

2023

unicef 
for every child

Global Annual **RESULTS REPORT**



Gender equality

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27 February 2024, in Bakong district, Siem Reap. Students in Rolous Secondary School shared presentations on Skills4Girls and other STEM programmes as well as the benefits they gained from local life skills lessons and activities.

Gender equality

Introduction

UNICEF prioritizes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as crucial for protecting the rights of all children. Our Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan realize this commitment to gender equality through strategic collaborations, increased investments in transformative programmes, and policy initiatives.

UNICEF and partners are intensifying investment and action to move decisively towards gender equality. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2022-2025 articulates a series of time-bound programmatic and institutional targets to achieve more transformative, lasting change. In 2023, the midpoint of the Gender Action Plan, there were notable gains in many areas, with UNICEF either surpassing or almost meeting its milestones.



SDG 5: Gender Equality

Eliminate all harmful practices, for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day (*Target 5.3*)

End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere (*Target 5.1*)

Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (*Target 5.2*)

Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (*Target 5.3*)

Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate (*Target 5.4*)

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life (*Target 5.5*)

Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences (*Target 5.6*)

More UNICEF-supported countries scaled up efforts to professionalize health workforces, including community health workers (CHWs), the majority of whom are women. More women were reported to be using maternal care. Record numbers of women, girls and boys were reached with protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services, and millions of women and girls and their families benefited from safer and more inclusive water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems. Since 2021, twice the number of UNICEF-supported countries recorded gender-integrated social protection results, and almost three times more countries were supporting gender-equitable care work through policy reform.

Dedicated, multi-faceted programming for and with adolescent girls expanded in 2023, framed by the [UNICEF Adolescent Girls Strategy](#). Over 46 countries now have dedicated resources to scale up ambitious multipronged, girl-centred programming in the areas of education and skills, health and nutrition, protection and economic security. Country offices reported improved services and access for adolescent girls, including co-created mechanisms for and with girls to influence policy making. Gains were recorded in adolescent girls' maternal care and anaemia prevention, as well as in skills development, civic participation and leadership. Millions of adolescent girls benefited from interventions to protect them from child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). Across

our multisectoral, girl-centred programmes, 11.7 million people benefited in 2023. While activities focused on girls' specific needs and rights, they also holistically engaged the wider community with the aim of fostering a supportive environment for adolescent girls that also benefits boys and families as a whole. UNICEF continued to amplify the voices and agency of adolescent girls and women in its media and communications activities, producing hundreds of topical media assets, knowledge products, articles and events in 2023 at headquarters and out of the regional and country offices. UNICEF social media channels saw an increase of 50 per cent since 2022 in audiences viewing gender-focused content.

Institutionally, UNICEF also met key benchmarks in priority areas, including more gender analyses, more intentional integration of gender considerations in programmes, and improved accountability for gender results. UNICEF has achieved gender parity in its staffing globally and continues to refine its policies to make the organization a more inclusive and transformative workplace.

In 2023, UNICEF received \$46.6 million in Other Resources (OR) for gender equality programming. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of OR funding at 87 per cent while private sector partners contributed 13 per cent.

Figure 1. Gender Equality - OR contributions received by fund type, 2023

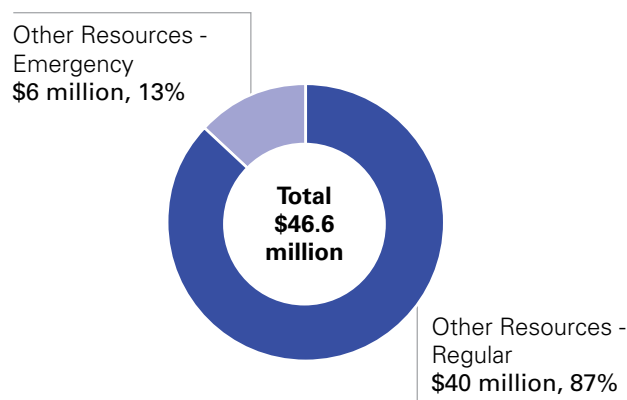
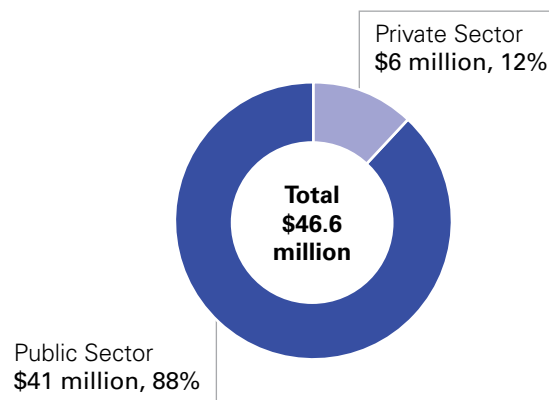


Figure 2. Gender Equality- OR contributions received by resource partner, 2023



Summary of progress

Context and strategic approach

Globally, the rights of girls and women continue to be under threat. Escalating global challenges such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its aftermath, climate change and conflict have created a polycrisis that is widening gender disparities and deepening deprivations for girls and women in many areas. Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable. Prior gains on gender equality and the rights of girls and women are at risk of being rolled back in many countries, fuelled by rising authoritarianism and misogyny. The latest [Gender Social Norms Index report](#) found no improvement in biases against women over the last decade, and United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, argued at the opening of the sixty-seventh Commission on the Status of Women that “progress won over decades is vanishing before our eyes”.

Programmatically, while UNICEF is on track to meet its targets, investments in girls’ and women’s rights are constrained. A lack of resources for girl-focused programming undermines the potential for bold system reforms, especially in middle-income contexts. Vital data gaps, especially on younger adolescents, continue to stymie policy efforts. Gender expertise in UNICEF is still insufficient to meet demands in programming, for example to assist governments and other partners in taking forward the results of gender analyses. In humanitarian contexts, intentional gender-responsive programming and reporting is not yet systematic, despite advances in emergency preparedness.

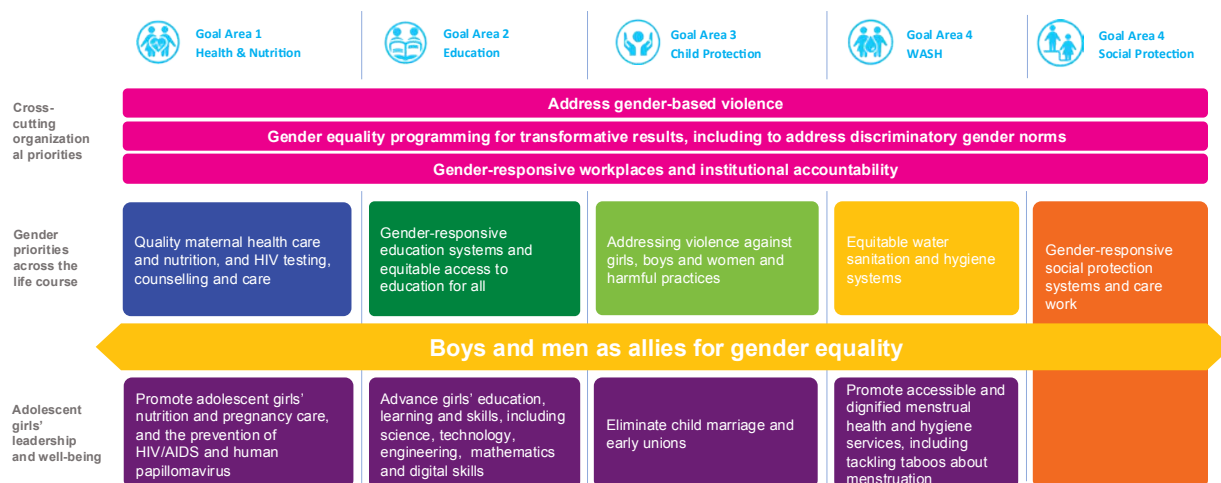
Through its strategic partnerships, advocacy and research, UNICEF has addressed gender holistically, including addressing how gender intersects with other dimensions

of children’s and adolescents’ lives such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and other significant factors. It entails partnering with national health sectors to expand quality maternal care and to support the professionalization of the mostly female community health workforce. It means promoting the role of women in the design and delivery of WASH services. And it means working with the education sector to ensure girls and boys excel in their learning and find pathways to meaningful employment. UNICEF is also advocating positive masculinities, non-violent behaviours, and involving boys and men in collaborative efforts towards realizing a gender-equal world, benefiting all individuals.

For adolescent girls especially, UNICEF invests in building girls’ skills to further their economic empowerment as entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders. We focus on providing learning environments at a time and place that suit girls’ individual circumstances. We work on assistive technologies for girls with disabilities, along with the expansion of digital platforms, vocational training and apprenticeships. To keep girls safe from harm, UNICEF programmes focus on preventing GBV, ending child marriage, eliminating FGM, supporting menstrual health management, delivering HIV and AIDS care, meeting girls’ specific psychosocial needs, and more. We invest in innovative models that protect even the hardest-to-reach girls – like virtual safe spaces that allow them to report violence and connect to local resources for support.

Gender programming works across all UNICEF Goal Areas for transformative results, aiming to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers, change harmful gender norms and empower girls, women and disadvantaged people from diverse population groups (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2022-2025 – results framework



Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives

UNICEF made advances in health-related outcomes for women and girls, particularly related to improvements in service delivery, broader health-systems strengthening, promotion of health-seeking behaviour, and enhanced partnerships with local women's and girls' networks to expand reach and impact to underserved communities.

