



Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to Support the Influx of Refugees from Ukraine

Final Report | March 2023

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Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to Support the Influx of Refugees from Ukraine | Final Report, 2023

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EVALUATION OF UNICEF'S RESPONSE TO SUPPORT THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

FINAL REPORT | MARCH 2023

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ACRONYMS

AAP Accountability to Affected Populations
ADAP Adolescent Development and Participation
API Application Programming Interface
CCC Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action
CSO Civil Society Organisation
ECARO Europe And Central Asia Regional Office
EU European Union
GDP Gross Domestic Product
HAC Humanitarian Action for Children
HPD Humanitarian Programme Document
L3 Level 3 (Emergency Procedure)

NER Named Entity Recognition
NGO Non-Governmental Organisation
NLP Natural Language Processing
RE Relationship Extraction
RRP Refugee Response Plan
SA Sentiment Analysis
SBC Social and Behavioural Change
TOR Terms of Reference
TP Topic Classification
UASC Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UN United Nations
UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
WASH Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Executive Summary

1. UNICEF commissioned an independent evaluation of UNICEF's response to the outflow of Ukrainian refugees, February-December 2022. The evaluation addressed the UNICEF response outside, not within, Ukraine, in eight countries: Bulgaria, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.
2. The evaluation covers the period February–December 2022. It asked four main questions:
 - i. How well did UNICEF's response meet the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and stakeholders?
 - ii. How well-aligned were resources UNICEF's response with partner needs?
 - iii. How timely was the response, and how efficiently were resource converted into results?
 - iv. What results were delivered and how sustainable are these results?
3. The evaluation applied an overarching intervention logic for the response, geared to the implementation of UNICEF's Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action ('the CCCs'). A mixed-method approach was applied including documentary analysis; surveys with affected populations and external stakeholders; interviews and consultations with over 100 stakeholders from inside and outside UNICEF; and country missions to Poland, Romania, and Moldova. A range of evidence products were generated for use by UNICEF stakeholders, including an internal website, which contains the timeline for the response and three briefs which describe the response.

FINDINGS

Meeting the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and stakeholders

4. UNICEF adopted a twin-track approach to expanding its country presence, undertaking strategic advocacy and negotiation at national level in parallel with programmatic activity on the ground. Its strategic narrative of the Child Protection dimensions of the crisis was substantively appropriate and strategically shrewd. Internally, the division of leadership role between the Regional Office and the Emergency Operations division suffered from an early lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities, which was resolved after the re-designation of the refugee response to a Level 2 emergency.
5. UNICEF deployed a large-scale surge operation to meet needs. However, this revealed shortcomings in the standard response model, with short-term deployments, handover weaknesses, capacity and knowledge gaps and lack of operations expertise impeding progress. Despite wider data constraints, UNICEF supported needs and other assessments, though these were undertaken only later in the response. Learning, which was experiential, supported knowledge management in the same manner.
6. The response was aligned to needs in broad terms of country and sector allocations. However, vulnerable group recognition and programmatic tailoring took time. The programme has become more diversified and nuanced over time, and UNICEF has been a particularly prominent actor in relation to the

sensitive issue of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC).

data reporting were significant on staff in the early stages.

Internal and external cohesion

7. Expanding partnerships to deliver was a steep learning curve, particularly where UNICEF had no prior programmatic presence in the country. UNICEF acted as a generous and supportive facilitator for the wider UN response, with a noted absence of territorialism. It facilitated entry for the UN response in several countries and acted as a strategic co-ordinator in others. Its 'national systems first' model was highly appreciated by national partners.
8. However, balancing 'no regrets' with rigour was challenging, with due diligence for new partnerships not always met, and handover shortcomings. The risk of national resource displacement was insufficiently considered, and the role of National Committees inadequately clarified in the early phase of the response. Some partnerships experienced strain in the final months of 2022, due to lack of clarity on resource availability for 2023.
9. Internal coherence faced challenges, linked to the lack of clarity on strategic leadership. Intra-regional coherence and knowledge transfer has been limited, and connections with the 'inside Ukraine' response patchy, though with strong cross-border collaboration on UASC and education.

12. Quantitative achievements against targets were strong in SBC/C4D/AAP and Social Protection, with good performance in Child Protection, Health, Programme Strategy and Education. UNICEF's four existing Country Offices saw mostly higher achievement levels of quantitative targets than non-programme countries. Some notable achievements were made through advocacy, including sustaining global attention to the crisis' effects on vulnerable children.
13. Attention to equity was stronger than that to gender equality and the empowerment of women, despite previous barriers faced by women and girls in Ukraine. Accountability to affected populations mainly relied on partner systems, with few feedback loops into UNICEF's own planning and programming. Nonetheless, beneficiaries indicated relatively high satisfaction levels with UNICEF interventions.

Timeliness and resource efficiency

10. Overall, the response was timely. Rates of programmatic expansion were notably diverse between established Country Offices and emergency response programmes, given the additional time requirements needed to establish strategic and operational space. Although resources were relatively quick to arrive, the time needed to build up to programmatic readiness in some countries affected the pace at which funding could be committed and utilised. Partners experienced little to no disbursement delays.

Sustainability

14. The response has adopted a strong nexus focus. The 'national systems first approach' provided a potentially strong sustainability lens, but this was inconsistently applied. The two main risks to sustainability related to partnerships formed in the early stages of the response, which did not always adopt a medium-term view, and UNICEF's inability to extend the same level of financial resourcing into 2023, which risked the continued commitment and goodwill of partners.
15. The issue of sustainability also raises a central conceptual dissonance; namely, the delivery of emergency response, implemented through national systems, and focused (in the sustained phase) on strengthening those systems, requires a different model from the short-term 'humanitarian' instruments which currently govern it.

Results

11. Initial target-setting suffered from data gaps. A process of recalibration of targets provided a reality check of the response's true emphases. Burdens of

CONCLUSIONS

16. Overall, the evaluation finds that UNICEF's response to the regional refugee crisis was **swiftly executed, effective and appropriate for context**. Prioritising response delivery through national systems and placing the 'best interests of [every] child' at the

heart of the response, helped built its reputation as a principled and impartial actor.

17. UNICEF deployed staff and resources to meet needs, building a narrative with governments of its comparative advantages while engaging programmatically on the ground. It also successfully deployed its powerful communications and advocacy capacities to highlight suffering. The opportunistic/expedient approach to partnerships supported localisation, but shortcomings included unsystematic due diligence; fast turnover in surge deployments; limited overview by the Regional Office of programme development; and sustainability. Overall, UNICEF’s response largely met the commitments that the CCCs demand, despite contextual complexities.

18. The response has also highlighted some key dilemmas and institutional fault lines. Operationally, the response generated some valuable lessons, many linked to human resourcing and institutional capacities. Strategically, it has highlighted the conceptual disjunct between the medium-term view needed for a response as ‘delivered through systems, and systems strengthening’ and the short-term institutional tools available to address it. The wider question arising from this evaluation is, therefore: is there room, and a requirement, for a new model of emergency response, for such contexts?

RECOMMENDATIONS

CORPORATE

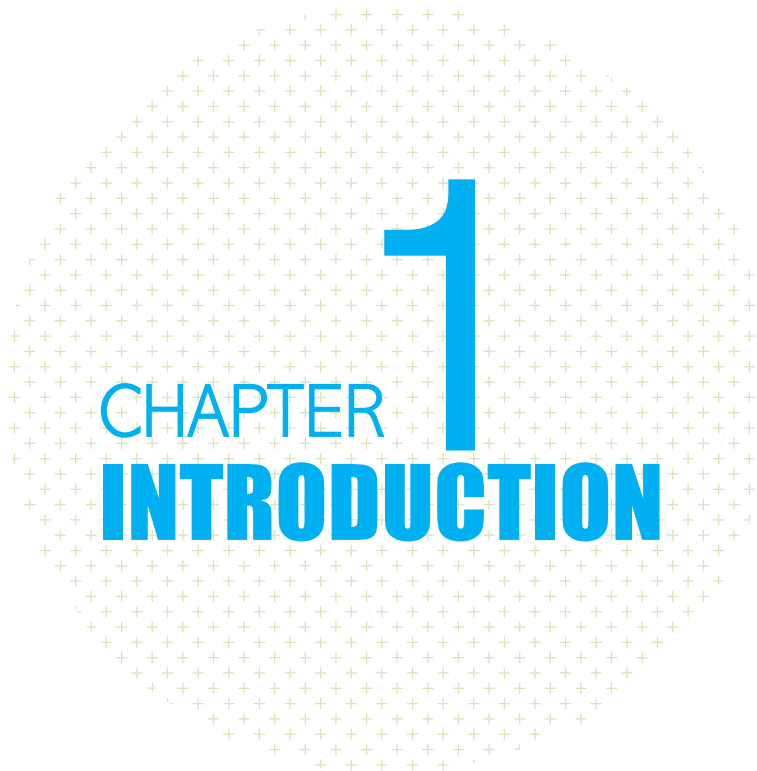
1. Extend links to political and security intelligence systems.
2. Review UNICEF’s emergency response model for middle- and high-income settings/protracted crises.
3. *(in line with findings from the Humanitarian Review and COVID-19 Evaluation)* Build emergency capacity across UNICEF, including for national staff in contexts with low emergency propensity.
4. Reconfirm and communicate the role of National Committees in emergency response.

REGIONAL

1. At regional level, interpret the CCCs for this context.
2. Generate a clear corporate statement and position on gender in the response.
3. *(in line with the Humanitarian Review)* Centralise lesson learning in the response, building on the co-ordination meetings now being held.
4. Build emergency preparedness, geared to an ethos of systems-strengthening into new CPDs as they are developed and approved.
5. Define the UNICEF legacy post-crisis response.



CHAPTER 1



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Following eight years of armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, at dawn on 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a military incursion across the country. The event displaced millions in search of safety, protection, and humanitarian assistance, creating the fastest growing refugee emergency since World War II.¹
2. By the end of March 2022, almost four million people, mainly women and children, had fled to neighbouring countries or beyond. As of January 2023, nearly eight million refugees had left Ukraine and entered Europe.²
3. The crisis is highly politically charged. The international community grappled with its political effects, while the humanitarian system launched a massive emergency response. The European Union offered three years of temporary protection for Ukrainian refugees, and countries opened their doors to those in need.

¹ 2022 Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan. March-December 2022.

² UNHCR Operational Data Portal (29 Nov 2022). <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92257>.

'Europe' in this report applies the definition used by UNHCR, which corresponds to all Europe sub-regions as identified by Eurovoc (European Union, Thesaurus Eurovoc. Volume 2,

4. This report examines how United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) responded to the humanitarian needs created by millions of Ukrainian refugees exiting their country throughout 2022. Written while the crisis is still ongoing, it aims to assess performance, highlight strengths, and identify areas for future improvement.

1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

5. This report comprises an independent evaluation of UNICEF's response to the outflow of Ukrainian refugees, February-December 2022. It addresses the UNICEF response outside, not within, Ukraine, in eight countries: Bulgaria, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. It covers the period February-December 2022.
6. The evaluation asks four main questions:³
 - i. How well did UNICEF's response meet the needs and priorities of beneficiaries and stakeholders?
 - ii. How well-aligned was UNICEF's response with partner needs?
 - iii. How timely was the response, and how efficiently were resource converted into results?
 - iv. What results were delivered and how sustainable are these results?
7. As an issue of principle, this report is focused on the interests, needs and priorities of populations affected by the Ukraine crisis. More directly, its main intended users are the UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia; the concerned Country Offices and Refugee Response teams; UNICEF senior management and leadership; and external stakeholders such as governments, United Nations partner agencies, UNICEF's many implementing partners and Executive Board members.

Subject-oriented version, Publications Office, 2005), therefore including EU and non-EU countries belonging to Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, and Western Europe, plus Türkiye.

https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.153066617.1194888114.1673958415-612591460.1673352313

³ See Terms of Reference, Annex 1

1.2 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

8. The evaluation's full methodology is described in Annex 2. The enquiry was guided by six contextualized criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact, and sustainability. Recognising the immense strains on UNICEF at a time of high-intensity strategic and programmatic action, it is designed primarily for utility and future learning.
9. The evaluation applied a context-sensitive model for a complex crisis, which also spoke to the UNICEF operating model and culture. To achieve this, it combined theory-based evaluation with elements of contribution analysis and a utilization-focused approach. It reconstructed an overarching intervention logic for the response (*Flowchart 1*), geared to the implementation of UNICEF's Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action ('the CCCs').⁴ The intervention logic, alongside the CCCs, provided the guiding frameworks for this report.
10. A key focus of the evaluation was data gathering and generation, which took place as the response evolved. A range of evidence products were generated for use by UNICEF stakeholders, including an internal website, which contains the timeline for the response and three briefs which describe the response. To generate the findings in this report, a mixed-method approach was applied including documentary analysis; surveys with affected populations and external stakeholders; interviews

and consultations with over 100 stakeholders from inside and outside UNICEF; and short (3-day) country missions to Poland, Romania, and Moldova. Validation meetings were held with Regional Office and country stakeholders in December 2022 and January 2023.

11. Limitations to the evaluation include:

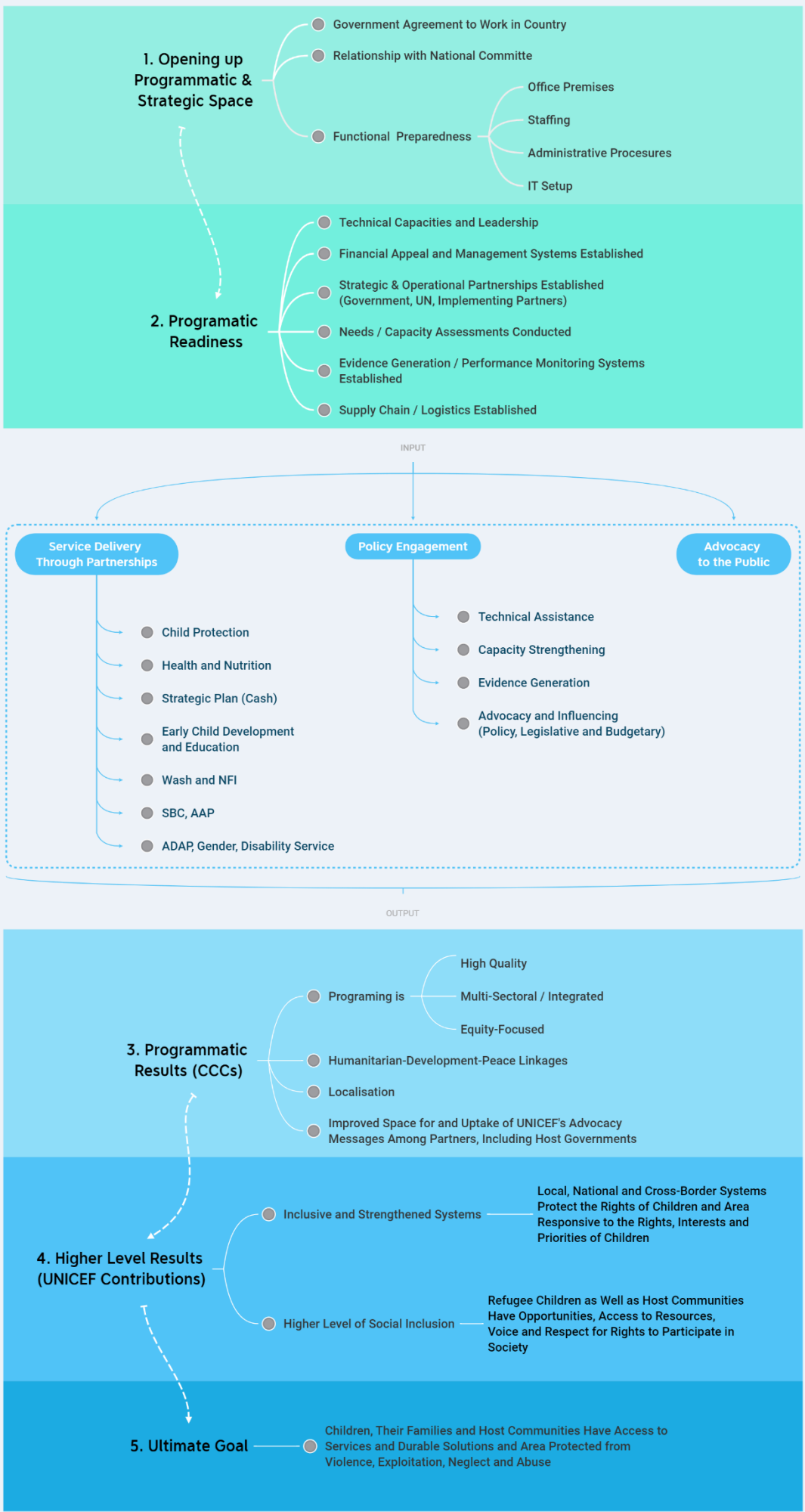
- i. Given the programmatic burdens on UNICEF at a time when the emergency response was still ongoing, field missions were necessarily short. Therefore, this evaluation relies heavily on data gathered and analysed, rather than in-depth observations of the response in situ.
 - ii. The evaluation covers only eight countries of the wider number to which Ukrainian refugees have travelled, including Russia. Those included here represent those covered by the main instruments for the response, the multi-agency Regional Refugee Plan and UNICEF's own Humanitarian Appeal for Children (Pillar 2).
 - iii. Given the speed of events, the findings presented here risk swift outdated. This report therefore simply aims to capture the main narrative of the response during February-December 2022.
12. Finally, this is not a country- or programme-specific evaluation. As such it does not provide detailed examination of individual UNICEF country or programmatic responses. Rather, it adopts a regional and strategic approach. Given highly differentiated responses across involved countries in the region, it contextualizes findings, and calibrates them to the strength of the evidence available.

⁴ UNICEF (2020) Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Emergencies.

[https://www.unicef.org/media/87611/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/87611/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20(English).pdf)

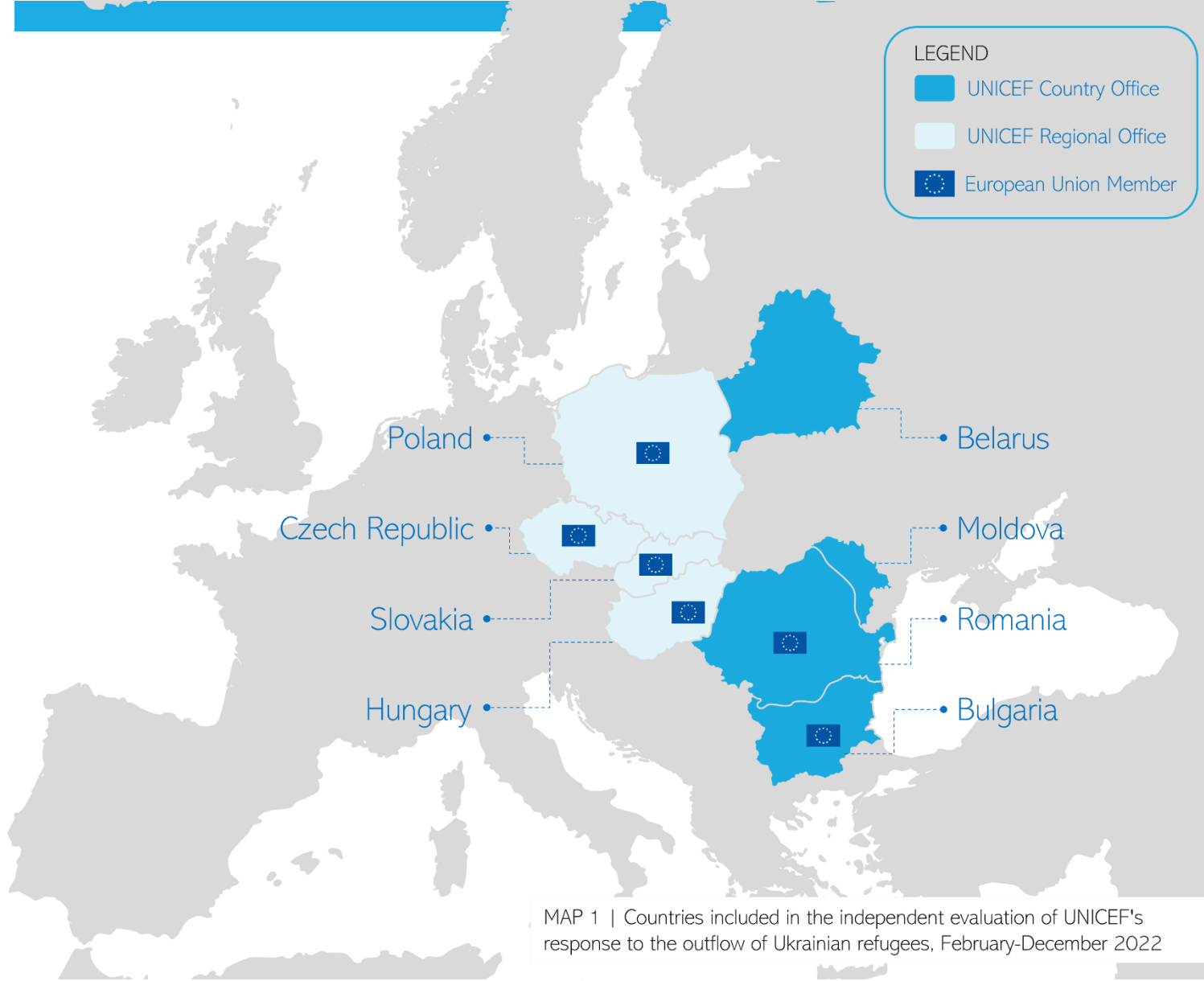
START

FLOWCHART 1 | INTERVENTION LOGIC



Context: High Income – Strong Governance – EU Membership – Multidimensional Political Sensitivity – Diverse Expectation – Fluid Population Movement – Temporary Protection Directive

END



1.3 CONTEXT OF THE RESPONSE

13. The operating context of the Ukraine refugee crisis is highly complex, and not least its geopolitical dimensions. This report does not repeat descriptions elsewhere,⁵ but highlights relevant features for this exercise:

14. **Initial speed and scale shifting to a 'pendular' crisis.** Despite heightening concerns in the weeks prior to the crisis,⁶ the attacks on Kyiv and elsewhere in late

February 2022 resulted in an outflow of millions within a short space of time. Later, as people began to move inwards to Ukraine and out again, the crisis became a 'pendular' one. As of January 2023, over 17 million border movements had taken place outwards from Ukraine, and over nine million back into the country.⁷ However, as of early 2023, attacks on critical infrastructure and economic hardship inhibit returns to Ukraine and risk triggering new displacements. Border crossings in November 2022 indicated an increase of over 105,000 Ukrainian refugees compared to previous months.⁸

⁵ See for example UNICEF Situation Reports: Ukraine Crisis and Refugee Outflow <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/ukraine/situation-reports> and/or UNHCR: Regional protection profiling and monitoring factsheets <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97720>

⁶ See for example <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine> accessed 12.12.2022

⁷ https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine#_ga=2.153066617.1194888114.1673958415-612591460.1673352313

⁸ UNICEF (2022) Ukraine Situation Report: December 2022

15. **Strong Child Protection and gender features.** The Government of Ukraine's martial law that only women and children could leave Ukraine, with men required to support the military effort, has shaped the dynamics of the crisis. Ninety per cent of refugees are women and children, some of whom - even before the conflict - faced heightened multidimensional poverty within Ukraine.⁹ Children's healthcare rights, including immunization, were not fully realised, and prior to the crisis, Ukraine had one of the highest numbers of people living with HIV of any country in Europe. Ukraine was facing challenges to reduce the number of children in institutional care prior to the conflict with boarding schools for children with disabilities excluded from de-institutionalisation efforts.¹⁰

16. **Extreme geopolitical sensitivity and high media profile.** The crisis is deeply embedded in international geopolitics, linking territorial concerns with political ideology, economic and political sanctions, food security, energy dependency and cyber warfare concerns.¹¹ Its high profile and continued media presence in media adds to the pressures on the humanitarian response.

17. **The role of the European Union.** EU member states activated the Temporary Protection Directive on March 4, 2022, for the very first time¹² Of the 6.9 million refugees recorded across Europe, 4.9 million¹³ had registered for Temporary Protection or similar national protection schemes as of January 2023.¹⁴ The Directive's provisions require suitable social provisions for migrants from the crisis, to afford them a standard of living to ensure their health and well-being for the duration of the protection provided, though it does not specify cost implications for member states.¹⁵ The EU also leads

the Testing the Child Guarantee with the Aim of Ending Child Poverty and Social Exclusion for all Children in Europe, a policy instrument which aims to address disadvantage and exclusion in childhood, and in which UNICEF was engaged in several countries prior to the crisis.¹⁶

18. **Strong solidarity in host countries and from the diaspora.** Both within and outside the EU, refugee-hosting countries have shown significant support for and solidarity with the refugees from Ukraine. Governments, civil society organisations, community and religious groups and volunteers have joined forces to provide basic services including accommodation, health, education and child and social protection. The private sector and diaspora have also played a significant role, both providing access to resources and funding the international humanitarian response.

⁹ UNICEF (2021) UNICEF Country Programme Evaluation Report

¹⁰ <https://unicef.org/ukraine/en/topics/child-protection>

¹¹ In 2019, the absolute poverty rate of families with children was 47.3 per cent, compared to 34.3 per cent for families without children. In total, 13.6 per cent of households with children were extremely poor, compared to 8.0 per cent of households without children. See for example <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/eastern-europe/ukraine>

¹² This stipulates that all member states must grant temporary protection to Ukrainians as well as persons with protection status in Ukraine and their family members who resided in Ukraine before February 24, 2022, Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan. March-December 2022.

¹³ Representing nearly 100% of the caseload eligible for Temporary Protection, as the remaining 2 million are understood to be located in the Russian Federation.

