



GOAL AREA 3

Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Global Annual
Results Report 2021

unicef 
for every child

Cover image: © UNICEF/UN0484305/UNICEF Afghanistan
Children playing outside with hula-hoops at Child Friendly Space
built by UNICEF in Balkh, a northern province of Afghanistan.

Expression of thanks: © UNICEF/UN0456813/Fuad
Hands of a young girl (15) in Dhamar, Yemen, who was about to
be another victim of child marriage. But fortunately, with the help
of UNICEF's engagement, her family was dissuaded from the
practice.



Expression of thanks

UNICEF's work for children is funded entirely through individual donations and the voluntary support of our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children's rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. We would like to thank all our partners for their commitment and trust in UNICEF.

UNICEF would like to extend particular thanks to its partners who provided global thematic funding for child protection in 2021, notably the governments of Sweden, Denmark, Spain and Hungary, and all National Committees for UNICEF, particularly the National Committees of Germany, Switzerland, the United States of America and Sweden. Thematic funds are critical in allowing for greater flexibility, long-term planning and innovative programming. These funds have contributed significantly to the results described in this report. UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base, including thematic contributions, and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible.

Seventy-five years after UNICEF was established and thirty-two years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the organization's mission to promote the full attainment of the rights of all children is as urgent 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 is able to fully enjoy their rights. It sets out measurable results for children – especially the most disadvantaged (including those in humanitarian situations) – and defines the change strategies and enablers that support their achievement.

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

This report summarizes UNICEF's and its partners' contribution to Goal Area 3 in 2021 and reviews the impact of these accomplishments on children and the communities in which they live. This is one of seven reports on the results of efforts made during 2021, 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'. It supplements the 2021 Executive Director Annual Report, UNICEF's official accountability document for the past year.

Contents

Executive Summary	2	Output 3.2: Strengthening prevention and delivery of protection services to reduce harmful practices (child marriage and female genital mutilation)	70
Strategic context.....	8	Child marriage	72
Global trends and challenges	10	Female genital mutilation	77
Looking forward	13	Output 3.3: Improving children’s access to justice	83
Results by strategic output	14	Justice for children	84
Result summary	15	Children without parental or family care	90
A cornerstone of child protection: strengthening systems.....	24	Mainstreaming a disability-inclusive approach to child protection programming	94
Output 3.1: Strengthening child protection systems for prevention and response services to reduce violence against children.....	28	Accelerating birth registration to close the legal identity gap	99
Accelerating national progress to reduce all forms of violence.....	29	High-level priorities	105
Social service workforce strengthening	44	Abbreviations and acronyms.....	110
Scaling up digital information management systems	47	Annex 1: Child protection financial report*	111
Child protection in humanitarian action	49	Part 1: Overall UNICEF income in 2021	111
Mental health and psychosocial support	52	Part 2: UNICEF Goal Area 3 income and expenses...	114
Monitoring and reporting on grave violations	54	Endnotes.....	131
Children associated with armed forces or armed groups	55		
Unaccompanied and separated children	56		
Mine action and explosive weapons in populated areas.....	58		
Gender-based violence in emergencies	60		
Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse	62		
Reflections and looking forward.....	65		
Children on the move.....	66		





Executive summary

People watch as children from Aagaz enact a street play to raise awareness about child protection in Bhopal, India.

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Child protection is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children, including adolescents. The UNICEF approach in Goal Area 3 (child protection) is guided by human rights principles, norms and standards that are embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ and its three Optional Protocols. It seeks to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.^{2,3}

Despite advancements in child rights over the past two decades – notably, the rise in birth registration levels and declining rates of female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and child labour – significant acceleration is required to fully realize the rights of all children everywhere, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other global conventions, and to achieve the child protection-related SDGs.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has further intensified threats to children's rights to protection, as services to manage those risks have been reduced and countries continue to feel the social and economic impact of the pandemic in 2021. School closures, disruptions in health, social, child protection and other services, and caregiver deaths caused by the pandemic have placed the most vulnerable at an increased risk of multiple rights violations, such as violence against children and women, child marriage, child labour, trafficking and family separation.

Government leaders, political leaders and all leaders across the world, we need more commitment to help end violence against children.

– Sarafina, Youth Activist, Ghana,
Global Forum for Children and Youth (CY21)

Over the past two years, the number of children living in countries with complex emergencies has almost doubled, making the threat to rights to protection particularly acute for these children.⁴ The rapid escalation of violence in Ukraine in early 2022, which caused more than 1.5 million children to flee their homes in the first month of the conflict, underscores the critical need for sustained prevention and preparedness in humanitarian action.

While countries in situations of fragility and those affected by conflict or climate-related disasters are some of the hardest hit, certain other contexts also accentuate threats to the protection of children, including poverty and loss of livelihoods, violence along migration routes and, increasingly, violence in the virtual world. Children also face discrimination and neglect due to disability, racism, xenophobia, sexual orientation and gender identity, and ethnicity.

Key results in 2021

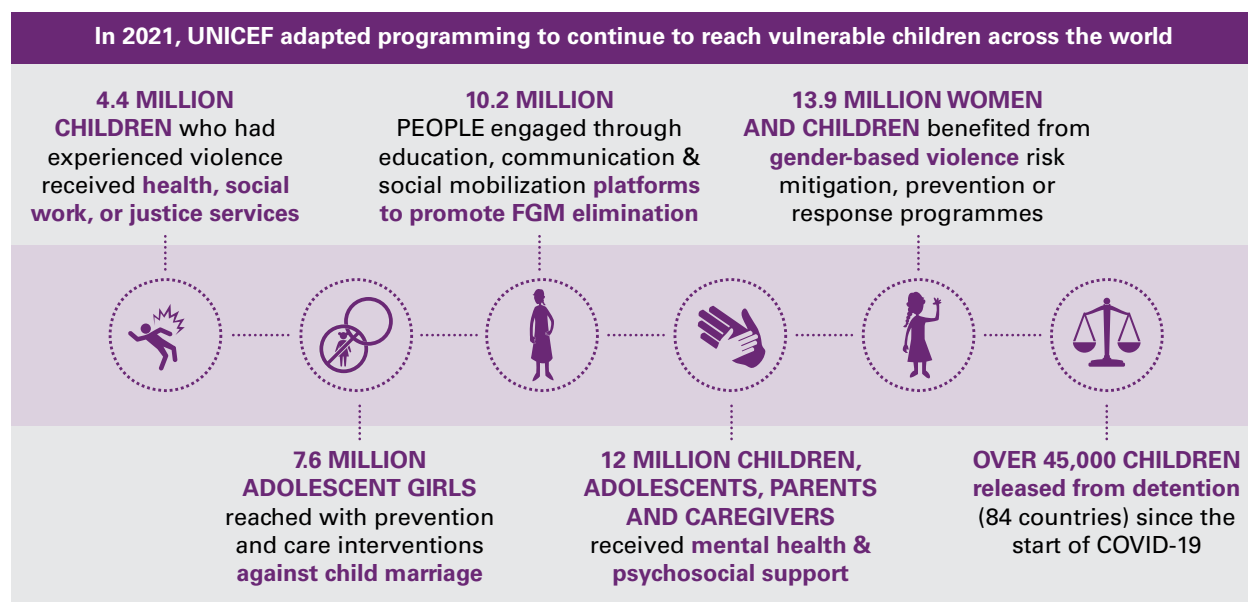
Against this backdrop, UNICEF Goal Area 3 worked with global, regional and national partners – including governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia – in 153 countries, to continue progress in the final year of its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The launch of UNICEF's 2021–2030 Child Protection Strategy provided a pivotal opportunity to build on our experiences and lessons learned across each thematic area in which UNICEF child protection engages. This will help us define our role and shape our direction, to build back better from the disruptions of COVID-19 and the new contextual reality for child protection.

In 2021, this has included: advocating for and shaping global policy and standards (e.g., online protection); calling on governments and partners to scale up their ambitions (e.g., to end child detention, child labour, FGM, child marriage, universal parenting, avoiding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and ending the use of children by armed actors); and developing targeted thematic agendas to accelerate joint action (e.g., investing in mental health, prevention of violence, care reform, justice for children and humanitarian action).

Programmatically, while the focus in 2020 was on maintaining the continuity of services, in 2021 child protection has also extended its focus on preventative strategies and approaches, emphasising scale and quality of services as foundational pillars to steer national policy decision makers to invest in a long-term vision of child protection and well-being. Through sustained partnerships, advocacy and support to over 150 countries, there are signs of improvements to previously disrupted child protection and related services across many countries. UNICEF adapted programming to continue to reach vulnerable and marginalized children across the world, reaching millions of children, parents and caregivers across many areas of UNICEF's child protection programming (see *Figure 1*).

From the start of the pandemic, UNICEF convened United Nations agencies and partners to advocate for the release of children from detention, as part of a joint approach across the United Nations Development System. A major result in 2021 was the largest-ever release of children from detention within a short period of time. Over 45,000 children across 84⁵ countries had been released by the end of 2021.⁶ UNICEF and partners also continue to scale up

FIGURE 1: Goal Area 3 selected results summary, 2021



access to child-friendly justice services, benefiting 384,000 children in 81 countries, or nearly half of all children in contact with justice and administrative bodies in 2021. This was an increase from 210,000 in 48 countries in 2017. While this is a critical breakthrough, ramped-up action is still needed, including the need to end the unlawful and arbitrary detention of children, the immigration detention of children, and detention due to association with armed actors, or for national security reasons. Releasing children from detention forms one of six actions of the ambitious 10-year #Reimagine Justice for Children Agenda, which UNICEF launched in 2021. The agenda, which is closely aligned to the new Child Protection Strategy, 2021-2030, calls on all states to accelerate progress so that all children know and can claim their rights.

Working across countries, the number of children experiencing violence, who received health, social or justice services has increased exponentially over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, particularly in the South Asia and the East and Central Asia regions. Across 129 countries in 2021, UNICEF-supported interventions reached 4.4 million children who had experienced violence (53 per cent are girls out of 2.3 million with disaggregated data on sex). This is an 80 per cent increase from 2017. UNICEF has driven efforts to integrate positive parenting into primary prevention of violence approaches, contributing to the roll-out of a shared inter-agency vision for universal parenting support to accelerate progress. UNICEF-supported parenting programmes have been significantly scaled up, with the number of mothers, fathers and caregivers reached around the world increasing fourfold from 2017.

Regional alliances, particularly with the African Union, and the traction gained by the Global Programme to End Child Marriage, co-led by UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), resulted in 7.6 million adolescent girls across 47 countries receiving prevention and care interventions, compared with 2.1 million across 23 countries in 2017, meeting the 2021 target. In 2021, this included over 11,000 adolescent girls with disabilities across 20 countries: a tenfold increase over 2017. A key programmatic shift in recent years is the adoption of rights-based, evidence-based, and action-oriented gender-transformative approaches to address gender and social norms barriers and restrictions that increase adolescent girls’ and young women’s risk of child marriage and FGM.

The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM has entered its fourth phase, with a stronger focus on promoting girls’ agency, including through promoting life skills and adolescent girls’ empowerment. To drive localized collaboration, UNICEF is also increasingly building partnerships with grassroots movements and women-led organizations. Education, communication and social mobilization platforms promoting elimination of FGM engaged 10.2 million people (50 per cent are girls out of 6.5 million with disaggregated data on sex). This was an increase of 64 per cent from 2017 and surpassed the 2021 target by nearly one third. To date, close to 4,500 communities, involving over 3.4 million people, made public declarations to abandon the practice.

To ensure every child has the right to a legal identity, UNICEF continues to work closely with multiple United Nations agencies – including as part of the United Nations

Legal Identity Agenda – to accelerate birth registration and close the identity gap. This includes improving interoperability with other sectors, especially the health sector, supporting the decentralization of services and facilitating increased investments in digitization. These measures are proving to be game changers for countries, even in emergency situations such as COVID-19.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF, working in close cooperation with partners, has supported the notification of births of 45 million children, the registration of births of 97 million, and the certification of births of 82 million children. In total, 47 countries have in place free and universal birth registration services within the civil registration system, over threefold from 14 countries in 2017. A global evaluation of UNICEF's work on civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) was released in 2021, providing important recommendations to accelerate action. This includes aligning UNICEF's areas of support within a life-cycle approach to legal identity.

With a scale-up of action in East and Central Asia and in West and Central Africa, there are 80 per cent more countries than there were in 2017 with alternative care

policies in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (from 23 in 2017 to 41 in 2021). In early 2021, the roll-out of the UNICEF agenda, 'It's Time for Care: Prioritizing quality care for children during the COVID-19 pandemic – Challenges, opportunities and an agenda for action', is boosting efforts to increase national investments in the care economy. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion (DGD) provided further critical leverage to push forward calls on governments to increase their commitments to care reform.

UNICEF has also enhanced support to strengthen child protection systems that are inclusive of the specific needs of children with disabilities. Recent years have seen renewed impetus in generating reliable and internationally comparable data on children with disabilities, including, in 2021, the release of the first-ever cross-nationally comparable data on children with disabilities, with data estimates drawn from around 50 countries. Though structural challenges remain in building inclusive services for children with disabilities, improved reporting mechanisms indicate a scale-up in the number of children reached with violence prevention and response services;



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UNICEF supported social worker, who has gone through the social work professionalization programme, provides counselling to a child in Hargeisa, Somalia.

almost 45,000 children with disabilities across 64 countries received such services in 2021, up from over 10,000 in 10 countries in 2017.

Over the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan period, UNICEF has invested in transformative programming to achieve unprecedented results for children in humanitarian situations, engaging in 124 countries in 2021. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF has played an especially important role in driving development of inter-agency standards and protocols as well as mobilizing cooperation around innovative multisector programming, resources and tools. The strategic alignment between UNICEF and its humanitarian partners was boosted by the launch of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, which places prevention as a top priority.

In 2021, UNICEF provided protective services to nearly 2.3 million children on the move in 74 countries (of the 1.5 million for whom disaggregated data are available across 53 countries, 53 per cent are girls), which is a 140 per cent increase compared with 2017. Over 179,000 unaccompanied and separated children received family tracing, reunification services and alternative care across 67 countries; over three times the 55,000 children who were reached in 39 countries in 2017. In 19 countries, UNICEF provided protection and reintegration support for 13,000 children (of the 12,000 for whom disaggregated data are available, 25 per cent are girls) who exited armed forces or armed groups. Furthermore, across contexts, UNICEF also supported community-based protection mechanisms and systems to identify children at risk and address the root causes to protect them from recruitment by armed actors.

The year 2021 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of Graça Machel's 1996 seminal report to the United Nations General Assembly on the impact of war on children. Since 2005, at least 266,000 grave violations have been verified by the United Nations as having been committed by parties to conflict in 30 situations across the globe. In line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005), UNICEF supported monitoring of grave violations against children in 21 situations in 2021.

In 21 countries where landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to threaten children and families with debilitating or fatal accidents, 5.2 million children received UNICEF-supported survivor assistance and relevant prevention messages on how to avoid injury. Although this number is similar to that reached in 2017, it had doubled since 2020, when the global pandemic closed schools around the world and significantly curtailed risk education programmes.

UNICEF has expanded access to community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) by integrating services into protection, health and education sectors, as well as implementing targeted awareness campaigns. These collective interventions reached over 8.4 million children and adolescents in 111 countries (up 170 per cent

from 2017) and nearly 3.6 million parents and caregivers in 97 countries. UNICEF has increasingly supported adolescents and children with disabilities with MHPSS; support for children aged 10–14 increased 62 per cent from 2020, and support for children with disabilities increased more than fivefold compared with 2017.

Gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE) programming has become an explicit part of UNICEF's humanitarian action, with 98 per cent of all UNICEF's Humanitarian Appeals for Children in 2021 including a specific GBViE indicator and funding request. Nearly 13.9 million people in 89 countries benefited from UNICEF-supported risk mitigation, prevention or response programmes to address gender-based violence. This is over 21 times the 640,000 people in 43 countries reported in 2017.⁷

UNICEF continued its accelerated scale-up of systems and programmes to protect communities from sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian and development actors, resulting in 117 country offices becoming engaged in establishing systems for the protection of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Of these, 53 had PSEA systems in place in 2021. Across 93 countries, 61 million children and adults now have access to safe and accessible sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) reporting channels; a nearly tenfold increase from 2017.

Other milestones include a landmark resolution on ending violence against children, passed by the World Health Assembly in 2021. Significantly, this has opened up pathways for stronger strategic intersectoral synergies to deliver prevention and response services for children. Strong partnerships are proving critical to drive the global Framework for Reopening Schools. UNICEF child protection is playing a key role in shaping guidance and developing practical tools to address the critical role schools can play in preventing and responding to protection and mental health concerns. With the rapidly increasing role digital platforms play in children's lives, UNICEF is working in partnership with the WeProtect Global Alliance, governments and industry partners to put in place safeguards and to ensure appropriate responses for children who have experienced online harm. The adoption by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child of General Comment 25 has brought vital global-level leverage to accelerate coordinated strategies and plans.

A key element of child protection systems-strengthening (CPSS) is instituting legislation and policy frameworks. Since 2017, through sustained advocacy, investment and technical support, the number of countries introducing or refining legal and policy frameworks has steadily increased, including those to eliminate child labour and end corporal punishment for children. UNICEF also continues to support the adoption and utilization of digital information management systems for case management, with 3.5 times more countries reporting advancements than in 2017. Of note is the continued scaling up of the inter-agency digital solution Primero™ to support child protection actors

in both humanitarian and development contexts to manage protection-related data for case management, incident monitoring and programming monitoring.

To address the centrality of CPSS in advancing protection rights, UNICEF has defined its approach and established a comprehensive set of benchmarks to track its progress more effectively. Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, there has been a steady increase in the number of countries UNICEF supports to strengthen aspects of their social service workforces. There is also a growing

recognition of the critical importance that front-line services performed by the social service workforce can contribute to societies. However, this is not concomitant with adequate growth in national investments – including workforce capacity-building – and the systematic integration of social service workforce strengthening into national budgets and development plans.

In 2021, global programme expenses in Goal Area 3 across 153 offices totalled US\$773 million, including US\$422 million for humanitarian action.

Looking ahead

Despite progress in the past four years, challenges to the child protection landscape remain, with social and economic inequalities, ongoing child rights violations, and progress towards the SDGs lagging in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic. Combined with existing and unfolding crises in all corners of the globe, UNICEF is acutely aware of the need to further maximize our scale and speed, galvanize global action and leverage every opportunity to drive transformational, systemic change.

The launch of the Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030 provides a timely and clear vision for UNICEF's work in child protection for this decade. It calls upon every sector of society to work together and invest jointly to prevent child protection violations. UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 represents a key platform to translate these priorities into demonstrable action, with an emphasis on fostering integration and accelerating coordinated strategies.

UNICEF is making a strategic shift towards prevention of child protection violations in both development and humanitarian contexts. The Child Protection Strategy affirms the need to: strengthen protection systems and the social service workforce; to invest further in access to justice and jointly address violence against girls, boys and women; to deepen intersectoral collaboration; increase the focus on social and behavioural change and gender-transformative programming; ensure the participation of children as rights-holders and change agents, particularly in administrative and judicial processes that concern them; and prioritize the inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups of children, such as those with disabilities and those children on the move, in child protection systems and services.



Strategic context

A child in the IDP settlement in Herat City, Afghanistan.

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Two years of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, aggravated by deep-rooted poverty and increasing income inequality and discrimination, mean that child rights and protection gains are now at risk. The consequences of child protection violations are catastrophic – profound, enduring and often deadly for children – and the economic cost of violence against children is estimated to be US\$7 trillion per year. Yet, many countries, constricted by a tightening fiscal space, have grappled with the trade-off between investing in minimizing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating the longer-term damage this will do to children's protection rights.

Child protection systems have come under excessive stress, testing their resiliency to adapt to the global crisis. Disruptions to the caregiving environment, schooling, work, and social and justice services have sent many women and children into a spiral of harm and violence and heightening the risk of negative coping mechanisms.⁸ Divisions that were already apparent between those who have access to quality services and those who do not have been further exposed.⁹

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every country and community, and exposed millions of more children to physical, sexual and emotional violence. It has also put a

Rebuilding child protection services disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic

In the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has further tested and weakened child protection systems in many countries across the world, placing significant strain on already under-resourced prevention and response services for children. In responding to the pandemic, countries faced significant challenges to ensure continued access to child protection services.

In the rapidly changing context of COVID-19, real-time tracking of the socioeconomic impacts on children proved critical. UNICEF monitoring of selected COVID-19 protection-related indicators in over 122 partner countries over the course of 2020-2021 provides important data on the level of service disruptions. While the pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts continue to test the resiliency of child protection systems, evidence is emerging that, through sustained multi-partner collaboration, dissemination of guidance and tools, and a scaling up of technical support and capacity development, there is progress - albeit incremental in many cases - to get disrupted child protection and related services back on track.

UNICEF data show that at the end of September 2021 (latest available data), 59 countries had reported some type of service disruption; this was down from 71 countries reporting service disruption at the end of March 2021.

8 in 10 countries

adopting one or more measures to ensure continuity of child protection services, and where there are clear signs that investment is yielding progress

19 countries

increased or introduced home visit services by social service/justice workers in the past year – yet they remain the main disrupted service – pointing to the critical need for sustained advocacy to increase investment in the social service workforce

80 countries

where improvements are being seen to adapt pre-existing or introduce a new child helpline linked to government services, providing a valuable long-term addition to service provision

78 countries

have taken measures to adapt and/or scale up mental health and psychosocial support services for children, including adolescents

80 countries

have adapted approaches to continue providing support to their existing child protection caseload – often through innovative case management processes

74 countries

have maintained, developed, or scaled up new or existing approaches to integrate prevention of violence against children messaging in mainstream media or other communication channels

spotlight on the mental health and well-being of children, adolescents and caregivers, which has been aggravated by the isolation and disruption caused by the pandemic. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a particularly

devastating impact on households in low-income countries and those in situations of fragility and conflict, many of which were already in precarious situations – only serving to reinforce existing inequities.

Global trends and challenges

Decades-long progress in children’s protection and well-being has resulted in increases in birth registration and reductions in child marriage, FGM and child labour. Yet, despite progress, the world remains off track to meet child protection-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. Countries in situations of fragility and conflict are the furthest behind, while certain other contexts (such as migratory routes and, increasingly, violence in the virtual world) heighten threats to the protection of children. The COVID-19 pandemic has served to further diminish protection rights for children and adolescents. Although not every country is experiencing these factors in the same way, or at the same time, they provide an underlying context, which UNICEF and partners need to address head-on to make a positive difference and ensure no child is left behind.

Today, the world is witnessing the first increase in extreme monetary poverty since 1998. An estimated 150 million children have fallen into multidimensional poverty – two out of three children globally have no access to any form of child or family benefit, and coverage is lowest where child poverty is highest.¹⁰ The economic crisis is forcing the most vulnerable into negative coping mechanisms, such as child trafficking, child labour and child marriage, and placing a heavy burden on families’ ability to survive and thrive.

Only 18 per cent of countries in situations of fragility and conflict are on track to reach SDG goals.¹¹ Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, humanitarian needs were on the rise, with prolonged and violent conflicts a key driver.

In 2021, around 1.2 billion children lived in countries with complex emergencies, a figure that has doubled since 2019. Escalating conflicts, such as those in [Afghanistan](#), [Ethiopia](#) and [Myanmar](#) have pushed millions more children and their communities to the brink. Across conflict zones, armed forces and armed groups conduct deliberate campaigns of violence against children. In 2021, the United Nations verified almost 24,000 grave violations against children in conflict. Children represent more than half of civilian casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war. And the number of children on the move has grown

Today we are witnessing unprecedented challenges to the child protection sector due to the continued socioeconomic pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic, sustained and new humanitarian child rights crises, and the multiplier effect of climate change. These factors are continuing to test the resiliency of child protection systems – but equally they have emboldened UNICEF and partners to think big and build back better in this Decade of Action.

*– Cornelius Williams, Director,
Child Protection, UNICEF*

more than ever before in 2021. Of the 82 million people forcibly displaced worldwide, 42 per cent are children, with climate-related disasters being among the biggest drivers.¹² These have tripled in the last 30 years, and 2021 was no exception, exemplified by the floods in South Sudan and storms such as Cyclone Yaas, which struck Bangladesh and India. Up to 216 million people may have to move within their own countries by 2050 because of the effects of climate change. This will put millions of children – including those travelling alone or separated from their parents – at risk from violence, exploitation, labour and abuse.¹³

The socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected recent progress in gender equality: violence against women and girls has intensified (SDG 5.2), with child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) expected to increase after declining in previous years (SDG 5.3).

Over the past two years, increasing economic insecurity and inequality – key drivers of harmful practices – are placing more girls at risk. Worldwide, almost one third of

women aged 15–49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner; a figure that has remained largely unchanged over the past decade.¹⁴ UNICEF estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic may result in 10 million additional child marriages occurring before the end of the decade,¹⁵ while according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates, there may be as many as 2 million cases of FGM by 2030 that would have been averted had it not been for the pandemic (SDG 5.3).¹⁶

Although FGM declined by a quarter in the last 20 years, in the 31 countries with available data, progress has been uneven and not all countries have made progress. Even before COVID-19, to meet the target of elimination by 2030, progress needed to be 10 times faster than over the past decade, even in countries that have seen reductions.¹⁷ Child marriage has declined over the past decade, with one in five young women married in childhood today, compared with one in four a decade ago. The global burden of child marriage has shifted from South Asia to sub-Saharan Africa, though at the same time, there is no evidence of progress in Latin America and the Caribbean, with levels of child marriage remaining as high as they were 25 years ago. To eliminate child marriage by 2030, global progress would need to be 17 times faster than the rate observed over the past decade.¹⁸

Child labour is both a cause and consequence of poverty, reinforcing social inequality and discrimination. Global progress against child labour has stalled for the first time in two decades, making the elimination of child labour by 2025 unlikely (SDG 8.7).

Globally, 160 million children are in child labour – accounting for almost 1 in 10 children worldwide. Seventy-nine million children – nearly half of all those in child labour – were in hazardous work.¹⁹ Many girls and boys are also involved in work that is hidden within the home and in family enterprises. These children are not systematically counted in available statistics. The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 is compounding issues, with 9 million additional children considered to be at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022.²⁰

Around 1 billion children and adolescents experience physical, emotional or sexual violence every year.²¹ Some 150 million children report experiencing peer-to-peer violence in and around school²² and some 720 million school-aged children live in countries where they are not fully protected by law from corporal punishment at school.²³ With millions of children still affected by school

closures in 2021, the most vulnerable remained deprived of an important space that offers them safety, stability and a sense of normalcy. For these students, being at home exposes them to risks such as violence, child marriage or child labour, without the support and protection of professionals, including school staff. This is coupled with the increasing use of digital technologies to perpetrate violence against children.²⁴

The world is off track to achieve the goal of building peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG 16), particularly for the millions of children living in fragile and conflict-affected states. COVID-19 has exposed existing inequalities and discrimination. It has also tested, weakened and, in some cases, shattered rights and protection systems in countries and territories.²⁵

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to be registered at birth and to have a legal identity (SDG 16.9). While there has been a rise in birth registration levels globally – with about three in four children under five years old being registered today, compared with 6 in 10 in 2000 – the total number of unregistered children, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, will continue to increase and will exceed 100 million by 2030, unless progress accelerates.²⁶

The right to be recognized as a person before the law is a critical step in ensuring lifelong protection and is a prerequisite for exercising all other rights. Yet, worldwide, the births of one quarter of children under the age of five have never been officially recorded.²⁷

Surrogacy has become a global phenomenon. International surrogacy arrangements now surpass the use of intercountry adoption as a method of family formation. Given the lack of safeguards in international human rights law on domestic and international surrogacy arrangements, UNICEF is increasingly engaging with legislators, decision makers, policymakers and practitioners to ensure that children born through surrogacy have the same rights as all children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and that appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks exist at the national level to protect and promote their rights regardless of individual states' position on surrogacy.²⁸

Despite the challenges, there are growing signs of optimism, including the voices of young people from across the world, many of whom are saying that even amid the pandemic, they are 50 per cent more likely than older generations to believe the world is becoming a better place.²⁹ We also know that violations of children's rights to protection are preventable; progress can be made through political will, societal change, and an emerging science of prevention and response strategies.



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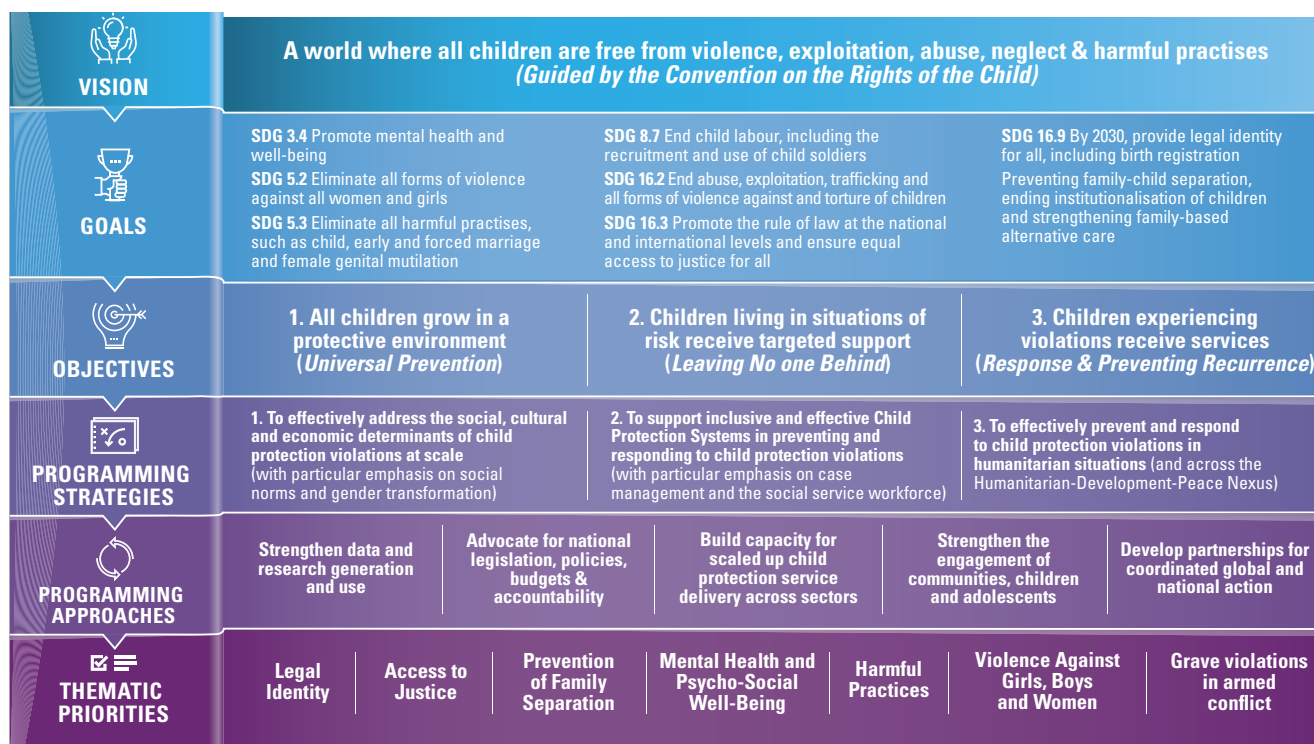
A boy showing his journey on the map. At Sedra reception centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF currently supports children with families and unaccompanied children through 24-hour protection and a variety of support programmes.

Looking forward

The context for children in 2021 is challenging and will require significant investment over the long term to rebuild more resilient, informed and inclusive child protection systems and service delivery capacities. At the normative level, UNICEF, together with our partners, continues to advocate and influence critical strategic shifts, reinforcing the centrality of the rights of children to protection and addressing the challenges children around the world continue to face (see *'Results by strategic output'* for examples of our work across thematic areas).

Building on available evidence of what works and what challenges remain, [UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030](#) was launched in 2021 and sets out a clear vision and strategic framework for UNICEF's work in child protection for the decade to 2030 (see *Figure 2*). Its development, coinciding with the onset of COVID-19, provided a key moment to critically reflect on the global child protection context. Also opportune was the ability to align with [UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2022–2025](#), and associated Theory of Change and Results Framework, facilitating the immediate operationalization of the strategy.

FIGURE 2: UNICEF's Child Protection Strategic Framework, 2021–2030





Results by strategic output

A mother and child looking at the airfield of Port-au-Prince airport in Haiti upon their arrival from the US border. UNICEF was on the ground at the airport providing returning children with psychosocial support, protection services and education supplies, in coordination with national authorities and the International Organization for Migration.

Result summary

UNICEF prioritizes strengthening child protection systems for prevention and response services, across development and humanitarian contexts. The aim is to ensure a protective environment to safeguard children's rights, well-being and development, prevent violation of children's rights in all forms and ensure a systematic and comprehensive response is available to address violations. Achieving transformational change for children entails: leveraging financing for children; supporting rights-based policies and legislation; shaping the quality and access to essential prevention and response services at scale; brokering global partnerships for children; influencing social behaviours and norms; and transforming the landscape of data on children.

This report summarizes annual progress in the fourth year of targets of Goal Area 3 of UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, across its three output (result) areas. The concluding section outlines Goal Area 3 strategic priorities, including the programming shifts identified to achieve the targets set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, and the broader targets of protection-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

In the face of unprecedented challenge lies unprecedented opportunity to truly reach every child by using scalable solutions and cementing new collaborations through partnerships, innovation, technology, and policy.

– Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, 2021

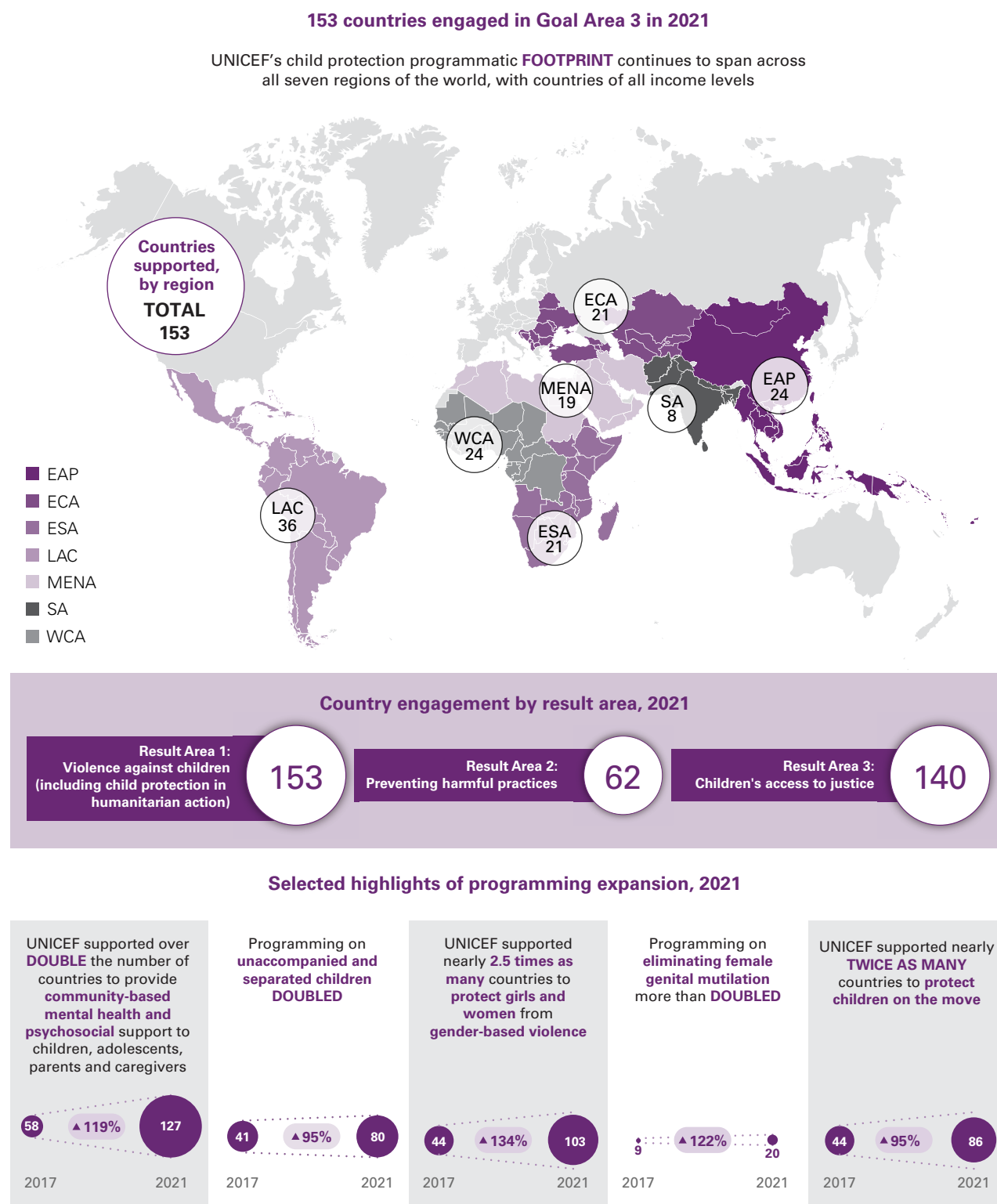
Working in close collaboration with governments, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and other partners, UNICEF child protection (Goal Area 3) teams around the world were able to deliver a wide array of results across 153 countries, including in 124 countries with new and ongoing humanitarian situations (see Figure 3). Scaled-up interventions, strengthened systems and information management mechanisms, and improved data reporting have enabled UNICEF and partners to reach millions of children, parents and caregivers with UNICEF-supported programmes (see Figure 4).



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Boy, 9, speaks with a social worker from the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs, at home in Sragen, Central Java Province, Indonesia. As of 2 December 2021, over 32,000 children in Indonesia had lost one or both caregivers due to COVID-19. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and partners to continuously provide access to mental health and psychosocial support for such children and their caregivers, and strengthen coordination efforts to ensure children remain in family-based care.

FIGURE 3: Summary of Goal Area 3 strategic output results: country engagement, 2021

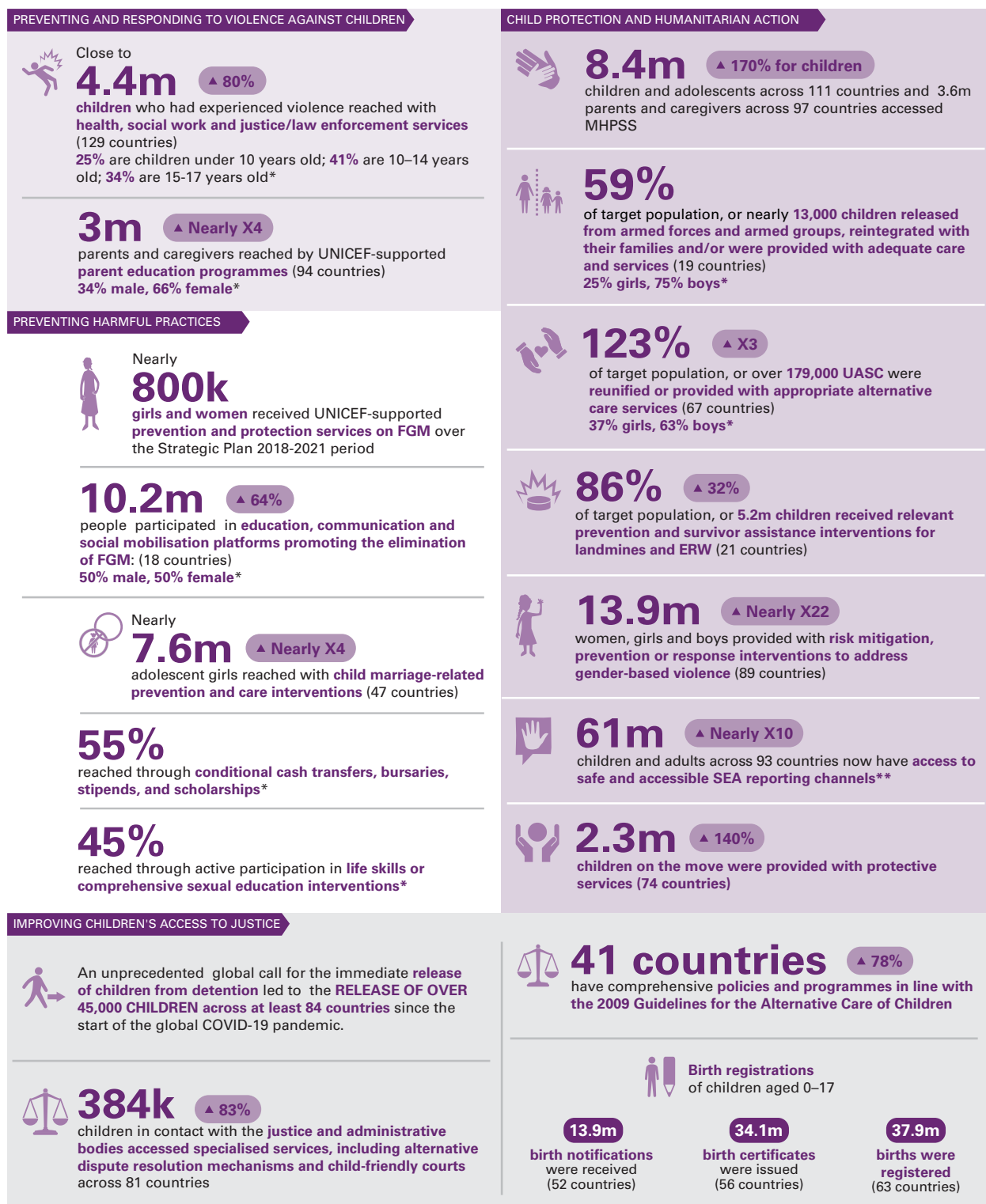


Changes are compared to results achieved over the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 period, unless otherwise specified.

EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

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FIGURE 4: Summary of Goal Area 3 strategic output results: programme reach, 2021



Abbreviations: ERW - explosive remnants of war, FGM - female genital mutilation, GBV - gender-based violence, MHPSS - mental health and psychosocial support, SEA - sexual exploitation and abuse, UASC - unaccompanied and separated children, VAC - violence against children.

Changes are compared to results achieved in 2017 unless otherwise specified.

*Disaggregated data are not always available for the entire aggregated total. The proportion provided here are based on and out of the available data with relevant disaggregated information.

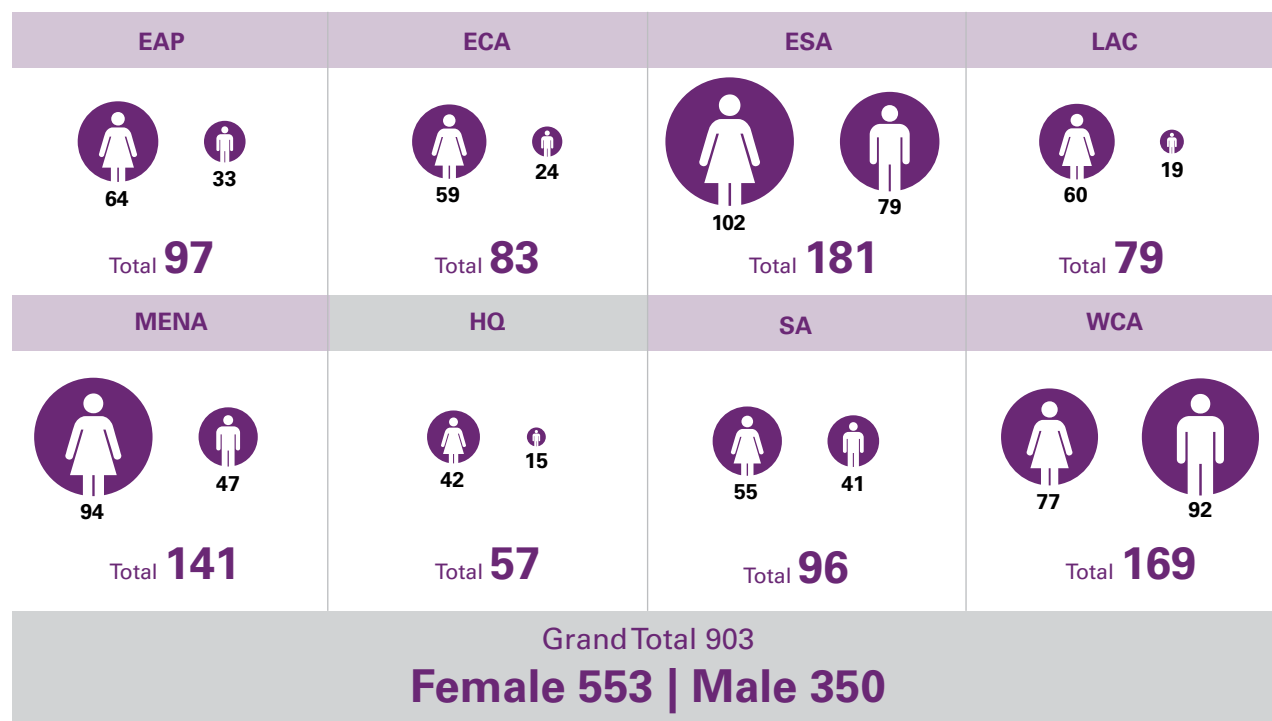
**UNICEF's work to scale up PSEA resulted in 117 country offices actively engaged in PSEA system establishment. In 2021, 53 country offices have PSEA system in place, having developed country action plans, rolled out the UN Protocol on Assistance to Victims of SEA, strengthened referral pathways and implemented capacity building for partners.

At the end of 2021, UNICEF had 903 full-time staff (61 per cent women, 39 per cent men) working on child protection worldwide; the largest cadre of child protection specialists in any international agency (see Figure 5). This figure, as a share of UNICEF staff, has remained constant in recent years at 18–19 per cent of specialist staff; 94 per cent of child protection staff are located at country and regional levels, and the remainder at UNICEF Headquarters.

Building a body of data-driven knowledge and evidence are critical parts of the acceleration of solutions and actions to end violence against children. In 2021, UNICEF, together

with partners, produced more than 350 knowledge products across the spectrum of child protection issues at global, regional and country levels, an increase of 10 per cent compared with 2020. Around 30 per cent of all products were produced at the headquarters level, with the remainder tailored to regional (20 per cent) and national contexts (50 per cent). Around 33 per cent of these products were COVID-19-related. Products cover all key thematic areas of child protection and are being used to advocate for and inform the development of improved policies and programming and build partner capacity across regions (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 5: Number of child protection staff by gender per location, 2021

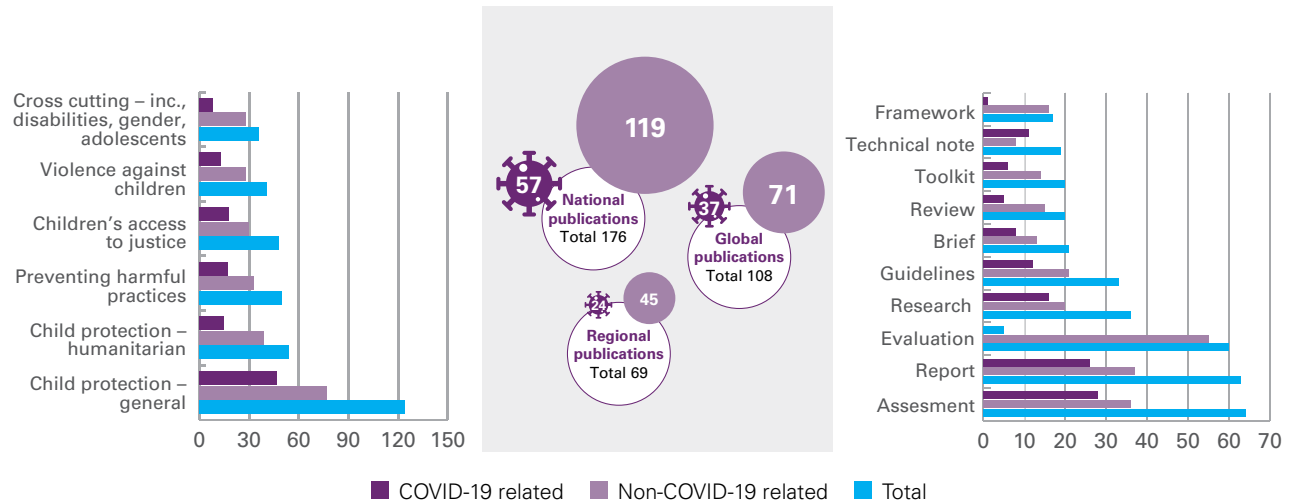


Notes: EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ: Headquarters (New York); LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.

FIGURE 6: Breakdown of knowledge products by thematic area and type, 2021

Total number of knowledge products in 2021: 353+

▲ 10% from 2020



In 2021, global programme expenses in Goal Area 3 totalled US\$773 million (see Figure 7), spread across 153 offices, including US\$422 million for humanitarian action. Goal Area 3 expenses have increased incrementally over the course of the Strategic Period 2018–2021; and 2021 expenses

amounted to an 18 per cent increase compared with that of 2018. Goal Area 3 expense represent 12 per cent of total UNICEF expenses. In 2021, partners contributed US\$170 million ‘other resources – regular’ for Goal Area 3 – a 3.5 per cent increase over the previous year (see Annex 1).