Maternal care

Through the [Every Newborn Action Plan](#) (ENAP) and the [Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality](#) (EPMM) initiative, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the World Health Organization (WHO) continued to lead actions to advance the global maternal and newborn agenda. This contributed to significantly stronger service delivery and quality of maternal and PHC over the last two years. In 2023, 124 countries were supported to strengthen their PHC systems, 27 more than in 2021; almost 24,000 health-care facilities improved their quality of care, three times more than in 2021.

With UNICEF support, 77 countries strengthened delivery of quality maternal and newborn care, almost double the number in 2022. Improvements in care contributed to some 34.1 million live births being delivered in health-care facilities (surpassing the 2023 milestone), and an increase in the number of live births attended by skilled health personnel. Better perinatal care led to more pregnant women receiving antenatal and postnatal care in 2023 compared to 2021, a pattern that was mirrored among pregnant and parenting adolescent girls. This is an encouraging shift from the more stagnant results of previous years for this demographic. For example, in 2023, the proportion of adolescent girls (aged 15-19 years) receiving antenatal care was 61 per cent, higher than 2021 baseline estimates of 57 per cent; and those receiving postnatal care was at 65 per cent, compared to 62 per cent in 2021.

Additionally, the percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel increased from the baseline by three percentage points to 78 per cent. A key contributing factor to these gains is targeted, deliberate investment to close gaps in the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs and rights of adolescent girls, such as access to gender-responsive, adolescent-friendly health-care services, and removal of barriers to health-seeking behaviour, including discriminatory gender norms.

Figure 4: Pregnant women and girls receiving at least four antenatal visits

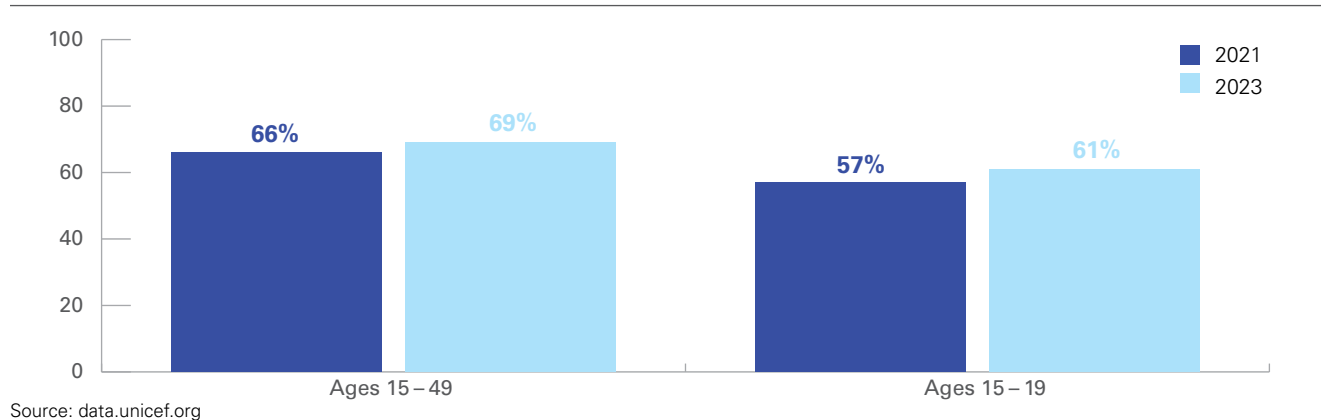
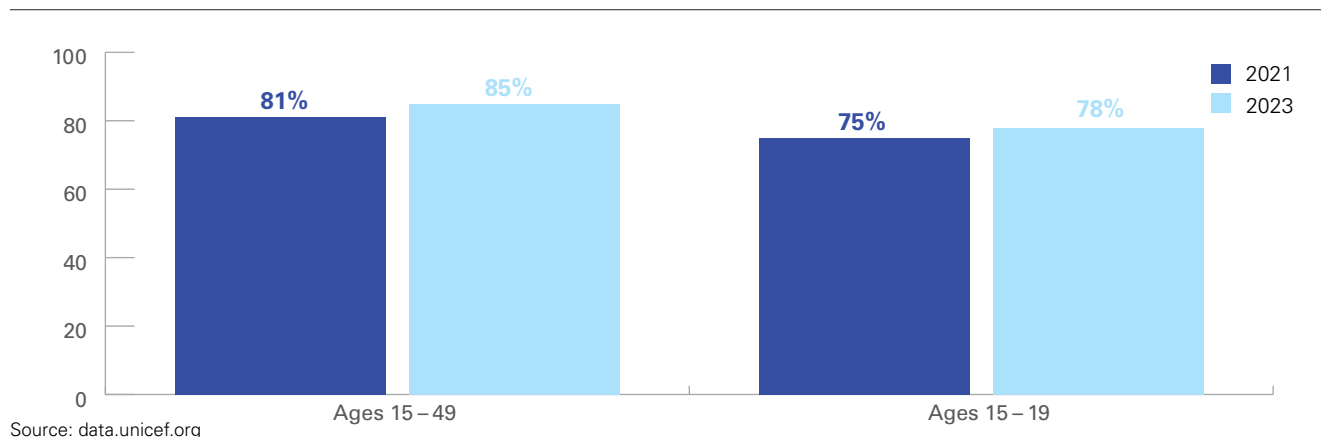


Figure 5: Live births attended by skilled health personnel



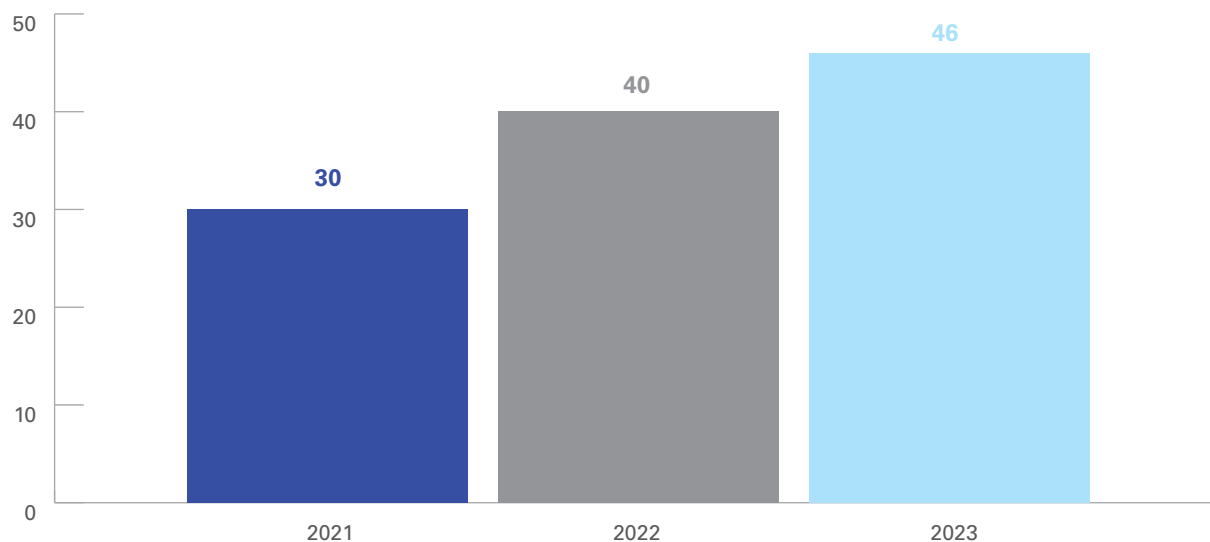
Adolescent health-care

In 2023, UNICEF supported government partners to deliver on adolescent health priorities, including SRHRs, either through integrating these into PHC services, or using school and digital platforms. Forty-one countries benefited from this support, up from 27 in 2021. Strategic interventions in several countries are addressing demand for and quality of gender-responsive and adolescent-friendly services, and promoting health-seeking behaviour among adolescent girls and boys. In Peru, for example, UNICEF support helped to develop core health indicators and standards for adolescent care, including on topics such as gender and masculinities, gender diversity, violence detection, and comprehensive sexual education. This resulted in a 40 per cent increase overall in uptake of adolescent health services, and an increase in uptake of adolescent mental health-care, from 6 per cent of adolescents using services in 2021 to 8.3 per cent of adolescents in 2023 (a total of 290,000). UNICEF also supported scaled-up action in some countries to promote adolescent girls' agency around their SRHRs, linked to efforts to address high rates of teenage pregnancy, early unions and GBV. In the Philippines, for example, [Okya, a girl-designed puberty and period tracking app](#), has been integrated into education in schools nationwide, to increase adolescent engagement in health-related decision making. Globally, Oky is available in 22 languages across 13 countries, with 600,000 users to date.

Nutrition

Roughly one in three adolescent girls globally is anaemic. As shown in a major report from 2023, [Undernourished and Overlooked: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women](#), globally, more than a billion adolescent girls and women suffer from malnutrition. UNICEF and partners continued to support integrated programmes to prevent anaemia and other forms of malnutrition that address the specific nutrition needs of adolescents as well as pregnant women. There were promising results in 2023. The percentage of pregnant women benefiting from UNICEF-supported anaemia prevention programmes rose from 37 per cent at baseline to 45 per cent in 2023. Forty-five UNICEF-supported countries had programmes to prevent anaemia in adolescents through school and community-based approaches. In countries with disaggregated data, at least 29 million girls were reached with iron and folic acid supplementation and other programmes to prevent malnutrition, representing a considerable scale-up compared to previous years. In Afghanistan, for example, where a third of all adolescent girls are anaemic, a shift from school to community-based delivery resulted in 48 per cent of target group girls receiving supplementation in 2023, a 10-percentage point increase from the year before (see case study in Goal Area 1). Women CHWs helped to increase acceptance of the programme among girls and their families, and were also able to expand reach to remote communities.

