

2019

Annual Report

Office of Emergency Programmes

Contents

- Part 1: Executive summary 1
- Part 2: Context and trends 4
- Part 3: Key results in 2019 5
- Part 4: Lessons learned and constraints17

Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to affected populations
AoR	Area of responsibility
CAAC	Children and armed conflict
CCC	Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes (UNICEF)
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
ERT	Emergency Response Team
GNC	Global Nutrition Cluster
GWC	Global WASH Cluster
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPSCEN	Operations Centre (UNICEF)
RRT	Rapid Response Team
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Part 1: Executive summary

Conflict remained a main driver of humanitarian needs in 2019, while extreme weather events, hunger and infectious diseases drove many people to seek and depend on emergency aid. In this context, the UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) coordinated the organization's global support for humanitarian action, enabling country offices to scale up their emergency preparedness and response, effectively deliver humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable, and protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation.

To improve the organization's maturity as a humanitarian actor, EMOPS led the revision of the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs), UNICEF's main humanitarian policy, in an inclusive and consultative process involving country offices, regional offices, headquarters divisions, external partners and humanitarian experts. The new CCCs provide a more robust accountability framework for UNICEF and partners to ensure principled, timely, predictable and efficient humanitarian response in line with international norms and standards. They provide new corporate commitments on critical areas of work that have emerged in the past decade, including preparedness, quality of programmes, linking humanitarian and development programming, community engagement, accountability to affected populations (AAP), public health emergencies and population movement.

At the request of the Office of the Executive Director, EMOPS also initiated a humanitarian review process in 2019 in response to the evaluation of the quality and coverage of its response in complex and high-threat environments, and in an effort to promote institutional change in the way UNICEF designs and delivers integrated humanitarian programmes and acts on its own policies and procedures. The humanitarian review involves an organizational re-thinking of UNICEF's configuration and capacity for humanitarian action, including the commitment to strengthening the linkages with its development programming. The results are due in 2020.

EMOPS also continued efforts to strengthen the ability of UNICEF and partners to deliver humanitarian assistance and protection in a rapid and unimpeded manner. UNICEF further scaled up implementation of its Global Humanitarian Advocacy Strategy to focus on the most salient protection and assistance needs of children in humanitarian crises. Following the finalization of UNICEF's first Institutional Access Framework in 2018, in 2019, EMOPS pilot tested the UNICEF Access Field Manual – a collection of good practices and tools for strengthening humanitarian access in countries. Pilot testing in South Sudan yielded improvements in UNICEF's ability to access the hardest to reach and most vulnerable populations in a more predictable and sustainable manner.

Significant resources were mobilized for UNICEF humanitarian action under EMOPS leadership in 2019, including with the launch of the 2019 and 2020 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. With the earlier December 2019 launch of the 2020 appeal, UNICEF was able to align its humanitarian funding request with the global inter-agency appeal and reposition UNICEF as a key humanitarian partner. Despite generous support from donors, the 2019 appeal was 49 per cent funded, with US\$2.0 billion available against the revised appeal requirement of US\$4.1 billion. EMOPS continued to manage UNICEF's global humanitarian thematic funds – critical multi-year flexible funding – and in 2019, disbursed US\$26.9 million to 43 field and regional offices for humanitarian preparedness and response at the country level, and US\$4.7 million to support UNICEF's global humanitarian architecture. EMOPS also disbursed US\$68.5 million from the Emergency Programme Fund to 24 country offices and 3 regional offices, including to support responses to Level 2 or Level 3 crises.

EMOPS continued to invest in supporting the implementation of the Grand Bargain and World Humanitarian Summit commitments, including by working to strengthen its humanitarian cash programmes, accountability to affected population (AAP) and preparedness for emergencies. For example, as part of the First Action Initiative – in which UNICEF uses flexible funds in countries in urgent need of preparedness due to imminent risks – four country offices (Afghanistan, Haiti, the State of Palestine and Zimbabwe) and one multi-country office (the Pacific Islands) – received a total of US\$2.3 million to take key preparedness actions. EMOPS estimates that these five allocations will improve the speed of UNICEF’s emergency response by an average of 42 days, enable 57 per cent in savings per investment and reduce UNICEF’s carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1,000 metric tonnes.¹

Surge deployments remained key to UNICEF’s overall preparedness and ability to respond in emergencies. In 2019, the eight EMOPS-based Emergency Response Team (ERT) members undertook 27 missions in 10 countries, totalling more than 1,000 days of support for humanitarian response in the field. With the support of cluster partners, including standby arrangements, global cluster rapid response teams (RRTs) provided direct coordination and information management support to 24 countries, including five Level 3 emergencies, through 62 missions totalling 2,750 days. Through EMOPS, 24 standby partners provided UNICEF with more than 18,000 days of support, the equivalent of US\$9.1 million of in-kind contributions.

Humanitarian operational partnerships were strengthened throughout the year. Partnerships were renewed and expanded with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP), including through the development of joint approaches to the implementation of humanitarian cash transfers. EMOPS also conducted six country case studies on collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), which generated findings that will improve how the organizations work together over the long-term. The first global consultation with humanitarian non-governmental organization partners organized since 2012 yielded recommendations that will strengthen collaboration on key aspects of humanitarian action (e.g., localization and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse).

Through EMOPS, UNICEF continued to lead the Nutrition, Education and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. In 2019, UNICEF used its role as cluster lead agency to strengthen evidence-based humanitarian planning at the inter-agency level to better address the specific needs of target populations. This has improved country-level analysis on people with disabilities and the integration of gender-based violence risk mitigation into cluster guidance and policies.

