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for every child

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UNICEF KYRGYZSTAN

Annual Report 2023



COMMENTS

FOREWORD	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
RESULTS	7
Social policy	7
Child rights monitoring	8
Child protection	9
Prevention of harmful social practices ...	10
Quality education	11
Early childhood development	12
Adolescent and youth engagement	13
Maternal and child health	14
Nutrition	15
Immunization	16
Climate change and environmental health	17
FUTURE PLANS	18
FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION / RESOURCES	21
EXPRESSION OF THANKS	23

FOREWORD

2023 was the first year of UNICEF's 2023-2027 Country Programme. In our five-year plan we set ambitious goals to advance children's rights. This first annual report is an opportunity to look back and see the progress we have made towards these goals.

The Republic of Kyrgyzstan reported on how it is working to realize children's rights at the 94th session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. Following the open dialogue, the Committee issued 146 recommendations on issues including violence against children, the right to a family environment, protection of children with disabilities, basic health and welfare, education and environment. Our work with civil society organizations and the government is more important than ever to address these recommendations.

Kyrgyzstan repatriated more women and children from Syria than any other country in Central Asia. Under its mandate to uphold children's rights and building on its expertise in supporting children and families affected by armed conflict, UNICEF supported the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic in this humanitarian operation and is now supporting the full reintegration of these children and their mothers into their families and communities. The government has shown that working together across all sectors of government – and collaboratively with the United Nations and civil society – means that citizens

can be brought home and supported to reintegrate back into society. UNICEF is now supporting the full reintegration of these children and their mothers, enabling them to complete their education, live in a safe environment, and avail of the opportunities that they now have.

The highlight of the year was the rolling out of a UNICEF-supported integrated model project for children with disabilities in four municipalities in Suzak District, Jalal-Abad Province. The model focuses on early identification and early intervention, and requires the active involvement of family doctors, home visiting nurses, preschool teachers, family and child support department case managers, social assistants for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and local social affairs specialists all working together. The model project will create a support network for children and their families, to ensure that all children with disabilities and developmental delays and their families will enjoy equal and full enjoyment of their rights, including promotion and respect for their inherent dignity.

In 2024, our commitment to advocating children's rights remains steadfast. We will continue working closely with the government, civil society, and partners to ensure that policies align with international standards and prioritize the well-being of Kyrgyzstan's children.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, UNICEF achieved significant results in the areas of social policy, child protection, health, education, and climate change adaptation.



CHILD POVERTY

Advocacy on child poverty at the high-level National Development Forum on Poverty and Inequality shaped discussions on poverty reduction strategies, with a focus on social assistance and care services for children.



EVIDENCE AND DATA COLLECTION

To assess progress on realizing children's rights in Kyrgyzstan, in cooperation with the National Statistics Committee and with support from partners, UNICEF launched Round 6 of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). The MICS provides reliable statistics on the situation of children and women. The results of the survey will be made available to the public in 2024.



CHILD PROTECTION

UNICEF supported the government to reach 233 children and 101 women repatriated from Syria. The returnees were able to access immediate psychosocial support, hygiene kits and health checks. To ensure that the repatriated children and parents are supported to reintegrate back into their families and communities – as well as to prevent and respond to child violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation – UNICEF advocated specialized child protection and family welfare social workers be placed at municipal level.

UNICEF also provided technical support to the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration to rewrite the “social care services” chapter of the social protection system assessment; this updates information on social work staff and services for children.



PREVENTION OF HARMFUL SOCIAL PRACTICES

UNICEF in Kyrgyzstan engaged over 80,000 people - users of the edutainment game application “Mysteries of Sary Kol” and viewers of an online television programme – to address harmful gender norms supporting child marriage and gender-based violence. In addition, thanks to UNICEF, 80 members of 20 mobile response teams from conflict-affected communities now have skills to assess risks of gender-based violence in emergencies, and to identify and refer survivors to services during emergencies.



QUALITY EDUCATION

In 2023, UNICEF supported the publication and dissemination of the Ministry of Education and Science's National Sample-Based Learning Assessment. The assessment showed that an alarmingly high share of Grade 4 and Grade 8 students performed below basic levels in reading comprehension, mathematics and science for the period between 2007 and 2021. To address this issue, UNICEF is helping the education sector to strengthen data-informed, equity-focused planning and build the capacity of teachers to enhance the learning outcomes of children.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) agenda was at the forefront in 2023, in legislative, political and technical education arenas. The Accelerator Programme was launched to boost the number of private and community-based preschool services for children aged three to six years, especially in rural areas. UNICEF played a key role in developing a comprehensive training package to ensure that service providers on the Accelerator Programme gain foundational skills and knowledge on child development and care, child safeguarding, non-discrimination, play-based learning, and business administration.



ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In 2023, Kochkor-Ata, Razakov, and Kara-Suu were recognized as the three top youth and child-friendly cities in Kyrgyzstan, exemplifying their commitment to creating environments that prioritize the well-being and rights of the younger population. The cities were identified in the second phase of the UNICEF-supported Youth and Child Friendly Local Governance initiative, led by the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy, with 32 local self-governments across the country participating. Thanks to the initiative, the cities are prioritizing the voices, needs, concerns, and rights of children and young people as integral components of public policies, programmes, and decisions.



MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to improve the quality of primary health care for newborns, children, and adolescents, to ensure that they have access to life-saving essential services. Thanks to telemedicine, children with developmental difficulties from the most remote and deprived regions now have access to quality health services, following the approval by the Prime Minister of regulations to enable the use of telemedicine in the health sector.



NUTRITION

UNICEF continued to support the government to develop an evidence-based nutrition policy. The resulting Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan for 2023-2027 integrated survey findings and a concept note on micronutrient supplementation. Implementation of the Action Plan will reduce micronutrient deficiency in children and adolescent girls, using measures including food fortification. To continue advocacy and strengthen the knowledge base on nutrition, UNICEF trained 25 parliamentarians on food security and nutrition. The training was delivered by UNICEF alongside the World Food Programme, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

IMMUNIZATION

The main priorities of immunization work in 2023 were responding to the measles outbreak; supporting national stakeholders to develop the National Immunization Strategy; ensuring cold chain for vaccine transfer and storage; and generating demand for vaccination. More than 85 per cent of parents and caregivers who participated in Behavioural Insights research declared that they had vaccinated their child within the timeframe of the immunization schedule.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Air pollution is the biggest environmental risk factor for premature death and ill-health affecting children and adults in Kyrgyzstan, and also has negative economic effects. UNICEF advocated political and social awareness of the health effects of air pollution. An outcome of this advocacy was that the Minister of Natural Resources, Ecology, and Technical Oversight signed the Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action, pledging to ensure that priorities for children and youth are included in climate action.

