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Annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

Summary

This is the first annual report of the UNICEF Executive Director to the UNICEF Executive Board on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025.

The report is accompanied by reports on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025^a and on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;^b an annex on key independent oversight functions/bodies in UNICEF; and a data companion and scorecard.

Elements of a draft decision are presented in section V.

^a Annual update on revenue and expenses is included in the Integrated Results and Resources Framework annex (UNICEF/2023/EB/9).

^b General Assembly resolution [71/243](#).

* [E/ICEF/2023/9](#).



I. Overview

1. In 2022, UNICEF began implementing its new Strategic Plan, 2022–2025, in the context of the polycrisis. Today’s children are growing up in a world beset by multiple, near-simultaneous, interdependent shocks, stemming from the fallout of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and other disease outbreaks, violent conflicts, climate change and environmental degradation, and skyrocketing costs of living. Given the integrated nature of our world, economic, political and social turmoil in one part of the world affects others in complex ways. These shocks exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of children and communities, taking the greatest toll on the poorest and on those marginalized and discriminated against on the basis of disability, gender, race, ethnicity, migration status and gender identity.

2. While previous decades saw historic progress in realizing multiple aspects of children’s rights, those advances were uneven, and some are now under threat of stagnation and reversal. In the context of the worsening climate crisis – the biggest structural threat to food and nutrition security – the pandemic’s economic fallout and the impacts of the war in Ukraine have created the worst food and nutrition crisis in modern times. In 12 crisis-hit countries, the number of acutely malnourished pregnant and breastfeeding women has grown by 25 per cent since 2020. The impacts are passed down across generations: UNICEF estimates that about half of children under 2 years of age with stunting become stunted during pregnancy or the first six months of life.¹

3. Even as the pandemic’s disruptions wind down, the harms to children continue. Learning losses remain high, especially among girls and in sub-Saharan Africa. In low- and middle-income countries, the proportion of 10-year-olds who cannot read or understand a simple text surged to 70 per cent.² Twenty-five million children missed out on vaccinations in 2021, 2 million more than in 2020 and 6 million more than in 2019,³ and 2022 saw outbreaks of measles, cholera, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and polio.

4. Five million children under 5 years old died in 2021, largely from preventable causes, and a similar number is expected for 2022. Children in sub-Saharan Africa, where the risk of childhood death is highest, are 15 times as likely to die before their fifth birthday as children in Europe and North America.⁴

5. The global economic crisis deepened the deprivations facing the most vulnerable children around the world. Projections show 1 in 4 children living under national poverty lines in 2023. This marks a return to 2019 levels, putting the world four years behind the expected 2030 trajectory for child poverty reduction and leaving millions of children to spend more of their formative years enduring deprivations with lifelong consequences.⁵

¹ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Undernourished and Overlooked: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women*, (New York, 2023).

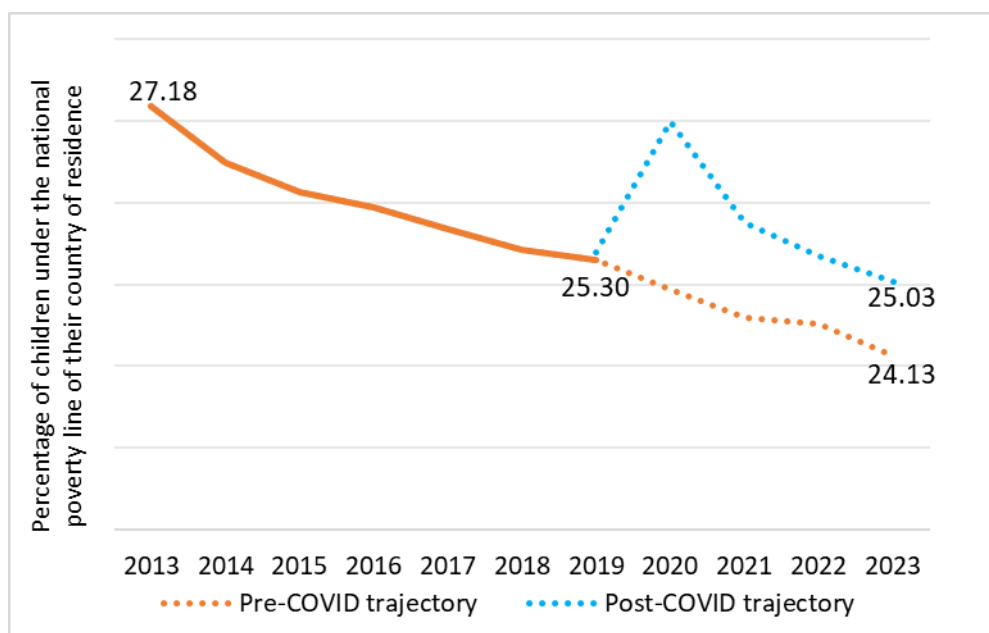
² World Bank World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF, Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, United States Agency for International Development, and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, *The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update – Conference Edition*, 23 June 2022.

³ UNICEF, “Immunization”, web page. See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/immunization/>.

⁴ United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, *Levels & Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2022 – Estimates developed by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation* (New York, UNICEF, 2023).

⁵ UNICEF, *Prospects for Children in the Polycrisis: A 2023 Global Outlook* (UNICEF, January 2023).

Children living under national poverty lines, pre-COVID, and estimated current trends



6. Around 1 billion people, among them between 350 million and 500 million children, live in urban slums, and the number is set to triple by 2050.⁶ More than half of all children – approximately 1 billion – are at extremely high risk from climate hazards such as heat waves, floods, drought, air pollution and water scarcity.⁷ Meanwhile, financing for climate adaptation continues to fall far short compared to the magnitude of needs. In 2022, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, more commonly referred to as COP27, dropped the explicit commitment, agreed at COP26, to double adaptation finance by 2025.⁸ Today’s children and their children after them will pay the price.

7. Children living in conflict zones continue to come under attack on an alarming scale. In a context of increasingly prolonged wars fought in urban areas and other civilian spaces, recent years have seen an exacerbation of children’s vulnerability to grave violations, including killing, maiming, abduction, sexual violence, recruitment into armed forces or groups, denial of humanitarian access, and attacks on hospitals, schools and water facilities. In 2021, the United Nations verified 23,982 grave violations committed against children by parties to conflict, with abductions and sexual violence against children both increasing by over 20 per cent, while attacks on schools and hospitals increased by 5 per cent.⁹

8. A pushback against child rights and gender equality, in countries of all income levels as well as in intergovernmental forums, threatens the integrity of international standards pertaining to children. Meanwhile, increasing factionalism within and between countries is putting the multilateral system under stress, making it hard to

⁶ UNICEF, “Urban policy”, web page. See www.unicef.org/social-policy/urban.

⁷ UNICEF, *The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children’s Climate Risk Index* (New York, 2021).

⁸ UNICEF, “Child-sensitive climate policies for every child”, Research brief (November 2022).

