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Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

Summary

Humanitarian needs continued to grow significantly in 2022, with approximately 274 million people requiring assistance because of conflict, climate change, disasters and public health emergencies and their compounding effects.

The present report describes the humanitarian situation of children and how UNICEF engaged with partners at the local, regional and global levels to save lives, protect childhoods and ensure that children's rights were upheld. It also provides a progress update on the implementation of the management response actions linked to the second evaluation of the UNICEF role as cluster lead/co-lead agency (CLARE II).

Elements of a draft decision for consideration are included in section X.

* E/ICEF/2023/9.

Note: The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.



I. Overview

1. Climate change and conflict shaped many children's lives for the worse in 2022. Flooding, storms, drought, war, local and regional conflict and other forms of violence negatively impacted children's safety; their health and exposure to communicable diseases; their nutritional status; their access to education; their environment and access to safe water; and their ability to stay in their homes and communities.

2. Delivering on its mandate by working with Governments and other partners, UNICEF was able to be a counterweight to the forces described above, achieving the following results in humanitarian settings:

- (a) Clean water and sanitation for 39.4 million people;
- (b) Measles vaccinations for 27.2 million children aged 6 months to 15 years;
- (c) Services for the early detection and treatment of severe wasting and other forms of severe acute malnutrition benefiting 114.6 million children under 5 years of age;
- (d) Access to education for 18.6 million children;
- (e) Community-based mental health and psychosocial support services for 12.6 million children and families, and interventions designed to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors for 8.8 million children and women;
- (f) Access of 49.2 million children and adults¹ to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel who provide assistance to affected populations;
- (g) Humanitarian cash assistance for 2.8 million households;
- (h) Leadership or co-leadership of the nutrition, education and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) humanitarian clusters and the child protection area of responsibility;
- (i) Delivery of \$863.9 million worth of supplies (excluding COVID-19 vaccines) in preparation for or in response to emergencies.

3. UNICEF received \$4.25 billion in humanitarian funding against the 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. At its launch in December 2021, the appeal called for \$9.4 billion but, by the end of 2022, the total requirement had risen to \$11.74 billion.

4. Despite critical constraints, including the conduct of parties to conflict, interference and threats to humanitarian workers, rapidly expanding needs and heavy earmarking of funding, UNICEF was able to achieve results and strengthen its capacity to be a better partner for children. This meant enhancing global partnerships; expanding work with adolescents and youth as changemakers in their societies; making progress on including children with disabilities in humanitarian response plans and in fostering gender equality in its humanitarian action; promoting anticipatory action and preparedness; and laying out a pathway for investment and innovation in sustainability in humanitarian action that is impactful for people and communities and for the organization's climate footprint. UNICEF also advanced on key recommendations of the CLARE II evaluation.

5. Looking ahead, UNICEF will deepen its response to climate change and climatic events that impact children, and will lead a multisectoral response to famine prevention to prevent, detect and treat child wasting. UNICEF will continue to foster

¹ This figure covers both humanitarian and development contexts.

inclusion and gender equity; enhance cluster leadership capacity; refine its response to public health emergencies; evolve its anticipatory action practices; and call for flexible funding – all to better uphold the rights of children living through humanitarian crises.

II. Introduction

The deluge

6. Climate change and conflict have meant for millions of children a literal deluge: waves of flooding and violence, displacement, mudslides and drought, hunger and distress. They have also undermined progress by Governments and communities in improving child well-being, including global progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, whose promises come due in 2030, just seven short years away.

7. This annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action shows how these crises impinged upon children’s rights in 2022. It spotlights some of the (many) humanitarian crises that required attention. Overall results for children in 2022 are provided in the overview. The remainder of the report provides indicative examples of how UNICEF, Governments and thousands of other partners worked locally, regionally and globally to be an equal and opposite force to the circumstances of the time: saving lives, restoring and honouring childhoods, empowering communities and protecting children’s futures.

III. The humanitarian situation in 2022

8. Broadly speaking, the humanitarian situation of children in 2022 differed from that of the previous few years (the ‘pandemic years’) in ways more linked to scale than to substance. The term ‘polycrisis’, re-coined for the current era in an editorial in *The Financial Times* in October 2022,² aptly captured the mix of conflict, climate, energy, economic and other challenges that characterized the year.

A story of ‘more’

9. Altogether, approximately 274 million people required humanitarian assistance in 2022, up from 235 million in 2021.³ However shockingly high, this is nonetheless fewer than the 339 million people who are expected to require such assistance in 2023.⁴ The humanitarian story of 2022 was one of ‘more’: more displacement (a record 103 million people displaced globally);⁵ more mortality from such epidemics as cholera and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19);⁶ more children at risk of wasting owing to more drought and other factors;⁷ more flooding (e.g., rainfall in Chad at a 30-year high, one third of Pakistan under water); and more children living in multidimensional poverty.

10. Conflict and violence continued to drive much of the humanitarian need that people experienced in 2022, affecting millions of children in all regions where

² Ooze, Adam, “Welcome to the world of the polycrisis: today disparate shocks interact so that the whole is worse than the sum of its parts”, *The Financial Times*, 28 October 2022.

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, OCHA, Geneva, 1 December 2022, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵ OCHA, *2023 Global Humanitarian Overview Presentation – Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths*, OCHA, Geneva, 1 December 2022.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, p. 22.

UNICEF is present, such as in Ethiopia, where a sprawling conflict in the north is only one of multiple, overlapping hazards that put millions at risk; and in Yemen, where conflict has endured for more than eight years.

11. The war in Ukraine spawned an entire global ecosystem of suffering and need in 2022 (and ongoing into 2023), starting with the 27.3 million people (including 7.1 million children) who required assistance both within Ukraine and in the countries where many sought refuge. This conflict has also had, as a byproduct, a disastrous effect on many millions of people globally, for whom the war has been a central factor in hunger brought about by diminished food shipments (pre-war, for example, Ukraine had supplied 13.4 per cent of global wheat exports and 40.4 per cent of global seed oil exports);⁸ increasing unaffordability – tipping into unavailability – of food;⁹ and higher fuel prices.¹⁰ These circumstances increased the number of families and children living in poverty globally¹¹ and deepened children’s hunger, making an existing global nutrition crisis worse. All told, 60 million children globally were at risk of being acutely malnourished by the end of 2022,¹² 27 per cent more than in 2021.

