



Gender Equality

UNICEF Australia's Priority Programs Results 2017 – 2020



¹ UNICEF Australia recognises that this includes those who are transgender, gender diverse or non-binary.

Gender Equality in UNICEF Australia's Priority Programs

2020 marked 25 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most comprehensive policy agenda for gender equality. There are certainly achievements to celebrate. However, progress has been uneven across regions and groups, with the most marginalised girls primarily from ethnic minorities, indigenous groups, poor households, living in rural or conflict settings, and living with disabilities.

In the Asia Pacific, employment, health, HIV-AIDS related deaths, and early marriage and pregnancy remain key areas of concern for girls with little improvement. COVID-19 has also negatively impacted progress in gender equality, threatening to reverse the gains that have been made. Girls are more likely to drop out of school during health crises in order to take on more caregiving responsibilities at home. Previous health crises, such as the Ebola epidemic, have shown that girls who drop out are unlikely to ever return to school. Protracted crises also often see a rise in gender-based violence, as well as essential funding being diverted from crisis prevention and response services.

UNICEF Australia's work on gender equality has been guided by UNICEF's Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2018-2021. This roadmap for promoting gender equality integrates gender outcomes into each program area, and highlights key priorities in the areas of adolescent girls' health; menstrual health and hygiene; child marriage and early unions; gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies; and girls' secondary education.

Between 2017-2020, **83% of UNICEF Australia's projects had a specific focus on women and girls, and contributed to achieving gender equality**. This report includes some of the key results and case studies which highlight the progress being made in gender equality. Moving forwards, we will continue to invest in and prioritise progressing gender equality for girls, boys, women and men and those of other gender identities¹ across all our programs to ensure that no one gets left behind. There will also be an increased focus on key issues, such as addressing child marriage in Laos and Cambodia, and building adolescents skills in Sri Lanka and Burundi.



"While there has been great progress in the past 25 years, no country is currently on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. Without direct investment, we risk reversing the gains we've made. Now is the time to accelerate our efforts, so that girls and boys can have a fair chance to reach their potential."

- Vivien Harvey-Wong, Gender Focal Point, UNICEF Australia



726,361

girls have directly benefitted from UNICEF Australia's Priority Programs from 2017-2020



Bridging the gap to give mothers and their babies a chance to survive

In Zimbabwe, the role village health workers play in reducing delays in accessing health facilities can literally mean life or death for women and girls, and their babies. In the past three years, UNICEF has been training village health workers in the Zimbabwe Child Survival project, increasing the capacity of health workers to improve maternal and child health for the most vulnerable and unreached populations.

The village health workers run women's groups to provide support and discuss issues like overcoming gender norms, addressing sexual and gender-based violence, early care seeking, accessing family planning services, breastfeeding, early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. These groups have been highly successful, and in one province has expanded to 800 groups in total.

Village health workers also conduct home visits for pregnant women and girls, and help them access healthcare especially when that decision may be at odds with traditional cultural or religious customs which

could end up being life-threatening. Tatenda Muza, a pregnant 16 year old, was confined to a small hut while in labour when a village health worker found her. **"He found me almost dying and I had lost all hope,"** she says. He was then able to call the health clinic who organised an ambulance to take her to the district hospital where she gave birth to a premature baby at 36 weeks through emergency caesarean section.

The Child Survival program in Zimbabwe has reached over 1.15 million men, women, boys and girls (including those with a disability). Approximately 367,000 women, 381,000 boys and 409,000 girls benefited from improved quality of and access to maternal, newborn and child health services. Training for health workers to deliver health services was provided for approximately 6,000 women and 1,800 men.



460,153

women have benefitted from improved quality of and access to maternal, newborn and child health services in UNICEF Australia's Child Survival program between 2017-2020

Dismantling gender roles so girls and boys can dream bigger

Inclusive integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) programming has so far resulted in more girls accessing ECD services than before, improving their chances at being ready for school, staying in school and fulfilling their potential. To make sure that girls and boys are able to access equal opportunities, UNICEF has incorporated evidence-based research to design a parenting package in the Laos Early Childhood Development program, centred around the importance of nurturing care, the stable environment that mums, dads and other caregivers can create. Evidence shows that engaging fathers, as well as mothers, in more equal child rearing and nurturing care significantly improves child development outcomes.

The parenting package dismantles stereotypical gender roles in child rearing, by using images which portray fathers' engagement and stories that navigate different societal pressures that may be interwoven in family traditions and cultural norms.

Through this package, UNICEF aims to also promote principles of gender equality from the earliest moments of life, enabling girls and boys to grow and develop on an equal footing. It also starts conversations around early marriage and teenage pregnancy, building awareness among parents of how they can address some of these harmful gender norms, and support their girls and boys throughout adolescence. Materials for the parenting package have been developed and finalised, and community facilitators have been trained, ready to deliver training to around 300 rural Lao communities in the coming months.

UNICEF Australia's Early Childhood Development program has reached over 58,000 boys including almost 200 boys with a disability, and over 60,000 girls including 150 girls with a disability across five countries. In Laos over 3,200 boys and 3,000 girls (including those with disabilities, and from ethnic minorities) have accessed inclusive, equitable and community-based ECD interventions. This project will continue into 2021, and gain momentum in delivering the parenting package in communities so that girls and boys can grow up unimpeded by stereotypes that hold them back from reaching their potential.



