



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 May 2020

Original: English

For decision

United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

Annual session 2020

29 June–2 July 2020

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Report on the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and annual report for 2019 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Summary

The present report, the second annual report of the UNICEF Executive Director to the UNICEF Executive Board on the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, incorporates findings from the midterm review of the Strategic Plan. It is accompanied by the revised Integrated Results and Resources Framework; reports on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system^a and the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; a data companion and scorecard; a joint annex on the implementation of the common chapter; and a paper on lessons learned through the midterm review.

The report should be considered in conjunction with the report on the midterm review of the UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 ([E/ICEF/2020/AB/L.5](#)).

Elements of a draft decision are presented in section IX.

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

* [E/ICEF/2020/6](#).



I. Overview

1. At the threshold of the Decade of Action, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has plunged the world into an unprecedented global health crisis and a deep recession. The full impact and long-term fallout are still unclear, but without urgent action, the world is on the brink of a child-rights crisis as the pandemic and measures to contain it disrupt livelihoods and social services that children depend upon for their well-being, health, safety and learning, with the most vulnerable children hardest hit. This new challenge comes as the world is already off track to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNICEF joins the entire United Nations family in the call for global solidarity to address this crisis through the lens of human rights, with a sharp focus on those who were already at risk of being left behind.

2. UNICEF is striving to maintain the continuity of its programmes and operations as it responds to the pandemic and adapts to its impacts. It is committed to delivering assistance to children across all affected areas, together with Governments and partners, to ensure that all children in need receive humanitarian assistance. It is working to strengthen the public-health response to reduce coronavirus transmission and mortality, while monitoring and responding to the socioeconomic impact on children and families, especially the most disadvantaged.

3. An agile business-continuity plan is helping UNICEF to manage business and programme continuity while keeping the security and well-being of staff at the forefront. While it is too early to project the impact of the pandemic on public and private sector funding for UNICEF for the period 2020–2021 and beyond, the organization is concerned about the potential negative impact on overall funding, and regular resources in particular. UNICEF asks all Member States and other partners to unite in protecting the most vulnerable children and their families, sustaining the development gains of recent years and recommitting to multilateralism and international cooperation as the only way forward.

4. UNICEF and its sister agencies, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), each undertook a midterm review of progress to date in achieving the objectives of their respective strategic plans, assessing the continued relevance of the underlying assumptions and associated strategies. After two years of implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the midterm review found that UNICEF was performing well across its major result areas, with most of its targets on track for achievement and a smaller number already achieved. However, because the world is not on track to achieve the child-focused Sustainable Development Goal targets and reduce all forms of poverty among children, UNICEF has used the midterm review as an opportunity to prioritize strategies and approaches that will accelerate progress in areas in which it can have the greatest global impact in the short to medium term.

5. The midterm review found that, despite a remarkable increase in the scope and scale of UNICEF work with other United Nations agencies, in line with the latest reforms of the United Nations development system, it was still too early to ascribe to this trend an increase in effectiveness and results. However, the reform and the leveraging of both the system's collective strength and the comparative advantages of the respective agencies are now central features of the UNICEF strategies to accelerate progress in the Sustainable Development Goals across all the areas in which it works.

6. The midterm review found that the quality of resources continued to be a challenge. Projections for the remainder of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

period forecast a 9 per cent overall increase in income, with an 8 per cent increase in other resources (regular) and a 31 per cent increase in other resources (emergency), but a 10 per cent decrease in regular resources compared with previous projections. In response, UNICEF is redoubling its efforts to demonstrate the unmatched potential of regular resources to achieve results for children. Fully achieving the needed acceleration at scale to realize the rights of every child will be possible only through increased flexible funding, notably regular resources.

II. Introduction

7. UNICEF has used the midterm review to assess its role in accelerating Sustainable Development Goal progress while keeping children's rights at the top of the agenda in a volatile world. The five Goal Areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, supported by the change strategies and enablers, outline the UNICEF contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. Although there has been clear progress on many child-related Sustainable Development Goal targets, it has been too slow, particularly in fragile contexts. In 2019 alone, UNICEF, through its Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal, aimed to reach approximately 53 million of the 102 million children in need of humanitarian assistance. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, communities and families will be enormous. The ambition of acceleration will be reviewed as the trends evolve, with a focus on protecting gains and preventing further deterioration.

8. Two years into implementation, most of the Strategic Plan output targets are on track: 74 per cent of output milestones have been met or nearly met, with 10 per cent somewhat off track and 16 per cent significantly off track, a pattern comparable to last year's. UNICEF has continued to deliver on the ground for children across the five Goal Areas of the Plan.

9. Goal Area 1 is aimed at ensuring that every child survives and thrives, and contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3 and 5. At the output level, UNICEF progress rates were over 90 per cent for all nine of the result areas under Goal Area 1, including 27.4 million babies delivered in health facilities, 307 million children under the age of 5 years reached with services to prevent malnutrition, and 115 countries implementing early childhood development (ECD) programmes. Despite this strong performance, impact- and outcome-level progress in maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, immunization, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, and ECD is beset by inequities and too slow to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

10. Goal Area 2 is aimed at ensuring that every child learns, supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, while contributing to other Goals. At the output level, progress rates for all three result areas were over 90 per cent, with 17 million out-of-school children, including 8.4 million girls and 8.6 million boys, participating in early learning, primary and secondary education, and 4 million children, about 60 per cent of them girls, participating in skills-development programmes. Progress was slowest in access to quality education and educational and learning materials. While progress in some outcome areas has been significant, outcome- and impact-level progress is too slow to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030.

11. Goal Area 3 is aimed at ensuring that every girl and boy is protected from violence and exploitation, and supports the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 5, 8 and 16. At the output level, UNICEF progress rates were over 90 per cent for two of the three result areas. The organization reached 17 per cent more girls and boys who had experienced violence with health, social work or justice and law enforcement services in 2019, and over 158,000 girls

and women received female genital mutilation (FGM)-related services through UNICEF-supported programmes. Progress was slowest in access to justice and outputs on legal aid and birth registration, followed by the result area on addressing violence against children. Progress at the impact and outcome levels included a global increase in birth registration over the past two decades, while child marriage has declined since 1990. However, acceleration by UNICEF and its partners is necessary to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals related to Goal Area 3 are on track.

12. Goal Area 4 is aimed at ensuring a safe and clean environment for children, contributing to Sustainable Development Goals 6, 11, 13 and 16. At the output level, UNICEF progress was over 90 per cent for four of the five result areas. Progress was slowest in sanitation, including in schools, and ending open defecation. Progress at the outcome and impact levels has not been fast enough to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on basic and safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. Many countries are off track to eliminate open defecation, especially among poor and rural households. Disaster risk reduction and climate- and environment-related Sustainable Development Goal targets are off track even as natural disasters become more frequent and extreme.

13. Goal Area 5 is aimed at addressing some of the key dimensions of discrimination and inequity that prevent children from realizing their rights, contributing to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 5 and 10. It applies cross-cutting strategies that address underlying rights violations and root causes that have an impact on the results of the other Goal Areas. At the output level, UNICEF progress was over 90 per cent for three of the five result areas. Progress was slowest regarding public finance for children in the child poverty result area. A lack of comparable data has made progress at the impact and outcome levels difficult to assess. The evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan identified challenges and lessons related to the UNICEF performance on gender, and these have been integrated into the midterm review.

14. With so many Sustainable Development Goals for children off track, sustainable development cannot be realized, gender inequalities cannot be reduced and child rights cannot be secured amidst limited growth in predictable resources and unprecedented levels of humanitarian and public health crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF has identified areas in which progress is significantly off track for children and where it can make the greatest possible difference with the right blend of financing, innovation, partnerships with business, data-driven approaches and advocacy for multi-stakeholder action at the global, regional and country levels. The organization is modernizing and simplifying its processes to accelerate results, including establishing a people-centred human resources system and shaping an organizational culture that helps staff members to deliver while living its core values.

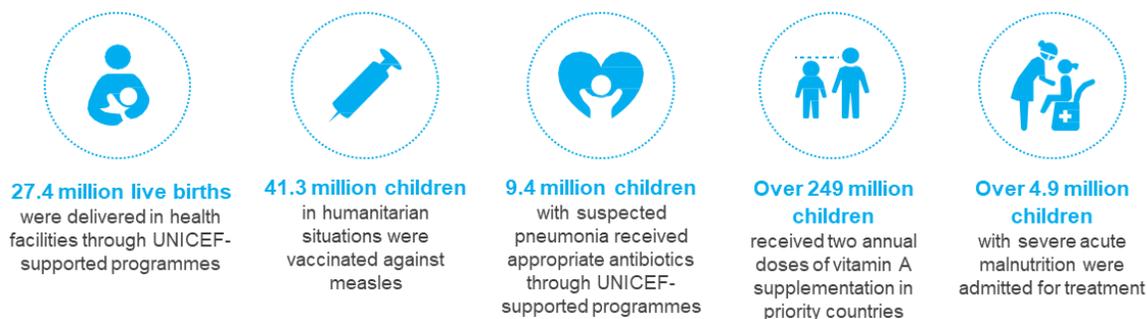
15. In the remaining period of the Strategic Plan, as we set course for the Decade of Action, UNICEF will prioritize the acceleration of results in learning outcomes; stunting and wasting; maternal and neonatal health and immunization; basic sanitation and ending open defecation; reducing violence against children; scaling up birth registration; climate action; and improving mental health for children and young people in order to “bend the curve” with respect to related Sustainable Development Goal targets. Through the midterm review, UNICEF has determined where Strategic Plan targets are off track, so that it can accelerate efforts, as well as where they are on track, so it can increase its programmatic ambition and sharpen priorities. Many of the most vulnerable and marginalized children are affected by conflicts, displacement, disasters, protracted crises, fragility or public-health emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, guided by the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, its mandatory policy and response framework for humanitarian action, UNICEF is focusing on improving the quality, coverage and

equity of humanitarian action, while enhancing programming that promotes long-term development and sustainable peace within humanitarian action.

