

## Kyrgyzstan

### Update on the context and situation of children

During the year 2022, Kyrgyzstan faced a severe cross-border conflict with Tajikistan – the worst in Central Asia in decades – and had to grapple with the consequences of economic downturn caused by the war in Ukraine.

Despite alarming projections, Kyrgyzstan's economy was more resilient than expected. Remittances from about one million migrants in the Russian Federation, had increased by 7.7 percent by mid-year, while they were anticipated to sharply decrease. The World Bank estimated economic growth at 4 per cent for 2022, slightly higher than 2021 (3.6 per cent). However, Kyrgyzstan also experienced very high inflation (13.5 per cent[1] for 2022), driven by significant food and fuel price increase, negatively impacting households.

The UNICEF Office of Research[2] estimates that the socio-economic situation resulting from the war in Ukraine will increase poverty by 2.2 percentage points in Kyrgyzstan, or 143,000 people, including some 53,250 children. For the poorest families with children, this is mainly because of food inflation. In July, the National Statistics Committee (NSC) reported the national poverty rate increasing to 33.3 per cent in 2021, from 25.3 per cent in 2020. Child poverty rose from 31.8 per cent to 40.5 per cent, and child multidimensional poverty from 50.9 per cent to 58.2 per cent.[3] To address this situation, the government increased the monthly benefit for children in poor families by 50 per cent in June 2022.[4]

Two cross-border conflicts with Tajikistan, the first in January and the most violent one in September, set back children's rights. The September conflict resulted in 63 deaths and 142,071 people displaced. In addition, 423 private houses were destroyed and 12 schools, 11 kindergartens, 4 hospitals, and many other public facilities damaged.[5] Children suffered psychosocial trauma and disrupted learning as 161 schools in Batken and Osh regions (with in total 131,300 students) were temporarily closed; some schools accommodated an influx of displaced persons. By 31 December, most families had returned to their communities but 3,942 people, including around 2,360 children, remained displaced. Meanwhile, negotiations for demarcating the border with Uzbekistan progressed well and the countries signed a protocol on 26 September which was ratified by Kyrgyzstan's Parliament in November. However, the agreement terms caused significant protests at various levels, including major demonstrations in Uzgen district.

Following November 2021 elections, the new parliament sat first in February. That month it reinvigorated the previous Council for Women's Rights and Gender Equality under the Parliamentary Speaker and added Child Rights to its mandate, creating the Council Women and Children's Rights and Gender Equality: a new opportunity to strengthen parliamentary support for improving child rights. In October, the Cabinet approved the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2030 and National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2022-2024, providing a strong foundation for improving gender equality.

The Minister of Health's arrest for alleged corruption in June, which was followed by the Chair of Cabinet dismissing all three Deputy Ministers, resulted in very turbulent time in this key social sector ministry, also affecting the Republican Center for Immunization. In September, the Minister of Education was also arrested for corruption allegations, just after the Minister of Energy and Industry was dismissed. In October the Speaker, the Minister of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth, and the Minister of Transport and Communication all resigned, further disrupting government. A second Commissioner for Child Rights was appointed in March, only 10 months after the position was

created.

A comprehensive legal inventory process to align 359 laws with the new Constitution, started in 2021, was completed in 2022. However, many laws, such as those on education and disability, are not yet approved by the Parliament. The process was challenged by ineffective coordination and insufficient public discussions. The year also saw shrinking civic space, with the drafting of several restrictive laws on civil society and freedom of expression. This could hinder civil society work on issues such as gender-based violence (GBV) and institutionalization of children. Indeed, 2022 saw intensive public debates on violence against women and children, in view of the number and gravity of GBV cases reported.

On a positive note, the Parliament passed the amended Criminal Code, Criminal Procedural Code and Misdemeanour Code, introducing more severe punishment for violence against children – including life imprisonment – and increasing fines for sexual, spiritual and moral crimes against children.

