

## Multi-country evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Venezuela outflow crisis



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### Trinidad and Tobago Country Case Study

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## ***Disclaimer***

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The data collection for this country case study was conducted remotely in December 2021, and the reporting phase was finalised in October 2022. Although findings were not updated, recommendations were workshopped with the ECA Office and regional office in July 2022.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AMMR	Archdiocese's Ministry for Migrants and Refugees
BID	Best Interests Determination
BPRM	Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
CATT	Children's Authority of T&T
CBM	Catholic Board of Management
CBI	Cash Based Interventions
CCCs	UNICEF Core Commitments for Children
C4D	Communication for Development
CFS	Child Friendly Space
CFSSWG	Child Friendly Space Sub Working Group
COAR	Country Office Annual Report
COM	Children on the Move
CP	Child Protection
CPD	Country Programme Document
CPWG	Child Protection Working Group
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CSRP	Caribbean Subregional Coordination Platform
CWD	Children with Disabilities
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
ECA	UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EO	Evaluation Office
EMOPS	UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
ET	Evaluation Team
EQ	Evaluation Question
EWG	Education Working Group
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FO	Field Office
GAP	UNICEF Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GPF	Global Proficiency Framework
GoRTT	Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children appeal
HACT	Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers
HPD	Humanitarian Programme Document
HPM	Humanitarian Performance Monitoring

IMS	Information Management System
IP	Implementing Partner
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
KI	Key Informant
KII	Key Informant Interview
LACRO	UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
LWC	Living Water Community
MCPD	Multi-Country Programme Document
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSDFS	Ministry of Social Development and Family Services
OECD-DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development- Development Assistance Committee
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
PoC	Persons of Concern
PSS	Psychosocial Support
R4V	Response for Venezuela (Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela)
RMRP	Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan
SoPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TA	Temporary Appointments
ToC	Theory of Change
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago
TTFPA	T&T Family Planning Association
TTVSOLNET	TTV Solidarity Network
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
VMC	Venezuela Migration Crisis
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WG	Working Group

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## Executive Summary

In April 2018, the UN Secretary-General directed the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to lead and coordinate the regional response to the Venezuelan Migrant Crisis (VMC). This led to the establishment of the Response for Venezuela (R4V) Coordination Platform. The 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that have joined the R4V Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) are hosting an estimated 84 per cent of all refugees and migrants from Venezuela, amounting to some 5 million people. In November 2021 an estimated 44,000 Venezuelans were in need of assistance in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), 24,500 of them targeted in the RMRP. In a country of 1.4 million people, this represented the highest number of Venezuelans any country has received per capita.

This study explores and analyses how UNICEF simultaneously responded to the Level 2 (L2) VMC emergency and the Level 3 (L3) public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The regional L2 Response was activated in February 2019 and did not include T&T, despite the fact that the country was being significantly impacted by the VMC. The response to the VMC in T&T by the UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA) was never officially declared as an emergency by the Government of T&T. The ECA in T&T participated in the Regional Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal to mobilise resources to respond to the VMC and received donor humanitarian funds. Informants interviewed for this study, inside and external to UNICEF, noted that the response was constrained by a challenging national policy environment in which Venezuelan children on the move were unable to access healthcare, education, birth registration and other services available in T&T.

UNICEF interventions in T&T in response to the VMC have focused on child protection, education, reproductive health and family planning services, nutritional screening, vaccination, cash-based interventions (CBIs) and Communication for Development (C4D). In the field of child protection, UNICEF has provided mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to children and caregivers; trained community actors in providing psychosocial support (PSS) and established ten Child Friendly Spaces (CFS). UNICEF has supported Venezuelan children and adolescents through working with the Living Water Community (LWC), a long-established Trinidadian implementing partner (IP). Technical support was provided to enhance case management of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), to strengthen family and community-based alternative care mechanisms and to protect child victims of trafficking by bringing them within the national foster care system. Standard operating processes (SoPs) for establishing and maintaining CFS were developed to ensure child protection (CP) mainstreaming, feedback mechanisms and strategies for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA). CP and gender-based violence (GBV) referral pathways were developed.

UNICEF's activities as part of the VMC response were focused primarily in the capital, Port of Spain, with some limited activities in Tunapuna, Chaguanas, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Icacos, San Rafael and San Fernando. UNICEF provided R4V leadership in education and CP.

## Evaluation purpose, objective, intended audience and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation and its five country case studies is to account for the results achieved by UNICEF's Response to the L2 activation and draw lessons learned and recommendations to guide future strategic and programmatic priorities for children on the move. The primary objective is to provide evidence on whether ECA's response to the VMC has been appropriate, effective, coherent, adequately coordinated, efficient and connected and to understand enabling and constraining factors and lessons learned. The primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF staff – in Country Offices (COs) in which country case studies were carried out (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and T&T), in the ECA in Barbados, in the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) in Panama and in New York Headquarters (HQ) – as well as IPs, government counterparts and affected populations.

The analytical framework of the evaluation used criteria developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC)<sup>1</sup> with the international human rights framework. In terms of quality standards, the evaluation refers to UNICEF's 2020 *Core Commitments for Children* (CCCS)<sup>2</sup> as well as its *Six-Point Agenda for Children on the Move*. It is utilisation-focused, participatory and forward-looking, seeking to shed light on results achieved and approaches to enhance UNICEF's strategic and programmatic

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/2755284.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>

effectiveness for children on the move. The methodology consisted of mixed methods including document and literature review and semi-structured interviews with key informants at national and local level.

The COVID-19 pandemic was at its height in T&T in November 2021 when field work was to be carried out. Public health restrictions involved the closure of offices, CFS and other public spaces. Thus it was necessary for interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to be carried out remotely with UNICEF field teams, IPs and representatives of government, educators, students and other members of the migrant community.

### **Key findings and conclusions**

UNICEF's VMC response in T&T was particularly complex due to the irregular status of many migrant children on the move and their families and the context of multiple humanitarian needs and issues, not the least of which has been the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With limited resources and without a clear or supportive policy framework for children on the move from the government, the ECA put in place the outline of what has been an appropriately designed response, built around UNICEF's mandate and the core competencies of other UN agencies and civil society. While the operation had shortcomings in terms of coverage and addressing of gender issues the key design elements of CP and education strategies proved to be effective. Timely efforts to bring key services online proved fortuitous when the L3 COVID-19 was declared in March 2020.

In T&T UNICEF has been listening to affected populations and has facilitated focus group discussions (FGDs) and surveys to understand and address their needs. Yet despite the interest of staff in being more engaged with children on the move and their families, and local investment in direct consultation, it is recognised that UNICEF's broader institutional processes neither promote flexibility nor the flexibility to change programme interventions based on beneficiary feedback.

Despite a long history of migration between T&T and Venezuela, the ECA was unprepared for the onset of the VMC. This lack of migration intelligence was commonplace across the region and raises the question of whether the Venezuela CO should have sounded the alarm earlier. In terms of preparedness and the Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP), in 2018 the ECA did not identify migration as a key risk factor in T&T and the region. Nor did it do so when it updated the EPP in 2021. UNICEF was not appropriately equipped to identify and quickly bring on-board IPs with expertise on migration who are trained on CCCs and other minimum requirements. Thus the ECA lost some time at a cost to children by not being prepared for the VMC. Subsequently it has lacked a clear reading of the government's attitude and approach to the influx of Venezuelans in T&T.

The L3 COVID-19 health emergency significantly affected UNICEF's ability to deliver in the short term. In T&T child friendly spaces (CFS) which were a key platform for delivering education and other services to children were closed for nearly two years.

The evaluation team (ET) finds that UNICEF's work in education in 2018 and 2019 to respond to the needs of secondary learners by bringing online curricula that would lead to formal accreditation of achievement and attainment of high school leaving certificates constituted good practice. The gap that urgently needs to be addressed is that for primary learners who do not always learn well online. Concerning CP, a success has been the creation of a network of CFS since 2018 as a platform to integrate multiple programmes. It is considered an effective approach to building a supportive community for Venezuelan migrant children and their families. In 2022, this was complemented by the addition of Roving CFS to address the needs of children in remote and rural areas.

UNICEF has had an effective M&E system in place for tracking progress towards HAC targets. However, frequent changes in some indicators not strongly linked to sector results complicated assessing progress towards results in the short or longer term. M&E could be better used to scale up programmes for children on the move, as well as in the operationalisation of the principles enshrined in UNICEF's *Accountability to Affected Populations*<sup>3</sup> (AAP) within the organisation through establishing stronger feedback loops between UNICEF and beneficiaries.

As in other VMC- impacted countries coverage has been a major challenge in T&T. UNICEF and R4V partners need to find the means to bring key services to scale, particularly in terms of coverage of primary school education. Coverage is intimately linked with UNICEF fundraising capacity for the VMC and the reality across the response countries of insufficient funding for responding to migration crisis of this scale. UNICEF's role in CP strengthening has potential to increase coverage but this requires long-term building of state capacity as well as additional partners.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/aap>



The coherence of the response has been enhanced through high quality partnerships with key civil society and government partners. The Education Working Group (EWG) and Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), set up under the rubric of R4V, meet regularly. However informants told the ET that these mechanisms need to be more strategic and solutions oriented. There is a sense that those who participate in these fora lack the kind of sense of urgency needed in a humanitarian response, and that UNICEF has not always received sufficient assistance from R4V lead agencies. There has been limited training of IPs and other UNICEF partners on humanitarian modalities such as the CCCs and the *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*.<sup>4</sup> Informants report significant gaps in analysis and information sharing as well as lack of information on case counts, out-of-school children and how to reach them. UNICEF's lack of field presence is seen to be a challenge.

The ECA has sought to use resources efficiently and avoid duplication. Partnerships with UNHCR on education and IOM on data collection and analysis on displacement monitoring have respected the mandates of sister agencies. Accredited online learning for high school students provides good value for money, providing a scalable solution for more students without adding costs of classroom space, building maintenance and transport. The same model of blended learning should be applied at primary level. On cash-based intervention (CBIs), UNICEF has pursued and should continue to pursue partnership with UNHCR (and IOM, if possible,) to be more efficient. Experience in other countries shows that not coordinating with other partners can create a high risk of duplication and other inefficiencies.

As the whole UN system has grappled with integrating responses to migration into its humanitarian architecture UNICEF has recognised that the phenomenon of children on the move requires more attention, regardless of the national origin of the migrant population. Migration of Venezuelans to T&T, and to other host countries, has upended the traditional expectation that migration is a Global South to Global North phenomenon. Many countries have been taken by surprise to find themselves a migration destination. The VMC response in T&T has been to include all children on the move in response efforts, not only Venezuelans. Within the Caribbean migration is here to stay. Increasingly in T&T there are many vulnerable migrants from Cuba, Haiti and Central America who all require a rights-based response. It is recommended at a global level that UNICEF move from a nationality-based approach to migration to a rights-based approach that addresses the needs of all children on the move.

Experience in T&T, as in other states hosting Venezuelans, has shown the need for linkage between UNICEF advocacy strategies and evidence (generated by Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) studies so as to combat xenophobia and violence against child and other migrants.

### Good practices and lessons learned

- UNICEF ECA in T&T has developed a culture of direct consultation with beneficiaries, including children and their families and has endeavoured to integrate some of the information gathered directly into both the content and form of communications with the migrant community. This is considered a good practice to be shared with those COs in the region which seems to have often kept beneficiary communities at arms' length. A lesson learned is that participatory approaches to design of the response need to be included from the outset of the emergency should be systematically accompanied by programme staff, not only staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation.
- Another good practice in 2019 was the opening of ten CFS which provided a much-needed hub for a range of programmes, including education, needed by children on the move and their families. A lesson learned has been that adequate coordination is required between partners so as to ensure that each partner can be effective in working within the shared physical and online spaces of the CFS.
- Another good practice has been the inclusion of mental health in face-to-face and online counselling provided by Childline, an IP which provided webinars for parents during the pandemic. However, given limited uptake in remote and rural areas a lesson learned is that it is needs to be accompanied by sufficient communications, awareness and field presence.
- Other examples of good practice noted by the ET include:
  - Development of a Best Interests Determination (BID) process, creating a formal structure to address the risks to migrant children in detention, at risk of deportation or of family separation generated by the deportation of one or both parents.
  - Putting in place of referral pathways and training for foster carers taking Venezuelan children into their homes.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/documents/global-programme-framework-children-move>

- Working with the Children's Authority of T&T (CATT) to develop a CP information management system (IMS)
- Using Communication for Development (C4D) to identify communications challenges and creating and disseminating messages on topics of use to beneficiaries.
- Using the MyChild HelpLine app to develop models that have the potential to be highly scalable.

## Recommendations

Recommendations arising from the evaluation process were elaborated and validated through a participatory workshop with UNICEF ECA in August 2022.

**Recommendation 1:** LACRO and ECA should invest at the outset of any migratory influx) in direct consultations with children on the move, their families, host communities and local governments. As the emergency continues, UNICEF should regularly engage in community consultations to support routine programme monitoring and gain first-hand information about real needs, vulnerabilities and priorities of children, adolescents and families on the move.

**Recommendation 2:** As part of emergency preparedness ECA should invest in enhanced planning scenarios, map emergency response capacities, identify gaps in training needs of staff and IPs (particularly around the CCCs and *The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*), and acknowledge the challenges of staff turnover.

**Recommendation 3:** In terms of the new MPCD, UNICEF ECA should review whether migration should be treated as a cross-cutting issue. The current positioning of migration within the MCPD could be reviewed in the Annual Workplan, taking an intersectoral approach to enhance access of children on the move to key public services.

**Recommendation 4:** UNICEF should engage more actively to reduce tensions and build synergies between its IPs following the reopening of CFS.

**Recommendation 5:** ECA should align emergency response with UNICEF's *Gender Action Plan*.<sup>5</sup> Given that xenophobic attitudes and sexual harassment particularly affect Venezuelan women and girls, it is important to work with government and women's and girls' organisations in T&T to change social norms and stereotypes through a clear gender-focused campaign.

**Recommendation 6:** ECA should strengthen advocacy and communication strategies to influence policies and attitudes towards children on the move and their families in T&T. These should, address violence against migrants and, xenophobia and advocate for rights to healthcare and education for migrant children.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality/gender-action-plan-2022-2025>

## 1. Background and context of UNICEF ECA's country response to the VMC

Eleven kilometers off the coast of Venezuela, as of November 2021 T&T, a country of 1.4 million people, has an estimated 44,000 Venezuelans in need of assistance according to data from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>6</sup>, of whom 24,500 are targeted in the 2022 Regional Refugee and Migration and Response Plan RMRP.<sup>7</sup> The country has significant oil and natural gas resources making it one of the most prosperous countries in the region. Venezuelan migration to T&T is not new. It is the rise in numbers within a short time span and the arrival of significant numbers of children and adolescents that has attracted both local and international attention.<sup>9</sup> This case study explores UNICEF's response to the situation of Venezuelan refugee and migrant children and their families in T&T. T&T is one of the eight countries and four overseas territories covered by UNICEF's 2022–2026 *Eastern Caribbean Area Multi-country Programme* Document (MCPD).<sup>10</sup>

In April 2018, the UN Secretary-General provided direction for IOM and UNHCR to lead and coordinate the regional response to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, and the Response for Venezuela (or R4V) Coordination Platform was established. The 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that are covered by the R4V Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan RMRP) are hosting an estimated 84 per cent of all refugees and migrants from Venezuela, amounting to some 5.75 million people.<sup>11</sup>

This case study explores the ECA response to LACRO's Regional Level 2 (L2) Venezuela Migration Outflow Emergency in T&T. This was activated in February 2019 and expired in June 2020, a period during which the number, proportion and profile of Venezuelan children on the move in T&T changed significantly. The case study of T&T is part of multi-country evaluations of UNICEF's regional response to the VMC, also covering case studies in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

The limited physical presence of UNICEF in T&T should be noted. It should be noted that the response has been led via the relatively centralised UNICEF ECA based in Barbados. Of the countries covered by UNICEF's ECA Office, T&T is the southernmost of the Caribbean islands and closest geographically to Venezuela, but is not the only Caribbean nation to be affected by the VMC or to see rising numbers of children, not just from Venezuela, on the move.

### 1.1. Rights holders and duty bearers

#### 1.1.1. Venezuelan children on the move in Trinidad and Tobago

As of 2017, the issue of rising migration from Venezuela was already perceived as a concern by UNICEF and other UN partners.<sup>12</sup> According to UNICEF, about 40,000 Venezuelans were estimated to be living in T&T at the time and the figure was expected to increase in 2018 – comprising both earlier and newer migrants. Of the 9,231 new arrivals of concern registered by UNHCR by October 2018, Venezuelans accounted for 72 per cent (6,758), of whom 38 per cent were females and 62 per cent males. Adult males made up the vast majority of migrants at that time, many of whom were employed in the informal sector and sending remittances home to their families. Only eight per cent were children.<sup>13</sup>

The number of Venezuelans formally registered as having arrived in T&T was 25,648 in 2016, 18,571 in 2017, and 20,287 in 2018. However, formal arrivals only tell part of the story. IOM and UNHCR data confirm that much higher numbers have arrived and continue to arrive without any official migration process or documentation.<sup>14</sup>

From a gender perspective this situation changed rapidly. In August 2018 there were more than twice as many male migrants registered with UNHCR in T&T compared to female migrants. This gap has been closing. The period covered by the L2 response (February 2019 to June 2020) saw a shift from a population of predominantly single male migrants, many of whom had left Venezuela for employment and economic opportunities, to a situation where the families of these male workers began to join them. The decline in the number of persons of concern (PoC) registered with UNHCR directly corresponds to March–April 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF HPM Monitoring cites UNHCR situation reporting.

<sup>7</sup> R4V: Regional Migration and Refugee Response Plan for 2022, p. 1 <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/2022-rmrp-trinidad-tobago-factsheet>

<sup>8</sup> These estimates are higher than the number of refugees, asylum-seekers or people of concern registered with UNHCR. See below for number of Venezuelans registered with UNHCR.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF HPM reporting 2018–2021

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/9011/file/2022-PL7-Eastern\\_Caribbean\\_Area\\_MCPD-EN-ODS.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/9011/file/2022-PL7-Eastern_Caribbean_Area_MCPD-EN-ODS.pdf) Island states and territories covered by the ECA office include Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

<sup>11</sup> R4V: 2022 REGIONAL REFUGEE AND MIGRANT RESPONSE PLAN (RMRP) January - December 2022, p. 14

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF ECA: Country Office Annual Report, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF ECA: Country Office Annual Report 2018.

<sup>14</sup> UNHCR monthly sit reps, provided by UNICEF M&E

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

As a proportion, the number of children has also increased over the period, from only three per cent in 2018 to 19 per cent of the total migrant population by 2020.<sup>16</sup> According to key informants (KIs) interviewed by the evaluation team (ET), children on the move are particularly vulnerable. In February 2002 a Venezuelan woman was shot and wounded and her nine-month-old baby was killed when the T&T Coast Guard opened fire on a boat carrying migrants. Over a hundred Venezuelans have died while making the crossing in overloaded boats.<sup>17</sup> Venezuelan children and youth in migrant families face multiple challenges, denial of universal child rights such as access to health, education, economic security and housing. According to UNICEF ECA's Annual Report for 2018, only 15 per cent of children living in the country for one month to one year had any access to education services, Only 24 per cent of those with longer residence in T&T had managed to do so.<sup>18</sup> Clearly, a significant proportion of children – upwards of 75 per cent – were denied access to education at the outset of the L2 VMC response.

LACRO's L2 VMC Emergency was activated in February 2019, but did not cover T&T. At time of the L2 activation children were estimated to comprise ten per cent of all migrants.<sup>19</sup> While capacities to support migrant, unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children and families have been strengthened, there are significant gaps in full realisation of their rights that need to be addressed. UNICEF and UNHCR have supported children's access to CP, learning, socialisation and psychosocial support (PSS). By the beginning of 2020, it was estimated by UNICEF that 53 per cent of refugee and migrant children had received some degree of access to learning support.<sup>20</sup>

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions further placed children on the move at increased risk. Closures of hospitality venues and building sites – where many Venezuelan migrants had found employment – quickly led to loss of income and reduced ability to meet basic family needs. So harsh did their circumstances become that it is reported that the pandemic caused Venezuelans to either return to Venezuela or to move elsewhere. It was not possible to quantify the extent of these movements as they have not been documented in UNHCR/IOM reporting statistics.<sup>21</sup>

### **1.1.2. Government of Trinidad and Tobago's VMC response**

In June 2019, the Government conducted a two-week registration exercise for Venezuelans present in the country, including those who had entered irregularly or overstayed and granted them permission to stay and work for up to six months. It is reported that through this exercise, 18,944 Venezuelans were registered: 16,523 adults and 2,421 children. Registered Venezuelans were to be issued with a Minister's Permit conferring the right to remain and work in T&T for six months from issuance of permit. With the onset of the pandemic, renewal of permits became problematic as many suffered from administrative shutdowns, closure of offices and stay-at-home orders.<sup>22</sup>

A re-registration exercise began in March 2021, solely for those previously registered Venezuelans, which granted them a further six months stay with a possible extension at least until the first half of 2022. After this exercise, the official government figure of Venezuelans allowed to remain decreased. It appears that many previously registered Venezuelans may have been fearful to re-register given the hostile environment for migrants and refugees. The government has maintained that all non-nationals who were not registered in the June 2019 exercise are to be regarded as illegal migrants and deported. Interceptions of asylum-seekers at sea or detention of recent arrivals on land became more common during the pandemic, effectively denying asylum-seekers opportunity to seek international protection and often resulting in their refoulement.<sup>23</sup>

While the registration exercise conducted by the authorities in 2019 promoted integration for some Venezuelan migrants and asylum seekers, many Venezuelans who came after the registration exercise or who did not manage to be registered continue to struggle to access basic services and livelihoods. Lack of documentation prevents Venezuelans from accessing the formal labour market. Many KIs reported that the large number of migrants with professional diplomas and certificates – among them qualified judges, doctors and other highly skilled professionals – are unable to have qualifications accredited and are thus ineligible to apply for skilled jobs, with negative consequences when they apply for work permits. Many work informally in precarious conditions and are at risk of exploitation. Lack of valid documentation and legal status also prevents Venezuelans from accessing financial services, including bank accounts and loans. The R4V platform is urging the government to extend registration to asylum-seekers and refugees of other nationalities and to those Venezuelans who did not have the

<sup>16</sup> According to ECA Annual report for 2020, migrant and refugee children in T&T make up 19 per cent of the migrant population, with approximately 3,963 children, according to UNHCR registration statistics.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/07/venezuela-immigrants-killed-trinidad-tobago-coast-guard>

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF ECA: Annual Report 2018.

<sup>19</sup> UNHRC Monthly SitRep, December 2021

<sup>20</sup> See UNICEF ECA Annual Report, 2019, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> See UNHCR reporting on the VMC as taken up in UNICEF monitoring data.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/study-protection-situation-venezuelan-refugees-and-migrants-caribbean>

opportunity to register during the two-week exercise in June 2019. These include new arrivals and Venezuelans who were detained for immigration offenses at the time of registration.

As more Venezuelans continue to arrive in T&T, those not registered with the government may find themselves at risk of detention and exploitation, including sexual and labour exploitation. Unlike those Venezuelans who registered earlier they have no access to protection services.

A joint programme between UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and IOM – with a steering committee that includes national partners – is working on an action plan to address victims of trafficking. The T&T Labour Inspectorate Unit of the Ministry of Labour has been working to on identify cases of forced labour and human trafficking.

Regarding national legal frameworks, T&T has acceded to many international conventions but these have not been comprehensively implemented in national legislation and policies. Seeking legal clarity on the rights of migrants, IOM and other organisations have long advocated adoption of a comprehensive migration policy. However, migration-related issues are usually led by the Ministry of National Security and it is they who convene inter-ministerial committees.

T&T signed the *1951 Refugee Convention* and its *1967 Protocol* in 2000. It has also signed the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, meaning that migrant children are entitled to access education. In 2014, the Cabinet adopted a strategy entitled *A phased approach towards the establishment of a National Policy to address refugee and asylum matters in the Republic of T&T* (hereinafter the *Refugee Policy*).<sup>23</sup> It sets out general principles related to refugee protection and includes a three-phased plan of action to progressively develop national capacity to receive and adjudicate refugee claims and grant enjoyment of certain rights to refugees, including access to work, education, identity, travel documents and health care. Although the *Refugee Policy* was formally adopted in 2014, work on drafting legislation and developing a functioning asylum system – which it was envisaged would be completed by 2017<sup>24</sup> – is still in the hands of the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of National Security.

In the meantime persons in need of international protection remain subject to the provisions of the *1976 Immigration Act*<sup>25</sup> with limited access to rights and services. In the absence of national asylum procedures and legislation, UNHCR registers asylum-seekers and recognises refugees pursuant to its mandate.

T&T approved a *Trafficking in Persons Act* in 2011.<sup>26</sup> In its *2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: T&T* report the US State Department noted that nobody has been convicted under this act and that the country does not fully meet minimum international standards.<sup>27</sup> The Ministry of National Security has begun working on a Migrant Smuggling Act (a work in progress). In 2019, the Ministry of Labour reviewed three key pieces of legislation that impacted migrant labour rights and since 2018 have been working on a Labour Migration Policy.<sup>28</sup> A population policy has been approved.

### 1.2. COVID-19 public health restrictions in Trinidad and Tobago

Pandemic restriction measures impacted the lives and livelihoods of migrant families. On March 21, 2020, National Security Minister Stuart Young announced a stay-at-home order, and the closure of all borders to everyone (including to nationals & non-nationals). No international flights would be allowed to enter the country, but cargo vessels bringing food and pharmaceuticals would be allowed entry. Schools were closed and would remain so for almost two years. In May 2021, the twin island state imposed a state of emergency at the end of August masks were made compulsory in public places. Schools reopened in October 2021 for children in Forms 4-6 resumed in person schooling on 4 October 2021 but it was not until April 2022, after two years of closures, that all schools reopened. Pandemic control measures had significant impacts on Venezuelan migrant workers and their families and children, leading to some return movement to Venezuela and financial hardship for many.

### 1.3. Migration within the Caribbean region

The Venezuelan migration into T&T, as is clear also from other case studies, upends the traditional expectations around migration as a Global South to Global North phenomenon, following instead a South-South pattern that

<sup>23</sup> See: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/571109654.html>.

<sup>24</sup> UNHCT, Universal Periodic Review, T&T, p. 1 file:///C:/Users/tim/Downloads/UNHCR\_UPR25\_TTO\_E\_Main.pdf

<sup>25</sup> Immigration Act of 1976, T&T (July 1976), available at: <http://www.immigration.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/Immigration%20Act.pdf>. There is no mention of refugees, asylum-seekers, basic humanitarian protection or situations of mass influx in the 1976 Immigration Act.