FIGURE 7: UNICEF Goal Area 3 expenses by result area, 2021 (US\$ millions)

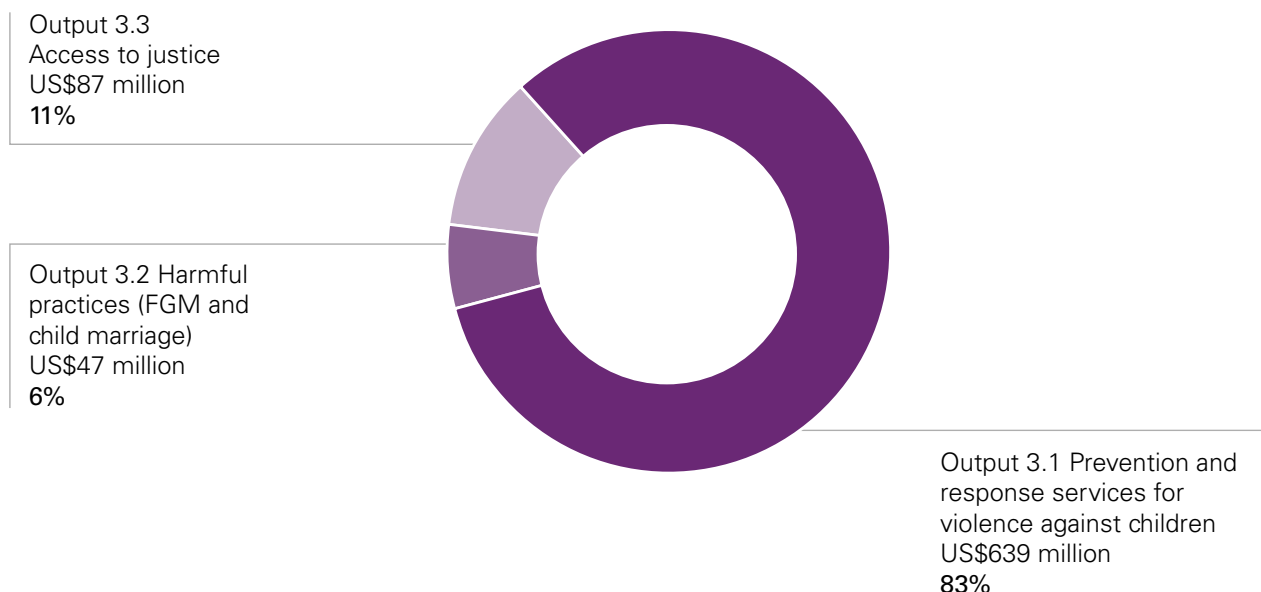


Figure 8: Selected results using global thematic funding, 2021

Global thematic funding serves as a critical resource to ensure delivery of essential service interventions, provide catalytic funding to initiate innovative work or take programming to scale and to fill temporary funding gaps to avoid interruptions to critical programming. In 2021, UNICEF allocated US\$4.3 million of global thematic funds – the most flexible type of resources after regular resources – for Child

Protection programming across global, regional and country offices. Of this total, 78 per cent of funds were allocated to 23 UNICEF country offices (US\$3.3 million). Additionally, 12 per cent of funds (US\$0.5 million) were allocated across seven regional offices, and approximately 10 per cent (US\$0.4 million) to UNICEF Headquarters.*

Number of countries allocated global thematic funds per region, 2020



GUYANA & SURINAME

In Guyana, UNICEF provided legal aid access and reintegration services for 30 children released from detention. In Suriname, UNICEF partnered with the Guyana Association of Professional Social Workers and a newly formed Association for Students Social Workers as part of the consultations process to draft the Law on Social Workers Licensure.

'Little Things' – Paving the way to big things

In recognition of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the protection of children, the pop band ABBA is generously donating all the royalty payments they receive from their latest single Little Things to UNICEF's Child Protection thematic funds. The royalties are generated each time someone purchases the single, taken from the group's latest album, Voyage, or streams it on Spotify, iTunes, or YouTube.

"We think it is impossible to eradicate poverty without the empowerment of women. That is why we support UNICEF in protecting girls from sexual violence and empowering them through the Global Child Protection Fund. We have done so for many years with our song Chiquitita and now we have decided to give UNICEF a Christmas gift in the form of a second song: Little Things from our album Voyage."

—Agnetha, Björn, Benny & Anni-Frid (ABBA)

MOROCCO

UNICEF supported the establishment of decentralized child protection systems in 17 provinces, including setting up intersectoral provincial committees, mapping available child protection services and actors, developing provincial action plans, and initiating planning for improved integrated information management services. Front-line service providers reached almost 875,000 people, including children, with related services.

BELARUS

UNICEF continues to prioritize child protection systems strengthening. To build system responses for prevention of bullying, UNICEF and government partners rolled out the Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools programme, reaching more than 11,500 students (grades 5–9) in 26 targeted schools, and anti-bullying online courses for schoolchildren and parents were made available.

STATE OF PALESTINE

UNICEF supported the scaling up of the number of Child Protection Counsellors who provide critical subnational protection support to communities. There are now 35 Child Protection Counsellors placed across 6 governates (12 per cent increase from 2020), who provided protection support to nearly 2,400 children (20 per cent girls, 80 per cent boys).

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

UNICEF supported partners to conduct and launch an assessment report and recommendations for strengthening community-based child protection services for vulnerable populations. In follow-up, a comprehensive resource package to strengthen the operations of the Child Protection Network and para-social workers at subnational levels was developed. Guidelines for Social Service Workforce Development (2022–2026) were also released, and almost 700 social welfare workers, justice actors and allied workforce members were trained on related issues.

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

UNICEF and partner capacity-building initiatives for island-level multisectoral community social groups (or IBAMA) reached 107 islands (around 50 per cent of the population) – a significant step forward to developing a community network of child protection referral services.

UGANDA

UNICEF supported the dissemination of the National Child Policy in 51 districts, including establishing child well-being committees to coordinate its implementation. In 9 districts, around 400 justice, health and social workers received specialized training on case management and case referral – including providing multisectoral services – and over 29,000 child survivors of violence (55 per cent girls, 45 per cent boys) received services. Over half of the 4,610 children in conflict with the law were diverted away from the criminal justice system.

CABO VERDE

UNICEF supported the development of a Case Management and Information System Procedure Manual. The standards of the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation were also reinforced through scaled up advocacy with the travel and tourism sector in 2021.

Notes: * In addition, UNICEF also sets aside 1 per cent of the programmable amount to support undertaking planned Goal Area 3-related evaluations during the year.

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PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

Violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse of children affects their emotional, social, cognitive and physical development, thus violating children's fundamental human rights. Children living in conflict-affected areas and in fragile contexts are particularly vulnerable. The child protection-related SDGs, which are explicitly grounded in human rights, are mostly off-track.

The protection of children is therefore a priority for Sweden and Sweden's International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). UNICEF, with its global mandate grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is an obvious and longstanding trusted partner for Sweden and Sida to advance Child Protection priorities globally across development and humanitarian contexts.

To enable long-term strategic programming, bridge urgent gaps and facilitate swift response when crises arises, Sweden is committed to providing global thematic funding to directly support UNICEF's Child Protection programming. The support is in line with Goal Area 3 of its Strategic Plan.

The COVID-19 pandemic has globally strained weak and fragile social service, protection and justice systems and deepened existing inequalities. But the crisis has also provided opportunities for UNICEF and partners to elevate child protection concerns, as mental health, violence in the home and children without family care, as well as a recognition of the social service workforce. During the year 2021, we saw again with clarity how flexible funding made it possible for UNICEF to adapt its programming quickly to deliver impressive child protection results amidst the pandemic.

Sida recognises that thematic funding is instrumental for UNICEF to strengthen the ability to deliver on long-term strategic activities, such as cooperation with duty-bearers often in "donor forgotten contexts" to build sustainable national child protection systems and promote access to justice for children. Sida continues to have strong confidence in UNICEF's child protection programme and regards UNICEF as an efficient and effective partner and strong advocate for the fulfilment of children's human rights.

– Cecilia Scharp, Assistant Director General, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)



Bisrat Biru had been involved in performing FGM in Dara district, Ethiopia for more than 20 years. She is now an activist against this harmful practice.

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A cornerstone of child protection: strengthening systems

UNICEF's child protection systems-strengthening (CPSS) approach is embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in a human rights-based approach to programming and advocacy. UNICEF seeks to support child protection systems that are inclusive, non-discriminatory, resilient and effective, and that can adapt to changing contexts to prevent and respond to child protection violations.

A 2018 internal evaluation of UNICEF support to CPSS between 2012 and 2018³⁰ concluded that, although UNICEF had considerable success in advancing the child protection systems agenda at the national level, this had not translated into adequate domestic CPSS investments. The evaluation also recommended that UNICEF clarify its approach to CPSS and ensure that the approach is reflected in organizational plans. Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF has taken significant steps to prioritize CPSS as a key approach to achieve results for children. This implies complementing issue-based programming – that is focused on specific themes and groups or categories of children – with a more holistic and comprehensive systems approach, which can provide protection to all children across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

In 2021, UNICEF released a pivotal document to [define UNICEF's approach to and outcomes of CPSS](#).³¹ Recognizing the varying contexts within which CPSS programming takes place, the collaboration with allied sectors, and the importance of community and child participation, the document describes the seven intermediate outcomes for CPSS (see *Figure 9*). It also proposes a four-phased approach to CPSS, based on a maturity model. This model elaborates the priorities, processes and results to be achieved in each phase of CPSS. Importantly, the approach paper is accompanied by a set of comprehensive benchmarks that are aligned to the seven outcomes.

The CPSS benchmarks offer coherent metrics to effectively measure investments and the results of UNICEF's [CPSS work](#). In 2021, UNICEF took a significant step forward in this regard to assess – for the first time – the maturity level of child protection systems across 155 countries and territories worldwide. The 2021 results will set a monitoring baseline for UNICEF contribution to CPSS over the new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 period and beyond. It

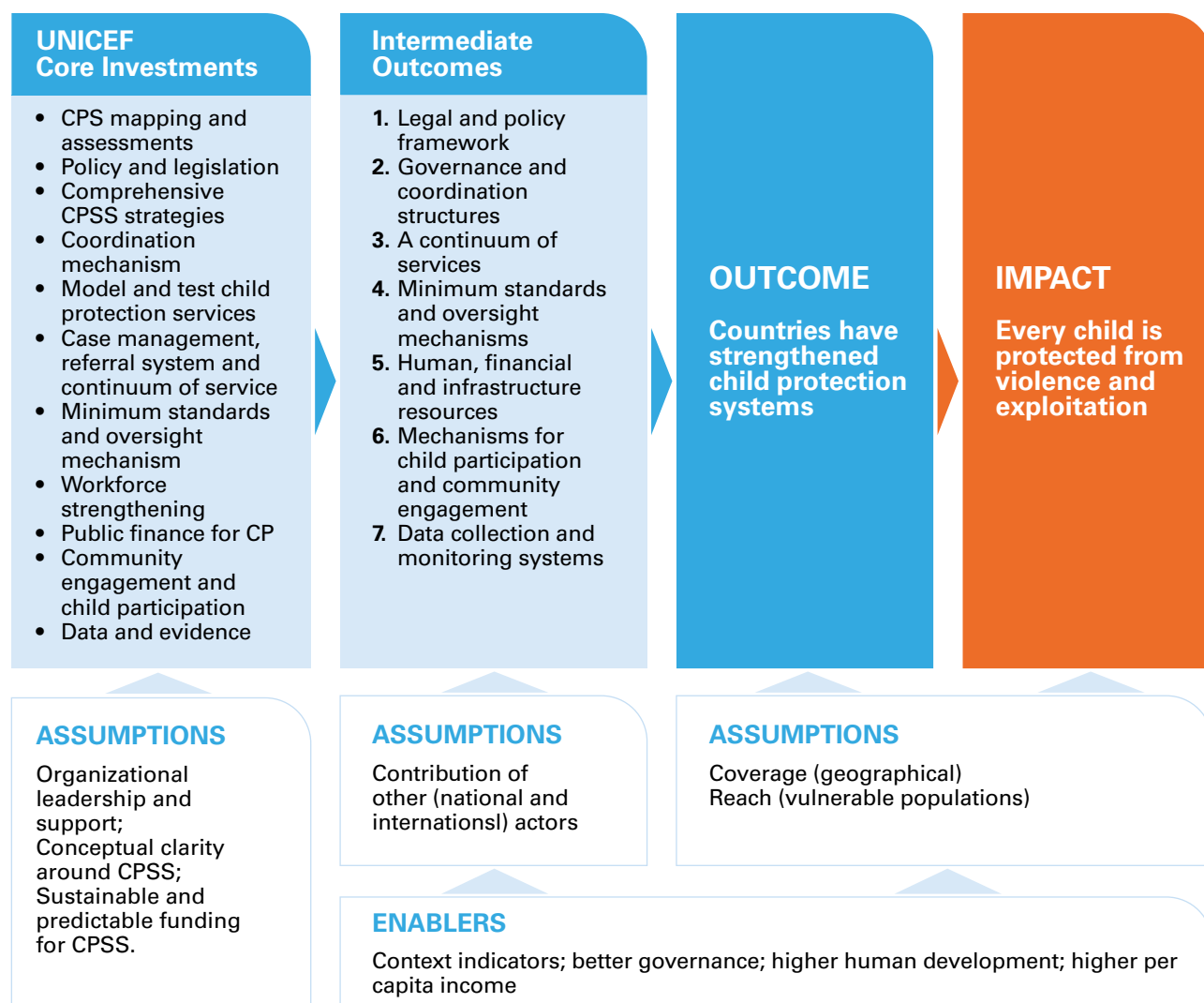
also provides critical data for national partners on how to identify areas of CPSS policy and programming requiring dedicated investments. The measurement framework is also key to implementing a human rights-based approach to programming, as it allows country offices to measure whether the system is strengthening both the capacities of duty-bearers (i.e., human resources and complaints mechanisms) and rights-holders (i.e., child participation and community engagement).

Results in 2021 (see *Figure 10*) show that a large majority of UNICEF partner countries are in phase 2 of maturity: the systems enhancement phase of development. This is the phase where a normative framework/legislation outlining the national child protection systems exists, multisector coordination mechanisms are established and comprehensive standard operating procedures/protocols compliant with international standards are available. However, implementation structures/mechanisms either do not exist or are too weak/ad hoc to be fully effective. They are also often constrained by lack of adequate financial or human resources and limited capacities, which limit the scope and scale of implementation.

Overall, the top three areas of progress where gains are the greatest in 2021 include the development of legal and policy frameworks (see *Figure 11*), establishing governance structures and coordination mechanisms, as well as introducing improvements to child protection service delivery, such as developing standards, protocols and case management and referral pathways. Implementation issues continue to prove challenging, including developing and enforcing minimum standards for services, oversight and complaints mechanisms that children can access, as well as streamlining comprehensive evidence and monitoring of services.

To strengthen the evidence base on the importance of investing in CPSS, a '[Review of the Use of Public Finance for Children in Child Protection](#)' was published in 2021. The review explores how UNICEF has used public finance analyses and interventions to advocate for and promote child protection objectives. The findings support UNICEF's advocacy for increased national budgets to prevent and respond to violence, and to strengthen child protection systems and services.

FIGURE 9: Child protection systems-strengthening: programme – impact pathways

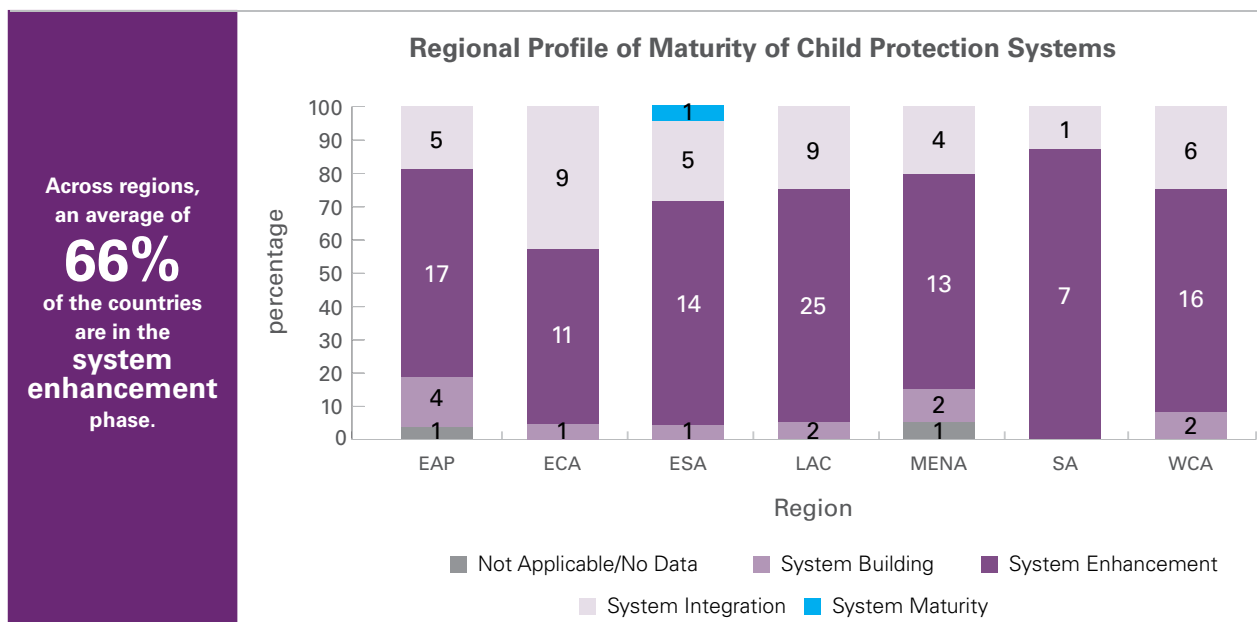
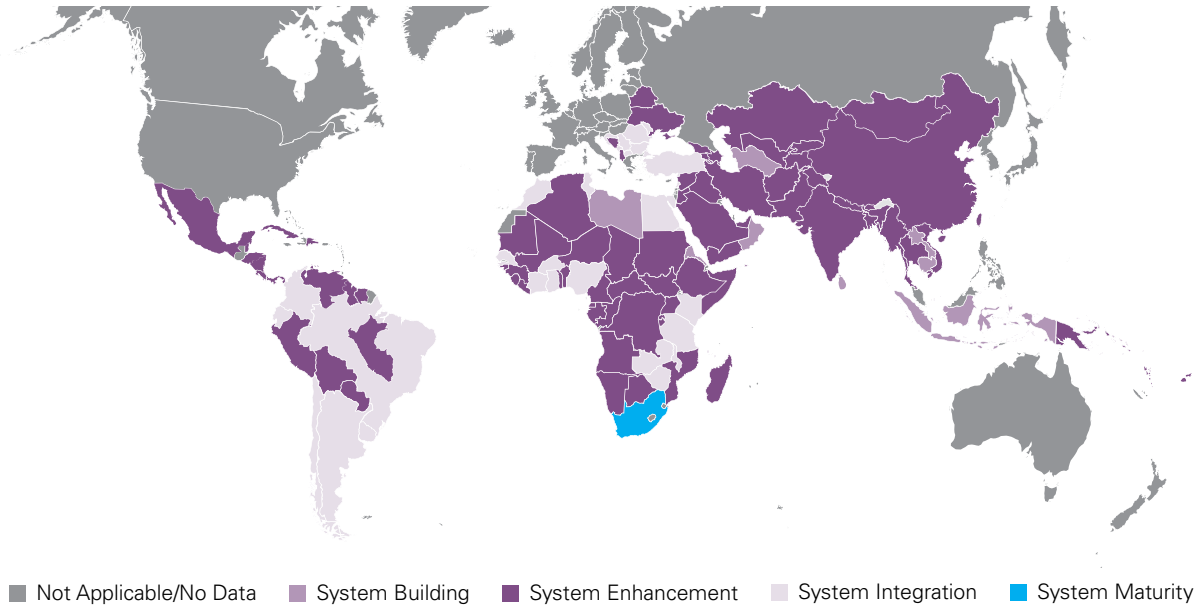


Reflections and looking forward

The programmatic context for child protection systems-strengthening, including the social service workforce, has significantly changed in the four years of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan. Never has there been greater conceptual clarity on what CPSS means, the results that need to be achieved, the approach and interventions that are essential to strengthen child protection systems, and the means to measure the progress made. UNICEF has played a critical leadership role in fostering strong global, regional and country partnerships to facilitate this convergence of common approaches and priorities. The development and release of UNICEF’s CPSS approach

and associated measurement framework is a critical first for the sector and provides a comprehensive platform to take CPSS to the next level. Similarly, the release in 2019 of the first-ever global Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection provided UNICEF and partners with a much-needed framework to accelerate social service workforce programming (see also *‘Strengthening the social service workforce’*). Looking forward, our attention must now be turned to translating these operational frameworks into accelerated action and to maintain momentum to advocate for increased national investments to advance holistic child protection systems-strengthening.

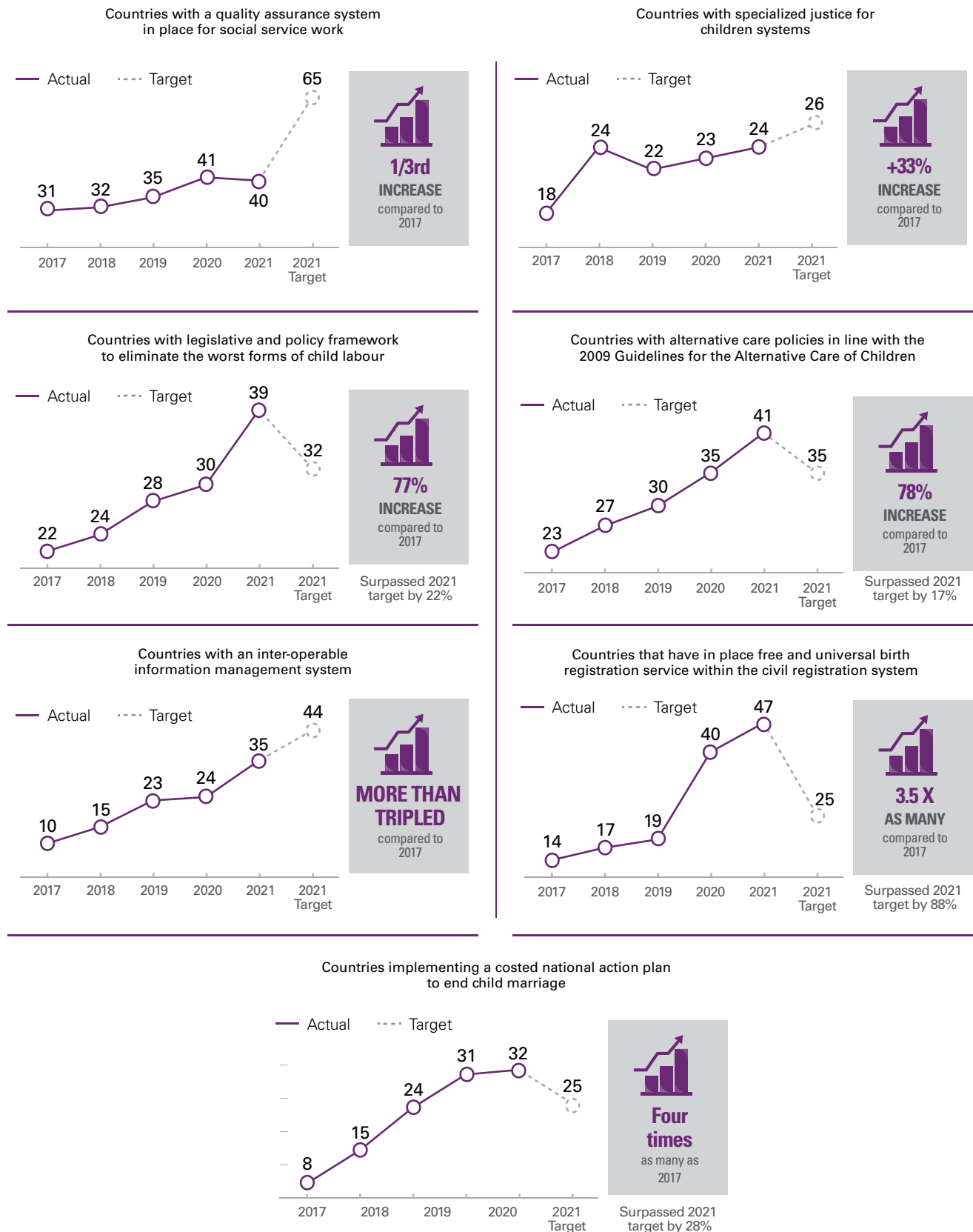
FIGURE 10: Maturity of Child Protection Systems, 2021 Data



Notes: CP: Child Protection; CPs: Child Protection Strategy; CPSS: Child Protection System Strengthening
 EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.
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Source: United Nations Children’s Fund, Child Protection Systems Strengthening, UNICEF, New York, 2021.

FIGURE 11: Progress in strengthening child protection systems, 2017–2021





Output 3.1: Strengthening child protection systems for prevention and response services to reduce violence against children

Murals painted by artist Sebastião Coana and teams of local artists. UNICEF, with the support of the Government of Mozambique, and the Spanish and Swedish Governments, has used murals to raise awareness to prevent, mitigate and combat early unions, and prevent violence.

Accelerating national progress to reduce all forms of violence

As the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic moved into its second year, UNICEF's violence against children (VAC) programming continued to focus on mitigating the impact of the pandemic on the protection and well-being of children. At a global level, UNICEF plays a critical role in fostering partnerships to scale up VAC programming, notably through the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children (End Violence) and the Safe to Learn coalition. UNICEF also collaborates on high-level advocacy with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. UNICEF's role in the WeProtect Global Alliance is critical to accelerating global coordinated action to address online violence.

In 2021, UNICEF worked with partners in 144 countries to prevent and respond to VAC with efforts to bolster multisectoral response services for children experiencing violence; to scale up support provided to parents and caregivers; to ensure that schools implemented basic child protection measures as they reopened; and to address evolving risks in digital environments. UNICEF also contributed to strengthening policies and legislation to advance the agenda. To address data challenges, the organization is scaling up evidence generation and use to shape policy and guide programming to end VAC.

Ending violence against children cannot wait. With only eight years remaining to keep the promise of the 2030 Agenda, building back better during the pandemic and beyond must be seen as an opportunity that cannot be missed in order to prevent and to end violence against children in all settings.

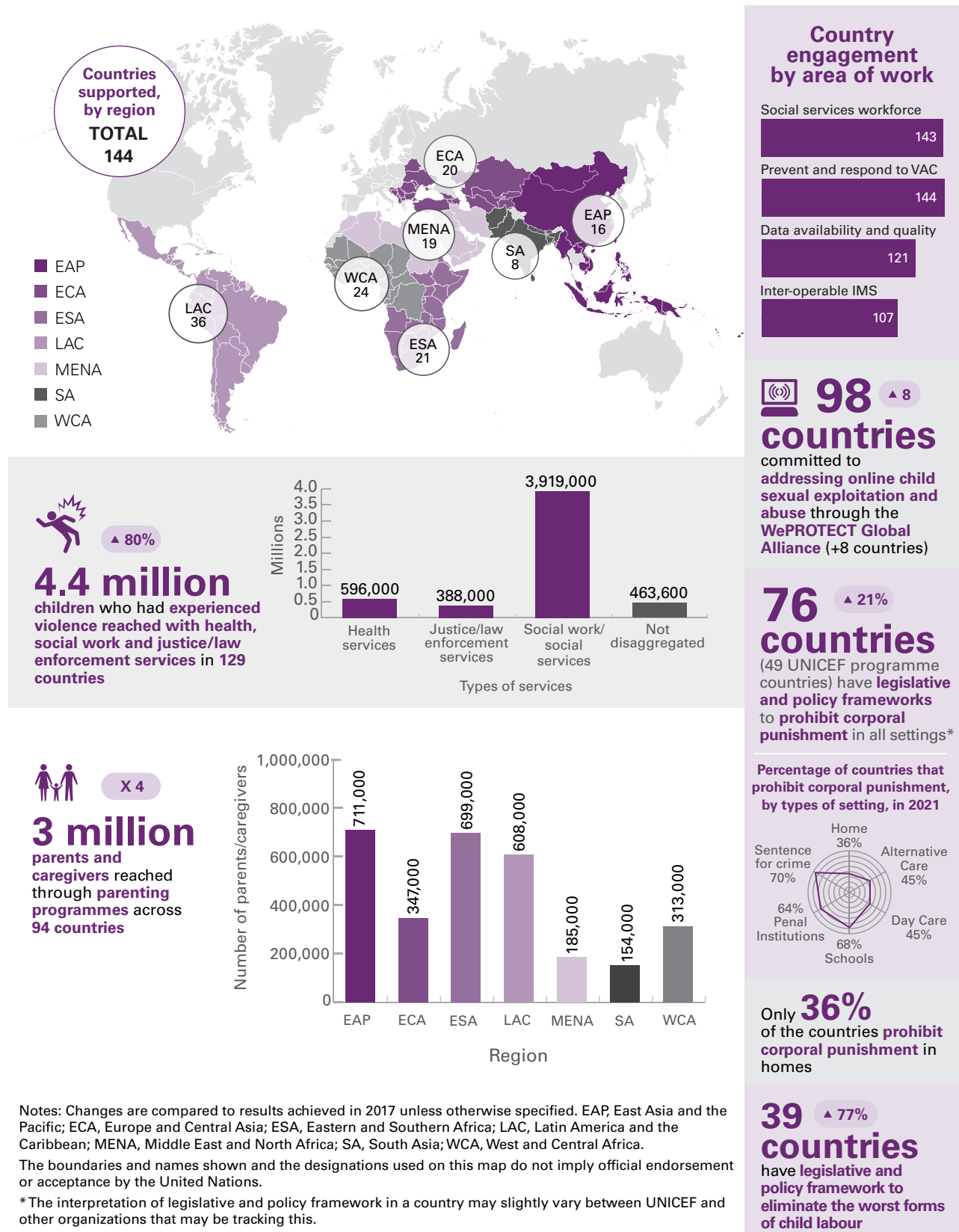
– Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

In 2021, several milestones helped advance the global agenda to end VAC. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child provided guidance on how States parties should implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child in relation to the digital environment through its General Comment 25. The recommendation on children in the digital environment by the Organisation for



A girl in school in Mali receiving support through UNICEF's VAC intervention programme with Solidarité pour le Sahel (SOLISA), after suffering abuse at home.

FIGURE 12: Summary of results on addressing violence against children, 2021



Notes: Changes are compared to results achieved in 2017 unless otherwise specified. EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

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*The interpretation of legislative and policy framework in a country may slightly vary between UNICEF and other organizations that may be tracking this.

Economic Co-operation and Development now entrenches children's rights online into its larger framework. A new resolution was adopted by over 60 countries at the World Health Assembly on ending VAC through health systems-strengthening and multisectoral approaches. And a global call by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) to adopt a universal approach to parenting support has elevated onto the global stage the parenting agenda to prevent abuse and neglect.

Strengthening prevention of and response to violence, exploitation and abuse

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF intensified efforts to support governments to ensure a continuum of services (spanning prevention and response services). This included strengthening the integration of related services across social welfare, justice, health and education; prioritizing the strengthening of social welfare services (see also '[Social service workforce strengthening](#)'); and supporting the development and roll-out of case management and referral systems (see also '[Scaling up information management systems](#)'). A key emerging shift, particularly in response to the pandemic, is the demonstrable success that coordinated and integrated approaches bring to strengthening the scale and quality of services. This was particularly evident with the education and protection sectors throughout 2021, which took intersectoral coordination to the next level to mitigate the impact of school closures and subsequently support countries to safely reopen schools (see also '[Ensuring schools are safe places to learn](#)').

Across 129 countries, UNICEF reached 4.4 million children who had experienced violence (of the 2.3 million for whom disaggregated data are available, 53 per cent are girls) with health, social work or justice/law enforcement services, which was 80 per cent more than in 2017.

In 2021, countries as diverse as **Angola, Bhutan, Liberia, Morocco, Senegal** and **Ukraine** provided strong examples of progress to integrate multisectoral service delivery models, particularly supporting child survivors and witnesses of violence. In particular, 'one-stop' centres that bring together counselling, forensic services, medical help, and support with legal proceedings and referral to

other services are increasingly yielding positive outcomes for children and families. For example, to expand the reach of services in **Angola**, UNICEF supported the setting up of the one-stop model across four provinces, while in **Bhutan**, focus was placed on strengthening the availability of integrated services under one roof at four youth centres, benefiting 7,650 young people (29 per cent female, 71 per cent male). In **Morocco**, decentralized integrated service delivery models in 17 provinces were scaled up, including capacity-building of front-line multisector service providers who supported 13,800 child survivors of violence in 2021.

The global impact of COVID-19 has affected women and girls differently than men and boys, and in ways that put them at greater risk of gender-based violence (GBV), particularly in contexts where gender inequality is already pronounced (see also '[Gender-based violence in emergencies](#)'). This can include increased exposure to intimate partner violence due to tensions in the home in the face of dwindling family resources and, in the case of COVID-19, under confinement conditions. UNICEF focuses on strengthening access to safe, ethical and quality response services, while addressing root causes.

Spotlight: Honduras

In **Honduras**, UNICEF – as part of the Spotlight Initiative³² and with key partners and donors, including the European Union – focused on strengthening the capacities of community-based organizations to identify risk factors and apply techniques to stop violence and prevent violent deaths by changing social norms. The aim is to prevent and de-escalate conflicts through strengthening partnerships, youth participation and community mobilization. UNICEF teamed up with the non-governmental organization (NGO) Cure Violence Global to develop a strategy to address ('interrupt') homicide, femicide and GBV in 25 communities in the country's four most violent cities. In 2021, it succeeded in 'interrupting' almost 4,000 disputes in 43 highly vulnerable communities, providing comprehensive multi-service support to the survivors of violence.

In **India**, UNICEF worked with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), WHO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to roll out a programme addressing GBV in times of COVID-19 across 17 states. Across five states, almost 900,000 children

Spotlight: The Plurinational State of Bolivia

In the **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, the Safe Family Helpline is now a key element of the national child protection system, promoting better access to mental health and violence prevention and response services for children. In 2021, the helpline received some 22,000 calls (a total of 48,600 since it was established in 2020); 35 per cent of which were from children and adolescents. Of all calls, 27 per cent concerned cases of family violence and GBV, followed by emotional stress, family conflicts and requests for psycho-educational counselling. In 2021, UNICEF worked to strengthen the linkages of the helpline service with municipal child protection services. This included developing standard operating procedures and referral pathways to ensure all calls related to violence against children and women were efficiently referred to the relevant services. In 2021, around 2,640 cases were referred for specialist services.



A young mother (16) working, with her 17-month-old daughter, in La Paz, Bolivia. With no family and no steady job, she began to self-harm and was having suicidal thoughts. In desperation she called the UNICEF-supported “Safe Family Hotline” and received psychosocial support.

and women received multisectoral interventions through one-stop centres, the 1098 Childline and the Advika (adolescent) digital platform. UNICEF **Belize** supported the development and roll-out of a family violence toolkit to address the root causes of family violence against women and children. In **Turkey**, around 41,500 women survivors of domestic violence and 18,000 children who resided with their mothers in women’s shelters received specialized psychosocial support services by government staff who had received UNICEF-supported specialized training.

The health sector has a key role to play in identifying, preventing and responding to VAC. In **Senegal**, for example, national guidelines for health-care professionals were developed and disseminated, to better detect and provide care to child survivors of violence. Critically, this contributed to around 140 child survivors of sexual violence

receiving specialized services. In **Albania**, UNICEF trained 165 health personnel on a plan for universal progressive home visiting (covering childcare, parental well-being, child protection from abuse and neglect, children with different abilities, gender dynamics in the family and cross-sectoral cooperation). Such services reached some 1,425 families in 2021.

UNICEF is also supporting the justice sector to strengthen its response services for survivors of violence and prevent secondary victimization (*see also* [‘Access to justice for children’](#)). UNICEF **Botswana** supported the country’s first-ever child-friendly police station in late 2020; in 2021 over 200 VAC cases were recorded. To scale up the quality of service provision, police officers from 78 police stations were also trained as focal points for child-related cases, including specialized skills to support GBV cases. For UNICEF **Chile**, priority was placed on institutionalizing the access to videotaped interviews for survivors, to improve the quality of services in 2021, while in **Nigeria**, UNICEF helped set up a Coordination Forum on Justice for Children to enable a more streamlined review of sexual violence cases. This included identifying processing bottlenecks and activating the fast-tracking of cases through the court system.

Over the past several years, UNICEF has increasingly focused on improving access to cost-free child helplines. These teleservices are increasingly recognized as a vital service within national child protection systems. They provided a lifeline for many during the COVID-19 lockdowns that continued into 2021. According to a Child Helpline International survey, violence and mental health concerns are the main reasons that children reach out to helplines. In 2021, at least 20 UNICEF country offices helped establish or strengthen the provision of child helplines. In **Albania**, UNICEF supported the National Child Helpline ALO 116 to introduce a ‘Raporto Tani’ mobile app, resulting in over 13,300 calls and 500 chat communications within the first few months of operation. The calls led to some 700 children receiving mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and 500 children being referred to other relevant services.

In **Mozambique**, UNICEF continued to support the decentralization of services, including scaling up helpline teleservices to the Northern Province.

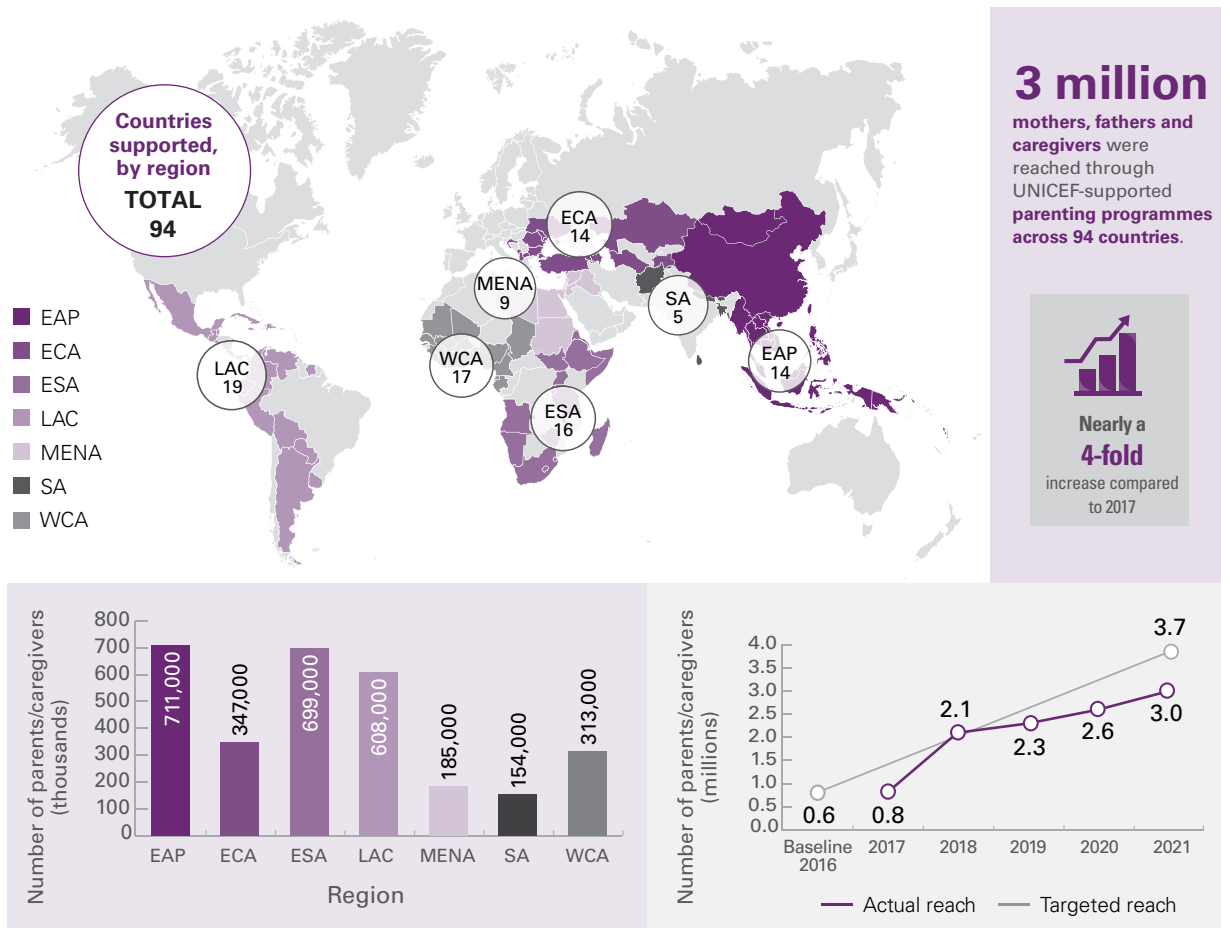
Scaling up parent and caregiver support

Parents continue to face extreme challenges in caring for their children including, among others, the context of COVID-19, economic hardship, and the many pressures children face online. In 2021, UNICEF-supported parenting programmes were scaled up around the world, reaching 3 million mothers, fathers and caregivers across 94 countries. This was almost a fourfold increase from 2017. Of note is progress made in 2021 in **Albania, Egypt, Papua New Guinea, Peru, South Africa, Thailand and Ukraine**.

Noting that evidence-based parent and caregiver support programmes are a scalable and cost-effective way of alleviating parental stress, improving parent-child attachment, and preventing VAC, UNICEF was part of an inter-agency policy call for universal parenting support in 2021. The call sets out a minimum package of action for governments to support parents throughout the child's life. As a follow-up to the universal call, UNICEF is supporting the implementation of these efforts across all types of country contexts, including integrating parenting support in national service delivery mechanisms, where appropriate.

Examples of action include **Papua New Guinea**, where scaled-up implementation of the Parenting for Child Development Programme, implemented in partnership with the government and the Catholic Church, reached almost 2,600 parents (34 per cent fathers, 64 per cent mothers) in four provinces; a 70 per cent increase in reach from 2020. Programme monitoring shows positive changes

FIGURE 13: Summary of results on strengthening parenting and caregiver support, 2021



Notes: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Spotlight: Collaboration on the development of innovative digital parenting resources

The impact of COVID-19 has made it more challenging for parenting programmes to reach families in need, at a time when parents need this support more than ever. As an initial response, the multi-agency Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) communications initiative was launched in 2020; and by the end of 2021, PLH had reached over 200 million families with evidence-based parenting tips. In 2021, a number of open-source interactive tools for greater digital engagement with parents were developed. The tools include a PLH-ParentText (a chatbot delivered via RapidPro) and a ParentChat (an online group programme delivered through messaging services such as WhatsApp or Viber). A PLH-ParentApp was also designed to complement in-person programme delivery that can be used individually or combined with remote facilitator support.

In 2021, UNICEF tested these resources in **Jamaica, Malaysia, Montenegro, the Philippines, South Africa and Sri Lanka**, with a view to implementing further scale-up. In **Malaysia**, for example, UNICEF, together with the University of Putra Malaysia, is scaling up the availability of the PLH in-person and digital parenting programmes beyond initial pilot groups. This includes adapting content for cultural contexts, such as Rohingya refugees. In the **Philippines**, to broaden the accessibility of the resources, they have been translated into 12 local languages, reaching almost 296,000 people in 2021.



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A father, with his 4-month-old daughter, receiving parenting tips from a Community Based Volunteer in Kholowa Village, Katete District in Eastern Province of Zambia.

in discipline practices by parents and caregivers after completing the full programme cycle, including reductions in all elements of harsh parenting. In **Peru**, training modules on positive parenting were used to strengthen capacity-building efforts for service providers as part of the 'Cuna Más' social protection programme. The programme reached 176,700 caregivers nationwide in the first nine months of 2021.

UNICEF and partners are increasingly adopting specific strategies to improve the engagement of men in caregiving. In **South Africa**, UNICEF worked with the Department of Social Development and Sonke MenCare Justice to roll out an evidence-based behavioural change initiative that promotes the equal involvement of men in caregiving. The programme supported the training of 110 social workers across five provinces, providing around 8,800 families with services. In **Timor-Leste**, UNICEF supported the national ministry in the revision of the 'Strengthening Families' parenting curriculum to integrate content on gender-discriminatory behaviours and the role of men in parenting. New guidelines were also developed and rolled out to the Fathers' Network.

Ensuring schools are safe places to learn

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the protective role that schools play in the lives of children. Schools are a front line of response and recovery when

children are experiencing abuse and neglect in home environments. They also protect children from risks in the community, such as child marriage, child labour and recruitment by armed actors. COVID-19-related school closures have exacerbated the risk of violence, particularly for adolescent girls, who are at risk of being cut off from important social support networks. UNICEF has therefore prioritized the re-establishment and strengthening of child protection as part of the framework for reopening schools (see also 'UNICEF Goal Area 2 (Education) Global Annual Result Report').

In **Angola**, UNICEF continued to support the Child Friendly Schools and Safe Havens models for primary education, to establish community platforms for the delivery of integrated services in selected municipalities, reaching around 73,600 learners in two provinces and the capital in 2021. In **Mozambique**, UNICEF efforts focused on strengthening MHPSS and mainstreaming GBV and VAC services within school environments, including strengthened referral protocols. This included building the capacity of more than 7,600 primary school teachers; 67 national, provincial and district education focal points; and 290 pedagogical directors.

UNICEF is advancing support to adolescent girls identified as being at high risk through provision of services and supporting their re-entry to schools. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, for example, UNICEF supported social workers to reintegrate 316 girls who dropped out of school during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the **Niger**, around 1,133 schools were supported in establishing localized plans to address



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Children outside of school after a UNICEF led session on safe practices in schools in Turkey.

school-related GBV, with a focus on at-risk girls. This included training of 4,410 parents and 1,260 teachers on the identification and referral of cases of violence and supporting girls to stay in school.

UNICEF also advocates with ministries of education for the adoption of national policies for the protection of children in educational settings and supports their roll-out to school level. In **Malawi**, advocacy with the Ministry of Education resulted in a commitment to institutionalize and coordinate child protection interventions in all school districts; 435,445 children (50 per cent girls, 50 per cent boys) completed a safe schools empowerment transformation and active citizenship training in 10 districts. In **Jordan**, a 'Safe to Learn' national diagnostic study provided baseline data to measure national efforts to prevent and respond to violence in schools.

A key focus for UNICEF is on scaling up evidence-based strategies to reduce violence in school. This includes focusing on enhancing interventions that prevent peer-to-peer and teacher-student violence, with a focus on positive discipline, bullying and school-related GBV. In **Peru**, UNICEF advocated for the alignment of a Positive Discipline programme with the public-school curriculum, which is now being rolled out to 3,000 schools, reaching more than 1.3 million students nationwide. A two-year public budget commitment secured in 2021 will see further scale-up in 2020/2023. In **Cambodia**, UNICEF supported an expansion of training in school-based positive discipline, with a specific focus on GBV to over 12,000 teachers and school directors in some 1,400 schools, benefiting 429,300 boys and girls. UNICEF Cambodia also supported a multimedia campaign, 'Do it today, Don't Wait for Tomorrow' to promote children's safe return to school, reaching 8 million people nationwide.

Protecting children in digital environments

UNICEF support to protect children from violence and abuse facilitated by technology has accelerated, partly due to the widespread move to digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing role of digital platforms in children's lives. In the past two years, governments and industry looked to UNICEF for support to put safeguards in place and ensure appropriate responses for children who experienced harm.

Many UNICEF offices are supporting the strengthening of governance mechanisms and legal and policy frameworks to address new challenges to child protection in the digital age. In Southeast Asia, UNICEF has been collaborating with ECPAT International and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the implementation of the 2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse. In 2021, UNICEF

supported the adoption of an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action for the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse. UNICEF is supporting the translation of these plans into country contexts. Examples of action include the adoption of a National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Exploitation (2021–2025) in **Cambodia** that is paving the way for more focused interventions to protect children online. In other regions, UNICEF is also advancing action. In Rwanda, for example, UNICEF helped operationalize multisectoral child online protection coordination structures to guide the overall implementation of the Child Online Protection Policy.

The [Disrupting Harm project](#), funded by the End Violence Fund and implemented by ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF, has generated evidence in 13 countries on children's experiences of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and how national protection systems are responding. Reports on Kenya and Uganda were published in 2021, providing rich (and alarming) data on the prevalence of online risks. For example, in **Kenya** data revealed that between 5 and 13 per cent of internet-using children, aged 12-17 years, reported experiencing online child sexual exploitation and abuse in the past year. However, it is believed this number is likely higher as many children do not disclose. Further, boys and girls were equally likely to experience online sexual exploitation and abuse. Yet 98 per cent of reports were made by girls. In **Uganda**, data provided critical evidence to inform the development of a National Action Plan to address online child SEA.



Two friends play outside while their parents participate in a workshop supported by UNICEF about online security and positive parenting practices in Nikajkim Comunity, Utatlan, Solola Guatemala.