⁹ United Nations, *Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General (A/76/871-S/2022/493)*.

muster the principled collective action needed to solve our collective problems and work together to protect children's rights. This is unfolding at a time when the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance continues to grow.

9. In 2022, that number reached 274 million,¹⁰ up from 235 million in 2021. UNICEF responded to both human-made crises and natural disasters aggravated by human-made climate change, including drought in the Horn of Africa, affecting Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia; devastating floods in Pakistan; surging conflict in the central Sahel, affecting Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and further devastating one of the regions hardest-hit by climate change; conflict in Ukraine, and the resulting massive refugee outflow into Europe; crisis in Afghanistan; conflict in northern Ethiopia and Yemen; and gang violence and flooding in Haiti, also hit by the global cholera outbreak, affecting an unprecedented 30 countries in 2022.

10. In 2022, despite the challenges posed by the global food and nutrition crisis, 356.3 million children under 5 years of age – more than ever before – benefited from programmes to prevent malnutrition in all its forms, and a remarkable 182.4 million benefited from programmes for the early detection and treatment of wasting. With UNICEF support, 77.9 million children were vaccinated against measles, and the number vaccinated in countries affected by humanitarian crises increased substantially, to more than 27 million.

11. UNICEF scaled up programming to prevent violence, exploitation and harmful practices, including through parenting support programmes, which reached 11.8 million caregivers in 2022, up from 3 million in 2021. UNICEF investments to strengthen delivery of mental health and psychosocial support, another key protective factor, contributed to an almost doubling in the number of children, adolescents and caregivers provided with community-based services, from 12 million in 2021 to 25.2 million in 2022.

12. To address the vulnerabilities of children and families, UNICEF advocated with businesses and policymakers to support family-friendly policies – parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare and child benefits. In 2022, 24 countries adopted at least two of these policies, up from 13 in 2021. Across all Goals Areas, UNICEF disability-inclusive programmes reached more than 4.5 million children with disabilities in 142 countries, including in humanitarian crises, and response efforts in 65 per cent of countries with a Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal worked to systematically include children with disabilities.

13. Despite an increasingly challenging fundraising environment, UNICEF income reached the highest level to date. But the proportion of core resources continued to decline, in a worrying trend away from the Funding Compact commitment made by Member States. The high level of earmarking means that funding is directed to certain programmes over others, and it prevents UNICEF from being able to influence outcome-level results that would address the underlying, systemic causes of child deprivation and rights abuses.

14. The level of ambition of the UNICEF Strategic Plan remains entirely relevant to this time of polycrisis, as does its aspiration for a more holistic understanding of the deprivations and discrimination children face, towards systemic change to address these issues at their roots, and towards action through partnerships, as the critical means to make a sustainable difference in children's outcomes over the long term.

¹⁰ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023*.

15. Countering the threats to children’s rights and building a world in which no child is left behind requires a concerted push to strengthen national systems and build resilient, cohesive societies. This will take the resources, knowledge, ingenuity and will of a broad range of actors, global and local, and UNICEF is engaging with partners including children and young people, civil society organizations, businesses, regional organizations, international financial institutions and other United Nations agencies to devise and implement solutions.

16. The organization is working to generate actionable evidence, enhancing its capabilities for foresight, preparedness and adaptability, investing in its human capital, business systems and technological infrastructure, and engaging with new and traditional donors to mobilize the flexible resources needed to fulfil its mandate. Even in the midst of polycrisis, systemic breakdown is not inevitable, and UNICEF is working to seize the momentum for positive change.

II. Performance under the Goal Areas (including cross-cutting programme areas)

17. The year 2022 represented the first year of implementation for the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. The Plan represents a significant departure for the organization, representing a longer-term vision and placing much greater emphasis on outcome-level systemic change than any previous UNICEF Strategic Plan. These strategic shifts will improve performance management and corporate reporting and will continue to shape and change how UNICEF works for the next decade.

18. The performance and achievements of UNICEF in 2022 remained relatively consistent with the trends of recent years and with the previous Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, particularly in the number of children reached by services delivered with the support of UNICEF programmes. Most result areas (12 of 18) are on track with the milestones for 2022, having been substantively achieved or exceeded; only one of the remaining result areas was significantly off track.

A. Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives

19. The polycrisis has created a multifaceted crisis in children’s health, nutrition and well-being, amplifying pre-existing challenges in realizing children’s rights to survive and thrive. More than 5 million children under the age of 5 years died in 2021, primarily in low- and middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of South Asia, and 54 countries are off track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target for under-5 mortality.¹¹ Immunization coverage continued on a downward trajectory across the globe, and without urgent action, the Sustainable Development Goal and Immunization Agenda 2030 targets will be unattainable. The number of “zero-dose” children – those missing out on any vaccination – reached 18 million in 2021, an increase of 5 million since 2019. More than 28 per cent of zero-dose children now live in urban and peri-urban areas.¹²

20. The world has made important progress to improve maternal and child nutrition over the last two decades, including a one-third reduction in the prevalence

¹¹ United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, *Levels & Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2022 – Estimates developed by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation* (New York, UNICEF, 2023).

¹² Adelle Wigley and others, “Estimates of the number and distribution of zero-dose and under-immunised children across remote-rural, urban, and conflict-affected settings in low and middle-income countries”, *PLOS Global Public Health*, vol. 2, no. 10 (26 October 2022).

of child stunting,¹³ and an increase in the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding from 38 to 48 per cent since 2000. Yet these achievements are in jeopardy as some countries plunge deeper into an unparalleled food and nutrition crisis. The number of children suffering from severe wasting in the 15 worst-affected countries¹⁴ is expected to reach 8 million, 3 million more than the total treated in all countries in 2021. Hunger and food poverty are at an all-time high, with at least 202 million children under the age of 5 years living in severe food poverty,¹⁵ at high risk of stunting, wasting and death.

21. UNICEF worked on Goal Area 1 in 155 countries in 2022. The total Goal Area 1 expense was \$3.3 billion, including \$2.1 billion for humanitarian action. On average, the level of progress against the 2022 output-level milestones was more than 90 per cent for six of eight results areas under Goal Area 1.¹⁶ Good progress was seen in maternal and newborn health, in some areas of child health, and in adolescent health programmes and services through primary health care, school and digital platforms. The 2022 in-country administrative data on immunization showed signs of recovery, consistent with efforts to restore service delivery. Reported progress was slower in addressing mental health and psychosocial well-being, one of the newer areas of focus in the Strategic Plan.

22. The greatest challenge to the performance of UNICEF nutrition programmes in 2022 was the global food and nutrition crisis, particularly affecting countries in the Horn of Africa and the central Sahel. Reductions in unrestricted funding and the shrinking fiscal space for many donors and host countries also hampered progress, while UNICEF faced increased programme delivery costs due to the increased cost of essential supplies and raw ingredients, such as those used to produce ready-to-use therapeutic food.¹⁷ Despite these challenges, UNICEF achieved the majority of output-level milestones for nutrition in 2022, thanks to years of investments in strengthening nutrition systems and programme innovations such as family-led screening and community-based treatment for wasting. In 2022, 356.3 million children under the age of 5 years, more than ever before, benefited from programmes to prevent stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity, compared with 335.9 million in 2021.