12. Hundreds of millions of people globally experienced the adverse effects of climate change in 2022. Climate-related disasters and conditions either caused or worsened a substantial portion of humanitarian need, uprooted more than 26,900 children each day and caused crises in health and nutrition, education, protection and participation.

13. The war in Ukraine also caused a great ebb and flow of people on the European continent, one that surpassed anything seen there since the Second World War. Between 24 February and early September 2022, 12.3 million movements out of the country were recorded, along with more than 5.5 million movements back into the country. Around 7.9 million refugees from Ukraine were recorded in other European countries by the end of 2022. And as of early December 2022, there were 5.9 million people internally displaced, more than two thirds of them women.¹³

14. Globally, adults continued to harm children in the context of war and conflict. In 2021, the most recent year for which complete data are available, the United Nations verified 23,982 grave violations against children, affecting 19,165 children (13,633 boys, 5,242 girls, 290 sex unknown).¹⁴

15. Humanitarian access (of people to services, and of humanitarian actors to those who required assistance) proved challenging in many places in 2022, not unlike previous years. More than 30 countries recorded high to extreme access constraints through October 2022. Four countries – Eritrea, Ethiopia, Myanmar and Yemen – were classified as having extreme access constraints; 17 countries – among them Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine – were classified as having very high access constraints.¹⁵

⁸ World Bank Group, “Shockwaves for global trade”, graphic, March 2022, available at www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/04/world-bank-ukraine-food-energy-crisis/#:~:text=This%20World%20Bank%20chart%20shows%20Ukraine%E2%80%99s%20share%20of.a%20for%20more%20than%2040%25%20of%20all%20exports.

⁹ *A Global Food Crisis – 2023: Another year of extreme jeopardy for those struggling to feed their families*, video, World Food Programme, 2023.

¹⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *The Global Humanitarian Impact of High Food, Fertilizer and Fuel Prices: Key messages*, IASC, Geneva, November 2022.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*, p. 22.

¹³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁴ United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General: Children and armed conflict, A/76/871–S/2022/493, United Nations, New York, 23 June 2022.

¹⁵ ACAPS, *Humanitarian Access Overview*, ACAPS, Geneva, 19 December 2022, pp. 11–13.

16. Finally, three global headwinds – geopolitical, economic and environmental – are expected to shape the coming years and, in fact, the remainder of the 2020s,¹⁶ with a profound impact on the lives of children, and especially those already living in, or vulnerable to, humanitarian crises.

IV. UNICEF humanitarian response in 2022

17. UNICEF responded to a total of 442 new or ongoing humanitarian crises in 128 programme countries in 2022, compared with 455 crises in 153 countries in 2021. Responses were aligned with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. Crises designated as Level 3 emergencies included those in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa (elevated from Level 2 to Level 3 in September 2022), Ukraine and Yemen, as well as COVID-19 (until 1 July 2022). Level 2 emergencies included those in Haiti, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Sahel region, Uganda and the Ukraine refugee outflow countries.

18. The UNICEF response was shaped by deeply concerning trends in the conduct of parties to conflict, affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure as well as aid workers. Lack of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian access not only led to growing needs, but also hampered the response to humanitarian needs and hindered the protection of civilians, in particular children. Persistent violations of international humanitarian law impeded the ability of aid workers to operate, while interference, threats and violence against them increased. With the significant increase in people in need in 2022, international humanitarian assistance and financing were stretched and lacked the flexibility to keep up with the growing needs and allow rapid scale-up and adaptation of humanitarian responses. Disproportionately earmarked funding and aid conditionalities (despite the World Humanitarian Summit commitments to flexible funding), along with the adverse consequences of sanctions and counterterrorism measures, remained significant challenges throughout the year.

19. Despite these constraints, UNICEF maintained a steady humanitarian presence and was able to ensure timely deployment of personnel at the onset of emergencies for a rapid response. The UNICEF human resources strategy for humanitarian action covers the transition from immediate support to longer-term staffing needs, as well as a scale-down strategy.

20. A total of 709 deployments were made from both internal and external surge structures in 2022. Internal surge mechanisms provided support to 39 countries, with 22 Emergency Response Team members carrying out 55 deployments and another 359 staff members undertaking 386 deployments. UNICEF also benefited from 268 deployments via external surge mechanisms to 61 country, regional and headquarters offices (198 deployments through the standby partner mechanism, 70 through the Rapid Response Team).

21. In 2022, UNICEF, working with the World Health Organization, Governments and other partners, provided an array of services and support for children and families affected by public health emergencies, including in humanitarian settings. A total of 142 country offices responded to outbreaks or other public health emergencies, among them outbreaks of Ebola virus disease and Marburg virus disease; cholera outbreaks, including in ongoing humanitarian crises (an unprecedented 30 countries had experienced cholera outbreaks by the end of 2022); measles outbreaks; and three public health emergencies of international concern (COVID-19, mpox and polio). All

¹⁶ United Nations Children's Fund, *Prospects for Children in the Polycrisis: A 2023 global outlook*, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, January 2023, p. 8.

requests from regional and country offices for initial support for a public health emergency response received headquarters assistance within 48 hours.

22. The UNICEF Supply Division delivered a record level of life-saving supplies to children in emergencies in 2022 – more than \$863.9 million worth of supplies (including supplies for the COVID-19 response, but excluding COVID-19 vaccines) for emergencies in 140 countries, with 57.4 per cent going to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies and the remaining 42.6 per cent going to other emergencies. Afghanistan and Ukraine received the highest value of emergency supplies. Globally, nutrition supplies were one of the largest emergency commodity groups, valued at \$127 million. Overcoming increasing pressure on supply chains, rising freight costs and bottlenecks, UNICEF ensured the timely delivery of supplies by collaborating with partners and by optimizing warehouse operations across its global network. The Supply Division also worked with country offices to pre-position supplies locally and build capacity for preparedness and response, including for public health emergencies. The Division provided direct support through 59 emergency deployments to 17 emergency locations, including Afghanistan, Pakistan and Ukraine.