Spotlight: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – A comprehensive approach to tackle online child sexual exploitation

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District adopted an Action Plan for Combating Violence against Children in the Digital Environment (2021–2024). As part of the roll-out, over 700 professionals were equipped with knowledge and skills to deal with cybercrimes against children, including digital evidence generation and improved case identification and reporting. To strengthen response services, seven cybercrime police investigators undertook specialist training on the use of modern forensic digital systems, and 42 specialist police officers enhanced their supervisory capacity to support law enforcement officers dealing with related crimes and survivor support. Almost 650 professionals (pedagogues, psychologists, information technology teachers and other educational staff) gained essential knowledge and skills in online safety and collectively supported over 18,800 learners to keep safe in the digital environment. A national conference provided a major platform to reach 50 cross-sectoral stakeholders with the latest evidence, strategic frameworks and projects.

Increasingly, countries are also integrating online safety issues more broadly into educative and prevention initiatives, with progress noted particularly in 2021 in at least 15 countries.³³ In the **Dominican Republic**, UNICEF reached over 7 million people with online safety messaging; equipped 120,000 adolescents and caregivers with knowledge and skills through two educational platforms, E-pana and E-mentores; and launched a joint study with Plan International, which included assessing the gender dimensions of online sexual exploitation and abuse.

UNICEF is also working to scale up the quality of criminal justice responses and survivor services for those affected by online child sexual exploitation and abuse in countries as diverse as **Belarus, Kenya, Turkey, Uganda and Zimbabwe**. UNICEF **Kenya**, for example, supported the development of a specialized curriculum for investigators and prosecutors for cases of online child SEA.

Accelerating national progress to reduce all forms of violence

Strengthening national action plans to end violence against children

As a contribution to the Together to #ENDviolence Solutions Summit Series, UNICEF supported national policy dialogues on VAC in 16 pathfinder countries in 2021, which resulted in new policy commitments to scale up VAC-related interventions and services. In 2021, **Ethiopia, Guinea, Jordan, Kenya and Papua New Guinea** joined the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, bringing the total number of pathfinding countries to 37. UNICEF supports these governments through the meeting of milestones in the pathfinding process. In Jordan, for example, UNICEF supported a National Study on Violence Against Children that highlighted community practices and attitudes on VAC and provided data on the prevalence

of violence. Findings are now informing national action planning. In addition, UNICEF also helped to develop and evaluate national action plans to end VAC in at least 11 countries.³⁴ In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, for example, UNICEF supported the development of the National Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Children and Violence Against Women 2021–2025, which specifically prioritizes actions against child online violence and violence in schools. Whereas, in **Sao Tome and Principe**, UNICEF efforts focused on integrating actions to address VAC into the development of the broader Child Protection Action Plan 2022–2023, reinforcing a focus on prevention.

Reforming legislation to fully prohibit all forms of violence

UNICEF supports legislative reform that aims to comprehensively prohibit all forms of VAC and that sets out appropriate statutory responses to protect children who are at risk or experiencing violence. The organization also supports countries to strengthen targeted legislation on specific forms of violence. In 2021, both **Colombia and Guinea** enacted laws that prohibit all forms of corporal punishment of children, bringing the total number of countries that have achieved full prohibition to 63. UNICEF is supporting implementation in both countries, notably through scale-up of positive parenting programmes.

Other legislative reform actions include in **Zimbabwe**, where UNICEF's policy and legal reform support contributed to an approved Children's Amendment Bill and Child Justice Bill. In **Angola**, advocacy efforts contributed to the entry into force of a decree approving child protection standard operating procedures. In **Bulgaria**, legislative reform resulted in amendments to the Child Protection Act and Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2005, while in **Thailand**, legal provisions focused on child online protection issues, including online child SEA.

Strengthening data and research

There has been a significant increase in the availability and quality of data on child protection, including violent discipline, and other child protection issues in recent years. For example, the number of countries with cross-nationally comparable data on violent discipline has grown from around 13 in 2005, to around 90 today. However, internationally comparable data on sexual violence in childhood, particularly for boys, remains scarce: as of 2021, only 12 countries had data on boys and around 60 had the same data for girls. UNICEF continues to invest in filling data gaps on VAC.

In 2021, UNICEF initiated a process for the development of survey questions on sexual violence against children that can be included in existing data collection efforts. The aim is to measure the prevalence of various forms of sexual violence against children (including sexual exploitation) and to collect information on some key contextual factors, including types of violence experienced by children, perpetrators, age at victimization, help-seeking etc. Questions will be included that will allow for the calculation of indicators to be used for reporting on indicator 16.2.3 of the SDGs to ensure that countries can use the modules to fulfil their reporting obligations.

Additionally, in response to the need to have comprehensive operational definitions of VAC, UNICEF has developed a statistical classification/codebook on all forms of VAC (ICVAC), building in consistency with the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes. The classification will provide countries with a tool to assess the extent to which their national definitions comply with some internationally agreed standards and to ensure that data collection efforts adhere to these in order to produce comparable data on VAC. The draft was developed in 2021 and in 2022, is undergoing a country consultation and review process, involving over 150 representatives from national statistical offices, line ministries, international agencies, international NGOs, and academic experts. Based on the outcome of the consultation and the review of the United Nations Committee of Experts on International Statistical Classifications, the ICVAC is expected to be submitted to the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2023. UNICEF is also working on strengthening administrative data on VAC. A key step forward was UNICEF's publication on [Strengthening Administrative Data on Violence against Children](#) rolled out in early 2021, which provides an important new resource on how to use and improve administrative data related to VAC.

UNICEF also led a coalition of partners in convening virtual events to: (1) [take stock of the evidence on preventing and responding to violence against children](#), and (2) look at the [intersections between violence against children and women and identify evidence gaps and opportunities for collaboration](#). These were attended by over 1,000

researchers, practitioners, policymakers and activists from around the world. Event outcomes are supporting the development of a [shared research agenda](#) on the intersections of these forms of violence. This is a joint effort undertaken by UNICEF, WHO and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative.

UNICEF also continued to raise awareness of the increased risks of violence posed by COVID-19, developing [innovative methodologies](#) to estimate the effect of the pandemic on violent discipline of children, and [proposed evidence-informed](#) strategies to minimize future risks. A research report was also published on the impact of the pandemic on child protection.

An important resource on [ending online child sexual exploitation and abuse](#) was also published in 2021. This is based on lessons learned and promising practices in 29 low- and middle-income countries. While findings detail considerable progress in implementing the WeProtect Model National Response, it also identified systematic challenges. These include: gaps in legislative frameworks and enforcement; maturity of child protection systems; and technical capacity in addressing online and offline child sexual exploitation and abuse among all professional cadres.

Regionally, UNICEF in East Asia and the Pacific collaborated with the United Nations Population Fund and UN Women to produce a report on [approaches to ending violence against women and children](#) in the region. To address violence in schools, the publication [Action to End Violence Against Children in Schools](#) details experiences in 28 countries across regions from 2018 to 2020. It identifies the range of interventions and programme strategies implemented by UNICEF and partners in different contexts to operationalize the Safe to Learn Call to Action. Findings are being used to inform ongoing programming.

Reflections and looking forward

COVID-19 has, as never before, shed light on the invisibility of violence against children and violence against women, and also their indivisibility in home and family settings. This recognition is reflected in the Secretary-General's Common Agenda's call for an emergency response plan to eradicate violence against women and girls as well as in UNICEF's new Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030, the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the Gender Action Plan. Yet, despite global commitments to end all forms of violence against children (SDG Target 16.2) and eliminate of all forms of violence against all women and girls (SDG Target 5.2), as well as increased evidence on effective interventions³⁵ (including in humanitarian settings), evidence-based intersectoral programmes have not yet been comprehensively implemented at scale.³⁶

Looking forward, UNICEF's work in child protection for the decade to 2030 will place a primary focus on scaling up evidence-based prevention approaches to the population level, not only in the core child protection sectors of social welfare and justice, but also in education, health, social protection and other sectors, with strong and clear accountabilities to deliver child protection outcomes.

UNICEF will work with partners to support inclusive, non-discriminatory and effective child protection systems in preventing and responding to child protection violations. Where children are experiencing violations, the organization will work collaboratively to strengthen access to response services to prevent recurrence and provide care, support and justice.



A young boy (11) works as a porter and often collects trash from the streets. He regularly visits and spends time with other children in the child protection hub supported by UNICEF in Gabtoli, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

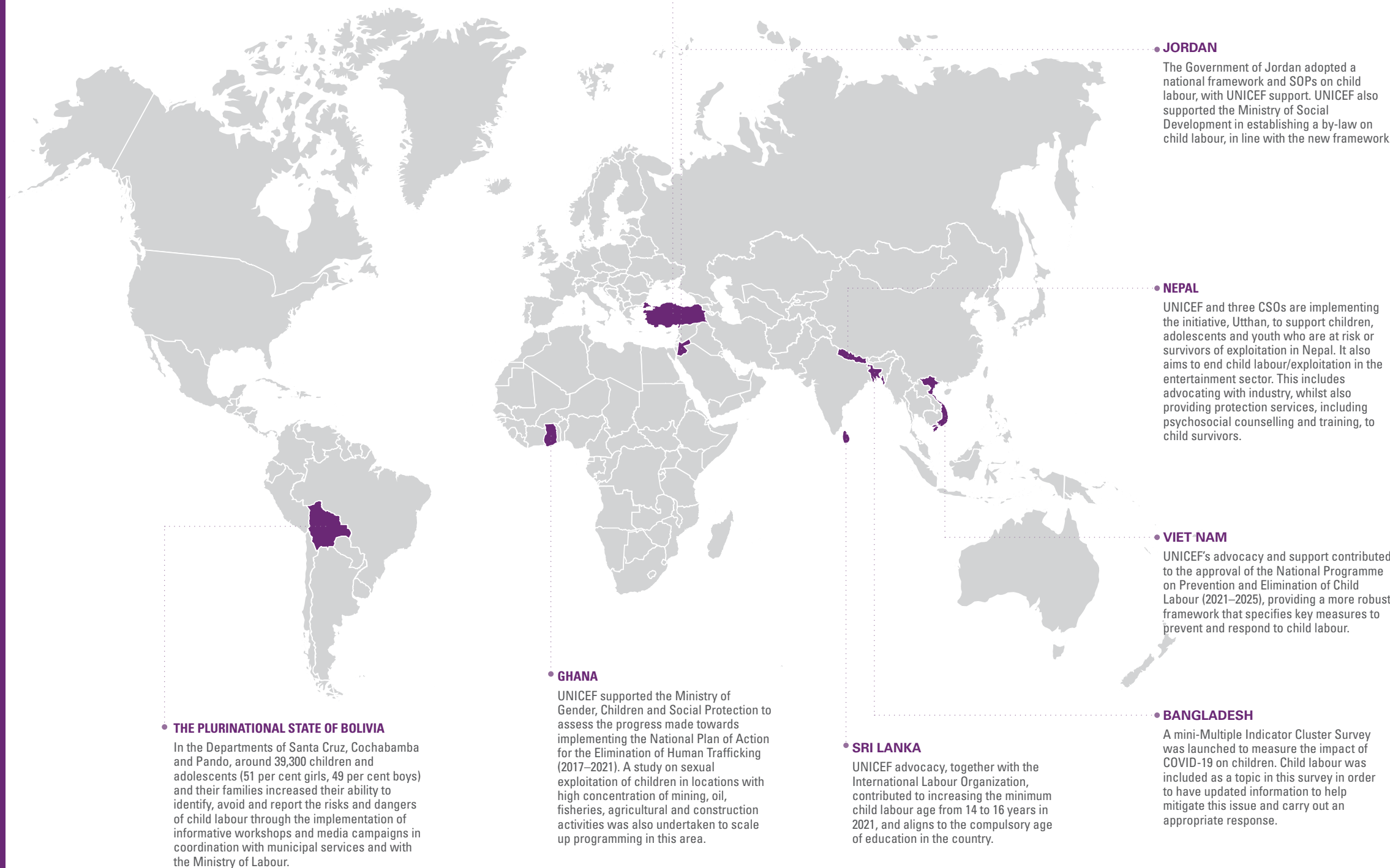
UNICEF and child labour

The United Nations General Assembly declared³⁷ 2021 the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, providing a critical platform to scale up efforts to eradicate forced labour and child labour (SDG 8.7) by 2025. According to International Labour Organization-UNICEF estimates issued as part of observing the year,³⁸ 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour at the beginning of 2020, accounting for almost 1 in every 10 children worldwide. For the first time in two decades, global progress against child labour has stalled.³⁹

In 2021, UNICEF worked with a range of partners, including the International Labour Organization, governments, private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs), in 66 countries to address child labour, particularly in relation to strengthening legislation and policy frameworks. In 2021, 39 countries report that legal and policy frameworks to eliminate the worst forms of child labour are in place; a 77 per cent increase on the number reporting in 2017 (22 countries) (see Figure 14). Increasingly, UNICEF has shifted to promote an integrated approach to eliminating child labour, which also includes strengthening parenting initiatives, promoting responsible business approaches in global supply chains and addressing harmful social norms that perpetuate child labour, in addition to strengthening legal, social support and reporting systems to curtail it. To expand country-level research and learning, UNICEF is also building the evidence base. This includes, in 2021, evidence on child labour and education in **India** and **Bangladesh** and on child labour and social protection in Africa (focused on **Malawi**, **the United Republic of Tanzania** and **Zambia**).

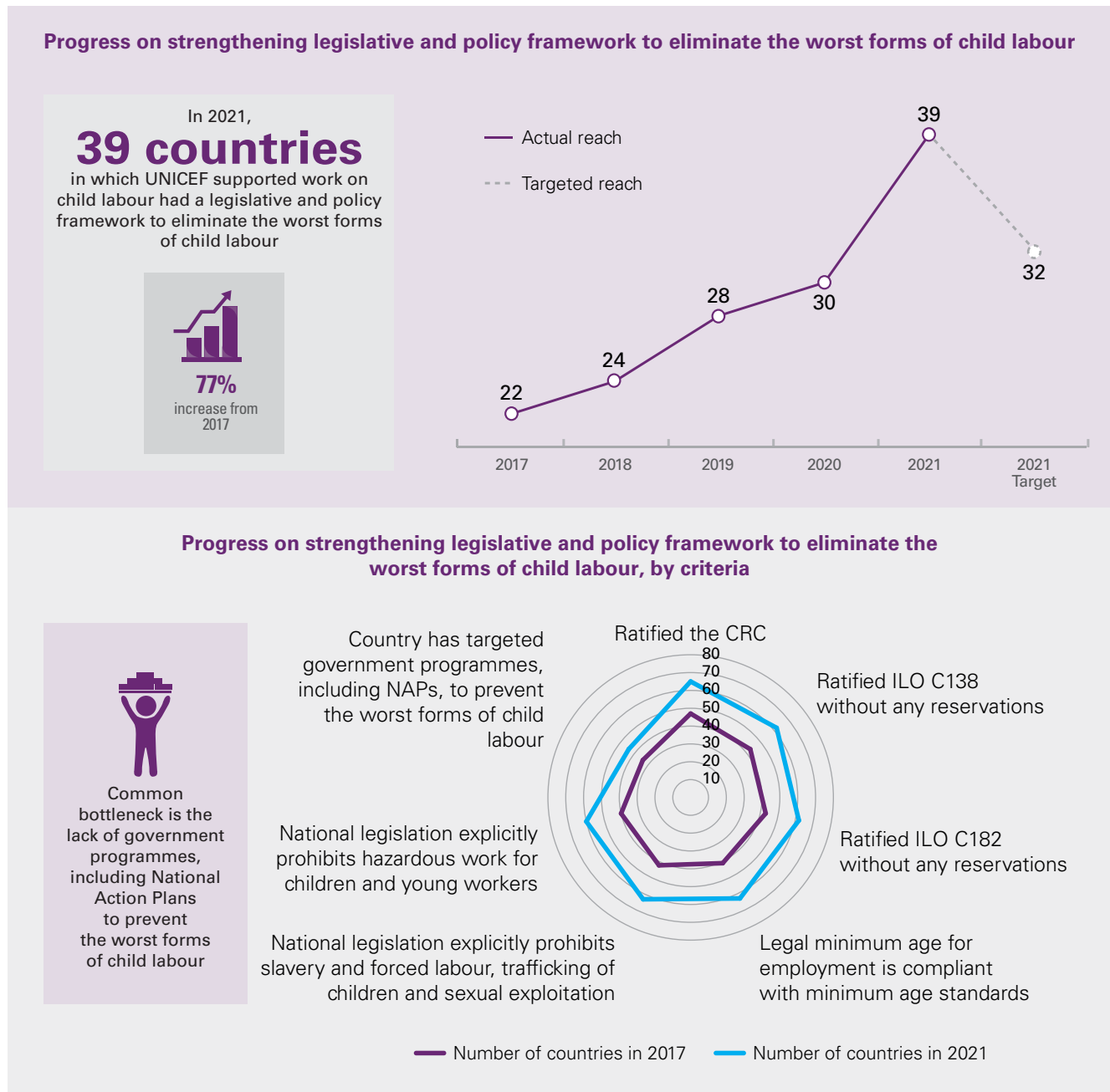
At the global level, several advocacy moments also spotlighted the role and responsibility of the private sector. For example, UNICEF contributed to a session on child labour at the 2021 Global Compact Leaders Summit, where business leaders shared their perspectives on key issues and actions taken by their companies to contribute to eliminating child labour. UNICEF also released a guide with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development for business leaders, on responsible business approaches to eliminate child labour. The publication, *Tackling Child Labor: An Introduction for Business Leaders*, highlights the significant role of businesses in addressing child labour in business operations and supply chains, with a focus on prevention and tackling the root causes.

Selected highlights of work around the world include:



Note: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

FIGURE 14: Summary of results on addressing child labour, 2021





A UNICEF supported social worker providing support to families, in the context of COVID-19.

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Social service workforce strengthening

One of the main reasons sufficient long-term investments have not been made in social service workforce strengthening is not only that the importance of the workforce is often not understood and its role frequently undervalued, but also that funders lack a clear basis for calculating the required investment, including a means of calculating the workforce numbers needed, and an overall costing framework. To address this challenge, the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance is now working with UNICEF to develop evidence, guidance and tools which will provide a clear basis for the required investment.

– Hugh Salmon, Director, Global Social Service Workforce Alliance

A well-developed social service workforce (SSW) is key to promoting and accessing social justice, providing and protecting legal identity, reducing discrimination, changing harmful behaviours and social norms, and preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and family separation. A lack of investment in the SSW undermines all other efforts to sustainably strengthen the child protection system.⁴⁰ Yet, in many countries, the SSW remains under-resourced, with insufficient numbers of qualified social workers to provide quality services at scale, especially at the subnational level.

At the height of COVID-19 in 2020, national SSW efforts were focused on ensuring the continued provision of social service care. This included, for example, expanding the availability of remote learning methods and expanding online case management. While these practices continued in 2021, the long-term investments essential to strengthen SSW have suffered. In 2021, UNICEF has placed a strategic emphasis on addressing this challenge, working with partners in over 143 countries (see *Figure 15*). UNICEF remains a leading advocate, highlighting the essential role of the SSW as an anchor to sustainably strengthen the child protection system in the long term.

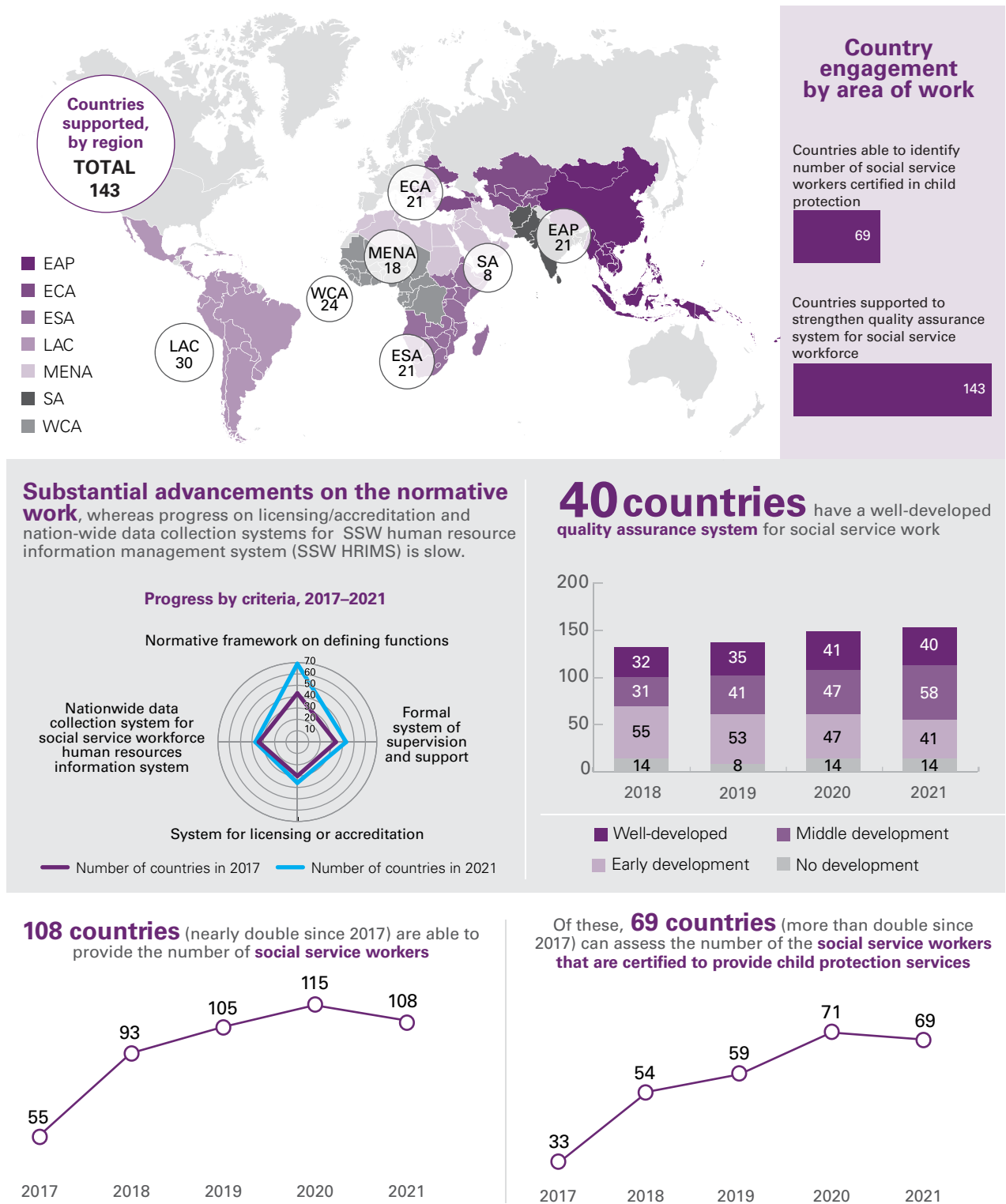
The organization provides practical support to help countries map out and cost their resourcing and capacity needs for SSW expansion. In 2021, UNICEF, together with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA), established an independent expert group to develop a strong investment case for workforce strengthening. This has led UNICEF and GSSWA to develop the first-ever global guidance on determining worker/population ratios and costing of the SSW. This guidance will prove to be a useful tool to advocate for and guide national efforts to strengthen the SSW.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, there has been a steady increase of 25 per cent in the number of countries strengthening their SSW (from 114 countries in 2017 to 143 in 2021). In 2021, there were 40 countries with systems in place to assure the quality of the SSW – a 29 per cent increase from 2017 (31 countries). Since 2017, more than double the number of countries (69) have data on the number of social service workers certified in child protection, including new reporting countries in 2021, such as the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** (with nearly 1,000 certified social workers), **Zambia** (nearly 400) and **Cambodia** (nearly 300).

Spotlight: Cambodia

In 2021, **Cambodia** significantly advanced work to enhance their SSW, including at subnational level. Securing high-level leadership of key ministries was a key driver for the development of provincial child protection plans, the formal appointment and capacity-building of government social service workers, and the establishment of clearer mechanisms for delivery of services and referrals at community level. Social service workers with clear job descriptions were appointed in all 204 districts and child protection plans developed in 10 provinces. In total, the direct domestic resource investment for child protection from actions taken in 2021, including recruitment, is estimated to have increased by almost US\$0.5 million.

FIGURE 15: Summary of results on social service workforce strengthening, 2017–2021



Notes: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

Global progress is also evident in the number of countries reporting advancements in developing their quality assurance systems. A key starting point to strengthening a national SSW is to develop the normative framework that outlines and defines functions, such as roles and responsibilities, work procedures and SOPs for social service workers at the national and/or subnational level. This is especially critical for effective case management and equipping workers with the necessary competencies to deliver on their expected functions. In 2021, 69 countries (a 60 per cent increase compared to 43 countries in 2017) had a normative framework in place.

Progress is noted in countries such as **Botswana**, where UNICEF supported the drafting of a bill establishing a Social Work Council, which will be instrumental in the professionalization of the SSW. In **China**, policy documents were developed on 'Further Strengthening Professional Social Work Workforce' and 'Promoting its High-quality Development', along with a set of social work standards for child welfare institutions and the juvenile justice system. In **Romania**, UNICEF supported the launch of the first-ever SSW census, with findings contributing to the development of a new policy that ensures equitable coverage of quality services and requires that social workers are qualified in roles necessitating professional competencies.

Social workers play a critical role in identifying vulnerable households and their needs. Scaling up efficient case management systems – including improved training for social service workers in their use – and mechanisms to

ensure effective referral processes, including to health, education, social welfare and justice services, are critical. UNICEF **Bhutan** supported partners to develop case management guidelines for early identification and safe referral procedures for child protection and GBV. This was rolled out to almost 600 social service workers. In **Kenya**, the reach of the Child Protection Volunteer (CPV) scheme was expanded through the deployment of an additional 320 CPVs (30 per cent female). The CPV scheme is a proven model to strengthen community-based prevention services. CPVs work in tandem with local child protection officers. CPVs were also trained on the use of the Vurugu Mapper app, an information management system that supports the digital reporting of cases. Over 114,000 child protection-related cases were registered in 2021 using the app, alongside case reporting via the Child Helpline and by local children's services offices.

Spotlight: The Lao People's Democratic Republic

In the **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, UNICEF helped strengthen the professionalization of their SSW with the promulgation of the Strategic Guidelines for the Social Service Workforce Development 2022–2026 and review of the National University of the Lao People's Democratic Republic' BA in Social Work. A comprehensive standard job package was developed to capacitate and operationalize the child protection network and para-social workers at subnational levels. This included introducing a code of conduct, child case recording book and mapping out of referral pathways. A total of 684 social welfare workers, justice actors and allied workforce members were trained, including in skills related to MHPSS, child-friendly juvenile proceedings, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, GBV and VAC.

Spotlight: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 2021, UNICEF capitalized on opportunities that arose from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen linkages and connections between regular and emergency programming in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. This allowed for significant advancement in reinforcing the central role of the SSW in emergency response and scaling up the reach of services. UNICEF, working closely with the Division of Social Affairs (DIVAS), continued to scale up identification and referral capacities as part of the expansion of a para-social worker model. Through the establishment of a trained and accredited network of para-social workers (Travailleurs Para-Sociaux), the role of the DIVAS as a primary respondent in emergency responses to Ebola outbreaks and natural hazards – such as the volcano eruption in 2021 – has been recognized and reinforced. Overall, social workers supported more than 200,000 additional cases compared with 2020, enabling almost 440,000 children to receive services in 2021.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to require adaptations to delivery of in-service trainings, including those that focus on providing remote case management and follow-ups over mobile phones. These innovative approaches have demonstrated the potential to strengthen the workforce more efficiently, impacting those in hard-to-reach areas, marginalized communities or during

crisis situations, where access is limited. **South Sudan** developed and disseminated a voice-recorded presentation on access to justice and case management that was made available via phones for caseworkers and managers. **Ethiopia** used a teleconferencing approach, transmitting messages on case management, MHPSS, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. This involved a cascade method, where eight senior social workers were trained to be able to train a further 50 social workers, who then engaged 1,500 community service workers through small-group telephone calls.

In **Sri Lanka**, UNICEF finalized an assessment of their SSW that aims to improve professional accreditation and quality assurance systems in the workforce. In **Romania**, the organization partnered with the National College for Social Workers to coordinate a mapping of best practices related to incentives and retention packages for professionals working in remote areas. Despite progress, a common bottleneck that remains in many countries is putting in place a system of SSW licensing or accreditation and ensuring the availability of a nationwide data collection system for social service work. This is central to maintaining and ensuring quality assurance in the sector.

Regional commitments to strengthening the social service workforce: Southeast Asia

Across the 10 ASEAN member States, progress to strengthen SSW has varied significantly. A UNICEF-GSSWA 2019 mapping of SSWs in the region highlighted significant challenges, including very low ratios of social workers per population, only three countries with a professionalized workforce, and poor public perceptions of social workers. In response, UNICEF and GSSWA supported ASEAN to develop a regional framework – the 2020 Ha Noi Declaration for Strengthening Social Work Towards Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community. Building on this, in 2021, a 10-year road map was adopted for its implementation. This is the first regional approach for strengthening social work and calls on ASEAN member States to expand and invest in the workforce; develop costed national plans of action; professionalize social work; strengthen education, regulation and supervision; and promote positive perceptions of social workers.

In 2021, a regional public campaign – [#StandTogetherforSocialWorkers](#) – was launched on World Social Work Day to increase public awareness of the critical role the SSW plays in the lives of children, families, women and communities in the region. The campaign highlights the wide-ranging role played by social workers in supporting vulnerable children and their families.

Scaling up digital information management systems

UNICEF continues to invest in strengthening child protection information management systems (IMS) to support child protection actors in both humanitarian and development contexts to manage protection-related data for case management, incident monitoring and programming monitoring.

In 2021, 107 countries reported strengthening IMS for child protection, including 35 countries reporting an interoperable IMS in place; a 3.5-fold increase since 2017. **Kyrgyzstan**, for example, supported the introduction of a case management IMS country-wide to ensure tracking of cases and referral to services. To facilitate secure sharing of relevant data, the Migration Department linked its IMS to the government's 'Tunduk' information exchange hub.

UNICEF also works with governments and other partners to support the scale-up of digital IMS solutions, in particular **Primero™**, an open-source digital public good used for case management and incident monitoring for the child protection and GBV sectors.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has been incorporating **Primero™** into several types of protection programming across different contexts, including alternative care, migration and VAC. **Primero™** offers innovative solutions to improve the capacity of social service providers to facilitate quality case management and incident monitoring, and to deliver family tracing and reunification services.

In 2021, the number of active Primero™ instances increased by 24 per cent (from 41 in 2020 to 51 in 2021) across countries/territories in 2021. Overall, this is a more than threefold increase from the 14 instances at the start of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period.

In 2021, new instances were introduced in **Brazil**, **Ethiopia**, **Ghana**, **Guatemala**, **northeast Syrian Arab Republic**, **Somalia**, **South Sudan**, **Thailand**, and in the five field sites of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for **Palestine** Refugees in the Near East. In **Ghana**, government partners scaled up their version of Primero™, the Social Welfare Information Management System, to more than 100 districts. **Guatemala** is now moving into a new phase of scale-up, with a transition from Primero™ v1 to Primero™ v2; more than 10,000 cases of migrant children and other vulnerable children had been managed through the system by the end of 2021. In **Brazil**, the child protection information management system (CPIMS+) module of Primero™ was rolled out to support case management for the influx of migrants from the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela** and is now being used by UNICEF and more than 70 social service workers from three other organizations to facilitate services for more than 5,100 refugees. In **Somalia**, the Federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development and UNICEF launched the CPIMS+ to enhance the protection of the most vulnerable children. It was used by over 190 users to support an estimated caseload of 25,000 children at risk in 2021 (see also *Spotlight on ‘Operationalizing the “Blueprint for Refugees” through improved data management systems in Ethiopia’*).

As a result of these new roll-outs and the scaling up of existing implementations, there are currently 51 active implementations of Primero™ being used across 41 countries/territories. The caseload managed by more than 6,200 SSW users has increased by more than 82 per cent from 2020 (from 110,000 cases in 2020 to nearly 190,000 cases in 2021). In 2021, the latest version of Primero™, (v2.2), was released. This version provides the greatest level of flexibility for users, as it can be used online and offline in locations where internet coverage is limited. This is a critical step in extending its service to marginalized and hard-to-reach populations.

The year 2021 also saw a noteworthy marker in service growth with the launch of the fiftieth Primero™ implementation (or ‘instance’) with **South Sudan’s** GBV information management system (GBVIMS+) module roll-out. This was also the first-ever inter-agency roll-out of GBVIMS+ version 2 and it is supporting over 90 users representing 5 GBV organizations offering life-saving assistance to women and girls in South Sudan.



A group of social workers using the Child Protection Information Management System Primero for case management and follow-up in Cambodia. UNICEF supported the launch of Primero in Cambodia, allowing social workers to better respond to child protection cases and provide support services.

Reflections and looking forward

Integrated data management strategies that bring together social services actors around common procedures, practices and datasets are becoming more prevalent in the sector, yet there is still a long way to go before digital IMS is fully mainstreamed as a core component in successful child protection systems. Looking forward, UNICEF will work to further mainstream Primero™ modules that are centrally supported to bring programme efficiencies and coherent data standards to the sector. Efforts to develop advanced analytics for prevention – including predictive models and quality of care metrics – will be prioritized. Explicit in this approach will be UNICEF’s continued support towards the alignment of Primero™ with the Responsible Data for Children initiative to strengthen data privacy and promote best practice in data responsibility.



Child protection in humanitarian action

This girl participates in a coloring activity at the UNICEF office in Barranquilla, Colombia. She is part of the “Súmate por Mí” project that engages children and adolescents around the promotion of peace.

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Protection needs are deepening across the globe, rising to the highest levels ever seen in some regions. More than 1.2 billion people now live in countries with complex emergencies, and this number is likely to grow as new crisis situations arise. Proliferating conflicts and escalating violence, the consequences of climate change⁴¹ as well as disease outbreaks – including the ongoing effects of COVID-19 – are putting children’s rights and overall well-being, and even their lives, at risk. Across all settings, children and women are disproportionately impacted. The rapid escalation of violence in Ukraine, home to 7.5 million children, underscores the critical need for sustained prevention and preparedness in humanitarian action.

Advocating for a child rights approach to humanitarian decision-making is central to UNICEF’s humanitarian action mandate. The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs), revised in late 2020, form the central UNICEF policy and framework for child protection in humanitarian action. They were revised to reflect the current global humanitarian context, which has changed significantly since their first inception over 20 years ago, and to equip UNICEF and its partners to deliver principled, timely, quality and child-centred humanitarian response and advocacy in any humanitarian situation. They are aligned to UNICEF’s long-term vision for children set out in the new Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030 and operationalized in the short term through the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

Over the period of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF invested in transformative programming to achieve unprecedented results for children (see Figure 16). In 2021, UNICEF worked in 124 countries, in close cooperation with a range of partners, including United Nations

Children’s rights are never suspended. Listen to children.

– Testimonial at the United Nations General Assembly, 2021, by Farida, a refugee who was displaced by violence that killed her mother, then married and became a mother herself, all before turning 16.

agencies, international non-government organizations, governments and other national and local partners. UNICEF has accelerated development of sector-wide guidance and global standards to advance child rights, scaled up prevention and response interventions to address child violations, and expanded policy and programming linkages across the humanitarian and development nexus to strengthen the inclusion of children caught up in crises within national child protection systems.

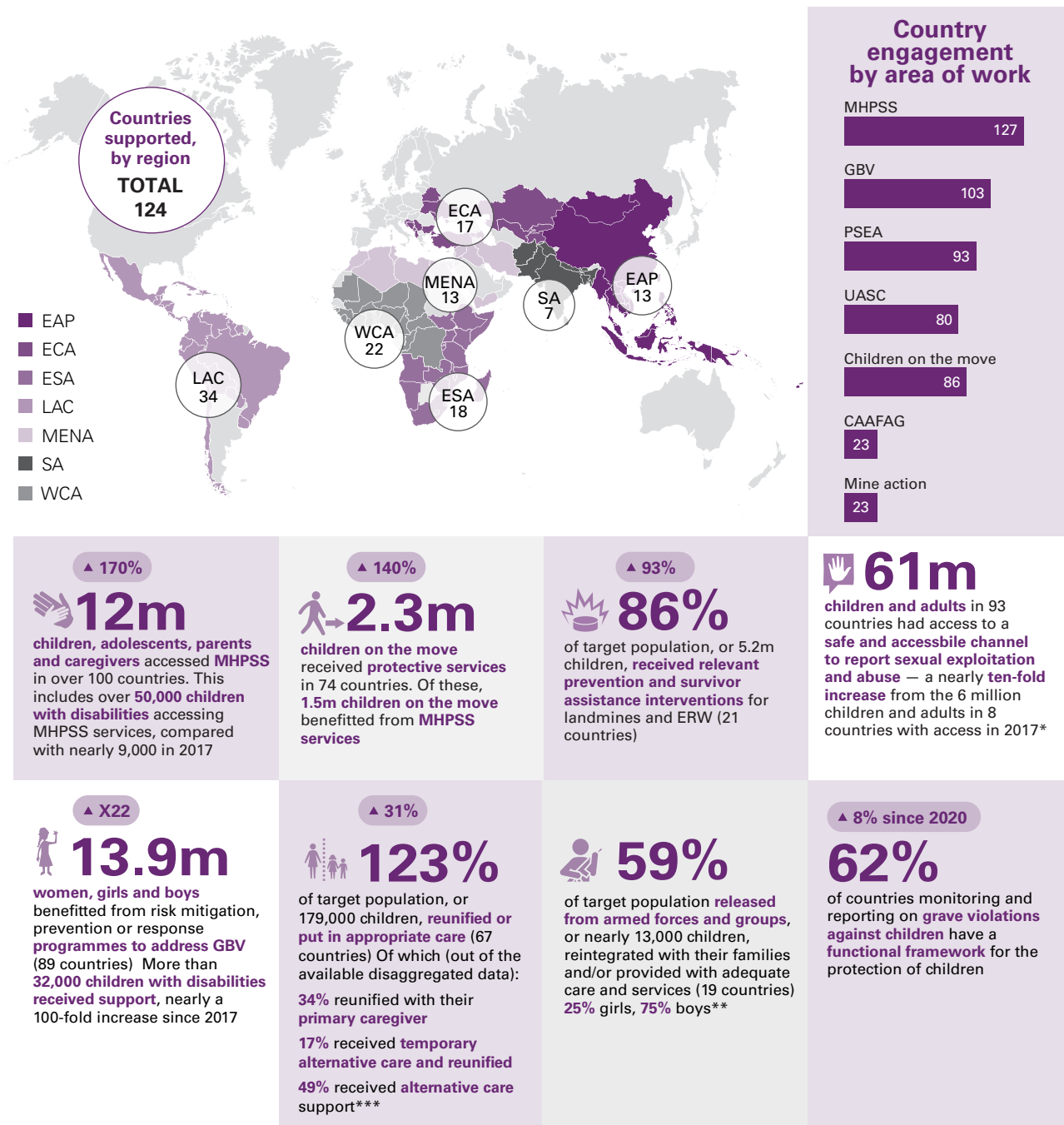
UNICEF humanitarian work focuses on scaling up actions to support children’s mental health and psychosocial well-being; monitoring the grave violations of child rights; reintegrating children affected by armed conflicts with their families and communities; providing support to unaccompanied and separated children; expanding the reach of explosive ordnance risk education (EORE); preventing and responding to gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE); and strengthening system-wide protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA).



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As families struggled to cope with the aftermath of the devastating Beirut explosions, UNICEF and partners provided counselling services and continue to support many, including Rana and her children here at their home on April 16, 2021.

FIGURE 16: Summary of results on child protection in humanitarian action, 2021



Abbreviations: ERW - explosive remnants of war, GBV - gender-based violence, MHPSS - mental health and psychosocial support, UASC - unaccompanied and separated children.

Notes: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Changes are compared to results achieved in 2017 unless otherwise specified.

* UNICEF's work to scale up PSEA resulted in 117 country offices actively engaged in PSEA system establishment. In 2021, 53 country offices have PSEA system in place, having developed country action plans, rolled out the UN Protocol on Assistance to Victims of SEA, strengthened referral pathways and implemented capacity building for partners.

** Where sex-disaggregated data were available

*** Drawn from countries with available disaggregated data

Spotlight: Operationalizing the 'Blueprint for Refugees' through improved data management systems in Ethiopia

The region of Gambella in Ethiopia, flanking the border of South Sudan, hosts one of the biggest refugee populations in Africa, with more than 700,000 refugees currently registered there. In Ethiopia, 60 per cent of all refugees are children. Due to their status, they are often unable to access the services provided by governments, including child protection services. In 2020, UNICEF and UNHCR came together to imagine a new strategy for reaching these children. The UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint for Joint Action: A Fair Deal for Refugee Children (the '[Blueprint](#)') is a joint two-year initiative to meet the challenges of refugee inclusion and to ensure that no child is left behind.⁴² The Blueprint is being piloted in 10 countries,⁴³ which are home to over 2 million refugee children, or 20 per cent of the world's total.

Case management for individual children in refugee settings is a complex process and is most efficiently done through an integrated approach. The Blueprint approach aims to connect national service providers with those who are working in refugee settings, including through comprehensive data management systems.

In 2021, UNICEF and UNHCR worked closely with the Ethiopian Government and partners such as the Danish Refugee Council, Save the Children and Plan International to bring this aim to fruition through the launch of the child protection information management system – CPIMS+/Primero™. After a year-long effort to prepare, build capacity, and implement the system, more than 60 caseworkers to date have been trained on the use of CPIMS+/Primero™, and digitally facilitated casework commenced. The next phase of work will be to scale up the system in Gambella, including integrating CPIMS+/Primero™ and UNHCR's proGres v4 refugee registration database. By linking these data systems together, UNICEF and UNHCR are investing in making the structural changes that will support inclusive programme and service delivery, all moving one step closer to the realization of the Blueprint's shared vision of giving all refugee children a fair chance in life.

Building on the early successes of the Blueprint in Ethiopia and elsewhere, UNICEF and UNHCR plan to expand the approach in 2022 to other countries where they work jointly.

Mental health and psychosocial support

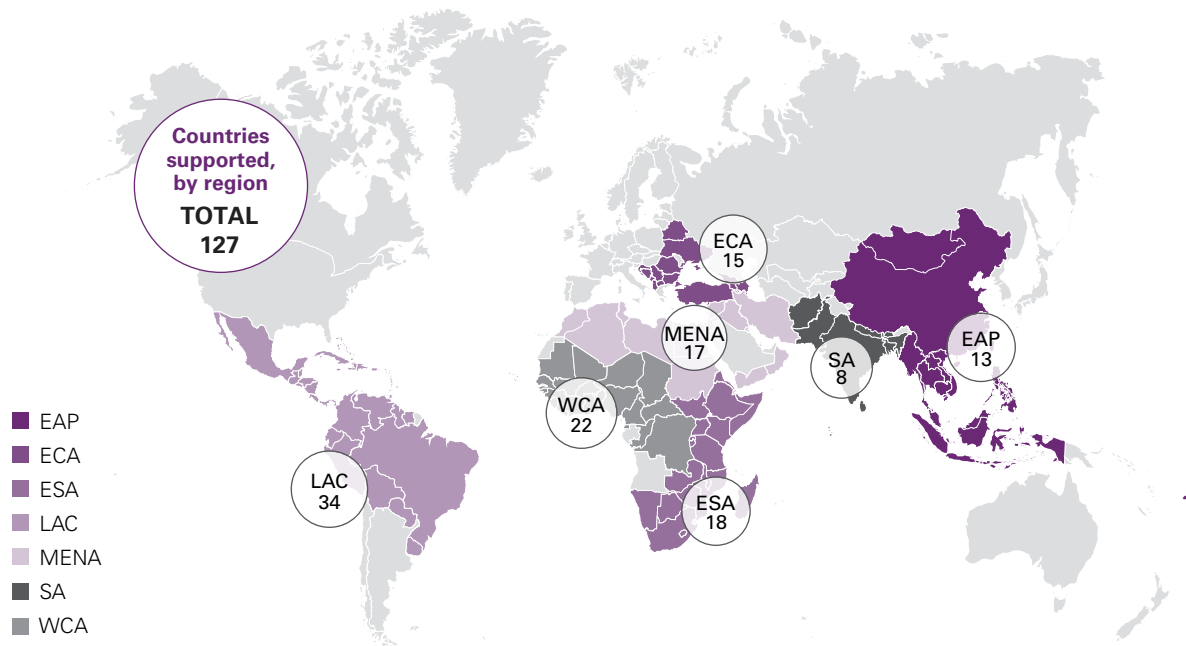
UNICEF has been instrumental in driving greater inter-agency collaboration and coordination to scale up mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) across countries. This includes strengthening standards, expanding access to quality community-based MHPSS services and programming across humanitarian and development contexts, and increasing engagement with children, adolescents and caregivers at community level. In combination, these actions have anchored UNICEF's programmatic shift towards a more holistic and multisectoral approach to MHPSS, yielding considerable progress over the past four years.

To strengthen coordinated action across the mental health continuum of prevention, promotion and treatment, UNICEF released a [Global Multisectoral Operational Framework for MHPSS](#) in 2021. The framework details strategies to accelerate the inclusion of policies and practices that fundamentally support child, adolescent and caregiver mental health and well-being into national and regional development strategies. In addition, UNICEF and WHO produced a MHPSS Minimum Service Package

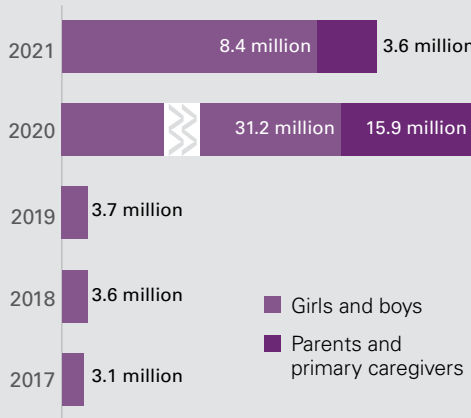
that provides a single intersectoral package of tools and interventions to support humanitarian response operations that are holistic, comprehensive and consistent across settings.⁴⁴

In the past four years, the number of countries in which UNICEF supports community-based MHPSS has more than doubled, from 58 in 2017 to 127 in 2021. Although most people were reached with direct MHPSS services in humanitarian situations, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health and well-being has created further opportunities to scale up MHPSS interventions and build awareness across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

FIGURE 17: Result summary of UNICEF mental health and psychosocial support, 2021



12m children, adolescents, parents and caregivers accessed MHPSS in 111 countries, significantly more than the 3.1m girls and boys reached with UNICEF-supported interventions in 2017



This includes:

2.4 million girls, 2.4 million boys, 1 million women and over 650,000 thousand men, based on countries reporting disaggregated data

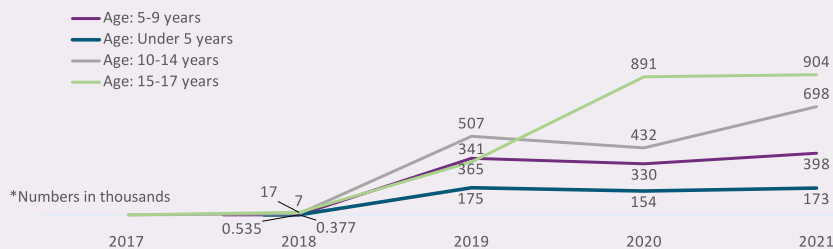


More than 50,000 children with disabilities received support

Children

Note: The charts below visualize percentages and numbers based on the total number of reported disaggregated data. Total disaggregated data may differ from total number reported for the indicator.

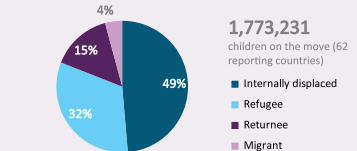
Age (2017 – 2021)



Disability (2017 – 2021)



Migration Status (2021)*



Notes: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Changes are compared to results achieved in 2017 unless otherwise specified.

* Percentage is calculated based on available disaggregated data on migration status.

In 2021, UNICEF MHPSS support, through direct services and targeted awareness campaigns, reached over 8.4 million children and adolescents in 111 countries (up 170 per cent over 2017). Similar interventions also reached almost 3.6 million parents and caregivers in 97 countries in 2021 (see Figure 17). UNICEF has improved substantially in the ability to report on age disaggregated data. In 2021, 904,000 children aged 15–17 were reached in 32 countries, compared to 2 countries having data for this age bracket in 2017. Of note is UNICEF’s support to children aged 10–14 in 2021, which increased 62 per cent from 2020.

In 2021, UNICEF expanded MHPSS access by integrating services into protection, health and education sectors, with a focus on participatory, sustainable, community-based approaches. For example, in **Yemen**, UNICEF scaled up MHPSS in health-care facilities, schools, community centres, and sites for internally displaced persons, using a mix of fixed and mobile services. Over 1,300 service providers, including teachers, community volunteers, health workers and social workers, received MHPSS training, who in turn collectively reached almost 468,000 children (49 per cent girls, 51 per cent boys) with support. UNICEF-supported interventions in **South Sudan** are aimed at scaling up service provision of child-friendly community spaces and schools, including to those children most at-risk and those that have limited access to such services.

Almost 92,800 children (47 per cent girls, 53 per cent boys) were reached in 2021, and around 5,900 caregivers (54 per cent women, 46 per cent men) participated in psychosocial support services and positive parenting sessions – over twice the number of caregivers reached in 2020.

