



## GOAL AREA 2

# Every child learns

Global Annual  
Results Report 2021

unicef   
for every child

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Expression of thanks: © UNICEF/UN0475053/Ralaivita  
Lova, a student at Seraphin school in Madagascar, shows her  
classmates how to respect social distancing at school.





## Expression of thanks

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt education for millions of children. Despite the significant challenges, the commitment of our resource partners allowed UNICEF to reach millions of children with the support they need to continue to learn, grow and develop the skills necessary to thrive in life. UNICEF's work is funded entirely through individual donations and the voluntary support of our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect the rights of children, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. We take this opportunity to thank all of our partners for their commitment and trust in UNICEF.

We also extend special and warm thanks to our partners who contributed to UNICEF's thematic funding. Thematic funding once again proved its value in allowing UNICEF the flexibility and agility to deliver technical, operational and programming support, particularly in emergency settings where the impact on children has been multiplied by the pandemic. By entrusting us with this funding, you have made many of the results in this report possible and have furthered our mandate to reach the most vulnerable children. We warmly acknowledge our partner, the Government of Norway, which has continued to champion education and work with us to reach every child with quality education. We are grateful for the sizable contributions from the Government of Sweden and the Government of Germany for education activities in Afghanistan.

We also thankfully acknowledge the work of Vina Barahman and Chelsea Lavallee who led the development of this report. We are grateful to the leadership of Robert Jenkins, and the core reporting team of Nicolas Reuge, Jean Luc Yameogo and Ellen Dougherty. We warmly thank Jonas Berntsson for his exceptional support and coordination.







## PARTNER TESTIMONIALS

*Improving access to quality basic social services is one of the four thematic priorities of Luxembourg's development cooperation strategy. Providing quality education, as reflected in SDG 4, is a cornerstone of Luxembourg's commitment, and a prerequisite for giving children and young people the knowledge, skills and values to build their lives and contribute to their society. As such, Luxembourg has been a long-time supporter of UNICEF's efforts aimed at safeguarding opportunities for children around the world and will continue to promote equal access to quality education for all.*

Franz Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, Luxembourg (2022)

*Access to education for children in crisis and conflict is a key priority for Norway. Our support to UNICEF's Global Thematic Fund for Education helps to provide flexible funding for the goals set out in UNICEF's strategic plan. Common focus areas include equitable access to learning opportunities, improved learning and skills for all, and improved learning and protection for children in emergency and fragile contexts. Norway attaches great importance to UNICEF's commitments to provide education for the many children and young people who are still left behind. – Including refugees and internally displaced persons. Thematic funding enables UNICEF to adapt its work to different needs and contexts. This has been crucial in responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. And to other emergency situations around the world. I would like to commend UNICEF for its overall response to the education crisis in 2021. I am particularly pleased that UNICEF has focused on nutrition and the provision of food and water in its approach. As UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J. Mohammed, has said; 'when children are hungry there is no stomach for learning'. Furthermore, I am pleased that UNICEF has incorporated school feeding as an integral part of education programming where this is possible.*

Anne Beathe Tvinnereim, Minister of International Development, Norway (2022)



Students at the Kibumba Primary School in Kalemie, Democratic Republic of the Congo

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

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

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

The following report summarizes how UNICEF and its partners contributed to Goal Area 2, Every Child Learns, in 2021 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 2021 Executive Director Annual Report, UNICEF's official accountability document for the past year.



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# Executive summary

Girls from Burkina Faso, in Tougbo, in the north of Côte d'Ivoire.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was already facing a learning crisis: over 260 million children had never set foot in a classroom, and those in school did not necessarily learn and acquire necessary skills. The pandemic brought education systems across the world to a halt, with school closures affecting more than 1.6 billion learners at its peak, including 167 million younger children who lost access to early childhood education.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of the detrimental impacts of school closures on learning offers a harrowing reality: learning losses are substantial, with the most marginalized children and youth (such as children with disabilities, children living in or fleeing from conflict and emergencies, and those living in poverty or among minority communities) disproportionately affected. The pandemic widened the pre-existing inequalities in learning.

School closures caused more than just disruption of education and significant learning loss: nearly 370 million children in 150 countries missed out on school meals due to school closures,<sup>2</sup> 10 million more girls than previously estimated are at risk of early marriage by 2030,<sup>3</sup> and 9 million more children are at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022.<sup>4</sup> Millions of children living in extreme poverty, hunger, and amidst conflicts are faced with new emergencies within existing crises.

Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized children, UNICEF scaled up interventions focused on continuity of learning during school closures and getting learning back on track for marginalized children who were most impacted by the pandemic. This report documents the unstinting efforts of UNICEF staff around the world to protect children's rights to education and protect them from the worst effects of the pandemic and school closures. It also offers a sober acknowledgement of the grave impacts of the pandemic on children's education, the exacerbated inequities, the growing learning loss, and new obstacles placed in the path of children eager to learn. The report demonstrates the determination of UNICEF to support countries in building back better, to restore pathways to learning, and develop more resilient education systems going forward.

In 2021, UNICEF's support resulted in reaching 48.6 million out-of-school children – half of them girls – with education, bringing the total number to 126 million since 2018. Among these children, 6.4 million (48 per cent girls) were children on the move and 31.7 million (50 per cent girls) lived in humanitarian settings. 42.1 million children (18.1 million in humanitarian settings) received learning materials, bringing the total since 2018 to 109 million children. UNICEF supported 85,586 school management committees or similar bodies with training, a significant

increase compared to just under 60,000 in 2020. Moreover, 45 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries reported having a gender-responsive teaching and learning education system, such as education sector plans and policies that support gender-responsive curricula and learning materials, gender-responsive pedagogy, and programmes focused on reducing gender-based disparities in learning, supported by sufficient budgets. UNICEF's support to skills development programmes in 116 countries benefited 33 million children (51 per cent girls), including 1.7 million in humanitarian settings. Since 2018, 47 million children participated in skills development programmes through UNICEF support.

UNICEF's advocacy among partners contributed to significant commitments and action for the most pressing issues in education affecting marginalized children, such as the concrete commitments made by the Group of Seven (G7) to advance education for girls.

UNICEF's partnerships, such as the *Mission: Recovering Education*, launched together with UNESCO and the World Bank in 2021, proved their value once again in scaling up efforts to ensure safe return to schools for all learners, remedying the learning losses, and supporting teachers. Through the partnership on *Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugees*, UNICEF continued working alongside the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to enrol refugee and host community children in school, reaching over half a million children in Ethiopia and 52,516 the Congolese and Burundian refugee children in Rwanda. Under the *Prospects* partnership, UNICEF launched the report, '[Learning to earning' for displaced youth: Unlocking the power of digital technologies](#)', on leveraging digital technologies to support youth transition from school to work in displaced and host communities.

UNICEF's flagship [Reimagine Education](#) initiative helped double down on scaling up of digital learning solutions and rallying a diverse set of partners, including the private sector, to make digital learning a reality for every child, including the most marginalized in no-/low-tech contexts. Diversifying and expanding partnerships, in light of the response to the pandemic and education recovery, allowed UNICEF to reach children at scale and speed, through solutions such as the *Learning Passport*, in partnership with Microsoft, that was launched in 13 countries in 2021. By the end of the year, it had reached nearly 2 million children, youth, educators and caregivers with educational content to support continuous learning. The partnership established with Airtel Africa in November 2021, is another example, that will accelerate the roll-out of digital learning through connecting schools to the internet and ensuring free access to learning platforms across 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, 2021. [Learning Poverty Updates and Revisions: What's New?](#) Learning Poverty Monitoring Series. No. 1.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage](#)

<sup>4</sup> ILO and UNICEF. 2021. [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward](#).

Among continued efforts by UNICEF to ensure accessibility and accuracy of data and support to data systems, was the launch of the first-ever comprehensive global report on the situation of children with disabilities, [\*Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities\*](#), covering more than 60 indicators of child well-being, including education, nutrition and health, access to water and sanitation, and protection from violence and exploitation, in addition to a new global education database on educational inequalities among children with disabilities. UNICEF, in collaboration with UNESCO and the World Bank, continued monitoring national education responses to the pandemic and the status of school reopening, including monitoring the strategies countries applied to support marginalized children and girls. UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank also joined forces in 2021 to establish the *Learning Data Compact* to support coordinated efforts to close the learning data gaps that still exist worldwide. This partnership aims to ensure that all countries, especially low-income countries, have at least one quality measure of learning by 2025.

UNICEF's efforts to strengthen national systems and capacities, included the launch of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) hub, in collaboration with the World Bank Group and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), to provide a rich repository of resources on FLN for use by practitioners and decision makers, as well as the first-ever FLN Academy, a multi-module online course designed as a professional development and knowledge sharing journey. UNICEF also supported 18 countries with strengthening their primary education curriculum, including revisions, reforms, integration of climate change, and health and nutrition issues.

At the end of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan period, UNICEF took stock of the success, challenges and lessons learned, and applied it to the development of the new Strategic Plan (2022–2025). Improvements have been made to strengthen the strategic approach to advocacy, programming and support to countries to bring Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) back on track, and protect a generation of children who have suffered the gravest impacts of the pandemic. Moving forward, in line with the UNICEF Global Education Strategy and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF will work with partners to strengthen national systems to better address inequalities, build resilience and ensure access to safe and quality learning, skills acquisition and participation opportunities, including through its coordination role in humanitarian crises. Now is the time for accelerating education recovery and transformative action to ensure that every child (particularly the most marginalized including girls, children with disabilities and children in fragile contexts) is fully supported in the key transitions of their learning journey: getting children ready for school, ensuring they have basic foundational numeracy and literacy, and they develop a full range of skills for adulthood. There is an alarming lack of action and investment in addressing the growing learning crisis. UNICEF will continue to leverage its vast network of partners and on-the-ground presence to put a spotlight on and advocate for urgent action, supported by sufficient, effective, and equitable financing at global and domestic level. UNICEF will continue to work closely with partners, including with governments, to take urgent action to recover the learning losses by: Reaching every child, Assessing their learning, Prioritizing teaching the fundamentals, Increasing catch-up learning, and Developing psychosocial health and well-being.





# Strategic context

Nazdana is one of 32 students attending classes at the UNICEF supported accelerated learning center in Warkak community, in Daikundi Province, Afghanistan. She wants to be a journalist when she grows up.

## Impact of COVID-19 on education and global trends in education

Before COVID-19 hit, the world was facing a learning crisis: over 260 million children had never set foot in a classroom, and those in school did not necessarily learn and acquire the skills they needed. The pandemic created a crisis within a crisis.

The global disruption to education caused by the pandemic is without parallel, and the effects on learning are severe. The crisis brought education systems across the world to a halt, with school closures affecting more than 1.6 billion learners at its peak, including 167 million young children in 196 countries who lost access to early childhood care and education services.

Globally, full and partial school closures lasted on average 224 days.<sup>5</sup> But in low- and middle-income countries, school closures often lasted longer than in high-income countries, and the response was typically less effective. Children from disadvantaged households were less likely to benefit from remote learning than their peers, often due to a lack of electricity, connectivity, devices, caregiver support or due to language barriers. Globally, two thirds of school-age children (1.3 billion) do not have internet access at home,<sup>6</sup> and one in three children were not reached with remote learning solutions offered during school closures. The youngest students and students with disabilities were largely left out of policy responses, with remote learning rarely designed in a way that met their needs. The youngest children were unable to develop the skills they need to begin their formal education. Girls faced compounding barriers to learning amidst school closures, as social norms, limited digital skills, and lack of access to devices constrained their ability to keep learning.<sup>7</sup>

Remote learning was the new norm for delivery of education in 2021 in many countries. Countries continued with multi-modal strategies like online, TV and radio education, as well as print materials and instant messaging, to promote learning continuity. While nearly every country in the world offered remote learning opportunities for students, the quality and reach of such initiatives varied greatly. Inequitable access to remote learning opportunities,

technology and learning support, impacted millions of children, particularly the marginalized and the youngest learners. Standard approaches to education response were not sufficiently inclusive of the most marginalized learners.<sup>8</sup>

Teachers in many low- and middle-income countries received limited professional development support to transition to remote learning, leaving them unprepared to engage with learners and caregivers. Even though the global spend on education in absolute terms has increased continuously over the last 10 years, the impacts of the pandemic threaten to interrupt this upward trend. Public spending on education remained highly unequal, with wealthier groups often capturing a greater share of the available resources. In low-income countries, for example, 40 per cent of total public education funding benefits the wealthiest quintile, and only 10 per cent the poorest.<sup>9</sup> The pandemic forced many countries to reduce domestic budgets for education. National fiscal responses to education have been largely insufficient to mitigate and prevent a generational catastrophe for children. Two thirds of low- and middle-income countries showed cuts to education budgets amidst pandemic-induced downturns.<sup>10</sup> Despite significant COVID-19 stimulus packages, on average, countries allocated only 3 per cent of their stimulus package to education. This figure is even lower in low- and lower-middle income countries, where less than 1 per cent of the COVID-19 stimulus packages were allocated to education.<sup>11</sup> Declines have been confirmed in the share for education in the Official Development Assistance (ODA) (from 8.8 per cent in 2019 to 5.5 per cent in 2020). The education share of global humanitarian aid increased to 2.8%, from 2.6% in 2020.<sup>12</sup>

Evidence of the detrimental impacts of school closures on children's learning offers a harrowing reality: learning losses are substantial,<sup>13</sup> with the most marginalized children and youth (such as children with disabilities, children living in or fleeing from conflict and emergencies, the youngest learners and those living in poverty or among minority communities) disproportionately affected, widening the pre-existing inequalities in learning. The global learning crisis has grown even more than previously feared. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of children living in learning poverty,<sup>14</sup> which was already over 50 per cent before the pandemic, is projected to rise sharply,

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF and ITU. 2020. [How many children and young people have internet access at home?](#)

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO. 2021. [When schools shut: gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures](#).

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report and the World Bank. 2021. [Education Finance Watch 2021](#).

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report and the World Bank. 2021. [Education Finance Watch 2021](#).

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [Addressing the learning crisis: An urgent need to better finance education for the poorest children](#).

<sup>12</sup> According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), global humanitarian funding contributions totaled US \$29.35 billion in 2021. Of this, education received \$806 million, or roughly 2.8 per cent, nearing the total reached in 2019 with 2.9 per cent. OCHA, Financial Tracking Service, Total Reported Funding 2021, available at <https://fts.unocha.org/global-funding/overview/2021>.

<sup>13</sup> 'Learning Loss' refers to any loss of knowledge or skills and/or deceleration of or interruption to academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in a student's education. Source: UNICEF. 2021. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>14</sup> Defined by the World Bank as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story.



potentially to more than 70 per cent, because of the long school closures and the varying quality and effectiveness of remote learning.<sup>15</sup>

School closures caused more than just disruption of education and significant learning loss: nearly 370 million children in 150 countries missed out on school meals due to school closures,<sup>16</sup> 10 million more girls than previously estimated are at risk of early marriage by 2030,<sup>17</sup> and 9 million more children are at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022.<sup>18</sup> Millions of children living in extreme poverty, hunger, and amidst conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, Haiti and Lebanon, were faced with new emergencies within existing crises.

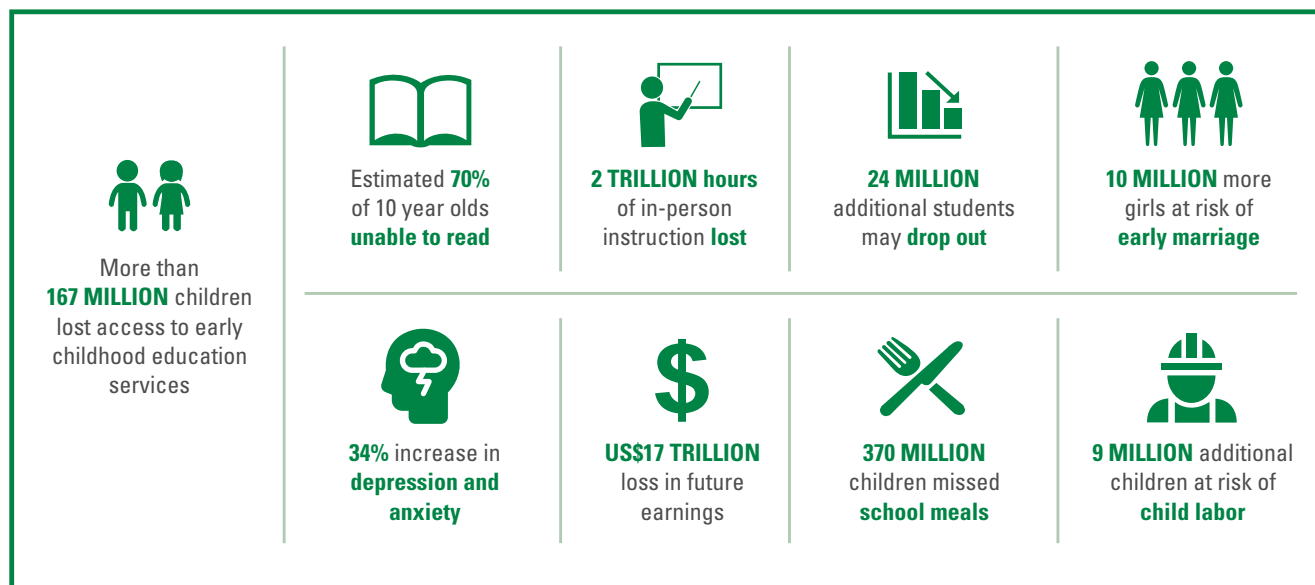
This generation of students is at risk of losing US\$17 trillion in lifetime earnings in present value as a result of school closures, or the equivalent of 14 per cent of current global GDP.<sup>19</sup> Early evidence from the COVID-19 crisis indicates exacerbated mental health problems during the pandemic and some increases in stress and anxiety among children and adolescents.<sup>20</sup>

The COVID-19 crisis forced the global education community to learn some critical lessons, but also highlighted that transformation and innovation are possible. Despite the shortcomings of remote learning initiatives, there were bright spots: Remote and hybrid education, which became a necessity when the pandemic hit, proved their potential to reach learners at speed and on a large scale, and paved the path for transforming the future of learning.

## Strategic shifts

Recognizing the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on marginalized children, UNICEF continued to scale up interventions focused on ensuring continuity of learning during school closures and focused on getting learning back on track for marginalized children who were most impacted by the pandemic. Safe return to school; remediation of learning loss, including through the use of digital learning solutions and data-driven approaches; focusing on equity for girls and children with disabilities; and new partnerships all contributed to strategic shifts by UNICEF in 2021.

FIGURE 1: Detrimental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning and well-being



<sup>15</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>16</sup> Azevedo, Joao Pedro Wagner De, et al. 2021. [Learning Poverty Updates and Revisions: What's New?](#) Learning Poverty Monitoring Series; No. 1. World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage](#).

<sup>18</sup> ILO and UNICEF. 2021. [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward](#).

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. 2021. [COVID-19: Missing More Than a Classroom. The impact of school closures on children's nutrition](#).

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. 2021. [Life in Lockdown: Child and adolescent mental health and well-being in the time of COVID-19](#).

Supported by growing evidence that with adequate measures, health risks to children and education staff could be minimized, UNICEF continued to advocate for the reopening of schools to become the top priority in addressing the growing learning crisis. Together with the World Bank and UNESCO, UNICEF launched the *Mission: Recovering Education* in 2021, focusing on safe return to schools for all learners, remedying the learning losses, and supporting teachers.

At the same time, UNICEF urged countries to double down on efforts to scale up interventions focused on remediation of learning loss. UNICEF continued to encourage the rapid roll out and scaling up of digital learning solutions through the *Reimagine Education* Initiative. Together with partners, UNICEF advocated for digital learning to both complement in-person learning and unlock transformational and systemic change in education.

Building back better education systems requires countries to measure how effective their policy responses are at mitigating learning losses and to analyse the impact on equity, and then to use the data and lessons learned to make improvements. In 2021, UNICEF continued supporting countries to improve systems to generate timely and reliable data. UNICEF partnered with the World Bank and UNESCO to conduct multiple rounds of surveys with ministries of education to monitor the status of school reopening and the measures countries took to help children catch-up with lost learning. UNICEF continued efforts to diversify and expand partnerships, including with the private sector. The *Learning Passport*, an online, mobile and offline digital learning platform, that was developed through a partnership between UNICEF and Microsoft, was launched in 13 countries in 2021. By the end of the year, it had reached nearly 2 million children, youth, educators and caregivers with educational content to support continuous learning. In November 2021, Airtel Africa and UNICEF launched a five-year US\$57 million pan-African partnership to accelerate the roll-out of digital learning through connecting schools to the internet and ensuring free access to learning platforms across 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The advocacy and engagement of UNICEF with key partners helped ensure the girls' education was prioritized at crucial forums. Key global actors, such as the G7, set two targets to get 40 million more girls in school and 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10 (or the end of primary) by 2026.<sup>21</sup>

To address the issue of insufficient reliable data on children with disabilities, UNICEF and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics developed the *Child Functioning Module* for use in censuses and surveys, launched in 2016. The roll-out of the Module, as part of the UNICEF-

supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), led to the collection and analysis of comparable data on children with disabilities between nations for the first time. This enabled UNICEF to publish in late 2021, the global report *Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities*, covering more than 60 indicators of child well-being, including education, nutrition and health, access to water and sanitation, and protection from violence and exploitation.<sup>22</sup> In addition, a new global education database was published to unpack educational inequalities among children with disabilities, reporting access, completion and learning outcome data in 32 countries and territories.<sup>23</sup>

## Key achievements

In response to the pandemic, UNICEF seized the opportunity to support innovative ways to ensure learning continued and to address discrimination, exclusion and inequity that hindered access to education. Following school closure, significant efforts were channelled at leveraging technology for learning, as well reopening schools safely and inclusively. This aimed to ensure all children returned to the classroom and received holistic support in terms of their learning needs, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, protection, and health including mental health and well-being.

In 2021, UNICEF spent US\$802 million across 147 countries to support programmes on equitable access to education. As a result, 48.6 million out-of-school children accessed education (50 per cent girls), bringing the total number to 126 million since 2018. This number is not strictly comparable with the numbers before the pandemic, since it includes children in some countries who were already enrolled in school in 2019, and whose education was interrupted by school closures due to the pandemic. However, it shows that the support of UNICEF to ensure continuity of learning in the second year of the pandemic remained consistent and reached even more children than in 2020. Among these children, 6.4 million (48 per cent girls) were on the move and 31.7 million lived in humanitarian settings. The support of UNICEF to strengthen education systems led to 43 per cent of supported countries having equitable education systems for access and 38 per cent having gender-responsive education systems for access.

UNICEF spent US\$309 million across 144 countries in 2021 to improve learning outcomes. As a result, 42.1 million children (18.1 million in humanitarian settings) received learning materials, bringing the total since 2018 to 109 million children. UNICEF supported 85,586 school management committees or similar bodies with training,

<sup>21</sup> FCDO. 2021. [Declaration on girls' education: recovering from COVID-19 and unlocking agenda 2030](#).

<sup>22</sup> UNICEF. 2022. [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#).

<sup>23</sup> UNICEF. 2022. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/education-for-children-with-disabilities/>

a significant increase compared to just under 60,000 in 2020. Moreover, 45 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries reported having a gender-responsive teaching and learning education system, such as education sector plans and policies that support gender-responsive curricula and learning materials, gender-responsive pedagogy, and programmes focused on reducing gender-based disparities in learning supported by sufficient budgets.

In 2021, US\$80 million was spent in 116 countries in support of skills development programmes, benefiting 33 million children (51 per cent girls, 1.7 million in humanitarian settings). This number significantly increased from the previous year, as it includes 26.3 million who have accessed a career guidance portal in India, which saw a significant increase in usership from 5 million in 2020. UNICEF's support to skills development programmes continued throughout the second year of the pandemic, despite several challenges regarding delivery of programmes, such as the closure of schools and shift from in-person learning to remote learning. As a result of the support to strengthen the education system, 28 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had a system institutionalizing gender-equitable skills for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability. Since 2018, 47 million children participated in skills development programmes through UNICEF support.

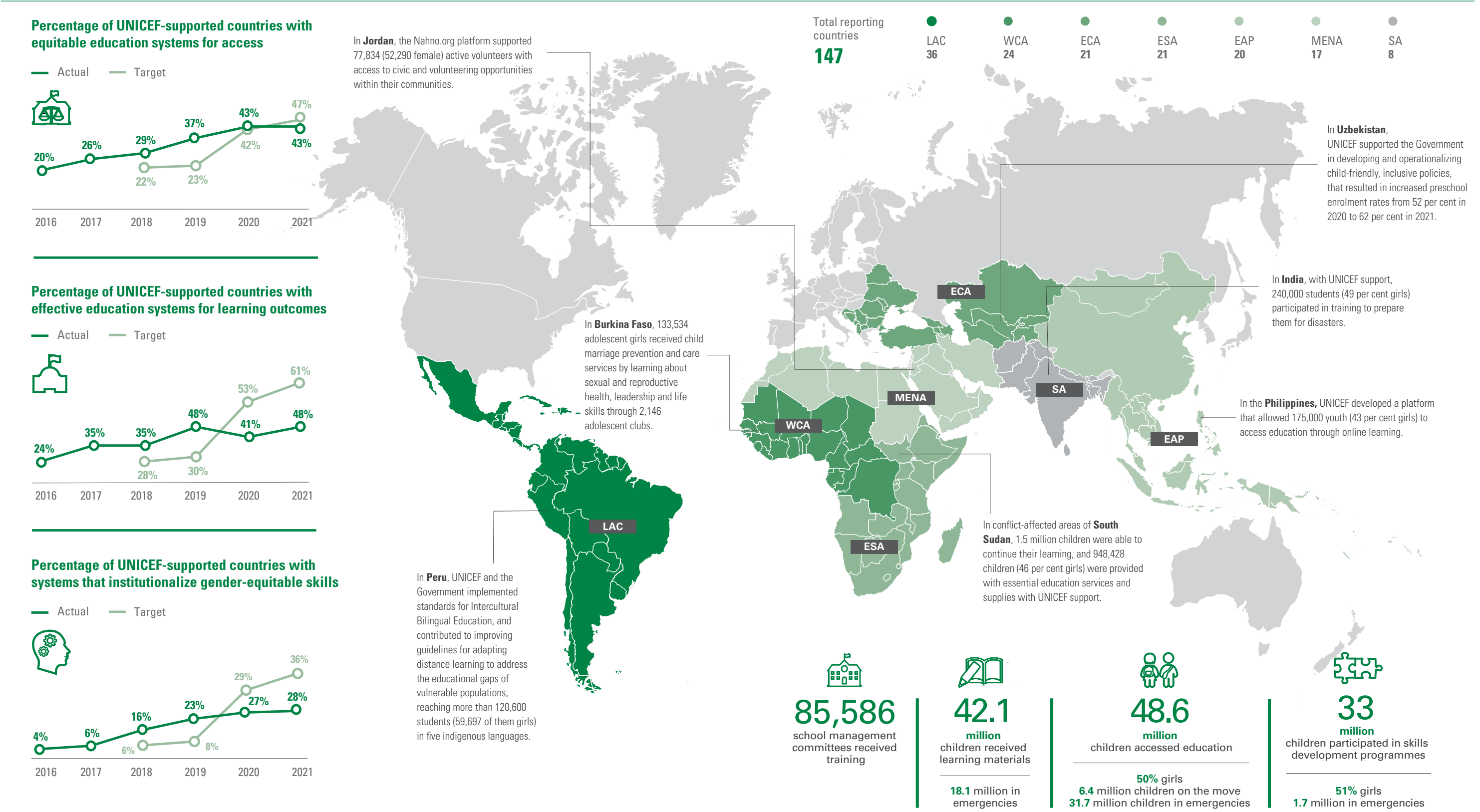
Out of the 62 million children targeted in the Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) in 2021, UNICEF reached 31.7 million children (50 per cent girls), including 4 million children on the move, with education access in humanitarian settings. In addition to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF continued to negotiate with parties to conflicts and armed groups to protect education from attacks and to encourage the endorsement and implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration.

The value of education supplies procured in 2021 was \$155.3 million for 105 countries (a 260 per cent increase since 2020), including procurement of 86,780 education kits to 64 countries. In addition to education supplies, UNICEF supported several countries with the construction of schools or with improvements to toilet and hand-washing facilities. For instance, in Gaza, UNICEF rehabilitated at least 20 slightly- to moderately-damaged school buildings and, in Haiti, UNICEF constructed classrooms and school spaces for a value of \$3.6 million.



# Highlights of 2021 results

FIGURE 2: Illustrative results from 2021





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# Systems-strengthening

In a classroom in Mbera camp in Mauritania recently rehabilitated by UNICEF, two girls pose with their notebooks.



In 2021, the pandemic continued to disrupt education systems. Despite the progress made in reopening schools around the world, the emergence of the Omicron variant at the end of the year threatened education systems with another round of school closures, and millions of children continued to be affected by full or partial school closures.

UNICEF continued its emergency approach to education response to the pandemic. However, where context allowed, the organization moved from immediate response to recovery, in order to ensure the resilience of education systems to future shocks. In 2021, UNICEF's support to national education systems focused around three key priorities: bringing all children back to school focusing in particular on those impacted disproportionately by the pandemic, such as girls and children with disabilities; remediation of the learning loss through catch-up learning initiatives; and preparing and supporting teachers to address learners needs holistically. In 2021, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank jointly launched the *Mission: Recovering Education*, focusing on safe return to schools of all learners, remedying the learning losses, and supporting teachers.

UNICEF continued efforts to strengthen education systems through risk-informed programming, to enhance preparedness, preventative, responsive and mitigation capacities of education systems, as well as to strengthen the positive coping capacities of children and communities. In 2021, 127 countries received support from UNICEF on emergency preparedness and resilience strengthening measures. During the year, UNICEF utilized some US\$67 million to strengthen risk-informed and resilient education systems addressing climate change, natural disasters and conflict.

COVID-19 increased the need for timely, comparable data to assess the impact of school closures on students' learning. UNICEF, in collaboration with UNESCO and the World Bank, continued monitoring national education responses to the pandemic and the status of school reopening, including monitoring the strategies countries applied to support marginalized children and girls. UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank also joined forces in 2021 to establish the *Learning Data Compact* to support

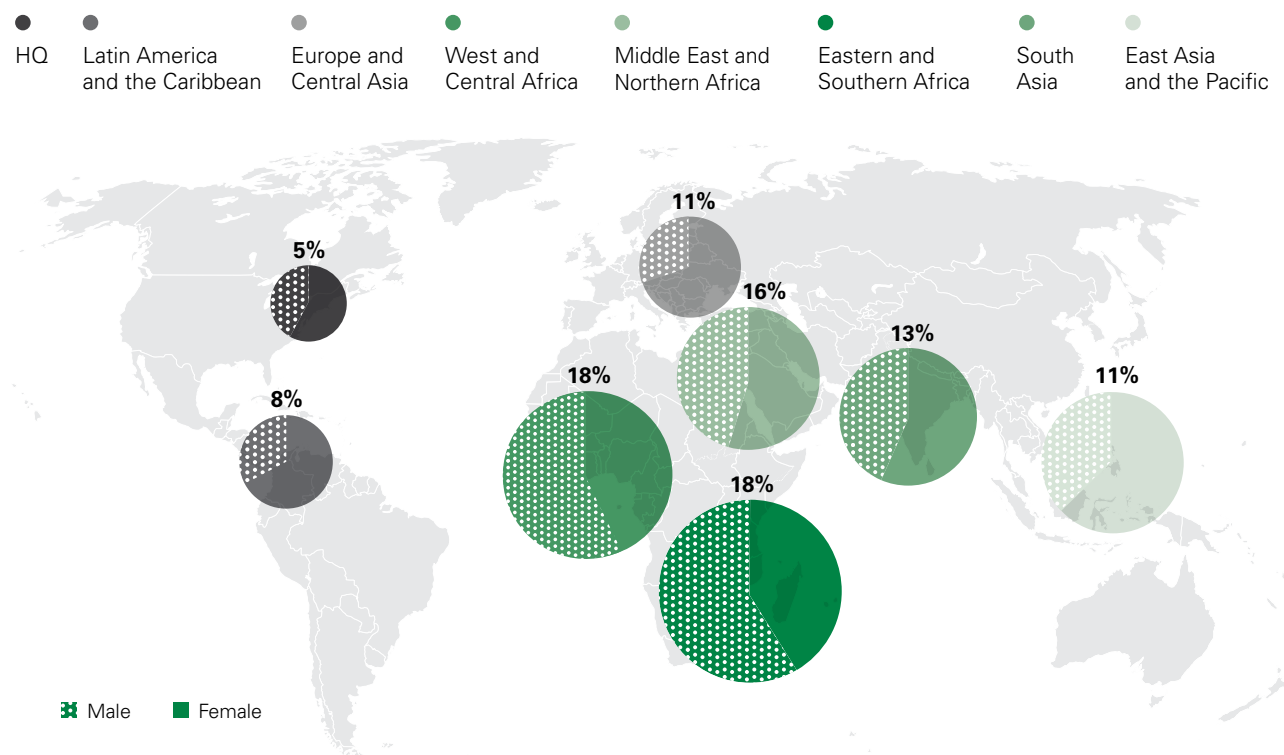
coordinated efforts to close the learning data gaps that still exist worldwide. This partnership aims to ensure that all countries, especially low-income countries, have at least one quality measure of learning by 2025.

While implementation of digital learning and other remote learning solutions has been critical for emergency responses to school closures, integration of digital learning in education sector plans is a critical component of systems-strengthening, especially as education systems recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, UNICEF worked closely with governments across many countries to develop and implement robust policies for digital learning with clear accountabilities and budgets to help close digital divides. For example, in Viet Nam, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Training to transform the education system, developing the National Digital Literacy and Transferable Skills Framework through a consultative approach with teachers, young people and private sector partners. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF supported the development of the technical standards for the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, a prerequisite for ensuring equitable access to digital and blended education for all children.

In 2021, the total number of UNICEF staff members working in education reached 1,060 (55 per cent women), of which 1,002 (95 per cent of all education staff) were deployed to UNICEF regional, country, and field offices, often in fragile, conflict-affected, or remote locations where needs were greatest. This strong country presence helps UNICEF take a more participative approach, working closely with stakeholders on the ground, and developing a deeper understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by education systems. UNICEF education staff work in close collaboration with colleagues focused on health, nutrition, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), social policy, disability, gender, adolescent development and Communication for Development (C4D). This includes using schools as an integrated service platform to deliver a range of interventions and outcomes for children in development and humanitarian settings. UNICEF's support to education systems-strengthening is facilitated by education thematic funding, offering countries flexibility for targeted technical, operational and programming spending.



FIGURE 3: UNICEF education staff per region



## Thematic funding for education

Thematic funds are the most flexible source of financing and are critical to the implementation of system-wide programmes with a longer-term impact. They are allocated on an as-needed basis to support long-term planning and programme sustainability. Thematic funds reduce costs and promote efficiency and effectiveness by pooling resources to streamline programme management activities, from planning to reporting. They allow the work of UNICEF to adapt to different contexts and needs. They enable impact for sustainable results in different thematic areas (as opposed to earmarked funding of specific projects), while also addressing issues such as gender equality and support to children with disabilities.

Since 2018, UNICEF has spent US\$471 million in thematic funding on education (including US\$108 million in emergencies). In 2021, the amount of education spending from thematic funds was nearly US\$121 million, of which a quarter was emergency thematic funds. West and Central Africa (WCA) was the region with the highest spending on thematic funds, followed by the Middle East and North

Africa (MENA) and Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA). These three regions account for 59 per cent of the total education spending from thematic funds. In 2021, the thematic funds expenditure (US\$121 million) exceeded that of the previous year (US\$90.3 million), and once again proved to be a vital addition to regular resources in addressing inequities that the allocation of regular and project-based resources is not able to target.

In 2021, education systems-strengthening accounted for 46 per cent of thematic funding, compared with 28 per cent for non-thematic education expenditure. UNICEF's funding to ensure that all children access education and learning is also reflected in the share of funding allocated to equitable access (64 per cent of thematic and 68 per cent of non-thematic).

Throughout this report, boxes titled '*Spotlight on thematic funds*' highlight where the flexibility of thematic funds has enabled concrete results to be obtained for programmes. The following figures highlight the expenses for education in 2021 by activity and result area respectively.

FIGURE 4: Expenses for education by activity, 2021

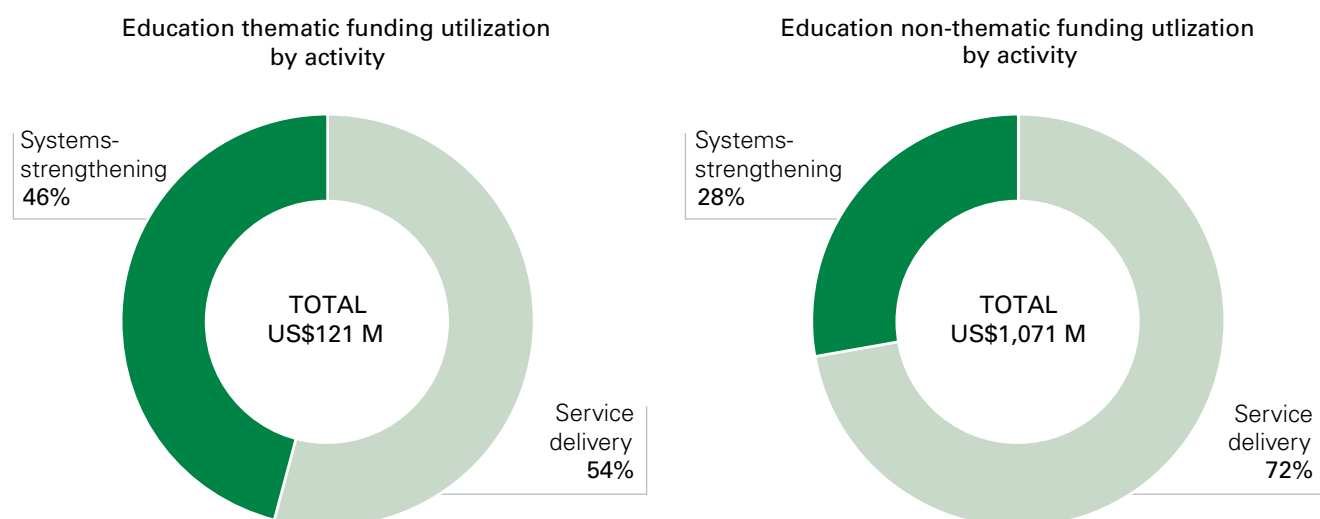
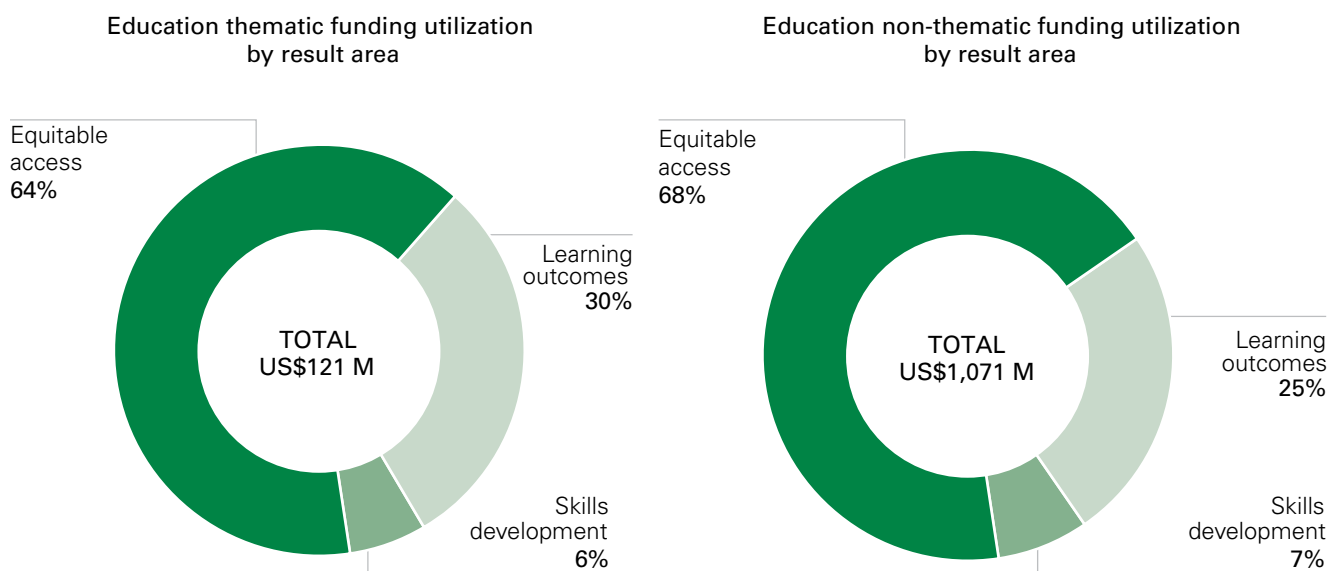


FIGURE 5: Expenses for education by result area, 2021





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# Results

Srete Chakma, 16, is a Bangladeshi Class 10 student. During her study break, she started learning hand-weaving at a UNICEF vocational training center.



# Result Area 1: Equitable access to quality education

Throughout 2021, UNICEF continued its efforts to ensure all girls and boys can access quality education. The proportion of countries reporting equitable education systems for access remained at 43 per cent in 2021. The number of countries strengthening effective inclusive education systems for children with disabilities increased by 2 per cent (from 54 per cent in 2020 to 56 per cent in 2021). However, the number of countries with gender-responsive education systems for access declined from 42 per cent in 2020 to 38 per cent in 2021.

UNICEF's absolute spending on access decreased from US\$838 million in 2020 to US\$802 million in 2021. However, this amount reflects 67 per cent of the organization's total spending on education (US\$1.19 billion) in 2021, up by three per cent from 2020, indicating consistency in prioritizing equitable access to education. Of total spending on equitable access to education, UNICEF utilized US\$609 million on service delivery, US\$193 million on systems-strengthening measures, and 20 per cent of the total funding in this area was focused on gender equality.



Syaiful (left), 12, a child with a physical impairment, sits next to his best friend Kevin Saputra (right), 9, a child with a visual impairment, at Syaiful's house in Banyumas, Central Java, Indonesia. Both Syaiful and Kevin attend Madrasah Ibtidaiyah school, which is part of the inclusive education programme.