2023 at a glance

January

Launch of "Oky" mobile application for teenage girls about growing up and health



The first Inclusive Kid's Run

May



Republican Forum on Early Childhood Education



March

Football match on 8 March – Women Asian Football Cup

High-level advocacy led by UNICEF to protect ethno-linguistic minorities and advance multilingual education

February

First repatriation flight from Syria



April

ECO Kyzdar Hackathon within UNICEF's "Girls in Science" initiative

Government signing of Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate following UNICEF advocacy

June



Measles campaign and arrival of measles vaccines



Kyrgyzstan's Partnership Compact for System Transformation launched by Ministry of Education and Science and Local Education Group

July



Launch of integrated model project for children with disabilities in Suzak District, Jalal-Abad Province

September



Kyrgyzstan reports on implementation of child rights at the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

November



National Forum on poverty and inequality – with UNICEF technical support on session around child poverty

World Children's Day

Large-scale campaign on children's rights with Manas Airport and Kyrgyz national football team

August

Approval of new Law on Education



Campaign on violence in public transport within Spotlight

International Day of Girls – Resolution of Girls

October



A campaign calling on the public to intervene when they observe harassment in public transport was renewed in 2023 reached over 1,000,000 passengers in Bishkek and Osh.

December

Education Joint Sector Review organized to review SDG4 progress



RESULTS



Social policy

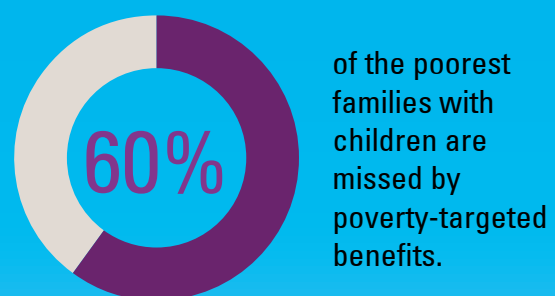
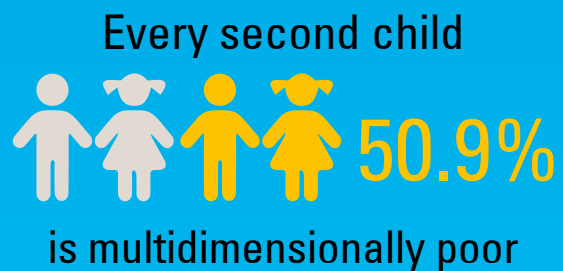
UNICEF remains steadfast in its commitment to creating lasting impacts in the lives of Kyrgyzstan's children. Through collaborative efforts and strategic initiatives, we are striving to build a more equitable and prosperous future for every child in the country. In our unwavering commitment to poverty reduction and the establishment of fair and inclusive social protection systems, UNICEF has actively consulted with key stakeholders, including the President's Administration, Parliament, and the Cabinet of Ministries.

Building on the momentum of the 2023 SDG Summit, UNICEF collaborated with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic to organize the country's first National Development Forum on Poverty and Inequality. This Forum delved into the data and trends surrounding multidimensional and child poverty, shaping discussions on poverty reduction strategies that prioritize strengthening social protection and investing in human capital. An assessment of the national social protection system focused on social assistance and care services for children; the insights gleaned from the study influenced the Cabinet of Ministers' annual Work Plan for 2024.

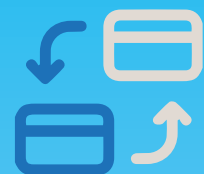
UNICEF has worked with the authorities to help ensure that social protection payments are available when shocks hit. This includes supporting the development of guidance for providing cash transfers during emergencies.

As part of our work to help ensure that public spending reaches children, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education and Science to implement a new way of planning and budgeting that focuses on how ministries will achieve results for children. Details of the new planning and budgeting approach were put online, to make it easier for Ministry staff to use and follow. This aligns with the government's digitalization agenda and will also support the scaling up of this new approach to other ministries in the future.

In Kyrgyzstan, over a million children live in monetary poverty (40.3 per cent of all children); these children additionally suffer from multiple deprivations in their living conditions, known as multidimensional poverty. UNICEF's work focuses on working with partners and stakeholders to strengthen the social protection system in Kyrgyzstan, to ensure that it reaches the children who need the most support. In 2023, this included technical support to the country's first National Development Forum on Poverty and Inequality, guidance on delivering cash transfers in emergencies to 'shockproof' the social protection system, and supporting child-friendly planning and budgeting.



The value of each humanitarian cash transfer is now equal to the monthly Minimum Subsistence Level



KGS 7,178 (\$85)

Child rights monitoring

In 2023, Kyrgyzstan concluded its fourth reporting cycle on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As part of this process, UNICEF provided technical support to civil society organizations that submitted alternative reports, and supported the government to prepare for the State Party Dialogue with the Committee in September. The government delegation was headed by the Commissioner on Child Rights and included nine high-level representatives from relevant ministries. The head of the delegation invited the Committee members to visit Kyrgyzstan in 2024. Subsequently, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued 146 recommendations, as part of its concluding observations. The recommendations pay special attention to violence against children, the right of children to live in a family environment, and protection of children with disabilities. Recommendations related to the impact of climate change on child rights were included for the first time.

UNICEF supported the Parliamentary Council on Women's and Child Rights and Gender Equality to develop the Council's annual workplan on child rights. Key events included a session on inclusive education in the draft law on disability, and on implementation of the new Law on Education. Children living with disabilities are a priority for UNICEF Kyrgyzstan. In support of this, UNICEF presented the findings of its Situation Analysis on Children and Adolescents with Disabilities to the Council on Persons with Disabilities. The next meeting of this Council was dedicated to children with disabilities. The Council on Persons with Disabilities established a working group on children with disabilities, in order to strengthen intersectoral coordination and improve the access of children with disabilities to services.

UNICEF worked in close coordination with the National Statistics Committee and partners to complete data collection for the latest round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6). The MICS provides reliable statistics on the situation of children and women, and MICS data are a cornerstone of child-rights monitoring, providing evidence on progress against child-rights indicators.