In **Ethiopia**, around 119,200 children and caregivers were reached through community-based MHPSS interventions. Together with national and regional public health units, UNICEF rapidly deployed 35 social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists to hospitals, internally displaced persons sites and one-stop centres in Amhara to support children and women survivors of violence. In **Myanmar**, despite escalating violence and pandemic-related restrictions, UNICEF and partners reached around 29,700 children (47 per cent girls, 53 per cent boys), providing MHPSS through mobile and remote services.

Additionally, UNICEF supported messaging campaigns to raise awareness around signs of distress and use of positive coping skills. In **Ukraine**, for example, UNICEF, together with youth-led organization, Teenergizer, focused on addressing the stigma around mental health challenges. A social media campaign using TikTok, ‘#youareok’, was launched, reaching more than 10 million young people and resulting in 5,000 visits to Teenergizer’s online consultation service requesting support.

Monitoring and reporting on grave violations⁴⁵

The year 2021 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the release of Graça Machel’s 1996 seminal report to the United Nations General Assembly on the impact of war on children. Since 2005, at least 266,000 such violations have been verified by the United Nations as committed by parties to conflict in 30 situations across the globe. To mark the anniversary, UNICEF Executive Director in 2021, Henrietta Fore, and Special Representative for the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, released a joint [statement](#) to reignite global awareness about children affected by armed conflict, calling for full adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law by all parties to conflict.

UNICEF engages at country level to develop strategies to address rights violations, including advocacy, legislative reform and establishment of comprehensive, system-wide and multisector prevention and response measures. In 2021, 90 per cent of the countries included in the Secretary-General’s Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) had an inter-agency strategy that included actions to protect children from key grave violations of child rights.

UNICEF and partners continued to verify child rights violations, supporting actions in over 25 situations of conflict, some of which are not formally part of the MRM

Since 2018, killing and maiming, and recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups are the two violations with the highest number of verified cases. These account for a combined 68 per cent of all verified violations during the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period. In 2021, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM)⁴⁶ documented over 22,000 grave violations across 21 country situations⁴⁷ and 1 regional situation, with over 15,000 children affected by at least one grave violation (27 per cent girls).

but nonetheless require monitoring of grave violations and other serious violations in accordance with the CCCs. In **South Sudan**, UNICEF supported establishment of national ministerial and technical committees on the Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations Against Children and 10 state-level technical committees. In **Yemen**, MRM

data supported advocacy and dialogue with parties to the conflict. In **Burkina Faso**, UNICEF supported the training of 82 members of local community organizations and 62 local and international child protection actors on the monitoring and reporting of grave violations.

Creating a common and accessible platform for knowledge sharing and learning remains a priority for UNICEF to provide teams and partners with shared resources,

information and strategies that further strengthen the ability to document, prevent and respond to grave violations. In 2021, UNICEF's online MRM CAAC Community of Practice continued to support multiple exchanges among its members in the more than 23 situations of concern, including on specific topics such as engaging with parties to conflict and working in countries with United Nations peacekeeping and special political mission presences.

Children associated with armed forces or armed groups

UNICEF works closely with governments, United Nations Country Teams and other partners to identify children and secure their release from armed forces and armed groups so they can receive the support to which they have the right. Between January 2018 and December 2021, over 30,000 children have been verified as recruited and used by armed actors across 21 contexts. In addition, significant numbers of children are detained in the context of armed conflict rather than provided with supportive recovery and reintegration services.⁴⁸

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF provided care and support to between 12,000 and 15,000 children per year who had been released from armed forces or armed groups. However, operationally, efforts to expand or maintain a consistent reach continues to be challenged by the effect of COVID-19 and by the fluidity in security situations in several contexts.



After being abducted and abused by Boko Haram, girl (18) in Nigeria attends a UNICEF supported reintegration center where she is learning tailoring skills. With her newfound skills she has been able to help her mother in her shop.

In 2021, the severe escalation and rising number of violent armed conflicts, along with the proliferation of armed actors in some settings – particularly in **Afghanistan**, the **Syrian Arab Republic**, and in the **Central Sahel region** of Africa – placed children at an increased risk of recruitment or use by armed forces or groups.

UNICEF provided a range of care and services to almost 13,000 children in 19 countries who exited armed forces or armed groups.⁴⁹ Where sex-disaggregated data were available, girls accounted for 25 per cent of the children receiving such support. Of the 13,000 children, over 11,000 children across 18 countries were supported to reintegrate

with their families and communities. Children also continue to receive reintegration or other protection support after being reunited with their families. Of these children, more than 77 per cent were in countries located in West and Central Africa in 2021.

For example, in the Timbuktu region of **Mali**, UNICEF supported the socioeconomic reintegration of 90 adolescents (93 per cent boys, 7 per cent girls) who had been demobilized from armed actors thanks to community dialogue. All children were reintegrated with their families and supported with life-skills preparation, such as how to set up a small business, how to manage livestock, and

other vocational activities – all of which also aim to increase their protection against new recruitment. With increased identification capacities and strong field support, holistic assistance was provided to 554 children (13 per cent girls) released from armed forces or groups, representing 139 per cent of the planned 2021 target in Mali.

In **Nigeria**, around 3,120 (55 per cent boys, 45 per cent girls) and 79 youths formerly associated with armed actors were released from administrative custody to return to their communities without retribution, and were able to access available reintegration programmes in their communities. In **Somalia**, engagement with the government and the Somali National Army resulted in the handover of 98

children previously associated with parties to conflict. 514 children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups in South Sudan (75 per cent boys, 25 per cent girls) also benefited from UNICEF-supported reintegration programmes.

As a member of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), UNICEF is working to strengthen the quality of services provided by practitioners to children associated with armed forces and armed groups. In 2021, revisions were made to integrate child and youth issues more effectively into the Integrated DDR Standards, which were formulated through the joint efforts of 25 United Nations entities.

Unaccompanied and separated children

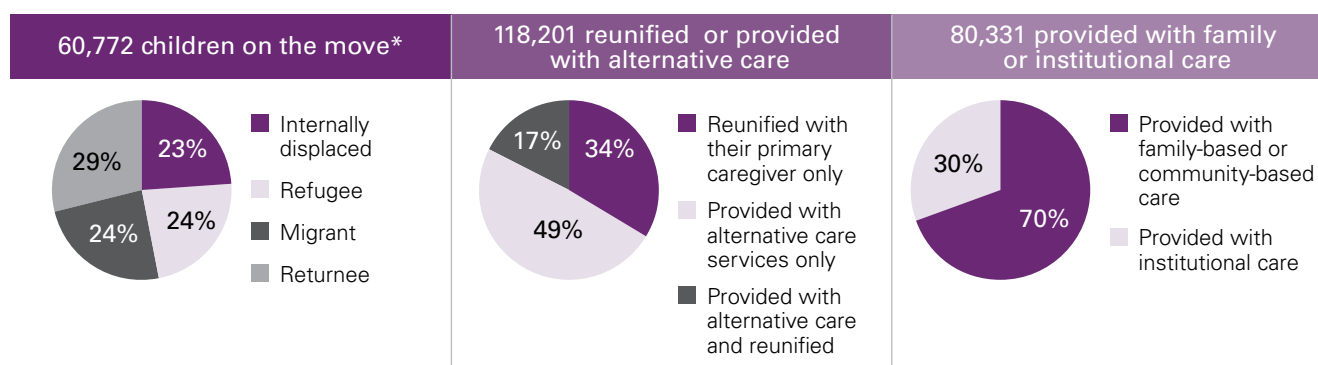
Children who are unaccompanied or become separated from their families and caregivers in emergency settings face tremendous protection risks. Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF has steadily expanded its reach and services for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in humanitarian settings, providing reunification and/or alternative care services. In 2021, all the children targeted for UNICEF-supported interventions received such support.

As a result of sustained multi-year advocacy and service investments, there has also been a demonstrable shift in scaling up family- or community-based alternative care. Around 70 per cent of the 80,000 children receiving alternative care in 2021 benefited from family- or community-based arrangements as opposed to residential care placement (see also '[Children without parental or family care](#)' and '[Children on the move](#)').

In 2021, over 179,000 UASC, (of which 37 per cent are girls in countries where disaggregated data are available) received UNICEF-supported family tracing and reunification services and/or were provided with alternative care across 67 countries. This is a 31 per cent increase in the number of UASC provided with family tracing, reunification services and alternative care compared with 2020, and more than three times those reached in 2017 (55,000 in 39 countries) (see Figure 18).

FIGURE 18: Result summary of UNICEF support to unaccompanied and separated children, 2021

123% of target population, or 179,000 children, were reunified or put in appropriate care (67 countries) – over three-fold increase since 2017



* Percentage is calculated based on available disaggregated data on migration status.

UNICEF has strengthened reporting mechanisms to more effectively track the range of support provided. Of the children supported in 2021, 34 per cent of the children registered were reunified with their primary caregiver, 17 per cent received temporary alternative care and were subsequently reunited, while 49 per cent received alternative care support.

In **Afghanistan**, with UNICEF support, around 5,100 UASC were reunified with their primary caregivers and/or provided with temporary alternative care. UNICEF was also instrumental in providing cross-border inter-agency coordination for the registration, care and reunification of an additional 392 UASC identified amongst civilians evacuated by the US Government in August via Qatar and Germany. In the **Sudan**, around 13,000 UASC displaced by violent conflict in Central, North and West Darfur were identified and reunified with their families and/or placed in alternative family care.

In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF-supported services reached some 6,000 UASC, of which 69 per cent were provided with family-based or other appropriate alternative care support (while in the process of family tracing), while the remainder were reunified with their families. In **Nigeria**, almost 24,600 UASC – including around 3,150 children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups – were provided with support. Of those reached, 68 per cent were reunified with their families and the remaining children were placed in alternative care arrangements.

UNICEF plays a critical inter-agency role in advancing sectoral standards and guidelines and improving the quality and delivery of UASC programming. A key step forward included the development of [programmatic guidance](#) for field practitioners that builds on lessons learned in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to strengthen the design and implementation of tracing and family reunification services for UASC during infectious disease outbreaks.⁵⁰



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In Iraq, UNICEF supports mine risk education programmes to teach children and adults how to identify, report and protect themselves against explosive hazards.

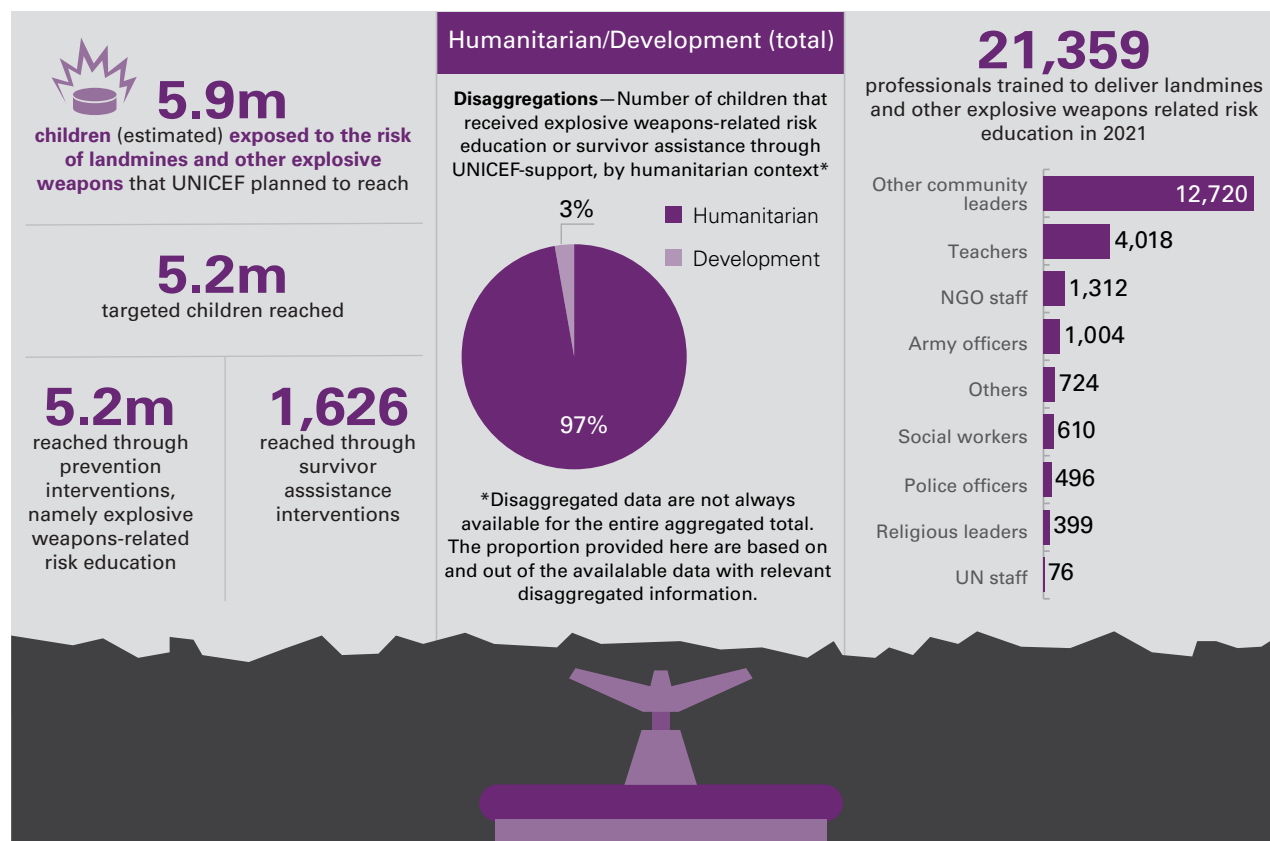
Mine action and explosive weapons in populated areas

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) is increasing, with devastating consequences for children and families. Ninety-one per cent of casualties resulting from EWIPA are civilians and approximately half of these are children.⁵¹ UNICEF, together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and other United Nations entities, continues to advocate for political commitment to avoid the use of EWIPA.

Several steps were taken to push the agenda forward in 2021. UNICEF, together with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs provided key inter-agency inputs to the Government of Ireland-led high-level consultations, attended by 70 states, calling for an unequivocal global declaration to avoid the use of EWIPA.

Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 period, UNICEF has supported 16 million children in over 20 countries with explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and/or survivor assistance. In 2021, UNICEF reached 5.2 million children in 21 countries, almost double the 2.7 million reached in 2020 (see Figure 19). This jump is due in part to a major shift towards mass digital messaging campaigns, which gained traction during the pandemic, and which were more systematically measured in 2021.

FIGURE 19: Result summary of UNICEF support to risk-reduction efforts of landmines and other explosive weapons, 2021



This call was reinforced by UNICEF's Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, in a statement at the Security Council Open Debate on CAAC in 2021. A key breakthrough came when the Belgian Parliament became the first in the world to pass a resolution asking its government to commit to avoid using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. The Government of Ireland is also advancing a new political declaration to secure global progress on avoiding the use of EWIPA. UNICEF is one of the three lead United Nations agencies engaged in influencing this process, including United Nations tripartite contributions to the drafting of the political declaration.

In **Yemen**, UNICEF's combined mass messaging – through television, radio, text messaging, and in-person in schools and community-based activities – reached more than 5.8 million conflict-affected people, including around 3.2 million children (49 per cent girls). Children with disabilities often have no access to risk education activities. However, learnings from previous disability-inclusive campaigns have demonstrated that children with hearing impairments are powerful agents of change in their communities. Therefore, the 2021 campaign ensured that sign language was available for the television campaign elements.

In **Myanmar**, safety concerns and restrictions on group gatherings hindered face-to-face EORE delivery in some locations; EORE activities were instead delivered through a hybrid model using virtual (mobile apps) and remote (radio transmission) modalities. Combined, these initiatives reached around 33,400 children (47 per cent girls, 53 per cent boys) and 166,600 adults (35 per cent women, 65 per cent men).

Notably, UNICEF's mine action engagement in **Cambodia** and **Sri Lanka** ended due to the success of sustained multi-year programming. National authorities and civil society partners will now maintain EORE activities.

UNICEF also trained 21,575 professionals – including teachers, religious leaders and members of the security forces – in 14 countries to deliver explosive ordnance risk education in 2021. This included, for example, 2,940 community liaison leaders (48 per cent women) in **South Sudan**, who were trained on EORE to disseminate messages to their communities.

UNICEF-supported interventions also provide support to survivors. This includes identifying households with child and/or caregiver mine/explosive remnants of war (ERW) survivors in need and providing individual case management, psychosocial support and other targeted assistance.

In 2021, UNICEF supported nearly 1,000 child survivors of landmines and ERW to receive direct survivor assistance; a 25 per cent increase from those reached in 2020. This



A young girl tries on her artificial limb at the prosthetic centre supported by UNICEF in Aden, Yemen. She was injured when an explosion struck her home three years ago.

is largely attributable to the resumption of the survivor assistance programme in **Afghanistan**, where 398 child survivors received assistance. In **Yemen**, 223 child survivors received a mix of medical services, provision of assistive devices (prosthetic devices) and mental health and psychosocial support services.

Other examples include in **Ukraine**, where UNICEF, as part of its mine-survivor assistance response programme, identified and enabled 45 children and 30 adults to receive specialized assistance along the contact line in Eastern Ukraine. In **Colombia**, UNICEF provided direct survivor assistance to 15 severely injured children in need of medical care, rehabilitation, physiotherapy and MHPSS, while in **Myanmar**, focus was placed on initiating plans to establish a nationwide survivor assistance framework in 2022.

Gender-based violence in emergencies

Over 70 per cent of women and girls living in conflict contexts have experienced GBV.⁵² Even before COVID-19, refugee and internally displaced women and girls were at greater risk for GBV. The pandemic's socioeconomic impact has intensified this risk, with displaced women and children experiencing higher rates of domestic and sexual violence as a result.

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, GBViE programming became an explicit part of UNICEF's humanitarian programming approach, with 98 per cent of all UNICEF's 2021 Humanitarian Appeals for Children including a specific GBViE indicator and funding request.

In 2021, UNICEF reached 13.9 million women, girls and boys with GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response programmes in 89 countries, compared with the 640,000 people reached in 2017 in 43 countries (see *Figure 20*). The decrease from 2020 – when UNICEF reached 17.8 million women, girls and boys in 84 countries – is due mainly to the reduction in the scaled use of mass information and awareness-raising campaigns that were conducted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In 2021, priority hot spots included scaled-up support to **Afghanistan** (see *spotlight box*), **Tigray (Ethiopia)**, **Haiti**, **Madagascar** and **Mozambique**, amongst others. In 2021, 32,000 girls and boys with disabilities were also reached, across 28 countries.

UNICEF works with United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs, academics and others, to coordinate programming to strengthen the quality of service provision. Joint efforts supported the finalization of the global inter-agency Remote GBV Case Management Guidelines in 2021. At country level, UNICEF continued to focus on delivering quality response services for survivors. For example, in the **Central African Republic**, UNICEF supported the government and NGO partners to roll out a case management system for child survivors of violence and those at risk. Around 357 key actors were trained to use the system. Additionally, the organization supported skills training of 3,824 first-line responders, who reached more than 26,800 (54 per cent girls, 46 per cent boys) at-risk or survivor children (including 1,132 child survivors of sexual violence and GBV) with services. Each received at least one service from the minimum protection package; an increase of 52 per cent compared with 2020.

In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF partnered with over 12 organizations as part of the Northern Ethiopia Response Plan, supporting access to one-stop centres, leading GBV risk mitigation through safety audits and other activities across Tigray, distributing dignity kits and actively supporting coordination in various locations. UNICEF supported capacity-building of

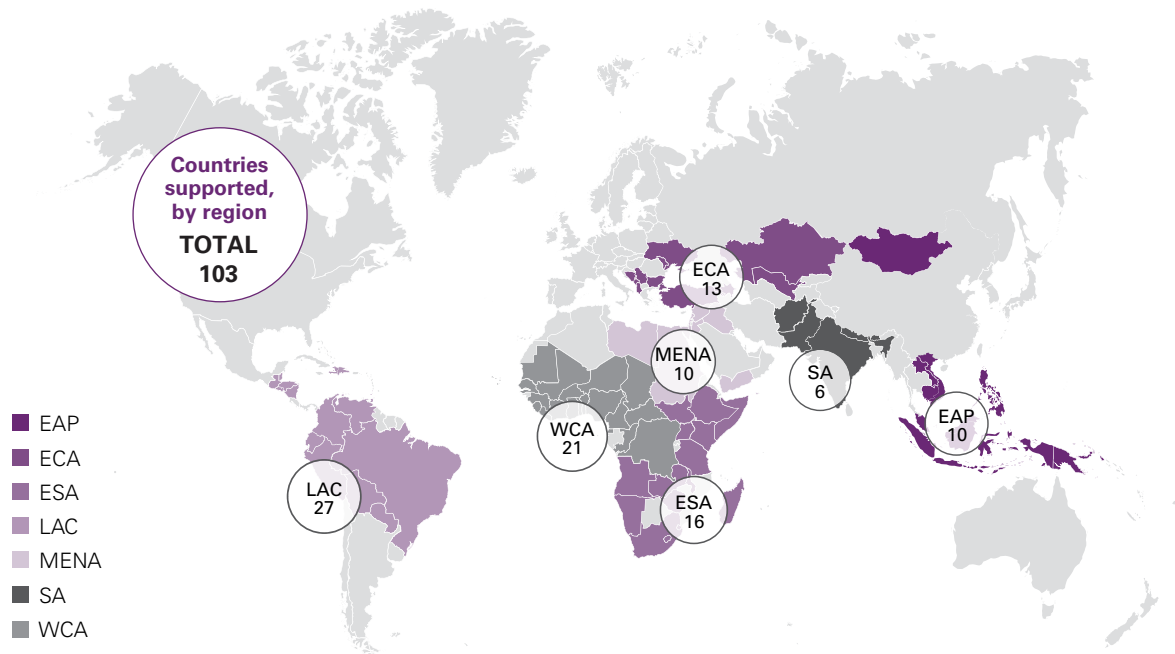
Since 2017, there has been a 29-fold increase in risk-mitigation interventions, a 7-fold increase in the number of women, girls and boys reached with prevention services, and a 14-fold increase in UNICEF-supported GBViE response services.

300 service provider/front-line staff on GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response. Almost 228,200 women and girls were provided with GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response services, including the provision of UNICEF-supported multisectoral services in Tigray for GBV survivors.

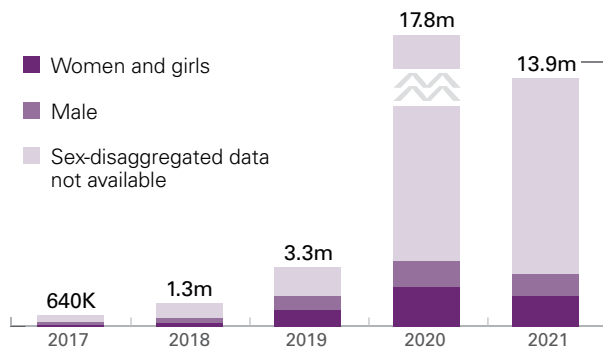
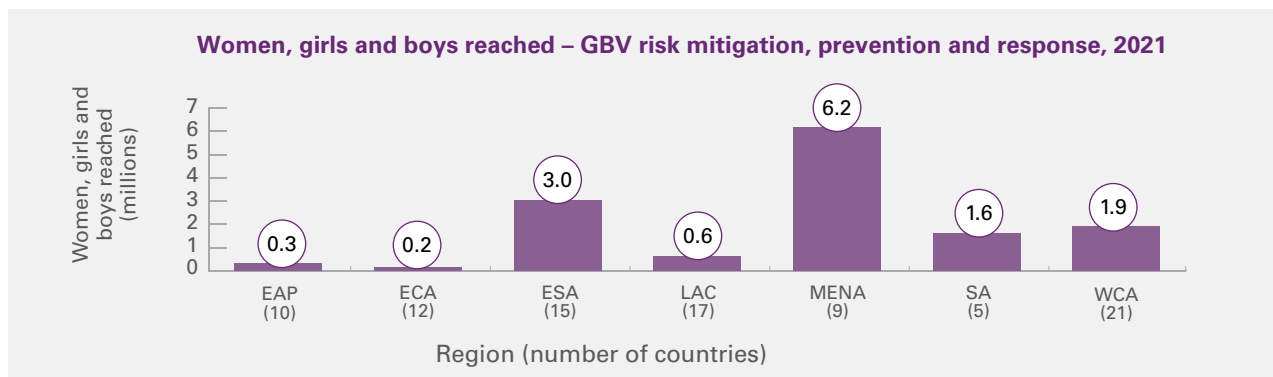
UNICEF's flagship Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Programme, is grounded in evidence showing that changing collective beliefs and unspoken rules in communities can lead to change in practices and behaviours. Communities Care was scaled up in **Somalia**, reaching over 65,400 people. In **Iraq**, UNICEF launched a 'communities care initiative', jointly with another programme to provide interactive virtual safe spaces for adolescent girls and for women to access life skills information on GBV and reproductive health. Further, over 920 front-line social service workers received specialized preventative training on child protection issues, including identifying GBV risks. Overall, almost 357,000 women, girls and boys (40 per cent girls; 60 per cent women) were reached by UNICEF-supported GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response services; almost double UNICEF's planned target for 2021.

In its capacity as lead agency on the global inter-agency roll-out of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) GBV guidelines, UNICEF works to ensure risk mitigation is embedded within its sectoral work, as well as within the clusters it leads. Guidance on GBV risk mitigation and cash transfers was piloted in two countries in 2021 and final key considerations were made for integrating GBViE into the public health emergency response. This investment in risk mitigation benefited, for example, some 143,420 people in **Benin** and 99,190 in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**. In **Yemen**, GBV was mainstreamed across UNICEF's humanitarian response, and GBV risk mitigation activities reached around 6.7 million women and girls, including through the distribution of gender responsive hygiene kits.

FIGURE 20: Result summary of UNICEF GBViE programming, 2021



Nearly **22 TIMES** more women, girls and boys provided with GBV interventions in emergencies—13.9m in 89 countries in 2021—compared to 2017



Of the countries that reported data disaggregated by age in 2021, for the people reached:

50% were aged **under 18 years**

50% were aged **18 year and above**

 More that **32,000 children with disabilities** received support, over **90-fold increase** since 2017

Figures are rounded. K: thousands, M: millions

EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse⁵³

In 2021, 61 million children and adults across 93 countries had access to SEA reporting channels; a nearly tenfold increase from the 6.2 million children and adults in 8 countries with access in 2017. The scale-up of UNICEF-supported reporting channels has led to a greater than fourfold increase in total reports received in 2021 compared to 2017, reflecting improved access and community trust in systems on the ground. UNICEF-related SEA allegations increased sevenfold during this time period, from 8 to 57 (see *Figure 21*). In 2021, 117 out of 128 UNICEF reporting country offices were actively engaged in establishing and/or scaling up systems for the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), 53 of which have a PSEA system in place.⁵⁴

Since 2018, UNICEF has played a leading role in mobilizing the inter-agency humanitarian system to prioritize collective and coordinated action to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) at country level by humanitarian workers, advocating for a survivor-centred approach and strengthened system-wide accountability. UNICEF led the development of the [IASC Acceleration Plan](#) for SEA and continues to serve as the global technical lead for the [roll-out of the 2019 United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) (the 'Protocol'). This includes overseeing the establishment of a common set of standards and a significant scale-up of safe and accessible reporting, quality assistance for SEA survivors, and enhanced accountability, including investigations at country level.

UNICEF support in 2021 includes in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, where UNICEF engaged local women leaders to serve as PSEA focal points, playing a critical role in building trust and promoting face-to-face reporting. This contributed to an almost twofold increase in the number of people with access to safe reporting channels, and a greater than threefold increase in actual SEA allegations reported in 2021. In the **Sudan**, the presence of on-the-ground PSEA/GBV focal points and establishment of available GBV services contributed to significant increases in SEA reporting.

UNICEF and inter-agency partners produced a technical note to further strengthen in-country implementation of the Victim Assistance Protocol. Furthermore, the number of countries that have developed inter-agency PSEA standard operating procedures integrating survivor assistance increased fourfold from 2017 (from 18 in 2017 to 70 in 2021). UNICEF also directly supported over 50 inter-agency PSEA coordinators and over 800 PSEA, GBV and child protection practitioners globally, through remote and in-person trainings and workshops. In **Iraq**,

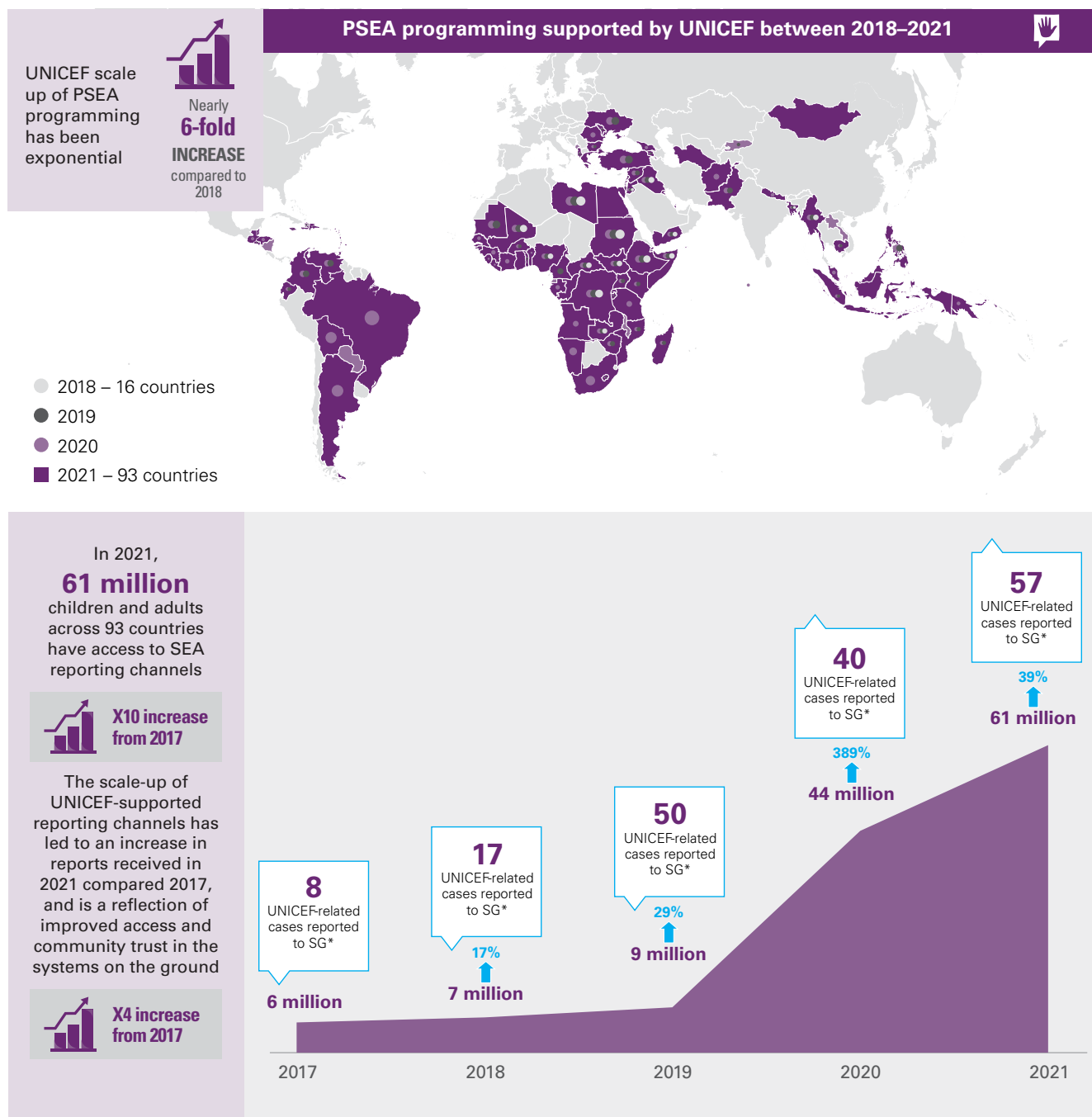
UNICEF worked with local partners to assess their internal capacity to prevent PSEA, subsequently supporting 17 of the 26 partners to develop action plans to fill gaps identified. In addition, almost 180 individuals, including police officers, social workers, PSEA focal points from partner organizations, and representatives from the Iraq Information (call) Centre were trained on PSEA.



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UNICEF supports counselling services for survivors of gender based violence resulting from the conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia.

FIGURE 21: Result summary of UNICEF support to the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, 2018-2021



* One allegation may involve one or more survivors
 Data source for map is a combination of UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions as well as investments in select humanitarian countries.
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
 Due to rounding, percentages may differ slightly.

Spotlight: Afghanistan

In **Afghanistan** in 2021, UNICEF prioritized an integrated and multisectoral approach to meeting the immediate and unprecedented protection and humanitarian needs of children and families. This included investing in system-strengthening and community engagement to spur behavioural and social norms change. Almost 2.2 million (60 per cent female) community members, including parents, elders, religious leaders, teachers and adolescents gained a deeper understanding of child rights, child protection and gender norms, and created collective community responses towards negative social norms, including child marriage and child labour. Integrated programming initiatives were undertaken with the health, education and social protection sectors.

In response to the growing humanitarian needs in the country, child protection services were scaled up by strengthening partnerships with NGOs and through community mechanisms. Almost 232,000 individuals (46 per cent female) benefited from MHPSS services and around 32,000 women, girls and boys were provided access to GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response services. UNICEF continues to support safe spaces for women and girls in Afghanistan and is working with partners to develop innovative digital and virtual approaches to support hard-to-reach women and girls.

Extreme poverty remains a significant factor for continued recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups. In 2021, with UNICEF support, 244 children associated with former government forces and Taliban were released and reintegrated into their communities.

To address the hazards of landmine and explosive remnants of war child casualties, UNICEF scaled up Explosive Ordnance Risk Education interventions, training around 5,600 professionals, including community leaders (66 per cent), social workers (9 per cent), religious leaders (7 per cent), police officers (6 per cent), teachers (5 per cent) and health workers (5 per cent). Thanks to the resumption of the victim assistance programme, 270 child survivors received appropriate assistance.

Throughout 2021, UNICEF actively co-led the coordination of the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) at national level and reactivated the regional CP AoR to scale up emergency child protection responses, leverage resources and advocate for more allocations to address critical gaps. Going forward, multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships to strengthen the normative framework for children will be essential to scale up services, safeguard hard-won gains, and expand protections over the longer-term.



A boy enjoys playing at a UNICEF child friendly space in Daku Village - Kia Island, in the Republic of Fiji, following the destruction suffered as a cause of tropical cyclone Yasa.

Building effective sector leadership to drive learning and coordination

Through its position within the inter-agency humanitarian system, and its leadership roles at the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action ('the Alliance') and the child protection sector/area of responsibility, UNICEF provides leadership and coordination to strengthen global protection standards and drive innovations, placing children's and women's rights at the heart of humanitarian action, with an urgent focus on prevention.

The Alliance played an early and pivotal role in shaping the child protection sector's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, releasing a technical note on priority actions to undertake, which had been downloaded over 100,000 times by the end of 2021. Overall, the Alliance partners produced over 95 knowledge products to inform evidence-based programming, and 21 technical notes and briefs to support implementation covering all aspects of child protection. These have collectively garnered over 200,000 views on the Alliance website, which is fast becoming the go-to platform for sector learning and evidence. A key example of collaboration in 2021 came with the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies⁵⁵ to jointly support a sector shift towards integrated programme models that prioritize child rights, well-being and healthy development. A jointly published paper outlines strategies to strengthen [collaboration across child protection in humanitarian action and education in emergencies](#) and is closely aligned with the broader reopening of schools agenda.

UNICEF is the permanent co-lead of the Alliance, which has grown into a network of more than 100 child protection agencies, policy experts and practitioners, and serves as an essential voice in advocating for an increased focus on child rights, and a shift towards primary prevention. The Alliance's new Strategic Plan (2021–2025) prioritizes the centrality of children and their rights to protection across the humanitarian system, and is fully aligned with UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy 2021–2030 and the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

Reflections and looking forward

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF child protection in humanitarian action programming has shifted in breadth and scale. These shifts include its contribution to driving the system-wide agenda on PSEA, the integration of GBV as an integral part of all humanitarian response, and the scaling-up of MHPSS across humanitarian-development fields. The global pandemic, COVID-19, was a significant accelerator of scale up, as programmes adapted their implementation modalities, including digital tools. To ensure meeting protection needs and the quality of services, these approaches were balanced with in-person engagement in 2021 as public health measures changed. This global phenomenon drives the fluctuation in numbers reached in 2020–2021; yet the overall trend continues to track upward, reflecting both the needs of children and women and our capacities to respond – and to be ready to respond better as crises occur.

Child protection programming in multiple emergencies is linking humanitarian action with system strengthening. The Blueprint Joint Action for Refugee Children provides the pathways for greater systemic inclusion of refugees in national plans and services. In 2021, the Alliance issued a clarion call to put children and their protection at the centre of humanitarian action. This is vital to preventing rights violations, a central tenet of the Alliance's and UNICEF's new strategies. However, as humanitarian needs outpace the ability to respond, the Secretary-General has called on the development system to redouble its investment in institutions and systems in fragile situations to mitigate against more crises. UNICEF's programmes from Afghanistan to Ukraine to Yemen will strive to deliver on this call.



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UNICEF team and partners take young children to reunite them with their parents after spending some days at “La Casita.” La Casita is a safe place UNICEF and its partner Aldeas SOS have established to take care of children until their parents arrive. Many times, due to climate conditions or parents getting sick during the journey in the jungle, they must handover their children to other adults to guarantee their survival.

Children on the move

In a world still impacted by the effects of the lockdowns and border closures adopted in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, displaced and migrant children and their families have been disproportionately affected by poverty, family separation and discrimination.⁵⁶ Conflict, violence, and a rising number of extreme weather events have uprooted children – internally and across borders – at an unprecedented scale (see also [‘Spotlight: Climate change and children on the move’](#)).

UNICEF protects children on the move through the implementation of the six-point Agenda for Action to protect all refugee and migrant children. The organization advocates with and supports national authorities to mainstream policy and programming for children on the move into national child protection systems-strengthening frameworks. This includes leveraging partnerships at regional and global levels, and improving data generation and use to inform policy and programming.

In 2021, in the context of child protection, UNICEF-supported programmes reached 2.3 million children on the move across 74 countries, including through interventions promoting alternatives to child immigration detention, MHPSS and child-friendly legal aid, as well as longer-term support during reintegration into communities. This is an increase of 140 per cent in the number of children on the

Displaced children are extremely vulnerable to being separated from their families, exploited, and trafficked. They need governments ... to step up and put measures in place to keep them safe.

– Afshan Khan, UNICEF’s Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia

move receiving UNICEF-supported protective services, since 2017. In addition, in 32 countries, UNICEF-supported best interest assessment/determination processes reached 43,000 unaccompanied and separated children. Looking forward, an area for acceleration is advancing the number of countries that have comprehensive legal frameworks in place on child rights that incorporate an approach inclusive of all children without discrimination, and regardless of migratory (or any other) status. In 2021, only 6 per cent (eight countries) of the overall reporting countries (131) report a framework in place, including **Costa Rica, Mexico, Nigeria and the Sudan**.

Strengthening partnerships to accelerate programme results

At the global level, UNICEF plays an active role in two critical platforms that are strengthening coordination and policy coherence for migrant and refugee populations. These are the United Nations Network on Migration – which aims to coordinate system-wide support to Member States on migration – and the Global Refugee Forum, which looks to identify concrete commitments on implementation of the monitoring framework for the Global Compact on Refugees. Both collectively provide a vehicle to leverage partnerships, resources and coordination to prevent and respond to protection concerns facing migrant and refugee children, and to mainstream children’s rights across sectors.

In 2020, UNHCR and UNICEF also agreed on an ambitious Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children. This initiative represents a bold step towards realizing both agencies’ joint Global Refugee Forum pledge. In 2021, this proved to be a key accelerator to ensure the inclusion of refugee and migrant children and their families in national

systems and plans. By the end of 2021, the initiative had increased access to education, clean water and child protection services for over 2 million refugee children in 10 focus countries⁵⁷ (see also [‘Child protection in humanitarian action’](#) for highlights of our joint work in Ethiopia).

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF worked progressively to mainstream the rights of children on the move into its strategic and programme planning. This provided new impetus to reporting on results for children and young people on the move across sectors (see also *Global Annual Results Reports for health [Goal Area 1]; education [Goal Area 2]; water, sanitation and hygiene [Goal Area 4]; and social protection [Goal Area 5]*).

Spotlight: Climate change and children on the move

[Millions of children around the world are on the move.](#)







This includes over 9.8 million weather-related internal displacements of children in 2021. This equates to more than 26,900 children being displaced each day. To position child and youth solutions on climate mobility, and to give young people on the move a seat at the table in driving climate change policy and action, at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (commonly referred to as COP26), UNICEF co-created a youth-powered action agenda with migrant and displaced youth. This was published in partnership with the International Organization for Migration and the Major Group for Children and Youth. These efforts contributed to unlocking new funding to support through an innovative data partnership with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, and spurred capacity-building on climate change and children on the move. More than 110 colleagues across UNICEF were equipped with skills to strengthen inclusive and resilient services with and for children on the move.

To strengthen evidence-based programming linked to climate change, UNICEF has undertaken climate landscape analyses for children in 28 countries to explore the potential impacts, and risks and opportunities climate change presents for children’s rights and well-being. The analyses focus on the impacts on livelihoods, the interplay with conflict and fragility, and the risk of displacement and migration as an adaptation strategy, along with disruptions in access to protection, education, health care and other essential services in the aftermath of a disaster. In 2021, analyses were undertaken in **Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, El Salvador, Jordan, Serbia and Viet Nam.**



A woman looking for her belongings in the midst of the flood. This is a direct impact of the worst flooding in 60-years in Bentiu, South Sudan and the larger Unity State, that washed away harvests and cattle and left villages under water. UNICEF has provided children with psychosocial support activities, as well as registered them for case management services.

UNICEF's six-point Agenda for Action to protect all refugee and migrant children: Result highlights

<p>ACTION 1</p>  <p>PROTECT UPROOTED CHILDREN FROM EXPLOITATION AND VIOLENCE</p>	<p>In Mali, 940 children (48 per cent girls) on the move or at risk of displacement received protective services through UNICEF-supported mobile teams and one-stop social welfare shops along migratory routes – a 36 per cent increase in service reach from 2020. In India, UNICEF prioritized protection and support to migrant families and children to access social protection benefits, creating greater awareness and vigilance for preventing child labour and trafficking and ensuring their access to services including MHPSS; efforts reached more than 716,200 migrant families and around 57,800 (82 per cent boys) children on the move in eight states.</p>
<p>ACTION 2</p>  <p>END THE DETENTION OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CHILDREN BY CREATING PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVES</p>	<p>In Myanmar, UNICEF and partners provided legal aid services for children and young people. This included provision of legal aid to more than 700 children and 750 youth in detention as well as almost 180 Rohingya children in migration detention. At the southern borders of the United States of America, over 520 government and CSO personnel were supported to improve reception, care, services and psychosocial support; and 13,000 children were assisted in the End Migration Protection Protocols Operation.</p>
<p>ACTION 3</p>  <p>KEEP FAMILIES TOGETHER AND GIVE CHILDREN LEGAL STATUS</p>	<p>In Chile, to address the increased number of expulsions of Venezuelan migrants entering through irregular borders that took place during the pandemic, UNICEF contributed to setting up best interest determination processes, and protocols for first reception and protection hearing in family courts. In Colombia, UNICEF, together with local partners, organized 86 registration drives in seven departments, enabling the registration of over 12,000 Venezuelans, including about 1,900 people from ethnic communities and 5,700 children, including adolescents.</p>
<p>ACTION 4</p>  <p>HELP UPROOTED CHILDREN TO STAY IN SCHOOL AND STAY HEALTHY</p>	<p>In Egypt, as part of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF advocated for children without a national identity to access the Ministry of Education and Technical Education's remote learning platform. The organization also supported around 13,900 younger refugee children (50 per cent girls) with education cash grants to support their right to education, and continuation of kindergarten learning. In Turkey, strengthened synergies between national social protection systems and the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education programme for refugees resulted in the latter reaching around 625,900 refugee children, including supporting their back-to-school expenses.</p>
<p>ACTION 5</p>  <p>PRESS FOR ACTION ON THE CAUSES THAT UPROOT CHILDREN FROM THEIR HOMES</p>	<p>In Iraq, UNICEF strengthened the life, employability, entrepreneurship and digital skills of 16,600 vulnerable young people (43 per cent girls), including within the displaced community, utilizing the four Life Skills and Citizenship modules that were delivered as part of the Iraq Learning Passport. In Turkey, UNICEF developed a toolkit to support the prevention of, and response to, child labour in humanitarian contexts, which was rolled out to support over 500 practitioners from the United Nations, NGOs, governments and private sector, including the Child Labour Technical Group, co-chaired by UNICEF and the International Labour Organization.</p>
<p>ACTION 6</p>  <p>COMBAT XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION</p>	<p>In Italy, UNICEF launched a contest called "OPS! –Your Opinion, beyond Stereotypes, against Prejudices!"⁵⁸ to empower young people to raise awareness about racial prejudices. Winners were selected to take part in mentorship programmes to enhance their advocacy skills and creative talents. In Colombia, in partnership with UNHCR, UNICEF implemented the social media campaign <i>Súper Panas en Tiempos de Coronavirus</i> to build the capacity of young people to stand up to xenophobia and encourage solidarity with Venezuelan migrants.</p>

Improving evidence generation and use

Reliable, timely and accessible data and research are essential for understanding how migration and forced displacement affect children and their families. They help to put in place policies and programmes to support the realization of the rights of people on the move along migration routes, in countries of transit, destination and return. To this end, UNICEF released the publication [Reimagining Migration Responses: Learning from children and young people who move in the Horn of Africa](#). To demonstrate the pivotal role of age and gender in a child's migration, recent data were published in [Uncertain Pathways: How gender shapes the experiences of children on the move](#), while the [Talent on the Move](#) report provides a compilation of young people on the move and their aspirations to become agents of change and change-makers through the co-creation of policies and programmes set up with and for them.

Reflections and looking forward

The increased internal and protracted displacement happening across the world has called on UNICEF to identify more innovative solutions to support children on the move. Looking forward, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 moves beyond a one-dimensional view of migration as a child protection issue towards a more integrated approach across Goal Areas – reflecting a whole-child and whole-of society approach, in all contexts, from fragile to high-income. While the previous Strategic Plan had just one dedicated indicator in Goal Area 3, indicators in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 reflect progress to support children on the move across child protection, education and social protection sectors.



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Through the Strengthening Refugee and Migrant Children's Health Status in Southern and South-Eastern Europe project, UNICEF supports *Info Park*, a non-governmental organization working in a reception centre in Vranje, Serbia, to organize workshops to support women, girls, and children, especially in the areas of mental health, protection and prevention of and response to gender-based violence.



Output 3.2: Strengthening prevention and delivery of protection services to reduce harmful practices (child marriage and female genital mutilation)

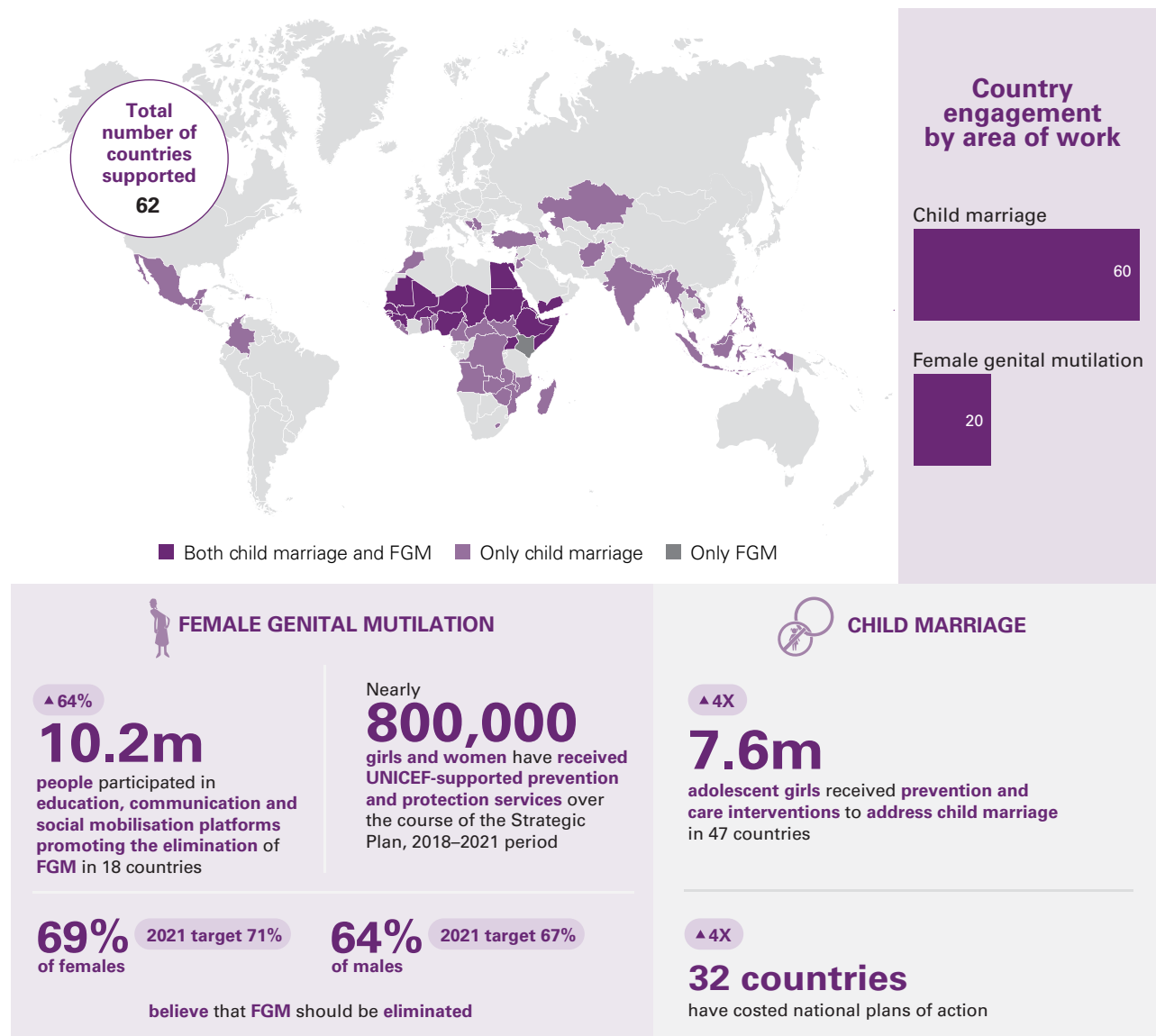
This 12-year-old girl in a refugee camp in Mauritania has already been promised by her family for marriage. For several years UNICEF has been working with the Mauritanian government and its partners to end this practice. Through sustained action, vulnerable families are made aware of the risks of early marriage and receive financial and psychosocial support to ensure the child's well-being and to keep them in the family and in school.

