



## GOAL AREA 5

Every child has an equitable  
chance in life

Global Annual  
Results Report 2021

unicef   
for every child

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As part of the response to COVID-19, UNICEF and the World Bank supported the Government of Guatemala with the design and implementation of Bono Familia, an unconditional emergency cash transfer programme to support the most vulnerable families impacted by COVID-19. More than 2 million poor and vulnerable families were reached across the country, representing 80 per cent of all households in Guatemala. Alongside a concerted effort from government entities, commercial banks, electricity companies, telecommunication companies, automated teller machine (ATM) providers and call centres, UNICEF, in partnership with the World Bank, supported the creation of an innovative platform to identify, register and pay benefits to affected families. Innovations included electronic registration, token distribution, as well as monitoring dashboards and electronic signatures to improve managerial and administrative processes within the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES).

# Expression of thanks

UNICEF is funded through the voluntary support of millions of people around the world and our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children's rights, help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. UNICEF takes this opportunity to thank all partners for their commitment and trust.

The Goal Area 5 team would like to acknowledge and thank our key core and thematic resource partners. Thematic funding offers flexibility for long-term planning, enhances the sustainability of programmes and enables UNICEF to invest in innovative and new approaches. Particularly in the context of UNICEF's COVID-19 response, thematic funding was critical to respond to emerging needs and challenges adequately and rapidly, supporting the most vulnerable children and families. Under the current UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, Norway, Spain, Italian Committee, ING Bank and the U.S. Fund for UNICEF have provided global thematic funding to Goal Area 5.

Seventy-five years after UNICEF was established and 32 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 in humanitarian situations, and defines the change strategies and enablers that support their achievement.

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

The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to Goal Area 5 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 during the past year, encompassing gender equality and humanitarian action, as well as each of the five strategic plan Goal Areas – 'Every child survives and thrives', 'Every child learns', 'Every child is protected from violence and exploitation', 'Every child lives in a safe and clean environment', and 'Every child has an equitable chance in life'. It supplements the 2021 Executive Director Annual Report (EDAR), UNICEF's official accountability document for the past year.

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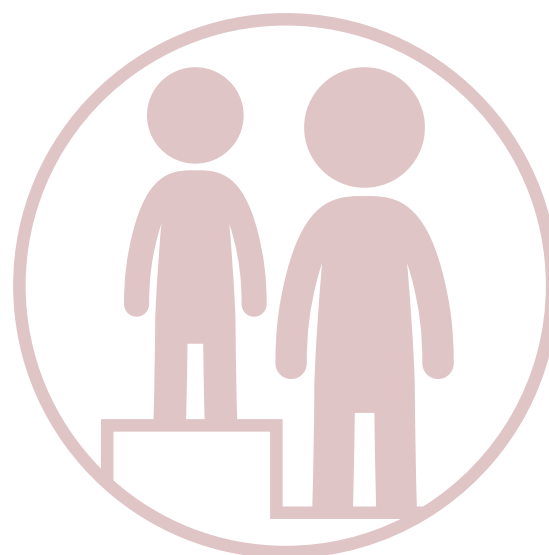
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The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to [goal area/cross-cutting area] in 2018 and reviews the impact of these accomplishments on children and the communities where they live. This is one of eight reports on the results of efforts during the past year, encompassing gender equality and humanitarian action as well as each of the five Strategic Plan goal areas – 'Every child survives and thrives', 'Every child learns', 'Every child is protected from violence and exploitation', 'Every child lives in a safe and clean environment', and 'Every child has an equitable chance in life', and a short report on Communication for Development (C4D). It supplements the 2018 Executive Director Annual Report (EDAR), UNICEF's official accountability document for the past year.

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>	<b>Results: adolescent participation and civic engagement – “supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future”</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Key results achieved in 2021 .....	3	Results achieved in 2021 towards supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future .....	80
Looking ahead .....	5	Looking ahead .....	88
<b>Strategic context</b> .....	<b>7</b>	<b>Systems-strengthening</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Global developments and trends in the situation of children.....	8	High-level priorities towards the 2022–2025 strategic plan and the sustainable development goals .....	92
Goal area 5 theory of change .....	9	<b>Abbreviations and acronyms</b> .....	<b>95</b>
<b>Results: child poverty – “ending child poverty by 2030”</b> .....	<b>11</b>	<b>Endnotes</b> .....	<b>96</b>
Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards ending child poverty by 2030 .....	12	<b>Annex: financial report*</b> .....	<b>101</b>
Looking ahead .....	22		
<b>Results: public finance for children – “protecting the rights of children through greater and more equitable investments”</b> .	<b>23</b>		
Results achieved and challenges towards protecting the rights of children through greater and equitable investments.....	25		
Looking ahead .....	33		
<b>Results: social protection – “strengthening social protection systems”</b> .....	<b>34</b>		
Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards strengthening social protection systems .....	36		
Looking ahead .....	52		
<b>Results: gender – “promoting positive gender norms and socialization”</b> .....	<b>53</b>		
Results achieved in 2021 and challenges in promoting positive gender norms and socialization .....	55		
Looking ahead .....	66		
<b>Results: children with disabilities – “supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential”</b> .....	<b>68</b>		
Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential .....	69		
Looking ahead .....	76		





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# Executive Summary

Fatima, 14, at the UNICEF-supported multiservice centre in Hanano neighborhood, Aleppo city, northwest Syria, on 17 February 2022.

Anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF's universal mandate is to uphold the rights of all children. The results under UNICEF Goal Area 5 (Every child has an equitable chance in life) build on the principle of leaving no one behind, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a specific focus on tackling key dimensions of exclusion, discrimination and inequality, while upholding the rights of children affected by humanitarian crisis through the Core Commitments for Children. Goal Area 5 leverages UNICEF's lead role and expertise in eliminating child poverty, building social protection systems, enhancing public finance for children, and addressing gender equality, disability and adolescent participation.

Specifically, UNICEF works to reduce child poverty by making children living in poverty visible, enhancing governments' capacity to systematically measure and monitor child poverty and to integrate these analyses to influence national policies and strategies; it also leverages its expertise in public finance for children to ensure inclusive and rights-based financing, and to enhance the

efficiency, equity and transparency of social sector budget allocations, enhancing impacts for children and influencing fiscal policies and mechanisms. Moreover, UNICEF works to enhance the coverage and adequacy of child-sensitive social protection systems, including in humanitarian contexts; to address discrimination, including on the grounds of age, gender identity and disability – such as through gender and disability assessments and response plans to ensure the coverage and adequacy of social protection for these vulnerable groups; and to increase the participation, voice and agency of children, and adolescents and young people in civic life. UNICEF takes a leading role in amplifying child rights advocacy (specifically in relation to social protection as a right) in human rights mechanisms, including to call attention to the intersecting forms of discrimination faced by children.

In 2021, UNICEF supported 157 countries and invested over US\$727 million in Goal Area 5, including US\$352 million for humanitarian action, to provide children with an equitable chance in life.

## Key results achieved in 2021

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Although 2021 was a challenging year, UNICEF met and even exceeded its goals in several key programming areas. Progress rates were above 90 per cent for all five result areas under Goal Area 5. At outcome level, UNICEF exceeded its targets for the number of children reached by cash transfer programmes, a critical component of social protection systems-strengthening, and the civic engagement of adolescents.

UNICEF continued to strengthen and expand on its network of partnerships, building strong alliances with regional, national and international partners to accelerate positive change. UNICEF partnered with the World Bank and Save the Children, among others, and co-chaired the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty to make visible the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on child poverty. UNICEF, in close coordination and collaboration with United Nations partners, and as part of United Nations Country Team processes, has supported socioeconomic impact assessments in 86 countries since 2020 and played a leading role in the social protection response to COVID-19, working closely with United Nations agencies and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

UNICEF provided support to countries in analysing and monitoring child poverty and prioritizing it in their national strategies. Using nationally owned measurement and routine reporting systems, 71 countries reported on multidimensional child poverty (compared with 66 in 2020), and 86 reported on monetary child poverty (compared with 79 in 2020). Translating evidence into action, a total of 111 UNICEF offices engaged in child poverty advocacy, and

33 countries reported that their measurement, analysis or advocacy had led to policies and programmes that reduced child poverty.

Social protection continued to be a central pillar of UNICEF's response to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. UNICEF has worked alongside governments to develop social protection systems that are inclusive and shock-responsive in over 115 countries. UNICEF-supported cash transfers reached nearly 133 million children in 2021, including over 19 million children in humanitarian settings and over 1 million children with a disability.

UNICEF's work with government and other partners has resulted in a steady increase in the number of countries whose social protection systems are moderately strong or strong, from 31 countries in 2017 to 67 in 2021. This assessment of the strength of the social protection system includes aspects such as the existence of a legal policy or framework; the inclusion of child poverty analysis in the system's development; budgetary commitment to social protection; and system coverage, coordination and linkages to other services.

COVID-19 has further highlighted the importance of social protection systems being risk informed and shock responsive. UNICEF's work in this area has scaled up: 79 countries are currently building shock-responsive social protection systems, while the number of countries' reporting systems that are ready to respond to a crisis has grown from 9 in 2020 to 17, surpassing the strategic plan target of 15.

Even though social protection was a core pillar of the response, COVID-19 also highlighted some gaps in social protection systems, including in terms of adequacy and inclusion. In 2021, UNICEF worked with governments to make social protection systems more gender transformative: 100 UNICEF country offices now have explicit gender objectives embedded in their social protection work (up from 29 in 2019); 43 country offices have objectives to increase girls' education through social protection work; and 40 country offices have objectives to reduce gender-based violence. UNICEF also worked to make social protection systems more inclusive of children and adults with disabilities in more than 56 countries and initiated support in a further 25. UNICEF-supported programmes reached a total of 940,428 displaced and migrant children with cash transfers.

UNICEF has accelerated its evidence generation on social spending and established the [Social Spending Monitor](#), which generates routine data on social sector expenditure at a global level. Country-level work on public finance increased in 2021, engaging 137 countries in 2021, up from 124 in 2020. Of those, 65 countries generated evidence and strengthened their national social sector budgets in 2021, up from 55 in 2020. A strengthened social sector budget refers to the actions undertaken by UNICEF country offices in collaboration with governments and international development partners in terms of evidence, policy and technical advice, and capacity-strengthening, leading to tangible improvements in the level, or the use, of social sector resources and ultimately contributing to improved access to services for children, including the most disadvantaged.

Equity was a key area of focus, in line with the SDGs. In 74 countries, up from 28 in 2020, UNICEF generated evidence and provided technical support on spending equity, triggering government action to improve equity across public spending in 37 countries, up from 16 in 2020. UNICEF's work on the equity of social spending aims to ensure that governments allocate a fair share of public resources to the poorest and most disadvantaged children to enable their access to social services.

A major concern in 2021 was that rising debt burdens and tightening budgets would crowd out government spending on social policies. UNICEF launched a [Call to Action on Financing an Inclusive Recovery](#), which calls for protecting social spending; prioritizing public resources efficiently, effectively and equitably; and identifying new

financing options to address critical game changers across sectors. UNICEF country offices employed public finance approaches and built on established partnerships to make visible the concerning trends and changes in budgets for children, and to help governments protect critical services for children from cuts. UNICEF focused on accelerating evidence generation and evidence-based advocacy, embarked in capacity-building and systems-strengthening, and enhanced engagements with governments and international partners to strengthen social sector budgets and expand government allocations for children.

UNICEF programmes engaged nearly 20 million adolescents (54 per cent girls) across 125 countries in 2021, 5.7 million of them in humanitarian action and nearly 700,000 in climate change advocacy. This is nearly four times the targeted number, a reflection of UNICEF's commitment to increasing adolescent engagement.

In a tremendous advance on 2020, UNICEF reached more than 4.8 million children with disabilities across 148 countries through disability-inclusive programming in 2021, including in humanitarian situations, more than double the 2.2 million reached in 2020. In emergency response contexts, 55 per cent of UNICEF country offices systematically included children with disabilities. For instance, a total of 54,833 girls and women with disabilities in humanitarian situations across 29 countries accessed menstrual hygiene management services through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2021.

Demonstrating solid progress, 94 UNICEF country programmes had concrete gender equality objectives, compared to 91 in 2020 and 76 in 2018. Country offices in 64 countries carried out interventions to confront gender-discriminatory roles and norms and promote positive gender socialization, an increase of 15 since 2020; UNICEF-supported interventions reached 3 million mothers, fathers and caregivers across 94 countries, close to a fourfold increase on 2017.



# Looking ahead

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The new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 includes a strategic shift around Goal Area 5, sharpening its focus on reducing child poverty, revamping and reaffirming its commitment to public finance for an inclusive recovery, and expanding access to inclusive social protection, including in humanitarian crises and fragile contexts. UNICEF will continue to deepen its long-standing work on systems-strengthening, expansion of coverage and supporting the expansion of social investments for children. At the same, UNICEF will leverage critical partnerships, nuanced expertise and long-standing field-level presence to revamp critical game changers across Goal Area 5, particularly to accelerate results in terms of inclusion, the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and inclusive financing.

As the leading actor on child poverty, UNICEF will continue to strengthen and leverage existing and new critical partnerships, for example with the World Bank and United Nations agencies, while continuing to co-chair the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, which brings together 22 global organizations to increase visibility of this critical agenda and ensure a joined-up approach, while addressing the critical drivers of poverty such as climate and conflict, and new profiles of children falling into poverty, including in urban areas, the informal sector and humanitarian contexts. While the measurement of child poverty lays the foundations for change, the next critical step is the design and implementation of policies that reduce it, which is why UNICEF's new strategic plan will also strengthen the use of analysis for enhanced policy design and implementation as we move towards systemic change.

Moreover, scaling up a comprehensive approach in fragile and humanitarian contexts will remain a priority, enhancing UNICEF's support to strengthening social protection systems as well as the direct cash delivery and operational capacities to respond to shocks. This will continue alongside our revamped commitment to ensuring that systems are systematically integrating and responding to the specific needs of vulnerable girls and boys, children with disabilities and children on the move, while strengthening strategic linkages with other services to address the multiple dimensions of deprivation. And finally, despite the commendable increase in social protection programmes, especially during the COVID-19 response, many were temporary in nature and are currently at risk of being reversed, UNICEF will continue to work with partners, including in the context of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030) and the Global Accelerator for Social Protection, Jobs and Just Transition as part of the Common Agenda, the SDG Fund and United Nations Country Teams to advocate for

prioritizing social protection as a core pillar of our collective efforts towards inclusive recovery, promoting the expansion of coverage and sustainable financing of social protection, including child and family-friendly policies as critical game changers to contribute to a resilient economy.

In public finance, UNICEF will continue to ensure that investments in social sectors for children are prioritized, enhanced and expanded to ensure we can reverse the multiple losses across social sectors due to the pandemic, conflict and climate. UNICEF will also continue to address inequalities in access to finance, including advocating for debt restructuring, increased official development assistance and other critical mechanisms, such as Special Drawing Rights. UNICEF will support governments to enhance the efficiency of their national budgets, including by identifying and addressing service delivery bottlenecks, assessing and costing financing gaps and identifying new and innovative financing options. Together with other partners, including in the context of the Financing for Development Process, as well as part of the Global Finance partnership with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF will continue to work at global, regional and country levels to close funding gaps in social sectors and enhance the alignment of public and private financing with the SDGs. In addition to its core work on public finance systems, UNICEF will enhance its support to tackle sector-specific financing challenges, for example in early childhood development and immunization, and strengthen critical partnerships with multilaterals and IFIs to further align and strengthen social spending commitments in concessional financing packages.

In 2022, UNICEF will double down on its efforts to facilitate gender-transformative programming and shift discriminatory gender norms. As the new Gender Action Plan is operationalized in 2022, UNICEF will hold itself to higher programmatic and institutional standards for gender equality. UNICEF will work from within to build gender capacity across the programming continuum, from gender analysis to gender-responsive reporting, evidence generation and dissemination.

In working with children, adolescents and young people, UNICEF will take the lead from them to ensure the organization meets their needs and expectations, in line with their right to be heard on decisions that affect their lives. Children, adolescents and young people must be seen as resources and problem solvers; as UNICEF sets out on its new strategic plan, their insights and knowledge will be crucial to achieving its goals.

Disability inclusion is anchored in the new strategic plan as one of the guiding principles, with disability-inclusive programming as a cross-cutting priority.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, UNICEF initiated the development of its first ever **Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy (DIPAS) 2022–2030**. The DIPAS will be launched in 2022, will be linked to the

implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the United Nations 2030 Agenda and will guide UNICEF’s work on programmes, operations and culture towards disability inclusion.





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# Strategic Context

Naomi Bikila, a 18 years old girl with her 2 1/2 years old daughter Chansela, in Mbandaka, the Equatorial Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

# Global developments and trends in the situation of children

In 2021, as UNICEF celebrated its 75th year, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to reverberate around the world. The compounding impacts of COVID-19, conflict and climate change – the triple C – have had, and continue to have, a devastating impact on child poverty, and its effects will be felt for many years. The latest estimates for 2021 suggest that the number of children experiencing multidimensional poverty increased by 100 million, with an additional 60 million children living in monetary poverty.<sup>2</sup> It represents the first global increase in poverty for nearly two decades, and compounds child poverty rates that are already far too high. Additional analysis by UNICEF and the World Bank highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had critical impacts on households with children: for instance, 76 per cent of households with children reported experiencing total income loss, in comparison with 55 per cent of households with no children.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, despite evidence that investments in childhood development, social protection, child protection, health and education yield high returns, governments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) continue to underinvest in these areas. For instance, UNICEF estimates that LMICs will

need to spend an additional 0.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on education, 4.7 per cent on health and 0.6 per cent on social protection just to meet minimum spending benchmarks, while these averages mask much greater shortfalls in some countries and regions.<sup>4</sup>

Budgets for the social sectors, which had increased due to fiscal stimulus, have begun to retreat as the measures wind down. Increases in social protection budgets have proved temporary in many cases, despite the longer-term effects of COVID-19 on family incomes and child poverty. Health budgets came under continued stress from the costs of successive waves of COVID-19, while COVID-19 vaccine delivery costs risked crowding out routine immunization and other health services. Fiscal responses for education were relatively small and insufficient to address the challenges of remote learning, leading to major learning deficits.

In 2021, the global economy and government budgets were dominated by the COVID-19 response, with the focus only starting to shift towards recovery in some countries. The recovery is proving fragile and highly uneven, driven by unequal access to both COVID-19 vaccines and finance. Government



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On 29 December 2021 in Nuristan Province, Afghanistan, Zakira smiles as she waits for her mother.

budgets continue to struggle with lower tax revenues, increasing spending demands and, in many cases, rising debt burdens. Low-income countries were especially at risk. While advanced economies will see government revenue return to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2025, growth projections suggest that revenue in LMICs will take longer to recover. Governments in LMICs have taken on increasing debt in recent years, and debt service is the only area of government spending that has risen as a proportion of overall spending in the last five years. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 24 LMICs were already spending more on debt service than on education, health and social protection combined. As a result of the pandemic, 60 per cent of LMICs are now judged to be at high risk of, or in, debt distress.<sup>5</sup> The risk to social spending in heavily indebted countries is rising, as measures to contain the cost of debt have ended, while global interest rates are increasing.<sup>6</sup>

The crisis is creating immediate and future challenges to social protection as not seen before. The gaps in social protection coverage remain extremely concerning, with 4.1 billion people deprived of their right to social security, and only one in four children having access to any form of child or family benefit.<sup>7</sup> However, a silver lining of the pandemic has been the central role that social protection has played in the socioeconomic response, with over 200 countries and territories expanding their social protection as a result of COVID-19.

While these measures were vital, they were also mostly temporary in nature – and social protection now finds itself at a crucial strategic tipping point. Making universal social protection a reality will require significant investment. For example, around US\$78 billion is required to ensure a social protection floor in low-income countries alone.<sup>8</sup> And while countries face increasing fiscal challenges in their post-COVID-19 recovery, the global emphasis on social protection is growing rapidly. Marking this crucial inflection point, the United Nations Secretary-General emphasized social protection in his report, *'Our Common Agenda'*. The United Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) subsequently launched a 'Global Accelerator' for jobs, social protection and a just transition to a net-zero-emissions future, which aims to reach an additional 4 billion people with social protection. The unprecedented fiscal response to COVID-19 shows that rapid change is possible, and, as [UNICEF's work in over 100 countries shows](#), there is growing national interest in expanding social protection and ensuring systems are ready to respond to future crises, as well as making them more

inclusive of girls and women, children with disabilities, and displaced and migrant children. Realizing this potential will be a defining challenge of the coming years.

The pandemic overturned the everyday lives of adolescents, including impacts on their physical and mental health, their access to health care, their education, and the economic circumstances of their families and communities. Data gathered between March 2020 and October 2021 indicate that over 2.1 million children aged 10–17 years were estimated to have experienced orphanhood due to COVID-19. These children now face risks associated with orphanhood, including sexual violence, exploitation, HIV/AIDS, suicide, child labour, pregnancy, separation from family, household poverty, and leaving school to care for younger siblings.<sup>9</sup> We see an increase in the likelihood of [child marriage](#); over the next decade, up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic.<sup>10</sup> Pre-pandemic, it was estimated that 98 million adolescent boys aged 10–19 and 78 million adolescent girls aged 10–19 lived with a mental health disorder,<sup>11</sup> with new data signalling a 34 per cent increase in depression and anxiety for adolescents globally during the pandemic. The pandemic has also exacerbated the learning and skills crisis and threatens to create even more obstacles for adolescents as they transition from school to work.<sup>12</sup>

The pandemic has intensified the vulnerabilities of children with disabilities. It has increased their risk of exclusion, poverty and lack of access to critical services. The crisis has demonstrated that the limited systematic approach of inclusiveness in education, social protection, health care and child protection systems weaken resilience to major shocks such as public health emergencies and the consequences of climate change.

The impact of growing poverty and inequality has undermined years of progress made towards gender equality. Intersectional vulnerabilities – including but not limited to race, ethnicity, age, minority status, poverty and religion – have led to multidimensional deprivation and increased marginalization of women and girls. Setbacks in women's participation in the economy and girls' education and an increase in child marriage, gender-based violence and the burden of unpaid care work are evident and concerning. These factors have reinforced underlying and harmful gender norms and stereotypes about the status and roles of women and girls in society and deepened existing prejudices and discrimination.

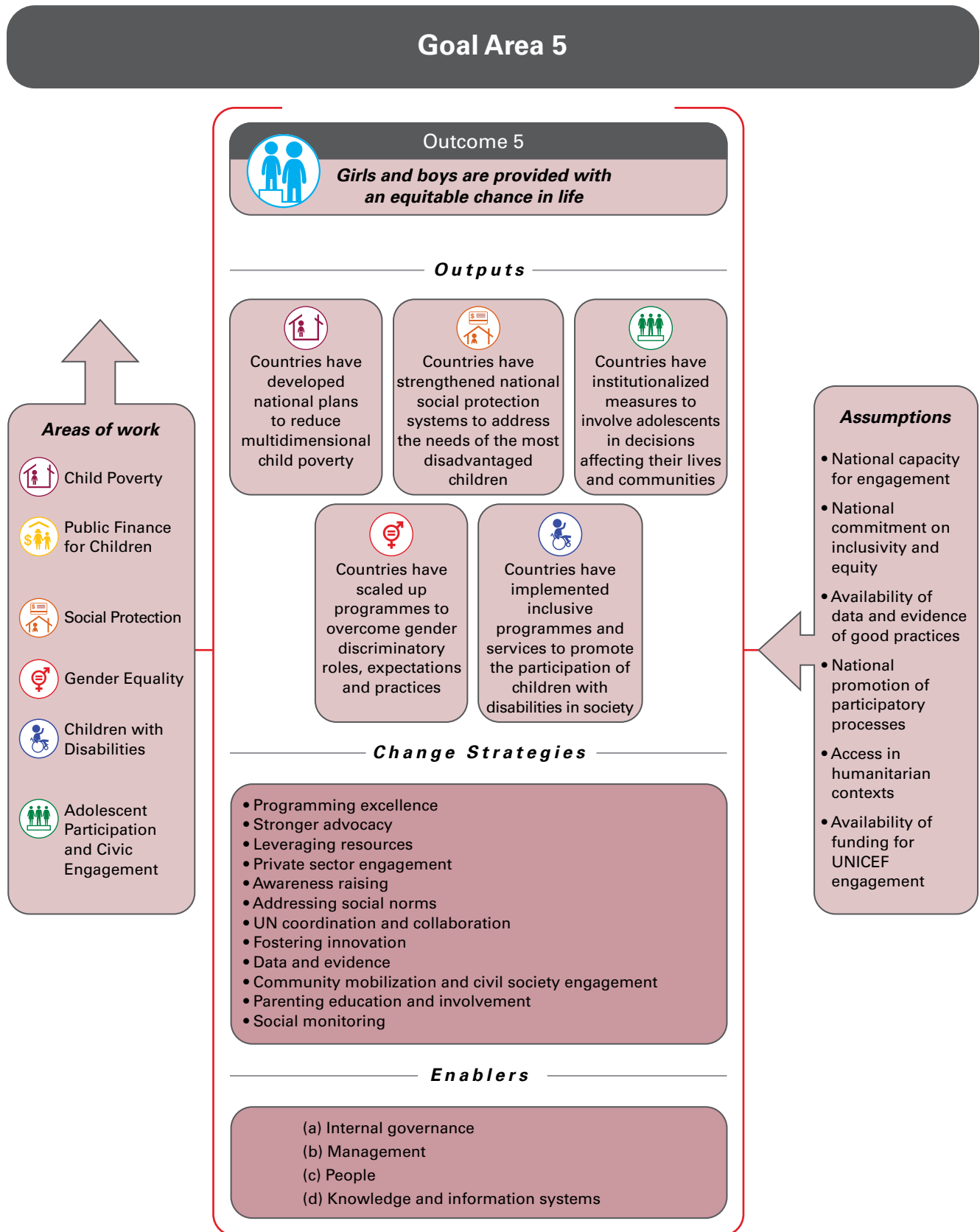
## Goal Area 5 theory of change

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UNICEF programming is systematically guided by the human rights-based approach and the provisions and principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments. UNICEF Goal Area 5 programming aims to ensure that every child has a fair chance in life, by reducing child poverty, combating discrimination and ensuring inclusion.

The theory of change to achieve Goal Area 5 results, through programmes in multidimensional poverty, social protection, public finance for children, gender equality, children with disabilities, and adolescents, is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: Goal Area 5 theory of change





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# Results: Child poverty – “Ending child poverty by 2030”

Eight-month-old Adifa smiles while being photographed at home in Bogor, West Java Province, Indonesia, on 1 November 2021.

Child poverty has devastating consequences for children, impacting their physical, cognitive and social development and affecting the full range of their rights, which can diminish their life chances and ability to realize their full potential. Children experience poverty as deprivations in their lives, including deprivations of nutrition, health, water, education and shelter – referred to as multidimensional child poverty.<sup>13</sup> In addition, a family's standard of living, reflected in monetary or income poverty,<sup>14</sup> is a critical element of the deprivations children experience. The impacts of child poverty can have serious implications for future generations and societies. Children are significantly more likely to live in poverty than adults, and thus early interventions and investment in children and their families are central to breaking the cycles of poverty.

In supporting countries to formulate contextualized responses to address child poverty, UNICEF works to systematically integrate child poverty as a central issue in national development plans, national agendas, policies and programmes.

UNICEF's approach to addressing child poverty focuses on:

- Enhancing the visibility of children living in poverty by supporting the universal, nationwide measurement of child poverty in all its dimensions
- Using policy analysis and engagement to influence policies and programmes to reduce child poverty
- Advocating for using child poverty measurements, and positioning child poverty as the highest priority in national development plans and poverty reduction strategies

## Child poverty reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

SDG 1, ending poverty in all its forms, includes three key poverty indicators/measures which UNICEF tracks at global and national levels, namely:

- Indicator 1.1.1 on ending **extreme monetary child poverty** by 2030 (children struggling to survive on less than purchasing power parity US\$1.90/day)
- Indicator 1.2.1 on halving **monetary child poverty as nationally defined** by 2030 (children living below the national poverty line)
- Indicator 1.2.2 on halving **multidimensional child poverty as nationally defined** by 2030

# Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards ending child poverty by 2030

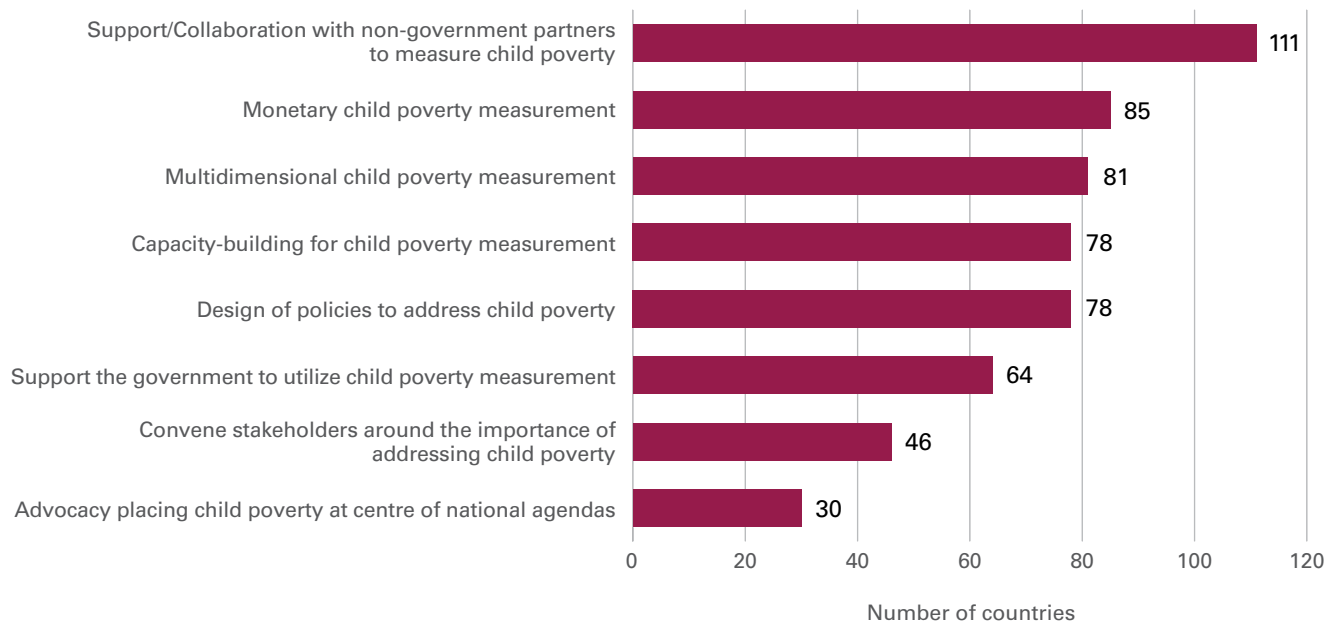
## Summary of global results

In 2021, UNICEF continued to prioritize assessing and highlighting the devastating impact of COVID-19 on children and their families, including via socioeconomic impact and child poverty assessments, and updated joint global estimates with Save the Children on the impact of the crisis on child poverty.

By the end of 2021, 71 countries were routinely measuring and reporting on multidimensional child poverty, and 86 on monetary poverty. UNICEF offices in 111 countries engaged in child poverty advocacy efforts (*see Figure 2*), and in 33 countries their evidence led to policies and programmes that contributed to a meaningful reduction in child poverty (*see Figure 3*).

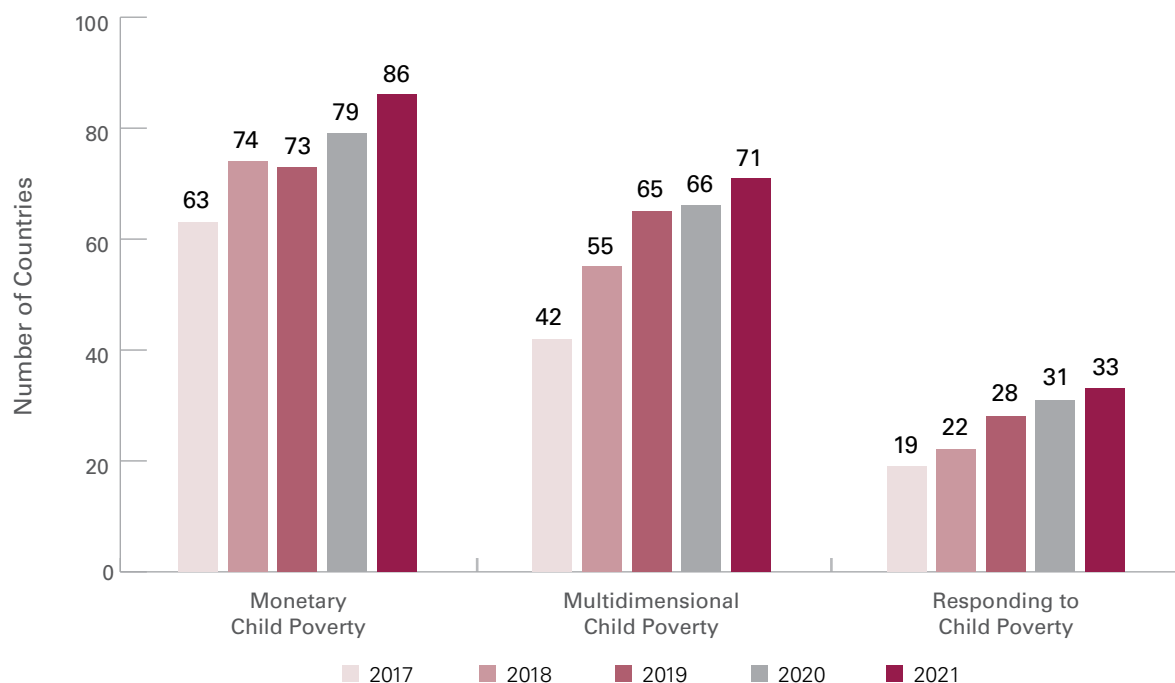


FIGURE 2: UNICEF support to child poverty, 2021



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>15</sup>

FIGURE 3: Global progress in countries measuring and addressing child poverty – UNICEF internal monitoring



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>16</sup>

## Evidence-informed policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis and recovery

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF has been at the forefront of assessing the socioeconomic impact of the crisis on children and their families, including those living in poverty, and has engaged with and supported governments and partners in over 86 countries since 2020. This has included collaborations with various United Nations partners, as outlined in the United Nations framework for the socioeconomic response to COVID-19.<sup>17</sup> At the global level, UNICEF partnered with Save the Children in 2021 for updated estimates on the impact of the crisis on children living in poverty, showing that an additional 100 million children are estimated to be living in multidimensional poverty because of the pandemic, a 10 per cent increase since 2019.

UNICEF partnered with the World Bank to analyse the global impact of COVID-19 on households with children, using high-frequency phone survey data (results released in early 2022). In Belarus, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Mexico, Senegal and Zambia, among many other countries, UNICEF led and/or supported real-time monitoring of the impact of the crisis to rapidly inform policies and programmes, using data from several rounds of phone field surveys or online surveys. In Liberia, UNICEF and the World Bank partnered to analyse the impact of COVID-19 on children and women, using high-frequency phone surveys. Joint analysis revealed that nearly 80 per cent of households had skipped a meal at the height of the pandemic, and up to 32 per cent went without eating for a whole day.<sup>18</sup>

In many countries, UNICEF supported follow-up rounds of analysis after the initial impact of the pandemic. For example, in the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF twice assessed the impact of COVID-19 on remittances, a lifeline for many families in the country, and analysed the coping mechanisms families have resorted to. In North Macedonia, a follow-up study projected that relative poverty increased from 28 per cent to 32 per cent due to the pandemic, underlining the importance of expanding cash transfers. A UNICEF longitudinal study in Serbia found that the crisis significantly impacted the income security of households with children, with almost 50 per cent of families experiencing a decline in income from the onset of the pandemic.<sup>19</sup> In Viet Nam, UNICEF commissioned a follow-up study on the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on children and families to inform the country's short-, medium- and long-term recovery policies and plans.<sup>20</sup> In Morocco, UNICEF supported the High Commission for Planning to conduct the third round of a COVID-19 impact survey, and, in collaboration with the National Human Development Observatory, has produced timely evidence on the impact on child poverty.

In both 2020 and 2021, UNICEF-supported analysis and emerging recommendations relating to COVID-19 provided crucial evidence in support of placing children and their

families high on government agendas during the response and recovery, with specific emphasis on those living in poverty and exclusion. This included the following:

- In Mali, UNICEF supported a modelling study of the impact of COVID-19 on households, and in Indonesia UNICEF supported microsimulations on the impact of COVID-19 on child poverty, the results of which were used to advocate for and influence child-focused policies, highlighting how social protection has mitigated the impact of the crisis on those living in or vulnerable to poverty.
- In the Maldives, UNICEF continued its support to the Bureau of Statistics, building on its earlier collaboration in measuring multidimensional poverty, and in 2021 launched the first-ever national Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, highlighting concentrations of vulnerable populations and providing robust evidence for programme targeting and the possible reallocation of resources.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF research highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable families and their access to basic social services. The research revealed that the pandemic has increased existing gaps, highlighting the need for increased investment in shock-responsive social protection programmes.
- UNICEF-supported analysis in the Philippines showed the impact of the pandemic on child poverty and provided costed policy advice, including for the scale-up of social protection. The analysis was presented to the House of Representatives before the start of the 2022 budget deliberations, the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster, and at the Joint Review Missions of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) with the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- In Ukraine, UNICEF contributed significantly to producing new evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on poor and other vulnerable children, to place them at the centre of planning as well as the implementation of response measures.
- In Jordan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, UNICEF published a policy brief on the nation's social protection response during COVID-19, reflecting on measures taken by Jordan during the pandemic, emerging challenges and key lessons learned.
- In Chile, joint UNICEF, ILO and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) analysis highlighted the impact of the pandemic on households with children, resulting in increased public awareness of the impact of the crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable.

FIGURE 4: COVID-19 and UNICEF-supported child poverty and socioeconomic analysis in 2021



Source: UNICEF (2021).<sup>21</sup>

## Reaching SDG Goal 1: Partnerships to measure and monitor child poverty

In 2021, UNICEF supported the measurement of multidimensional child poverty in 64 countries and the measurement of monetary child poverty in 46 countries, through government, stakeholder and research partnerships.

- In multiple countries, UNICEF supported national statistical offices, advising on household survey modules to capture multidimensional child poverty and plan for child poverty analysis to be undertaken in 2021/2022, including in Belize, Burundi, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Tunisia. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNICEF helped to establish a task force of relevant stakeholders to plan for systematic measurement of child poverty. In Chile, UNICEF launched a two-year study on child poverty, conducted with the Alliance to Eradicate Poverty.
- In Afghanistan, Jamaica, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, UNICEF partnered with respective government partners, UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative for the development of national multidimensional child poverty estimates.
- In Uruguay, UNICEF and UNDP initiated support to the National Institute of Statistics to start developing a national multidimensional poverty index, with a focus on children.
- In China, UNICEF supported the government to enrich the evidence base on the characteristics of children experiencing multidimensional deprivations, through collaboration with the China Center for Social Policy at Columbia University. In addition, a partnership with the International Poverty Reduction Center in China and Zhejiang University was launched to analyse the impact on children of the national targeted poverty alleviation programme 2012–2020. The results are expected to inform the scale-up of child-sensitive policy interventions.

- Monetary child poverty was analysed for the first time in Côte d'Ivoire in 2021, the result of collaboration between the planning ministry and UNICEF, revealing that nearly half of the children in the country are living in monetary poverty. The results will inform Côte d'Ivoire's national development plan for 2021–2025, as well as the national social protection strategy.
- In Ethiopia, UNICEF provided support to the government for the monitoring of progress towards the SDGs for children, by undertaking in-depth analysis of national surveys and including disaggregated poverty levels as one of the indicators in the country's new 10-year development plan for 2020–2030.
- In South Africa, UNICEF supported the government and partners with the continuous revision of human-centric tools to measure poverty, in follow-up to the 2020 study on multidimensional child poverty.
- In Uganda, UNICEF partnered with the Bureau of Statistics and the University of Bristol for both monetary and multidimensional child poverty analysis, and with the Office of the Prime Minister and the University of Cardiff for embedding the measurement of multidimensional child poverty into the monitoring and evaluation of national social protection programmes.
- In the Islamic Republic of Iran, building on the results of a multidimensional poverty study, UNICEF's continuous advocacy at various levels resulted in approval from the High Council of Statistics to systematically and regularly measure multidimensional child and adult poverty.
- The UNICEF-supported report *Child Poverty and Disparities in Ukraine* proposed 10 concrete measures for reducing child poverty and reversing the negative impact of COVID-19 in the country.<sup>22</sup> UNICEF launched the report jointly with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and supported a wide range of consultations with key counterparts from the government, civil society and international organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), United Nations agencies and bilateral donors. Tragically, just a few months after these measures were proposed, Ukraine faces an entirely different scenario.
- In addition to the measurement of monetary and multidimensional child poverty, UNICEF has supported child poverty-related qualitative analysis research, for example in Lebanon, where UNICEF supported the completion of a qualitative research study on child well-being in 2021.

