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UNICEF THAILAND

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic which provoked a global economic downturn with far-reaching consequences for the health and wellbeing of the world's most vulnerable families and children. Against the backdrop of this ongoing crisis, which, together with Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Round 6 (MICS6) data released this year, served to highlight persistent inequalities. UNICEF Thailand focused on advocating for enhanced social protection for the most vulnerable groups of children, while providing hygiene supplies and health messaging based on data gathered to support targeted policy responses. Regular programming also continued, tackling challenges across the lifecycle development of children and UNICEF Thailand, together with partners, made significant progress in effecting longer-term systemic change by supporting the mainstreaming of child-related issues into key national frameworks. This was the fourth year of the 2017-2021 Country Programme. With an annual programme budget of US\$10 million, UNICEF managed a total of 51 strategic partnerships with Government departments, civil society groups and the private sector.

In response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Thailand, and under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), initial UNICEF support focused on ensuring that vulnerable children, particularly those in public institutions and at-risk migrant families, had adequate food and non-food items including hygiene supplies, to protect themselves. In this context, over 215,000 children and their families were assist-

ed by UNICEF in partnership with key public sector (USAID, Government of Japan) and private sector donors (Unilever), and with the World Health Organization (WHO) and local NGO networks.

A new COVID-19 website reached people nationwide over 45 million times and became the platform for UNICEF Thailand to share toolkits, infographics, podcasts and videos with prevention recommendations and advice on mental health issues. Engaging in positive communications to promote facts over fear and providing trustworthy guidance to parents, caregivers, children and young people, UNICEF reached almost 187,000 people across 23 provinces with targeted messaging on health and preventive measures.

To better assess needs and target responses, UNICEF organised a series of surveys, canvassing vulnerable groups such as families with young children, children left behind (CLB), young people, and poor families in the Southern Border Provinces (SBP). With over 70,000 respondents, including up to 10,000 young people, the data gathered was used to contribute to national policy discussions for the Thai National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) contingency masterplan on COVID-19.

In co-operation with Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), ILO, IOM and UN Women, successful UNICEF advocacy, putting social protection front and centre of COVID-19

response, resulted in 8 million vulnerable children and their families benefitting from the scaling up of existing social transfers, and in over 650,000 children continuing to receive school lunches, ensuring access to nutrition under lockdown.

With benefits extending beyond the pandemic, and in collaboration with the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), and the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), UNICEF developed guidance this year which ensured that over 10 million children had a safe and healthy return to school. Further guidance developed with the MSDHS, meant that almost 20,000 children were ensured protection in all public residential centres nationwide and that government personnel nationwide were equipped to ensure child protection in the community.

These interventions were complemented by efforts to ensure longer term improvements across the life-cycle of children. Investment in early childhood took many forms in 2020. Framed by the national Early Childhood Development (ECD) Strategic Plan (2020-2027), a landscape analysis of childcare services for 0–3-year-olds, coupled with workforce investments which saw an expansion of ECD centres and parenting programmes, benefited up to 4,000 children and families. Steps to ensure that decentralised financing for ECD capacity building of local authorities will be extended to five additional provinces in 2021, go some way towards achieving longer term systematic change.

In 2020 UNICEF continued to support and promote foundational reading and literacy skills alongside skill development of teachers and caregivers, with campaigns reaching over 64,000 children, including over 2,000 from ethnic minority and migrant groups.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Education (MoE), UNICEF invested in developing a draft national curriculum and a skills framework, highlighted core competencies and included a focus on the improvement of remote technologies, an area brought into focus in 2020. A mapping of school connectivity ensured that online resources were developed, including in the SBP where ongoing work was leveraged to train teachers on the use of remote technologies, supporting 6,000 students for home-based learning nationwide.

Key progress for children was achieved in 2020 through UNICEF advocacy, in partnership with the

MSDHS, including a move closer to a Universal Child Grant which, if approved in 2021 will cover 4.2 million children aged under 6. Together with an increase in Disability Grant rates and agreement on the further expansion of the M-FUND (a low-cost migrant health insurance scheme developed with EU funding), these improvements will ensure lasting benefits for some of the most vulnerable children in Thailand.

For children and young people in their second decade of life, UNICEF Thailand put an emphasis in 2020 on nurturing hope for the future, by supporting specific skill development opportunities, as well as enhancing participation and spaces for engagement. The approach supported scalable system strengthening for sustainability.

Acknowledging the need to enhance mental health support, UNICEF collaborated with Government and private sector partners to organise The Sound of Happiness campaign, aimed at overcoming stigma and promoting current services and platforms for adolescents to seek professional help. The online health platform [Lovecarestation.com](https://lovecarestation.com) was also extended this year, allowing 30,000 adolescents and young people to receive online counselling services.

UNICEF established its first-ever Youth Advisory Board in 2020 comprising 50 young people from various backgrounds to guide UNICEF in its engagement with young people, sharing their experiences with policy makers. Aimed at addressing persistently high rates of youth unemployment, UNICEF also focused on skill and employability development for the most vulnerable young people in juvenile detention and migrant communities.