¹⁴ Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation (unhcr.org)

¹⁵ Motte-Baumvol, J., Frota Mont'Alverne, T.C. and Braga Guimarães, J. (2022) 'Extending Social Protection for Migrants under the European Union's Temporary Protection Directive: Lessons from the War in Ukraine' Oxford University Comparative Law Forum <https://ouclf.law.ox.ac.uk/extending-social-protection-for-migrants-under-the-european-unions-temporary-protection-directive-lessons-from-the-war-in-ukraine/#post-1429-footnote-46>

¹⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/european-child-guarantee/>

1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

19. Within the eight countries covered by the evaluation, Poland hosts 64% of the 2.4 million refugees recorded. All eight countries are upper-middle and high-income (Table 1).
20. Despite their relative income status, countries have faced significant challenges in responding to high-volume needs, within short arrival times, particularly given ongoing gaps in their own social systems. Five specific issues include:
21. (i) **Social protection challenges.** Existing systems in refugee-hosting countries have not always had

capacity to address the needs of a vast and swiftly-arriving refugee population; not least one whose duration of needs is highly unclear.¹⁹ Analysis of social protection systems found that in Poland, 'overall, the system is not fit-for-purpose to address chronic or acute poverty or a sudden surge of beneficiaries'²⁰ while Moldova 'is the least resourced country to incorporate a very large caseload of new entrants into its social protection system.'²¹ Population structures also affect social protection systems; countries such as Slovakia and the Czech Republic have social services focused on the needs of older age groups given ageing populations.²²

22. (ii) **Healthcare risks.** Prior to the crisis, healthcare systems in several countries were struggling, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. In Slovakia, for instance, hospital doctors in 2022 threatened to resign over salary and working conditions.²³ At the same time, the risks of disease outbreak expanded in host countries, given lower

Table 1: Context and Volumes of Refugees

Country	EU member	World Bank income categorization	Public social spending as % GDP, 2022 ¹⁷	Refugees from Ukraine recorded (January 2023) ¹⁸	Refugees per 100,000 population
Poland	EU	High	22.7	1,563,386	4,142
Czech Republic	EU	High	22	478,614	4,556
Moldova	Non-EU	Upper-middle	-	102,016	3,901
Bulgaria	EU	Upper-middle	-	50,601	736
Slovakia	EU	High	19.1	105,732	1,941
Belarus	Non-EU	Upper-middle	-	19,124	205
Hungary	EU	High	17.2	33,446	344
Romania	EU	High	-	106,987	560
TOTAL				2,440,782	

¹⁷ OECD (2022) Social Expenditure Database (SOCX)

¹⁸ Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation (unhcr.org)

¹⁹ See for example

<https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/humanitarian-assistance-and-social-protection-linkages-strengthening-shock-UN>

²⁰ See <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/poland-social-protection-country-profile-ukraine-crisis-response>

²¹ See

<https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/moldova-social-protection-country-profile-ukraine-crisis-response>

²² https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing. See also Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 85th Session (14 September-1 October 2020), 86th Session (18 January-5 February 2021), 87th Session (17 May-4 June 2021), 88th Session (6-24 September 2021), 89th Session, 17 January-11 February 2022), 1st January 2022

²³ UNICEF (2022) Situation Report: Ukraine, December 2022

vaccination rates among Ukrainian refugees, and different national protocols, for measles, polio, and COVID-19.²⁴ Meanwhile, in Poland, a completed vaccine schedule is a condition of entry to education.²⁵

23. (iii) **Education systems.** The Government of Ukraine initially encouraged refugee children to maintain their engagement with the Ukrainian education system, due to the crisis occurrence during the middle of a school year; the availability of digital infrastructure developed during the COVID-19 pandemic; and certification challenges. Yet neither primary nor secondary systems across the eight countries were set up encompass a large volume of incoming refugee children, particularly those with additional needs, and countries took different approaches to obligatory attendance. Differences in secondary school duration, combined with language barriers, have pushed students back to earlier grades, leading to dropouts.²⁶ Pre-school education and care was already overstretched and/or with inequitable access in countries such as Moldova, Romania and Slovakia.²⁷

24. (iv) **'De-institutionalisation'.** By 2022, seven of the eight countries examined here²⁸ had undergone, or were undergoing, a process of 'de-institutionalisation' of children in alignment with EU and international law.²⁹ Consequently, large-scale children's homes were unavailable. For the nearly 8,000 children³⁰ who had been in institutions inside Ukraine, and were evacuated abroad along with their careers, this posed a major challenge given the Ukrainian government's early position that such

children should remain in groups with their Ukrainian carers, and not be 'split up' or hosted separately.

25. (v) **Infrastructure.** Countries such as Moldova are particularly vulnerable to the targeting of electricity power plants and supply lines in Western and Southern Ukraine. In December 2022, these were causing power outages, requiring the Moldovan government to procure electricity in the open market, contributing to an overall increase in electricity prices. In December 2022, power outages in Ukraine were also affecting online education in host countries for refugees.³¹

²⁴ 2022-HAC-Ukraine-and-Refugee-Outflow-revised-April.pdf (unicef.org)

²⁵ <https://www.vaccinestoday.eu/stories/poland-offers-free-vaccination-to-refugees-from-ukraine-but-uptake-remains-low/>

²⁶ UNICEF (2022) Situation Report: Ukraine, December 2022

²⁷ See van Ravens, Aggio, C, Moore, K and Ponguta, A (2017) J, Analytical Review of Governance, Provision and Quality of Early Childhood Education Services at the Local Level in Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS): Country Report for Moldova;

<https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22598077/slovakia-is-the-worst-in-europe-in-number-of-educated-children-of-preschool-age.html>

²⁸ In Belarus, UNICEF reported in 2021 that '*Despite efforts to reduce the number of children in residential care institutions, 5,881 children lived in residential care institutions in 2020. While there is a national intersectoral working group on de-institutionalization, a comprehensive interagency strategy is*

needed to prevent the flow of children going to institutions and to increase return to families for those in institutions.' UNICEF Belarus (2022) Country Office Annual Report 2021

²⁹ See for example UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 19, which requires States parties to close institutional settings for persons with disabilities and instead ensure their full inclusion and participation in the community. See also: Article 29(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 15(4) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Article 23(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); also, Article 26 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

³⁰ 7971 as of 1.10.2022. Source: UNICEF data, made available to the evaluation team 15.12.2022

³¹ UNICEF (2022) Situation Report: Ukraine, December 2022

1.5 THE UNICEF REFUGEE RESPONSE FEBRUARY - DECEMBER 2022

26. When the crisis began, at dawn on 24th February 2022, UNICEF had Country Offices in Moldova, Romania, Belarus, and Bulgaria. It had no programmatic presence at all in Poland – where the bulk of refugees were entering – Czech Republic or Slovakia, and an administration Global Shared Services Centre in Budapest, Hungary.
27. By 26th February, UNICEF had deployed staff to border areas in Poland, where the majority of refugees were entering. By 1st March, it had established its first Blue Dot – a one-stop information shop and ‘safe space’ at Sighetu Marmatiei, on the Ukraine-Romania border, and published its Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) for the crisis response. [Flowchart 2](#) provides

the key ‘strategic moments’ in the course of 2022 (See in the next page): [Flowchart 2: Response Timeline](#).

28. **Regional Refugee Response Plan.** UNICEF’s crisis response is framed within the broad strategic framework of the multi-agency Ukraine Situation Refugee Response Plan (RRP), published by UNHCR on March 1st, 2022, just a week after the crisis began. The RRP covers the time period March-December 2022.³⁴ It sets out the financial needs of 142 partners supporting host country governments to provide protection services and urgent humanitarian assistance to refugees and impacted host communities.
29. **UNICEF response frameworks.** UNICEF published its initial HAC on 1st March 2022, and followed it with two updates, in April and November 2022, and a revised HAC for 2023. Each HAC combined the ‘inside’ Ukraine response (Pillar 1) with the refugee response (Pillar 2). Table 2 lists the key features of each Appeal:

Table 2: HAC Appeals

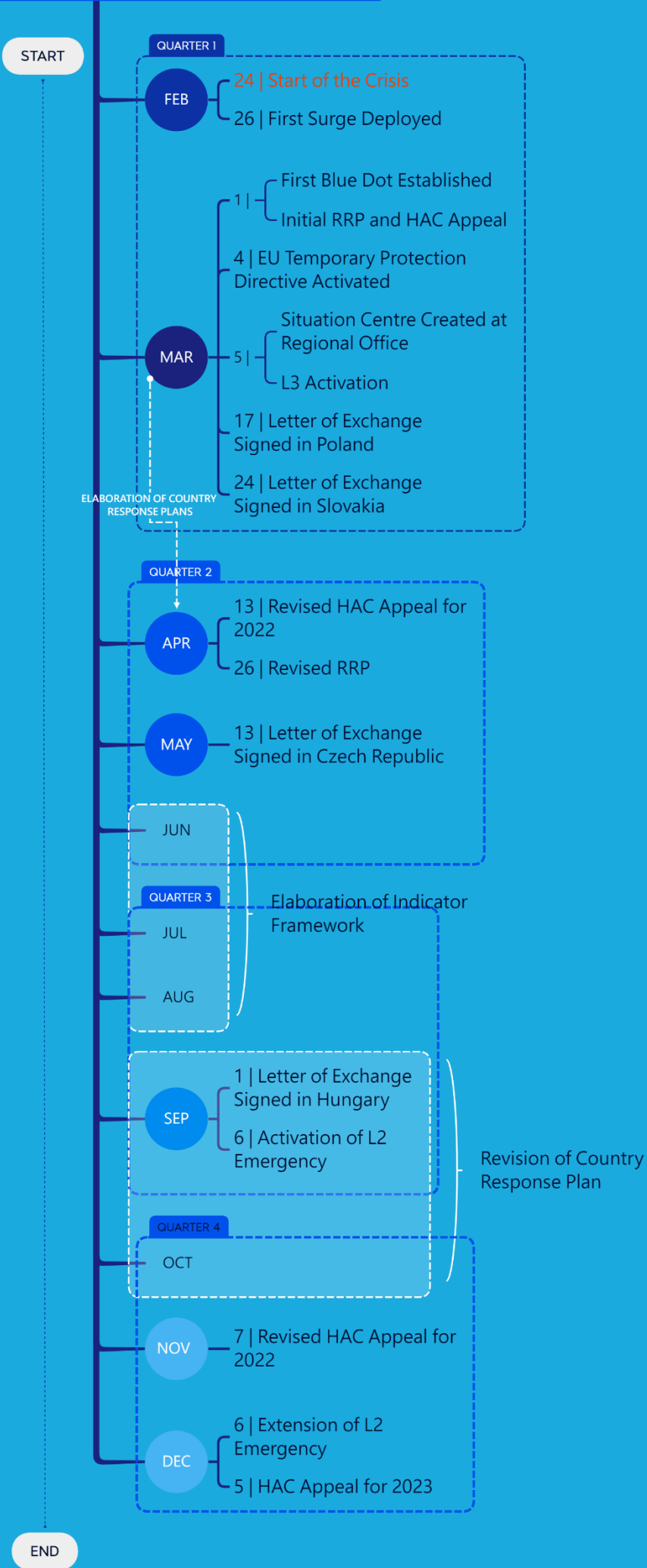
HAC	Pillar 2 request (US\$ million)	% HAC request	Content
Initial HAC March 1 st 2022 ³²	73	20.9	Emphasized the activation of “Blue Dot” safe spaces in host countries; the scale up of health and nutrition support; the provision of humanitarian cash transfers; sanitation interventions in shelters; and support to children’s continued access to education.
Updated HAC April 6 th 2022 ³³	325	34.2	Expanded support for unaccompanied and separated children, psychosocial services and prevention of trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation, and abuse, along with critical health, nutrition, education, WASH services and livelihoods and social support interventions.
Updated HAC November 2022	377	27.0	Emphasized multi-sectoral life-saving support for children and families, including supplies; child protection, health, vaccination, nutrition, education, early childhood development, WASH services, social protection and humanitarian cash, and capacity enhancement of social service workers and systems.
2023 HAC, issued December 2022	230	21.0	Lists intended use for critical supplies, services and for child protection, health care and nutrition, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and humanitarian cash; and work to strengthen social protection and national and local capacities to address needs.

³² 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. Ukraine, March 2022.

³³ 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, April 2022.

³⁴ 2022 Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan. March-December 2022. A subsequent update later in the month was elaborated with more partners, covers a longer period, and is more detailed at the country level.

FLOWCHART 2: RESPONSE TIMELINE | YEAR 2022



30. Both HAC appeals are geared to the implementation of UNICEF’s Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action (‘the CCCs’) ³⁵ (Box 1).
31. UNICEF also elaborated country-level Emergency Response Plans for each of the refugee-receiving countries. These plans are limited, taking the form of Excel spreadsheets for 2022, and simply list the key actions, targeted populations, and performance indicators by sector.
32. **Emergency declarations.** UNICEF declared a Level 3 emergency on 5th March 2022, four days after publishing its first HAC. On 6th September 2022, at a scheduled revision point, the refugee response was re-designated a Level 2 response. The implications of this separation are discussed within Section 2, Findings.
33. **Programmatic intent.** Key sectoral interventions planned were Child Protection, Health and Nutrition, Education, WASH and basic needs/non-food items, and Social Protection (Table 3).³⁶

³⁵ See: [https://www.unicef.org/media/87611/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20\(English\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/media/87611/file/Core%20Commitments%20for%20Children%20(English).pdf). 1 The CCCs are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action, namely: Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Global Norms and Standards; International Humanitarian Law; the Humanitarian

BOX 1






THE CCCS

‘The CCCs form the core UNICEF policy and framework for humanitarian action and are mandatory for all UNICEF personnel. Grounded in global humanitarian norms and standards, the CCCs set organizational, programmatic, and operational commitments and benchmarks against which UNICEF holds itself accountable for the coverage, quality and equity of its humanitarian action and advocacy’.

Source: UNICEF (2020) Core Commitment to Children in Humanitarian Action.

Principles; the SPHERE Core Humanitarian Standards, Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, ³⁶ Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, April 2022.

Table 3: Multi-Sectoral Response Plan

<p>HEALTH</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scaling up essential nutrition and primary health services. ▪ Supporting referrals to gender-based violence and specialized child protection services. ▪ Assisting governments to mitigate impacts of covid-19 and prevent outbreaks of measles and polio.
<p>EDUCATION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitating access to early learning and education through temporary learning and recreational activities and supporting host-governments to include refugee children in education systems.
<p>CHILD PROTECTION</p> 	<p>Advocacy³⁷ with governments to strengthen child protection services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screening for at-risk children at border points. ▪ Providing technical support and safeguarding programming through Best Interests procedures for unaccompanied and separated children. ▪ Assisting identification and registration of children evacuated from residential care in Ukraine. ▪ In collaboration with UNHCR, scale up 'Blue Dots' child friendly spaces in strategic locations to provide child protection, health, education, early childhood development, mental health and psychosocial support, and critical information.
<p>WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing adequate, safe water and sanitation, hygiene and dignity items and infection prevention control measures in reception sites, transit centers, shelters, and schools.
<p>SOCIAL PROTECTION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing multi-purpose cash transfers for households with children in transit. ▪ Integrating refugees into national social protection systems.

³⁷ UNICEF, defines advocacy as “the deliberate process, based on demonstrated evidence, to directly and indirectly influence decision makers, stakeholders and relevant audiences to support and implement actions that contribute to the fulfilment of children’s and women’s rights.” Advocacy Toolkit, 2010

FINANCIAL PROFILE

34. An unusual financial profile. The refugee response was exceptionally well-funded for a humanitarian appeal. It received more than the requested US\$ 377 million by December 31, 2022, or US\$ 381 million. Of this, an unusually high percentage of funding - 57% - was fully flexible, with only 43% being earmarked for specific countries or activities.³⁸ The bulk of flexible funding was provided through National Committees, with resources arriving from private donations, including those from individuals. *Table 4: Main Donors. Pillar 2 HAC Appeal* and *Chart 1: Source of Finance* below³⁹ provide the funding profile of the response:

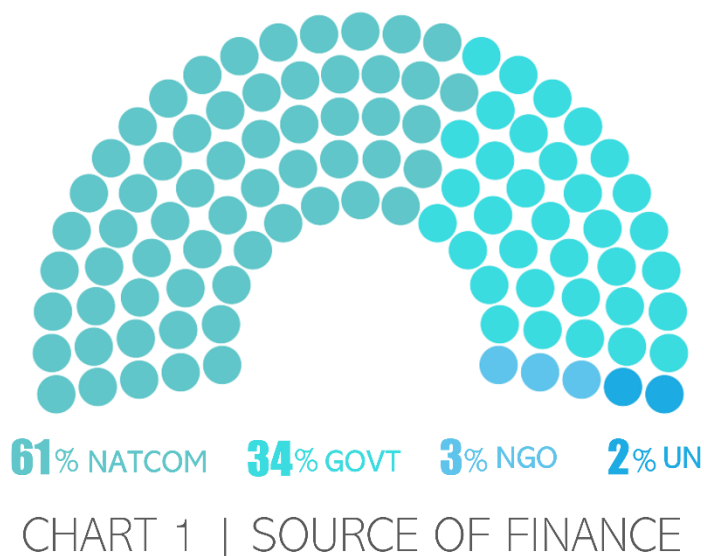


Table 4: Main Donors. Pillar 2 HAC Appeal

TOP NATIONAL COMMITTEE	TOP GOVERNMENT
1. United States Fund for UNICEF	1. United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
2. German Committee for UNICEF	2. USA (State) BPRM
3. Japan Committee for UNICEF	3. German Federal Foreign Office
4. UK Committee for UNICEF	4. European Commission / ECHO
5. Swedish Committee for UNICEF	5. Japan

Source: *Insight Ukraine HAC Response Donor Portfolio* (extracted on Jan 23, 2023).

³⁸ Analysis of UNICEF financial data, December 2022

³⁹ UNICEF (2022): HAC Ukraine Funding Summary Report.

1.6 MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND KEY ACTORS

35. The two main institutional units directing the response are:

- **UNICEF's Emergency Operations (EMOPS) division**, with the Director of EMOPS appointed, as per Level 3 procedures, the Global Emergency Co-ordinator for both the inside and outside Ukraine response. EMOPS hosted the regular Emergency Management Team (EMT) and Technical Emergency Team (TET) meetings to co-ordinate the response. It also prepared the HAC in consultation with the Regional Office, below, and deployed surge personnel.
- **UNICEF's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)** took a leading role in designing and implementing the response. Following the shift to Level 2 in September 2022, it became the formal lead for the refugee response. Its roles included: providing strategic direction and technical advice; supplying surge staff to affected countries; and engaging directly the four 'non-programme' countries.

36. *Flowchart 3: Management Arrangements for the Response* (next page) maps the management arrangements for the response. It reflects the four countries in which UNICEF already had fully-fledged Country Offices (Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania) and those where it did not (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland). These arrangements have driven forward the response described in this report.

37. Other key actors in the response are:

- **Host governments.** Host governments have led refugee responses on their territories, providing access to services including health, education and child and social protection. In countries such as Poland and Romania, national government

provides the main policymaking and co-ordination function, while services are delivered by municipal and other local authorities to citizens and refugees. Accordingly, international actors must engage at both levels to support service delivery.

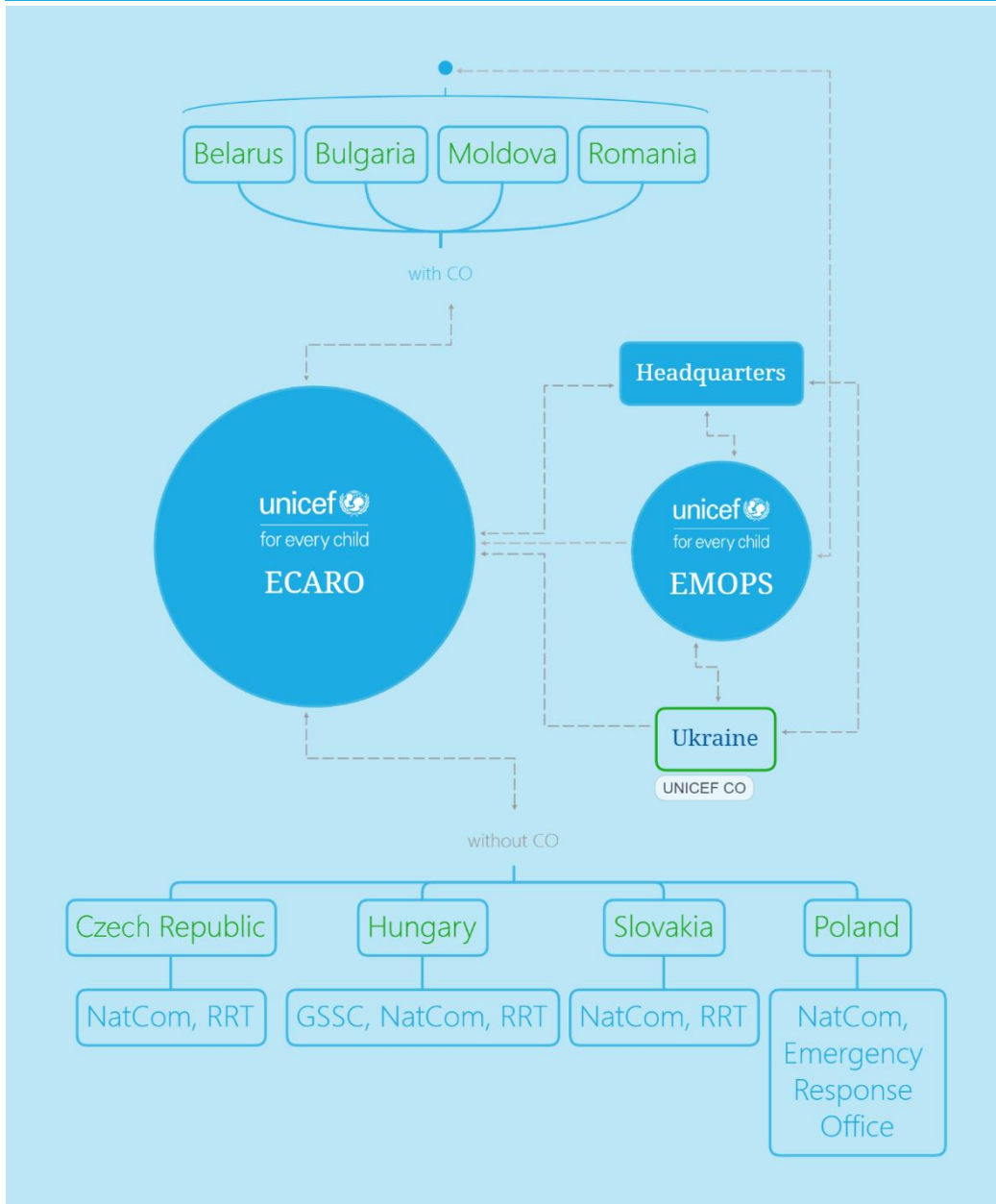
- **Implementing partners (civil society and government).** The vast majority of UNICEF's services are delivered through implementing partners – which include local/ municipal authorities above. As of January 2023, UNICEF had transferred US\$ 99 million to government and civil society organisations for the refugee response. Fifty-six percent of these resources were for partnerships with governments (national and local), and 44% for partnerships with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).⁴⁰
- **National Committees** in Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Czech Republic, where it lacked a previous programmatic presence), UNICEF works in close partnership with National Committees, registered as locally registered organizations affiliated with UNICEF. 'NatComs' aim to promote children's rights, raise funds from the private sector and secure visibility for children's issues.⁴¹ Across the world, they raise around one-third of UNICEF's annual income from corporations, civil society organizations and more than ten million individual donors worldwide. They have a long history in countries, being present in Poland for example for 65 years before the crisis, but those in the four concerned countries are relatively small in scale.

38. It was under these complex conditions, and amid the intense media scrutiny accompanying the crisis, that UNICEF launched its emergency response. The remainder of this report assesses the strengths, limitations and learning from the response to date.

⁴⁰ 2022 Humanitarian Response for Children Outside of Ukraine. Factsheet No. 8 (July 20-August 3).

⁴¹ <https://www.unicef.org/unicef-national-committees>

FLOWCHART 3: MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RESPONSE





CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS

2.1 HOW WELL DID UNICEF'S RESPONSE MEET THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF BENEFICIARIES AND STAKEHOLDERS?

SUMMARY

UNICEF's strategic narrative of the Child Protection dimensions of the crisis was both substantively appropriate and strategically shrewd. It helped legitimise and explain programmatic expansion in existing programme countries, while presenting a rationale for entry in the four 'non-CPD' countries. It adopted a twin-track approach to expanding its country presence, undertaking strategic advocacy and negotiation at national level in parallel with programmatic activity on the ground.

Internally, the division of leadership role between the Regional Office and the Emergency Operations division suffered initially from a lack of clarity and agreement on roles and responsibilities. This was resolved after the re-designation of the refugee response to a Level 2 emergency.

To meet the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders, UNICEF deployed a large-scale surge operation. However, this revealed shortcomings in the standard response model, with short-term deployments, handover weaknesses, capacity and knowledge gaps and lack of operations expertise impeding progress.

Data constraints are a wider feature of the crisis, arising in part from its speed and scale and the mobility of the refugee population. UNICEF sought to mitigate this by supporting needs and other assessments, though these were undertaken only later in the response. Learning, which was experiential, supported knowledge management in the same manner.

The response was aligned to needs in broad terms of country and sector allocations. However, linked to data gaps, above, vulnerable group recognition and programmatic tailoring took time. The programme has become more diversified and nuanced over time, and UNICEF has been a particularly prominent actor in relation to the sensitive issue of Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC).

39. The response unfolded among highly diverse operating conditions across the region – and within the sensitive political climate and high media profile described above. This section of the report describes how UNICEF adapted to meet beneficiary and stakeholder needs, in terms of its management arrangements, capacities and programming.

2.1.1 What features of the crisis affected the UNICEF response?

40. The specific features of the crisis created some unique operating conditions for UNICEF:

- i. **The absence of country programmes in four refugee-receiving countries** meant that UNICEF lacked on-the-ground knowledge of systems, capacities, and partners, as well as entry points with government and ‘brand awareness’. National Committees were the known UNICEF entity in these contexts, and their advocacy and fundraising efforts adopted a narrative of UNICEF as the international standard-bearer for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and improving lives and livelihoods elsewhere in the world.
- ii. **Regional capacities largely geared to advocacy and technical support** meant limited experience in large-scale emergency response, with existing country programmes in Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania largely small-scale.⁴² Countries previously had little to no crisis propensity.

iii. **A lack of a clear institutional discourse to describe the operating context.** Corporately, UNICEF uses the terms ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ to distinguish activities, as for example in its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan.⁴³ Its definition of ‘humanitarian’ action, as set out in the Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action (‘the CCCs’), encompasses emergency situations in upper-middle and high-income contexts as well as a resilience and system strengthening component.⁴⁴ However, the ‘development’ discourse struggled to find relevance in the Central and Eastern Europe context, where many countries donate to UNICEF;⁴⁵ have upper-middle or high income status (section 1.3); and possess comparatively strongly functioning governance, institutions and social and economic systems.

41. **Some valuable assets and capacities.** Nonetheless, UNICEF also possessed some key assets and capacities to support its regional response. These included:

- i. Large-scale and high-capacity emergency response expertise, including at within the Regional Office.
- ii. Within the region, institutional memory of experience with the refugee influx from the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015.
- iii. A strong body of national staff within its Country Offices in the region, with understanding of, and

⁴² Analysis of UNICEF Country Programme Documents for Belarus (2017-2022), Bulgaria (2018-2022), Moldova (2018-2022) and Romania (2018-2022)

⁴³ See for example p5 of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan: ‘The Strategic Plan will incorporate key findings from the formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming...’ p6 ‘To strengthen coordination, coherence and collaboration (where contextually appropriate) between its humanitarian and development work, in line with its dual mandate, UNICEF must overcome bottlenecks...’ UNICEF (2022) UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025

⁴⁴ ‘Humanitarian action for UNICEF encompasses interventions aimed at saving lives, alleviating suffering, maintaining human dignity and protecting rights of affected populations, wherever there are humanitarian needs, regardless of the kind of crisis (sudden-onset or protracted emergencies, natural disasters,

public health emergencies, complex emergencies, international or internal armed conflicts, etc. 1), irrespective of the Gross National Income level of a country (low, middle or high), or legal status of the affected populations. Humanitarian action also encompasses interventions addressing underlying risks and causes of vulnerability to disasters, fragility, and conflict, such as system strengthening and resilience building, which contribute to reducing humanitarian needs, risks and vulnerabilities of affected populations.’ UNICEF (2020) core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action.

⁴⁵ All countries examined here were contributors to UNICEF Regular Resources/Other resources in 2021, other than Belarus, which provided private sector Other Resources. UNICEF Partnerships Annual Report 2021 <https://www.unicef.org/media/125196/file/UNICEF%20Annual%20Report%202021%20Partnerships%20Supplement.pdf>

detailed insight into, national political, governance and institutional environments.

iv. Also in the region, an established operating modality in programme countries, borne of the context, of working through national systems and mechanisms.

