



# Humanitarian action

Global Annual  
Results Report 2023

unicef   
for every child

Cover image: © UNICEF/UNI521729/EI Baba  
A young girl holds an empty water bottle in front of her family's shelter in the city of Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, in January 2024.

Expression of thanks: © UNICEF/UN0856169/Elfatih  
Children displaced by conflict in the Sudan draw at a gathering centre in the city of Madani in June 2023. Drawing helps children express their experiences during the fighting and its impact on their lives. The State Council for Child Welfare organizes and delivers these psychosocial support activities, with UNICEF support. After the outbreak of war in April 2023, UNICEF responded in hotspot areas, addressed the needs of displaced people in safer areas and sustained systems that provide basic services to children and their families.



## Expression of thanks

UNICEF expresses its gratitude to all resource partners whose overall contributions supported the organization's humanitarian action in 2023. The achievements described in this report were the result of these continued partnerships. In particular, UNICEF expresses its sincere appreciation to all resource partners that contributed thematically to the organization's work in humanitarian responses. Thanks to thematic funding and its flexibility, UNICEF has been able to provide timely and effective technical, operational and programming support to countries in all regions as part of its efforts to prepare and deliver life-saving protection and assistance to children and families. On behalf of children, their families and communities in urgent need, UNICEF is especially grateful for contributions of global, regional and country humanitarian thematic funds, which provide the most flexible resources for emergency response. The work of UNICEF is funded entirely through the voluntary support of millions of people around the world and our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. We take this opportunity to thank all our partners for their commitment and trust in UNICEF.

# Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Endnotes.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Strategic context: Children under threat, and the global UNICEF response .....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Annex 1: Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding 2023.....</b>	<b>89</b>
Children under threat .....	4	<b>Annex 2: Financial Report .....</b>	<b>117</b>
The global UNICEF response .....	8	<b>Annex 3: Humanitarian Data Companion.....</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Looking forward.....</b>	<b>17</b>		
<b>Results for children: 2023 in review .....</b>	<b>19</b>		
January.....	21		
February .....	28		
March .....	35		
April.....	41		
May .....	46		
June .....	54		
July.....	59		
August.....	63		
September .....	66		
October .....	68		
November .....	74		
December .....	81		





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# Introduction

Students at Dame Marie national school in Grand Anse Department, Haiti, wait at a distribution of UNICEF school kits in March 2023.

The rights of millions of children to life and safety, health care, adequate nutrition, education, safe water and protection from harm and exploitation came under grave threat in 2023 because of conflicts, violence, climate-induced emergencies and natural disasters – or, for the most vulnerable children, due to some overlapping mix of these conditions.

UNICEF, the United Nations agency mandated to uphold the rights of children, worked with partners to save lives and protect childhoods by extending the long arm of its mandate to the most difficult places on earth to be a child: the Gaza Strip in the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, Haiti, Myanmar, Mali, Ethiopia, Somalia and so many other places. Results of UNICEF's humanitarian action in these 9 countries and in 98 other countries are contained in this *2023 Global Annual Results Report: Humanitarian Action*. Included are global results for key humanitarian indicators across all programmatic areas. This report also presents specific results in key humanitarian contexts, with a focus on countries for which UNICEF issued a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for 2023. Targets are provided wherever possible to provide context for these results. The results show how UNICEF, working closely with partners, and in particular local partners, made great efforts to profoundly impact the lives of millions of children.

Yet the global demand for humanitarian assistance in 2023 outstripped its supply: the many threats to children's rights outpaced the capacity of the humanitarian community to fully protect children in the midst of conflict and violence, forced displacement, storms, floods, droughts and wildfires, and earthquakes and other natural disasters.

As happens when demand is high and supply is lower or disrupted, the cost – in this case measured in children's lives lost, diseases untreated, education disrupted, communities threatened – was unacceptably high. Critical challenges to UNICEF's humanitarian action for children in 2023 included obstacles to humanitarian access; an erosion of trust in humanitarian actors; the need for greater prioritization of preparedness; and the scope and scale of humanitarian needs outpacing the financial means to meet them, despite the great generosity of donors. This situation was not unique to UNICEF: globally, the humanitarian community faced not only extreme difficulties accessing people in need, but also "one of the worst humanitarian funding crises we have seen in years"<sup>1</sup>

The first part of this report contains a brief snapshot of this challenging humanitarian situation for children in 2023, and a summary – primarily through graphics – of the UNICEF response on a global level. There are special sections on challenges in humanitarian access – a critical impediment to results – and on UNICEF's advocacy work in 2023, which is an important tool for addressing this impediment. There is also a two-page section on UNICEF efforts to get supplies into the Gaza Strip when most major ways to do this were cut off.

Unlike in previous reports in this series, key humanitarian contexts as well as challenges will be presented in a month-by-month narrative of key results for children. This will guide the reader through the year of crises and how UNICEF responded to deliver results for children. The report discusses the achievements in the programmatic sectors where UNICEF and its partners work. And it notes key challenges, and whether and how they were overcome, including situations where results did not go as planned. Cross-cutting areas – gender equality, inclusion of children with disabilities, adolescent programming, social and behaviour change and community engagement – are integrated throughout the main results narrative.<sup>2</sup>

None of UNICEF's humanitarian action would have been possible without the support of the resource partners who contributed a total of \$3.48 billion for the UNICEF humanitarian response in 2023. These partners were public and private sector donors including governments, multi-lateral funding mechanisms and other public sector partners; UNICEF National Committees; and the companies and the millions of individuals who contributed to UNICEF through the National Committees or through other country office private sector fundraising channels. UNICEF is funded by voluntary contributions, and we thank our resource partners for re-committing to the UNICEF mandate for children each year. Annex 2 provides detailed information about contributions received in 2023. Annex 1 provides an overview of global humanitarian thematic funding, the most flexible type of funding after regular resources; Annex 1 also provides case studies showing how global humanitarian thematic funding was used and delivered results for children in 2023.



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# Strategic context: Children under threat, and the global UNICEF response

Andrii, 2, plays with sand at a playground in Kharkiv, Ukraine, in September 2023. At his young age he has already experienced war, displacement, COVID-19, hospitalization and a devastating separation from his father, resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder and a desire to hide away from the world. A UNICEF-supported early childhood intervention service is helping Andrii to recover and start communicating once again.

# Children under threat

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The number of people requiring humanitarian assistance reached an estimated 364.6 million globally in 2023, up from 324 million in 2022.<sup>3</sup> The UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeal estimated more than 200 million children in need of humanitarian assistance at the beginning of 2023 in countries with appeals. Conflict, global climate change and economic challenges caused the majority of humanitarian needs children and their families experienced throughout the year.<sup>4</sup>

The impact of conflict and violence on children's realization of their rights in 2023 cannot be overstated.

Grave violations against children increased by 21 per cent in 2023. The United Nations verified 32,990 grave violations; 30,705 were committed in 2023 and 2,285 were committed earlier but verified in 2023. Violations affected 22,557 children (15,847 boys, 6,252 girls, 458 sex unknown) in 25 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement covering the Lake Chad basin region.<sup>5</sup>

Every kind of grave violation was present in the State of Palestine and Israel in 2023, where a brazen disregard for children's lives saw children indiscriminately killed or taken as hostages in early October; and nearly the entirety of the 2.2 million population of the Gaza Strip displaced in the ensuing retaliation and escalation of hostilities.

The State of Palestine Ministry of Health reported that more than 9,000 children had been killed in the Gaza Strip between 7 October 2023 and 4 January 2024.<sup>6</sup> Violence obliterated children's homes and safety, health care and education. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children were brought to the edge of starvation.<sup>7</sup> Extreme threats to lives and childhoods also occurred elsewhere. In the Sudan, where conflict erupted in April 2023, 3.5 million children were forced to flee their homes. Millions were also displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the number of grave violations against children surged in the first half of 2023 by 41 per cent.<sup>8</sup> And in Haiti, 3 million children required humanitarian assistance, with children among those most vulnerable to heightened violence, including killings, kidnappings and sexual assaults by armed groups. And the list, unfortunately, goes on: threatened were children living through war in Ukraine; children on the move in the Darién Gap bordering Panama and Colombia; those living in the cyclone-drenched hills and valleys of Malawi; internally displaced due to conflict in Myanmar; or under siege-like conditions in areas of northern Mali.

Lack of access to many of these children under threat was a defining element of the year (*see SPOTLIGHT*).



## Humanitarian access

Disruption and denial of humanitarian access to people who require assistance violates humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law. The consequences of this are not abstract: children requiring medical care or treatment for severe wasting do not receive it; those who require protection are not protected; those who need safe water to drink or to help to prevent diseases such as cholera do not have it.

Crisis-affected people in 41 countries experienced high to extreme access constraints between June and November 2023.<sup>9</sup> At the end of 2023, access constraints were particularly acute in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Myanmar, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and Ukraine.

Nonetheless, UNICEF persisted in trying to obtain and preserve access to children in need. Country offices receiving specific support from UNICEF headquarters to address access issues included Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Colombia/the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Myanmar, Mozambique, Somalia, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. UNICEF deployed short-term access support to Haiti, Ecuador, Ethiopia and Yemen, and access Emergency Response Team members deployed in support of north-western Syria, the Sudan and Myanmar.

Critical access interventions included advocating for access to children in the Gaza Strip, in partnership with other organizations, and advocating to open land crossings since the start of the response. In Haiti, UNICEF played a leading role in negotiating access with armed non-State actors, spearheading inter-agency efforts in key areas of the capital

Port-au-Prince. In October 2023, these efforts resulted in the rescue of dozens of children trapped amid crossfire. These access successes were due to an intentional focus on strengthening the access skills of UNICEF colleagues; inter-agency coordination work to address access concerns; public and private advocacy; humanitarian negotiations; and enhanced country office support.

Efforts to develop staff skills and knowledge to handle challenging access situations are ongoing. Negotiating humanitarian access is part of the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop for senior leaders. In November 2023, UNICEF piloted (with the Civil Military Coordination Service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) two dedicated trainings for staff on United Nations-civil-military coordination. UNICEF also continues to provide tailor-made sessions to its front-line staff, including security and emergency staff globally, on the use of armed escorts, sanctions, principled humanitarian action and addressing bureaucratic and administrative impediments. In 2024, UNICEF expects to hold its biennial workshop for country Representatives on operating in complex and high-threat environments, along with the first global peer-to-peer workshop for UNICEF access practitioners.

Globally, around 175 million people are believed to live under the control of armed groups.<sup>10</sup> In 2023, UNICEF initiated a baseline analysis of its humanitarian engagement with armed non-State actors at the country level to identify good practices and ways to support country and field offices while also maintaining a risk-informed approach. UNICEF will disseminate the results of this study, along with research on navigating humanitarian dilemmas in the field, among practitioners and partners in 2024.



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UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and Red Crescent aid convoys begin entering the Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, on 21 October 2023. The 20 trucks contain a limited amount of life-saving items, including medicines, food supplies and bottled water. Since the outbreak of war, UNICEF has called for immediate, unrestricted humanitarian access throughout the Gaza Strip to allow humanitarian actors to reach civilians in need.

Climate-related events that occurred in 2023 deeply impacted children and families, many of whom were already living in vulnerable situations. These included storms and flooding (Tropical Cyclone Freddy in southern Africa, Tropical Storm Daniel in Libya, Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar and Bangladesh, and others); wildfires in Europe; and drought, with millions of people facing water scarcity, including children in Afghanistan, Madagascar and Somalia. Internal displacement due to climate change was on the rise, jumping by 45 per cent from 2021 to 2022.<sup>11</sup>

And in February 2023, major earthquakes affected the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, and millions of children were traumatized, losing their homes, their access to education and so much more. Throughout the year earthquakes also hit Morocco (September), Afghanistan (October) and Nepal (November).

Following a year of record-breaking cholera epidemics in 2022, the number of reported cases in 2023 surpassed 2022, reaching 766,300 in 31 countries, with more than

5,400 deaths. With disruption to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, because of or along with the upheaval of conflict, violence, displacement, flooding and drought, people living through humanitarian emergencies were extremely vulnerable to cholera. This is especially true for children, because cholera can kill them within hours. Other diseases also impacted children, notably measles, dengue fever and others.

Economic challenges continued to impact children globally. Rising food prices linked to the war in Ukraine, along with global political and economic instability, were among the factors that diminished the ability of the most vulnerable families to pay for necessities. These economic challenges overlapped with conflict, disease, displacement and climate-related factors.

Given all these extremely difficult conditions, advocacy was an essential tool in a number of critical contexts (see *SPOTLIGHT*).



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An immunization officer and a community health nurse ride a motorcycle to a camp in Sapelliga, Ghana, in February 2023, where they will provide services to new arrivals fleeing conflict in Burkina Faso.

## Advocacy

UNICEF advocacy improved and accelerated in 2023, thanks to progress in the implementation of the Humanitarian Review recommendations, including increased advocacy capacity at headquarters and in regional offices; a growing number of whole-of-organization advocacy strategies for specific major emergencies; and enhanced ways of working across teams for coherent, coordinated advocacy.

Advocacy is central to efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance; secure access; promote adherence to international legal norms and standards; promote accountability of those who violate children's rights; and raise awareness and promote the rights and voices of women and children as integral to humanitarian action.

UNICEF continued to invest in developing humanitarian advocacy-related knowledge and skills of its staff. The Humanitarian Leadership Workshop included targeted training modules on strategic humanitarian advocacy, including advocacy in complex and high-threat environments. Teams refined and delivered a modular humanitarian advocacy training course for colleagues in the field, ranging from a one-hour introductory course on humanitarian advocacy to a full three-day advocacy strategy and capacity-building workshop. UNICEF rolled out tailored versions of this training module in 2022 and 2023 in numerous regional and multi-country contexts, and in Haiti.

UNICEF humanitarian advocacy has become more intentional and coordinated at all levels. Globally, UNICEF remained a premier voice for children, engaging intensively on the agenda around children affected by armed conflict. This included UNICEF high-level participation in the 2023 Oslo Conference on Protecting Children in Conflict, which saw Member States increase and strengthen their domestic and international commitments to protect children in conflict. UNICEF also weighed in on

protection of civilians and other child-related issues. The organization influenced four Security Council resolutions and presidential statements and three General Assembly resolutions, including peace operations mandate renewals where UNICEF influence resulted in strengthened language on child protection. The UNICEF Executive Director briefed the Security Council six times<sup>12</sup> and participated in a high-level briefing on the deteriorating situation in Yemen.

In Haiti, UNICEF led humanitarian advocacy efforts on behalf of the international community given the role of the UNICEF Executive Director as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principal Advocate for the Humanitarian Situation in Haiti. A joint advocacy plan linked to this role was developed and implemented, along with a UNICEF-specific advocacy strategy. A key goal was shining a spotlight on the plight of children, achieved through increased media and social media attention, more engagement with key missions in New York and more by visits by the Executive Directors of UNICEF and the World Food Programme to Haiti in June 2023. The UNICEF Executive Director also briefed the Security Council on the situation in Haiti in October and held bilateral briefings with Member States.

With an integrated strategy for public and private advocacy linked to the escalation of conflict in Israel and the State of Palestine, UNICEF continually called for an immediate and long-lasting humanitarian ceasefire; safe and unrestricted humanitarian access; immediate, safe and unconditional release of all abducted children; an end to grave violations against children; respect and protection for civilian infrastructure; safe access to critical health services; and evacuation of injured and sick children. UNICEF highlighted Gaza as the world's most dangerous place to be a child. UNICEF briefed the Security Council and had high-level bilateral advocacy meetings linked to this crisis and others, including Haiti and the Sudan.



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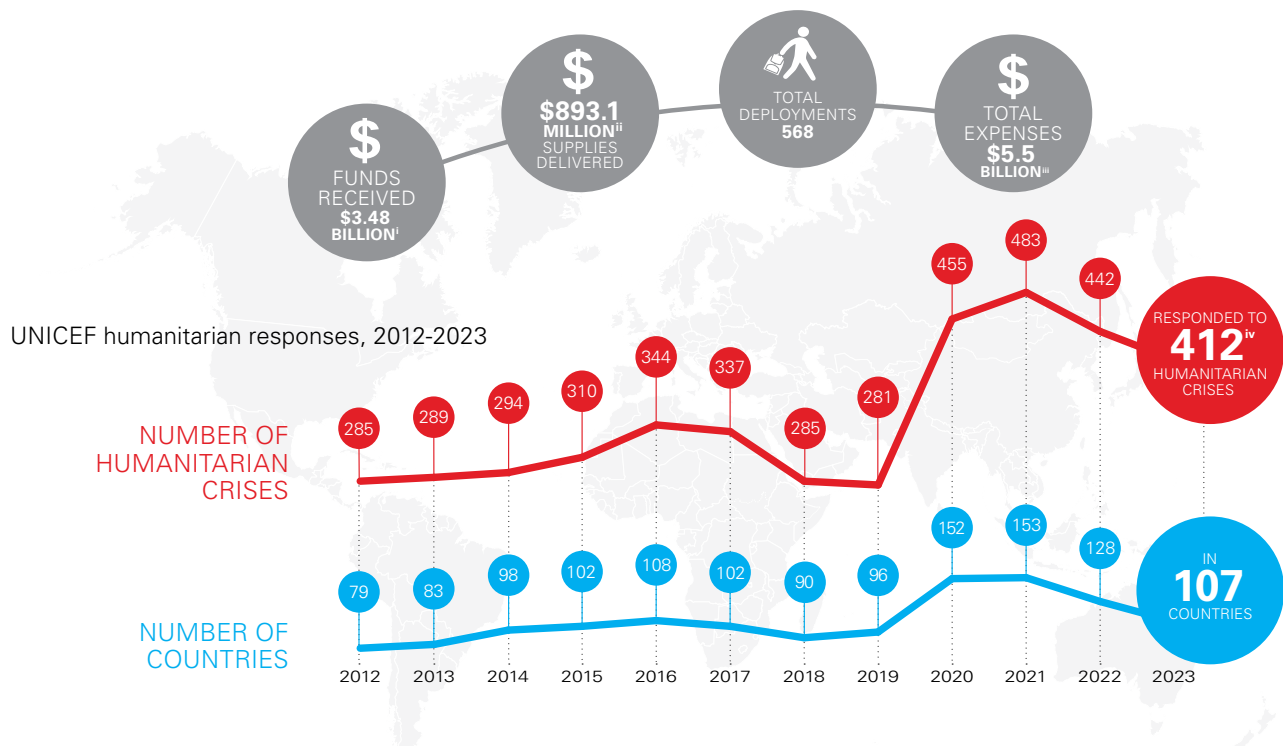
In June 2023, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell speaks with a mother holding her baby at the New Church of God of Deliverance in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where more than 500 people (half of them children) sought refuge after fleeing their homes due to violence by armed groups. The Executive Director serves as Principal Advocate for the Humanitarian Situation in Haiti for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

# The global UNICEF response

In 2023, UNICEF responded to 412 new or ongoing humanitarian crises in 107 countries. Ten crises necessitated a Level 3 scale-up during the year, compared with six in 2022.<sup>13</sup> See Figure 2 and Figure 3.

FIGURE 1: UNICEF global response in 2023

In 2023, 107 country offices responded to 412 humanitarian crises, reaching millions of children with life-saving, gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive interventions.



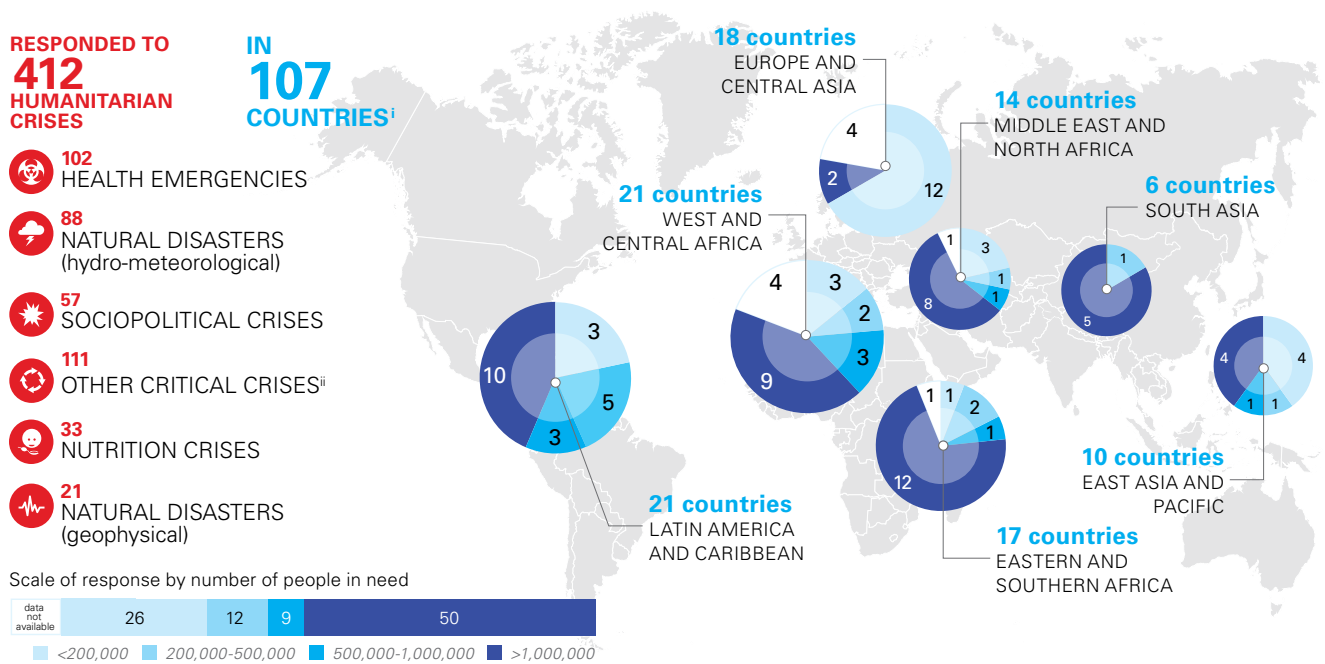
<sup>i</sup> The figure is based on contributions received in 2023. Humanitarian funding includes other resources - emergency and other types of funding that support UNICEF humanitarian response.

<sup>ii</sup> This total includes all programme supplies going to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies; all programme supplies for any new Level 2 or Level 3 emergencies, from the date they are declared; specific relevant orders for the countries in which only a region or part of the country is in an emergency; and specific supplies flagged as emergency supplies in countries facing Level 1 crises.

<sup>iii</sup> The figure represents expenses of humanitarian funding received in 2023 and carried over from the previous year.

<sup>iv</sup> This total includes 109 natural disasters, 57 sociopolitical crises, 102 health emergencies, 33 nutrition crises and 111 other critical crises.

FIGURE 2: Type and scale of humanitarian response in 2023



This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control agreed by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed by the Parties. The final boundary between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

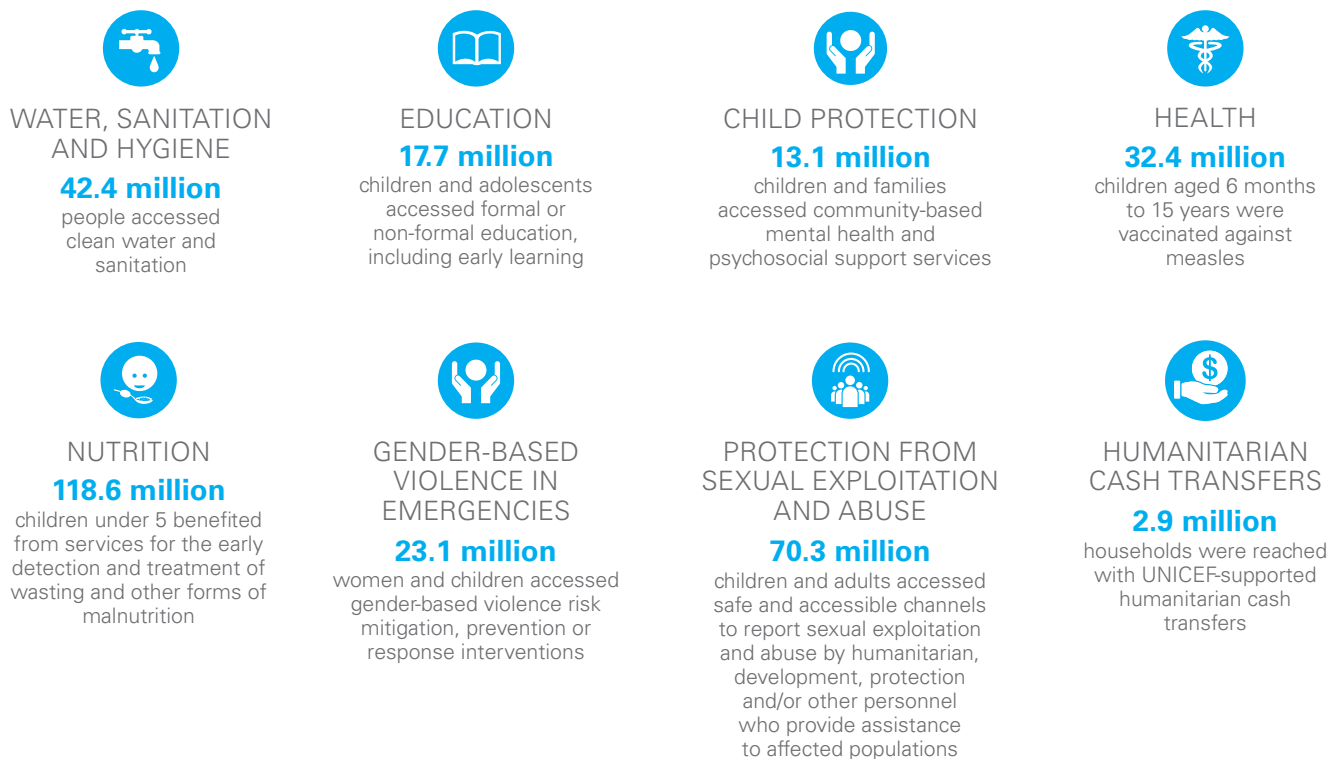
<sup>i</sup> Out of the 107 countries where UNICEF responded in 2023, 97 countries reported the total number of people in need. The charts in this graphic reflect the breakdowns by region and scale of response for those 97 countries.

<sup>ii</sup> Including but not limited to the response for refugees and migrants.

Key global-level results reflect a positive impact on children and families in all parts of the globe. See Figure 3.

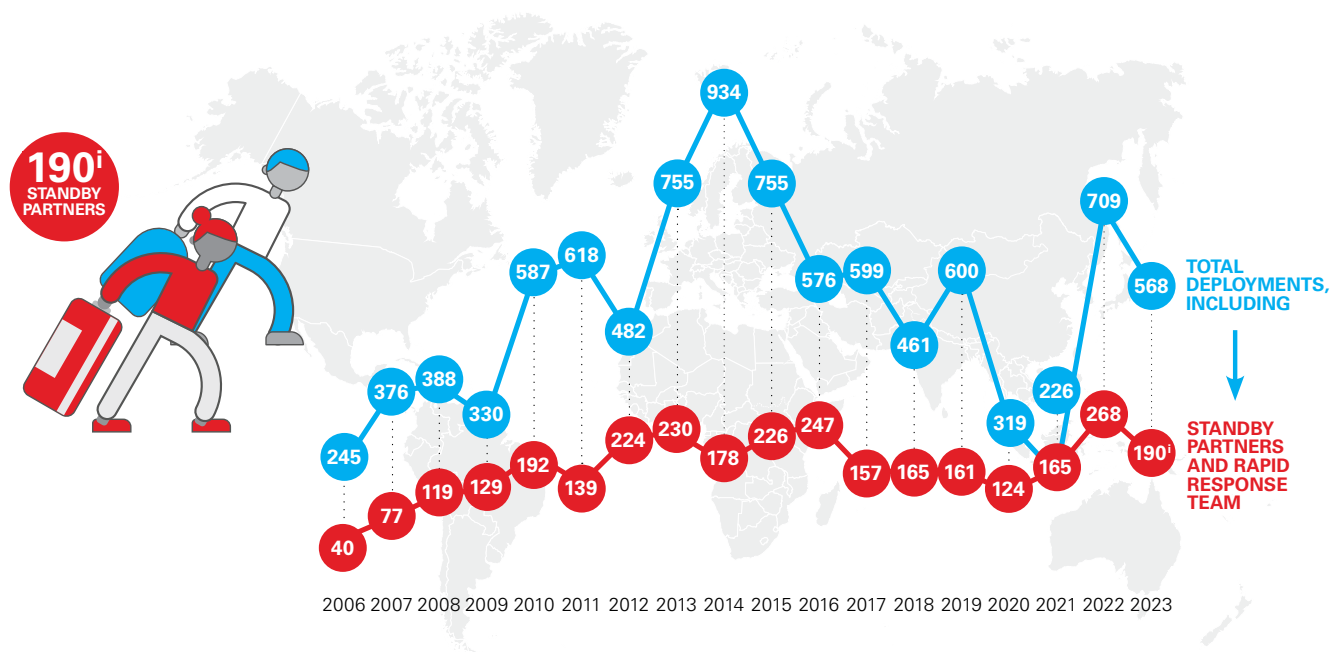
FIGURE 3: Humanitarian results for children in 2023

These are some of the key humanitarian results achieved by UNICEF and partners in 2023. In some contexts, achievements were constrained by limited resources, including across sectors; inadequate humanitarian access; insecurity; and challenging operating environments.



A UNICEF staff member shares a light moment with a Cyclone Freddy survivor at Naotcha Camp in Blantyre, Malawi, in March 2023.

FIGURE 4: Emergency deployments



<sup>i</sup> Includes 137 deployments through standby partner mechanisms, 36 through the Rapid Response Team and 17 through other external mechanisms.

## Our staff

UNICEF has no greater resource than its people. And throughout the year, UNICEF deployed critical additional staff for humanitarian responses using internal and external surge mechanisms (see Figure 4).

Development of staff knowledge and capacity in emergency response remained a top priority for the organization. Capacity development among UNICEF humanitarian staff accelerated: 100 senior managers were trained through the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop;

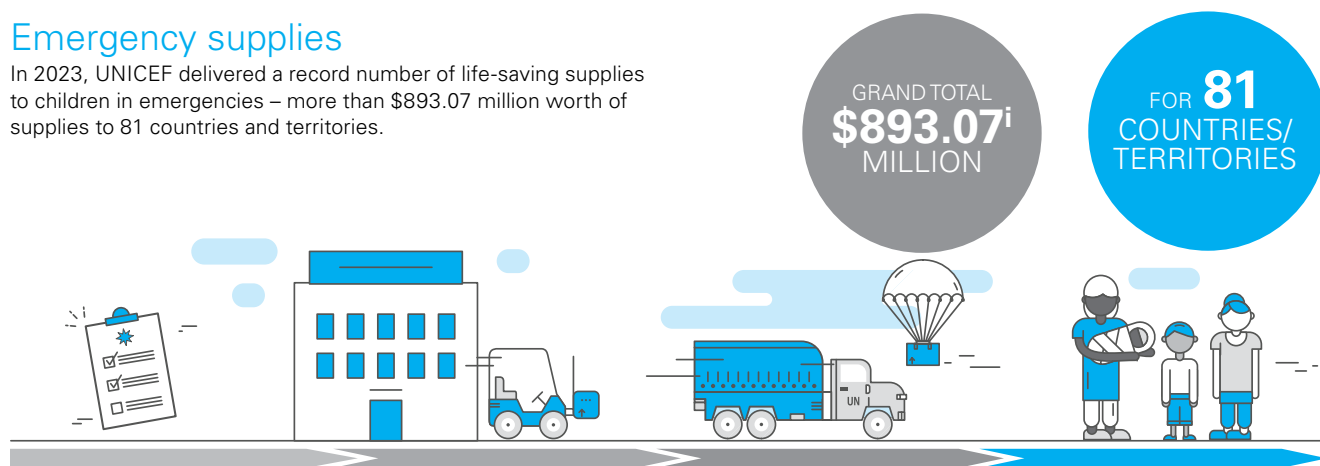
and a 30-module UNICEF Emergency Preparedness and Response course was revised for global roll-out in all seven UNICEF regions, helping to make emergency learning more coherent and focused. UNICEF set up a humanitarian learning channel, which provides access to more than 200 certified humanitarian-related courses. And staff in 70 country offices were trained in the Emergency Procedures for Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 crises.

## The humanitarian supply response

FIGURE 5: Emergency supplies

### Emergency supplies

In 2023, UNICEF delivered a record number of life-saving supplies to children in emergencies – more than \$893.07 million worth of supplies to 81 countries and territories.

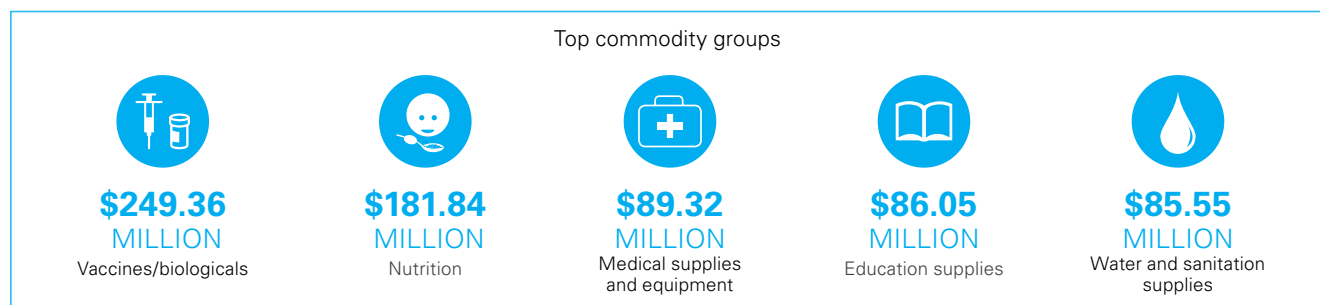


#### Responding to the resurgence of cholera

UNICEF supported the procurement of 36 million doses of oral cholera vaccine to respond to outbreaks in 30 countries. The speedy delivery of WASH supplies was essential for affected communities to contain the spread of infection and ensure access to safe water.

#### Nutrition

In 2023, UNICEF delivered 1.1 billion sachets of ready-to-use therapeutic food to 75 countries.



<sup>i</sup> This total includes all programme supplies going to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies; all programme supplies for any new Level 2 or Level 3 emergencies, from the date they were declared; specific relevant orders for the countries in which only a region or part of the country is in an emergency; and specific supplies flagged as emergency ones in countries facing Level 1 crises.

UNICEF delivered \$893.07 million in emergency supplies to 81 countries and territories.

UNICEF mounted large-scale supply responses and quickly mobilized essential supplies to support life-saving relief, early recovery, long-term development and preparedness for the future. Getting supplies into the hands of those who needed them often required managing complex transport routes, for example, getting supplies into the Sudan or

into the Gaza Strip (see *SPOTLIGHT*, below). Agility was a necessity to be able to deliver life-saving supplies in some critical contexts. Among other initiatives, special efforts were made to better package emergency supplies to meet the specific needs of adolescent girls, see page 26.

For overall information on emergency supplies in 2023, see [UNICEF Supply Annual Report 2023: Supply 360°](#).



## An agile supply and logistics operation tackles extreme access obstacles to providing relief to children and families in the State of Palestine

To save lives and support people in need in the Gaza Strip after October 7, UNICEF rapidly scaled up its supply and logistics operation, procuring \$14.3 million of essential supplies by the end of 2023 and deploying 15 UNICEF staff members (to multiple locations in the region<sup>14</sup>) with expertise in strategic supply planning, market assessments, local procurement, logistics and warehousing.

UNICEF immediately released supplies that had already been pre-positioned in the Gaza Strip, including medical, water and sanitation supplies; and building on the operational capacity it had established in the Gaza Strip prior to 7 October, UNICEF rapidly expanded cash assistance to reach vulnerable families within six days of the escalation of violence. By the end of 2023, UNICEF had delivered \$13.8 million in cash assistance to more than half a million people, enabling them to purchase essential supplies from the local market. UNICEF cash assistance made up 65 per cent of the cash assistance provided by the entire humanitarian community in the Gaza Strip between 7 October and the end of the year.

As local markets emptied and restrictions on the entry of commercial goods increased, children and their families soon relied almost entirely on humanitarian aid to survive. UNICEF balanced the sourcing of humanitarian supplies among local, regional and offshore markets, with 53 per cent of supplies procured locally in the State of Palestine and regionally from Egypt and Jordan.

To increase sustainable access to life-saving supplies critical to the response, UNICEF accelerated regional procurement efforts. In record time, UNICEF conducted an expedited regional market assessment and evaluation in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic that resulted in 198 new local vendors pre-screened for the procurement of blankets, children's winter clothing, family hygiene kits, tarpaulins and tents, significantly diversifying the regional supplier base.

UNICEF also leveraged support from its partners to facilitate rapid and efficient deliveries, organizing 29 charter flights carrying more than 1,000 metric tons of supplies from offshore suppliers, including medical kits and other health supplies and nutrition and WASH supplies. In the initial weeks of the response, the European Commission, in collaboration with UNICEF, provided air transport for more than 500 metric tons of essential supplies. Flexport.org provided in-kind transportation

of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals to the city of Al-Arish in northern Egypt, where all humanitarian supplies were consolidated before entering the Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing. UNICEF also transported trucks loaded with winter clothing for children from Jordan by ferry and then by land to the Rafah crossing.

Humanitarian action was severely limited by the closure of all but one border crossing at Rafah and due to the multilayered screening process for trucks entering the Gaza Strip. UNICEF played a front-line role in resolving bottlenecks. UNICEF advocated for increased ports of entry, while simultaneously leveraging its expertise in supply chains, cross-border logistics and inventory management to build a stable and sustainable pipeline of essential supplies. UNICEF worked with colleagues on the ground to identify priority needs and facilitated supply access, including for other United Nations agencies, to ensure a steady flow of supplies was ready to enter the Gaza Strip each time the border was opened for humanitarian supplies to go through.

UNICEF worked closely with the Egyptian Red Crescent, which coordinated the delivery of aid from Al-Arish into the Gaza Strip. UNICEF supported their capacity in inventory management, strategy development and cross-border operations. UNICEF also supported the development of the Egyptian Red Crescent's fully automated inventory management system and provided additional warehouse equipment including forklifts, pallet movers and shrink wrappers to support faster pallet handling.

In the Gaza Strip, coordination efforts and the safe delivery of aid were severely restricted by the shortage of available trucks, drivers and fuel, and by frequent electricity cuts and communication blackouts. Bombardments severely damaged roads for transporting aid; and secure storage space in the Gaza Strip became extremely limited, shrinking daily as more people moved into Rafah. To reach beneficiaries as quickly as possible and to minimize the need for storage, UNICEF prioritized direct delivery to partners and health facilities upon entry from the Rafah crossing.

By the end of 2023, UNICEF had delivered more than \$3.4 million in WASH supplies to the State of Palestine. This included 2.4 million water bottles and 1 million water purification tablets to improve access to clean drinking water, as well as nearly 37,000 hygiene and dignity kits

and 25,500 diapers. As the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Cluster lead, UNICEF also provided operational support, set standards and policies and built response capacity of cluster members.

With Nutrition Cluster partners, UNICEF supported the provision of therapeutic services and supplies for children affected by wasting, delivering \$1.8 million in nutrition supplies, including nearly 10,000 cartons of lipid-based nutrient supplements to prevent undernutrition and improve child survival, growth and development for more than 32,000 children aged 6–24 months and more than 6,800 cartons of ready-to-use therapeutic food to treat nearly 7,000 children suffering from severe wasting.

UNICEF provided medical supplies for health facilities throughout the Gaza Strip, delivering doses of routine vaccines, including pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, pentavalent vaccine<sup>15</sup> and hepatitis B vaccine to protect an estimated 134,000 children under the age of 18 months against vaccine-preventable diseases.

The Gaza Strip remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. UNICEF will continue to advocate for an immediate and long-lasting humanitarian ceasefire and for safe and unrestricted humanitarian access to and within the Gaza Strip for the delivery of life-saving supplies to those in need.



A man unloads 4,000 UNICEF-supplied blankets destined for European and Nasser hospitals in southern Gaza Strip, in December 2023.

## Coordination on a global scale, and within countries

UNICEF remained cluster lead of the Nutrition, WASH Clusters, co-led the Education Cluster (with Save the Children) and also led the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. Each of these clusters had significant results in 2023, both organizationally and by extension impacting children in emergencies. For example, after a mid-term review of the Global Nutrition Cluster strategy, key strategic shifts emerged that will boost the cluster's role in the localization agenda and enhance its climate lens. The Global Education Cluster provided robust support to crisis contexts and focused on training cluster members for better needs assessments. The Global WASH Cluster continued to forge a place as a global strategic leader in WASH response and also emphasized strong advocacy. And the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, through its global help desk,<sup>16</sup> handled a total of 575 requests –167 more than in 2022 – while also developing a Learning and Development Strategy (2023–2026) that will contribute to a strong foundation in coordination for years to come.

Critical progress was made in implementing the recommendations of the second evaluation of the UNICEF role as a cluster lead/co-lead agency (CLARE II). New guidance was developed for clusters and UNICEF country teams on cluster transition and deactivation and on how country clusters can address policy commitments on gender-based violence, localization and inclusion. Several new tools (one for cluster coordination teams and one for local women's organizations) made humanitarian coordination more accessible and relevant for local women's organizations. During the year, \$7.5 million in global humanitarian thematic funding was allocated to Level 2 and Level 3 countries with critical staffing gaps in coordination and information management to meet UNICEF commitments to reliable cluster leadership. And in 2023, 2,736 learners in 288 cities worldwide utilized UNICEF's Humanitarian Coordination Learning Channel on the Agora platform, completing 5,440 modules. A cross-cutting UNICEF working group on localization, accountability to affected populations, gender-based violence risk mitigation and disability inclusion worked to develop review criteria to mainstream these issues into humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans.

## Critical partnerships

Clusters drive coordination to make best use of all partners' contributions to saving children's lives in emergencies. This is important because children reap the benefits when government structures, humanitarian actors and communities and their organizations work together. In fact, there is no other way of achieving a sustainable positive impact on the lives of children impacted by humanitarian crises.

In 2023, UNICEF transferred \$2.9 billion to partners, including \$1.07 billion for humanitarian programming. Out of this, 43 per cent (\$458 million) was transferred to local<sup>17</sup> and national civil society organizations, exceeding the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent. Local civil society organizations led by women received 8 per cent (\$82.5 million). Altogether, UNICEF collaborated with 1,903 civil society partners, 1,380 of them local partners (see *Figure 6*).

At the global level, UNICEF signed a new global Strategic Collaboration Framework with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in February 2023. With a goal of global coverage of this framework by 2025, its operationalization was achieved in Belarus, the Central African Republic, Pakistan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Tunisia by December 2023. The partnership between UNICEF and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) continued through its Strengthening Initiative, with consultations held in country and regional offices and in headquarters. Aligning with localization commitments from the Grand Bargain and World Humanitarian Summit, this initiative engaged Red Cross/Red Crescent National Societies and UNICEF country offices in six countries, resulting in the allocation of small grants in Honduras, Kyrgyzstan, Nigeria and Tajikistan.

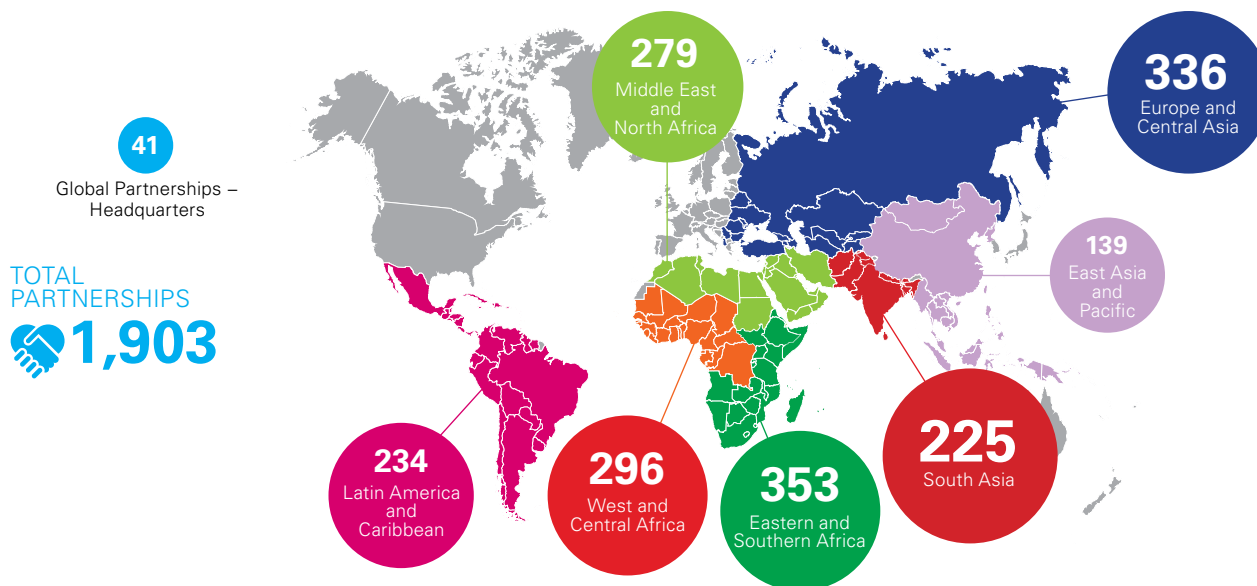
Information on concrete actions and results achieved through partnerships in 2023 is found throughout the main results narrative in this report, Results for children: 2023 in review (see *page 19*).

## Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

Throughout 2023, UNICEF strengthened the protective environment for children and their communities by reinforcing its internal systems for protecting populations from sexual exploitation and abuse. Ninety-one per cent of country offices with a humanitarian response had sexual exploitation and abuse reporting mechanisms rolled out office-wide and ensured capacity-building support to their partners; 72 per cent of country offices had established a holistic system for this, inclusive of an action plan, reporting mechanism, quality system for provision of victim assistance and referrals and partners trained. An estimated 36 million children and adults in 78 countries with a humanitarian response had access to reporting channels, compared with 31.7 million in 2022. The number of reports of sexual exploitation and abuse received through these channels increased by 53 per cent. The annual update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse offers further details on UNICEF work in this area.<sup>18</sup> UNICEF funded or contributed to inter-agency protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordinator posts in five Inter-Agency Standing Committee priority countries.

FIGURE 6: Partnerships

In 2023, UNICEF collaborated with 1,903 civil society partners, 1,380 of them local partners, and \$1.07 billion in cash was transferred to partners at all levels for humanitarian response. Of this, a total of \$378.6 million went to national government responders, and \$458.6 million (43 per cent) went to local actors, exceeding the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent.



*This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control agreed by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed by the Parties. The final boundary between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.*

## Localization

UNICEF implemented components of its comprehensive approach to localization in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Nigeria, the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen. Clusters finalized and rolled out a localization tool kit, and humanitarian learning opportunities were further extended to local partners (e.g., the Learning Passport and No Language Left Behind projects, the finalization of 10 face-to-face learning modules tailored to local partners, and a local-language pilot learning project for the staff of partners working with the UNICEF Goma field office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). UNICEF was a global leader in promoting localization and in integrating localization considerations into guidance and review processes linked to cluster coordination and the review of humanitarian response plans. Results included in the primary results narrative of this report reflect extensive work with local partners.

## Accountability to affected populations

Dedicated expertise in accountability to affected populations in six UNICEF regional offices and at headquarters supported 47 countries with technical advice and the development of related strategies. UNICEF is working to better link efforts on accountability to affected populations with workstreams supporting protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which have often been perceived as being disconnected at the country level. UNICEF continues to co-lead, along with the World Health Organization (WHO) and IFRC, the Collective Service, which provides coordination, social science research and analysis, information management and a help desk to support governments and other partners in community engagement during public health emergencies and other crises. UNICEF has also developed a digital engagement strategy for accountability to affected populations, which will be rolled out in 2024.



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# Looking forward

A girl plays at a child-friendly space in Fada N'gourma, in eastern Burkina Faso, in December 2023. Set up in August 2023 by a local consortium of organizations, with UNICEF support, the child-friendly space welcomes 1,633 host community and internally displaced children aged 3 to 17. Integrated humanitarian assistance includes protection activities along with health, nutrition and education services.

UNICEF will continue to call out the denial of humanitarian access to children as a particularly pervasive, multifaceted and complex grave violation.