Kyrgyzstan's education sector witnessed profound progress and challenges regarding ongoing system reforms. Teachers and school administrative staff nationwide received 50-80 per cent pay increases, to attract talent and improve teaching's status. Dialogue is underway at senior government level to introduce 12-year school education, modernize learning objectives, curriculum and pedagogies and bring Kyrgyzstan closer to international education standards. Work is still needed on associated legislation, policies and financial implications.

In the health sector, NSC data show that infant mortality fell from 21 per 1,000 in 2011 to 15 per 1,000 in 2021,[6] a notable achievement of the Ministry of Health (MoH) and partners. In April, the government doubled family doctors' basic salary, and in July, it increased the salaries of most health-care professionals to help attract and retain qualified personnel. The MoH and partners paid particular attention to strengthening primary health care and health system financing in 2022. However, COVID-19 vaccination coverage remained low – at 20.8 per cent – despite efforts to boost uptake.

After two years of delay due to COVID-19, Kyrgyzstan conducted the Population and Housing Census. It will provide key data on the level of education of the population, marriage and family structure and ethnicity in the country, among other key information. In October, the NSC announced that the population had reached 7 million.[7] Final census results will be disseminated in 2023.

[1]IMF World Economic Outlook, 2022, Countering the Cost-of-Living Crisis

[2] UNICEF Office of Research, The Impact of the Ukraine conflict on the situation of children in Kyrgyzstan, 2022

[3]NSC: <https://sustainabledevelopment-kyrgyzstan.github.io/en/1-2-2>

[4]The monthly benefit is now KGS1,200 (US\$14).

[5]Kyrgyzstan Emergency Response Plan, 2022

[6]NSC, 2022

[7]NSC, 2022

## Major contributions and drivers of results

2022 marked the last year of UNICEF's Country Programme 2018-2022. A consultative process took place with government and civil society partners to agree key elements of the new Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2027, in line with national priorities and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. The new CPD was approved by the UNICEF Executive Board in September.

This report covers not only annual achievements, but also some notable results achieved during the five-year programme cycle, grouped around UNICEF's Strategic Plan Goal Areas.

UNICEF Kyrgyzstan's programme delivery in 2022 amounted to US\$9 million, including US\$1.9 million in regular resources, US\$4.93 million in additionally mobilized resources and US\$2.1 million in emergency funding. Osh Zone Office has enabled programme implementation and monitoring in the southern regions.

For the total five-year cycle, Country Programme (CP) funding amounted to US\$39.5 million (regular resources: US\$7.75million; other resources: US\$25.2 million; emergency funding: US\$6.5 million), meaning the CO was able to mobilize much more funding than initially planned in the CPD (US\$31.73 million).

## **Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives**

Over the last five years, UNICEF has focused on addressing neonatal and infant mortality. After conducting a study in 2018 on trends and determinants of newborn mortality in Kyrgyzstan, published in Lancet,[1] UNICEF prioritized specific interventions supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH), including: promoting and modelling a new approach for young child home visits (YCHV), enhancing service provider capacity, upgrading health facilities, introducing telemedicine, strengthening the information system, and improving governance and financing to strengthen primary health care (PHC).

Since 2018, UNICEF has supported 45 health facilities to deliver higher quality maternal and child health services, with 23 facilities receiving life-saving medical equipment, 11 benefitting from improved infrastructure, and 117 health-care workers increasing their capacities to provide evidence-informed perinatal care based on training modules developed with UNICEF support. Three clinical protocols were developed on managing healthy and sick newborns at PHC level. Perinatal audits were introduced in six regional maternities that have the largest number of deliveries in Kyrgyzstan. UNICEF worked with perinatal health experts from these maternities to examine the causes of neonatal deaths. Their analysis suggested that more than half the cases resulted from insufficient quantity and quality of care, primarily at PHC level. This led the MOH to issuing a decree in November 2022, which introduces changes in clinical practices to improve service quality.

