programmes and policy support, considering the social and economic crises, to continue to achieve results for children.

**Every child learns**

Despite the challenges faced with the extended closure of educational facilities, and the limited access to devices and internet access for some families, UNICEF ECA countries scored among the highest globally in the Remote Learning Readiness Index. This is a new indicator that measures countries’ readiness to deliver remote learning in response to school closures or the disruption of in-person learning.

In 2021, UNICEF maintained schooling for 157,700 children (80,399 boys and 77,301 girls) from primary and secondary schools and ECD centres through its Lifelong Learning programme. It continued its support in collaboration with national, subregional and international partners inclusive of parents, educators and others. Students benefited from improved teaching and learning environments. This included the safe reopening of schools, and ECD centres; the provision of supplies of hygiene packs and sanitization stations/equipment; the delivery of science kits; the provision of appropriate materials for young learners; the organization of academic recovery programmes for the preparation of examinations; in addition to the delivery of devices to most vulnerable children.

Approximately 13,000 teachers, parents, and caregivers were also trained and supported to deliver diligent care, home-based and online education during school closures. Together with the MoEs, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and Notes Master, UNICEF also introduced beneficiaries to a diverse range of teaching and learning experiences that involved both online and face-to-face education, utilizing high-quality resources. One hundred and thirty-one teachers (120 females and 11 males) completed the training in the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach to support children on the move, who are native Spanish speakers. UNICEF is piloting the
methodology in view of it being scaled up as a supplement to the curricula.

Migrant and refugee children in Trinidad and Tobago who don’t have access to the national education system, continued their education through Equal Place, an online learning initiative. Additionally, UNICEF supported approximately 22,500 of the regions’ most vulnerable children with the provision of devices in collaboration with the OECS Commission, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and Generation Unlimited funds (GenU). Also, UNICEF supported, in partnership with the OECS Commission, the COVID-19 education sector response and Giga implementation plan, and provided training to create a digital repository of open educational resources.

Enhancing the skills and knowledge of approximately 2,445 ECD practitioners and teachers, and 3,080 parents and other caregivers in the provision of nurturing care, learning, and holistic development in safe, protective, and enriching environments remained the focus for UNICEF. Additionally, UNICEF delivered capacity-building in more responsive caregiving to support quality of health, well-being, and early experiences for learning for children under the age of 8 in 2021. This was done concomitantly by sharing information and reliable guidance on breastfeeding and healthy nutrition for young children; tips for supporting psychosocial health and well-being; promoting vaccinations in the fight against COVID-19; and supporting learning and development at home. Inclusively, more than 950 young children on the move and their families also benefited from comprehensive integrated counselling services, and over 800 received emergency nutritional support.

UNICEF successfully completed policy work around the Education Policy Reviews in Barbados and Anguilla; and undertook the Child Friendly Schools/Effective Schools Framework Evaluation to support improved teaching and learning across ECA countries. Key recommendations from this evaluation will inform UNICEF’s programming in child protection, social and behaviour change communication, and evidence generation.

Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

High rates of violence against children continue to plague the ECA and efforts to reduce risks of violence, exploitation and abuse of children remained high on the agenda in 2021. UNICEF provided technical support for the development of new laws, policies, and strategies aimed at strengthening normative frameworks and enhancing child protection systems across 12 countries and territories.

To address the increased need for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) exacerbated by the protracted restrictions imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF in partnership with the OECS Commission, and key national child protection agencies, expanded access to remote, online, and tele-MHPSS for frontline workers, caregivers and children. UNICEF scaled up the MyChild Helpline application to four additional countries, in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada and St. Vincent and Grenadines, supporting greater links to national protection, helpline, emergency and counselling services. It placed access directly in the palms of caregivers’ and children’s hands. The negative effects of the increased use of technology on children emerged as an area requiring additional attention. As such, UNICEF supported the analysis and development of frameworks for the capacity development of key stakeholders, including children, to address and reduce the risks of online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Amidst strongly held values and norms which are in most instances also supported by national laws, UNICEF made some progress to advance policy initiatives on the prohibition of corporal punishment in Barbados. The eventual passage of approved policy frameworks will increase the total number of countries that have legislation against this harmful practice in various settings. UNICEF also continued to support the enhancement of child-friendly procedures for juvenile justice systems across the OECS countries and Barbados. It provided financial and technical support for the development of information management systems in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago to improve case management.

Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2021, UNICEF contributed to improving the socioeconomic status and well-being of children in the ECA to ensure that they did not fall deeper into poverty due to shocks. It did this through effectively supporting (i) the shift in four countries towards more rights-based, child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection legal and policy frameworks, and (ii) social protection systems-strengthening and enhanced programme delivery. It achieved this by effectively increasing the capacity
of key stakeholders and providing the technical support to enhance programme delivery mechanisms (targeting, payment systems, grievance and redress mechanisms, communication and monitoring). It included response to shocks (COVID-19 and the volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) in eight countries/territories covered by the office, as well as at a subregional level through the OECS Commission and the Caribbean Emergency Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA).

Policy responses benefitted from the evidence generated by UNICEF on public finance for children, which focused on advocating for more efficient and effective national budget allocations to sectors that matter for children. The knowledge of staff from social sectors and Ministries of Finance on budget issues linked to the social sector was increased in five countries (Antigua and Barbuda, the British Virgin Islands, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago). UNICEF will further support influencing public financial decision-making processes and to leverage domestic resources for children in 2022.

A key milestone was reached in the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands. UNICEF used participatory and integrated consultations across the education, health and social development sectors to help draft their ECD policy document and implementation plan. Once approved by the Cabinet, UNICEF expects to guide a more structured, inclusive, and integrated programming for early childhood development programmes.

By the strengthening of national capacities in data collection and the provision of technical expertise for evidence generation, UNICEF contributed to a body of knowledge and data on children, adolescents, and young people in the ECA. UNICEF continued to support the Department of Statistics in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the analysis of data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the completion of the report on the survey findings, as well as supporting the Central Statistical Office (CSO) in Trinidad and Tobago to finalize the MICS survey tools and the provision of PPE for enumerators. In Saint Lucia, UNICEF’s engagement is ongoing with CSO for resumption of MICS after national Census. UNICEF also has an opportunity to support administrative data management in Trinidad and Tobago, following a request from the Office of the Prime Minister. This will be in collaboration with the Division of Gender and Child Affairs. UNICEF also emphasized Humanitarian Programme Monitoring by strengthening countries’ capacities in real-time monitoring using Survey 123, Rapid Pro, and Kobo Toolbox. Through the new Multi Country Programme (MCP) 2022–2026, UNICEF will continue to harness partnerships and strategies to sustainably generate data that can be used for evidence-based programming.

Social and behavior change programming

Recognising that vaccine hesitancy was a challenge in all programme countries, UNICEF supported countries to implement campaigns, engage influencers, and to implement community-based intervention to gain greater uptake for COVID-19 vaccines. UNICEF also collaborated with MoEs, and with regional NGOs to address obesity among children, especially in a pandemic environment where national lockdowns and online schooling led to a decrease in physical activity and unhealthy eating habits. Our strategic collaboration with partners resulted in parents and caregivers acquiring enhanced knowledge of the importance of exercise and making healthy food choices. Lactating mothers also acquired improved knowledge of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for six months.

Humanitarian action

In 2021, UNICEF continued to support the most vulnerable in humanitarian contexts. In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, UNICEF provided cash relief support through the national social protection system to 490 affected families. In partnership with CDEMA, UNICEF ensured that within the first 72 hours after the volcanic eruption, it made sufficient WASH supplies available to the National Emergency Management Organisation for lifesaving response. In partnership with the Ministry for National Mobilisation, over 13,000 caregivers and children benefited from child protection in emergency interventions including MHPSS, GBV risk mitigation, child-friendly spaces and other community interventions.