23. Maternal and newborn health indicators saw steady progress, with 44.4 million live births delivered in health facilities through UNICEF-supported programmes, while the percentage of live births attended by skilled health personnel increased to 86 per cent based on annualized estimates. Antenatal and postnatal care interventions increased, to 69 per cent for antenatal visits, and to 73 per cent and 72 per cent for mothers and newborns, respectively.

24. Overall, the contribution of UNICEF to child survival remained on track to meet milestones, with indicators for care-seeking for acute respiratory infections increasing from 63 per cent to 64 per cent and the proportion of children in malaria-endemic countries sleeping under an insecticide-treated net increasing from 60 per

¹³ UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, *Levels and Trends in Child Malnutrition: Key Findings of the 2021 Edition of the Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates* (New York, UNICEF, 2021).

¹⁴ Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

¹⁵ UNICEF, *Child Food Poverty: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Early Childhood* (New York, 2022), drawing on data from the UNICEF Global Database on Young Child Feeding.

¹⁶ Output-level progress rates represent the extent of progress from the baselines to the 2022 milestones, except for some indicators measuring particular aspects of UNICEF work, as described in the data companion and scorecard annex. The level of progress is calculated at the indicator level and averaged for each of the result areas.

¹⁷ UNICEF, “Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food Supply Alert” (June 2022).

cent to 62 per cent based on annualized estimates between 2021 and 2022. Some 60 countries supported the implementation of integrated management of neonatal and childhood illness/integrated community of case management at the subnational level, reaching 56.2 million children, mostly in high-burden countries. UNICEF supported 59,584 health facilities with diagnostic and treatment supplies and 10,550 health facilities to implement quality-of-care standards for child health in 2022.

25. While there was an overall decline of 1 percentage point in reaching children with the first dose of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis-containing vaccine, to 85 per cent in 2021, countries in humanitarian contexts showed signs of recovery, from 73 per cent in 2020 to 75 per cent in 2021. In 2022, with UNICEF support, 77.9 million children were vaccinated against measles, with an increase of more than 27 million children vaccinated in countries affected by humanitarian crises. More than 412 million doses of novel oral polio vaccine type 2 were shipped to 23 countries, and more than 794 million doses of bivalent oral polio vaccine to 81 countries.

26. UNICEF supported 143 countries to deliver COVID-19 vaccination services, through procurement, cold chain and logistics management, demand generation, monitoring and evaluation activities. With its partners, UNICEF continued to lead the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, the largest vaccine supply and delivery operation in history, and in 2022 delivered 977.8 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 92 countries and territories, including 100.8 million doses on behalf of the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust initiative of the African Union. UNICEF delivered 7.92 million COVID-19 diagnostic tests and 321 million personal protective equipment items to protect health-care workers and support the continuity of health services in 121 countries, as well as 69 Oxygen Plants-in-a-Box – the fastest product innovation in UNICEF history – to help 27 countries rapidly increase their oxygen production capacity.

27. Community engagement and social and behaviour change programming, particularly through risk communication and community engagement, was key to addressing challenges related to both COVID-19 and routine immunization, including behavioural barriers and limitations on service access. In countries including Bangladesh, Ghana, the Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and South Africa, the use of behavioural insights, rapid prototyping, social listening data, youth engagement and local consultation processes for community-driven solutions helped to increase vaccination uptake.

28. Incremental outcome-level gains were made in the global HIV response, including in treatment access for pregnant women and children living with HIV. Global coverage of antiretroviral therapy increased from 80 per cent to 82 per cent in pregnant and breastfeeding women, and from 50 per cent to 52 per cent among children aged 0–14 years. UNICEF supported interventions and policies to improve service access and quality in 37 priority countries for HIV. Thirty-two countries implemented comprehensive paediatric HIV treatment interventions within primary health care, and 35 integrated innovative HIV diagnostics into primary care settings.

29. Early childhood development services were integrated into primary health care in 65 countries, up from 61 in 2021. These services included early stimulation and responsive caregiving, developmental monitoring, early identification and interventions for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and parenting support programmes. Additionally, 31 per cent of UNICEF country offices met organizational benchmarks for integrating parenting support programmes, an increase from 22 per cent in 2021. UNICEF delivered 19,869 early childhood development emergency kits to 37 countries.

30. UNICEF supported the implementation of adolescent health programmes and services through primary health care and through school or digital platforms in 37 countries, up from 27 in 2021. More than 4.7 million adolescents benefited from UNICEF-supported sexual and reproductive health services. Twenty-two country offices had policy-level engagement and support work to integrate non-communicable diseases, and 12 focused on the prevention and management of injuries. UNICEF addressed environmental health risks in 20 countries to protect children's health from the impacts of climate change and pollution, and strengthened climate-resilient, environmentally sustainable health-care facilities in 59 countries, including with the provision of 12,514 solar-powered vaccine cold chain equipment.

31. Although progress is still comparatively slow, not least because this is a newer area of direct engagement, 67 countries have integrated mental health services in primary health care, including through school and digital platforms since 2021. Forty-one countries implemented multisectoral approaches to caregiver mental health in 2022. UNICEF focused on improving the quality and scale-up of services, demonstrated by higher reach within reporting countries, and made substantial investments to strengthen delivery of mental health services for children, adolescents, parents and caregivers through primary health care and through school, digital or social protection platforms, depending on country contexts and target populations.

32. To advance progress for children, UNICEF effectively advocated for the health and well-being of women and children through high-level engagement in global health and nutrition platforms and partnerships including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Financing Facility, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organisations and the Polio Oversight Board. At the same time, UNICEF led global thinking and action to end the triple burden of malnutrition (undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overweight) and to improve children's foods, food environments and food practices.

33. In 2022, 182.4 million children under the age of 5 years benefited from services for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting, of which 7.3 million were treated for severe wasting and other forms of severe acute malnutrition, including in humanitarian contexts. Seventy-three countries implemented programmes to provide care for children with severe wasting as part of an essential package of regular health and nutrition services for children, compared with 67 countries in 2021, while 33 implemented simplified approaches for early detection and treatment.

34. UNICEF supported 34 countries across seven regions in adopting policies and regulations to improve children's food environments and prevent malnutrition in children and adolescents. Sixty-eight countries had a national policy to protect, promote and support optimal child nutrition, including legislation to protect children from the harmful promotion or marketing of breastmilk substitutes or foods and beverages. UNICEF supported global, regional and country-level advocacy to shape public policies and private sector standards on large-scale fortification of staple foods, building on past work to fortify salt with iodine, which led to the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency in children and women globally. In 2022, 44 countries supported large-scale fortification of wheat flour with iron plus, up from 38 in 2021, in an effort to eliminate iron deficiency anaemia, a major driver of brain damage and poor school performance.

