

# Formative Evaluation of the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme 2017-2021

Final Report

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Prepared for // UNICEF LACRO/ECA

By // IOD PARC

Date // 14 July 2021

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## ACRONYMS

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ACT      | Advocacy Capacity Tool   |
| ALNAP    | Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance                 |
| CARICOM  | Caribbean Community  |
| CDB      | Caribbean Development Bank   |
| CDEMA    | Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency                             |
| CEDAW    | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CMCO     | Conditional Movement Control Order   |
| CRC      | Convention on the Rights of the Child                                      |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease 2019   |
| CPE      | Country Programme Evaluation   |
| CPMP     | Country Programme Management Plan  |
| CRPD     | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities                      |
| CSEC     | Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate                                  |
| CWI      | Cricket West Indies  |
| DFID     | Department for International Development (UK)                              |
| DRR      | Disaster risk reduction  |
| EAPRO    | East Asia and Pacific Regional Office                                      |
| ECA      | Eastern Caribbean Area   |
| ECD      | Early Childhood Development  |
| ECPAT    | End Child Prostitution and Trafficking                                     |
| ECSC     | Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court  |
| EMG      | Evaluation Management Group  |
| ERG      | Evaluation Reference Group   |
| ERIC     | Ethical Research Involving Children  |
| ESRC     | Economic and Social Research Council                                       |
| EU       | European Union   |
| FCO      | Foreign and Commonwealth Office  |
| FGD      | Focus Group Discussion   |
| GDP      | Gross Domestic Product   |
| GEEW     | Gender equality and empowerment of women                                   |
| GEROS    | Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System                                 |
| GESI     | Gender and social inclusion  |
| GNI      | Gross National Income  |
| GPR      | Gender Programmatic Review   |
| GSHS     | Global School-Based Health Survey  |
| HDI      | Human Development Index  |
| IAWGCP   | Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation                     |
| ILO      | International Labor Organization   |
| IMF      | International Monetary Fund  |
| IOM      | International Organization for Migration                                   |
| IFRC     | International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies           |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| IPV      | Intimate partner violence   |
| IRB      | Internal Review Board   |
| IT       | Information technology  |
| ITU      | International Telecommunication Union   |
| JECT     | Joint Emergency Cash Transfer   |
| KII      | Key informant interview   |
| LACRO    | (UNICEF) Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office                                    |
| LWC      | Living Water Community  |
| MCP      | Multi-Country Programme   |
| M-CPD    | Multi-Country Programme Document  |
| M-CPE    | Multi-Country Programme Evaluation  |
| MEL      | Monitoring, evaluation, learning  |
| OECD/DAC | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee |
| OECS     | Organization of Eastern Caribbean States  |
| PAHO     | Pan-American Health Organization  |
| PWD      | Persons with disabilities   |
| QA       | Quality assurance   |
| RF       | Regulatory Framework  |
| SAMOA    | Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action                         |
| SDG      | Sustainable Development Goal  |
| SIDS     | Small Island Developing States  |
| SMART    | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely                                     |
| SMR      | Strategic Moment of Reflection  |
| SNA      | Social network analysis   |
| SP       | Social Protection   |
| ToC      | Theory of Change  |
| UK       | United Kingdom  |
| UN       | United Nations  |
| UNCT     | United Nations Country Team   |
| UNCRC    | UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  |
| UNDAF    | United Nations Development Assistance Framework   |
| UNDP     | United Nations Development Programme  |
| UNECLAC  | United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean                  |
| UNEG     | United Nations Evaluation Group   |
| UNESCO   | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization                        |
| UNFPA    | United Nations Population Fund  |
| UNHCR    | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees   |
| UNICEF   | United Nations Children's Fund  |
| UN-MSDF  | United Nations Caribbean Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework                |
| UNRCO    | United Nations Resident Coordinator Office  |
| UNSDCF   | UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework  |
| UNWOMEN  | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women                  |
| US       | United States   |
| USAID    | United States Agency for International Development                                      |

|      |                                  |
|------|----------------------------------|
| USD  | United States Dollar             |
| VAWG | Violence against women and girls |
| VPN  | Virtual Private Network          |
| WB   | World Bank                       |
| WFP  | World Food Programme             |
| WHO  | World Health Organization        |



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and context

The 12 countries and territories<sup>1</sup> covered by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA) Office are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) comprising about 2.3 million people, of which 27 per cent are children. All 12 of these countries and territories are classified as high or upper-middle-income and as 'very high' and 'high' on the Human Development Index (HDI). Most countries in the sub-region carry a high debt burden. Public debt reduces state spending on essential public services, which is further exacerbated by the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

### Evaluation Object

The object of the evaluation was the 2017-2021 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme (MCP). It covered 12 countries and territories in the sub-region, with an overall budget of about USD 40 million.

The 2017-2021 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean MCP has been developed in alignment with the UN Caribbean Multi-country Strategic Development Framework (UN-MSDF) 2017-2021 priorities: (a) an inclusive, equitable and prosperous Caribbean; (b) a safe, cohesive and just Caribbean; and (c) a sustainable and resilient Caribbean. The programme is defined in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and national and regional frameworks.

The overall goal of the 2017-2021 MCP was "an Eastern Caribbean where no child lives in poverty, all children achieve minimum academic qualifications in a quality, protective and resilient learning environment and free from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse." Three outcomes were designed to contribute to this goal:

- By 2021, 10% more children and adolescents, particularly boys, access equitable, healthy, safe and protective learning environments in development and humanitarian contexts
- 30% more vulnerable and poor households – particularly female-headed and large households - have access to quality social services
- All girls and boys (in and outside humanitarian situations) grow up healthy, resilient and benefit from improved parenting practices and strengthened child protection systems

There was an unequivocal UNICEF ECA demand to revisit the UNICEF M-CPD, including its achievements, but also its ability to adapt and flex to unexpected contextual changes, whether climate change, migration or the COVID-19 pandemic, among other, inevitable crises, including health crises. The recent eruption of the Soufriere volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is only one example of these challenges. There is great emphasis now also on "building back better," increasing the resilience of the SIDS to inevitable future challenges.

### Evaluation Purpose, Objectives, Scope and Intended Audiences

The purpose of this M-CPE was to support UNICEF learning efforts in enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF programmes in the Eastern Caribbean Area (ECA), particularly by informing the development of the next Multi-Country Programme 2022-2026.

The objectives of the evaluation were as follows:

- To assess the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the 2017-2021 UNICEF, MCPD and implementation with a particular focus on relevance and connectedness and a formative and forward-looking focus on the current and evolving ECA context.
- To take stock of the progress made towards the attainment of the development and humanitarian results, including effects in addressing disparities and inequities; and identify the most effective implementation strategies and partnerships for UNICEF ECA to adopt for the next phase of programme development.
- To determine how UNICEF can most effectively position itself, build on its comparative advantage, and provide specific recommendations to improve the design and relevance of the 2022-2026 MCP in the ECA and UN-MSDCF.

The evaluation Terms of Reference served as the basis for the thematic, geographic and chronological aspects of the scope of work. This included its three main components, with a deeper dive into the issues of child protection, violence and resilience, as well as the UNICEF hurricane and migration response, also in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. While the MCP generally aimed to implement the identified priorities and components across the 12 countries and territories, the evaluation also identified specific case studies on the selected themes described above, in three chosen countries, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, as well as Trinidad and Tobago. It covered three and a half years of the MCP, from the beginning of the current MCP and UN-MSDF to April 2021.

The primary audience of the evaluation was UNICEF ECA Multi-Country Office (MCO) and UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), with interest also from UNICEF HQ, UNICEF donors, and other UN agencies, as well as the sub-regional organizations, governments and civil society organizations implementing related interventions in the 12 countries and territories.

### Methodology

The design of the evaluation was non-experimental and theory based, applying contribution analysis and utilization focused, participatory mixed-methods that included both quantitative and qualitative data in assessing the effectiveness of the UNICEF MCP approaches adopted in the current programme cycle against their intended aims. The formative aspect of the evaluation allowed for conclusions to be drawn on the MCP conceptual framework and UNICEF's Theory of Change (ToC) related to how MCP would achieve the goals they were intended for. The theory-based approach was further strengthened by describing similar interventions, notably child protection and disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago. The selected case study themes particularly explored the adaptation and flexibility of the MCP to intransigent problems such as violence and the increasingly frequent crises facing the region.

The evaluation relied substantially on secondary data sources, where these were made available to the evaluation team. Primary data collection methods enhanced existing data or covered identified gaps and priorities and included the following:

- Perception survey (e-survey)
- Key informant interviews (KIIs)
- Group interviews

Overall, the evaluation sought to improve data quality through the triangulation of findings. This evaluation was conducted remotely in a context of restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Key Findings

**Evaluation question 1:** To what extent did the MCP objectives (including any adjustment of objectives) and UNICEF-supported interventions remain appropriate and relevant to the changing circumstances in the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries and territories?

**Main findings:** While the original MCP objectives and outcomes were well aligned with both sub-regional and the priorities of the supported countries and territories, based on document review, e-survey and interview data, to a degree, they had to be set-aside to due to the need to react to the sudden-onset disasters, whether hurricanes, COVID-19 or most recently, the volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The MCP was able to adapt and flex to both the specific national priorities of supported countries and territories, as well as to the more immediate needs imposed by these disasters, but the nexus between developmental and humanitarian work is not yet fully integrated, based on a review of the MCP TOC and interviews.

**Evaluation question 2:** To what extent did the MCP objectives (including any adjustment of objectives) and UNICEF-supported interventions remain appropriate and relevant to the needs of children and young people, especially the most marginalized?

**Main findings:** While the MCP prioritized addressing the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable children, UNICEF relied primarily on governments to identify these populations (with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago) and major data gaps existed on identifying the poorest and especially 'invisible' or 'unaccounted' children, based on a review of poverty data, as well as interviews. The COVID-19 crisis has generated a new group of marginalized children, but again with limited data.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium (Low on disability)

**Evaluation question 3:** What are the major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of the MCP outputs? (e.g. (a) external factors - political, social, economic; (b) internal factors – implementation model/structure, quantity, quality, timeliness of delivery). What influence did these factors have on achievement (or not) of MCP outcomes?

### Main findings:

Progress on original MCP outcomes is mixed, based particularly on UNICEF ECA project monitoring and reporting data. Primarily this was due to the need to recurrently redirect resources to crisis management, but also due to the highly ambitious and comprehensive MCP, which was not fully aligned with the means of UNICEF ECA, as indicated through consultations with UNICEF ECA staff in particular. More progress was made in outcome areas, namely in life-long learning that utilized the full suite of UNICEF strategies, including evidence-based advocacy for policy change, communication strategies to influence behavior change and actual service provision, over a long time period. While some progress was made in the promotion of child protection legislation, actual implementation was constrained by institutional capacity, as well as deeply entrenched norms that held-back the behavior change required. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) demonstrated that the influence of evidence alone on government strategies and policies was more mixed, with a particular weakness identified in influencing public expenditure for children. While tracking public expenditure for children was a key indicator in the MCP results framework, related data was not systematically collected and analyzed. Generally, monitoring and evaluation, especially data quality remained a concern across the main outcome areas, with limited adaptation made to these efforts despite the major challenges posed by the recurrent crises in the region.

(See below for main findings in the three MCP components)

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

**Main findings:**

*Education*

Progress on original MCP learning outcomes was mixed, based namely on OECS education statistics from the sub-region, due to the need to shift attention and human resources to disaster response, according to interviews.

Further progress was made on the availability and quality of early childhood development and positive behavioral management, the former employing the full suite of UNICEF strategies, from policy advocacy to the actual provision of related services, but no effect has yet been felt on school retention rates, especially of more marginalized boys, based on a review of OECS data, the e-survey and interviews.

While initiatives beyond ECD and positive behavioral management may have responded to real government needs, they were more piece-meal, based on a review of UNICEF ECA reporting.

**Strength of Evidence:** High

**Main findings:**

*Child protection*

While UNICEF has a unique mandate and clear value proposition on the promotion of child protection, there has been limited progress in reducing child abuse and violence against children, based on available data on related cases. While some progress has been made on legislation (e.g. in Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago), actual implementation is constrained by institutional capacity, as well as deeply entrenched norms in the small communities, based on interviews.

In addition to promoting related policy change, UNICEF ECA has particularly utilized communications for development to promote related awareness among children, youth, caregivers and the broader population, based on UNICEF ECA reporting and interviews. There are particular challenges related to the time required for awareness raising to influence behavior and underlying norms, as well as measurement issues with assessing related behavior change.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

**Main findings:**

*Social inclusion and child rights monitoring*

The flagship data UNICEF data product has been the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), though its influence, along with other produced data and evidence on government strategies and policies is more mixed, based on interview data. UNICEF advocacy for the increase of public expenditure for children is a particular weakness, with also no data regularly gathered on related government commitments by UNICEF ECA. UNICEF has been extending its mandate into social protection, especially through the use of its DRR support as a catalyst for broader policy reform (e.g. British Virgin Islands, Dominica) but its mandate and added-value, also in relation to that of other UN agencies remains less clear, based on other evaluations and interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

**Evaluation question 4:** What is UNICEF's added value in the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries/territories – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies? Are these strengths a result of UNICEF corporate features or are they specific to the multi-country Office?

**Main findings:**

The M-CPD and ToC did not sufficiently capture UNICEF added-value, especially the interlinkages and synergies between upstream and downstream approaches and between inside-track and outside track advocacy; the latter being closely linked to the UNICEF established "brand" and excellent communications, which are among its global assets, based on the e-survey and interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

**Evaluation question 5:** To what extent were meaningful partnerships or coordination mechanisms established with other key actors e.g. government at national and local levels, civil society, NGOs, academia, other UN agencies etc. to avoid duplication of efforts, miscommunication and clearer accountabilities?

**Main findings:**

While relationships and partnerships were well established with government and other UN agencies, they were not yet fostered with all potential like-minded organizations (e.g. donors, international financial institutions (IFIs), civil society organizations, private sector), based on the e-survey, whether for joint advocacy (e.g. to review structural challenges in data, government budgets, government capacity and implementation challenges, quality of services) or for leveraging additional funding, including more innovative financing solutions.

UNICEF is committed to UN reform and joint programming (e.g. COVID-19 response), though roles and operating procedures are not always fully clear, especially in relation to requirements imposed on implementing partners, based namely on interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

**Evaluation question 6:** To what extent have UNICEF cross sectoral strategies (capacity building, evidence generation, communication, advocacy, Innovation, South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships, gender and climate change) enhanced the potential for government replication and scalability in the future? What are the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the UNICEF programme?

**Main findings:** UNICEF ECA has emphasized the promotion of systemic change in legislative and policy frameworks, with a view to generating sustainability, though there has been less measurable effect on public expenditure in its core intervention areas. Implementation of policy reforms remains a major challenge. The sustainability of UNICEF interventions over time is a major concern. Both sustainability and scale require working through national systems and committing government resources. UNICEF ECA is well-placed, with its close government relationships to catalyze related reforms, but too frequently they are still limited to individual, finite project interventions or to working with the same, government counterparts (e.g. at the ministries for education and social affairs). Likewise, monitoring and evaluation still remains oriented to ensuring accountability of individual projects or programmes.

The mainstreaming of gender, youth and climate change are also critical sustainability factors and have been insufficiently integrated into the MCP.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium

**Evaluation Question 7:** To what extent did UNICEF respond effectively to emergencies during the period being evaluated (measured against the benchmarks set in the Humanitarian Action for Children and Response Plan)?

**Main findings:** Work on DRR was effective in partnership, notably with CDEMA, among other humanitarian actors. The focus was on the initial emergency response, notably on psychosocial recovery, safe schools, including critical pedagogical and recreational materials, access to information on good hygiene, safety and protection, as well as cash-transfer schemes, based on related evaluation, reporting, the perception survey and interviews. However, as demonstrated by the Child Friendly Spaces for migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago, frequently emergency measures were not sustainable over time and required more systemic reform, in this case, for the government to change its policy and admit migrant children into the regular public school system.

**Strength of evidence:** High

**Evaluation Question 8:** To what extent is Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) mainstreamed in UNICEF's multi-country programme?

**Main findings:** DRR and the MCP did not fully incorporate the humanitarian and development nexus, based on document review, e-survey and interview data.

**Strength of evidence:** High

**Evaluation Question 9:** How can UNICEF ECA ensure that its response to COVID-19 is anchored coherently within its longer-term program in the next M-CPD?

**Main findings:** While the initial focus of the COVID-19 response was on life-saving awareness raising about hygiene measures, as well as support for distance learning, a number of issues will remain longer term concerns, such as the longer-term implications for the newly and most vulnerable children and social protection for a much larger portion of the population, as a result of the pandemic. While topics such as blended learning have received a lot of attention, immediate needs, such as addressing inevitable learning gaps, especially for the most vulnerable who did not have access to digital devices and distance learning opportunities need to be addressed; also in the context of already existing gender differences in school retention rates.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium

The findings of the MCP-E reflect both evidence on the accountability for the performance of the previous MCP, as well as providing useful lessons-learned for the M-CPD currently under development. The main, overall conclusions are outlined below. Ultimately, these conclusions and the recommendations in the final section should support the design of the next M-CPD.

## Recommendations

| Priority ranking # | Recommendation   | Responsibility                                 |
|--------------------|--|--|
|                    | <b>Design of the next MCP</b>  |  |
| <b>1</b>           | <p>Define clearer, more specific and achievable objectives, with a focus on advocacy for policy change, in a limited number of geographies and themes, along with a related results framework in the new MCP reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNICEF's specific added-value on ECD and more resilient education, reduced violence and child protection, in line with a sound theory of change, resources and capacity to consolidate VAC</li> <li>- proportionality and relative size of problems faced, population of children and size of countries and territories (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago).</li> <li>- flexibility in related change pathways, including the use of both service delivery and advocacy for sustained impact</li> <li>- Leveraging of partnerships e.g. CDEMA, Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), IFRC, donors, EU/ECHO, relevant UN agencies, as well as civil society organizations; particularly in the identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families, including those with developmental delays and disabilities.</li> </ul> | UNICEF ECA, UNICEF LACRO, UN agencies, UN RCOs |
| <b>2</b>           | There is a need to improve the humanitarian-development nexus, to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency   | UNICEF ECA                                     |

|          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
|          | <p>nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.</p> <p>For the next MCP it is critical for UNICEF ECA to understand their 'value addition in this critical area and to further embed this through developing clear pathways from the desired developmental outcomes back to the current humanitarian situation and needs Applying a clear 'resilience lens' to the development of objectives, pathways and activities as well as monitoring indicators will be critical to support this.</p> |  |
|          | <b>During implementation of the next MCP</b>   |  |
| <b>3</b> | <p>Greater realism and prioritization in the engagement of countries and territories, while ensuring greater opportunities for in-country engagement, whether through the UN system, strengthening local presence or responsibilities for individual countries and territories in the ECA team.</p>  | <p>UNICEF ECA,<br/>UNICEF LACRO,<br/>UN system</p> |
| <b>4</b> | <p>Integrate multi-sector programming, a greater focus on advocacy for systemic change and the humanitarian-development nexus into UNICEF ECA operational modalities, including structures, procedures (e.g. more adaptive programming and flexible, learning oriented monitoring, evaluation and learning) and staff competencies and technical skills required.</p>  | <p>UNICEF ECA,<br/>UNICEF LACRO</p>                |



## 1. EASTERN CARIBBEAN AREA (ECA) CONTEXT

Multi Country Programme Evaluations (M-CPEs) in UNICEF fulfil a key role in identifying lessons which can inform the design of the next Country Programme Document (CPD).

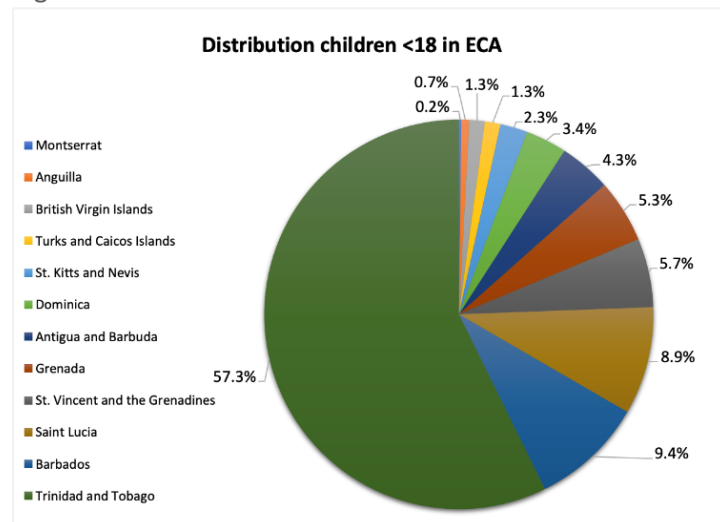
UNICEF's M-CPE 2017-2021 and the reasoning behind UNICEF's approach in the ECA region and aligned with overall goal- The overall goal of the 2017-2021 MCP is "an Eastern Caribbean where no child lives in poverty, all children achieve minimum academic qualifications in a quality, protective and resilient learning environment and free from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse".

The MCP-E of UNICEF interventions in Eastern Caribbean (ECA) region was identified by the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNICEF LACRO) as a priority in its 2017-2021 Management Plan (see Terms of Reference in Annex 1). The evidence and learning from MCP-E are expected to contribute to the work of UNICEF, partners and allies in the framework of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 1.1 SOCIAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT RELATED TO CHILD PROTECTION IN ECA REGION

The 12 countries and territories<sup>1</sup> covered by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ECA Office are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) comprising about 2.3 million people, of which 27 per cent are children. The largest portion of these children live in Trinidad and Tobago (57.3 per cent).

Figure 1: Distribution of children in the UNICEF ECA



Source: UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)<sup>1</sup>

All 12 of these countries and territories are classified as high or upper-middle-income, with a 2019 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita between US\$ 7,463 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to US\$ 48,511 in the British Virgin Islands.

<sup>1</sup> Eight independent countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago and four British overseas territories, namely, Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.



Eastern Caribbean countries are also classified as 'very high' and 'high' on the Human Development Index (HDI), ranging from 58 (Barbados) to 103 (Dominica) out of 189 countries; and this has been the case for the last decade.<sup>2</sup> Most of the islands are dependent on the tourism sector or commodities (e.g. oil and gas in Trinidad and Tobago). Trinidad and Tobago have the largest economy and population, and largest percentage of children in the region. The British Virgin Islands have the highest GDP per capita, while Dominica is one of the poorest and most vulnerable islands in the region.

Key socio-economic indicators are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Selected socio-economic indicators for 12 countries and territories**

|    | Country/<br>Territory                  | Population <sup>3</sup> | Child<br>Population<br>Percentage<br>of total <sup>4</sup> | HDI<br>Ranking<br>(out of<br>189) <sup>5</sup> | GDP<br>(USD<br>Current<br>prices,<br>2019) <sup>6</sup> | GDP<br>Per capita<br>(USD,<br>2019) <sup>7</sup> | GDP growth<br>(annual per cent<br>2019) <sup>8</sup> |
|----|--|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| 1  | Anguilla                               | 13,555                  | 27.9%  | -  | 313<br>million  | 21,068   | 5%   |
| 2  | Antigua and<br>Barbuda                 | 84,760                  | 29.2%  | 74   | 1.728<br>billion  | 17,790   | 4.7%   |
| 3  | Barbados                               | 226,193                 | 23.8%  | 56   | 5.209<br>billion  | 18,148   | -0.1%  |
| 4  | British Virgin<br>Islands              | 28,054                  | 26.3%  | -  | 1.5<br>billion  | 49,974   | 2.1%   |
| 5  | Dominica                               | 69,246                  | 28.6%  | 98   | 596<br>million  | 8,300  | 5.7%   |
| 6  | Grenada                                | 105,508                 | 28.8%  | 78   | 1.2<br>billion  | 10,966   | 3.1%   |
| 7  | Montserrat                             | 4,775                   | 24.6%  | -  | 67<br>million   | 13,352   | 3.0%   |
| 8  | Saint Kitts<br>and Nevis               | 47,195                  | 27.6%  | 73   | 1.1<br>billion  | 19,896   | 2.5%   |
| 9  | Saint Lucia                            | 172,874                 | 39.8%  | 89   | 2.1<br>billion  | 11,611   | 1.7%   |
| 10 | Saint Vincent<br>and the<br>Grenadines | 108,188                 | 30.4%  | 94   | 811<br>million  | 7,464  | 0.3%   |
| 11 | Trinidad and<br>Tobago                 | 1,327,367               | 24.9%  | 63   | 24.1<br>billion   | 17,276   | 0.0%   |
| 12 | Turks and<br>Caicos<br>Islands         | 30,556                  | 24.6%  | -  | 1.1<br>billion  | 28,146   | 2.9%   |

Source: UNICEF Situation Analysis 2019, UNICEF. Country Office Annual Report 2019, Eastern Caribbean MCP - (2019 Report UNDP HDI data 2019, The World Bank 2020

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Development Programme. 2019 Human Development Index Ranking (2019)

<sup>6</sup> The World Bank. GDP (current US\$) Indicator (2020) and UNCTAFSTAT. Country Profiles (2020)

<sup>7</sup> The World Bank. GDP (current US\$) Indicator (2020) and UNCTAFSTAT. Country Profiles (2020)

<sup>8</sup> The World Bank. GDP (current US\$) Indicator (2020) and UNCTAFSTAT. Country Profiles (2020)

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the sub-region enjoyed a relatively stable Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 2.2 per cent, fueled by reconstruction activity in post-2017 hurricane countries, robust performance of the tourism sector, and positive developments in main trading partner countries (Canada, United Kingdom (UK) and United States). Dominica, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Turks and Caicos Islands and Grenada experienced the highest growth rate during this period. Exceptions were Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, which experienced tepid economic growth at 0.1 and 0 per cent, respectively<sup>9</sup>.

Most countries in the sub-region carry a high debt burden. Except for the UK Overseas Territories and St. Kitts and Nevis, the debt-to-GDP ratio in 2019 was above the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 60 per cent, and Barbados' ratio was especially high, at above 120 per cent. Barbados developed the 'Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Programme' to address its economic crisis<sup>10</sup>. Public debt reduces state spending on essential public services, which is further exacerbated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has impacted the financial year 2020, with the World Bank anticipating an estimated contraction of 3.1per cent,<sup>11</sup> and the Economic Commission estimating a contraction of up to 7.9per cent<sup>12</sup> for the Caribbean and Latin America both excluding Guyana (but including a number of other countries beyond the UNICEF ECA). The subregion will be affected by falling tourism and remittance inflows.<sup>13</sup> There are particular needs for social protection, including adaptive safety nets, to ensure government recovery efforts reach the most vulnerable.

The anglophone Caribbean islands are characterized by two-party systems, stemming from the colonial past, though on a number of islands a single party has dominated the political scene (e.g. Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago). The British Overseas Territories also have elected governments. The British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago held general elections in 2019 and 2020. In Trinidad and Tobago, a number of women filled key positions. These political changes presented opportunities for advocacy and positioning children, adolescents and young people on the political agenda, based on the latest UNICEF ECA Annual Report 2019.<sup>14</sup> However, based on consultations, the elderly, as a strong voting constituency, tend to be prioritized over young people by most administrations in the region.