23. In 2022, UNICEF amplified young people’s voices and actions in humanitarian contexts – from disaster response in Indonesia to conflict responses in Afghanistan and Ukraine. The organization engaged more than 16 million adolescents in 89 countries through UNICEF programmes, with more than 340,000 of them engaged in humanitarian action. The Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation – implemented in safe spaces and in child protection, education and mental health and psychosocial support initiatives – supported more than 900,000 adolescents in more than 30 countries.

24. Sixty-five per cent of country offices with a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal systematically included children with disabilities in their response efforts in 2022, compared with 55 per cent in 2021. This progress was driven by the ongoing inclusion of children with disabilities in preparedness, needs assessment and data-collection processes and by an emphasis on cross-sectoral programming. UNICEF focused on strengthening national systems for inclusive education and linking them to WASH and nutrition services, for example. UNICEF also provided assistive technology and worked to protect children with disabilities from violence and exploitation and to foster their participation in decision-making in their communities. UNICEF enhanced its institutional capacity for disability-inclusive humanitarian action by integrating critical content into the agency’s humanitarian learning framework and by rolling out the Disability-Inclusive Humanitarian Action Tool Kit, and operational guidance on including children with disabilities in humanitarian response through short tip sheets, practical tools and capacity-building packages. UNICEF continued to lead inter-agency efforts to strengthen disability inclusion in humanitarian needs overviews and humanitarian response plans, resulting in substantial progress, particularly on collection and use of data.

25. UNICEF deployed regional gender advisers, a gender emergency response team specialist or a gender in emergencies specialist to every Level 3 emergency in 2022. This helped to ensure that gender commitments guided the organization’s response.

26. In 2022, UNICEF scaled up efforts on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse during its humanitarian responses. Eighty-nine percent of country offices with a humanitarian response had sexual exploitation and abuse reporting systems fully in place and have ensured capacity-building support to their partners. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and response systems, including community-based reporting channels, were scaled up throughout UNICEF programmes and operations. As a result, at least 31.7 million children and adults in 80 country

programmes with a humanitarian response were provided access to sexual exploitation and abuse reporting channels in 2022. As part of the commitment to a survivor-centred approach, UNICEF provided training to humanitarian country teams and inter-agency on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordinators and networks to roll out the United Nations Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. UNICEF also supported the inter-agency humanitarian systems to generate data and evidence to track and monitor collective protection from sexual exploitation and abuse results and inform interventions over time.

27. A total of \$5 billion was spent on humanitarian action in 2022, or 63 per cent of all expenses. The country offices with the highest overall humanitarian expenses (in descending order) were Afghanistan, Ukraine, Yemen, Lebanon and Ethiopia. In Ukraine and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), more than 95 per cent of country-level expenses were classified as humanitarian expenses.

V. Key outcomes achieved in 2022

28. Top-line results in humanitarian settings linked to the various programming areas of UNICEF work are provided in paragraph 2 above. This section describes UNICEF responses and results in several critical humanitarian crises during the year, through the lens laid out in the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal: the climate crisis, conflict and displacement.

29. The examples provided are indicative and not exhaustive. A more comprehensive accounting of results¹⁷ is provided in the 2022 Global Annual Results Report on humanitarian action, and in-depth information on UNICEF responses globally can be found in the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.

A. The climate crisis is a child rights crisis – UNICEF response in 2022

30. In 2022, UNICEF was among the international agencies and non-governmental organizations, national and local organizations and Governments that stepped up the response to the acute needs of vulnerable people impacted by climate and other disasters.

31. The examples below are provided because of the scope and scale of the needs engendered across a single context – not because the individual suffering was unique in these places, because unfortunately it was not. In these and other responses, the humanitarian needs caused by the climate event were often layered over existing vulnerabilities linked to conflict, displacement or chronic poverty, and the responses and results described below were in addition to other ongoing humanitarian and development efforts.

Drought and nutrition crisis

32. Many children experienced climate change in 2022 through recurrent or severe drought, and through this, hunger and malnutrition.

33. In the **Horn of Africa**, 36.3 million people, including 20.2 million children, have been affected by the worst drought crisis of the past 40 years, with 23 million people experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. Combating this drought-driven nutrition crisis has taken intensive collaboration and coordination to provide relief and life-saving services. In **Somalia**, for example, UNICEF worked with the World

¹⁷ Due to timing, figures in the present report may differ from those reported later in the annual reporting cycle in the Global Annual Results Report on humanitarian action.

Food Programme to scale up nutrition services in 16 hard-to-reach districts, while also accelerating procurement of ready-to-use therapeutic food for children and families with the greatest needs. As a result, 1,080,852 children aged 6 to 59 months were admitted for therapeutic care and treatment for wasting. The approach in Somalia echoes efforts throughout the region, which have drawn on a multiplicity of partnerships – with Governments, international non-governmental organization partners, the private sector and civil society organizations – and whose aim is to expand the delivery of integrated services to affected people.

34. **Burkina Faso** is one of several countries in the central Sahel region that have experienced a multilayered crisis encompassing climate factors (drought and flooding) along with the upheaval of conflict. To combat the nutrition crisis there, UNICEF engaged, for both preventive and curative care in the most insecure areas, in operational partnerships involving numerous national and international non-governmental organizations along with community platforms. A total of 107,289 children aged 6 to 59 months with severe wasting were admitted for treatment. Of these children, 17,500 were reached specifically using simplified approaches for detecting and treating wasting at the community level. Such approaches extend the reach of programming (whether required due to scale of need, or challenges in access) and the efficiency of the response. Overall, in Burkina Faso, UNICEF reached 70 per cent of its 2022 planned target of 152,510 children experiencing severe wasting. Programme performance rates were good according to Sphere standards, with a recovery rate of 91.5 per cent, a mortality rate of 2.8 per cent and a default rate of 5.8 per cent.