The modelling of YCHV in two districts engaged 116,800 caregivers and increased their awareness of good childcare practice. The capacity of 962 Village Health Committee volunteers was also strengthened. In 2022, in target areas, 65 per cent of mothers had knowledge of danger signs for newborns compared to 40 per cent in 2019; 86 per cent of newborns were visited within three days after discharge from maternity, compared to only 21 per cent before. This year, an assessment of this pilot highlighted good practices of home-visiting and barriers to PHC services. Recommendations informed the development of a roadmap to expand this model, promoting collaboration across social and health services.

UNICEF supported MoH to introduce an open-source telemedicine solution that can work in low-cost, low-bandwidth settings. Telemedicine helps vulnerable communities access specialist consultations and diagnosis, which is often difficult due to geographical and economic barriers.

Immunization remained integral to health programming. Throughout the CP, UNICEF strengthened the supply chain and vaccine storage capacity to deliver vaccines to all. Through provision of cold chain equipment, access to specialised refrigeration equipment at vaccine points increased from 49 to 85 per cent nationwide. UNICEF also supported the MoH to combat vaccination hesitancy through enhanced communication and social mobilization strategies.

In the nutrition area, UNICEF conducted the National Integrated Micronutrient and Anthropometric Survey (NIMAS), the largest nutrition survey ever conducted in Kyrgyzstan. It found that anaemia and iron deficiency prevalence among children, adolescent girls and women, as well as folic acid deficiency, remain serious public health concerns. About 50 per cent of pregnant women suffer from anaemia, which increases the risk of maternal and neonatal death. NIMAS results have informed the development of the new national Food Security and Nutrition Programme (FSNP).

In 2022, Kyrgyzstan became the first Central Asian country to develop standard guidelines on adequate and healthy diets for all, covering infants, children, adolescents, pregnant, and lactating women. UNICEF also enabled development of a three-day training course on integrated nutrition approaches for health-care providers. This was rolled-out in all regions to increase family doctors' capacity to integrate nutrition interventions into PHC. In total 133 health workers gained knowledge and skills on child growth monitoring, IYCF, and wasting and anaemia prevention and management.

## **Goal Area 2: Every child learns**

Throughout the programme cycle, a key UNICEF priority has been promoting Early Childhood Education (ECE), contributing to its inclusion into the Education Sector Strategy 2021-2040 and to the creation of a Pre-school Department at the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). UNICEF also helped enhance ECE quality through curriculum revision and introduction of national standards, taking into account gender, inclusive education, social cohesion, and peace aspects. Revisions were made to integrate fathers' engagement and remove gender stereotypes in games and visuals. UNICEF also supported multilingual education to promote mother tongues for early stimulation. All these interventions included capacity building of MoES officials and pre-school educators.

UNICEF prioritized increasing access to ECE to reach the Government's target of 80 per cent coverage. UNICEF facilitated development and scale-up of alternative pre-school models, such as community-based kindergartens, where only three hours of classes are offered daily, and child development centres (CDCs), established at rural libraries, making them cost-effective. By end 2022, there were 150 CDCs, offering ECE to more than 5,000 children aged 0-6 years, including some with disabilities. UNICEF also supported analysis in ECE financing, developing a budget brief and training for 871 local and central government officials in ECE planning and budgeting. In 2021-2022, UNICEF focused on promoting public private partnerships (PPP) to attract additional financial resources in the sub-sector, working closely with the PPP Centre under the National Investment Agency. As a result, a PPP framework for ECE was approved by the Government in 2022.