Over the last two years, increasing economic insecurity and inequality – key drivers of harmful practices – are placing more girls at risk. UNICEF estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic may result in 10 million additional child marriages occurring before the end of the decade, while according to United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) data, there may be as many as 2 million cases of FGM by 2030 that would have otherwise been averted if not for the pandemic.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF and partners have adapted to get programming back on track to meet the SDG 5.3 target by 2030. Based on over

a decade of experience and learning from the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation: Accelerating Change (JPFGM), and the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage (GPECM), UNICEF promotes rights- and evidence-based programming approaches for the elimination of harmful practices. This includes empowering adolescents and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes, strengthening community engagement to transform social norms, and developing legal and policy frameworks.

FIGURE 22: Summary of results on strengthening prevention and delivery of services to reduce harmful practices, 2021



Abbreviations: FGM - female genital mutilation

Note: Changes are since 2017 unless otherwise specified. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

At the global level, UNICEF plays a critical advocacy role in leveraging key events to secure political commitment to accelerate global and regional action towards the elimination of harmful practices. UNICEF also provides

knowledge leadership to generate data and research on child marriage and FGM to inform prevention and response strategies and programming (see box on [‘Strengthening data and research’](#)).

Child marriage

We are united in our efforts. It is time to consign child marriage to the history books, once and for all.

– Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA

Regional alliances, particularly with the African Union, and the traction gained by the GPECM resulted in 7.6 million adolescent girls across 47 countries receiving prevention and care interventions in 2021, compared with 2.1 million across 23 countries in 2017. This means that the 2021 target was met; with an increase of nearly four times the number of adolescent girls reached by UNICEF-supported interventions (see *Figure 23*). A key programmatic shift in recent years is the adoption of rights-based, evidence-based, and action-oriented, gender-transformative approaches to address gender and social norms barriers and restrictions that increase adolescent girls’ and young women’s risk for child marriage and FGM.

In the South Asia region, there has been a notable fivefold increase in the number of adolescent girls reached in 2021, compared with 2017 (6 million compared to 1.2 million). India represented nearly all the girls reached in the region, and 77 per cent of the 7.6 million girls reached worldwide. Considerable progress can also be seen in the Middle East and North Africa region, where there were over 17 times the number reached in 2017 (over 159,000 compared with 9,000). Targeted action to mainstream interventions to support adolescent girls with disabilities has also contributed to a ninefold increase in the number of girls with disabilities reached with services between 2017 and 2021 (from 1,200 to 11,000 adolescent girls across 20 countries).

However, despite overall progress, several factors continued to impact country-level programming efforts in 2021. Several countries, including, for example, Bangladesh, Belize, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Uganda continued to experience partial or full school closures due to COVID-19. In other cases, humanitarian situations hampered progress. For example, mass displacement in Bangladesh and Mozambique interrupted service provision in many areas, as was the

case due to the escalation of conflicts in Burkina Faso and Mali. Against this backdrop, UNICEF and partners adapted their programming to implement rights-based interventions aimed at ending child marriage. This includes across the 12 countries that are part of the GPECM, and 8 countries in the Spotlight Initiative that are impacted by child marriage.

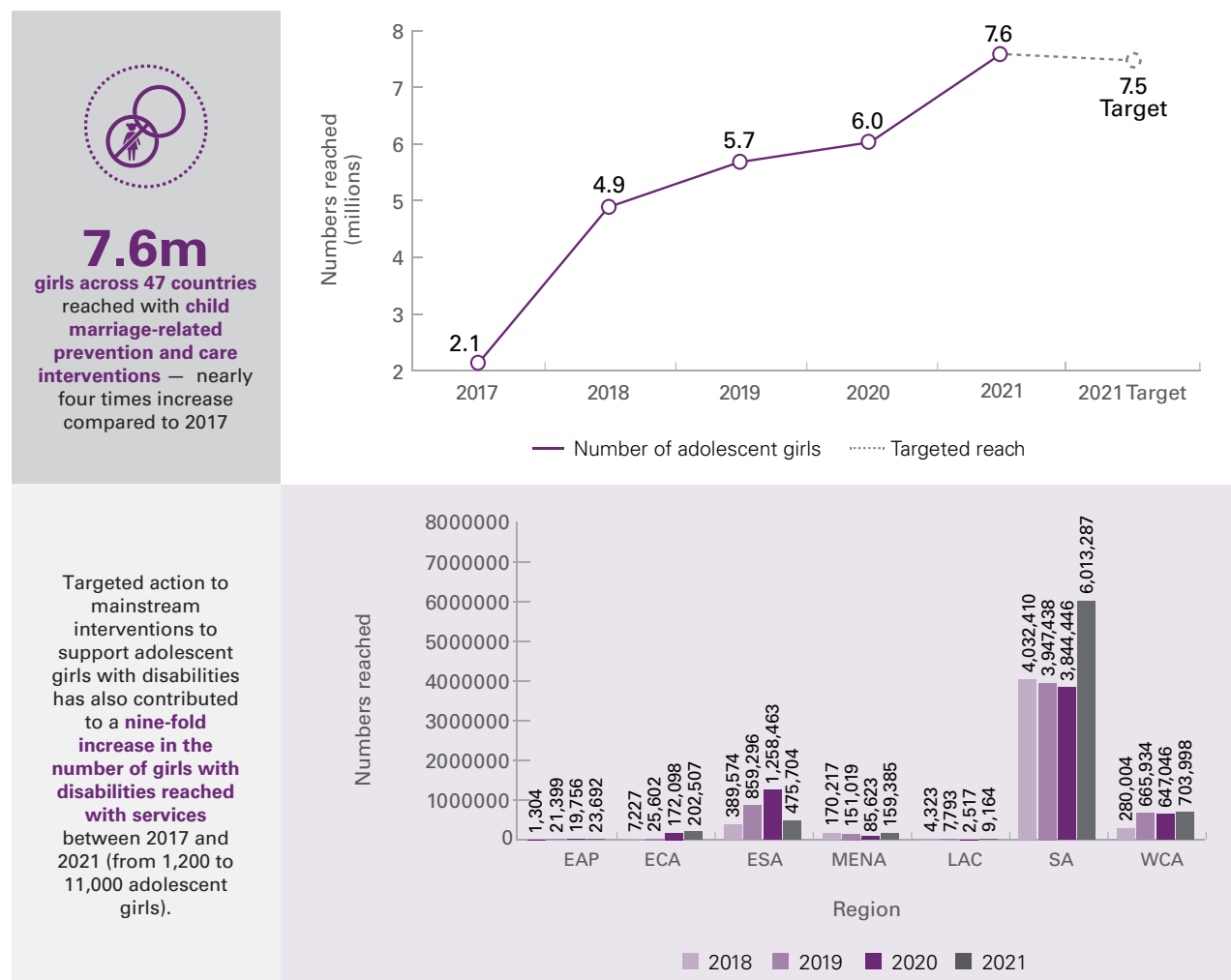
At the community level, UNICEF works to promote life skills and the empowerment of adolescent girls, building partnerships with grassroots movements and women-led organizations, and leveraging social protection mechanisms

Spotlight: Harnessing the power of youth in Africa to end harmful practices

As part of the Spotlight Initiative, UNICEF, UNFPA, the African Union and other partners joined forces in 2021 to identify ways to reimagine youth engagement in ending harmful practices across the continent.

These included a youth event titled, ‘Culture matters – protecting and enhancing the role of youth in creative arts to accelerate an end to harmful practices in Africa’, held during the third African Girls’ Summit in the Niger. Attended by more than 100 young representatives from across the continent, the event made a collective call on Member States to ramp up action, including strengthening ties with traditional and faith-based leaders and increasing the engagement of adolescent girls and young women. A particularly innovative call was the development of an eVillage to act as a digital platform to highlight and incubate adolescent empowerment innovations. UNICEF and the African Union also launched a Youth Innovation Challenge on the Impact of Harmful Practices, which aims to encourage innovative ideas that promote the mental health and well-being of children and young people in their communities.

FIGURE 23: Summary of results: prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes, by region, 2017–2021



Notes: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

for girls and their families. At national level, support involves: integrating child marriage programming into essential services; enhancing MHPSS; sustained advocacy with governments for maintaining access to critical health, education and protection services; and supporting the development of legislation, and policy frameworks and budgets.

Promoting adolescent empowerment to end child marriage

UNICEF works with partners to develop a comprehensive framework for action that mainstreams life skills⁵⁹ in schools and communities, with particular emphasis on supporting access to safe spaces and clubs that can

provide an adolescent-friendly environment for girls to voice their opinions. For example, in **Ghana**, UNICEF supported community-based life skills and employability skills trainings that reached 205,470 adolescent girls. In **Turkey**, the organization focused on skills development and peer-to-peer mentoring activities, reaching 200,615 adolescent girls.

UNICEF-supported programmes also provide a platform to offer financial and educational support for girls who are identified as being at risk and most vulnerable, including to support their return to school. For instance, the GPECM provided bursary support to 70,000 girls across **Burkina Faso**, **Ghana** and **Nepal**, which included exercise books, stationery materials, uniforms and, due to COVID-19, personal protective equipment. Since the economic vulnerability of adolescent girls and their families is a key driver of child marriage, UNICEF also



Spotlight: Utilizing global digital platforms to raise visibility on ending harmful practices

Digital platforms such as YouTube have become an important global social mobilization tool to influence gender and social norms change. Capitalizing on the global success of its breakthrough documentary in 2020, [Coping with COVID](#), UNICEF launched the second season of the series, which follows the lives of 8 of the original 16 girls, as they speak out and challenge many cultural taboos, including child marriage and FGM. The series generated over 2.5 million impressions and over 1 million video views in 2021.

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF also raised considerable attention with the groundbreaking release of [Vaillante](#), a fictional mini-series that explores the issue of child marriage. The series provided critical key messages on how young people, especially girls, can be part of the solution if they are empowered to take action. The series reached more than 20 French and English markets via YouTube, while 10.6 million people viewed UNICEF's social media posts, and visitors to the *Vaillante* web page came from over 100 countries worldwide.

Taking innovative steps to strengthen gender-transformative programming

As part of a strategy to operationalize gender-transformative programming, the GPECM developed and field-tested a [Gender-Transformative Accelerator Tool](#). The tool aims to identify drivers and bottlenecks, and to guide programming actions to prevent child marriage and change people's attitudes and behaviour. The tool is adapted to country contexts. In **Ethiopia**, for example, an assessment using the tool helped to identify internal gender biases of the social workforce conducting child marriage programming, leading UNICEF and partners to develop a [Social Analysis and Action](#) methodology to support efforts. UNICEF continues to advocate for increased investments aimed at shifting discriminatory gender norms across the gender continuum. This includes engaging with community members, elders, religious leaders and adolescents to promote positive behaviours.

supports the expansion of social protection programmes and economic support services. In **Zambia**, for instance, UNICEF successfully advocated for the national Social Cash Transfer programme to provide bursary support to 28,000 adolescent girls to facilitate school attendance.

Strengthening community engagement to transform social norms to end child marriage

To make digital engagement meaningful, it must be relevant and accessible. A key part of UNICEF and partners' programming approach is to use various communication methods to disseminate key messaging aimed at changing perceptions, attitudes and behaviours around child marriage. In some contexts, digital engagement continues to prove useful to overcome ongoing COVID-19 mobility and other challenges. In **Bangladesh**, for example, the adolescent-focused television drama series *Icchedana* ('On the wings of wishes') was rebroadcasted on two channels and via social media, reaching over 160 million viewers.

However, to bridge the digital divide encountered by many adolescent girls and communities, UNICEF also ramped up advocacy for and practical support to use either a mix of digital or non-digital methods or, in some cases, extend the use of low-tech communication mediums. In **Mozambique**, for example, UNICEF supported the use of popular television channels such as the *Ouro Negro* ('Black gold') edutainment programme, which was coupled with more

traditional community interventions, collectively reaching over 2 million people. In addition, some 13,400 parents and 11,500 young people participated in 210 community dialogue sessions. Pre- and post-assessments of their impact showed a 37 per cent increase in the willingness of participants to abandon child marriage.

To overcome digital inequity in certain locations in **Uganda**, the use of local radio talk shows with community leaders were coupled with community meetings led by CSOs, benefiting almost 204,250 girls and boys. In the **Niger**, UNICEF supported localized dialogues promoting equitable gender norms, including discussions on human rights, and sexual and reproductive health, reaching almost 212,300 people. These efforts contributed to 219 villages making public declarations to commit to abandoning child marriage and FGM.

Improving access to prevention and care services to address child marriage

As part of the systems-strengthening approach, UNICEF and partners prioritize scaling up the availability of service delivery points to provide quality adolescent-responsive services. In 2021, UNICEF and partners supported around 1,163 service delivery points across eight countries to provide a range of inter-related services (health, including sexual and reproductive health, and GBV and child protection care) to adolescent girls at risk of or affected by child marriage.

For example, in **Uganda**, staff in over 240 child protection service delivery points received training on strengthened protocols and service standards, which in turn provided services to close to 200,000 young people in 2021. In **Ghana**, an improved training facilitator's guide was used to train over 770 community health service providers to improve standards of service on adolescent health issues. In **Bangladesh**, UNICEF programmes supported 322 secondary schools to establish anti-sexual harassment committees to ensure that adolescent girls have a safe environment to seek support on a range of related issues, including child marriage.

UNICEF and partners are also increasingly enhancing MHPSS for adolescent girls as part of broader essential services. The MHPSS component was necessitated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when schools were shut down

and adolescent girls lost their peer networks and were isolated in their homes. In **Lesotho**, for example, UNICEF-supported programmes strengthened community-based child protection structures, enabling over 8,200 adolescent girls to receive community-based MHPSS and orientation on positive parenting skills linked to child marriage. In **Nepal**, MHPSS was integrated within the 'Rupantaran' life skills programme to end child marriage by setting up tele-mental health services, reaching 56,485 people.

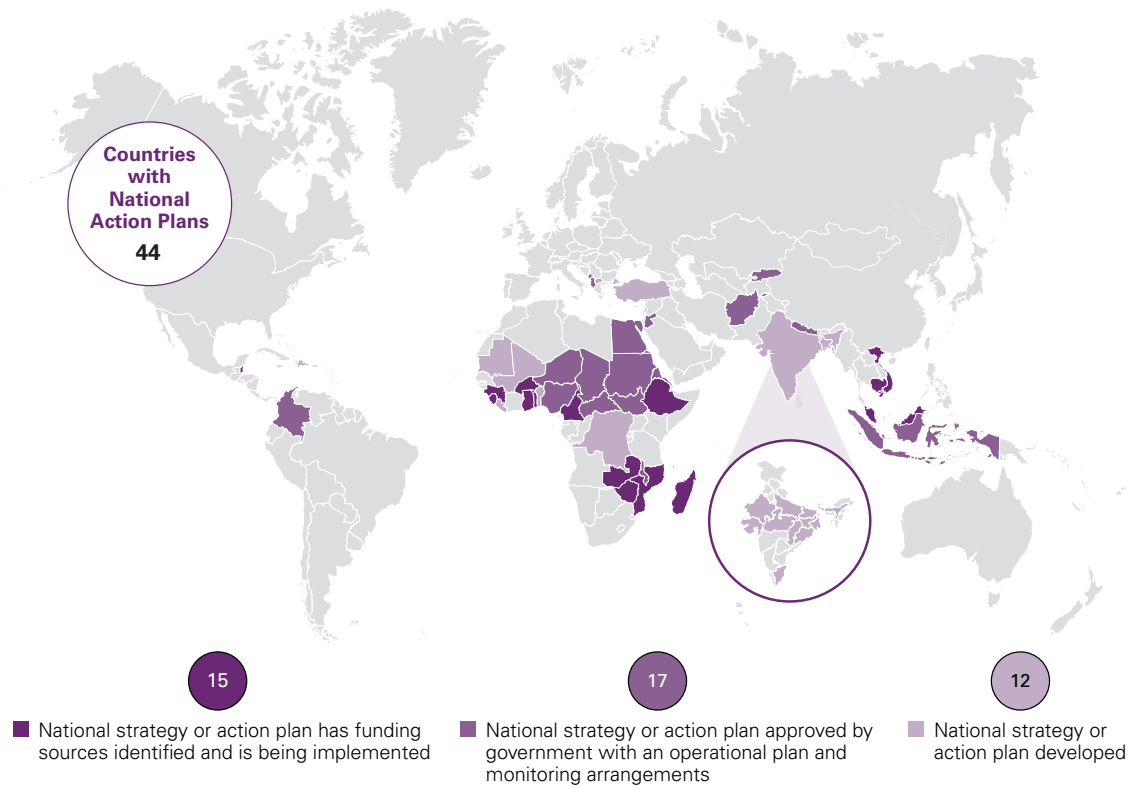
Developing legal and policy frameworks

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 period, 44 countries have developed national plans of action to end child marriage, of which 32 have costed national plans of action, up from 8 in 2017. While all countries with high prevalence rates have legislation and/or plans in place, challenges remain in translating these into funded implementation plans with corresponding budgets. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the tightening of national fiscal space for the social sector compounded this situation.

To overcome challenges, UNICEF and partners work collectively to advocate for and provide technical support on budgeting, gathering evidence and data to inform the mapping out of costed action plans, as well as guidance to roll out gender-responsive policies, legislation and frameworks to end child marriage. In 2021, two additional countries, **Belize** and **Malaysia**, committed public funds to implement their costed national plan of action to end child marriage. This brings the total number of reporting countries committing government funds for implementation to 15 (*see Figure 24*).⁶⁰

UNICEF supported six countries to review or develop new policies and legislation aligned with international standards including, for example, restricting marriage under the age of 18 years. In the **Dominican Republic**, after four years of sustained UNICEF and partner advocacy, a law prohibiting legal marriage of persons under the age of 18 was enacted. In **Bhutan**, UNICEF supported the National Commission for Women and Children to convene experts from the Parliament, the Cabinet, the legal sector and CSOs to harmonize the provisions of the Marriage Act with international standards. In **Morocco**, findings from a UNICEF-supported national study on child marriage contributed to a commitment from the government to develop a national road map to end child marriage.

FIGURE 24: Supporting national action plans to end child marriage, 2021



Note: India has 12 states with fully funded action plans, but no national action plan.



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Girl footballers from Brahmanbaria and Magura are playing in the final match of the U-16 National Women's Football Championship at Sonaimuri, Noakhali. UNICEF and the Bangladesh Football Federation forged a partnership to empower girls through sports to end child marriage.

Female genital mutilation

We closely work with ulamas, women groups, schools, elders and idir leaders [local support group] so that they themselves take action ... Unless the community is involved it is impossible to change attitudes.

– R. Mohammed, a kebele manager in Ethiopia

In 2021, UNICEF contributed to FGM programming in 20 countries. This includes the 17 countries participating in the JPFGM.⁶¹ It also includes the five countries impacted by FGM that are part of the Spotlight Initiative.⁶² The JPFGM has entered its fourth phase, with a stronger focus on promoting girls' agency and building strategic partnerships to drive innovation and collaboration. Education, communication and social mobilization platforms promoting FGM elimination engaged 10.2 million people in 2021, up 64 per cent over 2017, surpassing the 2021 target of 7.8 million by nearly a third. Out of 6.5 million in

14 countries with disaggregated data, 50 per cent were girls. Over 213,000 girls were saved from undergoing the harmful practice, while around 4,500 communities involving 3.4 million people made public declarations to abandon FGM, of which 3,813 communities established surveillance systems that continued to protect girls from undergoing the practice in 2021.

Promoting adolescent empowerment to eliminate FGM

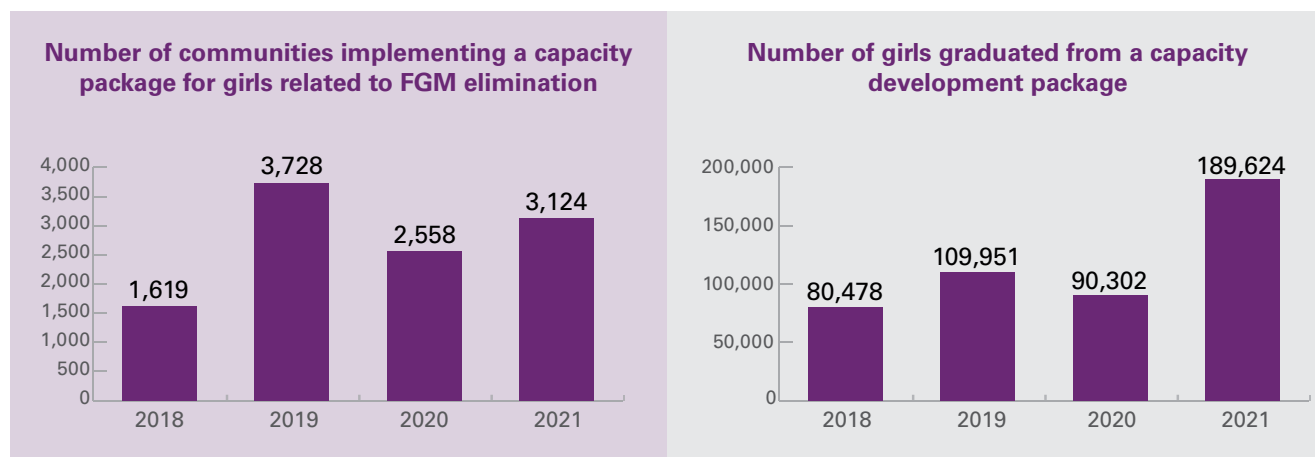
In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis placed on empowering girls, as full rights-holders, to eliminate FGM. The number of girls reached with UNICEF-supported capacity and skills development has consistently increased over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period. These types of interventions often rely on the transfer of skills from older women in leadership positions within the community (mentorship).

In 2021, in 3,124 communities, around 189,624 girls benefited from capacity development to increase their knowledge about FGM, build their leadership skills and enhance their participation. This is more than double those reached in 2018 (see Figure 25).



Girls and women from the local communities in Upper Egypt (where FGM is most prevalent) are being trained to be community advocates against FGM as part of the project “Safer Communities for Children”, currently implemented by UNICEF Egypt’s partner NGO Asyut Child and Development Association within the framework of USAID’s Girls Empowerment programme and UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Global FGM Programme.

FIGURE 25: Number of girls benefiting from capacity development packages, 2018–2021



UNICEF and partners continue to adapt their approach to creatively identify innovative solutions to sustain child and youth engagement, including the use of mass and social media platforms, which are used to complement more traditional engagement methods such as community gatherings and dialogues. For example, in **Senegal**, social media engagement strategies reached over 1 million people, including through a UNICEF digital campaign (reaching 570,677 users). In **Egypt**, digital engagement (using modalities such as a dedicated web page, Facebook and mobile app) was extended as part of the National Girls' Empowerment Initiative, Dawwie (or 'echoed voice' in Arabic), resulting in over 100,000 unique views of the Dawwie website and over 10 million visitors to the Dawwie Facebook page.

Lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic show, however, that reliance only on these methods raises equity concerns, particularly in those communities where digital means are less available. In **Ethiopia**, to strengthen reach to remote locations, UNICEF and a telecom partner, Viamo collaborated to develop mobile phone-based communication, consisting of text messages and calls sent through an interactive voice response system. These were coupled with regular life-skills training and peer-to-peer discussions and proved an effective system to reach adolescent girls in a rapidly evolving humanitarian situation in the country in 2021.

As part of the transformative approach, UNICEF and partners are also increasingly supporting interventions that engage men and boys as change agents. This includes through a partnership with the Men Engage Alliance across 13 countries.⁶³ In **Egypt**, a chapter on FGM was rolled into the Engaging Men and Boys programming curriculum and used in sessions attended by over 1,830 men and boys. Participants reported changes in their attitudes and

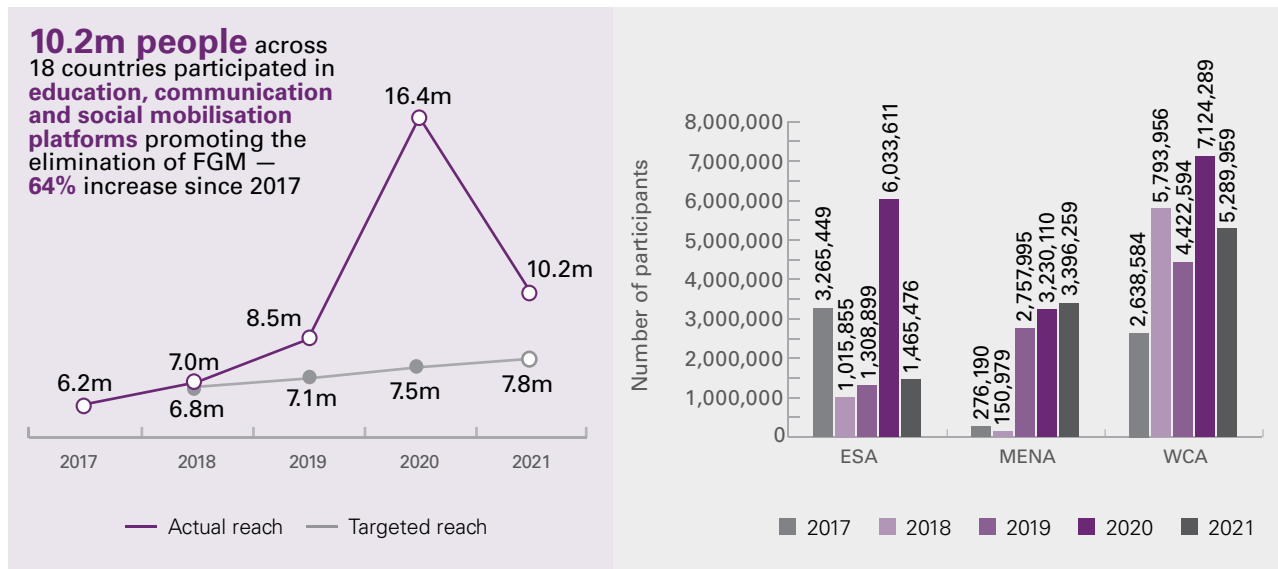
perceptions of gender and power relations. Similar training was provided to almost 1,000 male community, religious and administrative leaders in **Guinea** with similar success.

Strengthening community engagement to transform social norms to end FGM

Since 2017, there has been a 64 per cent increase in the number of people who participate in UNICEF-supported education, communication and social mobilization platforms promoting the elimination of FGM. However, in 2021, the number of people reached by these platforms saw the first dip in reach figures since the start of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (a decrease of 38 per cent compared with 2020) (see Figure 26). While the 2021 figures are comparable to pre-pandemic numbers (8.5 million in 2019), they underscore the challenge of community outreach in the context of COVID-19 restrictions.

While online initiatives and remote campaigns continued, UNICEF also increased the emphasis on face-to-face communications in 2021 to address digital equity gaps. In **Guinea**, community-based structures were used to disseminate FGM messaging as part of the response plans to the Ebola epidemic outbreak in early 2021, reaching over 431,300 community members. In **Burkina Faso**, UNICEF supported the establishment of community-based child protection units in 905 new villages across 45 provinces, which subsequently declared abandonment of FGM. Despite programming challenges in some areas of **Ethiopia**, community outreach increased in two regions, resulting in 13,100 girls becoming community change agents.

FIGURE 26: Number of individuals participating in education, communication discussions and social mobilization platforms supported by UNICEF, 2017–2021



Notes: ESA, East and Southern Africa; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; WCA, West and Central Africa.

Despite social distancing restrictions in many countries, the number of public declarations continued to increase in 2021. Cumulatively, more than 33,100 communities and more than 45 million people have engaged in these commitments since 2008, when the JPFGM commenced. In recent years, UNICEF and partners have shifted attention to more collaborative work with religious leaders. This is particularly important in certain communities where FGM

is traditionally justified as a religious requirement. Across 17 countries, UNICEF and partners supported around 5,105 religious and traditional leaders to make public statements delinking the practice from religious doctrine, including in **Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya and Mauritania**. In **Mauritania**, these public commitments extended to around 678 religious and traditional leaders.

FIGURE 27: Communities making public declarations of abandonment of FGM, and number of communities establishing community-level surveillance systems, 2018-2021

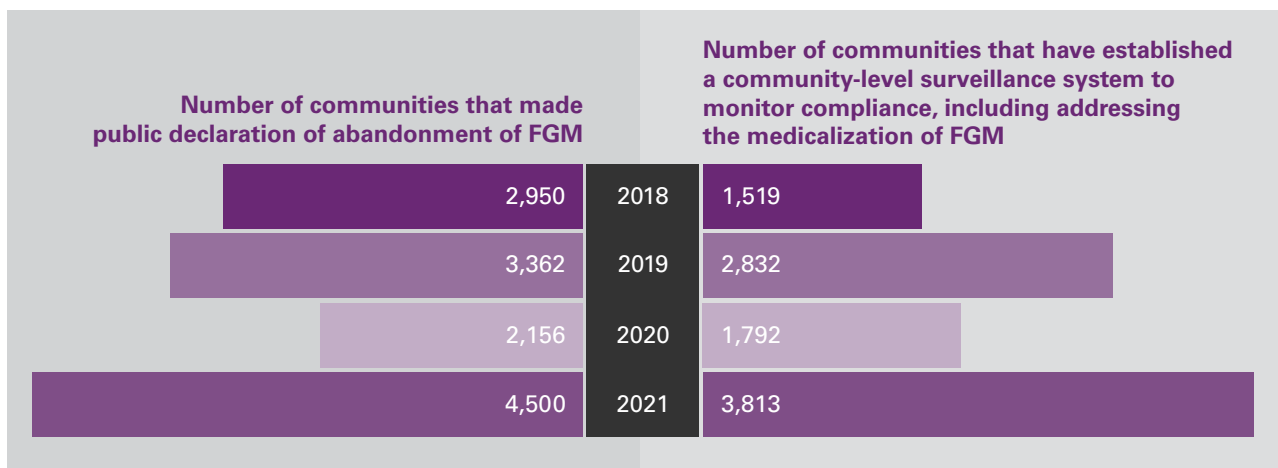


FIGURE 28: Number of girls prevented from undergoing FGM through community surveillance, 2018–2021



The continued effect of COVID-19 means that many typical formal protection mechanisms providing a haven to protect vulnerable girls – such as schools – were no longer as accessible. As such, the use of community-led surveillance, such as setting up community-based child protection committees or peer social networks, has proven to be invaluable to maintain monitoring of post-declaration commitments. Across 15 countries, UNICEF supported the development of surveillance systems and strategies for preventing and reporting cases of FGM in 3,813 communities, following public declarations of abandonment of FGM (see Figure 27). Over 213,000 girls were prevented from undergoing FGM through community surveillance in 2021 (see Figure 28). For example, in **Nigeria**, in over 1,000 communities in five priority states that had previously made public declarations, community surveillance systems were established in partnership with Community Women's Associations. In 2021, these networks identified and protected 3,335 girls. In **Kenya**, similar structures aided the prevention of 18,530 girls from undergoing FGM. More than 60 per cent of these girls received life skills and mentoring support, as well as alternative rites of passage.

Improving access to prevention and protection services for female genital mutilation

Access to comprehensive (and integrated) services (including in the health care, education, social protection and legal sectors) is critical for ensuring that girls and women at risk of or affected by FGM receive the care they need. Currently, 1.7 million girls and women received UNICEF-supported prevention and protection services. This

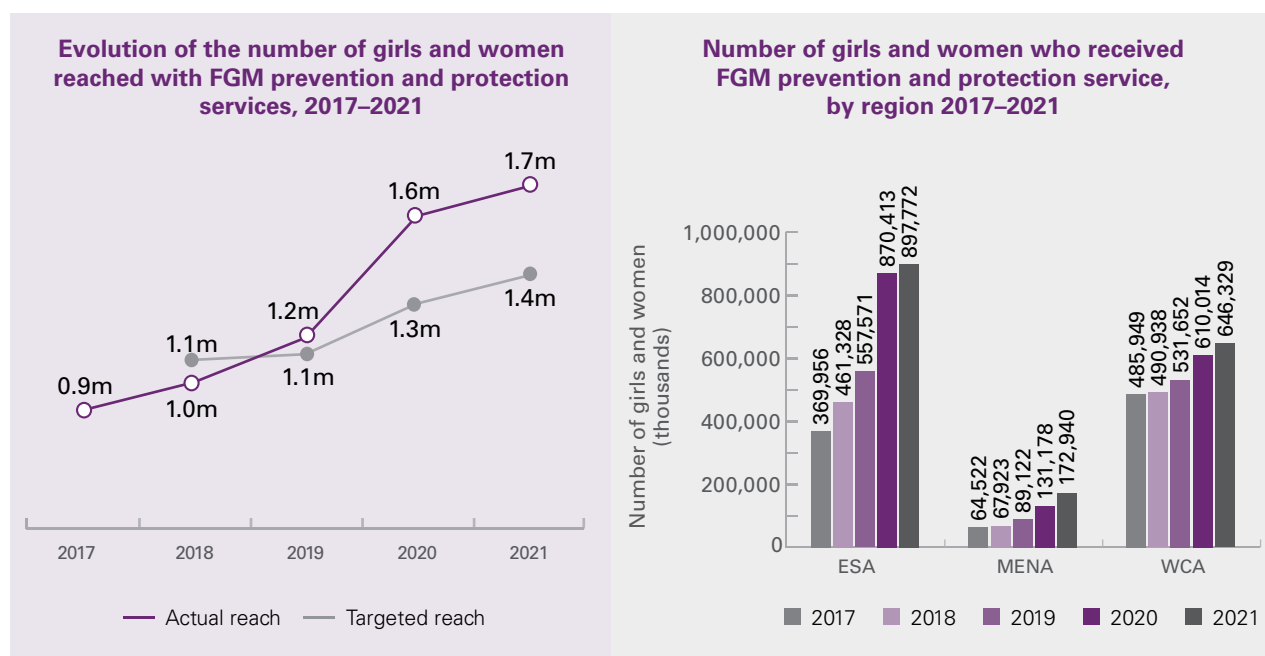
includes nearly 800,000 girls and women who have been supported with prevention and protection services against FGM during Strategic Plan period 2018–2021 period. Despite setbacks in 2021, UNICEF and partners supported interventions enabled over 105,000 girls and women from 18 countries to receive prevention and protection services on FGM (see Figure 29).⁶⁴

Collaboration with the health-care system remains essential, particularly in a context where girls undergo FGM at a younger age, or in locations where the practice is more medicalized. UNICEF and partners supported multiple countries' efforts, despite operational challenges. For example, in **Kenya**, the number of service delivery points providing FGM case management protocols increased from 46 per cent in 2020 to 61 per cent in 2021 in UNICEF-supported areas. Furthermore, over 532 health-care professionals and community health volunteers received FGM training (resulting in 69 per cent of health-care staff nationwide receiving such training to date). In **Senegal**, the Maternal and Child Health Booklet was revised to include provisions on FGM. FGM indicators were also integrated into the national Health Information System to support improved tracking.

Developing legal and policy frameworks

UNICEF and partners continue to support governments to strengthen policy frameworks and legislation that criminalizes FGM (and its enforcement) and to develop national action plans/strategies to end FGM. In 2021, **Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mauritania, Nigeria** and the **Sudan** developed new plans/strategies to end FGM.

FIGURE 29: Number of girls and women reached with prevention and protection services for FGM, 2017–2021



Notes: ESA, East and Southern Africa; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; WCA, West and Central Africa. Target and result figures are cumulative.

Of the 17 countries where the JPFGM is being implemented, 15 have adopted legislation criminalizing FGM. Two notable legal advances took place in 2021. The **Puntland State of Somalia** approved a FGM Zero Tolerance Bill that includes stiff penalties for those performing FGM. In **Egypt**, an amendment to the FGM Penal Code introduces harsher penalties, including a five-year prison sentence for doctors and medical staff performing medicalized FGM.

However, despite legislation prohibiting FGM, enforcement remains weak in many countries. This was further compounded by the disruption of judicial services caused by COVID-19. This resulted in a reduction in the number of arrests, court cases, and convictions and sanctions in 2020. In 2021, countries are beginning to catch up on processing the backlog of cases. Across reporting countries, the number of FGM arrests has returned to pre-pandemic levels (206 cases in 2021) while the number of convictions has increased considerably (135 in 2021). In **Ethiopia**, for example, a national FGM road map that prioritizes strengthening enforcement systems has translated operationally into steady yearly increases in the number of arrests, court hearings and prosecutions related to FGM.

Global advocacy and dialogue to eliminate harmful practices

UNICEF plays a critical role in leveraging global events to secure political commitment to accelerate action towards the elimination of harmful practices. To highlight the need to tackle gender inequality to end child marriage, the governments of Canada and Zambia, together with UNFPA, UNICEF and Save the Children, hosted an intergenerational dialogue at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, which was attended by over 400 people in 80 different countries. This included youth participants from **Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, the Syrian Arab Republic** and the **Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela**, as well as ministers and government representatives from **Canada, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Sierra Leone, the United Kingdom** and **Zambia**.

At the forty-seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2021, UNICEF, UNFPA and over 100 countries supported the delegations of **Burkina Faso** and **Egypt** to reiterate the commitments of the 2020 Human Rights Council resolution to eliminate FGM. To commemorate the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, UNICEF, UNFPA and the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices jointly launched 'No Time for Global Inaction: Unite, fund, and act to end FGM' to global the JPFGM social media campaign, #ACT2EndFGM, reaching over 99 million people across social media channels.

Strengthening data and research

UNICEF rolled out critical learning tools and evidence to strengthen prevention and response strategies and programming. This includes the release of a review of the [Evolution in the Evidence Base on Child Marriage](#), which provides important evidence on contexts, prevalence, consequences, measurements and interventions from the last 20 years.⁶⁵ To support social and behaviour change, a compendium of findings on the [root drivers of child marriage](#) provides a set of programming recommendations.⁶⁶ To deepen the contextual understanding and programming realities, UNICEF also released several briefs, including on global trends and profiles of progress [towards ending child marriage](#) and the [relationship between child marriage and FGM](#). Other complementary resources include research on [gender-transformative and systems approaches to ending child marriage and promoting girls' rights](#).⁶⁷

[A global review of evidence for elimination of FGM](#) assesses the quality and strength of existing FGM interventions from 2008 to 2020.⁶⁸ To provide greater clarity on social norms programming, a paper defining [social norms and related concepts](#) was released.⁶⁹ Additionally, a [Technical Note on Girls' Education, Empowerment, and the Elimination of FGM](#) provides evidence on the linkages between education and FGM.⁷⁰

UNICEF continues to promote the use of the [ACT Framework](#) to track progress towards social norms change.⁷¹ In 2021, **Ethiopia**, for example, used the indicators to develop the baseline, mid-line and end-line evaluation of their social behaviour change programme addressing FGM and child marriage, while **Egypt** has integrated key ACT Framework indicators into a large-scale FGM survey.

To strengthen technical learning across programme countries, GPECM, JPFGM and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti formed the Strategic Technical Assistance for Research Initiative. By the end of the year, the initiative had delivered comprehensive technical guidance and contextual direction on child marriage research to **India, Ethiopia, Nepal, the Niger and Zambia**. To further the learning agenda for programme implementers, UNICEF released a [technical guide](#) to support child marriage interventions in humanitarian settings.⁷² The organization also undertook an extensive consultative process in 2021 that led to the development of the first-ever [Global FGM Research Agenda](#) outlining evidence gaps and research priorities over the next five years.⁷³

Reflections and looking forward

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF and UNFPA, as co-leads of two of the largest United Nations joint programmes, have demonstrated the collective strength of the 'One United Nations' approach. UNICEF has played a significant role in driving forward action, including advocating and shaping normative milestones to accelerate global commitments, driving transformative programme shifts and leading in the delivery of evidence-driven data and research to improve policy and programming frameworks for prevention and elimination of harmful practices. Over recent years, there has been a key programmatic shift to adopt rights-, evidence- and results-based gender-transformative approaches to address gender and social norms barriers and restrictions. Gender-transformative programming has gone from 'the sidelines' to the mainstream and is now an institutional commitment for UNICEF.

To inform programming direction to eliminate child marriage, UNFPA and UNICEF undertook a midterm review of Phase II of the GPECM in 2021. A UNICEF and UNFPA

event, 'Brilliant minds, bold approaches, better results' gathered leading experts and innovators to explore how to get back on track to meeting the SDG elimination goal. An evaluation of Phase III of the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2018–2021) was also undertaken to inform the design of the next phase of the joint programme. Building on the evidence and lessons learned prior to and during COVID-19, UNICEF and partners have identified a key set of forward-looking strategies to address current challenges and to scale up a long-term, multisectoral approach to accelerate action towards ending FGM by 2030.

UNICEF has prioritized the ending of harmful practices as a programming strategy in the Child Protection Strategy 2021–2030 and key result area in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. Working in close collaboration with partners, UNICEF will scale up action required to effectively address the social, cultural and economic determinants of harmful practices at scale and ensure the universal adoption of transformative norms and values.



Output 3.3: Improving children's access to justice

A boy works in a metal workshop that operates in the Malaysian Prison Department. UNICEF is supporting the Government of Malaysia to develop a more holistic approach to children in conflict with the law, including providing life skills for youth in conflict with the law.

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Justice for children

I felt like someone saved me when I was drowning ... We are poor and we do not understand how everything works ... If I hadn't met the lawyer, I do not think my son would be free today.

– The mother of an adolescent boy called Kyaw, Myanmar

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exert enormous pressure on rule-of-law systems worldwide. Though many countries have been working towards child-friendly justice reform prior to the onset of COVID-19, the pandemic catalysed the need to initiate rapid responses, creating opportunities for wider reform in countries where the pace of progress was lagging or, in some cases, in countries that have yet to initiate a process of justice reform planning. This opened pathways to advocate for and support efforts

to release more than 45,000 children from detention in at least 84 countries since the start of the pandemic, which is an unprecedented scale.

Building on this momentum in 2021, UNICEF supported 121 countries to strengthen justice system reform (see *Figure 30*). This included: advocating for and supporting the ending of detention of children and strengthening diversion and alternatives to detention; ensuring access to specialized services for child survivors and witnesses of crime; making justice systems more responsive to and protective of children; strengthening legislation and the legal empowerment of children; and addressing data gaps.

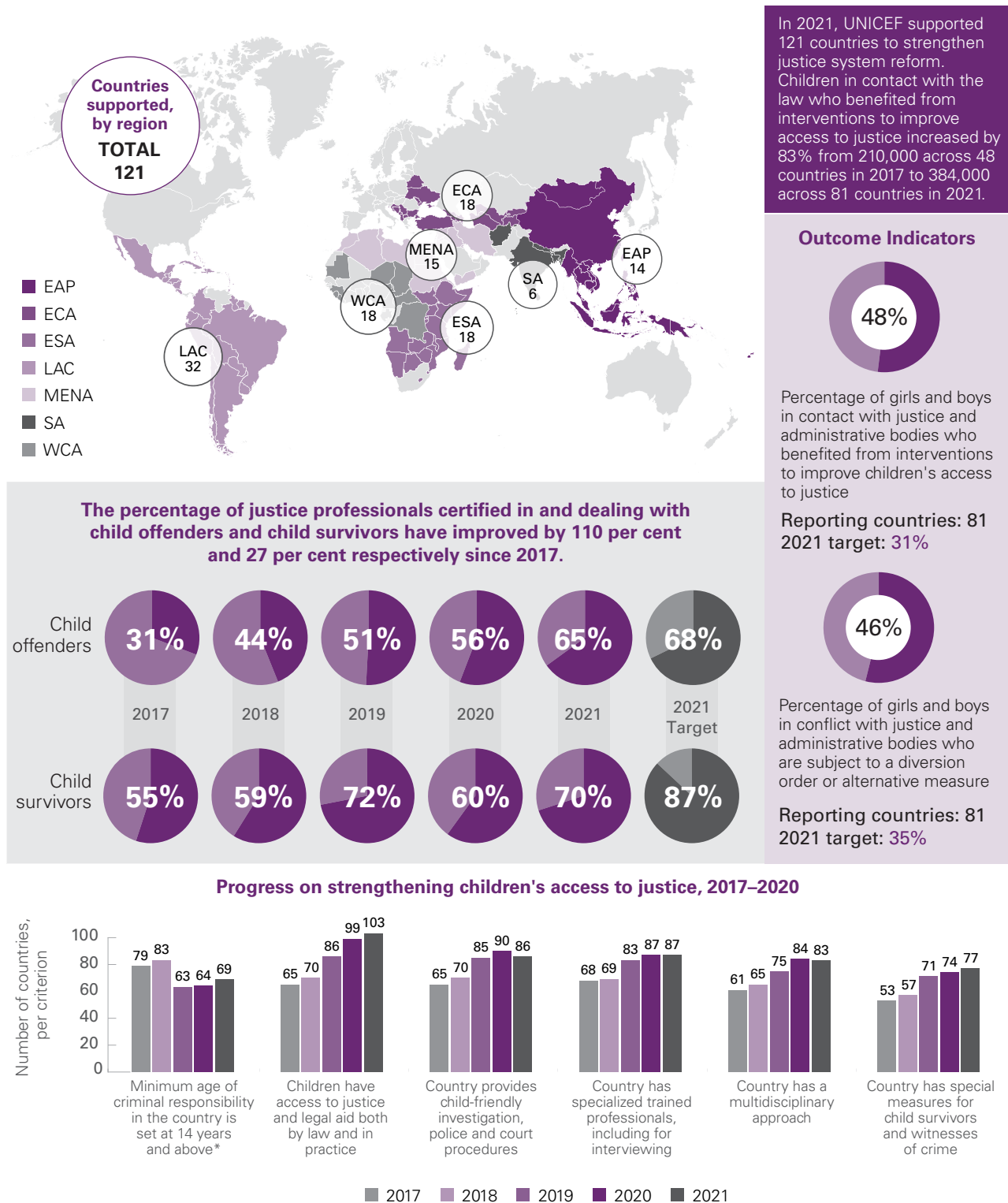
Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, there has been a 69 per cent increase in the number of countries reporting on improving access to child-friendly justice services.

Spotlight: Reimagining justice for children

Building on the [lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and the recommendations of the United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty,⁷⁴ UNICEF launched an ambitious 10-year [Reimagine Justice for Children Agenda](#) ('Reimagine Agenda') at the World Congress on Justice with Children in 2021. More than 14,000 participants attended the Congress online. Central to the Reimagine Agenda is calling on states' and individuals' accountability for the human rights of children; the importance of non-discrimination and children's legal empowerment; and a call to end the detention of children in all its forms. The Outcome Declaration of the World Congress on Justice with Children closely aligns with the Reimagine Agenda, providing leverage for accelerated global action.



FIGURE 30: Summary of results on strengthening justice systems for children, 2021



Notes: The numbers prior to 2019 may not reflect the accurate number on countries meeting the criteria on the minimum age of criminal responsibility. In 2019, the Committee on the Rights of the Child updated its guidance on children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law in the 'General Comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system', stating that the recommended minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) is at least 14 years of age (up from the previously recommended 12 years of age). EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Ending the detention of children

Across the world, UNICEF estimates that more than 260,000 children in conflict with the law are in detention.⁷⁵ Prior to COVID-19, many countries resisted releasing children from detention, or resisted the use of non-custodial measures for those in conflict with the law. From the start of the pandemic, UNICEF convened United Nations agencies and partners to advocate for the release of children from detention, as part of a joint approach across the United Nations Development System.

