

Update on the context and situation of children

Although facing numerous challenges, Niger continued to make progress with structural economic reforms, which underpin Niger's continued economic growth estimated at 6.3% in 2019 compared to 6.5% in 2018. There was significant progress at policies and systems level in key social sectors with potential impact towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as key results for children. However, persistent bottlenecks affecting the national statistical system's capacity to produce quality data continue to hinder monitoring child-related SDG indicators (Niger's 2018 Voluntary National Review).

Niger's economic momentum being linked to large scale projects, prospective oil exports, and substantial donor support, pre-existing trends of rising inequalities (with negative income per capita growth (-0.06%) for the bottom 40% of the population) and high levels of extreme child multidimensional poverty (with 41% under five children suffering from all five rights deprivation simultaneously in 2012) are unlikely to have changed.

With the population of Niger growing at exponential rates (3.9% p.a. in 2012), the Government of Niger faces considerable challenges to ensure an equitable growth trajectory and allocate sufficient levels of resources on a per capita basis to increase both the coverage and the quality of services benefiting children and women equitably.

Despite these structural challenges, the number enrolled in school continued to grow, with the number of students in primary schools reaching 2,326,590 in 2019 (up 3% from 2018). In primary education, the gender parity index rose to 0.88 (from 0.86). On the other hand, the transition rate from primary to secondary education has fallen, from 51% in 2018 to 46% in 2019, highlighting the need to address the tradeoff between the urgent need for investments in quality education and increasing access to school and responding to the needs of 2.5 million out of school children and adolescents.

Although the most recent data on child or maternal health outcomes date back to 2012 (DHS 2012), Niger's child and maternal mortality rates were estimated at 84 per 1,000 livebirths in 2018 (Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation) and 509 per 100,000 livebirths in 2017, respectively (Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group). Regarding the health sector, coverage for most high-impact interventions remained stagnant, except for immunization, which made some progress. Antenatal consultation stood at 34% compared to 35% in 2018, assisted birth deliveries have remained at 39%, immunization of pentavalent3 was at 97% compared to 95% in 2018, and measles at 96% in 2019 compared to 99% in 2018. Furthermore, poliovirus, measles and meningitis outbreaks indicate that both individual and collective immunity remain weak and require additional efforts to protect children with immunization.

According to the 2019 national nutrition survey, the prevalence of stunting nationwide remained stagnant, estimated at 45.7% on average (compared with 2018 up to 47.8%). The highest prevalence rates are among children in Maradi (55.4%) and Zinder (52.9%). Child wasting remains a major concern with Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence above 10% and Severe Acute Malnutrition prevalence reaching 2.7% (compared to 2018 with 3.2%) (SMART 2019). Over one million children are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition each year, among whom around 400,000 children are at an elevated risk of severe acute malnutrition. Moreover, micronutrient deficiencies (anemia) remain widespread, affecting 61.2% of infants age 6-59 months and 49.3% of women of reproductive age, with limited disparities across regions. Although breastfeeding is a widespread practice, early initiation of breastfeeding within one hour after delivery was estimated at 60% and only 21% of infants under 6 months are exclusively breastfed. In addition, only 5.7% of young children between 6-23 months received the minimum acceptable diet (SMART, 2019).

Regarding SDG 6, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) shows that access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation improves but remains very low in Niger. From 46% in 2017, 50% of the population gained access to basic water supply services (JMP 2018) with significant disparities between urban (84% from 89% in JMP 2017) and rural (44% from 36% in JMP 2017). The open defecation rate is estimated at 68% (JMP 2018) compared to 71% in JMP 2017.

In 2019, Niger ranked last in the Human Development Index owing to extremely low levels of education relative to countries with similar per capita income and despite having better life expectancy. Niger had a score of 0.32 on the Human Capital Index (World Bank, 2018), meaning that the expected productivity of a Nigerien child born in 2018 is only 32% of her full potential. Discriminatory social and gender norms continue to be identified as a source of significant challenges for children and adolescents, particularly girls. Niger ranked 154 out of 166 countries on the 2018 United Nations Development Programme Gender Equality Index, in a context where child marriage remains widespread.

In 2019, Niger continued to be confronted with a combination of acute and chronic humanitarian crises due to a host of structural causes, natural disasters, recurring epidemics and insecurity. During 2019, populations living in the border areas of Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa regions were exposed to worsening cross-border security threats from non-State armed groups. Children were disproportionately affected, with 632,910 children (52% of girls) estimated to be exposed to various

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protection risks, according to the Humanitarian Response Plan (2019). Displaced and refugee population reached 437,206 by year-end 2019 compared to 362,283 in 2018. Over 60% of the IDPs are children.