III. Performance under the Goal Areas

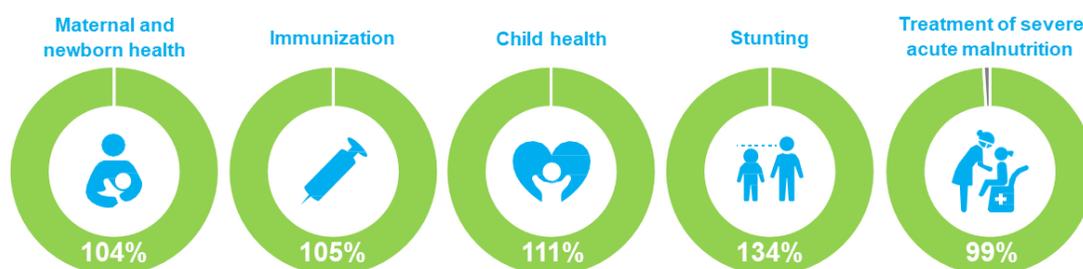
A. Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives

16. In 2019, global programme expenses in Goal Area 1 across 152 countries totalled \$2.15 billion, including \$0.95 billion for humanitarian action in 82 countries. Impact- and outcome-level progress in maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, immunization, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and ECD is beset by inequities and too slow to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Children in poor households, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and in fragile and conflict-affected settings are among those at greatest risk of being left behind. Even in outcome areas in which UNICEF is on track towards Strategic Plan targets — reaching children and mothers with services for maternal and newborn health, nutrition and HIV/AIDS — progress is insufficient.

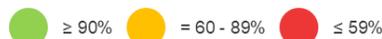


Sample Goal Area results

17. At the output level, UNICEF met or came close to meeting 79 per cent of its milestones, with progress rates of over 90 per cent for all nine result areas under this Goal Area.



Progress rate by result area



18. In 2019, through UNICEF-supported programmes, 27.4 million live births were delivered in health facilities, and quality-of-care interventions were increased along with support to WASH in 3,341 health facilities. With the support of UNICEF and partners, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus, while 65.7 million children received three doses of the diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis-containing pentavalent vaccine in 64 priority countries, and 41.3 million children in humanitarian settings were reached with measles vaccine out of the 43.7 million targeted. Nigeria remained free of wild poliovirus for a third

year, paving the way for the potential certification of Africa as wild poliovirus-free in 2020. However, 2019 saw a surge in cases of vaccine-derived poliovirus in Africa, including in Nigeria, as well as in parts of Asia.

19. In 25 countries with high pneumonia prevalence, 9.4 million girls and boys with suspected pneumonia received antibiotics through UNICEF-supported programmes in 2019, with 69 per cent of those with pneumonia symptoms (67 per cent girls, 70 per cent boys) taken to an appropriate health provider. UNICEF supported the skills enhancement of 35,840 community health workers (46 per cent women, 54 per cent men) in integrated community case management, and supported their full institutionalization. The emergence and rapid spread of COVID-19 marked the end of a year in which UNICEF responded to 74 public health emergencies worldwide, including Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cholera in 10 countries, Zika in 4 and measles in 9.

20. To address stagnant immunization rates driven by challenges in maintaining adequate attention and resourcing in middle-income countries and reaching children in remote rural, poor urban and conflict-affected areas as well as those on the move, UNICEF and partners are strengthening routine immunization programmes and systems and creating synergy with supplementary immunization activities for polio, tetanus and measles. To accelerate the decline of maternal mortality, UNICEF recognizes the need to increase access to the most effective interventions: antenatal care and skilled birth attendants.

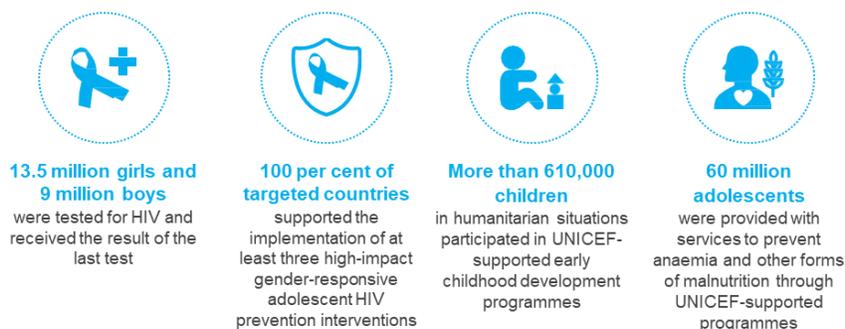
21. To accelerate the revitalization of primary health care in countries with the highest burdens of maternal, newborn and child mortality, the midterm review identified areas with the potential for high-impact results. Chief among them is strengthening primary health care by means of integrated frontline services delivered through community, school or health-facility platforms with community engagement. UNICEF will leverage global and domestic resources to secure investments in health systems, infrastructure and human resources; promote South-South and triangular cooperation; and support the strengthening of health systems, in particular by improving frontline worker capacity and numbers, supply chains, quality of care and digital health information and data. The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, a partnership of 12 multilateral health, development and humanitarian agencies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), launched in 2019, will support primary health care in high-burden countries, working through accelerators the agencies have identified through their complementary expertise.

22. In 2019, UNICEF supported nutrition programmes in over 120 countries, advancing global efforts to address the triple burden of malnutrition — undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight — the last of which is rising in every region, including in fragile contexts. In 2019, 307 million children under the age of 5 years were reached with services to prevent stunting and other forms of malnutrition in early childhood; 60 million children (including 26.6 million girls and 19.3 million boys in countries reporting data disaggregated by sex) with services to prevent anaemia and other forms of malnutrition in adolescence; and 4.9 million children (including 1.8 million girls and 1.6 million boys in countries reporting data disaggregated by sex) with services to treat severe wasting and other forms of severe malnutrition.

23. UNICEF positioned itself as a thought leader in maternal and child nutrition with its 2019 publication *The State of the World's Children: Children, Food and Nutrition*, which documents the changing face of child malnutrition globally and advocates for the crucial role of food systems in supporting improved child nutrition. The midterm review confirmed that all UNICEF nutrition programmes should continue to share a universal premise: prevention comes first, but if prevention fails,

treatment is a must. This premise underlies the partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to deliver nutrition-specific actions for children and their mothers in 15 high-burden countries in the first 1,000 days of life through food, health and social protection systems, as well as the partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP) on child wasting, which emphasizes prevention in early childhood and the integration of early detection and treatment services in primary health care, including in fragile contexts.

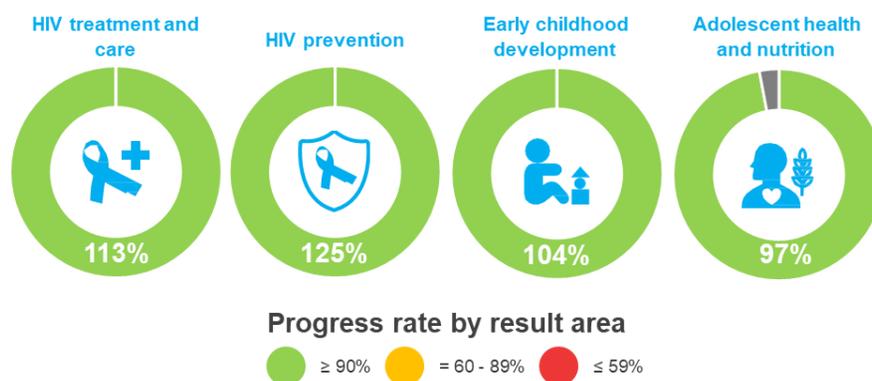
24. Progress in preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has flatlined, and treatment coverage in children, at 54 per cent globally, is up only 10 per cent in the past 4 years. While some countries have increased HIV prevention among adolescent girls and young women, that population accounted for an estimated 310,000 new infections by the end of 2018. UNICEF has met its Strategic Plan milestones, but dwindling donor funds for HIV programmes, the false perception that the prevention of mother-to-child transmission has been successful and is no longer a priority, and a shift in focus to epidemic control in adults mean that “business as usual” will be insufficient to end AIDS in children by 2030.