FIGURE 6: Results chain for equitable access to education

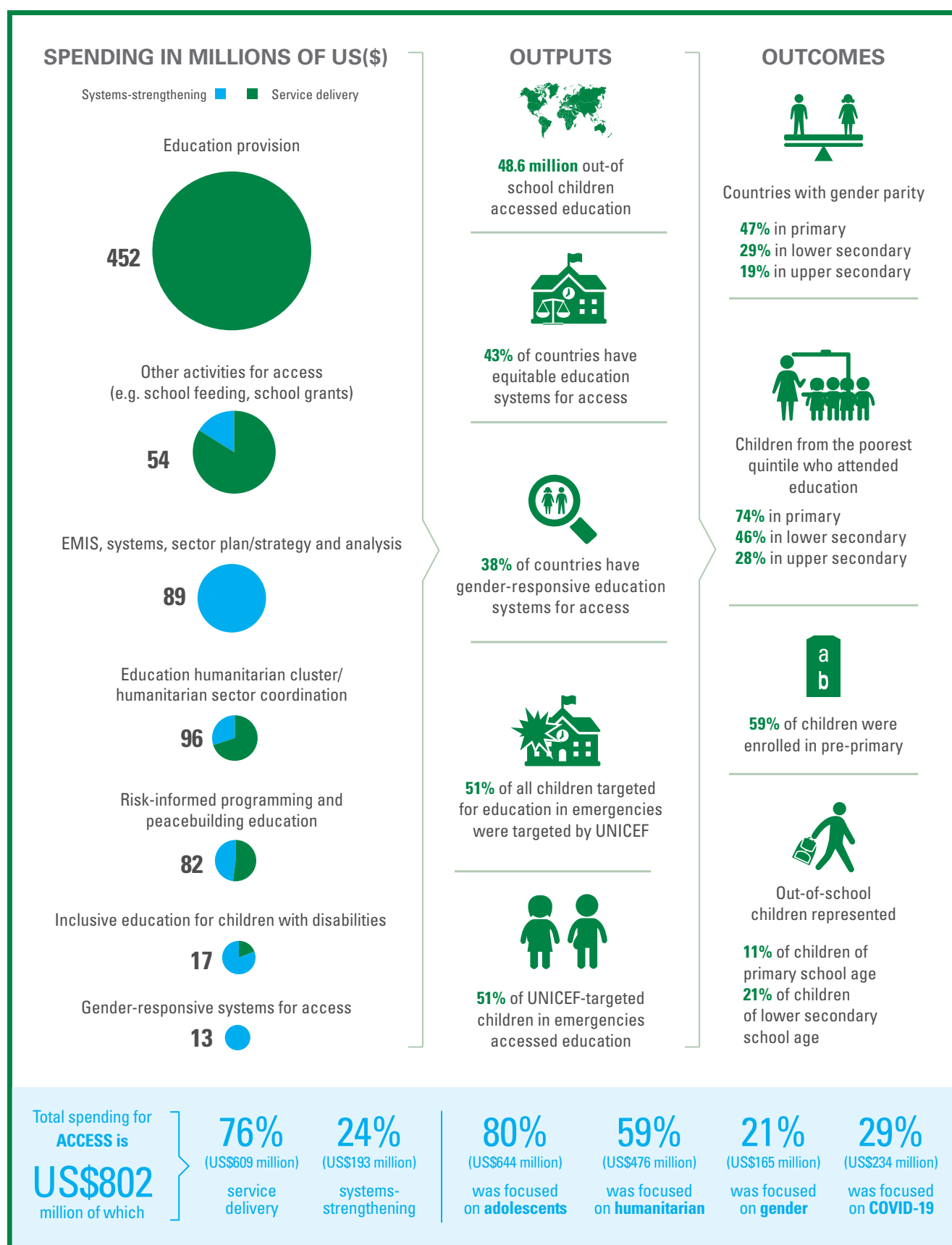
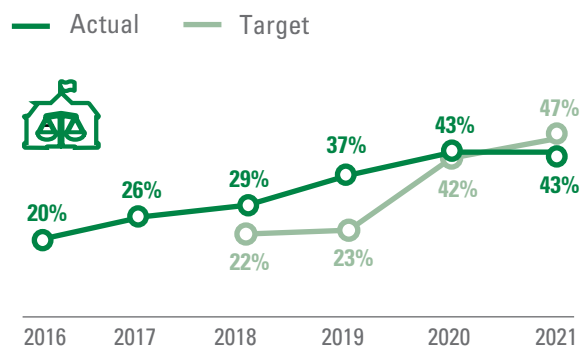


FIGURE 7: Systems-strengthening indicators for equitable education systems for access

### Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with equitable education systems for access

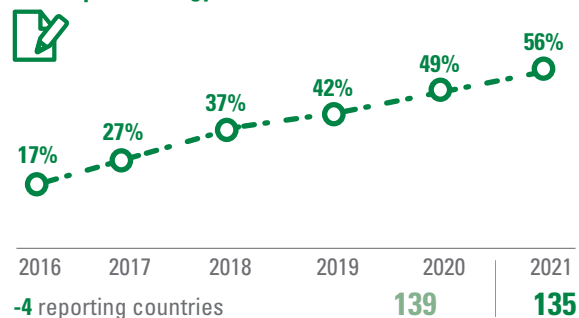


### Regional progress

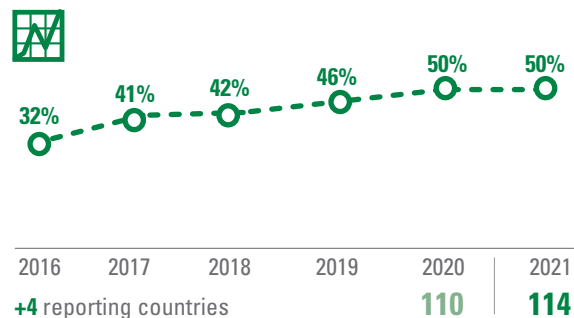
Region	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
EAP	21%	53%	44%	41%	43%	35%
ECA	14%	24%	24%	40%	45%	57%
ESA	29%	33%	43%	52%	67%	62%
LAC	18%	14%	17%	25%	29%	36%
MENA	20%	27%	40%	40%	33%	18%
SA	25%	38%	38%	38%	50%	50%
WCA	17%	21%	21%	33%	46%	46%

### Four dimensions of equitable education systems for access

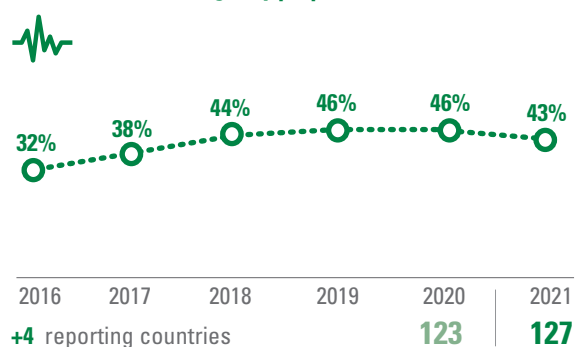
#### Sector plan/strategy



#### Data



#### Resilience and emergency preparedness



#### Inclusive education

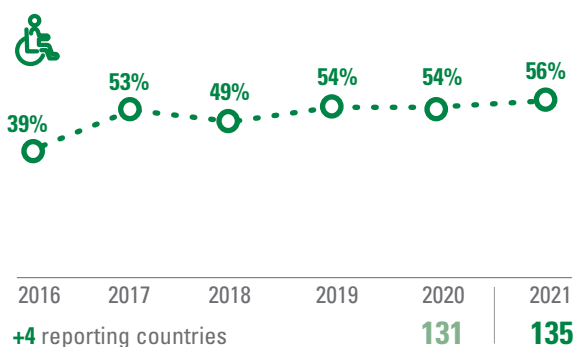
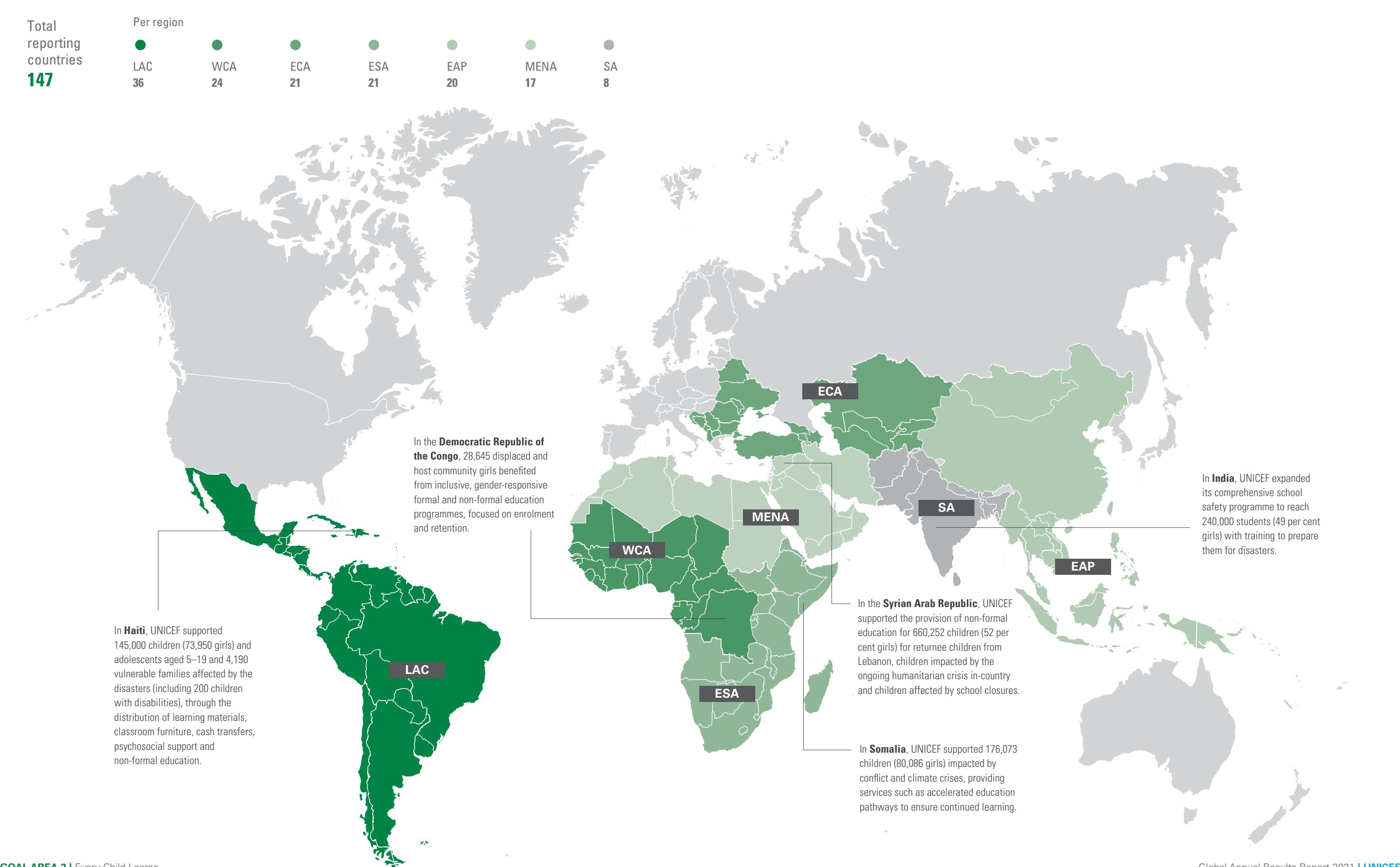




FIGURE 8: Illustrative results for equitable access to education



## Voices from the field: Elli Heino, Junior Professional officer from Finland, on inclusive education in Nepal

Joining the Education team in UNICEF Nepal in late 2021, in the midst of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, was a truly exciting challenge. Even as a new Junior professional officer, my expertise and contribution were highly valued. My main task has been to help Nepal in taking its first steps towards developing inclusive early childhood development (ECD). I was assigned to investigate the current situation and analyse how inclusive education could be further developed. So far, my main achievement has been developing a proposal to ensure that ECD services across the country will be ready to accommodate a greater number of children with disabilities and to support their families, ensuring that every child has the right to develop to their full potential. Having the chance to interact with the children, and being encouraged to share my ideas, is what really motivates me.



Elli with students with disabilities participating in training on newly developed digital materials.

## Inclusive education for children with disabilities

Despite evidence showing the economic cost of exclusion of people with disabilities, children with disabilities continue to face major barriers to accessing education.<sup>24</sup>

In 2021, UNICEF continued working with partners to support children with disabilities with inclusive education. UNICEF released, for the first time, cross-nationally comparable data on children with disabilities in a global report, titled [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#), which covered more than 60 indicators of child well-being – including education, nutrition and health, access to water and sanitation, and protection from violence and exploitation.<sup>25</sup> The findings of the report shed light on alarming inequities against the 240 million children who live with disabilities across the world.<sup>26</sup> These disparities increase as children grow older and the severity of disability increases. By the time they reach upper secondary school age, nearly all children with the most severe disabilities are out of school.

UNICEF, with financial support from the GPE, launched the [Accessible Digital Learning Portal](#), a technology-based hub with a catalogue of accessible digital content and tools to support policymakers, educators and parents/caregivers. It supports inclusive education in remote and classroom settings for learners with and without disabilities, and provides resources and guidance for the production, distribution and implementation of accessible digital learning content based on Universal Design for Learning in environments with high and low resources.<sup>27</sup>

In support of strengthening national capacities on disability-inclusive education sector planning, UNICEF and the International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO (IIEP-UNESCO) trained 112 officials from ministries of education in 23 countries in East Asia and the Pacific, and West and Central Africa regions, through the delivery of the *Foundations of Disability-Inclusive Education Sector Planning* course.<sup>28</sup>

In the Dominican Republic, UNICEF supported accessible distance learning opportunities for over 5,100 children with disabilities (2,662 girls) and expanded support to children with audio-visual impairments, in addition to children with autism and intellectual disabilities.

Compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities are:

- 25 per cent less likely to attend early childhood education (ECE)
- 47 per cent more likely to be out of primary school
- 42 per cent less likely to have foundational reading and numeracy skills
- 49 per cent more likely to have never attended school.

In Ghana, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and Ghana Health Service collaborated to screen over 1.8 million children for ill health and disability in almost 15,000 kindergartens nationwide.

In Zimbabwe, UNICEF supported the provision of assistive devices to 12,278 children with disabilities (62 per cent girls) and the printing of the *Open and Distance Learning Modules* (benefiting 150,000 children) that have increased learning opportunities for children with disabilities and out-of-school children.

In the Gambia, more than 6,000 teachers were trained on inclusive pedagogy, emphasizing disability inclusion, gender responsiveness and social cohesion.

In Cambodia, UNICEF supported the development of an inclusive education pre-service teacher training programme that was integrated into the teacher education curriculum. As a result, for the first time, new teachers will be equipped with knowledge and skills on inclusive education, including support to transition children with disabilities from lower secondary to upper secondary education. UNICEF also used digital learning solutions to expand the reach of remote learning to children with disabilities.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF supported ministries of education in four countries – Jamaica, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Paraguay – to develop digital material and textbooks that are accessible to all learners, as part of the *Accessible Digital Textbooks for All Initiative*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Estimates suggest that countries lose up to 7 per cent of their GDP due to the exclusion of persons with disabilities. Source: UNICEF 2021. [Combating the Costs of Exclusion for Children with Disabilities and their Families](#).

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF. 2022. [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities](#).

<sup>26</sup> The report mentioned revealed that 240 million children live with disabilities, compared to the previously estimated 93 million.

<sup>27</sup> Universal Design for Learning is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways that students access and engage with material, and showcase their understanding.

<sup>28</sup> IIEP-UNESCO. 2020. [Foundations of Disability-Inclusive Education Sector Planning](#).

<sup>29</sup> [Accessible Digital Textbooks for All](#) is an initiative by UNICEF and partners to make textbooks available, affordable and accessible for children with disabilities in all contexts. The initiative brings together writers, publishers, teachers, organizations of persons with disabilities, technologists, and ministry of education representatives to develop the guidelines needed to produce textbooks in accessible digital formats.

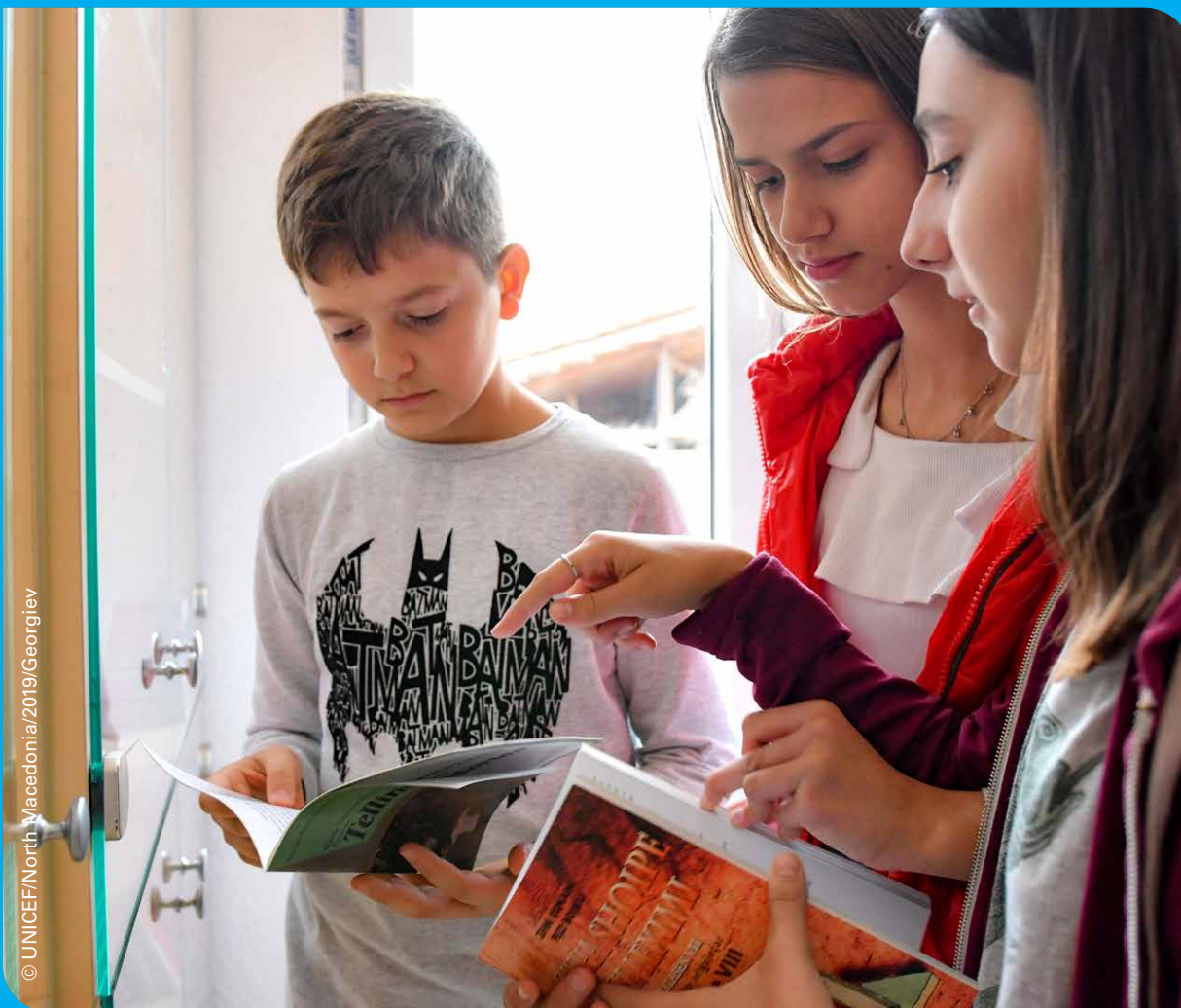


## Spotlight on thematic funding: Education reform for more inclusive and equitable education in North Macedonia

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia with educational reforms, including a new law on inclusive education, which called for the transformation of special schools into resource centres, designed to provide capacity development for staff. UNICEF supported the training of 500 teaching assistants (474 female) on inclusive education practice, who were deployed to public schools across the country.

UNICEF also supported the development of new curricula for Grades 1 and 4 in addition to training for over 3,000 teachers and printing of over 120,000 textbooks, in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Open Society Foundation.

In response to the 2018 Review of Evaluation and Assessment in Education in North Macedonia,<sup>30</sup> by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNICEF supported the Ministry to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of public spending in education through the development of a new, per student funding formula for primary education.



Students going through books in a school library.

<sup>30</sup> OECD. 2019. *Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: North Macedonia*.

While reliable data quantifying the effects of pandemic-related school disruptions on learners with disabilities are unavailable, it is certain that children with disabilities have been among the worst affected. This reinforces the urgent need to support resilient, inclusive education systems that withstand future disruptions, so that all children, especially the most marginalized, can continue to learn.

In 2021, UNICEF increased spending on inclusive education for children with disabilities to US\$17 million, up from US\$14 million in the previous year. Of this amount, US\$14 million (81 per cent) was spent on systems-strengthening activities, such as inclusive Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), and laws and policies, and US\$3 million was spent on inclusive teacher training and accessible learning materials.

## Education for out-of-school children

The pandemic put 24 million more children at risk of dropping out of school. This is in addition to over 260 million children, including 130 million girls, who were not in school prior to the pandemic. In 2021, school closures continued to pose a major setback for efforts to reduce the number of out-of-school children. Globally, around 131 million schoolchildren in 11 countries have missed three quarters of their in-person learning from March 2020 to September 2021. Among them, 59 per cent – or nearly 77 million – have missed almost all in-person instruction time. Bangladesh and the Philippines represent 62 million of the 77 million learners impacted.<sup>31</sup>

Once out of the school system the most marginalized children are at risk of never going back to school. By 2030, 10 million more girls than previously estimated are at risk of early marriage,<sup>32</sup> and 9 million more children are at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022.<sup>33</sup> Emerging evidence shows that as schools are reopening, younger learners are returning to early primary grades of schooling, and classrooms with higher student-teacher ratios. For example, it is estimated that Uganda, the country with the longest school closure, will have triple the number of children starting grade one in 2022.<sup>34</sup> Poor early

experience of school has long been recognized as a major contributing factor for school dropout.

In 2021, UNICEF continued advocating for reopening of schools more inclusively, making specific efforts to reach those previously excluded from education, and providing the critical comprehensive health (including mental health support), nutrition, protection, WASH and other services necessary. UNICEF led the revision of the global *Out-of-School Children Initiative Operational Manual*,<sup>35</sup> to reflect both the expanded scope of SDG 4 and the increasing recognition that quality education can be experienced in non-formal settings, which should count, where appropriate, as in-school.

UNICEF continued to provide strategic support to countries to produce data and evidence on out-of-school children, and to advocate for policy shifts to increase these children's access to education, including through publication of up-to-date data on how children are progressing through school and where the drop out points are most acute (by country and region).<sup>36</sup>

UNICEF support to the Institute of Adult Education in the United Republic of Tanzania, helped reach 30,183 out-of-school adolescents (51 per cent girls) through non-formal education and skills programmes on the mainland and through formal education in Zanzibar. As a result, the number of out-of-school children dropped from 3.5 million children in 2016 to 3.2 million in 2021, out of which about 51 per cent are girls. In Burkina Faso, 185,627 out-of-school children (91,208 girls) gained access to learning/training opportunities and 607,217 children maintained their educational routine through radio programmes.

UNICEF built on the massive global expansion of remote learning in 2020, to scale up alternative learning pathways through digital learning. In Iraq, the blended learning approach adopted by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF support enabled an estimated 4.2 million children to access education (compared to 2.9 million in 2020). In the Philippines, UNICEF developed a platform that allowed 175,000 youth (43 per cent girls) to access education through online learning.

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [Education disrupted: The second year of the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures](#).

<sup>32</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [COVID-19: A threat to progress against child marriage](#).

<sup>33</sup> ILO and UNICEF. 2021. [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward](#).

<sup>34</sup> Uganda National Planning Authority. 2021. [Technical Note: Towards Safe Opening of The Education Sector in COVID-19 Times](#).

<sup>35</sup> The Framework is available at the Out-of-School Children Initiative website: [www.allinschool.org](http://www.allinschool.org)

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [How are children progressing through school? Education Pathway Analysis](#).

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Scaling up local government response to bring out-of-school children in Indonesia back to learning

In 2021, in Indonesia, UNICEF supported monitoring of the national response to the pandemic to assess the impact on out-of-school children across 33 of Indonesia's 34 provinces. The data revealed a 1 per cent increase in the number of out-of-school children (ages 7–18), as well as a rise in risk factors leading to school dropout, mainly due to COVID-19-related economic reasons.

UNICEF provided technical support and capacity development to more than 1,280 district and village stakeholders (47 per cent female), including district and village government officials, representatives from religious organizations, civil society organizations, and local education boards and community leaders. The aim was to conduct data collection and develop evidence-based and child-centred education plans and budgets to provide crucial assistance to out-of-school children and support their return to learning. These efforts helped district governments to identify 1,961 out-of-school children (39 per cent girls) and 21,805 children (48 per cent girls) who were at-risk of dropping out of school.

Districts and village governments allocated scholarships for out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out of school, including those with disabilities, to help them resume or continue their education in formal or non-formal settings. District and village governments also provided learning facilities and established local teams for accelerating out-of-school children outreach and referral to relevant education services with UNICEF support.



Pemalang District government in Central Java delivered scholarships to 23 out-of-school children who returned to school with the launch of the Back-to-School movement in the district.

## Support for mother-tongue/multilingual education

The number of UNICEF-supported countries promoting mother-tongue education rose from 58 in 2020 to 61 in 2021, of which 52 per cent were considered to have effective mother-tongue/multilingual education. These programmes are particularly important as schools reopen: the best opportunity for rapid learning gains will be through remedial classes delivered in languages children understand well. In 2021, UNICEF spent US\$5.9 million on activities related to mother-tongue, or multilingual, education – less than half of the amount spent in 2020

(US\$12 million). It is likely that school closures have impacted the ability of countries to fully implement these programmes. In addition, school closures are likely to have reduced exposure of children who speak minority languages at home, to the language of instruction at school, and therefore these children are likely to fall further behind, compared to their peers.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to advocate for policies supporting multilingual education. In Thailand, advocacy on the importance of multilingual education with the Royal Society successfully led to the Cabinet approving the inclusion of mother-tongue-based multilingual education in the National Language Policy Action Plan (2021–2022).



UNICEF and the Government of Peru implemented the standards for Intercultural Bilingual Education, and contributed to improving guidelines for adapting distance learning to address the educational gaps of vulnerable populations, reaching more than 120,600 students (59,697 of them girls) in five indigenous languages.

In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF provided technical assistance to align legislation with the new constitution, ensuring that child-related issues were covered in the revised legal framework. This included advocating for keeping multilingual education as a key provision in new laws on education and on state language.

Lessons learned from Viet Nam on evaluations of mother-tongue bilingual education led to clear recommendations on the importance of ethnic minority languages in schools.

UNICEF leveraged its partnership with the Ethnic Council of the National Assembly to advocate for policies promoting the implementation of mother-tongue-based bilingual education and the development of bilingual textbooks.

UNICEF continued its support to provide children, particularly those displaced by crises and conflicts with language learning opportunities. In partnership with the Akelius Foundation, UNICEF provided digital language learning opportunities for children and youth, particularly refugees and migrants. In 2021, the partnership reached over 42,000 educators and learners across eight countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Kazakhstan, Italy, Lebanon, Mauritania and Serbia) with free digital language learning courses. In 2021, 3,263 teachers were trained on the use of the application and blended teaching and learning approaches.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Reaching ethnic minority language learners in Myanmar

Children in Myanmar continued to experience a learning crisis, triggered by the pandemic and exacerbated by the political crisis in February 2021. Safety concerns kept many children from going to school. To support the most disadvantaged children affected by this challenge, UNICEF Myanmar leveraged education thematic funding, and worked in collaboration with civil society partners to distribute storybooks, supporting over 72,000 young children (49 per cent girls) aged three to five. UNICEF also supported training for more than 3,600 language teachers. UNICEF reached 66,119 children at primary and middle school (33,015 girls) and 2,059 teachers (762 female), including community volunteer teachers, to support continuity of learning.

UNICEF support enabled the continuity of learning for 77,758 children (38,076 girls) who have been affected by protracted conflicts in the Rakhine, Kachin, northern Shan and Kayah States with temporary learning classrooms, provision of school backpacks, teaching and learning materials, home-based learning, training and incentives for volunteer teachers, as part of efforts to contribute to the achievement of the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan targets.



Aung Khin and Kham Li hold their bags in front of their classroom in Namtu Township, northern Shan State, Myanmar.

## Gender-responsive access to education

Despite significant challenges brought by the pandemic, 2021 was a successful year in terms of commitments to girls' education and gender equality. UNICEF rallied partners in advocating for girls' education to be put at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery across crucial forums, such as the G7 Summit (June), Generation Equality Forum (June/July), the GPE Global Education Summit (July), the 76th United Nations General Assembly (September), and the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (October/November). Among the various commitments that emerged were two new targets set by the G7 to get 40 million more girls in school and 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10 (or the end of primary) by 2026.<sup>37</sup>

In 2021, UNICEF continued its support to girls' education, with 38 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries reported as having gender-responsive education systems for access, a 4 per cent drop from 2020. However, this decline is primarily explained by the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on girls, which caused spikes in gender-based violence, child marriage, early pregnancy and disrupted support systems.

UNICEF continued working with governments to ensure access to learning during school closures and safe reopening of schools, with particular attention to girls and making schools more gender responsive. Following the

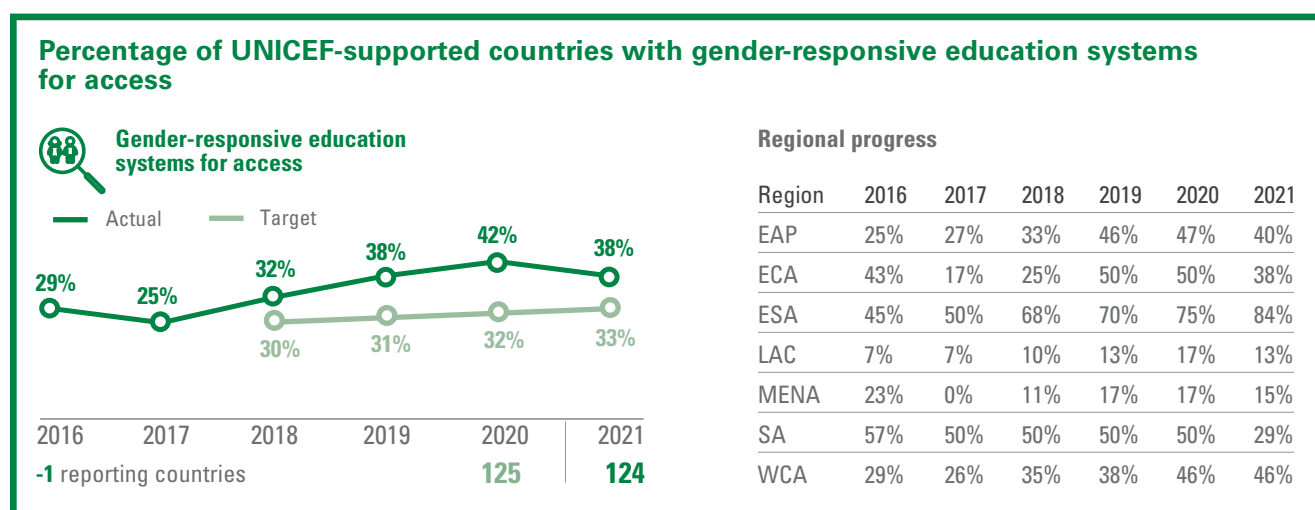
full re-opening of schools in Ghana, UNICEF worked with the Government to conduct a nationwide *Back-to-School campaign* that included advocacy with traditional and religious leaders on the return of pregnant schoolgirls and adolescent mothers, and the importance of safe schools, right-age enrolment and inclusive education.

In Peru, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education to develop guidelines that help guarantee that pregnant adolescents and young mothers can remain in school. In addition, guidelines for comprehensive sexuality education with a gender perspective were developed and training was delivered, reaching more than 30,000 teachers nationwide, out of which 14,910 are female teachers.

To address the multifaceted barriers to girls' education, amplified in the second year of the pandemic, UNICEF continued to leverage its multisectoral programming capacities. In Albania, UNICEF supported development and distribution of training packages for school psychologists and school council students and supported the appointment of 458 school psychologists as gender focal points, to support mental health and psychosocial needs of girls.

In Kenya, UNICEF provided 18,813 adolescent girls with sanitary kits and supported the Ministry of Education in developing the WASH in Schools (WinS) strategy with a costed action plan to scale up gender-responsive and disability-inclusive WASH interventions. Similarly, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in Malawi to provide 8,742 vulnerable out-of-school girls with scholarships to complete secondary education in safe schools.

FIGURE 9: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education



<sup>37</sup> FCDO. 2021. [Declaration on girls' education: recovering from COVID-19 and unlocking agenda 2030](#).

In the Sudan, UNICEF-supported girls' school clubs provided 29,733 adolescent girls with prevention and care interventions to address issues of child marriage.

In Burkina Faso, 32,829 girls were supported with grants and scholarships to continue their studies.

In Yemen, UNICEF supported 2,162 rural female teachers with a monthly cash incentive to increase girls' enrolment and retention in rural areas with an acute shortage of female teachers.

To support evidence-based country programming, UNICEF also developed several tools and resources with partners, including [Reimagining Girls' Education: Solutions to Keep Girls Learning in Emergencies](#), developed through technical partnership with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and financial partnership with the GPE. UNICEF also produced the [Brief on Gender Transformative Education](#) that provides an overview of related terms, concepts and approaches, developed in partnership with the United

Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Transform Education and Plan International.

Additionally, to accelerate results for girls through cross-cutting programmes, UNICEF worked with partners in generating evidence and providing guidance on joint areas of work. UNICEF and UNGEI jointly published a [Technical Note on Girls' Education, Empowerment, and the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\)](#), intended for governments, practitioners, donors, academics, and their own staff and partners implementing policies and programmes related to girls' education and FGM. Together with UK Aid, High-Quality Technical Assistance for Results (HEART) and ODI, UNICEF developed [Mapping Social Protection Intervention Pathways to Address Barriers to Girls' Education: A Visual Guide](#), including a set of maps that seek to visually represent, in an accessible way, different types of barriers and how social protection could contribute to tackling these.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Advancing girls' education in vulnerable communities in Iraq

In Iraq, 49 per cent of girls at lower secondary level are out of school, compared to 24 per cent of boys at the same level. In 2021, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) worked together with local organizations and the government, including Mercy Hands and the Directorate of Education, to assist adolescent girls to transition from primary to lower secondary education in Shatt Al-Arab, a district where children face multiple barriers. Twenty-two schools participated in the project, consisting of gender-sensitive capacity-building, leadership and empowerment initiatives and community sensitization, as well as WASH interventions, such as rehabilitation of latrines and waterpoints. A gender-sensitive pedagogy toolkit was developed and head teachers, school counsellors and teachers from each school participated in training. In addition, girls' clubs were put in place and sensitization campaigns on the importance of girls' education were carried out, including campaigns within mosques addressing *mukhtars* (community leaders), caregivers and parents at home. The project reached 2,570 girls in Grade 7 (the first grade of lower secondary education), who received three cash instalments as part of a cash-based intervention to increase their retention and support their transition into secondary-level education.



Inside a classroom at the Martyr Hassan Jassim Al-Tamimi School in Basra, Iraq.



## Addressing school-related gender-based violence

Prior to the pandemic, 150 million children reported having experienced peer-to-peer violence in and around schools,<sup>38</sup> and over a quarter of children and young people report experiencing violence in schools.<sup>39</sup> Estimates reveal that the cost of violence in and around schools in lost future lifetime earnings could be as high as US\$11 trillion.<sup>40</sup>

In 2021, as the world entered the second year of the pandemic, children remained at increased risk of violence, even as schools reopened in some countries. Whilst there is limited evidence on the effects of pandemics on children's exposure to violence during school closures and disruption of other services, evidence from the West Africa Ebola crisis indicated increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Data from Latin America and the Caribbean at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020, where services continued to be offered, suggested increased levels of severity of violence.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout the UNICEF 2018–2021 Strategic Plan period, the number of UNICEF-supported countries prioritizing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) increased, a commitment critical to achieving SDG 4. In 2021, 52 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had national SRGBV prevention and response mechanisms, 14 percentage points up from 2018.

UNICEF's work on SRGBV focused on legislation, policy reform and whole-school approaches that engage learners, teachers, parents and communities. As a founding partner of the [Safe to Learn](#) initiative, UNICEF continued to play a critical role in supporting countries to implement the *Call to Action to End Violence in Schools*,<sup>42</sup> endorsed by 15 countries. In 2021, UNICEF reviewed its programmes to address violence in and around schools in 28 countries that

were implemented between 2018 and 2020.<sup>43</sup> The review complements the Safe to Learn [Global Programmatic Framework and Benchmarking Tool](#) and provides concrete solutions of how governments and partners can implement the Call to Action in different contexts.

With support from the Government of Canada, UNICEF is implementing the *#SafeToLearn* initiative in four countries in West Africa with high rates of girls' school dropout – the Niger, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. This initiative, which is aimed at improving learning outcomes for girls in fragile and conflict-affected settings, is tackling SRGBV by strengthening prevention and response mechanisms at the school level, capacity-building of education actors, community awareness-raising, and strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms. Through this initiative, 9,006 child survivors of violence in and around schools, including 5,092 girls, were reached by social services, health care and/or legal aid.

In the Niger, more than 1,000 schools were supported to develop action plans to address SRGBV, including training on the identification and referral of SRGBV cases to 4,410 parents and 1,260 teachers.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in Guyana to develop a manual for a gender-responsive approach to responding to the psychosocial needs of children in schools, which will help minimize gender-based violence in schools, including for children who face victimization due to their sexual orientation.

In Belarus, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF started the *Safe and Enabling Environment in Schools Programme* in the 2020/2021 academic year, resulting in more than 11,500 students in Grades 5 to 9 learning to set classroom rules of respect and restore classroom values when violations occur.

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF. 2018. [An Everyday Lesson: #ENDViolence in Schools](#).

<sup>39</sup> World Bank. 2021. [Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case](#).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> UNESCO. 2021. [When schools shut: gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures](#).

<sup>42</sup> Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, Ghana, Honduras, Jamaica, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldova, Nepal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda.

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [Action to End Violence Against Children in Schools: UNICEF Review of Programme Interventions Illustrating Actions to Address Violence against Children in and around Schools \(2018-2020\)](#).

## United Nation Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI): Snapshot of 2021 Results

UNGEI works to advance gender equality in and through education. In 2021, UNGEI continued to play a key role in convening governments, civil society, donors and technical partners to promote gender equality in education.

In Burkina Faso, the Niger, Nigeria, Mozambique, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Mali and Chad, UNGEI supported Ministries of Education and civil society organizations to support girls to learn. An in-person Gender-Responsive Sector Planning (GRES-P) workshop in Dakar, **Senegal**, brought together 34 civil society organization representatives and young feminist activists from 11 French-speaking countries.<sup>44</sup> Training was provided to 25 facilitators, who are training Ministry of Education staff in 2022.

UNGEI developed the *Gender Equality in Education Snapshot Toolkit* (GES), a quick data picture of where a country stands regarding gender equality within and beyond its education system. UNGEI piloted a whole-of-school programme on SRGBV in Sierra Leone and its 2021 *Education in Emergencies Gender Toolkit* (EiE-GenKit) in South Sudan and Uganda. The toolkit comes with an online curriculum and has been developed with the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW). UNGEI supported cross-country learning by articulating lessons learned from the Whole School Approach to SRGBV prevention in Zimbabwe,<sup>45</sup> and launched a collection of case studies documenting strategies to overcome 'gendered' COVID-19 barriers to learning.<sup>46</sup> UNGEI and the Malala Fund, with support from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government, conducted research on *Better Financing for Gender Equality in Education* that highlights promising, yet under-utilized tools to allocate resources equitably, effectively and efficiently for girls' education.<sup>47</sup> UNGEI worked with UNICEF and Plan International on a policy brief on Gender Transformative Education and a technical note on Girls' Education, Empowerment and FGM, that were mentioned earlier in this report. These resources helped UNGEI draw 118,000 new users from around the world to its new website.

UNGEI also leveraged key moments of the year to advocate further for the rights of youth activists and girls with disabilities. Together with partners, including the Commonwealth Children and Youth with Disability Network (CCYDN), UNGEI launched a campaign in the lead up to the G7 Meetings and the GPE Global Education Summit (July) through a series of technical, policy and advocacy briefs, as well as a video series to amplify the voices and experiences of youth activists and girls with disabilities.

In 2021, UNGEI implemented a practice to fund the connectivity, expertise, and time of young feminist activists. Over 50 young feminists were provided stipends to participate in speaking opportunities, working groups and consultations in 2021. UNGEI partnered with Gender at Work to launch the Feminist School, an experiential and action-based programme for 26 young feminist participants from the UNGEI network. Transform Education, a young feminist coalition hosted by UNGEI, secured their first funded partnership and launched the *Education Shifts Power* campaign that amplified key messages around the time of the G7 Meetings, the GPE Replenishment conference and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 26).<sup>48</sup> A feminist youth-led statement of recommendations was shared across networks, calling for gender-transformative education to advance climate justice.<sup>49</sup>

For the International Day of the Girl (October), UNGEI piloted the *Step Outside the Gender Box* campaign, calling for the removal of gender stereotypes from textbooks and classrooms to advance gender equality in education.<sup>50</sup> During the *16 Days of Activism* campaign to end gender-based violence (November/December), the Global Working Group to End SRGBV, co-chaired by UNGEI and UNESCO, together with Transform Education hosted solidarity circles in Pakistan, Trinidad, Malawi and South Africa. This created a safe and healing space for young people to share experiences of gender-based discrimination, violence in and around schools, and ideas to create a safe learning environment.

After the takeover by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan in August 2021, UNGEI mobilized partners including the GPE, UNESCO and Plan International, among others, to call for the protection of girls' rights, including education and women's rights.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup> More information available at: [www.ungei.org/blog-post/gresp-workshop-young-african-feminists](https://www.ungei.org/blog-post/gresp-workshop-young-african-feminists)

<sup>45</sup> Case study available at: [www.ungei.org/publication/applying-whole-school-approach-prevent-SRGBV-lessons-from-Zimbabwe](https://www.ungei.org/publication/applying-whole-school-approach-prevent-SRGBV-lessons-from-Zimbabwe)

<sup>46</sup> Case studies available at: [www.ungei.org/feature-collection/case-studies-gender-edu-covid-19](https://www.ungei.org/feature-collection/case-studies-gender-edu-covid-19)

<sup>47</sup> UNGEI and Malala Fund. 2021. *Spending Better for Gender Equality in Education: How can financing be targeted to improve gender equality in education?*

<sup>48</sup> More information available at: <https://plan-international.org/blog/2021/06/09/weve-had-enough-young-activists-call-for-education-funding-and-real-partnerships/>

<sup>49</sup> More information available at: [Feminist youth-led statement of recommendations](https://www.ungei.org/feature-collection/case-studies-gender-edu-covid-19)

<sup>50</sup> More information available at: [www.ungei.org/step-outside-gender-box-learning-free-stereotypes](https://www.ungei.org/step-outside-gender-box-learning-free-stereotypes)

<sup>51</sup> Call to action available at: [www.ungei.org/un-girls-education-initiative-calls-action-afghanistan](https://www.ungei.org/un-girls-education-initiative-calls-action-afghanistan)

## Equitable access to quality education in emergencies

Conflict, political instability and economic crises increased in 2021 and were exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and environmental disasters related to climate change. In addition to learning losses, school closures have reduced opportunities for physical exercise, decreased interactions with peers and teachers, and increased the likelihood of experiencing violence at home. The cumulative effects of these stressful experiences, especially when combined with the mental health impacts of conflict, environmentally induced disasters and forced displacement, can pose serious risks to children's rights and well-being, especially the most marginalized girls and adolescents. In countries like Afghanistan, Haiti and Lebanon existing crises became more severe and were worsened by new emergencies.

In 2021, there were a total of 14 countries in need of Level 2 and Level 3 emergency responses.<sup>52</sup> Out of the five Level 3 emergencies, the pandemic continued to be the most far-reaching with 153 of UNICEF programme countries and territories impacted heavily. Other Level 3 emergencies in 2021 included crises in Afghanistan, northern Ethiopia, Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic.

In Yemen, more than 2 million have dropped out of school due to poverty, conflict, and lack of opportunities, with an estimated 6 million children at risk of missing out on education, and 11.3 million children in need of humanitarian assistance as the conflict continued into its seventh year. The political transition in Afghanistan in mid-2021 resulted in an estimated 9.7 million children in need of humanitarian assistance, and now it threatens the learning and livelihoods for millions of children, especially girls. The humanitarian emergency in the Syrian Arab Republic entered its tenth year, while in northern Ethiopia the conflict-related humanitarian emergency entered its second year, resulting in the destruction of 7,363 schools.