In 2023, Kyrgyzstan concluded its fourth reporting cycle on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Partnerships with key government bodies – including the Commissioner for Child Rights, the Parliamentary Council on Women's and Children's Rights and Gender Equality, and the Council on Persons with Disabilities – have resulted in commitments to advance child rights, including support for dissemination of the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2023, UNICEF started the sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS-6) to gather reliable statistics on the situation of children and women in Kyrgyzstan.



The United Nations
Committee on the Rights of
the Child issued

146

recommendations on
children's rights in
Kyrgyzstan.

Child protection

UNICEF worked closely with the government to support 233 children and 101 women repatriated by the government from Syria in 2023. All the repatriated children and their mothers received specialized services at government-run transit centre. The children and women who returned to Kyrgyzstan have been through very traumatic experiences and UNICEF supported psychologists to work in the Transit Centre and provide mental health and psychosocial support. The 80 Transit Centre staff were also trained on trauma-informed care to enable them to support the children and women. All of the children were given a learning assessment, which will help with their reintegration, as the findings help teachers to develop individual learning plans so the children can go to and remain at school. All the children and women had health check-ups, including dental check-ups, which were very well received. To prepare districts to reintegrate children and women from Syria, three local-level orientation events were conducted with all the district representative offices of line ministries and agencies involved in reintegration (health, education, social welfare, internal affairs, President's Administration, and State Commission for National Security). Significantly, the government ministries and agencies worked together to ensure children were healthy, safe and thriving. Through this collaboration and cooperation, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic will ensure adequate and quality support for the reintegration of these children and their mothers.

Significant efforts have been made to build and strengthen partnerships on children in contact with the law, with the aim of piloting diversion in one district, Sverdlovsky. Under diversion programmes, children accused of committing criminal offences are supported to address problems in their lives that led to the offences and make amends, instead of being placed in detention. Guidelines on how to implement diversion and training were developed and 18 service providers were trained. To date, 15 children have been diverted and provided with services following agreements with investigators. The pilot project is a multi-agency effort involving the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration.

UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration on the 'social care services' chapter of the social protection system assessment, which gives updated information on social work staff and services for children. UNICEF advocated specialized child protection and family welfare social workers be placed at municipal and district levels.

Children in Kyrgyzstan continue to face a range of protection threats, particularly if they belong to a vulnerable population group. UNICEF achieved significant results in the area of child protection in 2023, supporting the repatriation and reintegration of children and their mothers from Syria. Of the 410 children and 268 women from Kyrgyzstan who have been identified in camps in Syria, a total of 233 children and 101 women were repatriated in 2023. Meanwhile, UNICEF continued playing a critical role in supporting coordination on child protection issues between the government, the United Nations and NGOs.



were repatriated from Syria to Kyrgyzstan in 2023.

18 service providers were trained to implement diversion,



and **15 children** were diverted and provided with services rather than being placed in detention centres.

Prevention of harmful social practices

Child marriage remains a reality for many girls in Kyrgyzstan. Like other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), the practice is underpinned by harmful gender norms. In 2023, UNICEF in Kyrgyzstan engaged over 80,000 people – users of the edutainment game application 'Mysteries of Sary Kol' and viewers of the online television programme 'Erkekche' – to address harmful gender norms supporting child marriage and GBV.

An endline survey measuring change in social norms supporting child marriage was conducted in six UNICEF-supported communities and compared with control community data. The results of the survey confirmed increased levels of confidence to denounce child marriage, and improved social expectations of adolescents from parents concerning girls' education in the communities where UNICEF works.

Following the 2022 border-conflict emergency response, the child protection team reflected on GBV-risk mitigation, and how to improve the response to GBV and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF introduced a new approach using mobile teams, particularly relevant for fast-moving border conflicts. Training was developed for 20 mobile protection teams (80 members in total) in Batken province – the area most affected by the conflict – covering psychosocial support for children, training adolescents to deliver psychosocial support to younger children once the mobile team moves to the next location, and for active identification and response to cases of GBV.

The work of mobile teams should contribute to enhancing the leadership role of adolescent girls, as the girls who received training will become animators and proactively support younger children with psychosocial-support activities on challenges, including disclosure of violence, a key gap in violence programming. Consultations with girls and young women from conflict-affected communities helped adjust words and messaging in relation to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Use of the word 'sexual' is a taboo in these communities and will lead to rejection of the entire message by the audience. Three posters were designed through consultations with girls and young women, focusing on help-seeking, prohibition of all types of sexual exploitation and abuse, and reporting channels. Posters will be placed visibly in all locations and sites where UNICEF operates.

Every eighth girl in Kyrgyzstan is married before she turns 18, depriving them of education and employment opportunities, and putting them at increased risk of birth complications, isolation, poverty and violence. UNICEF works in Kyrgyzstan to address the gender norms underpinning child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence. In 2023, this included engaging users of an edutainment game application with dialogue on harmful gender norms, and enhancing the leadership role of adolescent girls through their involvement in mobile GBV-response teams and in communication campaigns against sexual violence and exploitation.



13%

of women aged 20-24 in Kyrgyzstan are

married before the age of 18

The edutainment game application **'Mysteries of Sary Kol'**, devoted to prevention of child marriage, was selected as a finalist from among **400 applicants** worldwide by Game4Change in the category of **Best Civics Game**.



Quality education

Facilitative support from UNICEF enabled the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) to formulate the Partnership Compact for system transformation, a requirement for mobilizing funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The Partnership Compact highlights the policy reform areas agreed upon by the MOES and the Local Education Group at the 2022 Joint Sector Review, and the country commitments made at the 2022 Transforming Education Summit.

As part of the Partnership Compact, UNICEF assisted MOES in organizing the Joint Sector Review in 2023. UNICEF provided support to MOES to publish the National Education Statistical Book for 2018-2022 and National Sample-Based Learning Assessment. This helped MOES and the sector partners to review Kyrgyzstan's progress towards SDG4 and identify gaps and needs through data-informed policy dialogue. The assessment showed that an alarmingly high share of Grade 4 and Grade 8 students performed below basic levels in reading comprehension, mathematics and science for the period between 2007 and 2021.

To address a learning crisis in the country, UNICEF trained 2,660 teachers (85 per cent female) to apply assessment tools to identify student learning gaps. This aims to help 20,000 students of Grade 5 and Grade 6 in 460 target schools, especially those underperforming in academic subjects, and provide them with support to catch up.

