GOAL AREA 2

Every child learns
Students at the playground of Turgani High School in Faizabad, the largest city of Badakhshan province, northern Afghanistan. Working at the national, provincial and community levels with the Ministry of Education and other partners, UNICEF focuses on the most vulnerable people in disadvantaged areas, particularly girls, to combat exclusion due to poverty, discrimination and conflict.

You nearly hear the laugh of these children of the indigenous community of Chicoy of Todos Santos Cuchumatán in the province of Huehuetenango, Guatemala as they enjoy their last day of school. "We love school but we also love holiday because we can play all day long!" said one of the children.
Expression of thanks

Results achieved in 2019 would not have been possible without the support of our resource partners. UNICEF is entirely funded through the voluntary support of millions of people worldwide, as well as through our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. These contributions enable UNICEF to help children around the world realize their rights, including the right to a quality education, and fulfil their dreams for a better future. On behalf of all the children whose lives have been touched by the education support of UNICEF, we express our deepest appreciation to all our partners, and our renewed determination that their commitment to and trust in UNICEF will result in the most good for the most children possible.

A number of our partners provide support in the form of thematic funding, which gives us the flexibility to offer countries targeted technical, operational and programming support. We are grateful for this funding. Thanks to thematic funding, UNICEF can support the most marginalized children. Without it, many of the results presented in this report would not have been possible. Thank you to Norway in particular for its continued leadership in this area and its ongoing support to help UNICEF meet the aspirations and the right of children everywhere to a quality education.
More than 70 years after UNICEF was established, the organization’s mission to promote the full attainment of the rights of all children is as relevant as ever.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and charts a course towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of a future in which every child has a fair chance in life. It sets out measurable results for children, especially the most disadvantaged, including in situations where there is a humanitarian crisis, and defines the change strategies and enablers that support their achievement.

Working together with governments, United Nations partners, the private sector and civil society, and with the full participation of children, UNICEF remains steadfast in its commitment to realize the rights of all children, everywhere, and to achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: a world in which no child is left behind.

The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to Goal Area 2, ‘Every child learns’, in 2019 and reviews the impact of these accomplishments on children and the communities where they live. This is one of eight reports on the results of efforts during the past year, encompassing gender equality and humanitarian action as well as each of the five Strategic Plan goal areas: ‘Every child survives and thrives’, ‘Every child learns’, ‘Every child is protected from violence and exploitation’, ‘Every child lives in a safe and clean environment’ and ‘Every child has an equitable chance in life’, and a supplementary report on Communication for Development (C4D). It supplements the 2019 Executive Director Annual Report (EDAR/MTR), UNICEF’s official accountability document for the past year.
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PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

In our partnership with UNICEF in several development cooperation projects, education has always been a firm priority. Over the years, Estonia and UNICEF have shared the commitment of modernising and improving the quality of education. We value the partnership as UNICEF strives to adjust education to the realities of contemporary times by providing children the skills and knowledge that is instrumental for their future and the sustainable development of societies.

The focus of several common education projects has been on teacher-training, modernisation of curricula, including the development of ICT skills and building digital proficiency of both teachers and students. We are looking forward to expanding our trusted and long-standing partnership with UNICEF even further with innovative projects leveraging on advances already achieved and incorporating these into establishing resilience of education systems. The latter being essential especially in crises such as the spread of COVID-19, which has made us face greater barriers to providing quality education to every single child.

– Jüri Seilenthal, Director General, External Economic and Development Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

There has been a massive expansion in schooling globally over the last few decades so that today nearly all children enroll in primary school. However, while access to basic education has increased, the quality has not improved. Today, there are over 260 million children and youth who are out of school, and there are millions more in school, but not learning. Learning crisis is a reality and the COVID-19 pandemic will worsen the situation even further. Finland is increasing its efforts in the education sector, working for a more inclusive school for all and investing in new education sector initiatives and programmes in the most vulnerable countries in Africa and Asia. Advocating for a relevant, inclusive education that responds to the 21st century needs, is at the core of our development policy.

We share with UNICEF the same human rights based approach to education and strive to ensure that all children have access to quality education and can feel the joy of learning. We cooperate with UNICEF in the field in all countries where we have education sector programmes, such as Nepal and Mozambique. Humanitarian crises and conflicts force millions of people out of their home countries and children’s education is at risk. Finland supports the No Lost Generation initiative, which provides crises-affected children and youth with both formal and non-formal education opportunities, including life skills and vocational training.

– Satu Santala, Director General, Department for Development Policy, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

Our valued partnership with UNICEF is a part of our digital service, DNB Lærepenger, which was created for the education of children and young teenagers focusing on personal finances and the value of money. DNB wants children all over the world to have the opportunity to get an education. That is why we donate 1.4 Million NOK annually to UNICEF. We feel strongly for the “School in a box” concept which sends education kits to unsafe areas, making sure all children will have the most essential equipment for learning.

– Tina Wesselsen, Head of Sponsorships, DNB BANK ASA
PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

Education is a top priority for Norway’s humanitarian and development policy. Investing in education means investing in the future. Education is vital to ensure long-lasting peace, prosperity and gender equality, and to reduce poverty and inequality. Norway is therefore fully committed to SDG4: Quality education.

UNICEF is one of Norway’s main development partners. Anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF works to safeguard children’s rights around the world. Norway is committed to leaving no one behind. Adolescent girls and children with disabilities are often excluded from education. I therefore commend UNICEF for its strong emphasis on marginalized children in the new Education Strategy 2019–2030, including children with disabilities, children in humanitarian situations, and girls who are denied quality education.

By supporting UNICEF’s Global Thematic Fund for Education, Norway is providing flexible funding towards the goals set in UNICEF’s strategic plan. Thematic funding enables UNICEF to adapt its work to different needs and contexts, while also addressing cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and disability rights. Adequate, flexible and predictable funding is vital for supporting a reformed UN. Through thematic funding, UNICEF can more efficiently achieve better results for children. As one of the largest contributors of thematic funding to the organization, we appreciate our continuous dialogue with UNICEF.

– Dag-Inge Ulstein, Minister of International Development, Norway

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

As a long-term supporter of UNICEF, Luxembourg continues to allocate multi-year, flexible funding to UNICEF’s thematic funds. These contributions are critical to safeguard opportunities for children around the world to have decent lives and fulfil their potential. Specific attention is paid to learning outcomes and related policy issues such as the language of instruction, competency-based curriculum reform and implementation and equal treatment to promote and uphold gender equality. Luxembourg and UNICEF continue to be strong allies to promote equal access to quality education for all, particularly vulnerable populations, as well as women and girls.

– Paulette Lenert, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Luxembourg
Executive summary

Girls walking to school in the village of Guidan-Alou, Niger.
The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the key goal of education is the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. The Annual Results Report for Education is an opportunity to reflect on the lessons of the past year as UNICEF worked towards that goal – to build on successes and to learn from what went wrong. This is not easy. Despite the proverb, hindsight is rarely 20/20; nonetheless, a number of significant trends and challenges within the education sector are becoming increasingly apparent.

The midterm review of the Strategic Plan, which took place in 2019, demonstrated progress in implementation of all three results areas in Goal Area 2. However, it also highlighted the need to accelerate the rate of progress and to raise the level of ambition around core challenges.

No challenge is greater than that of the learning crisis. According to the World Bank, 53 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries are “learning poor” – they cannot read and understand a simple story by the end of primary school. In sub-Saharan Africa, the level is estimated at 87 per cent.¹ The response of UNICEF and its partners to this challenge is rendered more complex by the increasing number of countries that are being called upon to deliver education services in emergency situations. In 2019, there were 16 Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies.² Looking to 2020 and beyond, the COVID-19 pandemic is already creating even more severe and more widespread disruptions.

The lessons from the recent past are sobering. Only half of refugee children have attended primary school, and less than a quarter have attended secondary school; girls are at particular risk. Many will never receive an education unless new approaches are adopted and new financing is made available. In 2019, UNICEF aimed to provide schooling services for 12.3 million children in humanitarian situations but only succeeded in placing 7.4 million (3.4 million girls) of these children into formal or non-formal school classes.

Many of the children trying to learn are doing so in education systems that face multiple challenges simultaneously, including conflict, disease outbreaks and the growing impact of climate change. The lag between the outbreak of an emergency and the education response remains too long, and the impact of emergencies on the most vulnerable children is insufficiently documented and addressed. Resources for education in emergencies are far from what is required to effectively deliver learning for all children, particularly in West and Central Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in humanitarian situations in the Middle East and North Africa. The increased burden of absorbing these external shocks often falls most heavily on girls.

This report also documents a more encouraging trend. An increasing number of countries are restructuring their education sector plans, their teacher training programmes and their budgets to provide greater support for improving learning outcomes. Financing from UNICEF for learning assessment increased from US$10.6 million in 2017 to US$18 million in 2018 and US$19.2 million in 2019. The proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes has doubled from 24 per cent in 2016 to 48 per cent in 2019. This is far above the 2019 expected milestone of 30 per cent, and another reason for optimism that significant improvements in actual learning outcomes are within reach.

This Annual Results Report for Education documents exciting breakthroughs in learning that have occurred when new approaches are developed in line with international good practice and research evidence. In South Africa, for instance, a bilingual literacy initiative supported by UNICEF was renamed by the community as the ‘Magic Classroom Collective’ because parents felt it was like a miracle watching young children learn how to read. This programme showed a rapid tripling of Grade 3 literacy scores. The use of the child’s own language for the early years of schooling, the development of scripted approaches to support underqualified teachers, new curriculum designs aimed at teaching to the right level – all of these are redefining what is possible. However, globally, few of these programmes are reaching their full potential, because implementation continues to be partial – rarely taken to full scale.

The expansion of early childhood education (ECE) holds enormous promise for accelerating learning, and there are many promising developments, but very few developing countries have taken ECE to scale. The publication in 2019 of A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Early Childhood Education gave greater prominence to the call by UNICEF for universal access to at least one year of preschool education, with a strong focus on the most disadvantaged children.³ In 2019, however, UNICEF spending on early learning declined from 7 per cent of all UNICEF education spending to 6 per cent. UNICEF management has responded by committing to increase ECE spending to 10 per cent of education expenditures.

A further trend is the increasing support for inclusive education. The share of UNICEF-supported countries that have adopted inclusive education in their legal frameworks has increased from 74 per cent in 2017 to 87 per cent in 2019. Children with disabilities face multiple barriers to education, which are often exacerbated by poverty. In UNICEF programme countries, primary adjusted net attendance for the poorest quintile of children has increased from a 69 per cent baseline in 2017 to 76 per cent in 2019. Trends in gender parity are less clear and somewhat masked by country averages, with an increase in the number of countries in which boys are disadvantaged. Within many countries, however, girls remain far behind boys in certain regions, and poor girls remain the furthest behind of all.

In 2019, UNICEF spent about US$1.2 billion⁴ on education, of which US$165 million was drawn from regular resources (the most flexible), and US$1 billion from funds earmarked
for specific programmes (other resources). About US$106 million from other resources was drawn from education thematic funds which provide flexibility so that country offices can target their support more effectively to address emerging challenges at national and subnational levels.

Emerging trends are reflected in the UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030.6 This strategy’s starting point is that to achieve the goals agreed for 2030, the persistent gap between understanding what works and actually doing what works must be eliminated. Alliances between UNICEF and its partners must focus strategically on service delivery for the most vulnerable children. System strengthening efforts must bridge the humanitarian–development nexus and result in systems that are capable of reliable delivery of education services under all circumstances. The Education Strategy calls for a transition from child-friendly schools to learner-centred child-friendly systems, to ensure wider support to the improvement of education quality. Adolescent youth will need access to programmes that offer multiple learning pathways of good quality and relevance for subsequent employment. Indeed, all of the programmes described in this report must be, and will be, reviewed and reassessed to identify opportunities for breakthrough progress. And all of these efforts will have children at their centre – children with every right to learn just like their peers everywhere else in the world.
Strategic context

In the Bahamas, children who have been evacuated in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian participate in activities organized by UNICEF partner organization, IsraAid, at the largest shelter run by the Government. UNICEF Education Specialist Lisa Deters participates in the sports activities.
For far too many children, disruption has become an unwelcome part of daily life. Schoolchildren rushing out of class at the sound of gunfire on the edge of town. Schoolchildren whose entire town is evacuated following the eruption of a volcano. As this report is being compiled, UNESCO estimates that more than 1 billion children, over 80 per cent of all learners around the world, are out of school because of the COVID-19 pandemic. On a smaller scale, a teacher’s absence can disrupt learning for an entire class. In many countries, more than half of children with a disability will see their lives forever disrupted by prejudice or neglect without even getting a chance for an education.

This report shows how UNICEF support in 2019 focused on preventing disruptions to learning – on helping children affected by crises reclaim their right to a normal life and a good education. But it also shows that some trends must be disrupted to help children achieve their goals. This is the welcome form of disruption – change so innovative and so profound that it completely alters our understanding of what is possible.

Current trend lines are far from where they should be in terms of progress towards the goals set out in the 2030 agenda. Africa, for instance, has 25 per cent of the world’s children, but 57 per cent of its out-of-school children and a high percentage of its children in learning poverty (defined as the share of children who are unable to read a simple story by the age of 10). In addition, there are profound and persistent inequities. Conflict-affected countries have 20 per cent of the world’s primary-school-age children but 50 per cent of the children out of school. The share of children characterized by learning poverty is also disproportionately high in these countries. At the primary level, 5.5 million more girls than boys are out of school, although in many countries, boys’ learning performance in areas such as reading is behind that of girls. Globally, children from wealthier families are seven times more likely to attend early childhood education (ECE) than children from poorer families. And in middle-income countries, almost all children complete primary school, while in low-income countries, one in three does not. Only 61 children from poor families complete lower secondary schooling for every 100 children from well-to-do families, and low-income countries spend only 10 per cent of their education budgets on children from the poorest 20 per cent of families.

This report presents progress made in the second year of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, for the three Goal Area 2 results areas: (1) strengthening education systems for gender-equitable access to quality education from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities; (2) strengthening education systems for gender-equitable learning outcomes; and (3) improving children’s access to skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability. Goal Area 2 of the Strategic Plan is underpinned by a comprehensive theory of change (see Figure 1) and set of change strategies.
Girls and boys, in particular the most vulnerable and those affected by humanitarian crisis, are provided with inclusive and equitable quality education and learning opportunities.

**Outputs**

- Increase and sustain access to education for girls and boys from early childhood to adolescence, including children with disabilities and minorities.
- Increase learning outcomes for girls and boys.
- Increase access for girls and boys to the skills for learning personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability.

**Change Strategies**

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**Enablers**

- Internal governance
- Management
- People
- Knowledge and information systems

**Assumptions**

- Global support & resourcing of education, including in emergencies
- National commitment to equity
- Data disaggregation and use
- Consistent commitment to education reform process
- Sufficient, efficiently used domestic resources
- Public support for equity
- Access in humanitarian contexts
- No worsening of the economic, political and social environment

**Approaches**

1. Assist governments to reform and improve their education systems, to achieve greater access including for the most vulnerable children and better learning outcomes.
2. Provision of essential learning materials, emergency education services, teacher or community training directly helping children to learn (usually accompanied by efforts to help governments to improve their formal and non-formal education system).
3. Contribution to global public goods, partnerships and dialogue at the global and regional levels.
The end of 2019 marked the midterm review of the Strategic Plan. While progress was observed in implementation of all three results areas in Goal Area 2 of the Strategic Plan, the midterm review questioned whether the targets in the Strategic Plan were sufficiently ambitious to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Indeed, the midterm review highlighted two concerns: (1) that some targets, even if achieved, would still fall short of what is called for in SDG 4; and (2) that for other targets, the rate of progress achieved to date is insufficient to reach 2021 targets.

The midterm review highlighted that achievement of the SDGs would require both:

- An increase in the level of ambition at the output level where targets are seen as too low: for instance, increasing the targets of 26 per cent of countries with equitable systems for access, 36 per cent of countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes, and 10 per cent of countries that institutionalize gender-equitable skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship, and/or employability;

- An acceleration of efforts to meet the target set in areas such as early learning, provision of education in humanitarian settings, provision of education/learning materials, gender-responsive teaching and learning, and girls and boys participating in skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability.

The UNICEF Education Strategy agreed in 2019 acknowledges that at current trends, by 2030, 420 million children will fail to attain basic skills in childhood, and 825 million will fail to attain basic secondary-level skills. The strategy identifies three trends that must be disrupted: (1) the most vulnerable children are not gaining access to school; (2) there is a learning crisis even for those children who get to school; and (3) children living through emergencies or in fragile contexts are being left behind.

We know much more than ever about out-of-school children, thanks in part to the Out-of-School Children Initiative, and this is positive, but we still know far too little about children's learning, and this is a problem. Far more children are out of learning than out of school. These are the children in learning poverty, and their situation will not change unless current trends are disrupted, unless we take bold, innovative actions to forever change the status quo.

There are three key pivot points where these positive disruptions must be made: near the age of 5, at the time of the child's transition from home to school; near the age of 10, at the time of the child's transition from acquiring the fundamental tools of learning to applying those tools to problem-solving and creativity; and near the age of 18, at the time of transition from schooling to active adult life — entering the labour market, creating a new family life and growing as a caring, fulfilled individual. This is what the education sector can and must achieve if it is to reverse the out-of-learning trend, and to do so abruptly, in real time.

UNICEF increasingly directs its efforts towards the most vulnerable children, to help them get through the school doors and to help them learn. The number of children whose lives have been disrupted by conflict and crisis surged to a record high in 2017, stayed at that level in 2018 and, sadly, remained there in 2019. Along with the COVID-19 pandemic, these are signs that the world has changed in ways to which we must adapt; we must urgently find new ways of working under these new circumstances so that widespread lack of access to learning never becomes acceptable, like a bad habit we have learned to tolerate. The way forward must be characterized by positive disruption in the form of bold and innovative actions that can reverse these persistent trends and accelerate progress for all.

In April 2019, UNICEF released A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Early Childhood Education, its flagship report on ECE, calling for universal access to at least one year of quality preschool education. In 2019, UNICEF also pledged to devote 10 per cent of its education budget to this purpose, to take accountability for meeting the goal and reporting against it. Access to good ECE is a positive disruptor that helps disadvantaged children grow their vocabularies, work habits and confidence, and puts them on a faster learning curve. In Nepal, children attending ECE programmes are 17 times more likely to be on track in their early literacy and numeracy skills. Children in Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Togo who have attended pre-primary education are 1.5 times more likely to achieve minimum mathematics competencies at Grade 2 than those without pre-primary experience. But in low-income countries, children are 2.5 times less likely to attend pre-primary education.

Providing school instruction in a language that children speak at home is another powerful way of disrupting old habits that harm children. This Annual Results Report gives examples of where, with UNICEF support, out-of-learning trends were reversed within months through the introduction of mother tongue teaching and through the hard work of teacher training, preparation of appropriate materials, and ongoing teacher and community support.

Explicit instruction is another positive disruptor. In the long run, teachers must receive appropriate training and strong foundational skills from the first years of schooling. But where they have not had this advantage, and where their students are underperforming as a result, more structured approaches, including scripted lessons, can disrupt the classroom status quo and quickly bring teachers and their students into a more positive, proactive learning environment.

Inclusive education is perhaps the most powerful positively disruptive force of all, with the potential to change societal attitudes and deeply ingrained structures of schooling that exclude children from learning. Inclusive education helps children with disabilities to learn in a mainstream classroom.
context, while providing the additional support they need. It also helps all children work towards achieving their potential by helping teachers tailor instruction to learners’ individual needs.

Greater support for girls’ education can also disrupt patterns by which girls drop out of school earlier than boys or are limited to areas of study which provide less access to labour market opportunities. In virtually all developing countries, gender acts as an intensifier of disadvantage. Girls living in poverty, with a disability or in conflict-affected regions or coming from minority ethnic groups will find their educational opportunities even more limited than would be otherwise predicted.

These patterns can be reversed, and innovative technologies can also act as a positive disruptor to accelerate change. This report describes the Accessible Digital Textbook Initiative[^13] that is rapidly expanding into new countries, showing how the digital ‘divide’ can be turned into a digital ‘multiply’, closing gaps by speeding up the learning process for the most vulnerable children.

This is the strategic context of the UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030; these are the trends that must be disrupted so that we can look to a future where children’s lives are not.

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[^13]: Accessible Digital Textbook Initiative

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Hussein Sedow, UNICEF Education Officer, speaks to a girl at the USAID- and UNICEF-supported Kaharey temporary learning space, Dollow, Somalia. As Hussein says, “for the children, drawing is an important way to express aspirations and put their imaginations on paper.”
Results

Two girls playing during a school break at Samdech Ov Samdech Mae Primary School in Prek Village, Stung Treng Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic.
Strategic approach

A feature of all education systems is the lag between the introduction of change processes and the time when the results of those processes become clear. This lag often means that reforms are abandoned just as they are beginning to produce results. For this reason, it is important to look for precursors – early indicators or proxies that show reforms are beginning to take hold. This report looks for these precursor results wherever possible. Rather than focusing on inputs, it seeks to highlight the earliest observable effects of thematic and other funds where these are traceable. Many of these are the results of partnerships – working with governments and other partners in complex shared arrangements – and are not easily attributable to any one partner.

The output results for UNICEF education programmes capture both service delivery and system strengthening work. The system strengthening results are based on a scoring of 1-4 for each thematic area of support to education systems and policies, and for their dimensions (see Annex 2 for more detail). Shifts in thematic focus are reflected in new indicators (e.g., teachers’ development). The system strengthening indicators are aligned to the access, learning and skills development result areas, with one main system strengthening indicator per result area (e.g., percentage of countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes, including early learning).

