

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Update on the context and situation of children

In December 2022, the European Union (EU) recognized Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as a candidacy country for EU accession: an opportunity for BiH to advance the realization of rights of 620,000 children, representing 18 per cent of the total population[1]. BiH conducted its elections in October 2022; entity and state level governments are yet to be formed at all levels. 2022 was characterized by many challenges towards improving the situation of children, youth, and their rights due to structural, institutional, and political impasses, the continuing refugee and migrant crisis, pandemic dislocation and security and economic aftershocks of the war in Ukraine. BiH is an upper-middle income country with persistent political stalemate, policy paralysis, reconciliation, and social cohesion deficit.

Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is preliminarily assessed at a yearly average of 2.7 per cent. The price level in November 2022 year-on-year increased by 16.3 per cent[2], eroding the purchasing power and financial wellbeing of households. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated poverty trends. Vulnerable groups have been impacted the most, with 24.4 per cent of the most vulnerable people reporting a radically worsened financial situation[3].

The population of BiH is shrinking[4] and ageing[5]. With the estimated population of 3.5 million[6] in BiH, it could decrease to 3,058,000 by 2050[7] according to the median variant of the United Nations World Population Prospects. The trend of young people and families looking for better opportunities abroad continues, with a significant increase in health and education professionals leaving the country. BiH has one of the highest youth unemployment rates (ages 15 to 29) at 64.1 per cent.[8] The proportion of youth aged 15–24 not in education, employment or training (NEET) is 21.2 per cent[9]

BiH has improved slightly, ranking 73rd of 156 countries in the 2022 Global Gender Gap Index; however, gender inequality remains a barrier in everyday life for girls and women, especially in the areas of knowledge, power and work[10].

Air pollution remains a problem in BiH, with an estimated 3,300 annual deaths due to air pollution, costing 8.2 per cent of GDP annually. Children are particularly affected as air pollution causes asthma, cancer and developmental delays.

Vaccine coverage is declining for almost all vaccines, but for the first dose of Mumps, Measles and Rubella (MMR): coverage was 80 per cent in 2019 and only 60 per cent in 2021. Children are also deprived of early childhood development (ECD) services which are the foundation for their healthy growth[11].

Less than one quarter of children under five attend early childhood education (ECE). The education system is characterized by deficient mechanisms for identifying out-of-school children and alignment with the needs of the modern labour market. For the first time since the pandemic, all 16 ministers of education united to adopt a Declaration of Commitment during the global Transforming Education Summit (TES) 2022, focusing on digital education. UNICEF mapped information and communications technology (ICT) resources in all schools in BiH, revealing that almost 20 students share one computer, while the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average is 1.2; more than 25 per cent of school objects have no Internet connection, and of those connected, only 13 per cent meet the minimum standards. These results reveal clear investment needs to bridge digital gaps in education institutions.

Violent methods of discipline, physical and sexual violence, neglect, online child sexual abuse and violence against women and girls remain prevalent issues in BiH. Around 55 per cent of children aged 2–14 (among those 49.5 per cent are girls) had experienced a violent method of disciplining at home. Nearly half of children without parental care are kept in institutions (two thirds of children with disabilities without parental care). The latest data shows that the number of children in residential care has been increasing[12].

The current global data on disability, including in BiH, suggests that detection of developmental disorders is below their actual prevalence, and the measures undertaken to date in detection of developmental disorders are insufficient.

Over 24,170 migrants and asylum seekers transited through BiH in 2022[13]. Fourteen per cent of migrants accommodated in temporary reception centres (TRCs) were children, comprising six per cent children in a family and eight per cent unaccompanied or separated children (UASC). Access to public healthcare is limited, and there are no modalities for the inclusion of UASC in the public health insurance scheme. Over 303 migrant children (102 girls) are included in local schools.

The BiH Service for Foreigners' Affairs (SFA) reported 137 Ukrainian citizens, mostly residing with friends and relatives in BiH (34 per cent children, 48 per cent women).