EMOPS continued to face challenges during the year, particularly in its support of UNICEF’s humanitarian action in complex and high-threat environments, where it remained difficult to maintain and sustain principled, timely and equitable humanitarian access. While cash transfers took hold as an organizational strategy, technical expertise for implementation and scale up remained limited across the organization. And constrained human and financial resources continued to impact EMOPS’ support for child protection, preparedness and risk analysis. While it is too early to project the full impact of the coronavirus disease 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic, its expected impact on children communities and families, especially in humanitarian contexts, will be enormous. EMOPS will work across the organization to address these

¹ Based on emergency scenario estimates provided by UNICEF country offices at the time of disbursement. Calculations will be updated to reflect actual return on investment as emergencies occur in investment contexts.

challenges in 2020 (see *Part 4*).

Part 2: Context and trends

In 2019, global humanitarian needs grew to their highest levels yet. By the end of the year, nearly 168 million people – 1 in every 45 – required urgent humanitarian assistance.² Over the past five years, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has more than doubled.³

Over the course of the decade, UNICEF and humanitarian partners have seen prolonged and violent conflicts become the primary drivers of humanitarian needs. People living in conflict zones – such as those in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen – face the daily risk of death and injury; sexual and gender-based violence; loss of livelihoods; heightened risks of hunger and mental health conditions; and forcible displacement from their homes.⁴

At the same time, climate change continues to cause more extreme weather events and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, particularly in countries beset by violence. Over half a billion children live in areas with extremely high flood occurrence, and almost 160 million are in areas with high drought severity.⁵ Conflict-affected regions such as the Sahel, where livelihoods rely on agriculture, grazing and fishing, are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

These trends – protracted conflicts, displacement and climate change – are also placing millions of people at increased risk of disease outbreaks, as health, water and sanitation systems weaken under the strain of crisis.⁶ The year saw diseases such as Ebola and measles heavily impact conflict zones, further complicating humanitarian response in places where access is more and more restricted. This was the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the current Ebola outbreak is the world's second largest and deadliest on record.⁷ The outbreak of COVID-19, reported at the end of 2019, had become a pandemic by early March 2020, throwing the world into an uncertain new reality.

EMOPS responded by supporting UNICEF's humanitarian operations in 61 countries in 2019. The Division led the organization's efforts to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crisis; prevent and respond to the most serious protection risks and violations facing children affected by armed conflict; strengthen and expand its leadership and partnerships for child-focused humanitarian action; manage the safety and security of UNICEF personnel, premises and assets in the field; and strengthen field-based humanitarian coordination mechanisms. This report details that work, as well as the challenges and lessons learned over the course of the year.

² Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*, OCHA, Geneva, 2019, p. 24.

³ In 2014, nearly 78 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2015*, OCHA, Geneva, 2014.

⁴ *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*, p. 11.

⁵ *UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2020*, p. 2.

⁶ *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*, p. 19.

⁷ *UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children 2020*, p. 2.

Part 3: Key results in 2019

Principled humanitarian access and protection for crisis-affected children

Increasing and sustaining equitable humanitarian access

In 2019, UNICEF continued to face significant challenges reaching children affected by emergencies, particularly in complex and high-threat environments. EMOPS therefore focused on supporting the organization to improve access to children in these environments through the development and application of targeted guidance and tools.

Following the finalization of UNICEF's first Institutional Access Framework in 2018, in 2019, the Division finalized the UNICEF Access Field Manual – a collection of good practices and tools for strengthening humanitarian access in countries. Pilot testing of the Manual in South Sudan yielded tangible improvements in UNICEF's ability to access the hardest to reach and most vulnerable populations in a more predictable and sustainable manner. In addition, inter-agency programme criticality assessments supported by EMOPS in Burkina Faso, Iraq, Libya and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela helped UNICEF and partners identify critical programme activities to be sustained by the United Nations, even in high-risk situations.

With EMOPS support, UNICEF also completed an evaluation of the quality and coverage of its response in complex and high threat environments, and a management response was agreed upon and presented to the Executive Board in June. The evaluation has provided a critical frame of reference for addressing capacity gaps across the organization to enable more principled humanitarian access.

Supporting the implementation of humanitarian cash transfers

To scale up the use of cash in humanitarian programmes, EMOPS coordinated UNICEF's institution-wide efforts on humanitarian cash programming. With the finalization of an organization-wide capacity building strategy on humanitarian cash transfers and a full package of related training materials, EMOPS, the Programme Division, the Division of Financial and Administrative Management and the Supply Division strengthened UNICEF's strategic position, resources and materials on humanitarian cash transfers. The five-year strategy provides a framework for developing cash expertise across functions (programme, finance, procurement and management) at the country, regional and headquarters levels.

With EMOPS support, UNICEF also made important strides in its collaboration with other United Nations agencies on humanitarian cash transfer programming. EMOPS worked across headquarters divisions to create the first common UNICEF position on sharing data on humanitarian cash transfers with UNHCR and WFP. The resulting tripartite data sharing agreement – which will provide country offices with a framework for sharing data across organizations and encourage more systematic joint work on humanitarian cash transfers at the field level – is expected to be signed in early 2020.

Inter-agency collaboration on humanitarian cash transfers was also strengthened through the finalization of collaborative procurement guidance for the United Nations Common Cash System. The guidance – which will direct United Nations agencies on jointly procuring financial service providers to deliver cash transfers – was designed to facilitate and encourage collaboration across agencies at the country level and improve the efficiency and effectiveness

of cash programmes in the field. The United Nations Common Cash System is carrying out pilots with EMOPS technical support in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Ecuador, the Niger and Yemen.

EMOPS also provide countries with direct technical assistance throughout the year to support the initiation, scale up and coordination of humanitarian cash programmes. Technical assistance provided in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Libya, the Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan, enabled those country offices to carry out cash feasibility assessments, which are the first step in designing a strong cash programme. In the Sudan, this led to the allocation of US\$4 million from the European Union to initiate a cash programme.