UNICEF also continued to provide enhanced delivery of quality equitable and inclusive education to all children and provided support to 7,568 directly affected students. Through the Ministry of
Education, UNICEF provided psychosocial support in learning centres, created learning hubs to support students preparing for exams and provided an online bridging programme to support the return to learning. Additionally, UNICEF disseminated communication messages on how to keep children safe and protected while at shelters at key physical sites, including shelters and through social media platforms reaching just over 79,200 persons. UNICEF continues to support families after the disaster to return to their homes of origin, and it provides WASH and protection services through the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and CARITAS Antilles to support the recovery process once families are able to return home.

Migrant children, adolescents and families in Trinidad and Tobago also continued to receive support from UNICEF and national partners in 2021. Despite the challenges caused by COVID-19 and the State of Emergency measures adopted by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021 marked a growth and consolidation of the migrant response. Partnerships increased and strengthened; the foundation to cash-based interventions was established; and technical capacities expanded enabling system-wide results. Over 2,200 unique child beneficiaries and their families accessed information, education, nutrition, protection services and cash assistance.

Leveraging the development–humanitarian nexus, UNICEF contributed to building systems that can respond to the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking children. One example is the National Child Policy, which was also available in a child-friendly version produced in Spanish to raise child rights’ awareness among Venezuelan migrant and refugee children. UNICEF’s leadership and coordination efforts mobilized all stakeholders to strengthen the response for children and saw the development and implementation capacity-building activities, exchange of experiences with Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, knowledge generation, and advocacy activities that supported a more coordinated approach to the rights of migrant and refugee children in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Resilience agenda**

Over the last quinquennial ending 2021 the Caribbean recorded increased evidence of climate change and stronger forecasts of impending climate disasters. The subregion experienced numerous strong weather systems, more powerful hurricanes, longer dry seasons, and shorter wet seasons. To ensure community and systems resilience, UNICEF focused on the link between humanitarian response and longer-term sustainable development as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This effort included strengthening resilience to climate change and disasters as well as promoting inclusive societies.

Climate resilience is a core cross-cutting programmatic priority, and in 2021 UNICEF mobilized young people across the subregion to accelerate and facilitate climate action. UNICEF Youth Advocates from Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago participated in COP26 and through support to the Healthy and Environment-friendly Youth (HEY) campaign, UNICEF supported the creation of the HEY parliament and other online events, including a seminar on climate change and sport, as well as a photo/video competition on climate change. Through a partnership with Caribbean Youth Environment Network (CYEN), UNICEF was engaged in the ‘Stay Alive and Thrive’ climate action campaign and supported other youth-led advocacy events raising public awareness about the urgent need to mitigate and adapt to climate change across the Caribbean and the world.

UNICEF influenced, lobbied, and advocated for the inclusion of children and youth as a specific group in major climate change policies, such as the National Determined Contributions (NDCs). As a result, Grenada and St. Lucia included children and youth in their revised NDCs, and St. Lucia officially recognized UNICEF as a strategic partner in their 2021 NDC revision. UNICEF also continued to make progress on Gamification for Climate Action (GACA) – Nature Heroes – through testing and reaching out to partners. It continued to work on drafting a multisectoral, multi-agency concept note for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) on integrating climate adaptation and resilience in Dominica in partnership with the Government of Dominica, the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). To advance child sensitivity in climate policies, UNICEF and CYEN consulted thousands of children and young people throughout the region on their needs, priorities and ideas for action.

UNICEF ECA introduced business and community resilience (BCR) as an area of focus in 2021. UNICEF engaged the private sector to explore potential engagement in emergency preparedness and
response. The groundwork is being established to set up partnerships in these areas by setting up or leveraging with businesses existing platforms and initiatives, and to establish effective coordination mechanisms among humanitarian actors. UNICEF engaged multi-stakeholder business platforms to apply a child-centred perspective on humanitarian action to converge on BCR. UNICEF action points at mobilizing and leveraging awareness, interest and resources; and is currently conducting a landscape assessment of private sector engagement in humanitarian action, mapping key resources that are potentially available in disaster response with the Energy Chamber of Commerce in Trinidad and Tobago. Three key initiatives selected are prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA) in partnership with national Hotel and Tourism associations, build capacity and preparedness in cash transfers through financial services providers, and access to education for migrant children. UNICEF is also jointly working with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to tailor the Business Continuity Planning Tool developed by the Caribbean Chamber of Commerce (CARICHAM) with child-centred components.

**UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships**

In 2021, UNICEF maintained and strengthened partnerships at national and subregional levels to effectively deliver quality results for children. The OECS Commission and CDEMA continued to be strategic partners in a range of programmes across the region in both development and humanitarian contexts. New partnerships also emerged with IFRC, CARITAS Antilles, and CARICHAM.

Within the context of ‘Delivering as One’, UNICEF’s programme coordination with other UN agencies focused on the development and implementation of the joint COVID-19 Multisectoral Response Plan (MRP), in addition to existing joint programmes to accelerate the SDGs: The SDG Accelerator Fund for Social Protection; and Spotlight Initiative: To eliminate violence against women and girls. Contributions to the UN monthly situation reports and joint concept proposals resulted in the COVID-19 MRP being successfully funded. UNICEF ECA led sectoral responses in education, child protection, and social protection. UNICEF ECA led and provided inputs to the drafting of the Common Country Assessments and supported the completion of the UN Multi Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UN MCSDCF) for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean 2022–2026. This ensured that children remain a key focus of future UN programming and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework Evaluation. In addition, UNICEF continued to provide financial and technical support to develop contextualized tools and provided training on PSEA to UN staff and partners as well as PSEA assessments of all UNICEF implementing partners. UNICEF ECA also provided technical inputs into the joint Strategy to address children’s mental health in Trinidad and Tobago. Additionally UNICEF collaborated with PAHO, UNDP, FAO and the Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) to develop a joint UN workplan for addressing vaccine hesitancy in the OECS member states. UNICEF also collaborated with PAHO to implement a campaign to increase uptake for COVID-19 vaccines. UNICEF continued to co-chair the Inclusive, Equitable and Prosperous Caribbean – Eastern Caribbean Development Partners subgroup, comprising other UN agencies, USAID, Global Affairs Canada, the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the European Union and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office. The subgroup met once during the year to map out common areas of collaboration and to prioritize areas of engagement supporting the ongoing COVID-19 recovery. UNICEF closely collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Women, and the UNDP to strengthen people’s resilience through adaptive and universal social protection in Barbados and the OECS.

UNICEF partnered with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to support the Displacement Tracking Matrix and provide information to shape and refine the programmes with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other implementing partners through sectoral working groups. In addition, UNICEF expanded partnerships to support the delivery of key
services for migrants at the national and regional levels. Thanks to the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, the Catholic Education Board of Management, the Pan American Development Foundation and the University of West Indies, children saw directly or indirectly increased opportunities to access quality services.

**Lessons Learned and Innovations**

In 2021, there was success transition in programme and office operations in the easing from face-to-face interactions to remote online working modality, and then subsequently to a hybrid approach when conditions were conducive. Extensive testing of UNICEF’s Business Continuity Plan and emphasis on a paperless environment saw the office smoothly adapt work approaches to programme delivery in a remote setting. Even with continued rises in COVID-19 cases across countries and territories, there was no disruption in programme delivery across the subregion. All staff were able to transition seamlessly from a physical to a remote work environment. While remote working addressed the continuity of programmes, the importance of ensuring a balance between focused time to participate in online meetings and guaranteeing staff were not overwhelmed and were afforded the time needed to attend personal matters and self-care was critical.

In 2021, UNICEF’s consistent and strategic engagement in evidence generation actively supported the national priorities for children and their families and programme implementation and advocacy within the ECA. The approach included leveraging and expanding partnerships to generate robust child-related data, data mining, and analysis related to key population groups and strengthening capacities to undertake real-time monitoring. This strategy has been enhanced by leveraging existing data sources for secondary analysis, including administrative data and household survey data to inform programming priorities. It has also been important to consistently monitor programme implementation with key partners to increase efficiencies and identify innovative solutions to challenges.

