unicef
for every child

STRATEGY

Every Child Learns

UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030

Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ECE	Early childhood education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross domestic product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children
HIC	High-income country
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICT	Information and communications technology
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LIC	Low-income country
LMIC	Lower-middle-income country
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey(s)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UMIC	Upper-middle-income country
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

The acronyms of the regions used by UNICEF, and used in this presentation, are:

EAP	East Asia and Pacific
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
SA	South Asia
WCA	West and Central Africa

SUMMARY

Every child has the right to learn. Although more children than ever before are enrolled in school, the duty-bearers obligated to realize this right for every child are collectively failing to improve learning, and this failure is deep and broad, and has significant consequences. Many children lack the knowledge and skills to realize their full potential and maximize their contribution to their communities.

The gap between the levels of learning that education systems are providing and what children, communities and economies need, is growing. The breadth and depth of this learning crisis provides the greatest global challenge to preparing children and adolescents for life, work and active citizenship.

The lesson of the learning crisis is clear: the conventional assembly of education inputs is not improving learning outcomes. This presents a fundamental challenge to the way that governments, development partners and communities are managing and supporting education systems. A new, more radical approach that focusses on enhancing learning outcomes is long overdue and forms the basis for this Strategy.

The vision of the Strategy is that '**every child learns**'. In support of this vision, the Strategy adopts the following three goals: (1) equitable access to learning opportunities; (2) improved learning and skills for all; and (3) improved learning in emergencies and fragile contexts. The Strategy outlines the shift towards a greater focus on improving learning outcomes, including supporting the development of the breadth of skills that allow young people to become agile, adaptive learners and citizens, equipped to navigate personal, social, academic, economic and environmental challenges.

For "**every**" child to learn, UNICEF will increasingly promote equity and inclusion. This will include focussing particularly on children excluded on the basis of gender, children with disabilities, the poorest, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and children affected by emergencies. There will also be a shift in focus to expand support for reaching children during their early years (3–5 years old) and during adolescence (10–19 years old). Increased work on pre-primary education will enable countries to benefit from the unparalleled positive return from investing in this area. Providing multiple learning pathways, particularly for adolescents, by introducing and scaling up innovative approaches will enable UNICEF to respond to the increasingly important and critical period in which children transition to adulthood.

UNICEF will also shift emphasis in implementation, on the basis of lessons learned and the organization's comparative advantage, as outlined in the Strategy's programmatic approaches. First, systems strengthening will be (further) enhanced in partnership with governments, non-governmental organizations and other non-state providers. This will include enhanced support to sector-wide analysis, planning, implementation and accountability, with a clear focus on promoting learning and greater equity. Education systems will be supported to further promote and realize their potential as a tool for transforming societies and economies – challenging, rather than replicating, harmful gender and social norms.

At the
current rate,
by 2030,
of the

1.4
billion

school-age children,
in low- and middle-income
countries

420
million

will not learn the
most basic skills
in childhood

825
million

will not acquire
basic secondary-level
skills

Second, the generation and use of data and evidence will be (further) enhanced, particularly related to levels of learning, to generate a better understanding of the children being left behind, and the effectiveness of education systems in meeting the learning needs of every child. Greater and more effective investment will be accorded to strengthening the systematic measurement of learning outcomes for all learners (regardless of pathway). Mobilizing and enabling the wide range of duty-bearers to act on the data and evidence on learning at all levels will be central to the Strategy.

Third, scalable and sustainable innovation will be a key and expanded programmatic approach in the Strategy, including promoting new ways to accelerate learning for vulnerable children and transforming the effectiveness of education systems at scale.

This shift in emphasis will enable UNICEF to leverage significant opportunities over the next decade. With more data and awareness than ever before on the depth of the learning crisis, there is a growing consensus on the urgency for coordinated action, as outlined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which place learning and equity centre stage. There is also more evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to transforming education systems to improve learning. The growth of technology, and the increasingly broad range of partners providing learning opportunities, bring the potential to deliver learning opportunities anywhere, to anyone, at any time.

This strategy confirms the importance that UNICEF accords to education and a commitment to deliver, along with partners, the SDGs for education and the realization of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – so that "**Every Child Learns**".

1 | INTRODUCTION

A child's right to education entails the right to learn. The near universalization of primary schooling is one of the great global achievements of the past 50 years. In the early 1950s, some 50 per cent of primary school-aged children were out of school. As late as 1970, the figure stood at 28 per cent. Today, that figure has come down to 9 per cent.[1] Yet three education challenges stand out today as acute and urgent: (1) inequitable access to education for children and adolescents, (2) the global learning crisis, and (3) education in emergencies and fragile contexts. These three challenges frame this Strategy.

The purpose of the Strategy is to provide a clear vision and strategic framework for UNICEF work in education to 2030. The Strategy sets policy and operational parameters to deliver that vision, while allowing for sufficient flexibility at country level to be led by country context and local education needs. It communicates the importance that UNICEF accords to education and its ambition in delivering, with partners, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for education. It communicates strategic shifts in UNICEF support to education. In addition to existing priorities – primary and secondary education; gender equality; education in emergencies and fragile contexts – this Strategy includes a greater focus on: learning and skills development; equity and inclusion; pre-primary education and education for marginalized adolescents; systems strengthening, the use of data and evidence, and innovation.

The process of Strategy development has been led by a team comprising UNICEF Headquarters staff and Regional Education Advisers, supported by an Internal Reference Group comprising UNICEF staff from different offices and functions. It has been informed by three core inputs: (1) data and analytics,[2] to set a firm foundation in data and evidence and to draw on the best future-thinking on education challenges for the next decade; (2) a survey of UNICEF education work,[3] completed by 279 participants;

and (3) extensive internal and external consultations in 86 countries,[4] including with governments and other key UNICEF partners such as civil society, other United Nations agencies and other multilateral organizations, public and private donors, academia, global education thought leaders and young people.

This Strategy focusses above all on learning. The breadth and depth of the learning crisis provides the greatest global challenge to preparing children for life, work and active citizenship in the 21st century. No task can be more important in the service of the world's children.

"Hope is building a world where the sound of education and enlightenment is louder than the sound of guns."

Middle East and North Africa Youth Consultation

2 | CONTEXT

2.1 GLOBAL CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN

In 2030, some 63 per cent of the world's children will be living in low-income countries (LICs) and in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs), where the vast majority of UNICEF development expenditure occurs.[5]

LICs and LMICs will continue to have very large shares of school-age children and adolescents (43 per cent of the total population in sub-Saharan Africa in 2030, compared with only 20 per cent in high-income countries [HICs][6]), but increasing numbers of young people and decreasing fertility will also lead to greater potential to reap the demographic dividend. Urbanization will place significant pressures on services and create acute risks for the most disadvantaged, but it will also create economies of scale and opportunities for innovations in the delivery of services. And, despite global urbanization, most people in LICs and LMICs will still be living in rural areas in 2030.

FIGURE 1

The poorest countries face three levels of compounding challenges in relation to financing public services for children

High-income countries
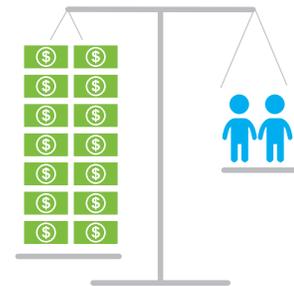
US$21,050
Gross domestic product per capita

34%
Government revenue

20%
Population 3–19 years old

Low-income countries

US$680
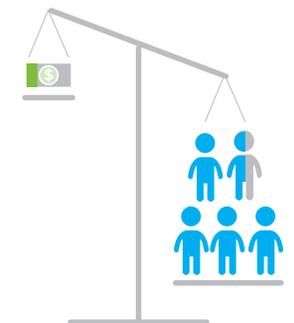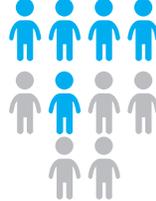Gross domestic product per capita

18%
Government revenue

44%
Population 3–19 years old

In 2030,

63%

of the world's children
will be living in
low-income countries and in
lower-middle-income countries

In spite of economic growth, LICs and LMICs will face three inter-related challenges with respect to financing services for children: (1) lower gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, (2) a smaller proportion of that GDP collected for public spending (lower tax base), and (3) a higher proportion of children as a percentage of the total population. In LICs and LMICs, the vast majority of jobs are and will still be in the informal economy.[7] Women comprise three quarters of young people (aged 15–24) today that are not in employment, education or training.[8]

Significant numbers of countries are facing intense and extended humanitarian crises and disasters. While the number of global deaths from natural disasters has remained relatively stable in recent decades, in the past two decades there has been a significant increase in the number of deaths due to climate change and in the financial and human costs related to environmental degradation.[9]

Access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) continues to increase and will significantly shape learning strategies over the coming decade. However, access to even basic technology is highly uneven between and within countries. Some 1.3 billion people lack basic access to electricity.[10] Only 32 per cent of primary schools in LICs have access to electricity.[11] In developed countries, 81 per cent of the population (94 per cent of young people aged 15–24) use the Internet compared with 41 per cent in developing countries and only 17 per cent in least-developed countries (14 per cent of women and 21 per cent of men).[12] The development and growth of ICTs in education have potentially radical implications for the future of learning, and not just for richer countries and communities. At the heart of technology is the potential to deliver anything, anywhere, to anyone, at any time. Innovative technologies such as adaptive learning, gaming, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented realities have the potential to change the way we learn. They also put new demands on education systems (e.g., connectivity, curriculum, evolving roles for teachers) and on learners (e.g., a higher premium on digital skills). The challenge for

UNICEF and partners is to support the safe, affordable and effective application of ICTs in education, in ways that improve the learning outcomes of the most deprived and marginalized children. This applies both to formal education systems and to learning outside of the classroom.

"Climate change and air pollution are having a devastating impact on children's learning."

Viet Nam Country Consultation

"We have a 19th century education system that does not facilitate 21st century learning."

Latin America and Caribbean Youth Consultation

At least 175 million pre-primary
school-age children and 262 million
primary and secondary school-age
children – one in five –are
still not accessing education.

2.2 EDUCATION CONTEXT FOR CHILDREN

2.2.1 EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT AND CONTRIBUTOR TO MULTIPLE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Education is a basic human right – universal, inalienable and indivisible. This is underscored in human rights treaties and international agreements; most notably, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides the foundation for UNICEF work in education as in other sectors.

Education contributes to many of the SDGs. It reduces poverty, drives sustainable economic growth, prevents inequality and injustice, leads to better health – particularly for women and children – and it helps to protect the planet. Education empowers children and adolescents. But the economic and social benefits of education depend on generating learning outcomes, and not just getting children into school. Education challenges are greater in LICs and LMICs, but even in upper-middle-income countries (UMICs) and HICs, where access is universal or almost universal, significant challenges remain in terms of learning and equity.

2.2.2 CHALLENGES IN ACCESS, INCLUDING STALLED PRIMARY COMPLETION

With respect to access and retention, since 2000, some 75 million more children have been enrolled in pre-primary education, 89 million more in primary education and 138 million more in secondary education.[13] Nevertheless, at least 175 million pre-primary school-age children[14] and 262 million primary and secondary school-age children – one in five – are still not accessing education.[15] To reach universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education in 2030, on average, countries will need to enrol 5.7 times the number of children currently in pre-primary, 1.1 times the number in primary and 2 times the number of children in secondary education. The access challenge is greatest in sub-Saharan Africa where projected population growth is highest.

To reach universal pre-primary, primary and secondary education in 2030, sub-Saharan Africa will need to enrol 3.3 times the number of children in total that it does today.[16]

Primary completion rates have levelled off across the world, most notably in LICs, where they have not improved since 2009, and remain around 66 per cent *(Figure 2)*.[17] In some cases, progress has even been reversed. Raising primary completion rates will require strategies for universal education in the poorest countries, as well as targeted strategies in all countries, to reach the most disadvantaged, focussing on access, retention and completion. It will also require different approaches.

Patterns of education financing and provision are also shifting in UNICEF programme countries. Private schools are growing in their share of service provision, including in LICs. In 2017, they constituted 42 per cent of pre-primary enrolments, 17 per cent of primary and 27 per cent of secondary enrolments globally.[18] The growth of the non-state sector brings both risks and opportunities, which partner governments – as duty-bearers for the right to education and guarantors of free basic education – must manage carefully.

> **"The private sector is a major player in provisioning of education in many states. From a government perspective the role is one of regulation and accreditation."**
>
> India Country Consultation

FIGURE 2

Primary completion rate

━━ High-income   ━━ Upper-middle-income   ━━ Lower-middle-income   ━━ Low-income

Reduced gap

Progress achieved between 2000 and 2009 has stalled (and in some cases reversed).