In more than half of the 152 reporting countries, governments have put in place measures to release children from detention since the start of the pandemic.⁷⁶ The largest proportion of countries reporting such release initiatives are in the regions of West and Central Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa and South Asia.⁷⁷ Governments in more than one third of reporting countries have put in place alternatives to detention in response to the pandemic. The regions that report the greatest proportion of countries employing such methods in the past two years include South Asia (63 per cent), Eastern and Southern Africa (52 per cent) and the Middle East and North Africa (50 per cent).⁷⁸

Spotlight: Bangladesh

In **Bangladesh**, UNICEF continued its support to significantly reduce the number of children in detention, as well as to support them after their release. In 2021, the country was struck by a second wave of the pandemic, leading to authorities reactivating over 100 virtual courts to process the release of children from detention centres. Case processing was expedited and over 5,000 children have been safely released to date.

UNICEF facilitates the expanded use of diversion and non-custodial measures in countries for children in conflict with the law. Of the 81 countries reporting in 2021, 46 per cent of children in conflict with the law were subject to a diversion order or alternative measure, compared with 39 per cent (69 countries) in 2017. In **Uganda**, for example, over half of the 4,610 children in conflict with the law were diverted away from the criminal justice system in 2021. In **Morocco**, almost two thirds of children in conflict with the law benefited from non-residential alternatives to arrest and detention (pre-trial and trial) (out of 16,889). In **Cambodia**, guidelines on diversion and child-friendly justice procedures were adopted and disseminated nationwide.

Ensuring access to specialized services for child survivors and witnesses of crime

UNICEF works across all regions to improve access to justice services for child survivors and witnesses of crime. The number of countries that have special measures for these children has grown exponentially, increasing by 45 per cent since 2017 (from 53 countries in 2017 to 77 in 2021). Of note is the growing proportion of justice professionals certified in and able to support child survivors, which has increased from 55 per cent in 2017 (in 25 countries) to 70 per cent in 2021 (in 49 countries).

In **Zambia**, guidelines for the protection of child survivors and witnesses of crime in justice processes were used to train 115 front-line officers from the police, social welfare, health and justice sectors. In **Egypt**, UNICEF supported the Office of the Prosecutor General in developing guidelines for protection of child survivors and witnesses of crime. In **Morocco**, UNICEF supported a pilot programme to introduce a new recording system for testimonies of child survivors of violence to improve child-friendly procedures for victims of violence. In **Sri Lanka**, UNICEF's continued support to the Attorney General's Office to improve judicial processes benefited over 3,900 survivors of child abuse.

UNICEF works to embed child-friendly and gender-sensitive justice processes and procedures into service delivery and to strengthen sectoral coordination to scale up the quality of service delivery more effectively. UNICEF in **Ghana** helped establish eight additional child-friendly GBV courts equipped with specific materials to ensure a safe and child-sensitive testimony process, and three women and child interviewing rooms in areas with high caseloads of sexual violence cases. In **Viet Nam**, 180 investigators and 177 legal aid and justice officers received skills training to handle cases involving children and women survivors of violence more effectively, especially GBV.

Making justice systems more responsive and protective for all children

There has been a progressive increase in the number of children in contact with justice and administrative bodies accessing specialized services, such as alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and child-friendly courts. The number of children benefiting from such interventions has increased by 83 per cent since 2017 – from 210,000 in 48 countries in 2017 to nearly 384,000 children in 81 countries in 2021. Overall, 48 per cent of children in contact with justice and administrative bodies benefited from interventions to improve access to justice. Countries reporting for the first time on this progress in 2021 included **Belize, Iraq, Mongolia, Peru, Thailand and Zambia**.

In **Iraq**, for example 2,742 children (95 per cent boys) in contact with the law were reached with child-friendly justice services.

The number of countries reporting on strengthening child-friendly investigation, police and court procedures has also increased from 65 countries in 2017 to 86 in 2021. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, UNICEF supported the High Judiciary Council to deploy 70 juvenile judges in 21 juvenile justice courts. In **Zimbabwe**, more than 10,000 children (68 per cent girls) accessed justice legal services through the decentralization of diversion, legal aid and survivor-friendly services. The pandemic forced many countries to innovate to continue service delivery, and this continued in 2021. UNICEF in **Guyana** supported access to virtual hearing rooms/safe spaces for court reporting in nine courts that dealt with more than 300 reports of domestic violence. In **Armenia**, a hybrid modality using online and face-to-face formats was introduced to support judges, prosecutors and investigators.

Since 2017, evidence has been emerging that countries are continuing to invest in professionalizing child-friendly justice services, with the percentage of justice professionals certified in and dealing with child offenders rising from 31 per cent in 2017 (27 countries) to 65 per cent in 2021 (51 countries). Sustained UNICEF support in **Namibia** has contributed to 99 per cent of justice professionals, police, magistrates and prosecutors from national and regional levels receiving training on managing child violence cases. In **Kenya**, a curriculum on investigation and prosecution of online child sexual exploitation and abuse was developed. In the **State of Palestine**, lawyers were trained across the West Bank and Gaza on harmonized approaches aimed at better streamlining specialized justice services and procedures for children.

Strengthening legislation and the legal empowerment of children

The backbone of strengthening justice systems is ensuring there is a strong legislative foundation that places a child rights approach at the heart of reforms. In 2021, more than 120 countries reported strengthening legislative and policy frameworks in line with international standards. Successful UNICEF multi-year advocacy in **Armenia** contributed to the adoption of the new Criminal and Criminal Procedure Codes that introduce a wider range of child-friendly services for offenders and survivors. In **Belize**, UNICEF supported the comprehensive review of key legislation, including the Families and Children Act and the Criminal Code Act. In **Cabo Verde**, a new legal framework on the prohibition of sexual crimes against children was adopted.

Since the Committee on the Rights of the Child raised the recommended minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) from at least 12 years of age to at least 14 years of age in 2019, six additional countries (raising the total

number of countries from 63 in 2019 to 69 in 2021) have put in place legal reforms to extend the MACR to at least 14 years of age. Two key breakthroughs in 2021 include in **Uzbekistan**, where the age of criminal responsibility was raised in accordance with the global recommendations, and UNICEF's advocacy efforts in **Peru**, which helped prevent a proposed reduction in the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 14 years.

Increasing investment in the legal empowerment of children and their access to legal aid is a principal component of children's access to justice. There has been a significant increase since 2017 in the number of countries that enable children's access to justice and legal aid, both by law and in practice. This has risen from 65 countries reporting in 2017 to 103 countries in 2021. In **Belarus**, UNICEF and partners introduced a free legal aid mobile app, *Advokot*, which enables adolescents to obtain free online legal consultations and related information. In **Georgia**, a Legal Aid Service website for children was developed, including for children with disabilities, which aims to increase awareness on how to access legal aid.

Strengthening research and data

High-quality and reliable information is necessary for all reporting and decision-making on issues involving children in contact with the justice system. UNICEF is redoubling its efforts to support countries to overcome research and data gaps. Two critical knowledge products were released in 2021. This includes [Detention of Children in the Time of COVID-19](#), which presents data on the number of detained children released by authorities during the pandemic,⁷⁹ and [Estimating the Number of Children Deprived of Liberty in the Administration of Justice](#), which provides the latest global picture of children in conflict with the law who are in detention.

To strengthen administrative data systems on justice for children, UNICEF developed [a tool for country-level self-evaluation](#), to assess the capacity of statistical systems to collect, collate, analyse and disseminate administrative data on justice for children at subnational and national levels. Two important 2021 publications complement these efforts: A [review of innovative data initiatives](#) examined sources of administrative data in **Canada, Jordan, Montenegro, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay**; and [Gauging the Maturity of an Administrative Data System on Justice for Children: Three stages of development](#), which provides guidance on how the components of a justice for children administrative data system can more effectively function.

Reflections and looking forward

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, the justice for children landscape has advanced significantly, with an increasing number of countries showing demonstrable

progress in initiating reform and/or scaling up access to improved justice services. Improved data and reporting systems show that more children in a growing number of countries can access child-friendly justice services, including legal aid and child-friendly investigation, police and court procedures. There are progressively more countries building the capacity of justice professionals, including those that are certified to support child offenders and child survivors, as well as expansions to the specialized services available to support child survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Recent lessons learned show us that countries which invested in diversion and non-custodial measures before the pandemic did not have large numbers of children in detention and were better prepared to release children and apply alternatives. Similarly, countries where the justice system worked in an integrated manner with social services were more able to provide adequate measures for children at risk, as well as to provide post-release support and prevent re-offending.

Countries that introduced adequate innovative technological solutions such as 'virtual courts', online justice training and online post-release support were able to maintain justice and social services despite lockdowns. Though the use of technology offers opportunities for justice and welfare systems to reach more children more effectively, lessons learned from the past year indicate more evidence needs to be gathered on the appropriate use of technology in legal proceedings involving children.

Looking forward, maintaining this momentum will require greater investment in reforming national justice for children, to ensure it is fully integrated into broader rule-of-law systems worldwide. UNICEF will continue to capitalize on the success of the past years, leveraging UNICEF's Reimagine Justice for Children Agenda to accelerate specific action to overcome challenges and scale up national child-friendly justice reform processes.



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Commissioner for Child and Family Protection Division, Naguru Police Headquarters, leads a session during a UNICEF supported training held in Moroto, Uganda focused on the forms, causes and effects of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV); and the key practices and procedures involved in the collection, preservation and presentation of forensic evidence critical to the investigation and prosecution of SGBV cases, especially those involving children.



A young mother (18) with her daughter (2) in Democratic Republic of Congo. UNICEF supports community-based engagement activities to prevent family separation and to ensure protection and psychosocial support for children and vulnerable families.

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Children without parental or family care

Countries continue to accelerate progress in care reform, with a nearly 80 per cent increase in countries with strong national policies and programmes in place to prevent family separation and family-based care compared with the start of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. Key accelerators include a rising global momentum and increasing consensus and shift of focus on preventing family–child separation. UNICEF has scaled up action to support families and their resiliency as part of the broader child protection systems-strengthening approach, with a particular emphasis on improving case management and the SSW (see also [‘Social service workforce strengthening’](#)).

UNICEF works in over 100 countries to strengthen care reform aimed at preventing unnecessary family–child separation, protecting children deprived of parental care, and ending institutionalization of children. In 2021, UNICEF programmes focused on: promoting parental care and preventing unnecessary family–child separation; prioritizing family-based alternative care options as far as possible to protect children without parental care; strengthening child welfare and protection systems and services; and improving the availability of data.

Countries are progressively advancing comprehensive care reform. Since 2017, the number of countries that have comprehensive policies and programmes in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children⁸⁰ has risen from 23 countries in 2017 to 41 countries in 2021.

Promoting parental care and preventing unnecessary family–child separation

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the centrality of families in the care of children.⁸¹ Since 2017, there has been a significant increase in the number of countries scaling up interventions to promote parental care and to prevent unnecessary family separation. In 2021, 96 countries reported having in place a range of services to prevent children being separated from their families; a 78 per cent increase compared with 2017 (54 countries).

In **Morocco**, UNICEF partnered with the Moroccan League for Child Protection to pilot supportive spaces that offer psychosocial, health and economic support

Going forward, [we] will continue to work on ... ensuring that States act urgently to transform systems to prevent separation of children from families so that children grow up in safe and nurturing families, and to deliver appropriate quality alternative care services where these are needed.

– Professor Ann Skelton, Member, United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the Day of General Discussion on Alternative Care, 2021

to single mothers – including migrants – to prevent child abandonment. In Cambodia, public engagement interventions promoting positive parenting practices to prevent family separation reached over 10,000 parents and caregivers, benefiting some 12,000 children (around 48 per cent female). In **Zambia**, a national campaign for family-based care reached an estimated 2 million people, and community dialogue tools on family-based alternative care, birth registration and positive parenting reached 5,600 people across five districts.

There has also been a significant increase in the number of countries putting review mechanisms in place to ensure that separation of a child only takes place in circumstances deemed necessary, and when it is in the child’s best interests. This has risen from 58 countries reporting such gains in 2017 to 88 in 2021; a 52 per cent increase in the past five years. Operationalizing these mechanisms requires a skilled workforce and strong case management systems. Progress made in these two areas has contributed to further strengthening the scale-up and quality of these review mechanisms.

Supporting alternative care options to protect children without parental care

A key objective of strengthening alternative care is to promote family-based care options to protect children without parental care, reduce reliance on residential care, and end the institutionalization of children. In 2021, 99 countries reported having policies and programmes with a range of alternative care options for children without parental care – such as foster care and kinship care – as

Spotlight: Advancing the global care reform agenda

In 2021, UNICEF and partners took an important step forward with the launch of an agenda for care reform: [It's Time for Care](#). The agenda offers a multisectoral road map to guide the immediate pandemic response and outlines the long-term investments necessary to ensure sustained quality care for children.⁹²

In 2021, the Committee on the Rights of the Child devoted its Day of General Discussion (DGD) to the issue of 'Children's Rights and Alternative Care'. This offered UNICEF and partners further critical leverage to push the agenda forward across the global community and reiterate the call for governments to increase care reform investments. The DGD was one of many firsts for the sector. It was the most inclusive high-level event for the care reform sector ever staged remotely, bringing together over 1,500 participants from 125 countries, providing a global stage for the voices of children with disabilities and children with lived experiences in care (*see also* ['Mainstreaming a disability-inclusive approach to child protection programming'](#)).

Building on these lessons, as well as those from the pandemic, the It's Time for Care agenda shifts the focus squarely to doubling down on prevention. It calls for increased investments in the care economy, including in unpaid and paid care work, child protection systems, the SSW and social protection. A further shift is the call to embed MHPSS for children and their families as part of the long-term solution.

well as strengthening the standards of alternative care. This is an increase of 27 per cent compared with 2017. The number of countries with a monitoring and inspection mechanism in place for alternative care providers and facilities has risen 76 per cent from 38 countries in 2017 to 67 in 2021.

After sustained advocacy in **Chile**, a key milestone came with policy changes stipulating children under 3 years old will no longer be placed in residential care. The government also reduced the overall number of children in residential care centres by 16 per cent from 2020 to 2021. In **Rwanda**, as part of supporting inclusive de-institutionalization, a training module was developed to build awareness amongst community child protection volunteers (Inshuti z'Umuryango, or Friends of the Family) on the rights and needs of children with disabilities. As a result, around 6,500 children without adequate parental care were reintegrated into family-based care (including almost 400 children with disabilities). In **Belarus**, a case management needs

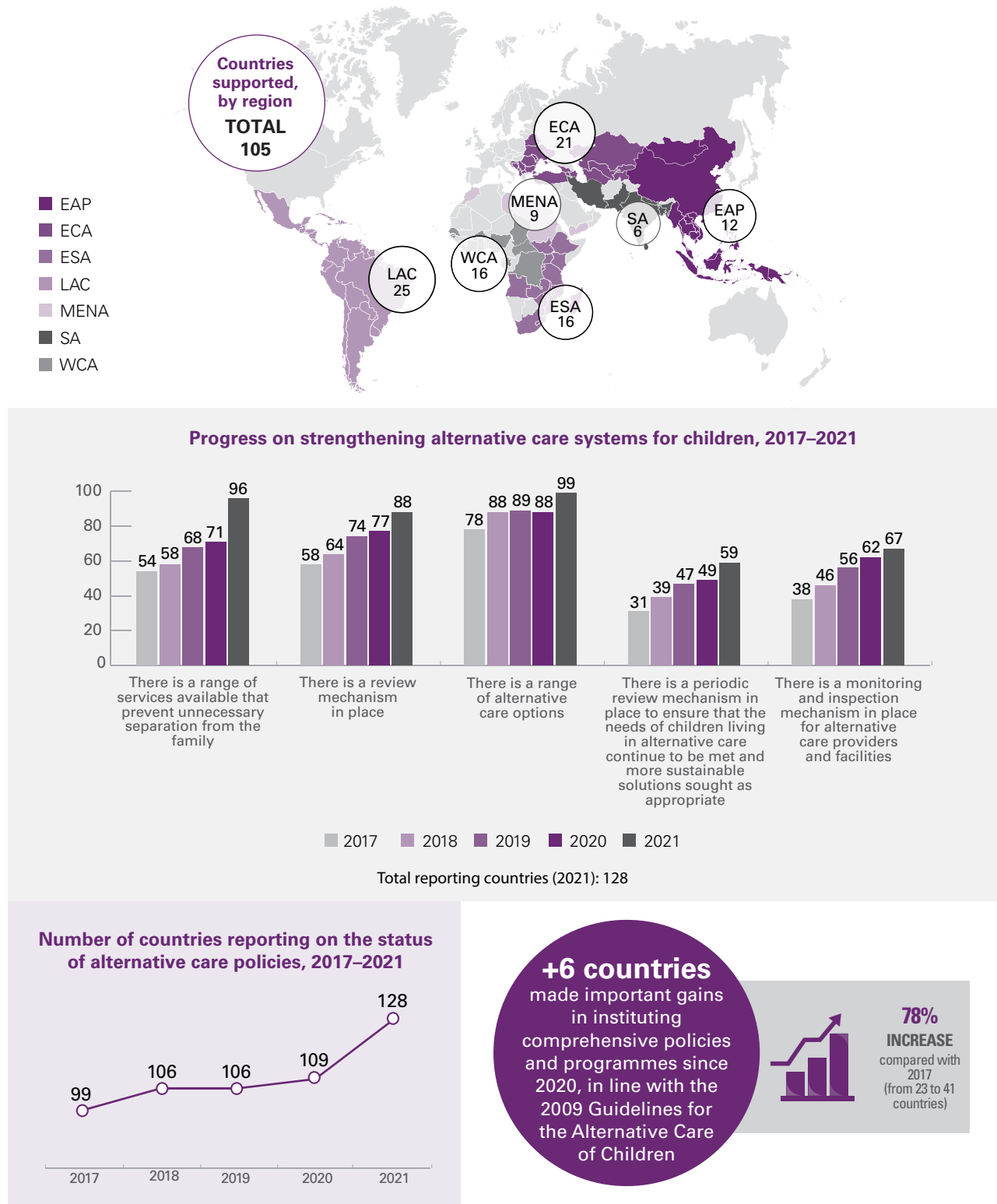
assessment was piloted in residential centres, which led to a reduction of 35 per cent in the number of children in the centres and placed in alternative care; and 67 per cent of new cases were placed in family-based care alternatives.

UNICEF continues to support countries to strengthen review mechanisms that can monitor care systems. This ensures that the needs of children living in alternative care continue to be met, and sustainable solutions identified. In 2021, 59 countries – a 90 per cent increase from 2017 – reported the availability of a periodic review mechanism that ensures the needs of children living in alternative care continue to be met, and more sustainable solutions sought, as appropriate. In **Maldives**, the Child Rights Ombudsperson conducted audits, resulting in recommendations to improve residential care institutions. In **Mozambique**, strengthened reporting mechanisms in residential care institutions are facilitating the identification of children eligible for alternative care. UNICEF also supported training of 100 foster families for family-based

Spotlight: Sri Lanka

In 2021, UNICEF continued to support the implementation of the National Policy for Alternative Care of Children in Sri Lanka, which aimed at reducing the number of children in residential care, with efforts focused on working with six of the nine Provincial Probation Commissioners to reintegrate children with their families and prevent them from going into care institutions. Four provincial action plans were developed and implemented, enabling over 280 children (81 per cent girls) to be reunited with their families, and preventing almost 1,500 children (76 per cent girls) from being institutionalized. A landmark report on children living in institutions was also launched, which provides, for the first time, disaggregated data. These findings are further informing the roll-out of the National Policy for Alternative Care of Children.

FIGURE 31: Summary of results on supporting children without parental or family care, 2017–2021



Note: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Spotlight: Croatia

UNICEF, together with 15 partners, commenced a focused programme for the most vulnerable children and their parents/caregivers (specifically including Roma communities) to strengthen their access to child protection and family support services. Actions in 2021 included: improving the availability of tools to review, assessing and monitoring services; standardizing a training curriculum for foster care parents; and supporting the umbrella CSO of foster parents. As a result of these improved resources and services, more than 1,300 foster parents were able to provide strengthened care to 2,200 children in 2021.

alternative care options. A new law adopted in **Argentina** is supporting residential care leavers in their transition to independent life.

In many situations, UNICEF also focuses on increasing its support of national efforts to enhance the care workforce across regions, in countries as diverse as **Afghanistan, Bhutan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, the Comoros, Peru, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe** (see also '[Social service workforce strengthening](#)'). In **Viet Nam**, for example, UNICEF supported the training of 200 social protection officers on case management related to children in residential care, alongside developing a guideline on child safeguarding in residential care settings and on alternative care. In **India**, technical guidance on childcare reform was distributed nationwide to care providers. To strengthen the quality-of-service provision, some 18,500 child protection workers were trained on family-based alternative care and aftercare services for children leaving institutions. In **Peru**, operating budgeting models were developed for prevention of family separation, as well as promotion of family-based alternative care and family reintegration, accompanied by a revision of operational guidelines and instruments for national models for alternative care.

Improving the availability of data

UNICEF invests in developing and implementing data collection tools to generate accurate information on children in alternative care, especially disaggregated data. This includes data on the number of children with disabilities in the care system, which is a critical challenge for the sector. A key breakthrough was the release of the first-ever comprehensive technical protocol to support [global data collection for children living in residential care settings](#). This is the first-ever set of tools to collect data on many indicators of well-being for children living in residential care.⁸³

At a regional level, complementary work was undertaken by UNICEF in Europe and Central Asia through the DataCare project, which aims to move towards a more

transparent, common approach to data collection and reporting across Europe. A technical report assessed how data on children in alternative care are collected, analysed and published across 28 European countries, with findings concluding that 19 of the 28 countries surveyed are either reforming, or have recently reformed, their data system on alternative care.⁸⁴

Despite its importance, efforts to generate accurate and reliable data remain limited, and official records capture a fraction of the actual number of children in alternative care. Countries need to invest in efforts to collect useful, accurate and comprehensive data across all forms of alternative care. This is an area of attention for UNICEF.

Reflections and looking forward

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF and partners have played a key role in driving forward global advocacy and attention on care system reform. This includes increasingly providing support to countries to map out and develop policies, programmes and action plans to implement their care reform agendas. There are now more countries than ever before making important gains in instituting comprehensive policies and programmes, in line with the 2009 Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. UNICEF has also significantly strengthened its engagement with bilateral and multilateral organizations to advocate for strengthening international cooperation towards holistic multisectoral care reform.

Despite advancements, implementation remains a challenge, particularly in the absence of strong oversight and inspection mechanisms, and sustained capacity and long-term system investments. Similarly, preventing family separation and reducing the level of placement in institutions is at times hindered by mistaken sociocultural beliefs that residential care is the only alternative for some children, particularly those with disabilities. Addressing these issues forms one of the key thematic priorities of UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030, and is a key priority in the implementation of its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.



A boy (13) with a disability walking with his father in Tripoli, Lebanon. UNICEF is supporting the families and parents of children with disabilities to ensure their children's inclusion and appropriate care.

Mainstreaming a disability-inclusive approach to child protection programming

For far too long, children with disabilities have been excluded from society in a way that no child ever should be. My lived experience as a woman with disabilities supports that statement.

– Maria, 20, a UNICEF youth advocate from Bulgaria.⁸⁵

UNICEF's work on disability-inclusive child protection is grounded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It follows a twin-track approach of mainstreaming disability programming, combined with targeted interventions across both humanitarian and development contexts.⁸⁶ Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has deepened its focus on mainstreaming disability inclusion across diverse areas of child protection programming (see Figure 32).

At the global level, strong partnerships help drive inclusive child protection advocacy, policy and dialogue. A major accelerator in 2021 was the new partnership framework for disability with the Government of Norway, which aims to strengthen the availability of tools and resources to scale up disability-inclusive programmes at the country level.⁸⁷ This partnership was also instrumental in ensuring that the Committee on the Rights of the Child DGD on 'Children's Rights and Alternative Care' was one of the most inclusive and accessible to date. The DGD also provided a critical platform to advocate for disability-inclusive care reform with decision makers and participants from over 125 countries (see also ['Children without parental or family care'](#)).

Recent years have seen renewed interest in generating reliable and internationally comparable data on children with disabilities. This has led to the development of new tools for data collection and a substantial increase in the availability of data on children with disabilities over the last five years. In 2021, the first-ever cross-nationally [comparable data on children with disabilities](#) were released, with data estimates drawn from around 50 countries,⁸⁸ and [data from 20 more surveys](#) expected to become available over the next several years.⁸⁹

FIGURE 32: Summary of results of number of children with disabilities reached with UNICEF-supported services and interventions, 2021



Spotlight: Kosovo

UNICEF Kosovo worked to create an enabling environment for the inclusion and protection of children with disabilities by strengthening normative and regulatory frameworks at the national level. Technical and financial support was provided to line ministries on developing and reviewing legislation such as the law on child protection and the law on the categorization of persons with disabilities, resulting in, inter alia, the introduction of new legal provisions to regulate adoption procedures, foster care and kinship care. UNICEF facilitated the participation of CSOs and organizations of persons with disabilities in these processes to ensure alignment with international principles and prioritization of children with disabilities.

These efforts demonstrate the increasing attention to the rights of children with disabilities in Kosovo, and have been informed by, and built on, improved data collection (i.e., 2017 Situation Analysis of Children with Disabilities in Kosovo) and the inclusion of children with disabilities in national strategies (i.e., Kosovo Strategy on Children's Rights 2019–2021). Looking forward, UNICEF Kosovo aims to gather additional data on children with disabilities in the upcoming Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey and census, to further accelerate disability-inclusive planning and programming.

Reflections and looking forward

The number of children with disabilities globally is estimated at almost 240 million, according to UNICEF data (2021).⁹⁰ Many of these children continue to be left behind, despite the near-universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the call for action embedded in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the clear mandate set by the SDGs. Often, this neglect is the result of structural discrimination, compounded by limited data. When absent from official statistics, children and adults with disabilities remain politically, economically, socially and culturally 'invisible', increasing their marginalization and exposure to rights violations.⁹¹

Looking forward, to ensure the full realization of the rights of all children, and that no child is left behind, UNICEF's Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030 will prioritize interventions to support children at greatest risk of child protection violations, including children with disabilities. Focus will be placed on building inclusive child protection systems. UNICEF will also work to bolster disability disaggregation in research and data collection, to inform policies and planning more effectively. To address stigma and discrimination, it is essential that countries implement a rigorous social and behaviour communication change strategy. UNICEF strongly supports and promotes platforms for children's and adolescents' empowerment, as it is also critical that children with disabilities are engaged and included in decisions impacting their lives.

BURKINA FASO

UNICEF supported the roll-out of revised case management tools for child protection services, both in humanitarian and development contexts, enabling delivery of services to almost 800 children with disabilities (42 per cent girls).

JAMAICA

As a result of disability-inclusive child protection data drawn from a UNICEF-supported study highlighting gaps in supply and demand of services, and an evaluation of the national child protection system, updates of available disability-inclusive services in the Directory of Services for Children were made.

GUYANA

UNICEF supported implementing specific services for children with disabilities who have experienced sexual abuse, reaching over 1,000 persons through the child advocacy centres in 2021.

KENYA

UNICEF supported the piloting of the newly endorsed Care Reform Strategy, with 70 children's officers, social workers and managers in Kisumu County undergoing training on foster care and disability mainstreaming.

ZIMBABWE

The placement of case management officers and mentoring of almost 4,000 community case workers resulted in over 14,000 children with disabilities benefiting from comprehensive child protection services.

TAJIKISTAN

UNICEF reached over 900 children – including those with disabilities – with online support in response to COVID-19, including psychosocial and legal support to receive medical and social services.

UKRAINE

UNICEF created a 'think tank' consortium of CSOs specialized in child protection, including children with disabilities, to help provide technical expertise to municipalities on local-level reforms in child protection.

THE STATE OF PALESTINE

UNICEF strengthened the capacity of communities to prevent violence against children with disabilities, with parental awareness sessions on positive discipline and non-violence reaching over 100 parents of children with disabilities in the West Bank, and training on the rights of children with disabilities reaching more than 1,300 teachers and school counsellors in Gaza.

CAMBODIA

UNICEF supported the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in all new legal and policy documents in 2021, such as the child protection law, alternative care policy and as part of the digital case management system (PrimerTM).

BHUTAN

UNICEF built on existing national parenting education programmes to launch a 'Caring for Caregivers' package in three pilot districts. For the first time, this includes support to social workers and caregivers to children with disabilities.



A young boy received his birth certificate in Fada in the East of Burkina Faso. With the support of UNICEF, displaced families are able to obtain birth certificates.

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Accelerating birth registration to close the legal identity gap

The right to be recognized as a person before the law is a critical step in ensuring lifelong protection and is a prerequisite for exercising all other rights. In 2021, UNICEF worked closely with 73 countries to align their civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems to minimize the risks and prevent further erosion of the gains made over the last few years due to the pandemic. Scaling up access and quality of birth registration (BR) services was a key focus.

Continued investments in improving interoperability with other sectors, especially the health sector, strengthening the decentralization of services, and digitization are proving to be game changers for countries. At least three out of every five countries in 2021 showed an improvement in the number of children notified (65 per cent), registered (67 per cent) and certified (75 per cent) with birth certificates, compared with 2020. In 2021, 47 countries have in place free and universal BR services; more than three times more than the 14 countries who had this in place in 2017. Six out of seven regions saw an increase in countries with free and universal BR services, compared with 2017. Despite advancements, UNICEF and partners continue to address the structural inequities that remain, especially for vulnerable and marginal groups, and those in rural and difficult-to-reach areas. And in many countries, costs continue to be applied to BR services and the obtaining of a birth certificate.

At a global level, UNICEF works jointly with 12 United Nations entities as part of an integrated 'One United Nations' approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management. This includes UNICEF's continued leadership with the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) task force, which provides coordinated assistance to Member States to achieve SDG 16.9. As part of the UNLIA, 13 countries in Africa were selected as pilot countries, where rapid assessment missions – to assess the current situation and capacity of national stakeholders to implement UNLIA – took place, under the leadership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Out of the 13 countries, in 2021, 6 received seed funding from the UNLIA task force to initiate the implementation of UNLIA.

In 2021, a synthesis report of assessments in 10 UNLIA priority countries⁹² was also released, which is guiding governments and United Nations country teams to identify specific areas of investment for UNLIA acceleration. At the country level, the UNLIA prioritized the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Zambia** for targeted support to accelerate country-level implementation. This included, for example, in **Mozambique**, where UNICEF and

If you are invisible, you are vulnerable. Birth registration must be everyone's priority. Let's make all children visible, and let's give every child a birthday!

– Archbishop Desmond Tutu,
Nobel Peace Prize laureate

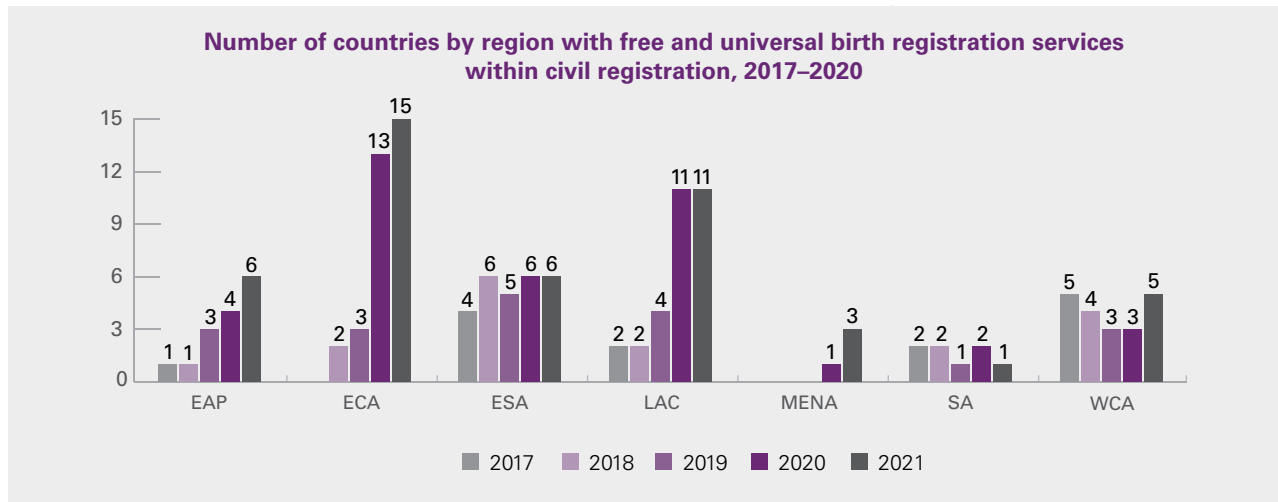
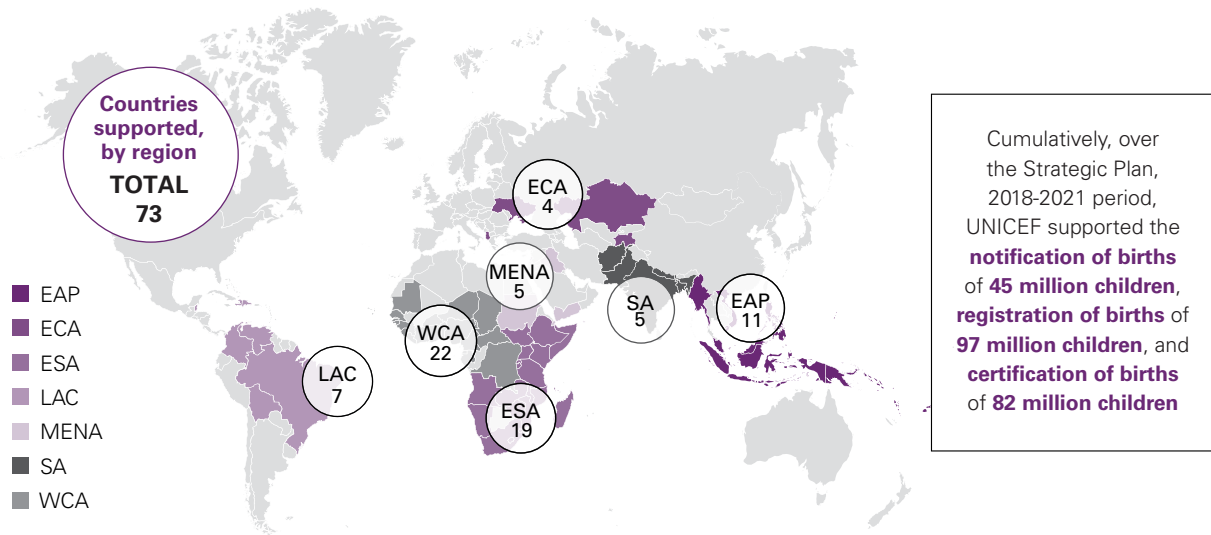
partners supported the development of a cross-sectoral UNLIA implementation plan, alongside advocating for and providing technical guidance to the development of a country data protection and privacy law. In **Sierra Leone**, UNICEF and partners helped ensure provisions to reflect the needs of refugee, returned migrant, stateless and displaced populations were incorporated into the initiatives planned for legal, policy and procedural reform.

Regional collaboration is also critical to drive forward accelerated action. In 2021, UNICEF and the African Union capitalized on the first anniversary of the African Union's 2020 '[No Name Campaign](#)', to call on governments to double down on efforts to remove BR bottlenecks that are impeding progress. These calls were reiterated at an expert group meeting of Africa Registrar Generals of CRVS, where key action areas to prioritize were identified.⁹³ In the Asia and the Pacific region, a midterm review of the CRVS Decade (2015–2024) – which provides a shared regional vision to achieve universal and responsive civil registration and vital statistics systems – is bolstering regional action. Review findings identified that those countries across the region that have built-in resiliency to their national systems in recent years, ensured they were better able to respond to the impact of COVID-19 than they would have been five years ago.

Linking civil registration to other systems to improve birth registration

A key approach across regions is the increasing efforts to 'twin' BR services with other sectors' systems to facilitate improved access and service availability. The health sector is a fundamental partner in CRVS development, as it offers untapped opportunities to leverage the health sector's reach to improve the coverage of notification, declaration, registration and certification of births and deaths. In 2021,

FIGURE 33: Summary of results on strengthening birth registration services, 2021

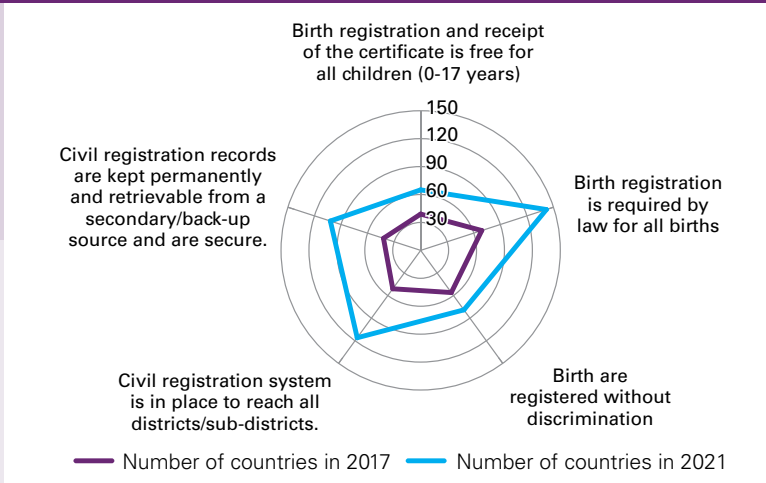


Progress on strengthening birth registration and civil registration and vital statistics, 2021

In 2021, **47 countries** have free and universal birth registration service within the civil registration system

Over 3X the countries compared to 2017 and 18% increase from 2020

Challenges most faced across countries are the fact that birth registration and receipt of certificate is NOT free for all children and that births are not registered without discrimination.



Note: EAP, East Asia and the Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; LAC, Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

FIGURE 34: Number of births notified and registered, and birth certificates received through UNICEF support, 2021



77 countries provided the number of health care facilities in their country. Out of the 77 countries, 54 countries had 80 per cent or more of their health care facilities as interoperable with the civil registration system to facilitate birth registration services – declaration, registration, and certification.

The interoperability between health platforms and civil registry has proved instrumental in bringing about noteworthy gains in countries such as **Cameroon, Ghana, India, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sri Lanka and the United Republic of Tanzania**. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in **India**, an 89 per cent BR rate for newborns was achieved in 2021 (up from 80 per cent in 2020) through sustained efforts to improve interoperability between systems. To scale up interoperability with the health sector, UNICEF and WHO

jointly published guidance on health sector contributions towards improving the civil registration of births and deaths in low-income countries. It provides important practical steps that health workers can take to enable children's births to be registered.

In addition, among the countries that UNICEF supported in 2021, 38 (52 per cent) have a twinning system in place between the civil registration system and other sectors' systems, such as education (16 countries), social protection (13 countries) or national identification services (27 countries). In **Angola**, for example, a UNICEF-supported BR programme was linked to the Safe Haven project in schools and implemented in 18 rural primary schools in one province, resulting in the distribution of about 7,500 identity cards to primary school-aged children. In six out of nine regions in **Guinea-Bissau**, civil registration services

were introduced in selected schools and communities to increase registration rates of children under 7 years old. Targeted programmes reached over 16,500 children in 2021. UNICEF in **Senegal** focused on linking services with the health and education sectors, including supporting the launch and roll out of two national guidelines. The first, on the establishment of civil registry support desks within health-care facilities; and the second, on systematic detection and registration of students without birth certificates in schools. In **Liberia**, with UNICEF support, BR services were integrated within targeted nutrition and vaccination campaigns, leading to the births of around 127,400 children (aged 0–12 years) being registered.

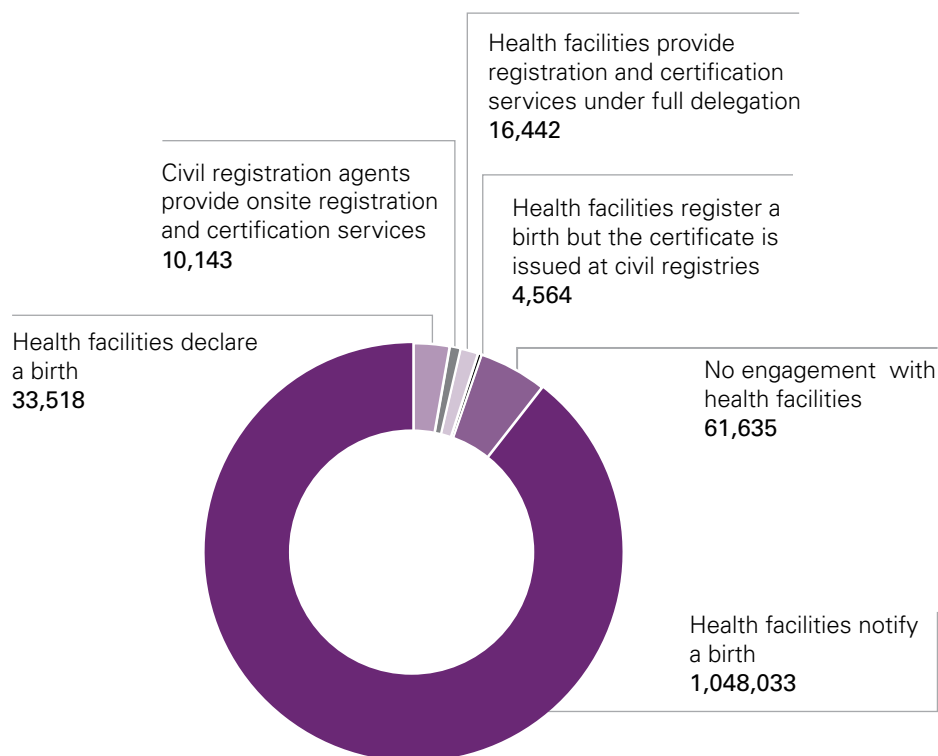
Investing in digital solutions to facilitate birth registration

UNICEF prioritizes innovative solutions to scale up BR services, including the use of information and communication technologies, which play a significant part in civil registration worldwide. BR digitization has brought about gains in several countries in recent years. In **Namibia**, for instance, where digitization is well advanced, birth registration is close to 80 per cent.

Mozambique has achieved equally noteworthy progress in digitizing registration services at decentralized levels.⁹⁴ Despite advancements, many CRVS systems, especially in Africa, remain a combination of paper-based and digitized registration processes. The African Union’s Digital Transformation Strategy, 2020–2030 is aimed at strengthening countries transitioning to digital data processing. UNICEF is supporting these efforts.

Recent country advancements include in **Senegal**, where BR monitoring was systematized through RapidPro across all civil registry centres in three regions. In **Nigeria**, UNICEF supported the development of the e-CRVS Operational Readiness Assessment Report, which illustrated correctable gaps in service delivery and the digital capabilities required to deliver effective digitized CRVS. UNICEF in the **Gambia** and the World Bank are providing technical support to introduce digitalization of birth registration, alongside support for the Birth, Death and Marriage Act. Innovative cross-regional coordinated strides were also undertaken by UNICEF West and Central Africa, South Asia, and the East Asia and the Pacific regions in 2021. This includes an initiative to identify and develop a digital CRVS solution that can be made available as a digital public good and adapted for implementation across multi-country contexts.

FIGURE 35: Types of UNICEF-supported birth registration services provided at health-care facilities, 2021



Source: UNICEF Child Protection strategic monitoring questions, 2021 data.

Increasing demand for birth registration

UNICEF supports interventions to build awareness at community level of how and why birth registration benefits children. This approach – combined with enhanced outreach efforts such as service integration, nutrition interventions, education and safety net (cash transfer) programming – serves as an important method to stimulate demand for services. Joint messaging on timely BR in **Bangladesh** reached 60 million people, with 1.2 million children under 5 years old registered over a period of 10 months in 2021. In **Guinea-Bissau**, an integrated approach to engage communities to promote multiple issues led to 27 chiefs and religious leaders in one region signing a letter formally announcing their support for routine vaccination of children under 1 year, birth registration of children under 7 years, and the progressive abandonment of FGM and early and forced marriage. Close to 2.4 million community members in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** were sensitized on BR across the country via radio, face-to-face awareness-raising, and other forms of community engagement –

including in schools and health-care facilities, contributing to the registration of over 1.5 million children's births, an 18 per cent increase from 2020.

Ensuring BR is totally free of charge is critical to reaching universal coverage goals. In West and Central Africa, for example, free and universal BR is only available in 5 of 24 countries.⁹⁵ UNICEF continues to work with the African Union and partners to reverse this trend. For example, in **Togo**, the president approved free BR services in 2021. In **Equatorial Guinea**, a pilot campaign to raise awareness of the importance of BR was carried out in four districts, where families were exempted from paying late registration penalty fees during the campaign.

Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks

In 2021, 142 (of the 151 reporting countries) reported that the registration of all births is required by law in their country, compared with 69 in 2017; more than twofold

Spotlight: Reducing the risk of statelessness through birth registration

Since 2017, UNICEF and UNHCR have jointly led the [Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality](#). The Coalition supported the development of 23 joint national strategies to address and reduce the risk of childhood statelessness. As part of the UNICEF-UNHCR Joint Strategy, the Coalition also works in over 20 countries to address childhood statelessness. Key result highlights for 2021 include:

- In **Bangladesh**, BR services in Cox's Bazar resumed following UNICEF's and UNHCR's joint advocacy at the local and national level.
- In **Tajikistan**, over 1,250 children at risk of statelessness and affected by migration from 26 districts and cities received birth certificates.
- In **Ethiopia**, a campaign commenced to register the births of more than 90,000 refugee children whose registrations were delayed by service suspensions due to COVID-19.
- In **Sierra Leone**, a new SOP was developed for 'Birth and ID Registration of Migrants, Refugees, Returnees, Stateless Persons and Persons at Risk of Statelessness' that aims to harmonize CRVS strategies and policies.
- In **Cameroon**, UNICEF advocated with authorities for the delivery of birth certificates for refugee children from the Central African Republic on their return to their country.

As part of the Coalition, UNICEF also partners with the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion⁹⁶ to raise understanding of childhood statelessness and what can be done to rectify the issue. In 2021, a resource book was jointly published, titled [The Child's Right to a Nationality and Childhood Statelessness](#), which aimed at supporting programme practitioners. It complements a related UNICEF/Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion advanced intensive training course that was made available in 2020. In 2021, 43 key participants from more than 35 countries attended the course.

increase in the past five years. However, despite progress, multiple legal barriers remain in providing services of quality and at scale. For instance, fees and fines for registration and certification continue to be imposed, and registration processes remain complicated, particularly for unwed/single mothers. The COVID-19 pandemic also reinforced the need for simplification in civil registration processes. UNICEF and partners are taking a series of steps to advocate for a comprehensive review of CRVS laws, including use of executive directives and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) prior to the adoption of laws. These efforts have started to yield notable results.

For example, in **Turkmenistan**, UNICEF supported a legislative review and the development of a road map on CRVS. The latter laid the groundwork for a digitalized CRVS registration system, including the creation of unique IDs. In **Cameroon**, a MoU between the Ministry of Health and the National Office of Civil Registration marked a major turning point for the interoperability between these two sectors. In **Mali**, UNICEF supported the revision of the MoU between government bodies to involve community health workers in the declaration of births and deaths.

UNICEF and partners are working with countries to remove discrimination barriers from the BR process. Under the umbrella of the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, UNHCR and UNICEF released important evidence to drive forward the reform process in the 2021 publication, [Sex Discrimination in Birth Registration](#). Report findings indicate important steps being taken in countries as diverse as the **Dominican Republic, Guinea, Mozambique, Nepal** and **South Sudan**, to reform civil registration laws, affording equal rights to women for BR.⁹⁷ In the **Dominican Republic**, for example, UNICEF supported the development of the draft law to simplify procedures by eliminating the judicial process for late BR cases, and for allowing both the mother and father to register the child.

Reflections and looking forward

In recent years, there have been some major shifts shaping the legal identity landscape. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2022 period coincided with the launch of several global platforms and coalitions, such as the UNLIA and the Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality, which have significantly accelerated action. At the regional level, the African Union has also provided an important continent-wide partner, providing a unified platform to call on country commitments. This is critical in a region where over one in two African children are still deprived of a legal identity.

Despite advancements, efforts are still needed to register all newborns at birth and clear the backlog of unregistered children due to the interruption of services during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a need to fast-track legal reviews and ensure they are more inclusive, gender-responsive, equity-based, information technology-friendly and responsive to data protection and privacy issues. Vulnerable groups need special consideration to access civil registration.⁹⁸ Greater attention must also be placed on supporting the rights of children born through surrogacy to ensure that their right to an identity and to know their origins is protected. Renewed and sustained efforts are also necessary to address system issues, poor infrastructure, limited human and physical resources, and social barriers to make registration simple, affordable and accessible.

In 2021, a [Global Evaluation of UNICEF work on CRVS](#) was released, which provides important recommendations to accelerate action. This includes: aligning UNICEF's areas of support within a life-cycle approach of legal identity; promoting and using vital statistics from CRVS systems; integrating with other sectors; and digitization to strengthen the functioning of CRVS systems. These recommendations form part of the UNICEF implementation strategy (management response) and fully align with the UNLIA. This will form a core basis for UNICEF's accelerated action over the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 period.



High-level priorities

Children from Kapan in the city center participating in Armenia's International Youth Day in August, 2021.