[1] UNICEF SitAn, 2020[2] Agency for Statistics of BiH (BHAS)[3] UNDP-UNICEF, Social Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Third Household Survey, 2022[4] An estimated 250,000 citizens have left BiH since 2013[4], while about 26,000 young people have left BiH between June 2011-June 2022[4]. (UNFPA)[5] CCA, 2022. The share of 65+ aged in the total population of BiH during 1991 Census was 6.5%, 2013 Census - 14.2%, and it is expected that this share could reach 37.9% in 2050. The same indicator at the global level: 1991 – 6.2%, 2013 - 8.0%, 2050 – 16.5%.[6] Census, 2013[7] CCA, 2022[8]Ibid [9] SDG Country Profiles (unstatshub.org), 2019[10] Source: Moving towards the Gender Equality Index Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022[11] Research by Loga, Pištoljević, et. al. (2017) on the state of child psychiatry and psychology in BiH indicated that most professionals providing services to children with disabilities work with very unspecified diagnoses such as combination of developmental disorders (55.5%) or non-specific psychological disorder (33.3%), indicating a further problem of designing appropriate intervention and access.[12] The most recent data from 2021 report 929 children in residential care compared to 885 in 2019.[13] As of November 27, 2022

Major contributions and drivers of results

1. *Every child survives and thrives*

In 2022, UNICEF's investment in refurbishing BiH's cold chain contributed to strengthening overall health system. With the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) support, 31 refrigerators for vaccine storage, 11 generators and 3 cold rooms were delivered to health institutions nationwide. This rehabilitation will continue in 2023. As a coordinator of procurement of COVID-19 vaccines, UNICEF has imported 332,640 doses of vaccines through COVAX and procured over EUR1.5 million of equipment and vaccine material with EU4HEALTH funds.

UNICEF's public information campaigns reached over 1.6 million people, and 518 members of religious communities (233 women) were engaged in promoting immunization against COVID-19. 500 health professionals received interpersonal communication training to help convince parents of the importance of vaccination. UNICEF facilitated the vaccination of 357 Roma children – the most vulnerable children in BiH, educating 2294 parents (1277 female) about importance of immunization. UNICEF supported assessments to improve access to and the quality of the vaccination programme, including effective vaccine management assessments and the electronic immunization records system, enabling a major breakthrough in the health sector. UNICEF supported developing digital solutions for

storing, processing and managing vaccination data, including planning, identifying unvaccinated individuals, and necessary vaccines and supplies.

UNICEF supported the development of the new multisectoral ECD Programme 2022–2028 in Republika Srpska (RS), adopted in November 2022 with a commitment to prioritizing and financing family-centred ECD interventions that are promoting more gender transformative actions. Following UNICEF advocacy, the Protocol on Cooperation in promoting ECD in the Sarajevo Canton was signed, leading to the allocation of public funds to employ 14 additional speech therapists and open at least two ECD centres in the Sarajevo canton. Sixty new ECD professionals gained knowledge on applying developmental behavioural scales to detect developmental delays in children, which is crucial for early intervention.

UNICEF BiH engaged in air pollution through youth activism: awareness-raising workshops took place in five municipalities, reaching 655 young people (51% female), who designed and implemented campaigns in their communities, engaging peers from schools and universities and organizing discussions with local authorities.

A low breastfeeding rate of 19% prompted UNICEF to intensify capacity-building to ensure optimal nutrition practices for newborns and infants in 15 municipalities through training for 300 paediatricians and gynaecologists. Six new maternity wards were accredited according to the Standards for Baby-Friendly Hospitals, reaching 100-per-cent coverage in RS and ensuring that young mothers receive breastfeeding support immediately post-partum. The Nutrition-friendly Schools/Preschools Initiative continued in 2022, educating 2,500 pre-school and 1,200 school-age children on the importance of healthy eating.

UNICEF leveraged Government of FBiH funds and partnered on Vision Screening programme reaching over 9,000 children in all preschool institutions and their parents with information on immunization and nutrition messages.

2. *Every child learns*

UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) contributed to a breakthrough in education policy: all 16 education authorities agreed on the Statement of Commitment for TES 2022, and the government endorsed the Guidelines for Online and Blended Learning in BiH, paving the way to transform the education agenda, with a focus on digital education. Importantly to note, one of the TES 2022 prioritized commitments for BiH is to advance gender equality and women's empowerment approach to ensure that gender-responsive measures transforming the education system are indeed a priority.

UNICEF supported the OECD Reviews of Assessment and Evaluation in Education in BiH, which defines pathways to improve student assessment, teacher appraisal, and school and system evaluations. UNICEF conducted seminal mapping of ICT resources in all (2061) schools, identified the most deprived schools and provided 1,400 computers to serve an estimated 27,800 students. Since only 25% of children aged 3-5 are enrolled in ECE in BiH, UNICEF conducted two feasibility studies for ECE expansion. Additionally, in partnership with UNICEF's Office of Research, Innocenti, the impact of the Akelius Digital Learning Programme on learning outcomes was assessed.