In the poorest countries, approximately

40% of children

are still failing to complete primary education
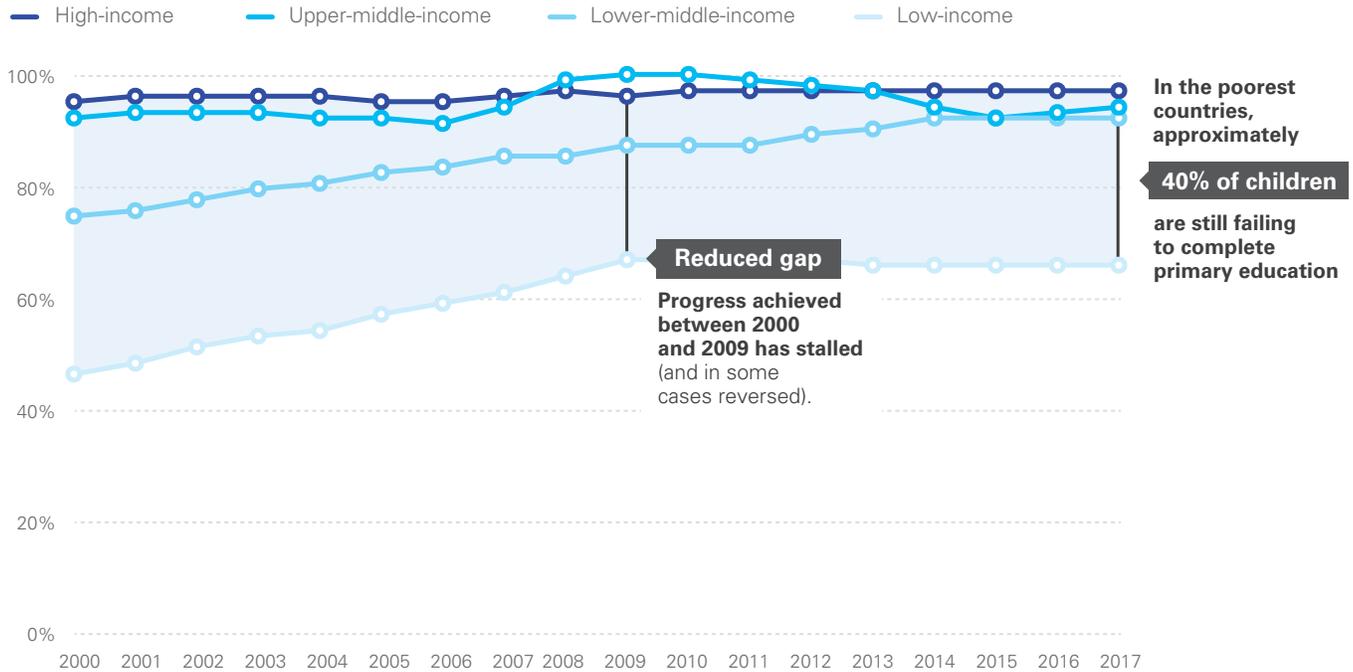
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

2.2.3 THE LEARNING CRISIS

Addressing the learning crisis is the top priority of this Strategy. Learning and skills development must be the point of everything that we do. Schooling does not mean learning, and for the first time in history there are more non-learners in school than out of school. Some 387 million primary school-age children and 230 million lower-secondary school-age adolescents are not achieving minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.[19]

At current rates, by 2030, of the 1.4 billion school-age children in low- and middle-income countries, 420 million will not be on track to learn the most basic skills in childhood, and 825 million will not be on track to acquire the basic secondary-level skills they need to succeed in life, school and work.[20] One billion young people will enter the workforce in the next decade.[21] In 2030, some 76 per cent of employment in LICs will still be in the informal economy, and 62 per cent in LMICs.[22] This reinforces the importance

of developing *foundational skills* (such as basic literacy and numeracy), and *transferable skills* (such as a problem-solving, negotiation and critical thinking), starting in the early years.

"There is a large gap between what students are learning and what the job market is looking for. The current curricula are outdated."

South Asia Youth Consultation

387 million

primary school-age children

+

230 million

lower secondary school-age
adolescents

not achieving minimum
proficiency levels in reading
and mathematics.

2.2.4 EQUITY AND INCLUSION

With respect to equity, access to education and learning remains highly uneven, including in many middle- and high-income countries. Significant compounding disparities exist in access and learning in relation to wealth, location, gender and inequity of education investment. Other dimensions, rarely measured or reported, can be associated with even larger equity gaps, for example disability, mother-tongue instruction, ethnicity, displacement and subnational differences. Half of all children with disabilities in developing countries are excluded from school.[23]

FIGURE 3

Education attendance rates in Serbia and Serbia Roma settlements
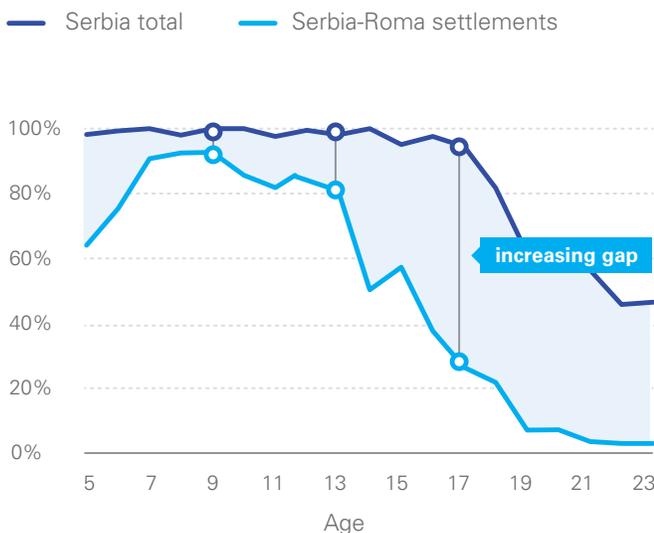
LICs spend 46 per cent of their public education budgets on the 10 per cent most educated students.[24] Since the poorest children have much less access to higher levels of education, on average, LICs spend only 10 per cent of their public education budgets on the poorest quintile and LMICs spend only 14 per cent on the poorest quintile.[25] UMICs also face significant equity gaps. In Serbia, the national average proportion of children in school is high at all levels – 99 per cent at primary and lower secondary and 88 per cent at upper secondary – but these high levels of enrolment mask significant disparities in access for Roma children.[26] 'Leaving no one behind' is a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

With respect to gender, three outstanding challenges frame this Strategy, consistent with the UNICEF Gender Action Plan:[27] (1) girls' education; (2) gender parity, focussing on girls or boys, according to context; and (3) gender transformation, maximizing education's potential to be gender transformative and improve equitable outcomes for girls. Only 19 per cent of LICs and 17 per cent of LMICs have achieved parity. Girls are disadvantaged in 62 per cent of LICs and boys are disadvantaged in 63 per cent of LMICs.[28] Boys are also more likely to be disadvantaged in UMICs and HICs. This highlights the need for country-specific strategies. Gender transformation is a universal challenge. Gender norms, combined with inadequate systems of child protection and lack of access to health services, magnify gender inequality in education, especially for the most marginalized girls. Some 12 million girls each year are married in childhood[29] and pregnant girls can be unfairly and unlawfully excluded from schools.

"UNICEF should always focus on the most disadvantaged and hardest to reach children."

Quote from survey

2.2.5 FOCUS ON PRE-PRIMARY (AGE 3–5)

The world is facing a learning crisis and the roots of this crisis are in children's earliest years. Quality early childhood education (ECE) is one of the best investments available to governments for addressing this challenge. Preschool education benefits children, families, education systems and societies in the long term. Despite the proven benefits of preschool education, only half of the world's preschool-age children receive this early benefit; and in most countries, children also lack the early learning interactions in their homes they need to enter school ready to succeed. In LICs, 78 per cent are missing out on ECE opportunities.[30]

Challenges to quality ECE include: lack of high-level political commitment to prioritize ECE in education sector plans and strategies; inadequate budget allocations by governments and donors; limited institutional capacity to plan, implement and assure quality at scale in ECE programmes; limited coordination and coherence among partners at national and global levels to advance ECE; and poor linkages between homes and schools in the early childhood period.

FIGURE 4

Factors of exclusion from early childhood education programmes

Poverty

Richest children are 7 times more likely to attend ECE programmes than

Poorest children
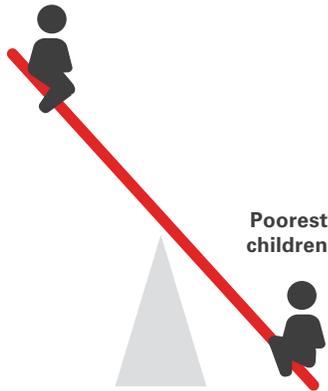
Mother's education

Children of mothers with secondary education and above are 5 times more likely to attend ECE programmes than

Children of mothers with primary education and below
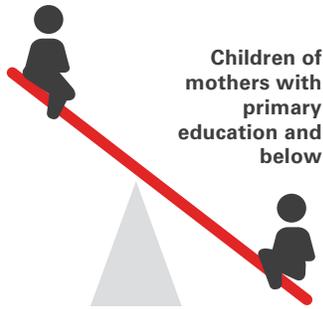
Residence

Children living in urban areas are 2.5 times more likely to attend ECE programmes than

Children living in rural areas
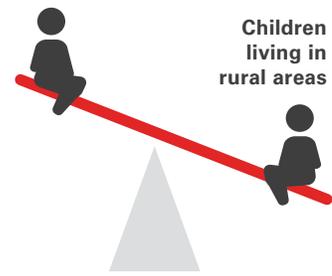
Source: Comparisons by UNICEF, based on available data from UNICEF MICS global databases, 2010–2018.

2.2.6 FOCUS ON MARGINALIZED ADOLESCENTS (AGE 10–19)

The global completion rate at lower secondary level for the poorest children is 54 per cent, but in six out of seven UNICEF regions, the majority of the poorest quintile adolescents have *never* attended primary school, or have dropped out of primary school, or are still in primary school.[31]

Globally, 74 per cent of the poorest quintile adolescent girls, and 68 per cent of boys, have never set foot in a secondary school. In sub-Saharan Africa, it is 93 per cent of girls and 90 per cent of boys.[32] Meeting the needs of secondary school-age children will therefore require a focus on strengthening multiple education pathways, including catch-up education, vocational training, apprenticeships, and formal primary and secondary education.

FIGURE 5

Educational attainment of poorest quintile adolescents (age 10–19)
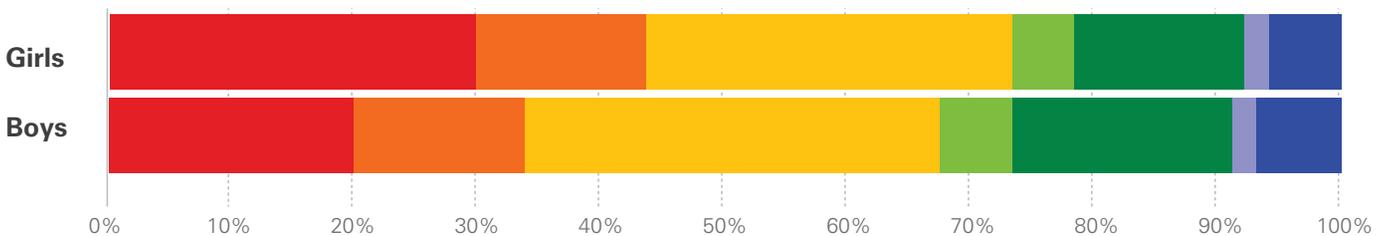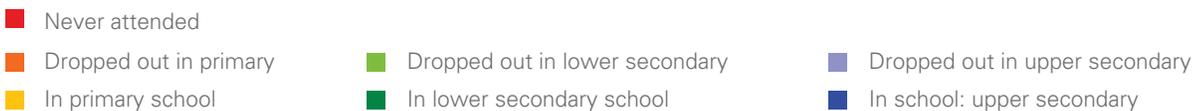
■ Never attended

■ Dropped out in primary   ■ Dropped out in lower secondary   ■ Dropped out in upper secondary

■ In primary school   ■ In lower secondary school   ■ In school: upper secondary

Gender norms, combined with inadequate systems of child protection and lack of access to health services, magnify gender inequality in education, especially for the most marginalized girls and boys.

2.2.7 EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS

In 2016, there were more than 75 million children aged 3–18 in urgent need of educational support in 35 crisis-affected countries.[33] Only 50 per cent of refugee children have access to primary education and only 22 per cent of refugee adolescents are in lower-secondary school.[34] Comparable data are not available for internally displaced persons, who represent a far larger group of displaced people and are an important responsibility for UNICEF. Lack of education services, as well as reduced demand due to loss of family income, contribute to these low rates of enrolment.

Children in conflict-affected countries are 30 per cent less likely to complete primary school and 50 per cent less likely to complete lower-secondary school.[35] Crises are also rolling back gains, as observed for example through the Ebola epidemics in West and Central Africa or attacks on girls' education in Afghanistan. By 2030, more than 80 per cent of the world's poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.[36]

"How do we make the invisible visible … the refugees and children affected by armed conflict?"

Philippines Country Consultation

Girls in conflict-affected countries are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls in non-conflict-affected contexts.[37] In addition to conflict, natural disasters lead to loss of school days, resulting in cumulative deficits that are detrimental to education outcomes and the well-being of children.

There is a vicious cycle between education, inequality and violent conflict. Inequality in multiple dimensions is associated with an increased likelihood of violent conflict. Violent conflict is in turn associated with loss of schooling and with education inequality. Schools, teachers and students are often the target of violence, including gender-based violence. Between 2013 and 2017, there were more than 12,700 attacks registered, harming more than 21,000 students and educators in at least 70 countries.[38]

75
million children
aged 3–18 in urgent need of educational support in 35 crisis-affected countries.

2016 data

Although education as a percentage of total humanitarian funding has increased slightly, it remains very low at 3.9 per cent – significantly below that dedicated to health (10.6 per cent), nutrition (7.7 per cent), and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (6.5 per cent).[39] UNICEF is committed to filling the gap of humanitarian needs that no other partner or government can address – access and funding notwithstanding. In many crises, UNICEF is the largest provider of education in emergencies in humanitarian response, working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners.

2.3 UNICEF AND EDUCATION

UNICEF education expenditure in 2018 was US$1.2 billion, compared with approximately US$500 million per year for the period 2006–2010. The increase during recent years has been driven principally by increased resources for emergencies. Fifty per cent of education spending in 2018 was in only eight countries, including 40 per cent in five countries affected by the Syrian crisis.[40]

UNICEF has the largest global education presence of any international agency. But the proportion of education-specific staff within UNICEF has decreased over the last 10 years and is low, as a share of total social sector staff, compared with peer organizations *(see also section 4.2.2)*.

In humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF supports large-scale service delivery, including strengthening host government education services accommodating additional children and

By 2030, more than

80%

of the world's poor
will live in fragile and
conflict-affected contexts.

adolescents. Between 2014 and 2018, UNICEF provided education support to 43.5 million children in emergencies. In non-emergency contexts, where UNICEF resources are often more limited relative to government resources, UNICEF works to strengthen national education systems to support the achievement of results for children at scale, with a particular focus on the most excluded children. Since 2006, the percentage of UNICEF education expenditure on system-strengthening activities has more than doubled, from less than 20 per cent to 40 per cent.[41]

UNICEF places strong emphasis on intersectoral working. Education staff work in close collaboration with colleagues working on health, nutrition, child protection, WASH, social policy, disability, gender, adolescent development and Communication for Development. This includes using schools as an integrated service platform to deliver a range of interventions and outcomes for children, in development and humanitarian settings *(see 'Programmatic Principle 3' in section 3.2.2)*. Intersectoral approaches help address causes of low enrolment and poor education outcomes that lie beyond the education sector.

UNICEF is fully committed to the reforms of the United Nations development system and to implementation of General Assembly Resolution 72/279.[42] UNICEF embraces the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is fully committed to strengthening the collective approach of the United Nations development system in support of the SDGs. The ambition of the SDGs calls for comprehensive and cross-cutting approaches to sustainable development, drawing on stronger integrated planning, strategic thinking and policy advice, as well as new partnerships across public, private, civil society and multilateral actors.