Child protection against violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation remained a priority in 2020, with efforts focused on building consensus and laying the groundwork for programmes aimed at reducing violence against children in many settings. A national child protection visioning exercise was launched in 2020 and a long-term roadmap will guide longer term inter-ministerial efforts towards developing protective services to ensure adequate prioritisation and resourcing of child protection in national policy. Children in conflict with the law were also a focus this year, which saw the inclusion of child protection in a reference manual on juvenile and family litigation, the development of a manual on implementation of the government's inter-ministerial MOU on alternatives to immigration detention for children

and the development of guidance for public prosecutors to support the work of the Regional Centres on Protection of Children, Juveniles and Family.

Over the year, the role of UNICEF as a partner and convener proved crucial, including during the COVID-19 response, when its role on convening and knowledge management to partners and Government achieved key results such as the emergency cash transfer top-up and the expansion of the Child Support Grant (CSG). Collaboration with UN agencies increased in 2020, in particular on evidence generation, and a partnership with the National Statistical Office (NSO) resulted in the launching of the sixth round of the MICS covering key indicators on child wellbeing from over 40,000 households across the country.

UNICEF Thailand progressed private sector engagement efforts in 2020 under the Business for Results (B4R) initiative. Support was given to corporate sector COVID-19 response and adaptation including sharing guidance for employers on family-friendly workplace practices and for mobile operators and online content providers for keeping children safe online during the pandemic. Work on Family Friendly Practices (FFP) also commenced in 2020, and consultations with business partners on digital education and skills development and adolescent employability will inform future programming.

In 2020 UNICEF Thailand continued to reach and engage the public, with an estimated 111 million reaches online and 5,155 media mentions. COVID-19 related content on social media recorded over 45 million reaches, amplifying public health messaging and advocating for the needs of those in most need.



A virtual YouTube telethon Love Delivery Fest raised US\$130,000 for COVID-19 response with the support of over 25 celebrities. The third annual fundraising Blue Carpet Show for UNICEF reached over 40 million people, garnering public support for UNICEF's efforts to improve the lives of children and raising awareness of issues facing children in Thailand and beyond.



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UPDATE ON THE CONTEXT AND SITUATION OF CHILDREN

In 2020, the Royal Thai Government (RTG) continued to reaffirm its commitment to long term developmental goals for children embedded in the 20-year National Strategy (Thailand 4.0, 2018-2037). The 2020 Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Thailand 79 out of 189 countries¹.

Thailand was the first country after China to report a confirmed COVID-19 case in January. It has been spared the massive loss of life experienced in other parts of the world. This is seen as largely due to a mixture of a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, decades of investments in public health infrastructure, including in a network of more than 1 million village public health volunteers, as well as swift lockdowns and safety measures. By end 2020, despite a slight resurgence of cases in December, Thailand had fewer than 7,000 cases and some 60 deaths.

Nonetheless, the socio-economic impact of the pandemic has been far-reaching, resulting from both the global economic slowdown, given Thailand's heavy reliance on tourism and other exports; and measures taken to curb the spread, including the closure of businesses and borders. According to the World Bank, the Thai economy is projected to contract by 8.3 per cent in 2020, among the sharpest projected

declines in the East Asia and Pacific Region. Severe job losses negatively impacted household welfare². The NESDC projected approximately 1.14 million vulnerable households at risk of falling into poverty³, with the likely outcome of worsening human development indicators for families and children.

In response to the pandemic and targeting the most vulnerable, the Cabinet approved an emergency monthly top up of 1,000 THB (approximately US\$32) for three months of social protection programmes reaching 8 million vulnerable households, including 1.4 million children under 6 receiving the CSG, following UNICEF advocacy.

Against this downturn, MICS6, the largest national survey on children and women⁴, launched in October, was the first to include a questionnaire directed at children to assess foundational learning skills and will form key evidence for policy planning, advocacy, and monitoring on child related issues. Findings underline the continued need to address inequity and focus on the most vulnerable children and young people in Thailand.

MICS6 data reveals that only 61 per cent of children aged 3-5 are on track in the literacy-numeracy

²World Bank, 2020

³NESDC, 2020

⁴MICS6 Report

¹ UNDP Human Development Report, 2020

domain. The poor nutritional status of children under 5-years, 13 per cent stunting, 8 per cent underweight and 9 per cent overweight, remains a concern⁵ along with a low exclusive breastfeeding rate of 14 per cent. Almost 1 in 4 children aged 0-17 do not live with either biological parent. Rates of violent discipline remain high at 58 per cent for children aged 1-14.

School attendance rates drop after grade 9 (the end of compulsory education) from 87 per cent to 70 per cent. Children from vulnerable households face increased challenges and adolescent birth rates reveal that 1 in 43 adolescent girls aged 15-19 have given birth. Only about half of children in the poorest quintile attend upper secondary school compared to 87 per cent of children in richest quintile; and more than half of upper secondary school-age children living in a household headed by a non-Thai native speaker are not in school.

In 2020, the RTG unveiled its vision for a reformed education eco-system to improve quality in pre-tertiary education and accelerate progress towards 21st century excellence. Plans include the development of a competency-based national curriculum, creating Human Capital Excellence Centres (HCEC) for education workforce strengthening, establishing a Digital Education Excellence Platform (DEEP), and envisioning Excellence Individual Development Plan (EIDP) to promote growth mindset.