For the wider education sector, as Education Partners' Group co-chair, UNICEF has played a leading role in education sector policy dialogue. In 2022, UNICEF supported the MoES to organize two key policy events: the national consultation on the global United Nations Transforming Education Summit (TES) in June and the first ever Joint Sector Review (JSR) organized in Kyrgyzstan in December. To prepare the TES, UNICEF and UNESCO supported the MoES to organize an inclusive forum, involving civil society, academia and various partners, and an online poll of 1,600 young people (52 per cent female). The outcome fed into the country's commitment submitted to the Summit. The JSR, organized by the MoES and attended by 130 education stakeholders, enabled follow-up on this TES commitment and assessment of progress against the Education Action Plan 2021-2023. The JSR sessions, jointly moderated by the MoES, UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank, helped identify five key education reform areas: equity; digital transformation; administration and teachers' competence; teachers' capacity development; and financial transparency.

Every year, UNICEF has supported the MoES to increase data quality and coverage in the Education Management Information System (EMIS), now available online[2], make it interoperable with other information systems and enhance data visualization and use. Education statistics were presented to the Joint Sector Review (JSR).

During past years, UNICEF also helped MoES and associated institutes revise teacher training methodologies and textbooks from gender equality and non-discrimination perspectives, and supported teacher training on science. UNICEF is currently supporting 460 target schools to accelerate learning recovery and personal hygiene practices after COVID-19.

Since 2019, under the global GIGA initiative, UNICEF provided support to connect all Kyrgyzstan's schools to quality internet. In 2021, there were still 42 unconnected schools in remote and mountainous areas. In 2022, UNICEF set up fiber-optic internet connections for 10 schools in Naryn, Jalal-Abad, Osh and Talas regions, enabling 1,500 school children to access online learning resources.

### **Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

During the Country Programme, UNICEF enhanced justice for children. Guidelines on child-friendly legal aid were developed and approved by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in 2020 including a chapter on working with child victims of violence with a specific focus on girls. Subsequently, 477 out of 552 MoJ-registered free legal aid lawyers were trained. Child-friendly and gender-sensitive free legal aid has been established in all civil, criminal and administrative procedures involving children.

In 2021, support was provided to bring the Criminal Procedure Code and Misdemeanors Code into compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new legislation, approved that year, introduced child-friendly procedures in all criminal processes involving children. All child justice system stakeholders are required to be trained on age and gender specifics and to be assigned for children's cases at all stages of justice proceedings, to address the lack of funding for juvenile courts. Importantly, juvenile diversion was introduced as a first-resort measure and juvenile probation introduced as an alternative to detention.

In 2022, 712 judges, prosecutors, juvenile police officers and investigators, and case managers were trained on diversion and child-friendly justice. Training modules on diversion were tested and then incorporated into the curricula of Training Centres for Judges, Prosecutors and Lawyers providing free legal aid service. Now 85 per cent of court sentences are alternative measures rather than imprisonment.

With UNICEF technical support, the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Migration (MoLSWM) developed a State Programme on Child Protection (2023-2026), currently pending validation, which includes significant elements on addressing violence against children. Regulations on social workers and on provision of social services were drafted and are awaiting approval.

### **Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a clean and sustainable environment**

UNICEF strengthened its portfolio on climate change and resilience building through disaster risk reduction (DRR). Key achievements include: the launch of UNICEF study on the social and health impacts of air pollution on children and women in Bishkek, providing recommendations for mitigation; operationalization of the DRR Road Map to equip teachers and students with emergency preparedness skills, including establishing an early warning system in disaster-prone schools. Local governments received assistance to formulate their own DRR plans; 247,852 school students (148,631 girls; 99,221 boys), and 4,362 school administration staff enhanced their emergency skills through DRR trainings and simulation exercises.

### **Goal Area 5: Every child lives free from poverty**

Since 2018, UNICEF has been co-chairing the development partners' group on social protection. UNICEF generated evidence on the social benefit targeting children in poor families, demonstrating

that social protection covers less than half of children living below the poverty line. Evidence-based advocacy was conducted to extend its coverage, only succeeding marginally with one eligibility criterion removed in 2021.