As part of the development of this Strategy, UNICEF conducted a survey of its staff, government counterparts and other partners, to ask where it should focus its education activities over the period to 2030, and what its strengths and weaknesses are as an organization. Respondents identified the following thematic areas where UNICEF should play a global leadership role *(see Annex 1 for a summary of survey results)*:[43]

→ **pre-primary and primary education:** including the development of foundational skills in the early years, such as basic literacy and numeracy;

→ **inclusive education:** for children with disabilities and other vulnerable children such as the extreme poor, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrant children and girls;

→ **education sector analysis, planning and strategy development:** working with governments and with international partners including the Global Partnership for Education, the World Bank, bilateral donors, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; and its institutes) and other United Nations agencies.

Respondents felt that UNICEF should engage less in learning materials procurement and provision (except in emergencies), upper-secondary education, technical and vocational education and training / job-specific skills development. Although close to 80 per cent of respondents identified UNICEF as an established global leader in education, the survey also highlighted the need to make changes to the way UNICEF operates, including adopting greater focus and prioritization in programming, simplifying internal processes, putting more emphasis on evidence and the use of data, and investing more in technical staff, in particular for data collection and analysis, sector planning and policy dialogue, and for key thematic areas.

In addition to the survey conducted in support of this Strategy, we also conducted an extensive consultation exercise, seeking views from external partners and UNICEF colleagues on a short consultation draft of this Strategy. We received input from 86 countries and 1,329 participants, including over 500 from ministers and officials in programme country governments – our primary counterparts. We are extremely grateful for responses to the consultation process, some of which are quoted in this Strategy. They have helped shape and significantly enrich the Strategy.

BOX 1

Learning from the past:
Lessons from previous UNICEF work in education and other sectors

We draw the following conclusions from reviews and evaluations of previous UNICEF education work:

→ strengthen fundraising efforts for education, with a particular emphasis on UNICEF regions with lower spending;

→ continue the trend to support more education systems strengthening;

→ further strengthen evidence-based programming;

→ ensure that pilot projects are systematically evaluated, in particular by measuring learning outcomes, and then scaled up or discontinued depending on the evaluation results;

→ recognize and address both girls' and boys' disadvantages, where they exist;

→ build on positive efforts undertaken to achieve and demonstrate results and impact in education;

→ we have not always placed learning at the centre of our programming and technical support: we need to ensure that learning outcomes are at the heart of everything we do in education.

We draw the following conclusions from reviews and evaluations of previous work organization-wide, notably the evaluation of the previous UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017:

→ increase investment in disaggregated data to help monitor inequality and discrimination consistent with children's rights legislation;

→ intensify the strengthening of national systems to address the most disadvantaged children;

→ scale up equity-focussed programming;

→ intensify community engagement and social mobilization to address demand-side barriers to the fulfilment of children's rights, including damaging social norms;

→ support the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in decisions that affect them;

→ invest in risk-informed programming and systems strengthening to prevent or mitigate the impact of humanitarian crises;

→ invest in integrated/multisectoral approaches to address underlying causes of children's rights violations;

→ invest in gender analysis and gender equality programming;

→ strengthen partnerships within the United Nations system and with other partners, including the private sector;

→ focus on cost-effectiveness and on simplifying internal processes.

Only

half

of the world's preschool-age
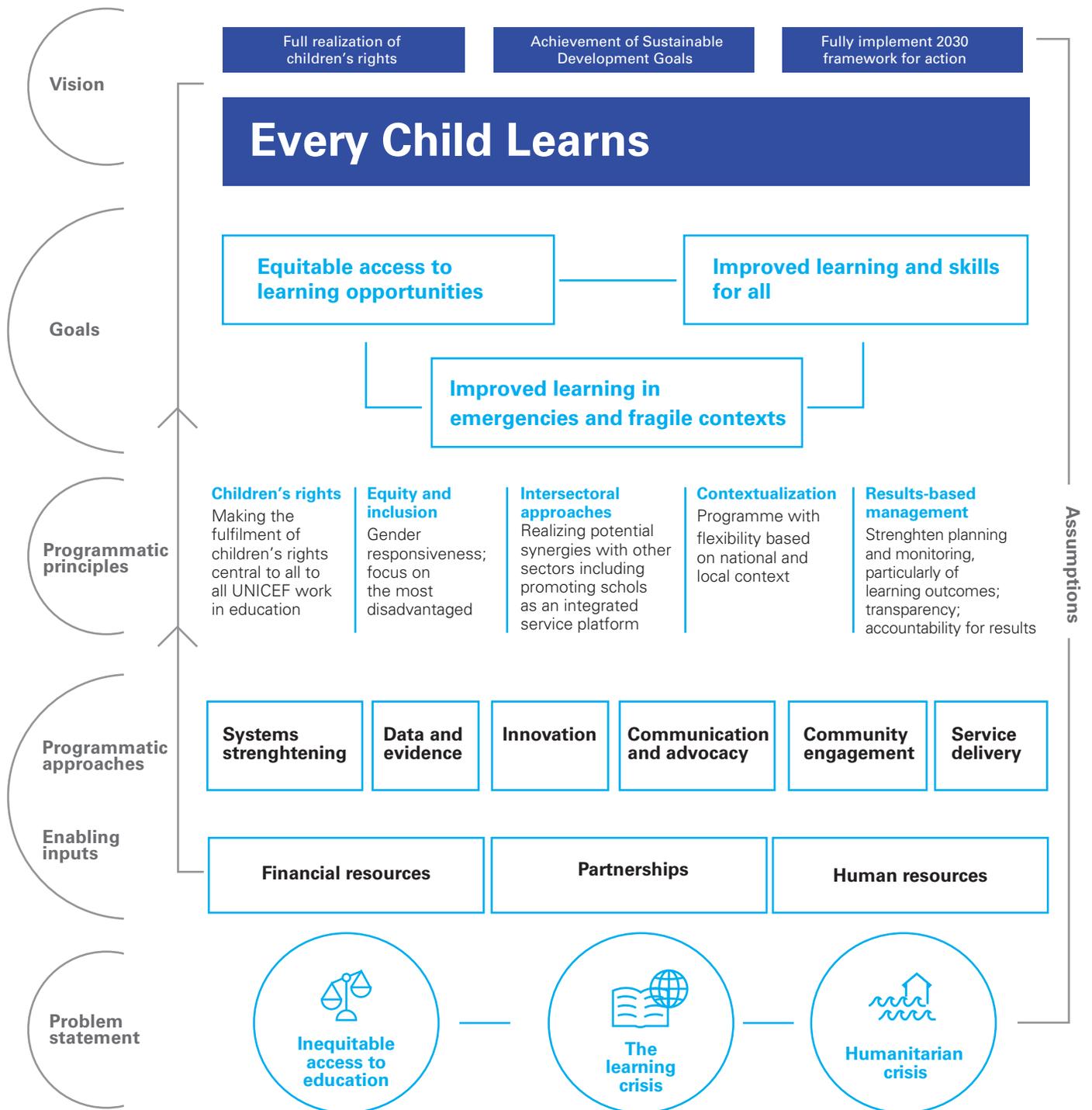children are enrolled
in pre-primary education.

3 | STRATEGIC FOCUS
3.1 SUMMARY

The vision of this Strategy *(see Figure 6)* is that "**every child learns**". More fully expressed: "Improved learning and skills development for boys and girls from early childhood to adolescence, in particular for the most marginalized and those affected by humanitarian situations."[44] We will pursue this vision with every ounce of resource, commitment and professional dedication that we can muster.

Key frameworks

This vision is aligned with and informed by key frameworks and agreements to which UNICEF is a signatory, and which guide our policy and operations. These include:

→ **Children's rights:** most notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; children's rights and associated principles – such as non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability – are at the core of the UNICEF mandate and mission;

→ **Sustainable Development Goals:** most notably SDG 4 (education), but also the many other SDGs to which education is a major contributor;

→ **Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 Framework for Action:**[45] which set a global road map for the realization of the education-related SDGs to 2030.

Goals

The Strategy adopts three goals, corresponding with the perceived greatest needs and UNICEF's comparative advantage:

→ **Equitable access** to learning opportunities;

→ **Improved learning and skills** for all;

→ **Improved learning and protection for children in emergencies and fragile contexts:** (1) prevention (resilient systems), and (2) response (education in emergencies).

Programmatic principles

Underpinning the Strategy are five programmatic principles:

→ **Children's rights:** making the fulfilment of children's rights central to our advocacy, policy dialogue, programming and accountabilities.

→ **Equity and inclusion:** gender responsiveness; focus on the most disadvantaged (e.g., the poorest children, girls, children with disabilities, minorities, displaced children); address household financial barriers.

→ **Intersectoral approaches:** working with other sectors (e.g., health, nutrition, water and sanitation, social policy, child protection); using schools as an integrated service platform.

→ **Contextualization:** programming at country level with flexibility based on country context (local education needs; UNICEF comparative advantage; division of labour with others).

→ **Results-based management:** measurement, particularly of learning outcomes; transparency; accountability for results.

These principles will support the implementation of six core programmatic approaches outlined in the Strategy: (1) systems strengthening, (2) data and evidence, (3) innovation, (4) communications and advocacy, (5) community engagement, and (6) service delivery.

The implementation of the six core programmatic approaches is in turn supported by three main enabling inputs: financial resources, human resources, and partnerships.

FIGURE 6
Strategic framework for UNICEF education work

Vision

| Full realization of children's rights | Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals | Fully implement 2030 framework for action |

Every Child Learns

Goals

Equitable access to learning opportunities

Improved learning and skills for all

Improved learning in emergencies and fragile contexts

Programmatic principles

Children's rights
Making the fulfilment of children's rights central to all to all UNICEF work in education

Equity and inclusion
Gender responsiveness; focus on the most disadvantaged

Intersectoral approaches
Realizing potential synergies with other sectors including promoting schols as an integrated service platform

Contextualization
Programme with flexibility based on national and local context

Results-based management
Strenghten planning and monitoring, particularly of learning outcomes; transparency; accountability for results

Assumptions

Programmatic approaches

| Systems strenghtening | Data and evidence | Innovation | Communication and advocacy | Community engagement | Service delivery |

Enabling inputs

| Financial resources | Partnerships | Human resources |

Problem statement

Inequitable access to education

The learning crisis

Humanitarian crisis

3.2 GOALS

3.2.1 EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

UNICEF will work across the life cycle from early childhood to adolescence. Increasing our work in pre-primary education and early learning will constitute a strategic shift for this Strategy period, as will education for marginalized adolescents. These strategic shifts will complement our existing core work in primary and secondary education.

To address the Strategy's equitable access goal UNICEF will:

→ Work with partners (e.g., UNESCO, Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank) to strengthen national Education Management Information Systems (EMIS). We will help identify out-of-school children and adolescents and those most at risk of being out of school, and contribute to the development and implementation of policies and strategies to reach them. UNICEF support will include addressing ethical risks related to child data privacy and protection.

→ As part of our increasing focus on systems strengthening, UNICEF will advocate for 20 per cent allocation of national budgets to education, and for donors to contribute more to education, particularly at pre-primary level. We will advocate for, and support the implementation of, pro-poor public expenditure, and work with governments to improve the quality of public expenditure – more equitable, more efficient, more effective.

→ As recommended by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, UNICEF will actively promote – with governments and partners – the principle of progressive universalism that was adopted initially in the health sector as a way to make rational spending decisions in constrained financial contexts. This means giving initial priority in the allocation of public funding to lower levels of education, and gradually increasing allocations to higher levels when coverage is close to universal at lower levels, with a focus on the poorest and most vulnerable children *(see Figure 7)*.[47]

→ UNICEF will help address the household-level financial and social barriers that contribute to low enrolment, drop out and poor outcomes by supporting governments to strengthen their social protection systems for greater impact on child well-being. In line with the forthcoming UNICEF Social Protection Programme Framework, this includes, inter alia: (a) generating evidence on how well the social protection system works for children, and identifying gaps and options to improve impact; (b) expanding and improving cash transfers for children including, where appropriate, education scholarships and grants; (c) strengthening links between cash transfers and access to services; (d) improving access to childcare and programmes that support adolescent employability, and (e) strengthening the social welfare workforce and direct outreach to families.

Programmatic Principle 1. Children's rights

Thirty years ago, world leaders made a historic commitment to the world's children by adopting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. It provides the foundation for all UNICEF work, including in education, supported by associated rights frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the International Covenant on Economic and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This Strategy sees children's rights both as a programming principle – to guide education programming decisions and accountabilities for UNICEF and our partners – and as an outcome allied to the vision of this Strategy.

FIGURE 7

Illustration of the principle of progressive universalism

See text for details
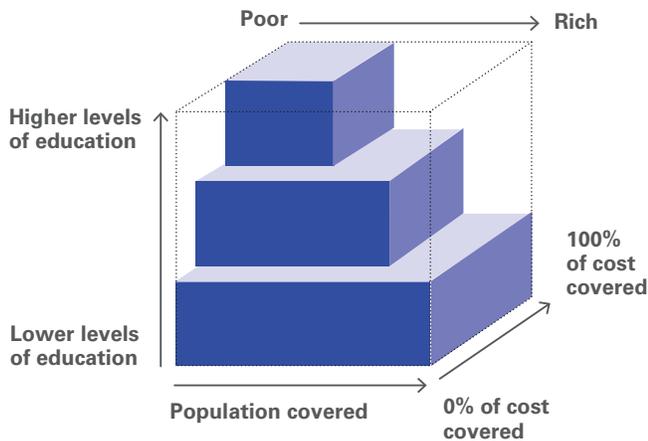
Source: The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (nd).[46]

"Pre-primary education is fundamental and the foundation of learning. The focus on pre-primary is essential."

Jamaica Country Consultation

→ UNICEF will prioritize pre-primary education over the coming decade. We will aim to spend at least 10 per cent of our education financing on pre-primary education and urge others to do likewise. We will work with partners to prioritize at least one year of pre-primary education in every country's education sector plan, with a target of 10 per cent of education budget allocated to pre-primary education. We will enhance national and subnational technical capacity to develop costed pre-primary action plans and implement quality pre-primary education at scale. We will work to ensure linkages with the first '1,000 days', including caregiving practices in the home and community, and services that advance health, nutrition, protection and early learning goals in a coordinated manner. We will work to improve the enabling environment and catalyse partnerships for early childhood education.

→ Acknowledging that needs will differ significantly according to country context, UNICEF will adopt three core strategies for secondary-age (adolescent) education:

→ supporting quality formal primary education (for those currently in primary education and for those who never attended school but are still age-eligible to enter primary) and secondary education, with a particular focus on reaching the most marginalized adolescents;

→ strengthening non-formal education and alternative delivery models (e.g., catch-up classes, bridging and accelerated education, second-chance education, skills development training and apprenticeships), including the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal learning outcomes;

→ advancing adolescent girls' secondary education, learning and skills development (including in science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM]), as part of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan targeted priorities;[48] this will be complemented by cross-sectoral work addressing child marriage, harmful social norms and gender-based violence in and around schools.