In 2019, a state of emergency was enforced or renewed in 19 departments, compared to 18 in 2018. In addition, the onset of severe instances of banditry affecting communities in border areas of northern Nigeria caused an unexpected influx of 39,000 refugees into Maradi region, which further tested the capacities of local governments, host communities and humanitarian actors to respond. Humanitarian access has become a critical challenge particularly in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions bordering Mali and Burkina Faso, where communities have remained out of reach of humanitarian assistance for extended periods of time during the year.

In response to worsening security threats on three border fronts in recent years, the government has flatlined to reduced social spending to make way to increased security spending. Analysis of the 2020 national budget showed that security spending amounting to 16.5% of total budget (or 4.2% of GDP) (IMF 2020), compared to education 20.1%, health 9.5% and water and sanitation 2.9%, while high impact social programs continued to remain largely underfunded or dependent on donor funding (child protection, rural hygiene and sanitation), or yet to be integrated in sectoral program budgets (community health and nutrition).

Major contributions and drivers of results

As part of the Niger-UNICEF country programme 2019-2021, UNICEF is working towards acceleration of a **key result for children on immunization and SDG 3.2**, aimed at ensuring that 80 per cent of children 0-11 months are protected against vaccine preventable diseases annually. In 2019, routine immunization coverage made progress as, immunization of pentavalent 3 reached 98% compared to 95% in 2018, and measles (second dose) 66% compared to 62% in 2018 (EPI Report, administrative data, October 2019). 95% of health districts reached an immunization coverage well above the 80% target. UNICEF's contribution towards improving immunization coverage in 2019 involved high-level advocacy to ensure domestic co-financing of vaccine procurement, to prevent significant vaccine shortages; supporting the government in strengthening accountability frameworks through the organization of advocacy forums in Tahoua and Diffa regions, with political and administrative authorities, as well as traditional and religious leaders; supporting the improvement of vaccine stock availability and storage conditions; supporting equity in immunization through bottleneck reduction which enabled reducing Pentavalent drop-out rate from 10% in 2018 to 7% in 2019 in the Niamey Region (EPI Report, October 2019).

Important support was provided to health system strengthening including supply chain reform at national and sub-national levels according to the "Last Mile" strategy, and the development of a dedicated roadmap for Community Health Information Systems to integrate the Health Information Management System. UNICEF's technical and financial support to the Health Basket Fund, along with other health multilateral and bilateral partners, allowed for at-scale implementation of high impact interventions by the Government, with 75% of resources earmarked at decentralized level. In addition, contributing to the ongoing development of the Roadmap for Universal Health Coverage (UHC 2021-2030), UNICEF provided key technical support encompassing both service delivery and financial protection components and ensured that nutrition and WASH are recognized as major determinants.

UNICEF continued to provide support to modelling of high-impact strategies for children's health. It provided support leading to Ministry of Health endorsement the Community Health Strategic Plan 2019-2023, as the overarching framework for Community Health interventions. Community Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (C-IMCI) was expanded in all 43 targeted districts. In line with the commitment to leave no child behind, case management at health center level for Potentially Severe Bacterial Infections (PSBI) was piloted in seven districts (100% of target).

In emergency response, UNICEF supported essential Health interventions in 2 conflict-affected Regions (Diffa in the Lake Chad area and Tillabéri across the Mali border) and floods-affected areas. Mobile clinics provided care for 18,193 children in three districts (72% of annual target), 317,008 children from 06 months to 14 year of age were vaccinated against measles as part of emergency immunization activities, 91% of the annual target.

UNICEF continued to work in 2019 towards accelerating a key result for children on **stunting** (SDG 2.2), envisioning that girls and boys under the age of 5, especially those that are marginalized and those living in humanitarian conditions, receive high impact nutrition services to prevent stunting.

At the policy level, UNICEF supported the "Nigériens Nourish Nigériens" initiative (i3N) to initiate a nutrition budget analysis to track allocations towards nutrition-specific and nutrition sensitive interventions. Along with European Union and as the nutrition sector lead, UNICEF also endeavored to support the revitalization of Scaling Up Nutrition movement in Niger, through a clear roadmap established following the participation of Niger in the SUN global gathering in Nepal. UNICEF also participated in the elaboration of a roadmap for the integration of management of SAM into the national budget, which enabled the creation of a budget line of \$1.5 million in the 2020 budget for the procurement of Ready-to-Use

Therapeutic Food.