Mental health, especially of adolescents, remains an urgent priority for children in Thailand. Several surveys conducted in 2020 to understand the impact of COVID-19, indicate that mental health is among the top concerns. 7 in 10 children and young people felt the pandemic had affected their mental health, causing stress, worry, and anxiety. Schools in Thailand currently lack professional counsellors able to detect signs of mental illness and provide timely intervention⁶.

Thailand is rapidly becoming an aging population, driven by a low birth rate at 1.4 births per woman⁷ with the year 2025 projected to mark the crossover into decline⁸. In addition, around 1.4 million young people aged 15-24 are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), giving a NEET rate of 14.9 per cent⁹. The NESDC projects that the ratio of people of working age (15-64) to those aged 65 and over



is expected to drop from 3.6 in 2020 to 1.8 in 2040. This contraction in workforce entrants puts pressure on Thailand to ensure that productivity of the workforce is enhanced, making the education and skill development of young people a top priority for continued growth.

Against the background of the above challenges, Thailand was marked by student and youth led political protests this year, calling inter alia for reform of the education sector, consideration of schools as safe spaces for civic engagement and scrutiny of the upholding of children's rights to participation. The development reflected a broader and widening inter-generational polarisation, which conspires against meaningful participation for Thai adolescents in community decisions or in policy development processes¹⁰. To note, Thailand adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, which guarantees for children's voices to be heard.

5 Ibid
6 UNICEF CCA Youth consultations
7 Ibid
8 UN World Population Prospects, 2019
9 ILO Brief, 2020

10 Ibid



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MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS AND DRIVERS OF RESULTS

Introduction

The year 2020 marked the 4th year of the current UNICEF Thailand Country Programme (CP), 2017-2021. In supporting the rights of children and adolescents, the CP continued to align with Thailand's 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) and the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF) 2017-2021.

As an upper middle-income country, UNICEF's strategy in Thailand continues to be on strengthening of key state institutions to deliver and scale up quality social services to all children while strengthening institutions to fulfil the rights of every child and address persistent inequalities. This has also remained the key strategy during 2020 and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While COVID-19 demands dominated 2020, UNICEF Thailand, together with partners, made significant progress in effecting longer-term systemic change, by supporting the mainstreaming of child-related issues into key national frameworks. UNICEF advocacy at ministerial level and with NESDC, ensured a comprehensive focus on children and young people in the reviews of the five-year Master Plans and sub Master Plans. Concretely, 42 jointly developed child-related 'key success factors' were either directly or partially adopted in those Plans. As a result, Government-led child-related projects and budgeting are now more secure, and a strong foundation has been laid for continued child-sensitive planning in the next NESDP (2022-2026). Further, UNICEF Thailand provided key inputs to the design and development of other national policies and programmes, such as the MoE's Skill Development Framework, the Child Protection Visioning Exercise and the Adolescent Health Promotion Model, facilitated by three online surveys of almost 10,000 young people.

What we did: The COVID Pivot

Immediate response

With financial support from USAID, the Government of Japan and Unilever, UNICEF supported the national COVID-19 response plan under the leadership of the MoPH, providing critical prevention supplies (digital thermometers, hand sanitisers, soap) to over 165,000 people including 60,000 children, and procuring testing re-agents, worth US\$165k.

UNICEF particularly focused on at-risk migrant families, hard hit by the economic impact of lockdown and falling outside Government COVID-19 assistance. Working with the Thai Red Cross to identify vulnerable families and to double the reach and impact, UNICEF provided food and non-food relief to more than 30,000 migrant families. Partnering with local NGO networks in border provinces with concentrated migrant populations, hygiene supplies were distributed to over 25,000 migrant children in 128 migrant learning centres, 68 private residential care homes and 120 migrant shelters.

Spreading the word, not the virus – positive communications

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, UNICEF has been working with the UN system, the Government, experts and partners to establish large-scale campaigns and community engagement interventions promoting social and behaviour change. These have focused on promoting facts over fear, and offering trustworthy guidance to parents, caregivers, children and youth, including the vulnerable populations, on issues ranging from health and hygiene practices to psychosocial and mental health issues.

Ensuring access to information on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation for the most vulnerable was a key first step in the UNICEF approach. A total of 186,625 people across 23 provinces were reached through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) messaging, the majority of whom were migrants or from ethnic minorities, where limited access to information and language barriers put them at greater risk.

UNICEF Thailand reached people nationwide over 45 million times recording over 1.57 million engagements with COVID-19 related content on social media where UNICEF Thailand amplified public health messaging and raised awareness of, and advocated for, meeting the needs of those hardest hit by the economic impact, notably raising US\$130,000 through Love Delivery Fest, a virtual telethon organised on YouTube. A new COVID-19 website offered toolkits, infographics, podcasts and videos with prevention recommendations and advice on mental health issues.



