A student of Matany Primary School smiles during preparations for the launch of a UNICEF supported water, sanitation and hygiene in schools programme in Napak district of Uganda.
For many children, it is the best of times. There are more children in school than ever before and global gender parity has been reached. These are important achievements and they are worth celebrating. However, there is another side to the story. Progress has been uneven and unfair. In far too many countries, cities and villages, for every child who receives the benefits of a quality education, another child no less deserving misses out. For every child attending preschool, another child, or two or three or four children, miss out.

Barriers associated with gender, poverty, disability, ethnicity and displacement are taking their toll, and hard-fought gains are at risk of being lost. Today’s world of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is one of contrasts – a world where new technologies are giving some children opportunities that never existed in a previous generation, while others are at risk of perpetual second-class status. Globally only 73 children from the poorest families complete primary education for every 100 children from the wealthiest families, and this gap increases with the level of education. Children in conflict affected countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school, with girls particularly affected. An estimated 387 million primary school-age children and 230 million lower secondary school-age adolescents have failed to achieve basic numeracy and literacy.

But all children can learn if they are given the chance. Key strategies UNICEF has followed in 2018 reflect its response to the global trends observed. They include a move away from direct provision of goods and services towards greater support for system strengthening; an increasing proportion of finance spent in emergency contexts with a subsequent blurring of the distinction between humanitarian and development support; even more working through partnerships; and greater engagement in support of the ‘bookends’ of basic education: early childhood development and giving adolescents multiple pathways to learning.
2018 HIGHLIGHT RESULTS

- 55,983 school management committees received training
- 11.3 million children received learning materials
- 2 million children participated in skills development programmes
- 32 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have gender-responsive education systems for access
- 6.9 million children accessed education in emergencies
- 12 million out-of-school children accessed education globally
- 29 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have equitable education systems for access
- 31 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have gender-responsive teaching and learning systems
- 35 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have effective education systems for learning outcomes
- 16 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have education systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills
- 35 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have effective education systems for learning outcomes
- 31 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have gender-responsive teaching and learning systems
- 16 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have education systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills

GLOBAL SITUATION FOR CHILDREN

**Learning:** 387 million primary school age children and 230 lower secondary school age children are failing to learn basic numeracy and literacy. Most of these children are in school.

**Access:** 262 million children and adolescents, one out of five, are out of school. 175 million children are missing out on pre-primary education.

**Equity:** Estimates suggest that almost half of children with disabilities in developing countries are out of school. Two-thirds of adolescent boys and girls from the poorest quintile in UNICEF programme countries never attended any school, dropped out in primary or are still attending primary school. Low-income countries spend only 10 per cent of their public education budgets on the 20 per cent poorest children.

**Demographics:** To reach universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education by 2030, countries will, on average, need to enroll 5.7 times more children in pre-primary, 1.1 times more in primary and 2 times more children in secondary.

**Information and communications technology:** Only 14 per cent of women and 21 per cent of men are using the internet in least developed countries.

**Jobs:** In low and lower middle income countries, the vast majority of jobs are informal. Based on trends, it will still be the case in 2030 – 76 per cent of jobs in low-income countries and 62 per cent of jobs in lower middle income countries will still be informal. In Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia women are more likely to be in informal jobs than men.

**Humanitarian:** Children in conflict affected countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school, with girls particularly affected, meaning there are approximately 27 million children out of school in 24 conflict affected countries.

UNICEF’s Annual Results Report, ‘Every Child Learns’, shows how UNICEF support in 2018 has given countries greater capacity to achieve these aims by building stronger education systems, from school and community level to district and central ministry level, and by directly delivering education materials and services in a timely manner, particularly in humanitarian contexts. At the same time, work done by UNICEF at regional and global levels has shaped the policy and programmatic landscape in which countries operate, by building and using evidence, strengthening advocacy and providing thought leadership for the education sector.
In Jordan, support services from UNICEF and partners for refugee children have contributed to improvements in the pass rate for the general secondary education certification exam (Tawjihi). In the Za’atari refugee camp, the pass rate soared from 5 per cent in 2014/2015 to 37 per cent in 2017/2018.