With the erosion of trust in humanitarian action impacting the delivery of life-saving assistance for children in critical contexts around the world, UNICEF will continue – and deepen – its support to the transformation of the humanitarian system to make it more localized and to address this erosion of trust. Part of this means investing in local economies in areas where UNICEF delivers humanitarian action. UNICEF is committed to supporting local production of products and supplies and to procuring more supplies locally.

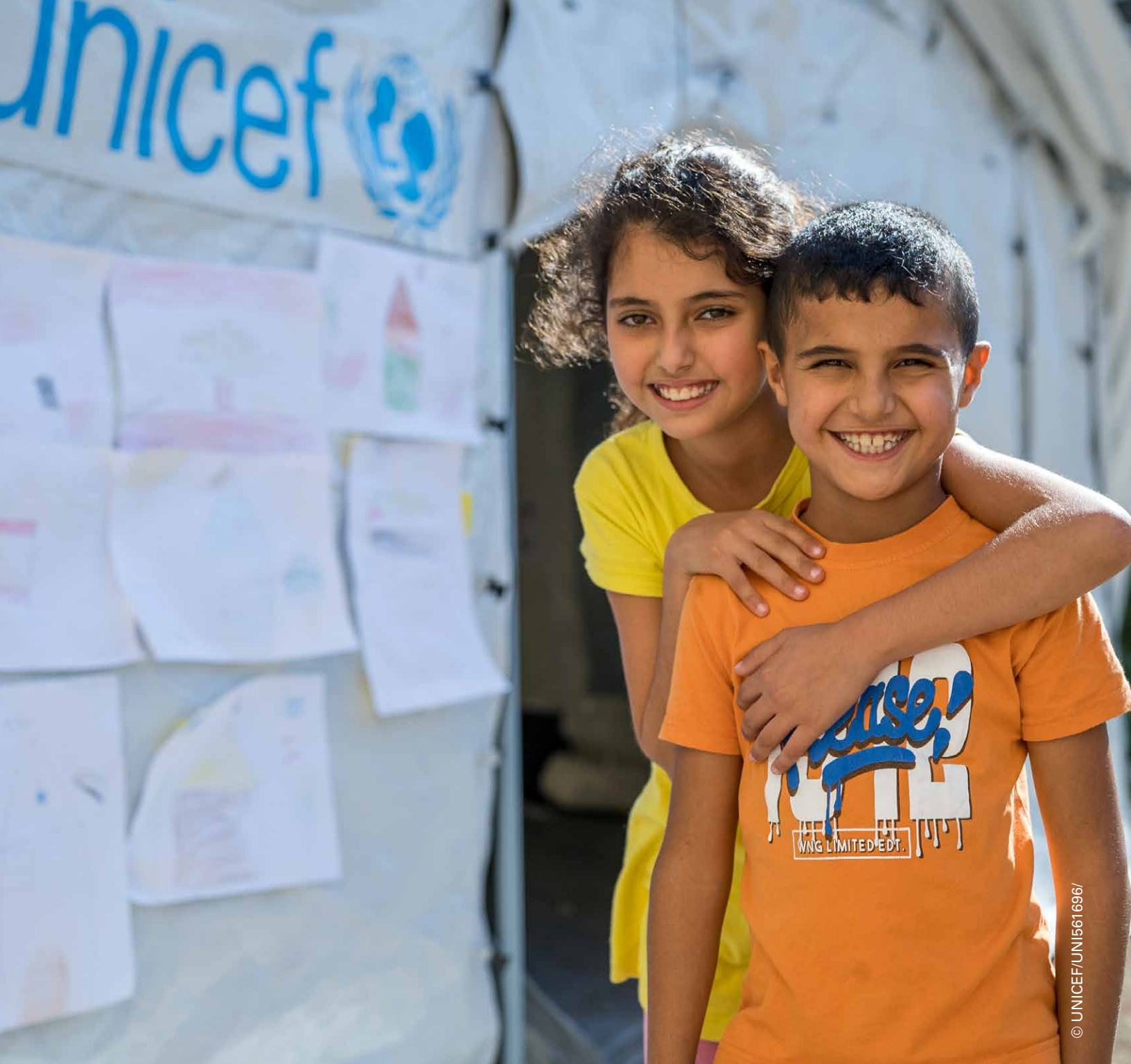
The triple planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and loss of biodiversity is a child rights crisis. The UNICEF Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan, 2023–2030 lays out strategies, operations and partnerships to help communities to build low-carbon, resilient services for children; equip young people to be champions of the planet; and accelerate a just transition to a nature-positive and carbon-neutral world. Support for this approach and for these goals is critical for children living in humanitarian emergencies.

UNICEF will continue to invest in disaster risk reduction and in strengthening the resilience of communities, institutions and systems surrounding and supporting children. Expanded efforts in anticipatory action and preparedness

planning will help to strengthen countries' capacities to prepare for disasters and mitigate their worst effects. UNICEF will continue to strengthen programming across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and support resilience-building activities.

The Humanitarian Review made recommendations for making the UNICEF humanitarian response more fit for purpose. In 2024, UNICEF is carrying out a mid-term review of the Humanitarian Review, coinciding with and informing the mid-term review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. There were numerous Humanitarian Review recommendations linked to building human resources capacity for the humanitarian response, and UNICEF will continue to prioritize cultivating the skills and leadership capacities necessary to fulfil its mandate.

Finally, UNICEF will continue advocating for full and flexible funding for its emergency responses to meet the humanitarian needs of children, wherever they are, providing aid based solely on need, and as the provider of last resort in some places. A primary objective of UNICEF is to concentrate efforts on essential, non-negotiable humanitarian needs while upholding fundamental humanitarian principles.



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# Results for children: 2023 in review

Layale and Bassem Sweid stand in front of a tent offering psychosocial support activities at Lebanese German University in Tyre, Lebanon, in November 2023. Support is provided for people displaced by tensions in southern Lebanon.

From the first day of January to the last day of December 2023, the substantial combined efforts of UNICEF staff, partners and donors contributed to saving children's lives, supporting their families and making their childhoods safer in 412 new or ongoing humanitarian crises in 107 countries.

UNICEF continued to strive to fulfil its mandate in 2023 with a child-focused response. UNICEF's mandate includes direct support in the field. It also includes joint analysis and programming addressing risks and vulnerabilities; and encompasses the development of policies, research and guidelines that enhance ways of working – and therefore improve results for children – in today's complex humanitarian environment.

This humanitarian action is carried out in line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action and the goals laid out in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and, ultimately, in service of the achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

Humanitarian action in 2023 encompassed direct UNICEF service provision, including as provider of last resort in the four clusters where UNICEF was a cluster lead or co-lead agency (education, nutrition, WASH and the child protection

area of responsibility); building the capacity of and working with partners, including governments and 1,380 local civil society organizations that provided critical services and extended the reach of UNICEF in many places where access was challenging or nearly impossible; leveraging partnerships with international non-governmental organizations; and strengthening synergies with other United Nations agencies.

This section of the *2023 Global Annual Results report: Humanitarian action* will guide the reader month by month through the year of crises and show how UNICEF responded to deliver results for children.

Complete results for all countries where UNICEF has a Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal and for those countries covered in regional appeals can be found in the consolidated emergency reports, which are available at <https://open.unicef.org/documents-and-resources>.





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# January

A young girl reads from her textbook in her new community-based education class in Spera District, Khost Province, Afghanistan, in June 2023.

The year 2023 opened with the extreme situation of girls and women in **Afghanistan** in the spotlight, in the aftermath of a late-December 2022 ban by the country's de facto authorities on women attending university and on female Afghan aid workers working with national and international non-governmental organizations. Girls had already been banned from attending high school. UNICEF strongly advocated for girls to be allowed to attend school and for a repeal of the ban on female humanitarian workers, who are critical to service provision. The ban made it even more difficult to provide desperately needed assistance, especially to women and girls. In the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for 2023, launched in December 2022, UNICEF had requested \$1.45 billion dollars for its humanitarian response in Afghanistan, a reflection of the extensive needs experienced by millions of Afghans in the face of what is at its core a protracted protection crisis, made worse by a water crisis that has left no part of the country untouched. Ultimately, in 2023 UNICEF humanitarian expenses in Afghanistan were the highest of any country, at \$641.5 million.

Thanks to the generous support of partners who funded 63 per cent of the total Afghanistan appeal amount (with health and education programmes fully funded), UNICEF teams used a strategy of sustaining systems at the subnational level to reach millions of children and women with an array of humanitarian programmes: 20.3 million people accessed health care through UNICEF-supported facilities in 2023, against a target of 19 million; 715,480 children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting were admitted to treatment, out of 875,227 targeted; and nearly 686,000 children (60 per cent girls) accessed education through community-based education classes, out of 600,000 targeted. UNICEF also reached 256,306 households in Afghanistan with humanitarian cash transfers across multiple sectors, including targeted three-month cash assistance to support 85,900 families in coping with harsh winter conditions in Badakhshan, Ghor, Panjshir, Balkh and Herat provinces. Towards the end of the year, UNICEF piloted an innovative cash delivery mechanism in Herat Province to provide earthquake-affected populations with cash-based assistance within 96 hours. By 31 December 2023, UNICEF Afghanistan had reached a milestone of successfully delivering \$100,000,000 to 360,000 families across the country since its first cash-based intervention in 2021.

**Sustaining systems at the subnational level:** In 2023, 20.3 million people (out of 19 million targeted) accessed health care through UNICEF-supported facilities in Afghanistan

A testament to the grueling circumstances in Afghanistan – and the high needs for mental health and psychosocial support they wrought, especially for women and girls – UNICEF reached nearly 4 million children and caregivers (including 768,000 girls and 758,000 women) with group and individual mental health and psychosocial support through child-friendly spaces, health facilities, transition centres and psychosocial well-being messaging via mass and social media. The target was 3.6 million children and caregivers. This mental health support effort and that in **Ukraine**, where 2.5 million of children and caregivers were reached (*see Case Study 1*), were the two largest mental health and psychosocial support responses carried out by UNICEF globally during the year, a reflection of the vast scale of the needs in both places. To achieve these results amid operating challenges in **Afghanistan** – restrictions, the ban on female national aid workers, the closure of some programmes, funding gaps – UNICEF and partners used various adaptive strategies, among them engaging influential religious leaders, deploying local social workers and advocating for exemptions from local authorities. Integrating multisectoral strategies across sectors including child protection and education (e.g., training of teachers and delivery of mental health and psychosocial support within community-based education) and establishing child-friendly spaces in health facilities helped maintain continuity in services to address entrenched mental health disparities, especially among women and girls.

Yet UNICEF could not meet every target in Afghanistan. For example, only around 2.1 million people out of the 6.2 million targeted accessed safe drinking water with UNICEF support, partly because of a large funding gap for WASH activities in the country.

## Gender equality in humanitarian action

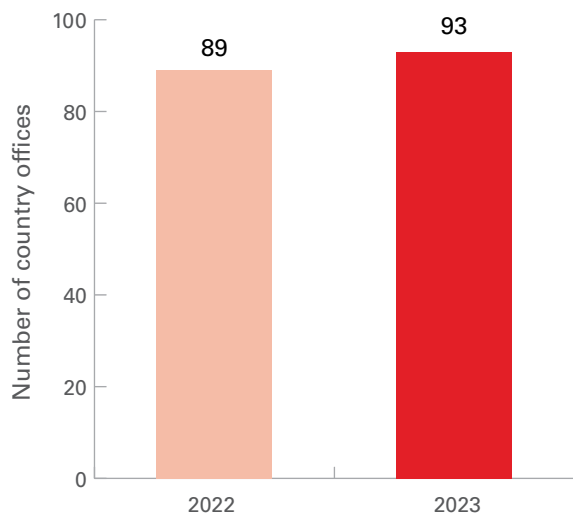
Globally, UNICEF worked in 2023 to ensure its responses met women and girls' specific needs, mitigated their risks and engaged them meaningfully in humanitarian action. UNICEF also engaged with international, national and local partners to ensure integration of gender goals and gender-based violence risk mitigation into clusters and within the Inter-agency Standing Committee more broadly.

The high achievements in gender equality in 2023 reflect UNICEF's commitment to gender-responsive humanitarian action, including the equitable focus on girls and women in preparedness and response. They are also a result of the increase in the scale of emergency operations.

UNICEF prioritized gender-responsive preparedness, recognizing that proactive steps before a crisis are critical to women and girls' resilience, survival and recovery. Forty-one countries included key gender priority actions in their preparedness plans in 2023, compared with only four in 2022. Gender integration in preparedness informed contingency plans for staffing, supplies, programmes and partnerships. This work led to strategic efforts to ensure supply plans include packages for adolescent girls, a key accomplishment of 2023 (see *Case Study 2*). Gender-responsive early childhood development (ECD) kits were also created. The new ECD kit avoids gender stereotyping and carefully promotes co-parenting as a cornerstone of advancing girls' rights and gender equality.

Preventing and responding to gender-based violence is central to UNICEF's humanitarian response. In addition to nearly reaching its global targets in this area, 490,000 girls globally benefited from individual case management.

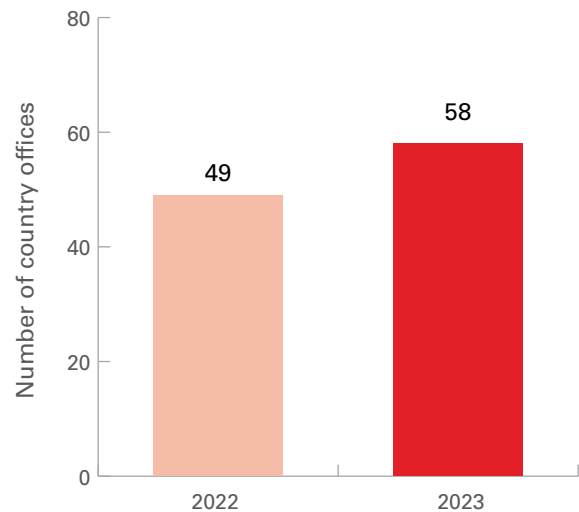
FIGURE 7: Number of UNICEF country offices that implemented the gender equality commitments outlined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action



Looking ahead, UNICEF is building a robust cadre of UNICEF staff and standby partners for emergency surge deployments on gender; and expanding its initiatives around emergency preparedness, rapid gender analysis and tailored, multisectoral humanitarian interventions for and with adolescent girls. Refining monitoring and evaluation systems will help UNICEF more accurately capture its operations, results and impact and make needed adjustments.

**Preventing and responding to gender-based violence is central to UNICEF's humanitarian response – in 2023, 490,000 girls benefited from individual case management**

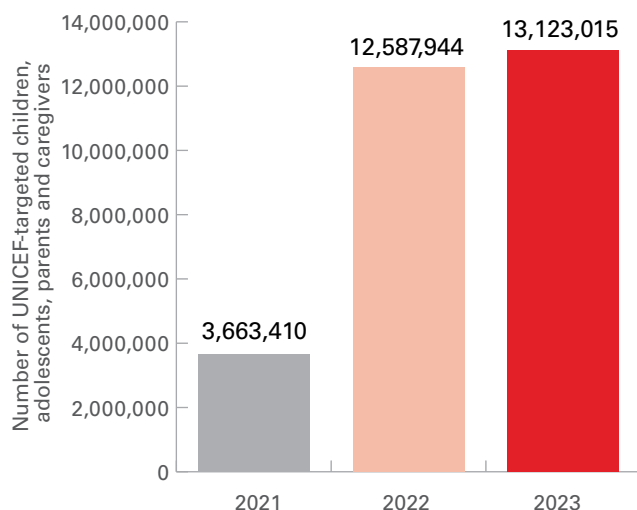
FIGURE 8: Number of UNICEF country offices that conducted rapid gender analyses



## Mental health and psychosocial support

The scale of mental health support provided in Afghanistan and Ukraine reflects the extensive need globally for such programming. To meet these needs for support around the world, UNICEF implemented multisectoral interventions; issued global guidance; and deployed technical experts to support inter-agency collaboration and capacity-building.

FIGURE 9: Number of UNICEF-targeted children, adolescents, parents and caregivers provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support services



In 56 countries, including in 24 with ongoing humanitarian responses, UNICEF helped strengthen mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) systems to improve country capacity to deliver high-quality support and track service delivery and referral information. This work involved continued collaboration with WHO, UNHCR and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to promote evidence-informed emergency response using the [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package](#) (MSP). In 2023, the inter-agency MSP team deployed technical experts to provide in-person capacity-building workshops on the use of the package to inter-agency stakeholders in **Ethiopia, Mozambique, Pakistan** and **Türkiye** (in Gaziantep, for support to **north-western Syria**). The team provided remote support to humanitarian actors and inter-agency groups in the **Islamic Republic of Iran, Chad,**

UNICEF strengthened MHPSS systems in 24 countries facing humanitarian crisis, partly through **continued collaboration with WHO, UNHCR and UNFPA**

**Myanmar** and the **Syrian Arab Republic**; and conducted orientations on the minimum service package for MHPSS technical working groups in **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Mozambique, the Niger, north-eastern Syria, the Sudan, Türkiye** and **Ukraine**. For example, amid the multiple complex emergencies and significant mental health support needs in **Ethiopia**, members of MHPSS technical working groups in multiple regions in the country participated in a training-of-trainers, which led to the creation of a 34-member task force that rolled out implementation of the Minimum Service Package in Ethiopia. UNICEF provided mental health and psychosocial support to a total of 344,300 children, adolescents and caregivers in conflict- and drought-affected areas of Ethiopia in 2023, out of 275,000 targeted.

In 2023 and into 2024 UNICEF has used digital platforms like [U-Report](#) and [Spotify](#) to disseminate context-specific evidence-based interventions (e.g., [Self-Help Plus](#) and [Helping Adolescents Thrive](#)) directly to young people affected by war and conflicts, including children on the move. Along with continued training and support for the MHPSS workforce through initiatives like [EQUIP](#) (a WHO-UNICEF tool for trainers and supervisors to improve the quality of their team’s psychosocial and mental health helping skills), these tools build systemwide capacity, enhance awareness and facilitate effective and wide-scale delivery of mental health and psychosocial support to children and caregivers affected by emergencies.

## Case Study 1: Holistic, comprehensive and multisectoral mental health and psychosocial support aids millions of children and caregivers affected by the war in Ukraine

The mental health and psychosocial well-being of children and caregivers in **Ukraine** has been deeply impacted by the war. To respond to these increasing needs, UNICEF launched a comprehensive multisectoral mental health and psychosocial support programme in 2022; this programme reached more than 2.5 million people, including 1.49 million children (815,462 girls) and 1.07 million caregivers in 2023.

The second year of the war brought about a transition from large-scale mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services across the country to greater focus on comprehensive services for the most vulnerable children and families and in the humanitarian response. UNICEF also worked to link MHPSS services to various government priorities across sectors (including development and systems strengthening initiatives) and to support resilience centres linking MHPSS to an integrated social services package.

UNICEF's approach combined various initiatives tailored to different age groups and contexts – and heavy investment in capacity-building efforts, with training of more than 38,000 professionals (75 per cent women) in Ukraine to deliver high-quality mental health and psychosocial support services. This included specialized training using WHO's Mental Health Gap Action Programme – which aims to scale up services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders, especially in low- and middle-income countries – to build capacity of health-care providers in primary health care and community settings to manage the most common mental health conditions. UNICEF also promoted initiatives like 'Helping the Helpers', where front-line workers in Ukraine (including doctors and nurses at perinatal care facilities, maternity and children's hospitals and primary care facilities) received MHPSS services that benefited them and also expanded their capacity to support their patients.

Children and families in refugee-hosting countries also required mental health and psychosocial support, and UNICEF worked to build capacity in these countries to provide it. In 10 countries,<sup>19</sup> UNICEF built the capacity of 300 professionals and paraprofessionals working with children through an intensive global course on mental health and psychosocial support. In **Poland**, UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Education to introduce the [Learning Passport](#), an e-learning platform developed in collaboration with Microsoft. Alongside this, a comprehensive teacher training programme equipped 9,500 educators with skills to support student mental health. At the same time, 635 school managers underwent advanced training in mental health and psychosocial support to create nurturing and inclusive learning environments.

For caregivers, UNICEF, in collaboration with the [Global Initiative to Support Parents](#), developed targeted [support messages](#) to enhance their ability to nurture their children's mental health. Additionally, for adolescents and younger children, the [Helping Adolescents Thrive Toolkit](#) was customized to address the specific needs of young

refugees in Poland and Italy in education settings, at reception centres and via digital platforms. For example, in **Italy**, 51 young migrants and refugees were trained and engaged as peer supporters through an adapted version of the '[I Support My Friends](#)' peer-to-peer psychological first aid intervention.



Alisa, 3, draws in the UNICEF Spilno Child Spot at a metro station in Kyiv, Ukraine, in March 2023. Children often hide there during air raid alerts, and the Spilno spots can help children cope with anxiety during rocket attacks. The Spots operate in more than 20 Ukrainian cities, with nearly 60,000 people visiting them every month.

UNICEF's overall approach emphasizes systems strengthening and scalability. By prioritizing staff care, building capacities to deliver mental health and psychosocial support at all levels, upgrading staff rest spaces within health facilities and incorporating mental health support into teacher education, the organization aims to ensure sustainable mental health support for vulnerable children impacted by war. Looking ahead, UNICEF plans to expand its reach and develop tailored interventions and policies to meet the evolving needs of children and caregivers in Ukraine and the surrounding region.

## Case Study 2: Adolescent girls and emergency supplies – Planning for and meeting adolescent girls’ specific needs from the outset of a crisis

In 2023, UNICEF initiated a strategic initiative to ensure that its humanitarian supply operations are more responsive to adolescent girls.

Adolescent girls (aged 10–19 years) are at a comparative disadvantage before a crisis even hits. In countries that are receiving the greatest share of humanitarian assistance, compared with their male peers adolescent girls are less likely to have the information, skills and networks that are associated with greater levels of resilience and agency. Adolescent girls also make up an increasing proportion of displaced persons – and displacement intensifies their disadvantages, exacerbates risks and, in many settings, strains girls’ fragile claim on their rights. Displacement also increases adolescent girls’ vulnerabilities to gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation.<sup>20</sup>

When disasters impact communities, social expectations steer adolescent girls towards caring duties, risky livelihoods and child marriage. Crises upend their education and social networks. Concerns for their safety or discriminatory policies restrict their movements.

Moreover, humanitarian responses themselves far too often assume that programmes for younger children or for adult women meet adolescent girls’ specific health needs, promote their continued learning and mitigate their unique risks of experiencing gender-based violence, exploitation or abuse. This assumption compromises adolescent girls’ protection, health and rights.



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Mouzan Abdou, 16, gazes at the camera in a refugee site in Adré, eastern Chad, close to the border with the Sudan. Her family fled the Sudan with nothing.

Humanitarian supply plans often make similar assumptions, for example when family kits or dignity kits are considered sufficient for all members of a family. And even when preparedness plans include individual supplies that could benefit girls, the accountability for collating relevant supplies into a package is often missing, undefined and undetermined. In the rush to deliver assistance – whether through health, WASH, nutrition or even humanitarian cash interventions – how, when and where adolescent girls can safely access supplies is not approached systematically. The question of how adolescent girls’ needs can inform procurement is not even asked.

Recognizing that adolescent girls are not a sector and that it takes the engagement of several sectors to plan and procure supplies, in 2023 UNICEF disseminated an action brief and guidance to inform the development of context-specific emergency supply packages for adolescent girls. Since the release of the guidance, UNICEF teams responding to crises in Afghanistan, Lebanon, the State of Palestine and the Sudan have distributed care and protection packages tailored to adolescent girls’ needs. Girls have had an opportunity to inform adjustments to the contents of the packages. The engagement of local organizations led by women and girls has been central to awareness-raising around these packages and to their safe distribution.

In the **Gaza Strip**, UNICEF has reached 9,337 adolescent girls with the Adolescent Girl Personal Care and Protection Package, which includes sanitary pads, underwear, skin wipes, a multipurpose cloth, a scarf and a whistle. It also contains a Lahaa<sup>21</sup> booklet on mental health and gender-based violence and an Adolescent Girls Care Kit Booklet. These packages support girls while respecting their privacy and cultural sensitivities. UNICEF distributed the packages in collaboration with women-led organizations in the Gaza Strip, via safe spaces that provide information services as well as recreational activities. Safety and security concerns informed every step of the distribution process. In southern **Lebanon**, UNICEF and partners distributed 1,350 tailored kits for adolescent girls. And in the **Sudan**, UNICEF piloted a context-specific package in Kassala and Gezira states, reaching 5,000 young women and girls. Across settings, UNICEF engages women and girls, including local organizations they lead, to adapt packages to local customs and languages and to include core information about available services and programmes. UNICEF plans to integrate the Adolescent Girl Personal Care and Protection Package into its humanitarian responses globally.

Strengthening UNICEF supply operations with supplies tailored for adolescent girls is a sign of UNICEF’s commitment to adolescent girls’ well-being, protection and empowerment and is a part of the organization’s strategic plan focus. Yet procuring and pre-positioning essential supplies for adolescent girls is only one aspect of the broad multisectoral response required to deliver timely and tailored responses that address adolescent girls’ specific needs, risks and capacities.



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# February

Mohammad, 8, participates in a recreational activity provided by UNICEF-supported volunteers in Abdul Muttaleb Al Qad School, which is now being used as a shelter, in February 2023. The facility is in the Al-Jabrieh neighbourhood in the city of Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic. Aleppo was hard-hit by the earthquakes in early February 2023.



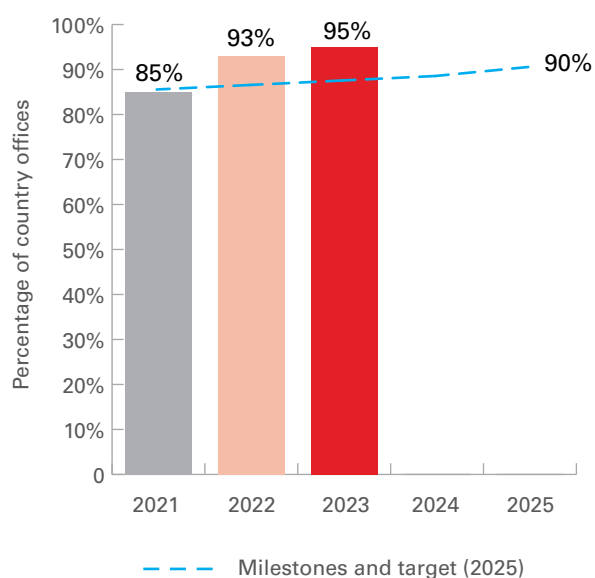
The earthquakes in **Türkiye** and the **Syrian Arab Republic** on 6 February affected millions of children and their families who saw their lives crumble around them in the space of a few minutes. In **Türkiye**, 15.6 million people, including 5.6 million children, were affected in 11 provinces, among them 1.8 million Syrians under temporary protection, along with international protection applicants or status holders from other countries. More than 39,361 buildings collapsed, 202,571 buildings were severely damaged and 43,344 buildings were moderately damaged. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, 8.8 million people were affected, including 3.7 million children, the majority of whom urgently needed food, water, shelter, education and emergency medical and psychosocial assistance.

UNICEF and its partners, supported by resource partners, responded with provision of critical supplies, life-saving surgeries and trauma care, hygiene kits, immunizations, safe drinking water and sanitation services, access to formal and non-formal education and humanitarian cash provided directly to families in greatest need.

A comprehensive accounting of results – including an education response that supported nearly 1 million children in Türkiye, cash distributions to the most vulnerable families in Türkiye and families in the most highly affected provinces in the Syrian Arab Republic, along with many other results – is available at <https://open.unicef.org/documents-and-resources>.

One programmatic area newly established for UNICEF in **Türkiye** as a direct result of the earthquake was WASH, and mounting the WASH response demonstrated the organization's agility in the face of the rapid change in circumstances. UNICEF reached nearly 3.1 million beneficiaries with access to safe water (out of a target of 2 million), 1.3 million with improved sanitation services

FIGURE 10: Percentage of country offices that meet organizational benchmarks on updated preparedness plans



(out of a target of 200,000) and 759,000 with hygiene supplies (out of an initial target of 1 million). These results were achieved by supporting the government-led response, collaborating with municipalities and water utility companies and coordinating responses with NGO partners. By supporting water utility companies with emergency supplies, procuring chemicals for water quality improvement and facilitating quick repairs to water and sanitation systems, UNICEF helped extend the benefits of the WASH response to more people. Partnerships with such non-governmental organizations as ACTED, Support to Life and Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization enabled UNICEF to address immediate WASH needs in formal and informal temporary settlements. WASH supplies and dignity kits supplied post-earthquake came with flyers containing a QR code that led users to an anonymous online satisfaction survey. By February 2024, 659 surveys had been completed. Based on the rolling feedback, UNICEF moved from distributing a generic WASH kit to four separate kits – family; mother and baby; baby; and people with special needs. UNICEF also customized the offering of gender-appropriate items in the kits, including undergarments, menstrual products and adult diapers. The customized kits reached more than 907,000 people.

The earthquake response sought to meet immediate needs with an eye to the future. For example, in the **Syrian Arab Republic**, UNICEF supported emergency access to water and provision of hygiene kits in the wake of the disaster – and also rehabilitated sewer systems and reconstructed nine elevated earthquake-resistant water tanks to replace tanks collapsed by the earthquake in Aleppo, Hama, Idlib and Lattakia, benefiting more than 1.5 million people.

Protection interventions and mental health support were critical in both countries in the aftermath of the earthquakes to help children and families cope with the trauma they had experienced (see Case Study 3). A great added value of UNICEF's work in the response was helping to empower communities to support themselves, for example through social and behaviour change work (see Case Study 4). And, with an eye toward empowering the future generation of leaders, UNICEF facilitated the role of youth as agents in its response (see Case Study 5).

Strong earthquakes also occurred during the year in **Morocco** (September), **Afghanistan** (October) and **Nepal** (November). In **Morocco**, 2.8 million people were impacted, and 300,000 required humanitarian assistance; UNICEF's regional office for the Middle East and North Africa supported the country office health team to ensure continuity of health services and outbreak response, all supporting the robust government response. In **Afghanistan**, among other post-earthquake interventions, emergency water trucking services to the most affected communities in Zinda Jan district occurred within 72 hours of the earthquake, a response that was swift and effective thanks to preparedness actions that had already been undertaken, including long-term agreements with the private sector. This was followed by distribution of

life-saving WASH supplies and hygiene promotion through social mobilizers and community-led sanitation extenders. And, as lead for the WASH cluster, UNICEF facilitated the work of numerous partners. In **Nepal**, UNICEF collaborated with the Government to provide critical relief supplies, including tarpaulins and blankets, to more than 39,900 people (13,560 children) living in the districts most affected by the earthquake; other work included support to two measles vaccination campaigns, one following the earthquake and the other at the beginning of the year, following a measles outbreak in January – altogether reaching 1,866,202 children aged 6 months to 15 years.

February 2023 also marked one year of the escalation of the war in **Ukraine**. UNICEF humanitarian programmes inside the country assisted 8.76 million people, including 2.96 million children. Support for children and their families on the front lines was accompanied by recovery and reconstruction, along with policy engagement (e.g., the Better Care programme, which supports deinstitutionalization and strengthening social protection systems). Mental health support reached 1,487,505 children (815,462 girls) and 1,073,894 caregivers, or 99 per cent of the target, with a transition during the year from heavy use of mobile teams towards more structured and sustained mental health and psychosocial support services,

QR codes with satisfaction surveys led to tailored WASH kits in the Türkiye earthquake response: this is **accountability to affected populations in action**

emphasizing capacity-building of professionals and quality assurance of programmes (*see Case Study 1*). One of the tools used for mental health support was the Adolescent Kit, which helped reach around 68,000 young people (35,122 girls and young women, and 24 young people with disabilities). Other interventions supported primary health care, safe water, education and cash transfers. And, after the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in June 2023 compromised access to sustained, safe water for 1 million people, UNICEF provided life-saving support for around 1 million people, including safe water, hygiene supplies, health consultations, psychosocial support and cash assistance. A speedy response was possible due to contingency planning and emergency preparedness actions, including pre-positioning of stocks.

### Case Study 3: A comprehensive post-earthquake protection response cares for children and families in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic

The psychological impact and the associated loss and displacement of the February earthquakes in both Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic were significant. In addition to all the other critical needs – shelter, water, health care, continuation of education – the need for child protection interventions skyrocketed. In Türkiye, the earthquakes affected the provinces housing the highest number of refugees, exacerbating existing protection vulnerabilities. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the destruction brought about by the disaster intensified families' negative coping mechanisms, including resort to child marriage and child labour, which added to children's significant stress and made their already limited access to social services more difficult.

In **Türkiye**, UNICEF reached 1,556,846 children and caregivers with critical child protection services and more than 3.6 million with gender-based violence risk-mitigation measures in the 11 provinces affected by the earthquake. Age-appropriate community-based mental health and psychosocial support to children, adolescents and caregivers helped them cope with the emergency, strengthen their coping and resilience skills and start to rebuild their lives. Through the establishment of 47 child, adolescent and family support hubs (called *Birlikte*, or 'Together'), UNICEF delivered critical child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response services to 639,406 individuals, including 421,116 children. These hubs also served as a bridge to additional early recovery and long-term support, including referrals to other cross-sectoral services needed by families. UNICEF supported training for more than 4,000 government and civil society professionals to sustain the hubs. At the same time, 3 million people were reached through messaging (including via online platforms) on gender-based violence, including child marriage. UNICEF also provided training to government and other partners on gender-based violence prevention and response in emergencies, adapted the inter-agency gender-based violence pocket guide and supported all sector partners to apply the gender-based violence safety audit. Nine surge staff were deployed from the Ministry of Family and Social Services to ensure specialized services were provided to 11,106 women survivors of domestic violence. UNICEF also helped the Ministry to temporarily replace a demolished women's shelter to provide safe accommodation to survivors of gender-based violence.

More than 1,900 unaccompanied and separated children were identified, of whom 1,887 were reunited with their families. UNICEF also provided support to the Union of Turkish Bar Associations/Local Bar Associations to ensure the availability of pro bono legal support for families to take care of legal paperwork and finalize caregiving arrangements, and for follow-up of legal processes for unaccompanied and separated children. The Ministry of Family and Social Services and UNICEF also ensured no disruption in care for approximately 1,000 children in alternative care who were evacuated to safer facilities. The population-based psychosocial and gender-based violence interventions described above enabled the identification and the screening of around 5,150 particularly vulnerable children from the southeastern provinces requiring individual attention (e.g., those needing family tracing, suffering from acute psychological distress, at risk of child marriage or in need of a referral to specialized health care). These children were reached through a combination of efforts: a national 24-hour hotline for earthquake response, which provided counselling and referrals to 8,430 callers; three temporary social service centres established in key locations; and the deployment of 53 trained social workers funded by UNICEF to support and relieve staff working in the earthquake-affected area.

UNICEF provided capacity-building and monitoring to partners and aid workers on their roles and obligations related to protecting affected populations from sexual exploitation and abuse. Robust awareness-raising campaigns carried out by UNICEF and partners in the wake of the earthquakes reached 468,774 individuals with information on safe reporting channels for sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF disseminated child-friendly PSEA information, ensuring widespread distribution and outreach through collaboration with the inter-agency PSEA network members; distributed 13 thousand dignity kits containing flyers with vital information for women and girls on how to report sexual exploitation and abuse and seek assistance; and organized PSEA awareness-raising sessions for children and women in child-friendly spaces.

In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, in the immediate response to the earthquake, trained front-line workers provided psychological first aid to children and families to help them cope with their distress. UNICEF also rolled out a well-being package to support the mental health and psychosocial well-being of front-line workers and service providers, benefiting more than 4,323 front-line workers with non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and those who were volunteers (2,902 women and 1,421 men). UNICEF launched the WAQTI ('My time') initiative, a targeted multisectoral (child protection, education and WASH) response to the most affected communities: 112 WAQTI centres were established to provide a range of child protection services, including mental health and psychosocial support, family tracing and reunification and case management, along with education, hygiene promotion and sanitation services. More than 200,000 children, adolescents and parents and caregivers in 56 communities in north-western Syria benefited from these centres.

UNICEF supported 1,234 unaccompanied and separated children (600 girls) with child protection services, family tracing and reunification and alternative care. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour disseminated a hotline number in shelters to report cases of unaccompanied and separated children. In Aleppo, a 'protection necklace' was piloted to prevent separation of children: the necklace had a QR code leading to the child's full name and address and the phone numbers of caregivers and relatives. Eight hundred children in schools took part in the pilot.

Given the displacement within the Syrian Arab Republic caused by the earthquake, UNICEF and partners delivered explosive ordnance risk education to 213,129 people (105,039 women and girls) in north-western Syria, with a focus on internally displaced persons and host communities in schools, camps, sites and communities.

UNICEF continued to support the United Nations system for monitoring incidents of grave violations against children in armed conflict and efforts for humanitarian engagement with armed groups, including in north-western Syria.



Children attend a psychosocial session at a UNICEF-supported child-friendly space at the Osmaniye Cevdetiye temporary shelter in Osmaniye, Türkiye, in April 2023.

## Case Study 4: Community-centred social and behaviour change empowers individuals after the earthquakes in the Syrian Arab Republic

Millions of people in the Syrian Arab Republic who were affected by the February 2023 earthquakes were already living in an extremely challenging circumstances characterized by 12 years of conflict. Community engagement and social and behaviour change interventions were necessary following the earthquakes to help manage trauma, mitigate challenges of communal life in shelters and protect against disease outbreaks (which were more likely due to the upheaval and destruction caused by the earthquakes). Interventions reflected what the communities themselves expressed as their needs; solutions to meet these needs also came from the community. UNICEF provided support to this through a network of community-based partners.

UNICEF's social and behaviour change strategy addressed the local contexts and needs in Aleppo and Lattakia, the governorates most affected by the earthquake. Initially, simple protective messages, delivered across different social media platforms, reached around 863,000 people (446,000 women and girls). At the same time, UNICEF rapidly mobilized an extensive network of partners to expand the reach of in-person interventions to a greater number of shelters and communities.

Community workers with local non-governmental organizations were deployed to 695 communities to engage with families in shelters and host communities on maintaining the cleanliness of WASH facilities, saving water and caring for children's health, including through mental health and psychosocial support. This outreach engaged 782,000 people (18 per cent girls). The community workers worked within shelters to help communities identify their critical needs, and then worked to put in place any supports they needed to meet those needs (for example, coordinating the installation of solar-powered lights to light the dark corridors of schools-turned-shelters). A key goal was to give people in the shelters a role in a way that would increase their collective sense of responsibility and an understanding that by working as a group, they could do something to make their lives better.

Specific messages and solutions included the following: what to do in case of aftershocks; messages around continuation of breastfeeding; messages and information on gender safety (for example, communities deciding that older women or male relatives could escort girls and young women to use communal bathrooms in shelters to provide a sense of safety); and messages on rationalizing the use of water.

Late in 2023, a survey of earthquake survivors in four shelters in Lattakia and eight shelters in Aleppo showed that 4 out of 5 respondents were either motivated or very motivated to help their communities recover. Reflective of the high level of community engagement in the response throughout 2023, and how empowering it can be, this also indicates that community engagement can have lasting and sustainable impact on long-term recovery.



Kawthar, 21, stands at the Jamal Dawood school-turned-collective-shelter for those displaced by the earthquakes in the city of Lattakia, Syrian Arab Republic, in July 2023. She is a UNICEF-supported community worker, connecting with children and families to foster behaviours, such as handwashing, that help keep them healthy and safe.

## Case Study 5: Rising together – Engaging youth in earthquake response in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic

In the aftermath of the earthquakes that devastated southern Türkiye and north-western Syria, UNICEF and its partners in both countries initiated a systemic effort to empower and mobilize young people to support relief efforts, building on existing engagement mechanisms. By collaborating with stakeholders – government agencies, private sector partners and civil society organizations – UNICEF supported young people to amplify the impact and reach of youth-focused life-saving interventions in emergencies.

### Humanitarian action in Türkiye

In **Türkiye**, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to mobilize approximately 5,000 trained youth volunteers from the national youth volunteer platform.<sup>22</sup> These youth volunteers participated in search and rescue operations, assisted in retrieving survivors from the rubble and provided immediate medical aid to those in need. They also helped prepare and distribute emergency packages, ensuring affected families received crucial supplies including food, water and non-food items. The youth volunteers played a vital role in setting up and managing temporary shelters housing approximately 160,000 people.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth and Sports also established 'Youth Spaces' (locally known as *Genç Alan*) in provinces affected by the earthquake. These were safe spaces for adolescents and youth to engage in social activities, access skills development programmes and receive psychosocial support. The aim was to reduce the adverse effects of the earthquakes on young people's mental health and well-being while fostering a sense of community and resilience during the crisis. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry and other partners, introduced the Adolescent Kit<sup>23</sup> as a resource for use in the Youth Spaces to provide young people in earthquake-affected areas with activities and strategies to contribute to long-term recovery and community-building efforts.

In addition, UNICEF collaborated with partner organization *Genç Hayat Vakf* to form a group of youth volunteers in Hatay and Adiyaman provinces. This local partnership enabled UNICEF to engage more young people in designing activities for adolescents and youth, with a focus on civic engagement, reconstruction activities and social cohesion. UNICEF also partnered with Habitat Association, a local non-governmental organization, to train youth volunteers in social skills development to support their peers.

### Humanitarian action in the Syrian Arab Republic

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF and its partners engaged 6,125 youth volunteers (3,151 adolescent girls and young women) who, despite being earthquake survivors themselves, were eager to assist their affected communities, children, peers and families. The youth volunteers played a crucial role in various emergency responses, managing shelters, distributing relief items and disseminating important messages in shelters and affected areas. UNICEF and partners also provided additional training to the youth volunteers, including empowering them to lead social and digital activities.

In addition, 425 trained youth volunteers (including 190 young women) carried out data collection activities, using the Syria Needs Assessment Tool,<sup>24</sup> to evaluate the needs of families affected by the earthquake. For instance, in Tartous and Lattakia, 74 volunteers (including 35 young women) from the digital volunteer platform 'Youth Power in Emergencies' received training from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and leaders of the various inter-agency programmatic sectors active in the response; these volunteers conducted cross-sectoral needs assessments post-earthquake. Similarly, the UNICEF country office engaged six youth researchers from the Young Participatory Research team<sup>25</sup> to conduct a Multisectoral Initial Rapid Assessment.

UNICEF offered skill-building services to 2,800 young people (1,792 young women and 1,008 young men) through youth-friendly spaces and mobile teams in earthquake-affected areas in Tartous and Lattakia. UNICEF and partners also enhanced social, civic and digital engagement for 1,700 young people (1,105 females and 595 males). This included youth-led initiatives, recreational activities, dissemination of social and behaviour change messages, aid distribution and assessments. Overall, UNICEF reached 63,861 earthquake-affected young people with these opportunities.

UNICEF is committed to empowering adolescents and youth to be catalysts for positive change in emergencies and in building resilient communities. Yet there is a need to find ways to ensure their systematic engagement within humanitarian systems. The scale and impact of youth engagement in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic post-earthquake points to the potential for collaborating with young people in disaster risk preparedness and planning, and for maintaining platforms and partners that can sustain their engagement both in early emergency response and in ongoing rebuilding efforts. This case study highlights the importance for UNICEF of investing in young people's skills and capacities, equipping them with tools and resources and opening spaces for them to engage with governments and other stakeholders.



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UNICEF-supported volunteers put on a puppet show to provide psychosocial support for children who are displaced by the earthquakes, in the Stamo collective shelter in the village of Stamo, in rural Latakia, north-western Syria, in February 2023.



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# March

Children hold up their cholera vaccination cards after being vaccinated in Lichinga, Niassa Province, Mozambique, in February 2023. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health's cholera vaccination campaign, which reached 719,240 people aged 1 year or older in the eight districts most affected by the country's cholera outbreak.

Following a year of record-breaking **cholera** epidemics in 2022, in 2023 cholera outbreaks worsened. The cholera resurgence underscored some of the greatest challenges to preventing disease outbreaks: inequity and poverty. Cholera is a disease that can kill children within hours. With disruption to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, because of or along with the upheaval of conflict, violence, displacement, flooding and drought, people living through humanitarian emergencies are extremely vulnerable to cholera. In March 2023, due to the extent of ongoing cholera outbreaks, their geographical spread and the high case fatality rate resulting in high mortality rates, UNICEF activated the Global Cholera Emergency Cell to support the organization's cholera preparedness and response efforts, including its work with partners; and authorized an adaptation of the Level 3 Emergency Procedures for use in 30 countries affected by both cholera and polio, for a duration six months.

Thirty countries faced cholera outbreaks in 2023.<sup>26</sup> The UNICEF Global Cholera Emergency Cell provided remote technical assistance to countries, deployed surge support to country offices and trained a diverse group of UNICEF regional and country office staff. A virtual multisectoral cholera simulation exercise increased the number of UNICEF staff capable of preparing for and responding to a cholera outbreak. The cholera cell carried out surge deployments to Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Zimbabwe country offices. Coordination and collaboration with the WHO Incident Management Support Team was pivotal in the work of the cell.

More specifically, at the country level UNICEF provided support to affected governments to contain outbreaks – such as in the **Sudan** where, amid ongoing conflict and massive population displacement, 2.3 million children received the oral cholera vaccine through UNICEF support to the government cholera vaccination campaign in December 2023. This campaign covered 99.6 per cent of the target population in Gedarif and Gezira states; however, extremely difficult access conditions meant that only 64.5 per cent of the target population in Khartoum was covered. UNICEF also supported the procurement and pre-positioning of cholera supplies and helped with operational costs and supplies to cholera treatments centres and oral rehydration therapy corners. Integrating social and behaviour change into the cholera response increased knowledge of preventive behaviours and awareness of available health services. In **Zimbabwe**, a cholera outbreak began in February and spread to all 10 provinces by the end of the year, with 14,517 cholera cases. The situation was complicated by Tropical Cyclone Freddy, which impacted Zimbabwe in late February and early March. The case fatality rate of the outbreak was 2.8 per cent. Case area targeted interventions (CATI) were implemented to stop the transmission of cholera cases between and among households. UNICEF distributed hygiene kits to 34,950 families (reaching 139,799 people – 59,346 female, 80,317 male, 136 people with disabilities – against a target of 275,000) by partnering with non-governmental

UNICEF activated its **Global Cholera Emergency Cell** in March to meet the response demands of multiple outbreaks worldwide

organizations Welthungerhilfe, Oxfam, Mercy Corps, Africa Ahead and Christian Care. Other components of CATI included water point rehabilitation and bucket chlorination at water points to provide safe water to 327,285 people (66 per cent of the target). Cholera prevention messages reached 1,068,705 people (491,604 children) through mass media, community, schools and market hygiene clubs.

In many countries, risk communication and community engagement was a critical element of UNICEF response to cholera and other public health emergencies, as was providing support for continuation of essential services (e.g., health care and schooling). *See Case Study 6 and Case Study 7.*

## Public health emergencies

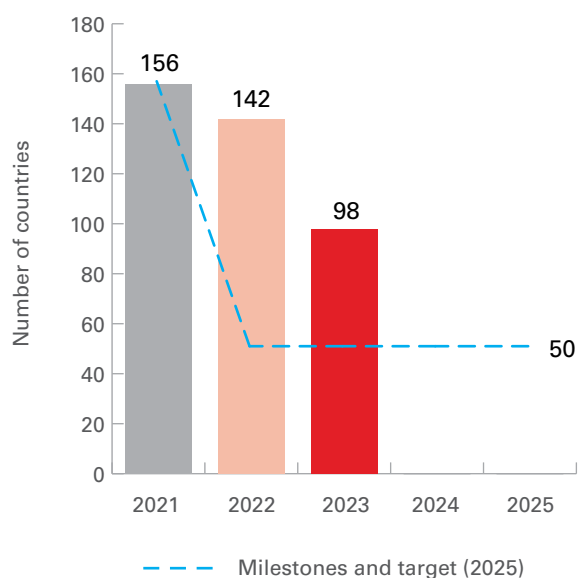
Cholera was not the only epidemic that necessitated a swift and child-focused response. With public health emergencies proliferating over the last few years due to climate change, zoonotic spillover, conflicts and fragile situations, population displacement and movements and rapid unplanned urbanization, in 2023 UNICEF responded to at least one outbreak or other public health emergency in 98 countries. This includes Marburg virus disease (the United Republic of Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea), diphtheria (Guinea, the Niger, Nigeria), dengue (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde) and cholera (in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and many other countries).