Since 2018, UNICEF has been better able to record expenditure by level of education, and to make a clearer link between spending and results. UNICEF can also now track expenditure on activities that specifically target results for gender equality, adolescents and humanitarian situations.

UNICEF work to support education system strengthening

In recent years, UNICEF has increasingly focused on system strengthening – primarily with government counterparts – including at the subnational level. System strengthening is about putting the learner at the centre (in development and humanitarian settings) and making learning the primary goal. It requires alignment of the different components of the system – for example, the curriculum, teaching and assessment – to deliver and be accountable for that goal, while also addressing implementation blockages and accountabilities accordingly.

UNICEF spending on education system strengthening is cost-effective for a sustainable impact on the US$1.2 trillion overall annual education spending in low- and middle-income countries (mainly funded by domestic resources).

UNICEF support to education system strengthening is implemented by its staff at country level, and facilitated by education thematic funding, which allows impact for sustainable results in different thematic areas (as opposed to earmarked funding of specific projects). In 2019, over 800 education staff worked to implement education programmes across the globe (see Figure 2). The majority were deployed at the country level, including in fragile and conflict-affected countries or in remote locations where the needs were greatest. This strong country presence allows for close relationships with ministries of education at national and subregional levels and, increasingly, at the level of schools and communities. Staff are supported by seven regional offices. They provide access to evidence and global good practices and contribute to shaping global education policies and partnerships.

Education staff are in close collaboration with colleagues working on health, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), social policy, disability, gender, adolescent development and Communication for Development (C4D). This includes using schools as an integrated service platform to deliver a range of interventions and outcomes for children in development and humanitarian settings.
Thematic funding for education

Thematic funds are the most flexible source of financing and are critical to the implementation of system-wide programmes with a longer-term impact. They are allocated on a needs basis and allow for the long-term planning and sustainability of programmes, providing much-needed continuity in what are often inequitable contexts. They help build preparedness and resilience to future shocks. Thematic funds have proved to be a vital addition to regular resources in addressing inequities that the allocation of regular and project-based resources is not able to target.

Resource partners can contribute thematic funding at global, regional or country level. The thematic funding received at global level is allocated across country offices using equity-based formulae. In 2019, US$106 million of education thematic funding was used by headquarters, regional offices and 124 country offices. US$9.7 million in education thematic funds was spent on education work implemented jointly with other UNICEF sectors such as early childhood development to improve the nutrition, protection and stimulation that children need in their earliest years for healthy brain development. The Mali UNICEF Country Office used the largest amount of thematic funds in 2019 (US$4 million), with funds spent on providing access to formal and non-formal education, including temporary learning spaces, improving community engagement at the local level and provision of learning materials.

The largest share of thematic funds is spent on strengthening education systems – investments that are at the core of UNICEF education programmes but for which funding can be otherwise hard to secure. The UNICEF focus on education system strengthening is reflected in the 58 per cent share of thematic funding spent on system strengthening, compared with just 28 per cent for non-thematic education expenditure (see Figure 3).

The use of thematic funding by UNICEF to ensure that all children are both accessing education and learning is also reflected in the 47 per cent share of thematic funds expenditure allocated to improving learning outcomes, compared with only 24 per cent of the share of non-thematic expenditure, as highlighted in Figure 4.

Throughout this report, boxes titled ‘Spotlight on thematic funds’ highlight where the flexibility of thematic funds has enabled concrete results to be obtained for country programmes.
FIGURE 3: Expenses for education by activity, 2019

Education thematic funding utilization by activity
- System strengthening: 58%
- Service delivery: 42%
- TOTAL: US$96 M

Education non-thematic funding utilization by activity
- System strengthening: 28%
- Service delivery: 72%
- TOTAL: US$1,084 M

FIGURE 4: Expenses for education by result area, 2019

Education thematic funding utilization by result area
- Equitable access: 50%
- Learning outcomes: 47%
- Skills development: 3%
- TOTAL: US$96 M

Education non-thematic funding utilization by result area
- Equitable access: 70%
- Learning outcomes: 24%
- Skills development: 6%
- TOTAL: US$1,084 M
Highlights of 2019 results

FIGURE 5: Illustrative results from 2019

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF promoted a school feeding pilot which benefited over 7,600 children (3,842 girls) in Miranda state. This intervention was complemented by the distribution of educational material in seven states, reaching close to 5,800 teachers and over 285,000 children (146,724 girls), which has had a direct and documented impact on school attendance and on retention of teachers.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, 357,586 adolescents (aged 13-17 years), especially those at risk, were targeted through temporary learning centres with life skills, psychosocial support services and protection, including mine-risk education.

In the Niger, UNICEF-supported programmes provided individual education/early learning materials to 201,431 children of whom 51,431 were in humanitarian contexts.

In Bangladesh, the UNICEF Adolescent Strategy for Rohingya and Host Community Response, launched in April 2019, aims to provide 18,000 Rohingya and 7,600 host community adolescents with integrated vocational, literacy/numeracy, life skills and psychosocial support through 109 multipurpose centres.

In the Sudan, 437,843 children (48 per cent girls) received education-in-emergency supplies and recreational materials.

Over 12,700 adolescents (50 per cent girls), including young people who are not in education, have benefited from skills-building interventions in formal and non-formal education in Tajikistan.

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Accessible digital textbooks were developed to improve learning for 55,000 disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities, in Kenya.

In Mozambique, in the post-cyclone emergency, UNICEF and partners provided education support to approximately 12,000 pre-primary schoolchildren and more than 115,000 primary schoolchildren in 292 child-friendly spaces.

UNICEF supported the development of a set of 10 bilingual early learning storybooks in 25 ethnic languages, improving access to learning for 415,000 young children aged three to five years in Myanmar.
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Result Area 1: Equitable access to education

Despite the SDG 4 call to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” the UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates that more than 258 million children, adolescents and youth are out of school, representing one sixth of the global population of this age group. Of these, 59 million are children of primary school age, 62 million are adolescents of lower secondary school age, and 138 million are youth of upper secondary school age. Barriers to education may be different for boys and girls, and many children face multiple barriers because of disability, poverty and/or isolation. Increasingly, education services must be delivered in emergency contexts. Finding new approaches to deliver quality education promptly to those affected by crises has become ever more vital.
Global Annual Results Report 2019

**SPENDING IN MILLIONS OF US($)**

- Education provision: 483
- Other activities for access (e.g. school feeding, school grants): 127
- EMIS, systems, sector plan/strategy and analysis: 87
- Education humanitarian cluster/humanitarian sector coordination: 40
- Risk-informed programming and peacebuilding education: 35
- Inclusive education for children with disabilities: 21
- Gender-responsive systems for access: 12

**OUTCOMES**

- Countries with gender parity:
  - 51% in primary
  - 28% in lower secondary
  - 18% in upper secondary
- Children from the poorest quintile who attended education:
  - 76% in primary
  - 46% in lower secondary
  - 29% in upper secondary
- 47% of children were enrolled in pre-primary
- Out-of-school children represented:
  - 9% of children of primary school age
  - 19% of children of lower secondary school age

**OUTPUTS**

- 17.5 million out-of-school children (8.4 million girls) accessed education
- 37% of countries have equitable education systems for access
- 38% of countries have gender-responsive education systems for access
- 50% of all children targeted for education in emergencies were targeted by UNICEF
- 60% of UNICEF-targeted children in emergencies accessed education

**Total spending for ACCESS is 804 million of which**

- 78% (626) service delivery
- 22% (178) system strengthening
- 81% (654) was focused on adolescents
- 62% (501) was focused on humanitarian
- 12% (99) was focused on gender
In 2019, UNICEF spent US$804 million on equitable access to education. Figure 6 outlines how this sum was spent across different thematic areas and activity types. It also shows how the spending is related to both service delivery and system strengthening outputs, and to increasing equity in access to education in relation to gender and wealth. Activities related to service delivery accounted for 78 per cent of the total spent on equitable access to education. More than 17 million out-of-school children, primarily in humanitarian situations, were provided with education services. Since 2016, more than 52 million children have been supported, well beyond the 2019 target of 40 million. However, only 60 per cent of children targeted for education in emergencies were actually reached, well below the 2019 expected milestone of 76 per cent.

System strengthening activities account for the remaining 22 per cent of education expenditures in 2019, including sector analysis and planning, Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), risk-informed programming, and inclusive education for children with disabilities.

FIGURE 7: System strengthening indicators for equitable education systems for access
About 37 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries have equitable education systems for access (defined as systems with a sector plan/strategy addressing equity issues, disaggregated data provided by EMIS, resilience and emergency preparedness, and inclusive education for children with disabilities) – far above the 2019 expected milestone of 23 per cent (see Figure 7). Analysis of the four dimensions shows modest progress over the past two years on all four dimensions. Progress is most advanced in Eastern and Southern Africa, where the proportion of countries with equitable education systems for access increased from 43 per cent in 2018 to 52 per cent in 2019. Although notable progress was made in Latin America and the Caribbean, only 25 per cent of countries in that region have equitable education systems for access.

Amir (left, 11) and Adam (right, 12) attend English learning class at their local Makani centre. “I love to learn and that’s why I come here. I want to be a teacher when I grow up,” Amir said. “I get to play football too.” Adam attends classes in the morning and works in the afternoon. “I don’t go to school but I come here to learn English and Arabic,” he said. “I play football with my friends and the teachers are awesome. They inspire me and make me happy.”
In Argentina, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to prepare seven booklets that encourage the inclusion of children and adolescents with disabilities in regular schools. In June 2019, as part of the second Global Disability Summit, UNICEF supported the International Symposium on Inclusive Education, bringing together experts from 12 countries and strengthening the participation of ministries of education in international dialogue around inclusive education.

UNICEF Congo conducted a national study, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Telecommunication, which analysed the impact of gender-based violence in schools and of online violence on the education system, especially for girls. The 2020–2024 Country Programme references mitigation measures recommended by this study and other evidence to inform advocacy for an enabling environment free from violence, exploitation and abuse.
In Turkey, at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, 684,728 refugee children (336,722 girls) were enrolled in formal education, bringing the percentage of refugee children enrolled in school in the country to 63 per cent, compared with approximately 35 per cent in 2016, at the beginning of the programme. Around 96 per cent of the refugee children in formal education are now studying in Turkish public schools rather than refugee-only temporary education centres.

In Malaysia, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to develop an early warning data system to identify individual students at risk of dropping out of school, based on seven new indicators. During the pilot phase alone, 262 children who had dropped out of secondary school returned to school.

In Lebanon, UNICEF supported 6,571 students at United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools. A total of 87 students with special education needs benefited from scholarships at special education institutions in 2019.

In Rwanda, UNICEF continued supporting the government to address access to education for the most marginalized children. As a result, approximately 85 per cent of refugee children accessed quality education.
Reaching the most disadvantaged children

UNICEF reaches the most disadvantaged children through initiatives at all levels of education systems. Countries have been supported to make inclusive and preschool education an integral part of their sector plans, with equitable financing. A new partnership with the Inclusive Education Initiative, a multi-donor trust fund overseen by the World Bank with support from Norway and the United Kingdom, will be instrumental in promoting inclusive education. Management information systems have helped countries quickly identify students at risk so that programmes could be implemented to meet their needs. Targeted programmes have addressed the needs of out-of-school children, children with disabilities, and refugee children.

Education sector plans

In 2019, UNICEF invested US$29 million to support the development and implementation of education sector plans and strategies to guide system development and policy reforms with an equity perspective. These reforms address obstacles – such as inequitable public education spending and resource allocation, instruction in a language that children do not use at home, buildings that are inaccessible to children with disabilities, girls not receiving equal opportunities, poor children being excluded, and conflict and other crises – that prevent many of the most marginalized children from attending and persisting in school, and from learning. The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with an equitable education strategy/plan increased from 37 per cent in 2018 to 42 per cent in 2019 (see Annex 2).

In Mali, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education to develop the 10-year sector plan (PRODEC II), strategically emphasizing inclusive education and learning outcomes to achieve SDG 4. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education in the roll-out of its new preschool strategy.

In Viet Nam, the National Assembly passed the revised Law on Education, drafted with UNICEF support, which guarantees children with disabilities the right to education. The Law on Education aims to ensure that all children are in school, are learning and are safe. It increases the length of compulsory schooling to nine years.

Equitable public finance for education

UNICEF encourages its partner countries to apply ‘progressive universalism’ to their education programming. This means that priority should be given first to the lower levels of education systems, moving progressively up as a good education becomes close to universal at those levels. Private financing and a degree of cost recovery will have a role to play for higher levels of education. In 42 countries, the richest 20 per cent of children receive almost double the funding of the poorest 20 per cent. The highest disparities are seen in 10 African countries, where the richest children benefit from as much as nine times more public financing than the poorest children.14 Progressive universalism aims to change that model.

In El Salvador and Romania, UNICEF helped the governments establish more equitable budget allocations. In Botswana and Eswatini, UNICEF and the World Bank supported reviews to make spending more equitable. In Mali, the new Education Sector Plan identifies inequities in financing and proposes measures to address them.

Spotlight on thematic funds: Equity Index in Nepal

Thematic funding has allowed UNICEF to provide technical assistance and expertise to support priority areas in Nepal, including inclusive education. The Equity Index developed through the UNICEF Data Must Speak initiative measures education-related disparities across municipalities and provinces. The Equity Index provides compensatory funding for marginalized populations – an approach that is the first of its kind and already being studied closely by countries around the world.

UNICEF advocated successfully for the use of the Equity Index as a disbursement-linked indicator for the Joint Financing Arrangement signatories. The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank, the European Union (EU) and Finland linked a combined US$24 million to the indicator’s targets for five years of the current school sector development plan. These targets include public financing for municipalities based on the Equity Index score in order to reduce disparities. By focusing on disparities rather than averages, the Equity index helps planners to understand and address the severity of barriers for subpopulations across communities.
Education Management Information Systems

UNICEF is committed to strengthening government data systems in ways that enable effective monitoring, including community-based monitoring, support of schools and teachers, and equitable use of public resources. It provides training in data collection, data processing, integration of platforms and databases for analysis, and tools for data visualization, aiming to strengthen pro-equity policies.

Recognizing that marginalized groups miss out on learning opportunities when they are not accurately represented in EMIS, UNICEF spent US$31 million in 2019 to strengthen data systems. The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective EMIS/data systems reached 46 per cent in 2019. The percentage increased significantly between 2018 and 2019 for monitoring attendance, dropout, quality and timeliness, but remained stagnant in the important area of data disaggregation (see Annex 2).

In Armenia, system strengthening included a draft regulation on approving the procedure for identification and referral of children left out of compulsory education. UNICEF facilitated negotiations between relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, to ensure equity in access and learning. Disability indicators were added to the EMIS.

Out-of-School Children Initiative

In East Asia and the Pacific, a comprehensive study completed in 2019 provided evidence and policies to support out-of-school children. In Guyana, Haiti and Papua New Guinea, studies of out-of-school children are being used to inform education sector plans. Likewise, a study of Jamaica’s out-of-school children has been used to develop a new attendance policy. UNICEF supported alternative and flexible education programmes and the implementation of accelerated learning programmes, especially in humanitarian settings.

In Mali, UNICEF facilitated the reintegration of 204,471 out-of-school children (49 per cent girls) into formal schools by financially supporting decentralized education structures and school management committees to identify and reinstate out-of-school children. In partnership with the EU, UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Food Programme, International Rescue Committee and Norwegian Refugee Council, ensured that out-of-school children benefited from a holistic package (pedagogical support, food at school and improved WASH facilities). UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in launching an innovative and scalable platform that monitors enrolment and retention of out-of-school children, using computer tablets and student identity cards, in Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso regions.

In Papua New Guinea, with financial contributions from the Education Cannot Wait Fund, UNICEF met the continued learning needs of 30,726 children (13,226 girls) and supported 442 teachers (297 women) with the provision of teaching and learning materials, in Hela and Southern Highlands provinces – areas that were affected by the 2018 earthquake. UNICEF also supported the government in bringing 2,720 out-of-school children (1,422 girls) into formal basic mainstream education through early learning and non-formal bridging classes. More than 2,694 children (1,422 girls) were enrolled in these integrated early childhood development centres, elementary and primary schools, including 56 children with disabilities (29 girls).

In Brazil, more than 180,000 out-of-school children and adolescents were identified across 3,050 municipalities (55 per cent of municipalities in Brazil) through the implementation of the UNICEF School Active Search strategy. A total of 15,400 children and adolescents were re-enrolled in the public school system as a result of this strategy. A new online open course was developed and launched to improve the implementation of the strategy, reaching over 4,700 managers from the municipalities.

In Morocco, where school attendance drops significantly at the secondary level, for girls in particular, the Child to Child programme has been reviewed and strengthened through a school-based approach and aggressive social and community mobilization for schools targeted as being most at risk for dropout. UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education in identifying the main gender-related and sociocultural drivers of school dropout in the four targeted regions to inform more transformative C4D strategies. The programme tracked 70,000 out-of-school children and adolescents in 2019, of whom 32,000 were reintegrated in formal schools and 38,000 were provided with non-formal and second-chance schooling.
Innovation focus: Building schools with plastic bricks

UNICEF Côte d’Ivoire piloted an innovative construction method using bricks made from recycled plastic waste in partnership with the Colombian social enterprise Conceptos Plásticos. There are now 26 functional classrooms throughout the country. This alternative method is faster than traditional methods, reducing classroom construction time by up to three weeks (from six months) and is safe and easy to use. At the same time, the collection of plastic waste creates jobs for disadvantaged communities and contributes to reducing plastic pollution.

The awareness and advocacy campaign for recycled plastic bricks is a flagship campaign for preserving the environment, fighting plastic pollution and promoting the right of children to grow and play in a clean environment, nationally and globally. The campaign raised awareness of the importance of the environment nationally and is garnering political support at the highest level, as well as gaining interest from the private sector and young people. In September 2019, Kherann Yao, a young Ivorian boy, took part in the United Nations General Assembly, while a classroom made of recycled plastic bricks was displayed at the entrance of United Nations headquarters in New York, United States of America.

Children at the playground of their school, made out of recycled plastic bricks, in Toumodi-Sakassou, in central Côte d’Ivoire.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities

Children and young people with disabilities face multiple barriers to education, including school infrastructure and learning materials that are not adapted to their needs, and poor leadership and management by government. Promoting education sector planning inclusive of children with disabilities is a key factor in improving school attendance, learning processes and outcomes.

In 2019, the inaugural Global Disability Summit took place in London, United Kingdom. It was followed by the International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education in Cali, Colombia, to take stock of legislation, policies and actions that effectively address barriers to progress. In partnership with the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO-IIEP), UNICEF organized two technical roundtables to discuss the challenges involved in disability-inclusive education sector planning and systems reform for eight francophone African countries (Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, the Niger, Senegal and Togo) and eight anglophone countries in Africa and Asia (Cambodia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, South Africa and Viet Nam).

UNICEF and UNESCO-IIEP have drafted a framework for disability-inclusive education that details the elements necessary to analyse and plan an education system that caters to learners’ diverse needs. This framework includes the enabling environment: existing laws and policies, data and evidence, leadership and management, and financing surrounding disability-inclusive education; and service delivery considerations – how to ensure that infrastructure, teachers and learning materials include all learners, and that the curriculum and assessments are designed to deliver quality education for everyone. The section on costs, attitudes, risks and rewards addresses the demand for inclusive education services.

UNICEF is also working with the World Bank to enhance the collection of data and evidence for children with disabilities, develop the capacity of government and non-government actors on inclusive education sector analysis and planning – an initiative to be implemented jointly with UNESCO-IIEP - and to review scalable screening, assessment and referral systems for children with disabilities. This is being done through the Inclusive Education Initiative, a multi-donor trust fund overseen by the World Bank. Launched in 2019 with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), the initiative invests in ground-
Wonderful things are happening for children with disabilities in Mozambique. UNICEF and Handicap International have partnered with the Government to make sure that children can get the help they need to go to school with their friends. Before, Ilídio (11) stayed at home with his mum Isabel, or all by himself. With the help of a physiotherapist who visited them at home, Ilídio managed to say his first few words. As he made more and more progress at home, Ilídio started going to school, and today he can read and write, and most importantly he has friends to play with.

UNICEF spent about US$21 million directly on inclusive education for children with disabilities in 2019, with US$13 million (62 per cent) spent on system strengthening activities such as ensuring that countries have disability-responsive EMIS and laws and policies which establish the right of all children to receive an education. In 2019, 54 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had an effective inclusive system for children with disabilities. Compared to 2018, significant progress has been made in the subdimensions of human resources and data disaggregation (see Annex 2). US$8 million (38 per cent) was spent on service delivery. In addition, UNICEF spent almost US$57 million in 2019 on activities that indirectly or partially addressed support for the education of children with disabilities.

In Bulgaria, a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education and Science and UNICEF resulted in improved collaboration with parents and improved individual support plans. Participating kindergartens apply a test to screen for developmental delays. Over 5,000 children were supported, along with skills development for more than 500 teachers and 100 specialists over a period of two and a half years.

In Cambodia, the Early Childhood Care and Development National Action Plan 2019–2023 and the Multilingual Education National Action Plan 2019–2023 were finalized. With UNICEF support, the Inclusive Education Action Plan 2019–2023 was also finalized. It will guide the provision of quality education for children with disabilities.

UNICEF provided technical support and guidance for the Accessible Digital Textbooks for All initiative in Kenya, Paraguay, Rwanda, Uganda and Uruguay. In December, UNICEF launched a report, Emerging Lessons, from the initiative, which reflects innovative approaches and aims to catalyse collaboration and learning. UNICEF also launched a global open-source portal designed to promote knowledge-sharing and to support development and implementation of the initiative globally.