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Providing social support – Gathering data and evidence

Beyond initial response, UNICEF examined the impacts of the crisis and subsequent lockdown, particularly among vulnerable groups, and invested in generating up-to-date evidence to inform targeted policy responses. Notably, in response to a request from the NESDC, and in co-lead with UNDP, UNICEF carried out a socio-economic impact assessment of COVID-19 in Thailand. The assessment, informed by rapid surveys, provided key macro-economic projections and a social impact analysis of five key areas: poverty and social protection, health, nutrition, education, and violence.

In parallel, UNICEF coordinated several large-scale online surveys on the economic and social impact of COVID-19 targeting families with young children, children living without their biological parents (Children Left Behind) and young people, to better understand the impact faced by these vulnerable groups. Facilitated by partnerships with the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), the Institute of Population and Social Research (IPSR), the Children and Youth Council of Thailand (CYCT), UNDP and UNFPA, the analysis of results from almost 80,000 respondents informed UNICEF's response plan and advocacy with other stakeholders.

All the above evidence contributed to national policy discussions for the NESDC contingency masterplan on COVID-19.

UNICEF partnered with the Faculty of Nursing of Prince of Songkhla University-Pattani to undertake a rapid assessment of reported challenges facing some poor families in the SBP, particularly in villages under extended lockdown. Findings were shared with the Centre of COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), with information passed down to the provincial government and health authorities of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat. Commitments were made to develop a mitigation plan in the event of a second wave, prioritising food support and nutrition (especially for children) and routine vaccination provision.

Expanding the social net

Partnering with other UN agencies, UNICEF put social protection front and centre of COVID-19 response, advocating for a scale up of existing social transfers to protect children and their families. As a result, Government mobilised US\$765 million to support 8 million vulnerable families (benefitting from CSG, Disability Grant, Old Age Allowance and Welfare Card) through a supplementary cash grant of 1,000 THB (approximately US\$32) for 3 months. UNICEF also successfully advocated with the government to ensure continued school lunches for 650,000 children, ensuring access to nutrition under lockdown.

Building Back Better

With the Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC), UNICEF developed a Safe School Guidance and a Teacher's Manual for 54,000 ECD centres and schools nationwide (also available in Braille) ensuring a safe and healthy return to school for over 10 million children. UNICEF also assisted with the development and dissemination of the Safe School Operations resource pack across 35,369 schools in July 2020.

With the MSDHS, UNICEF developed guidelines for the protection of children in all public residential centres nationwide, and for more than 200 registered private residential care facilities, benefitting almost 20,000 children.

Movement restrictions, coupled with school closures, have heightened children's exposure to violence in the home, while at the same time, have undermined monitoring of such risks.

Consequently, UNICEF supported several ministries¹¹ in developing and distributing guidance for government personnel on child protection in the community during COVID-19. With 2,500 copies distributed to relevant bodies at local, provincial and national levels, the benefits accrue beyond the pandemic.

¹¹ Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), Ministry of Interior (Mol) and Ministry of Education (MoE)

What we did: Lifecycle approach

In 2020, UNICEF maintained a lifecycle approach to link the early and later years of a child's life, delivering integrated results across programmatic domains. COVID-19 has compounded Thailand's existing social inequities, inequalities, and vulnerabilities, by a disruption in basic services, school closures, and growing poverty. In this context, UNICEF sought to adjust its approach by creatively re-imagining a better future for every child across their lifecycle, and adopting an experimental mind-set to overcome new challenges, based on nurturing resilience and fostering inclusivity.

First decade

The importance given to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Act (2019) in the national context was marked this year by the appointment of an ECD policy committee, setting-up of a secretariat and working sub-committees, and the finalisation of the national ECD Strategic Plan 2020-2027.

Significant investments were made in generating up-to-date evidence to help prioritise policy implementation in the coming years with the commissioning of a landscape analysis of childcare services for the 0-3 age-group. This analysis also informed the development of a curriculum for caregivers, to be trialed in 2021.

Acknowledging the importance of having a well-equipped and trained ECD workforce, UNICEF partnered with Department of Local Administration (DOLA) to support and certify 13 ECD demonstration facilities taking the cumulative total to 27 across 23 provinces, expanding the available cadre of lead ECD trainers and reaching nearly 3,000 children. In 2020, teachers and caregivers in 22 such centres modelled onsite parenting programmes, engaging 660 families to promote responsible and nurturing caregiving for adults in young children's lives; and Early Moments Matters on Mobile (EMMM) successfully transitioned to a new platform reaching nearly 30,000 subscribers.

New partnerships with the DOLA have delivered enhanced child focused approaches driven by and implemented by local authorities, ensuring sustainable investments in ECD systems and workforce. Engage-

ment with the Parliamentary Budget Office, led to strengthening of public finance for children, through increased budget for school lunches. Through cooperation with the Sanya Dharmasakti Institute for Democracy (SDID), and Thammasat University, decentralised financing for ECD capacity building of local authorities in Nakhon Rachasima province will be extended to five additional provinces in 2021.

Advocating for greater equity in basic education to support children from ethnic and linguistic minority and migrant communities was a key priority in 2020. UNICEF Thailand supported over 1,200 migrant children from Myanmar in Chiang Mai and Ranong to attend school and the ongoing Mae Hong Son district school programme ensured enrolment and participation of over 600 ethnic minority children from 27 remote Highlander communities.