42. Prior to the crisis, UNICEF had also developed a considerable programme of work on Child Protection issues in the region, given longstanding concerns on children in institutions or other alternative care arrangements; justice for children; violence against children; and vulnerable groups such as Roma children.⁴⁶

43. Limited emergency preparedness plans. Nonetheless, Country Offices in the region did not all have preparedness plans in line with UNICEF’s Minimum Preparedness Standards, as required by the CCCs.⁴⁷ Moreover, the CCCs themselves were not widely known among staff.⁴⁸

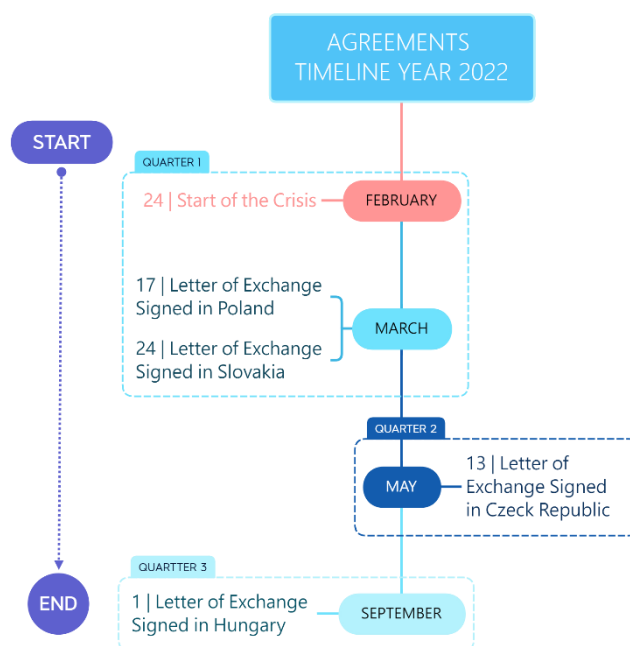
2.1.2 How well did UNICEF create the conditions to deliver its response in different countries?

44. A new narrative needed. In the four existing Country Offices, UNICEF’s existing programme of work meant that partners’ understanding of UNICEF was largely as an actor focused on advocacy and technical support. In Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, where UNICEF had no programmatic presence, partners’ knowledge of it was derived largely from its National Committee narrative: UNICEF geared to ‘development’ and ‘humanitarian’ work in other areas of the world. A new narrative for engagement was therefore needed.

45. Creating entry points in non-programme countries. The challenge was particularly acute in countries where UNICEF had no prior programmatic presence. The process for initiating UN programmatic presence on sovereign territory is complex and requires astute political navigation – as evidence from previous

refugee crises has shown.⁴⁹ UNICEF needed formal agreement to establish its presence, and/or to support government-led refugee response programmes in these four countries.

46. This highly delicate navigation required time and careful steps. In all four non-programme countries, UNICEF approached national strategic partners to initiate dialogue and begin to carve out strategic and operational space. *Flowchart 4* shows the dates of national-level agreements:



47. The speed of agreement depended on the pace at which negotiations proceeded – governments themselves being embroiled in large-scale emergency responses – and local political conditions. Agreements with the governments of Poland and Slovakia were relatively swift, being signed in in mid-March 2022. Czech Republic followed in May 2022, while Hungary, which was engaged in election preparation earlier in the year, took longer, with agreements signed in September 2022. In all four of these countries, UNICEF’s presence is that of a ‘Refugee Response Team’, since

⁴⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/eca/topics/child-protection>

⁴⁷ Analysis of Country Office preparedness plans in Romania and Moldova.; interviews with Country and Regional Office staff.

⁴⁸ Fieldwork in Poland, Moldova, and Romania.

⁴⁹ See for example UNHCR (2022). Joint Evaluation of the Protection of the Rights of Refugees during the COVID-10

Pandemic, Final Report, July 2022; Solé Arqués, R., Lefevre Saadoun M., Hatzinikolaou, K., Ormonbekova, L. (2020): Evaluation of UNICEF’s contribution to the migrant and refugee crisis response in Greece (2016-2019), Final Evaluation Report as of 16 of June 2020, commissioned by UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia.

establishing Country Offices and Programmes requires a formal invitation from the host government, and agreement from UNICEF's Executive Board.

48. **A twin-track approach.** Concurrently to central-level strategic dialogue, however, UNICEF proceeded to establish or expand its programmatic activity in two ways:

- i. At national level, by forming agreements with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) or other partners – such as the Scouts in Poland, the Red Cross/Red Crescent in Belarus, and Terre Des Hommes in Hungary – who could deliver key services at scale across the country.
- ii. At decentralised level, by pursuing partnerships with local-level municipalities or CSOs who could reach specific populations or groups within a given geographical area.

49. These partnerships, and the results they achieved, are analysed in more detail in section 2.2, but they illustrate the dual approach adopted; of working to ensure service delivery to those in need, while cultivating the strategic and political conditions for government co-operation.

50. **Child protection narrative strategically appropriate.** UNICEF's adoption of a Child Protection early narrative⁵⁰ was substantively appropriate, being in line with some of the main vulnerabilities created by the crisis (see section 1.4). It was also politically expedient, framing UNICEF's offer to the crisis within its global mandate on child rights, and thereby positioning UNICEF as a central actor within the response, as section 2.3 explains.

51. **A well-received external narrative.** Government stakeholders interviewed were positive on UNICEF's process of engagement,⁵¹ appreciating its child

rights stance and its partnership with UNHCR in refugee response.⁵² The early provision of 'Blue Dots', which offered a one-stop information point and 'safe space' for refugees arriving from Ukraine, reinforced this narrative, and provided a visible and tangible statement of UNICEF presence (see section 2.1).

2.1.2 To what extent did UNICEF's management arrangements support or impede the response?

52. **Corporate emergency management arrangements.**

Respective roles and responsibilities for COs, RO and HQ for emergency response are clearly set out in the CCCs.⁵³ HQ (EMOPS), as Global Emergency Co-ordinator, holds responsibility for '*strategic leadership and overall direction to ROs and COs for the implementation of humanitarian response*' and '*strategic and technical guidance to ROs and COs in their preparedness and emergency efforts*.'⁵⁴ However, these items met confusion in the day-to-day management of the response, since the Regional Office possessed in-house emergency expertise, including experience from the Syrian regional crisis in 2015; detailed knowledge of EU systems and institutions; and in-depth knowledge of the regional context. Specific areas of responsibility and '*who should do what*' and '*who decides*' under the extreme time pressures of the crisis, were therefore not always clear, or internally agreed.⁵⁵

53. Following a period of internal tension and debate,⁵⁶ the re-designation of the refugee response as a Level 2 emergency effectively separated management arrangements for the 'inside' and 'outside' Ukraine components. The consensus from staff was that the separation was necessary, appropriate, and brought welcome clarity - although it also removed from the refugee response scope for the enhanced systems available under Level 3 mechanisms.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ UNICEF (2022) Humanitarian Appeal for Children in Ukraine (March 2022, April 2022); analysis of UNICEF social media posts February-September 2022

⁵¹ Interviews with government stakeholders in Poland, Moldova, and Romania.

⁵²As reflected in the HAC and its April 2022 update as well as its social media messaging and formal dialogue with governments.

⁵³ UNICEF (2020) Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action p21

⁵⁴ UNICEF (2020) Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action p21

⁵⁵ Mapping of EMT Action Points (minutes March-October 2022); Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ and Regional Office

⁵⁶ Acknowledged by interviews at Regional Office and HQ level

⁵⁷ Interviews with UNICEF staff and partners in HQ and Regional Office



OPERATIONAL COMMITMENT

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Timely deployment of personnel at the onset of emergencies enables rapid emergency response.
- ROs, COs and field offices are adequately staffed to enable ongoing humanitarian response.
- UNICEF personnel have appropriate knowledge of emergency preparedness and response.

mechanism, provided by surge deployments while country staff continued their work on the pre-existing country programme.⁵⁹

2.1.3 To what extent did UNICEF have the right strategic and operational capacities in place to create and expand political/operational space on the ground?

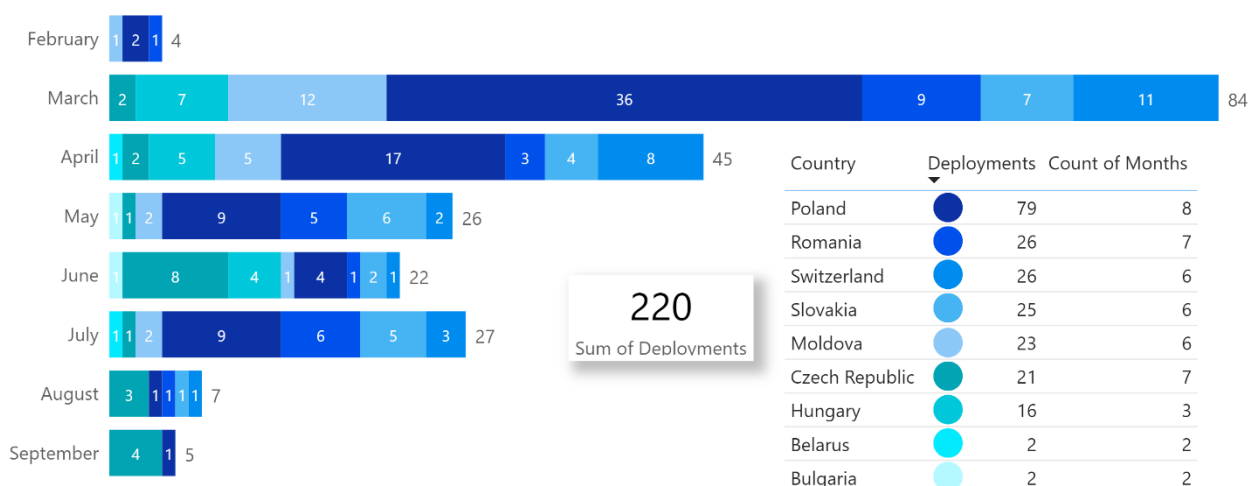
55. **Strategic and operational capacities pre-crisis fit for context.** Pre-crisis, UNICEF Country Office staffing aligned with the needs of their respective Country Programme Documents.⁶⁰ Human resourcing profiles comprised largely national staff, deeply familiar with the systems, institutional arrangements, and political dynamics in their contexts, as well as instinctively aligned to the principle and process of working through national systems.

56. **A large-scale surge operation.** To address immediate needs, a large surge operation was launched. 220 'in person' surge deployments were made to the region over 2022 and 40 remote surge deployments. Deployments were made in two ways: (i) internationally, through the surge deployment mechanism operated by EMOPS under the Level 3 mechanism and (ii) from the Regional Office. The bulk of deployments took place in March 2022, *Chart 2: Surge Deployments (excluding remote)*.

54. Diverse management arrangements at country level.

Management arrangements for the programmatic emergency response was conducted differently across countries – even where UNICEF had a previous presence. In Moldova, for example, the emergency dimensions of the response were integrated into the existing country programme, with UNICEF expanding its programmatic areas on child protection, health, and education.⁵⁸ Surge staff provided additional technical support. In Romania, by contrast, beyond the setting up of Blue Dots, the emergency response was run as effectively a parallel

Chart 2 | Surge Deployments (Year 2022)



Source: Evaluation team, from UNICEF internal data. Excludes remote deployments.

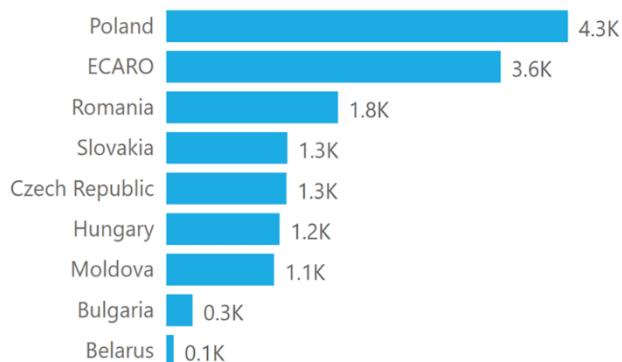
⁵⁸ Field mission findings: Moldova

⁵⁹ Field mission findings: Romania

⁶⁰ Analysis of UNICEF Country Programme Documents for Belarus (2017-2022), Bulgaria (2018-2022), Moldova (2018-2022) and Romania (2018-2022)

57. Poland received the largest number of surge support days while Belarus, which had an established Country Office and received a limited number of refugees, the lowest. Romania, which, as noted, also opted to run its emergency response separately to the main programme, received the third highest number of surge support days after the Regional Office (Chart 3).

Chart 3 | Surge Support Days by Country



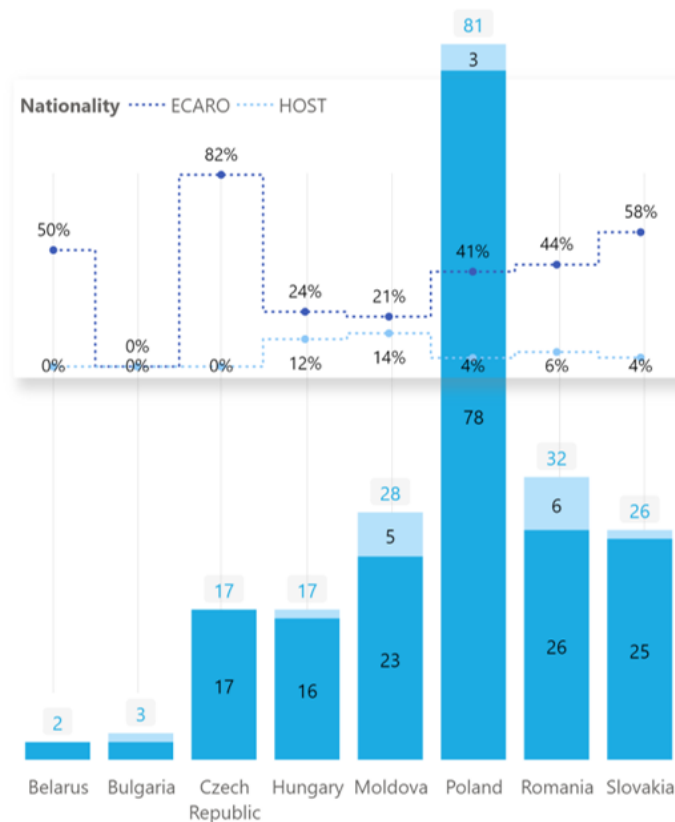
Source: Evaluation team, reconstructed from UNICEF internal data.

58. Surge staff were heavily sourced from among the region. Chart 4 shows the share of surge personnel having a) the same nationality as the host country or b) a nationality from one of the countries where ECARO has a Country Office, supporting contextual knowledge.

59. Challenges with short-term deployments. An early challenge was the short duration of deployments. These initially followed the standard emergency model of 2-3 weeks in the initial phase, geared to setting up systems and establishing the infrastructure needed for crisis response. However, this proved out of sync with both the needs of host countries – where response systems, utilising existing national mechanisms, were already established but required gap-filling and augmentation. UNICEF staff and partners in the existing four Country Offices described frustration at having to brief and re-brief incoming personnel; Government representatives in at least two countries eventually refused to meet with UNICEF staff who were staying less than two months.⁶¹

⁶¹ Interviews with Government representatives during field missions

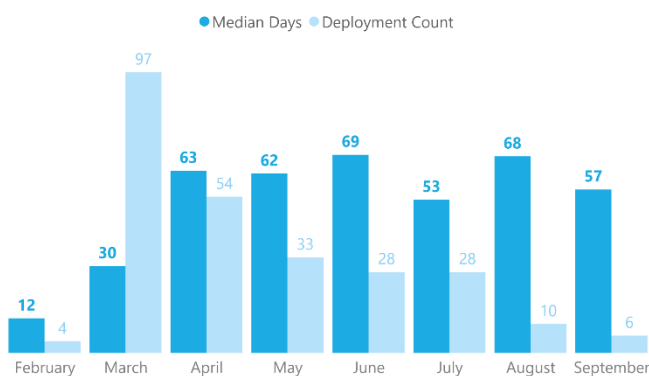
Chart 4 | Sourcing of Surge Personnel from Among ECARO and National Deployment ● Local ● Remote



Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF internal data.

60. UNICEF addressed this concern: as of August 2022, the Regional Office required a minimum of two months from surge deployments.⁶² Chart 5 below shows the expansion in surge duration, from February to September 2022.

Chart 5 | Surge Duration Over Time (Year 2022)



Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF internal data.

⁶² EMT meeting minutes August 2022; interviews with staff and management at regional and country level

61. **Weaknesses in handover.** The pace and scale of surge deployments negatively affected staff handover, which was repeatedly described as weak or non-existent in the four ‘non-programme’ countries, particularly where there were gaps in surge deployments. Staff arriving for longer durations described spending their first few weeks in their new roles discovering ‘*what agreements had been made, and with whom*’.⁶³ In Poland, for example, no full picture or overview of the programme was in place until August 2022. Co-ordination between HQ, regional and country level on official visits was also inconsistent, with some country managers describing encountering relatively senior visitors from different layers of the organisation arriving in the country for which the managers were UNICEF’s responsible officer, without warning.⁶⁴
62. **Capacity gaps across the response.** Although the CCCs commit UNICEF to a well-capacitated emergency response (Operational Commitment 3.2 above), the response suffered significant knowledge and capacity gaps in some key areas. These fell into four main categories:
- i. **Emergency systems.** The CCCs state that ‘All UNICEF personnel are expected to know and apply the emergency procedures.’⁶⁵ It became apparent however, that while Country Office staff were deeply familiar with national systems, governance arrangements and political climates, many lacked familiarity with emergency systems, procedures, and co-ordination mechanisms, including the Humanitarian Principles and the CCCs, and needed guidance.
 - ii. **National systems and working modalities.** By contrast, many international surge staff presented the converse. They had deep familiarity with the CCCs and UNICEF emergency systems and procedures, but in many cases, little experience of working through national systems, or in strong governance contexts.
 - iii. **Local context knowledge.** In non-programme countries, UNICEF had to develop knowledge of the political, governance, legal and procedural terrain, as well as local partnership availability and capacity, from scratch. For example, in Poland, the complex political relationships between municipalities – the main arm of Polish state service delivery to its citizens – and the central government were not initially understood. UNICEF employed dedicated Polish staff with knowledge of the political and governance landscape to fill this critical gap.⁶⁶ Elsewhere, such as in Romania, existing Country Office staff were ‘outposted’ to field positions, supporting local coordination and advocacy, as well as understanding of the local context.
 - iv. **EU normative environment.** The EU’s strong legal and regulatory framework, norms and standards define the policy and operational context surrounding the refugee response in relevant countries. For UNICEF at country level, particularly in ‘non-programme countries’, this meant swiftly developing its knowledge on these issues, and interpreting and applying them in relation to UNICEF’s own frameworks.
63. **‘Learning by doing’.** In the absence of prior capacity, and under the pressures of large-scale emergency response, learning has been experiential, both for those in the region, who had to learn how to do emergency response ‘on the job’, and for those arriving from elsewhere. The learning curve, accordingly, been steep.
64. **Lack of Operations expertise.** A further challenge was the initial focus on technical expertise, rather than Operations staff. The latter perform a vital function in UNICEF: they undertake key functional tasks and manage the internal systems which keep UNICEF programmes ‘moving’. In existing Country Offices, Operations staff were already in place, but for non-programme countries, staff described inordinate amounts of time in the early days conducting functional activities, as well as trying to deliver a large-scale response. ‘*Mobile phones,*

⁶³ Interviews with staff and management at Regional Office and Country Office level

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ UNICEF (2020) Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action p17

⁶⁶ Interviews with Polish government and municipality officials, as well as UNICEF staff.

stationary, a meeting place, an IT connection....I was doing everything. There was no backup.'

65. Although the deployment of operations staff increased from 31 in early March to 82 at the end of December across the eight response countries, with 43 of these in non-programme countries,⁶⁷ staff on the ground reported ongoing challenges, and particularly severe struggles trying to cope with UNICEF's end of year requirements, which require the navigation of internal systems.

66. **Challenges in building national staff complements.** As the response moved into the sustained phase, from August 2022 onwards, UNICEF began to recruit new staff in the region. However, this proved unexpectedly problematic due to (i) constrained labour markets, with unemployment already at low levels in host countries; (ii) UNICEF's relative unfamiliarity as an employer; (iii) comparatively low salary rates compared to the private sector and (iv) lack of specialised skillsets in UNICEF specific programming areas. Onboarding also took time. Multiple managers referred to staffing as '*their biggest headache*'. For international staff, low/outdated post adjustments rates rendered postings relatively unattractive compared to those elsewhere in the world.⁶⁸

2.1.4 To what extent did the response use evidence to inform design?

67. **Political analysis and preparedness.** UNICEF lack a mechanism to feed information from UN Security Council briefings into its emergency preparedness planning for individual countries, while its forecasting unit does not address humanitarian issues. However, political analysis of an event likely to occur was widely available in the period before the crisis; indeed, UNHCR had been '*strongly advised to deploy*' ahead of the crisis by one of its leading donors.⁶⁹ UNICEF had access to similar intelligence through its Ukraine Country Office particularly, though the Ukrainian government, at the time, were hesitant to acknowledge the potential for a full incursion.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ UNICEF internal Human resources data. However, support was not evenly spread Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary had very limited to no operations support in the early days of the response.

⁶⁸ Due to the fact that global salary surveys had not been regularly conducted, such as in Poland and Romania.

⁶⁹ Interviews at country and regional level

⁷⁰ Interviews with multiple stakeholders at country, regional and HQ level.



SECTORAL COMMITMENT

Needs Assessments, Planning,
Monitoring and Evaluation.

- Disaggregated data is collected, analysed, and disseminated to understand and address the diverse needs, risks and vulnerabilities of children and their communities.
- Coordinated, timely and impartial assessments of the situation, humanitarian assistance and protection needs, vulnerabilities and risks are undertaken.

68. **Limited visibility on caseload composition.** Once the crisis occurred, major gaps arose in caseload data, partly due to the speed and scale of the exodus, and

the transiting of many refugees across countries, and later in the response, to its ‘pendular’ nature (section 1.3). As the response evolved over time, UNICEF sought to mitigate these gaps in four ways:

DIRECT

- i. Through use of the Blue Dots which, once established, provided an important vehicle for collecting evidence on specific vulnerabilities, with specific questions on support needs asked.⁷¹
- ii. Through VIBER polls, the main channel of communication among refugee groups, which took place March-May 2022, and secured responses from over 50,000 refugees. Polls asked questions about healthcare and education.⁷²
- iii. Through some country-specific needs assessments, e.g., a multi-sectoral assessment conducted in Romania by October 2022.

INDIRECT

- iv. Through asking partners to define the needs of their own beneficiaries, in line with standard partnership arrangements. Analysis of a sample of partnership agreements confirms that all agreements highlighted target groups, though the analysis behind these was not always clear.
- v. Through support to needs assessments, which UNICEF supported in Moldova, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania (Table 5).

Table 5: Needs Assessments (Year 2022)

Country	Organisation	When Conducted
Moldova	REACH	May
Slovakia	REACH	Jul-Aug
Hungary	IOM	Sep
Romania	REACH	Oct-Nov
Poland	International Rescue Committee	Mar
	UNICEF & UNHCR	Mar
	Norwegian Refugee Council	Jun
	REACH	Aug-Sep
	REACH	Sep
	Central Council of German Sinti and Roma	Unknown

69. Data generated from these processes helped inform programmatic tailoring, below.

70. Efforts to support lesson learning from elsewhere. Although the crisis happened at a unique speed and scale, it is far from the first refugee crisis in middle and higher-income settings. Previous crises, such as those in Syria and Venezuela, have generated valuable lessons and experience.⁷³

71. Although no separate formal knowledge management strategy was developed, UNICEF made efforts to generate and share knowledge to inform the response, for example by generating and sharing a repository of learnings from previous emergencies and establishing a Situation Centre to act as an information, reporting and crisis management centre. Lessons Learned and Good Practices culled from relevant evaluations were also disseminated.

⁷¹ This takes place through a questionnaire developed for monitoring purposes. Data is collected through an electronic questionnaire to be filled in by the Blue Dots staff. The evidence obtained in this way is not representative of the overall refugee population, as many refugees never visited a Blue Dot, but it was nevertheless regarded as an important source of information on caseload.

⁷² The first poll was launched on March 28 and results were reported on March 31, the second was launched on April 3 and results reported on April 6, and the third was launched on May

30 and results reported on June 8. The number of responses was 38,991 in the first poll, including those from Germany. The second poll does not report on the number of responses (but only shares of answers). The third poll has 19,736 responses, also including those from Germany.

⁷³ UNICEF (2022) Evaluation of the UNICEF response to the level 3 humanitarian crisis in Syria; UNICEF (2022) Multi-country evaluation of UNICEF’s response to the Venezuela outflow crisis (2019-2021)

Experientially, internationally deployed staff utilised their experience of crises elsewhere to inform the response. For example:

- i. Staff with experience of the Syrian regional response crisis described applying knowledge of social protection mechanisms (cash transfers).
- ii. The Blue Dots model was drawn from the Syrian regional crisis, and regional guidance on their establishment was used.
- iii. Staff who had worked on the Venezuela refugee crisis applied their experience of child protection systems and mechanisms, including for violence against children.⁷⁴

72. **Resource requests and allocations aligned to volumes of needs.** In purely financial terms, resource requests and allocations were aligned to volumes of needs at country level. Within the April HAC update, and its successor in November 2022, the greatest resource volumes were requested for Poland, which had received the largest number of refugees, followed by Moldova and Slovakia (*Map 2: HAC Requests per Country*; ⁷⁵ next page). Subsequently, in line with requests, the greatest volume of funds as of December 2022 had been *allocated* to Poland, with substantial allocations also made to Moldova (*Table 6: HAC Appeal: Funding Status*; ⁷⁶ next page). Comparing the funding requests with the funding received, requests were lower than funding received for Bulgaria, Moldova, and Romania, as well as for the regional coordination of the response.

2.1.5 How well-diversified was the response for different needs?



SECTORAL COMMITMENT

Needs Assessments, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

- Response plans are evidence-based and consistent with interagency planning.

⁷⁴ Interviews with staff at Country Office level.

⁷⁵ Shading refers to a composite index for countries' needs for support from UNICEF, considering their structural conditions (GDP per capita, government effectiveness, children's rights)

and refugee population. The darker the shading, the greater the need. See Annex 2 for methodology.

⁷⁶ UNICEF (2022): HAC Ukraine Funding Summary Report.