EdTech innovations, including Akelius, assistive technology and Arduino technology were scaled up, reaching over 3,000 children (over 1,600 girls) with a focus on vulnerable groups (e.g. girls from rural areas, children on the move and those with disabilities). These programmes create eco-systems to improve access to EdTech and empower institutions to integrate assistive technology.

UNICEF continued with educational TV show for preschool children Kids Scientists "Klinci

Naucnici” which was focused on socio-emotional development and wellbeing of young children. Broadcasting reached over 1 million views only on state television and over 100,000 views on Facebook and YouTube.

In 2022, around 13% of teachers in BiH (over 70% female) participated in UNICEF programmes to improve their pedagogical and digital skills and psycho-social support capacities. Some of these programmes had a particular focus on improving female teacher well-being. Professional development programmes were integrated into the officially endorsed catalogues and reached an estimated 50,000 children: over 12% of all children in formal education.

In 2022, UNICEF invested in engaging youth and adolescents in formal and non-formal education: developing their digital, entrepreneurial and “green” skills through the IT Girls and UPSHIFT programmes, reaching 522 adolescents. IT Girls, which empowers girls to proceed with careers in STEM, expanded to reach 405 adolescents (389 girls) from 29 schools. The programme incorporates teacher capacity building for gender-responsive teaching methods that aim to dismantle conscious or unconscious gender biases.

3. Every child is protected

To strengthen the care system and deinstitutionalization, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in RS endorsed Guidelines for Centres for Social Welfare (CSW) to prevent family separation. In collaboration with key line ministries and professional associations, capacities of providers serving vulnerable families and supporting emergency childcare and respite care were enhanced, contributing to preventing family separation and promoting family-based care, particularly for vulnerable working parents, predominantly women. Advocacy for alternative care and piloting foster care for children on the move was conducted throughout 2022 and will continue in 2023. Despite these efforts, the number of children in residential care increased, and more significant investments are needed to improve gatekeeping, closure of residential care facilities and foster care services.

The social service workforce was strengthened in supervision and safeguarding, improving the quality assurance system and support to emergency/respite care. In 2022, 128 social service professionals were trained in professional supervision, resulting in a higher quality of psycho-social work with children and their families. Alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of FBiH, five cantonal ministries, and professional associations, UNICEF improved child safeguarding capacities in development and emergency contexts by supporting guidelines, contributing to prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse that predominantly affects girls and the most vulnerable including children without parental care and children on the move.

Protection for children’s interests and wellbeing in judiciary procedures was enhanced by training over 300 judges and prosecutors in delivering child-friendly justice to children in contact with the law. The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council adopted the Minimum Standards for Equipping and Use of Child-Friendly Interviewing Rooms, and 17 justice institutions were equipped with UNICEF support, covering all prosecutor offices handling children’s cases in BiH. Access to child-friendly justice procedures and interviewing techniques has thus improved, the risk of re-traumatization of children has declined by minimizing how often a child is interviewed, ensuring privacy, prevention of revictimization, and gender sensitivity. The school-based secondary prevention programme continued to expand, through early identification and referrals to support services, including mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS). More than 21,000 schoolchildren were included in a further expansion of the programme in collaboration with the MoE of Una Sana Canton and Canton 10. In previously established locations, 190,000 children were reached through the continuation of the programme, improving access to services of education, social welfare and health professionals. Awareness-raising for access to services including justice reached 105,568 people, including 73,000 school children (36,000 girls).

UNICEF successfully advocated to keep corporal punishment prohibition in the draft RS Family Law.

Advocacy to end child marriage (exceptions 16 and above) was conducted but ultimately not successful. A review of the legal regulatory framework related to family friendly policies was conducted and an assessment focusing on identification of key gaps and challenges in provision of family friendly practices is finalized.

By strengthening referrals, children's access to protection, education and health services improved. Eighty municipalities (56 %) endorsed a referral mechanism protocol (64 in RS, 16 in FBiH) through the secondary prevention programme and municipal DRR Standard Operating Procedures. With UNICEF's support, 5,518 children (2,672 girls) received MHPSS services directly, including in-person, phone and online counselling. Adolescent girls were primary users of Bluephone helpline services and 1,000,000 people were informed about these services, including 600,000 children and caregivers.