Sample Goal Area results

25. The midterm review found that UNICEF must increase its ambition to improve programme performance in HIV/AIDS, especially in high-burden countries. The organization will work to extend its sphere of influence through strategic partnerships, striving to achieve more with less, using smart data analysis to target programme action; leveraging South-South cooperation; promoting innovations in diagnosis, treatment and service delivery; and partnering with communities to optimize the reach and efficiency of programmes.

26. In 2019, 115 countries implemented government-owned multisectoral ECD programmes, up from 80 in 2018. A national ECD policy or action plan was in place in 83 countries, 16 more than in 2018. UNICEF reached 615,049 children under the age of 5 years in humanitarian situations in 42 countries with ECD interventions, including 237,167 girls and 245,943 boys (based on data from 33 countries) and 2,608 children with disabilities (based on data from 14 countries). Innovations included such family-friendly business policies as paid family leave and breastfeeding support, as well as using existing platforms, including health centres and home visit programmes, as entry points to deliver multisectoral ECD interventions integrated into such areas as health and nutrition. UNICEF will increase investments in capacity-building for parents and frontline workers to enhance the delivery of nurturing care and stimulation in development and humanitarian contexts.



27. By 2019, 67 countries had inclusive, multisectoral and gender-responsive national plans for adolescent health, and UNICEF supported their implementation in 31 countries. Nearly 1 million adolescent girls received the full schedule of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination in five countries in which UNICEF had earlier supported the vaccine's introduction. In 2019, 79 countries implemented school health programming, with active UNICEF support in 33, leveraging a primary platform for the integrated delivery of preventive and promotive interventions for adolescent health, including mental health. To address the challenges undermining adolescents' right to thrive, UNICEF is accelerating its efforts to engage adolescents and prioritizing data and evidence generation to inform at-scale, multisectoral programming and resource mobilization.

B. Goal Area 2: Every child learns

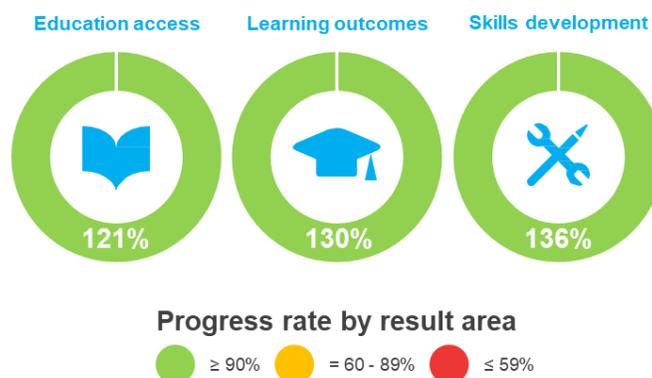
28. In 2019, global programme expenses in Goal Area 2 across 143 countries totalled \$1.18 billion, including \$0.69 billion for humanitarian action in 82 countries.



Sample Goal Area results

29. Despite significant progress in some outcome areas, outcome- and impact-level progress is too slow to achieve inclusive, equitable quality education for all by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal 4). By 2030, without faster progress, 420 million of the 1.4 billion school-aged children in low- and middle-income countries will not learn basic skills in childhood and 825 million will not acquire basic secondary-level skills, with boys worldwide at a slight disadvantage. The children left behind in both access and learning are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa, in humanitarian situations, in the poorest households and among children with disabilities and those who do not speak the language of instruction.

30. UNICEF met or came close to meeting 73 per cent of its output targets. The progress rate for all three result areas under Goal Area 2 was over 90 per cent. Progress was slowest in result area 1 on access to quality education and with respect to output targets 2.a.4 and 2.a.5 relating to education in humanitarian situations.



31. To achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, the midterm review determined the need to (a) raise the ambition of on-track targets; and (b) accelerate efforts to strengthen equitable access, strengthen effective systems for learning outcomes, and institutionalize gender-equitable skills development for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and employability. Accelerated efforts are needed to meet off-track targets in early learning, education in humanitarian settings, educational and learning materials, gender-responsive teaching and learning, and participation in skills-development programmes.

32. UNICEF has placed the learning crisis at the heart of its Global Education Strategy for the period 2019–2030, aiming to accelerate results by focusing, in collaboration with partners, on three key transition points: (a) the readiness of 5-year-olds to start school in 35 priority countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia; (b) the readiness of 10-year-olds to succeed in school in 74 priority countries, mostly in these same regions, as well as Europe and Central Asia; and (c) the readiness of 18-year-olds for life and work, including through efforts in 31 Generation Unlimited priority countries.

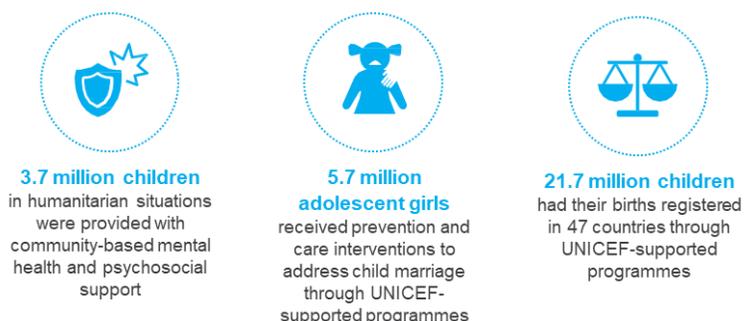
33. The strategy focuses on attendance and retention, structured pedagogies, learning assessments, incentives and accountability; and prioritizes three programmatic approaches: (a) systems strengthening; (b) the generation and use of disaggregated data; and (c) scalable and sustainable innovation.

34. These efforts will build on the substantial results achieved thus far. In 2019, 37 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had systems to provide equitable access to education, compared with 29 per cent in 2018; 49 per cent had effective mechanisms to reduce or prevent school-related gender-based violence, compared with 38 per cent in 2018; 48 per cent had effective education systems for learning outcomes, compared with 35 per cent in 2018; and 23 per cent had effective systems that institutionalized gender-equitable skills development, compared with 16 per cent in 2018. In the Sudan, 5,136 children, 47 per cent of them girls, gained proficiency in mathematics and Arabic through the global “Can’t Wait to Learn” e-learning programme, slated for significant scale-up.

35. In 2019, because of funding shortfalls, escalating insecurity and targeted attacks, UNICEF reached only 60 per cent of its target to provide education to 12.3 million children most at risk in humanitarian situations. Still, UNICEF and partners’ work with States and armed groups to protect education from attack resulted in the endorsement by 102 countries of the Safe Schools Declaration, while UNICEF worked with Governments to implement its guidelines.

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

36. In 2019, global programme expenses in Goal Area 3 across 152 countries totalled \$0.71 billion, including \$0.38 billion for humanitarian action in 74 countries.



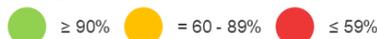
Sample Goal Area results

37. There has been progress at the impact and outcome levels. Birth registration has increased globally over the past two decades, albeit with stagnant progress in some regions. Child marriage has declined since 1990, furthered by the catalysing efforts of joint programming with UNFPA, which, in 2019, reached 5.7 million adolescent girls with child marriage-related prevention and care interventions; this includes almost 8,000 adolescent girls with disabilities, based on data from 10 out of 44 countries. Still, none of the Sustainable Development Goals related to Goal Area 3 are on track. Furthermore, 2019 concluded a deadly decade for children in conflict, with more than 170,000 grave violations against children verified since 2010, and the number of countries experiencing conflict the highest it has been since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

38. At the output level, UNICEF had progress rates exceeding 90 per cent for two of the three result areas under Goal Area 3. Progress was slowest in access to justice and outputs related to legal aid and birth registration within the civil registration system, followed by addressing violence against children.



Progress rate by result area



39. Through the midterm review, UNICEF identified key areas for acceleration to inform the development of the 2020 Child Protection Strategy. Efforts to strengthen child protection systems to prevent and respond to violence against children and to improve systems to ensure children’s access to justice are not on track. While efforts to address such harmful practices as FGM and child marriage are on track towards Strategic Plan targets, those targets’ ambition needs to be increased to contribute to the achievement of the related Sustainable Development Goal targets.

40. UNICEF will leverage its leadership role within the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda to accelerate birth registration in 13 priority countries in Africa, home to one in three unregistered children worldwide. Priority actions on violence against children include (a) strengthening the social service workforce; (b) focusing on violence in schools through the Safe to Learn campaign; (c) expanding the child online protection agenda; and (d) scaling up programming to support sexual violence prevention and response, including by improving parenting and caregiving practices.

41. UNICEF will strengthen its emphasis on social- and behavioural-change programmes and measurement, with transformation of gender norms, especially as they relate to violence and harmful practices, a priority area. On the basis of data and evaluation findings, the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programmes on FGM and child marriage will extend learning and technical support to additional countries.

42. Evidence from evaluations conducted in 2019 has necessitated that UNICEF adjust the Goal Area 3 theory of change, including modifying one assumption to reflect the importance of gender-transformative strategies. UNICEF has also identified approaches to strengthen the linking of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming; enhance work around public finance, data, monitoring and case management; and deepen engagement with partners, communities and children.