35. Leveraging integration with the education system, UNICEF sustained and accelerated its work to support the nutrition of school-age children and adolescents across 63 countries. Mostly through school-based programmes, 116.2 million

children aged 5–19 years benefited from gender-responsive programmes for the prevention of anaemia and other forms of malnutrition.

B. Goal Area 2: Every child learns

36. The year 2022 marked a transition from a state of global education emergency response towards recovery. Although by September 2022 all countries had lifted pandemic-related nationwide school closures, disruptions to education persisted – as did the learning losses resulting from their cumulative effects, disproportionately affecting the most marginalized children and youth, especially girls. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of children living in learning poverty – already at 57 per cent before the pandemic – increased to 70 per cent.¹⁸ The pandemic exacerbated educational exclusion for learners with disabilities, many of whom faced barriers to participation in remote learning, as Governments were slow to provide accessible content and needed support services.¹⁹ Despite the challenges, significant efforts have been made to help learners recover the learning losses, including through leveraging technology and accelerated learning methods.

37. UNICEF worked on Goal Area 2 in 148 countries in 2022. The total Goal Area 2 expense was \$1.6 billion, including \$0.9 billion for humanitarian action. On average, the level of progress against the 2022 output-level milestones was 81 per cent for both result areas under Goal Area 2.

38. As a result of UNICEF support, 37.9 million out-of-school children and adolescents (49 per cent girls) accessed education in 2022 (with 3.2 million accessing pre-primary education), including 3.1 million children on the move and 18.6 million children in humanitarian settings. Learning materials reached 28.3 million children, including 3.8 million in humanitarian settings, while 85,099 school management committees or similar bodies received training through UNICEF-supported programmes. Of UNICEF-supported countries, 47 per cent had inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to quality learning opportunities and 49 per cent had effective student and community participation within the education system.

39. In Nepal, where almost one third of girls are married before they turn 18 years old, UNICEF partnered with the Government and local civil society organizations to roll out a curriculum to equip adolescent girls aged 10–19 years with communication and other life and leadership skills, delivered through schools but also reaching out-of-school girls in remote and rural areas and those in religious schools. In Afghanistan, UNICEF significantly expanded the community-based education program, doubling the number of vulnerable children reached, to more than 286,000 girls in 28 provinces.

40. In addition to supporting COVID-19 pandemic recovery, UNICEF continued to negotiate with parties to conflict and armed groups to protect education from attacks and encourage countries to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by 116 countries by November 2022. Colombia, the Congo and Tunisia were the latest countries to commit to implementing it.

41. UNICEF programmes engaged 16.1 million adolescents (45 per cent girls) in civic initiatives across 89 countries, including more than 344,000 engaged in

¹⁸ Defined by the World Bank as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story. See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/23/70-of-10-year-olds-now-in-learning-poverty-unable-to-read-and-understand-a-simple-text>.

¹⁹ UNICEF, *Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022–2030* (New York, December 2022). See www.unicef.org/unicef-disability-inclusion-policy-and-strategy-dipas-2022-2030.

humanitarian action. While the total was 20 per cent below the 2022 milestone – owing to fewer adolescents engaged in humanitarian action as the COVID-19 response scaled down globally – the number engaged in development contexts continues to rise, by nearly 2 million in 2022 alone.

42. Together with more than 3,000 partners across the public and private sectors, the United Nations and civil society, Generation Unlimited reached over 100 million young people (aged 10–24 years) in over 80 countries across six continents with skilling and opportunities for entrepreneurship, employment and social impact, with a focus on technology, gender equality and climate action. The Girls' Education Skills Partnership was launched in 2022 in partnership with the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and private sector partners,²⁰ and over the next four years will enable more than 1 million adolescent girls and young women in Bangladesh, India and Nigeria to develop skills for the future of work.

43. In 2022, 2.2 million young people in 42 countries completed the UPSHIFT social entrepreneur skills curriculum. In the United Republic of Tanzania, which has a shortage of nearly 90,000 teachers in pre-primary and primary school education, UNICEF and the Government piloted a volunteer engagement model covering about 2,500 teachers in one region. This model will engage young trained teacher graduates as volunteers in a pipeline that will gradually absorb them into the formal civil service.

44. At the Transforming Education Summit, a key initiative of the *Our Common Agenda: Report of the Secretary-General* to mobilize action to address the learning crisis, UNICEF highlighted the urgent need to address the digital divide through both connectivity and skills development, to reach the hundreds of millions of children – disproportionately girls – who are being left behind. With the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF launched Gateways to Public Digital Learning, a multi-partner initiative to ensure that every learner, teacher and family can access and use high-quality digital education content and learning platforms. UNICEF also drew attention to worsening underinvestment in education as well as inequities in public education financing, calling for targeting of resources towards the poorest and most marginalized children.²¹

45. In 2022, 99 country offices and National Committees for UNICEF took advocacy action, resulting in policy changes related to tackling the learning crisis, one of the global advocacy priorities of UNICEF. Ten governments endorsed the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, agreeing to address the learning crisis, and the World's Largest Lesson was rolled out in 10 countries, spotlighting education and the Transforming Education Summit.

C. Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

46. Significant acceleration is required across all contexts to meet the child protection-related Sustainable Development Goals. Protection risks are heightened for children living in countries affected by fragility and conflict, which are furthest behind in attaining Sustainable Development Goal targets; for children on the move; for children living without family care, including an estimated 2.9 million living in residential care worldwide; and for children deprived of their liberty, including more

²⁰ Accenture, Cognizant, Coursera, Microsoft, Pearson, PwC, Standard Chartered, Unilever, United Bank for Africa and Vodafone.

²¹ See UNICEF, *Transforming Education with Equitable Financing* (New York, January 2023).

than 410,000 deprived of their liberty in the administration of justice.²² After declining in recent decades, child marriage and female genital mutilation are now expected to increase. Twenty countries in Africa are on track to achieve universal birth registration by 2030, but globally, the births of one quarter of children under the age of 5 years have never been officially recorded.²³ Meanwhile, the exponential growth of violence against children in the virtual world poses further complex challenges to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

47. UNICEF worked on Goal Area 3 in 151 countries in 2022. The total Goal Area 3 expense was \$0.9 billion, including \$0.5 billion for humanitarian action. At the outcome level, UNICEF remained on track with major gains witnessed in the number of children without parental care placed in family-based care as opposed to residential care, increasing from 27 per cent (about 404,000) in 2021 to 41 per cent (about 2.6 million) in 2022. The number of countries tracking delivery and referral information related to mental health and psychosocial support services for children and adolescents more than doubled, from 23 countries in 2021 to 49 countries in 2022. No significant changes were observed for indicators related to transformative social and behaviour change strategies, such as perceptions of physical punishment of children or intimate partner violence, which usually require multiple years to achieve results.