Myanmar's political crisis in February 2021 led to considerable violence against children and has resulted in 1.2 million children in need of humanitarian assistance,<sup>53</sup> and has negatively affected the education of 12 million children and adolescents. Other declared Level-2 emergencies included Haiti's earthquake, the migration and displacement of children from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mexico and Central America into countries like Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, the prolonged conflict and climate related crises in the Central Sahel, the continued fighting in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado,

which resulted in the displacement of 414,272 children,<sup>54</sup> and Madagascar's multiple crises which included drought-induced famine, cyclones, flooding and disease outbreaks.

In response to these emergencies, UNICEF and partners ensured that the world's most vulnerable children and adolescents had access to quality education services, even in the most challenging situations. UNICEF's total expenditure for education in humanitarian and crisis settings in 2021 came to US\$683.3 million, accounting for 57 per cent of all the organization's expenditures in education (nearly US\$1.19 billion). UNICEF education in emergencies programme represented 51 per cent of the total Global Education Cluster targets of all partners combined (some 123 million children) for 2021.

By the year's end, UNICEF supported 31.7 million children (50 per cent girls) in emergency situations to access learning opportunities. The largest proportion of those supported were at primary school level (68 per cent), followed by lower secondary (15 per cent), pre-primary (12 per cent) and upper secondary (5 per cent). This included the provision of learning materials to 18.1 million children living in emergency humanitarian settings and supporting nearly 3 million children with access to early learning and pre-primary education.

UNICEF continued its global leadership in capacity development on education in emergencies. Following the recommendations of the *Evaluation of the UNICEF Contribution to Education in Humanitarian Situations* published in 2020,<sup>55</sup> the Education in Emergencies Global Course on Agora (UNICEF's learning platform) was launched in 2021, to provide UNICEF education staff and practitioners with foundational knowledge and skills relating to Education in Emergencies (EiE). To date, 1,376 staff members, as well as education practitioners from over 26 organizations have registered. Almost all participants who took the summarized or full version of the course, reported that they would recommend it to their colleagues.

As a founding member, UNICEF continued to participate in the INEE steering group. UNICEF supported the roll-out of the capacity development framework as part of the professional development workstream, and provided technical support to various initiatives, such as the Minimum Standards e-learning course and the mapping of EiE courses. UNICEF is also a member of INEE's Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning (PSS-SEL) Collaborative and supports the development of policy, knowledge management and capacity-building products relating to PSS-SEL.

<sup>52</sup> Information available at: [UNICEF Level-3 and Level-2 Emergencies | Humanitarian UNICEF](#)

<sup>53</sup> UNICEF Myanmar. 2022. [Myanmar Humanitarian Situation Report](#).

<sup>54</sup> UNICEF. 2022. [Humanitarian Action for Children Overview](#).

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2020. [Management Response to the Evaluation Report: Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to education in humanitarian situations](#).



## Spotlight on thematic funding: Increasing access to quality education for children in humanitarian situations in Mali

In Mali, despite the insecurity in the country and ongoing school closures, UNICEF leveraged its position as the lead of the Education Cluster and as a member of the Local Education Group to support the Ministry of National Education to reach internally displaced children. Using thematic funding, UNICEF provided pre-primary schools and early childhood learning spaces with learning materials and supported parenting programmes to improve access to quality early childhood education for children aged 3–5 living in conflict-affected humanitarian settings. As a result, 45,336 children (22,427 girls) gained access to formal or non-formal basic education and the primary education completion rate increased from 47 per cent to 51.6 per cent. The lower secondary education completion rate increased from 32 per cent to 36.2 per cent. Similarly, the rate of out-of-school children of primary and lower secondary school age dropped from 39 per cent to 36.5 per cent.



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In Mopti, Mali, three young internally displaced girls discover Grade 1 at their first day of school.

UNICEF continued to engage and expand partnerships focused on education in emergencies to harmonize and strengthen the collective approaches and response.

The organization hosted the ECW and received US\$100.3 million out of the total of US\$260.8 million disbursed by ECW to 70 grantees in 2021. This funding supported education responses in 16 countries, including Ethiopia, Chad, Afghanistan, the State of Palestine and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, three regional-led responses, as well as the Global Education Cluster, early childhood development and Child Protection Humanitarian Alliance.

During 2021, UNICEF continued its leadership of the Global Education Cluster, alongside Save the Children. Education clusters and working groups were in 31 countries

supporting work in 34 contexts composed of 27 activated clusters, three hubs in the Syrian Arab Republic and four Education in Emergencies working groups. UNICEF had dedicated cluster coordinators in 21 out of the 35 contexts it co-leads. By mid-year, 19 million children and adolescents, including around 9.5 million girls had received educational assistance, and 836,537 teachers (420,328 female) were supported within the Humanitarian Response Plan.

UNICEF is a founding member of the *Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies* launched in January 2021 to effectively elevate the educational needs of children and youth in emergencies, protracted crises and displacement, ensuring it is made a top priority before, during and after crises. Over a span of 12 months, the hub has grown to 33 member organizations and has focused on three main

goals: grow demand for change, inspire commitment, and boost country-level impact. UNICEF is a member of both the steering group and technical working group. UNICEF led on collaborative engagements with members, most notably with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Action Summit in June 2021, and spoke at a meet-up linked to the 4th International Conference for the Safe Schools Declaration, as part of a broad effort to engage in key Geneva-based forums. UNICEF supported key spotlight events on northern Ethiopia and the Sudan to bring together the Geneva strategic community, so that governments and partners

see education as a top priority before, during and after emergencies, and in protracted crises.

UNICEF continued its role as chair of the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES), in addition to knowledge sharing and advocacy. A global consultation with nearly 100 expert reviewers was completed, capturing emerging themes related to issues such as public health emergencies and climate change needed in the ongoing revision of the GADRRRES *Comprehensive School Safety Framework*.

## Learning Passport: Bridging the learning gap and the digital divide

The Learning Passport is an online, mobile and offline learning platform that was developed in collaboration with UNICEF and Microsoft to address the challenges faced by over 30 million children and youth to access continued, quality education due to disruptions caused by crisis and displacement. At the onset of the pandemic, the platform was quickly scaled in countries to mitigate the impact of school closures on children's education by ensuring continuity of learning for children and youth. The Learning Passport includes an embedded feature that allows learners and teachers to monitor learning progress in real time.

In 2021, the Learning Passport launched in 13 countries including Kosovo<sup>52</sup>, Honduras, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Lebanon, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, the Sudan, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Kyrgyzstan, and Montenegro.

UNICEF and partners piloted the non-formal education Learning Passport for vulnerable Lebanese and refugee youth in Lebanon. In 2021, 63,004,362 children and youth (64 per cent girls) and 938 teachers and school administrators were reached, with more than 55,002,356 learners completing 90 per cent of one or more of the courses they enrolled in.

In the state of Puntland in Somalia, in response to the COVID-19 school closures, UNICEF financed the digitalization of curriculum materials for primary and secondary education, including reaching 13,000 learners with curricular and co-curricular content through the Learning Passport platform.

UNICEF Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Microsoft and TelOne, launched the Zimbabwe Learning Passport with an aim to empower students, especially girls, with access to gender-responsive content, early exposure to computer-assisted learning, developing skills in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), digital and financial literacy, and to explore future careers in emerging technologies. The Zimbabwe Learning Passport provided 79,560 users with access to digital learning.

The Sudan launched the Learning Passport in October 2021, which enabled learning continuity for more than 5,000 students whose learning became disrupted due to rapid political transitions.

When the first Youth Learning Passport was launched in Jordan, 14,000 thousand young people (68 per cent female) enrolled in informal online learning. The Youth Learning Passport provides a critical bridge to help disadvantaged youth – especially girls, refugees and adolescents with disabilities – access digital learning and training.

Courses on the Learning Passport platform and initiatives that have used this solution, reached 3,000 young people (60 per cent women) from different refugee camps (Syrian and Palestinian). Testing of the Learning Passport Offline model commenced in Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe.

By the end of 2021, the Learning Passport supported nearly 2 million children, youth, educators and caregivers with educational content to support continuous learning in over 20 countries, with plans to expand into 30 more countries. The Learning Passport was selected as one of TIME's Best Inventions of 2021 and nominated as a finalist in Fast Company's World Changing Ideas Awards for 2021.

## Case study: Inclusion of Syrian refugee children into the national education system in Turkey

Turkey hosts 1.7 million refugee children from the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 420,000 of whom are out-of-school. Girls make 6 per cent of the out-of-school Syrian refugee children in Turkey and face multiple barriers, such as gender bias, to access education.

Since 2017, the Turkish Government has committed to integrating all school-aged Syrian refugees into the national public school system. In 2021, UNICEF supported the Ministry of National Education to enrol 731,713 children (359,575 girls) in formal education. UNICEF worked with the Government to implement intersectoral programming that addresses the full range of needs of the most marginalized learners. With support from UNICEF and the Turkish Red Crescent, as well as funding from The Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission (ECHO), the Government implemented the National Conditional Cash Transfer for Education programme, to reach the most marginalized children, including children from the host community and refugees, and to increase enrolment and retention in both formal and non-formal education. In 2021, 625,901 learners (311,110 girls) received conditional cash transfers to access and continue their education.

UNICEF also supports the government to implement the Accelerated Learning Programme, a certified and accredited second chance learning opportunity to help Syrian and other forcibly displaced non-Turkish speaking out-of-school children and adolescents continue learning and eventually transition into the Turkish formal education system. This programme provides condensed, age-appropriate, competency-based essential curricula along with psychosocial support, counselling for learners' educational and career needs, and extra-curricular activities to address young people's experiences in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. It prioritizes literacy and numeracy skills as the foundation for learning, and instructors receive in-service training on topics such as Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language. In 2021, 32,369 children (15,447 girls) enrolled in accelerated learning programmes in 12 refugee dense provinces, and 28,808 children (13,828 girls) completed the programme. UNICEF provided financial support to train over 720 teachers and 120 key Ministry personnel on methods to support learners in the Accelerated Learning Programme.



13-year-old Yahya El Asker attends a local school for Syrian children in Grade 4.



## Case study: Accelerating safe school reopening in Chad

School closures in Chad affected 3.3 million children, including over 214,000 children already affected by emergencies.<sup>56</sup> To ensure continuity of learning while schools were closed, UNICEF supported the Government with implementation of distance education alternatives, reaching 607,675 students (136,426 girls) with radio, television and mobile phone programmes in partnership with a local NGO, called TECHNIDEV. To promote a safer return to school, UNICEF provided handwashing kits to at least 1,083 primary schools and built 15 water points.

UNICEF supported the print and distribution of the comic book, *Lafya* (meaning 'peace' in Ngambaye, one of Chad's local languages), developed with support from ECHO and BMZ/ KfW Entwicklungsbank (KfW Development Bank), which includes messages about COVID-19 prevention. Printed copies were distributed to 17,000 students, along with posters and stickers, online versions, 2D animations and audio books in French, Arabic and Ngambaye. UNICEF also helped develop a child-friendly radio programme inspired by *Lafya* in collaboration with *Hadre Dounia*, a local theatre company. The organization's support to this intervention reached 262,866 adolescents and youth (136,691 girls) aged 10-24 with COVID-19 related messages. The outreach activities were made possible thanks to 1,535 adolescents and youth aged 10-29 (630 girls) who engaged in prevention and promotion activities.



Students from Dangabo Chaïb, a primary school in N'Djaména, receiving the *Lafya* comic book for the first time.

<sup>56</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [Chad COVID-19 Situation Report #09](#).

## Learning continuity and recovery in emergency settings

In 2021, UNICEF supported the continuation of learning in countries experiencing multiple emergencies in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Sudan, UNICEF worked in the three states of White Nile, Blue Nile and Kassala to establish 78 learning centres providing learning to a total of 24,500 nationwide, including 11,760 girls.

In the Philippines, to ensure continuity of learning during school closures, UNICEF supported the Department of Education in implementing and improving digital and other self-learning modalities in local languages through online learning platforms, television, radio and distribution of printed materials, benefiting more than 3 million children in Grades 1 to 3.

In South Sudan, in conflict-affected areas, UNICEF trained 3,245 teachers (19 per cent women) on conflict-sensitive pedagogy. Through radio programming, 1.5 million children were able to continue their learning, and 948,428 children (46 per cent girls) were provided with essential education services and supplies.

## School reopening during COVID-19 and Mission: Recovering Education

By the end of 2021, countries had closed and reopened schools numerous times with a combination of remote and in-person instruction used to ensure children's continued learning. In 2021, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank launched *Mission: Recovering Education*, a partnership focused on three priority areas:

- All children and youth are back in school and receive the tailored services needed to meet their learning, health, psychosocial well-being and other needs
- Students receive effective remedial learning to help recover learning losses
- All teachers are prepared and supported to address learning losses among their students and to incorporate digital technology into their teaching

The partnership provides global and country support to track and monitor school reopening and education recovery, and to measure students' learning upon reopening to have a clear diagnostic of their needs and estimate the magnitude of learning losses. In addition to the technical support provided in these areas in 2021, a series of webinars on best practices were held and eight case studies from champion countries across the three agencies were developed.

UNICEF documented successful country examples, including the support provided to the Ministry of Education in Argentina to produce eight *Return to the Classroom* reports, which monitored the return to schooling throughout the country.<sup>57</sup>

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 28,645 displaced and host community girls benefited from inclusive, gender-responsive formal and non-formal education programmes, focused on enrolment and retention. The partnership also aims to engage with countries to prioritize education financing for recovery, the outcome of which is being documented in 2022.

In Mozambique, UNICEF mobilized technical, financial and human resources to support the Ministry of Education and Human Development through preparation and review of the country's COVID-19 response plan. During school closures, UNICEF supported nearly 100,000 children with distance or home-based learning. Additionally, more than 1.5 million primary and secondary school children were reached indirectly through the organization's support to the Institute for Social Communication for their production of community radio and educational television learning programmes.

In Brazil, UNICEF worked with more than 3,000 municipalities to train over 215,000 educational personnel as part of the country's COVID-19 recovery plan. The plan included providing over 135,000 children and adolescents with distance and home-based learning, and re-enrolling more than 14,000 children who left school because of the pandemic.

In Sudan, UNICEF worked in the three states of White Nile, Blue Nile and Kassala to establish 78 learning centres that provided non-formal learning to a total of 24,500 (48 per cent girls) nationwide.

<sup>57</sup> Available in Spanish at: [www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/informes-de-situacion](http://www.argentina.gob.ar/educacion/informes-de-situacion)



## Case study: Supporting girls' learning continuity during school closures in Burkina Faso

Attacks on teachers, students and schools have ravaged children's access to education in Burkina Faso. Since June 2021, 2,244 schools were closed due to insecurity affecting 304,564 children (148,046 girls).

To mitigate learning losses, UNICEF worked with the Government and local partners to improve access to quality radio-based education programmes, particularly for girls. UNICEF supported 2,645 female community coaches to encourage girls' participation in listening clubs, where children meet around one radio to listen to lessons and complete exercises guided by an adult. UNICEF also supported the Government in providing free access to digital learning resources on a national platform. UNICEF supported 647,046 learners (336,479 girls), three out of four of them internally displaced persons with access to distance or home-based learning opportunities.

UNICEF supported the scale up of the Quality Child-Friendly School approach and the development of a School Emergency Preparedness and Response plan. Teachers' psychological first aid techniques were also strengthened, reaching 2,292 schools (21 per cent of the country's 10,630 public schools) and reaching 480,852 children (48 per cent girls).



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Girls in Ouahigouya in the north of Burkina Faso.



## Education under attack

In 2021, there were over 950 verified incidents of attacks on schools and military use of schools. Schools continued to be targets of armed violence, with girls and women being the main victims of attacks, targeting their access to and continuation of education. Recruitment of children to serve in armed groups was prevalent particularly among adolescents.

Following the *Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration* held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2021, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2601, which condemns attacks and threats of attack against schools, educational facilities and civilians connected with schools, and emphasizes the need to facilitate the continuation of education in situations of armed conflict.<sup>58</sup> By the end of 2021, 113 states around the world had endorsed the *Safe Schools Declaration* with the Maldives, Mexico, Namibia, Timor-Leste and Togo being the latest states to endorse it in 2021. UNICEF continued to support children in conflict-affected countries through developing school safety plans, providing mental health and psychosocial support services, and support for continuity of education, rehabilitating schools and distributing supplies for teaching and learning.

In Myanmar, waves of attacks on schools and education officials occurred with 192 attacks against schools and school personnel being reported, and the use of 176 educational facilities for security forces between the beginning of February to the end of September alone. By the end of 2021, the total number of people displaced by instability reached 370,000.

In Ukraine, UNICEF implemented its Safe and Child-Friendly School concept into 25 schools in Luhansk and Donetsk, where 8,200 children benefited from conflict-sensitive, risk-informed and life-skills education delivered by teachers trained by UNICEF and its partners. Ukraine also passed its Safe Schools Declaration implementation plan in August 2021.

In Somalia, UNICEF supported 176,073 children (80,086 girls) impacted by conflict and climate crises providing services such as accelerated education pathways to ensure continued learning. Somalia also finalized its Safe Schools Declaration policy in 2021, outlining measures to prevent, manage and respond to attacks on education services and ensure safe learning environments in schools and universities.

In Colombia, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Government are working together to prevent recruitment of children into armed groups under

an initiative called *Sumate por Mi*. In 2021, the initiative provided training to 5,629 teachers (2,408 female) and has reached over 13,000 children (6,029 girls) with learning programmes and psychosocial support.

## Non-formal and remedial learning in emergency settings

The pandemic and humanitarian emergencies, including armed attacks on education and climate related emergencies, showed the need for scale up of non-formal education, remedial and accelerated learning programmes to provide learning continuity for children and adolescents, especially the most vulnerable, children on the move, and children with disabilities.

After the takeover by the de facto authorities in Afghanistan in August 2021, UNICEF prioritized support to the community-based education (CBE) programme, which resulted in the establishment of 6,456 new CBEs, bringing the total number of CBEs to 7,604 operating across the country, 680 of which are in areas in the south where children have not had access to primary (formal) education for the past two decades. By the year's end, CBE classes were providing access to learning for 245,995 children (53 per cent girls). UNICEF also contributed to the 2021/2022 Regional Refugee Response plan in Pakistan, to meet humanitarian needs, including the education needs of 150,000 refugees from Afghanistan.

In Lebanon, where children's education is affected by slow-onset and compounded crises, UNICEF supported 47,857 out-of-school children (49 per cent girls) in non-formal education programmes. This number includes 20,597 children in community-based early childhood education, and 14,997 children in basic literacy and numeracy programmes.

In Myanmar, UNICEF supported the continuity of learning for 19,124 children (8,919 girls) in the three conflict-affected townships of Rakhine, Kachin and Kayin through the provision of home-based learning materials.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF supported the provision of non-formal education for 660,252 children (52 per cent girls), returnee children from Lebanon, children impacted by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in-country, and children affected by school closures.

<sup>58</sup> United Nations. 2021. [Security Council resolution 2601 \[on children and armed conflict\]](#).

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Getting children back to school and remedial learning in the State of Palestine

Through thematic funds, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education in the State of Palestine, and collaborated with established local partners to respond to the education needs of conflict-affected children in Gaza. UNICEF supported remedial education for children in Grades 1 through 4 in 50 public schools. The schools that were selected had a higher concentration of marginalized children, had limited access to digital connectivity and few teachers. In the education districts of North Gaza, East Gaza, West Gaza, Easy Khan Younis and Rafah, 5,000 children (2,196 girls) completed the remedial learning classes.

UNICEF provided stationery kits to over 77,140 of the most vulnerable children (50 per cent girls) to mitigate their risk of dropping out of school, and supported rehabilitation of 20 damaged schools, providing a safe learning environment to 19,968 children (13,243 girls). UNICEF reached 54,971 children and adolescents (28,585 girls) with well-being, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). The flexibility of thematic funding enabled UNICEF to rapidly deploy these measures, get children back on track with their learning, and ensure they stayed in school following the reopening of schools in August 2021.



Students show their stationery kits.

## Support for teachers in humanitarian situations

Teachers working in protracted crises are often overstretched, suffer from trauma, at times go without payment, and serve a multitude of roles beyond supporting students' learning, to include psychosocial support and protection. In 2021, 59 per cent of UNICEF countries in humanitarian settings reported supporting teachers with professional development training, and 64 per cent of countries reported providing teachers with school leadership programmes.

In Yemen, where 64 per cent of teachers have not received a regular salary since 2016, UNICEF supported 2,162 rural female teachers with a monthly cash incentive to help retain female teachers in conservative rural areas where there is a shortage of women teachers, and to increase enrolment and retention of girls who are not allowed to be taught by male teachers.

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, chronic inflation exacerbated by the economic impact of the pandemic has limited children's access to essential services like food and education. UNICEF helped support the Ministry of Education in their retention of 7,794 teachers (5,692

women), 112 of them from indigenous populations. In seven states, UNICEF and partners provided incentives to support the training of 10,528 teachers (8,867 women) in quality education and in preparation for schools reopening.

In Greece, UNICEF supported the provision of accelerated learning materials and oversaw the training of teachers on language and cultural barriers to support the integration of 20,000 refugee children into the country's national public school system.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Providing safe spaces for learning in Ethiopia

The *Bete* ('My Home' in Amharic) programme in Ethiopia, which was designed by UNICEF, is a joint education and child protection initiative aimed at providing a safe space for hard-to-reach out-of-school children, including internally displaced persons, refugees and children in host communities from ages 6 to 18, who live amid humanitarian emergencies. In 2021, the programme reached 92,016 children (47 per cent girls) with integrated accelerated learning, child protection and skills development.



In the Amhara region, Meseret Tekuar, 16, left her town with her two younger brothers. They are staying in a school with many children who are separated from their parents.



## Development-humanitarian-peace nexus: Resilience, disaster risk reduction and climate change action

Resilient education systems are critical to ensuring the achievement of SDGs, by mitigating costly and potentially irreversible losses brought by human-made and environmentally induced disasters to children's learning and investments made in education. In 2021, up to 2 billion children were exposed to extreme weather and climate related crises, including heatwaves, cyclones, flooding and water scarcity, with the number of climate related disasters having tripled in the last 30 years.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, conflict and other human-made hazards threatened learning opportunities for children in multiple fragile settings worldwide, where capacities of education systems struggle to respond to and prepare for emergencies. With the deepening socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, diminishing domestic financing in many countries, and dwindling ODA for education, the capacities of education systems have been further strained, undermining their resilience.

In 2021, UNICEF continued efforts to strengthen education systems through risk-informed programming approaches and capacity development to enhance preparedness, preventative, responsive and mitigation capacities of education systems, and to strengthen the positive coping capacities of children and communities. UNICEF supported 127 countries with emergency preparedness and resilience strengthening measures and utilized some US\$67 million to strengthen risk-informed and resilient education systems addressing climate change, natural disasters and conflict. The organization's efforts contributed to making schools climate resilient and ensuring that safety and disaster preparedness measures, as well as school disaster management strategies, are in place.

In 2021, 62 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries reported having effective risk reduction strategies in their education systems, while 44 per cent have allocated human and financial resources to their preparedness and resilience mechanisms, a 2 per cent increase from 2020. Nevertheless, in 2021, the global pandemic and growing financial pressure caused 43 per cent of countries to experience a 3 per cent decline in the overall level of preparedness and/or resilience mechanisms in place in the education sector. A risk assessment was conducted by 63 per cent of countries.

In India, UNICEF expanded its comprehensive school safety programme to 10 states, covering 145,000 schools to build resilience against humanitarian and climatic shocks. In the state of Chhattisgarh, 14,000 teachers (45 per cent female)

were trained on school safety. With UNICEF support, 240,000 students (49 per cent girls) participated in training to prepare them for disasters.

In Haiti, natural disasters, political crises and a surge in gang violence, within an ongoing pandemic, left an estimated 3 million children without access to a school. UNICEF supported 145,000 children (73,950 girls) and adolescents aged 5–19 and 4,190 vulnerable families affected by the disasters (including 200 children with disabilities), through the distribution of learning materials, classroom furniture, cash transfers, psychosocial support and non-formal education.

## Development-humanitarian-peace nexus: Conflict-sensitive education and peacebuilding in fragile and conflict-affected settings

UNICEF works to connect humanitarian and development efforts to leverage the potential of education, and to support peacebuilding and social cohesion in fragile and conflict-affected settings through risk-informed and conflict-sensitive education approaches. In 2021, a total of 39 UNICEF country offices reported implementing risk-informed programming approaches, utilizing over US\$6 million to leverage child-centred education services to strengthen social cohesion and prevent conflict. These programmes focus on expanding access to education to marginalized communities in conflict-affected settings, promoting peace capacities of children, adolescents, teachers and schools, and supporting inclusive and multilingual curricula.

In Angola, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to implement violence prevention protocols and an education for peace strategy in schools located on border provinces. In total, 335 counsellors and 372 teachers were trained on how to implement this strategy into schools, benefiting 27,858 students.

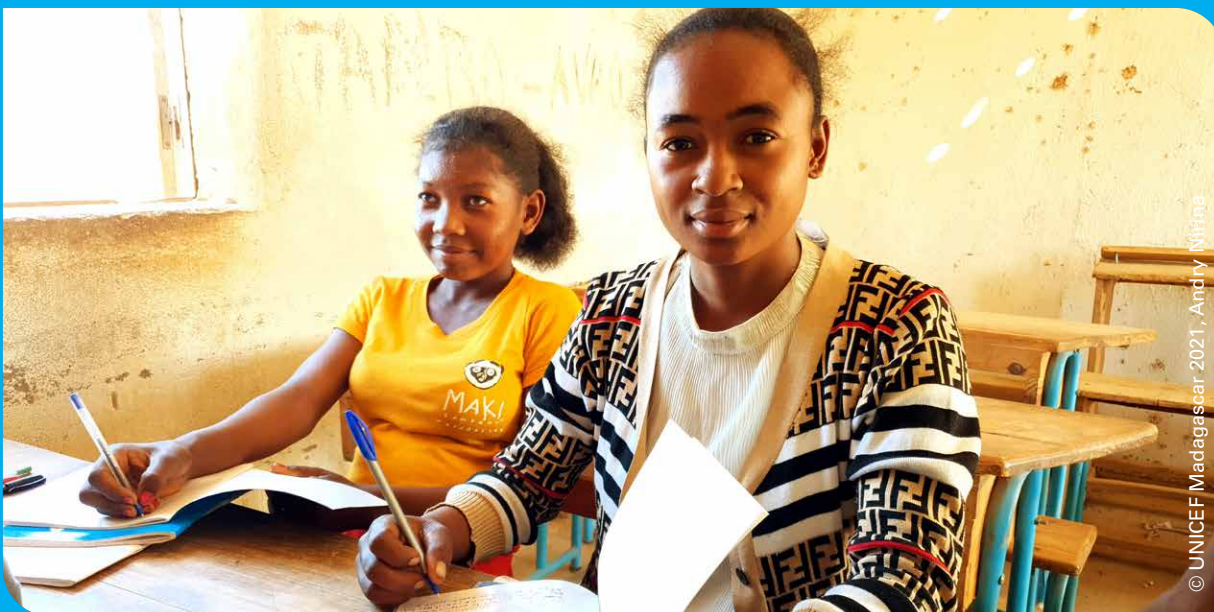
In Burkina Faso, UNICEF supported peace education and social cohesion programmes taught at 276 after-school clubs across the country. These programmes focused on fostering peace, community dialogue and social cohesion in the Sahel region. A total of 6,794 adolescents (47 per cent girls) attended these programmes.

In border provinces in Ecuador, UNICEF worked in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to provide education for peace programmes to 27,858 students, 372 teachers and 335 counsellors.

<sup>59</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis](#).

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Catch up learning in humanitarian contexts in Madagascar

In Madagascar, UNICEF supported the Government's response to the pandemic and the droughts affecting the southern part of the country. Using thematic funds, UNICEF supported regional directorates to reach some of the most marginalized children with catch-up classes. In total, 90,085 children and adolescents (50 per cent girls) participated, including 878 children with disabilities, primarily in the drought-affected south.



© UNICEF Madagascar 2021, Andry Nirina

Students from lower secondary school in a catch-up programme in the southern drought-affected region of Atsimo-Andrefana.

## Children on the move: Refugees, internally displaced persons and migrant children<sup>60</sup>

The number of internally displaced children, refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers and, in some cases, returnees or those re-integrating into their communities after displacement, has increased dramatically in recent years. These numbers are expected to increase due to the growing impacts of climate change, protracted and emerging conflicts on education systems, particularly in

fragile settings. In 2021, there were an estimated 88.9 million forcibly displaced people worldwide because of persecution, conflict, and violence, out of which internally displaced persons account for 55 million, while 26.4 million are refugees.<sup>61</sup> Children make up around 42 per cent (or 37.3 million) of those forcibly displaced.<sup>62</sup> Roughly 9.8 million refugees and 25.6 million internally displaced persons are under the age of 18 (around half of all forcibly displaced people).<sup>63</sup> Countries hosting the vast majority of children on the move are also those that face multiple crises across Africa and the Middle East, and account for 43 of the 50 most fragile countries in the world.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> The term 'children on the move' refers to children who face situations of protracted displacement (sometimes intergenerational displacement in the same settings), or processes of resettlement and (re)integration. It also includes situations in which a child would not describe themselves as 'on the move' in their immediate future but still considers themselves migrants in a new community.

<sup>61</sup> UNHCR. 2021. *Education Report 2021: Staying the course – The challenges facing refugee education*. More recent figures are drawn from the *2021 Internal Displacement Index Monitoring Report*, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Geneva, 2021, p. 6, and IOM's *World Migration Report 2022*.

<sup>62</sup> Figures include the updated estimate number of internally displaced persons from the Internal Displacement Index Monitoring Report (p. 6), and UNHCR's *Education Report 2021: Staying the course – The challenges facing refugee education*. IOM's recent global migration report places the number of displaced persons even higher at 89.4 million (See: World Migration Report 2022, p. 3).

<sup>63</sup> UNICEF. 2021. *The State of the World's Children 2021: On My Mind – Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health*. Note: Figures include the updated estimate number of internally displaced persons based upon the 2021 Internal Displacement Index Monitoring report.

<sup>64</sup> UNICEF. 2022. *Education, Children on the move and Inclusion in Education: Lessons learned and scalable solutions to accelerate inclusion in national education systems and enhance learning outcomes*.

During 2021, UNICEF programmes supported 6.4 million children on the move, reflecting an increase of 66 per cent compared with 2020 numbers, with slightly more boys (52 per cent) than girls (48 per cent). This number also includes UNICEF support to 4 million children on the move in humanitarian settings across the globe, ensuring they have access to safe learning opportunities (an increase of 30 per cent compared with 2020). The largest proportion of children on the move supported by UNICEF and its partners were at primary level (73 per cent), followed by lower secondary level (13 per cent), pre-primary level (9 per cent) and then upper secondary level (6 per cent).

In 2021, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and IOM jointly developed the *Toolkit for Integrating Migration into Education Interventions*, which is a technical guide that includes user-friendly resources to support the inclusion of migrant children into education systems and programmes, as part of commitments made by partners and governments under the Global Compact for Migration.<sup>65</sup>

UNICEF and UNHCR continued the implementation of the *Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugees* across 10 countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Honduras, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya and Rwanda), which are home to 2.14 million refugee children, almost 18 per cent of the world's total. The partnership aims to enrol refugee and host community children into education over a period of two years. In Ethiopia, for example, 195 classrooms were constructed, providing educational access to 202,195 refugee children and 397,882 internally displaced and emergency affected primary school children. In Rwanda, UNICEF supported the integration and continued learning of 52,516 Congolese and Burundian refugee children (24,281 girls; 209 children with disabilities) in refugee hosting communities through the procurement of government learning materials and guided curriculum that prepared refugee learners to take Rwanda's national exams and enable their transition into the national system.

Since 2019, the *Prospects Programme*, funded by the Netherlands, has supported eight countries in the Middle East and Eastern Africa (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) with a focus on supporting migrant and forcibly displaced children and young people to acquire critical learning competencies and skills for employability, strengthening school to work transition. It supports active participation in societal forums, so that the children and youth are equipped with skills to constructively engage in their communities.

## Life skills programming in humanitarian and emergency contexts

In 2021, UNICEF utilized more than US\$9 million to support approximately 1.7 million children and adolescents (51 per cent girls) to access skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability in humanitarian situations. The largest age groups benefiting from these opportunities were younger adolescents aged 10–14 years (74 per cent) followed by older adolescents aged 15–19 years (23 per cent).

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF and partners provided 224,563 young people (50 per cent girls) with social and civic engagement opportunities. Life skills sessions provided 100,405 young people (57 per cent girls) with critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills.

In Burundi, a total of 552 solidarity groups and peace clubs were created under the leadership of 552 (59 per cent girls) peer educators who attended life skills lessons under UNICEF's *UPSHIFT* project.<sup>66</sup> The UPSHIFT project also taught life skills and the concept of social cohesion to 15,895 adolescents (56 per cent girls) – including to those who are refugees and displaced from minority groups.

## Intersectoral approaches in education in emergencies

Schools can play a pivotal role as an integrated service platform to deliver a range of interventions, and in ensuring children have access to safe learning environments, whether it be in emergency situations or in places that are at risk for natural disasters and conflict. A key aspect of the support that UNICEF provides in humanitarian response is its intersectoral work in emergency settings to address multiple hazards and risks to children accessing safe learning environments. Education section staff work in close collaboration with colleagues in the health, nutrition, child protection, MHPSS, WASH, social policy, disability, gender, adolescent development and C4D sections to identify and respond to a spectrum of hazards.

In the Central African Republic, UNICEF education and WASH teams worked in tandem to ensure that 32 schools and 10 health-care facilities were equipped with functional and well-maintained water facilities, reaching nearly

<sup>65</sup> The [Global Compact for Migration](#) is the first ever UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions. It is non-legally binding, and grounded in values of state sovereignty, responsibility sharing, non-discrimination and human rights, and recognizes that a cooperative approach is needed to optimize the overall benefits of migration, while addressing its risks and challenges for individuals and communities in countries of origin, transit and destination.

<sup>66</sup> UPSHIFT is a social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme designed to build skills and opportunities for young people who are disadvantaged due to issues such as poverty, gender discrimination, disability or ethnicity. UPSHIFT aims at empowering young people with the skills and resources to identify and design solutions to problems in their communities.



18,600 children. More than 3,400 school children have been provided with basic sanitation facilities with gender-segregated latrines.

In Mexico, UNICEF education and child protection teams supported the ongoing school-based violence prevention *Escuelas en Accion por la Igualdad* programme in 61 schools, including training of 729 teachers (489 women) – 85 per cent of whom showed an increase in knowledge on violence prevention and reached 7,169 children adolescents (3,926 girls).

In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF nutrition and education teams provided children with balanced school meals to meet dietary needs in preschool, primary and secondary schools. As a result, 110,272 children from 3 to 17 years old (55,724 girls), 4,585 of them from indigenous populations, and 29 children with disabilities, in 11 states continued their education during the pandemic.

## Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

The stressful experiences related to the pandemic and school closures, combined with other adverse experiences for marginalized children from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds and those affected by emergencies, have posed serious threats to children's mental health and well-being. Early evidence indicates the decline of mental health during the pandemic, and some increases in stress and anxiety among children and adolescents.<sup>67</sup> All children, particularly those most marginalized and affected by humanitarian crises, need to learn and acquire skills in a safe learning environment that promotes and responds to their mental health and well-being needs, from childhood to adulthood. The Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the key goal of education is the development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. Also, one of the UNICEF *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action* is to ensure access to quality education, and to deliver gender and age-appropriate mental health and psychosocial support for children, adolescents and teachers.<sup>68</sup>

In 2021, 51 of UNICEF-supported countries incorporated mental health and psychosocial support as part of their resilient education system plan. Formal and non-formal education programmes offer critical entry points to improve the mental health and well-being of children, adolescents, caregivers and teachers, who have experienced the psychosocial impacts of varied emergencies, and to

improve the safety of learning environments across the world.

In 2021, recognizing the many disruptions and stressors that children and youth have faced, UNICEF continued to advocate for schools to be kept open and ensure that children have access to holistic services when they return to school, including mental health and psychosocial support.

In Colombia, UNICEF developed *La Aldea: Stories to Stay at Home*, a multi-platform curriculum based on fables to help children, teachers and caregivers navigate feelings of uncertainty, fear, loneliness and anger generated by the pandemic and school closures.

In Ecuador, UNICEF trained nearly 1,200 school counsellors and teachers to provide psychosocial support for children by telephone and digital platforms, reaching 48,000 primary and secondary students in 14 provinces.<sup>69</sup>

In Mozambique, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Human Development, and the Education Cluster partners to develop an MHPSS training manual, training 8,180 educators on MHPSS services for children affected by the pandemic and the Idai and Kenneth cyclones.

In Azerbaijan, UNICEF, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, implemented an initiative on school-based MHPSS in nine conflict-affected regions. In total, 3,442 female and 68 male schoolteachers received training to support the social and emotional learning skills of children and adolescents, and 323 female and 6 male school psychologists developed the new set of skills in Psychological First Aid. Social and emotional learning approaches that apply a whole-school approach have proven effective to promote child mental health and well-being.

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting children's learning, mental health and well-being. In 2021, UNICEF and partners supported teachers with skills development opportunities, support and guidance to protect and promote their own and their students' mental health and psychosocial well-being in 37 countries.

In Mexico, for example, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to train about 34,500 teachers and educators (62 per cent female) from ECE to upper-secondary level on MHPSS. UNICEF supported the training of 3,200 teachers on psychosocial support in Nepal, and 22,588 teachers (10,158 women) in Pakistan.

<sup>67</sup> UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti. 2021. *Life in Lockdown: Child and adolescent mental health and well-being in the time of COVID-19*.

<sup>68</sup> See more at: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>

<sup>69</sup> UNICEF. 2021. *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Case Study: Mental health and psychosocial well-being services are integrated in the education system*.

## Case study: Ensuring all children return to school and receive comprehensive support and MHPSS, including for children on the move in Brazil

In Brazil, most schools closed from mid-March 2020, resulting in over 5 million children and adolescents losing access to education until schools started reopening in September 2021.

SAS is a free methodology and online tool that helps national and subnational governments identify, register and monitor children and adolescents aged 4–17, who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. The technology also helps identify the factors preventing children from attending school and uses this data to improve enrolment and attendance rates. SAS data also helps address children's comprehensive needs with mental health and psychosocial care, through identification, prevention and referrals in cases of suspected violence.

In the states of Roraima and Amazonas, UNICEF worked with state and municipal education departments in the active search for refugee and migrant students using SAS, and provided comprehensive education, health and protection services for 17,498 migrant and refugee children (8,480 girls) through non-formal educational services.



Children return to school in Serrinha, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil.

### Summary

UNICEF worked closely with its partners in 2021 to limit the negative impacts of the pandemic on children's education and well-being. Despite the growing financial gaps to address the exponentially increasing needs of children, UNICEF continued its on-the-ground leadership in action for shoring up access to education. UNICEF was an early voice in advocating for school re-openings and ensuring response and recovery plans include concrete measures for access to quality learning for all children, particularly marginalized children who have suffered a

disproportionate impact from the pandemic. Over the course of 2021, the organization developed several global public goods, including data and guidance for use by all partners to enable children to resume learning, and guidelines for children with disabilities, for accelerated learning and for safe school reopening. UNICEF helped to develop several tools aimed at improving opportunities for girls, including those who are trying to complete their education in an emergency context. UNICEF also prepared guidelines for addressing the needs of refugee children, and to support their mental health needs during school closures and upon their return to school.

## Result Area 2: Improving learning outcomes

The latest evidence shows that the global learning crisis has grown by even more than previously feared. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of children living in learning poverty,<sup>70</sup> which was already over 50 per cent before the pandemic, is projected to potentially rise to 70 per cent, as a result of the long school closures and the varying quality and effectiveness of remote learning.<sup>71</sup>

In Uganda, where schools were closed for nearly two academic years, one in every three children and one third of teachers may never return to school. In Ghana, there is an estimated learning loss of around 66 per cent in foundational numeracy. In Bangladesh, girls' literacy and numeracy scores dropped by 6 percentage points, and the learning loss among the poorest 40 per cent of girls was three times greater than their wealthier peers. A study from São Paulo in Brazil, shows that on average, students

learned only 28 per cent of what they would have in face-to-face classes, and the risk of dropout increased more than threefold.<sup>72</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, the learning loss could accumulate to 2.8 years of long-term lost learning.<sup>73</sup> Learners in high-income countries have also been showing alarming levels of learning loss. In Virginia, in the United States of America, one study found that early reading skills were at a 20-year low in late 2021.<sup>74</sup> In Texas, only 30 per cent of third graders tested at or above grade level in mathematics in 2021, compared to 48 per cent in 2019.<sup>75</sup> Similar learning losses have been observed in other states. In the United Kingdom, results from autumn 2020 showed a learning loss in reading akin to two months of learning, among both primary and secondary students.<sup>76</sup> Data from an eight-week school shutdown in the Netherlands shows a learning loss equivalent to 20 per cent of a school year.<sup>77</sup>



Children in preschool play outside of their school in Turkey.

<sup>70</sup> The World Bank defines 'learning poverty rate' as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story, by 2030. Source: [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/what-is-learning-poverty](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/what-is-learning-poverty)

<sup>71</sup> UNICEF. 2021. *The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery*.

<sup>72</sup> All examples from UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank, 2021. *The State of the Global Education Crisis report*.

<sup>73</sup> Angrist, Noam, et al. 2021. *Building back better to avert a learning catastrophe: Estimating learning loss from COVID-19 school shutdowns in Africa and facilitating short-term and long-term learning recovery*. International Journal of Educational Development. Volume 84.

<sup>74</sup> University of Virginia. 2021. PALS Report. Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Identification of At-Risk Students: Fall 2021 Literacy Screening Findings. Retrieved from [https://pals.virginia.edu/public/pdfs/login/PALS\\_StateReport\\_Fall\\_2021.pdf](https://pals.virginia.edu/public/pdfs/login/PALS_StateReport_Fall_2021.pdf) on 10 March 2022.

<sup>75</sup> UNICEF. 2021. *The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery*.

<sup>76</sup> Department for Education, United Kingdom. 2021.

<sup>77</sup> Engzell, Per, Arun Frey, and Mark D. Verhagen. 2020.



In 2021, UNICEF's spending on improving learning outcomes increased to US\$309 million in 2021, up from US\$272 million in 2020, which to some extent reflects the shift of focus from immediate response to the pandemic, towards school reopening and recovery, and investing in interventions that focus on addressing the learning losses. These investments allowed UNICEF to reach 42.1 million children with learning materials, and support 85,586 school management committees or similar bodies with

training, (compared to just under 60,000 in 2020). Of the UNICEF-supported countries, 48 per cent reported having an effective education system for learning outcomes. The effectiveness of education systems for learning outcome is measured through five core dimensions including early learning, teacher development, learning assessment, community participation, mother-tongue and multilingual education.