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p\\_lang=en&p\\_isn=88404&p\\_country=TTO&p\\_count=174](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=88404&p_country=TTO&p_count=174)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/trinidad-and-tobago/>

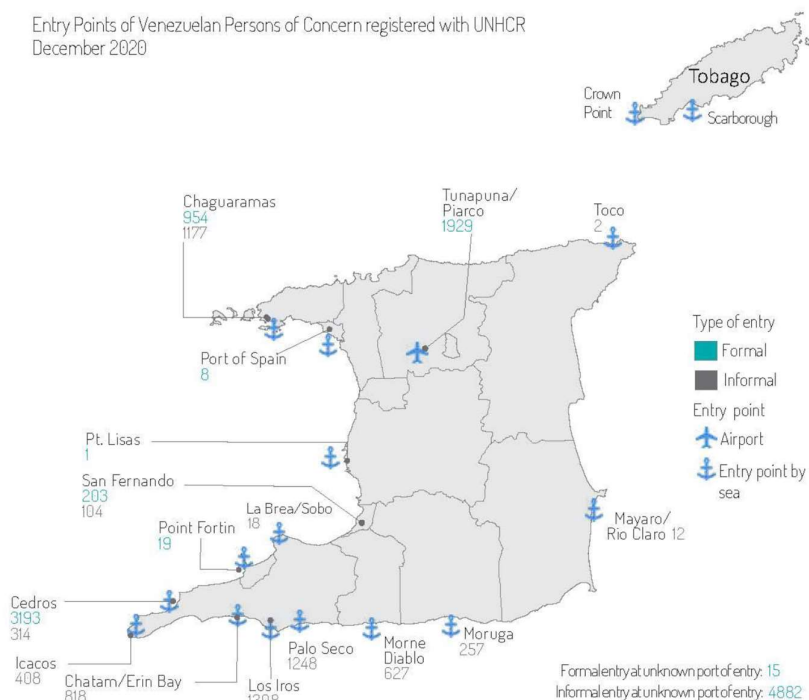
<sup>28</sup> The Ministry of Labour held consultations on the *Foreign Labour Contracts Act* that was officially repealed in March 2022 as well as consultations in 2018-2019 on the *Recruiting of Workers Act* and the *Unemployment Exchange Act*. An Inter-Ministerial Committee was also appointed by Cabinet to develop a Labour Migration Policy which falls under the remit of the Ministry of Labour



has taken many countries, not used to seeing themselves as migration destinations, by surprise. However, migration in the Caribbean is not a new phenomenon for population movements between islands have been a constant, as well as from T&T to Venezuela and vice-versa.<sup>29</sup>

While this case study focuses on UNICEF ECA's response in T&T, there are clearly broader issues at play within the region and globally. The VMC has coincided with other migratory phenomena such as a COVID-19 related (return or onward) migration, and the Haitian migration crisis. Many of these population movements are entirely foreseeable and unlikely to end or resolve themselves soon. Migration is a growing phenomenon.

**Figure 1. Main entry points of refugee and migrant families arriving in T&T.**



Other countries in the region are experiencing a similar exclusionary, not to say xenophobic, response to rising rates of Venezuelan and intra-Caribbean migration. For example, Amnesty International has regularly noted how Curaçaoan and Dutch authorities have violated the rights of Venezuelans seeking international protection in Curaçao.<sup>30</sup> It should also be noted that migration has historically not been an area of focus within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which impacts UNICEF scope for working on this issue at the sub-regional level.

These five VMC studies pose fundamental questions about how UNICEF wants to position itself as migration becomes a highly political and politicised area of intervention. How should the agency realise aspirations to move along the humanitarian-development nexus when governments are unwilling partners and the media is rife with negative perceptions about children on the move.

## 2. Object of the evaluation and country case studies

UNICEF's response to the VMC, both at country and regional levels, constitutes the object of the evaluation. Through a regional lens and five country case studies in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and T&T, the overall evaluation will review the diverse ways that UNICEF has responded to the VMC, given the specific opportunities and constraints of national contexts, government policies, and through both its development and humanitarian interventions. The five case studies will shed light on good practices and lessons learned from the experience of responding to this now protracted humanitarian crisis, and how UNICEF LACRO and HQ can better support COs in their response efforts.

<sup>29</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/migration-caribbean-current-trends-opportunities-and-challenges>

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, October 2021, "Curaçao: Authorities continue to deny protection to people fleeing the crisis in Venezuela" <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/curacao-authorities-continue-deny-protection-people-fleeing-crisis-venezuela/>

The Regional L2 Response to the VMC, which constitutes the object of this evaluation, was activated in February 2019 and expired in June 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The L2 activation did not include T&T, despite the fact that the country was being significantly impacted by the VMC. UNICEF ECA's response to the VMC in T&T was never officially treated or declared as an "emergency" since none was ever declared by the Government of T&T. While UNICEF ECA in T&T has participated in the Regional Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal to mobilise resources to respond to the VMC and has received humanitarian funding from donors, the overarching sense from KIs, both within and outside UNICEF, is that the response has been rather restrained, limited by both a lack of demand from government partners for UN assistance, the absence of clearly articulated government policy framework on migration, limited data on the exact numbers, locations and needs of refugee/migrant children and their families, and limited in terms of the availability of civil society partners with experience on issues related to children on the move.

### **UNICEF's participation in the R4V Regional Platform**

The R4V Caribbean Subregional Coordination Platform (CSRП) was established in 2018 to link five National Platforms in Aruba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and T&T with the R4V regional response (see Annex 2). The R4V- CSRП aims to promote the coordination of RMRP activities to ensure the recognition and protection of refugees and migrants and jointly deliver a humanitarian response to their needs in complementarity with, and reinforcing, each country's government's response. The R4V-CSRП coordination platform is jointly led by UNHCR-IOM. In T&T, the R4V National T&T Interagency Coordination Platform has comprised relatively few, and mainly UN, organisations. In 2021, partners included Humans Analytic, IOM, Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNHCR, UNFPA and UN-Habitat.

Within R4V-CSRП UNICEF provides technical assistance and sector coordination leadership on education, CP, and co-leadership with UNHCR on CBIs. There are two functional working groups – Education and Child Protection – in which government agencies participate, including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

### **UNICEF ECA's programmatic VMC response**

Over the period covered by the L2 from (February 2019 - June 2020) UNICEF's programmatic interventions in response to the VMC have focused on CP, education, nutritional screening, vaccination, CBI and Communication for Development (C4D).<sup>31</sup>

On CP, UNICEF has provided mental health and psychosocial support MHPSS to children and caregivers; trained community actors in providing PSS and established ten CFS, supporting children's access to intersectoral programming in partnership with Living Water Community (LWC). Technical support was provided to enhance case management of UASC and to strengthen family and community-based alternative care mechanisms for UASC and child victims of trafficking by integrating them within the national foster care system. CFS' SoS were developed to ensure CP mainstreaming, feedback mechanisms, and strategies for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation (PSEA). CP and GBV referral pathways were developed. In 2019, UNICEF also engaged ChildLine to provide PSS and counselling to approximately 1,000 migrant and non-migrant children in three migration-affected municipalities. This partnership engaged counsellors to support children in remote hard-to-reach areas and resulted in the launch of the My Child Helpline App, a mobile application increasing migrant families access to PSS, other key CP resources and emergency numbers. UNICEF expanded programming through the Freely Give Foundation<sup>32</sup> to offer children a safe space with opportunities to develop, learn and play, and build/strengthen resiliency through community and youth development programming.

In 2020, based on its new strategy, UNICEF partnered with the Catholic Commission for Social Justice/Archdiocese's Ministry for Migrants and Refugees (AMMR) to enhance the protection and well-being of children on the move in T&T. This included supporting ten additional CFS established by AMMR and five other community-based organisations, providing PSS, launching an alternative care programme for unaccompanied, separated and trafficked children, and capacity building on gender-based violence.

UNICEF's activities as part of the VMC response were focused primarily in the capital – Port of Spain – with some limited activities in Tunapuna, Chaguanas, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, Icacos, San Rafael and San Fernando.

At the outset of the VMC, UNICEF and other partners were both expecting and planning for integration of Venezuelan migrant children into the formal educational system. Discussions were undertaken and investments of approximately US\$300,000 were made to build capacity of the Catholic Education Board (CEBM) to enrol and integrate migrant children in their primary school system. However, it eventually was made clear that the

<sup>31</sup> Recently renamed Social and Behavioural Change Communication.

<sup>32</sup> <https://m.facebook.com/FreelyGiveFoundation/events>

Government of T&T would not issue school permits for Venezuelan migrant and refugee children. In collaboration with stakeholders in the Education Working Group, UNICEF has continued to provide education through a blended Learning model, covering approximately 53 per cent of the beneficiary population. Through contracts with Notes Master and DAWARE, both the T&T and the Venezuelan national curriculum were made available so that migrant and refugee learners could access education in Spanish and English. UNICEF also initiated early childhood development (ECD) activities with a home-visits programme.

Through communications and C4D activities, UNICEF endeavoured to understand the information needs of refugees and migrant families and provide them with the information that they need to survive in a new country where they do not speak the local language. It also sought to address perceived stigma and xenophobia. The local media have documented how this has been manifested in evictions from rented accommodation. The 2019 Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)<sup>33</sup> IOM report noted that 70 per cent of their Venezuelan respondents felt discriminated against because of their nationality.

In T&T, migrants have access to primary health services as part of government accident and emergency policy but in practice access remains challenging due to the language barrier and experiences of In coordination with LWC, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health, children attending CFS had their vaccinations updated. In order to address sexual and reproductive health for adolescent girls, UNICEF supported the T&T Family Planning Association (TTFPA) to provide nutritional screening for infants and small children. In 2019, through an agreement with TTFPA, nutritional assessments of under-fives infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling for under2s were completed by.

Finally, in 2021, a CBI initiative was set up with funding from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) to address the impact of COVID-19 on the migrant population. In partnership with LWC, the CBI took the form of a QR Code distributed to a number of migrant households with under-fives to allow them to procure needed groceries and supplies at local supermarkets.

In terms of financing, UNICEF's HAC appeals have been relatively successful in covering the requirements of the T&T response. If funds carried over from previous years are taken into account, UNICEF's funding requirements were largely met in 2019 and 2020.

**Table 1. Humanitarian Needs and Gaps for T&T 2019**

Sector	Requirements	Allocation	Other Resources	2018 Carry-over	Gap	%Gap
Education	850,000	634,693	52,500	247,540		
CP	600,000	77,500		266,605	255,895	43%
Advocacy/Comm	50,000				50,000	100%
Cross Sectoral		77,500	95,299	63,743		
<b>TOTAL 2019</b>	<b>1,500,000</b>	<b>789,693</b>	<b>147,799</b>	<b>577,888</b>	<b>305,895</b>	<b>20%</b>

**Table 2. Humanitarian Needs and Gaps for T&T 2020**

Sector	Requirements	Allocation	Other Resources	2019 Carry-over	Gap	%Gap
Nutrition	50,000				50,000	100%
Education	400,000	370,185		125,174		0%
CP	380,000			94,718	285,282	75%
Advocacy/Comm	16,000				16,000	100%
C4D	60,000				60,000	100%
Cross Sectoral		140,170		24,927		
Unallocated/ other sectors		142,149				
<b>TOTAL 2020</b>	<b>906,000</b>	<b>652,505</b>		<b>244,819</b>	<b>411,282</b>	<b>45%</b>

<sup>33</sup> <https://dtm.iom.int/trinidad-tobago>



For 2021, the HAC appeal for T&T was for US\$ 897,500, with ECHO being the main humanitarian donor of UNICEF's migration response.

### **3. Purpose, objectives and scope of the T&T case study**

#### **3.1. Purpose**

The purpose of the overall evaluation is to account for the results achieved between January 2019 and December 2021 and draw lessons learned and recommendations that will guide future strategic and programmatic priorities in the region and in T&T, including the new Regional Office Management Plan, Rolling Workplan and relevant Country Office (CO) Programme Documents. The primary users of this evaluation are the UNICEF Offices in each of the countries, UNICEF staff in LACRO and in HQ supporting the response, government counterparts and targeted beneficiaries including children, adolescents and their families. Secondary users include UN agencies, civil society and other IPs, national and international organisations, donors, the private sector, host communities and research agencies with interest in the evaluation findings.

This case study focuses on:

- The evolution of the T&T Response from the activation of the L2 Emergency in February 2019 to the present, including revisions to its Country Programme Document (CPD), development of a migration Theory of Change (ToC), and the challenges and opportunities encountered in its approach to programming along the humanitarian-development nexus.
- UNICEF's efforts to ensure access to nutrition, vaccination, CP and educational services, including GBV prevention and referral against a background of absence of a clear and supportive policy framework provided by the government.
- In terms of reaching the most vulnerable populations, a focus will be the appropriateness of the response provided to the most vulnerable Venezuelan migrants in terms of age, gender and culturally appropriate instruments and strategies.
- UNICEF in general attempts to carry out system strengthening and avoid duplicating existing systems. However, in T&T ensuring access to formal education has proven impossible due to the existing legal and administrative barriers. It was valuable to assess the contingency and advocacy plans developed by UNICEF and challenges addressed, in terms of finding a timely solution to ensure that the educational needs of Venezuelan migrant children are met.
- This case challenges UNICEF thinking on the importance of linking emergency humanitarian and development actions and integrating them in long-term planning processes given that government partners have played a limited role in the response.
- The relationship between the response in T&T and key standards – including the CCCs and the application of the *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*, challenges and opportunities experienced and how they have been factored into UNICEF's response as a new paradigm for thinking about South-South migration are areas of interest for the evaluation.

The evaluation has a strong gender and equity focus component, exploring how and to what degree UNICEF has been implementing through a gender and equity lens and considered gender dynamics, such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, and other relevant variables in its design, planning and implementation.

#### **3.2. Objectives**

As per the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), the primary objective of this case study is to evaluate the extent to which UNICEF is providing adequate, effective, and timely response to the crises generated by the outflow of migrants from Venezuela to T&T since February 2019, and to understand what the enabling and constraining factors and lessons learned have been. This case study also investigates UNICEF's actions to open opportunities to establish localised solutions, as well as more long-term solutions to the integration of migrants through institutions and systems of duty bearers.

It also seeks to analyse the extent to which UNICEF's contribution to changes in social norms, including those related to gender and xenophobia, are envisioned and strategies are in place and measurable.

The evaluation has sought to identify good practices, innovative approaches and lessons learned and seek to develop, in a participatory manner, forward-looking recommendations to strengthen UNICEF's results, with a special focus on reaching the most vulnerable groups. The evaluation provides evidence on whether UNICEF's

Regional Response to the VMC has been and continues to be appropriate, effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated and connected.

### 3.3. Scope

**Timeframe:** This evaluation covers UNICEF's response to the Venezuela outflow crises in T&T, from the time the Level 2 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure (CEAP) was triggered in February 2019 to its deactivation in June 2020, as well as the overlapping period with the Global L3 CEAP activated in March 2020 following the COVID-19 outbreak (January 2019 to June 2021). As most field missions/interviews were carried out during the last quarter of 2021, it was agreed with LACRO to extend the timeframe beyond the deactivation of the L2 VMC Emergency until December 2021 in order to capture the evaluation of the VMC response over time.

**Criteria scope:** The evaluation uses OECD-DAC evaluation criteria adapted to humanitarian interventions in line with guidelines of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)<sup>34</sup>: appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and coordination, coverage and connectedness.

**COVID-19:** the evaluation has included an assessment of UNICEF's COVID-19 adaptations to the migration crisis response in T&T.

### 3.4. Stakeholders

The evaluation has an extensive set of primary and secondary stakeholders, although in the case of T&T, some are not represented given the size and types of responses implemented in relation to the VMC. As primary stakeholders, we include the affected population, as well as UNICEF staff and implementing and government partners engaged in the response. In addition, secondary stakeholders have been identified and included as external to UNICEF in the table below.

**Table 3. Secondary Stakeholders**

Level	Internal to UNICEF	External to UNICEF
<b>Headquarters Level</b>	- Sr. Management, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), Children on the Move (Geneva)	- UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, UN Women - Donors (including United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), ECHO, and Government of Canada and other donors)
<b>Regional Level</b>	- UNICEF Sr. Management, Emergency and Technical Advisors	- UN Partners: UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, UN Women, OCHA - Regional R4V Platform members - Donor Representatives
<b>National Level</b>	- UNICEF Sr. Management and Section chiefs, sector specialists, Emergency and Technical teams (Migration technical team)	- UN Partners: UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, UN Women - National government partners in key ministries and government agencies - R4V Coordination members - IPs - Donor representatives - Partners in media and other opinion influencers
<b>Sub-national level</b>	- UNICEF Field-Office and satellite teams in including different sectors specialists	- IPs - Beneficiaries of UNICEF-funded - programmes - Representatives of host – communities, including by gender and ethnicity (women, men, indigenous) - R4V Coordination members under WASH, Education, CP AoR, C4D - local media/influencers

## 4. Evaluation criteria and questions

The evaluation criteria incorporate two cross-cutting approaches: a human rights approach (HR) and a gender perspective. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the human rights, gender equality, equity and intercultural approach for girls, boys and adolescents were incorporated into the implementation of the

<sup>34</sup> ALNAP (2016), Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide

Venezuela's response to the migration crisis. In terms of quality standards, the evaluation refers to UNICEF's 2020 CCCs as well as relevant policy guideline for children on the move.

The evaluation questions (EQs) have been validated by a reference group designated by UNICEF, which included programmatic and technical staff, and arranged in an evaluation matrix (see Annex 4). The ET maintains the same questions for all the case studies to ensure harmonisation of the enquiry process.

## **5. Methodology of the T&T Country case study**

This case study follows the evaluation methodology laid out in the Inception Report. The team was asked to reconstruct a set of nested Theories of Change (ToCs) for each of the country programme's response to the Venezuelan Outflow, which span both humanitarian and development modalities (see annex 5 in this report). The ToC has been used to explore the underlying theoretical aspects of the linkages between humanitarian and development aspects of the response in each of the country cases. Other key frameworks that have been used to guide the evaluation are UNICEF's CCCs as well as UNICEF's *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*. Both documents are key references and provide a standard by which to measure the effectiveness and appropriateness of the response.

The evaluation is utilisation focused and participatory, with a focus on learning. The evaluation is also forward-looking with a view to shedding light on the results achieved so far and the possible strategic and programmatic priorities in the region towards durable solutions for the beneficiaries and communities.

### **5.1. Document and literature review**

In the data collection phase, the team conducted an extensive review of country-level, LACRO and other documentation on the coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance relevant for each country case study (See Annex 7 for full bibliography). This review of key qualitative and quantitative material, including metrics applicable to UNICEF's response and strategy for responding to the needs of migrant populations and host communities, has enabled understanding of how UNICEF ensure that the rights of migrant and refugee children are strengthened, access to services is improved and solutions for refugees and migrants are sought. This in-depth analysis allowed the ET to create a framework to measure progress on collective (regional or cross-border) and individual (country-level) efforts and capture lessons learned and good practices.

The desk review included the information provided by LACRO and the CO, available in shared folders, sometimes internal and non-public documents, monitoring data, operational contracts and reports of IPs, contextual data of the RMRP, R4V platform, academia, the Government of T&T and other sources.

### **5.2. Semi-structured key informant interviews (KII)**

A series of semi-structured interviews were carried out with key in-country informants (both at ECA and T&T) based on the stakeholder analysis in the IR. In total 28 KIIs were conducted (20 female KIIs and 8 male KIIs). KIIs were purposefully selected following a sampling strategy agreed in the Inception Report, with a focus on interviewing different categories of stakeholders: UNICEF staff, IPs, government counterparts, multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and civil society organisations (see Annex 8 for list of institutions consulted).

A generic interview guide, based on the revised EQs, guided the case study and can be found in Annex 9. Interview protocols were kept as simple and as brief as possible without compromising quality, giving the highest levels of sensitivity and respect for beneficiaries and communities, and staff, including female and male learners, female and male parents, and teachers/workers in the online learning spaces.

Qualitative evidence from these interviews was analysed according to emergent categories of analysis, such as similar themes or issues raised by multiple respondents.

### **5.3. Engagement with families of children on the move and host communities**

An in-person country visit was not advisable due to the COVID-19 public health restrictions that had schools and CFS closed and both UNICEF and other agencies' staff working from home. Therefore, an extended set of remote, gender and age-disaggregated interviews and small group discussions with beneficiaries were carried out starting in November 2021 and continuing until March 2022. This allowed the ET to gather evidence from a wide range of participants in the response and beneficiary groups, including adolescents (see agenda in Annex 6).

Five online group discussions with migrant children, parents and teachers were carried out remotely using Zoom with a total of approximately 40 participants, including children and adolescents. The ET attempted to have separate groups with fathers and mothers of learners in UNICEF-funded programmes, but unfortunately participation by fathers was very limited and mothers attended both groups. The selection of participants in group discussions was purposeful, covering specific categories of stakeholders (adolescents, parents, teachers),

considering gender and age, and the requirement of having been involved in UNICEF-funded programmes and activities at sub-national level. This included almost all teachers from Equal Place, a temporary UNHCT intervention helping asylum-seekers, refugees and other eligible children in need to access accredited education,<sup>35</sup> as well as learners.

#### 5.4. Feedback loops and validation process of the cases study

This report was submitted to LACRO and the CO, and went through a validation process:

- 1) Two weeks to allow written feedback to this report addressing inaccuracies, possible gaps in information or misinterpretations.
- 2) The ET organised a workshop on 27 July 2022 with UNICEF staff and external stakeholders to further refine findings, conclusions, and recommendations and to address any remaining gap in information. Draft recommendations were reviewed and possible actions identified, to encourage learning and ownership of the evaluation results.

### 6. Limitations of the case study

Limitation	Action to minimise
Due to COVID-19 pandemic and related public health restrictions the field mission was conducted virtually, over Zoom, reducing the opportunity of the ET to make direct observations.	The result of the virtual visit was that there were no opportunities to directly observe UNICEF's activities in T&T. In order to sense a comprehensive picture of the response, the ET consulted additional documents from a variety of sources.
Limited documentary evidence and partnerships on this relatively small operation	T&T is a smaller operation than other case studies in this evaluation. The ET has endeavoured to include a wider range of stakeholders and partners and to carry out additional interviews to offset the reduced number of written documents, and has also included more secondary data from different sources.
Evaluation fatigue: the CO had recently gone through a Country Programme Evaluation, an intense exercise that would inform the new country programme.	Care was taken not to overload UNICEF staff.

### 7. Ethical and gender considerations

The evaluation was implemented based on standards set out in the *UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*<sup>36</sup> prepared by the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) and also in UNICEF's *Procedure on Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis*.<sup>37</sup> In particular, the ET has sought through its interviews, document review, group discussions and analytical frameworks to fully operationalise its obligations to demonstrate independence, impartiality, credibility, and accountability in accordance with UNEG ethical standards. The ET confirms it does not have any conflict of interest.

The ET made all efforts to assure all participants informed and voluntary participation, privacy and confidentiality, and wellbeing during this process. The case study was designed to ensure participation of as many beneficiaries as possible, and interviews and small group discussions were composed to seek perspectives of men and women, girls and boys. The ET has also sought to ensure that gender has been treated as a cross-cutting issue – both internal and external to UNICEF and its operational processes.

With respect to ethical approaches to managing evaluation participant data (applying to the content of interviews, FGDs), this case study has ensured:

- Respect for dignity and diversity: respecting the differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs, gender, disability, age and ethnicity and the potential implications of these when carrying out research. We took steps to minimise any risk of disruption to the respondents, provided ample notice and respected their privacy.

<sup>35</sup> <https://help.unhcr.org/trinidadandtobago/faqs/equal-place-education-programme/>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

<sup>37</sup> <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

- **Rights:** We have ensured that participants were treated as autonomous agents and given time and information to decide whether they wished to participate, and not pressured into participating. The participants were selected as per the defined sampling methodology.
- **Redress:** Participants were provided sufficient information to seek redress and how to register a complaint.
- **Confidentiality:** We have respected the respondent's right to provide information in confidence and will make them aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. Names and any other sensitive information will be anonymised.
- **Data security:** Data has been stored systematically and securely and in line with DARA's data protection policy, which has been updated to be fully compliant with the 2018 GDPR standards. Data will be stored in a way that makes it available and clearly accessible to the ET only. If requested and following appropriate anonymisation, the data will also be shared with UNICEF. Data will be retained for the period of the evaluation, and then destroyed.

## 8. Findings

### 8.1. Appropriateness

The evaluation of the appropriateness of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: To what extent did COs develop and adapt strategic approaches and internal arrangements based on regional/country contexts, needs and taking into account a gender, equity and route-based approach and the COVID-19 pandemic?

Overall, the evaluation finds that UNICEF's presence within the response has been highly appropriate, advocating with partners and governments on behalf of Venezuelan children on the move and raising their profile within collective response efforts. UNICEF ECA has made good efforts to reach and include the participation of migrant parents, teachers and learners through FGDs which have influenced, to some extent, the design and delivery of services.

However, the ET notes:

- The absence of a regional overarching strategic plan for the response led to challenges in meeting UNICEF standards and guidance, including incorporating gender as a cross-cutting area.
- There has been limited capacity to advocate for operationalising the CCCs.
- Insufficient preparedness to address migration caused lack of initial emergency capacity on migration.
- There have been Issues around planning for and staffing the response.
- There are concerns that a nationality-based approach to children on the move has had a negative impact in terms of addressing xenophobia.

This chapter is further structured according to the evaluation questions.<sup>38</sup>

***EQ2: To what extent did UNICEF in T&T and adapt response theories of change, strategies, objectives and implementation modalities that were appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of migrant children/families, opportunities, capacities and circumstances in border, transit and urban/rural settlements, including adaptations to the COVID-Covid19 outbreak?***

Objectives and implementation modalities, including Theories of Change for Child Protection and Education sectors, have been appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of migrant children and their families. These included adaptations to the COVID-19 outbreak.

- These have taken the form of a network of Child Friendly Spaces, as well as the expansion of online learning opportunities for children living in different localities.
- However, UNICEF in Trinidad and Tobago has not fully adopted a route-based approach, despite the small size of the geographic area, and several KIs have commented on the significant strategic and operational protection gaps that exist for children – starting from arrival in the formal or informal ports via boat, and as they fan out to more remote areas of the Islands, with lack of adequate monitoring of cases of detention and refoulement. While some activities take place in other centers, territorial coverage and

<sup>38</sup> The first evaluation question is not addressed in this country case study as the question related to the regional level and will be addressed in the cross-country synthesis report

presence of UNICEF was centred mostly in the capital and that it has been systematically missing a strategy for child protection, education and access to health services for children in the many rural and coastal areas, many of them fishing communities, where they have settled.

- The evaluation team also notes gaps in both past and current preparedness planning for migration emergencies.
- In terms of past and current Theories of Change, the draft CPD does include migration, but only under social protection, when in fact other sectors like child protection and education could consider mainstreaming migration into their strategies and outcomes.