48. At the output level, progress rates were above 90 per cent of the 2022 milestones for two out of three result areas under Goal Area 3. UNICEF scaled up prevention and response programming across result areas, resulting in a large increase in the number of children, adolescents and adults reached across thematic priorities, notably parenting practices, mental health and psychosocial support services, and prevention and care interventions to address female genital mutilation and child marriage. In humanitarian settings, UNICEF support contributed to more than 26 million individuals in humanitarian settings and 7.9 million children on the move benefiting from a range of interventions. Relatively moderate output progress rates in result area 2 reflect a decrease in the number of countries reporting on humanitarian case management, from 84 to 66 countries, due in part to a deceleration of COVID-19-related programming and the impacts of other humanitarian situations on child protection and care systems.

49. Stronger programming integration with other sectors – including health, nutrition, education and social protection – was a cornerstone of the shift towards prevention. In 2022, the number of countries with interoperability between the health and civil registration systems to facilitate birth registration – which has been a game-changer in advancing universal access – increased to 59 from 54 in 2021. UNICEF cultivated public-private partnerships, including with the technology sector to prevent online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to advance prevention response in the criminal justice sector.

50. There was an exponential increase in the number of mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through UNICEF-supported parenting programmes, up from 3 million in 2021 to 11.8 million in 2022. Expanded use of mass media to build parenting skills and challenge social norms was particularly successful in countries with large populations, including Bangladesh (3.8 million reached) and the Philippines (4.2 million reached). UNICEF support contributed to a more than doubling in the number of children, adolescents, parents and caregivers provided

²² UNICEF, “Justice for children”, web page. See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/justice-for-children/>.

²³ UNICEF, *A Statistical Update on Birth Registration in Africa* (New York, 2022).

with community-based mental health and psychosocial support services, from 12 million in 2021 to 25.2 million in 2022, with notable increases in Afghanistan and Ukraine to support crisis-affected populations.

51. As another key component of prevention, UNICEF strengthened social and behaviour change and gender-transformative programming to address the determinants of violence, exploitation and harmful practices affecting children. The number of people engaged in reflective dialogues to challenge discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices increased by 40 per cent, from 22.3 million in 2021 to 31.1 million. The number of girls and women receiving prevention and care interventions for child marriage and female genital mutilation doubled since 2021, reaching 17.2 million and just over 383,000, respectively.

52. UNICEF enhanced its focus on making child protection systems more effective, resilient and inclusive. This is reflected in the new UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022–2030,²⁴ in which a disability-inclusive approach to child protection is prioritized. To promote the inclusion of refugee children and their families in national plans, budgets, datasets and service delivery systems, and to prevent childhood statelessness, UNICEF developed a Strategic Collaboration Framework with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, building on strong collaboration and learning from the two agencies' 2020–2022 Blueprint for Joint Action for Refugee Children. The new UNICEF-International Organization for Migration Strategic Collaboration Framework also prioritizes efforts to strengthen national child protection systems to be inclusive of migrant children.

53. Across 109 countries, UNICEF supported 4.7 million children who had experienced violence to receive health, social work, justice or law enforcement services, a 7 per cent increase over 2021. UNICEF led the creation of the International Classification of Violence against Children, endorsed as an international standard, to help align national definitions and data collection efforts and greatly increase data availability.

54. UNICEF reached more than 5 million women and children in 65 countries with gender-based violence risk mitigation interventions, and nearly 6 million in 64 countries through gender-based violence prevention programming. Systems to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse were rolled out across all country offices and implementing partners, and UNICEF worked with communities to strengthen complaints mechanisms and raise awareness. In 2022, 65 country offices had a system for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, compared with 53 in 2021. Globally, more than 49 million children and adults now have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection or other personnel across 110 countries.

55. UNICEF continued to invest in strengthening monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in conflict situations, to prevent and end violations and respond to affected children. In 17 countries, UNICEF reached 58 per cent of targeted children formerly associated with an armed force or group with protection or reintegration support. UNICEF supported more than 9.8 million children affected by landmines and other explosive weapons with relevant prevention or victim assistance interventions, an 89 per cent increase from 2021. UNICEF high-level advocacy supported the development of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the

²⁴ UNICEF, *Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022–2030* (New York, December 2022). See www.unicef.org/unicef-disability-inclusion-policy-and-strategy-dipas-2022-2030.

Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, a critical advancement to protect children, who represent more than half the civilian casualties of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

D. Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

56. The world is making progress in improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), but not at the rate necessary to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6. Insufficient financing, the increasing impact of climate change on WASH systems, and widespread humanitarian crises are impeding progress and threatening past gains.

57. Meanwhile, more than half of all children – approximately 1 billion – live at extremely high risk from climate hazards. High heatwave frequency affects 559 million children, and by 2050, it will affect all of the world’s 2.02 billion children, regardless of efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions.²⁵ Children are more vulnerable than adults to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation – and they are crucial agents of change for a more sustainable tomorrow.

58. UNICEF worked on Goal Area 4 in 156 countries in 2022. The total Goal Area 4 expense was \$1.3 billion, including \$0.9 billion for humanitarian action. At the output level, progress rates were above 100 per cent of the 2022 milestones for two out of three result areas under Goal Area 4. UNICEF is making very good progress in support for safe WASH services. In 2022, 26 million people (including 894,000 people with disabilities) gained access to at least basic sanitation services, 30.6 million (including 1.4 million with disabilities) to basic water that is safe and available when needed, and 23.6 million (including 1.1 million with disabilities) to basic hygiene. More than 88 per cent of those gaining access were in fragile countries, where UNICEF direct support is concentrated. Menstrual health and hygiene services or communication reached 17.5 million adolescent girls and women in 2022, including 3.7 million in humanitarian crises.

59. UNICEF reached more than 39 million people in humanitarian emergencies with WASH services in 2022, including through major interventions in response to war in Ukraine, flooding in Pakistan, and conflict and severe drought in Ethiopia and neighbouring countries. UNICEF responded to the global cholera outbreak that hit an unprecedented 30 countries in 2022, including through emergency support interventions in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and other countries that had not had cholera cases for years. UNICEF support for improved WASH facilities in 2022 in both development and humanitarian contexts led to 32,939 schools and 10,827 health-care facilities having a complete set of basic WASH services.

60. Strengthening WASH sector systems is a priority for UNICEF, now established as a stand-alone result area. While incremental gains were made in sector financing, WASH systems sustainability monitoring and promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, more modest progress was registered in the overall area of systems strengthening, mirroring underinvestment and overreliance on limited core and thematic resources. Systems strengthening is a bridge between output-level results and outcome-level change, and as such requires greater prioritization and advocacy with donor partners for increased flexible funding resources.