## 1.2 CONTEXTUAL CHANGES DURING THE CPD IMPLEMENTATION

### *Government strategies and priorities*

The transposition of the CRC into national legislation and policies is underway. Ten countries/territories passed domestic violence bills and status of children bills, nine countries/territories passed children's care and adoption bills and status of children bills; eight countries/territories passed child justice bills

9 UNICEF. Country Office Annual Report 2019 Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme (2019)

10 UNICEF. Country Office Annual Report 2019 Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme (2019)

11 The World Bank. The World Bank in the Caribbean – Overview (2020)

12 Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean. Contraction of Economic Activity in Region Intensifies Due to the Pandemic: It Will Fall - 9.1per cent in 2020 (2020)

13 Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean. Contraction of Economic Activity in Region Intensifies Due to the Pandemic: It Will Fall - 9.1per cent in 2020 (2020)

14 UNICEF. Country Office Annual Report 2019 Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme (2019)

and child maintenance bills; and six countries/territories passed guardianship, custody and access bills. Concerns nevertheless remain in the implementation of these bills and actual service delivery.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 2: National child protection legislation by country/territory (OECS Member States only)

| Country/Territory            | Domestic Violence Bill | Child Care and Adoption Bill | Child Justice Bill | Status of Children Bill | Child Maintenance Bill | Guardianship, Custody and Access Bill |
|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Anguilla                     |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Antigua & Barbuda            |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Barbados                     |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| British Virgin Islands       |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Dominica                     |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Grenada                      |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Montserrat                   |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis        |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Saint Lucia                  |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Saint Vincent and Grenadines |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| Turks and Caicos Islands     |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        |                                       |
| <b>Key:</b>                  |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        | Passed, taken effect                  |
|                              |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        | Passed, not taken effect              |
|                              |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        | In progress                           |
|                              |                        |                              |                    |                         |                        | Not passed                            |

Source: UNICEF, 2019

The legislation and policies are one dimension of government commitment. Capacity dimensions, such as political leadership and will, the ability to network and relate, presence and efficiency of organizational structures and processes, and the availability of skilled human resources are critical challenges in the Caribbean, not least due to the small size of the islands and their respective civil services. Shared challenges also include the rapid turnover of civil servants, including brain-drain abroad, especially in the social sector, resulting in a lack of continuity in staff knowledge and skills. Interagency coordination is not a given, especially on issues such as violence and social protection, which bridged several different ministries and agencies. Based on consultations, strong political commitment to children and equity was at times overshadowed by a deep interest in the elderly as a critical constituency. Deeper resistance to confronting socially accepted norms, e.g. on violence, is also a concern.

### 1.3 CHILD RIGHTS IN THE SUB-REGION

All ECA countries have signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) between 1990-93, and it was extended by the UK to its overseas territories in 1994. During the last three decades of the CRC, Latin America and the Caribbean has made significant progress in its economic and social development, which has had a positive impact on the wellbeing of the population and the increasing number of children who can exercise their rights. The 2017-2021 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

MCP is aligned with the UN-MSDF 2017-2021 priorities. Nevertheless, challenges remain and vulnerable groups of children still face barriers to access basic services and basic protection. Deeply entrenched social norms also hinder progress on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Children's rights are inextricably linked to the rights of women.

The Realization of Children's Rights Index (RCRI) (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) provides a useful overview of children's rights across the OECS members, with the situation in Dominica being particularly poor

Figure 3: Realization of Children's Rights Index by OECS Member States \*

| Country/Territory              | Realization of Children's rights Index* (out of ten) | Realization of Children's rights Index level | Population aged 0-14 (% of total) | Under-5 mortality rate (%) |
|--------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Anguilla                       | --   | --   |                                   |                            |
| Antigua and Barbuda            | 8.05   | Yellow - satisfactory situation              | 24.7                              | 6                          |
| Barbados                       | 8.48   | Yellow - satisfactory situation              | 18.6                              | 12                         |
| British Virgin Islands         | --   | --   |                                   |                            |
| Dominica                       | 7.28   | Red - difficult situation                    | 22.3                              | 20                         |
| Grenada                        | 7.61   | Orange - noticeable problems                 | 24.7                              | 11                         |
| Montserrat                     | --   | --   |                                   |                            |
| St. Kitts and Nevis            | 7.86   | Orange - noticeable problems                 | 21.9                              | 8                          |
| St. Lucia                      | 7.78   | Orange - noticeable problems                 | 21.6                              | 13                         |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines | 7.50   | Orange - noticeable problems                 | 25.9                              | 17                         |
| Trinidad and Tobago            | 7.88   | Orange - noticeable problems                 | 19.5                              | 18                         |
| Turks and Caicos Islands       | --   | --   |                                   |                            |

Source: Humanium, 2021 (<https://www.humanium.org/en/rcri/>)

\* The Realization of Children's Rights Index (RCRI) is a grade between 0 and 10 that shows the level of realization of Children's Rights in a country. The lower the RCRI is, the lower the realization of Children's Rights in the country. The higher the RCRI is, the more Children's Rights in the country are real and respected. The Realization of Children's Rights Index is an indicative value allowing countries to be classified and graded according to the level of realization and respect of Children's Rights. The Realization of Children's Rights Index is an indicator obtained by grouping statistical measurements, which have been given values determining its weight in the calculation. This statistical tool created by Humanium is an estimation based upon sources judged to be reliable in their field (including the World Bank, UNICEF, country Ministry of Health information, and UNDP).

ECA performed better than the overall regional average in Latin America and the Caribbean on most gender indicators (see **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** below).

| Gender Inequality Index by country <sup>16</sup> |   |  |   |   |  |      |  |      |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|------|--|------|
| Country/<br>territory                            | Gender<br>inequality<br>index<br>classification | Maternal<br>mortality<br>ratio<br>(deaths<br>per<br>100,000<br>live births)<br>(SDG 3.1) | Adolescent<br>birth rate<br>(births per<br>1,000<br>women<br>ages 15-<br>19)<br>(SDG 3.1) | Share of<br>seats in<br>parliament<br>(per cent<br>held by<br>women)<br>(SDG 5.5) | Population with at<br>least some<br>secondary<br>education (percent<br>aged 25 and older)<br>(SDG 4.6) |      | Labor-force<br>participation rate<br>(per cent aged 15<br>and older) |      |
|  |   |  |   |   | Female   | Male | Female   | Male |
| Antigua and Barbuda                              | ---   | ---  | 43.5  | 20  | ---  | ---  | ---  | ---  |
| Barbados   | 60  | 27   | 37.3  | 19.6  | 94.2   | 91.6 | 62.3   | 70   |
| Dominica   | ---   | ---  | ---   | 25  | ---  | ---  | ---  | ---  |
| Grenada  | ---   | 27   | 29.2  | 25  | ---  | ---  | ---  | ---  |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis                            | ---   | ---  | ---   | 13.3  | ---  | ---  | ---  | ---  |
| Saint Lucia                                      | 74  | 48   | 40.5  | 20.7  | 48.2   | 42   | 61.2   | 75.9 |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines                 | ---   | 45   | 49  | 13  | ---  | ---  | 58.6   | 80.3 |
| Trinidad and Tobago                              | 73  | 63   | 30.1  | 30.1  | 74.4   | 69.1 | 51   | 73.7 |
| LAC Average                                      | ---   | 67   | 61.5  | 28.8  | 59.5   | 59.1 | 51.6   | 77.5 |

**Table 2 Gender inequality index by country:**

Source: UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, empowerment (measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females); and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status (expressed as labor market participation and measured by labor force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older).

The GII is built on the same framework as the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index. It measures the human development costs of gender inequality. Thus, the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development<sup>17</sup>.

Political representation was an exception in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, despite demonstrated progress in women's representation at the highest level across the sub-region.

<sup>16</sup> UNDP. Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update (2018)

<sup>17</sup> <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

## 1.4 CLIMATE CHANGE

**Caribbean countries are extremely vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters.** The ECA region experienced two Category 5 hurricanes between 2017-2019. Hurricanes Irma and Maria wreaked havoc across five ECA countries and territories in September 2017 affecting 143,000 people, including 39,000 children. A dedicated Humanitarian Action for Children appeal was launched for the response to the Caribbean hurricanes raising US\$11.5 million through international donations during this time.<sup>18</sup> Regional efforts included the activation of the regional response roster and a regional supply and logistics strategy, which included plans for the distribution of emergency supplies.<sup>19</sup> The Commonwealth of Dominica lost two-fold of its 2016 GDP and British Virgin Islands three-fold. Due to the escalating impacts of climate change, children and youth face significant risks in all areas, from education, health, water, and nutrition to child protection, which are also exacerbated by environmental degradation.

## 1.5 MIGRATION

**The ECA region experiences different types of migration including internal migration, intra-regional migration and forced displacement.** Reasons for child migration include seeking of opportunities, reunification with family members who previously migrated, displacement as a result of gradual or sudden changes in their environment, and to flee from the impact of natural disasters, domestic abuse, extreme poverty or political instability. Child migrants face economic vulnerabilities (e.g. payment for health treatment, non-eligibility for social welfare and/ or immigration requirements). Migration can often also exacerbate sexual exploitation and child labor; and children can be separated or be victims of trafficking.<sup>20</sup>

In the ECA region, migration issues are particularly prominent in Trinidad and Tobago. As of late 2019, there were around 23,400 Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in Trinidad and Tobago and this number is projected to rise to about 33,400 by the end of 2020.<sup>21</sup> Children represent about 17 per cent of all the migrants.<sup>22</sup> The findings from a survey conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with UNICEF support in 2019 revealed income generation/employment, medical care, legal services, food and education being among the top five priority needs of the population of concern. Access to education continues to be a challenge as migrant children are not able to access the national education system in Trinidad and Tobago. Based on a recent Knowledge, Attitudes and Perceptions (KAP) survey, the majority of respondents among the population nevertheless felt that children should have access to public education and health services.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.6 COVID-19

Since the first confirmed COVID-19 case in the sub-region was reported on 11 March 2020 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there have been subsequently 21,972 infected people and 307 deaths in the 12 ECA countries and territories as of the sixth of April 2021. The resulting restrictions have led to both direct and indirect socio-economic impacts on children resulting from school closure and disruption of

18 UNICEF Press Release UNICEF and partners continue to support children in the Caribbean, six months after Hurricanes Irma and María. 19 March 2018

19 UNICEF. Humanitarian Action for Children. (2018)

20 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

21 UNICEF. The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Children in Trinidad and Tobago (2020)

22 UNICEF. The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrant Children in Trinidad and Tobago (2020) and UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

23 UNICEF. Humanitarian Action for Children. (2018)

education, increased time at home, higher care burden and violence levels, rising unemployment and poverty levels, and increased demand for social protection.

Table 3: COVID-19 cases/deaths in eastern Caribbean (as of 6 April 2021)<sup>24</sup>

| Name                             | Cases - cumulative total | Cases - cumulative total per 100,000 population | Deaths - cumulative total | Deaths - cumulative total per 100,000 population | Transmission Classification |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Anguilla                         | 25                       | 166.64  | 0                         | 0  | Sporadic cases              |
| Antigua and Barbuda              | 1170                     | 1194.74   | 28                        | 28.59  | Clusters of cases           |
| Barbados                         | 3679                     | 1280.21   | 43                        | 14.96  | Community transmission      |
| British Virgin Islands           | 154                      | 509.31  | 1                         | 3.31   | Clusters of cases           |
| Dominica                         | 165                      | 229.2   | 0                         | 0  | Clusters of cases           |
| Grenada                          | 156                      | 138.64  | 1                         | 0.89   | Sporadic cases              |
| Montserrat                       | 20                       | 400.08  | 1                         | 20   | Sporadic cases              |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis            | 44                       | 82.72   | 0                         | 0  | Sporadic cases              |
| Saint Lucia                      | 4273                     | 2327  | 61                        | 33.22  | Community transmission      |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | 1764                     | 1590.05   | 10                        | 9.01   | Community transmission      |
| Trinidad and Tobago              | 8178                     | 584.36  | 145                       | 10.36  | Community transmission      |
| Turks and Caicos Islands         | 2344                     | 6054.03   | 17                        | 43.91  | Clusters of cases           |

Source: WHO Coronavirus Dashboard, 2021

The IMF has termed this the “lost decade” for developing countries, due to high indebtedness. A number of additional external shocks include reduction of real exports, lowering of export prices, considerably lower remittances (capital and cash), as well as substantially lower income from the tourism sector. The repercussions of COVID-19 could erase gains that have been made to date in combatting poverty and gender inequality.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the impacts will hit the already most vulnerable households much harder, e.g. in terms of: (1) their physical well-being (higher morbidity and mortality among those without means to self-isolate, protect themselves and afford care); (2) lower income (due to rising unemployment/underemployment, fewer remittances); (3) limited essential goods or higher costs (food, pharmaceuticals); and (4) reduced access to essential services (such as school closures, limited healthcare).<sup>26</sup>

There is great emphasis now also on “building back better,” increasing the resilience of the SIDS to inevitable future challenges.

<sup>24</sup> WHO. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. <https://covid19.who.int/table>

<sup>25</sup> International Monetary Fund. The IMF and COVID-19 (Coronavirus) – Continued Strong Policy Action to Combat Uncertainty (2020)

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF. Call to Action to Governments to Utilize Comprehensive Social Protection to Respond to COVID-19 (2020)

The current MCP was drafted to address particularly the following challenges identified at the time of strategy development:

- Transboundary issues requiring regional approaches
- Equitable access and quality and effectiveness of services
- Limited availability of high quality and timely data for decision-making
- Lengthy national reform processes
- Persistent social norms
- Limited financial and human resources.<sup>27</sup>

Due to all of these continuing sub-regional challenges, exacerbated by **crisis as the “new normal”**, there is a need to revisit the UNICEF M-CPD, including its achievements, but also its ability to adapt and flex to unexpected contextual changes, whether **climate change, migration, the COVID-19 pandemic** or the recent volcanic eruption on Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The evaluation therefore gave particular focus to understanding if, when and how the MCP evolved in light of changing circumstances and how this flexibility can be strengthened in the new M-CPD.

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<sup>27</sup> UNICEF. Country Programme Document. Eastern Caribbean Multi-Country Programme (2016)



## 2. OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The MCP provided the overall strategy of UNICEF in the sub-region and the shared vision and objectives of all of its components, programmes and projects. The evaluation **assessed the performance** of, and **drew lessons learned** from, the implementation of the Eastern Caribbean MCP 2017-2021, with a view to **informing the design** of the next M-CPD.

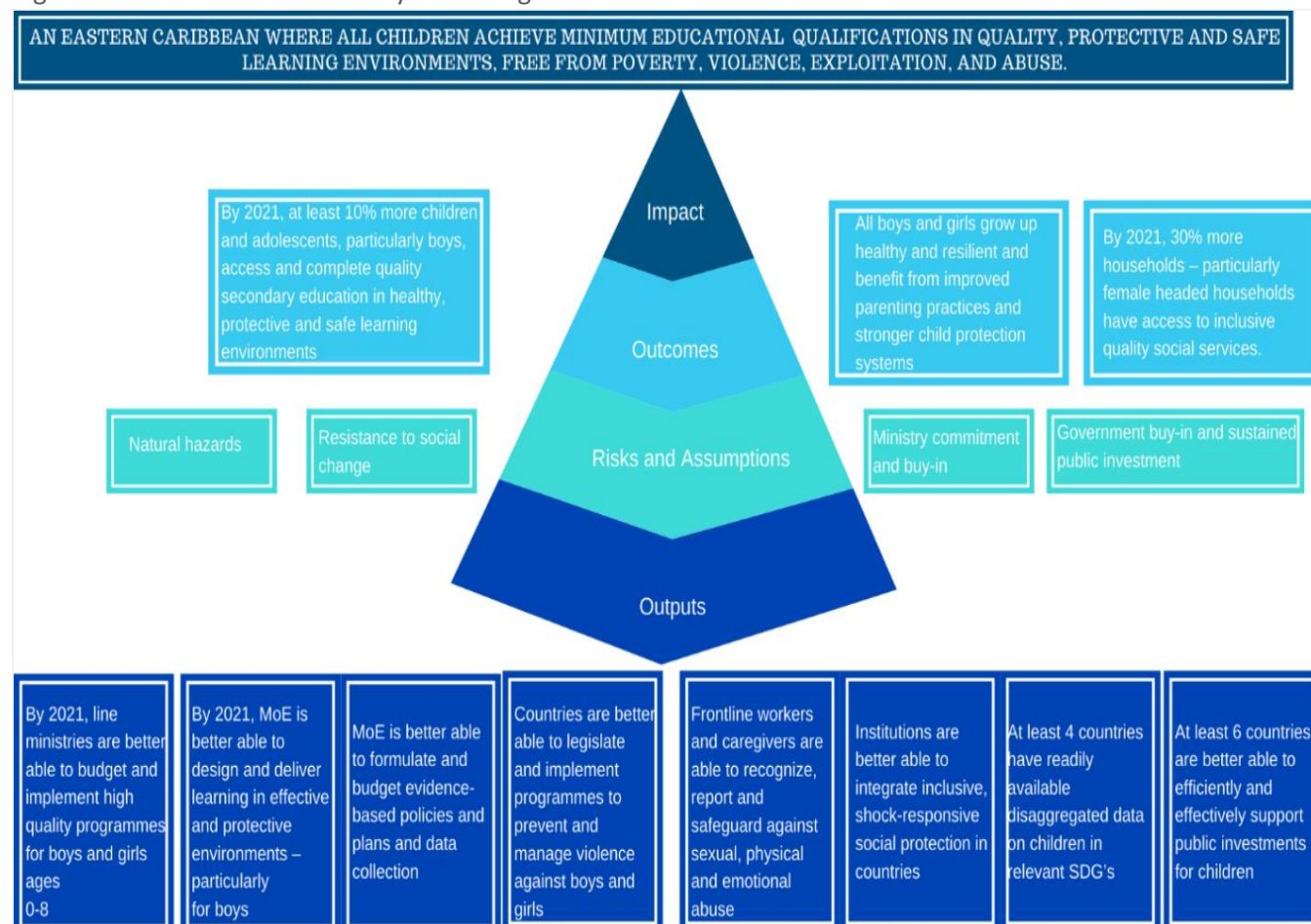
The object of the evaluation is the 2017-2021 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean MCP.

The Eastern Caribbean MCP was aligned with the UN Caribbean Multi-Country Strategic Development Framework (UN-MSDF) 2017-2021 priorities, including: priority area (PA) 1 An Inclusive, Equitable, and Prosperous Caribbean., (PA2) A Healthy Caribbean., (PA3) A Safe, Cohesive, and Just Caribbean., and (PA4) A Sustainable and Resilient Caribbean. The programme was also defined in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway and national and regional frameworks. The overall goal of the 2017-2021 MCP is “an Eastern Caribbean where no child lives in poverty, all children achieve minimum academic qualifications in a quality, protective and resilient learning environment and free from violence, neglect, exploitation and abuse” Three outcomes were designed to contribute to this goal:

- By 2021, 10% more children and adolescents, particularly boys, access equitable, healthy, safe and protective learning environments in development and humanitarian contexts
- 30% more vulnerable and poor households – particularly female-headed and large households - have access to quality social services
- All girls and boys (in and outside humanitarian situations) grow up healthy, resilient and benefit from improved parenting practices and strengthened child protection systems

The current MCP ToC is depicted below:

Figure 4: Current MCP Theory of change



Source: UNICEF, 2017

No changes were made to the original UNICEF logical framework or the results chains and frameworks in the individual programme strategy notes (PSNs). However, the overall UNICEF ToC was revised in November 2019. It was agreed at inception that it provided sufficient basis for the evaluation. The approach of the evaluation to the use of this MCP ToC and its revision, with a view to contributing to the next strategic planning cycle is described in annex 2.

The programme employed a mix of strategies to support the realization of planned outcomes and outputs, including:

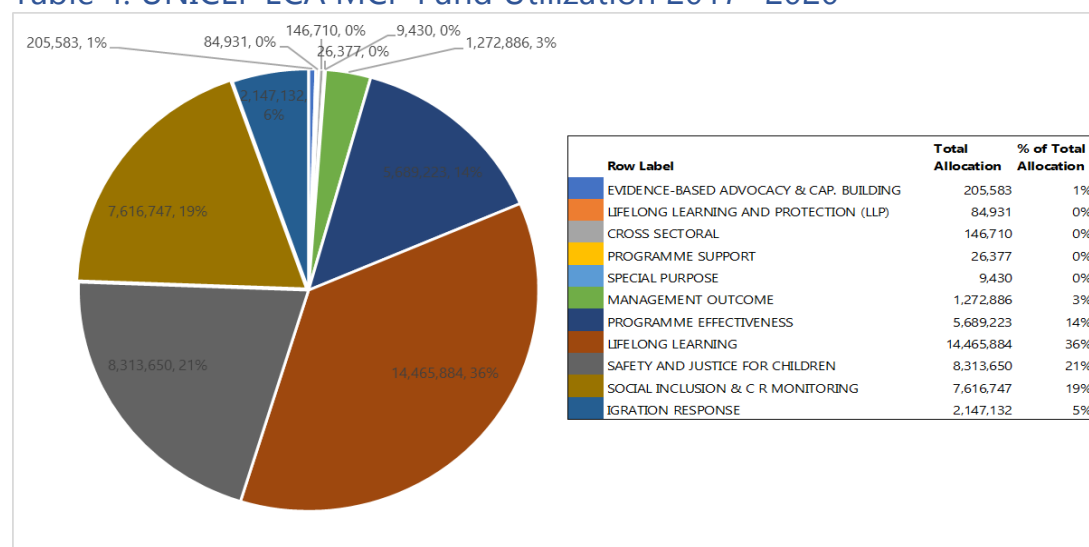
- a) Capacity development for policy formulation and implementation**, the delivery of quality services and the creation of demand for services, particularly for the most excluded and disadvantaged;
- b) Evidence generation and policy dialogue** and advocacy to inform policies, programmes and accountability;
- c) Innovation, South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships** to enhance equity focus and address disparities for vulnerable children;
- d) Communication to develop social and behavioral-change models** and to complement and enhance social accountability for children's rights, empowering communities to demand services and promote positive behaviors

Programme effectiveness of the MCP-E was evaluated through the assessment of the UNICEF MCP ToC. This included testing the main change mechanisms, including the following (as defined in the ToR):

- a) evidence of cross-sectoral (gender, youth, climate change) convergence to achieve higher results for children;
- b) assessment of UNICEF engagement in evidence generation, analysis and use;
- c) use of strategies to support behavior change communication; and
- d) presence of mechanisms, tools and processes to support effective programme coordination, implementation and monitoring.

The 2017-2021 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean MCP covered **12 countries and territories** in the sub-region, with an **overall budget of about USD 40 million**<sup>28</sup>. Of the four main components, the largest allocation was made to life-long learning (36%), with relatively even allocations to the other components (safety and justice for children, social protection and child rights monitoring and programme effectiveness).

**Table 4: UNICEF ECA MCP Fund Utilization 2017 -2020**



Source: UNICEF, 2017-2020 ECA MCP Budget Allocations use as of 21 September 2020

The response to natural disasters (mainly hurricanes) was mainstreamed across the main components, while migration had a separate budget-line.

A resource mobilization strategy was developed in 2016. It identified: (i) private sector fundraising; (ii) traditional sources, such as national committees; (iii) innovative strategies; and (iv) leveraging funds as key priorities. The UNICEF ECA office was organized (see Figure 5) to support the implementation of the four MCP components under the leadership of the Deputy Representative and overall responsibility of the Resident Representative.

<sup>28</sup> The Budget and its further breakdown is in the process of being further analyzed by the strategic planning consultant. These results will be integrated when complete.

### 3. PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The main purpose of the M-CPE is to draw lessons learned to inform the design and implementation of the next 2022-2026 MCP and hence strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of the UNICEF programmes in the ECA. The M-CPE will contribute to reinforce UNICEF's ECA organizational learning, strategic positioning and value proposition in its partnerships, and enhance its accountability to the Governments, donors, peers and implementing partners.

Broken down in key components, the M-CPE purpose is to:

- i. Identify emerging good practices and key lessons learned from the current 2017-2021 MCP to inform the design of the 2022-2026 programme document and its intervention strategies to respond better to Eastern Caribbean development priorities and advance child rights; and
- ii. Provide an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the country programme and its strategies for (a) understanding the extent to which the MCP contributing to national development goals and humanitarian priorities; and (b) determine the extent to which programmes are adequately addressing disparities and inequities.

With emphasis on informing the design of the new UNICEF country programmes in the ECA, this independent evaluation had a formative focus, with summative aspects in assessing performance and programme effectiveness of its current phase.

This also explains why the evaluation was conducted in the past six months; namely, to inform the development of the next MCP, which will be undertaken in 2021. From a summative perspective, the evaluation assessed the effectiveness and performance of the current MCP to enhance accountability to Governments, peers and implementing partners.

There was also an opportunity to **instill an evaluative, learning culture in the strategic planning process**. Double-loop learning was encouraged through close engagement of UNICEF ECA staff. The participation of UNICEF regional and ECA staff in the evaluation demonstrated their commitment to both evidence and its application to decision-making. Close coordination with the consultant facilitating the strategic planning process also enhanced the relevance and utility of the MCP-E for this process. This can only be encouraged in the future, to close the loop between evaluation and planning for the country programme development cycle. The remote nature of the consultation process nevertheless challenged close engagement.

During the inception phase of the evaluation internal and external stakeholders called for a **strategic refresh, focusing on the relevance of the MCP, in light of the prevailing context**; the "new normal" characterized by the climate, migration and COVID-19 crises. They also emphasized the need for internal reform, including UNICEF structures and processes, not least due to the ongoing, overall UN reform process. The evaluation processes and products were needed now and planned accordingly to inform the development of the UNICEF 2022-2026 CPD. There was a need to coordinate also with the broader UNSDCF planning process.

The intended audience of the evaluation included the UNICEF Office for the ECA. Other users included: UNICEF ECA Multi-Country Office (MCO), UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO), UNICEF ECA technical departments, UNICEF HQ, UNICEF donors, and other UN and the

government ministries, agencies and staff responsible for planning and financing, education, justice, social development, statistics and donor coordination in the 12 countries and territories. It also included the Eastern Caribbean regional organizations, such as CARICOM and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and sub-regional organizations such as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the OECS Commission and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), as well as the University of West Indies (UWI). They played an important role in implementing, facilitating and supporting UNICEF humanitarian and development initiatives, and in providing guidance and technical expertise to address development priorities across the region. Finally, the audience included civil society organizations and the private sector, that have engaged in UNICEF initiatives, which was crucial as they played an enabling role in promoting and protecting children's rights within a rights-based framework. Children (girls and boys of various ages and abilities), particularly vulnerable children had a particular interest in the effectiveness of UNICEF programmes to ensure that they enjoyed the same rights as other children.

#### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The objectives of the evaluation remained as stated in the evaluation terms of reference (ToR):

- To assess the **relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability** of the 2017-2021 UNICEF, MCP design and implementation with a particular focus on **relevance** and **connectedness** and a formative and forward-looking focus on the current and evolving ECA context.
- To take stock of the **progress** made towards the attainment of the development and humanitarian results, including effects in **addressing disparities and inequities**; and identify the most effective **implementation strategies and partnerships** for UNICEF ECA to adopt for the next phase of programme development.
- To determine how UNICEF can most effectively **position** itself, build on its **comparative advantage**, and provide specific recommendations to **improve the design and relevance of the 2022-2026 MCP** in the ECA and UN-MSDCF.