In Afghanistan, 93,451 children gained access to education through UNICEF intervention that focused on drought-affected areas. Support included temporary learning spaces, teaching and learning materials, teacher salaries and training, social mobilization, links with Child Protection and WASH, and early childhood development kits.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is empowering girls through the implementation of the ITGirls! Initiative, supported by UNICEF in partnership with United Nations Women and the United Nations Development Programme. This partnership has reached out to the private sector to engage inspiring role models to act as mentors for young women in STEM, addressing gender biases in skills development and opening career pathways for girls and women.

UNICEF Ecuador highlighted the situation of Venezuelan refugee children by promoting their stories in social networks at country, regional and global levels, using the hashtag #AnteTodoSonNiños.

In Egypt, UNICEF supported the Government in mainstreaming life skills in curriculum frameworks for pre-primary and the first level of primary education, as well as the development of grade-level teacher training and assessment frameworks, supporting the training of more than 138,000 teachers.

Together with the Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento, UNICEF developed a comprehensive study and mapping of early childhood education in Argentina. The evidence generated through this study will inform the Ministry of Education’s policies and actions, particularly in the area of governance, and help promote early childhood education in the electoral agenda in 2019.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF supported the development of a learning assessment (early grade reading and mathematics) in national languages in a sample of 480 primary schools across eight provinces. The learning assessment targeted 4,200 children in 1st and 2nd grades. The results of these tests will provide previously unavailable evidence on the effectiveness of instruction related to reading and mathematics delivered in national languages in the early grades.

In South Sudan, UNICEF helped the Ministry of General Education and Instruction in 2018 to train 170 master trainers, who in turn helped more than 16,000 teachers develop teaching skills and participatory classroom practices to implement a new competency-based school curriculum.

In Burundi, capacity development for school management committees benefited over 400,000 children. The committees were trained to monitor school performance, including attendance, prevention of gender-based violence and corporal punishment, and menstrual hygiene management.
In **Malaysia**, the Ministry of Education, a local NGO WOMEN:girls and UNICEF initiated the #MYkindness2018 School Outreach programme, prompting children to examine their attitudes and behaviours as victims, bystanders or bullies; and to develop solutions and ideas to promote kindness and respect in their schools. The initiative provided a video platform for these children to share their experience and personal solutions to end bullying.

In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education and six Regional Education Bureau to implement early childhood education services, including the Child-to Child School Readiness Programme and the Accelerated School Readiness Programme, and to mainstream the ‘O’ class, a 1-year pre-primary programme. With UNICEF support, 130,036 children 47 per cent gained access to quality early childhood education in 2018. This included 11,135 children through the internally displaced persons programme, 43,836 through the refugee programme, and 75,065 through the national public school programme.

In **India**, UNICEF provided technical support in establishing a creditable National Achievement Survey to assess key competencies in language, mathematics and environmental studies (science and social science) in classes 3, 5 and 8 for more than 2.2 million children (52 per cent girls). Thematic funds were used to support capacity-building in all 701 districts across 36 states and union territories of India, to provide reliable information on learning for teacher professional development, the production of learning resource materials, and state- and district-level planning to improve learning.

By expanding the mobile library programme in the north of **Thailand**, UNICEF helped the Government to encourage more children to read, part of its push to improve literacy levels in the region. Reading materials were updated to appeal to young readers, guided by facilitators who receive ongoing coaching, with a commitment from local education authorities to take over the cost.

In **Tajikistan**, UNICEF supported the Institute for Education Development and the In-Service Teacher Training Institute to design and deliver a multilingual education and peacebuilding programme that allowed 935 ethnic minority children to start their first learning experience in their mother tongue. Preschool teachers, local education officials and 600 parents (62 per cent women) were helped to support early learning in a diverse linguistic and cultural environment.

In **Indonesia**, in response to earthquake disasters in Central Sulawesi and Lombok, UNICEF helped set up temporary learning spaces for more than 35,000 children and adolescents, providing training for teachers and psychosocial support for students, parents/caregivers and teachers.
### 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

### 2018-2021 STRATEGIC PLAN

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, is a road map for the children and adolescents left behind. Its Goal Area 2, ‘Every Child Learns’, states that every child has the right to an education and to learning opportunities of good quality from early childhood to adolescence. It supports the achievement of multiple SDGs, in particular Goals 4 and 5.