61. UNICEF expanded efforts to increase WASH sector financing through support to government partners, work with the private sector, and greater engagement in

²⁵ UNICEF, *The Coldest Year of the Rest of their Lives: Protecting Children from the Escalating Impacts of Heatwaves* (New York, October 2022).

innovative financing initiatives such as the new high-level panel of the Africa Water Investment Programme.²⁶ UNICEF with partners issued new guidance for the development of costed, inclusive national WASH financing strategies – a key component of this effort – and nine countries implemented such strategies in 2022. Fifteen countries increased financing from public or private sources at least partially due to UNICEF support, including Bangladesh, where \$240 million in public funds were committed to scale up the UNICEF-piloted arsenic mitigation approach countrywide.

62. To help accelerate progress to reach the Sustainable Development Goal sanitation target, the most off-track of all the Sustainable Development Goal targets,²⁷ UNICEF is shifting its programmatic focus as articulated in the new UNICEF Game Plan to Reach Safely Managed Sanitation 2022–2030,²⁸ with the goal of helping 1 billion people reach this sanitation standard by 2030 through direct support and strengthening national WASH systems.

63. UNICEF support resulted in 5.4 million people using climate-resilient water systems and 3.2 million using climate-resilient sanitation facilities, and progress was made in institutionalizing resilience into national policies and plans. UNICEF constructed 1,855 solar water systems in 2022, providing safe water to communities, health-care facilities and schools, and expanded technical support services, including through regional solar hubs.

64. Progress was made in the area of water security, including through an expanded initiative supporting national efforts to monitor and manage increasingly climate-vulnerable groundwater resources, the only source of water for more than half of the population in programme countries.²⁹ The More Water More Life initiative brought innovative mapping data to predict affordable groundwater solutions for water shortages in Eastern and Southern Africa. Successful pilots in Ethiopia and Madagascar mapped groundwater to enable more cost-effective water provision for over 1.1 million children, and are paving a path to scale in more countries across the region.

65. In 2022, UNICEF significantly accelerated its climate, environment, sustainable energy and disaster risk reduction work. In 2022, 69 countries implemented child-sensitive programmes to enhance the climate- and disaster-resilience of children and promote environmental sustainability, up from 37 in 2021. With UNICEF support, 16 national Governments worked to create preparedness frameworks informed by child-risk assessments, while in 28 countries, UNICEF used long-term climate projections to adapt multiple social sectors such as health, WASH and education to minimize the adverse impacts of climate change.

66. At COP27, UNICEF advocacy with its partners in the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative led to the formal recognition of the role of children and youth as agents of change in climate action, and parties were urged to include them in their processes for designing and implementing climate policy and action. The organization worked to ensure that the resilience of social services for children and other child-related priorities would receive more attention in debates on climate financing and adaptation action.

²⁶ See <https://aipwater.org/high-level-panel/>.

²⁷ WHO and UNICEF, *Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000–2020: Five years into the SDGs* (Geneva, 2021).

²⁸ See www.unicef.org/documents/sanitation-game-plan.

²⁹ See www.unwater.org/publications/un-world-water-development-report-2022.

E. Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

67. The impacts of the polycrisis have pushed more children and families into poverty. As of 2022, half of the 1.2 billion people living in multidimensional poverty were children under 18 years old.³⁰ Child poverty soared in 2022 in Europe and Central Asia, as the Ukraine war and rising inflation plunged 4 million children into poverty, a 19 per cent increase since 2021.³¹

68. Addressing the deprivations that children face and making progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 1 and other Goals requires an acceleration of social protection coverage, particularly among children. While there was increased coverage during the pandemic, only a portion of COVID-era programmes continued in 2022. Less than one in five global social protection measures during COVID-19 addressed gender,³² and despite increased need, disability benefits reached only a third of working-age adults with severe disabilities worldwide, and less than 10 per cent of those in low-income countries. Children on the move remain largely excluded from national social protection systems.³³

69. UNICEF worked on Goal Area 5 in 155 countries in 2022. The total Goal Area 5 expense was \$1.0 billion, including \$0.7 billion for humanitarian action. At the output level, progress rates were above 90 per cent of the 2022 milestones for both result areas under Goal Area 5.

70. In 2022, 38 countries reported that child poverty measurement, analysis or advocacy led by UNICEF translated into critical change. In Viet Nam, UNICEF technical support and advocacy resulted in increased investment in human capital development and social spending for children, as well as the inclusion of key targets and indicators on children in provincial socioeconomic development plans.

71. The year saw an overall drop in countries measuring monetary child poverty, to 74, down from 85 in 2021, as a significant number had not updated their measurement since 2017 and were excluded from the calculation. On the other hand, several countries measured monetary child poverty for the first time, including Côte d'Ivoire, Mexico, Nepal, Senegal and Sri Lanka. Seventy-one countries measured multidimensional child poverty, including first-ever estimates from Ecuador, El Salvador, Greece and Mauritania.

72. UNICEF led numerous partnerships to accelerate results in social protection and child poverty reduction, including the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board working groups on gender and on linking humanitarian cash

³⁰ While monetary poverty is defined as having a household income below a certain amount, such as the \$2.15 per day by which the World Bank defines extreme poverty, children's experiences of poverty are about more than money, encompassing lack of essentials such as shelter, nutrition, water, health or protection services. As a complement to monetary poverty measurement, multidimensional poverty measures children's access to goods and services that are fundamental for their full development and essential for the fulfilment of their rights. See <https://hdr.undp.org/content/2022-global-multidimensional-poverty-index-mpi#/indicies/MPI>.

³¹ UNICEF, "The impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on child poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia", Regional brief (2022). See <http://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/impact-war-ukraine-and-subsequent-economic-downturn-child-poverty-eastern-europe>.

³² Maja Gavrilovic and others, "Gender-Responsive Social Protection Post-COVID-19", *Science*, vol. 375, no. 6585 (10 March 2022).

³³ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Social Protection for the Forcibly Displaced in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Pathway for Inclusion* (1 July 2022); and Rebecca Holmes and Christina Lowe, *Strengthening Inclusive Social Protection Systems for Displaced Children and Their Families: Accelerating Momentum towards Child-Sensitive, Shock-Responsive Social Protection* (London, ODI and New York, UNICEF, 2023).

assistance and social protection; the Global Accelerator on Social Protection and Jobs, a Secretary-General-led Common Agenda initiative launched in 2022; the Universal Social Protection 2030 working group on financing partnerships; and country-, regional- and global-level initiatives with the United Nations Development Programme on child-focused social spending, mitigating climate change impacts on public budgets, and operationalizing the Integrated National Financing Framework to focus on children's needs.

73. In 2022, 68 countries were assessed as having strong or moderately strong social protection systems. With UNICEF support, Governments reached more than 129 million children with cash transfer programming. Still, the number of households reached by cash transfers through UNICEF support decreased to 103.5 million, owing in part to the suspension of temporary programmes responding to COVID-19 since 2021.