FIGURE 10: Results chain for improving learning outcomes

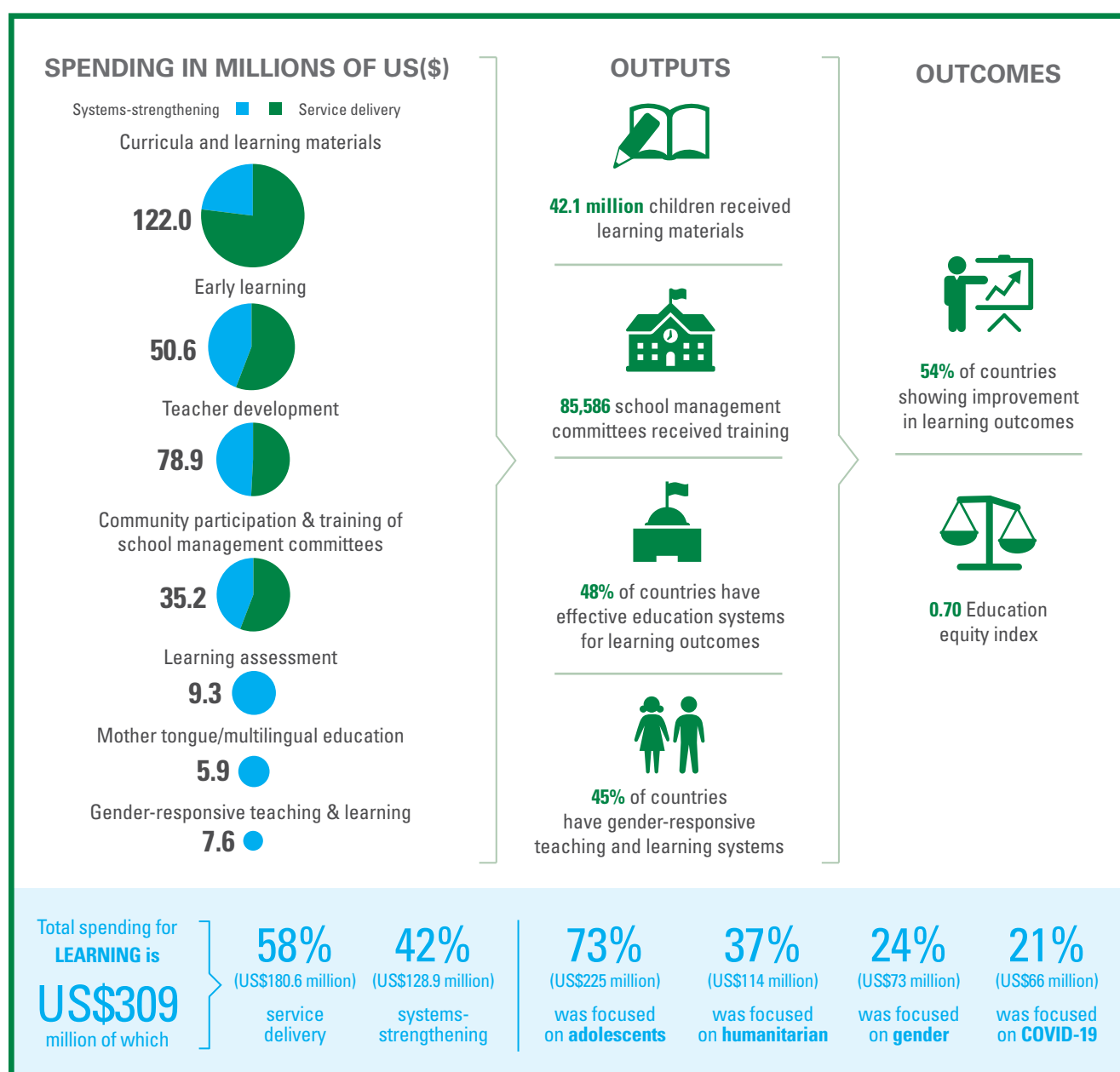
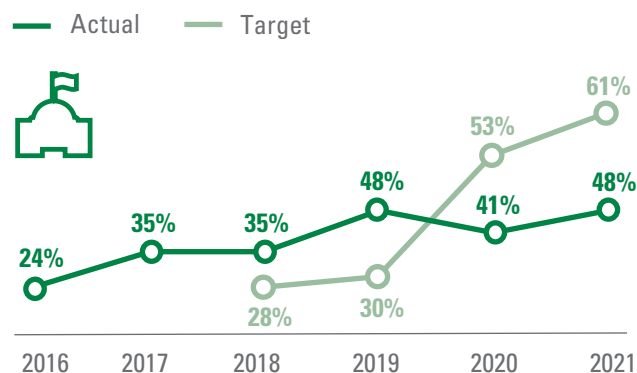


FIGURE 11: Systems-strengthening indicators for learning outcomes

## Percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with effective education systems for learning outcomes

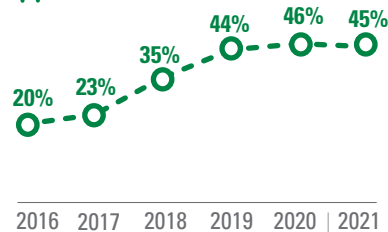


### Regional progress

Region	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
EAP	21%	53%	44%	41%	43%	33%
ECA	14%	24%	24%	40%	45%	62%
ESA	29%	33%	43%	52%	67%	62%
LAC	18%	14%	17%	25%	29%	47%
MENA	20%	27%	40%	40%	33%	31%
SA	25%	38%	38%	38%	50%	50%
WCA	17%	21%	21%	33%	46%	43%

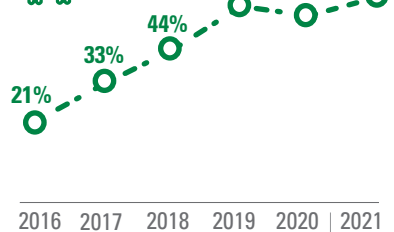
## Five dimensions of effective education systems for learning outcomes

### Teacher development



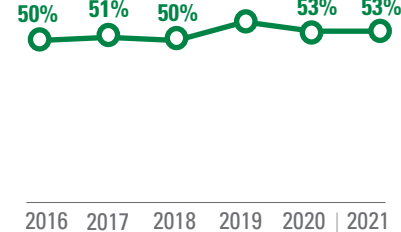
2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021  
+2 reporting countries 105 107

### Early childhood education



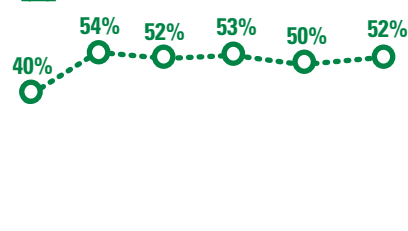
2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021  
+4 reporting countries 134 138

### Community participation



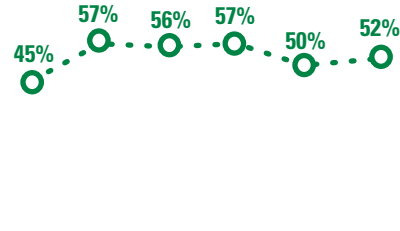
2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021  
+0 reporting countries 111 111

### Mother tongue/multilingual education



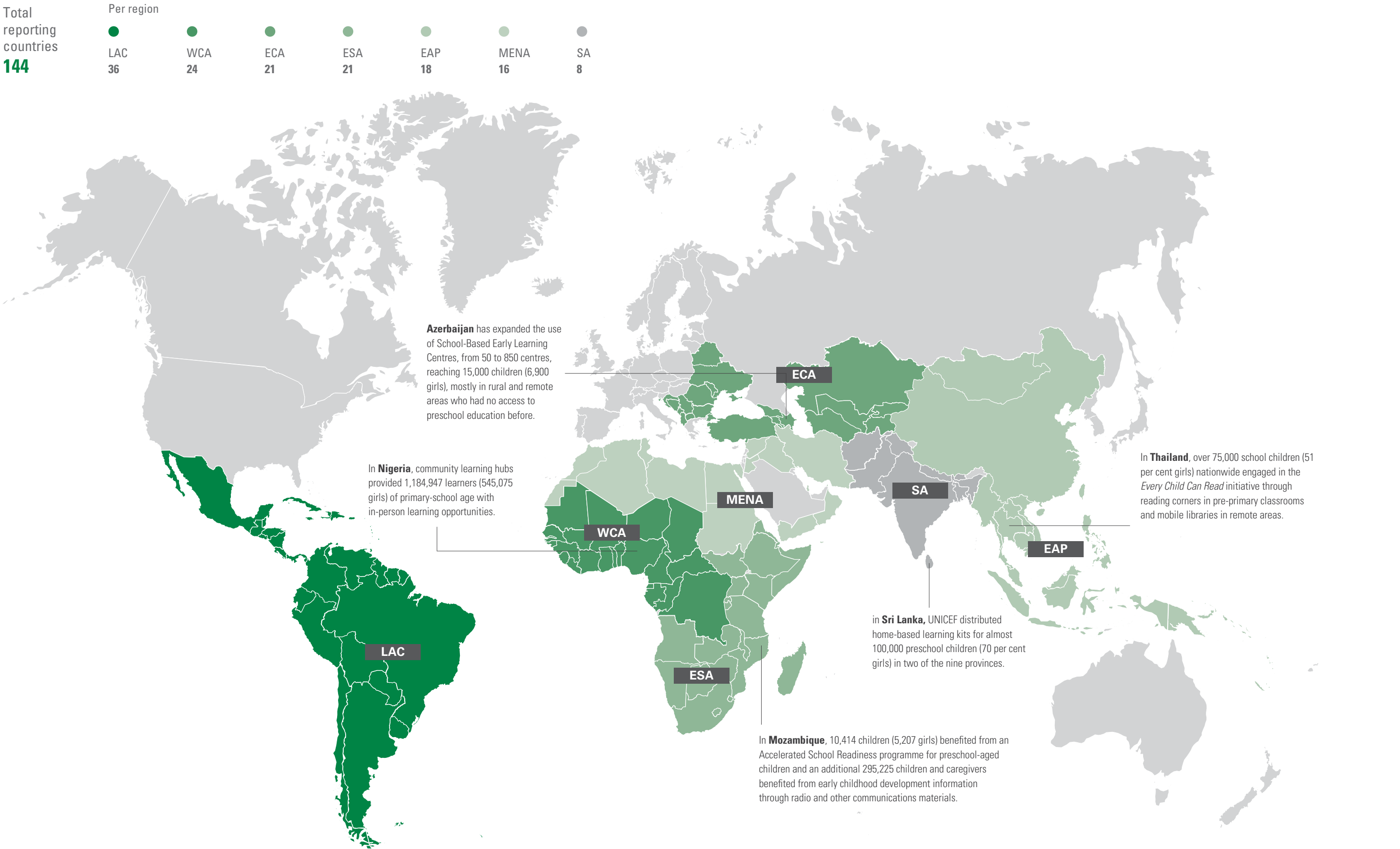
2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021  
+3 reporting countries 58 61

### Learning assessment



2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021  
+4 reporting countries 96 100

FIGURE 12: Illustrative results for improving learning outcomes





## Learning in early years

Early childhood offers a critical window of opportunity to shape the trajectory of a child's holistic development and build a foundation for learning and thriving. Quality ECE is the cornerstone of UNICEF's efforts to address the global learning crisis and achieve SDG target 4.2 – *ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education*. Pre-pandemic data showed that one in five children in low-income countries were denied life-changing opportunities to pursue pre-primary education.<sup>78</sup>

In 2021, the pandemic continued to widen the gaps in reaching global objectives for ECE. By mid-2021, over 60 countries had not fully reopened their pre-primary schools. As pre-primary centres struggle to reopen, more than 10 million young girls and boys have fallen off-track in their early development. During school closures, the youngest learners in low- and middle-income countries were less likely to access remote learning opportunities compared to primary and secondary school students. Millions of children are at the threshold of starting their formal education journey, ill-prepared with readiness skills they need to stay in school and succeed. The lifetime lost earnings attributed to pre-primary school closures alone are globally estimated at US\$1.6 trillion, yet evidence shows that most low- and middle-income countries were leaving out pre-primary education from their response to the pandemic.<sup>79</sup>

Prior to the pandemic, 38 per cent of countries invested less than 2 per cent of their education budgets on pre-primary education, and less than 1 per cent of international education aid is spent on pre-primary education, with the amounts vulnerable to donor funding fluctuations.<sup>80</sup> There is also an urgent need to include ECE in humanitarian education appeals and financing to ensure that preschool-age children who live in contexts affected by conflicts or emergencies (such as a pandemic) have access to early learning opportunities.

In 2021, UNICEF spent US\$50.6 million, or 4.2 per cent of its total expenditure on education on ECE – a decrease from 4.5 per cent in 2020, and 6 per cent in 2019. This reflects a significant gap to meet the UNICEF target of committing 10 per cent of its education resources to ECE. This is mainly due to the under-prioritization of ECE by countries and the prolonged closure of pre-primary learning centres due to the pandemic. More than half of the funding (totalling US\$28 million) was allocated to service delivery activities, access to early learning opportunities, parental education, provision of learning materials and teacher training. This was to ensure that young children benefited

from continuity of learning and that parents and caregivers, as well as ECE teachers were empowered to support distance learning measures during the pandemic. The remaining amount (US\$22 million) was spent on systems-strengthening efforts, such as solidifying pre-primary policy, leadership and budget, and investing in the pre-primary teaching and learning environment.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to advocate for prioritizing pre-primary education at global and national level and supported countries to put in place early learning transition strategies (accelerated, bridging and remedial programmes) to support young children in developing basic school readiness competencies as they transition to primary schooling. Such transition programmes tend to have the greatest impact for marginalized and disadvantaged children, and play a key role in mitigating the impact of learning losses.

UNICEF supported governments in developing and scaling up accelerated and distance early learning programmes that provided critical emergency programming to young learners, while also mobilizing communities and supporting parents and caregivers in engaging young children in play-based, early learning activities at home. The overall percentage of countries with effective ECE programmes increased from 55 per cent in 2020 to 61 per cent in 2021. This increase reflects the positive momentum generated through UNICEF-led initiatives and global advocacy for ECE.

UNICEF advanced the Better Early Learning at Scale (BELDS) agenda,<sup>81</sup> an innovative approach to strengthening national capacities to plan, cost and finance ECE programmes. As part of this agenda, UNICEF supported the global dissemination and uptake of existing resources in the [ECE Accelerator Toolkit](#) that was developed in 2020, to strengthen capacity for analysis, planning and implementation of quality ECE programmes. In Sierra Leone, for example, an ECE technical working group was developed to guide sub-sector strategic planning processes that led to the inclusion of a budgeted ECE chapter in the national 2022–2026 Education Sector Plan. In addition to Sierra Leone, UNICEF supported strengthening the capacity for analysis, planning and implementation of quality ECE programmes in South Sudan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Lesotho, through the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) project in partnership with the GPE. The GPE KIX project supports the scaling of promising education innovations and strengthens partners' capacity to improve learning outcomes. UNICEF developed a Community of Practice which facilitated dialogue and South-South collaboration and knowledge exchange between these countries.

<sup>78</sup> UNICEF. 2019. [A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education](#).

<sup>79</sup> UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti and Inter-American Development Bank. 2021. [It's Not Too Late to Act on Early Learning: Understanding and recovering from the impact of pre-primary education closures during COVID-19](#).

<sup>80</sup> UNICEF. 2019. [A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education](#).

<sup>81</sup> UNICEF has partnered with the GPE under the Better Early Learning and Development at Scale (BELDS) initiative to pilot an innovative consultative approach to strengthening national capacities to plan, cost and finance ECE programmes in Kyrgyzstan, Ghana, Lesotho and Sao Tome.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Improving access to quality pre-primary education in Nigeria

Nigeria's 2013 *National Policy on Education* guarantees one year free and compulsory pre-primary education. To ensure successful implementation of this policy, in 2021, UNICEF supported the Government of Nigeria to improve access to quality ECE through revision of the pre-primary curriculum. A national intersectoral ECE team was established to steer the development of a revised curriculum focused on children's holistic development, school readiness and a strengthened environment for children to live and learn. With support from thematic funds, the draft curriculum was piloted across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. It demonstrated teachers' strengths in organizing play-based activities, and showed that teachers could implement the curriculum and provide opportunities for children to interact with each other. Learners also showed greater enthusiasm to learn as they participated in play-based activities.

Mrs. Ruth Ogbu, a teacher from Abuja, reflected: "The curriculum gives room for interaction among the children in the classroom which increases their language capacity. The curriculum is quite engaging with measurable targets, giving clear description of what the child is expected to learn, and expected results as teachers or caregivers. It is so easy to use, and I appreciate the fact that children with disabilities were not left out."



Children in a classroom playing with their locally available materials during an activity.

## Effective governance for early learning

UNICEF has played an instrumental role in supporting national governments in strengthening and implementing quality assurance, workforce development and service delivery mechanisms for the provision of contextually relevant early learning programming. The percentage of countries with effective governance for ECE has increased from 55 per cent in 2020 to 60 per cent in 2021.

The quality of the teaching workforce is at the core of quality pre-primary services, with the potential to make a significant difference in children's school readiness and developmental outcomes. UNICEF continues to prioritize digital transformation to improve the quality of ECE services.

Teacher training and resource modules were digitalized in Ghana, Turkey, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Georgia. In Thailand, over 75,000 school children (51 per cent girls) nationwide engaged in the *Every Child Can Read* initiative through reading corners in pre-primary classrooms and mobile libraries in remote areas.

Ensuring that the developmental outcomes of young learners are appropriately monitored and evaluated is an essential step in assessing the relevance and quality of preschool programmes. In Guinea-Bissau, preschool early learning development standards were developed, and inspection services were strengthened, enabling access to quality preschool education for an estimated 50,623 five-year-old children (24,689 girls) in 2021.

UNICEF supported governments in finding contextually appropriate solutions to support teachers and parents in the implementation of quality early learning activities. Despite the considerable challenges facing teachers and national education systems in 2021, the percentage of countries reporting effective teaching and learning environments increased from 65 per cent in 2020 to 68 per cent in 2021.

As intermittent and permanent preschool closures due to the ongoing pandemic continued to negatively impact access to early learning services, the youngest learners were severely affected, missing out on critical opportunities for foundational learning and leaving them unprepared to transition to primary school.

A total of 10,414 children (5,207 girls) in Mozambique, benefited from an *Accelerated School Readiness Programme* for preschool-aged children and an additional 295,225 children and caregivers benefited from early childhood development information through radio and other communications materials.

In addition to accelerated and bridge programmes for young learners, UNICEF country offices engaged with national counterparts to develop contextually relevant, robust remote learning platforms to engage both young learners and their parents, and provide quality, home-based early learning and developmental opportunities for young children.

In Sri Lanka, UNICEF printed and distributed home-based learning kits for almost 100,000 preschool children (70 per cent girls) in two of the nine provinces.

UNICEF also contributed to the development of programming to reinforce the capacity of parents to provide a holistic home-based learning environment for children. In Nepal, UNICEF continued home and community-based teaching modalities benefiting 48,000 parents through a parenting education radio series.

## Placing ECE at the centre of national response plans

In 2021, UNICEF continued to advocate for and support the prioritization of pre-primary education within education sector plans and COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

In Senegal, pre-primary education is recognized as a pillar of the human capital development index of the Plan for an Emerging Senegal (PES) – a national framework for the country's economic and social policy midterm and long-term. COVID-19 prevention measures were applied in preschools. Resources were mobilized from both the national budget and development partners, resulting in 78 per cent of preschool facilities receiving hand-washing units, and hygiene and protection kits. This government-led, integrated response enabled all pre-primary structures to reopen, resulting in pre-primary enrolment rates returning close to pre-pandemic levels, and enabling more mothers to resume income generating activities.

UNICEF supported development of the new *Education Roadmap* in Ethiopia, and the drafting of a newly proposed education proclamation, which makes pre-primary education free and compulsory. Morocco advanced public finance for children and child-responsive budgeting, which have contributed to enrolment rates for pre-primary education increasing from 57.8 per cent in 2020 to 72 per cent in 2021. UNICEF supported the Government of Uzbekistan in developing and operationalizing child-friendly, inclusive policies, that resulted in increased preschool enrolment rates from 52 per cent in 2020 to 62 per cent in 2021. In the Gambia, the integration of ECE in the national 2016–2030 Education Sector Plan helped increase the number of young children accessing ECE programmes from 37 per cent in 2013 to 53 per cent in 2021. In Azerbaijan, the Government covered all costs of the national School Readiness Programme, ensuring over 90 per cent enrolment of preschool education.

## Inclusive ECE

Pre-primary education offers an exceptionally powerful opportunity to break intergenerational cycles of inequity. Globally, access to ECE programmes has been slow and inequitable, not only across but also within countries, as vulnerable children are disproportionately excluded. Securing universal access to quality pre-primary education requires bold measures that benefit disadvantaged children and ensure the provision of quality ECE services are available for all young learners.

UNICEF continued to lead global efforts to advocate for and implement national policies that ensure young learners with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities to engage and benefit from early learning programmes.

In Namibia, UNICEF supported the implementation of a recovery plan for children with disabilities in school. The plan included developing a revised curriculum, and assistive technology for children with disabilities, as well as the distribution of 6 million workbooks which reached close to 40 per cent of pre-primary classes (27,700 learners).

In Montenegro, preschool education coverage returned to 2019 levels (72 per cent of children aged 3–6), and the number of children with disabilities in preschool rose by 21 per cent compared to 2020.

Community-based preschools present a promising model that can be leveraged to engage communities and expand the provision of early learning services to reach marginalized and hard to reach communities. This approach was successfully implemented in Egypt, Timor-Leste, China and Senegal. In Senegal, UNICEF invested in the creation of 107 community-based preschools in underserved communities, offering a minimum of one year of pre-primary education to more than 5,000 children.

Azerbaijan has expanded the use of School-Based Early Learning Centres, from 50 to 850 centres, reaching 15,000 children (6,900 girls), mostly in rural and remote areas who had no access to preschool education before.



## Voices from the field: Seven-year-old Cian's return to in-person learning in the Philippines

The pandemic disrupted in-person learning in the Philippines, affecting 27 million Filipino students. Many children faced challenges with remote learning if they did not have access to gadgets or a high-speed internet connection.

Cian Nathaniel Gansit was among the students who went back to school after studying at home for almost two years. As a Grade 2 student at the Tagalag Elementary School in Valenzuela City, he has really enjoyed going back to in-person learning: "I am happy because I get to see my classmates, not just on screen."

The pandemic may not be over yet, but Cian and his friends can begin their journey towards achieving their dreams with the motivation inspired by safely learning from school. "I want to be a doctor when I grow up," Cian shared.

Throughout 2021, UNICEF Philippines strongly advocated for the resumption of in-person classes, noting the positive effects of in-person schooling on a child's growth and development. With UNICEF support, the Department of Education and Department of Health developed guidelines on the safe resumption of in-person learning, localized the global WHO Checklist to monitor in-person learning and prepared for potential COVID-19 resurgences. These efforts have enabled Cian and millions of children to resume in-person learning in the Philippines.



Amid the pandemic, Cian and his mother Charmain, are confident that the school is a safe place to learn, because of the health protocols implemented in the school and the community.

## Learning in primary level

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was facing a global learning crisis, with more than half of children in low- and middle-income countries not being able to read and understand a simple text, write or do simple mathematics by age 10. The pandemic and related school closures have only exacerbated this learning crisis. Today, over 502 million children, representing 70 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries, are in learning poverty.<sup>82</sup> The human and economic costs of learning poverty are potentially catastrophic, including an estimated loss of US\$17 trillion in lifetime earnings, a sharp rise from the 2020 estimate of a US\$10 trillion loss.<sup>83</sup>

In 2021, UNICEF continued its work on improving learning outcomes of primary level learners with a goal to ensure children can read and do mathematics at grade level by age 10. This goal is at the heart of the FLN Initiative, a partnership between UNICEF, The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), Pratham and Delivery Associates, that was launched in 2021. The FLN Initiative aims to both improve children's short-term FLN outcomes and strengthen countries' long-term education systems through engagement with policymakers, educators, learners and caregivers.

With the support of The World Bank Group and the GPE, the FLN Initiative launched the FLN Hub, a dedicated resource website, including tools and implementation guides on parental engagement, formative assessments, tailored instruction (such as the Teaching at the Right Level

approach), and effectively implementing FLN programmes. UNICEF and partners in the FLN Initiative, also launched the first-ever FLN Academy, a multi-module online course designed as a professional development and knowledge sharing journey. The Academy was attended by 750 participants from 75 countries.

Curricular reforms are an integral part of the transformational effort to recalibrate education systems post-pandemic, driving countries to rethink how children learn and are taught, and what they need to learn from childhood to adulthood, to success in school and beyond. In 2021, UNICEF supported 18 countries with strengthening their primary education curriculum, including revisions, reforms, integration of climate change, and health and nutrition issues.

In Sri Lanka, UNICEF worked with the Government to ensure the reforms were informed by evidence on learning collected as part of the recovery plans. In Benin, UNICEF's leadership and advocacy efforts led to a partnership for quality education with Cooperation Suisse, the World Bank and the GPE, which includes support to revision of the primary level curriculum. In Puntland, Somalia, UNICEF supported curricula reforms, including the development of an ECE curriculum and revisions of lower primary education curriculum. UNICEF also contributed to ensuring that primary education curricula address gender and holistic learning. In Uzbekistan, UNICEF supported the development of competency-based, gender-responsive and inclusive curriculum and textbooks for over 1.2 million children in mathematics, languages and science for Grades 1 and 2.

<sup>82</sup> UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. 2021. [The State of the Global Education Crisis: A Path to Recovery](#).

<sup>83</sup> Borkowski, Artur, et al. COVID-19: Missing More Than a Classroom. The impact of school closures on children's nutrition, Office of Research-Innocenti Working Papers no. 2021-01.

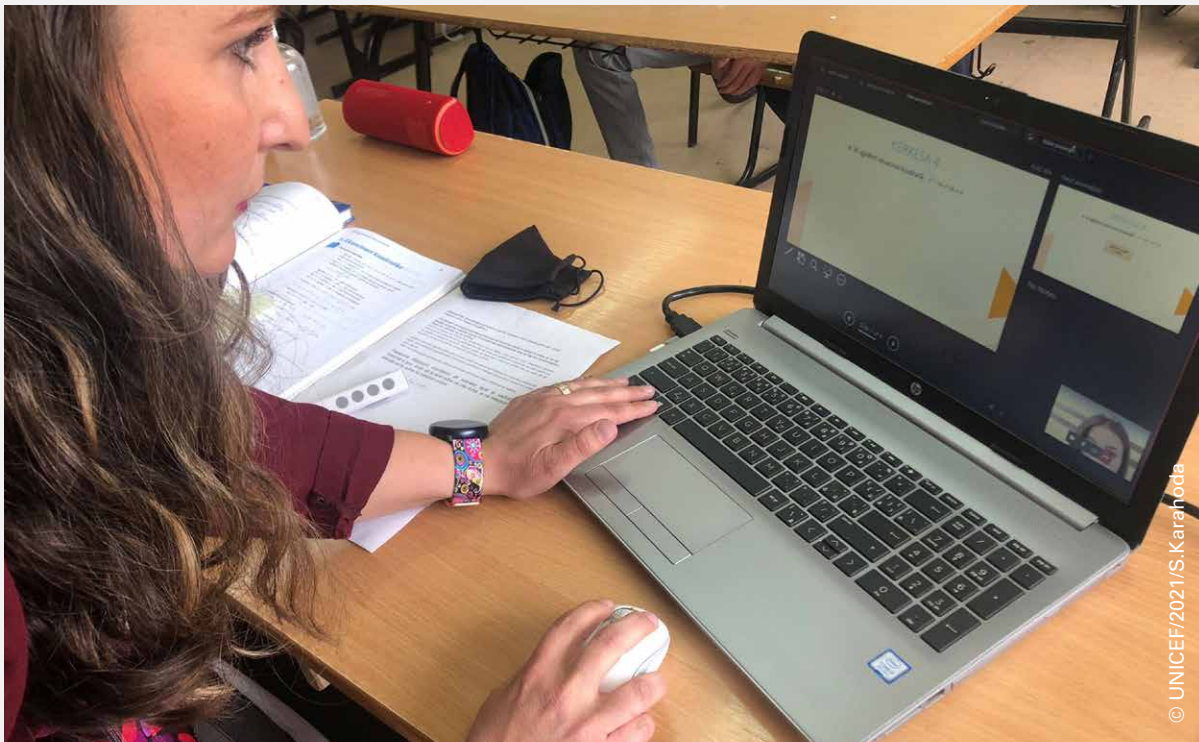
## Voices from the field: Launching the Learning Passport 'shkollat.org' to ensure children in Kosovo continued learning during the pandemic<sup>84</sup>

Teacher Zana Vokshi Meqa from the Hajdar Dushi upper secondary school is among the 24,000 Kosovo teachers who faced the challenge of adopting online and blended teaching approaches during school closures. Kosovo's safe school reopening guidelines protected learners with social distancing, which led many schools to switch to 'split classes' where students alternated between attending classes online from home and attending in person in the classroom.

For teacher Zana and her students, the Learning Passport platform, launched in Kosovo as 'shkollat.org', was a practical solution at a critical time, allowing students to remain engaged from home and to connect the physical and online classrooms.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, we worried about the safety of the platforms we were using and the quality of lessons. This platform is easy and safe to use, making the children-parent-teacher cooperation much easier. Shkollat allowed every student to feel they were part of learning even when joining from home. As a teacher I felt that I was succeeding in interacting with everyone and keeping my students involved and tracking their progress in real-time. UNICEF supported us to achieve the learning outcomes foreseen in the curriculum."

Through the organization's partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science, Training and Innovation, the shkollat.org platform reached 1,308 users in 2021.



Zana and her students solving the same equation together online.

<sup>84</sup> All references to Kosovo in this report are in the context of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Official designation: 'Kosovo' stands for both the long form and the short form.



## Quality teaching

As the pandemic continued to disrupt education for millions of learners, once again the important role that teachers play in children's learning and well-being was put in the spotlight. While teachers' commitment, passion and creativity continued to prove crucial to adapting to the new norms, teachers in many low- and middle-income countries received limited professional development support to transition to remote learning, leaving them unprepared to engage with learners and caregivers.

UNICEF has made significant progress within the previous Strategic Plan cycle (2018–2021) in increasing the percentage of countries supported with effective teacher development, from 23 per cent of the countries in 2017 (baseline for Strategic Plan 2018–2021) to almost double at 45 per cent in 2021. UNICEF's efforts to strengthen teaching practices are also reflected in its work to ensure gender-responsive teaching, contributing to an increase in the percentage of countries with gender-responsive teaching systems (from 42 per cent in 2020 to 45 per cent in 2021). While the progress demonstrates a positive trend, much work remains to be done to strengthen the teaching workforce in more than half of the reporting countries. The recovery from the pandemic provides an opportunity to prioritize upskilling and support to teachers, who are at the heart of delivering quality education. In addition, data on scaling up teacher recruitment, teacher retention and improved methods in pre-service teacher education must be captured to obtain a comprehensive understanding of effective teacher development.

In 2021, UNICEF supported development of policies that support teachers and the teaching profession, including through the Strengthening Multi-Partner Cooperation to Support Teacher Policy and Improve Learning programme, a collaboration with the GPE, the World Bank, UNHCR, ILO and Education International, supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). In Ghana, UNICEF supported the development of a Comprehensive National Teacher Policy. Similarly, with UNESCO, UNICEF Malawi supported the Government with the drafting of the National Teacher Policy that advocates for decentralized and equitable deployment of teachers and the retention of teachers.

The work of UNICEF on strengthening quality teaching in 2021 focused on three main strategies:

- Use of ICT in teaching: The Google Suite for Learning in the Maldives ensured continuity of learning for 50,000 pre-primary and primary students. In Gabon, UNICEF provided financial and technical support to the Ministry of Education to develop a roadmap (accompanied by an operational plan) for the digital transformation of education for primary school children aged 6 to 10. The five-year roadmap will reach 130,000 students enrolled in primary school. In Albania, UNICEF contributed to the setting up of 22 Education Technology Hubs designed to serve

as tech mobile libraries, benefiting 8,000 children (including 4,224 girls), methodologies for teacher training in ICT, and ICT standards for teachers, providing training for 2,362 teachers (1,441 female) and peer learning for a further 14,000 teachers. UNICEF Malaysia provided technical support for the Digital Educational Learning Initiative through which 4,000 teachers from 2,168 schools received training on online teaching (55 per cent of total are female and 49 per cent of total are deployed to rural schools).

- Holistic continuous professional development: In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 38,061 teachers (14,592 female) received training on psychosocial support and classroom strategies to better manage stressful and traumatic situations. In Mexico, UNICEF scaled up teacher and educator training on psychosocial support, reaching almost 34,500 additional teachers and educators (62 per cent female) from the ECE to upper secondary education levels. In addition, over 12,000 indigenous students (50 per cent girls) benefited from UNICEF's training support to indigenous teachers to improve literacy among their students in bilingual and multigrade classrooms. In Senegal, a total of 7,283 teachers and supervisors (2,971 female) were trained in remedial education, multigrade management, gender, disability inclusion and digital education. The deployment of female teacher networks and school-based peer support groups for girls was scaled up to three regions, alongside the introduction of menstrual hygiene management in 624 public schools, covering the needs of 31,200 girls.
- Reducing teacher shortages: In Eritrea, in order to meet the safe schools and COVID-19 prevention guidelines, class sizes were reduced, which generated a demand for additional teachers. The Ministry of Education therefore appointed 6,700 uncertified teachers (high school graduates who had no prior teacher training experiences) including 3,000 female teachers and provided them with two weeks training on lesson planning, classroom management, learning assessment, and child-centred pedagogy. In Malawi, 3,270 teachers (1,264 female) were hired and deployed to targeted primary schools across the country for a period of five months. In Senegal, an additional 5,000 teachers (including 2,035 female teachers) were recruited by the Government with the support of UNICEF.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Teacher capacity-building on digital skills and national curriculum in the Plurinational State of Bolivia

UNICEF Bolivia (Plurinational State of) used thematic funds to support a more adaptable, resilient education system. In total, 22,675 teachers (14,739 female) equivalent to 16 per cent of the workforce were supported to develop digital skills and provide psychosocial support to reach more than 70,000 children and adolescents (34,994 female). Teachers used interactive primers, which include guidance and fun activities, exercises and quizzes to progressively develop the concepts of respect, empathy, self-care and leadership in students, from kindergarten to high school. The training also included content from the regular programme and national curriculum, such as prevention and elimination of violence in schools and comprehensive sexuality education. This promoted peacebuilding and reduced violence in schools, and contributed to more cost-efficient strategies to disseminate content within the education system.



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Eight-year-old Daira Andrea is in Grade 2 at Pampa de la Isla School in Santa Cruz, the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

### Parental engagement

Parents who prioritize child's learning, value playful learning and take an active role to engage in building their child's foundational learning, positively affect their child's performance. Therefore, it is critical to empower parents and caregivers to engage in and foster children's learning throughout their primary education journey. Making education-related information available to parents has been shown to increase learning outcomes at low cost.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout the pandemic, parents and caregivers were called upon to support children's learning at home. UNICEF continued to strengthen parental engagement to advance foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes, through the expansion and adoption of tools and platforms for online learning, supporting the establishment of self-help groups, community volunteers, adolescent collectives, and utilizing media channels to deliver learning, including via television networks and community radio. UNICEF Nepal provided support to 48,000 parents in Madhesh, Lumbini,

<sup>85</sup> UNICEF, J-Pal, Pratham, Delivery Associates. 2020. [Providing Information to Parents or Students About Education](#).

Karnali and Sudurpaschim provinces through a parenting education radio series. In Kosovo,<sup>86</sup> UNICEF supported the development of the training module for educators to facilitate the engagement by fathers in early education.

In Romania, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education are collaborating on a National Parenting Education Platform through which 31,000 parents and caregivers have received parenting classes.

## Case study: Engaging parents to increase home-based learning in India

During school closures, UNICEF India supported a variety of education programmes that engage parents of children aged 3 to 8 in support of foundational literacy and numeracy, including distance learning initiatives for pre-primary children, volunteer-led and community-based classes, and simple learning activities using SMS messaging for other groups of marginalized children. In total, 9 million preschoolers (49 per cent girls) benefited from responsive parenting programmes. Community volunteers promoted playful parenting by disseminating activity calendars, audio-video stories, songs and worksheets in 11 states when the country's 1.34 million Anganwadi (early childhood development) centres were closed. Community-based lessons provided 160,000 primary-aged children (approximately 49 per cent girls) with in-person learning opportunities, and simple mathematics and reading activities reached 56,000 primary-aged children living in the Assam tea gardens through SMS messages.

Since the national Ministry of Education released the [\*Guidelines for parent participation in home-based learning during school closure and beyond\*](#) in June 2021, they have been adapted by states in their guidance on distance learning, in manuals for school management committees and field volunteers, and in specific programmes aimed at children in vulnerable communities. In some states, they have been adapted for use with resource persons who undertake home visits to support the parents of children with disabilities. An estimated 54 million children aged 3 to 8 years have benefited.



Children learn together in Moderdi village in Barmer, Rajasthan, India.

<sup>86</sup> All references to Kosovo in this report are in the context of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Official designation: 'Kosovo' stands for both the long form and the short form.



## Assessment of learning

For the second year in a row, the COVID-19 pandemic has interfered with learning assessments. But as schools reopen, countries rightly continue to prioritize assessment *for* learning (formative assessment) rather than assessment

*of* learning (including examinations). With assessment *for* learning, teachers pay more attention to identifying individual students' learning needs through classroom-based continuous assessments – teachers then plan lessons based on what students do and do not know.

### MICS-EAGLE (Education Analysis for Global Learning and Equity) Initiative

The MICS Education Analysis for Global Learning and Equity (MICS-EAGLE) Initiative seeks to improve learning outcomes and equity issues in education by putting education data that is easy to understand and interpret in the hands of governments and key education stakeholders so it can be used for education policymaking. UNICEF works with Ministries of Education to produce curated factsheets of key education indicators that are uniquely designed for the national context. The factsheets are entirely customizable, but generally cover eight critical areas in education: 1) access and completion; 2) skills (learning outcomes, ICT skills and literacy rates); 3) inclusive education (with a focus on disability); 4) early learning; 5) out-of-school children; 6) repetition and dropouts (internal efficiency); 7) child protection (child labour and child marriage); and 8) remote learning. All of these topics are analysed through an equity lens that considers factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and location.

MICS-EAGLE is committed to strengthening national capacity for data interpretation and analysis, and helping countries leverage the vast wealth of disaggregated household data to inform education policy discussions. The factsheets are often the launching pad for national workshops that demonstrate how to interpret education data for evidence-based situation analysis and reviews of education sector plans. The initiative also works at the regional and global levels to disseminate research findings on topics such as inclusive education and learning outcomes to provide insights into how barriers to educational opportunities can be reduced so all children can reach their full potential.

In 2021, during school closures and the delivery of remote or blended learning, some countries devised new ways of delivering assessment tools to students and collecting their responses. Collection of learning data is picking up, while countries also examine data previously collected, and use it for planning and policy.

In Sao Tome and Principe, where lower secondary education completion rate remains low (60 per cent), UNICEF conducted a secondary analysis of education data, the MICS6-EAGLE,<sup>87</sup> to identify and analyse equity and quality bottlenecks preventing better secondary retention. UNICEF also supported the implementation of the Minimum Quality Standards Guide for improvement of learning outcomes that revealed 38.4 per cent of students lack the necessary skills in reading and 35.8 per cent in calculation. The organization's support also focused on enhancement of management practices and quality of the school environment. Finally, UNICEF initiated a modelling experience, using digital resources and differentiated teaching models to improve reading skills, particularly in

the early years through the promotion of reading, hence increasing the lower secondary completion rate.

Countries are rediscovering the importance of formative assessment in helping teachers understand students' performance levels when they return to the classroom. Formative assessment is key for designing lesson plans appropriate to students' needs, and should continue during normal times. In Afghanistan, despite the challenges faced during the year, interventions improving the quality of education in the areas of teacher development and learning assessment continued to be supported. In total, 513 academic supervisors received training on new skills of supervision and mentorship, and technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Education for the development of standardized test items as part of the roll-out of the National Assessment Framework for Afghanistan (NAFA). In addition, 804 teachers (150 females) were trained on conducting diagnostic learning assessment and tailoring remedial support for low-performing students.

<sup>87</sup> MICS-Education Analysis for Global Learning and Equity is an initiative by UNICEF that seeks to leverage the rich data generated by MICS6 to positively influence education policy and practices, and thereby achieve better education outcomes for children through evidence-based situation and policy analyses.

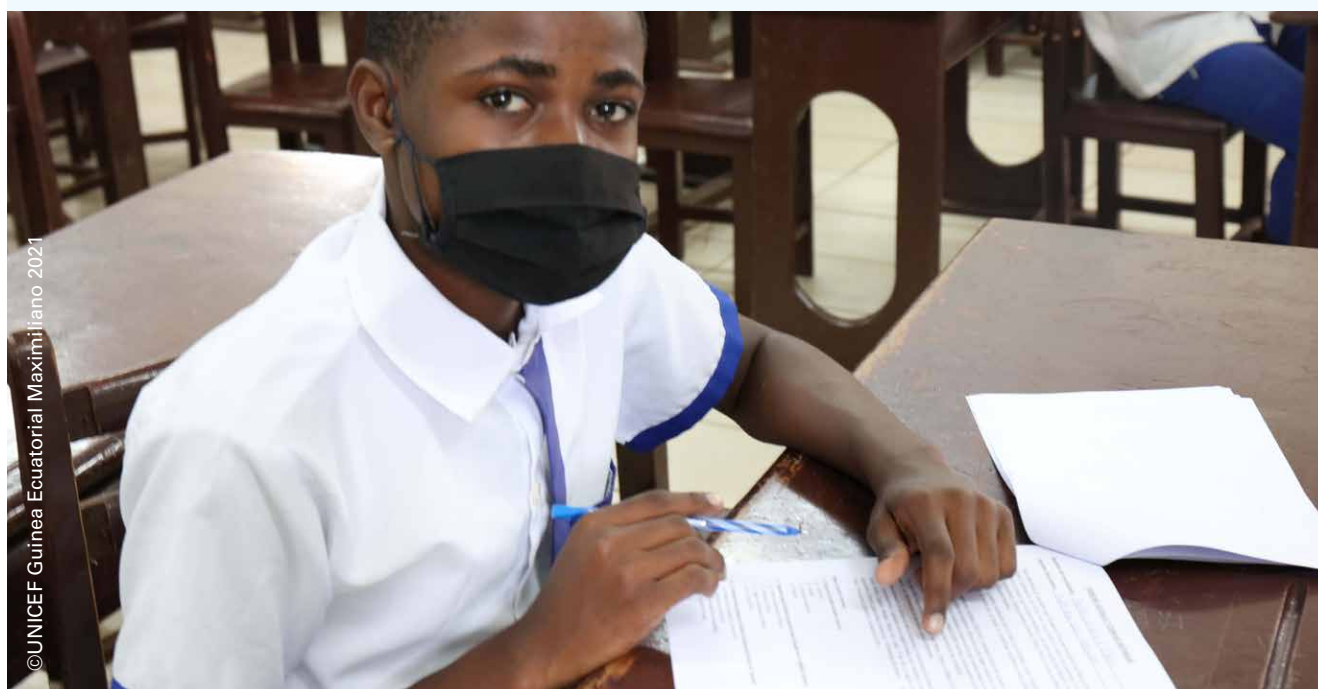
Large-scale assessments are also returning. In Algeria, national capacities to respond to learning losses have been consolidated, starting with the ability to measure learning and track evolution over time. Following the development of the instruments and training of key staff in the previous year, 2021 saw the implementation of the first large-scale national student learning assessment targeting learners in Grades, 2, 4 and 7, in mathematics, basic languages and sciences (a total of 5,000 children). The analysis to be performed in 2022 will pay particular attention to learning losses during the pandemic and to gender gaps.

As the education sector lead partner in Mozambique, UNICEF supported the provincial education authorities by strengthening their capacity to plan, implement and monitor activities and data. UNICEF continued supporting a learning assessment and dropout study to better understand causes and preventive measures of dropout, especially in the context of the pandemic. Meanwhile, UNICEF Malawi financially and technically supported the Government with the development of a national learning assessment framework.