UNICEF continued to support implementation of high-impact interventions for the prevention of malnutrition. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to provide life-saving vitamin A supplementation and deworming to children during national campaigns. During the year, Vitamin A supplementation and deworming in integration with the polio campaign reached 5,395,477 children in the first round, and 5,367,414 during the second semester, representing respectively 98% and 97% of the annual target. The home fortification program to prevent anemia among children continued in municipalities in 14 health districts, up from 10 in 2018. Provision of iron and folic acid reached 76,333 pregnant women, only 25% of the annual target, due to shortage of funding. UNICEF supported community-based approaches to empower health system actors and communities with increased knowledge on improved Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices. As a result, 417,943 caregivers were sensitized, and 599 community health workers and 3,161 community volunteers were trained on IYCF practices.

In response to the acute malnutrition crisis, UNICEF continued to support the treatment of children with severe acute malnutrition, ensuring that they receive quality care. Through a network of 1,233 health facilities supported by both NGOs and UNICEF, 414,239 children with SAM (109% of the CPD annual target) received life-saving treatment and care, with performance indicators surpassing national and SPHERE standards. In its effort to sustain screening of acute malnutrition at community level, UNICEF, in collaboration with ALIM and WFP, supported the scaling-up of the MUAC-by-mother approach in the Maradi region, training more than 872,000 women of reproductive age on how to screen and detect malnutrition in their children. Thanks to UNICEF support, Niger's 2019 Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention campaign integrated malnutrition screening, enabling to screen approximately 3.9 million children under five months between July and October.

UNICEF Niger is committed to support the country in achieving SDG 4 and is prioritizing a key result for children envisioning that by 2021, 100% pupils from pre-primary to lower secondary education, boys and girls, are reached with interventions targeting the improvement of **learning outcomes and skills**, including in humanitarian context. In 2019, 201,431 children (five times the annual target) were provided with individual education/early learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes, out of whom 51,431 in humanitarian context. At policy level, UNICEF took over as the Chair of the Education Partners Group, in close cooperation with the European Union as co-chair. UNICEF's role was pivotal in ensuring the high-level dialogue, consensus and enhanced partnership framework and resource mobilization necessary to support the Government's renewed strategic vision for the education sector. UNICEF along with education sector partners played a strategic role in supporting the ministries of education in developing of a new Education and Professional Training Transitional Sector Plan (PTSEF 2020-2022) an important development as it defines the necessary foundations for the country can effectively improve access to quality education. UNICEF supported eight sectoral studies and the development of a Financial Simulation Model, thus ensuring that the plan was evidence-based, realistic and responsive to the main challenges in the sector. The finalization of a quality Education sector plan enabled Niger to apply for a new Global Partnership for Education grant, unlocking US\$85 million for the sector and prioritizing intervention into critical early learning years in priority regions. The new education and training sector partnership framework was also signed, successfully building an inclusive and effective policy dialogue platform between Government and all education partners. UNICEF support, in partnership with the World Bank, was instrumental leading to signature by the Ministry for Primary Education, of a Declaration committing the country to raise pre-school enrolment to 20% by 2030 (SDG 4.2), thus acknowledging the importance of pre-school education to quality learning outcomes. In addition, UNICEF supported the education sectors ministries in finalization of a new Girls' and Women's Education and Training National Strategy with multi-annual action plan (SDG 4.5). UNICEF worked to strengthen statistical capacities in the education sector, including the annual statistics revision, with other sector partners providing capacity development and design of a sector-wide Education Management Information System.

The Niger-UNICEF country programme is focused also on accelerating the reduction of **child marriage** and contributing towards the SDG 5.3, envisioning a reduction in the percentage of girls aged 20-24 married before the age of 18 from 76% to 72%. In 2019, UNICEF continued to put an emphasis on reducing child marriage through promoting multi-sectoral interventions with a strong focus on quality girls' education. UNICEF child marriage prevention and care interventions reached 49,921 girls, three times the annual target, and UNICEF supported efforts to implement the national plan against child marriage, indicating that the country programme was on track to achieve key results in this area. In addition, UNICEF supported the process leading to institutionalization – by presidential decree – of Child Protection Committees, a major advancement to address child marriage and to promote positive social norms for the protection of children's rights. UNICEF in collaboration with UNFPA supported the Ministry of the Promotion of Women and the Protection of children for the implementation of the national costed strategic plan to end child marriage. UNICEF supported the empowerment of more than 12,000 additional adolescent girls actively participating in the community child protection program covering 198 new villages in the regions of Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder, and reaching a total of 49,921 adolescents (85% of the CPD annual target). UNICEF strived to shift social norms on child marriage by ensuring active involvement of traditional leaders in social mobilization and community dialogue, reaching out to more than 260,000 parents in 67 communities, as well as on gender-based violence. In addition, a network of 40 radio stations covering the whole territory of Niger organized a large campaign to prevent child marriage and promote child rights. More than 1,000,000 young people were exposed to radio