43. Acceleration will build on results achieved thus far. In 2019, close to 21.8 million births were registered in 47 countries through UNICEF support, a 35 per cent increase over 2018. More than 158,000 girls and women received FGM-related prevention and protection services, a 59 per cent increase over 2018.

44. Interventions to address violence against children were scaled up, with 17 per cent more children who had experienced violence reached with services in health, social work or justice and law enforcement in 2019 compared with 2018, with a roughly even split between girls and boys, based on data from 81 countries, and including over 16,000 children with disabilities, based on data from 43 countries. Ten per cent more parents and caregivers were reached with parenting programmes to prevent violence. Programmes to improve the availability and quality of data on violence against children were supported in 125 countries, an increase of 9 per cent over 2018 and a testament to the significance of data in improving child protection outcomes.

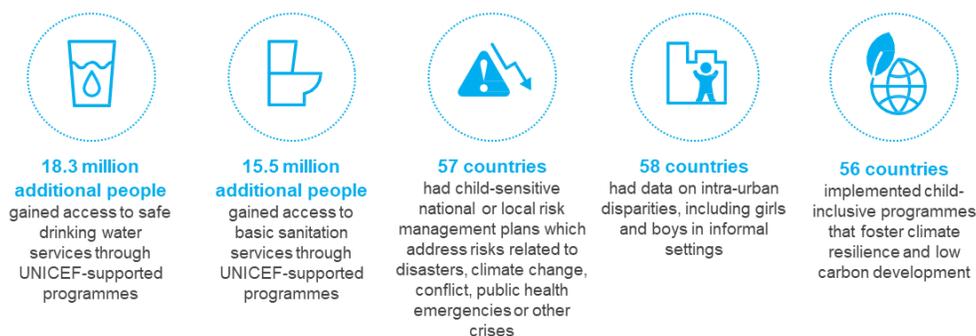
45. Protective services were provided to 1.7 million children on the move, including through UNICEF-supported programmes in 76 countries; this number includes over 795,000 boys and nearly 714,000 girls in 50 of those countries. UNICEF also provided protective services to millions of children affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and public health emergencies in 74 humanitarian situations. Over 4.37 million children living in areas affected by landmines or other explosive weapons in 22 countries received relevant prevention and survivor assistance interventions, reaching 89 per cent of the target population and including about 1.9 million girls and 2 million boys, based on data from 21 countries, and over 28,000 children with disabilities, based on data from 8 countries.

46. Since an initial 2018 investment to scale up protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in 16 priority countries, UNICEF has continued to facilitate relevant United Nations system-wide processes, actively scaling up protection from sexual exploitation and abuse processes in 32 countries across six regions that have a humanitarian response. UNICEF co-led the development of the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, launched in December 2019. The organization reached over 3.3 million women, girls and boys with gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions in humanitarian situations in 2019.

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

47. In 2019, global programme expenses in Goal Area 4 across 145 countries totalled \$1.11 billion, including \$0.68 billion for humanitarian action in 84 countries.

48. Good progress against most Strategic Plan targets at the outcome and impact levels has not been fast enough to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on basic and safely managed WASH services by 2030. Many countries, especially in Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa, are not on track to eliminate open defecation. Even as extreme weather events and disaster-induced displacement increase in severity and global greenhouse gas emissions rise, Sustainable Development Goal targets related to disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and climate change response are off track.



Sample Goal Area results

49. At the output level, progress rates were over 90 per cent for four of the five result areas under Goal Area 4. Progress was slowest on sanitation and for output targets on open defecation and access to sanitation and hygiene in schools.

50. The midterm review found a clear need to accelerate efforts towards universal basic sanitation and ending open defecation as well as ensuring access to WASH in schools and health-care facilities. Meanwhile, the ambition of the Strategic Plan targets that are on track must increase in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

51. According to the midterm review, limited prioritization by Governments and other actors has resulted in inadequate resources and capacity, slowing progress. In response, UNICEF is (a) strengthening the evidence base for advocacy in areas such as WASH in Schools as well as partnerships with national and subnational Governments; (b) mobilizing global and regional partners around harmonized approaches as well as high-level political commitment; and (c) deepening relationships with the private sector. The World Bank and regional platforms, including the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, will be key partners in efforts to end open defecation in left-behind regions.



52. Three strategic shifts with regard to WASH are necessary: strengthening programming capacity in climate-resilient WASH; promoting safely managed sanitation, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals; and linking development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work in fragile contexts and protracted crises. Addressing WASH inequalities in rural and urban areas and WASH in schools and health facilities will be key to accelerated progress.

53. According to the midterm review, several approaches set out in the theory of change for Goal Area 4 should be reinforced, including WASH systems strengthening, community health systems, market-based approaches and innovative financing, with a focus on fragile and conflict-affected countries. Climate, energy and environment-related solutions should be integrated into sector strategies.

54. Acceleration in Goal Area 4 will build on results achieved thus far. In 2019, UNICEF reached 39.1 million people (19.6 million women and girls and 18.8 million men and boys, including over 750,000 people with disabilities) with humanitarian water support in 64 countries, the same number of countries as in 2018. In addition, the organization reached 9.3 million people (4.6 million women and girls and 4.4 million men and boys, including over 140,000 people with disabilities) with sanitation services in emergencies in 50 countries, an increase from 46 countries in 2018. One million girls and women in emergencies were reached with menstrual health and hygiene services and supplies.

55. In May 2019, UNICEF issued a procedure to enhance linkages between humanitarian and development programming, emphasizing child-sensitive and multi-hazard risk analysis. In 2019, 41 per cent of UNICEF country offices met organizational benchmarks on implementing risk-informed programming, exceeding the 35 per cent milestone, while 57 countries developed child-sensitive national or local risk-management plans, exceeding the milestone of 50.

56. In 2019, UNICEF programming on climate change expanded, with 56 country offices engaged in child-inclusive programmes that fostered climate resilience, compared with 27 in 2018. Activities included (a) policy and implementation support to make social-service delivery more climate-resilient; (b) actions to combat air pollution; and (c) sustainable energy provision, with a focus on health-care facilities, schools and water and sanitation services.

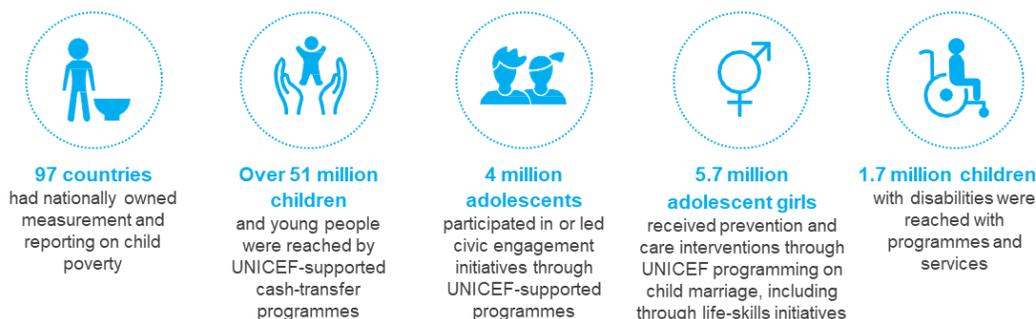
57. The midterm review elevated action on climate change and environmental degradation as an organizational priority, to be mainstreamed throughout UNICEF programmes. UNICEF will accelerate efforts to programme at scale in such areas as climate-smart WASH, health care and education, and promoting the engagement of children, adolescents and young people in action on climate and the environment.

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

58. In 2019, global programme expenses in Goal Area 5 across 154 countries totalled \$0.50 billion, including \$0.27 billion for humanitarian action in 60 countries.

59. Goal Area 5 encompasses work to (a) reduce child poverty, including by influencing fiscal policies and multisectoral programming; (b) prioritize child rights in international and national human rights mechanisms; (c) address discrimination, including on the basis of gender and disability; and (d) increase the participation of young people in civic life.

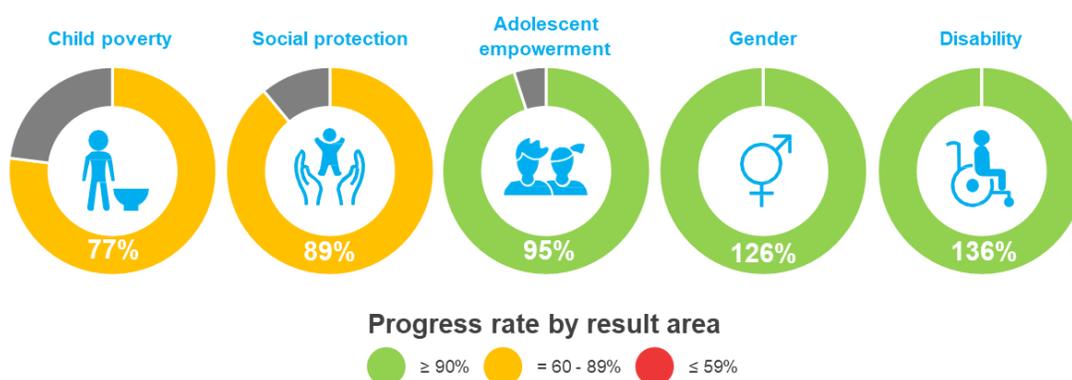
60. While data indicate progress on impact- and outcome-level indicators of child poverty and social protection access, it has not been fast enough to achieve Sustainable Development Goal targets. Despite significant progress in outcome indicators of adolescent empowerment, the lack of global data makes it hard to gauge progress towards related Sustainable Development Goal targets. Progress in political commitment towards gender equality has not translated broadly into gender norm changes within communities. Meanwhile, with the outcome indicator measuring change in attitudes on disability still under development, progress is difficult to assess.