Three evaluations were completed in 2021: The implementation of Child Friendly Schools/Effective Schools Framework in the Eastern Caribbean; Approaches to cash-based programming in humanitarian settings: Dominica; and the UNICEF ECA MCP 2017–2021. Recommendations have shaped the formulation of the new MCP 2022–2026 and future sector-specific interventions. Specifically the overarching recommendation for all three evaluations relates to greater implementation of multi-sectoral programming with a focus on focus on advocacy, coordination, consistent monitoring of implementation and enhanced preparedness of national systems for systemic change and the humanitarian-development nexus into UNICEF ECA operational modalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed ECA countries to the fact that a blended approach to education is a new reality, and that capacities are far from adequate for its delivery. In this context where technological advances are to be planned for by the education providers, it will also be necessary to support and strengthen teachers’ capacity to deliver quality instruction through virtual and face-to-face modalities. A key lesson learned was that it was necessary to be responsive to the needs of the ECD community in the changing contexts. To ensure that learning and development continues, professional development needs to continue for parents, ECD practitioners and other caregivers to support their child-rearing practices. In support of this, there was a strong pivot to the use of traditional and newer technologies with governments and national partners to provide informational and educational content for families and other caregivers, including activities for engaging young children in appropriate ways in homes and communities.

UNICEF will conduct research to investigate the impact of the pandemic on students focusing on delivery, access, quality, and attainment across all educational sectors, in order to better inform the planning of programmes.

The stigma attached to accessing mental health services in small country contexts requires more community-based strategies targeting gatekeepers and community leaders. It needs to build the resilience of community stakeholders to strengthen family and community support to promote pro-social connections and behaviours. It also needs supportive social connections and opportunities for learning, growth, and coping with new challenges. A robust child protection system requires a
qualified and resourced social workforce. However, the child protection sector remains under-resourced, lacking the financial, and sometimes political, support to protect children and their families. This has been exacerbated by budget cuts and competing priorities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Continued support is needed to ensure that well-equipped social service workers support implementation of the laws, policies and programmes that governments establish to protect children. In an environment in which COVID-19 continues to negatively impact countries and territories, support is required for social protection systems-strengthening, disaster preparedness. Both technical and financial support is needed to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, and to respond to other disasters in a way that contributes to strengthening long-term systems. While UNICEF has provided support in previous years at a higher level (policy, overall capacity-building), the ‘heavier’ investments at a technical level in a subset of countries such as Antigua and Barbuda in social protection (targeting, digitization of their data management systems, grievance, communication) were welcome, and able to effectively contribute to implementing the new rights-based approach to social protection taken by these countries. UNICEF ECA will pursue this bottom-up approach through its new MCP and document the experiences to facilitate learning sharing, notably through the subregional institutions (OECS and CDEMA).

UNICEF implemented its activities supporting youth engagement in climate action through active involvement and partnership development. However, partners have limited financial resources, and many youth-led initiatives remain informal or ad-hoc. In the longer term, dedicated funds will be required to build partners’ capacities and support more structured youth networks. The upholding and expanding of traditional media channels to communicate and advocate continued to drive results for children even in the face of a rapidly expanding social media presence. Alliances with telecommunication and media companies must continue to be pursued to make sure that UNICEF’s messages penetrate all markets, especially vulnerable sections of the populations who do not have consistent access to digital media.

In the context of the migrant response, maintaining national partnerships, buy-in, and ownership is critical to enhancing protection measures among political sensitivities. Collaboration across sectors articulated and enhanced UNICEF’s delivery of services with higher standards for children on the move aligned with the Core Commitments for Children. The exchange of experiences on responses in the education sector with Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela highlighted existing system-wide gaps. At the same time, this contributed to building the capacity of the sector’s stakeholders convened in the Education Working Group.