UNICEF partnered with the Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled to promote its Inclusive Education Policy, launched in August 2019. A total of 87 community leaders discussed their role in supporting inclusive education in line with national policy; 50 children with disabilities were enrolled in regular primary schools as part of this process.

In Jordan, UNICEF supported the provision of inclusive education services in 100 schools. Thirty of these schools are being handed over to the Ministry of Education during the 2019-20 school year. Improvement of school infrastructure helped over 800 children with disabilities enter or remain in education.
Case Study 1: Europe and Central Asia: Inclusive education

UNICEF supports system strengthening in Europe and Central Asia, with a focus on children with disabilities. In 2019, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan received support for policy development, road maps for inclusive education, costed action plans and significant donor funding. Montenegro adopted the National Strategy for Inclusive Education 2019–2025 and saw a 40 per cent decrease in the number of children in special schools and a tenfold increase in the number of children with disabilities who are attending mainstream schools. Ukraine started development of its National Strategy of Inclusive Education 2020-2030. In the Republic of Moldova, which is shifting to a mainstreaming approach, a UNICEF-supported evaluation highlighted the need for teacher education reform. Serbia introduced innovative approaches to teacher development, such as mentoring, coaching and communities of practice. In both the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, the number of children with disabilities who enrol in regular school has doubled since 2013.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the UNICEF teacher training package for inclusive education was adopted by two universities, while in Albania, a UNICEF-supported training curriculum reached all 500 teaching assistants in the country. In Azerbaijan, with additional EU support, a nationwide teacher education reform was launched.

In Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine, UNICEF supported disability assessment to increase participation and learning in the classroom. Ukraine introduced the World Health Organization International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health in the national teacher education module, and Bulgaria supported a multidisciplinary approach for inclusive education resource centres. A multidisciplinary approach is also being scaled up in Romania following an evaluation.

Key lessons are emerging: countries can successfully shift to a mainstreaming approach when teachers lead as agents of change, but teachers need continuous support to perform this role. Adequate financial and human resources need to be allocated to regular schools to enable this process, and data collection and use should be expanded to inform policy development. Most importantly, accelerated efforts are needed in the region to challenge the long-standing medical approach known as ‘defectology’ – this means challenging negative attitudes, investing in teachers, and reforming the systems of disability assessment.

UNICEF will expand its support for assistive technology in all countries in Europe and Central Asia as a way to empower children with disabilities. This effort will build on innovative country-led approaches already under way: Montenegro received a Zero Project Award for innovation in disability and accessible textbooks, and the Republic of Moldova and Armenia are preparing to invest in a national ecosystem for assistive technology.
Cross-cutting feature: Communication for Development applied to disability

Communication for Development (C4D), also referred to as social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), is a UNICEF core change strategy which can positively shift the knowledge and attitudes of caregivers, learners and educators to support inclusive and equitable quality education. C4D programming has also been linked to improved learning outcomes such as early cognitive skills and school retention.

In Bhutan, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to develop a multipronged C4D strategy and action plan together with materials to address knowledge gaps and social norms surrounding disability. The effort complemented UNICEF-supported quantitative and qualitative analyses to understand the situation of children at risk of dropping out, repeating or never attending school. These analyses will improve evidence-based planning and implementation related to education quality, high-risk districts and vulnerable groups.

Gender-responsive access to education

The impact of gender-responsive programmes can be immense: each year spent in secondary education reduces the probability of being married before the age of 18 by at least 5 percentage points. Adolescent girls may drop out because of safety concerns, gender norms, child marriage or the need to prematurely take on adult roles to support the family. Boys may be taken out for economic reasons, joining the labour market at a young age, or being recruited into armed groups as child soldiers. These factors have multiplier effects when combined with other vulnerabilities such as displacement, poverty or the simple fact of living in a rural setting.

FIGURE 9: System strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education systems

### Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive education systems for access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
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*Regional progress*

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Pupil studying outside of her primary school, the Congo.
In 2019, the percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with systems that are gender-responsive in terms of access increased to 38 per cent from 32 per cent in 2018, well above the 2019 target of 31 per cent (see Figure 9). This refers to countries that have strategies that address demand-side gender-related barriers to education, plans and policies that support gender-responsive learning environments and that have national prevention and response mechanisms to address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).

Gender-responsive education programmes can change the norms that drive these barriers, or lessen their impact. When learning environments are free of violence, when travelling to and from school is safe, when school hours are flexible, and when female teachers are well represented (with provision of a system for substitute teachers), school is seen as a much more welcoming place by girls and their parents. In 2019, UNICEF spent US$12 million on gender-responsive systems for access, reaching the same level of spending as in 2018 (see Figure 7).

A UNICEF study in Burkina Faso revealed that incentive measures such as availability of a school canteen, scholarships, support for school supplies and a means of commuting (e.g., bicycles) have a positive impact on the enrolment and retention of girls in school when complemented by outreach to parents and communities. In 2019, UNICEF-supported incentives facilitated access for 18,450 adolescents (73 per cent girls) to post-primary school in four targeted regions of Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Ouest, Est and Sahel – including those affected by emergency. UNICEF continued to provide scholarships and school supplies to 1,275 highly vulnerable girls to facilitate their schooling.

In the same country, UNICEF enabled 310,042 adolescent girls to access interventions preventing child marriage or supporting those who are married. In 2019, a total of 1,059 villages declared abandonment of child marriage and female genital mutilation; the villages are continuously monitored by community-based committees. Since 2018, 2,559 villages with a collective population of 1.3 million people declared an end to child marriage.

In Croatia, UNICEF supports gender-responsive parenting support programmes. Equal involvement of mothers and fathers in childcare is encouraged, and a gender-specific training package for fathers that addresses the roles of mothers and fathers in childcare and risk assessment was produced. These types of interventions help to change gender norms and facilitate community monitoring of gender-responsive practices in schools.

To continue working towards improving gender equality in access, UNICEF supports ministries of education globally to collect gender-disaggregated data from the early grades up to secondary education, including in humanitarian contexts, so that interventions can be effectively targeted towards children facing the greatest barriers.

UNICEF Iraq, in alignment with UNICEF’s Gender Action Plan 2018–2021, is working to improve the availability of gender-disaggregated data for planning purposes and the development of plans that focus on identified problematic areas – for example, a targeted plan for adolescent health and nutrition, or malnourishment in girls – as well as to leverage the development of ongoing systems, processes or tools such as EMIS, and to support analysis and advocacy on persistent issues such as girls’ low rates of transition from primary to secondary education in certain areas of the country.

A continuing partnership with the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) (see box below) assisted UNICEF Lesotho in strengthening its gender programming and support to a number of key line ministries for integrated education sector planning. There was continued focus on adolescents’ access to gender-responsive
Partnership to advance girls’ education

The work of the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) is made possible in part by UNICEF thematic funding, which provides the flexibility to ensure country ownership and leadership of initiatives to support girls’ education and gender equality in and through education. Political momentum around this agenda continues to grow, and UNICEF’s partnership with UNGEI has had a particular impact globally by providing a strong evidence base for actions and interventions. In 2019, for instance, the UNGEI-INEE Guidance Note on Gender was published, updating the INEE Gender Pocket Guide on education in emergencies; UNGEI worked with GPE and the United Kingdom’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office to issue a new policy note on the integration of gender into management systems, Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning – a pathway to gender equality in education; and UNGEI with UNICEF and UNESCO produced six thematic briefs synthesizing research and learning on school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) from around the world.

The Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV Programme, jointly implemented by Education International and Gender at Work, has reached over 100,000 teachers in nine education unions in East, South and West Africa. This has resulted in a wide range of teacher-led initiatives to end gender-based violence in schools. Culminating three years of collaboration, UNGEI effectively transferred ownership of this programme to teacher unions in Africa.

In July, the G7, under the leadership of France, joined UNGEI, UNICEF, GPE, UNESCO-IIEP and civil society organization partners to launch the Gender at the Centre Initiative – Putting Gender Equality at the Centre of Education Planning. The initiative will provide US$8 million to strengthen the capacity of ministries of education in eight countries in West and Central Africa.

On International Youth Day, UNGEI also launched the Transform Education Campaign. This programme brings together over 375 youth-led networks for gender equality in and through education, engaged in activism and advocacy online and through the work of grass-roots organizations around the world.

multisectoral services, including health and education. The combined impact of UNICEF interventions in the HIV sector reached 6,644 adolescents and young people (71 per cent adolescent girls and young women) with information on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and HIV provided through peer-to-peer mentoring.

Gender equality in emergencies

Girls are disproportionately out of school during times of crisis. UNICEF programming seeks to address the impact of direct and indirect gendered threats to girls’ education. These threats include targeted attacks on institutions, teachers and students, displacement, SRGBV, discriminatory social norms, opportunity costs for educating girls and early/forced marriage and pregnancy.

Education programming by UNICEF in humanitarian contexts considers the following: (1) equal access for girls and boys in gender-responsive learning environments; (2) gender-responsive teaching and learning; (3) gender-responsive policies for teachers and other education personnel; and (4) gender-responsive education policy through advocacy to improve gender mainstreaming and to bridge the humanitarian–development nexus for its longer-term inclusion.

With girls representing 65 per cent of out-of-school children in Afghanistan, UNICEF supported the launch of the first Girls’ Education Policy, while facilitating enhanced coherence and synergies among sector partners to ensure girls stay in school. Through the Girls’ Access to Teacher Education Scholarship Programme, 887 female students received scholarships to be trained and serve as teachers in some of the most marginalized provinces with higher gender disparities. Field monitoring and anecdotal reports indicate increased enrolment and retention rates of girls in schools with female teachers, thus contributing to efforts to reduce gender disparities in education.

In Myanmar, a new education initiative in Rakhine, Learning Together, was launched in mid-2019 with DFID support to reach about 45,000 children. The initiative goes beyond humanitarian response and includes initiatives for longer-term development. It engages children in educational activities with a focus on gender equality, including: a reading component with gender equality criteria for the selection of book titles and training for teachers and education officials, hygiene promotion through separate toilets for girls and boys, and challenging gender stereotypes in sports by encouraging both boys and girls to benefit from recreation kits. Female teachers are also prioritized through the provision of vehicle transport to school where safety and security are a concern.
Case Study 2: Nepal: Girls’ Access to Education

The Girls’ Access to Education (GATE) initiative in Nepal, funded by Let Us Learn, is a nine-month non-formal education programme for out-of-school girls aged 10-18 years. In 2019-20, the programme expanded from four districts to all eight districts of Province 2. Trained local facilitators deliver a curriculum six days a week, for two and a half hours per day. Communities contribute space and oversight committees; local governments provide finance to pay facilitators and supervisory and buy supplies.

In two years, GATE has reached 45,850 girls, of whom 88 per cent had never attended school and 99 per cent are from disadvantaged castes or ethnic groups. Of all participants, 89 per cent went on to enrol in mainstream classes (usually Grade 3 or higher). A rapid assessment in 2019 found that 63 per cent of programme graduates remained enrolled in formal school after 6 months, and 53 per cent remained enrolled after 18 months. Average test results for the 2018–19 cohort increased from a 12 per cent score on the pretest to 64 per cent on the post-test.

Factors contributing to GATE’s success include:

- outreach to the most marginalized out-of-school children,
- curriculum content relevant to girls in the Terai region, including reproductive health, consequences of child marriage, and life skills,
- government ownership of programme implementation and budget, complemented by UNICEF technical support,
- strong community engagement, including provision of learning spaces and establishment of management committees to oversee classes,
- class timing in line with girls’ availability,
- child-friendly pedagogy to ensure girls enjoy the classes.

UNICEF and the Government of Nepal are now considering an adapted model to reach more geographically scattered out-of-school children, continuing to rely on the use of data and evidence to inform programming.
Addressing school-related gender-based violence

Barriers such as violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and gender stereotypes compromise the quality of teaching and learning and reduce opportunities for students to develop. Progress in reducing SRGBV can be measured in part by assessing the percentage of countries that have mechanisms to prevent SRGBV, and to provide a reliable response when it does occur. In 2019, the percentage of countries with such mechanisms in place was 49 per cent, compared with 38 per cent in 2018 (see Annex 2).

UNICEF South Africa continued to support interventions under the National School Safety Framework, which included targeted training in monitoring SRGBV incidents, field-testing a manual to prevent and manage alcohol and substance abuse in schools, and building provincial capacity to execute national protocols to manage and report sexual abuse, harassment and corporal punishment in schools.

Teachers have a critical role to play in fostering a safe and gender-responsive environment for students. UNICEF Togo worked with teachers to reduce SRGBV in schools via child-centred participatory teaching methods, reinforced by regular intervals of peer learning and teacher-led modelling. The project demonstrated that participatory classroom practices can reduce rates of corporal punishment and shift power dynamics between teachers and students.

A national code of conduct on preventing SRGBV was developed by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, through UNICEF-supported consultations with members of the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association, civil society organizations, and representatives from the health, education, gender, justice and police sectors. The code is being rolled out in all regions of the country through the distribution of printed copies and intensive training of teachers, who will serve as gender focal points in their schools. Each gender focal point is responsible for training others in their province on the code, including school-level implementation monitoring, and forming local SRGBV committees and school gender clubs.

The #ENDviolence in Schools campaign

In 2019, the partnership for the #ENDviolence in Schools campaign expanded into a broad coalition under the overall coordination of the global partnership End Violence Against Children. Ministers of education in 15 countries endorsed the Safe to Learn call to action, and the coalition developed the Safe to Learn strategic road map.22/23

The communications campaign included the following activities in 2019:

- Through the Safer Internet Day, the campaign built on the #ENDviolence youth manifesto by encouraging young people to be kind online, generated 15.8 million impressions, 75 million views and half a million engagements.
- The subsequent kindness activation in July was one of the biggest UNICEF user-generated activations of all time, with 1.4 million mentions of the kindness call to action, and 5.2 million engagements online. In the first two days, there were 191 mentions of the campaign in the media.
- At the high-level political forum, UNICEF hosted a child-led art, advocacy and action event to end violence in schools, including the launch of the winning comic book on ending bullying from the School Superhero Comic Contest.
- UNICEF also collaborated with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children on a U-Report poll about online bullying, with over 170,000 U-Reporters from more than 30 countries.

UNICEF education and child protection continue to work together to address violence in schools. UNICEF Palestine facilitated safe access to school for over 6,400 children (32 per cent girls) in the West Bank. In Cambodia, the positive discipline programme expanded its reach to 1,143 primary schools, an increase of 339 primary schools. In Egypt, UNICEF and partners conducted a campaign against violence inside and outside school that reached an estimated 6.2 million people; the campaign had a social media reach of 84 million and an engagement of 3 million.
Education in emergencies

Children affected by emergencies need, and deserve, the opportunity to continue learning. Without access to a good education, their lives can become a crisis that never ends. Yet the international community continues to fall short in its goal of responding to their needs. Countries around the world are facing a learning crisis; it is most severe in countries affected by conflicts and disasters: more than half of the 20 countries with the lowest levels of learning experienced humanitarian crisis situations in 2018. In crisis-affected countries, 128 million children of primary and secondary age are out of school.2425

In 2019, there were 16 Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies, including Level 3 emergencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen that demanded priority support. In these protracted and complex situations, children face an uncertain future because of conflict, attacks on education, climate change, natural disasters, forced migration and interruption of schooling, which threatens their learning and their right to education. Education is often not given priority in the humanitarian response, and too often funding falls far short of what is needed.

UNICEF, working with governments, United Nations agencies and other partners, is often called on to play the role of the agency of last resort in humanitarian situations – the agency on which children and their families can rely to provide critical education services to the children who need it most. Yet the achievements fall short of meeting the needs. In 2019, UNICEF set an ambitious target for education provision to 12.3 million children in humanitarian situations. In the calendar year, UNICEF enrolled 7.4 million (3.4 million girls) children in humanitarian situations in formal or non-formal education programmes. As crises emerged and evolved, the number of children in need of education shifted, with some of the biggest increases in India, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen. Due to funding shortfalls, escalating insecurity and targeted attacks on education, in some contexts UNICEF was only able to reach a small fraction of the children in need. This was particularly true in Burkina Faso and Cameroon, due to financial shortages and other obstacles. UNICEF remains committed to resolving this challenge and is determined to find solutions that reach all children affected by emergencies.

UNICEF co-leads the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Education Cluster with Save the Children and is Lead Agency for country-level education clusters in many countries. In countries without a cluster, UNICEF often chairs education in emergencies working groups. In 2019, there were strategic shifts in coordination functions. The Global Education Cluster formalized its cooperation with the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and started a task team on humanitarian cash transfers. At the national level, clusters were increasingly involved in facilitating Education Cannot Wait proposals across cluster members and prioritized capacity-building in needs assessment and core skills training. UNICEF is a founding member of the InterGENCY Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and a member of its steering group and a number of its working groups. In 2019, both as a steering group member and as the organization with the largest number of individual INEE members globally, UNICEF actively worked within the network to support the priorities of the INEE Strategic Framework, 2018–2023.26

Education Cannot Wait is hosted by UNICEF and administered under its financial, human resources and administrative rules and regulations. The Executive Director of UNICEF represents UNICEF on the high-level steering group for Education Cannot Wait, and UNICEF participates as a member of the Executive Committee and strategic technical task teams. In 2019, UNICEF received US$52.7 million in grants from Education Cannot Wait in 17 countries, 2 regional offices, UNICEF’s Office of
Emergency Programmes and UNGEI. UNICEF was grantee for the 16 First Emergency Response grants in 2019, and in Mozambique, through Education Cannot Wait funds of US$5 million, UNICEF reached almost 108,000 children with educational support following the disastrous impact of Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth. Multi-Year Resilience Programme grants with UNICEF as grantee were allocated to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, State of Palestine and Somaliland. In Afghanistan, in 2019, during its first year of implementation, the programme succeeded in providing 118,212 children (69,212 girls) in crisis-affected provinces with access to education. A total of 3,478 community-based education learning spaces have been established, and 3,620 teachers (1,658 women) have been recruited and trained.

**Education under attack**

Between 2014 and 2018, there were more than 14,000 reported cases of attacks on education – threatened or actual use of force against students, education staff, officials or facilities – in 87 countries. During 2019, 488 schools were reported to have been forcibly closed because of insecurity, affecting around 150,000 children. UNICEF works with states and armed groups to protect education from attack and to encourage endorsement and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

Monitoring and reporting are crucial for preventing and responding to attacks. The Education Cluster, co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children, coordinates partners’ alerts, and monitors, reports and responds to attacks on education. UNICEF is on the front lines, developing school safety plans, getting children back to learning through psychosocial support and formal and informal opportunities, training teachers, rehabilitating schools and distributing teaching and learning materials.

In 2019, UNICEF raised the alarm about the rapidly deteriorating situation in the West and Central Africa region. As of June, a UNICEF report found that nearly 2 million children had been robbed of education because of violence and insecurity in and around their schools in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria.

Through the Child Alert, UNICEF called for: (1) states to protect education and endorse the Safe Schools Declaration; (2) teaching and learning to be designed to build peace and support girls’ education; (3) authorities to build the capacity of education personnel; (4) all school-age children, including refugee, migrant and displaced children, to be able to continue learning; (5) parents and communities to be essential partners in ensuring access to quality education; (6) governments and their international partners to work to diversify available options for quality education; and (7) donor governments to commit to multi-year flexible funding.

A shared goal was for 100 Member States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration by the end of 2019; this goal was exceeded, with 102 countries endorsing the declaration. UNICEF is working with governments to implement the guidelines in the declaration.

Somalia established its Safe School Declaration Task Force in 2019. In Burkina Faso, 1,762 schools have implemented the Safe Schools approach since 2018 to build resilience in schools.

**Children on the move**

Children who are forcibly displaced, or ‘on the move’, include refugees, internally displaced persons, asylum-seekers, and those migrating across countries for various reasons. Such children typically face multiple barriers to beginning and continuing their education. As of 2016, 28 million children (1 in 80) globally were living in forced displacement; this included 12 million child refugees and child asylum-seekers, and 16 million children in internal displacement as a result of conflict, violence or environmental disasters.

To provide equitable access to education for migrant children, UNICEF implements programmes aimed at: (1) facilitating social integration through inclusive education policies to ensure that all children are included in the national education system; (2) removing barriers to learning
After the crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF provided humanitarian support to millions of children within the country, as well as those migrating across the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

- In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF promoted a school feeding pilot which benefited over 7,600 children (3,842 girls) in Miranda state. This intervention was complemented by the distribution of educational material in seven states, reaching close to 5,800 teachers and over 285,000 children (146,724 girls), which has had a direct and documented impact on school attendance and on retention of teachers.
- In Peru, as a result of advocacy efforts in coordination with UNESCO, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF has eliminated administrative barriers to education for migrant children from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, benefiting 75,000 children.
- In Brazil, UNICEF and partners are running 25 Súper Panas, integrated spaces which provide non-formal education opportunities and psychosocial assistance to children on the move in Boa Vista, Manaus and Pacaraima. The centres operate in government-run transit centres and shelters as well as in informal shelters, through mobile teams. These interventions reached over 12,000 children and adolescents with non-formal education, including 5,971 children under the age of five.
- In Colombia, UNICEF built on its experience of working with more than 22 local and community organizations in partnership with the government. Through ‘bridge’ initiatives tailored to local contexts, UNICEF sought to link emergency interventions with longer-term development workstreams, including the integration of the migrant population into host communities. Inter-agency coordination ensured complementarity of response and avoided duplication. UNICEF leveraged its role as Education Cluster leader in the Latin America and Caribbean region to maintain coherence in the planning and implementation of the Humanitarian Needs Overview/Humanitarian Response Plan with the Regional Migration Response Plan. With a view to ensuring the continuity of education services, both from a formal and non-formal perspective, and with the goal of enabling migrant children’s transition to the education system, UNICEF Colombia, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Fundación Escuela Nueva, continued to implement Círculos de Aprendizaje (‘Learning Circles’), which provide an appropriate learning environment and personalized attention as children transition to the formal system. In 2019, a total of 1,245 migrant children participated in 82 UNICEF-supported Círculos de Aprendizaje.