#### 5. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation ToR served as the basis for the thematic, geographic and chronological aspects of the scope of work. This included its three main components, with a deeper dive into the issues of child protection, violence and resilience, as well as the UNICEF hurricane and migration response, also in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. In line with the geographic coverage of the MCP, the evaluation had a sub-regional ECA scope and was strongly informed by the evidence at the national level of the results, lessons and experiences emerging from the 12 ECA countries and territories. The evaluation identified specific case studies **on the selected themes described above, in three chosen countries**, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, as well as Trinidad and Tobago. The M-CPE focused on the 2017-2021 UNICEF MCP and cover three and a half years of implementation from the beginning of the current CPD and UN-MSDF to the present (January 2017 to June 2020).

The **ToC**, its results, pathways of change and assumptions, were reviewed based on the evidence generated and updated accordingly. The 'theory of change Strawman' in annex 2 may contribute to the internal ToC process for the next M-CPD. It did not undergo a participatory, co-creation process as a part of the evaluation, due to management concerns about overlap and duplication of these processes.

## 5.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

As specified in the ToR, the evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the MCP in line with the OECD-DAC criteria definitions.<sup>29</sup>

The evaluation questions were used to inform the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria which were defined in this evaluation as follows:

| Criteria      | Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use <sup>30</sup>  | Working Definitions for this Evaluation  |
|---------------|---|--|
| Relevance     | The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to participants', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change. <sup>31</sup> | <p>The extent to which CP objectives and design respond to the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders, particularly in the complex COVID-19 environment.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to explore all or a selection of questions related to responsiveness to the needs, the alignment to strategic priorities, suitability to the context, rigor of intervention design and adaptive capacity</p> |
| Coherence     | Compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution.   | <p>The extent to which the 2017- MCP was planned and implemented in synergy with other development/ humanitarian actors (particularly UN agencies) in the Eastern Caribbean.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to look into policy coherence, strategic partnerships, coordination of implementation, etc.</p>   |
| Effectiveness | The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.  | <p>The extent to which the Country Programme results were achieved or are expected to be achieved, what factors influenced their achievement (or not), and whether UNICEF demonstrates a reasonable contribution at the outcome or system level.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to look closer into the achievement of results, the scope and</p>   |

29 OECD-DAC Criteria and ALNAP. Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria (2006). See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

30 OECD DAC. Evaluation Criteria: Adapted Definitions and Principles for Use (2019)

31 "Respond to" means that the objectives, design and adaptation of the intervention are sensitive to the economic, environmental, equity, social, political economy, and capacity conditions in which it takes place.

| Criteria       | Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use <sup>30</sup>  | Working Definitions for this Evaluation  |
|----------------|---|--|
|                |   | scale of results, and inclusiveness, with related lessons learned.   |
| Connectedness  | Connectedness refers to the need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account. <sup>32</sup> | <p>The extent to which UNICEF's contributions to humanitarian response during 2017-2020 have been connected to its regular country program priorities and the experience and lessons that can be gained from this.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity to assess relevance, strategic alignment, adaptation and flexibility in relation to existing objectives.</p> |
| Sustainability | The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.  | <p>The extent to which UNICEF's work continued or is likely to continue its positive effects after the MCP has been completed, and its potential for scale-up and/or replication.</p> <p>Provides the opportunity to explore whether sustainability was planned, and to investigate continuation of positive effects, replicability and scalability.</p>       |

## 5.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The overarching evaluation question for the MCP-E was:

To what extent has the UNICEF 2017-2021 multi-country Programme proved successful in its Programme delivery, strategic choices and approaches, and what implications are there for the development of the 2022-2026 Programme for UNICEF?

The final evaluation framework included a list of nine Evaluation Questions (EQ).

The original evaluation questions were examined from a gender and human rights perspective, and in terms of their evaluability. The **questions were further refined** on the basis of the ToC review, particularly with a view to the further specification of outputs and short-term outcomes, but also in accordance with UNICEF priorities, through the **effectiveness sub-questions and judgement criteria**. The final evaluation framework included a final list of 9 Evaluation Questions (EQ). The refined questions, together with relevant

<sup>32</sup> ALNAP. Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria (2006)



judgement criteria, indicators and available means of verification, are summarized in the evaluation framework in Annex 7.

### 5.3 INDICATORS

The indicators in the evaluation framework were derived from the **MCP results framework** and complemented with **additional indicators and judgement criteria** through the desk review and evaluability assessment. The main aim of the evaluation was to use and strengthen existing indicators and related data collection to support the existing monitoring, evaluation, learning (MEL) system. Hence, there was **strong reliance on existing metrics and data sources**.

Additional judgement criteria and indicators were drafted for new results deemed critical for tracing the pathway from outputs to outcomes. They related particularly to **assumptions and change mechanisms such as advocacy, capacity and partnerships**. They were particularly **qualitative criteria**; to also explore why and how change happened/did not happen. These are included in the evaluation framework in chapter 6.

The **disaggregation** of indicators by gender and other characteristics of vulnerability, such as age, socio-economic status, region and disability was also reviewed. It was noted that existing indicators and data collection efforts **did not always refer to demographic data** beyond age, gender and geographical location. This demographic data was included in the evaluation data collection efforts.

Through the use of the existing indicators, the evaluation also aimed to strengthen the existing UNICEF and government monitoring efforts, rather than creating parallel structures. It also contributed to improving the availability of disaggregated data. Careful attention was nevertheless given to **data quality** issues and any weaknesses documented (see **Error! Reference source not found.** on limitations). The overall **strength of evidence** underlying the evaluative statements for each of the main evaluation questions and criteria was also assessed and summarized based on an assessment of the strength of evidence (3-point scale) for the main findings.

The evaluation framework was detailed in a **standard evaluation framework matrix (see above)**. In addition to the usual information, such as the DAC criteria, evaluation questions, indicators and data collection plans, a more detailed matrix also included sub-questions, analytical tools and the sampling strategy for each data collection tool. The detailed framework also includes all of the outcomes, outputs and indicators from the UNICEF Results Framework to further specify the evaluation plans for the effectiveness question.



## 6. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the detailed methodology used by the evaluation team to carry out the evaluation process and respond to the objectives, including the approach taken to sampling and data analysis, including measures to ensure data quality, as well as coverage of ethical issues and safeguards. Where the evaluation team have needed to make adjustments and changes to the methodology these are justified, with the suitability of any methodological changes described and explained to show the logic of the evaluation process supports the achievement of an objective and triangulated response to the evaluation questions. The section therefore concludes with a summary of limitations and related mitigation measures.

The section is structured as follows:

- Evaluation design and methods
- Sampling
- Data analysis
- Data quality
- Ethical issues and safeguards
- Limitations and mitigation measures

The methodology concludes with a section on **data analysis**, and a detailed description of the data triangulation method.

### 6.1 EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODS

The evaluation was both summative and formative. As it was not possible for the evaluation to draw conclusions from baseline data and non-intervention comparison groups, it relied on a non-experimental design using mixed methods. Through the use of a participatory approach, the evaluation sought to ensure engagement of key stakeholders in the planning of the evaluation, as key informants and in the validation of evaluation findings.

The MCP-E employed **contribution analysis** to determine the relationship between UNICEF's interventions and programme outcomes. This entailed setting out the MCP attribution problem, the revision of the ToC throughout the evaluation, and iterative gathering of related evidence to test the different pathways of change across the three main MCP components.

Contribution analysis reduced uncertainty about i) whether the contribution of the different MCP interventions made to the observed results through an increased understanding of why the observed results have occurred (or not!) and ii) the roles played by the intervention and other internal and external factors.

A case study approach was used to understand programme implementation and programme effects of some representative components of the MCP-E. This allowed the team to cumulatively bring together findings from many case studies to answer the evaluative questions.

The data collection aimed to capture a variety of perspectives through both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary sources were included in a desk review that was undertaken in the inception phase/evaluability assessment of the evaluation. The evaluation used different data collection methods and tools, which were developed based on the evaluation questions and matrix in consultation with UNICEF-ECA and stakeholders (government, NGOs, private partners, etc.). A mixed-methods approach allowed to draw evidence from both qualitative and quantitative primary and secondary data for a comprehensive assessment of UNICEF contributions in protecting children rights.

This evaluation used two main primary data collection tools, the perception survey and key informant interviews. Full details on the related tools are presented in annex 6.

As the evaluation has been carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic the section on limitations details out the challenges encountered, their implications to the methodology and the necessary responses and adjustments made.

Further details on the utilization-focused, theory-based approach, employing contribution analysis and case-studies can be found in the Inception Report.

## 6.2 SAMPLING

A non-probabilistic sampling strategy was considered the most appropriate choice for the theory-based, mixed methods design that also employed case studies on different UNICEF components and ECA countries/territories. While non-probability samples generally do not allow for the generalization on conclusions, the inclusion of three themes and three very different countries did factor in some of the diversity of the entire population.

The criteria for selecting the priority themes were:

- Utility for UNICEF
- Significant, existential contextual challenges (hurricanes and COVID-19)
- UNICEF performance and results
- Data gaps

The **UNICEF components or themes** drove the case study sample choice, with a particular interest in serving the utility of the up-coming planning process and urgency of addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 context. Therefore, the choice of the UNICEF **hurricane and migration response as case studies** for further exploration was a natural one. They also allowed for exploring both shifting from a humanitarian to a developmental mode of operation and mainstreaming versus specific response, among others.

In addition to being an intransigent problem in the Eastern Caribbean region, **violence and child protection was identified as a “deviant” case** where UNICEF simply had not obtained the same traction, as in, for example, lifelong learning and child survival over the past decades. Addressing violence also included some of the cross-cutting challenges of crisis response, as well as the perennial concern of UNICEF service delivery versus systemic policy and behavior change.

The **country selection** facilitated comparison of the same UNICEF component in different relational and spatial contexts, with the chosen sample of **Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica and British Virgin Islands**, varying in size, economy, population and even potentially culture. Trinidad and Tobago are relatively large in geography, economy and child population, while Dominica is substantially smaller, with the lowest GDP per capita and HDI across the portfolio. Dominica was also destroyed by hurricane Maria in 2017. UNICEF management was keen to include at least one overseas territory in the sample. The British Virgin Islands are a very small territory, and substantially wealthier than the Eastern Caribbean average. Neither the British Virgin Islands, nor Trinidad and Tobago belong to the OECS. The themes of violence and child protection, as well as migration touch all of the selected islands. Despite the size of the population, there was less data for Trinidad and Tobago, which was addressed by the evaluation to some degree.

The table below summarizes the final sample of case studies, the perception survey and KIIs/group interviews.

Table 5: Final Sample

| Evaluation method               | Country   | Themes   | Actual Sample  | Gender breakdown                                  |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Document review</b>          | All   | All  |  | n/a   |
| <b>Perception survey</b>        | All   | All  | Total population, based on stakeholder analysis and contact-list (42/55)                                 | Female: 60%<br>Male: 37%<br>Prefer not to say: 3% |
| <b>Case studies</b>             | British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago (3)           | Violence/child protection, migration, hurricane response, COVID-19 | 3  | n/a   |
| <b>Key Informant Interviews</b> | Sub-regional, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Trinidad and Tobago | Violence/child protection, migration, hurricane response, COVID-19 | UNICEF (19), Regional organizations (5), Government (9), civil society (8), UN agencies (14), donors (8) | 68% women   |

The **Perception Survey** extended across all 12 UNICEF countries and government focal points, as well as key UNICEF staff, focal points at other UN agencies, and donors. It therefore encompassed the complete target population of international, regional and national agencies working with UNICEF, as well as its main non-governmental implementation partners among NGOs and the private sector.

The KIIs and group interviews complemented this overall sample, with more details from the same stakeholders across the sub-region and in the three selected countries.

Inevitably, any sampling strategy had its limitations and potential bias. These limitations were addressed namely through triangulation between multiple data sources, including existing data.

### 6.3 MEASURES TO ENSURE DATA QUALITY

The evaluation set **high standards for data quality**, both its validity (accuracy of measure) and reliability (consistency of measure). Data quality standards were employed across the whole evaluation design, including the approach, methods, data collection tools, data analysis and sampling strategy. Inevitably, each of the choices made also had its limitations (see also **Error! Reference source not found.** for limitations).

Overall, the evaluation sought to improve data quality through the **triangulation of findings**. Methodological triangulation relied on existing data sources to anchor this approach. The evaluation

framework mapped out the different data collection methods, used to answer each evaluation question. Data was also triangulated across the sample of countries, themes and respondents. Finally, data was also triangulated through the use of different members of the team during interviews.

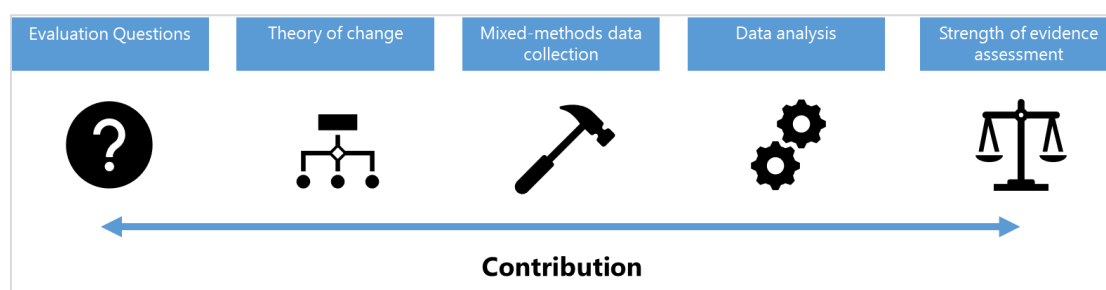
The reliability of the conclusions was strengthened through the case study approach. Even with its limitations, the cases allowed us to test conclusions across diverse themes and contexts. The validity of the survey responses was increased through the use of existing definitions and measurement scales (e.g. capacity definitions and assessment).

Careful coordination across the team ensured the harmonization of the data collection and analysis approach. We increased the reliability of the interview questionnaire by conducting initial interviews together. Reliability was also increased by the spot review of data analysis by two team members. Furthermore, we coordinated the evaluation process carefully with the strategic planning process and the consultant facilitating the latter, which further ensured the reliability of findings and their utility for the next M-CPD.

## 6.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The **data analysis** process used the evidence gathered to answer the evaluation questions through the ToC review and related contribution analysis. Figure 5 summarizes the process and relationship between the evaluation questions, ToC and the data collection, analysis and strength of evidence assessment process, with the evaluation design and framework guiding data collection and analysis efforts, that ultimately feed-back to further reviewing and verifying the ToC and answering the evaluation questions. The **strength of evidence assessment** explores the strength of each main evaluative conclusion, allowing for the assessment of their relative weight in relation to each other.

Figure 5: Data analysis model



Contribution analysis (steps 3-6) were undertaken in an iterative fashion throughout the implementation phase, with data gathered and coded along the pathways of change in the ToC. This data collection also focused on building an understanding of the 'why' and 'how' of any changes seen in relation to assumptions made about the change process, including internal implementation and external contextual factors. These are both treated in the section **Error! Reference source not found..**

The case studies strengthened the evidence for the cross-cutting violence and resilience themes, fortifying related pathways in the ToC. Comparison across the case studies shone further light on contextual factors and assumptions made. Ultimately, they also provided information on the organizational factors involved.

The data analysis processed and categorized the data gathered based on the ToC and additional analytical tools, namely capacity assessment, the social engagement ladder, advocacy matrix, as well as the rights-based and gender analysis in order to populate the ToC contribution story and answer the evaluation questions. Further detail on these analytical tools can be found in the Inception Report.

## Data analysis process

Documentation, e-survey responses, as well as interview notes were analyzed, based on an agreed **coding structure** derived from the **evaluation framework, analytical tools and the ToC**. The analysis was documented in an **evidence matrix**.

1. Qualitative data were categorized based on these sources as well as the identified analytical tools, through a coding process.
2. Evidence was used to test the mechanisms and assumptions outlined in the ToC. It was then reported on the basis of the evaluation questions.

**Quantitative** data were cleaned and analyzed using standard mathematical and statistical operations, such as grouping, calculating averages and data spread. The sample was not large enough to provide strong statistical rigor. Emphasis was placed on graphics tabulations, to ensure well-structured and well-presented tables and infographics summarizing the data effectively.

**Qualitative** data was transcribed and coded, based on an agreed coding protocol. Codes were derived from the ToC and a number of existing analytical frameworks described below. Active efforts were made to identify deviant cases and to triangulate data across primary (surveys and interviews) and secondary data sources.

The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data addressed identified data gaps and strengthened the triangulation of evidence. The inclusion of qualitative data also supported drawing out related learning of utility to UNICEF.

## Strength of evidence

In addition to documenting the process of triangulation in the evidence matrix, the evaluation team assessed the **strength of evidence** for each evaluation question. This process established whether the evaluation conclusions were based on a **high level of confidence in the data available**, and to identify where available data may not provide a comprehensive picture.

Table 6: Strength of evidence ratings

| Evidence rating | Descriptor   |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>High</b>     | A high level of evidence is characterized by a range of evidence sources to corroborate findings, including documentary sources, quantitative and qualitative sources that allow for robust triangulation; or alternatively evidence sources that may not be comprehensive but are of high quality and reliable. |
| <b>Medium</b>   | Medium evidence will have fewer (3-4) corroborative sources of evidence that allow for reasonable assessment/triangulation but where evidence coverage is not complete or where quality of the evidence sources varies.  |
| <b>Low</b>      | A low level of evidence has 1-2 sources of evidence which from a single data collection stream (i.e. purely interview/survey data) and there is no possibility for triangulation.  |

The evidence strength score is included in the overall findings for each of the evaluation criteria and questions.

## 6.5 LIMITATIONS AND MITIGATION MESAURES

**Inevitably, any chosen approach, methods, sampling strategy and data collection tools have their weaknesses.** A generative approach to causality, theory-based approach and contribution analysis will

never be able to **isolate the single variable that is essential for change to happen**. This was a design choice and was not mitigated through the use of counterfactual argumentation.

The concerns raised over the **availability, quality and periodicity of data**, with variation across the UNICEF themes and particular issues with obtaining data with a sufficient degree of geographic and demographic granularity, to truly reach the most vulnerable populations remained throughout the evaluation process. Data was nevertheless presented, for the countries, territories and time periods available, with note of the observed weakness.

**The secondary data used was what was available, whether in relation to the geographic breakdown, time series or degree of disaggregation.** Generally, the data that was available had been gathered in a methodologically robust way but triangulation was a challenge, as reporting on the same data varied between different documents, most probably due to data gathering at different points of time. Data quality issues and gaps are referred to in respective sections of the report. Generally, data management at ECA therefore was identified as a major UNICEF ECA challenge.

While **data was available for some of the indicators in the MCP results framework**, it was 1) fragmented, 2) not always available for all countries, 3) did not always use consistent definitions of concepts and terminology, and 4) not always available at baseline and across comparable date ranges. It was also not accessible in a single, safe place, challenging reliability. Data was nevertheless presented, for the countries, territories and time periods available, with note of the observed weakness.

Data availability was a particular challenge with children, compounded by the ethical concerns highlighted in section 7.2, and by current constraints imposed by COVID-19 restrictions on data collection and direct engagement with evaluation participants. The **planned social media poll of the MCP-E was dropped**, to avoid evaluation fatigue, as well as these ethical and practical challenges. The youth engagement work in the framework of the M-CPD preparation provided both an opportunity to fill this gap and related challenge. While it provided **secondary data on children's actual views**, the geographic and thematic coverage did not fully match the MCP-E design. This data was nevertheless valuable on issues such as mental health and climate change.

**The response to the perception survey, with 40 out of 55 total potential responses was very good.** However, the total population (55) was not very high and even less representative, when broken down by geography and type of organization. 10 out of 40 respondents also left a number of questions unanswered. **The representation particularly of different government views across the 12 countries and territories was not very high** (5 responses). This data was triangulated with other sources.

Similarly, the **coverage of the KIIs/group interviews was very comprehensive across UNICEF staff, regional organizations, UN agencies and donors.** However, obtaining interviews with **government representatives across the three selected countries and territories was extremely challenging** 1) due to the limited and dated initial list of contacts, 2) the limited number of high-level contacts (predominantly Permanent Secretaries), 3) limited number of contacts in selected themes (e.g. child protection, justice, DRR). The coverage of civil society organizations was high in Trinidad and Tobago, but very low in Dominica (1) and non-existent in the British Virgin Islands, despite efforts to identify relevant contacts through snowballing. Substantial efforts were made to obtain the correct and additional contact details and the data collection period was extended well beyond the original plans, also to accommodate the remote nature of the interviews.

Ultimately, therefore, the **drafting of detailed thematic case studies, based on information from the three countries and territories was not possible.** However, this data from the countries is reflected in each of the relevant sections of this evaluation report, where it was available.

We are nevertheless confident that **triangulating through the use of mixed methods and data sources and challenging each other across the team** during both data collection and analysis, mitigated these limitations, resulting in evaluation findings that are rigorous enough and “fit for purpose” in serving the needs of the UNICEF strategic planning process.

## 6.6 EVALUATION NORMS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation<sup>33</sup>, [UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis](#)<sup>34</sup>, UNICEF procedures for Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC)<sup>35</sup> and IOD PARC’s Ethical Code of Conduct (2018), which adheres to UNEG Ethical guidelines for Evaluation (2008), UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System (2007), DFID Ethical Principles for Research and Evaluation (2011) and the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics and Principles (2012).

IOD PARC’s Ethical Code of Conduct is signed by all staff and associates. The ethical code of conduct for field work is based on international good practice and draws on a guide published by UNICEF. Field work consists of any activity which takes place outside the office environment and/or involves contact with any stakeholders, and it duly applies to this evaluation being conducted remotely<sup>36</sup>.

All engagement with participants younger than 18 years of age was guided by the standards identified above. We acknowledge our responsibility to respect the dignity of children; for our research to be just and equitable, and for the benefit of children. We have ensured that children are not harmed through their participation in the research, and that their participation in our research was based on their informed and ongoing consent. We have reflected on the assumption, values, beliefs and practices that influence our involvement of children in the research process and the impact it has on children.<sup>[1]</sup>

All members of the evaluation team, including UNICEF’s evaluation manager, are bound by ethical research principles of impartiality, independence, credibility, accountability and avoiding conflict of interest. To further ensure that the highest ethical standards are upheld, the Inception Report was subject to an independent ethical review by HML IRB, which specializes in providing research ethics reviews to a range of clients, including UNICEF and the World Bank Group.

As this evaluation involved primary data collection from adults and children, the overall ethical safeguards were applied to all data collection processes are as follows:

- **Authorization**
  - o Permission to involve UNICEF staff as data sources for the evaluation was obtained from UNICEF LACRO and the UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean, as relevant.
  - o Permission to conduct the evaluation was obtained from relevant authorities in the countries where primary data was collected<sup>[2]</sup>. This was facilitated by the UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean and UNICEF Field Offices in the respective countries, as relevant.
- **Informed consent.** The engagement of all key informants and respondents in data collection activities was based on informed consent. This was incorporated at different stages of the evaluation’s investigation phase, as follows:
  - o Voluntary participation based on informants’/respondents’ understanding of the purpose of the evaluation, the reasons and requirements for their involvement, what the data collection activity entails and the associated requirements or demands, how

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33 UNEG. UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation (2008)

34 UNICEF. UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015)

35 Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. & Fitzgerald, R. Ethical Research Involving Children. Florence (2013)

36 A copy of IOD PARC Ethical Code of Conduct is available on request

the data will be used and what the potential benefits and disadvantages of participation might be.

Only those who voluntarily agreed to participate were involved, and those who chose not to participate were not sanctioned or penalized in any way. The value of including children's voices as part of the data collection process has been carefully considered and the evaluation team have determined that it is integral to the validity of the findings that children's voices are heard. All work with children has been done in their best interests and under the ethos of "do no harm".

- **Confidentiality.** The management and use of information shared by individuals during the data collection process was explained to them, and their privacy has and will always be respected. This included explaining that evidence shared or presented in evaluation reports will be anonymized and non-attributable, and will be used only for purposes of the evaluation. Non-anonymized information will not be accessible by anybody other than the evaluation team. Should the publication or sharing of non-anonymized information be required, this will not be done without permission.
- **Safeguarding of children.** Informants/respondents were not asked or encouraged to disclose child abuse during data collection. However, it will be made clear that the commitment to confidentiality does not extend to issues concerning the safeguarding or well-being of children. If a disclosure of abuse, harm or harassment had been made to the evaluation team, we would have been obliged to make UNICEF aware of this.
- **Respect.** The autonomy of all informants/respondents to contribute freely to the data collection process was respected at all times. This included respecting judgements, opinions and choices they may have expressed that are based in their values, beliefs and lived experience. It also included creating a safe environment where they could freely express those judgements, opinions and choices without fear of negative sanctioning.

Introductory (consent) scripts for KIIs/group interviews and the perception survey are in annex 6.

The Team Leader ensured that all members of the evaluation team were familiar with the data collection tools, protocols and ethical considerations before data collection commenced.

### **Actions taken during the evaluation process.**

The IOD PARC evaluation team initiated an ethics review for a planned 'Social Media Poll'. In discussion with the UNICEF senior management team the decision was taken to not use the Social Media Poll as there was a strong overlap with another survey that UNICEF ECA had commissioned and to avoid over-burdening participants. The IOD PARC Team agreed to take a joint approach with UNICEF in their survey which had already completed an ethical review process.<sup>37</sup>

### **Safe-keeping of documents and data security**

All documents and data collected for the evaluation is stored in digital format on laptops linked to IOD PARC's remote Virtual Private Network (VPN), which is password protected and encrypted using government standard AES-256; security permissions on certain files and folders can be and are applied, where necessary. IOD PARC operates a Data Protection System which includes procedures and processes to ensure data is secured and backed up. Data related to this evaluation will be kept on IOD PARC's central electronic server for a period of three years, whereafter it will be destroyed.

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<sup>37</sup> Conversations with UNICEF ECA January 2021



## 7. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the evaluation, responding directly to all the evaluation criteria and questions. Available data from the MCP results framework indicators is reviewed, and gaps identified. Additional information is included from the document review, perception survey and KIIs/group interviews.

The strength of evidence underlying the main findings is considered and incorporated accordingly. Any limitations in the data are also noted, particularly in relation to the indicators in the MCP results framework and availability of related data.

### 7.1 RELEVANCE TO CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE 12 EASTERN CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

**Evaluation question 1:** To what extent did the multi-country programme objectives (including any adjustment of objectives) and UNICEF-supported interventions remain appropriate and relevant to the changing circumstances in the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries and territories?

**Main findings:** While the original MCP objectives and outcomes were well aligned with both sub-regional and the priorities of the supported countries and territories, based on document review, e-survey and interview data, to a degree, they had to be set-aside to due to the need to react to the sudden-onset disasters, whether hurricanes, COVID-19 or most recently, the volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The MCP was able to adapt and flex to both the specific national priorities of supported countries and territories, as well as to the more immediate needs imposed by these disasters, but the nexus between developmental and humanitarian work is not yet fully integrated, based on a review of the MCP ToC and interviews.