Figure 6: Number of countries implementing integrated anaemia prevention and nutrition counselling in pregnancy care programmes



Source: data.unicef.org

Integrated, gender-transformative approaches are helping to confront the impact of discrimination on the nutrition of women and their children. For example, linking anaemia prevention and nutrition counselling with caregiver support helps promote gender-equitable nutrition practices in communities, such as engaging male caregivers in child feeding and care, and promoting women's agency in making family nutrition decisions.

In 15 sub-Saharan African countries characterized by high rates of vitamin A deficiency and child mortality, UNICEF and Global Affairs Canada are scaling up the equity and effectiveness of VAS delivery, to reach an estimated 41 million girls and boys. An important aim of the programme is to remove gender-related barriers to VAS access and delivery, while also promoting gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. Strategies have emphasized increasing women's agency and access to resources, challenging discriminatory gender norms and engaging men in care work, supporting women's collective action and leadership, and strengthening gender-responsive service delivery. UNICEF is also enhancing gender analysis and the tracking of results, by creating standardized core gender indicators and gender analysis tools for national VAS programmes. In 2023, the first year of the multipronged programme, nearly 28,000 health-care workers (44 per cent women) were trained in gender-responsive service delivery. At the same time, almost 41,500 women's groups were mobilized around building knowledge, skills, and social support for child nutrition, and more than 1,400 men's groups were engaged to become VAS community advocates. Through eight mass campaigns, an estimated 1.9 million women and 1.24 million men were reached with nutrition and gender equality messages.

"Canada is pleased to continue supporting access to vitamin A for children under-five through UNICEF and its partners. The "Vitamin A Supplementation in a New Age" project is working closely with 15 country governments across Sub-Saharan Africa to break down barriers for women to access lifesaving vitamin A capsules for their children, including incorporating the capsules into a package of nutrition and health services to make it easier and more efficient for families to participate."

– The Government of Canada

Immunization

At the global level, while there is no significant difference in immunization coverage for boys and girls, there are still gender dimensions to vaccine access and coverage, whether it is women's decision-making power in a household, the workload and pay of women vaccinators, or the value placed on girls in some communities. In partnership with the Canadian Global Initiative for Vaccine Equity, WHO and other partners, UNICEF is championing the community-based participation of women and girls in national immunization programmes. UNICEF has helped develop gender-sensitive tools to inform analyses and created standardized core indicators to track gender-related results in national immunization and health programmes. In DRC, for instance, UNICEF is promoting the meaningful involvement and leadership of women and girls in routine immunization efforts: 48 women's and girls' groups were involved in gender analysis, and follow-up activities will promote their leadership in community mobilization activities.

Globally, just one in eight girls is vaccinated against HPV – the leading cause of cervical cancer.¹ Global momentum around HPV vaccination programmes had been growing, but was severely curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF and partners have been working to reinvigorate efforts, and in 2023, UNICEF successfully procured HPV vaccines for one in four countries worldwide. In collaboration with Gavi and governments, UNICEF launched the 'HPV+ with and for the Adolescent Girls' initiative in the 21 Gavi priority countries. This will see targeted investments to support countries to introduce the HPV vaccine, and to generate demand or improve its coverage, while also enabling additional health-, education- and empowerment-integrated, girl-centred interventions.



A health-care worker vaccinates a girl with the HPV Vaccine at the Maternal and Child Clinic Dala, Kano state 20th May, 2024.

Community health workers

UNICEF continued to scale up support for a professionalized health workforce, supporting capacity development programmes for frontline workers in health, nutrition and HIV in 92 countries (up from 62 in 2021). This includes community-based workers, the majority of whom are women. CHWs play a vital role in delivering information and essential health services, including life-saving vaccinations, often in hard-to-reach communities and in challenging emergency contexts. About 1.1 million health workers received skills and support to deliver essential maternal, newborn and child health services through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2023, cumulatively reaching 2.3 million workers in total since 2021. In Yemen, UNICEF supports more than 3,200 women CHWs from rural communities with training and financial incentives. In 2023, as part of enhanced skills development, 160 women from this cohort were enrolled in midwife training. These future midwives will eventually deliver much-needed access to reproductive health-care in hard-to-reach areas.

HIV and AIDS

A core focus for UNICEF is the triple elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and hepatitis B. A total of 36 out of 37 UNICEF priority countries now have policies and services for the elimination of HIV and syphilis, and some national plans also include hepatitis B. Antiretroviral therapy coverage of HIV-positive pregnant women globally remains above 80 per cent.

Despite this progress, there are harmful gaps. Data from 23 countries with high prevalence of HIV showed that efforts towards triple elimination are slowing down, and in some contexts, pregnant women continue to face limited access to prevention of mother-to-child-transmission services. Outside sub-Saharan Africa, at least one in three pregnant women living with HIV were not receiving antiretroviral treatment in 2022.² Low awareness and political commitment, coupled with limited community engagement, partly explain the gaps in treatment and delayed progress towards key indicators.

Adolescent girls continue to be disproportionately vulnerable to HIV, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Antiretroviral treatment coverage among 10–19-year-olds was under 60 per cent in every region except Eastern and Southern Africa where it was 70 per cent.³ Multifaceted, integrated and gender-transformative strategies are critical to protecting and supporting these girls and young women, including pregnant and parenting adolescents. UNICEF partners with community-based networks of adolescents and young people through peer-led and mentor programmes to promote HIV testing and access to care, and link young people to treatment and mental health services. In 2023, 32 out of 37 UNICEF priority countries implemented combination HIV-prevention interventions, targeting adolescent girls and young women and/or young key populations. For example, UNICEF uses bundled or 'plus' interventions like Tanzania's Ujana Salama

programme to combine economic and health components to improve well-being, reduce HIV, and improve SRH, while also addressing the compounded vulnerabilities facing adolescent girls and young women. Cash transfers, gender-responsive training and mentoring, and links to adolescent-friendly health services are resulting in increased economic activities for girls, more health-seeking behaviour among boys, and fewer girls experiencing sexual violence.

Goal Area 2: Every child, including adolescents, learns and acquires skills for the future

The crisis in learning continues to stymie progress towards meeting the SDG 4 targets on quality education for all children. Globally, the number of out-of-school children has risen to 250 million, largely due to the exclusion of girls and the education crisis in Afghanistan.

In partnership with national governments, UNICEF continued to prioritize equitable access to education in 2023, supporting 37.7 million out-of-school children and adolescents (51 per cent girls) to gain access to learning, including 3.1 million children on the move, 17.7 million children in emergencies, and 274,000 children with disabilities. UNICEF's support during emergencies extended learning opportunities to almost 300,000 vulnerable children (about 48 per cent girls). In Benin, UNICEF is supporting the government to facilitate access and retention of 130,000 adolescent girls in school through a monthly cash transfer model. This programme initially targeted 29,000 girls, and has been scaled up to cover almost 12 per cent of all girls in this age group across the country.



Digital learning helps children in Al-Hasakeh to continue their education with support from UNICEF

The gender digital divide has come into focus since the COVID-19 pandemic: globally, 90 per cent of girls and young women are offline, compared to 78 per cent of their male peers.⁴ In 2023, there was a surge in access to digital education across 65 UNICEF-supported countries, with 17.8 million more children benefitting than in 2022 (about 5 million girls in countries with sex-disaggregated data). UNICEF assisted governments to develop digital education policies, train teachers and strengthen national digital learning platforms, as well as develop content and tools focused on gender equity to challenge stereotypes that pose barriers to girls' access and opportunities.

Building adolescent girls' skills for the future

Skills development for adolescents continues to be a top priority for UNICEF, given its vast potential to offer alternative learning pathways, smooth transitions from education to decent work, and support adolescents to benefit from twenty-first century economic opportunities, especially in the digital arena. The need is especially great for girls, since they remain overrepresented among adolescents who are NEET, despite advances in their access to learning in the last decade. The number of young women completing secondary school for every 100 young men increased from 102 to 105 globally. In sub-Saharan Africa, which remains the region where young women face the greatest disadvantage, this ratio grew from 84 to 88. Yet globally, the NEET rate for adolescent girls and young women is 35 per cent, more than double the rate of their male peers at 14 per cent.⁵

Several UNICEF-supported countries⁶ have accelerated skills-development efforts targeting girls from rural and remote areas, and from refugee communities. For example, UNICEF partnered with the Pakistan Girl Guide Association to provide life-skills and leadership training to girls from remote and rural communities through non-formal, interactive, and community-focused camps: more than 130,000 girls under age 18 benefited in 2023. UNICEF and government partners in Vietnam are using innovative teaching methods to implement a transformative curriculum that addresses gender stereotypes, benefiting some 4 million girls, including those living in remote areas of the country.

The UNICEF Skills4Girls partnership with the private sector has been working since 2019 to bridge the gap between the skills girls need for twenty-first century employment versus those that they traditionally have access to (see case study: Skills4Girls: Girl-centred solutions for unlocking the potential of adolescent girls). In 2023, with the support of partners like Clé de Peau Beauté and Max Factor, nearly 4 million girls benefited from girl-focused programmes, linking girls with mentors, peer networks and training in wide-ranging skills such as digital and green skills. Private sector partner Chloé also renewed its commitment to UNICEF for a further three years in the support of the Skills4Girls programme. Increasingly, UNICEF is also exploring how to gamify and digitalize skills and learning pathways for girls. A gaming-driven curriculum has been

rolled out in six pilot countries,⁷ involving hackathons for girls to design their own games and mentorship opportunities with 25 local companies. So far, some 10,000 girls, parents and teachers have benefited.