FIGURE 5: UNICEF-supported child poverty analyses published in 2021



Source: UNICEF (2021).<sup>23</sup>

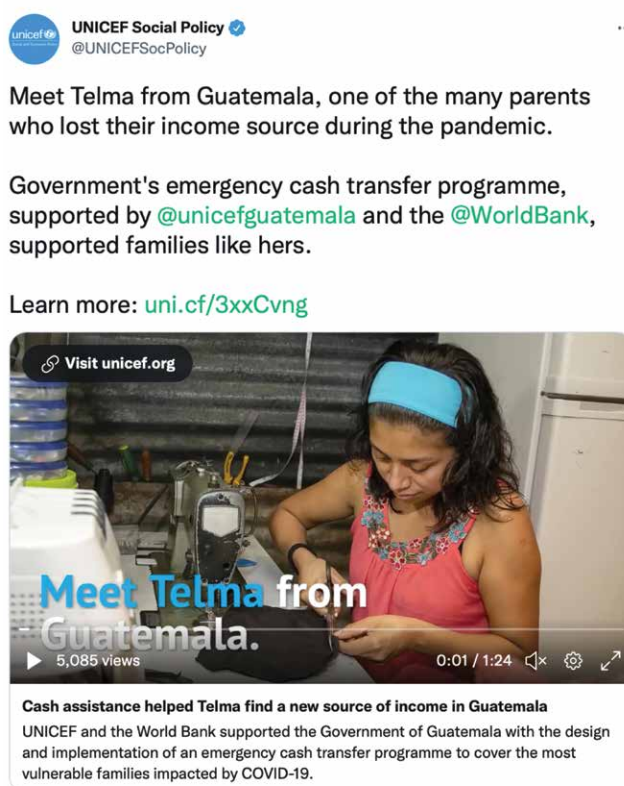
## Building capacity to address child poverty

Nationally owned systems to measure and monitor child poverty, and the development of policies to address it, are at the heart of UNICEF's work on child poverty. To ensure routine monitoring, the measurement of child poverty needs to be embedded in national statistical systems and processes. National ownership of child poverty measurement and the technical capacities to produce this evidence are key to strengthening systems and tackling child poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of timely, reliable data on child poverty and the role this evidence can play in shaping policy responses. In 2021, UNICEF supported many countries in strengthening national systems to measure, report and analyse child poverty, and provided insight into how to translate this evidence into policy and programme responses.

- UNICEF supported governments in Pakistan and Rwanda to strengthen their SDG monitoring framework through financial and technical assistance, administrative and data analysis systems and improved data storage capacity.
- To generate evidence for advocacy, policy design and evaluation, UNICEF supported governments in Benin and Lesotho to develop comprehensive reports on child poverty and produce communications materials.
- UNICEF provided technical support to government ministries and statistical agencies in Algeria, Belarus, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Guyana, Kazakhstan, Namibia, Pakistan and Thailand to develop a methodology to measure multidimensional child poverty at a national level. This support included technical assistance and capacity-building, as well as advising national experts on how to incorporate a focus on multidimensional child poverty within existing general multidimensional poverty measures. Alongside this technical assistance, UNICEF undertook specific advocacy in Bhutan and Guyana that contributed to the national poverty task forces in both countries, including the measurement of multidimensional child poverty in their mandates.
- UNICEF helped with collecting and analysing data using the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis methodology in Algeria, Azerbaijan and Rwanda, including capacity-building training.
- UNICEF, in partnership with the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning and other line ministries, developed a module to integrate child poverty estimation into the country's Household Income and Expenditure Surveys and enhanced the capacities of partners in estimating child poverty.

- In Timor Leste, despite the challenging context in the country due to both COVID-19 and extreme floods, UNICEF supported the government with capacity-building, including the first-ever national multidimensional poverty measure (based on 2014 data), providing a baseline for SDG indicator 1.2.2 and guiding pro-poor policies and programmes.

FIGURE 6: Communications and advocacy to address and end child poverty



The image is a screenshot of a tweet from the account 'UNICEF Social Policy' (@UNICEFSocPolicy). The tweet includes a video player with a thumbnail showing a woman, Telma, working at a sewing machine. The video title is 'Meet Telma from Guatemala.' and it has 5,085 views. Below the video, the text reads: 'Cash assistance helped Telma find a new source of income in Guatemala. UNICEF and the World Bank supported the Government of Guatemala with the design and implementation of an emergency cash transfer programme to cover the most vulnerable families impacted by COVID-19.'

4:00 PM · Dec 30, 2021 · Twitter Media Studio

Source: UNICEF Social Policy Twitter channel. <sup>24</sup>

To translate evidence into action, 111 UNICEF offices engaged in child poverty advocacy efforts (see Figure 2), and in 33 countries this evidence led to policies and programmes that contributed to a reduction in child poverty (see Figure 3). At the global level, UNICEF continued to communicate and advocate for policies to address and end child poverty. UNICEF emphasized communicating its work to policy influencers, decision makers, researchers and general audiences around the world, including through social media, blog posts, videos and articles.

- UNICEF Malaysia’s response to COVID-19 benefited from rapid social policy actions, with UNICEF leading in many areas through its evidence generation activities and advocacy efforts. A study by UNICEF and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the quasi-longitudinal Families on the Edge research project continued in 2021 with its third and fourth publications. The study was complemented by a proactive public communications and political advocacy strategy and received unprecedented media and political attention. By the end of this project, media coverage had included over 140 print and digital news articles, around 15 television and radio interviews, and 5 mini documentaries made by a national broadcaster.
- In Argentina, rapid assessments informed UNICEF’s COVID-19 response plan at different stages of the pandemic, generating evidence to inform policies, for example that at the height of the pandemic 62 per cent of all households in Argentina experienced a decline in their income. The evidence, published in *Monetary poverty and non-monetary deprivations in Argentina*,<sup>25</sup> a joint effort by Universidad Nacional de General Sarmiento, the Interdisciplinary Institute of Political Economy of Buenos Aires, the Institute of Labor Studies and Economic Development, Equity for Children and UNICEF, inspired extensive communications and public advocacy, with 79 published articles reaching nearly 11 million people.

## Policy design and recommendations

UNICEF’s support to governments for the measurement and monitoring of child poverty, and related advocacy, can increase awareness among the public and decision makers on the importance of addressing child poverty – and lay the foundations for change to end child poverty by influencing governments’ policies, plans, strategies, policies and programmes. Examples of UNICEF’s impact in 2021 include the following.

In Georgia, the national statistical office, GeoStat, reported increased poverty rates after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting that children remained the poorest group in the country. UNICEF evaluated Georgia’s targeted

FIGURE 7: @UNICEFSocPolicy Twitter account



Source: UNICEF Social Policy Twitter channel.<sup>26</sup>

social assistance (TSA) programme and provided the government with crucial evidence on its impact, including the fact that the existing food vouchers were not resulting in increased expenditure/consumption for children, as intended. Based on this analysis, the government abolished food vouchers for children and started to exclusively distribute cash for children. In addition, the government doubled its investment in child cash benefits and increased the number of children reached. Currently, 213,583 children (around 20 per cent of the child population) receive the child cash benefit. Further, to ensure continuity of services during the pandemic and its related restrictions, UNICEF provided support to the social service agency that administers the TSA programme and other cash support.

## Are countries committed to ending child poverty by 2030?

The Decade of Action emphasizes the need to intensify efforts to reach the ambitious goal of ending poverty, including among children. Key tools for accountability and monitoring progress towards achieving the SDGs are the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). They allow for both national-level monitoring and global reporting. UNICEF social policy staff supported these reviews in a number of countries in 2021, including Angola, Chad, Madagascar and Sierra Leone.

UNICEF and the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty reviewed the VNRs submitted in 2021 to assess countries' progress on tackling child poverty and meeting the targets set out in the child poverty-related indicators of Goal 1. The review of the VNRs suggest a mixed picture, with some progress being made on the measurement of monetary child poverty, but still very few countries meeting the SDG requirement to measure multidimensional child poverty.<sup>27</sup> Between 2017 and 2021, 219 VNRs were undertaken, of which about 30 per cent reported on monetary child poverty and just 12 per cent reported on multidimensional child poverty.

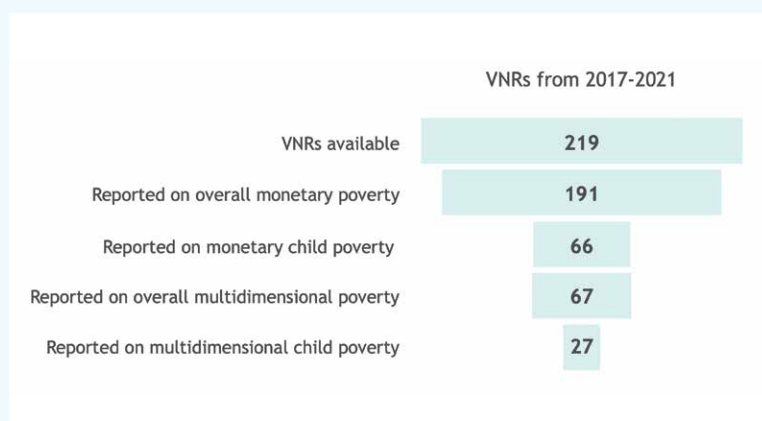


The VNRs from 2017–2021 show that many countries are designing and implementing measures to reduce poverty among families and children, for example by expanding child-sensitive social protection, improving the access and quality of public services for the poorest and, as 11 countries are doing, prioritizing children in national development plans. These are all important elements of tackling child poverty, but evidence suggests that a comprehensive national plan to reduce child poverty is integral to achieving sustained progress. There were four notable examples of countries that have developed such coordinated plans, but otherwise there was little evidence in the VNRs that countries are developing these comprehensive approaches. In Japan, Norway, Spain and Zimbabwe, governments have adopted a strategy with either a particular focus on children or a specific set of targets within a wider anti-poverty strategy focused on children and young people.

Overall, the 2021 VNRs suggest that progress is being made to address child poverty. However, large gaps remain, particularly regarding the number of countries that are fulfilling the SDG requirement to measure monetary and multidimensional child poverty. Furthermore, in many of the VNRs, countries mentioned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health, societies and economies, as well as the policy responses they initiated during this period, but an explicit focus on children was mostly missing from their analysis.

Positive, child-focused responses outlined in the VNRs include the following.

- Cabo Verde designed and delivered additional supports for poor families with children under 15 years.
- As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2018 earthquake, the Government of Indonesia has developed an emergency cash-based assistance programme for children affected by disasters.
- The Ministry of Children and Adolescents in Paraguay found that the age group most affected by the pandemic was those under 15 years. As a result, it implemented a comprehensive response to the health emergency, delivering hygiene and food kits to families.



These are very positive developments that highlight the link between the measurement of child poverty and policy action. As the first year of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs drew to a close, it was clear that much more needed to be done to do so, both in terms of the measurement of child poverty and policy responses. Without transparent and accessible measurements of child poverty, civil society and other stakeholders are unable to hold governments to account on SDG progress to end child poverty.

In Belarus, UNICEF generated evidence using multidimensional child poverty analysis as a potential tool to guide programmes and reduce multidimensional child poverty during the COVID-19 response and recovery. Based on this analysis, UNICEF convened government partners to discuss the need to assess the main national TSA programme and its effectiveness in addressing and reducing child poverty.

In Namibia, the official launch in 2021 of the Namibia Multidimensional Index ensures that the government routinely measures and reports both monetary and non-monetary child poverty. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the importance of strong and responsive social protection systems. With evidence showing that children remain the poorest demographic, in terms of monetary and multidimensional poverty – 20.6 per cent and 51.3 per cent compared with the national average of 17.4 per cent and 41.3 per cent, respectively<sup>28</sup> – UNICEF intensified its advocacy and support towards finalizing the new child-sensitive social protection policy, which will launch in 2022.

In the Philippines, UNICEF and partners analysed the poverty registry to provide concrete recommendations on how to strengthen shock-responsive social protection in the poorest region in the country.

In Haiti, a UNICEF-supported study on child poverty, alongside an equity-focused situation analysis of children and women, enhanced the child-related recommendations of the common country assessment, including recommendations for expanding child-sensitive social protection.

UNICEF in Nigeria closely collaborated with key government institutions for the first-ever monetary and multidimensional child poverty measurement. The results were used extensively to influence and support child-friendly budgeting and development planning at federal and state levels. In addition, the analysis informed policy measures of the National Social Protection Policy (which was, as of the end of 2021, awaiting approval).

In Mali, UNICEF supported the development of a communal poverty index, providing key information for the classification of 703 communes based on poverty status. The index is an important tool for targeting the most vulnerable communes to be prioritized for programme delivery and the programmatic convergence of the interventions.

In the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF developed a deprivation measurement tool, using indicators commonly used for measuring multidimensional child poverty, with the objective of identifying the key deprivations faced by children and adolescents at district level. The tool has been piloted in one district, and UNICEF is looking at opportunities to replicate the model in other parts of the country to further identify priorities and strategic planning at the local level, in favour of strengthened social services for children.

In Chad, the child-sensitive public policy agenda was boosted by the first-ever nationally owned child poverty measurement, supported by UNICEF, providing new evidence on the contribution of social protection to educational attainment and absolute poverty reduction, as well as up-to-date, disaggregated data on children.

## National planning processes and influencing policies and programmes

For many countries, a key step in addressing child poverty is to support the development of poverty reduction plans that fully consider children's rights and the situation of children living in poverty, or a child-specific national action plan, bringing together the reality of children in poverty, and integrated policy and programmatic solutions. When these plans are implemented, it is vital that they are monitored and evaluated.

In Trinidad, UNICEF is supporting the Office of the Prime Minister to develop a national child poverty reduction strategy, and participates in the cabinet-appointed committee guiding this process. In Bulgaria, UNICEF supported the government to expand access and improve the quality of services for poor and vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, Roma children and children in precarious family situations. This work came under the umbrella of the European Child Guarantee – which was adopted by the European Council in June 2021 to ensure that every child has access to key essential services – and was guided by a two-year action plan for the implementation the National Strategy for Reduction of Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion. Furthermore, UNICEF Bulgaria initiated a deep dive into national child poverty reduction policies, to inform a national action plan towards achieving the European Child Guarantee.

In Nepal UNICEF, in collaboration with the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, supported the Central Bureau of Statistics in the analysis of multidimensional poverty, including child poverty, highlighting the progress made in achieving the strategic priorities of Nepal's 15th five-year development plan and its SDGs.

In Egypt, UNICEF continued its partnership in 2021 with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the University of Cairo, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, the American University in Cairo and the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, as well as other researchers. UNICEF's work enhanced the evidence on child poverty, placing child rights and children's deprivations at the centre of policy debates and policymaking. In 2021, UNICEF initiated a new collaboration with the Information Decision and Support Center of the Egyptian Cabinet to further expand the reach of UNICEF-supported evidence and to support policymaking on issues important to children, with a focus on the Prime Minister's Office and the Egyptian Cabinet. Furthermore,



## Case Study 1: Montenegro: Understanding the complex realities of children in poverty and inspiring the expansion of a universal child benefit

Prior to the pandemic, one in every three children in Montenegro were at risk of living in poverty. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) had a devastating impact on children. UNICEF, in collaboration with partners, was able to support the government to place child poverty at the centre of its agenda through evidence, analysis, advocacy and partnerships, which ultimately led to the following.

- **Multidimensional child poverty study using multiple overlapping deprivation analysis:** UNICEF supported the government by producing a child poverty study,<sup>29</sup> which revealed that more than 80 per cent of Montenegro's children were deprived in at least one of the seven factors that are essential for a child's development (health, nutrition, early childhood development and education, and the absence of neglect, discipline, and child labour). In Montenegro, at least one in every two children are not enrolled in preschool. At least three out of five are not immunized against measles, mumps and rubella on time, and more than three out of five experience some form of violent discipline in their home. The analysis found that young children up to the age of 5 are the most disadvantaged age group in Montenegro, facing combined deprivations in all seven areas, preventing them from reaching their full human development potential. Half of Roma children up to the age of 5 are simultaneously deprived in early childhood education, housing and access to utilities. The report suggests that combating child poverty and how it manifests in the lives of children requires tailored social protection responses, in addition to multisectoral responses to poverty and vulnerability and long-term investments in human development that will reap high overall benefits for society along the road.
- **Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) for social protection system assessment:** UNICEF supported an analysis of the social protection system in Montenegro using the international methodology CODI. As a result, an overarching road map of reforms was presented to and validated by the Steering Committee led by the Minister of Finance and Social Welfare. This document proposes a list of social and child protection system reforms validated by relevant ministries, international organizations, community-based civil society organizations and beneficiary populations. The government can choose to implement those that respond best to Montenegro's needs, in line with their cost-benefit analysis and national reform priorities.
- **Advocacy campaign against child poverty:** UNICEF Montenegro prepared a variety of advocacy materials on tackling child poverty. UNICEF's representative published an op-ed on child poverty that was covered by all media.<sup>30</sup> In addition, UNICEF organized interviews with the main stakeholders in the country, conceptualized as one-minute videos, responding to the question, "What needs to be done to reduce child poverty?" UNICEF's young reporters interviewed key stakeholders in the country<sup>31</sup> (the speaker of Montenegro's Parliament, representatives of all parliamentary clubs, ombudsman, civil society, academics, international community, young people and parents) about how to reduce child poverty in Montenegro, creating an influential national media and social media campaign.

Based on this evidence and analyses, as well as an effective advocacy campaign, Montenegro's Parliament adopted a universal child allowance for children up to 6 years old (in June 2020), with a focus on providing long-term predictability, in line with investing in the early years of childhood as a crucial window of opportunity for every child's development. In December 2021, the Parliament of Montenegro passed a law to expand the child allowance scheme to cover all children up to 18 years of age.<sup>32</sup> The roll-out is planned for the end of 2022. The child allowance coverage rate increased from approximately 13,000 children (10 per cent of all children) in 2020, to 50,000 (38 per cent) in 2021, and is now expected to reach all children (more than 130,000) with this universal scheme in 2022.



Two seven-year-old girls are playing outside in the municipality of Bijelo Polje, Montenegro.

UNICEF contributed to the midterm review of the current United Nations Partnership Development Framework and the development of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which starts in 2023 in Egypt, by authoring diagnostic papers on children and poverty, and on poverty and vulnerable groups, and co-authoring others for input into the Common Country Assessment of Egypt.

UNICEF supported the National Planning and Development Commission in Ghana, to advocate for the inclusion and prioritization of inclusive growth, to address child poverty and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, and develop the national Medium-Term National Development

Policy Framework. The UNICEF-supported analysis on inclusive growth, multidimensional child poverty, and the impact of COVID-19 on children was used to inform the process, including during regional workshops, for input into the framework.

With UNICEF support, monetary and multidimensional child poverty was reported and analysed in 2021 by the government in Namibia. This analysis informed national budgets and the next round of the National Development Plan, highlighting the need for strategies and greater investments in reducing child poverty, which remains disproportionately high at 51.3 per cent compared with the national average of 43 per cent.

## Looking ahead

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We are witnessing an unprecedented increase in child poverty after nearly a quarter of a century of steady global advances. This is a result of the economic impacts of COVID-19, alongside the ongoing and pressing effects of conflict and climate change.

This changed landscape requires UNICEF and partners to focus on reversing the negative impacts of the pandemic, climate change and conflict, while continuing to accelerate towards the SDGs to end extreme child poverty and halve multidimensional child poverty by 2030.

UNICEF will work to further understand the new profiles of children and families now living in poverty. That is, who they are and how to reach them with social services and programmes including income support. Early indications and analysis show that up to 75 per cent of the 'new poor' – those who had been spared from poverty until now – come from middle-income countries (including India and the Niger). They are also more likely to be living in urban areas and to be more educated than those in chronic poverty.<sup>33</sup>

While this new landscape requires a shift in focus, the fact remains that those who were the poorest and most vulnerable prior to the COVID-19 crisis remain the most affected, falling deeper into poverty. Hence, the routine measuring and reporting on child poverty in every country is of foundational importance, as the increased visibility of child poverty leads to changes in national policies and programmes that can address and, ultimately, end it. While we have seen significant improvements in this area, there is still a long way to go.

Looking ahead, we see two challenges. First, governments must undertake child poverty measurement as part of national statistical processes, moving beyond occasional or

ad hoc exercises. Secondly, all existing measures need to be integrated into national reporting processes, including SDG tracking. This is essential if we are to monitor progress towards ending child poverty, both nationally and at the global level. This area of work will remain a top priority for UNICEF as the organization accelerates its work with governments to prioritize the measurement of child poverty and build government capacity to do so.

Moving the needle towards progress also requires prioritization of the design and implementation of policies to reduce child poverty. Accelerating the use of measures to change policies and programmes is a top priority as we enter the crucial period of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, with other emerging threats on the horizon. In 2021, UNICEF produced the first comprehensive review of how multidimensional poverty measures can be used to make an impact, and in early 2022 the organization will be releasing a similar publication on monetary child poverty. This will support the scale-up of UNICEF's work to design and implement policy and programming that responds to the challenges of COVID-19 recovery and climate change to address child poverty.

Finally, strengthening and expanding global and national partnerships in child poverty will be essential to maintaining and increasing the focus on child poverty at this critical moment. UNICEF is well positioned to take these collaborations forward. In 2022, the organization will deepen its ongoing relationship with the World Bank to measure, analyse and communicate issues relating to child poverty, and to focus on coordinated advocacy, communication and programming efforts through our role as co-chair of the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty.



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# Results: Public finance for children “Protecting the rights of children through greater and more equitable investments”

11 December 2020. Praia Gamboa, Sao Tomé, Sao Tomé e Príncipe. Portrait of Berlinda Jarizete dos Ramos Menezes de Barros (18).

Realizing child rights requires social and fiscal policies that prioritize public budgets as a key modality for investment in human capital. The overarching goal of UNICEF's Public Finance for Children (PF4C) work is to contribute to the realization of children's rights by supporting the best possible use of public finance. UNICEF's work in public finance is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 4 and General Comment No. 19 on Public Budgeting for the Realization of Child Rights), as well as with critical 2030 Agenda targets.

Leveraging its extensive expertise and partnerships, UNICEF works with governments and other organizations to ensure that children are prioritized in the allocation of national resources and investments across social sectors, and that they can access essential social services. Moreover, UNICEF works with ministries of finance, social sector ministries and subnational governments to increase investment and ensure that resources for children and families are spent effectively, while promoting the identification of additional financing options to address gaps in programming. UNICEF ensures resources are better distributed to promote equitable spending, with greater attention to disadvantaged groups, and that citizens including children and adolescents are empowered to monitor and participate in budget processes for more transparent and accountable spending.<sup>34</sup>

UNICEF encountered major challenges to achieving these objectives in 2021 owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. LMICs faced decreasing government revenues, exacerbated by the economic impact of the pandemic, and the uncertainty generated by new variants of the coronavirus. In LMICs, especially where debt is as high as 64 per cent of GDP or more,<sup>35</sup> this has impacted social spending.<sup>36</sup>

The COVID-19 crisis has weakened the adequacy of resources, exacerbated inequities between the poorest and the richest nations, as well as within countries, and changed the financing landscape. In this context, in July 2021, UNICEF launched a call to action, [Financing an Inclusive Recovery for Children](#).<sup>37</sup> This mandates doubling down on investments in human capital, and prioritizing an inclusive recovery. It highlights the critical and urgent actions required to prevent a crisis in social sector spending, to reverse the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children and ensure an inclusive recovery that leaves no one behind. It focuses on three key actions to ensure an impact on child poverty: safeguarding social spending, ensuring effective and efficient use of resources, and identifying and deploying additional international and domestic resources.

UNICEF has worked to translate this call to action into concrete results via several key measures, including: accelerated evidence generation and evidence-based advocacy, public finance capacity-building, and enhanced engagements with governments and international partners to strengthen national and subnational social sector budgets. UNICEF also contributed to work on costing and financing for the equitable delivery of COVID-19 vaccines as

an essential step towards limiting the spread of COVID-19 and curbing its far-reaching impacts. UNICEF's PF4C work to highlight the risks and implications for countries' domestic financing provided a critical contribution to the multi-partner agenda on vaccines. PF4C worked closely with UNICEF immunization and health experts to estimate global costs for vaccine delivery, track existing external support and identify country-level funding gaps. This helped to inform donor strategies and resource allocations, and assisted with highlighting and prioritizing country needs.

The new strategic plan will continue its focus on public finance for children as a key programming modality. UNICEF will take a rights-based approach to financing, with a focus on SDG 1, which aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, and indicators 1.a.2 (the proportion of total government spending on essential services),<sup>38</sup> and 1.b.1 (the proportion of government spending on health and education and direct transfers that directly benefit the monetary poor).<sup>39</sup>

UNICEF's call to action for inclusive recovery is centred on three critical measures to accelerate its impact on child poverty.

1. Safeguard critical social spending and minimize the negative impacts of the economic crisis, ensuring children are last in line for budget cuts.
2. Ensure the effective and efficient use of financial resources across social sectors for human capital development, maximizing coverage and impact for all children.
3. Identify and deploy additional international and domestic financing options, using innovative approaches as necessary, to direct adequate finance towards an inclusive recovery that: protects children, especially the poorest and most marginalized; tackles inequalities that have been revealed and deepened by the pandemic, including those of gender; and that sets a course for economies to be more resilient in the face of future shocks.

# Results achieved and challenges towards protecting the rights of children through greater and equitable investments

## Summary of global results

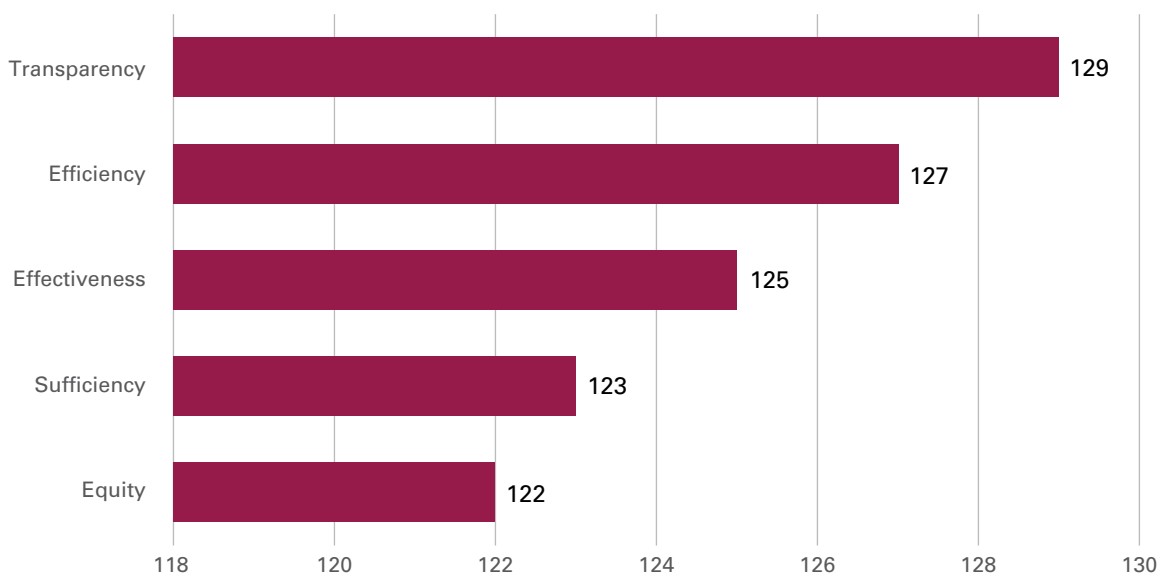
In 2021, UNICEF's country-level work in public finance grew significantly, engaging a total of 137 countries (up from 124 in 2020). UNICEF worked with governments, UN agencies, international financial institutions, development partners and the private sector to strengthen social sector budgets and leverage resources for children. It also worked across all the key public finance dimensions; that is, sufficiency/adequacy, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and equity (see Figure 8). UNICEF also accelerated evidence generation on social spending and established the Social Spending Monitor, which aims to generate routine data on social sector expenditure at a global level.

UNICEF's PF4C work aims to ensure better social sector spending, while addressing public financial management constraints that hinder the delivery of social services. In 2021, UNICEF's public finance work was a key component across multiple sectors, including social protection, education, health, child protection, early childhood development, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), adolescent participation and development, gender, climate, and communication for behavioural change<sup>45i</sup> (see Figure 9).

## The Social Spending Monitor

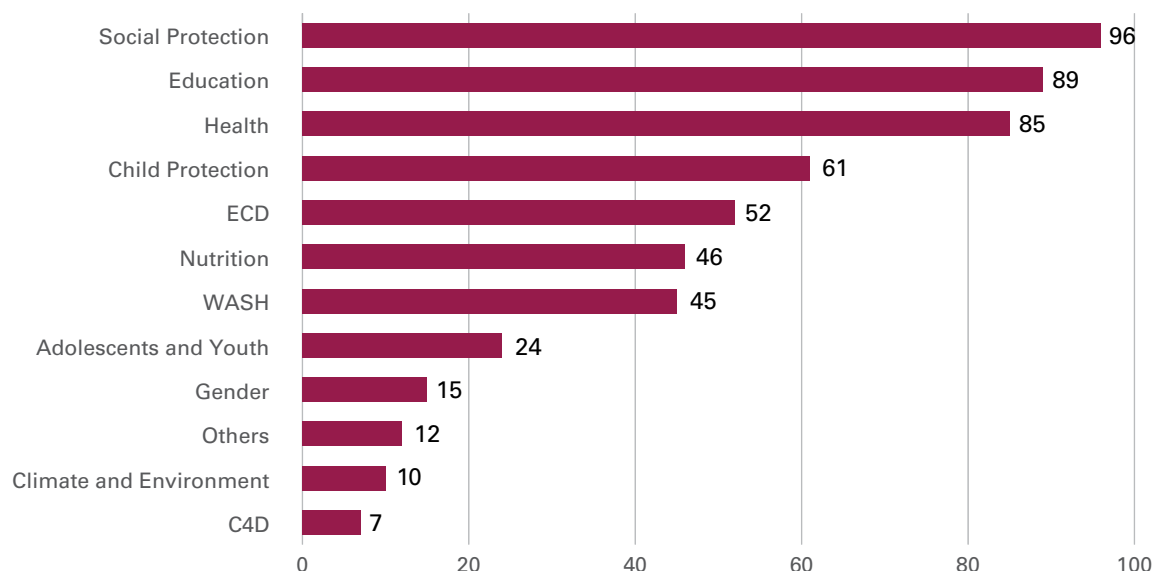
UNICEF's Social Spending Monitor<sup>40</sup> is an evidence-based advocacy platform for protecting and transforming social spending for children during COVID-19 and beyond. It aims to generate evidence on social spending and shed light on the current and potential impacts of COVID-19 on public finance for children, as well as the consequences of economic and fiscal policies on children in the short, medium and long term. UNICEF published two policy briefs, one on the looming debt crisis for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and its impact on children,<sup>41</sup> and one on shortfalls in social spending in LMICs,<sup>42</sup> in addition to five monthly updates, which provided routing monitoring on social spending at country level.<sup>43</sup>

FIGURE 8: Number of countries reporting (137) on engaging with governments on public finance, by dimension



Source: UNICEF, Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>44</sup>

FIGURE 9: Country offices (total 137) working on public finance for children, by sector



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Communication for Behavioural Change (C4D) is the current Social and Behavioural Change Programme.

A strengthened social sector budget refers to actions undertaken by UNICEF country offices, in collaboration with partners – in terms of evidence, policy and technical advice, and capacity-strengthening – that lead to tangible results in social sector financing, and ultimately contribute to improved access to services for children, including the most disadvantaged. In 2021, UNICEF’s PF4C work strengthened social sector budgets in 65 countries (up from 55 in 2020). UNICEF has been able to deliver important results for children in public finance by working in partnership with governments, the United Nations system, international financial institutions and development organizations.

## Promoting adequate investment for children’s rights

UNICEF works to promote adequate investments in social sectors that contribute to the realization of child rights, at national and local levels. When public resources are not sufficient to cover the cost of social services for children, UNICEF engages with countries to increase social sector financing through various sources, including complimentary, blended, private sector finance, as well as international financing, including official development

## UNICEF accelerated public financial management support for COVID-19 vaccine delivery

The timely, effective and equitable delivery of COVID-19 vaccines is an essential step to address the spread of COVID-19 and curb its far-reaching health, social and economic impacts. UNICEF’s Public Finance for Children (PF4C) work to highlight the risks and implications for countries’ domestic financing provided a critical contribution to the multi-partner agenda on vaccines. PF4C worked closely with immunization and health experts to: estimate global costs for vaccine delivery; track existing external support; and identify country-level funding gaps. This helped inform donor strategies and resource allocations, and assisted with highlighting and prioritizing country needs.

assistance. In 2021, UNICEF engaged with governments in 123 countries (up from 112 countries in 2020) at central and local levels, to ensure adequate investments in key social sectors.

In Rwanda, UNICEF generated evidence, provided technical support and advocated for increased social spending. UNICEF published budget briefs for fiscal year 2021/2022, which cover national budget, education, social protection, health, WASH and nutrition. Also, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of local government officials in participatory planning and budgeting in 11 districts. With the Rwanda Management Institute and the National Child Development Agency, government officials from the social sector cluster and from 30 districts were trained in nutrition planning and budgeting, including expenditure tracking. UNICEF worked with the Government of Rwanda to ensure public investments in key sectors for children were prioritized, contributing to an 82 per cent increase in budgetary allocations for social sectors, from US\$558.7 million in 2017/2018 to US\$1 billion in 2021/2022.<sup>47</sup>

In Nigeria, UNICEF provided public finance support to the government at national and state levels towards policy reform. This engagement, through analytical work, policy dialogue, capacity-building and advocacy, focused on costing social sector policies, fiscal space and social budgeting analysis, investment cases, a medium-term expenditure framework, annual budget preparation, and strengthening local governance. In addition to informing the National Development Plan, findings from the social budget analysis and investment cases on health, nutrition and early childhood education have informed state budgets and development plans in selected states. The unit cost derived from the costing studies was used in costing the development plans and identifying efficiency strategies that could be integrated into them. This resulted in increased public spending on health, education and social protection. As an illustration, Jigawa and Kano States allocated 6.4 per cent and 7.5 per cent of their annual budgets to social protection for 2022, representing, respectively, an increase of 0.3 per cent and 1.5 per cent from 2021. In the 2022 budget in Katsina State, 1 per cent of the state statutory allocation was appropriated for the state contributory health-care scheme, compared with 0.31 per cent in 2020.

In Morocco, UNICEF engaged in a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, underpinned by a memorandum of understanding. This created an enabling environment to embark on public finance capacity-building in key line ministries, and to conduct costing and analysis of sectoral finances, specifically early childhood education (ECE). UNICEF supported the government with the approval of the Programme de Generalisation, which embeds in law the requirement to achieve universal ECE coverage. UNICEF also helped with defining minimum quality standards for preschool facilities and an initial cost estimate for the universalization of ECE based on a survey of 400 existing preschools. Building on this groundwork, the finance ministry asked UNICEF to help develop a national costing and financing model for ECE, including

analysis of the current programme, options for calculating the cost of universal coverage, financing options and fiscal space analysis. This will help determine the gap between the cost required for the roll-out, and the predicted budgetary room for ECE, while providing options to reduce that gap. The action plan for the universalization of ECE seeks to increase the preschool education rate in Morocco from 50 per cent in 2018 to 100 per cent in 2026/2027.

In Senegal, UNICEF supported the government to set up the Social Budget Monitoring Observatory to enhance coordination between development partners and the government, and to serve as an institutional framework for resolving financing bottlenecks. Through the monitoring observatory, UNICEF supported social budget analysis and budget briefs, which were used as an evidence-based advocacy tool to influence the government and donors to better allocate funds for the rights and well-being of children. To promote transparency of public spending for children, UNICEF has set up a major capacity-building programme for more than 200 ministerial actors, parliamentarians, local elected officials and civil society, to equip them with skills to assess the performance of state funding for social sectors. UNICEF has coordinated high-level, development-partner dialogue forums and built strong partnerships with donors to ensure that the child rights agenda is being adequately reflected in budget support initiatives. Currently, UNICEF is a member of the Thematic Group on Public Finances, which advocates for including budgetary support for children – specifically focusing on nutrition indicators for children under 5 years old– in the European Union (EU) budget support matrix. This has resulted in increased allocations for managing malnutrition among them.

In India, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the state government of Odisha to prepare the SDG budget for the fiscal year 2021–2022 and ensure spending on priority sectors – especially those targeted towards the SDGs – at a time of fiscal constraints. UNICEF technical support helped to identify the various schemes and programmes implemented by the state government and map them against the SDG targets, and helped to develop a methodology for appropriate allocation and expenditure against various SDG targets. Initially, UNICEF advocated for the importance of a state budget that targeted the SDG Indicators. Then, UNICEF supported Odisha's Planning and Convergence Department in developing the National Indicator Framework, as a prelude to the new budget, which aligns with the SDGs. UNICEF partnered with a local think tank, the Center of Excellence in Fiscal Policy and Taxation, to generate evidence on the macroeconomic and fiscal impact of COVID-19. UNICEF's evidence generation, technical support and advocacy led to the institutionalization of the SDGs as part of the state's budget planning process, and resulted in higher budget allocations for child-focused SDG indicators.

In Tunisia, prior to COVID-19, there had been sustained UNICEF policy dialogue on social protection financing. UNICEF supported a universal child benefit (UCB) feasibility study in 2018–2019,<sup>48</sup> using value-for-money and benefit

incidence analysis showing that the UCB was a more cost-effective and equitable option than existing subsidies. In the course of this work, UNICEF forged new strategic partnerships, notably with the Ministry of Finance, the World Bank and the IMF. While continuing its policy work to advocate for the UCB, UNICEF supported more immediate measures. In 2021, UNICEF updated the fiscal space analysis, which recommended a progressive extension to all children under the age of 18, which would cost 1.09 per cent of GDP if achieved in 2025. A success for the short-term response was a US\$26 million grant from the German Government, leveraged by UNICEF, to increase the coverage of children between mid-2020 and the end of 2021. The legal framework was modified to remove a limit on the number of eligible children per family and the age threshold of 6 years. For the first time, a monthly grant was introduced for children under 5 years in most households outside the contributory system. By December 2021, about 129,000 children under 5 were receiving monthly benefits. In addition, the number of school-aged children receiving annual school allowances doubled to 310,000. Then, in March 2021, the World Bank's board approved a loan of US\$300 million to create the COVID-19 Social Protection Emergency Response Support Project, which includes the continuation of monthly child benefits for around 125,000 children aged 0–5 years. Finally, Tunisia passed a law in January 2022 institutionalizing the monthly benefit for all children under 5 who are registered on social assistance schemes. UNICEF will continue its efforts to advocate for national budget allocation for UCB, as constrained fiscal space poses a major challenge for scaling it up in the medium term.

## Making public spending on children's rights more efficient and effective

The constrained resources in many LMICs made it difficult for governments to increase allocations to social sectors. Promoting efficient and effective use of resources is critical for improving the quality and equity of service delivery, but also for creating savings to expand coverage of services that generate the highest social returns on investments.

In 2021, UNICEF engaged with governments to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public budgets in 127 and 125 countries, respectively (up from 113 countries in both dimensions in 2020). Evidence generation, evidence-based advocacy, engagement with budgetary processes, systems-strengthening, and leveraging partnerships have been key to promoting efficient and effective budgets. UNICEF supports governments to analyse the efficiency and effectiveness of budgets using a wide range of public financial management tools, mainly public expenditure reviews, cost-benefit analyses, and cost-effectiveness analyses, in addition to a wide variety of other tools.<sup>49</sup>

In collaboration with the EU, UNICEF Cambodia supported the government in improving budget efficiency and effectiveness, with a specific focus on the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY). UNICEF focused on overall capacity-building for programme-based budgeting, to ensure that strategic priorities are better translated into budget statements, targets and indicators to contribute to the effective allocation of resources. Inclusion of central departments, as well as the provincial departments of MoSVY contributed to realistic budget submissions, with improved execution by the end of 2021 for social protection, social affairs and child protection. UNICEF supported the costing of key programmes, including the government's flagship social assistance programmes, to inform budget planning. Tools such as a budget strategic plan assessment guideline, programme budget guideline, and rapid budget analysis were developed to support budget effectiveness at subnational levels, while budget briefs for key social ministries contributed to an improved understanding of budget efficiency and effectiveness in support of annual budget preparations and negotiations. This has resulted in the improved allocation and execution of budgets for cash transfers, which reached over 3 million individuals through multiple cash transfer programmes. MoSVY was also able to negotiate and execute the increased operational budgets required for the delivery of massive programmes, despite budget cuts caused by COVID-19.