106,393

girls and boys have accessed inclusive and equitable community-based ECD interventions in UNICEF Australia's Early Childhood Development program between 2017-2020



Preventing gender-based violence through positive parenting

Gender-based violence and violence against children is widespread in Papua New Guinea (PNG). UNICEF has been implementing a Child Protection project from 2017-2020 that recognises how gender norms shape the realities of girls' and boys' lives differently and aims to be gender transformative. The low status of girls in PNG, especially in rural areas, is reflected in high rates of early marriage and teenage pregnancy, along with a lack of opportunities for education and employment, and information and services for sexual and reproductive health.

The Positive Parenting component of the project has significantly reduced rates of violence against children and gender-based violence, giving girls and boys the safety of a supportive environment to learn and grow. Positive Parenting includes promoting gender equality in family and community life. It addresses harmful gender norms by encouraging both mums and dads to care for and show affection to their children, and teaching them to encourage their children to follow their interests regardless of if they were stereotypically 'girl-interests' or 'boy-interests'. Mums and dads are

trained to use positive techniques to communicate with their children rather than physical or verbal abuse.

Peter, one of the participants, shared, **"I did what my parents used to do to me. I used to hit my children when they did not listen ... But now this program gives directions and some instructions on how parents can do better for the children."**

The Child Protection project in PNG has benefitted approximately 8,000 boys and 6,600 girls in total. Over 1,100 government staff, service providers and community leaders have been trained to prevent and respond to child protection issues. Over 24,000 men, women, boys and girls including those with a disability have been trained on gender issues and women's equal rights.



353,262

men, women, boys and girls trained on gender issues and women's equal rights in UNICEF Australia Child Protection program between 2017-2020



Education shouldn't stop for periods

Periods are a natural part of life for women and girls. However, every single month, taboos, social norms, and a lack of access to information, sanitary products and facilities can affect a girl's right to equality, dignity and access to education. This is why menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has been a part of UNICEF Australia's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools projects in Fiji and Myanmar from 2017-2020.

In the Myanmar WASH project, teachers say that MHM education and gender-segregated facilities are the most highly valued aspects of the project for adolescent girls and play a significant role in reducing the number of girls missing school due to menstruation. For Mang Deih Thang and other schoolgirls from middle classes, the private room for changing sanitary materials during menstruation is a real asset. **"There is no need for us to go home, miss class or feel embarrassed when we have our periods,"** says Mang Deih Thang.

In Fiji, the MHM component is taking the next step to meeting the needs of girls with disabilities. UNICEF and the Pacific Disability Forum ran a Menstrual Hygiene

Day in Fiji's Hilton Special School in May 2019, to fight the stigma that menstruation is a sickness or something dirty through teaching students on what it is, when it occurs and what to do. The day also raised awareness on the experiences of young women and girls with disabilities and their menstrual health.

UNICEF Australia's WASH program has benefitted approximately 58,500 boys, and over 56,500 girls including those with disabilities. In Fiji and Myanmar, over 52,000 boys and nearly 51,000 girls including those with disabilities were educated on menstrual hygiene management, an important achievement with aims to normalise and destigmatise periods in the long-term. Over 28,000 boys and 29,000 girls now have improved access to sanitation facilities.



52,378 boys and 50,945 girls

received education on menstrual hygiene management in UNICEF Australia's WASH program between 2017-2020



Taking stock of achievements and gaps to ensure we reach the most vulnerable girls

Gender Programmatic Reviews look at our programs to ensure we are making progress on gender equality. They find what issues we should be focusing on and where the gaps need to be filled, in order to achieve the strategic plan goals for all girls and boys.

In 2018 and 2019, UNICEF Australia supported the East Asia Pacific Regional Office in undertaking three Gender Programmatic Reviews in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. Gender Programmatic Reviews are conducted to explore what UNICEF Country Offices are currently doing to achieve outcomes for gender equality across all their work. They are also a strategic opportunity for a UNICEF Country Office to reflect on

the priority gender-based issues in their country and how they can improve programming to address these issues more effectively.

Through the three reviews, issues such as reducing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, designing and implementing gender responsive adolescent programming, and better gender mainstreaming in the sectors of Early Childhood Development, Child Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) emerged strongly as priorities. These priorities are being incorporated into UNICEF program planning and design, and have also been identified as areas where UNICEF Australia will scale up its support. The incorporation of gender outcomes in program planning and implementation by UNICEF Cambodia as a result of their review has led to some big wins and it is now seen as a global best practice example.



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Gender Programmatic Reviews conducted between 2017-2020 to understand what progress we've made and where we need to focus our efforts in achieving gender equality through our programs

UNICEF Australia would like to thank all our supporters for their generosity in supporting our work with girls, boys and children of other gender identities, and their families and communities around the world. The results and impacts delivered by these programs would not be possible without your assistance, which is ensuring that we are reaching the most vulnerable, and that no one is left behind.

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