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As the current global context for children reminds us, any hard-earned gains for child rights made in recent years may be diminished with the continuing threat of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), as well as increasing levels of poverty and inequality, rising humanitarian needs and the multiplying impact of climate change. In 2021, the United Nations Secretary-General launched '[Our Common Agenda](#)', which calls on the development system to redouble its investment in institutions and systems across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. It aims to reshape the multilateral response to ensure no one is left behind, and places women and girls at the centre of a reinvigorated agenda, where everyone can thrive in peace, dignity and equality.⁹⁹

Building on available evidence of what works and what challenges remain, the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030 has set out an ambitious vision and strategic framework to meet this call and place every child's rights and protection at the heart of decision-making. UNICEF is shifting towards a greater focus on preventing violence and harmful practices. The strategy affirms the need to continue to invest in systems-strengthening, including strengthening the social service workforce as an essential component of child protection systems; scaling up justice for children; jointly addressing violence against girls, boys and women; and investing in digitization, innovation and evidence generation.

It also builds on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, not least in terms of deepening intersectoral collaboration for child protection, including tapping into the opportunity to promote universal access to safe schools, universal birth registration through twinning with the health sector, and to integrate child protection concerns into social protection programmes. On the demand side, there is an increased programmatic focus on social and behavioural change, including transforming harmful gender and social norms and practices. Critically, this approach elevates the participation of children as full rights-holders and change agents, including in administrative and judicial processes that concern them.

The Goal Area 3 (child protection) theory of change in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 translates this vision into action with a steadfast fundamental objective: that every child has the right to grow up free from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices. UNICEF will focus on achieving results across three result areas:

Result Area 1: Protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

Result Area 2: Promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being and justice.

Result Area 3: Prevention of harmful practices.

These results aim to contribute towards the three objectives outlined in the UNICEF Child Protection Strategy, 2021–2030: (1) prevention, (2) ensuring that no child is left behind, and (3) strengthening access to response services. To address data challenges, UNICEF will support national statistical offices to improve the regular collection of comparable and disaggregated data on all aspects of child protection, including in line with their accountabilities for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) measurement. To strengthen data and reporting, UNICEF will also focus on generating research and evidence, alongside strengthening standards and global guidance across all aspects of child protection.

The new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 also provides an opportunity to renew commitments for children on the move within a more integrated approach, working with child and social protection, education, health and other sectors, and co-creating with youth and young people on the move. Anchored in the two Global Compacts on refugees and migration, and closely aligned with the approaches of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration and other partners, UNICEF will continue to pursue the contextualization of the child protection system strengthening strategy for children on the move. The UNICEF-UNHCR Blueprint for action will also provide key momentum towards the interoperability of national systems for refugee children. The empowerment of children uprooted by climate change, and the protection of their rights in a context of climate mobility, urbanization, as well as conflicts and displacement, will also be critical. UNICEF will proactively engage in the rolling out of the new internally displaced persons action plan and increase partnerships with platforms such as the African Climate Migration Initiative towards COP27.



Result Area 1: Protection from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. Children, including those affected by humanitarian crises, are protected from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect.

Looking towards the achievement of the SDGs on the horizon, UNICEF considers primary prevention of violence to be of paramount importance and will contribute to build a protective environment for all children. This will include scaling up evidence-based violence reduction strategies as identified in the INSPIRE interagency package, increasing investment in family and parenting support and tackling the social and behavioural drivers of violence. This will also entail greater involvement of, and cooperation with, other sectors to address child protection risk factors and strengthen protective measures.

UNICEF, working closely with governments and other partners will accelerate action around the world for inclusion of effective violence prevention strategies in national policies, plans and budgets, at scale, prioritizing child protection systems strengthening, with a specific focus on addressing the intersections with violence against women and children. A focus on the digital environment will be critical given the scale of associated risks and will be guided by robust multi-sectoral and industry partnerships and recently developed international frameworks and standards.



Result Area 2: Promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being and justice. Children, including those affected by humanitarian crises, benefit from the promotion of care, mental health and psychosocial well-being and justice.

UNICEF aims to build a protective environment in all settings where childhood evolves; at home, in school, online, in the community, and in humanitarian contexts. We build capacity to respond and support children and women who endure any form of violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. We have a specific focus on protecting children in high-risk situations, such as armed conflict, and addressing the worst forms of child labour.¹⁰⁰

Severe distress and exposure to traumatic events can have a lifelong impact. UNICEF supports children to recover from the psychological impacts of these experiences. We protect children without parental care. And we ensure their rights are respected within legal and justice systems.¹⁰¹

In emergency contexts, UNICEF will work with all country offices to ensure the implementation of a minimum package of GBV risk mitigation strategies, strengthen the quality of service provision and encourage inclusion of GBV risk mitigation in all humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. UNICEF will continue to provide inter-agency leadership and coordination on PSEA programming, supporting the development of safe and accessible reporting channels, survivor-centred assistance, and strengthened accountability. With violent conflicts escalating worldwide, UNICEF will continue to monitor grave violations against children, push for political commitment to avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and seek to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups.

UNICEF, together with partners will focus action on the key priorities in care reform, namely, prevention of unnecessary family-child separation, prioritization of family-based alternative care as necessary in the community and ending the institutionalization of children. Priority is also placed on addressing the root causes of family-child separation. This includes expanding social protection and inclusive community-based services such as health care and education. UNICEF will work with bilateral and multilateral organizations to advocate for strengthening international cooperation towards holistic multisectoral care reform across contexts. Furthermore, it will support the roll-out of the recommendations of the Committee for the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion, with a focus on supporting children with disabilities.

In humanitarian contexts, UNICEF will address the multidimensional nature of child protection issues by investing in intersectoral collaboration. To accelerate action on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) prevention, promotion and treatment, a final version of the Global Multisectoral Operational Framework for MHPSS will be issued to support the scale-up of programming across contexts.

Justice for children is a key thematic priority of the child protection strategy. The six key actions outlined in the Reimagine Justice for Children agenda articulate how to translate that vision into action to accelerate children's improved access to justice. As a priority, UNICEF will continue to roll out and support the implementation of the six-point actions of the agenda. This includes mainstreaming the agenda across United Nations rule of law mechanisms and initiatives and continuing to engage strategically in the United Nations task force on children deprived of their liberty and the United Nations Global Focal

Point on the Rule of Law. To operationalize the agenda at regional and country levels, UNICEF will: extend links with child welfare and other allied systems; prioritize prevention and early intervention in child offending; and scale up support to diversion, non-custodial measures, and post-release support programmes. Greater emphasis will be placed on strengthening children's legal empowerment, including on marginalized groups and their access to justice through access to legal aid. UNICEF will also drive forward action to end the detention of children in all its forms.

Accelerated action is necessary to ensure all children have a right to be registered at birth and have a legal identity. A key priority will be placed on doubling down support to establish efficient, non-discriminatory, resilient, and well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, aligning with the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda strategy of promoting a holistic life-cycle approach. This includes promoting the use of innovative and safe digital solutions. UNICEF Child Protection will continue to deepen partnerships with the health sector through improved interoperability of systems and services to achieve universal birth registration. To this end, UNICEF will continue to strengthen and work closely with the WHO, as well as with the World Bank, Global Financing Facility, and other United Nations and non-United Nations agencies to advance the overall legal identity agenda at normative and operational levels. Moreover, UNICEF will work to address the key recommendations of the 2021 Global Evaluation of UNICEF work on CRVS.

UNICEF will use the momentum built around dissemination of the paper on 'Child Protection Systems-strengthening: Approach, Benchmarks, Interventions' to step-up advocacy to identify solutions and make systems more effective as part of our aim to enhance investments in national child protection systems. UNICEF will also continue to prioritize strengthening the social service workforce as a strategic intervention. UNICEF is developing a first-ever authoritative guidance on ratios and costing of the social service workforce that will provide the leverage to further advocate for, and shape increased national investments in building the social service workforce. Recognizing prevention as an essential component of child protection strategy, UNICEF child protection in humanitarian action will prioritize programmes that strengthen child protection systems and promote inclusion and community engagement for children impacted by humanitarian situations. Drawing on key learnings from the global COVID-19 response and recovery, and recent emergency response missions, including those to Afghanistan, Ukraine and Ethiopia, UNICEF will prioritize preparedness and the importance of maintaining access to essential services in humanitarian action.



Result Area 3: Prevention of harmful practices. Children, including those affected by humanitarian crises, benefit from the prevention of harmful practices.

Child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) are human rights violations. But they are also strongly embedded in some communities. UNICEF works to increase knowledge and change attitudes so that these harmful practices can be eliminated for good.¹⁰²

To inform programming direction to eliminate child marriage, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF undertook a midterm review of Phase II of the UNFPA- UNICEF Global Partnership to End Child Marriage in 2021, identifying solutions for scaled-up responses and new models to get back on track to achieve SDG 5.3. Looking forward, there is a need for localization, integration and partnerships to accelerate action. This includes building context-specific knowledge and evidence on what does and does not work to inform policy development and programming. Programmatically, areas for scale-up include: expanding access to critical health, education and protection services; leveraging social protection mechanisms for girls and their families; building partnerships with grassroots and women-led organizations and movements for outreach to communities; and mixing digital and face-to-face approaches to address equity issues. Also, while there is a need to engage children and youth meaningfully through digital spaces, attention is needed to assess the quality and impact of these engagements. To address the structural causes of gender inequality and child marriage, UNFPA and UNICEF will advocate for investing in critical pathways of change, including gender-synchronized approaches promoting the empowerment of girls and positive masculinities for boys. There will also be a thrust on more preventative work, relevant and accessible digital innovations, services that are more adolescent-friendly, increased visibility of girls in data, programme evaluations and continued advocacy to prioritize child marriage in humanitarian contexts.

In 2021, an evaluation of Phase III of the Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (2018–2021) was undertaken to inform the design of the Joint Programme post-Phase III. Building on the evidence and lessons learned prior to and during COVID-19, UNICEF and partners identified a key set of forward-looking

strategies to address current challenges and scale up a long-term multisectoral approach to accelerate action towards ending FGM by 2030. UNICEF and UNFPA will continue to advocate for national strategies and plans to implement a comprehensive, rights-based, gender-responsive, and multisectoral approach that supports ending FGM at community, local and national levels, while ensuring access to FGM-related services by at-risk populations and survivors. This includes: adopting and enforcing legislation prohibiting and criminalizing FGM; establishing functional national coordination mechanisms that are systematic and complementary to addressing prevention, care and protection for at-risk populations and survivors; and advocating to increase domestic investment for scaling up and tailoring interventions at different levels, including within the devolution system. This includes exploring promising innovative financing models that support gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women. UNICEF and partners will also actively engage and empower youth, adolescents and women's groups as FGM

elimination advocates in their communities and enhance their role in strengthening social accountability at local and national levels.

Through these collective actions across our three results areas, UNICEF will, over the long term, scale up evidence-based prevention approaches to the population level, not only in the core child protection sectors of social welfare and justice, but also in education, health, social protection and other sectors. As part of UNICEF's commitment to equity, inclusion and the 'Leave No One Behind' agenda, UNICEF will target interventions to children at greatest risk of child protection violations, including children in humanitarian crises and fragile settings, children with disabilities, children deprived of parental care, children on the move, and children experiencing other forms of discrimination and exclusion. Where children are experiencing violations, UNICEF will work to foster new and strengthen existing partnerships to improve access to response services to prevent recurrence and provide care, support and justice.



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Engan youngsters celebrate the launch of the Enga Provincial Child and Family Services Council in Papua New Guinea. Enga Provincial Child and Family Services Council's aim is to strengthen and improve the child protection system to help prevent and respond to violence against women and children in the province.

Abbreviations and acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations	IMS	information management system
BR	birth registration	JPFGM	UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation
CAAC	Children and armed conflict	MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
CCC	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action	MoU	memorandum of understanding
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019	MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
CPIMS+	child protection information management system	NGO	non-governmental organization
CPSS	child protection systems-strengthening	PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
CRVS	civil registration and vital statistics	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
CSO	civil society organization	SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
DGD	Day of General Discussion	SOP	standard operating procedure
EORE	explosive ordnance risk education	SSW	social service workforce
EWIPA	explosive weapons in populated areas	UASC	unaccompanied and separated children
FGM	female genital mutilation	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
GBV	gender-based violence	UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
GBViE	gender-based violence in emergencies	UNLIA	United Nations Legal Identity Agenda
GPECM	UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage	VAC	violence against children
GSSWA	Global Social Service Workforce Alliance	WHO	World Health Organization
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee		

Annex 1: Child protection financial report*

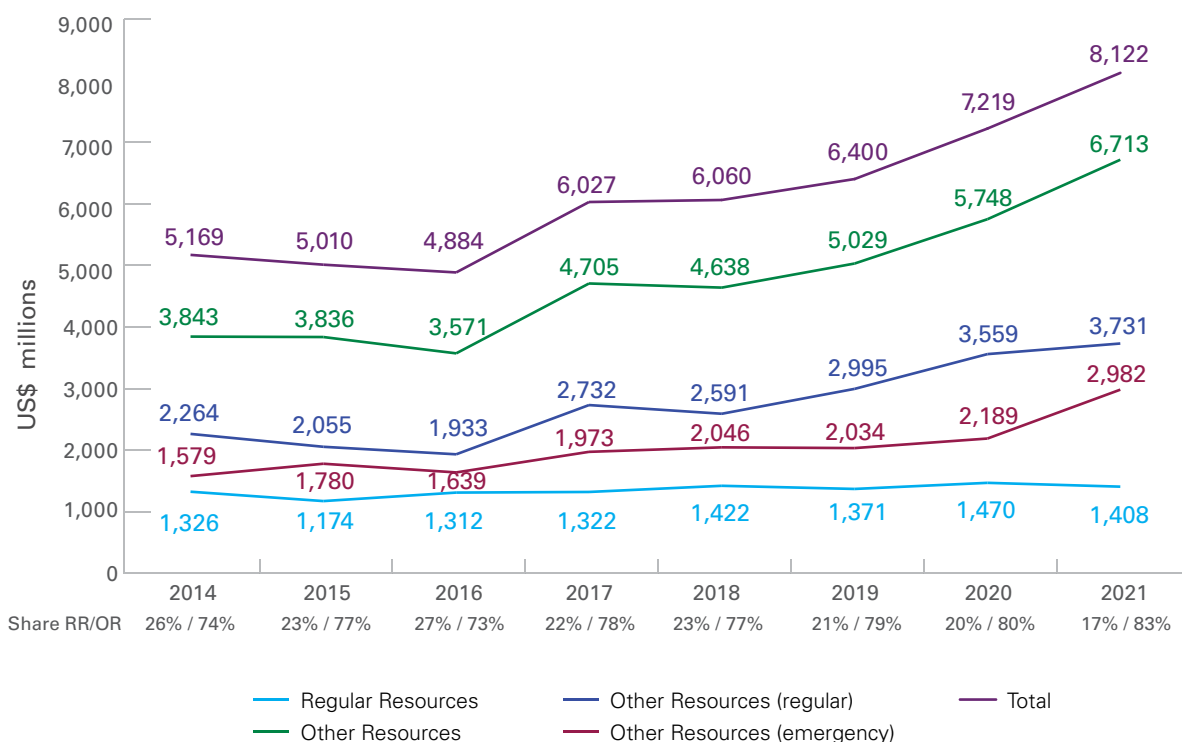
* All funding data are provisional as of 1 April 2022, pending audit and certification.

Part 1: Overall UNICEF income in 2021

In 2021, UNICEF income reached over \$8 billion for the first time. This was achieved within the context of economic uncertainty created by COVID-19, cuts to UNICEF's income by some key donors and new realities in almost all of UNICEF's programme as well as donor countries

resulting from the pandemic. This is a testament to the faith and trust that UNICEF's public and private resource partners have in the organization and its ability to effectively undertake its mandate, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Unfortunately, UNICEF's record-breaking

FIGURE A1-1: Income by funding type, 2014-2021*



* Figures are based on 'income', which here represents contributions received from public sector, revenue from private sector and other income.

income in 2021 also aligns with record-breaking needs of children. The impact of COVID-19 continued to exacerbate children's vulnerabilities in 2021 and widened the gaps in reaching the SDGs.

The growth in total income was driven by an increase in earmarked funds to specific programmes (other resources) income, which grew by 17 per cent, up from US\$5,748 million in 2020 to US\$6,713 million in 2021. Despite the organization's call for increased flexibility in light of the unprecedented demands of the pandemic, un-earmarked core resources (regular resources) income decreased, to US\$1,408 million in 2021, compared with US\$1,470 million in 2020. As such, RR as a proportion of overall income has steadily decreased, from 23 per cent in 2018 to only 17 per cent in 2021. This is almost entirely due to increased earmarking of public sector resources (see *Figure A1-1*).

'Other resources' contributions increased by 17 per cent compared with 2020, and contributions to UNICEF's thematic funding pools increased by 73 per cent, from US\$438 million in 2020 to US\$756 million in 2021.

Thematic funding also increased as a percentage of all 'other resources', from 8 per cent in 2020 to 12 per cent in 2021. This is 3 per cent below the milestone target set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, of thematic funding being 15 per cent of all 'other resources' in 2021. The increasing overall amount of thematic funding, as well as increasing ratio of thematic funding as a percentage, is a result of both an increase in non-humanitarian thematic funding as well as an increase in humanitarian thematic funding driven by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. This trend is encouraging and in line with the 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, such as UNICEF's thematic funding pools. In alignment with this commitment, UNICEF's Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 aims to double thematic funding as a share of all 'other resources' by 2025. To reach this goal, UNICEF encourages partners to channel more contributions through these softly earmarked funds.

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 need-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.

For partners, contributions to UNICEF's 10 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 percentage of funds going towards programming. They also simplify renewal and allocation procedures and reduce the administrative monitoring burden for partners.

'Income' includes contributions received in a given year from public sector partners (governments, European Commission, inter-organizational arrangements, global programme partnerships and International Financial Institutions) and revenue from private sector partners. UNICEF uses income for the preparation of the financial framework, which forms a part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. Income is not part of the audited UNICEF financial statements.

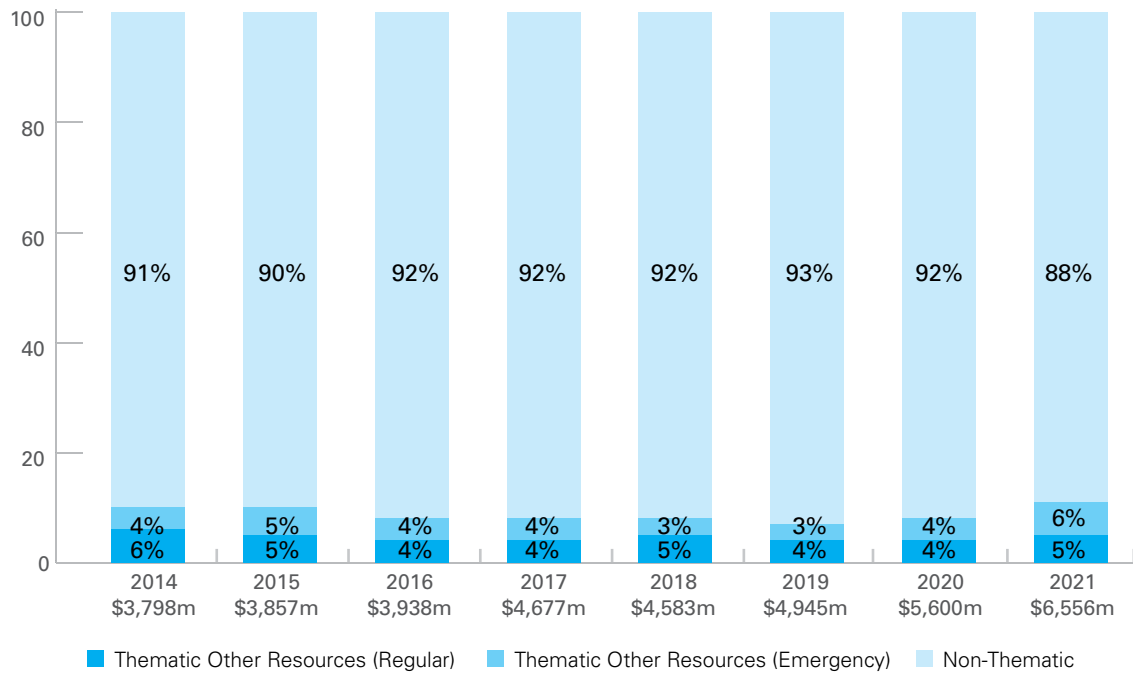
Regular resources (RR) are un-earmarked funds that are foundational to deliver results across the Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 period.

Other resources (OR) are earmarked contributions for programmes; these are supplementary to the contributions in un-earmarked RR and are made for a specific purpose, such as an emergency response or a specific programme in a country/region.

Other resources – regular (ORR) are funds for specific, non-emergency programme purposes and strategic priorities.

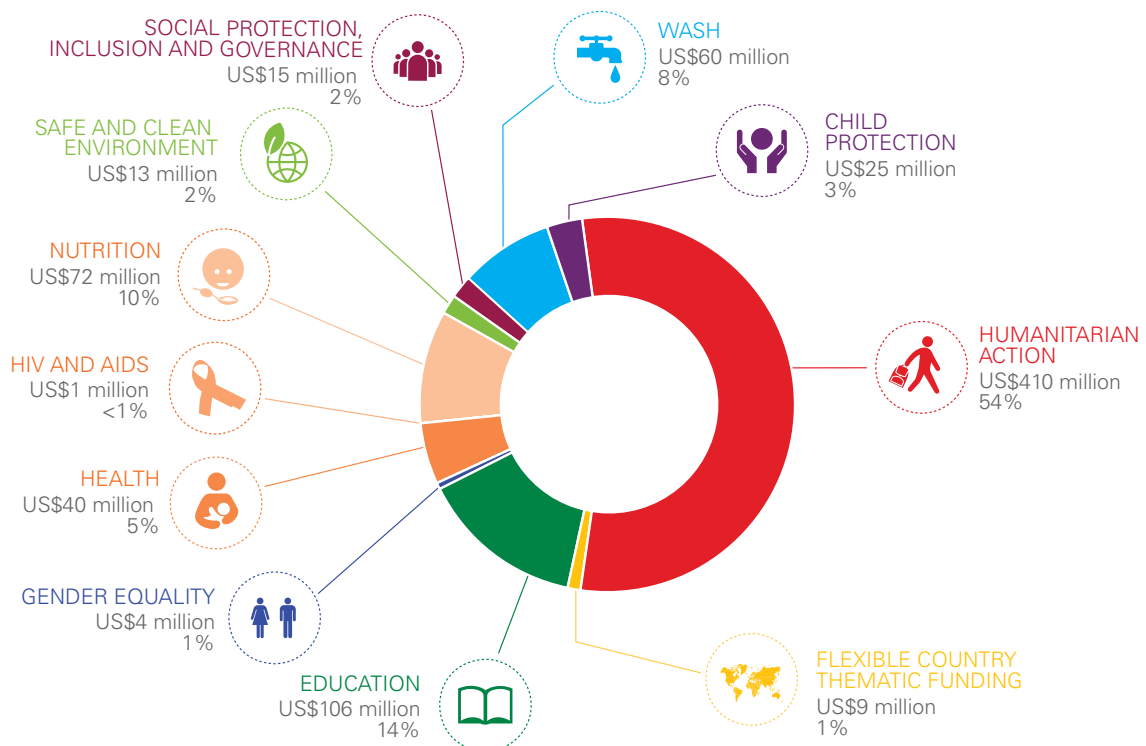
Other resources – emergency (ORE) are earmarked funds for specific humanitarian action and post-crisis recovery activities.

FIGURE A1-2: Other resources contributions 2014–2021: Share of thematic funding*



*2014–2016 contributions restated to reflect change in accounting policy for comparison with 2017–2021

FIGURE A1-3: Thematic contributions by thematic pool, 2021: \$US756 million



Overall contributions to the thematic funding pools increased from US\$438 million in 2020 to US\$756 million in 2021. The largest public sector contributors to the thematic funding pools in 2021 were the governments of Germany, Sweden and Norway, while the largest private sector

contributions were facilitated by the United States Fund for UNICEF, the Danish Committee for UNICEF, and the German Committee for UNICEF.*

*For more information on thematic funding and how it works, please visit: <<https://www.unicef.org/partnerships/funding/thematic-funding>>

Part 2: UNICEF Goal Area 3 income and expenses

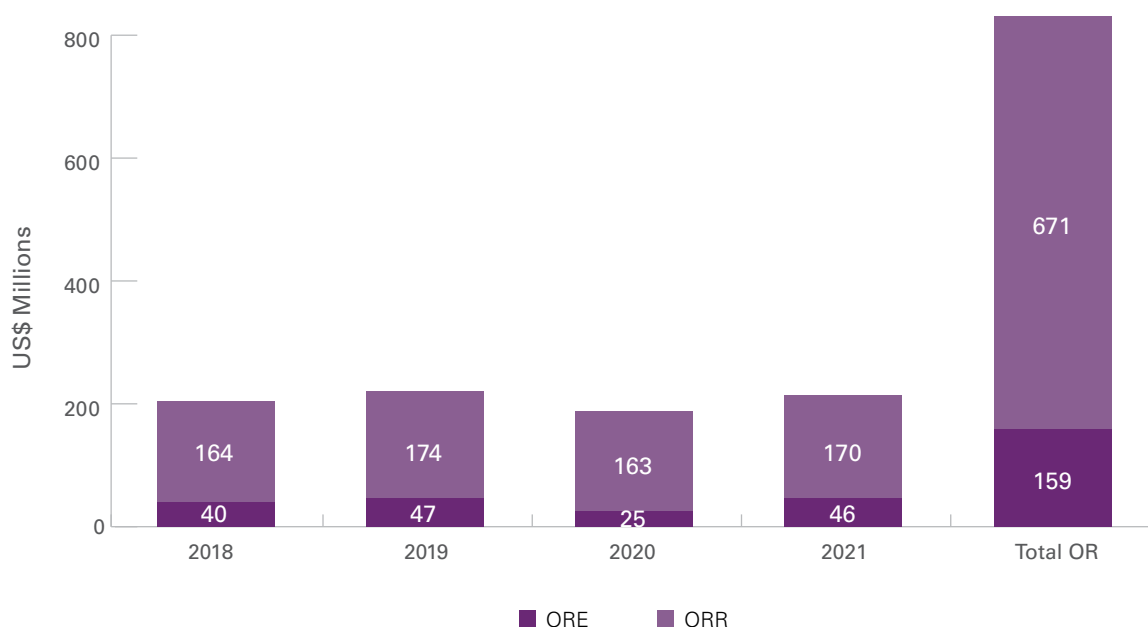
Goal Area 3 Income

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, the total OR contributions for Goal Area 3 amounted to US\$830 million, with an average annual contribution of US\$207 million, comprising an average of US\$168 million ORR (81 per cent of total income) and US\$ 40 million ORE (19 per cent of total income). This is an increase of US\$9 million per year in OR compared to the previous 4-year Strategic Plan period (2014–2017). In 2021, the overall OR contributions for Goal Area 3 rose from US\$189 million in 2020 to US\$215 million, commensurate with 2018 and 2019 levels. This is due primarily to a sizable increase in ORE, rising from US\$25 million in 2020 to US\$46 million in 2021 (see Figure A1-4).

In 2021, partners contributed US\$169 million ‘other resources – regular’ for Goal Area 3 – a 3.5 per cent increase over the previous year. Within this sum, thematic contributions have reached their lowest point in the last 4 years with a total of US\$25 million (below the US\$ 28 million average for the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period). This figure represents 15 per cent of all ORR funding. In comparison, at their highest point, in 2019, thematic funds contributed 20 per cent of all ORR funding, with contributions totalling US\$34 million.

In 2021, public sector partners contributed the largest share of ORR to Goal Area 3, at 85 per cent. This remains consistent with the percentage share of contributions received from public sector sources over the Strategic

FIGURE A1-4: Other resources contributions 2018–2021 for Goal Area 3 (US\$ million)



Notes: Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

FIGURE A1-5: Goal Area 3 'other resources – regular' contributions, 2014-2021

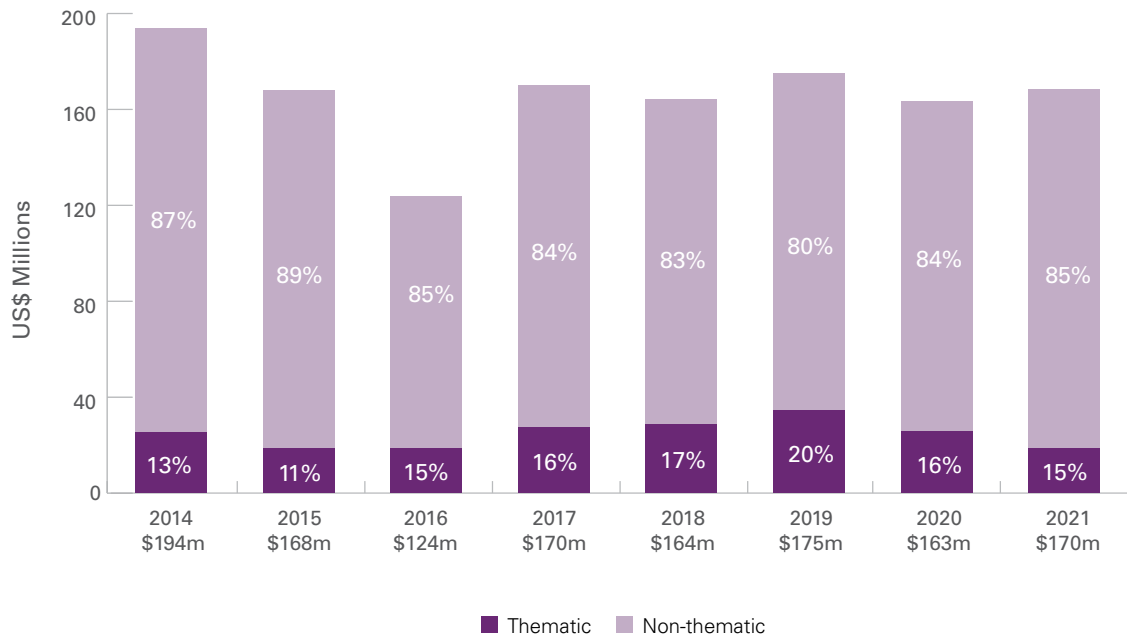


FIGURE A1-6: Total Goal Area 3 funds received by type of donor, 2021: US\$170 million

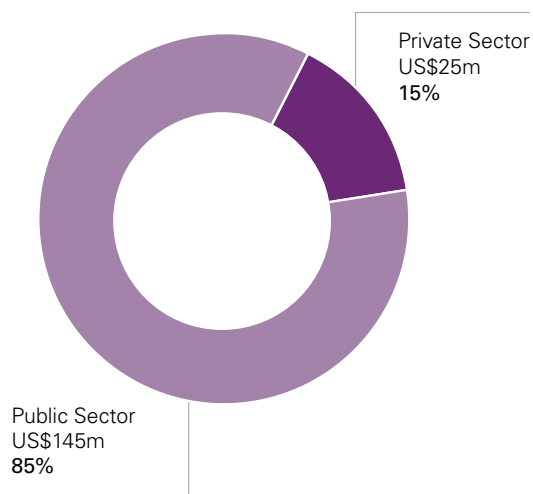
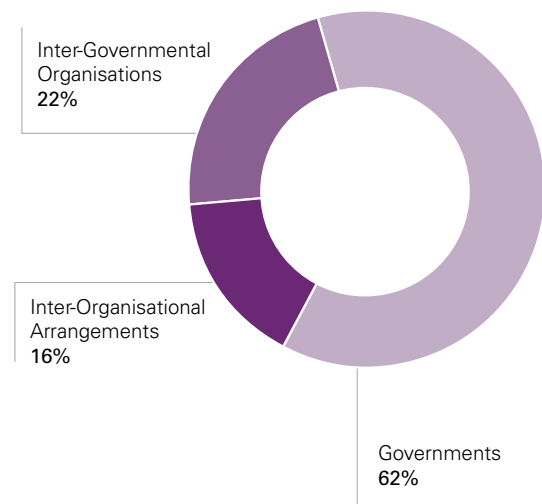


FIGURE A1-7: Total Goal Area 3 funds received by type of donor in the Public Sector, 2021 (%)



Plan, 2018–2021 period: with a 4-year annual average of 84 per cent. Principal donors of public sector contributions comprise government, intergovernmental organizations and inter-organizational arrangements. Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, government contributions accounted for an average of 65 per cent of all public sector contributions, followed by intergovernmental organizations (24 per cent), and inter-organizational arrangements (11 per cent).

In 2021, the top five resource partners to Goal Area 3 were the European Commission, the Government of Sweden, United Nations Joint Programmes, the Government of Denmark, and the Government of Canada. The largest contributions were received from the Government of the Netherlands for 'PROSPECTS – responding to forced displacement crisis', from United Nations Joint Programmes for the global work to accelerate action to end child marriage, and from the Government of Germany

to strengthen resilience and social cohesion in Darfur, the Sudan (see Table A1-2 and the body of the report for country results).

In 2021, 20 partners contributed thematic funding to child protection, compared with 26 partners contributing in 2020, and 32 in 2019. The Government of Sweden was the largest thematic resources partner in 2021, providing 71 per cent of all thematic child protection contributions received (see Table A1-3), including country-specific funding for Zimbabwe and Mali. Sizeable thematic contributions were also received from the Government of Denmark for child protection activities in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and from the Government of Spain. In addition, the Government of Hungary contributed global child protection thematic funding for the first time during the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period.

TABLE A1-1: Top 20 resource partners to Goal Area 3 by total contributions, 2021

Rank	Resource partners	Total (US\$)
1	European Commission	39,398,477
2	Sweden	34,540,218
3	United Nations Joint Programme	25,814,744
4	Denmark	13,838,985
5	Canada	12,298,941
6	United Nations Population Fund-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes	10,738,600
7	The United States of America	9,044,343
8	The United Kingdom	7,849,217
9	United States Fund for UNICEF	5,661,358
10	Germany	4,849,339
11	Norway	4,710,616
12	The Education Cannot Wait Fund	4,669,068
13	The Republic of Korea	4,244,178
14	The Netherlands	3,535,524
15	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	3,476,957
16	United Nations Development Programme-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes	3,349,591
17	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	3,243,652
18	Japan	3,149,437
19	French Committee for UNICEF	2,735,667
20	Australia	2,731,187

Note: The above table excludes the proportion of contribution to Goal Area 3 from cross-sectoral grants, as noted in Table A1-2.

Of all thematic child protection contributions received by UNICEF between 2018 and 2021, 41 per cent were global-level contributions, also referred to as Contributions to the Global Thematic Fund. Global thematic contributions are the most flexible sources of funding to UNICEF, after

regular resources, as they are distributed across regions to individual country programmes, according to priority needs. In 2021, there was a shift between global and country contributions received, compared with 2020; the share of contributions at the global level dropped by 14 percentage

TABLE A1-2: Top 20 contributions to Goal Area 3, 2021

Rank	Grant Description	Resource Partners	Total (US\$)
1	PROSPECTS – Responding to Forced Displacement Crisis*	Netherlands	32,961,063
2	Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage	United Nations Joint Programme	21,425,314
3	Integrated programme for Strengthening Resilience and Social Cohesion in Darfur, Sudan*	Germany	16,891,892
4	Resilience and Social Cohesion in Northeast Nigeria*	Germany	15,202,703
5	European Union Response to Health and Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Region*	European Commission	14,869,464
6	Strengthening Community Resilience in South Sudan Urban Settings*	Germany	14,201,197
7	Strengthening National Systems for Improved Access to Equitable and Integrated Basic Services, Iraq*	Germany	11,149,764
8	Female genital mutilation (FGM) Joint Programme	UNFPA-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes	10,555,000
9	Child Protection Programme to Prevent FGM, GBV and Support Children Affected by Armed Conflict, Somalia	Denmark	9,984,802
10	Building an Integrated Safety Net System for the Most Vulnerable Women, Ethiopia	Sweden	9,494,904
11	Support to Internally Displaced in Yemen*	Germany	7,804,835
12	Multisectoral Support to COVID-19 Response, Senegal*	Canada	7,754,872
13	The United Republic of Tanzania: scaling up birth registration	Canada	7,151,451
14	Improving the Well-being of Conflict-affected Children and Families in Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan States*	Germany	6,689,858
15	Global Child Protection Thematic Funding	Sweden	6,594,856
16	Afghan Children on the Move – A Framework for Action to Protect Afghan Children	European Commission	6,481,683
17	Mitigating the Effects of COVID-19 through Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and Protection, Afghanistan*	European Commission	6,472,800
18	Support to Strong Girls, Strong Communities, Sudan*	Canada	6,385,286
19	Fostering Rights and Empowerment among Most Marginalized and Children with Disabilities in Bangladesh	European Commission	6,201,704
20	UNICEF–World Food Programme Partnership for Resilience and Social Cohesion in Diffa Region, Niger*	Germany	6,097,561

Note: *Cross-sectoral grants SC190601 (Education, Child Protection), SC210718, SC210728, SC190741, SC190728 (Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection, WASH), SC200739, SC200642 (Health, Child Protection, WASH), SC210667 (Health, Education, Child Protection, WASH, Social Protection), SC210677 (Education, Child Protection, WASH), SC210141 (Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection), SC210017 (Nutrition, Child Protection, WASH), SC210248 (Education, Child Protection, WASH, Gender Equality)

TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partners to child protection, 2021

Resource Partner Type	Resource Partner	Total (US\$)	Percentage of Total
Governments 89.25%	Sweden	17,449,204	70.73%
	Denmark	3,854,183	15.62%
	Spain	563,063	2.28%
	Hungary	150,000	0.61%
Private sector 10.75%	German Committee for UNICEF	833,975	3.38%
	Swiss Committee for UNICEF	449,653	1.82%
	United States Fund for UNICEF	377,731	1.53%
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	298,292	1.21%
	UNICEF Bangladesh	146,455	0.59%
	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	127,427	0.52%
	Czech Committee for UNICEF	97,421	0.39%
	Andorran Committee for UNICEF	84,459	0.34%
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	60,533	0.25%
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	35,441	0.14%
	Danish Committee for UNICEF	33,927	0.14%
	Canadian Committee for UNICEF	30,878	0.13%
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	27,263	0.11%
	UNICEF South Africa	26,994	0.11%
	UNICEF Ireland	11,261	0.05%
Australian Committee for UNICEF	11,237	0.05%	
Grand total		24,669,397	100%

Grant numbers are provided for IATI compliance: SC1899050017, SC1899050022, SC1899050023, SC1899050028, SC1899050033, SC1899050036, SC1899050039, SC1899050040, SC1899050056, SC1899050058, SC1899050060, SC1899050068, SC1899050083, SC1899050086, SC1899050091, SC1899050100, SC1899050108, SC1899050111, SC1899050112, SC1899050113, SC1899050114, SC1899050115, SC1899050116, SC1899050117, SC1899050118, SC1899050119, SC1899050120, SC1899050121, SC1899050122, SC1899050123, SC1899050124, SC1899050125, SC1899050126, SC1899050128, SC2299050001, SC2299350001

points (from 44 to 30 per cent), and the share of country-specific contributions rose by 15 points (from 55 to 70 per cent). Contributions to UNICEF Regional Offices have remained consistent at an average of 1 per cent of overall contributions over 2018–2021.

Under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the Government of Sweden has contributed 71 per cent of all global child protection thematic funding, followed by the Government of Norway at 11 per cent and the Korean Committee for UNICEF at 8 per cent (see Figure A1-9).

In 2021, 20 partners contributed thematic funding to child protection, compared with 26 partners contributing in 2020, and 32 in 2019. The Government of Sweden was the largest thematic resources partner in 2021, providing 71 per cent of all thematic child protection contributions received (see Table A1-3), including country-specific funding for Zimbabwe and Mali. Sizeable thematic contributions were also received from the Government of Denmark for child protection activities in Burkina Faso, Mali and the

Niger and from the Government of Spain. In addition, the Government of Hungary contributed global child protection thematic funding for the first time during the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period.

Of all thematic child protection contributions received by UNICEF between 2018 and 2021, 41 per cent were global-level contributions, also referred to as Contributions to the Global Thematic Fund. Global thematic contributions are the most flexible sources of funding to UNICEF, after regular resources, as they are distributed across regions to individual country programmes, according to priority needs. In 2021, there was a shift between global and country contributions received, compared with 2020; the share of contributions at the global level dropped by 14 percentage points (from 44 to 30 per cent), and the share of country-specific contributions rose by 15 points (from 55 to 70 per cent). Contributions to UNICEF Regional Offices have remained consistent at an average of 1 per cent of overall contributions over 2018–2021.

Under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the Government of Sweden has contributed 71 per cent of all global child protection thematic funding, followed by the Government of Norway at 11 per cent and the Korean Committee for UNICEF at 8 per cent (see Figure A1-9).

Global thematic funding serves as a critical resource to ensure delivery of essential service interventions; provide catalytic funding to initiate innovative work; take programming to scale; and to fill temporary funding gaps

to avoid interruptions to critical programming. At the start of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, UNICEF developed a robust set of equity-based criteria for allocating global thematic funds across regions. Funds available for headquarters programming use are capped at 10 per cent. The allocation criteria intend to ensure their use towards programming to strengthen child protection systems, including the social service workforce, to contribute to the achievement of progress against critical child protection Strategic Plan indicators.

FIGURE A1-8: Goal Area 3 thematic funding contributions at country, regional and global levels, 2018–2021

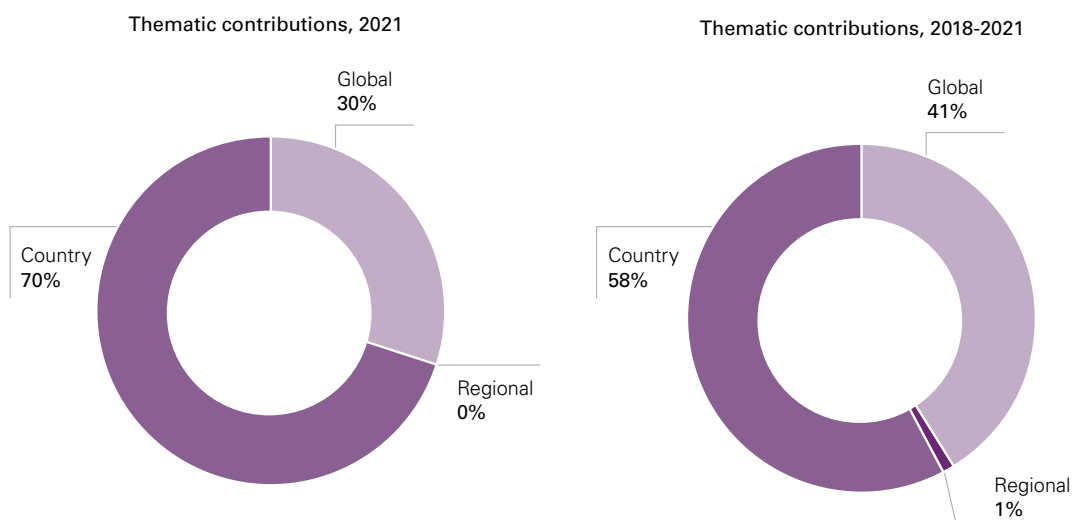
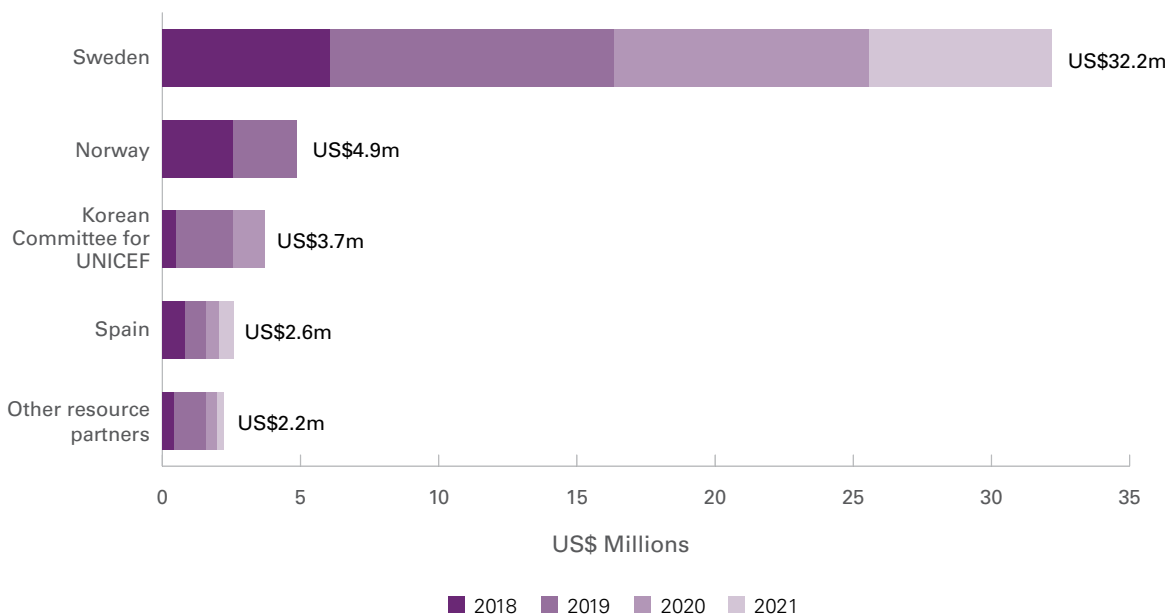


FIGURE A1-9: Spotlight on global child protection thematic funding contributions, 2018–2021



In 2018, programmable funds available for allocation totalled US\$12.4 million, benefiting 48 country offices. Similar levels of global thematic funding allocations were received in 2019 (US\$12.5 million) and 2020 (US\$12 million), benefiting 49 and 47 country offices, respectively.¹ However, in 2021 there was a significant drop in the amount of funds received (to US\$4.3 million), reducing the number of country offices allocated global thematic funding to 23 country offices (see Figure A1-10). Of this total, 78 per cent of funds were allocated to UNICEF country offices (US\$3.3 million). Additionally, 12 per cent of funds (US\$0.5 million) were allocated across seven regional offices, and approximately 10 per cent (US\$0.4 million) to UNICEF headquarters (see Figure A1-11 and main body of the report for highlights of country results using global thematic funding).

The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal (open.unicef.org) 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.