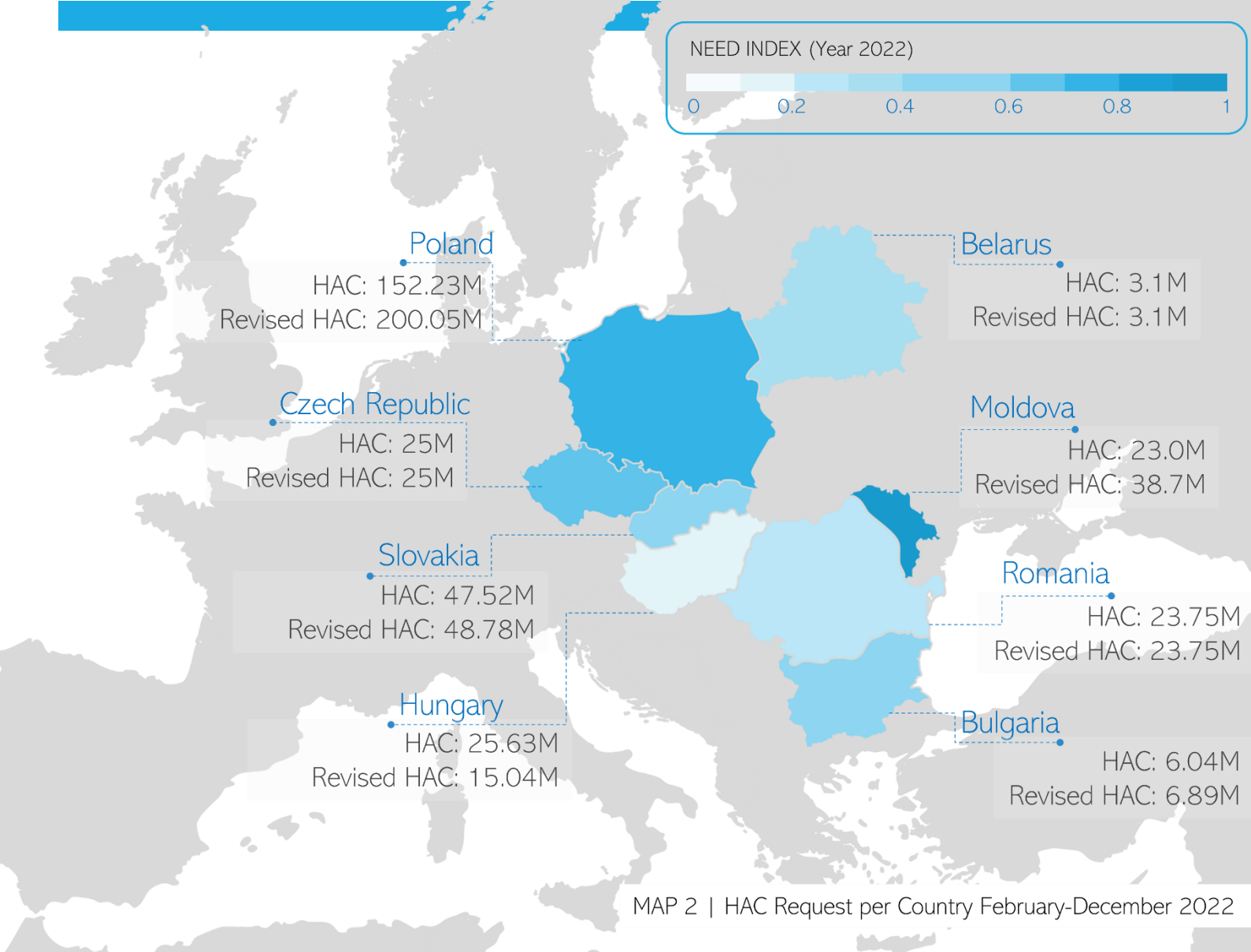


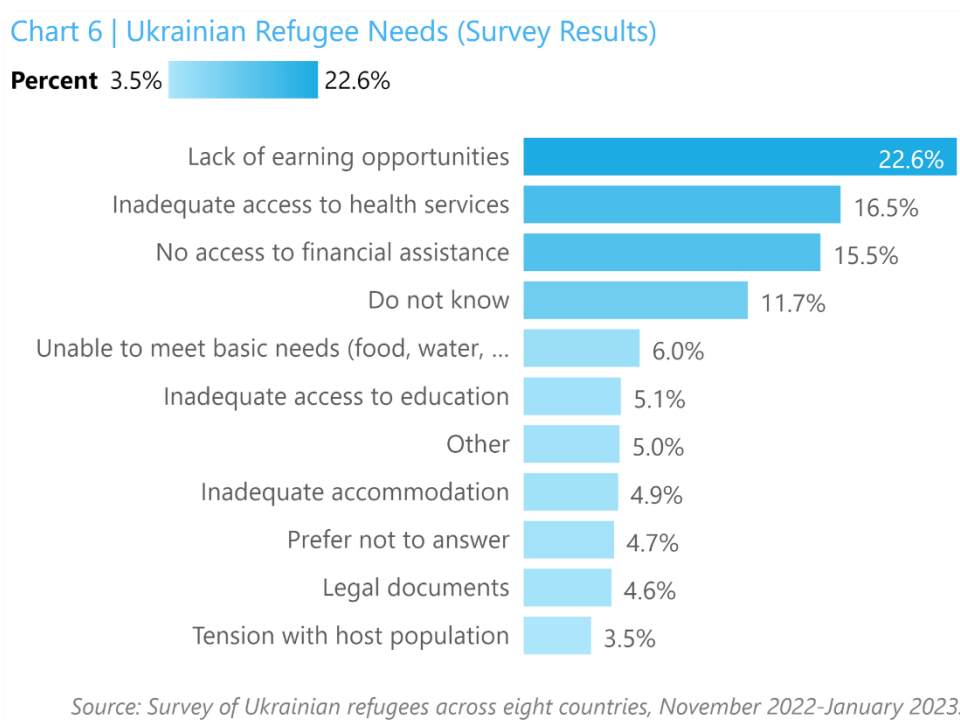
Table 6: HAC Appeal: Funding Status (as of December 31, 2022)

Country	Funding Requirement (US\$ Millions)	Funding Received (US\$ Millions)	Percentage Funds Received	Funding Gap (US\$ Millions)	Percentage Unfunded
Poland	200.05	147.24	74%	52.88	26%
Slovakia	48.78	49.05	101%	-0.27	-1%
Moldova	38.7	53.18	137%	-14.48	-37%
Czech Republic	25.0	16.75	67%	8.25	33%
Romania	23.75	33.64	142%	-9.89	-42%
Hungary	15.04	13.73	91%	1.31	9%
Bulgaria	6.89	7.11	114%	-0.95	-14%
Other countries and regional coordination	19.0	59.4	313%	-40.39	-213%
Ukraine outflow total	377.21	380.75	101%	-3.55	-1%

Source: UNICEF HAC Ukraine Funding Summary Report, December 2022

73. **Funding allocations mostly aligned with sectoral needs.** UNICEF’s plans, as per the HAC, for a multi-sectoral response (*Table 3 above*) mostly reflected identified needs (*Table 7 below*). The exception was WASH; although the HAC requested support for sanitation and hygiene at entry points, host governments were swiftly able to offer provision.⁷⁷ Child protection, education, and social protection were the top funded sectors in 2022 (*Table 7: Allocations vs Sectoral Needs; ⁷⁸ next page*).

74. **Increased nuancing of vulnerability mapping.** Over time, the data gathering mechanisms in para. 67 enabled more nuanced identification of vulnerable groups. Across the different sources, five main groups were identified (*Table 8, p. 33*); mental health needs were particularly prominent, with 57% of all those attending Blue Dots June-December 2022 requesting this as their primary need.⁷⁹ A survey of 1866 Ukrainian refugees, across all eight countries, November 2022 — January 2023 found earning opportunities, health, and social protection among refugees’ main concerns (*Chart 6*):⁸⁰








⁷⁷ Fieldwork in Moldova, Poland, and Romania: interviews with staff at Regional and Country Office level; analysis of UNICEF HAC results data

⁷⁸ UNICEF (2022) HAC Ukraine Funding Summary Report, December 2022.

⁷⁹ Blue Dots: Analysis of services provided to individuals: Blue Dots monitoring data 03.06.2022 – 20.12.2022. Countries covered: Bulgaria, Italy, Poland, Romania

⁸⁰ Please see Annex 7 for full profile of survey respondents and full datasets

Table 7 : Allocations vs Sectoral Needs

PROGRAMME AREA	ALIGNMENT WITH NEEDS	ALLOCATED US\$M
<p>CHILD PROTECTION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two million children exiting Ukraine, with vulnerabilities including children with disabilities, children at risk of trafficking and exploitation and Unaccompanied and Separated Children, including children from institutions. Host community children also have identified needs, including disabilities and social exclusion, for example Roma children, with identified gaps in child protection systems and risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation.⁸¹ 	133
<p>EDUCATION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant need for the 2 million children exiting Ukraine with no clear re-entry date; host countries systems lacked capacity to accommodate new entrants at scale. 	136
<p>SOCIAL PROTECTION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing systems in need of support to accommodate 2.6 million refugees across the eight countries (section 1.3). Existing gaps in social protection systems, for example towards excluded groups such as Roma.⁸² 	61
<p>HEALTH</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower vaccination profile of Ukrainian refugees raises health risks in host countries, particularly for COVID-19, alongside insufficient capacity within existing healthcare systems to absorb needs of refugees. Require evidence of vaccination to access e.g. education (Poland). 	24
<p>NUTRITION</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing the needs of pregnant and lactating women and babies lacking access to ante-natal or post-natal care. 	0.9

⁸¹ <https://www.unicef.org/eca/child-protection>

⁸² Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child: Considerations of reports submitted by States Parties and

Concluding Observations. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc>

75. **Gradual refinement in programmatic targeting.** With more nuanced data on needs available, programmatic adaptation and expansion could begin. *Table 8* sets out the programmatic responses to the main five vulnerable groups as of December 2022:⁸³ no data is available to report on UNICEF’s targeting of older persons or Roma and Sinti groups.

76. **Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC).** One of the most vulnerable and high-risk groups existing in Ukraine, and one of the most politically sensitive, are unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF has been the only UN actor to engage at high level and at scale on the issue.⁸⁵ *Box 2*, on the next page, describes the challenges, and how UNICEF has sought to address them.

Table 8: Programmatic Responses to Identified Vulnerable Groups

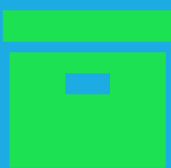
VULNERABLE GROUP	PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSE
a. Those with mental health needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of MHPSS services – Poland, Moldova, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria.
b. Those with disabilities and/or medical needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of vaccination services (procurement and direct support to vaccination - measles, polio) - Poland, Moldova, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania. Support to provision of primary healthcare services – Bulgaria, Slovakia, Poland, Moldova, Romania, Czech Republic. Provision of carer’s grant for those caring for children with disabilities and/or severe medical needs in Slovakia; provision of social protection support for children with disabilities in Moldova.
c. Pregnant and lactating women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving IYCF counselling – Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, Belarus, Bulgaria, Romania.
d. Those vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including trafficking and sexual exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions – all countries.
e. Unaccompanied and Separated Children. ⁸⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification – all countries. Provision of alternative care and/or reunited – Poland, Czech Republic, Belarus, Romania, Moldova.

⁸³ Mapping of Country Response Plans for the eight countries

⁸⁴ Includes children living in boarding schools, institutions, or alternative care arrangements.

⁸⁵ Analysis of UNHCR, WFP, IOM and WHO Ukraine plans and statements.

BOX 2



UNACCOMPANIED AND SEPARATED CHILDREN

In Ukraine, prior to the war, ‘de-institutionalisation’ – as had taken place in other countries in the region, following the break-up of the Soviet Union – was a major thrust of UNICEF’s work.⁸⁶ Progress was slow, however, and at the beginning of the war, there were 722 municipal and private institutions for institutional care and education in Ukraine, where 104,729 children studied and were brought up. Of these, 48,071 children were enrolled in a boarding school or institutional care, of which 4,584 children (9.5%) had the status of an orphan or a child deprived of parental care.⁸⁷

The issue is highly politically sensitive within Ukraine, being addressed at Deputy Prime Minister level. The Government of Ukraine adopted a clear position from the outset that children in institutions were to be retained in groups under the care of Ukrainian guardians. This proved challenging for host countries due to i) the legal frameworks for de-institutionalisation, including the Hague Convention on Child Protection⁸⁸ and ii) their own de-institutionalisation processes which meant that large, specialised facilities, for example, capable of hosting children with additional needs, had largely closed.

The issue of data has been particularly acute, with some government agencies/private sector providers hesitant to provide information to external partners. Moreover, some evacuations of children in institutions were being organised at municipal level, without the involvement of national authorities either in Ukraine or in host countries.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ RE: Ukraine CP evaluation

⁸⁷ V. D. Dybailo, Z. P. Kyianytsia, N. V. Tymoshenko, O. I. Laushnyk, L. A. Pietushkova, V. M. Vovk, A. V. Tereshchenko (2022) Children And War In Ukraine: on the State of Children from Family Forms of Childcare and Institutions Report No. 1 based on monitoring results February – June 2022

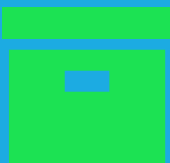
⁸⁸ The Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children (HCCH 1996 Child Protection

Convention) is a multilateral treaty covering a broad range of civil measures to protect children in cross-border situations. The Convention provides uniform rules that prevent conflicting decisions, enable cross-border co-operation between authorities, and secure the recognition and enforcement of measures among Contracting Parties.

<https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialised-sections/child-protection>

⁸⁹ Internal mission note, UNICEF 2022

BOX 2



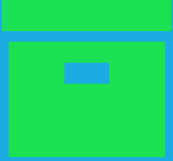
UNICEF is closely involved in the issue of UASC, being the only non-Government of Ukraine organisation to attend the high-level weekly briefings on the issue. It began a sustained focus on UASC from June 2022, from the position that, in line with international treaties and protocols, as well as EU laws, such children should be integrated into the national protection system, provided with individual child assessment, family and community-based or foster care, supported to remain with caregivers, ensured access to legal representation, prevented from returning to institutions in Ukraine and heard in decision making processes related to their protection.⁹⁰

AS OF JANUARY 2023, KEY ACTIONS HAVE INCLUDED:

- i. Engaging in high-level political dialogue on the issue, to try to broker agreements between governments, including the Government of Ukraine.
- ii. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Ukraine's Ministry of Social Policy, which prove instrumental in UNICEF's ability to engage and advocate with host governments on the issue and to data flows.
- iii. Undertaking legal research to inform international positioning on the issue.
- iv. Leading on data gathering efforts on the issue, including liaising with Government of Ukraine, and organising an international monitoring meeting for UASC, to attempt to bridge information flows from within Ukraine to host countries and to systematise data-gathering mechanisms, which resulted in the creation of an online data portal to track caseload flows.

⁹⁰ Internal data and correspondence, UNICEF, 2022

BOX 2



- v. Facilitating a visit by the Government of Ukraine's Ombudsman to Poland, to review the situation of 500 UASC housed in a hotel with their carers, which resulted in a shift in position by the Ukrainian authorities to allow the encompassing of legal responsibility for UASCs to the host government, for example through pairing with a social worker from the host country.
- vi. Advocating with host governments on legislative and policy positioning regarding UASC, to ensure that positions are aligned with international treaties and protocols (for example, in Poland,
- vii. Engaging with national authorities on regulatory and legal instruments to address the needs of UASC; for example, in Romania, the border police and the local child protection authorities identified and provided protection to almost 5,000 UASC in 2022, due to multi-partner action including the Office of the Prime Minister, the National Child Protection Authority and UNICEF, which resulted in a government order requiring cross-sectoral collaboration and action for the identification and case management of UASC.
- viii. Investing in social workers and family assistants across host countries, to support the protection of vulnerable UASC, and transferring social workers from within Ukraine to support hosts countries, e.g., in Poland.⁹¹
- ix. Engaging on an individualised level with returns for UASC to family care, small group homes and further care. For example, in Ludz municipality in Poland, UNICEF supported the local government to move nearly 100 children from two evacuated institutions in the Ukraine to integrated small group homes in the community that house up to 14 children in line with national legislation.

⁹¹ UNICEF facilitated the transfer of 9 social workers from Ukraine to Poland.

77. As a result of international attention to the issue, including UNICEF’s advocacy, progress on de-institutionalisation – a slow process prior to the crisis (see p. 24) - has gained momentum within Ukraine, with the Government committing to speeding up the pace of change.⁹²

78. **Perception risks regarding the resource allocation process.** Allocation decisions were made by a committee situated co-ordinated by UNICEF’s Regional Bureau, based on needs arising from countries, and, according to interlocutors, countries’ capacity to absorb funding.⁹³ The large volumes of flexible funding available in 2022 enabled a responsive approach (see section 2.3). The structure of the allocation process, however, with decision-making located at regional level – who were also *de facto* managing the response – raised risks for some interlocutors regarding its independence.⁹⁴

79. **Questionable relevance of supplies.** Finally, at least five UNICEF Co-operating Partner organisations interviewed across the response noted limited relevance of (and delays in the provision of) some UNICEF supply items, largely in the area of WASH. Hygiene kits for example included water purification tablets – not relevant in the countries of destination. These were transferred by partners to their ‘inside Ukraine’ response but were cited as examples of a ‘not fit for context’ response.⁹⁵

2.1.6 How did the response evolve over time, as the crisis changed?

80. **An early focus on country presence.** In the early stages of the response, faced with a sudden and massive refugee outflow, UNICEF’s primary focus was on establishing and/or expanding its country presence to meet needs. Bluntly, this translated to a focus on ‘boots on the ground’, with staff at regional and HQ level heavily consumed with surge deployment, as per section 2.1.

81. With deployments underway, the Blue Dots, established in partnership with UNHCR and governments, were a key initial entry point for refugees, and demonstrator of UNICEF presence. The first was set on 1st March 2022. By June 2022, 40 had been established, across Bulgaria, Italy, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.⁹⁶ MAP 3, on the next page, provides the full suite as of January 2023.

82. **Programmatic expansion over time.** With human resource capacity coming into place, and more nuanced information on needs emerging, programmatic activity evolved to a more diversified response over time. Chart 7 (*Fund Expenditure with Cost Recovery by sector; next page*) shows the pattern of funds utilisation across programming areas, March-December 2022, as an insight into this diversification.

83. Analysis shows that:

- i. Funds were across all the programmatic areas defined in the HAC.
- ii. Education and child protection consumed largest share of funds expenditures, with 40% and 31% respectively. The next largest sectors were cross sectoral and social protection with 11% and 10% respectively.
- iii. A relatively minor share of funds was used for WASH and cross-sectoral activities.
- iv. At the beginning of the refugee response, a large share of funds was for purposes that were non-sectoral (shown as ‘not defined’). These were used to establish the structures of the response, including Human Resources, Operations, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Emergency, and Partnerships.

⁹² UNICEF internal data, December 2022

⁹³ Interviews at country and regional level

⁹⁴ Interviews at country and regional level

⁹⁵ Fieldwork in Poland, Moldova, and Romania

⁹⁶

<https://www.unicef.org/media/125086/file/ECARO%20Ukraine>

%20Refugee%20Response%20Factsheet%20No.%207,%2020%20July%202022.pdf Blue Dots mirrored the concept of Spilno (Together) Spots (Safe Spaces for multi-sectoral support) inside Ukraine.

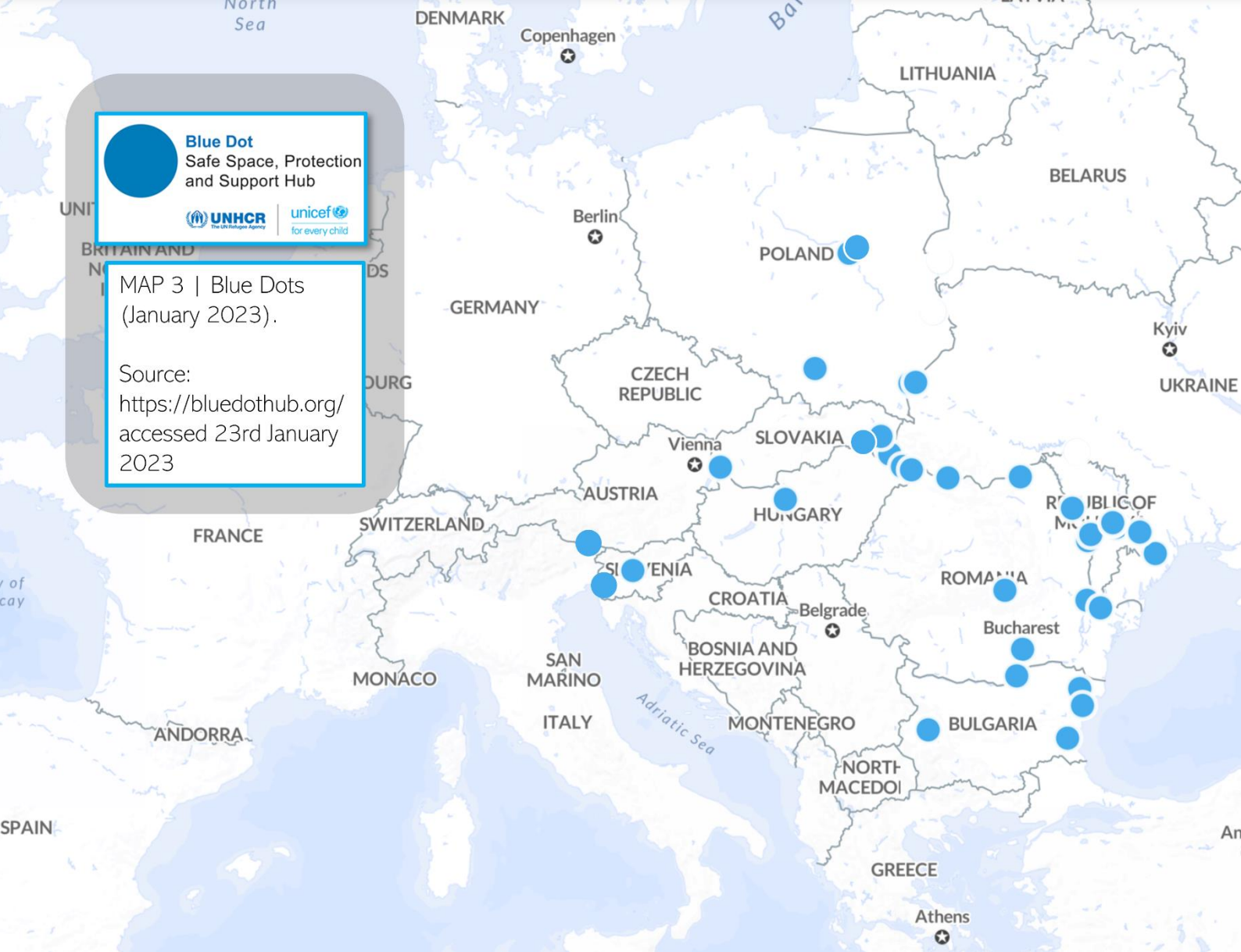
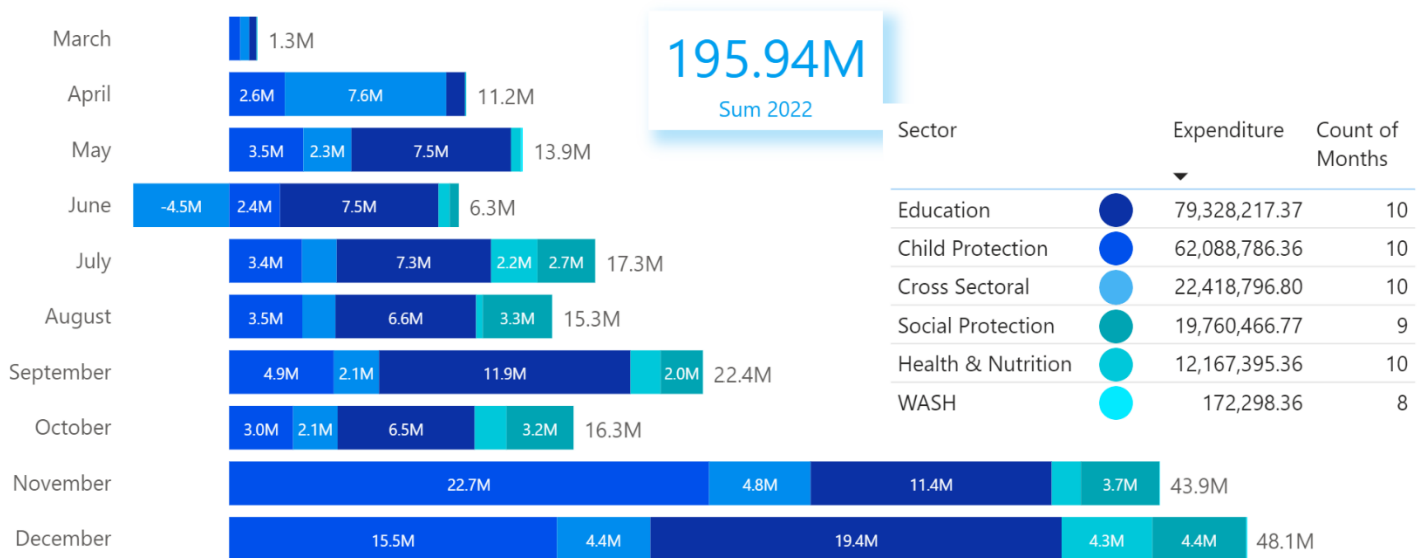


Chart 7 | Fund Expenditure with Cost Recovery by Sector (from Goal Area, Year 2022)



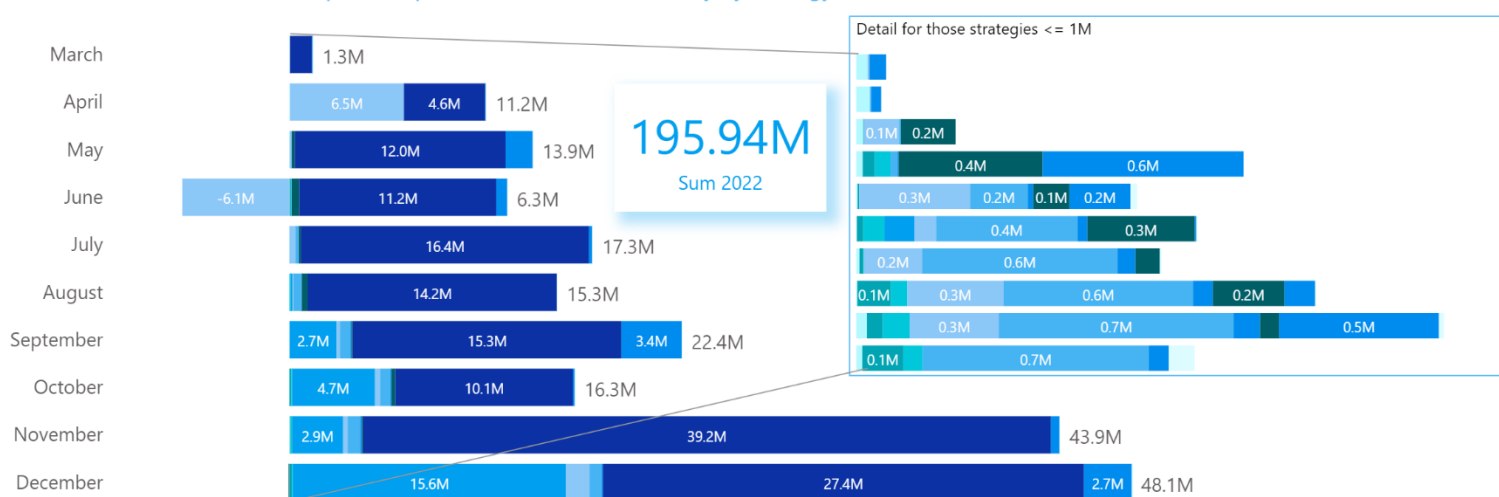
Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF internal data.