**Strength of evidence:** High

**The MCP was well aligned with the education and social sector objectives of the supported countries and territories, as well as with those of the OECS.** There was strong alignment with pillar II of the OECS development strategy, in overall education objectives, addressing juvenile justice and gender-based violence, as well as supporting the multi-dimensional poverty data and strengthening of social safety nets, particularly as a part of DRR. Particularly early childhood development, child protection and social protection were well aligned with the development plans that were available and reviewed from Dominica, and Trinidad and Tobago, social protection being only mentioned in the latter.<sup>38</sup>

Table 7: Relevant strategies and policies of the OECS

| Title of Strategy  | Period Covered by the Strategy |
|--|--------------------------------|
| OECS Development Strategy                                | Medium Term 2019-2028          |
| OECS Education Sector Strategy                           | Medium Term 2012-2021          |
| OECS Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics | Long Term 2017-2030            |

According to one interviewee, alignment is largely due to close consultation with governments. "Having a seat at the table" at high level meetings is therefore a critical success factor.

<sup>38</sup> The British Virgin Islands are still in the consultation process of their latest sustainable development plan.

**UNICEF ECA has also demonstrated the ability to adapt UNICEF support to regional and national priorities.** According to one interviewee, “I like their flexibility, their willingness to work with the regional and countries’ agenda. They shift accordingly”. The main challenge is that the social sectors generally remain a low government and donor priority (e.g. related government budget allocations). Among others, none of the support from the European Union is in the social sectors, besides education infrastructure.

**Some concern remained around the pressure to conform to the UNICEF corporate offer,** based on a few interviews. In a number of cases, matching country priorities with those of the UNICEF MCP required UNICEF staff support. The credibility and influence of UNICEF, especially personal relationships with decision-makers were key to the alignment of the joint agenda.

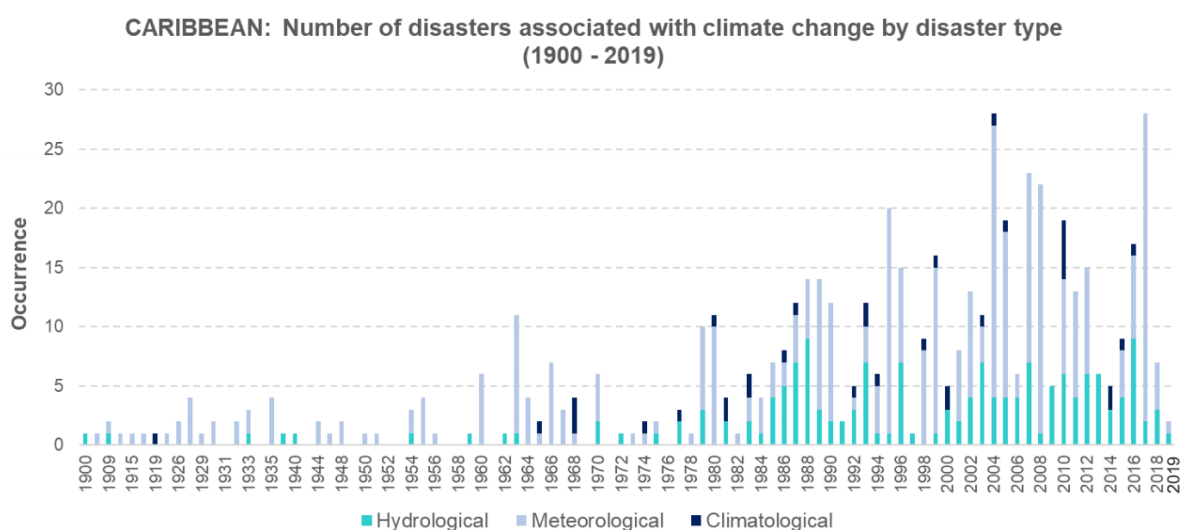
**The original MCP objectives and outcomes remain relevant and valid, but were nevertheless challenged by the multi-country nature of the strategy and programme.** The multi-country context directly affected the: (a) implementation arrangement and partnership with the Governments (level of ownership, governance, accountability) and (b) planning, monitoring and reporting processes, with related implications for the Paris Declaration principles. The M-CPD and results framework covered the sub-region and should have been relevant also to the countries’ contexts. Challenges related to (a) clarity of the convergence areas and cross-cutting strategies of the M-CPD; (b) plausibility of the logic and results structures for each country; (c) validity and reliability of the indicators; (d) the aggregation and disaggregation of information at the country level; and (e) mainstreaming emergency preparedness and DRR<sup>39</sup>. The COVID-19 crisis posed particular challenges for feasible models for national programme planning, monitoring and coordination, notably in relation to the imperatives to connect globally (e.g. tourism) and the need for rapid adaptation and flexibility, within the complex ECA context.

The current MCP objectives were developed to address a number of fundamental challenges in the context of a complex operating environment, including also the need to adapt to climate change. The Eastern Caribbean region is the second most vulnerable to the effects of climate change in the world, experience more intense and frequent storms.

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39 UNICEF. UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 Evaluability Assessment – Final Report Annexes (2015)

Figure 6: Caribbean Disaster Events



Source: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) Catholic University of Louvain. The International disaster Database (EM-DAT)

Moreover, most recently, there has been a global need to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, including eventually also recovery from its devastating economic and social effect, particularly on the most vulnerable children. It was not possible to foresee and prepare for these external challenges. The section below addresses how UNICEF ECA addressed these crises and if and how it had to adapt the original MCP objectives accordingly.

**The MCP was able to adapt and flex to these new challenges.** More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff felt that the office had successfully adapted to the changing circumstances and crises in the sub-region.<sup>40</sup> This was also confirmed by a number of external interviews. UNICEF's response to these crises was largely seen as positive and a demonstration of its capacity to provide swift, effective and timely interventions. Likewise, its ability to adapt and flex to different needs and situations and to adapt when regional and countries agendas had to shift was generally appreciated by all respondents. The downside to this flexible approach was that this would result in less attention and resources being dedicated to the challenging areas of governments priorities, such as the social sectors.

The impact of climate related disasters, migration and the most recent COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in the original MCP objectives being set aside, to a degree, since the hurricane response in 2017. Across the three main strategic areas programmatic priorities, 1) education, 2) child protection, and 3) social protection, the emphasis shifted from addressing longer term root causes of these issues to a Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery mode. According to one interviewee, "humanitarian response (e.g. advocacy, communication and responding to immediate needs) may cloud achievements in the core three areas".

**Clear learning was demonstrated particularly from the hurricane response to the COVID-19 response in the design of specific programming.** A number of interviewees highlighted the strength of UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrated some clear learning of how to manage a crisis driven response with a development orientation (primarily in its operational modalities). This contrasts with the more normal experience where linkages from humanitarian to development work

40 Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)

are not good, with fault on both sides. In UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, development partners noted the application of good planning and execution with strong collaboration (especially with PAHO and UNESCO) and communication. In a similar fashion, humanitarian responses can (and should) be seen as an opportunity to build on more systemic reforms such as social protection in the British Virgin Islands and Dominica.

**The challenge that UNICEF ECA faced and is currently facing is the separation of development and relief/humanitarian work.** The current approach emphasizes a focus primarily on one or the other. To effectively engage in both and work in the humanitarian/ development 'nexus,' with crisis as the new normal, requires a different approach to achieving longer term objectives, in effect re-visiting the pathways of change, mainstreaming DRR and resilience and addressing the 'missing middle' between programme outputs and results.

## 7.2 NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**Evaluation question 2:** To what extent did the MCP objectives (including any adjustment of objectives) and UNICEF-supported interventions remain appropriate and relevant to the needs of children and young people, especially the most marginalized?

**Main findings:** While the MCP prioritized addressing the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable children, UNICEF relied primarily on governments to identify these populations (with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago) and major data gaps existed on identifying the poorest and especially 'invisible' or 'unaccounted' children, based on a review of poverty data, as well as interviews. The COVID-19 crisis has generated a new group of marginalized children, but again with limited data.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium (Low on disability)

**The MCP 2017-2021 emphasized the focus on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable children, but it was not always clear who the vulnerable children were in a given instance.** It identified the most vulnerable and poorest stakeholders as: (a) children of migrants and "left-behind" children; (b) out-of-school children, mainly boys, and children who fall out of the education, health and protection systems; (c) pregnant teens and young mothers; and (d) children from single-parent households.<sup>41</sup> The situation analysis confirmed this breakdown and added children without parental care, disabled children and/or child victims of violence, abuse or neglect and children living in economically vulnerable households, as well as a focus on children at most at risk for multiple deprivations.

**Gaps included an absence of data on vulnerable groups or 'invisible' or 'unaccounted' children<sup>18</sup>** such as migrant children and children under the age of five (especially those without access to structured services). This was confirmed through at least a few interviews, which were more critical of UNICEF ability to reach the most vulnerable children, especially un-registered migrant children, living in rural communities. Most also noted the multi-dimension and dynamic nature of poverty; the latter particularly pertinent due to the COVID-19 induced new poor.

Most noted that UNICEF depended on governments in the identification of most vulnerable groups, which was not always reaching those most excluded. However, it was also challenging in Trinidad and Tobago, where UNICEF worked namely with civil society organizations. There were particular challenges in reaching un-registered children in more rural settings and newly arrived migrant children. Moreover,

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<sup>41</sup> UNICEF ECA MCP, 4

government systems were not always strong enough to measure vulnerability, especially its dynamic nature.

**UNICEF processes and technologies were also not always adapted to identification of all the most marginalized populations.** The current communication campaigns, focusing on social media may not be as effective as grassroots engagement (e.g. through civil society organization partnerships) in reaching the most vulnerable groups. This also applied to some of the other methods employed in research. The “perceived geographic cap in JECT GIS methodology and poor coverage of community groups (40 per cent of country) excluded many farmers, fishermen and people working in the tourism industry”.<sup>42</sup>

**While there was a UN-wide remit to focus on disability, there was limited government interest.**

There were more than a million people in the Caribbean living with some form of disability, and an estimated 250,000 who experience significant disabilities. “Persons with disabilities (PWDs) faced a range of physical, social, attitudinal and institutional barriers that prevented their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. As a result, they experienced less favorable outcomes in health, education, employment and housing”.<sup>43</sup> There was a need to ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). With the exception of St. Kitts and Nevis, all ECA countries and territories have signed the CRPD. However, it is yet to be ratified by Grenada, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. Based on the State of the World’s Children (2013), ECA supplement, “a great deal more needs to be done to enable persons with disabilities to maximize their potential to actively participate in society”. This included areas such as early detection, affordable access to services, quality aids and devices, access to mainstream education, employment opportunities, social protection, financial aid and welfare services, recreation sport and leisure, transportation, as well as related legal reforms. Based on the review of documents and consultations, disability has not received sufficient UNICEF attention. Only one of the government interviewees raised the issue, without prompting.

**There is now a new population of marginalized children resulting directly from COVID-19.**

According to interview data, 45-50 per cent of students have not logged onto distance learning across the sub-region. One interviewee described them as “the “new poor” battling distance learning alone at home”.

### 7.3 EFFECTIVENESS

As demonstrated in the section above, the focus of UNICEF ECA and the MCP successfully pivoted to addressing disasters, first the hurricanes, then the migration response in Trinidad and Tobago, and then COVID-19 in the sub-region. This however also implied that progress on original MCP outcomes was mixed, due to the need to shift attention and human resources to disaster response.

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<sup>42</sup> JECT evaluation

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

**Evaluation question 3:** What are the major factors influencing the achievement (or not) of the multi-country programme outputs? (e.g. (a) external factors - political, social, economic; (b) internal factors – implementation model/structure, quantity, quality, timeliness of delivery). What influence did these factors have on achievement (or not) of multi-country programme outcomes?

**Main findings:**

Progress on original MCP outcomes is mixed, based particularly on UNICEF ECA project monitoring and reporting data. Primarily this was due to the need to recurrently redirect resources to crisis management, but also due to the highly ambitious and comprehensive MCP, which was not fully aligned with the means of UNICEF ECA, as indicated through consultations with UNICEF ECA staff in particular. More progress was made in outcome areas, namely in life-long learning that utilized the full suite of UNICEF strategies, including evidence-based advocacy for policy change, communication strategies to influence behavior change and actual service provision, over a long time period. While some progress was made in the promotion of child protection legislation, actual implementation was constrained by institutional capacity, as well as deeply entrenched norms that held-back the behavior change required. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) demonstrated that the influence of evidence alone on government strategies and policies was more mixed, with a particular weakness identified in influencing public expenditure for children. While tracking public expenditure for children was a key indicator in the MCP results framework, related data was not systematically collected and analyzed. Generally, monitoring and evaluation, especially data quality remained a concern across the main outcome areas, with limited adaptation made to these efforts despite the major challenges posed by the recurrent crises in the region.

The effectiveness questions particularly test the three main pathways of change in the MCP ToC: 1) Life-long learning, 2) Security and justice for children, and 3) Social equity and child rights monitoring, along with the external and internal factors both supporting and challenging the achievement of related results. Cross-cutting change mechanisms, a) evidence generation, analysis and use (e.g. advocacy), b) strategies to support behavior change and communication, c) effective programme coordination, implementation and monitoring, as well as d) cross-sectoral (gender, youth and climate change) convergence are treated across the three main outcome areas, where relevant and in greater detail among the internal factors. A more thorough analysis of climate change and gender issues is provided in relation to the sustainability of the MCP.

### 7.3.1 Life-long learning

**Education remains a key focal area for UNICEF ECA, with an emphasis particularly upon early childhood education.** The role of UNICEF in the education sector was recognized as relevant and effective, across the conducted interviews, which speaks particularly to its strong recognition and presence in the sub-region. Almost 80 per cent of the evaluation e-survey respondents felt that UNICEF was delivering results in access to healthy and safe learning environments, as compared to about 60 per cent in child and social protection respectively.<sup>44</sup>

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44 MCP-E e-survey February 2021

## Early Childhood Education

### Main findings:

#### *Education*

Progress on original MCP learning outcomes was mixed, based namely on OECS education statistics from the sub-region, due to the need to shift attention and human resources to disaster response, according to interviews.

Further progress was made on the availability and quality of early childhood development and positive behavioral management, the former employing the full suite of UNICEF strategies, from policy advocacy to the actual provision of related services, but no effect has yet been felt on school retention rates, especially of more marginalized boys, based on a review of OECS data, the e-survey and interviews.

While initiatives beyond ECD and positive behavioral management may have responded to real government needs, they were more piece-meal, based on a review of UNICEF ECA reporting.

**Strength of Evidence:** High

**ECD enrolment has increased.** This indicator was included in the original MCP results framework and was tracked through OECS statistics, which were updated in the latest UNICEF ECA Situational Analysis. In the ECA, on average, 71 per cent of children aged 3-4 are enrolled in early childhood education, including 75 per cent of girls and 69 per cent of boys.<sup>45</sup> However, only Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia met the MCP results framework target of 80 per cent enrolment, based on available data. Whereas almost all primary school age children are in school, about 20 per cent of early childhood age children are not enrolled.<sup>46</sup> Table 9 below summarizes the ECE enrolment data across the sub-region.

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<sup>45</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

<sup>46</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

Table 8: Enrolment in ECE institutions, public and private<sup>47</sup>

| Country/territory                | Enrolment in public ECE institutions |      |         |      |         |      | Enrolment in private ECE institutions |      |         |      |          |      | Total enrolment in ECE institutions |      |          |      |          |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|---------|------|---------|------|---------------------------------------|------|---------|------|----------|------|-------------------------------------|------|----------|------|----------|
|                                  | Male                                 |      | Female  |      | Total   |      | Male                                  |      | Female  |      | Total    |      | Male                                |      | Female   |      | Total    |
|                                  | n                                    | %    | n       | %    | n       | %    | N                                     | %    | n       | %    | n        | %    | n                                   | %    | n        | %    | n        |
| Antigua and Barbuda              | 99.0                                 | 6.1  | 73.0    | 4.3  | 172.0   | 5.2  | 1,529.0                               | 93.9 | 1,613.0 | 95.7 | 3,142.0  | 94.8 | 1,628.0                             | 49.1 | 1,686.0  | 50.9 | 3,314.0  |
| British Virgin Islands           | 15.0                                 | 2.1  | 14.0    | 2.1  | 29.0    | 2.1  | 700.0                                 | 97.9 | 650.0   | 97.9 | 1,350.0  | 97.9 | 715.0                               | 51.8 | 664.0    | 48.2 | 1,379.0  |
| Dominica                         | 91.0                                 | 12.3 | 98.0    | 13.0 | 189.0   | 12.7 | 646.0                                 | 87.7 | 658.0   | 87.0 | 1,304.0  | 87.3 | 737.0                               | 49.4 | 756.0    | 50.6 | 1,493.0  |
| Grenada                          | 961.0                                | 43.3 | 958.0   | 43.2 | 1,919.0 | 43.3 | 1,257.0                               | 56.7 | 1,258.0 | 56.8 | 2,515.0  | 56.7 | 2,218.0                             | 50.0 | 2,216.0  | 50.0 | 4,434.0  |
| Montserrat                       | 59.0                                 | 77.6 | 49.0    | 75.4 | 108.0   | 76.6 | 17.0                                  | 22.3 | 16.0    | 24.6 | 33.0     | 23.4 | 76.0                                | 53.9 | 65.0     | 46.1 | 141.0    |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis            | 542.0                                | 36.4 | 544.0   | 38.1 | 1,086.0 | 37.2 | 947.0                                 | 63.6 | 884.0   | 61.9 | 1,831.0  | 62.8 | 1,489.0                             | 51.0 | 1,428.0  | 49.0 | 2,917.0  |
| Saint Lucia                      | 403.0                                | 16.0 | 415.0   | 16.0 | 818.0   | 16.0 | 2,111.0                               | 84.0 | 2,180.0 | 84.1 | 4,291.0  | 84.0 | 2,514.0                             | 49.2 | 2,595.0  | 50.8 | 5,109.0  |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines |                                      |      |         |      |         |      |                                       |      |         |      |          |      |                                     |      |          |      |          |
| 2016-2017                        | 189.0                                | 10.7 | 175.0   | 9.7  | 364.0   | 10.2 | 1,572.0                               | 89.3 | 1,628.0 | 90.3 | 3,200.0  | 89.8 | 1,761.0                             | 49.4 | 1,803.0  | 50.6 | 3,564.0  |
| 2017-2018                        | 202.0                                | 11.2 | 197.0   | 10.7 | 399.0   | 10.9 | 1,604.0                               | 88.8 | 1,652.0 | 89.4 | 3,256.0  | 89.1 | 1,806.0                             | 49.4 | 1,849.0  | 50.6 | 3,655.0  |
| OECS Totals (2016-2017)          | 2,359.0                              | 21.2 | 2,326.0 | 20.7 | 4,685.0 | 21.0 | 8,779.0                               | 78.8 | 8,887.0 | 79.0 | 17,666.0 | 79.0 | 11,138.0                            | 49.8 | 11,213.0 | 50.2 | 22,251.0 |

Source: OECS, Educational Statistical Digest, 2016-2017

<sup>47</sup> Source: OECS, Education Statistical Digest: Statistics on Education for the AY 2016-2017



Based on more recent interview information, the sub-region has been reporting that approximately 80 per cent of children in the 3-5 age group and approximately 40 per cent of children 0-2+ are participating in registered ECD programmes. It is known however that a significant percentage of children are also being cared for in the more informal home-based care services, which brings the focus on quality (e.g. care, protection).

There is insufficient, comparable data on the quality of pre-primary education outcomes, including the MCP results framework indicator tracking progress of ECD aged children in different developmental domains across the sub-region.

**Governments have also made efforts to expand ECD services from largely private provision to public support,** especially in more vulnerable communities. Governments (Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines) either established or increased the number of government operated ECD Centers to meet the needs of young children in their vulnerable communities. According to an interviewee, UNICEF has also supported the provision of materials and equipment to upgrade learning environments to promote active play and learning.

**UNICEF ECA has contributed to the improvement of the quality of ECD,** even though the relevant indicator was not monitored. This included supporting ECD policy, regulation and standards' development and implementation, curriculum development together with the OECS, knowledge sharing, workshops, training, including training of trainers. The regional, child-centers curriculum framework was developed together with the OECS and launched in Anguilla, British Virgin Islands and Saint Lucia.<sup>48</sup> It focused on identifying and responding to developmental delays and to use communication and play approaches to support holistic development of young children.<sup>49</sup> UNICEF also facilitated the preparation of a White Paper on Teacher Education addressing standards for Teacher Educators, together with key partners. Knowledge was also shared across the region, at the regional early childhood research conference held in Antigua and Barbuda in February 2018. UNICEF also supported the Child Development and Guidance Centre in St. Lucia and the Special Education Department in Grenada to strengthen the skills of 85 national counterparts in St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines in early identification and intervention for children with developmental delays. This experience will serve as reference in the other countries and territories covered by UNICEF ECA.<sup>50</sup>

**Arguably, the training interventions have had broad reach across the sub-region.** By 2020, across ECA-programme countries 141,678 children and adolescents from early childhood, primary and secondary levels, and 8,424 parents, caregivers, education professionals and policymakers benefited from initiatives implemented within the COVID-19 response plan, School Safety Protocols, Safe School programme and Care for Child Development frameworks.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, efforts have even extended to single families and parents, as in the case of Nevis.<sup>52</sup> Most recently, advocacy has focused on the "Early Moments Matter" theme.

**The training efforts may even have had copying and replication effects, promoting sustainability.** According to an interviewee in Dominica, "there are 800 pre-schools now. Many people trained by UNICEF went and opened their own schools". Efforts have also been made to influence related national policies and budget allocations; though the latter has not yet borne visible results. This included cost-

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48 COAR 2018

49 COAR 2016

50 COAR 2017

51 COAR 2020

52 COAR 2018

benefit analysis in the ECD sector in Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as an assessment of systems available for early identification and intervention in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada to increase access and quality of ECD services.<sup>53</sup> A budget analysis in the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat demonstrated the limited investments in ECD, resulting in related advocacy.<sup>54</sup> According to one interviewee, the ECD budget allocation has also increased in some instances. However, it does not appear that the allocation for ECD in the British Virgin Islands has increased, based on interview data. Despite being an indicator in the MCP results framework, budget data was not systematically available across the 12 countries.

**There is growing evidence that ECD may also promote school retention rates, which are a major sub-regional challenge, particularly for boys, though this still needs to be borne out in practice.**

“Findings since the 1960s have indicated that preschool programmes can enhance children’s cognitive skills, literacy and social skills necessary for school success, as well as promoting school achievement in elementary grades, reducing the need for special education and grade retention, reducing the risk of delinquency and increasing levels of educational attainment.<sup>55</sup> According to a more recent meta-analysis of 22 high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental studies conducted between 1960 and 2016, participation in ECE leads to statistically significant reductions in special education placement and grade retention and increases in high school graduation rates.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the UNICEF ECA focus on ECD has particular merit in addressing the identified problems in the region, whether grade retention or graduation rates, particularly of boys, though they remain less represented in the ECD enrolment statistics.

## Primary and secondary education

### **MCP Results Framework Indicators:**

Number of countries with gender- and child-responsive social protection and education policies and strategies

Percentage of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

Lower secondary education completion rate, by gender

Percentage of students who are over-age for grade in primary education, by gender

**Generally, school enrolment was high across the sub-region**, based on education statistics, namely from the OECS. Whereas almost all primary school age children are in school, 12 per cent are not enrolled in secondary school.<sup>57</sup> The net primary school enrolment rate is the lowest in Dominica and the British Virgin Islands at 83 and 80 per cent respectively, with a slightly higher proportion of boys (4 per cent more) enrolled in the British Virgin Islands. Similarly, net secondary school enrolment rates are also lower in the British Virgin Islands, at 69 per cent. Although drop-out and repetition rates are low, over 60 per cent of these are boys. Data at the outcome level of the MCP ToC on secondary school completion rates are not available, as defined in the MCP results framework.

**Learning outcomes remained a concern, particularly among boys**, based on available OECS education statistics. Only one out of three secondary school students (31 per cent boys, 37 per cent girls) meet the required level of learning qualifications, measured by ‘pass’ rates of the Caribbean

<sup>53</sup> COAR 2019

<sup>54</sup> COAR 2016

<sup>55</sup> Ou, S. and Reynolds, A. (2004) Preschool Education and School Completion. Encyclopedia of Early Childhood Development 2004.

<sup>56</sup> McCoy, D. et. al. (2017) Impacts of Early Childhood Education on Medium- and Long-Term Educational Outcomes. Educational Researcher 46(8):474-487

<sup>57</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

Secondary Education Certificate examinations.<sup>58</sup> For decades, “virtually all education indicators favor(ed) girls, starting with primary level examination performance and carrying through Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) sitting rates to tertiary enrolments”.<sup>59</sup> Dominica students perform better than average on standard tests in both English and mathematics. Secondary school students (31 per cent boys, 37 per cent girls) meet the required level of learning qualification.

However, data at the outcome level of the MCP ToC on learning qualifications, specifically in reading and math, is not available for grades 2/3, as per the MCP results framework.

**There are substantial gender differences in both retention and graduation**, with boys being almost twice as likely as girls to repeat a grade or drop out at the primary and secondary levels. The percentage of over-age children in primary education has increased (13 per cent), rather than reducing (by 20 per cent) as per the targets in the MCP results framework and gender differences persist. Gender disparities are evident in education system data on transition from lower secondary to upper secondary (Form III to Form IV), with male students experiencing significantly higher rates of educational breakdown than girls. Repetition rates for both primary and lower secondary revealed that 8 per cent of boys repeat a grade, compared to 4 per cent of girls.<sup>60</sup> The ‘Out of School Study’ in partnership with UWI, OECS and the CDB covering five countries highlighted these issues,<sup>61</sup> but UNICEF ECA has not been able to catalyze related changes.

**There has been little change in bullying** (at school), with a slight increase (average of 2 per cent across sub-region) of bullying experienced by girls, rather than the overall target of a 40 per cent reduction, as per the MCP results framework.

Little to no focus has been given to identifying the skills needs of the private sector and matching educational support programmes to these needs (e.g. private sector coordination, technical and vocational training and education). Based on the most recent engagement of children and young people in Montserrat, the most pressing concerns voiced related to increasing access to vocational and technical training that opens up job opportunities.<sup>62</sup>

**The main UNICEF focus was on positive behavioral management.** It was integrated into the teacher training curriculum, in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, “facilitating the transitioning from ad hoc in-service workshops to a more sustainable pre-service approach”.<sup>63</sup> Prior to the hurricanes, 58 per cent of primary schools and 39 per cent of secondary schools in eight countries confirmed having implemented positive behavior management strategies that, directly and indirectly, contributed to reduced tardiness, truancy, noise levels and use of corporal punishment, as well as improved student participation and parental involvement.<sup>64</sup> 45 facilitators (at least three per country) were trained and committed to replicating the training in their countries. Additional support was provided to assist in this task and during the last six months of 2018 these facilitators trained an additional 1,182 teachers in nine countries, impacting 28,300 students. These actions were complemented with other communication for development (C4D) strategies, contributing to more holistic changes in school practices, student engagement and ultimately, improved learning and student behavior<sup>65</sup>.