In 2020, in collaboration with the World Bank, UNICEF supported an assessment of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on children and families and conducted a rapid follow-up MICS survey. In 2022, UNICEF analyzed the potential impact on child poverty of the economic downturn and inflation as a consequence of the war in Ukraine. Informed advocacy influenced the Government to increase the benefit amount, though the programme did not expand.

In 2022, UNICEF provided technical support to a multisectoral group established by the Government to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the social protection system, as inscribed in the National Development Programme 2021-2026. With ILO, WFP and the World Bank, UNICEF introduced the internationally recognized Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) methodology for this assessment, which will lead to the development of the new sectoral policy and to costed options to introduce universal childcare benefit for 0-3-year-old children.

Advances were made in public financing for children (PF4C), with particular focus on education and health. Since 2021, UNICEF has been implementing a joint programme (JP) with UNDP, funded by the United Nations SDG Fund to develop an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF). Within the JP, UNICEF supported a review of education sector public spending efficiency. The findings and recommendations were validated by the MoES.

UNICEF supported the development of government regulations on programme-based budgeting (PBB) and a related training module. Fifty strategic and budget planners from 19 ministries refreshed their knowledge and skills on PBB during trainings conducted by the Ministry of Finance Training Centre, with UNICEF support. The methodology was applied for the 2023 ECE sub-sector budget submission, and the 2023-2025 education sector Mid-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF).

In 2022, UNICEF conducted an analysis of Primary Health Care financing with a view to increase the accessibility of PHC services for low-income families through improved financing and reduction of out-of-pocket payments.

## **Adolescent and youth programming**

UNICEF has invested considerably in strengthening adolescent participation, focusing on local government through youth- and child-friendly local governance (see 'Lessons learned'). Since 2021, UNICEF focused on equipping adolescents with skills and knowledge to facilitate transition to employment. In 2022, 36,749 adolescents and young people (23,387 female; 13,362 male) benefited from such programmes. Adolescents were also supported to pursue life and education choices. For example, 9 per cent of Girls in Science project participants reported their communication skills having improved, 59.5 per cent gained leadership skills, and 66.3 per cent learned about new professions. In parallel, UNICEF engaged with parents, teachers and community members to create an enabling environment: 7,697 parents were trained in positive and gender-responsive parenting.

## **Humanitarian response**

In September 2022, to respond to humanitarian needs triggered by the cross-border conflict in Batken region, UNICEF and the Red Crescent Society of Kyrgyzstan (RCSK) delivered 1,700 family hygiene kits to 8,510 displaced people. UNICEF Osh Zone Office played a critical role in the response and participated in the UN-led rapid needs assessment. UNICEF coordinated the WASH and education clusters. UNICEF volunteers provided psychosocial support through recreational activities for 158 children and youth in temporary shelters. UNICEF has been improving sanitation facilities in five

educational institutions serving as emergency shelter in Batken city. With United Nations funding, UNICEF procured an additional 1,650 family hygiene kits for affected people in Batken region. UNICEF also delivered 70 education kits and 20 early childhood development (ECD) kits to schools and kindergartens covering 4,200 children.

## **Gender programming**

Child marriage remains a key child rights' issue in Kyrgyzstan. UNICEF supported the MoLSWM to monitor and review the two-year action plan on ending child marriage adopted in 2020 and help identify key recommendations for the next plan. The 2022-2023 plan has now been developed and submitted for approval to the Cabinet of Ministers. Community-level social and behaviour change strategies were implemented to promote girls' education as an alternative to child marriage. Two mobile game application have further reinforced these strategies, reaching close to 200,000 players.

UNICEF supported the development of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030 and, in 2022, provided training to the newly recruited MoLSWM Gender Unit team in gender normative framework, gender statistics, and monitoring. During the programme cycle, UNICEF paid particular attention to addressing gender-based violence and transforming harmful social norms related to gender.