With German support, Africa Drone and Data Academy (ADDA) in Malawi has awarded over 600 certificates to young people (over 60 per cent of them females) who learned how to build and pilot their own drones, how to integrate drones into a supply chain to deliver medicine to hard-to-reach areas, and how to use drone-acquired data to improve resilience, precision agriculture, etc.

The leadership and participation of girl-led groups and networks is a critical part of the Adolescent Girl Strategy. Three girl-led organizations in Rwanda were supported to amplify their advocacy around teen pregnancy prevention and support for teen mothers, reaching over a million young people. Pre- and post-surveys showed dramatic changes in their knowledge about violence prevention and menstruation. Overall, in UNICEF-supported countries, nearly 22 million adolescents and young people (52 per cent girls) participated in or led civic engagement initiatives (such as consultations, online peer support, and developing U-Report initiatives) through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2023.

Goal Area 3: Every child, including adolescents, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices

The escalation in armed conflicts and climate-related crises has increased the risk and occurrence of violence faced by women, girls and boys, and strained resources globally for response and prevention. In 2023, UNICEF and partners, through multifaceted programmes, assisted 4.5 million



Adolescent Isatou Sanneh (15) discusses child marriage at the Kwinella Upper and Senior Secondary school, The Gambia, on February 12, 2024.

children experiencing violence with access to health, justice, and social welfare services in 105 countries (51 per cent girls in countries with sex-disaggregated data).

The shift towards a more intentional, gender-transformative approach to violence prevention is gaining momentum. Gender-transformative approaches critically challenge the discriminatory gender norms and uneven power dynamics that condone and fuel violence. For example, one in three adolescent girls and boys still believes that husbands are justified in beating their wives, a number that has remained unchanged for several years.⁸ UNICEF and its partners have emphasized parenting support as a transformative violence-prevention strategy, incorporating social and behaviour change (SBC) approaches which have reached 11.8 million parents and caregivers across 85 countries.

UNICEF and partners continued to use innovative and integrated platforms to address GBV, including through technology and digital channels. In South Sudan, GBV risk-mitigation interventions were integrated into nutrition service delivery. Early results are promising. Cross-referrals between the two sectors have increased; women and girls reported feeling safer attending nutrition facilities; and there have been positive changes in household- and community-level dynamics linked to violence.

Ending female genital mutilation

Through the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme to Eliminate Female Genital Mutilation, in 2023 UNICEF reinforced its support to governments to enhance programming and partnerships across various sectors, including health, social services, and gender and social protection. Collective efforts have provided protection and prevention services to 603,270 girls and women in 20 countries, significantly expanding the reach in emergency settings, and engaged 4.9 million people in reflective dialogues to abandon FGM across 19 countries. In Nigeria, for instance, UNICEF trained 300 FGM survivors and young women leaders in digital and social media skills. Their involvement helped grow the Movement-for-Good campaign across 20 communities in four states with high FGM incidence, inspiring over 630,000 community members, as well as local and national leaders, to pledge to eliminate FGM.

Ending child marriage

Through the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and other initiatives, UNICEF continued to expand innovative programme strategies and consolidate global action to end child marriage. Today, one in five

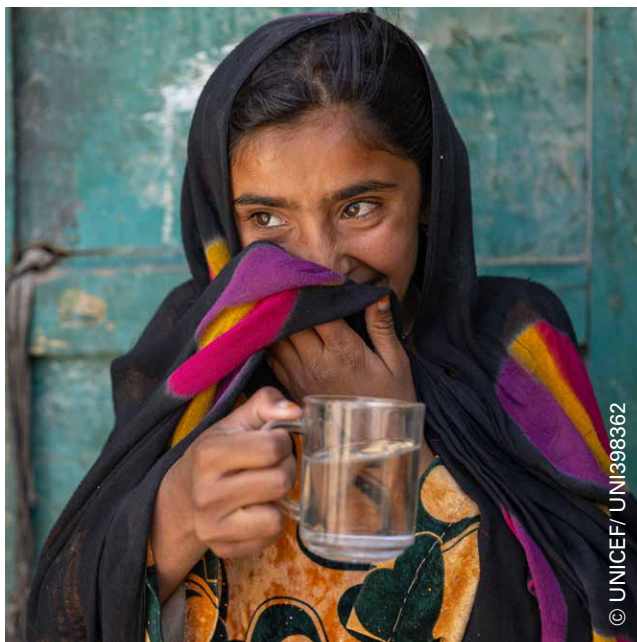
young women aged 20 to 24 years was married when she was still a child, versus nearly one in four 10 years ago.⁹ Yet progress has been uneven, and gains have not been equitable, leaving the most vulnerable girls behind. The poorest adolescent girls and those on the move are at high risk of child marriage. In 2023, across 48 countries, UNICEF-supported prevention and care interventions to address child marriage benefited 11 million adolescent girls, and 32 million people were engaged in reflective community dialogues about discriminatory social norms. In Ethiopia for example, UNICEF partnered with feminist, women-led and youth-led organizations to implement varied interventions, including strengthening male engagement and community surveillance mechanisms. As a result, 40,800 boys and men joined community mobilization and awareness activities, and 8,848 planned child marriages did not go ahead. In addition, at least three-quarters of the target group of adolescent girls reported more confidence in delaying their marriages; and four in five girls of lower-secondary school age who were out of school in target areas re-enrolled in school.

Promising results are emerging from use of the UNICEF gender-transformative accelerator tool, which is helping country programmes to design and refine their interventions to remove barriers to gender equality and change the underlying norms driving child marriage. In Mozambique, for instance, the tool was used to foster critical thinking about gendered power relations and positive masculinities in male engagement interventions, and to review economic empowerment and entrepreneurship training tools for girls and boys to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. UNICEF in India applied the tool to inform capacity-building for 679 feminist, 20 women-led and 19 youth-led organizations, including youth groups from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, plus (LGBTQI+) community, in gender-transformative programming related to ending child marriage, covering issue areas such as digital safety, parenting, positive masculinities, and employment.

UNICEF also continues to make substantial contributions to the collection of gender-related statistics, including as custodian or co-custodian of several SDG indicators, such as those on child marriage. Of special note in this regard is the establishment in 2023 of the Child Marriage Data Portal as part of the Child Marriage Monitoring Mechanism, a multi-stakeholder initiative which strives to promote data use to end child marriage and hold stakeholders accountable.

Goal Area 4: Every child, including adolescents, has access to safe and equitable water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies, and lives in a safe and sustainable climate and environment

Across more than 100 countries, UNICEF continues to work towards providing equitable and inclusive access to WASH services, with a renewed focus on reaching women, girls and persons with disabilities. In 2023, through UNICEF-supported programmes, over 21 million people gained access to at least basic sanitation services (10.8 million women and girls), nearly 36 million to safe water that is available when needed (18 million women and girls in countries reporting sex-disaggregated data), and over 24 million people to basic hygiene, exceeding 2023 milestones in all three areas. To address the growing impact of climate change on water resources (that ultimately impacts women and girls as the primary carriers of water), in 2023, nearly 2,800 solar-powered water supply systems were installed across 56 countries to improve reliability and proximity. In 80 countries, UNICEF-supported MHH services and information benefited 7.9 million girls and women in 2023.



Sima Gul pours a glass of water from her family's new water tap. For the first time, she has clean, drinkable water right near her home. 65 families in Sima Gul's community now have water from the same water system in Kani Noorbakhil Village, Spera District, Khost Province, Afghanistan.

Of this number, 5.1 million were in development settings and 2.8 million were in humanitarian contexts, including girls and women with disabilities.

Efforts to improve gender- and disability-inclusive WASH services and systems in schools and health-care facilities were scaled up in 2023. New or upgraded sanitation facilities were single-sex, disability-inclusive (stalls with ramps and handrails), and included MHH facilities so that women and girls could have safe, private spaces. In both development and humanitarian contexts, 7,553 schools were supported to reach basic WASH standards, as were almost 3,250 health-care facilities – critical given their role in reducing both maternal and newborn mortality rates.

Gender-responsive WASH-sector governance and systems strengthening remained a central focus, to ensure women's meaningful engagement in WASH management, planning and maintenance. In many countries, this led to increased participation and leadership by women and girls in the sector. In Burkina Faso, for example, UNICEF support has contributed to women and girls holding more than 40 per cent of positions of responsibility in local water management committees and school WASH clubs. Sanitation financing and loans are increasingly targeted at women, leading to increased toilet construction, improved loan repayments, and broader benefits such as gender mainstreaming in WASH policies. UNICEF also supports national governments to address the issue of gender disparity in the WASH work force.

Elsewhere, improvements in the policy environment in several UNICEF-supported countries are helping to promote wide-scale accessibility and affordability of menstruation supplies, address structural barriers, and reduce stigma about the MHH needs of girls and women. For example, sustained policy dialogue in Iraq has laid the groundwork for a National Menstrual Health and Hygiene Plan; while in Mexico, evidence-based advocacy support contributed to the adoption of the Dignified Menstruation Law in 2023. Advocacy around 'period poverty' and support for tax reform and provision of free menstrual supplies, particularly for the most marginalized girls and women, have yielded results in Pakistan and the United Republic of Tanzania. Education-system policies are also paying more attention to girls' specific needs. UNICEF support to education authorities in Mongolia for instance, led to inclusion of MHH requirements in the national guidelines for school dormitories, while in Tajikistan, after girls identified MHH as a key barrier to their school attendance, UNICEF and the education ministry developed the first-ever national MHH training course for educators. Advances in gender-informed research and data collection are enhancing access to WASH services. This includes new research and monitoring indicators around gender inequalities in the WASH sector, as part of the [WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene](#).