The nature of the migration flows into T&T have changed and evolved and UNICEF's response has endeavoured to keep pace with the changing needs of migrant children and their families as well as the challenges posed by government policies designed to ensure that there are no potential pull factors created that would entice Venezuelan migrants to arrive and settle.

Among key strategic documents shared with the ET and designed to articulate the response were:

- ECA ToC for the migrant response
- UNICEF Child Protection Response - T&T Venezuelan Migrant Response 2018-2021
- the ECA – 2020 VMC Strategic Moment of Reflection and Action Plan<sup>39</sup>
- The draft CPD 2021-2025 and combined Strategy Notes

In December 2017 there was focus on the extreme vulnerability of Cuban children whose parents had started camping camped out in front of United Nations House in Port of Spain in protest at poor reception conditions for asylum seekers.<sup>40</sup> It appears the CP officer raised the issue with senior management and was asked to approach UNHCR to see what support UNICEF could provide. At the time UNICEF had only three staff members in T&T. UNHCR expressed concern about the growing wave of migration, of both Cubans and Venezuelan and collaboration between UNHCR and UNICEF began. This initially involved an asking UNICEF to carry out training on child rights as part of larger UNHCR training of T&T migration officials. The evolution of the ToCs and response strategies show that in September 2018, the Child Protection section was already documenting and creating its ToC to guide the response. This ToC appears to have evolved organically as the migration response had no precedent in T&T.

Another key concern was that in order to ensure protection of the Cuban children the only available space for them and their families the local police station. At that time UNHCR had only one IP assisting refugees and migrants – LWC – and they were too overwhelmed to take on the challenges of alternative housing for migrant families. This shows that even before the mass arrival of Venezuelans both state, UN and civil society capacity to address migration issues was lacking.

In 2018, the ECA launched a humanitarian response focusing on education, ECD, nutrition, CP and C4D. The CP response was designed to ensure that children on the move were protected from violence, exploitation and abuse. UNICEF provided PSS, enhanced its identification and referral of children at risks and helped out-of-school migrant children through the establishment of a network of child-friendly spaces (CFS). At the same time there was strengthening of family or community-based alternative care and case management for UASC. Focus has been on strengthening national and community-based systems for the reception and protection of children on the move by relevant T&T authorities.

The CP Working Group was established in 2018 as a coordination mechanism and adopted a development/humanitarian nexus approach to facilitate collaboration between UN, government and civil society to meet the protection needs of migrant children.

The CFS enabled an integrated programming approach offering children on the move PSS, educational support, life-saving messages around education, protection and nutrition) and opportunities for socialisation, learning and play. CFS offered opportunities to verify children's vaccination status and assess risks and to refer children in need of care and protection. CP referral pathways were established. Animators, teachers and local CP workers were trained in providing PSS using the *Return to Happiness* model adapted to the migration context.

A highly positive and appropriate aspect of the migration response in the T&T has been the openness to all migrants. Although humanitarian funding was dedicated to the Venezuelan population, it is an emergent finding of this evaluation that rigid adherence to privileging one group of migrants over another is unethical in

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<sup>40</sup> <https://newsday.co.tt/2017/12/20/ag-cuban-protesters-must-obey-the-law/>



humanitarian terms. It can lead to heightened negative attitudes and social backlash against the very population that humanitarians intend to assist. The ECA has taken a positive approach to providing equal access to key services for all migrant and asylum-seeking children and families, as most are in the same situation and facing the same protection risks as the Venezuelans.

IOM, with support from UNICEF, completed a Displacement Tracking Monitoring study in August 2019 surveying over 2,200 migrants living in T&T. The report published in October 2019<sup>41</sup> highlighted that income generation/employment, medical care, legal services, food and education were among the top priority needs of the Venezuelan migrants. The survey indicated that 90 per cent of those who had children of school age did not have access to formal education. A further DTM report in 2021 noted that "43 per cent of the children living with the respondents did not have access to education in T&T, which was a reduction of 16 percentage points from DTM 2020".<sup>42</sup> This indicates that while progress has been made, access to education has remained a challenge throughout the period covered by the evaluation. It has remained the reality that migrant children have been largely unable to access the national education system in T&T.

In 2019 the UNICEF/UNHCT IP, LWC opened the St Therese Centre for Education and Training (known as the School of Hope.<sup>43</sup>) Entirely funded by UNHCR, It provided a physical learning space for 84 migrant children from different countries, including Venezuela. In June 2020, at the high of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR indicated it could not continue funding all cost and UNICEF started to pay for facilitators' salaries. With UNICEF support the number of learners rose to 200. However, the model was ultimately unsustainable, due to the cost of transport of learners to a centralised location. It inadvertently created a parallel education system which both UN agencies did not wish to continue supporting given the political sensitivities at the time. It is unclear when the school closed, but was still open in June 2020.<sup>44</sup>

UNICEF, again in collaboration with UNHCR, supported a scheme to support migrant children unable to enter the formal education system, using a blended approach to education that combined e-learning with in-person support through. This programme, Equal Place, started in September 2019<sup>45</sup> as a temporary intervention helping asylum-seekers, refugees and other eligible children in need to access accredited education. This, together with UNICEF's network of CFS and the MyChild HelpLine app were highly relevant adaptations to the constraints faced by migrant children. However, there was tension between the education strategy and the integration of Equal Place into CFS programming.

### **Challenges of using a route-based approach in Trinidad and Tobago**

The ToRs requests that the evaluation consider whether or not UNICEF at CO and LACRO levels have taken a route-based approach. UNICEF's activities and focus were in Port of Spain, where the UN and international community are based, with a significant gap in situation monitoring, documentation and response to the child rights situation in the many coastal areas and fishing communities where Venezuelan migrants have sought refuge. As a small island state, T&T has many costal coves and potential entry points by sea (see Figure 1 in Context section above). Proximity to Venezuela has made it a key, if somewhat perilous, destination for Venezuelan migrants, mainly arriving by boat. An attempt was made to address this under the ChildLine partnership through the establishment of a remote counselling team that was equipped to identify, refer and provide emergency assistance to children and families in remote areas.

T&T is a middle to high income country and agriculture, tourism and other sectors offer labour opportunities for migrants.<sup>46</sup> Some informants suggest that the collapse of the education system in Venezuela and T&T's reputation of for quality education created a draw for families wanting to see their children continue schooling and acquire proficiency in English to open doors for future opportunities.

UNICEF informants agreed the response was Port of Spain-focused and drew attention to the fact that this is where IPs focus their activities. IPs reported that in many rural migrant and refugee communities, families have no access either to CFS or Equal Place online schooling. KIs noted that in some remote fishing communities accessing basic health care and pharmacies can involve a whole day of travel and expense, beyond the means of most families. Several KIs mentioned that taxi drivers systematically over-charge Venezuelan migrants further impeding access to health care. According to one KI:

<sup>41</sup> IOM, T&T: Monitoring Venezuelan Citizens' Presence - Round 1, available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/trinidad-and-tobago-%E2%80%94-monitoring-venezuelan-citizens-presence-round-2-september-2019>

<sup>42</sup> IOM: DTM

<sup>43</sup> <https://catholictt.org/2019/08/02/st-therese-centre-for-education-and-training-a-community-space-for-migrants-refugees-and-others/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://catholictt.org/2019/08/02/st-therese-centre-for-education-and-training-a-community-space-for-migrants-refugees-and-others/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://help.unhcr.org/trinidadandtobago/faqs/equal-place-education-programme/>

<sup>46</sup> UNDP, Country Programme Document for T&T (2017-2021)

UNICEF staff should be going around with IOM to some of these remote locations to document the risks that Venezuelan migrant children are really experiencing in T&T. They have no access to any kind of school system or even identity. In these remote areas, where Venezuelans are living in fear of the authorities, the risk of statelessness is becoming a real problem that UNICEF needs to do something about.

A number of KIs expressed concern that the risk of child detention and refoulement are not yet adequately factored into UNICEF situation monitoring. This is despite the fact that UNICEF is an active member of the Detention Sub-working Group and overall Protection Coordination Group which was formed to increase situation monitoring and informed collaborative action and advocacy. An advocacy strategy was jointly developed and webinars held on the issue. Several KIs described situations where UASCs and other children were forced to spend one or several nights in police stations because there was nowhere else for them to receive shelter. They also described how deportations to Venezuela – either of parents without their children or of UASC were commonplace, and have been inadequately monitored. Little is known about those who are deported from T&T and then repeatedly try to return.<sup>47</sup> There is little evidence of those who returned to Venezuela during COVID-19 lockdown and conditions of their departure. KIs suggest that the current figures for the number of migrants in the country may in fact be lower than the caseload in UNHCR’s registration system because there is no meaningful tracking of returnees to Venezuela.

### **Appropriateness of ECA –T&T preparedness measures**

A rapid review of UNICEF’s entries into UNICEF’s EPP provides an indication of the extent to which, prior to the L2 being activated, COs had identified and were prepared to respond to the threat of a migration crisis similar to the VMC or health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to remember that by 2018, the VMC itself was well underway, and T&T had already begun to experience the impacts of this mass migration. The 2018 ECA entry into the EPP does not identify migration as a threat in the development of potential risk scenarios, despite the fact that the context in Venezuela was already very serious and T&T had experienced previous waves of migration from Venezuela. A UNICEF informant said that the reason was that migration had not yet been “made explicit” in the risk analysis (step 1) of the EPP, meaning that it would be easy for COs to overlook. On the positive side, the possibility of a pandemic was identified. Strangely, by 2021, in the midst of both a migration crisis and global pandemic, the EPP entry neither recognised the risk of a migration-related crisis, nor that of an epidemic/pandemic. This raises questions whether the whole EPP process should be made more comprehensive and developed in relation to real world scenarios. A UNICEF informant noted that the EPP focuses mostly on natural hazards and that migration was only added in the 2.0 version, released globally in late 2020, while training was rolled out only in early 2021.

Having failed to flag the risks associated with mass migration, UNICEF has been hard-pressed to subsequently do so. KIs suggest that UNICEF was unprepared, with limited experience of and no formal partnerships with civil society partners with experience on migration issues. KIs recommended that UNICEF consider that, as part of its emergency preparedness procedures, incorporation of pre-vetting of IPs with capacities to carry out specific CP or other sectoral activities in designated areas. This could include potential partners with awareness and experience of migration issues or partners who can be quickly brought up to speed on migration. This would ensure that IPs are ready to move even before the onset of an emergency, akin to the way that UNICEF operates its rosters of standby private consultants.

Another approach, used by UNICEF in 2019, was tapping into the already extensive list of agencies experienced in education, ECD and CP and building their capacity on migration. Today civil society in T&T is more sensitised on migration than it was prior to the VMC. Nonetheless, the consequence of limited partnerships with those familiar with migration and UNICEF standards meant that the agency was starting from scratch, in the midst of an emergency situation, to find and prepare partners for UNICEF contracting requirements.

### **Appropriateness of existing ToCs and emerging ToC on migration in the draft CDP 2022-2026**

Typically, UNICEF emergency responses are not guided by a ToC. However, one was developed by the CP sector<sup>48</sup> and other helpful strategy documents outlining the role and contribution of other sectors were put in place. Particularly in education a great deal of thought has been given into how to navigate the challenges of legal and administrative barriers of access to the formal educational system. Yet despite the lessons learned from the migration response over the last three years, and the likelihood that migration in the region is set to continue to increase, the new 2022-2026 MCPD and ToCs of change elaborated in the ECA Combined Strategy Note, do not

<sup>47</sup> New Humanitarian, 2021. *As desperation grows, Venezuelans look to a dangerous Caribbean escape route*. <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2021/4/28/venezuelans-look-to-a-dangerous-caribbean-escape-route>

<sup>48</sup> UNICEF: UNICEF ECA, Combined Programme Strategy Note – undated, 2021?



significantly integrate migration as a forward looking and cross-cutting concern. Migration is only directly mentioned as a component of the third programmatic pillar – on Social Protection. In the results framework of the strategy note, there exists one explicit reference to children on the move:

Output 3. Caribbean public institutions have strengthened capacities to deliver programmes and implement policies that mitigate the impact of deprivations for children on the move in partnership with private sector, academia and CSOs.<sup>49</sup>

The ET was not able to identify any corresponding intervention logic or communications or advocacy agenda setting out how this output is to be achieved. Therefore, in terms of ToCs supporting the new MCDP, the ET finds that there remain gaps related to children on the move in education and CP where UNICEF could bring value added through a well-defined advocacy agenda.

**EQ3: To what extent were UNICEF's plans, actions and key decisions informed by the active participation and voice of affected populations? Were different types of beneficiaries consulted and included in the response?**

UNICEF has regularly conducted beneficiary-based consultations, which have influenced to some extent C4D channels of communication and programming.

- Using zoom meetings, WhatsApp groups and working in close collaboration with IOM and UNHCR, UNICEF ECA in Trinidad and Tobago can be considered one of the operations most tuned in to the voices of affected populations.
- UNICEF staff are very aware of and committed to the importance of hearing directly from migrant families as a basis for better tailoring of programmes to meet their needs. However, most KIs are clear that UNICEF's overall organisational culture does not favour bottom-up programming, but rather the rolling out of standard models and messaging that is not always appropriate to the specific context.

UNICEF ECA's VMC Response should be considered good practice for its regular and in-depth consultations with the beneficiary population, including during the pandemic, by using Zoom, WhatsApp and other media to ensure that the voices of the Venezuelan migrant population, including children, were being heard. C4D staff travelled in 2019 to T&T in order to document the information needs of Venezuelan migrants and UNICEF staff has also consulted with children and parents to understand their learning needs and challenges during the pandemic. Other consultation processes engaged in by UNICEF and documents produced have included:

- Participation in UNHCR participatory assessment exercises and FGDs, carried out on an annual basis and used for planning purposes.
- Participation in IOM's DTM studies – 2019, 2020 and 2021.
- *Engaging children and young people on UNICEF'S strategic plan 2022-2025.*<sup>50</sup>

Through UNICEF's work in social protection and the QR Code initiative, it was able to gather relevant data on the day-to-day needs of Venezuelan migrant children and families.

Although UNICEF's migration response in T&T has been closer in many ways to the beneficiaries than in other operations, perhaps possible due to the small size of the migrant population compared to other countries covered by the evaluation, KIs cite the need more beneficiary consultation earlier in the design of the response. KIs note that it is very important to carry out consultations with beneficiaries prior to laying down the foundations of the programmatic response; because once this is done it is difficult to change. According to some KIs, the emergency assessments are critically important. These are carried out largely by M&E staff with less active participation from programme staff. They are also often used to collect quantitative, rather than qualitative data, from beneficiaries. KIs stressed that emergency assessment teams should gather both quantitative and qualitative data, to ensure that beneficiaries needs and difficulties are taken into consideration prior to programme design.

Another concern raised by KIs was around UNICEF messaging based on top-down LACRO/HQ agendas versus bottom-up needs arising from the beneficiaries themselves. It is common that UNICEF programmes roll out standard messaging, mainly around key topics such as child rights and the prevention of violence against children. But ECA team members also highlighted that such top-down messaging can miss the mark if UNICEF is not listening sufficiently and adapting its strategies:

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/media/107941/file/Engaging\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_on\\_UNICEF%27s\\_Strategic\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/107941/file/Engaging_children_and_young_people_on_UNICEF%27s_Strategic_Plan.pdf)

At LACRO Level, they tell us the types of messaging that they want us to share with the migrant community – these have to do with messages around violence against children and other specific messages. But what is important is not just our messaging, but listening to the beneficiaries and understanding what they need from us – and adapting our programmes to what they need. UNICEF is not very good at this. We are told to share messages which do not always correspond with the actual needs of the populations we are trying to serve.

### **Focus groups with Venezuelan migrants**

FGDs in 2019 allowed UNICEF to understand the information needs of Venezuelan migrants and adapt its communications platforms to them, rather than vice versa (see Annex 11). FGDs led by UNICEF revealed that traditional media sources such as radio, television and newspapers are rarely utilised within the Venezuelan migrant community. The fact that programmes and articles were largely in English made these sources inaccessible. Participants indicated that their mobile devices were the main way they received information. All participants possessed mobile phones with internet connectivity. These phones were used to maintain contact with family and friends back in Venezuela but also to source information needed for living in T&T. Two channels were identified as being most used, Facebook and a well-subscribed WhatsApp group for Venezuelans. Participants expressed a need for a centralised source of information where migrants could access trusted information on key areas of interest. This should be Android-friendly and accessible via mobile phones. A website was suggested as a useful option. This research confirmed the importance of social media for the migrant community in T&T.

Based on these FGDs ECA developed communications tools and began to use these platforms for communicating with Venezuelan and other migrant groups. UNICEF shared with the ET two communications strategies – one from 2018-2019 and a revised version in 2021 – which have sought to address some of the key information needs and priorities identified by beneficiaries. While some of the needs identified by beneficiaries have not yet been incorporated into UNICEF programmatic responses, the ET acknowledges it has been a good practice which should be shared and replicated in other VMC impacted countries.

### **Knowledge, attitudes and perceptions study of host community attitudes towards Venezuelan migrants**

UNICEF commissioned a KAP study in May 2020 within communities where migrants have settled to assess knowledge about migrants, their practices and attitudes towards them. The study was based on a sample of 1,500 Trinidadian national respondents in five urban centres hosting large numbers of migrants. Local perceptions were sought to inform C4D, programming on xenophobia, and CP, health, education and ECD interventions for migrant children. It also sought to measure the extent to which existing methods of communication have been effective, or if alternative communication methods are needed.

The study found that Trinidadians are relatively sympathetic to migrants and strong manifestations of xenophobia were not pervasive. This is in contrast with the KI interviews conducted as part of this evaluation which would suggest that on a daily basis, there is much more xenophobia towards Venezuelan migrants than is directed at other groups of migrants. Other studies by R4V partners and Refugees International have highlighted the hyper sexualisation of Venezuelan women and girls, and the fact that both Venezuelan women and men experience a high degree of violence in their daily lives.<sup>51</sup> A July 2021 LWC study highlighted the prevalence of violence and GBV experienced by the migrant community.<sup>52</sup>

To follow up the KAP study UNICEF developed a series of the Children on the Move workshops. These were conducted in seven primary and secondary schools to develop a sense of tolerance, protection and support among host community children for the needs of vulnerable children and families on the move. In total, 412 children (210 girls and 202 boys) participated. These confirmed that stereotypes of about Venezuelan migrants were held by children. Another partnership with Jabulous<sup>53</sup> involved FGDs with both migrants and host communities and to develop information tools for migrant families.

The ET sees it as a positive step by the C4D team to attempt to address stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes toward Venezuelan migrants. These could have potentially gone further to build on the response to the KAP survey. It is for C4D to consider how far it might go to use media and other campaigns targeted at general public to raise awareness of violence against migrants, particularly migrant women and children.

<sup>51</sup> Melanie Teff, Refugees International, 2019, “Forced into Illegality – Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Trinidad and Tobago”. <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/1/27/forced-into-illegality-venezuelan-refugees-and-migrants-in-trinidad-and-tobago>

<sup>52</sup> Living Waters Community, 2021, *Experiences of Migrants and Refugees with Violence in T&T*.

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.jabulous.org/>

***EQ4. Did the design of interventions take into account specific barriers linked to gender and societal expectations, challenges faced by minorities (for example indigenous migrants), vulnerable groups (for example unaccompanied children or CWD, women and pregnant women, etc.)?***

The design of interventions, in some cases, specifically targeted pregnant and lactating women, and included CWD and UASC.

- In response to the COVID-19 restriction measures, UNICEF introduced small scale programmatic and humanitarian responses to address specific barriers, such as the QR Code initiative to provide a self-selected basket of food and other needs from a local supermarket chain.
- Language barriers have been considered as a key factor marginalising Venezuelan migrants in T&T and UNICEF has worked to overcome some of them.
- However, as in other countries, the most vulnerable groups remain invisible. There is little or no information on the needs of indigenous Venezuelan migrants, although it has been identified that they exist. UASC are at particular risks as are those who have been trafficked into the country. UNICEF interventions do not appear to be able to overcome barriers faced by gender, minorities, and other vulnerable groups because there has not been sufficient analysis or consideration given as to how to reach them.
- The scale and complexity of the emergency, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its public health restrictions, have generated significant gaps in coverage that have not been overcome within the timeframe and resources provided for the L2 Response to the VMC.
- Overall, there are significant information gaps that seem to prevent UNICEF from designing specific measures to overcome barriers to accessing key interventions and services.

A clear need that emerged from all consultations was for access to services in Spanish – with the language barrier being a significant problem for Venezuelan migrants to access all range of services. UNICEF has endeavoured to ensure that IPs are able to offer services in Spanish, although partners themselves have often struggled to identify staff with sufficient language skills.

A further challenge is that the most vulnerable migrant children and families are generally beyond the reach of UNICEF and many of its IPs. According to KIs and documents reviewed, since most do not have legal status in the country, many seek to avoid detection and do not come forward. The most vulnerable are also the most invisible.

Below are a few highlights of ways in which the ECA sought to overcome specific barriers to enhance access to services and information by the most vulnerable groups:

**Health and nutritional screening for children 0-23 years**

A positive initiative to respond to vulnerable Venezuelan migrant children and families was the collaboration between the TTFPA and UNICEF to bridge the demand for and access to health assessments and general health screening. There has been focus on paediatric nutrition among migrant children; and increase knowledge and awareness among parents about the importance of healthy nutrition and maintaining the healthy diet of children. TTFPA has been one of the IPs best placed to serve the migrant population, as it has developed staff capacity to provide medical services in Spanish.

Working out of its health service centres in four different locations in T&T it was able to identify 81 Venezuelan migrant children, 42 females and 39 males aged 0-23 months in need of nutritional support. According to KIs, children were usually accompanied by their mothers, who received IYCF counselling for appropriate feeding. During these consultations many parents/guardians spoke about challenges with meal preparations. For many of them, it was the first time using many of the vegetables, fruits and other foodstuffs, available in T&T. They expressed frustration as they did not know how to prepare meals using local produce, were unsure where to access information (especially because of the language barrier) and they didn't feel that they had the time to focus on providing healthy meals when their first priority was to earn income. In addition to information on portion control and meal compositions, TTFPA's medical team used pictures and handouts to build knowledge on healthy food options available locally. They were also provided with recipes to try. In addition, the information shared related to health information (sexual and reproductive health, nutritional health, GBV, important agencies and their contact numbers), clinic days and times, employment and other opportunities specific to Spanish-speaking migrants and asylum seekers.

KIs and document review show that this was the first such project with under 2s migrant children TTFPA. There were a number of challenges around targeting. UNICEF's PCA with TTFPA was to achieve a target of 200 children receiving access to IYCF counselling with a screening target of 200 children suffering from malnutrition. But

according to document review and KIIs, studies indicated that malnutrition incidence rates stand at approximately 17 per cent for this population. As TTPF noted:

A screening target for children 0-23 months should have been set at 340 children and the number of targeted caregivers (men and women) of boys and girls 0-23 months with access to IYCF counselling for appropriate feeding should have been set at a maximum of 60.<sup>54</sup>

Overall, the programme struggled to meet its targets and UNICEF was not seen as willing to make the adjustments to the IP contract to ensure that the programme was able to address the needs of the most vulnerable, some of whom were outside the originally targeted age group. From UNICEF's point of view, it was noted that during the pandemic, TTFPA did not offer in-person consultations, creating an obstacle for children to be screened and caregivers to receive counselling on IYCF. All services were provided remotely creating a significant limitation.

### **Child helpline and counselling services**

In 2019, UNICEF signed a two-year agreement with Childline T&T to offer PSS support to children on the move in T&T.<sup>55</sup> Childline offers over-the-phone support through the helpline service, and individual PSS and group counselling workshops with children at CFS. The agreement with UNICEF targeted 1,000 children and adolescents between three and 19 years of age, throughout T&T, as well as their parents or guardians. The project was intended to reach the most vulnerable children, both nationals and migrants, with an emphasis on the three main municipalities with the highest concentration of migrant children – Tunapuna, Chaguanas and Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo. Childline is a key partner for UNICEF worldwide and a sound choice for outreach to migrant children via CFS.

The two- year partnership was designed to increase access to PSS for 500 host and 500 migrant children through the establishment of a remote counselling unit that conducted field visits to remote areas; as well as enhanced prevention, mitigation, identification and response to GBV, trafficking, exploitation. Children and at-risk families were provided with emergency assistance and referred to specialised services. The partnership also focused on developing a mobile application – MyChild HelpLine App<sup>56</sup> -which provides direct access to mental health and PSS. It provides children with an array of child-friendly resources conveniently available in the palm of their hands. Available in English, Spanish and French, the app connects its users to CP support services, including direct access to national toll-free hotlines, developmentally appropriate resources and interactive activities. With the online chat feature, children have quick and easy access to direct PSS, tele-counselling, and information to re-establish a sense of safety. This project would be a key pillar to enable UNICEF to understand and access the most at-risk children – which in the case of T&T largely refers to children in remote, rural areas, as well as UASC. See Effectiveness section below.

### **Small-scale cash-based food voucher initiative**

In 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health restrictions that impacted the livelihoods of many migrant families engaged in the informal sector, UNICEF launched a small-scale initiative to provide food vouchers to vulnerable families. This measure responded to the special nutritional vulnerabilities of pregnant women and under-fives put at risk by unemployment generated by the pandemic. The intervention was relatively rapidly developed and rolled out. It provided a one-off cash voucher in the form of a QR Code for families participating in nutritional screening led by UNICEF's IP LWC. From KIIs, little information could be gained about the initiative, which in 2022 was evaluated through a real time review by a consultant hired by UNICEF with funding from BPRM.<sup>57</sup> According to KIIs, there was little formal reporting available. As with other country case studies, this evaluation finds that CBIs were an appropriate, and, in some cases, necessary response to the hardships imposed on migrants during the pandemic. This was especially so in T&T where no government social protection programmes were available.

### **Communications and services in Spanish**

A keyway in which UNICEF helped to overcome barriers was through providing opportunities for information, participation and services to migrant families in Spanish. UNICEF has endeavoured to ensure that, through its own communications and through IPs and government partners, Venezuelan migrants and others have been able to benefit from services in their own language. It is also important to extend some of these services to those indigenous peoples, whose main languages are neither English nor Spanish.

<sup>54</sup> TTFPA: "A humanitarian response to the health and nutritional needs of Spanish-speaking children 0 to 59 months in T&T." Draft 3 July 2020. p.13.

<sup>55</sup> <https://childlinett.org/whatwedo/>

<sup>56</sup> <https://barbadostoday.bb/2021/12/18/app-offers-mental-health-support-for-children/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/3216/file/TOR.pdf>

During the height of the COVID-19 lockdown, the C4D section put out two live, online consultations with Venezuelan psychologists to provide Spanish language psycho-social support to parents to cope with the pandemic stresses.<sup>58</sup>

### **On-going critical barriers yet to be overcome**

The VMC has presented UNICEF with a target population spread over wide geographical areas, often lacking regular migration status, trying to avoid detection and living either in remote rural communities or seeking anonymity in dense urban areas. It is clear that the most vulnerable are those who are not visible to the numerous agencies based in Port of Spain. During conversations with affected populations, UNICEF staff and partners, the following barriers to accessing basic services and rights were identified.

