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Annual report for 2020 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Summary

This is the third annual report of the UNICEF Executive Director to the UNICEF Executive Board on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

The report is accompanied by reports on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system^a; a joint annex on the implementation of the common chapter; and a data companion and scorecard.

Elements of a draft decision are presented in section VI.

^a General Assembly resolution [71/243](#).

* [E/ICEF/2021/9](#).



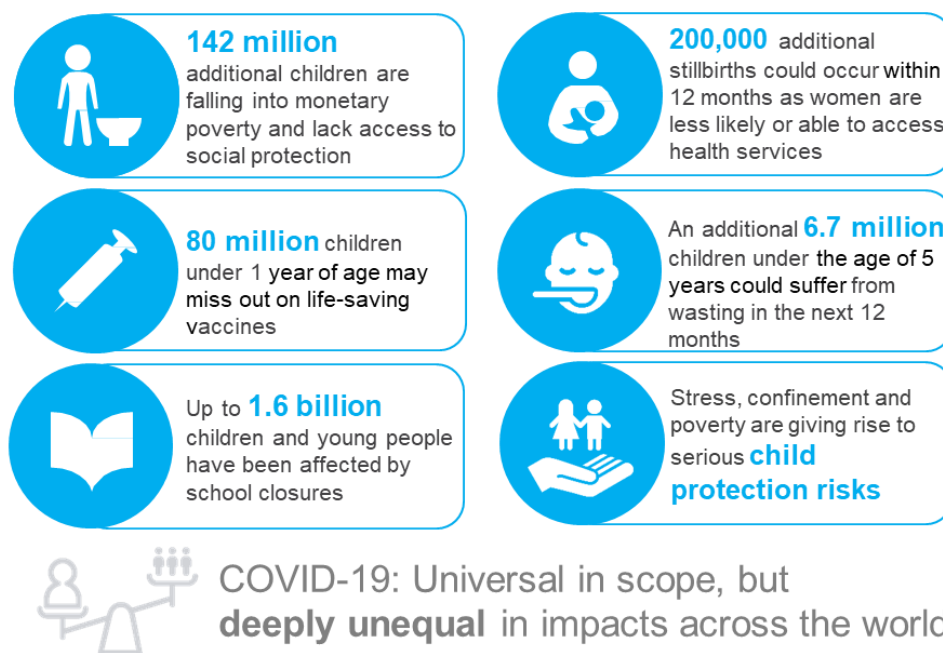
I. Overview

1. The year 2020 ushered in a time of exceptional uncertainty. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic unleashed a global crisis that has been unprecedented in both its universality and its unequal impacts. Children everywhere have seen their lives upended. But the most harmful effects have fallen disproportionately on children in the poorest countries and communities and those already disadvantaged by discrimination, social exclusion, fragility, conflict and other crises.

2. As highlighted in last year's report on the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the COVID-19 pandemic struck a world that was already off track to achieve the child rights-related Sustainable Development Goals – a world contending with mounting humanitarian crises and persistent fragility; struggling to respond to climate change; and marked as much by inequality and discrimination leaving millions of children behind as by decades of progress in realizing children's rights. The pandemic has sharpened existing inequalities and exposed the fragility of development gains, with major reversals in many indicators of child rights throwing progress towards Sustainable Development Goals even further off track. It has pushed more households into poverty and exacerbated the exclusion and vulnerability of girls; children with disabilities; children belonging to ethnic, racial and other groups facing discrimination; refugee, migrant and displaced children; and children in humanitarian settings.

Figure I

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children



3. COVID-19 has placed health systems under enormous strain. It has disrupted such life-saving services as those related to antenatal care, the treatment of common childhood illnesses and immunization. A 6-month disruption in services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV could result in dramatic increases in new HIV infections among children in sub-Saharan Africa, with a 162 per cent projected increase in Malawi, 139 per cent in Uganda, 103 per cent in Zimbabwe and 83 per cent in Mozambique. Approximately 80 million children under

the age of one year in at least 68 countries may miss out on vaccines, putting them at risk of serious disease and death. With disruptions in food systems, livelihoods and health and nutrition services, more families are experiencing food insecurity that could leave 44 million children hungry. Increasing numbers of vulnerable children are becoming malnourished. The pandemic has deepened the global learning crisis and the inequalities that underlie and perpetuate it. Up to 1.6 billion children (94 per cent of learners worldwide) were affected by school closures at the height of the pandemic, with at least one third of them unable to access remote learning opportunities.¹ Uncertainty, economic pressures, racism, xenophobia, social isolation and heightened household tensions during lockdowns have increased protection risks for children, including those related to violence in the home, gender-based violence, online abuse and exploitation and harmful practices like child labour and child marriage.

4. UNICEF responded quickly, leveraging its data systems to assess the pandemic's impacts and make the situation of children visible while using its dual humanitarian and development mandate and its extensive presence at the field, country and regional levels to play a key role in the United Nations system-wide response to the pandemic. Under the leadership of national Governments and in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners, UNICEF has advocated for child rights and supported the public health response, the continuity of essential social services and the partnership around the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines.

5. Responding to COVID-19 in 153 countries, UNICEF reached 106 million people, including approximately 58 million children, with critical water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services and supplies; 3 billion people, including approximately 1.53 billion women and girls and 810 million children, with risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) information and activities; nearly 2.6 million health workers with personal protective equipment (PPE); and 4 million health workers with training on infection prevention and control. More than 30,000 social workers have been trained to deliver essential services. Through its leadership in the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, UNICEF has been instrumental in designing the innovative advance market commitment to finance COVID-19 vaccines for 92 low- and middle-income countries, brokering the engagement of industry to procure the doses and supporting countries to prepare for and deliver the vaccine.

6. To mitigate the impacts of the crisis on the most vulnerable, UNICEF supported countries in scaling up and strengthening inclusive, gender-responsive and shock-responsive social protection systems and in making child protection a cornerstone of the response. Social service workers are now deemed essential. The organization adapted its programming to the challenges of the pandemic, prioritizing the scale-up of digital and community-based solutions. Notably, one of these was reorienting the management of child wasting from facilities to the community level, representing a shift that enabled nearly 5 million children with severe wasting to receive treatment and care, which was more than in 2019. UNICEF ramped up interventions and campaigns on community-based mental health and psychosocial support, reaching more than 78 million children and caregivers, and expanded the Learning Passport initiative for remote learning. As part of the COVID-19 response, more than 301 million children, including approximately 147 million girls, were supported with remote learning.

7. As the pandemic compounded the impacts of gender inequality, UNICEF redoubled efforts in addressing gender-based violence; maintaining gender-

¹ United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme, "Futures of 370 million children in jeopardy as school closures deprive them of school meals", press release, 28 April 2020.

responsive health and education services; caring for caregivers, especially through quality maternal care; and strengthening gender data and analysis.²

8. Alongside the pandemic response and in the face of extraordinary logistical challenges as well as market constraints and increased difficulties with humanitarian access, UNICEF responded to new and ongoing humanitarian crises. These included crises in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, the Niger, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen and countries affected by the protracted crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.³ Overall, in 2020 UNICEF responded to 455 new and ongoing humanitarian situations in 152 countries, including 102 natural disasters, 72 sociopolitical crises, 211 health emergencies, 38 nutrition crises and 32 other situations.

9. The year also witnessed an upsurge in social justice movements around the world, as millions stood up against pervasive and deeply rooted injustices, including racism and the long-lasting impact of colonialism, and were sensitized to the role of intersectionality in working together for change. While the combination of the pandemic, the climate crisis and social unrest made it a uniquely difficult year for children and young people, they were centrally involved in mobilizing themselves and others to create change, including through platforms such as U-Report and Voices of Youth and the Generation Unlimited partnership. As it did in 2020, UNICEF will always stand with children and young people to amplify their voices as they demand a world better than the one they are set to inherit.

10. In a record-breaking year for its income, UNICEF saw increases in both public and private sector funding. This was primarily earmarked funding for programmes related to the COVID-19 response. However, the ratio of UNICEF regular resources to other resources continued to decline, even as the situation surrounding the pandemic demonstrated just how critical flexible resources are for mounting an efficient, swift and agile response to sudden-onset emergencies and for supporting the long-term resilience of countries and communities.