Sample Goal Area results

61. UNICEF met or came close to meeting 82 per cent of its output milestones and had output-level progress rates of over 90 per cent for three of the five result areas under Goal Area 5. Progress was slowest in the result area on child poverty.

62. The midterm review findings identified the need for UNICEF to prioritize continued support to countries' measurement of child poverty, while addressing challenges in measuring the equity of social-sector spending and supporting the use of data for policymaking. Acceleration is needed in promoting shock-responsive and climate-sensitive social protection, which will entail enhancing organizational capacity and slightly revising the target and baseline. Other priorities include (a) expanding cash-plus approaches, while making social-protection systems more gender-responsive and disability-inclusive; and (b) measuring gender norms to build evidence on what works to accelerate change.



63. Acceleration will build on the results achieved thus far. In 2019, UNICEF continued its work to encourage Governments to monitor child poverty and adapt social and economic policies to address it. As of 2019, 65 countries had established routine measurement and reporting on multidimensional child poverty and 73 on monetary child poverty, surpassing the milestones of 52 and 65, respectively. Child poverty was addressed by specific policies and programmes in 28 countries, up from 22 in 2018 and exceeding the milestone of 23.

64. In 2019, child-poverty measurements helped to direct focus and resources into geographic areas and populations with the highest number of deprived children, including in Ghana, Panama and Zambia, and influenced national poverty-reduction efforts, including increasing social-protection coverage for children, as in Malaysia, where the flagship social-protection scheme increased benefits to children.

65. UNICEF-supported cash transfer programmes reached more than 51 million children in 78 countries in 2019, including almost 8.5 million in humanitarian settings in 30 countries. These numbers include 11 million girls and 10.9 million boys, based on data from 36 countries, and almost 700,000 children with disabilities, based on data from 21 countries. As of 2019, 47 countries had strong or moderately strong social-protection systems, up from 38 in 2018, and 9 had national cash-transfer programmes ready to respond to a crisis, up from 6 in 2018.

66. Over 4 million adolescents (61 per cent girls) across 113 countries — 2.6 million of them in India — participated in or led civic-engagement activities through UNICEF-supported programmes, exceeding the target of 3.2 million. Thirty-one per cent of UNICEF country offices routinely engaged adolescents in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, exceeding the 2019 milestone of 30 per cent. At least half the engaged adolescents were girls or from marginalized backgrounds. In collaboration with partners, UNICEF will continue to focus on improving the collection of age-disaggregated data and evidence to support adolescent programming across all Goal Areas, and is developing a universal tool to measure outcomes for adolescent participation across cultures and socioeconomic contexts, to address the global data gap in this area.

67. In 2019, UNICEF scaled up disability-inclusive programmes to support 1.7 million children with disabilities across 142 countries, up from 1.4 million across 123 countries in 2018. Thirty-six per cent of UNICEF humanitarian responses (21 out of 59 countries) systematically provided disability-inclusive programmes and services, such as accessible classrooms in refugee camps in Kenya. Over 138,000 children with disabilities were provided with assistive devices and products through emergency kits. The midterm review identified disability-inclusive programming in humanitarian and development contexts, capacity-building for frontline workers and access to assistive devices and technologies as priority areas for acceleration.

IV. Cross-cutting priorities

A. Humanitarian action

68. In 2019, prolonged armed conflict remained the main driver of humanitarian need, followed by displacement, food insecurity, disease outbreaks and natural disasters. Climate change continued to cause more frequent and severe weather events and exacerbate vulnerabilities. About 1 in 45 people worldwide — nearly 168 million — required urgent humanitarian assistance. One hundred forty-nine million children were living in high-intensity conflict zones.

69. In 2019, UNICEF responded to 281 new and ongoing humanitarian situations in 96 countries, including 5 Level 3 (L3) and 11 Level 2 (L2) emergencies. Humanitarian expense accounted for 52 per cent of the overall expense of the organization. At the country level, 54 per cent of expenses were humanitarian-related. Globally, emergency supplies worth \$346.1 million were procured for 58 countries and areas, with 94 per cent of the total supporting UNICEF Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies.

70. In 2019, UNICEF reached 39.1 million people in humanitarian situations with access to safe water, significantly reducing the water-collection burden faced by women and girls. In addition, the organization reached 7.4 million children with education, 41.3 million with measles vaccination, 3.7 million with psychosocial support and 4.1 million with treatment for severe acute malnutrition. UNICEF reached another 8.5 million children with cash assistance to 2.8 million households. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the organization reached 7,500 children with an innovative humanitarian cash-transfer programme for children with disabilities, with a total of 15,000 reached since the project began in 2016. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including as part of its multisectoral response to the Ebola outbreak, UNICEF reached 169,784 children (90,194 boys, 79,590 girls) with mental health and psychosocial support and about 33 million at-risk people with communication-for-development activities.

71. In 2019, UNICEF initiated a humanitarian review process to promote institutional change in the design and delivery of integrated humanitarian programmes. The review identified the top 10 barriers to the delivery of principled, timely and quality humanitarian action by UNICEF. Recommendations will be forthcoming for ways in which to address the need to adapt human resources, ensure humanitarian access, improve accountability to affected populations, strengthen partnerships with international actors, enhance localization, conduct coherent advocacy, enhance consistent humanitarian-development linkages in programming, address donor conditionalities and expand the use of innovation and technology in humanitarian action.

72. The review highlighted three key areas for improvement: increasing humanitarian capacity and leadership; guaranteeing corporate commitment to humanitarian response; and strengthening accountability for achieving humanitarian results. In addition to undertaking the review, UNICEF revised the Core Commitments for Children to equip itself and partners with new organizational, programmatic and operational commitments.

73. The midterm review found that fragile situations presented significant risks to meeting Sustainable Development Goal targets as well as Strategic Plan targets across all Goal Areas. Accelerating socioeconomic progress and access to basic social services in these settings requires strategies that engage Governments, the United Nations development system, civil society and the private sector to invest in institution-building and monitoring and to prepare for shocks.

74. The outbreak of COVID-19, reported at the end of 2019, had become a pandemic by early March 2020, throwing the world into a menacing, shifting and uncertain new reality. While the numbers of severe illnesses and deaths are above the capacity of most countries to manage, the pandemic's wider consequences, in particular for children, women and their families as well as for many populations already in humanitarian situations, have yet to be seen. The negative impacts of the crisis on the deployment of staff, supplies and resources to reach people in need, both in the COVID-19 response and in all other ongoing humanitarian emergencies, are expected to be severe and long-lasting.

B. Gender equality

75. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 integrates gender across all Goal Areas and strengthens the institutional capacity to deliver gender-equality results, while targeting five priority issues: gender-responsive adolescent health, girls' secondary education, child marriage, gender-based violence in emergencies and menstrual health and hygiene. This work contributes to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights and addressing harmful gender norms, both critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

76. UNICEF has improved its performance on the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women benchmarks from a baseline of 73 per cent in 2017 to 82 per cent in 2019, with the most marked improvements in gender expenditure and overall gender parity. Programmatically, UNICEF made significant progress in addressing gender-based violence, menstrual health and hygiene (MHH), child marriage and quality maternal care.

77. Unprecedented momentum on gender-based violence was propelled by global coalitions, including the Safe to Learn initiative, launched in 2019 to target violence in schools, with a focus on its gender dimensions. In 2019, as part of the flagship European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative on ending violence against women and girls, UNICEF began implementation in 13 countries in Africa and Latin America. Gender-based violence was integrated into 71 per cent of the 2020 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals, surpassing the target of 50 per cent set by the UNICEF Executive Director.

78. UNICEF support for MHH continued to expand in 2019, with activities in 72 countries in development and humanitarian settings and extensive global support for capacity-building, policy formulation and innovative programming. UNICEF provided MHH-related services to 1 million women and girls from 39 countries dealing with emergency situations, including 24,232 women and girls with disabilities.

79. Programming on positive gender norms and socialization — a flagship area of work that contributes to meeting Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the results on gender equality of the common chapter to the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women — took place in 120 countries in all regions, focusing on school curricula; parenting practices, including fathers' engagement in caregiving; training for frontline workers; and multisectoral interventions addressing gender norms linked to child marriage and FGM.

80. In 2019, an independent evaluation of the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan noted that progress in mainstreaming gender across sectors and in humanitarian action had lagged. In addition to flagging the need for stronger accountabilities and leadership on gender, the evaluation called for a greater emphasis on structural change over and above the focus on improving internal capacities and systems.