More broadly, UNICEF worked with partners to address weaknesses across the school system, exposed by the pandemic, such as the need for improved remote technologies. This included developing a draft national curriculum and a skills



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framework highlighting core competencies. 23,000 young people and teachers, 3,300 administrators and school principals and 5,000 parents were consulted to inform both documents. UNICEF also convened discussions with the private sector on education technology, collaborated with International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO on mapping school connectivity, and curated available online learning resources to support children's home-based learning.

UNICEF rolled out several country-wide, potentially scalable initiatives to support reading in the early years, in both urban and rural contexts. In partnership with the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA), and thanks to EU funding, with an emphasis on promoting foundational reading skills and school readiness (A Book A Week – Reading Saves Lives) as well as the skill development of teachers and caregivers (Every Child Can Read), UNICEF campaigns this year reached over 64,000 children, including over 2,000 from ethnic minority and migrant groups, in ECD centres, schools and through the Mobile Library initiatives nationwide.

In the SBP, UNICEF leveraged ongoing work with the ICT teachers' network during school closure, training 150 teachers on the use of remote technologies, supporting 6,000 students. UNICEF also conducted a rapid assessment of the distance learning pilot implemented to better understand issues around access and acceptance to technology. The findings will

inform the review of the national learning platform and identify next steps on promoting equitable education around technology in Thailand.

UNICEF advocacy led to several important steps in 2020, including moving closer to a Universal Child Grant. Developed in partnership with TDRI and endorsed by the National Council for Youth and Children, the Grant will cover 4.2 million children under 6, if approved by Cabinet in early 2021. Further, in recognition of the challenges facing children with disabilities and their families, the Disability Grant was increased from 800 to 1,000 THB (US\$32) per month for those households with children and a welfare card. Thirdly, agreement was reached for further expansion of the M-FUND, a low-cost health insurance scheme developed with EU funding for migrants, which acts as a safety net for those not covered by the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme, beyond the current 18,000 beneficiaries and ensuring sustainability.

Second decade

Young people face increasing challenges in their second decade, as they undergo critical physical and emotional changes. The effects of the pandemic point to negative impacts on adolescent mental health and wellbeing with 7 in 10 youth acknowledging high stress levels in a recent survey. This, in turn, risks compounding falling school attendance rates once compulsory education ends, and the challeng-

es young people face transitioning into meaningful work. In this context, UNICEF Thailand put an emphasis in 2020 on nurturing hope for the future, by supporting specific skill development opportunities, as well as enhancing participation and spaces for engagement and for making their voices heard. The approach supported scalable system strengthening for sustainability.

Adolescent wellbeing

Enhancements to Lovecarestation.com, an online platform for sexual and mental health, extended reach to more than 1.8 million persons, a 42 per cent rise in use, and more than 30,000 adolescents and young people received online counselling services. Aiming to reach around 6 million students nationwide by 2024, a new mobile application called HERO (Health and Education Reintegrating Operation) was piloted to connect schools and hospitals, strengthening mental health screening and referral systems.

In a successful collaboration with Government and private sector partners, UNICEF organised The Sound of Happiness campaign, to overcome stigma attached to mental health issues by bringing to life the voices and experiences of people who struggled with mental health challenges during their youth, while promoting current services and platforms for adolescents to seek professional help. UNICEF also supported the MoE in developing guidance and a framework to protect children from sexual abuse and violence.

Preparing for the future

At 4.9 per cent, youth unemployment is seven times higher compared to the total population, according to the Youth Employability Scoping Study Report published in 2020 by TDRI, with support from UNICEF and ILO, which highlighted the need for continued focus on skill development and employability development for young people.

Enhancing chances among the most vulnerable, the Department of Juvenile Observation and Protection (DJOP) reformed its education and training curriculum to suit the needs of young people in juvenile detention with UNICEF support, while partnerships with Life Skills Development Foundation and Friends International provided vocational skills training for migrants in Bangkok and Chiang Mai focused on career advancement and employability. A vision paper outlining a blueprint for an inclusive youth employability platform will inform the strategic direction of UNICEF Thailand in 2021 and beyond.

With UNICEF support, and in partnership with co-hosts UNDP and the Saturday School Foundation, a youth team from the SBP of Thailand won the Generation Unlimited (GenU) Youth Challenge in 2020 for the second year running.



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Youth Engagement

Besides the engagement of youth in surveys on the many impacts of COVID-19, a survey conducted with the Thailand Education Partnership (TEP) enabled incorporation of the youth perspective on school curriculum reform. UNICEF established its first-ever Youth Advisory Board comprising 50 young people from various backgrounds to guide engagements with young people and to share their experiences with policy makers. Members were actively involved in a range of activities throughout the year including the development of a reporting channel on child protection online, input to the Sound of Happiness campaign and validation of environmental research with UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO). In light of student and youth led protests, and in line with its mandate to promote young people's right to participation and civic and political engagement, UNICEF issued a statement calling for the protection of children and young people.