## Case study: Assessment for learning in Equatorial Guinea

In Equatorial Guinea, UNICEF's advocacy on the importance of measuring children's learning to ensure foundational skills, paired with the Ministry of Education's commitment and allocation of resources to measure learning, resulted in substantial progress towards the improvement of learning outcomes. Through UNICEF support, 14,032 primary level students (52 per cent girls) in Grade 3 and 6 participated in summative assessments to evaluate their learning outcomes, primarily in Spanish and mathematics. Grade 6 students were evaluated on two additional subjects: science and social science. The assessments were strategically conducted in two districts, Malabo and Bata, which enabled data collection across a significant number of the Grade 3 (68 per cent) and Grade 6 students (75 per cent).

While UNICEF provided support to launch learning assessments in the two major districts, the Ministry of Education used its own resources to pilot a similar learning assessment exercise in other districts, with the aim of re-introducing the concept of student assessment as a means to support better learning outcomes. The additional learning assessments were conducted with limited resources, but it was a significant step forward for the Government to increasingly invest in education and generate evidence about the realities of learning in schools. The long-term vision of the Government is to scale up summative learning assessments to benefit children in all schools across the country.



Student participating in the learning outcomes assessment organized by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF's support.

## Community participation

Community engagement is one of the most effective levers for improving the delivery of education in schools. Members of the community participate through parent-teacher associations (or other local mechanisms) to hold school leaders, teachers and themselves accountable. However, the impact on learning outcomes depends on two elements: parents must have the necessary information (data and evidence) to inform their engagement with the school, and mechanisms for community engagement must empower parents to be heard and to influence decision-making processes.

UNICEF's work on community participation encompasses system-level support, such as the development of policies, guidelines, regulatory frameworks, training materials and feedback to communities. Work also includes direct service intervention to targeted communities and schools. Overall, the aim is to support the provision of community-based education where relevant, and the training and effectiveness of school management committees or other community-based associations. UNICEF also works to improve data and the use of evidence by parents for informed participation in school management and for strengthening accountability. An example of this approach is the Data Must Speak programme, used in an increasing number of countries. Co-funded by the GPE KIX, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, NORAD, Jacobs Foundation, and UNICEF global thematic funding for education, the programme provides support to ministries of education and school communities for more effective data use to improve equity in education systems. In 2021, UNICEF worked with ministries of education to provide annually updated community-focused school profiles for local communities. As part of the Data Must Speak Positive Deviance research, UNICEF has worked hand-in-hand with Ministries of Education, and leveraged administrative datasets to identify the various impacts of community-led structures on school performances in Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Togo.

UNICEF expenditure on community participation continued to decline in 2021: from US\$53 million in 2019 to US\$40 million in 2020 to US\$35.2 million in 2021. In total, US\$15.6 million (56 per cent) was spent on system-level interventions – US\$19.5 million (44 per cent) supported service delivery activities. In eight countries (Nigeria, Iraq, Somalia, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Mauritania, Egypt and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) UNICEF spent over US\$1 million each to support community participation. Nigeria spending was again the highest (US\$5.7 million). The share of countries reporting effective community participation remained unchanged compared to 2020 (53 per cent), overall remaining relatively stable throughout the Strategic Plan 2018–2021 implementation. Of the reporting countries, 72 per cent declared effective student and community participation. The share of countries reporting effective community involvement in monitoring took a small dip from 56 per cent in 2020 to 54 per cent in 2021.

In Nigeria, when COVID-19 closed schools, UNICEF worked with the federal Ministry of Education to establish volunteer-led in-person community learning hubs for

small groups of children offering a range of options, including non-formal education programming and bridging programmes designed to bring participating students back into the formal education system following school reopening. These community learning hubs provided 1,184,947 learners (545,075 girls) at primary school with in-person learning opportunities.

In Nicaragua, the Ministry of Education shifted its strategy around student well-being from a clinical approach in each individual case to a community-based and preventive approach. The community-based approach promotes families and whole-of-school communities to get involved, and to take the lead in supporting students. In 2021, UNICEF's investment of US\$30,000 enabled the training of 9,125 teachers on the School Community Counselling Programme (SCCP) to provide socio-emotional support to learners.

In 2021, more than 85,586 school management committees were trained globally, 1.5 times more than in previous years, despite significant school closures. This led to a cumulative total of 346,916, exceeding the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 target of 210,000.

## Gender equality in learning outcomes

In 2021, UNICEF-supported countries showed progress in advancing gender equality in learning outcomes. The share of UNICEF-supported countries with gender-responsive teaching and learning systems increased to 45 per cent, up from 42 per cent in 2020, and 40 per cent in 2019. While this 3 per cent increase might seem like a slight improvement, it should be noted that the number of country offices reporting on this indicator increased to 106 from 92 countries in 2020. Notable improvements in the number of gender-responsive teaching and learning systems were made in the ESA and WCA regions. This progress is partly due to an increase in spending in this area. Of the US\$309 million spent by UNICEF on improving learning outcomes, 24 per cent (US\$73 million) was allocated to activities that specifically targeted gender equality.

In Viet Nam, UNICEF worked inter-sectionally to champion gender inclusion, especially for ethnic minority girls. It supported work on a revision of the national ECE curriculum and teaching materials to eliminate gender bias and stereotyping, and instead promote progressive and equitable depictions of all genders. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF supported the development of a new story on the Spring in Bishkek app, a game promoting girls' education and combating child marriage, reaching over 150,000 users. In Ukraine, UN Women and UNICEF partnered with the youth NGO, STEM is FEM, to launch the She is Science campaign to promote science and IT careers among young women and girls, engaging 50,000 people with 400 thematic events, and over 6 million participants through outdoor events and digital campaigns.



## Voices from the field: Partnering with the Ghana Library Authority to engage communities in early grade reading

UNICEF partnered with the Ghana Library Authority (GLA) to introduce the Mobile Library Early Grade Community Reading programme to continue the provision of library services and engage school children during school closures in 2021. The programme focused on reaching children in hard-to-reach communities and those out of school. The GLA library van visited communities and engaged parents, children and local leaders through reading clinics, group reading sessions, video story time sessions and personality readings. Additionally, the translation of videos and audio on external drives strengthened online and offline learning opportunities in the targeted communities. The programme reached 8,532 children (4,291 girls) from kindergarten to Grade 3 in low performing communities in eight selected regions in Ghana.



© UNICEFGhana

Children receive books to continue their reading at home through the Mobile Library Early Grade Community Reading programme.

## Voices from the field: Gender-sensitive education improves teaching and learning in Malawi's schools

When she started her first year of secondary school at Machinga Community Day Secondary School (CDSS), 19-year-old Hajila Issa was very timid. She grew up in Nayuchi village in Machinga, where girls were often discouraged from enrolling in school and male learners finished top in class. Hajila continued to maintain her

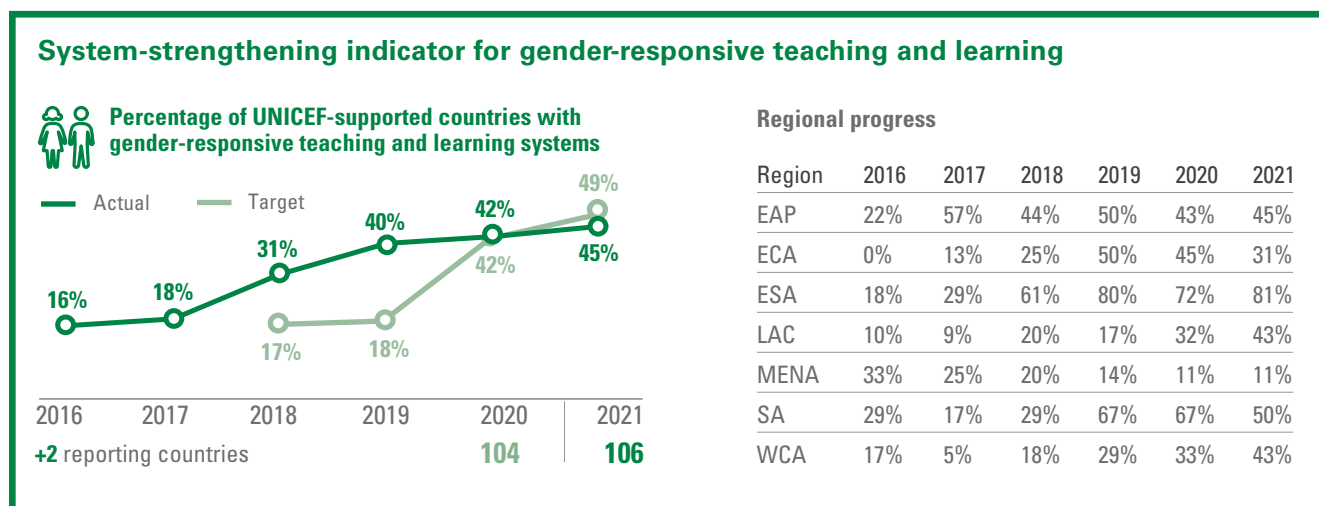
good grades up until the third year of secondary school, the same year UNICEF introduced the gender responsiveness training for teachers to ensure teaching and learning practices in classrooms respond to the needs of girls and boys.

"Sometime last year, I remember the teachers called all the students for a meeting to explain the importance of boys and girls working together and how to treat each other as equals," says Hajila. "They encouraged the girls to work hard to get good grades and the boys to support the girls in achieving this. Now we find that girls and boys help each other with schoolwork, so we can all excel in learning, and the performance of our school looks good too." In the future, Hajila would like to be a nurse: "I hope to pass my exams with 12 points and go to college, so I can achieve my dream of providing quality health services to people."



Hajila and her teacher Enless Kondecha.

FIGURE 13: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-responsive teaching and learning



## Summary

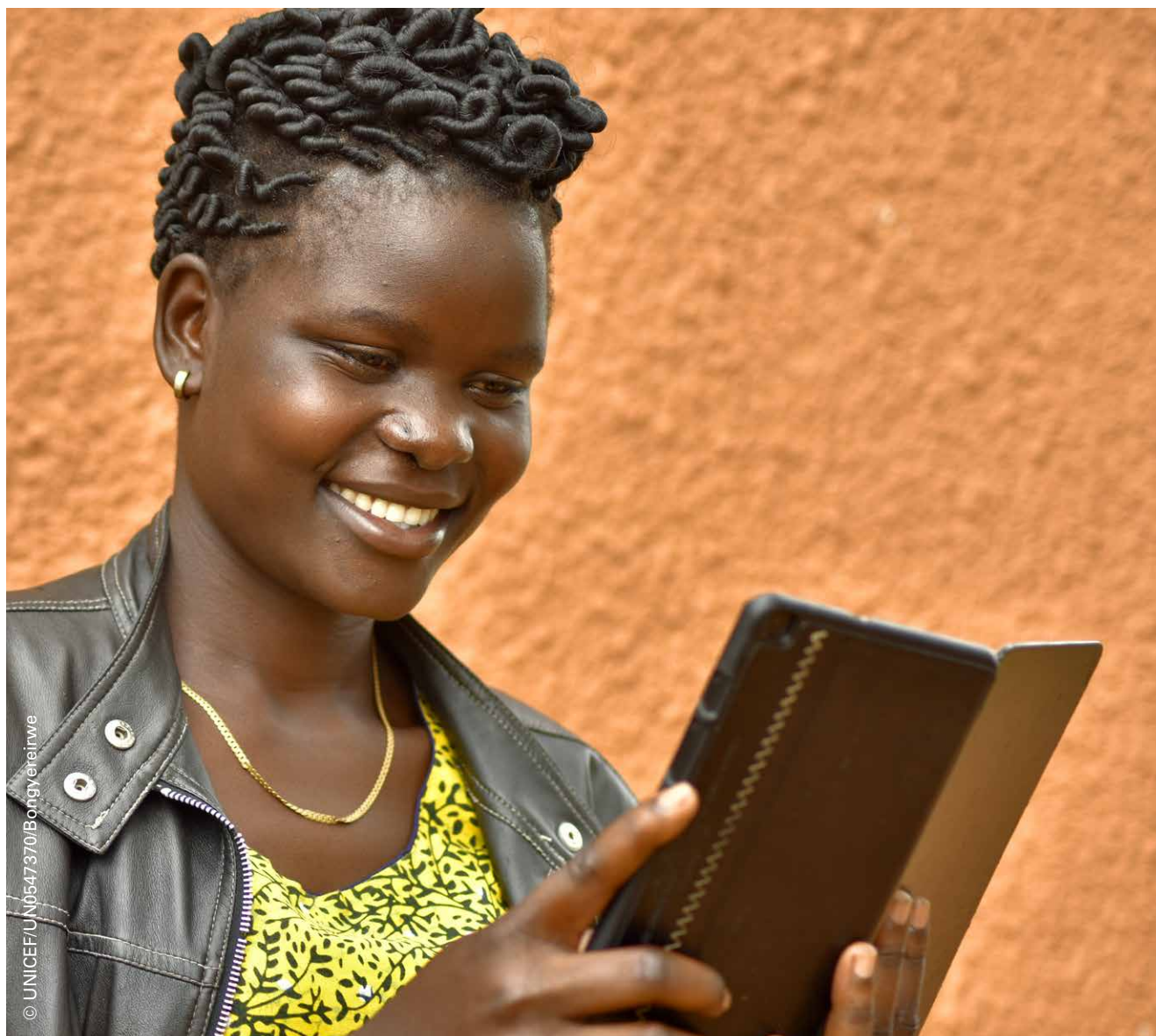
The latest evidence reveals that the learning losses during education interruption due to the pandemic have been severe, and they have been felt most deeply by the most vulnerable children. In 2021, UNICEF significantly increased the share of its spending devoted to improving

learning outcomes. It provided an unprecedented number of learning materials to children. It also trained more school management committees than ever before in an effort to maintain the links between home and school during the period of school closures and to move more quickly towards safe school reopening.

## Result Area 3: Skills development

All children and adolescents need access to quality education and learning that prepares them with skills and knowledge to face an ever-changing world, labour markets, migration, climate change, conflict and epidemics. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 61.5 million adolescents (10–19 years old) of lower secondary school age were out of school.<sup>88</sup> Around 825 million school-age children in low- and middle-income countries were not

on track to acquire minimum secondary level skills by 2030, with many entering adulthood without the skills that allow them to navigate personal, social, and economic challenges. The pandemic has exacerbated the skills crisis especially for adolescents with 78 million in lower secondary education (24 per cent of students at this level) not reached through any remote modalities.<sup>89</sup>



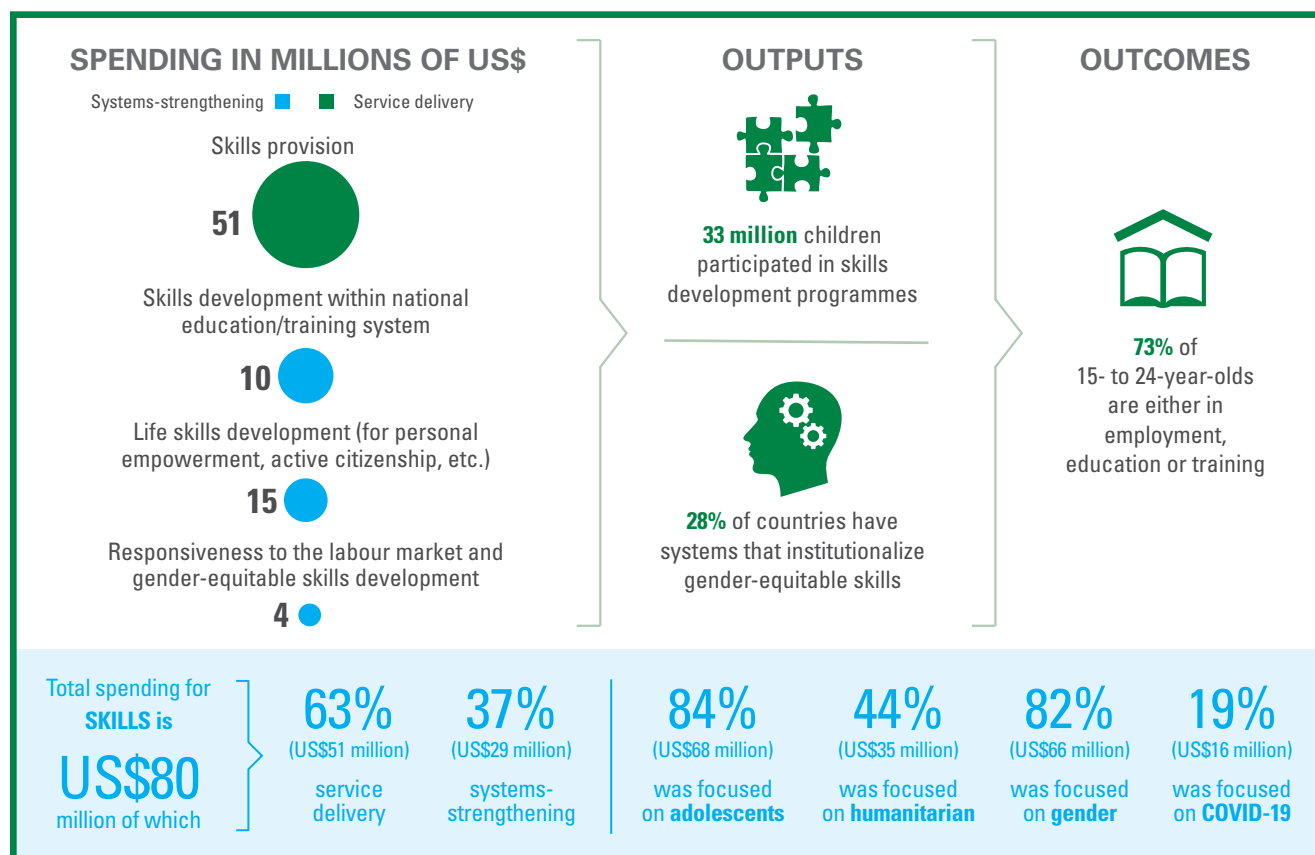
Junior journalist, Ikedu Esther Aremo, in Kaabong District, Uganda explores the digital life skills website.

<sup>88</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). 2019. *New Methodology Shows that 258 Million Children, Adolescents and Youth Are Out of School*.

<sup>89</sup> UNICEF. 2020. *COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?*



FIGURE 14: Results chain for skills development



In Arauca, Colombia students celebrate World Children's Day on the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

FIGURE 15: Illustrative results for skills development

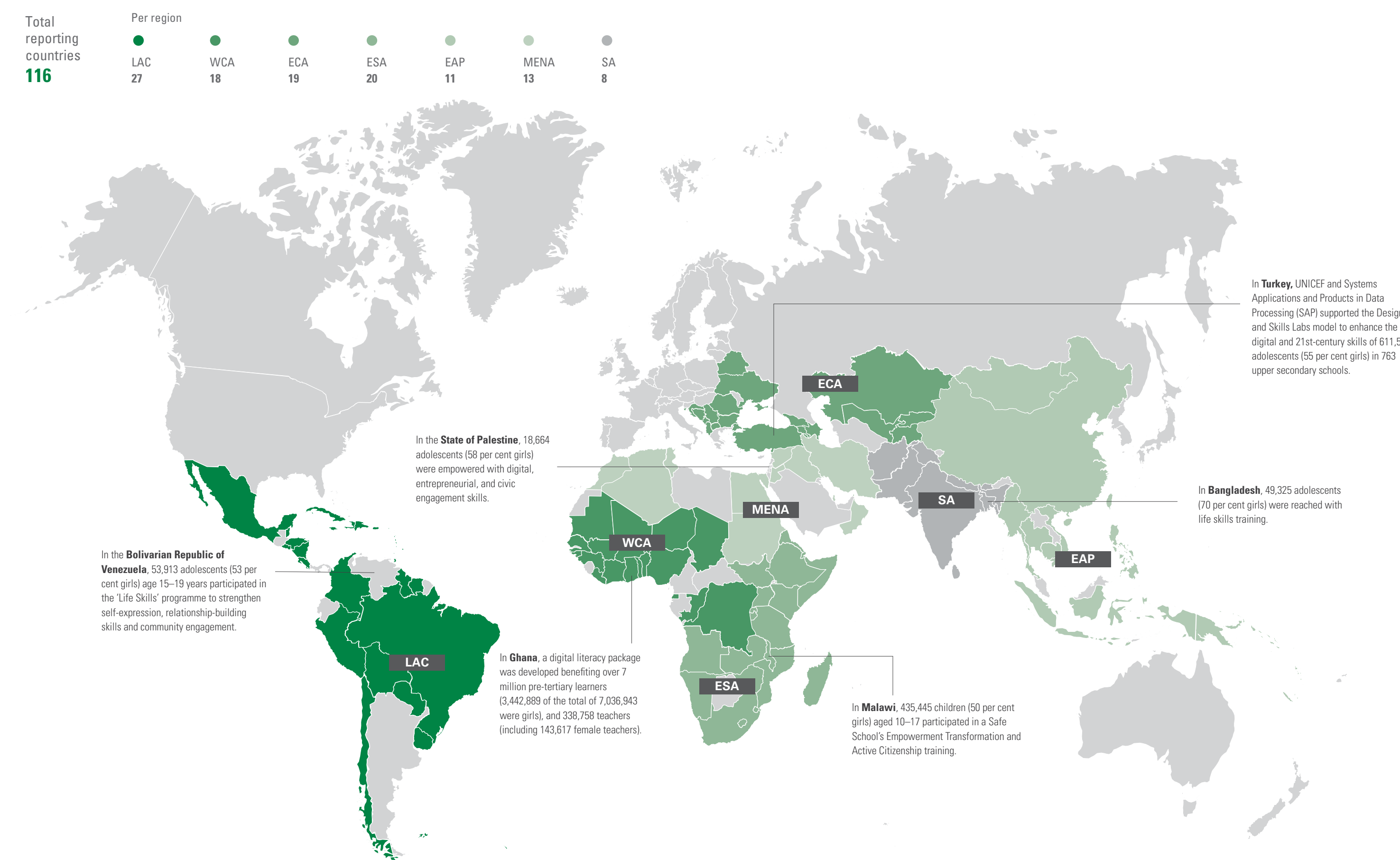
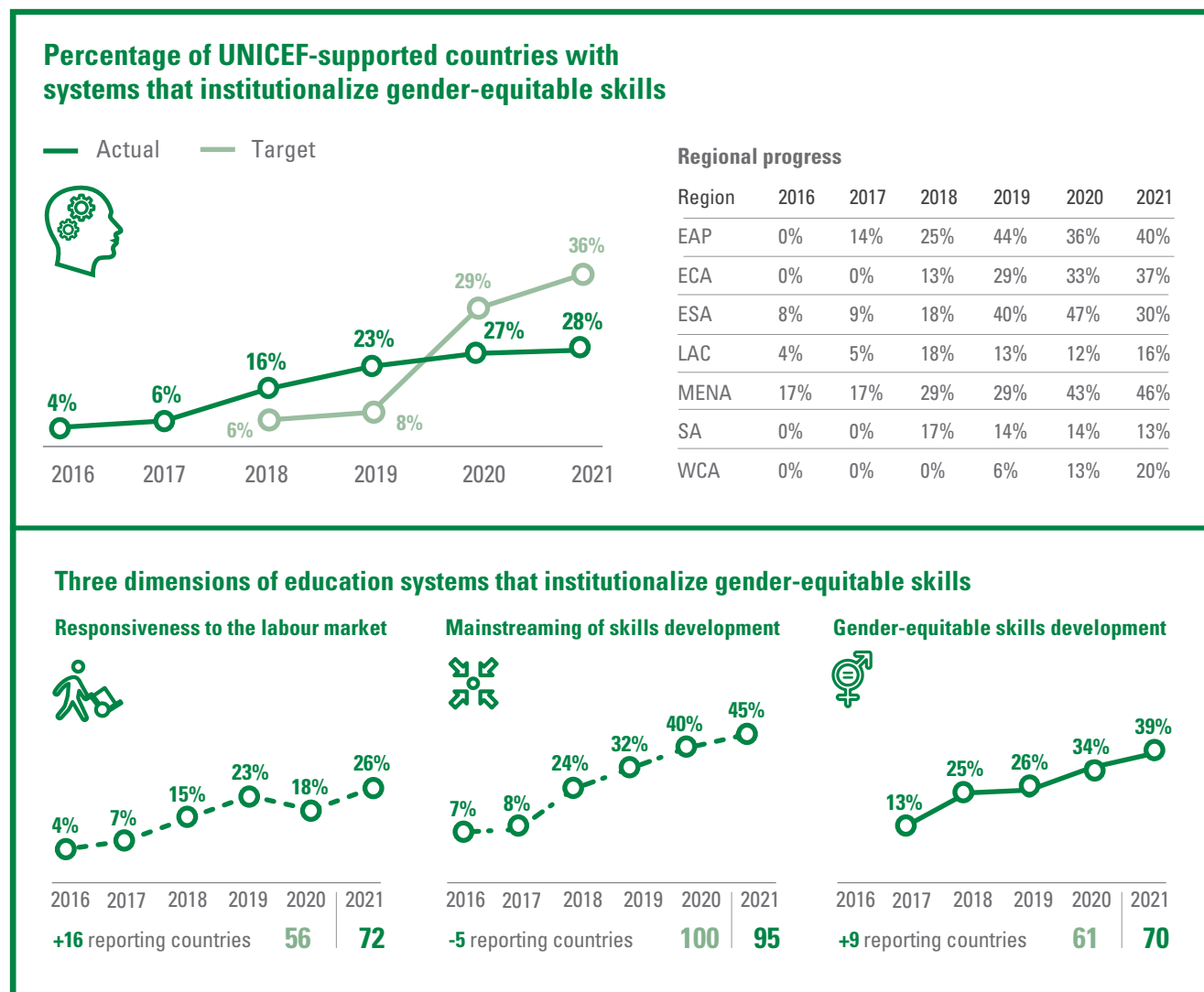


FIGURE 16: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-equitable skills development



UNICEF works to equip children and adolescents with the full range of skills (foundational, transferable, digital, entrepreneurial and job-specific) to achieve meaningful learning outcomes, and that allows them to navigate personal, social and economic challenges. All these skills, except potentially job-specific skills which are more relevant for older adolescents, are developed progressively from the early years through adolescence. In 2021, to ensure continuity of skills development during school closures, UNICEF country offices continued to promote a multiple and flexible pathways approach. This approach is built on the premise that skills development can take place in various settings and contexts, including formal and non-formal settings, and through various modalities such as face to face, remote (online, television, radio, and printed materials) or hybrid. UNICEF worked with governments, communities, private sector, and other key partners to improve skills through the following key priorities:

- Enhancing quality of skills programming: Integrating the full range of skills in curricula, pedagogy, and assessment in formal education and certified multiple pathways. This includes a focus on transferable, entrepreneurial and digital skills, as well as related areas such as climate education, green skills, STEM and global citizenship.
- Expanding access of skills programming: Support the implementation of non-formal/community-based opportunities to develop and apply the full range of skills. This includes enhancing skills development through volunteerism, adolescent participation, internships and apprenticeships.

In 2021, 110 UNICEF country offices reported results in this area (up from 104 in 2020). Within that context, UNICEF spent a total of US\$80 million on skills development in 2021. Of this amount, 63 per cent (US\$51 million) was



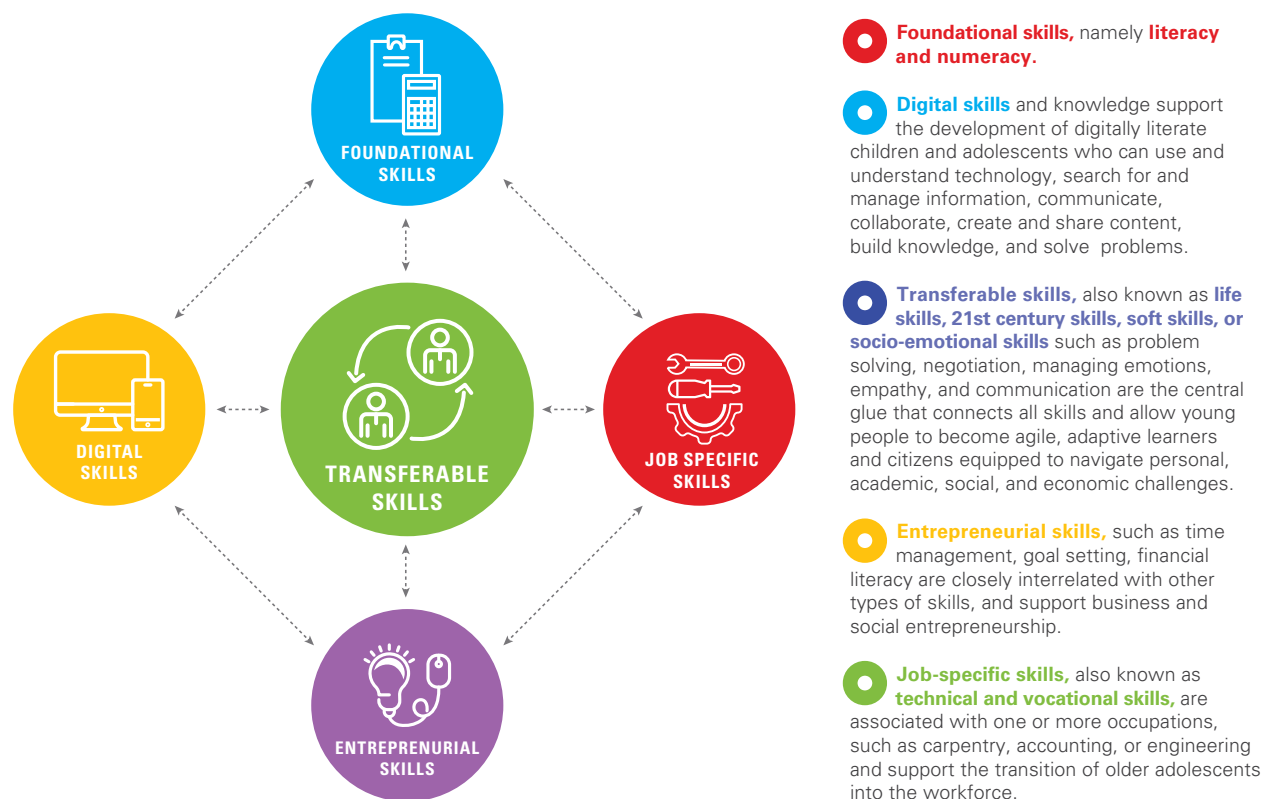
spent on service delivery, including the provision of skills development for more than 33 million children and youth (1.7 million in humanitarian settings). The remaining 37 per cent (US\$29 million) was spent on systems-strengthening. Of all children and youth reached with support for skills development in 2021, 49 per cent were girls and 51 per cent were in humanitarian situations.

## Skills development in early years

Quality ECE programming provides a critical window of opportunity for young children to develop the foundational cognitive, motor and social-emotional skills that will enable them to successfully transition and succeed in primary schooling and beyond.

In 2021, UNICEF supported the national roll-out of an innovative Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programme in North Macedonia, which was completed in all public preschools, reaching 1,336 preschool teachers and 102 school staff (92 per cent female), close to 100 per cent of active preschool teachers. The SEL programme continues to help children develop foundational skills that support their future learning outcomes, social interactions, mental health and well-being, and positive gender socialization. To expand the programme's reach beyond preschools, UNICEF supported the development of animated and TV content, broadcast nationally and shared online, to reach children who are not attending preschools and help create public demand for SEL opportunities.

FIGURE 17: UNICEF's skills typology



In Viet Nam, UNICEF continued its work on embedding gender-sensitization in training on socio-emotional learning in ECE programmes, which was piloted in 204 preschools in 27 project communes, benefiting 7,782 preschool children (3,788 girls and 6,775 ethnic minority children).

UNICEF supported research to contribute to policy discussions in the Philippines that resulted in a greater focus on urgent learning recovery needs and focus on socio-emotional skills. The Early Childhood Care and Development Longitudinal Study, conducted between 2014 and 2021 for the Department of Education, followed a cohort of 3,000 students from kindergarten to Grade 4 to measure their cognitive and socio-emotional learning. The study led to recommendations aimed at strengthening numeracy and literacy assessment policies and practices to support learners in meeting curriculum expectations.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF addressed the learning needs of young children, through the development of an educational series called '*Kid Scientists*', broadcast on national television as well as social media platforms, with an audience of over 1 million, including an estimated total of 100,000 children. The series helped children learn emotional literacy and self-regulation – areas that are foundational for children's development, especially during crises.

## Skills development in primary and lower secondary education

Children who are in primary education are at a developmental stage when personality, behaviour, and social and cognitive skills all become more hardwired. Hence, it is a vital time in children's development that can determine future skills and behaviour.<sup>90</sup> The transition at the end of primary school to the beginning of lower secondary school is another window of opportunity to reinforce skills developed in the early years and to develop new skills.<sup>91</sup> The development of foundational, transferable and digital skills becomes very important during this period. In 2021, UNICEF continued its support for skills development in this critical developmental window.

In Ghana, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in rolling out the Safe School policy and accompanying resource materials. About 90,000 (41,519 girls) learners from 833 junior high schools in 20 districts were reached with psychosocial skills content.

In Bhutan, UNICEF, together with the Youth Development Fund, Fab Lab and Loden Foundation, continued to offer digital skills and computer coding, entrepreneurship, employability, and civic engagement skill development opportunities, reaching 20,824 adolescents including 8,113 girls.

### Voices from the field: A parent's testimonial from the Plurinational State of Bolivia

Before the pandemic, Laleska Chambi had enrolled her three-year-old son, Yerik, in preschool. When schools closed, they continued learning at home together through activities in the kitchen, such as baking pastries while learning to count, measure and name ingredients. Laleska heard about the AFINI digital learning platform and began to integrate new activities she found there into her routine with Yerik. "There are different activities for my son to develop his skills, and we can spend time together," she says.

They enjoy the videos, stories and especially the songs, which help Yerik learn the alphabet and numbers. Laleska likes the flexibility of the technology, which allows her to manage both helping her son with his education and time for her work. She explains: "My commitment to my child's early learning is to continue supporting and cheering him on."

<sup>90</sup> Durlak, Joseph A., et al. *The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions*. Child Dev. 2011 Jan-Feb;82(1):405-32. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x. PMID: 21291449.

<sup>91</sup> UNICEF. 2019. *Global Framework on transferable skills*.

## Case study: Reaching children and youth with career skills in India

In India, UNICEF, through its work with the YuWaah! initiative supported the development of the Career Guidance Portal, in partnership with the Department of Education, iDream Careers and Systems Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP). In 2021, the portal launched across 13 states, reaching over 26 million adolescent students (50 per cent girls). The portal provides secondary school students with knowledge and skills to identify and make informed decisions about their educational and occupational pathways. Users can log onto the portal, including through an app, to access gender-responsive career counselling materials available in nine state languages, as well as English. Well researched content is available on over 550 professional and vocational careers, allowing students to access career specific directories, entrance exam information, and scholarship and funding opportunities.

Teachers were oriented on how to use the portal and its content to guide students in exploring and choosing a career pathway. Students were encouraged and facilitated to register on the portal through dedicated time within school hours, enabling them to explore the career guidance portal and develop decision-making, critical-thinking and digital skills. In addition, webinars were held with students to introduce newer career options and known personalities from different fields were engaged to interact with students and share information on their career.

## Skills development in upper secondary education

Upper secondary school is the time when adolescent girls and boys need preparation for transition out of school into work or other opportunities. Expanding the provision of formal secondary education and non-formal education for out-of-school adolescents therefore has distinct benefits for adolescents themselves, as well as their families, communities and countries.

While the pandemic and school closures have restricted skills opportunities (only 18 per cent of adolescents in upper secondary were reached through remote learning),<sup>92</sup> UNICEF continued to work with governments and partners to expand these opportunities remotely during closure and ensure their resumption as education systems reopened.

In Bangladesh, 49,325 adolescents (70 per cent girls) were reached with life skills training. In Madagascar, the national life skills programme benefited 10,481 children (56 per cent girls) in seven regions and 585 parents in two regions. In Uganda, a digital curriculum and life skills content was provided via the *Kolibri* online platform for 7,300 users, with 2,700 new users registered in 2021. In Iraq, UNICEF strengthened the life, employability, entrepreneurship and digital skills of 16,600 vulnerable young people (43 per cent

girls), including internally displaced persons, poor and other socially excluded groups, which were delivered as part of the Iraq Learning Passport.

In Turkey, to prepare young people with skills that are relevant for the labour market, UNICEF and Systems Applications and Products in Data Processing (SAP) supported the Design and Skills Labs model, which was rolled out to enhance the digital and 21st-century skills of 611,524 adolescents (55 per cent girls) in 763 upper secondary schools.

To support participation and community engagement in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, UNICEF strengthened the self-expression, relationship-building skills and community engagement of 53,913 adolescents (53 per cent girls) aged 15–19 years from vulnerable communities in 16 states through the 'Life Skills' programme. The results led the Ministry of Education to incorporate the programme in the secondary education curriculum, allowing UNICEF to contribute to the creation of long-term capacity within the Ministry, and helping to bridge the humanitarian–development nexus.

In Brazil, UNICEF further contributed to strengthening the life skills of over 95,000 adolescents and young people, including those from traditional, indigenous and migrant communities, and adolescents in conflict with the law.

<sup>92</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [COVID-19: Are children able to continue learning during school closures?](#)



## Voices from the field: Tailoring training transforms the lives of Rohingya adolescents

Amina, a 16-year-old girl from Myanmar, has lived in the Rohingya refugee camps since 2017. She learned of a UNICEF-supported multipurpose centre near her home through community volunteers who encouraged her to join in a vocational training programme in tailoring. Amina hesitated at first until her father, a craftsman himself, encouraged her: "If you learn this skill, you can make clothes for us," he told Amina. She took his suggestion and began the training. Amina learned how to use the sewing machine and made a new kurta for her father. She asked if her family could buy her a sewing machine to practise at home. Her father replied, "If you can make more clothes, you can sell them and buy your own."

Amina was determined and, within three months, she sold enough clothes to buy her very own sewing machine. During the pandemic, her clothes-making business took off, and Amina began making and selling clothes to her friends and neighbours. "I have learned that people always need clothes," says Amina, "My tailoring can help those who cannot afford the prices in the markets."



© UNICEF Bangladesh/2021/Kiron

A sewing class for adolescents at a UNICEF-supported multipurpose centre in the Rohingya refugee camps.

## Supporting transition from school to work

The future of work is increasingly dynamic and unpredictable given the rapid change in economic climate, technology advances and other changes that have a profound impact on the workforce across sectors and countries. While the global youth population grew 30 per cent between 1999–2019, the total number of youth engaged in the labour force decreased by 12.5 per cent in the same period. The pandemic has exacerbated this disconnect between the booming demographic dividend and low educational and employment attainment: nearly 25 per cent of youth aged 18–24 stopped working during the pandemic, and many of those who continued working faced reduced hours and income as they were more likely to be working in highly affected and informal sectors.<sup>93</sup> As many adolescents and young people enter the formal and informal labour markets from the secondary level, it is crucial that they, especially the most vulnerable children in conflict-affected areas and girls, are able to access relevant education and training opportunities.

In 2021, to support the school to work transition, UNICEF continued to leverage partnerships, such as the *Prospects* partnership – a programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, bringing together the International Finance Corporation, ILO, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank. Spanning eight countries – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda – the partnership seeks to transform the way governments and other stakeholders respond to forced displacement crises, through the involvement of development actors. The programme focuses on supporting migrant and forcibly displaced children and young people to acquire critical learning competencies and skills for employability, by strengthening pathways from school to the world of work. The Prospects Partnership also supports children's and young people's active participation in societal forums to equip them with skills to constructively engage in their communities. UNICEF's involvement focuses on education and learning, protection services, youth engagement, transition from learning to earning, innovation, gender-sensitive programming, data improvement and global advocacy. In 2021, under the *Prospects* partnership, UNICEF published the report, *'Learning to earning' for displaced youth: Unlocking the power of digital technologies*,<sup>94</sup> which provides an overview of how digital technologies are being used to support youth's transition from school to work, and 'learning to earning' in displaced and host communities.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to support programmes focused on development of skills needed to transition to work. In Turkey, for example, with UNICEF support,

the Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, local authorities and NGOs ensured more opportunities for 707,213 vulnerable adolescents (386,940 girls) through their inclusion and retention in formal education, improved educational programmes, and access to innovative non-formal/informal learning and skills development. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of National Education on the revision of technical and vocation education programmes, based on the changing job market, and to integrate transferable and digital skills, benefiting more than 1.3 million students (41 per cent girls).

In Kenya, UNICEF has continued to expand the Youth Market Place (YOMA) – a digital platform focused on helping young people transition from learning to work. The platform has reached over 7,000 young users who have accessed personalized training opportunities, and engaged in community service, including environmental initiatives for schools and communities, and providing mentorship to others.

UPSHIFT is a social innovation and social entrepreneurship programme designed to build skills and opportunities for young people who are disadvantaged due to issues such as poverty, gender discrimination, disability or ethnicity. In Burundi, UNICEF successfully scaled up the implementation of UPSHIFT to foster innovation among adolescents. Some 53,814 adolescents (57 per cent girls) were skilled with competencies to identify community problems and develop innovative solutions to address them. To accompany these youth innovators, UNICEF supported the establishment of five innovation labs, enabling 5,940 adolescents (49 per cent girls) to access comprehensive information and resources to improve their innovative community projects and livelihoods. In Kosovo,<sup>94</sup> UNICEF expanded its skills-building flagship initiatives, UPSHIFT, PONDER and PODIUM, formally accredited in 2020 by the Ministry of Education and Science, through uploading their content onto the Learning Passport and bringing the programmes to six upper secondary schools with 169 teachers trained. Overall, 6,785 adolescents and young people were reached and connected through UNICEF's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills-based programmes. Additionally, 1,027 (52 per cent girls) completed a skills development programme for problem-solving, critical thinking, team working, entrepreneurship, goal setting and/or interpersonal communication, including through the implementation of 64 youth-led initiatives on issues such as the environment, gender equality, mental health and e-education.

<sup>93</sup> ILO. 2020. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*.

<sup>94</sup> All references to Kosovo in this report are in the context of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). Official designation: 'Kosovo' stands for both the long form and the short form.

## Generation Unlimited (GenU): A global multisector partnership to meet the need for expanded education, training and employment opportunities for young people

In 2021, the effects of COVID-19 continued to be devastating for young people around the world, with 1.6 billion children and youth affected by school closures, and young people – especially women experiencing job loss that was almost 2.5 times greater than that for adults.

Despite this challenging operating environment, in collaboration with nearly 3,000 partners, GenU reached 120 million young people (aged 10–24) in 47 countries across six continents from July 2020 to July 2021 with access to skilling, employment, entrepreneurship and civic engagement opportunities.<sup>95</sup>

Over 65 million young people were reached with skilling and employment opportunities. While online solutions played a significant role, about 50 per cent of young people were reached through low- and no-tech solutions, such as radio, TV and in-person interventions. This has been particularly important for disadvantaged youth, especially adolescent girls who have significantly less access to connectivity and remote learning.

In Bangladesh, GenU accelerated delivery of the Alternative Learning Programme and virtual adolescent club programmes, providing critical learning and skilling opportunities for over 120,000 adolescent girls, and connected them to employment opportunities. GenU Kenya finalized its curriculum development and modification to provide digital courses and improved ICT skills for 1 million young people by the end of 2021.

In Egypt, a package of digital and non-digital solutions for learning and skilling, the National Girls' Empowerment Initiative, is being rolled out, as well as online safety awareness campaigns for young people, especially girls. Over 10,500 young people (over 50 per cent girls) have been reached so far.

GenU Turkey supported integration of skills into the national TVET programmes, benefiting nearly 650,000 young people.

GenU Brazil's 1MiO platform expanded to include over 80 multisector partners, providing over 100,000 skilling and employment services, such as connecting young people to internships, apprenticeships and jobs.

GenU Sahel,<sup>96</sup> which was launched in November 2021, aims to create skills development opportunities with and for 100 million Sahelian youth by 2030, through public–private youth partnerships.

## Multi-agency technical partnerships for skills development

In 2021, UNICEF leveraged its membership in several multi-agency technical partnerships to support global efforts to address the skills crisis.