84. Analysis by activity area, as reflected within Situation Reports and *Chart 8* below, also reflects a gradual refinement in activities as the response evolved.

85. Specifically:

- v. The bulk of funding is classified as ‘risk-informed humanitarian and nexus.’ This comprised more than half of all fund’s expenditures at the end of the year.⁹⁷
- vi. Other major strategies applied were institutional strengthening (13%) and service delivery (5%).

Chart 8 | Fund Expenditures with Cost Recovery by Strategy (Year 2022)



Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF internal data.

Strategy Area	Expenditure with Cost Recovery	Count of Date
Risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming	151,880,519.88	10
Institutional strengthening of national systems	25,958,371.06	5
Service delivery (including delivery of essential services)	9,175,910.80	10
Operating costs – staff	3,257,568.48	9
Operating costs – non staff	3,005,217.74	10
Policy engagement for system strengthening	1,367,895.66	8
Data and analysis	356,039.68	8
Evaluation	308,983.51	6
Planning and monitoring	307,914.84	7
Advocacy and communications	190,465.68	10
Social and behaviour change and community engagement	127,073.69	6
Total	195,935,961.02	10

⁹⁷ This strategy combines the following activities: emergency preparedness; resilience building; coordinating role in emergencies as Cluster Lead Agency; humanitarian crisis response, which includes building capacity at local level to

deliver services during and after crisis; support of networks and initiatives including cross-sectoral and multi- sectoral dialogue including during emergencies.

2.2 HOW COHESIVE WAS THE RESPONSE, INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY?

SUMMARY

The massive expansion in needs required a consummately rapid expansion in partnerships to deliver. This was a steep learning curve, particularly where UNICEF had no prior programmatic presence in the country. Understanding the fundamental role of municipalities in service delivery in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia, for example, as well as their complex political and governance relationships with national government, and their systems and procedures, took time.

UNICEF adopted a 'national systems first' model, highly valued and appreciated by national partners. However, under conditions of considerable pressure, balancing 'no regrets' with rigour was a difficult balancing act. Some questions arise over due diligence of new partnerships, even under expedited procedures, and handover shortcomings left a lack of clarity over agreements formed and programme/pipeline development. The risk of national resource displacement was also insufficiently considered. The role of National Committees was inadequately clarified in the early phase of the response, with resulting internal and external confusion.

Some partnerships have experienced strain in the final months of 2022, due to lack of clarity on resource availability in 2023, and subsequent reduced budget availability – the product of a balance of highly complex factors, including the fitness of UNICEF's tools to govern the response in these contexts.

UNICEF has acted as a generous and supportive facilitator for the wider UN response, with a noted absence of territorialism. It has facilitated entry for the UN response in several countries and acted as a strategic co-ordinator in others. Its pragmatic and supportive approach is widely praised.

The response has experienced challenges to internal coherence, linked to the lack of clarity on strategic leadership. Intra-regional coherence and knowledge transfer has been limited, and connections with the 'inside Ukraine' response patchy, though with strong cross-border collaboration on UASC and education.



OVERARCHING COMMITMENTS

- Support the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles.

PROGRAMME APPROACHES

- Localization: Invest in strengthening the capacities of local actors (national and local authorities, CSOs and communities) in humanitarian action needs assessments, planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

2.2.1 External cohesion – How well-aligned was UNICEF’s response with partner needs?

NATIONAL PARTNERS – GOVERNMENT, MUNICIPALITY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

86. Under the pressures of the response, UNICEF had to rapidly initiate new partnerships, or expand its existing ones, to enable it to deliver activities to populations in need. The initiation/expansion was significant: in total, 211 partnership agreements were developed from February-December 2022.⁹⁸ *Chart 9: Growth in Partnerships* (next page) below shows the breakdown by country.⁹⁹

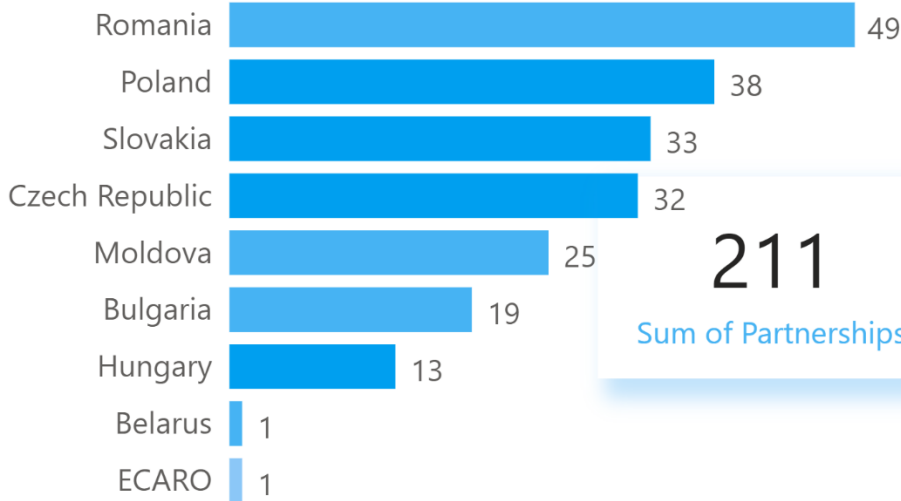
87. These partnerships were the central mechanism in supporting response scale-up: of a survey of UNICEF partners, 71% indicated that UNICEF’s engagement had enabled their organisation to extend its scale and scope to support the crisis response (*Chart 10: Partner perceptions of UNICEF’s support for programmatic expansion*; next page).

⁹⁸ In existing programme countries, PCAs may be signed with existing partners for this refugee response. Partnership agreement refers to MoU or Letter of Exchange with government partners and Programme Co-operation Agreements with CSOs.

⁹⁹ Information on partnerships were extracted from internal databases. We cannot rule out that partnerships are erroneously included or excluded when it was not unequivocally clear whether they are targeted at the refugee response.

Chart 9 | Growth in Partnerships by Country

Country_Office ● CPD ● Non-CPD ● Regional Office



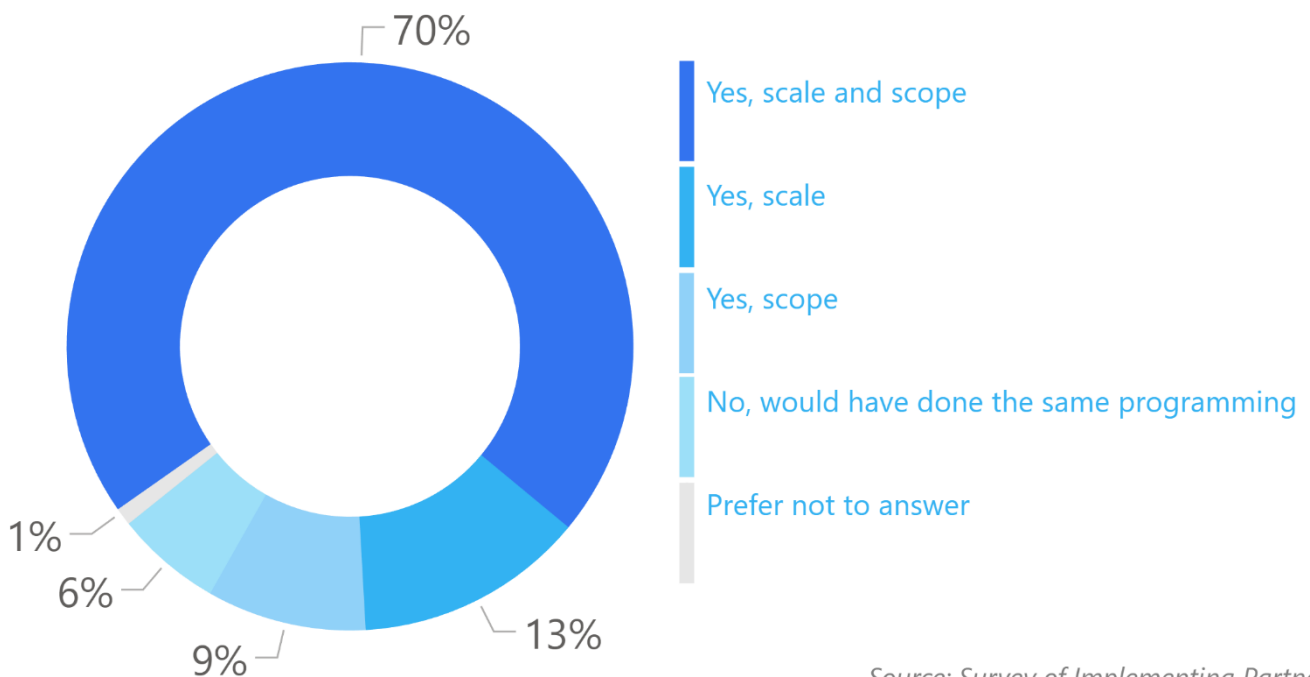
Non-CPD
116 Partnerships 54.98% Percent

CPD
94 Partnerships 44.55% Percent

Regional Office
1 Partnerships 0.47% Percent

Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF internal data.

Chart 10 | Partner Perceptions of UNICEF's Support for Programmatic Expansion



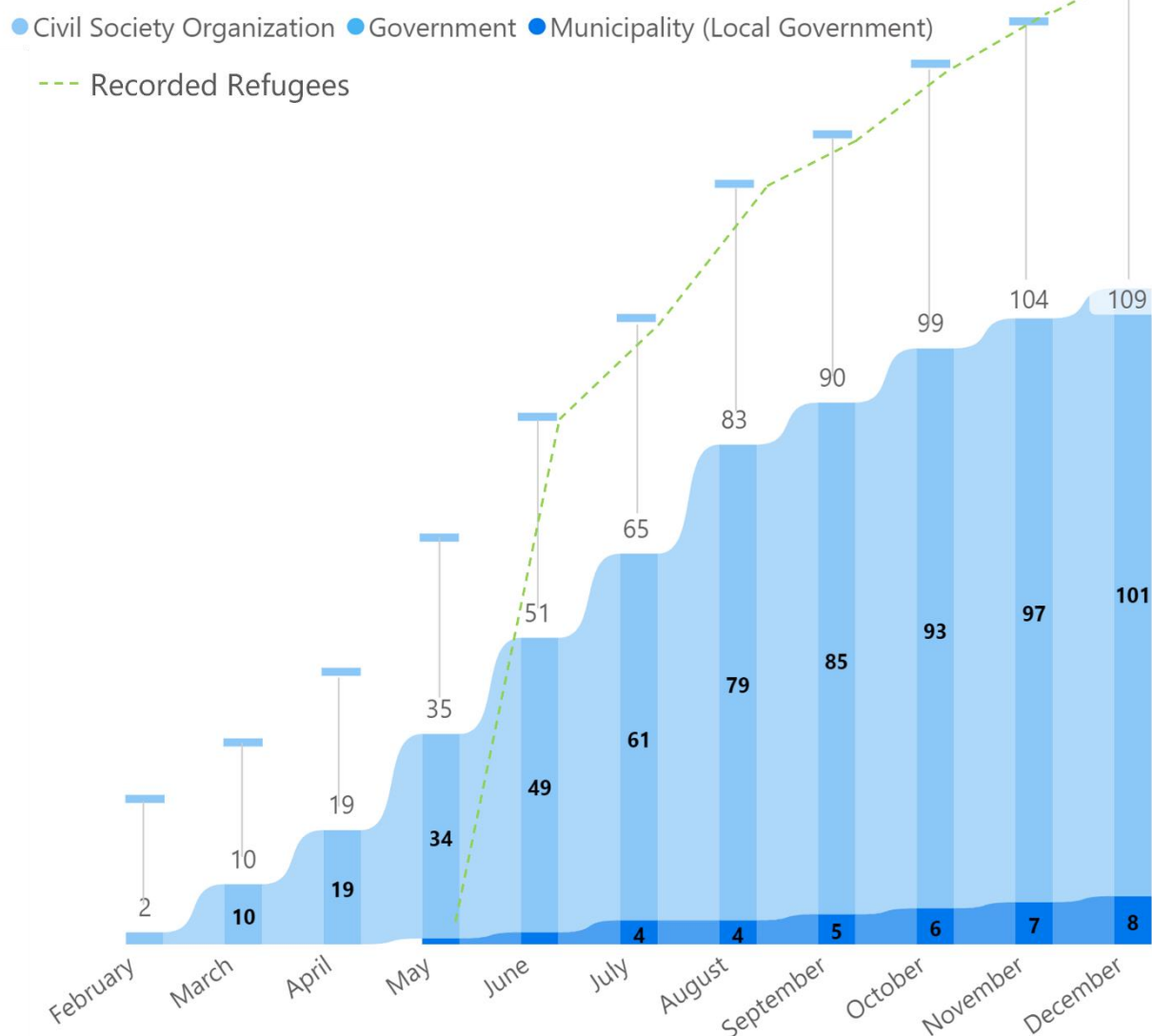
Source: Survey of Implementing Partners.

88. **The primacy of national systems.** Both the March and April update of the HAC, alongside the inter-agency RRP, are explicit on the primacy of national systems and authorities in the crisis response. Both strategic documents make clear their commitment to i) working in support of national social protection and service delivery architectures and ii) the importance of mitigating the effects of refugee flows on existing services and national protection systems.¹⁰⁰ For example, the April 2022 HAC update commits UNICEF to ‘work[ing] with sectoral counterparts and local municipalities to strengthen capacities... and expand national systems to integrate refugee families.’¹⁰¹

89. **Localisation.** These commitments were carried through operationally. Analysis of partnership agreements over 2022 finds that 19 were national government; 22 were municipalities; 117 were Civil Society Organisations; and 19 were of other types, though often public entities (*Chart 11: Partnership Categories*).

90. Analysis of partner types by country shows partnerships with partnerships with central and local government bodies in all countries, while municipalities were a major focus in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary (*Chart 12: Partnership Types by Country*; next page).

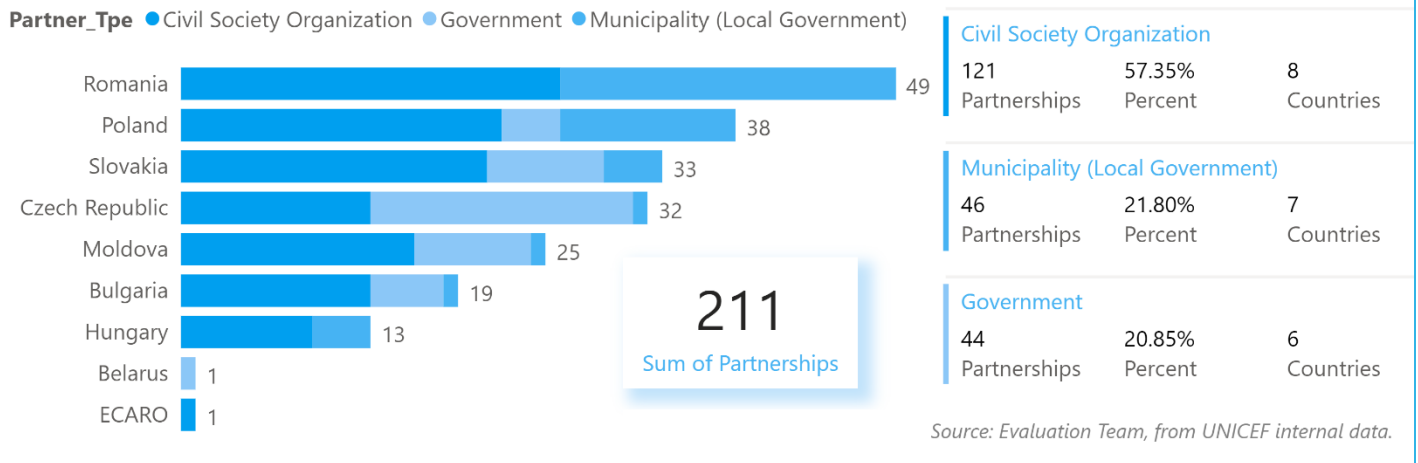
Chart 11 | Active Partnership Agreements by Month 2022



¹⁰⁰ 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, April 2022; 2022 Ukraine Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan. March-December 2022.

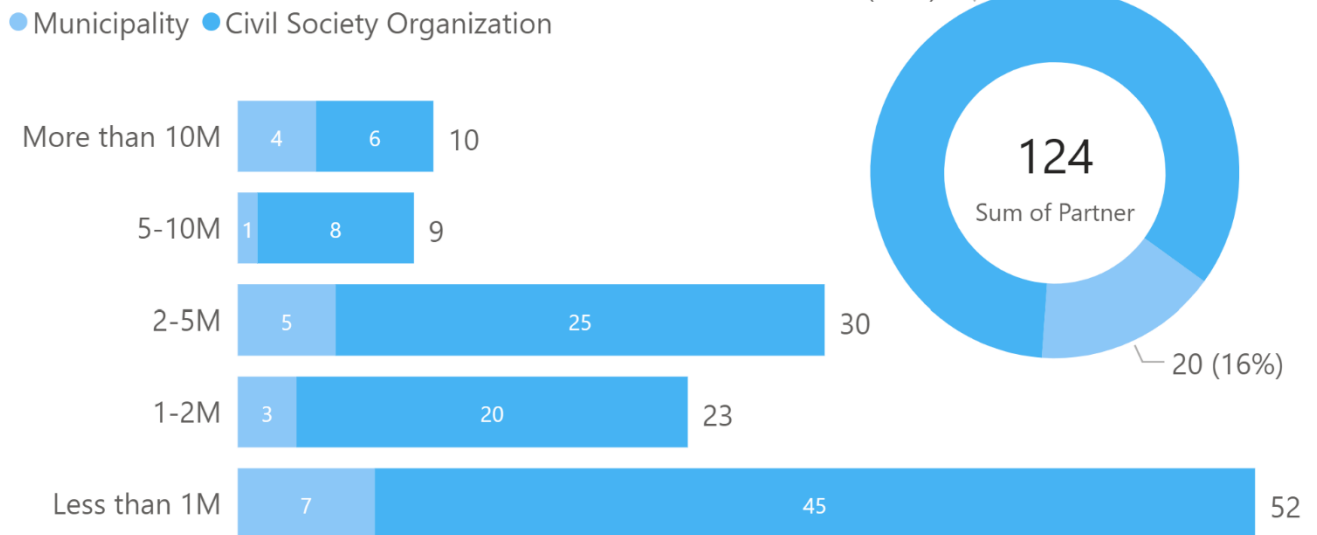
¹⁰¹ 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, April 2022

Chart 12 | Partnership Type by Country



91. **Diverse scale of partnerships.** The average partnership value was USD 3.16 million for CSOs and USD 10.49 million for municipalities. However, some CSOs also had large-scale partnership agreements; for example, that with the NGO Comenius Foundation for Child Development, for over US\$ 10 million with UNICEF in 2022.

Chart 13 | Partnership Agreements by Value

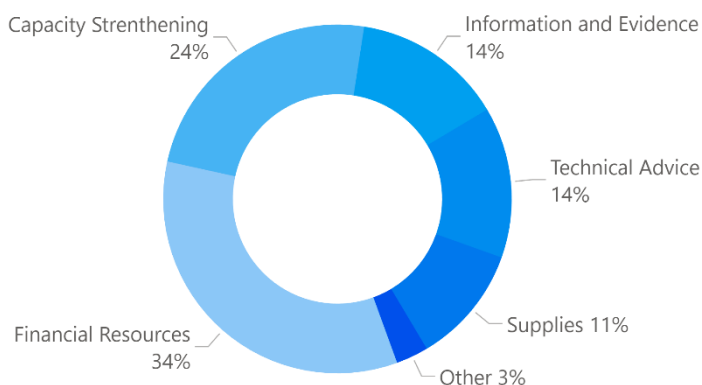


Source: Evaluation Team, from UNICEF partnership data. Based on partnerships for which financial data was available at the time of writing.

95. **Graduated approach to partner capacity strengthening.** The ‘systems strengthening’ approach implies a systematic approach to capacity building, as per the CCC commitment on localisation.¹⁰⁵ For existing Country Offices, this was already part of their working modality, as reflected in Country Programme Documents.¹⁰⁶ For new partners, both in programme and non-programme countries, early ‘pressure to deliver’ placed capacity strengthening as a secondary aim.

96. As the response moved into its sustained phase, partners reported a growing focus on capacity building. A survey of UNICEF partners (see Annex 8 for full results)¹⁰⁷ found that 34% saw the partnership’s main value as financial resources for their organisation, while 24% saw capacity strengthening as the key advantage (Chart 14). 93% of these respondents reported that collaboration with UNICEF had enabled it the organisation to

Chart 14 | Partner Perception of UNICEF Added Value



Source: Survey of implementing partners.

improve its systems and processes for responding to a refugee inflow compared to the start of 2022.

97. **Partner frustrations.** National partners indicated frustration with UNICEF in three areas: firstly, the high turnover of UNICEF staff, documented in section 2.3, caused inefficiencies in having to ‘brief and re-brief’. Secondly, UNICEF’s lack of familiarity with their own requirements, including alignment with budgetary cycles and administrative requirements, consumed time and energy for

departments in explanation. And thirdly, UNICEF’s inability to communicate, even in late December 2022, potential budget availability for 2023 (which was still being discussed and negotiated internally) – and which was eventually ‘capped’, as part of an effort to bridge the difficult and delicate balance, of potential reputational risk in the region and UNICEF’s wider mandate and responsibilities as a global humanitarian actor.

CCCS

NATIONAL COMMITTEES

In countries and territories where there is a National Committee Office, and no UNICEF office, and where Governments are requesting UNICEF's support, National Committees and UNICEF may work together to establish a formal agreement defining their respective roles, responsibilities, and the modalities of their collaboration, to provide a coordinated response meeting the standards defined in the CCCs.’

¹⁰⁵ ‘Invest in strengthening the capacities of local actors (national and local authorities, CSOs and communities) in humanitarian action’ Programme Approaches 2.2.6

¹⁰⁶ Country Programme Documents for Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, and Belarus.

¹⁰⁷ The survey targets the senior management of UNICEF's implementing partners. The list of implementing partners was in most cases verified with the Country Office. In Moldova and Poland, partners were excluded from the survey who were interviewed during the country mission.

98. Prior to the crisis, **National Committees** in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, as per section 1.3, were considered by external stakeholders as the ‘face of UNICEF’.¹⁰⁸ National Committees are not tasked to undertake UNICEF programming and are not subject to UNICEF requirements on programme quality.

99. **A learning curve.** In the early scramble, and as UNICEF sought to establish its programme teams, confusion arose on roles and responsibilities, particularly concerning advocacy, information provision and communication. The acute pressure compounded the challenge, and interlocutors agreed that the initial phase was ‘bumpy’.¹⁰⁹ As the pressures receded, however, and more space was available for dialogue, roles and responsibilities were clarified, and stakeholders described a smoother path into 2023¹¹⁰ – though with some valuable lessons learned for the future.

UN PARTNERSHIPS

100. **Providing an entry point.** UNICEF’s existing country presence in Moldova, Belarus, Romania, and Bulgaria, positioned it as a key platform for the wider UN response in these countries. *Table 9* provides examples of where UNICEF deployed its capacities to support the UN response.

101. **Engagement in co-ordination mechanisms.** Despite variable degree and quality of wider UN co-ordination mechanisms,¹¹¹ UNICEF engaged substantively, chairing or co-chairing ten working/sub-working groups in Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovak Republic and participating in 37 groups in Bulgaria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Moldova, Poland, and Slovakia.¹¹² Examples include:

- i. Co-chairing the Child Protection and Education Sub-Working group and the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Network for the regional response.
- ii. Engagement in sector working groups e.g., Gender Based Violence, Health, MHPSS, Humanitarian Cash and WASH.¹¹³
- iii. As country examples:
 - a. In Hungary, UNICEF co-chaired the Regional Response Plan meeting, where key programmatic priorities and interventions for the child protection and education clusters were formulated.

Table 9: Examples of Capacities Deployed to Support the Wider UN Response

CAPACITIES	COUNTRY EXAMPLES
Providing an entry point	In Moldova, UNICEF facilitated entry for UNHCR to the Ministry of Education and parliamentary committees as part of response planning
Advocacy capacities	In Romania, UNICEF coordinates local Ukrainian networks in the area of education to prepare advocacy strategies
Technical capacities	In Moldova, UNICEF plays a central role in the inter-sectorial working group on data and information management which co-ordinates monitoring frameworks and conducts inter-agency needs assessments

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with external stakeholders in three countries

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with National Committees in four countries

¹¹⁰ For example, in Czech Republic, cooperation on International Children’s Day; planned cooperation around the conflict’s anniversary e.g., in Slovakia)

¹¹¹ Interviews with UN agencies in three countries

¹¹²

<https://www.unicef.org/media/125086/file/ECARO%20Ukraine%20Refugee%20Response%20Factsheet%20No.%207,%200%20July%202022.pdf>

¹¹³ <https://www.unicef.org/media/130176/file/2022-HAC-Ukraine-and-Refugee-Outflow-revised-Nov.pdf>

- b. In Bulgaria, UNICEF co-leads the Working Groups on Child Protection and on Education with the government.
- c. In Romania, UNICEF Chairs the Child Protection and Education Working Groups and is part of all others, including the information management Working Group, and co-leading health with WHO and Child Protection with UNHCR. It also leads the Youth and Adolescents Task Force as a sectoral group under UNHCR's response to the emergency.

2.1, resulted in early difficulties until the division into the Levels 2 and 3 respectively in September 2022.¹¹⁶ The intended strategic co-ordination vehicle of the Emergency Management Team (EMT), which included representatives from HQ, the Regional Bureau and Country offices/representations in the region, was described by staff as '*largely information-gathering*', rather than the provision of strategic direction.¹¹⁷ Analysis of meeting minutes and agendas confirms this, with the bulk of the agenda consumed by Ukraine, and each refugee-hosting country being allocated a five-minute slot in which to update the meeting.¹¹⁸

102. Partners praised UNICEF's generosity in facilitating entry for agencies via existing relationships with government, noting the relative ease with which UNICEF could secure access to senior officials and their broad range of entry points within Ministries and departments.¹¹⁴ The evaluation did not observe examples of UNICEF 'territorialism' within the response.

103. Co-ordination with UNHCR. UNICEF was a key partner to UNHCR in RRP preparation. At regional and country level, strategic co-operation was described by both agencies as strong,¹¹⁵ for example on the implementation of the Blue Dots. Examples of programmatic co-ordination were also emerging in Moldova, for example, UNICEF had directed resources for social protection cash transfers through UNHCR in a UN-UN delivery model to speed up procedural challenges. In Romania, hygiene kits were transferred from UNHCR to UNICEF as part of interagency cooperation to reduce bureaucratic requirements.

2.2.2 How well did UNICEF's internal coherence, between different organisational layers, units and divisions, function?

104. Challenges to internal coherence. The lack of clarity around the respective roles and responsibilities of EMOPS and the Regional Bureau, noted in section

105. Limited intra-regional knowledge transfer. Knowledge generation and transfer within the region has been limited. Regional-level HQ-level programmatic strategies were developed for UASC and for education,¹¹⁹ which required a common approach to advocacy, and the HAC itself offers a cohesive overarching framework. However, the first co-ordination meeting for the region only took place on 3rd November 2022.¹²⁰ Staff agreed that the meeting was extremely useful, and these are planned to continue.¹²¹ The gap in knowledge transfer means that some potential conceptual and operational synergies, such as on social protection and engagement with host communities under the '*every child*' mandate, were not fully explored.