81. Insights from the evaluation have informed the midterm-review finding of the need to accelerate gender results over the remaining two years of the Strategic Plan. UNICEF will increase investment in targeted areas, especially adolescent girls' health and education outcomes, while redoubling attention to sectors lagging in gender integration, including health, nutrition, WASH and humanitarian action. Measures to enhance ownership and responsibility for gender integration among staff at all levels will be critical. Enhancements to gender-related data and evidence systems across all sectors will be prioritized, building on lessons learned and ramping up the evidence base on gender norms change.

V. Strengthening organizational performance

A. United Nations reform

82. UNICEF remains fully committed to the reform of the United Nations development system and the implementation of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The organization has carried out numerous critical adjustments to processes, policies and structures in line with the reform and has strengthened its partnerships with other United Nations entities at the global and field levels.

83. In 2019, UNICEF provided critical inputs for the new country-level Management and Accountability Framework and the updated United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) guidance. Following the finalization of the two frameworks, UNICEF and the Development Coordination Office developed guidance for performance appraisals of resident coordinators and UNICEF representatives. UNICEF also strengthened its support to the resident coordinator talent pool.

84. Inter-agency efforts with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women increased synergies between UNSDCFs and country programme documents, and an online planning, monitoring and reporting system, UN INFO, was developed to ensure the correct sequencing of the two documents. UNICEF advanced the work on common business operations, issuing guidance to regional and country offices on the principle of mutual recognition to maximize inter-agency efficiencies and initiating a study to assess the potential savings from common back offices at the country level. In support of the wider United Nations development system, UNICEF continued to provide strategic advice and support to the High-level Committee on Management on the provision of services, including advice on mechanisms, technology and service management.

85. UNICEF doubled its cost-share contribution to the development coordination system for 2019, transferring \$8.4 million in late 2018 to allow for critical early investment by the Development Coordination Office into the system. UNICEF collected 1 per cent coordination levy payments from Member States in the amount of \$3.4 million, leading the way among United Nations entities.

86. In 2019, UNICEF received \$548 million from United Nations partners for development and humanitarian interventions, including through joint programmes, an increase of nearly 10 per cent over 2018. United Nations partnership arrangements have become the second biggest funding stream for UNICEF after traditional government partners, and the organization is considering developing a dedicated strategy for pooled funds, with ongoing discussions on how to guide more joint programming.

87. In 2019, UNICEF started to assess the significant implications of the United Nations development system reform as part of the midterm review and reconfirmed its steadfast support as the focus of reform shifts towards implementation. Pending additional guidance from Member States, UNICEF is ready to operationalize the regional and multi-country office reviews, promote system-wide solutions, and

engage in the development of the regional and global chapters of the Management and Accountability Framework and the UNSDCF companion pieces. UNICEF will advance efforts to further harmonize reporting on the funding compact with other United Nations entities, and will continue to drive results at the regional and country levels by mainstreaming actions from the concluded reform workstreams and enhancing efficiencies.

88. In 2019, UNICEF redoubled its cooperation efforts with key United Nations partners, underscoring the shift towards a focus on the impact of the reform on the ground. In response to the Secretary-General's Call to Action to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF and WFP enhanced their partnership on wasting prevention and school-based WASH, health and nutrition, and UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees formalized joint actions in education, WASH and child protection for asylum-seeking, refugee and returnee children, their families and host communities.

89. The long-standing UNICEF collaboration with WHO continued, with intensified efforts in primary health care, public-health emergencies, immunization and data. Following the request of the Secretary-General to strengthen the global health architecture, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Women, WHO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Bank (H6 Partnership) expanded and deepened their collaboration to improve outcomes in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and took steps to create regional and country platforms. The UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage received unprecedented support of \$150 million in 2019, while an independent evaluation noted that the programme validated the power of joined-up action to provide leverage for collective solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

90. In 2019, the United Nations Legal Identity Agenda reached unprecedented consensus across 14 United Nations agencies, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank on a common approach to identity management, with operational guidance in the works for United Nations country teams. Building on core United Nations reform principles and under the leadership of resident coordinators, UNICEF and its sister agencies have harmonized programme design and implementation for the Spotlight Initiative to deliver a comprehensive approach to ending all forms of gender-based violence in 26 countries across four regions.

91. Good progress continued to be made in the six identified areas of collaborative advantage of the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and UN-Women, as outlined in the joint annex on implementation in 2019 of the common chapter of the strategic plans, 2018–2021 of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

92. In a survey of staff conducted by the independent evaluation offices of the respective agencies as part of the evaluability assessment of the common chapter, 100 per cent of respondents indicated that the common chapter was either a key driver or a positive influence for improved collaboration among the agencies. Nonetheless, while collaboration between the four agencies is solid and growing, the imperatives of the reform require collaboration across the entire system, and the utility of the common chapter as a separate initiative should be reviewed in that context.

B. Implementation strategies

93. The midterm review reaffirmed the prioritization of programming at scale and across sectors for all Goal Areas to accelerate results towards Strategic Plan and

Sustainable Development Goal targets. Building on evidence from several evaluations, systems strengthening will be enhanced as key to coordinating and implementing interventions that deliver high impact and mitigate crises across multiple areas of children's rights by developing the capacities of Governments, civil society and communities and fostering national ownership of interventions, including through South-South cooperation.

94. Winning support for children's rights from decision-makers and the wider public is a key priority for UNICEF, which increased its base of supporters to 96 million in 2019. Integrated campaigns on priority advocacy issues, together with related programme strategies, contributed to positive child rights-focused policy changes in 136 countries. The midterm review identified the need to set clear priorities for data-driven global advocacy and individual-giving fundraising by paying attention to how programmatic areas resonate with the wider public. The potential to accelerate results through advocacy is particularly high around climate change, education and humanitarian action.

95. In 2019, UNICEF continued to effect change by developing and leveraging resources and partnerships for children. Increased and more-systematic engagement with regional and multilateral organizations and international financial institutions yielded \$401 million in funding, a 300 per cent increase from 2018. Contributions from Global Programme Partnerships recorded 19 per cent annualized growth, while 83 per cent of country offices implemented advocacy plans to leverage domestic resources, vastly exceeding the 56 per cent milestone for 2019. Contributions from corporate partners increased from \$134 million in 2018 to \$155 million in 2019.

96. The midterm review confirmed that the greatest challenge to leveraging resources for children is maintaining and growing the organization's regular resources and other flexible funds. Despite Member State commitments to quality funding, meaningful gains in this area have yet to be seen, while increased conditionalities and partner demand for oversight and due diligence require more resources for risk mitigation. The acceleration of results requires high-quality, flexible funding to innovate, build and leverage partnerships and strengthen capacities as well as to generate data and enhance its use for action. It is also necessary to bridge gaps in humanitarian funding where stringent donor conditionalities prevent the implementation of activities that yield durable solutions. Flexible funding has become even more imperative to ensure that UNICEF has the flexibility to respond quickly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

97. UNICEF continued to maximize the power of business and markets for children in 2019, as 136 country offices and National Committees, compared with 73 in 2018, engaged with over 18,000 businesses worldwide on fundraising, advocacy, good business practices and support through core assets, reaching an estimated 15 million children worldwide. Income from businesses increased from \$134 million in 2018 to \$155 million in 2019.

98. In 2019, UNICEF procured \$3.826 billion in supplies and services from over 11,000 businesses across 172 countries, achieving a savings of \$363.3 million through strategic procurement approaches, \$93.3 million more than the 2019 milestone of \$270 million. In addition, five novel products against a target of four were on the pathway to scale: school furniture; a non-pneumatic anti-shock garment that reduces blood loss in post-partum haemorrhage; the Scaling Pneumonia Response Innovations (SPRINT) Project for proven pneumonia treatments (antibiotics and oxygen); an oxygen-therapy project; and high-performance, multi-purpose tents. The midterm review is pushing UNICEF to deepen and diversify its engagement with businesses, including through shared-value partnerships that leverage business expertise and assets to accelerate long-term, sustainable results for children; it also affirmed the importance of taking products to scale.

99. In 2019, UNICEF focused on making innovation a more effective change strategy to accelerate programme results in priority areas. As recommended by the 2019 evaluation of innovation in UNICEF work, the organization drafted a new strategy, initiated structural changes and introduced a portfolio-management approach. Innovations included the GIGA initiative to connect every school in the world to the Internet and the Cryptocurrency Fund, a first for the United Nations. Innovations taken to scale in 2019 include the youth-engagement platform U-Report, which now reaches 9 million people in 65 countries, and the Learning Passport platform to improve learning access for children on the move, as well as two health innovations: HIV point-of-care diagnosis and the HPV+ platform for integrated health and well-being for adolescents.

100. UNICEF is increasingly data-driven in its programming approaches. As a result of the midterm review, the organization will make research and data more readily accessible to decision-makers using predictive analytics and other tools; strengthen its programme monitoring and evaluation functions; and focus on meeting the demand for instant data, new and accessible data sources and more disaggregated data and information for informed decision-making, advocacy and action.

