UNICEF u Srbiji
Contents

Introduction ................................................................. 3

Early Childhood Development ........................................... 4

Education ................................................................. 8

Child Protection ....................................................... 12

Youth and Adolescent Development ......................... 16

Refugee and Migrant Response ...................................... 20

Child Rights Monitoring ............................................. 24

Partnerships ............................................................... 28
UNICEF, for every child

UNICEF provides support to the Republic of Serbia’s reform processes to ensure that child rights are realized for every child in the areas of early childhood development, education, child protection, youth and adolescent development. Specifically, we are providing evidence, modelling solutions that can be brought to scale, and engaging in continuous policy dialogue to make sure that no child is left behind. At the same time, our task is also to be the independent voice of children – to point out the gaps, breaches and violations of child rights.

Our work is in line with national development priorities and contributes to the fulfilment of the Government’s international commitments and plans, including on the path to EU accession and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is aligned with the Development Partnership Framework which defines the cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations System.

We are working with a wide range of partners to deliver our universal mandate for children. While the Government is our main partner, we are also closely cooperating with civil society organizations, academia, independent human rights monitoring bodies, including the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia and the Parliament of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, communities, families, and children and youth themselves. Furthermore, we build partnerships with the private sector - multinational corporations, national companies and small businesses – to leverage their resources, knowledge and outreach to drive innovation to support UNICEF’s work to reach every child.

Our vision for the future is a world in which every child is healthy, safe, educated, cared for and protected and in which all children can make the most of their potential.
Early Childhood Development

The first years of life are critical for the physical, emotional and intellectual development of a child.

Early childhood development (ECD) programmes are important during the earliest years. During this time the brain develops faster than at any other time in life and that is why interventions are highly effective and bring high return on investment.

ECD programmes are also a powerful equaliser of opportunities for vulnerable children.

Challenges

- Perinatal mortality of 7.8 per 1000 births in Serbia is still much higher compared to the average rate of 4.9 in the 25 EU countries.
- 19% of children from the general population are not fully immunized on time, while the same is true for 56% of children from Roma settlements.
- Only 13% of children are exclusively breastfed in the first 6 months.
- Only 37% of fathers regularly engage in learning activities with their 3 to 5-year-old children.
What we do

Health

UNICEF strengthens the ability of the healthcare and other sectors to provide quality health and early childhood development services, particularly to vulnerable children and their families – those living in poverty, Roma children and children with disabilities.

We support the Ministry of Health and the Institute of Public Health to strengthen implementation of the national immunization programme focusing on effective communication for immunization, capacities of health professionals to address issues of hesitant parents, as well as on efficient vaccine procurement and data management.

UNICEF works to improve the quality of maternity and neonatal services so that they support modern concepts of care by promoting mother and baby-friendly principles, supporting breastfeeding, promoting family-centred and developmental care that provides an optimal environment and stimulation for young children, particularly premature ones.

Nutrition

UNICEF is advocating for strong infant and young child feeding policies and the scale-up of proven interventions from pregnancy through the first two years of life. These include maternal nutrition, early and exclusive breastfeeding, as well as improvement in the nutritional status of young children, those at risk of obesity and undernourished children, particularly children coming from the most vulnerable communities.
Parenting

We support services that help parents and other caregivers provide children with affection, attention and stimulation, in addition to good nutrition, proper healthcare and protection.

Together with relevant ministries, we work to advance the capacities of paediatric and community nursing services, as well as developmental counselling units to support parents in stimulating optimal child development, to engage in early detection of risks that cause children to lag behind in their development, and together with preschool and social welfare services provide early interventions for children and families in need.

Results

- **200,000** children and their parents have access to improved early childhood development services in 25 primary healthcare centres
- More than **1,500** children with developmental risks or difficulties received support from developmental counselling units benefiting their developmental outcomes
- **1,500** premature and sick babies received improved care in neonatology units in Kragujevac, Nis, Novi Sad and Belgrade
- **1,000** Roma families informed about positive parenting practices to improve young child hygiene, nutrition, health and development
Education

Every girl and boy, everywhere, is entitled to high quality inclusive education

Some children are more likely to miss out on education than others. That deprivation has lifelong consequences that often mean that the next generation will start out at a disadvantage. The resulting cycles of inequality and deprivation thwart the potential of both individuals and societies.