[1] [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30460-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30460-5/fulltext)

[2] OpenEMIS: <https://open.edu.gov.kg/index.php>

## UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

During the last year of the country programme, UNICEF continued strengthening collaboration across a large spectrum of partners, from government, civil society, United Nations, bilateral and multilateral organizations and international financial institutions.

Within the United Nations system, through the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office UNICEF contributed to update the Common Country Analysis and develop the new United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF), providing support and expertise in areas related to children's rights and social sectors. UNICEF, with UN Women, coordinated development of the UNSDCF outcome on Quality Social Services and Decent Work and respective Joint Workplans 2023-2024. UNICEF is also implementing three joint programmes: one funded by the Peacebuilding fund to enhance social cohesion, one funded by the global United Nations SDG Fund on SDG financing and one funded by the EU to address gender-based violence – the Spotlight Initiative. Within this programme, UNICEF has established partnerships with women's rights Civil Society Organizations, involving them in regular consultations.

UNICEF cooperated closely with the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank to assess Kyrgyzstan's social protection system's performance. This has helped define a common position among key stakeholders to better support the formulation of the new national policy.

UNICEF further strengthened the collaboration with GAVI - the Vaccine Alliance, in partnership with the World Health Organization and the MoH. The partnership focused on strategic planning and immunization programme delivery, with a special focus on under-vaccinated children.

In the education sector, UNICEF co-chairs the Education Partners group and helped strengthen the partnership between the MoES and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), preparing for the obtaining of the GPE Multiplier grant, an innovative finance instrument intended to catalyze more and better investment in education.

UNICEF served as co-facilitator of the Scale Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, along with WFP, under Ministry of Agriculture leadership. The SUN Multi-Stakeholder is the first model of intersectional coordination for nutrition in Kyrgyzstan. It was involved in analyzing the implementation of the Food Security and Nutrition Programme (2019-2023) to prepare for the development of the new one. Also in nutrition, a large partnership contributed to conduct and launch the results of the NIMAS, comprising WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), WHO, USAID, Advancing Nutrition/USAID, and Mercy Corps. Together these partners develop a communication and advocacy plan to disseminate the survey findings and ensure that nutrition is prioritized by the government.

Financial support from the European Union through two projects has been critical. The first one intends to protect children affected by migration and the second to support the Central Asian States for the return of their citizens from conflict zones, primarily Syria Iraq.

The Government of Japan remains a key partner of UNICEF programme, supporting two large projects in the education sector: one consists in building the capacity of schools in the area of DRR, while the other one intends to ensure a clean and infection-free environment in schools and develop students catch-up learning, as part of COVID-19 recovery.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

During the country programme (CP) 2018-2022, special efforts were made to improve policy-maker and service provider capacity to listen to public suggestions, concerns and feedback, especially from



children, adolescents and youth. UNICEF also endeavoured to enable children and youth to meaningfully participate in public discussions and decision-making. UNICEF also further shifted its own business model from working *for* to working *with* children and youth, consulting them on the framing of the 2023-2027 CP and mainstreaming child participation across results areas.

Social listening is new in Kyrgyzstan and was initially poorly understood by partners. First reports were seen as criticizing state and civil service performance. However, in the COVID-19 response, UNICEF and the Republican Health Promotion and Mass Communication Centre (RHPMCC) continues its use to gain a real understanding of the population's concerns, improving the findings presentation to make it more constructive and solution oriented. For six months, social listening reports were only used internally. However, the Centre started using the data at Ministry of Health (MoH) meetings to tailor communications on vaccines. Eventually, weekly social listening reports were shared with all COVID-19 Communication Group members, including development partners. With time, interest in social listening grew among state partners at technical and policy levels.

Social listening data was collected online and offline. The RHMPCC organized website and social media polls, and surveyed village health committees every week by telephone. A group of analysts reviewed popular social network posts and comments, monitored media reports and developed recommendations.