forums, ads and interactive radio programs on subjects related to gender norms and harmful practices.

Significant results were also achieved with UNICEF support in strengthening the child protection system. The new civil registration policy and law were adopted by the Parliament contributing to the achievement of the universal birth registration (SDG 16.9). UNICEF continued supporting civil registration services to ensure that every child birth is notified, registered, and a certificate is granted. Up to September 2020, more than 361,705 children under 1 year old, the majority of which in rural areas, obtained their birth certificate, amounting to 47% of expected births in the year, out of a 50% annual target. UNICEF support to government protection services allowed 13,597 children including 5,704 girls victims of various forms of violence and children on the move to access services (91% of annual target). To improve access to services for children on the move, an innovative approach was developed through the establishment of four One Stop Social Welfare Shops in the region of Agadez, and the rehabilitation of the temporary transit center in Agadez for unaccompanied child migrants was also completed.

Protection services for children in conflict with the law were strengthened in 2019 through provision of socio-professional training for children in detained in the regions of Niamey, Maradi, Zinder and Agadez. A mechanism for reintegration and alternatives to detention was set up. UNICEF continued technical support, monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the Government of Niger and the United Nations System for the protection of children allegedly associated with armed groups, ensuring their handover to protection services and an adapted reintegration programme.

In 2019, emergency response in child protection reached children in Diffa, Tillabéri and Tahoua regions, as well as started to implement activities in villages hosting refugees in the region of Maradi following displacement of population from the Nigeria border. Out 8,000 targeted children, 7,896 children (including 2,633 girls) were reached with psychosocial support, 643 registered unaccompanied and separated children benefitted from family-based care or alternative care arrangements while 24,878 children affected by population movements benefitted from sensitization through activities and via 70 child protection community-based mechanisms set up and reinforced in Diffa, Tillabéri and Tahoua regions, reaching only 28% of the target population due to funding shortfall in Diffa, and humanitarian access issues in Tillabéri and Tahoua.

UNICEF supported the Government's efforts to increase access to **safe water and sanitation and to promote hygiene**, in line with Niger's National Water Hygiene and Sanitation Programme (PROSEHA 2016-2030), and outcome 3 of the UNSDCF, aligned with SDG 6. During 2019, the trends to promote climate resilient water supply infrastructure were maintained through the construction of mostly solar powered piped systems, enabling about 642,000 additional people to gain access to safe drinking water in rural areas; among whom 23,548 through UNICEF direct support. UNICEF focused also on WASH in institutions. Thus, 10,715 students (4,571 girls and 6,144 boys) benefitted from their school connection to existing piped systems and, among them 4371 students (1,974 girls and 2,400 boys) benefited from separate blocks of latrines for boys and girls thereby improving the learning environment in a gender-equitable manner. UNICEF upgraded 18 health care facilities gaining access to water supply and adequate sanitation (compared to 5 in 2018).

Regarding sanitation, as the leading partner for rural sanitation and Community Led Total Sanitation, UNICEF supported the Government to finalize and disseminated the national CLTS implementation guide and to develop an orientation note on CLTS in emergencies, integrating vulnerabilities and disability. As part of the municipality-wide WASH approach, UNICEF also supported the implementation of the open defecation free (ODF) municipality approach in ten municipalities, resulting in a total of 584 additional communities (362,380 people) and one municipality fully certified ODF, exceeding the ending open defecation annual target of 200,000 additional people living in the newly certified ODF. UNICEF supported the implementation of the CLTS in emergencies approach in 47 communities (43,915 inhabitants), mostly affected by floods or located in cholera hotspots. 29 of them (29,355 people) were certified ODF (compared to 15 triggered in 2018). UNICEF coordinated partners' efforts in the WASH cluster to provide populations affected by humanitarian crises with assistance. Additionally, through UNICEF interventions, a total of 92,836 additional people gained access to safe drinking water (77% of target) and 36,327 to sanitation facilities (104% of target). 493,572 people were reached by UNICEF for hygiene promotion (107% of annual target).