UNICEF improved preparedness and response capabilities for public health emergencies using a multisectoral approach, with a focus on global sectoral leadership in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement, education, supply and logistics and immunization. During public health emergencies throughout 2023 UNICEF supported the continuity of essential health and social services (e.g., mental health and psychosocial support, paediatric case management, gender-based violence risk mitigation and continuation of essential services including education and child protection), within a new area of community protection work evolving from reforms to the global health architecture.

UNICEF supported governments in leadership, coordination and planning around public health emergencies. In 2023, **Nigeria** experienced one of the largest diphtheria outbreaks in Africa, with 13,455 cases confirmed and 580 lives lost. Children aged 2–14 years constituted 90 per



FIGURE 11: Number of countries in which UNICEF supported a timely response to outbreaks or other public health emergencies



cent of those affected. UNICEF’s presence in all 36 states in Nigeria and its relationships with the Government and other partners enabled a rapid response to the outbreak. To prevent the spread of the outbreak beyond its epicentre in Kano State, UNICEF procured tetanus diphtheria vaccines and supported the Government in securing and deploying pentavalent vaccines. UNICEF used risk communication and community engagement interventions to enhance trust and raise community awareness regarding diphtheria; reactivated infection prevention and control committees; and supported case management and the procurement of personal protective equipment and stipends for health-care workers. These interventions helped to reduce the initial case fatality rate among confirmed cases of diphtheria from 10 per cent in January 2023 to 1.1 per cent in December 2023.

UNICEF also bolstered countries’ capacity to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into their preparedness for and response to public health emergencies.

In **Bangladesh**, the number of dengue cases – typically seen in sporadic outbreaks during monsoon season, or occasionally as a larger outbreak, as in 2019 – reached new heights in 2023: 321,179 cumulative dengue cases were recorded (40 per cent of them among women and 17 per cent among children aged 0-15 years), with 1,705 reported deaths. Cases also occurred outside the bounds of the monsoon season, with climate changes influencing the mosquito life cycle, affecting disease spread and escalating outbreaks. To save lives, UNICEF supported the training of 1,077 doctors and nurses on clinical management of dengue, while dengue test kits for 276,495 dengue tests

were delivered to the Communicable Disease Control of the Directorate General for Health Services and distributed throughout the country. Another 17,000 test kits were distributed to the Gazipur and Narayanganj city corporations for rapid detection and referral of cases. UNICEF supported nearly 15,650 government primary schools to provide printed materials to promote dengue prevention activities, including awareness raising among students and parents. UNICEF supported a nationwide week-long dengue clean-up campaign that reached more than 795,000 people in all 64 districts in Bangladesh through a network of 7,226 volunteers, including representatives from the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, girl guides and scouts. UNICEF also provided technical support to the Government for the development of its 2024–2030 national strategy for dengue prevention and control. And UNICEF advocacy helped ensure risk communication and community engagement was included in the dengue response plan developed between WHO and the Government of Bangladesh. Rohingya refugees living in Cox’s Bazar District and in Bhasan Char also benefited from dengue mitigation work: 119,511 refugees (52 per cent female and 1 per cent persons with disabilities) were reached by a WASH response that focused on elimination of mosquito breeding sites, repair of water pipe and tank leaks and solid waste management.

Tropical Cyclone Freddy hit **Malawi** from 12 to 15 March 2024, causing extensive flooding, aggravating the cholera epidemic there and destroying infrastructure, homes and crops. The cyclone worsened food security, bringing to 4.4 million (22 per cent of the population) the number of people facing acute food insecurity and requiring humanitarian assistance to sustain livelihoods and mitigate food consumption gaps in the last quarter of the year. And the cyclone-induced floods created conditions that exacerbated cholera risk. Among other interventions, UNICEF used thematic funding to immediately expand the number of partners implementing the WASH response and procured WASH kits for distribution in 18 districts. The magnitude of the natural disaster overwhelmed the district social welfare offices in Blantyre, Mulanje, Chikwawa, Nsanje and Chiradzulu; the swift deployment of 48 social welfare professionals to affected communities supported life-saving interventions immediately after the cyclone. These social welfare workers helped place 99 children who were unaccompanied or separated from their caregivers into alternative care arrangements. In flood-affected areas, UNICEF supported internally displaced people and host communities; UNICEF also provided support in areas where displaced people resettled after the floodwaters subsided. Other UNICEF-supported interventions included mobile clinics, nutrition screening, infant and young child feeding counselling, community engagement on hygiene practices and other positive behaviours and support to the Government for creating safe learning environments during the outbreak (see *Case Study 6*). UNICEF supported the restoration of services by rehabilitating and reconstructing damaged facilities, including water sources, health facilities

In the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Freddy, thematic funding helped UNICEF immediately **expand the number of partners implementing the WASH response and procure WASH kits** for distribution in 18 districts in Malawi

and school infrastructure. Central to all this work was a focus on building back better and enhancing the resilience of affected communities to future shocks.

The destructive power of cyclones was also felt in **Vanuatu** in March, when twin Severe Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin left 200,000 of 300,000 Vanuatuans in need of assistance. UNICEF worked with the Vanuatu Red Cross to provide immediate relief. The island nation was hit again by a cyclone – Severe Tropical Cyclone Lola – in October 2023. The triple crisis in a single year brought into sharp focus the impacts of climate change on the Pacific Islands and in the East Asia and Pacific region more broadly. In 2023, many countries in the region experienced extreme storms, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, along with human-induced emergencies such as armed conflict – putting the lives of millions of children at risk. In Vanuatu, humanitarian thematic funding had enabled deployment of pre-positioned emergency supplies – tents, tarpaulins and medical and education supplies – there and in Fiji, which sped up the response when the cyclones hit. The country continues to prioritize work around climate change and resilience, which has enabled a focus on the humanitarian–development–peace continuum of response in the country. Structures shaping this are becoming increasingly institutionalized in Vanuatu, including via the National Advisory Board on Climate Change & Disaster Risk Reduction, the National Disaster Management Office and the Recovery Unit.

## Social and behaviour change

Community engagement and social and behaviour change were crucial to responses to the natural disasters and public health emergencies described above – and in nearly every kind of emergency context in 2023. This arm of UNICEF’s work delivers critical information and facilitates people’s access to life-saving services. It was also fundamental to establishing and maintain community feedback mechanisms and community processes to strengthen UNICEF programming – creating a virtuous cycle where communities are empowered and children reap the benefits.

In 2023, 62 UNICEF country offices implemented advanced or established programming standards for institutionalizing participatory planning, monitoring, feedback and social accountability standards in humanitarian programming. This is a leap over 2021, when only 16 country offices did this – an important result that reflects UNICEF efforts to put children and their communities at the centre of programming.

Work within countries on community engagement and social and behaviour change was wide and varied: UNICEF developed – along with governments, partners and other United Nations agencies – risk communication and community engagement task forces in the **Syrian Arab Republic** and **Türkiye** after the earthquakes; helped create community cells in displacement contexts to foster social cohesion in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**; promoted social and behaviour change–WASH collaboration for cholera preparedness in **Mozambique** and **Nigeria**; and mainstreamed social and behaviour change components into cash transfer projects in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **Morocco**. In **Cambodia**, through a COVID-19 vaccination-related programme covering the humanitarian and development spheres, UNICEF supported local authorities in eight provinces with data collection to improve service delivery and results, including for hard-to-reach populations. Civil society organizations then worked with local leaders to tailor programme messages and service delivery. In **Moldova**, support to national authorities to prioritize community engagement for immunization programmes resulted in a 15 per cent increase in vaccination in the first six months of interventions in one target municipality. Interventions included capacity strengthening of health workers in interpersonal communication, social behaviour change messaging on local TV and radio and engaging local public authorities and influencers.

This type of capacity-building and training for building community engagement and social and behaviour change into their work was carried out for partners, government officials, community organizations and other local actors by 65 UNICEF country offices. It is one element of localizing UNICEF programming and adapting it to the many types of national and regional contexts where UNICEF works. Such capacity-building also sets the stage for sustainable results.

In Vanuatu, **humanitarian thematic funding** had enabled the pre-positioning of emergency supplies – tents, tarpaulins and medical and education supplies – there and in Fiji, which **sped up the response** when cyclones hit in 2023

Engaging and working with communities can create a **virtuous cycle where communities are empowered, making children's lives better**

In 2023, the world faced multiple humanitarian crises and public health emergencies where UNICEF's support to timely delivery of information and services was crucial in upholding children's rights – and where engaging and working with communities continued to be one of the most effective strategies to change the conditions that affect these rights.

## Case Study 6: UNICEF support to the Government helps keep schools open during the cholera outbreak in Malawi

An unprecedented cholera outbreak in Malawi in 2022 and 2023 resulted in 59,125 confirmed cases and caused 1,770 deaths (with a case fatality rate of 3 per cent, higher than the accepted threshold of 1 per cent). The outbreak was driven by poor food hygiene, limited access to safe drinking water, basic sanitation and hygiene facilities and inadequate hygiene and sanitation practices (e.g., open defecation and limited hand washing).

One action the Government took to contain the outbreak was suspending the re-opening of schools in the cities of Blantyre and Lilongwe for the term beginning 3 January 2023, affecting nearly 1 million learners.

UNICEF provided multisectoral support to the Government's cholera response, including cholera treatment, infection prevention and control and WASH interventions and carried out other initiatives designed to allow children to return to school and mitigate the spread of the disease within schools. Actions also encompassed supporting some schools to re-connect their water supply, installing taps and constructing toilets. To safeguard students, UNICEF also trained teachers and other stakeholders in cholera prevention, including soap making.

Two weeks after the postponement of the school openings in Blantyre and Lilongwe, more than 200,000 learners from 89 schools benefited from UNICEF-supported water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (soap, buckets and chlorine for water purification and infection control) when they returned to school.



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Students at Chikuli Primary School in Blantyre, Malawi, wash their hands during a break in May 2023. The school and the surrounding village benefit from a solar-powered water system supported by UNICEF, which provides access to clean and safe water for 6,000 people – crucial for keeping cholera cases low.

## Case study 7: Providing HIV services during the cholera outbreak in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's cholera outbreak began in February 2023 and spread to all 62 of the country's districts. By year-end, more than 20,000 cases had been reported, with a case fatality rate of more than 2.5 per cent in laboratory-confirmed and suspected cases. UNICEF partnered with the National AIDS Council to integrate HIV as part of prevention and response to the cholera outbreak in five cholera hotspot districts to ensure people living with HIV were able to continue with their treatment and access HIV services during the outbreak.

A total of 101 community members (70 female, 31 male) in these districts had already been trained in HIV care, treatment and support. These workers – adolescent peer supporters, village health workers, behavioural change facilitators and people living with HIV – provided ongoing support to children, adolescents and pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV, facilitated access to HIV treatment for newly diagnosed clients and supported adherence to treatment so that people could attain viral load suppression. During the cholera outbreak, they received information on how to ensure continuing HIV care, with training on the impact of cholera and diarrhoeal diseases on people living with HIV and the support these individuals required.

Through community gatherings, the community-based workers disseminated information on preventing and managing cholera, screening for and referring cholera cases, conducting assessments of water and sanitation, and ensuring continued HIV treatment for people living with HIV. They reached more than 2,000 community members with messages emphasizing the continuation of breastfeeding in mothers afflicted with diarrhoea or cholera and the availability of HIV treatment services in places with cholera treatment camps. This contributed to nearly 44,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women, children and adolescents living with HIV in UNICEF districts (out of a targeted 40,000) continuing to receive elimination of vertical transmission and HIV treatment services at primary health care facilities during the outbreak. Of these, 17,209 were children aged 0–14 years, and 21,626 were pregnant and lactating women.

The efforts underscore the importance of community-driven initiatives to provide hope and support; and they show how integral local communities are to sustainable solutions and to the continuity of HIV services during emergencies.



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Pepukai Moyo receives oral rehydration solution (ORS) for her 9-month-old son at an oral rehydration point in Kuwadzana, a cholera hotspot area in Harare, Zimbabwe.



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# April

Children participate in a drawing session at a safe learning space set up by UNICEF at the Al Maimona gathering point in Hantob, Gezira State, the Sudan, in October 2023. More than 600 displaced and host community children are registered at the safe learning space, where they benefit from age-appropriate and inclusive learning and other activities, including those that they previously enjoyed at their schools, such as daily assemblies. Around 19 million children in the Sudan are not in school.

## Beginning in April, war immediately put at risk the well-being of the Sudan's 24 million children

On 15 April 2023, war erupted in the **Sudan**, immediately putting at risk the well-being of the country's 24 million children. To meet the needs of children and families affected by the combination of violence, displacement, malnutrition and disease, UNICEF used a three-pronged humanitarian–development–peace nexus strategy: responding in hotspot areas, addressing the needs of displaced people in safer areas and sustaining systems for the provision of basic services to children and their families. UNICEF also engaged in extensive advocacy for humanitarian access to children and families who required assistance.

The response required maximum agility and adaptability. For example, UNICEF had been implementing a joint programme with World Food Programme (WFP) to strengthen resilience and social cohesion in the region of Darfur. With the outbreak of conflict and the shift to emergency response, UNICEF was able to re-programme and continue delivering basic services to affected communities – health and nutrition, WASH and protection services in the spirit of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. UNICEF fast-tracked the establishment of new partnerships (including with the remnants of line ministries and local technocrats) that had the operational capacity to deliver in affected areas. The joint programme used a robust community-based and participatory risk analysis to inform its interventions to ensure adherence to the principle of 'do no harm' and ensure partners were aware of conflict dynamics. As a result, UNICEF and its partners were able to operate in areas held by opposing parties while adhering to principled humanitarian actions and neutrality.

Prevention and response interventions laid the foundation for sustainable results and supported the resilience of basic social service delivery systems and communities to withstand shocks. Despite the complex operating environment and limited funding in 2023 (the appeal was only 18 per cent funded), UNICEF and partners delivered meaningful results: 6.4 million people reached with health supplies and nearly 1 million women and children accessed primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities (target: 1.7 million); 5.9 million people reached with safe drinking water (exceeding the target of 4 million); 5.4 million children reached with malnutrition screening (92 per cent of the target), including nearly 313,400 who received life-saving treatment (50 per cent of the target); 870,100 people reached with psychosocial counselling, learning, and protection support; 3,175 unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care options and/or successfully reunited with their families, far below the targeted 11,499 children due to the complex

operating environment and under-funding of the UNICEF appeal for this sector, which was only 10 per cent funded; and 300,000 people reached with cash, information and services to preserve health and resilience. UNICEF was the first agency to resume large-scale cash transfers in the Sudan after war broke out. The centrepiece of the cash programming was UNICEF's flagship Mother and Child Cash Transfer Plus programme to cover the basic needs of pregnant and lactating mothers and their children – a development programme for transitional contexts. By the end of 2023, 50,000 pregnant and lactating mothers were reached in areas with no active conflict, but which were facing heightened insecurity, banking sector collapse and liquidity challenges. A total of nearly \$14 million was delivered during the year through this programme.

With nearly every child in the Sudan not in school – around 19 million children, nearly 7 million of whom were out of school prior to April 2023 – UNICEF invested in staying and delivering on its education commitments to children. Only 7 per cent of children targeted for education support were reached (230,859 children compared with a target of 3,473,900) – reflecting the challenges brought by war and severe underfunding of the education sector response, which was only 6 per cent funded. Yet there were bright spots, as UNICEF and partners reached hundreds of thousands of children with a crucial lifeline to education, in the most difficult circumstances (*see Case Study 8*).

The Sudan was not the only place where the volatility of conflict and violence, coupled with lack of prioritization and funding for education, made it difficult to deliver education interventions at scale. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, where conflict and deteriorating security in the east prompted the June 2023 declaration of a Level 3 emergency scale up (*see page 55*), UNICEF supported 175,763 children (85,509 girls) in conflict- and disaster-affected provinces to access formal or non-formal education, including early learning (target: 1,726,400, 10 per cent of the target). UNICEF did this by establishing temporary learning spaces; providing teaching and learning materials, recreational kits and menstrual hygiene kits; and by building the capacity of 1,782 teachers (718 female) on pedagogical approaches adapted to children affected by crises, including a focus on psychosocial support, peace education, child protection and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Insufficient funding, however, was a

UNICEF used a **three-pronged humanitarian–development–peace nexus strategy in the Sudan: respond** in hotspot areas, **address** the needs of displaced people in safer areas and **sustain** systems that provide basic services to children and their families

major constraint in responding to children’s needs, with the education component of UNICEF’s appeal for the country just three per cent funded.

## Education

Every child has a right to an education, even amid war and conflict. Education is children’s lifeline to their future beyond humanitarian crisis and should be seen as an urgent life-saving response. Globally, an estimated 224 million children affected by crisis require urgent education support.<sup>27</sup> In 2023, UNICEF support for children’s education in humanitarian settings covered 71 countries, focusing on learning continuity and equitable educational access. Of the \$1.7 billion UNICEF spent on education, 61 per cent was spent in humanitarian settings. UNICEF is committed to ensuring uninterrupted, inclusive education for all children and young people impacted by crises, with a focus on girls, children with disabilities and children on the move.

Advocacy is needed to ensure that education is a first-line response in all humanitarian settings. To accelerate learning recovery in humanitarian contexts, UNICEF implemented the Mission: Recovery education in humanitarian settings programme in 27 countries (until mid-2023), with the support of the United States. In this programme, countries prioritized education as a first-line response in emergencies and showed that it is possible to improve learning outcomes in extremely challenging situations through remedial or catch-up programmes. Through the Mission: Recovery programme, UNICEF reached more than 1.75 million children (883,311 girls) with learning recovery interventions and built the skills and capacity of more than 55,000 teachers. However, the ongoing support of governments, donors and other stakeholders is needed to continue to do this consistently and at scale. Without political will and sustainable funding, children in emergency settings will continue to be at risk of being left behind and not given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

More frequent and more intense climate-related disasters have underscored the importance of resilient education systems. Such systems – including resilient infrastructure – can mitigate costly and potentially irreversible learning and education infrastructure losses. Globally, UNICEF continued its efforts to strengthen education systems through risk-informed programming approaches and capacity development to enhance anticipation, preparedness, prevention, responsiveness and mitigation capacities and

**Education is children’s lifeline to their future beyond humanitarian crisis and should be seen as an urgent life-saving response**

to empower children and communities with positive coping mechanisms. As a result of UNICEF’s support in 2023, 46 per cent of UNICEF country programmes reported capacities to respond to crises through risk-informed planning and response measures in the education sector.

FIGURE 12: Number of out-of-school children and adolescents who accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes

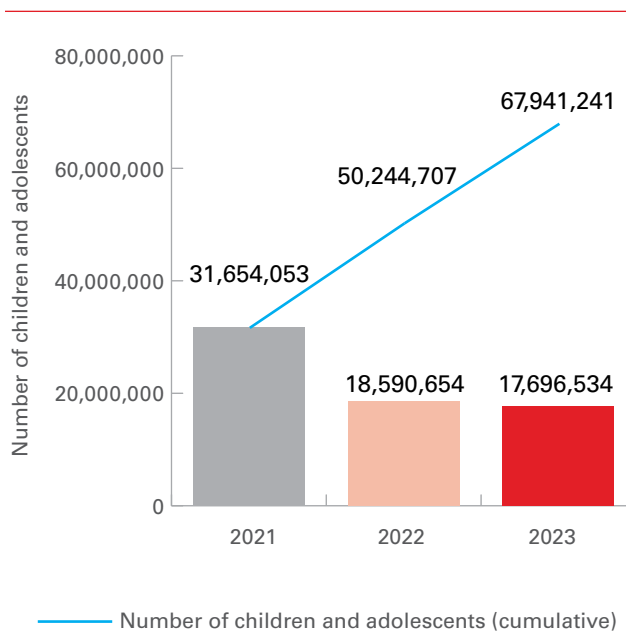
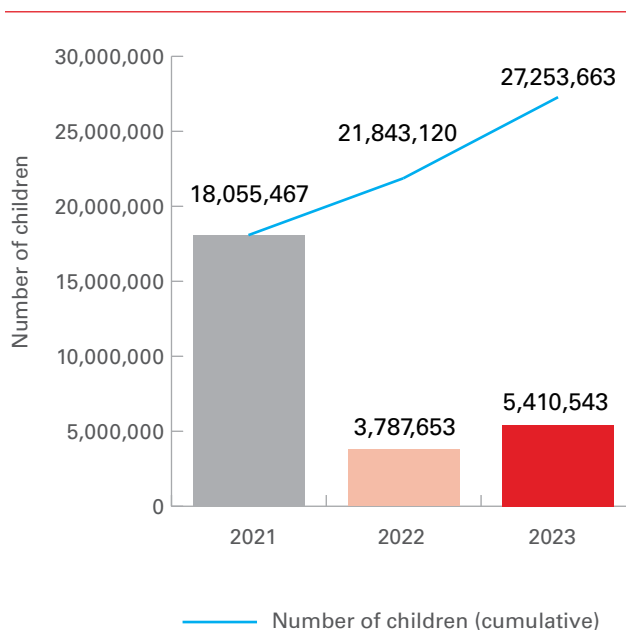


FIGURE 13: Number of children provided with individual learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes



Throughout humanitarian education responses, mental health and psychosocial support activities played a critical role in equipping children and teachers with the knowledge skills, and support needed for learning continuity and mental health and psychosocial well-being. Of 40 reporting countries with a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, 38 per cent met the threshold for MHPSS strategies, plans and policies for learners and educators in schools and learning environments; 44 per cent reported that 30–50 per cent of primary and secondary schools implemented a training curriculum that focused on child and adolescent health, mental health and well-being; and 29 per cent integrated mental health and psychosocial support into teacher training curricula and development. In **Türkiye**, through the Play and Heal project partnership with The LEGO Foundation, UNICEF trained more than 1,000 teachers from earthquake-affected areas to use play bricks for guided play activities to promote and support student’s mental health and well-being. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF supported 568,050 children (49 per cent girls) in earthquake-affected governorates with psychosocial support and non-formal education activities.

## Health

In 2023, UNICEF worked to ensure access to primary health care services in humanitarian crises, especially for women and children, and supported capacity-building in the health sector. And, in a nod to the deep impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s immunization levels globally, and the acceleration needed to meet global goals in this area, on 24 April WHO, UNICEF, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, along with Immunization Agenda 2030 and many other global and national health partners, announced ‘The Big Catch-up’, a targeted global effort to boost vaccination among children following declines driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. Immunization is critical for children impacted by humanitarian crises, as is access to essential health care.

UNICEF provided basic and essential care, including life-saving medicines and supplies for newborns, children and mothers in humanitarian crises. Through the deployment of staff, technical support was provided to country offices responding to crises including the conflict in the State of Palestine, the drought in Somalia and the Horn of Africa and earthquakes in Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic. In **Somalia**, which is experiencing a protracted crisis, nearly 1.9 million people received life-saving health services (out of a targeted 1.6 million), an increase in 14 per cent compared with 2022. The results were achieved through expansion and scale up of life-saving essential health services for crisis-affected communities in districts affected by drought and El Niño-related flooding. The health component of UNICEF’s appeal for Somalia was 77 per cent funded in 2023.

FIGURE 14: Number of children vaccinated against measles through UNICEF-supported programmes

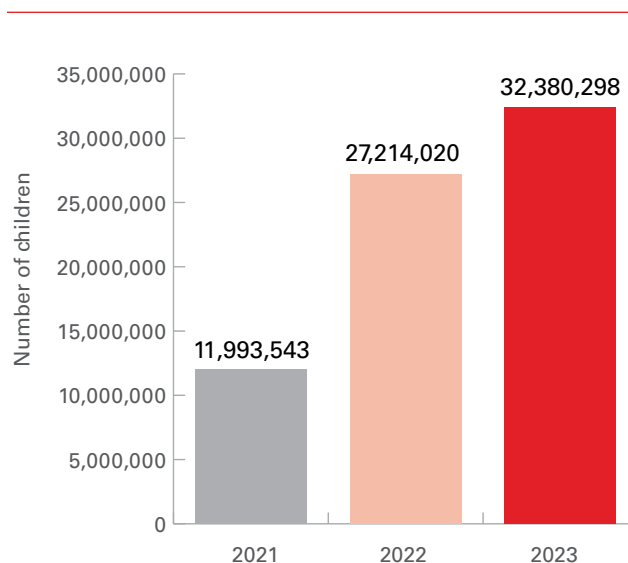
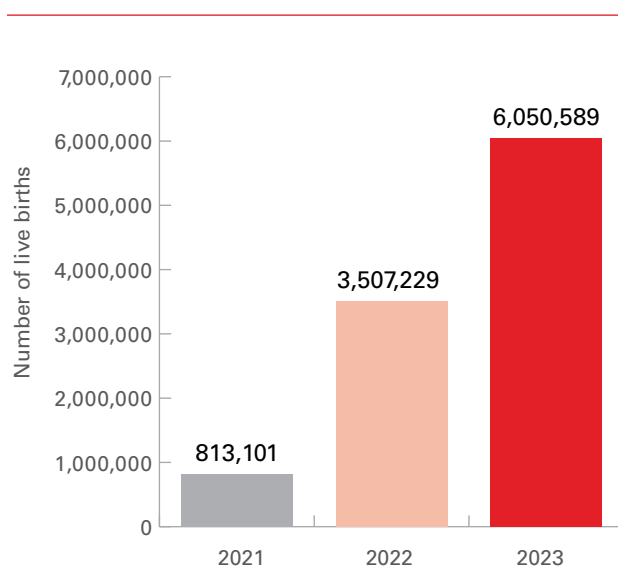


FIGURE 15: Number of live births delivered in health facilities through UNICEF-supported programmes



UNICEF provided basic and essential care in humanitarian crises globally, including **life-saving medicines and supplies for newborns, children and mothers**



In response to the measles outbreak in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, which affected more than 314,000 children (causing nearly 5,900 deaths), UNICEF supported the vaccination of nearly 1.9 million children, well beyond the initial target of around 1.1 million children. UNICEF took a proactive approach to mitigating the recurrent measles outbreaks in North Kivu Province, with UNICEF's Integrated Outbreak Analytics cell providing rapid analysis to understand such risk factors as malnutrition, barriers to seeking treatment and gaps in the surveillance and reporting system. The analysis supported the co-development of 26 evidence-based actions, 91 per cent of them completed by the end of 2023. In the **Sudan**, a proposal to the World Bank to preserve access to essential health services in response to the humanitarian crisis there evolved into a multisectoral plan to cover the multiple humanitarian needs of children, mothers and families.

In Europe and Central Asia, measles cases skyrocketed in 2023, and by the end of the year had risen by more than 3,000 per cent. The highest numbers of measles cases were registered in **Kazakhstan** (30,002 cases), **Kyrgyzstan** (10,112 cases), **Türkiye** (4,559 cases), **Azerbaijan** (3,316 cases) and **Romania** (2,805 cases). UNICEF worked with country offices, governments and partners WHO and Gavi to address the outbreaks, including through immunization and communication campaigns, with assistance spilling into 2024. In **Kyrgyzstan**, for example, UNICEF and Gavi supported the Ministry of Health's Republican Centre of Immunoprophylaxis to rent two additional premises – one cold room for vaccines and one for dry storage – to address the country's limited vaccine storage capacity. In addition to being used for routine immunization vaccines, the warehouses provided the Ministry of Health with capacity to store an additional 260,000 doses of measles and rubella vaccine and devices for responding to the country's measles outbreak.

## Case Study 8: Safe learning spaces for children in the Sudan provide crucial support for children to learn, play and heal

With more than 18,000 schools closed in the Sudan due to conflict, nearly all school-aged children, an estimated 19 million children, were not in school in 2023.<sup>28</sup> Millions of children not learning means millions of children denied their right to an education. Not being in school is disastrous for children's safety and well-being; and it increases their risk of abuse and exploitation, including child labour, child marriage and recruitment by armed groups and forces. The learning crisis in the country will become a generational catastrophe without urgent action.

Despite the need to prioritize education in the Sudan and the region as a lifeline that protects children and as a long-term investment in their futures, UNICEF and partners faced critically low levels of funding support for the humanitarian education response. Yet even with low levels of funding and with the extreme insecurity and access challenges, UNICEF and partners reached 230,859 children (out of a target of 3,473,900), including around 118,100 girls, through the creation of 842 safe learning spaces that provided protection, social connection and learning opportunities. Close to 40,000 children in active conflict areas accessed high-quality digitized content linked to grades 1–8 of the national curriculum through the Learning Passport; for learners in hard-to-reach areas that lacked access to electricity, solar units were installed to support tablet charging as part of the E-School-in-a-Box. Around 114,700 children received learning materials.

UNICEF continues to advocate for schools to reopen so that millions of Sudanese children can return to their classrooms and conflict-affected children can learn and heal in safe spaces. In 2024, UNICEF aims to reach children forced from their homes by conflict with integrated learning, skill development and protection assistance.<sup>29</sup> The Makanna 'Our space' approach will continue to provide a safe learning place where children can learn, play and heal while accessing an integrated package of support and referral services. In addition to psychosocial support, services provided through Makannas encompass family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children, prevention of and response to gender-based violence and mine risk education.



A boy writes on the blackboard during a session at a safe learning space set up by UNICEF at Al Maimona gathering point Hantob, Gezira State, the Sudan, in October 2023.



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# May

Diyo Kudo gives her baby ready-to-use therapeutic food in Borena, Ethiopia, in April 2023. The mother of three has been deeply affected by Ethiopia's drought, losing 48 of her 50 head of cattle.

Cyclone Mocha hit Bangladesh and Myanmar in mid-May, endangering lives and heightening risks for people who were already extremely vulnerable, including many displaced persons and refugees.

In **Myanmar**, the cyclone caused widespread destruction in Rakhine State, compounding the difficult circumstances of people already affected by ongoing conflict in the country. An escalation of the conflict later in October led to more than 600,000 people newly displaced, bringing the total number of displaced persons in the country to more than 2.6 million by the end of December. Altogether, nearly 6 million children required humanitarian assistance in Myanmar in 2023 due to the protracted conflict, which has led to increased protection risks, widespread economic collapse, internal displacement and the deterioration of social services. Significant constraints (military operations, ongoing hostilities and administrative constraints) along with the politicization of humanitarian assistance hindered the humanitarian response, as did the low level of funding for the UNICEF response, which was only 15 per cent of the requested amount. Yet working with local organizations and other United Nations agencies – and capitalizing on its seven field offices – UNICEF was able to support life-saving health-care services in many parts of the country. UNICEF worked closely with WHO on a catch-up vaccine campaign for children who had missed out on their routine immunizations, and an estimated 700,000 children were vaccinated against measles (93 per cent of the target). Infant and young child feeding counselling reached 88,587 of the 134,900 caregivers targeted. Nearly 440,000 people received access to safe water (76 per cent of the target). UNICEF expanded its reach in the nutrition sector, working with a network of eight non-governmental organizations and 11 international non-governmental organizations in

UNICEF supported life-saving health-care services in many parts of Myanmar **by working with local organizations** and UN agencies – and by capitalizing on its seven field offices

13 states and regions to provide integrated preventive and curative nutrition services to address wasting (5,422 children aged 6–59 months were admitted to treatment for severe wasting, against a target of 9,829) and micro-nutrient deficiencies. Support to the national campaign for vitamin A supplementation led to 2.5 million children aged 6–59 months receiving the supplements, well beyond the initial UNICEF target of around 592,500 children. UNICEF also trained hundreds of local staff in integrated management of wasting; and 90 people were trained in integrating maternal, infant and young child feeding with multiple micronutrient supplementation.

UNICEF worked with local disability communities to establish the Disability Management Information System – a significant advancement in Myanmar in inclusion of children with disabilities into systems for providing support (see *Case Study 9*).

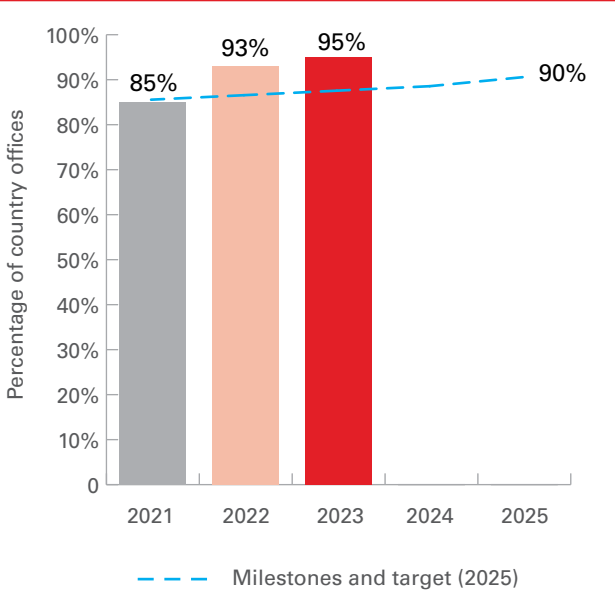
### Disability inclusion

The advances in disability inclusion in the complex environment of Myanmar show that progress in inclusion is possible even in extremely challenging circumstances, including complex conflict situations. Within UNICEF, there was a notable shift towards prioritizing inclusion of children with disabilities in 2023.

Yet globally, challenges persisted to prioritizing children with disabilities in complex crises, and barriers remained to effective partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities. UNICEF’s commitments to fostering collaboration and overcoming these key obstacles to inclusion were reflected in initiatives involving capacity sharing between organizations of persons with disabilities and humanitarian actors.

The gap between the needs of children with disabilities in emergencies and the resources to meet their needs further marginalizes them. To address this, UNICEF is expanding its capacity to embed disability inclusion as a core element of humanitarian action, across contexts and programmatic sectors. For example, in the **Syrian Arab Republic** post-earthquake, UNICEF and its partners reached 163,000 individuals with disabilities, including 84,659 women and girls. This is significant, because 2.6 million people with disabilities were among the 15.3 million people requiring humanitarian assistance in the country in 2023. In the Gaza Strip, **State of Palestine**,

FIGURE 16: Percentage of countries providing disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services



UNICEF implemented multisectoral disability-inclusive interventions covering education, protection, health, WASH and social protection for children with disabilities; surge capacities were mobilized to review and provide technical inputs for emergency response plans in the Gaza Strip and in countries neighbouring the State of Palestine. In the State of Palestine, UNICEF provided support to 16,195 persons with disabilities via cash assistance (approximately \$208, or enough to purchase 60 per cent of the pre-conflict minimum expenditure basket) and sectoral top-up payments that enabled them to access nutritious food, health care and education; among this group were 5,079 children with disabilities whose families received a second payment of approximately \$70 (indirectly benefiting 35,553 people) in December, in recognition of the extra support required to meet their needs (see *Case Study 13*).

In **Ukraine**, 11,291 children with disabilities benefited from UNICEF humanitarian cash transfers (provided to a total of 61,869 households, which included 220,181 individuals). And in **countries receiving Ukrainian refugees**, UNICEF provided targeted social protection support to Ukrainian children, in particular those with disabilities. Distribution of cash transfers was crucial in immediately meeting the needs of these children and facilitating their access to essential services. UNICEF also supported the development of assessment tools to integrate Ukrainian refugee children with disabilities into social protection frameworks in refugee-hosting countries. In **Yemen**, UNICEF worked towards improving the lives of 500 girls and boys who had survived war injuries by providing them with comprehensive rehabilitation services in four rehabilitation and prosthesis centres. Globally, UNICEF provided assistive devices and products to 438,064 children with disabilities.

Advances in inclusion of children with disabilities in humanitarian responses were made possible through enhanced technical and operational guidance for UNICEF country and regional offices. Forty-four UNICEF country offices now have at-scale programmes to develop staff capacity for disability inclusion in humanitarian responses – up from 21 in 2021. Funding from Norway helped to make this possible, because it supported practical initiatives in priority countries – promoting adaptability and problem-solving and hands-on execution of tasks in real-world settings – that could foster learning and experiences with relevance to the wider humanitarian response. In

**Staff demand resulted in better guidance on disability inclusion** in humanitarian response – a reflection of greater sensitivity organization-wide to ensuring that every child – with a disability or not – can benefit from UNICEF’s work

fact, support from Norway has empowered UNICEF to enhance disability inclusion efforts globally, regionally and in countries. This includes targeted support for all seven regional offices and for 14 country offices, and support for global sectoral initiatives (e.g., inclusive data collection, disability-inclusive participatory action, strengthening disability inclusion in education strategies, social protection and humanitarian cash transfers and disability-inclusive localization and preparedness).

This support, coupled with the increased demand for guidance and action, led to substantial results in 2023 that will bear fruit for years to come. For example, in **Mauritania**, which began coping with a new influx of refugees from Mali since August 2023, Norwegian funding on inclusion made it possible to support the country’s social register to develop a system to collect data on people with disabilities. This in turn enabled the identification of more than 60,000 people with disabilities, including children, in the most vulnerable areas of the country, where new arrivals are putting increased pressure on limited services and resources in a region already subject to climatic shocks and with increased humanitarian needs for food, water, health care, shelter and essential items. The Mauritanian Government was, for the first time, able to include people with disabilities, including children, in its national humanitarian response plan for 2024 to mitigate the effects of food insecurity and malnutrition on vulnerable populations during the lean season. At the same time, training on inclusive policies for government actors and local organizations began and is expected to strengthen their capacities to integrate disability considerations into social protection initiatives.

Guidance on disability-inclusive preparedness was finalized and piloted in the East Asia and Pacific and Eastern and Southern Africa regions, fostering hands-on efforts to engage more with local organizations of persons with disabilities in those regions, especially during planning and preparedness work.

The points of progress in disability inclusion in UNICEF’s humanitarian response in 2023 also illuminate what needs to change. For example, after looking closely at disability-inclusive localization and accountability to affected populations, it became clear that the organization’s current partnership processes reinforced institutional barriers to engaging organizations of persons with disabilities as partners in humanitarian response. UNICEF organized an inter-agency exchange to highlight this issue among key partners, resulting in identification of some key actions that UNICEF will take to address barriers to partnering with local organizations of persons with disabilities.

The Disability Reference Group, chaired by UNICEF, grew to more than 400 members in 2023. One effort co-led by UNICEF and carried out through this group was a project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, to implement capacity sharing activities between organizations of persons with disabilities and humanitarian actors. As a leader of efforts to promote disability inclusion

in inter-agency humanitarian response plans, UNICEF helped foster greater inclusion of children with disabilities into humanitarian response plans that were themselves undergoing a transformation to becoming ‘lighter’, focusing more tightly on the most urgent needs and targeting fewer people – reflecting a broader transformation in the humanitarian system.

## Nutrition and early childhood development

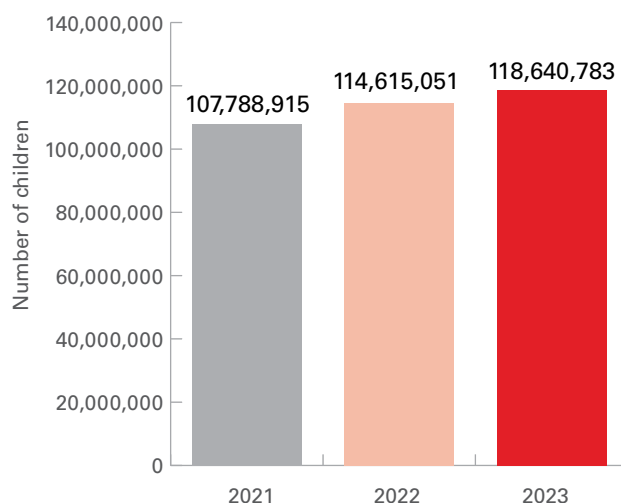
UNICEF raised the alarm about child nutrition multiple times in May.<sup>30</sup>

UNICEF worked to improve children’s diets and feeding practices and promote responsive caregiving in countries in all regions in 2023. Cross-sectoral efforts helped multiply nutrition results for children. UNICEF also embedded early childhood development into emergency responses linked to nutrition outcomes to strengthen systems and change mindsets – in a way that paves the way for long-term development-related interventions and long-term, sustainable outcomes.

Interventions in both nutrition and early childhood development (ECD) were increasingly integrated in 2023 for good reason: they are extremely connected, especially for the youngest children. Working on both leads to better outcomes for children. Nutrition and stimulation deficits can combine to lead to stunting;<sup>31</sup> and, while stunting prevalence globally declined from 33 per cent to 22.3 per cent between 2000 and 2022 and the number of affected children dropped from 204.2 million to 148.1 million during the same period, these last few years have seen a rise in global levels of acute hunger.<sup>32</sup> Children and women are at the forefront of this crisis, which has particularly intensified among people displaced due to conflict and disasters. Integrated reporting on nutrition and ECD in this *2023 Global Annual Results Report: Humanitarian action* reflects this reality and the increasing – and intentional – integration of these programme areas by UNICEF to enhance results for children.

One example of this integration was the transition to the new 2023 WHO guidelines for the prevention and treatment of wasting in infants and young children. Among other things, these guidelines made child stimulation and caregiver well-being non-negotiable parts of the guidelines/treatment protocol for the first time. Another example

FIGURE 17: Number of children under 5 years of age who benefit from services for the early detection and treatment of severe wasting and other forms of malnutrition



is work around complementary feeding bowls: UNICEF has a roadmap under development with priorities on complementary feeding in emergencies for countries in fragile contexts, and, more generally, is applying tools for using complementary feeding bowls to promote the caregiver-child interactions that are at the heart of early childhood development.

Critical partnerships – between the nutrition and ECD programmatic sectors and among organizations – are enabling better results for children. Partnership-building for nutrition and ECD included a UNICEF and WFP joint Strategic Approach to optimize actions for the early prevention, detection and treatment of wasting in children and women in 15 countries, with work beginning in 2024 in five priority countries.<sup>33</sup> This partnership and the work in the first few countries is expected to be a blueprint for an ambitious objective: preventing wasting in children while also ensuring treatment for children who require it. The overall goal is to stabilize wasting rates in communities and countries at greatest humanitarian risk, while providing preventive and responsive services, care and support to address young children’s developmental needs.

**UNICEF nutrition and early childhood development interventions were increasingly integrated in 2023** for good reason: they are extremely connected, especially for the youngest children, and working on both leads to better outcomes for children

Work in **Kenya** shows how programmatic integration and awareness can lift results for children. Nearly 2.2 million caregivers received infant and young child feeding counselling, well above the target of 1.8 million, with UNICEF playing a key role by supporting the training of 589 health workers in infant and young child feeding counselling and in integrating care and stimulation. These results were bolstered by UNICEF advocacy and policy support to develop Kenya's multisectoral, national early childhood social and behavioural change and maternal, infant and young child nutrition strategies for 2023–2030 (along with their operational guidelines) – providing direction and strengthening the enabling environment for these achievements. In **Armenia**, UNICEF responded to the needs of children displaced due to conflict by providing nutrition and health services to 4,632 children, who were reached by 20 mobile teams that each included two paediatricians, one nurse and one psychologist. UNICEF also reached around 4,200 caregivers with counselling on health- and nutrition-related childcare practices. And in **Lebanon**, the Rising programme focused on the impact of nutrition on both physical and cognitive growth and development, using a multiplatform approach to providing integrated services (see *Case study 10*).

UNICEF supported 20 countries in integrating ECD into their humanitarian responses via the creation of public goods and tools (such as the Quick Guide for Maximizing Early Childhood Development within Nutrition in Emergencies), technical assistance, capacity-building and trainings and support to pilot, roll out and evaluate tools. UNICEF also delivered 42,680 ECD kits in emergencies, benefiting 2 million children aged 0–6 years

in 62 countries. There was also progress in developing an ECD kit emphasizing caregiver engagement in play and inclusivity for children with disabilities. And Project Play, which repurposes ready-to-use therapeutic food packaging to make play materials, provided nearly 50,000 new toys for children in malnutrition treatment facilities in **Pakistan**, **Sierra Leone** and **Uganda**, providing critical stimulation opportunities to help these children recover. Project Play is also an example of UNICEF's commitment to implement ECD as a climate action approach that not only responds in the short-term to the needs of children, but also creates more sustainable communities as called for in the 2023 ECD Climate Change Brief.

UNICEF invested in strengthening nutrition information systems to assess nutritional vulnerability in humanitarian contexts. Building on UNICEF's role as the cluster lead agency for nutrition, and its strengthened partnership with WFP, UNICEF helped to develop innovative methods and tools for gathering information on changes to child malnutrition in the many areas where humanitarian access is limited. In the Gaza Strip in the **State of Palestine**, for example, data gathered using these tools are helping to guide programming and advocacy in this complex emergency, with highly visible results, with international media and policy makers using those data as grounds for advocacy and policies. In addition to leading the Global Nutrition Cluster, UNICEF also co-chairs an ECD Working Group to support countries in emergencies in providing quality services for the youngest children and their families with an array of tools, case studies, communications means and technical support.

## Case Study 9: Building systems to identify and serve children with disabilities in conflict-affected, hard-to-reach areas in Myanmar

Children with disabilities in Myanmar face significant challenges: they are subjected to violence and social exclusion; limited access to services; and poverty. Escalating conflict since the military takeover in early 2021 has exacerbated this, leading to increased disability rates and reduced access to such essential services as education and health care. Many children with disabilities remain unidentified; many have high unmet needs and lack access to basic social services. In 2023, UNICEF made substantial progress in building systems to address these challenges and reach children with disabilities, particularly through the establishment of a Disability Management Information System (DMIS). UNICEF also supported comprehensive disability screenings and collaborated with local communities to provide essential support services.

The implementation of the DMIS marked a significant advancement in Myanmar. The platform consists of bespoke software installed on mobile phones and tablets to support data collection, linked to a secure online data repository managed by UNICEF to facilitate analysis and the determination of eligibility for assistance and planning of support services. Data are collected on functional limitations, health conditions, education and health-care access and assistive technology requirements. As of January 2024, more than 25,700 children and adults in 180 townships nationwide had been screened and registered in DMIS, including in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas. Collaboration with local disability communities enhanced the relevance and effectiveness of these screenings.

Better information served as the backbone for scaling up service delivery. Services included child disability cash benefits (implemented directly by UNICEF and a financial services provider) disbursed every two months via the mobile money platform Wave Money for those with severe and profound functional limitations who are registered in DMIS. These disbursements reached 2,511 households in 2023, benefiting 12,360 children and family members, among them 2,611 children with severe and profound disabilities. Additionally, complementary disability-specific services were delivered through partnerships with local organizations of persons with disabilities and other non-governmental organizations, with a focus on assistive devices, rehabilitation services and access to health care. UNICEF also provided teaching materials and essential learning packages benefiting thousands of children, including those with disabilities. More than 605 front-line workers and personnel from non-governmental organizations received training in delivering disability-friendly services.

The success of inclusion efforts in Myanmar demonstrates the importance of – and potential for – building inclusive systems to reach children with disabilities in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas. By prioritizing collaboration, data collection and tailored support services, UNICEF has made significant strides in improving the lives of children with disabilities and their families – enhancing their access to essential services, promoting the rights and dignity of children with disabilities and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.



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A UNICEF staff member plays an audiobook on her laptop, while children listen and ask her questions. Some of the children are visually impaired, and creation of the storybooks – which also have bright pictures for those children who are hearing-impaired – is just one aspect of UNICEF’s comprehensive work on enhancing inclusion of children with disabilities into support systems in Myanmar.

## Case Study 10: The Rising programme in Lebanon helps create an environment where all children can rise to their full potential for growth and development

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The nutrition status of Lebanon's children and women is a result of the strains experienced in Lebanon: deep economic crisis, serving as host to the highest number of displaced persons per capita and per square kilometre globally, cross-border conflict with Israel. Anaemia is prevalent in up to 41.3 per cent of children under age 5 years; stunting affects up to 25 per cent of children under age 5 in Syrian informal tented settlements; and wasting is found in up to 4 per cent of children under age 5 in Palestinian camps.

The UNICEF nutrition strategy in Lebanon addresses this by focusing on the impact of nutrition on physical and cognitive growth and development – and working to prevent malnutrition in all its forms across the life cycle among children, adolescents and women. The work in Lebanon is a model for integrating early childhood development into an emergency response.

Through the Rising programme, the UNICEF nutrition and child development team convenes multisectoral responses on five platforms: primary health clinics; community centres, including ECD corners and Makani ('My Space') centres; schools and kindergartens; nurseries; and digital devices. Lebanon is using the five pillars of the nurturing care framework to prevent deprivations: good health, adequate nutrition, responsive caregiving, safety and security and opportunities for early learning.