Flooding

35. Flooding joined drought in generating extensive climate-linked humanitarian needs in 2022. One of the starkest examples of this was in Pakistan, where epochal rains and subsequent flooding created humanitarian needs for 20.6 million people, including 9.6 million children. Damage to public and communal water supply systems and sanitation facilities meant that children and families had to drink contaminated water and risk exposure to such water-borne and vector-borne diseases as cholera, diarrhoea, dengue and malaria. Around 6.3 million people needed immediate WASH services. Through UNICEF support, 1.2 million people gained access to safe drinking water through water tanks and the installation of water filtration plants. Hygiene-promotion messages reached 627,904 people, and menstrual hygiene kits, soap and other WASH-related non-food items were provided to 1.2 million people. Additionally, UNICEF screened 925,392 children in flood-affected districts for malnutrition. Of these, 68,857 children (30,590 boys and 38,267 girls) with severe wasting were enrolled for treatment that was supported by UNICEF. The organization also supported primary health-care services for 1.5 million people, the immunization of 1,091,951 children against measles and the establishment of nearly 1,000 temporary learning centres and education access for 124,461 children. Additionally, 266,048 children and caregivers were provided with access to mental health and psychosocial support.

36. As part of an holistic response in Pakistan, early childhood development approaches were mainstreamed into primary health care, WASH and education support. For example, early childhood development and parenting information was included in kits for lady health workers and newborns, and 202 early childhood development kits benefited 10,100 children in temporary learning centres (primarily in Sindh Province). The ‘Resources for Frontline Workers’ section of the digital platform Internet of Good Things Pakistan provided early childhood development resources to front-line workers. Globally, UNICEF will continue to prioritize and systematize early childhood development in humanitarian action by ensuring enabling

policy environments, fostering access to services for young children, supporting parents and caregivers and building the capacity of front-line workers. In 2023, UNICEF is improving sectoral coordination for early childhood development and promoting a global strategy for nutrition and child development in emergencies.

37. In addition to leveraging its global field presence to contribute directly to saving and improving the lives of children impacted by climatic events, UNICEF influenced the way Governments and the humanitarian community understand the climate risks children face and prepare for effective responses. The UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index was extended in 2022 to the subnational level in the pilot countries of Antigua and Barbuda, Cambodia, Kenya and Somalia. Key challenges for the subnational adaptation of this tool – crucial for understanding which children are at greatest risk – include accessing up-to-date local-level data on children's vulnerability, in particular data that are comparable across countries. To overcome this obstacle, UNICEF is exploring external scientific partnerships to develop novel ways to use earth observation data to augment on-the-ground sources. At the global level, UNICEF influenced core discussions and negotiations at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 2022, reiterating the importance of investing in climate adaptation and building resilience among children, young people and their communities.

A priority for UNICEF

38. In essence, UNICEF elevated climate action as a priority across the organization in 2022, and is accelerating the response to the effects of climate change in humanitarian contexts globally. UNICEF is developing a climate action plan anchored around three pillars: resilient and sustainable services; looking at the organization's environmental footprint; and enhancing the voice and engagement of young people around solutions to the crisis. One example of the work around the third pillar is the recruitment in 2022 of young climate activists in 10 countries to lead climate action and disaster risk reduction efforts and mobilize their communities and peers.

39. Investment in the organization's climate action plan can pay climate dividends for UNICEF and for communities in crisis. UNICEF initiated work in 2022 to create an internal revolving loan fund designed to push capital investments into sustainable long-term systems, phasing out short-term, carbon-intensive emergency operations. Not only could earlier investment in sustainable water infrastructure in fragile contexts provide lasting relief to communities that need such systems, but evidence shows that the savings generated could also save UNICEF money in the long term, while supporting dividends to investors.

40. This commitment to integrate sustainability into humanitarian response is already reaching children in 'win-win-win' ways. Project Play, launched in Pakistan, Sierra Leone and Uganda in 2022, shows how. This initiative provides play materials made from recycled ready-to-use therapeutic food boxes to children suffering from wasting. For malnourished children, the lack of nutrients affects both their bodies and their brains, and can halt crucial cognitive development. With toys and play opportunities, children's brains can begin to recover along with their bodies, and caregivers gain new awareness of the importance of play. Project Play is also a way for UNICEF to contribute to a greener tomorrow that will be inhabited by the children receiving life-saving support today.

B. Conflict leads to humanitarian needs – UNICEF response in 2022

41. The many ways children's rights were negatively impacted by conflict in 2022 were only matched by the many ways UNICEF collaborated with partners (at the field level, nationally, regionally or on global platforms) to meet these children's needs and uphold their rights.

42. A primary goal in settings of conflict and violence is protecting children. In **Ukraine**, for example, after the outbreak of war, UNICEF-supported mental health and psychosocial interventions reached 2,978,598 children and caregivers to help them to deal with the distressing effects of war and displacement. In addition, 108,080 children and their families benefited from case management and referral to social support services, and 352,103 women and children were reached by UNICEF-supported gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and response services. Seventy UNICEF-supported multidisciplinary mobile teams in 18 regions also reached 930,067 beneficiaries with integrated services in 2022. Among those reached, 38,852 (9,313 children and 29,539 adults) were referred to specialized services (health, social and legal institutions).

43. Children in the **State of Palestine** live in a protracted protection crisis characterized by an ongoing occupation that has created psychological distress and trauma – all embedded in an environment of low economic opportunity, a divided political landscape and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. To respond to chronic protection needs and to the escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip in August 2022, UNICEF and its partners provided an array of services. Around 8,300 children were reached with child protection services during the escalation in the Gaza Strip, and more than 1,430 children received individual case management and referrals. Efforts extended to education of caregivers, with 2,420 caregivers (72 per cent women) attending sessions focused on positive parenting and how to protect their children and strengthen family capacity to prevent violence at home.