In 2019, with support from partners including UNICEF, the Minister of Water and Sanitation (MoWS) conducted the baseline survey and the mid-term review of the first phase of the implementation of the PROSEHA, and the development of municipal WASH plans for 107 municipalities, contributing to the operationalization of the decentralization process, reaching 97% of national target. UNICEF supported the implementation of the municipality-wide WASH approach in ten municipalities (100% of annual CPD target), to support effective management of competencies devolved from the central Government as part of the decentralization process. As a result of this support, three additional municipalities, up to one in 2018, set up a functional municipal WASH service.

Overall, 2019 was also an important year for advocacy. The Government of Niger publicly renewed and symbolically signed its commitment to the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 2019, following a series of communication and advocacy initiatives undertaken by UNICEF and its partners. The year-long

celebration of the anniversary of the CRC was an opportunity to forge strategic alliances with celebrities to advocate for children's rights, particularly through the "Champions for Children" initiative.

At the forefront of the celebration, youth and children participated in a wide range of communication and advocacy initiatives and campaigns to help them advocate for their rights. UNICEF and partners provided them with the necessary tools and skills – through video, photo and storytelling workshops – to have their voice heard and foster better understanding about the challenges they face. Media contents produced by children were presented and widely disseminated on World Children's Day. UNICEF and partners collaborated with the National federation of football to maintain conversation around gender stereotypes through the highly media-exposed national tournament for young girls.

With support from the CAPEG (Prime Minister Office) and UNICEF, government's efforts to institutionalize participatory consultation of young people in development policies and programmes were translated into an update of the National Youth Policy, up for adoption in early 2020. The Ministries of Youth and Sports, Youth Entrepreneurship, Professional Education and Training, and Cultural Renaissance included in their respective 2020 program budgets key recommendations from the participatory study on youth aspirations "Paroles des Jeunes" ("Word of Youth"). UNICEF also supported youth associations in conducting community engagement initiatives. 190 youth associations were involved in the promotion of peacebuilding initiatives and youths' leadership. In addition, 2,632 adolescents and youth in 9 municipalities in the regions of Tahoua, Tillabéri, Maradi and Zinder were trained on youth leadership, peacebuilding, associative life, communication and advocacy techniques.

In humanitarian response, UNICEF continued to strengthen national capacities to respond to emergencies. In 2019, UNICEF was designated as Technical lead of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), the main immediate emergency response mechanism to population movements due to armed conflicts and floods. The RRM has conducted more than 130 humanitarian needs assessments among newly displaced populations in 2019 and has served more than 100,000 with food assistance, 61,000 people with non-food items and more than 18,000 people with safe water and access to sanitation. UNICEF was also in charge of RRM procurement, transports and pre-positioning of contingency response stocks to meet the vital needs of the affected population in terms of essential household items and access to water, hygiene and sanitation. In 2019 UNICEF has procured 13,200 NFI kits, 1,000 baby NFI kits and 10 health center kits.

UNICEF collaborated closely with the State Sectoral Technical Directorates, the Ministry in charge of Humanitarian Action and the General Directorate of Civil Protection, in the context of preparation and response to population movements and floods, through capacity building and the funding of multisectoral emergency response capacities, enabling Government to proactively and quickly identify victims of floods, collect and analyse data and partially support victims of flood through the distribution of NFIs.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

In 2019, UNICEF Niger started to operate a strategic shift from a predominantly service-delivery mode to more investments in systems strengthening and capacity-building for sustainable solutions. To accelerate key results for children, innovative approaches were developed in support to these principles, particularly regarding support to decentralization, youth and technological innovation agendas, including the underlying elements of social accountability and participatory planning and budgeting at municipal level.

UNICEF worked to operationalize the WASH municipality-wide approach based on public-private partnerships (PPP). In addition to improving the quality and sustainability of the service and the accountability to users, the PPP through the delegated management of the water supply piped systems can offer opportunities for youth employment. Given this potential opportunity for private operators to hire competent youths for management of the piped systems, UNICEF is planning to pilot an initiative for the promotion of PPP in the Diffa region as of 2020.