UNICEF, along with other UN agencies, made high-level advocacy efforts to preserve the right to language for ethno-linguistic minorities, and reiterated the importance of non-discrimination and multilingual education at public hearings on the law on the state language. UNICEF also held several meetings with the Disability Council, highlighting the importance of revising the MOES concept note and action plans on disability-inclusive education in line with the new education law and international conventions on disability and children's rights.

Access to primary and secondary education is high, but learning achievements remain low, in particular for children who did not attend pre-primary education, children with disabilities, children from low-income families and children from linguistic minorities. UNICEF has called for efficient and transparent management of resources in education to address the existing and potential inequities, by strengthening use of the education management information system and results-based management in sector planning and results monitoring. Important activities of UNICEF in 2023 included supporting the Ministry of Education and Science to formulate the Partnership Compact for system transformation, a requirement for mobilizing funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and training teachers to apply assessment tools to identify student learning gaps.

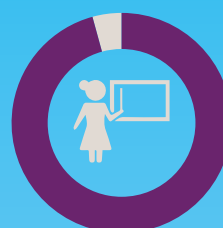


61% of Grade 4 students lack basic proficiency in mathematics



and about half **49%** of Grade 4 students

cannot demonstrate foundational skills in reading comprehension.



92% of teachers under survey had completed professional development courses.

Early childhood development

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) agenda was at the forefront in 2023, in legislative, political and technical education arenas. The agenda was driven by the Prime Minister and Child Rights Commissioner who initiated the 'Accelerator' programme in March 2023. The ECE Accelerator programme aims to boost the number of community-based, private preschool services for children aged three to six years, especially in rural areas. The core measure of the programme is to relax the existing licensing requirements in legislation, allowing 800 individual entrepreneurs, mainly women, to open and run community-based preschools immediately after three days of training.

UNICEF played a key role in bridging the coordination gaps between the strong drive of the initiators and technical issues raised by the Ministry of Education and Science. The legislative shift towards relaxing licensing requirements may help increase the national coverage of preschools, yet it may also compromise the quality of preschool services, including raising concerns over child safeguarding, quality assurance and accountability.

UNICEF partnered with the Republican Teacher Training Institute in developing a comprehensive training package to ensure that service providers under the Accelerator programme gain foundational skills and knowledge on child development and care, child safeguarding, non-discrimination, play-based learning, and business administration. The content of the training package was also informed by expertise and resources from UNICEF, the Aga Khan Foundation and the World Bank. The two-week comprehensive training, including post-assessment and certification, was validated by the Ministry of Education. As of December 2023, more than 800 female and male service providers have taken part in the initial three-day training and are gradually engaging in the comprehensive training in a phased manner across 2023-2024. For sustainability, UNICEF negotiated with the Republican Teacher Training Institute to ensure that the training package is integral to the annual academic plan, as part of the ECE Accelerator programme. In this sense, UNICEF made a technical contribution to advancing the progress of the Accelerator programme and ensuring that training for the new ECE facilitators and managers met minimum standards.

According to the latest MOES data, the national enrolment rate in preschools is only 26.4 per cent, suggesting that an estimated 768,000 preschool-aged children aged 3-5 years miss out on early childhood development and education (ECD/E) services, potentially compromising their school readiness. The government initiated the ECE Accelerator programme to increase national preschool coverage by removing the licensing procedures and providing three days of training to hundreds of people to run community-based preschool services. While raising concerns about the quality of services under the Accelerator programme, UNICEF and the Republican Teacher Training Institute developed additional comprehensive training to ensure that service providers gain skills and knowledge on child development, safeguarding, play-based learning, non-discrimination by gender and ethnicity, and business administration.

Bebbo

Over 70,000 parents of children aged 0 to 6 use the 'Bebbo' parenting app – UNICEF's regional initiative for parents

48 With the support of UNICEF, 48 national ECD resource trainers have been trained to disseminate knowledge on early childhood development to those who wish to start home-based kindergartens through the Government Accelerator programme.

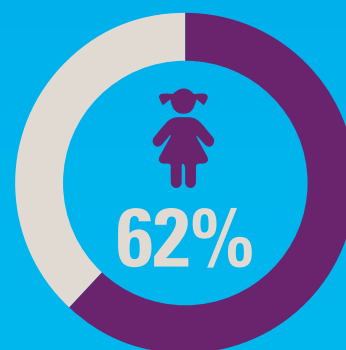
Adolescent and youth engagement

In 2023, UNICEF supported the Government to launch the second phase of the Youth and Child Friendly Local Governance (YCFLG) initiative. This initiative, led by the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy, achieved significant results by ensuring that 32 local self-governments (LSGs) across the country prioritize the voices, needs, concerns and rights of children and young people as integral components of public policies, programmes and decisions. Additionally, the initiative successfully integrated child and youth issues into local planning priorities, recognizing 13 LSGs as 'youth and child friendly.' Kochkor-Ata, Razakov, and Kara-Suu were recognized as the top three child-friendly cities, exemplifying their commitment to creating environments that prioritize the well-being and rights of the younger population.

The UNICEF-administered 'U-Report' digital platform has played a crucial role in amplifying youth voices. Through online polls, young people have shared opinions on sensitive issues like school bullying and career guidance, and utilized the resulting data to design their own youth-oriented initiatives. The platform boasted 12,700 young subscribers in 2023 (56 per cent girls) in Kyrgyzstan.

The urgent need to bridge the growing digital gender divide, address declining learning outcomes among adolescents, and harness the promising growth of information technology and related industries underscores UNICEF's commitment to prioritizing science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) and STEM4Girls initiatives in Kyrgyzstan. UNICEF engaged caregivers, parents and teachers to innovate in school STEM subjects and co-create projects with a gender perspective in 50 target schools nationwide. Moreover, 355 parents gained skills to contribute to the mental well-being of adolescents and provide support for adolescent girls pursuing studies in STEM, overcoming prevailing gender stereotypes. UNICEF also invested in supporting girls to gain green skills (including eco thinking, eco habits, waste sorting, and knowledge about green professions) and STEM knowledge, and to gain understanding of gender stereotypes and norms. Equipped with co-creation tools, these girls played a pivotal role in training their peers using peer-to-peer approaches.

Kyrgyzstan is grappling with many challenges concerning its adolescents and youth, encompassing economic hardship, educational barriers, environmental threats, social inequality, exclusion from decision making, and a polarized society. In response, UNICEF prioritizes fostering and creating an enabling environment for adolescent and youth development and participation. In 2023, this included supporting the government to extend the Youth and Child Friendly Local Governance (YCFLG) initiative, engaging young people using the 'U-Report' digital platform, and leading initiatives to increase uptake of the study of science, technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) among girls.