**Children Uprooted**

The Children Uprooted Campaign continues to uphold the rights of migrant and forcibly displaced children in refugee and internally displaced contexts, through public advocacy and fundraising and by influencing public opinion.

During 2019, as part of its support for implementing the Global Refugee Compact in partnership with UNHCR and many agencies and Member States, UNICEF provided technical leadership for primary and secondary education technical working groups in the first Global Refugee Forum, held in Geneva in December 2019. The contributions of UNICEF helped galvanize global action for the implementation of the Global Refugee Compact, with a decisive shift in approach that featured education. The event resulted in more than 770 pledges, which ranged from financial support to more inclusive government policies for refugees, including incorporating refugees in the national education systems of refugee-hosting countries.

UNICEF education teams across eight countries in the Middle East and Africa supported the implementation of the four-year Netherlands-funded global Prospects programme, together with several United Nations agencies, supporting migrant and forcibly displaced children and youth to acquire critical learning competencies and skills for employability, strengthening pathways from the world of school to the world of work, and facilitating active participation in societal forums so that they can constructively engage in their communities.

UNICEF renewed its partnership with local governments across Turkey to support nearly 1 million refugee children to access learning opportunities and skills-based training.
Learning in emergencies

UNICEF country and field offices use Accelerated Education to deliver learning opportunities for children who have missed out on schooling. Accelerated Education programmes are used in both humanitarian and development contexts to ensure that children catch up to appropriate learning levels and gain the skills they need. UNICEF is a member of the Accelerated Education Working Group, advancing global recognition of Accelerated Education programmes. At the country level, UNICEF reaches children through a variety of Accelerated Education and other alternative education pathways.

In South Sudan, UNICEF education in emergencies and GPE programmes expanded education service delivery across the humanitarian–development nexus. A total of 618,174 children and young people (260,822 girls) in humanitarian situations gained access to protective quality education services in pre-primary, primary, Accelerated Learning Programme and secondary schools.

In Turkey, UNICEF supported alternative pathways to learning for refugees, including the Accelerated Learning Programme and Turkish language classes. Since the Accelerated Learning Programme was launched in 2018, almost 17,500 children (47 per cent girls) have benefited, and almost 12,000 children (47 per cent girls) have attended Turkish language classes.

In Mali, in response to school closures, UNICEF, as Education Cluster co-lead, advocated for educational support for crisis-affected children. With engagement from the Ministry of Education and support from implementing partners, 119 schools reopened in October for the start of the 2019–20 school year.

In 2019, UNICEF completed research for the Learning Passport project, in partnership with Microsoft and the University of Cambridge. It provides a curriculum framework and technical platform to improve the quality of learning for vulnerable children and adolescents around the world. The Learning Passport is a response mechanism for children impacted by emergencies without access to school or educational content. The platform contains an initial set of open-source teaching and learning materials, and has full offline functionality to enable continuous access to education whether in schools or in refugee camps. A prototype will be prepared in Bangladesh and Kenya in 2020.

Voices from the field

When children have access to water, toilets and soap for handwashing at school, and girls have access to proper hygiene facilities, they are more likely to come to school, stay in school, stay healthy and learn. “Sick children cannot learn,” says Ibrahim Al Qadhi, Programme Specialist, UNICEF Yemen. Ibrahim manages the water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (WinS) Programme and is part of the UNICEF Cholera Task Force responding to outbreaks in the country. As part of the response, UNICEF rehabilitated WASH facilities in schools in the most affected areas and provided girls and boys with bars of soap and information on healthy hygiene practices.

“I am very proud to be part of the education team in Yemen, working to ensure that children learn and grow to reach their full potential.”

© UNICEF Yemen

Ibrahim Al Qaadhi, Programme Specialist, interacts with a child in Yemen.
Case Study 3: Nigeria: Teaching at the Right Level

For more than a decade, Borno State in Nigeria has experienced a tragic insurgency with a negative impact on children’s access to education and learning. Teachers are in short supply and poorly trained, infrastructure to support learning is inadequate, and mother tongue teaching methods are lacking. As a result, Borno State has some of the highest rates of children out of school in the country (nearly 75 per cent, or just over 1.4 million children), with the northeast region accounting for the most children out of school. Even those who are in school have the weakest foundational skills in literacy and numeracy.

The partnership between UNICEF and the UK Department For International Development-North East Transition to Development programme, in collaboration with Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa, helped the government pilot an innovative remedial learning programme to address some of the learning barriers children face in achieving proficiency in literacy and numeracy. The TaRL pilot was launched in Borno State using mother tongue instruction to support learning based on children’s existing competency levels. Lessons from this pilot are now being used to accelerate learning results for children at scale.

The pilot achieved impressive results over three months: in reading, the percentage of students who could not read letters was reduced from 68 per cent to 17 per cent. The baseline of children in Grades 4–6 who could read a paragraph of four lines in Hausa increased from 14 per cent to 45 per cent. In arithmetic, the baseline of students who were proficient in subtraction increased from 11 per cent to 59 per cent. The results achieved during the pilot of the TaRL programme in Borno State contributed to the government’s buy-in to scale up the intervention, including in neighbouring states in the northeast of Nigeria such as Adamawa, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Yobe states.
**Humanitarian–development–peace nexus**

UNICEF works to connect humanitarian and development efforts in education programming, emphasizing systems strengthening, risk-informed programmes, community participation, emergency preparedness and resilience. UNICEF strengthens education across this nexus through learners, teachers and education officials, and in learning facilities. Education programmes delivered by UNICEF consider conflict-sensitive design to address root causes of violence and ensure that education contributes to peace and equitable access to quality learning opportunities.

In Honduras, the Peacebuilding Programme, which aims to reduce violence in educational centres by creating safe learning spaces, was scaled up by the Department of Education with UNICEF support from 130 to 260 educational centres. In 70 per cent of the educational centres, families and community members actively participated in school management; 80 per cent prepared school situational analyses and a violence response plan, 72 per cent reduced acts of violence against children and adolescents, and 83 per cent promoted participation and listening to the views of children. Children and adolescents interviewed from 130 educational centres reported feeling safer because of fewer disputes among students and fewer punishments, thus improving relationships between them. As a result of this expansion of the Peacebuilding Programme, 91,000 children and adolescents benefited.

In Lebanon, provision by UNICEF of life-skills packages is reported to have had a multidimensional impact on adolescents and youth. Engaging young people from different communities and nationalities in joint activities in safe spaces strengthened social cohesion between Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian adolescents and youth. Over time, this was reflected in their communities, particularly through activities focused on non-violent ways to resolve conflicts and share their experiences, fears and emotions.

In Turkey, starting in 2019, Syrian and Turkish adolescents participating in social cohesion activities or Turkish language courses were given access to psychosocial support and individual counselling services, with 3,019 benefiting so far. UNICEF also implemented multisectoral workplans with three municipalities whose combined population was over 1.4 million Turkish citizens and about 600,000 refugees. In June 2019, UNICEF expanded this partnership to Kilis municipality, which has the highest ratio of refugees to Turkish citizens (almost 50 per cent) in Turkey.

In Iraq, through UNICEF financial and technical support for school renovation, provision of learning spaces and other interventions, nearly 161,200 children (80,900 girls) accessed formal or non-formal education opportunities.

In Yemen, UNICEF supported efforts by the Ministry of Education and local education authorities for the rehabilitation of conflict-affected schools, construction of semi-permanent classrooms and repair of WASH facilities in schools, benefiting 253,406 children. Desks and teaching and learning materials were provided for 277,847 children.

In areas affected by conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 299,123 children (155,544 girls) were provided with access to quality education. Interventions included the establishment of semi-permanent learning spaces, peacebuilding activities and psychological support for children and teachers in need.

To support the humanitarian–development nexus and preparedness for future disasters, UNICEF supported the education system in Madagascar with environmentally friendly cyclone-proof classrooms with toilets, which benefited over 5,400 children from preschool to lower secondary. In Cuba, UNICEF contributed to the return of children to safe learning spaces with the acquisition of 33,000 m² of waterproof roofs for 40 schools, including 9 day-care centres. In Indonesia, a structural assessment of 1,200 school buildings was completed with UNICEF support. In Jordan, UNICEF provided daily buses for over 2,000 children living in the most vulnerable informal tented sites.

In Egypt, UNICEF supported refugee and migrant children to overcome financial barriers, through education grants partially covering the direct and indirect costs of education for 11,575 children.

In Lebanon, the partnership between the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UNICEF and the sector has supported more children to enrol by subsidizing the school fees of 205,000 refugee children aged 3–14 years (38 per cent of the refugee population in this age group) and 72,000 Lebanese children. Enhanced efforts of sector/non-governmental organization partners to conduct outreach to children and an increase in the number of second-shift schools (from 88 schools in 2013 to 346 schools in 2019) contributed to increasing enrolment.

**Schools as platforms for multiple services**

In times of crisis, such as during a public health emergency, when coping mechanisms are compromised, schools act as an anchor for children and can serve as a protective environment and a critical platform for the delivery of multiple services. UNICEF promotes the use of schools and non-formal learning spaces to provide multiple critical services such as access to clean water, child protection services and primary health services such as vaccinations. It works to ensure that teachers and other education personnel are equipped to provide learning and

**Safe places to learn**

In 2019, UNICEF provided access to learning opportunities for children affected by crises and disasters by setting up temporary learning spaces and child-friendly spaces, renovating schools and constructing new permanent structures.
psychosocial support to students who have faced trauma during crises and prolonged conflicts.

The UNICEF framework for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) recognizes education as one of many entry-points, offering a chance to reach all those children, adolescents and caregivers most in need. MHPSS is a significant precursor to learning and thus essential for children and adolescents to develop needed knowledge and skills.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, 357,586 adolescents (aged 13-17 years), especially those at risk, were targeted through temporary learning centres with life skills, psychosocial support services and protection, including mine-risk education.

In Ecuador, UNICEF worked to promote the inclusion of migrant children and adolescents in schools, providing 94,534 students (61,254 girls) and 11,068 teachers with psychosocial support.

In Cameroon, in response to the educational needs of internally displaced children and teachers in the Littoral, Northwest, Southwest and West Regions, UNICEF, in partnership with the local education authorities of the Littoral and West Regions, trained 962 teachers (28 per cent from secondary education and 72 per cent from primary), 237 community members and 40 educational personnel on psychosocial support and school-based risk mitigation.

Innovation focus: Alternative ways to deliver education in emergencies

In emergencies, traditional mechanisms of education delivery are often not possible because of school closures, threats to students, teachers and institutions, and blocked access or limited transportation options. UNICEF works to find new ways to provide education to children where they are, through new technologies and adaptation of existing mechanisms to reach those in need.

In Kenya, UNICEF worked with Nokia to provide 1,000 digital open education resources mapped on the Competency-Based Curriculum to serve as remedial and supplementary material to students in rural and refugee communities.

In the Sudan, e-learning introduced through 80 centres in Blue Nile, Kassala and White Nile States enabled 5,136 children (47 per cent girls) to gain proficiency in mathematics and Arabic as part of the global Can’t Wait to Learn programme, to help hard-to-reach – particularly nomadic – children access learning opportunities.

In the Central African Republic, a radio programme for children’s education was launched after a year-long process to develop and produce lessons. The programme targets hard-to-reach children in remote areas, displaced and returnee children, and those with limited learning time. Seventy lessons were produced and are ready to be aired.
Building disaster risk resilience

Within the context of a changing climate, every region is susceptible to more frequent and more severe natural disasters. More than 600 million children are currently affected by climate change and its adverse impacts. This number will continue to grow. Thus, UNICEF works to ensure that education systems are resilient and prepared for emergencies around the world through an increased emphasis on preparedness and risk-informed programming. There has been an upward trend in recent years, with the proportion of UNICEF-supported countries that have emergency preparedness/resilience mechanisms in place in the education system increasing from 32 per cent in 2016 to 46 per cent in 2019. In 2019, 55 per cent of countries conducted a risk assessment, up 13 percentage points since 2016; 57 per cent of countries have effective risk reduction strategies in the education system, up more than 20 percentage points since 2016 (see Annex 2).

UNICEF employs the following strategies to mitigate risk for various hazards: (1) disaster risk reduction (DRR) in education; (2) climate change education; (3) school health and nutrition; (4) conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding; (5) child protection in education; and (6) social protection in education. The overarching objective of DRR in education is to reduce interruptions to education through systematic integration of the analysis of disaster risks, and to incorporate proactive measures to reduce these risks into education sector development policy, planning and financing obligations.

In Pakistan, disaster risk resilience and preparedness capacity were improved in 368 schools through disaster management planning, training and evacuation drills, creating structures to protect continued education for 29,440 children in disaster-prone regions.

UNICEF education programming strengthens resilience to climate change. Through adaptation to climate change, UNICEF aims to reduce the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on children’s rights and to identify and enhance opportunities to advance the rights of children.

In Mozambique, in the post-cyclone emergency, UNICEF and partners provided education support to approximately 12,000 pre-primary schoolchildren and more than 115,000 primary schoolchildren in 292 child-friendly spaces. This represents roughly 40 per cent of cyclone-affected students in Cabo Delgado, Manica and Sofala provinces. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education and Human Development on cluster coordination and capacity at central and provincial levels.

In Mongolia, the frequency and severity of cyclical climatic shocks – winter disasters, or dzud – are increasing as a result of climate change. These severe winters cause cattle to die from starvation and cold, leaving nomadic herder households (approximately a third of the population) particularly vulnerable. Rigorous national studies provide evidence that shocks have a lasting negative impact on children’s education and health. Education and social protection programmes from UNICEF are topping up cash transfers to children affected by dzud. Self-reported attendance figures from households triangulated with attendance data from schools will contribute to evidence on the effects of cash transfers on school attendance and retention, and resilience to shocks.

In response to heavy flooding in the Islamic Republic of Iran in March 2019, UNICEF led the education emergency and recovery response, working closely with the World Health Organization, UNESCO, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Habitat. UNICEF provided technical support to the education sector for a post-disaster needs assessment. Supported by donor countries such as Canada, Japan, Kuwait, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland, as well as local donors from the private sector, the assessment mobilized critical funds for the flood response and ensured that the most vulnerable children, including refugee and immigrant children, had access to essential services.
Spotlight on thematic funds: Taking action on climate change

East Asia and the Pacific is one of the regions that is most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with 1 billion people affected by floods, droughts and storms every year. Thematic funding allowed the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office to finance the study 'It is Getting Hot: Call for Education Systems to Respond to the Climate Crisis'. The study focused on the complex impacts of the climate crisis on children’s education, including infrastructure damage, absenteeism and dropouts. It highlighted the need for education systems to adapt to become more protective, particularly of the most vulnerable, and proposed the following actions: (1) improve learning and skills in schools to address climate change challenges; (2) enhance data and improve the evidence base to inform climate and education policies and develop sustainable financing mechanisms for climate-resilient education systems; (3) ensure continued education and support for all children, adolescents, teachers and families under different climate change scenarios, with specific initiatives to climate-proof schools and relevant infrastructure to improve access to and quality of education; and (4) strengthen capacity of education stakeholders to understand and act on the climate crisis and proactively participate in relevant climate change policymaking and financing processes at international, national and subnational levels, recognizing the critical role of education sector leadership in tackling the climate crisis.

Based on evidence derived from a case study of Viet Nam, UNICEF launched a dialogue with the Ministry of Education and Training on working towards climate-smart education. The Ministry requested the co-creation of sustainable environment education packages integrating ‘green’ habits and skills into the new national curriculum and teacher training, benefiting 24 million students, and the development of a set of climate-smart education indicators for the new 2021–2030 Education Strategic Development Plan.

A high school girl in Vietnamese traditional dress, Ao Dai, rides a bicycle to her school passing a bridge in Ben Tre, one of the 10 provinces in the Central Highlands, South-central coast and Mekong Delta, affected by drought and salt water intrusion.
Le Anh Lan, Education Specialist 2nd Decade and Learning for UNICEF Viet Nam, works to protect children’s right to learn in some of the provinces in the country that are most affected by climate change. “Climate change is real”, says Anh Lan. In provinces such as Kiên Gang and Trà Vinh in the south of Viet Nam that are severely affected by drought and saltwater intrusion, Anh Lan has met the children who bear the brunt of the effects of climate change.

“Listening to school children talk about their classrooms getting hotter and a lack of water to drink underlines the importance of UNICEF’s work and how we must work even harder to incorporate awareness of climate change into education and limit the impact it has on children’s learning. As a Viet Namese national, I’m passionate about working on solutions to support the next generation adapt and thrive. That’s what motivates me every day I come to work.”

UNICEF Education Specialist Le Anh Lan, jumps with boys and girls at the front yard of Sin Cheng semi-boarding ethnic lower secondary school.

Summary

The coronavirus pandemic has once again provided a striking illustration of the challenges in providing a good education for all children during emergencies in humanitarian, development and developed contexts alike. It has also highlighted the interconnectedness of the world and the need for preparedness at all times and in all places. The global constraints are clear. Funding shortfalls for ensuring universal access to education have not been overcome, and they are most apparent for those who are most vulnerable. These deficits are particularly acute in the education sector in the context of emergencies, where an unacceptable lag time persists between the outbreak of emergency and the ability to mobilize an effective education response.

Monitoring and evaluation systems often exclude the most vulnerable, whose needs are often under-reported, particularly children with multiple vulnerabilities in emergency contexts. These include poor children, girls, children with disabilities, children on the move, sociocultural/linguistic minorities and indigenous communities, and children in rural areas. The most vulnerable children are often the most difficult to reach with messaging and with services, and the political will to ensure upfront preparedness is lacking in too many cases.

A significant shift in resource mobilization, priorities and approach is needed. Partnerships focused strategically on building systems capable of far more effective service delivery will be ever more important. System strengthening efforts must be fundamentally revisited to bridge the humanitarian–development nexus and to develop more resilient systems capable of effectively delivering inclusive education services. Greater investments will be needed in adapting breakthrough technologies to better reach vulnerable populations with distance learning, educational support and recognition of learning for children on the move. For children who have missed out on education, alternative pathways such as Accelerated Education will be crucial. All of these approaches must be centred not just on access to schooling, but on access to real learning opportunities, with accountability for results.
Result Area 2: Improving learning outcomes

The term ‘learning poverty’ is defined as the share of children who are unable to read a simple story by the age of 10. Just over half of all children in low- and middle-income countries are characterized by learning poverty. This is an astonishing and unacceptable number. Education that is hit or miss results in a waste of resources. More importantly, it results in wasted opportunities for children.

This report highlights many encouraging programmes that have shown dramatic improvements for children when learning outcomes are at the core of planning and measurement. Many of these programmes must now be scaled up with urgency. These include programmes to improve learning in the early years, which are crucial to success later. Learning assessments must provide information to parents, teachers and policymakers about how to improve teaching and learning. And all children in all contexts, both boys and girls, must have equal access to good learning. No child should still be ‘learning poor’ after five years in school.

FIGURE 10: Results chain for improving learning outcomes
A 5-year-old indigenous girl of the mixed school of the indigenous community of Chicoy, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Huehuetenango, Guatemala draws on her reading book. Despite the important progress made in gender equality and parity in primary schools, women are still behind men in many key sectors.
In 2019, UNICEF allocated US$311 million to improving learning outcomes. Figure 10 outlines how this sum was spent across different thematic areas and activity types, and how the spending is related to both service delivery and system strengthening outputs and, ultimately, to improving learning outcomes and increasing equity in education systems.

Half of the spending was devoted to service delivery activities, including the procurement and distribution of learning materials to more than 12 million children. Cumulatively, nearly 52 million children have been provided with learning material since 2016, short of the 2019 milestone of 62 million. In addition, in 2019, just over 60,000 school management committees or similar organizations were trained, making a total of 202,107 trained since 2016 – significantly more than the 2019 target of 140,000. The other half of the spending went towards system strengthening activities, including early learning and teacher development.

FIGURE 11: System strengthening indicators for learning outcomes
The share of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes has increased to 48 per cent, up from 24 per cent in 2016 and above the 2019 milestone of 30 per cent (see Figure 11). Analysis of the five dimensions of effective systems for learning outcomes – how countries are working on teacher development, early learning, community participation, mother tongue/multilingual education and learning assessment – shows progress between 2016 and 2019 for all dimensions. Progress is particularly significant for teacher development and early learning. Acceleration is needed for mother tongue education and learning assessment.

Progress is most advanced in Eastern and Southern Africa and East Asia and the Pacific, where the proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes is 65 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively. Although notable progress was made in the West and Central Africa and Middle East and North Africa regions, only 26 per cent and 40 per cent of countries in these regions, respectively, have effective education systems for learning outcomes.
UNICEF **Nicaragua** is supporting the Ministry of Education to develop video books aimed at bringing national literature closer to children with hearing disabilities. The video books comprise poems and stories by famous local poet Ruben Dario in Nicaraguan sign language and Spanish, with closed captions, so that both children with and without disabilities can enjoy the readings in a regular classroom.