Preventing and responding to protection risks facing children affected by armed conflict

In 2019, EMOPS strengthened UNICEF's voice on protecting children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) through coordinated advocacy efforts with other United Nations agencies and non-United Nations partners, targeting Member States. UNICEF also contributed to strengthening the CAAC agenda through its support to and participation in two regional workshops that brought together the Special Representative for the Secretary-General on CAAC, UNICEF regional offices, UNICEF country offices and key United Nations counterparts in Nairobi and Bangkok. Participants exchanged on good practices and challenges, which raised awareness and capacity on key issues related to CAAC.

EMOPS engagement in the CAAC agenda in 2019 also brought new attention to the situation of children actually or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist. With EMOPS support, the UNICEF Executive Director highlighted this issue and advocated for these children to be treated as victims in her participation in the Annual Debate on CAAC. By supporting UNICEF's advocacy for children actually or allegedly associated with groups designated as terrorist, EMOPS is helping to guide Member States and other stakeholders on principled rights-based responses to affected children, ultimately positioning UNICEF as a strong and credible humanitarian actor.

At the country level, EMOPS strengthened the capacities of UNICEF country offices in Mali, Somalia and South Sudan to make progress on the Security Council's CAAC agenda. In South Sudan, EMOPS support contributed to the development of a revitalized Action Plan with the Armed Forces for South Sudan that addresses all six grave violations committed against children.

Strengthening accountability to affected populations

Following the 2018 endorsement of the organization-wide strategy for integrating AAP into all UNICEF programmes, in 2019, EMOPS continued to strengthen the organization's accountability to affected people by supporting UNICEF offices to implement the strategy.

In an important step in this process, EMOPS coordinated a rigorous and independent assessment of UNICEF's current strengths and weaknesses regarding AAP, making UNICEF the first United Nations agency to conduct such an exercise. The results found that while UNICEF is systematically applying action-oriented evidence in its programming, the organization needs to improve its complaint and feedback mechanisms and better document the information flowing from these mechanisms to facilitate more strategic programme adjustments.

With EMOPS support, UNICEF is already taking steps to address these findings at the country

level. In 2019, country offices in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Myanmar, Turkey and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela gained valuable technical expertise on improving feedback mechanisms and using feedback to inform decision making. For example, in Cameroon, EMOPS supported the development of a new AAP strategy that led to the integration of specific AAP outputs and indicators into programme documents and partner agreements. These steps have yielded improvements in the participation of affected people and the use of their feedback to inform the humanitarian response – improvements that are in turn helping to address persistent programme acceptance challenges.

Improving operational efficiency and effectiveness for principled humanitarian action

In 2019, EMOPS made significant investments in supporting the implementation of the Grand Bargain and World Humanitarian Summit commitments at the country level. These efforts – to strengthen joint needs assessment, humanitarian cash programmes, AAP, child protection in humanitarian crisis, data on people with disabilities in emergencies, and preparedness – are described in detail throughout this report. The results achieved in these areas in 2019 required close collaboration across the organization and with the five United Nations agencies participating in the Department for International Development Single Humanitarian Business Case led by EMOPS.⁸

EMOPS mobilized significant resources for UNICEF emergency response during the year, including with the launch of the 2019 and 2020 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. The earlier launch of the 2020 appeal – in December 2019 – helped to drive organization-wide efforts to reposition UNICEF as a leading humanitarian organization and synchronize with the global inter-agency humanitarian appeal process. The 2019 appeal was 49 per cent funded, with US\$2 billion available against the revised requirement of US\$4.1 billion; and the 2020 appeal was 30 per cent funded, with US\$1.7 billion available against the revised requirement of US\$5.8 billion, as of end April 2020. The 2020 revised amount includes the funding requirement for the COVID-19 response.

EMOPS continued to manage UNICEF's global humanitarian thematic funds, and in 2019, disbursed US\$26.9 million to 43 field and regional offices for humanitarian preparedness and response at the country level, and US\$4.7 million to support UNICEF's global humanitarian architecture. This multi-year flexible funding is critical for EMOPS' ability to plan and operate beyond a one-year horizon. For example, allocations of global humanitarian thematic funding were used to expand activities and respond to increasing needs in countries such as Burkina Faso, where displacement rose dramatically, and the Sudan, where violence and unrest continued to escalate.

EMOPS senior management regularly engaged with Member States, donors and partners to contribute to humanitarian advocacy. This included consultations with the governments of China, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America, as well as the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

⁸ UNHCR, WFP, OCHA, IOM and WHO.

Preparedness and response to humanitarian crisis

Enhancing preparedness and effective humanitarian response

In 2019, EMOPS strengthened country and regional office capacity to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies using the UNICEF Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) – a system for tracking risks to enhance the organization’s early warning and preparedness.

With EMOPS support, 83 per cent of country offices reviewed their EPP plans and 93 per cent reviewed their risk analysis during the year. Forty offices in high-risk countries received feedback on the quality of their plans, including how to close preparedness gaps to meet minimum standards, strengthen scenario and response planning and leverage technical and financial support from regional offices and headquarters. Following these quality reviews, several high-risk country offices improved their preparedness capacities by enhancing supply pre-positioning and strengthening humanitarian partnerships, among other readiness measures.

EMOPS also took steps to strengthen its preparedness architecture in 2019, including with the revision of UNICEF’s Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response⁹ and the UNICEF Minimum Preparedness Standards; the development of guidance on preparedness in countries affected by complex and protracted crises; and the addition of new features in the EPP.¹⁰ These efforts, and the ongoing implementation of the EPP at the country level, have yielded clear improvements in country office emergency preparedness – such as increased numbers of standby agreements, and supply and logistics strategies.