44. The major social unrest and gang-related violence that have gripped **Haiti** since September 2022 show another dimension of how violence and strife threaten children. As is true elsewhere, the humanitarian situation in Haiti is not one-dimensional, and threats to children's well-being are interlinked. In Haiti, for example, in addition to the societal violence noted above, severe fuel shortages restricted utilities and the delivery of basic services, including water and health care. Nearly 48 per cent of the population was considered acutely food insecure in October 2022. The cholera outbreak that began in the country that month bubbled out of this upheaval and disruption and compounded existing threats to children, who made up 40 per cent of all cholera cases. The UNICEF response included a rapid response team strategy and the use of mixed teams (including WASH staff from non-governmental organizations and nurses from the Ministry of Health) to implement the case-area targeted intervention approach to stemming the outbreak.

45. Delivery of cholera supplies and kits helped to meet the needs of more than 86,000 people in Haiti. Water trucking provided half a million litres of water to more than 22,000 people currently living in or displaced from Cité Soleil – the commune within the greater Port-au-Prince metropolitan area that reported the first confirmed cases, and not incidentally also one of the flashpoints for gang violence. Through its non-governmental medical partners, UNICEF supported the referral of more than 355 suspected cases of cholera to treatment centres or oral rehydration points, and delivered critical supplies to health departments and treatment centres. UNICEF was integral to a cholera vaccination campaign targeting 1.64 million people over 1 year of age for oral cholera vaccine in 80 communes in the Ouest and Centre departments.

UNICEF focused on vaccine distribution, waste management and communication. By the end of December 2022, nearly 1 million people had been vaccinated against cholera (61 per cent of the target).

46. Globally, cholera response efforts intensified in 2022, with UNICEF supplying community response kits in far greater numbers than in 2021 and providing a comprehensive response in countries with severe epidemics, among them Haiti, Lebanon, Malawi, the Syrian Arab Republic and others.

Humanitarian access

47. All types of conflict settings can be those where **humanitarian access** to populations is challenged. UNICEF continued to support its country offices in 2022 with policy advice, tailored capacity-building initiatives and dedicated country support – all designed to establish and sustain timely, equitable and unimpeded humanitarian access to people living in complex and high-threat environments. UNICEF disseminated the Humanitarian Access Field Manual and the Guidelines for UNICEF Engagement with Armed Non-State Actors, and rolled out in-person, in-depth training on humanitarian access. More than a dozen UNICEF country offices (Afghanistan, Colombia, Haiti, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), among others) received dedicated support on humanitarian access and related humanitarian policy issues from UNICEF headquarters. This resulted in the creation of access strategies and workplans in Myanmar and Somalia, and an engagement strategy with the de facto authorities in Afghanistan.

48. Globally, UNICEF advocated to strengthen protection of children, women and civilians affected by armed conflict in 12 situations of concern in 2022 with United Nations Member States and in such United Nations forums as the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

C. Record child displacements: a record nobody wants – UNICEF response in 2022

49. A global response for displaced and migrant children represents a large and growing focus of the UNICEF humanitarian response. The displacement phenomenon is intricately linked to the pressures of climate and conflict noted above.

50. UNICEF meets immediate humanitarian needs and advocates for child-responsive refugee and migration responses that save lives, protect children's rights and strengthen access to inclusive national systems and durable solutions for children who have been uprooted. For instance, in Ethiopia in 2022, UNICEF helped to strengthen the child-sensitivity of the social protection system and collaborated with the Government to provide cash transfers to 31,453 conflict-affected internally displaced people to improve food security and meet other needs.

Strategic partnerships for children on the move

51. UNICEF launched a landmark strategic partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in early 2023 to advance cooperation and the joint efforts of both organizations. Additionally, UNICEF is a key player in the multi-stakeholder PROSPECTS partnership, which is funded by the Government of the Netherlands and is designed to find ways to support and meaningfully engage forcibly displaced young people and host communities. This partnership opened opportunities for learning-to-earning and the systematic participation of forcibly displaced young people in Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Sudan and Uganda. UNICEF also signed its first-ever agreement with the youth refugee-led

Global Refugee Youth Network to support local action with refugee youth in forcibly displaced contexts. Other youth-related partnerships included those with the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth and the Youth on the Move Fellowship Programme, which provides a pathway for talented and passionate youth on the move and young refugees who face obstacles in accessing traditional internships and learning-to-earning opportunities to gain practical skills through work with UNICEF and other humanitarian organizations.

VI. Strengthening organizational performance

Accountability to affected populations and a more localized humanitarian response

52. Specialists in accountability to affected populations in five regions provided technical support to 54 country offices between January 2021 and December 2022. Beyond this regional capacity, substantial support was also provided to the responses to the crises in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa drought emergency and the war in Ukraine. All these efforts were guided by a new UNICEF strategy on accountability to affected populations.

53. Feedback mechanisms were tailored to the specific needs of people experiencing humanitarian emergencies. In Myanmar, for example, UNICEF partners were required to incorporate measures for accountability to affected populations into their programme agreements. UNICEF established an online platform for monitoring feedback (disaggregated by age, gender, location and sector of intervention), with 18 partners making use of the platform to report 3,290 submissions of feedback in 2022. The feedback received led to improvements in provision of essential WASH, health, nutrition and other services to communities. Internally, the feedback helped UNICEF programme and operations teams to adapt their service delivery mechanisms.

54. Close collaboration with national and local partners remained a priority in 2022 and \$1.5 billion in cash was transferred to partners at all levels for humanitarian response. Of this, a total of \$482.5 million went to national government responders, and \$569.2 million (39.2 per cent) went to local actors,¹⁸ exceeding the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent. UNICEF remained engaged in global and inter-agency efforts to further the localization of humanitarian response, co-chairing the IASC Task Force on Localization and leveraging its global cluster leadership role.