UNICEF supported **Namibia**’s family and community engagement efforts through the launch of a multi-platform early childhood development campaign called RightStart, which reached over 250,000 people through a locally produced television cartoon series (WakaWakaMoo). Complementary campaign activities at the community level reached over 3,000 people.
In Iraq, over 4,500 teachers completed training on topics including education in emergencies and identifying and supporting students experiencing psychosocial distress. UNICEF extended support to enable the hiring of 345 volunteer teachers to help keep 29,066 children learning in 25 formal schools in camps for internally displaced persons until the end of the 2018–19 academic year, a period during which services were seriously disrupted by short-notice closures and consolidation.

In Yemen, UNICEF initiated the Cash Incentives to Support Teachers and School-based Staff Project, reaching 128,216 teachers and school-based staff, including temporary teachers, with incentives to cover transportation and other basic costs.

UNICEF supported more than 2,500 ECE centres enrolling over 77,000 children (61 per cent girls) in Pakistan. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, UNICEF supported the design of a new approach to children's development and early learning, which will be scaled up by transforming 10,000 classrooms into holistic ECE rooms.

In Mongolia, UNICEF supported the development of training modules for pre-primary education teachers who work with children with disabilities. The training covered all 350 target teachers. UNICEF also collaborated with the non-governmental organization the Mongolian Association of Sign Language Interpreters to develop learning materials and organize training on ECE sign language.
Learning in the early years

Today, the world is facing a learning crisis: millions of children cannot read, write or do basic mathematics, even after years of primary schooling. This global learning crisis has been made worse by a failure to invest in quality ECE, meaning many children start school already behind in a range of vital skills.

Despite the proven benefits of ECE, more than 175 million children – nearly half of all pre-primary-age children globally – are missing out. In low-income countries, 8 out of 10 children are not enrolled in ECE, and less than 2 per cent of the overall education budget is allocated to the pre-primary subsector. The very children who would benefit most from ECE are the least likely to enrol.

Coordination and collaboration around ECE are improving, as are enrolment rates, but many challenges remain. Provision is inequitable. External and domestic financing is insufficient, and rapid expansion has been hampered by limited national capacity to plan, implement and monitor progress. Many children receive services of sub-standard quality. A lack of data around access, outcomes and spending creates particular difficulties given the nature of ECE, which requires collaboration across a number of subsectors.

Under its new Education Strategy, 2019–2030, UNICEF reaffirmed that all children should have access to at least one year of quality preschool, giving priority to marginalized children, including those affected by emergencies. A highlight of 2019 was the launch by UNICEF of its first global report on pre-primary education, A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education. This report makes the case for investment in ECE and outlines a set of practical recommendations for governments and partners to make quality ECE universal and an integral part of education systems. UNICEF also led in shaping a global advocacy agenda for ECE with key partners such as the World Bank, GPE and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with a global call to action for ECE investment, including a decisive commitment by UNICEF to dedicate at least 10 per cent of its education resources to pre-primary education.

UNICEF will seek to accelerate progress towards this goal by reinforcing its strategic engagement to: (1) mainstream ECE in national education plans, with a target of countries progressively increasing ECE financing to 10 per cent of the education budget for this subsector; (2) strengthen the pre-primary subsector through a systems approach to support quality implementation at scale; and (3) mobilize and leverage partnerships to scale up quality ECE.

Funding for early childhood education

In 2019, UNICEF allocated US$71.6 million, or 6 per cent of its total expenditure on education, to ECE – a slight decrease from the 7 per cent allocated in 2018. Around half of the financing (52 per cent) went to systems strengthening activities. This reflects the role of UNICEF as a recognized technical advisor to governments in supporting upstream-level work within a comprehensive subsector approach.

The efforts in supporting subsector development and system strengthening are also reflected in the Strategic Monitoring Question indicators. Steady improvements were observed in 2019, with 58 per cent of countries reporting effective ECE systems across these dimensions,
up from 44 per cent in 2018 (see Figure 11), demonstrating the contribution of UNICEF to leadership and technical expertise in this area. Furthermore, the strong push towards positioning ECE centrally in sector planning processes is leading to positive results, as 72 per cent of countries report having effective policy, leadership and budget for the ECE subsector (an increase from 66 per cent in 2018) (see Annex 2).

The other half (48 per cent) of UNICEF financing in ECE was spent on service delivery activities (see Figure 10), such as provision of teacher training and learning materials. There remains an urgent need to include ECE in humanitarian education appeals and financing to ensure that pre-school-age children who live in contexts affected by conflicts or emergencies have access to early learning opportunities, especially given that they stand to benefit the most.

Policy, leadership and budget

The Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative is a partnership with GPE to incorporate ECE as an integral part of education sector plans and policies and to develop the capacities, resources and knowledge to systematically integrate ECE into sector plans, budgets and implementation strategies. The shift towards UNICEF supporting countries with stronger development and implementation of ECE plans is a key solution under the Education Strategy and shows promising prospects of securing additional external funding for this area of work, including under the GPE’s Knowledge and Innovation Exchange initiative.

The efforts of UNICEF have had a positive impact on advocacy, evidence generation, knowledge exchange and technical support for mainstreaming ECE in sector planning processes, as evidenced by an increase in the percentage of countries with effective policies, leadership and budget for ECE, which currently stands at 72 per cent, up from 66 per cent in 2018 (see Annex 2). These efforts are expected to improve financing and budgets for ECE, and to greatly increase the number of children with access to quality ECE. This will continue to be a major focus for UNICEF.

Through UNICEF technical assistance, coordination and advocacy support, the four pilot BELDS countries have shown promising results.

- In Ghana, the Kindergarten Policy Framework was substantively completed, with final validation and high-level endorsement expected by mid-2020.
- Kyrgyzstan’s ECE subsector is well positioned in the country’s Education Development Strategy (2021–2040) and accompanying Action Plan (2021–2023).
- Lesotho articulated a vision for scaling up reception (ECE) classes attached to existing primary schools.
- Sao Tome and Principe integrated ECE into the revision of its Carta de Política Educativa (vision for the education sector) and accompanying action plan.

The support of UNICEF strengthened coordination between and increased ownership by ministries of education, other government stakeholders and sector partners in the following countries as well.

- Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mozambique, the Pacific Islands and Zambia undertook national pre-primary subsector diagnostic workshops to identify key priorities in the context of broader development or revision of sector plans and strategies.
- Turkmenistan’s Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and Economy, and State Statistics Committee jointly developed an investment plan for introducing one year of quality pre-primary education for all 5-year-olds. The plan was complemented by relevant cost–benefit analysis and included equity-based options and models to be initiated in the most disadvantaged regions in the next year.
Effective governance for early childhood education

The complexity of the ECE provision landscape and the devolution of responsibilities and accountabilities in decentralized systems necessitate an effective regulatory and quality assurance system, and well-coordinated planning and actions across the different levels of the subsector. Activities by UNICEF in 2019 highlight the importance of articulating clear and consistent quality standards and strengthening quality assurance and information systems to monitor and improve the quality of ECE, including early identification and interventions. Efforts by UNICEF led to an increase in the proportion of countries with effective governance for ECE from 45 per cent in 2018 to 54 per cent in 2019 (see Annex 2).

In Lebanon, UNICEF led a participatory exercise in collaboration with the Higher Council for Childhood, the Université de Saint Joseph and 69 early childhood facilities, to contextualize international ECE and develop minimum standards to account for the influx of Palestinian refugees in the country. In a first group of 17 facilities, improvements were seen in the physical environment, pedagogy, staff competencies and supervision, child protection, and inclusion of children with developmental and learning difficulties and disabilities.

In Jordan, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to create a licensing system to regulate the provision of kindergartens through the revision of by-laws, regulations and standards. UNICEF also contributed to the development of assessment tools and guidelines for achieving learning standards in kindergarten.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF collaborated with the World Bank to finalize pre-primary (O-class) quality standards under the General Education Quality Improvement Programme. UNICEF will support quality assurance efforts by the Regional Education Bureau, benefiting more than 2 million children enrolled in the pre-primary O-class programme.

Teaching and learning environment of early childhood education

Without adequate safeguards to ensure that the most vulnerable children are given priority access to quality ECE, expansion efforts can have the adverse effect of intensifying education inequities. In 2019, UNICEF worked to support governments in strengthening the capacity of their pre-primary systems to provide quality teaching.
and learning environments for the most vulnerable young children. This included development and implementation of developmentally appropriate curricula and teaching and learning materials, supporting teacher development initiatives and strategies, and solidifying the connections with families and communities to support children’s learning at home. The proportion of countries reporting effective teaching and learning environments increased from 52 per cent in 2018 to 64 per cent in 2019. (see Annex 2)

In India, UNICEF provided technical assistance to design an e-learning course on developmentally appropriate ECE curricula. Half a million of India’s ‘Anganwadi’ (rural childcare centre) workers and approximately 8,000 (60 per cent women) state-level and district-level resource group members (Anganwadi workers’ professional development trainers) across Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal states were trained through the course. In Maharashtra and Rajasthan, 5,000 Anganwadi workers provided counselling to more than 100,000 parents to support children learning at home.

In China, UNICEF promoted equity and quality of ECE services targeting specific needs of poor rural and urban districts through teacher training and materials. In collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, UNICEF continued piloting a new teacher professional development system in Guizhou and Shandong provinces, expanding its focus on specific needs of migrant children and large ethnic minority populations. A total of 21 new kindergartens in Shandong’s Linyi prefecture participated in the pilot.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, the National School-Based Continuous Professional Development Framework was approved, harmonizing in-service teacher training across the country. With support from coordinating partners DFID and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and UNICEF, national pre-primary and primary in-service training modules were distributed to pre-primary and Standard 1 and 2 teachers in over 17,000 schools.

Service delivery for early childhood education

Governments build on system strengthening efforts by UNICEF to increase access to pre-primary education opportunities and to explore models of service delivery to reach the most vulnerable children, including children living in conflict and emergency settings. A focus will be continuous advocacy for the inclusion of ECE in humanitarian appeals and emergency plans.

In Armenia, UNICEF supported a cost–benefit analysis of a preschool model for small rural communities, which included recommendations for replication of the model in other communities. The EU delegation to Armenia is planning to include a component on the expansion of alternative preschool services in the EU4Citizens project with the United Nations. Funding of nearly EUR1.2 million is expected under this project to establish 35 inclusive preschool services in remote rural communities during 2019–2021.

In Turkey, UNICEF provided 39 container classrooms, furniture and learning materials, which will serve approximately 3,900 children every year. UNICEF also partnered with the Development Foundation of Turkey, Kilis and Yüreğir municipality to expand community- and home-based ECE programmes in marginalized communities, reaching over 23,000 children.

In Afghanistan, almost 5,000 classes at community-based schools, accelerated learning centres and early childhood development centres were maintained, enabling over 130,000 children (51 per cent girls) to gain access to quality ECE. UNICEF supported the training of 3,785 preschool teachers.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF assisted 18,514 children (9,067 girls) in refugee and host communities and 33,890 internally displaced persons (16,867 girls) to access ECE programmes. This included support for enrolment of children through the summer Accelerated School Readiness programme, the Child-to-Child approach to school readiness, and through O-classes (pre-primary).

Spotlight on thematic funds: Starting early to reduce inequities

In Côte d’Ivoire, 86 per cent of the nearly 2.2 million children aged three to five years miss the opportunity to build essential skills for future learning and development in pre-primary school. Thematic funds were used to support the establishment of community preschool centres. These centres were a platform for early childhood development services as well as for social interaction to rebuild trust between communities while empowering mothers whose children were attending preschool to break gender stereotypes.

This integrated approach generated great interest and is currently being scaled up by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the World Bank and GPE, with 117 centres, reaching 6,000 children a year. UNICEF is providing direct oversight and technical support through the expansion phase.
Quality teaching and learning

Quality learning requires quality teaching. UNICEF has focused on providing teachers with the tools and training they need to work effectively, including in emergency situations. UNICEF supports system-wide approaches with the potential to achieve rapid, deep improvements in learning for the most vulnerable children, such as multilingual or mother tongue teaching. Teaching at the Right Level, improving time on task and structured support such as the use of scripted lessons. UNICEF’s Office of Research is one of its key resources to ensure that all such initiatives are informed by a strong evidence base (see Box below).

A teacher reviews children’s work at the playground of the Juba Christian Centre (JCC) in Juba, South Sudan.

Highlights from the Office of Research – Innocenti, 2019

The UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti has aligned its education programme and vision with the UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030: ‘Every child learns’. It emphasizes collaboration with governments and implementing partners from the design stage to maximize the use of research at the country level. Broad research themes include: (1) education systems and policies; (2) local service delivery; and (3) research on innovation and implementation that bridges the ‘know–do’ gap, and the gap between the school and system levels.

Key achievements in 2019 include:

The ‘Time to Teach’ study of teacher attendance and time on task in Eastern and Southern Africa. The main causes of teacher absenteeism are health, weather and family obligations. Other issues that reduce time on task include inconsistent payment of teachers, limited capacity of head teachers and communities to monitor absenteeism, a lack of learning materials, a lack of transportation, and insecurity. The study recommended training head teachers in proper management, training the community to hold teachers accountable, timely payment of teachers and intersectoral collaboration to address health issues.

A literature review of child-focused Sport for Development (S4D) programmes, conducted in partnership with Barça Foundation. Play is the right of every child, and the Getting into the Game report found that well-designed S4D initiatives can promote equitable outcomes through a balance of sport and social development, when children ‘come for the sport, but stay for the support’. These programmes help keep children in school, keep them safe and included, develop skills and empower them for success in other aspects of learning. Well-designed programmes promote non-violence and equal access for all children regardless of social standing, wealth or skill level. Quality training and clear standards for coaches and trainers are also critical.

A study of the digital language learning platform, Akelius, was conducted jointly with the Akelius Foundation, UNICEF Sweden, headquarters and country offices. Research was designed to understand the impact of the Akelius digital language learning platform on refugees and other marginalized children in Greece, Lebanon and Mauritania. Preliminary results from Greece show that the platform’s positive impact on children’s learning can be attributed to design features that allow children to learn at their own pace.
Curricula and learning materials

Learning materials have the power to shape the way children interact with the world; when they are adapted to the needs of the most marginalized learners, all children can benefit. In 2019, UNICEF spent US$103 million on learning materials (see Figure 6), reaching over 12 million children (4.3 million in emergencies) with books, school kits and other learning materials. Since 2016, UNICEF has provided learning materials to 51.6 million children, below the ambitious 2019 target of 62 million.

UNICEF Egypt continued supporting the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Framework by training 35 curriculum development experts on ways to integrate life skills into learning outcomes. New curricula were rolled out nationwide, reaching 6 million pupils from pre-primary to Grade 2 of primary.

In Montenegro, UNICEF and national partners received the global Zero Project 2020 Award for innovation by piloting a digital audiovisual textbook which enables access to quality teaching and learning materials for children with disabilities within mainstream education. Montenegro also participated in a subregional pilot project to support children with severe communication difficulties through digital technologies.

In Kenya, UNICEF engaged with private and public stakeholders, including all mobile network operators in the country, to support the Ministry of Education in improving learning outcomes and transition rates to secondary school. Accessible digital textbooks were developed to improve learning for 55,000 disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities. After approval by the Ministry, the open education resources and digital textbooks will be distributed to all schools in Kenya, with UNICEF ensuring they reach the most disadvantaged counties and communities.

Provision in emergencies

UNICEF provides learning and recreational materials to facilitate learning and promote play for children in emergency contexts. In Iraq, educational supplies were delivered for over 272,000 children (45 per cent girls). In the Sudan, 437,843 children (48 per cent girls) received education-in-emergency supplies and recreational materials. In the Niger, UNICEF-supported programmes provided individual education/early learning materials to 201,431 children (five times the annual target), of whom 51,431 were in humanitarian contexts.

Voices from the field

Education Officer Iman S. Abdullah is in charge of planning and monitoring education programmes in six provinces in Iraq, including Baghdad. During an emergency, the priority is to bring people’s lives back to normal, she says. “Education is the start of a normal life for both children and families.”

Schools protect children in emergencies from the physical dangers around them. They provide food, water and medical and hygiene supplies, and they offer support, giving children stability and structure to help them cope with the trauma they experience every day. Parents and children affected by crisis consistently cite education as a priority.

“Visiting schools and seeing children sitting at desks once again, or playing on the playground, is one of the most enjoyable parts of my job. In those moments, I feel proud to be part of the UNICEF family, working to fulfil the rights of all children to an education.”
Innovation focus: Alternative learning pathways in Mexico

Mexico's national primary school enrolment rate is 99 per cent. At the lower secondary level, it drops to 84 per cent, and in upper secondary to 64 per cent\(^1\), with the wave of increasing violence in the country a key driver of adolescent dropout. In response, UNICEF Mexico launched the project Communities in Harmony for Children and Adolescents with the aim of keeping adolescents learning and safe. The programme’s innovative teaching methodologies blend in-person and online learning to improve learning and prevent dropout. The programme incorporates two areas related to child protection: training for teachers and child protection authorities on prevention and referral of cases of violence, and creation of safe spaces for adolescents in schools in the community.

UNICEF Mexico delivered tablets to secondary school students in two states with some of the largest numbers of out-of-school adolescents. Teachers were trained to blend traditional face-to-face teaching with use of technology. Audiovisual materials loaded on the platform allow teachers to plan lectures, assign tasks, monitor individual progress and offer targeted help. The pilot programme has reached 4,500 adolescents (2,250 girls) and 247 teachers. To address identified challenges, including poor Internet connectivity, offline versions of the software will be tested. A midterm evaluation revealed modest increases in learning, indicating the potential for an alternative learning pathway for out-of-school adolescents.

Teacher development

Investing in teachers is fundamental to improving educational opportunities and the quality of learning outcomes for all children. UNICEF continues to engage and support countries through investments in teacher training and development and invests an annual average of US$50 million on teacher development (see Figure 10). These efforts are expected to contribute to better learning outcomes and life opportunities for children, while also benefiting disadvantaged children, communities and populations by helping to attract and retain qualified teachers in poor and remote areas.

The proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with effective teacher development systems that incorporate incentive schemes for pro-equity deployment of teachers, accountability mechanisms and national school leadership increased from 35 per cent in 2018 to 44 per cent in 2019 (see Figure 11). There was continued progress in the share of countries providing support to school leadership, which increased from 45 per cent in 2018 to 52 per cent in 2019. The share of countries with systems to attract and deploy teachers to rural or deprived areas increased from 23 per cent in 2018 to 31 per cent in 2019, as did the share of countries providing professional development opportunities to teachers, up from 39 per cent to 53 per cent. The share of countries with systems to monitor teacher performance and absenteeism (accountability) increased from 29 per cent in 2018 to 34 per cent in 2019. (see Annex 2)

In the Sudan, UNICEF supported in-service training delivery by the Ministry of Education to more than 11,000 primary school teachers (55 per cent women). Additional funds received from KfW, the EU, emergency resources and the thematic fund made it possible to far exceed the annual target of 6,000 teachers. After the training manual had been revised to include learner-centred approaches, 30 trainers of trainers were equipped to deliver the new content. UNICEF also provided 1,000 sign language dictionaries for hearing-impaired children and supported capacity-building in use of the dictionary.

In the Central African Republic, UNICEF supported preparation of the Ministry of Education’s proposal to accelerate 20 per cent of the GPE grant of US$31 million. UNICEF also conducted strong policy dialogue and advocacy on critical issues related to teacher deployment and payment. Support was given for supervising and monitoring trainee teachers. In much of the country, the
absence of banking services affects the ability to pay teachers. UNICEF, as managing agency for the GPE grant, helped ensure monthly payments to 1,500 trainee teachers, while continuing efforts to find a more sustainable method to pay all teachers through official mechanisms.

In Myanmar, UNICEF continued its support for in-service teacher education. In 2019, 1,548 teachers (1,078 women) completed school-based in-service teacher education in six remote townships in Chin, Kachin and Rakhine states, and another 13,290 teachers began a new cycle of this teacher education in 15 townships, facilitated by 3,245 resource teachers and 153 township-level resource persons. Child-Friendly School teacher training was delivered to 2,078 primary teachers (962 women) and 648 volunteer teachers in Rakhine. Over 7,000 head teachers were trained.

In Barbados, UNICEF supported training for 2,400 teachers and principals in eight counties and four territories in mainstreaming principles of child-centred rights-based education, reaching 38,000 students. Support for student participation and leadership focused on positive relationships and reducing violence in schools. Based on an assessment in early 2019, key aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and rights-based education were integrated into the University of West Indies teacher education programme. This assessment will also contribute to wider efforts with the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Commission to strengthen pedagogy in teacher colleges, building on a 2019 white paper on teacher education.

In Chad, UNICEF supported payment of government subsidies for 1,269 community and contract teachers in seven provinces, which enabled the enrolment of around 72,000 primary school pupils (30,900 girls), including 15,285 out-of-school children (6,405 girls), surpassing the 2019 target by 53 per cent. This resulted in reduced costs for more than 720 parents’ associations in rural areas, the return to work of community teachers, an increase in school enrolment capacity, and reduced classroom overcrowding. Some schools are now able to offer a full primary cycle.

Spotlight on thematic funds: Teacher incentives

Thematic funding has played an important role in building evidence and data systems that add value to the work of UNICEF, government and partners in South Sudan. In 2019, UNICEF supported the assessment and funding of teacher incentives, a critical element to ensure the continuity of education services. Based on the assessment, 734 volunteer teachers (190 women) in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Warrap states benefited from incentives that have improved teachers’ motivation and attendance in target schools.