### **Gender barriers and migration**

UNICEF's *Gender Action Plan* <sup>59</sup>(GAP) is UNICEF's roadmap for promoting gender equality throughout its work and working towards gender equality objectives). The GAP, which was updated in September 2021, identifies data and evidence to inform programming that advances UNICEF's gender equality commitments. GAP stresses that "promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the responsibility of everyone, regardless of organizational role"<sup>60</sup> yet KIs – with UNICEF staff, other UN agencies and IPs – all noted that the VMC response has not invested adequately in documenting and analysing the gender issues and inequalities that impede access to services for Venezuelan migrant girls and boys in T&T. The ET found little evidence and documentation to identify specific protection risks facing girls, adolescents and women on the move, as well as those facing male migrants which might form the basis of a gender-sensitive, gender responsive and/or gender transformative programming and protection strategy.

The VMC in T&T, as in all the country case studies, presents a context of hyper sexualisation and social stereotyping of migrant women and girls leading to forms of xenophobia, social exclusion and in some cases serious protection risks including heightened risk of GBV.<sup>61</sup>

The ET finds little evidence that the Gender Commitments of the CCCs are being systematically delivered. There is little evidence of a thorough context-specific gender analysis which informs the design and delivery of programmes in all sectors, for all needs assessment reports, situation reporting and HACs. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems do include disaggregated gender reporting, nor gender indicators prescribed by GAP. There is no direct evidence that VMC response programmes intentionally promote positive behaviour and social change toward gender equality, especially by empowering adolescent girls, and in this case challenging degrading and sexist stereotyping of Venezuelan women and girls. The ET also finds Limited evidence that programme and enabling environment services provided and/or supported are gender-responsive to the different needs of girls, boys, men and women.

### **Barriers accessing the Right to Protection**

The number of children beyond the reach of CP authorities is undocumented. The literature review and FGDs and KIIs all point to a number of barriers to access including fear of being identified due to children's/parents' irregular migration status, lack of documentation, the presence of child trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and prostitution, an undocumented number of migrant and asylum-seeking children detained in police custody, deported or allowed to remain but whose parents have been deported.

A significant and growing risk in T&T is that of statelessness. As the number of children with unrecorded births grows, this will present a risk to the right to identity for a lifetime if UNICEF and partners, particularly the government, are not able to identify solutions. There is limited evidence that UNICEF has fully assessed the range of protection risks to refugee and migrant children or the extent to which UNICEF' response has assisted them to overcome multiple barriers.

### **Barriers in accessing the right to education**

KIIs and documentary evidence suggests that there continue to be barriers to migrant children effectively accessing education – although UNICEF has developed a valid and appropriate response strategy to the lack of access to state-run formal in-person education, the coverage provided by UNICEF is yet far below that needed to guarantee the right to education for all migrant and refugee children. There is a lack of formulation of specific interventions

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<sup>58</sup> <https://fb.watch/ccdiFZUAsQ/>  
<https://fb.watch/ccdoHDXzli/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality/gender-action-plan-2022-2025>

<sup>60</sup> GAP 2022-2025, p.1.

<sup>61</sup> See LWC study on Violence experienced by Venezuelan Migrants.

for children with disabilities (CWD). Parents in FGDs expressed that these children have been completely overlooked in terms of access to needed health and educational services, not only by UNICEF but by all government and civil society actors. While in theory, refugee and migrant children have a right to education, they cannot obtain authorisations required because of their lack of regular status. This situation creates a barrier to both current and future studies after high school or access to higher education. R4V partners have provided classes in English as a Second language classes for adults and children in T&T, and some migrant children have access to Equal Place, although other KIs noted it has not been always sufficient. FGDs showed that d that their inability to master English has exacerbated xenophobia

Another crucial challenge is to ensure school certificates and accreditations and to develop post-secondary opportunities. This leads to demotivation as adolescents know higher education is unreachable even if they obtain good grades. While UNICEF is actively exploring options for accredited secondary studies that might be accessible for Venezuelan migrants this is not yet in place. Every year that goes by increases the number of young people whose futures are blighted.<sup>62</sup>

**Barriers for vulnerable groups:** While there are specific programmes for pregnant and lactating mothers around ante natal care, a barrier to access is lack of childcare options for small children so that mothers can have the time and space to get the care that they need. This topic was raised in several FGDs with mothers. During the pandemic lack of affordable childcare options, led many to make unsafe choices by leaving their children alone or in the care of an older sibling.

### **Indigenous peoples and migration**

There is little information available, or any documents shared with the ET, concerning a specific approach to working with indigenous migrant. Indigenous Venezuelans comprise some three per cent of the population.<sup>63</sup> Venezuelan refugees and migrants that identify as indigenous groups are present in T&T. KIs have identified that Warao and Arawak have moved to Guyana and T&T in search for places to grow crops and sell their products. UNICEF with LWC has been providing support to a CFS in Icacos and another in San Rafael, specifically delivering lessons to 53 Warao indigenous children. Educational materials used by the Warao in Venezuela have been shared for use in T&T to support educational continuity.

According to KIs, it is difficult to differentiate between the current context of the VMC and longer-term or traditional migration patterns. The Warao are nomads who consider that their traditional lands extend far beyond national borders. T&T host communities have often been supportive of indigenous refugees and migrants since most work in agriculture. Thus they are not competing with locals for work in tourism, hospitality and other sectors sought by non-indigenous refugees and migrants in urban areas. Regarding their specific CP, health and educational needs, there is little information available. A R4V study<sup>64</sup> notes that “in T&T many indigenous people entered and settled in Icacos, they set up a small village and built shacks. They had no WASH facilities”. This indicates that there could be an opening for ECA – which currently has no WASH specialist staff –, to investigate if there is a role in supporting WASH in these indigenous settlements. R4V partners have indicated that they needed WASH and basic lifesaving resources to support vulnerable indigenous communities in T&T.<sup>65</sup>

The indigenous peoples often have their own language which should be respected in terms of establishing an educational response. However, there is no evidence of specific educational solutions being developed with and for indigenous migrant children.

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<sup>62</sup> A study by Maharaj-Landaeta (2019) of the educational experiences of teachers who work with Venezuelan children in T&T identified that there is no national legislation allowing them to attend schools. Even if exceptions are made to accept them into the physical classrooms (in private schools for example), then there is still no legislation giving them the right to a student permit, the right to do national exams or to get certification. “Teachers [...] describe them as ‘The invisible children lost inside a web of red tape, bureaucracy, xenophobia and intolerance’” (Maharaj-Landaeta 2019, 273). As part of the protection needs, school dropouts and access to education requires more attention, especially with schools’ closure and online activities after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.iwgia.org/en/venezuela.html>

<sup>64</sup> IOM, Protection Cluster and R4V: Study on the Protection Situation of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in the Caribbean, November 2021. <https://www.r4v.info/sites/default/files/2022-01/R4V%20Protection%20Study%20Caribbean%202021.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

***EQ5: How appropriate were UNICEF's internal arrangements at RO and CO levels for the management/staffing/leadership/capacity development/technical support (including human resources, tools, protocols, fundraising and managerial capacity/surge capacity, etc.) to address the context, scale and complexity of the Venezuelan outflow?***

UNICEF's response to the VMC required the development of new methodological proposals, the on-boarding of new partners, the implementation of rapid humanitarian actions and the management of the increase in the volume of resources in a very short time.

- The demands of this response generated a great deal of individual and institutional stress, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and public health restrictions.
- UNICEF's internal arrangements, including staffing, contracting, fundraising and managerial capacity have not always been adequate in relation to the scale and complexity of the VMC.
- The lack of appropriate internal arrangements has affected both the coverage, effectiveness and efficiency of the ECA response.

#### **Staffing of the response: over-dependence on UNVs**

This question considers some of the inputs required to generate outputs and outcomes of the reconstructed ToC for the response (see Annex 5). UNICEF's response to the VMC in T&T challenges current notions about systems strengthening activities, and that strengthening national systems is sufficient to address issues of inclusion of children on the move. T&T is an example of a country that does have some key CP systems in place, but does not allow access to migrants for fear of generating pull factors that would lead to increased arrival of migrants from Venezuela and other countries. This has created the need for UNICEF in T&T to establish some parallel systems which have proven effective, albeit on a limited scale.

Most ECA staff work out of the main office in Barbados and are spread throughout the islands. At the outset of the VMC, UNICEF only had three professional officers in T&T among them a national CP officer. This enabled an early sector response which was fully supported through already established relationships with local agencies and government partners. Other sector staff conducted periodic field visits to understand needs and design a response which was managed remotely and supported by the CP staff member who was appointed as the focal point. Instead of supplementing this capacity with experienced UNICEF personnel, the office engaged two international United Nations Volunteers (UNVs) —one with a role as Emergency Coordinator and the other responsible for education in emergencies. They had no prior experience in UNICEF, on mass migration, experience of working with the government of T&T or extensive high level negotiation skills. They thus lacked the skills and background to support a child rights agenda with the government and partners in T&T. Most KIs identified that UNICEF's approach to strengthening staff capacity for the VMC response was not fully appropriate in terms of building on UNICEF's pre-existing credibility with government partners. It was not conducive to maximising chances of achieving its advocacy objectives with key government decision-makers. These UNVs received limited induction into UNICEF policies and procedures, and were not familiar with key policies such as the CCCs. The UNVs were placed in another part of the UN House and were not housed with the rest of UNICEF staff. UNICEF colleagues were not informed that the UNVs had been appointed and would arrive in T&T until the very last minute. There was no formal handover or orientation process. From the point of view of UNICEF staff based in T&T, there were issues regarding the UNVs understanding of UNICEF principles and CCCs for humanitarian responses and there was a lack of supervision and guidance in operating within the national contexts. There were also concerns around the approach that UNICEF was taking to staffing the response in a manner likely to improve influence with the national government.

From the point of view of the UNVs, while they were able to work well with colleagues from LWC and UNHCR their experience within the UNICEF team was found to be less than supportive. The fact that they had little or no prior knowledge of UNICEF policies, procedures, standards and received limited orientation, supervision or guidance from the ECA in Barbados reduced their effectiveness. After a year, the UNVs' contracts were terminated. One told the ET:

It was very disappointing to see that we were able to work with colleagues from outside of UNICEF better than we were able to work with colleagues from within. It was a very painful experience and one that I would not want to repeat.

By mid-2020, after the L2 had expired, UNICEF brought in an experienced consultant with 15 years prior experience in UNICEF. Her appointment and ability to leverage UNICEF resources was broadly welcomed by informants.

However the fact she is a consultant meant she lacked authorisation to undertake tasks such as signing contracts and made her dependent on staff in Barbados. In 2021, her contract was extended for a further 11 months.

In 2020, UNICEF also engaged a national UNV CFS Coordinator to ensure the implementation of the UNICEF CFS SoPs in all UNICEF-supported CFS, and support the systematic coordination of CFS programming, supporting IPs to operationalise PSEA policy and procedures. The coordinator chairs the CFS Coordination sub-working group under the CPWG, that supports coordinated efforts between both UNICEF-supported and community-based CFS and strengthens intersectoral services. Of the eight organisations operating CFS, LWC does not participate in the CFS sub-working group (CFSSWG) which causes a gap in coordination and effective programming.

### **Management support in humanitarian delivery could be enhanced**

Tension within the UNICEF team in T&T, highlighted above, appears to have not been addressed by senior management in Barbados. Indeed, it seems that while staff of different sectors feel that they received some support from their sector heads in the ECA office, there appears to have been an issue of internal coordination between sectors that was not effectively managed. Some informants suggested UNICEF misread the type of personnel needed for the education emergency response, personnel with inside knowledge of how to work with government authorities particularly in the Ministry of Education to encourage colleagues to address the needs of vulnerable migrant children.

### **On-boarding of new humanitarian partners**

Both UNICEF and partner informants commented on lack of training for partners on UNICEF's standards for humanitarian operations. Of particular note is lack of information about the CCCs and the Six Policy Asks, crucially important instruments to help inexperienced partners understand how UNICEF works. On-boarding, training and tooling up of humanitarian and migration partners could be best undertaken prior to an emergency context for ECA countries and Latin American. It should also include Pre-emergency familiarisation with PSEA and procedures such as the Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT).

### **Technical support, expertise and sharing of good practices at CO and RO levels**

Given the above, KIIs have identified that more technical support on emergency response would be needed and Of all the countries in the evaluation, ECA is the smallest operation and the one that informants report is most dependent on LACRO for support on gender issues, programming and analysis. They also suggest the need for more LACRO and HQ support for education, ECD resource mobilisation and guidance on migration-related issues to support the roll out of effective programming that ensures the rights and basic needs of migrant children and their families.

There are some key areas where UNICEF staff in T&T involved in the emergency response would have benefitted from the opportunity to liaise with colleagues in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Brazil. Key areas where operations could have supported each other is in sharing Spanish language messages with T&T – particularly on COVID-19 in the pandemic, and also messaging to combat xenophobia. Colombia could have learned from T&T on its approach to education and online learning. T&T could have learned from Colombia and other countries on taking into account indigenous communities in the response. Both could have learned from Peru on working with local level municipal and other actors to address the needs of migrants in migrant-affected areas.

### **Capacity for gender analysis and programming**

UNICEF's response in T&T has been weak in terms of evidence generation related to gender /inequalities and gender analysis related to the VMC. This may in part be due to the fact that the ECA does not have any dedicated gender professional staff. The gender focal point in Barbados is the Deputy Representative, who according to KIIs is stretched with a wide range of tasks. Through various documents, a number of gender issues are regularly flagged. The challenge is that programmatic responses do not directly address gender inequalities or takes a gender transformative approach to migration Responses.

While UNICEF ECA is aligned with the *Minimum Standards for Gender Staffing* of the operation based on overall spending, appears to comply with the recommendation of the Gender Programmatic Review of 2019<sup>66</sup> to keep the status quo of not having a dedicated gender specialist on staff, the VMC presents a very complex emergency situation in one country of a Multi-country Programme. It could be considered that such an emergency context required additional gender capacity at both ECA and LACRO levels to be able to achieve UNICEF's gender objectives.

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<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that the Gender Programmatic Review carried out in the ECA Office in 2019 made very little reference to children on the move or any specific concerns about the migration situation, even though it was carried out six months into the L2 VMC emergency response. It seems the Gender Review process could better consider gender and migration issues.



### Partner contracting mechanisms, labour laws and limitations of resource mobilisation

In KIs, both government and NGO partners expressed challenges they have faced in participating as partners in UNICEF's VMC response. These are not new and have to do with the very short funding cycles of humanitarian funding. As in other country case studies, partners affirmed that it is not possible to deliver a year's worth of activities in the short, three-month window between the time that funds are disbursed (in May, June or July for example) and the time they are expected to begin reporting on outputs. As seen in other country case studies, partners suggest that UNICEF would be well served to establish mechanisms to COs to mobilise bridge funding needed to carry over activities from one year to the next.

A further challenge posed to partners relate to the fact of having annual contracts while implementing a multi-year response. According to one partner:

Labour laws in T&T are strict and we are not allowed to keep people on temporary contracts indefinitely. UNICEF needs to help us address these labour related problems so that as NGOs we are not contradicting the law, and that we are respecting the rights of workers who are servicing the VMC response.

Appropriateness	
Strengths	Challenges
UNICEF in T&T has developed a strong culture of direct consultation with beneficiaries, including children and their families.	Despite this culture of direct consultation, it is felt by several staff that this does not allow for changing the programme interventions to the extent necessary.
In terms of ToCs, UNICEF ECA has identified on-going migration-related work within its new CPD related to inclusion of migrants within social protection mechanisms.	UNICEF ECA could be doing more to ensure that migration is treated as a cross-cutting issue. Issues related to lack of access of migrant and refugee children to education, health services and protection and the right to an identity are incorporated into its new CPD.
	Preparedness: In 2018, UNICEF ECA had not identified migration as a key risk factor either in T&T or in its other countries and territories, nor did it do so when it updated the EPP in 2021. UNICEF was not appropriately equipped to identify and quickly bring on board IPs with expertise on migration trained on UNICEF's CCCs and meet other minimum requirements

### 8.2. Effectiveness

The evaluation of the effectiveness of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***To what extent did UNICEF's response to the VMC achieve, or can be expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups, (including by gender/age/ethnicity) across border, transit, urban and other settlements?*** Subsequently, this section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question, systematically reviewing achievements by sector. Per sector, a summary of strengths and challenges related to the effectiveness of UNICEF's VMC response is also presented.

***EQ6: To what extent did UNICEF response appropriately achieve, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups, in border, transit and urban settlements?***

***EQ7: How effective has UNICEF been in responding to the influx of Venezuelan migrant with regards to:***

***a) Supporting UNICEF- bolstered access to their rights and protection: child and social protection, education, prevention of gender-based violence, early childhood development, health, nutrition and WASH services for migrant, refugee and host community children***

***b) Supporting and promoting inclusion and integration by ensuring access to national social services and humanitarian/social cash transfers; the regularisation of children's and families' legal status; strengthened social policies and national/local integration capacities.***

***c) Generating a sense of empowerment for migrant children, adolescents and families in terms of having access to information and opportunities.***

UNICEF in T&T has achieved many of its objectives and intended short-term results, in terms of meeting, and at times exceeding planned humanitarian targets. The ET cannot conclude, however, that longer term issues, such as access to rights, inclusion and integration into national social, health and educational services and empowerment of migrant children have been, or are likely to be achieved in the near future. UNICEF's measures have improved a bad situation considerably for some children, although it is considered likely that hundreds, if not thousands, of children remain beyond the reach of its programming and response actions.

Regarding meeting of shorter objectives for the L2 Response, the ET relies on LACRO's HPM indicators by sector. These are not consistently employed year by year, making it difficult to track progress or improved performance.

- On a sector-by-sector basis, the ET finds wide variations in the capacity of UNICEF in T&T to achieve its targets. Achievement of targets appears to be completely independent of the resources received by sector of activity.
- Measurement of effective achievement of targets is also of concern because many of the indicators are presented cumulatively, where it is suspected that this leads to significant overcounting of beneficiaries.
- Regarding longer-term results for refugee/migrant children and their families, the ET finds that UNICEF in T&T may have misread, but is not responsible for, the failure of these.

This country case Study will address EQs 6 and 7 and its sub-questions as a continuum as they complement each other. Achievement of results at the output level is gauged through the level of achievement of the intended objectives through the progress of the indicators that measure the different activities, as well as alignment between results and UNICEF's own standards, particularly in relation to CCCs and *The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*. In the context of this evaluation, the ET in its reconstructed Regional ToC (see Annex 10), has also proposed three longer-term outcomes for the overall regional response. Document reviews, field visits and KIIs were utilised as a basis for establishing the extent to which UNICEF's programming has led to or likely to lead to these three key longer-term outcomes:

a) Children on the move having access to rights and protection.

b) Children on the move being included and integrated through access to national services and programmes, including the regularisation of children's and families' legal status and strengthened social policies.

c) Children on the move have a sense of empowerment in terms of having access to improved information and opportunities.

### **8.2.1. Child Protection**

#### ***EQ6 and EQ7 on effectiveness of Child Protection:***

Short-term results: The evaluation finds that UNICEF has successfully achieved many of the short-term results that it laid out in its various Action Plans for the Migration Response. However, the evaluation notes key gaps to be addressed:

- At the time of interviewing key personnel, a BID process for migrant and asylum-seeking children was not in place. The risk that children may be deported or that their parents maybe be deported without them remains high. A state-led due process for establishing what actions are in the best interest of migrant or asylum-seeking children has not yet been established.
- There is seen to be a gap in establishing an integrated, interoperable case management system for key child protection partners to share and jointly track information about child protection cases.
- The trafficking and sexual exploitation of adolescent girls and women remains a significant concern for KIIs. Fortse few girls provided state protection, some of whom are now mothers, itisl important to consider their future and ensure some form of skills training to allow them to lead more productive lives.
- The lack of a guarantee of civil registration of the births of Venezuelan migrant children presents a growing risk of statelessness.

Longer-term Results: The CP section is advancing slowing on the strengthening of child protection systems for children in T&T and the Working Group on Child Protection is seen to be building consensus among its government and CSO members. However:

- Evidence suggests that migrant and asylum-seeking children are at heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation in their daily lives, and many are growing up in fear.
- Integration into national systems is problematic due to the perception that these systems are not adequately resourced or working for national children. A more solid mapping of the system and how to build capacity of the Children's Authority of T&T is overdue.
- Migrant children do not feel empowered to fully develop their skills and realise their dreams. UNICEF is working to explore options, such as vocational training, that can open the path to greater social integration.

The output level result formulated in the ECA HAC Action Plan, 2020 is as follows

<b>Sector result in ECA Action Plan 2020</b>
<i>Children on the move are protected from violence, exploitation and abuse, provided with PSS, and have access to child-friendly spaces, family or community based alternative care, and specialised services.</i>

### How CP effectiveness is measured

This result formulation from the 2020 ECA Action Plan on Migration<sup>67</sup> summarises all actions taken in the CP sector. The table below shows the reporting on the Regional SitRep by year, by indicator, for T&T. The Regional SitRep comprises the totals of all COs in the Region participating in the VMC response. Each year, the specific targets are set which are measured by Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) indicators. As the HAC followed an annual planning process, these indicators are readjusted each year, and have changed, thus- making any kind of comparison difficult from year to year. However, it is clear that the effects of the pandemic were not felt as strongly in T&T in 2020 as in other countries in the region (See Colombia, Brazil and Ecuador reports). Lockdowns significantly reduced UNICEF's ability to reach its target population. Pre-pandemic reporting shows a significant level of over performance, whereas the two subsequent years show a concerning, but understandable, level of under-performance.

**Table 4. Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) indicators for CP (2019-2021)**

Child Protection	Regional HPM 2019		Regional HPM 2020		Regional HPM 2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# of girls and boys provided with PSS including access to CFS with intersectoral programming interventions	1,000	2,355				
# of children benefitting from programmes to prevent and address violence, abuse and exploitation (including GBV) being mobilised and strengthened	1,000	1,036				
# of children accessing MHPSS			3,250	4,299 (t), 2,187 (g) 2,112 (b)		
# of children accessing mitigation, prevention or response interventions to violence, abuse and exploitation			1,000	943 (t) 498 (f) 445 (b)		

<sup>67</sup> The evaluation team refers to the CO level Action Plans on the Migration Response because these are the only documents where CO provide an overall sector level results. Although in other country case studies we have referred to the 2019 CO Action Plans, in T&T there is only the 2020 Action Plan that provides the Overall Sector Result statement, which we are assuming did not change from 2019.

# of children and caregivers accessing mental health and PSS					2,738	1,648
# of UASC accessing family-based care or suitable alternative					100	40
# of children, adolescents and women received GBV response services, including risk mitigation interventions and prevention					2,458	602

Source: UNICEF ECA monitoring data

See Annex 13 for detailed information on the annual progress towards HAC targets on CP. While the CP sector is mainly meeting or surpassing humanitarian targets set, a persistent challenge has been providing UASC with appropriate family-based care and specialised services. In 2021, all aspects of CP failed to meet targets due to the pandemic, state of emergency and closure of CFS. Informants report that the pandemic also effected the willingness of foster care families to open their doors to Venezuelan migrant children. However, in terms of GBV response services, GBV rose during the pandemic and it is of concern that UNICEF partners were not able to meet targets in 2021 as they had done in previous years.

### **Creation of a network of CFS and provision of PSS to migrants and local community**

A success has been the creation of a network of CFS since 2018. The CFS key a key programmatic intervention to protect children from harm, neglect and psychosocial distress and to help them continue learning both during and immediately after an emergency or crisis. According to UNICEF's 2019 Annual Report<sup>68</sup>, UNICEF worked in collaboration with UNHCR, LWC and Freely Give Foundation<sup>69</sup> to operationalise ten CFS, providing migrant learners access to PSS, basic education and intersectoral programming. In addition to education and PSS services, ECD, nutritional screening and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) programmes were provided by partners. These ten CFS were part of an important outreach and protection strategy, due to the fact that, as acknowledged by UNICEF and IPs, there was an important information and service gap around how to reach UNHCR-registered migrants and asylum-seeking families. According to one KI: "We simply had no idea how many Venezuelan children on the move there were and where to find them. If anyone says differently that is simply not true." Eight of these CFS were administered by LWC, far and away UNHCR and UNICEF's largest NGO partner in T&T, which was contracted to provide services to approximately 1,000 children. In 2019, another partner, the Freely Give Foundation, operationalised two additional CFS. A mapping of other community based CFS highlighted eight additional CFS not supported by UNICEF but altogether providing services to an additional 729 children. CFSSWG was established under the CPWG to coordinate CFS programming, to mainstream child safeguarding measures and operational procedures and to provide support to NGOs to strengthen intersectoral services across the CFS. In 2020, UNICEF partnered with the Catholic Commission for Social Justice/AMMR to operate five additional CFS in other locations and to provide support to the unsupported community based CFS run by other organisations and who were members of the CFSSWG. By 2020 a total of twenty CFS were operational and supported by UNICEF to varying degrees. As noted, when all physical spaces were closed due to the pandemic support was provided for a virtual CFS accessible to children with devices and data. As highlighted above, this strategy was effective within the context, providing UNICEF and partners with a platform from which it could provide Venezuelan children on the move with access to a range of services, including vaccinations control, nutritional screening, and PSS.<sup>70</sup>

### **CFS integration of Equal Place Programme**

CFS were established as GBV risk-mitigation measures through temporary community safe spaces with comprehensive intersectoral services targeting at-risk migrant children. In this sense, FGD participants have highlighted the CFS as an effective approach to building a supportive community for Venezuelan migrant children and their families. UNICEF responded to the government's requirement of student permits for accessing the public education system by migrant and asylum-seeking children and closure of the School of Hope. Growing pressure from parents to provide formal education where their children could be accredited and matriculate integrate into public schools was such that UNICEF partnered with LWC and UNHCR to address the issue. A working group was

<sup>68</sup> Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/annual-report-2019>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/FreelyGiveFoundation/>

<sup>70</sup> Due to the fact that the CFS were conceived and operated as type of one-stop shop for a number of services, including mental health and psychosocial support, it is difficult to identify whether and to what extent there may be duplication in the reporting on the different CP indicators. Are these all the same children identified? Or different children?

established in 2018 comprising both education and CP stakeholders. In 2019, Equal Place was developed as a temporary intervention helping asylum-seekers, refugees and other eligible children to access accredited education. It was envisioned that this learning would mainly take place online, with opportunities for in-person support through the already established CFS network. UNICEF CP and education staff worked together with UNHCR, TTV Solidarity Network (TTVSOLNET)<sup>71</sup> and LWC to expand the services of their CFS to include the Equal Place intervention. However, there were some teething issues. For example, it was suggested there be mandatory wearing of uniforms and attendance requirements together with a three-stage enrolment process for migrant. This approach was against UNICEF humanitarian principles, CFS SoPs and resulted in conflicting messages to CFS staff. There was concern about reported incidences of teachers using corporal punishment. These problems were resolved and additional focus was placed on training teachers in positive behavioural management, PSS and CFS standards.