106. Intersections with 'inside Ukraine'. Although strategically interwoven through the HAC and the co-ordination mechanism of the EMT, the 'inside Ukraine' and the refugee responses have functioned largely discretely. Figure 2 below maps areas of interlinkage, including the two main substantive cross-border issues of UASC and education, but reflects that resource allocations, funding arrangements and programmatic decision making remain separate. A planned position to co-ordinate the 'inside' and 'outside' Ukraine responses did not materialise.

¹¹⁴ Interviews with partner UN agencies including UNHCR, UNOCHA, WFP, WHO and IOM

¹¹⁵ Interviews with UNHCR and UNICEF officers in Moldova, Romania and Poland.

¹¹⁶ Interviews with staff at regional and country levels.

¹¹⁷ Interviews with staff at regional and country levels.

¹¹⁸ Analysis of EMT/TET minutes February-October 2022

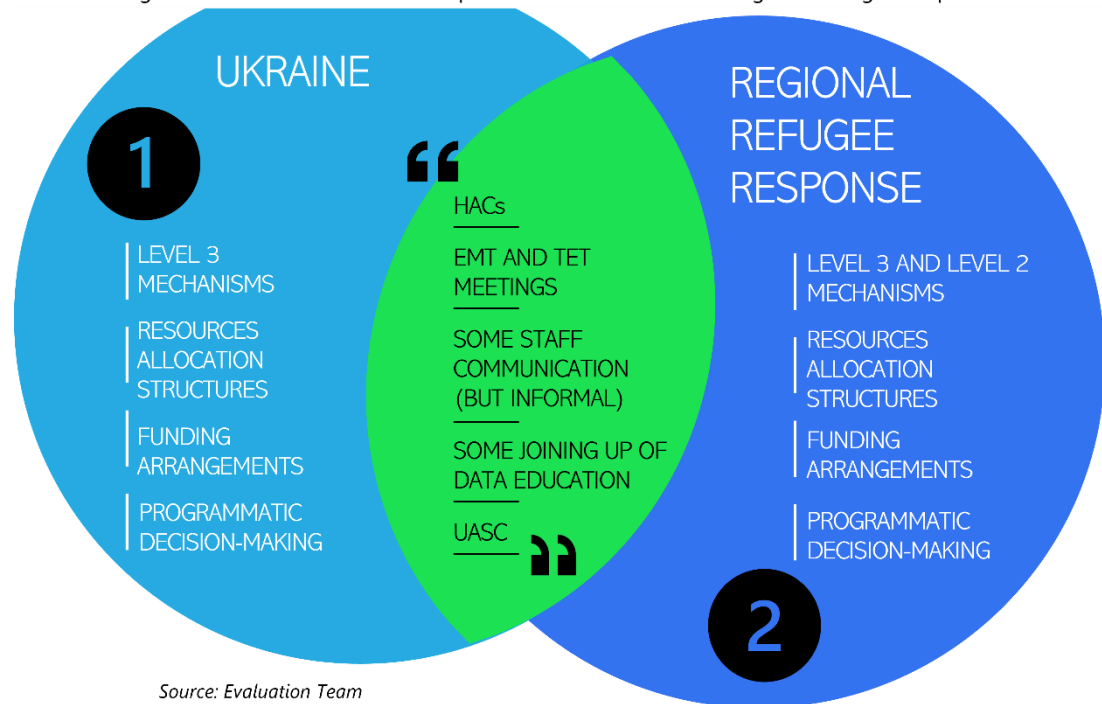
¹¹⁹ See for example UNICEF Operational Guidance Note for Continued Education for Ukrainian Children in Refugee Situations

¹²⁰ Minutes of meeting,

¹²¹ Minutes of meeting; interviews with staff at regional and country level

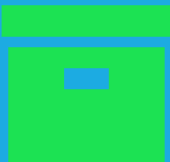
Figure 2: Areas of Cohesion and Separation in the Ukraine and Regional Refugee Response

107. **Cross-border concerns.** The two main substantive areas where cross-border co-operation and an internally cohesive approach was essential, were UASC (Box 2) and education (Box 3):



Source: Evaluation Team

BOX 3



CROSS-BORDER CONCERNS: EDUCATION

The provision of education to Ukrainian children exiting Ukraine was highly challenging, given both pre-existing gaps in national education systems and the high volume of child refugees. The difficulty was compounded the Ukrainian authorities' initially robust position that refugee children should continue their education according to the Ukrainian curriculum and examinations schedule - despite the contradiction of this position with international treaties and legislation, as per section 1.3.

UNICEF therefore needed to navigate particularly sensitive political terrain, given the position of the Government of Ukraine; its own role as standard-bearer for Convention on the Rights of the Child; the need to respect the role and policies of host governments and their political sensitivities; and EU positioning on the issue. It responded with the following actions:

- Engaging in high-level political dialogue and advocacy with Government of Ukraine to shift its position on integration in host country education systems.
- Partnering with ministries of education and social welfare, local municipalities, universities, and civil society organizations to expand access to systems for Ukrainian refugee children.
- Working on regulatory and administrative barriers that hinder children's access to formal education in host countries.
- Providing information on their rights and entitlements to refugee families.
- Providing financial support for expanded access within national education schemes, and to parents to remove barriers to access.
- Providing teacher education and psychosocial support for education staff.
- Providing non-formal and vocational education where gaps exist.
- Supporting Ukrainian teachers and education staff to continue their careers within host country education systems.¹²²

¹²² UNICEF (2022) Ukraine war response: Ensuring access to learning; triangulated with field missions and analysis of UNICEF results data (see 2.4)

2.3 HOW TIMELY WAS THE RESPONSE, AND HOW EFFICIENTLY WERE RESOURCES CONVERTED INTO RESULTS?

SUMMARY

Overall, the response was timely. UNICEF's Level 3 declaration occurred later than that of other agencies, but deployment of technical capacities was swift. Rates of programmatic expansion were notably diverse between established Country Offices and emergency response teams, given the additional time requirements needed to establish strategic and operational space. The differential provides a valuable insight into duration needed for an international agency to bring new entry through to programmatic readiness and ultimately delivery.

This differential is also reflected in funding flows; although resources were relatively quick to arrive, the time needed to build up to programmatic readiness in some countries affected the pace at which funding could be committed and utilised. Partners experienced little to no disbursement delays.

2.3.1 How timely was the response?

108. Level 3 declaration slower than other agencies.

UNICEF’s Level 3 declaration – which occurred two weeks after the crisis began, on March 5th 2022 – was later than those of partner UN agencies, with WFP and UNHCR both declaring level 3 emergencies on 25th February.¹²³ The UNICEF declaration and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) designation of Ukraine as a Level 3 (system-wide) emergency were delivered on the same day, March 5th 2022.

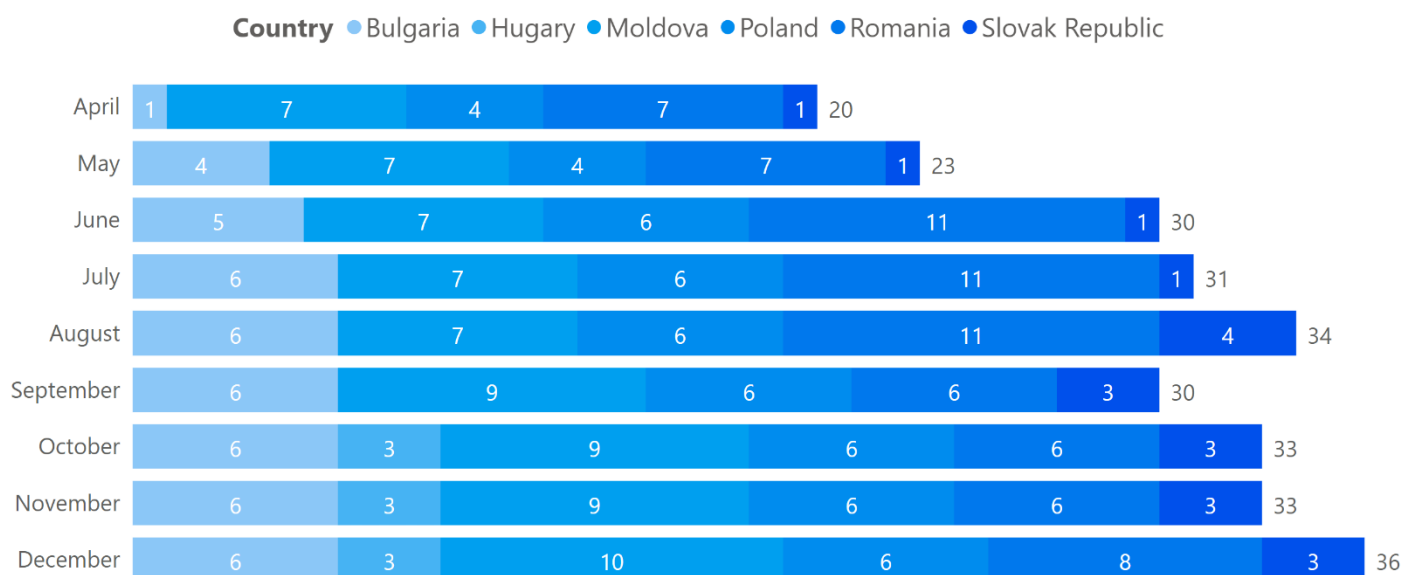
109. Swift deployment of technical capacities. UNICEF’s operational response however preceded its Level 3 declaration. The HAC had been published just five days after the crisis began, on March 1st; and staff deployed to border sites almost immediately. Deployment data from *Flowchart 2* reflects this speed.

110. Rapid construction of Blue Dots. The joint UNHCR-UNICEF Blue Dots were also established swiftly. By the end of April 2022, 20 had been established; and 30 by June (*Chart 15*).¹²⁴

111. Diverse rates of programmatic expansion between established Country Office and emergency response programmes. The major differentiator in pace across countries was the speed at which partnerships could be formed. In non-programme countries, preparatory activities were required first.

112. The Intervention Logic (*Flowchart 1, p. 4*) captures this distinction in its first two columns, reproduced on the next page as *Flowchart 5. Column 1* illustrates the preparatory phase before programmatic readiness (at scale) could be fully established. The timeline to get from ‘zero’ to ‘programmatic readiness’ (*Column 2*) was naturally longer in the four ‘new’ countries of entry than in the four countries where Country Offices were already established.

Chart 15 | Blue Dot Establishment (Year 2022)



Source: Evaluation team, reconstructed from HPM data.

¹²³ UNHCR declared a Level 3 emergency for Ukraine on 25th February 2022, and on the same day a Level 2 emergency in the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and other affected countries.

¹²⁴ Link>> ECARO Ukraine Refugee Response in Neighboring Countries Humanitarian Situation Report No. 19, 2 Nov - 2 December 2022

FLOWCHART 5 | ELABORATED INTERVENTION LOGIC

COLUMN 1

COLUMN 2

1. Opening up Programmatic & Strategic Space

2. Programmatic Readiness

- Government Agreement to Work in Country
- Relationship with National Committee
- New
 - Introduction of UNICEF Role & Capacities
 - Introduction to Service Delivery Partners (CSO, Municipality)
- Functional Preparedness
 - Office Premises
 - Staffing
 - Administrative Procedures
 - IT Setup
 - Transport Facilities
 - Diplomatic Accreditation & Visas
 - Communications
 - Meeting Space



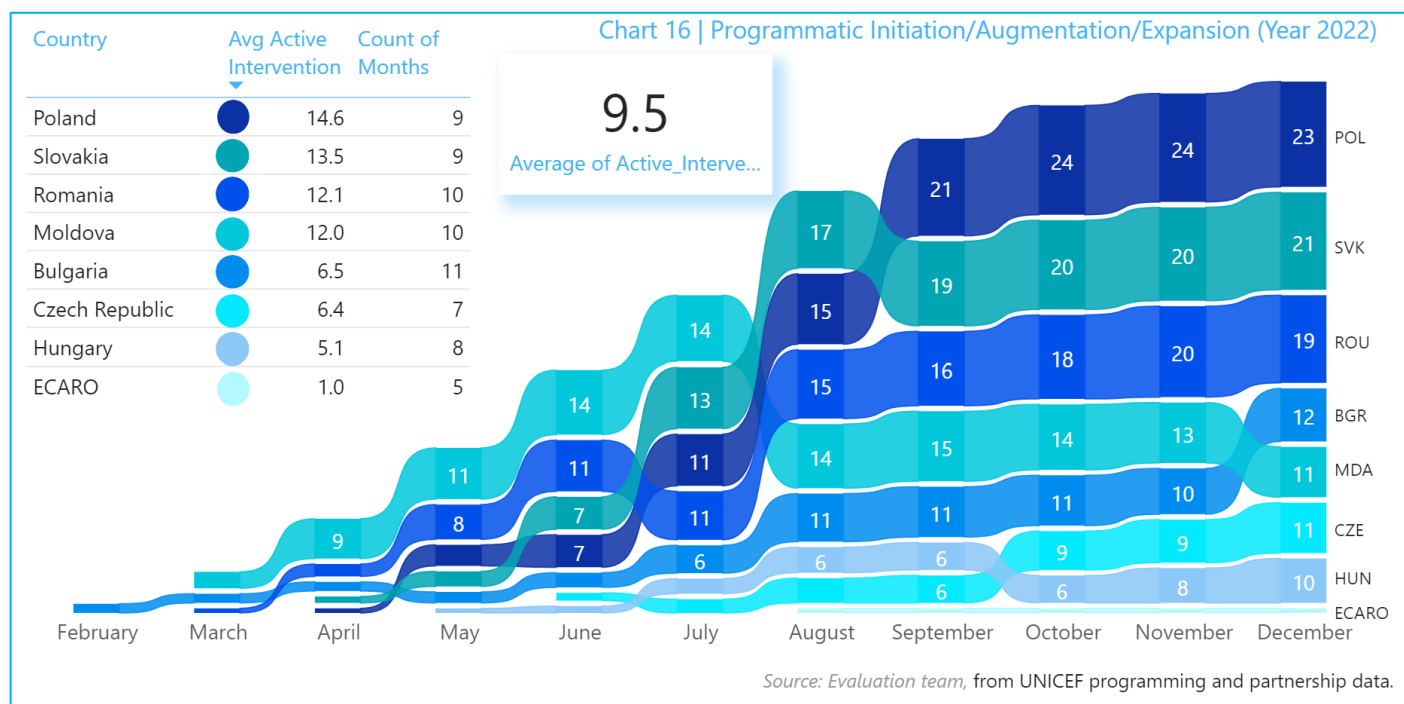
New



- Contextual Knowledge in Place
- Technical Capacities and Leadership
- Financial Appeal and Management Systems Established
- Strategic & Operational Partnerships Established (Government, UN, Implementing Partners)
- Needs / Capacity Assessments Conducted
- Evidence Generation / Performance Monitoring Systems Established
- Supply Chain / Logistics Established

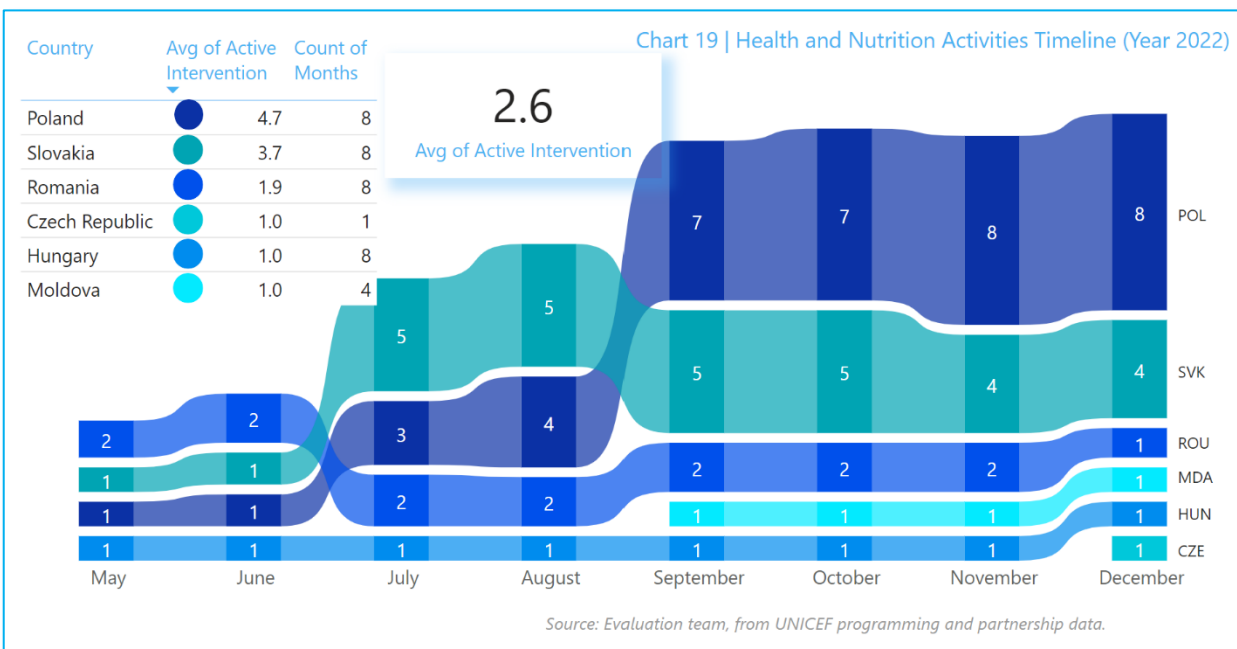
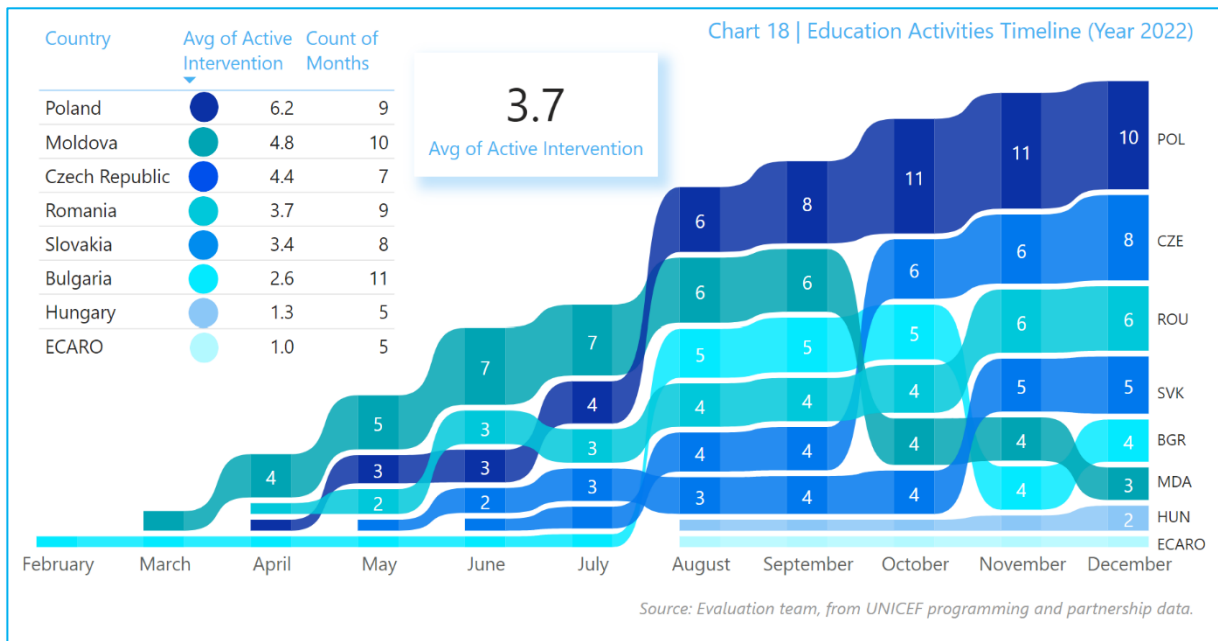
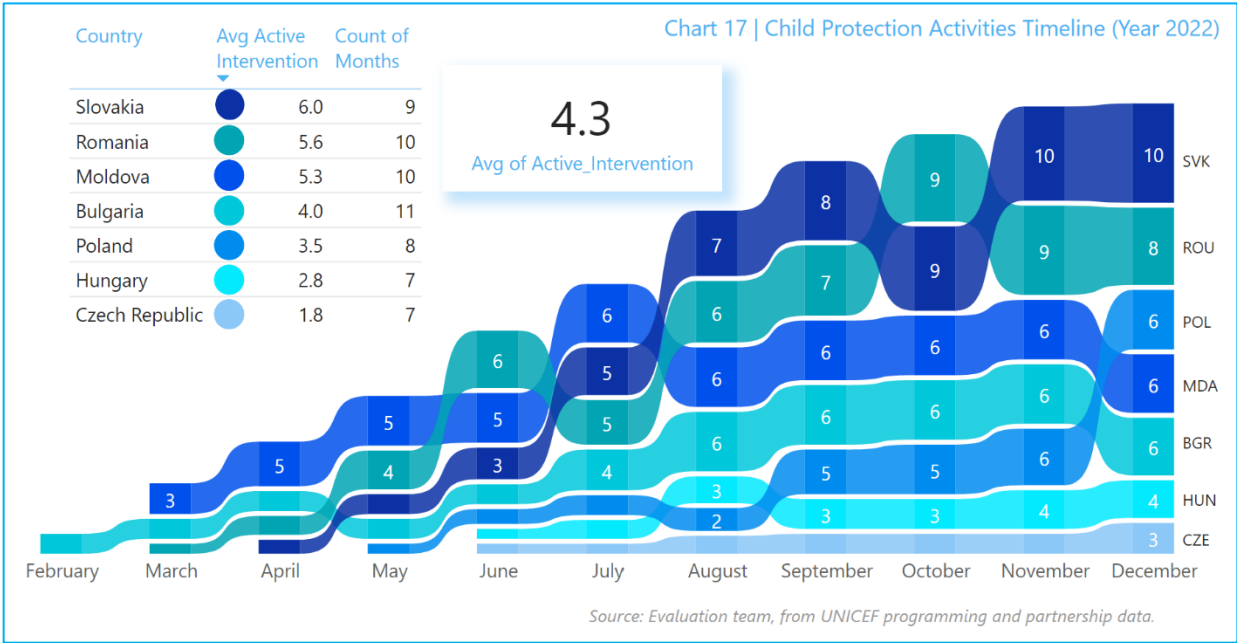
113. *Chart 16* below shows the pace of activities across countries over time. In Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova, where established Country Offices were in place, programmatic expansion/augmentation was able to start relatively quickly, with May-June 2022 seeing significant growth. In Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, more time was needed to create the conditions for programmatic readiness, meaning that programmatic expansion only gained momentum from August 2022, with a significant uptick from September. In Hungary, where conditions were much more challenging for the entry of international agencies (see section 1.3), programming gained pace from September 2022. No data was available for Belarus.

114. *Charts 17-19* provide a more detailed analysis within the three selected programmatic areas with the largest funding profile across the greatest number of countries: Child Protection, Education and Health and Nutrition.¹²⁵ The same pattern arises; established Country Offices, in all three programmatic areas, indicate a swifter upscale, faster by approximately three months, a useful indication of timescale.



¹²⁵ Funding status as of end November 2022: Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA USD 135,477,877; Education USD 113,252,421; Health and nutrition USD 23,883,555 (the two activity areas are combined, reflecting their combination in

Situation Reports). Social Protection had a larger funding profile than health and nutrition, at USD 62,258,040, but programming is only undertaken in three countries, Slovakia, Poland, and Czech Republic.



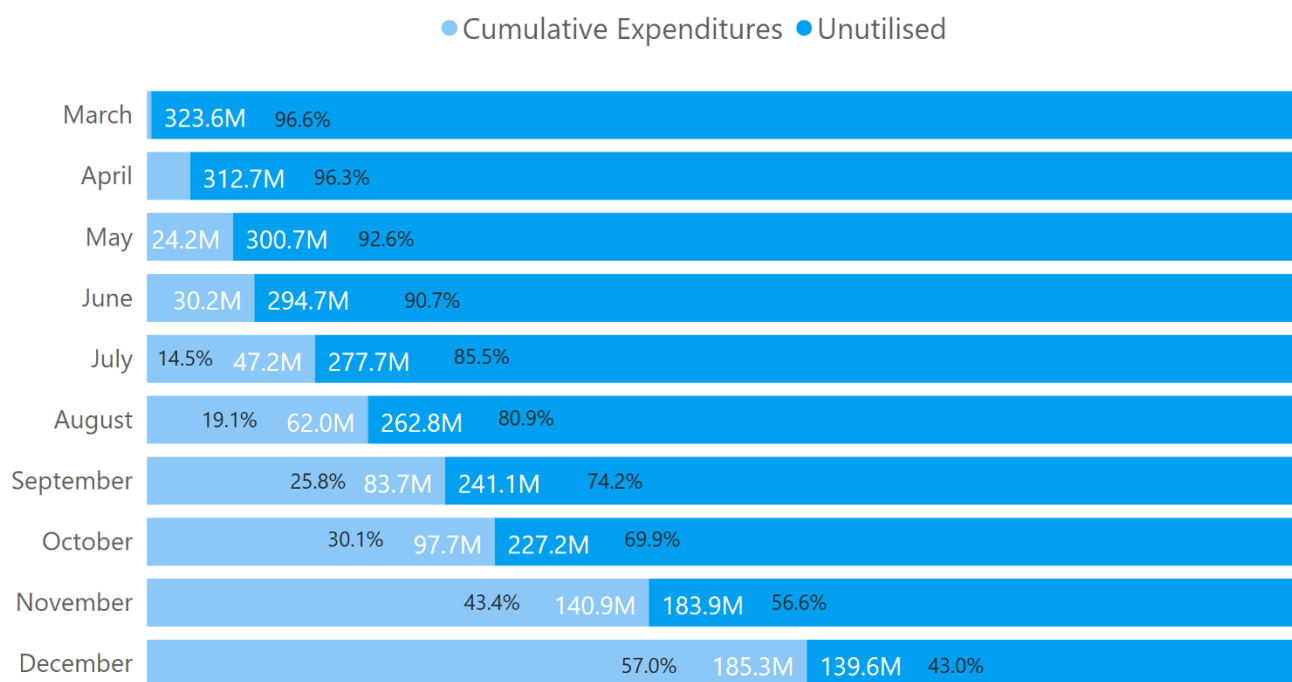
2.3.2 How efficiently was UNICEF funding disbursed against identified needs?