Over 4,880 (62 per cent girls) adolescents benefitted from skills development on peacebuilding, gender equality and eco-solutions.



32 cities

enrolled in UNICEF's Youth and Child Friendly Local Governance (YCFLG) initiative.

Maternal and child health

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MOH) to improve the quality of primary healthcare (PHC) for newborns, children, and adolescents to ensure that they have access to life-saving essential services. The MOH revised the Primary Health Care classifier and the State Guaranteed Benefit package (SGBP) to include evidence-based services for early detection and prevention of diseases, risky behaviours, and mental health problems among adolescents, along with other services. This was aligned with objectives included in the midterm review of the Health 2030 strategy.

Thanks to telemedicine, sick children or children at risk of disability from the most remote and deprived regions of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken provinces now have access to quality health consultations. This approach removes such barriers as a travel cost, distance and time. The telemedicine was prioritized by President and Health 2030 strategy. The MOH is coordinating this work to avoid the introduction of multiple telemedicine platforms.

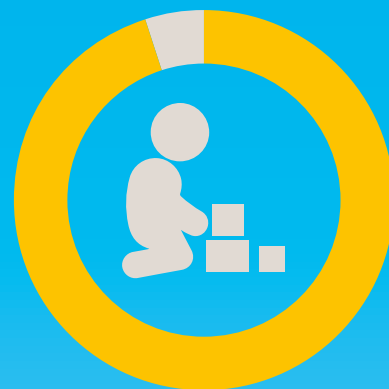
In 2023, an important activity for the MOH was the development of a set of principles to optimize primary healthcare services; ensuring that child health remains on the agenda and in frameworks. UNICEF provided technical support and ensured the participation of child-health experts in the discussion, planning and conceptualization of several high-level documents, such as the midterm review of the Health 2030 strategy. One key success was the institutionalization of evidence-based, effective home-visiting practices in the next phase of health sector reform. Practically, in Suzak district, 400 frontline workers were trained in early identification of developmental delay in children, within the new piloted cross-sectorial project on children with disabilities.

Working with WHO, UNICEF provided technical support to the MoH to adapt the global 'Guidelines on PHC services to newborns, children and adolescents' (released in 2022) for use in Kyrgyzstan. This is to ensure inclusion of evidence-based preventive and curative services for both healthy and sick children.

Maintaining continuity of primary health care (PHC) services for routine and essential care is necessary for reducing child mortality and promoting women and children's health. UNICEF's priority in Kyrgyzstan is improving access to and quality of PHC services, as the best way of protecting the health and wellbeing of mothers and children. Results in this area in 2023 included supporting the Ministry of Health to revise the State Guaranteed Benefit package (SGBP) to include evidence-based services for early detection and prevention of diseases, risky behaviours, and mental health problems among adolescents; and the institutionalization of evidence-based, effective home-visiting practices in the next phase of health sector reforms.

400 frontline workers

in Suzak district



(more than 95 per cent in these areas) were trained in early identification of developmental delay in children.

Nutrition

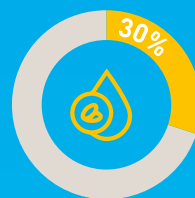
The Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan for 2023-2027, developed with UNICEF support, integrates findings from the 'National Nutrition Survey 2021' and a concept note on micronutrient supplementation. Implementation of the Action Plan will reduce micronutrient deficiency in the country, using measures including food fortification. The Action Plan has been cleared by all relevant ministries and is currently with the Prime Minister's Office, waiting for approval. To continue with advocacy and strengthen the knowledge base on nutrition, training was conducted on food security and nutrition for 25 parliamentarians. The training was delivered by UNICEF alongside the World Food Programme, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

UNICEF developed a thematic brief on iron and folic acid supplementation, which highlights widespread deficiency of iron and folic acid, severely affecting the health of children, adolescents, and pregnant women.

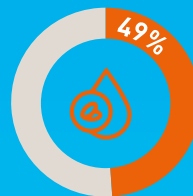
A behavioural insights study conducted in 2023 found that the long-established tradition of consuming meat and wheat flour-based dishes is being passed down to children. Barriers to cooking and eating a nutritionally diverse set of snacks and main meals each day (as a family), include lack of information on infant and young child feeding, financial constraints to buying healthy ingredients, family power dynamics and gender norms. The study will inform solutions for improved dietary diversity for children aged 6-23 months.

UNICEF and FAO are jointly supporting the government to develop food-based dietary guidelines to address the needs of infants and young children, adolescents, and pregnant and lactating women. Kyrgyzstan will be the first country in Central Asia to develop such guidelines. A working group has been established and has drafted a preliminary plan for development.

Poor diets continue to affect the health of children growing up in Kyrgyzstan. In 2023, UNICEF supported the government to develop an evidence-based nutrition policy, leveraging partnerships and resources and drawing on the findings of the National Nutrition Survey 2021. The Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan for 2023-2027 will reduce micronutrient deficiency in the country, using measures including food fortification. Other results include developing food-based dietary guidelines to address the needs of infants and young children, adolescents, and pregnant and lactating women; and a thematic brief on iron and folic acid supplementation



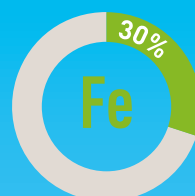
Children aged 6-59 months in Talas, Issyk-Kul and Naryn are anaemic.



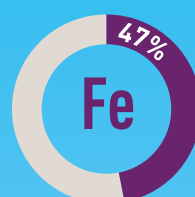
National prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women



High prevalence of iron deficiency in children aged 6-59 months



Children aged 5-9 years old have iron deficiency



Girls aged 10-18 years are iron deficient.

Immunization

In response to the measles outbreak, UNICEF, in coordination with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and WHO, supported the country to receive 755,500 doses of measles and rubella vaccine from the Measles and Rubella Partnership. Following this, the Republican Centre for Immunoprophylaxis began a supplementary immunization campaign in four regions. The campaign was supported by media and social media communication informed by social listening analysis, and community engagement. The MOH initiated the development of a National Immunization Strategy for 2025-2030 with technical support from UNICEF and WHO, to better integrate immunization with other health interventions and help meet universal health coverage targets. The strategy includes activities to generate demand for vaccination, by influencing the views and behaviours of parents and medical workers relating to childhood immunization.