Key results of the Rising programme in 2023 (list is indicative, not exhaustive):

- 85 fixed and mobile ECD corners were established in the most underserved localities;
- A systematic and harmonized education programme on nutrition and child development composed of 19 modules is in place to equip front-line workers with essential knowledge and skills on all aspects of ECD, the nurturing care framework and responsive feeding;
- 269 community health workers and ECD front-line workers were enrolled in the Rising education programme and equipped with knowledge and skills on nutrition and responsive care and ECD;
- Institutionalized the practices of ECD-centred home visits, with a focus on the first 1,000 days of life, when child-parent interaction is observed and tailored support is offered;
- Institutionalized digital child development monitoring;
- 390,000 children and caregivers were reached with preventive and promotive integrated early child development counselling and social and behaviour change interventions;
- 94,637 children under age 5 received essential nutritional supplements to prevent malnutrition;
- 124,918 children under age 5 were proactively administered vitamin A supplementation, ensuring optimal growth and development;
- 61,452 pregnant and lactating women were screened for malnutrition;
- 19,760 pregnant and lactating women were provided with micronutrient supplements, supporting fetal and newborn growth and development;
- Growth monitoring and screening efforts reached 386,190 children aged 0–59 months;
- Growth and development monitoring was extended to 459,527 children aged 0–59 months; and
- 7,000 children and pregnant and lactating women were enrolled in services for treatment of wasting, including supplementary cash support to reach these services.

Linked to the Rising programme, the Lebanon Integrated Micronutrient, Anthropometric and Child Development Survey (LIMA) was completed in 2023 in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Harvard University. The survey gathered critical nutrition and child development data on young children, adolescent girls and women from 6,500 households nationwide to help fill in the evidence gaps on nutrition and child development. The generated evidence is strategically important because LIMA is the first national household survey globally that



measures ECD outcomes in the critical first two years of life using the newly released Global Scales for Early Development-Household Form (GSED-HF 1.0), which was launched in February 2023 – so it enabled a study of the association of the nutrition and ECD outcomes during the first two years of life on the scale of a national household survey.

The Rising programme will expand its scope and reach in 2024 and is expected to be a model for other fragile and emergency contexts around the world.



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Sendus, 3, eats food prepared for her by her mother in their tented home at a refugee camp in Bekaa, Lebanon.



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# June

Children displaced by violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo get ready for a game at the child-friendly space set up by UNICEF in Rusayo, North Kivu Province, in September 2023.

Reports of staggering levels of gender-based violence against displaced women and girls in Goma, in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, emerged in the second quarter of 2023,<sup>34</sup> leading UNICEF to declare a Level 3 emergency response for the eastern part of the country in June. This marked the first time discussions around activating a Level 3 response were triggered specifically by gender-based violence.

Escalating armed conflict, particularly in the eastern part of the country, was having a deep and negative impact on millions of people. Seven million people were displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2023, and the number of grave violations against children surged in the first half of the year by 41 per cent.<sup>35</sup> High levels of violence directly threatened children's lives and worsened their vulnerability to diseases – including outbreaks of cholera and measles – and their risks of the harms associated with displacement, community violence and disrupted education.

Despite numerous challenges to accessing populations in need, UNICEF intensified its already substantial humanitarian response in the country to meet the rapidly expanding needs of people in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. An extensive field presence, including multiple field offices, helped UNICEF to reach children and families requiring assistance. The UNICEF humanitarian response was comprehensive, though it was hard to fully meet targets because of access constraints and insufficient funding in critical sectors: 378,000 women and children received primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities, out of a target of 618,400; 319,118 children aged 6–59 months were admitted to treatment for severe wasting, out of 995,800 targeted; 796,251 accessing sufficient quantities of safe drinking water, out of 3,384,000 targeted. Humanitarian cash transfers reached a total of 20,500 households through various types of cash programmes, many coupled with other interventions (e.g., the cash plus nutrition programme in Tanganyika Province that reached 2,300 households in an effort to prevent the root causes of malnutrition and contribute to building families' resilience to future shocks).

With growing risks for children, adolescents and women, prevention and response to gender-based violence against women and girls was a priority of the child protection programme in the country in 2023, and with the Level 3 declaration UNICEF scaled up its efforts immediately. UNICEF developed a comprehensive strategy that included increasing work with women-led organizations and expanding its programmes for gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response throughout the country. One example of this strategy was the holistic support provided through three safe spaces in South Kivu Province, accompanied by mobile clinics and services extending to hard-to-reach areas for 4,650 survivors (just under one third of the target, and including 2,800 girls and 1,681 women and 196 boys). UNICEF provided humanitarian cash transfers via mobile money transfers to households in Minova, South Kivu – a top-up to World

Food Programme's blanket cash distribution that was designed to mitigate the particular risks among women and girls of meeting basic survival needs, enhancing prevention of gender-based violence. In collaboration with national partners, specialized case workers supported 12,201 survivors with multisectoral, age-adapted response services in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Tanganyika and Mai Ndombe provinces.

Countrywide, 806,000 women, girls and boys accessed gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and response interventions, well beyond the target of 397,800 due to higher than anticipated needs and expanded programmes. UNICEF also provided technical and financial support to establish and equip safe spaces for women and girls where they could access information on skills opportunities and specialized services.

Globally, gender-based violence in emergencies is one of the most underfunded elements of humanitarian action. Yet systematic work across sectors yielded results in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For instance, the number of girls who benefited from risk reduction supplies (including menstrual hygiene management items) as part of the education programme increased by 182 per cent compared with 2022. More than 26,000 women and girls received hygiene kits. In line with UNICEF's commitment to work more with local women and girls' organizations, the country office also ensured 20 per cent of its humanitarian funds were allocated to women's organizations.

UNICEF provided child protection services to 21,500 children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were either formerly associated with armed groups, unaccompanied and separated children or survivors of sexual violence. This was a 42 per cent increase compared with 2022. UNICEF and partners supported 6,397 unaccompanied and separated children (2,703 girls and 3,694 boys), 37 per cent more than in 2022, but lower than the 2023 target of supporting 10,200 children. To improve the efficiency and quality of services provided to children in situations of family separation, UNICEF also initiated a pilot intervention of mobile money transfers. The pilot aimed to empower households, promote dignity and improve cost efficiency, while minimizing operational risks including delays in delivery of goods and food items.

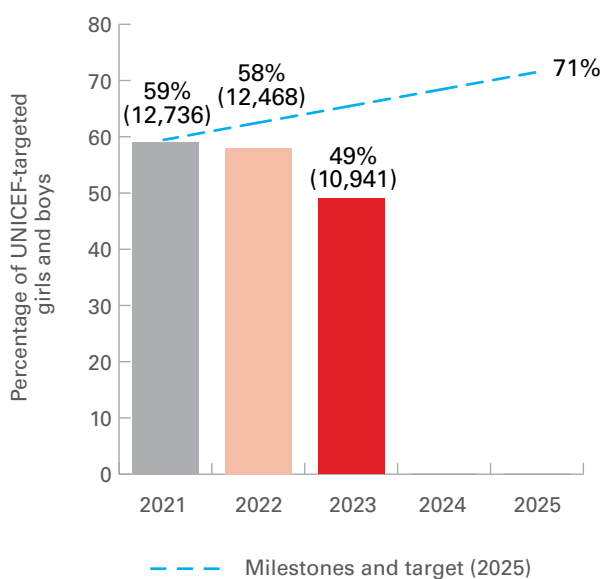
For the first time, **UNICEF discussions around activating a Level 3 scale-up were triggered specifically by high levels of gender-based violence against women and girls, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

## Child protection

The needs for protection in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reflect the vast need for child protection in humanitarian hotspots globally. Escalation in the scale and intensity of armed conflicts and violations of international law throughout 2023 had devastating consequences for children’s rights, including their right to protection. More people are forced to flee conflict, violence and climate-induced disasters: the number of forcibly displaced people reached a record high of more than 114 million in 2023, with those forcibly displaced at greater risk of violence, abuse and exploitation. Protection interventions are also an essential response to such climate-related disasters as drought. UNICEF and partners prevented and responded to protection threats by disseminating information to mitigate risks (e.g., the risk of explosive weapons); engaging with communities and governments to build resilient systems and access to reporting channels; and providing tailored services that provide care, safety, reunification and reintegration and mental health and psychosocial support, reaching 26 million globally.

In 2023 gender-based violence surged in all kinds of emergency contexts: amid the increased violence in Haiti; in conflict in the Sudan and in the Middle East region more broadly; during the global resurgence of cholera; in the aftermath of the earthquakes affecting Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic; and in many other places. In response, in 2023, UNICEF reached 23 million people globally with programmes spanning its three key gender-based violence intervention pillars: response, prevention and risk mitigation. The significant growth in the number

FIGURE 18: Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys who have exited an armed force or group and who have been provided with protection or reintegration support



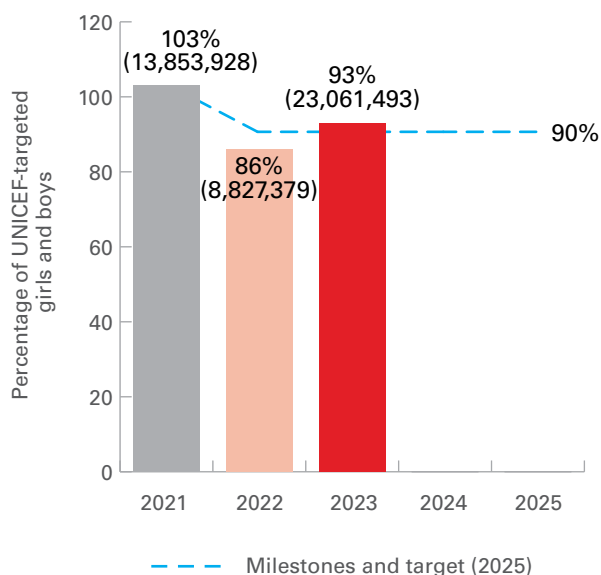
There is a **vast need for child protection in humanitarian hotspots globally**, with escalation in the scale and intensity of armed conflicts and violations of international law throughout 2023 having devastating consequences for children’s rights, including their right to protection

of people reached compared with 2017 (when under 1 million were reached) reflects UNICEF’s investment in better meeting the specific needs of women and girls in crises. In 2023, 26 per cent of UNICEF country offices implemented a minimum set of gender-based violence risk mitigation actions, up from 19 per cent in 2022. These actions included systematically consulting with women and girls, tailoring programmes to meet their specific needs and conducting gender-based violence risk analyses. Response services reached 2.2 million people with services including women and girls’ safe spaces, gender-based violence case management and health care. These services were provided via centres and other spaces; through the social service workforce where it was still operating; via mobile teams; and through integration with other programmes (e.g., health and nutrition). Access to physical safe spaces can be limited for adolescent girls and young women during humanitarian crises. To address this, UNICEF’s online safe space, which provides adolescent girls and young women with safe, culturally appropriate and accessible information and access to gender-based violence-related services, is now available in Arabic, Dari, English, Kurdish, Pashto, Spanish and Ukrainian.

In **Ethiopia**, ongoing and new crises in the country prompted the expansion of UNICEF programmes around gender-based violence to reach nearly 9.5 million people. Diverse approaches increased the reach of programmes and expanded people’s access to services: UNICEF partnered with local women-led organizations; modeled cash solutions for survivors of gender-based violence; embedded critical actions into mobile health and nutrition teams; built the capacity of the social service workforce to address gender-based violence in crises; and supported an increase in entry points for gender-based violence-related programmes through the health system.

UNICEF implemented the Children and Armed Conflict mandate, including verifying and reporting more than 30,000 grave violations affecting more than 22,000 children in 26 conflict situations globally. The establishment of grave violations monitoring mechanisms and the documentation of grave violations enabled the Secretary-General to add **Haiti** and the **Niger** as new situations of concern and provided the basis for engagement with parties to conflict in a range of contexts. In April 2023, in **Iraq** the United Nations and

FIGURE 19: Percentage of UNICEF-targeted women, girls and boys in humanitarian contexts provided with risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions to address gender-based violence through UNICEF-supported programmes



the Government signed an Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to support the reintegration of children released from armed actors, while in **Ukraine**, a prevention plan was developed and signed by the authorities in May 2023. UNICEF, as co-lead of the country task forces on monitoring and reporting grave violations, took a leading role in this work on behalf of the United Nations system. During the year, UNICEF and its partners provided protection and reintegration support to 10,941 children in 20 countries who were or were perceived to be associated with armed forces or armed groups. In **Mali**, UNICEF supported 531 children (87 girls) associated with armed forces or armed groups (out of an overall target of 700 children) with family tracing and reunification, temporary care and socioeconomic, education and reintegration assistance. In **Mozambique**, training of UNICEF partners helped to increase their skills and knowledge in identifying and caring for children directly affected by armed conflict, including more than 400 released from armed forces or groups, out of a target of 190.

Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) as a form of primary prevention benefited more than 8 million children in 19 countries in 2023. UNICEF also provided victim assistance to 5,712 children in 13 countries who experienced injuries due to these weapons. In the **State of Palestine**, 8,745 children and their caregivers (47 per cent children) received in-person EORE. After 7 October 2023, an additional 3,040 people (1,090 children) benefited

from in-person sessions in the Gaza Strip on how to protect themselves from the harm of explosive weapons, and around 400,000 people were also reached through a broader SMS campaign with basic EORE messaging. In **Myanmar**, UNICEF provided support on EORE to partners in the Mine Action Area of Responsibility, reaching more than 109,000 children; 79 child survivors received appropriate support. In **Yemen**, UNICEF scaled up the EORE programme, reaching a total of 845,094 people, including 567,220 children (46 per cent girls and 54 per cent boys) and 277,874 adults (47 per cent women and 53 per cent men) through community campaigns and EORE sessions delivered at schools. UNICEF supported the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre to mitigate the risks posed by explosive ordnance by focusing on raising awareness and fostering behavioural change among children and communities; and 133 child survivors benefited from victim assistance services.

Addressing family separation using a case management approach expanded in 2023 to respond to growing needs, and 253,628 unaccompanied and separated children (132 per cent of the planned target), mostly in displacement contexts, benefited from alternative care and family reunification interventions in 64 countries, compared with 201,040 in 2022. Some 793,141 children (80 per cent of the planned target) were reached with case management, confirming UNICEF's increasing footprint in this field. Change strategies including use of the humanitarian development nexus, system strengthening and digital transformation helped to achieve results. Indeed, strategic investments in the social service workforce, the promotion of family-based care and the Child Protection Information Management Systems (CPIMS+/Primer) proved to be instrumental in sustaining UNICEF results for children during the year. UNICEF also led the development of key inter-agency policies (child protection case management guidelines, data protection and information sharing tools, etc.) and further aligned with UNHCR on refugee-inclusive national child protection systems, data protection and information sharing. In **Ukraine**, 74,360 children (including 4,507 children with disabilities, and 49 per cent girls) received individual case management (at 60 per cent of the target, lower than initial planning figures due a strategy focused on sustained, quality case management under the Better Care programme). This included 1,900 children who had been separated returned to their biological families; and 5,100 children placed under guardianship who received individual case management from social workers for an average of three months, mitigating the risk of institutionalization.

Against the expansive reach of child protection needs in humanitarian emergencies, UNICEF continued to strengthen the capacity of its own workforce – and that of its partners – to respond. This was especially true for priority areas including case management and mental health and psychosocial support. To do this, UNICEF used innovative approaches (e.g., forecasting) as well as EQUIP, a tool for trainers and supervisors to improve the quality of their team's psychosocial and mental health helping skills.

The addition of **Haiti** as a new situation of concern within the Children and Armed Conflict Mandate reflected the deadly reality of the 3 million children requiring humanitarian assistance there in 2023. During the year, instances of violence increased significantly, including killings, kidnappings and sexual assaults by criminal groups. More than 40 per cent of Haiti's population faced acute food insecurity. At the same time, access to such essential services as safe drinking water, sanitation, health care and education was severely restricted. These compounded crises impacted distinct groups and regions in different ways: armed violence entrapped urban populations; communities outside the capital faced food insecurity and marginalization; violence displaced families; and Haitian migrants were subject to repatriation. Children were among those most vulnerable to the heightened violence.

The UNICEF Executive Director and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme made a high-profile visit to Haiti in June to raise awareness of the plight of children and families and mobilize additional support for the humanitarian response. The UNICEF Executive Director had earlier in the year been named the IASC Principal Advocate for the Humanitarian Situation in Haiti, and UNICEF had been instrumental in triggering a system-wide scale up of assistance for people affected by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the country and had declared the context a Level 3 emergency in April.

To raise awareness of children's needs in Haiti, in addition to the prominent visit to the country UNICEF sought increased media and social media attention to the crisis and undertook more engagement with key missions at United Nations headquarters in New York. The UNICEF Executive Director briefed the Security Council on the situation in Haiti in [October and held bilateral briefings with Member States](#).

Actively coordinating and responding across programmatic areas with the Government and partners, UNICEF used a localized approach, in conjunction with WFP, to access populations in gang-controlled areas. More than 406,000 children were screened for wasting (68 per cent of the target), with 41,738 admitted for treatment of severe wasting (36 per cent of the target). More than 393,000 children and women received essential health-care services in UNICEF-supported facilities (60 per cent of

To access populations in gang-controlled areas in Haiti, **UNICEF used a localized approach, in conjunction with World Food Programme**



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# July

Esther, a Haitian mother of two, arrives in a pirogue at the Lajas Blancas Migrant Temporary Reception Center in Metetí, Panama, in May 2023, after crossing the Darien jungle with her husband and children. The family left Haiti several years prior, settling in Brazil, but were then forced to make the migration journey north to the United States due to the harsh economic situation and the language barriers in Brazil.

the target); 1.1 million people had access to safe water through UNICEF assistance (74 per cent of the target); 80,991 children accessed formal and non-formal education (7 per cent of the target); and 55,881 children received psychological support (27 per cent of the target). UNICEF also delivered just under \$900,000 in humanitarian cash to nearly 4,000 families with school-enrolled children who were at risk of drop-out. Overall, UNICEF provided cash to 8,867 households, 26 per cent of the 33,840 households targeted.

## Children on the move

By July, the number of children who had died at sea in 2023 trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe was already double that of the same period in 2022.<sup>36</sup> In this region, and in a total of 42 country offices globally, UNICEF worked to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of migrant, refugee and forcibly displaced children – children on the move – and advocated for child-sensitive responses that saved children’s lives, protected their rights and strengthened their access to inclusive national systems and durable solutions.

In 2023, the number of forcibly displaced persons globally reached a record high 108 million – more than 40 per cent of them children.<sup>37</sup> More than 14.1 million of these children are refugees,<sup>38</sup> and an even larger number of children – 29.7 million<sup>39</sup> – are internally displaced. Ongoing, emerging and reignited conflicts in the Democratic Republic of

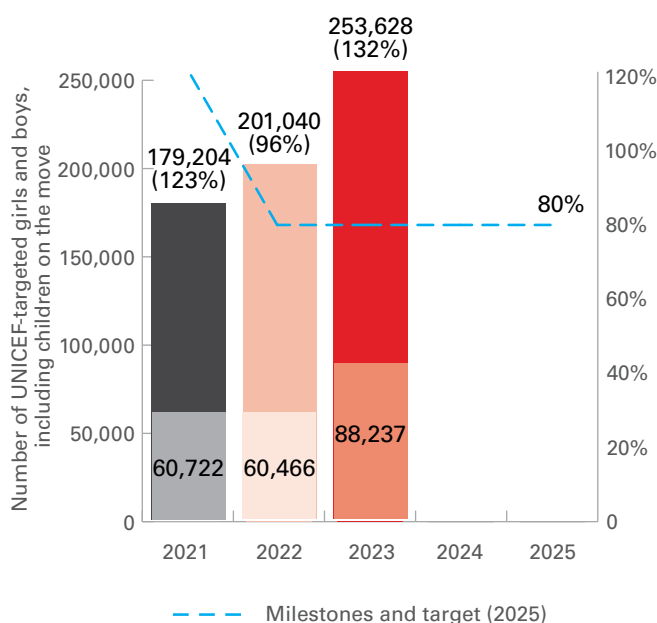
UNICEF took a leading role in negotiating access with armed non-state actors in Haiti, spearheading inter-agency efforts in key areas of the capital Port-au-Prince. In October 2023, these efforts resulted in the rescue of dozens of children trapped amid crossfire. Yet access constraints created by the deteriorating security situation, coupled with funding shortages (the appeal was only 20 per cent funded), made it difficult to reach all those targeted for assistance.

the Congo, Ethiopia, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and elsewhere have displaced millions of children.

At the same time, conflict as a driver for displacement is increasingly overlapping with climate-induced shocks. The result is erosion of livelihoods, diminished social cohesion, less access to services and higher protection risks, all impacting children in the most profound ways. UNICEF generated new data insights in 2023 on climate-related child displacements in hot spots, leading to the release of the landmark report *Children Displaced in a Changing Climate*, which identifies locations where children are likely to be most impacted in communities that are the least prepared.<sup>40</sup> This work will help UNICEF fine-tune preparedness efforts and mitigate risks before and after disasters strike.

By applying its programmatic breadth along its wide operational footprint, UNICEF was a leader in 2023 in protecting, including and empowering children on the move. With migration and displacement impacting children across sectors – health and nutrition, education, protection, social protection, WASH and others – cross-cutting programming helped to accelerate results for children. In **Jordan**, for example, 127,000 vulnerable children, adolescents and youth and their caregivers received UNICEF-supported integrated social protection services through 136 Makani centres in refugee camps and host communities. Children and families on the move have a wide array of needs, and the range of services provided at these centres reflects this: parenting sessions for caregivers, early childhood development sessions for young children, learning support services for children with low education achievements, community-based child protection interventions, skill-building training for adolescents and youth and volunteering opportunities. In the **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, UNICEF created spaces for the coordination of community engagement approaches to prevent xenophobia against children on the move and their communities, within the context of high regional migration levels. This included raising awareness among border authorities and participatory action planning with United Nations agencies, partners and community leaders. The U-Report *Uniendo Voces* platform collected data on health, education, migration and employment to improve the conditions of migrant families.

FIGURE 20: Percentage of UNICEF-targeted unaccompanied and separated girls and boys in humanitarian contexts who were provided with alternative care and/or reunified





## Conflicts and climate-induced shocks have **displaced millions of children**

Partnerships with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNHCR and other United Nations organizations helped strengthen programming, policy dialogue and advocacy to uphold the rights of children on the move. A strategic collaboration framework with IOM, for example, with its specific, actionable commitments, is enhancing results for children through more aligned sectoral programming (e.g., for the response to gender-based violence, education, health and other areas); by enhancing child protection within the IOM-led global Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster; and in a host of other areas. And partnership with the International Labour Organization in Iraq is supporting displaced and host community youth to develop employment skills that will lead to decent earning opportunities (see *Case Study 11*).

The needs of children were also kept front and centre in global migration forums, including the UN Migration Network, which provides a forum for inter-agency advocacy and capacity-building across the UN system and through direct engagement with Member States. And UNICEF made sure that the concerns of millions of children were felt at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2023 (see *page 82 for details on the many ways UNICEF promoted the voice – and rights – of children and youth at the Global Refugee Forum*). UNICEF also contributed to the Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement as a member of the Executive Committee and in other ways, while using a newly developed institutional action plan as a guidepost to promote solutions to internal displacement in 15 pilot countries. Solutions to protracted displacement crises require the engagement of development actors, humanitarian actors, governments and forcibly displaced persons themselves. Yet applying a solutions-focused lens – which means enhancing State capacity to fully integrate

children, sustainably reintegrate them or find another long-term solution to their displacement – is difficult, especially in fragile contexts where state capacity is limited.

The declaration of a Level 2 emergency response for **Chad** in July showed how the dynamism of population movements requires an agile response from UNICEF and other humanitarian actors who assist displaced and migrant populations. Around 300,000 Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict in the Sudan had arrived in eastern Chad (88 per cent of them women and children), and they urgently required humanitarian assistance. Chad was already hosting more than 600,000 refugees – and at the same time contending with an ongoing crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, the imminent threat of catastrophic floods, political instability and strained infrastructure.

The presence of UNICEF in the field through its subnational office in Abeche, pre-positioned stocks at the subnational level, strong partnerships with national and international non-governmental organizations and the support of surge staff from the UNICEF regional office helped the organization achieve results during the year. Notably UNICEF provided life-saving treatment to 371,153 children aged 6–59 months suffering from severe wasting (out of a target of 416,000), including 27,070 children in eastern Chad (14,268 girls) as part of the response to the influx of Sudanese refugees. The recovery rate for all children admitted to treatment was 95.3 per cent. Access to quality treatment for severe wasting was improved throughout the country, with 30 new outpatient nutrition units opened jointly with WFP in two priority provinces in western Chad with low treatment coverage. The nutrition response in Chad was only one prong of UNICEF's multisectoral work supporting refugee and host populations: for example, nearly half a million children in eastern Chad were among the nearly 940,000 children aged 6–59 months who were vaccinated against measles (out of a target of 1.2 million). UNICEF also supported children's access to education, access to safe water and protection services, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

**Solutions to the protracted displacement crises of the current era** require the engagement of development actors, humanitarian actors, governments and forcibly displaced persons themselves

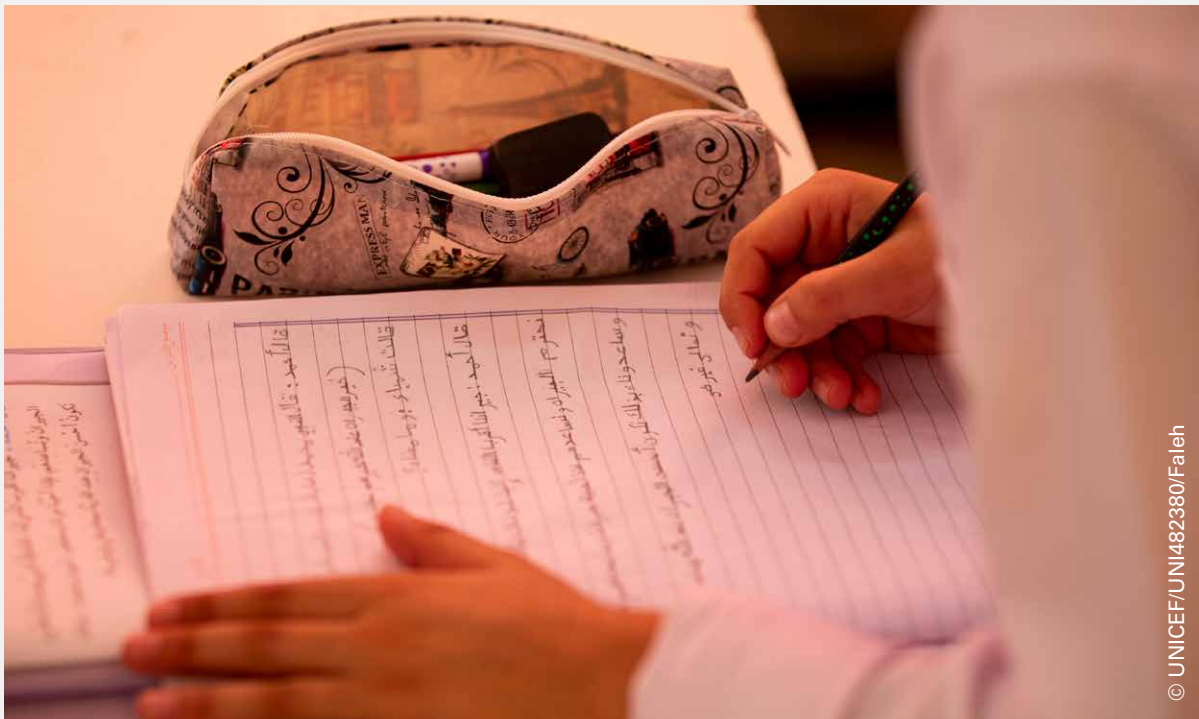
## Case Study 11: Learning-to-earning opportunities for displaced and host-community youth in Iraq provide a pathway to employment and social entrepreneurship

UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO) are collaborating in Iraq to support displaced and host community youth to develop life and entrepreneurial skills that are in demand in today's job market.

Youth aged 18–24 years enrolled in UNICEF-supported life skills and entrepreneurship training programmes in government youth centres are linked with ILO-supported employment service centres run by the governorate's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. There, they receive further training and capacity-building to enhance their employability. The collaboration is partly supported by the PROSPECTS initiative.

Youth who complete the ILO-supported skills-development sessions receive career guidance and job-matching services to connect them with potential employers. Benefits include access to advanced entrepreneurship and financial literacy training programmes and access to banks and financial institutions to get their own businesses up and running if they choose. By the end of 2023, 473 displaced and host-community youth (215 female and 258 male) had participated in the programme, with 286 participants (134 female, 152 male) securing opportunities in the labour market following training.

The programme is showing benefits for youth starting their careers – and for entire communities. For example, in one of the youth centres in Mosul, programme participants have developed their own social initiatives, including one to help younger peers learn how to read and another to serve older generations in elderly homes. Many youth have gone on to work for or launch their own service-providing businesses, ranging from electronics to designing and tailoring clothing. And, during project implementation in the cities of Duhok and Ninevah, 75 small businesses were supported through seed funding for youth starting up and or expanding their own social and business entrepreneurship projects.



A girl writes in her notebook at Swoyof Al-Haq School, in Shaiuba, Basra, Iraq, in October 2023.



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# August

A woman collects water from a UNICEF-supported climate-resilient handpump in the village of Mir Jan Mohammad, Sindh Province, Pakistan, in November 2023.

August marked one year since massive flooding impacted the lives of 33 million people in Pakistan and left 9.6 million children in need of humanitarian assistance. People who had returned to their communities post-flood had to deal with damaged houses and a lack of essential social services. They also experienced the loss of infrastructure, businesses, crops and livestock, compounded by an existing economic downturn and a surge in poverty levels (one report estimated that the flooding will push an estimated 8-9 million additional people below the poverty line<sup>41</sup>).

UNICEF continued to provide essential health, nutrition, WASH and other services to millions of children and families in flood-affected districts. This is an example

of UNICEF's long-term commitment not only to saving children's lives in the immediate aftermath of disasters, but to supporting communities as they continue to recover.

The UNICEF humanitarian response in Pakistan transitioned to early recovery and rehabilitation and reconstruction throughout 2023. For example, even while continuing targeted outreach, UNICEF worked with the Government and other partners to support reconstruction for communities' sustainable future access to health care (see *Case Study 12*). UNICEF operationalized four new field hubs in the three most affected provinces, adding to the four provincial field offices, and this allowed UNICEF staff to be closer to the districts and communities where it was supporting services.

UNICEF is committed to saving children's lives in the immediate aftermath of disasters and to **supporting communities as they continue to recover**

## Case Study 12: UNICEF sustains access to primary health care for children and families in the aftermath of Pakistan's floods

With UNICEF support, millions of children and families had access to essential and primary health care services during the aftermath of the flooding in Pakistan in 2022 and into 2023. Through community- and facility-based services, UNICEF reached nearly 6.1 million people in flood-affected districts in 2023 with primary health care services, more than double the initial target of 3.2 million people. Services were partly provided through 112 mobile health teams, which continued to operate in flood-affected districts into the first quarter of 2023.

UNICEF also collaborated with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA and WHO to create a joint rehabilitation plan for the more than 2,000 health facilities that had been partially or completely damaged.<sup>42</sup> UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 108 of these health facilities. Refurbished facilities received critical equipment and medicines, including essential supplies – 50 emergency kits, 100 midwifery kits, equipment and medicines. The number of people visiting the health facilities after refurbishment increased significantly due to the markedly increased quality of care.<sup>43</sup>

To enhance quality care and build capacity at the community level, UNICEF supported the training of Lady Health Workers as part of the launch of the government's Lady Health Workers Strategic Framework. UNICEF supported the distribution of 7,900 Lady Health Worker kits, each containing essential pharmaceuticals, equipment and other health materials, in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh provinces. Additionally, UNICEF arranged two training courses (of two days' duration), covering the health-care needs of communities during emergencies, in Hyderabad and Sukkur, Sindh Province, for 200 health-care workers.

In flood-affected districts, UNICEF supported measles vaccination for 1.9 million children (target 736,000), including more than 1 million girls. With a fivefold increase in the number of malaria cases in 2023 compared with 2022, UNICEF distributed 2 million long-lasting insecticidal nets, 50,000 malaria and dengue testing kits and antimalarial drugs for 415,000 people.

Alongside its flood response, UNICEF continued to provide a critical humanitarian health response to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. In Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces – areas neighbouring Afghanistan and with high numbers of refugees – UNICEF helped to strengthen 46 public health facilities by rehabilitating labour

rooms and WASH facilities and providing essential medicines and equipment. UNICEF also established health outreach camps within Afghan refugee villages in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Through these comprehensive interventions, UNICEF extended primary health care services to 531,626 individuals (190,042 women, 84,737 men, 149,425 girls and 107,422 boys), nearly double the target of 257,284. UNICEF support also facilitated 2,046 deliveries by trained health-care professionals.



Farida Hussain, a Lady Health Supervisor, provides essential services to Ali Shah, 18 months, while his mother Afshan cradles him in her arms in Union Council 2, Tehsil Qasimabad, Hyderabad, Sindh Province, in October 2023.



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# September

A child arrives in Syunik, Armenia, in September 2023, after fleeing his home community.

The flow of 100,000 ethnic Armenians into **Armenia** beginning on 24 September 2023, following an escalation of hostilities in the region, quickly overwhelmed the Government's capacity to respond.

UNICEF's ongoing development programme of cooperation with the Government was focused on strengthening systems, including the shock-responsiveness of the social protection and child protection systems, and this bore fruit during the emergency. Nearly all refugee children received government cash support; and more than 50 per cent of the unaccompanied and separated children who had fled to Armenia and had been previously placed in residential care were subsequently moved to family-type care. UNICEF also supported health (including mental health), nutrition, child protection and education interventions. Around 100 refugee children with disabilities underwent needs assessments and received tailored assistance, specialized services and assistive devices when needed.

In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF declared a Level 2 emergency response in September while at the same time deactivating its Level 3 response for the Horn of Africa, which had covered Ethiopia along with Kenya and Somalia. In northern Ethiopia, an ongoing volatile security situation exacerbated existing humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities and made access to people in need extremely difficult. In Tigray, more than 1 million people remained displaced. Clashes in Amhara disrupted access to basic social services and led to new population displacements and significant protection concerns. More than 20 million people countrywide experienced food insecurity. Despite significant access constraints, UNICEF reached nearly 7.5 million people –

**UNICEF's development programme of cooperation with the Government of Armenia** was focused on strengthening systems, including the shock-responsiveness of the social protection and child protection systems, and this **bore fruit during the emergency**

42 percent of its overall target of 17.8 million people. More than 3.4 million women and children (out of a target of 2.1 million) benefited from UNICEF-supported primary health care services and medical consultations via support to primary care facilities, mobile health and nutrition teams and other sustainable outreach services, and provision of emergency drug kits and other supplies. And 674,000 children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting received life-saving therapeutic treatment, around half the targeted 1.2 million children. The recovery rate of those admitted varied by region and by quarter, ranging from 52.12 per cent recovery in Amhara Region in the second quarter to 93.98 per cent in Afar Region in the same quarter.

Child protection and gender-based violence interventions reached more than 1.1 million people (including 663,807 children). UNICEF also carried out extensive WASH and education programmes.



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# October

Lama, 4, sits in front of her tent at a shelter camp in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, in November 2023. "I am here with my family sleeping in this tent," she says. "I do not know when I will be back home, but I miss sleeping on my bed, I want this situation to end very soon."



The situation in Israel and the State of Palestine captured the **horrifying dismissal of children’s rights** – including their right to life and safety – and the **disregard for international humanitarian law** that was pervasive in many places in 2023

The story of October (and after) was that of the disregard for children’s lives in **Israel** and the **State of Palestine**: children indiscriminately killed or taken as hostages in Israel on 7 October and the loss of life, threatened childhoods and deep suffering of the children of the Gaza Strip. The situation captured the horrifying dismissal of children’s rights – including their right to life and safety – and the disregard for international humanitarian law that was pervasive in many places throughout the year.

From the outset of hostilities in Israel and war in the State of Palestine, UNICEF and partners worked to try to provide life-saving support while facing profound obstacles: extreme insecurity, massive logistics encumbrances and a prohibition on critical supplies (for example, poles for tents were not allowed into the Gaza Strip). With the onset of war, UNICEF also rapidly scaled up its supply and logistics operations to support the humanitarian response – including by accelerating regional procurement (see *SPOTLIGHT on supply operations in the Gaza Strip*, p. 13).

UNICEF was able to meet some critical needs, for example ensuring the life-saving supply of safe water for 1.3 million people in the Gaza Strip each week, out of 2.1 million targeted. Pre-positioned fuel, construction supplies and water disinfection materials enabled a rapid and effective life-saving WASH response (see *Case Study 13*).

UNICEF also supported the safe evacuation of 31 babies from Al-Shifa Hospital in northern Gaza along with WHO and others in November 2023. However, without a lasting ceasefire, open borders, regular channels for humanitarian assistance to reach people and the resumption of the commercial activities of daily life – all things UNICEF advocated for, through every channel and at every level – the humanitarian response fell far short in 2023. By early 2024, every child under 5 years of age in the Gaza Strip – an estimated 335,000 children – was at risk of severe malnutrition and preventable death due to looming famine. Widespread insecurity undermined health services and the distribution of life-saving health and nutrition supplies. Only 4 per cent of the 311,200 children aged 6–59 months targeted for nutritional supplements (preventive lipid-based supplements, micronutrient supplementation, high energy biscuits) received them in 2023; while only 2 per cent of the targeted 6,813 children under 5 years of age who were severely wasted were admitted for treatment. UNICEF was able to get some critical health supplies into the Gaza Strip

and support 15 health-care facilities; overall, 513,300 people received medical supplies (out of a target of 780,000), 4,759 high-risk pregnant women benefited from medical assistance (target: 50,000) and 29,084 children and women (target: 145,432) accessed primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities. With more than 625,000 children having no access to education in the Gaza Strip with all schools closed, damaged or destroyed, UNICEF partners provided recreational activities for 50,871 children and adolescents (target 55,000) in 57 shelters in the Gaza Strip (26,908 girls and 565 children with disabilities).<sup>44</sup>

Humanitarian cash assistance reached 81,605 households in the Gaza Strip shortly after 7 October 2023, more than double the target because the strategy had shifted to providing a single round of cash to a greater number of households. About a quarter of the population of Gaza benefited from a UNICEF-supported cash transfer (see *Case Study 14*), where delivery of cash not only mitigated somewhat the extreme access challenges, but also, through use of digital innovations and virtual channels of communication, allowed UNICEF to collect data on how people’s needs were changing as the humanitarian situation evolved.

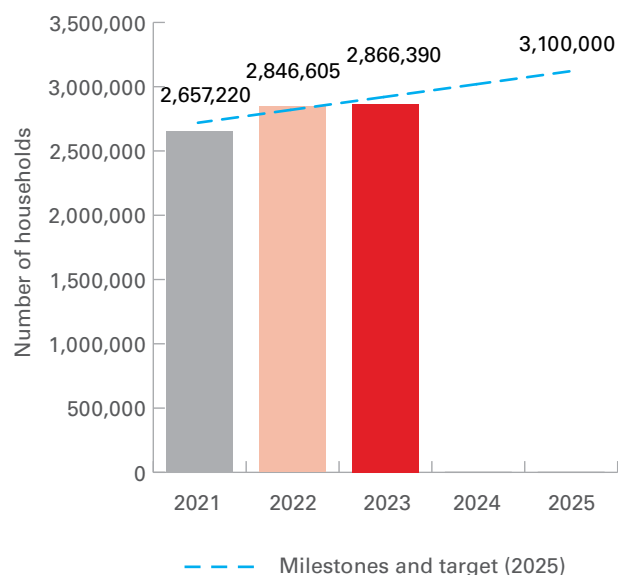
UNICEF remained a steadfast advocate for ceasefire and for uninterrupted humanitarian access to the children and families of the Gaza Strip. (See page 5 for a detailed look at critical access issues here and elsewhere during 2023; see page 7 for details on UNICEF’s stepped-up advocacy globally.)

## Humanitarian cash transfers

This agility of UNICEF’s humanitarian cash operation in the Gaza Strip was emblematic of the overall UNICEF humanitarian cash effort during the year. Globally, UNICEF leveraged its technical and operational expertise to deliver humanitarian cash in three ways: supporting governments to protect existing structures in places where social protection systems were ready and aligned with humanitarian principles; using a UNICEF direct delivery model, including the use of UNICEF’s Humanitarian Cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) in places where the social protection system was unusable; and

**Without a lasting ceasefire, open borders, regular channels for humanitarian assistance to reach people and the resumption of the commercial activities of daily life – all things UNICEF advocated for, through every channel and at every level – the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip fell far short in 2023**

FIGURE 21: Number of households reached with UNICEF-supported humanitarian cash transfers



using a mixed approach combining existing systems and direct delivery in some places. UNICEF’s use of humanitarian cash transfers addressed basic needs across sectors, including through rapid response mechanisms.

Preparedness and investments made prior to the onset of emergencies proved critical to effective use of humanitarian cash transfers in 2023, when they were deployed in 49 countries, compared with 43 in 2022, to meet the growing demand by UNICEF country offices for its use in humanitarian responses. The volume of cash transferred was \$520 million, down from \$725 million in 2022, largely due to a lower volume of cash provided in the Ukraine context in 2023 (\$46.8 million) compared with 2022 (\$290 million).

UNICEF provided in-country or remote technical support to humanitarian cash programmes in the largest emergency responses in 2023, including all Level 2 and Level 3 responses. Cash programmes often sought to further specific results in key programmatic sectors. For example, in **Somalia**, UNICEF supported an innovative voice-recognition mechanism to verify the payments made through its nutrition-sensitive humanitarian cash transfer programme. Mobile payment systems were used to verify and pay 2,324 families (out of 2,000 targeted), providing a total of \$709,000. Voice recognition introduced an additional layer of security compared with traditional methods – and eliminated the need for complex passwords or physical documentation, which could be beneficial to individuals with disability or language barriers because it simplifies

The **agility** shown in standing up the humanitarian cash programme in the Gaza Strip in October **was emblematic of the overall UNICEF humanitarian cash effort in 2023**

access. In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF supported a humanitarian cash transfer programme with a focus on enhancing child protection outcomes in humanitarian hotspots across the country. Families with women and girls of reproductive age, as well as unaccompanied and separated children, received cash top-ups jointly with their UNICEF-provided dignity kits; the programme included home visits carried out by social workers. During the year, 58,759 families were reached with close to \$13 million.

UNICEF expanded its system for direct delivery of cash – HOPE – in 2023 to include a payment module, creating a service continuum for families from registration through payment. The HOPE system was newly deployed during the year to Czechia, Haiti, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and the State of Palestine, bringing to 20 the number of countries using it. Nearly 275 programmatic and operational staff from 49 country and regional offices received training on humanitarian cash transfers.

## WASH

UNICEF’s ability to supply safe drinking water for more than a million people experiencing catastrophe in the Gaza Strip built on years of prior work there, including strong preparedness and extensive connections with local and regional partners. This formula played out in other critical contexts during the year, including Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan and Ukraine. Globally, even with high needs coming up against funding challenges, UNICEF achieved a significant portion of its humanitarian WASH targets in 2023 because it prioritized cost-efficient repairs of critical water systems.

Partnerships with governments, water utilities, non-profit organizations and other local organizations were pivotal in reaching as many people as possible with high-quality water and sanitation services. In **Lebanon**, which hosts millions of refugees and internally displaced persons and where a severe economic and financial crisis has decimated jobs and income and led to high inflation and a shortage of essential services, UNICEF delivered results to a large population by strategically collaborating with regional water establishments. The water establishments

FIGURE 22: Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate drinking water services, through UNICEF-supported programmes

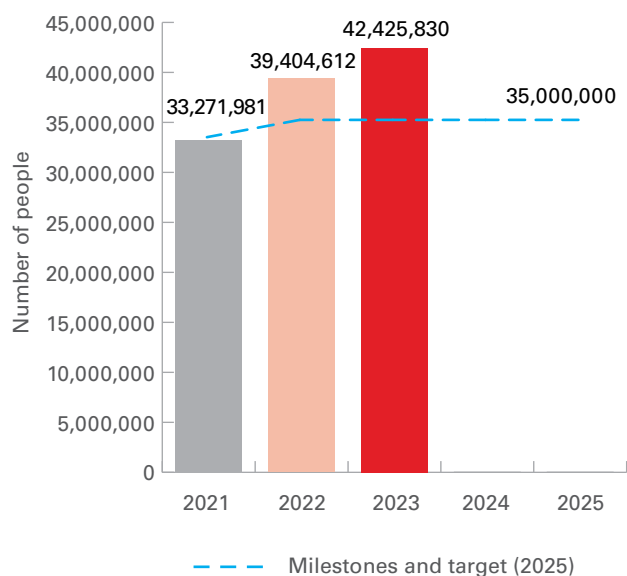
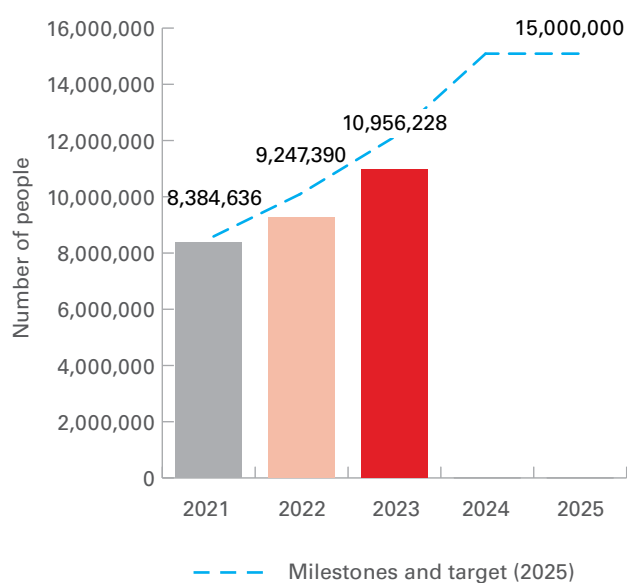


FIGURE 23: Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate sanitation services, through UNICEF-supported programmes



had been impacted by depletions of supplies, revenues and financial and human resources. UNICEF was able to reach 2,457,669 people, exceeding its target, by supporting maintenance and the provision of supplies and consumables for water establishments and by repairing more than 600 water systems.

UNICEF also prioritized inclusive WASH services. In humanitarian settings worldwide, UNICEF-supported programmes provided appropriate sanitation services to 386,090 people with disabilities, and menstrual hygiene management services to 135,613 girls and women with disabilities. In 2023, in **Somalia**, UNICEF reached 288,841 people (96 per cent of the target) with appropriate sanitation facilities through the construction of nearly 4,500 gender-segregated latrines with hand-washing facilities in displaced persons camps, schools and health facilities, 15 per cent of which were equipped with disability-friendly fixtures (e.g., ramps in schools enabling access to sanitation facilities, adjusted heights of water collection points).

The UNICEF WASH response faced several unique obstacles during the year. For example, in some places (e.g., in the Gaza Strip in the State of Palestine and in Haiti) it was a struggle to secure sites for building sanitation facilities when target locations were overcrowded with a sudden surge of displaced populations or when host governments imposed restrictions. At the same time, unless connected to functional sewage systems, temporary sanitation facilities required continuous maintenance cost for desludging. Lack of funding prevented UNICEF from providing such services at Sphere standards and in keeping with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, to cover all the existing needs. UNICEF will continue to improve sanitation situations for affected populations by strengthening assessment, dialogue with host governments, partnerships with the private sector and non-profit organizations, and by seeking out innovative approaches.

**Strong preparedness and extensive connections with local and regional partners** were critical to UNICEF WASH results in 2023

## Case Study 13: Life-saving WASH services for children in the Gaza Strip build on years of engagement

UNICEF has worked for years in the Gaza Strip, supporting the fulfilment of child rights through multisectoral programming. Key water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) achievements include constructing a large solar-powered desalination plant, rebuilding critical environmental sanitation infrastructure and supporting emergency preparedness by pre-positioning supplies.