→ To further address transitions to decent work, UNICEF will partner with others to ensure continuity of services as young people transition from childhood into adulthood. UNICEF will engage with partners (e.g., World Bank, International Labour Organization, UNESCO, United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA]) to ensure that supply- and demand-side interventions work together to enhance adolescent and youth skills for employability and transition into decent work. In case such services are not available and key partners are not present, as for example in humanitarian contexts, UNICEF might choose to fill the gap and engage directly to ensure continuity of services for the most vulnerable young people.

→ UNICEF will adopt a priority focus on the most marginalized, including the extreme poor, children in humanitarian situations, displaced and refugee communities, children with disabilities, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and girls. We will campaign for the elimination of stigma and discrimination against children with disabilities. We will contribute to the training of teachers in inclusive pedagogy, promote accessible public buildings, especially schools, and assist in the provision of assistive devices and accessible learning materials through school-based programmes.

Only
50%

of children with disabilities in developing countries go to school

→ UNICEF will adopt three core strategies with respect to gender: (1) girls' education; (2) gender parity: focussing on girls or boys, according to context; and (3) gender transformation. We will advocate for, and support the implementation of, gender-responsive budgeting and education sector planning, and interventions for the transformation of gender norms in education systems (policies, curricula, teacher education, teacher deployment, monitoring and evaluation). Education must become a tool for transforming societies and economies – challenging, rather than replicating, harmful social norms and stereotypes.

"We need to focus on gender mainstreaming in education institutions as much as possible to try to build more spaces for healthy relationships in the future."

Middle East and North Africa Youth Consultation

→ UNICEF will work with governments, and particularly ministries of education, to help them engage with private financing and provision of education services, including supporting regulatory frameworks and enabling environments that prioritize learning and equity in both state and non-state provision, including faith-based schools. This is consistent with human rights law which states that

Programmatic Principle 2. Equity and inclusion

The Strategy period will see a priority focus on equity and inclusion – an area at the heart of the UNICEF mandate and its comparative advantage as an organization. Equity and inclusion are inextricably linked to a rights-based approach. For UNICEF, this means focussing on children excluded on the basis of gender, children with disabilities, the poorest, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrant and displaced children, and children affected by emergencies. Equity and inclusion will be central to UNICEF advocacy, policy dialogue, technical assistance and direct programming in education. The major test of this Strategy will be UNICEF's ability to work with governments and other partners to orient policies, expenditure, implementation and accountability towards the twin goals of equity and learning, both in development programming and in emergency settings.

governments must be the guarantor but not necessarily the sole provider of education services. As part of UNICEF's work on evidence-based policy dialogue, we will support the generation of data and evidence on non-state education and public–private partnerships, including with partners such as UNESCO.

The key impact indicators for the equitable access goal – aligning with the SDG 2030 targets and indicators – will be:

→ participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex (SDG Indicator 4.2.2);

→ completion rates in primary and lower-secondary education and gross enrolment rate in upper secondary, by sex (based on SDG Target 4.1);

→ parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/ top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators that can be disaggregated (SDG Indicator 4.5.1).

3.2.2 IMPROVED LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Learning is the process of developing and acquiring skills, subject knowledge and values. Skills are developed from early childhood to adulthood. UNICEF uses a fourfold typology for learning and skills development.[49]

→ **Foundational skills:** basic literacy and numeracy; skills that are needed regardless of employment aspirations and are essential for further learning, productive employment and civic engagement.

→ **Transferable skills** (also called 'life skills' or '21st-century skills'): skills and values that are developed progressively from early years and allow young people to become agile, adaptive learners and citizens equipped to navigate personal, social, academic, economic and environmental challenges such as problem-solving, negotiation, empathy, communication, participation, play, peacebuilding, environmental awareness, emotional and mental well-being.

→ **Digital skills:** skills and knowledge that support the development of digitally literate children and allow them to use and understand technology, search for and manage information, communicate, collaborate, create and share

content, and solve problems safely, critically and ethically.

→ **Job-specific skills** (also called 'technical' and 'vocational' skills): skills which prepare young people for entry into specific trades or professions.

→ UNICEF will prioritize foundational and transferable skills. We will also work on digital skills and on job-specific skills for marginalized adolescents within the UNICEF age-mandate (up to age 19), and according to country needs, UNICEF comparative advantage and fit with in-country partners.

Determinants of learning include the following.

→ **Strong foundations:** a healthy, well-nourished, cared-for and stmulated child who has also had some form of pre-primary education will learn faster than their peers.

→ **Infrastructure and learning inputs:** physical and digital infrastructure such as classrooms and connectivity, as well as curricula, books and other learning materials, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for learning; with them, children might learn – without them, they will not.

→ **Teachers and teaching:** the number and functions, deployment, capability and working conditions of teachers are key determinants of learning; as are time-on-task, pedagogical practice and accountability for learning outcomes.

→ **Evidence-based approaches:** the conventional expansion of education inputs is largely not working; we must generate and act on evidence of what works, including testing innovations.

→ **Measurement of learning outcomes:** measurement of learning at all levels – the child, the school, national and global progress – is critical to driving performance and accountability in education.

→ **Institutional capability and strong systems:** high-performing systems have capable staff and institutions, and align all inputs and actors in the education system to the goal of learning.

Programmatic Principle 3. Intersectoral approaches

The use of intersectoral approaches is based on three core tenets: (1) interdependency of outcomes (education is critical to deliver outcomes in health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, protection and other sectors; other sectors are critical to delivering education outcomes); (2) potential efficiencies in using schools as an integrated platform for services to deliver a wide range of children's rights and child development outcomes; and (3) UNICEF comparative advantage in working through intersectoral approaches. Examples of collaboration with other sectors include, but are not limited to, the following.

→ **Early childhood development:** support to parents and caregivers to provide stimulation and early learning within the home and community; outreach and behaviour change work around responsive care; strengthening linkages between home and early education programmes in preschools and other settings.

→ **Health:** (1) health services (including child and adolescent immunization and child and adolescent screening services); (2) health education and promotion (including healthy eating, comprehensive sexuality education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, menstrual hygiene management, and mental health); and (3) healthy schools (including sports / physical activity, road safety, elimination of harmful substances, prevention of bullying).

→ **Nutrition:** (1) supplementation (e.g., iron and folic acid); (2) disease prevention activities (e.g., deworming, distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets); and

(3) provision of food and safe water (e.g., midday meals, school feeding programmes, clean water).

→ **Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH):**
(1) institutionalization of WASH in schools;
(2) evidence-based intervention models such as the 'Three Star Approach' to hygiene promotion and infrastructure upgrading; (3) models to reduce bottlenecks to upscaling, such as the high cost of water supply systems and WASH facility maintenance; and (4) improvements in monitoring of WASH in schools through strengthening EMIS and developing standards for WASH in schools.

→ **HIV:** school-based programmes for HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention, as part of comprehensive sexuality education; promotion of treatment adherence; measures to combat stigma and discrimination.

→ **Child protection:** systems to address bullying and violence; protective factors for children and adolescents (e.g., school-related gender-based violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, child marriage, teenage pregnancy and HIV); civil registration; providing a safe space in emergencies.

→ **Social inclusion and policy:** advocacy, technical support, evidence generation and policy dialogue for greater, more equitable and more efficient public investment in education; community empowerment to track spending and performance of education systems and schools; child poverty measurement; cash transfer programmes to address household financial barriers.

→ UNICEF will adopt different intervention points – the child, household and community; the school, classroom and broader learning environment; and education systems – within the broad enabling environment for learning *(see Figure 8).*

FIGURE 8

Enabling environment for learning – Conceptual framework
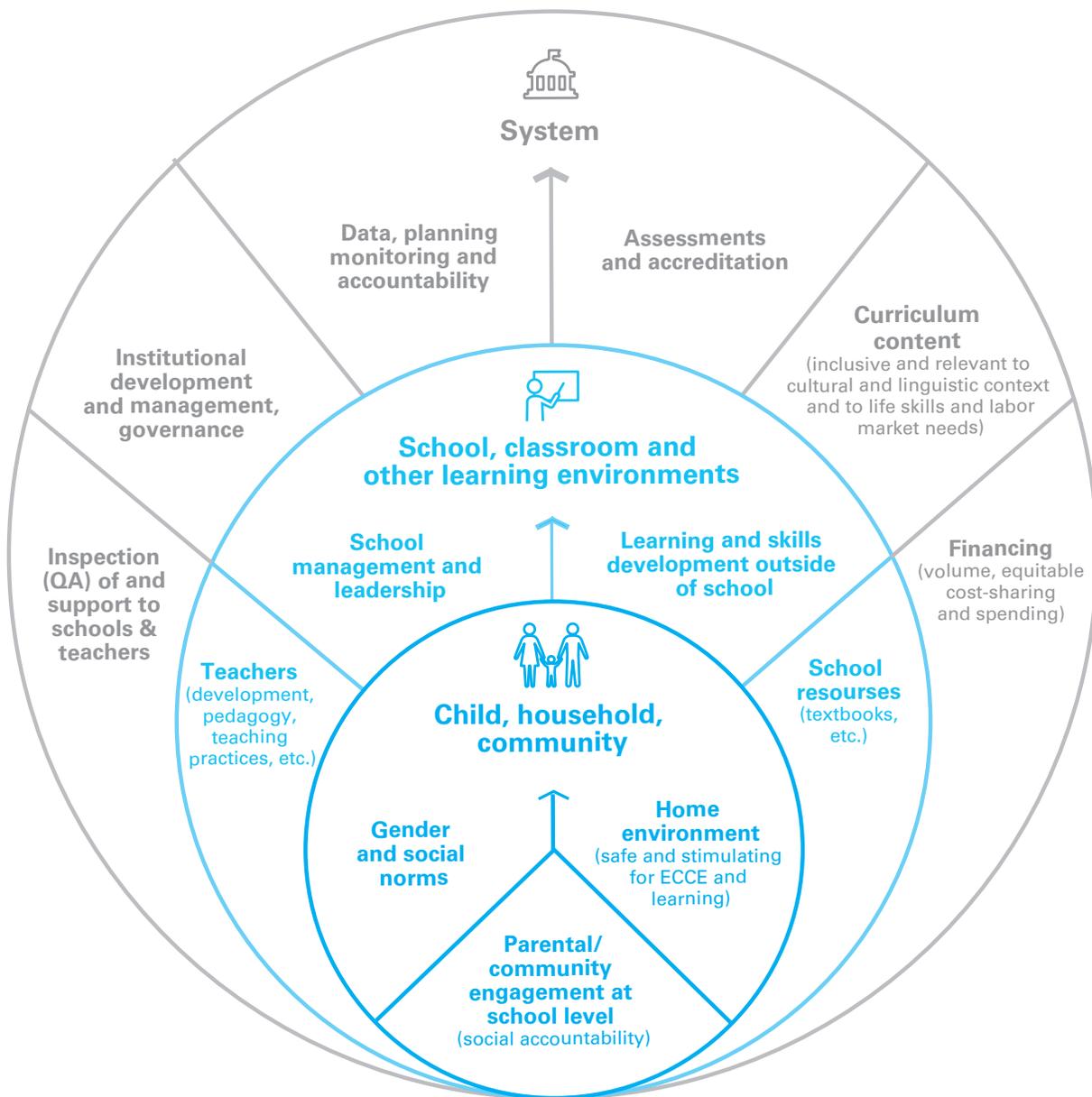
ECCE, early childhood care and education.

To address the Strategy's learning and skills goal UNICEF will:

→ UNICEF will help build strong foundations: working with colleagues in Early Childhood Development, Communication for Development, Health and Nutrition, we will increase support to responsive caregiving, early stimulation and play-based learning in the home, community and childcare facilities. To deliver quality at scale in pre-primary education, we will focus on five domains – planning and resource allocation; curriculum development; workforce development; family engagement; and standard setting and quality assurance – with a priority focus on workforce development and quality assurance.

→ UNICEF will work with governments to support the provision of safe and secure infrastructure and learning inputs. This will be primarily through technical support to government planning, budgeting and implementation; both in overall terms and in areas where UNICEF has specific expertise and focus, including gender- and disability-responsive planning. As a provider of last resort in emergency situations, in keeping with the UNICEF humanitarian mandate *(see section 3.2.3)*, UNICEF will directly provide infrastructure and learning inputs. Working with the UNICEF Innovation Team, we will collaborate with partners to support the goal of connecting all schools to the Internet by 2030.

→ UNICEF will prioritize seven areas of teachers and teaching in the support we provide to ministries of education and other partners: (1) the size and composition of the teacher workforce, particularly given the rapid expansion of many education systems over the coming decade; (2) deployment of teachers, particularly in rural areas; (3) the capability of teachers, including as supported through pre- and in-service training based on qualifications frameworks, and supportive supervision; (4) working conditions for teachers; (5) time-on-task, working with teachers to maximize time spent teaching in the classroom; (6) pedagogical practice, with a particular focus on activity-based learning, teaching at the right level, gender-responsive and learner-centred pedagogies; and (7) accountability for learning outcomes, including better use of formative and summative assessment, including classroom-based assessment. We will also work with school principals, inspectors and teacher trainers to provide more effective support to teachers.

→ UNICEF will support the generation and scaling up of evidence-based approaches, focussing on the expansion of interventions and learning strategies that work –

e.g., mother-tongue/bilingual instruction; structured pedagogy and teaching at the right level; activity-based learning – making these central to UNICEF policy dialogue, systems strengthening and direct programming. We will generate new evidence of what works through testing existing interventions and through investing in innovation, both with ministries of education and with the private sector, including new technologies, particularly for personalized and adaptive learning.

"We should stress not only the collection of data but also its analysis and use in ongoing education planning and monitoring."

Mozambique Country Consultation

→ UNICEF will support education systems to systematically measure learning outcomes – from the classroom up to the national level – and we will support the systematic measurement of learning outcomes in education in emergencies and protracted crises. We will collect and use new learning data, including through Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys. We will support social accountability for better learning, providing parents with information on learning to challenge and support the quality of service provision – for example, through the UNICEF 'Out-of-school Children Initiative' and 'Data Must Speak'[50] programme. We will advocate for learning as the main focus of education and build coalitions of national actors to work together to advocate for a greater focus on improving learning for all.