11. Throughout 2020 and despite the pandemic, the most important findings of the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018-2021 continued to be highly pertinent. The strong performance of UNICEF in mobilizing resources and delivering results is exemplary and a critical bulwark against development losses due to crises, including sudden ones like the COVID-19 pandemic and protracted ones like the climate crisis. However, outcome and impact-level changes continue to be less pronounced as social, political and economic factors stymie the development breakthroughs and acceleration of progress that are necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. This pattern has been apparent for some time now across multiple strategic plans. If truly transformational change is to be possible by 2030, it is clear that there is a need for more concerted global action and partnerships, and for an approach to planning and strategy that is more adaptive and outcome-focused and falls within a longer-term vision.

II. Performance under the goal areas and cross-cutting priorities of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

12. Three years into the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has achieved or has come close to meeting milestones for 22 out of the 25

² See the 2020 annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018-2021 for more information on this and all UNICEF gender results for the year.

³ See the 2020 annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action for more information on this and all UNICEF humanitarian action results for the year.

result areas, despite the pandemic. Around 72 per cent of Strategic Plan output milestones have been met or nearly met, while 13 per cent are somewhat off track and 14 per cent are significantly off track. At the outcome level, a little more than one third of outcome indicators have already been achieved or are on track to meeting the 2021 targets. But progress on most remains slow, mirroring the challenges in accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Most outcome-level and impact-level data analysed for this report precede the pandemic, in contrast to output-level data, which are more current.

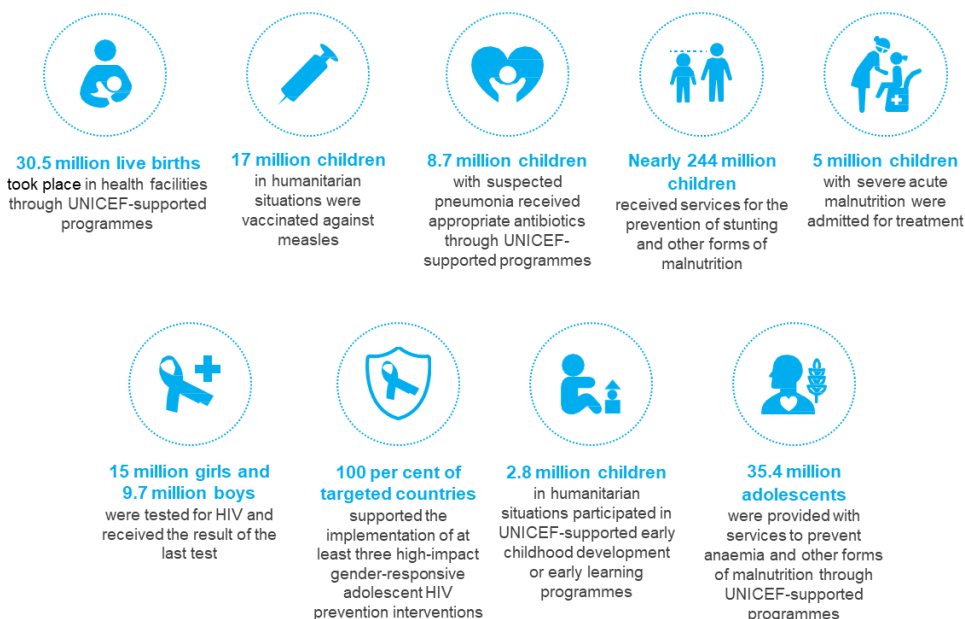
A. Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives

13. At the outcome level, by the end of 2020 indicators for the institutional delivery and access to antibiotics for the treatment of pneumonia had already achieved or were on track to meeting the 2021 target set in the Strategic Plan. However, to reach their respective targets set for 2021, acceleration is required in the areas of immunization of children, access to maternal and child antiretroviral therapy for pregnant women and children living with HIV, optimal feeding practices and early stimulation and responsive care.

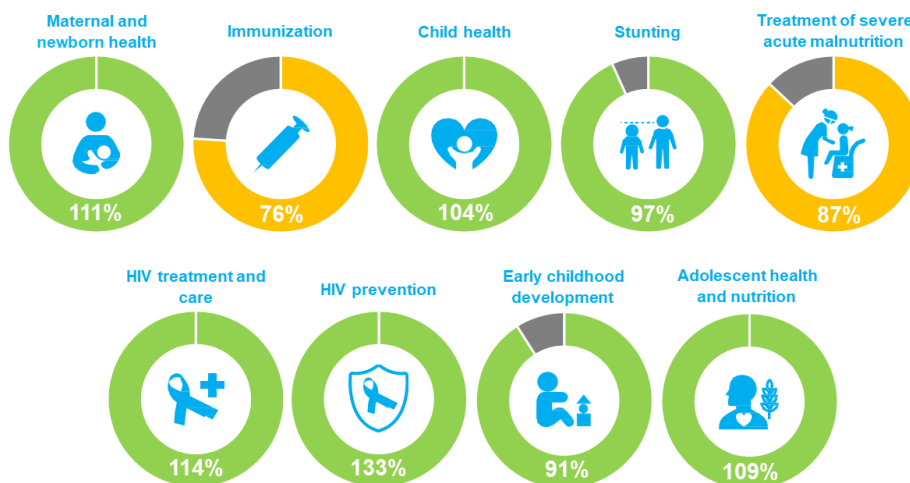
14. The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted essential health and nutrition services in 2020, exacerbating pre-existing coverage gaps and inequalities and threatening to reverse decades of improvement in health outcomes. By the end of October 2020, around one third of countries faced declines of 10 per cent or more in the service coverage for routine immunization, outpatient care for childhood infectious diseases, including HIV, and services related to maternal health and PMTCT, compared with the same time in 2019. In some countries, routine immunization delivery dropped by up to 50 per cent, putting children at risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases, including measles. More than 100 countries reported disruptions to essential nutrition services.

15. UNICEF supported the continuity of life-saving maternal, newborn, child and adolescent services, including those for health, nutrition and early childhood development (ECD). The organization adapted its programme delivery to respond to the impacts of the crisis, focusing on community-based and digital solutions, and it seized opportunities to make primary health-care systems more resilient.

Sample Goal Area results



16. At the output level, progress rates were higher than 90 per cent for 7 of the 9 result areas under Goal Area 1. Progress was slowest in the immunization result area, specifically in relation to output milestones related to the introduction of vaccines in national immunization schedules. This was largely due to financial constraints and competing priorities in national immunization programmes. Many vaccine introductions were put on hold in 2020 due to the pandemic. This will remain a challenge in 2021 as the introduction of vaccines against COVID-19 is prioritized. In the result area on the treatment of severe acute malnutrition, progress did not meet planned milestones, particularly under the output on integrating severe acute malnutrition care within an essential package of regular health and nutrition services for children. Nevertheless, programme adaptations and innovations made it possible for even more children with severe wasting to receive life-saving treatment and care, compared with 2019.



Progress rate by result area
● ≥ 90% ● = 60 - 89% ● ≤ 59%

17. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and slower progress towards results at the outcome level, UNICEF saw numerous achievements. In 2020, 30.5 million live births took place in health facilities through UNICEF-supported programmes. Seven more countries implemented plans to strengthen the quality of newborn and maternal primary health care, bringing the total to 38 and surpassing the target set in the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021. The number of district hospitals with sick newborn care units, which are critical for newborns' survival, health, growth and development, reached 5,639 since 2017 as a result of progress made and an increase in the number of countries reporting on this figure. UNICEF supported interventions to promote WASH in 4,725 health-care facilities in 52 focus countries of the Every Newborn Action Plan, enhancing infection prevention and the quality of care during childbirth.

18. Nigeria was certified as wild poliovirus-free in August 2020, affording Africa the same status. However, pandemic-related disruptions in vaccination campaigns contributed to an upsurge of cases of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus, paralysing more than 1,000 children in Africa and parts of Asia. Within the Global Polio Eradication Initiative partnership, UNICEF continued to lead in vaccine procurement and key strategic communication. While no additional country eliminated maternal and newborn tetanus in 2020, six countries managed to conduct supplementary immunization activities with higher than 80 per cent coverage, vaccinating more than 8 million women of reproductive age with vaccines against tetanus and diphtheria. In 63 countries reporting humanitarian situations, a total of 17 million children were vaccinated against measles. The number of girls in target countries who received the final dose of vaccine against the human papillomavirus (HPV) increased significantly to 2.9 million, with large increases reported in Ethiopia and the United Republic of Tanzania. The number of countries that introduced the vaccine against HPV in their immunization schedule doubled from 8 to 16. Progress was reported in the introduction of the vaccine against meningitis in two countries.