The aftermath of 7 October 2023 was marked by the rapid deterioration of conditions on a massive scale: the war caused significant WASH infrastructure damage, the collapse of the electrical power system and severe restrictions on logistics, including access to fuel. This meant extraordinary challenges in keeping WASH services functional, with water access dropping to as low as 1.5 litres per person per day the week following the escalation.<sup>45</sup>

The UNICEF response at the outset of the crisis was possible due to pre-positioned fuel, construction material available in the local markets and pre-positioned water disinfection supplies. By April 2024, UNICEF had provided more than 1.7 million litres of fuel, allowing public and private water wells and desalination plants to produce safe drinking water and supported the operation of sewage systems, preventing an environmental crisis. Around 1.32 million people benefited, including more than 676,000 children. During the initial stage of the response, before systems could be fully supported, bottled water distribution was carried out to cover service gaps, followed by the distribution of jerrycans and dignity and hygiene kits, benefiting 313,000 people, including women and adolescent girls.

While providing sanitation interventions was highly challenging due to restrictions on the flow of supplies, shortages of construction materials, lack of space and shortages of fuel and electric power, UNICEF explored every opportunity to optimize the use of locally available resources and scale up its work on sanitation. (See page 13 for details on procurement of supplies for the UNICEF response in the Gaza Strip.)

UNICEF also coordinated the broader WASH response through its leadership of the WASH Cluster. The WASH Cluster has been critical to the response, coordinating WASH activities in the Gaza Strip and issuing clear response strategies and advocacy documents.



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A girl sits on the side of the road waiting to fill water cans, in Khan Younis City, southern Gaza Strip, in November 2023.

## Case Study 14: Humanitarian cash brings critical relief to a quarter of the population of the Gaza Strip

Despite the extreme and challenging security situation in the Gaza Strip in the aftermath of 7 October 2023, within six days UNICEF was able to leverage social protection and cash operational capacity set up prior to the crisis to begin delivering cash assistance to the most vulnerable families with children. Every fourth person in the Gaza Strip (546,588 people: 81,605 families, including 285,617 children, 16,195 people with disabilities, and 12,822 female-headed households) benefited from UNICEF's first round of cash assistance, surpassing the initial target of 35,000 households because of a strategy shift to provide one round of cash to a greater number of families, instead of two payments to a smaller number of families. Some families later received a second payment. More than 27,100 pregnant and breastfeeding women with children under age 2 received a nutrition-sensitive cash payment to cover food-related needs, and 5,079 families with children with disabilities received a disability top-up payment (reaching a total of 35,553 people). To prevent the spread of disease, UNICEF also piloted a cash incentive programme for around 700 workers to collect and dispose of solid waste at 12 temporary shelters at Al-Quds University housing around 200,000 residents.

UNICEF transferred funds for the humanitarian cash payments through mobile money systems and monitored market functionality to ensure that beneficiaries were able to use their cash. UNICEF used RapidPro to connect directly with families to understand their needs and monitor the impact of the programme. The RapidPro post-distribution monitoring data showed that about 90 per cent of children under age 2 were consuming two or fewer food groups. Dietary diversity for pregnant and breastfeeding women was also severely compromised – with 25 per cent of pregnant and breastfeeding women only consuming one food type the day before they responded to the survey questions, and nearly 65 per cent consuming only two food groups. For nearly 70 per cent of recipients, the cash transfers from UNICEF covered most of their household food needs in the previous two weeks.

UNICEF cash assistance made up 65 per cent of the cash assistance provided by the entire humanitarian community in the Gaza Strip between 7 October and the end of the year.



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Mohammad, 10, (far right) sits with his siblings in a shelter for internally displaced persons in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, in December 2023.



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# November

Students use a temporary classroom in Vanuatu, in March 2023.

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as COP28, took place between 30 November and 12 December in United Arab Emirates. UNICEF was an active participant, and along with its partners took part in discussions that helped position children and adaptive essential services as central to climate policies, action and finance. Among critical decisions, parties mandated an expert dialogue on the impacts of climate change on children and relevant policy solutions, scheduled for June 2024 – the first-ever such focus under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process.

Such forward movement, with an eye on children, was critical. Nearly half of the world's children live in countries that are extremely vulnerable to climate change impacts – floods, storms, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, climate change was one of a trifecta of factors that drove the majority of humanitarian needs in 2023 (the others are conflict and economic challenges),<sup>47</sup> and more frequent and more severe weather-related events, along with the global rise in temperatures, worsened conditions for children living in complex conflict situations.<sup>48</sup> Climate change has led to the internal displacement of around 43.1 million children globally.<sup>49</sup> And climate factors (along with the proliferation of humanitarian emergencies, generally, and suboptimal water and sanitation infrastructure in so many places) are also a critical reason for the resurgence of cholera.

## Climate resilience and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

The overall UNICEF humanitarian response and results in 2023 could not be artificially separated from the organization's life-saving response to the effects of climate change on children. A wide array of UNICEF humanitarian programmes responded to the effects of climate change on children – WASH, health care and treatment for wasting, education, social protection, holistic responses for children displaced in part due to climate change or affected by conflicts and violence connected to the changing climate. Multiple actors were integral to this response: government agencies, humanitarian organizations, local civil society organizations and donors.

Application of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach in some critical contexts shows how UNICEF is supporting children and families experiencing complex humanitarian crises and helping them build resilience (see *Case Study 15*). This work demonstrates why it is so important for children that UNICEF respond along – and connect – the continuum of humanitarian, fragile and transitional and development contexts. Children's rights are inherent, and do not depend on the kind of context they are living in.

UNICEF humanitarian response and results in 2023 **could not be artificially separated** from the organization's life-saving response to the effects of climate change on children

During 2023, UNICEF advanced several tools to better understand children's climate vulnerabilities and help mitigate the impacts of climate-related crises on children. UNICEF developed the Child Climate Risk Index – Disaster Risk Model, which brings governments and UNICEF country offices together to create risk maps combining hazard exposure and child vulnerability, which in turn enhances country office use of geospatial data for risk analysis and preparedness. In 2023, GeoSight, an open-source online analytical platform developed by UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes and Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring, was deployed in numerous emergency contexts, including Afghanistan, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, to support emergency planning and decision making. GeoSight is a tool that non-technical staff can use to access and analyse subnational geospatial data related to vulnerability, hazard exposure, early warning and context to make decisions about how to best target children in need.

In **Kenya**, where humanitarian needs have been rooted in the severe Horn of Africa drought, El Nino-enhanced floods, high refugee influx and outbreaks of cholera, measles and polio, GeoSight supports the Child Climate Risk Index – Disaster Risk Model, which is implemented in collaboration with the Government. GeoSight is now integrated with the government web site. These tools ease mainstreaming of climate change action into county development plans in Kenya to help reduce economic loss due to natural disasters and build the resilience of institutions, communities and households. UNICEF will continue to strengthen subnational government systems throughout the humanitarian response in Kenya and will link this to ongoing development programmes to build more resilient subnational government capacities.

This work with country offices and government partners shows how UNICEF is using data for better evidence-based decision making in emergency preparedness and risk-informed programming related to the climate crisis and in conflict settings. GeoSight is freely available to partners, governments and the wider public as a free global public good via open-source licensing and a source code downloadable from GitHub.

UNICEF uses anticipatory action to mitigate the impacts of crises (including climate-related crises) on children and families before those crises occur. UNICEF finalized its anticipatory action framework in August 2023 and is implementing anticipatory action in 13 countries (including

## UNICEF finalized its anticipatory action framework in August 2023 and is implementing anticipatory action in 13 countries

the first-ever cholera-related anticipatory action project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and developing projects in another 7. In **El Salvador**, given concerns regarding the potential effects of the El Niño phenomenon on food security, UNICEF submitted a proposal<sup>50</sup> to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) secretariat on anticipatory actions in the WASH and nutrition sectors. The aim – in case of activation – was to reach 1,500 children under age 5, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and vulnerable families living in high-risk areas of San Vicente department. In **Nigeria**, UNICEF anticipatory action interventions prior to massive flooding in 2022 were followed by early recovery work in the first part of 2023. Flooding had displaced around 2.4 million people, who had sought refuge in makeshift shelters, schools and health facilities, adversely affecting the continuity of basic services. From January to June 2023, UNICEF continued to support families affected by these floods, especially those whose homes were uninhabitable, while simultaneously preparing for future disasters. In the **Niger**, the use of cash as part of preparedness efforts that linked cash disbursements to climate-focused triggers (in this case, drought) was one way to mitigate the negative consequences of climate change. The Niger is one of the countries in the central Sahel region, along with **Burkina Faso** and **Mali**, whose precarious climate vulnerability has mixed with conflicts to expose children to numerous threats to their rights. Ten million children in these three countries required humanitarian assistance in 2023, with many caught up in an increasingly brutal armed conflict, as victims of intensifying military clashes or targeted by non-state armed groups. UNICEF declared a Level 2 emergency for the central Sahel countries in June 2022 (covering Burkina Faso, the Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Togo); this Level 2 response endured until 31 December 2023, with Mali designated for an ongoing Level 2 response until June 2024.

UNICEF engaged children and young people in action and advocacy to address climate change or environmental degradation in 78 countries in 2023, 28 of which worked to mainstream climate change into teacher training and learning opportunities. UNICEF identified entry points to accelerate climate action in schools through learning materials, teacher training, curricular reform and school safety strategies.

In 2023, UNICEF also implemented the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, the first child-focused climate risk financing solution to address climate change risks, and in particular the impact of cyclones, in eight at-risk countries: Bangladesh, Comoros, Fiji, Haiti, Madagascar,

Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. By December 2023, one year after the launch of the pilot, UNICEF had secured more than \$100 million in cyclone risk coverage and received \$3.98 million in insurance payouts to respond to tropical cyclone-induced emergencies that occurred in Bangladesh, Fiji, Madagascar, Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. At the same time, 30 per cent of the \$153.01 million allocated to UNICEF from the Central Emergency Response Fund went for climate-related emergencies (droughts, floods and cyclones). *See Annex 2: Financial Report for full details on financial contributions to the UNICEF humanitarian response in 2023.*

## Social protection

One of the many topics UNICEF engaged on at COP28 was adaptive social protection – social protection systems that strive to reduce poverty and vulnerability by ensuring access to essential services and providing income support for the well-being of children. UNICEF's work in social policy, including social protection, has a strong focus on fragile and humanitarian contexts, specifically on expanding the number of countries with social protection systems able to respond in time of humanitarian crisis. UNICEF also significantly scaled up advocacy and direct support to include children on the move in social protection frameworks.

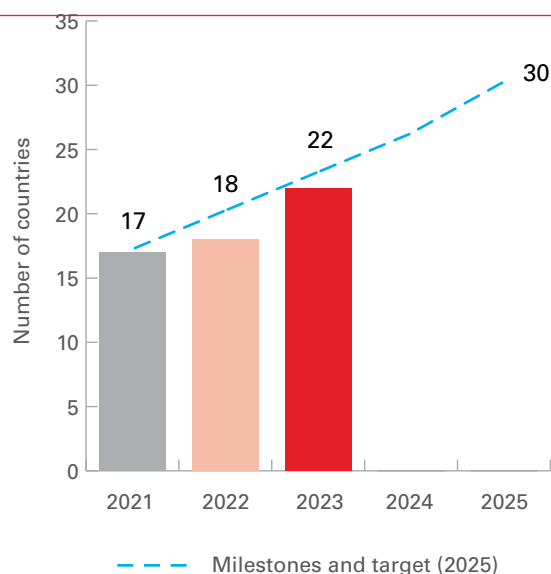
At COP28, in partnership with the World Bank, Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, UNICEF organized a high-level event to promote – successfully – inclusion of adaptive social protection in the Loss and Damages Fund. This was part of stepped-up efforts by UNICEF to influence global policies to strengthen the role of social protection in fragile and humanitarian contexts, an arm of work supported by IrishAid. UNICEF also played a critical role at the [Global Forum for Adaptive Social Protection](#) in April, with sessions focusing on the Sahel, strengthening evidence on adaptive social protection, and inclusion of social protection for displaced populations; and participated in discussions of the G20 Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction that resulted in the inclusion of shock-responsive social protection as a mechanism to achieve disaster risk reduction objectives.

UNICEF continued to build the knowledge, empathy and capacities of social protection and humanitarian practitioners. A partnership with the CashCap facility of the Norwegian Refugee Council embedded humanitarian

In 2023, UNICEF **stepped up efforts** to influence global policies to strengthen the role of social protection in fragile and humanitarian contexts



FIGURE 24: Number of countries with social protection systems, including cash transfer capacities, that are able to effectively and rapidly respond to humanitarian crises



cash experts within UNICEF social protection teams in **Barbados** and in the **Europe and Central Asia** Regional Office; accompanying this was the first-ever training in humanitarian cash transfers for governments. UNICEF designed the training with support from the United Kingdom Foreign & Commonwealth Development Office and the United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs. Trainings took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan for government participants from social protection and disaster risk management agencies in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

UNICEF also co-led the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board working group on linking humanitarian action and social protection; in this role UNICEF further built country capacities and oversaw the development of a set of common principles to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.<sup>51</sup>

This policy and capacity-building work underpinned the goal of delivering – or supporting governments to deliver – high-quality social protection programming benefiting children living through emergencies. In the **Syrian Arab Republic**, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to deliver cash assistance to 36,471 households (including 93,740 children, of whom 49 per cent are girls) within 96 hours of the earthquakes in February by providing a ‘vertical’ top-up of cash on the back of existing social

protection programmes. In **Türkiye**, UNICEF leveraged the government dataset to deliver cash transfers to 102,000 households (300,000 children) through the Children First programme. In **Zimbabwe**, a UNICEF-supported Emergency Social Cash Transfer programme targeted vulnerable households affected by diseases outbreaks, climate-related hazards including the El Niño-induced drought, the residual chronic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic shock of hyperinflation. The money helped households buy medication and food and pay school fees. In 2023, this social protection scheme brought relief to 113,790 people (36,115 children) in 25,801 households in six urban districts, with the last payment received in May; people were then transitioned to the Government’s social protection programme. The Emergency Social Cash Transfer programme extended to five rural districts and to one urban district later in the year, with a total of 8,644 households in three of those districts receiving payments starting in mid-December.

Local municipalities are often critical in connecting vulnerable people to the social protection they require when faced with an emergency. In **Brazil**, UNICEF supported a business intelligence tool for local surveillance systems and also supported development of guidelines (including operating procedures) to bolster the shock-responsiveness of municipalities’ social protection systems. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, support to local-level municipalities led to integration of shock-responsive social protection schemes into local budgets to mitigate the impacts of climate events and other hazards – showing how modest investments can lead to big impact (see *Case Study 16*).

UNICEF efforts on public finance – support to governments to ensure the sufficiency, efficiency, effectiveness, equity and transparency of public budgets to better advance finance key social services for children – reached an inflection point in 2023 with the finalization of a publication on financing social services in humanitarian contexts. At the same time, UNICEF launched a mapping of its engagements in public finance for children in fragile and humanitarian contexts, with a deeper analysis of 12 countries<sup>52</sup> expected to lead to recommendations on advancing public finance for children in complex settings.

Coordination, communication and mutual understanding between humanitarian and social protection actors has been a challenge in the implementation of shock-responsive social protection programmes in emergencies. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly articulated and what stakeholders can bring to the table is not fully explored and utilized. Capacity-building efforts are addressing this. UNICEF will scale up both initiatives in 2024, with a focus on preparedness and anticipatory action.

**Local municipalities are critical** in connecting people to the social protection they require in emergencies

## Case Study 15: Climate resilience through the humanitarian–development–peace nexus: Drought response in Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Ethiopia

Drought, exacerbated by climate change, poses significant challenges to vulnerable communities worldwide. Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Ethiopia are all prone to recurrent droughts, which have severe impacts on food security, water availability and livelihoods; these countries have faced repeated humanitarian crises due to climatic shocks, with the added risk of deteriorating social cohesion due to competition over scarce resources. With a comprehensive response required to mitigate the effects of drought, build resilience in affected communities and strengthen systems, these three countries have implemented innovative strategies to drought response with a humanitarian–development–peace approach.

In **Burkina Faso**, UNICEF initiated a 2019 study to advance the national climate change adaptation agenda, focusing on enhancing the resilience of WASH infrastructure. This led to the development in 2020 of an innovative strategy called the Summer Plan, which mobilized \$6 million for regions affected by climate change and benefited more than 100,000 individuals. In Kaya, construction of three drought-resistant deep wells was an investment in inclusive water access beyond trucking. Following this success, \$2.5 million was raised for the National Water and Sanitation Office in Kaya, Djibo and Ouahigouya, co-donated by the Danish International Development Agency and the World Bank. Advocacy efforts targeted major funders like the World Bank and European Commission, resulting in increased financing and expanded resilient WASH interventions going into 2023. Capacity-building initiatives, including training sessions for government counterparts, contributed to the institutionalization of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach within Burkina Faso’s WASH sector and the development of a framework document defining longer-term actions and accountabilities. Positive outcomes include increased consideration of potential emergencies in public projects, as well as reinforced government leadership and ownership.

**Madagascar** experienced prolonged drought in the south from 2018 to 2022, leading to acute food insecurity and malnutrition. UNICEF designated its extensive humanitarian response there a Level 2 scale-up. A subsequent evaluation of UNICEF’s response to the drought recommended stronger famine prevention strategies and emphasized the need for strengthening child protection systems. Consequently, a post-emergency plan adopted in September 2022 and implemented throughout 2023 focused on targeted humanitarian interventions alongside a transition to long-term development initiatives. UNICEF is also supporting the development of standard operating procedures for reporting and referral linked to gender-based violence; recruitment of specialists in gender-based violence response programming and in protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; and capacity-building around protection concerns for service providers and security forces. Disaster risk reduction, including early warning systems and preparedness, is also a priority to enhance community resilience. This approach was developed jointly with partners and Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator leadership; it encompasses United Nations agencies including the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, all under the coordination of the government’s local office for emergency response and with the support of key donors (the European Commission, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office). In the nutrition sector in particular, UNICEF used its convening power to mobilize partners on both policy work and programme implementation in the spirit of the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach. This includes the adaptive case management of severe wasting through a ‘surge model’ that accounts for seasonal variations, along with strengthened nutrition surveillance systems.

In **Ethiopia**, UNICEF advanced resilient programming to address drought, focusing on system strengthening, infrastructure improvements and capacity-building. Such initiatives as solarization of water systems, construction of sand dams and preventive maintenance for water points promoted sustainable access to clean water, particularly in conflict-affected regions. Integration of peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity into WASH programmes contributed to social cohesion and reduced conflict incidents. In the Gambella region, for example, an integrated host-refugee water utility scheme was set up in partnership with the Regional Water Bureau. Conflict analyses and stakeholder consultations mapped conflict dynamics among communities and even businesses along a main road, all of whom benefit from the utility. One focus was strengthening the risk management capacity of the scheme, including through development of grievance mechanisms as well as

contingency plans to address service gaps. This resulted in a decrease in the number of conflict incidents and an increase in collaborative engagements. Having the tariff for water services set by the community-led entity managing the water access points allowed for the scheme's sustainability.

The experiences in each of these countries bring critical lessons that will shape future efforts. Integration of protection interventions into the humanitarian responses to drought is essential, particularly to address the heightened risks faced by vulnerable groups. Child protection systems must be strengthened as critical to children's well-being and to an effective response. At the same time, effective drought response and resilience building requires the coordinated efforts of government agencies, humanitarian organizations and donors – buy-in is crucial to building longer-term and preventive initiatives such as better early warning systems.

It is possible to adopt holistic and sustainable solutions: investing in contextually relevant infrastructure (e.g., the solarization of water systems), promoting soft skills (including community awareness to preserve child nutrition and promoting social cohesion) and creating the capacity for inclusive community-led water management entities for tariff-setting and maintenance. This overall approach strengthens systems and lays the foundation for resilient and effective programming in times of scarcity.



People tend a vegetable garden, made possible by a water reservoir built by UNICEF, in the village of Nisoa in southwestern Madagascar, in July 2023. The reservoir is part of a UNICEF-supported water system built in 2022 to respond to the country's intensive drought; the system serves a community of 1,800 people and includes a borehole, a solar-powered water pump, a reservoir and five water points in the village. Now people from across the region come to collect water.

## Case Study 16: Climate-informed social protection in high-risk communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly exposed to climate-induced risks and shocks: floods make up more than 60 per cent of natural hazards in the country, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change climate scenario for the country predicts more frequent and more intense weather extremes in the future. However, existing legislative, policy and institutional frameworks for disaster risk reduction and climate change action are largely focused on rescue and relief. They have lacked an approach rooted in forecasting and considerations of social vulnerability.

To address this, UNICEF co-led multisectoral efforts to design a holistic crisis preparedness system connecting various socioeconomic sectors to create a comprehensive support package for citizens and government authorities in vulnerable communities. The way this strengthening of the country's shock-responsive social protection system integrated development and humanitarian actors has emerged as innovative. UNICEF spearheaded the design of a risk-informed social protection cash and service delivery mechanism for children and families, developing a model that is guided by high-quality crisis risk data and evidence, contingency actions and real-time testing through cross-sectoral field action for disaster risk management. The model includes cross-sectoral crisis coordination mechanisms.

As a result of this work, in 2023 Bosnia and Herzegovina became the first country in the Western Balkans region to institutionalize a local shock-responsive social protection model in its governmental strategic planning processes. UNICEF partnered with local governments to expand the model to 15 locations prone to flooding, covering more than 18,500 beneficiaries and children with crisis-prepared social protection cash and services. Ten localities have included a line item for the cash and services in their budgets, bringing 18 per cent in local co-funding to implement the budgeted shock-responsive social protection action plans. This plan was tested in 2023 in joint field crisis simulation exercises in partnership with the disaster management sector. One of the target localities ultimately activated its action plan in 2023 during local floods, triggering cash assistance and service referrals for more than 1,000 adults and children who were living in dire socioeconomic situations and already receiving regular social assistance.

UNICEF leveraged this operational success to institutionalize the work through development of two<sup>53</sup> shock-responsive, system-level social protection road maps. These road maps, coupled with ongoing system-level reform plans around humanitarian cash transfers, pave the way for the large-scale expansion of sustainable, fully government-led and government-funded shock-responsive social protection interventions.



Students and teachers carry out an emergency drill in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They practise ensuring the safety of everyone, including a child in a wheelchair. The teachers carry the child in a wheelchair, showcasing the power of inclusion in emergency preparedness. Inclusive crisis preparedness measures are part of multisectoral climate change and disaster preparedness efforts supported by UNICEF. The aim is to strengthen the preparedness of social welfare centres in cooperation with schools and other providers to holistically meet the needs – financial and non-financial – of children and families.



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# December

Ukrainian refugee children currently living in temporary accommodation near Záhony, Hungary play outside in February 2023.

The Global Refugee Forum took place in Geneva, Switzerland, 13–15 December. The breadth and depth of UNICEF’s global humanitarian response and its intersection with displaced and refugee populations in so many countries made UNICEF a powerful voice for child rights at the Forum.

In the lead-up to the Global Refugee Forum, UNICEF engaged 23 Member States directly and ensured prioritization of child rights across sectors. During the Forum UNICEF organized high-level events on child rights, education, health care, including mental health, economic inclusion, social protection, ending statelessness, as well as events on youth participation and on ending child immigration detention, with the aim of garnering global support for child-focused pledges that will positively impact the lives of refugee and host community children.

As a founding member of the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, for example, UNICEF and other members of the Hub embraced a renewed commitment at the Global Refugee Forum to address climate change in education in emergencies and the right of refugee, displaced and crisis-affected children to continuous, safe and quality education. UNICEF joined forces with the World Bank, Germany, UNHCR and other partners in the education multi-stakeholder pledge to accelerate the transition and inclusion of refugee children into national systems.

UNICEF placed significant emphasis on the importance of mental health and psychosocial support for refugees and displaced children through various pledges and initiatives. In support of the [MHPSS mega pledge](#) (led by Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, with more than 16 co-signatories), UNICEF submitted a pledge on mental health and psychosocial support that listed actions to accelerate interventions and services for children on the move globally.

A UNICEF Youth on the Move Fellow led an event on the need to invest in promoting and safeguarding the mental health and psychosocial well-being of children on the move within national education systems. UNICEF – in partnership with refugee education advocates, The LEGO Foundation, International Rescue Committee and Right to Play International – also spearheaded a global multistakeholder pledge on education-based mental health and psychosocial support and social and emotional learning, a pledge that was endorsed by 25 organizations. UNICEF endorsed the Global Initiative to Support Parents pledge on support for caregivers on the move; and contributed to the launch of

the Multistakeholder Pledge on Economic Inclusion and Social Protection, which aims to advance the self-reliance of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people and host communities.

UNICEF also co-led in crafting a pledge to incentivize universal health coverage, support community health-care workers and provide immunization services for migrant children.

Altogether, the Global Refugee Forum resulted in more than 1,600 pledges to improve the lives of the world’s refugees and their host communities, backed up by financial commitments totaling more than \$2.2 billion. Of the 1,600 pledges, 84 (so far) are tagged to an overarching [child rights pledge](#) promoting collaboration among stakeholders to ensure children’s non-discriminatory inclusion in and access to quality national and local systems and services.

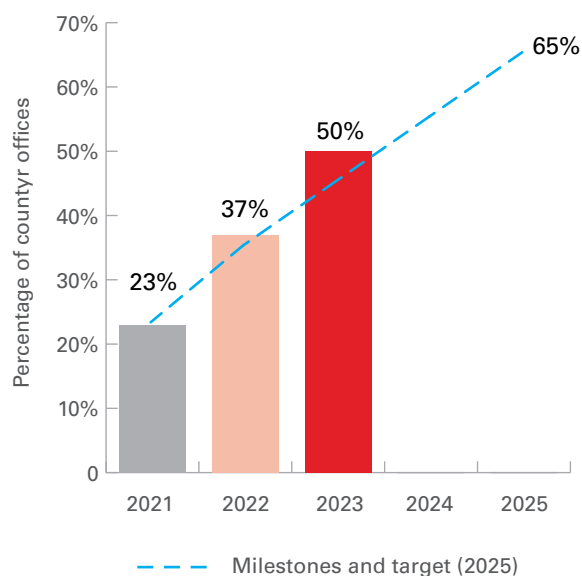
## Adolescent development and participation

The Global Refugee Forum was a pinnacle moment for youth engagement in 2023. Numerous UNICEF-linked partnerships amplifying young people’s voices came together; and the Forum featured the [Youth Leadership in Action Pledge](#), which was signed by Member States, the inter-agency [Youth Compact](#) and youth-led organizations. In partnership with refugee and migrant youth-led organizations, UNICEF’s support enabled 466 youth to engage in advocacy forums (the Global Refugee Forum and others) on climate mobility and ending immigration detention.

One critical partnership seeking to elevate the voices of young people is the PROSPECTS partnership, a global initiative with UNICEF, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ILO, UNHCR, World Bank and the International Finance Corporation. In 2023, UNICEF secured \$189.5 million in funding for a second four-year phase of the PROSPECTS partnership, a large portion of the \$211 million total that was obtained for programming addressing and connecting the humanitarian and development needs of refugee children and their host communities in eight countries. In **Kenya**, PROSPECTS funding enabled UNICEF to begin partnering with the local organization Windle International Kenya in 2020 to promote the uptake of STEM subjects and improve learning outcomes in Kakuma, Kalobeyei and Dadaab refugee camp secondary schools, enabling adolescents to overcome barriers linked to their displacement status and to their disability status or gender. By 2023, performance trends in Kakuma and Dadaab revealed significant improvement in learning outcomes across multiple subjects (mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics) in the four years since the STEM initiative had begun.<sup>54</sup> Nearly 25,500 secondary school students accessed STEM classes through this programme in 2023. In **Iraq**, also supported by PROSPECTS funding, UNICEF is

UNICEF was a powerful voice for child rights at the Global Refugee Forum

FIGURE 25: Percentage of country offices that meet organizational benchmarks on accountability to affected populations



partnering with ILO to help displaced and host community youth develop skills to compete in the job market or start their own businesses (see Case study 11).

Other innovative partnerships with and for young people are the [Global Refugee Youth Network](#), a youth refugee-led organization, and the [Youth on the Move Fellowship programme](#) which provides young people on the move access to education and opportunities by placing them in months-long paid positions within UNICEF. Fifteen youth were placed through this programme in 2023, not only gaining invaluable paid experience, but enriching UNICEF teams in the process.

Propelled by all these foundational partnerships, young people were at the forefront of key UNICEF efforts in 2023 to address societal challenges in humanitarian contexts. UNICEF continued its commitment to recognize and support young people’s capacities to drive positive change; enhance their meaningful participation in humanitarian action; and empower them to take action in their communities and beyond.

**Young people were at the forefront** of key UNICEF efforts in 2023 to address societal challenges in humanitarian contexts

Around the world, UNICEF deepened its work to ensure young people’s meaningful and safe participation across the preparedness, response, recovery and peacebuilding spectrum. In **Viet Nam**, for example, UNICEF partnered with more than 605,000 adolescents on the climate change and disaster risk reduction campaign ‘Early Action for a Safe, Clean, and Green ASEAN for Every Child’. The UNICEF flagship tool for emergencies, the [Adolescent Kit](#), supported nearly 740,000 adolescents globally in 2023, with 6,400 partners and youth volunteers trained to use it. In the **Sudan**, the Adolescent Kit equipped more than 70,300 adolescents with skills and information through adolescent-led clubs, supporting the UNICEF humanitarian response in education. In **Türkiye**, UNICEF engaged 5,000 youth volunteers and in the **Syrian Arab Republic** 6,125 youth volunteers in the wake of the earthquakes (see Case Study 5).

The number of recent and large-scale humanitarian responses in 2023 – such as those in Türkiye, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan and the State of Palestine – highlighted the lack of a global institutional mechanism for engaging youth, such as a youth cluster or sector within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee or in other frameworks. Such a mechanism could support safe, systematic and meaningful engagement of young people in humanitarian responses at all phases of the response. And adolescent/youth specialist surge capacity is limited, as is funding to support such surge efforts. UNICEF will continue to advocate for such a specialized cluster/sector to be able to expand participation – and results – for adolescents and young people living through emergencies on the cusp of adulthood.

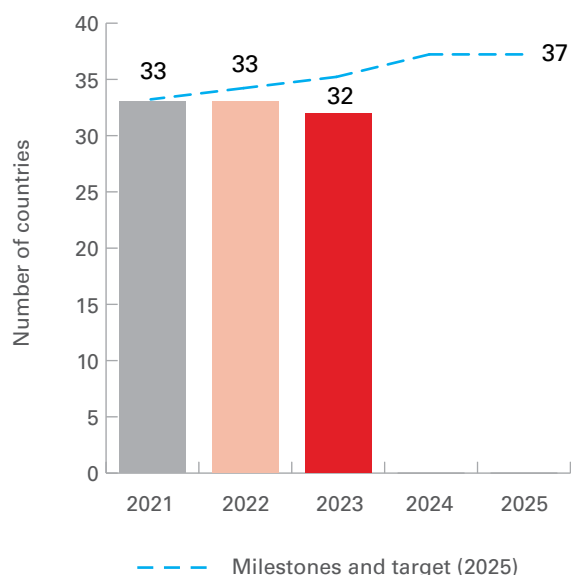
## HIV

UNICEF marked World AIDS day on December 1 by calling attention to the disproportionate burden of the HIV epidemic on adolescent girls.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the year, UNICEF HIV programming worked for impact and efficiency in primary health care, including by supporting community systems; sought to strengthen access to quality HIV treatment, care, prevention and sexual and reproductive health services; and to ensure that programmes, especially for adolescent girls, had additional components to enhance their health and well-being.

Humanitarian crises in specific countries made it more difficult to sustain life-saving HIV responses in those places, and UNICEF’s close work with governments and community-based and community-led cadres of workers was essential to ensure continuity of essential health and HIV services when other crises hit.

In 2023, climate-related events occurred in a number of priority HIV countries, challenging fragile health systems. In **Zimbabwe**, UNICEF partnered with the National AIDS Council and the Ministry of Health to ensure, during the country’s cholera outbreak, continuity of services for prevention of vertical HIV transmission and for HIV

FIGURE 26: Number of countries in which UNICEF is supporting combination HIV-prevention interventions, including pre-exposure prophylaxis, targeting adolescent girls and young women and/or adolescent and young key populations\*



\* This indicator covers both development and humanitarian settings

treatment at primary health care facilities for nearly 44,000 pregnant and lactating women, children and adolescents living with HIV, out of a targeted 50,000 (see Case Study 7). In drought- and flood-affected **Kenya**, UNICEF supported drought response HIV coordination meetings for the counties of Wajir, Mandera and Garissa. Every individual living with HIV was attached to a specific facility where they received their HIV medications, but the constant drought-related migration of families disrupted access to these facilities. The abrupt movement of the families living with HIV made adherence to anti-retroviral therapy (ART) challenging because of social stigma that prevented people from seeking HIV services at unfamiliar health facilities. At the same time, lack of adequate food and water worsened the side effects of ART drugs, and occasional insecurity in some parts of the drought-affected counties hampered the drought response due to the difficulties in access. County meetings led to the development of a catch-up plan to prevent vertical transmission and to support children and adolescents living with HIV. In Wajir and Samburu counties, both affected by drought, around 100 community health care workers and mother mentors received training on new prevention and treatment guidelines to eliminate vertical transmission of HIV and on provision of new paediatric-friendly ARV formulations, resulting in more than 1,700 children placed on more efficacious regimens. These same individuals were also trained in ARV defaulter tracing, HIV stigma reduction, community-facility referral

and linkage procedures, family index testing and HIV health talks. Greater capacity on defaulter tracing resulted in 125 women and children, who were previously defaulting or not adhering to their treatment schedule, brought back to HIV care and linked to 'treatment buddies'.

In Cabo del Gado, **Mozambique**, UNICEF partnered with the Government and other partners to expand coverage of and access to health, HIV and nutrition services in remote and hard-to-reach areas through implementation of integrated mobile brigades. These brigades reached 33,515 children under age 5 and 5,098 pregnant and breastfeeding women. Mobile brigades in other areas of Mozambique extended health and nutrition services to hard-to-reach children and families in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Freddy in March. The cyclone and the cholera epidemic together strained health services in **Malawi**. To support uptake and continuity of HIV services there, UNICEF linked HIV-exposed children to early infant diagnosis and worked with community health workers to bring more than 3,800 defaulters back into treatment by providing vital information on accessing interventions for HIV prevention, care and treatment services in the emergency-affected districts. To improve preventive and curative practices related to HIV care, 20,000 adolescents received reproductive health information, some of them reached by trained HIV-positive adolescents.

War continued to affect HIV responses in **Ukraine** in 2023. As the principal recipient under an emergency memorandum of understanding with the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to support the Public Health Centre of Ukraine, UNICEF provided critical HIV commodities (including diagnostics), delivering 700 rapid tests for HIV, hepatitis B and C. In the second half of 2023, UNICEF and the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs embarked on an initiative in **Belarus** to promote the social integration and support of socially vulnerable adolescents, including refugee children from Ukraine living with HIV. The initiative facilitated 55 offline events and cultivated vibrant online communities, engaging more than 2,755 participants. Training seminars resulted in the formation of two peer consultant teams made up of 60 refugees, adolescents living with HIV and volunteers. These teams gained skills for peer counselling and volunteerism in their communities, leading to the development and implementation of initiatives promoting healthy lifestyles and psychological well-being.

Community-led organizations were the backbone of effective HIV responses in 2023 and are one demonstration that public health programmes – like other programmes – are more effective when they are driven by the

**Community-led organizations were the backbone** of effective HIV responses in 2023



The COVAX Facility, in which **UNICEF was a critical player**, wound down at the end of 2023 – after **averting an estimated 2.7 million deaths** in the countries participating in the programme

needs, knowledge and active involvement of affected communities. Drivers of results throughout the AIDS epidemic, local organizations were also critical during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today they are increasing the reach and quality of HIV services, helping to highlight inefficiencies in programmes, strengthening accountability and pioneering new approaches to protecting people's health.

Yet the instability and uncertainty across much of the world in the past few years has had a worrying impact on the financial and human resources available for HIV responses. Fiscal constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic and poor economic outlooks (at least in the short term) have affected governments' ability and willingness to increase or even sustain domestic funding for HIV responses, including in places where the inequities that children experience are the greatest. This has made it difficult to reach the global AIDS target to ensure 90 per cent of people in humanitarian settings have access to integrated HIV services.<sup>56</sup>

## Inflection point in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Although the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact governments, communities, families and children, the end of 2023 marked a turning point for the UNICEF COVID-19 response. Two key partnerships UNICEF had played a leading role in drew to a close. The first, the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership, had contributed to a ninefold increase in coverage of COVID vaccines in 34 countries. And the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, in which UNICEF was a critical player, wound down on 31 December 2023. The Facility had delivered nearly 2 billion doses of COVID vaccines to 146 economies since 2021, averting an estimated 2.7 million deaths in the advance market commitment lower-income countries participating in the programme.<sup>57</sup>

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Griffiths, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, in United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Annual Report 2023, OCHA, New York, 5 June 2024.
- <sup>2</sup> Not included in the report are many of the behind-the-scenes operational accomplishments and challenges – for example, in information technology, administration management and other areas – that, while critical to humanitarian results and an important component of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, are largely captured in the Office of Emergency Programmes management report (summary narrative), which is available to the public, or in other global reporting products. See: UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes, 2023 End of Year Results Summary Extended Narrative, March 2024, available at [www.unicef.org/media/155721/file/Office-of-Emergency-Programmes-2023-COAR.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/155721/file/Office-of-Emergency-Programmes-2023-COAR.pdf). See also: UNICEF, 'Update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse' (E/ICEF/2024/14), UNICEF, New York, 12 April 2024, available at [www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21661/file/2024-14-Update-on-PSEA-EN-ODS.PDF](http://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21661/file/2024-14-Update-on-PSEA-EN-ODS.PDF); UNICEF, 'Annual update on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025' (E/ICEF/2024/17), UNICEF, New York, 10 May 2024, available at [www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21446/file/2024-17-GAP-Annual-report-EN-ODS.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21446/file/2024-17-GAP-Annual-report-EN-ODS.pdf); and UNICEF, 'Report on the midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2023 and the annual report for 2023 of the Executive Director of UNICEF' (E/ICEF/2024/11), UNICEF, New York, 16 April 2024, available at [www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/22071/file/2024-11-ED-annual-report-EN-ODS.PDF](http://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/22071/file/2024-11-ED-annual-report-EN-ODS.PDF).
- <sup>3</sup> OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2023: October update – snapshot as of 31 October 2023, 9 November 2023, p. 2; and OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2022: October update – snapshot as of 31 October 2022, 7 November 2022, p. 2.
- <sup>4</sup> OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, p. 4.
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/78/842 S/2024/384, United Nations, New York, 3 June 2024.
- <sup>6</sup> State of Palestine, Ministry of Health, Minister's Office, Daily report, 4 January 2024.
- <sup>7</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Gaza Strip: IPC Acute Food Insecurity – November 2023-February 2024, Rome, 21 December 2023.
- <sup>8</sup> Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, Democratic Republic of the Congo, September 2023.
- <sup>9</sup> ACAPS, Humanitarian access: A snapshot of the most challenging contexts, December 2023, available at [www.acaps.org/en/thematics/all-topics/humanitarian-access](http://www.acaps.org/en/thematics/all-topics/humanitarian-access), accessed on 14 March 2024.
- <sup>10</sup> OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024*.
- <sup>11</sup> OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024*.
- <sup>12</sup> The six briefings included thematic debates on children and armed conflict and protecting water from attack; two briefings on the humanitarian situation in Israel and the State of Palestine; and briefings on Haiti and Afghanistan.
- <sup>13</sup> These included the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, the State of Palestine (including related cross-border operations), the Sudan and earthquake responses in northwest Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye. The response to the Horn of Africa drought crisis was a Level 3 emergency until September 2023, with Ethiopia (the northern Ethiopia crisis) moving to Level 2 after that date. Emergency responses in Afghanistan and Ukraine moved from Level 3 to Level 2 during the year. The 30-country cholera/polio response enacted adapted Level 3 procedures from 26 March until 26 September. Other Level 2 crisis occurred in eastern Chad, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan, the Sahel region, Uganda and Yemen.
- <sup>14</sup> The Gaza Strip, Al-Arish and Cairo in Egypt and Amman, Jordan.
- <sup>15</sup> Containing diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B and haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine.
- <sup>16</sup> The Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility has Global, Arabic, French and Spanish Help Desks.

- <sup>17</sup> Local civil society organizations include academic institutions, community-based organizations, national non-governmental organizations and Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies.
- <sup>18</sup> UNICEF, 'Update on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse' (E/ICEF/2024/14), UNICEF, New York, 12 April 2024, available at <[www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21661/file/2024-14-Update-on-PSEA-EN-ODS.PDF](https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/21661/file/2024-14-Update-on-PSEA-EN-ODS.PDF)>.
- <sup>19</sup> Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Slovakia, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.
- <sup>20</sup> Development Initiatives, *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2023*, Development Initiatives, Bristol, Nairobi and Washington, DC, June 2023, available at <<https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2023>>.
- <sup>21</sup> Laaha provides information to women and girls on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence as well as where and how to access services when needed. It is the first-ever platform designed by and for women and girls in humanitarian and development settings to address gender-based violence.
- <sup>22</sup> The National Youth Volunteer Platform was established with the Ministry of Youth and Sports prior to the earthquake. This platform was part of a social cohesion platform and evolved to serve to all young engagement programmes. It was further used in the early earthquake response to quickly mobilize of a trained cadre of youth volunteers and is an excellent example of emergency preparedness.
- <sup>23</sup> The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation is a package of tools, activities and supplies that was developed through human-centred design processes. Flexible and adaptable, the Kit is being used in a range of programming contexts – during preparedness stages, acute emergencies and protracted crises, and in vulnerable development contexts.
- <sup>24</sup> The Syria Need Assessment Tool (also called SNAT) was developed and rolled out by an inter-sector coordination group to (primarily) determine the needs of those displaced to hosting arrangements.
- <sup>25</sup> UNICEF and partners launched a Young Participatory Research team in the Middle East and North Africa (particularly in Jordan, the State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic) to generate evidence with and for young people, empower them to lead community-based research and support them in becoming change markers and advocates on issues of concern to them.
- <sup>26</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), Multi-country outbreak of cholera, external situation report no. 11, WHO, 12 February 2024 available at [www.who.int/publications/m/item/multi-country-outbreak-of-cholera-external-situation-report-11-12-february-2024](http://www.who.int/publications/m/item/multi-country-outbreak-of-cholera-external-situation-report-11-12-february-2024).
- <sup>27</sup> Education Cannot Wait, *Crisis-affected children and adolescents in need of education support: New global estimates and thematic deep dives*, ECW, New York, 2023, available at <[www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/crisis-affected-children-and-adolescents-in-need-education-support-new-global](http://www.educationcannotwait.org/resource-library/crisis-affected-children-and-adolescents-in-need-education-support-new-global)>, accessed 21 March 2024.
- <sup>28</sup> UNICEF, Sudan Humanitarian Situation Report No. 15, 31 January 2024.
- <sup>29</sup> UNICEF is utilizing the EiE-GenKit (United Nations Girls Education Initiative, Education Cannot Wait and Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2021) to ensure that girls and boys equally enjoy the protection and learning outcomes that its learning and skills development programme aims to provide. This includes providing gender-responsive instruction and learning processes for implementing partners, a gender audit of the e-learning curriculum, setting-up adolescent girls' clubs and gender-responsive support for teachers and other education personnel.
- <sup>30</sup> UNICEF, '[Global Report on Food Crises: Number of people facing acute food insecurity rose to 258 million in 58 countries in 2022](#)', press release, 3 May 2023; UNICEF, '[UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell visits Kenya to meet children affected by the Horn of Africa drought and climate crisis](#)', press release, 3 May 2023; UNICEF, '[Armed violence plunging children into severe acute malnutrition in Haiti](#)', press release, 11 May 2023; UNICEF, '[Over half a million children at risk of malnutrition in Malawi](#)', press release, 19 May 2023; UNICEF, '[Horn of Africa: Over 7 million children under the age of 5 remain malnourished across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia](#)', press release, 22 May 2023; UNICEF, '[Conflict and economic crisis drive food insecurity and malnutrition in Yemen](#)', press release, 25 May 2023.
- <sup>31</sup> WHO defines stunting as "the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. Children are defined as stunted if their height-for-age is more than two standard deviations below the WHO Child Growth Standards median." See [Stunting in a nutshell \(who.int\)](http://www.who.int).
- <sup>32</sup> The Global Report on Food Crises 2023 estimates nearly 282 million people in 59 countries and territories experienced high levels of acute hunger in 2023 – a worldwide increase of 24 million compared with previous year. See: Food Security Information Network and Global Network Against Food Crises, *Global Report on Food Crises 2023*, Rome, 2023, available at <[www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2023](http://www.wfp.org/publications/global-report-food-crises-2023)>.

- <sup>33</sup> Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria and South Sudan.
- <sup>34</sup> Médecins Sans Frontières, “Alarming numbers of sexual violence victims in camps around Goma”, press release, Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 9 May 2023, available at <[www.msf.org/drc-alarming-numbers-sexual-violence-victims-camps-around-goma](http://www.msf.org/drc-alarming-numbers-sexual-violence-victims-camps-around-goma)>.
- <sup>35</sup> Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, Democratic Republic of the Congo, September 2023.
- <sup>36</sup> UNICEF, “Children drowning in the world’s inaction”, UNICEF Geneva Palais briefing note on the increase in children taking the Central Mediterranean Sea migration route, Palais briefing note, Geneva, 14 July 2023.
- <sup>37</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022, UNHCR, Geneva, 2023, p. 2.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 17.
- <sup>39</sup> International Data Alliance for Children on the Move, ‘On the move, In the know’, newsletter, Issue no. 2, August 2023, available at [https://mcusercontent.com/7088c711be3d9d4f8b0897886/files/ce26332d-5944-fb39-decf-26f9d7aeace1/DAC\\_newsletter.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/7088c711be3d9d4f8b0897886/files/ce26332d-5944-fb39-decf-26f9d7aeace1/DAC_newsletter.pdf).
- <sup>40</sup> UNICEF, *Children Displaced in a Changing Climate*, UNICEF, New York, 2023.
- <sup>41</sup> The post-disaster needs assessment human impact assessment highlighted that the national poverty rate may increase by 3.7 to 4.0 percentage points, potentially pushing between 8.4 and 9.1 million more people below the poverty line. See: Government of Pakistan Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-disaster needs assessment – Main report, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, October 2022.
- <sup>42</sup> Government of Pakistan Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-disaster needs assessment – Main report, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, October 2022.
- <sup>43</sup> Based on the daily patient records kept by the facilities.
- <sup>44</sup> A total of 60,505 children were reached in 2023 with recreational activities in the Gaza Strip, with 50,871 of these children reached after October 7.
- <sup>45</sup> The Sphere standard is 15 litres per person per day. The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action specify a minimum of 7.5 litres per person per day at the initial stages of a response.
- <sup>46</sup> UNICEF, *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children’s Climate Risk Index*, UNICEF, New York, 2021, p. 4.
- <sup>47</sup> OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, p. 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, ‘Climate Insecurity Impacts on Children and Armed Conflict’, A Discussion Paper, November 2023, p. 7.
- <sup>49</sup> UNICEF, *Children Displaced in a Changing Climate*, UNICEF, New York, 2023, p. 12.
- <sup>50</sup> In coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme and the Pan American Health Organization.
- <sup>51</sup> Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection, Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection, 2023, available at <https://socialprotection.org/connect/stakeholders/spiac-b-working-group-linking-humanitarian-cash-assistance-and-social>.
- <sup>52</sup> Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Honduras, Lebanon, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Ukraine and Yemen.
- <sup>53</sup> One each for Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, two of the three administrative units that make up Bosnia and Herzegovina. The road maps envision systemic integration of shock-responsive social protection in all local communities, coupled with legal, policy and finance solutions at higher government levels.
- <sup>54</sup> Kingdom of the Netherlands and UNICEF, PROSPECTS-powered solutions: Testing and scaling new approaches to forced displacement, UNICEF, April 2024, p. 38.
- <sup>55</sup> UNICEF, ‘Despite progress, adolescent girls continue to bear the brunt of the HIV epidemic, with 98,000 new infections in 2022’, press release, New York, 1 December 2023.
- <sup>56</sup> Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), 2023.
- <sup>57</sup> WHO, COVID-19 vaccinations shift to regular vaccinations as COVAX draws to a close, statement, WHO, Geneva/New York/Oslo, 19 December 2023.