For example, in the Sudan, where the rainy season regularly causes flooding and disease outbreaks in the east, UNICEF drew on these tools to carry out preparedness exercises with government partners, identify the localities most likely to be affected and determine the response and supplies needed. This led to the pre-positioning of WASH and health supplies at the local level, and the formation of response teams ready to deliver health and hygiene campaigns. When flooding affected more than 7,000 households later in the year, UNICEF and partners were prepared to initiate an immediate and effective response: community mobilization was rapid, chlorination activities were continuously monitored and WASH, nutrition and health supplies were available as needed. Five out of six affected localities were protected from disease outbreaks and the threat of cholera was effectively neutralized at the local level.

EMOPS also continued to institutionalize its efforts to analyse risks for stronger organizational preparedness. In 2019, the EMOPS Horizon Scan¹¹ identified 28 countries as priorities for emergency preparedness – up from 11 in 2018 – and mobilized EMOPS contributions to successful preparedness efforts in these countries. For example, as part of the First Action Initiative,¹² four country offices (Afghanistan, Haiti, the State of Palestine and Zimbabwe) and one multi-country office (the Pacific Islands) identified through the scan received a total of US\$2.3 million to take key preparedness actions. EMOPS estimates that these five allocations will improve the speed of UNICEF’s emergency response by an average of 42 days, enable 57

⁹ The Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response was designed to ensure that preparedness is mainstreamed across UNICEF country, regional and global offices. It includes mandatory minimum preparedness actions and standards for analyzing risks and systematic contingency planning and monitoring of progress towards agreed preparedness standards.

¹⁰ These features will streamline planning, decision-making, quality control and preparedness planning at the onset of a crisis

¹¹ The Horizon Scan Process gives UNICEF a way of identifying risks, prioritizing countries that have large risks to ‘watch’ and ensuring that those countries have solid preparedness plans in place to address those risks.

¹² Through the First Action Initiative, UNICEF uses flexible funds in countries in urgent need of preparedness due to imminent risks.

per cent in savings per investment and reduce UNICEF's carbon dioxide emissions by more than 1,000 metric tonnes.¹³

EMOPS continued to provide timely and efficient support to UNICEF country and regional offices to facilitate effective response to crises in 2019, including to five Level 3 and 11 Level 2 emergencies.¹⁴ EMOPS was particularly instrumental to scaling up support and response to rapidly escalating emergencies, such as the Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the socio-economic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for example, EMOPS supported the Country Office to open four field offices and increase its staff four-fold, from 28 to 118. UNICEF Venezuela went from nearly no humanitarian response in 2018 to reaching millions of children with polio immunization, nearly 350,000 people with access to safe water, and more than 150,000 students with educational materials in 2019.

The deployment of surge support through the ERT remained key to UNICEF's overall preparedness and ability to respond in emergencies. In 2019, the eight EMOPS-based ERT members undertook 27 missions in 10 countries, totalling more than 1,000 days of support for humanitarian response in the field. These missions provided coordination leadership, as well as response planning and monitoring support, for a range of humanitarian situations. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the EMOPS-based ERT established Ebola contingency protocols and preparedness teams in Goma, significantly increasing UNICEF response capacity and enabling a rapid effort to contain the outbreak in Goma and prevent the risk of Ebola spreading into a complex urban context.

A key ingredient for effective and timely response is the availability of funds. In 2019, EMOPS disbursed US\$68.5 million from the Emergency Programme Fund to 24 country offices and 3 regional offices, including to support country responses to Level 2 or Level 3 situations. For example, US\$7.5 million disbursed to Mozambique in response to Cyclone Idai allowed UNICEF to order supplies and deploy surge staff to coordinate the response. Through EMOPS advocacy, UNICEF also received US\$60.2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for underfunded emergencies in 20 countries. This support was particularly critical in chronically underfunded emergencies such as in Afghanistan, Haiti and the Sudan.

Strengthening policies and operational guidance for effective response

In consultation with key partners, EMOPS continued to lead the revision of the CCCs, UNICEF's main humanitarian policy, in an inclusive and consultative process involving country offices, regional offices, headquarters, partners and humanitarian experts. The new CCCs provide a more robust accountability framework for UNICEF and its partners to ensure principled, timely, predictable and efficient humanitarian response in line with international norms and standards and reflecting new positions and agreements within the humanitarian community. They provide new corporate commitments on critical areas of work that have emerged in the past decade, including preparedness, coordination, humanitarian advocacy, quality of programmes (including on gender, disabilities, adolescents and early childhood development), linking humanitarian and

¹³ Based on emergency scenario estimates provided by UNICEF country offices at the time of disbursement. Calculations will be updated to reflect actual return on investment as emergencies occur in investment contexts.

¹⁴ This included responses to five large-scale emergencies designated as UNICEF Level 3 emergencies: the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Cyclone Idai in Mozambique; and the protracted crises in Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. It also included responses to 11 UNICEF Level 2 emergencies: the socioeconomic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; the migration situation in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru; armed violence in Burkina Faso and the Central Sahel; and the risk of Ebola outbreaks in Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda.

development programming, community engagement, environmental sustainability, AAP, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, health emergencies and population movement.

EMOPS also led several other initiatives designed to improve UNICEF's humanitarian action. EMOPS and the Programme Division co-led the development of a comprehensive approach to linking humanitarian and development programming, and the issuance of a UNICEF Procedure to that effect with a mandatory statute across UNICEF offices. The approach was designed to help UNICEF achieve better results for children in fragile and crisis-affected situations, while reducing their vulnerabilities and risks. EMOPS also led the development of an organization-wide, systematic approach to the localization of humanitarian action to deliver more effective results for children in partnership with local civil society organizations and government authorities. With EMOPS support, internal UNICEF guidance and key messages on counterterrorism and the prevention of violent extremism and child rights were also finalized and disseminated. This content has enabled expanded engagement with other United Nations agencies and Member States on advocating for a child rights approach in counterterrorism operations (e.g. in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic).