Mother tongue/multilingual education

From an equity perspective, multilingual education programmes are a cost-effective way to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn. Language barriers create avoidable bottlenecks to quality schooling. In 2019, UNICEF provided US$9.3 million for mother tongue/multilingual education, a slight decrease from US$11 million in 2018 but well above the previous benchmark of US$5.3 million in 2017. This expenditure went to system strengthening activities such as policy reform, teacher training, and access to developmentally, culturally and linguistically appropriate learning materials.
In 2019, there was a slight increase in the share of countries with effective mother tongue/multilingual education to 53 per cent from 52 per cent in 2018, but this is still a slight decrease from 54 per cent in 2017 (see Figure 11). While there was an increase in the share of countries with a conducive policy environment from 65 per cent to 69 per cent in 2019, and in the share of countries working on human and material resources from 43 per cent to 51 per cent in 2019, the share of countries working with community engagement dropped to 62 per cent in 2019 from 66 per cent in 2018 (see Annex 2).

UNICEF supported the governments of Cambodia and Myanmar in reaching a greater number of students from a range of ethno-cultural backgrounds. A 2015–2018 programme targeting over 100,000 speakers of five Cambodian languages was evaluated and found to have had a positive impact. This paved the way for the addition of another indigenous language within the 2019–2023 plan. UNICEF Myanmar supported the development of a set of 10 bilingual early learning storybooks in 25 ethnic languages, improving access to learning for 415,000 young children aged three to five years. Support was also extended for the development of materials for the local primary school curriculum in Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin and Mon states, benefiting over 20,000 children.

An evaluation of a bilingual literacy and numeracy programme piloted in the Eastern Cape of South Africa showed a dramatic increase in average Grade 3 scores in isiXhosa literacy from 12 per cent to 33 per cent. The Magic Classroom Collective – so named by the community because of the miracle of watching children read in their home language – ensures teaching is engaging and fully grounded in its local context. UNICEF South Africa supported the Department of Basic Education’s scale-up of the programme as well as a coaching course on early-grade reading.

UNICEF Senegal supported the formulation of a draft policy framework on bilingual education promoting the use of mother tongue in accelerated learning programmes for children aged 9–15 years who lacked primary school education. The revised curriculum integrates life skills, including entrepreneurship. The approach will be further scaled up in 2020 through partnerships with USAID, the International Organization of La Francophonie, and the World Bank.

In Peru, equitable access to secondary education was the focus of work by UNICEF in 2019. With the aim of improving learning outcomes and reducing the urban–rural gap, UNICEF supported the creation of technical round tables for developing new policies for intercultural bilingual education, guaranteeing the right of indigenous children to learn in their own language. The intercultural bilingual education model was designed and field-tested in three regions – Huancavelica, Loreto and Ucayali – with technical support from UNICEF. This is a groundbreaking approach in keeping with recommendations from language and literacy experts, who generally recommend delaying the transition in instruction from a local language to an international language until children have a solid literacy foundation (late-exit bilingual education).

### Learning assessment systems

Helping countries build effective learning assessment systems is a key strategic shift under the new UNICEF Education Strategy. UNICEF works with ministries of education around the world to tailor the approach to country need and capacity. Classroom assessments help teachers to differentiate their teaching based on the achievement levels of individual students. National examinations can be used to reveal and address inequities across different geographical regions or ethnic or socioeconomic groupings. Participation in large-scale assessments will provide baseline comparisons to help decision makers seeking to improve the overall quality of learning. The goal is to ensure that these assessments provide disaggregated data to inform the design of measures to improve learning outcomes for all children.

In 2019, UNICEF invested US$19.2 million in learning assessment activities, up from US$10 million in 2018 and US$10.6 million in 2017 (see Figure 6) – demonstrating a rapidly growing emphasis on strengthening systems for learning assessment.

The proportion of countries reporting well-functioning student learning assessment systems has been stagnant since 2017 (57 per cent) (see Figure 11). There has, however, been a steady increase in the proportion of countries in 2019 with good assessments at the classroom level.
level, up from 47 per cent in 2018 to 53 per cent, and at national level, up from 59 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent. The share of countries with good-quality examination systems declined slightly, from 63 per cent in 2018 to 62 per cent in 2019, marking a continuing decline from a high of 68 per cent in 2017 (see Annex 2).

UNICEF conducts its own assessments of learning as part of the Foundational Learning Skills module of the global Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) programme. MICS provides an assessment of basic reading and numeracy skills of 7- to 14-year-olds in their homes, so as to include the learning levels of out-of-school children. It enables more reliable equity analysis and the identification of factors (e.g., stronger parental engagement) that are associated with an increase in basic skills, based on household background information and other data.

Classroom assessment
In Tajikistan, UNICEF supported the finalization of a child assessment tool for monitoring early learning outcomes, while in Afghanistan and Ethiopia, UNICEF provided training to teachers on conducting classroom-based continuous assessments to improve learning outcomes.

Examinations
In India, school-based learning assessments were enhanced to promote twenty-first century skills and grade-appropriate learning outcomes. Nine states have established learning assessment cells, which will contribute to improved learning outcomes for approximately 44 million children (51 per cent girls).

National large-scale assessment
In Iraq, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to complete the first national learning assessment, undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the federal region and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and focusing on mathematics and sciences. An analytical report is under preparation and will guide improvements to the education system in 2020 and beyond. As a result of the full engagement of the Ministry of Education, the process has been institutionalized: a core team with full capacity now exists in the Ministry to lead and manage similar assessments in the future.

Assessment of learning in emergencies
In times of crisis, children often miss the opportunity to participate in mandatory national examinations, preventing them from completing crucial steps in their educational journey to continue to the next level or grade. In Yemen, UNICEF supported 564,809 children (259,812 girls) to sit their exams. In Jordan, UNICEF provided supervised transport from camps to test sites for students sitting the Grade 12 examination, providing stationery and facilitating the required administrative documents. In Somalia, almost 12,000 children were helped to participate in end-of-primary examinations.
Case Study 4: Southeast Asia: Generating comparative data to support learning policies and practices

The UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office supports the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) programme. SEA-PLM aims to achieve three key outcomes: (1) enhanced capacity to generate and analyse assessment data at regional, national and subnational levels; (2) enhanced capacity to use assessment data to improve education and achieve more equitable learning outcomes at regional, national and subnational levels; and (3) enhanced integration of Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries in terms of approaches to assessment.

Regional collaboration is assured by a steering committee of ministries of education in the region, which is co-chaired by the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization and UNICEF. The countries maintain ownership of the programme through this partnership, and collaboration is encouraged on key issues affecting education in the region. Technical processes, including methodology, instrument development and quality control, are produced through a participatory method that engages countries and external assessment experts.

The programme aims to build a regional cadre of experts in test development, sampling, scaling and test administration standards. The cost to each participating country is approximately US$100,000 per year for five years. In 2019, a representative sample of 30,000 Grade 5 students from the six participating countries took part in the main survey. These surveys will continue on a cyclical basis at least until 2030. The 2019 report will be launched in December 2020, providing regional and national disaggregated results.

Group work helps students to learn from each other. This is one of the techniques teachers are being taught by pedagogical advisors to improve quality education at Phonkeo Primary School, Saravane Province, Lao People’s Democratic Republic.
Community participation

Community engagement plays an important role in improving the delivery of education at the school level, with community members having the chance to participate through parent–teacher associations or other local mechanisms. However, for community participation to positively impact learning, parents must have access to information; a mechanism for equal participation of all community members must be in place; and information must be available in a format and language that community members can understand.

UNICEF provides system-level support in the form of development of policies, guidelines, regulatory frameworks, training materials and feedback to communities, as well as through direct service delivery to targeted communities and schools. The overall aim is to support provision of community-based education where relevant, and to improve the effectiveness of school management committees or other community-based associations such as parent–teacher and mothers’ associations through appropriate training and by sharing data and evidence.

The amount of spending in this area and the proportion of countries reporting programming on community engagement in education both increased in 2019. UNICEF expenditure on community participation reached US$53 million, twice as much as in 2018 (US$26 million). Of this, 44 per cent was spent on system strengthening interventions, while 56 per cent supported service-delivery (see Figure 10).

Fifty-six per cent of UNICEF-supported countries report effective community participation in education. Each of the three subdimensions of the indicator – community involvement, accountability to communities, and community and student participation – showed increases (see Annex 2).

Data Must Speak: System-level support for informed community participation in school management

The UNICEF Data Must Speak Programme, co-funded by GPE, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and thematic funding, provides technical support and capacity-strengthening to ministries of education and school communities for more effective and transparent data use. The programme provides communities with reliable information about the resourcing and performance of their school relative to other schools, with the goal of improving equity and learning.

UNICEF has helped ministries of education make community-friendly school profiles widely available and understood. This has been done in part by using C4D to enhance social accountability and increase demand for schooling.

Chad and the Niger joined Data Must Speak in 2019; four more countries are expected to join shortly. The UNICEF Madagascar Country Office used Data Must Speak to support two other programmes: Transparency, Accountability and Community Action for Education in Madagascar; and TAFITA, a project to support participatory management of schools. These programmes are funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), respectively. In Zambia, profile cards were also developed for use by provincial inspectorates; the school profiles
Data Must Speak – Evaluation for better community participation

After the January 2019 UNICEF evaluation of innovation, UNICEF released a case study on Data Must Speak. The evaluation found that the programme improved equity and accountability, in part by generating knowledge about the mechanisms by which parental and community involvement have an impact on school management.

A formative evaluation of Data Must Speak recommended that:

- School profile cards should track learning and include indicators that target school-level decision-making.
- School performance should be evaluated based on minimum standards rather than simple comparison with other schools.
- Independent training of community members on the use of the school scorecards should be considered as an alternative to training by district or school officials.
- Profile cards should show trends over time to better support inputs into decision-making by school leaders and community members.

Zambia evaluation findings. Randomly selected community members in Zambia with children of primary school age were given training in the use of community-friendly profile cards. The evaluation used a control group of communities where the profile cards were distributed but no training was offered. The evaluation found that parents in the intervention group were significantly more knowledgeable about the school and better informed about the school’s resource constraints than the parents in the control group. An important finding, however, was that access to better information has not automatically given communities a greater voice in terms of decision-making. The evaluation noted the need for much more critical attention to underlying political structures that create little incentive for managers to be held accountable by communities.

Gender equality in learning outcomes

The share of UNICEF-supported countries with good gender-responsive teaching and learning systems increased from 31 per cent in 2018 to 40 per cent in 2019, well above the target of 18 per cent (see Figure 13). Notable progress was made in the Europe and Central Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa and South Asia regions. Acceleration is needed in Middle East and Northern Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, where the share of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive teaching and learning systems is only 9 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.
Despite gains over the last two years, learning continues to be a challenge, and very low levels of completion for both girls and boys from the poorest families persist. Figure 14 shows that most low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa display continuing gender disparities, usually in favour of boys. In Liberia, there is gender parity in primary school completion rates for the poorest children, but this is hardly a success given that only 1 in 10 girls and 1 in 10 boys in poor communities complete primary education.

In some low-income countries, the national gender parity index masks severe inequities for the poorest girls. For example, in Mozambique, the overall primary school completion rate for boys is 44 per cent, while for girls it is 39 per cent (gender parity index = 0.901). But for the poorest group, primary completion is 21 per cent for boys and only 5 per cent for girls (gender parity index = 0.237).

As children move towards lower secondary education (see Figure 15), in most low-income countries with data, the poorest girls have the lowest completion rates, and the gender gap widens.
UNICEF invests in strengthening the gender-responsiveness of education sector plans, strengthening strategic partnerships with UNESCO, the World Bank, the G7, research institutions and private sector partners to accelerate actions, and designing cross-sectoral interventions to address the interlinked problems that girls face and the rigid social norms that underpin them.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF support resulted in gender-responsive teaching methodologies and learning materials. Revisions by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh resulted in a comprehensive curriculum framework that incorporates teaching and learning around life skills, child safety, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, gender equality and climate change.

UNICEF Myanmar has supported efforts to make the alternative education curriculum more gender-responsive, including the addition of age-appropriate sessions on reproductive health. Adolescents meet and discuss their needs and challenges in schools, including stereotypes perpetuated in the classroom. This programme aims to help children remain in school and complete their education.

Summary

An increasing number of UNICEF-supported countries have effective education systems for improved learning outcomes. The most significant improvements have been in teacher development, early learning and community participation.

Fifty-eight per cent of countries now report effective ECE systems, up from 44 per cent in 2018. However, there are some glaring deficiencies. For instance, the children who need ECE the most are the least likely to have access to it. UNICEF expenditure on ECE was lower in 2019 than in 2018.

In terms of quality teaching and learning, successes have been achieved through mother tongue literacy programmes, teacher development and use of digital curriculum materials. Significant challenges remain in providing reliable Internet connectivity, ensuring regular payment of all teachers and transitioning from traditional to child-centred instruction.

Community participation has improved, and more communities are engaged in monitoring, holding schools accountable and participating in meaningful inputs to their children’s education. The Data Must Speak model is a promising approach to further improve the availability of information at the school and community levels.

There has been progress in gender equality in learning outcomes, and 40 per cent of countries now report gender-responsive teaching and learning. But progress is uneven, and many countries show enormous differences in the impact of gender on learning from one region to another.
Children with disabilities, their parents and disability rights activists joined UNICEF in a Makani centre in Zarqa, Jordan, supported by UNICEF and run by the Ministry of Social Development. UNICEF Jordan is organizing community events through their network of Makani centres in Jordan to raise awareness of the rights of children with disabilities and create community-led solutions to overcome the barriers they face in accessing quality education.
Result Area 3: Skills development

In the midst of a constantly and rapidly evolving global landscape, all children and adolescents need access to quality education and learning that develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, and makes them successful lifelong learners who can: learn, un-learn and relearn; find and retain productive work; make wise decisions; and positively engage in their communities.

Around 258 million children and adolescents remain out of school or do not have access to quality learning opportunities. Furthermore, education and learning systems worldwide are constrained in delivering positive outcomes for children and adolescents and remain mostly focused on the acquisition of knowledge, which is not sufficient to prepare them to meet challenges and seize opportunities.

There is an urgent need to expand, rethink and transform education and learning systems to provide all children and adolescents, especially those who are marginalized or in conflict or emergency settings, with quality learning opportunities that include the skills they need to succeed in school, work and life.

Globally, 25 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds (37 per cent of girls and young women and 14 per cent of boys and young men) were not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the end of 2019. This reflects an improvement from 24 per cent overall in 2018. However, the percentage for girls and women remains more than double that of boys and men, which indicates the overall disadvantage for women to participate in the labour market, due to gendered roles and discrimination.

UNICEF country offices encourage a multiple-pathway approach to education and training which assumes that skills development can take place at different times, in various settings and contexts, and through various providers throughout the life course (see Figure 16). A high-quality multiple-pathway approach meets the needs of learners and promotes equity and inclusiveness by offering more opportunities to reconcile social norms and expectations, home duties, work and learning prospects. This is particularly the case for working children, young mothers, refugees and displaced people. Having more alternatives for education and training also improves the chances of success in training/employment transitions for youth with disabilities. A multiple-pathway approach also becomes critical in situations of conflict and crisis to promote equal access to skills development opportunities for marginalized groups.

Skills needed for success at school, work and life:

- Foundational skills: Literacy and numeracy – skills that are needed regardless of employment aspirations, and essential for further learning, productive employment and civic engagement
- Transferable skills: Also called life skills or twenty-first century skills – skills that allow young people to become agile and adaptive learners and citizens equipped to navigate personal, social, academic and economic challenges, such as problem-solving, negotiation, empathy, communication and participation skills
- Job-specific skills: Also called technical and vocational – skills associated with one or more occupations, such as carpentry, computer programming, accounting or engineering
- Digital skills: Skills that allow young people to participate positively, safely and effectively in using the web and other forms of media, and to make use of opportunities offered by technology
FIGURE 16: Multiple pathways for skills development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age Range (years)</th>
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<td><strong>Academic Outcome</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FORMAL EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td>Early Childhood Education, Primary, Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary (includes TVET), Tertiary Education (includes TVET)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NON-FORMAL EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td>Early Childhood Education, Accelerated Learning Programmes, Flexible Learning Programmes, Catch-Up and Remedial Programmes, Community-based Education</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT</strong></td>
<td>Volunteering, Participation, Civic Engagement, Active Citizenship, Service Learning, Sports for Development, Peacebuilding Programmes, Creative Arts Programmes, Innovation Programmes</td>
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<td><strong>CHILD PROTECTION AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION</strong></td>
<td>Child-Centred Safe Spaces, Child Protection Centres</td>
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<td><strong>GIRL EMPOWERMENT</strong></td>
<td>Ending Child Marriage Programmes, School-Related Gender-Based Violence Programmes</td>
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<td><strong>OTHERS</strong></td>
<td>Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programmes, Nutrition Programmes, Health Programmes, Early Childhood Development Programmes</td>
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During a monitoring visit, Ahmed Abbadi, UNICEF Education Consultant, ensures children are able to use their tablets properly at the UNICEF-supported Debate e-Learning Centre in a village on the outskirts of Kassala, in eastern Sudan.
Within this understanding, Result Area 1 (equitable access) and Result Area 2 (learning outcomes) under Goal 2 of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, are mutually supportive, and skills development also contributes to results reported in the UNICEF Annual Results Reports 2019 for Goal Areas 1, 3, 4 and 5, and to cross-cutting areas such as gender.

UNICEF is working with governments and partners to embed skills development within education and training systems from early childhood onwards, across all levels of education. Effective skills development requires the alignment of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Achieving this for all children involves the systematic strengthening of teaching and learning through multiple pathways, as well as of the broader enabling environment that supports skills development.

**FIGURE 17: Results chain for skills development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPENDING IN MILLIONS OF US$</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skills provision</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1 million children participated in skills development programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills development within national education/training system</td>
<td>75% of 15- to 24-year-olds are either in employment, education or training</td>
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<td>Life skills development (for personal empowerment, active citizenship, etc.)</td>
<td>23% of countries have systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to the labour market and gender-equitable skills development</td>
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Total spending for **SKILLS** is 66 million of which

- 68% (45) service delivery
- 32% (21) system strengthening
- 82% (54) was focused on gender
- 82% (54) was focused on adolescents
- 48% (31) was focused on humanitarian

Figure 17 outlines how UNICEF spent US$66 million on skills development across different thematic areas and activity types in 2019. Of this, 68 per cent (US$45 million) was spent on service delivery activities, such as provision of skills development for more than 4 million children and youth. A total of 9.4 million children and youth have received such skills development programmes since 2016.

Sixty per cent of all children and youth reached in 2019 were girls, and 21 per cent were in humanitarian situations.

The remaining 32 per cent (US$21 million) of UNICEF spending on skills development was spent on systems-strengthening activities such as mainstreaming skills development within national education and training policies and curricula.
Figure 18 outlines progress in the proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability. The share of UNICEF-supported countries with systems institutionalizing gender-equitable skills for learning significantly increased to 23 per cent, up from 16 per cent in 2018. There was a notable improvement in the quality and effectiveness of programming, including an increase from 24 per cent to 32 per cent in the share of UNICEF-supported countries with systems that mainstream skills development. The proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with systems that are responsive to the demands of the labour market and can enhance effective transitions from school to work increased from 15 per cent to 23 per cent.

Progress is most advanced in Eastern and Southern Africa, where the proportion of countries with systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills increased from 18 per cent in 2018 to 40 per cent in 2019. There is room for improvement in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and West and Central Africa regions, where only 13 per cent, 14 per cent and 6 per cent of countries, respectively, have systems that institutionalize gender-equitable skills development.
In Viet Nam, through support from UNICEF, UNESCO and UNFPA, sexual and reproductive health education was incorporated into the newly approved national school curriculum from preschool to secondary. The curriculum includes substantial content on gender, power dynamics and human rights.

With partners, UNICEF supported training of 116,416 adolescents (42,602 girls) in Pakistan, using a life skills toolkit with messages on adolescents’ rights to protection, including minimum age of marriage, education and freedom of expression.

In Cambodia, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to expand its life skills programme to 83 lower secondary schools which provide life skills education for 32,771 students (17,349 girls) and 66 schools that are implementing entrepreneurship education for 21,416 students (10,854 girls).

With financial support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, UNICEF supported the development and implementation of a comprehensive model for adolescent leadership and empowerment in Guinea-Bissau. During 2019, a total of 1,187 adolescents aged 12–16 years (50 per cent girls) in 30 communities in Cacheu and Gabu regions benefited from a six-month training programme aimed at building their capacities in peacebuilding and life skills.
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In Cambodia, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to expand its life skills programme to 83 lower secondary schools which provide life skills education for 32,771 students (17,349 girls) and 66 schools that are implementing entrepreneurship education for 21,416 students (10,854 girls).

With partners, UNICEF supported training of 116,416 adolescents (42,602 girls) in Pakistan, using a life skills toolkit with messages on adolescents’ rights to protection, including minimum age of marriage, education and freedom of expression.

The Youth Innovation Lab in Montenegro, supported by UNICEF, has been providing opportunities for young people, particularly the most marginalized, to acquire twenty-first century and entrepreneurial skills. Since 2016, the initiatives have reached 40,000 beneficiaries (65 per cent girls) directly or indirectly.
Generation Unlimited

Generation Unlimited (GenU) is a global multisector partnership launched by UNICEF to meet the urgent need for expanded education, skills development, employment and engagement opportunities for young people aged 10–24. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, articulates ambitious results for adolescents across the five goal areas. Education for adolescents, skills for personal empowerment, learning, employability and civic engagement, as well as adolescent empowerment, are key results for UNICEF to deliver within the Strategic Plan. As such, GenU provides an opportunity for UNICEF to accelerate and scale up results and also establish links and bridges across the symbolic age line of 18 and connect with those who can facilitate the entry of young people into productive adult life.