4. Every child has a fair chance in life

In partnership with the Ministries of Social Policies and Associations of Social Workers, UNICEF supported both FBiH and RS to develop Social and Child Protection Strategies 2023–2027, for adoption in 2023. Strategies are aligned with the BiH SDG Framework, encompassing various system elements to reduce poverty, quick identification of families at risk, improve targeted services, support deinstitutionalization and community-based services, and shock-responsive social protection (SRSP).

Child disability assessment reform expanded in Una Sana Canton and RS, and its success continued in two pilot cantons: Herzegovina-Neretva applied a new approach to assessing children with disabilities, and Zenica-Doboj adopted the new by-law. Child disability assessment reform and referral in BiH is unique in the region, based on functional assessment, replacing the archaic system of medical classifications. It is aligned with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). Over 270 social protection, education and health professionals were trained on applying the new by-laws in two pilot cantons, and 100 professionals in RS on applying ICF.

Social entrepreneurship (SE) and integrated case management (ICM) schemes were initiated in 10 locations through 14 local projects, benefiting 797 (432 female) direct beneficiaries including 492 (229 female) children and youth. To maximize results, local ownership and sustainability, UNICEF mobilized approximately US \$63,000 from local communities as co-financing to grant schemes and trained 290 service providers. The schemes target the most vulnerable families to improve their socio-economic situation through income-generating activities. An ICM model was also institutionalized, enabling multisectoral cooperation, particularly among CSWs and employment offices, to increase the employability and social inclusion of vulnerable rural families with children, families living in poverty, single parents, mothers of children with disabilities, youth with disabilities, Roma families. The design of SE and ICM activities took into consideration specific gender related requirements, based on the findings of the local situation analyses. Several schemes targeted women (long unemployed with low education and skills, victims of domestic violence, single mothers). While engaging them in income generating activities, the project ensured free access to pre-school education or other extra-curricular activities for their children.

To influence public financing, UNICEF developed investment cases for children with a focus on social protection, ECE and ECD health services for children aged 0-6, and two ECE feasibility studies, including detailed cost-benefit and cost-of-inaction analyses of the short and long-term socio-economic consequences of adequate, equitable and cost-effective investments in each sector. These also encompass three policy briefs and two in-depth feasibility studies for full ECE coverage of children aged 3-6 at the municipal level (Ljubuški and Bijeljina). The findings of these investment cases are striking and will inform decision making at all government levels and enable informed investments of public resources to design and expand ECD services.

The local SRSP model expanded to five new locations, with 15 municipalities benefitting 45,409 beneficiaries, including 5,485 children. Eight in 10 CSWs implemented Crisis Preparedness and Response Action Plan projects, resulting in enhanced DRR capacities of more than 100 social protection professionals to ensure service continuity in crisis. Social Protection beneficiaries are empowered to apply DRR skills by identifying risks, using prevention and protection services and contacting emergency providers during and after a crisis, coupled with crisis response equipment and tested through disaster simulation drills. Through UNICEF advocacy efforts, 10 CSWs leveraged 18% of co-funding to implement Action Plans (APs) with long-term commitments being mainstreamed in 10 local development strategies. Ten SRSP APs were tested in joint field crisis simulation exercises in close partnership with the disaster management sector and five new CSWs adopted vulnerability risk assessments and SRSP APs.

FBiH increased the coverage and adequacy of child allowances by adopting the Law on Support to Families with Children.

Under the BiH Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees, the Platform for the Advancement of Children's Rights was established to connect stakeholders and enable children and youth to voice their opinions and propose initiatives improving their rights.

5. Support to refugee and migrant children and families, including Ukraine response

In 2022, UNICEF supported over 3,500 children on the move in BiH working closely with the Ministry of Security, SFA, Cantonal Ministries of Social Welfare, CSWs and other partners. Providing gender-responsive services designed to meet the needs of girls and boys on the move, more boys were reached as they represent the majority of UASC residing in TRCs.

UNICEF worked with education authorities in Sarajevo and Una Sana cantons to include 303 children (102 girls) on the move in formal education, and provided non-formal education within TRCs, including Akelius language course, learning support and catch-up classes for 1,071 children (236 girls). Education authorities were supported in providing vocational training for 186 migrant and refugee children in TRCs.

A learning hub was established in the Citluk municipality for 30 Ukrainian refugee children (18 girls) with Ukrainian online classes, digital content, and distance learning platforms. Educational opportunities, including vocational training and Akelius, were very effective, representing a viable solution to strengthen the humanitarian-developmental nexus across all programmes, creating opportunities for children.