"Capacity development of human resources in the education sector (teachers, school directors, Ministry of Education officials, Teacher Training Institute trainers, pedagogical university professors, etc.) needs to be prioritized."

Kyrgyzstan Country Consultation

FIGURE 9

Learning life cycle of the child
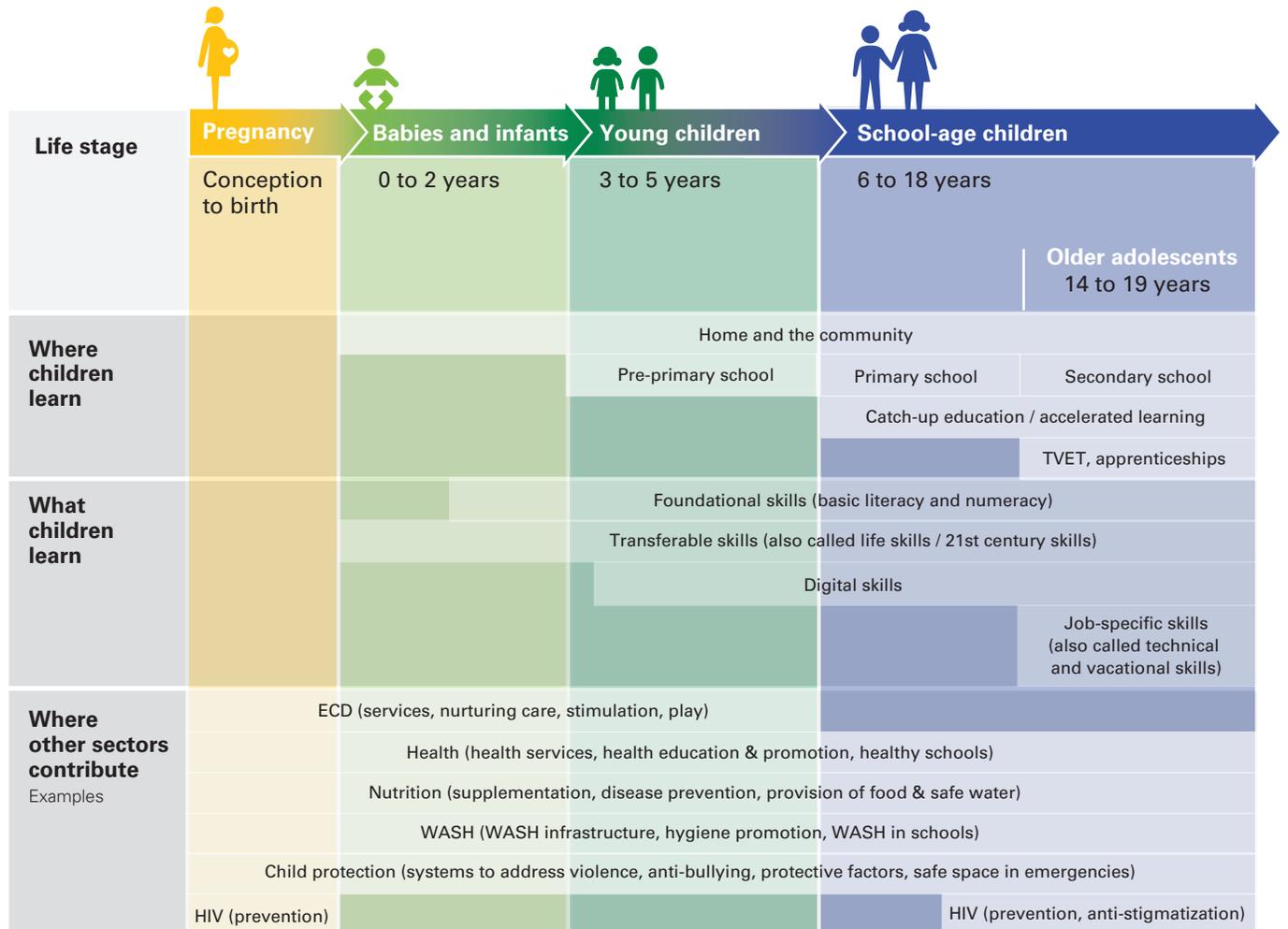
ECD, early childhood development; TVET, technical and vocational education and training; WASH, water, sanitation and hygiene.

→ UNICEF will invest in building institutional capability and strong education systems. We will support the capacity development of government staff and institutions. We will support the alignment of all inputs and actors in the system – national and local governments, communities, the private sector – to the goal of learning, particularly ensuring that foundational and transferable skills run through the core of curriculum–teaching–assessment. We will support multiple learning pathways for children and adolescents, including but not limited to formal education and drawing on inputs from multiple sectors and corresponding UNICEF teams *(see Figure 9)*.

→ UNICEF will also support the goal of the multi-stakeholder 'Generation Unlimited' partnership: to ensure that every young person is in school, learning, training or employment by 2030. Generation Unlimited focusses on adolescent education, skills development and training, and empowerment, particularly for girls. Our support to Generation Unlimited will be aligned to the age group (up to age 19) and mandate of UNICEF.

The key impact indicators for the learning and skills goal – aligning with the SDG 2030 targets and indicators – will be:

→ proportion of children under 5 years of age who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex (SDG Indicator 4.2.1);

→ proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (1) reading and (2) mathematics, by sex (SDG Indicator 4.1.1).

Programmatic Principle 4. Contextualization

The purpose of this Strategy is to provide a clear vision and strategic framework for UNICEF work in education to 2030. The Strategy sets policy and operational parameters to deliver that vision, while allowing for sufficient flexibility at country level to be led by country context and by local education needs. This point cannot be overstated. Education needs and priorities differ hugely across different countries and regions, as will UNICEF programmatic approaches and partnerships in each case – though governments, and particularly ministries of education, will remain our primary partners in most cases. Annex 2 provides a typology of countries – using data on three inter-related challenges of equitable access, learning and skills, and education in emergencies and fragile contexts – indicating the diversity of country contexts in which UNICEF operates. In each case, operational choices on how to implement the Strategy will be driven by three core concerns: (1) analysis of local education needs; (2) UNICEF comparative advantage, both generic *(see section 4.2.3)* and country-specific; and (3) division of labour with other actors. Analysis, objective-setting and programming choices will be embedded in UNICEF operational tools such as situation analyses and Country Programme Documents.

3.2.3 IMPROVED LEARNING AND PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN IN EMERGENCIES AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS: (1) PREVENTION (RESILIENT SYSTEMS), (2) RESPONSE (EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES)

As Global Education Cluster co-lead agency in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee system-wide humanitarian response, the UNICEF role in coordination does not end with the staffing of the country-level coordination mechanisms; it confers an additional accountability of being 'provider of last resort'. UNICEF co-leads the Global Education Cluster with Save the Children, and has a key role to play in the way the collective humanitarian response is shaped, including mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as protection, gender-based violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, gender, age and disability. UNICEF also has a critical role working with UNHCR in refugee contexts using the Refugee Coordination Model, and in working with internally displaced persons and stateless people.

To address the Strategy's education in emergencies and fragile contexts goal, UNICEF will work on prevention (resilient systems) and response (education in emergencies).

Prevention (resilient systems)

→ UNICEF will adopt a much stronger focus on systems strengthening through risk-informed approaches to help governments, other key institutions and communities build resilience to shocks. Risk-informed programming should address multiple hazards, risks and shocks, including climate change. This will include bringing up new generations of young people for better environmental stewardship and a green and sustainable economy.

"It seems important in the current global context to take into account the building of peaceful societies."

Mali Country Consultation

→ Good-quality, accessible education can counter the underlying causes of violence, by fostering values of inclusion, tolerance, human rights and conflict resolution. We will work to strengthen education systems on this basis.

→ We will work with partners such as UNESCO, UNHCR, the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education to make education financing and education systems more risk-informed and responsive, and to help governments to accommodate children affected by protracted crisis.

Response (education in emergencies)

→ UNICEF will continue to provide global leadership on education in emergencies, which will continue to constitute a large share of our programming, advocacy, leadership and convening. We will work with others to build an architecture for education in emergencies that is fit-for-purpose, adequately resourced, and maximally effective.

→ UNICEF will continue to provide direct services and supplies on a demand-driven basis. We will build on the increased use of cash transfers as an element of emergency response, ensuring that this multisectoral support to families is deployed, monitored and optimized to improve children's access to education, and links to other services that support learning outcomes. Subject to country context, we will also work on construction and other supply-side issues.

→ UNICEF will promote the centrality of social cohesion and peacebuilding within the humanitarian architecture. We will expand work on child protection in emergencies, focussing on physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection for children and adolescents. Early and adequate investments in education and child protection during and after emergencies are crucial in order to reduce needs and vulnerabilities in the future.

→ UNICEF will deepen integrated approaches in promoting girls' education in emergencies and protracted crises. We will be the first to step forward to address school-related gender-based violence, to end child marriage, and to conduct targeted gender transformative programmes.

→ UNICEF will support recognition of learning, certification, mobility, accreditation and transition of displaced and migrating children and adolescents between education systems, and actions that ensure entry and retention of children through different formal and non-formal education pathways.

→ UNICEF will deliver its education commitments within the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, the Global Compact for Refugees and its commitments to the Grand Bargain / New Ways of Working, particularly our accountability to affected populations, including migrant populations.

→ To deliver these commitments, UNICEF will advocate and pursue predictable, multi-year financing, and will continue to advocate for prioritization of education within humanitarian financing. We will work with government partners to ensure that domestic financing is not risk-blind.

→ UNICEF will work to strengthen the regulatory role of ministries of education and to establish common standards, norms and principles for education partners. We will partner with other humanitarian actors in the United Nations system, notably the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and WFP, and also with Education Cannot Wait – a critical partner for UNICEF in education in emergencies.

→ UNICEF will continue to provide leadership, with Save the Children, as Global Education Cluster co-leads in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for system-wide humanitarian response. We will work closely with other civil society partners.

→ UNICEF will actively promote and implement Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards, Child Protection Minimum Standards and Sphere standards, and work with partners to advance the goals of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

The key impact indicator for the education in emergencies goal – aligning with the SDG 2030 targets and indicators – will be:

→ parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators that can be disaggregated (SDG Indicator 4.5.1).

4 | IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

Implementation of the Strategy will be strongly determined by country and regional context, as highlighted in the programmatic principle of contextualization *(see section 3.2.2)*. This section of the Strategy describes the six programmatic approaches and three enabling inputs UNICEF will utilize to implement the Strategy, as summarized in Figure 6.

4.1 PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

UNICEF will adopt six main programmatic approaches for the implementation of the Strategy:

SYSTEMS
STRENGTHENING

DATA AND
EVIDENCE

INNOVATION

COMMUNICATIONS
AND ADVOCACY

COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT

SERVICE
DELIVERY

As part of the strategic shifts communicated in the Strategy, we will increase our focus and also shift emphasis within the programmatic areas of systems strengthening, data and evidence, and innovation.

4.1.1 SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

In recent years, UNICEF has increasingly focussed on systems strengthening – primarily with government counterparts – including at the subnational level *(see Annex 3 for examples of results achieved during the 2014–2017 period)*. Proportionately, there is more system strengthening work in Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, and West and Central Africa, and more service delivery support in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, East Asia and Pacific, and in countries facing higher education challenges and emergencies. Systems strengthening is about putting the learner at the centre (in development and humanitarian settings) and making learning the primary goal. It requires alignment of the different components of the system – particularly the curriculum, teaching and assessment – to deliver and be accountable for that goal, while also addressing implementation blockages and accountabilities accordingly.

FIGURE 10

Evolution of UNICEF education spending by type of support
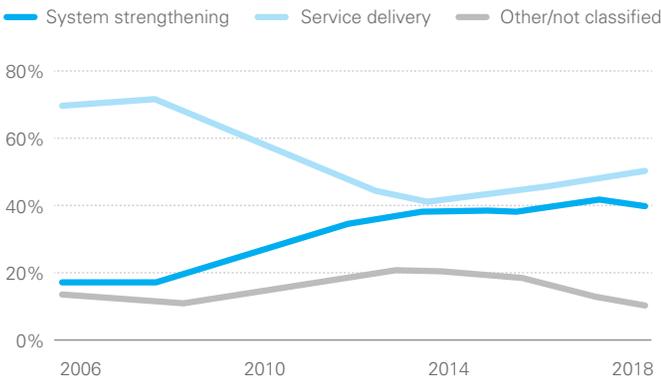
Systems strengthening will be further enhanced, including working closely with governments, non-governmental organizations and other non-state providers. This will include enhanced support to sector-wide analysis, planning, implementation and accountability, with a clear focus on goals of equity and learning. Education systems will be supported to further promote and realize their potential as a tool for transforming societies and economies – challenging, rather than replicating, harmful gender and social norms.

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to systems strengthening.

→ Strengthening education sector analysis and evidence-based sector planning and monitoring, including gender- and disability-responsive planning, and risk-informed planning responsive to conflict, climate change and other major risks.

→ Supporting pro-poor polices and public expenditure through analytical tools, policy dialogue and technical support.

→ Strengthening capacity at central and subnational levels in areas such as data, delivery, accountability for results, and protecting education from all forms of attack.

→ Improving the alignment of inputs and actors in the education system so that education systems are clearly focussed on addressing equity and the learning crisis.

→ Improving the alignment of the education system with other sectors, such as social protection, health and labour.

→ Improving links with social protection systems that address, inter alia, household financial barriers to equitable access and learning.

"It is important to transition from 'Child Friendly Schools' to 'child friendly systems', which will ensure wider support to the improvement of education quality."

Montenegro Country Consultation

From 'Child Friendly Schools' to learner-centred and child-friendly systems

The Strategy period will consolidate two ongoing shifts with respect to Child Friendly Schools.

→ A shift to position learning and skills more centrally in the concept and operationalization of child-friendly schools; this is in large part based on the critique, supported by a recent evaluation, that Child Friendly Schools have been overly focussed on inputs (e.g., the built environment) and processes (e.g., participation) and insufficiently focussed on learning outcomes. This shift is about re-balancing, not jettisoning, what was been done and learned to date.

→ A shift from 'Child Friendly Schools' to child-friendly systems: moving from UNICEF-supported pilot projects to helping governments integrate child-friendly policies, approaches and quality standards into national education systems.

A reinterpretation of Child Friendly Schools – centred on learning and integrated into national education systems – might comprise three basic components, but must be conceived and operationalized by governments themselves, subject to their own needs and systems requirements.

1. Learning environments: inputs and outcomes linked to child well-being and learning, i.e., protection, health, gender equality (one key lesson to date is that an enabling school environment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for learning).