UNICEF is a member of the Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) together with UNHCR, UNESCO, USAID, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Education Development Center, ECHO and War Child Holland. The group's goal is to strengthen the quality of accelerated education programming through a more harmonized, standardized approach. In 2021, the AEWG

focused on support to countries to improve the quality of Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP), including through strengthened evidence and resource mobilization, and as part of the COVID-19 response. Building on a 2020 Evidence Review of AEPs, in 2021 the AEWG embarked on a multi-year research project funded by Dubai Cares on the policy terrain for educating the hardest to reach in EiE contexts, identifying key factors affecting implementation of AEPs. In addition, the AEWG disseminated the AE M&E Toolkit and launched *Principles for Catch-Up Programmes*,<sup>97</sup> which built on response to the pandemic and support to ministries and key stakeholders in deploying AE as an effective response to the needs of learners who have missed out on education.

<sup>95</sup> GenU reporting cycle differs from that of the Annual Results Report. Results from the remainder of 2021 will be reflected in future reports.

<sup>96</sup> The Sahel region includes Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, the Gambia

<sup>97</sup> INEE. 2020. [Catch-up Programmes: 10 Principles for Helping Learners Catch Up and Return to Learning](#).



UNICEF is also a member of the Secondary Education Working Group (SEWG) – a multi-stakeholder group consisting of several key education stakeholders working in secondary education. The focus of the SEWG is on formal and flexible models of secondary education. The SEWG has four areas of focus: access, quality, evidence, and data and advocacy, and has a task team made up of SEWG members working in each area. In 2021, UNICEF and the SEWG conducted a landscape analysis of interventions successful at improving learning outcomes for adolescents in contexts of fragility, crisis and emergencies, with attention to girls and adolescents with disabilities.<sup>98</sup>

UNICEF continued to advocate for skills development by mobilizing new momentum around the need for action towards achieving greater progress on SDG 4. In partnership with The Education Commission, GenU, and the World Data Lab, UNICEF developed the [World Skills Clock](#) – an interactive webtool that monitors learning and skills trajectories globally and at the country level using a real-time data model. The clock was launched at the RewirEd Summit in Dubai, in December 2021, and is accessible to everyone online.

## Skills4Girls: Investing in girls' STEM and digital skills

The Skills4Girls initiative is a UNICEF global partnership that aims to develop and bolster girls' skills in STEM, digital technologies and social entrepreneurship. It provides vocational training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training for out-of-school adolescent girls via an alternative learning programme. Girls are supported with professional orientation, pre-engagement training, placement in internships and/or apprenticeship programmes, including in IT, engineering, transport and construction, or on-the-job training that links them directly with the job market. Through mentoring circles, girls are matched with local female role models to develop their confidence and provide a safe space to discuss barriers they face. The initiative has been implemented in Bangladesh, China, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, the Niger, Peru, Senegal and Viet Nam.

In some countries, these programmes were complemented with intensive literacy classes for adolescent mothers and pregnant girls, and local workshops and campaigns to address harmful gender stereotypes and harmful practices, while promoting investment in girls.

In Kyrgyzstan, 651 girls led sessions as peer-trainers for 12,401 girls on gender equality, gender-based violence and child forced marriage. An additional 1,000 girls also benefited from the mentorship of professional women working in science or business.

In Bangladesh, 8,885 adolescent girls (aged 15–19), including Rohingya refugee adolescent girls, participated in vocational skills training

## Gender equality in skills development

Investing in skills development of girls and young women is one of the most urgent and effective means to drive progress on gender equality, poverty reduction and inclusive economic growth. Equipped with the right skills, resources and opportunities, girls today can become the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs and change-makers. However, even with growing numbers of girls in school,<sup>99</sup> the pace of progress must be accelerated. In over two thirds of countries in the world, women make up less than 15 per cent of graduates the STEM education programmes.<sup>100</sup> Worldwide, nearly one in four girls aged 15–19 years is neither employed nor in education or training compared to 1 in 10 boys of the same age.

UNICEF focuses on skills development for girls at each stage of their learning journey from pre-primary through to secondary, and supports gender-responsive programmes and innovations to create a bridge between secondary education and the world of work. In Burkina Faso, 133,534 adolescent girls received child marriage prevention and care services, bringing the total number for the period of 2017–2021 to 696,568. These girls benefited from learning about sexual and reproductive health, leadership and life skills through 2,146 adolescent clubs. In Malawi, 435,445 children (50 per cent girls) aged 10–17 in 10 targeted districts were empowered to protect themselves from violence, and to demand protection services by completing a Safe School's Empowerment Transformation and Active Citizenship training.

<sup>98</sup> The landscape analysis is a joint work by UNICEF, UNHCR and Plan International, titled, [Evidence on Learning Outcomes for Adolescents in Fragile Contexts: A Landscape Analysis](#), published in April 2022.

<sup>99</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [Gender and education](#).

<sup>100</sup> UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report. 2020. [A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education](#).

## Case study: The 'Technogirls' programme preparing future female STEM leaders of South Africa

South Africa is facing a skills crisis, especially in science, technology and engineering, where the education system has not sufficiently prepared young people with the necessary competencies to meet employers' requirements. In 2020, the Government launched an intensive drive to harness and improve skills, starting by strengthening foundational mathematics and science training in schools to improve young people's qualifications for science, technology and engineering careers. A targeted focus on the particular needs of girls to ensure their readiness for STEM careers, and an increase in female participation in the traditionally male-dominated subjects of mathematics, science and technology, was identified as a critical lever to boost the country's economic growth.

In 2021, UNICEF supported the Department of Education to develop the Technogirls mentorship programme, a public-private partnership that seeks to enhance the career uptake by disadvantaged girls in STEM fields. Technogirls identifies high achieving 15- to 18-year-old girls from disadvantaged communities, especially those coming from rural areas, by placing them in corporate mentorship and skills development programmes, where they also benefit from academic scholarships. Career mentorship helps participants link what they learn at school with the skills needed to succeed in the business world, and be better prepared to enter higher education. As a result, many participants have received university or college scholarships. In total, 11,241 girls engaged in structured job-shadowing programmes in 2021, and 78 per cent went on to study in one of three STEM fields. This showed great progress in a country where previously few young people had been equipped with the necessary technical skills.



Girls participating in the Technogirl programme receive targeted support for learning in STEM.

## Non-formal education and community-based skills development

UNICEF engages communities to reach young people with skills development opportunities by supporting the implementation of non-formal/community-based opportunities to develop and apply the full range of skills. During the pandemic, these types of programmes were essential in supporting children and adolescents to stay engaged. As countries opened up, the programmes

supported them in school, or to transition out of school into work or other opportunities.

In Mozambique, over 3,330 adolescents from children's clubs produced 3,500 media programmes on issues affecting adolescents. The media programmes were broadcast through radio and television, reaching over 5 million adolescents and their families.

In Uganda, UNICEF supported the Life Skills Programme for Out-Of-School Adolescents, reaching 121,954 adolescents (52 per cent girls and 6 per cent refugee adolescents).

## Voices from the field: Second chance programming for out-of-school and at-risk adolescent girls in Côte d'Ivoire

Since 2020, with *Sweden Post Code Lottery* support, UNICEF has worked with the Government in Côte d'Ivoire to reform Institutions of Training and Education for Women (IFEFF) to ensure they meet adolescent girls' needs, in line with demands from the labour market. Initially created to welcome illiterate women, the IFEFF are piloting a new approach as a key component of the COVID-19 response and recovery, to provide second chance programming and welcome out-of-school adolescent girls and those at risk of dropping out back to learning.

There are nearly 1 million out-of-school adolescent girls in Côte d'Ivoire. Mrs. Esso, the Director of the Abobo IFEFF in Abidjan, works with 120 girls to provide skills needed for work and community participation. "My dream is to see a new IFEFF built in the land that the City Council of Abobo granted us," she explains.

IFEFF offers training in literacy and family education, as well as popular vocations, such as sewing and pastry making. In line with the national reform, the institute aims to offer innovative and promising training to break down the persistent barriers between girls and boys regarding employment, and to train female electricians and mechanics.



Students learn literacy skills at the IFEFF.

## Alternative learning pathways

UNICEF supports alternative pathways for continued education for adolescents who did not complete primary and secondary education, combining foundational literacy and numeracy with the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills needed to participate in the workforce. Flexible, alternative, and certified learning programmes provide opportunities for out-of-school adolescents, including working adolescents, those in underserved rural communities and refugees, to re-enter school or transition to work. The formal curriculum

is adapted to flexible time frames and is delivered using adapted pedagogical methods and materials, as well as information and communication technology.

In the Sudan, over 217,488 out-of-school children (50 per cent girls) benefited from the Alternative Learning Programme implemented by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education.

In Senegal, UNICEF used innovative and diversified approaches to strengthen alternative pathways to education. These included foundational literacy and



numeracy programmes in traditional Quranic schools that reached 5,164 out-of-school children (15 per cent girls) in 2021, as well as other pathways such as distance learning for secondary school dropouts to help them prepare for national examinations, and accelerated training initiatives to improve employability skills among youths with no prior qualifications, that helped reach 22,224 out-of-school children (52 per cent girls). These programmes involved public-private initiatives with local Chambers of Commerce, private companies, local training centres, and civil society, reaching a total of 27,388 out-of-school children.

In Zambia, 8,627 teachers (4,366 female) received training on Catch-up remedial learning in five provinces, which reached 303,037 learners (53 per cent girls) from Grades 1–6 with much needed remedial learning support. Given the evidence and impact of the Catch-up programme, the Ministry of Education has committed to take this approach to scale as a national remedial learning programme.

## Spotlight on thematic funding: Pakistan continuity of learning and Alternative Learning Pathways

Thematic funds were crucial in supporting Pakistan's COVID-19 education response. UNICEF worked with national and local education authorities to implement standard operating procedures and guidelines for continuity of learning. UNICEF trained 16,665 teachers (6,828 female) and education officials on safe reopening and operations of schools, benefiting approximately 650,000 students. In total, 22,772 teachers and education officials (10,254 female) were trained on MHPSS, enabling them to better support approximately 670,000 students (almost 300,000 girls) during the pandemic.

Moreover, UNICEF rolled out campaigns to advocate for continuity of learning during school closures, which reached 15 million people through social media and 587,341 parents through SMS, sharing messages on COVID-19 prevention, safe school operations, and encouraging continued participation in education. UNICEF also provided home-based learning materials to 211,112 disadvantaged children (106,231 girls) in Punjab and Sindh provinces to ensure continuity of learning during school closures.

With the use of thematic funds, the Alternative Learning Pathways programme was able to reach disadvantaged out-of-school children, reaching 9,673 marginalized students (5,842 girls) in Sindh province and 10,488 students (7,014 girls) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, UNICEF also helped establish an Implementation Unit to support systematized and efficient service delivery of the programme, including standard setting and accreditation to support learners' transition into the formal education system, and community mobilization sessions, mentoring sessions and teacher training for facilitators.



Students at Mashaal School in Islamabad.

## Voices from the field: Teacher Trang Tho Phe is pioneering innovation to empower ethnic minority girls in STEM subjects

Trang Tho Phe is an ethnic minority technology teacher in Lao Cai province, Viet Nam. She is one of the 2,199 teachers trained in the UNICEF-supported Augmented and Virtual Reality (AVR) pilot programme, which aims to reduce the digital divide among children, as well as tackle stereotypes in STEM.

By training teachers and investing in software and hardware, topped up with connectivity, UNICEF is bringing AVR to classrooms, allowing 29,745 marginalized students (49 per cent girls and 36 per cent ethnic minorities) to engage with STEM through gamification and immersive interaction.

Trang is a teacher who dreamed as a little girl of becoming an educator. She used to walk 4 kilometres to school and study by oil lamps at night. Despite the challenging conditions, school brought Trang immense joy. She looked up to her teachers, who tirelessly helped her learn relevant skills and encouraged Trang to dream big. Devoted to her studies, she decided she wanted to become a teacher herself. Years later, Trang was nominated as a technology teacher at Bat Xat Secondary School. The AVR pilot programme provided her with an opportunity to learn an innovative teaching approach which inspires her to become a role model.

“I am proud that I am setting an example as a female ethnic teacher pioneering technology and innovative digital solutions in my daily work. I believe it is inspirational for female students,” says Trang.

In the 2020–2021 school year, Trang was recognized as a National Youth of Excellence by the Viet Nam Youth Union and is featured in a national Vietnamese newspaper and Forbes.



Trang Tho Phe introduces AVR technology to her students in Bat Xat Secondary School, Lao Cai province, Viet Nam.

Digital skills and literacy are necessary for children and adolescents to participate positively, safely, and effectively on the internet and other forms of media. It enables them to use and understand technology, search for, and manage information, create and share content, collaborate, communicate, build knowledge, and solve problems critically and ethically.

In Ghana, a digital literacy package was developed benefiting over 7 million pre-tertiary learners (3,442,889 out of 7,036,943 were girls), and 338,758 teachers (including 143,617 female teachers).

In Iraq, UNICEF strengthened the employability, entrepreneurship and digital skills of 16,600 vulnerable young people (43 per cent girls), including internally displaced persons, and poor and other socially excluded groups, utilizing the four Life Skills and Citizenship modules which were delivered as part of the Iraq Learning Passport (in line with the regional learning accelerator).

Given that women in least-developed countries are significantly less likely to have access to the internet, UNICEF programmes also consider how to increase access to digital skills and jobs for adolescent girls and young women.

In the State of Palestine, 18,664 adolescents (58 per cent girls) were empowered with digital, entrepreneurial and civic engagement skills. Of these, 12,571 (58 per cent girls) were equipped with digital skills through a programme called *Digital Entrepreneurship Adolescence Leaders*. In total, 6,093 (56 per cent girls) were equipped with civic engagement and employment skills, and developed initiatives to respond to the challenges in their communities.

Another impactful way for adolescents and young people to learn and build a wide range of skills is by volunteering or taking on projects or activities that address local challenges in their communities. Integrating volunteerism into the learning experiences for young people offers a rich skills-building experience, as well as benefits the community. When embedded as part of a formal school curriculum, volunteerism is sometimes referred to as Community Service Learning, which is an emerging area in curricula across the globe. Combining formal classroom learning with non-formal community service or volunteering can give students the opportunity to work in their communities to address local problems and constitutes an additional strategy for boosting results for young people in terms of enhancing their life skills and career choices.

In Jordan, the *Nahno.org* platform enabled youth to register and be matched to relevant volunteer opportunities near them, providing opportunities for United Nations agencies, Government, private sector and Civil Society Organizations to engage the most vulnerable young people in systemic and meaningful engagement and volunteer opportunities. By the end of 2021, the platform supported 77,834 (52,290 female) active volunteers with access to civic and volunteering opportunities within their communities.

In Ukraine, in partnership with UNICEF, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Ecology and Environmental Protection, civil society and the private sector, adolescents and young people benefited from community engagement and skills-building opportunities, 59,428 youth (73 per cent girls) were engaged in civic initiatives, including 16,514 who contributed to climate change action.

## Case studies

### Egypt: Meshwary programme

With support from the Hilton Effect Foundation, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Egypt to continue the implementation of the 'Meshwary' (My Journey) programme in 2021. This programme provided young people with skills development and career guidance training programmes in governorates with high trends of irregular migration. The programme targets disadvantaged young people and their host communities by supporting them with life skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, digital skills and career counselling. Activities were carried out within youth centres in five designated governorates in Lower Egypt, namely Qalubeya, Beheira, Al Sharkeya, Al Gharbeya and Kafr El Sheikh.

The skills development programme, was designed to promote young people's socioeconomic empowerment opportunities through building their employability skills, including money saving, money management and entrepreneurship skills. It is aligned with the Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) Regional framework that addresses key life and employability skills, such as interpersonal, creativity and innovation skills, as well as employability and work-readiness. 31,700 young people (18.7 per cent refugees or migrants, 49.5 per cent girls) attended the skills development programme and/or the career guidance component of Meshwary. The programme is linked to the global GenU multisectoral partnership platform launched in Egypt in 2021.



## Case studies (continued)

### Jordan: Learning Bridges accelerates learning for almost half a million students

In Jordan, schools have been fully or partially closed since March 2020. In September 2021, all schools reopened, but half of students still attend only two or three days a week. The Ministry of Education, with UNICEF support, implemented the Learning Bridges programme, a national blended learning programme. Learning Bridges combines weekly printed materials and QR codes to online resources to share activities based on core curricula, including guidance on how parents can support their children's learning. Audio files are embedded in the Ministry of Education's DARSAK online learning platform to provide accessibility for children with visual impairments or for those who have difficulty reading. UNICEF also provide printed weekly activities, as well as monthly data packages, for teachers and students in refugee camps.

To strengthen teachers' skills with blended and digital learning, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education conducted online teacher training and engaged Learning Bridges 'champions', who operate in each directorate and support teachers with innovative, flexible delivery of the curriculum. The champions promoted use of good practice 'padlets', online notice boards of children's work for use by schools and supervisors, which have had an average of 100,000 views a month.

UNICEF and the Education Development Trust conducted an impact study which showed that Learning Bridges reached nearly 500,000 students (65 per cent girls) in Grades 4 to 9 in over 70 per cent of public schools and enabled 30,000 teachers to access online teacher education on blended learning a first in Jordan.



Refugee children in Jordan exploring Learning Bridges activities using a mobile to scan the QR code.

## Case studies (continued)

### Nepal: Sharpening learning and life skills – Rupantaran radio show

In Nepal's southern plains, adolescents and caregivers learned to better navigate life and relationships with help from a radio show broadcast with UNICEF support in 2021. The 'radio sessions' comprise weekly gatherings at schools, where a group of students listen to the Rupantaran radio show together, followed by discussions on their reactions and thoughts on the content. The show is based on the Rupantaran life skills package that was developed by UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with the Government of Nepal, with the objective of imparting crucial social and financial knowledge and skills to participating adolescents.

With generous funding support from the 7 Fund, this was then broadcast via stations across all eight districts in Nepal's southern plains, in three local languages – Maithili, Bhojpuri and Bajjika. The broadcast reached 138,629 (53 per cent girls) adolescents (aged 15–19) and their families across all eight districts in Nepal's southern plains.



Students of the Shree Nepal Rashtriya Basic School in Parsa District in southern Nepal discuss the latest episode of the Rupantaran radio show under the facilitation of Rupantaran supervisor Palak Thakur

## Summary

Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on children's learning, rights and well-being, in 2021, UNICEF worked with governments to help children continue learning and develop a wide range of skills, from early childhood to when they transition from learning to earning. UNICEF's

chief focus was to continue to provide every opportunity for the most vulnerable children, children in conflict-affected areas, girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalized groups to gain the skills needed to find decent employment and enjoy full and fulfilling lives.





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# High-level priorities

Young boy at the Franco-Arab school Diamaguene center in Kaffrine, Senegal.



In 2021, UNICEF concluded its 2018–2021 Strategic Plan. The interruptions to children's education, rights, and well-being have threatened to derail hard-earned progress in the advancement of the rights of children and towards achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 4. Despite the significant challenges imposed by school closures and increased inequities, UNICEF continued the implementation of the Global Education Strategy (2019–2030) with an increasing focus on reaching marginalized children. UNICEF advocated and programmed with a focus on reaching the most marginalized children, with a goal of ensuring that girls, children with disabilities, those living in emergencies or in poverty, indigenous and minority groups were not further left behind.

UNICEF efforts within the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan cycle led to an increase in the number of countries reporting strengthening effective education systems for access from 26 per cent (2017 baseline) to 43 per cent in 2021. The most significant achievement in this area is the increase in the percentage of UNICEF-supported countries that reported having an education sector plan/strategy, which increased from 27 per cent (2017 baseline) to 56 per cent in 2021. UNICEF's successful advocacy and programming for gender transformative education systems is reflected in the increase in the percentage of countries supported in strengthening systems that institutionalize gender equitable skills: from 6 per cent in 2017 (Strategic Plan baseline) to 28 per cent in 2021. Similarly, significant progress has been made in terms of increase in percentage of UNICEF-supported countries that have reported effective education systems for learning, from 35 per cent in 2017 (baseline) to 48 per cent in 2021, including notable progress made in the areas of early learning and support to teachers and the teaching profession.

UNICEF demonstrated its ability to deliver results at speed and scale in response to the pandemic, through efforts to realize the potential of technology as a great equalizer, to reach every child, even those in no-/low-tech context, with education tailored to their needs and interests, in a language they understand and a format they can access. While UNICEF provided a variety of modalities (TV, radio, printed, etc.), a significant shift was made towards digital learning and use of technological innovations in education. Since its launch in 2020, UNICEF's Reimagine Education initiative seeks to enable every child and young person (some 3.5 billion by 2030) to access world-class digital learning solutions that build the skills they need in life, with a focus on quality learning opportunities and equity to reach marginalized children. The initiative operates through five key interconnected pillars: world-class digital learning solutions, connectivity, devices, affordable data and content, and young people's engagement.

The Reimagine Education initiative has mobilized a diverse set of partners from the public and the private sector, including through partners from the GenU initiative – content providers, telecommunications companies, device manufacturers, among others. UNICEF's multi-year partnership with Airtel Africa, for example, will connect schools to the internet and ensure free access to learning platforms across 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Through Reimagine Education, UNICEF entered into a partnership with the Edtech Hub in October 2021 to improve the generation, dissemination and use of evidence in digital learning programmes. UNICEF also joined forces with the World Bank to focus on the development of global public goods and targeted technical assistance to countries to close digital divides in low- and lower-middle-income countries. In 2021, UNICEF and the World Bank jointly developed a set of seven remote learning resource packs to support government officials and education practitioners with strengthening, designing and implementing effective remote learning opportunities for children in development and humanitarian contexts, with approaches to support the most marginalized children who were disproportionately left out of remote learning at the height of the pandemic. In addition, through the Giga initiative, UNICEF mapped over 1 million schools across 42 countries and connected over 3,000 schools to the internet, reaching over 1 million teachers and learners. In addition, UNICEF developed the Remote Learning Readiness Index, a new index to assess educational resilience in relation to crisis to accelerate the efforts of the international community and national stakeholders in 'building back better'.<sup>101</sup>

UNICEF learned significant lessons from the midterm review of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan,<sup>102</sup> and in the process of developing its 2022–2025 Strategic Plan.<sup>103</sup> Based on the key findings of the *Evaluation of UNICEF's Contribution to Education in Humanitarian Situations*, UNICEF took concrete measures to strengthen its staff capacity in education in emergencies, and expanded its guidance and support to reaching girls and children with disabilities in humanitarian situations. The 2021 report on the situation of children with disabilities, covering more than 60 indicators of child well-being – such as nutrition and health, access to water and sanitation, protection from violence and exploitation, and education – is a critical step towards accelerating results for children with disabilities.<sup>104</sup> The 2021 review of programmes, addressing SRGBV that were implemented between 2018 and 2020 in 28 countries, contributed to UNICEF's efforts in the area of providing safety in and around schools, particularly advancing girls education goals.

The UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank joint surveys of national responses to the pandemic, which focused on school reopening and education recovery plans in 2020 and 2021, proved to be a crucial tool to global and country level support.

<sup>101</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [Ensuring Equal Access To Education. In Future Crises: Findings of the New Remote Learning Readiness Index.](#)

<sup>102</sup> UNICEF. 2020. [Executive Board Midterm Review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021: Lessons learned.](#)

<sup>103</sup> UNICEF. 2021. [UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022–2025.](#)

<sup>104</sup> UNICEF. 2022. [Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities.](#)

Based on a new UNICEF report,<sup>105</sup> with data from 120 countries, findings show less than half of surveyed countries are implementing learning recovery strategies at scale. A quarter of low-income countries surveyed do not know how many students have returned to school. It also shows that only half of all low-income countries surveyed have plans to measure student learning. The report also highlights some equally alarming data reflecting a lack of financial investment in addressing the staggering levels of learning loss globally. It reiterates that, on average, countries allocated only 3 per cent of their COVID stimulus package to education. The share of ODA allocated to education fell from 8.8 per cent in 2019 to 5.5 per cent in 2020. Humanitarian fund for education increased from 2.6 per cent in 2020 to 2.8 per cent in 2021. UNICEF resource mobilization and advocacy efforts will continue to call for protection and increase of education budgets, and most importantly for equitable and effective education financing that reaches the most marginalized.

## Moving forward

Moving forward, in line with the UNICEF Global Education Strategy and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF will work with partners to strengthen national systems to better address inequalities, build resilience and ensure access to safe and quality learning, skills acquisition and participation opportunities, including through its coordination role in humanitarian crises. UNICEF's 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, Goal Area 2, is aimed at ensuring that every child (including every adolescent) learns and acquires skills for the future (SDG 4.1, 4.4 and 4.6). In the coming years, UNICEF will focus on addressing the global learning crisis, shifting to increase the emphasis on early learning (SDG 4.1 and 4.2), which is a critical moment for a child's skills development, including through work in emergencies, holistic skills acquisition, multiple learning pathways, and creating safe and supportive school environments (SDG 4.a). It will place priority on girls and the most marginalized children and adolescents, including children with disabilities, children affected by humanitarian crises, children on the move, and children from the poorest households (SDG 4.5). UNICEF will support evidence-based policies, programmes and products to support inclusive education for children with disabilities, migrant, minority and indigenous, refugee, and displaced children, and other marginalized groups. The organization will strengthen government and partner capacities on risk-informed programming, in relation to climate, conflict and disaster risks, and integrate mental health and psychosocial support and social protection to create more supportive school environments.

Informed by current learning poverty trends and skills gaps, UNICEF programmes will also incorporate gender programming in a transformative way and strengthen the

capacity of education systems to support student-centred teaching, measure and improve learning outcomes, and develop multiple learning pathways to institutionalize holistic skills development that supports learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship, employability and entrepreneurship. UNICEF will prioritize foundational literacy and numeracy; transferable, digital and job-specific skills; age-appropriate and culturally relevant comprehensive sexuality education; and cognitive and social-emotional skills from early childhood through to adolescence, while strengthening mechanisms for participation and civic engagement to empower children and adolescents, and contribute to inclusive, peaceful and environmentally sustainable communities. GenU will be a key partnership in this area. UNICEF will continue its long-standing work on climate education, including through the World's Largest Lesson and within the framework of safe schools programming and education for peace.

UNICEF will build on the success and lessons learned from innovative collaboration, such as the partnership with Microsoft on the Learning Passport, and the Reimagine Education partnership, with the World Bank, to diversify resource mobilization and expand partnerships, including with the private sector.

Building on efforts to reimagine education in the wake of COVID-19, UNICEF will focus on equitable access to digital learning solutions and connectivity, while engaging children, families, parents and communities to strengthen accountability. The organization will support teachers' development and the scale up of accessible, online and offline digital content and platforms, including through new and existing partnerships with mobile companies and other relevant business sectors, as well as improve in-person learning opportunities, blended digital learning and teachers' technology skills development. It will also ensure that interventions remain appropriate to context, and that low- and no-tech solutions better suited to reaching the most vulnerable student populations are not deprioritized or overshadowed by tech-heavy and expensive interventions.

A key global moment for education will be marked in 2022 with the Transforming Education Summit, called by the UN Secretary-General, and as recommended in the Our Common Agenda (OCA) report, presented to the world leaders during the 2021 UN General Assembly. UNICEF aims to leverage the Summit and the key milestones leading up to it, to rally education partners around seven key calls to action as key accelerators of education transformation, and call on governments to take RAPID action to avert a learning catastrophe: Reach and retain every child in school; Assess learning levels; Prioritize teaching the fundamentals; Increase catch-up learning and progress beyond what was lost; and Develop psychosocial health and well-being so every child is ready to learn.

<sup>105</sup> UNICEF. 2022. [Where are we on Education Recovery? Taking the Global Pulse of a RAPID Response](#).

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AEP</b>	Accelerated Education Programme	<b>INEE</b>	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
<b>AEWG</b>	Accelerated Education Working Group	<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>AVR</b>	Augmented and Virtual Reality	<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>C4D</b>	Communication for Development	<b>J-PAL</b>	Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab
<b>CBE</b>	Community-based Education	<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EAP</b>	East Asia and Pacific	<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>ECA</b>	Europe and Central Asia	<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental health and psychosocial support
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development	<b>NORAD</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education	<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>ECHO</b>	The Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission	<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>ECW</b>	Education Cannot Wait	<b>PSS-SEL</b>	Psychosocial Support and Social and Emotional Learning
<b>EiE</b>	Education in Emergencies	<b>ROSA</b>	Regional Office for South Asia
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information Systems	<b>SAR</b>	South Asia Region
<b>ESA</b>	East and Southern Africa	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>G7</b>	The Group of Seven	<b>SEWG</b>	Secondary Education Working Group
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office of the United Kingdom Government	<b>SRGBV</b>	School-related gender-based violence
<b>FLN</b>	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy	<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>GADRRRES</b>	Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>GenU</b>	Generation Unlimited	<b>UNGEI</b>	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
<b>GPE</b>	Global Partnership for Education	<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations Refugee Agency
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communication technology	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>IIEP-UNESCO</b>	International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO	<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>IFEFF</b>	Institutions of Training and Education for Women	<b>WCA</b>	West and Central Africa
		<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



# Annex 1: Financial Report\*

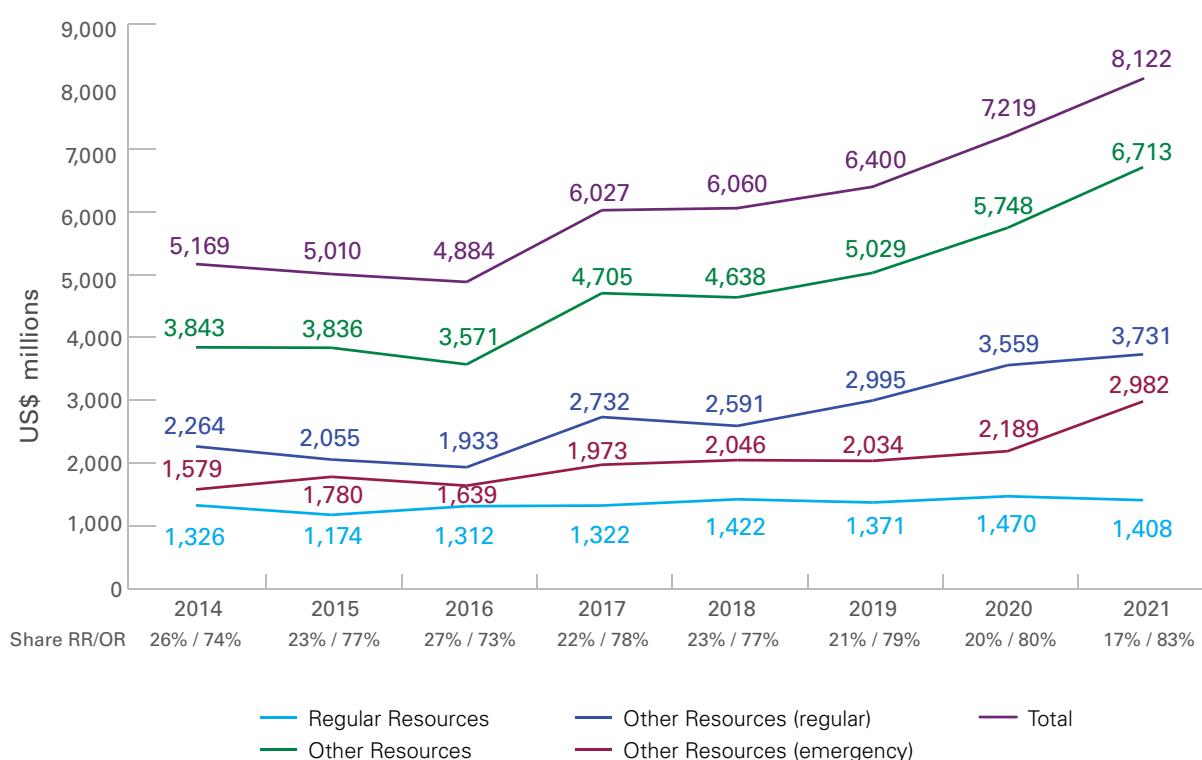
\*All funding data are provisional as of 1 April 2022, pending audit and certification.

## UNICEF Income in 2021

In 2021, UNICEF income reached over \$8 billion for the first time. This was achieved within the context of economic uncertainty created by COVID-19, cuts to UNICEF's income by some key donors and new realities in almost all of UNICEF's programme as well as donor countries resulting from the pandemic. This is a testament to the faith and trust that UNICEF's public and private resource partners have in the organization and its ability to effectively undertake its mandate, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Unfortunately, UNICEF's record-breaking income in 2021 also aligns with record-breaking needs of children. The impact of COVID-19 continued to exacerbate children's vulnerabilities in 2021 and widened the gaps in reaching the SDGs.

The growth in total income was driven by an increase in earmarked funds to specific programmes (other resources) income, which grew by 17 per cent, up from US\$5,748 million in 2020 to US\$6,713 million in 2021. Despite the organization's call for increased flexibility in light of the unprecedented demands of the pandemic, un-earmarked core resources (regular resources) income decreased, to US\$1,408 million in 2021, compared with US\$1,470 million in 2020. As such, RR as a proportion of overall income has steadily decreased, from 23 per cent in 2018 to only 17 per cent in 2021. This is almost entirely due to increased earmarking of public sector resources. (See Figure A1-1).

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



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

'Other resources' contributions increased by 17 per cent compared to 2020, and contributions to UNICEF's thematic funding pools increased by 73 per cent, from US\$438 million in 2020 to US\$756 million in 2021. Thematic funding also increased as a percentage of all 'other resources', from 8 per cent in 2020 to 12 per cent in 2021. This is 3 per cent below the milestone target set out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, of thematic funding being 15 per cent of all 'other resources' in 2021. The increasing overall amount of thematic funding as well as increasing ratio of thematic funding as a percentage, is a result of both an increase in non-humanitarian thematic funding, as well as an increase in humanitarian thematic funding driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend is encouraging and in line with the Funding Compact commitments. In the Funding Compact between governments and the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, United Nations Member States have committed to double the share of non-core contributions that are provided through single agency thematic, such as UNICEF's thematic funding pools. In alignment with this commitment, UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022–2025 aims to double thematic funding as a share of all 'other resources' by 2025. To reach this goal, UNICEF encourages partners to channel more contributions through these softly earmarked funds.

**'Income'** includes contributions received in a given year from public sector partners (governments, European Commission, inter-organizational arrangements, global programme partnerships and International Financial Institutions) and revenue from private sector partners. UNICEF uses income for the preparation of the financial framework, which forms a part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. Income is not part of the audited UNICEF financial statements.

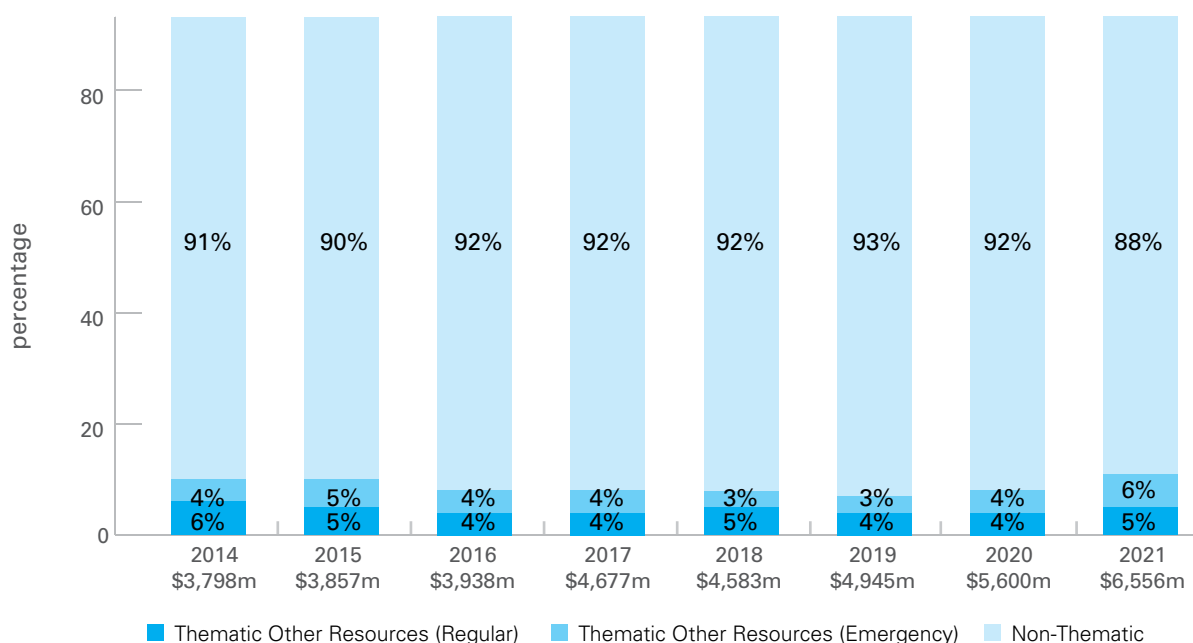
**Regular resources (RR):** Are unearmarked funds that are foundational to deliver results across the Strategic Plan.

**Other resources (OR):** Are earmarked contributions for programmes; these are supplementary to the contributions in unearmarked RR and are made for a specific purpose, such as an emergency response or a specific programme in a country/region.

**Other resources – regular (ORR):** Are funds for specific, non-emergency programme purpose and strategic priorities.

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

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



\* 2014–2016 contributions restated to reflect change in accounting policy for comparison with 2017–2021

Thematic funding remains a critical source of income for UNICEF programme delivery. Through thematic funding contributions at global, regional and/or country levels, partners support UNICEF-delivered results at the highest programme level in each of those contexts for the greatest impact. They act as an ideal complement to regular resources, as they can be allocated on a needs-basis. The flexibility of thematic funding allows UNICEF to respond more effectively. It facilitates longer-term planning, sustainability and savings in transaction costs, leaving more resources for UNICEF programmes.

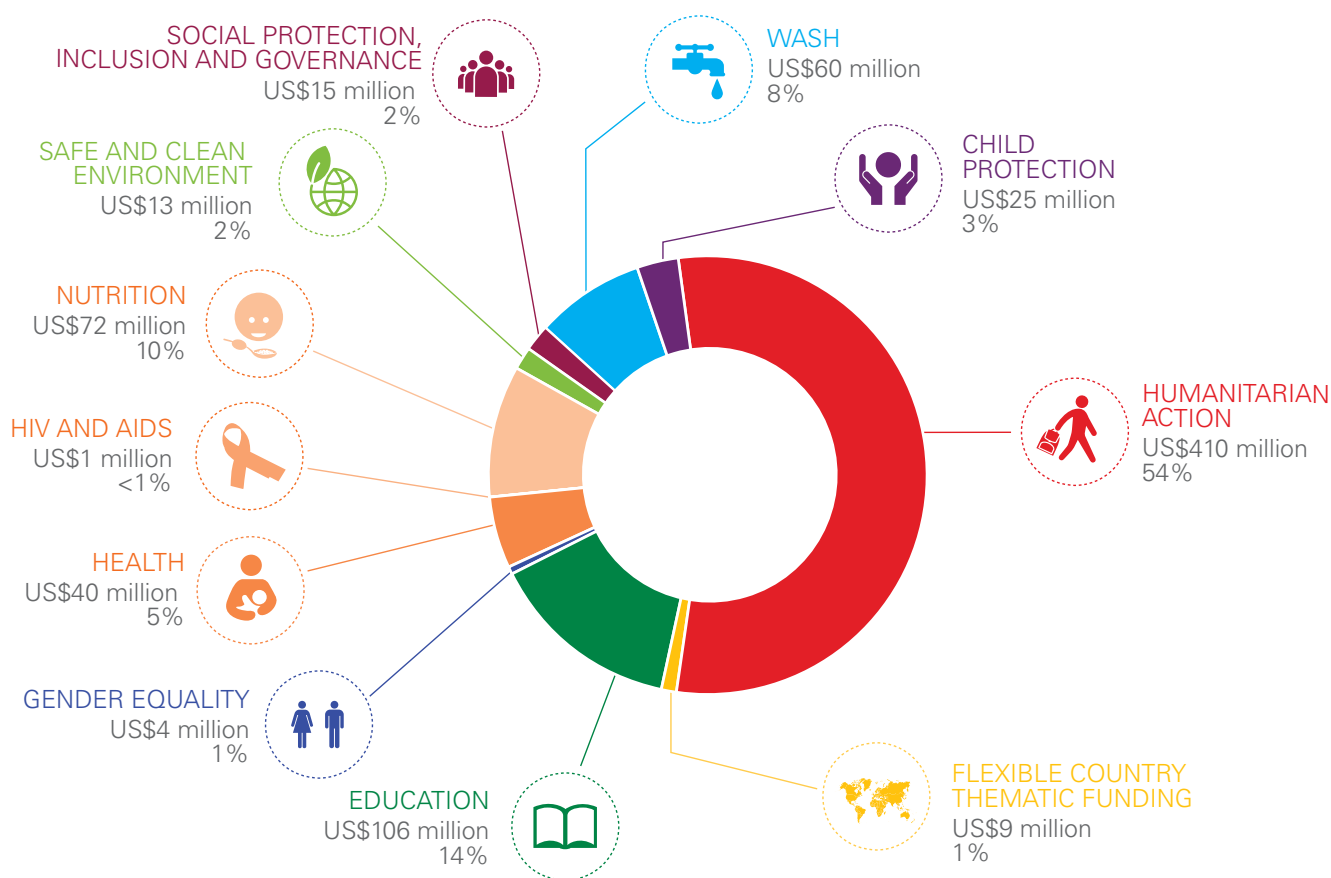
For partners, contributions to UNICEF's 10 thematic funding pools are in keeping with the principles of good multilateral resource partnerships. Thematic contributions have the greatest potential of 'other resources' to produce high-level results directly aligned to the Strategic Plan, as endorsed by the UNICEF Executive Board, and supported by the aims of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. They yield a higher return on investment than more tightly earmarked

contributions, as lower management and reporting costs result in a larger percentage of funds going towards programming. They also simplify renewal and allocation procedures and reduce the administrative monitoring burden for partners.