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#### Theory of change

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<th>OUTCOME:</th>
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<td>Girls and boys, in particular the most marginalized and those affected by humanitarian situations, are provided with inclusive and equitable quality education and learning opportunities.</td>
<td>If countries have strengthened education systems for gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities, and if they have strengthened their education systems for gender-equitable learning outcomes, including early learning, and if they have institutionalized skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability: Then every child, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, can learn.</td>
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#### STRATEGIC PLAN OUTPUTS

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<tr>
<td>Increase and sustain access to education for girls and boys from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities</td>
<td>Increase learning outcomes for girls and boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase access for girls and boys to the skills for learning personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability</td>
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#### CHANGE STRATEGIES

- Evidence-based plan & strategy development
- Policy dialogue & coordination
- Accountability systems (incl. to communities)
- Capacity development
- Knowledge products/tools
- Partnerships & dialogue
- South-South & triangular cooperation
- Education provision in emergencies
- Provision of quality learning materials
- Training for quality teaching
- Community mobilization

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FUNDING

Total education expenses in 2018 were US$1.192 billion, accounting for 22 per cent of total UNICEF expenses for the year, the second highest category after health expenses, which accounted for 24 per cent. This was the same share for education as the previous year, but represented a 1 per cent decrease in absolute terms. In 2018, regular resources (the most flexible type of resources) were used for 13 per cent of total education expenses, while other resources – regular and other resources – emergency were used for 43 and 45 per cent, respectively.

The top five resource partners to UNICEF education in 2018 were the governments of Germany and Norway, the European Commission, the United Kingdom, and the Global Partnership for Education. The largest contributions were received from the Government of Norway for the global thematic education pool, from the Government of Germany for the Education Development Fund in Zimbabwe, and for WASH and Education support to internally displaced children and families in Yemen.

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

Education Thematic funds provide UNICEF leverage to support Governments for increased access to quality education for children with disabilities and out-of-school children, and to focus on regions and schools that face the most challenging context. In 2018, US$110 million of education thematic funding was used by headquarters, regional offices and 123 country offices. US$12.2 million of education thematic funds was spent on education work implemented jointly with other UNICEF sectors, including communication for development for improving community engagement at local level. UNICEF’s focus on education system strengthening is seen in the share of expenditure of thematic funding on system strengthening of 82 per cent, versus only 43 per cent for the non-thematic education expenditure.
UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base (including thematic contributions) and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible. The number of partners contributing thematic funding to education increased from 28 in 2017 to 47 in 2018; the Government of Sweden became a thematic funding partner, providing country-level flexible funding to programmes in Bolivia and Sudan. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the Government of Denmark towards education activities in Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mali and Niger, while the Norwegian Committee for UNICEF also contributed sizeable country-specific funding for activities in Colombia and Pakistan.

UNICEF would like to extend particular thanks to partners who provided thematic funding. Special thanks go to the Government of Norway for its partnership and consistent and generous contributions to achieve results in education.

**SPOTLIGHT ON THEMATIC FUNDING**

**Viet Nam** – In Viet Nam, 72 per cent of preschool teachers are unqualified or not trained to deliver child-centred ‘learn through play’ programmes, and the curriculum does not foster the social and emotional learning of children. UNICEF Viet Nam has helped the Ministry of Education and Training to pilot a ‘Social Emotional Learning’ curriculum in 200 preschools in the poorest provinces with high concentrations of ethnic minority students. The pilot includes teacher training, on-the-job coaching and classroom environment improvements, benefiting 5,000 children aged 3–5 years. These preschools empowered parents and caregivers to be partners in the development and education of preschool children and their younger siblings. Thematic funds were used for programmes in two provinces in particular – Gia Lai and Dien Bien. The flexibility of the thematic funding allowed UNICEF Viet Nam to seize this opportunity, for which no other donor funding was available. It facilitated programme implementation to adjust and respond to this emerging opportunity. The Ministry is now revising the early childhood education curriculum around inclusive social emotional learning, with a nationwide launch expected in 2021, benefiting 3.7 million preschool-age children each year.

**Sources:** UNICEF Education Annual Results Report, 2018