In 2019, UNICEF continued to support country offices as they drive forward GenU activities in over 20 front-runner countries. In Bangladesh, GenU was launched under government leadership with BRAC, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank and private sector partners. The target is to reach at least 7.3 million young people with education, skills development and employment opportunities, and create 1 million apprenticeships by 2030. In Kenya, under the leadership of President Kenyatta, UNICEF is supporting GenU in designing investment opportunities for private and public partners and helping establish stronger links between employers and the education system. In India, with strong leadership from UNICEF, GenU was launched under the name YuWaah to build pathways for economic opportunities for 100 million young people, facilitate 200 million young people to develop relevant skills for the future of work, and equip more than 300 million young people to become catalysts of societal change.

Skills development in early childhood education

Essential cognitive, social and emotional skills developed in early childhood constitute the foundation of more complex skills. Education during this critical period also helps spur the development of skills demanded in the modern job market as well as positive behaviours and dispositions, including creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, openness and resilience. Participation in quality pre-primary education has long-term benefits, such as improved health outcomes, labour force productivity and increased future earning potential. Skills development from the early years can thus help children become productive citizens and break intergenerational cycles of inequity.

In Viet Nam, as of September 2019, 4.6 million preschool children are benefiting from a curriculum that promotes social and emotional skills. Children also learn how to navigate gender inequality by interacting with each other. Teaching and learning materials support an empowering and inclusive learning environment.
Skills development in primary and lower secondary education

At the primary and lower secondary levels of education, children and adolescents develop the foundational transferable skills needed to enable them to become lifelong learners and to access future work opportunities. As connectivity improves, digital skills are increasingly needed to enable children to navigate the digital world safely.

UNICEF has provided technical support to integrate updated life skills education into curricular frameworks, teacher training and assessment in both formal and non-formal education, including for 3,000 primary schools in Kenya, 83 lower secondary schools and 66 entrepreneurship education schools in Cambodia, and, in Egypt, for 6 million pupils in pre-primary through Grade 2 (Grade 3 expected in September 2020).

Comprehensive support by UNICEF of accelerated education in Uganda enables delivery of life skills and citizenship education to out-of-school adolescents. For those who do not proceed to formal post-primary education, system strengthening enables and builds the district local government’s capacity to refer adolescents to appropriate learning or work opportunities. In all, 20,955 out-of-school adolescents (11,106 adolescent girls) completed accelerated learning, life skills and vocational training. Through participation in school clubs, 43,855 adolescents (26,313 adolescent girls) gained knowledge and life skills and citizenship education. Furthermore, life skills and citizenship education has been introduced in school plans in Northern, Eastern and Western regions. In Karamoja, life skills interventions contributed to a rise in primary school retention from 8.4 per cent to 10.6 per cent for girls and from 12.6 per cent to 14.1 per cent for boys between 2017 and 2019.

Case Study 5: Argentina: Promoting learning and skills development

In Argentina, PLaNEA is an innovative model of learning for urban secondary schools that promotes learning and skills development. Fifty per cent of students never graduate from Argentina’s traditional secondary schools; half of those who do graduate do so at the age of 20 or later, and many graduates lack minimum skills in Spanish and mathematics.

PLaNEA changed teaching and assessment by introducing inquiry- and project-based pedagogy in social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, Spanish and computer science, making school more relevant and engaging. This stimulated learning and increased completion rates. UNICEF supported teacher training, student and teacher peer groups and health care.

In 2019, PLaNEA added 2,500 students in 24 Tucumán Province schools, 350 teachers, 45 school directors, 8 school supervisors and 20 provincial public secondary officials. The total enrolment in participating schools was 6,610 students.

PLaNEA uses data to identify issues and ensure policies and interventions are evidence-based and specific. Monitoring has shown an increase in student motivation to learn and positive perceptions among teachers and school authorities.

Spotlight on thematic funds: Assessing life skills

Assessing learning and understanding the status of proficiency in life skills are key to countries’ efforts to mainstream life skills in learning and teaching. Yet many countries lack metrics to measure learning in life skills.

UNICEF and the World Bank in the Middle East and North Africa region have developed a standardized instrument for national large-scale assessments to measure life skills across lower secondary-age students (age 12–14). The instrument builds on the 2017 Life Skills and Citizenship Education Conceptual and Programmatic Framework, and is informed by rigorous research; it has been tested in Egypt, the State of Palestine and Tunisia. Applying the instrument will enable an understanding of the distribution of life skills among the school-age population, and of learners’ life-skills proficiency. The findings will inform policies and programmes that foster life-skills teaching and learning, and track the progress and impact of their implementation.
Skills development in upper secondary education

At the upper secondary level, adolescents, whether in or out of school, continue to develop transferable skills and digital skills. Such programming focuses on the relevance and quality of skills development, linking young people to productive work opportunities through structured internships, apprenticeships and career guidance.

In China (lower and upper secondary), twenty-first century and employability skills were introduced in the curriculum and included in teacher training resources for vocational education. A total of 7,374 adolescents (3,033 adolescent girls) in 37 vocational schools in 11 project counties in 9 provinces were reached.

In Tajikistan, learning and a successful transition to life and work have advanced through the development of a multiple-pathway programme, in line with the vision and approach of Generation Unlimited (GenU). In 2019, over 12,700 adolescents (50 per cent girls), including young people who are not in education, have benefited from skills-building interventions in formal and non-formal education. Competency-based curricula have been developed, building on the UNICEF Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation and the UPSHIFT programme, with a focus on digital skills. Youth competencies improved by between 20 per cent and 40 per cent against baseline throughout the established learning pathways. Modelling of outsourcing digital jobs was further supported with the launch of Impact Sourcing in partnership with the private sector and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Population Employment. A first cohort of 87 youth (80 per cent girls and young women) was supported in outsourced digital jobs, with the potential of facilitating access to 17,000 such jobs throughout Tajikistan.

UNICEF and ING Bank have collaborated to test models in different settings, focusing on empowering adolescents through development of twenty-first century skills, financial skills, digital skills and civic engagement. Adolescent/youth engagement for environmental protection and climate change was also made a focus area. The Power for Youth Partnership between UNICEF and ING Bank included five countries in 2018: China, Kosovo, Montenegro, Philippines and Viet Nam. In 2019, Ukraine became the sixth country to receive support from this programme.

Highlights include:

- UNICEF worked with the China Association for Science and Technology to revise training on life skills for adolescents, called Step into Society. A total of 12,768 adolescents were trained using the revised modules. UNICEF also worked with the Ministry of Education to adapt two modules (interpersonal skills and social and emotional learning) for post-secondary school students aged 18–19 years and trained about 6,660 of these students. The preparation of these modules involved six expert teams working with hundreds of teachers and involving over 100,000 students. Experience from these pilots will eventually feed into policies and guidelines; the ultimate goal is that they will be adopted nationally to benefit millions of adolescents across China.

- In Kosovo, UNICEF supported capacity-building of staff and partners of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to adapt skills-based initiatives to the existing national curriculum.

- In Montenegro, over 25,000 adolescents were reached directly and indirectly through life-skills programmes implemented as part of the regular primary and secondary school curricula in the five poorest municipalities, as well as at a winter camp, to empower vulnerable adolescents.
Innovation focus: Fostering career aspirations through technology

In the past five years, UNICEF India has intensified efforts to address the needs of adolescents in their transition to adulthood and from school of experiences has resulted in promising initiatives that can improve opportunities in the lives of millions of adolescents.

One such initiative, to which thematic funds have contributed, is the career portal that enables adolescents to choose a career path that matches their aspirations, interests and inclinations, and links them with mechanisms (such as colleges, scholarships, skills development programmes, internships and apprenticeship opportunities) in the pursuit of career choices. This is expected to lower the high dropout rates observed at various stages of the education system and also improve job retention.

The career portal has been launched in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) in collaboration with the state governments. Over 10 million students (50 per cent girls) from classes 9–12 are being reached, with over 750,000 students (58 per cent girls) actively engaged through support from 59,000 teachers who have been trained in use of the portal.

The focus will be to improve the portal with additional features for better accessibility and use, such as career videos, a chatbot and a gaming app. A finance management system will be added to support students to access various government and private scholarships and bank loans for further education. The online portal will also be supplemented with strengthened offline activities. Life skills resource material will be digitized to scale up and accelerate impact. The aim is for the programme to be operational across all states of India.
Gender equality in skills development

In many countries, progress in educational achievement among girls and young women is not translating into employability because of barriers to skills development opportunities such as restrictive gender norms that prescribe what girls should and should not do. While 14 per cent of adolescent boys and young men between 14 and 24 years old were not in education, employment or training in 2019, the figure was 37 per cent for adolescent girls and young women. Responding to the need to equip adolescent girls with skills for employment, including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and digital technologies, UNICEF is supporting gender-responsive programmes and innovations that help bridge secondary education with the world of work.

Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights information is increasingly being integrated into life skills curricula in some countries, in the context of addressing harmful gender norms and stereotypes. Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar incorporated sexual and reproductive health education into their school-based life-skills programming, complemented by community-based outreach to parents to raise awareness around adolescent sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

UNICEF Zambia launched the Zambian Girls 2030 programme in 2019, focusing on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, career guidance and corporate mentoring. The programme aims to empower adolescent girls by providing them with the skills they need to improve their lives, and contributes to the realization of Zambia’s Vision 2030. Currently, Zambian Girls 2030 targets almost 15,000 adolescent girls in Grades 5–12 in two provinces. Schools are selected based on indicators such as gender parity, dropout rates, occurrence of early child marriages and teenage pregnancy, and girls’ transition and completion levels.

UNICEF Lebanon’s Girls Got IT initiative, part of the Generation of Innovation Leaders youth programme, is breaking cultural stereotypes around young women in STEM. In 2019, a total of 900 adolescent girls explored their interest in technology and built essential skills through a series of hands-on workshops, talks and mentoring by inspiring industry leaders from Lebanon and elsewhere. Tutorials focused on innovative new digital concepts, including coding, game design, mobile apps, robotics and artificial intelligence, 3D printing, Internet of Things (IoT), engineering and entrepreneurship. An additional 2,156 adolescent girls and young women completed digital skills training courses. Many of these young women accessed income-generating opportunities through Bridge, Outsource, Transform (BOT), a platform that distributes high-demand digital jobs to marginalized youth.

In 2019, UNICEF entered into partnership with UNFPA and the World Food Programme to implement a programme, funded by Canada, to overcome barriers to girls’ education in Chad and the Niger. This programme aims to benefit 130,000 girls in impoverished communities with a comprehensive package of nutrition, prevention of gender-based violence and life skills education, including on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

There was considerable momentum in expanding private sector partnerships in 2019. Through GenU, UNICEF and partners are working to bridge education and training with employment and entrepreneurship for youth. To step up investment in building girls’ skills and self-esteem, UNICEF launched partnerships with Dove, Clé de Peau Beauté and Chloé.

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Rojosoa Manevah Hortense, 23, a young peer educator who coaches adolescents during a life skills session in Amboasary, Madagascar.
Cross-cutting feature: Education as a powerful strategy to end child marriage

Girls who marry early – defined as marriage before the age of 18 years – are significantly less likely to complete their secondary school education. This diminishes their agency, choice and capacity to achieve life goals and has repercussions for their children, families and communities. In response, the UNFPA–UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage increases girls’ access to life skills, education and health-care services, educates communities on the dangers of child marriage and promotes gender-equitable attitudes, increases economic support to families, and strengthens and enforces laws that establish 18 as the minimum age of marriage. To support girls’ education, the Global Programme uses three core strategies: (1) improving access; (2) providing gender-equitable learning; and (3) enhancing gender-equitable skills.

For example, in Bangladesh, the Global Programme is developing a Standardized Adolescent Empowerment Package to scale up life skills education in adolescent clubs, focusing on health, nutrition, gender, information and communication technologies (ICT) and livelihood skills. The Global Programme trained 200 teachers to roll out the package across secondary schools in the country, aiming to reach 600,000 adolescents by 2022.

Voices from the field

Noreen Khan, Gender and Development Specialist, UNICEF Bangladesh, works on the Global Programme to End Child Marriage. “Investing in education is a smart thing,” says Noreen.

“We plan to unlock the potential of girls themselves through empowerment, skills-building and education as their best defences in the fight to end child marriage. Addressing the intersectional power hierarchies that influence social norms around child marriage is a key focus. We stand united with all partners in the call to help girls say no to child marriage.”
Non-formal education and community-based skills development

To contribute to gender equality and overall inclusiveness in skills development, UNICEF uses cross-sectoral approaches. These interventions are delivered through non-formal education and skills training, as well as in community settings.

UNICEF Tanzania has supported the development of the Integrated Programme for Out of School Adolescents (IPOSA). The programme includes vocational training, entrepreneurship skills, life skills and literacy/numeracy skills. IPOSA has trained over 12,000 adolescents (of whom 53 per cent are girls). The programme surpassed its target of enrolling 5,000 learners by the end of 2019.

In 2019, a total of 8,386 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 (including 4,814 adolescent girls, and 223 children with disabilities) were empowered through entrepreneurial and civic engagement skills-building programmes in the State of Palestine. After the skills training, 2,648 adolescents organized and conducted 351 initiatives and social enterprises that helped to address the identified challenges in schools and communities.

In Bangladesh, the UNICEF Adolescent Strategy for Rohingya and Host Community Response, launched in April 2019, aims to provide 18,000 Rohingya and 7,600 host community adolescents with integrated vocational, literacy/numeracy, life skills and psychosocial support through 109 multipurpose centres.

Summary

UNICEF will continue to give priority to the development of a breadth of skills as a key strategic priority. Persistent challenges in skills development remain, including a lack of evidence-based approaches to skills development and measurement in low-resource and low-capacity contexts, as well as weak system-wide approaches to provide coherent and harmonized opportunities for skills development for all children and adolescents. This has frequently led to unsustainable and dispersed approaches with limited impact.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated and systemic efforts to work through multiple learning pathways and across all levels of education. It demands learning systems that align curriculum, pedagogy and assessment approaches and promote enabling environments conducive to the development of transferable skills. For this purpose, UNICEF must continue to expand partnerships and coordination with key partners (the International Labour Organization, UNESCO, UNHCR and the World Bank), in-country donors and the private sector. These partnerships can complement and go beyond the work of UNICEF. For example, as a founding organization of GenU, a global multisector partnership, UNICEF can leverage its role to help meet the urgent need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people aged 10–24, and to drive scalable, innovative and impactful solutions to these challenges.

By the age of five, a child should have the life skills necessary to transition to a more formal school environment where foundational (language and mathematics) skills will be further developed. By age 10, a child should have the necessary building blocks to add in transferable skills such as problem-solving, negotiation, empathy, communication and participation. By the age of 18, a child should have the necessary skills to successfully enter the workplace, having mastered technical, vocational and digital skills. Research and evidence-building will help solve some of the technical challenges related to developing and measuring these skills at each stage of a child’s education. Unlocking these challenges will also require continued investment in the internal human resource capacity of UNICEF, as well as that of its partners in developing countries.
High-level priorities

Students in the playground of their school in Faizabad, the largest city of Badakhshan province, northern Afghanistan.
As this report was being prepared, the world was in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. The full impact of the crisis will be extraordinary and will last for many years in ways that are still unclear. UNICEF will strive to maintain continuity of its education programmes and operations while responding to the pandemic. The organization, together with governments and partners, is committed to delivering assistance to children across all affected areas to ensure that all children in need receive humanitarian assistance. UNICEF is working to support governments in limiting disruptions to learning and to safeguard children’s rights and well-being. This will require unprecedented joint efforts from all Member States and other partners working with UNICEF to sustain the development gains of recent years, to ensure that the most vulnerable children are protected, and to recommit to multilateralism and international cooperation as the only way to move beyond this crisis.

The COVID-19 crisis comes at a particularly challenging time for the education sector. Even prior to the pandemic, the world was off track to achieve universal access to quality education and learning by 2030. According to projections prepared for the High Level Political Forum in July 2019 to assess progress towards SDG 4, by the current rate, by 2030 more than 220 million children, adolescents and youth will still be out of school.

The midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, showed that while UNICEF is on track to achieve Goal Area 2 targets, too many children and youth still fail to learn, and that at the current pace of progress, the SDG targets will be missed. UNICEF is, therefore, determined to address the learning crisis as a critical programmatic accelerator in Goal Area 2. The organization is looking to increase the ambition expressed in the targets of the Strategic Plan to accelerate its contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To do this, it intends to build on the increasing evidence regarding effective approaches to transform education systems. It will work to improve learning for all children, in part through opportunities presented by the growth of technology and the increasingly broad range of partners focused on innovative approaches to improve learning outcomes. The new UNICEF Education Strategy was adopted with those goals in mind.

### The new Education Strategy: from definition to implementation

The new Education Strategy defines the position of UNICEF in relation to the work the organization needs to do in Goal Area 2 to increase its contribution towards the SDGs and the realization of children’s rights. It builds on the conviction that the key goal of education is for every child to learn. The focus in Goal Area 2 for the next two years will be on addressing the learning crisis and closing the gap between the ambition for a universal right to quality education and its implementation.

The learning crisis calls for a new programmatic vision that challenges the way governments, development partners and communities manage and support education systems. It considers the urgent need for an approach that will address the needs of children characterized by learning poverty, and those at risk of falling into learning poverty. Programmatic priorities will focus on the strategic shifts that the global Education Strategy, 2019–2030, pursues in the area of system strengthening (education sector analysis, evidence-based sector planning, pro-poor policies and decentralization), data and evidence (production, dissemination and effective use, including assessment of learning) and innovation (including school-based and adaptive learning, placing learning at the centre, partnering with the private sector and working with stakeholders from the early stage of design, continuing through implementation and monitoring and evaluation).

The global Education Strategy provides scope for accelerating results beyond the Strategic Plan targets, and focuses interventions to ensure that children are ready for three key transitions which are critical to their progress in education: (1) from home to school; (2) from acquiring the basic tools of learning, literacy and numeracy, to applying those skills to critical thinking and more complex problem-solving; and (3) from schooling to the workplace. The Education Strategy, 2019–2030, focuses on attendance and retention, structured pedagogies, learning assessments, and incentives and accountability. The children and young people who are furthest behind will remain at the centre of UNICEF efforts under the global Education Strategy, especially children living in poverty, girls, children with disabilities, children from those countries that are the furthest behind (with priority given to low-income and lower middle-income countries), including children in fragile contexts, and those affected by conflict or complex emergencies.

Under the new strategy, priority will be given to ensuring that:

- More children aged five are ready for school in 35 priority countries, mostly in Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA), West and Central Africa (WCA) and South Asia (SA), with an enhanced focus on equity and quality, and on using the ECE platform for
multisectoral collaboration to improve children’s health and nutrition.

- More children aged 10 are ready to succeed at school in priority countries, mostly in ESA, WCA, SA and Europe and Central Asia. This will require innovative support for improving school completion and reducing learning poverty so that children are able to read and do basic mathematics. The school platform will be used to enhance integrated programming – for example, in collaboration with gender and WASH to provide menstrual health and hygiene services. More systematic engagement with parents and communities will be promoted to identify barriers, jointly create solutions and improve social accountability within local education systems.

- More 18-year-olds are ready for life and work, focusing on the most marginalized and vulnerable. Meeting the needs of children will require a focus on strengthening multiple learning pathways, including catch-up education, vocational training and apprenticeships. Introducing and scaling up innovative approaches will enable UNICEF to respond to the increasingly important and critical period in which children transition to adulthood.

Girls attend class at a UNICEF-supported learning centre in Balukhali refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.
Partnerships and resource mobilization

Following the launch of the UNICEF Education Strategy, 2019–2030, the organization initiated an Education Partner Group in 2019 consisting of key resource partners with the objective of engaging partners more closely in the implementation of the strategy. The Education Partner Group serves as a platform to work towards achieving the targets of the global Education Strategy through programmatic discussion, consultation, and strategic and financial support as appropriate, based on a review of progress and lessons learned.

Mobilizing additional resources for education, especially thematic funding, as well as ensuring that resources are strategically allocated to serve the most vulnerable children, will be critical to address the global learning crisis. Funding shortfalls are already interfering with the ability of UNICEF to reach its goals under the Strategic Plan. Funding for education experienced a downturn in 2019 compared with 2018, with consequences that become apparent in the number of children supported in emergency contexts, which was lower than expected. Funding shortfalls have also prevented UNICEF from providing full operational leadership to build momentum in support of ECE. Pilot programmes known to support better learning and better equity – mother tongue instruction, early-grade reading, scripted lessons, inclusive education and school grants – have not been taken to scale in many countries because of insufficient funding. Unqualified teachers lead many classrooms because of insufficient training opportunities.

These are areas where countries will ultimately take the lead, but catalytic support from UNICEF can support innovation and programmes to demonstrate proof of concept at scale.