EMOPS also initiated a humanitarian review process in 2019 in response to the evaluation of the quality and coverage of its response in complex and high-threat environments, and in an effort to promote institutional change in the way UNICEF designs and delivers integrated humanitarian programmes and acts on its own policies and procedures. The humanitarian review involves an organizational re-thinking of UNICEF's configuration and capacity for humanitarian action, including the commitment to strengthening the linkages with its development programming. The results are due in 2020.

Fostering humanitarian learning across the organization

EMOPS prioritizes humanitarian learning as a central aspect of its support to UNICEF humanitarian action. In 2019, EMOPS contributed to strengthening the quality of UNICEF humanitarian action, as well as the capacities of its leadership to guide response.

The publication of the revised UNICEF Reference Guide for Emergency Preparedness and Response has added a vital knowledge base on the overall purpose, coordination and quality of UNICEF humanitarian response, including how to reduce response time and save and protect more lives. This resource will serve as the comprehensive compilation of UNICEF guidance on humanitarian response for use by UNICEF staff and partners globally.

EMOPS also helped to better equip country offices to access critical information on humanitarian action. The Division participated in the revision of UNICEF's Programme, Policies and Procedures manual, which involved transitioning from a paper-based static document to a more interactive Wikipedia-style online resource. EMOPS contributed topic pages related to different phases of the humanitarian programme cycle that will help country offices access programme policies, procedures, guidance and tools related to emergency preparedness and humanitarian action.

EMOPS continued to improve the knowledge and capacities of UNICEF's field leadership at all levels. The organization's skills for operating in complex and high-threat environments were strengthened through the second consecutive leadership workshop for representatives of 35 countries. The launch of the Humanitarian Leadership Workshop in 2019 expands the organization's humanitarian learning resources, giving country leaders with no prior emergency experience the information and tools they need to lead emergency response. And in October,

EMOPS gathered UNICEF regional emergency and security advisors to share lessons on achievements and challenges in the delivery of emergency assistance. According to participants' feedback, the experience not only provided valuable insight that they can use to improve policy, practice and training; it has also enhanced UNICEF's understanding of how these advisory roles can effectively support UNICEF's emergency response.

Improving evidence and analysis for humanitarian action

To strengthen access to guidance and information essential to effective humanitarian response, EMOPS and the Evaluation Office launched the Intranet website 'Humanitarian PME'. The website will serve as a one-stop-shop for country offices that need quick access to the most recent UNICEF and inter-agency information and best practices on emergency response. To date, more 550 UNICEF personnel have accessed the site. The website was an ideal resource for country office staff responding to the Venezuelan migration crisis, as well as Cyclone Idai in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, providing personnel with limited recent emergency experience with immediate access to resources on planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic alliances, partnerships and advocacy

Strengthening strategic alliances and partnership for humanitarian action

Humanitarian partnerships made notable strides under EMOPS leadership in 2019. Strong engagement with UNHCR, governments, private sector leaders and other stakeholders at the first-ever Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 underscored UNICEF's position as a key partner implementing the Global Refugee Compact and responding to the needs of refugee and host community children in programme countries. UNICEF was particularly active and visible in its participation in the Global Refugee Forum, with a high-level delegation, a video message from Executive Director Henrietta Fore and 16 official statements. The pledges made by UNICEF and with partners will shape and inform the humanitarian community's response to the situation of refugee children, returnee children and host community children for years to come.

EMOPS also took steps to strengthen humanitarian partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Forty-six international and national NGOs attended a two-day UNICEF-NGO Consultation for Partnership in Humanitarian Settings convened by EMOPS and co-facilitated by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies – the first of its kind since 2012. The consultation yielded seven recommendations for working together to address key issues (e.g., localization, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and the CCC revision).

A joint study on country-level collaboration conducted by EMOPS and IFRC generated findings that will improve how the organizations work together going forward. The findings cover areas such as improving knowledge of the CCCs; improving partnership management and accountabilities; supporting joint advocacy between UNICEF and NGO partners on children's rights in emergencies; and developing a global localization strategy. The resulting evidence-based roadmap will serve as a long-term strategy for the partnership.

In 2019, EMOPS continued to facilitate the collaboration between UNICEF and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research – which focuses on building capacities for using geographical information systems and mapping in humanitarian response. In 2019, the partnership helped the Chad, Djibouti, Indonesia and Mali country offices develop geospatial mapping skills that will equip them to better anticipate and prepare for emergencies.

EMOPS also worked closely within the framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, including by supporting the implementation of the revised IASC structure, monitoring progress and ensuring UNICEF leadership had access to quality information on the IASC agenda.

Finally, to strengthen principled humanitarian action and the centrality of protection, UNICEF further scaled up implementation of its Global Humanitarian Advocacy Strategy focusing on the most salient protection and assistance needs of children in humanitarian crises, supported by the global Children Under Attack campaign.

Expanding and strengthening standby deployable human resources

The standby partnership mechanism managed by EMOPS remains a main provider of surge support in UNICEF during emergencies. In 2019, 24 standby partners provided UNICEF with more than 18,000 days of support, the equivalent of approximately US\$9.1 million of in-kind contributions. A total of 161 deployments were undertaken during the year to 39 countries, including 103 standby personnel and 58 RRT missions to support UNICEF's cluster, programme and operational commitments. Fifty-seven per cent of standby deployments were to UNICEF Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies. Deployments also supported smaller emergency responses in Angola, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Namibia and Pakistan.