19. In 25 countries with high pneumonia prevalence, 8.7 million children with suspected pneumonia received appropriate antibiotics through UNICEF-supported programmes. UNICEF supported the distribution of insecticide-treated nets to 2.5 million people in humanitarian situations, with most distribution taking place in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan. In 18 countries, UNICEF supported the skills enhancement of 36,816 community health workers, including 15,275 women and 20,854 men, in integrated community case management.

20. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical role of primary health care in achieving universal health care. As noted in the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF is committed to leveraging global and domestic resources to secure investments in primary health care and ensure resilience in the face of ongoing and future emergencies. A new operational framework for primary health care, which was launched in 2020, proposes 14 levers to translate the global commitments made in the Declaration of Astana into country-level actions. UNICEF support to this agenda is resulting in an increased institutionalization of the community health workforce and progress in the quality of care. In 2020, it contributed to national health sector supply chain strategies or plans implemented in seven more countries.

21. Significant progress has been made in preventing new HIV infections in children. Globally, 85 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV received antiretroviral treatment for their own health and for PMTCT of HIV, 95 per cent in Eastern and Southern Africa. However, this progress has stalled and treatment coverage of children with HIV lags behind that of pregnant women. In 2019, only 54 per cent of children who required it received antiretroviral treatment. Even before

COVID-19, the world was off track to achieving the 2020 global target of less than 20,000 new infections in children and less than 100,000 in adolescent girls and young women. There were only modest annual declines in the number of new HIV infections among adolescent girls, decreasing from 0.79 per 1,000 uninfected girls in 2018 to 0.64 in 2020. With the introduction of virtual medical visits as well as community-based service delivery and multi-month prescriptions, the sharp declines in antenatal care attendance and access to services for PMTCT, HIV testing and treatment that had taken place during the pandemic in countries reporting performance data in the second quarter of 2020, bounced back to pre-COVID-19 levels. The impact of the pandemic on HIV prevention in adolescents and young women still has to be determined, given the reported increase in gender-based violence, disruptions in education and adolescent pregnancies in some countries.

22. The COVID-19 pandemic risks unravelling years of steady progress in improving nutrition, while exacerbating inequalities. In 2020, UNICEF supported 118 countries in adapting and continuing maternal and child nutrition programmes: 71 received support to integrate nutrition counselling in pregnancy care; 58 scaled up programmes to improve the diversity of children's diets in early life; 58 implemented comprehensive national strategies to prevent stunting; and 21 implemented policy actions for the prevention of overweight and obesity in children. UNICEF reached nearly 244 million children⁴ with services for the prevention of stunting and other forms of malnutrition (a 23 per cent drop from 2019), while 35.4 million adolescents benefitted from services and support for the prevention of anaemia and other forms of malnutrition. Globally, four million children in humanitarian settings were treated for severe acute malnutrition. This included 227,480 children who were treated in Yemen (86 per cent of that country's target) out of 3,072,407 children under the age of five years who were screened.

23. COVID-19 catalysed a radical shift in the approach to managing the prevention, early detection and treatment of child wasting at the community level. In 2020, 70 countries implemented adaptation measures to ensure the continuity of services, including the use of mid-upper arm circumference tapes by caregivers in 32 countries for the early detection of wasting. As a result, nearly 5 million children in more than 70 countries were reached with life-saving treatment and care for severe wasting (more than in 2019), and more than 88 per cent recovered fully, exceeding global standards of care.

24. The UNICEF and World Food Programme (WFP) Partnership Framework on Child Wasting was finalized in 2020, with UNICEF set to lead the roll-out of the Global Action Plan on Child Wasting. In 2020, UNICEF and WFP also worked together in Chad, Mali and the Niger to improve school health and nutrition, support shock-responsive social protection systems and develop resilience-building packages. The two organizations also strengthened access to basic social services by more than 2 million people, including 1.6 million children, in Mali, Mauritania and the Niger through systems strengthening interventions at the national, subnational and community levels.

25. Despite the pandemic, enabling environments for promoting multisectoral ECD interventions at scale were strengthened in 2020. As a result, 117 countries have Government-owned multisectoral ECD programmes. UNICEF supported the participation of nearly 2.8 million children under the age of 5 years (64 per cent of the target) in ECD and early learning programmes in humanitarian contexts in 74 countries, including through remote modalities such as television and online programmes.

⁴ Preliminary data.

26. In 2020, global programme expenses in Goal Area 1 across 156 countries totalled \$2.18 billion, including \$1.14 billion for humanitarian action in 131 countries.

B. Goal Area 2: Every child learns

27. At the outcome level in Goal Area 2, indicators related to access to education and education equity surpassed or were on track to meet the 2021 target. Acceleration is needed in the areas of improving learning outcomes and the share of adolescents not in employment, education or training. Performance at the output level has been generally positive across all result areas.

28. When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down schools across the globe, the world was already facing a global learning crisis. An estimated 23.8 million children are projected to drop out of school as a result of the pandemic,⁵ with girls at a higher risk. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities, highlighting in particular the digital divide. More than half of the world's children and young people lack digital connectivity. Around 463 million children whose schools closed had no remote learning opportunities. And of this group, more than three quarters were from the poorest 40 per cent of households.⁶ Girls⁷ and children with disabilities have been less likely to access remote learning.⁸

29. UNICEF found innovative ways to ensure that learning continued and to address exclusion and inequality. Significant efforts were channelled into adopting and adapting technology to provide distance learning; safely and inclusively reopening schools through the coordination with the health, WASH and child protection sectors; strengthening the resilience of education systems; and protecting education financing.

Sample Goal Area results



48 million out-of-school children participated in early learning, primary or secondary education



More than 43 million children were provided with individual education/early learning materials



More than 7.7 million children participated in skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability

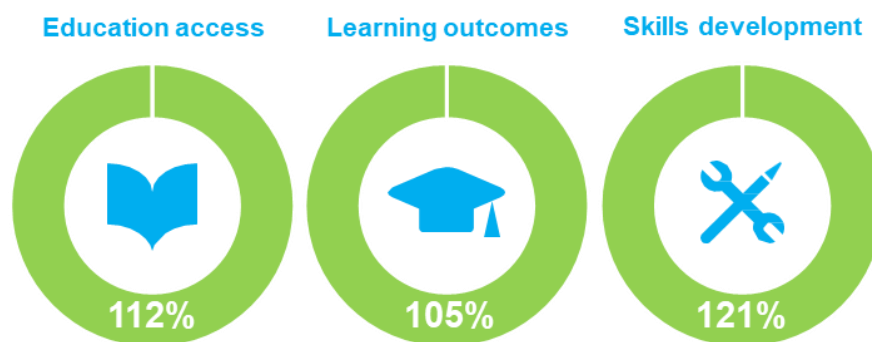
⁵ United Nations, Policy brief: education during COVID-19 and beyond (New York, 2020). Available from <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-education-during-covid-19-and-beyond>.

⁶ UNICEF, COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures? A global analysis of the potential reach of remote learning policies using data from 100 countries (New York, 2020).

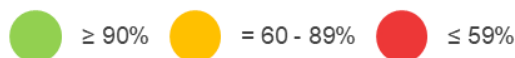
⁷ Malala Fund, Girls' education and COVID-19: What past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impact of pandemics (United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2020).

⁸ UNICEF, Child disability and COVID-19, web page, April 2020. See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-disability/covid-19/>.

30. At the output level, progress rates for all three result areas under Goal Area 2 were at over 90 per cent. The progress rate in result area 2 was slowest for the output milestone related to effective education systems for learning outcomes.



Progress rate by result area



31. In 2020, as a result of UNICEF support, 48.0 million out-of-school children, 49 per cent of them girls, accessed education, including 4 million children on the move and 33 million in humanitarian settings. Learning materials were provided to 43 million children, 52 per cent of them in humanitarian settings; 59,223 school management committees or similar bodies received training; and 7.7 million children, 48 per cent of them girls and 79 per cent in humanitarian settings, benefited from skills development programmes.

32. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education of Ethiopia in developing life-skills materials and providing 24,623 adolescent girls with life-skills training. UNICEF is in the process of advising the Ministry on integrating life skills into the general education curriculum. In Bangladesh, UNICEF supported 4,000 early learning centres offering mother tongue-based instruction, including for Rohingya children in refugee camps.

33. Out of the 47.7 million children targeted in the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal in 2020, 33 million were reached, 49 per cent of them girls. In addition to responding to the pandemic, UNICEF continued to negotiate with parties to conflicts and armed groups to protect education from attacks and to encourage the endorsement and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

34. In 2020, global programme expenses in Goal Area 2 across 151 countries totalled \$1.17 billion, including \$0.70 billion for humanitarian action in 140 countries.

C. Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

35. At the outcome level, the 2021 target was surpassed for indicators related to the provision of health, social work and justice/law enforcement services to children who experienced violence, and for the provision of interventions to improve children's access to justice. Progress was slower in changing the percentage of adults who think that physical punishment is necessary to raise children, and in strengthening diversion and alternatives to detention for children in contact with the law. Overall, progress at the output level was more positive. This is an area of work where continued strong

output-level performance is not translating into outcome-level change at a rate commensurate with global aspirations.

36. Despite progress made over the past two decades, significant acceleration is required to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to child protection. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified this challenge and threatens to roll back progress. The pandemic has strained weak and fragile social service, protection and justice systems; multiplied underlying protection and gender-related risks; and deepened existing inequalities. At the same time, the crisis provided opportunities to elevate child protection issues, including such “hidden” issues as mental health, violence in the home and children without family care, and to recognize the social service workforce as “essential”.

37. Throughout 2020, UNICEF sought to maintain the continuity of its programmes and operations while pivoting to proactively address the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and support national mitigation planning. The organization played a leading role in expanding and establishing partnerships and networks to maintain a continuum of prevention and response services and to ensure national coordination. With its partners, it reached an unprecedented number of children, young people and families, using innovative and digital approaches.

Sample Goal Area results



47.2 million children, adolescents and caregivers in humanitarian situations were provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support

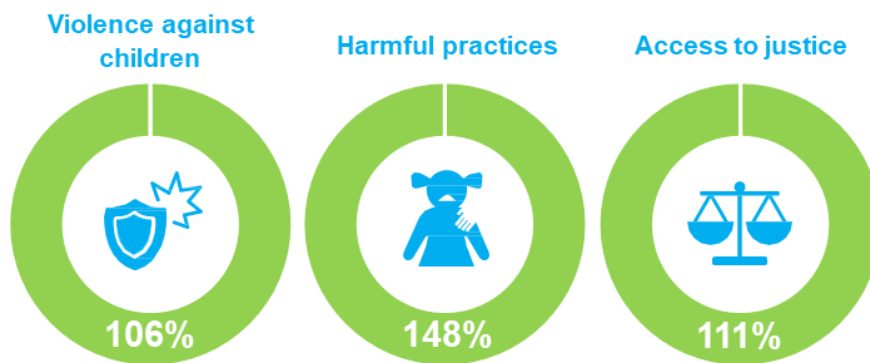


6 million adolescent girls received prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes

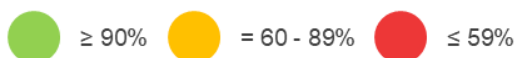


21.2 million children in 57 countries had their births registered through UNICEF-supported programmes

38. At the output level, progress rates exceeded 90 per cent for all three result areas under Goal Area 3. Progress was slowest in relation to output milestones related to the certification of justice and legal professionals dealing with child-related cases, and to quality assurance systems for social service work. Building the latter is a long-term endeavour and presents challenges, including limited fiscal space in many contexts and, in humanitarian contexts, constraints in the availability of social service workers and their access to clients.



Progress rate by result area



39. In 2020, UNICEF reached 47.2 million children, adolescents, parents and caregivers with community-based mental health and psychosocial support, including through targeted community awareness campaigns. Taken together with efforts made in mental health-related community messaging, awareness-raising and capacity building of the social service workforce during the pandemic, UNICEF-supported interventions that were related to community-based mental health and psychosocial support reached more than 78 million children, adolescents, parents and caregivers in 117 countries with COVID-19 response plans. In Egypt, the increasingly available child helplines reached more than 20,000 child victims of violence and children on the move with mental health and psychosocial support.

40. Around 17.8 million people in 84 countries benefitted from interventions related to gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response, while more than 210,000 UNICEF personnel and partners completed trainings on gender-based violence risk mitigation and referrals for survivors in 83 countries with COVID-19 response plans. The pandemic accelerated efforts to increase protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Indeed, 91 countries now have safe and accessible reporting channels, country action plans, training for partners and strengthened referral pathways.

41. Across 126 countries, UNICEF reached close to 4.2 million children who had experienced violence to provide them with health, social work and justice services. Of those, 24,227 were children with disabilities across 55 countries, which represents 51 per cent more children with disabilities reached with these services than in 2019. UNICEF-supported parenting programmes reached more than 2.6 million caregivers across 87 countries, a 14 per cent increase compared with 2019. UNICEF supported the Parenting for Lifelong Health partnership to share evidence-based parenting resources, reaching 134 million families globally between March and November 2020, with at least 57.9 million people reached through a UNICEF-supported digital engagement initiative. Meanwhile, more than 711,000 children without parental or family care were provided with appropriate alternative care arrangements in 87 countries with COVID-19 response plans.

42. While the pandemic significantly impacted the implementation of community-based interventions, which is a critical approach to addressing female genital mutilation (FGM), the number of people participating in education, communication and social mobilization platforms that promoted the elimination of FGM increased from 8.5 million in 2019 to 16 million in 2020. Joint programming with the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) resulted in 6 million adolescent girls (compared with 5.7 million in 2019) across 45 countries being reached with child marriage prevention and care interventions. This included almost 10,000 adolescent girls with disabilities, based on data from 13 countries.

43. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly one third of countries (42 out of 148) showed a decrease of 10 per cent or more in the access to, availability and/or use of civil registration services. UNICEF continued to support 74 countries in improving birth registration, civil registration and vital statistics; 48 of these used “twinning” between the civil registration and other sectoral systems, such as the health system, to facilitate birth registration. UNICEF continued to leverage its leadership role within the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda to accelerate birth registration.

44. With 34 per cent more countries reporting on access to child-friendly justice, the number of children in contact with the law who received such services increased from 277,000 in 65 countries in 2019 to 413,000 in 87 countries in 2020. UNICEF provided protective services to millions of children affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and public health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, in 145 countries, compared with 74 in 2019.

45. In 2020, global programme expenses in Goal Area 3 across 154 countries totalled \$712 million, including \$393 million for humanitarian action in 145 countries.

D. Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

46. At the outcome level, the 2021 target for child-inclusive programmes that foster climate resilience and low carbon development was met. Significant acceleration is still needed for other outcome indicators, including to ensure access to basic sanitation services.

47. In 2020, UNICEF met or exceeded most output targets within Goal Area 4, while contributing to the global COVID-19 response effort. The WASH area quickly became a critical component of the UNICEF pandemic response, particularly through handwashing campaigns and efforts to ensure equitable, affordable access to WASH services and supplies, including in health-care facilities and schools and especially in high-risk areas.

Sample Goal Area results



17 million
additional people
gained access to safe
drinking water
services through
UNICEF-supported
programmes



13.4 million
additional people
gained access to
basic sanitation
services through
UNICEF-supported
programmes



56 countries
had child-sensitive
national or local risk
management plans which
address risks related to
disasters, climate change,
conflict, public health
emergencies or other
crises

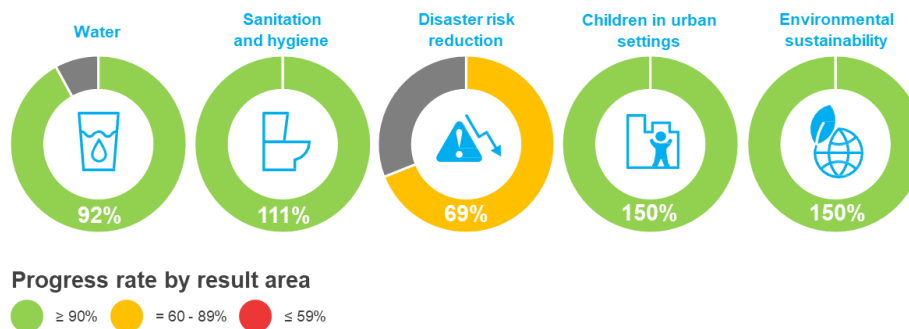


71 countries
had data on intra-urban
disparities, including on
girls and boys in informal
settings



74 countries
implemented child-
inclusive programmes
that foster climate
resilience and low
carbon development

48. At the output level, progress rates were over 90 per cent in 4 out of 5 result areas under Goal Area 4. Progress was slowest in reaching the output milestone related to child-sensitive national or local risk management plans in the disaster risk reduction result area, due to a lack of dedicated investment of resources and the prioritization of the COVID-19 response in many countries. Progress was also slow in reaching the output milestone related to access to sanitation facilities in humanitarian situations, due to the reprioritization of hygiene and water for the COVID-19 response, compounded by challenges related to movement restrictions during the pandemic.