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58 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

59 UNICEF Situational Analysis 2019

60 COAR 2016

61 COAR 2016

62 UNICEF (2021) Engaging Children and Young People in the Eastern Caribbean Area: Anguilla, Barbados, Dominica, Montserrat and Trinidad and Tobago

63 COAR 2016

64 COAR 2016

65 COAR 2018

**Initiatives beyond ECD and positive behavioral management, though maybe responding to real government needs, were piece-meal**, with limited data available. Progress was also made in using the Teacher Simulation Model, strengthening of student councils, delivery of health and family life education (HFLE), enhanced parental involvement,<sup>66</sup> the translation of learning outcome data into decision-making.<sup>67</sup> Generally, beyond ECD and some advances in the spreading skills in positive behavioral management, UNICEF ECA fell short of its original education objectives, namely as efforts were overtaken by the management of consecutive crises (see next section).

### 7.3.2 Security and Justice for Children

#### *Child protection*

##### **Main findings:**

While UNICEF has a unique mandate and clear value proposition on the promotion of child protection, there has been limited progress in reducing child abuse and violence against children, based on available data on child abuse and child protection cases. While some progress has been made on related legislation (e.g. in Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago), actual implementation is constrained by institutional capacity, as well as deeply entrenched norms in the small communities, based on interviews.

In addition to promoting related policy change, UNICEF ECA has particularly utilized communications for development to promote related awareness among children, youth, caregivers and the broader population, based on UNICEF ECA reporting and interviews. There are particular challenges related to the time required for awareness raising to influence behavior and underlying norms, as well as measurement issues with assessing related behavior change.

**Child protection is a key UNICEF mandate**, recognized by all stakeholders. According to Aloys Kamuragiye, the UNICEF ECA Representative, “compared to 30 years ago (the time of the ratification of the CRC), children in the Eastern Caribbean enjoy far better their rights to survival and development. The biggest challenge now is their protection against violence.”<sup>68</sup> Over two out of three children are subject to physical and psychological violent disciplining by parents or caretakers<sup>69</sup>.

**The perceived added-value of UNICEF on the topics of corporal punishment and violence against children (VAC)** are indisputable among all interviewees. According to one interviewee, UNICEF ECA is extremely active in child protection, corporal punishment and abuse-related issues through human-rights based programming; all being very serious problems in the Caribbean. VAC, particularly in the form of violent discipline at school and in the home is endemic in the region. UNICEF has placed emphasis on strategies for preventing and eliminating VAC in the broader Caribbean and Latin American region, with a focus on strengthening capacity (both personal and institutional), key partnerships and the generation of evidence, as well as awareness raising.<sup>70</sup> There was greater focus in the UNICEF ECA sub-region on communications for development type initiatives.

66 COAR 2016

67 COAR 2017

68 UNICEF. 30 Years of the CRC: Progress and Challenges (2019)

69 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

70 UNICEF (2020) Reduciendo la Violencia contra la Infancia. Evaluación multi-país de las intervenciones de UNICEF en la región de América Latina y el Caribe.

**Data on child protection was a major challenge**, with limited data available and gathered on the indicators in the MCP results framework.

**MCP Results Framework Indicators:**

Number of countries able to ascertain attrition rates in sexual offences and domestic violence cases by procedural stage (police and courts)

Number of countries in which the number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population has decreased

Number of countries with a decrease in the number of women and men reporting experiences of physical and sexual violence

Percentage of students experiencing bullying, corporal punishment, harassment, violence, sexual discrimination or abuse

Children (2-14 years) (1-14) who experience violent disciplinary practices by an adult member of the household

Girls (15-17 years) who have ever experienced sexual violence

Children in detention per 100,000 child population

Children (0-17years) living in residential care, with disaggregated target ages and a specific target for children 0-3years

**Different types of child abuse continue to be prevalent across the sub-region.** Around 2,300 cases of child abuse are reported to the authorities annually in ECA countries and territories, of which 35 per cent are related to sexual abuse, 34 per cent neglect, 25 per cent physical abuse and 10 per cent to emotional violence. The table below summarizes cases of violence against children that were reported to authorities across the sub-region in 2018.

Table 9: Cases of physical, sexual and emotional violence and neglect reported to authorities, 2018<sup>71</sup>

| Country/territory                       | Physical violence | Sexual violence | Emotional violence | Neglect | Total |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------|-------|
| <b>Anguilla</b>                         | 7                 | 15              | 0                  | 6       | 28    |
| <b>Antigua and Barbuda</b>              | 37                | 34              | 1                  | 92      | 164   |
| <b>British Virgin Islands</b>           | 25                | 32              | 1                  | 28      | 86    |
| <b>Dominica</b>                         | 45                | 129             | 6                  | 9       | 189   |
| <b>Grenada</b>                          | 91                | 121             | 37                 | 86      | 335   |
| <b>Montserrat</b>                       | 30                | 38              | 0                  | 48      | 116   |
| <b>Saint Lucia</b>                      | 73                | 84              | 12                 | 61      | 230   |
| <b>Saint Kitts and Nevis</b>            | 32                | 44              | 29                 | 109     | 214   |
| <b>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</b> | 50                | 42              | 10                 | 80      | 182   |

Source: UNICEF, 2019

<sup>71</sup> UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

It is challenging to calculate how these data relate to the MCP results framework baseline and target data, which is expressed in percentages. Taking just the case of Saint Lucia, where data was available from different sources, the reported cases of physical violence represent about 10 per cent of the population. In comparison with the baseline data from the MCP results framework, this was substantially lower than the baseline figure of 67.5 percent of children who had experienced violent disciplinary practices by a parent. Comparable data was also not available for Trinidad and Tobago. This example demonstrates some of the data related challenges described across the evaluation report.

**Bullying has also increased, notably also among girls.** In Trinidad and Tobago, between 2011 and 2017, there was an 8 percent increase in the proportion of children (aged 13- 15) who experienced bullying in the 30 days prior to the survey. More specifically, there was a 5 percent increase among boys and a 9 percent increase among girls. Likewise, there was a 7 percent increase from 2011 to 2017 in the proportion of children aged 13-15 who had been in physical fights in the 12 months prior to the survey in Trinidad and Tobago. There was an 8 percent increase for boys and a 6 percent increase for girls. While there is little gender difference in bullying, boys (49 per cent) are significantly more likely to engage in physical fighting than girls (29 per cent). Children in Barbados and British Virgin Islands were least likely to experience bullying.

**Most ECA governments are working on related policy formulation and the development and implementation of systems and structures to support the new child justice laws,** with some progress being made. All countries now have new draft legislation in at least one of six agreed priority areas. Moreover, some countries have approved, and started implementation of, these new laws.<sup>72</sup> Eight of 12 countries now have national child abuse reporting and management protocols and two countries have justice systems that comply with the minimum standards laid down in the Beijing Rules of Justice, with another four very close to meeting these standards.<sup>73</sup> For example, on 20 November 2018, the Government of Saint Lucia passed the Child Justice Bill and the Children’s Care, Protection and Adoption Bill.<sup>74</sup>

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72 COAR 2016

73 COAR 2017

74 COAR 2018

Table 10: National Child Protection Legislation (OECS only) <sup>75</sup>

| National Child Protection Legislation by Country/Territory (OESC Member States only) |                        |                          |                      |                      |                         |                        |                                       |
|--|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Country/Territory  | Domestic Violence Bill | Child and Adoption Bill  | Care Bill            | Child Justice Bill   | Status of Children Bill | Child Maintenance Bill | Guardianship, Custody and Access Bill |
| Anguilla   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, not taken effect | In progress          | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Antigua & Barbuda  | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Barbados   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| British Virgin Islands   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Dominica   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Grenada  | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Montserrat   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| St. Kitts and Nevis  | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| St. Lucia  | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |
| Turks and Caicos Islands   | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect     | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect | Passed, taken effect    | Passed, taken effect   | Passed, taken effect                  |

**Key:**

Passed, taken effect  
 Passed, not taken effect  
 In progress  
 Not passed



Source: UNICEF, 2020

The case studies in Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago also demonstrated progress being made in other countries and territories. Child justice legislation has been developed in Dominica and is awaiting Cabinet approval and enactment. In addition, 325 children have been diverted/given alternatives from arrest or custodial sentences, representing a more than 300 per cent increase in the use of diversion in Dominica, through a non-governmental initiative directly with the magistrate court. However, there was no direct UNICEF role in this non-governmental initiative.

<sup>75</sup> Source: UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean. 2020

**Child protection policy and case management: Case study in Trinidad and Tobago**

The Child Policy 2020-2030 in Trinidad and Tobago was perceived as ground-breaking in the sub-region. It was prepared in a highly consultative fashion and has also "emphasized the importance of inter-agency coordination and efficiency in service provision; establishing timelines for case management and handling cases from one agency to the other," according to an interviewee. A Child Abuse Protocol is under preparation that will further cement these processes.

The success of the Trinidadian Family Court experience and its recognition over the last 12 years remained the region's best practice in the administration of family and children's justice.<sup>1</sup> Efforts have been made for other countries to learn from this experience (e.g. Antigua and Barbuda).

In Trinidad and Tobago, an urgently required upgrade of the case management system is also under way. Primero™ is an open-source software platform that helps social services, humanitarian and development workers manage protection-related data, with tools that facilitate case management, incident monitoring and family tracing and reunification ([www.primero.org](http://www.primero.org)) There is also an ambition to roll out the MIS across relevant agencies, though this is still in progress. Nevertheless, the Children's Authority still does not have sufficient human resources to manage the current case load of about 27,000 cases per year. They have the staff to take care of about 10,000, which entails a 60 per cent backlog.

**Progress has also been made on the legal ban of corporal punishment.** There is no legislation currently against corporal punishment in the home setting across the sub-region, and very few countries have banned it in other settings across the sub-region. In St. Lucia, it was abolished fully in May 2020, with clear, traceable influence of UNICEF ECA in this decision. Among the selected case study countries, Trinidad and Tobago is the most advanced in the banning of corporal punishment in different settings beyond the home. In British Virgin Islands, some progress has been made on the banning of corporal punishment in institutional settings. According to interviews, progress on Child Rights in the OCTs was driven particularly by pressure from the UK and others. In Dominica, legislation did not yet exist, though awareness raising has taken place through various activities (e.g. parental workshops, radio programmes, booklets). According to one interviewee, in Dominica "they will tell you that is rarely practiced". According to another interviewee, generally acceptance of corporal punishment has reduced in public and at the school level across the sub-region.



Table 11: Status on Legal Abolition of Corporal Punishment<sup>76</sup>

| Status of Legal Abolition of Corporal Punishment  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
|---|------|------------------|----------|---------|--------------------|------------|
| Country/Territory   | Home | Alternative Care | Day Care | Schools | Penal Institutions | Sentencing |
| Anguilla  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Antigua & Barbuda   |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Barbados  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| British Virgin Islands  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Dominica  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Grenada   |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Montserrat  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| St. Kitts and Nevis   |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| St. Lucia   |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| St. Vincent and the Grenadines  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Trinidad and Tobago   |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| Turks and Caicos Islands  |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |
| <i>Note: Status as of 15 November 2019</i><br><b>Key:</b><br>Abolished in law<br>Existing law providing partial abolition<br>Stated policy, ministerial statement or draft law under consideration for abolition<br>Not abolished |      |                  |          |         |                    |            |

Source: UNICEF, 2020

**Having legislation in place, does not mean that it is effectively implemented in practice.** At the sub-regional level, over two out of three children are subject to physical and psychological violent disciplining by parents or caretakers<sup>26</sup>. Adults in Trinidad and Tobago (27 per cent) and Grenada (31 per cent) are the least likely to support the banning of corporal punishment. Parents in Trinidad and Tobago are also the most likely to use corporal punishment, according to the same data.

The legislation and policies are one dimension of government commitment. Capacity dimensions, such as political leadership and will, the ability to network and relate, presence and efficiency of organizational structures and processes, and the availability of skilled human resources are critical challenges in the Caribbean, not least due to the small size of the islands and their respective civil services. Shared challenges also include the rapid turnover of civil servants, including brain-drain abroad, especially in the social sector, resulting in a lack of continuity in staff knowledge and skills. Interagency coordination is not a given, especially on issues such as violence and social protection, which bridged several different ministries and agencies. Based on consultations, strong political commitment to children and equity was at times overshadowed by a deep interest in the elderly as a critical constituency. Deeper resistance to confronting socially accepted norms, e.g. on violence, is also a concern.

**Actual experience with violence appears to continue.** Violence and abuse remain prevalent across the sub-region, being among the highest in the world, with a substantial risk to increase due to COVID-19.

<sup>76</sup> Source: UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean. 2020

## Textbox 1: Violence against Women and Girls in the Caribbean

Prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Caribbean is among the highest in the world. VAWG has proven to be so entrenched and normalized that both men and women have a high tolerance for its manifestations, particularly when perpetrated in the context of intimate partner relationships. Across five countries (Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago), on average, nearly 1 out of 2 or 46 per cent of ever-partnered women aged 15-64 have experienced one or more of the four types of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence) and 14 per cent experience one or more of the three types of IPV (physical, sexual and psychological violence). The intergenerational transmission of domestic violence paradigm suggests that violence is learned in childhood and transmitted across generations; thus, exposure to domestic violence in childhood is an important predictor for IPV in adulthood. Although 70 per cent of victims agreed that domestic violence should not remain a private matter, few had informed a health professional (13 per cent) or the police (5 per cent).

(UNICEF. Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area, 2020)

**The prevalence of sexual violence against children, especially girls is high**, with 25 per cent of young women aged 18-29 years having experienced sexual violence by the age of 18 in Trinidad and Tobago<sup>28</sup>. About 90 per cent of sexual abuse victims are girls, most in the 12-16 age group. Virtually all perpetrators are male and known to the victim. According to U-Report in Trinidad and Tobago, 79 per cent of girls have experienced or witnessed violent crime (as compared to 21 per cent of boys). While over 70 per cent had reported the crime, in 80 per cent of the cases it remained unresolved. The resolution of cases has been attributed namely to the police by the U-report respondents.

**Sex trafficking is also a problem in Trinidad and Tobago**, with traffickers increasingly targeting vulnerable foreign young women and girls aged 15-21, notably from Venezuela. According to one interviewee, reporting is up in Trinidad and Tobago, with an increase in emotional abuse cases in particular. So far, however there is no apparent impact from COVID-19, though reporting may be difficult". One of the greatest challenges is that corporal punishment is a socially accepted means of discipline in the general population. According to one interviewee, "we still believe beating children is ok. It is not frowned upon. You can beat them, but not abuse them; corporal punishment within reason". The negative social norm is further reinforced by the small size of the communities and islands in the sub-region. According to one interviewee, "the perpetrator is bound to be well known within the community."

**UNICEF ECA has increased emphasis on communication for development (C4D) specifically on corporal punishment and VAC**, also during the last MCP period. While the Break the Silence campaign was launched during the previous strategic programming period, related capacity-building workshops in nine countries and communication efforts continued. This led to heightened media coverage of child abuse cases in these countries and public calls for improved child protection services. Debate around the persistent problem of child sexual abuse in the ECA dominated public discourse on social media.

Communication and advocacy therefore have been directed not only at governmental decision-makers, but also other key stakeholders; though one interviewee felt UNICEF could improve the identification and use of related entry points beyond government. Continuous efforts have been made to raise awareness, among children and adolescents, but also teachers and care-givers. Some of the interviewees felt that UNICEF could do better at reaching-out to relevant civil society organizations and operating at the community (versus national, legislative) level; also with teachers and parents. There was a need to "wean them off" of corporal punishment, with greater education and the provision of alternatives. More

support may be needed particularly for households and parents (e.g. greater paternal responsibility for childcare vs. being the “punishers,” greater psychosocial support for families). According to another interviewee, the related messages were still somewhat top-down, “Don’t beat your children”, which potentially demonized parents, especially single-mothers. At the same time, according to another interviewee, frontal confrontation, like the work of some NGOs, may be counterproductive in the region.

Translating these communication materials and efforts into actual behavior change remains a challenge; also from the point of view of measuring this change.

**Prevalent social norms evolve only slowly over time.** According to one interviewee, change is a long process and cannot be achieved in 4-5 years. Each programme cycle builds on the last and slowly creating a better environment legally, politically and culturally. “It is hard to say that things have change because they take time”.

**Obesity and mental health among children and adolescents are emerging issues.** It is estimated that 10 per cent of children under five are overweight. By the time they reach adolescence, close to 30 per cent are overweight. A contributing factor is lifestyle, as data shows that only one in four adolescents on average undertake at least an hour of physical activity per day, compared to one in two who are engaging in sitting activities for 3 hours or more per day<sup>77</sup>.

On the mental health front, it is reported that 20 per cent of adolescents (24 per cent girls) have considered attempting suicide.<sup>78</sup> Based on recent consultations with children and adolescents, some of the related challenges include the stigma associated with mental health issues and access to support, whether through parents, school, church, friends or even social media, though related risks were also acknowledged. Some key issues facing children and young people included pressure from social and gender norms, fear of sexual exploitation and economic strains facing families, especially during COVID-19.<sup>79</sup> UNICEF ECA has committed to investing in further understanding these emerging issues in 2020-2021, with a view to developing ways of addressing them in the next programme cycle.

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77 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

78 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

79 UNICEF (2021) Engaging Children and Young People in the Eastern Caribbean Area: Anguilla, Barbados, Dominica, Montserrat and Trinidad and Tobago

### 7.3.3 Social inclusion and child rights monitoring

#### *Social inclusion and child rights monitoring*

##### **Main findings:**

The flagship data UNICEF data product has been the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), though its influence, along with other produced data and evidence on government strategies and policies is more mixed, based on interview data. UNICEF advocacy for the increase of public expenditure for children is a particular weakness, with also no data regularly gathered on related government commitments by UNICEF ECA.

UNICEF has been extending its mandate into social protection, especially through the use of its DRR support as a catalyst for broader policy reform (e.g. British Virgin Islands, Dominica) but its mandate and added-value, also in relation to that of other UN agencies remains less clear, based on other evaluations and interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

##### **MCP Results Framework Indicators:**

Percentage of children, both boys and girls, living below the national poverty line or in multidimensional poverty

Number of countries with functioning mechanisms for systematically collecting, analyzing and using disaggregated data and other forms of information that use regionally established tools for monitoring and reporting on the situation of women and children

Number of countries with gender-and child-responsive social protection and education policies and strategies

Number of countries that implement gender and child responsive budgeting tools

Public expenditure for children (percentage of GDP) disaggregated by sector: social protection, health, education, child protection, and ECD

Percentage of the eligible population covered by social protection floors or systems, disaggregated by sex, and distinguishing children, the unemployed, the elderly, people with disabilities, pregnant women/newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and vulnerable

Number of children covered by social protection systems

Proportion of children covered by social protection systems of the total children targeted by social protection systems

Despite the ambitions of this component to strengthen monitoring of child rights, namely through the strengthening of data and related national systems, data availability was a major challenge. While overall poverty statistics were gathered in some countries, also with UNICEF support (see particularly the MICS), they were not available across all geographies and were frequently out of data. Nevertheless, work on the measurement of multi-dimensional poverty continued, particularly with the CDB. No data was available on public expenditure for children, despite it being one of the indicators in the MCP results framework. Data on the coverage of children by social protection systems was also missing, being limited to a description of the social protection systems in some countries and territories.

## Child poverty

Despite the progress made by ECA countries and territories in the fulfilment of children rights over the years, there are still several issues children and young people face which negatively affect their wellbeing, opportunities and life chances. One in three children in the ECA (32 percent) live in poverty, compared to one in five adults and 3 per cent in extreme poverty.

Table 12: Child Indigence and poverty rates in the ECA

| Country/Territory                | Child indigence rates (%) | Child poverty rates (%) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Anguilla                         | 0                         | 47.2                    |
| Antigua and Barbuda              | 4.5                       | 24.3                    |
| Barbados                         | 6.4                       | 35.6                    |
| British Virgin Islands           | 0.4                       | 29.1                    |
| Dominica                         | 6.2                       | 38                      |
| ECA average                      | 3.1                       | 32.9                    |
| Grenada                          | 4                         | 50.9                    |
| Montserrat                       | 5.2                       | 46.9                    |
| Saint Kitts and Nevis            | 1.5                       | 31.2                    |
| Saint Lucia                      | 2                         | 34.5                    |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | 4.4                       | 37.6                    |
| Trinidad and Tobago*             | 0                         | 21.4                    |
| Turks and Caicos Islands         | 0                         | 26.2                    |

Source: OECS Commission and UNICEF, Child Poverty in the ECA, Final Report (2017)

\*Source: Kairi Consultants (2007)<sup>80</sup>

The child poverty rate in Grenada, at 50.9 percent, was the highest in the region, followed by Montserrat (46.9 percent), Dominica (38 percent), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (37.6 percent), Barbados (35.6 percent), and Saint Lucia (34.5 percent). The child poverty rate was lowest in Anguilla. The last published Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) in T&T was in 2005 and recorded poverty at 21.4 per cent and the level of indigence at 0 percent, but given the age of this data it cannot be compared to the more recent figures published by OECS for the other countries/territories. This also made tracking change over time, in line with the MCP results framework a challenge. There was no clear baseline and data was not available across all 12 geographies for the same time periods, using the same source and methods.

<sup>80</sup>

The last published survey of living conditions in Trinidad and Tobago was in 2005 and is shown in the table above, though it must be noted that this data is much older than the OECS data.

Child poverty rates varied strongly with the number of children in the household and by the gender of the head of household to some degree, but not always. A significant number of the vulnerable child population resided in female headed households, large households and households with migrants<sup>81</sup>. Poverty rates were also higher among households from other Caribbean islands (e.g. British Virgin Islands),<sup>82</sup> according to the OECS 2017 report on Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean.

Households with four or more children had poverty rates averaging 80 per cent higher than the overall child poverty rate. In contrast, households with one or two children had poverty rates below or close to the adult and overall poverty rates. In seven out of the nine countries for which data was available, these large households accounted for over 40 per cent (rising to almost 60 per cent) of all poor children. In most countries, children in female-headed households were more likely to be poor than those in male-headed households. However, this was not always the case, and in several countries, the variation in poverty rates was small. The three countries with the highest female-male differentials were Barbados, Grenada and British Virgin Islands.<sup>83</sup>

### **Data on children's rights**

**The flagship UNICEF data product has been the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).** It has gone some way in bridging the major data challenges that characterize the region. MICS were conducted in five countries and territories, with the design of new MICS under-way in Saint Lucia (2nd MICS) and Trinidad and Tobago (3rd MICS). Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia and Turks & Caicos. Data collection were adapted to COVID-19 requirements in the latter cases. According to one interviewee, in some instances MICS has even replaced household poverty data. Ultimately, the objective has been the mainstreaming of child poverty and young people in national poverty reports (e.g. Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines). Additional research products, with a particular emphasis on the disaggregation of data were produced, including the following:

- The multi-country child poverty analysis conducted in collaboration with OECS Commission, based on a survey of living conditions (2016)
- OECS Education Statistical Digest
- Situational analyses in each of the 12 countries and territories<sup>84</sup>
- Promotion of CRC reporting

**Support for the collection of disability data, never progressed.** Generally, there is low demand for social data, lack of resources (staff, budget, skills) and insufficient cross-sectoral coordination.<sup>85</sup> Political will is also a concern in some contexts (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago)

**The influence of data and evidence in government strategies and policies is more mixed.** Delays were incurred in the finalization of surveys and studies, there were continued data inadequacies and a persistent lack of systematic use of data to inform evidence-based decision-making and allocation of resources.<sup>86</sup> UNICEF advocacy for the increase of public expenditure for children was a particular weakness. UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff also felt that less results were obtained in this area.<sup>87</sup> Eastern Caribbean countries and territories allocated on average only 4.1 per cent of GDP to education, 4 per

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81 UNICEF. Situation Analysis of Children in the Eastern Caribbean (2019)

82 OECS Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean (2017)

83 OECS Child Poverty in the Eastern Caribbean (2017)

84 Coar 2016

85 COAR 2016

86 COAR 2017

87 Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)

cent to health and just over 1 per cent to social services.<sup>88</sup> There was no systematic collection of expenditure data across the sub-region. Despite direct efforts to conduct budget analyses in the OCTs, budget allocations have not increased, based on interview data. UNICEF has also been less engaged with key government partners, such as ministries responsible for planning and especially finance. UNICEF influence on public expenditure for children has therefore been minimal, based on interviews.

### **Social protection legislation, policies and systems**

**UNICEF has been extending its mandate into social protection.** UNICEF was active in the establishment of the OECS Social Protection Technical Committee, which is useful for advocacy and knowledge-sharing.<sup>89</sup> Related legislation was reviewed in Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat through high-level advocacy in the framework of a UNICEF/UN Women Joint Programme on Social Protection. Draft bills on social protection for Antigua and Barbuda and Montserrat were prepared and adopted. The bills are currently pending final inputs from ministers of the respective social development ministries. One challenge is coordination between the labor and social development sectors, as the two main ministries involved will have to begin to strategically engage. The evaluation of the St Kitts and Nevis pilot social protection programme was aimed to support government efforts to scale up from a pilot programme and reach about 5,690 poor and vulnerable children and families, as part of efforts to promote resilience.<sup>90</sup>

These social protection policies and systems are being developed (e.g. in Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago) as a spin-off from cash transfer projects of hurricane response and now for the COVID-19 response. Dominica is working to strengthen delivery of the country's public assistance programme – its flagship cash transfer intervention, which covers more than 1,000 children in recipient households. The British Virgin Islands are also attempting to review its social protection system, as a result of the cash transfer experience during the hurricane response. There is also a potential opportunity to incorporate a cash transfer component for transport cost of 150 migrant children to school in Trinidad and Tobago. This may be a way to incrementally integrate migrants into national social security system over time.

**Challenges remain on UN and broader donor coordination.** There is an ambition to translate emergency cash transfer response to more comprehensive social protection reform. However, this has faltered due to challenges in identifying the specific UNICEF added-value, as well as inter-agency coordination among competing UN agencies; namely the WFP. Many players are working on cash transfer and social safety nets, requiring coordination. One interviewee felt there was "competition (on which UN agency) can provide cash transfers first, rather than a strategic approach in this area". Other development partners, such as the World Bank, also have a substantial social safety net footprint in the broader region. There is also a need to consider cash transfers through a humanitarian-development or 'double nexus' lens, i.e.: allowing people to survive and meet short-term, acute needs whilst also considering longer-term development objectives.

#### **7.3.4 EXTERNAL CHALLENGES TO UNICEF ECA RESULTS**

**The economic situation and poor fiscal position of the countries and territories in the sub-region is a major, underlying constraint** for achieving all of the results of the UNICEF MCP. The debt-to-GDP ratio remains high, especially among the small, OECS and tourism dependent economies. The economic situation has been further exacerbated by COVID-19. All of the interviewees felt that the governments in the sub-region were not able to assign already scarce resources to social priorities generally and more specifically to those concerning children. Despite the substantial support provided in the ECD sector,

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88 UNICEF Situation Analysis 2019

89 COAR 2016

90 COAR 2017

many interviewees still felt that this was not a government priority. There were also insufficient resources identified for scaling up access to ECD, especially for the most vulnerable children.<sup>91</sup> Child protection was a challenging topic due to the complexity of underlying factors, including the small size of islands and communities and deeply entrenched norms which all reduced governments willingness to address the highly sensitive topic, except in cases where individual leaders championed the issue (e.g. Saint Lucia).