In Serbia, the 2021 Public Expenditure and Institutional Review developed by the World Bank and UNICEF provided a comprehensive assessment of public expenditure in human development sectors in the country. Given Serbia's current economic outlook and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, such analysis is key to the policymaking and budget allocation processes. It is also key to leveraging domestic resources and developing the efficiency of spending to help Serbia meet the challenges of an ageing population, inequality, and low productivity and public expenditure in the human development sectors. UNICEF also compiled a compelling analysis of costed options to increase spending for existing cash assistance programmes (child allowance, financial social assistance) that were presented to the government in response to their expressed commitment to ensure social protection for children living in poverty. The analysis includes options for increasing adequacy and coverage of cash benefits that would ensure a greater proportion of children is reached.

In Montenegro, UNICEF collaborated with the government to find evidence to illustrate the most effective ways to decrease poverty. UNICEF analysed the effects of COVID-19 on spending in social sectors relevant to children, including health, education, social protection, and sports and youth. The analysis was used to advocate for the Ministry of Finance and Parliament to safeguard expenditure on crucial services for children in the 2021 budget. The Social Protection System Assessment, finalized in 2021, looked at trends in spending on social and child protection. The results revealed a low level of expenditure on family and child benefits, relative to other benefits.



In addition, UNICEF, in collaboration with UNDP and as part of the Joint SDG Fund, analysed and simulated how €100 investments in different expanded poverty reduction programmes would contribute to a reduction in poverty rates and narrow the poverty gap. Promising results on the effectiveness of rolling out universal social protection triggered government action to introduce a universal child allowance for children aged 0–6 years and a fourfold increase in annual expenditure on children.

In Pakistan, UNICEF collaborated with the EU to provide technical assistance to the Department of Planning and Development in the province of Sindh, for a public expenditure review on key sectors covering health, nutrition, WASH and child protection. The evidence gathered informed a dedicated capacity-building plan for implementing recommendations pertaining to improved capacities and institutional mechanisms in public sector financing, and improved efficiency in public spending. UNICEF's evidence, policy and advocacy efforts contributed to budgetary decisions at provincial and district levels in relation to the distribution and allocation of community schemes delivering basic services. The evidence also supported cost sharing by the public sector on activities geared towards improving nutrition in local development schemes.

## Making public social spending more equitable

Equity in the allocation of public resources is critical for achieving universal coverage of social services and reducing extreme poverty and inequality.<sup>50</sup> It is also at the core of UNICEF's rights-based approach to financing, and in line with SDG 1.b.1 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 4 and General Comment 19). UNICEF's work on the equity of social spending aims to ensure that governments allocate a fair share of public resources to the poorest and most disadvantaged children, to enable their access to social services. In 2021, UNICEF worked in 122 countries (up from 113 in 2020) to promote equity of social spending and the right of every child to social services.

In Timor-Leste, UNICEF's support for the adoption of a child marker in state planning and budgeting was a major step towards improving equity in the state budget. Key enablers of this were the strong partnership between UNICEF, the Prime Minister's office and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and UNICEF's extensive engagement and advocacy work with the government. UNICEF conducted equity-focused budget advocacy with the government through development partner meetings with the Ministry of Finance, the Child Rights Commissioner's intervention during the government budget review committee, and the child marker policy note, which was adopted by the Council of Ministers. Also, UNICEF supported the Child Rights Commissioner to strengthen the interventions in the government's budget review committee, which is in charge of finalizing the 2022 state budget proposal.

## Transparency, accountability and participation

UNICEF supports governments in their efforts to make public budgets more transparent and promotes greater public awareness of how funds are allocated and used. This is critical to enhancing the financial credibility of social sectors and supporting a strong social contract. UNICEF also supports community, and young people's and children's participation in budgetary processes. Transparency of social sector budgets and the participation of communities, including young people and children, is critical to ensure the efficiency and equity of investments for children. In 2021, UNICEF worked in 129 countries (up from 119 in 2020) to promote transparency, accountability and participation. UNICEF adopts various strategies, including establishing social accountability mechanisms, producing citizen's budgets, subnational open budget surveys, and community score cards. UNICEF works with a broad spectrum of national and international partners to improve budget transparency, accountability and participation, including the International Budget Partnership.

In Argentina, UNICEF supported the publication of the national, provincial and consolidated public sector investment report on children and adolescents.<sup>51</sup> The government also produces and publishes [quarterly reports](#) to monitor budget allocations and the implementation of child policies. Since 2020, the government's budget message has included a chapter on identifying and analysing financial resources directed towards children and adolescents, to inform budget allocations for the following year. In 2021, UNICEF analysed budgetary allocations for children and adolescents, and discussed the 2022 national budget proposal in congress with the Bicameral Commission of Children and Adolescents Rights, the National Secretariat for Children, Youth, and Family, and other actors of government and civil society.<sup>52</sup> These efforts have greatly improved the availability of budgetary data, and created an enabling environment for generating evidence, specifically on the distributive impact of public health spending, which focuses on children and adolescents, and costing an adolescents' integral health model to further promote the well-being of children and adolescents.

In Ghana, UNICEF promoted transparency, civic awareness and participation in budgetary processes, and hosted the Innovative Budget Challenge, in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development, the private sector, and civil society. Young people participated and presented solutions that would facilitate the tracking of local-level expenditure. Also, UNICEF embarked on capacity-building for Ministry of Finance officials, to improve budget credibility and integrate a social accountability template for public financial management, as well as a health community scorecard. In addition, UNICEF supported data collection and analysis on the impact of COVID-19, including phone surveys, which strengthened the case for sustained funding to key programmes, to support and protect children and women. The surveys also brought to the fore transparency and accountability issues regarding the flow of resources earmarked for COVID-19 interventions at the facility level.

## Noteworthy and innovative PF4C approaches

UNICEF develops tailored solutions to challenges related to public finance for children, which fit specific country contexts, leveraging its global coverage through country and field offices; strong partnerships with governments and key stakeholders at all levels; and flexible programme tools and approaches. Solutions range from specific service models that reflect a country's level of shock-preparedness (which require financial resources for scaling up) to interventions that provide direct support to budget management and programme implementation.

In Tajikistan, UNICEF collaborated with different ministries and established partnerships with United Nations agencies, international agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector partners to leverage funds for the country through technical assistance to the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. This partnership for technical assistance allowed UNICEF to engage in the socioeconomic resilience-strengthening project, which aims to invest in skills and resilience development, with a focus on innovations, psychological well-being, participation, and prevention of gender-based violence. UNICEF's technical assistance to the Islamic Development Bank and the Ministry of Education and Science in developing a proposal led to the leveraging of US\$19 million for vocational education and training in the country.

In Oman, UNICEF is engaging with the government to protect social spending in a high-income country, where the impact of COVID-19 and a sharp drop in oil prices have placed pressure on public spending. The country office started with the capacity-building of government partners and built networks with influential individuals inside and outside the government. UNICEF generated evidence by conducting a fiscal space analysis to better support the government in assessing the effects of the economic downturn on available resources for social sectors. UNICEF also produced a high-level policy paper on the initial implications of the fiscal space analysis to inform UNICEF's planning options and to describe the various public finance interventions to be pursued in Oman.

The Oman Country Office also engaged with the private sector to find innovative ways to maximize potential resources for children. The engagement focused on establishing a leadership circle of high-net-worth individuals and influencers to promote financing solutions for underfunded sectors, including financing services for children with disabilities. UNICEF's PF4C work in Oman illustrates how UNICEF can promote a multi-level strategy in a high-income country, backed by evidence, to protect and expand social spending and leverage domestic private resources for child rights.

In India, UNICEF and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) have adopted the 'One UN' approach to advocate for and strengthen gender budgeting and a gender-transformative

agenda in the Indian state of Maharashtra. UNICEF has provided technical assistance to the Department of Planning and Finance on Gender and the Department of Child Budgeting for the last five years to publish annual gender and child budget statements, for sustained capacity-building of staff, and for making gender visible on the state's budget portal. In 2021, both agencies helped the Ministry of Women and Child Development to develop a new state policy and action plan for gender equality and women's empowerment. Based on insights from evidence generated on public finance for children and women, as well as learnings from the pandemic, this policy focuses on the principle of leaving no one behind, and promotes intersectoral convergence among departments.

## Working in partnership

UNICEF has been able to strengthen social sector budgets and deliver important results for children by working in partnership with multiple organizations and stakeholders. UNICEF has played a vital role in leveraging additional resources for children, as well as in ensuring that resources are provided for impactful programmes that address child-specific priorities. UNICEF's strong engagement with governments at central and decentralized levels, extensive field presence, and its nuanced expertise to link public finance to social service delivery have been key enabling factors for UNICEF's success in advancing social spending for children. In 2021, UNICEF continued its partnerships with UNDP, the ILO, the IMF, the EU and the IBP.

It is important to highlight the strong collaboration with the IMF at a global, regional and country level on evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue for social sector spending, inclusive recovery and fiscal equity, with continued collaboration at regional and country levels. Meanwhile, the partnership with IBP continued to support global advocacy and country level research on budget credibility.

The partnership with the EU and ILO on social protection and public financial management continued in 2021, engaging eight countries on social protection financing. Also, the EU/UNICEF PF4C for South and South East Asia continued to enhance the adequacy, effectiveness and efficiency of social sector spending for children's rights and development. This EU/UNICEF facility is a three-year programme launched in 2019, covering Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar, through which UNICEF provides technical support on public finance in social sectors, as a complement to EU budget support.

UNICEF further deepened its engagement in the Secretary-General's Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, and co-chaired the subgroup Alignment on National Planning, Spending and Implementation in the cluster on sustainability and climate action. As part of its contribution to this agenda, UNICEF highlighted the importance of integrating sustainability, inclusion, climate action and resilience into national financing strategies. Research conducted in partnership with the subgroup – including UNDP, UN Women and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

## Case Study 2. Benin: Ring-fencing and expanding social sector expenditure in the context of COVID-19

UNICEF's advocacy, evidence, technical support and partnerships improved the adequacy and transparency of social sector budgets in Benin.

In Benin, UNICEF had significantly stepped up its public finance engagement prior to the pandemic, which helped with the country's response to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Since 2018, UNICEF has established partnerships with the Ministry of Finance's General Directorate of Budget, the Parliament, and Social Watch Benin (a civil society organization that acts as a focal point for the International Budget Partnership [IBP] to monitor and promote budget transparency). UNICEF has also placed national consultants in the Directorate of Budget to produce and publish budget documents recommended by IBP, and to invest in civil society capacities to monitor and analyse budgets, promote transparency, and foster citizen participation and social accountability. In parallel, UNICEF Benin has developed a close relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to monitor social sector expenditure. UNICEF also collaborated with the World Bank and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit to develop budget briefs and a review of public expenditure on education. With the World Bank, three advocacy notes were developed, including a note on the economic benefits of ending child marriage and promoting girl's education, which triggered a solid governmental commitment to invest more public resources in investment projects that impact on girls' education and well-being. The United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Capital Development Fund and UNICEF have worked together to support the government to study the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 in Benin, and to implement the Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Fund. When COVID-19 hit, UNICEF leveraged its existing partnerships to advocate for increased social spending, while also working in partnership with the IMF to ensure the inclusion of social spending within the IMF lending programme.

In 2021, UNICEF and Social Watch Benin published two joint documents for advocacy on social sector spending.<sup>53</sup> Benin's score in the International Budget Partnership's Open Budget Index rose from 39 to 49 out of 100 between 2017 and 2019, making Benin the top performer in francophone Africa. The share of social sectors in government expenditure rose from 35.9 per cent in 2018 to 36.6 per cent in 2019, and 47.3 per cent in 2020. Government spending on health almost doubled from 4.8 per cent in 2018 to 8.6 per cent in 2020. But the rise in social sector spending did not just reflect increased spending on health to cope with COVID-19. During the same period, the share of education spending also increased from 17.5 per cent to 18.3 per cent, and social protection spending from 1 per cent to 6.1 per cent.

The government also used data and analysis produced by UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, especially data compiled in the SDG progress reports, to prepare their proposal for a US\$500 million SDG Eurobond, which the government issued on the international capital markets in July 2021. Benin became the first country in Africa, and one of the first in the world, to issue a long-term bond to finance high-impact projects related to the achievement of the SDGs. The bond has favourable financing terms and was oversubscribed threefold.



4 little girls are resting under the shade of a tree in a primary school of a village in the Municipality of Zogbodomey (South of Benin).

Development – has highlighted the opportunities for national governments to integrate climate mitigation and adaptation and social inclusion into national budget processes, including through performance-related budget processes, application of harmonized methodologies for measuring and monitoring spending for climate and social inclusion, and measures to assess the distributive impact of climate change policies. Going forward, UNICEF will work in partnership with UNDP on practical opportunities to trial the application of these methods.

UNICEF continued its engagement with the Joint SDG Fund, a multi-partner initiative aimed at closing the financing gap to achieve the SDGs through concerted action by the United Nations system. UNICEF received US\$13.8 million to improve financing of social services in 43 countries, especially through the Integrated National Financing Framework of Joint Programmes.

In Zambia, UNICEF is collaborating with UNDP, UNFPA, ILO and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, as part of the Joint SDG Fund in Zambia. UNICEF's position as a trusted partner to the government at central and local levels enabled UNICEF to support capacity-building for output-based budgeting at the local (decentralized) level, and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation budget frameworks at a central level. This improved links between local authority outputs, national priorities and enhanced costing of public services, and it is hoped that it will eventually improve performance at decentralized levels. Output-based budgeting introduced in 67 of 116 local authorities emphasized the need to measure and report on specific programme- and sub-programme-level outputs and enhanced budget transparency. To support an overall enabling environment, UNICEF collaborated with United Nations agencies, the World Bank, national think tanks, and

a civil society organization to improve accountable public finance mechanisms and social accountability. The systems-support approach integrates both upstream (legislation and policy) and downstream support, as well as analytical work, specifically Performance Expenditure Reviews and budget briefs, and characterizes UNICEF's concrete contribution to the Joint SDG Fund and the wider public finance agenda in Zambia. This work is in a context where, despite a high debt burden and challenges with fiscal space, the government significantly increased its social sector budget allocations by 34 per cent between 2021 and 2022 – a signal of government action to protect the needs of vulnerable populations, including children.

In Jamaica, UNICEF made progress as the lead agency of the Joint SDG Fund, improving public expenditure to shore up acceleration towards the SDGs. The joint programme

### Case Study 3. Colombia: Road map for an Integrated National Financing Framework in Colombia

UNICEF in Colombia is playing a key role in accelerating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) financing, and providing extensive capacity-building to the government to advance social spending for children.

UNICEF is collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme UNDP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women as part of the Joint SDG Fund in Colombia. This joint SDG financing programme focuses on analytical evidence on the existing financial framework for financing the SDG targets. Its goal is to diversify funding mechanisms and increase public and private financial resources for SDGs, and to deliver a national SDG financing strategy by establishing a road map to identify integrated financing solutions.

In Colombia, around 98.2 per cent of the goals established in the National Development Plan 2018–2022 are aligned with the SDGs and 86 per cent of the 2022 national budget is aligned with SDG priorities. However, one of the main challenges is to integrate and achieve the mobilization of resources through governmental, private sector and international cooperation to accelerate progress towards the SDG goals. To overcome this challenge, UNICEF, alongside the other agencies, is generating new evidence on social investment flows for SDG and child-related policy goals.



On 20 November 2021, children in Tibú, Norte de Santander, Colombia, celebrate World Children's Day, which calls for societies to reimagine a better future for every child.

A feasibility analysis on innovative financing mechanisms to accelerate Colombia's SDG targets is under development, while the country office is providing technical assistance to the government in designing a specific, results-based mechanism for public care services for early childhood. The SDG financing strategy will place strong emphasis on innovative financing. The Integrated National Financing Framework has given greater political visibility to UNICEF's work, specifically highlighting its technical support in monitoring social spending on children and the budgeting and design of social projects with a life-course approach.

Once the activities of the International Financing Framework and the design of the results-based mechanisms on early childhood development are completed, the government will have a better understanding of financing gaps for fulfilling the SDG goals, specifically in child rights and gender equality.

supported the development of budgeting and monitoring guidelines for the education and health ministries; embarked on capacity-building in medium-term, results-based budgeting; improved performance indicators linked to national priorities and SDGs; and strengthened the capacity of the government in public financial management monitoring and evaluation. UNICEF also collaborated with the World Bank to undertake a public expenditure review (PER) of the education sector, which revealed that responding to COVID-19 will require US\$2.4–3.9 billion.<sup>54</sup> The review estimated that the cost of inaction on this investment will be US\$5.4 million. Following the PER, UNICEF and the World Bank engaged in a series of policy dialogues with the government and presented the findings of their review to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. UNICEF has now started work with the Ministry of Education to address the recommendations of the PER by scaling the public financial management capacity of the Ministry in results-based budgeting. UNICEF's evidence and institutional strengthening is paving the way towards the SDGs and enhancing the financing of Jamaica's education system.

## Public finance for children in fragile and humanitarian contexts

A government's ability to raise revenue through taxation and borrowing can be impeded by conflict, fragility, natural disasters and epidemics. Any impediment increases its reliance on development partners and humanitarian funding to finance basic social services. The strength of UNICEF's

presence and experience at the field level in supporting the realization of children's rights in humanitarian contexts has been an enabling factor in tackling public finance challenges. This includes working with development partners and IFIs to bridge the gap in financing basic social services and humanitarian responses, while keeping the focus on national systems-strengthening.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF engaged in the development of a budget brief to analyse the 2021 state budget, highlighting trends in social sector expenditure over the past 10 years of conflict. This entailed collecting all budget laws for the period 2010–2021 to compute and analyse the data, including spending on subsidies. The budget brief led to increased evidence on budgetary allocations, setting an agenda for research and policy engagement, and positioning UNICEF as a value-added actor in the Syrian Arab Republic beyond the delivery of humanitarian aid. For the first time in the Syrian Arab Republic, there is evidence to show how the government's spending has evolved since the start of the conflict, with a focus on the sectors that matter most for children. The budget brief called for progressively increasing government expenditures on key sectors for children, and for a focus on data generation and routine budget monitoring, including assessing the impacts of sanctions on children. The budget brief was very well received by donors, United Nations agencies and the World Bank, demonstrating that UNICEF can put forward and contribute to critical issues on the global stage. It has also paved the way for formal engagement with the government in public finance, indicating a strategic shift after 10 years of humanitarian action.

## Looking ahead

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In 2022, UNICEF will continue to advocate and engage with governments to focus on an inclusive and resilient recovery. We will also advocate for ensuring that human capital is at the centre of any inclusive agenda and for stronger action to tackle inequalities in access to finance – particularly for low-income countries, including through debt restructuring and the transfer of resources from high-income countries to LMICs through the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights.

The new strategic plan will continue to focus on a rights-based approach to financing, to ensure the poorest and most disadvantaged children have equitable access to services. UNICEF will continue to promote public finance evidence generation, through its work on the Social Spending Monitor, to better track and assess social spending at a global level.

UNICEF will scale up its technical support to governments to further strengthen social sector budgets and better address the increasingly constrained fiscal space. To enable national leadership on public finance for children,

UNICEF will step up capacity-building initiatives to support governments' reporting obligations on financing, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 4, and SDG reporting on adequate and equitable social sector spending. UNICEF'S PF4C work will also continue to support the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. This will include a focus on understanding and addressing bottlenecks in countries and improving the equity of the vaccine roll-out.

UNICEF will strengthen its collaboration with the United Nations through the new flagship initiative with UNDP, while continuing its work to support the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, the financing initiative for post-COVID-19 recovery, and Integrated National Financing Frameworks through collaboration with the Joint SDG Fund. In addition, partnerships with international and regional financial institutions and development partners will continue to focus on leveraging resources towards sustainable and inclusive fiscal responses.



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# Results: Social protection – “Strengthening social protection systems”

In southern Madagascar, Raharisoa Marie Léonie's is a recipient of a UNICEF-supported universal cash transfer program, “Zara Mira”, providing her six disabled children a dignified and happy life.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have devastating impacts on children, as illustrated in the 'Child Poverty' section of this report. While there have been some signs of recovery, estimates for 2021 show that COVID-19 has led to an unprecedented increase in monetary and multidimensional child poverty. This represents deepening poverty across all areas of a child's life, including health, nutrition, education, housing, water and sanitation. The consequences are compounded for children who face social exclusion and discrimination due to gender, ethnicity, race, disability, geographic location, minority status or migratory status. Child poverty and social exclusion remain at the centre of UNICEF's response and recovery efforts.

No sector has a more important role than social protection in addressing both the financial and social barriers that children and families face. Access to social protection is a right in and of itself, and it is foundational in the realization of human rights more broadly, as it improves child outcomes across all aspects of their lives. Further, social protection not only provides opportunities to individuals and families, but also impacts on society and social cohesion as a whole, and is a fundamental and highly tangible part of the social contract between a state and its citizens.

UNICEF supports governments in the development of social protection systems, helping to develop: a solid evidence base; strong policies, legislation and strategies; a holistic approach to programming across social transfers, social insurance, labour and jobs, strengthening the social service workforce; and enhancing multisector coordination, and administrative and information systems. UNICEF works to further a systems approach to social protection, and towards the progressive realization of rights-based and universal social protection for every child and every family.

As has been highlighted by COVID-19 and the unprecedented social protection response, comprehensive social protection systems are critical in supporting children and families, particularly in crisis contexts. Social protection prevents families from falling into deep poverty and helps to avoid negative coping strategies by increasing access to a range of services, especially for the poorest. Social protection proved to be essential during the COVID-19 pandemic in helping to mitigate and address income loss, as well as additional health and care costs. The pandemic also showed that social protection is a critical lifeline for all, particularly families living in poverty and extreme poverty. The COVID-19 crisis also highlighted critical gaps in the system in terms of coverage, adequacy,

inclusion and financing. It is crucial that countries work towards providing universal child benefits, ensuring their adequacy and that they are inclusive and reach the most vulnerable populations – including women and girls, children with disabilities and children on the move – while working towards sustained financing of social protection programmes. Social protection systems also need to be risk-informed and ready to respond to crises, with policy, financing and administrative systems that can rapidly scale up when crisis happens.

Following the action areas of the organization's social protection framework, UNICEF supports the expansion of social protection systems for children, including through:

- A foundation of evidence
  - Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessment
- Policy, legislation and financing
  - Policy and strategy development, coordination and financing
- Integrated programme areas of child-sensitive social protection systems
  - Expanding and improving cash transfers for children
  - Cash plus; connecting cash transfers to information, knowledge and services to increase the impact of social protection
  - Expanding and improving health insurance
  - Supporting childcare and adolescent employability
  - Strengthening the social welfare workforce and direct outreach to families
- Administration and integrated service delivery
- Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts
  - Strengthening national shock-responsive social protection systems
  - Linking humanitarian cash transfers (HCT) to social protection systems
- Inclusive social protection
  - Gender-responsive social protection
  - Disability-inclusive social protection
  - Social protection for refugee, migrant and displaced children and families

# Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards strengthening social protection systems

## Summary of global results

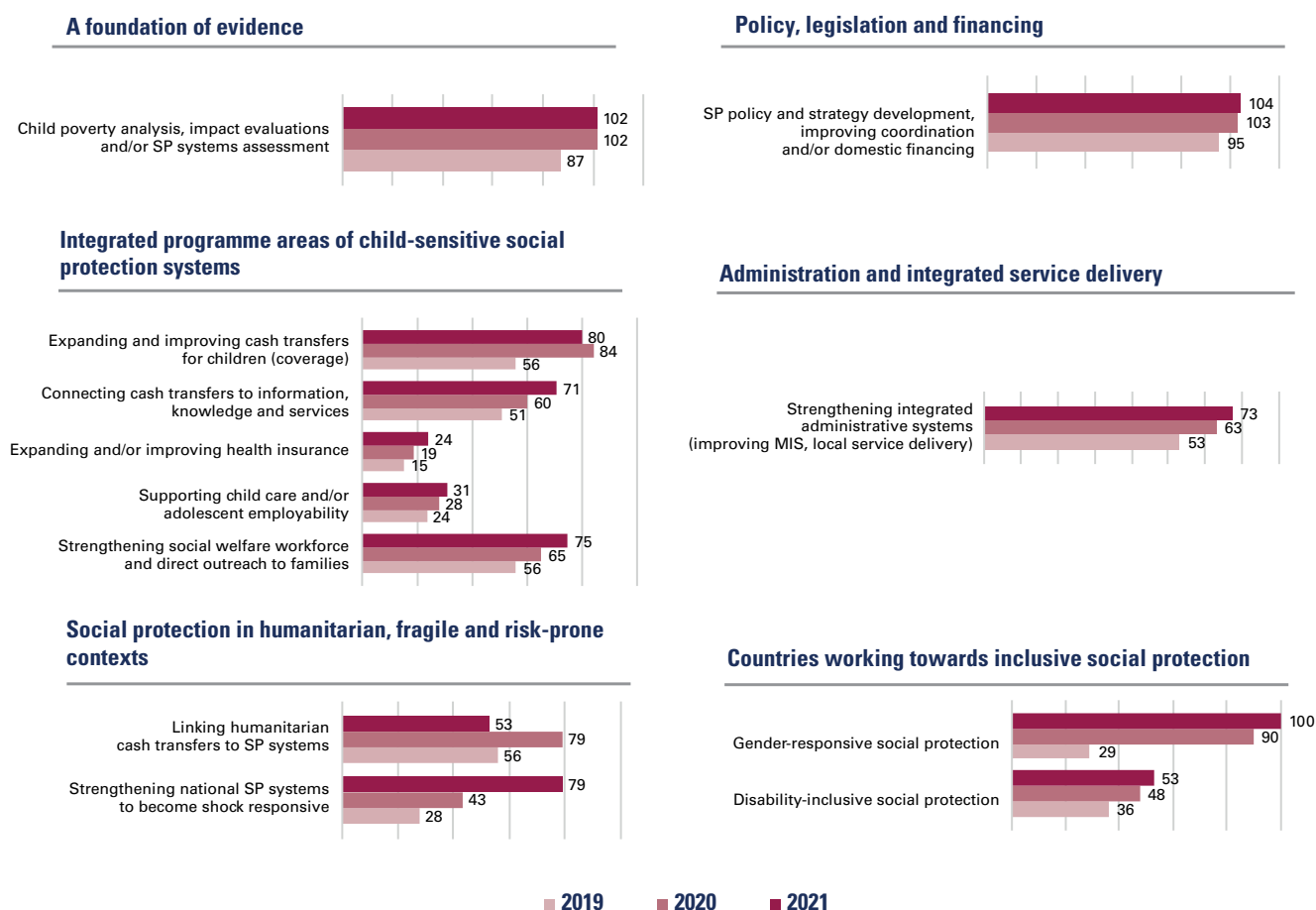
The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted both the crucial need for social protection to respond to crises and its foundational role in addressing child poverty and vulnerability. However, it also underlined ongoing gaps in social protection coverage, adequacy, financing and risk-informed design. Despite the commitments made in SDG 1.3 to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and floors, and to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030, only one in four children currently have access to child or family benefit. Further, this average hides significant regional disparities: while 82 per cent of children in Europe and Central Asia, and 57 per cent in the Americas receive

benefits, this is the case for only 18 per cent of children in Asia and the Pacific, 15 per cent in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and 13 per cent in Africa.<sup>55</sup>

Globally, only 47 per cent of people are covered by even one social protection benefit. Fewer than one in five unemployed people receive an unemployment benefit, only 35 per cent are protected in case of a workplace injury, and only 34 per cent of persons with severe disability receive any form of cash benefit or support. More than half of all mothers with newborns are deprived of maternity benefits.<sup>56</sup>

Making universal social protection a reality requires urgent and significant investment. As stated by ILO, US\$77.9 billion per year is required to ensure a social protection floor in low-income countries alone. Filling the financing gap

FIGURE 10: Number of countries where UNICEF works across key action areas of social protection systems, 2019–2021



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>58</sup>



will require countries to safeguard and reinforce existing sources of financing and identify new and innovative ones. The pandemic highlighted what is possible, with US\$3 trillion spent on the social protection response across 194 countries and territories.<sup>57</sup>

Social protection has continued to be a central pillar of UNICEF’s response to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. UNICEF has helped governments to build inclusive and shock-responsive social protection systems as part of the COVID-19 response in over 115 countries. UNICEF also supported cash transfers that reached over 132 million children in 2021, including over 19 million children living in humanitarian settings, and over 1 million children with disabilities.

Moreover, in 2021 there was a steady increase in the number of countries whose systems were moderately strong or strong, from 31 countries in 2017, to over 65 countries in 2021. And equally critical, UNICEF continues to scale up its work in fragile and humanitarian contexts. Currently, 79 countries are working on building shock-responsive social protection systems, and the number of countries reporting systems that are ready to respond to a crisis has increased from 9 to 17, surpassing the overall strategic plan target of 15 countries by 2021.

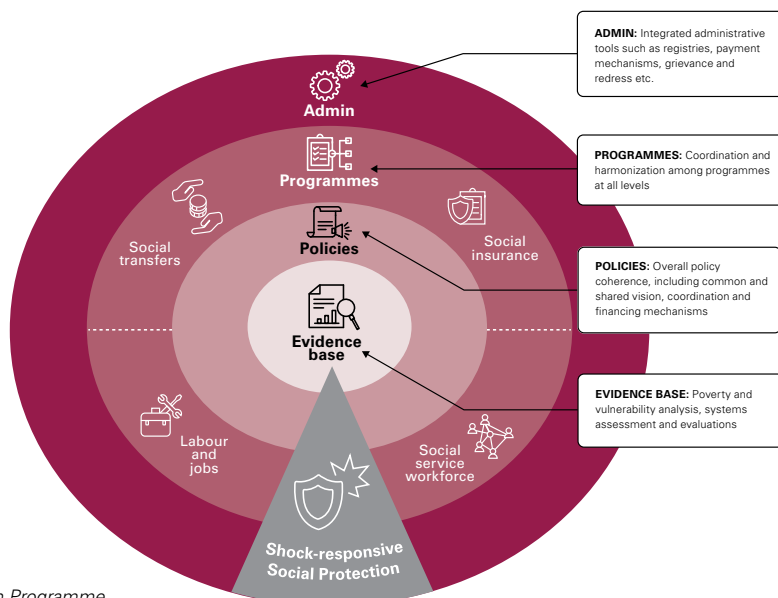
UNICEF has also continued to accelerate its efforts to make social protection systems more gender transformative and inclusive. Today, 100 UNICEF country offices have embedded explicit gender objectives in their social protection work (up from 29 in 2019), with 43 UNICEF country offices now targeting results to increase girls’ education through their social protection work, and 40 country offices targeting results to reduce gender-based

violence. This includes a diverse range of output-level commitments, from conducting gender reviews to identify gendered barriers to access and how to remove them, to linking social assistance with response services for gender-based violence (GBV), to adapting ‘plus’ components to better respond to gendered needs or shift harmful gender norms. In terms of social protection and disability, UNICEF has worked to make social protection systems more inclusive of children and adults with disabilities in more in 56 countries, and initiated support in 25 more, with work focusing on data collection and analysis, disability identification and assessment mechanisms, and fully considering disability costs in social protection programmes. In 2021, UNICEF reached a total of 940,428 children on the move with cash transfers through UNICEF-supported programmes.

## Strengthening social protection systems

UNICEF’s work on social protection takes a systems approach, as outlined in the Global Social Protection Programme Framework. A systems approach is essential to ensure that children are supported throughout their lives and have access to a wide range of programmes to address multidimensional poverty and compounding vulnerabilities across the life cycle (see Figure 11). Engagement of different sectors and levels of government are also important aspects of integrated social protection systems, to effectively contribute to poverty reduction and inclusion and drive long-term change at scale for children and families in a sustainable and coherent manner.

FIGURE 11: Components of a child-sensitive social protection system

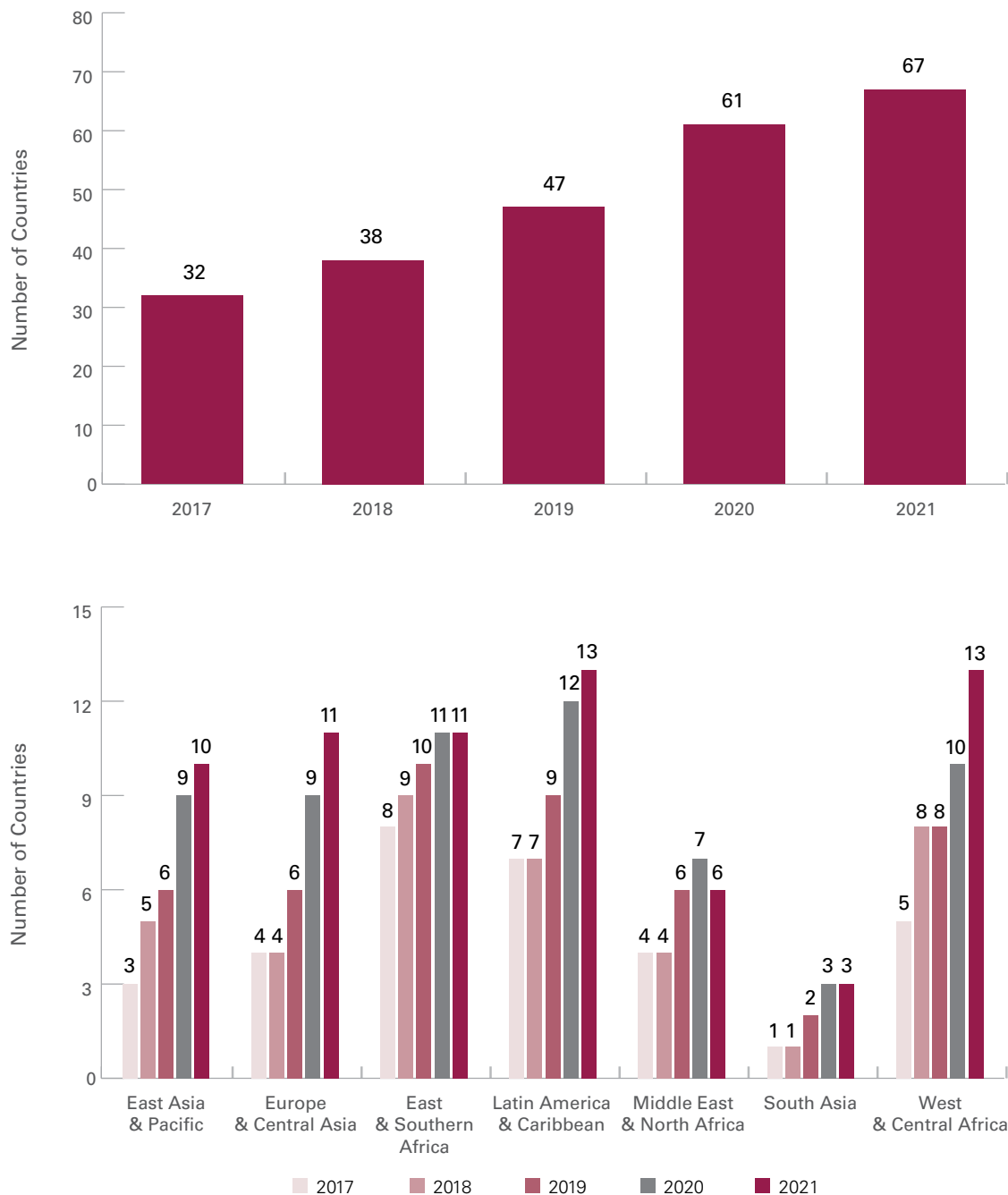


Source: UNICEF Global Social Protection Programme Framework 2019 <https://www.unicef.org/media/64601/file/Global-social-protection-programme-framework-2019.pdf>

Strong social protection systems have also proven to be effective in responding to shocks and crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and their impact is enhanced when they are inclusive of the most vulnerable, including girls, children with disabilities, and children on the move.

As mentioned before, and as per Figure 12 below, there has been a steady increase in the number of countries with moderately strong or strong social protection systems across the regions; the number of countries has doubled, from about 30 countries globally in 2017 to over 65 countries in 2021.

FIGURE 12: Number of countries that have moderately strong or strong social protection systems, globally and by region, 2017–2021



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>59</sup>

## Being Prepared and Acting First: A series of case studies on UNICEF's role in the delivery of effective social protection responses to COVID-19

UNICEF prepared a compendium of eight country case studies from Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Jordan, Madagascar, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and Yemen.<sup>60</sup> The case studies highlight UNICEF's role in supporting governments to take specific action in their COVID-19 response, and to reflect on strategic partnerships, challenges and lessons learned in pursuing strong social protection systems that can respond to crises.

Each of the case studies includes stories of children, women and families who have been impacted by the pandemic, and how the COVID-19 response allowed them to cope with the crisis. These stories were highlighted through a series of videos shared on [UNICEF Social Policy's Twitter account](#) (see Figure 7).



### Supporting global partnerships on social protection

Leveraging its strong country presence and technical expertise on social protection globally, UNICEF played a leading role in shaping critical agendas in enhancing social protection programming, while influencing global knowledge, discussions and commitments on social protection. In particular, UNICEF positioned itself as a leading expert on expanding and strengthening social protection systems for children, ensuring effective inclusion of the most vulnerable populations (including girls and women, children with disabilities, and children on the move). It also enhanced the shock-responsiveness of social protection systems across the development–humanitarian nexus.

With dedicated capacity for child poverty and social protection work across 140 countries, UNICEF plays a leading role at the country level to enhance social protection systems, in coordination with partners ranging from governments, other United Nations agencies, IFIs,

development partners and civil society. In 2021, UNICEF co-led the implementation of the first portfolio of the United Nations' joint fund on social protection in 31 out of 35 countries to accelerate achievement of the SDGs (see Box 'The Joint SDG Fund promotes in-country United Nations family collaboration on social protection'). Likewise, UNICEF has worked in close partnership with governments, other United Nations agencies and civil society partners to support socioeconomic responses to COVID-19 in more than 115 countries, building on over 20 years of work in developing and strengthening social protection systems in a variety of contexts.

At a global level, UNICEF worked in partnership to highlight the gaps in coverage of social protection for children by developing a chapter on child and family benefits for the ILO's flagship global report on social protection, *World Social Protection Report 2020–2022*.<sup>61</sup> UNICEF is also a core partner of the Secretary-General's Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, to translate global initiatives into concrete country-level results, and leverage long-standing country presences

and roles across more than 120 countries, including humanitarian contexts, as well as leadership roles in universal child benefits, family-friendly policies, care, and systems- and life-cycle approaches.

UNICEF has led the way in shaping key agendas on child-sensitive and inclusive social protection as a member of the steering committee of the USP2030 and the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, and has co-led subgroups on gender-responsive social protection, linking humanitarian cash assistance and disability-inclusive social protection. In further expanding its network, UNICEF worked with partners to develop a new 'action track' on social protection at the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, which led to the establishment of a new working group on food systems and social protection under USP2030. UNICEF also leads the social protection financing working group, which was created at the end of 2021. UNICEF has also worked closely with ILO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to facilitate a United Nations-wide consultation, and an approach paper to seek ways to further strengthen collaboration among United Nations agencies in supporting national social protection systems.

## UNICEF's support across the key action areas of social protection systems

### A foundation of evidence: Child poverty analysis, impact evaluations and systems assessments

Child-sensitive social protection systems must be built on a foundation of evidence in order to be effective. UNICEF and partners have been working for many years in developing a solid evidence base on the role of social protection on poverty reduction, inequality and children's outcomes. Specifically, UNICEF works on evidence generation to highlight the situation of children, particularly those living in poverty and exclusion, and the impact of social protection programmes, remaining gaps, as well as the best design and implementation considerations to enhance effectiveness and impact from action research from implementation. UNICEF has also supported the monitoring of the continued impact of COVID-19 on children and families, as showcased in the earlier section on child poverty, which in turn informed the design and implementation of social protection responses. In 2021, 102 country offices engaged in evidence generation, ranging from poverty assessments to systems assessments and impact evaluations.

## The Joint SDG Fund promotes in-country United Nations family collaboration on social protection

The first window of the Joint SDG Fund supported integrated policy solutions to leave no one behind, in particular social protection programmes. Leveraging its long-standing field presence, expertise and network at country levels in all regions, UNICEF has led or co-led the social protection portfolio of the Joint SDG Fund in 31 out of 35 countries, playing an important role in achieving transformative results to accelerate SDG efforts, together with other United Nations agencies.