74. Continuing the trend since 2018, the number of countries with shock-responsive social protection systems increased to 18 in 2022, driven partially by the momentum of Government-led COVID-19 programmes, and also by UNICEF investment in a comprehensive approach that strengthens the readiness of national systems to scale up cash transfers, while at the same time strengthening UNICEF internal preparedness for a parallel response when needed. In 2022, national systems in over 90 countries had a high- or medium-level ability to respond to crisis through delivering cash.

75. UNICEF scaled up the use of humanitarian cash transfers as part of emergency response, including in Level 2 and Level 3 contexts, reaching over 2.8 million households in 43 countries (up from 2.7 million in 2021). UNICEF strengthened its operational capacity to implement timely and risk-informed HCT programmes by providing in-country and remote technical and operational support in the largest emergencies (including Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and the Philippines), and rolling out the Humanitarian Cash Operational and Programmatic Ecosystem, an information management system to enhance programme quality, compliance, accountability and traceability, in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, the Philippines, Slovakia, the Sudan, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine and Yemen.

76. UNICEF drove cross-sectoral collaboration to enhance the systematic inclusion of girls, children with disabilities, and children on the move in social protection systems. UNICEF supported 60 countries to have disability-inclusive social protection systems in 2022, up from 55 in 2021, including through disability assessment and certification mechanisms that are essential to targeting social protection support for children with disabilities and their families. Meanwhile, with UNICEF support, social protection programmes in 37 out of 115 reporting countries reached gender-responsive and gender-transformative status, up from 22 in 2021.

77. Emerging efforts on care and family-friendly policies expanded, with 24 countries adopting at least two of the four priority policies (parental leave, breastfeeding support, childcare and child benefits), up from 13 in 2021, with further room for growth in low- and middle-income countries to support children in early childhood and adolescence. The increase can be attributed to ongoing advocacy with businesses and policymakers; operationalization of the newly launched organizational parenting strategy of UNICEF, which prioritizes strengthening enabling environments; and rising demand for parenting support in the context of increased care burdens during the pandemic.

78. UNICEF engaged with 144 Governments to enhance the efficiency, impact, equity and transparency of public financing resources across social sectors and to leverage additional financing to accelerate progress. Seventy-eight countries, up

from 65 in 2021, generated evidence and strengthened national social sector budgets, while 67, up from 55 in 2021, engaged with international development partners and the private sector to leverage resources for social services for children.

79. To support child-friendly urban environments, UNICEF worked to mainstream child rights in national and subnational legislation and urban policies and supported actions to develop child-sensitive local policies, plans and budgets in 107 countries.

80. The humanitarian crisis in Ukraine confirmed the importance of local governments in responding to crises. UNICEF partnered with 39 large urban municipal and local authorities in Europe to help refugee children and families from Ukraine access essential services through existing national and subnational systems, while strengthening cities' capacity to develop innovative integration policies for children and families that will be applicable beyond this emergency.

III. Organizational effectiveness

81. In 2022, UNICEF employed its nine priority change strategies to accelerate progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the realization of children's rights, and invested in its five organizational performance enablers in order to become a more agile, values-based, effective and efficient organization that can respond effectively to change and uncertainty.

A. Upholding children's rights

82. In a context where children's rights are under grave threat and have become less prominent in development and humanitarian discourse, UNICEF engaged with United Nations human rights mechanisms to elevate attention to the full spectrum of children's rights, including with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (with which UNICEF held its eighth biennial meeting), the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, special procedures of the Human Rights Council, and the Universal Periodic Review.

83. UNICEF amplified child rights advocacy in intergovernmental forums and strengthened its engagement with broad-based national human rights institutions as well as dedicated independent institutions with a child rights mandate. The organization supported the strengthening of child participation in the Committee on the Rights of the Child reporting process. Three quarters of reporting offices supported children to have their voices heard in the process, together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and coalitions, through child submissions to the Committee, child participation in pre-sessions and plenary sessions of the Committee, and the development of child-friendly versions of reports to, and recommendations from, the Committee.

B. Engaging children, young people and their communities

84. Eight million U-reporters were registered in 2022 alone, bringing the total engaged to 27.5 million in 92 countries. U-report engaged youth living in humanitarian situations in places such as Ukraine, Venezuela and Central America. Meanwhile, 10.6 million young volunteers played a significant role in areas including climate action, pandemic response and emergency response.

85. UNICEF engaged 7.4 million children, adolescents and youth in advocacy, nearly 6.6 million in communication and 27.1 million in online platforms. On global UNICEF social media channels, 6 million followers were 24 years old and younger. Linking the Voices of Youth platform and the global advocacy priorities helped to

engage young people in UNICEF campaigns, while co-creating content with youth advocates helped to elevate young people's voices.

86. The engagement of young people was a key aspect of the strong performance of UNICEF projects implemented with support from the United Nations Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund. In Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF partnered with the United Nations Development Programme to reduce the common vulnerabilities of populations in border areas, engaging adolescents and youth from diverse ethnic groups through intergenerational dialogue, young peace ambassadors, U-Reporters and life skills training.

87. In areas including child protection, mental health, education, immunization, nutrition, disability and gender, community engagement and social and behaviour change was an important component of programming to address barriers to service access and use, and to change attitudes, practices and the social norms underlying child rights violations. In 2022, 60 per cent of country offices established or advanced community engagement and social and behaviour change standards for programming, up from 32 per cent in 2021, while 34 country offices established standards for participatory planning, monitoring, feedback and social accountability in development and humanitarian operations, an important milestone for integrating the voices of children and their communities into UNICEF work.

C. Working with local partners across the nexus

88. Close collaboration with local partners remained a priority in 2022, as UNICEF worked with 2,184 civil society partners (1,634 local NGOs and 550 international NGOs) in humanitarian response. Nearly \$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 went to national NGOs and community-based organizations, exceeding the Grand Bargain target of 25 per cent. UNICEF adopted the application of 7 per cent overhead costs to local civil society organizations (previously applied only for international civil society organizations), to realize its commitment towards localization, cascading quality funding and capacity strengthening of local civil society organizations.

89. UNICEF championed greater engagement with local organizations led by women and girls, transferring 7 per cent of its humanitarian funds to approximately 647 local women-led organizations. Increasing resource allocation to local women- and girl-led organizations remains challenging for several reasons, including local capacity, stakeholder risk tolerance and bureaucratic processes. In Afghanistan, the ban on female humanitarian workers compromised the delivery of essential community-based services for women and children, including polio and measles vaccination, hygiene promotion and child protection case management, and shuttered 75 out of 117 safe spaces for women and girls, in a context of heightened risks of sexual exploitation and abuse.

90. Recognizing the need for better integration of humanitarian and development programming in support of resilient community systems, UNICEF launched new country programme planning guidance, which directs country offices to consider humanitarian, development and peacebuilding aspects when developing new country programmes. UNICEF revised its Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus, which aims to support UNICEF programmes in addressing root causes of fragility and building resilience.