UNICEF also initiated analysis of barriers to vaccine uptake and development of behavioural insights-informed approaches for three groups of parents: young mothers, single mothers, and vaccine-hesitant fathers. Evaluation of the implementation of the approaches found that the one targeting young mothers in maternity wards was effective for increasing knowledge among this group, and provided evidence for scale up.

For the first time in Kyrgyzstan, the online National Immunization Strategy (NIS) Cost. App (NIS.Cost.App) – a UNICEF Google sheet application which supports estimation of resource requirements for vaccinations – was put to use. The NIS.Cost.App is used to plan activities and will be used to develop Annual Operational Plans for the immunization programme.

Kyrgyzstan has made significant progress in vaccination over the decades: together with other countries in the region, it was certified polio-free in 2002 and rubella-free in 2019. Nevertheless, in 2023, in spite of coordinated efforts, Kyrgyzstan faced a measles outbreak among young children. The main priorities for immunization work in 2023 were responding to the measles outbreak; supporting national stakeholders to develop the National Immunization Strategy; ensuring cold chain for vaccine transfer and storage; and generating demand for vaccination.



More than 85 per cent of parents and caregivers who participated in Behavioural Insights research declared that they had vaccinated their child within the timeframe of the immunization schedule.

Climate change and environmental health

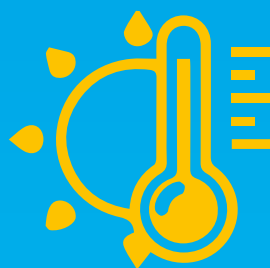
Air pollution is the single biggest environmental risk factor for premature death and ill-health affecting children and adults in Kyrgyzstan, and also has negative economic impacts. Children's lungs are especially vulnerable to air pollution even at lower levels of exposure. To address this issue, UNICEF advocated political and social awareness of the health effects of air pollution. An outcome of this advocacy was that the Minister of Natural Resources, Ecology, and Technical Oversight signed the Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action, pledging to ensure that priorities for children and youth are included in climate action.

To raise the voices of youth and ensure child participation, UNICEF conducted the Eco Hackathon, designed to address environmental issues. The hackathon resulted in the creation of 12 eco-friendly solutions by adolescent girls, of which four received financial backing to showcase their practical impact. The proposed solutions encompassed initiatives in upcycling, eco farming, and development of a parabolic thermal power plant. This collective experience deepened the participants' understanding of environmental challenges, nurtured an entrepreneurial spirit, and honed project management capabilities among the girls.

UNICEF has made substantial progress in building the capacities of teachers for disaster risk reduction and preparing students for climate-related disasters. With support from UNICEF and the Red Crescent Society in Kyrgyzstan, over 900,000 children have improved their knowledge and preparedness to emergencies and response skills. Moreover, 1,800 schools have developed and updated preparedness plans and conducted emergency drills and 600 schools are equipped with fire-fighting equipment.

Kyrgyzstan is one of the most climate vulnerable countries in the region, while air pollution is the biggest environmental risk factor for children's health. UNICEF's work in this area in 2023 centred on raising awareness of the health effects of air pollution, and encouraging adolescents to take action for the environment through participation in an Eco Hackathon.

Climate change



Kyrgyzstan's climate will continue to warm rapidly. By the end of the century the average temperature in Kyrgyzstan will

likely be 4-5° higher than today.

Children are inherently more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

The economic effects of climate change will continue to undermine already failing services for children.

Air pollution

Air pollution reaches hazardous levels in Bishkek in the winter, causing significant adverse health and economic impacts.

The drivers of air pollution are now clear: residential coal-fired heating is the primary cause, followed by diesel vehicles.



FUTURE PLANS





SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Work with partners to improve the quality and coverage of the social protection system to reduce multidimensional poverty and address child-rights deprivations.
- Build on UNICEF's technical support to strengthen the justification, design, costing and fiscal space within and beyond the sector – and proposals to either extend the coverage of the poverty-targeted benefit or introduce a new category of benefit for children under the age of three – by assisting the government and presidential administration to adopt evidence-based and costed policy options to move forward the child-sensitive social protection agenda.
- Assess the performance of the national social protection system to support the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration to develop a new sectoral policy in 2024.



CHILD RIGHTS MONITORING

- Continue working with the government to address the concluding recommendations made to Kyrgyzstan by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- Introduce the new child data portal, incorporated into the National Statistics Committee (NSC) website.



CHILD PROTECTION

- Work with the government to develop a long-term vision for a child protection system for Kyrgyzstan that will support all vulnerable children across the country. UNICEF will advocate for an increased number of social workers specially trained in child protection and domestic abuse at municipal level.
- Support the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration to invest in the social welfare workforce (including social workers, social pedagogues, social assistants for the elderly and disabled, and municipal specialists in social affairs) to have the basic social work skills to support children who experience abuse and neglect, and families in crisis.
- Provide new modules on “parenting adolescents” and other relevant topics to support parents who may not know how to engage with their teenage children.
- Reform childcare as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Children should live with their families or in a family environment, and this requires child protection social workers and child protection services to be available at municipal level. UNICEF will continue to advocate and work with the Government to make this a reality in the Kyrgyz Republic.
- Ensure the safe repatriation and smooth reintegration into communities of all citizens returning to Kyrgyzstan, and that child rights are respected in all interactions. This will be key to continuing to work together across sectors and with various government and development partners, all of whom bring their specific expertise to ensure children are protected.



PREVENTION OF HARMFUL SOCIAL PRACTICES

- Redesign training for mobile GBV-response teams so that these operate in a way that is more practical and effective in emergency situations.
- Increase efforts to address child marriage through engaging with communities – particularly girls and boys and their parents – to reflect on and discuss key issues facing adolescent girls, identify solutions, and then put them into practice. This way of working seeks to embed problem solving within affected children and communities, and is part of empowering children, families and communities to examine and discuss underlying gender and social norms in a safe way.



QUALITY EDUCATION

- Continue to support MOES and other stakeholders to transform the education system, in line with the Partnership Compact.
- Partner with line ministries, existing committees and working groups, and donors to ensure inclusion of gender equality, disability rights, and non-discrimination for ethno-linguistic minorities in legislation, policy dialogue and education planning.
- Strengthen the systems-capacity of the MOES in preschool and basic education, teachers' professional development, skills-development opportunities for adolescents, and roll-out of climate education and disability-inclusive education.
- Support the transition to 12-years education system, in line with the Government's priorities.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- Support the government to increase access to alternative and community-based early childhood education (ECE) services through quality assurance and innovative models for young children aged 3-5 years.
- Provide technical support in reviewing ECE-related legislation and policies to remove structural barriers and address the impact of gender norms for children to access high-quality preschool education.
- Promote digital technologies in early learning and parenting support for greater access to and use of inclusive ECE resources, online curricula and parenting apps.



ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Advocate for adolescents to have opportunities to participate in skills-development opportunities, with a focus on socio-emotional skills, transferable skills, employment skills, green skills, gender equality and youth-led climate action.
- Strengthen adolescent participation and local ownership for sustained impact for social cohesion.
- Expand partnerships with the private sector, chambers of commerce and business associations, young people's networks, and ministries to develop mechanisms to address skills mismatch and increase internships, traineeships, volunteering, and support for entrepreneurship.
- Promote parental and community engagement in a national campaign on careers and lifelong education and skills development training for adolescent boys and girls, coupled with social behaviour change in favour of gender equality and youth agency in society.



MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

- Assess the situation of transmission of HIV, hepatitis and syphilis to infants.
- Introduce a package of PHC services for newborn children and adolescents based on WHO-UNICEF recommendations.
- Provide technical support to MOH for the systematization of neonatal screening initiatives, ensuring early identification of children at risk of disability.
- Contribute to the development of community-level transdisciplinary teams to ensure the access of children with disabilities to early intervention services.
- Apply innovation and digitalization by expanding telemedicine services in primary healthcare to ensure that sick children have access to quality medical consultations.



NUTRITION

- Develop and cost a micronutrient strategy for the Government and advocate for investment in nutrition.
- Update policies on breastfeeding and infant and young-child feeding, and follow up with capacity-development activities among health workers in the southern regions.
- Update the flour fortification strategy with a focus on strengthening institutional capacity.



IMMUNIZATION

- Support evidence-based communication and community engagement to address the measles outbreak.
- Coordinate promotion of demand for vaccination efforts.
- Build the capacity of health promoters in applying new approaches and techniques, and of medical staff to improve interpersonal communication skills.
- Support the generation of behavioural-insights evidence on barriers and enablers to vaccine uptake, and design tailored solutions for getting every child vaccinated: this includes finalizing the behavioural insights-informed approaches for single mothers, hesitant fathers and caregivers affected by migration.



CLIMATE CHANGE

- Establish and invest in climate-change and environmental education at secondary and high school level.
- Equip children and young people with the knowledge and skills required to protect themselves and contribute to a safe and sustainable future, ensuring that such efforts reach marginalized children and youth.



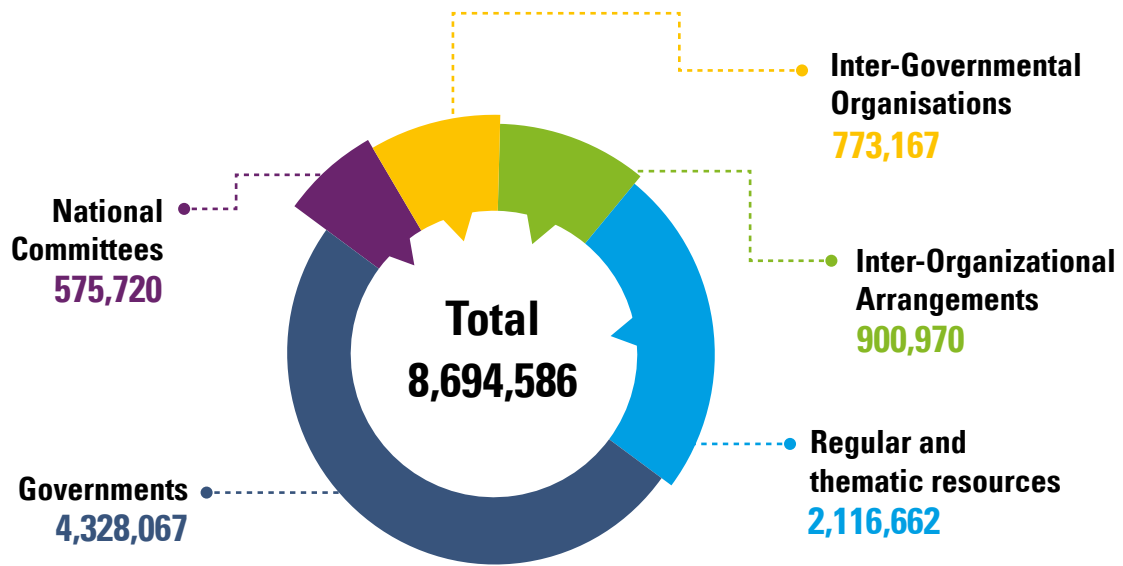
INTEGRATED SUPPORT TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES

- Create an enabling environment (policies, regulations) for operationalization of transdisciplinary teams in Suzak rayon.
- Build and strengthen capacity of key stakeholders, with a focus on family-based support in selected municipalities in Suzak.
- Raise awareness on issues affecting children living with disabilities at community and national levels, and advocate for implementation of integrated support to children with disabilities outside of Suzak rayon.