C. Management

101. In 2019, UNICEF invested considerable effort in building a positive work culture. In response to the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, the organization took measures to embed its core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability across work and behaviours, strengthen people management and clarify and reinforce accountabilities to deter inappropriate behaviours.

102. Measures included a new competency framework, grounded in the core values; more mediators to help resolve interpersonal conflicts; strengthened investigative capacity; increased training in management skills for staff in supervisory roles; the introduction of new national-staff professional-development programmes; and more opportunities for staff engagement on organizational culture. UNICEF launched a strategy on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, with trainings for staff, and strengthened internal vetting during recruitment, including through the United Nations system-wide Clear Check database. Stronger, more coherent internal communications underpin all these efforts.

103. UNICEF is adding a fifth “enabler” on organizational culture to its Strategic Plan to institutionalize accountability. The organization will continue to share and consult with and learn from other United Nations agencies around best-practice approaches to organizational culture through the High-level Committee on Management task force on the future of work and other relevant platforms.

104. In 2019, UNICEF continued to meet the respective targets of the Secretary-General’s system-wide strategy on gender parity among international professional staff, maintaining the ratio of 48 per cent women and 52 per cent men that it achieved in 2018. Full gender parity was achieved among senior staff, with 51 per cent women. Geographical diversity among international professional staff increased, with 54 per cent from programme countries in 2019, up from 52 per cent in 2018. Among senior staff, geographical diversity increased from 37 per cent programme-country nationals in 2018 to 39 per cent in 2019.

105. Recruitment processes were further strengthened in 2019, including by consolidating the talent pipeline for senior staff positions and establishing a new talent pipeline for deputy representative positions. In 2019, completing each of 4,129 recruitment cases took an average of 59 days, compared with 57 days in 2018, falling

within the established 90-day regular-recruitment timeline. Emergency recruitment averaged 45 days, compared with 63 in 2018.

106. The midterm review led UNICEF to further review its programme management model to align with new modalities employed by offices to deliver programmes, taking into account new challenges and opportunities while addressing financial and programmatic risks. A realignment of work between programme and operations staff will strengthen the UNICEF programme-management model and reduce transaction workloads by enabling programme staff to focus on programme oversight while operations staff provide greater support on implementation modalities and achieving value for money. The review of the programme management model is ongoing.

107. The Global Shared Services Centre continued to drive efficiency and business modernization, reduce organizational risk and deliver value for money, generating savings of \$27.3 million in 2019. The Centre is also spearheading operational reform in line with the reform of the United Nations development system. By the end of 2019, 53 per cent of offices had fully implemented the Business Operations Strategy against a target of 50 per cent, with \$11.5 million in savings, almost twice the target of \$6 million.

108. UNICEF issued 28 internal audit reports in 2019, generating 353 agreed actions to strengthen governance, risk management and controls. Two advisory reports and a report on a UNICEF-led, six-agency audit of the United Nations “Delivering as one” initiative in one country were issued. The organization managed 498 cases, a 120 per cent increase over 2018, and closed 287 cases, a 209 per cent increase over 2018. The number of matters reported for investigation continued to rise.

VI. Revenue, expenses and resource mobilization¹

109. Total revenue decreased by 4 per cent in 2019, to \$6,412 million. Regular resources decreased by 24 per cent, to \$1,381 million, while other resources increased by 3 per cent, to \$5,031 million. Consequently, regular resources as a proportion of total revenue fell from 27 per cent in 2018 to 22 per cent in 2019.

¹ Financial information is unaudited.

Table 1
Revenue source and type, 2018 and 2019

(Millions of United States dollars)

<i>Source of revenue</i>	<i>2018 actual</i>	<i>2019 actual</i>	<i>2019 plan^a</i>
Regular resources			
Government and intergovernmental agencies ^b	895	480	522
Private sector ^c	739	695	817
Other revenue^d	173	206	174
Total — regular resources	1 807	1 381	1 512
Other resources (regular)			
Government and intergovernmental agencies	2 098	1 783	1 564
Private sector	558	622	684
Inter-organizational arrangements	286	576	466
Subtotal	2 942	2 981	2 714
Other resources (emergency)			
Government and intergovernmental agencies	1 412	1 585	1 512
Private sector	163	144	100
Inter-organizational arrangements	352	321	280
Subtotal (rounded)	1 927	2 050	1 892
Total — other resources	4 869	5 031	4 606
Total revenue (rounded)	6 676	6 412	6 118

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 2019 (E/ICEF/2019/AB/L.5). The data in this column is 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 2018 actual and 2019 include contributions of \$47 million and \$43 million, respectively, for specific management activities.

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

Table 2
Revenue source, 2018 and 2019

(Millions of United States dollars)

<i>Source of revenue</i>	<i>2018 actual</i>	<i>2019 actual</i>	<i>2019 plan^a</i>
Government and intergovernmental agencies	4 405	3 848	3 598
Private sector	1 460	1 461	1 600
Inter-organizational arrangements	638	897	746
Other	173	206	174
Total revenue	6 676	6 412	6 118

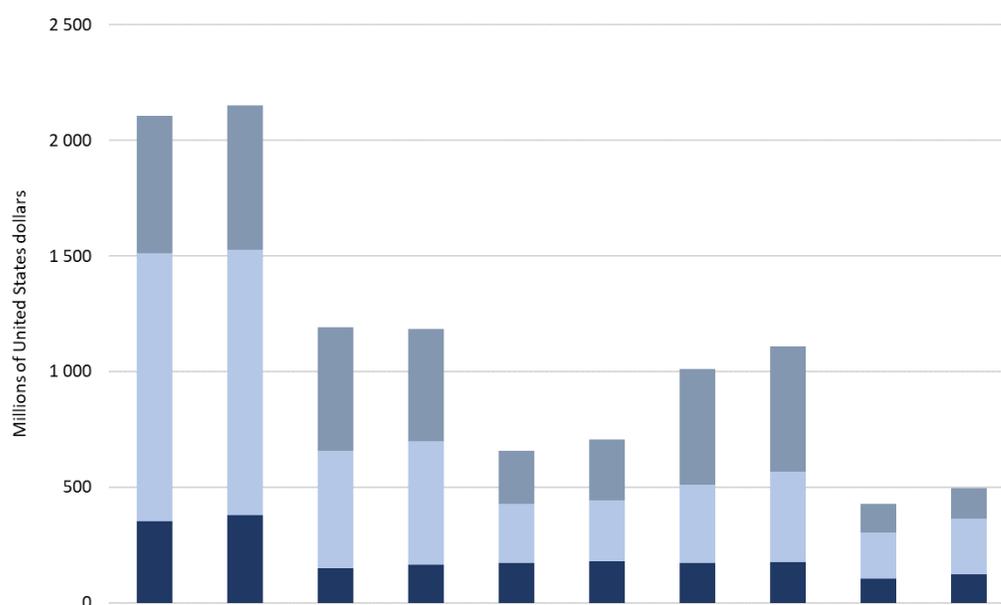
^a According to financial estimates provided to the Executive Board in September 2019. The data in this column is presented on a modified cash basis.

110. In 2019, 137 Governments contributed to UNICEF resources. Total public-sector revenue (from Governments, intergovernmental agencies and inter-organizational arrangements) came to \$4,745 million (down from \$5,043 million in 2018). Regular resources revenue from Governments and intergovernmental agencies declined by 46 per cent, to \$480 million (down from \$895 million in 2018). The decline is due to multi-year funding recorded in 2018 primarily from Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The largest contributors in 2019 were Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States of America. Of special note is the generous donation of \$110 million in regular resources through a multi-year commitment by the Netherlands. Private sector revenue (from National Committees, individual donors, non-governmental organizations and foundations), at \$1,461 million, has remained consistent with 2018.

111. Revenue for humanitarian assistance (other resources (emergency)), at \$2,050 million in 2019, was 6 per cent higher than in 2018. The humanitarian funding requirement increased to \$4,133 million in 2019 from \$3,813 million in 2018, representing the largest-ever funding request for humanitarian action by UNICEF.

112. Total humanitarian expense amounted to \$2,961 million, or 52 per cent of the total 2019 expense; \$2,049 million of this amount was in other resources (emergency). Of the 30 country offices with the largest overall expense, about 60 per cent of country-level expenses were classified as humanitarian. These offices comprised 79 per cent of total country-level expenses, both humanitarian and non-humanitarian; 28 of them had Humanitarian Action for Children appeals in 2019.

Figure 1
Direct programme assistance by Goal Area and resource type, 2018 and 2019



	<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	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
Regular resources	353	379	150	165	172	178	171	175	103	122	949	1 020
Other resources (regular)	1 160	1 149	509	533	255	266	341	392	201	241	2 466	2 581
Other resources (emergency)	593	625	534	485	231	264	499	542	123	134	1 980	2 049
Total	2 106	2 153	1 192	1 183	658	708	1 011	1 109	427	497	5 395	5 650

Note: Due to rounding, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns and rows; data as of 2 April 2020.