**Most notably, the lack of political will was reflected in the stagnant budget allocations for children's issues.** 24 per cent of the MCP-E e-survey felt UNICEF ECA did fairly or very poorly in addressing constraints in public finance. In the last European Union financial framework, no country or territory identified a UNICEF sector for support, with the exception of Anguilla, which sought infrastructure support for re-building in the education sector after hurricane Irma. However, this was not the case in all countries. Based on interview data alone, the budget allocations for children's issues in Trinidad and Tobago were at a historical high and it was not critical to ensure that the commitments were actually allocated and spent. There was a particular need to advocate for more cost-effective, preventative measures, as the allocations for institutionalized care were particularly challenged in government. Mobilization of programme resources for non-emergency results areas remained a challenge, despite persistent UNICEF efforts.<sup>92</sup>

**Policy change is hampered by actual implementation of reforms.** The lack of political will influenced particularly the implementation of policy reforms, which ultimately is more costly in both human resource and budget terms. The case of child justice reform in Trinidad and Tobago is illustrative of this challenge. While the legal and policy framework is highly ambitious, the implementation of related reforms, such as the case management system, is much more challenging, due to constraints in human resources and budget allocation; especially in light of more recent public budget constraints and staff cuts stemming from the low, global oil and gas price. Based on interview data, there is a real need now to package reform ideas, with the right messaging, targeted at the right instances, including the Ministry of Finance. According to another interviewee, UNICEF has not fully grasped the political complexity in Trinidad and Tobago and there is further need to strengthen efforts to identify reform champions and advocate for sought changes, especially with the window of opportunity provided by the ambitious Child Policy.

**Due to their income status the countries and territories are also not able to escape the debt trap.** The countries are also not able to obtain concessional finance, with middle-income countries and territories having substantially less engagement with donors and particularly multi-lateral development banks.

**Economic constraints are closely linked with political will.** In the face of limited resources, priorities do not tend to focus on the social sector. One interviewee felt that there is also less attention given to children's issues, due to the power of voting constituencies, where elderly have greater influence.

**Priorities may have to shift to social protection during major crises** (e.g. Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) plan, as a result of COVID-19). This may prove to be a window of opportunity also for the next UNICEF ECA MCP.

**The relationship of individual countries with the UN system generally was an issue in some cases.** The small, but relatively wealthy countries and territories are rightfully proud of their sovereignty and economic achievements. Political will to engage with the UN system has been a particular challenge in Trinidad and Tobago. The issue remains extremely politically sensitive in the country, though UNICEF

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91 COAR 2017

92 COAR 2017



has been able to navigate around some of these constraints due to skillful advocacy and strong networks with reform champions in-country. While all of the countries do want to strongly exercise their sovereignty and prefer to align any external support tightly with their own priorities (e.g. British Virgin Islands), others are more amenable and in need of external support. For example, in Dominica, external assistance, including from the UN and UNICEF is perceived as critical for the post-hurricane recovery efforts.

**Economic constraints are also related to the small size and limited capacity of the countries and territories.** Therefore, the economies of scale across sub-regional efforts are critical (e.g. OECS, CDEMA, UWI). Size alone was a perceived constraint, though challenged by some research.<sup>93</sup> The small size of the islands definitely influenced the capacity of the government and civil service to pass and implement reforms. The centralization of decision-making in the cabinet and the position of the Permanent Secretary is something that characterizes all decision-making in the region, slowing down the reform process. Continued delays in policy development and approval affected programmes in several countries.<sup>94</sup> The capacity of the civil service to implement reforms is further constrained by the limited number, but qualified civil servants. There is also substantially high turnover and even brain drain away from the region. This appears to apply particularly to ministries and agencies operating in the social sector.

Extreme vulnerability to climate change and more frequent, stronger storms is also a major external constraint that will only grow in the coming years. According to one interviewee, it is very challenging to “build back better,” in countries like Dominica, where the government and public purse are still reeling from the last hurricane, when the next already arrives. The sub-region is also having to deal with other natural disasters (e.g. major flooding, volcanic eruption). The La Soufrière volcano erupted in March 2021 in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The lava dome is expanding and the alert level is now red.<sup>95</sup> Apparently, contingency planning was already underway, based on interviews. Finally, the large influx of Venezuelans to Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates the continuing migration pressures in the sub-region; also from Haiti.

**Finally, deeply entrenched norms also constrained progress in the critical area of child protection, in particular.** Reforms on difficult topics, such as corporal punishment and abuse are challenging and require time, also due to small size of the communities and entrenched social norms. Notably, about 20 per cent of the MCP-E e-survey respondents felt that UNICEF ECA did fairly or very poorly in addressing entrenched social norms around corporal punishment and did fairly poorly in addressing entrenched gender norms through its programming in the sub-region. Therefore, persistent, long-term communications efforts around awareness raising with children, adolescents, families, caregivers and other key target audiences remains critical.

### 7.3.5 INTERNAL FACTORS IN ACHIEVING UNICEF ECA MCP RESULTS

Overall, the perception of UNICEF and its implementation of the MCP is generally positive, though internal challenges were observed. 20.69 per cent of stakeholders responding to the perception survey perceived the relevance of services delivered as ‘very good’ and 37.93 per cent as ‘fairly good’. Similar figures were recorded for both the quality of services delivered (20.69 per cent ‘very good’; 34.48 per cent ‘fairly good’) and timeliness of delivery (23.33 per cent ‘very good’; 33.33 per cent ‘fairly good’). There were slightly more mixed signals in relation to the implementation of the multi-country office

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<sup>93</sup> Ruprah, Melgarejo, and Sierra (2014)

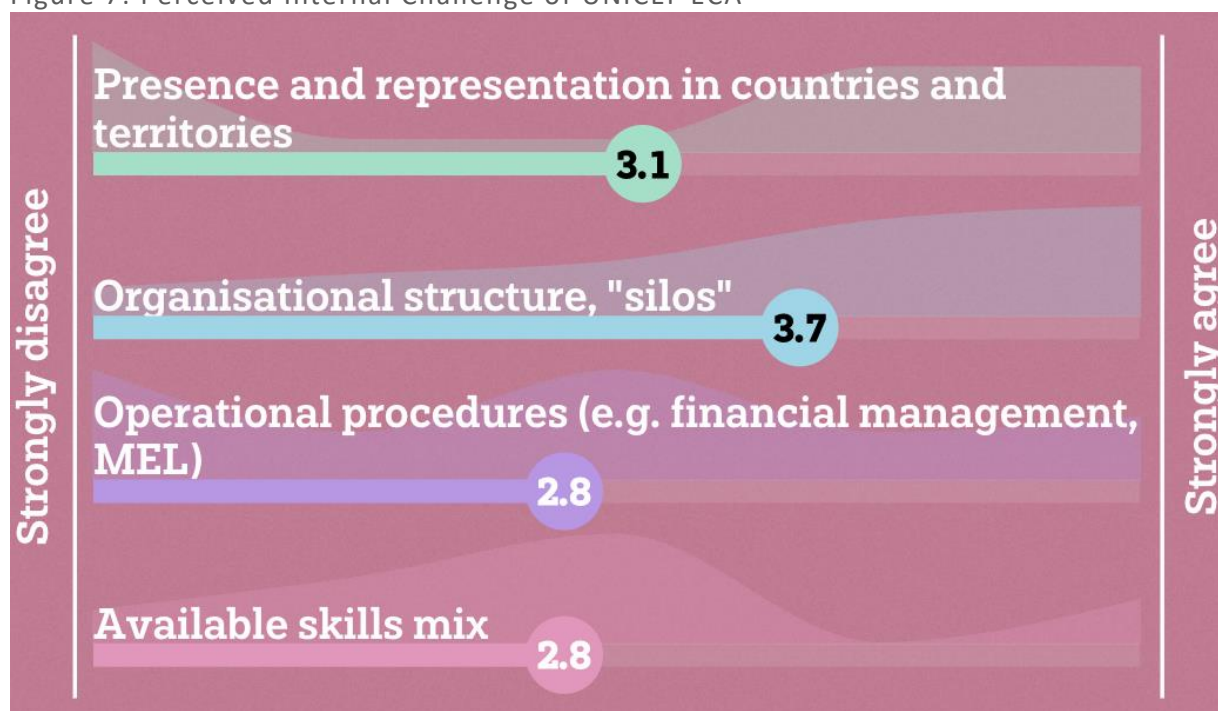
<sup>94</sup> COAR 2017

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.volcanodiscovery.com/soufriere-st-vincent/news/125483/Soufriere-St-Vincent-volcano-West-Indies-lava-dome-continues-to-grow-slowly.html>

model, however; 16.67 per cent rated this as 'very good', 23.33 per cent as 'fairly good' while 20 per cent of respondents perceived the model to be 'fairly poor'.

When asked about the greatest internal UNICEF ECA challenge, UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff felt that the organizational structure was the greatest challenge, followed by its presence and representation across the countries and territories across the sub-region.

Figure 7: Perceived Internal Challenge of UNICEF ECA



Source: Participatory mentimeter with 25 respondents

These and other reasons for perceived challenges with the multi-country model are further explored below.

### Leadership

One of the internal factors observed that positively influenced the achievement of MCP outputs and outcomes was the quality of leadership, which facilitated excellent relationships with partners and at the highest levels of government across all countries. This came out strongly in interviews with key stakeholders, as well as in the perception survey, with 10.34 per cent of respondents rating strategic leadership as 'excellent', 20 per cent as 'very good' and 34.48 per cent as 'fairly good'. Key informants noted that senior leadership was very responsive, open to ideas and proactive, with strong strategic thinking and an ability to see the big picture in the region. However, it was noted that relationships were dependent on individuals, rather than an institutional approach.

### Internal structure and processes

**There were several internal challenges observed with the MCP model.** The perception survey highlighted mixed views on the internal structures and procedures, with 13.79 per cent finding these 'very good', 20.69 per cent 'fairly good' and 17.24 per cent finding them to be 'fairly poor'. An equal number of respondents (6.9 per cent) found them to be 'excellent' and 'very poor.'

A key challenge relates to the fact that the programme covers 12 small island states/territories and internal resources – human and financial – are spread across these. This affects several areas, including,

for example, relationship development and management with governments. This is particularly true in contexts where it takes longer to build trust to forge strong relationships and build networks. It has also led to a lack of understanding of specific government needs in certain cases. For example, there is already a very high level of technical assistance provided to the government in Trinidad and Tobago, and it would be more effective to assess remaining gaps and propose a more tailored response to this based on the skills and capacity that are still required. The UNICEF ECA team is composed of 25 national and international general service and professional staff working together on the implementation of the MCP. Staff are often also spread too thinly within countries, which can lead to partners coming to them for all programme-related questions and staff not always having the answers or technical expertise to support them. Budget resources are also spread very thinly across a broad spectrum of objectives, which hampers both efficiency and effectiveness of the MCP.

A further challenge noted by several stakeholders relates to the lack of alignment between corporate procedures and the needs and challenges unique to MCP. This can also lead to a disconnect between corporate procedures and the culture and capacity of all 12 small island states/territories. The UN operating system does not allow for the complexity of a MCP. For example, when responding to the Strategic Management Questions (SMQ) at the end of the year, staff have to answer the same question 12 times. Staff also have to report equally on each country, despite overlap and duplication of effort which leads to inefficiencies.

**It was also noted by both staff and partners that the programmatic approach could be improved.**

There are challenges in coordination between the main areas of operation which is strongly felt by many different stakeholders. The technical teams often work in silos, with a lack of an integrated and cohesive approach across the areas of social protection, education and child protection. This is reflected in the results of the perception survey, with 33.33 per cent finding the internal coordination between themes and staff to be 'fairly good' and 16.67 per cent viewing these as 'fairly poor'; 3.3 per cent perceived internal coordination as 'very poor'. The technical officers are seen by partners as leading on the technical areas, leading to the perception of an individual approach rather than an institutional approach to programming.

**There is also a clear divide between the humanitarian and development teams** which could be improved to promote more of a double nexus approach to programming. For example, there is no coordinator who understands both the humanitarian and development structures to bridge the divide and develop mutual understanding on the links between addressing short-term, immediate needs and longer-term development objectives. This includes issues such as connectedness and the role of humanitarian cash transfers in a social protection response. There is also a perceived capacity gap among external stakeholders on UNICEF ECA's ability to effectively plan and respond to emergencies; partners report that while UNICEF is excellent at communicating the consequences of crises, they are less effective at addressing these directly.

**Stakeholders also observed that the right balance of skills and staff has not yet been achieved.**

First, the number of staff necessary to cover all technical areas across the MCP are not in place and efforts are not always made to address this. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, there was a need to recruit an education specialist who understood the education system and had strong local networks with education interlocutors. Instead, the office appointed two UNVs from outside the country with no experience of the local education system, or networks. Secondly, the right technical skills are not always covered, with generalists expected to cover technical areas that are not aligned with their experience. Conversely, programme specialists are assigned general administrative tasks that are time-consuming and could potentially be done by programme assistants or administrative staff. Thirdly, there is a dependence on individuals to create and maintain positive working relationships with partners; this should be based on an institutional approach instead.

## Business model

The operating structures and business model were already an area of concern prior to the pandemic, with COVID-19 adding an additional layer of challenges to the internal structure and implementation model. A recent analysis of UNICEF ECA workload<sup>96</sup> highlighted that between 2012 and 2014, “UNICEF did not articulate a specific business model for operating in middle-income small island states while addressing an upstream agenda” which led to UNICEF ECA adopting an upstream agenda as set out in the 2014-2017 MTSP without any corresponding changes to the business model.<sup>97</sup> This did not consider several key issues, including, for example, the importance of country-level presence, vulnerability of the region to natural disasters or the need for an integrated humanitarian-development, or double nexus, approach with the recruitment of staff with the necessary skills and expertise. Although UNICEF ECA conducted risk assessments consistently between 2014 – 2020, these assessments did not include a focus on the need to review the business model. A review of the business model could lead to improvements of both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the MCP implementation model.

The business model was also not adapted to reflect the evolving context and shift in priorities. Despite the introduction of UN Reform and the changes in the socio-economic environment in the region, and the emerging priority areas of complex issues such as migration and climate change, the traditional business model was retained.

## Staffing

A major challenge to relevance highlighted by a number of interviewees was the need for appropriate level of UNICEF support from specialists who have appropriate experience of the sector. As well as sector knowledge it was also critical that staff understand the context and have a level of awareness and credibility from government staff was seen as a major challenge. This is a challenge for UNICEF’s staffing structure across the ECA sub-region.

## Heavy workloads

UNICEF ECA report that heavy workloads can have a negative impact on their ability to sufficiently focus on implementation of the MCP. Pre-Covid, programme specialists reported spending up to 70 per cent of their time on administrative tasks and generally, all staff were already spending 5-10 hours a month on administrative tasks and UN coordination meetings. The time and energy required to complete the mandatory administrative tasks resulted in less time available for programme implementation and unmanageable workloads for programme staff. The UN Reform process has also increased workloads for key staff members, including the Deputy Representative, the M&E officer and the Social Policy Specialist.

**COVID-19 only served to increase the number of (online) meetings that had to be attended and added to already heavy workloads.** The shift from in-person working to virtual, remote working led to the need for retraining and reframing responsibilities and functions within teams; while this was reported to have been well managed on the operations side, it was less effective within the programme section. This compounded existing challenges, including overlap and gaps within job descriptions for programme staff as well as a lack of consistency and coherence as part of these. Duplication of effort led to inefficiencies and contributed to unnecessarily heavy workloads. This is reflective of the findings of the 2020 UNICEF Global Staff survey; globally, 48 per cent of staff reported that *“in my office, there is little duplication of work”* and 48 per cent reported *“the workload is distributed fairly in my office”*. ECA staff responses were not nearly as positive; 27 per cent of ECA staff reported *“in my office, there is little duplication of work”* and just 23 per cent reported that *“the workload is distributed fairly in my office”*.

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96 UNICEF Eastern Caribbean workload analysis: mission-focused accountability with a team-friendly culture, Christine Norton, March 2021

97 Ibid, p.13

## Monitoring and reporting

Unsurprisingly, the hurricanes and global pandemic affected the original MCP objectives, and plans and targets were set aside due to the crisis. While objectives and activities were adapted, indicators and targets were not adjusted accordingly. UNICEF contribution and additionality are also not always clear.

**The quality of both the monitoring system and the way that data is collected, managed and analyzed is limited.** The original MCP indicators, baselines and targets were not revisited, either with updated data or with shifting priorities. While research is conducted (e.g. MICS, various perception surveys) usually with a sufficient degree of rigor, the overall quality of data across the sub-region remains very weak and data is not accessible and managed adequately to allow for accountability or learning. Similar weaknesses have been observed at the UN level across the sub-region<sup>98</sup>. Formal reporting is focused on the annual COAR reporting, which nevertheless does not systematically relate to the results framework, especially its indicators and targets. While adapting to changing circumstances, especially frequent crises is required, these adjustments also need to be reflected in the related monitoring systems, with a view to accountability and particularly, rapid decision-making and learning loops to continue improving interventions along the way.

Several challenges were observed in relation to monitoring and reporting beyond the adaptations required due to the ongoing pandemic. Ongoing monitoring and subsequent reflection of what is working well and less well at both the output and outcome level could be improved. For example, the Note Masters system for the migrant children's education programme was adopted by UNICEF based on the assumption that this linked with the Caribbean Examinations Council. However, the system did not deliver as planned but this was not picked up early enough. Staff noted that there needs to be more systematic reflection built into the institutional culture that would allow these challenges to be identified earlier, saving time later on and leading to greater overall efficiency and effectiveness.

## Partners reported difficulties with reporting due to rigid and inflexible reporting requirements.

For example, the reporting period begins when funds are requested from UNICEF, but these funds often take time to get through to the implementing partner and the context may have shifted slightly by the time funds are received. However, UNICEF still requires 3-month reporting, which partners noted as challenging. The reporting process is also quite demanding for some partners whose own internal monitoring systems are not aligned with UNICEF's systems and the technical and time-consuming nature of UNICEF reporting requirements has also led to partners needing to hire extra support just to cover that area of work. Partners also stated that in some instances, UNICEF's own monitoring data tends to focus on successes, but fails to also highlight challenges.

In summary, while evidence generation and particularly its use in advocacy was a key UNICEF ECA mechanism of change, the strongest evidence was generated in the education sphere, notably with OECS leadership. The influence of the evidence, notably on ECD and gender disparities nevertheless was not reflected either in UNICEF ECA strategies, which continued to focus on ECD or on actual performance and retention in the school system, especially of boys. While strategies to support behavior change were utilized in the life-long learning component, notably in the British Virgin Islands, among the case study countries, they were the most prominent in the security and justice for children component. Efforts there were focused directly on adolescents and children, as well as caregivers and teachers to address particularly entrenched norms and values relating to violence. Nevertheless, related changes will require a time period well beyond the life-cycle of a single MCP. The monitoring of children's rights was a key focus of the social inclusion and child rights monitoring component, notably through the MICS. Nevertheless, in this component, as among the others, data availability across the 12 countries and territories, its periodicity and quality remained major concerns.

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98 UN Caribbean (2021). End of Cycle Evaluation\_ Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (2017-2021)

## 7.4 COHERENCE

**Evaluation question 4:** What is UNICEF's added value in the 12 Eastern Caribbean countries/territories – particularly in comparison to other UN agencies? Are these strengths a result of UNICEF corporate features or are they specific to the multi-country Office?

**Main findings:**

The M-CPD and ToC did not sufficiently capture UNICEF added-value, especially the interlinkages and synergies between upstream and downstream approaches and between inside-track and outside track advocacy; the latter being closely linked to the UNICEF established "brand" and excellent communications, which are among its global assets, based on the e-survey and interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

### UNICEF Added-value

UNICEF is most known for its exclusive focus and dedication to children, especially around child protection and also on access to education. This was clear in the structure of the MCP, its ToC and it was confirmed unequivocally by all interviewees. Of the MCP-E e-survey respondents, 88 per cent felt that UNICEF provided added-value, through its focus on children. According to one interviewee, "the value of UNICEF is the awareness that they create around children, the sense of feeling and empathy toward children".

**There is also no other organization that is focusing as closely on child protection issues.** On education, UNICEF has an established position, recognized competence and a close presence in the sub-region (e.g. in comparison with UNESCO). UNICEF has strong competencies in education and is a "known brand". Meanwhile, on social protection, UNICEF does not have an exclusive mandate and needs to work with partners, including other UN agencies (e.g. WFP). DRR efforts are also conducted in close coordination with partners. Some interviewees even felt that UNICEF had a predominant role in DRR, namely due to the focus on hurricane response and now COVID-19. UNICEF capacity to organize emergency responses and interact and define communication strategies with the communities was greatly appreciated.<sup>99</sup> According to one interviewee, "the value of UNICEF is the awareness that they create around children, the sense of feeling and empathy toward children".

**UNICEF added-value is also closely linked to its established "brand" and excellent communications.** This was almost as frequently mentioned among all different groups of interviewees, as was the identification of UNICEF through its exclusive focus on children. Likewise, 84 per cent felt that UNICEF communication was part of its added-value. UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff also agreed that results had been particularly achieved in raising awareness on children's rights.<sup>100</sup> Strong capabilities in communications also reflected in UNICEF advocacy. One interviewee called UNICEF "half UN agency, half civil society organization". Many interviewees enumerated visible UNICEF campaigns (e.g. backpacks to demonstrate COVID-19 impact on students). UNICEF expertise on communication was also considered a big opportunity to address any "hesitation around COVID-19 vaccination, to provide advice, coordinate approaches on vaccine communications and logistics, with their tremendous experience on child vaccination".

However, some did suggest that due to the strong communication focus, at times it also became the predominant driver of UNICEF engagement, at the cost of actual implementation of impactful

<sup>99</sup> JECT Evaluation 2018

<sup>100</sup> Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)

interventions on the ground or even the rigor of research, according to one interviewee. The fundraising incentive was frequently connected with this more critical view on UNICEF communications. One interviewee noted that “high visibility also poses responsibilities and challenges, both with governments, as well as other UN agencies.” It is clear that the strong visibility and communications of UNICEF raises the ire of other UN agencies in particular.

**UNICEF is therefore known for its “blended” approach to advocacy.** Based on the MCP-E e-survey, as many respondents appreciated the inside-track, quiet diplomacy and policy advice, as well as the “out-side track” activism and related communication efforts of the organization. 42 per cent of survey respondents felt that UNICEF activism (e.g. direct action to support children’s rights) was excellent or very good, with 16 per cent considering it excellent, compared with 36 per cent who thought similarly of UNICEF advice to governments. The two approaches, which are often considered diametrically opposite, both characterized UNICEF advocacy.

### **Inside track diplomacy**

**UNICEF is also known for its good relationship with the government and inside-track diplomacy.** Relationships are fostered by both leadership and staff. According to one interviewee, UNICEF enters relationships with the government “through the backdoor”. A number of UNICEF staff mentioned that different ministers in the region had them on “speed dial,” and that UNICEF staff had very personal, valued relationships with government officials, which differentiated them from other agencies. “By being a trusted partner UNICEF can influence policy over time and get positive results, though concrete attribution of these results is difficult”, according to one interviewee. Another mentioned that UNICEF was considered “sensitive and politically astute”. Qualities of individual staff were highly appreciated by all respondents. One interviewee termed it a “heart thing” very much linked to individual relationships with UNICEF personnel. However, the flip side was that the strong dependence on individuals was insufficiently institutionalized in UNICEF structures and procedures.

**The key was being available and identifying concrete areas where UNICEF can provide government assistance.** Often, this was small initiatives, instead of large budget commitments. According to one government representative, “they add value, because they are hands on”. Examples, such as the St. Lucia case on child protection demonstrate that UNICEF staff understand what governments need and can provide it when required. According to another interview, “this sounds very downstream. We get caught up in the upstream, but it is practical support which is required, not intellectual policy level discussion. That is what sets UNICEF apart”.

Inside track diplomacy seemed particularly well suited to the sub-region and its capacity needs. One interview termed it a “post-colonial hiccup”. According to another government official “UNICEF do not over power us. They always build capacity”. Of the MCP-E e-survey respondents, 77 per cent felt that UNICEF influenced policy change, 62 per cent felt UNICEF contributed to government system strengthening and 68 per cent on training.

Some, though fewer also mentioned how UNICEF generates technical knowledge, through consultants and research. According to one government respondent, “they have assisted us beyond their expected scope, through advice, sharing best practice from other countries. reviewing documents, technical recommendations and lending expertise in initiatives; technical expertise and time. Far fewer mentioned the data generated by UNICEF, notably the MICS.

UNICEF may nevertheless not be using all of its influence channels, as it works less through **civil society organizations** and the private sector. “One stream of advocacy is giving ammunition to others that can use it to hold the government to account – UNICEF is not doing this well,” according to a civil society representative.

## UNICEF Partnerships

**Evaluation question 5:** To what extent were meaningful partnerships or coordination mechanisms established with other key actors e.g. government at national and local levels, civil society, NGOs, academia, other UN agencies etc. to avoid duplication of efforts, miscommunication and clearer accountabilities?

**Main findings:**

While relationships and partnerships were well established with government and other UN agencies, they were not yet fostered with all potential like-minded organizations (e.g. donors, IFIs, civil society organizations, private sector), based on the e-survey, whether for joint advocacy (e.g. to review structural challenges in data, government budgets, government capacity and implementation challenges, quality of services) or for leveraging additional financing, including more innovative financing solutions.

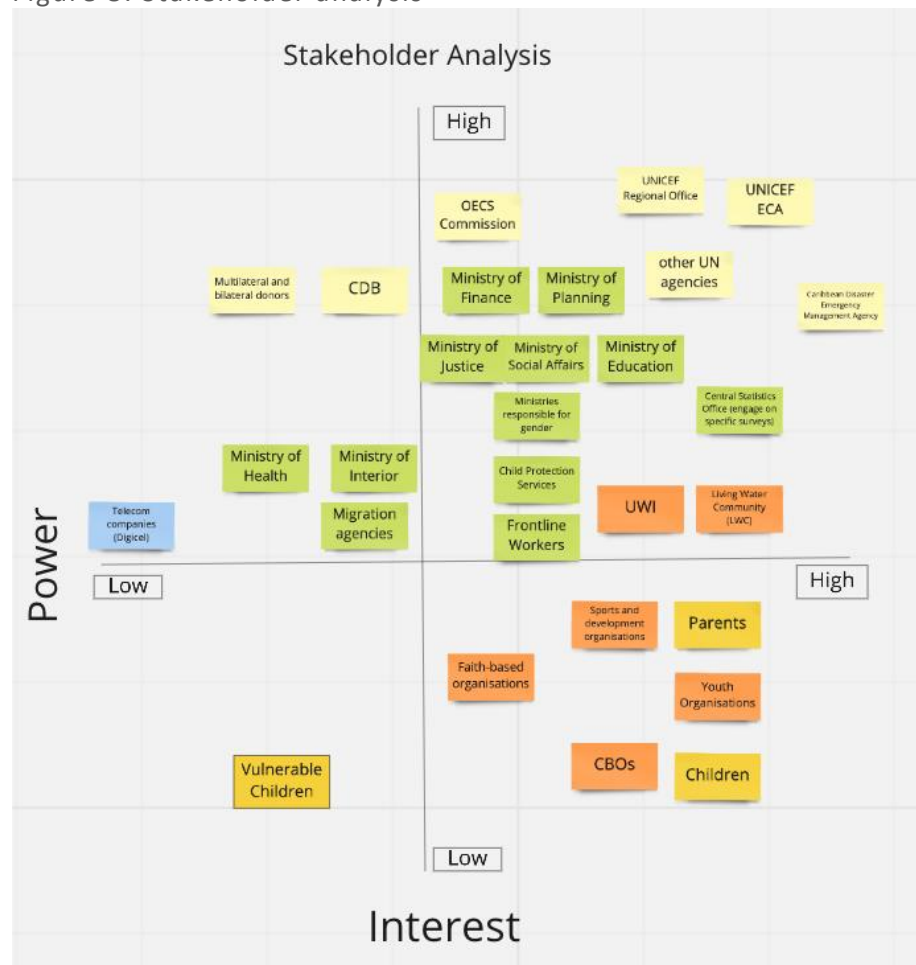
UNICEF is committed to UN reform and joint programming (e.g. COVID-19 response), though roles and operating procedures are not always fully clear, especially in relation to requirements imposed on implementing partners, based namely on interview data.