Since its launch in September 2019, only LWC-operated CFS have been supported to integrate the Equal Place intervention. There has been a heavy focus on academic only services impacting their ability to provide comprehensive intersectoral services especially PSS. Although other CFS continue to provide comprehensive intersectoral services they still do not have access to the Equal Place intervention or education support. Access to formal learning materials, tablets and support for teachers was only provided to the Living Water CFS. -LWC obtained the bulk of the materials, particularly tablets, with other CFS left without any. This led to a sense of competition and unfairness, rather than cooperation between the CFS themselves- Living Water CFS drew children away from other, less equipped CFS, that may be physically closer to them and had room for additional children.

**Roving CFS:** In 2022, UNICEF, in collaboration with AMMR introduced Roving CFS for migrant and refugee children as well as underprivileged vulnerable locals. The Roving CFS allows UNICEF and AMMR to go into areas where there is little or no intervention for migrant/refugee children in order to fill an important gap in information and services to underserved, remote and rural populations. The space allows children to engage in activities and learning that would assist them with their psychosocial skills and cognitive development and prepare them for formal education.<sup>72</sup> It has been supported through collaboration with other CFS organisations. The AMMR also provides children with a workbook developed by UNICEF and the Heroes Foundation<sup>73</sup> that they can continue using by themselves for twelve months. While it is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the Roving CFS strategy, the ET finds that it is a well-directed response to the concern expressed by many KIs, concerning the lack of coverage provided by existing CFS and the inability of the most vulnerable children to access them.

### **Psychosocial support**

In addition to first aid PSS provided through CFS, from 2019 onwards, Child Line T&T was engaged as partner of UNICEF to provide in-person specialised PSS to children – both Venezuelan children on the move as well as vulnerable nationals - in key CFS, and also to develop the MyChild HelpLine app which provides 24/7 access to counselling, including in Spanish, offering quick and easy access to direct psychological support, counselling, and information. According to KIs, a main challenge which delayed the launch of the initiative was the challenge to find Spanish-language counsellors to work the phone lines and go into the CFS, delaying the start-up of services. Once in-person counselling was initiated, a new challenge arose, which was a tension between Living Water, which ran most of the CFS, and the Childline counsellors. There was lack of sharing of basic information needed to facilitate ChildLine reporting. According to KIs a very competitive atmosphere arose which did not favour Childline counsellors doing their job or feeling comfortable within the LWC operated CFS. Furthermore, during the pandemic, when all the CFS were closed and services went online, ChildLine was not invited to provide its services out of the online CFS. Instead it turned to providing online webinars for the migrant community separate from the CFS. The impact of these tensions has been seen by KIs to affect the effectiveness of services provided by ChildLine. According to a KI:

ChildLine has had very few calls or chats from migrant children regarding their situation and it has been difficult to access them. We have had some calls from parents on where to get financial support. We have had most calls from local children, and a significant rise in suicidal ideation among local children wanting to run away. All this relates to the impact of the pandemic on children, and we are not doing enough analysis of the consequences of the pandemic on children's mental health, but reaching migrant children has been a much greater challenge than we anticipated.

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<sup>71</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/TTVSOLNET/>

<sup>72</sup> <https://catholictt.org/2022/05/24/roving-cfs-learning-spaces-for-vulnerable-children/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://theheroesfoundation.com/>

KIs considered that the PSS and language capabilities offered by ChildLine could and should have reached more children, had they been better promoted within the LWC online CFS during the pandemic and had UNICEF provided better coordination between IPs at the level of the CPWG. According to KIs, despite efforts to raise these issues at the level of the CP working group and with UNICEF ECA Senior Management, improvements were not made. As a result, even children identified for psychosocial follow up were difficult to reach – both as a result of poor communications and a fear of parents that children might be removed from their care.

### **Strengthening national systems**

In addition to the CFS, provision of PSS and strengthening of community- based mechanism including CFS SoPs, CP and GBV Referral Pathways, UNICEF ECA has also taken a systems strengthening approach to CP in an effort to bridge the humanitarian/development nexus. According to KIs, the VMC response in T&T has been helpful overall in exposing certain weaknesses in national CP systems. An informant noted:

The VMC response has helped to debunk the idea that UNICEF previously had that T&T was well organised and resourced in the CP sector. This is clearly not the case. In T&T, we need a lot of help in this area. Our preexisting backlog of CP cases, even before the VMC posed a serious problem. At least now we are all aware of the weaknesses, but it will take a long time to make the system work in a way that can include and respond to the needs of Venezuelan children.

Another informant noted that:

Many of the cases referred by us to government agencies including the Children’s Authority, are not adequately treated in a timely manner. There is a severe lack of capacity in the social sector, so a referred case may not be investigated or assessed for six to 12 months. A child could die or suffer additional abuse in the time it takes for the Children’s Authority to respond. The situation of migrant children is even more desperate, since they live mainly in remote rural areas, and they don’t speak the language. The magnitude of their plight is unknown and unmapped.

Against this backdrop, UNICEF’s CP actions have been to support the existing government systems to build internal capacity to identify and respond to CP cases, including those of Venezuelan children on the move.

As part of UNICEF ECA’s wider CP strategy, UNICEF provides technical support to three key national initiatives aimed at strengthening national systems.

- The Spotlight Initiative, – a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union (EU) and the UN to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.<sup>74</sup>
- The National Child Policy.<sup>75</sup>
- The Primero Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), an initiative which has now been rolled out in 40 countries.<sup>76</sup> and
- National Inter-Agency Protocols.

While not directly linked to the migrant response, UNICEF support to these endeavours strengthened the architecture and CP framework for all children, including Venezuelan migrants.

### **CP IMS**

In September 2020, as part of UNICEF’s CP development approach in systems strengthening, Children's Authority of T&T (CATT) indicated that their current CP IMS was no longer able to serve the growing caseload and asked for UNICEF’s support under the Spotlight Initiative– to replace their CP IMS with a more sustainable and effective system. UNICEF conducted a sensitisation on Primero – one of the recommended IMS software promoted by UNICEF for CP case management. Technical support was also provided to streamline case management procedures based on the evolution of the CATT procedures. This is considered a positive move by UNICEF and a sound long-term investment to enhance case management. In 2021 UNICEF and CATT hosted a CP IMS interoperability scoping meeting with the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS) and the Ministry of National Security. The meeting introduced the Primero system, explored the current or planned IMSs in the two organisations and discussed next steps towards interoperability. A draft Data Sharing Protocol was developed, based on the recommendations from the meeting. The CP IMS is operational and data migration is ongoing. Interoperability work was undertaken before the Primero system went live in June 2022. There was also

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.undp.org/trinidad-and-tobago/projects/spotlight>

<sup>75</sup> <http://parlcloud.ttparlament.org:8081/PapersLaidViewer/TempFiles/National%20Child%20Policy%20of%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/press-releases/new-child-protection-system-launched-trinidad-and-tobago>

completion of an IMS for the MSDFS. The need for an interoperable system that allows data from police, migration officers and other actors to be fed into the CP IMS, is clear. According to one KI:

The Ministry of National Security is the only one who really knows which children are in detention and any children that have been deported or whose parents have been deported. Without the information provided by National Security, we are all in the dark.

### **Best Interest Determination Procedure**

A BID sub-working group, led by UNHCR, was established under the CPWG in 2020 panel created to formalise a process for certain migrant children of concern, to address the significant risks to migrant children in detention, deportation or family separation generated by the deportation of one or both parents. The group comprises CATT, the Counter-Trafficking Unit, Immigration Unit, UNHCR, IOM and UNICEF. While the government stakeholders have indicated that the national system already has an internal BID process highlighted in the legislation, this process does have some challenges and no UN agency is a part of the process for migrant children. Substantial time was spent in building the capacity of all the government stakeholders to understand the benefits and procedures of an extended BID process and the comparative advantage each UN Agency could bring to the process. However, navigating the current political sensitivities, exploring the local legislation and processes, and building trust between some newer UN Agencies and government stakeholders required attention. In the interim, national stakeholders continue to conduct their internal process and UNHCR has convened an interim BID panel for matters involving children resettlement and other matters of concern. UNICEF sits on this panel and provides support in the determination of these cases. It is key to review the pace of progress on this aspect as the need for a strong BID procedure is a requirement of the CCCs. In the T&T response, this aspect is still a work in progress and the BID procedure was not yet operational. This situation is very serious from a child rights perspective and should be taken seriously by all actors. UNICEF's investment and leadership on this process are essential to generate the conditions by which national systems are able to provide protection to children on the move. Clearly this is an issue that affects not only Venezuelan children, but the growing number of children on the move from other countries who lack legal status in T&T.

### **Unaccompanied and Separated Children:**

The ET finds that a key population at risk are UASC who, according to KIs, are frequently victims of trafficking, sexual exploitation in the tourist industry, or may be rendered unaccompanied or separated due to the fact that one or both parents have been deported. According to KIs, deportation and detention of minors for days or even weeks in police custody is not uncommon, as there are simply not enough spaces in foster families or care facilities to receive UASC. In 2019, according to KIs, there were 19 Venezuelan children living in police stations because they had nowhere else to go. During COVID-19 the situation was worse because migrant children entering the country were placed in detention centres under the guise of quarantine requirements. Added to this are problems of communication between CATT and other actors such as the police. According to one informant:

All 41 community residences are full. One Venezuelan migrant, a teenaged girl, spent three days in the police station while she was being medically examined, and we didn't know that she had a baby with her because the police didn't tell us that.

According to KIs, a common but undocumented situation is of early marriage/unions, with Venezuelan girls forming unions with older Trinidadian men. These unions may have been made already in Venezuela, or once the girls arrive in T&T. Overall, early marriage/premature unions are common in the region: 25 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 in the region were in a union before the age of 18, including 4 per cent before the age of 15.<sup>77</sup> Due to the fact that early marriage is illegal in T&T, fear of prosecution or deportation can further drive adolescent girls into hiding their age and relationship status. According to one KI: As soon as we identify these girls, they are gone. They don't want to be helped, it is a challenge at the level of age identification, because some are posing as being older than they are." Several KIs identified the need for capacity building on age determination as being a major need for police, immigration, national security and CAAT.

Family separation and the capacity or lack thereof to undertake family reunification is also very real concern in T&T. Knowledge of and tracking of UASCs is very challenging due to the fear of deportation, which keeps vulnerable children hidden from view.

UNICEF has been providing technical support to the Ministry of National Security' Counter-Trafficking Unit, which itself is working to create special housing for Venezuelan children, mainly girls, trafficked to T&T. These are girls who are mainly 14 years old or over, who have been trafficked to participate in the sex tourism industry. Currently

<sup>77</sup> UNICEF "A Profile of Child Marriage and Early Unions in Latin America and the Caribbean 2019"

the Counter-Trafficking Unit liaises with the Venezuelan Embassy to ascertain if the girls can be sent back to Venezuela. This is precisely where a BID process should be carried out, to ascertain any protection risks for them upon return to the country. KIs see that these girls are among the most vulnerable. They are not easily integrated into normal online classes. According to one “These girls are among the most vulnerable and require a lot of help and support. Although UNICEF is working on developing protocols and policies, and funding the CFS, the most vulnerable children are not in the CFS, because they have parents who care about them and bring them there. The most vulnerable are outside the CFS. UNICEF should be giving direct assistance to these UASC. These are teenagers without parents to look after them. They need help to further their education, to learn English. They are sent into local children’s homes, but they need a future, to get out of the sex trade. They need to learn a skill”.

A range of partners, including UN, government as well as donors, all agree that UNICEF should have a stronger role and work plan on the prevention and response to sexual exploitation in the tourist industry, among others. Here is where the experience of UNICEF Colombia and its partner Fundación Renacer, could be very valuable. It was also considered by KIs that given the challenges of the current situation; UNICEF needs to invest in building up its CP team to be more operationally oriented.

Regarding family and community-based alternative care arrangements for UASC, UNICEF has been working to help CATT to strengthen its national system of foster and alternative care arrangements. An UASC – Alternative Care sub-working group was established with CAAT, the Counter Trafficking Unit, IOM, AMMR and UNICEF. A SoP was developed highlighting key roles and responsibilities of partners. An alternative care programme for UASC was launched by the UNICEF IP AMMR in 2021 which is integrated into the national foster care system. It involves establishment of community-based CP committees) across Catholic parishes, development of a sensitisation manual to support those families willing to receive Venezuelan migrant children, and special training for foster carers.

KIs from UNICEF report little expressed interest by either host or migrant families to become foster parents of older aged children, including UASC. Reluctance increased as a result of the pandemic. The sub-working group has also identified some key challenges in the national foster care system which included the backlog of cases to be assessed and the lack of capacity to conduct them. As a result, in late 2021, UNICEF supported the procurement of several assessment kits and tools and a training workshop with psychologists and social workers, in order to improve the speed at which foster families can be assessed for migrant and refugee children. The trained team currently provides direct support to CATT on a request basis. Additionally, to support human resource gaps, UNICEF through AMMR supports a case management officer who works directly with CATT to support more community-based level interventions, support identification and referral of UASC or high-risk children and families, and support mobilisation of caregivers. Through the established CBCPs operating throughout rural communities in T&T, community volunteers conduct community walk-throughs and home visits to support identification and referral to the case management officer who conducts a risk assessment and makes the necessary referrals to other specialised services including nearby of virtual CFS, CAAT, MHPSS, NFIs, food, health etc. These are worthy investments, but KIs currently estimate that there are far more cases requiring placements than there are spaces available. This was the case well prior to the VMC.

### **Prevention of statelessness**

A further CP gap identified the challenge of birth registration for Venezuelan children born in T&T. According to various documents and KIs, this is a growing concern, as health authorities sometimes require information or fees that should not be requested in return for birth registration. In FGDs, parents also say that some new parents do not know where or how to register their child’s birth, or they are afraid to do so, for fear of deportation. Although PAHO is leading the Health Working Group, it appears from KIs that this is not working very effectively. UNICEF should be raising the issue of birth registration and where possible, forming alliances with key government, UN and civil society partners to prioritise actions to ensure that Venezuelan and other children on the move are registered at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Evidence generation, strategic planning and advocacy with relevant authorities and other stakeholders**

The ET finds that there is a gap in understanding and evidence generation as a basis for advocacy and the development of proposals that would be of interest to donors. In order to pull together stronger CP programmes, UNICEF should invest in evidence generation and creative partnerships to address the needs of hard-to-reach groups, such as UASC, victims of trafficking or early unions.



Child Protection	
Strengths	Challenges
Development of Network of CFS as a platform for integrated services	Inadequate coordination <sup>78</sup> between partners to ensure that each partner can be effective in working with the shared physical and online spaces of the CFS.
Inclusion of mental health in-person and online counselling services provided by ChildLine, webinars for parents during COVID-19 pandemic	Limited uptake of services due to lack of communications/awareness and lack of field presence where children and families are most vulnerable in remote and rural areas.
Initial work begun to develop Best Interest Determination (BID) process and panel and put in place referral pathways	BID process not in place four years into the response, referral pathways between partners unclear.
System strengthening includes the bringing online of an IMS for CATT.	IMS not yet operational at end of 2021.
System strengthening and training for foster carers who would take Venezuelan children into their homes	Lack of concrete measures to stop detention of children in police stations and deportations (parents and children) and address ongoing inadequate protective services/spaces for children on the move.
Some technical support to the Ministry of National Security's Anti-Trafficking Unit	Lack of assessment and response to the lack of civil birth registration and the growing risk of statelessness.
	Urgent need to develop work plan and strategies on support for girls in early marriage/unions, victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, through online and in-person learning options
	Need to develop creative partnerships in order to overcome create the child protective spaces and alternative care arrangements during COVID 19.

### 8.2.2. Education

#### **EQ6 and EQ7 on effectiveness of Education:**

Short-term results: Since 2019, UNICEF has been effective, to some extent, in setting up, with UNHCR and other partners, two online learning programmes at the secondary level for children on the move. The LWC CFS have also, to some extent, been adapted to give some limited online learning to primary students. The ET finds that:

- UNICEF and partners in T&T have provided online options for secondary education in both national and Venezuelan curricula. This online format was a positive response, rendered even more positive during pandemic provoked school closures. Having a structured online programme in advance was a distinct advantage for Equal Place learners.

<sup>78</sup> According to UNICEF KIs, all partners are included at the Child Friendly Space Sub Working group (under the CPWG), which meets every two2 weeks and supported through a WhatsApp group for streamlining communication and resource sharing. Implementing partners attendance is not mandatory, however their absence negatively impacts the ability to support coordination. Both LWC and Childline T&T have stopped attending.

- In discussions with both teachers and learners, it appears that the DAWARE programme is preferred over Note Masters, both because it offers more realistic options for post-secondary studies, and because it is easier for Spanish mother-tongue speakers.
- By the end of 2021, there was still no clear curriculum in place for primary students preparing them for an accredited high school programme.
- Since migrant learners are not able to sit the official high school leaving exams in T&T, there are limited options for them to pursue post-secondary education in country.

Longer-term results: In the longer term, the failure to find a solution to the learning needs of children on the move at primary level may have lasting consequences in terms of diminished life chances and self-esteem.

- The advocacy of UNICEF and other partners has not been effective at opening doors to access to formal, accredited education for children on the move in T&T. Their access to rights has suffered since no effective substitute programme at primary level has been put in place.
- Focus groups with parents, teachers and learners all confirm the high value that Venezuelan families place on education, and the frustration experienced at not having primary and some secondary children registered in a properly accredited learning programme. This goes for all children, but in particular children with any learning disabilities are being left behind.
- The response has not been effective at supporting and promoting inclusion and integration by ensuring access to national educational services or the regularisation of children's and families' legal status. On the contrary, the lack of a structured educational pathway has been demonstrated to be a driver of social exclusion.
- For those children that have benefited from the DAWARE programme, there is a limited sense of their empowerment – either to return to Venezuela or to travel to other countries to pursue post-secondary education.

In the 2018 COAR<sup>79</sup>, UNICEF diagnosed the situation of children and youth in migrant families as “critical in several areas”, including health, education, economic security, housing and work opportunities: It noted that:

Only 15 per cent of children [on the move] living in the country for between one month and one year had access to education services, and only 24 per cent of those living there for over one year had access to this critical service.

There is no information provided regarding any differences between girls and boys on the move in terms of access to education. This should be further specified and analysed by UNICEF in light of findings of other studies that support girls' exclusion due to early unions, teenage pregnancies, domestic chores and sexual exploitation.

This signifies a significant gap in access to education for the VMC response in T&T. It is unclear to what extent this proportion has improved. Are more children able to access formal education today than in 2018-2019?

Gearing up of the response in T&T was taking shape even before the L2 Emergency was declared in 2019. In 2018, TTVSOLNET thoroughly researched the matter and was working to facilitate access of Venezuelan children on the move to online learning DAWARE which provided the Venezuelan curriculum fully online with formal accreditation provided by the Florida State Department of Education. UNHCR and IOM were already partnering with TTVSOLNET to support this learning option for Venezuelan learners. UNHCR was also supporting the School of Hope, an adult training centre operated by Living Water Community (LWC), its main IP, providing English language classes to adult migrants and asylum seekers, which was expanded to include children. UNHCR sought a partnership with UNICEF to develop much needed learning spaces for children. It was at this point that UNHCR and UNICEF agreed to partner in education for children on the move in T&T.

In 2018, LWC was engaged to put in place a number of educational and CP activities for UNICEF through a first PCA and went from being UNHCR's main IP to also becoming UNICEF's main IP UNICEF engaged LWC to address the educational needs of children on the move and transition from a previous, unsustainable model of physical learning centre to an online learning model. According to KIs and document review, cost of maintaining a physical centre was too high, as was the cost of transport for migrants who lived in some cases quite far from the centre. Indeed, with pockets of migrant families scattered around the islands, online learning was the best option.

The following are the 2020 sector results as formulated by UNICEF EAC in the HAP, as well as the HPM indicators utilised to monitor that response:

<sup>79</sup> UNICEF ECA, Country Office Annual Report 2018.

**Sector results formulated as in ECA Action Plan 2020**

*Migrant children of school age access high quality education services in T&T.*

The table below shows that UNICEF has consistently surpassed its humanitarian targets, with the exception of 2021.

**Table 5. Education indicators and targets (2019, 2020, 2021)**

Education <sup>80</sup>	HPM 2019		HPM 2020		HPM 2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# boys and girls on the move, including adolescents accessing formal education and ECD Services	450	1,062				
# of children girls and boys (under 5) benefiting from early childhood development activities	200	416	750	1,422 girls and 717 boys		
# No of children and adolescents accessing formal and non-formal education			1,000	1,300 girls and 650 boys		
# children accessing formal and non-formal education, including early learning					2,400	1,662

A clearer picture of the numbers of children involved by year comes from the HPM and results tracking provided by the M&E section of UNICEF's ECA office.

In terms of education and ECD, UNICEF has exceeded humanitarian targets, with the exception of 2021, where both sectors fell short. Overall, as highlighted above, target versus actuals in 2021 appear to have been highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown conditions.

#### **Development of Equal Place online/in-person modalities**

In 2019, while waiting and preparing for an eventual opening by government with UNICEF support LWC launched Equal Place on September 2019 to replace the School of Hope as a blended learning initiative, offering both in-person and online learning options at the secondary level. According to FGDs carried out by UNICEF and other partners prior to launching parents had expressed fears that the cost of transportation for their children to and from school was a major expense, due to the discriminatory rates charged by local taxis for Venezuelan migrants. According to an FGD attendee:

Participants took the opportunity to appeal for assistance with transporting their children to and from Equal Place. One mother revealed spending TTD120 to transport her children to school daily. While participants wanted the best for their children, they admitted that the cost of transportation was prohibitive, particularly with some locations less accessible than others<sup>81</sup>

Cost—both for migrant families and for UNHCR/UNICEF—was therefore a rationale for putting learning services online. This can also be considered as a key protection-oriented solution for girls, due the fact that in FGDs with the ET, they frequently mentioned fear for their physical safety as being a concern for themselves and their parents should they go more than a few blocks from home. The population of children on the move is also dispersed in various communities across T&T. Other analyses support the idea that migrants and asylum seekers regularly experience a range of forms of violence – from sexual harassment and aggression in the streets for women and girls to physical and other forms of violence by men. FGDs held during the evaluation with Equal Place learners also confirmed that many parents do not want their children to circulate due to a fear of violence.

<sup>80</sup> Based on LACRO End of Year SitRep: Summary of Programme Results for 2019, 2020 and 2021

<sup>81</sup> UNICEF: Focus group with Venezuelan Migrants, 2019

The ET finds that in terms of risks to children, cost to families and overall institutional costs, the online learning option where institutions can support the cost of data connectivity for those families that need them, was an appropriate choice for UNICEF. When in March 2020, all schools were closed having worked to put learning services online was a clear advantage for learners, UNICEF and its partner LWC over the two years schools remained closed. During the period covered by the VMC response, UNHCR and UNICEF agreed to adopt two options for high school learners. The first was Notes Master online platform with learning materials where teachers could prepare learners for writing the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). The second option for secondary learners was DAWARE identified earlier by the NGO TTVSOLNET, which came as a complete and solid learning programme easier for online learners to use.

FGDs with learners confirm their preference for the latter option: most learners in the focus groups discussions preferred to use the DAWARE software because it well-structured and because the level that they would need to achieve in English in a very short time to pass the CSEC exams was too demanding. Also simply registering for CSEC presented obstacles to parents. According to one KI:

Notes Master is not going to work for these kids. You can't promise the parents that if the kids are going to be able to follow this course of study and at some point, integrate in the school system in T&T. Primary school system in T&T has 7 years – and in Prep 5 the whole Caribbean including T&T sits the secondary entrance exams. You need to be registered in the school system itself and be prepared to write these tests in English. This is not possible for most Venezuelan children, not fair to falsely raise their expectations

Many expressed that the advantage of DAWARE is that it leads to the Venezuelan Bachillerato (high school leaving certificate) which would allow them to go back to Venezuela with a certification, and a Florida Department of Education certificate which would be recognised in the US. All stated that they would like to go back to Venezuela when conditions permit. Most expressed the great hardship of being in T&T where they felt they could not realise their potential, where they do not see a pathway opening for them. According to learners, the response has not been effective at supporting and promoting inclusion and integration by ensuring access to national educational services or the regularisation of children's and families' legal status. On the contrary, lack of structured educational pathway has been demonstrated to be a factor of social exclusion. For those children that have benefited from DAWARE, there is a limited sense of their empowerment – either to return to Venezuela or to travel to other countries to pursue post-secondary education. They all expressed the desire to go to university and continue their studies, but were very concerned about a lack of future options. It has further been questioned by some whether and how, within a short period of time the CSEC exam could feasibly be passed. Only one learner in the evaluation focus group was ambitious enough to want to undertake both exams.

### **Learners losing hope? Going home or moving on?**

In 2018, it was estimated that only 24 per cent of children who had been living in T&T for one year or more were able to access formal schooling. In December 2021, 4,836 children were registered with UNHCR. For 2021, while LACRO reported that 1,662 learners were accessing formal and non-formal schooling through its programmes, monthly tracking reports from the ECA e provide s much lower figures. Monitoring data from UNICEF ECA showed only 476<sup>82</sup> children were receiving access to formal and non-formal educational services through UNICEF-funded programmes which represents only a very small proportion of all children. If the ECA tracking data is correct, the ET considers that the trend is going in the wrong direction. This figure would suggest that either there are fewer children on the move than indicated by UNHCR's statistics, because families are choosing to return to Venezuela or are moving on to other countries, or that UNICEF-funded educational programmes are not keeping pace with the rising numbers of children on the move.

Either way, from an effectiveness point of view, this is of concern, and it is key that UNICEF invest in the data required to assess the number and location of children who are being left behind by lack of access to education. This should be a priority area for evidence generation and analysis by UNICEF and EWG partners. This could include, as has been done in other countries, door-to-door campaigns, WhatsApp/social media surveys and/or other field-based verification methods to get a more accurate estimate of the number of out-of- school children. The CCCs clearly state UNICEF's commitment to ensure that formal and non-formal education programmes, including early learning and skills training, are available and used. The ET finds that the evidence indicates a very low level of usage given current estimates of children in need of services.