2. Pedagogies: that place learners at the centre (e.g., activity-based learning; personalized and adaptive learning; teaching at the right level), based on the child's capabilities and engaging children on the basis of their capabilities and learning levels.

3. Learning outcomes: as the single most important result of the schooling process; including but not limited to foundational skills of basic literacy and numeracy and transferable skills.

4.1.2 DATA AND EVIDENCE

The generation and use of data and evidence will be further enhanced, particularly in relation to levels of learning to generate a better understanding of the children being left behind, and the effectiveness of education systems to meet the learning needs of every child. Greater and more effective investment will be accorded to strengthening the systematic measurement of learning outcomes for all learners (regardless of pathway). Mobilizing and enabling the wide range of duty-bearers to act on the data and evidence on learning at all levels will be central to the Strategy.

UNICEF's ability to co-create and deploy data and evidence – working with partners such as the UNESCO Institute of Statistics and the World Bank – is a critical driver of education results, in both development and humanitarian settings. This particularly applies to strengthening the capability of government partners to generate evidence to inform policies and services for children and adolescents. Within system-strengthening work, UNICEF Education has to date focussed less on evidence generation and research compared with other UNICEF programme areas. UNICEF has an urgency to deliver impact but it is also a global laboratory to find innovative ways to deliver wide-ranging and sustained development solutions. On this basis we will seek to prioritize our work on data and evidence over the period to 2030.

"UNICEF should work with partners to enhance collection and integration of disaggregated data on children with disabilities or special needs in national Education Management Information Systems."

Mongolia Country Consultation

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to data and evidence:

→ generate data and evidence through investing in data collection, education sector analysis, research and evaluation activities in country programmes and at the regional and global levels; and, in particular, strengthening the capacity of governments to generate and utilize data;

→ disseminate data and evidence through knowledge management platforms, national and international networks and South–South collaboration;

→ support the use of data and evidence to inform evidence-based policy, programming and advocacy.
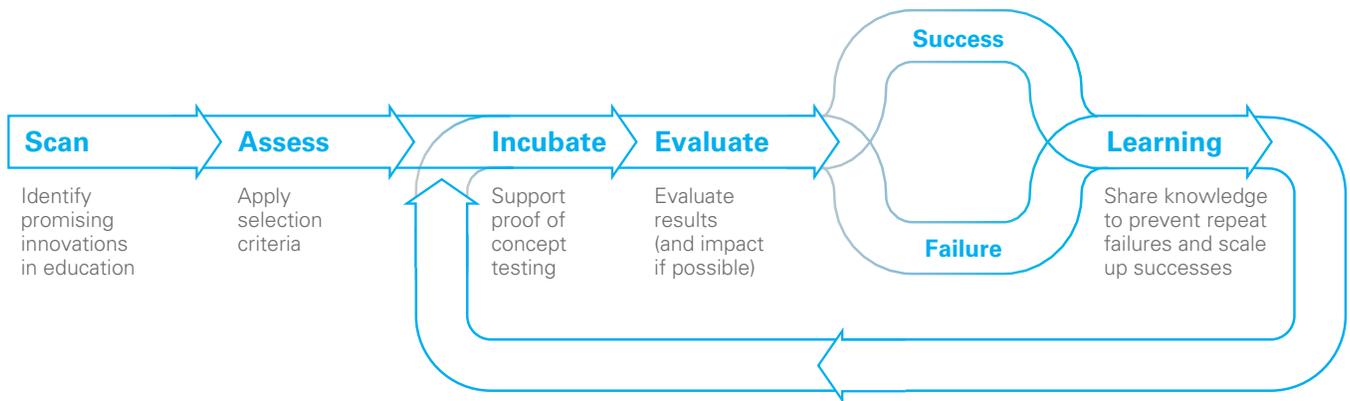
4.1.3 INNOVATION

The need for innovation in education is acute: traditional service delivery channels are strained and learning increasingly takes place in new ways and in new places, including outside of the classroom. This is particularly true for adolescents. UNICEF is well placed to help broker innovation in education. UNICEF work on innovation is guided by a set of operating principles at the corporate level: design with the user; understand the existing ecosystem; design for scale; build for sustainability; be data driven; use open source; reuse and improve; do no harm; be collaborative.

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to innovation:

→ placing learning at the centre of the education innovation agenda, setting fit-for-purpose mechanisms to monitor and measure outcomes, especially of the most marginalized children and adolescents;

→ partnerships with the private sector under a co-creation approach;

→ working with government and other critical stakeholders from early stage of design throughout implementation;

→ evidence generation through testing and evaluating innovations and their application;

→ school and classroom-based innovations, including but not limited to ICT-enabled innovations, that empower and support teachers and pedagogical facilitators;

→ new approaches to personalized and adaptive learning, both inside and outside of the classroom.

FIGURE 11

Linking the sourcing of innovations with generation of evidence

"There is risk that innovation is tested and launched without sustainability and scalability considerations. Strong engagement of the government is needed from the planning stage and joint consideration of sustainable implementation and financial mechanisms at scale."

Lao People's Democratic Republic Country Consultation

4.1.4 COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVOCACY

UNICEF engages in a wide range of communications and campaign activities at the country, regional and global levels. UNICEF advocates to policymakers, political and social leaders to create an enabling policy and legislative environment that creates and sustains social transformation. This includes amplifying the voices of children and parents from marginalized groups.

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to communications and advocacy:

→ making the case for children's right to education and for issues-based communications and campaign activities such as 'Protecting Children from Attack' and 'Safe to Learn: ending violence in schools'; we will also advocate for the integration of refugees, internally displaced persons and other marginalized groups into host government national education systems;

→ supporting behaviour change and generating community demand through country-level activities such as 'Back to School' campaigns;

→ influencing the policies and practice of governments and the international community; shaping the architecture for international development and humanitarian aid to education;

→ convening partners and participating in campaigns to advance education goals, both UNICEF led and those led by others.

"We need to strengthen child and adolescent participation in the definition of education policies."

Brazil Country Consultation

4.1.5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UNICEF supports community engagement in education in many countries. Community engagement is proven to be effective for improving learning outcomes if communities: (1) have information to act upon; (2) have the necessary capacity to understand and act upon information; and (3) have a role, accepted by teachers, in influencing decisions made by school management. Evidence shows that community-based monitoring can be one of the most cost-effective practices to increase access and learning outcomes.[51]

FIGURE 12

Proportion of countries with functional school management committees

"It is important to emphasize parenting programmes, to engage communities and to promote learning in the home."

Timor-Leste Country Consultation

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to community engagement:

→ parental and household engagement in learning in the home and community, including early stimulation for babies and infants, reading at home and making books available;

→ changing gender and social norms, including convening dialogue and providing information to address issues such as girls' education and gender equality in education, early marriage, child labour and violence against children;

→ supporting social accountability for better service delivery, providing parents with the information and opportunities to engage with and challenge the quality of public services.

4.1.6 SERVICE DELIVERY

Over the period 2014–2017, some 75 per cent of UNICEF education service delivery work was concentrated in 15 countries – mainly emergency contexts, and with a particular focus on the Syrian region crisis.[52] UNICEF will continue to be a leader in education in emergencies, working with partners including UNHCR, WFP, Education Cannot Wait and Save the Children.

UNICEF also provides technical support to strengthen core service delivery across all country contexts and to test innovations to support their inclusion in (or exclusion from, subject to results) large-scale service delivery funded by governments and others.

UNICEF will prioritize the following activities with respect to service delivery:

→ support emergency response for education on a large scale, working with a range of government and international development partners;

→ work across the humanitarian–development nexus, including rebuilding education systems recovering form conflict and natural disasters, and strengthening the resilience of all education systems;

→ test and evaluate innovations across all country contexts;

→ strengthen core service delivery through technical assistance and programme guidance, focussing on areas such as curriculum development, effective pedagogy and assessment, and equitable teacher provision.

Between 2014 and 2018, UNICEF

Provided education to
43.5 million
children
in emergencies

Trained
238,851
school management
committees /
school communities

Delivered learning
materials to
70.7 million
children

Delivered learning
materials to at least
1.2 million
classrooms

4.2 ENABLING INPUTS

Implementation of the Strategy will be supported by three principle enabling inputs: (1) financial resources, (2) human resources, and (3) partnerships.

## Programmatic Principle 5. Results-based management

Achieving the stated goals of this Strategy will require the application of the results-based management principle throughout the lifetime of the Strategy and at all levels. It will start with planning for results through analysis, prioritization, and clearly defined theories of change and results. Implementing the Strategy will require active monitoring (including the measurement of learning outcomes) and related programmatic adjustments and corrective actions as required. Accountability and transparency will be maintained through the regular reporting of activities, results and lessons learned, while UNICEF's contribution to any results achieved will be analysed through rigorous evaluations as part of the data and evidence programmatic approach.

The consistent use of results-based management throughout the implementation of this Strategy will enable UNICEF to reach the most disadvantaged children, and report these results readily to the public, governments, development partners and donors. Section 6 of this Strategy ('Monitoring, evaluation and learning') details how results achieved at the country level will be aggregated up to report annually on progress against education goals at output, outcome and impact levels.

4.2.1 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

FIGURE 13

UNICEF education expenditure by region (2014–2017)
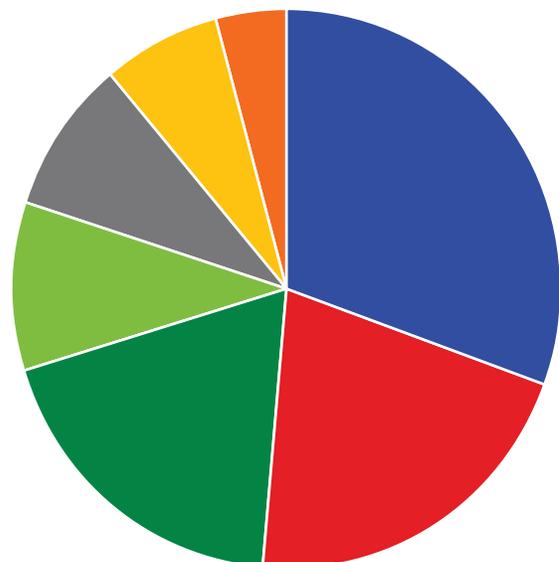
■ MENA **31%**   ■ ESA **21%**   ■ WCA **19%**

■ SA **10%**   ■ ECA **9%**   ■ EAP **7%**
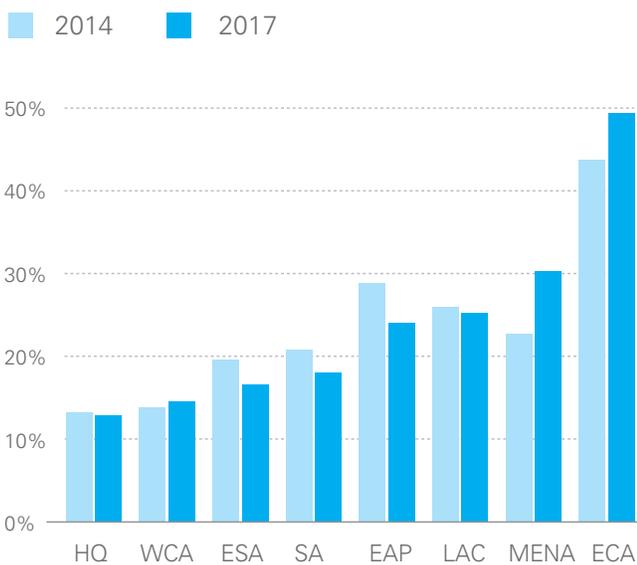
■ LAC **4%**

EAP, East Asia and Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; LAC, Latin America and Caribbean; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

UNICEF education expenditure in 2018 was US$1.2 billion compared with approximately US$500 million per year for the period 2006–2010. The increase during recent years has been driven by the increased resources for education in emergencies. Fifty per cent of UNICEF education spending in 2018 was in only eight countries, including 40 per cent in five countries affected by the Syrian crisis.[53]

FIGURE 14

Share of UNICEF spending for education, by region

2014   2017

EAP, East Asia and Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; HQ, headquarters; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; LAC, Latin America and Caribbean; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

There have been large regional variations in the proportion of UNICEF expenditure dedicated to education from 49 per cent in Europe and Central Asia (driven by emergency response in Turkey) to a low of 15 per cent in West and Central Africa and 13 per cent in Headquarters (HQ) *(see Figure 14)*.[54] To implement the Strategy, we will seek increases in both regular and thematic resources for education. Implementation of the Strategy will be driven by country context, by the needs of specific countries and regions, and the partnerships developed with governments and others to address those priority needs.

In 2018

50%

of UNICEF education spending was in only eight countries, including 40% in five countries affected by the Syria crisis.