Together with behavioural insights, social listening data helped shape public communication on vaccination, respond to information voids, and debunk myths. It was also used build public trust, as distrust in public authorities was identified as a primary reason for low vaccination. UNICEF also supports health-care providers to be open to user feedback. Training on interpersonal communication and home visiting for medical workers emphasizes the importance of active listening and motivational interviewing for childhood immunization and COVID-19 vaccination counselling.

In the spirit of social listening, the digital platform U-report was created with UNICEF support in November 2021, under the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth, to collect young people's feedback and opinions; vital as almost half Kyrgyzstan's population is under 25. In 2022, U-report reached 15,077 subscribers and was used to get youth perspectives on the "Kyrgyz Jarany" social cohesion policy of the government, as part of peacebuilding work. Just over half were aware of this policy, but 75 per cent wanted to know more. A third wanted to help introduce the Concept through projects. A fifth felt they could learn about it at school or work. U-report was also used to ask youth about their education priorities to feed into national consultations for the global United Nations Transforming Education Summit. Ninety-two per cent believed government should do more to ensure children learn basic literacy and numeracy at primary school. These inputs were taken into account for Kyrgyzstan's commitment presented at the Summit.

During 2022, UNICEF and other United Nations agencies, initiated hate speech monitoring using an automated system to identify key words. The first two monthly reports confirmed that increased isolation and discontent along ethnic, geographic, generational, gender and other lines led to increased hate speech. The September 2022 Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict sparked more hate speech on social media involving public figures. UNICEF will further analyse and use the data to prevent such intolerant discourse.

UNICEF advocated for use of feedback tools in humanitarian response, after the cross-border conflict with Tajikistan, following United Nations guidance on Accountability to Affected Populations. Thus, UNICEF-supported civil society, local radio and village health committees, reached 500,000 members of displaced families and host communities with child health and well-being information. They organized live radio programmes with specialists and authorities. Radio discussions became a key mechanism for affected persons to openly raise issues related to the assistance received.

During the current CP, UNICEF focused on enhancing local-level adolescent and youth participation through the Youth-and-Child-Friendly Local Governance (YCFLG) initiative in 42 localities across all seven provinces. Under YCFLG, youth councils were established under each mayor's office, to identify key issues and address them in local planning and budgeting processes. YCFLG has crucially addressed limited youth engagement and poor social cohesion. Parent groups, schools and local governments support youth projects and proposals. Projects include designing and placing rubbish bins in towns, opening a student library, public events on inclusion of children with disabilities, and adding streetlights and pavements around schools. In 2019, the Government started leading YCFLG, with UNICEF support, transforming it into a two-yearly competition. A second round initiated in 2022 will reach all 32 localities. However, local authorities did not fully embrace youth participation principles and standards. In 2022, UNICEF helped develop a training module for local officials on engaging adolescents in participatory governance. This will be rolled-out in 2023.

UNICEF strived to ensure youth voices could also feed into its new programme. UNICEF consulted three groups of disadvantaged adolescent girls and boys – adolescents with disabilities, girls from conservative communities and adolescents from the marginalized Roma (Lyuli) community – presenting new CP priorities, and discussing their specific needs. The consultations confirmed the importance of co-creating solutions and programme approaches tailored to adolescents' specific barriers and challenges, and the need for an enabling environment alongside service provision and skills development.

As a result, the new Country Programme mainstreams child and youth participation in all programmes, beyond the specific adolescent development and participation (ADAP) output. In upcoming interventions, UNICEF will focus even more on youth participation, at levels from communities and families, schools, local government, to central authorities.

Integrating youth perspectives in programme development is a must, as UNICEF cannot implement adolescent and youth programmes without having them at the table. In the second phase of "Girls in Science" project, an indicator is included to measure girl peer trainers' satisfaction with programme activities and their degree of participation in design, implementation and monitoring. A guide will be co-developed to integrate this in implementing partners' work in 2023.

(end)