Furthermore, statistics provided by KIs indicate that during the pandemic only 60 per cent of learners attended online learning classes three times a week or more. Forty per cent have dropped out or at risk of dropping out.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

Teachers and KIs noted that high school students were most regular in their attendance. Of greatest concern are younger primary learners. Parents and teachers alike in FGDs noted that primary school learners are not getting the structured educational experience and curriculum that they need. KII strongly suggested that UNICEF has held on to the CFS model as a psychosocial, play-oriented space while the real need of learners is for formal, structured and accredited education at all levels. Informants say what is needed is a structured and accredited curriculum, including sufficient hours of mathematics, science, languages and other subjects, which prepares primary school learners for moving on to secondary school. Accreditation is important, in case the families need to move again. This would be the basis of a meaningful route-based approach to education for children on the move. According to one KI:

Child Friendly Spaces offer intersectoral services, including education. What is lacking is accredited education which is currently only available for secondary aged learners through a third-party provider (DAWARE). Access to DAWARE is not prohibited or restricted by the CFS Model, which encourages integrated services.

In FGDs with children, all said that they knew of peer not in school, whose parents were sending them out to work or could not attend school because they lacked data and devices to connect or for other reasons. UNICEF partners who go regularly to the field also confirm that there are many children who are not connected via online learning or to any school, particularly in remote and rural areas where families do not have connectivity or any devices. This was particularly crucial during the pandemic when all UNICEF-funded CFS were closed. According to KIs and FGDs, in many cases, children have been left on their own while their parents go to work. Informal day-care providers and small-scale tutoring services have arisen in response to the desire of parents to ensure their children have some kind of educational experience. Some informants said that UNICEF and partners are failing children since, after four years of emergency response, no formal, accredited education has been put in place for elementary school learners.

UNICEF itself has begun to estimate the rollout costs of a primary programme. In 2021 UNICEF consulted with EWG members to see which planning scenario should be used for setting targets for primary school programming. Different planning scenarios assume both different numbers of children as well as different financial requirements. Informants report that EWG members were divided. Potentials implementers wanted high targets for the R4V planning scenario; while those potentially funding it —UNHCR and others—opted for a fixed percentage based on registered children.

The ET considers that planning for the roll out of primary programming and ECD should be as inclusive as possible. From the limited evidence gathered for this study it is clear there is a strong demand for primary programming. Mothers, particularly those who work and have adolescent children, are greatly in need of affordable childcare options so that they can continue their studies or provide for their children through employment and small business opportunities. UNICEF should show leadership and make it a policy commitment, from a child rights perspective, that every child who needs it should have access to formal educational programmes, including ECD. Additionally the agency should commit itself to apply other CCC standards. It should strive to ensure on-going access to secondary education for all learners who require it.

This will clearly require resources- UNICEF and EWG members will need to look beyond traditional partners for donors with a longer-term perspective. One such partner could be the World Bank, which UNICEF should seek out to strengthen delivery of education for children on the move in all countries included in these case studies. LACRO and COs should collaborate to build a strategic education alliance with the World Bank for children on the move, of the kind that has been done between UNHCR and the World Bank on the issue of refugee education.<sup>83</sup>

#### **LACRO: Need to generate evidence on the best educational solutions for children on the move**

For high school learners it is still too early to say what will be the educational achievement impact of the move to online learning which of the learning packages produces the best results for learning and support. It is recommended that LACRO and ECA monitor this situation carefully, and identify some indicators of the quality of education received and not only the numbers of beneficiaries. There is need for a specific evaluation of how the educational status of children on the move—in terms of lost years of school, falling behind in their grades and dropout rates—has been impacted by the VMC and which best practices at the global level could be most helpful. It would also be worthwhile to explore the economic, social and psychosocial cost to children in their lives of every week and month of learning lost.

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<sup>83</sup> See <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/159281614191477048/pdf/The-Global-Cost-of-Inclusive-Refugee-Education.pdf>

It is clear to the ET that the cost to children of time spent out of school—online or in person—has been enormous and there is a great need to develop innovative solutions for learners at all levels. Though introduction of online learning platforms for high school students is a good practice that could be replicated in other UNICEF COs, it is regrettable that UNICEF did not take the extra step of developing a similar solution for out-of-school primary students. It has been suggested that a similar programme to DAWARE for the primary level could have been developed by UNICEF which would have been used to meet the temporary learning needs of thousands of children in the LACRO region been excluded from education as a result of the VMC.

In T&T, UNICEF continues to explore options for vocational training that might benefit migrants and the host nation due to a significant demand for skilled workers. This could provide the basis for a meaningful partnership with UNWomen which is dedicated to developing employment and small business opportunities for women and girls in T&T especially for girls who are victims of trafficking and sexual.

### **Pandemic effects, teacher and technical support**

During the pandemic, teachers indicated a great need to reach out to families and to help them continue and sustain the online learning. UNICEF supported LWC with videos to help parents adapt to the pandemic, to enable them to work with their children to support the learning process. Teachers from Equal Place said they called their students weekly and more often if they were not attending, to try to get them back online. Families and learners confirmed that for those who were most committed to their studies felt really supported. Overall, it appears that the teachers have put in many more hours and shown an extraordinary level of commitment to helping their learners to succeed, and this is a huge credit to UNICEF, partners and the teachers themselves.

However, it was noted from KIs and FGDs that some learners could not attend due to lack of data and devices. LWC received 1,000 devices in 2019 to share with learners in need. It has been observed by KIs that these were only shared with LWC, and not with other NGOs supposed to be providing online educational activities so that all children could have access to needed learning tools. It appears to some KIs that LWC is too dominant and UNICEF is not taking needed measures to cultivate and strengthen other local partners.

### **Advocacy and context analysis**

In 2019, it was foreseen and planned by UNICEF and partners that eventually the government would allow students to be integrated into the formal educational system. In 2020, UNICEF was actively planning for this. This is one of the reasons why UNICEF did not move ahead aggressively with identifying alternative educational solutions. UNICEF invested heavily in a partnership with the Catholic Board of Management (CBM), which oversees the functioning of Catholic schools, both primary and secondary, and the CBM undertook, at the government's request, to compile a list of all available spaces in schools across the country that it could make available to Venezuelan children on the move. It was able to identify some 1,000 spaces. UNICEF carried out teacher training and also invested in some building repairs to make some classrooms were fit to receive the children. However, these investments were in vain when in early 2021 the government surprised UNICEF and partners by saying signified that there would be no opening of the schools to Venezuelan children. Some informants suggested UNICEF should have sought the help of well-connected intermediaries able to understand the thinking of the Prime Minister and his inner circle and to carry out more strategic advocacy. It was suggested that UNICEF should have hired an education advisor from among retired senior local education personnel to guide UNICEF in its advocacy strategy. Informants report this was proposed by some UNICEF team members but not taken up by ECA management.

Whether this would have made a difference is difficult to know. As the ECA is a centralised office based in Barbados, the nuances of the political context in T&T may have been difficult to read. Going forward, this suggests the need to listen to the local personnel who know the country and culture best.

UNICEF's own evidence generation in a KAP study demonstrated that the general public appears to agree with the idea that children on the move should have access to education. Yet, there is little evidence that UNICEF has strategically leveraged this positive public sentiment to build a wider social coalition around the right to education. According to KIs, more could have been done by UNICEF to support advocacy by other organisations, not only the Catholic Church and UN agencies, to build a movement in support of access to children's rights for all children. An approach/package to address overall weaknesses and needs of the education system, in partnership with the World Bank for example, could have served to expand the humanitarian space to enable children on the move to access education.

## Education Working Group

Informants reported that the arrival of a UNICEF Emergency Coordinator in April 2020 led to improved education coordination. She has chaired the EWG which brings together TTSOLNET, LWC, the Pan-American Development Foundation, CEBM, AMMR, UNHCR and UNICEF education staff. The UNV CFS Coordinator attends to foster collaboration and streamline information between the two systems. UNICEF might consider inviting some other partners to join the EWG, such as the World Bank and UN Women This is an urgent matter.

Education	
Strengths	Challenges
Effective introduction of an online learning platform with accreditation and certification of secondary leaving certificate – this provides an option for children on the move, be they in transit, with the intention to remain, or to return to Venezuela	There is no curriculum in place or accreditation process for primary school students, which urgently needs to be addressed. Primary school children should be able to benefit from a combined in-person/online blended learning model.
UNICEF has conducted a KAP survey which indicates positive sentiment in the population in support of the right of migrant children to access education and healthcare	UNICEF has not yet invested in building a broader social coalition around children's rights, in particular the right to education. In terms of funding UNICEF at LACRO and CO level should look to partnership with the World Bank.
UNICEF is beginning to explore pathways to support learners to post-secondary options, including vocational training	UNICEF has yet to introduce/envisage some specific programming for adolescent UASC and victims of trafficking and the sex trade to ensure BID processes and provide a pathway to employment and small business creation. This could be done with UNWomen.
	As an urgent matter, there exists an information gap around out of school children. Available data suggests this figure to be very high, and totally unacceptable four years into the response.

### 8.2.3. Social inclusion

#### EQ7 and EQ6 on effectiveness of Social Inclusion:

In 2021, UNICEF addressed food insecurity among migrant households through the introduction of a QR Code initiative to enable families to purchase food at local supermarkets. The evaluation of this initiative will be done in 2022.

- The short-term result is achieved over the three-year response.
- Under UNICEF's partnership with TTFPA the main challenge was a project design that did not take into account many specifics of the context and the profile of beneficiaries. The project was positive in that it took a comprehensive approach to children's health and nutrition.
- In the short term, UNICEF was able to surpass its target for 2021 with additional funding from BPRM for the QR Code initiative which provided 831 households with food baskets and a QR Code.
- While a positive short term humanitarian investment, the QR Code CBI did little to change the underlying dynamics of lack of integration, access to social services or empowerment for children on the move and their families.



**Sector results formulated as in the ECA Migration Action Plan 2020**

*Social protection systems adapt and have the capacity to provide an adequate response to the migration crisis.*

**Table 6. Social Inclusion indicators and targets (2019, 2020, 2021)**

Social Inclusion	HPM 2019		HPM 2020		HPM 2021 (up to March)	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# of households reached with humanitarian cash transfers across sectors					200	831

Overall, Social Protection appears to be a new area for UNICEF's migration response in T&T. In 2021, UNICEF had three social protection staff based in country, as well as a Shock Response Social Protection (SRSP) specialist in the Barbados office. The addition of one new social protection staff in country which will help to strengthen its presence in the country, and also, potentially, help to weave together the Migration Response with broader institutional and budgetary analyses and mappings that will shed light on key opportunities for inclusion of children on the move into national programmes and policies.

LACRO HAC 2019 and 2020 included no indicators for humanitarian cash transfers. Only in 2021 did UNICEF in T&T use an indicator on social protection, in the form of a cash transfer for food and internet data to be able to access online learning, or the QR Code initiative

This measure responded to the special nutritional vulnerabilities of pregnant women and under-fives, was relatively rapidly developed and rolled out, and provided a one-off voucher for families participating in nutritional screening led by LWC. There is little information available on its successes and challenges experienced, nor the extent to which the heightened risk of GBV was identified and planned for. What is known is that the HPM reporting indicates that although only 200 beneficiaries were targeted, 831 are reported to have benefited. This represents a 416 per cent overachievement of the planned target, which was achieved through a specific proposal to BPPRM to provide additional funding.

#### **Formation of the CBI Working Group**

To ensure harmonisation between CBI actors, UNICEF took the initiative to invite UNHCR and IOM to share experiences about the CBI in a workshop in February 2021. In November 2021, UNICEF took the initiative to provide a draft term of reference for a CBI working group which it shared for comments with both UNHCR and IOM. As of end of 2021, it has yet to receive any response. The ET finds this effort to coordinate and to show leadership in the area of CBI both positive and innovative for UNICEF. The ET commends UNICEF for continuing to try to coordinate in this field. A coordinated approach to CBI will save all partners' resources and help avoid duplication. It would be helpful for senior management to ensure that UNICEF's positive attitude to showing leadership smooths the way to a more dynamic and energetic interagency collaboration. CBI will be a very important area for UNICEF going forward.

Social inclusion	
Strengths	Challenges
UNICEF scheduled an evaluation of CBI programme which will generate evidence and support next steps	Preliminary evidence suggests that the QR Code initiative was much needed but could have been rendered more accessible through having more grocery stores included in the scheme.
UNICEF has taken the initiative to form a CBI Working Group	Other UN partners yet to respond to terms of reference for a CBI working group, which hampers harmonised CBI.

#### 8.2.4. Nutrition

**Sector result formulated as in the ECA Migration Action Plan 2020**

*(IYCF counselling is accessed by targeted caregivers.)*

**Table 7. Nutrition indicators and targets (2019, 2020, 2021)**

Nutrition	HAC 2019		HAC 2020		HAC 2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# Targeted caregivers (men and women) of boys and girls 0-23 months with access to IYCF counselling for appropriate feeding	200	163				
# of caregivers of children under 5 reached with IYCF counselling			200	147		
# primary caregivers of children aged 0-23 months receiving IYCFa counselling					300	1,261

A main challenge during UNICEF's 2019-2020 partnership with TTFPA was that project design did not take into account many specifics of the context and the profile of beneficiaries. The project was positive in that it took a comprehensive approach to children's health and nutrition, allowing for medical follow up as well as nutritional screening and work with caregivers to provide information and recipes on appropriate feeding for under-2s. However, it was clear that the conditions set for the programme were not appropriate to meet the targets set. According to KIs, it is difficult for a new, small UNICEF partner to pre-finance on its own.

According to KIs and documents reviewed, there appears to have existed significant gaps in the design of the initiative to ensure that the most vulnerable migrant children and families were enabled to fully benefit from the programme. According to KIs, their economic marginalisation and lack of coverage by a public health system is further compounded by language barrier and stigma and discrimination toward Spanish-speaking migrants.

Later, in 2021, UNICEF through its partner LWC, was able to use acquire additional funding from BPRM through the QR Code initiative under social protection. It is assumed that all members of those 1,261 households are included in the programme beneficiaries reported for 2021. This also generates a case of double counting. UNICEF sees a boost in the number of beneficiaries under both social protection and nutrition reporting.

Nutrition	
Strengths	Challenges
With TTFPA, UNICEF took a comprehensive approach to health and nutrition for under-2s in a context in which medical attention for children on the move can be a challenge, due to language barriers and other constraints.	The project did not identify the challenges and costs for Venezuelan migrant families to fully avail themselves of the services and benefits provided by the project. The project could be redesigned with more appropriate targets and budgets, because it appears the types of support provided are much needed.

## 8.2.5. Advocacy/Communications and Communication for Development (C4D)

### *Sector result formulated as in the ECA Migration Action Plan 2020*

*C4D: Children and their families have access to information on protective practices, available services and information to promote social cohesion*

*Advocacy and Communications: Promote measures to eradicate xenophobia, discrimination and marginalisation of uprooted children and their families (there is no sector specific reporting on this area)*

**Table 8. C4D indicators and targets (2019, 2020, 2021)**

C4D	HPM 2019		HPM 2020		HPM 2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# people reached in affected areas with messages on life saving skills and protective practices and behaviours, as well as on information on access and use of services.	17000	12807				
# of people in host communities participating in community activities on the prevention of xenophobia, promotion of inter-cultural dialogue and inclusion			5000	390		
# of people reached with messages on lifesaving skills and protective practices or information on uptake of services			11,000	13,569		
# of people reached with messages on access to services					10,000	5,940

The ECA response should be considered a good practice for its in-depth consultations with the beneficiary population, including during the pandemic, using zoom, WhatsApp and other media to ensure that the voices of the Venezuelan migrant population, including children, were being heard. C4D team members from ECA travelled in 2019 to T&T in order to document the information needs of Venezuelan migrants and UNICEF staff consulted with children and parents to understand their learning needs and challenges during the pandemic. Other consultation processes engaged in by UNICEF and documents produced include:

Through UNICEF's programmatic work in the area of social protection and the QR Code initiative, it was able to gather relevant data on the day-to-day lives and needs of Venezuelan migrant children and families.

Although UNICEF's migration response in T&T has been closer in many ways to the beneficiaries than in other operations and there are practical examples of how beneficiary feedback has been used to improve programme performance, KIs cite the need for more beneficiary consultation earlier in the design of the response. KIs note that it is very important to carry out consultations with beneficiaries prior to laying down the foundations of the response and its programmes; because once this is done it is difficult to change.

Based on these FGDs, UNICEF ECA developed communications tools and strategies and begin to use these platforms for communicating with Venezuelan and other migrant groups. During the pandemic UNICEF developed webinars and other communications products that allowed them to reach upwards of 12,000 people. UNICEF shared with the ET two communications strategies – one from 2018-2019 and one revised in 2021 that sought to address some of the key information needs and priorities identified by beneficiaries. While some of the needs identified by beneficiaries have not yet been incorporated into UNICEF programmatic responses, for the ET the availability and commitment to listening and taking action on beneficiary priorities constitutes a good practice and should be shared and replicated through other UNICEF offices and the region.

In 2020, more than 12,000 migrant families had access to key information to prevent disease, keep children safe from harm, violence and exploitation. Children from host communities were sensitised on how they can reduce

xenophobia and build relations with Venezuelan migrant children. UNICEF and partners, including LWC, developed materials and guidance to support parents with at-home support for online learning. This guidance was complemented through the #SpeakUp Facebook Live Series,<sup>84</sup> a joint initiative between UNICEF, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Commission and PAHO that delivered guidance and practical tools to cope in times of crisis.

The ET finds that C4D efforts to attempt to address stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes toward Venezuelan migrants were important but that they could have been followed up programmatically by engaging with a wider range of stakeholders, not only school children and their immediate educators. Given that xenophobic attitudes and sexual harassment particularly affect Venezuelan women and girls, it would be important to work with women's organisations in T&T to change social norms and stereotypes through a clear gender-focused multimedia campaign. Given the context of government resistance to providing services to children on the move and their families, C4D could have played a quiet yet strategic role to feed into and connect with other social movements, journalists and potentially academic communities such as the University of the West Indies. While respecting government sensitivities, it could have potentially gone further to build on the response to the KAP survey, allowing civil society organisations to take the lead and show the level of popular support for the idea that Venezuelan migrant children should be provided with access to education and healthcare. It is for C4D to consider how far it might go to mobilise and build on this popular sentiment through media and other campaigns directed to the general public.

**UReports:**<sup>85</sup> A visit to the UReport site<sup>86</sup> shows rather limited activity during the period. This is unfortunate as in many countries and humanitarian contexts UNICEF's UReport platform has been used to engage with adolescents and youth to measure and gauge social attitudes, as well as give adolescents a sense of empowerment and social agency to express themselves and have their voices heard. It seems odd in T&T that UReports has not been used as a strategic communications platform to engage with youth and measure attitudes towards the migrant community as a support for effective programmatic actions.

C4D	
Strengths	Challenges
C4D has been fully engaged in the VMC response in T&T and some sound initiatives have addressed the information needs of migrant families.	Some opportunities to use communications more effectively and to build broader coalitions in favour of the positive attitudes towards migrants would have been the logical follow up to the KAP and other studies carried out by UNICEF
C4D was able to capture a great deal of information about local perceptions and attitudes towards migrants through studies and FGDs with both migrant and host community members.	Similarly, UReports, which is small but established in T&T might have been used more effectively as a tool for engaging both with adolescents on the move as well with national adolescents to help measure and influence attitudes toward the migrant community.

<sup>84</sup> [https://m.facebook.com/watch/?ref=watch\\_permalink](https://m.facebook.com/watch/?ref=watch_permalink)

<sup>85</sup> As stated in the UReport website: "U-Report is a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders, and foster positive change. The program sends SMS polls and alerts to its participants, collecting real-time responses, and subsequently publishes gathered data."

<sup>86</sup> <https://ureport.in/>

***EQ8: To what extent did UNICEF's situation monitoring, monitoring of the quality of the service, real-time monitoring, accountability mechanisms at the migrant/host community/ and government service levels, lead to improved effectiveness of the response at CO/RO levels***

There is clear evidence that UNICEF is effectively tracking progress on HAC targets. There is not much evidence of how this data is used to improve effectiveness at CO or RO levels. Specifically:

- UNICEF ECA's overall monitoring of the humanitarian context has been sound. There exist small discrepancies between SitRep figures reported by LACRO and ECA, and some areas where overcounting of beneficiaries exist, but for the most part there has been an effective tracking on all key indicators. LACRO should note that changing humanitarian indicators each year does not make sense and makes it difficult to track progress over a multiyear response.
- It is positive that ECA's indicators and results frameworks and action plans are closely aligned with the CCCs.
- UNICEF ECA's PCAs indicate that partners need to have mechanisms in place to gather feedback and participation from affected populations. However, there is no indication from documents that UNICEF ever requests or receives evidence that this has been systematically done. Here CO Colombia can share some experiences of systematising the process. Overall, as in other COs, the accountabilities of UNICEF to affected populations do not appear to be clearly articulated or manifested in practice.
- Apart from the HPM indicators, there do not seem to be any measures that would indicate the quality of services and programmes delivered by UNICEF and partners.
- There have been no realtime evaluations of the migration response. However, LACRO did carry out a realtime evaluation of the COVID-19 response across the region.
- A positive move is the decision to evaluate the QR Code initiative under. The ET also recommends an evaluation of the education response to ensure that lessons are captured for the next phase of scaling up of educational services to children on the move.

The ET finds from reviewing the documentation that M&E is effectively supporting the VMC response, by providing systematic, monthly tracking of progress towards targets. This allows programme teams to be aware of emerging bottlenecks that can impede the meeting of short-term targets. The M&E role could be strengthened in a number of areas.

**Monitoring the quality of programming, impact and advocacy role**

The ET finds that HPM indicators have clear limitations in terms of capturing the quality in outputs and outcomes and this requires an additional effort by the M&E teams. These indicators are made up often of a wide range of different types of inputs and activities and do not help UNICEF to understand which activities are most effective in terms of contributing to the achievement of key short-, medium- and longer-term outcomes. The ECA M&E team should be congratulated for the meticulous tracking of all the different activities lines that contribute to each HPM indicator. As the VMC now enters a protracted phase, it is important to further develop indicators that relate to the quality of interventions and the extent to which these are effective in bringing about the desired changes in policy and results on the ground for migrant children and families.

It has been impossible to track the results of UNICEF's advocacy role at the national level – to understand what the advocacy strategy is, and what how its success should be measured and what have been the results. In particular, UNICEF's *Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move* formulates Six Policy Asks that are seen as key to creating the conditions needed for children on the move to enjoy short-term protection and longer-term inclusion. According to KIs, while the work of UNICEF field teams on the ground is highly visible, its role in advocacy by senior management, particularly with national institutions, is much less visible. Particularly in the case of T&T, where government positions have not been aligned with what UNICEF would have hoped for in terms of providing access to children on the move in the formal school system, it would be helpful to track and document the extent to which the Six Policy Asks have been advanced, when, where, with whom, how often and with what results.

According to KIs at LACRO and HQ level, at a global level there are an insufficient number of impact evaluations that allow UNICEF to learn which specific interventions are producing the best long-term results for children on the move. All UNICEF COs, including ECA, can support the agenda of evidence generation on what works for children on the move by building into their evaluation programmes a number of impact evaluations that link short-term action to longer term results and impacts.

According to KIs, there are areas where additional monitoring and evaluation could provide valuable information and guide UNICEF's operations and strategies. Among these have been identified:

**Education in Emergencies:** Effectiveness of the education strategy to date. What are the lessons learned and how to chart the way towards integrating both primary and post-secondary into a comprehensive learning programme for children on the move.

**GBV from a cross sectoral, multi-actor approach:** A key area that has been highlighted by KIs that requires deeper inquiry is the effectiveness of UNICEF's response to GBV in its multiple forms in T&T – this goes from trafficking of adolescent girls to other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. Another valuable area of assessment is the extent to which domestic violence and GBV are being identified and addressed across sectors and whether established SoPs are being followed and are working from the victim's point of view. KIs see that UNICEF's own internal tracking and tools, as well as those of partners, could be better aligned to ensure UNICEF and partners across sectors have in place management information systems to ensure identified cases are effectively and efficiently managed. Organisations of women and girls could be engaged in helping to track and monitor GBV.

There is a clear need to include participatory approaches to design of the response from the outset of the emergency. One of the lessons learned according to KIs is the importance of participatory approaches and the inclusion of beneficiaries at the earliest stages to design appropriate programmatic responses. It was highlighted by KIs that while early needs assessments at the outset of the emergency are often led by M&E, it is important for them to be systematically accompanied by programme staff. They said that emergency assessment teams should gather both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure that beneficiaries' needs and difficulties are taken into consideration prior to programme design. It was also noted by some that UNHCR's participatory assessment process is extremely well structured and requires UNHCR to give direct feedback to persons of concern. According to one:

Such a process of feedback to participants is fundamental and this is something that UNICEF could learn from UNHCR on by developing more serious policy commitment and regular engagement with beneficiaries in quickly evolving humanitarian contexts.

UNICEF has also contributed to a number of qualitative and quantitative studies with IOM and UNHCR – particular (DMT which provides valuable information about the migrant population and context.

### **Real time evaluations**

Neither ECA nor LACRO commissioned any real-time evaluations of the VMC or its components. Following the activation of an L3, LACRO it did carry out an evaluation real time assessment of UNICEF's response the COVID-19 pandemic in Argentina, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Venezuela.<sup>87</sup> LACRO decided to conduct a regular evaluation of the VMC while it conducted together with the Evaluation Office (EO) a Review of the UNICEF L2 response in Venezuela.

### **AAP mechanisms**

UNICEF has ensured that the responsibility for implementation of its AAP policy is largely passed on to IPs through partnership agreements. This is a positive step, but as seen in the case of Colombia, partners may require support to understand UNICEF's expectations around AAP and how to build adequate processes. Based on discussions with KIs, there are concerns that some key principles of AAP are being lost. One is that AAP is not only a matter that applies to IPs but should also be at the heart of UNICEF work. Having IPs directly engage with beneficiaries about what they like and do not like about the services is a good start. However, it is insufficient and fails to address how power relationships between IPs and beneficiaries can make it unlikely that beneficiaries feel fully comfortable to disclose concerns they may have with the quality of services provided, or that IPs will always accurately and faithfully pass this feedback on to UNICEF.

Especially in the case of T&T where one single IP has amassed a great deal of power as the main IP for both UNHCR and UNICEF, it would be worthwhile for UNICEF to take a more direct approach to AAP and regularly engage through FGDs and other means to get an independent perspective on IP performance through the eyes of beneficiaries. Here M&E can play a vital role in carrying independent consultations with programme beneficiaries to ensure that it has its own source of beneficiary feedback that is not filtered by IPs.

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<sup>87</sup><https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/reports/detail/17774/rta-of-the-unicef-ongoing-response-to-covid-19-at-country-level-lac-region>

M&E	
Strengths	Challenges
M&E has an effective system in place for tracking progress towards HAC/HPM targets, only a few areas detected with the potential for double counting.	Frequent changes in indicators/some indicators not strongly linked to sector results lead to difficulties in assessing progress towards results in the short or longer term.
Introduction of AAP to PCAs with IPs	M&E could be making a greater contribution to the operationalisation of AAP within the organisation through establishing stronger feedback loops between UNICEF and beneficiaries, establishing clear lines of responsibility between M&E and programme teams.
Interest and experience in the use of participatory methods, and beneficiary-based consultations that could strengthen M&E	UNICEF ECA lacks data and analysis on key programmatic areas. Impact evaluations could help UNICEF chart the way forward and assess which programme activities are most effective and ready for scaling up.
	Beyond just numbers of beneficiaries, indicators and tools are needed to assess the quality of interventions such as education, GBV.