FIGURE A1-10: Allocation of Goal Area 3 global thematic funding by location, US\$ million, 2021

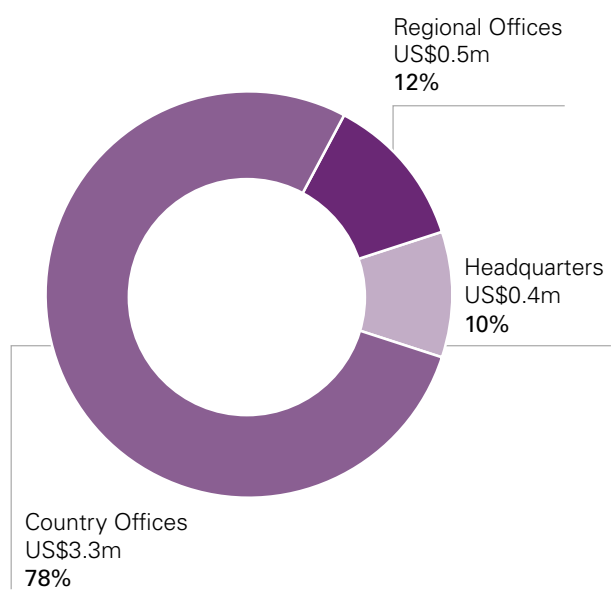
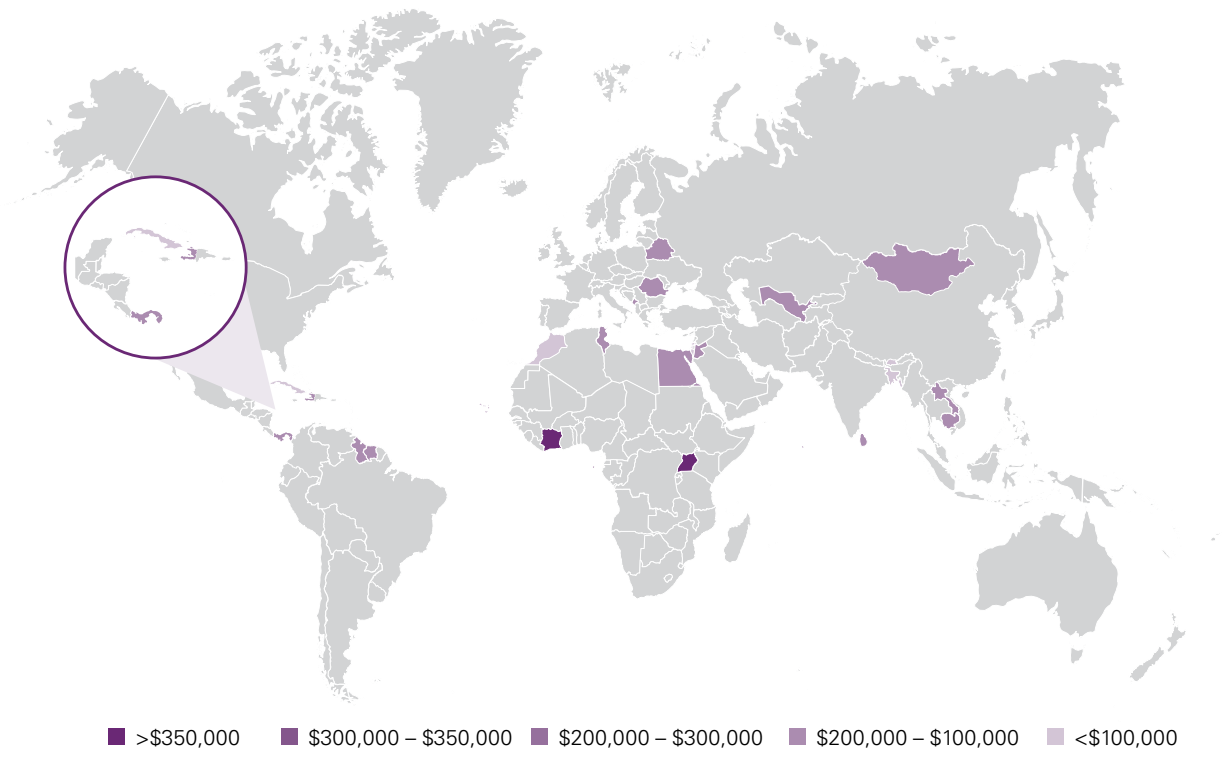
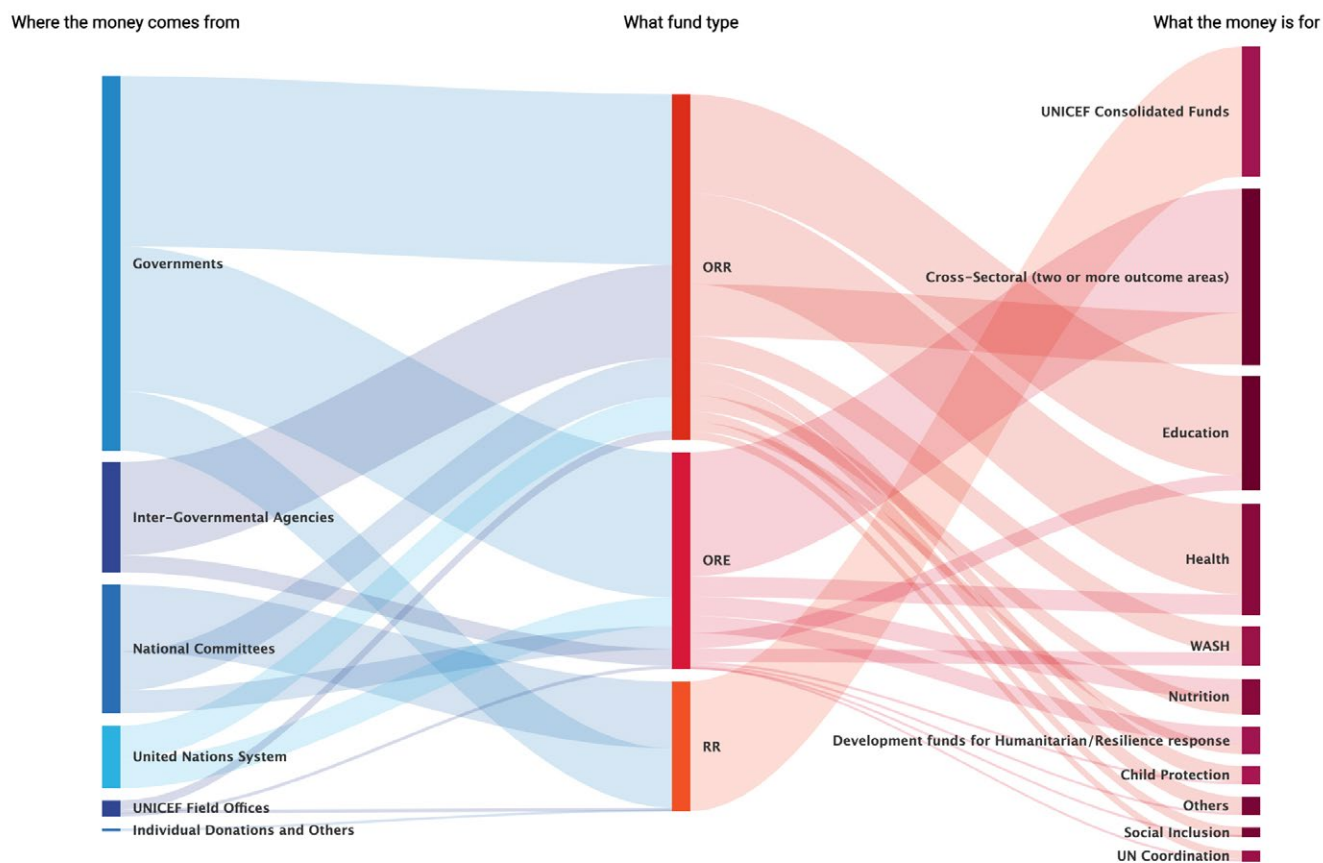


FIGURE A1-11: Allocation of Goal Area 3 global thematic funding to country offices, US\$, 2021



Transparency:

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



PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

Spain considers the defence of children's rights a guiding principle for the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the same way, the UNICEF Strategic Plan (SP) 2022–2025 through Goal Area 3 aims to ensure that every child, including young people, is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices. In line with this new SP, Spain has financed thematic funds for social and child protection, to foster children's right to live and grow up free from all forms of violence, exploitation, or abuse, allowing long-term, flexible, and innovative programs with better planning, coordination and results.

The pandemic has exacerbated vulnerabilities faced by children that have increased violence and the negative effects on mental health, so it is necessary to focus on three main objectives: prevention in a protective environment; leaving no one behind; and a response with well-prepared care and social services.

Spain's commitment to protecting and defending girls from any type of abuse is a cornerstone of our policy and the Spanish Government will continue to place the protection of any child from violence or abuse as a priority of action in our new Cooperation Law and Master Cooperation Plan.

— Pilar Cancela, Secretary of State for International Cooperation, Spain

Goal Area 3 expenses in 2021

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 Goal Area 3 in 2021. In 2021, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US\$6.33 billion.

In 2021, global programme expenses in Goal Area 3 across 153 countries totalled US\$773 million, including US\$422 million for humanitarian action. Goal Area 3 expenses have increased incrementally over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2022; with expenses in 2021 increasing 18 per cent compared with 2018. In 2021, Goal Area 3 expenses represented 12 per cent of total UNICEF expenses (see *Figure A1-12*). Between 2018 and 2021, Goal Area 3 expenses as a proportion of the total for UNICEF (and as compared to other strategic outcome areas) has been static at around 12 per cent per annum.

Over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2022 period, there has been a marginal shift in expenses trend by funding type for Goal Area 3. ORR consistently represents the main type of funds used. OR have contributed 76 per cent of the total child protection expenses from 2018–2021. However, over the past four years, the proportion of expenses drawn from RR has dropped by 19 per cent (from 26 per cent to 21 per cent), while the proportion of expenses drawn from ORR increased 11 per cent (from 39 per cent in 2018 to 43 per cent in 2021).

Expenses vs. Expenditures

'Expenses' are recorded according to International Public Sector Accounting 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).

Of the total expenses in 2021, 36 per cent (US\$277 million) was from ORE, 43 per cent (US\$332 million) from ORR and 21 per cent (US\$164 million) from RR funds (see *Figure A1-13*). At the regional level, regions representing the three highest level of expenses, both in terms of absolute amount and proportion of regional and headquarter expenses, include West and Central Africa (21 per cent of total expenses), Middle East and North Africa (19 per cent) and Eastern and Southern Africa (19 per cent) (see *Figure A1-14*).

FIGURE A1-12: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2021

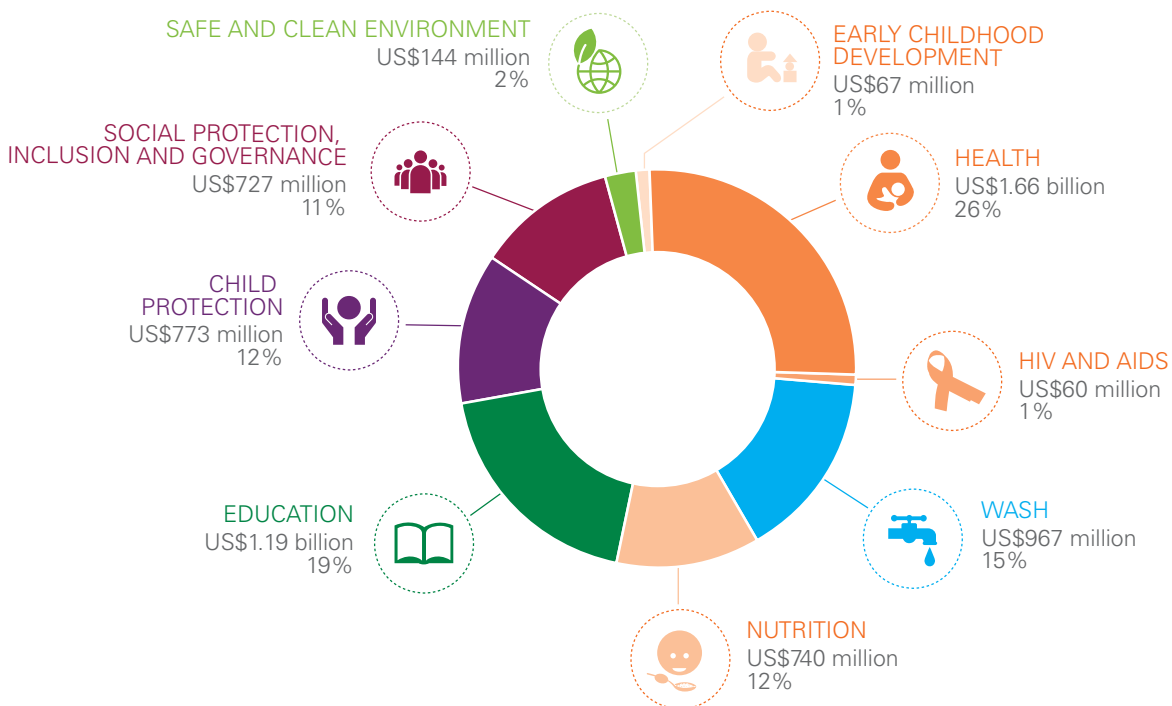
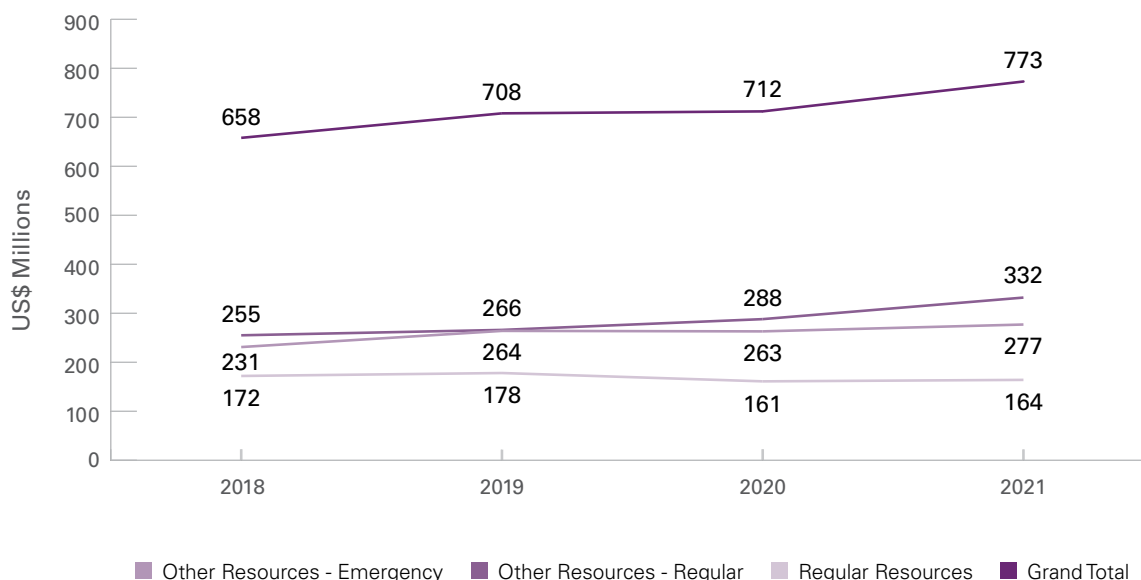


FIGURE A1-13: Goal Area 3 expenses by funding type, 2018–2021



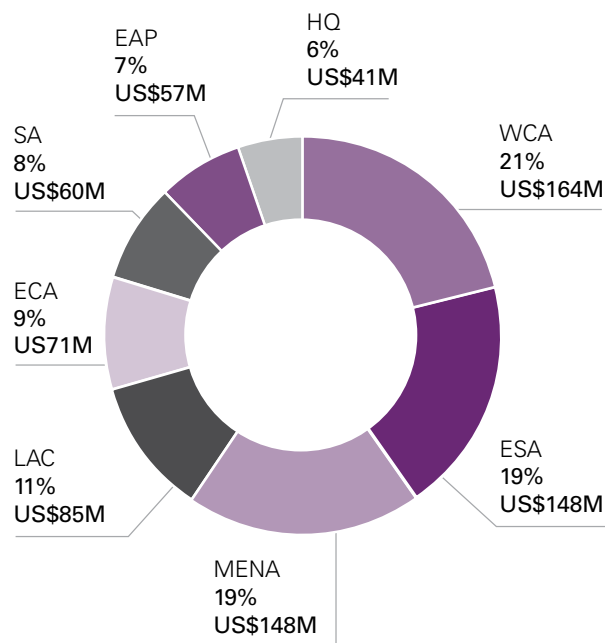
*Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

Expenses in Latin America and the Caribbean region have increased most substantially over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, increasing by 96 per cent compared with 2018 (see Figure A1-15). This is due to the exponential increase in both the absolute amount, as well as the proportional increase, of ORE in the region since 2018. This is primarily because of scaled-up child protection emergency programming. This includes, but is not limited to, the Venezuelan crisis and the Haiti crisis. The absolute amount has increased from US\$5.1 million in 2018 to US\$39.2 million in 2021, and the proportion of ORE of the total regional expense increased from 12 per cent to 46 per cent.

In the West and Central Africa Region, there has been an overall increase in expenses by 40 per cent, compared with 2018. In 2018, 41 per cent of the proportion of the total expenses in the region were drawn from RR. In 2021, the proportion of expenses across funding type is more balanced, with ORR representing 37 per cent of the proportion of the total expenses, while RR represents 31 per cent.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, expenses were drawn significantly from ORE in 2018 (63 per cent in proportion of the total expenses in the region). This reliance on ORE decreased to 46 per cent in 2021, while the proportion of expenses drawn from ORR has increased from 30 per cent in 2018 to 46 per cent in 2021 (see Figure A1-16).

FIGURE A1-14: Expenses and proportion for Goal Area 3 by region, 2021 (US\$ millions)



Notes: EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ: Headquarters; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.

*Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

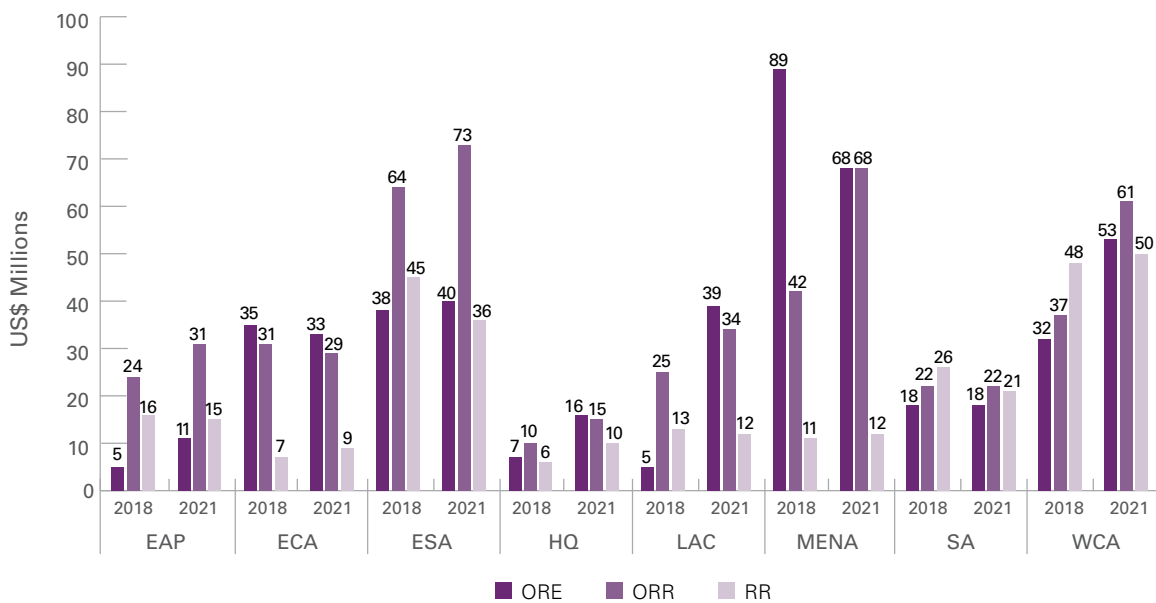
FIGURE A1-15: Regional expense trend for Goal Area 3, 2018 and 2021 (US\$ millions)*



Notes: EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ: Headquarters; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.

*Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

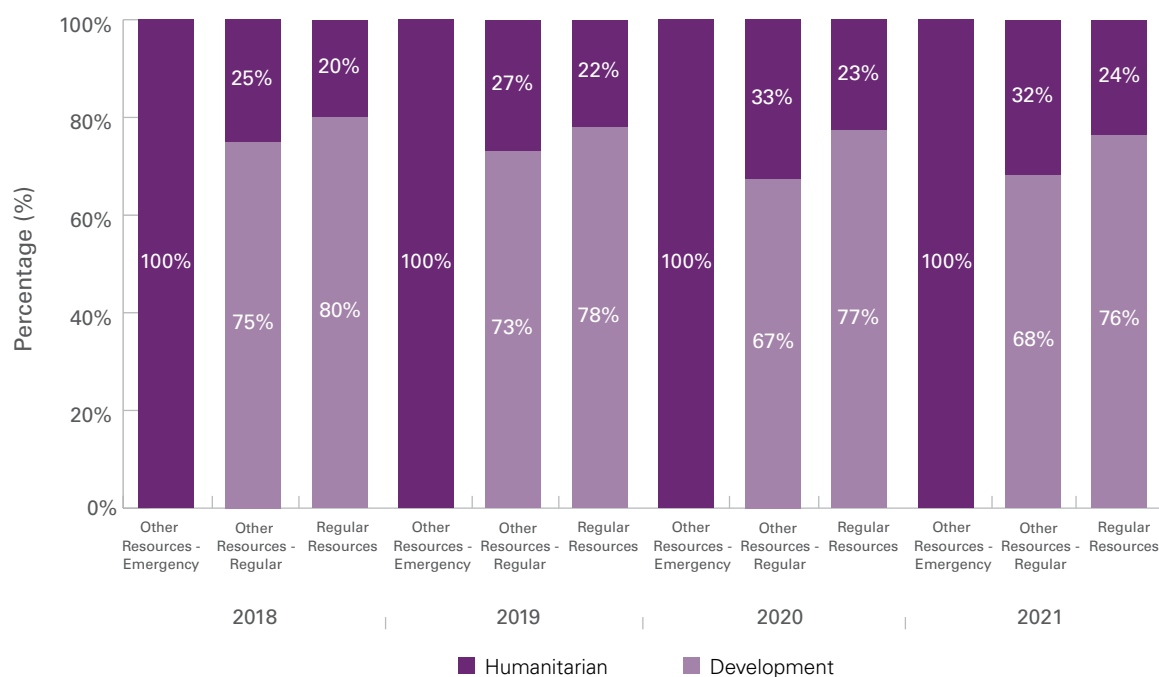
FIGURE A1-16: Regional expense trend for Goal Area 3 by fund type, 2018 and 2021 (US\$ millions)*



Notes: EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ: Headquarters; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.

*Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

FIGURE A1-17: Expense trend by humanitarian and development programming and by fund type, 2018-2021

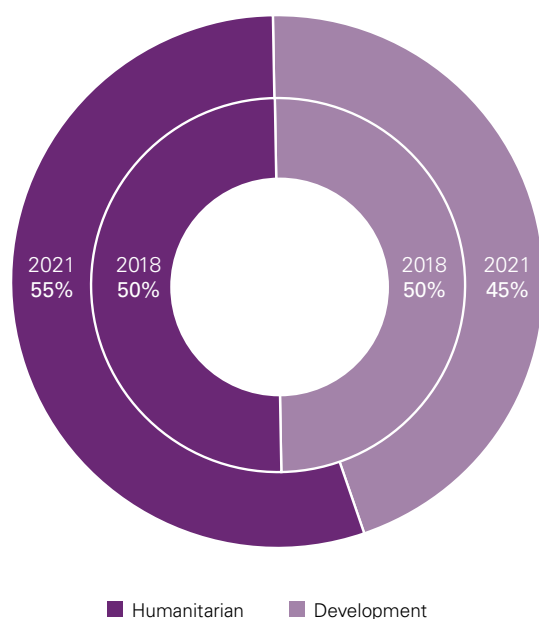


Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, the share of humanitarian expenses within ORR and RR expenses has steadily increased. The proportion of humanitarian expenses within ORR grew from 25 per cent in 2018 to 32 per cent in 2021. Likewise, the proportion of humanitarian expenses within RR expenses has grown from 20 per cent in 2018 to 24 per cent in 2021 (see Figure A1-17). In 2021, humanitarian expenses account for 55 per cent of the total Goal Area 3 expenses (an increase from 50 per cent in 2018) (see Figure A1-18).

Overall, 20 UNICEF Offices accounted for 47 per cent of the total Goal Area 3 expenses for 2021 (US\$360 million) (see Table A1-4), with Lebanon, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Iraq representing the top five countries in order of total Goal Area 3 expenses in 2021. In addition, due to the scaling up of child protection programming, several country offices have also significantly increased expenses in 2021. These include Ukraine, increasing expenses by 133 per cent in 2021 compared with 2020, Zimbabwe (+101 per cent), the Niger (+43 per cent) and the Central African Republic (+31 per cent).

The proportional expenses in Goal Area 3 Result Area have remained relatively consistent over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period. In 2021, Result Area 1 expenses amounted to 83 per cent of the total expenses in Goal Area 3, Result Area 2 at 6 per cent, which is slightly

FIGURE A1-18: Proportion of humanitarian expenses of the total Goal Area 3 expenses, 2018 and 2021



*Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

higher than in previous years, and Result Area 3 at 11 per cent (see Figure A1-19). Expenses for Result Area 1 and Result Area 2 increased by 21 per cent and 56 per cent respectively compared to 2018, while Result Area 3 expenses decreased (-12 per cent compared with 2018) (see Figure A1-20).

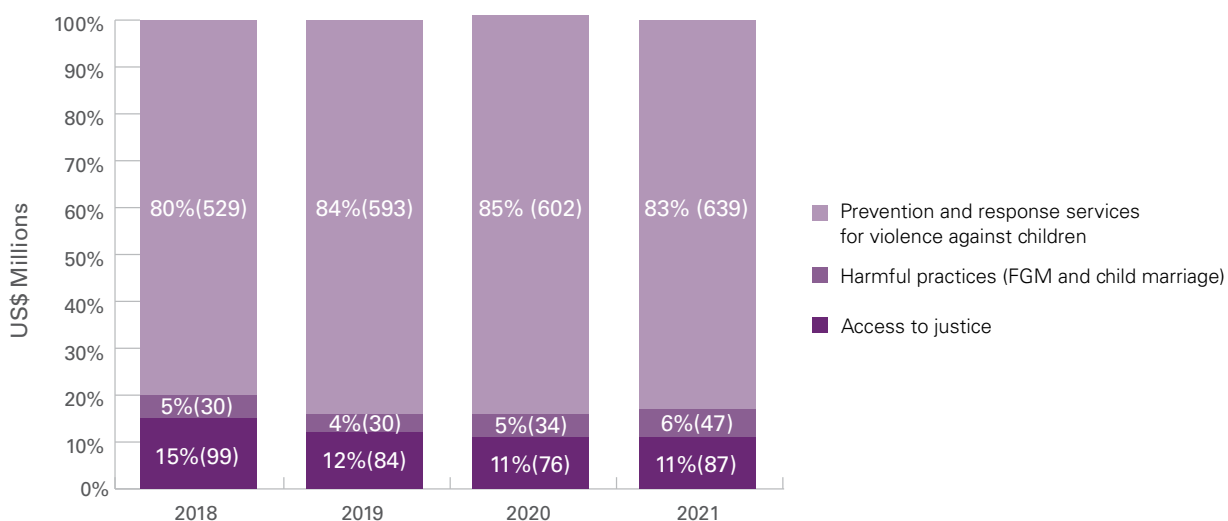
The two areas representing the largest programming intervention expense for Goal Area 3 include expenses contributing to strengthening services to prevent or respond to violence, exploitation and abuse, which increased by 75 per cent compared with 2018 (see Table A1-5). In 2021, this amounted to US\$119 million,

TABLE A1-4: Expenses for Goal Area 3 by top 20 offices, 2018–2021 (US\$ millions)*

Country	2018 Expense	2019 Expense	2020 Expense	2021 Expense	Per cent difference (2021-2018)	Per cent difference (2021-2020)
Lebanon	27	30	27	29	9%	11%
Ethiopia	15	21	22	27	73%	19%
Somalia	20	21	20	25	27%	26%
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	27	36	34	25	-9%	-28%
Iraq	24	30	22	24	0.25%	13%
Nigeria	19	17	14	22	13%	55%
Yemen	19	38	24	21	7%	-13%
Bangladesh	20	26	27	19	-5%	-30%
Turkey	32	28	32	18	-43%	-42%
Mali	7	8	12	18	140%	43%
Afghanistan	14	14	15	16	15%	6%
Sudan	12	13	16	16	34%	2%
Niger	8	8	10	14	67%	43%
South Sudan	26	24	15	14	-47%	-6%
Zimbabwe	17	12	7	13	-23%	101%
Republic of Mozambique	12	11	11	12	-1%	7%
Ukraine	3	5	5	12	277%	133%
Central African Republic	7	8	9	12	79%	31%
Burkina Faso	5	9	14	12	143%	-15%
United Republic of Tanzania	9	7	9	11	33%	34%

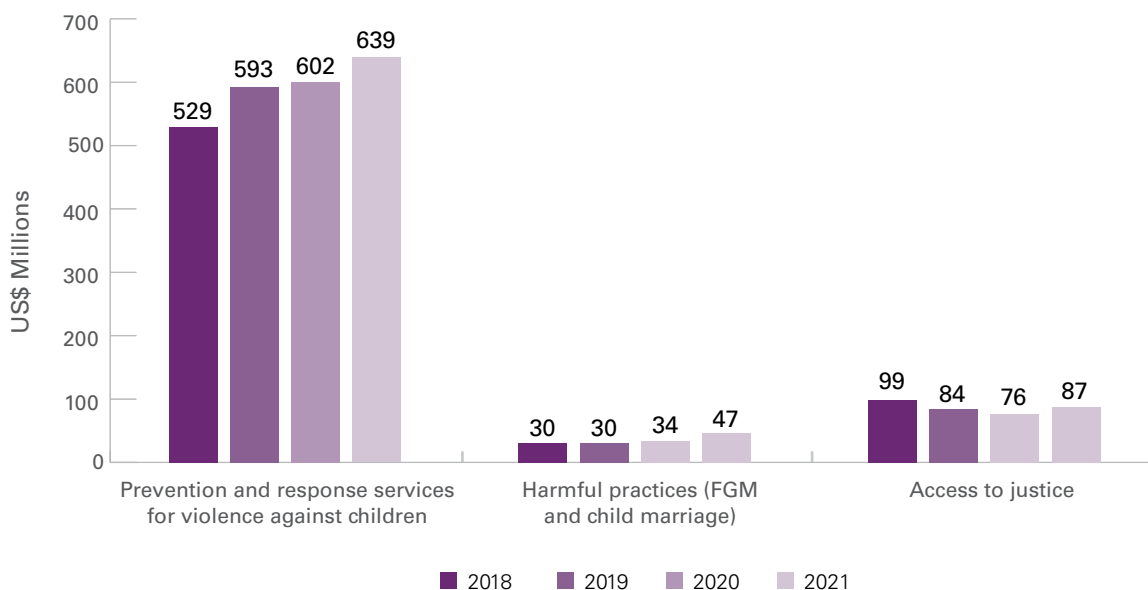
Notes: * Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

FIGURE A1-19: Proportion and Amount of UNICEF Goal Area 3 Results Area Expenses, by year (Percentage and US\$ millions)*



Notes: * Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

FIGURE A1-20: UNICEF Goal Area 3 expenses by Result Area, 2018- 2021 (US\$ millions)



Notes: * Due to rounding, the totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

which was used across 132 offices. The humanitarian expense for this intervention increased by 114 per cent compared with 2018 and the development expense by 31 per cent. The second area of highest expenses relate to the provision of technical support for violence against children programming, which has increased 33 per cent compared with 2018. In 2021, total expenses in this area amounted to US\$83 million used across 114 offices. The humanitarian expense for this intervention increased by 38 per cent compared to 2018 and the development expense by 28 per cent. Two programming areas that have experienced significant expenses growth over the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period include programming support for children on the move, where expenses have almost tripled since 2018, and expenses related to scaling up social and behaviour change communication programming for VAC, which have increased from US\$7 million in 2018 to US\$25 million in 2021. Additionally, Goal Area 3 expenses in data strengthening and evidence generation have increased by 53 per cent since 2018.

The total amount of humanitarian expenses has increased 28 per cent from 2018 (US\$329 million in 2018 to US\$422 million in 2021). Overall, the proportion of humanitarian

expenses in Goal Area 3 increased from 50 per cent of the total Goal Area 3 expenses in 2018 to 55 per cent in 2021. At a regional level, the proportion of humanitarian expenses has most significantly increased in the Latin America and Caribbean region, from 28 per cent in 2018 to 61 per cent in 2021 (see *Figure A1-21*).

At the country level, notable increases include Mexico (over sevenfold increase from US\$1 million in 2017 to US\$9 million in 2021), Ethiopia (nearly threefold increase from US\$5 million to US\$15 million), and the Sudan (57 per cent increase from US\$8 million to US\$12 million). Notable decreases in humanitarian expenses over the 2018–2021 period include South Sudan (58 per cent decrease from US\$24 million in 2018 to US\$10 million in 2021), Jordan (47 per cent decrease from US\$14 million to US\$7 million), and Turkey (41 per cent decrease from US\$30 million to US\$18 million). In 2021, the five country offices representing largest level of humanitarian expenses included Lebanon (US\$20 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (US\$20 million), Iraq (US\$18 million), Somalia (US\$18 million), and Turkey (US\$18 million) (see *Table A1-6*).

TABLE A1-5: Top 10 expenses by programme intervention, 2018–2021 (US\$ millions)

Programme Intervention Cost	2018 Expense	2021 Expense	Per cent Difference (2021-2018)
Services to prevent or respond to violence, exploitation and abuse	68	119	75%
Technical assistance - Prevention and response services for violence against children	62	83	33%
Operations support to programme delivery	52	69	33%
Protective services for children on the move	15	44	193%
Services to prevent or respond to gender-based violence in emergencies	38	35	-6%
Social welfare workforce systems strengthening (accreditation, staffing and supervision)	55	35	-36%
Emergency preparedness (cross-sectoral)	21	27	29%
Psychosocial support in emergencies	35	26	-26%
Social and behaviour change communication on violence, exploitation and abuse	7	25	230%
Birth Registration/Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems	27	22	-18%

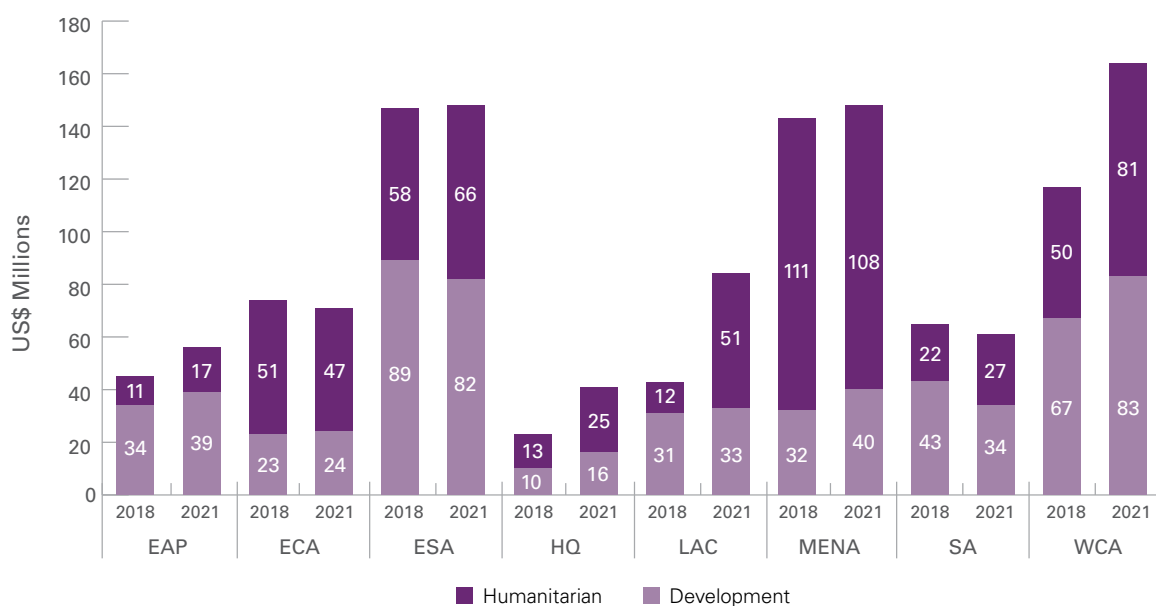
The total amount of thematic expenses for Goal Area 3 in 2021 amounted to US\$71.4 million,ⁱⁱ comprising 9 per cent of the total expenses. The regions of Middle East and North Africa, West and Central Africa and East and Southern Asia account for the greatest proportion of thematic spending in 2021 (of the total thematic expense); at 23 per cent, 20 per cent, and 13 per cent, respectively. These regions represent the largest proportionality and thematic expenses over the course of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period – with the Middle East and North Africa at 26 per cent (US\$65.5 million), West and Central Africa at 16 per cent (US\$40.2 million), and East and Southern Asia at 14 per cent (US\$35.6 million). The proportion of humanitarian thematic expenses,ⁱⁱⁱ out of the total thematic expenses for GA3 amounted to 57 per cent in 2021 (see Figure A1-21).

In 2021, expenses under cost category ‘transfers and grants to counterparts’ represented 46 per cent of total Global Area 3 expenses. This is in line with the trend and average of the proportional expenses under this cost category between 2018–2021 (47 per cent). 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 child protection interventions. Technical assistance accounted for 25 per cent of total expenses, which includes costs related to staff and consultants to support national programmes and policy development, leverage domestic and global investments, undertake capacity development, research and evaluation, and programme management (see Table A1-7).

TABLE A1-6: Top 20 countries on humanitarian expense, 2018–2021 (US\$ millions)

Country	2018 Expense	2021 Expense	Per cent difference (2021-2018)
Lebanon	19	20	6%
Democratic Republic of Congo	17	20	18%
Iraq	23	18	-19%
Somalia	14	18	34%
Turkey	30	18	-41%
Yemen	18	18	-3%
Ethiopia	5.1	14.6	187%
Bangladesh	13.2	12.2	-8%
Nigeria	13.3	12	-10%
Sudan	7.5	11.7	57%
South Sudan	24.2	10.3	-58%
Central African Republic	4.5	9.5	109%
Afghanistan	7.3	9	23%
Mexico	1.2	8.5	600%
Greece		7.8	
Jordan	14	7.4	-47%
Ukraine	2.5	7.3	196%
Syrian Arab Republic	10.1	7.3	-28%
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	0.2	7.3	3630%
Burkina Faso	1.2	7.3	520%

FIGURE A1-21: Goal Area 3 expenses by region, humanitarian and non-humanitarian programming (US\$ millions), 2018-2021



Notes: EAP: East Asia and the Pacific; ECA: Europe and Central Asia; ESA: Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ: Headquarters; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; MENA: Middle East and North Africa; SA: South Asia; WCA: West and Central Africa.

TABLE A1-7: Expense for Goal Area 3 by cost category, 2021 (US\$ million)

Cost category	Other resources – emergency	Other resources – regular	Regular resources	Total
Contractual services	18	43	16	77
Equipment, vehicles and furniture			0.3	0.3
General operating and other direct costs	12	13	15	40
Incremental indirect costs	19	23		42
Staff and other personnel costs	47	68	78	193
Supplies and commodities	20	10	4	34
Transfers and grants to counterparts	150	164	42	356
Travel	3	3	4	10
Other	8	8	5	21
Grand total	277	332	164	773

Endnotes

1. The four guiding principles central to the Goal Area 3 mandate include: the best interests of the child; non-discrimination; respect of the views of the child; rights to life, survival and development.
2. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
3. In humanitarian settings in particular, UNICEF is guided by the Core Commitments for Children, the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming. In situations of armed conflict, UNICEF is guided by international humanitarian law and refugee law, and is specifically mandated to protect children by Security Council Resolution 1612.
4. 'Complex emergencies' are defined as those in countries with a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.
5. Though 84 countries reported the release of children from detention; only 54 of these countries provided specific data on the number of children released.
6. United Nations Children's Fund, *Detention of Children in the time of COVID-19*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
7. Based on disaggregated data reported by 60 countries, 58 per cent of people supported through these programmes were female and 42 per cent were male.
8. Bakrania, Shivit, et al., *Impacts of Pandemics and Epidemics on Child Protection: Lessons learned from a rapid review in the context of COVID-19*, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence, 2020.
9. United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Protection Strategy 2021–2030*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
10. United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF's Global Social Protection Framework*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.
11. Overseas Development Institute, *SDG Progress: Fragility, crisis and leaving no one behind*, ODI, London, 2018.
12. United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2022 Overview*, UNICEF, New York, 2022.
13. United Nations Children's Fund, *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
14. Violence against women Prevalence Estimates, 2018. Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women. WHO: Geneva, 2021 <<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>>, accessed 11 May 2021.
15. United Nations Children's Fund, *COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage*, UNICEF, New York, March 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/covid-19-a-threat-to-progress-against-child-marriage/>>, accessed 19 May 2022.
16. United Nations Population Fund, Johns Hopkins University and Victoria University, 'Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage', Interim Technical Note, UNFPA, 27 April 2020, <<https://www.unfpa.org/resources/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-gender-based-violence-female-genital/>>, accessed 11 May 2022.
17. United Nations Children's Fund, *Female Genital Mutilation: A new generation calls for ending an old practice*, UNICEF, New York, 2020.
18. *COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage*.
19. International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, New York, 2021.
20. *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020*.
21. Hillis, Susan, et al., 'Global Prevalence of Past-year Violence Against Children: A systematic review and minimum estimates', *Pediatrics*, vol. 137, no. 3, March 2016, e20154079.

22. United Nations Children's Fund, *Protecting Children from Violence in School*, UNICEF, 2020, <www.unicef.org/protection/violence-against-children-in-school>, accessed 6 April 2022.
23. Ibid.
24. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, *CyberTipline 2021 Report*, <<https://www.missingkids.org/gethelpnow/cybertipline/cybertiplinedata>>, accessed 18 April 2022.
25. See 'SDG 16', <<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>>.
26. United Nations Children's Fund, *Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track?*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.
27. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Birth Registration', UNICEF, August 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/birth-registration>>, accessed 6 April 2022.
28. More information can be found at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/115331/file>.
29. The poll, *The Changing Childhood Project*, is the first of its kind to ask multiple generations for their views on the world and what it is like to be a child today. It surveyed more than 21,000 people across two age cohorts (15–24 years old and 40 years old and up) in 21 countries. Nationally representative surveys were undertaken in countries across all regions – Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America – and across income levels. For more information, see <www.unicef.org/press-releases/landmark-intergenerational-poll-shows-young-people-are-50-more-likely-older>.
30. United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Protection Systems Strengthening*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
31. Ibid.
32. The Spotlight Initiative is a global initiative of the United Nations which has received generous support from the European Union. Its aim is to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, with a particular focus on domestic and family violence, sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, femicide, trafficking in human beings and sexual and economic (labour) exploitation. The Initiative represents an unprecedented global effort to invest in gender equality as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. See <<https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/>>.
33. Albania, Bangladesh, Belarus, Colombia, Croatia, Dominican Republic, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Marshall Islands, Pakistan, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Tonga and Vanuatu.
34. Cambodia, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Philippines, Viet Nam and Zambia.
35. For more information, see <https://www.unicef.org/media/66876/file/INSPIRE-SevenStrategies.pdf>
36. For more information, see <https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-generation-to-protect/>
37. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/327
38. International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, New York.
39. The issue of child labour is guided by three main international conventions: the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 concerning minimum age for admission to employment and Recommendation No. 146 (1973); ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and Recommendation No. 190 (1999); and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. These conventions frame the concept of child labour and form the basis for child labour legislation enacted by countries that are signatories.
40. United Nations Children's Fund, *Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection*, UNICEF, New York, 2019.
41. For more information, see <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/the-climate-crisis-is-a-humanitarian-crisis>
42. United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNHCR-UNICEF Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children', UNICEF, <www.unicef.org/emergencies/unhcr-unicef-blueprint>, accessed 6 April 2022.
43. Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Rwanda.
44. United Nations Children's Fund, 'The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Services Package', UNICEF, <<https://mhpsmsp.org/en>>, accessed 6 April 2022.
45. Grave violations include killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children as soldiers; sexual violence against children; abduction of children; attacks against schools or hospitals; denial of humanitarian access for children.
46. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism is a mechanism established by Security Council Resolution 1612. Through this and subsequent related resolutions, UNICEF is mandated to support monitoring and reporting on grave child rights violations to the Security Council.
47. This includes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups; killing; maiming; harassment, rape and sexual violence; abductions; and attacks on schools and hospitals.

48. Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, *A Path to Reintegration: The role of handover protocols in protecting the rights of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups*, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, New York, December 2020, p. 7.
49. Children receiving support in 2021 also include those who had exited armed forces or armed groups over the course of several prior years.
50. The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and UNICEF, *Key Considerations: Family tracing and reunification (FTR) for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC)*, UNICEF, New York, 14 July 2021.
51. For more information, see [impact-of-mines-erw-on-children_nov21-update.pdf \(the-monitor.org\)](#)
52. ActionAid International, *On the Frontline: Catalysing women's leadership in humanitarian action*, ActionAid International, Johannesburg, 2016, p. 10.
53. Sexual exploitation and abuse, in this specific context, is the abuse or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, or the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, by United Nations personnel, their implementing partners, or other aid workers, against the people they serve.
54. Putting protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) systems in place requires developing country action plans and establishing internal reporting systems. Further scale-up includes building capacity of partners, strengthening case management and referral pathways and disseminating sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) messages. In placing women and children at the centre of these measures – which together form the bedrock of PSEA programming – significant progress has been made to better protect communities from SEA by humanitarian and development workers.
55. The Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies is an open, global network of members working together within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure that all individuals have the right to a quality, safe, relevant and equitable education.
56. World Bank, *Phase II COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens*, Migration and Development Brief 33, World Bank, Washington, D.C., October 2020.
57. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations Children's Fund, *The Blueprint Partnership in Action: Five accelerators for refugee action*, UNHCR, Geneva, 2021.
58. ANSA, 'UNICEF: Eight out of ten migrants in Italy victims of prejudice', Info Migrants, 23 June 2021, <[www.infomigrants.net/fr/post/33150/unicef-eight-out-of-ten-migrants-in-italy-victims-of-prejudice](#)>, accessed 7 April 2022.
59. Life skills can range from literacy, numeracy, computing and financial skills, to gender-transformative life skills and livelihoods training.
60. Belize, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Togo, Uganda, Viet Nam and Zambia.
61. The Joint Programme is being implemented in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.
62. Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda.
63. Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.
64. Chad, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.
65. Malhotra, Anju, and Shatha Elnakib, *Evolution in the Evidence Base on Child Marriage*, UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage, UNFPA and UNICEF, New York, 2021.
66. United Nations Children's Fund and Center on Gender Equity and Health, *Four Areas of Influence Driving Child Marriage: What the data tells us and how it can inform programming*, UNICEF, New York, 2020.
67. This was released by the Child Marriage Research to Action Network, a network created under the auspices of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage and Girls Not Brides, aimed at identifying the state of the evidence on child marriage and remaining research gaps.
68. Matanda, Dennis, et al., *Effectiveness of Interventions Designed to Prevent or Respond to Female Genital Mutilation: A review of Evidence*, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and Population Council, Kenya, 2021.
69. United Nations Children's Fund, *Defining Social Norms and Related Concepts*, UNICEF, New York, November 2021.
70. United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, *Girls' Education, Empowerment, and the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
71. United Nations Population Fund, *The Act Framework: towards a new M&E model for measuring social norms change around female genital mutilation*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
72. United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Children's Fund, *Addressing Child Marriage in Humanitarian Settings*, UNFPA, New York, 2021.

73. Matanda, Dennis, and Esther Lwanga-Walgwe, *A Research Agenda to Strengthen Evidence Generation and Utilisation to Accelerate the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation*, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and Population Council, Kenya, 2022.
74. Nowak, Manfred, *The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty*, United Nations, New York, 2020.
75. United Nations Children's Fund, *Estimating the number of children deprived of liberty in the administration of justice*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
76. United Nations Children's Fund, *Detention of Children in the Time of COVID-19*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
77. Ibid.
78. As of 31 October 2021, 152 country offices had provided responses to questions pertaining to justice for children. Thus, the results reflect the situation in 97 per cent of the programme countries, which are home to around 2 billion children. Although every effort was made to document and verify the numbers, the availability and quality of data from service providers remain weak in many countries, compromising the ability to accurately report on the number of children released from detention. In fact, while 84 countries reported the release of children from detention, only 54 of them provided specific data on the number of children released.
79. *Detention of Children in the Time of COVID-19*.
80. Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children', A/RES/64/142, 24 February 2010.
81. In keeping with Articles 9, 18, 20, 21 and 25 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF works with national partners to drive forward their national care reform agenda.
82. Also see blog post: Aulicino, Carolina, 'Time to Care: supporting parents and families through family-friendly policies', UNICEF, 1 July 2021, <www.unicef.org/blog/time-to-care-supporting-parents-family-friendly-policies>, accessed 6 April 2022.
83. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Data collection on children in residential care', UNICEF, January 2020, <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/data-collection-protocol-on-children-in-residential-care/>>, accessed 6 April 2022.
84. United Nations Children's Fund and Eurochild, *Better Data for Better Child Protection Systems in Europe: Mapping how data on children in alternative care are collected, analysed and published across 28 European countries*, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Geneva, 2021.
85. For more information see <<https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/nearly-240-million-children-with-disabilities-around-the-world-unicefs-most-comprehensive-statistical-analysis-finds/>>
86. In line with the 2019 Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action <<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines>>, UNICEF is also increasingly adopting disability-inclusive approaches in humanitarian action programming at national scale.
87. Partner countries include Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
88. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Children with Disabilities Overview', UNICEF, December 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-disability/overview/>>, accessed 7 April 2022.
89. United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Functioning', UNICEF, December 2021, <<https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-disability/module-on-child-functioning/>>, accessed 7 April 2022.
90. United Nations Children's Fund, *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
91. Ibid.
92. Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zambia.
93. These include strengthening of legal frameworks, innovation, interoperability across systems, advocacy with government and members of public, demand creation, decentralization, capacity-building of civil registration and vital statistics staff, and strengthening of leadership and governance, coordination and partnership.
94. United Nations Children's Fund West and Central Africa, 'Birth registration can accelerate children's access to justice: the African Union and UNICEF launch "No Name Campaign"', UNICEF, 16 June 2020, <www.unicef.org/wca/press-releases/birth-registration-can-accelerate-childrens-access-justice-african-union-and-unicef>, accessed 7 April 2022.
95. Fouchard, Anne, 'Adama, or the story of a fight for identity in Africa: Story of Adama Coulibaly, Principal Adviser Sahel, West and Central Africa Regional Office', UNICEF West and Central Africa, 10 August 2021, <www.unicef.org/wca/stories/adama-or-story-fight-identity-africa#:~:text=The%20effectiveness%20of%20abolishing%20birth%20registration%20fees%20has,and%20Central%20Africa.%20Free%20registration%20as%20a%20prerequisite>, accessed 7 April 2022.

^{96.} Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion is a non-governmental human rights organization dedicated to working on statelessness at the global level, to promote inclusive societies by realizing and protecting the right to a nationality.

^{97.} United Nations Children's Fund, 'Women in many countries face discrimination in registering births, warn UNHCR and UNICEF', UNICEF, 7 July 2021, <www.unicef.org/press-releases/women-many-countries-face-discrimination-registering-births-warn-unhcr-and-unicef>, accessed 7 April 2022.

^{98.} This includes, inter alia, women and girls, the poor, children living in slums and vulnerable urban settings or on the street, migrants and stateless persons.

^{99.} For more information, see [Our Common Agenda | United Nations](#)

^{100.} For more information, see [UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025](#).

^{101.} Ibid.

^{102.} Ibid.



Published by UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

www.unicef.org

June 2022

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