**Strength of Evidence:** Medium

A participatory stakeholder analysis process was initiated during the inception phase, with a view to identifying who needed to change, and how, to achieve UNICEF objectives. After a desk review and brainstorming on key stakeholders for the design of the evaluation, they were discussed and plotted on a 2X2 interest and influence matrix during a participatory session (see Figure 8 below). The analysis was further complemented through the desk review and bilateral design discussions with key stakeholders. A more detailed stakeholder analysis was conducted for the selected case study countries as a part of the sample development for the data collection tools.



Figure 8: Stakeholder analysis



Source: Mentimeter with 22 participants

The table below summarizes the level of engagement with different types of stakeholders across ECA.

Table 13: Level of stakeholder engagement across geographies

| Stakeholder   | Type of organization              | Geographic reach   | Degree of engagement (Level) |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <b>UNICEF ECA Multi-Country Office (MCO)</b>  | International organization/agency | Across the sub-region, with permanent in-country presence in Barbados, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. Presence also during disaster response (e.g. British Virgin Islands, Dominica) | 3                            |
| <b>UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO)</b>   | International Organization/agency | Regional, based in Panama  | 2                            |
| <b>UNICEF ECA programme sections</b>  | International organization/agency | Across the sub-region, with permanent in-country presence in Barbados, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago. Presence also during disaster response (e.g. British Virgin Islands, Dominica) | 3                            |
| <b>UNICEF HQ</b>  | International Organization/agency | Global   | 2                            |
| <b>Government ministries, agencies and staff responsible for planning and financing, education, justice, social development, statistics and donor coordination in</b> | Government                        | All 12 countries and territories, particular challenges identified in Trinidad and Tobago  | 3                            |

|   |                                   |  |                              |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| <b>the 12 countries and territories</b>         |                                   |  |                              |
| <b>Other UN Agencies</b>                        | International Organization/agency | UN Resident Coordinators in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Jamaica.<br>UNDP<br>UNWOMEN<br>WFP | 3                            |
| <b>UNICEF Donors</b>                            | Donor agency                      | CDB – regional<br>EU - regional<br>FCDO – regional<br>USAID - regional<br>World Bank -regional           | 3                            |
| <b>Eastern Caribbean Regional Organizations</b> | Regional organization             | CARICOM - regional<br>CDEMA - regional<br>OECS – sub-regional  | 3                            |
| <b>Children</b>                                 |                                   |  |                              |
| <b>Civil society organizations</b>              | Non-governmental                  | Relevant across all 12 countries and territories, with particular engagement in Trinidad and Tobago      | 3 (Trinidad and Tobago only) |
| <b>Private Sector</b>                           | Private sector                    | While potential across all 12 countries and territories, very limited UNICEF reach                       | <b>1</b>                     |

The stakeholder analysis was updated throughout the evaluation process. The final list of interviewees can be found in annex 4

UNICEF ECA has been particularly successful at fostering its relationship with regional organizations, notably the OECS and CDEMA, in addition to working closely with government. According to the UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff, while governments ranked as the first partner, during the dynamic assessment, the partnerships with regional organizations were also considered highly important. While some considered donors also central, they eventually slipped to rank five, as did other UN agencies to rank four in the participatory exercise. While civil society organization partnerships were ranked third, this was not reflected by the other evidence gathered by the MCP-E. Private sector retained the lowest rank in the participatory ordering of UNICEF partnerships.

Figure 9: UNICEF ECA Participatory Partnership Ranking



Source: Participatory Mentimeter assessment with 22 respondents

### External partnerships

**It is clear that UNICEF ECA implements its programming namely through government partnerships.** All interviewees felt that the government was its main implementing partner. 75 per cent of MCP-E e-survey respondents felt UNICEF ECA was good or excellent at advising governments (e.g. through policy briefs). Some of the programming results also demonstrated the success of these efforts (e.g. Child protection legislation and policy in Saint Lucia) including the effects of training at scale, such as in the case of ECD. However, in other cases, efforts to influence policy changes have been less successful (e.g. overseas countries and territories (OCT) public expenditure review), which have been a question of either missing political commitment or capacity to implement proposed reforms. While there is close cooperation, for example on the preparation of legislation, monitoring is namely conducted for accountability purposes in the form of reporting for funding provided. A number of sub-region wide learning events have also been held (e.g. best practices in cash-transfer), which are considered valuable opportunities for knowledge sharing by participants.

**Unique due to the multi-country context, UNICEF ECA also works extremely closely with the relevant regional organizations,** namely the OECS and CDEMA. The cooperation with the OECS has various benefits, including legitimacy and political influence, as well as impact at scale across the sub-region (e.g. in common curriculum standards, model legislation, shared case management practices, coordinated DRR). Apparently, UNICEF is very flexible and has adapted to the OECS agenda and its members' needs. UNICEF is the only UN agency which regularly attends the annual OECS Council of Ministers meeting, according to an interviewee. However, as in the case of government, monitoring is namely conducted for accountability purposes in the form of reporting for funding provided. Cross-government learning is an inherent function of the OECS, which makes it a valuable partner also in knowledge exchange.

**There has been a shift of programming from civil society to government partners,** also in Trinidad and Tobago, where civil society has been a major implementation partner on migration-related issues. While UNICEF has worked predominantly with the Living Water Community, it has also explored cooperation with a variety of other civil society organizations. There appears to be substantial frustration among these organizations on tight and reducing financial resources, lack of eligibility of operational costs, as well as substantial financial management issues. While U-report was initially designed and planned to be implemented in cooperation with a civil society partner in Trinidad and Tobago, the platform is now housed in the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Donors generally are less aware of UNICEF in the region**, even in cases where funding has been provided to joint-activities and/or where similar support is provided across the sub-region. Communication mainly takes place in the established donor coordination structure, including its sector-specific working groups, which meets only sporadically. The frequency and quality of these meetings varies substantially from one group to another. The poverty group co-chaired by CDB and UNICEF meets 1-2 times per year. Joint activities and projects are limited, due to different priorities, as well as the prevailing MIC/HIC status of the countries and territories. There is particularly limited engagement with multi-lateral development banks, notably the IDB, which is the preferred partner, for example, in Trinidad and Tobago. This is particularly due to the inability of IFIs to provide concessional finance to middle to high income countries. According to some, trying to establish a relationship with the MDBs required a lot of effort, for limited returns.

**Despite original ambitions in the MCP, there has been little to no engagement of the private sector.** This remains a joint challenge for the UN. Some efforts were made to leverage private telecom companies in the C4D efforts, also on addressing the COVID-19 challenge (e.g. Flow communication). UNICEF has also reached out to Massy supermarkets, but this is only a very recent effort. UNICEF has not engaged chambers of commerce or other businesses directly, despite clear relevance in areas like education and skills development. UNICEF has also not leveraged the private sector in its government advocacy efforts.

### **Internal Partnerships**

**UNICEF is also committed to UN Reform and the promotion of closer coordination among different UN agencies, including joint programming.** According to one interviewee, UNICEF ECA is “playing by the rules, but challenging business as usual”. Nevertheless, coordination among often competing UN agencies remains a major issue in the sub-region. While not formally under the MCP, the Spotlight initiative, funded by the EU, has demonstrated the challenges in UN and broader donor coordination. This includes its governance and management structure, as well as operational procedures that must comply with demanding EU requirements. Based on interview data from multiple individuals, interagency politics poses a challenge for the most minute decisions during the implementation of Spotlight. Some also now consider the issue of GBV and VAC is now “saturated” with funding, though only Spotlight only focuses on Grenada, as well as Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Textbox 2: COVID-19 and UN agency coordination**

The joint approach to COVID-19 is considered a success story in UN-coordination. All of the UN agencies agreed to come together for a joint approach under the umbrella of the UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic Response to COVID 19 and the COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Response Plan for the Eastern Caribbean Funding Appeal.<sup>101</sup> In addition, the SDG Fund Joint Programme for Universal and Adaptive Social Protection in the Eastern Caribbean, is being implemented by 5 UN Agencies (WFP, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF and UNWomen). The challenge for Caribbean countries is how to transition from COVID-19 response to more medium to long-term shock responsive strategies.<sup>102</sup> According to interviews, there is a good division of labor and the agencies have worked well together on mobilizing resources.

**The definition of an adequate agreement and the collaboration instrument and mechanism between organizations is critical.** This was done in the joint UNICEF WFP cash-transfer support to Dominica after the hurricane. “VNA was a good inter-institutional and interagency agreement between

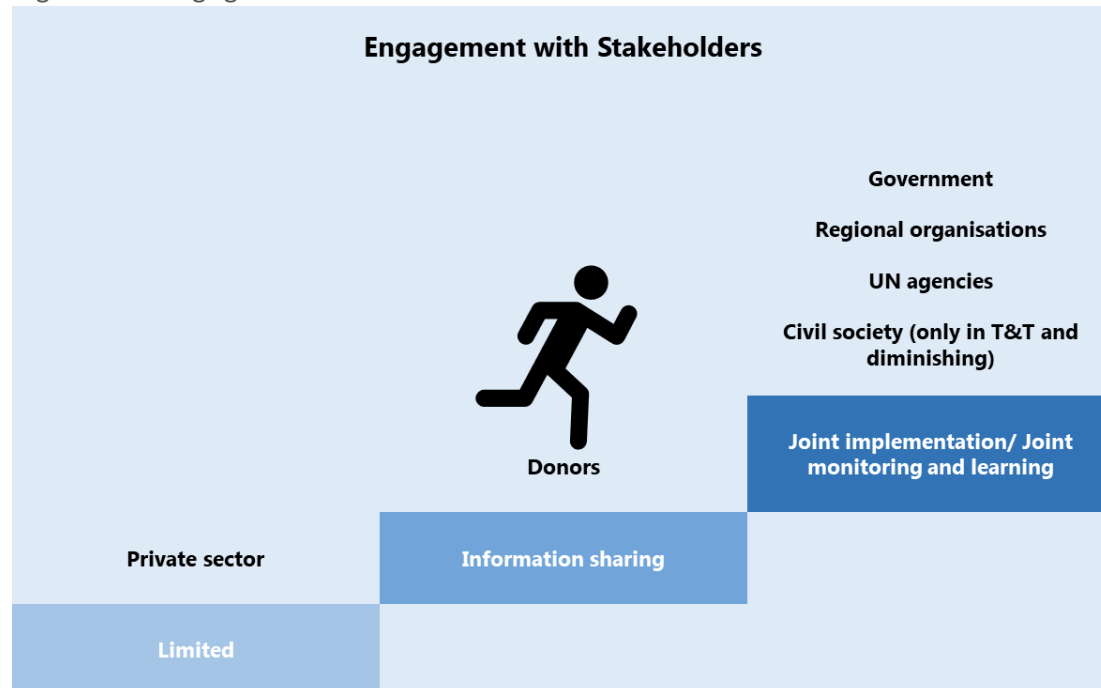
101 United Nations. COVID-19 Multi-Sectoral Response Plan for the Eastern Caribbean Funding Appeal. (2020)

102 United Nations. From COVID-19 Response to Broader Social Protection Reform – Regional Experiences. (2021)

GCOD, IOM, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA, and UNDP, which enabled a rapid shift from the provision of blanket assistance during the emergency response phase to the protection of food security and livelihoods of the most vulnerable population affected by the hurricane during the recovery phase”.<sup>103</sup> However, issues with harmonizing results and financial management procedures remain. Therefore, truly “joint” monitoring and learning still requires some joint UN effort.

The figure below summarizes the level of engagement with different types of stakeholders across ECA.

Figure 10: Engagement with Stakeholders



## 7.5 SUSTAINABILITY

**Evaluation question 6:** To what extent have UNICEF cross sectoral strategies (capacity building, evidence generation, communication, advocacy, Innovation, South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships, gender and climate change) enhanced the potential for government replication and scalability in the future? What are the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the UNICEF programme?

**Main findings:** UNICEF ECA has emphasized the promotion of systemic change in legislative and policy frameworks, with a view to generating sustainability, though there has been less measurable effect on public expenditure in its core intervention areas. Implementation of policy reforms remains a major challenge. The sustainability of UNICEF interventions over time is a major concern. Both sustainability and scale require working through national systems and committing government resources. UNICEF ECA is well-placed, with its close government relationships to catalyze related reforms, but too frequently they are still limited to individual, finite project interventions or to working with the same, government counterparts (e.g. at the ministries for education and social affairs). Likewise, monitoring and evaluation still remains oriented to ensuring accountability of individual projects or programmes.

The mainstreaming of gender, youth and climate change are also critical sustainability factors and have been insufficiently integrated into the MCP.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium

**UNICEF ECA has tried to improve the sustainability of its interventions particularly through an emphasis on promoting systemic change in legislative and policy frameworks, as well as government capacity to implement reforms.** There has been a corporate push for more normative, upstream policy advocacy. In-side track advocacy (e.g. policy advice, draft legislation, prepared speaking points) has been critical in achieving sought policy changes, with the greatest success demonstrated where real country needs and reform champions were identified and engaged.

**UNICEF has not yet managed to fully influence the dedication of public finances to children's priorities.** While efforts have been made to analyze public investment in children, as well as to support child and gender sensitive budgeting (e.g. Saint Lucia, Montserrat, British Virgin Islands), also through related training,<sup>104</sup> there are no demonstrable effects on actual increases in related allocations in core UNICEF intervention areas, whether to education, child or social protection. While the latest national development plan of Trinidad and Tobago mentions children, especially in the context of violence against children, despite efforts to analyze social sector expenditure patterns it remains difficult to actually trace concrete allocations beyond anecdotal evidence. According to one interviewee, the current budget has made the greatest, historical allocation for children's issues. According to another government interviewee, "We don't do a good job at continuity. We drop the ball".

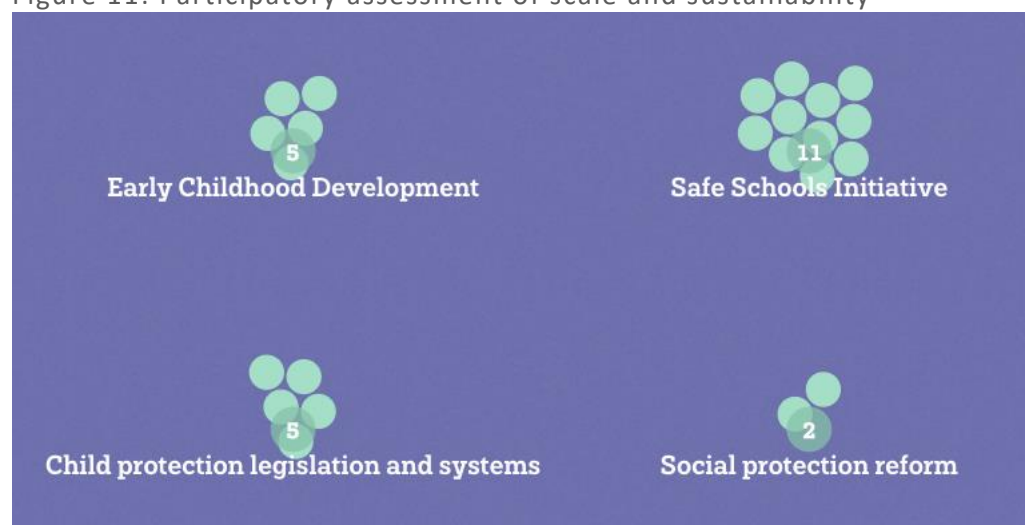
**UNICEF ECA has contributed to reaching greater scale through influencing policy reforms in some instances across all three areas of strategic emphasis, ECD, child protection and social protection,** though advances in child protection have been slower and the social protection space is a relatively recent area of emphasis. UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff felt overwhelmingly that the greatest impact had been through the Safe Schools Initiative, which was catalyzed by the hurricanes and now has leverage

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104 COAR 2016

support well beyond UNICEF. Likewise, it was felt that ECD and child protection had improved sustainability through copying and replication effects and policy reform, respectively.<sup>105</sup>

Figure 11: Participatory assessment of scale and sustainability



Source: Participatory assessment using mentimeter.com with 23 respondents

**At the same time, governments (and some UNICEF ECA staff) demand for operational support and direct service delivery,** not least due to a lack of related human and financial resources. According to one interviewee, “stopping service delivery is (simply) wrong.” The small size of the islands and respective populations also makes service delivery possible (e.g. cash-transfer pilots).

The assumption that high- and middle-income status entails that basic institutional capacity is in place for implementation of proposed reforms and service delivery is not always true. There are particular challenges in the SIDS context and substantial variation between contexts. For example, there are major capacity challenges in Dominica due to its vulnerability to natural disaster. All of the countries and territories struggle with a sufficient number of civil servants to dedicate to tasks. Often, “one person carries several hats”, according to an interviewee. The fiscal situation of most economies also does not allow for sufficient expenditure in the social sector.

**Support to capacity-building, including additional staff placements, is therefore essential.** According to one interviewee, “capacity development and creating conditions for capacity to be operationalized is essential”. The front-line presence of UNICEF staff and hired consultants has been critical in both DRR (e.g. Hurricane response in the British Virgin Islands and Dominica), as well as longer-term programming, such as in the case of child protection and migration response in Trinidad and Tobago.

**At the same time, greater ownership and assigning government budget to the reform efforts is required.** Development partners do not have endless resources. Whether the immediate, post-hurricane cash-transfer support or the education support to migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago (see section on social protection and DRR), there is a need to ensure that government ultimately improves the resilience of its own social protection systems and that migrant children are integrated into the regular, public school system. The continuing costs of these interventions are clear, as was proven by UNHCR pulling its funding for the facilitators of the migrant education programme. UNICEF stepped in to pick up these additional costs, but a longer-term solution is required.

<sup>105</sup> Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)



While some see a shift in UNICEF emphasis from so-called “direct service delivery” to policy advocacy, most feel that both are necessary to catalyze the required changes in the sub-region. There is a need for a mix of approaches, according to key interviewees. Limited service delivery can provide an entry-point to more comprehensive reform. According to one interviewee, “you buy small stuff, to keep you at the (decision-making) table”.

**Often, concrete service delivery was required to catalyze a broader reform agenda.** This was the case in ECD, where UNICEF initially paid for coordinators of individual centers. Now, ECD is growing in the government budget, for example, through the establishment of public child care centers in more vulnerable communities and standards exist for private ECD providers, which still dominate the sector. Disaster response, such as the cash transfers provided in the British Virgin Islands and Dominica provided an entry point for social protection reform in both countries. However, it is yet completely clear if these reforms will proceed and what role UNICEF will play in the process, if any.

Ultimately, service delivery is required to improve the lives of children and adolescents. According to one interviewee, “there is a lack of follow up on beautiful policies. We need support in implementation. It is more critical. We need to give teeth to what we say”. For example, the Children’s Authority in Trinidad and Tobago is still challenged by funding, staff and building systems for implementation, based on interview data.

There is some concern also about the sustainability of selected technological solutions. While the free PRIMERO information management system is more financially sustainable than competing options that cost upward of USD 200,000 based on an open procurement process, concerns still remain on if other government departments and agencies are willing to use the same solution.

**‘Ensuring connectedness between humanitarian and development programming’.** An important learning for UNICEF has been the ‘development driven’ response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Applying a development oriented ‘handwashing/good hygiene’ messaging programme as a preventive measure has demonstrated the place and effectiveness of building the humanitarian – development nexus from a development perspective. The learning for UNICEF is that building resilience can be more effective and therefore sustainable if it is built into development programming.

## 7.6 GENDER, YOUTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The extent to which gender is effectively mainstreamed across the MCP is limited, with scope for improvement across programme design, implementation, monitoring and reporting. Gender is a cross-cutting policy and programme objective underpinning the ECA MCP, which is aligned with the Gender Action Plan (2014–2017). This is coherent with the integration of gender within the UNDAF-MSDF, which states that “issues of gender equality, women’s empowerment, and empowerment of youth will be integrated throughout the priority areas,<sup>106</sup>” and the MCP itself includes an overarching focus on addressing “key barriers and bottlenecks that prevent girls and boys, particularly the marginalized, from enjoying their full rights.” The MCP document included a focus on gender both in the document itself and in the associated results framework. However, the extent to which this focus was carried through in programme implementation was less clear.

Gender issues in the ECA were frequently generalized as somewhat exceptional, due to the particular vulnerability of adolescent boys to lower school performance, dropping out, substance abuse and violence. Nevertheless, women and girls remain disadvantaged in many areas, such as equal pay for equal work, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence and poverty<sup>107</sup>. Deeply entrenched and gendered role expectations remained in schools, the workplace and within the home. There was also social

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<sup>106</sup> UNDAF-MSDF Caribbean, (2016).

<sup>107</sup> UNICEF. Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area. (2020)

acceptance and tolerance of violence against women and girls. Emergencies, whether hurricanes, migration or COVID-19, exacerbated gender equality and empowerment of women (GEEW) issues. The UNICEF GAP II framework (2018–2021) identified the following common barriers and bottlenecks which apply to the ECA sub-region, that need to be overcome to move towards gender equality:

- Negative femininity and masculine ideals and expectations
- Lack of safety and mobility
- Limited access to knowledge, information and technology
- Lack of resources and decision-making
- Gendered division of labor between men and women, girls and boys

### Textbox 3: Prevalence of Violence Against Women (VAWG) in the Caribbean:

Prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the Caribbean is among the highest in the world. VAWG has proven to be so entrenched and normalized that both men and women have a high tolerance for its manifestations, particularly when perpetrated in the context of intimate partner relationships. Across five countries (Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago), on average, nearly 1 out of 2 or 46 per cent of ever-partnered women aged 15–64 have experienced one or more of the four types of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (physical, sexual, psychological and/or economic violence) and 14 per cent experience one or more of the three types of IPV (physical, sexual and psychological violence). The intergenerational transmission of domestic violence paradigm suggests that violence is learned in childhood and transmitted across generations; thus, exposure to domestic violence in childhood is an important predictor for IPV in adulthood. Although 70 per cent of victims agreed that domestic violence should not remain a private matter, few had informed a health professional (13 per cent) or the police (5 per cent).

(UNICEF. Gender and Children in the Eastern Caribbean Area. (2020)

The main issues identified in the End of Year Results Summary Narratives related to gender-based budgeting (2016), the Out of school study (2016, 2017), Gender based issues in disaster (2018) and migration response (2017), including GBV and GBV and Spotlight (2019). The 2019 Gender Programmatic Review conducted by UNICEF “efforts need to be intensified to eliminate the sexual and physical abuse of young women and further reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies. For boys, focus should be on addressing issues of inferior educational performance and combating their heightened propensities to delinquent and criminal behavior, and non-consensual sexual activity towards females. For boys and girls alike, issues which significantly pertain to both are poverty, obesity, violent disciplining and bullying.” UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff also felt that less results were demonstrated in the mainstreaming of gender across the MCP.<sup>108</sup>

Interviews with several partners also indicated that UNICEF ECA is perceived as weak on gender as a cross-cutting theme, particularly on mainstreaming gender throughout the programme and project cycle. The findings of the Gender Programmatic Review found that while there was clear overlap between sectors and programme focus areas, more could be done in practice to strengthen the achievement of cross-cutting gender outcomes.<sup>109</sup> Although progress has been made in some instances due to capacity strengthening in this area, gender responsive and gender transformative programming is still a weakness. Gender is not yet systematically integrated in programme and project conceptualization, design, development, implementation and reporting.

<sup>108</sup> Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com)

<sup>109</sup> Gender Programmatic Review, (2020)

It was also observed that data is not always analyzed with a gender lens, particularly around social protection and child protection. In education, the prevailing understanding of boys facing challenges often undermines the continuing discrimination of girls, also in educational institutions, according to one interviewee. Although the Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of UNICEF ECA does collect sex-disaggregated data, this is not analyzed strategically to understand why outcome-level changes are occurring or not, and what intended and unintended changes are being achieved. As a result, the potential to course correct to address key gender barriers and enhance programme effectiveness in relation to gender is limited.

**A strong focus on engagement with government** through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development was observed both generally and in terms of addressing specific issues such as corporal punishment; the main entry point for child protection in ECA is clearly through government. Although this level of engagement is important for creating an enabling legislative environment that addresses key issues, including corporal punishment, it is equally important to engage civil society organizations, which can often be more effective at facilitating behavior change at the community, household and individual level, addressing norms around corporal punishment and social protection. **The more substantial focus on government stakeholders, with less engagement with civil society, can limit programme effectiveness, including the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming.**

**There is also scope to work more collaboratively with other UN agencies with specialist expertise in complementary areas.** Although there are examples of joint programming, for example the Spotlight Initiative with UN Women, UNFPA and UNDP (see Textbox 4: The Spotlight Initiative), implementation was observed to have been in silos, with little evidence of genuine collaborative co-implementation, but rather a division of responsibilities and activities implemented separately. This lack of a joint approach to implementation is a missed opportunity to bring together multi-sectoral technical and thematic expertise on gender, child protection and social protection in a harmonized way to increase the effectiveness of UN coordination and collaboration, as well as programme implementation. Regional Spotlight Initiative: “Strengthening Regional Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Family Violence in the Caribbean”

#### Textbox 4: The Spotlight Initiative

Launched in 2020 and jointly funded by four UN agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UNFPA – the Spotlight Initiative is a regional partnership between the UN and the EU in collaboration with regional partners and civil society. It seeks to address family violence in all its forms and promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. The three-year initiative also seeks to contribute to the scale, sustainability and visibility of progress in the prevention of and response to violence against women and girls. Despite positive progress in some areas, it was observed that the initiative is largely implemented in siloes, with each agency focused on their own areas of responsibility under the initiative and not always open to genuine collaborative approaches, co-implementation of activities and cross-learning.

**Climate change was originally not adequately represented in the MCP (1). However, significant progress has been achieved to prioritize it, and increase programs and operational capabilities.** This was initially a direct output of UNICEF ECA’s response to the 2017 hurricane season, which had devastating impacts on the sub-region, across sectors. In September 2018, the office representative initiated the process of mainstreaming climate change (2), which first translated into an evidence-based Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) in 2019 and the prioritization of climate resilience mainstreaming in the SIM. From September 2019, a dedicated human resource was recruited to implement the CLAC action plan and develop a climate resilience mainstreaming strategy. Major achievements have included technical support to countries to incorporate children’s needs into national climate policies, youth engagement in climate action, access to climate finance (with a focus on the

education sector) and progress in the area of shock-responsive social protection. A detailed climate resilience mainstreaming strategy was completed in March 2021, paving the way for the inclusion of a dedicated output into the new MCP.