Challenges

- Only 9% of children from the poorest households and 6% of children from Roma settlements aged from 3 up to 5 attend preschools.
- Secondary school is attended by 15% of girls from Roma settlements.
- Only 50% of children aged from 3 up to 5 attend preschools.
- Primary school is completed by 66% of children living in poverty.
What we do

**Early Childhood Education**

UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, public institutions and the academic community, works to raise awareness on the importance of preschool education, build a strong system and to provide equal access for all children, focusing especially on the inclusion of children from vulnerable groups.

Our work is focused on enabling access to quality inclusive preschool education that provides meaningful learning opportunities to all children.

We work to improve the overall quality of preschool education, including the curriculum framework, knowledge and professional skills of preschool teachers, parents and other stakeholders, the data collection and management system, and quality standards of preschool institutions for the benefit of children and families.

**Inclusive Education**

UNICEF works to increase capacities of national and local institutions to include children from vulnerable groups in schools and to prevent drop-out.

Our work is focused on improving the overall quality of education, including the knowledge and professional skills of teachers to work in diverse classrooms, enhancing cooperation between different stakeholders at the national and local levels and supporting parents’ participation.

We are working on improving quality and equity in education and encouraging the inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds in the education system.
Results

Over 2,000 children enrolled into preschool education for the first time

186,260 pupils benefitted from improved capacities of teachers through direct support to schools

Almost 96% of primary age refugee and migrant children are included in education in 38 primary schools across Serbia

4,200 education professionals supported to implement quality inclusive education

Development and adoption of the For Every Child - New Preschool Curriculum Framework, ensures continuity of learning from preschool to primary school
Child Protection

Every child has the right to protection

A strong child protection system addresses the many inter-connected risks that confront children and their families. The challenge is to build such a system to protect every child.

Challenges

- In almost 1/3 of all cases of domestic violence, the victims are children.
- 44% of boys and 42% of girls under the age of 14 have experienced violent methods of discipline at home.
- Over 2/3 of children in institutions are children with disabilities.
- 57% of girls from Roma settlements are married before the age of 18, and almost 18% are married before the age of 15.
- Out of the total number of reported children in conflict with the law, diversionary measures are applied before criminal proceedings in only 9.5% of cases.
What we do

Strengthening vulnerable families

UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, encourages the reduction of the number of children living in residential care by preventing family separation whenever possible. We are investing efforts to develop prevention services, for families living in multiple deprivations whose children are at risk of being separated from their parents and placed into care. UNICEF prioritises the downsizing of the remaining large-scale institutions focusing on children aged 0-3 and children with disabilities. We work to increase system capacities to scale-up family-based alternatives for children in care. We provide professional, evidence-based advice, build the capacity of social workers and other practitioners and model innovative services to support those most excluded from society.

Violence against children

UNICEF works on strengthening the cooperation among various sectors dealing with children – in healthcare, education and social protection, but also in the areas of justice and law enforcement – to prevent violence, and to address situations in which violence against children has occurred.

We strengthen the capacity of centres for social work, healthcare institutions, schools, judicial professionals, and the police to improve their work on preventing and reporting cases of violence, and their ability to adequately respond to it.

Justice for children

UNICEF supports changes that help ensure the full protection of all children, particularly children victims and witnesses of crime to avoid secondary victimization. We are helping to build a system based on the ‘best interests of the child’ in judicial proceedings, one in which child participation is supported when decisions are made about their custody, care and protection.

Together with the Ministries of Justice and Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, UNICEF contributes to improving children’s access to justice and supports the Government’s efforts to establish a system that focuses on the reintegration of juvenile offenders through prioritization of diversionary measures over punitive ones.

Child marriage

UNICEF works to strengthen the role and leadership of Roma communities in tackling child marriage by providing information on alternatives – through community dialogue, direct support to families and engagement of successful young Roma role models. We support girls from Roma settlements to benefit from education, employment and social resources, by making online services and training available to them.

At the national level, we support the National Coalition to End Child Marriage, which consists of more than twenty organizations and institutions dedicated to promoting children’s rights and the eradication of the harmful practice of child marriage in the Republic of Serbia. The Coalition is co-chaired by the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality under the leadership of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and Ternipe, a Roma organization.
Results

1,700 children with and without disabilities reached through inclusive sport and **recreational activities**

198,000 children indirectly benefited from teams for prevention and protection of children from violence

2,886 parents counselled via the National parent line

Over 900 families and 2,000 children supported by family outreach workers

307 330 girls, mothers and 54 fathers in 20 Roma settlements benefitted from activities geared toward ending child marriage

© UNICEF Serbia/Atanackovic
Youth and Adolescent Development

Every young person, everywhere, is empowered to achieve their full potential.