The joint programme under the SDG fund contributed significantly to advancing social protection systems across countries, for example:

- Making social protection systems universal; for example, by supporting policy design and coordination mechanisms towards a universal social protection system in Kenya
- Making social protection system more inclusive; for example, by ensuring access to quality integrated services for persons with disabilities in Georgia
- Making social protection systems more gender responsive/transformative; for example, by linking cash transfers with gender-based violence support in Madagascar
- Making social protection systems more responsive to shocks; for example, by adapting to climate-related shocks in Mongolia

As all joint programmes under this portfolio will come to an end in 2022, consolidated lessons learned from the joint programme across countries will be documented and analysed to offer invaluable insights to further strengthen United Nations collaboration in achieving universal social protection.

- In Belize, UNICEF conducted a universal child grant simulation. Building on a public expenditure review and a child poverty study, both of which were supported by UNICEF, the simulation set out different scenarios, with costs and potential impacts on the poorest populations to support advocacy for a universal child grant.
- The government of Burkina Faso established its first multidimensional child poverty measurement, with UNICEF's support. The poverty measure, along with a socioeconomic impact study of the pandemic, will be key to informing the development of new national social protection strategy.
- In Chile, UNICEF launched the findings of a two-year study that explored the long-term consequences of poverty and vulnerability on children. The study, which was widely disseminated among government agencies, the country's parliament, academia and civil society, not only raised public awareness about child poverty, but also pointed to the urgent need to implement a child-sensitive social protection floor that guarantees the well-being of every child.

## Policy and strategy development, coordination and financing

Social protection policies, strategies, coordination mechanisms and financing instruments are foundational pillars of social protection systems. UNICEF helped 104 countries to strengthen their social protection policies, strategies and legal frameworks, including financing and coordination mechanisms.

In Côte D'Ivoire, UNICEF worked with ILO and the World Bank to support the development of a new social protection strategy based on extensive reviews of the previous strategy (2018–2020). The strategy identified four priority areas, including expansion of the coverage and increased investment in human capital. The new strategy will provide a coherent vision for the social protection sector, and strengthen the social protection floor and its related coordination mechanisms. The strategy is expected to be validated in 2022.

In Chad, UNICEF collaborated with the World Bank to strengthen the policy framework and coordination mechanism on social protection. An inter-ministerial committee was established and received capacity-building support to revise Chad's national social protection strategy and make it shock-responsive and child-sensitive. Further, a costed action plan and financing strategy was developed to support the implementation of the revised social protection strategy.

In three countries in the Eastern Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and the British Virgin Islands), UNICEF developed draft social protection policies, costed action plans and monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks for adoption in 2022. In Iraq, UNICEF played a key role in shaping the social protection agenda to focus

on child-sensitivity, integration and shock-responsiveness in the context of reform. Technical support to the government was led by UNICEF, in partnership with the ILO and the World Food Programme (WFP), through a joint programme funded by the EU.

## Integrated programme areas of child-sensitive social protection systems

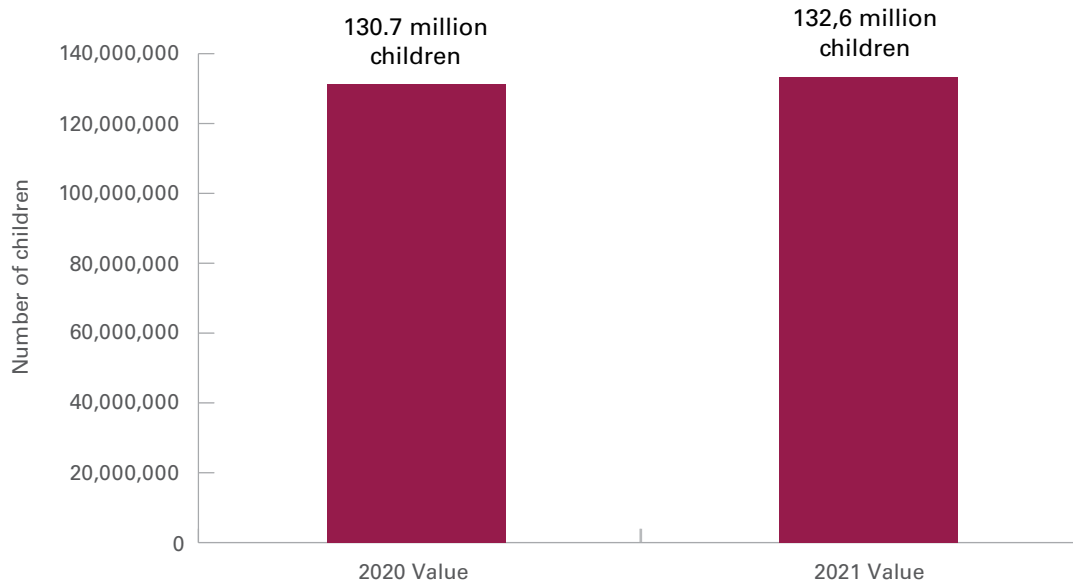
### Expanding and improving cash transfers for children, including in humanitarian contexts

Despite clear evidence of the wide-ranging impact of cash transfers on children and families, only one in four children have access to any child/family benefits, globally.<sup>62</sup> In close collaboration with partners, UNICEF has been working globally to support the expansion of national cash transfer programmes towards universal child benefits, and has also worked in humanitarian contexts to provide HCTs for families in need. In 2021, over 132 million children were reached by cash transfers supported by UNICEF across humanitarian and development contexts.

In Nepal, the Child Grant programme was expanded with support from UNICEF, as well as the World Bank, the EU and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to an additional 11 districts, reaching 375,000 children. UNICEF contributed to the programme's expansion through the timely production of real-time assessments of COVID-19 impacts, budget analysis and policy advocacy. In Tunisia, a child benefit programme introduced in 2020 scaled up its coverage from an initial 50,000 children to 129,000 children in 2021. Further, the programme was institutionalized through the amendment of a law. In Egypt UNICEF, in partnership with the ILO, provided technical support to expand the social assistance programme, reaching a total of 3.8 million households and 5.1 million children. The organization also generated evidence and advocated to further expand the coverage to informal workers as well as migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. In Georgia, UNICEF generated important evidence through an impact evaluation of the Targeted Social Assistance programme, which included consultations with key government counterparts, leading to the abolishment of food vouchers, doubled the value of transfers and increased the programme's coverage. With the reform, the transfer now reaches over 213,000 children, which is around 20 per cent of the child population.

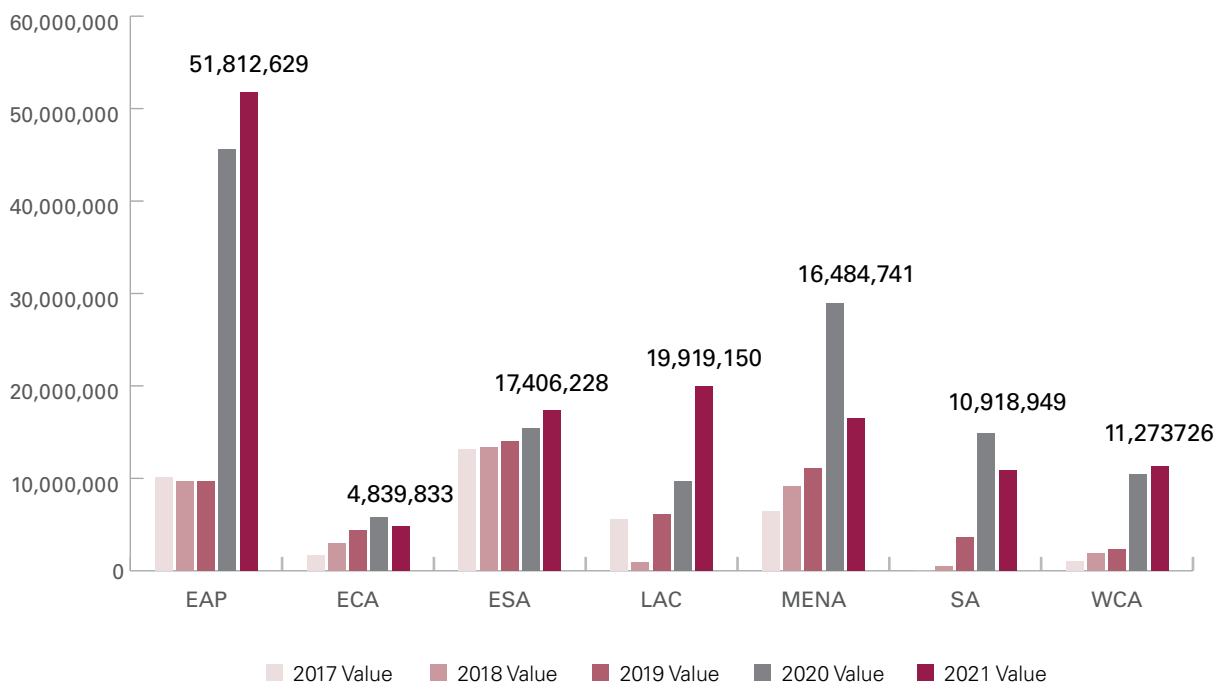
As part of the ongoing COVID-19 response in Ghana, UNICEF and the World Bank supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to deliver cash transfers as COVID-19 relief, which targeted an additional 125,000 persons identified as vulnerable during the pandemic. UNICEF also supported the cash transfer programme in testing out new approaches for communication, monitoring and evaluation using free surveys via innovative platforms.

FIGURE 13: Number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2021, globally



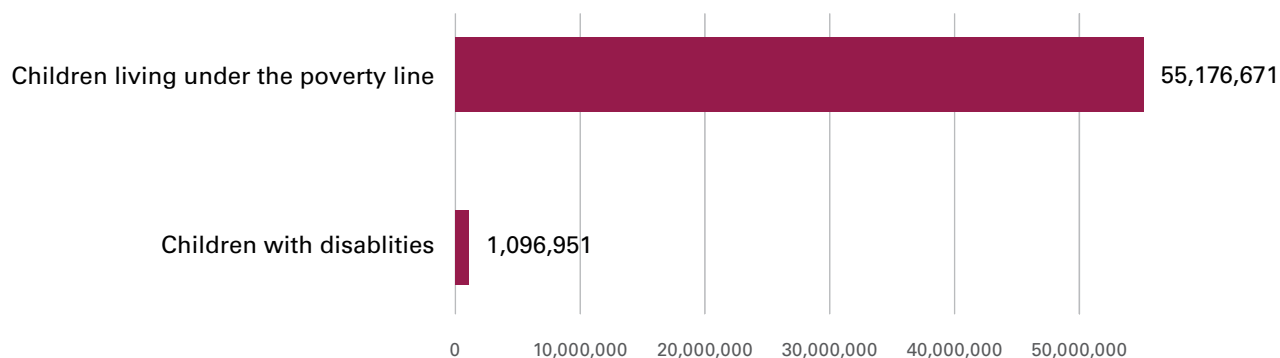
Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>63</sup>

FIGURE 14: Number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2021, by region



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>64</sup>

FIGURE 15: Number of children with disabilities and children living under the national poverty line benefiting from UNICEF-supported cash transfers in 2021



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>65</sup>

**Cash plus: First step towards systems-building – Connecting cash transfers to information, knowledge and services to increase the impact of social protection**

Child poverty is multidimensional in nature, and is driven by multiple underlying factors. Leveraging its cross-sectoral programming expertise, UNICEF’s work on social protection actively seeks ways to integrate its efforts with different sectors to provide children and families with holistic support. This includes ‘cash plus’ approaches, which ensure that families receiving cash transfers are supported with access to goods, services and information that are critical to their children’s health, development, protection and well-being, as a critical first step to systems-building.

In Ethiopia, UNICEF is supporting the Integrated Safety Net Programme, modelling how the Rural Productive Safety Net Programme can further promote gender equality and nutrition outcomes by making links with social workers and supporting access to nutrition services, behaviour change, and communication. UNICEF’s support is provided in close coordination with other partners under Ethiopia’s Donor Coordination Team, which facilitate coordination between relevant government ministries and international donors.

UNICEF is also seeking ways to ensure that these cash plus approaches are gender responsive or transformative in nature, as part of the organization’s global strategy to address gender inequalities through its social protection work. For example, in Burundi, UNICEF has undertaken a review of the cash plus programme to identify ways to adapt and improve the content and quality of the different

components to ensure a more gender-transformative approach, including seeking adaptations to components on early childhood development and women’s economic empowerment to support violence prevention and long-term shifts in gender attitudes. A new paper – a collaboration between UNICEF, the FCDO and Oxford Policy Management – will capture programmatic lessons from six countries with thought-provoking approaches to gender and cash plus. The paper will be published early in 2022.

In Mozambique, UNICEF has been supporting the expansion of the Child Grant programme for children under two years of age, with the ‘cash and care’ model. The integration of the ‘care’ component is an important part of the programme design, given the challenges of violence against children, child marriage and gender-based violence. An impact evaluation, supported by UNICEF, shows that the cash and care model has had a statistically significant impact on reducing domestic violence, and promoting positive care practices, compared with those who only received cash transfers. The positive results and advocacy efforts led the government to further expand the Child Grant programme using the cash and care model to further scale up the impact, as well as the World Bank to mobilize additional support to the Child Grant programme in their new social protection project.

## Case Study 4: Tunisia: Increasing access to social protection for young children

UNICEF Tunisia successfully advocated for additional funding (US\$12 million) from the German KfW development bank to expand monthly child benefits for young children aged 0–5 years, enabling the government to afford the increased number of children registered in the national social protection programme, Amen Social. UNICEF Tunisia also leveraged World Bank funding through the Tunisia COVID-19 Social Protection Emergency Response Support Project, which will sustain the child benefit programme through a budgetary support loan over the period 2022–2023. A significant milestone was when child benefits for all children aged 0–5 was enshrined into law in January 2022.

- Enhancing the management information system: UNICEF supported the modernization of the registration system by launching a digital platform that allows households to request support and update their information and contacts. This helped to update the databases of eligible households in view of the implementation of the 2019 Amen Social law, which anticipates merging all existing social protection programmes into one unique database. UNICEF’s support also accelerated the updating of registration process for children under the age of 5.
- Capacity-building initiatives: UNICEF initiatives included training up a team of trainers for 24 government officials using the TRANSFORM modules developed by ILO, UNICEF and UNDP, which focus on strengthening the effectiveness of the national social protection programme. In 2021, UNICEF’s support led to wider coverage of children aged 0–5 years, reaching 129,000 children (approximately 12 per cent of the age category), up from 50,000 in 2020.
- Mobilizing funds: UNICEF’s advocacy focused on the inclusion of child-related indicators in the new World Bank loan programme for 2022–2023. This work was critical to ensure that the most vulnerable families receive equitable access to social protection to address the needs of their children, including the specific needs of younger children, when it comes to health, nutrition, protection and education. UNICEF successfully mobilized from the KfW development bank an additional US\$12 million in 2021 (bringing the total to US\$26 million for 2020 and 2021) to expand the child benefit programme targeting children, support their resilience and strengthen the responsiveness of the national social protection system to the rights of the most vulnerable.



Abdelhafidh, sits outside his home surrounded by his five children, Yusef (6), Mohammed Aziz (8), Maysa (4), Aminullah (2), and Aya (6)./ Dâaja, Beja. 2021.

On top of a hill, at the end of a bumpy dirt road amid bright green fields, five siblings are playing with a donkey and shouting excitedly together. The house they live in is a simple concrete structure, at the edge of a tiny, isolated settlement called Dâaja, in Tunisia’s north-west Beja province. Many of the villagers in Dâaja are severely economically marginalized, with few work opportunities. The agriculture that most locals depend on does not bring in enough stable revenue to support a family.

Hajer, their mother, speaks about the extreme hardship the family has experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, on top of the daily challenges they already faced in Dâaja. “I got sick with Covid. I was exhausted. I had a fever. And then all of the kids got sick too. But my husband and I were only able to spend three days in bed recovering – we had to get back up and work.” Hajer spoke of the cash transfer programme, of which the Daaji family are recipients. “Two of my children get 30 dinars [US\$10.50] each per month. My husband picks it up at the post office. I use the money to buy food and clothing for my kids. I also buy them books for school!”



## Expanding and improving health insurance

UNICEF plays a critical role in linking health insurance programmes with social protection initiatives to ensure the most vulnerable children and families can access the resources and services they need. In 2021, work continued in 26 countries supporting governments to expand and improve health insurance coverage for children and their families.

For example, in Ghana – as part of the UNICEF-supported Integrated Social Services initiative – a programme to strengthen intersectoral collaboration expanded from 40 districts to 100 districts. Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) and Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), its national social protection programme, took stock of existing bottlenecks at the subnational and national levels, to ensure access to health insurance for LEAP recipients. The initiative resulted in a sixfold increase in LEAP members actively enrolled in the NHIS in its first year. A total of 1,190,402 individuals representing 78 per cent of all LEAP beneficiaries enrolled in the NHIS by 2021.

## Supporting childcare

The year 2021 was pivotal for UNICEF's work on childcare and adolescent employability. In 2022, for the first time, the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 will include specific commitments to increase the number of country offices in our global network taking action on care work and family-friendly policies, including expanding access to childcare, maternity and parental leave, breastfeeding support and child benefits. This is a multisectoral collaboration including social policy, gender, early childhood development, nutrition and business for rights. In 2021, 56 country offices engaged in specific activities to advance this agenda, including: supporting national consultations on updating or introducing support (16 countries); costing the introduction of support (8 countries); and supporting social protection programmes linked to the provision of care services (16 countries). Together with Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing and ILO, we also published a report on extending family-friendly policies, including childcare, to workers in the informal economy.<sup>66</sup> We shone a spotlight on these critical policies at the [first Global Forum for Children and Youth](#).<sup>67</sup>

## Strengthening the social welfare workforce and direct outreach to families

UNICEF plays a key role in linking social protection with other social services, including child protection, health, education and nutrition services, through the expansion and strengthening of the social welfare workforce. Effective case management and referral mechanisms are important in ensuring that the most vulnerable children and families have access to social protection programmes.

UNICEF supported the strengthening and expansion of the social welfare workforce in 77 countries and territories. In India, through the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance partnership, UNICEF supported the strengthening of the social workforce framework in five states and scaled up its capacity-building efforts through digital acceleration to reach 224,253 participants.

## Administration and integrated service delivery

In 2021, UNICEF supported 73 countries in improving the efficiency of administrative systems through streamlined processes, time and resources. These systems, overlaid with child-sensitive information, led to more effective coordination between programmes.

In Jordan, UNICEF played an instrumental role in strengthening the social protection system and the sector's response. Guided by evidence, UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank, provided support to the government to operationalize its national social protection strategy, enhancing the management information system of the National Aid Fund and integrating it with the National Unified Registry. UNICEF was assigned as co-chair of the Common Cash Facility – an inter-agency cash delivery platform – and the expansion of the National Aid Fund was technically and financially supported by the World Bank, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WFP and UNICEF. As a result, over 640,000 children (49 per cent girls) benefited from regular and emergency National Aid Fund programmes.

In India, UNICEF supported state efforts to improve data integration and social registry systems. In order to advocate for children's and women's social protection benefits, UNICEF reached out to the wider United Nations agency networks and the World Bank. A raft of state efforts to improve existing social protection services<sup>68</sup> involving local governance and community structures have provided alternative models of delivery in difficult-to-reach areas. In response to the pandemic, and the need to reach vulnerable children, cash transfers targeting girls were enhanced, with Madhya Pradesh being the sixth state to announce the social protection scheme Ladli-Laxmi 2.0 in 2021.

In Namibia, UNICEF, together with the EU delegation, is helping the government to develop an integrated management information system for social protection, providing technical support to the design of an integrated beneficiary registry system. The integrated beneficiary registry was designed to bring together information on applicants, beneficiaries and payments of all social protection schemes, and links the social protection management information system to other government databases, such as the national population register, to facilitate verification and referrals of recipients to other complementary social services. This tool will monitor the progress and performance of all social protection schemes, both individually and collectively, facilitating informed decision-making for enhanced efficiency.

## Social protection in humanitarian, fragile and risk-prone contexts

### Strengthening national shock-responsive social protection systems

In 2021, 79 countries reported working on shock-responsive social protection. This reflects the consistent progress made in reducing the number of countries with absent or weak shock-responsive social protection systems, and a corresponding increase in the number of countries with moderate and strong systems. The strategic plan target was surpassed in 2020 and maintained in 2021.

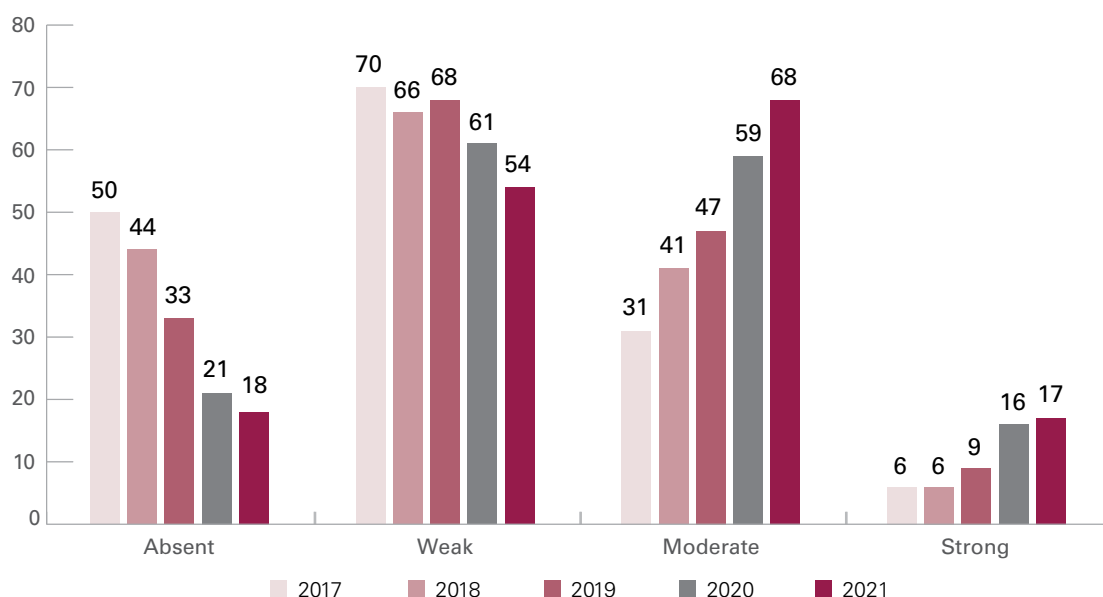
UNICEF undertook capacity-building initiatives to further strengthen staff capacities to meet the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action relating to social protection. These initiatives included the development of technical resources in four United Nations languages, the consolidation of a toolbox and the facilitation of technical sessions in four regions.

UNICEF adopted diverse strategies to support governments in strengthening the shock responsiveness of their social protection systems. For instance, in Libya, working closely with the National Economic and Social Development Board and UNDP, UNICEF helped to develop a road map for the national social protection policy. This road map aims to strengthen the shock-responsiveness of the social protection system. In Kenya, UNICEF supported the review of the national social protection policy, with a view to strengthening its inclusiveness, child sensitiveness and shock responsiveness. In Nepal, UNICEF worked with

partners to organize a national policy workshop, bringing different authorities together with the aim of strengthening understanding and advancing the policy formulation of shock-responsive social protection.

In the Philippines, UNICEF focused on strengthening the social protection programme in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and enhancing the poverty registry for shock responsiveness. In Mongolia, UNICEF's support for the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in monitoring its pandemic response via the Child Money Programme and Food Stamp Programme generated useful evidence that informed the government's decisions on transfer value, coverage and additional measures. This allowed it to improve on the implementation and institutionalization of shock responsiveness in its social protection system. In Brazil, UNICEF leveraged its support for emergency cash transfers in seven municipalities, to develop guidance for the municipality of Rio de Janeiro on strengthening adaptive social assistance services for emergencies. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF worked closely with WFP to successfully model a shock-responsive social safety net project in Nsele, Kinshasa, covering 21,000 households. This effort helped the government to develop and test social protection tools and systems, including the development of a social protection management information system, and guidelines and operation manuals. In Somalia, UNICEF's efforts to build a nascent social protection system included capacity-building at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, alongside building key components of a government social protection system, including the development and comprehensive testing of the software for a unified social registry and strengthening the coordination structures.

FIGURE 16: Trends in the number of countries with national cash transfer programmes that are ready to respond to crises



Source: UNICEF (2021).<sup>69</sup>

## Case Study 5: Afghanistan: Scaling up cash transfers for vulnerable families and children

Ongoing conflict and displacement, severe weather conditions, COVID-19 and underlying poverty in Afghanistan have, over the years, resulted in large numbers of people struggling to survive and in need of humanitarian assistance. The regime change in August 2021 exacerbated this further. The withdrawal of development aid, coupled with one of the worst droughts in decades and the imposition of restrictive norms, especially on women and girls, has resulted in almost universal poverty. Children and women have been, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted by the compounded humanitarian needs, and are in urgent need of life-saving cash and social protection services.

Following a two-pronged strategy focusing on addressing immediate humanitarian needs while working on longer-term strategy to develop a social protection system, UNICEF rapidly scaled up its cash programme, reaching 266,151 people by December, 2021. This scale-up will continue in 2022, and is expected to reach

1.5 million people by the first quarter of 2022. The objective of the programme is to address the immediate- and medium-term needs of the most vulnerable children and families in Afghanistan, paying special attention to gender needs. It also aims to help prevent households resorting to negative coping mechanisms (from being forced to skip meals to child marriage) and to strengthen the basis for a nascent social protection system for longer-term impacts. It is hoped that the programme will have long-lasting effects for children in Afghanistan, an estimated 97 per cent of whom live in poverty.<sup>70</sup>

To strengthen daily operational delivery and risk management, UNICEF has set up a distinct operational unit, the Afghanistan Programme Management Unit. This has dedicated expertise on contracting, payment, risk management, monitoring and beneficiary data management for high-volume cash payments. UNICEF works through NGOs to select recipients and target its cash transfer operation. Data collection is carried out by trained enumerators with the KoBo Toolbox, using UNICEF's dedicated server, and registration data are uploaded into UNICEF's dedicated management information system for cash transfers, the Humanitarian Cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE). Through this process, HOPE automatically leverages available biographical information on each individual beneficiary and calculates a similarity score to other individual beneficiaries, flagging those that merit further review.

UNICEF uses a categorical targeting approach to reach those most in need of assistance. This includes families with children who have disabilities, female-headed households, and households with pregnant or lactating women. UNICEF and partners systematically negotiate access for female enumerators to ensure the gender sensitivity of the registration process, such as for interventions targeting pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF has established long-term agreements with money service providers and financial service providers and is working collaboratively with other United Nations agencies in terms of financial services contracting and liquidity management, as part of the United Nations Common Cash System involving UNHCR, WFP and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations).

UNICEF sets the transfer value in US dollars, which is converted to Afghanis before registration, to ensure beneficiary purchasing power is minimally impacted by exchange rate fluctuations. UNICEF sets up multiple channels for reporting, to ensure the system is inclusive and accessible to the most vulnerable people in the community. Feedback channels include Awaaz and the inter-agency toll-free hotline; community members and beneficiaries can request information on humanitarian cash assistance and report any issues with the service.

UNICEF was the first United Nations agency in 20 years to travel to rural Nuristan with international staff, to deliver life-saving cash assistance to the most impoverished families and children. See [this video](#)<sup>71</sup> to learn more.



A woman receives a cash benefit through the UNICEF supported programme to support her family in Parun city, Nuristan Province

## Linking humanitarian cash transfers to social protection systems

UNICEF continues to pursue its commitment made at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to strengthen the links between HCTs and social protection. This commitment is reflected in the encouraging results for the reporting period. In 2021, UNICEF-supported HCT programmes reached 19 million children in 62 countries. An overwhelming majority of these children – 97 per cent – were supported by linking HCTs with social protection. Meanwhile, UNICEF increased the number of countries implementing UNICEF-funded HCT programmes to 52 in 2021 (up from 50 countries in 2020), reaching 2.7 million households (up from 2.5 million in 2020). Of these, 724,000 households across 20 countries (up from 18 in 2020) were reached through direct funding and national social protection programmes, and 1.9 million households in 38 countries (up from 34 countries in 2020) were reached through implementation partnerships with local financial service providers and civil society partners. The remaining 6.8 million households were reached through the provision of technical assistance to expand government social protection programmes. In most countries, this entailed providing technical assistance and funding to governments to scale up social cash transfers. In eight countries, however, this included leveraging components of the existing social protection system, such as beneficiary lists or the social workforce.

In the conflict-affected town of Dessie in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, UNICEF partnered with the regional government to identify 10,010 conflict-affected internally displaced persons, including 6,391 children. Humanitarian cash transfers were delivered to 10,010 conflict-affected internally displaced persons, including 6,391 children. They received US\$50 as HCTs for three months via the regional government. This approach is part of UNICEF's efforts to strengthen the preparedness and capacity of local governments and authorities to embark on a social protection response. The payments were made into bank accounts, which facilitated the withdrawal of cash from any location along the displacement route. An additional 4,259 internally displaced people and members of the host community were supported in the town of Debarq in the Amhara region. In Sierra Leone, UNICEF's efforts in shock-responsive social protection have enhanced the capacity of the government system to respond to the needs of populations affected by crises. In 2021, scaled-up social safety net and emergency cash transfer programmes supported 66,005 households with UNICEF technical assistance. This demonstrates a threefold increase in coverage compared with 2020.

Previous years' efforts at assessing the readiness of social protection systems and, accordingly, developing a demonstration pilot in Tajikistan, proved a useful intervention. In 2021, the World Bank utilized the humanitarian cash transfer model developed by UNICEF in 2019 to make one-time payments to low-income households with children under 16 years of age. The intervention covered over 124,164 households. In Ukraine, UNICEF embarked on a similar process to provide one-

time, multipurpose cash transfers to children living close to the 'contact line' in the east of Ukraine, with the dual purpose of supporting children and improving the shock-responsiveness of social protection in the country.

Responding to the needs of children on the move, in Turkey, UNICEF maintained the Conditional Cash Transfers for Education programme for refugees. Since 2017, this programme has supported 760,858 children with cash transfers. Of these, 377,286 are girls. As part of the UNICEF–World Bank partnership, 1.44 million poor and vulnerable households across the country have been reached in Yemen. In 2021, steps were initiated to gradually transition this programme into becoming a national institution.

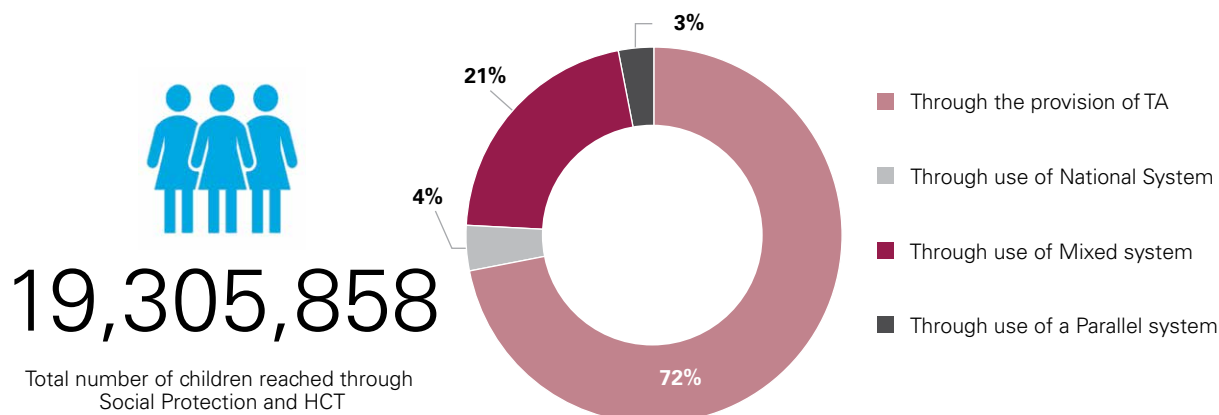
Globally, UNICEF, FCDO and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies co-lead a multi-agency platform designed to strengthen synergies between HCTs and social protection. In 2021, UNICEF led the consolidation of global learning across member agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development, ILO, WFP, UNHCR, the Association of Charitable Foundations, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, Mercy Corps, UNFPA, Kenya Red Cross, Turkish Red Crescent, World Vision and UNICEF on this topic to strengthen collective knowledge and expertise. Globally, UNICEF co-leads a multi-agency platform designed to strengthen synergies between HCTs and social protection. In 2021, UNICEF led the consolidation of global learning across member agencies on this topic to strengthen collective knowledge and expertise. Initially conceptualized as a subgroup of the cash workstream of the Grand Bargain commitments, it transitioned into a working group of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board in 2021, following the suspension of the cash workstream. UNICEF played an important leadership role in this transition process, ensuring that the progress made by the group was not lost.

## Social protection for migrant and displaced children and families

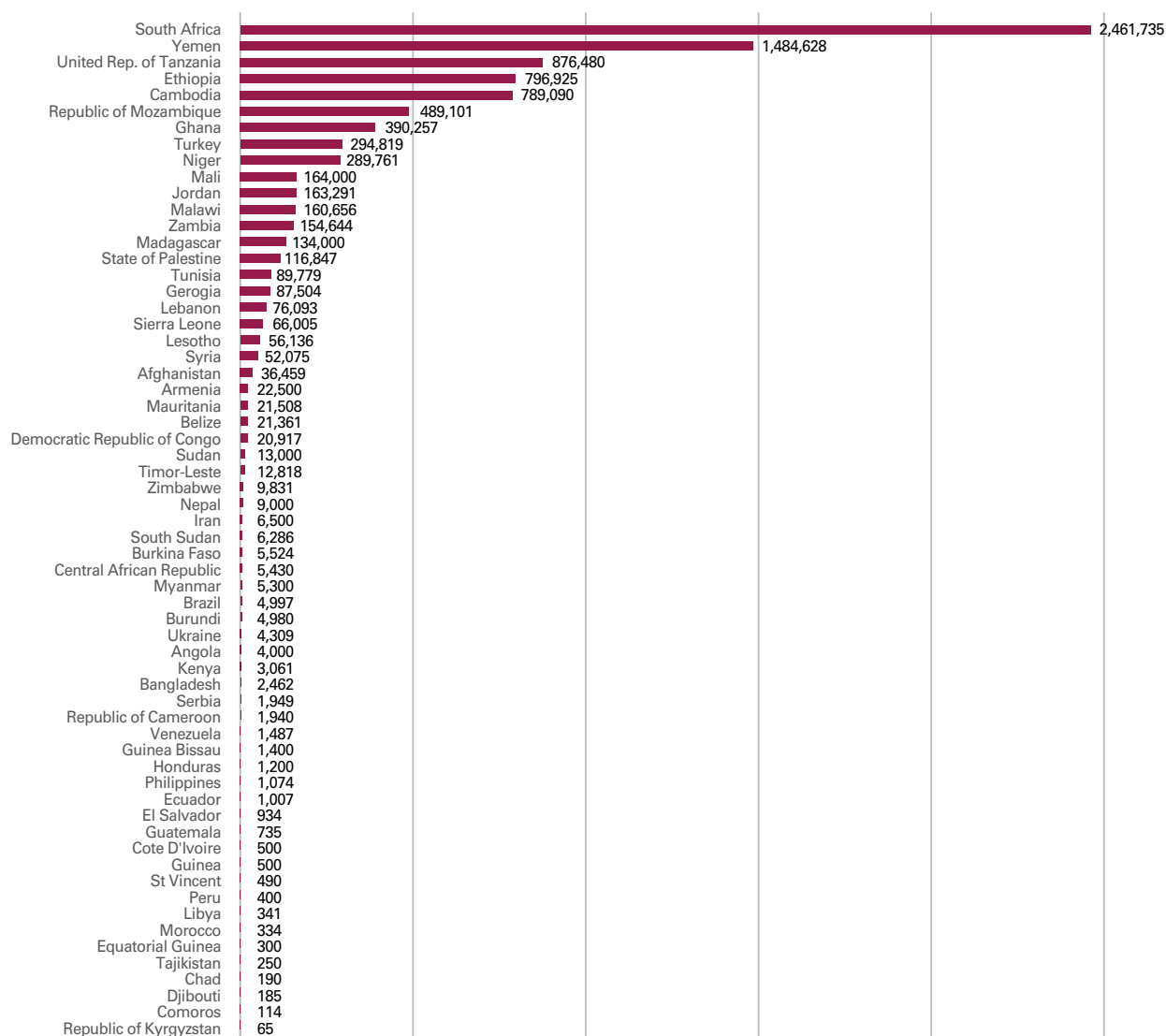
UNICEF continues to work on strengthening the inclusion of children on the move in social protection systems. In 2021, UNICEF-supported programmes reached a total of 940,428 children on the move with cash transfers. In Latin America, UNICEF partnered with the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and WFP to document promising methods to include Venezuelan migrants in social protection as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Egypt, policy recommendations informed the expansion of social protection to migrants. In India, UNICEF advocated for portable social protection and supported the development of migrant registration systems to deliver emergency cash transfers to migrant families. In Trinidad and Tobago, UNICEF and national partners supported more than 2,000 migrant children and their families with education, nutrition, protection services and cash assistance.

FIGURE 17: HCT beneficiaries by type of assistance and by country

Social Protection and HCT beneficiaries reached



Social Protection and HCT beneficiaries by country



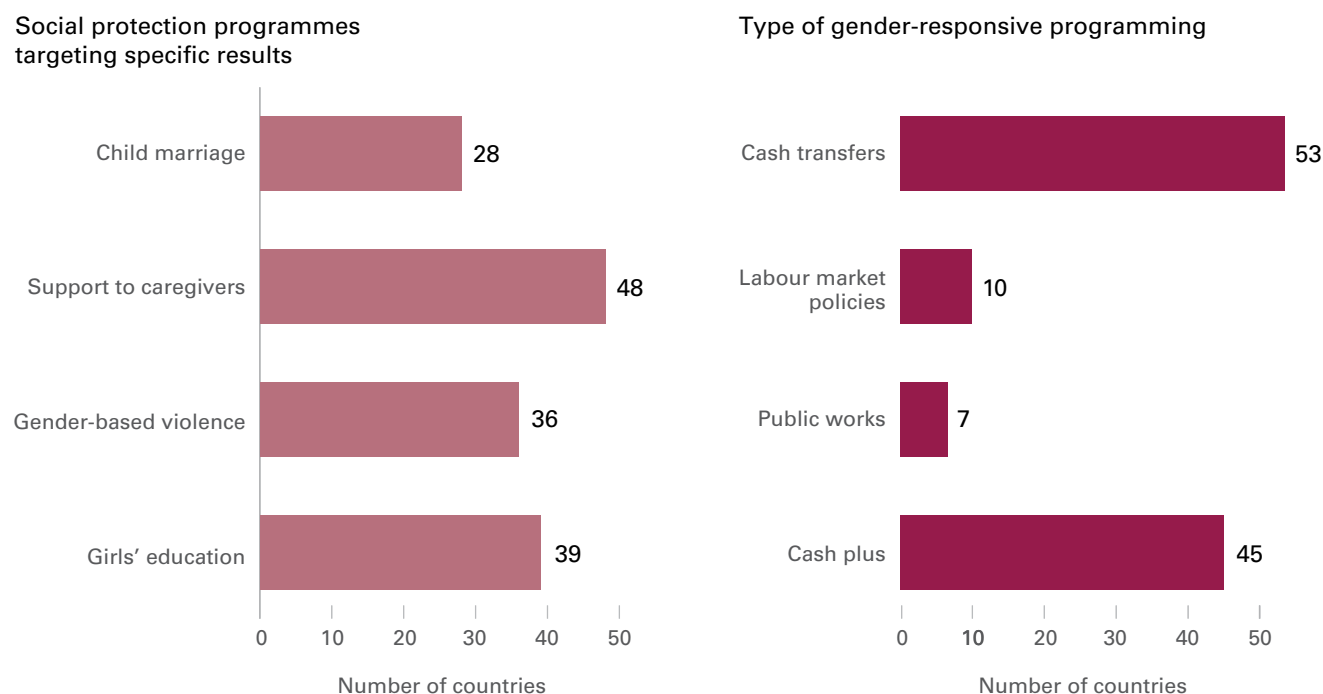
Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions (2021).<sup>72</sup>

## Gender-transformative and inclusive social protection

This was a critical year for UNICEF's work on inclusive social protection, and we made strides in both gender-responsive/transformational social protection and disability-inclusive social protection. For the first time, UNICEF has developed a new strategy to work towards gender-transformative social protection, and made concrete commitments to increase the number of countries with social protection programmes that are gender responsive, or lead to transformative gender equality results, as well as the commitments to care work and family-friendly policies detailed earlier. With the support of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ireland and the Hewlett Foundation, UNICEF has been able to enhance its capacity in this area of work, including increasing technical assistance to countries and providing training to governments, other United Nations agencies and UNICEF staff. As a result of a learning partnership with the World Bank and FCDO, collaboration with the SPIAC-B gender working group, and UNICEF's internal community of practice, we reached over 2,000 people with knowledge exchange and learning events on gender and social protection.