Overall contributions to the thematic funding pools increased from US\$438 million in 2020 to US\$756 million in 2021. The largest public sector contributors to the thematic funding pools in 2021 were the governments of Germany, Sweden and Norway, while the largest private sector contributions were facilitated by the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, the Danish Committee for UNICEF, and the German Committee for UNICEF.\*

\* For more information on thematic funding and how it works, please visit: [www.unicef.org/partnerships/funding/thematic-funding](http://www.unicef.org/partnerships/funding/thematic-funding)

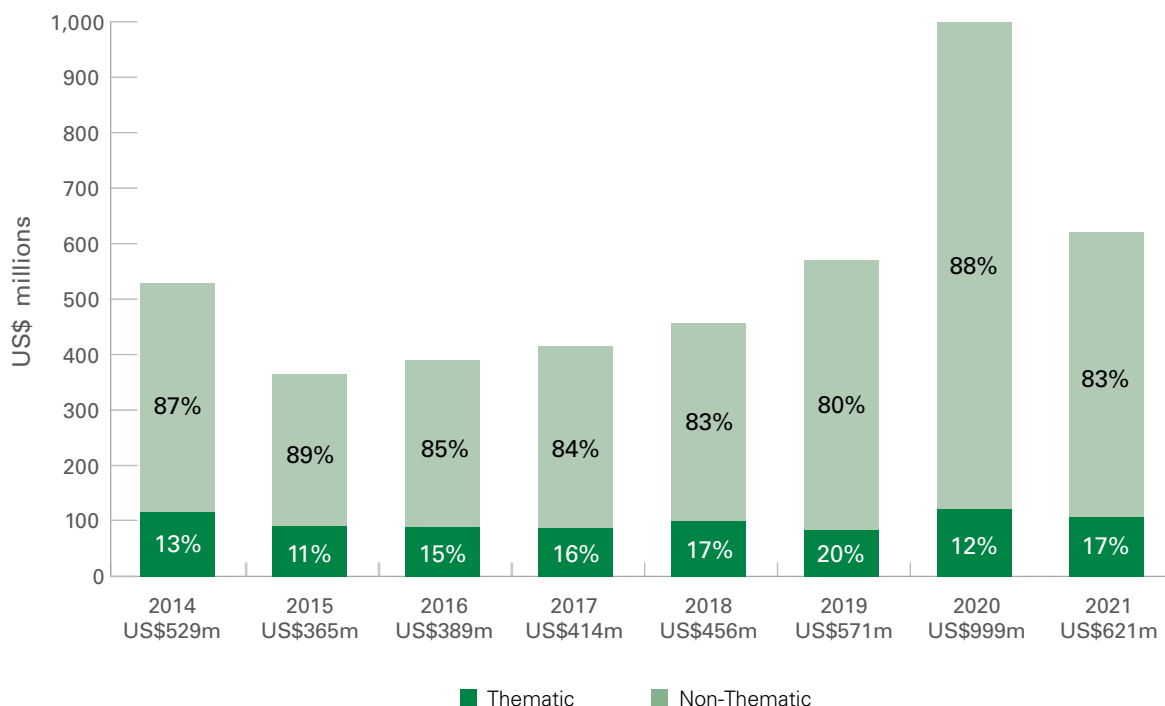
FIGURE A1-3: Thematic contributions by thematic pool, 2021: \$US756 million





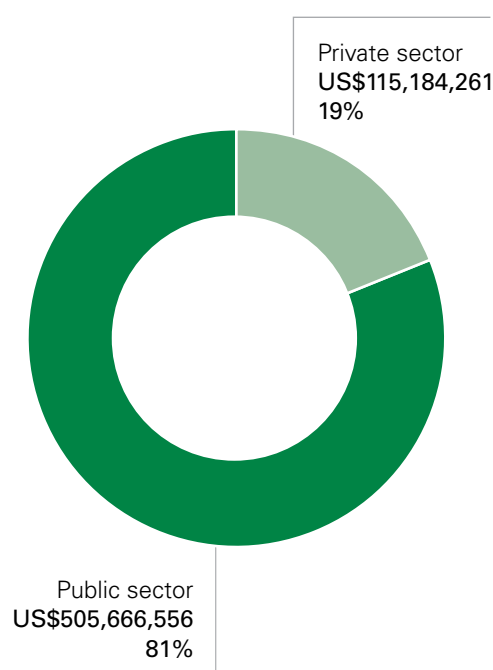
## Goal Area 2 income in 2021

FIGURE A1-4: Goal Area 2 'other resources – regular' contributions, 2014–2021



In 2021, partners contributed US\$621 million 'other resources – regular' for Goal Area 2 – a 38 per cent decrease compared to the previous year. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of 'other resources – regular' to Goal Area 2, at 81 per cent. The top five resource partners to Goal Area 2 in 2021 were the governments of Germany and Norway, the Global Partnership for Education, the European Commission, and the Education Cannot Wait Fund (see Table A1–1). The largest contributions were received from the Government of Norway for the global education thematic fund, from the Government of Germany for the Programme for Facilitating Access to Education and Social Services to Syrian Children and their Families in Turkey, and from the Government of the Netherlands for 'PROSPECTS – responding to forced displacement crisis' (see Table A1–2 and the body of the report for results on these programmes).

FIGURE A1-5: Total Goal Area 2 funds received by type of resource partner, 2021: US\$621 million



**TABLE A1-1: Top 20 resource partners to Goal Area 2 by total contributions, 2021**

Rank	Resource partners	Total (US\$)
1	Germany	142,260,012
2	Norway	83,961,577
3	Global Partnership for Education	80,687,899
4	European Commission	70,555,936
5	Education Cannot Wait Fund	29,609,665
6	United Kingdom	25,518,708
7	Danish Committee for UNICEF	20,900,604
8	United States Fund for UNICEF	19,930,689
9	World Bank	18,617,905
10	UNICEF Qatar	16,391,717
11	Japan	14,931,476
12	German Committee for UNICEF	10,273,299
13	Republic of Korea	9,369,803
14	Canada	9,064,896
15	Sweden	8,897,764
16	Finland	7,047,870
17	Switzerland	6,756,000
18	Canadian Committee for UNICEF	6,338,936
19	Italy	6,320,197
20	United States	6,065,628

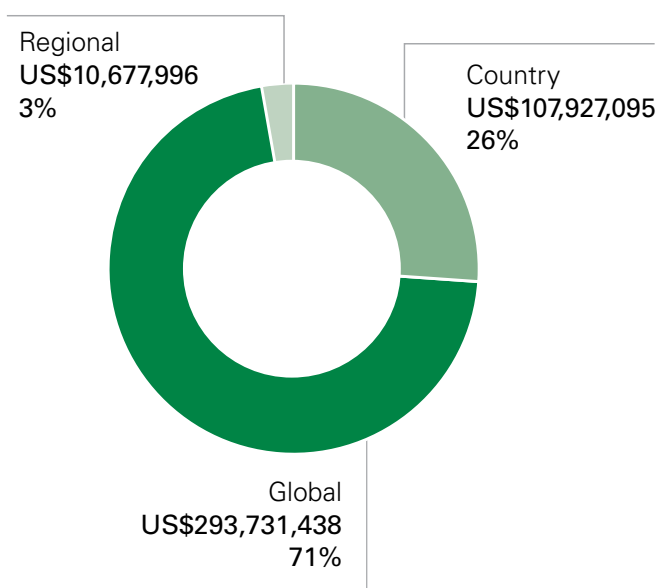
**TABLE A1-2: Top 20 contributions to Goal Area 2, 2021**

Rank	Total (US\$)	Grant description	Resource partners
1	48,998,514	Global Education Thematic Funding	Norway
2	39,024,173	Programme for facilitating access to education and social services to Syrian children and their families, Turkey	Germany
3	32,961,063	PROSPECTS – Responding to Forced Displacement Crisis*	Netherlands
4	28,153,153	Education Thematic Funding, Afghanistan	Germany
5	28,097,404	Supporting Access to Formal Education for Lebanese and non-Lebanese girls and boys in Lebanon's Public Primary Schools (Phase IX)	Germany
6	16,891,892	Strengthening Community Resilience in South Sudan Urban Settings*	Germany
7	15,202,703	Resilience and social cohesion in Northeast Nigeria*	Germany
8	14,721,530	Strengthening the public education system in Lebanon to deliver inclusive and quality education for vulnerable school-aged children - including Syrian refugees - ensuring their full access and retention	European Commission
9	14,201,197	Strengthening Community Resilience in South Sudan Urban Settings*	Germany
10	13,494,809	Equitable access for the Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for All Children	United Kingdom
11	12,681,337	More OOSC in schools in Nigeria	UNICEF Qatar
12	12,107,207	Construction of Lower-Secondary Schools, Burkina Faso	Japan
13	11,401,428	Accelerated Funding for the Democratic Republic of Congo	Global Partnership for Education
14	11,149,764	Strengthening National Systems for Improved Access to Equitable and Integrated Basic Services, Iraq*	Germany
15	11,149,764	Increased access to education opportunities and strengthened child protection services for refugee and vulnerable children in Turkey	Germany
16	11,149,764	No Lost Generation/Makani Center II, Jordan	Germany
17	9,825,328	Support for sustained Quality Educational Services for Syrian Refugee Children in Jordan	European Commission
18	9,056,656	Integrated Education and Well-Being for Vulnerable Lebanese and non-Lebanese Adolescents and Youth	Norway
19	8,550,000	GPE Accelerated Funding, Afghanistan	Global Partnership for Education
20	8,502,637	Accelerated Funding to support Burkina Faso's Education Sector	Global Partnership for Education

Note: \*Cross-sectoral grants: SC190601 (Education, Child Protection), SC210718, SC210728, SC190741 (Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection, WASH), SC2100667 (Health, Education, Child Protection, WASH, Social Protection)

UNICEF thematic funds maintain a four-year funding period that covers the entire Strategic Plan period (2018–2021). Throughout the Strategic Plan period, thematic funding contributions for education reached US\$412.3 million, with US\$106.4 million received in 2021, of which close to 90 per cent came from public sector partners. The Government of Norway was the largest thematic resources partner in 2021, providing 50 per cent of all thematic education contributions received (see Table A1–3).

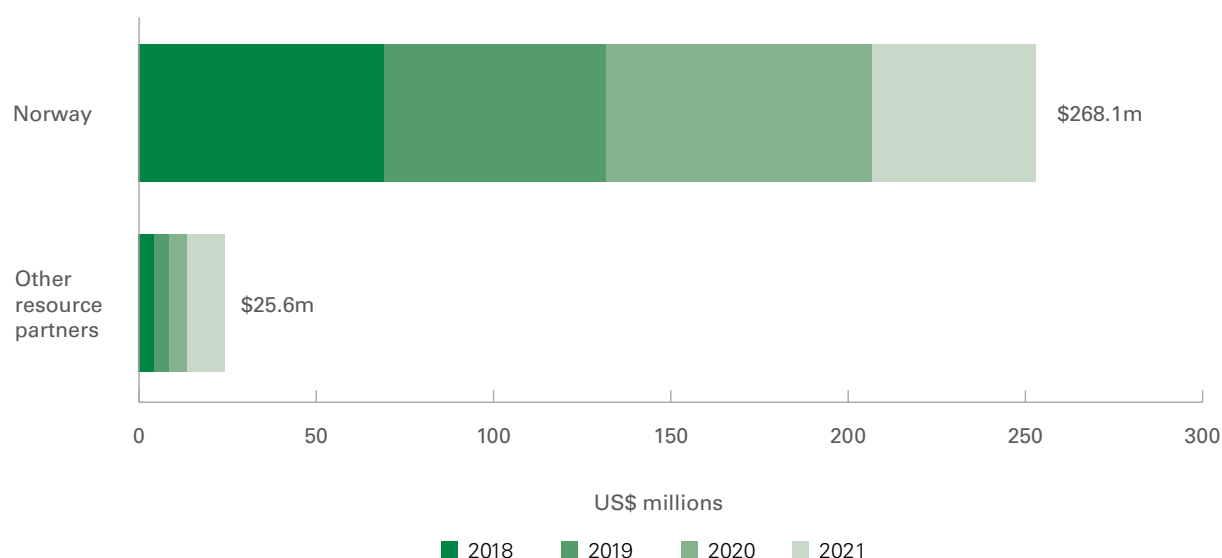
FIGURE A1-6: Education thematic funding contributions at country, regional and global levels, 2018–2021



Of all thematic education contributions that UNICEF received in 2018 to 2021, 71 per cent were global-level contributions. These are the most flexible sources of

funding to UNICEF after regular resources and can be allocated across regions to individual country programmes, according to priority needs (see Figure A1–6).

FIGURE A1-7: Spotlight on global education thematic funding contributions, 2018–2021



Under the 2018–2021 UNICEF Strategic Plan, the Government of Norway has contributed 91 per cent of all global education thematic funding.

UNICEF is seeking to broaden and diversify its funding base (including thematic contributions) and encourages all partners to give as flexibly as possible. In 2021, 37 partners

contributed thematic funding to education, compared to 33 partners contributing in 2020. Sizeable thematic contributions were received from the governments of Norway and Sweden for global education thematic funding, and from the Government of Germany for education activities in Afghanistan.



**TABLE A1-3: Thematic contributions by resource partner to Education, 2021**

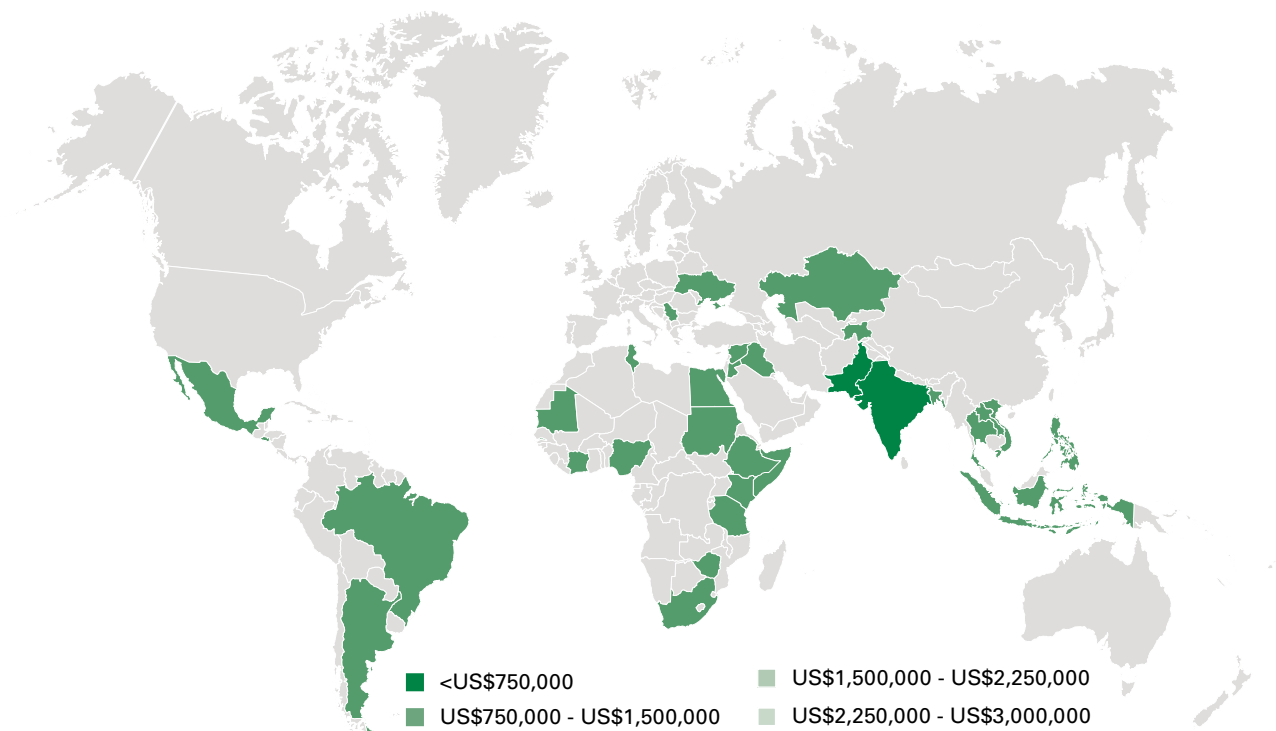
Resource Partner Type	Resource partner	Total (US\$)	Percentage of total
<b>Governments 89.58%</b>	Norway	53,232,542	50.02%
	Germany	28,153,153	26.45%
	Sweden	8,076,235	7.59%
	Denmark	3,854,183	3.62%
	Finland	1,126,126	1.06%
	Luxembourg	901,968	0.85%
<b>Private sector 10.42%</b>	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	1,534,882	1.44%
	United States Fund for UNICEF	1,341,684	1.26%
	German Committee for UNICEF	926,889	0.87%
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	763,242	0.72%
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	741,630	0.70%
	French Committee for UNICEF	533,751	0.50%
	Danish Committee for UNICEF	515,238	0.48%
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	498,064	0.47%
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	391,599	0.37%
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	343,988	0.32%
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	323,083	0.30%
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	260,144	0.24%
	Andorran Committee for UNICEF	84,459	0.08%
	Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF	45,659	0.04%
	Swiss Committee for UNICEF	21,326	0.02%
	Canadian Committee for UNICEF	19,000	0.02%
	Icelandic Committee for UNICEF	14,693	0.01%
	Belgian Committee for UNICEF	10,465	0.01%
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	7,188	0.01%
	UNICEF Country Offices	2,710,824	2.55%
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>106,432,016</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Grant numbers are provided for IATI compliance: SC1899040001, SC1899040004, SC1899040006, SC1899040008, SC1899040010, SC1899040012, SC1899040013, SC1899040015, SC1899040026, SC1899040029, SC1899040030, SC1899040035, SC1899040039, SC1899040079, SC1899040080, SC1899040082, SC1899040094, SC1899040095, SC1899040097, SC1899040099, SC1899040100, SC1899040101, SC1899040102, SC1899040109, SC1899040110, SC1899040111, SC1899040114, SC1899040122, SC1899040124, SC1899040125, SC1899040126, SC1899040127, SC1899040128, SC1899040129, SC1899040130, SC1899040133, SC1899040135, SC1899040136, SC1899040137, SC1899040138, SC1899040141, SC1899040143, SC1899040147, SC1899040150, SC1899040155, SC1899040157, SC1899040160, SC1899040165, SC1899040166, SC1899040167, SC1899040168, SC1899040169, SC1899040170, SC1899040171, SC1899040172, SC1899040173, SC1899040174, SC1899040175, SC1899040176, SC1899040177, SC1899040178, SC1899040179, SC1899040180, SC1899040181, SC1899040182, SC1899040183, SC1899040184, SC1899040185, SC1899040186, SC1899040187, SC1899040188, SC1899040189, SC2299040001, SC2299340001

The 2021 allocations of global thematic education funds were made according to a needs-based formula for country offices' regional allocations and for regional office's allocations, based on progress against critical education indicators. The allocation for a region increased with the number of children and youth in the region, the fragility of the region, the economic inequality of the region, as well as the impact of the pandemic on education indicators. The indicators used, where relevant, are consistent with the Results Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The amounts allocated to country offices were

determined at regional level, based on the Strategic Plan Result Areas, using a similar approach. The indicators were: (1) pre-primary gross enrolment rate; (2) primary education out-of-school rate; (3) primary education net attendance rate of the children from the poorest quintile; (4) secondary education gender parity index; (5) quality of education system for learning outcomes (Strategic Plan indicator 2.b.3); (6) school-age population; (7) fragility index indicator (proxy based on the number of consolidated appeals in the region during the past several years); and (8) economic inequality (based on World Bank Gini index).

FIGURE A1-8: Allocation of global education thematic funding to country offices, 2021

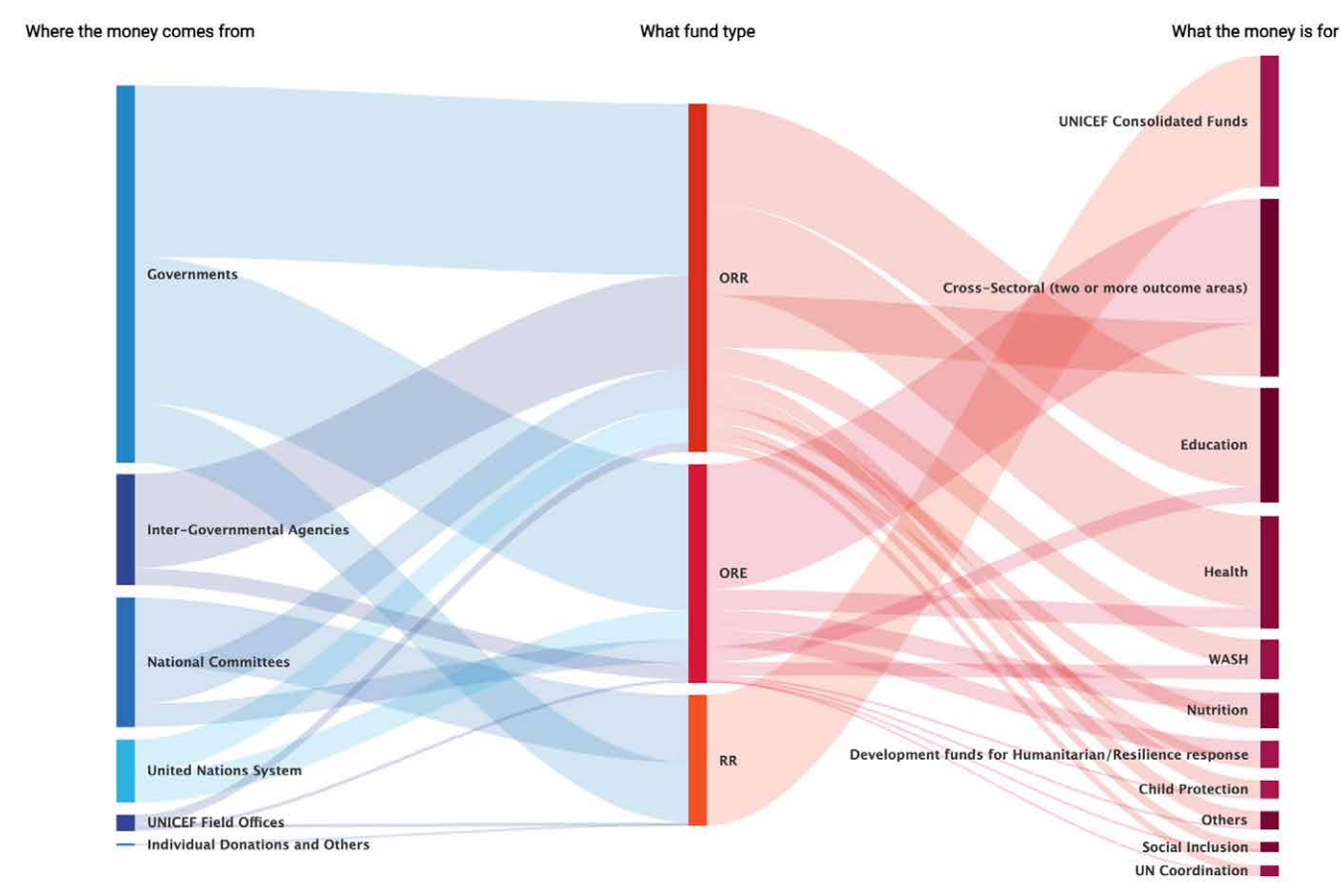


The allocation and expenditure of all thematic funding contributions can be monitored on the UNICEF transparency portal ([open.unicef.org](http://open.unicef.org)) and the results achieved with the funds, assessed against Executive Board approved targets and indicators at country, regional and global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

Specific reporting for country and regional thematic funding contributions is provided separately for partners giving at those levels.

## Transparency:

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

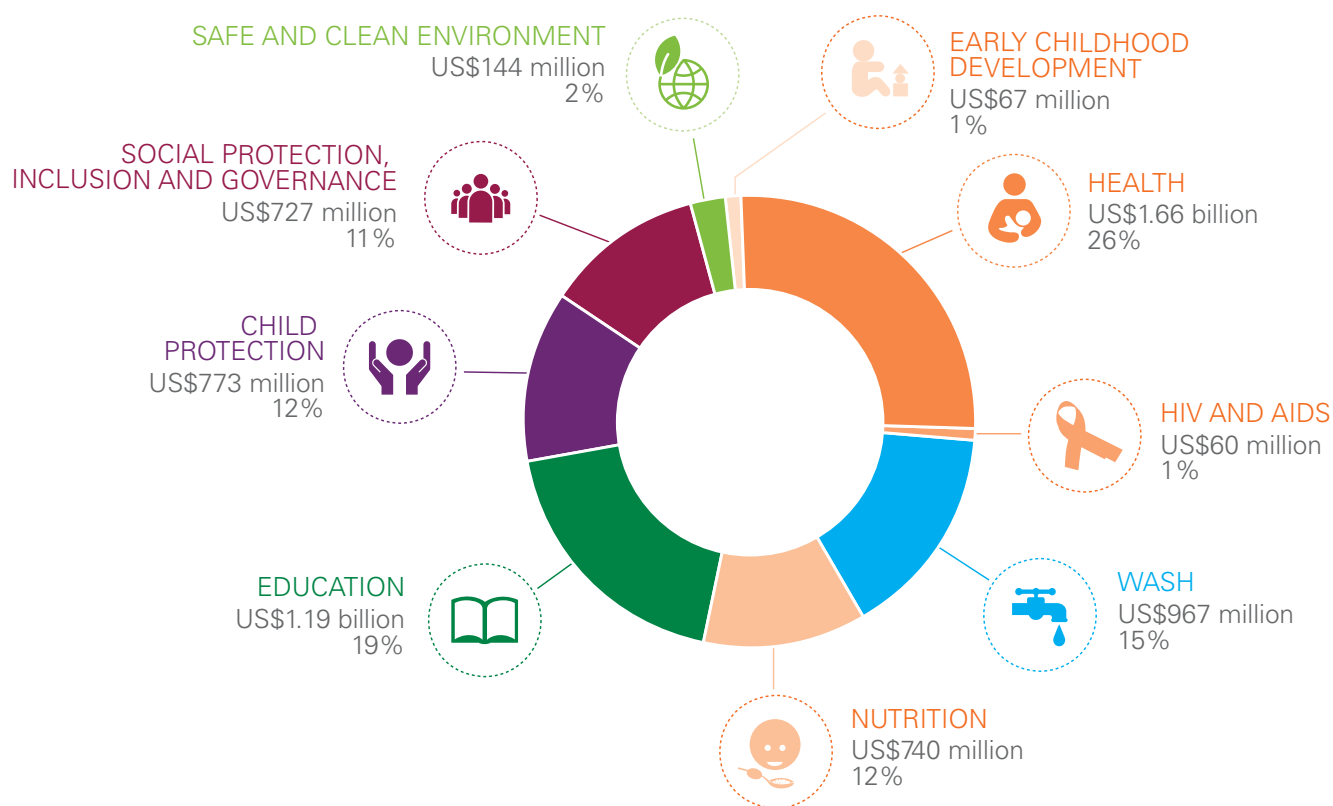


# Goal Area 2 expenses in 2021

*Note: Expenses are higher than the income received because expenses are comprised of total allotments from regular resources and other resources (including balances carried over from previous years), whereas income reflects only earmarked contributions to Goal Area 2 in 2021. In 2021, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US\$6.33 billion.*

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

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





To reach the results set out in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has planned for a total of US\$20.3 billion in programme expenses. In 2020, total expenses for UNICEF programmes amounted to US\$6.3 billion. The overall expenses since 2018 amounts to US\$23.1 billion.

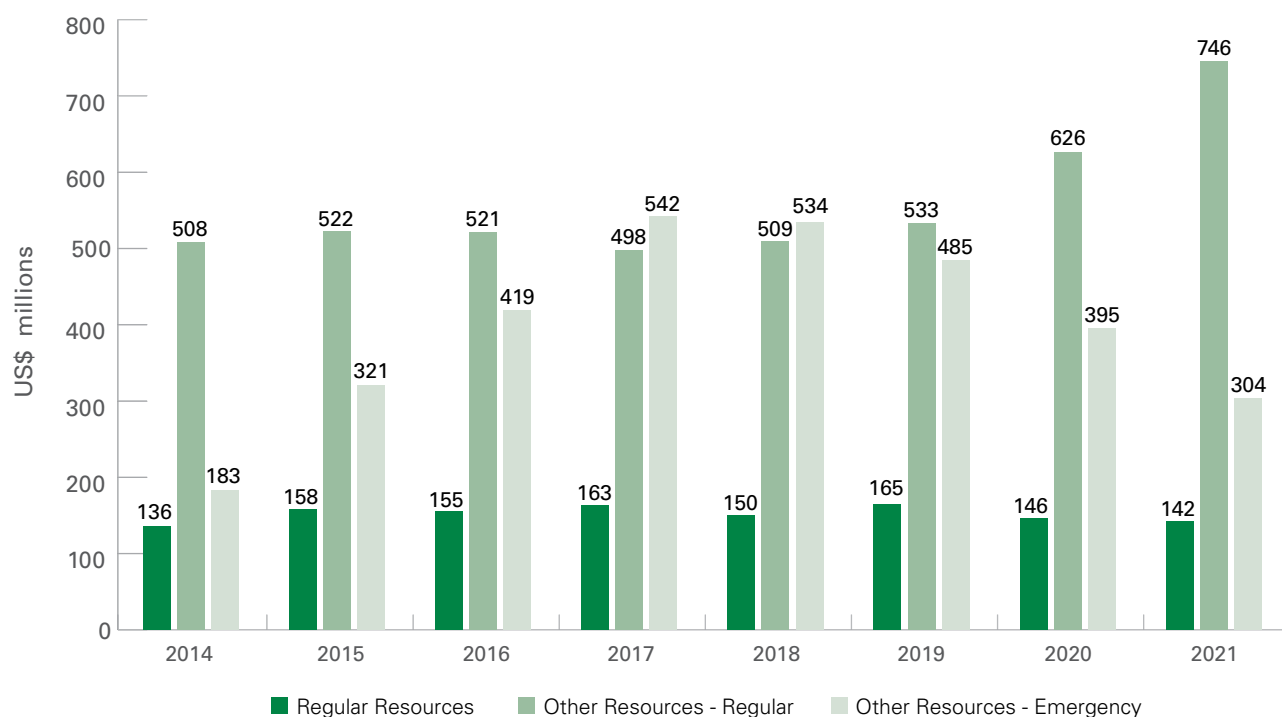
Total education expenses in 2021 were US\$1.192 billion, accounting for 19 per cent of total UNICEF expenses for the year, the second highest category after health expenses, which accounted for 26 per cent (see Figure A1–9). Compared to 2020, the share for education fell by 1.6 per cent, while in absolute terms, expenses increased by 2.0 per cent.

In 2021, regular resources (the most flexible type of resources) were used for 12 per cent of total education

expenses, while other resources – regular and other resources – emergency were used for 63 and 25 per cent, respectively.

The share of spending from emergency funds (ORE) has significantly decreased to 26 per cent compared to previous years. It reached 45 per cent in 2018 and then gradually decreased to 41 per cent in 2019 and 34 per cent in 2020. In absolute terms, spending from emergency funds has also been steadily decreasing since 2017. In 2021, it has dropped by US\$91 million. Despite these declines, humanitarian crises are continuing to affect large numbers of children, and UNICEF is continuing to play a very large role in backstopping education services in emergency situations.

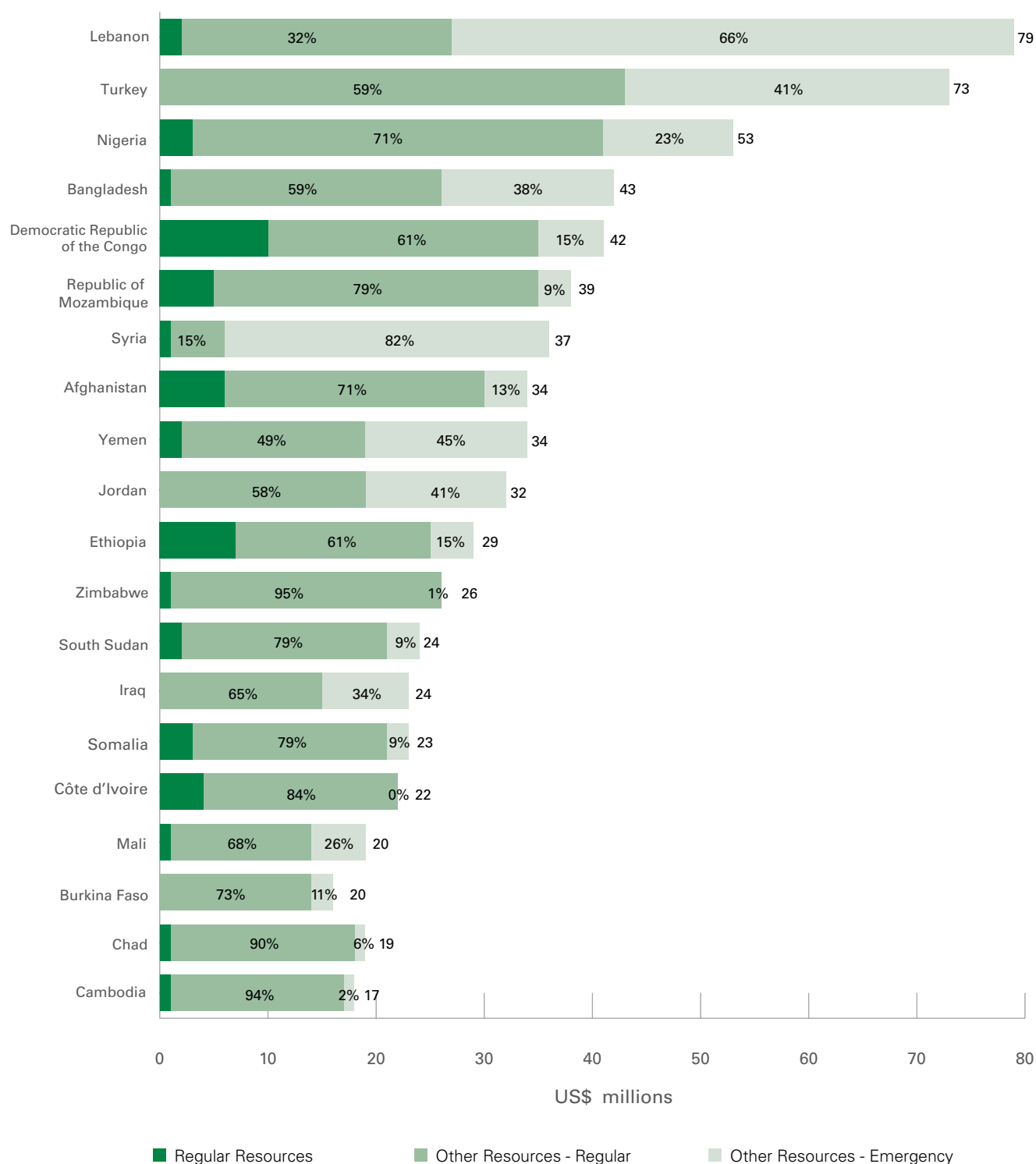
FIGURE A1-10: Education Expenses Trend by Fund Type, 2014–2021



Countries affected by emergencies and humanitarian crises generally had the largest education expenses in 2021 (see Figure A1–11). The Syrian crisis continues to have an impact on many of these countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon

and Turkey. Other countries with high levels of expenses included Nigeria, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and South Sudan.

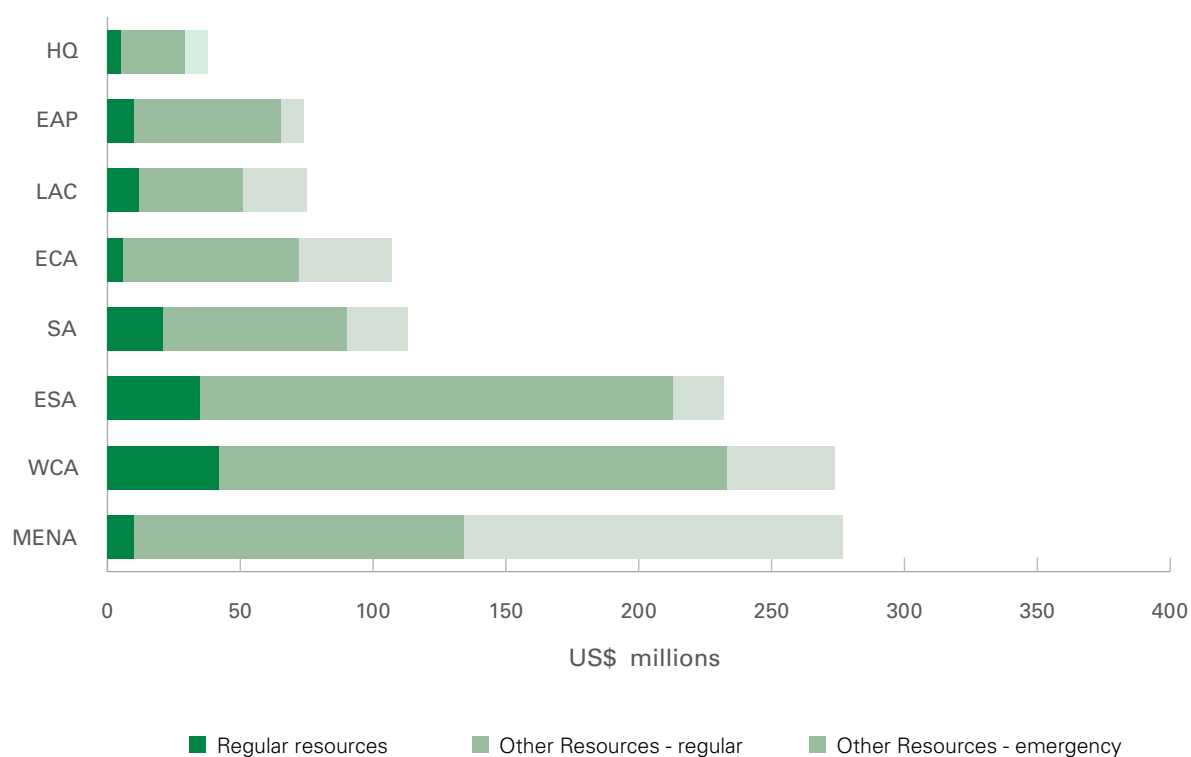
FIGURE A1-11: Top 20 Countries and Fund Type, 2021



In 2021, the largest expenses for education were in MENA, followed by WCA and ESA (see Figure A1-12). These

regions together accounted for two thirds of all UNICEF expenses for education.

FIGURE A1-12: Total expenses for education by region and fund type, 2021



Equitable access to quality education accounted for 67 per cent of expenses in the sector in 2021 (see Figure A1-13). Activities related to learning outcomes accounted for 26

per cent of education spending, while 7 per cent of total expenses went to skills development.

FIGURE A1-13: Expenses for education by result area, 2021

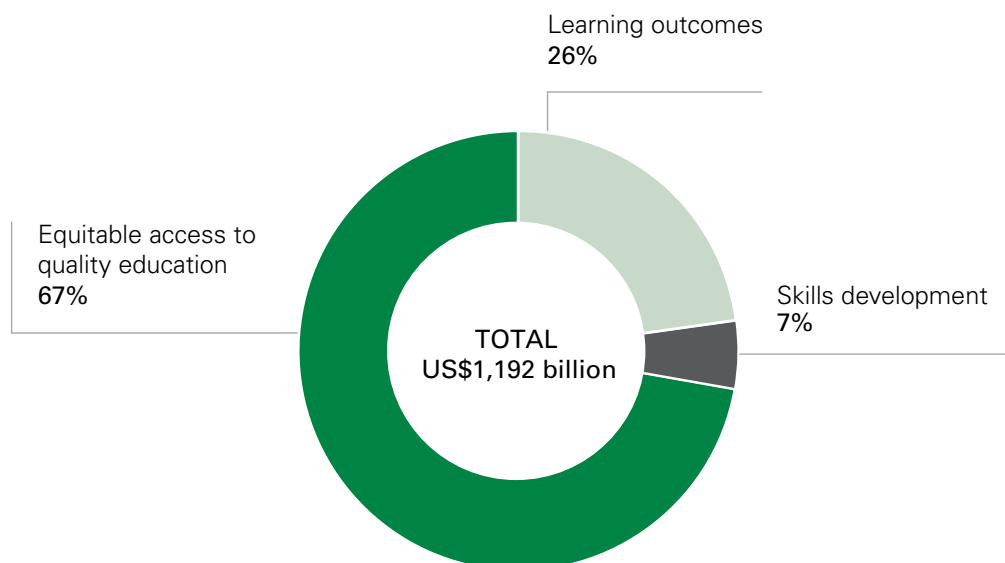
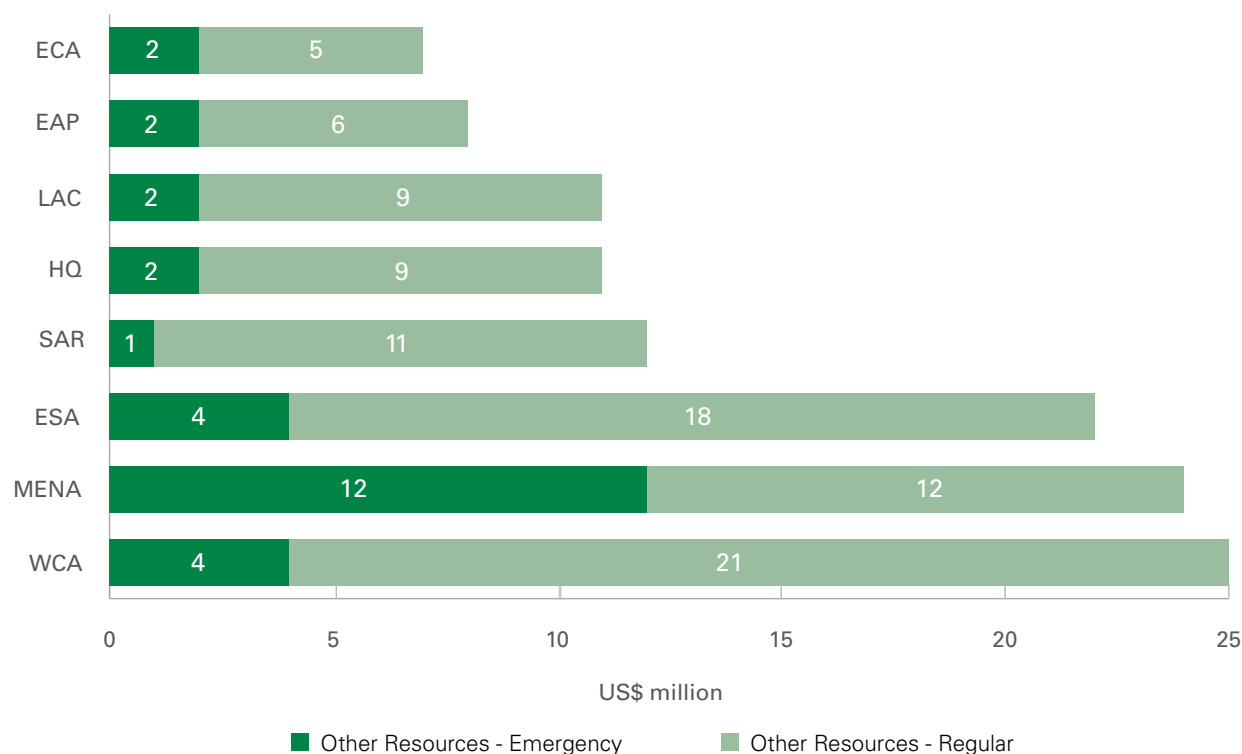


FIGURE A1-14: Thematic expenses for education by region and fund type, 2021



In 2021, the amount of education spending from thematic funds was nearly US\$121 million, of which a quarter was emergency thematic funds. WCA was the region with the highest spending of thematic funds, followed by MENA and ESA. The three regions cumulated 59 per cent of the total education spending from thematic funds.

Globally, thematic funds accounted for 10 per cent of all the education expenses in 2021. However, this share varies widely from 7 per cent in ECA to 14 per cent in LAC and 29 per cent in HQ.

## Analysis of expenses in the goal area/sector

In 2021, three cost categories accounted for nearly 76 per cent of education expenses: Transfers and grants to counterparts (US\$544 million); staff and other personnel costs (US\$197 million); and supplies and commodities (US\$167 million) (see Figure A1-15). The higher share of expenses in 'transfers and grants to counterparts' is consistent with the increasing use of partnerships to achieve greater impact for children in education interventions.