For example, in response to the sudden onset of cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, standby partners responded with rapid and significant support, with 35 deployments with an in-kind value of US\$1.9 million. A joint review of the standby response found that standby partner deployments were on the ground faster than other surge staff, enabling the United Nations to scale up its operations rapidly and reach hard-to-reach areas. The standby mechanism also provided a critical mix of technical expertise (including in areas that are difficult to fill such as disabilities and cash), as well as emergency experience, relevant language skills and interpersonal cultural competencies.

EMOPS continued to expand its standby partnership base throughout the year, with new standby agreements signed with InterSos (Italy) and the Danish Emergency Management Authority. Planning exercises with existing standby partners helped to identify additional projects to support specific responses. For example, strategic planning with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency secured valuable support for the response to the socioeconomic crisis in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The project will include 12 positions over 12 months for an in-kind value to UNICEF of US\$2.2 million. These resources will allow UNICEF Venezuela to expand services to affected populations in more areas of the country and provide critical expertise to areas such as gender-based violence and school reconstruction.

Promoting awareness and action on children in crisis

EMOPS provided a global framework for the Children Under Attack campaign, in which UNICEF called for an end to attacks on children affected by conflict. The campaign enabled more focused and systematic public advocacy on grave violations against children and raised awareness globally of how children are impacted by attacks on education, water infrastructure, detention and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Participation in high-level fora such as the United Nations Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs Segment raised the profile of issues such as the protection of children and addressing the needs of children in armed conflict, including the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in

humanitarian response. EMOPS also supported UNICEF's chairmanship of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group which led to the adoption of a set of concrete measures by Grand Bargain members focused on improving the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

Safety and security of personnel, premises and assets

In its first full year of implementation, the UNICEF Security Framework of Accountability – which details individual security roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for all UNICEF personnel – enabled more structured oversight and clear accountability mechanisms for security management. For example, in the Syrian Arab Republic, EMOPS used the Framework to streamline the internal approval process of a critical inter-agency mission to reach children affected by the dire situation in Al Rukban with life-saving assistance.

Proactive security support provided in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Libya, Nepal, Turkey, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Yemen strengthened country office emergency response, facilitated critical decision-making and helped country offices implement security risk management measures. The onset of the crises in Burkina Faso and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela prompted security deployments that increased preparedness, facilitated vital contingency planning and enhanced the safety of UNICEF staff during programme delivery.

Investments in learning were also critical to building staff capacities for safety and security in emergency situations. More than 250 women personnel from 11 countries received the Women's Security Awareness Training, which addresses security concerns and threats as they relate to women and provides practical tips and tools for managing security risks.

The UNICEF Operations Centre (OPSCEN) continued to provide 24/7 operational support to UNICEF humanitarian operations and security activities and UNICEF staff globally. This included responding to requests for assistance from the field, including on highly sensitive subjects; rapidly distributing relevant information to colleagues and communicating directly with UNICEF staff worldwide; and supporting emergency management processes. On average, OPSCEN processed and disseminated approximately 300 reports, alerts, and/or briefs per month. In support of UNICEF's responses to Level 3 emergencies, OPSCEN organized and managed all Emergency Management Team meetings.

OPSCEN also compiled the breaking news alerts and updates on political and security dynamics, events and natural hazards that had the potential to impact UNICEF programmes, personnel and infrastructure and helped senior management act quickly on the latest developments and make informed decisions. This included more than 275 first-line reports and alerts on emergency events such as the spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302, which resulted in the deaths of 21 United Nations personnel; and socio-political turmoil in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

During the year, US\$7.5 million from UNICEF Headquarters Central Investment Fund were allocated to 83 country offices to facilitate compliance with safety and security standards in various areas of UNICEF operations. The funds were used to purchase key security equipment and reinforce the security of office premises in line with security risk management measures. For example, multiple country offices, including UNICEF Niger, were able to procure armoured vehicles to protect programme missions in dangerous, hard-to-reach areas. UNICEF Niger was also able to enhance the physical security of its main premises.

Humanitarian coordination

EMOPS continued to support UNICEF's role as cluster lead agency of the Education, Nutrition and WASH Clusters and Child Protection Area of Responsibility. Efforts to strengthen evidence-based humanitarian planning to better address the specific needs of target populations improved country-level analysis on people with disabilities and the integration of gender-based violence risk mitigation into cluster guidance and policies. EMOPS also continued to strengthen AAP across the clusters, including through the development of new guidance and tools.

With the support of cluster partners, including standby arrangements, global cluster RRTs provided direct coordination and information management support at both the national and sub-national levels to 24 countries, including five countries experiencing Level 3 emergencies. This support was carried out through 62 missions totalling 2,750 days of support. This assistance supported both the immediate scale up of humanitarian response, while strengthening local capacities within countries.

Global Nutrition Cluster

In 2019, the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) strengthened capacities and resources for stakeholders working to meet the nutrition rights and needs of people affected by emergencies.

With GNC support, 13 countries took steps to improve cluster performance by completing the Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring exercise. The exercise is a country-led self-assessment where country clusters analyse their performance against six core cluster functions and on AAP. The process enables all cluster partners and coordinators to identify strengths and weaknesses of performance and agree on actions for improvement.

The GNC supported the Global Technical Assistance Mechanism for Nutrition – a common mechanism co-led by the UNICEF Programme Division and World Vision and endorsed by over 40 GNC partners – to provide systematic, predictable, timely and coordinated nutrition technical assistance. The GNC supported the establishment of help desks for cash and voucher assistance and nutrition information systems and facilitated the creation of a Global Thematic Working Group on Wasting, which will provide technical guidance on wasting prevention and care.