55. UNICEF also continued championing greater engagement of local organizations led by women and girls. In 2022, 7.7 per cent of the humanitarian funding that was transferred to implementing partners went to 647 local women's organizations.

Programming to strengthen the humanitarian–development–peace nexus

56. In 2022, UNICEF began requiring country offices to consider humanitarian, development and peacebuilding dimensions when developing new country programmes of cooperation, in direct response to the 2021 formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming. UNICEF also revised its Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus and is in the process of developing a global peacebuilding framework, to be launched in 2023.

57. Progress in nexus programming approaches was visible in 2022 in several critical country contexts. In Mozambique, for example, UNICEF developed the Community Recovery and Resilience Plan (2022–24) – A child focused approach to the north, to connect the new Mozambique country programme to humanitarian

¹⁸ Local actors include national non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations.

response needs. The Plan is aligned with government plans. In the Sahel region, a joint mission with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Food Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees focused on operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in fragile contexts, including those of forced displacement. New country programme documents for Cameroon, Haiti, Libya, Sri Lanka and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) all emphasized a humanitarian-development-peace approach.

58. In 2022, the percentages of UNICEF country offices that met organizational benchmarks on conflict-sensitive programming and on contributions to social cohesion and peace were 23 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively; these low percentages are likely partly due to underreporting against a revised indicator. Performance has, however, been particularly strong in countries where UNICEF is implementing projects supported by the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund. For example, to reduce the common vulnerabilities of the population in the villages situated in border areas between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF led a cross-border Peacebuilding Fund project in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme. Adolescents and young people aged 15 to 24 years were provided with WASH and child protection services. Dedicated interventions targeting adolescents and youth of diverse ethnic groups on both sides of the border encompassed intergenerational dialogue and life skills training, young peace ambassadors and training to be U-Reporters. Staff from the UNICEF zonal offices were particularly helpful in monitoring community dynamics and emerging conflicts and helping to build confidence and trust within communities.

Update on the management response to the CLARE II evaluation

59. The lead role of UNICEF in several inter-agency clusters and areas of responsibility was assessed in the second evaluation of the UNICEF role as cluster lead/co-lead agency (CLARE II). The management response to this evaluation ([E/ICEF/2022/20](#)) included 35 actions. These can broadly be broken down into the following areas: (a) funding and staffing; (b) mainstreaming accountabilities; and (c) policy and inter-agency engagement.

60. UNICEF has made progress on the actions outlined in the management response. Key challenges have included the decentralized nature of UNICEF and the multiplicity of initiatives, and these are both being addressed by ensuring as much internal alignment across related initiatives as possible. The recruitment of an advocacy expert within the Office of Emergency Programmes and a dedicated cluster-focused staff member in the Division of Human Resources is helping to address these challenges.

61. The dedicated human resources staff member is focusing on recommendations pertaining to staffing (under recommendations 1 and 2), with 71 per cent of activities already initiated. Notably, in response to recommendation 1 (a), mapping and analysis of country cluster staffing were completed at the end of July 2022, illuminating critical gaps in Level 3 and Level 2 emergency countries that required urgent corrective action. As a result, \$4.1 million in global humanitarian thematic funding was allocated to address critical coordination gaps in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, State of Palestine and Yemen. In 2023, UNICEF will continue to leverage this flexible funding and prioritize supporting cluster coordination needs and costs at the country level.

62. More than half of the actions aimed at reinforcing cluster lead agency (CLA) accountability are under way, including the regular analysis of cluster coordination performance monitoring results and the development of key performance indicators

that reflect CLA accountability. Areas where CLA accountabilities need to be developed in the updated UNICEF accountability system have been identified and the mainstreaming of CLA accountabilities into key roles is under way.

63. In response to recommendation 1 (b), UNICEF has begun to mainstream coordination training for staff and partners to further strengthen CLA ability to deploy the right staff rapidly and improve the quality of coordination staff. This also enhances organizational capacity to support national actors to take up leadership roles and meaningfully contribute to the cluster, aligned with the UNICEF commitment to localization. A humanitarian coordination learning channel was created on the Agora learning platform, making a substantial body of online learning content on information management publicly available in English, French and Spanish. Further e-learning on cluster coordination is being developed. Work to enable advances on key policy commitments, including the centrality of protection, accountability to affected populations, the humanitarian-development nexus, localization, gender-based violence risk mitigation and disability inclusion, was also initiated in 2022 with the development of guidance for UNICEF country offices on implementing gender-based violence risk mitigation action. This work will address recommendation 1 (e).

64. Efforts at the inter-agency level may require more time due to their consultative nature. UNICEF has already initiated discussions with management in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Global Cluster Coordination Group and other IASC partners. The analysis of areas of IASC cluster guidance that need updating has been identified as a priority, together with the need to produce guidance on cluster transition in keeping with the nexus approach (recommendations 3 (a) and 3 (b), respectively). Recruitment of the consultants to conduct this work should be completed in the first quarter of 2023.

VII. Resource mobilization for humanitarian action¹⁹

65. The initial 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, issued in December 2021, requested \$9.4 billion to assist 190.8 million children in need in 145 countries and territories. By the end of 2022, the total humanitarian requirement had risen to \$11.74 billion owing to new or deteriorating crises, including the war in Ukraine, floods in Pakistan, drought in the Horn of Africa and other worsening protracted emergencies for children,²⁰ in addition to the need to accelerate equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines. New appeals were also created for Djibouti and Sri Lanka, bringing the total number of appeals to 55.