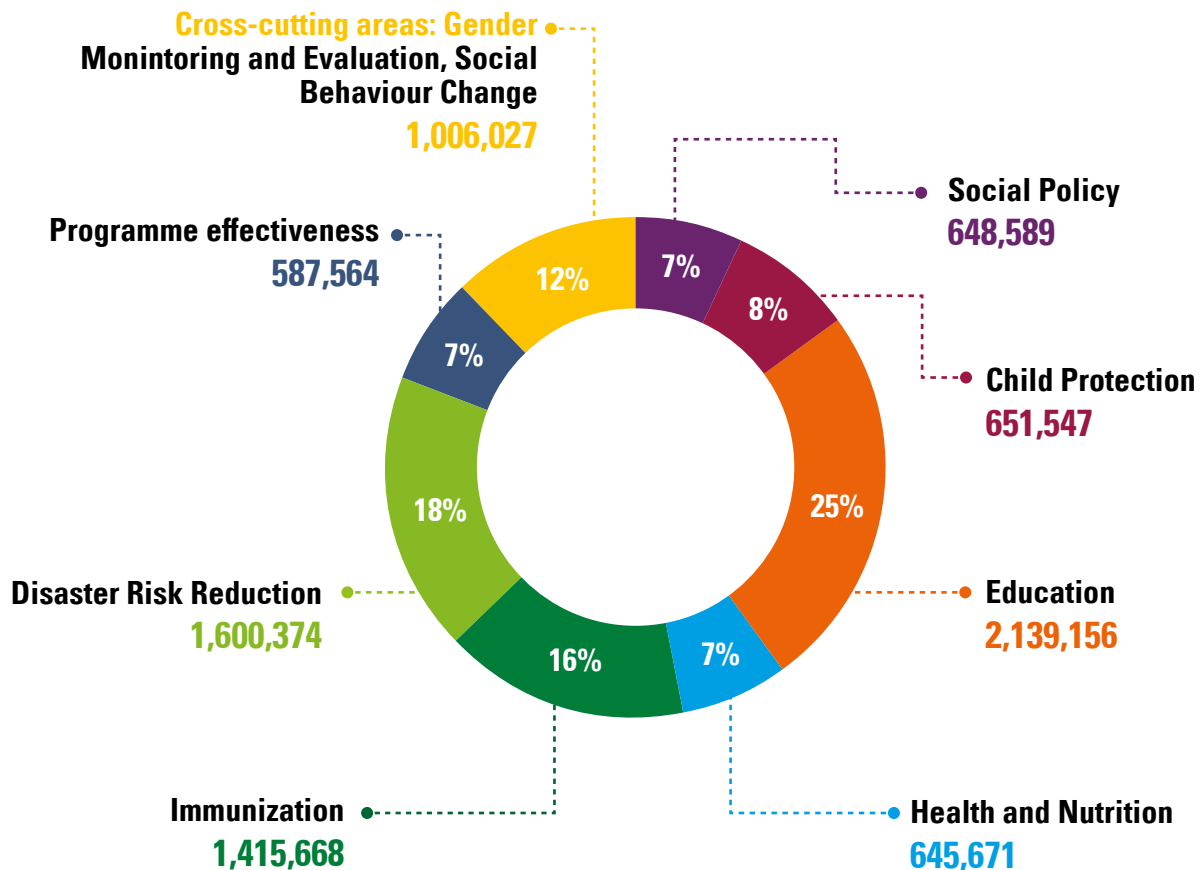
FINANCIAL IMPLEMENTATION / RESOURCES



2023 UTILIZATION BY TYPES OF FUNDING



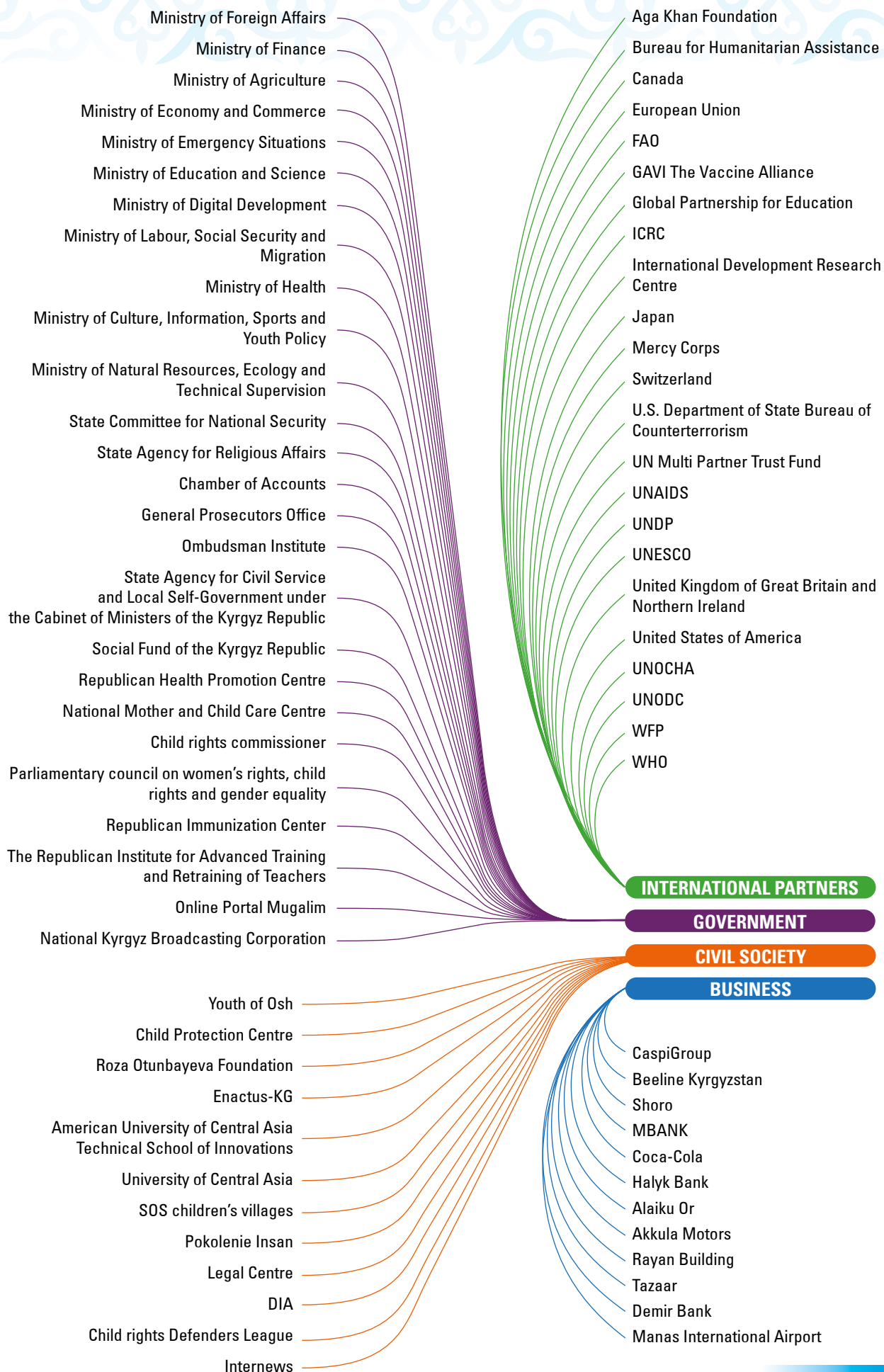
2023 UTILIZATION BY PROGRAMME



EXPRESSION OF THANKS



UNICEF extends its thanks to the following partners



For every child

Whoever she is.
Wherever he lives.
Every child deserves a childhood.
A future.
A fair chance.
That's why UNICEF is there.
For each and every child.
Working day in and day out.
In more than 190 countries and territories.
Reaching the hardest to reach.
The furthest from help.
The most excluded.
It's why we stay to the end.
And never give up.



for every child


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