A total of 100 UNICEF country offices have explicit gender objectives in their social protection work (up from 29 in 2019). For the new strategic plan, what counts will be how this number translates into concrete changes in the lives of the people we serve, particularly how social protection systems can change the lives of girls experiencing exclusion, and shift detrimental poverty, power and gender norms for everyone. For example, in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF is supporting the government with an adolescent-focused cash plus programme, assessing its impact, including reducing gender-based violence and promoting gender-equitable attitudes amongst adolescent boys (such as on domestic chores, violence and other domains), health and more. Further research on cash plus work in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme and social protection programmes in other countries is also under way, under the Gender-Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection programme, in partnership with the United Kingdom. In Albania, UNICEF and UN Women are working to generate evidence around the impact of social protection on children and women, and to make actionable recommendations around sustainable financing for cash and care services that are appropriate, adequate and relevant to the needs of children and women throughout their life cycle. These examples illustrate the range of work taking place across regions and domains to advance our agenda.

FIGURE 18: Gender-responsive programming and social protection



Source: UNICEF Strategic Monitoring Questions, (2021).<sup>74</sup>

As of January 2022, 43 UNICEF country offices are targeting results to increase girls' education through their social protection work, 40 country offices are targeting results to reduce GBV, and 36 country offices are explicitly targeting results to increase women's and girls' decision-making power (such as the ability to make decisions about household expenditure). Country offices in 31 nations are supporting social protection programmes, with an aim to increase gender-equitable attitudes, and 30 are working to improve access to maternal, sexual and reproductive health rights for girls and women.

To support this work in 2021, UNICEF [published its strategy](#) for including gender-transformative approaches in social protection, as part of a compendium of papers on being intentional about gender-transformative strategies. Alongside this, UNICEF Innocenti and UN Women collaborated to produce a [review on mainstreaming gender into social protection strategies and programmes in 74 low- and middle-income countries](#), and UNICEF collaborated with the FCDO and ODI to produce a [synthesis paper capturing recent evidence, learning and recommendations for gender-responsive or transformative social protection](#). UNICEF also led collaboration with the SPIAC-B gender working group to develop a [key resources sheet on GBV and social protection](#), bringing together the best of recent research papers, practical guidance and webinars. Furthermore, a collaboration between UNICEF's humanitarian, child protection and social protection teams produced [guidelines on GBV risk mitigation and humanitarian cash transfers](#).

## Disability-inclusive social protection

In 2021, UNICEF provided support to make social protection systems more inclusive for children and adults with disabilities in more than 56 countries, and initiated support in 25 more. The UNICEF–Norway disability partnership enabled both an increase of its technical capacities and its support to countries to make their social protection response to COVID-19 more disability-inclusive, including in Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In terms of systems-strengthening, the focus was on improved disability data collection and analysis, the development or reform of disability identification assessment mechanisms and programmes, and systems that take into consideration disability-related costs faced by children with disabilities and their families. On data collection, UNICEF has supported evidence generation for more disability-inclusive social protection in more than 40 countries. For example, in Jamaica, one study analysed the socioeconomic impact of disability on children and their access to social protection. The study showed that there is a need to improve outreach to children and adults with disabilities and their families, as most do not have access to existing social assistance, and may not even be aware of existing services and support. In Mali, a study on people living with a disability aged 0–17 years was produced by the Sustainable Development Observatory and the Fight Against Poverty in collaboration with UNICEF. In Maldives, UNICEF supported

the inclusion of disability questions in the upcoming 2022 census questionnaire. In addition, UNICEF is supporting the government to collect information on the disabled population nationwide, to build the first national disability database, providing appropriate information for targeting national interventions towards people with disabilities. UNICEF is also supporting the department of social welfare of the Philippines to carry out an innovative study on disability-related costs faced by children with disabilities and their families, to help design more supportive social protection schemes.

The COVID-19 crisis has further highlighted the importance of comprehensive registries, including disability-specific information, to channel support to children with disabilities and their families swiftly and effectively. UNICEF has supported the development or reform of disability identification and assessment in 26 countries, to align them with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, either by adapting their existing disability assessment, such as in Armenia or Bosnia and Herzegovina, or by developing a new mechanism, like in Cambodia. With UNICEF and Joint SDG Fund support, the Cambodian ministry of social affairs established the Disability Management Information System (DMIS) and developed revised identification guidelines and digital app-based disability assessment tools, which can be used by community workers, making the process more accessible and reliable. A total of 4,000 commune officials were trained to undertake the national identification process, which resulted in more than 250,000 persons with disabilities being identified and registered in the DMIS (with final verification still in process). The disability identification process is an on-demand system. The emerging DMIS was put to immediate use during the COVID-19 pandemic, to prioritize persons with disabilities for vaccination. In all cases, we are trying to ensure that assessment mechanisms are more accessible, take into consideration the support needs of children and adults with disabilities, and are reliable, so that governments can build on them to develop schemes and services.

To tackle the capacity gap across stakeholders on disability-inclusive social protection, UNICEF has also worked closely with other agencies on developing technical resources. For example, UNICEF delivered an intensive online course with ILO and the Bonn–Rhein–Sieg University of Applied Sciences for 74 staff members of government, organizations of persons with disabilities and United Nations agencies from 41 countries. It also co-organized a series of webinars with the World Bank for colleagues from Europe and Central Asia, reviewing key issues and promising practices.

# Looking ahead

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With the continued impact of COVID-19 and the crisis of poverty and care, the challenges of conflict and forced displacement, and the climate crisis, child rights are being threatened to a degree not seen in more than a generation. As discussed in the child poverty chapter of this report, rapidly evolving new trends in urbanization, digital transformation and demographic shifts, among other things, will also continue to have profound impacts on children and families, including the 'new poor'.

In this context, the role of social protection in addressing economic and social vulnerabilities and inequalities and providing support to children and families is more important than ever. The unprecedented policy response to COVID-19 has shown that scaling up rapid support is possible, where there are strong systems and political commitments in place. As highlighted in the rapid review of UNICEF's social protection response to COVID-19, UNICEF has leveraged its field presence and technical expertise to support the scale-up of responses globally.

However, critical gaps remain, including in terms of coverage, adequacy and financing for building universal social protection systems. UNICEF will continue to place strong emphasis on furthering our long-standing support to strengthening social protection systems, including in contexts of fragility, but with a focus on accelerating progress through revamping critical game changers.

Crucial among these is an increased focus on inclusive social protection, including family-friendly policies. The crisis of poverty and care has illuminated all too clearly the urgent need for scaling up gender transformative social protection, including family-friendly policies and programmes that recognize and support care work, including maternity and

parental leave grants, childcare, breastfeeding support and child benefits. We must also urgently reach children with disabilities (or those living with a disabled family member), as well as children on the move, with social protection, as these are among the most vulnerable groups of children. COVID-19 has also underlined the importance of preparedness and shock-responsive social protection. Strengthening our work in this area will be crucial, owing to the ongoing and growing threats of conflict and climate change.

The key to success in many of these areas will be expanding coverage of social protection, and UNICEF will continue to work to support countries expanding towards universal coverage, including through the development of practical, context-specific road maps. Ultimately, success or failure across these areas will depend on generating sufficient financing, which will be a core renewed area of focus.

UNICEF remains committed to working with partners to accelerate progress towards universal social protection, particularly working as a key partner on global initiatives such as the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, SPIAC-B and USP2030, including on shock-responsive social protection, gender, disability and finance.





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# Results: Gender – “Promoting positive gender norms and socialization”

Two teams compete in the final match of the under-16 National Women's Football Championship in Bangladesh. UNICEF and the Bangladesh Football Federation launched a national football talent scout for adolescent girls to challenge discriminatory gender norms that limit girls' participation in sports.

In her first address to UNICEF staff around the world on 7 February 2022, UNICEF's new Executive Director, Catherine Russell said, "We have to do better by these girls, we can do better by these girls. Girls are more likely to be pulled out of school, they are more likely to end up working or getting married. And what does that mean for their lives? And what does that mean for their children? It means that their children will be less likely to go to school. The consequences are terrible."

One of the most significant causes of poorer outcomes for girls and women are discriminatory gender norms.<sup>75</sup> That is, the harmful, deep-seated social rules, beliefs and practices that dictate how people should behave, based on their gender. As children grow up and interact more with the world around them, they internalize gender roles through agents of gender socialization, including parents, caregivers, school, teachers, and – increasingly – peers and the media. Discriminatory gender norms have an enormous impact on girls and women, restricting their ability to exercise their rights, access resources and services, seize opportunities and fully realize their potential. Furthermore, gender norms can also intersect with other factors – including age, disability, race, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others – compounding the disadvantages and deprivations many girls and women face.

In 2021, the continued impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing gender and social inequalities, and further entrenched discriminatory gender norms. In many households around the world, traditional gender roles intensified, and women and girls were disproportionately burdened with unpaid care work. Furthermore, in the wake of school closures at the height of the pandemic, many girls dropped out of school and have not returned, despite schools re-opening. Rates of child marriage and other harmful practices also rose during the pandemic, and

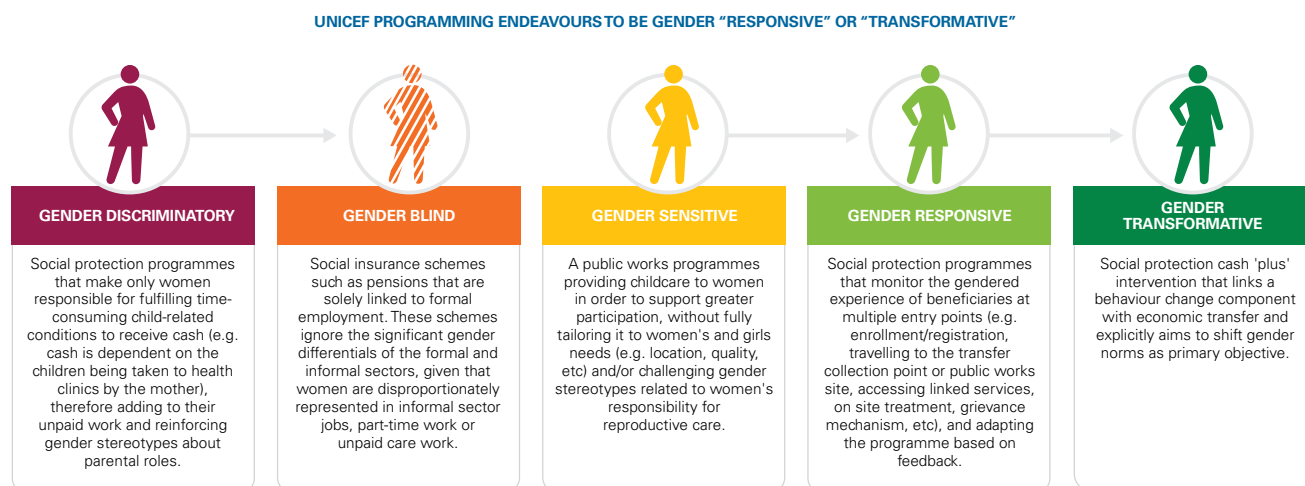
women and girls faced a heightened risk of GBV during lockdown. In response, UNICEF has re-oriented and re-prioritized its regular programming, recognizing the specific disparities facing girls and women, and sharpening its focus on efforts to dismantle discriminatory gender norms as the underlying drivers of inequality.

## UNICEF's approach

Addressing harmful gender norms and promoting positive gender socialization is an integral, cross-cutting priority for UNICEF, and has been a flagship area of work in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. It has also been a critical focus of the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, to accelerate results for girls and women. UNICEF programming has sought to be at least gender responsive, and aspires to be gender transformative (*see Figure 19*) by applying a gender equality and rights-based approach to programme design that not only responds to gender-specific needs, but also attempts to transform the harmful norms and power relations between women, girls, boys and men that lie at the root of gender inequality.

The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 outlined a twin-track approach to gender programming by integrating gender equality for girls and boys across all goal areas of the strategic plan, while recognizing the rights and particular needs and vulnerabilities of adolescent girls through five targeted priorities. UNICEF promotes gender equality for children from birth through adolescence by addressing gender-specific discrimination and disadvantages that typically affect girls the most, but can also affect boys. UNICEF works across the life course of children to create an enabling environment for sustainable and at-scale results in gender norms change, through the following programming principles.

FIGURE 19: Gender continuum illustrating how social protection programming can take gender dimensions into account effectively



Source: 'Integrating Gender into our Social Protection Work: Technical Note', Social & Inclusion Policy Section, UNICEF, 2020

- Programme design based on child rights and evidence of prevailing gender norms
- Interventions tailored to context-specific needs
- Holistic, cross-sectoral programmes that engage individuals, families, communities and the legal or policy environment
- A clear methodology for monitoring progress on gender norms change.

To promote positive gender norms and socialization, UNICEF programming focuses on the following:

- Gender-responsive parenting programmes. In the early years of a child's life, parents and families are the most crucial influencers of gender socialization. Gender-responsive parenting applies key principles, such as gender equality and inclusion, and promotes positive gender norms and socialization to transform imbalanced power structures in families and future generations. UNICEF strategies for gender-responsive parenting include engaging fathers and male caregivers in caregiving and domestic responsibilities, and social and behaviour change communication through multimedia platforms.
- Gender-responsive and gender-transformative social protection programmes. Discriminatory gender norms can be further entrenched when families face poverty and deprivation. Providing vulnerable families with economic support through social protection programmes such as cash transfers allows them to direct resources towards all their children, regardless of gender. In addition, poorly designed social protection systems can be discriminatory and severely limit women's and girls' economic opportunities and access to benefits, especially for female heads-of-households and other marginalized groups. UNICEF works with governments and private sector actors to effectively integrate gender-responsive dimensions into social protection

programmes that go beyond addressing economic needs, to working on changing discriminatory structures and practices.

- Education and school curricula. Teachers and schools have a significant influence on children. UNICEF supports countries to develop gender-responsive education systems by ending gender stereotyping in teaching methods, curricula and training. UNICEF also supports education-related interventions that promote behaviour change to address the interlinked challenges that adolescent girls face, including GBV, menstrual health management, teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, among others.
- Addressing gender norms linked to harmful practices and violence. Discriminatory gender norms are the root causes of GBV and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and early and forced unions, as they devalue girls' abilities and disregard their bodily integrity, choices and agency. UNICEF works with numerous stakeholders to address the underlying norms that perpetuate these practices through social and behavioural change communications.
- Gender stereotypes in media. Marketing and advertising are key agents of gender socialization that can shape harmful gender and social norms and stereotypes among children. Girls are regularly portrayed in the media as demure or interested in caregiving and domestic work, while boys are often exposed to toxic masculinities that reinforce notions of boys having to be physically strong above all else. UNICEF works with both public and private sector actors to facilitate the positive representation of gender in media, marketing and advertising to encourage gender-equitable attitudes, inclusion, diversity and self-esteem, particularly among children, adolescents and young people.

## Results achieved in 2021 and challenges in promoting positive gender norms and socialization

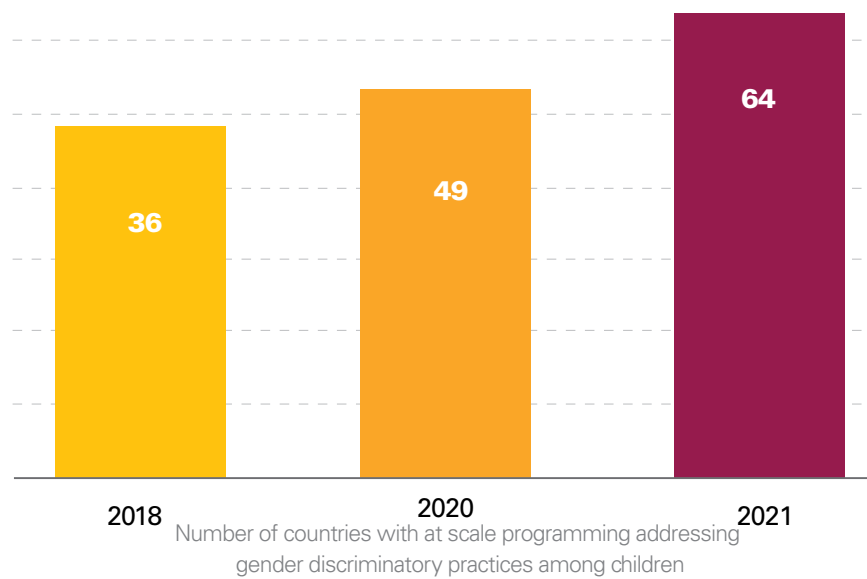
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In 2021, 64 UNICEF country offices (50 per cent) had at-scale programmes addressing gender-discriminatory roles and practices among children, exceeding the target of 40 per cent and showing remarkable growth from 49 country offices in 2020, and 36 country offices in 2018.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to support gender-responsive parenting programmes, especially emphasizing fathers' engagement in childrearing and gender-equitable caregiving

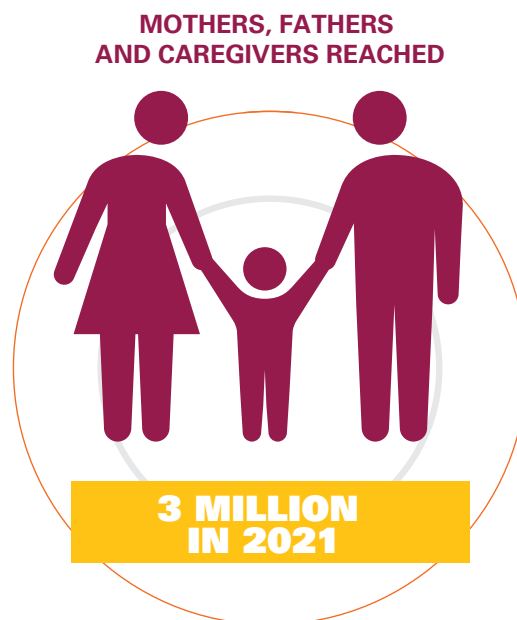
and domestic responsibilities. The organization worked closely with governments to include gender-responsive elements in all existing national parenting programmes. Three million mothers, fathers and caregivers across 94 countries were reached with UNICEF-supported interventions, close to a fourfold increase from 2017.

FIGURE 20: Number of programmes addressing gender discriminatory roles and practices among children



Source: UNICEF 2021

FIGURE 21: Number of parents and caregivers reached by UNICEF-supported interventions



Source: UNICEF 2021

Parenting resources were significantly expanded to help country offices tackle gender norms. A UNICEF parenting strategy was introduced,<sup>76</sup> offering coordinated, evidence-based technical guidance for parents and caregivers to support the gender-equitable development of children and adolescents. A strategic note, UNICEF's Vision for Elevating Parenting,<sup>77</sup> promoted positive gender socialization, while acknowledging diverse gender identities and expressions in programmes that are already under way. This supplemented the Technical Note on gender-responsive parenting,<sup>78</sup> which was developed in 2020, and provided a framework for efforts at the field level to address harmful norms and promote behaviour change towards gender equality.








UNICEF helped countries to incorporate gender dimensions into existing national parenting programmes. For example, in Lebanon, UNICEF supported the Qudwa programme, led by the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is a social and behavioural change communication plan targeted towards parents and caregivers, to discourage harmful practices like child marriage, violent discipline and child labour. The programme provides support services, information and resources that inform better parenting and caregiving choices, and has reached approximately 100,000 children.

In line with UNICEF's gender equality and rights-based approach to programming, countries were encouraged to aspire to gender-transformative parenting programmes that acknowledge and tackle the intersecting deprivations women and girls face, and consider the complexities of multiple identities and contexts. For example, in Croatia, a parenting support module was developed for impoverished Roma families. A total of 387 parents and 317 children received parenting and psychosocial support that addressed harmful gender norms and practices around children's upbringing in the Roma community, with a focus on behaviour change in fathers. Workshops for parents advised fathers to be engaged in their children's lives and encouraged a fair division of domestic work.

To further enhance gender-transformative parenting programmes, UNICEF launched the gender-transformative parenting pilot in 2021. Managed jointly by the Gender Section at UNICEF Headquarters and the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, the pilot will be rolled out in eight countries: Argentina, Egypt, Eritrea, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, the United Republic of Tanzania and Turkey. Following mapping of current parenting programmes, the pilot will develop and roll out modules on gender-transformative parenting in each country, to help parents build the skills they need to raise children without gender-based discrimination and stereotyping.

FIGURE 22: Countries implementing programmes on promoting positive gender norms and socialization

UNICEF PROMOTES POSITIVE GENDER NORMS AND SOCIALIZATION TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR ALL CHILDREN

 <p><b>Lebanon</b> Supporting a normative shift in practices considered harmful for children and women, while encouraging behaviors and norms that promote their wellbeing, dignity and equality.</p>	 <p><b>Armenia</b> Facilitating positive gender portrayals in school curricula and mass media.</p>	 <p><b>Afghanistan</b> Establishing women and girls' safe spaces to provide individual and group psychosocial support.</p>	 <p><b>Cambodia</b> Expanding gender-responsive cash transfer programmes for pregnant women.</p>
 <p><b>Argentina</b> Advocating for gender-equitable parenting and domestic work.</p>	 <p><b>Madagascar</b> Partnering with government, civil society and religious groups to promote positive masculinities.</p>	 <p><b>Malawi</b> Promoting positive gender norms to end harmful practices like child marriage.</p>	

## Case Study 6: Turkey: Engaging fathers and breaking down gendered parenting stereotypes



Ahmed and Emine scroll through the Father Education Programme's content on a phone as Ahmed finds stories to read to his daughter.

"What do you think a fox looks like?" Ahmed asks his daughter Emine, reading a story on his phone from UNICEF's Father Education Programme. "A dog!" the five-year-old says, laughing.

The early education programme in Turkey – which targets disadvantaged communities, including refugees – offers weekly content and tools for parents to better engage with their young children and promote learning at home. Content is gender responsive and uses audiobooks and parenting guides to promote greater involvement by fathers in their children's development, and to shift traditional gender roles. During the pandemic, WhatsApp was used to continue communicating with parents and sharing tools.

The programme is being implemented by UNICEF, the Development Foundation of Turkey, and the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP) Regional Development Administration, and to date has reached almost 2,900 fathers and 4,900 children.

## Gender-responsive and gender-transformative social protection programmes

UNICEF continued to work on gender-responsive and transformative social protection programmes in 2021. The number of UNICEF country offices with specific gender objectives in their social protection work grew to 100, up from 29 in 2019. A total of 43 UNICEF country offices now prioritizes increasing girls' education through their social protection work, 40 offices are targeting GBV prevention, and 36 offices are promoting women's and girls' decision-making power.

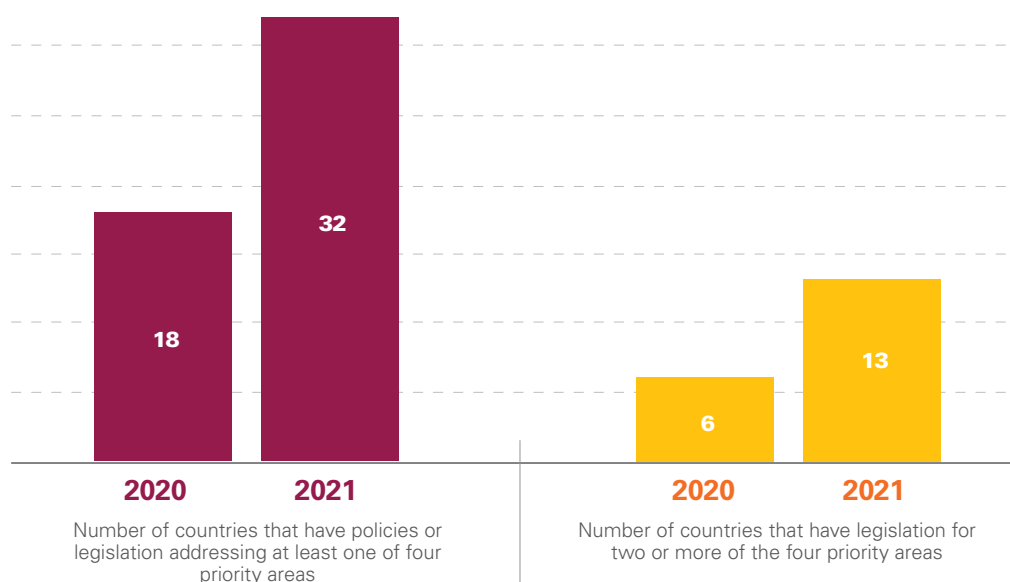
In low- and lower-middle-income countries, women are far more likely to be employed in the informal sector and are therefore excluded from the resources and protections tied to the formal economy. UNICEF is committed to facilitating social protection policies in both the formal and informal sectors.

The COVID-19 pandemic pushed 6 out of 10 children in Argentina under the poverty line. Women working in the informal sector – who make up 38 per cent of all wage earners in the country – were particularly vulnerable, as

they had no access to unemployment benefits or family or sick leave. The UNICEF Country Office in Argentina has been working to close the gap in access to family-friendly policies using strategies at both the macro and micro level. In partnership with a civil society organization, UNICEF has generated evidence and advocated for a change in family leave legislation, from both childhood and gender perspectives, to continue building on the country office's efforts in 2020 to empower women unionists in the informal sector to demand their rights.

Furthermore, many country offices recognize that family-friendly policies are a cornerstone of social protection programming that will catalyse gender-equitable parenting and care work. Hence, 56 countries engaged in direct programming on family-friendly policies or advocated for national governments to adopt such policies. UNICEF focuses on four key family-friendly policy areas: parental leave for all parents; breastfeeding support (*see Case Study 6*); affordable, accessible, quality childcare; and the provision of child benefits and adequate wages. Out of the 56 countries, 32 already have policies or legislation that address at least one of these four areas, marking an increase from 18 in 2020. Of the 56 countries, 13 reported having existing legislation for two or more of the four key areas; an increase from 6 countries in 2020.

FIGURE 23: Number of countries with family-friendly policies or legislation in at least one of the four key areas



Source: UNICEF 2021

## Case Study 7: Kenya: Creating safe and inclusive workplaces for breastfeeding mothers

UNICEF partnered with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) to implement Better Business Practices for Children (BBPC), an initiative to improve maternal and infant nutrition by making workplaces mother and baby friendly. Under the BBPC project, 48 companies established breastfeeding rooms, as mandated by the Health Act, 2017. This landmark legislation protects the rights of breastfeeding mothers in workplaces across Kenya. To design the programme, UNICEF leveraged global evidence on effective workplace policies. The programme was implemented through four distinct channels: the workplace, day-care centres, health-care facilities, and villages. UNICEF also brought together a multi-stakeholder working group to monitor the initiative, including county health departments, the Ministry of Health, KEPSA and Kabarak University. The project is the culmination of UNICEF's efforts to facilitate family-friendly policies in Kenya over the last eight years. The BBPC initiative continues to focus on infant and maternal health by promoting breastfeeding, and advocating for safer work environments and facilities that enable women to breastfeed in both formal and informal workplaces.



© Lucas Odhiambo from UNICEF KCO  
Communication, Advocacy and Partnership team.

From the left: Caroline Kawira, a KEPSA programme officer supporting Better Business Practices for Children; Jane Achieng Aluto, a member of the women's group holding her baby; Stacy Katua, UNICEF nutrition youth advocate.

KEPSA and UNICEF's nutrition interventions targeted towards women and children are being implemented in Mathare, an informal urban settlement in Nairobi where many work in the informal employment sector.



## Addressing discriminatory norms through gender-responsive school curricula

The COVID-19 pandemic has eroded almost 25 years of education gains for girls. In the aftermath of the pandemic, as many as 11 million girls may permanently drop out of school. Numerous interlinked, gender-related barriers underpin the challenges girls face, derived from and reinforced by discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes. Addressing gender discriminatory norms and stereotypes is a priority, as they affect adolescent girls' abilities and opportunities to pursue education and develop digital and science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills. In 2021, UNICEF continued to support countries to enhance the gender responsiveness of their education systems, leading to 38 per cent of UNICEF countries reporting a gender-responsive education system compared with 29 per

cent in 2016. In addition, approximately 33 million children (51 per cent girls) benefited from UNICEF's skill-building programmes, globally.

Harmful gender norms often manifest in school settings as gender-discriminatory rules and policies that punish adolescent girls and deprive them of education. For example, in several countries, adolescent mothers are not allowed to continue their education when they are pregnant or after childbirth. To combat this at the national level, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education in Peru to develop guidelines to guarantee that pregnant adolescents and mothers remain in school. The existing curriculum was also expanded to include guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education with a gender perspective. A course was designed and implemented to promote gender equality in schools, reaching more than 30,000 teachers nationwide. Similarly, in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNICEF supported advocacy efforts to overturn a law that prohibited pregnant girls from attending school.

### At a glance: Yemen: Female teachers boosting numbers of girls in schools

Of the 2 million children who are out of school in Yemen, the majority are girls. Adolescent girls are often forced to drop out of school because their families will not allow them to be taught by male teachers, due to prevailing norms that limit female interaction with males. An important strategy to ensure that adolescent girls can continue learning, therefore, is to have more female teachers in schools. In 2021, to increase the number of female teachers, especially from remote and rural areas, UNICEF provided almost 2,200 teachers from such communities with a monthly cash incentive of US\$145.



Teacher Saba'a Qasem Mohammed Moqbel, 32, is supervising students as they work on activities inside the classroom in Al-Haj Naser Muthana School for girls in Al Hussein, Al Dhale'e, Yemen. Saba'a has a bachelor's degree in mathematics and teaches secondary and elementary students.

## Case Study 8: North Macedonia: Making textbooks more gender friendly

In North Macedonia, UNICEF helped develop new textbooks for Grades 1 and 4 with a section on “Inclusion, Gender Equality/Sensitivity and Interculturality”. The books include chapters on prejudice, with sections that illustrate gender-based stereotypes – such as notions that boys should be strong and girls sensitive, that girls are not good at sports and that tidying up and cleaning is only for girls – and help students unlearn them. The content features boys and girls in equal measure, shows different types of families and encourages students to reject stereotypical gender roles by providing a broad and diverse array of positive socialization examples.

Similar efforts have also been under way in Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF partnered with Okuu Kitebi, a training and research centre, to discuss the learnings from the anti-discrimination and gender-based review of 61 current textbooks.

In Armenia, UNICEF helped develop a gender-responsive history curriculum that celebrates the contributions and accomplishments of women. The history resource pack has been distributed to 750 teachers, representing 75 per cent of all history teachers in the country.

In Azerbaijan, UNICEF and UNFPA have reviewed 10 draft textbooks across various subjects and grades for compliance with gender and inclusivity requirements for the Ministry of Education. After the review, 25 textbook authors and experts from the Ministry of Education underwent a training programme on inclusive education and universal design for learning.



Illustration from grade 4 textbook showing both boys and girls playing together.

Credit: Grade 4 textbook titled *History and Society*, published by the Bureau for the Development of Education, North Macedonia, Skopje, 2021.

## Addressing gender norms linked to violence and harmful practices

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to major setbacks in efforts to end child marriage; an estimated 10 million more child marriages may take place before the end of the decade. In response to this challenge, UNICEF has accelerated efforts to enhance programming that will combat child marriage and other harmful practices that are rampant. The number of UNICEF country programmes addressing child marriage has steadily increased, from 38 in 2016 to 52 in 2021. In 2021, UNICEF continued to support countries to develop and resource national plans to end child marriage. In 2021, 32 countries were implementing a costed action plan, compared with 8 in 2017. UNICEF-supported child marriage prevention and care interventions – delivered through safe spaces, and including mentoring, literacy, sexual and reproductive health services, and livelihood skills – reached close to 7.6 million adolescents across 47 countries; 1.6 million more than in 2020.

At the regional level, UNICEF and the Spotlight Initiative for the Africa Regional Programme engaged with the African Council of Religious Leaders to ensure the safe re-opening of schools in Eastern and Southern Africa, as a critical measure for preventing harmful practices. Approximately 204,000 adolescent girls, including 170

girls with disabilities, participated in life-skills initiatives in Ethiopia and benefited from prevention and care measures undertaken by UNICEF. Grass-roots efforts that included women-led, door-to-door community surveillance and advocacy from religious leaders also prevented over 16,000 arranged marriages.

At the national level in Ethiopia, efforts to end child marriage continued with the UNFPA–UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage. In 2021, 3,005 cases of child marriage were cancelled, compared with 640 in 2020. UNICEF also contributed to the reporting of 16,003 cases of child marriage through the multisector flagship initiative. Nearly 1.8 million people were reached with child marriage prevention measures in specific regions with high child marriage rates. The programme applies gender-transformative approaches by identifying the social and gender norms that perpetuate child marriage, and tackling them by integrating gender-transformative approaches to end child marriage into programmatic implementation guides and manuals.

In Malaysia, the Chup! Jom Sembang Seks digital campaign supported by UNICEF targets youth as change agents in support of the National Strategy Plan in Handling the Causes of Child Marriage (2020–2025), and has a recorded viewership of 20.6 million.

### At a glance: Afghanistan

In 2021, UNICEF continued to engage men and boys to promote gender equality and reduce occurrences of GBV and other harmful practices. In Kandahar, Afghanistan, a men and boys network was set up, which focused on providing members with an introduction to gender-based violence risks, prevention and response, gender-based violence (GBV) law, action against GBV, referral mechanisms and pathways and women's human rights. In collaboration with dedicated partners, UNICEF is supporting the establishment of 18 men and boys networks, 8 of which are already operational, with 176 members in Kandahar.



Members of the Men and Boys Network discuss issues around GBV at a weekly meeting in Herat

## Case Study 9: Egypt: “A voice that resonates with purpose” – Engaging families and communities to support girls and break down gender stereotypes

“I knew about Dawwie from my neighbour and, since I joined, I learn a new skill every day,” said Sarah Ibrahim, 12. Sarah is part of Egypt’s Dawwie programme. Dawwie – which means “a voice that resonates with impact” in Arabic – is a programme that promotes principles of diversity and inclusion by engaging adolescents, their families and communities in transforming the way girls are viewed and treated in society, to break gender stereotypes.

UNICEF Egypt partnered with the National Council for Women and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood to scale up the Dawwie programme in 2021 to foster community dialogue in partnership with faith-based organizations. The programme engaged 53,000 community members on issues related to harmful practices, while Dawwie’s online campaigns on female genital mutilation, internet safety and social inclusion reached 44 million users and engaged 4 million of them.

A documentary titled “It Takes a Village”, which followed the daily lives of girls who are part of the Dawwie programme, won the Best Short Documentary award at the New York Movie Awards in 2021, bringing more attention to the impact of the programme.



Sarah Ibrahim is pictured at a Dawwie session in Mansheyet Nasser, one of the largest informal settlements in Cairo. In July 2021, UNICEF and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood implemented the Dawwie Community Package through a series of Dawwie Camps in Mansheyet Nasser. The camps create a space for conversation with the target group (girls and boys aged 10–18), parents and community members on girls’ empowerment over the course of 3–4 days, through a series of engagement activities including: Dawwie storytelling circles, Dawwie digital literacy capacity-building, intergenerational dialogues with the parents, interactive community theatre with the community and, finally, a community event to support girls and boys within the community endorsing girls empowerment.

## Positive gender portrayals in media and advertising

Efforts to address gender stereotypes in media and advertising have the potential to transform gender norms at scale. UNICEF works to raise awareness within with the media and advertising industries of the impact of harmful stereotyping on outcomes for children, and advocates for businesses to dismantle harmful gender stereotyping in the content and products they design for children and to promote positive gender portrayals.

In Armenia, UNICEF developed a national edutainment series in collaboration with the public TV channel. Episodes in this series featured messaging on gender-biased sex selection and domestic violence, and disrupted gender norms by showing strong, powerful women and caring men. The series reached 200,000 viewers within the target group, and had 3 million views overall.

In Nepal, to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, UNICEF, the Rural Organization for Social Advancement, UNICEF Nepal and UN Women Nepal hosted a [panel discussion](#) on “Gender and Advertising” and the role that media content plays in forming or reinforcing unequal gender norms, particularly among children. Participants from civil society, government bodies and advertising companies discussed how to address gender bias in the media and the necessity of including diverse perspectives in the discourse.

In India, UNICEF and the [Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media](#) provided the Indian advertising community with baseline data and research insights showing the extent of gender bias and the limited types of representation in Indian advertising. Events relating to the findings were hosted by the Geena Davis Institute and the India country office, while the India chapter of the International Advertising Association, who have committed to implementing and monitoring change based on the findings, are helping galvanise the industry into action.

### Case Study 10: Addressing stereotypes in media and advertising



‘Promoting diversity and inclusion in advertising: a UNICEF playbook’ was developed with the support of the LEGO Group to provide guidance and tools to the private sector on diversity and inclusion practices.

In 2021, UNICEF worked with the LEGO Group to show the impact harmful stereotyping can have on outcomes for children, providing thought leadership, technical input and content to inform internal strategy, communications and product development. In workshops with LEGO teams, UNICEF shared an adapted version of the Gender Continuum diagnostic tool as a foundational model to guide transformational change.

The UNICEF and LEGO Group [diversity and inclusion playbook](#)<sup>79</sup> was launched during Advertising Week New York to offer companies working in this area tools for effecting change. It outlines key principles and definitions around

diversity and inclusion that impact on children and play, shares guidance to help companies assess their business, and highlights examples of best practice. The playbook has since been fully endorsed by [Licencing International](#), shared as a key resource on industry websites – including the [World Federation of Advertisers](#), the International Advertising Association, [Unstereotype Alliance](#) and [COFACE Families Europe](#) – and is proving an important door-opener for engaging with the private sector on promoting positive media portrayals of children.

# Looking ahead

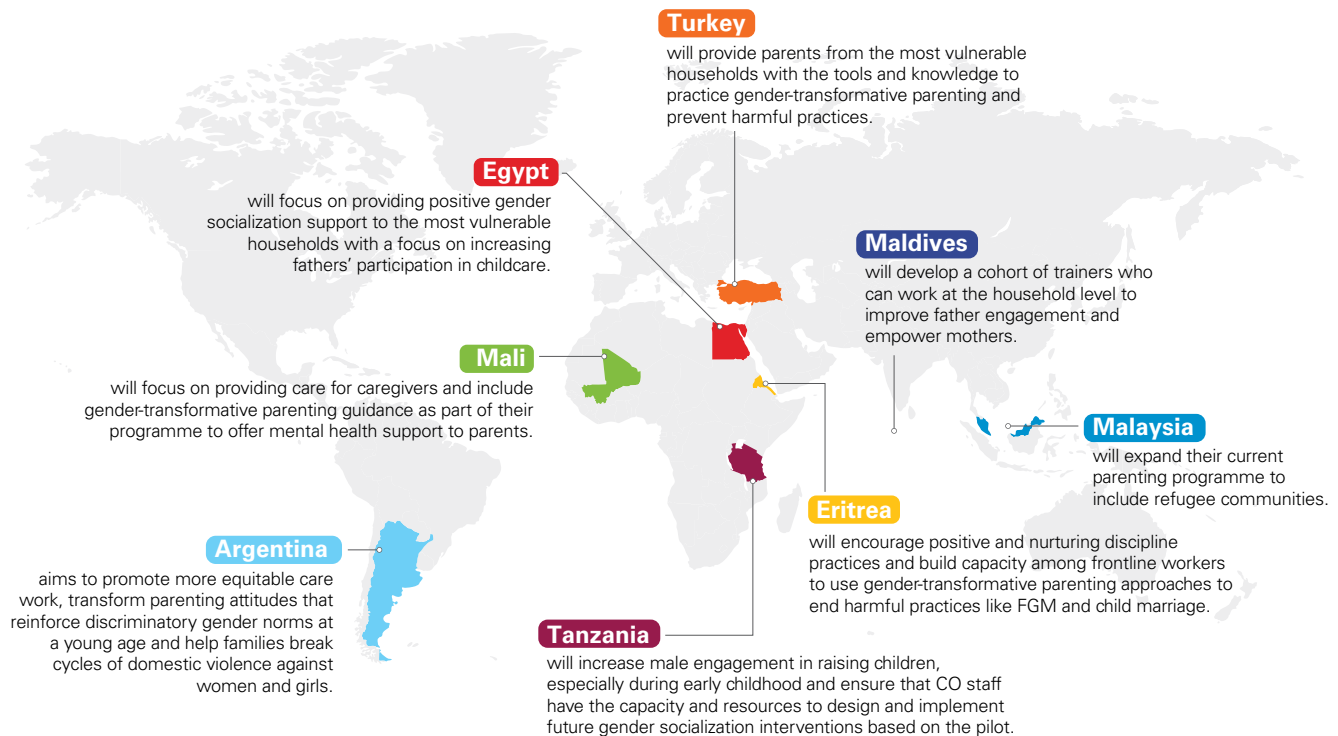
UNICEF's new Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, will be operational in 2022, marking 2021 as the final year of programming guided by the previous Gender Action Plan. With the impact achieved and lessons learned in the last four years, the new Gender Action Plan and Gender Policy emphasize expanding a gender-transformative approach to gender-equality programming, partnerships and institutional policies. In line with this renewed commitment to a transformative approach, UNICEF will continue to promote positive, non-discriminatory gender norms across all programming areas, and address the underlying and deep-rooted causes of existing, restrictive gender norms. Reshaping prevailing gender norms and enabling positive gender socialization is a critical aspect of UNICEF's gender-transformative programming agenda in the upcoming Gender Action Plan cycle.