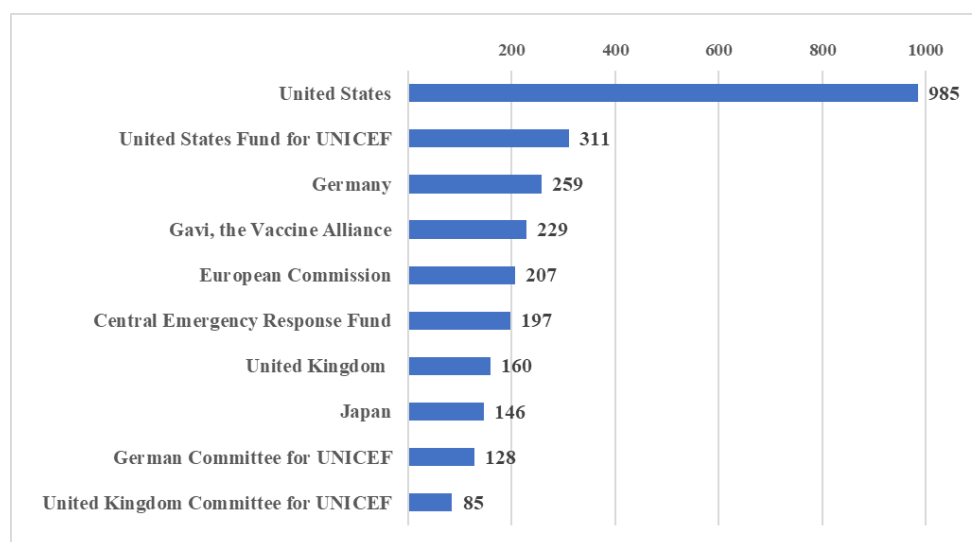
66. As at 31 December 2022, \$4.25 billion had been received in humanitarian funding²¹ for the 2022 appeal, a 43 per cent increase compared with the \$2.96 billion received in 2021 for the 2021 appeal. Public sector funding continued to be the primary source of funding received in 2022, at \$3.16 billion (a 29 per cent increase compared with 2021). Private sector funding doubled as compared to 2021, reaching \$1.09 billion.

¹⁹ Financial figures are based on contributions received.

²⁰ These include emergencies in Bangladesh, Chad, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali and Nigeria and in those countries hosting refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

²¹ Humanitarian funding includes other resources – emergency and other types of funding that support UNICEF humanitarian response.

Figure I
Top 10 partners for emergency funding, 2022
 (in millions of United States dollars)



67. Of concern was the heavy earmarking of both public and private funds for a few emergency appeals, with 64 per cent of the funding received for the 2022 appeal earmarked for four appeals: Ukraine and Refugee Outflow; Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator; Syrian Refugee-hosting countries; and Afghanistan.

68. UNICEF continued calling for quality funding for humanitarian action in 2022, and flexible humanitarian thematic contributions to the organization increased significantly in 2022. Thematic humanitarian funds (country, regional and global) reached \$928 million, doubling compared with 2021 primarily due to private sector donors, who provided 92 per cent of all thematic funding, and their commitment to support the Ukraine and Refugee Outflow and Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator appeals. In 2022, multi-year funding received from partners reached \$1.13 billion, and included public and private sector thematic and non-thematic funding. This far surpassed the \$422.7 million received in 2021. In 2022, public sector partners provided \$260.6 million in multi-year funding, still about 39 per cent less than pre-pandemic levels and 24 per cent less than in 2021.

69. Global humanitarian thematic funding is the most flexible type of resource aside from core resources. This type of funding more than tripled in 2022, reaching \$119.8 million.²² Global humanitarian thematic funding contributed to the UNICEF response in the Horn of Africa and Sahel countries; ensured timely response to cholera outbreaks in Haiti, the Syrian Arab Republic and Uganda; and provided UNICEF responses to natural disasters in the East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean regions with timely funding to cover critical gaps.

70. In 2022, UNICEF remained the top recipient of funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund, receiving \$197.2 million for 40 emergencies. Responses linked to conflict and climate-related crises in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, South Sudan, the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen all received more than \$10 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund. The Central Emergency

²² This significant increase was made possible thanks to new partners who contributed to global humanitarian thematic funding: the German Federal Foreign Office, the Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein, and Sweden, as well as increases in contributions from the United States Fund for UNICEF and the Netherlands and from private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices.

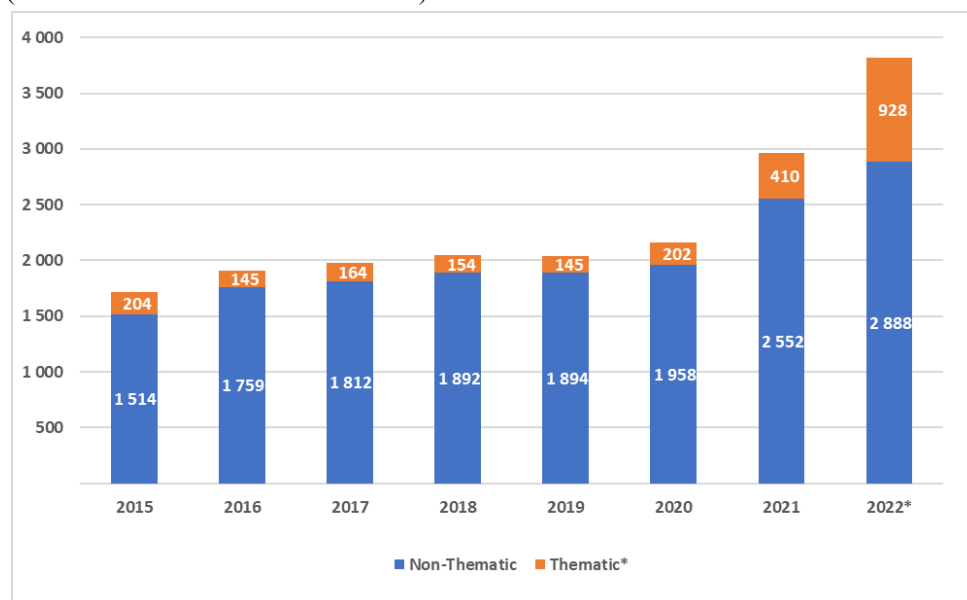
Response Fund also contributed to life-saving relief in countries experiencing food insecurity caused by the drought in the Horn of Africa or by a combination of armed conflict, drought and economic turmoil. Allocations of country-based pooled funds decreased from \$46.1 million to 12 countries in 2021 to \$26.2 million to 7 countries²³ in 2022.