These initiatives form part of larger efforts to promote the rights of all children in Thailand in line with the UNICEF mandate. UNICEF continues to engage with governmental and non-governmental entities to ensure the safety of children in multiple ways. In order to enable children to enjoy their rights at school, UNICEF continues to support the MoE's efforts to strengthen the school environment to ensure that children are protected from violence and sexual abuse and are able to report any violations.

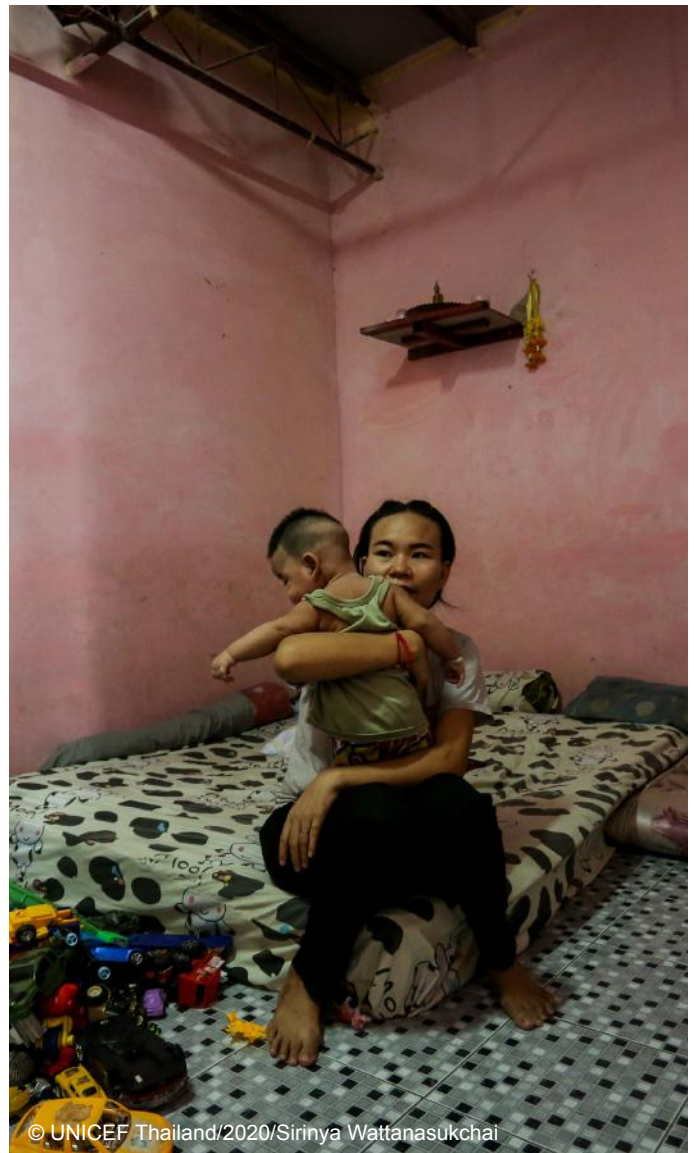
UNICEF also continues to advocate for the judicial rights of children under the age of 18 as stated in the Child Protection Act and in line with juvenile justice procedures outlined in the Juvenile and Family Court and Procedure Act. UNICEF also disseminated public communication materials to promote hotline services, tips for constructive conversations at home and on how to address family tensions as well as messaging on online safety and prevention of bullying.

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Child Protection

Efforts in child protection in 2020 focused on building consensus among key stakeholders and laying the groundwork for a roll out of programmes aimed at reducing violence against children in many settings. A national child protection visioning exercise and the development of a long-term roadmap to guide inter-ministerial efforts towards developing protective services was launched towards the end of 2020 in partnership with the Department of Children and Youth and aims to ensure adequate prioritisation and resourcing of child protection in national policy.

Support for the Office of the Attorney General involved both pre-service child protection training and development of a reference manual on juvenile and family litigation including child protection, while regional child protection expertise will be nurtured with the development of guidance for public prosecutors to support the work of the Regional Centres on



Protection of Children, Juveniles and Family.

Protection of migrant children, among the most vulnerable, remained a priority. With EU funding, a manual on implementation of the Government's inter-ministerial MOU on alternatives to immigration detention for children was developed and distributed and a ground-breaking national consultation of migrant children will inform implementation of the ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration.

The Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) programme led by MOPH, trials for which showed a 58 per cent reduction in child maltreatment, will be scaled up to focus on training of caregivers.

HOW WE DID IT:

PARTNERSHIPS AND UN COLLABORATION

In 2020, UNICEF Thailand managed some 51 strategic partnerships with 9 Government departments, 38 civil society and 4 private sector groups, including partnering with 12 CSOs to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. These partnerships were key to the delivery of results in 2020. The role of UNICEF as a convenor also proved crucial, and during the COVID-19 response, UNICEF Thailand leveraged its role on convening and knowledge management to partners and Government to press for significant change, and key results such as the emergency cash transfer top-up and the expansion of the CSG.

Collaboration with UN agencies increased. Under a joint SDG Fund programme with ILO, IOM, and UN Women, UNICEF was able to advocate and bring about expanded social protection measures under COVID-19; while the major socio-economic impact assessment under COVID-19 was organised in co-

lead with UNDP and ILO. Under this partnership, UNICEF co-launched a diagnostic review, to incorporate a poverty and vulnerability analysis, mapping of existing social protection schemes and propose options for policy reform, including budgeting for a more integrated system. A needs assessment and gap analysis on COVID-19 and gender-based violence under COVID-19 organised in collaboration with UNFPA and UN Women identified key areas for multi-agency collaboration.