***EQ9: To what extent have internal (within UNICEF, between countries and sectors) and external coordination mechanisms been effective in enhancing the quality of the overall response and advocacy on behalf of VNZ migrant children and their families?***

- Overall, there is a willingness and sense of urgency of partners to address key problems facing children in accessing their rights.
- Arrival of an experienced Emergency manager in 2020 helped the operation overcome its challenges.
- UNICEF needs to pay more attention to HR and staffing around emergency response, to limit risks to effectiveness and its credibility.
- There is a gap in terms of gender equality and protection programming, as well as intersectoral coordination.

In 2019, UNICEF recognised the need to adapt its current response to address the ongoing challenges with accessing formal education, especially in light of the government's continued restrictions. UNICEF CP staff recommended that the CFS be utilised to support children's access to formal education.

Early challenges arose due to a limited understanding of humanitarian principles and international best practice instruments and the CCCs. The integration of the Equal Place into LWC CFS programming was not an easy adaption. CP and education staff generated three possible options for integration into the CFS. It was agreed that an integrated model would be utilised to continue access to the comprehensive services. However, there was a shift and heavy focus was placed on 'academic only' programming, which reduced existing CFS services to levels where they eventually became non-existent. For example, PSS, CP, lifesaving messages, GBV activities, were all removed from the existing structures to make room for academic only programming. It was not an easy transition. The Equal Place programme needed to provide teachers to LWC's CFS s, thus creating two different cadres of staff: CFS animators and Equal Place teachers. The teachers were paid somewhat more than the animators and each group had slightly different concepts regarding what to do. According to one KI:



It was a challenge for both programmes to occupy the same spaces – there were thought of as being different. There ended up being different messages – one from CP and one from Education – the two were not at all on the same page.

Partners felt uncomfortable with UNICEF's lack of intersectoral coordination. In 2019, UNICEF CP staff recommended that both LWC and Equal Place staff should be referred to as Facilitators. This appears to have reduced the tensions, and issues around difference in pay scale and other matters were resolved. "Now they are all called facilitators, there is only one position, no difference in their job descriptions and they work as one team", said one informant.

The CP & Education teams met to clarify misunderstandings which resulted in the revision of a draft Equal Place SoP providing clarification to IPs. In 2020 the two UNVs left and a new Emergency Manager with experience in UNICEF was recruited.

It has also been perceived that ECD was not well integrated into planning at the outset of the emergency. Whereas mothers specifically requested access to a day-care type set up so that they could work or run errands while leaving under-fives in a safe environment, this was never taken into account and the ECD programme was based on a model of home visits. According to one KI:

A lesson learned from the response is that we realised that we did not have access to young children as would be necessary. Children under five are not visible, and we treat them as an afterthought. They should be brought upfront in the response because right now UNICEF is not reaching out to them adequately.

To be fair, although it appears that the T&T response is not well coordinated internally, this seems an inherent challenge where there is no shared physical office management and technical staff are not able to see each other and interact on a day-to-day basis. UNICEF ECA staff are concentrated in Barbados, or scattered across some 12 other island nations and territories. In this sense the T&T operation and context feels relatively isolated and not well enough understood by management at different levels.

#### **Coordination between UNICEF IPs in shared efforts and space**

Tensions also emerged between partners in the response that UNICEF has not properly addressed or mediated. Again, these tensions emerged around the CFS, as a common space out of which various services of IPs were delivered. According to one partner engaged to provide services out of the CFS:

The spaces that were managed by LWC were not welcoming to other NGOs also contracted by UNICEF. Everything was a problem and finally our team members did not want to be there anymore. UNICEF should have better mediated the relationships between partners. Partners need to understand what each other's roles are and respect each other to get the job done for children.

A number of partners have indicated LWC, is too dominant and that UNICEF allows it to monopolise the resources of the response.

Because LWC gets more resources than others, families decide the best thing is to leave other CFS to try to transfer to those operated by LWC. This creates a vicious cycle, and weakens the role of other partners. UNICEF should be equitable with the different partners or else they will disappear.

Indeed, it appears that one of the main challenges within the operation is the small pool of potential partners from which UNICEF can choose.<sup>88</sup> The over reliance of both UNHCR and UNICEF on LWC as a main IP is not helping UNICEF to bring on board new ideas and new non-Catholic partners and to create an effective and efficient working relationship between organisations which make up the response.

#### **Coordination within R4V working groups**

According to most KIs, there are positive and negative aspects to coordination within the EWG and CPWG. both led by UNICEF. On the one hand, coordination of the EWG is seen to have improved since April 2020 with the arrival of the new Emergency Manager. However, her contract ended in early 2022, and has not been reinstated at the time of drafting this report. This lack of continuity can have an important impact on organisational performance, effectiveness, efficiency, coverage and other aspects of its work. UN partners generally confirm that with the creation of the EWG and CPWG, the extent of information sharing and coordination improved. However, the operation of the EWG was seen by KIs as less effective. According to one KI:

2019 was a difficult and tense year. UNICEF did not have adequate personnel here. When UNVs came, they were not the right fit. UNHCR had to take over the coordination of the EWG from UNICEF. Now things

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<sup>88</sup> According to KIs, UNICEF partners based on various criteria – and demonstrated value add/Value for Money/expertise in an area.

are better. UNCHR and UNICEF have built strong bilateral coordination, which helps the overall coordination.

But there have also been criticisms of both the EWG and the CPWG in the sense that these spaces should be used for solving problems that require urgently to be solved, rather than just discussing but not coming up with concrete solutions. Due to the intertwined nature of the education and CP programmes most partners sit on both working groups and so can compare between their relative effectiveness. The challenges facing them seem to very similar, indicating that this is not about the chairing of one WG or another, but perhaps more fundamental issues about UNICEF's capacity to take action in an emergency context.

According to one partner on the EWG:

It is evident that UNICEF does not have enough staff to do all of what it needs to do. The meetings make no sense. EWG meetings are talking things over, but not solving problems with any sense of urgency. They don't need to take as long as they do. UNICEF staff doesn't go into the field, that is where the dissociation is occurring, they are not getting out in the field so things for them are somehow theoretical.

Similar concerns were raised regarding the CPWG, an informant noting that:

In the CP working group, it is all about meeting targets, rather than ascertaining the true nature of the problem and mitigating the problem. CP is dealing with a number of state ministries, and nobody can make a decision. Boxes are being checked; we are trying to hit the targets but not change the underlying conditions of lack of protection.

In terms of gender equality and protection programming, there is an evident gap, that would require resources for CP to go beyond meeting targets, to redefining targets related to areas such as trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse of adolescents within the tourist industry and in other sectors.

To give UNICEF credit, in a challenging environment, it has succeeded in bringing government partners around the table to discuss systemic challenges. However, it appears that while technical staff are keen to collaborate to see progress on education and CP they are not authorised by managers or politicians to make decisions to move forward the child rights agenda. Effective negotiations need to be had at a higher level -UNICEF ECA and/or LACRO should continue to try to influence the real decision-makers in T&T.

#### **Lack of data and coordination on the 4Ws – who, what, when, where**

The CPWG conducted two 4Ws (who is doing what, where and when) – one with the CFS Coordinating Group and the other with the wider CPWG. This was good practice because it allowed partners to report by sector on specific case numbers, for example on GBV, children protection issues, number of children trafficked, numbers of children in detention or tracking of other variables that would support overall planning and monitoring of the humanitarian situation.

Working with R4V partners, UNICEF could push for better situation monitoring, more realistic figures on the numbers of persons of concern and where exactly they are living, in order to ensure better targeting of services.

#### **LACRO coordination with other countries in the region, including Venezuela**

Due to the small size of the operation, UNICEF ECA has relied more heavily on LACRO technical support in the area of gender and social protection in particular, and this has been positive and forthcoming. While during the early part of the response, there was limited exchange on substantive issues facilitated by LACRO within the region, in 2021 LACRO organised an exchange of experiences on responses in the education sector with Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela highlighted existing system-wide gaps. This was seen to have contributed to building the capacity of the sector's stakeholders convened in the EWG.

Coordination	
Strengths	Challenges
Arrival of an experienced Emergency manager in 2020 helped the operation overcome its challenges	UNICEF needs to pay more attention to HR and staffing around emergency response, to limit risks to effectiveness and its credibility

Overall, there is a willingness and sense of urgency of partners to address key problems facing children in accessing their rights.	Good will at technical level needs to be accompanied by more effort to cultivate strategic alliances and relationships with the real decision-makers and bring them to the table.
	Absence of 4W/5W type partner and situation monitoring

***EQ10: To what extent did the activation of the UNICEF Level 2 emergency procedure in 2019 in Colombia, and later L3 designation of COVID-19 emergency, allow for more effective scale-up of UNICEF's support (from all levels) and response to address the critical needs and provide increased protection and services to Venezuelan migrant children and their families? To what extent did the L2 designation facilitate/change/simplify procedures at CO/RO/HQ levels?***

The activation of the L2 emergency appears to have changed very little in T&T, according to KIs, in terms of changing or facilitating procedures, since T&T was not one of the countries covered by the emergency activation. According to KIs, the emergency was not perceived as such by UNICEF ECA and the only state of emergency that was recognised by the government was that related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing partners did not see UNICEF's response simplified or facilitated or the movement of needed funding expedited.

According to informants, the main value of the L2 Regional Emergency Activation has been to attract humanitarian funding to the response, although, as we will see in the Regional Synthesis Report, this was despite the fact that some countries in the region never declared themselves to be in a state of emergency. For more information on UNICEF L2 Emergency activation procedure, see Annex 14.

In T&T, KIs informants from within UNICEF did not see that the L2 had led to a significant simplification of procedures. While the L2 designation is supposed to allow for more rapid, flexible, and simplified contracting methods in order to allow for a timely response, it appears that in T&T, these simplified procedures have not been applied nor did they help lighten the heavy administrative weight of the emergency response. Some specific matters that could have been facilitated but were not included:

**Contracting of partners (PCAs):** Contracting of partners, which was intended to be rendered speedier and more flexible under the L2 was not particularly adjusted, although additional partners were brought on board. UNICEF teams were required to invest significant time to on-board new partners, particular to ensure that they meet all PSEA and other requirements. Partners have highlighted UNICEF's lengthy contracting and payments procedures as a factor that did not allow for a needed cash flow to enable them to work steadily and show results throughout the year. Contracting and payment systems are seen as too slow to be effective.

**Onboarding of new partners:** It has been suggested by KIs that the onboarding of new partners in the midst of an emergency was a challenge, slowed down the response, and is really not the most effective or efficient approach for UNICEF – especially in the case of partners for children on the move, which was a rather new area for programming for UNICEF ECA. It has been proposed that it would be better – within the context of UNICEF's approach to preparedness – to create a database of partners within the region, capable of providing key services for children on the move, and ensure that they have been fully trained on UNICEF's policies, procedures and the CCCs and other relevant training packages, prior to the onset of an emergency. It would also be important to extend UNICEF partnerships to include women's and girls' organisations working to promote equal rights. In the words of one KI: "A one-million-dollar investment in preparedness is worth at least ten million in response." UNICEF should be looking to prepare COs better for migration emergencies like the VMC with partners and other capacities needed to achieve a high quality and timely response.

**Contracting of UNICEF staff for scale up of the response:** A main challenge for the emergency response has been to recruit, hire and retain staff required for the response. The UNV experience in T&T illustrates the risks involved for UNICEF in fielding persons new to UNICEF into an emergency and highly complex national context. The arrival of a more senior emergency officer in a consultant status has done a lot to help reduce tensions both internal and external to UNICEF. This should be a lesson learned for UNICEF regarding the staffing profile required for someone to hit the ground running.

**Development of proposals and private sector partnerships:** Internally, UNICEF lacked the coordination and human resources needed to rapidly develop proposals to raise funding needed to scale up the response. In this context, CO ECA appears to have been quite reliant on LACRO to produce the needed proposal. This is further explored in the synthesis report.

**At the level of LACRO and EMOPs,** it is unclear still whether there was sufficient support provided over the period of the L2 and L3 to assist UNICEF ECA T&T to develop proposals, identify new partners, build their capacities and simplify procedures to ensure a high-quality response in a timely manner. What is clear is that the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically reduced technical visits from LACRO and EMOPS to provide technical support to the two emergencies when these were needed most. It is also unclear whether LACRO has followed all the emergency procedures verifications required. This is further explored in the synthesis report.

### 8.3. Coverage

The evaluation of the coverage of UNICEF's response is guided by question: ***To what extent were the most vulnerable Venezuelan refugee/migrant girls and boys and their families reached with needed protection, assistance and empowerment?*** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question.

***EQ11: What were the internal and external factors that enabled or constrained UNICEF's ability to provide the most vulnerable Venezuelan migrants and refugee children, their families and host communities with protection and assistance according to their needs***

Factors that enabled UNICEF's ability to provide the most vulnerable Venezuelan children on the move with protection and assistance:

- Identification of partners who were able to work in remote and rural areas, such as TTFPA, AMMR and Child Help Line, and provide services in Spanish for migrants who do not speak English. (internal)
- Working through LWC which had a significant prior experience as the main IP for UNHCR and also access to UNHCR's registration data. (internal)
- Creative thinking on behalf of UNICEF partners and personnel to implement out-of-the-box solutions like online learning programmes, even before the pandemic made them a necessity. (internal)

Factors that constrained were:

- The Government of Trinidad and Tobago's policy of exclusion from education of Venezuelan migrants. (external)
- The ability of UNICEF and partners to act decisively and rapidly to put in place a structured learning programme and options for primary and post-secondary learners (priority on primary). (internal)
- The lack of rapidly getting and distributing devices and data to ensure that all learners could access online programming of whatever kind. (internal)
- Difficulty of partners to identify sufficient numbers of personnel with capacity to work in Spanish (external)
- Limited financial and human resources for the operational needs. (internal and external)
- The lack of key vulnerability profiles being identified, and the lack of strategies and models designed to address these profiles given the geographic dispersion of migrant families in at times remote and rural areas. (internal)
- Failure to recognise the need to mobilise additional partners to meet specific vulnerabilities, such as the need for a specific partner on alternative care arrangements. (internal and external)
- Lack of sustained or regular field presence in areas where children on the move are concentrated.

#### **Lack of clear vulnerability and gender analysis**

Coverage is primarily affected by the ability to identify those in need, their location, profile and vulnerabilities, and the capacity of the agency to address these with practical measures that correspond with their rights and protection needs. It implies that overall, the response and its programmes are designed to correspond with the extent and scale needs identified. This EQ is difficult to answer, since vulnerability profiles and needs of the most vulnerable Venezuelan children have not yet been clearly identified, four years into the response. This is a challenge for UNICEF. If the agency's objective is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, it needs to know who and where these children are at the outset of the emergency so as to trace a coherent action plan based on identified vulnerabilities in specific locations, and build an intervention logic around addressing them. It requires

a field presence or at least regular field monitoring visits, which in T&T, despite the fact that it is very small country in geographic terms, UNICEF has not maintained. Monitoring is done through HACT with IPs, and is limited to the areas in which these partners are working.

This represents a first major gap in the response. While UNICEF can list many different vulnerabilities, there are limited specific strategies in place to ensure the most vulnerable are reached with needed protection, assistance, and empowerment. This is reflected in the almost total absence of any gender strategy or action plan that reflects the specific vulnerabilities of girls and boys, and measures in place to address these.

#### **Low level of staffing**

As noted above since the onset of the VMC UNICEF has invested in staff, hiring consultants, Temporary Appointments (TAs) and UNVs. Yet it remains a resource poor operation with limited capacity to hire additional staff needed to address the VMC at scale. According to partners a significant gap has been the lack of adequate personnel to address the scale of the response, particularly the time and availability of staff to leave the office and carry out field monitoring. According to one: “There are simply not enough boots on the ground, which leads to significant bottlenecks and long delays in the response”.

#### **Exploring new scalable models**

On the positive side, UNICEF ECA in T&T has invested in some models that have the potential to achieve real and meaningful scalability. The investment in online, blended learning models and accredited education at the high school level shows that it is possible to develop responses that could potentially be brought to scale as limited extra cost. The main costs are investment in the platform and facilitators as well as local spaces where children can gather in person from time to time for in-person interaction with teachers and peers.

#### **Spanish language capacity of actors**

A gap experienced by several partners and IPs is the ability to have sufficient staff in the field of education, PSS and nutrition able to communicate directly with Venezuelan migrants on the move. This capacity took time to build up. On the positive side, UNICEF and partners have been working with the University of the West Indies to bring on board ESL training for children. However, this will take time to bear fruit but will help break down language barriers which make Venezuelan children and their families more vulnerable in T&T. Specialised Spanish language training was also provided for CP officers and frontline workers. This will increase the capacity of national stakeholders to respond to the needs of the migrant population. Finally, several of the CFS have been supported to establish English and Spanish learning programmes for community actors, local children and children on the move.

#### **Gap in healthcare and birth registration**

While UNICEF does not have a health programme that can be assessed, and in theory the government has given access to basic primary healthcare to all migrants, in practice KIs signify that there are many barriers to accessing healthcare that is making it challenge for families, including CWD, to access adequate services. According to one IP, “we visited areas where children had not been able to see a doctor for several years since their arrival. The families wanted this service but costs of transport and other services were very high”. These include fear of coming forward, the tendency of some health centres to request documentation or make the process of accessing care more complex than it need be, and also the language barrier. This also affects the willingness and ability of Venezuelan migrant families to register new births, leading to a growing risk of statelessness for many children born in T&T. Without overextending itself, UNICEF should carefully consider if it does not have a role to play in facilitating access to health care and birth registration for migrant children unable to access care in some areas. If such does not already exist, UNICEF could consider a partnership with other agencies on a mobile clinic which has been a strategy that has facilitated access to healthcare (and potentially birth registration) in other VMC response countries.

#### **Limitations on institutional capacity building as a response to large scale emergencies (systems-strengthening approach)**

As in other country case studies, we have seen the limitations that a system strengthening approach can have when the capacity of government partners is already very weak, and a migration or other emergency stretches these resources even thinner. Such a situation does not serve national children or children on the move and the back log of case management systems can grow to unacceptable levels. Here experiences from other UNICEF COs around the world can be used to see how to increase capacity without duplicating or creating parallel systems. A

2017 UNICEF evaluation of Child Protection System Strengthening<sup>89</sup> highlighted successful models of UNICEF playing a role to map gaps and proposed innovative ways of filling these through temporarily contracting of IPs to support what are normally government functions. In the VMC response, across countries, it seems that UNICEF in LACRO is not fully aware of this global experience or bringing it to bear to scale up services without deviating from its commitment to a system strengthening approach.

#### **Limited and short-term funding of the humanitarian response.**

KIs highlight limited and short-term funding as a key factor affecting the response and the consolidation of UNICEF teams and the engagement of partners needed at scale. Lack of experienced partners on migration has been an additional factor, although time and resources have been invested in upgrading IPs capacity to perform, report and abide by UNICEF humanitarian standards. Lack of sufficient resources, particularly for UNICEF's coordination role under the R4V, is stretching UNICEF's staff resources very thin.

#### ***EQ12: What factors have affected donors' perceptions and willingness to fund UNICEF's programmes and appeals in line with assessed needs/targets?***

Donors appreciate UNICEF's:

- Transparent and open communication.
- UNICEF's role in CP institutional strengthening.
- UNICEF's holistic, cross-sectoral approach.

The main factors that have detracted from UNICEF's ability to balance local needs with national priorities are:

- National priorities currently are, it appears, to avoid creating a pull factor which would draw more Venezuelan migrants or even to avoid that those who are currently there will remain.
- This situation makes the jobs of UNICEF and other partners very challenging, because resources are not sufficient at current levels to ensure the rights of children are addressed.
- As seen above in terms of UNICEF's effectiveness, it has brought in effective educational solutions which provide services and coverage for few children, but with proper funding, can be brought to scale.

The ET relied heavily on feedback from donor representatives interviewed as part of the evaluation inception and data collection phases. Donors suggested that in addition to interview data, the ET should request copies of Donor Visit Reports to have a comprehensive and systematic view of donor perceptions based on their own field visits and analysis. However, UNICEF CO and RO both informed the ET that they do not have or could not find copies of these reports.

In ECA as with all other COs, the lack of funding for the operation has been seen as a major challenge. Yet a monitoring of UNICEF's spending from year to year indicates that in the migration response in T&T there has been a regular carry over of funding from previous years. This suggests that UNICEF and its partners may not be able to spend budgets within the reporting year, raising the question of whether funding is the biggest challenge, or the capacity on the ground to fundraise, propose and execute.<sup>90</sup> As in other COs, BPPRM has been the main donor. There is the expectation from BPRM that UNICEF should broaden its donor base for this response. UNICEF has succeeded in bringing a fair amount of funding from ECHO.

#### **What donors value in UNICEF:**

- Transparent and open communication: the quality of communication and clarity of the relationship is seen to have a direct bearing on the quality of programming because it allows donors to be more informed and to bring their financial and conceptual contributions to enhance programming. UNICEF's capacity to conduct high level advocacy and a normative agenda.
- UNICEF's capacity to have an influence at a societal, and not just a policy level.
- UNICEF's broad mandate and ability to work across sectors is a value added, enabling understanding of the needs of children and women from a holistic, cross-sectoral approach.

As in Colombia, in T&T the main area of concern for donors is around CP in the context of humanitarian response. It should be noted that CP has received the least funding of any sector in the response. This should be a central

<sup>89</sup> [Child Protection Systems Strengthening .pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

<sup>90</sup> According to UNICEF ECA, carry over of funding may have to do with partner capacity to implement and absorb the allocated funds (e.g., funding is allocated in quarterly tranches/liquidated before a new tranche is transferred). Delays in implementation which carry over into extended partnership agreements, require the rollover/carry over of funds.

concern for UNICEF, where lives of children are at stake and where it should bring a great value added. According to one donor representative:

We would have expected a more strategic adaptation to the context. The government policy has not been evolving that much on the VMC response, so we would have expected UNICEF to show a more strategic adjustment to the role that UNICEF is playing by filling gaps that the government is either unable or unwilling to fill.

In practice this strategic adjustment would mean a greater investment of staffing, more targeted proposals, given what is at stake for in the area of CP – specifically around trafficking and sexual exploitation, early unions, teenage pregnancies, deportations and detentions which are daily occurring but not eliciting the urgent response from UNICEF that might be expected. An informant noted:

A systems strengthening approach is fine, but under emergency conditions, and given the state of the system, UNICEF might need more partners, more staff, and new models or approaches to reach the children at greatest risk and in greatest need.

Some donors are also concerned that the Regional L2 emergency response, having a focus only on Venezuelan migrants, might lead to missing a vulnerable child of other nationalities – such as Haitians, Cubans and others. According to one KI:

In reality, we do not have one migration phenomenon but several at the same time and UNICEF's L2 response, as a nationality-based response, is not necessarily the solution. We have the Venezuelan Outflow, a Haitian migration issue, a COVID-19 driven migration, south to north, north to south and intra-regional migration all at the same time. UNICEF needs to recognise the real scale of what we are talking about.

However, it should be noted that UNICEF ECA's efforts did include all children on the move and their families, without distinction by country of origin. This constitutes a good practice.

The main factors affecting donor perceptions and willingness to fund UNICEF's appeals and projects include the ability to:

- come with innovative humanitarian initiatives and projects that address the needs of the most vulnerable
- involve more donors: the US, sees itself as giving a disproportionate share of the humanitarian financing for the VMC.

In T&T UNICEF's efforts, for example, to bring online education to out-of-school children on the move is welcomed as an innovative solution to an unexpected external constraint. This is the type of solution that donors would like to see more of and at a larger scale.

Coverage	
Strengths	Challenges
In Education and CP through the CFS, as well as the My Child Helpline app, UNICEF is developing models that have the potential to be highly scalable with limited added investment	While these models are promising they are not yet providing coverage at scale. UNICEF and R4V partners need to find the means to bring key services to scale, particularly in terms of coverage of primary school education
UNICEF's role in CP institutional strengthening	UNICEF's role in CP system strengthening has the potential to increase coverage, but not in the short term. In the short-term UNICEF should be exploring how to bring new partners together with CATT and the Anti-Trafficking Unit to temporarily boost or support added capacity.
	UNICEF needs more data, including a vulnerability profile and CP case counts and



	information shared by all partners so as to strengthen coverage and better targeting of vulnerable children
	UNICEF needs to increase fundraising, both through diversifying donors and with the private sector, and address with donors the short-term nature of funding so as to be able to address the needs of this now protracted crisis.

#### 8.4. Coherence and coordination

The evaluation of the coherence and coordination of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***What are the main factors that have led to internal and external coherence and coordination of UNICEF's response or lack thereof?*** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question.

##### ***EQ13: What factors led to or detracted from UNICEF's ability to balance its response to local needs and national priorities?***

The main factors that have detracted from UNICEF's ability to balance local needs with national priorities are:

- National priorities currently are, it appears, to avoid creating a pull factor which would draw more Venezuelan migrants or even to deter those already present from remaining.
- This situation makes the work of UNICEF and partners very challenging, because resources are not sufficient at current levels to ensure the rights of children are addressed.
- In terms of UNICEF's effectiveness, it has brought in effective educational solutions which provide services and coverage for few children. With proper funding these could be brought to scale.

As should by now be clear in T&T there does not appear to be much short-term scope for balancing national priorities with local needs of children on the move. The government's position is not to create any pull factors that would incentivise Venezuelan migrants to remain or to increase their numbers. UNICEF on the other hand, cannot, by virtue of its mandate ignore the needs of children on the move and their families. There is therefore currently a balance in which the government allows UNICEF and other humanitarian actors to address the needs of migrants, without itself making significant commitments towards acknowledging these needs or seeking ways to address them. UNICEF and R4V partners must therefore continue to seek funding to sustain parallel systems of support, such as that they have introduced in education, while also investing in advocacy with government officials at the highest level. One aspect that has not been mentioned by KIs to date is whether any efforts have been made to engage with local governments and municipalities. These tiers of government are not only aware of the presence of migrants in their communities, but are also directly concerned with the human, financial and other aspects of their presence in the country. Under its development programme – and under the Spotlight Initiative – UNICEF is supporting the integration of prevention of family violence strategies into local government plans. The strategy takes into consideration both host and migrant populations. Community-based Child Protection Committees (CBCPCs) have been established to help identify and serve the migrant population. It would be important for UNICEF to continue to support local level initiatives and clarify in which ways local governments could be allies for UNICEF and R4V partners working on migration.