UNICEF continued to support large-scale public education and awareness-raising initiatives about puberty and MHH to dispel misinformation and confront gender norms and attitudes that fuel discrimination, especially against

adolescent girls. Gender-transformative MHH interventions in Bolivia (Plurinational State of) have a particular focus on engaging men, boys and the wider community, and are helping to break taboos.

Goal Area 5: Every child, including adolescents, has access to inclusive social protection and lives free from poverty

With more than 1.77 billion children worldwide lacking access to social protection, UNICEF worked with government partners to expand coverage for girls and boys in 2023 and ensure that social protection systems are inclusive, and gender-responsive or transformative. Results are encouraging. In 2023, 46 UNICEF-supported countries had gender-responsive social protection programmes contributing to transformative gender equality results, up from 22 in 2021.

UNICEF continued to prioritize reinforced, integrated sectoral services, and worked to make these more available to the most vulnerable, including women-headed households, displaced families, and women and children with disabilities. Several countries have focused on the economic security of at-risk adolescent girls. Support in India and Nepal contributed to expanding government-led, girl-centred cash transfer schemes to reduce child marriage and increase school enrolment, reaching nearly

2.5 million girls. With UNICEF support in Uganda, the Girls Empowering Girls programme run by the Kampala city government combines cash transfers with education, training and mentoring interventions, to ensure safe transitions to adulthood for adolescent girls. Learning from these and other programmes is contributing to the global evidence base on what works for adolescent girls. Mixed methods research is being used to refine national programming, such as in Mali, Peru and Tanzania, where barriers and motivators associated with girls' voice, agency and resilience were studied; and in Egypt and Tajikistan, where monitoring and evaluation systems are being strengthened to track girls' empowerment indicators.

Addressing the global care crisis

Globally, women and girls are still responsible for the bulk of caregiving. Unifying social protection with other sectors to deliver inclusive care and support systems to benefit children and caregivers can reduce gender inequities, and lead to transformative outcomes. In 2023, 37 countries were taking action with UNICEF support to address care work through family-friendly policies, up from 13 in 2021. Interventions promoted positive gender norms around equitable relationships, as well as supportive employment environments so women and men can balance paid work and domestic responsibilities. For example, the Government of Bolivia (Plurinational State of) is developing a national public policy on care to equalize caregiving responsibilities within families. In China, maternity provisions were incorporated into national health insurance for formal sector employees, benefiting more than 245 million women in 2023.



Bezawit, 12, got the HPV vaccine to protect herself from the risk of HPV infections and related cancers.

UNICEF also supported transformative parenting and caregiving programmes with an emphasis on male involvement in caregiving and shared family responsibilities. In Tajikistan, UNICEF assisted the government in the development of SBC communication strategies, such as the 'Family is the place of kindness' initiative. Implementation of the strategy included training sessions with community members, who worked in groups to discuss themes regarding parenting and gender roles, including impacts on the psychological well-being of children and families. Combined with dissemination through television, radio, print media, and digital and social platforms, the campaign reached a broad audience of more than 5.75 million individuals.

Gender in humanitarian action

In the context of humanitarian crises, UNICEF works to meet women's and girls' specific needs, mitigate the risks they face, and engage them meaningfully in humanitarian action. In 2023, 93 country offices implemented gender-equality commitments outlined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, up from 89 in 2022. Fifty-eight countries conducted rapid gender analyses in 2023, nine more than in 2022, reflecting an increase in emergency operations as well as UNICEF's commitment to gender-responsive humanitarian action.

UNICEF continued prioritizing gender-responsive preparedness and anticipatory action, recognizing that proactive steps before a crisis are critical for women and girls' resilience, survival and recovery. Forty-one countries included priority gender actions in their preparedness plans in 2023, compared to just four in 2022. Gender integration



On March 1st, 2024, Samuel Ismael Lux feeds his daughter, Yoseline (2 years old) an orange, outside their house in the village of Patzité, Quiché, Guatemala.

in preparedness informed contingency plans for staffing, supplies, programmes and partnerships. This effort has ignited strategic efforts to ensure supply plans include packages for adolescent girls (see box below) and for the promotion of gender-responsive ECD kits. The new ECD kit avoids gender stereotyping and carefully promotes co-parenting to advance girls' rights and gender equality. UNICEF is also rolling out a new framework to inform its response to public health emergencies.

Care and protection packages for adolescent girls in emergencies

Humanitarian responses far too often assume that programmes for younger children or for adult women are meeting adolescent girls' specific needs. Emergency supplies are an indispensable pillar of humanitarian response, but family kits or dignity kits are often considered sufficient for girls. In 2023, UNICEF initiated a strategic initiative to ensure that its supply operations are more responsive to adolescent girls. Using guidance, UNICEF teams responding to crises in the State of Palestine, Sudan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan have distributed care and protection packages tailored to adolescent girls' needs. Adolescent girls have also had an opportunity to inform adjustments to the contents of the packages, while the engagement of local organizations led by women and girls has been central to awareness-raising and safe distribution. In Gaza in the State of Palestine, UNICEF has reached approximately 16,000 adolescent girls with the Adolescent Girl Personal Care and Protection Package. These packages are designed to support girls, while respecting their privacy and cultural sensitivities. UNICEF distributed these packages in collaboration with women-led organizations in the Gaza Strip, ensuring that safety and security concerns informed every step. In southern Lebanon, UNICEF and partners distributed 1,350 tailored kits for adolescent girls. In Sudan, UNICEF piloted a context-specific package in Kassala and Gezira States, reaching 5,000 young women and girls. UNICEF plans to expand this operation based on its initial learning.

UNICEF is championing the meaningful engagement of women- and girl-led organizations in humanitarian action. They are often the first to respond to the needs of their communities, providing essential services to women, girls, and other marginalized groups; raising awareness around risks to the rights of women and girls; and demanding accountability. In 2023, approximately \$1.075 billion of humanitarian funding was transferred to national partners, of which local organizations led by women received 8 per cent (\$82.5 million). Strengthening these partnerships advances UNICEF's localization and commitments.

UNICEF remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring uninterrupted, inclusive education for all children and young people affected by crises, with a focus on girls, children with disabilities and children on the move. With UNICEF support, 37.7 million out-of-school children and adolescents (51 per cent girls) accessed education in 2023, including 3.1 million children on the move and 17.7 million children in emergency contexts. In Sudan, where over 3 million children have been displaced internally and over half a million have fled across borders, over 33,000 children are using the Learning Passport digital platform to continue their progress through the national curriculum-based digital content for Grades 1 to 8, which was developed by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education.

Central to UNICEF's humanitarian response are the mitigation, prevention of, and response to GBV. In 2023, UNICEF reached over 23 million people through response,

prevention and risk mitigation programmes in 77 countries. Globally, 490,000 girls benefited from individual case management. In Ukraine alone, over one million people were reached with GBV interventions. Specific support to survivors reached over 90,000 girls, boys and women, through case management and mental health and psychosocial support, health services, and safe referrals. UNICEF is extending these efforts to digital platforms. For example, [Laaha, an interactive online safe space](#)¹⁰ was designed by and for women and girls. It provides essential information on SRH, mental health, and GBV – including how to report and get support services.

In humanitarian settings, UNICEF WASH interventions reached 21.8 million girls and women (out of a total of 42.4 million people), while sanitation programmes reached 5.5 million girls and women (out of a total of 10.9 million people). UNICEF responded with large-scale emergency support in Yemen, Sudan, Nigeria, and Ukraine, providing affected persons with gender-segregated sanitation, hygiene and MHH services, including latrines and bathing shelters.

Looking ahead, UNICEF is building a robust cadre of staff and partners for gender-responsive emergency surge deployments, and expanding its initiatives around emergency preparedness, rapid gender analysis, and tailored, multisectoral humanitarian interventions for and with adolescent girls.



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A portrait of a minor who was rescued with six peers that had crossed into Kenya for female genital mutilation. She is currently in Primary One at Kalas Girls' Primary School in Amudat District.

Case studies

Skills4Girls: Girl-centred solutions to unlock the potential of adolescent girls

Strengthening skills is a cornerstone of UNICEF's work to promote adolescent girls' well-being and leadership. Since 2020, the [Skills4Girls programme](#) has reached 9.5 million adolescent girls and young women in over 20 countries (nearly 4 million in 2023), promoting the development of the STEM, digital and life skills that they need to succeed in their transition from learning to earning during adulthood.

Skills are both an asset that enable girls to have a safe transition to adulthood and decent work, and a core component of every girl's right to an education on an equal footing with boys, no matter who they are and where they live. Yet adolescent girls are less likely than boys to pursue a STEM career, and nearly twice as likely as boys to be NEET. UNICEF's Gender Equality team leads the Skills4Girls programme to address the inequalities in skills acquisition between girls and boys, and tackle harmful gender norms that underpin this gender gap. In 2023, Skills4Girls was implemented across 18 countries to bridge the gap between the skills girls need to succeed in the labour market and in life more broadly, and what they have traditionally been able to access.

UNICEF takes a targeted approach to address this skills gap for adolescent girls. Depending on the context, interventions focus on STEM skills, digital skills, or life skills such as self-esteem and negotiation, often in some combination. The programme aims to empower girls to transition from learning to earning in adulthood, through support from peers, mentors, role models, and trained and supported teachers and parents. Girls also have access to internships and apprenticeships, as well as a range of stand-alone and tailored after-school clubs, summer camps, competitions and mentoring schemes. Through co-creation with girls, the country programmes are tailored to girls' needs. To ensure a sustainable and scalable skills-building approach, UNICEF collaborates with government, private and civil society partners to integrate gender-transformative skills-building into national education systems.