UNICEF will continue to put more resources for education into regions and countries with the highest challenges – those regions characterized by long-term education needs, compounded by child population growth, e.g., Eastern and Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and South Asia *(see Figure 15)*, and also the Middle East and North Africa region given the scale of the humanitarian crisis. However, we will also maintain a strong presence in regions such as East Asia and Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean, and Europe and Central Asia, focussing particularly on issues of equity and learning and skills for children and adolescents, and on threats to education systems and children derived from conflict, migration and climate change.
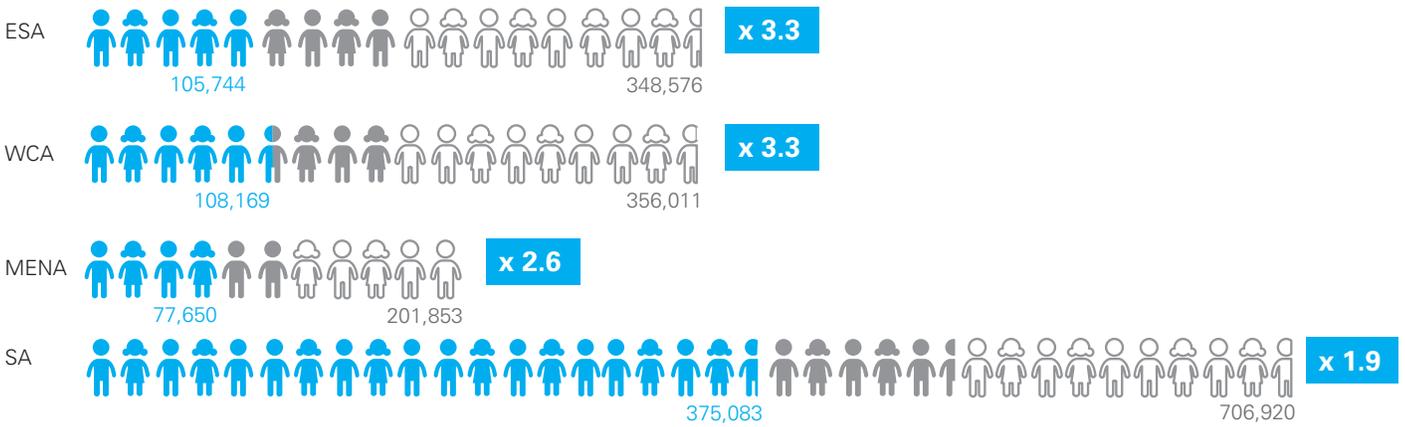
FIGURE 15

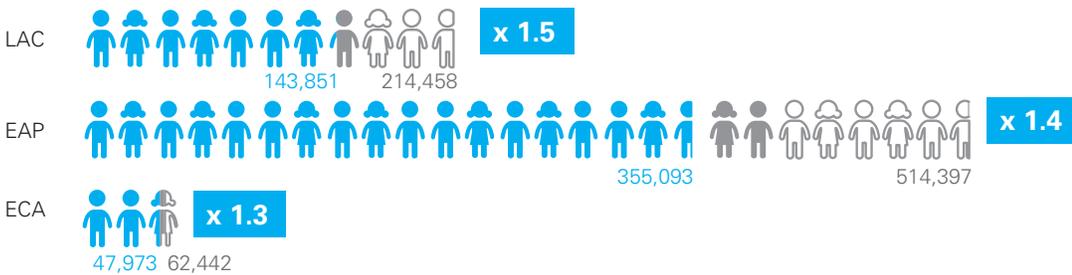## Regional overview of demographic challenges for school-age population

👤 20,000   ● Enrolment 2016   ● Out-of-school children in 2016   ○ School-age population growth for 2030

More challenged regions

Enrolment to reach SDG 4 in 2030 compared to current enrolment

ESA   x 3.3
105,744   348,576

WCA   x 3.3
108,169   356,011

MENA   x 2.6
77,650   201,853

SA   x 1.9
375,083   706,920

Less challenged regions

LAC   x 1.5
143,851   214,458

EAP   x 1.4
355,093   514,397

ECA   x 1.3
47,973 62,442

EAP, East Asia and Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; LAC, Latin America and Caribbean; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

4.2.2 HUMAN RESOURCES

No other international organization has the scale and capability of UNICEF, which has over 790 education staff in 144 countries around the world, including a large number of education staff at the subnational level.[55] This is our greatest resource. For the Strategy period, we see three priorities relating to the number, function and capabilities of our education staff:

→ **Number:** increase the number and share of staff working on education – the share of education staff within the total of UNICEF programme staff has decreased over the last 10 years (16 per cent of staff in 2016 cf. 20 per cent in 2006; partly explained by the increased emphasis on cross-sectoral staff) and is low compared with peer organizations (e.g., in the World Bank, the share of education staff within human development staff is 32 per cent).[56]

→ **Function and capabilities:** continue the trend of investing more (including in humanitarian contexts) in systems-strengthening capabilities such as sector analysis, risk-informed programming, gender-responsive planning and pro-poor public expenditure, and investing in thematic expertise required to implement the strategic shifts of this Strategy (e.g., pre-primary education, education for marginalized adolescents).

TABLE 1

UNICEF sectoral human resources as a proportion of total human resources

Domain	2006	2016
Health and HIV/AIDS	25%	20%
Nutrition	11%	9%
WASH	12%	14%
Education	20%	16%
Child protection	19%	17%
Social inclusion	2%	4%
Cross-sectoral	10%	20%
Total programmes	100%	100%

4.2.3 PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will be a critical lever to implement the Strategy. Governments are our primary partners for the implementation of this Strategy, and it is primarily programme governments that will set priorities for implementation. In addition to emphasizing the context of local education needs, the principle of contextualization also requires a focus on UNICEF's comparative advantage and on division of labour with others. It is these three considerations above all that will frame dialogue with partners on UNICEF country and programming strategies in education.

We see the UNICEF comparative advantage consisting principally of the following:

→ a mandate and normative function centred on children's rights;

→ alignment to governments and decades of experience building trust through close partnership;

→ the largest education field presence of any international organization;

→ membership of the United Nations system and its associated leadership, convening power and multi-agency operating capability;

→ shaper of the development and humanitarian architecture;

→ proven operating capability in supporting education in emergencies.

The division of labour with other donors will vary by country context; but in board terms we see that division of labour as follows.

→ **Governments:** duty-bearers at national level to ensure children's rights; policymakers; principal, but not sole, providers of services. Typically, our primary partner.

→ **United Nations agencies** (including UNICEF): duty-bearers at global level to ensure children's rights (includes focus on the most vulnerable); providers of standards and normative guidance; specialist agencies providing funding, technical assistance and sometimes service providers (often of last resort); convenors; knowledge brokers.

→ **Multilateral development banks** (World Bank; regional development banks): largest providers of concessional finance; providers of technical assistance; knowledge brokers.

→ **Global education funds and partnerships** (e.g., Global Partnership for Education [GPE], Education Cannot Wait): endorsers of plans (e.g., GPE for education sector plans); funders; convenors; knowledge brokers.

→ **Bilateral donors:** funders; providers of technical assistance; convenors; knowledge brokers; funders/ shareholders/governors of multilateral organizations (with other member states).

→ **Private sector:** financers; service providers (core and ancillary services); innovators; convenors.

→ **Civil society** (e.g., NGOs, professional bodies, academia, foundations): representatives; thought leaders; knowledge brokers; convenors; advocates; funders; service providers.

UNICEF works closely with UNESCO and other United Nations agencies, including as one of the eight United Nations agencies co-convening SDG 4 – Education 2030. UNICEF has critical partnerships with United Nations agencies for country delivery, global leadership and convening, the production of global and regional public goods and their application at country level. This includes working with the UNESCO Institute of Statistics on data issues and with the International Institute for Educational Planning on education sector analysis and planning.[57]

These partnerships – with agencies including UNESCO, WFP, UNHCR, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), ILO, World Health Organization (WHO) and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) – are being reshaped within the context of United Nations Development System Reform. The reforms reflect the need for the United Nations to take tailored and innovative approaches that break down silos between sectors, agencies and government ministries, to develop interdisciplinary responses to complex development challenges, and to increase transparency and accountability for system-wide results. By bringing together the expertise, assets and resources from across the United Nations system in support of national governments, we can multiply and sustain the direct benefit to children and their families, and become more cost efficient, as we put resources where they are needed most.

UNICEF works closely with the multilateral development banks as the largest providers of concessional finance and providers of significant technical assistance. UNICEF is a member of the Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and a major Grant Agent and Coordinating Agency for GPE programmes, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. UNICEF hosts Generation Unlimited and Education Cannot Wait, for which it is also a major implementing partner. UNICEF hosts the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative and the Partnership to End Violence Against Children. UNICEF is the co-lead of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Global Education Cluster, with Save the Children, and currently co-leads the Humanitarian Education Accelerator with UNHCR, established to identify and grow innovations in education in emergencies.

UNICEF works closely with funding agencies at country and global levels, with civil society organizations, academia, private foundations and the private sector. For the Strategy period, UNICEF will particularly seek to grow impactful partnerships with the private sector, based on a principle of 'shared value' and a shared commitment to access, learning and equity in education. At the regional level, UNICEF will collaborate closely with the regional bodies such as the African Union and the regional development banks. At the country level, UNICEF is an active partner in Local Education Groups and other coordination mechanisms for education, often playing a leading role for the development community; for example, as Coordinating Agency for the GPE.

Governments are our primary partners for the implementation of this Strategy, and it is primarily programme governments who will set priorities for implementation.

5 | RISKS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Table 2 lists principal risks, together with risk mitigation measures, organized by theme. The list is not intended to be exhaustive. These risks expand on the four principle 'assumptions' listed in the Strategic Framework *(Figure 6)*. Risks and risk mitigation measures will also be updated on a four-yearly basis through the overall UNICEF Strategic Plan *(see section 6 for how the Strategic Plan articulates with this Strategy).*

TABLE 2
Principal risks and mitigation measures

Risk	Mitigation measures
Equitable access Insufficient government focus on equity and marginalized groups; government Education Management Information System (EMIS) does not track marginalized groups; domestic and international allocations to pre-primary remain small; insufficient focus on education pathways for adolescents	→ Maintain strong focus on equity (leadership, advocacy, policy dialogue, convening, programming) → Support governments to develop disaggregated EMIS → Expand UNICEF programming, convening and advocacy downwards to pre-primary education and upwards to marginalized adolescents, while maintaining focus on primary and secondary, and in alignment with the principle of progressive universalism
Learning and skills UNICEF-supported programmes – both direct service delivery and support to governments – support the expansion of inputs alone, with no impact on learning	→ Systematically measure learning in all relevant UNICEF-supported education activities, both direct and indirect → Align all inputs and actors in the education systems to support learning → Global-, regional- and country-level advocacy
Education in emergencies and fragile contexts Insufficient funding; lack of humanitarian access; increased attacks on schools; insufficient focus on risk-informed planning; limited focus on measuring learning in humanitarian situations	→ Continue to advocate for education in emergencies funding and strengthen partners' voices (e.g., Education Cannot Wait) → Reinforce United Nations mandate, legal and rights-based frameworks for humanitarian access → Invest in risk-informed planning with governments and with 'non-humanitarian' actors → Work with partners to ensure the measurement of learning and best practice (e.g., with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies) of improving learning
Financial resources Insufficient funding for global education and for UNICEF education activities; UNICEF education funding restricted/projectized, limiting our ability to drive UNICEF priorities	→ Global advocacy in partnerships with others → Diversify UNICEF funding base → Demonstrate results → Expand funding → Seek to secure unrestricted funding
Human resources Insufficient UNICEF staff for effective emergency response; staff capability not aligned with needs; uneven staff capability across countries	→ Recruit more staff to work on education in emergencies, including more systems-focussed staff → Invest in education staff capability (particularly data and evidence, sector planning and policy dialogue)
Partnerships The UNICEF strategy, culture or systems retreat into bilateral programming; UNICEF impact diminishes; UNICEF brand value diminishes	→ Invest leadership and staff time and financial resources in strategic partnerships → Focus on impact → Maintain or grow brand value
Innovation Innovation is pursued for innovation's sake, without measurement of outcomes, or at the expense of core programming priorities; ICT-enabled innovations exacerbate inequities	→ Establish, enforce and track clear criteria for investing in innovation, including value-addition, cost-effectiveness, total cost of ownership, measurement of learning and assessing opportunity costs → Focus on the most marginalized

6 | MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The Strategy's performance framework will operate on three levels.

1. Impact and outcomes: 2030 impact and outcome indicators related to the three Strategy goals of access, learning and skills, and education in emergencies – outlined in section 3 – are mapped to the SDG Targets and Indicators and collected through existing SDG reporting mechanisms and through the monitoring of UNICEF Strategic Plans *(see Annex 4).* The UNICEF Strategic Plan operates on four-year cycles and includes goals, targets and implementation priorities for education, as for other sectors. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 has as Goal Area 2 that "Every Child Learns", and adopts a strategic approach and performance targets fully consistent with this Strategy.

2. Outcomes and outputs: with a higher degree of attribution to UNICEF activities, both in service delivery and in system strengthening; they will be taken from the UNICEF Strategic Plans and collected on an annual basis. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 includes output indicators for education (Goal Area 2) to guide implementation for this current four-year period; however, only the higher-level impact and outcome indicators are reproduced here *(Annex 4).*

3. Inputs: UNICEF will additionally monitor implementation of the key strategic shifts of the Strategy – to be reported on in the UNICEF Annual Results Report for Goal Area 2 'Every Child Learns' and in subsequent annual results reports for education for subsequent UNICEF Strategic Plans – as follows:

→ learning: share of UNICEF programmes/interventions measuring learning outcomes (including in humanitarian situations);

→ inclusive education and disability: share of UNICEF programmes/spending on inclusive education for children with disabilities;

→ pre-primary education: share of UNICEF programmes/ spending supporting pre-primary education / early learning;

→ education for marginalized adolescents: share of UNICEF programmes/spending supporting adolescent education;

→ systems strengthening: share of UNICEF programmes/ spending supporting systems strengthening work;

→ use of data and evidence: share of UNICEF education systems strengthening work on evidence generation and research;

→ innovation: share of UNICEF programmes/spending supporting innovation.

Monitoring will rely primarily on existing external and internal data sources that are, or will be, available as part of regular reporting mechanisms. We will also commission a Mid-term Review of the Strategy and a Final Evaluation, both summative and formative in nature. Monitoring, evaluation and learning will also be informed by reviews and evaluations of the UNICEF four-year Strategic Plans within the period of this Strategy; and by thematic and country evaluations conducted as part of UNICEF core business.

ANNEX 1 | UNICEF EDUCATION STRATEGY SURVEY: SUMMARY OF APPROACH AND KEY FINDINGS

The Education Section hosted an online survey between 13 November and 11 December 2018 to inform the development of the UNICEF 2019–2030 Education Strategy. The survey was shared with internal and external stakeholders: with all UNICEF colleagues globally and key stakeholders including programme country and donor governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia. There was a total of 279 participants. Respondents were 61 per cent internal, with the majority representing country offices (63 per cent of internal); and 39 per cent external, representing mainly donor governments (26 per cent of external), programme country governments (21 per cent) and civil society (21 per cent). Key findings were as follows.[58]

Education thematic priorities and global lead

→ Prioritize inclusive education (for children with disabilities and other vulnerable children, e.g., poorest, ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrant children), pre-primary and foundational skills (literacy and numeracy).

→ Phase out / do not engage in learning materials provision/procurement, upper-secondary education, and technical and vocational education and training / job-specific skills development.

→ Respondents identified the following as areas where UNICEF should take a global leader role: pre-primary; primary; education sector analysis, planning and strategy development; foundational skills.

Contexts of engagement and operational approaches

→ Internal and external respondents identified, to a fairly large extent, the same areas of work as most/least critical in the different contexts of engagement.

Partnerships

→ Respondents identified the Global Partnership for Education as the most important partnership to deliver the UNICEF agenda, followed by the World Bank and bilateral donors.

Execution capacities

→ 29 per cent of respondents said that UNICEF staff have the appropriate skill set to execute their work. Types of skills most cited as missing in current staff: data/analytical, managerial, sector policy, thematic experts.

Need for change

→ Close to 80 per cent of respondents identified UNICEF as one of the established global leaders in education.