In the current global context, the learning crisis is aggravated by COVID-19, with schooling interrupted for millions of children. In a context of major economic shocks, it remains important to sustain education funds to ensure that every child learns. In addition, UNICEF will also be advocating with governments in programme countries to protect education finances, including allocations to the most vulnerable children. Continuous engagement of National Committees in fundraising efforts as well as in advocacy for Official Development Assistance will also be critical to meet the education funding needs. With the goal of substantially increasing the level of resources available for education, UNICEF will engage with the public and private sectors, financial institutions, other United Nations agencies, global funds, facilities and foundations on the basis of mutual interest and financing opportunities. Activities financed through thematic funding will incorporate a focus on the three transition points in education, building commitment and accountability around efforts to reduce learning poverty in low-income and lower middle-income countries. In addition, UNICEF will seek to strengthen fundraising with innovative finance opportunities and domestic campaigns to support the development of education in middle-income countries.
### Abbreviations and acronyms

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>ECA</td>
<td>Europe and Central Asia</td>
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<td>ECE</td>
<td>early childhood education</td>
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<td>EMIS</td>
<td>Education Management Information System(s)</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GenU</td>
<td>Generation Unlimited</td>
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<td>GPE</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
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<td>IIERP</td>
<td>International Institute for Educational Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>INEE</td>
<td>Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies</td>
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<td>IPOSA</td>
<td>Integrated Programme for Out of School Adolescents</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and Northern Africa</td>
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<td>MHPSS</td>
<td>Mental Health and Psychosocial Support</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
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<td>SEA-PLM</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SRGBV</td>
<td>school-related gender-based violence</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNGEI</td>
<td>United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WASH</td>
<td>water, sanitation and hygiene</td>
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<td>WCA</td>
<td>West and Central Africa</td>
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Endnotes


2. Level 2 emergency response: Country office needs additional support from other parts of the organization (headquarters, regional office and other country offices) to scale up and respond to the crisis. The Regional Director will provide leadership and regional office support. Level 3 emergency response: The Executive Director declares that organization-wide mobilization is needed to scale up and respond and appoints a Global Emergency Coordinator with members of the Immediate Response Team able to be deployed on a ‘no regrets’ basis.


4. One billion is 1,000 million.


12. Ibid.


22. Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan and Uganda.


27. Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Indonesia, Malawi (two rounds), Mozambique, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Zimbabwe and the UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office.


37. Ibid.


43. Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Viet Nam.


46. Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Côte d’Ivoire, Eastern Caribbean, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand and Viet Nam.


51. The Global Programme is implemented in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Lebanon, Mozambique, Nepal, the Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia.

UNICEF income in 2019

In 2019, total income to UNICEF reached US$6,400 million. This was an increase of 6 per cent compared with 2018, due to an increase in earmarked funds to specific programmes (other resources). Un-earmarked funds (regular resources) income decreased to US$1,371 million in 2019, compared to US$1,422 million in 2018. Regular resources also decreased as a proportion of total income to UNICEF to 21 per cent, down from 23 per cent in 2018. Other resources income increased by 8 per cent, up from US$4,638 million in 2018 to US$5,029 million in 2019.

FIGURE A1-1: Income by funding type, 2014–2019*

* Figures are based on ‘income’, which here represents contributions received from the public sector and revenue from the private sector.
‘Other resources’ contributions increased by 8 per cent compared to 2018, while contributions to the 10 thematic funding pools decreased by 10 per cent, from US$386 million in 2018 to US$346 million in 2019. Thematic funding also decreased as a percentage of all ‘other resources’, from 8 per cent in 2018 to 7 per cent in 2019. This is 6 per cent below the milestone target set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2020, of thematic funding being 13 per cent of all ‘other resources’ in 2019. The trend of a decreasing overall amount of thematic funding as well as a decreasing ratio of thematic funding as a percentage of the total is concerning and goes against Funding Compact commitments. In the Funding Compact between governments and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Member States have committed to double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through single-agency thematic funding, such as UNICEF thematic funding pools. In alignment with this commitment, UNICEF aims to double thematic funding as a share of all ‘other resources’ to 15 per cent by 2021. To reach this goal, UNICEF encourages partners to channel more contributions through these softly earmarked funds.

‘Income’ refers to the total amount committed in the year that the agreement was signed, plus any adjustments, for funds received from private sector partners and disbursements received in a particular year from public sector partners, while ‘contributions’ refers to disbursements received in a particular year, exclusive of adjustments, from both private and public partners.

Regular resources (RR): Un-earmarked funds that are foundational to deliver results across the Strategic Plan

Other resources (OR): Earmarked funds for programmes; supplementary to RR and intended for a specific purpose, such as an emergency response or a specific programme in a country/region

Other resources – regular (ORR): Funds for specific, non-emergency programme purposes and strategic priorities

Other resources – emergency (ORE): Earmarked funds for specific humanitarian action and post-crisis recovery activities

FIGURE A1-2: Other resources contributions 2014–2019: Share of thematic funding*

*2014–2016 contributions restated to reflect change in accounting policy for comparison with 2017–2019
Goal Area 2 income in 2019

In 2019, partners contributed US$571 million ‘other resources – regular’ for education, a 25 per cent increase over the previous year. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of ‘other resources – regular’ to education, representing 81 per cent of the total. The top five resource partners to UNICEF education in 2019 were the Government of Germany, the European Commission, the Government of Norway, the Global Partnership for Education and the Government of the Netherlands. The largest contributions were received from the Government of Norway for the global education thematic pool, from the Government of the Netherlands for ‘PROSPECTS – responding to forced displacement crisis’ and from the Government of Germany for supporting access to formal education for Lebanese and non-Lebanese girls and boys in Lebanon (see body of the report for details on these programmes).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Resource partner</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Germany*</td>
<td>172,119,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>European Commission*</td>
<td>106,723,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>73,436,615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
<td>51,791,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Netherlands*</td>
<td>50,109,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Canada*</td>
<td>43,113,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>41,565,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Education Cannot Wait Fund</td>
<td>30,870,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>UNDP-managed UN Partnerships and Joint Programmes*</td>
<td>15,416,243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>14,216,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>German Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>11,945,835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>9,861,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration*</td>
<td>8,644,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Danish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>7,513,038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Republic of Korea</td>
<td>6,769,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sweden*</td>
<td>6,292,654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>5,564,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>5,523,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Japan Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>5,323,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>5,149,586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Grant Description</th>
<th>Resource partners</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2018-2021 Education Thematic Pool</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>66,235,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PROSPECTS - Responding to Forced Displacement Crisis*</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>50,109,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Supporting Access to Formal Education for Lebanese and Non-Lebanese Girls and Boys</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>50,104,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporting Access to Formal Education for Syrian Refugee and Lebanese Girls and Boys</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>47,785,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education Cannot Wait - Institutional Support 2019-2021</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>37,119,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Support to Internally Displaced in Yemen (Phase IV)*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>18,952,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Girls' Education Project (GEP) Phase 3, Nigeria</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>17,780,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Education and Child Protection, Egypt*</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>13,130,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Support to Refugees &amp; Migration Programme, Ethiopia</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>12,882,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>UN-DFID KP Merged Districts Joint Programme (KPMD), Pakistan*</td>
<td>UNDP-managed UN Partnerships and Joint Programmes</td>
<td>11,924,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No Lost Generation / Makani Center II, Jordan</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10,892,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rebuilding a Resilient Service Delivery System for Children, Iraq*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10,892,178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Strengthening Community Resilience in South Sudan Urban Settings*</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>10,102,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Resilience Integrated Education Program for Children, Youth (15+) Phase II, Nigeria</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>9,258,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Education Sector Program Implementation Grant, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
<td>8,843,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Education, Mali</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>7,675,476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Improving Access to a Quality Education for Children of Sahel</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>7,595,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Education Sector Program Implementation, South Sudan</td>
<td>Global Partnership for Education</td>
<td>7,073,863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Learning Centres for Children Affected by the Rohingya Crisis Phase III, Bangladesh</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>6,898,379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Resilience, Bangladesh*</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>6,849,315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thematic funding remains a critical source of income for UNICEF programme delivery. Through thematic funding contributions at global, regional and/or country levels, partners support UNICEF-delivered results at the highest programme level in each of those contexts for the greatest impact. They act as an ideal complement to regular resources, as they can be allocated on a needs basis. The flexibility of thematic funding allows UNICEF to respond more effectively. It facilitates longer-term planning, sustainability and savings in transaction costs, leaving more resources for UNICEF programmes.

Thematic funds have made UNICEF a much more agile, responsive organization, able to redirect resources at short notice to meet needs in rapidly evolving situations. The thematic funds are of particular value for use in conflict-affected contexts, and are an important factor in the organization’s ability to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development needs, ensuring not only responsiveness but also long-term sustainability. This is a critical challenge in the education sector and helps to explain why education is the second largest thematic funding pool, after the humanitarian action pool.

For partners, contributions to the 10 UNICEF thematic funding pools are in keeping with the principles of good multilateral resource partnerships. 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 proportion of funds going towards programming. They also simplify renewal and allocation procedures, and reduce the administrative monitoring burden for partners.

Regrettably, overall contributions to the thematic funding pools decreased from US$386 million in 2018 to US$346 million in 2019. The largest public sector contributors to the thematic funding pools in 2019 were the governments of Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands, while the largest private sector contributions were facilitated by the German Committee for UNICEF, the U.S. Fund for UNICEF and the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF.*

* For more information on thematic funding and how it works, please visit: <www.unicef.org/publicpartnerships/66662_66851.html>

FIGURE A1-5: Thematic contributions by thematic pool, 2019: $US346 million
UNICEF thematic funds maintain a four-year funding period that covers the entire Strategic Plan period (2018–2021). In the first two years of the Strategic Plan, thematic funding contributions for education have reached US$184 million, with US$84.3 million received in 2019, of which almost 86 per cent came from government partners. The Government of Norway was the largest thematic resources partner in 2019, providing almost 80 per cent of all thematic education contributions received.

Over three quarters (81 per cent) of all thematic education contributions that UNICEF received in 2018 and 2019 were global-level contributions. These are the most flexible sources of funding to UNICEF after regular resources, and can be allocated across regions to individual country programmes according to priority needs.

UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base (including thematic contributions) and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible. In 2019, 32 partners contributed thematic funding to education. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the Government of Norway for global education thematic funding, and from the Government of Denmark for education activities in Iraq and the Niger, while the Norwegian Committee for UNICEF also contributed sizeable country-specific funding for activities in Colombia and Pakistan.

### TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partners to education, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Partner Type</th>
<th>Resource partner</th>
<th>Total (US$)</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governments 85.92%</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>67,243,230</td>
<td>79.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>3,581,021</td>
<td>4.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>921,642</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>681,818</td>
<td>0.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sector 14.08%</td>
<td>Norwegian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>2,619,148</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netherlands Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>1,118,316</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>884,301</td>
<td>1.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Fund for UNICEF</td>
<td>843,953</td>
<td>1.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swiss Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>765,980</td>
<td>0.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Korean Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>725,705</td>
<td>0.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Peru</td>
<td>542,698</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finnish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>531,583</td>
<td>0.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>507,723</td>
<td>0.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>French Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>484,198</td>
<td>0.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Danish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>441,738</td>
<td>0.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Brazil</td>
<td>281,397</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swedish Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>277,649</td>
<td>0.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Colombia</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Argentina</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>0.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Ecuador</td>
<td>252,000</td>
<td>0.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>242,529</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>170,455</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF Chile</td>
<td>144,000</td>
<td>0.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal,* and the results achieved with the funds, assessed against Executive Board-approved targets and indicators at country, regional and global levels, are consolidated and reported across the suite of Global Annual Results Reports.

Specific reporting for country and regional thematic funding contributions is provided separately for partners giving at those levels.

The 2018–2019 allocations of global thematic education funds were made on a needs-based formula for country offices’ regional allocations and for regional office allocations based on progress against critical education indicators – for example, number of out-of-school children or gender parity. The allocation for a region increased with the number of children and youth in the region, the fragility of the region, the economic inequality of the region, and if the region was lagging in education indicators. The indicators used, where relevant, are consistent with the Results Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The amounts allocated to country offices were determined at regional level, based on the Strategic Plan Result Areas, using a similar approach. The indicators were: (1) pre-primary gross enrolment rate; (2) primary education out-of-school rate; (3) primary education net attendance rate of the children from the poorest quintile; (4) secondary education gender parity index; (5) quality of education system for learning outcomes; (Strategic Plan indicator

### TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partners to education, 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Partner</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF China</td>
<td>108,812</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andorran Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>82,508</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>78,586</td>
<td>0.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF India</td>
<td>57,977</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Croatia</td>
<td>55,400</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Uruguay</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>38,473</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan Committee for UNICEF</td>
<td>22,049</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF Ukraine</td>
<td>2,495</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84,301,383</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### FIGURE A1-6: Education thematic contributions at country, regional and global levels, 2018–2019

- **Global**
  - US $148,538,211
  - 81%

- **Regional**
  - US $2,045,434
  - 1%

- **Country**
  - US $33,436,349
  - 18%
2.b.3); (6) school-age population; (7) fragility index indicator (proxy based on the amount of Consolidated Appeals in the region during the past several years); and (8) economic inequality (based on World Bank GINI index).

FIGURE A1-7: Allotment of education global thematic funding revenue to offices and programmes, 2018-2019

Transparency:
Follow the flow of funds from contribution to programming by visiting <http://open.unicef.org>.

Goal Area 2 expenses in 2019

Note: Expenses are higher than the income received because expenses comprise total allotments from regular resources and other resources (including balances carried over from previous years), whereas income reflects only earmarked contributions to education in 2019. In 2019, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US$5.65 billion.

‘Expenses’ are recorded according to IPSAS standards and are accrual based. These are used for official financial reporting. ‘Expenditures’ are recorded on a modified cash basis. They are used for budget reporting, since they are aligned with cash disbursements and goods receipts (the way budgets are consumed).

FIGURE A1-8: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2019

To reach the results set out in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has planned for a total of US$20.3 billion in programme expenses. In 2019, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US$5.7 billion. After the US$5.4 billion expenses of 2018, the amount for the remainder of the Strategic Plan period is US$9.2 billion.

Total education expenses in 2019 were US$1.183 billion, accounting for 21 per cent of total UNICEF expenses for the year, the second highest category after health expenses, which accounted for 23 per cent (see Figure A1-8). Compared with the figure in 2018, the share for education fell by 1 percentage point, while, in absolute terms, expenses fell by 0.7 per cent.

In 2019, regular resources (the most flexible type of resource) were used for 14 per cent of total education expenses, while ‘other resources – regular’ and ‘other resources – emergency’ were used for 45 per cent and 41 per cent of total education expenses, respectively.

The share of spending from emergency funds (see Figure A1-9) has decreased compared with 2017 and 2018, when it was at 45 per cent. In absolute terms, spending from emergency funds dropped by US$49 million in 2019. Despite these declines, spending in 2019 on emergency funds was still well above 2016 or earlier levels. Humanitarian crises are continuing to affect large numbers of children, and UNICEF is continuing to play a significant role in backstopping education services in emergency situations.

Countries affected by emergencies and humanitarian crises generally had the largest education expenses in 2019 (see Table A1-5). The Syria crisis continued to have an impact on many of these countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Beyond the Syria crisis, other countries with high levels of expenses included Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.
### TABLE A1-5: Top 20 countries in expenses for education, 2019 (US$ millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>166,273,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>79,332,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>73,344,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>45,843,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>45,526,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>40,404,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>38,928,689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>37,954,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syrian Arab Republic</td>
<td>36,868,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>32,109,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>31,836,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>30,386,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>21,246,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan, Regional Office</td>
<td>18,663,182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>18,206,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>17,921,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>17,670,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>15,227,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>14,203,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>14,187,828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2019, the largest expenses for education were in the Middle East and North Africa region, followed by Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa (see Figure A1-10). These regions together accounted for 69 per cent of all UNICEF expenses for education.
Equitable access to quality education accounted for 65 per cent of expenses in the sector in 2019 (see Figure A1-11). Activities related to learning outcomes accounted for 28 per cent of education spending, while 7 per cent of total expenses went to skills development.

In 2019, the amount of education spending from thematic funds was nearly US$120 million, of which 18 per cent was emergency thematic funds. West and Central Africa was the region with the highest spending from thematic funds, followed by Eastern and Southern Africa and Middle East and North Africa. The three regions together accounted for 58 per cent of the total education spending from thematic funds. Globally, thematic funds accounted for 10 per cent of all education expenses in 2019. However, this share varies widely, from 4 per cent in Middle East and North Africa to 21 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific and 36 per cent in headquarters (see Figure A1-12).
In 2019, three cost categories accounted for nearly 80 per cent of education expenses: (1) transfers and grants to counterparts (US$643 million); (2) staff and other personnel costs (US$171 million); and (3) supplies and commodities (US$106 million) (see Table A1-6). The higher share of expenses in transfers and grants to counterparts is consistent with the increasing use of partnerships to achieve greater impact for children in education interventions.

### TABLE A1-6: Expenses for education by cost category, 2019 (US$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense</th>
<th>Other Resources - Emergency</th>
<th>Other Resources - Regular</th>
<th>Regular Resources</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contractual services</td>
<td>27,408,908</td>
<td>58,055,512</td>
<td>17,909,618</td>
<td>103,374,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment, vehicles and furniture</td>
<td>166,386</td>
<td>318,880</td>
<td>691,918</td>
<td>1,177,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General operating + other direct costs</td>
<td>11,971,757</td>
<td>21,923,117</td>
<td>15,867,066</td>
<td>49,761,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incremental indirect cost</td>
<td>35,287,338</td>
<td>38,167,813</td>
<td></td>
<td>73,455,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and other personnel costs</td>
<td>36,884,839</td>
<td>78,423,410</td>
<td>55,633,403</td>
<td>170,941,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplies and commodities</td>
<td>40,611,915</td>
<td>51,829,492</td>
<td>13,168,600</td>
<td>105,610,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers and grants to counterparts</td>
<td>322,452,199</td>
<td>270,776,664</td>
<td>49,434,349</td>
<td>642,663,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>3,845,165</td>
<td>9,812,727</td>
<td>7,943,553</td>
<td>21,601,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6,119,450</td>
<td>3,875,365</td>
<td>4,784,133</td>
<td>14,778,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>484,747,957</strong></td>
<td><strong>533,182,980</strong></td>
<td><strong>165,432,639</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,183,363,576</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Strategic Plan system strengthening indicators are based on one to five dimensions, which in turn are based on one to six subdimensions. If the UNICEF country office has supported the subdimension, it assesses the in-country situation using a 1-4 scale, ranging from 1 ‘weak’ to 4 ‘championing’. The average of these subdimension scores is then used to determine whether a country satisfies the particular dimension, and ultimately the overall indicator. An average of less than 2.5 is considered a ‘no’, and an average of 2.5 or more is considered a ‘yes’.

Figure A2-1 shows that in 2019, forty-two per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had an average score of 2.5 or more across the related subdimensions of education sector plan/strategy: (1) resource allocation; (2) access, participation and retention. In 2019, 39 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had a score of 2.5 or more for the resource allocation subdimension.
FIGURE A2-2: System strengthening indicators for Education Management Information System/data

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective EMIS/data system

Three subdimensions of effective EMIS/data system

Attendance and dropout

Quality and timeliness

Disaggregation

FIGURE A2-3: System strengthening indicators for emergency preparedness/resilience

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective emergency preparedness/resilience within education system

Three subdimensions of effective emergency preparedness/resilience dimension within education system

Human and financial resources

Risk assessment

Risk reduction strategy
FIGURE A2-4: System strengthening indicators for inclusive education

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective inclusive education systems for children with disabilities

Reporting countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>WCA</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six subdimensions of effective inclusive education systems for children with disabilities

- Accessible physical environment
  - 2016: 18%
  - 2017: 28%
  - 2018: 26%
  - 2019: 26%

- Human resources
  - 2016: 25%
  - 2017: 31%
  - 2018: 34%
  - 2019: 42%

- Materials and communication
  - 2016: 34%
  - 2017: 41%
  - 2018: 44%
  - 2019: 43%

- Attitudes
  - 2016: 46%
  - 2017: 49%
  - 2018: 46%
  - 2019: 55%

- Law-Policy
  - 2016: 51%
  - 2017: 62%
  - 2018: 68%
  - 2019: 72%
FIGURE A2-5: System strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education systems for access

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive education systems for access**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<th>2019</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRGBV</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing demand barriers</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-responsive environment</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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FIGURE A2-6: System strengthening indicators for teachers development

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective teachers development within education systems**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
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<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher professional development</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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FIGURE A2-7: System strengthening indicators for early childhood education

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective early childhood education

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<th>TOTAL</th>
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<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three subdimensions of effective early childhood education

Policy, leadership and budget
Governance
Teaching and learning environment

FIGURE A2-8: System strengthening indicators for community participation

Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective community participation within education system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>ESA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Three subdimensions of effective community participation within education systems

Community involvement in monitoring
Accountability to communities
Community and student participation
FIGURE A2-9: System strengthening indicators for mother-tongue/multilingual education

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective mother tongue/multilingual education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>ECA</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective mother tongue/multilingual education</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective mother tongue/multilingual education**

- **Human and material resources**
  - 2016: 22%
  - 2017: 40%
  - 2018: 43%
  - 2019: 51%

- **Policy environment**
  - 2016: 41%
  - 2017: 71%
  - 2018: 65%
  - 2019: 69%

- **Community engagement**
  - 2016: 53%
  - 2017: 67%
  - 2018: 66%
  - 2019: 62%

FIGURE A2-10: System strengthening indicators for learning assessment

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective learning assessment**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Reporting countries</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<th>ECA</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective learning assessment</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</table>

**Three subdimensions of effective learning assessment**

- **Classroom assessment**
  - 2016: 34%
  - 2017: 40%
  - 2018: 47%
  - 2019: 53%

- **National assessments**
  - 2016: 51%
  - 2017: 55%
  - 2018: 59%
  - 2019: 63%

- **Examinations**
  - 2016: 71%
  - 2017: 68%
  - 2018: 63%
  - 2019: 62%
Three subdimensions of mainstreaming skills development within national education/training systems

- **Community engagement**
  - 2016: 3%
  - 2017: 7%
  - 2018: 18%
  - 2019: 20%

- **Curricula**
  - 2016: 13%
  - 2017: 16%
  - 2018: 36%
  - 2019: 42%

- **Policies**
  - 2016: 20%
  - 2017: 24%
  - 2018: 43%
  - 2019: 47%

**Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries mainstreaming skills development within national education/training systems**

- **Reporting countries**

<table>
<thead>
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**FIGURE A2-11: System strengthening indicators for skills development**