In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the UniSat programme teaches girls to build and launch nanosatellites. The programme uses digital course content co-created with girls that is provided via an interactive, innovative, and personalized educational platform, building girls' knowledge and skills on STEM and data analytics. The engagement of high-profile mentors has increased the visibility of the programme, inspiring more girls from rural settings into STEM. In Uzbekistan, the Skills4Girls programme also created a tailored digital skills curriculum for girls with disabilities to equip them with skills relevant for their transition to the labour market, such as computer literacy and the skills needed to work at call centres for those with visual impairments, and graphic design and web programming for those with hearing impairments. In Nepal, the Rupantaran app – developed by UNICEF and now formally adopted by the Government – reached almost 12,000 girls in 2023, empowering girls in various life skills. Fifteen modules provide content to prevent early marriage, and to educate parents and help them change their harmful attitudes toward girls. Through linkages with the Supporting Access to Girls' Education programme, out-of-school girls up to the age of 13 are set on a path to formal education or enrol directly in schools. In this way, digital learning is supporting girls to return to school, and reinforcing and expanding learning opportunities for those in school.

Four years into its implementation, the Skills4Girls programme has generated information on challenges and opportunities in skills-building programming for adolescent girls and young women across a variety of contexts. Low levels of foundational skills and weak educational systems with limited access to technologies have been major challenges faced by UNICEF country offices when implementing Skills4Girls programmes. This is especially true for programmes aiming to reach the most vulnerable adolescent girls in rural areas. In these contexts, UNICEF has invested more resources into improving foundational skills, before building more advanced digital and job-specific skills. Advocacy with government stakeholders to increase national investments in these



Dilnaz's life completely changed after participating in the Eco-Hackathon organized by UNICEF. She became a peer-to-peer trainer at the K. Tabaldinov School in Kara Zhygach village.

areas to ensure national ownership and financial sustainability has also been important. Working with ministries of education is another key opportunity to ensure that skills-building programmes are effectively mainstreamed into national, formal education systems for lasting results. Fragile and conflict-affected countries also present formidable challenges for adolescent girls themselves and for programme delivery. So too do harmful gender norms affecting everyone, from the girls themselves and their peers, to their parents, teachers, and people in institutions making decisions about policy. Components targeted at teachers, parents and community leaders in the multi-component Skills4Girls programme are helping to shift harmful norms holding girls back and bring lasting change. Global and national communications efforts are also shifting the conversation to bring more focus on adolescent girls: a 60 second video on Skills4Girls by UNICEF partner Max Factor and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Priyanka Chopra Jonas reached 62 million unique viewers on Twitter/X.

Moving forward, UNICEF will continue to ensure that skills-building programmes are scaled up and sustained. UNICEF will work with governments to include skills-building activities in national education curricula, partnering with the private sector and civil society organizations to expand the quality, effectiveness and reach of interventions; and engage with multiple stakeholders across society to secure the finances and action needed to unlock adolescent girls' enormous potential, for themselves, their communities and economies as a whole.

Engaging female vaccinators to increase uptake of COVID-19 vaccination among women in Pakistan

People living in Pakistan's provinces face important disparities in access to quality health-care, largely due to limited infrastructure, financing and other constraints. About 64 per cent of the population live in rural and often hard-to-reach areas, and shortages of medical personnel and equipment are common in hospitals and health facilities. Pakistan is also extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change, with frequent floods and other climate events decimating already fragile health service delivery systems and communications networks in many areas.

Since 1994, the Lady Health Workers programme has been an invaluable national response to health-access challenges across the country, and has bridged the gap between formal health-care providers and underserved populations. Over 110,000 women are employed as CHWs, making this one of the largest such initiatives globally. The CHWs provide life-saving essential health-care and information services to rural and hard-to-reach communities, many of which uphold customary gender norms and practices which pose barriers to women and girls needing health-care. The CHWs provide sexual and reproductive health services such as family planning, nutrition and breastfeeding support, and childhood immunization, among other vital services. Because they are recruited from within the communities they serve, these women adeptly navigate cultural norms and customs, and are typically granted access to conservative households reluctant to engage with male health workers.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gender-related challenges impacted COVID-19 vaccination efforts, particularly in more traditionally conservative communities. By August 2021, UNICEF data showed that only 36 per cent of women had been vaccinated, compared to 64 per cent of men. A range of factors contributed to this gap. For example, hesitancy among pregnant and lactating women was largely related to myths about vaccine safety for themselves and their children, such as that vaccines could cause complications like increased miscarriage risk.



On 18 April 2023 in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan, Lady Health Worker (LHW) Shamim Hussain greets a man and child while working.

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Women had limited access to information sources to counter myths. Lockdown measures removed traditional channels of information, and women's existing lack of access to digital technology prevented them from receiving information through digital platforms. In addition, gender dynamics within the vaccinator workforce played a role: cultural norms meant women were uncomfortable or not allowed to receive vaccinations from male vaccinators, who made up the majority of the COVID-19 vaccinator workforce.

In response, UNICEF worked with the Government of Pakistan to shift this dynamic and leverage the existing CHW system to increase COVID-19 vaccinations among women. The intervention deployed 300 female vaccinators over the course of six months, across three provinces – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Sindh, and Balochistan – where many traditionally conservative districts had pronounced gender disparities. The cohort of vaccinators underwent training tailored to COVID-19 vaccination rollout, conducted by UNICEF, WHO, and provincial EPI teams. Vaccinators gained specific virus and pandemic-related knowledge, but there was also an emphasis in training on interpersonal communication skills to motivate families to get vaccinated, and address concerns and misconceptions. Promotional materials, community mobilization activities and collaboration with local leaders and organizations complemented direct interaction with women, their husbands and families through door-to-door visits, thus offering a more holistic, community-based approach to build trust and immunization acceptability.

"We conducted extensive door-to-door campaigns, tirelessly raising awareness about COVID-19 vaccination. Our commitment knew no bounds; we worked relentlessly throughout the day, even during the holy month of Ramadan and Eid holidays. In our dedication to the cause, we went above and beyond, often arranging transportation for individuals from our own pockets so they could reach the vaccination centre. Our efforts extended beyond vaccination centres; we even did duties at wedding halls, hotels, and bus stands to ensure we reached everyone for vaccination," said one woman vaccinator

A major task for the women vaccinators was correcting misinformation that the vaccine was part of a larger government agenda to promote fertility control. To counter this, the vaccinators and members of the UNICEF EPI team were first vaccinated themselves, and then vaccinated other girls and women in their families, capturing the process on video to share with people to promote trust. Vaccinators who were breastfeeding led by example too, using their personal experiences to persuade others. Vaccinators also worked with educational institutions to dispel myths among girls that the vaccine would affect menstruation and cause infertility. In many cases, in highly patriarchal communities, vaccinators reported that their biggest challenge was to convince husbands about the vaccine, since males were the sole family decision-makers.

"The culture here in Balochistan is such that women don't even drink water until their husbands allow it. So, for women to get vaccinated, we had to first convince their husbands. Women would only get vaccinated if their husbands allowed it," remarked a woman vaccinator

Six months after the programme was rolled out, vaccinations among women had increased from 36 per cent to 40 per cent for the first dose and 41 per cent for subsequent doses. Importantly, the increase in COVID-19 vaccine coverage was also matched by a boost in routine immunization rates, suggesting considerable potential to scale up efforts to enhance routine coverage with expanded engagement of women vaccinators.

Important lessons were learned, especially related to the women vaccinators themselves and their ability to implement the programme. The crucial role of women as vaccinators was repeatedly highlighted, making it essential for programme implementation to address the gender dynamics of the existing male-dominated vaccinator workforce. Training of vaccinators needed to be consistent, and delivered across all provinces, to ensure that vaccinators were well-equipped to carry out their duties. Safety risks were a pressing concern for many vaccinators who reported physical and mental harassment driven by conservative norms. They also pointed to the need for mental health support to alleviate stress and prevent burnout: many described feeling pressured to meet targets and experiencing criticism from their own families about their work. Further, transportation hurdles and mobility restrictions presented daily struggles for many of the vaccinators, who had to walk long distances for household visits and to get to immunization centres.

With this in mind, UNICEF is taking steps to expand and improve engagement with women vaccinators, such as increasing their presence at immunization centres, and stationing them at maternity wards to promote immunization for newborns.



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Mutiara Septiani (center), age 11, 6th grade student at Kampung Baru Primary School in Larantuka, East Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, is embraced by her two best friends Isnida Siti Aisyah (left), age 11, and Andita Marysa Putri (right), age 11, after a discussion on menstrual hygiene inside their class using OkyApp, the first period tracker created by girls for girls in Indonesia.

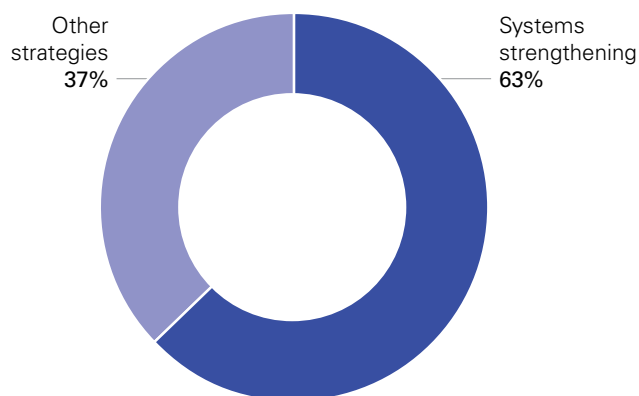
Spotlight on the UNICEF Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund

Results achieved in 2023 to ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Financial results

UNICEF's Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund is a flexible funding pool that enables the organization to strengthen systems to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.

Thanks to generous donors, in 2023 UNICEF's Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund received \$5.6 million. UNICEF is grateful for this support.