By engaging with young people and supporting them in standing up for their rights and creating the conditions for them to progress and play an active role in societies, we can contribute to building peace, security, justice and sustainable development for all.

Challenges

- **32%** of young people aged 15 to 24 are **unemployed**
- **16.5%** of young people aged 15 to 24 neither work nor study
- **40%** of young people between 16 and 24 years are at risk of **poverty and social exclusion**
- **Nearly 83%** of young people believe the culture of tolerance is not sufficiently developed among young adults
- **70%** of young people would venture to live **outside of Serbia**
What we do

Active participation and engagement

UNICEF works to raise awareness on the importance of youth participation, to ensure a stimulating environment for youth activities, and the involvement of young people in community decision-making.

Together with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, as well as with the Minister without Portfolio in charge of Demography and Population Policy, we work to support youth engagement and active citizenship, as well as the development of life skills for young people through formal and non-formal education.

Our goal is to improve the overall level of active youth empowerment, thus enabling young people to act on their own behalf and have a say in policy discussions. Young people want to be actively involved, to volunteer and to implement their ideas and projects. UNICEF supports young people to share their views through U-Report and youth dialogues. We work to ensure that all young people, especially those who are most marginalized, are consulted and informed, and that their voices and roles are recognized in the community.

Skills building

UNICEF works to increase capacities of the most vulnerable adolescents and youth to develop and realize their full potential. This includes wider access to information, skills and mentorship, as well as seed financing. In collaboration with civil society organizations, as well as with the private sector, like Nordeus, StartIt, and other partners, we focus on social innovation, digital and employability skills. Through a social innovation programme, UPSHIFT, we strive to include and empower all young people to identify and design solutions for their communities.

Inclusion

UNICEF encourages youth to acquire and practice skills to help break stereotypes, constructively interact and implement innovative ideas. In all our activities, we work to promote youth inclusion and well-being and support the rights of vulnerable groups to fully participate in their communities.
Despite the de-facto closure of the Balkan route in early March 2016, a constant stream of refugees and migrants continues to arrive in the Republic of Serbia – mainly from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina – with strong support from cross-border smuggling and trafficking networks.

Child protection main issues

When entering the country, women and children on the move are physically exhausted, psychologically traumatized, and many need medical and protection assistance. Refugee and migrant children, and women, are accommodated in collective centres that provide basic needs; however, they have limited access to safe places to rest and thrive, receiving only irregular specialized and community-based psychosocial support. Referral to specialized services, including for sexual violence, is limited, and children face several linguistic, cultural and social barriers to access them. The needs of adolescent girls and boys have also largely been unmet up to now. There are concerns in relation to unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), who require best-interest assessment and determination, and specific support throughout the case management process. Most children attend primary school; however, a smaller number attend secondary or higher education; when it comes to girls those figures drop further. Finally, nutrition of children, in particular infants, is still an area of concern.

Core strategic priorities

Child protection

UNICEF’s response focuses on the overall well-being of all refugee and migrant children by i) identifying the most vulnerable and at risk; ii) referring them to social workers and further specialized care; iii) enhancing competences of all service providers for quality and timely care; and iv) providing meaningful services to UASC.

Education

UNICEF supports school administrations, local institutions and partners to enrol and promote regular attendance of refugee and migrant children in schools in Serbia, and promotes non-formal education activities. Dedicated efforts are being made in evaluating learning outcomes, engaging parents, and ensuring secondary school enrolment and retention, especially for UASC and girls.

Gender-based violence

UNICEF implements dedicated programming on gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies; establishing safe spaces for women and girls, and documenting good practices to ensure that women and girls are at the centre of GBV prevention and response interventions. GBV and sexual exploitation, including against boys, remains a major concern.

Health and nutrition

UNICEF’s response supports nutrition and health services to mothers and babies through Mother and Baby Corners, and plays a pivotal role in providing technical support on nutrition and early childhood development to other institutions and actors.
UNICEF’s integrated approach

UNICEF focuses on applying an integrated approach: mainstreaming GBV into all programmatic activities; promoting joint and integrated capacity development initiatives; and advocating that all child rights are comprehensively respected and fulfilled in line with the Convention of the Rights of the Child. UNICEF provides advocacy, technical assistance and protection guidance to a variety of stakeholders (frontline NGOs, as well as institutions). UNICEF plays a paramount role in the coordination of the Child Protection Working Group, supporting the GBV Working Group, as well as in leveraging and advocating with other agencies to allocate resources and implement initiatives in protection. In the education, health and nutrition sectors, UNICEF is a technical essential actor, disseminating guidance and acting as a technical resource and knowledge management hub to partners and institutions.