Based on a UNICEF youth survey conducted in 2019, in partnership with the OECS and Caribbean Youth Environment Network, 67 per cent of respondents felt that climate change and environmental issues were priority issues for children and youth in their respective countries and territories, though alongside other issues, such as education, employment, crime, sexuality and psycho-social well-being. While over 85 per cent felt that their government was not doing enough to inform and educate young people about climate change, 72 per cent were willing to act.<sup>110</sup> In its new strategic plan, UNICEF will prioritize efforts to address climate change and environmental degradation...would then outline that there is a clear opportunity to do so in the new MCP-E... "At-scale programming across all areas of our work, supported by advocacy, partnerships, innovation and other key strategies, will promote environmental sustainability, mitigate climate change and environmental degradation, and address its impacts on children and communities

## **8. CONNECTEDNESS**

A key evaluation interest, as already seen under the relevance criteria questions was the connectedness of emergency response with longer term objectives and inter-connected issues of the MCP. More than three quarters of UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff agreed that results were demonstrated in DRR.<sup>111</sup> This section therefore explores the extent to which UNICEF's contributions to humanitarian response during 2017-2020 have been connected to its regular country programme priorities, namely the three main component of the MCP, as well as the experience and lessons that can be gained.

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<sup>110</sup> UNICEF (2019) Survey on Climate Change and the Environment

<sup>111</sup> Participatory review of draft MCP-E findings, using [www.mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com)

**Evaluation Question 7:** To what extent did UNICEF respond effectively to emergencies during the period being evaluated (measured against the benchmarks set in the Humanitarian Action for Children and Response Plan)?

**Main findings:**

Work on DRR was effective in partnership, notably with CDEMA, among other humanitarian actors. The focus was on the initial emergency response, notably on psychosocial recovery, safe schools, including critical pedagogical and recreational materials, access to information on good hygiene, safety and protection, as well as cash-transfer schemes, based on evaluation, related reporting, the perception survey and interviews. However, as demonstrated by the Child Friendly Spaces for migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago, frequently emergency measures were not sustainable over time and required more systemic reform, in this case, for the government to change its policy and admit migrant children into the regular public school system.

**Strength of evidence:** High

**Evaluation Question 8:** To what extent is Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) mainstreamed in UNICEF's multi-country programme?

**Main findings:** DRR and the MCP did not fully incorporate the humanitarian and development nexus, based on document review, e-survey and interview data.

**Strength of evidence:** High

**Evaluation Question 9:** How can UNICEF ECA ensure that its response to COVID-19 is anchored coherently within its longer-term program in the next M-CPD?

**Main findings:** While the initial focus of the COVID-19 response was on life-saving awareness raising about hygiene measures, as well as support for distance learning, a number of issues will remain longer term concerns, such as the longer term implications for the newly and most vulnerable children and social protection for a much larger portion of the population, as a result of the pandemic. While topics such as blended learning have received a lot of attention, immediate needs, such as addressing inevitable learning gaps, especially for the most vulnerable who did not have access to digital devices and distance learning opportunities need to be addressed; also in the context of already existing gender differences in school retention rates.

**Strength of evidence:** Medium

## Education and DRR

Efforts to strengthen education sector emergency preparedness and response were already prioritized in 2016 but grew to dominate the strategic period of the MCP.<sup>112</sup> UNICEF ECA aimed to work with other sector actors, specifically CDEMA, on prioritizing DRR into the education system including the mainstreaming of DRR policies, plans and curriculum and increasing the engagement of youth and adolescents in addressing the impact of climate change.<sup>113</sup> UNICEF ECA entered into a partnership agreement with the CDEMA. A CDEMA-led emergency simulation exercise was held in Antigua and

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<sup>112</sup> COAR 2016

<sup>113</sup> UNICEF MCP 2017-2021

Barbuda. The 'Return to Happiness' psychosocial recovery programme for children aged five to 12 years was implemented.<sup>114</sup>

An ongoing major challenge for the current MCP are the capacity gaps, especially those relating to data, in the relevant ministries. A critical 'lesson learned' from the previous MCP was 'the limited availability of quality, timely and disaggregated data as a challenge affecting effective planning, monitoring and budgeting for children as well as advocacy and resource leveraging efforts.'<sup>115</sup> Despite efforts to address the issue it has continued to be highlighted in numerous assessments and evaluation reports. UNICEF's Policy Brief 'Caribbean Children Facing the Climate Crisis (2019)<sup>116</sup> highlights the key issue of children being largely overlooked in key regional and national climate and environmental strategies, policies and legislation in the ECA. Critically the report notes that this omission 'is exacerbated by and contributes to the paucity of disaggregated data and child specific information in this area, hindering decision-making and the ability of interventions to effectively target children and meet their needs.

This was confirmed most recently by the 2021 MSDF evaluation, which noted weaknesses in the availability and quality of data, including disaggregated data, at the regional and national level, as well as the capacity of agencies to collect and manage data in related results frameworks, which remained weak and incomplete.<sup>117</sup> This challenge is also recognized by CDEMA in its 10-year Strategy (2014-2024) with the first of its four priorities focused on the need for 'Strengthened Institutional Arrangements for Comprehensive Disaster Management'. These systemic weaknesses have resulted in weak mainstreaming of DRR in sector plans. The impact is seen in delays and data inadequacies and a lack of systematic use of data to inform evidence-based decision making and allocation of resources.<sup>118</sup>

UNICEF's 'Safe Schools Initiative (part of the Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools – WISS) was officially launched in 2017. A key pledge from the Caribbean Road Map on School Safety was that 'new and existing educational infrastructure and school facilities should be fully accessible to all, including people with disabilities.'<sup>119</sup> The CEELAC study again reiterated the challenge of children being overlooked in key regional national, climate and energy related CEE strategies, policies and legislation in the ECA. A key point of this report, highlighted in the executive summary, noted "this omission is exacerbated by and contributed to a paucity of disaggregated data and child specific information in this area, hindering decision-making and the ability of interventions to effectively target children and meet their needs". Action points recommended for UNICEF are relevant as they highlight the need for action to be both internal and external and for DRR and Climate Change/Emergency (CEE) work to be integrated:

- a) Work with governments to be able to capture and use disaggregated data;
- b) Use disaggregated indicators in results frameworks;
- c) To work on specific points in DRR and climate emergency situations.

**With the region being hit by two category five hurricanes (Irma and Maria) in 2017 UNICEF prioritized its work on more on operational/downstream emergency response;** also into 2018. For education in emergencies this included working on strengthening and increasing the knowledge of stakeholders on their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and to increase commitment to safe schools programming. Based on summary UNICEF humanitarian achievements, a 19,444 out of a planned 25,069 children were able to attend school with critical pedagogical and recreational materials and 26,501 out of a planned 38,987 were able to get access to information on good hygiene, safety and

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114 COAR 2016

115 MCP 2017 – 2021

116 UNICEF 2019. Caribbean Children Facing the Climate Crisis. Policy Brief

117 UN Caribbean (2021). End of Cycle Evaluation\_ Multi-Country Sustainable Development Framework (2017-2021)

118 COAR 2017

119 Pegram J. & Knaute D.' Caribbean Children Facing the Climate Crisis: UNICEF Climate, Environment and Energy (CEE) Landscape Analysis for Children. UNICEF Office for ECA (2018).

protection. Work was also carried out in Dominica on updating 'School Safety Plans' and then rolled out to other countries in the sub region (Antigua and Barbuda, Nevis and St Kitts and St Lucia).<sup>120</sup>

Other work on incorporating DRR into education included:

- Support to the OECS (in 2019) on a review of the Regional Education Sector Plan to incorporate disaster risk management (UNICEF provided technical assistance to develop education sector contingency plans in national emergency response mechanisms for health and child protection sectors);
- Project Connect. Mapping Schools to Improve Connectivity and Learning Environment in the Caribbean. This helped to identify gaps, vulnerabilities and risks and to optimize service delivery and emergency preparedness.

### **Education of migrant children**

UNICEF and various partners, including other UN agencies have been providing education for migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago through Living Water Community, among others. As the government was not willing to admit migrant children into the public schools, a parallel system was created through the so-called Child Friendly Spaces, which nevertheless did not replace formal education. Three Child Friendly Spaces in highly migrant populated towns as safe places for psychosocial support and access to learning, socialization and play for children on the move.<sup>121</sup> Over 500 children are accessing these spaces, based on interview data. However, during COVID-19 restrictions, this has often only been 50 per cent of the total. There was a need to reassess the CFS and indeed, the curriculum was under revision and the delivery mechanism now also includes pre-taped (not only live) events.

The Catholic Church has incrementally also been able to identify places for migrant children in the Catholic schools. Based on interview data, so far 180 children have been integrated into the 20 schools, but approximately 2000 children need places. Government acceptance was also required in this case. Places are available only for registered migrant children of primary school age. Secondary school places are simply too competitive and sought after.

UNICEF, together with partners has not been able to advocate the government, namely the Ministry of National Security, to shift its policy to admit migrant children into the public school system. There is a need for a plan, if the migrant children are never admitted. Financing the CFS is simply not sustainable, according to one interviewee. There is also global evidence that CFS have an impact on the psychosocial well-being of younger children in crisis situations, but not in other areas (e.g. protection) and not on older children (above 16).<sup>122</sup>

### **COVID-19 and education**

#### **COVID-19 required an immediate shift from face-to-face, to blended learning in spring 2020.**

Overall, a blended approach was the most frequently used format with 46 per cent of teachers reporting this was being used at their school. Still, a substantial proportion also stated that they were only teaching face-to-face classes (39 per cent).<sup>123</sup>

**UNICEF ECA was particularly involved in immediate communication and messaging around good hygiene practices.** According to a recently completed survey, the most easily recalled message was to engage in frequent hand washing and sanitizing with 76 per cent of regional students remembering

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120 COAR 2019

121 UNICEF. Protecting the Life of Children on the Move: Article. (2019)

122 Hermosilla, S., Metzler, J., Savage, K. et al. (2019) Child friendly spaces impact across five humanitarian settings: a meta-analysis. BMC Public Health 19

123 UNICEF (2021) Rapid Assessment Of The Effectiveness Of Communication Interventions For The Safe Reopening Of Schools In Select Eastern Caribbean Countries And Territories For Safe Reopening And Generating Behaviour Change During COVID-19

this message in the countries assessed. Regionally, comparable proportions recalled the messages relating to mask wearing and physical distancing. An important factor to learn from this is that the hygiene messaging given as a core element of the 'emergency COVID-19 response' had a very clear development/preventive focus- *ensuring that good hygiene was practiced to safeguard against and minimize risks from potential COVID-19 outbreaks*. This contrasts with the 'norm of humanitarian responses' where the response is focused on addressing problems/ damage etc. that have occurred as a result of a disaster such as a hurricane.

**The UNICEF ECA focus on education is shifting from the immediate COVID-19 response to consideration of blended learning.** The UNICEF ECA Annual Report for 2020<sup>124</sup> highlighted the significant challenges related to managing, delivering and accessing online and face to face education through a 'blended approach'. The challenges focus around:

- Gaps in teacher capacity. Recognizing the different skills need to teach in a mix of online and face to face settings;
- Sufficient quality and reliability of access to devices and internet services in both schools and homes
- Adjustments to school/class settings to permit safe opening of schools. Key here was the recognition that moving to a 'shift' approach would bring additional safety issues;
- The challenge for schools, ministries, and parents to manage, communicate and operate in a more flexible yet structured and safe environment.

Based on the most recent, direct consultations with children and youth, it is important to keep in mind that while some students enjoy on-line learning, others struggle. About half of the parents of primary school children acknowledged that their child did not have the skills necessary to navigate online learning on their own. Further to this, only 43 per cent of primary school parents had the time and flexibility to help accommodate this format of learning<sup>125</sup>. 50 per cent of students at both levels and across territories had access to adequate internet.<sup>126</sup>

While on-line learning can be a stepping-stone for future digitalization, students still benefit from face-to-face interaction for their academic performance, but also emotionally and socially.<sup>127</sup>

While there has been some progress over the MCP 2017-2021 period on DRR in education, it is clear that addressing these challenges effectively will require strategies and approaches that **link operational responses to upstream policy work**.

A potential approach would be to take a more demand driven approach and to focus on collecting and managing disaggregated data at local levels that is then used as both a driver and model for upstream system strengthening. It will also require greater collaboration with other UN and government stakeholders to ensure coherence in approach to planning and implementation of response, as well as a more integrated humanitarian-development nexus approach to designing operational responses.

## **Child protection and DRR**

**UNICEF ECA response delivered access to water, education, psycho-social support and basic social protection.** The immediate hurricane response included the provision of WASH facilities for

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124 COAR 2020

125 UNICEF (2021) Rapid Assessment Of The Effectiveness Of Communication Interventions For The Safe Reopening Of Schools In Select Eastern Caribbean Countries And Territories For Safe Reopening And Generating Behaviour Change During COVID-19

126 UNICEF (2021) Rapid Assessment Of The Effectiveness Of Communication Interventions For The Safe Reopening Of Schools In Select Eastern Caribbean Countries And Territories For Safe Reopening And Generating Behaviour Change During COVID-19

127 UNICEF (2021) Engaging Children and Young People in the Eastern Caribbean Area: Anguilla, Barbados, Dominica, Montserrat and Trinidad and Tobago



the prevention of the outbreak of water-borne diseases and the provision of shelter (e.g. official shelters, tarpaulins), child protection interventions and lifesaving C4D messages. As a result, 37,495 people with access to safe water and 26, 510 affected children were provided with access to information on good hygiene, and on safety and protection.

**Table 13: Eastern Caribbean Humanitarian Situation January 2018**

|  | UNICEF        |               |
|--|---------------|---------------|
|  | UNICEF Target | Total Results |
| WASH: # people with access to safe water   | 37,318        | 37,495        |
| Child protection: # of children enrolled in psychosocial activities  | 17,102        | 13,042        |
| Education: # of children attending schools equipped with critical pedagogical and/or recreational materials              | 25,069        | 19,444        |
| Social protection: # of targeted children from the most vulnerable families receiving top up grants to cover basic needs | 6,000         | 6,153         |
| Cross-sectoral: # of affected children with access to information on good hygiene, and on safety and protection          | 38,987        | 26,510        |

Source: UNICEF (2018) Eastern Caribbean Humanitarian Situation Report; Process Review of the UNICEF-WFP Joint Emergency Cash Transfer (JECT) Programme in Dominica, Final Report, UNICEF, 2018

There were differences in figures reported among various sources, which made accountability a challenge. In the recovery phase, psychosocial support was provided for children through child friendly and safe spaces, reopening of early childhood development facilities, establishing temporary learning spaces and supporting the return to school. Safe environments were rehabilitated for the most vulnerable children (e.g. Chances Home, Dominica and British Virgin Islands Rainbow Children's Home and Autism Centre) This included the Return to Happiness Programme and the Creative Learning and Arts Programme in British Virgin Islands. 1,656 psychosocial support facilitators were trained and 13,042 children received mental health and psychosocial support.<sup>128</sup> 300 parents and caregivers were trained in child protection concepts and principles, as well as child abuse prevention. A child protection officer was deployed for one year to Dominica to support these efforts. The water distribution system in Dominica was also rebuilt.

**CDEMA was the main regional partner for leading these efforts.** There were nevertheless substantial concerns about the ability of UNICEF to manage the distribution and logistics of emergency assistance, as well as its targeting and monitoring, to ensure that it reached those most in need, based on a number of interviews. UNICEF ECA also helped CDEMA integrate child protection in the organizations own policies, along with related capacity building, including training for CDEMA staff. A guidance document on child protection in emergencies was also prepared.

**Similarly, the migration response also had a strong focus on the protection needs of children on the move, though the sustainability of these initiatives is a challenge.** The 2020 Action Plan was designed. Support included Child Friendly Spaces and psycho-social counselling.

<sup>128</sup> These figures were triangulated with actual/target data, demonstrating the achievement/exceeding of targets. UNICEF (2018) Eastern Caribbean Humanitarian Situation Report.

**Child protection in crisis: Case of the migration crisis in Trinidad and Tobago**

More than 500 children accessed these Child Friendly Spaces. 160-190 children were given individual support and 3000 children were in group counselling. 139 unaccompanied minors required foster care. Efforts were made to reduce the process of 6 months to 6 weeks, but so far, only a few of these children have been placed in foster care. The Childline app was developed by one of the civil society organization partners and launched in Oct 2020, with 800 downloads by spring 2021. These efforts have also been extended to the host community, forging links between all children.

**The immediate COVID-19 response focused on providing lifesaving health information.** The effects of COVID-19 on violence against children remain a major risk but tracking actual cases is difficult under continuing restrictions. In Trinidad and Tobago, more than 12,000 migrant and host community families were reached to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and keep migrant children safe. There are great concerns that COVID-19 will result in growing frustration and increasing tensions between parents and children, which in turn could entail an increase in the violent disciplining or child neglect. Levels of domestic violence and sexual abuse may increase. However, so far, the number of abuse cases remains consistent, with slightly higher reporting of emotional abuse in Trinidad and Tobago, though, with the continuing restrictions, those most vulnerable may not be able to report.

**DRR and Social Protection**

**With the hurricane response, the immediate needs of affected families were addressed through cash-transfer.** Both Dominica and the British Virgin Islands benefited from cash transfer programmes, where UNICEF provided support particularly to households with children.

**Post-disaster cash transfer: the case of Dominica**

In Dominica, after a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), the Joint Emergency Cash Transfer (JECT) programmes implemented with the WFP targeted 8,000 of the poorest households in the country, including 6,000 children. Ultimately, 6,153 vulnerable children and their families were reached with cash transfers. It was the first of its kinds for UNICEF, and the first globally to run together with WFP.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the division of labor and coordination among UN agencies, especially with the WFP remained a challenge, with a number of interviewees questioning the UNICEF mandate in cash transfer. There were also some delays in the actual transfers, namely due to the technology used. The effort was supported by a UNICEF presence on the ground during six months.

The British Virgin Islands also benefited from an emergency cash transfer programme supported by UNICEF. With a view to meeting related, longer term needs across the sub-region, the OECS is preparing a model on strengthening shock responsive systems in the face of climate change.

**A small opportunity for cash-transfer also existed in Trinidad and Tobago,** but had not yet been taken up by UNICEF. In relation to the migration crisis, over 1,000 children and their caregivers benefited from early learning, education, stimulation, nutritional counselling and care packages/food vouchers. Civil society organizations were also promoting cultural exchange and social integration between migrant and local children, for example, through regular summer camps that both communities could attend. One of the interviews also suggested that cash-transfer could be used to cover the school transportation costs of migrant children. The system could then facilitate the later integration of migrant

households into the regular social support programmes in the country over time, when politically possible.

### **COVID-19 and social protection needs**

**Social protection needs will grow substantially, as an effect of COVID-19.** The poverty impact of COVID-19 is expected to be severe in the sub-region, with a projected six-fold increase in severe poverty from under 2.5 percent to over 16.5 percent. The average unemployment rate for the countries included in the analysis will increase by 26 percentage points from 8 per cent before to 35 per cent as a result of pandemic.<sup>129</sup> There has also been an impact on school feeding programmes, due to school closures.

**UNICEF, together with other UN agencies has mobilized also to address the resulting social protection issues.** For example, a microsimulation model on COVID-19 impact on household and child poverty in St. Lucia was prepared. The risk of politicization of government support was noted by one interviewee.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of the MCP-E reflect both evidence on the accountability for the performance of the previous MCP, as well as providing useful lessons-learned for the MCP currently under development. The main, overall conclusions are outlined below. Ultimately, these conclusions and the recommendations in the final section should support the design of the next MCP.

**Conclusion 1:** While the MCP was aligned with the needs and priorities of the 12 countries and territories, key sub-regional organizations, as well as the needs of the most vulnerable children, it did not sufficiently capture UNICEF added-value, including its close relationship with governments and sub-regional organizations, in promoting more resilient education and addressing violence against children, as well as employing the synergies between upstream and downstream approaches and between inside-track and outside track advocacy.

**Conclusion 2:** The MCP did not sufficiently capture the nexus between humanitarian and development objectives, as was required in the disaster-prone sub-region.

**Conclusion 3:** While stronger than that of many other UN agencies, the UNICEF ECA presence in the sub-region, especially through direct in-country engagement remained a challenge for the MCP.

**Conclusion 4:** The highly ambitious and comprehensive MCP, especially its need to adapt to recurrent crises, was also not fully aligned with the means of UNICEF ECA, including those for monitoring, evaluation and learning, which remained focused on accountability for planned project delivery. UNICEF ECA structures, procedures (e.g. more adaptive programming and flexible, learning oriented monitoring, evaluation and learning), as well as staff competencies and technical skills did not fully align with the need for multi-sector programming, a greater focus on advocacy for systemic change and integrating the humanitarian-development nexus.

## **10. LESSONS LEARNED**

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<sup>129</sup> The analysis and policy recommendations on socio-economic impact in eight countries and territories: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (together with UNDP and UNWOMEN)  
<https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/2311/file/Theper cent20socio-economicper cent20impact.pdf>

Lessons-learned were identified as a part of the evaluation process, notably through the revision of the MCP ToC, as well as by exploring the external and internal assumptions underlying the pathways of change. This section summarizes the main lessons-learned; many cutting across outcome areas and challenging existing UNICEF ECA operational modalities.

1. Adapting and flexing to changing circumstances, such as the 2017 hurricane response, migration crisis and now the COVID-19 response and relief efforts required leadership and flexibility from previous objectives, standard operating procedures, including on monitoring, evaluation and learning, as well as staff roles, alignment with national needs and close coordination among relief agencies, notably CDEMA, IFRC and PAHO, among others. These coordination efforts worked better in the COVID-19 response than previously and should influence the next MCP, as it integrates climate change and the development/humanitarian nexus in both the MCP objectives, ToC and operational modalities, including the results framework and related processes.
2. Reliance on governments in the identification of the most marginalized, in the context of multi-dimensional and dynamic poverty, did not always reach those most excluded. More grass-roots approaches, relying on support from local government and civil society organizations may be more effective (e.g. in identifying recently arrived migrant children, or migrant children in remote, rural settings, those requiring cash transfers) and should supplement government guided efforts, where relevant and feasible.
3. While policy change is possible (e.g. ECD, child justice and protection, social protection), it requires politically astute advocacy and excellent, personal relationships with key government representatives. Policy implementation remains the main challenge, due to lack of resources. Here as well, advocacy for increasing attention on children's issues and particularly allocation of public budget to key areas, such as ECD, education, child protection and social protection programmes is required. Advocacy for increasing related public expenditure and using carefully targeted programme resources for direct service delivery in areas that can catalyze reform and demonstrate the importance of public funding are required. Advocacy requires efforts well beyond individual, finite project interventions, and should therefore also be reflected in ECA operational modalities and resourcing, including staff roles.
4. While UNICEF began its work on communications for development during the MCP period, influencing deeply engrained social and gender norms (e.g. corporal punishment and violence against girls) requires great effort and particularly time.
5. UNICEF added-value, especially the synergies between upstream and downstream approaches, the development/humanitarian nexus and between inside-track and outside track advocacy were insufficiently understood and represented in the MCP, the ToC and UNICEF ECA operational modalities, including organizational structure and staff competencies. Greater attention needs to be given to these synergies, as well as other cross-cutting issues, namely climate change and gender; all requiring greater coordination and collaboration across the MCP outcomes and pathways of change, as well as UNICEF ECA structures, processes and resources.
6. UNICEF has not yet sufficiently identified its own particular added-value (e.g. on social protection) and how it can best leverage partnerships (e.g. donors, IFIs, civil society organizations, private sector) to increase its impact at scale around key objectives (e.g. ECD, VAC, data, social protection). Stronger partnerships among UN agencies (e.g. on COVID-19) as well as leveraging existing work of donors, especially key IFIs (e.g. CDB, IDB and World Bank) in areas such as increasing public expenditure on children and social protection need to be further explored. Partnerships with civil society organizations need to be further fostered, particularly to identify and reach the most marginalized and vulnerable groups (e.g. migrant children in Trinidad and Tobago) Engagement with the private sector can also generate substantial effects at scale.

7. Mainstreaming of DRR and further exploration of the humanitarian/development nexus is required to shift from an emergency response, to a more preventative, resilience mode, not least due to the effects of climate change in the sub-region.

## 11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below were developed in a participatory manner with UNICEF ECA and LACRO staff during a virtual workshop, which validated overall findings and co-created related recommendations in smaller break-out groups. The consultant facilitating the strategic planning process was also closely engaged in the design and implementation of the consultative process, which then seamlessly extended into the design of the next MCP. The recommendations were ultimately consolidated and prioritized, being summarized below, in order of priority based on the design and eventual implementation of the next MCP.

Table 14: Prioritized MCP-E Recommendations

| Priority ranking # | Recommendation  | Responsibility                                 |
|--------------------|---|--|
|                    | <b>Design of the next MCP</b>   |  |
| <b>1</b>           | <p>Define clearer, more specific and achievable objectives, with a focus on advocacy for policy change, in a limited number of geographies and themes, along with a related results framework in the new MCP reflecting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- UNICEF's specific added-value on ECD and more resilient education, reduced violence and child protection, in line with a related theory of change, resources and capacity to consolidate VAC</li> <li>- proportionality and relative size of problems faced, population of children and size of countries and territories (e.g. Trinidad and Tobago).</li> <li>- flexibility in related change pathways, including the use of both service delivery and advocacy for sustained impact</li> <li>- Leveraging of partnerships e.g. CDEMA, Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), IFRC, donors, EU/ECHO, relevant UN agencies, as well as civil society organizations; particularly in the identification of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and their families, including those with developmental delays and disabilities</li> </ul> | UNICEF ECA, UNICEF LACRO, UN agencies, UN RCOs |
| <b>2</b>           | <p>There is a need to improve the humanitarian-development nexus, to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer-term and interconnected problems into account.</p> <p>For the next MCP it is critical for UNICEF ECA to understand their 'value addition in this critical area and to further embed this through developing clear pathways from the desired developmental outcomes back to the current humanitarian situation and needs. Applying a clear 'resilience lens' to the development of objectives, pathways and activities as well as monitoring indicators will be critical to support this.</p>  | UNICEF ECA                                     |
|                    | <b>During implementation of the next MCP</b>  |  |

|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| <b>3</b> | Greater realism and prioritization in the engagement of countries and territories, while ensuring greater opportunities for in-country engagement, whether through the UN system, strengthening local presence or responsibilities for individual countries and territories in the ECA team.   | UNICEF ECA,<br>UNICEF LACRO,<br>UN system |
| <b>4</b> | Integrate multi-sector programming, a greater focus on advocacy for systemic change and the humanitarian-development nexus into UNICEF ECA operational modalities, including structures, procedures (e.g. more adaptive programming and flexible, learning oriented monitoring, evaluation and learning) and staff competencies and technical skills required. | UNICEF ECA,<br>UNICEF LACRO               |