*Other strategies include advocacy and communications; social and behaviour change; data and research; digital transformation; innovation; partnerships and engagement; and support to programme delivery.

The chart above illustrates how global thematic expenses are distributed across eight of UNICEF's nine implementing strategies for gender-related programming, noting that multiple strategies can be used to achieve results. In 2023, systems strengthening continued to be the core focus of work for gender equality, accounting for 63 per cent of all expenses.

Through its work on systems strengthening, UNICEF responds to gender inequality, and gets to the root causes of the issue, by addressing harmful gender norms, power imbalances, laws and behaviours. Working in this 'big picture' way is cost effective, sustainable and scalable, and it works.

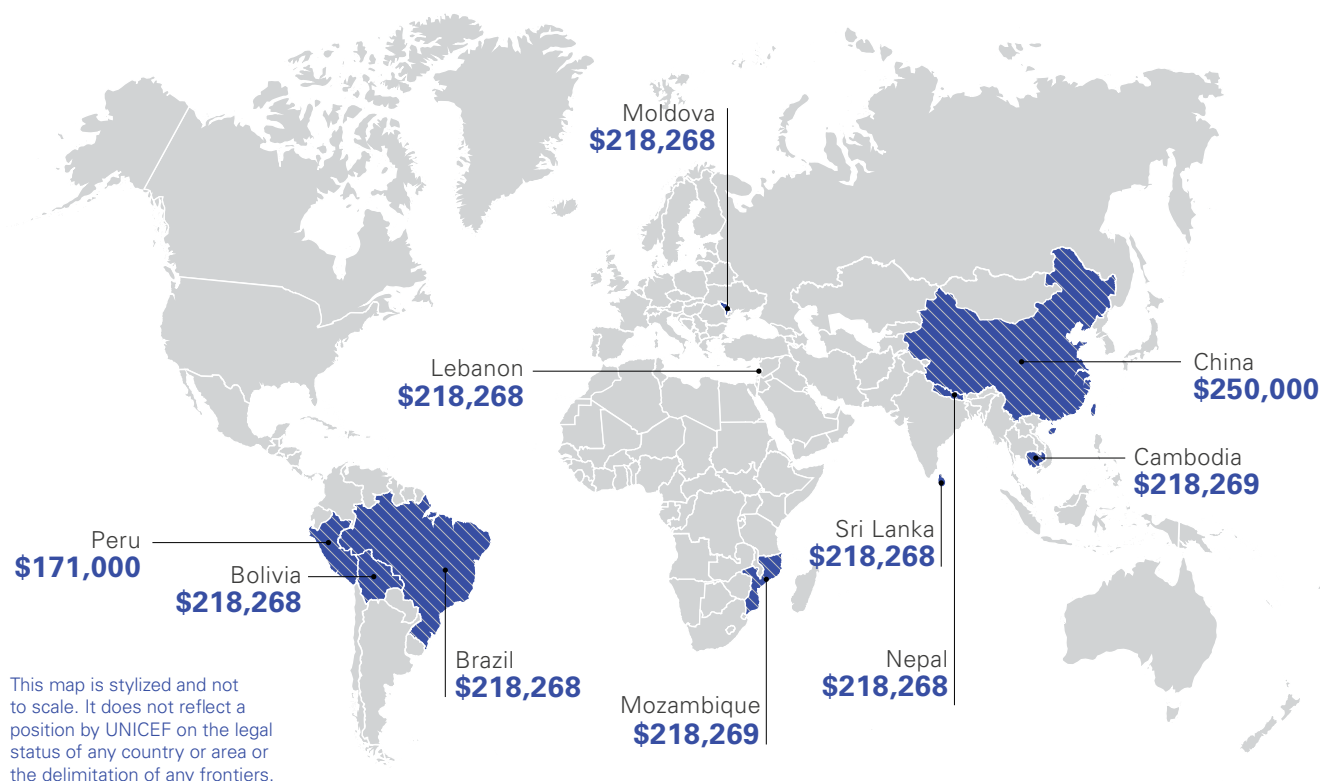
Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public sector	Germany	2,412,281
	Luxembourg	865,060
	Iceland	200,000
	Canada	26,524
	Balance from previous year	2,240
Private sector	UNICEF Country Office PSFR	651,186
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	338,025
	French Committee for UNICEF	306,886
	United States Fund for UNICEF	211,639
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	192,016
	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	140,000
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	99,753
	German Committee for UNICEF	30,000
	UNICEF Philippines Country Office PSFR	20,000
	Italian Committee for UNICEF - Foundation Onlus	20,000
	UNICEF Indonesia Country Office PSFR	15,000
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	10,000
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	10,000
	UNICEF Malaysia Country Office PSFR	10,000
	UNICEF Thailand Country Office PSFR	10,000
	Canadian UNICEF Committee	10,000
	UNICEF Viet Nam Country Office PSFR	10,000
Grand Total		5,590,609

Numbers may not add up due to rounding.
PSFR: Private Sector Fundraising.

Allocations

In 2023, supporters of the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund enabled UNICEF to allocate resources to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in 19 countries and territories. The map shows the 10 countries which received the highest allocations.

Global thematic funds were allocated to UNICEF countries to build on prior investments and programming focused on adolescent girls. The allocations supported gender-transformative, multisectoral, girl-centred programming, while implementing UNICEF's Adolescent Girls' Strategy, with a particular focus on girls' education, learning and skills.



Brazil (POWER4Girls)

Adolescent girls in Brazil need to overcome multiple challenges in their daily lives, from exposure to violence, mental health challenges and unintended pregnancies, to limited opportunities to voice their concerns and exercise their agency. Eight-five per cent of the Brazilian population live in cities with governance structures, where girls must have a say in how to tackle the issues that affect them. Thanks to an allocation of \$218,268 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund, and building on a pilot initiative called 'Menina Cidadã' (in English: Girl Citizen) in Maranhão State, in 2023 UNICEF partnered with CSOs working with and for girls to scale up the programme to seven state capitals to support girls to advocate girl-centred, gender-responsive public policies at local level, provide peer education among girls, and promote girls' empowerment.

Cambodia (Skills4Girls)

In 2023, Cambodia received \$218,269 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund to promote adolescent girls' leadership and well-being; advance girls' education, learning, and skills; and address discriminatory social norms. UNICEF worked to embed a life skills programme into the formal education system to ensure young people, especially adolescent girls, have the confidence and information to overcome challenges in their lives. In addition, the entrepreneurship programme 'Generation Future' is supporting talented young Cambodian adolescent girls to address key challenges in their communities by developing their ideas for positive social change and matching them with mentors, training, networking, and seed funding opportunities to realize their projects.

Lebanon (POWER4Girls)

UNICEF implemented a multi-component and girl-driven programme to promote adolescent girls' leadership and decision-making; increase their access to learning and skills; and provide them with gender-based violence prevention services. The Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund provided \$218,268 that helped reach Lebanese and refugee and displaced adolescent girls living in host communities, collective shelters, and informal settlements. This was achieved through a tailored skills curriculum delivered in multi-service community centres; newly established girls' networks to reach harder-to-reach girls; and girl-designed activities to combat communities' perceptions on gender equality.

Moldova (Skills4Girls)

The Skills4Girls programme is promoting adolescent girls' and young women's science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) skills through educational programmes and access to internships in the private information technology (ICT) sector. Following a 2022 pilot, an allocation of \$218,268 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund in 2023 has enabled UNICEF to provide a holistic support package to adolescent girls encompassing training and mentorship that reaches marginalized communities (STEAM on wheels), a summer STEAM camp, an internship, and a leadership programme, as well as a SBC campaign to tackle GBV (by informing girls about the risk of exposure to violence and the services available in their communities).

Mozambique (POWER4Girls)

While conflict and displacement, poverty and GBV affect lives in Mozambique, adolescent girls have benefited from a comprehensive package of interventions supported by an allocation of \$218,268 from UNICEF's Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund. The interventions help them unlock their agency, build their core competencies, and take action in their communities. Through the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation, mentorship opportunities, and the creation of safe, trusted, accessible and adolescent-friendly feedback, complaints and reporting mechanisms, this initiative seeks to build girls' self-awareness and confidence; encourage parents to support daughters in their aspirations; and create a collective movement among peers and community leaders where adolescents can thrive and advocate change. In the next phase, links to social protection will support the economic empowerment of girls through seed funding to implement entrepreneurship plans, giving them more opportunities and choices in their future.

Uzbekistan (Skills4Girls)

In Uzbekistan, UNICEF's efforts to empower girls with social entrepreneurship, digital and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills have also been tailored to girls with disabilities, who are at higher risk of not receiving education and training, including in the digital skills they need to access employment opportunities and navigate safely online. The Skills4Girls programme, supported with \$70,000 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund, has implemented girl-centred digital skills programmes adapted for girls with disabilities, including training in computer literacy and work at call centres for girls with visual impairments, and graphic design and web programming for girls with hearing impairments. The programme has also provided training for teachers in block coding, robotics, and cybersecurity skills along with gender equality and professional ethics, and entrepreneurship bootcamps.

Regional and global programming

Thematic funds not only support UNICEF's work in countries; they are also used to support UNICEF programming across wider regions and globally. These vital allocations of flexible funding are what enable the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund to have an impact far beyond the countries that receive direct allocations.

For instance, in 2023, just over \$253,000 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund was allocated to five regional offices, covering East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. These funds were used to lead on global goods for the adolescent girls' agenda; namely data, evidence, and tools to address specific gaps in girls' skills, girls' voice in climate action, and measuring adolescent girls' empowerment.