In addition, the GNC launched a mentoring programme to strengthen capacities for cluster coordination and information management at the country level. The first round of mentoring for 2019 reached 19 mentees (cluster coordinators and information managers). Although a formal independent evaluation of the mentoring programme is yet to be completed, the feedback from the mentees who participated in the programme indicates that they have been able to improve their knowledge, skills and competencies and deliver better information management and coordination support as a result of the experience.

Through eight GNC RRT deployments totalling 401 person days,¹⁵ capacities for cluster coordination and information management were strengthened in Afghanistan, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, for example, the RRT deployment following Cyclone Idai contributed to strengthening the capacities of provincial and district actors to respond to nutrition in

¹⁵ The disaggregated RRT figures may be higher than the total RRT deployment figures reported on page 12 as these include staff, preparedness and training mission not included under surge deployments.

emergencies. In addition to providing remote support to 21 nutrition clusters, the GNC also supported five country sectoral coordination mechanisms for emergency nutrition coordination.

Global Education Cluster

For the Global Education Cluster, 2019 was also a year of reinforcing and strengthening capacities for emergency education coordination. Core Coordination Trainings – which equip participants with the skills to effectively coordinate education in emergencies responses – reached 340 stakeholders from United Nations agencies, NGOs and governments. The trainings were provided in nine countries (Bangladesh, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, the State of Palestine, Ukraine and Yemen), two regions (the Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa) and at the global level (Geneva). In Iraq, the Education Cluster applied the skills and knowledge gained from the training to develop and finalize their comprehensive cluster strategy.

With the launch of the revised Needs Assessment Package and the associated Coaching Program for Coordinated Education in Emergencies Needs Assessment and Analysis, the Global Education Cluster also strengthened the tools and resources available to country coordination teams for assessing humanitarian needs. These tools will enable countries to conduct robust assessment and analysis that is critical to identifying, understanding and estimating the education needs of affected populations, providing a sound evidence base for humanitarian response plans and education cluster strategies, and advocating for the prioritization of education needs. The revised package and coaching programme have been piloted in Libya and Nigeria, where new joint education needs assessments are under development.

In 2019, the Global Education Cluster RRT provided 412 days of deployment that improved coordination, information management and needs assessment in 13 countries. The RRT Cluster Coordinator also deployed to support the development of the Whole of Syria education sector multi-year resilience programme funded by Education Cannot Wait. The programme supports more collaborative education responses in protracted crisis countries, shifting the focus to joint analysis, joint programming and multi-year financing.

Global WASH Cluster

The Global WASH Cluster continued efforts to strengthen WASH sector capacities for a predictable and high-quality humanitarian WASH response. In 2019, this included strengthening the quality of strategic planning – particularly humanitarian needs overview documents and humanitarian response plans – including by promoting greater clarity and consistency in identifying and defining humanitarian needs. This work was transmitted to countries through deployments to the Central African Republic and Somalia, as well as remote webinars and trainings on calculating people in need.

Investments were also made in building the capacity of the humanitarian WASH sector, with the launch of training packages on information management, market-based programming for WASH in emergencies, and government leadership coordination capacities for humanitarian WASH. More than 230 persons benefited from face-to-face Global WASH Cluster trainings on these topics and many more benefited from online tools and webinars. Progress was also made on the Quality Assurance and Accountability System – an innovative tool that will provide operational agencies and coordination platforms with a means of measuring the quality of the humanitarian response and increasing the accountability of humanitarian WASH partners to

affected populations. Field testing of the system was completed in four countries in 2019.

The GWC continued to support national humanitarian WASH coordination platforms to effectively fulfil their roles and coordination functions. The Field Support Team provided 1,409 days of deployment support to 17 countries. In Burkina Faso, the deployment of an information management specialist facilitated improvements in mapping for humanitarian response and routine data delivery.

Child Protection Area of Responsibility

The Child Protection AoR continued to champion the localization of child protection in emergency response in partnership with Save the Children and Street Child UK. The partners worked with coordination groups in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nigeria and South Sudan to boost the leadership roles of local organizations in emergency response. The experience has highlighted the critical importance of strengthening the evidence base for the Child Protection AoR and advocating for context-specific partnerships between international and national actors.

Cooperation between the Child Protection AoR and the Gender-Based Violence AoR continued to yield results in 2019 with joint planning carried out under the Child and Adolescent Survivor Initiative. The Child Protection AoR also worked with the Gender-Based Violence AoR to integrate gender-based violence risk mitigation into UNICEF-led cluster strategies, guidance, policies and training in Bangladesh, Madagascar, Nigeria and Thailand. These efforts are designed to help emergency responders reduce the risk of gender-based violence from the pre-emergency to recovery stages of humanitarian response.

The AoR also collaborated across sectors to strengthen child protection in emergencies responses. Coordination and capacity for mental health and psychosocial support was improved in close collaboration with health and education sector partners through gap analyses in Bangladesh, the Niger and Ukraine that will allow for more targeted and focused responses for children. Recognizing that food security plays a critical role in reducing or increasing child protection risks, the AoR continued to engage the Food Security Cluster to improve joint analysis. In Mali, the findings of a study on the linkages between food insecurity and child marriage will be used to improve targeting practices.

In 2019, the RRT provided 572 days of deployment support to 22 countries, including six emergencies declared in 2019: Albania, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Both direct and remote field support came at critical times in new emergencies or when specific surge was needed in evolving crises (e.g. Burkina Faso, Iraq, the Niger and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela).