49. UNICEF quickly ramped up operations, reaching 106 million people in 120 countries with ongoing WASH programming as well as special interventions, such as the distribution of hygiene kits and soap, including through more than \$7.8 million in in-kind donations from private sector partners. A total of 17 million people gained access to safe water services through direct support, keeping UNICEF on track to exceed the four-year goal of reaching 60 million people. An additional 30.2 million people were provided with short-term emergency water services, such as water trucking, while others were reached through UNICEF advocacy efforts to waive tariffs and support utilities during the pandemic. In humanitarian settings, 39.1 million people accessed safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, including 4.5 million people in Yemen, where more than 1.7 million also received a standard hygiene kit from UNICEF.

50. Since 2017, UNICEF has provided 12,309 health-care facilities with WASH services, far exceeding the target. In 2020, 15.3 million children in schools and temporary learning spaces were reached with handwashing support and other emergency interventions. UNICEF supported community-based handwashing promotion programmes in 110 countries, which is more than ever before, with a strong focus on messaging related to COVID-19. Through the “pandemic doesn’t stop for periods” campaign, UNICEF helped girls and women to get access to menstrual pads and culturally adapted and age-specific information, and the organization is still on-track to providing menstrual hygiene services to 50,000 schools by the end of 2021. Almost 1.2 million girls and women in humanitarian settings (up from 1 million in 2019) received menstrual health and hygiene services in schools, temporary learning spaces and other child-friendly spaces. Menstruation supplies were included as a mandatory item in hygiene kits delivered to communities in crisis. UNICEF helped 13.4 million people to gain access to basic sanitation services in 2020 and reached an additional 5.6 million people with shorter-term sanitation services through emergency response programmes.

51. UNICEF met the challenge of COVID-19 by accelerating its climate programming and emphasizing the importance of climate-resilient health, WASH and educational services for a “green” and resilient recovery. In total, 46 countries planned, designed and implemented climate-resilient WASH solutions through UNICEF-supported programmes, reaching more than 6 million people. UNICEF

incorporated climate action within new programme guidance and strategies, including in the areas of nutrition and health, and in the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. Since the beginning of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 period, 65 country offices have engaged in climate and environmental policy support, including 37 additional countries supported in 2020. UNICEF applied environmental and social safeguards to 26 projects, including in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The organization also aligned itself with the United Nations system-wide 2030 carbon reduction target for operations, aiming for a 45 per cent reduction from 2016 levels.

52. In 2020, 41 per cent of UNICEF country offices met organizational benchmarks for implementing risk-informed programming; an even greater percentage of countries conducted child-sensitive risk analyses and operationalized findings. In addition, 55 per cent of country offices implemented programmes to build peace and social cohesion, including by leveraging the role of UNICEF in education, adolescent and youth participation and WASH. Thirty per cent of all country offices reached the benchmark of informing these programmes using robust and timely conflict analyses. UNICEF significantly expanded its support to peacebuilding efforts globally, including through its collaboration with the Peacebuilding Fund of the Secretary-General, implementing 51 projects, up from 44 in 2019.

53. In 2020, global programme expenses in Goal Area 4 across 143 countries totalled \$1.12 billion, including \$0.76 billion for humanitarian action in 120 countries.

E. Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

54. At the outcome level, the 2021 targets related to children reached by cash transfer programmes and the civic engagement of adolescents were already exceeded. Progress was mixed across other outcome indicators despite a high performance at the output level.

55. The COVID-19 pandemic and the socioeconomic crisis it fuelled have increased monetary and multidimensional child poverty and exacerbated the vulnerabilities of children living in poverty, girls, children with disabilities and those belonging to other marginalized groups. The social protection response of UNICEF enabled a more inclusive recovery and created a unique entry point to strengthen social protection financing and partnerships. The organization also worked with partners to make visible the consequences of economic and fiscal policies on children and to make the investment case for protecting social spending.

Sample Goal Area results



100 countries
had nationally owned measurement and reporting on child poverty



More than 130 million children
and young people were reached by UNICEF-supported cash-transfer programmes



7.2 million adolescents
participated in or led civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF-supported programmes

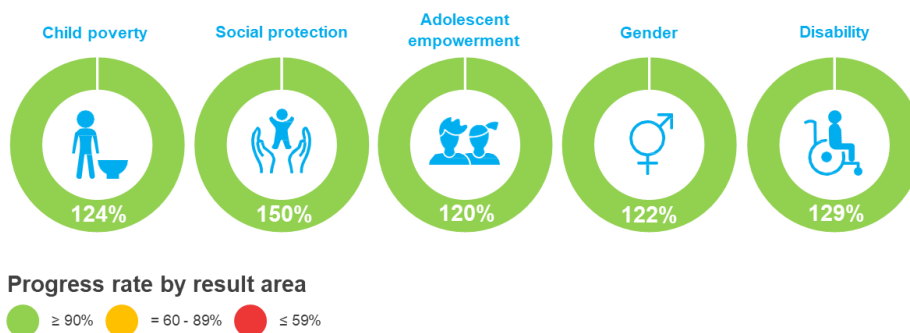


6 million adolescent girls
received prevention and care interventions through UNICEF programming on child marriage, including through life skills initiatives



2.2 million children
with disabilities were reached with programmes and services

56. At the output level, progress rates were at over 90 per cent for all five result areas under Goal Area 5. UNICEF met or came close to meeting all output milestones in this Goal Area.



57. In 2020, UNICEF swiftly responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by engaging in 70 socioeconomic impact assessments and 62 country-level child poverty-focused analyses on the disproportionate impact of the crisis on children. Child poverty estimates, which were updated jointly with the World Bank, signalled the need for concerted Government action to protect children and their families. Countries continued to monitor child poverty, with 66 countries reporting on multidimensional poverty and 79 on monetary poverty, using nationally owned measurement and reporting systems; 31 countries reported that measurement, analysis or advocacy led to policies and programmes that reduced child poverty.

58. UNICEF-supported cash transfer programmes reached more than 130 million children in 93 countries. Furthermore, 61 countries, almost twice the 2017 baseline number, had strong or moderately strong social protection systems. UNICEF continued to strengthen shock-responsive social protection systems in 16 countries. The number of countries promoting gender-sensitive or gender-responsive programmes or systems more than tripled compared with 2019, reaching 88, demonstrating growing attention to the needs of women and girls and the need to transform harmful gender norms and other gender outcomes.

59. In 2020, 7.2 million adolescents (53 per cent girls based on data from 99 countries) across 122 countries participated in or led civic engagement interventions through UNICEF-supported programmes in humanitarian and development settings, exceeding the 2021 target of 5.2 million. While measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic constrained in-person engagement, online platforms for adolescents increased and provided new opportunities. In collaboration with more than 200 partners representing Governments, United Nations agencies, the private sector and youth, Generation Unlimited reached more than 100 million young people aged 10 to 24 years in more than 40 countries in 2020 and accelerated the scale-up of digital platforms for learning, skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and empowerment to change the trajectories of young people's lives in the wake of the pandemic. In addition, 39 countries supported the development of a total of 66 adolescent-friendly policies, surpassing the 2020 milestone of 37 countries.

60. In 2020, UNICEF reached more than 2.2 million children with disabilities across 144 countries through disability-inclusive development and humanitarian programmes. In emergency contexts, 44 per cent of UNICEF country offices systematically included children with disabilities in their response efforts, as evidenced, for example, by the construction of 82 accessible latrines in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. UNICEF worked to address the impact of the pandemic on children with disabilities, who are at risk of being left even further behind. In Rwanda, UNICEF supported individualized home-based learning for 7,282 children with

disabilities. Globally, more than 152,000 children with disabilities were provided with assistive devices and products.

61. In 2020, global programme expenses in Goal Area 5 across 156 countries totalled \$533 million, including \$255 million for humanitarian action in 112 countries.

III. Strengthening organizational performance

A. United Nations reform

62. As the COVID-19 pandemic made working together a matter of unprecedented urgency, UNICEF continued to actively support the reform of the United Nations development system. As part of the system-wide pandemic response, the organization co-led with WFP the development of the social protection and social services pillar of the United Nations framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19. UNICEF also contributed to all other pillars but one. UNICEF is taking forward the three outstanding elements of the United Nations development system repositioning package: operationalizing a new regional architecture through engagement in the new regional collaborative platforms and helping to shape new issue-based coalitions; contributing to a strengthened system approach in multi-country offices; and bolstering system-wide evaluations.