Partnerships

UNICEF actively participates in and promotes partnerships with government institutions, United Nations agencies, including UNHCR, UNFPA, IOM and WHO, and civil society actors and the private sector. UNICEF continues to have strategic emergency partnerships to ensure essential services are available for the hard-to-reach and most vulnerable groups, including:

Women Centre: Established within a wider Community Centre for refugees and migrants, the centre offers recreational and cultural activities, vocational training and GBV specialized services, including material assistance and psychosocial support. The centre includes a Child Friendly Space and a Mother and Baby Corner.

Immediate emergency support to women and children on the move: Women, girls and children on the move receive lifesaving and real-time information about child protection and GBV services, as well as overall information about accessing assistance in Serbia.

UASC identification and assistance: Gender sensitive and age appropriate cultural mediation services are offered to children on the move, as well as to UASC accommodated in reception and asylum centres. Referral to specialized services and documentation of vulnerable cases is also ensured.

Health and nutrition for babies and their caregivers: Mothers and young children access comprehensive Mother and Baby Corner related activities to ensure their healthy and safe development, and that mothers have access to counselling and advice. A Mother and Baby Corner is also a functional entry point for GBV disclosure and child protection mainstreaming.
System strengthening

UNICEF designs its emergency interventions to ultimately strengthen national and local protection systems by working together with governments, local authorities and institutions at state and municipal levels. We support key institutional actors to develop and disseminate policies, elaborate referral pathways and standard operating procedures, and promote capacity development initiatives. Finally, UNICEF further supports national institutions’ and state authorities’ accountability for coordinating and responding to humanitarian needs in an efficient and timely manner.

People reached (2015–2018) | Total
--- | ---
Children under 5 years accessing mother and baby care and nutrition services | 7,377
Mothers benefiting from infant and young child feeding counselling | 6,439
Children receiving culturally-appropriate basic supplies, including clothes, baby hygiene items and dignity kits | 34,994
Children reached with quality child protection support (mental health and psychosocial support, legal counselling and case management) | 34,405
Unaccompanied and separated children identified and referred to specialized services | 5,930
Frontline workers trained on child protection standards | 813
People accessing gender-based violence prevention and response services | 913
Children and adolescents participating in non-formal education activities | 1,846
Children enrolled in mainstream formal education | 1,027
Problems that are unmeasured remain unresolved. For children, problems that are not registered, or in any way captured by official data, leave them with a greater risk of being left behind. That is why it is imperative to establish monitoring systems that encompass all child-related issues. If their situation is known and understood, action can be taken to make it better.

Challenges

- **Reliable** national data on the number of children with disabilities is not yet available.
- Disaggregated data is needed for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure no one is left behind.
- Lack of cross-sectoral data on the prevalence of violence against children prevents a cost analysis on the impact of violence.
- Children and young people have limited opportunities to participate in decisions that shape their lives and to monitor the status of their rights.
- Children are at greater risk of poverty than the overall adult population.
What we do

To improve the national systems for data collection and management, particularly in the fields of inclusive education, violence prevention and monitoring the changes in social norms, UNICEF is working to increase the availability of reliable disaggregated data on the position of children and women in Serbia.

Where possible, data are disaggregated by gender, age, residence, household income, education, and other key social and demographic variables to help uncover possible risk factors and inequities.

UNICEF supports the process of system reforms, and we are active in monitoring the implementation of laws and policies aimed at children and establishing an accountability system. We analyse data trends and emphasize patterns found within the data.

We advise on how these data can be used strategically to inform the development and/or implementation of inclusive national policies, laws and programmes, as well as the development of mechanisms for monitoring and addressing violations of child rights.

UNICEF supports national governmental and independent bodies, as well as local self-governments, to expand their knowledge on child rights and child-centred, evidence-based policy-making, budgeting and monitoring. We support child rights monitoring by both civil society as well as independent monitoring institutions (the Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Equality), the Office for Human and Minority Rights and others.

We support parliaments at national, provincial and local levels in building the capacity of parliamentary members to oversee the planning, implementation and budgeting of policies related to children.
A total of 10,000 households, of which 2,000 Roma households, are included in the Multiple Indicator Cluster (MICS6) survey in 2019.

A methodological guideline for the future Registry on Children with Disabilities has been developed, and is based on a functional assessment of children’s disability.

The introduction of an education information system in 2019 will enable evidence-based decision-making, contributing to the quality of education.

