



Gender Equality

Global Annual
Results Report 2020

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for every child

Expression of thanks

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

UNICEF expresses sincere appreciation to all the partners who have contributed to our work to achieve greater gender equality in our humanitarian and development programming in 2020. It is their support that allows us to provide technical, operational and programming assistance to countries to address gender inequalities and to impact the lives of millions of girls and boys, women and men across the world.

The flexibility of thematic funds provides for sustainability in our programmes and allows UNICEF to offer a full range of support to countries and regions. In this regard, we would especially like to thank the governments of Canada and Luxembourg, and private sector partners Chloé and Clé de Peau Beauté, for their contributions to the 2020 Global Thematic Fund for Gender Equality, and Dove, Gucci, Pandora and Lego for the resources contributed to gender equality programming. We would also like to thank the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its continued support for strengthening UNICEF's gender capacity and institutional systems for gender equality results. UNICEF will continue to explore new ways of enhancing visibility for contributing partners to global-level thematic funding, and we look forward to growing our collaborations in the future.

PARTNER TESTIMONIAL

"Given that Luxembourg is one of the few countries to have adopted a feminist foreign policy, our development cooperation is committed to promoting Sustainable Development Goal 5 – gender equality as a human right, and the empowerment of all women and girls. Today, many children continue to suffer from gender-based discrimination and limited access to quality basic social services. These inequalities and obstacles to their well-being often determine whether a child will grow up healthy, educated and safe. As a founding member of the UNICEF Thematic Fund for Gender Equality, and a firm believer in the multilateral system, Luxembourg will continue to support UNICEF in its efforts to end child marriage and to strengthen the mainstreaming of gender equality across its work. We believe that collective action enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of global efforts towards the achievement of gender equality and thus sustainable development."

– Franz Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Luxembourg (2020)

Seventy-four years after UNICEF was established and thirty-one years since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the organization's mission to promote the full attainment of the rights of all children is as urgent as ever.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021 is anchored in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and charts a course towards attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of a future in which every child has a fair chance in life. It sets out measurable results for children, especially the most disadvantaged, including in humanitarian situations, and defines the change strategies and enablers that support their achievement.

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

The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to Gender Equality in 2020 and reviews the impact of these accomplishments on children and the communities where they live. This is one of seven reports on the results of efforts during the past year, encompassing gender equality and humanitarian action as well as each of the five Strategic Plan Goal Areas – 'Every child survives and thrives', 'Every child learns', 'Every child is protected from violence and exploitation', 'Every child lives in a safe and clean environment', and 'Every child has an equitable chance in life'. It supplements the 2020 Executive Director Annual Report (EDAR), UNICEF's official accountability document for the past year.

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Executive Summary

18-year-old Sebatso Nchephe plays at Ivory Park, a township in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is a member of Techno Girl, a UNICEF-supported job shadowing programme for adolescent girls that focuses on strengthening their skills in science and technology fields. Inspired by the programme, Sebatso hopes to be a biomedical scientist some day.

Girls and women are bearing the brunt of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) crisis, which has exacerbated inequities and reinforced gender inequalities. Widespread unemployment and economic insecurity, added to significant service disruptions related to maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and education, are jeopardizing the lives and well-being of women and girls. As livelihoods are destroyed, and food scarcity in many countries intensifies, poor women and their families – including female-headed households and single mothers, and the vast numbers engaged in informal employment – are at the extreme ends of suffering. Adolescent girls face higher risks of violence, child marriage and dropping out of school, even after schools reopen, due to underlying discriminatory gender norms. Childcare and school closures, and the growing care needs of older people and the sick have increased the burden of unpaid care work borne by women, a substantial share of which is likely to be assumed by girls. Evidence points to an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) – cases of domestic violence have risen by as much as 30 per cent in some countries.¹ Women also bear greater risk on the front lines of the outbreak, as they account for about 70 per cent of health workers globally and do the majority of support jobs at health-care facilities.²

The commitment of UNICEF to an equal future for all girls and boys recognizes that promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and advancing the United Nations reform agenda. It aligns directly with the gender equality results identified in the United Nations ‘common chapter’, which details the close collaboration between UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Women. The UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 (GAP), closely aligned to the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, both articulates and operationalizes this commitment, providing a road map for promoting gender equality throughout the organization’s work.