115. Funding disbursement reflects this gradual expansion. Although funding was relatively quick to arrive, with UNICEF receiving US\$ 126 million by the end of April and US\$ 163.4 million by the end of May 2022,¹²⁶ the time needed to build up to programmatic readiness particularly in non-programme countries, affected the pace at which funding could be committed and spent. *Chart 20* shows the evolution of cumulative expenditures as well as funds un over time, March-December 2022, across the eight response countries. At the end of the year, US\$ 139.6 million of funding received

remained unutilised and was carried over to 2023. This is approximately 40% of funds received in 2022.¹²⁷

116. The presence or otherwise of an established Country Office has made little difference in terms of ability to absorb and distribute funding swiftly. *Map 4: HAC Utilised Rates per Country* (next page) shows funds received as a share of the HAC request as well as expenditures (with cost recovery) as a share of the funds received as of December 2022. Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia received more funds than had been requested by the HAC. Poland and the Czech Republic had the highest expenditures ratios.¹²⁸

Chart 20 | Funds Expenditure Across All Eight Countries (Year 2022)



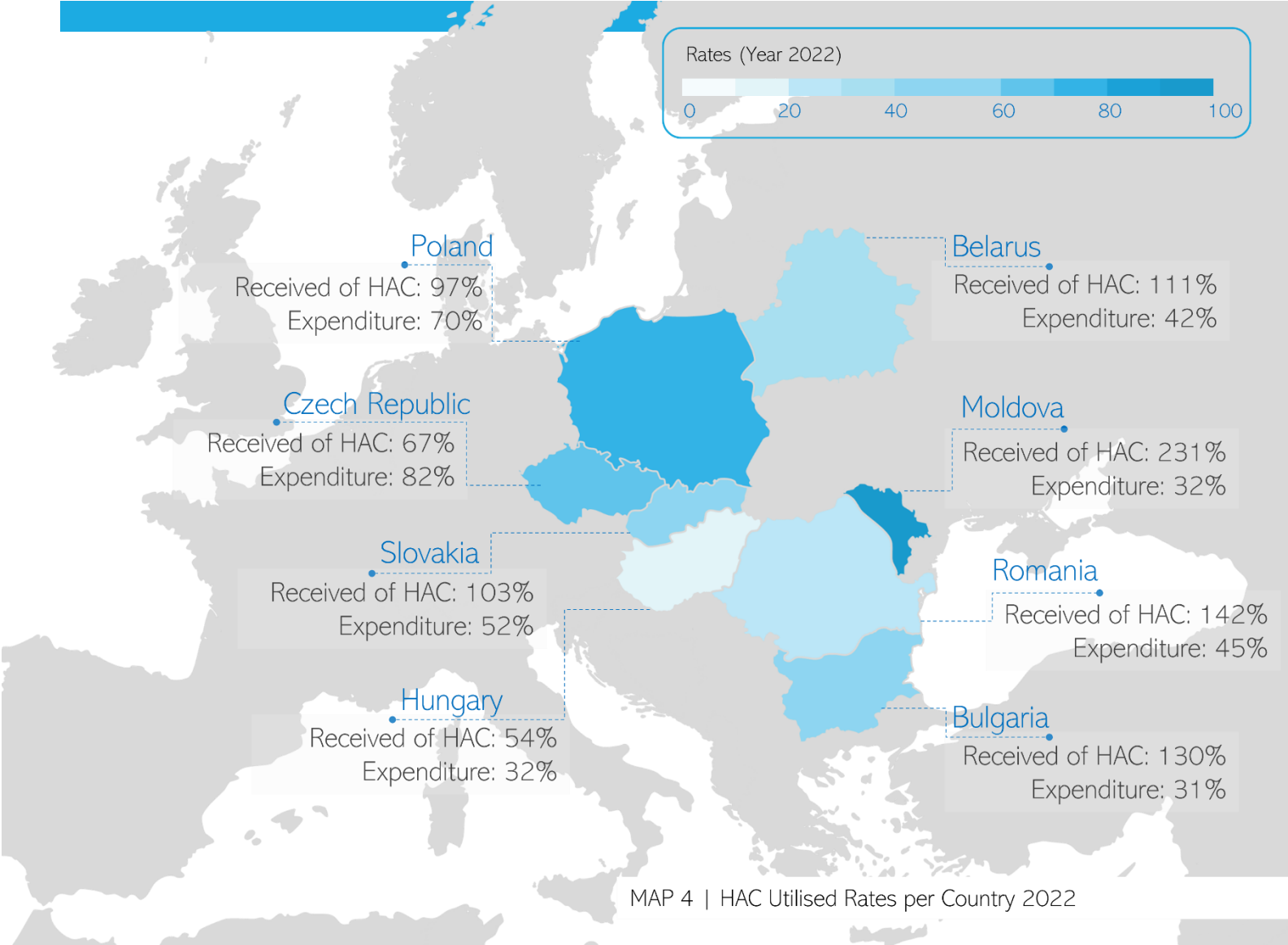
Source: Evaluation team, from UNICEF financial data.

¹²⁶

<https://www.unicef.org/media/125076/file/ECARO%20Ukraine%20Refugee%20Response%20Factsheet%20No.%205,%203%20June%202022.pdf>

¹²⁷ UNICEF internal financial data

¹²⁸ Shading refers to a composite index for countries' needs for support from UNICEF, considering their structural conditions (GDP per capita, government effectiveness, children's rights) and refugee population. The darker the shading, the greater the need. See Annex 2 for methodology.



117. **Few or no disbursement delays.** Partners appreciated UNICEF’s swift deployment of resources, with none reporting delays.¹²⁹ The speed was highly appreciated, given the scale of needs arising. The main area of timing-related complaints related to the communication of budgetary availability for 2023. Partners had, for several months, been requesting certainty, or at least an indication, of what they could count on in 2023 - and encountered, from their perspective, long delays.

¹²⁹ Interviews with implementing partners in Poland, Moldova, and Romania

2.4 WHAT RESULTS WERE DELIVERED?

SUMMARY

Initial target-setting, in the context of data gaps and unpredictability, took the form of a 'best guess'. Monitoring indicators were not all relevant or appropriate for context. Challenges were soon apparent, and UNICEF undertook a process of recalibration which provided a reality check of the response's true emphases. Burdens of data reporting were significant on staff in the early stages.

Quantitative achievements against targets were strong in SBC/C4D/AAP and Social Protection, with good performance in Child Protection, Health, Programme Strategy and Education. The uncertain relevance of some targets affected a purely quantitative analysis of 'performance', particularly for dimensions of nutrition and WASH. UNICEF's four existing Country Offices saw mostly higher achievement levels if its quantitative targets than the non-programme countries. Some notable achievements have been made through UNICEF's advocacy, including sustaining global attention to the crisis' effects on vulnerable children.

Attention to equity has been stronger than that to gender equality and the empowerment of women, despite previous barriers faced by women and girls in Ukraine. Accountability to affected populations mainly relied on partner systems, with few feedback loops into UNICEF's own planning and programming. Nonetheless, beneficiaries indicated relatively high satisfaction levels with UNICEF interventions.

2.4. How well did UNICEF's performance monitoring of the crisis work?

118. **Uncertainties in target-setting.** The initial HAC appeal of March 1st 2022 did not provide targets for the refugee response. The HAC update, on 6 April 2022, added eleven 'Pillar 2' targets, one for Health & Nutrition, two for WASH, three for Child Protection, one for Education, two for Social Protection, and two cross sectoral.¹³⁰

119. However, these targets were based on the extremely limited information available to the humanitarian community, described in section 2.1. Accordingly, UNICEF stakeholders agreed that they represented a 'best guess' at this point in time.¹³¹

120. Moreover, as the response proceeded, it became clear that UNICEF's standard way of measuring achievements in emergency responses was not fit for purpose in this context. Challenges included:

- i. Some of the targets and indicators, such as for water and sanitation/nutrition, were inappropriate in a context where facilities were available, and governments were responding.
- ii. The purpose and definition of the Blue Dots changed over time, making the relevant indicator redundant.
- iii. Some beneficiaries required repeated or recurrent services (e.g., education, health, MHPSS), makes it difficult to count unique beneficiaries over time.
- iv. In the four 'non-programme countries, the opening of strategic and operational space took longer than anticipated, slowing the programmatic 'results delivery' that might be seen in a more immediate humanitarian response.

- v. The lack of visibility and high mobility levels of the refugee caseload constrained accurate reporting.

121. To address the challenge, UNICEF undertook a process of 'recalibrating' targets and indicators between the April 2022 publication of the HAC targets and their November revision. The recalibration process, known internally as the 'Indicator Framework', aimed to formulate targets more aligned to the reality of the response on the ground. Through this process, five new targets were added; three were downscaled; and seven were upscaled (*Table 10*, below)¹³². The changes suggest over-ambition in early targets for healthcare and WASH supplies, in line with findings in section 2.1, but overall a balanced approach, and a reality check of the response's true emphases.¹³³ Detailed guidance was shared with offices and representations in an effort to standardise data gathering and reporting.

¹³⁰ UNICEF (2022) HAC update Ukraine, April 6th, 2022

¹³¹ Interviews with UNICEF staff and management at Regional and Country Office level

¹³² This table only contains targets included in either the April HAC or the November HAC or both. Note that other indicators and targets on which countries report (included in the HPM) were not stated in the HAC document.

¹³³ Source: Comparison of HAC targets and indicators April 2022-November 2022. Note: Confusing the issue somewhat,

UNICEF's Situation Reports, which issued periodically throughout the response, also presented targets in their regular Summary of Programme Results – but these did not consistently align with the targets presented in the HAC. For example, Situation Reports number 6 and 7 (published on 15 April and 22 April) contain: a) UNICEF Targets in Key Areas on the front page, and b) UNICEF targets for 2022 in Annex A: Summary of Programme Results. These targets do not align with each other, and do not align with the HAC targets stated.

Table 10: Comparison of HAC/Indicator Framework Targets April September 2022

ITEM	INDICATOR	HAC (April 2022)	HAC (November 2022 Revision)	CHANGE
PROGRAM STRATEGY	# New formal partnerships established with national and subnational authorities to support the extension of quality social services to refugees.		55	NEW
	# Targeted population in municipalities receiving UNICEF technical assistance for system strengthening.		1,986,546	NEW
HEALTH	# Children and women accessing primary health care through UNICEF-supported mechanisms.	2,341,200	429,800	DOWN
NUTRITION	# Primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving IYCF counselling.		85,090	NEW
CHILD PROTECTION	# Children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support.	1,164,350	1,210,190	UP
	# Women, girls, and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions.	810,200	633,000	DOWN
	# People with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers	601,400	653,930	UP
EDUCATION	# Children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	463,600	626,050	UP
	# Of children receiving individual learning materials		786,150	NEW
WASH	# People accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking and domestic needs	130,000		OUT
	# People use safe and appropriate sanitation facilities		290,000	NEW
	# People reached with critical WASH supplies	1,093,200	586,000	DOWN
SOCIAL PROTECTION	# Households reached with UNICEF funded multi-purpose humanitarian cash transfers	42,500	64,150	UP
	# Households benefiting from new or additional social transfers from governments with UNICEF technical assistance support	80,000	200,620	UP
SBC/C4D/AAP	# People reached through messaging on prevention and access to services	5,075,600	10,142,500	UP
	# Of people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms	43,900	146,270	UP

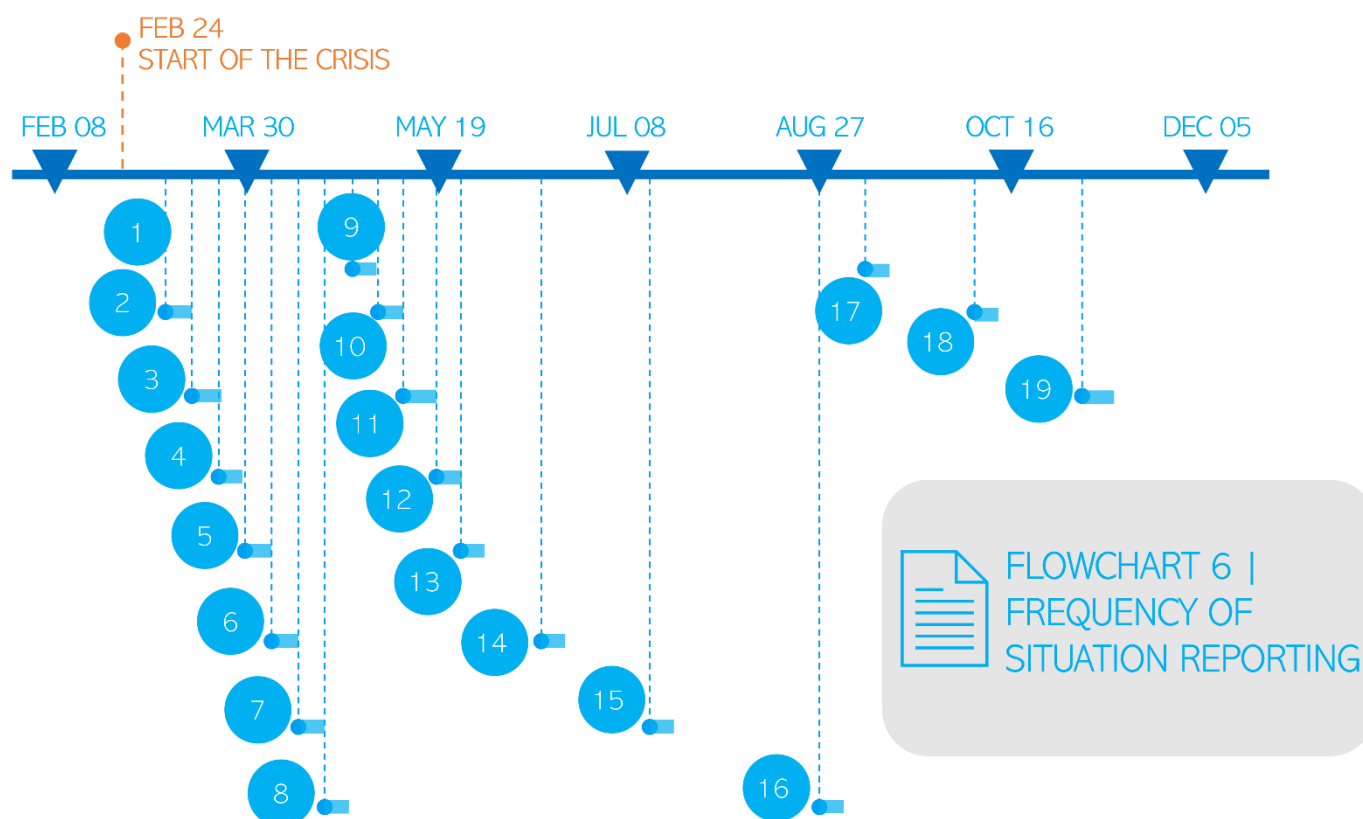
122. **Performance reporting.** To monitor progress, UNICEF published its regular reporting document for Emergencies, Situation Reports, or Sitreps. These issued on a weekly basis in the early months of the crisis, extending to bi-weekly by June 2022, and monthly by the end of the year (see *Flowchart 6 below*).

123. The burdens of reporting requirements in the initial phase, when data was highly constrained, and alongside reporting demands for the RRP, rapidly became apparent,¹³⁴ especially given the alignment challenges of the early targets with the reality on the ground. The challenge of opening strategic and operational space in non-programme countries, and consequent slower progress against targets, also validated the shift to less intensive, but still frequent, reporting. The shift was also in line with the move to a Level 2 response from September 2022.

2.4.2 What progress was made against targets and objectives?

124. **Questionable relevance of targets affecting quantitative overview of ‘performance’.** *Table 11* presents the main results of the response, aggregated for the eight countries, as reported in the December 2022 Situation Report. The full results table is presented at Annex 6. However, as per *section 2.4.1* above, the relevance of some targets has affected a purely quantitative analysis of ‘performance’, particularly for dimensions of nutrition and WASH. For example:

- i. Nutrition activities were only implemented in Moldova, Romania, and Slovak Republic, although targets were set for Belarus, Bulgaria and Poland.
- ii. WASH activities were implemented in Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovak Republic, with WASH supplies also planned for delivery in Poland and Belarus. However, the limited demand in these countries reduced implementation.



¹³⁴ Interviews with UNICEF staff and management at Regional and Country Office level

125. **Achievements.** Of the other substantive areas of programming – and based on UNICEF reporting, which the evaluation team has not been able to verify - all performed well against targets:

- i. SBC/C4D/AAP and Social Protection areas met 90% and 75% of target respectively across the eight countries.
- ii. Child Protection, Health, Programme Strategy and Education also performed well, all meeting 62 or 63% of targets against considerable political and implementation challenges. (See [Table 11: Achievement Against Target, 2022](#)¹³⁵; next page).

¹³⁵. Table 10 reports targets for 2022, results achieved and performance against targets achieved by December 2022. The numbers in the table, including on targets for 2022, are based

on Annex A: Summary of programme results (1 March - 23 December 2022) of the End-Year Situation Report (published on February 2, 2022)

Table 11: Achievement Against Target, 2022

INDICATOR	UNICEF TARGET 2022	RESULTS ACHIEVED	PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGET (PERCENT)
PROGRAMME STRATEGY			
# New formal partnerships established with national and subnational authorities to support the extension of quality social services to refugees	55	54	98%
# Targeted population in municipalities receiving UNICEF technical assistance for system strengthening	1,986,546	1,095,0714	55%
Overall Programme Strategy			76%
HEALTH			
# Children and women receiving primary health care services through UNICEF supported mechanisms	429,800	433,701	101%
Overall Health	-	-	101%
CHILD PROTECTION			
# Children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support	1,210,190	846,033	70%
# UASC identified	34,600	32,148	93%
# UASC who were provided with alternative care and/or reunified	23,605	10,840	46%
# People with access to safe spaces, protection and support hub	528,020	1,232,641	233%
# UNHCR/UNICEF operational blue dots	65	40	62%
# Women, girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions	633,000	311,896	49%
# People with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers	653,930	571,227	87%
Overall Child Protection	-	-	91%
EDUCATION			
# Children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	626,050	588,778	94%
# Of children receiving individual learning materials	786,150	448,306	57%
Overall Education	-	-	75%
WASH			
# People accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking and domestic needs	216,000	100,350	46%
# Reception centres and accommodation facilities supported to ensure appropriate access to wash facilities and services	52	56	108%
# Children accessing appropriate wash facilities and services in learning facilities and safe spaces	100,000	55,617	56%
Overall WASH	-	-	70%
SOCIAL PROTECTION			
# Households reached with UNICEF funded multi-purpose humanitarian cash transfers	64,150	47,494	74%
# Households benefiting from new or additional social transfers from governments with UNICEF technical assistance support	200,620	65,759	33%
Overall Social Protection	-	-	53%
SBC/C4D/AAP			
# People reached through messaging on prevention and access to services	10,142,500	10,500,187	104%
# People participating in engagement actions for social and behavioural change	276,400	379,796	137%
# Of people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms	146,270	152,398	104%
Overall SBC/C4D/AAP	-	-	115%

Source: UNICEF Ukraine Refugee Response situation report: December 2022

126. As might be expected, UNICEF's four existing Country Offices saw mostly achievement against quantitative targets than 'non-programme' countries, which took more time to build up programmatic readiness (Table 12). In the Czech Republic, UNICEF suffered from targets set in Health, Education and Child Protection which prove challenging to meet given limited demand and some political barriers.¹³⁶

Table 12: Country performance as an average of individual target indicators (2022)

COUNTRY	ACHIEVEMENT AGAINST TARGET
Romania	136%
Slovak Republic	109%
Belarus	81%
Moldova	81%
Poland	81%
Bulgaria	69%
Hungary	46%
Czech Republic	44%

Source: Generated by evaluation team based on UNICEF performance reporting for End-Year Situation Report March-December 2022

127. **Gender equality and equity.** The gender equality and equity dimensions of the crisis are unusual, in that (i) the response caseload comprise 90% women and children; (ii) children in institutionalized care, including many of those with disabilities, present challenges; and (iii) certain vulnerable groups, such as Roma children and adults, and refugees who had been living in Ukraine prior to the crisis, present 'vulnerabilities within vulnerabilities. Moreover, poverty in Ukraine – as section 1.3 points out – has a 'gendered face', with

women and girls inside Ukraine already struggling with a range of structural barriers to equality pre-crisis.

128. UNICEF makes powerful statements on its principled approach to gender equality and equity concerns. The UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-2030 commits UNICEF to 'a bold and ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of women and of all children and adolescents.' It impels UNICEF 'to work actively to remove the underlying structural barriers, such as harmful social norms and gendered power systems, that perpetuate inequalities.'¹³⁷ At the same time, UNICEF supports the UN's Disability Inclusion Strategy, which commits to 'sustainable and transformative progress on disability inclusion through all pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights, and development.'¹³⁸

129. The evidence finds unsystematic attention to gender across the response. Specifically:

- i. An assumption that, since the refugee caseload comprised largely women and children, gender was 'already addressed' in the response. Yet women and girls face specific vulnerabilities, including trafficking, sexual exploitation, balancing childcare with income generation opportunities, care for the elderly, physical and medical needs, and many others.¹³⁹ A nuanced approach is needed.
- ii. Limited attention to gender and equity in targets. The gender dimension of targets was not prominent; within the April 2022 HAC update, three of the 23 relevant targets¹⁴⁰ specify 'gender' explicitly as a term, while UASC and victims of violence are noted in two.
- iii. Limited technical capacity for gender. Limited technical capacity has impeded gender mainstreaming. A Gender Adviser was in place at

¹³⁶ Interviews with UNICEF staff at Country and Regional level, analysis Situation Reports February-December 2022

¹³⁷ UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-2030; UNICEF Gender Action Plan 2022-2025

¹³⁸ UN Disability Inclusion Strategy

¹³⁹ See for UNHCR/WAVE (June 2022) Regional Ukraine Refugee Response Gender-Based Violence Sub-Working Group Terms of Reference: <https://reliefweb.int/report/poland/regional-ukraine-refugee-response-gender-based-violence-sub-working-group-terms-reference#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20refugees,adolescent%20girls%2C%20and%20elderly%20women.>

group-terms-reference#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20refugees,adolescent%20girls%2C%20and%20elderly%20women.

¹⁴⁰ The first target under Programme Strategy is '# new formal partnerships established with national and subnational authorities to support the extension of quality social services to refugees', which does not lend itself to gender or equity dimensions at an aggregate level. Under Child protection, that of '# UNHCR/UNICEF active blue dots similarly.

regional level, but no Country Office or emergency office had a full-time gender adviser, though funding was available for this.¹⁴¹ Country-based staff showed highly diverse awareness of gender issues among either refugees or host communities.

iv. Limited prioritization of gender mainstreaming. While practical technical resources and guidance was made available to support terms in their integration of gender concerns across all aspects of the refugee response, analysis of country workplans showed limited prioritization, accountability and focus to gender mainstreaming within intervention areas.

130. **A stronger focus on equity.** Attention to equity issues was more prominent, however, though this tended to focus on specific groups. Roma families and children with disabilities were targeted under UNICEF’s Social Protection work, and children with disabilities and Unaccompanied and Separated Children under its Child Protection programming, with the latter receiving technical, strategic and advocacy firepower since June 2022. Refugees from third countries, resident in Ukraine pre-war and exiting alongside Ukrainian refugees, were included as part of the overall response.

131. **Stronger reporting on equity than gender.** Reporting on gender was limited, with only slight or passing reference within the SitReps issuing in 2022.¹⁴² However, reporting on vulnerable groups became increasingly nuanced, with reference to Unaccompanied and Separated Children, those with mental health needs, those with disabilities and/or medical needs, pregnant and lactating women, and those vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, including trafficking and sexual exploitation all referenced in Situations Reports from July 2022 onwards.¹⁴³

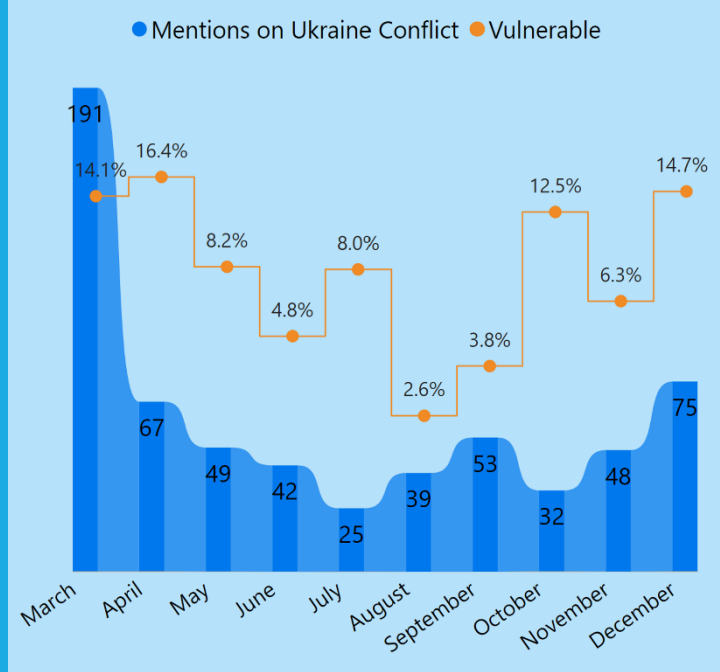
132. **Communications and advocacy.** UNICEF’s achievements in advocacy and communications are only partly reflected in the results above. These areas have been a major strength of the response, as follows:

133. **Advocacy:** The CCCs list a range of purposes for UNICEF’s humanitarian advocacy. *Table 13: Humanitarian Advocacy (next page)* assesses UNICEF’s advocacy in the response aligned with the relevant CCC aims.

BOX 4 UNICEF SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGING AND ADVOCACY ON VULNERABILITY

Chart 21 below analyses UNICEF’s twitter accounts from March - December 2022, noting those in which vulnerable groups were mentioned. The largest number of references were made in March, immediately after the crisis began. Subsequently, mentions stabilised, but with a pattern of consistent attention to vulnerabilities.

Chart 21 | Unicef Social Media Mentions - Vulnerable Groups



Source: Evaluation Team, from analysis of UNICEF Twitter accounts, March-December 2022.

¹⁴¹ Analysis of UNICEF response budgets; interviews at Regional and Country Office level

¹⁴² Analysis of Situation Reports February 2022-December 2022

¹⁴³ Analysis of Situation Reports February 2022-December 2022

Table 13: Humanitarian Advocacy (2022)

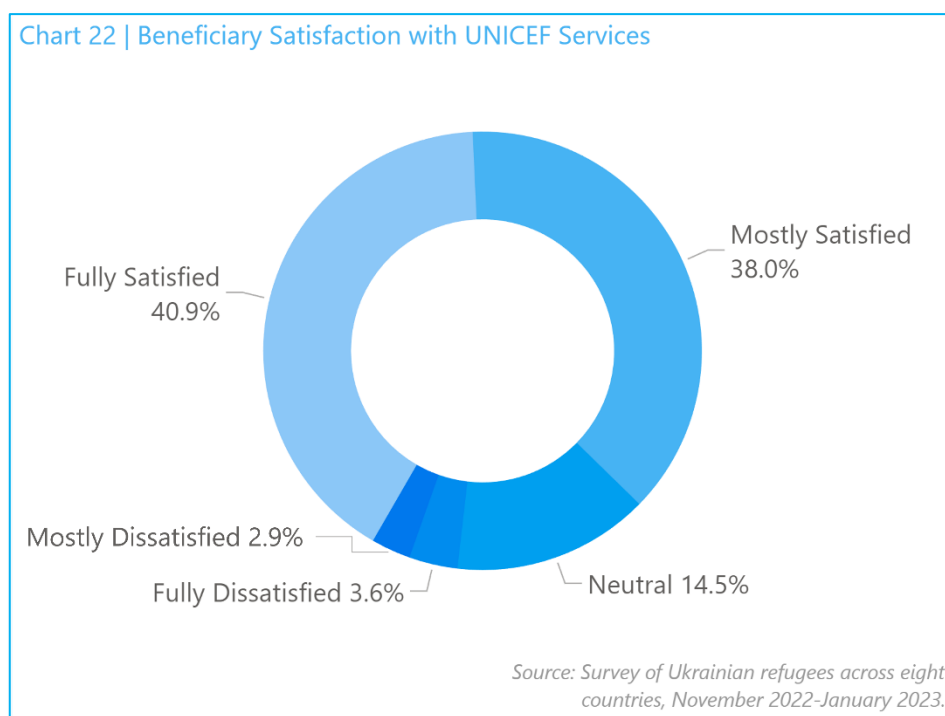
CCC AIM	YES / PARTIALLY / NO	EXAMPLES
a. Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy with governments for entry, to open strategic and programmatic space (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary). ▪ Advocating with government to expand existing programmatic areas (Moldova, Bulgaria, Belarus, Romania).
b. Secure unimpeded and principled humanitarian access to populations in need.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ See above; also, for access to specific groups including Roma and UASC.
c. Promote adherence to international and regional legal norms, standards and principles.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy on cross-border issues, targeted to the Ukrainian authorities re: educational access and provision for UASC. E.g., Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Social Policy inside Ukraine, to facilitate access to UASC.
d. Promote accountability of perpetrators of child rights violations.	Partially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work on GBV aims at holding perpetrators to account through the provision of referral pathways, but UNICEF defers to national legal and accountability systems. ▪ Work on UASC currently focused on identifying and providing for UASC in need, rather than addressing violations, which are held to be the responsibility of state parties.
e. Raise international and national awareness of the situation of children and of humanitarian and protection needs, particularly of the most vulnerable.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy about children from Security Council level downwards, both in terms of the wider effects of the crisis on children, as well as on specific groups such as UASC. ▪ Featuring vulnerable groups in external communications and messaging on social media (see Box 4 above).
f. Trigger rights-based and equitable development and strengthening of national policies, budgets, decisions, and legislation.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engagement with national ministries and municipalities to support reformulation of policy positions and legislative instruments re: vulnerable women and children, though too early for results yet.
g. Advocate for the rights and voices of children and women as an integral component of humanitarian action.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advocacy in multiple fora on education, UASC, child rights and other topic which seek to ensure the representation of children's and women's voices.