In 2022, UNICEF will continue its work on the development of indicators and questions for measuring gender norms related to children's engagement in unpaid care

and domestic work, in population-level surveys. Once completed, this work will facilitate evidence-based approaches to programming and advocacy.

In 2022, UNICEF will also implement the gender-transformative parenting programme pilot in eight countries, and then facilitate the roll-out of the training modules in other UNICEF country offices. The gender-transformative parenting pilot is funded by the Gender Thematic Trust Fund, supported by Luxembourg and Canada. Sustainable and flexible resources are integral for programming on gender norms. UNICEF's Gender Thematic Fund and partnerships are invaluable for our work on promoting positive gender norms and socialization and providing funding in programme areas where funding is typically more difficult to mobilize. We are grateful to our Gender Thematic Fund donors, in particular Canada and Luxembourg, for enabling this work.

FIGURE 24: Countries that will be part of the gender-transformative parenting pilot programme



To promote gender-transformative parenting and tackle discriminatory norms:

- Argentina aims to promote more equitable care work, transform parenting attitudes that reinforce discriminatory gender norms at a young age and help families break cycles of domestic violence against women and girls
- Egypt will focus on supporting positive gender socialization for the most vulnerable households, with a focus on increasing fathers' participation in childcare
- Eritrea will encourage positive and nurturing discipline practices and build capacity among front-line workers to use gender-transformative parenting approaches to end harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and child marriage
- Malaysia will expand their current parenting programme to include refugee communities
- Maldives will develop a cohort of trainers who can work at the household level to improve fathers' engagement and empower mothers

- Mali will focus on providing care for caregivers and include gender-transformative parenting guidance as part of their programme to offer mental health support to parents
- The United Republic of Tanzania will increase male engagement in raising children, especially during early childhood, and ensure that country office staff have the capacity and resources to design and implement future gender socialization interventions based on the pilot
- Turkey will provide parents from the most vulnerable households with tools and knowledge to practice gender-transformative parenting and prevent harmful practices

As the world grapples with the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerated impacts of climate change and an escalation of conflicts around the world, progress towards gender equality remains imperilled. Women and girls face greater adversity in tandem with a serious erosion of support services and resources. UNICEF's work to fight gender inequality remains a priority across all goal areas and will be the responsibility of everyone who is part of the organization.



Children playing inside a classroom that has been converted into a relief camp due to the devastating floods in Nagaon District, Assam, India on May 21, 2022.



© UNICEF/UN0498,044/Carrion

# Results: Children with disabilities – “Supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential”

June 2021, Managua, Nicaragua. Nicole de los Ángeles Juárez López, 4, plays with her sister at their house.



# Results: Children with disabilities – “Supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential”

Nearly 240 million children with disabilities are being left behind; that is, 1 in 10 children worldwide. UNICEF’s report,<sup>80</sup> launched in 2021, confirmed that children with disabilities face multiple and often compounding challenges in realizing their rights.

Inequalities have been further exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; increasingly, evidence is showing that children with disabilities and their families

have been disproportionately impacted, including through limited access to services. For instance, over 80 per cent of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia reported disruption in access to disability-related health services.<sup>81</sup> Forward-looking action is required to prevent children with disabilities from being excluded as societies reopen.

## I am a child – a poem by Cleric Tembwe

*A powerful call for inclusion and consideration, the following poem was performed by the poet, a member of the Namibian Children’s Parliament, at the World Children’s Day celebrations at Kazungula Bridge on 20 November 2021, in front of the heads of state of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.*

I am a child, I am a child, although my needs may be different from yours, it does not make me any different from you.

I am a child, I am a child, I may not walk or run fast like you, but I feel and hurt, just the same.

I may not be able to hug you easily, but I love and have emotional needs just like you. I may look a little different, but I can do, and achieve what you can.

[...]

If, and only if, you can make a world, where children like me can move with ease. A world, where children like me, are given a fair chance, to live to their full potential.

Then, only then, can we say there is hope For Every Child!

I Am A Child.

For the full poem, visit the [UNICEF Zambia website](#).



Cleric Tembwe, a member of the Namibian Children’s Parliament, and one of child participants at the sub-regional World Children’s Day event at Kazungula Bridge on 20 November 2021.

## Results achieved and challenges in 2021 towards supporting children with disabilities to reach their full potential

As the United Nations agency tasked with serving and advocating for a supportive enabling environment that allows all children to thrive, UNICEF has a responsibility to invest in systems, policies, and practices that include all children, and to prioritize the needs of those facing intersectional and compounding inequalities. UNICEF has developed a solid foundation of knowledge and experience, while expanding its programmes and operations around disability inclusion.

In 2021, through disability-inclusive programmes, UNICEF reached over 4.8 million children with disabilities across 148 countries; that is, double the number of children reached in 2020. Over half of UNICEF country offices with a Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal – 36 of 66 – systematically included children with disabilities in their response efforts in 2021.

The Norway-UNICEF partnership framework on disability inclusion, established in 2021, galvanized the organization to reinforce and increase its commitments to children with disabilities, and to implement the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The partnership enabled UNICEF to build an organizational framework for accelerating and scaling up disability inclusion. In 2021, UNICEF started consultations across the organization for the development of its first-ever DIPAS to guide its work on disability in both programmatic areas and institutional systems and processes. To be launched in 2022, the DIPAS will provide strategic direction and a framework for accelerating results for children with disabilities.

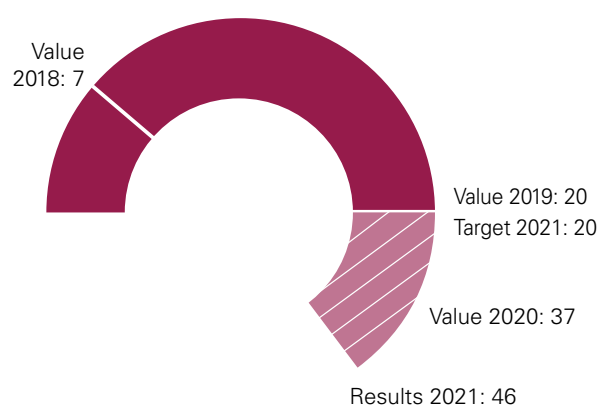
## Strengthening data on children with disabilities

Millions of children with disabilities around the world continue to remain invisible and unaccounted for in programming and policymaking, increasing their marginalization and exposure to rights violations.

Recent years have seen renewed interest in generating reliable and internationally comparable data on children with disabilities, and this has led to the development of new tools for data collection, including the Child Functioning Module. UNICEF and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics developed and launched the Child Functioning Module in 2016, which is now integrated in the UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys and other surveys around the world. It has also resulted in a substantial increase in the availability of data on children with disabilities over the last five years, fostering new data analyses and knowledge.

In November 2021, UNICEF released the most comprehensive statistical analysis of children with disabilities, revealing that as many as 240 million children worldwide continue to be left behind. The report, [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#),<sup>82</sup> presents data from over 40 countries that conform to the biopsychosocial model of disability and covers more than 60 indicators of child well-being; from nutrition and health, to access to

FIGURE 25: Number of countries implementing UNICEF-Washington Group data module on child functioning



water and sanitation, and from protection from violence and exploitation, to education. The report also contains the first-ever global and regional estimates of the number of children with disabilities (based on data from over 100 countries), including psychosocial difficulties.

Compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities are: 34 per cent more likely to be stunted; 25 per cent less likely to receive early stimulation and responsive care; and 49 per cent more likely to have never attended school. These data are a wake-up call and having them represents a huge step towards concrete action, including advocacy and the creation of policies and programmes that have the power to transform lives.

UNICEF continues to provide financial and technical assistance to countries for the collection of data on children with disabilities. From 2018–2021, a total of 46 survey reports were released with data collected through the Child Functioning Module (see Figure 24).

In 2021, with support from an external strategic advisory group, UNICEF established the Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities. The aim is to promote the generation of robust and relevant statistics on children with disabilities for use in both decision-making and advocacy. In particular, the centre will help fill data gaps, improve the accessibility of data and promote data use. It will also foster collaboration, standardization of approaches to data production and dissemination, and coordination of data activities.

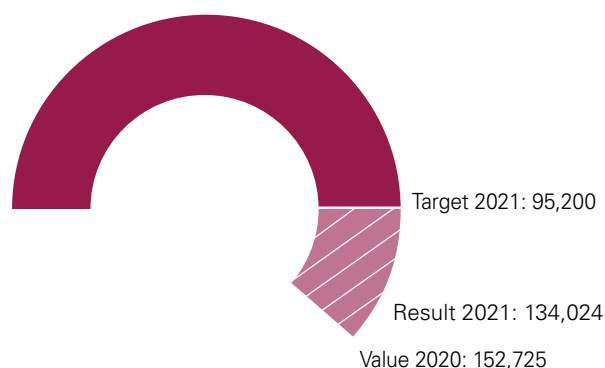
## Providing assistive technology and services to enable inclusion

For persons with disabilities, assistive technology (AT) is critical to the full realization of human rights, including in humanitarian settings. But AT, which includes devices ranging from wheelchairs to hearing aids, and services ranging from an individual's functional assessment to product fitting and repair, is only available to between 5 and 15 per cent of those who need it in LMICs. This leaves an estimated 900 million persons with disabilities without the AT they need, including many of the 240 million children with disabilities worldwide. UNICEF partners with other global actors to ensure that this invisible, but enormous need is transformed into demand, and addressed.

In 2021, UNICEF collaborated closely with the ATscale Partnership to increase visibility for this agenda globally. UNICEF has also continued its partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), including through co-authoring the Global Report on Assistive Technology, which is planned for launch in May 2022.

During 2021, over 134,000 children with disabilities were reached with assistive devices, disability-inclusive products and emergency kits through UNICEF-supported programmes across 81 countries. For example, in partnership with the Rwanda Education Board, UNICEF

FIGURE 26: Number of children with disabilities provided with assistive devices and products through UNICEF-supported programmes



supported the development of 24 downloadable, accessible digital textbooks for upper primary grades to allow children with disabilities to gain access to learning materials. In Zimbabwe, working with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and partners, UNICEF supported inclusive education, reaching over 12,270 children with a range of assistive devices, as well as other disability-inclusive learning materials such as computer tablets, audiological equipment, braille machines and other products across all 72 education districts in the country.

UNICEF also engaged with the Clinton Health Access Initiative in Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe to implement the AT capacity assessment tool, developed by WHO. The process has identified and mobilized key stakeholders – including government agencies, organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and the private sector – and has completed a systematic assessment of national AT capacity. UNICEF will continue this work in 2022 and beyond, supporting national governments to strengthen their systems for AT.

As a part of implementation of the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the supply division continuously assesses products to ensure that UNICEF's product portfolio is progressively accessible for persons with disabilities. In 2021, UNICEF focused two large global tenders on hearing aids and wheelchairs, which aimed to ensure that appropriate, quality products at reasonable prices are available globally. We expect the impact of these tenders to be reflected in the coming years in the numbers of children reached with assistive products.

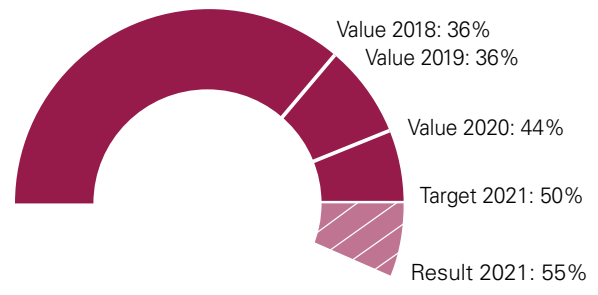
## Humanitarian action

In the context of humanitarian emergencies, children and adults with disabilities are among the most marginalized, and are more likely to experience higher risks of exploitation, violence, abuse and discrimination. They face increased difficulties to cope with the deterioration of the environment and additional barriers to equal access to services, protection and aid. Throughout 2021, UNICEF continued to advance disability-inclusive humanitarian action in its programmes.

Under UNICEF's leadership, inter-agency efforts supported by the FCDO in the United Kingdom continue to strengthen disability inclusion in humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans. UNICEF-led clusters (WASH, education, nutrition and child protection) have played a critical role in driving these changes. UNICEF also co-chairs the Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, bringing together United Nations entities, NGOs and OPDs for a coordinated approach to disability-inclusive humanitarian action. In 2021, the number of members (representing global-, regional- and country-level actors) reached 220.

In 2021, 55 per cent of UNICEF country offices with a Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal – 36 country offices – systematically included children with disabilities

FIGURE 27: Percentage of countries providing disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services

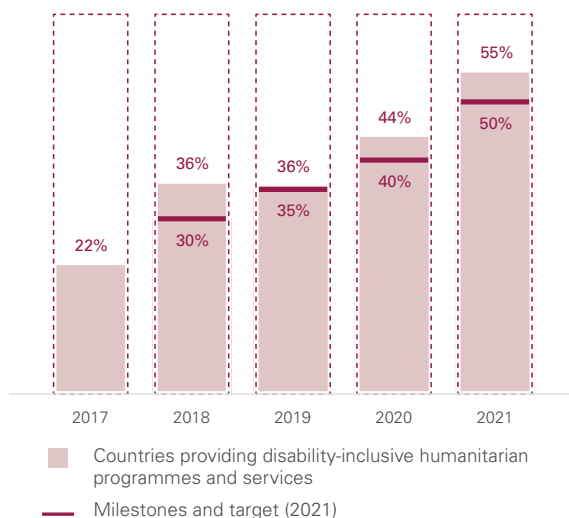


in their response efforts. Additionally, 21 country offices without appeals systematically included children with disabilities in their humanitarian responses.

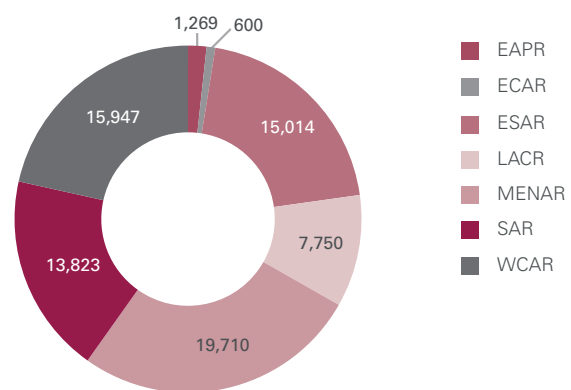
Inclusive education in humanitarian settings remained a challenge and was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite challenges, UNICEF continued its focus on inclusive education and supported a return to school for all children, to ensure that those with disabilities would not be left behind. For example, in Bangladesh, UNICEF supported marginalized children to access formal, non-formal and

FIGURE 28: In 2021, 55 per cent of UNICEF programme countries provided disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services, exceeding the 2021 target of 50 per cent. In the same year, more than 74,000 children with disabilities were reached with emergency kits through UNICEF-supported programmes.)

Countries providing disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services (5.e.3)



Children with disabilities who were reached in 2021 with emergency kits, through UNICEF-supported programmes (5.e.1 (b))



continuing education nationwide, including 34,211 children with disabilities, who continued to learn remotely using digital media and home-based projects and assignments. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF and partners supported 7,353 children with disabilities on the move to ensure continuity of learning, providing learning kits and remote learning strategies and materials.

In 2021, 1,262 unaccompanied and separated children with disabilities were provided with alternative care and/or reunified. For example, in Ethiopia, UNICEF and partners, conducted awareness-raising activities on the prevention of family separation, available child protection response services, mine action, and other child protection concerns, reaching a total of 4,460 individuals including 121 people with disabilities across five internally displaced persons sites.

A total of 69,787 children with disabilities received explosive weapons-related risk education through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2021, including in the Syrian Arab Republic, where UNICEF continued to support safe access for the most disadvantaged adolescents and youth, to skills development opportunities and social cohesion activities. Through UNICEF-supported adolescent-friendly spaces, 3,231 adolescents and youth with disabilities were reached by multi-service platforms and mobile teams, and 15,137 children with disabilities received explosive-weapons-related risk education.

## Identifying and supporting young children with developmental delays and disabilities

A child's right to survival and development is enshrined in Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while Article 25(b) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities determines that states have an obligation to provide children with disabilities access to early identification and intervention services. However, young children with disabilities are often overlooked by mainstream programmes and services that support child development. Children with disabilities are less likely to be exposed to early stimulation activities and responsive care compared with children without disabilities; children with difficulties in communicating, playing and learning experience the least exposure<sup>83</sup>.

Compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities are 25 per cent less likely to attend early childhood education.<sup>84</sup> In inclusive early childhood intervention programmes, children with and without disabilities learn and participate in the same daily activities and routines. These programmes are accessible, equitable, and enable participation from, and support for, all children.

In the Plurinational State of Bolivia, 204 children under 5 with developmental delays and disabilities received support to strengthen and guide their families, with fun

and stimulating activities. This work was supported by UNICEF, together with the NGOs Humanity and Inclusion and Caritas El Alto. In the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF partnered with the Voinicel Centre to provide high-quality, transdisciplinary, methodological support to 16 families with small children with disabilities or developmental delays.

In Namibia, in partnership with UNDP and UNFPA, UNICEF supported 1,293 parents of children with disabilities to access services, and mobilized health-care workers in 11 regions to identify disabilities in a timely manner and link children to services. In Zimbabwe, UNICEF supported the development of tools for the At Risk Surveillance System, which is envisaged as a uniform and commonly accepted method of identifying childhood disabilities, and the WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021 on better health for persons with disabilities. The surveillance system will be integrated into early childhood development programming in Zimbabwe.

## Furthering inclusive education

UNICEF spent about US\$17 million directly on inclusive education for children with disabilities in 2021, with US\$14 million (81 per cent) spent on systems-strengthening activities such as strengthening disability-inclusive Education Management Information Systems, and laws and policies that establish the right of children with disabilities to receive quality education. In addition, the organization spent almost US\$68 million on activities that indirectly or partially addressed support for the education of children with disabilities.

UNICEF's latest data show that disability is a stronger predictor of exclusion from education than gender or socioeconomic status. Even those children who attend school may not be accessing learning. If schools do not respond to their needs and support their growth, children with disabilities are hindered from full participation in quality learning and their rights continue to be denied. UNICEF works to strengthen education systems and capacities so that girls and boys with disabilities have equal access to quality, inclusive education.

During 2021, UNICEF worked in 124 countries to strengthen laws, policies and plans to support inclusive education. For example, in December 2021 in Mozambique, the Ministry of Education and Human Development launched a new national education strategy for children with disabilities, 2020–2029, with UNICEF support, including translation of the strategy into English and Braille. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the development of training modules on inclusive education for teachers and school directors, and trained 41 school managers, 41 deputy directors, 88 school directors, and six inclusive education focal points at province and district levels in Nampula province. In Maldives, with support from UNICEF, the Disability Inclusive Education Policy was revised and launched in 2021. UNICEF also provided support to the

Department of Inclusive Education for the revision of disability modules offered in teacher training institutes to align with the revised policy.

UNICEF Argentina engaged with the NGO, Canales, to develop a series of literature books to include children with disabilities, producing *Cuentos que Cuidan*<sup>85</sup> and 12 other children's books as audiovisual stories in Argentine Sign Language, reaching 9,000 deaf children.

In Viet Nam, during 2021, a total of 3,545 children with disabilities attending mainstream education, from pre-primary to lower secondary, benefited from the use of music therapy in inclusive education resource centres. For national scale-up, the National College of Education developed teacher guidelines on music therapy, which is currently being piloted in Hanoi.

## Protecting the rights of children with disabilities from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation

Children with disabilities have the same rights as other children to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices; along with the right to access quality, effective, inclusive and appropriate preventive support, redress and remedy.

In 2021, UNICEF launched a new strategy for its child protection work, which highlighted disability inclusion as a cross-cutting issue. Under this strategy, UNICEF engaged with governments and civil society partners to strengthen inclusive and effective child protection systems, including in humanitarian crises, to prevent and respond to child protection violations and ensure children with disabilities grow up in a protective environment, receiving targeted support and services where needed.

UNICEF reached children with disabilities through a diverse range of programming interventions across multiple countries. Gender-based violence services reached 32,000 children and women with disabilities across 28 countries in emergency contexts, and violence against children services reached almost 45,000 children with disabilities across 64 countries. There were significant increases in the number of children reached. For example, nearly 70,000 children with disabilities caused by landmines and other explosive weapons received relevant prevention and survivor-assistance interventions across 12 countries (compared with 6,000 across two countries in 2017), and over 50,000 children with disabilities received community-based mental health and psychosocial support across 51 countries (compared with nearly 9,000 in 7 countries in 2017).

As children with disabilities are overrepresented in alternative care, they are prioritized in UNICEF's work to prevent unnecessary separation from families, end institutionalization and prioritize family-based care. For example, in Armenia, UNICEF supported a comprehensive national programme for ensuring the right of every child to



Debyan Angel Estuardo Aquino Santiago (7 years old), adopted, hugs his older sister Meely Debyan Aquino Santiago (16 years old) in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala. Debyan has autism. UNICEF supports the National Adoption Council (CNA) in the country to guarantee the right of every child to live in a family and in a protective environment.

grow up in a family environment, expanding community-based family support services and strengthening the foster care system to place children with disabilities in foster families rather than in residential facilities. In 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.

## Improving access to water and sanitation for children and adults with disabilities

Compared with children without disabilities, children with disabilities are: 9 per cent less likely to have water and soap for hand washing in their household; 13 per cent less likely to have improved water sources in their household; and 8 per cent less likely to have improved sanitation in their household.<sup>86</sup>

In 2021, UNICEF reached approximately 1.6 million persons with disabilities with safe drinking-water and 1 million persons with disabilities with access to basic sanitation.<sup>87</sup> In Zimbabwe, UNICEF estimates that the rehabilitation of 991 water sources improved access to water for nearly 13,000 persons with disabilities. In addition, it estimates that over 35,000 persons with disabilities were reached with COVID-19 prevention and hygiene messages, and sanitary cleaning materials. In Eritrea, 8,000 persons with disabilities accessed latrines using the UNICEF-supported, community-led total sanitation approach, which has resulted in 70 per cent of Eritrea's rural communities being declared open-defecation free. In Fiji, UNICEF partnered with the Pacific Disability Forum, a regional OPD, to review the accessibility of WASH facilities in communities, public places and health centres, which informed the revision of national guidance and generated recommendations to make current WASH designs more accessible.

In humanitarian situations, UNICEF reached an estimated 2.1 million persons who have disabilities with clean water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene; and 245,000 persons who have disabilities with access to sanitation facilities in 2021. In Ukraine, UNICEF provided clean water directly to the households of over 76,000 persons with disabilities, using trucked and bottled water where necessary.

UNICEF is working to strengthen the collection of WASH disability data and monitor the impact of WASH services on persons with disabilities. UNICEF has developed '[Make it Count](#)', a guidance note on disability-inclusive WASH programme data collection, monitoring and reporting, which contains approaches and tips to collect data that identify persons with disabilities, define their barriers to WASH, and monitor and report the results and impact that WASH programmes have on them.

## Strengthening social protection mechanisms for children with disabilities

In 2021, UNICEF supported more than 1 million children and adults with disabilities via cash transfer programmes, including in response to the COVID-19 crisis. UNICEF support has taken different forms, depending on the social protection schemes already in place in the country. For instance, in Kenya and Zimbabwe, UNICEF supported the implementation of specific top-up grants for households with persons with disabilities who were enrolled in the existing social protection programmes. In 2021, a UNICEF-supported, disability-inclusive cash plus programme was also launched in Kenya's Mombasa County, reaching 3,019 children with disabilities and supporting access to education.

In Mauritania, UNICEF helped to expand the cash transfer response to include 10,000 persons with disabilities.

Beyond supporting existing government schemes, UNICEF worked in complex environments to ensure that its work on humanitarian cash transfers were inclusive. For example, in Yemen, a third of households supported by emergency cash had a member with a disability, reaching a total of 75,914 children. In Madagascar, a cash transfer programme responded to the severe drought in the south.

Aware of the diverse needs of children with disabilities, UNICEF is increasingly seeking to combine cash support with greater access to education, health and community support services. In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF continued to expand its programme, which combines cash transfers for children with disabilities with support for access to education and health services, and currently reaches 13,244 children with disabilities. UNICEF is working to sustain this scheme and enhance its approach to case management. In Georgia, UNICEF is supporting the government to develop a new package of services for children with disabilities and their families, as well as reforming disability assessment mechanisms, and carrying out a study on disability-related costs. In 2021, 6,790 children with disabilities in Georgia received UNICEF-supported cash transfers. In Cambodia, UNICEF supported the roll-out of the national identification system for persons with disabilities, which supported the government to reach 116,901 persons with disabilities in 2021 with cash transfers.

## Reducing stigma and discrimination through social behaviour change

Persons with disabilities face stigma based on multiple factors (for example, their disability group, age and gender). Discrimination happens within their communities, in their families, and in general services and systems that lead to structural discrimination in education, social protection and health systems.

During 2021, UNICEF collected evidence on effective and ineffective approaches to address stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities, and developed tools to measure attitudes and norms around children with disabilities. Building on this evidence and these tools, UNICEF is developing a global resource pack to address stigma and discrimination towards persons with disabilities, to be released in early 2023.

In 2021, over 50 countries reported that children with disabilities have been included in social behaviour change interventions. In Rwanda, UNICEF developed and adapted

materials for persons with disabilities and disseminated these through partners, reaching approximately 10,172 persons with disabilities across 20 districts. Working with partners, UNICEF Zimbabwe identified and trained over 500 adolescents and young people with disabilities to become disability champions in their communities, responsible for peer-to-peer support to prevent violence against children. These teams have reached over 2,000 children and adolescents with disabilities through peer-to-peer dialogue sessions and advocacy for inclusive communities.

In 2021, UNICEF Belarus launched a national campaign, Just Children at School, to change attitudes and behaviours towards children with disabilities in educational settings. Through media outreach and dedicated events, the second wave of the campaign resulted in a 6 per cent decrease in negative associations, such as pity (from 64 per cent to 58 per cent), and a 5 per cent increase in respondents who believed that children with disabilities should study with other children.

## Looking ahead

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In 2022 and beyond, UNICEF will continue to increase its efforts to collect and use disability data to inform the inclusion of persons with disabilities in our programme planning and implementation, in both humanitarian and development contexts.

In particular, UNICEF will continue to provide technical and financial support to countries for the collection of data on children and adults with disabilities through MICS. It is expected that, by 2025, at least 20 more MICS surveys will produce internationally comparable data on persons with disabilities. The newly established Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities will launch calls for proposals aimed at fostering collaboration with national statistical offices, ODPs and other stakeholders to promote standardization of approaches to data production and dissemination, and the coordination of data activities.

The results framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 reflects UNICEF's elevated focus on disability rights, with dedicated indicators on disability-inclusive programming across the goal areas, change strategies and enablers. A total of 34 indicators represent the organization's ambition to embed disability inclusion in everything it does.

UNICEF's forthcoming DIPAS will guide the organization's work on disability in programmes, operations and institutional culture up to 2030. It will be linked to the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025,

the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy and the 2030 Agenda and will be accompanied by an accountability framework.

UNICEF will launch the Global Research Agenda on Children with Disabilities in 2022 to complement the DIPAS and inform social and economic policy and effective interventions to advance the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities in the communities where they live. The Global Research Agenda will be informed by expert Delphi consultations and an evidence gap map of global, multi-language literature on children with disabilities that have been in process since 2000.

UNICEF will continue to engage closely with the International Disability Alliance in all aspects of our work, including through the joint Global Network of Adolescents and Youth with Disabilities.



## Case Study 11: The Accessible Digital Textbooks initiative

Beyond the goal of improving immediate access to textbooks, the UNICEF Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADT) initiative follows Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and builds flexibility and versatility into the design of textbooks. UDL provides opportunities for all children, with or without disabilities, to learn according to their individual requirements and preferences. Following these principles facilitates a customized teaching and learning experience for all, while helping persons with disabilities to realize the full potential of their social contributions alongside their peers. The goal is for all learners with disabilities to have equal access to quality learning through accessible and affordable digital textbooks in all contexts.

The UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office is implementing, deepening and scaling up the ADT initiative through: (1) provision of technical support to ministries of education in the five piloting countries (the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Paraguay); (2) creation of a regional repository with high-quality cataloguing; (3) systematization and enhancement of the knowledge management platform [www.accessibletextbooksforall.org](http://www.accessibletextbooksforall.org); (4) leveraging partnerships and regional networks with writers, publishers, teachers, technology developers, ministry of education (MOE) representatives and other key partners; and (6) generating evidence on learning through the ADT and its impact on inclusive education.

In 2021, UNICEF officially launched the ADT project with the Jamaican MOE, created national ADT Steering and Technical Committees, hired an implementing partner to coordinate the project, and trained 100 teachers on ADT and UDL. In Uruguay, UNICEF finalised the first ADT with broader engagement from the MOE, including ministries of special education and mainstream primary education, with Plan Ceibal acting as the technical partner for distribution. A new methodology, developed by UNICEF's Paraguay Country Office and the UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, was pilot tested in Paraguay to measure the perception of children and teachers in 10 classrooms; and over 100 teachers were trained on UDL and ADT. UNICEF Nicaragua conducted a 24-hour training with 40 teachers, organizations of persons with disabilities, stakeholders, NGOs and members of the MOE.



Children who are deaf learning with an ADT in an inclusive classroom in Escuela de Limpio, Paraguay.

## Case study 12: Working together to ensure inclusion of WASH rights and needs of persons with disabilities in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, UNICEF, government and development partners are working together to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) information and services for persons with disabilities. The process commenced in 2013, when the Government of Ethiopia supported the establishment of the One WASH National Programme, which brought together four government ministries, development partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition to improvement of delivery in Ethiopia, the One WASH National Programme intentionally identified improvement of access to WASH services, for the most vulnerable households, including persons with disabilities in Ethiopia. Under the One WASH National Coordination Office led by the Ministry of Water, a task force was established to ensure inclusion of disability in WASH, in addition to gender equity.

From a gender equity perspective UNICEF is working to include girls with disabilities in menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). To ensure that girls with disabilities in and out of schools are reached, UNICEF supported:

- The establishment of hygiene clubs in schools (for sharing information on MHH, health and hand washing)
- Development of a training package for health extension workers for use during visits and home assessments (to help identify children with disabilities and advise them and their families on how to manage menstrual periods)
- Revised guidelines to strengthen WASH facilities in schools
- Updated national WASH facilities in schools design and construction manual
- A revised guide to school facilities management, operation and maintenance.



School students in Ethiopia wash their hands before and after attending their classes using washing basins provided by UNICEF to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The UNICEF WASH in schools programme is aligned with the WASH manual and aims to construct WASH facilities that are both gender-sensitive (with MHH spaces) and disability-accessible. The programme is also cognizant of the human–development nexus. This has been shown in the 2021 results, which indicated that a total of 9,500 women and adolescent girls with disabilities under humanitarian contexts were provided with MHH management services through UNICEF-supported programmes.

Analysis of 2021 UNICEF-supported development programmes indicated that 14,018 persons with disabilities were provided basic sanitation services, and 39,555 persons with disabilities were reached with appropriate sanitation services through UNICEF-supported programmes in emergency contexts.



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# Results: Adolescent participation and civic engagement – “Supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future”

Youth in Ouahigouya, in the North of Burkina Faso.

They participate “Caravane Faso Jeunes”, a roadshow bringing together young people and adolescents, media, artists, influencers and authorities to increase opportunities for engagement, participation and skills learning. The roadshow runs from November to December 2021, in eight regions of Burkina Faso.

As per Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have a right to have their views heard and considered in decisions that affect their lives.

Technology, migration, climate change, conflict and epidemics are reshaping society, forcing children and adolescents across the globe to adapt to unprecedented changes in their lives, education and work. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has overturned the everyday lives of adolescent children: their physical and mental health, their access to health care, their education, and the economic circumstances of their families and communities. The harmful effects of the pandemic have not been distributed equally: those in already disadvantaged or vulnerable situations have been the hardest hit. This intersects with discrimination/vulnerabilities on the basis of gender, poverty, migration status, minority status, ethnicity and disability, among others, to deepen inequalities worldwide.

Data from March 2020 to October 2021 indicate that over 2.1 million children aged 10–17 years are estimated to have experienced COVID-19-associated orphanhood, exposing them to post-orphanhood risks, including sexual violence, exploitation, HIV infection, suicide, child labour, pregnancy, separation from family, household poverty and leaving school to care for younger siblings.<sup>88</sup> Over the next decade,

up to 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides as a result of the pandemic.<sup>89</sup> Before the pandemic, it was estimated that 98 million adolescent boys aged 10–19 and 78 million adolescent girls aged 10–19 live with a mental health disorder,<sup>90</sup> and new data suggest a 34 per cent increase in depression and anxiety for adolescents globally during the pandemic.<sup>91</sup> The pandemic has also exacerbated the learning and skills crisis and threatens to create even more obstacles for adolescents as they transition from school to work.<sup>92</sup>

Despite this, adolescents – as human rights-holders, and entitled to exercise their civil and political rights (including the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and to be heard) and to demand, inter alia, social justice<sup>93</sup> show incredible resilience and leadership. Today's young people are essential contributors to social, economic and political progress towards a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world. UNICEF is committed to working, not only for, but also with adolescents and youth, as equal partners, to ensure that they safely and healthily transition to adulthood with the skills and support needed to enable their success, both as individual rights-holders and as agents of change.

## Results achieved in 2021 towards supporting adolescents to engage in shaping their future

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UNICEF's work on safe and meaningful adolescent engagement is organized around three strategic pillars.

1. Supporting adolescent empowerment – directly empowering adolescents as rights-holders, change-makers and leaders
2. Supporting UNICEF and partners to work with adolescents – supporting UNICEF country offices' and partners' capacities for adolescent engagement
3. Strengthening systems for adolescent participation – strengthening systems for building adolescent engagement mechanisms.

In 2021, results were achieved under all three pillars. For pillar 1, in 2021, UNICEF programmes engaged 19,500,000 adolescents (54 per cent girls) across 125 countries in humanitarian and development settings. Among them,

UNICEF engaged 5,700,000 specifically in humanitarian action and more than 1 million in climate change advocacy. This result, nearly four times the strategic plan target, demonstrates UNICEF's increased commitment to, and investment in, adolescent engagement. For pillar 2, UNICEF is becoming more rigorous in working with adolescents in programming processes, with nearly all offices (92 per cent) consulting adolescents on their strategic programming decisions. For pillar 3, UNICEF strengthened systems for adolescent participation, another strategic plan objective, with 49 countries (against a target of 48) supporting the development of 75 adolescent-friendly policies.

The following provides illustrative examples of UNICEF work in adolescent participation and civic engagement in 2021, across its three strategic pillars.

## Case Study 13: Ukraine: Adolescents leading climate change discussions

“Our vision is important for the future, because we are the future.”

*Anastasia, age 24, COP26 participant.*

Enthusiasm for climate action is high among young people in Ukraine. UNICEF and partners are strengthening adolescents’ agency through a comprehensive, integrated approach: providing them with opportunities to learn and educate their peers on climate change; supporting them to advocate on decisions affecting the climate; and building their capacities to develop solutions to climate change.

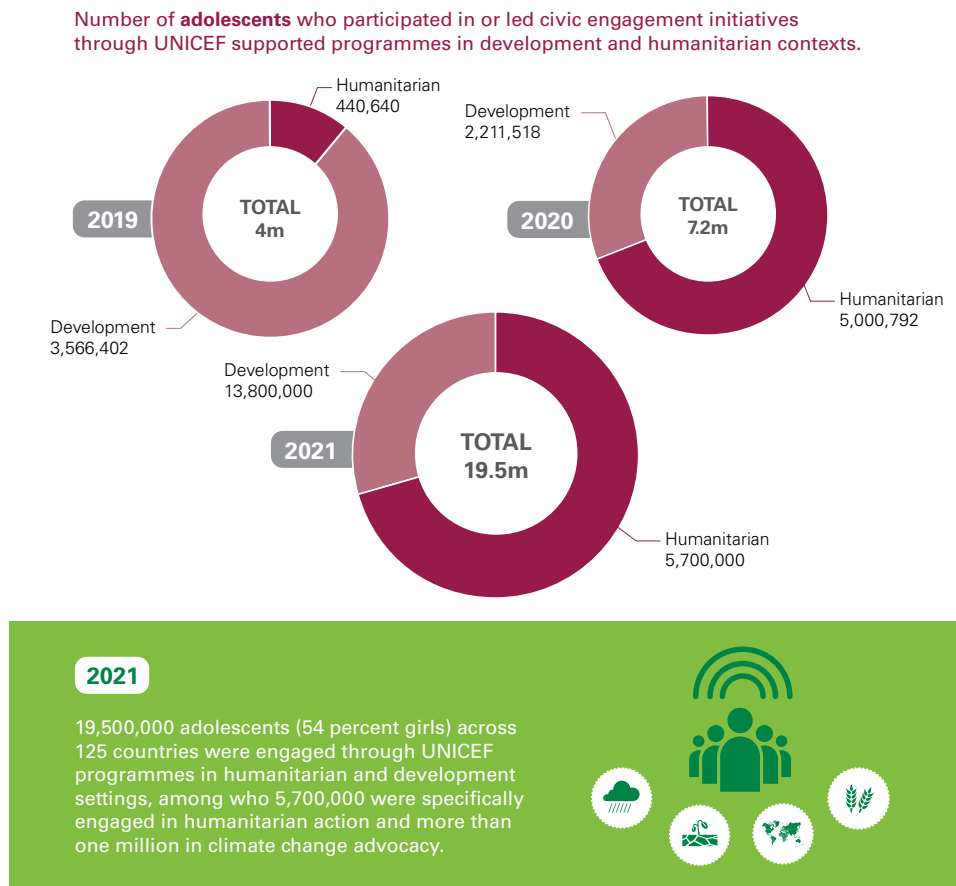
In April 2021, more than 4,100 teachers and 1,700 young leaders signed students and peers up for the World’s Largest Lesson on Climate Change. The lessons, including five educational videos, reached nearly 133,000 children and adolescents with messages on climate science, waste management, conscious consumption, water and air pollution, alternative energy and disaster risks. UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Science are currently exploring how to integrate the climate lessons into the national curriculum.

In 2021, more than 500 adolescents participated in a climate-focused hackathon and nearly 10,000 engaged in related educational online events. Over the four-day ECOTHON, UNICEF and INSCIENCE helped adolescents develop their ideas into prototypes, with five climate projects selected to receive funding from ING Bank for development. As a first for Ukraine, UNICEF supported five Ukrainian climate activists to attend COP26 as observers, where their interactions with Ukrainian ministers opened possibilities for greater youth engagement in 2022 national policies and plans.



Young people producing bio fertilizers in Sloviansk, eastern Ukraine.

FIGURE 29: Number of adolescents participating through UNICEF-supported programmes



Source: : UNICEF (2021).<sup>94</sup>

## Supporting adolescent empowerment

Empowering young people is an investment in a better tomorrow. Around the world, young people have used their enhanced skills to make change, influence peers, strengthen civil society, and increase the accountability of governments and corporations. Young people's engagement has enhanced inclusion, social cohesion and violence prevention, and contributed to peacebuilding. UNICEF works with young people as partners to co-create, provide solutions and take action using three strategies: advocacy to influence practices and policies; participation in school, local and national governance; and the provision of information and services to people and communities.

In the context of COVID-19, UNICEF worked to support adolescents with distance learning and engagement opportunities that are equitable and inclusive, emphasizing both the transmission of knowledge and the development of key skills that are necessary to succeed in school, at work and in life.

In India, under UNICEF's Reimagine Education initiative, over 7 million young volunteers joined the 'Young Warrior' movement, taking action against COVID-19 and promoting learning and upskilling through learning platforms available in the country. UNICEF created the Young Warrior NXT chatbot for, and in consultation with, young people, encouraging them to curate sets of 20 simple to-do lists for practising life skills around critical thinking, self-awareness, problem-solving and communication. Today, around 429,000 young users are registered on the chatbot.

In Bhutan, under the Reimagine Education initiative, UNICEF launched a partnership with over 70,000 scouts to enable young people to support initiatives that are relevant to their peers. The partnership trained and engaged 800 scouts in helping the most vulnerable children and youth with their online education during the pandemic. Where roads were not passable by car, scouts travelled on foot to teach, using materials developed by the Ministry of Education. They helped younger children to complete their homework and gave lessons to children, with no access to digital devices.