For decentralization, UNICEF also worked through an innovative consortium to align vision and efforts on citizen's voice, engagement and inclusive participation, as well as public finance for social sectors through two interlinked partnerships: one with GIZ (ProDEC) and WFP, focused on joint design and piloting of inclusive participation in local development and taxation; the second with the World Bank focused on citizen engagement and social accountability, access to budget information and capacity building of social actors to analyze social sectors' budgets.

Around the youth agenda, UNICEF Niger participated in the Generation Unlimited initiative, launching a call to young people to find innovative solutions to problems identified in their communities. UNICEF strengthened its youth-led advocacy efforts in 2019 with Niger's participation to the YouthConnekt Africa initiatives. UNICEF and partners initiated a series of #TEDTalks, bringing together youths, innovators and thought-leaders to showcase solutions on issues confronting young people and on the "Niger They Want". New ways to empower adolescent girls were tested through a video participatory workshop enabling them to exchange experiences, direct and produce a series of video on the way they see their world, tell

their own stories and shed light on challenges they face. UNICEF and partners supported the national competition e-Takara and the newly-created e-Takara Junior promoting co-creation of solutions that have the potential to deliver results by and for young people and children. Formal alliance with digital influencers helped UNICEF expand its reach and engagement through digital platforms and social media. These innovative experiences consolidated UNICEF's belief that interventions have more impact when fully thought through and conducted directly by youth associations. Hence, it will become critical in 2020 to focus on youth associations as change multipliers, and further empower them through capacity building.

UNICEF also used technology to improve social services for children, particularly through strengthening of quality information systems for effective decision-making. UNICEF supported the Health Information Management System (HMIS) enhancement with the introduction and a gradual scale-up of the District Health Information System (DHIS-2) platform, a key step forward towards effective resource alignment and program implementation management at decentralized level, for Integrated Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition.

In the education sector, the Data Must Speak initiative (DMS) aimed to achieve increased equity in access to education and improved learning outcomes by making available and maximizing the usefulness of existing education data. With the Connect My School initiative, UNICEF Niger supported 600 children across five regions in learning tablet-based mathematics and French lessons, increasing their scores by almost 50% at the primary level. Best practice lessons were filmed and produced to support pedagogical development of teachers, who were also coached through WhatsApp and Skype in Diffa region. In the child protection sector, the implementation of CPIMS+ project aimed at improving case management in Niger. It became also a catalyzer for improving quality and consistency of the case management response, in partnership with the Ministry of Child Protection. CPIMS+ will be fully operational in 2020.

Lessons learned were focused on UNICEF's role as facilitator and convener, partnerships with the private sector, decentralization and resilience. UNICEF's role as a principled, but neutral convener and facilitator of game-changing strategies and processes bringing together all sector's actors, starting from the top leadership of the Government until all technical and financial partners, was successfully modelled in the education sector. 2019 saw the culmination of a process built over the years, requiring a combination of heavily technical support (on data, sectoral analysis), communication and advocacy skills particularly on politically sensitive subjects, high-level political advocacy, and very strong coordination and mediation skills. Through this experience, we learned the time and resource-intensity that these processes require of UNICEF in the country context of Niger, and we will bring lessons learned into 2020 and beyond, particularly to ensure UNICEF can play a similar role in other key sectors.

Reflections on decentralization also touched UNICEF programme implementation and monitoring modalities, as the need was highlighted to deepen the decentralization of UNICEF's programme. In response, UNICEF has strengthened the human resources base in zonal offices, redistributed presence according to the concentration of programme activities, and has worked on an accountability framework of zonal offices which will be operationalized in 2020. In 2020, UNICEF will also be supporting the Niger-UNICEF CPD coordination ministry to undertake a review of the CPD sub-national coordination mechanisms to inform their enhancement.

In several results areas of UNICEF work in Niger, partnerships with the private sector emerged as key to move forward on critical agendas such as the prevention of stunting, and the financing of WASH investments at decentralized level. In 2019, UNICEF conducted an initial mapping of the private sector in Niger, which highlighted the need to deepen the analysis and develop a specific private sector engagement strategy focused on the business sectors with the highest potential to contribute to results for children. The private sector engagement strategy is expected to be finalized in the second quarter 2020.

Finally, considering the increased number of people affected by the multiple and complex emergencies in the country, and climate change and associated events, empowering authorities and communities at local, departmental, regional, national level to withstand and prepare for shocks is critical. Therefore, resilience building will increasingly constitute a focus of UNICEF's work. During 2020, UNICEF plans to model and operationalize an integrated municipal and community development approach integrating a strong element of resilience and risk reduction.