In 2020, UNICEF implemented its largest-ever emergency response, working with partners to adapt programming towards the continuity of essential services – including alternative learning pathways for children, and GBV-related services – the expansion of social protection systems, and giving critical support to front-line workers and families, among other actions. The timely launch in 2020 of the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, aligned to the GAP, with clear gender equality commitments and benchmarks, allowed for more deliberate gender integration throughout the COVID-19 response, and in UNICEF humanitarian action more broadly.

Highlights of results and challenges in 2020

In this third year of GAP implementation, and despite the enormous challenges brought by the pandemic, UNICEF accelerated results for women and girls, situated within the larger emergency response.

Progress was achieved in several areas. In the health sector, in the face of much-reduced medical services, UNICEF invested in strengthening remote and mobile delivery systems to ensure the continuity of services, and supporting governments to adapt to challenges and strengthen national systems. UNICEF also advocated the maintenance of critical maternal health services amid containment efforts. By the year end, 38 countries had implementation plans to scale up quality maternal and newborn health care, 7 countries more than in 2019, and surpassing the overall GAP target. The number of countries that integrated nutrition counselling into their pregnancy care programmes increased from 57 in 2019 to 71 in 2020, also exceeding the overall target. Greater investment and acceleration of efforts are needed to close gaps in a number of areas, including to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Nutrition service delivery was seriously disrupted due to school closures. HIV infection rates in adolescent girls and the global maternal mortality rate remain too high to achieve global targets.

UNICEF intensified efforts to promote equitable learning opportunities within the COVID-19 response, including scaling up gender-responsive distance education, expanding access for children in humanitarian settings, and removing systemic barriers to learning, especially for girls. Globally, 301 million children were reached with distance learning, about half of them girls. Through UNICEF-supported programmes, 18.6 million out-of-school girls participated in early learning and primary or secondary education compared with 8.4 million in 2019. This sharp increase was also reflected in humanitarian settings, where the number of girls who participated rose from 23 million in 2019 to 42 million in 2020. UNICEF continued to assist government partners to increase inclusivity and remove learning bottlenecks in national education policy. This contributed in 2020 to 53 countries including menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) targets in strategies for water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, almost 10,000 schools being equipped with MHH-related services, and over 70,500 schools being equipped with separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys, including those living with disabilities. There remains cause for concern about learning outcomes, particularly among girls, aggravated by school closures and other effects of the pandemic. Out of 55 countries reporting, the percentage of countries where

girls improved on learning outcomes rose by a marginal one percentage point (from 55 per cent in 2019, to 56 per cent), whereas the percentage of countries seeing boys' outcomes improve rose to 65 per cent, from 49 per cent in 2019.

Reports of increases in GBV and the strain on prevention and response services related to COVID-19 led UNICEF and partners to significantly ramp up service delivery in 2020. Existing inter-agency partnerships were leveraged to adapt programming, minimize disruptions and expand services, including both online and offline measures to reach vulnerable groups and spread information about risk mitigation and response services. This contributed to 4.2 million children (over 1.25 million girls) who experienced violence being reached with health, social work and

justice services, 53 per cent more than reached in 2019. In emergency settings, 17.7 million people across 83 countries received GBV risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions. UNICEF also used online platforms to reach parents and communities with behaviour-change interventions focusing on nurturing care, positive discipline and family mental well-being – about 2.6 million parents and caregivers across 87 countries were reached through UNICEF-supported programmes.

Across all regions, UNICEF continued to emphasize programming to transform the harmful gender roles and norms that lie at the root of discrimination against women and girls. Social and behaviour change strategies are being used as important means of engaging communities and individuals, including men and boys, as a force for



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