→ 34 per cent said that UNICEF's peers are changing more and improving faster than UNICEF; however, 47 per cent said there is a willingness to change.

→ To support its future success, respondents agree that UNICEF needs to fundamentally change the way it operates. They suggest investing more in technical staff, focus/prioritize more, simplify internal processes, and put more emphasis on evidence and use of data

Quotes from survey respondents:

"Position learning as the core of all education programming, including in humanitarian settings"

"Greater analytical skills to inform sector dialogue and programme design, and monitoring and evaluation skills"

"Strengthening of partnerships will be key in delivering the Strategy"

"Less fragmentation, stronger technical quality assurance, less haste, more quality, recruit staff with education technical capabilities, place greater emphasis on use of data and evidence in programming"

"UNICEF should always focus on the most disadvantaged and hardest to reach children"

ANNEX 2 | COUNTRY TYPOLOGY BY EDUCATION CHALLENGES

The following typology captures the differences across countries in terms of the challenges related to each of goals of the Strategy: (1) Equitable access; (2) Learning and skills; and (3) Emergencies and fragile contexts.[59]

→ The equitable access challenge reflects the combined challenge of the number of additional school seats needed in 2030 to reach universal pre-primary,[60] primary and secondary, based on current enrolment, projected population and the existing disparities in access to education between boys and girls, between urban and rural, and between children from the poorest and richest quintiles. The two indicators are combined into one synthetic index with countries assigned to one of three categories: (1) Red: high challenge, i.e., large increase needed and high current inequities; (2) Yellow: medium challenge; and (3) Green: comparatively low challenge.
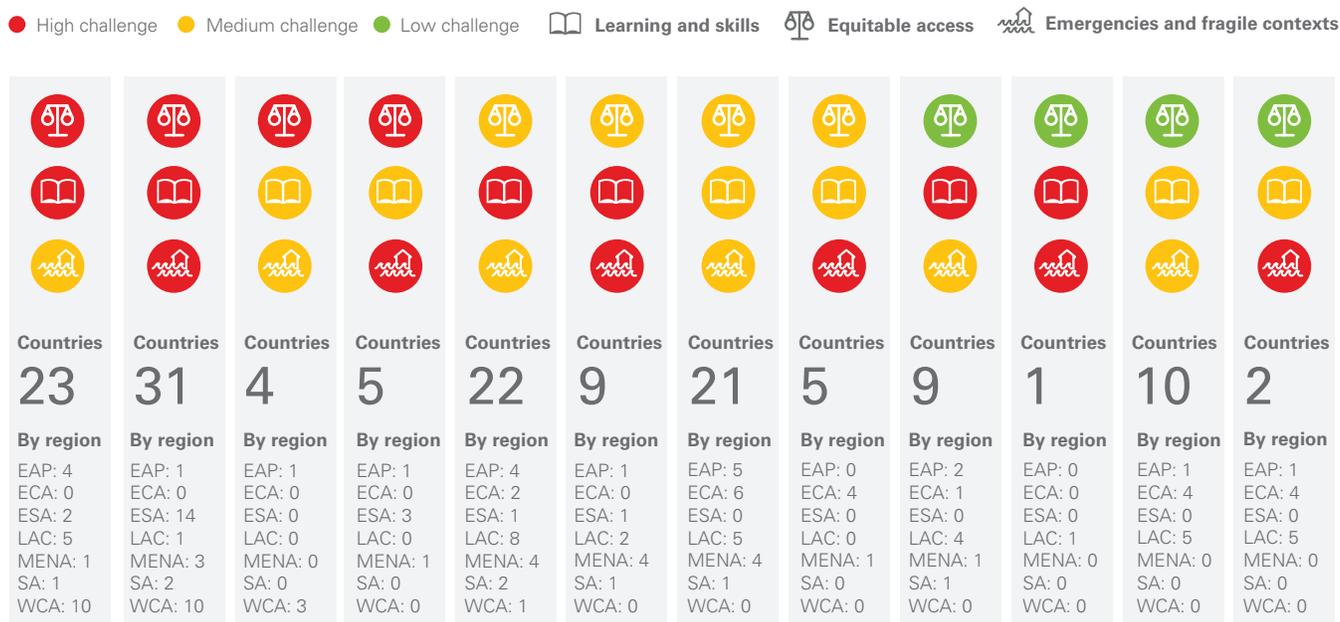
→ The learning and skills challenge captures the current level of learning outcomes as measured by standardized learning assessments. The indicator used is the Harmonized Test Score

from the World Bank, as a component of the Human Capital Index. The lower the value the higher the learning challenge is. Allocation to one of the two categories – Red: high challenge and Yellow: medium challenge – is based on where the country sits in relation to the median index across all countries.[61]

→ The emergencies and fragile contexts challenge is based on whether the country was part of the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) in 2018 – Red: was part of HAC in 2018 and Yellow: was not part of HAC in 2018.

There are high correlations between the different challenges: the countries that are facing one of the three key challenges are more likely to face the other two. Consequently, the countries in the categories with the highest challenges: (1) will need extra effort in terms of fundraising and support, and (2) will – at least on the short to medium term – likely need more prioritization in terms of key strategies, for example in terms of priority levels of education to be supported or in terms of balance between supporting access to the most marginalized and supporting improvement of quality learning.

FIGURE 15

● High challenge ● Medium challenge ● Low challenge 📖 **Learning and skills** ⚖️ **Equitable access** 〰️ **Emergencies and fragile contexts**

	Countries 23	Countries 31	Countries 4	Countries 5	Countries 22	Countries 9	Countries 21	Countries 5	Countries 9	Countries 1	Countries 10	Countries 2
By region												
EAP	4	1	1	1	4	1	5	0	2	0	1	1
ECA	0	0	0	0	2	0	6	4	1	0	4	4
ESA	2	14	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAC	5	1	0	0	8	2	5	0	4	1	5	5
MENA	1	3	1	1	4	4	4	1	1	0	0	0
SA	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
WCA	10	10	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

EAP, East Asia and Pacific; ECA, Europe and Central Asia; ESA, Eastern and Southern Africa; MENA, Middle East and North Africa; LAC, Latin America and Caribbean; SA, South Asia; WCA, West and Central Africa.

ANNEX 3 | EXAMPLES OF RESULTS ACHIEVED THROUGH UNICEF EDUCATION SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING WORK

FIGURE A3.1

Proportion of countries with well-functioning learning assessment system, especially for early years
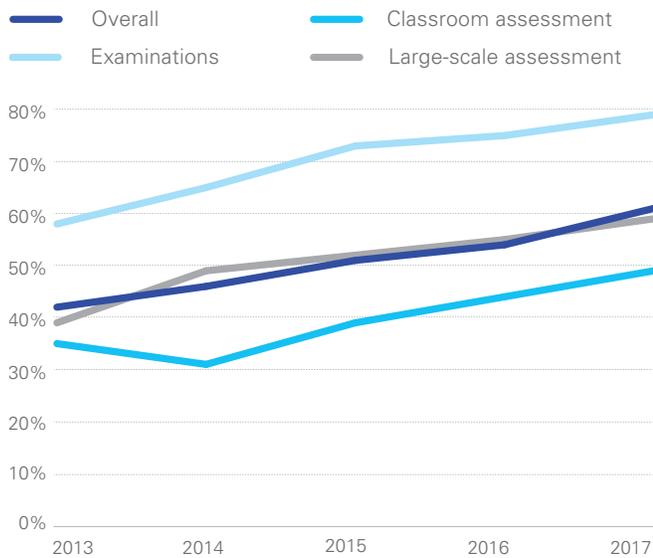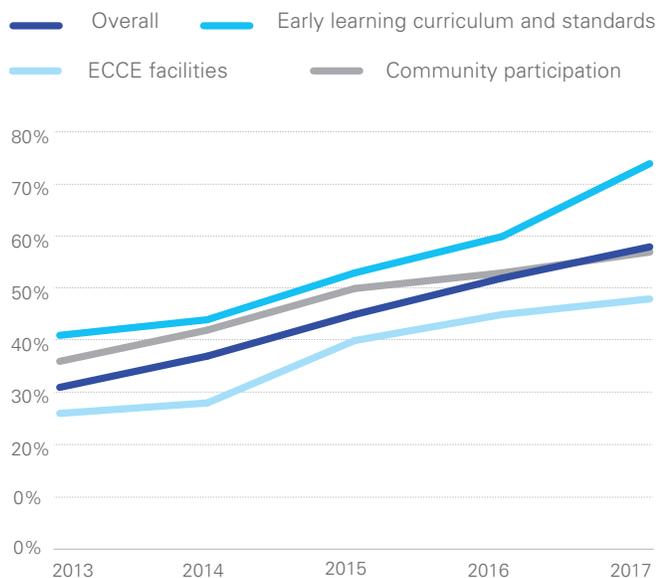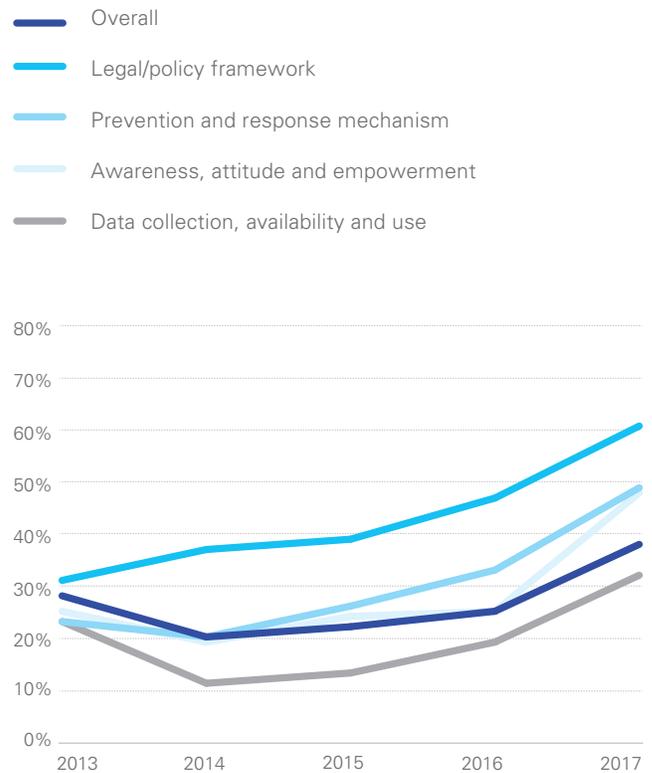
- Overall
- Examinations
- Classroom assessment
- Large-scale assessment

FIGURE A3.2

Proportion of countries with effective early learning policies and quality early learning programmes

- Overall
- ECCE facilities
- Early learning curriculum and standards
- Community participation

FIGURE A3.3

Proportion of countries with an education policy or plan to address gender-based violence

- Overall
- Legal/policy framework
- Prevention and response mechanism
- Awareness, attitude and empowerment
- Data collection, availability and use

ECCE, early childhood care and education.

ANNEX 4 | EDUCATION IMPACT AND OUTCOME INDICATORS IN THE UNICEF STRATEGIC PLAN, 2018–2021

TABLE A4.1.

UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, Goal Area 2 (Every child learns): Results Framework (impact and outcome indicators only)

Impact indicator	Disaggregation	Baseline	2018 value	Target (2021)
I. Completion rate (gross intake rate to the last grade) in primary and lower-secondary education (SDG 4.1)	Primary – Total	90%	90%	92%
	Lower secondary – Total	75%	77%	83%
J. Gross enrolment rate in upper-secondary education (SDG 4.1)	Upper secondary – Total	65%	65%	77%

Outcome indicator	Disaggregation	Baseline	2018 value	Target (2021)
Equitable access				
2.1. Percentage of countries with gender disparity (SDG 4.5)	Primary – Girls disadvantaged	23%	25%	18%
	Primary – Boys disadvantaged	25%	22%	19%
	Lower secondary – Girls disadvantaged	31%	23%	26%
	Lower secondary – Boys disadvantaged	40%	45%	30%
	Upper secondary – Girls disadvantaged	36%	35%	28%
	Upper secondary – Boys disadvantaged	45%	46%	35%
2.2. Adjusted net attendance rate of children from the poorest quintile in primary and lower- and upper-secondary education (SDGs 4.1 and 4.5) and attendance rate in early childhood education of children from the poorest quintile (SDG 4.2)	Early childhood education	18%	20%	30%
	Primary – Total	69%	76%	75%
	Lower secondary – Total	36%	45%	44%
	Upper secondary – Total	20%	29%	28%
2.3. Gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education	Global value	44%	46%	50%
2.4. Out-of-school rate for girls and boys of primary and lower-secondary school age	Primary – Girls	10%	9%	7%
	Primary – Boys	9%	9%	7%
	Lower secondary – Girls	18%	19%	16%
	Lower secondary – Boys	19%	19%	16%
Learning Outcomes				
2.5. Percentage of countries showing improvement in learning outcomes (SDG 4.1)	Total	62%	67%	79%
2.6. Education equity index (reflecting inequalities on gender; urban/rural and wealth quintile) (SDG 4.5 and Global Partnership for Education Results Framework)	Total	0.63	0.67	0.66
Skills Development				
2.7. Percentage of adolescents not in employment, education or training (SDGs 8.6, 4.4 and 4.7)	Total	22%	24%	20%

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44   This vision statement corresponds with the 'Outcome statement' for 'Goal Area 2: Every child learns' of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. This in turn accords with the overall mission of UNICEF as expressed in the Strategic Plan: "Realizing the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged".

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48   UNICEF Gender Action Plan.

49   Developing skills requires teachers implementing learner-centred pedagogies and a move away from traditional rote memorization approaches that focus mainly on knowledge acquisition. Skills are not the same as subject knowledge – e.g., in entrepreneurship education the learner will develop both knowledge (startup regulations, accounting principles, etc.) and skills (communication, creativity, decision-making). Skills are harder to assess than subject knowledge, making it harder to evaluate and improve programming. This is an emerging field to which UNICEF can contribute.

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57   We will also work closely with the Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

58   UNICEF 2019–2030 Education Strategy: Survey Approach and Key Findings.

59   Based on available data: 192 countries (142 UNICEF programme countries + 50 non-programme countries) have data on the three indicators and were included in the typology.

60   Universal pre-primary refers to full coverage of pre-primary for the number of years pre-primary is delivered in the country.

61   Half of the countries are categorized in the 'high challenge' and the other half in the 'comparatively low challenge'. Most of the countries in the 'comparatively low challenge' will still need to improve their learning outcomes.

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Wherever he lives.
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A fair chance.
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The furthest from help.
The most left behind.
The most excluded.
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And never give up.

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