# Annex 1: Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding 2023



## Türkiye

A young girl stands near a temporary shelter in Hatay, Türkiye, in May 2023, nearly three months after devastating earthquakes hit southeastern Türkiye. UNICEF and its partners responded to the earthquakes with critical supplies, life-saving surgeries and trauma care, hygiene kits, immunizations, safe drinking water and sanitation services, access to formal and non-formal education and humanitarian cash provided directly to families in greatest need.

# ABOUT GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN THEMATIC FUNDING

To fulfil its mission of reaching every child, UNICEF relies on [voluntary contributions](#), using these resources to achieve the greatest impact for children. Sufficient levels of quality funding enable UNICEF to do three critical things: be **fast**, because we can release funds in a timely manner and respond quickly to the needs of children; be **fair**, because we can meet the needs of children in hard-to-reach areas and in underfunded emergencies, whether a crisis is in the spotlight or not; and be **prepared**, because we can invest in preparedness that enables early action for an initial life-saving response.

After [core resources for results](#) (regular resources), [global humanitarian thematic funding \(GHTF\)](#) is the most flexible form of funding for UNICEF's humanitarian action. Designed to save lives and alleviate suffering before, during and after emergencies, GHTF is a highly effective way to contribute to maximum positive impact for children, not just in one emergency, but all over the world.

## WHY INVEST IN GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN THEMATIC FUNDING?

The secret to the effectiveness of GHTF is the flexibility it provides to UNICEF, because when dealing with emergencies, flexibility is everything. Partners can be assured that their funds are put to work quickly, reaching children when their needs are most urgent. Global humanitarian thematic funding can be one of the best mechanisms to save children's lives, protect children's rights and secure a better, healthier and safer future for children and their communities, because it allows UNICEF and its partners to:



**Provide immediate life-saving assistance** to the children most in need.



**Speedily release funds** for sudden-onset emergencies within 24 hours, as needed.



**Respond equitably based on needs** by reaching children in smaller/forgotten crises, in underfunded sectors and in multi-country and subregional crises.



**React faster** in underfunded/forgotten emergencies to flexibly address immediate or ongoing critical needs when it is difficult to attract international attention and funding.



**Invest in preparedness** for early response through better risk analysis and the identification of high-return actions, which saves lives and makes emergency response faster and more efficient. Such investment also facilitates stronger and more strategic UNICEF programming.



**Ensure a more cost-effective response** because every \$1 invested in preparedness reduces response cost by \$2, and investment in preparedness can make responses faster by an average of 14 days.



**Save transaction costs** associated with managing individual and earmarked contribution agreements. Because it uses harmonized and strategic reporting, GHTF reduces transaction costs, resulting in a lower cost recovery rate, so that more funding is programmed.



**Ensure a higher quality response** by allowing for strategic and efficient allocation based on clear criteria and priorities. Through quality assurance processes along with robust technical assistance, UNICEF can ensure timely and high-quality results for the most vulnerable children.

Contributions to GHTF are an investment in UNICEF's humanitarian mandate, through an equity lens. This investment is directly used each month by UNICEF to support key child-focused interventions throughout the humanitarian programme cycle, including anticipatory action and preparedness, response and recovery.

# GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN THEMATIC FUNDING ALLOCATIONS

Allocations of global humanitarian thematic funding reached \$119.2 million in 2023, nearly double the amount allocated in 2022 (\$63.7 million) due to higher demand for flexible humanitarian funding that could cover funding critical gaps and kick-start humanitarian responses. Of the amount allocated, 80 per cent supported humanitarian response led by country or regional offices, while 20 per cent supported global coordination and technical support efforts.

Global humanitarian thematic funding enables UNICEF to react quickly – which is so crucial for saving children’s lives and meeting their urgent needs in times of crisis. The flexibility of GHTF can make all the difference for children in the first days and weeks of an emergency. For protracted or chronically underfunded emergencies, when international attention and resources are difficult to attract, GHTF allocations are often a last resort, providing life-saving assistance to the children who are most in need. Because of this, GHTF allocations are a tool for a more equitable humanitarian response.

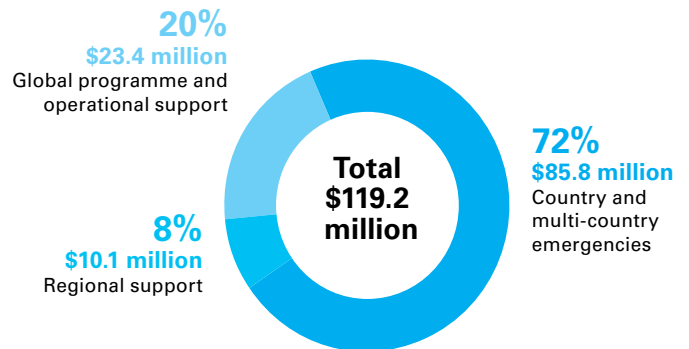
Through better risk analysis and by identifying high-return actions, preparedness saves lives and makes the humanitarian response faster and more efficient. Thanks to GHTF, UNICEF can invest in preparedness for early response (6 per cent of all GHTF allocations were for preparedness activities). And the flexibility of GHTF allows UNICEF to ensure a principled and equitable response that enables adaptation based on emerging needs. In 2023, 76 country offices and seven regional offices received GHTF allocations. The top ten recipients of GHTF received 37 per cent of all GHTF that was allocated: these were, starting with highest allocation amount, country offices in the Sudan, the State of Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Haiti, Myanmar, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh and Cameroon. The regions receiving the largest total allocations were Middle East and North Africa (26 per cent), West and Central Africa (13 per cent) and Eastern and Southern Africa (12 per cent).

More than 10 per cent of GHTF allocations (\$12.5 million) aided the response to emergencies caused by natural disasters, including preparedness activities designed to mitigate the impact of these disasters on children’s lives and childhoods. Half of these allocations were for humanitarian responses to the earthquakes – a total of \$6.2 million was allocated to offices to support life-saving responses for children affected by earthquakes in Afghanistan, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Nepal, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye.

Responses to public health emergencies stemming from outbreaks of cholera, measles, typhoid and dengue fever continued to be a priority in 2023. Around \$7 million in GHTF – or 6 per cent of all GHTF allocations – was allocated to support the response to these public health threats and mitigate their impact on children’s lives.

Responses to eight protracted emergencies were among the top 10 recipients of GHTF in 2023, together receiving \$46.7 million, or 39 per cent of the total. In several of these crises – in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, the Sudan and the State of Palestine – children experienced a rapid escalation of their humanitarian needs in 2023, and GHTF was able to fill these sudden needs against the backdrop of longstanding humanitarian crisis.

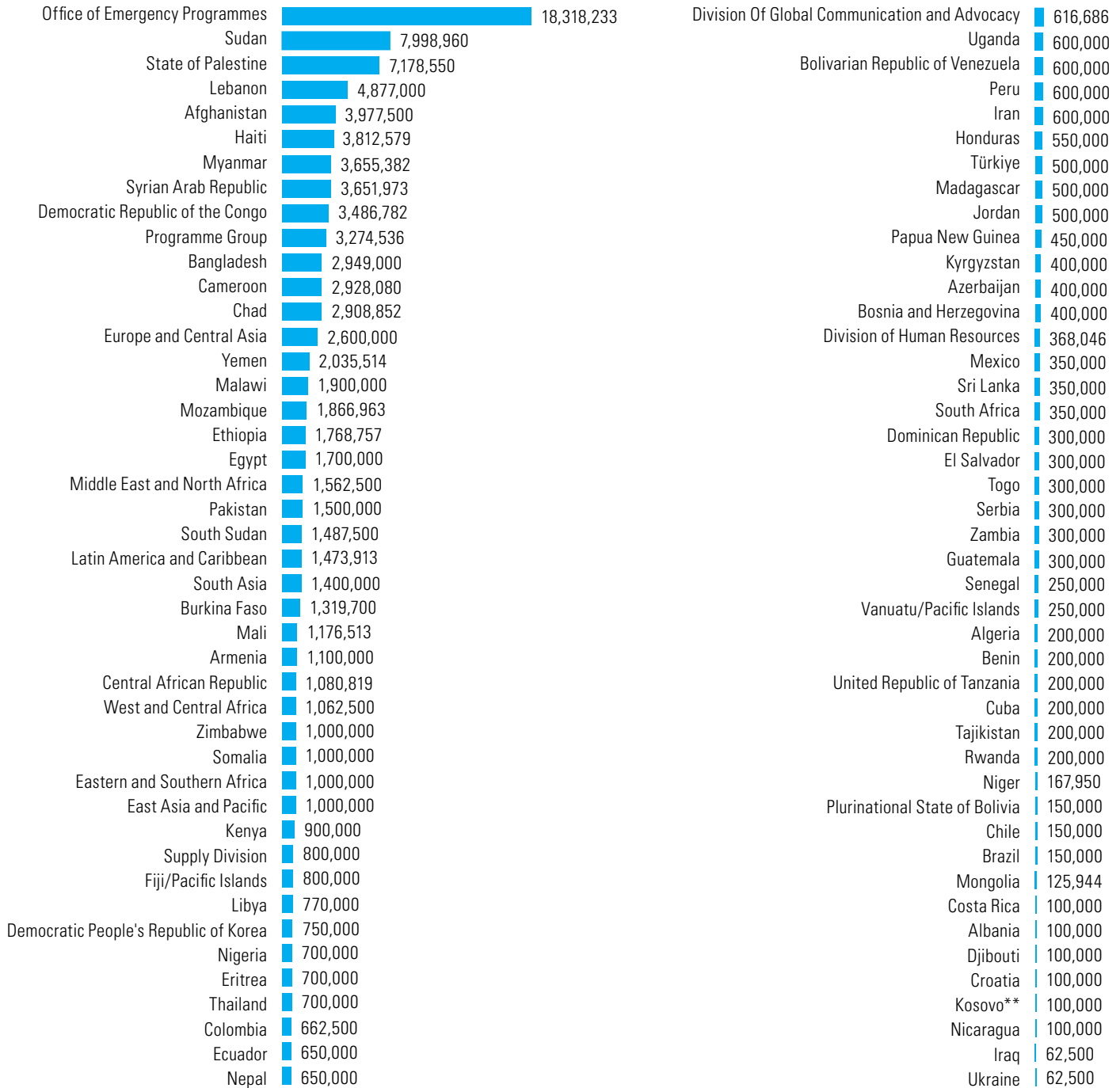
**Figure A1-1: Breakdown of global humanitarian thematic funding allocations (programmable amount), 2023**  
(in United States dollars)



## South Sudan

A young girl smiles as she arrives at a transit site in Roriak, Unity State, South Sudan, in May 2023, after fleeing conflict in the Sudan. Following the outbreak of conflict in the Sudan in April 2023, global humanitarian thematic funding was critical to the scale-up of UNICEF initiatives in South Sudan to immediately meet the needs of Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees.

**Figure A1-2: Global humanitarian thematic funding allocations, 2023 (in United States dollars)\***

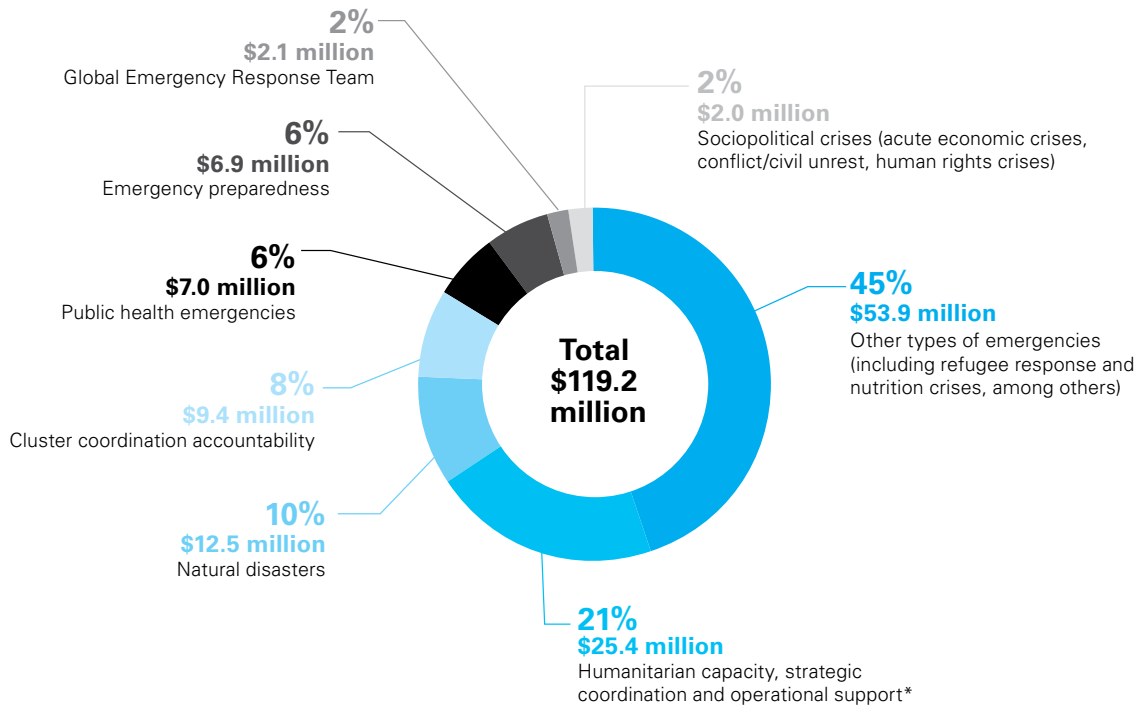


\*Note: Allocations are higher than contributions received in 2023 because allocations are made from the global pooled fund, which includes balance carried over from the previous year.

\*\*All references to Kosovo in this publication should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).



**Figure A1-3: Global humanitarian thematic funding allocations by category, 2023 (in United States dollars)**



“The global humanitarian thematic fund plays an important role in effectively responding to crises. Sudan last year was but one example: In April 2023, when conflict erupted, many women and children arrived at the border to South Sudan, often after having experienced indescribable violence. The flexible GHTF disbursement enabled a rapid scale-up, and also enabled local NGOs to swiftly deliver the necessary assistance. Children and pregnant women received treatment against malnutrition. Psychosocial support helped refugees and returnees alike to deal with the traumatic experiences from the conflict. Through WASH support and advocacy, public health outbreaks, such as cholera, were averted.




We are glad to work with UNICEF in order to support this invaluable work for those most in need. This is why Germany decided to further increase its funding to the GHTF in 2023, to €30 million, making us the top donor in 2023. We will continue our commitment and call upon others to join us in this support.”

**H. E. MS. DEIKE POTZEL, DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR CRISIS PREVENTION, STABILISATION, PEACEBUILDING AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AT THE GERMAN FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE**

\*This includes allocations to support organizational priorities and strengthen UNICEF emergency capacity, coordination and operational support at the global, regional and country levels.

# ALLOCATION CRITERIA

A senior-level allocations committee within UNICEF governs global humanitarian thematic funding allocations based on established criteria, with final approval given by the Deputy Executive Director, Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations. A set of clear criteria is used to allocate GHTF at all levels – country, regional and global. Criteria include:

-  Critical unmet needs for the most vulnerable children;
-  Critical funding gaps based on available and projected contributions;
-  Strong implementation capacity based on the delivery track record of regular country programmes; and



Alignment with organization-wide initiatives aimed at strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of UNICEF humanitarian action (e.g., the Humanitarian Review recommendations, UNICEF's commitments at the Oslo Conference on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action). Other examples of this include gender-transformative programming; establishment of effective mechanisms for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; accountability to affected populations; and localization strategies that emphasize anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

## GHTF ALLOCATION CRITERIA EXAMPLES

### Syrian Arab Republic

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$3,000,000**



- The earthquakes that hit the Syrian Arab Republic in early February 2023 affected more than 8.8 million people (including 3.7 million children) in a context where close to 70 per cent of the population was already in need of humanitarian assistance.
- The GHTF allocation of \$3 million was for implementation of rapid immunization and nutrition interventions in the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, along with WASH interventions in camps for internally displaced persons and in schools and health facilities.

*A child displaced by the earthquakes that devastated Türkiye and the Syrian Arab Republic holds hygiene supplies, distributed by UNICEF, at Bader Shaker Al Sayeb school-turned-shelter in the city of Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic, in June 2023.*

### Bangladesh

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$199,000**



- The outbreak of dengue fever in Bangladesh took a worrisome turn in August 2023 as the number of new cases and fatalities rose, signalling an alarming trend, with the World Health Organization reporting that dengue had already spread to all the districts of the country. Public health experts shared their concern that the dengue situation in Bangladesh posed a threat to overall public health.
- As part of the Co-Funding Initiative, \$199,000 was allocated to the Bangladesh Country Office for dengue fever preparedness and prevention. The purpose of the action was to continue to scale-up the preparedness and prevention capacity of UNICEF and partners to respond to this situation – notably by creating awareness among the general population about dengue fever prevention and by engaging communities to take preventive actions.

*Affif, 8, who has recovered from dengue fever, holds his school workbook at his home in Bangladesh in September 2023. UNICEF supported the response to the country's outbreak of dengue fever by training health staff, distributing test kits, supporting schools and engaging in many kinds of preventive efforts.*

### Libya

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$300,000**



- The floods in Libya, resulting from the torrential rains brought on by Storm Daniel on 10 September 2023, caused massive destruction, particularly on Libya's northeastern coast. The city of Derna, which experienced the worst of this storm, was officially declared a disaster zone due to significant disruptions to its electricity and communications infrastructure. Adding to the distress, roads critical to rescue efforts faced severe damage.
- Facing significant funding gaps, the Libya Country Office received an allocation of \$300,000 to meet humanitarian needs following the devastating flooding. During Storm Daniel, flexible thematic funding allowed UNICEF to be on the ground together with the Libyan Red Crescent Society within the first few hours of the emergency to assist in initiating an immediate response through rapid needs assessment and distribution of core relief items, until additional humanitarian funding was mobilized.

*A member of the Libyan Red Crescent Society inspects a car for survivors on September 11, 2023, after Storm Daniel swept through the city of Derna, destroying many of the city's structures, including buildings, hospitals, schools and residences.*

## Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$600,000**



© UNICEF/UNI497659/Nuñez

Israel Castillo, 9, practises handwashing at his school in Rosario de Perijá, State of Zulia, in November 2023. UNICEF supported rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure in 150 schools, benefiting 37,000 children.

- Chronic inflation, global instability, sociopolitical tensions and natural hazards aggravated by climate change continue to disproportionately affect children in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
- The allocation of global humanitarian thematic funding played a significant role in enhancing the preparedness and risk-informed approach within the response capacity of the civil protection, WASH and education sectors in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela at both national and state levels. This involved integrating a child-centred approach into emergency response strategies. As a result, 204 professionals (94 public servants and 110 humanitarian workers) received training for emergency response and disaster preparedness in Anzoátegui and Zulia states.

## Lebanon

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$2,000,000**



© UNICEF/UNI581639/Choufany

Aya, 4, holds items she received at a UNICEF distribution of winter clothes and school kits for families displaced in southern Lebanon, in November 2023.

- Tensions have risen on Lebanon's southern border due to conflict between Israel and the State of Palestine, with Lebanon also grappling with a severe economic crisis. Almost three quarters of the Lebanese population lives in poverty, and recent clashes have affected civilians and infrastructure in the country's south.
- In November 2023, \$2 million in GHTF was allocated to the Lebanon Country Office to support pre-positioning of supplies and scaling up the Rapid Response Mechanism and preparedness interventions in southern Lebanon and elsewhere as needed.

## Latin America and Caribbean region

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$173,913**



© UNICEF/UNI585557/

Students at Emilio Bárcenas primary school, in Segundo Frente, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, hold a piece of a giant game in March 2023. Recreation kits and the giant games were provided by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to help children and adolescents deal with stresses linked to emergencies, and to teach them about risks and resilience in the face of natural disasters.

- UNICEF impact scenarios anticipate that a major hurricane hitting the Caribbean would lead to devastating multi-country effects, including large-scale coastal and inland flooding and landslides. This could leave up to 2 million people in need of assistance, including 640,000 children. Considering that most of these countries are small territories with restricted logistics capacities and people and institutions highly exposed to risk, for UNICEF it would be very hard to reach remote and vulnerable groups (including indigenous communities and people of African descent) to urgently provide services and non-food items in communities and shelters.
- As part of the First Action Initiative, a global humanitarian thematic funding allocation of \$173,913 was made to the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office to support cyclone preparedness for seven Caribbean region countries. This allocation, together with preparedness funding from the United States Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and from Denmark, contributed to a total preparedness allocation of \$500,000 to the regional office.

## Division of Human Resources

**GHTF allocation:**  
**\$102,200**



© UNICEF/UN0864385/ElFain

A UNICEF staff member engages with children at a transit centre in the Sudan in June 2023. The children were relocated from an orphanage in the capital, Khartoum, after the outbreak of war, and are under government care. UNICEF supports their medical care, feeding, psychosocial stimulation, play and educational activities, and supports caregivers of children who are relocated.

- An allocation of \$102,200 was made to the UNICEF Division of Human Resources to support implementation of human resources-related recommendations of the Humanitarian Review. This GHTF allocation was for recruitment of a consultant to work with staff counsellor teams (and other relevant staff) globally to develop learning and support materials for staff engaged in humanitarian response. This included developing new content for videos and accompanying learning material tools; resources for target groups serving/supporting humanitarian contexts; updating existing materials; working with key staff to help package and roll out the different outputs, especially learning videos/podcasts used prior to deployment/assignment; and developing other resource materials (e.g., checklists, reading materials, infographics, learning paths) to be part of a toolkit for deploying staff and receiving offices.

# WHO SUPPORTS GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN THEMATIC FUNDING?

Global humanitarian thematic funding is at the core of quality funding that is received by UNICEF for humanitarian action.

UNICEF extends its gratitude to committed partners for their flexible contributions, which enable delivery of timely and equitable humanitarian relief to children and families with critical unmet needs. By contributing high-quality funding like GHTF, partners show their firm trust in UNICEF's principled role in reaching every child, everywhere.

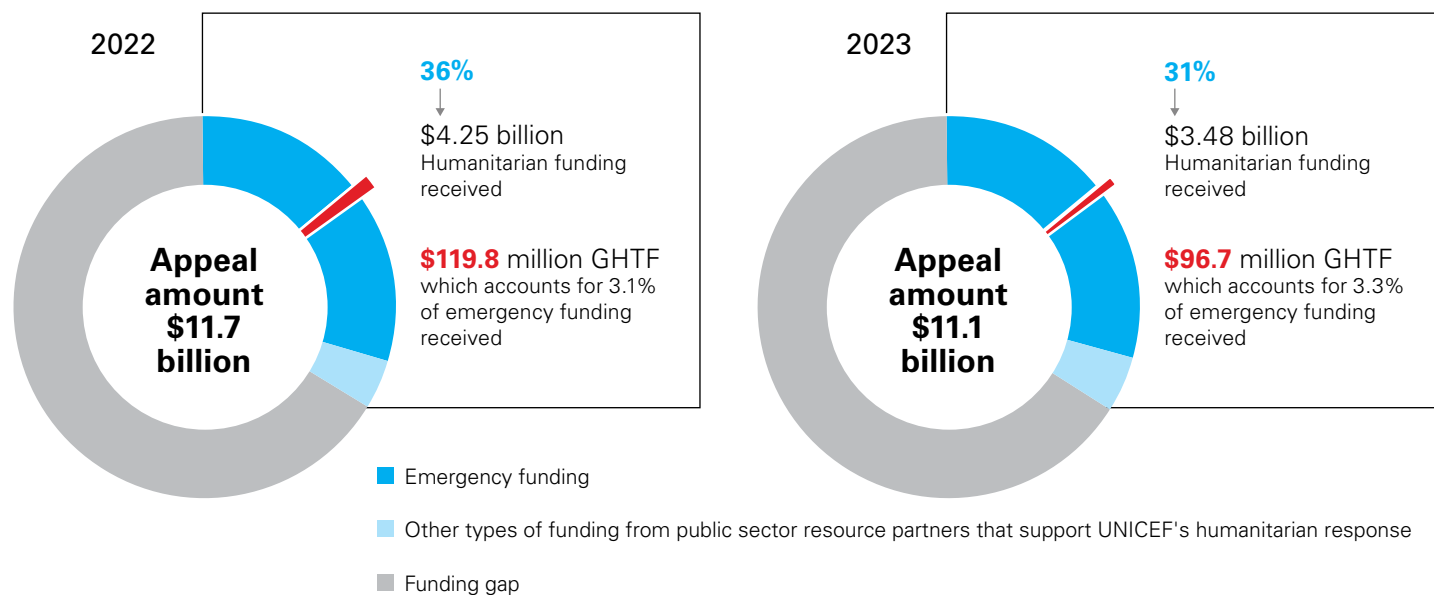
By the end of 2023, the second year of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF had received a total of \$216.6 million in global humanitarian thematic funding, \$119.8 million in 2022 and \$96.7 million in 2023. These high levels of GHTF contributions were due to the generosity of the public and private resource partners who recognized the added value of quality funding in humanitarian response. UNICEF is working steadily on improving the quality of reporting on GHTF and the visibility of GHTF contributions. The major contributors to GHTF for the combined period 2022 and 2023 were Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States Fund for UNICEF and private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices.

Despite the decrease in the absolute amount of GHTF received in 2023 compared with 2022, the share of GHTF as a proportion of all emergency funding reached 3.3 per cent in 2023, compared with 3.1 per cent in 2022. UNICEF is actively working on strengthening its engagement with traditional donors to expand the GHTF resource partner base, including by showcasing GHTF as a way for resource partners to fulfil their Grand Bargain commitment to flexible funding – and by demonstrating how flexible allocations can make a difference for children in emergencies and, therefore, make humanitarian response more equitable.

**Table A1-1: Top 10 resources of global humanitarian thematic funding, 2022 and 2023 combined (in United States dollars)**

1	Germany	52,678,918
2	Kingdom of the Netherlands	40,336,584
3	Private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices	28,506,340
4	United States Fund for UNICEF	24,915,984
5	Sweden	22,768,340
6	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	13,804,446
7	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	12,232,416
8	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	6,492,969
9	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	4,712,394
10	German Committee for UNICEF	1,257,008

**Figure A1-4: UNICEF other resources – emergency funding, 2022–2023 (in United States dollars)**



In 2023, resource partners from the private sector contributed \$33.9 million to GHTF (compared with \$64.1 million in 2022), while public sector resource partners contributed \$62.9 million, a \$7 million increase compared with 2022.

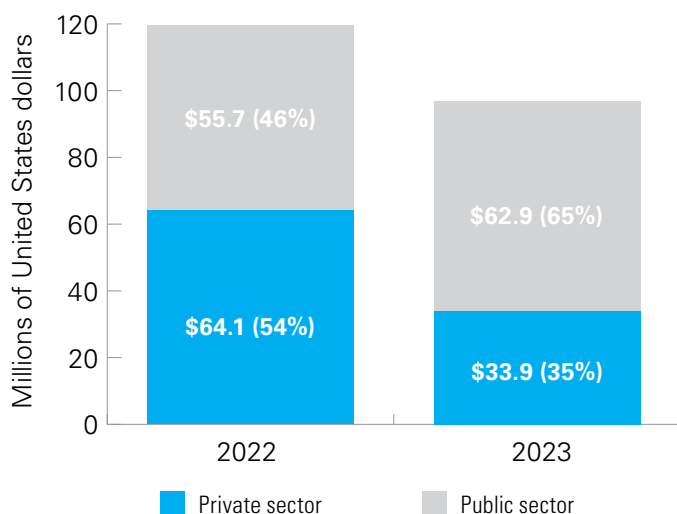
A notable increase in GHTF contributions from public sector resource partners came from Germany, which increased its contribution by 50 per cent compared with 2022. Also in 2023, Canada returned as a resource partner to GHTF, after last providing this type of funding in 2021.

The support of private sector resource partners for UNICEF's humanitarian response continues to grow each year. Increasingly, both newer and long-term resource partners are deciding to trust UNICEF with flexible funding for all children in emergencies, through GHTF contributions. Private sector partners who increased their contributions to GHTF included UNICEF National Committees in the United Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Australia, Portugal, Finland and Denmark as well as returned donors to GHTF from the UNICEF National Committees in Hong Kong, Germany, Norway, Poland and New Zealand.

**Table A1-2: Key donors supporting global humanitarian thematic funding through UNICEF National Committees, 2023**

National Committee	Key donors
Kingdom of the Netherlands	Adyen
United Kingdom	Formula 1
United States	The Northern Trust Foundation
	The Walt Disney Company
Sweden	Spotify

**Figure A1-5: Global humanitarian thematic funding by type of resource partner, 2022 and 2023**



**Table A1-3: Sources of global humanitarian thematic funding, 2023 (in United States dollars)**

Resource Partner	2023
Germany	31,996,394
Kingdom of the Netherlands	18,619,934
Private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices	11,878,506
Sweden	11,050,795
United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	9,007,964
Dutch Committee for UNICEF	3,624,667
United States Fund for UNICEF	3,348,887
German Committee for UNICEF	1,257,008
Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	1,198,557
Swedish Committee for UNICEF	1,174,380
Finnish Committee for UNICEF	686,359
Denmark	587,199
Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	474,219
Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited	370,358
Canada	364,751
Danish Foundation for UNICEF	339,993
Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	298,959
Canadian UNICEF Committee	61,505
Polish National Committee for UNICEF	60,168
Belgian Committee for UNICEF	38,680
UNICEF Hungarian Committee Foundation	24,210
French Committee for UNICEF	21,386
The New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF	11,534
Balance from previous years	244,812

In 2023, the majority of the Humanitarian Action for Children appeals were not fully funded, and some were critically underfunded (see Annex 2: Financial Report for comprehensive details). The value of humanitarian thematic funding is its timeliness and flexibility – not always available through the funding (for example, country or regional humanitarian thematic funding) that is earmarked to the Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. GHTF is the most flexible humanitarian thematic funding for UNICEF and is therefore in high demand. It is catalytic funding that can kick-start a response and cover critical gaps, addressing children's needs and promoting equity, everywhere. Because of this, GHTF is a critical component in humanitarian response for protracted, underfunded crises and in the sudden onset of an emergency.

UNICEF is grateful for all flexible contributions, large or small, and recognizes their clear impact on children's lives. UNICEF is looking forward to continuing solid and principled partnerships to enable high-quality funding such as GHTF to reach the most vulnerable children in the most challenges places where we work.

# GHTF CASE STUDIES

The following case studies show how global humanitarian thematic funding was used in specific critical contexts in 2023. These are only a few of the places where UNICEF used these flexible emergency funds to save lives and protect the childhoods of the most vulnerable children. For comprehensive information on UNICEF humanitarian responses in 2023, including the role of global humanitarian thematic funding, see the publicly available consolidated emergency reports for 2023 at <https://open.unicef.org/documents-and-resources>. Most of these reports contain case studies on the use of humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding.



“The UNICEF global humanitarian thematic fund allows UNICEF to operate swiftly, flexibly and efficiently in those areas where the need is greatest. In 2023, essential humanitarian aid has been offered through the fund: from providing psychosocial support to children in Türkiye after the earthquake, to delivering clean drinking water to people in Libya affected by floods and establishing child-friendly spaces for Sudanese refugee children. Wars and conflicts, extreme weather conditions and natural disasters make this swift and efficient response crucial.”

**H.E. MS. LIESJE SCHREINEMACHER, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**



## Guatemala

Maria, 5, plays with a UNICEF staff member in the rural community of Chajul, in Quiche, Guatemala, in September 2023. In 2023, with the support of global humanitarian thematic funding, UNICEF reached approximately 7,500 children and adolescents in Guatemala with comprehensive health, nutrition, WASH and child protection services.



## Yemen

Third grade students are ready to learn at Fatima Al Zahra primary and secondary school in Khanfir District, Abyan Governorate, Yemen, in January 2023. In 2023, flexible thematic funding supported the UNICEF education response in Yemen by ensuring that more children and adolescents, particularly girls, could benefit from quality formal, non-formal or alternative learning opportunities.

# TÜRKIYE

**With the support of global humanitarian thematic funding, a successful model of child protection and integrated service delivery was possible at community-based *Birlikte* hubs in earthquake-affected areas.**

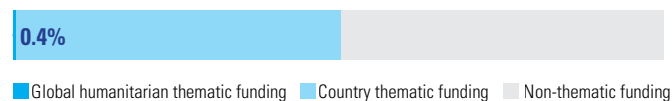
On 6 February 2023, two devastating earthquakes struck southeastern Türkiye, impacting approximately 15.6 million people in 11 provinces, including nearly 1.8 million registered refugees. Nearly 5.6 million children were affected. The psychological impact of the earthquakes on children and families remains evident, and the disaster heightened the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation.

As part of UNICEF’s child protection response, \$500,000 in global humanitarian thematic funding was allocated to the child protection section in Türkiye. This flexible thematic funding was rapid – available on February 19, within two weeks of the earthquake – and was instrumental, along with other donor funding, to the establishment and smooth running of 47 child, adolescent and family support hubs (called *Birlikte*, meaning ‘together’ in Turkish), which were established by UNICEF-supported partners Turkish Red Crescent, Development Foundation of Türkiye and the Association for Social Development and Aid Mobilization in 10 earthquake-affected provinces. At these centres, critical child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response services were delivered to 639,406 individuals, including 421,116 children and adolescents, directly contributing to fulfilment of UNICEF child protection Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

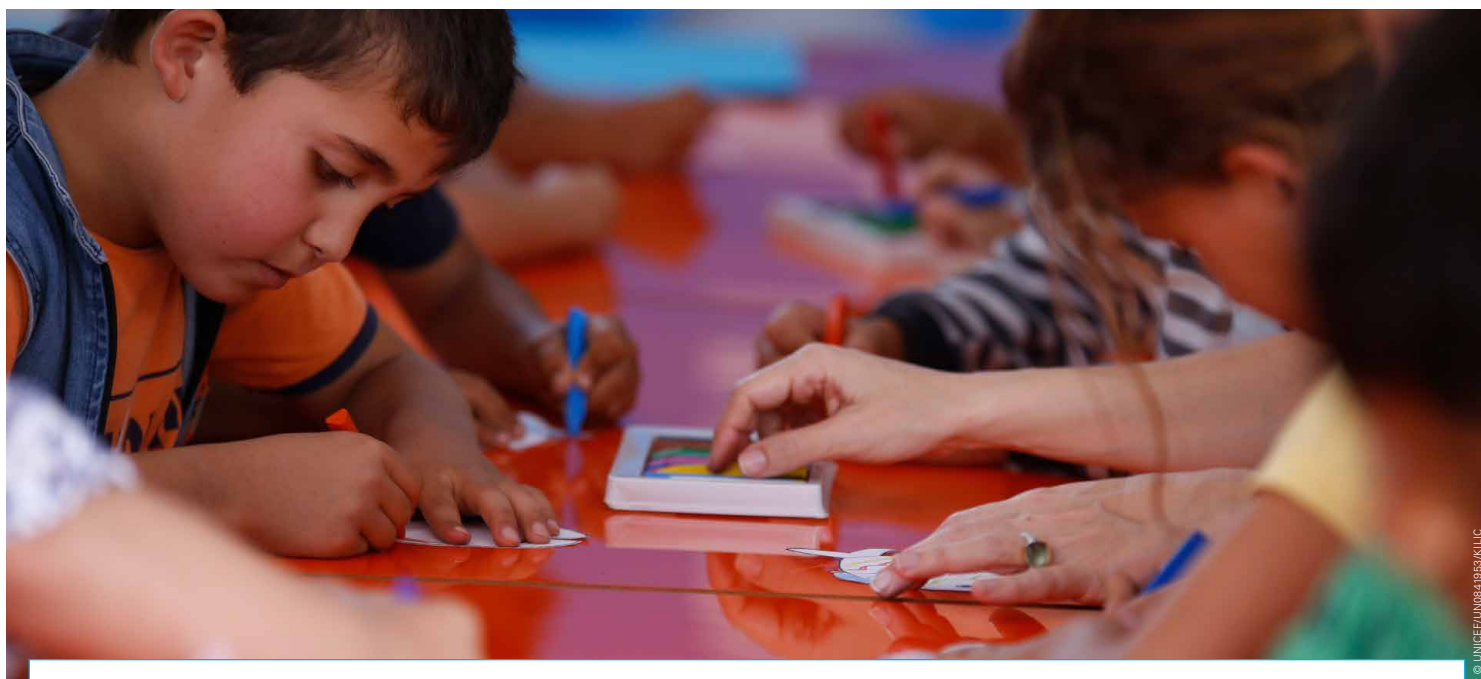
**Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023**

**47 child, adolescent and family support hubs were set up, serving 421,116 children and adolescents** in earthquake-affected provinces with critical child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response services

**Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023**



The flexibility of global humanitarian thematic funding was highly valued and enabled UNICEF to rapidly meet immediate and varied needs for the smooth running of the hubs (e.g., recruitment of professional staff, provision of supplies and operational costs of service delivery points), complementing other donor funding.



**Türkiye**

Children paint together in a child-friendly space at a temporary accommodation shelter in Hatay, in May 2023.

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

**Global humanitarian thematic funding played a key role in responding to the most critical needs of children affected by conflict in eastern provinces and in Mai Ndombe Province.**

The eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to grapple with insecurity stemming from armed conflicts, militia activities and intercommunal violence, worsening already difficult humanitarian conditions in the region. Instability led to widespread displacement and severely restricted people's access to such essential services as health care, education and clean water, while also increasing protection concerns significantly. Particularly vulnerable groups, especially women and children, experienced the worst conditions. While conditions deteriorated heavily in the eastern part of the country, Mai Ndombe Province, on the county's western border, also experienced intercommunal conflicts resulting in violence, displacement and loss of life, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and impeding development efforts. And – partly driven by this instability and upheaval – the country faced its worst cholera outbreak in six years.

Global humanitarian thematic funding played a key role in enhancing emergency response efforts both in the eastern provinces as part of the Level 3 scale-up there, and also in Mai Ndombe. Specifically, GHTF contributed to UNICEF and partners' swift action through its localized rapid response mechanism (UniRR) in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces that provided critical life-saving aid to more than 427,000 internally displaced individuals, including more than 285,000 children. This included timely delivery of essential household items and WASH kits, leading to noticeable improvements in the overall conditions.

Additionally, the availability of GHTF enhanced the cholera rapid response in North Kivu, South Kivu and Sankuru provinces, significantly curbing the epidemic's spread by supporting the case area targeted intervention approach (reaching nearly 1.3 million people). Close collaboration with national NGO partners working directly with UNICEF teams increased capacity to adapt to local contexts and ensured better access to hard-to-reach areas and acceptance by communities.

The flexible funding also allowed UNICEF to improve access to WASH services and primary health care in North Kivu Province; in South Kivu Province, flexible funding contributed to the clinical management of cholera cases and provided an immediate life-saving response and gender-based violence prevention services to 4,000 displaced women and girls. Furthermore, global humanitarian thematic funding helped address educational needs, contributing to reaching 252,444 children with both formal and non-formal education initiatives in crisis-affected provinces.

UNICEF was able to allocate flexible funding where it was most needed. By supporting procurement of critical medical supplies and non-food items and helping improve access to education and WASH services, these funds responded to the unique needs of communities affected by crises, ensuring effectiveness and relevance. By integrating various sectors such as health,

WASH, education and child protection, UNICEF provided holistic assistance that tackled the immediate needs of people affected by conflict and disease. The flexibility of thematic humanitarian funding was crucial for bridging gaps left by other sources of funding. Throughout the scale-up phase, national cluster coordinators were deployed in the eastern part of the country, maintaining constant communication with partners and providing assistance as required.



**Democratic Republic of the Congo**  
Displaced families and children draw water from a UNICEF-built water point in the Bulongo camp for displaced people in North Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in February 2023.

## Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023

- 
**400,000 displaced individuals**, including **285,000 children**, reached with critical life-saving aid
- 
**4,000 displaced women and girls** provided with an immediate life-saving response and gender-based violence prevention services
- 
**252,444 children reached** with both formal and non-formal education initiatives in crisis-affected provinces

## Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023





# AFGHANISTAN

## Acknowledging how important protection interventions are for children in Afghanistan, UNICEF leveraged flexible, humanitarian thematic funding to support child protection, specifically mental health and psychosocial support activities.

The level of mental health disorders is alarmingly high in Afghanistan, linked to a legacy of years of conflict, recurrent natural disasters, displacement, constant risks of harm from explosive ordnance and high levels of poverty. Compounding these challenges are the enduring consequences of restrictive measures on girls' education, limitations on women's employment opportunities and the shrinkage of public spaces available for women and girls. These restrictions exacerbate existing mental health concerns and contribute to a pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair, especially among young girls and women.

In its 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Afghanistan, UNICEF planned for a budget of \$56.6 million to carry out interventions in child protection, gender-based violence prevention and response and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. However, by the end of the year, only 47 per cent of this required funding had been received, leaving a significant funding gap. Given the criticality of protection interventions, UNICEF leveraged flexible, global humanitarian thematic funding (contributions as well as contributions directed specifically to the country) to support child protection, specifically mental health and psychosocial support activities, which made up a pivotal component of UNICEF's humanitarian child protection response programme in Afghanistan. UNICEF used around \$2.3 million in humanitarian thematic funding, complementing earmarked funding provided by other donors.

This thematic funding was crucial in facilitating the delivery of MHPSS services designed to enhance the psychosocial well-being and overall resilience of children and caregivers confronted with chronic adversity as well as sudden-onset emergencies. UNICEF built the capacity of psychosocial services providers through training and by other means, ensuring their preparedness to deliver age-appropriate, structured MHPSS – all the while addressing multifaceted risks of violence, abuse and exploitation and the threats posed by explosive ordinances. Simultaneously, awareness messages on psychosocial well-being were disseminated through community dialogues to combat the pervasive stigma associated with mental health and psychosocial concerns.

In 2023, UNICEF together with partners, and utilizing humanitarian thematic funding, supported the training and capacity building of 215 psychosocial support services providers (including 98 women) and facilitated the delivery of psychosocial support services to 389,500 children and caregivers (76,000 girls, 104,500 boys, 76,000 women and 133,000 men), fostering their emotional resilience. Additionally, 7,477 children (2,870 girls, 4,697 boys), survivors of violence, abuse, exploitation and family separation received psychosocial first aid and counselling services. This concerted effort contributed to improving the mental and psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents in the complex landscape of the Afghanistan crisis. Furthermore, 36,755 women and children (11,117 girls, 14,109 boys, 11,549 women) were reached with gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation services with support from thematic

funding, including counselling, medical care and livelihoods support through referrals. This has contributed to improving the mental and psychosocial well-being of children and caregivers impacted by complex mental health crises.



### Afghanistan

Zeinab, 11, plays with her classmates at the UNICEF-supported ACTED centre in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh Province, Afghanistan, in August 2023. Zeinab, an orphan, had been working on the streets polishing boots but is now enrolled in classes and receives psychological counselling. She wants to go to university and become a teacher.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023

**7,477 children** (2,870 girls and 4,697 boys), survivors of violence abuse, exploitation and family separation received psychosocial first aid and counselling services

**215 psychosocial support service providers** (including 98 women) supported with training and capacity building

**36,755 women and children** reached with gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation services, including counselling, medical care and livelihoods support through referrals

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023

0.8%

Global humanitarian thematic funding Country thematic funding Non-thematic funding

# PACIFIC ISLANDS MULTI-COUNTRY OFFICE

**In 2023, global humanitarian thematic funding enabled UNICEF to address Pacific Island countries' extreme vulnerability to climate change and played a pivotal role in disaster response and preparedness for several climate-related emergencies.**

In Vanuatu, following twin Severe Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin, UNICEF supported post-cyclone recovery efforts in the provinces of Shefa and Tafea, playing a lead role in supporting the government response in health, nutrition, education and WASH. These provinces had reported extensive damage, and global humanitarian thematic funding facilitated the transport of health response teams to remote areas, enabling UNICEF and partners to reach approximately 10,000 affected people. Working closely with the Ministry of Health in the two provinces, UNICEF supported training for 84 health workers and nine rapid response team members to strengthen emergency nutrition screening and treatment interventions at the community and facility levels. UNICEF provided technical assistance as co-lead of Vanuatu's nutrition cluster to ensure the emergency food basket met nutrition requirements and to focus on building long-term resilience to natural and climate-related hazards, for example by strengthening nutrition surveillance.

UNICEF also used humanitarian thematic funding to deploy surge support to the Ministry of Education. An education specialist based in Vanuatu was seconded to the Ministry to assist in damage assessment after the cyclones as well as response planning. An estimated 5,000 children benefited from the rapid deployment of 110 tents, 41 school-in-a-box kits and 12 early childhood development kits.

UNICEF co-led the WASH cluster, providing strategic development and progress monitoring. Nearly 40,000 people were provided with safe water and 18,441 with sanitation services. GHTF supported approximately 5 per cent of the people reached. The flexibility of GHTF allowed for a swift initial response and the distribution of supplies within 48 hours after the twin cyclones, and GHTF also served as a catalyst for further resource mobilization.

In Tonga, global humanitarian thematic funding enabled the recruitment of a child protection consultant to provide technical advice and support to the development of the country's National Child Protection Policy, supporting the recovery phase after the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcanic eruption in January 2022. The UNICEF support helped to provide guidance on strategic decisions around the child protection policy to promote human and child rights-based approaches. Humanitarian thematic funds supported humanitarian cash transfers for 71 families in Tonga.

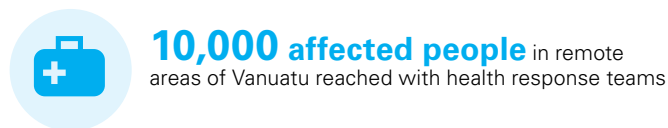
In Fiji, humanitarian thematic funding helped UNICEF invest in preparedness and anticipatory action. UNICEF provided storage containers for pre-positioned supplies to the Ministry of Health & Medical Services and rainwater tanks to Partners in Community Development Fiji and Habitat for Humanity for WASH rehabilitation in five communities. The funds also supported the National Disaster Management Office in preparedness.



### Pacific Islands

Keziah Vatoko, 7, opens her UNICEF backpack at École Publique Centre Ville, in Vanuatu, in March 2023. The country was hit with multiple tropical cyclones in March.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023



### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# MOZAMBIQUE

**As international attention waned despite a continuing cholera outbreak in Mozambique, global humanitarian thematic funding allowed UNICEF to respond where needed.**

In 2023, Mozambique experienced the largest cholera outbreak in its recorded history. There had been a non-stop stream of reported cases since September 2022, and eventually more than 41,000 cases were recorded in 2023 alone. And this was likely an undercount, given that these were just the official cases reported at cholera treatment centres, and that an unknown number of people in rural villages who were showing symptoms may have been unable to walk significant distances to health centres. As a result, many unreported cases and fatalities occurred. UNICEF responded to the outbreak throughout 2023, working nationwide with a network of government and civil society partners.

After Cyclone Freddy hit Mozambique in March, UNICEF was able to successfully fundraise for an immediate response to this disaster, including the massive increase in cholera cases that followed the cyclone. However, as attention waned and the cholera outbreak continued, finding the required funding for the response became more difficult. This was especially true during the 'dry' season (roughly May/June through August/September) in which cholera transmission was low, but continuous. And then cases began to increase again in September 2023, with little funding available. To support the UNICEF response, \$584,058 in global humanitarian thematic funding proved life-saving, especially in Tete and Niassa provinces, where the cholera response had been substantially underfunded all along.

Of the global humanitarian thematic funding allocated to Mozambique, \$277,000 was transferred to the organization Doctors with Africa CUAMM and to government ministries engaged in health, WASH and social and behaviour change initiatives. Around \$156,000 was used to procure WASH and health supplies. In addition, \$6,000 was directed towards hiring an Emergency WASH Consultant stationed in Pemba in Cabo Delgado Province. Another \$110,629 supported the deployment of UNICEF staff specialized in cholera coordination, WASH and health. Another \$7,500 ensured programme efficacy by supporting monitoring visits, while \$26,929 went towards warehousing and transportation logistics.

Within the above funding was support for the National Communication Institute of Mozambique to deliver cholera prevention awareness messages in local languages through community radio, and via mobile media units that organized video shows in affected districts.