FIGURE A1-15: Expense for education by Cost Category, 2021

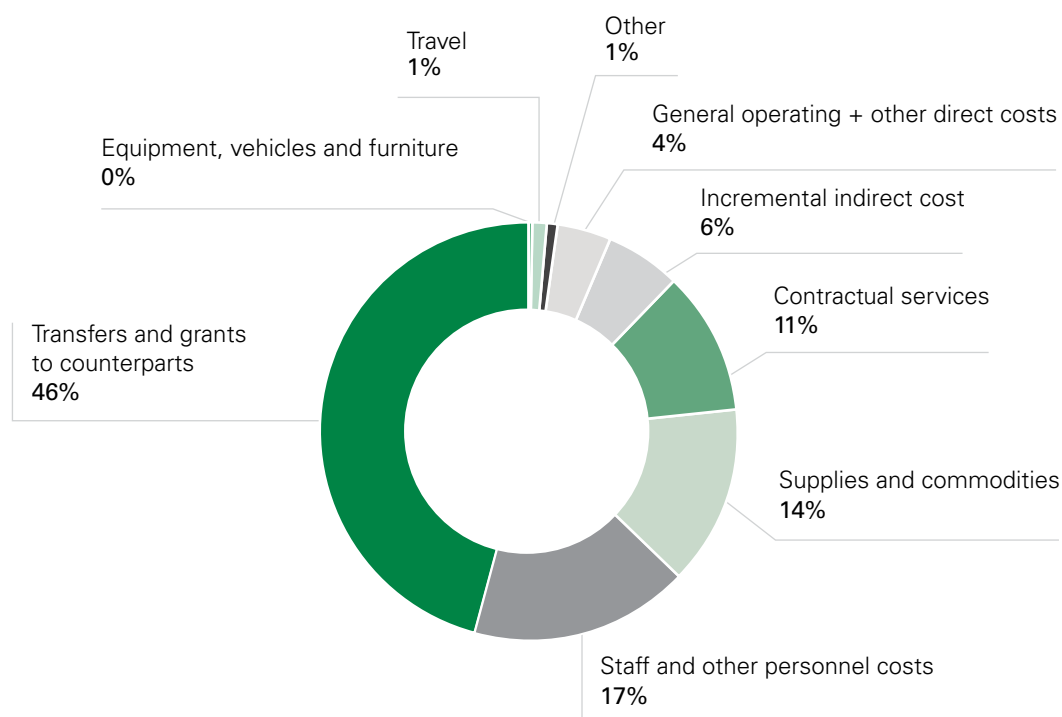
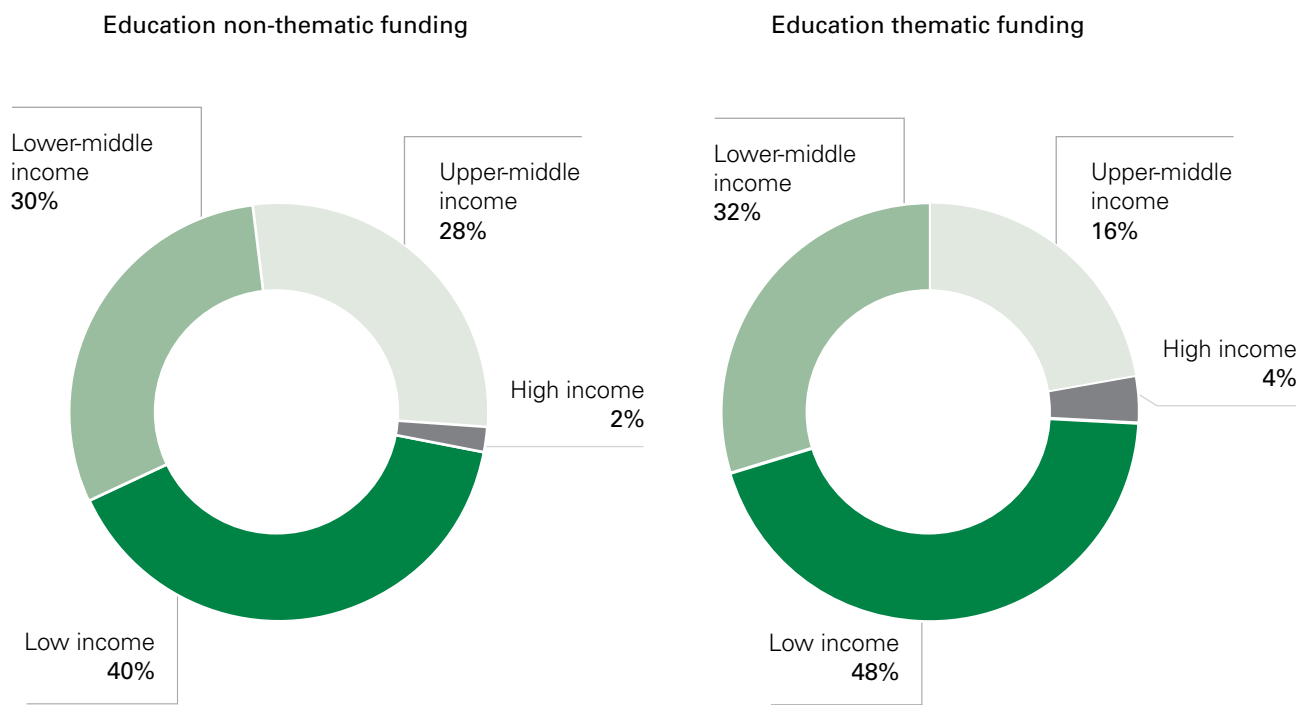


TABLE A1-5: Expenses for education by Cost Category and Fund Type

Cost category	Other Resources - Emergency	Other Resources - Regular	Regular Resources	Grand Total
Equipment, vehicles and furniture	26,868	107,844	230,807	365,519
Travel	2,015,714	5,021,834	3,150,089	10,187,636
Other	3,725,479	7,590,319	5,504,667	16,820,465
General operating + other direct costs	10,365,186	27,869,172	10,996,411	49,230,769
Incremental indirect cost	22,556,954	52,196,513		74,753,467
Contractual services	28,343,431	88,263,222	15,964,725	132,571,378
Supplies and commodities	56,007,245	99,571,237	10,940,378	166,518,859
Staff and other personnel costs	34,560,522	108,766,936	53,219,728	196,547,186
Transfers and grants to counterparts	146,384,346	356,601,611	41,160,503	544,146,460
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>303,985,744</b>	<b>745,988,688</b>	<b>141,167,308</b>	<b>1,191,141,740</b>

FIGURE A1-16: Expenses for education by income group, 2021



# Annex 2: Data Companion

The Strategic Plan systems-strengthening indicators are based on one to five dimensions, which in turn are based on one to six sub-dimensions. If the UNICEF country office has supported the sub-dimension, it assesses the in-country situation using a 1–4 scale, ranging from 1 ‘weak’ to 4 ‘championing’. The average of these sub-dimension scores is then used to determine whether a country satisfies the dimension, and the overall indicator. An average of less than 2.5 is considered a ‘no’, and an average of 2.5 or more is considered a ‘yes’.

Figure A2–1 shows that in 2021, some 56 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had an average score of 2.5 or more across the related sub-dimensions of education sector plan/strategy: (1) resource allocation; (2) access, participation and retention. In 2021, some 51 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had a score of 2.5 or more for the resource allocation sub-dimension, and 67 per cent for the access, participation and retention sub-dimension.

## Strategic monitoring questions (SMQs)

are one of the tools through which UNICEF’s programme division collects data to monitor and guide its work against the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. A Glossary of Indicators, developed as a supplemental annex to this report, provides definitions of indicators used by UNICEF country offices for data monitoring at country level and, particularly, a description of the scales used to provide a score to the sub-dimension. For enquiries, please contact Nicolas Reuge, Senior Education Advisor ([nreuge@unicef.org](mailto:nreuge@unicef.org)), and Jean Luc Yameogo, Education Specialist ([jlyameogo@unicef.org](mailto:jlyameogo@unicef.org)).

FIGURE A2-1: Systems-strengthening indicators for equitable education strategy/plan

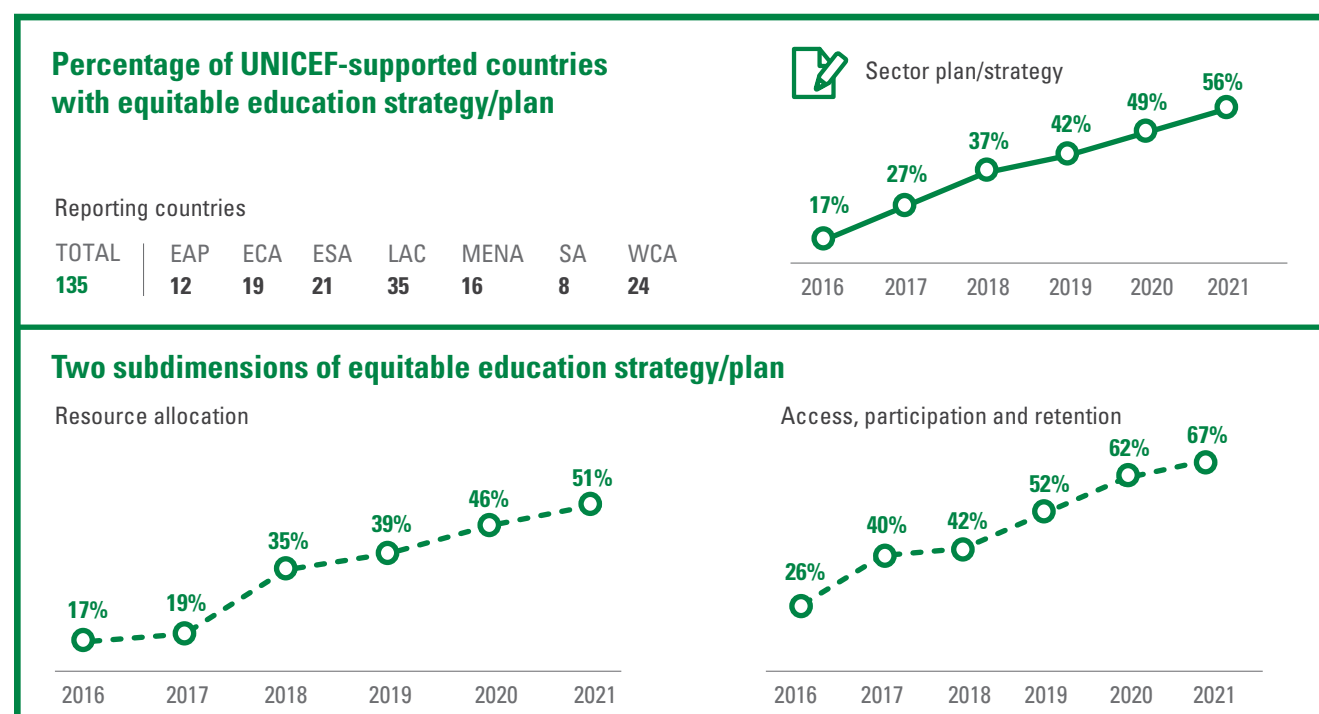


FIGURE A2-2: Systems-strengthening indicators for Education Management Information System/data

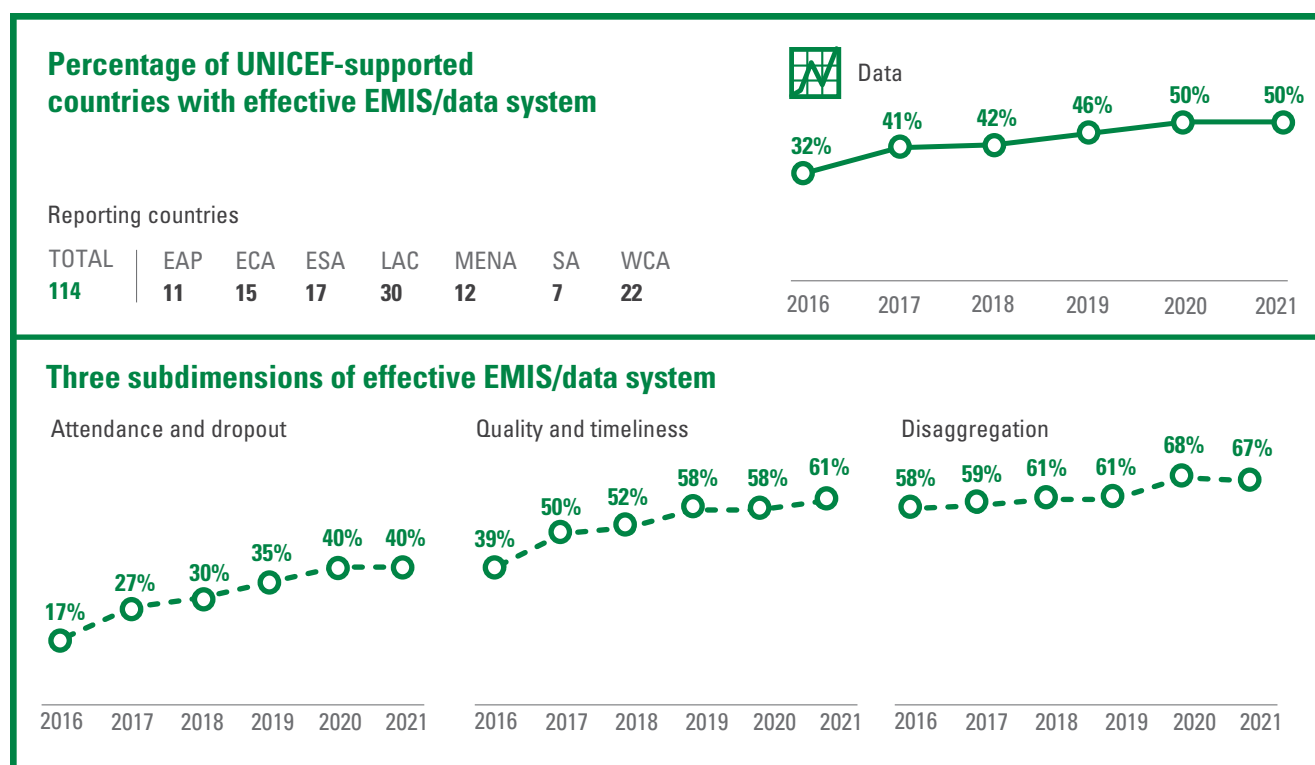


FIGURE A2-3: Systems-strengthening indicators for emergency preparedness/resilience

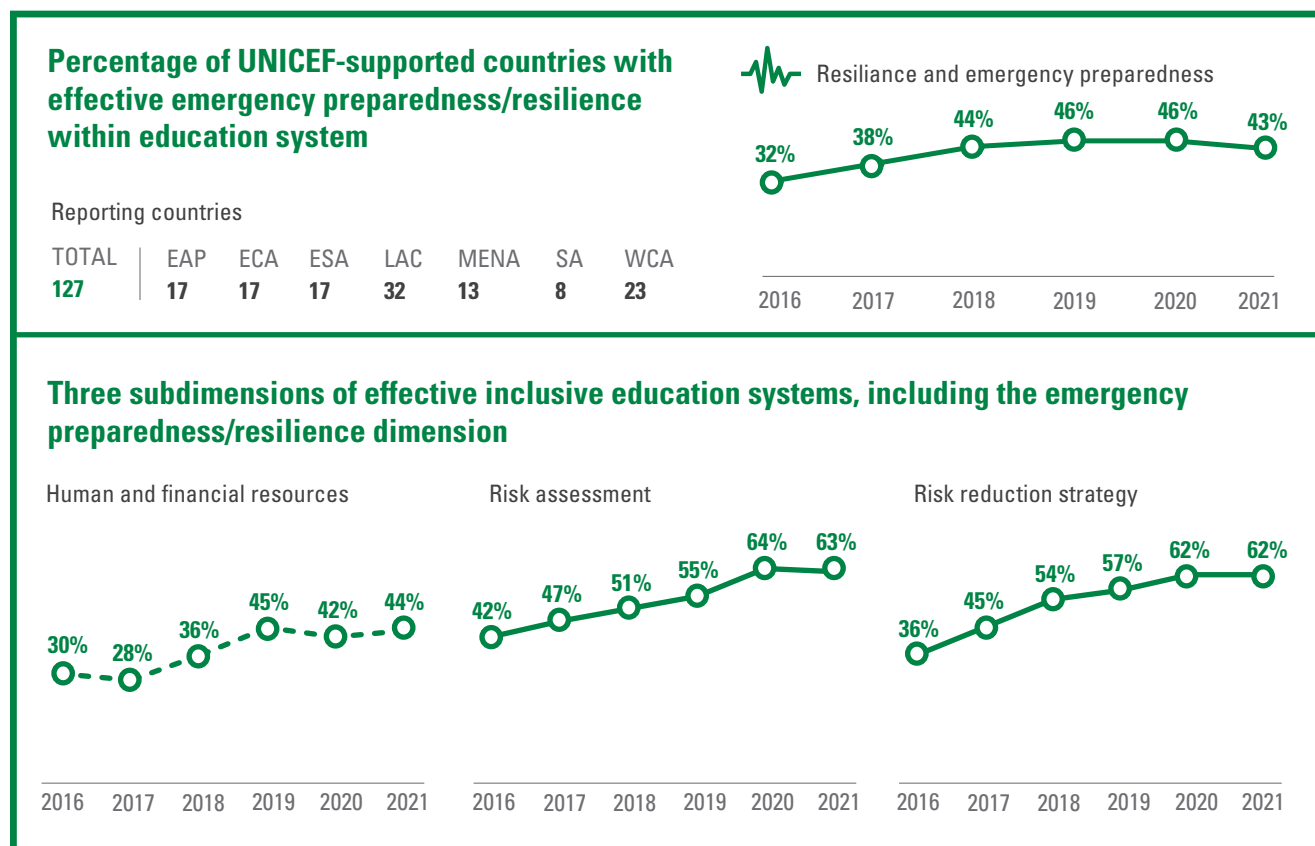




FIGURE A2-4: Systems-strengthening indicators for inclusive education

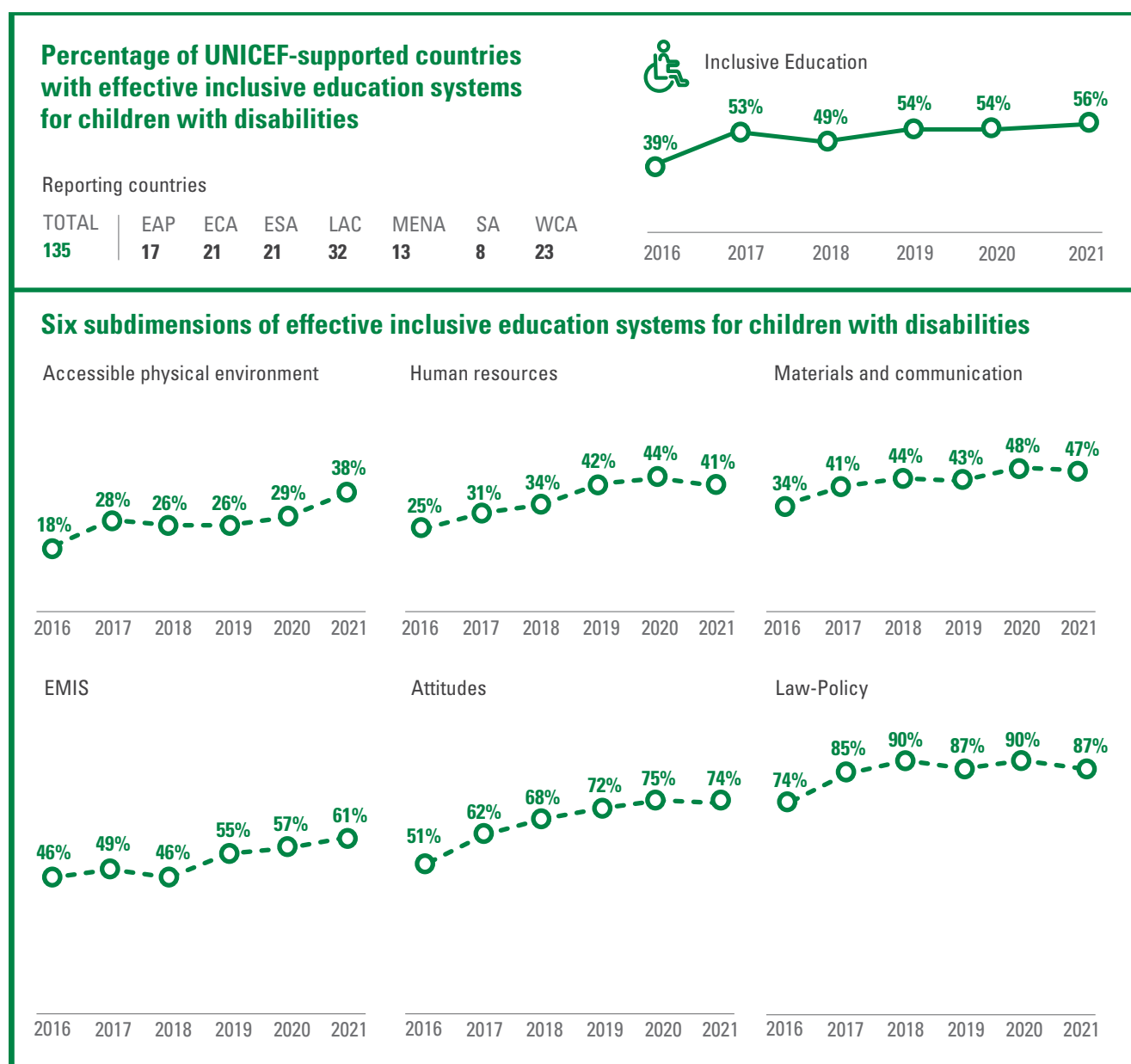


FIGURE A2-5: Systems-strengthening indicators for gender-responsive education systems for access

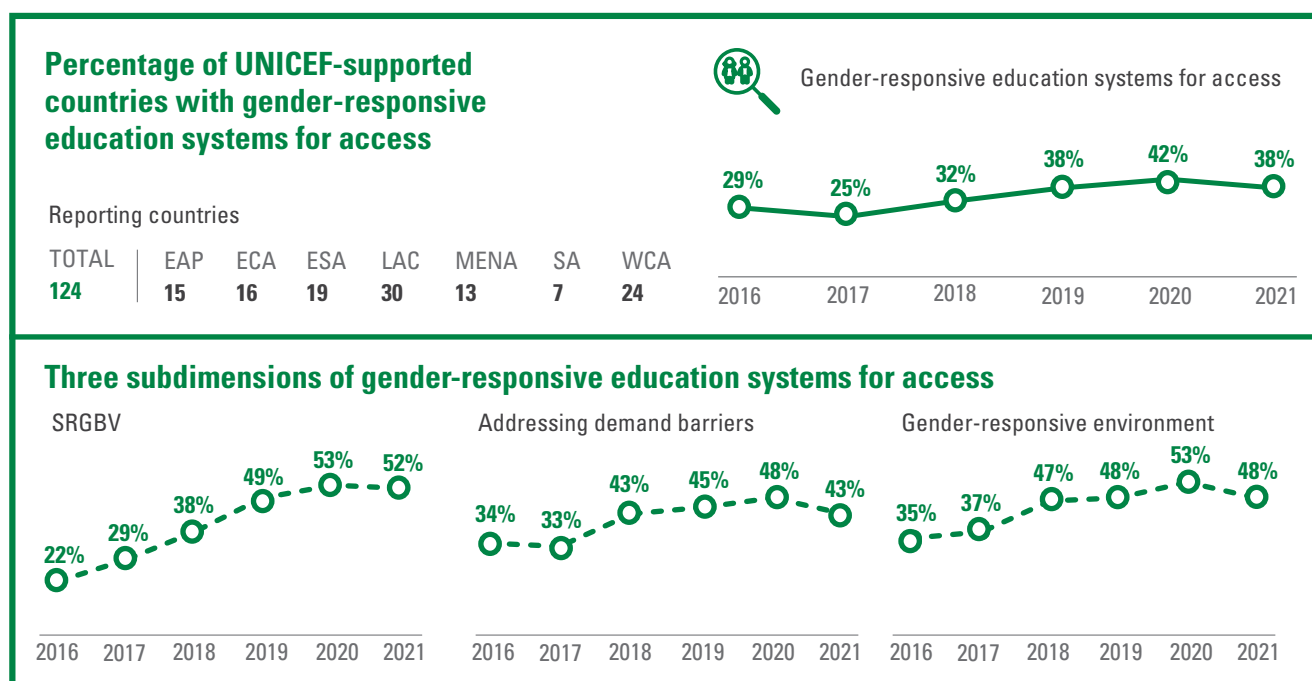


FIGURE A2-6: Systems-strengthening indicators for teacher development

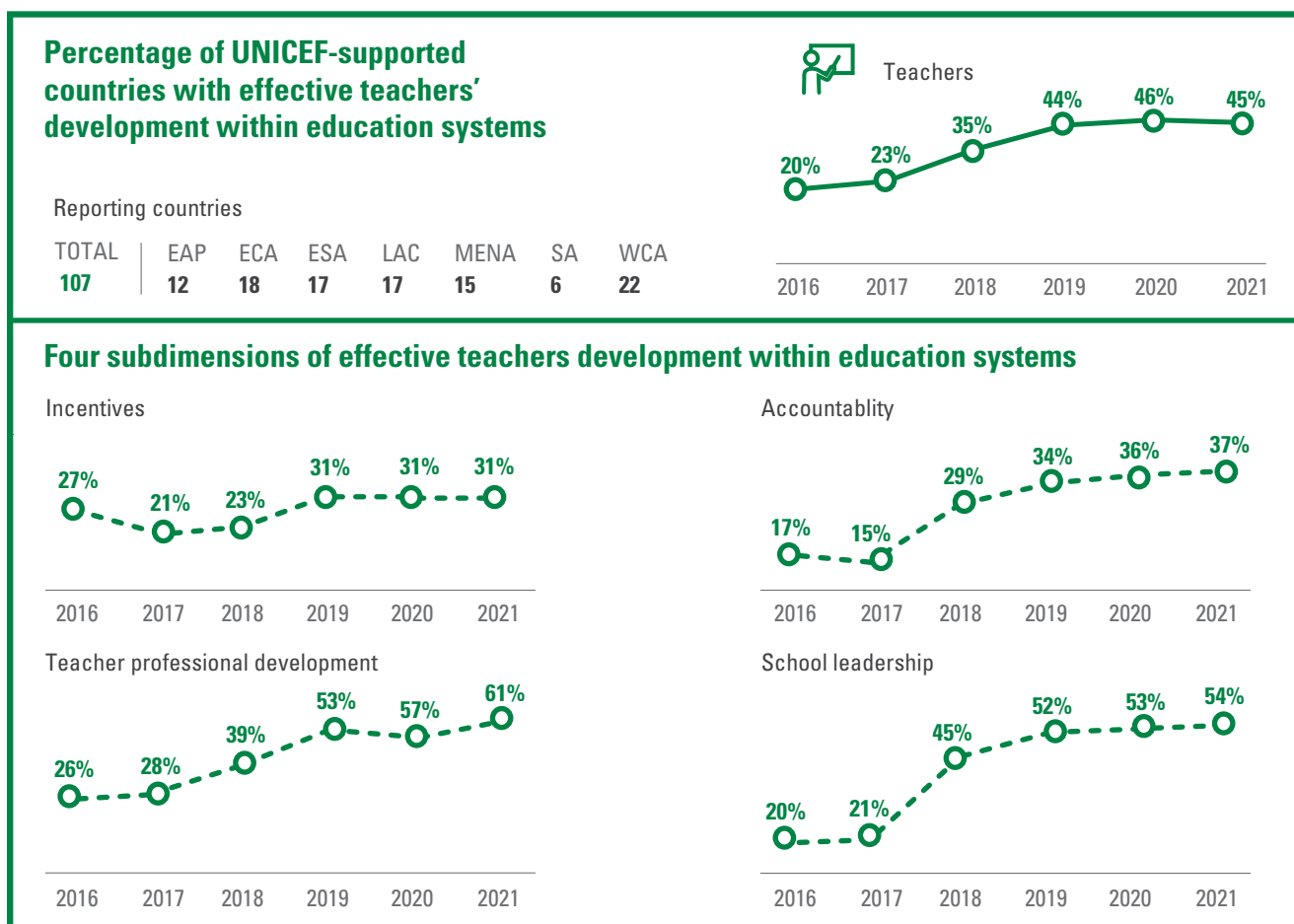


FIGURE A2-7: Systems-strengthening indicators for early childhood education

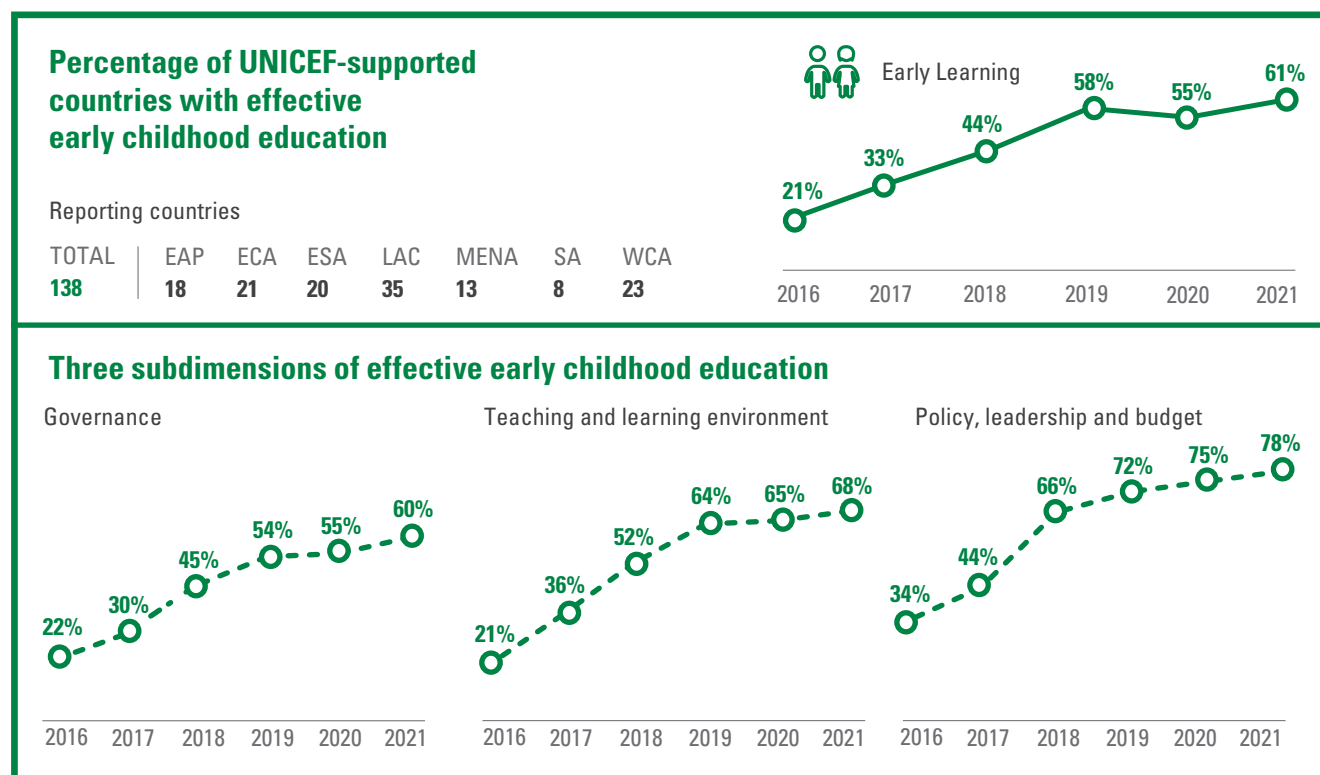


FIGURE A2-8: Systems-strengthening indicators for community participation

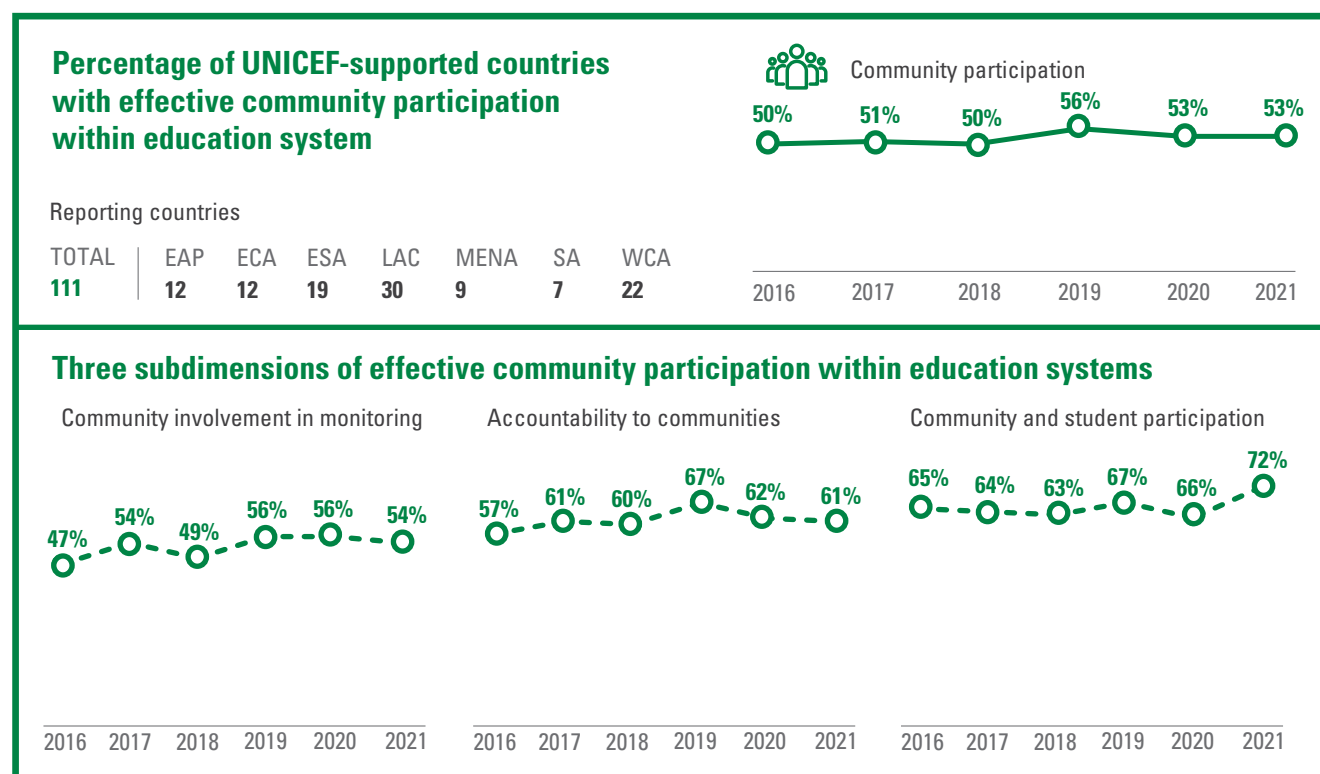


FIGURE A2-9: Systems-strengthening indicators for mother-tongue/multilingual education

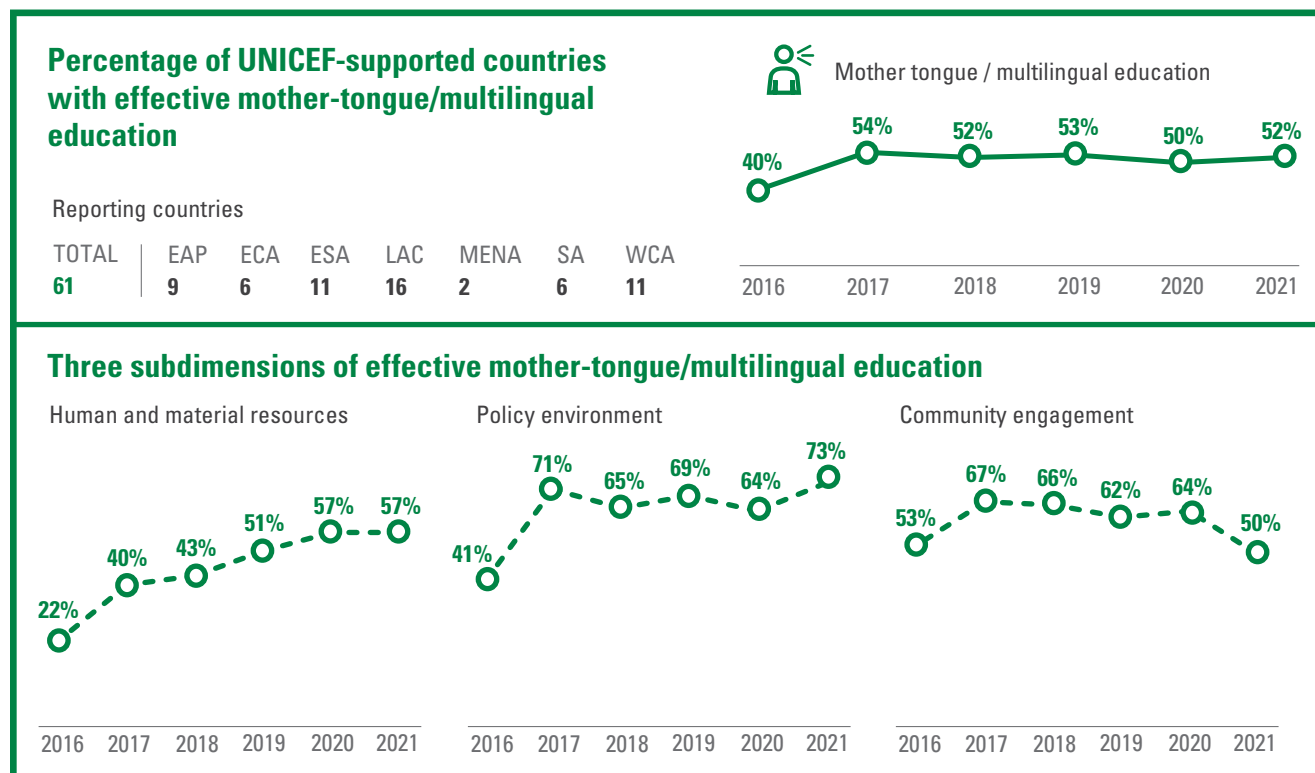


FIGURE A2-10: Systems-strengthening indicators for learning assessment

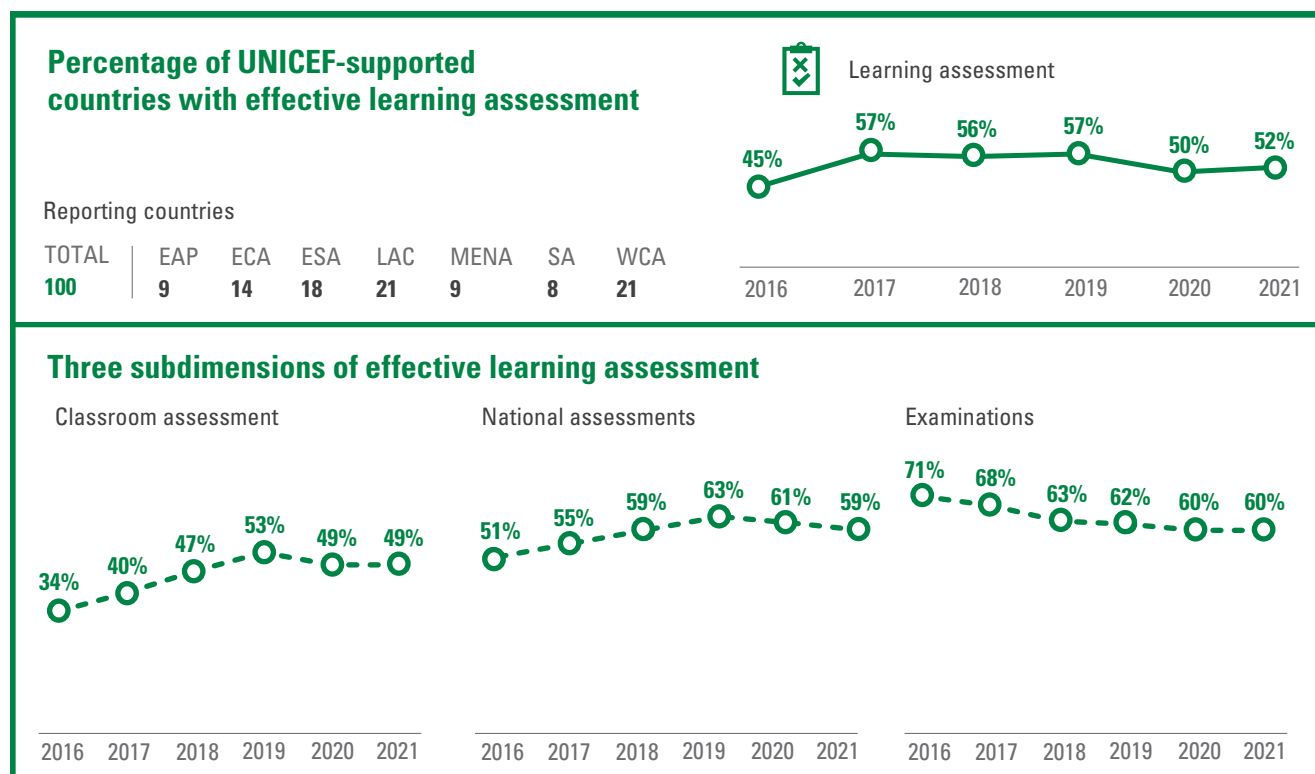
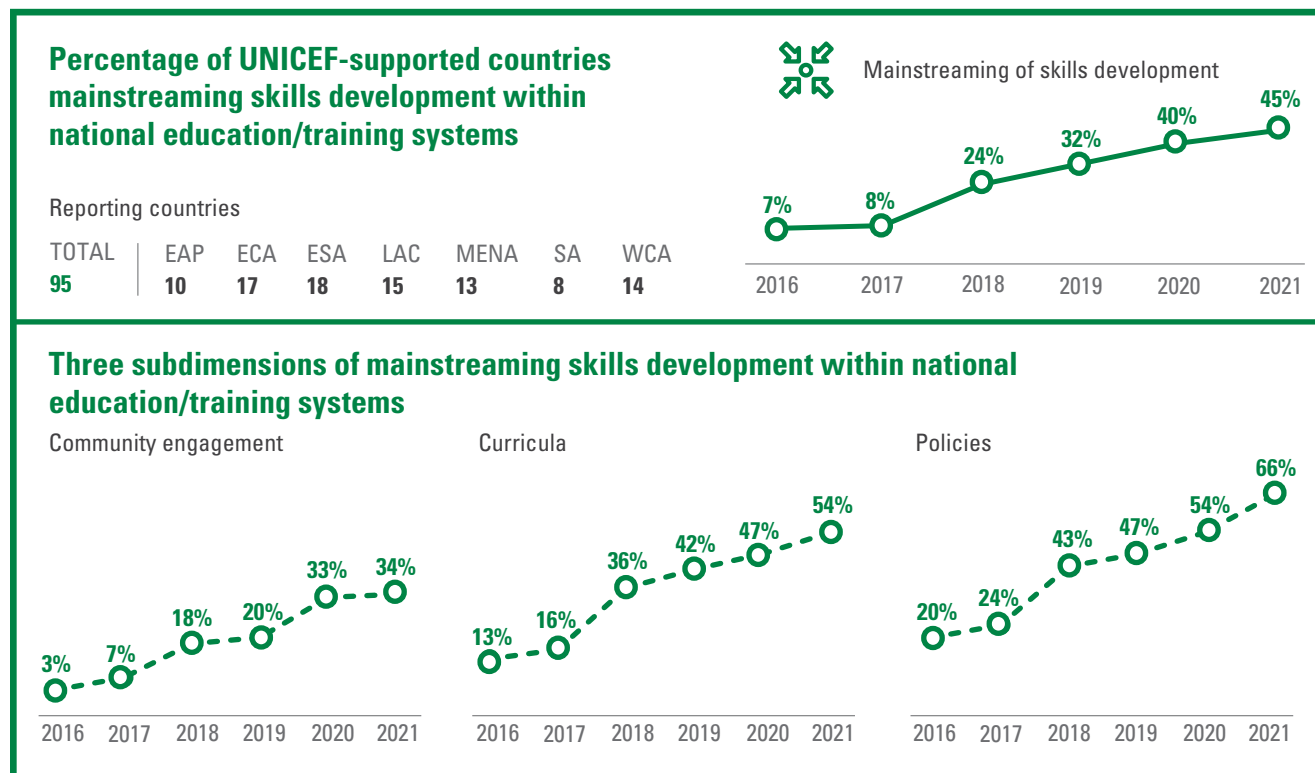




FIGURE A2-11: Systems-strengthening indicators for skills development







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