## Reimagine Education

Reimagine Education intends to support every child and young person in accessing learning and skills by scaling up world-class digital solutions.

The engagement of young people is one of the five pillars of Reimagine Education, co-led by Adolescent Development and Participation and the Global Volunteer Initiative. It supports practical opportunities for UNICEF country offices to:

- Expand reach and access to education for the most vulnerable children and young people
- Co-create learning solutions (including digital) in both content and delivery methods for formal and non-formal learning settings
- Advocate for change in education and increase participation in decision-making processes to influence policies/programmes with education providers, policymakers and local communities.

Over the course of 2021, the percentage of the 32 Reimagine Education front-runner countries which reported having plans for youth engagement increased from 50 to 86 per cent.

UNICEF is stepping up its work leveraging digital channels as a powerful way to reach adolescents quickly and in large numbers, while at the same time ensuring engagement is meaningful and safe. In Malaysia, UNICEF scaled up digital engagement programmes, empowering young people through UNICEF's Kita Connect (@KitaConnect) platform, where 615,000 young people were involved in learning about mental health resilience and skills-building. In Jordan, the youth engagement platform [nahnoo.org](https://nahnoo.org) allows companies, NGOs, the private sector, and institutions to post opportunities for young people on the platform, while young people can register and be matched to relevant engagement opportunities near them. To date, over 80,000 young people (62 per cent girls) have signed up and logged approximately 2 million volunteering hours.

In 2021, UNICEF also accelerated work to enable young people to identify and take action to address social norms that prevent them from being heard or making choices about their own lives. In Mauritania, UNICEF continued its efforts to overcome discriminatory barriers against girls and women by supporting their participation in community dialogues, such as community-led total sanitation groups, water management committees and hygiene clubs, and other governance bodies. In Kyrgyzstan, under the STEM4Girls project, 651 peer-trainer girls led sessions for 12,401 girls on gender equality, gender-based violence and child and forced marriage. In India, UNICEF ran a social media campaign depicting positive actions taken by adolescent girls during the pandemic, reaching over 5,862,432 across various social media platforms in English, Bengali, Hindi and Telugu. The campaign shared illustrations and positive stories of girls facilitating access to phones for remote learning, challenging GBV, managing their mental health and preventing child marriage in their villages.

Around the world, UNICEF country offices invested in peer-to-peer activities for scaling up meaningful adolescent engagement. In Burundi, learning and engagement opportunities for out-of-school adolescents were provided through a mix of digital and in-person sessions facilitated by trained peer educators. These efforts engaged 94,000 adolescents on issues related to agriculture, climate change, WASH and health. The office also scaled up UNICEF's UPSHIFT programme to foster innovation and social entrepreneurship in adolescents. UNICEF equipped approximately 54,000 adolescents with the skills and competencies to identify community problems and develop innovative solutions to address them. UNICEF also supported the establishment of five innovation labs, enabling 6,000 adolescents to access comprehensive information and resources to improve their community projects and livelihoods.

In Jamaica, UNICEF continued with efforts to support young people struggling with their mental well-being and engaged those with lived experiences as change-makers and in peer-to-peer support. In collaboration with the Jamaican Ministry of Health and Wellness and the Caribbean Child Development Centre of the University of the West Indies, UNICEF is supporting a mental health chatline, U-Matter, whereby Masters-level psychology students, with supervision from a senior psychologist, engage with young people through text messaging on the chatline and refer those in need to professional mental health services in the public health sector. The full chatline will launch in 2022, followed by a scale-up of the service.

## Supporting UNICEF and partners to work with adolescents

Achieving UNICEF's objectives requires working, not only with adolescents themselves, but also with UNICEF country offices to build their capacity to engage young people in UNICEF and country planning, implementation and monitoring processes.

UNICEF continues to build mechanisms for adolescent participation in its strategic processes in order to improve UNICEF's programming and better reflect the perspectives of young people. In Tajikistan, UNICEF established the Young People Advisory Group, which includes 43 young people with diverse backgrounds from across the country. The group was engaged in various stages of programming, including the development of the new Country Programme Document 2023–2026, programme evaluation and youth engagement around events to mark UNICEF's 75th anniversary. In Oman, as UNICEF is strengthening its engagement in the area of youth programming with its new Country Programme Document, UNICEF successfully helped establish a Youth Advisory Board to ensure the systematic and meaningful engagement of young people in the decision-making process of its multisector education, training and employment partnership, Generation Unlimited. In the Republic of Moldova, UNICEF supported the establishment of the 10-member United Nations Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel, to provide support to all United Nations agencies in programming, reporting, advocacy and other activities.

In Croatia, the country office engaged adolescents and young people as key informants for all UNICEF research, analytical and evaluation processes – including the development of the Situation Analysis on Children and Adolescents – and also as co-creators of the joint programmes created by UNICEF and the Government of Croatia. For example, young people

who were raised in foster families participated in focus group discussions evaluating the family-based care component of UNICEF Croatia's country programme. They were informed about evaluation findings, and contributed to developing the evaluation management response plan. Suggestions from young people were instrumental in influencing the social sector's public policies, and measures for young people leaving public care.

UNICEF ran consultations with children and adolescents who have disabilities on exposure to bullying and discrimination [in the Latin America and Caribbean region](#) (Argentina, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela). These efforts were in collaboration with the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy on disability and accessibility and Movimiento Estamos Tod@s en Acción (META) Juvenil. The results of these consultations contributed to a [Declaration from children with and without disabilities](#) and a [Decalogue of Good Treatment from Students with Disabilities to their Classmates](#), on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December), which calls for inclusive environments and makes recommendations for UNICEF to advance work in these areas.

## Strengthening systems for adolescent participation

Throughout 2021, UNICEF supported systems-strengthening at different levels. In Mozambique, the Secretary of State for Youth and Employment evaluated the National Youth Policy and action plan, with UNICEF's support, to inform the new 10-year National Strategy. UNICEF used this opportunity to position the agenda

### UNICEF and U-Report

U-Report is UNICEF's flagship digital platform to engage young people in programme priorities, emergency response and advocacy actions.<sup>95</sup> It supports adolescent, youth and community participation, and works as a tool to share information, raise awareness and collect quantifiable data on specific areas that impact children, including the most vulnerable. The responses are analysed in real time, mapped and displayed on a public dashboard, ensuring the young people's feedback can be actioned by local and national decision makers. In 2021, U-Report – despite challenges caused by COVID-19 – grew by 6 million users and 12 new country platforms to 18.8 million U-Reporters globally, and 88 national platforms. The platform collected over 30 million responses to 500+ polls, chatbots and other messages on topics such as migration, health, nutrition, education and climate, in collaboration with numerous divisions and teams.

In 2021, U-Report also expanded its work in emergencies, supporting efforts in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti, which boosted the scale of the platform. Significant improvements were made to user experience with updates to the U-Report website and the development of an online app to facilitate the participation of young people.

*U-Report is part of the Global Communication and Advocacy Division.*



for young people and address priorities expressed by them, including greater participation in decision-making processes, alternative learning and life skills training, empowerment, and adolescent-sensitive reproductive and sexual health and protective services. In Tajikistan, UNICEF engaged with over 36,000 young people (of which over 50 per cent are females) through platforms including Youth Friendly Local Governance and student councils to support government counterparts in developing and implementing the District Development Plans, the Youth Strategy 2030 and the National Programme on Youth Social Development at national and local levels. The process improved UNICEF's governmental partners' capacity to support adolescents' development and participation, and at the same time empowered adolescents to identify their own priorities and amplify their voices. The work led to the inclusion of 51 issues pertaining to young people in district development plans, generated solutions for issues young people face and created agents of change in their communities.

In Peru, at a local level, UNICEF and two regional governments developed action plans to promote adolescent participation in local climate change governance bodies. These action plans included climate training for adolescents with a focus on governance, capacity-building for authorities, regional government officers and teachers, and events to promote adolescent participation and dialogue on climate change. Similarly, through the Child Friendly City Initiative in the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNICEF is helping to put in place mechanisms for children to participate in urban decision-making. These consist of a Youth Urban Advisory Council, allocation of child-specific budgets, and partnerships with the private sector. UNICEF also supported the development of a child advisory council manual, to help guide processes for children's participation.

## Opportunities for adolescent participation in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present severe challenges for adolescents and youth, and added pressures to already fragile contexts. As a leading humanitarian actor, including in the COVID-19 response, UNICEF put significant effort into engaging adolescents and youth and prioritizing their needs. Of the 19.5 million adolescents (54 per cent girls) in 125 countries reached in 2021, over 5.7 million were young people living in humanitarian settings, and nearly 700,000 were engaged in climate change advocacy. UNICEF's work resulted in increased global attention on young people's needs and opinions, as well as increased recognition of their capacities to positively impact society.

A highlight of 2021 was the roll-out of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises](#),<sup>96</sup> which provides a framework for working with and for young people throughout the humanitarian programme cycle and across sectors. This resource was the result of an extensive inter-agency process led by UNICEF and the Norwegian Refugee Council under the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action<sup>97</sup> and the IASC. This flagship document, the first of its kind, sets the standards and principles for facilitating the systematic inclusion of, and engagement with, young people in humanitarian and peacebuilding contexts. Activities in 2021 included hybrid (online and offline) training for approximately 100 humanitarian actors and young people in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, and online training for young humanitarian workers.

The IASC Youth Guidelines were highlighted at numerous global forums, in webinars, online conferences and meetings. These roll-out initiatives were important to disseminate information on this global resource and opportunities for its operationalization, and to ensure the perspectives and voices of all young people affected by and/or engaged in humanitarian contexts, including the displaced, are part of any response.

UNICEF has built a key strategic partnership with the Netherlands' PROSPECTS Partnership initiative. In this, UNICEF worked in close coordination with partners to shape mechanisms that help forcibly displaced young people and host communities to engage together in meaningful ways. PROSPECTS established a youth workstream, created space for young people through forums such as [Youth At Heart](#), conducted trainings in 15 countries with local actors as part of a virtual learning series on working with and for young people in humanitarian and protracted contexts, and adapted materials and standards for young humanitarians themselves.

Throughout 2021, UNICEF also continued its partnership with the United States' Fund for UNICEF, scaling up implementation of the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation guidance package in both humanitarian and development settings, including developing COVID-19-specific adaptations of the kit.

## Case Study 14: Colombia: UNICEF's COVID-19-adapted adolescent kit for expression and innovation

With its Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation package, UNICEF and partners have reached nearly 440,000 adolescent boys and girls in 24 countries and trained almost 30,000 partners, facilitators, camp teachers and youth volunteers since its implementation in 2017. To date, 24 UNICEF country offices and partners have implemented and integrated the Adolescent Kit in their programming, to reach the most vulnerable adolescents, and it has had a positive impact on adolescents' needs and priorities across all aspects of their lives.

In Colombia, through the *Adolescentes en Movimiento por sus Derechos* (Adolescents for their Rights) initiative, UNICEF's Adolescent Kit was adapted into a series of activities that could be conducted easily at home, while complying with COVID-19 prevention measures. These were distributed digitally to a network of over 3,000 young people, who passed them around their communities using WhatsApp, Facebook and other digital channels.

To involve adolescents in the creation of these activities, a weekly call consulted with them on their needs, how they thought UNICEF could do better, their feedback on proposed new activities, and their proposals for other ideas. After the adolescents completed the activities, they shared their work and any feedback with UNICEF.

A collection of videos (webinars, tutorials) featuring several UNICEF country office initiatives using the Adolescent Kit can be found [on the Adolescent Kit YouTube channel](#).<sup>98</sup>

## Strategic partnerships

UNICEF is a key supporter of the Youth 2030 Agenda, an umbrella framework for the United Nations to significantly strengthen its capacity to engage young people and benefit from their views, insights and ideas.<sup>99</sup> In 2021, UNICEF continued to support the development of the Youth 2030 implementation package, including resources specific to a youth audience, for United Nations country teams and governments. The use of the Youth 2030 score card, a planning and accountability tool, by all United Nations country teams in 2021 allowed countries to assess their progress using 20 key performance indicators. UNICEF also continued its groundbreaking work to integrate adolescent and youth participation and engagement into the governance of the PROSPECTS Partnership.

The year 2021 was the fourth year of the Power for Youth programme in Kosovo, Montenegro, the Philippines, Viet Nam and Ukraine, which aims to boost twenty-first-century skills and civic engagement and is supported by a long-standing partnership with ING Bank. The partnership achieved important results both in quantitative terms (1.5

million direct beneficiaries against a target of 177,000) and qualitative ones, having an impact at a systemic level on twenty-first-century skills and civic engagement.

Caregivers are central to adolescents' health and development, and in fulfilling their right to participation. In 2021, the Z Zurich Foundation and UNICEF launched a three-year partnership that aims to promote mental well-being among young people worldwide. The partnership aims to equip 400,000 adolescents and 150,000 caregivers in seven countries with information, skills and strategies on caring for their own and each other's mental well-being. The partnership will support a global communication campaign that aims to reach 30 million people and promote positive conversations and connections that increase awareness, knowledge and action around mental well-being. UNICEF also co-founded the [Global Initiative to Support Parents](#),<sup>100</sup> an inter-agency vision and partnership to increase global support for parents and caregivers, together with WHO, the early childhood development Action Networks, End Violence and WHO's Parenting for Lifelong Health initiative.

## Case Study 15: The Philippines: Strengthening systems for adolescent participation

The Philippines has a young population, with 21 million adolescents aged 10–19 years (out of a total population of 110 million). To ensure adolescents' needs and ideas are embedded in policies, plans and strategies, UNICEF the Philippines works alongside government and civil society through a systems-strengthening approach. This involves strategic, multisectoral initiatives for all adolescents to be healthy, educated, skilled and able to contribute as active citizens.

From 2015–2021, UNICEF partnered with the Ateneo de Zamboanga University Centre for Culture and the Arts on SUGPAT, a social innovation programme focused on adolescent development and participation, especially for the most vulnerable. SUGPAT engages adolescents through art (film, photography, puppetry, etc.) and provides a resource centre for adolescent development, leadership and participation for academia, government and civil society.

SUGPAT activities fed into an adolescent development and participation curriculum, launched in 2018, that aims to advance students' skills in policy, research and leadership at the district level. In 2021, the new adolescent development and participation course was launched as a Master of Arts in Governance and Development, and offered to staff at the National Youth Commission and the Local Governance Unit. In 2022, the course will open to the wider public, including development workers.

To create an enabling environment for adolescent participation, UNICEF provided technical expertise to the Local Youth Development Councils and other youth networks in 2021. The advice given covered how to set up adolescent-friendly spaces, build trust in decision-making, and run consultative, collaborative and adolescent-led activities. As one example, this support helped the Zamboanga del Norte Youth Development Alliance develop a five-year strategic plan for young people to access education and training, employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement opportunities.



Youth performance at SUGPAT- a program for youth leadership through art.

# Looking Ahead

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Looking ahead to 2022 and the new strategic plan, UNICEF will accelerate its efforts to support young people with opportunities to learn, connect and take action to positively transform their lives, their communities and society at large.

In particular, UNICEF will continue to empower adolescents through building the capacities and skills for youth-led action and advocacy for a better tomorrow for all children. This work will focus on scaling up efforts in the key strategic areas of transforming education systems, advocating for better mental health policies and services, reducing harmful practices against girls and boys, youth-led change in humanitarian and protracted situations, and youth-led action for improved climate change policies. Having supported youth-led advocacy for climate change at COP26 through the capacity-building of nearly 400 young people, in 2022 UNICEF will focus on country-level advocacy. In partnership with YOUNGO, the youth constituency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, young people across regions will develop and implement climate change awareness-raising, advocacy and policy work.

In 2022, UNICEF will continue to expand efforts to realize the core commitments with and for adolescents in humanitarian action. This will be achieved by ensuring access to displaced, refugee and migrant populations, with age- and gender-responsive services across sectors, supporting the meaningful participation of young people in humanitarian and peacebuilding initiatives, and building capacities and skills of adolescents and local actors to support their transition to work and other opportunities for advocacy and youth-led action. UNICEF will take global flagship products to scale, by:

- Digitizing resources such as the Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation to deliver digital literacy and skills remotely and in a cost-effective way
- Building capacity across the organization and among partners, including young people, through remote and in-person training to give rise to a critical mass of confident and competent users
- Improving knowledge sharing by developing case studies, multimedia products and fostering a community of practice
- Strengthening partnerships with and for adolescents in humanitarian, protracted and vulnerable contexts.

One of the major challenges for adolescent programming and policy is the dearth of adolescent-specific data and the accessibility of existing data. To address this, in 2022 UNICEF will launch the Adolescent Data Portal, a partnership between Adolescent Development and Participation and the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring. The portal will ensure essential adolescent-focused data are available and accessible, enabling users to easily find relevant and trusted data on adolescent well-being to address questions such as:

- Health and nutrition: What are the leading causes of death among adolescents? How many girls give birth during adolescence? How many adolescents struggle with issues of nutrition or substance use?
- Education and learning: Are adolescent boys and girls equally likely to finish school, or to go to school at all? How many are illiterate? Do all adolescents have basic reading and arithmetic skills?
- Protection: How many adolescents experience intimate partner violence, violent discipline or bullying? How many marry before they turn 18? Where in the world are adolescents more likely to become victims of homicide?
- Transition to work: Which regions have the highest unemployment rates among adolescents? How many adolescents are not studying, working or receiving training? How many spend long hours doing unpaid household chores?
- Gender equality: Do boys and girls have equal access to education? Have they been similarly impacted by the HIV epidemic? Do girls have what they need to manage their menstrual hygiene and sexual health? How do adolescents view violence within relationships?

UNICEF is also continuing its work on the development of indicators and questions for measuring adolescent participation and empowerment in population-level surveys (such as MICS and demographic and health surveys). Once completed, this work will facilitate evidence-based approaches to programming and advocacy.

Finally, in 2022, in line with UNICEF's global priority to build on caregivers' existing strengths and help equip them to best support and nurture their children, the team is working across sectors on work to develop resources and tools, and implement evidence-based programming, to improve the mental health of adolescents and caregivers worldwide. The team is also prioritizing efforts that focus on adolescent caregivers and their children, recognizing that these highly vulnerable groups have typically been underserved.



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# Systems-strengthening

On 14 October 2021, Gordana Vukicevic and her 4-year-old son with down syndrome Vuk Ivanisevic are playing in the park and having fun in Mladenovac, Serbia.

UNICEF's support to governments takes a system-strengthening approach, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts, with the aim of ensuring systems are better equipped to deliver social services for children in an equitable and sustainable manner, and to respond and adapt to shocks. UNICEF's systems-strengthening approach is multidimensional. It recognizes that national systems are connected and impacted by global and regional systems and that, in turn, national systems need to be effective at the local level, and it recognizes both formal and non-formal systems (institutions, community structures, faith-based, etc.).

Systems comprise interconnected components that need to be in place, with established roles and accountabilities, including:

- Governance (legislation, policies, guidance, strategies, management), including at the local level
- Coordination (platforms that add value, coherence for collective action)
- Financing (budgets, strategies, etc.)
- Human and technical capacities needed for implementation (technical knowledge, formal and informal workforce, incentives, accountability/analysis of information/transparency, informal, technology, etc.)
- Service delivery modalities for implementation (physical reach/coverage/access, quality, sustainability, child and gender sensitivity).

Addressing both monetary and multidimensional child poverty requires a coherent systems approach, which remains at the heart of UNICEF's work in this area. To support routine monitoring of child poverty, UNICEF works with countries to ensure that the measurement of child poverty is embedded in national statistical systems and processes. National ownership of child poverty measurement and the technical capacities to produce this evidence are core to strengthening systems to tackle child poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of resilient national systems to measure, monitor and analyse child poverty. UNICEF's support to systems-strengthening has contributed to the organization's ability to swiftly respond to data gaps during crises, as shown by the sheer amount of evidence produced about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in poverty. In 2021, UNICEF continued this support; strengthening national systems to measure, report, and analyse child poverty, as well as providing insights on how to translate this evidence into policy and programme responses.

As outlined in UNICEF's social protection framework, systems-building is also crucial to respond to the multidimensional deprivations and needs of vulnerable and poor children throughout their life cycle. Therefore, UNICEF's support in social protection builds on a foundation of evidence and ranges from supporting policy, programming and implementation to achieving

coordinated and harmonized social protection responses for children and their families. The strengths of social protection systems are measured across five areas: policy, programmes, operations, shock responsiveness and inclusiveness. In over 100 countries across all regions, UNICEF has contributed to strengthening the systems over time, and the number of countries with strong or moderately strong systems has doubled, from about 30 countries globally in 2017 to over 65 countries in 2021.

UNICEF's work on public finance explicitly focuses on the connection between the public finance system, elements of the budget cycle – from strategic planning to budget preparation, implementation and reporting – and, ultimately, service delivery outcomes. During 2021, UNICEF worked with finance ministries, social sector line ministries, and a range of development and civil society partners to cost policies and assess fiscal space, to diagnose public finance bottlenecks, including at subnational levels, and to build capacity to solve public finance problems that affect the delivery of services for children. Specific initiatives to strengthen systems in 2021 included supporting the development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks in around 40 countries, to identify financing strategies for priority areas combining public and private domestic and international sources, in partnership with UNDP and other United Nations agencies. Together with the International Budget Partnership, UNICEF also supported interventions to strengthen the availability of budget data and the credibility of budgets. UNICEF also developed resources to support child-responsive public financial management, including our Global PF4C Toolkit, an analysis of fiscal equity for children assessing the combined tax and transfer options for reducing child poverty – and a series of subnational budgeting briefs that unpack common problems in the tracking and flow of funds between national and subnational governments and accountability to citizens, with examples of UNICEF's support solutions. Public finance systems that are responsive to children's needs are critical, so that government policies and plans are translated into budget allocations, and resources are then spent as intended to deliver services for children.

Any commitment to support adolescents on their journey to realize meaningful engagement requires effort to transform the structures, institutions and dynamics that reinforce and perpetuate inequality. Also, an enabling environment for adolescent participation requires elected officials and other decision makers to have the capacities to create and implement adolescent-friendly policies, programmes and plans, and to ensure these happen in practice. Influencing legislation, policy formulation and budget allocations that are responsive to adolescents' rights and support youth participation is key to UNICEF's work. To achieve this, UNICEF supports the development and implementation of quality, adolescent-friendly policies that are gender responsive, evidence-based, and include mechanisms to promote adolescents' participation. In 2021, UNICEF far exceeded its strategic plan target of 48 policies, supporting a total 75 adolescent-friendly policies in 49 countries.

UNICEF is also committed to working with both the public and private sectors to develop and strengthen legal frameworks, policies, investments and business practices that bolster positive gender socialization. UNICEF is determined, through its work with national governments, to develop and implement family-friendly policies that ensure the rights and well-being of both parents and children. UNICEF has helped many countries make great strides to add a gender dimension to new or existing social protection schemes. UNICEF is also a key partner to private sector actors, and guides them in acknowledging and challenging media and advertising portrayals of gender and social norms. UNICEF has been at the heart of research efforts and programme design and implementation, and

has guided family-friendly private sector policies such as maternity and paternity leave to set new industry standards.

Disability inclusion in UNICEF follows the human rights-based approach. To ensure that people with disabilities are heard and that they participate in decision-making, there is a focus on: systems-strengthening, by removing barriers to inclusion (institutional, cultural and structural); and empowerment of the individual, by supporting assistive technology and accessibility. UNICEF works to support the rights and needs of children with disabilities throughout the life-cycle.



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On 22 January 2022, 3-year-old Kawthar wears her new woollen hat and scarf, received as part of the winter clothing kits UNICEF distributed in Alzhourieyh makeshift camp, east rural Homs, Syria.



UNICEF/UN0373501/Billy/AFP-Service

# High-level priorities towards the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the Sustainable Development Goals

On 2 September 2020 in Guatemala, Erick Samuel, 18 months old, eats a mashed peach with vitamins delivered by UNICEF brigades, while being held by his mother.



With the unprecedented increase in poverty and child poverty as a result of the economic impacts of COVID-19, conflict and climate change, the challenges to the current and next generation have never been greater. The new strategic plan proposes a new goal area, to explicitly prioritize the elimination of child poverty and access to social protection, as a critical contribution to sustainable and inclusive recovery for every child. It aims to further elevate UNICEF's leadership role in this agenda and enhance its commitments to address critical gaps in terms of gender transformation, inclusion, financing and effective participating.

The child poverty challenge ahead can only be fully understood and addressed if child poverty is routinely measured and reported on in all countries. And this will remain a top priority of the organization as we accelerate our work with governments to prioritize the measurement of child poverty and build governments' capacities to do so.

While measuring child poverty lays the foundation for change, the design and implementation of policies to reduce child poverty form the crucial next step. In 2021, UNICEF produced the first comprehensive review of how multidimensional poverty measures can be used for impact and in early 2022 will release a similar publication on monetary child poverty. This will support the acceleration of UNICEF's work in the design and implementation of policy and programmes that reverse the negative impacts of the pandemic, while continuing to accelerate progress towards SDG 1 and 10.

UNICEF is the leading actor on child poverty, at global, regional and country levels. And we further enhance this role leveraging critical partnerships across sectors and diverse stakeholders, to ensure that the urgency to address child poverty remains high on the global agenda and to facilitate coordinated approaches to country engagement and support. In 2022, UNICEF will deepen our ongoing partnership with the World Bank in measuring, programming and communicating on child poverty, as well as our work co-chairing the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, with a focus on coordinated advocacy, communication and programming efforts.

The direction of social protection for children and families is at a crucial inflexion point: the response to COVID-19 underlined the importance of social protection as a key pillar in addressing poverty and vulnerability, but at the same time social protection coverage and financing remain far too low. With only one in four children receiving any form of child or family benefit, a top priority for UNICEF will be working to increase coverage of child and family benefits towards universal systems.

COVID-19 highlighted the great potential of national social protection systems to rapidly expand and respond to a crisis, but it also exposed significant gaps in their ability to do so. With ongoing challenges of fragility and conflict and the impacts of climate change growing, UNICEF will place strong emphasis on strengthening our support for

social protection systems that are shock responsive and enhancing our capacity to deliver life-saving humanitarian cash when needed.

UNICEF will also be accelerating its efforts to ensure that social protection systems are fully inclusive and effectively reach the most vulnerable populations, including girls and women, children with disabilities, and children on the move.

In 2022, social protection will be very high on the global agenda. This is underlined by its inclusion in the Secretary-General's report, *Our Common Agenda*, and the establishment of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. UNICEF will continue to work at the helm of these inter-agency processes and forums, acknowledging our unique comparative advantage in delivering on the ground, and our leadership of key thematic areas in inter-agency groups, including on financing, gender, disability and shock-responsive social protection.

As we move to the new strategic plan, the fundamental objectives of UNICEF's public finance work remain unchanged. However, the context is increasingly challenging as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect economic and fiscal capacity, while new national and global shocks, and the longer-term challenges of climate change add to the difficulties facing many governments. UNICEF will continue to advocate for investments in children and families, and support national governments and the international community to focus efforts on an inclusive and resilient recovery. Stronger action is required to tackle inequalities in access to finance through debt restructuring and the transfer of resources from high-income countries to LMICs via the reallocation of Special Drawing Rights.

At the national level, UNICEF will continue to support governments to assess financing gaps and identify financing options, and to make better use of resources to tackle service delivery bottlenecks and improve social sector results for children. The use of Integrated National Financing Frameworks and a stronger partnership with UNDP, IFIs and other partners will focus on leveraging more resources for social sectors to close financing gaps at the national level through improved strategic planning and aligning government budgets with critical SDGs. This will also support stronger integration of UNICEF's child- and inclusion-focused approach, with measures to integrate climate change policies into government budgets.

While maintaining the core focus on strengthening overall public finance systems, UNICEF will also develop and support approaches to tackle sector-specific challenges, including for early childhood development and immunization. We will strengthen critical partnerships with multilaterals and IFIs, in particular the EU and the IMF, to further build social spending commitments within concessional financing packages.

In 2022, UNICEF will redouble its efforts to facilitate gender-transformative programming and shift discriminatory gender norms that act as a hurdle to achieving equal outcomes for girls and boys. The new Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025 outlines a comprehensive set of programmatic and institutional standards, which emphasize that gender equality is the responsibility of everyone at UNICEF. UNICEF is committed to investing in gender expertise in all sectors and at all levels. The organization will build gender capacity for all staff, across all areas of the organization, including the programming continuum, from gender analysis to gender-responsive monitoring/reporting, evidence generation and dissemination.



A woman cradles her twins, Benoit and Melanie, at a UNICEF-supported health centre in Pobé City, Plateau Department in 2006.

UNICEF will also strengthen its engagement with adolescents and young people as rights-holders and change agents who offer valuable perspectives and insights that contribute to more effective, relevant and sustainable results in both development and humanitarian settings. This will build on successes under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, including accelerating efforts to generate and utilize data and evidence to determine priorities and advocacy, and strengthen outcome-oriented collaborations to deliver a holistic agenda across the sectors. The new strategic plan will identify priority areas, where UNICEF and its partners are well positioned to contribute towards accelerating results for adolescents and young people. These include: promoting adolescent mental health; supporting pregnant and parenting adolescents; ending child marriage; providing equitable access (including digital) to learning opportunities; and engaging youth in climate change. UNICEF will build on existing partnerships and explore new opportunities to partner with adolescents, young people and youth networks as equal constituents, in meaningful and safe ways, and to contribute to the delivery of programmatic priorities. By empowering adolescents and young people to claim their rights, as well as to build their agency to engage and lead change within their societies, we will be contributing to accelerated results for adolescents.

UNICEF will embed a disability strategy, action plan and guidance for disability inclusion in all of its programmes and operations. This will provide a framework for collaboration across UNICEF, as well as with sister agencies and inter-agency mechanisms such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, OPDs and public and private partners, to strengthen and scale up disability inclusion in communities around the world. A global research agenda on children with disabilities, informed by human rights, gender equality and social justice, will complement the UNICEF disability strategy, to inform effective interventions for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities. The organization also plans to establish the Global Centre of Excellence on Data for Children with Disabilities, which will generate robust and relevant statistics on children with disabilities for decision-making and advocacy. UNICEF will continue to strengthen the inclusion of children with disabilities in the COVID-19 response, and will work with the WHO to develop practical guidance on disability considerations in COVID-19 vaccinations. Finally, UNICEF will work to strengthen the consideration of public health emergencies in existing guidance and tools for the inclusion of children with disabilities in humanitarian action, based on learnings from the COVID-19 response.

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AT</b>	assistive technology	<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>COVID-19</b>	coronavirus disease 2019	<b>OPD</b>	organization of persons with disabilities
<b>DIPAS</b>	Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy	<b>PF4C</b>	Public Finance for Children
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>HCT</b>	humanitarian cash transfer	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>IBP</b>	International Budget Partnership	<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<b>WASH</b>	water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>LMICs</b>	low- and middle-income countries		

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# Annex 2: Financial Report\*

\*All funding data is provisional as of 1 April 2022, pending audit and certification

## 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 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 to 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 COVID-19 pandemic. This trend is encouraging and in line with the Funding Compact commitments. In the Funding Compact

'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.

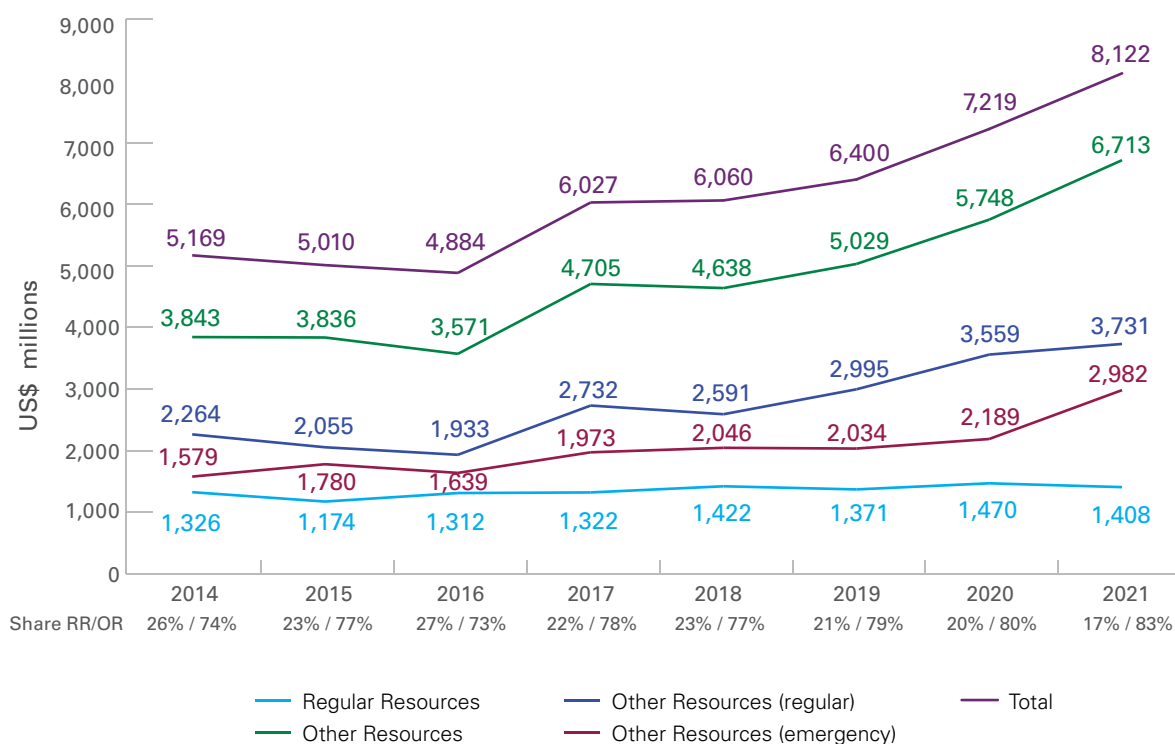
**Regular resources (RR)** are unearmarked funds that are foundational to deliver results across the Strategic Plan.

**Other resources (OR)** are earmarked contributions for programmes; these are supplementary to the contributions in unearmarked 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 purpose and strategic priorities.

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

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



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

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 needs basis. The flexibility of thematic funding allows UNICEF to respond more effectively. It facilitates longer-term planning, sustainability and savings in transaction costs, leaving more resources for UNICEF programmes.

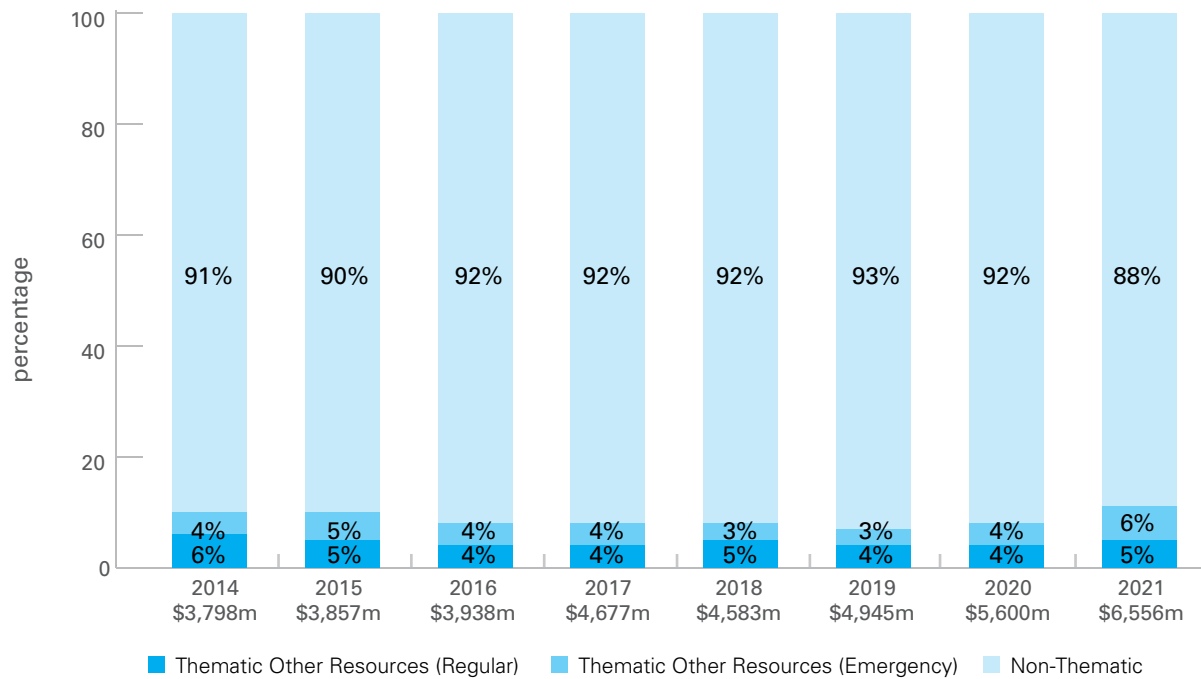
For partners, contributions to UNICEF's 10 thematic funding pools are in keeping with the principles of good multilateral resource partnerships. Thematic contributions have the greatest potential of 'other resources' to produce high-level results directly aligned to the Strategic Plan, as endorsed

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.

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 U.S. Fund for UNICEF, the Danish Committee for UNICEF, and the German Committee for UNICEF.\*

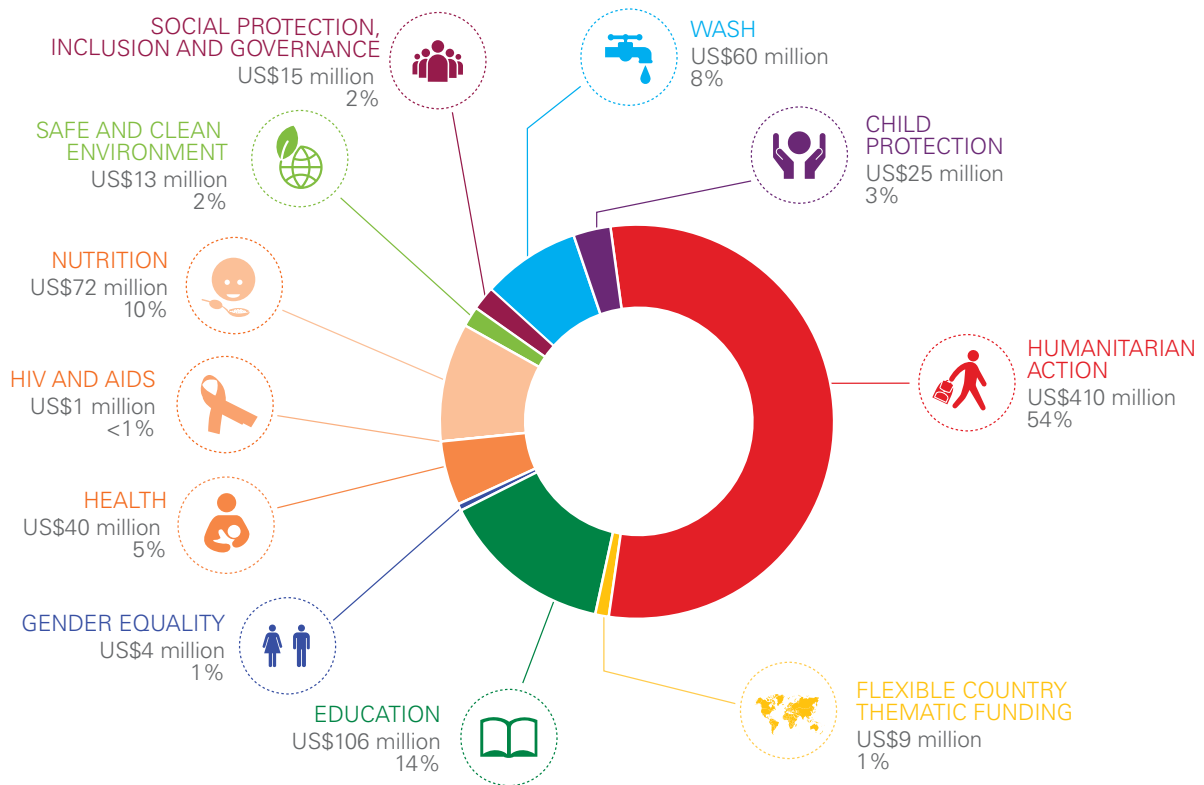
\* For more information on thematic funding and how it works, please visit: <<https://www.unicef.org/partnerships/funding/thematic-funding>>

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



Note: \*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



# Goal Area 5 income in 2021

In 2021, partners contributed US\$156 million 'other resources – regular' for Goal Area 2 – a 53 per cent increase over the previous year. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of 'other resources – regular' to Goal Area 5, at 98 per cent. The top five resource partners to Goal Area 5 in 2021 were the World Bank, the Government of Germany, the European Commission, and the governments of Sweden and Canada (see Table A1-1). The largest contributions were received from the World

bank for Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response in Yemen and for the Fifth Additional Financing for the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project, and from the Government of Germany for Investing towards Children's Human Capital through a Sustainable and Inclusive Social Protection System in Tunisia (see Table A1-2 and the body of the report for results on these programmes).