113. UNICEF made every effort to comply with the cost-recovery policy and the related Executive Board decisions. In total, eight waivers were granted, with a corresponding impact of approximately \$13.9 million.² Of this total, \$13.3 million related to three waivers with a reduced cost-recovery rate for significant donations of more than \$300 million from the World Bank in support of South Sudan and Yemen. Four waivers related to United Nations interagency activities and one waiver to a \$25 million donation from the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents administered by the World Bank.

² See table 14 in the report for 2019 on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021.

VII. Lessons learned

114. Several important lessons learned, drawn from evaluations, reviews and an assessment of the Strategic Plan enablers and consolidated through the midterm review process, will inform UNICEF work going forward. To enable the organization to make the strongest possible contribution to the realization of children's rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the midterm review identified areas in which the organization and the world were off track as well as those in which significant data gaps made it difficult to assess progress and reach the most disadvantaged children. Given the current climate of flat resource growth and a potential further shrinking of development financing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF has sharpened its focus on those areas in which its strategies and approaches have the strongest potential to reduce multiple deprivations across the two decades of a child's life, targeting the countries and populations with the highest deprivations of children's rights.

115. Lessons from many sectors across both development work and humanitarian action point to long-term, flexible resources as indispensable for integrated programming and holistic systems strengthening. These were flagged in the midterm review as among the most fundamental approaches for acceleration across all Goal Areas, cross-cutting priorities and child-related Sustainable Development Goals. As the trend away from flexible resources in international aid continues and the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for development financing remain uncertain, UNICEF will focus on accelerating the mobilization of regular resources by advocating with government partners and individual donors and reaffirming the criticality of multilateral institutions in meeting global challenges.

116. The midterm review has made clear that operationalizing the United Nations development system reform, linking it closely with programmatic work across sectors and contexts and tracking its impact will be key to accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Delivering on children's rights in the context of constrained resources demands that UNICEF maximize the efficiencies of coordinated action, while the multidisciplinary nature of the Goals calls for engagement across sectors and partners.

117. The findings of the evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan showed insufficient gender mainstreaming, highlighting the need for UNICEF to articulate a clear understanding of gender equality framed as a human-rights issue, grounded in a strengthened evidence base on gender norms and embedded across the organization so that the principles are consistently translated into programming. Overall, UNICEF needs to reinforce and further systematize its efforts to leave no one behind. The review of complex humanitarian responses and other sources of evidence have shown that the organization often struggles to strike the right balance between greater coverage, on the one hand, and reaching the most vulnerable, on the other. Greater conceptual clarity, supported by tools and approaches, is needed to define what equity and inclusion mean beyond equal access to services, so that equity approaches can contribute to systemic change.

118. UNICEF has identified the need to further strengthen the links between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming by embedding preparedness and risk mitigation, including as related to conflict and climate, more systematically in programme planning and budgets. Experience has reinforced the need to address systems strengthening and community resilience in humanitarian work consistently and from the outset in order to build local capacities and ensure that emergency response for immediate needs also contributes to equitable, holistic development in the long term.

119. Through a series of reports commissioned in the period 2018–2019 by the Executive Director, UNICEF identified an urgent need to strengthen its organizational culture, to ground it more firmly in its core values and in the International Civil Service Commission Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service and to ensure that all UNICEF workplaces maintained and promoted a culture of zero tolerance for all forms of discrimination, abuse, exploitation, harassment and abuse of authority. UNICEF is in the process of implementing the recommendations from these reports, with actions being taken to encourage staff to live the core values in their daily behaviours, to build the people-management skills of managers at all levels and to promote greater understanding and accountability by staff for their behaviours.

120. In line with the recommendations, UNICEF will include a new enabler — “An organizational culture firmly rooted in our core values” — in its Strategic Plan. How UNICEF works to deliver results for children cannot be separated from the results themselves. As an organization that champions the rights of children globally, UNICEF must also champion the same standards for its own staff. A more respectful, values-based work culture will ultimately make UNICEF even more effective at delivering results for children.

VIII. Looking forward

121. Two years into the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the midterm review has helped the organization to position itself to make the greatest possible difference for children in this Decade of Action. It has reviewed its own work to advance children’s rights across all Goal Areas, identifying the greatest opportunities for accelerated action. In these priority areas — improving maternal and neonatal health and immunization and putting mental health on the agenda; reducing stunting and wasting; ensuring access to basic sanitation and ending open defecation; improving learning outcomes, including skills-development for adolescents; reducing violence against children; scaling up birth registration; and mainstreaming action on climate change — UNICEF will bring to bear proven, high-impact interventions and will explore the potential for game-changing innovations to reach the greatest numbers while making a difference for those hardest to reach.

122. As the world mobilizes to counter the spread of COVID-19, UNICEF is delivering assistance to children in affected countries, working with Governments and partners to contribute to outbreak control and help to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and the measures to contain it. Without urgent action to address the impacts on children, this global health crisis threatens to become a child-rights crisis, potentially reversing some of the progress made in recent years.

123. Disruptions in societies are hitting children especially hard, compromising their access to essential health care and nutritious food, closing their schools and cutting them off from opportunities to learn, play and engage with their peers. Socioeconomic turmoil heightens the risk of violence against children at home and in communities and of such harmful practices as child marriage and child labour, while the global recession puts families’ livelihoods in jeopardy, pushing tens of millions into poverty and deepening deprivations for those who are already there. UNICEF is putting the most vulnerable children and their rights at the centre of its response, because those already affected by poverty, exclusion, discrimination, conflict or fragility will bear the brunt of the pandemic’s socioeconomic toll.

124. The organization has launched a six-point Agenda for Action to urge Governments and partners in the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector to safeguard children from the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. It calls for swift and concerted action to keep children healthy; to ensure that they can continue to learn and to access WASH and protection services; and to

support their families in caring for them. It includes targeted measures to uphold the rights of children on the move and conflict-affected children and to ensure that other vulnerable children, such as children with disabilities and girls, do not fall through the cracks in efforts to respond to the pandemic's socioeconomic impacts.

125. UNICEF will continue to monitor, analyse and respond to these impacts, particularly those that disrupt essential social services, exacerbate poverty and violence and influence medium- to long-term projections and plans in relation to Sustainable Development Goal progress. The organization will continue to work with the United Nations development system, international financial institutions and others to support practical programming.

126. UNICEF is particularly concerned about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in countries already facing humanitarian crises and fragile situations. These countries are home to many of the children at greatest risk of being left behind by progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and most vulnerable to sudden changes in development financing. In countries affected by conflict, violence, disaster, displacement or fragility, the pandemic puts additional strain on already overburdened health and social-service delivery systems and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities faced by children and communities. Such factors as overcrowded living conditions in refugee camps or informal settlements; a lack of reliable water and sanitation access; and movement restrictions and discrimination that bar children from lifesaving services create the potential for especially devastating impacts.

127. As UNICEF responds to the pandemic, it is taking measures to safeguard ongoing emergency operations and resources to avoid compromising achievements to date. The organization is aligning its COVID-19 response with those of sister United Nations agencies, including WHO and UNFPA, to address shortages of critical supplies and coordinate support to countries at greatest risk. Informed by the review of its humanitarian action and the revision of the Core Commitments for Children, UNICEF continues to take steps to make all its humanitarian action more effective, agile and equitable as well as more accountable to the people it serves, while reinforcing links between humanitarian action, long-term development and peacebuilding to seize opportunities to build back better through the response to this unprecedented crisis.

128. UNICEF is changing the way it works in order to fulfil its mandate to promote and protect children's rights. The organization is watching global trends closely to identify the tailwinds it can harness to accelerate progress for children and to respond to headwinds, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, that can slow it down and jeopardize gains already made. As economic uncertainty continues to put social spending at risk, as many countries contend with fragility, as trust in multilateralism wavers and as digital surveillance and shrinking civic space pose challenges to human rights, UNICEF is adjusting its approaches in programming, advocacy and communications and its partnerships, business model and funding sources, while remaining steadfast in its commitment to children's rights.

129. The organization is devising ways to draw on new sources of funding and advocate for regular resources based on its knowledge of what works best to leverage results for children in order to make the strongest contribution possible to the sustainable financing of the Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated once again the need for strong and well-resourced global and multilateral institutions. UNICEF is drawing strength from an ever-more tightly knit United Nations family to deliver results across multiple areas of children's rights in a streamlined and efficient way that capitalizes on the comparative advantages of each United Nations partner, to do more together than any could do alone, to safeguard development progress and to accelerate wherever possible.

130. Everything UNICEF does, it does with and for the children and adolescents whose futures depend upon the fulfilment of the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Today, more than ever before, children and young people are seen and heard. They are raising their voices to demand action on the climate change that threatens their planet and their future, gathering in the streets to make it clear that they are serious. They are calling for support in a world that often overlooks their mental health and well-being and disregards the rights of the most vulnerable. They are bearing witness to our successes and shortcomings in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and will be left with strong impressions as well as clear expectations for how we must do better. In this Decade of Action, UNICEF will continue to advocate for and with children and young people, speaking in a bold and authentic voice and leveraging all the knowledge, experience and institutional power it has to advance the issues that matter to them and to secure their rights.

IX. Draft decision

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and annual report for 2019 of the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as the proposed revised results framework for the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; 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 report 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); lessons learned; 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.