134. **Communication with beneficiaries.** The CCCS require commit UNICEF to ‘Ensure [ing] that affected children and families participate in the decisions that affect their lives, are properly informed and consulted, and have their views acted upon.’¹⁴⁴ UNICEF has used a range of mechanisms to explain services offered and to assess needs through polls (see section 2.1). Country Offices also used Facebook and Telegram to reach refugees.

135. A survey of 64 implementing partner organizations¹⁴⁵ found high presence of complaints and feedback mechanisms, with 94% of senior management and 96% of workforce respondents

across 7 countries reporting that their organizations had a complaints and feedback mechanism, and 51% stating that feedback is analyzed more than once a month.¹⁴⁶ However, access to, and use of, this data within UNICEF was limited, with few feedback loops established.

136. More directly, a survey of 1,423 Ukrainian refugees across all eight countries found 78% (of 453 respondents) satisfied with UNICEF services overall (including Blue Dots and in-kind services), while 14% were neutral and 6% mostly or fully dissatisfied (Chart 22).¹⁴⁷



¹⁴⁴ UNICEF (2020) Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action p29. Benchmarks: ‘All COs, with the support of ROs/HQ, establish processes to ensure that affected and at-risk populations, including children and women: • Participate in humanitarian planning processes and in decisions that affect their lives • Are informed about their rights and entitlements, expected standards of conduct by UNICEF personnel, available services, and how to access them through their preferred language and methods of communication • Have their feedback systematically collected and used to inform programme design and course correction’.

¹⁴⁵ Senior management responses from 64 distinct organisations (40 are CSOs and 24 public entities at local or national level). Responses from workforce are from 21 distinct organisations (21 CSOs and 8 public entities).

¹⁴⁶ The survey was not run with partner organisations in Belarus, as the Country Office was hesitant to engage their partners in an online survey, given the complex political situation in the country.

¹⁴⁷ The target population for the survey were refugees from Ukraine who were staying in one of the eight refugee response countries at the moment of responding to the survey. 98% were adults over 18 years of age. Of contacts with UNICEF, 16% had been in a Blue Dot safe space, 32% had received in-kind services, 9% had participated in focus group discussions, 25% had received information from UNICEF via a Viber channel; and 1% had used the U-report app. The remainder (8%) preferred not to answer. Please see Annex XX for full survey respondent profile and survey results.

2.5 HOW SUSTAINABLE ARE THE RESULTS?

SUMMARY

The response has adopted a strong nexus focus, both strategically and in implementation. The 'national systems first approach' provided a potentially strong sustainability lens, but this was inconsistently applied.

Two main risks to sustainability arise, related to partnerships formed in the early stages of the response, which did not always adopt a medium-term view, and UNICEF's inability to extend the same level of financial resourcing into 2023, which, although a difficult balance, risks the continued commitment and goodwill of partners.

The issue of sustainability also raises a central conceptual dissonance, particularly in the four non-programme countries. The delivery of emergency response, implemented through national systems, and focused (in the sustained phase) on strengthening those systems, requires a different model from the short-term 'humanitarian' instruments which currently govern it.

Going forward into 2023, UNICEF needs to turn its strategic lens less towards a 'vision' for the response, and more towards its chosen legacy, particularly in non-programme countries.

2.5.1 To what extent was the response framed and implemented within a nexus perspective?

137. Even despite challenges with terminology (*see Section 1.3*), the crisis is a clear illustration of an ‘nexus’ emergency. The response itself reflects the full spectrum of nexus dimensions, combining emergency response with systems-strengthening for the future and supporting social cohesion and peacebuilding where feasible.

138. **A strong nexus focus.** The framing, and implementation, of the response within a nexus lens from the outset is one of its main strengths. UNICEF and its partners, in their strategic documentation at least, realised the ‘nexus-oriented’ nature of the response early. The RRP contains four mentions of ‘nexus’ within its text, alongside 55 of ‘system-strengthening’, 42 of ‘capacity strengthening’ and 13 of ‘humanitarian-development’ (though only one of ‘humanitarian-development-peace’).¹⁴⁸

139. Neither the first March 1st HAC, nor its subsequent updates, explicitly mention the nexus, but all reference capacity and systems strengthening, and the November HAC is explicit on humanitarian-development linkages.¹⁴⁹ It commits UNICEF to: *‘sustain[ing] and scal[ing] up these efforts... working alongside UNHCR, humanitarian partners, and UNICEF National Committees to ensure access to critical services, facilitate social cohesion, and enhance the capacities of national actors and systems to maintain a supportive environment for refugee children.’*¹⁵⁰

140. UNICEF followed through on the strategic discourse, applying a nexus lens programmatically. The ‘systems strengthening’ programmatic emphasis and the inclusion of host communities to support social cohesion as part of peacebuilding provide tangible evidence here. Country examples are provided in [Table 14: Systems Strengthening and Social Cohesion](#).

¹⁴⁸ UNHCR (2022) Regional Refugee Response Plan, Ukraine

¹⁴⁹ UNICEF (2022) Humanitarian Appeal for Children, Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, March 2022 and Update November 2022

¹⁵⁰ UNICEF (2022) Humanitarian Appeal for Children, Ukraine and Refugee Outflow, Update November 2022

Table 14: Systems Strengthening and Social Cohesion.

SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING	TOP GOVERNMENT
<p>1. In Czech Republic, UNICEF is training refugee healthcare workers, teaching assistants, social workers to enter the Czech labour market.</p>	<p>1. Inclusion of host communities in the eight countries</p>
<p>2. In Slovakia, UNICEF developed a material needs benefit and Carer's Grant in partnership with government for children with disabilities, as a temporary support programme while the government prepared its systems to absorb a larger caseload. This used a simplified disability assessment tool to assess refugee children, opening the space for subsequent disability assessment reform for Slovak nationals.</p>	<p>2. Supporting countries in the development of their national Child Guarantee action plans including monitoring frameworks and, in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Bulgaria, integrating refugee children from Ukraine into the plans and frameworks</p>
<p>3. Also in Slovakia UNICEF entered into a partnership with academia to train social workers and other front line workers as part of the local labour offices and the Migration Office in how to work with and support refugee and migrant children, a partnership that will exist beyond the refugee response.</p>	<p>3. In Slovakia UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to create additional preschool places by matching funds received from the EU. This benefited both Ukrainian and Slovak children.</p>
<p>4. In Bulgaria, UNICEF provided support for the government-approved coordination mechanism for interaction and joint work between institutions and organizations in cases of UASC (Child Protection).</p>	<p>4. In Romania, UNICEF is supporting inclusion in the national education systems by helping develop a draft national action plan to respond to the needs of refugee children and their families. (Education)</p>
<p>5. In Moldova, UNICEF invested in the Moldova Legal Socialisation Programme and Municipality of Chisinau to strengthen child protection system.</p>	<p>5. In Moldova, UNICEF's inclusion of vulnerable Moldovan children in provision for mental health support, youth and adolescent engagement and social protection for those in need has expanded its remit within Moldova, and is praised by government for its equitable approach (Social Protection, Education).</p>

Source: InSight Ukraine HAC Response Donor Portfolio (extracted on Jan 23, 2023).

2.5.2 What longer-term, sustainable gains have been created?

141. An approach geared to sustainability, but risks arise.

The principle of delivering emergency response through national systems, while also strengthening them where required, is geared to a sustainable approach. However, it is still too early to demonstrate any significant potential. Moreover, two main risks to sustainability arise:

- i. Partnerships formed in the early part of the response were not always confirmed with a view to their effects in the medium term, with the 'pressure to deliver' undermining some approaches, including whether partners themselves are sustainable entities or with a view to potential harm created in the event of their non-continuation.
- ii. UNICEF's inability to extend the same level of financial resourcing into 2023 presents significant sustainability risks. Although a difficult balance, this choice is not without risks in the region, potentially compromising: (i) the progression to higher level effects inherently built into some interventions and (ii) the commitment and goodwill of partners, who may be more reluctant to engage with UNICEF when its continuity and constancy appear unreliable.

142. **Sustainability of UNICEF presence.** More domestically, the response has significantly expanded UNICEF's strategic and programmatic space in both existing country programme and non-programme countries. Across the eight countries, UNICEF's swift programmatic initiation or expansion; its determination to prioritise working through national systems; its co-operative approach with authorities at all levels; and its practical, 'can do' attitude have won it plaudits with governments and CSOs alike. These qualities, combined with demonstrable programmatic expertise, have helped open up strategic and programmatic space in new territory, and enhanced UNICEF's reputation in countries where its presence was previously more narrowly focused. The UNICEF 'brand' in the region has therefore been significantly enhanced.

143. At the same time, however, domestic sustainability

risks arise. Aside from the wider issue of UNICEF's continued presence in non-programme countries, UNICEF's own Programme and Budget Review for its regional presence was premised on the base of resource availability into 2024. Within the response, UNICEF has hired many staff on fixed-term contracts. With funding contracting into 2023, this structure may no longer be feasible.

2.5.3 What is UNICEF's future strategy for the response?

144. **A short-term horizon.** As the response continues into 2023, UNICEF's overarching statement of intent for the refugee response is defined in the 2023 HAC. This is, however, a necessarily short-term document, whose format allows a maximum 'vision' of twelve months ahead and geared to programmatic realities rather than future-focused strategic concerns. Regional programmatic area strategies, such as for health, child protection, education, social protection and others, are governed by the HAC, and resources raised through the instrument are necessarily, short-term. The HAC is also oriented to short-term, rather than medium term, results.

145. In Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania, UNICEF's 'vision' for the context is set out in their Country Programme Documents. Although these require adaptation for the crisis response, they provide, in their requirement for a clearly stated (usually five-year) goal, a strategic focus and an allied results framework for the medium term. These items clearly define UNICEF's future intent.

146. In the four 'emergency response team' countries, the situation is different. Here, UNICEF has only the short-term Country Response Plan available, itself a limited instrument oriented to targeting and programming areas rather than any kind of vision. The short-term nature of the regional HAC, combined with UNICEF's formal status as a temporary resident in the country, moreover, would preclude any formal statement of longer-term intent. Resources raised and allocated to the country occur through the standard short-term humanitarian instruments.

147. **Conceptual dissonance in the four non-programme countries.** At the same time, engagement with

systems strengthening – ate appropriate conceptual framework for the response – requires, by definition, a medium-term horizon. This disjunct highlight a central dissonance at the heart of UNICEF’s response; an emergency response, implemented through national systems, and focused (in the sustained phase) on strengthening those systems, requires a different model from the short-term ‘humanitarian’ instruments which currently govern it.

148. *The UNICEF legacy.* The conflict has no end in sight, but UNICEF’s emergency response – and its presence in four ‘new’ countries - has a limited timeframe.¹⁵¹ For 2023, UNICEF needs to turn its strategic lens in all eight countries towards its chosen legacy. This means defining what it hopes to leave behind; for refugees, host communities, and for partners, including the host governments who so generously opened their doors to those in need. The findings of this evaluation show that much good has been done, and much has also been learned. The start of 2023 is an appropriate point to begin this reflection for the future.

¹⁵¹ Initiating formalised Country Programmes in these contexts, even if the rationale existed, is a major decision, negotiation and political choice, undertaken at Executive Board level.



CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS

- UNICEF performance against HAC Situation-specific commitment: Large-scale movements of refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons.
- STRATEGIC RESULT Children, their families and host communities are protected from violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse and have access to services and durable solutions.

1

COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP. Effective coordination is established with UNICEF's participation.



2

BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD. The best interest of the child guides all actions, including status determination procedures and the identification of durable solutions.



3

RECEPTION, ACCOMMODATION AND CARE. Children and their families have access to safe and age-, gender- and disability-appropriate reception, accommodation and care.



4

ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION. Children have timely access to child-friendly information on their rights, available services, public health information, legal and administrative processes and durable solutions.



5

ACCESS TO SERVICES. Children have access to essential services, without discrimination, regardless of their legal status.



149. This evaluation finds overall that UNICEF's response to the regional refugee crisis has been **swiftly executed, effective and appropriate for context**. Drawing on UNICEF's mature emergency response capacities, as well as its deep knowledge of the region, and supported by generous and flexible financing, it has delivered significant results for refugees and host communities. Prioritising response delivery through national systems, and demonstrably placing the 'best interests of [every] child' at the heart of its ethos and practice, has built its reputation as a principled and impartial actor.
150. UNICEF deployed its existing assets and comparative advantages well, scaling up swiftly and successfully to meet the challenges of a rapid and large-scale event. Staff were rapidly deployed to borders, and Blue Dots established to meet immediate needs. UNICEF drew on its strong internal capacities to deploy professional expertise and experience, but also leaned heavily on its national staff from Country Offices in the region to 'step up' to the needs arising. Existing Country Offices and programmes pivoted to expand and augment existing activities, while acting as a generous facilitator and partner for the wider UN response. UNICEF has successfully deployed its powerful communications and advocacy capacities to highlight suffering, and to bring global awareness to the effects of the crisis on vulnerable women and children.
151. It was in the 'non-programme' countries however, where the greatest challenges arose. With no prior programmatic presence and little contextual knowledge of national systems and capacities, UNICEF had to literally start from zero. It did so at speed, deploying staff and resources to meet needs, and utilising its status as CRC standard-bearer and international emergency responder, building a narrative with governments of its comparative advantages even while engaging programmatically on the ground.
152. Across all countries, under the extreme pressures of speed and scale, an opportunistic/expedient approach was taken to partnerships. This has supported localisation, and was merited in many cases, but not in all. Shortcomings emerging have raised questions about due diligence; the fast turnover in surge deployments; the limited overview by the Regional Office of programme development in some countries; and the sustainability of both some partner organisations themselves, and the programme of work they deliver on UNICEF's behalf.
153. The response was necessarily blunt in its initial phase, given the crisis' speed and scale, as well as data limitations and the practicalities of adaptation. Yet it evolved for greater nuance over time, with the specifics of vulnerable groups recognised in greater depth, and programmatic tailoring to address them. In this, UNICEF's agility and adaptive capacity is clearly shown. It also successfully, and from the very start, employed a 'nexus' vision, appropriate for the region and aligned with national needs. The role of municipalities at the heart of service delivery for the vulnerable has been strongly highlighted in the response experience to date.
154. Overall, UNICEF's response has largely met the commitments that the CCCs demand, despite contextual complexities. Shortcomings mainly relate to operational concerns, along with a speedy approach to partnership that did not consistently take account of due diligence, capacity strengthening or sustainability concerns. Nuanced needs assessment was overtaken by speed and scale, and gender – nuanced for the conditions of the crisis - has been a significant gap. Conversely, the CCCs have been tested for relevance in unprecedented conditions and found largely validated in this unusual and complex environment, but with some dissonance in WASH and nutrition particularly, which would benefit from contextual adaptation.
155. Nonetheless, the response has also highlighted some both some key dilemmas and institutional fault lines, which bear relevance for UNICEF corporately and in the region. These fall into two main categories, operational and strategic.
156. **Operationally**, the response has generated some valuable lessons, many linked to human resourcing and institutional capacities, and several captured in the other reviews and evaluations.¹⁵² Surge

¹⁵² UNICEF (2020) Humanitarian Review and UNICEF (2022) Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to COVID-19

deployments for such a high-capacity, high-income context require experience in working through national systems, rather than the standard approach of setting up parallel mechanisms. Existing personnel, even were based in a low-crisis-propensity region, need guidance on UNICEF (and UN system-wide) emergency systems, co-ordination mechanisms and procedures. Early deployments to new contexts should include the key Operations skillset needed to make the UNICEF machine 'function'. Handovers need better management, and at all times, the Regional Office requires a clear-sighted overview of partnerships (and therefore the country programme) being developed. In new environments, National Committees, as per the CCCs, should be the first port of call, to provide the contextual knowledge but also the tactical entry points so essential for an agency to navigate new entry. Resource allocation mechanisms should be broadly constructed, to avert any perceived loss of independence. Amid the pressure to scale up, UNICEF still needs to take the time to reflect whether programmatic responses and supplies provided are appropriate for context.

157. **Strategically**, the response has highlighted a key conceptual disjunct. First, given the context, UNICEF has – appropriately - framed its response as '*delivering through systems, and systems strengthening*', supporting governments to respond to the needs of millions of arriving refugees and already-struggling host communities. Yet this inevitably implies a medium-term view and implementing strategy, even where UNICEF is only a temporary partner. By contrast, the institutional tools to address a swiftly arising crisis are by definition short-term instruments, such as the HAC, which is geared to raising resources for immediate response. Its format does not require, or even allow the presentation of a medium-term horizon. The systems and procedures which accompany the HAC are also geared to the short-term, such as the formulation of the HPM, which has been demonstrably unsuited the context of the crisis.

158. This raises a fundamental question, which cuts to the heart of humanitarian response in today's world. The Syrian, Venezuelan and other refugee crises, alongside Ukraine, have shone a light on the uncertainties of the wider humanitarian system when (i) needs arise in high and upper middle-

income countries and (ii) crises become protracted. Events in these locations place a powerful strain on national systems and starkly highlight existing gaps. In such environments, emergency responses need to both deliver through, and simultaneously strengthen and make more inclusive, existing systems to deliver on the Convention on the Rights of the Child – and all under the high-pressure conditions of a major humanitarian emergency.

159. Yet globally, the humanitarian system and model still retain the characteristics of its historical roots of short-term emergencies, often arising from natural disasters. UNICEF is no exception, with its HAC and HRP geared to the classic annual cycle. The wider question arising from this evaluation is, therefore: between the short-term intent of the HAC and the HRP, versus the medium and longer-term aims of a full UNICEF Country Programme, is there room, and a requirement for, a new model of emergency response?

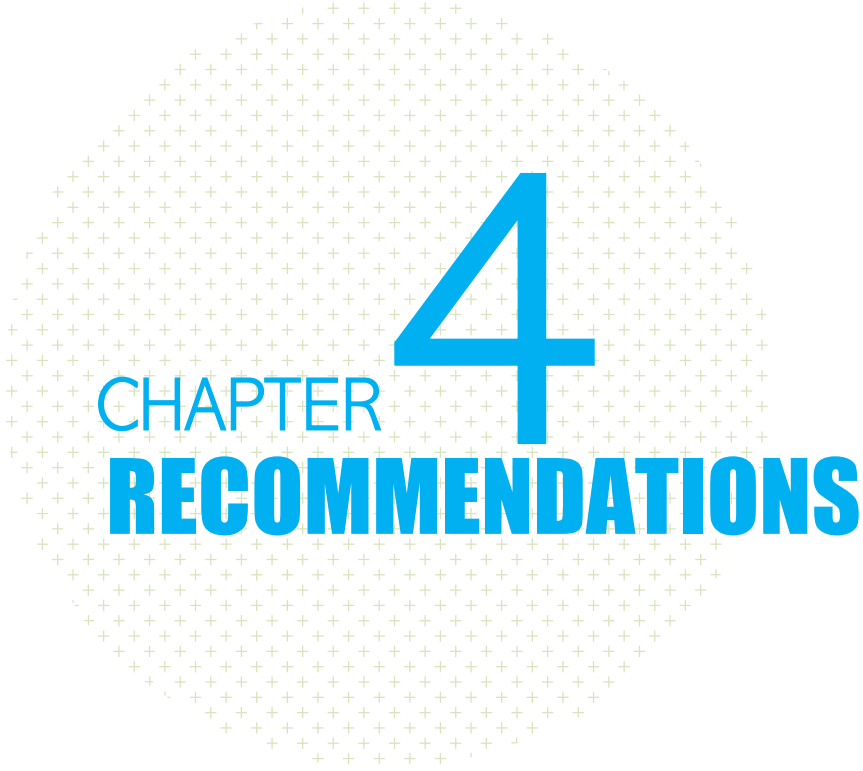
160. **The road ahead.** In January 2023, the crisis has no end in sight. Attacks and infrastructural damage continue and these, alongside winter conditions, raise the risk of major displacements within and from Ukraine.

161. Overall, therefore, the road ahead is challenging and uncertain. The UNICEF response, as of December 2022, has demonstrated an ability to move swiftly and at scale. More strategically, however, there is a strong need to define UNICEF's legacy in the region, geared to the CCCs and ultimately, the commitments of the Convention - and to align planning, assets, and capacities towards this.

162. Corporately, there are many lessons to be learned from this 2022 experience – some very fundamental. Examining these can help bring to light some of the institutional adjustments needed in an increasingly complex and unpredictable world.



CHAPTER 4



CHAPTER **4**
RECOMMENDATIONS

CORPORATE	MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE
<p>1. Extend Links to Political and Security Intelligence Systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a feedback system to ensure information flows from intelligence arising through UN Security Council briefings into UNICEF corporately. ii. Connect this system to UNICEF's Forecasting Unit, and from there into emergency response planning. 	<p>Emergency Operations division with input from Regional Office</p>
<p>2. Review UNICEF's Emergency Response Model for Middle- and High-Income Settings/Protracted Crises.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Consider an additional emergency model. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a specific guiding instrument for the sustained phase of emergency response in upper middle- and high-income contexts, which effectively succeeds the HAC after the immediate response phase. ▪ This should include a trigger mechanism which sets the thresholds at immediate humanitarian needs are determined to be met, and at which point, donors can be requested to direct their resources either to more medium-term system strengthening, or to humanitarian needs elsewhere. ▪ Within this, clarify the role of building stronger and more inclusive national systems, as well as resource allocation processes. ii. Emergency tools and procedures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adapt the HPM for its suitability for high-income, high-capacity contexts and issue timely guidance on its use. ▪ Supplement the EMT with a more streamlined, focused vehicle combining HQ and RO personnel, to direct and manage the crisis response. iii. Develop Standard Operating procedures for non-programme countries built around the CCCs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirm a 'rapid deployment' minimum skillset. Include Operations staff, plus key functions such as information management, monitoring and evaluation, emergency co-ordination and partnerships. ▪ Reconfirm the areas of responsibility of the Regional Office and EMOPS respectively. 	<p>Emergency Operations division with input from Regional Office</p>

CORPORATE	MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Review surge mechanisms to ensure and categorise skillsets for full contextual range. ▪ Consider extending surge requirements to a one- or two-month minimum, with language skills optimal and experience of working through national systems an imperative. ▪ Where emergency responses occur in non-programme countries, require a minimum deployment period of two months, require handovers between staff, and define the oversight mechanism for partnership formation and programme overview (Regional Office). 	
<p>3. (in line with findings from the Humanitarian Review and COVID-19 Evaluation) Build emergency capacity across UNICEF, including for national staff in contexts with low emergency propensity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Extend emergency capacity across the institution, providing training (and refresher training) on the basics of UNICEF and system-wide emergency response, co-ordination mechanisms and procedures, as well as the CCS and the humanitarian principles. ii. Convey more assertively that coverage of all programmatic areas is not essential during crises occurring in high-income contexts. 	
<p>4. Reconfirm and communicate the role of National Committees in emergency response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Refresh training on National Committees for all new staff entering UNICEF. ii. Reconfirm National Committees as the first port of call for 'new entrant' countries, to draw on their skills and expertise, including this in emergency training. 	<p>Office of the Deputy Executive Director, in conjunction with EMOPS and PFP</p>

REGIONAL	MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE
<p>1. At regional level, interpret the CCCs for this context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Interpret 'what the CCCs mean' for high-capacity, high-income contexts with strong governance mechanisms and where Governments take the lead on the response. ii. Share the interpretation with UNICEF HQ, so that the next revision of the CCCs can incorporate the learning from the refugee response. 	
<p>2. Generate a clear corporate statement and position on gender in the response.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Articulate a clear position at regional level on the gender dimensions of the response, and require Country Offices to develop, geared to the regional-level statement, a clear country-level statement on how a more fine-tuned approach to GEWE will be integrated. ii. Review the performance management framework for 2023 to ensure systematic inclusion of gender targets and indicators. 	<p>Regional Office, with input from Country Offices affected by the crisis</p>
<p>3. (In line with the Humanitarian Review) Centralise lesson learning in the response, building on the co-ordination meetings now being held</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a learning strategy for the response, with enhanced data management systems, including on government partnerships and using the vehicle of regional co-ordination mechanisms to capture and distil lessons as they emerge. ii. Develop a monitoring and evaluation process for accompanying the lessons with the 'learning and application' dimension of knowledge management. iii. Link the learning system into wider parts of the UNICEF institution, to continue real-time learning and support adaptive management. iv. Review linkages with data being generated by the 'inside Ukraine' response and consider scope for additional systematisation and use. 	
<p>4. Build emergency preparedness, geared to an ethos of systems-strengthening into new CPDs as they are developed and approved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Specify the importance of systems-strengthening and emergency preparedness in new CPDs as they are developed, alongside UNICEF comparative advantage to address them. ii. Approach intervention design from the perspective of risk-based programming, even in comparatively 'stable' contexts. iii. Ensure that planned interventions in programme countries encompass risk mitigation for any potential displacement of national resource allocations. 	

REGIONAL	MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION	RESPONSIBLE
<p>5. Define the UNICEF legacy post-crisis response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. For non-programme countries, analyse concluding observations from the Committee on the CRC state party reports to generate a gap analysis. ii. Based on the above gap analysis, define, and articulate a clear position on what UNICEF hopes to leave behind 'after the response', including sustainable gains on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Systems strengthened at country level. ▪ Social cohesion enhanced at country level. ▪ For 2023, align country performance assessment with these aims, and include an aim for increased social sector spending for vulnerable children and communities, including refugees. 	<p>Regional Office, with input from Country Offices affected by the crisis</p>

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