Global humanitarian thematic funding underwrote the deployment of Provincial Health Service Department staff to remote cholera treatment centres. The Provincial Health Service Department also organized cholera prevention training with community leaders and set up oral rehydration points in remote communities to treat patients unable to reach cholera treatment centres because they were unable to travel long distances. The GHTF provided to Doctors with Africa CUAMM supported case follow-up in communities in 10 districts in Tete, Zambezia and Cabo Delgado provinces, targeting the families of people with cholera and their

direct neighbours with the distribution of household hygiene kits and water treatment supplies to stop disease spread. Lastly, these flexible funds enabled UNICEF to purchase basic items to support cholera treatment centres: acute watery diarrhoea community drug kits, hygiene items, tents, plastic jugs and cups, aprons and gloves. UNICEF estimates that 87,000 people were reached with health, WASH and social behaviour change services due to global humanitarian thematic funding.

The availability of flexible funding to meet urgent gaps and respond to cholera where needed, particularly in areas where few donors had interest, was critical to saving lives.



## Mozambique

A child receives an oral cholera vaccine during a cholera vaccination campaign in Zambezia Province, Mozambique, in March 2023.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023



An estimated **87,000 people reached** with health, WASH and social behaviour change services



### Doctors with Africa CUAMM

provided case follow-up in communities in 10 districts, targeting families of cholera cases and their direct neighbours with distribution of household hygiene kits and water treatment supplies

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# HAITI

**In the underfunded child protection sector, global humanitarian thematic funding was key to enabling UNICEF and a partner, Organisation des Coeurs pour le Changement des enfants Démunis d’Haïti (OCCED’H), to provide children with care and with dedicated places to allow them to be children again.**

The armed violence plaguing the neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince forced families to flee their homes, aggravating the vulnerability of children already experiencing living conditions that could harm their physical, cognitive and social development. Some children had been victims of violence, including domestic violence: In Port-au-Prince, 51 per cent of children have experienced physical violence, and 81 per cent of this physical violence was perpetrated by gang members. Eighty-four per cent of children have undergone psychological violence and 18 per cent are survivors of sexual violence.

Among the terrifying consequences of armed violence are injuries and schools closures. Trying to get care for injured children can plunge households into severe financial hardship. What’s more, the violence can make it difficult to access medical care for injured children due to the collapse of the health system in Port-au-Prince, including the drain on human resources at hospitals and their lack of equipment.

Faced with this situation, Organisation des Coeurs pour le Changement des enfants Démunis d’Haïti (OCCED’H) intervenes to provide support to desperate families who no longer know where to turn to save their children’s lives. This local UNICEF partner organization helps victims of violence by urgently transporting children to hospitals, notably to the hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières in Port-au-Prince’s Tabarre neighbourhood, where children receive appropriate medical care. Being out of school has also contributed to psychological distress – hence the importance of the child-friendly spaces set up by OCCED’H with the technical and financial support of UNICEF. These spaces give children the opportunity to heal the scars of the war, offering them a chance to express themselves freely and to practice their hobbies in a safe and secure environment.

Global humanitarian thematic funding resourced this work in the Port-au-Prince areas of Bas Delmas, Haut and Bas Bel-Air in response to the security and humanitarian crisis caused by recurring clashes between armed groups. Mobile teams of child-friendly spaces implement psychosocial activities aimed at reducing psychological distress among children and strengthening their resilience. At the same time, awareness sessions (e.g., discussion groups) help raise awareness about such subjects as armed violence, children’s rights and prevention and response to exploitation and sexual abuse. A referral and case management strategy makes it possible to refer and/or take care of children requiring special attention, whether or not they are referred through child-friendly spaces. The project also enables young people from the target neighbourhoods to receive professional training in such trades as sandal making.

The GHTF-funded project facilitated psychosocial activities benefiting 8,104 children, while 910 children received specialized care following critical incidents (e.g., involving stray bullets). The awareness sessions on children’s rights reached 14,786 individuals, with specific discussion groups engaging 317 adolescents to involve them in project activities and restore a sense of joy in their lives.



## Haiti

A girl sits in her school in Cité Soleil, a neighbourhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in January 2023. The children at the school engage in UNICEF-supported psychosocial support activities and training sessions to help them cope with the high levels of violence that have affected Cité Soleil and many other neighborhoods.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023

-  **8,104 children** benefited from psychosocial activities
-  **910 children** received specialized care
-  **14,786 individuals** reached with awareness sessions on children’s rights
-  **317 adolescents** engaged in discussion groups to involve them in project activities and restore a sense of joy in their lives

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# CHAD

**During the influx of Sudanese refugees into Chad, flexible global humanitarian thematic funding was a cornerstone of UNICEF’s rapid response, helping meet immediate needs while also addressing development concerns to lay a foundation for community resilience.**

The eastern region of Chad was already hosting large numbers of Sudanese refugees when the outbreak of war in the Sudan in April 2023 prompted a new influx of refugees, along with Chadian returnees. Nearly 90 per cent of the refugees were women and children. Global humanitarian thematic funding enabled a rapid response to new flows of Sudanese refugees into Chad in 2023, in particular the provision of safe drinking water at refugees’ entry points and in other border areas.

The influx of refugees combined with water scarcity due to climate-related factors – for example, in Ouaddai Province, one of the eastern areas receiving refugees, only 36.9 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water – has exacerbated the risk of community conflict around access to water resources, affecting social cohesion. Thematic funds were allocated to the Chad Country Office to strengthen social cohesion and community resilience around water resource management in communities hosting displaced populations.

GHTF supported construction of six boreholes equipped with hand pumps in five targeted villages, Ourang, Koufroun, Borota, Middeguita and Dize bithe, serving 6,000 people. These were used as a way to provide water (including via water trucking) to more people. One thousand households received chlorine for water treatment. To accommodate the settlement of even more refugees, these water sources were then transformed into solar-powered water systems with taps to serve greater numbers of people (host community members, returnees and refugees), to improve water services and reduce the risk of conflict. In addition to the boreholes, UNICEF and partners constructed emergency latrines and provided WASH kits to facilitate adoption of good hygiene practices. These efforts, combined with community mobilization and water committee capacity building, contributed to an integrated package of WASH services that helped prevent water-related diseases, reduce the risk of conflict between host communities and refugees and improve social cohesion. Using local companies to construct the boreholes accelerated the response. Altogether in Chad in 2023, working with Croix-Rouge Tchad, The Lutheran World Federation and LM International (an international nonprofit faith-based organization), UNICEF provided access to safe drinking water to 336,913 people (104,190 girls, 97,952 boys, 69,320 women and 65,451 men) through water supply systems consisting of solar-powered hand pumps and household water treatment systems in Ouaddai, Sila, Wadi Fira, Moyen-Chari, Tandjilé, and Logone Oriental provinces in eastern and southern Chad. Around 140,800 refugees, returnees and host community members (30,445 women, 43,771 girls, 39,544 and 27,051 men) accessed basic sanitation services through the construction or rehabilitation of emergency latrines and showers.

The implementation of this project demonstrated that, in areas with high risk of conflict, flexible funds can contribute to a rapid response during emergencies that can also address development challenges




and lay a foundation for community resilience. Improvements in basic social services (in this case, a more stable water supply) represent a ‘contingency stock’ of social services that can be a buffer against conflict escalation. Including the needs of the host communities (UNICEF included a small percentage of host community members in all activities, a number limited by the limited resources available) was critical – for human reasons and also because doing so helped strengthen social cohesion, maintain peace and build resilience.



### Chad

Hadja Abdlla, 16, stands with a UNICEF staff member at a UNICEF-installed water distribution point in a refugee site in Adré, in eastern Chad, close to the border with the Sudan. Hadja fled fighting in the Sudan.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023

- 
**6,000 people** gained access to new water sources through borehole construction for water points that were later solarized
- 
**1,000 households** received chlorine for water treatment
- 
**An integrated package of WASH services** met needs of host community and refugee populations, helping to lay the foundation for community resilience and providing lessons for future responses

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# LEBANON

## Global humanitarian thematic funding allowed UNICEF and partners to respond immediately to the escalating conflict in southern Lebanon.

In October 2023, following the escalation of hostilities between Israel and the State of Palestine, armed confrontations between the different parties to the conflict started at the border between Lebanon and Israel. This further strained the ability of Lebanon’s public sector to deliver support to populations facing secondary displacement, because the country was already hosting 1.5 million Syrian refugees – the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. By the end of the year, 74,471 people had been displaced in Lebanon, including 27,554 children, many of whom required urgent humanitarian assistance. In addition, some vulnerable populations remained in the border areas, unable to leave their homes due to inability to travel to safer locations further north because of cost or other factors. These people also required assistance to access such essential services as health care and education.

UNICEF responded to the needs of those who were displaced. The organization has also prepared for a scenario in which the conflict escalates rapidly and up to 1 million people are affected across the country. In this scenario, UNICEF estimate that \$39.6 million would be required to provide life-saving services throughout Lebanon. All planned interventions build on UNICEF’s existing programmes under the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Syrian refugees and host communities. By the end of 2023, UNICEF had received \$8.9 million towards the funding required for this scenario, including \$5.6 million from the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; \$1.3 million from Australia and \$2 million in global humanitarian thematic funding. These funds were used to implement the preparedness plan for a large-scale escalation while at the same time meeting the most urgent needs of displaced populations and host communities.

The timely allocation of GHTF allowed UNICEF and its partners to respond immediately to the critical humanitarian needs of vulnerable and hard-to-reach children before the roll-out of the broader humanitarian response. The funding helped with essential humanitarian activities, including emergency procurement of non-food items and WASH supplies; pre-positioning of emergency fuel; procurement of vital emergency health supplies; urgent support for the child protection programme to scale up mental health and psychosocial support in the affected governorates (including in Palestinian camps) and for child safety assessments; and gender-based violence risk mitigation activities in shelters for internally displaced persons and in host communities.

GHTF was used to pre-position supplies in the main warehouse in Beirut and to acquire an additional warehouse in the city of Saida to pre-position supplies to ensure a rapid and timely response for displaced families. UNICEF procured contingency stocks to ensure UNICEF’s minimum preparedness and response capacity, including baby kits, early childhood development kits, high energy biscuits, ready-to-use therapeutic food, hygiene kits and other essential supplies.



### Lebanon

Douaa and her children Ikrima, 7 months, and Amar, 5, stand at a distribution centre in Lebanon in December 2023. UNICEF and partners have provided a wide array of support to people displaced due to tensions in southern Lebanon.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023



**70 households and 454 children** aged 0–24 months provided with baby and hygiene kits in South Lebanon Governorate



**25 internally displaced children** aged 6–24 months provided with baby kits in Baalbek-Hermel and Bekaa governorates



**6 recreational kits were provided to child protection partners** to support their interventions in the seven shelters hosting internally displaced persons in Bint Jbeil and Hasbaya districts

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# ARMENIA

## Global humanitarian thematic funding was instrumental for responding to the refugee crisis in Armenia.

In less than a week in September 2023, more than 100,000 refugee ethnic Armenians transited through Goris, a town in southern Armenia that is home to 20,000 inhabitants. This intensive and unprecedented influx strained local capacities to support the refugees. Given Armenia’s upper-middle-income status and focus on development cooperation, the international community as well as most national and local actors had limited emergency response capacity to respond to the influx of people. Because of this, UNICEF invested in emergency preparedness (e.g., establishing a field presence in Goris and contingency agreements for rapid resource deployment in case of new displacements).

Within days of the onset of the refugee influx, the Armenia Country Office received a global humanitarian thematic funding allocation of \$1.1 million that enabled the rapid scale-up of the preparedness investments already underway following an initial global humanitarian thematic funding allocation of \$300,000 in early 2023. These allocations were instrumental in UNICEF’s ability to respond from day one of the refugee crisis. Another allocation of \$800,000 in December 2023 allowed UNICEF to address the mid-term needs of affected children and their caregivers, especially given the heightened vulnerabilities during winter.

Using the global humanitarian thematic funding allocations, UNICEF activated and scaled up a contingency partnership with the Armenian Association of Social Workers (AASW) to provide timely mental health and psychosocial support and case management to refugees and host communities from the onset of the crisis. Through the partnership with AASW, UNICEF was also able to mobilize social workers and psychologists to refugee communities to deliver localized support. Altogether, 358 children (61 percent female, 39 percent male) received individual case management in Ararat, Kotayk, Syunik and Vayots Dzor provinces of Armenia and in Yerevan, the capital. UNICEF also activated contingency partnerships with the Children and Adolescent Social and Health Support Centre and the Armenian Red Cross Society. Through the Armenian Red Cross Society, GHTF enabled 1,165 children throughout Armenia to receive individual case management services.

Thanks to the flexibility of global humanitarian thematic funding, UNICEF was able to provide training and capacity development for 180 social service workforce professionals in psychological first aid, psychosocial support in emergencies, child sensitive communication and ‘do no harm’ approaches. This support expanded the overstretched capacity of the state system.



### Armenia

Zarine, a social worker, visits the Sahakyan family in December 2023 in the town of Abovyan, Armenia, where the family fled following an escalation of hostilities in their home community. UNICEF and partners have provided much-needed psychological first aid and psychosocial support to the refugee families and have helped build the capacity of the social workforce to assist them.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023

- 
**Activation and scale-up** of contingency partnerships with several local organizations
- 
**180 front-line social service workforce** professionals developed their capacities in psychological first aid, psychosocial support in emergencies, child-sensitive communication and ‘do no harm’ approaches.
- 
**1,523 children** received individual case management

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



# UGANDA

**Through global humanitarian thematic funding, UNICEF was able to provide life-saving assistance to 21,285 severely wasted children.**

UNICEF, through flexible global humanitarian thematic funding, provided life-saving assistance to 21,285 children with severe wasting in the Karamoja subregion in 2023. With severe climate challenges and economic hardship, the subregion experienced a critical malnutrition crisis, with 11.3 per cent of children suffering from wasting in 2023. This surpassed emergency thresholds and required urgent action.

UNICEF launched a targeted intervention in the hardest-hit districts of Karamoja: Kaabong, Kotido, Moroto and Nabilatuk. UNICEF supported district health teams, health facilities and village health teams, enabling them to conduct monthly integrated outreach, aiming to swiftly identify and enroll children with severe wasting into either inpatient or outpatient care programmes. The outreach delivered vital services directly to children in remote areas (around 30–40 km from the nearest health facility): nutrition assessments and screening and treatment for severe wasting, malaria and other childhood illnesses. Altogether, around 150,000 children aged 6–59 months were screened.

Severely wasted children with medical complications received treatment in nine inpatient treatment centres; those without medical complications were treated in the region’s 147 outpatient treatment sites. Because it provided intensive support that encompassed coaching and mentorship of health workers, the programme contributed to improved quality of care for severe wasting, and more than 90 per cent of children in inpatient sites were successfully treated. Seventy-three per cent of children receiving outpatient treatment were discharged as cured, a positive result driven by the active engagement of village health teams, local leaders and health workers in following up with caregivers of children receiving treatment – and by continuous availability of ready-to-use therapeutic food in health facilities offering outpatient treatment.

Complementing these efforts, UNICEF positioned five district-based nutrition officers to enhance the planning, implementation and monitoring of mass screenings, integrated outreach, directly observed treatment (DOT) for ready-to-use therapeutic food and the thorough documentation and reporting of nutrition data. This comprehensive approach aimed to alleviate the immediate crisis and lay the groundwork for sustainable health improvements in Karamoja.

As part of the investments aimed at preventing wasting as well as improving care, the programme also reached 65,200 primary caregivers of children aged 0–23 months with infant and young child feeding counselling. This was achieved through trained health workers and community health workers who utilized counselling cards and job aids.

A global humanitarian thematic funding allocation of \$240,000 contributed to the above achievements and enabled the programme to reach many more children than the 11,000 initially targeted.



## Uganda

Ichumara Rachele eats ready-to-use therapeutic food at the Moroto Regional Referral Hospital in the Karamoja subregion, Uganda, in July 2023. UNICEF has provided assessment tools as well as treatment supplies, including ready-to-use therapeutic food, F-75 and F-100.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023



### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023





# SRI LANKA

**Global humanitarian thematic funding allowed the Sri Lanka Country Office to support continuity in essential child protection services and invest in strengthening the child protection system to sustain its capacities in the longer term.**

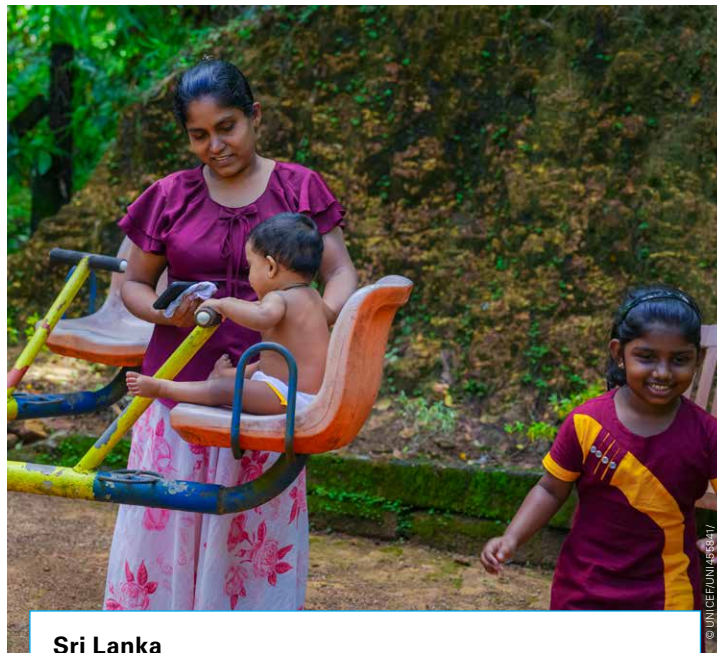
Economic crisis in Sri Lanka – which began in 2019 and then intensified when the country defaulted on its debt in 2022 – has disproportionately affected poor and vulnerable children and families, who have had to cope with rampant inflation contributing to declining real incomes, increases in health care costs and extended school closures. The economic crisis has also increased the proportion of the population suffering from acute food insecurity. Heightened poverty and vulnerability have created concerns for the protection of children: for example, families struggling to make ends meet tend to request placements of their children in institutional care. Additionally, violence against children continues at home, at school and in the community, with the risk of an increase in cases due to greater economic stress on families.

At the same time, the ability of Sri Lanka’s child protection authorities to respond to protection concerns has been constrained by weak child protection systems; low availability of funding for front-line services; and delayed/uncertain fund disbursements to relevant authorities.

UNICEF, as the protection sector lead in the country, guided the development of humanitarian programmes to address gaps in protection services for children and women. For its own response, UNICEF required around \$2.5 million to provide a comprehensive child protection response to the crisis in 2023 but was only able to mobilize \$933,136 for the entire sector. Of the funds mobilized, around \$401,000 (43 per cent) was global humanitarian thematic funding.

UNICEF supported the delivery of key child protection services related to case management and supported strengthening families and boosting their resilience. Humanitarian thematic funding enabled UNICEF to reach 682 children with family-strengthening support services that prevented family separation and supported deinstitutionalization and 790 children with individual psychosocial support. Global humanitarian thematic funding also helped ensure uninterrupted operation of the 1929 ChildLine by providing additional human resources and relevant infrastructure that supported guidance and referral to follow-up services.

These results contributed to the overall outcome of more children, especially the most vulnerable, benefiting from child-friendly services and positive social norms that can better prevent family separation and protect children from violence and exploitation in all settings.



### Sri Lanka

A mother engages her baby in play in a child-friendly area at a UNICEF-supported health facility in Kuruwita Division in Rathnapura, Sri Lanka, in October 2023. Her baby receives regular check-ups at the clinic.

### Humanitarian thematic funding, including global humanitarian thematic funding, contributed to the following results in 2023



**682 children** benefited from family strengthening services that prevented family separation and supported deinstitutionalization



**790 children** received individual psychosocial support



**Uninterrupted operation** of the 1929 ChildLine ensured

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



## EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE

### Global humanitarian thematic funding bolstered regional staff capacity in preparedness and disaster risk reduction and helped fill several cross-sectoral emergency preparedness and response capacity gaps, including in disability in emergencies and in technology for development.

A crucial element of the agenda of the East Asia and Pacific Regional Office is strengthening country-level emergency preparedness, which is a lynchpin to the well-being of children and families in this disaster-prone region that is also one of the most highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. During the year, global humanitarian thematic funding enabled various types of support to the regional office, and to country offices in the region, to make stronger preparedness a reality.

Some of the 2023 GHTF allocation (or other humanitarian thematic funds) supported staff in various capacities. These staff included a seconded staff member specialized in risk analysis and preparedness. This individual provided technical support for strengthening risk assessment and horizon scanning at the country and regional levels and reviewed existing plans on the Emergency Preparedness Platform, providing guidance on how to address shortfalls and improve country-level readiness. GHTF also went towards an emergency specialist focused on preparedness, and an emergency specialist in disaster risk reduction. The latter staff post helped UNICEF country offices in Cambodia and the Philippines to embed climate and disaster-risk-informed approaches into their new country programmes and also supported collaboration (under the Connecting Business Initiative) with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for the first-ever regional consultation with key business networks from the region.

Global humanitarian thematic funding also enabled in-person trainings on emergency preparedness and response in five country offices (Indonesia, Mongolia, the Pacific Islands Multi-Country Office, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines) and provide in-person technical support to Myanmar. It enabled active support to Cambodia to be the first pilot in the region to conduct subnational climate change and disaster-risk-modelling, providing a multi-hazard and multisectoral analysis to strengthen risk-informed development programming and emergency preparedness.

Boosting staff capacity in preparedness and disaster risk reduction was twinned with providing life-saving support when several sudden-onset emergencies struck countries in the region during the year. With available GHTF, the regional office was able to release funds to help country offices in the region swiftly initiate life-saving emergency support to children and their families in the wake of sudden-onset emergencies in Vanuatu (Cyclones Judy and Kevin), Myanmar (Cyclone Mocha) and Mongolia (floods in Ulaanbaatar). The presence of global humanitarian thematic funding allowed UNICEF to rapidly deploy staff and supplies to the affected areas. The flexible GHTF allocation also enabled the regional office to support country offices in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and Papua New Guinea to implement critical preparedness activities.

WASH humanitarian preparedness and response in the region also received a significant boost from global humanitarian thematic funding in 2023. These flexible funds helped the regional office mobilize additional personnel to aid in WASH-related capacity building and support country offices in strengthening WASH preparedness. GHTF also supported the Thailand Country Office in its WASH response along the Thailand–Myanmar border.

Lastly, global humanitarian thematic funding contributed to filling regional cross-sectoral emergency preparedness and response capacity gaps, complementing funds provided by the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to co-fund a disability in emergencies consultant and a technology for development consultant; and contributed to the salary of an inter-agency PSEA Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Region, hosted by UNHCR.

#### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



## WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE

**With global humanitarian thematic funding, the West and Central Africa regional office helped critical high-risk countries prepare for emergencies and carry out simulations to refine their plans.**

In West and Central Africa, recent years have shown clearly that emergencies and the rapid deterioration of existing crises can occur without warning, in any country. From escalating conflict in Mali, to flood levels unseen in 60 years in the Congo, Marburg virus in Equatorial Guinea and political upheaval in a number of countries, UNICEF must continue to seek a response that is fast, efficient and appropriate to the context.

In 2023, the West and Central Africa Regional Office emergency section focused significant attention on supporting high-risk countries with preparedness evaluations, contingency planning and emergency response simulations. The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria – three very different countries with very different capacities for emergency response, yet all with the high risk of annual recurring floods – undertook emergency response simulations for floods scenarios.

The goal of the simulation exercises was to ensure that UNICEF and its partners have measures in place to effectively respond. In Nigeria, the UNICEF country office had recently developed common contingency plans and risk analyses with the Government, covering much of the country. Through UNICEF support to government departments in fulfilling their department’s role in an emergency, the simulation exercise was able to identify gaps, misunderstandings and essential steps to take to ensure that UNICEF and its partners are well positioned to respond. The simulation exercises were carried out throughout the country.

In Ghana, the country office is currently monitoring the influx of refugees from Burkina Faso and the risk of the potential spill-over of conflict there into the northern regions of the country. Given this, the regional office supported the country office in the simulation of a combined refugee and flooding response and helped it analyse how the existing programmes and footprint of UNICEF could be adapted to respond to changes in the context – and therefore the changing needs of children – in a multi-risk environment.

In a region that has seen such rapid changes in humanitarian needs in recent years, critical emergency preparedness steps can mean the difference between a fast, efficient and appropriate response to a crisis – and having trucks of critical supplies tied up with importation challenges, or realizing in the middle of a crisis that key partners are no longer accepted by communities in certain areas. While preparedness for emergencies depends on contextual factors that vary greatly from country to country, UNICEF has developed global and regional tools to enable country offices to critique, test and improve their risk analysis and response systems. UNICEF will always work for the best possible outcomes for children – but at the same time try and prepare for the worst-case scenarios, to ensure that no child is left behind when emergencies unfold or intensify.

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023



“The driving force behind our partnership with UNICEF is the potential for meaningful impact on a global scale. Through Adyen’s donation solution, which offers a seamless way for our merchants and their consumers to generate funds for UNICEF’s flexible funding and global humanitarian thematic funding, we help ensure vital aid reaches those who need it most, precisely when they need it. Adyen’s ability to swiftly unlock these funds, coupled with UNICEF’s rapid and effective response in times of crisis, ensures that critical support reaches vulnerable children and families worldwide. It’s an effort we are proud and humbled to support, and one that we hope many other partners will continue to contribute to going forward.”

**MS. DOMINIQUE SIMONS, HEAD OF IMPACT, ADYEN**

## REGIONAL OFFICE FOR SOUTH ASIA

**Global humanitarian thematic funding enabled capacity-building for UNICEF staff in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and for members of the regional surge roster.**

South Asia – at high risk for humanitarian crises and disasters, and extremely exposed to climate-related emergencies – is home to more than 625 million children, many of them at risk of exposure to sudden-onset and protracted emergencies including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts and public health emergencies, as well as economic crises, political turmoil and malnutrition. In 2023, more than 55 million children in South Asia required humanitarian assistance. The emergencies that impact children do not respect boundaries, and a cross-border, multisectoral response is often required. It is essential to ensure that UNICEF has enough trained staff to respond to sudden-onset and protracted humanitarian emergencies.

Global humanitarian thematic funding, along with other resources, went towards significant training efforts in the region in 2023. By the end of the year, the Regional Office for South Asia emergency team had trained 225 UNICEF staff, 15 partner staff, and 30 government counterparts, including regional surge roster staff, on

emergency preparedness and response through nine trainings held in five different countries. Following the trainings, the Bangladesh Country Office also rolled out emergency preparedness and response trainings in UNICEF field offices and for partner staff. Through this, an additional 240 people, including 56 UNICEF staff, 45 partner staff and 139 government counterparts were also trained on emergency preparedness and response.

Training sessions covered humanitarian principles, framework and planning, coordination implementation and performance monitoring.

### Added value of global humanitarian thematic funding as a critical resource for response in 2023

57.3%

■ Global humanitarian thematic funding ■ Country thematic funding ■ Non-thematic funding



“We are proud to partner with UNICEF, to support their important work to provide essential humanitarian relief to protect children in crisis. We look forward to continuing to work together to support the mental health and well-being of young people around the world.”

**MS. KATARINA BERG, CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER, SPOTIFY**



“Sweden is proud to contribute to UNICEF’s important humanitarian work to save lives, alleviate suffering and uphold the human dignity of children in armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies. I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation for UNICEF staff who often work under extremely challenging circumstances to reach out to children in Ukraine, in Gaza and worldwide. Swedish flexible multi-year funding enables UNICEF to rapidly address emerging and worsening crises. It is a prerequisite for UNICEF to be able to respond rapidly or scale up in new or worsening crises. We would welcome more donors, including in the private sector, to increase their humanitarian assistance in light of growing humanitarian needs.”

**H.E. MR. JOHAN FORSELL, MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND FOREIGN TRADE, SWEDEN**

# GLOBAL SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Staffing for the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict

In August 2023, UNICEF allocated \$2 million in global humanitarian thematic funds as a step in realizing one of UNICEF's three commitments announced at the Oslo Conference on Protecting Children in Armed Conflict: the allocation of internal resources to contribute towards personnel costs in country and regional offices that have accountabilities for the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations of child rights. The \$2 million went to 22 country offices and two regional offices for personnel carrying out the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. The following country offices received allocations: Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia,

South Sudan, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, together with the Middle East and North Africa and the West and Central Africa regional offices.

This allocation reflects UNICEF's steadfast commitment to supporting all its teams in delivering on this Security Council mandate that is core to our child rights mission. The use of global humanitarian thematic funding also demonstrates UNICEF's leadership at the front line of protecting children in armed conflict, one of the most politically challenging elements of our work. Carrying out our role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism requires a whole-of-office engagement, including support to the colleagues whose full-time work is interviewing and documenting the experiences of children in war.



### Mali

Children play in a child-friendly space at a site for internally displaced people about 10 km from Gao, Mali, in August 2023. Nearly 3,000 displaced people, half of them children, have fled violence, conflict and/or food insecurity to find refuge at this site.

## Humanitarian capacity and leadership

Humanitarian leadership and building humanitarian capacity – key recommendation areas of the Humanitarian Review – are so important for upholding children’s rights and bringing results for children living through emergencies. Thanks to global humanitarian thematic funding (among other resources), the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes continued to lead the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop series, a learning initiative designed to better prepare and equip UNICEF senior managers – those with significant responsibilities leading teams in humanitarian response in the field – to better respond to these emergencies.

During the year, the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop series showcased enhancements in tools and approaches, notably integrating AGORA as an enrolment platform and Microsoft Teams for webinars and improving learning content aggregation via its Learning Management System. Altogether, 100 senior managers

were trained through the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop in 2023. Other capacity development advances included revision of a 30-module UNICEF Emergency Preparedness and Response course to make the existing ecosystem of emergency learning more coherent and focused. UNICEF also set up a humanitarian learning channel that provides access to more than 200 certified courses linked to humanitarian response. Additionally, staff in 70 country offices received training on the Emergency Procedures for Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 crises.

Global humanitarian thematic funding has been an important component of funding for the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop series since its development and launch in 2020 – an example of how flexible funding pays forward dividends throughout the UNICEF response, making children’s lives better not only today, but tomorrow.



“Having been involved with UNICEF since 2011, we have been repeatedly impressed with their reach, transparency and experience in truly eliciting long term sustainable change. Together with the ELEVA Foundation, we hope to enable them to achieve even more for the hardest-to-reach children. This is a long-term commitment and is one of the major driving forces behind ELEVA Capital; the whole team are involved in the selection of specific UNICEF projects.”

**ERIC BENDAAN, CEO & FOUNDER, ELEVA CAPITAL**



### Niger

A UNICEF staff member engages with a group of children in the village of Kornaka, in southern Niger.

# PREPAREDNESS FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION



## Bangladesh

In early May 2023, staff at the UNICEF warehouse in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, prepare menstrual hygiene kits for distribution ahead of Cyclone Mocha, which made landfall in the country on 14 May 2023. UNICEF was ready to distribute clean water, therapeutic milk, learning supplies, shelter materials and hygiene essentials to respond swiftly to the crisis.

UNICEF has two dedicated funding initiatives for emergency preparedness, the First Action Initiative and the Co-Funding Initiative. These initiatives have enabled important investments in the preparedness capacity of UNICEF and its partners. The First Action Initiative provides seed investments for preparedness and early action and contributes to a more environmentally sustainable approach because investments are expected to result in significant savings in terms of funding, time and carbon dioxide emissions (due to the pre-positioning of supplies in key areas). The Co-Funding Initiative provides seed money to regional and country offices for preparedness interventions, with those

offices also contributing resources. In 2023, global humanitarian thematic funding was a critical source of funds for these two important emergency preparedness initiatives. In 2023, UNICEF allocated \$11.1 million for preparedness through the two initiatives, with \$6.9 million of this coming from GHTF. These funds went to 26 country offices, three regional offices and one subregional response. The GHTF allocations were accompanied by \$4 million from UNICEF regional and country offices (through the Co-Funding Initiative), and with funding specifically earmarked for preparedness for gender-based violence response.

# Annex 2: Financial Report<sup>1</sup>

The humanitarian needs of children continued to grow in 2023, with children suffering from new and protracted conflicts, climate shocks, public health emergencies, food insecurity and devastating earthquakes.

The 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal sought \$10.26 billion to assist 110.3 million children in need in 155 countries and territories. By the end of 2023, total humanitarian requirements had risen to \$11.10 billion. This \$0.84 billion increase was due primarily to new conflicts and the escalation of protracted conflicts; climate-related emergencies (floods, droughts, cyclones); earthquakes; and economic downturns in countries already experiencing emergencies.<sup>2</sup> During the year, new appeals were issued to respond to a cholera outbreak in Malawi in January, earthquakes in Türkiye in February and the refugee crisis in Armenia in September.

As of 31 December 2023, UNICEF had received \$3.48 billion in humanitarian funding<sup>3</sup> for the 2023 appeal, or 31 per cent of the total required funds. During the year, humanitarian needs and the demand for resources outpaced financial support from donors. UNICEF humanitarian programmes benefited from emergency funding as well as other resources that helped to achieve results for children in 2023.

**The top 10 resource partners**, providing \$2.13 billion in emergency funding, accounted for 72 per cent of all emergency funding in 2023 – similar to 71 per cent provided by the top 10 resources partners in 2022. The top 10 resource partners in 2023 were as follows (from highest contribution amount): the United States of America, the European Commission, the Central Emergency Response Fund, Japan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, Sweden, the United States Fund for UNICEF, the German Committee for UNICEF and Norway. Of the top 10 resource partners, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States increased their contributions

## Terminology

**Contributions received:** Cash and contributions in kind received from resource partners within a calendar year

**Humanitarian funding:** Emergency funding (other resources – emergency) from private and public resource partners and other types of funding from public sector resource partners that support UNICEF’s humanitarian response

**Multi-year funding:** A contribution agreement with validity of two years or more, and an amended contribution agreement where validity changed to two years or more

**Public sector resource partners** include governments, inter-governmental organizations and inter-organizational arrangements.

**Private sector resource partners** include UNICEF National Committees, private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices and donations by individuals.

**Adequate and quality humanitarian funding mobilized in a timely and predictable manner to support anticipatory action and the response to humanitarian crises**

1 All figures in the report are based on contributions received.

2 Funding requirements for Haiti, Mexico and Central America: Children on the move and other crises, Mali, the Middle East and North Africa region, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian refugees and the West and Central Africa region were increased; requirements for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, South Sudan and Yemen decreased following alignment with the inter-agency humanitarian response plans.

3 The \$3.48 billion in humanitarian funding received in 2023 includes emergency funding as well as \$513.8 million in other resources – regular that was dedicated to humanitarian responses. Also included is \$3.98 million that was received in insurance payouts through the Today and Tomorrow Initiative for humanitarian responses to tropical cyclone-induced emergencies that occurred in Bangladesh, Fiji, Madagascar, Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.



in 2023 compared with 2022. Norway not only increased its contributions by 85 per cent, but also started a new window for underfunded emergencies as part of its overall funding to UNICEF.

**Public sector resource partners** continued to provide the majority of humanitarian funding, contributing \$2.99 billion, 86 per cent of all humanitarian funding received in 2023. In 2023, there was a slight reduction in the number of donors providing contributions above \$100 million to UNICEF humanitarian response: six public sector resource partners provided contributions above \$100 million,<sup>4</sup> together making up 63 per cent of emergency funding,<sup>5</sup> compared with seven in 2022. Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Kuwait, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and the United Nations Development Programme increased their emergency contributions by a collective \$257 million. At the same time, 40 public sector resource partners decreased their funding by a collective \$555.8 million.

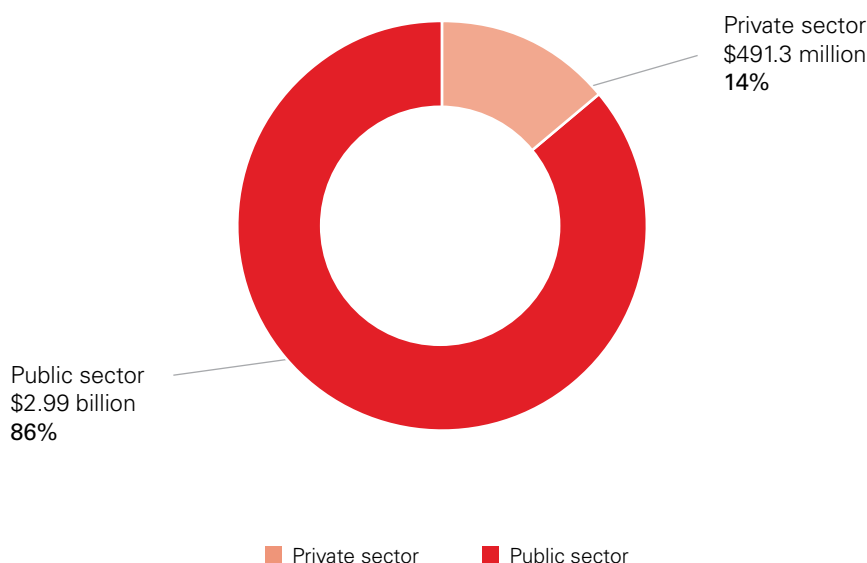
Funding from **private sector resource partners** reached \$491.3 million in 2023, or 14 per cent of humanitarian funding. This share is a return to historical trendlines from prior to 2022 (a year when the share provided by private sector resource partners was 26 per cent, a reflection of the remarkable level of private sector funding supporting the humanitarian response to the war in Ukraine and the

related refugee crisis). The top five private sector resource partners in 2023 – the UNICEF National Committees in Germany, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States – provided \$285.6 million, or 58 per cent of all private sector resources raised for humanitarian response.

Despite rapidly growing needs, funding for the humanitarian response to meet those needs has struggled to keep pace. In 2023, unequal funding across emergencies and sectors once again hampered humanitarian actors' ability to respond. UNICEF analysed crises through the lens of their severity and their response funding needs and developed a list of crises that required additional attention and support. People affected by these emergencies<sup>6</sup> accounted for around half of all people identified as in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023.<sup>7</sup>

Of the humanitarian funding received in 2023, 50 per cent was aimed at supporting humanitarian response to seven crises: those in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian refugees crisis, Türkiye (earthquake response) and Ukraine and the refugee response. Only four of these crises (those in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic) were among the emergencies UNICEF had identified mid-2023 as needing more attention and support.<sup>8</sup>

FIGURE A2-1: Humanitarian contributions received in 2023, by partner group



4 Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the European Commission.

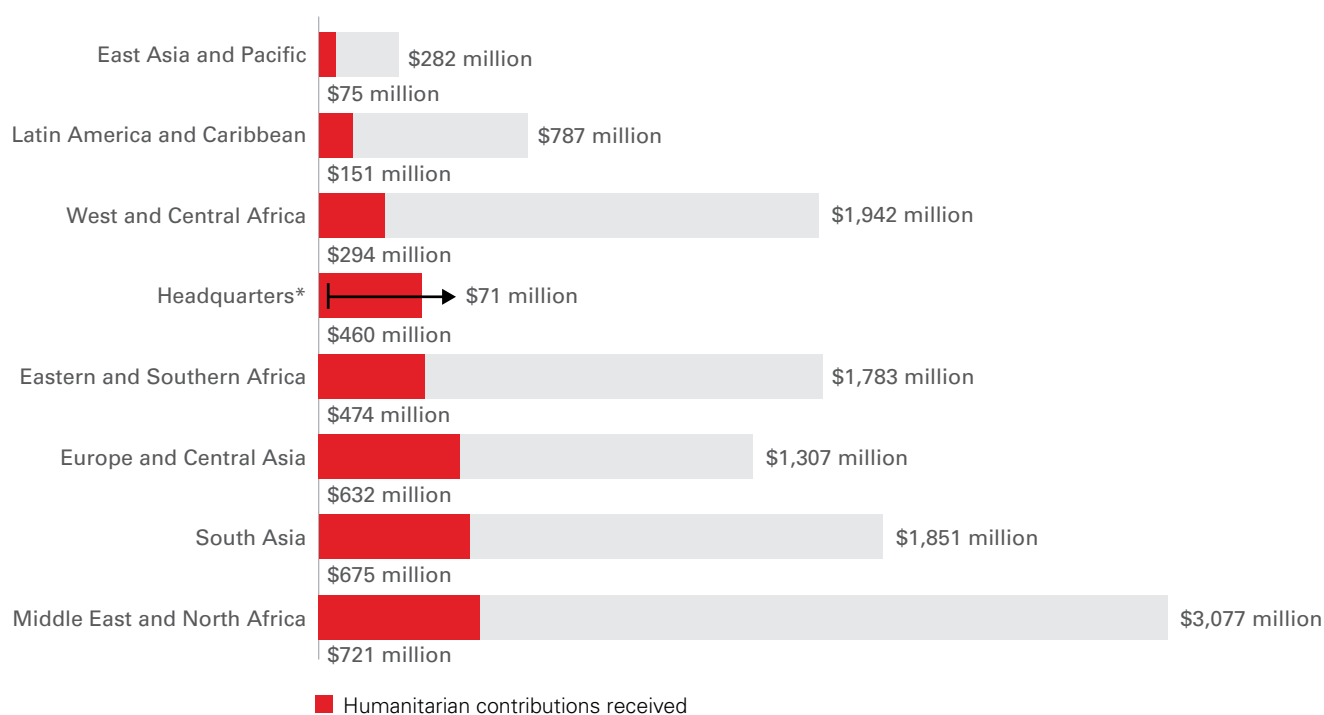
5 In 2022, seven public sector resource partners provided contributions above \$100 million that together comprised 57 per cent of the emergency funding (Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, CERF, the European Commission and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance).

6 Identified in the June list of emergencies requiring more attention and support.

7 Based on 2023 fundraising needs and on scale and scope, urgency and complexity and response capacity of UNICEF regional and country offices. See the lists at <[www.unicef.org/emergencies/11-emergencies-need-more-support-2023](http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/11-emergencies-need-more-support-2023)> and <[www.unicef.org/documents/humanitarian-action-2023-mid-year-snapshot](http://www.unicef.org/documents/humanitarian-action-2023-mid-year-snapshot)>. Additionally, in partnership with the European Union mission to the United Nations, UNICEF conducted a series of sessions on underfunded crises.

8 The other eight, though accounting for 24 per cent of the total funding requirements, shared only 13 per cent of contributions.

FIGURE A2-2: Humanitarian contributions received in 2023, by region, compared with appeal requirements



\*Contributions received for the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for ACT-A were received at the headquarters level.

In 2023, however, there was an overall increase of \$327.7 million for the group of crises identified as needing more attention and support, compared with 2022 funding received for these crises. This \$327.7 million increase came from public sector resource partners, and the increase included \$185.1 million for Afghanistan, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Increases in funding for these appeals were linked to the steep deterioration of the humanitarian situation for children in these countries or the sudden onset of new emergencies there.

**Flexible humanitarian thematic contributions** (country, regional and global)<sup>9</sup> amounted to \$319.3 million in 2023. These are flexible funds available for countries and at the global level to address equity in humanitarian response by allowing for UNICEF flexibility in their use, to cover critical funding gaps and meet the greatest needs. Out of the total \$319.3 million in flexible humanitarian thematic contributions received, \$178.8 million (56 per cent) was for five crises: those in Pakistan, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye (earthquake response) and Ukraine and the refugee response. Out of 52 appeals active in 2023, only 37 benefited from the flexibility country and regional thematic funding can bring, and of these, 11 appeals shared 95 per cent of the total thematic funding, leaving the other 26 to share 5 per cent.

Flexible humanitarian thematic contributions received from public sector partners amounted to \$87.8 million in 2023, an increase of \$11.3 million compared with 2022. Public sector resource partners who increased their contributions of flexible humanitarian thematic funding included Denmark, Estonia and Germany. Canada returned as a donor of flexible humanitarian thematic funding after last providing this type of funding in 2021. Despite the increase in the amount of humanitarian thematic contributions from public sector resource partners in 2023, there was a decrease in the number of public sector resource partners who gave this type of funding.

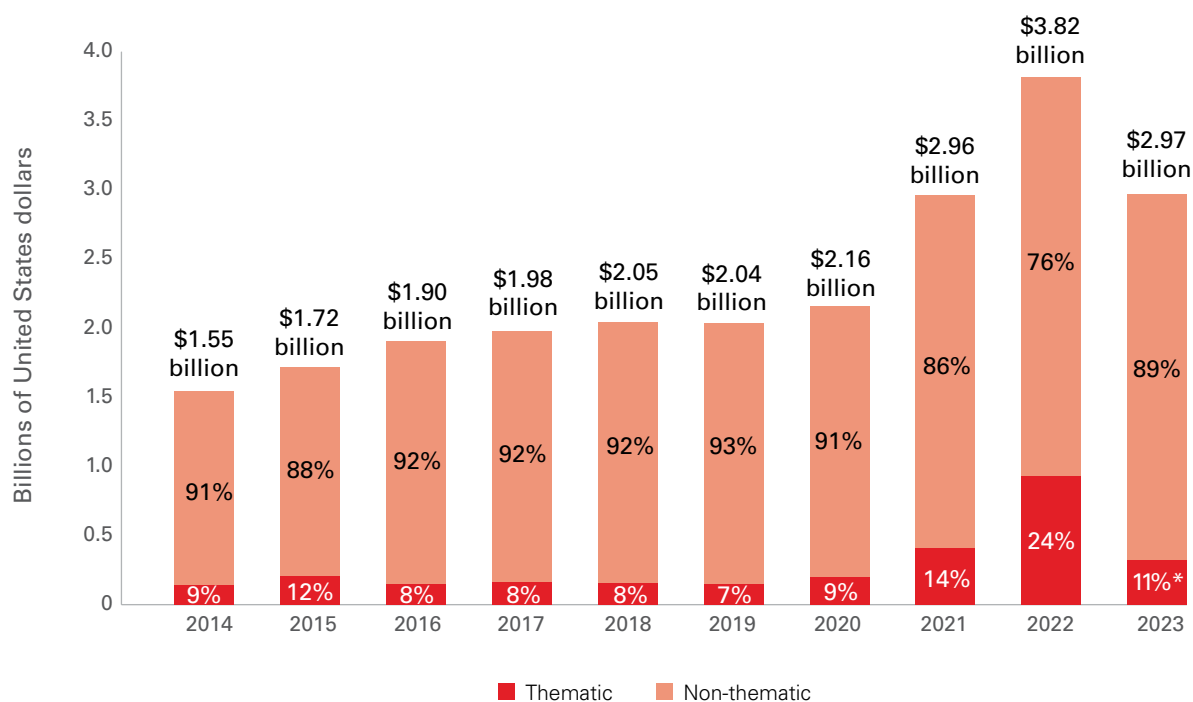
Thematic contributions from private sector resource partners amounted to \$231.6 million, providing a much-needed level of flexibility in the humanitarian response to sudden-onset emergencies, including the earthquake responses in the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, the response to floods in Libya and to meet various intensifying needs in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen, and for the response in Ukraine and refugee-receiving countries.

**Global humanitarian thematic funding** (GHTF) is the most flexible type of resources after core resources. UNICEF received \$96.7 million in GHTF in 2023 (3.3 per cent of all emergency funding),<sup>10</sup> a response to UNICEF's advocacy for GHTF and resource partners' enthusiasm for giving flexible emergency funding to fulfil their Grand

<sup>9</sup> Humanitarian thematic funding is fully flexible within the humanitarian appeal for which it was raised. In 2022, flexible thematic contributions reached \$928 million, 77 per cent earmarked for the Ukraine and refugee outflow and ACT-A appeals.

<sup>10</sup> For more information on global humanitarian thematic funds, please see Annex 1: Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding 2023.

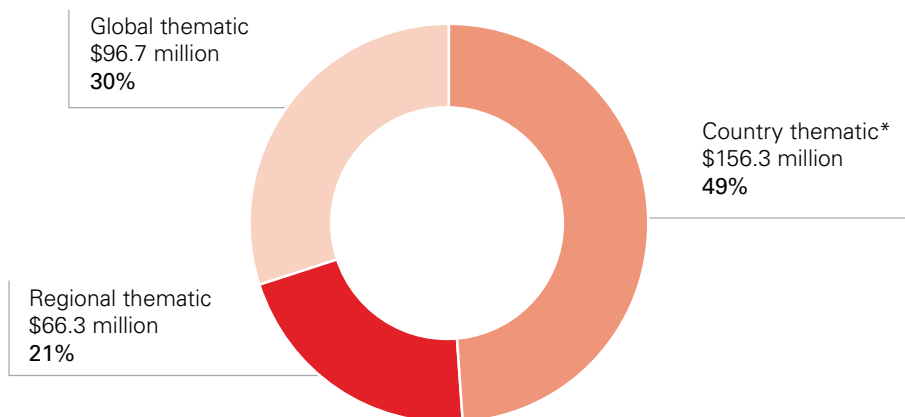
FIGURE A2-3: Contributions to other resources – emergency, 2014–2023, by thematic and non-thematic funding



\* 2023 thematic funding – Through the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, \$3.98 million was received in insurance payouts to respond to tropical cyclone-induced emergencies that occurred in Bangladesh, Fiji, Madagascar, Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This funding was received through the UNICEF National Committees in France (\$450,166); Germany (\$1.4 million); Ireland (\$448,753); Luxembourg (\$85,279); and the United Kingdom (\$1.5 million).