Part 4: Lessons learned and constraints

Reviewing UNICEF's humanitarian action

In 2019, at the request of the Office of the Executive Director, EMOPS initiated a humanitarian review process to promote institutional change in the way UNICEF designs and delivers integrated humanitarian programmes and acts on its own policies and procedures. The review has contributed to a better understanding of the challenges and lessons learned that the organization must address – at all levels – to strengthen its humanitarian action. Preliminary results indicate that UNICEF needs to continue to adapt and strengthen its humanitarian action

to be more fit for purpose, including by increasing humanitarian capacity and leadership, guaranteeing corporate commitment to humanitarian response, and ensuring accountability to consistently delivering on its commitments to children in humanitarian settings.

Operating in complex and high-threat environments with access challenges

UNICEF continues to face challenges to maintaining and sustaining principled, timely and equitable access in complex and high threat environments, particularly with the rise in the number of non-State entities in many contexts. In 2020, EMOPS will support UNICEF to take the following actions: scale up efforts to systematically strengthen the capacities of leadership in country offices on principled humanitarian action and engagement modalities; provide dedicated country support for humanitarian access with the full roll out of the UNICEF Access Framework and guidelines for engaging non-state entities, and expand the expertise provided through the ERT.

Improving the coherence of organizational humanitarian advocacy

The linking of humanitarian advocacy to response planning needs to be tightened to better enable UNICEF action on the ground. Building on its Global Humanitarian Advocacy Strategy to focus on the most salient protection and assistance needs of children in humanitarian crises, UNICEF will ensure a streamlined approach to advocacy strategies and planning, making its organizational position clear across all levels of its structure, and increasing the strength of its advocacy messaging, as a principled humanitarian and child rights actor.

Strengthening organizational capacities to implement humanitarian cash transfers

While 2019 saw increased uptake of humanitarian cash transfers as an organizational strategy, technical expertise in programme implementation and scale up remain limited across the organization. In 2020, EMOPS will roll out a capacity training strategy in all seven regions and implement a fast track training approach in targeted countries. EMOPS will also accelerate the development of the cash management information system in partnership with other headquarters divisions and UNHCR; and run a country-level pilot. Specific areas of collaboration have also been identified with WFP for the joint beneficiary registration of humanitarian cash transfer programmes in non-refugee settings.

Improving support for emergency preparedness / readiness

UNICEF needs to invest additional human and financial resources in emergency preparedness, including the global tools and systems needed to achieve better operational preparedness in the field. In 2020, UNICEF will develop a global simulation package enabling country offices to test their operational capacity; strengthen its capacity to provide feedback to country office senior management on the quality of preparedness plans; and improve its financial resources for preparedness and risk analysis. A preparedness co-funding initiative designed to increase resource allocations to preparedness at the country level is being tested; and a new preparedness tagging function in UNICEF's global financial data systems will be introduced. UNICEF will also increase preparedness resource mobilization efforts across the organization.

Expanded humanitarian learning

The relevance and usefulness of humanitarian learning extends well beyond UNICEF staff to the many partners and counterparts outside of UNICEF that implement humanitarian response with and on behalf of UNICEF. Providing effective learning and training at an adequate scale to many of these practitioners and collaborators, who are often working in far-flung places and in diverse contexts, has proven challenging. EMOPS is therefore developing a knowledge management strategy designed to make information available more purposefully for humanitarian practitioners and communities of practice, both within and beyond UNICEF. The

strategy also aims to increase interaction and knowledge transfer with and for the benefit of UNICEF field staff and implementing partners who directly deliver assistance. In 2020, EMOPS will launch a new website to support this ambition. A newly designed global Humanitarian Leadership Workshop for senior UNICEF managers will be rolled out in 2020 as a priority organizational need. When deployed for humanitarian action, ERT members will receive skills-transfer training for the benefit of UNICEF field staff and implementing partners.

Improving human resources

EMOPS continues to struggle with human resources limitations when it comes to implementing its vast and complex agenda. Lack of staff capacity constrained the finalization of protection strategies and related guidance; hindered the expansion of humanitarian cash transfers; and left the risk analysis and preparedness functions understaffed. EMOPS is continuing to recruit for vacant positions and work with country and regional offices to generate increase engagement in key areas of work, including risk analysis and humanitarian policy and protection.

Mobilizing more flexible and multi-year funding

Short-term funding commitments and donor conditionalities make response planning challenging. Flexible and multi-year funding remained low in 2019, undermining the ability of UNICEF to rapidly and equitably reach every child affected by emergencies – including in the less visible crises – and in a way that achieves sustainable results over the longer-term. Flexible funding has become even more imperative to ensure that UNICEF has the flexibility to respond quickly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, EMOPS shifted the UNICEF 2020 Humanitarian Action for Children funding appeal to an earlier December launch to drive organization-wide efforts to reposition UNICEF as a leading humanitarian body and to synchronize the appeal with the inter-agency humanitarian appeal process. EMOPS is also working to improve its allocation criteria, tracking and results reporting on flexible funding to support additional resource mobilization efforts. The contributions made to the Grand Bargain work stream on flexible funding have been well received, and EMOPS in collaboration with other Headquarters divisions is developing a clear position on donor conditionalities, particularly where there are counter-terrorism agendas.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children, communities and families

The outbreak of COVID-19, reported at the end of 2019, became a pandemic by early March 2020, throwing the world into a menacing, shifting and uncertain new reality. While the numbers of severe illnesses and deaths are above the capacity of most countries to manage, the pandemic's wider consequences – in particular for children, women and their families as well as for many populations already in humanitarian situations – are yet to be seen. The negative impacts of the crisis on deployment of staff, supplies and resources to reach people in need, both in the COVID-19 response and in all other ongoing humanitarian emergencies, are expected to be high and long-lasting. In 2020, EMOPS will support UNICEF to take measures to safeguard ongoing emergency operations and resources to avoid compromising the achievements made to date, and align the organizations' response to those of sister United Nations agencies.