FIGURE A1-4: Goal Area 5 'other resources – regular' contributions, 2014-2021

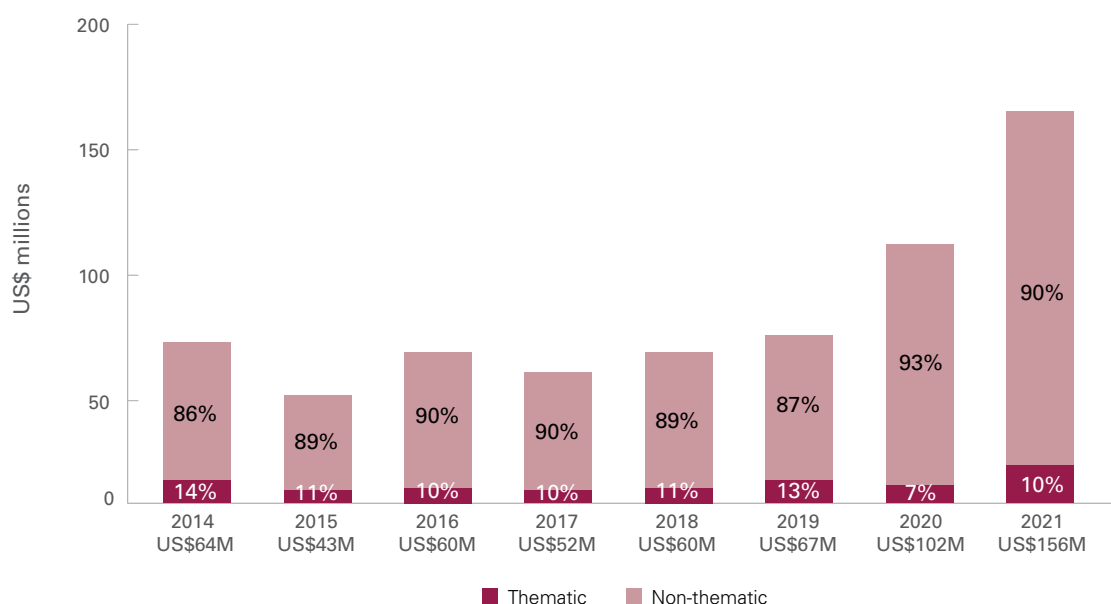
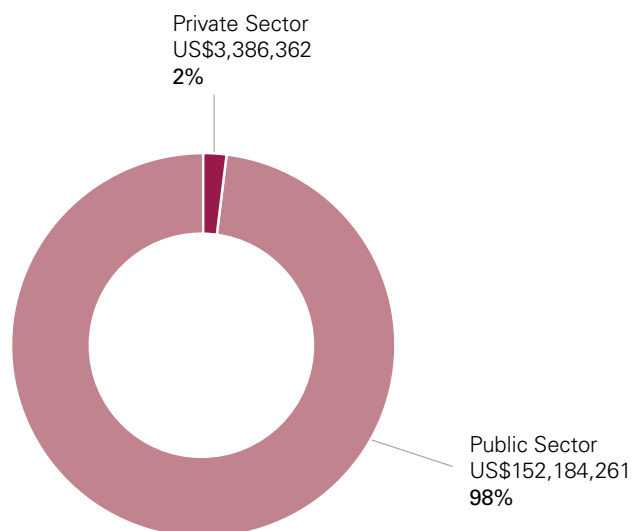


FIGURE A1-5: Total Goal Area 5 funds received by type of resource partner, 2021: US\$156 million



**TABLE A1-1: Top 20 resource partners to Goal Area 5 by total contributions, 2021**

Rank	Resource partners	Total (US\$)
1	World Bank	157,288,303
2	Germany	66,383,319
3	European Commission	26,040,583
4	Sweden	18,257,390
5	Canada	15,098,065
6	Norway	8,011,702
7	Belgium	7,874,172
8	United Nations Joint Programme	4,516,387
9	Global Muslim Philanthropy Fund	2,925,000
10	United States	2,742,472
11	United Kingdom	2,124,396
12	United Nations Multi Partner Trust Fund	1,996,236
13	UNDP-managed United Nations Partnerships and Joint Programmes	1,577,779
14	Swiss Committee for UNICEF	1,325,070
15	Ireland	1,154,147
16	United States Fund for UNICEF	832,508
17	Spain	675,676
18	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	672,154
19	Australia	663,323
20	Switzerland	425,064

**TABLE A1-2: Top 20 contributions to Goal Area 5, 2021**

Rank	Total (US\$)	Grant Description	Resource Partner
1	132,995,560	Emergency Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response, Yemen	World Bank
2	26,242,047	Investing towards Children's Human Capital through a Sustainable and Inclusive Social Protection System, Tunisia	Germany
3	23,560,000	Fifth Additional Financing for the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project	World Bank
4	22,522,523	Responding to COVID-19 Pandemic through Social Protection Systems in the Sahel	Germany
5	11,149,764	Strengthening National Systems for Improved Access to Equitable and Integrated Basic Services, Iraq*	Germany
6	11,148,649	Social Policy and Social Protection Thematic Funding, Afghanistan	Germany
7	8,023,649	Child Guarantee Scheme – Establishing a European Child Guarantee and Financial Support, ECARO	European Commission
8	8,011,715	Disability Inclusion Partnership	Norway
9	7,946,614	Support to Social Protection and COVID-19, Mozambique	Canada
10	7,492,029	Tackling Child Poverty and Vulnerabilities through Child-sensitive Social Protection Project in Burkina Faso	Sweden
11	6,974,023	Joint Programme on Local Governance Phase III, Somalia*	United Nations Multi Partner Trust
12	6,934,653	Support to the United Nations 'One UN Response Plan to COVID-19' in Nigeria*	European Commission
13	6,924,783	Fourth Additional Financing for the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project*	World Bank
14	6,836,653	Child Sensitive Social Protection in Refugee Hosting Districts of West Nile, Uganda	Sweden
15	6,761,617	Education, Adolescent Development and Participation, Tajikistan*	European Commission
16	5,902,891	Social Inclusion, Lebanon	European Commission
17	5,630,702	Support to Multisectoral Response to COVID-19 UNICEF in Bangladesh*	Sweden
18	4,962,182	Social Protection Programme for Iraq: Leveraging Effective Response and Accelerating Reform	European Commission
19	4,200,477	Strengthening of Services Provision for Children in Iraq	Germany
20	3,963,078	Contributing to the sustainability of the national safety net project Merankabandi, Burundi	Belgium

Notes: \* Cross-sectoral grants: SC210667 (Health, Education, Child Protection, WASH, Social Protection), SC180805, SC200911 (Education, Social Protection), SC200461 (Health, Social Protection), SC190305 (Health, Nutrition, Social Protection), SC200401 (Health, Nutrition, Child Protection, WASH, Social Protection).

UNICEF thematic funds maintain a four-year funding period that covers the entire Strategic Plan period (2018–2021). Throughout the Strategic Plan period, thematic funding contributions for social protection, inclusion and governance reached US\$36.7 million, with US\$14.9 million received in 2021, of which close to 95 per cent came from public sector partners. The Government of Germany was the largest thematic resources partner in 2021, providing 75 per cent of all thematic social protection, inclusion and governance contributions received (see Table A1-3).

Of all thematic social protection, inclusion and governance contributions that UNICEF received in 2018 to 2021, 21 per cent were global-level contributions. These are the most flexible sources of funding to UNICEF after regular resources and can be allocated across regions to individual country programmes, according to priority needs (see Figure A1-6).

Under the 2018–2021 UNICEF Strategic Plan, the governments of Norway and Spain have contributed 99.6% of all global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding.

FIGURE A1-6: Social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding contributions at country, regional and global levels, 2018–2021

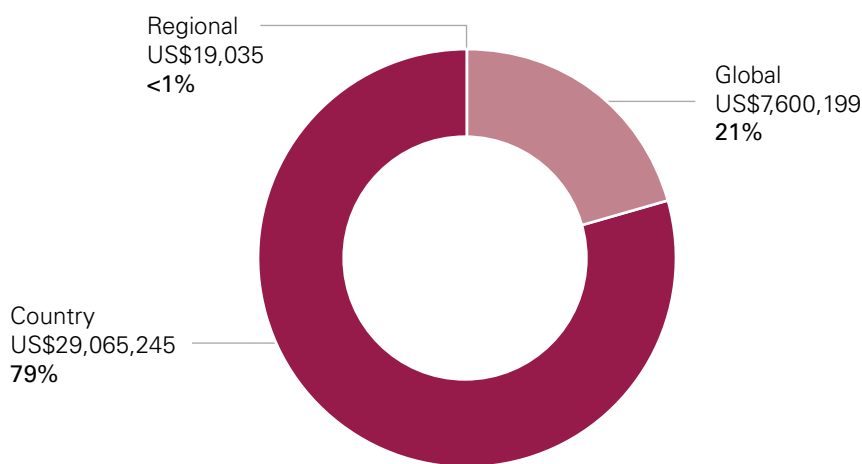
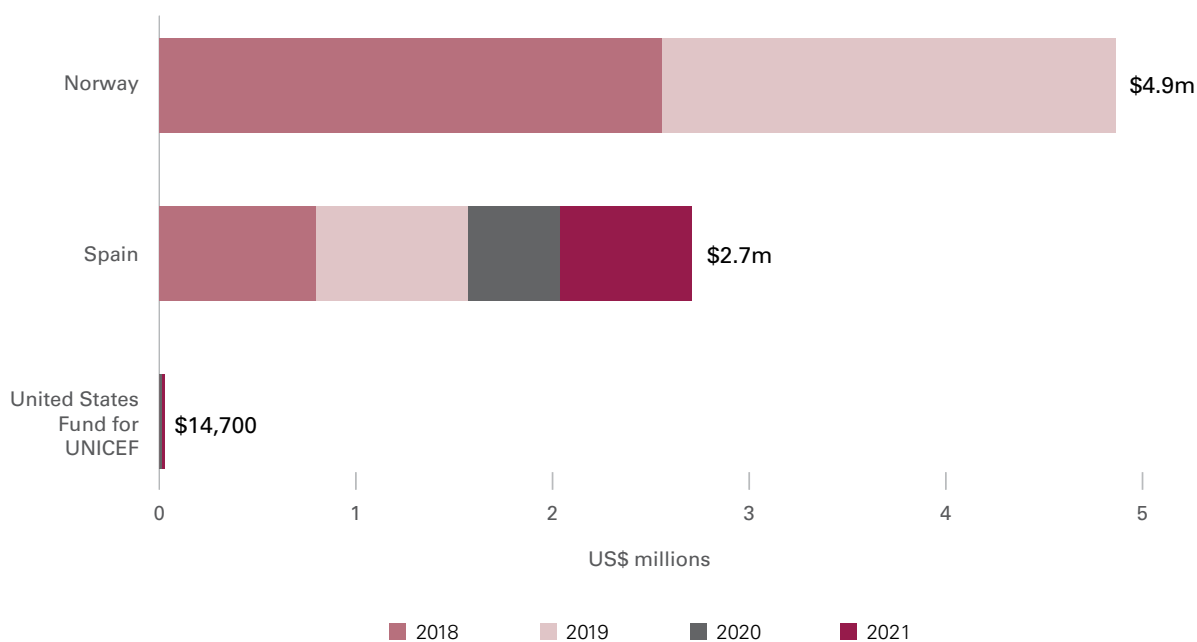


FIGURE A1-7: Spotlight on global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding contributions, 2018-2021



## PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

*At the core of the 2030 Agenda is the principle to leave no one behind. If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, marginalized groups must be included in all aspects of society. This responsibility lies primarily with national governments, but there is also a need for more inclusive international development cooperation. The Government of Norway hosted the Global Disability Summit 2022. The widespread participation of different stakeholders and their commitments illustrated a global commitment to disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action across regions and areas of work.*

*As part of this effort, Norway launched a strategy for disability-inclusive development: Equality for all (2022–2025). The strategy sets the overall direction for Norwegian development cooperation in this area in the years ahead. We will integrate the rights of persons with disabilities in our development cooperation, in different sectors and various thematic areas, including education.*

*Norway highly values its partnership with UNICEF, and we work together to enhance diversity and dismantle barriers faced by children with disabilities. Under our partnership on disability inclusion, UNICEF expands programming for, and strengthens the inclusion of, persons with disabilities across all areas of activity. Norway's support is strategic and extends across all areas of UNICEF's strategic plan. We are delighted that UNICEF launched a process to develop a disability inclusion strategy for the entire organization in 2021, and we look forward to continuing to work together to implement the new strategy from 2022.*

*- Anne Beathe Tvinnereim, Norwegian Minister of International Development*

UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base (including thematic contributions) and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible. In 2021, 5 partners contributed thematic funding to social protection, inclusion and governance, compared to 4 partners contributing in 2020. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the Government of Germany for social policy and social protection activities in Afghanistan, and from the Government of Sweden for social protection, inclusion and governance activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bolivia.

The 2021 allocations of global thematic social protection, inclusion and governance funds were made on a needs-based formula for country offices' regional allocations and for regional office allocations, based on country offices'

stated intention/commitment to meet one or more relevant Strategic Plan targets on child poverty, social protection, Public Finance for Children (PF4C) or local governance.

Further prioritization criteria were:

- Least-developed countries
- If a country office had the opportunity and a plan to make tangible progress towards one or more of the Strategic Plan targets for social policy
- If steps had been taken to incorporate attention to adolescents, disability and gender into the social policy work
- If a country office had demonstrated a capacity to absorb funds and had a funding shortfall for its planned social policy activities.

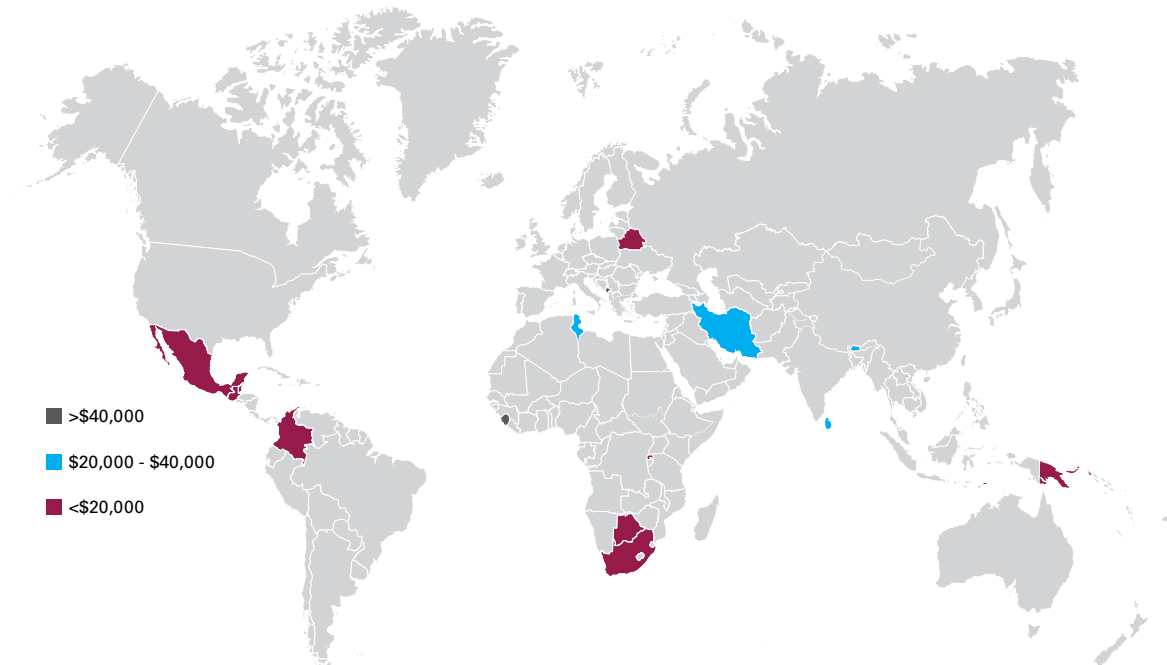
**TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partners to social protection, inclusion and governance, 2021**

Resource Partner Type	Resource Partner	Total (US\$)	Percentage of Total
Governments 99.46%	Germany	11,148,649	75.01%
	Sweden	2,958,827	19.91%
	Spain	675,676	4.55%
Private sector 0.54%	Czech Committee for UNICEF	66,747	0.45%
	United States Fund for UNICEF	13,076	0.09%
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>14,862,975</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Grant numbers are provided for IATI compliance: SC1899080004, SC1899080006, SC1899080008, SC1899080015, SC1899080016, SC2299080002, SC2299380001



FIGURE A1-8: Allocation of global social protection, inclusion and governance thematic funding to country offices, 2021

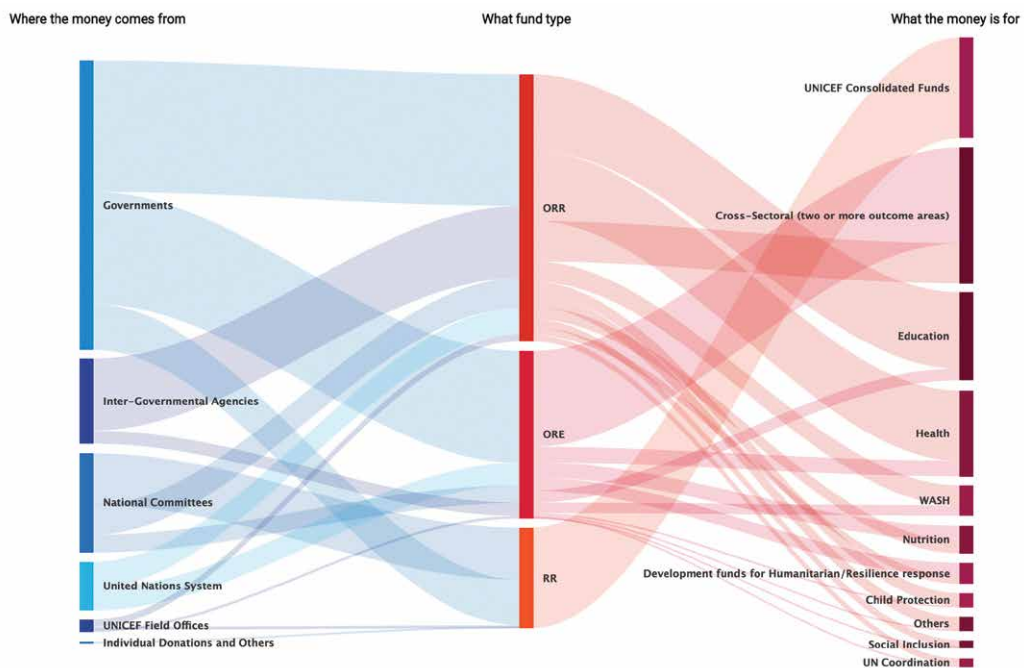


The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal ([open.unicef.org](http://open.unicef.org)) and the results achieved with the funds, assessed against Executive Board-approved targets and indicators at country, regional and global 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.

## Transparency:

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



# Goal Area 5 expenses in 2021

Note: Expenses are higher than the income received because expenses are comprised of total allotments from regular resources and other resources (including balances carried over from previous years), whereas income reflects only earmarked contributions to Goal Area 5 in 2021. In 2021, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US\$6.33 billion.

In 2020, global expenses for Goal Area 5 programming totaled US\$727 million, including funds used in a cross-thematic manner or to cover operational and other costs. This constitutes an increase of 36 per cent over 2020 (see Figure A1-10 and Table A1-4). The highest expenses took place in Yemen (US\$213.6 million), Turkey (US\$74.5 million), Jordan (US\$39.9 million) and Lebanon (US\$34.9 million) (see Table A1-6).

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

FIGURE A1-9: Total expenses by strategic outcome area, 2021

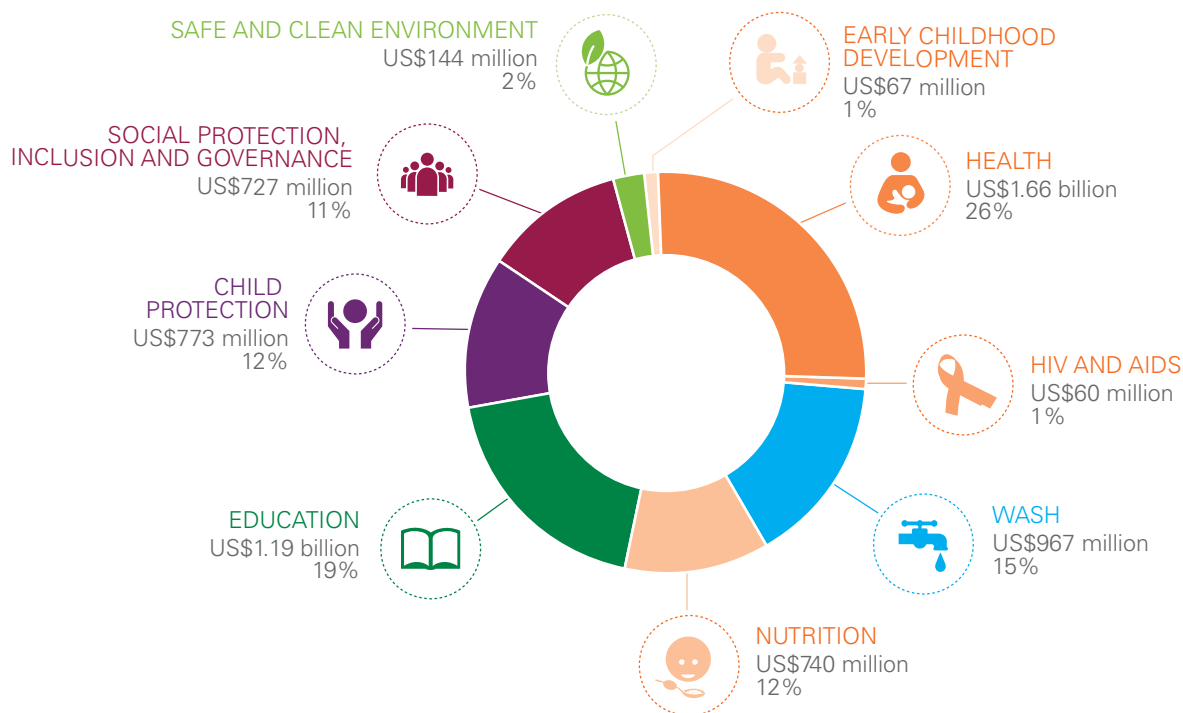


FIGURE A1-10: Expense trend for Goal Area 5 by year and fund type, 2014–2021

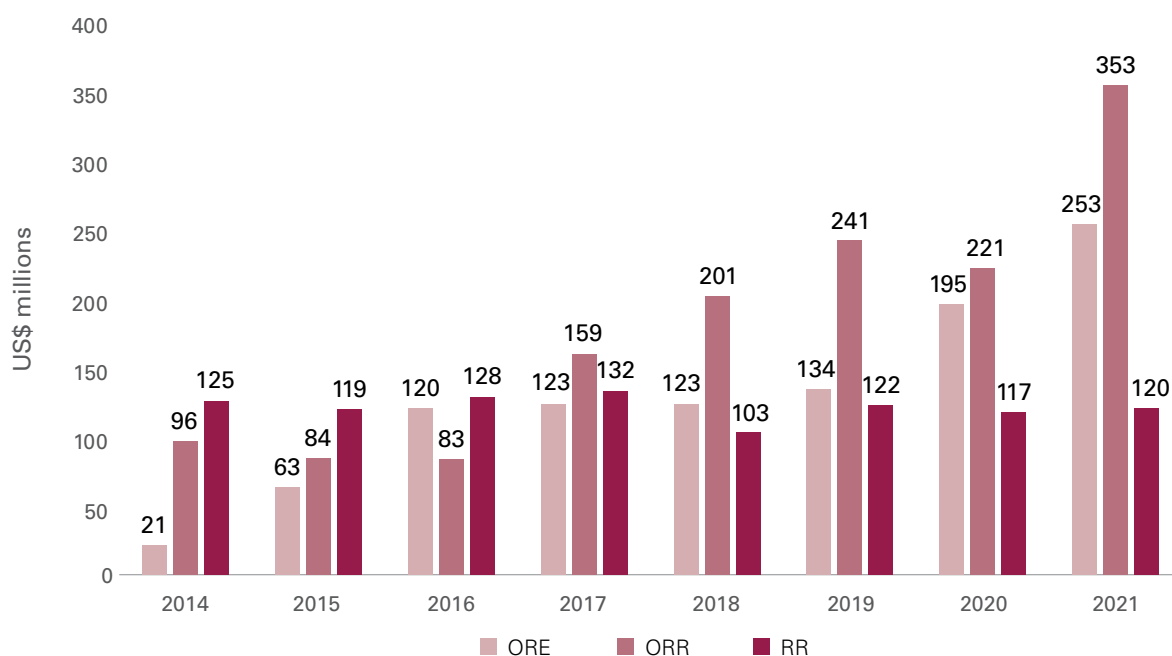


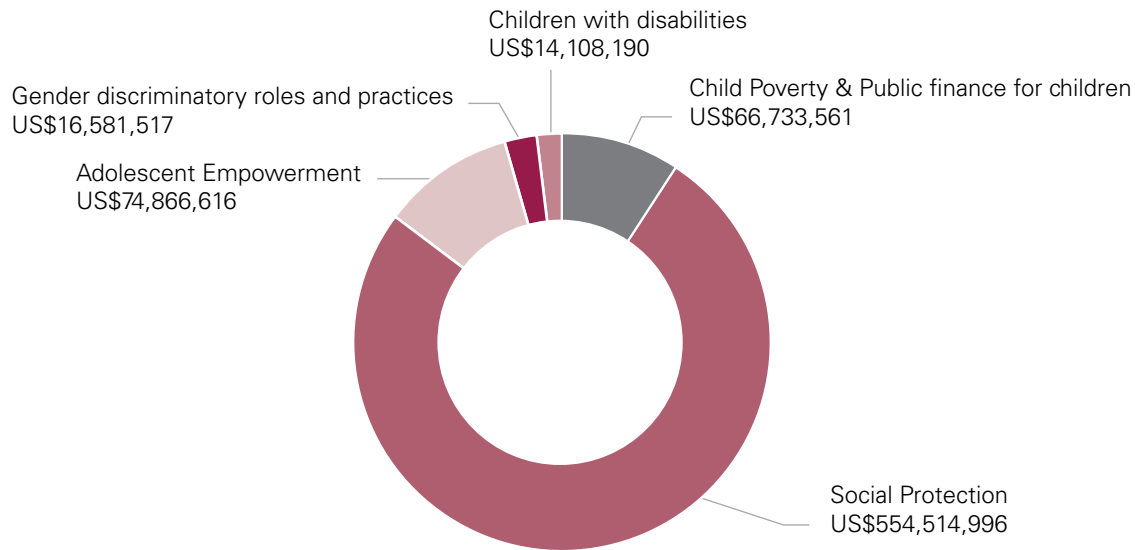
TABLE A1-4: Goal Area 5 expenses in 2021

Results area	Other resources – emergency	Other resources – regular	Regular resources	Total
Child Poverty / Public finance for children	6,171,778	21,231,750	39,330,034	66,733,561
Social Protection	220,984,180	284,869,862	48,660,953	554,514,996
Adolescent empowerment	18,501,353	34,892,537	21,472,726	74,866,616
Gender discriminatory roles and practices*	2,730,405	6,229,020	7,622,092	16,581,517
Children with disabilities*	4,938,999	6,225,296	2,943,895	14,108,190
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>253,326,715</b>	<b>353,448,465</b>	<b>120,029,699</b>	<b>726,804,880</b>

Notes: \* The expenses of US\$16.6 million on 'gender-discriminatory roles and practices' only refer to the programme expenses tagged against the positive gender socialization work under Goal Area 5. This value does not reflect the positive gender socialization work under other goal areas. Furthermore, this value does not reflect the complete UNICEF gender expenses in 2021. UNICEF expenses on gender-transformative programming in 2021 was US\$X million, which is per cent of total 2021 expenses. For the consolidated financial report on income and expenditure related to gender equality in 2021, please refer to the UNICEF Global Annual Results Report 2021 – Gender equality.

\*\* Global disability-related expenses are calculated on the basis of disability-specific budget codes and activities tagged using the disability tag, which is applied to all activities globally. The disability tag has multiple levels, and a methodology has been established that includes different proportions of expenses tagged based on the tag rating (principal/significant). The amount reported here for global disability-related expenses is a portion of expenses reported in each goal and results area.

FIGURE A1-11: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by results area, 2021



Note: \* The expenses of US\$13.1 million on 'gender-discriminatory roles and practices' only refer to the programme expenses tagged against the positive gender socialization work under Goal Area 5. This value does not reflect the positive gender socialization work under other goal areas. Furthermore, this value does not reflect the complete UNICEF gender expenses in 2020. UNICEF expenses on gender-transformative programming in 2020 was US\$1,190 million, which is 20.8 per cent of total 2020 expenses. For the consolidated financial report on income and expenditure related to gender equality in 2020, please refer to the [UNICEF Global Annual Results 2020 Report – Gender equality](#).

FIGURE A1-12: Thematic expenses for Goal Area 5 by region and results area, 2021

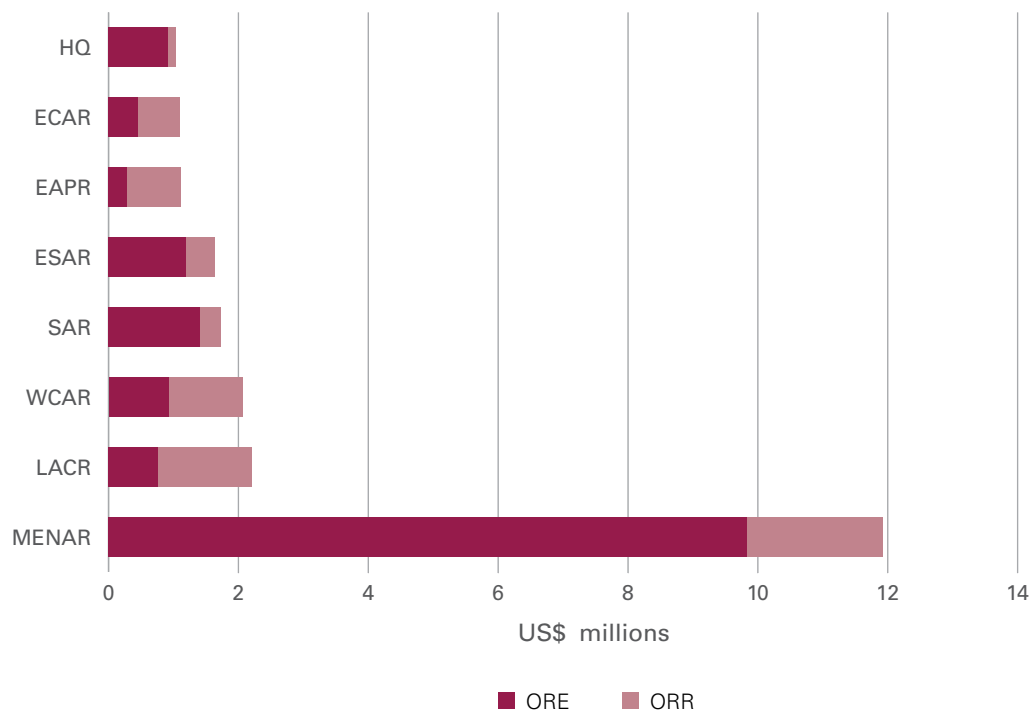


FIGURE A1-13: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by region and funding source, 2021 (US\$)

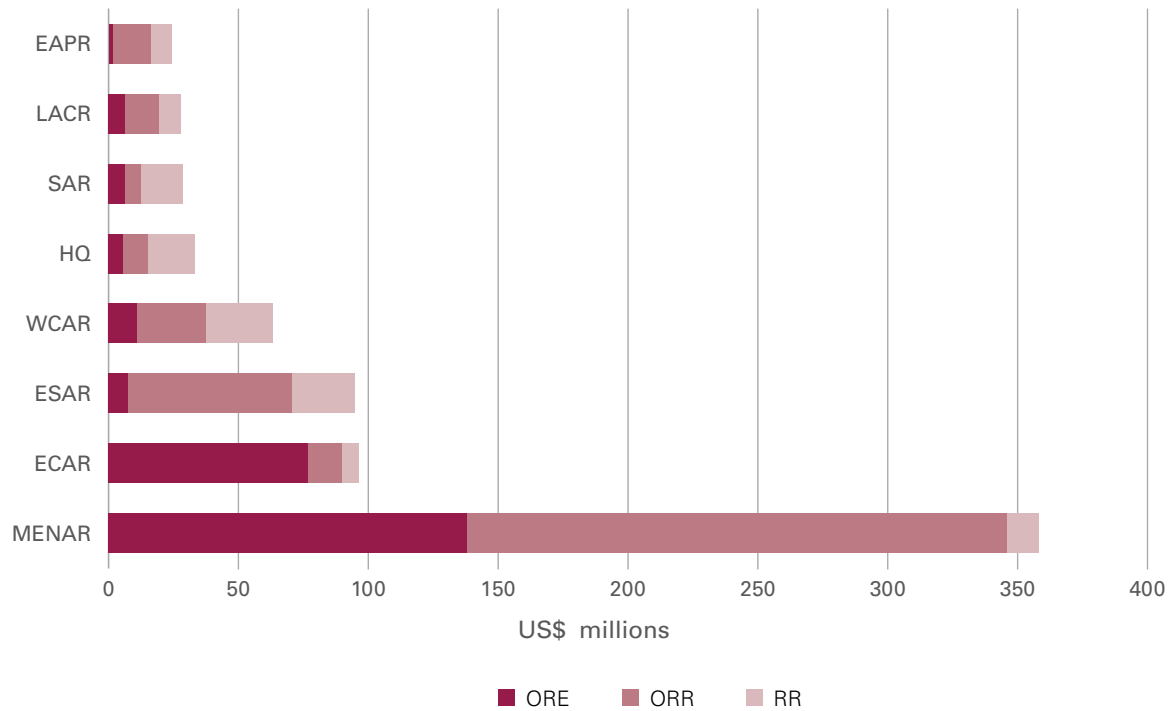
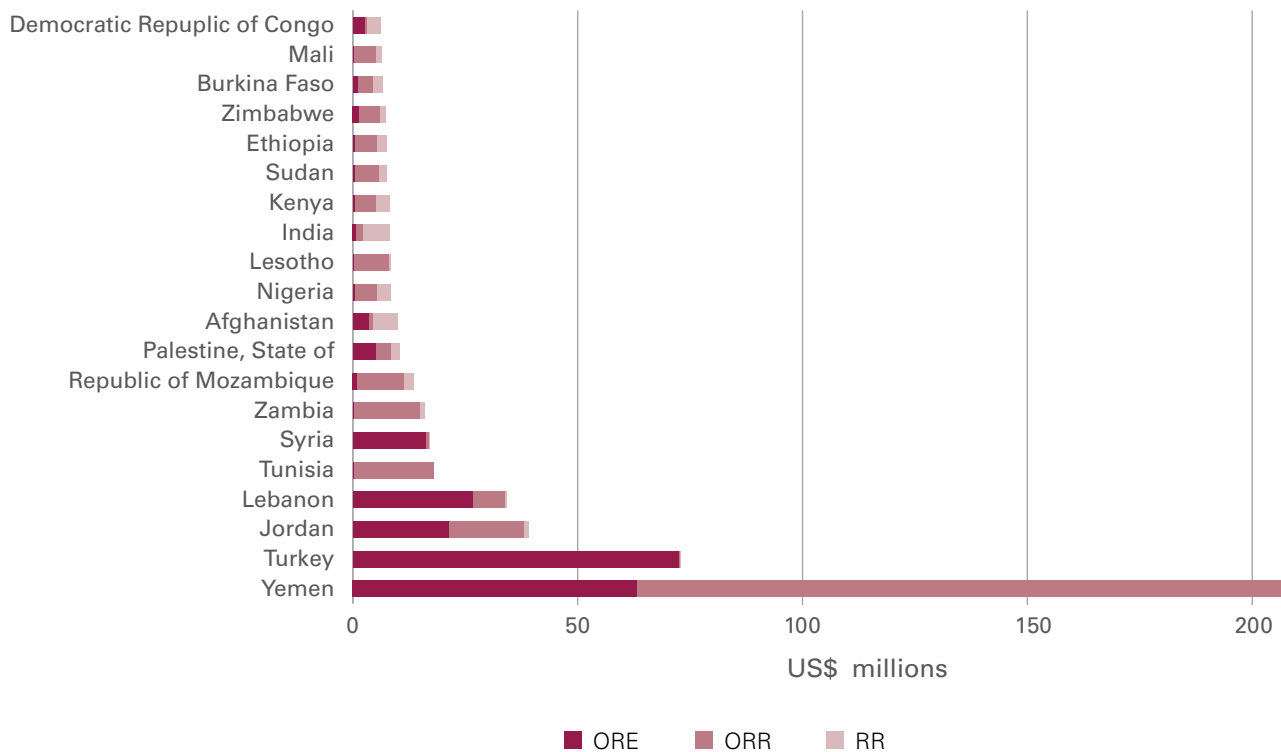


FIGURE A1-14: Top 10 expenses for Goal Area 5 by country/regional programme/headquarters division, 2021 (US\$)



**TABLE A1-5: Expenses for Goal Area 5 by cost category and fund type, 2021**

Cost category	Other resources – emergency	Other resources – regular	Regular resources	Total
Contractual services	13,218,131	37,112,814	19,231,188	69,562,133
Equipment, vehicles and furniture	11,706	101,480	173,599	286,785
General operating + other direct costs	5,282,584	9,382,405	11,069,462	25,734,451
Incremental indirect cost	17,064,530	18,443,942		35,508,472
Staff and other personnel costs	19,894,214	39,862,260	61,173,099	120,929,573
Supplies and commodities	12,682,257	5,386,820	1,873,373	19,942,451
Transfers and grants to counterparts	181,342,326	235,209,801	19,906,197	436,458,323
Travel	1,041,365	3,484,258	3,477,334	8,002,956
Other	2,789,602	4,464,685	3,125,449	10,379,735
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>253,326,715</b>	<b>353,448,465</b>	<b>120,029,699</b>	<b>726,804,880</b>

## Additional information by results area

### Social protection, child poverty and public finance for children

Within Goal Area 5, the highest proportion of expenses in 2021 were under the social protection results area and constituted US\$554.5 million. The largest proportion of these funds was spent on the delivery of cash transfers, either through new or parallel systems (US\$293 million) or government systems (US\$80 million). UNICEF invested close to US\$20 million to provide governments with technical support to develop or expand national cash transfer programmes, and US\$28 million to help strengthen social protection systems to become more shock responsive.

Strengthening of the social welfare workforce received investment of US\$5.8 million, and US\$9.6 million was spent to improve the linkages between cash transfer programmes and other services and information (including on essential family practices, livelihoods, psychosocial support). US\$27 million was spent to help develop or improve national social protection strategies, policies and legislation.

Globally, UNICEF spent US\$66.7 million on child poverty and public finance interventions in 2021. Of these funds, about US\$2 million was invested in child poverty measurement and US\$4 million in child poverty analysis, including profiling, mapping and identifying drivers of children's multidimensional and monetary poverty, as well as modelling and simulating policy options. Over US\$4 million contributed to the development or strengthening of national policies to address child poverty. Close to US\$11 million was invested in interventions aimed at improving budget allocation, the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure, and transparency, accountability and participation.

### Disability

UNICEF global expenses on disability inclusion can be measured across the whole Strategic Plan. Inclusion of children with disabilities in programmes and services is not only reflected in the expenses of targeted activities captured under Goal Area 5, but rather cuts across all goal areas, including education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and early childhood development (ECD).

In addition to the disability-specific budget codes, UNICEF uses a 'disability tag', which is mandatory for UNICEF offices to assess all activities in terms of disability inclusion, making it possible to measure expenses on disability across all goal areas of the Strategic Plan. As such, global expenses on the inclusion of children with disabilities in UNICEF 2021 programmes and services was determined to be US\$245.1 million, reaching over 4.8 million children with disabilities in 148 countries.

### Adolescents

The total global spending on adolescent participation and engagement, appropriate policy development, and routine engagement of adolescents in UNICEF programme planning and the programme cycle was US\$49.8 million in 2021. A total of US\$43.7 million was spent on adolescent participation in civic engagement initiatives, including US\$23.1 million in humanitarian contexts – resulting in over 19.5 million adolescents participating in or leading civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF-supported programmes. The amount spent on developing multisectoral policies supporting the development and participation of adolescents was US\$4.9 million in 2021, and US\$1.2 million was spent on system strengthening for adolescent participation and civic engagement (including in humanitarian settings).



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