Additionally, just over \$330,000 from the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund was allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters to support the ongoing management and learning agenda of the Adolescent Girls' Programming Strategy, including for the Skills4Girls portfolio. The allocation supported a dynamic new learning agenda and community of practice on adolescent girls called #Power4Girls, technical assistance where needed, and the meaningful participation of our new Adolescent Girls' Global Advisory Group to shape our strategic direction and feedback on programmes.

Achieving results for systems strengthening

Thematic funds are a vital cornerstone of UNICEF's systems-strengthening work to unlock lasting impact for children. But this takes time. This is why resources from the Global Health Thematic Fund are spent over a four-year period, aligning with UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2022–2025). This period also aligns with UNICEF's Gender Action Plan (2022–2025).

Below are some headline, sector-level results, for which thematic funding was a key contributor, as part of an overall portfolio of funding.

Workforce

All systems require a strong, skilled workforce. In the case of gender equality, this includes health workers, teachers, social service workers, and more. One key element of this work is investing in frontline workers, the majority of whom are female. A stronger workforce enables better identification and targeting of the barriers to access to and use of services by women and girls.

- Over 1 million health workers received skills training and support to deliver essential maternal, newborn and child health services through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2023.

Laws and policies

Influencing laws and policies can make immediate changes for women and girls across an entire country in a single moment. UNICEF is filling gender-related data gaps to strengthen the evidence base for policy change. It is also investing in influencing family-friendly policies for parental support, accessible childcare and child benefits.

- In 2023, UNICEF-supported programmes assisted countries to advocate family-friendly policies. The number of countries taking action to support care work, through family-friendly policies, rose from 24 to 37. Additionally, the number of countries involving children, adolescents, and young people in action and advocacy to tackle climate change, unsustainable energy use, and/or environmental degradation with UNICEF support also rose by 10, from 68 to 78.

Social and behaviour change

SBC programming is any work intended to shift attitudes on key issues. This includes work to promote positive gender norms and discourage harmful practices, such as FGM and child marriage.

- In 2023, UNICEF worked to challenge discriminatory gender norms that drive harmful practices and to promote gender equality in 59 countries. SBC interventions included multimedia campaigns and community outreach, which engaged 32.4 million people.

Supply chains

Most systems rely on supplies. UNICEF helps to strengthen supply chains for multiple commodities related to gender equality, including menstrual health items, iron and folic acid supplements to prevent anaemia, and HPV vaccines to protect girls from cervical cancer.

- In 2023, UNICEF supported the introduction of one or more new vaccines (HPV vaccine, hepatitis B vaccine, measles-containing vaccine second-dose, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and/or rotavirus vaccine) in 21 countries, improving access to vaccines in a total of 51 countries since 2020.

Infrastructure

Good infrastructure can support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. For instance, recognizing that girls and women have different WASH needs than their male peers, UNICEF works to ensure that they have access to safe water and toilet facilities that meet their needs in homes, health centres, schools and public places.

- In 2023, UNICEF-supported programmes enabled 10.8 million women and girls to access basic sanitation services, and 18.1 million women and girls to access safe water, across more than 72 countries.

Targets

To measure the long-term impact for systems strengthening in the Gender Action Plan, UNICEF monitors several key indicators, as seen in the table below.

Indicator	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2023)	Target (2025)
Workforce Number of countries with at-scale capacity-development programmes for frontline workers that focus on gender equality	50	65	80
Supply chains Number of children provided with individual learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes	42.1 million	101.6 million (cumulative)	91.4 million (cumulative)
Social and behaviour change Percentage of girls, boys, women and men aged 15 to 49 years who believe that female genital mutilation should be eliminated	Female: 69% Male: 64% (2011-2020)	Female: 72% Male: 64% (2011-2022)	Female: 77% Male: 71%
Laws and policies Number of countries with social protection programmes that are gender-responsive or lead to transformative gender equality results	22	46	40

Impact story

The power of choice

It is close to noon when the air along this scenic stretch of road in Rajdevi Municipality in Rautahat District, Nepal, fills with the sound of sizzling oil. The source? A small snack shop run by 16-year-old Antima Kumari Pandit.

Antima runs her business out of a modest roadside hut, selling samosas and other varieties of fried, savoury items. Her hands move deftly as she prepares the dough and fillings, her face a mask of concentration.

Antima first had the idea for the business last year after taking part in the Rupantaran life skills programme. Developed by UNICEF and UNFPA, in collaboration with the Government of Nepal, and with support from partners, the Rupantaran package provides adolescents aged 10 to 19 years with the information and skills they need to navigate society and plan for their futures.

The package includes a mix of social and financial skills training and covers a wide range of topics, including communication, negotiation, self-assessment and resource identification for goal attainment, and physical and mental well-being. Training is delivered by locally based facilitators or peer educators over the course of 21 weeks.

Antima, the eldest of seven siblings, had dropped out of school after Grade 5 because her family's financial situation was so dire. She had been staying at home, helping her parents take care of her siblings, when she was approached by a Rupantaran facilitator with an invitation to join the sessions. Having long felt aimless, she says she was curious about what the opportunity entailed and decided to give it a shot.

That decision turned things around for her.

As she completed the Rupantaran sessions, Antima became excited about what she was learning, particularly the module on economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

"My parents used to own a small eatery, and I had grown up watching my father make these dishes," she says. "I even helped him. I felt that this was something I could do, too."

And so, after completing the Rupantaran course, Antima applied for seed funding to start her business. Following an interview, she was among those selected to receive a sum of NPR 10,000 (about \$75). With the money in hand and the financial skills she had picked up in the Rupantaran session, the snack shop was soon up and running.



Antima Kumari Pandit takes part in the Rupantaran life skills programme developed by UNICEF and UNFPA, in collaboration with the Government of Nepal.

Today, Antima says she earns around NPR 700 (about \$5.24) a day. While she is glad that this is allowing her to contribute to the family's income, it is being able to pay for her younger siblings' education, especially that of her little sister, that brings her the most joy.

The Rupantaran programme places a strong emphasis on education, and as a first priority, encourages participating adolescents to continue or resume formal schooling after graduating. But the programme also recognizes that this option might not be viable for all – especially older adolescents who might struggle to transition to classrooms with much younger counterparts.

In these cases, especially when they demonstrate an interest and aptitude for entrepreneurship, the young people are guided accordingly, and provided with the skills-building and mentoring support they need to establish and sustain micro-enterprises of their choice.

Hearing from our donors and partners

The Government of Luxembourg and UNICEF empowering girls and women around the world

In 2023, the Government of Luxembourg was the second largest contributor to the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund, as well as one of the top three donors to the Global Education, WASH and Health Thematic Funds. UNICEF is extremely appreciative of this long-standing partnership and the predictable, flexible funding provided, which is essential for us to achieve long-term impact for children and contribute to the SDGs.

Since 2016, Luxembourg has been working with UNICEF to ensure that girls and boys enjoy the same rights, resources, opportunities and protections. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority in Luxembourg's development cooperation strategy, and enhancing the socio-economic integration of women and youth is one of the four main goals set out in this strategy.

UNICEF's Gender Action Plan 2022-2025, together with targeted actions across all five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan, promotes girls' leadership and well-being by investing in their empowerment and development; partnering with girls; and amplifying their voices, choices and solutions to ensure a more gender equitable world.

Luxembourg's support to the Global Gender Equality Thematic Fund enables flexible, catalytic funding to kickstart new and emerging priorities in UNICEF's gender programming, with a strong focus on the roll-out of the Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy of the current Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. Some examples of this work include:

- In Niger, UNICEF is promoting training opportunities in STEM and digital skills for vulnerable girls and youth, strengthening girls and youth networks with digital skills, engaging with the community to address gender stereotypes and promote girls' skills building.
- In Lao People's Democratic Republic, UNICEF is co-designing gender-responsive online inter-active/ gamified learning content with girls, promoting digital skills, STEM and online safety for girls within the national education system.

With the support of partners like the Government of Luxembourg, UNICEF is charting a way forward to deliver lasting, transformative change for children, adolescents and women worldwide.



November 2023, Girls' education in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Looking ahead

In the second year of the Gender Action Plan 2022 – 2025, it is evident that together with partners, UNICEF is contributing to visible results for women and girls. Partnerships with women's and girls' organizations are being nurtured; in fact, in 2023, UNICEF transferred \$2.99 billion to partners in development and emergency contexts, of which local civil society organizations led by women received 5 per cent (\$160.3 million).

More girls and women are accessing better quality services for maternal care and nutrition, education, protection, WASH, and social protection. Following the launch of the first dedicated UNICEF Adolescent Girl Strategy at the end of 2022, multi-faceted programming for and with adolescent girls has expanded rapidly, far exceeding targets for country-level reach. The establishment of an adolescent girl advisory group sets an important precedent for girl-led programming, feedback and policy in UNICEF, putting into action policy advice UNICEF provides to national governments. 2023 saw the introduction of many new girl-focused policies and initiatives in low- and middle- income countries, spurred by UNICEF-supported pilot programmes and technical advisory assistance.

Moving forward, a focus for UNICEF will be on taking these gains to scale, leveraging domestic resourcing and overseas development assistance for adolescent girls, including their networks and organizations. Transformation will require deepened, more explicit and targeted commitments by all partners (public, private, philanthropic) if the SDGs for girls and women are to be achieved. The convening role played by UNICEF, bringing together partners for collective action on this agenda, will continue to be critical. Regular communication from senior leadership at UNICEF on gender equality and the rights of girls and women at all levels is essential, as is modelling change internally.

Looking ahead, 2024 promises to be a watershed year for learning as UNICEF invests in its second independent evaluation of its Gender Action Plans, from 2018 to the present. Learning from this evaluation, UNICEF will continue to demand an ambitious and bold vision to deliver real, transformative change for girls and women everywhere.

Endnotes

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