662 children and infants (311 girls) benefitted from feeding services, including child-growth counselling and breastfeeding support for parents.

In addition to the coordinating role of child protection interventions and capacity-building of CSWs, UNICEF's support for children on the move included legal guardianship, case management, MHPSS and protection standards for 2,899 children (428 girls), including 2,138 UAC (75 girls). UNICEF and its partners operated two child-friendly spaces (CFS), reaching 560 children (261 girls). UNICEF supplied 1,076 children with clothing and shoes. CFS were also organized in Citluk for Ukrainian children to help them cope with stress through pedagogical activities.

6. Cross-cutting

UNICEF invested in promoting rights for children in BiH, brand building and donor recognition, resulting in 1900 media mentions and a five-per-cent increase in social media followers and engagement. Major events involving donors, high-level partners, experts, and young people contributed to increasing UNICEF's visibility and positioning as the key advocate and leader in promoting children's rights.

World Children's Day (WCD) was marked with numerous initiatives, including Kids' Takeovers, annual Media Award, and inclusive football games, contributing to a 200-per-cent increase in media mentions versus 2021 and reaching 3.3 million people. The Go Blue campaign in schools gathered over 5,000 children, voicing their rights and promoting the WCD.

The Gender Programme Review was completed, informing strategic shifts for gender-transformative programming in BiH. Further, UNICEF initiated a multi-sectoral programme to roll out the *UNICEF Adolescent Girls Strategy* in BiH.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

In 2022, UNICEF launched the Business Advisory Council formed of companies from the IT, banking, production, and retail sectors committed to raising awareness of children's rights, exchanging knowledge, and promoting responsible business practices in the interest of every child. UNICEF further expanded private sector engagement to support skills programming for the transition of youth from education to work with a three-year initiative funded by multinational company DP World, with one-third of the funds devoted to the empowerment of girls in STEM areas.

New multilateral partnerships with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA) for BiH were established to ensure availability of real-time data on schools' connectivity, including on the global Giga platform. The government committed to commissioning public-private partnership (PPP) feasibility studies for the education sector: a milestone in unlocking the potential of PPPs.

UNICEF continued strategic partnerships with two main public universities in BiH to build sustainable pre-service and in-service professional development programmes on pedagogical and digital skills of teachers.

UNICEF has been implementing five UN joint programmes: with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on supporting authorities in SDG implementation; on establishing an integrated ecosystem that allows for systemic financing of the SDGs with UNDP, UN Women (UNW), UNESCO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO); a DRR programme jointly with UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNESCO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); humanitarian assistance to refugees and migrants jointly with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR and UNFPA. Joint programme with UNESCO and ILO on 'Reimagining Education for Marginalised Girls and Boys during and post COVID-19' has ended in 2022. Collaboration among UN agencies improved further through joint assessments: with UNDP through the third round of the Household Survey on the Social Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in BiH, with UNHCR through a needs assessment for Ukrainian refugees, and all UN agencies through the Country Context Analysis. UNICEF joins efforts with UNW and other UN Agencies to advance its work on gender equality, empowerment of women and girls through the Gender Theme Group, public events as well as with CSOs to advance the *UNICEF Adolescent Girls Strategy* priorities in BiH.

USAID remained UNICEF'S largest public donor, while 10-year partnerships with the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) for the Justice for Children programme ended in 2022.

The EU remains one of UNICEF'S main partners for advocacy as well as resource mobilization. In addition to the joint UN response to the refugee and migrant situation, and regional projects (mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of children and their families, and strengthening refugee and migrant children's health status), a new EU-funded project with WHO and the World Bank on health sector reforms was negotiated, to begin in 2023.

Being one of COs in the Europe and Central Asia region with the largest number of implementing partners, UNICEF BiH conducted a comprehensive analysis, which confirmed quality partnership management of CSOs and governments.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

4.1 Lessons learned

UPSHIFT represents a good practice that yielded great results in reaching the most vulnerable

adolescents and equipping them with the entrepreneurial skills required to bridge the gap between the supply of graduates and 21st-Century labour market demands. Through direct engagement and outreach in schools from rural areas and smaller municipalities, UPSHIFT resulted in 35 per cent of all participants coming from marginalized groups. To ensure smooth transition to the labour market, follow-up with UPSHIFT participants is needed.

To respond to the protection needs of children and parents from Ukraine, UNICEF partnered with CSWs and Red Cross at the entity and local levels, building upon the lessons learned from CFS in other locations in BiH. A key lesson has been to consult the targeted population frequently, particularly as their needs change: once the children began attending their online classes in local primary schools, the interest and relevance of CFS intervention increased.