In cooperation with the Equitable Education Fund (EEF), UNICEF worked on a range of issues, from collaboration on the nationwide dissemination of the Safe School Operations resource pack as part of COVID-19 response, to initiating work on equity-based budgeting. With EEF, UNICEF Thailand co-hosted the All for Education virtual global conference involving 60 global changemakers and 40,000

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60 famous Think Tanks and Educators from around the world
 Sharing experiences and knowledge to find solutions for equitable education amidst the new challenge in the world after COVID-19

participants across 39 countries. UNICEF also partnered with the Royal Society to embed mother-tongue and multilingual-based education in national plans and policies, including the national language strategy and the NESDC led Master Plans.

A partnership with the Fiscal Policy Office (FPO) and Chiang Mai University, will result in the evaluation of the flagship welfare card programme which benefits more than 14 million families.

Partnership with the NSO led to the development and completion of MICS6, funded for the first time by the RTG to the tune of US\$500,000. Survey data informed the NESDC Q3 social outlook publications, thereby reaching key decision makers at Cabinet level, and will continue to contribute to the analysis of the situation of children and women and be used as a measure for the achievement of the SDGs and other key global and national strategies.

UNICEF strengthened its supporter engagement efforts this year to enable wider involvement in its mission for child rights, while further strengthening its internal processes and resources. New advocacy partnerships were developed with celebrities and influencers to jointly advocate for and deliver activities for children. By the end of 2020, the 'I Am UNICEF' volunteering platform had mobilised almost 16,000 supporters, and through which UNICEF continued to engage volunteers in various opportunities such as COVID-19 response, support to adolescent mental health, and raising community awareness to end violence against children. A supporter engagement newsletter was introduced to ensure that volunteers

and UNICEF supporters receive regular updates on the situation of children in Thailand and UNICEF programming. Through the 'Volunteer Leader' initiative, community volunteers delivered hands-on support to COVID-19 RCCE efforts, while students nationwide continue to implement community development and advocacy initiatives through the 'UNICEF Club' civic engagement initiative.

Learning from each other through in-house UNICEF cross-border collaboration grew in significance during 2020, through South-South modalities with UNICEF offices in the region, as well as facilitating linkages between professionals through webinars and relevant networks. A draft MOU on strengthening cooperation to protect children affected by migration was agreed by the governments of Thailand and Myanmar following UNICEF technical and financial support.

More than 75 celebrities and influencers, ranging from famous actors, singers, to comedians, entertainers, and technical experts, including Friends of UNICEF and UNICEF Thailand Goodwill Ambassador Mr. Anand Panyarachun, provided critical support to UNICEF's programmatic, advocacy, and fundraising campaigns and initiatives throughout 2020. The third Blue Carpet Show reached over 40 million people online in addition to a live TV audience of over 1 million viewers and gained over US\$2 million in PR value through more than 600 pieces of media coverage. These initiatives raised more than US\$1 million for children in Thailand and around the world.



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What's next?

In 2021, together with a host of partners, UNICEF is embarking on the development of its new Country Programme of Cooperation (2022-2026) with the RTG, to tackle key challenges and deprivations across the lifecycle development of children and young people in Thailand. Emerging priorities and lessons learnt in 2020 and over the course of the past years, will guide and inform the direction of the programme to ensure effective delivery of key results.

Accelerating private sector partnerships

The rapid pace of change, the number of actors engaging with Child Rights and Business (CRB) stakeholders, and limited resources calls for anchoring key strategies in partnerships, aligned visions and clear medium-long term joint action plans.

In this respect, in 2020 UNICEF Thailand progressed private sector engagement efforts under the Business for Results (B4R) initiative, including supporting corporate sector COVID-19 response and adaptation. This and other ongoing cooperation with the business community provides a platform for further engagement with business to contribute to children's rights.