##### ***EQ14: What is UNICEF's added value in the Venezuela Outflow response?***

##### ***EQ15: To what extent were meaningful partnerships and/or coordination mechanisms established with other key actors (e.g., government at national and local levels, civil society, NGOs, academia, private sector, other UN agencies etc.), to assist, include and empower the most vulnerable Venezuelan children and their families?***

In Trinidad and Tobago, coordination mechanisms appear to be coherent, or at least more so than in some other countries. The education and child protection working groups are the main coordination mechanism, led by UNICEF. Due to the small size of the operation and small number of partners, there is overlap between both working groups. A notable gap is the need for more active working group that takes into account access of children to health services.

Door informants noted UNICEF added value as an established actor in the country, whereas IOM and UNHCR were poorly connected with government agencies and ministries. According to KIs at the outset of the VMC, UNICEF was very helpful to UNHCR and IOM through introducing them to government partners which significantly facilitated progress on behalf of children on the move and their families. Nonetheless, despite the established relationships with government agencies the government did not change its position to provide access to more services, and in particular access to formal schooling for such a relatively small number of children on the move.

When it is considered that UNICEF had no migration-focused partners in T&T prior to 2018, it can be considered that the situation has advanced significantly. More work is needed to build a network of supportive organisations aware of and with capacity to understand and meet the needs of children on the move. It is hoped that the VMC will be the trigger that prepares partners and institutions for future, inevitable waves of migration.

In particular, UNICEF's early recognition of the role of the Catholic Church as a natural ally on Venezuelan migration outflow was significant. This was highly positive, mobilising not only the Archbishop and his advocacy capacity on the side of the migrants, but also the largest network of community-based halls and spaces through 26 parishes. Through working with AMMR the Catholic Commission for Social Justice, the Catholic Education Board of Management and LWC, UNICEF has clearly built on an existing affinity and desire of the Catholic community to provide support to Venezuelan migrants. As pointed out by some, however, while the Catholic community and its institutions are of immense importance in terms of the network and infrastructure, they bring to supporting children on the move, these organisations are far from being CP experts. The ET advises that UNICEF ensure adequate training and monitoring is in place to ensure that codes of conduct are in place and respected. For example, it was seen as odd by the Catholic Education Board of Management that UNICEF should insist on putting in place training and protocols for addressing PSEA.

UNICEF has also formed a strong alliance with the advocacy group TTVSOLNET largely made up of Venezuelan migrants from previous waves of migration who are now well established in T&T. This is a very important partnership because it is perhaps most representative of the voice of Venezuelan migrants themselves. They are closest to understanding the needs of current migrants, and what is needed to help them establish themselves in the country.

UNICEF partners closely with the CATT and the Office of the Prime Minister under which sits which oversees the Gender and Children's Affairs.<sup>91</sup> A notable success has been the recent adoption of a new *National Children's Policy 2020-2030* with UNICEF's support.<sup>92</sup> However, despite the broad scope and importance of the document which is intended to cover all children in T&T, there is limited mention of the specific needs or provisions for children on the move.<sup>93</sup>

Key partnerships are also those with ChildLine in T&T, which immensely strengthens capacity of UNICEF's outreach on CP and PSS. It could be considered that this is a partner that could be used more strategically for generating valuable data on CP due to its experience with call-in lines, counselling in the field and in CFS.

UNICEF is also partnering with the Pan American Development Foundation<sup>94</sup> both in education and in CP and with the University of West Indies to help develop an English as a Second Language (ESL) programme for children on the move. This is a positive partnership when exploring future options for post-secondary studies for children on the move who have passed the CSEC or the Venezuelan Bachillerato exams.

UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR on education for children on the move, and UNFPA on GBV prevention and response. While UN Women is present in T&T with one officer, there has been no direct partnership. It would be worth pursuing a common interest in vocational training for women and girls who have been victims of trafficking or sexual abuse and exploitation.

A gap to be explored, is to extend beyond this small but solid group of partners to explore possibilities of working with local governments and municipalities, teachers' union and other professional associations that might have a key role to play in influencing current government policies in favour of children on the move.

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<sup>91</sup> <http://opm-gca.gov.tt/>

<sup>92</sup> Office of the Prime Minister of T&T, Gender and Children's Affairs: "Green Paper: National Child Policy 2020-2030"

<sup>93</sup> See [http://opm-gca.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/2021/Publications/National%20Child%20Policy%2020202030%20\(Adult%20%20Version\)%20NOV%202021\\_compressed.pdf?ver=fX6FuWYT0s6z\\_LBQQMKuzw%3d%3d](http://opm-gca.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/2021/Publications/National%20Child%20Policy%2020202030%20(Adult%20%20Version)%20NOV%202021_compressed.pdf?ver=fX6FuWYT0s6z_LBQQMKuzw%3d%3d) pages 24 33, 39, 41 UNICEF also supported OPM to develop Spanish versions of the National Policy [http://opmgca.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/2021/Publications/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Infancia.pdf?ver=fX6FuWYT0s6z\\_LBQQMKuzw%3d%3d](http://opmgca.gov.tt/Portals/0/Documents/2021/Publications/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Infancia.pdf?ver=fX6FuWYT0s6z_LBQQMKuzw%3d%3d)

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.pdf.org/trinidad-tobago/>

**EQ16: How coherent were coordination mechanisms at the CO and Regional level?**

In T&T, coordination mechanisms appear to be coherent, or at least more so than in some other countries. The education and child protection working groups are the main coordination mechanism, led by UNICEF. Due to the small size of the operation and small number of partners, there is overlap between both working groups. A notable gap is the need for more active working group that takes into account access of children to health services.

Overall, at the level of coordination mechanisms a between partners appear to be coherent. The notable gap is in the information gathered and available to working group members. UNICEF CP's section carried out a 5W exercise<sup>95</sup> building the connection and coherence of partners actions in the sector. There is considerable overlap of participants between the education and CP WGs which may lead to some duplication in agenda items and repeated discussions in what are intended to be different fora. Overall, KIs noted a lack of focus on finding solutions to underlying problems, regarding them often as no more than box-ticking exercises. The ET is not aware of other WGs, but it has been suggested that the Health Working Group is barely functional and could require more support. UNICEF partners noted that it would be helpful for them to receive more training and to be more familiar with UNICEF standards, such as the CCCs and *The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*. Evidence on coordination mechanisms at the regional level has been gathered in Phase II of the evaluation.

Please refer to EQ9 and EQ 15 above for additional details

Coherence	
Strengths	Challenges
High good partnerships with key CSOs and government partners	Limited training on humanitarian modalities and standards/migration (CCCs and Global Proficiency Framework (GPF) for COM)
Coordination mechanisms exist and meetings are taking place	A gap is the level of analysis and information shared at the WGs. There is no information on case counts and areas of highest risk and prevalence of cases. A gap may exist in children's access to healthcare.

**8.5. Efficiency**

The evaluation of efficiency is guided by the overarching evaluation question: **To what extent has UNICEF delivered results with efficiency and timeliness?** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question. For a detailed timeline of the response in T&T, see Annex 15.

**EQ17: Were UNICEF strategies and programmatic interventions designed taking into account the activities, capacities and efficiencies of other UN agencies, local governments, central governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, private sector?**

**EQ18: When did coordination with national and local Governments, UN agencies and other major respondents avoid overlaps and bridge gaps? If any, what are the reasons for the gaps and what is needed to close them?**

In general, UNICEF's programmatic interventions were designed based on its own mandate, strategic partnerships, including those with UN, local government, central government, local government, civil society, and NGOs.

- UNICEF has generally been able to reduce duplication by working through a key partner shared with UNHCR (LWC). Some issues of duplication were detected that have been or should be easily corrected in the future. However, in a humanitarian situation like the VMC, it appears that gaps are unavoidable until UNICEF and other partners can develop more strategic, scalable approaches and attract needed donor

<sup>95</sup> Which organizations (Who) are carrying out which activities (What) in which locations (Where) in Which period (When) for which beneficiaries (Whom)

support.

- Information gathering and participatory assessments with IOM and UNHCR have helped ensure that UNICEF and other actors share common information about the needs and concerns of beneficiaries.
- UNICEF has been able to build efficiency and scalability through the innovation in blended online learning for children on the move. However, key gaps remain to identify an accredited curriculum for the primary level. CP and Education WG coordinated by UNICEF generally include the key partners, but UNICEF could be seeking to expand these circles: key players in CP are the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, National Security, but not local governments? Key new players in education for children on the move could be the World Bank, local government and other civil society groups?

KIs consider that the response overall has progressed a reasonable pace, but was slowed by the engagement, then departure of the two UNVs who occupied critical roles but for too short a time. Changing of key staff positions effectively slowed the progress, as did UNICEF's internal procedures for the disbursement of funds to partners. While the bones of a solid response are present and well-conceived, the scaling up of activities to meet the actual level of need has been far too slow. While UNICEF staff in T&T have acted with relative efficiency and effectiveness, they have not been given the institutional human and financial means to bring good ideas rapidly to scale.

Both in T&T and in other countries studies as part of this evaluation, the ET finds that there is a surprising level of acceptance/complacency regarding the pace of action on behalf of children's rights. It is time to sound some alarm bells. Both in the areas of CP and Education, children's rights are being violated and it is UNICEF's role to defend them. These include: rights not to be detained in police cell for multiple days; rights to a BID process before being deported or having one's parents deported without you and rights to a basic primary education. The fact that online schooling was in place since March 2020 but that the tablets needed to assist learners to access education online were only distributed in 2021, suggests a slow response to a clear and immediate need. The financial means to address such needs quickly must be sought near and far, among a larger range of donors – including the private sector.

A positive, but rather late development in 2021 was the development of an exchange of experiences with Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, which should be an ongoing feature of the regional response in the future.

In Phase II of this evaluation, interviews were directed at the Regional and Global level to deepen understanding of what the gaps in a regional level response were that hindered UNICEF's being better prepared for the massive exodus of 2018 and 2019, and the bringing to scale of responses in 2020 and 2021.

#### **UNICEF has worked hard to avoid duplication**

Overall, UNICEF's strategies and programmatic interventions have been designed to take into account the activities, capacities and efficiencies of other UN agencies, local governments, central government and CSOs. The ET has not detected significant areas for overlap, and it can be said that UNICEF has worked hard to avoid these and to ensure resources available are used rationally. A clear area of efficiency arose from the early decision for UNICEF to use the same implementing partner – LWC – as UNHCR. It appears from KIs that in the beginning there were some costs that may have been attributed by LWC to both UNHCR and UNICEF. Due to the close relationship established between UNICEF and UNHCR, these costs were sorted out. Due to limited funding by UNHCR in late 2020 it was agreed that UNICEF alone would cover expenses related to paying teachers' salaries, in order to avoid any duplication or double charging. Putting educational services online, according to UNHCR<sup>96</sup>, enabled Equal Place to grow by 37 per cent the number of children supported for the same cost. This is a clear efficiency and UNICEF should make the case for this to donors. This same formula needs to be applied for primary school students, as well as paving the way to access to vocational training and post-secondary learning for children on the move. As of April 2021, according to UNHCR<sup>97</sup>, 1,500 or 60 per cent of all of school age (5-17 years) in the country, remained without access to education. Furthermore, internet connectivity and cost of internet-enabled devices continue to be persistent gaps.

UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR have also collaborated to generate evidence and data, such as in the cooperation around the DTM studies carried out on a yearly basis.

#### **Need to better engage the private sector**

More could be done to engage the private sector – both within T&T – a relatively prosperous middle-income nation – and abroad. The donation of tablets, computers and other devices is a pressing need, as is the cost of data to

<sup>96</sup> UNCHR, T&T Factsheet, March 2021, available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86320>

<sup>97</sup> Ibidem.

enable learners to spend needed time online. In other COs, arrangements have been made with data providers, and perhaps this is something that could be pursued in T&T.

### Properly gauging the capacities of national government and other local actors

As highlighted above, there is a concern about UNICEF's ability to properly gauge the capacities of national CP actors such as the PMO's Gender and Children's Affairs, CATT and the Counter- trafficking Unit. According to one KI:

"If there is one positive out of this situation is that before, UNICEF may have assumed that there was more capacity in the national government institutions than actually exists. Now it is clear that the existing capacity is weak and UNICEF can do a lot to support this capacity, both for nationals and for children on the move.

While this may be correct, it is important for UNICEF to seek ways, through partners, that a temporary investment of new CP capacity be brought into play to avoid an unacceptable backlog of CP cases to be handled by national authorities.

Efficiency	
Strengths	Challenges
Effective partnerships with UNHCR on education and IOM on data collection and analysis on displacement monitoring.	
Accredited online learning for high school students provides good value for money, providing a scalable solution for more students without adding costs of classroom space, building maintenance and transport	The same model of blended learning can be applied to primary level. The cost of having children out of school for so long is simply too high
Continuing to pursue a partnership with UNHCR (and IOM, if possible, on CBI).	Risk that UNICEF might choose to go its own way on CBI, due to non-responsiveness of other partners. Experience in other countries shows that not coordinating with other partners can create a high risk of duplication and other inefficiencies.
Having a strong, experienced joint implementing partner with UNHCR in LWC. Having LWC as a shared partner with UNHCR allows both agencies to be aware of and reduce any overlapping costs and activities.	In some cases, having a partner that is so dominant can lead to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness if other partners are not allowed to do their work. UNICEF needs to mediate these relationships to get best value for money.
Integration of migration into overall humanitarian action within UNICEF and UN humanitarian architecture	Over the medium term, as the situation with Venezuelan migrants becomes protracted and it is recognised by UNICEF that children on the move is a theme that requires more attention. UNICEF at the highest level should discuss with the UN Secretary- General the longer-term plan for phasing out the R4V.

### 8.6. Connectedness

The evaluation of the connectedness of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***To what extent is UNICEF Colombia's response to the Venezuelan Outflow linked to other key institutional planning and policy processes?*** This section addresses how the *needs of the Venezuela migrant and refugee populations*

effectively being addressed by linking the two specific EQs formulated under this overarching question. The two EQs are answered together because they are related.

**Q19: How is the new country programme of UNICEF of ECA adjusted to the new context and needs of the Venezuela migrant and refugee populations effectively being addressed by linking the emergency response to longer-term development goals in each country? What are the difficulties, including opportunity costs, if any, encountered internally and externally (i.e., UNICEF internal structure and processes, donor requirements)?**

**Q20: To what extent has UNICEF adopted a whole-of-migration cycle approach which provides longer-term solutions for migrants, refugees and returnees including preparedness for new influxes, support to access social services in host countries as well as when returning and reintegrating in their home countries (the nexus)?**

- The response in T&T, for the time being, remains somewhat dissociated from the broader ambitions of the finalised ECA CPD. The ET team finds that this is a missed opportunity, since migration is here to stay in the ECA and region. UNICEF, at CO and regional level, could be better adapted to this reality, by integrating migration as a cross-cutting issue within all thematic or sectoral pillars.
- Preparedness for new and future migratory influxes has not increased over the prior covered by the VMC.

UNICEF ECA's new CPD integrates migration only under one, and perhaps the most unlikely component, which is that on social protection. Perhaps this is the main and most important route to reach UNICEF's broader objectives within such sectors as education, health and nutrition. However, the ET suggests that it would be worthwhile outlining some key objectives related to migration under the two other key sectors. Regarding CP and education, there are no practical outputs related to changes in the legal status or access to rights and services of children on the move. This is clearly a missed opportunity. Furthermore, an analysis of UNICEF's EPP entries for 2018 and 2021 for the ECA has flagged the risk of a number of natural hazards, but has twice overlooked the evident possibility of a migration crisis similar to the one currently experienced in T&T.

UNICEF ECA in T&T has not really adopted a whole-of-migration cycle approach- For it has limited monitoring capacity to follow migrants from the point of arrival to settlement, to their possible return to Venezuela or onward movement. Given the current government stance, and current staffing and resourcing, UNICEF would need to take a very different approach to make inroads on facilitating access to social services, including associating itself with larger partners, such as the World Bank, which might have more influence with decision makers.

Connectedness	
Strengths	Challenges
Migration and children on the move are acknowledge as issues in the CDP of the ECA	This could feature more prominently as a cross cutting, it is not just an issue for social protection, but one that should be considered also under the education and CP pillars.
	UNICEF in ECA needs to develop preparedness for future population movements through exploring what a route-based approach would look like in T&T and what resource requirements would be to implement it.

## 9. Conclusions, good practices and lessons learned

The case study has responded to the EQs based on the evidence obtained in the relevant documents, from key informants and affected populations as well as secondary data available. The report highlights for each EQ some strength sand challenges to facilitate identification of the issues at stake. We propose here a number of

conclusions, grounded in the findings reported above, and organised around the evaluation criteria, that should as a basis for justifying recommendations. We will follow the evaluation criteria to understand the rationale and the supporting evidence in the report. In this section, if relevant, we will mention the coherence of the analyses carried out with the theory constructed in the inception phase, the ToC for the T&T case study (in Annex 5).

The challenges facing UNICEF in T&T are fully understandable when taken in the context of the limited funding that has been made available for the response, which has itself been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic and related public health restrictions that have impacted both the economy, and pace of work and the ability to engage with the broader community on child rights and protection issues. As has been done in other country case studies, it is important to note that when it comes to the delivery of the humanitarian response, time is of the essence. With the aim of alleviating human suffering, rights violations and protection risks, it is important that UNICEF, with partners and donors, seek ways to step up the pace of interventions and support all partners towards achieving short-, medium- and longer-term results for children. Effective system strengthening is not about sacrificing the short term only to focus on longer term but about developing strategies that recognise where gaps exist and how which partners need to be brought on board to fill them while planning for the future. This may involve bringing in additional staffing or partners to support government agencies to overcome key bottlenecks affecting both national as well as migrant and asylum seeker children. Here a thorough mapping of the CP workforce and broader CP system, as well as gender inequalities and vulnerabilities, would be an invaluable tool to understand which supports could temporarily be used to facilitate better results for children.

### **Appropriateness**

Despite a long history of migration between T&T and Venezuela, UNICEF ECA was unprepared for the arrival of the 2018-2019 VMC on its doorstep. In terms of preparedness and in 2018, UNICEF ECA had not identified migration as key risk factor in T&T and the region, nor did it do so when it updated the EPP in 2021. UNICEF was not appropriately equipped to identify and quickly bring on board IPs with expertise on migration trained on UNICEF's CCCs and other minimum requirements. UNICEF ECA lost some time at a cost to children by not being prepared for the VMC, and then by not having a clear reading of the government's attitude and approach to it.

Despite this, and with limited resources and with unclear messaging from THE national government, UNICEF ECA in T&T has moved ahead to put in place the outline of what is an appropriately designed response, built around UNICEF's mandate and the core competencies of other UN and civil society partners. While the operation still has a long way to go to ensure coverage and address gender issues, the key design elements of the CP and Education strategies, the early effort to bring key services online, was very fortuitous when the L3 COVID-19 Response was declared in March 2020.

In particular, UNICEF ECA in T&T has developed a culture of direct consultation with beneficiaries, including children and their families, and has endeavoured to integrate some of the information gathered directly into both the content and form of communications with the migrant community. This is considered a good practice to be shared with other COs in the region who tend to see UNICEF more at arms' length from the population served.

T&T, more than other COs, has been listening to affected populations and facilitating a number of FGDs and surveys to understand and address their needs. Yet despite the interest of staff in being more engaged with children on the move and their families, and local investment in direct consultation, it is recognised that UNICEF's broader institutional processes do not favour flexibility and lack the pragmatism to change programme interventions based on beneficiary feedback.

In terms of ToCs UNICEF ECA has identified on-going migration-related work within its new CPD related to inclusion of migrants within social protection mechanisms.

### **Effectiveness**

The L3 COVID-19 Public Health Emergency public health emergency significantly affected UNICEF's ability to deliver on results in the short term. In T&T CFS which were a key platform for delivering all kinds of services to children, including education, were closed for nearly two years. Nonetheless, the ET finds that UNICEF's work in 2018 and 2019 to respond to the needs of secondary learners by bringing online curricula that would lead to a formal accreditation and a high school leaving certificate constitutes a good practice within the region. The gap that urgently needs to be addressed is that for primary learners who do not always learn well online.

On CP, the ET finds that a good practice in 2019 was the opening of ten CFS which provided much-needed entry points for a range of programmes needed by children on the move and their families. This has been complemented in 2022 by the addition of Roving CFS which can help meet needs of migrant and local children in remote and rural



areas. However, the ET finds that there has been inadequate coordination between partners to ensure that each partner can be effective in working within the shared physical and online spaces of the CFS.

A second good practice has been the inclusion of mental health in-person and online counselling services provided by Childline, webinars for parents during COVID-19 pandemic. However, the ET notes limited uptake of these services due to lack of communications/awareness and lack of field presence where children and families are most vulnerable in remote and rural areas.

A good practice over the period was that initial work begun to develop a BID process and a panel and put in place for referral pathways and training for foster carers taking Venezuelan children into their homes. However, urgent attention is need to the situation of children who may be in detention, for children who are UASC or whose parents have been deported without them. Another good practice during the period has been efforts to bring online a CP IMS for CAAT. However, timeliness again is an issue. C4D has played a positive role identifying needed communications challenges and messages on topics that are needed and useful to beneficiaries.

UNICEF M&E has an effective M&E system in place for tracking progress towards HAC targets. However, there have been frequent changes in indicators and some indicators are not strongly linked to sector results. This has led to difficulties in assessing progress towards results in the short or longer term. M&E could be making a greater contribution through developing a programme of impact evaluations as a basis for scaling up of programmes for children on the move .It could also aid in grounding AAP within the organisation through establishing stronger feedback loops between UNICEF and beneficiaries. In ECA, there is demonstrable interest and experience in the use of participatory methods and beneficiary-based consultations. These could be brought to bear to strengthen M&E.

### **Coverage**

As with other COs, coverage has been a major issue in T&T. On the positive side, in education and through the CFS, as well as through the MyChild HelpLine app, UNICEF is developing models that have the potential to be highly scalable. UNICEF continues to utilise the network of community centres and services which part of the Catholic Church network. These constitute good practices. While these models are promising they are not yet providing coverage at scale. UNICEF and R4V partners need to find the means to bring key services to scale, particularly in terms of coverage of primary school education. Coverage is intimately linked with UNICEF fundraising capacity for the VMC and for children on the move. UNICEF's role in CP system strengthening has the potential to increase coverage, but not in the short term. For existing state capacity is weak and additional partners need to be brought on board to boost it.

### **Coherence and coordination**

The coherence of the response has been enhanced through high quality partnerships with key civil society and government partners. The EWG and CPWG are functioning although KIs find these need to be more strategic and solutions oriented. There is a sense that these groups lack the clear sense of urgency needed in a humanitarian response. There has been limited training of partners on humanitarian modalities and standards/migration (CCCs and GPF for COM). Partners are not familiar with the CCCs and other key UNICEF policies for children on the move. A significant gap is the level of analysis and information shared at the WGs. It is regrettable there is, no information on case counts nor information about out- of-school children and how to reach them. UNICEF's lack of field presence is seen to be a major challenge. A gap exists in terms of children on the move's access to healthcare.

### **Efficiency**

UNICEF ECA has been mindful to use resources efficiently and to avoid duplication. Partnerships with UNHCR on education and with IOM on data collection and analysis on displacement monitoring are respectful of agencies mandates. Accredited online learning for high school students provides good value for money, offering a scalable solution for more students without adding costs of classroom space, building maintenance and transport. The same model of blended learning can be applied at primary level. The cost of having children out of school for so long is simply too high.

On CBI, UNICEF has pursued, and should continue to pursue, a partnership with UNHCR (and IOM if possible)). Evidence from other country case studies suggests that there are CBI efficiencies to be gained where key collaborate on intervention modalities to the largest extent possible. While the delays caused are regrettable there is a risk that UNICEF might choose to go its own way on CBI, due to non-responsiveness of other partners. Experience in other countries shows that not coordinating with other partners can create a high risk of duplication and other inefficiencies.

A good practice has been having a strong, experienced joint implementing partner with UNHCR in LWC. Having LWC as a shared partner with UNHCR allows both agencies to be aware of and reduce any overlapping costs and activities. However, in some cases, having a partner that is so dominant can lead to inefficiencies and ineffectiveness if other partners are not allowed to do their work.

### Connectedness

The question of how to integrate migration into overall humanitarian action within UNICEF and UN humanitarian architecture has become more salient with the protracted nature of the VMC. UNICEF recognises that children on the move is a theme that requires more attention. The agency is also commended for acknowledging the need for a strong link between UNICEF advocacy strategies and evidence which) seek to address xenophobia and violence against women, men and child migrants.

## 10. Recommendations

Recommendations are the result of the findings and conclusions of the evaluation process, and the ones retained below related with the ECA Country Office have been elaborated and validated through a participatory workshop with UNICEF ECA.

Recommendations
<p><b>Recommendation 1 on AAP</b></p> <p>UNICEF at LACRO and UNICEF ECA levels should invest at the outset of any migratory influx (emergency) in direct consultations with children on the move, their families, host communities and local governments as a basis for planning and programme design.</p> <p>As the emergency continues, UNICEF should regularly engage in community consultations to support routine programme monitoring and gain first-hand information about real needs, vulnerabilities and priorities of children, adolescents and families on the move.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2 on Emergency Preparedness</b></p> <p>As part of emergency preparedness, UNICEF ECA should invest in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhanced planning scenarios for Children on the Move ( COM) (EPP)</li> <li>- Mapping of Emergency response capacities and relevant migration-aware organisations</li> <li>- Identify gaps in training needs of staff and partners on the CCCs and <i>The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move</i>.</li> <li>- Ensure that staff and partner training addresses the issue of staff turnover.</li> <li>- MPS review (such as staff, partners and supplies.)</li> <li>- consider a process for prequalification of partners on migration issues.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 3 on multi-year programming</b></p> <p>In terms of the new MPCD, UNICEF ECA should review whether migration should be treated as a cross-cutting issue. The current positioning of migration within the MCPD could be reviewed in the Annual Workplan, taking an intersectoral approach to enhance access of children on the move to key public services.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4 on Partnerships</b></p> <p>It is recommended that UNICEF engage more actively to reduce tensions and build synergies between its IPs. Now that CFS are reopened, ensure that all partners can work effectively together and deliver needed services.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5 on Gender Focus</b></p> <p>UNICEF ECA should align the response with UNICEF's <i>Gender Action Plan</i>. Given that xenophobic attitudes and sexual harassment particularly affect Venezuelan women and girls, it would be important to work with Government and women's and girls' organisations in T&amp;T to change social norms and stereotypes through a clear gender-focused campaign.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6 on Engagement, Evidence Generation and Advocacy</b></p> <p>UNICEF ECA should develop a SMART advocacy and communication strategy to influence policies and attitudes towards children on the move and their families in T&amp;T. This should include both children on the move and children born to migrant parents.</p>

It should address the prevalence of violence against migrants, xenophobic attitudes and rights to healthcare and education for migrant children), utilising evidence gathered through the KAP study, U-Reports and any other mechanisms used to highlight community voices.