Indicators to monitor the implementation of recommendations by the UN Committee for Child Rights have been formulated in collaboration with civil society and the Office for Human and Minority Rights.

The Ombudsman, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Office for Human and Minority Rights and the Parliament have been supported and strengthened for improved monitoring of child rights.

A training on child rights for civil servants in local self-governments is being developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia signed a national Call for Action on Early Childhood Development.

Adolescents and young people articulated their priorities that correspond to the Sustainable Development Goals and this was reflected in the Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Serbia at the UN High-Level Political Forum in 2019.

UNICEF uses evidence to achieve results for children. In this context, together with partners, we have completed major studies, including: R3P – Determinants and Factors of Violence against Children in Serbia, Adverse Childhood Experiences Study, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices in Immunisation, Situation Analysis on Services for Infants and Small Children with Disabilities, How to be a Caring School, Child Marriage among the Roma Population in Serbia, and Monitoring Social Inclusion in the Republic of Serbia.
The world’s biggest challenges will not be solved by one organization, corporation, group of people or country. That is why the cornerstone of our work is partnerships – not only with governments and civil society, but also with individual donors, corporations, foundations, the media, celebrities, influencers and UNICEF National Ambassadors.

UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary contributions and our work would not be possible without the extraordinary generosity of our private sector partners and individuals.

We develop partnerships with companies across a wide range of industries, delivering clear business benefits for them, while companies significantly contribute to our work. At the same time, we believe that small gestures of goodwill, commitment and compassion are big steps towards a better society and a better life for marginalized children in Serbia. We are proud that more than 35,000 individuals help us deliver results for children with their monthly donations.

**Partnering with the Corporate Sector**

UNICEF works closely with corporate partners to jointly design and implement initiatives and build mutually beneficial partnerships that achieve maximum social impact. We collaborate with businesses to increasingly embrace technology, innovation and entrepreneurship as vital tools to UNICEF’s mission.

Our long-term partnership with Telenor has focused on digital violence prevention and providing more efficient access to health services for the most vulnerable children and their families.

The partnership with Nordeus is an excellent example of the evolution of cooperation with the corporate sector. From funding our work in Early Childhood Development, it has evolved to co-creating solutions that allow young people to realize their innovative projects and to actively engage in the lives of their communities.

We are deepening our engagement with businesses to innovate, replicate and scale up programming – especially for the most deprived children with a focus on creating shared-value partnerships.

Investing in children is good for business: it provides the foundation for a safe and sustainable future where social and economic development and progress go hand-in-hand. The interests of children and of business are inextricably linked: resilient and sustainable societies and business environments will only be possible if children’s rights are protected and promoted.
Better Business for Children

Better Business for Children is about recognizing that children are impacted by businesses in many different ways. They are children of employees as well as workers themselves. They are consumers of products and services and are also dependent on essential resources often shared with business.

UNICEF works to positively change business behaviour and practices as they affect children. We advocate for the corporate sector to adopt and promote corporate social responsibility practices with a focus on children’s rights. Together with companies, we work to create awareness about Children’s Rights and Business Principles, about how businesses can put in place appropriate policies and processes. The Principles call on the business community to do no harm, to evaluate its impact, and take action to make a positive difference for children.

Media Partnerships

Our partnerships with the media are manifold. We work together to spread the word about the situation of children and families, tell their stories, report about the realization and violations of child rights, including in the media, and the disparities and inequities that exist in society and that need to be addressed.

Thanks to the solidarity and donations of more than 35,000 citizens through the Friends of UNICEF Club:

- 1,500 premature and sick babies received improved care in neonatology units in Kragujevac, Nis, Novi Sad and Belgrade
- 200,000 children and their parents have access to improved early childhood development services in 25 primary healthcare centres
- 1,700 children with and without disabilities reached through inclusive sport and recreational activities

© UNICEF Serbia
UNICEF National Ambassadors

For more than 60 years, UNICEF has partnered with celebrities. They are well-known personalities in the entertainment industry, representing the fields of film, television, music, sports and beyond, who do their utmost to mobilize support for children among the public and within their industry.

UNICEF’s National Ambassadors in Serbia are Ana Ivanovic and Aleksandar Sasa Djordjevic. They are positive role models for children and young people and play a critical role in raising awareness of the needs of children, and use their talent and fame to fundraise, advocate, and educate on behalf of UNICEF. Novak Djokovic, formerly a National Ambassador for UNICEF in Serbia, is a global UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, championing the rights of the world’s children.