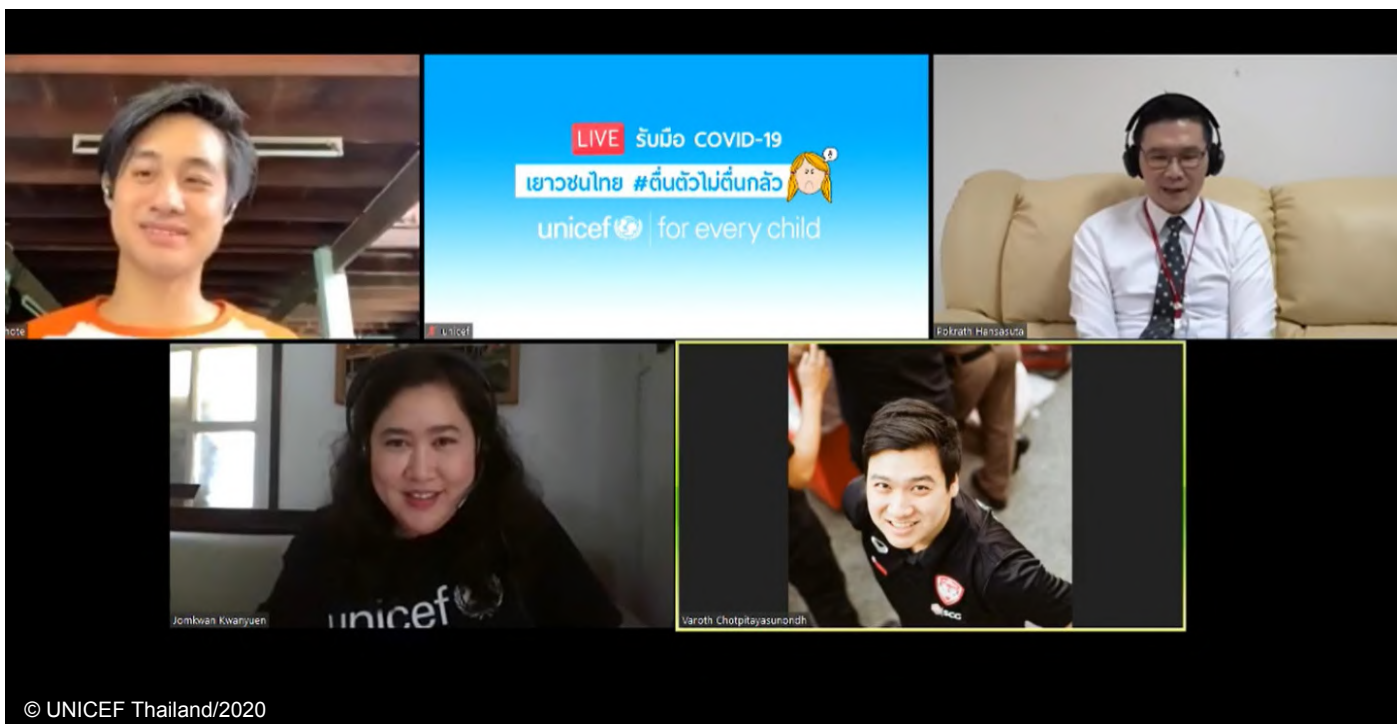
Child Rights and Business training in partnership with the Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET), carried out online in 2020, saw 10 of 28 companies trained in 2019 put forward their children's rights impact assessment in their public communications, such as corporate sustainability reports.

With EU funding, a partnership with Baan Dek Foundation on the Chiang Mai Framework for Action (CMFA) developed to address child rights in the construction sector continued, demonstrating application of CMFA tools in work camps. Work on Family Friendly Practices (FFP) also commenced in 2020, with research on prevailing corporate FFP standards and practices, including identifying industry leading cases for future engagement. UNICEF also engaged in consultations with business organisations and companies on digital education and skills development, and adolescent employability in the post-COVID-19 context, to help inform future programming in these areas.



UNICEF shared guidance for employers with key private sector partners, covering flexible working arrangements, childcare support, and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19 aimed at achieving a better work-life balance.

Promoting child protection, UNICEF shared guidance for mobile operators and online content providers for keeping children safe online during the pandemic; a major mobile operator (DTAC) integrated this guidance into their child safeguarding activities. UNICEF also developed and disseminated communication materials on child online protection and played a convening role in efforts to develop an e-learning child protection curriculum with child protection and justice professionals.



Digitalisation

The experience of the past 12 months has shown that the trend of digitalisation is no longer emerging but has now consolidated and must be a central consideration in future programming. Learning to adapt and devise new ways to interact is a key success factor, not only during a time of crisis, but also in the longer term.

Lockdown measures put in place to halt the spread and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 triggered an end to face to face contacts, affected learning for 10 million children and highlighted the need for digital access in homes across the country. The experience highlighted the need to reduce the digital gap, by better understanding of marginalised groups, and those with little access to remote learning or government support measures, and the importance of a more resilient and inclusive education system which can respond effectively to changing circumstances. UNICEF quickly moved to provide RCCE information online, setting an example followed by Government agencies who adapted access to social grants to online registration. Young people were encouraged to access COVID-19 prevention information, health care tips and counselling online, addressing some of the socio-economic fallout of the crisis.

Traditional data collection methods and analysis was no longer possible due to social distancing measures, so new online or remote methods were devised by leveraging partnerships. Realtime monitoring be-

came paramount given the fast-evolving situation on the ground and necessary policy changes to adapt to the new reality.





Leveraging policy and financing to benefit children

Developments in 2020 revealed the importance of working with line ministries, particularly their planning departments, to bring child-related issues to the centre of national plans and strategies, while advocating in parallel for child-related issues with the NESDC, as the body responsible for reviewing ministerial projects and proposals.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of initiatives for children at the local level is only possible with adequate financing at the national level. Advocacy for increased Government commitment to create a fiscal environment which provides a secure commitment to the improvement of quality services for children, young people and their families, both at a national and decentralised level, will be crucial for the next Country Programme. A better understanding of changes in national policy processes, along with various funding pathways for policies and proposals, will ensure increased leverage to access further funding for children, in particular at the local level.

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