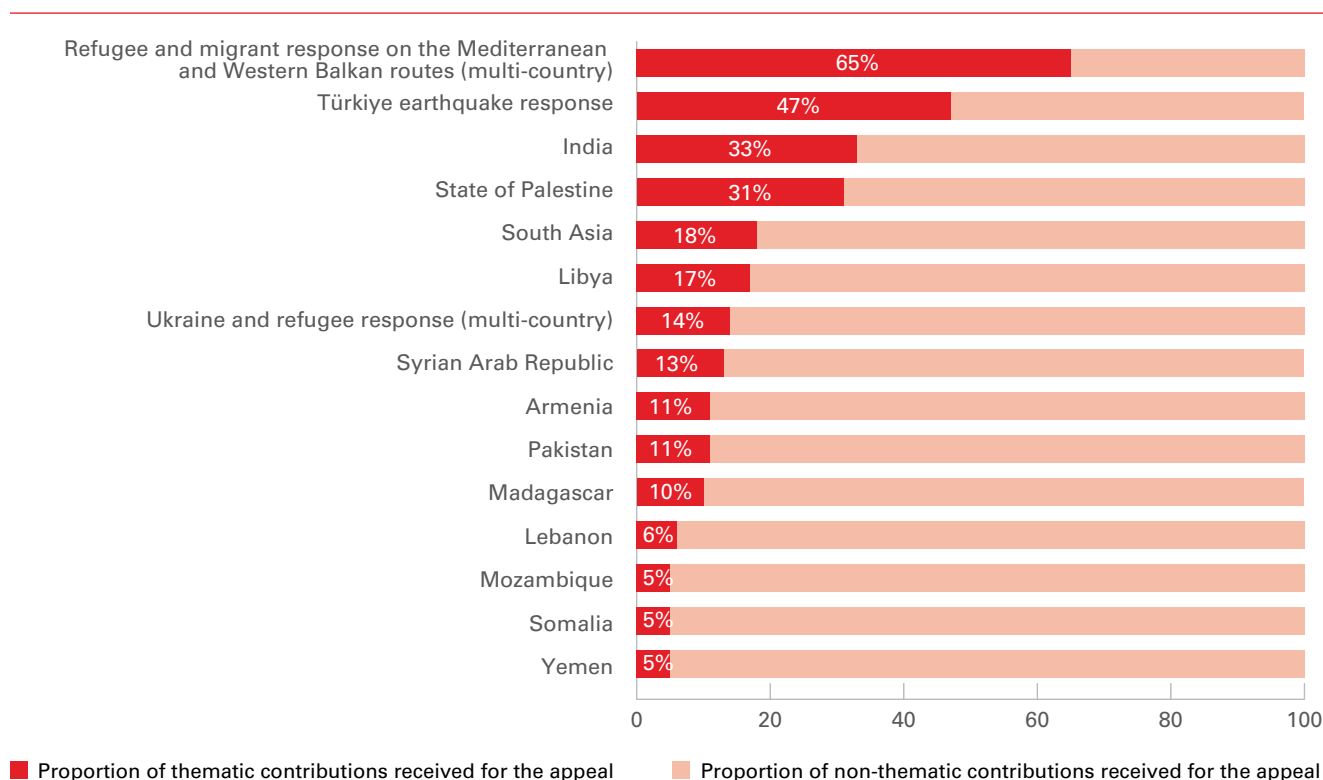
FIGURE A2-4: Humanitarian thematic funding contributions, by designated level (country, regional and global), 2023

Other resources – emergency



\* 2023 thematic funding – Through the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, \$3.98 million was received in insurance payouts to respond to tropical cyclone-induced emergencies that occurred in Bangladesh, Fiji, Madagascar, Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This funding was received through the UNICEF National Committees in France (\$450,166); Germany (\$1.4 million); Ireland (\$448,753); Luxembourg (\$85,279); and the United Kingdom (\$1.5 million).

FIGURE A2-5: Appeals with the highest proportion of thematic funding received, 2023  
Humanitarian funding, excluding GHTF allocations



Bargain commitments on flexible funding. Public sector resource partners contributed \$62.9 million to GHTF, and private sector resource partners contributed \$33.9 million. Resource partners who increased their support to GHTF included Germany and UNICEF National Committees in Australia, Denmark, Finland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Canada, as well as UNICEF National Committees in Germany, Hong Kong, Norway, Poland and New Zealand, gave to GHTF in 2023 after not providing this type of funding in 2022. GHTF played a catalytic role in humanitarian responses in 78 crises-affected countries in all regions; including ensuring timely responses to cholera outbreaks in Afghanistan, Haiti and Malawi. Allocations of GHTF were key to responding to earthquakes in Afghanistan, Nepal, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye; and in meeting children’s needs amid the rapid deterioration of security in Haiti and the sudden escalation of hostilities and war in the Sudan and the State of Palestine. In 2023, GHTF was essential for UNICEF to strengthen preparedness at the country and regional levels and provided timely funding to cover critical gaps in its emergency responses.<sup>11</sup>

In 2023, UNICEF received a total of \$153.01 million for 39 countries from the **Central Emergency Response Fund**, second-highest amount among all recipients. Humanitarian

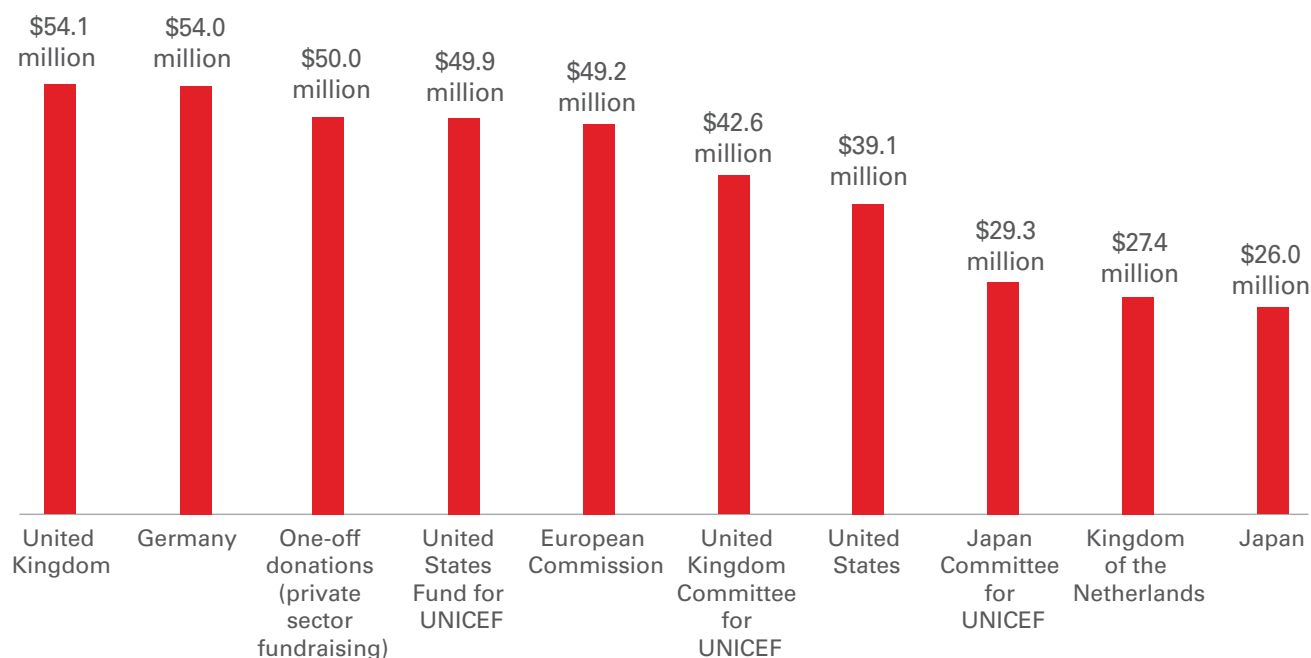
responses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic together accounted for 27 per cent of CERF allocations to UNICEF. Thirty per cent of CERF allocations were for climate-related emergencies (floods, drought, cyclones). CERF Rapid Response (RR) allocations were pivotal and were the first public sector funding received to kick-start the humanitarian response to the devastating earthquakes in Türkiye and among the first for the Syrian Arab Republic. For UNICEF responses in the State of Palestine and in the Sudan, CERF RR funding was the first funding received. CERF underfunded emergency allocations were instrumental in promoting funding equity across emergencies and sectors; these allocations included 10 of the emergencies identified by UNICEF as needing more attention and support during the year.<sup>12</sup> Overall, CERF funding helped UNICEF deliver a principled humanitarian response, with a focus on such cross-cutting areas as gender equity (e.g., in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Myanmar) and inclusive programming to ensure a focus on girls and children with disabilities in its humanitarian responses (e.g., in Bangladesh, Mozambique, Myanmar and the Pacific Islands).

Allocations of country-based pooled funds to UNICEF amounted to \$27.8 million to eight countries.<sup>13</sup>

11 For more information on allocations of the global humanitarian thematic funds to specific crises, please see Annex 1: Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding 2023.  
12 See the lists at <[www.unicef.org/emergencies/11-emergencies-need-more-support-2023](http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/11-emergencies-need-more-support-2023)> and <[www.unicef.org/documents/humanitarian-action-2023-mid-year-snapshot](http://www.unicef.org/documents/humanitarian-action-2023-mid-year-snapshot)>.  
13 Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

FIGURE A2-6: Top 10 resource partners for multi-year contributions, 2023

Other resources – emergency



### Joining efforts with other United Nations organizations

was critical to UNICEF's humanitarian response. Within these partnerships, UNICEF received \$43 million through UN-to-UN transfer agreements in 2023 to support children in humanitarian emergencies. Through this funding modality, United Nations organizations leverage each other's expertise and unique reach to assist the most vulnerable people, especially at the onset of emergencies.

In 2023, UNICEF received \$425.7 million in funding from **international financial institutions** to support countries with Humanitarian Action for Children appeals (compared with \$222.4 million received in 2022). Of this, \$11.6 million was emergency funding, including \$1.6 million in multi-year funding. International financial institutions, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank, are increasingly looking to UNICEF to be a key partner to help them remain engaged in crisis settings and ensure the continuation of basic services – including health, nutrition, WASH and education – as a means to provide life-saving support while preserving development gains.

As a signatory of the Grand Bargain, UNICEF continued in 2023 to advocate for quality funding for humanitarian action – emphasizing the need for multi-year,<sup>14</sup> unearmarked flexible funding. **Such types of funding should ideally become the norm, rather than the exception.** In 2023, UNICEF received \$698.8 million in multi-year funding. Although this amount is a decrease compared with

2022 – due to a notable drop in multi-year funding from private sector resource partners – public sector partners provided \$390.3 million in multi-year funding, a significant (50 percent) increase compared with 2022, approaching pre-COVID levels<sup>15</sup> and ensuring predictable funding for children. The top donors providing multi-year funding included Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Commission. Thirteen per cent (\$211.8 million) of all funding received for responses in the emergencies that require additional attention and support was multi-year funding, a good step towards ensuring continuity and predictability of services. As for **UNICEF's commitment to localization**, in 2023 a total of \$1.07 billion was transferred to implementing partners from emergency funding, of which \$458 million (or 43 per cent) was provided to local and national civil society organizations, exceeding the 25 per cent target established by Grand Bargain signatories.

**Respond to the increasingly complex and protracted humanitarian crises by mobilizing predictable, flexible and multi-year funding that is cascaded to implementing partners**

14 In line with the definition of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the term 'multi-year humanitarian funding' is defined here as funding with a duration of 24 months or more based on the start and end dates of the original formal funding agreement.

15 Public partners made \$426.2 million in multi-year contributions in 2018 and \$398.5 million in 2019.

In 2023, \$289.5 million in **core resources**, the most flexible type of resource at UNICEF, supported humanitarian programmes. One way core resources contribute to humanitarian response is via allocations from the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) loan mechanism, which fast-tracks resources to affected countries within 48 hours of a crisis. In 2023, **UNICEF provided \$87.9 million to 29 countries through this fund, a 22 per cent increase in such loans compared with 2022**. The record value of EPF loans issued in 2023 was in the context of the sudden onset of several new emergencies and the steep deterioration of ongoing and protracted crises that caused children’s needs to grow rapidly.

The overall funding level for humanitarian response reached only 31 per cent of total UNICEF humanitarian response requirements. This left many responses underfunded and compelled UNICEF to use other resources to address unmet needs of children. It also meant that some needs went unmet. Funding earmarked to a small group of crises impacts UNICEF’s ability to address the needs of children living through humanitarian crises. Funding earmarked for specific projects impacts the agility of the humanitarian response and creates critical funding gaps. **UNICEF strongly urges resource partners to provide flexible, equitable and multi-year funding – quality funding** – that not only enables swift and principled humanitarian response but also strengthens community resilience through preparedness and anticipatory action.

**TABLE A2-1: Top 20 emergency funding resource partners by contributions received, 2023**

Rank	Resource partners	Total (US\$)
1	United States	1,117,651,025
2	European Commission	174,495,933
3	Central Emergency Response Fund	155,222,137
4	Japan	147,383,498
5	United Kingdom	146,939,687
6	Germany	107,190,943
7	Sweden	78,583,910
8	United States Fund for UNICEF	72,216,593
9	German Committee for UNICEF	69,640,868
10	Norway	58,581,500
11	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	52,897,113
12	One-off donations (private sector fundraising)	50,000,000
13	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance	46,302,605
14	Canada	46,082,797
15	Japan Committee for UNICEF	40,808,598
16	Australia	35,407,015
17	Country-based pooled funds	34,513,701
18	Switzerland	32,304,759
19	France	30,913,064
20	Denmark	30,230,994

**TABLE A2-2: Top 20 emergency contributions received, 2023**

Rank	Grant description	Resource partners	Total (US\$)
1	Nutrition/global: Accelerated scale-up of detection and treatment for child wasting	United States	175,475,866
2	To address the humanitarian assistance needs of Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon	United States	53,770,222
3	Emergency funding for Ukraine crisis – winterization	One-off donations (private sector fundraising)	50,000,000
4	Scaling up multisectoral humanitarian response for internally displaced people and affected communities in Ukraine, including positioning of critical emergency supplies	United States	48,294,926
5	Multisectoral famine prevention interventions in Somalia	United States	40,709,788
6	To address the humanitarian assistance needs for Syrian refugees and host communities in Türkiye	United States	39,228,718
7	Provision of humanitarian assistance and life-saving protection to address vulnerable girls, boys, women and families affected by the war in Ukraine (Part I) and scaling up social and child protection for Ukrainian women, girls and boys in neighbouring countries (Part II)	Germany	37,593,985
8	Ethiopia crises 2 resilience with UNICEF	The United Kingdom	32,691,296
9	Contribution to UNICEF's global humanitarian thematic funding (GHTF) 2023	Germany	31,996,394
10	Multisectoral health, nutrition, WASH and child protection interventions to optimize health and nutrition outcomes for mothers and children in Yemen	The United Kingdom	31,365,989
11	Emergency assistance to conflict-affected populations in Ukraine	United States	28,481,088
12	Multisectoral humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people in Syria	United States	28,132,124
13	Provision of humanitarian nutrition, cash, WASH and protection assistance to the most vulnerable children, women and families in Afghanistan	United States	28,103,869
14	To address the humanitarian assistance needs for Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan	United States	26,269,060
15	Provide life-saving treatment to under five children with severe wasting in Ethiopia and food aid assistance for pregnant and lactating women and children under five	United States	25,234,811
16	Safe schools: Supporting Afghan girls and boys to access safe schools	UNDP USA	25,000,000
17	Support for emergency response to the Tigray crisis	United States	23,755,801
18	Enhanced delivery and access to basic health, nutrition, school feeding, child protection and WASH services for vulnerable girls and boys and their families, while reducing the spread of COVID-19, and building local capacities and resilience	United States	21,336,209
19	Scaling multisectoral humanitarian response for children and internally displaced persons in affected communities in Ukraine	Japan	21,262,500
20	In support of UNICEF's activities in Bangladesh outlined in the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Bangladesh	United States	21,003,975

**TABLE A2-3: Thematic funding\*\* contributions by resource partner to humanitarian action, 2023**

Resource partner type	Resource partner	Total (US\$)	Percentage of total
Private sector 72.51%	United States Fund for UNICEF	49,770,614	15.59%
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	41,795,008	13.09%
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	24,841,093	7.78%
	German Committee for UNICEF	18,597,881	5.82%
	Fundraising by UNICEF country offices	17,387,348	5.44%
	Italian Committee for UNICEF – Foundation Onlus	12,232,644	3.83%
	UNICEF Ireland	11,003,638	3.45%
	French Committee for UNICEF	9,086,137	2.85%
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	5,719,753	1.79%
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	5,245,033	1.64%
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	4,468,185	1.40%
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	4,298,238	1.35%
	Canadian UNICEF Committee	4,113,484	1.29%
	Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited	4,013,048	1.26%
	Danish Foundation for UNICEF	3,411,926	1.07%
	Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF	2,533,561	0.79%
	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	2,004,201	0.63%
	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	1,731,514	0.54%
	Polish National Committee for UNICEF	1,390,213	0.44%
	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	1,388,777	0.43%
	Turkish National Committee for UNICEF	1,352,090	0.42%
	Tetsuko Kuroyanagi	1,243,412	0.39%
	Belgian Committee for UNICEF	858,546	0.27%
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	571,548	0.18%
	The Israeli Fund for UNICEF	504,924	0.16%
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	446,079	0.14%
	The New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF	417,300	0.13%
	Austrian Committee for UNICEF	310,931	0.10%
	UNICEF Hungarian Committee Foundation	263,143	0.08%
	Icelandic National Committee for UNICEF	254,940	0.08%
Slovenia Foundation for UNICEF	230,795	0.07%	
Slovak Foundation for UNICEF	33,366	0.01%	
Lithuanian National Committee for UNICEF	11,979	0.00%	
Andorran Committee for UNICEF	11,628	0.00%	
Czech Committee for UNICEF	8,548	0.00%	



**TABLE A2-3: Thematic funding contributions by resource partner to humanitarian action, 2023** (continued)

Resource partner type	Resource partner	Total (US\$)	Percentage of total
Public sector 27.49%	Germany	31,996,394	10.02%
	Denmark	25,124,232	7.87%
	Kingdom of the Netherlands	18,619,934	5.83%
	Sweden	11,050,795	3.46%
	Republic of Korea	500,000	0.16%
	Canada	364,751	0.11%
	Estonia	124,114	0.04%
<b>Total</b>		<b>319,331,746*</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

\* Due to rounding, totals may differ slightly from the sum of the columns.

\*\* 2023 thematic funding – Through the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, \$3.98 million was received in insurance payouts to respond to tropical cyclone-induced emergencies that occurred in Bangladesh, Fiji, Madagascar, Mozambique, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This funding was received through the UNICEF National Committees in France (\$450,166); Germany (\$1.4 million); Ireland (\$448,753); Luxembourg (\$85,279); and the United Kingdom (\$1.5 million).

## Humanitarian expenses

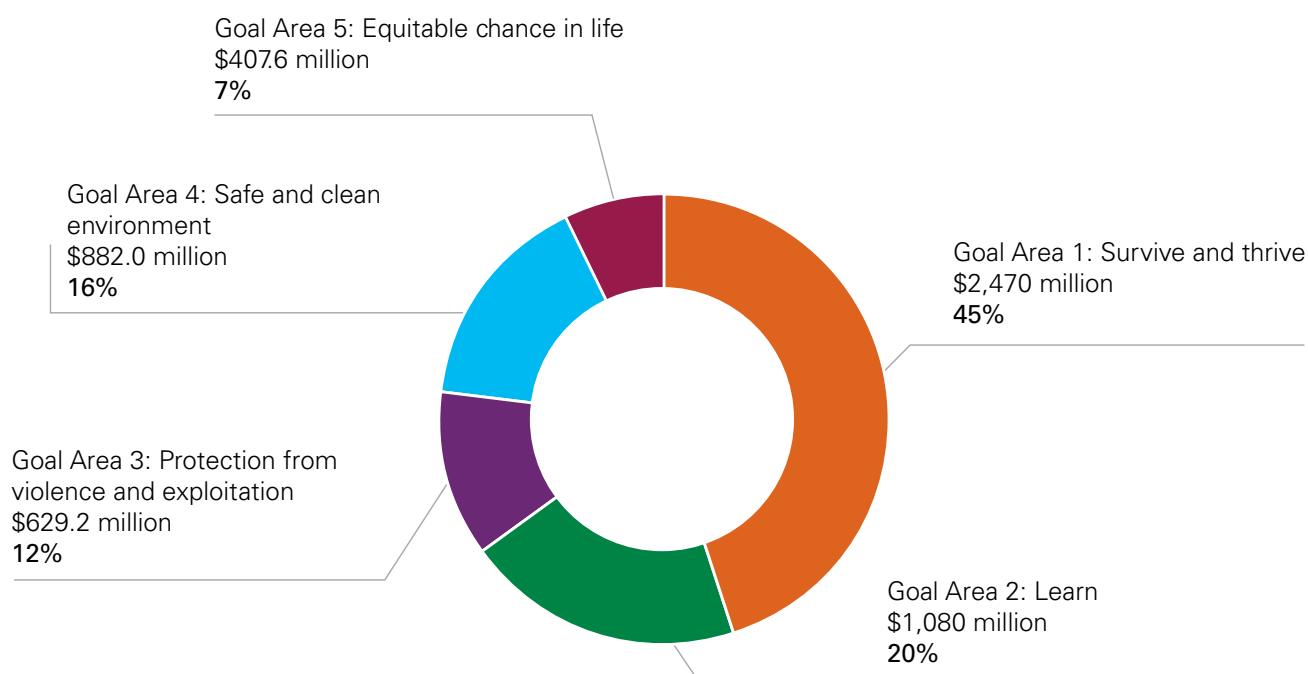
As crises grow in scale and complexity, humanitarian action continues to play a significant role in UNICEF's field operations. From 2019 on, humanitarian expenses increased every year, surpassing \$5 billion in 2022. In 2023, humanitarian expenses rose to \$5.5 billion (65 per cent of total expenses) as UNICEF responded to ongoing and sudden-onset emergencies across the globe.

Goal Area 1 (Every child survives and thrives) continued to have the highest share of humanitarian expenses in 2023, 45 per cent (\$2.48 billion). This was followed by 20 per cent (\$1.08 billion) for Goal Area 2 (Every child learns), and 12 per cent (\$629.2 million) for Goal Area 3 (Protection from violence and exploitation) (see Figure A2-7). In 2023, UNICEF continued to promote disability inclusion in humanitarian preparedness and response, resulting in an increase in related humanitarian expenses across the regions.

For the seventh consecutive year, in 2023 the Middle East and North Africa region had the highest humanitarian expenses of any region. The escalation of protracted crises along with sudden-onset emergencies – conflicts and displacement, public health emergencies and extreme weather conditions – increased humanitarian needs in 2023 (compared with 2022) and, subsequently, humanitarian expenses in the Europe and Central Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa, South Asia and West and Central Africa regions.

Eighteen country offices and two regional offices made up 67 per cent of the humanitarian expenses, and 59 per cent of combined humanitarian and development expenses in 2023.<sup>16</sup> Their humanitarian response requirements are captured in two multi-country appeals,<sup>17</sup> 15 country appeals<sup>18</sup> and two regional appeals focused on coordination and preparedness.<sup>19</sup>

FIGURE A2-7: Humanitarian expenses by goal area, 2023



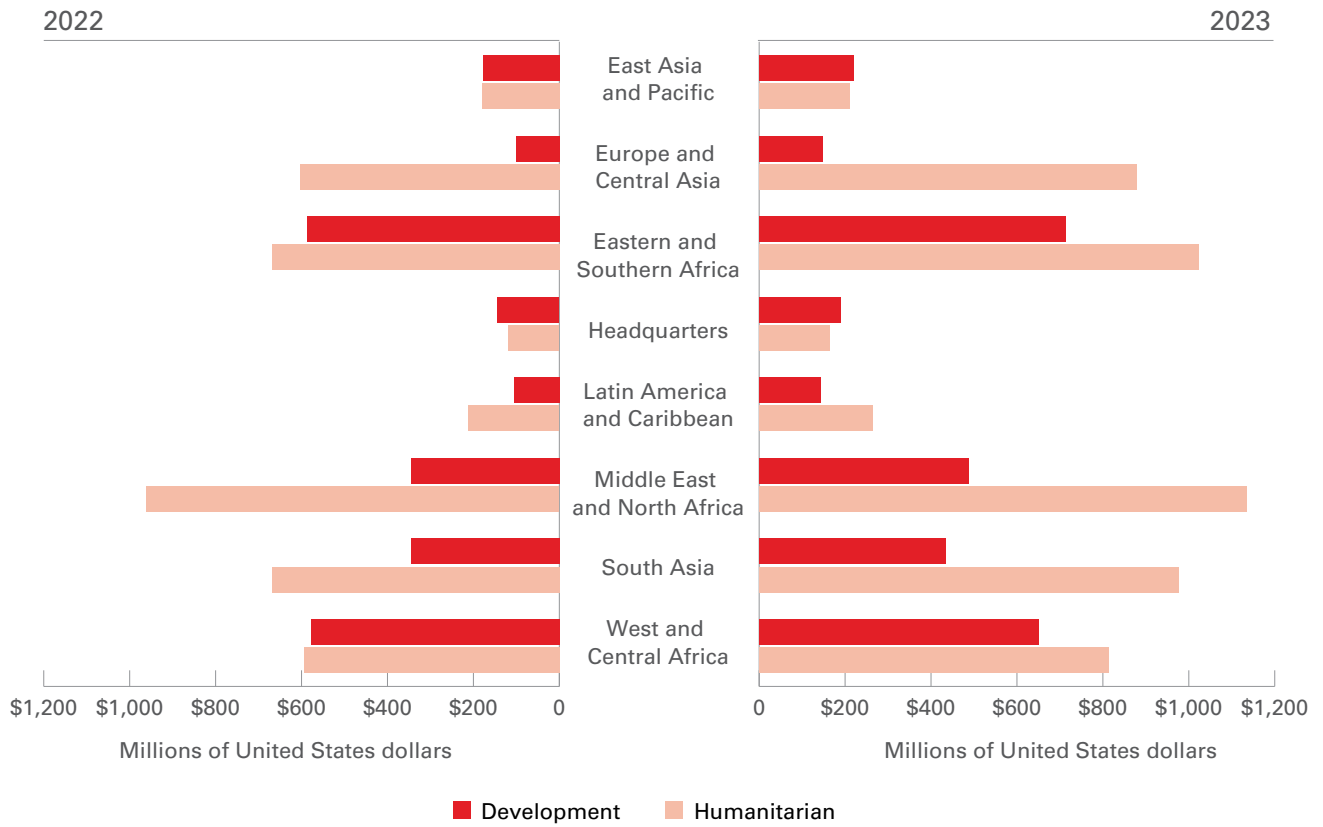
<sup>16</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye, Ukraine and Yemen; regional offices for Europe and Central Asia and Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>17</sup> Syrian refugees and Ukraine and refugee response.

<sup>18</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye earthquake response and Yemen.

<sup>19</sup> Europe and Central Asia and Middle East and North Africa.

FIGURE A2-8: Humanitarian expenses by region, 2022 and 2023

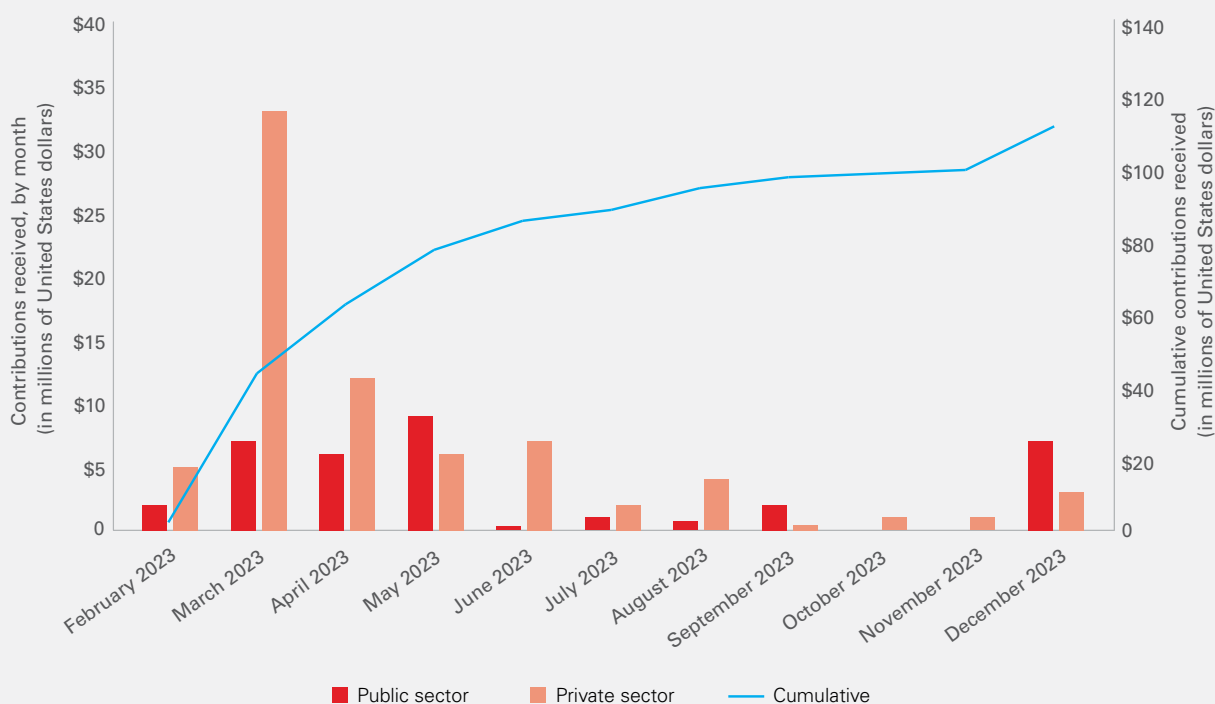


## Case studies: Mobilizing resources to save children’s lives<sup>20</sup>

### Case Study: The Türkiye earthquake response

Raising funds for humanitarian response at the outset of a sudden-onset emergency involves coordinated advocacy messaging and engaging with resource partners from the public and private sectors. On 6 February 2023, two catastrophic earthquakes struck southeastern Türkiye,<sup>21</sup> impacting 15.6 million people in Türkiye, including 5.6 million children. A high level of media coverage of the crisis led to greater emotional involvement for individuals, companies, foundations and philanthropists to express their compassion and support. This, coupled with a strong commitment from government resource partners, resulted in \$82.7 million raised within the first four months, against a \$196 million appeal. Furthermore, \$41 million was raised during the second month of the appeal alone – 82 per cent of it from private sector resource partners, who are often the first to respond and provide much-needed flexible thematic funding (60 percent of humanitarian funding provided by the private sector resource partners were flexible thematic contributions). This enabled UNICEF and partners to help 1.46 million students get back to learning in the earthquake-affected provinces; 1,774 unaccompanied children (out of 1,915 identified) reunite with their families; and 149,788 children and their families receive mental health and psychosocial support, with numbers continually growing.

FIGURE A2-9: Humanitarian contributions received for the Türkiye earthquake response from public and private sector resource partners in 2023



<sup>20</sup> The charts in this section are based on contributions received and may not match other published funding information due to differences in methodology.

<sup>21</sup> The earthquakes also impacted the Syrian Arab Republic. However, this case study focuses on the appeal for the response in Türkiye.

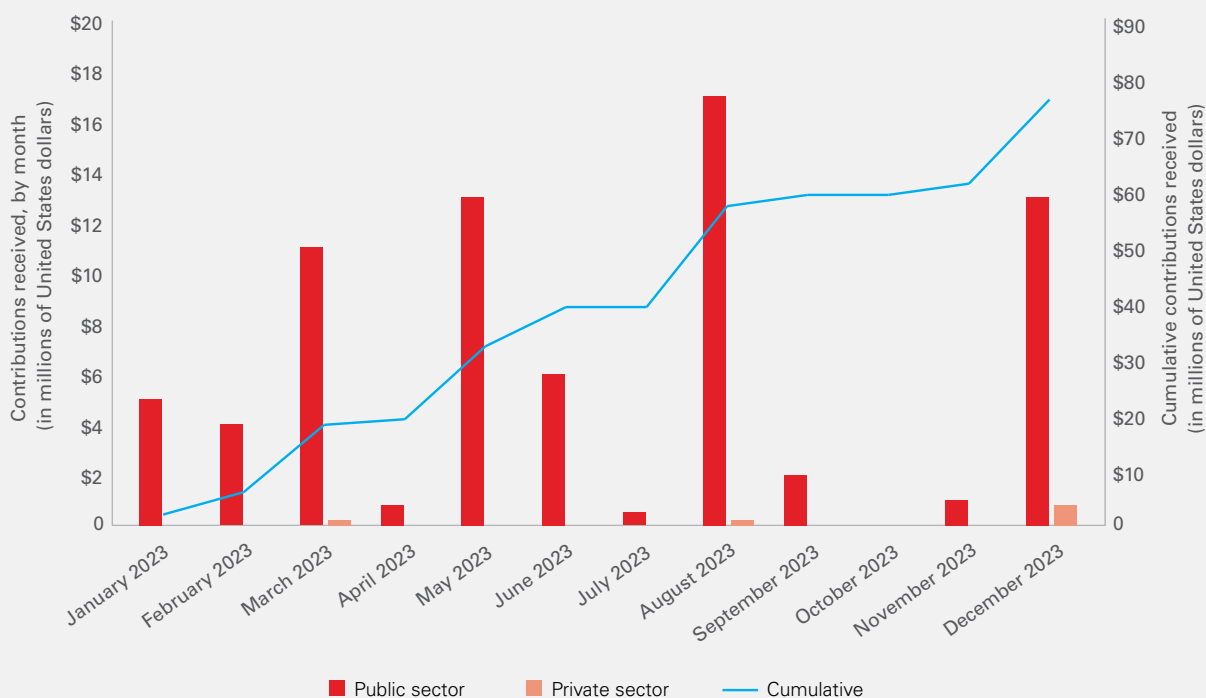
## Case Study: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

In 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to face one of the world’s most complex and protracted crises. More than 15 million children bore the brunt of an escalation in armed conflict and recurrent disease outbreaks that exacerbated chronic poverty, systemic weaknesses and existing population vulnerabilities. The scale of humanitarian needs and protection concerns remained massive throughout the year. The impact of climate change became increasingly obvious. Flooding and landslides, coupled with inadequate infrastructure, restricted children’s access to clean water, good sanitation and quality education and health services.

Throughout 2023, UNICEF spoke out about funding shortfalls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and stressed the importance of keeping the country in the spotlight, using key advocacy messages on gender-based violence in emergencies and children and armed conflict and bringing together key public donors and main humanitarian actors, including in briefings for Member States on the humanitarian situation in the country.

Decades-long conflict, donor fatigue and limited media coverage created a unique context where mobilizing resources for a \$862.4 million appeal for children was a challenging task. With the tools at its disposal, UNICEF advocated for support with such traditional public sector resource partners as Sweden, the European Commission and CERF, who all increased their humanitarian contributions to the response in the country in 2023. Following the call for additional resources to meet growing needs, Canada, France, the Republic of Korea and Saudi Arabia provided new funding. The United States tripled its commitment in 2023 compared with 2022.<sup>22</sup> Though the appeal received only a small amount of flexible country humanitarian thematic funding, humanitarian contributions from Sweden were fully flexible within the appeal – so, very high-quality funding – allowing the country office to cover critical gaps in the response.

FIGURE A2-10: Humanitarian contributions received for the Democratic Republic of the Congo from public and private sector resource partners in 2023



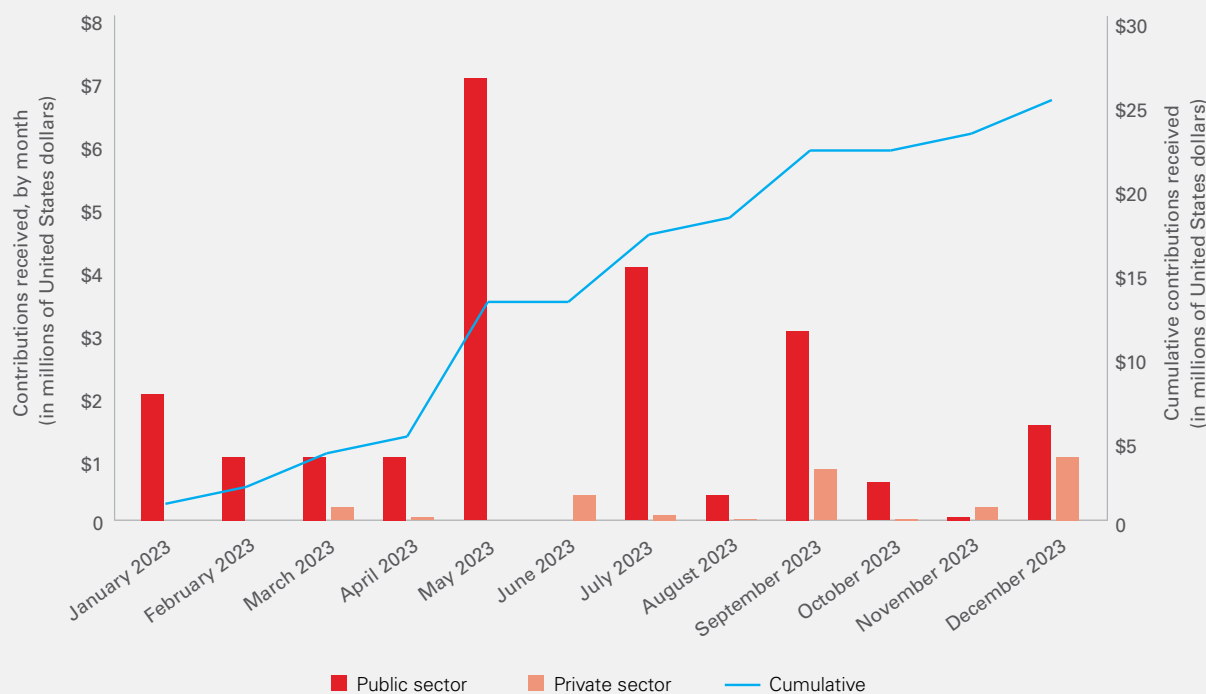
22 In 2023, new agreements with the United States negotiated within the scope of 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for the Democratic Republic of the Congo reached \$35.2 million, while agreements negotiated in 2022 within the scope of the 2022 appeal were only for \$11.1 million.

## Case Study: Haiti

The humanitarian situation in Haiti has been fueled by longstanding challenges, prolonged political turmoil, disease outbreaks, natural disasters and armed violence, which have led to hunger, acute malnutrition and rapidly escalating levels of violence, including gender-based violence. Three million children need humanitarian assistance, including protection assistance, and they may be joined by many more if new shocks hit the country. The funding requirement for the UNICEF humanitarian response in Haiti was \$245.9 million in 2023, while contributions received only amounted to \$26.9 million, only 5 per cent of which was fully flexible humanitarian thematic funding. The growing instability in the country made it difficult to attract and mobilize donor resources.

To overcome the challenges in mobilizing awareness and resources for Haiti, UNICEF stepped up advocacy, including the country in the semi-annual list of crises requiring additional attention and support and engaging in a high-level donor briefing in New York that brought together key public donors and critical humanitarian actors in the country. Additionally, the Executive Director's new role as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principal Advocate for the Humanitarian Situation in Haiti resulted in numerous high-level donor meetings, a joint visit to Haiti in June 2023 by the Executive Directors of UNICEF and the World Food Programme and a joint briefing on Haiti to the Security Council. These advocacy efforts helped UNICEF to expand its donor base to leverage more funding for the humanitarian response in Haiti: public sector resource partners from Cyprus, Ireland, Malta and Norway provided funding for the UNICEF humanitarian response in Haiti for the first time in 2023. And the United States nearly doubled its commitment in 2023 compared with 2022.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, CERF's rapid response contributions to Haiti were among the first to strengthen the cholera response and nutrition interventions there, and funding from the CERF underfunded window addressed shortfalls in the education sector.

FIGURE A2-11: Humanitarian contributions received for Haiti from public and private sector resource partners in 2023



<sup>23</sup> In 2023, new agreements negotiated with the United States within the scope of 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Haiti reached \$3.6 million, while agreements negotiated in 2022 within the scope of the 2022 appeal were for \$1.9 million.

# Annex 3: Humanitarian Data Companion

A. OUTPUT INDICATORS				
Output indicators		Results <sup>1</sup>		
		2021 <sup>2</sup> (Baseline)	2022	2023
<b>GOAL AREA 1</b>				
1.1.1	Number of live births delivered in health facilities through UNICEF-supported programmes	813,101	3,507,229	6,050,589
1.1.2	Number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported integrated management of childhood illnesses services (integrated community case management and/or integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness)	11,524,502	6,980,679	12,520,100
1.1.3	Number of health workers receiving the skills and support for delivering essential maternal, newborn and child health services through UNICEF-supported programmes	55,630	123,156*	204,811*
1.1.5	Number of countries in which UNICEF supported a timely response to outbreaks or other public health emergencies	156	142	98
1.2.1	Number of children vaccinated against measles through UNICEF-supported programmes	11,993,543	27,214,020	32,380,298
1.8.1	Number of children under 5 years of age who benefit from services for the early detection and treatment of severe wasting and other forms of malnutrition	107,788,915	114,615,051	118,640,783
<b>GOAL AREA 2</b>				
2.1.2	Percentage of countries with a resilient education system that can respond to humanitarian crises	25%	23%	27%
2.1.4	Number of out-of-school children and adolescents who accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes	31,654,053	50,244,707*	67,941,241*
2.2.7	Number of children provided with individual learning materials through UNICEF-supported programmes	18,055,467	21,843,120*	27,253,663*
2.2.10	Number of adolescents and young people who participate in or lead civic engagement initiatives through UNICEF-supported programmes	5,738,184	344,813	975,629

1 The 2021-2023 values presented in this Annex reflect results in humanitarian settings across Goal Areas, change strategies and enablers. For the complete set of data reported against the UNICEF 2022–2025 Strategic Plan Results Framework, please refer to the data companion and score card of the Annual report for 2023 of the Executive Director of UNICEF. Due to rounding, figures in this table may differ from those provided in the data companion and scorecard for the Annual report for 2023 of the Executive Director of UNICEF. See also the following note regarding 2021 data. This data companion table reflects humanitarian results only unless otherwise noted.

2 With the start of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, some indicators have changed compared with the previous Strategic Plan. In addition, the methodology for calculating some indicator values has changed. Therefore the 2021 baseline numbers included in this table may not match the 2021 results presented in the humanitarian data companion of the Global Annual Results Report 2021 – Humanitarian Action.

\* These figures are cumulative for 2021, 2022 and 2023.

GOAL AREA 3				
3.1.5	Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys who have exited an armed force or group and who have been provided with protection or reintegration support	59% (12,736)	58% (12,468)	49% (10,941)
3.1.6	Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys in areas affected by landmines and other explosive weapons provided with relevant prevention and/or survivor-assistance interventions.	4,536,292	4,975,154	3,861,1503 <sup>3</sup>
3.1.7	Percentage of UNICEF-targeted women, girls and boys in humanitarian contexts provided with risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions to address gender-based violence through UNICEF-supported programmes	103% (13,853,928)	86% (8,827,379)	93% (23,061,493)
3.1.8	Number of children and adults who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel who provide assistance to affected populations  • In humanitarian settings only	61,214,229  18,885,124	49,242,950  5,903,113	70,329,4034 <sup>4</sup>  8,760,214
3.2.6	Percentage of UNICEF-targeted unaccompanied and separated girls and boys in humanitarian contexts who were provided with alternative care and/or reunified	123% (179,204)	96% (201,040)	132% (253,628)
3.2.7	Number of UNICEF-targeted children, adolescents, parents and caregivers provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support services	3,663,410	12,587,944	13,123,015
3.2.8	Percentage of UNICEF-targeted girls and boys in humanitarian contexts who have received individual case management	79% (738,650)	67% (565,125)	80% (805,608)
3.3.1	Number of girls and women who receive prevention and protection services on female genital mutilation through UNICEF-supported programmes	N/A	25,602	135,192
3.3.2	Number of people engaged through community platforms in reflective dialogue towards eliminating discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices that affect girls and women through UNICEF-supported programmes	1,008,281	2,363,504	2,900,581
3.3.3	Number of adolescent girls receiving prevention and care interventions to address child marriage through UNICEF-supported programmes	473,823	232,499	365,128

3 While this indicator is measured as a percentage, for the humanitarian value only an absolute number is available.

4 This figure covers development and humanitarian settings.



GOAL AREA 4				
4.1.1	Number of people reached with at least basic sanitation services through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	4,043,404	8,197,746*
4.1.2	Number of people reached with at least basic water that is safe and available when needed, through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	6,872,082	23,427,669*
4.1.3	Number of people reached with at least basic hygiene services, through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	12,726,738	24,061,440*
4.1.4	Number of schools reached with basic WASH services, through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	26,385	29,245*
4.1.5	Number of health-care facilities reached with basic WASH services, through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	8,868	10,541*
4.1.6	Number of women and adolescent girls reached whose menstrual health and hygiene needs are addressed through UNICEF-supported programmes	-	3,671,600	6,477,677
4.1.7	Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate drinking water services, through UNICEF-supported programmes	33,271,891	39,404,612	42,452,830
4.1.8	Number of people in humanitarian contexts reached with appropriate sanitation services, through UNICEF-supported programmes	8,384,636	9,247,390	10,956,228
4.2.5	Number of countries integrating a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach on WASH programming through the participation of affected populations	13	16	18
4.3.1	Number of countries implementing child-sensitive programmes that enhance the climate and disaster resilience of children, reduce environmental degradation and promote low carbon development and environmental sustainability, with UNICEF support	37	69	68
4.3.2	Number of countries engaging children, adolescents and young people in action and advocacy to address climate change, unsustainable energy use and/or environmental degradation, with UNICEF support	50	68	78
4.3.3	Number of countries in which UNICEF supported the updating of government frameworks for preparedness and/or early/anticipatory action to be child-sensitive at the national and local levels	11	16	16
GOAL AREA 5				
5.2.4	Number of countries with social protection systems, including cash transfer capacities, that are able to effectively and rapidly respond to humanitarian crises	17	18	22
5.2.6	Number of households reached with UNICEF-supported humanitarian cash transfers	2,657,220	2,846,605	2,866,350

\* These figures are cumulative for 2022 and 2023.

## B. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### Indicator

#### HOWS<sup>5</sup>

H8.2	Percentage of country offices that meet organizational benchmarks on: (a) Updated preparedness plan (b) Risk-informed programming (c) Conflict-sensitive programming (d) Contributions to social cohesion and peace (e) Accountability to affected populations	(a) 85% (b) 51% (c) 27% (d) 29% (e) 23%	(a) 93% (b) 58% (c) 23% (d) 29% (e) 37%	(a) 95% (b) 61% (c) 24% (d) 30% (e) 50%
H8.3	Percentage of humanitarian funding provided to local and national actors	30%	39%	43%
H8.4	Percentage of countries in which UNICEF-led cluster/sector coordination mechanisms meet satisfactory performance for established functions: (a) Nutrition (b) Education (c) WASH (d) Child protection (area of responsibility)	(a) 90% (b) 100% (c) 86% (d) 87%	(a) 81% (b) 93% (c) 81% (d) 81%	(a) 85% (b) 88% (c) 85% (d) 77%
H8.5	Percentage of countries providing disability-inclusive humanitarian programmes and services	55%	65%	75%

<sup>5</sup> A 'how' indicator is defined as a change strategy necessary for the achievement of a result.



#### Credits

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