As part of the implementation of the complementary DRR cross-sectoral model, CSWs and primary and secondary schools from 10 partner locations have tested their crisis preparedness capacities in the multisectoral crisis field simulation exercise. The exercise allowed for stress testing plans and systems covering 10 local communities, with a special focus on vulnerable population groups and their needs in emergency response, as well as the importance of well-established coordination mechanisms between the protection and rescue, education, social and child protection, health, and agriculture sectors. To enable system-level integration of social sectors in the DRR agenda, UNICEF supported the development of the Sendai Framework mid-term review in BiH by integrating some of the most important lessons learned and opportunities for DRR improvements in sectors relevant to children.

4.2 Emerging opportunities and innovations

Innovative engagement was established in the development of Social Entrepreneurship (SE) schemes and ICM mechanisms. Strengthening of SE practices through 10 local schemes is recognized as a key innovative element of social development and social policy planning, moving away from reactive social spending towards a proactive role of social protection (SP) systems. The ICM model that stimulates labour activation of SP beneficiaries through enhanced cooperation of the employment and social protection sectors carries huge potential to complement the new vision for the SP sector, not only in equity and targeting but also in addressing poverty including child poverty. In close cooperation with entity-level associations of social workers, public employment services, the private sector and local organizations, both practices proved to be viable opportunities worth developing to foster innovative social service delivery targeting the most vulnerable families and children with a focus on their human capital potentials.

Opportunities to engage with non-traditional governmental partners have emerged. UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CRA, focusing on improving internet connectivity for primary and secondary education institutions in BiH. The CRA now owns the ICT mapping produced by UNICEF: using mapped static geospatial and other related data, UNICEF and the CRA will work on positioning BiH schools onto the Giga platform.

Following the numerous innovative EdTech solutions introduced by UNICEF BiH, a supply monitoring methodology was created, and the first monitoring of its kind conducted, resulting in findings that will inspire new directions of UNICEF interventions, particularly in the domain of electronic and electrical waste management, given that no clear e-waste management procedures and instructions exist in the majority of BiH administrative units.

The newly established BAC enables new opportunities for partnerships with the private sector, especially in 21st-Century skill-building focusing on transferable skills, employability skills, and green skills. Through the involvement of the private sector, with their expertise and direct engagement of their employees as experts and mentors, UNICEF aims to design skill-building programmes that respond to the needs of the labour market. In addition to launching the BAC, opportunities for cooperation with the private sector have been further stipulated through PPP feasibility studies, which build upon the co-investments of seven administrative units. PPP for education will be incorporated

into official PPP catalogues, thus triggering PPP mechanisms for long-term partnerships.

In partnership with Nova Generacija, a new council of children and adolescents will inform the work of Bluephone, a helpline that provides children with support related to violence and MHPSS, ensuring that the needs and views of children and adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, strongly inform and are integrated into the programming.

Striving to advance gender-transformative programming, UNICEF BiH completed a comprehensive Gender Programme Review suggesting emerging opportunities for GAP implementation building on the successes of such initiatives as capacity building of teachers in gender responsive teaching methods, MHPSS for adolescent girls and social entrepreneurship programme targeting women, who are long unemployed with low education and skills, victims of domestic violence, single mothers.

Within its efforts to strengthen the humanitarian-developmental nexus across all programmes, UNICEF participated in the Youth on the Move fellowship programme, engaging one fellow to support the emergency response team through an innovative programme that aims to engage displaced young people in the work of UNICEF.

One programmatic innovation was a specific set of child safeguarding and brief on-site trainings for staff and volunteers working with children on the move, which were introduced as obligatory in Sarajevo Canton prior to any engagement with children, along with signing a code of conduct.

As part of the innovation in Climate, Environment, Energy and DRR, the horizontal expansion of the SRSP model is recognized as one of the best practices in the ECA region, being increasingly relevant also during the new emerging crisis as it is focused on system preparedness and service continuity as an important mitigation mechanism in addition to (often constrained) cash provision to affected families.

The digitalization of the immunization system initiated by UNICEF BiH in 2022 is a significant innovation within the health sector, providing a unique ICT tool for managing all relevant information related to the vaccination of the country's population. It will also improve the national immunization programmes' ability to meet regional and country-specific routine immunization and COVID-19 reporting requirements in accordance with international standards.