63. To strengthen system-wide support to the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF continued to work with other United Nations entities, including the Development Coordination Office, the United Nations Development Programme, UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to improve common country assessments, use the new United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCF) as the central planning tool for United Nations country teams and strengthen alignment between the UNSDCFs and agencies' country programme documents (CPDs). UNICEF has ensured that all its new CPDs are fully aligned with the new UNSDCFs.

64. In 2020, UNICEF continued its support to the new generation of resident coordinators and coordination offices as well as the implementation of the country-level chapter of the Management and Accountability Framework. In accordance with the agreed funding arrangements for the resident coordinator system, UNICEF transferred \$6.3 million in 2020 levy payments to the United Nations Secretariat.

65. UNICEF continued to play a leading role in the roll-out of operational aspects of the United Nations reform, co-chairing the Business Innovations Group task team on common premises and co-chairing the task team on efficiency impact reporting. Internally, UNICEF has developed and disseminated guidance on common back office and mutual recognition.

66. An assessment of UNICEF performance against the targets established in its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 for United Nations coherence shows enhanced progress in areas measuring the performance of UNICEF-led cluster coordination and efficiency gains through common business operations within the framework of the Business Operations Strategy. Inter-agency pooled funds as a proportion of total UNICEF non-core resources have increased for development interventions, yet for humanitarian interventions the proportion is lower than expected.

67. UNICEF welcomes the December 2020 adoption of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) and is fully committed to implementing all mandates and reflecting them, as relevant, in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. UNICEF is

encouraged by the review's language on children and youth participation and the strong new mandate on education. The new QCPR will rally the strategic plans of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes around the Sustainable Development Goals and includes critical provisions on gender, disability inclusion, the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, environmental protection, climate change and human rights. These are all key areas for advancing progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Strategies

68. Social and behaviour change and community engagement, which are critical strategies for UNICEF, were central to the COVID-19 response. UNICEF played a leadership role, co-creating the RCCE collective service with WHO and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and supporting the establishment of national RCCE plans in 148 countries as well as the provision of community-sourced data. The critical importance of the UNICEF communication for development footprint and substantive investments in RCCE demonstrate the need to strengthen the comparative advantage of UNICEF in social and behaviour change programming.

69. Communication and advocacy became even more critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, with digital channels being widely used for delivering programme results and advocacy playing a key role in making the case for a response and recovery effort that prioritizes children's rights. In 2020, UNICEF introduced a global COVID-19 Advocacy Framework, which is backed by 172 Member States. UNICEF launched a call to "reimagine" the world for children and focused on vaccines, education, mental health and water and climate as global advocacy priorities. The number of UNICEF volunteers in programme countries saw unprecedented growth, increasing from 1.3 million in 2019 to 9.6 million in 2020, 84 per cent of whom were 24 years of age or younger.

70. South-South cooperation supported country-to-country learning on the pandemic response, with a focus on primary health care and essential health services and on reimagining education. UNICEF convened more than 1,000 practitioners from all regions, including Governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutes and academia and the private sector to distil lessons from countries registering early success.

71. In 2020, the business sector was fully galvanized to join the UNICEF mission, providing income, influence, expertise and innovation. UNICEF demonstrated significant growth in private sector partnerships: 108 countries reported working with 4,337 businesses, reaching an estimated 133 million children (compared with 34.3 million in 2019) and contributing to results in all UNICEF programme areas.⁹ The pandemic shed a spotlight on parents and caregivers as frontline responders. UNICEF strengthened enabling environments by promoting family-friendly policies, including on parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare and child benefits, in 46 countries. Six of these countries established or amended policies, laws or regulations to address two or more family-friendly policies.

72. In 2020, UNICEF procured \$4.468 billion in supplies and services from more than 10,844 businesses in 173 countries, achieving savings of \$173 million (\$103 million above the 2020 savings target of \$70 million) through strategic procurement approaches. As global demand for such critical pandemic response supplies as PPE, diagnostic tests and oxygen therapy equipment escalated and prices

⁹ This is a provisional figure based on the partial data available as the present report was finalized. The final figure is expected in April 2021.

soared, UNICEF worked with suppliers to support countries with limited buying power, obtaining PPE at appropriate prices and acceptable quality and leading a joint tender on behalf of 13 agencies, including United Nations and development agencies, to consolidate demand and stabilize the market.

73. As one of the lead procurers on behalf of the COVID-19 Supply Chain System Purchasing Consortia, UNICEF led the engagement with COVID-19 diagnostics manufacturers. Towards the end of 2020, UNICEF led a tender for COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of the COVAX Facility and held several industry consultations to prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out. In preparation for vaccine deliveries, UNICEF secured support from the airline, transport and logistics industries through collaboration with the World Economic Forum and the International Air Transport Association.

74. UNICEF launched its first Global Innovation Strategy in 2020, introducing a portfolio management approach to continue its shift towards strategic, problem-driven innovation, focusing on solutions that address priority issues and can be scaled to accelerate results for children, contributing to transformative change. Nine new frontier technology solutions were deployed in 14 countries, supported by the Venture Fund, and included the use of artificial intelligence for real-time insights to inform policies and chatbots to provide information in 100 languages for the COVID-19 response.

75. The scale-up of impactful innovations was accelerated in the pandemic context. For example, 19 million PPE units were purchased through the Fast Fund for UNICEF guaranty facility established by the United States Fund for UNICEF; and more than 1.3 million young people in 34 countries have gained transferable social innovation and entrepreneurship skills via the UPSHIFT programme. The GIGA initiative to accelerate access to connectivity by all schools worldwide reached 15 countries, mapping 800,000 schools to date. Digital solutions helped to accelerate UNICEF programmes across all sectors, including through scaling up health-related real-time information technology in 70 countries, the Learning Passport's cloud-based portal for digital education material, the Primero information management system in 43 countries and solutions to implement social protection mechanisms.

76. COVID-19 was as much a challenge for data, research and evaluation as it was for programme delivery. Even as demand for data providing insight into the impacts on children surged, the pandemic disrupted or shut down face-to-face survey and administrative data systems, which were the most robust and productive means of data collection. UNICEF pivoted to the judicious use of less robust means, including phone surveys, machine-learning analysis of social media streams and key informant interviews, applying rigorous analysis to judge their usability, recognizing that different uses of data require different levels of precision.

77. The research function turned to much more rapid analysis, looking for potential lessons from past experiences like the Ebola epidemic and for trends and patterns in the current situation, and it performed meta-analyses of the many research products produced around the world. The evaluation function used a wider variety of data sources and real-time evaluations of the COVID-19 response to keep UNICEF as effective as possible. Data sources and products were rapidly turned into actionable insights through short reports, digests, interactive dashboards and an electronic library of research on COVID-19 and children. In 2021, UNICEF is examining the data function based on lessons learned from 2020 to stay at the cutting edge of data production and use.

C. Management performance

78. In 2020, UNICEF remained actively engaged in key inter-agency coordination mechanisms, shaping the roll-out of the United Nations development system reform. In particular, UNICEF co-led the work of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Business Innovations Group, spearheading the development of system-wide guidance for reporting on efficiencies. UNICEF also contributed to the important work of the High-Level Committee on Management, including on the future of work in the United Nations system. UNICEF co-leads the workstream on new ways of working, which has prepared a model United Nations policy on flexible work arrangements and a set of senior leadership commitments to operationalize the 2017 United Nations System Leadership Framework. Other deliverables, including on diversity promotion in the United Nations system, work-life harmony actions and a United Nations wiki-type platform for sharing good practices and actions on organizational culture change, are in development.

79. During the year, UNICEF adapted its ways of working to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its workforce and operations to ensure business continuity, support its staff and enable effective collaboration, particularly with the advent of remote work in many locations. However, not all worked remotely because many UNICEF staff, particularly those in humanitarian contexts, continued working on site in response to local needs. Many of these adaptations reinforced ongoing efforts to make UNICEF systems more agile, efficient and people-centred. The use of online collaboration tools, including virtual meetings and newly introduced digital signatures, increased tenfold. UNICEF invested in monitoring and protecting its digital ecosystem to address a surge in cybersecurity threats.

80. The organization also continued to drive efficiency and business modernization, reduce organizational risk and deliver value for money. Its Global Shared Services Centre delivered against its service-level targets more than 90 percent of the time, as in previous years, while identifying workarounds to cover a range of pandemic-related administrative challenges. Moreover, 80 per cent of offices fully implemented the Business Operations Strategy, against a target of 60 per cent, while 50 per cent of UNICEF offices were in common premises. UNICEF strengthened its capacity to support effective programme delivery, including through the use of mechanisms to address fraud and other fiduciary risks, internal controls and the implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers. UNICEF issued 18 internal audit reports, generating 166 agreed actions to strengthen governance, risk management and controls; four advisory reports; and a joint United Nations audit report.