71. In 2022, UNICEF received \$222.4 million in funding from international financial institutions to support countries with Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. Of this, \$2.2 million was emergency funding.²⁴

72. In 2022, \$243.9 million in core resources supported humanitarian programmes. Additionally, these funds contributed to the humanitarian response via allocations from the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund loan mechanism, which fast-tracks resources to affected countries within 48 hours of a crisis. In 2022, UNICEF provided \$64.1 million to 31 countries through this fund, a 36 per cent increase compared with 2021.

Figure II

Thematic and non-thematic emergency funding trends, 2015–2022
(in millions of United States dollars)



*Thematic figures represent the total amount from the humanitarian action pools at the global, regional and country levels.

VIII. Strategic priorities

73. UNICEF will continue to respond to children and families experiencing humanitarian crises owing to **climatic events** and build resilience to such shocks in development and humanitarian programming. UNICEF interventions focus on: (a) scaling up climate change adaptation models in its global operations; (b) advocacy on behalf of children and engaging in policy development; and (c) prioritizing climate-adaptive anticipatory action and preparedness efforts to ensure timely, effective and cost-efficient actions to save lives and build resilience. UNICEF and partners are also

²³ Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen.

²⁴ Though humanitarian funding from international financial institutions decreased in 2022, the overall level of support from these institutions to UNICEF increased.

strengthening data on hotspots for weather-related displacements of children to be able to predict and prepare so that services are shock-responsive and able to reach the most vulnerable people before, during and after disaster strikes.

74. UNICEF commits to leading an urgent, integrated and multisectoral response to **famine prevention** so that fewer children experience the worst forms of wasting and a greater number of those that do receive treatment. The No Time to Waste acceleration plan, which UNICEF launched in September 2022, provides a pathway to reaching more than 26 million children and women between October 2022 and September 2023 with a package of essential interventions to promote early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

75. As the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls highlights, gender in humanitarian action still needs significant strengthening, with issues ranging from gender analysis and meaningful engagement of women and girls in programming and coordination to more targeted, gender-responsive interventions. A UNICEF corporate priority is to foster **gender equity and inclusion** in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery action. Gender analysis is now a mandatory component of UNICEF humanitarian action, and UNICEF has committed to more equity-focused data collection and disaggregation. At the global level, in 2022, UNICEF supported and endorsed the membership of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in the IASC Principals Group, which will elevate women, girls and gender equality within this inter-agency group.

76. Children with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by humanitarian emergencies and face steeper hurdles accessing humanitarian assistance. UNICEF has outlined a comprehensive plan for 2023 to promote **disability inclusion** in its emergency preparedness and response. The plan prioritizes inter-agency collaboration and engagement with local organizations of persons with disabilities and the private sector to ensure the effective implementation of disability-inclusive humanitarian action. The plan includes the dissemination of the tool kit on Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Action and the development of related expertise among staff working in emergency preparedness and response. UNICEF expects to further integrate disability inclusion into its work across the humanitarian-development nexus, for example, by strengthening disability inclusion in emergency preparedness processes and in response to children on the move.

77. Enhancing **cluster leadership** capacity is also a strategic priority going forward (see paragraphs 59–64 above).

78. The annual number of disease outbreaks reported to the World Health Organization has increased more than threefold since 1980. Humanitarian crises and climatic events heighten the risk of cholera transmission, for example, owing to population displacement and the destruction of WASH and health infrastructure. Global systems are overwhelmed. This is leading to insufficient capacity to prepare for and respond to the multiple cholera outbreaks – thereby creating a risk of further spread. Such public health emergencies require a whole-of-society response, with communities at the centre. UNICEF is building a global strategic plan of action for public health emergency preparedness and response that is complementary to the work of the World Health Organization and supports a reinvigorated global health architecture.

79. Empowering UNICEF staff and partners in the field to stay and deliver in complex emergencies and to access the most vulnerable children in the hardest-to-reach areas is a core commitment of the organization. UNICEF will pursue a three-pronged approach: developing and implementing humanitarian policies and guidance

on emerging issues; strengthening partnerships to maximize synergies and complementarities; and maintaining an intensive focus on supporting UNICEF field offices to stay and deliver, including national staff in humanitarian access-related capacity-building efforts, while also increasing the focus on staff at the field office level, who are often on the front line when it comes to access. Access constraints inventories, mapping of actors and subsequent access strategies need to reflect the realities and granularities of local rather than country-wide contexts (e.g., Afghanistan and Myanmar), and this requires capacity at the field office level.

80. UNICEF will continue to prioritize risk-informed **humanitarian and development nexus programming** as an operational change strategy for achieving results in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 (see paragraphs 56–58 above).

81. A key priority in 2023 is to increase UNICEF efforts on **anticipatory action**, in relation to inter-agency collaboration, forecasting, pre-financing and ensuring better readiness. Skills and knowledge will be strengthened with the required technical expertise to implement key anticipatory action interventions. As triggers for anticipatory action are based on forecasts, such action is closely linked to using a no-regrets approach to humanitarian response. Anticipatory action gained traction in 2022 within UNICEF and at the inter-agency level, and led to improvements in the lives of children and families. Nevertheless, anticipatory action requires anticipatory funding.

82. **Unrestricted and flexible funding** is critical to responding to humanitarian crises. UNICEF will continue to improve reporting and information-sharing on its humanitarian response and the benefits of anticipatory action, preparedness in general, and how funding modalities such as global humanitarian thematic funding can provide support.

IX. Conclusion

83. The challenges to children in humanitarian crises being able to enjoy their rights are substantial; they are interlinked; and they are enduring. If 2022 reflected the shape of the future in this regard, it also showed how UNICEF could rise to meet these circumstances and keep children at the centre of a visionary and forward-thinking humanitarian action.

X. Draft decision

The Executive Board

Takes note of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action ([E/ICEF/2023/14](#)).