81. UNICEF continued working to improve its organizational culture in line with its core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability, and responded to the worldwide upsurge in social movements for racial justice by starting to address racism and discrimination within the organization and its work.

82. Working towards a more inclusive organization, UNICEF established an internal task team on anti-racism and discrimination, which submitted draft recommendations for organization-wide input in March 2021. UNICEF contributed to inter-agency thinking related to anti-racism and discrimination, initiating an informal sharing group on anti-racism and discrimination across 15 United Nations entities that works to identify synergies across the United Nations on these issues.

83. UNICEF also rolled out an updated competency framework and a new values charter based on its core values and incorporated them into management and leadership learning programmes. The organization also further innovated by continuing to develop the pulse check on workplace culture to give a more frequent reading of the culture in every office and prompt more timely actions to address

issues. Policies on misconduct and the disciplinary process were further strengthened and a guidance note supported heads of offices to address interpersonal conflicts more promptly and proactively.

84. In 2020, the total staff count was 15,745 individuals, 70 per cent of whom were national staff. UNICEF met the targets of the United Nations System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, achieving full gender parity among international professional staff and senior staff. Programme country nationals made up 55 per cent of international professional staff, compared with 54 per cent in 2019; 42 per cent of these individuals were in the senior leadership cadre, compared with 39 per cent in 2019. This is expected to improve with the implementation of appointments made in 2020. The average time to recruit a candidate was 58 days, compared with 59 in 2019. The standby partnership programme of external experts became the main provider of surge support during the pandemic, with the equivalent of \$14 million in in-kind contributions. A COVID-19 surge protocol provided an additional risk management approach to enable in-country deployments.

85. Important work began in 2020 to further streamline processes in five areas of work that place the heaviest process burden on country offices: country programme planning, partnership management, consulting, services procurement and travel. In addition, the organization started several change initiatives to “reimagine” UNICEF and make it a more nimble and agile organization that can respond more quickly and effectively to the complex challenges that affect children today. These include realigning headquarters and country-office functions to enable more decision-making closer to country programmes, providing technical assistance more effectively and optimizing country office structures and processes. Several recommendations were approved for implementation starting in 2021, aiming to reduce the administrative burden on country offices and free up staff time for improved programme capacity and oversight, while continuing to further streamline and centralize transaction work into the shared services centre.

86. Regarding the targets contained in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 on organizational enablers, UNICEF saw slower progress on two of the five enablers, namely enabler 3 related to people and versatile staff as agents of change and enabler 5 on a stronger, value-based organizational culture. For enabler 1 on internal governance, progress was overall very strong. Clear progress was made on enabler 2 on results-oriented, efficient and effective management, and on enabler 4 on versatile, safe and secure knowledge and information systems, particularly as regards internal and external collaboration through the use of technology, especially relating to external engagement, as the pandemic prompted UNICEF to expand the use of digital solutions in its programmes, finances and operations.

87. Performance continued to be positive overall on enabler 3 regarding people and versatile staff as agents of change, but it was slower in relation to the ambitious 2020 milestones for geographical and gender parity among staff, and for recruitment and deployment in emergency response. With respect to the new enabler 5, which was introduced during the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 in early 2020 and pertains to a stronger, value-based organizational culture, in addition to the work highlighted earlier in this section, progress was made with respect to the implementation of several key initiatives and of the recommendations from the 2019 report of the Independent Task Force Review on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Harassment and Abuse of Authority. The organization exceeded its planned target for one of the key indicators concerning organizational culture, with the employee engagement index reaching 77 per cent in 2020, compared with a 2021 target of above 74 per cent. However, slower progress was made towards the 2020 milestone for substantiation of cases related to inappropriate behaviour and misconduct. In 2021,

the organization will focus on responding to comparatively slower progress on enablers 3 and 5.

IV. Revenue, expenses and resource mobilization¹⁰

88. Despite the global economic downturn and uncertainty created by COVID-19, 2020 was a record-breaking year for UNICEF, with a total revenue of \$7,548 million, representing an increase of 18 per cent from 2019, most of which is attributable to earmarked funding for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

89. Total public sector revenue from Governments, intergovernmental organizations and inter-organizational arrangements, increased by \$911 million, a 19 per cent change compared with 2019. Private sector revenue from National Committees, individual donors, non-governmental organizations and foundations, increased by 13 per cent, to \$1,610 million.

90. Regular resource revenue from the public sector decreased to \$412 million in 2020, down from \$480 million in 2019, while regular resources from the private sector increased to \$773 million, up from \$695 million in 2019. However, the ratio of regular resources to total revenue decreased by 3 percentage points compared with 2019, from 22 to 19 per cent. In 2020, 122 Governments contributed to UNICEF resources. The largest contributors in 2020 were Denmark, Germany, Japan, Norway and the United States of America.

91. Revenue for humanitarian assistance, referred to as other resources (emergency), at \$2,358 million in 2020, was 15 per cent higher than in 2019. The humanitarian funding requirement increased to \$6,315 million in 2020, from \$4,133 million in 2019, representing the largest-ever funding request for humanitarian action by UNICEF. Despite escalating needs, by November 2020, UNICEF had only received about a quarter of the humanitarian donor contributions, namely \$1.69 billion. Thirty-four per cent of the HAC appeal was dedicated to the COVID-19 response.

92. Total humanitarian expense amounted to \$3,244 million, representing 57 per cent of the total expense in 2020. Of this amount, \$3,014 million were other resources. Within the 30 country offices with the largest overall expense, about 62 per cent of country-level expenses were classified as humanitarian. These offices comprised 77 per cent of total country-level expenses, both humanitarian and non-humanitarian, and 26 of them had HAC appeals in 2020.

¹⁰ Financial information is unaudited.

Table 1
Revenue source and type, 2019 and 2020

(Millions of United States dollars)

<i>Source of revenue</i>	<i>2019 actual</i>	<i>2020 actual</i>	<i>2020 plan^a</i>
Regular resources			
Government and intergovernmental agencies ^{b,c}	480	412	526
Private sector ^c	695	773	646
Other revenue^d	206	242	164
Total – regular resources	1 381	1 427	1 337
Other resources (regular)			
Government and intergovernmental agencies	1 824 ^e	2 740	1 614
Private sector	581 ^e	546	651
Inter-organizational arrangements	576	477	620
Subtotal – other resources (regular)	2 981	3 763	2 885
Other resources (emergency)			
Government and intergovernmental agencies	1 585	1 776	1 644
Private sector	144	291	154
Inter-organizational arrangements	321	290	313
Subtotal – other resources (emergency)	2 050	2 358	2 111
Total – other resources	5 031	6 121	4 997
Total revenue	6 412	7 548	6 333

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

^a According to financial estimates provided to the Executive Board in September 2020 (E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.7). The data in this column are presented on a modified cash basis.

^b Gross regular resources from Governments include income taxes paid by UNICEF on behalf of the citizens of Governments that contribute to regular resources.

^c 2019 actual and 2020 include contributions of \$43 million and \$53 million, respectively, for specific management activities.

^d Other revenue includes income from interest, procurement services and other sources.

^e 2019 actual data are restated for re-mapping of UNICEF Hosted Funds.

Table 2
Revenue source, 2019 and 2020

(Millions of United States dollars)

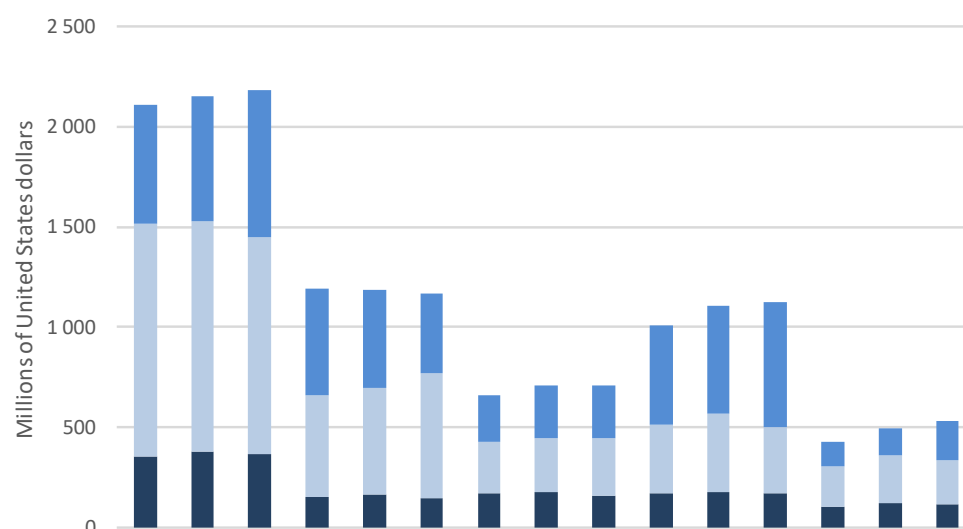
<i>Source of revenue</i>	<i>2019 actual</i>	<i>2020 actual</i>	<i>2020 plan^a</i>
Government and intergovernmental agencies	3 889 ^b	4 929	3 784
Private sector	1 420 ^b	1 610	1 452
Inter-organizational arrangements	897	767	933
Other	206	242	164
Total revenue	6 412	7 548	6 333

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

^a According to financial estimates provided to the Executive Board in September 2020. The data in this column is presented on a modified cash basis.

^b 2019 actual data are restated for re-mapping of UNICEF Hosted Funds.

Figure II
**Direct programme assistance by goal area and resource type, 2018, 2019
and 2020**



		<i>Every child survives and thrives</i>			<i>Every child learns</i>			<i>Every child is protected from violence and exploitation</i>			<i>Every child lives in a safe and clean environment</i>			<i>Every child has an equitable chance in life</i>			<i>Total (rounded)</i>		
		2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020	2018	2019	2020
	Regular resources	353	379	365	150	165	146	172	178	161	171	175	169	103	122	117	949	1 020	958
	Other resources (regular)	1 160	1 149	1 081	509	533	626	255	266	288	341	392	334	201	241	221	2 466	2 581	2 549
	Other resources (emergency)	593	625	736	534	485	395	231	264	263	499	542	620	123	134	195	1 980	2 049	2 208
Total		2 106	2 153	2 181	1 192	1 183	1 167	658	708	712	1 011	1 109	1 122	427	497	533	5 395	5 650	5 715

Note: Due to rounding, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns and rows; data as of 3 March 2021.

93. In 2020, UNICEF made every effort to comply with the cost recovery policy and Executive Board decisions. In total, nine cost-recovery waivers were granted, with a corresponding impact of approximately \$6.7 million.¹¹ Of this total, \$4.3 million related to three waivers with a reduced cost recovery rate for donations of \$222.4 million from the World Bank. Two of these waivers, with the total impact of \$2.8 million, related to the UNICEF programme in support of Yemen, while the third waiver, with a total impact of \$1.5 million, related to the pandemic emergency funding provided to the following countries: Afghanistan, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, the Niger, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Zambia. All waivers granted in 2020 reflect exceptional cases where the funding would otherwise have been at risk or where the absence of funding would have impacted negatively on the ability to perform urgent and life-saving work in humanitarian contexts. In addition, donor requests for preferential rates were

¹¹ See section on cost recovery in the report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 ([UNICEF/2020/EB/5](#)).

considered by UNICEF in close consultation with other United Nations entities working with the same donor.

V. Lessons learned and looking forward

94. As UNICEF responded to unprecedented realities and looked towards an uncertain future, the year 2020 brought new lessons while reinforcing many that had been highlighted in the midterm review in 2019. Alongside practical learning from the pandemic response, an evaluation of the current Strategic Plan yielded notable lessons that the organization is taking on board as it develops the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and seeks to act on the strategic direction provided in late 2020 by the QCPR.

95. The organization grappled with the key lesson that, even in pre-pandemic times, progress made by UNICEF and its partners has not translated into significant gains for children at the outcome level. UNICEF is working to develop its new strategic plan with a strong focus on outcomes, identifying a limited number of priorities that are key to addressing the multidimensional underlying causes of deprivations facing children. Through this shift, the organization aims to create more flexibility to respond to issues that are relevant to local contexts and emerging threats, and to align country-level efforts with national priorities.

96. The pandemic underscored the need to further strengthen the links between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming, in line with national priorities. Links between humanitarian and development programming have been key to the organization's ability to address the immediate and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the socioeconomic crisis it has created. The pandemic response leveraged UNICEF emergency systems, and the global implementation of emergency procedures (which allowed for a flexible, efficient and rapid response) emerged as a best practice for future disease outbreaks. The organization found that an effective response went beyond meeting the immediate humanitarian needs and prioritized interventions that strengthened national systems and technical capacities.

97. The key role of RCCE, subnational governments, community-based workers and local suppliers in the pandemic response highlighted the importance of working through local actors. This had previously been identified as an area for improvement, and UNICEF will strengthen it going forward. In 2020, UNICEF and its partners launched the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action to provide a more robust accountability framework for a principled, timely, predictable and efficient humanitarian response that is in line with international norms and standards.

98. The degree to which the world's health systems were unprepared for and quickly overwhelmed by COVID-19, the devastating experience of school closures for children and the gaps in social protection systems worldwide underscored the importance of working to strengthen systems, including to build their resilience against shocks. Going forward, in accordance with the findings of the evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and consistent with the direction provided by the QCPR, UNICEF will work to better reflect its dual humanitarian-development mandate in its long-term strategy, including by systematically integrating a humanitarian lens throughout the analysis that underpins its new strategic plan; overcoming the bottlenecks that result from the lack of humanitarian-development integration in its programming, monitoring, reporting, resource mobilization and staff capacity; and integrating peacebuilding processes where relevant.

99. Before the pandemic, the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 had highlighted that operationalizing the United Nations reform at the

country level was key to accelerating progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals related to child rights, particularly in an environment of constrained resources. The pandemic has further constrained resources and shown the need for coordinated action and engagement across sectors and partners to address the multidimensional nature of the deprivations it has exacerbated for children. UNICEF has reaffirmed the critical importance of joint action that yields savings and efficiency gains, maximizes comparative and collaborative advantages to deliver transformational results at scale, and supports countries to build strong and resilient systems. In response to the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF will seek to ensure that country offices continue to have the flexibility to work together with other United Nations agencies as needed, in line with national priorities and the respective UNSDCF.

100. The situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic reaffirmed the criticality of flexible funding, both to support a rapid, efficient and agile emergency response and to sustain programming that builds long-term resilience. It also highlighted the need to pursue new ways of financing work to advance the Sustainable Development Goals that are related to child rights. The financing gap between available resources and those needed to achieve the Goals and fund humanitarian action worldwide continues to widen. And the trend of increased earmarking of donor funding continues. Given this, UNICEF will invest in protecting its traditional funding bases from public and private sector sources while scaling up proven and new fundraising strategies, including through digital fundraising, intensified engagement with international financial institutions and innovative financing modalities. As the economic crisis puts additional pressure on the fiscal space for essential services for children, UNICEF will also work to help Governments to prioritize spending to support the most vulnerable and achieve the greatest impact.

101. The experience of the pandemic response has shown that the organization's investment in establishing global partnerships was critical to creating the momentum needed for unified advocacy, the rapid delivery of technical guidance and the rapid scale-up of innovations to address urgent needs. Driven by the recognition that far-reaching and sustainable change is possible only through the concerted actions of multiple stakeholders, UNICEF will place a renewed emphasis on leveraging its partnerships, ensuring that all its collaborations are drivers of outcome- and impact-level change. Taking on board lessons learned from the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the organization will pay increased attention to its change strategies and enablers, placing equal emphasis on monitoring their effectiveness alongside traditional programmatic results. UNICEF will strengthen its strategic engagement with children as agents of change and will for the first time incorporate the voices of children and young people in the development of its new strategic plan.

102. Lastly, as UNICEF and partners develop the new strategic plan, they can reflect positively on the lessons they have learned about the organization and its staff members in 2020. The adaptability and flexibility of its management systems and approaches and the commitment of its staff to stay and deliver for children around the world put UNICEF in good standing as it moves forward in pursuit of an even more ambitious agenda, at a time when the world most needs ambition and visionary thinking. Learning from its experience in 2020, and in keeping with the expectations of the children and young people it serves, UNICEF will continue to make its systems more agile, efficient and people-centred, and will continue to improve its organizational culture in line with its core values.

VI. Draft decision

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2020 of the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as the report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; the joint annex on the implementation of the common chapter of the strategic plans, 2018–2021 of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women); and the data companion and scorecard;
 2. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board;
 3. *Takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, including the management responses to the 14 recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit intended for consideration by the Executive Board.
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