D. Leveraging evidence and advocating for children

91. UNICEF worked to keep pace with the opportunities and challenges of the evolving data landscape – including new sources like Earth observation data, and new means of data processing through machine learning and artificial intelligence – while minimizing risks stemming from the collection, analysis and use of data. Through the Frontier Data Network, UNICEF brought together government, private sector, academia, data collaboratives and partner agencies to advance sustainable data science in every country, improving the national understanding of issues concerning children and enabling faster responses to crises. The sixth round of Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) (2017–2022) included a record 77 national surveys, while MICS Plus mobile phone surveys produced data in near real-time. A pilot in three countries for the first time linked MICS data with data from education and health administrative data systems – an integration with the potential to radically increase the analytical power of data on children.

92. Evidence-based advocacy and communication directly contributed to results across all Goal Areas. Clear, simple, data-driven messaging and timebound asks created entry points for successful advocacy with donors and partners, while projecting UNICEF as an advocate for child rights and a solutions-focused entity that tells a compelling story of impact for children. UNICEF reached 169.9 million digital supporters by the end of 2022, and continued to have a strong voice in the media at the global level to advocate for and promote child rights, increasing its share of voice to rank among the top three of its comparator organizations.

E. Partnering with businesses and innovating for children

93. UNICEF reached more than 72 million children by mobilizing business influence, core assets or changes in business practices. Fifty-four country offices and National Committees reported successful engagements with more than 2,800 businesses to change business practices that affect children’s rights. UNICEF worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the B-Tech Project, providing authoritative guidance and resources for implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in the technology space, and, with the International Telecommunication Union, drafted guidance for businesses on respecting child rights in the digital environment.

94. UNICEF leveraged its purchasing power and expertise in markets and product innovation to reduce market barriers that hinder access to supplies, and engaged with businesses to scale six novel products responding to the unmet needs of children, such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, glucometers and baby transport warmers. Sixty-one per cent of UNICEF country programmes engaged in South-South cooperation in 2022, supporting adaptation of local solutions and technology as well as resource mobilization from countries in the global South.

95. UNICEF procured a record \$7.4 billion in supplies and services in 2022, a 93 per cent increase from pre-COVID-19 figures. More than \$863.9 million worth of supplies were delivered to 140 countries in support of emergencies for distribution in programme implementation. To support the global movement of humanitarian supplies beyond COVID-19 supplies, the Supply Chain & Transport Industry Charter for Humanitarian Supply Chain Resilience was signed, expanding the previous charter led by UNICEF and the World Economic Forum.

F. Mobilizing resources

96. Despite the increasingly challenging fundraising environment in 2022 – with economic and political uncertainty reaching new heights due to the war in Ukraine,

supply chain disruptions, high inflation and foreign exchange rate volatility – UNICEF income³⁴ reached the highest level to date. Support to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the resilience of official development assistance from public sector partners and support from private sector partners as funding streams to UNICEF. Investments in digital capabilities facilitated a massive surge in new donors and increased giving from existing donors, contributing to a 72 per cent growth in cash donations.

97. However, 2022 highlighted a widening gap between total income and Core Funding for Results (RR). While total UNICEF income in 2022 grew by an additional \$1.2 billion compared with 2021, driven by growth in other resources (emergency), RR decreased by 6 per cent, or \$83 million. The declining proportion of RR to total income – dropping from 17 per cent in 2021 to 14 per cent in 2022 – marks a worrying trend away from the 30 per cent commitment made by Member States as part of the Funding Compact. This puts UNICEF at serious risk of becoming a project-driven organization rather than a mandate-driven one.

G. Working with United Nations partners

98. UNICEF, in close collaboration with other United Nations entities, continued to advance the reform of and strengthen coherence across the United Nations development system, to provide timely, coherent and harmonized support to countries in addressing socioeconomic challenges and achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

99. In 2022, 111 UNICEF country offices (87 per cent) delivered joint programmes in partnership with United Nations agencies, with an average expenditure of \$500 million per annum. Funds were provided by international financial institutions, the Global Partnership for Education, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, Education Cannot Wait, and the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. In Afghanistan, joint United Nations engagements on violence against women, nutrition and education enhanced community support and outreach through a consultative approach. UNICEF led 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.

H. Enhancing efficiency and managing risks

100. In 2022, UNICEF put in place an action plan to increase cost savings, simplification, carbon emissions reductions, and the inclusiveness of its office premises. The organization implemented 30 solar and energy-efficiency projects and two green building certifications in 2022, contributing to a 19 per cent reduction of its carbon emissions from the 2010 baseline. Fifty-three per cent of UNICEF offices were in common premises, exceeding the United Nations target of 50 per cent, and UNICEF identified 14 high-cost office locations to serve as basis for its common premises and cost savings initiative in 2023.

101. UNICEF worked to improve its monitoring, assessment and management of safety, social and environmental risks. In 2022, 82 per cent of offices executed fraud risk assessments, against a milestone of 85 per cent. No internal and just five external audit recommendations were outstanding for more than 18 months, below

³⁴ Defined as contributions received from Governments, inter-organizational arrangements, Global Programme Partnerships and intergovernmental organizations, and revenue from the private sector.

milestones of 4 and 18, respectively. Offices took steps to better manage overall safeguarding risks, including risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. Risks were aggregated and registered in an Enterprise Risk Management platform, and in 2022, 43 per cent of offices recorded effectively managing safeguarding risks across their functions, significantly below the milestone of 49 per cent.

I. Improving organizational culture and diversity

102. Organizational culture, diversity, equity and inclusion became more institutionalized in the structure of UNICEF with the recruitment of a Culture and Diversity team established within the Office of the Executive Director, tasked to oversee and coordinate organizational efforts in these areas. The new Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy of UNICEF stipulates that by 2025, UNICEF will increase the number of employees with disabilities by at least 2 per cent across all offices, with the aim of reaching 7 per cent representation by 2030.

103. UNICEF made progress in overall gender parity, reaching 48.9 per cent women staff in 2022, mostly driven by an increased proportion of women in the international professional staff category (51.6 per cent) and national professional officers (48.1 per cent), while in the general service category the proportion of women remained at 47.5 per cent.

104. UNICEF continued to monitor progress on workplace culture through employee surveys, such as the 2022 Global Staff Survey, which secured a response rate of 63 per cent, and an Employee Engagement Index score of 76 per cent globally. About 40 per cent of UNICEF offices met the organizational benchmark on psychological safety and trust, a significant increase from 28 per cent in 2021, but with noticeable regional contrasts.

IV. Looking ahead

105. Today's children and young people live in a world with few certainties and have legitimate concerns about the effectiveness of the institutions their parents and grandparents currently manage. To fulfil its mandate and bolster confidence in multilateral institutions and arrangements, UNICEF must learn to do things differently.

106. In 2022, UNICEF took steps in this direction by beginning implementation of an outcome-focused Strategic Plan, calibrated not towards what UNICEF can do itself today, but towards what it will take – partnerships, resources, policies and legislation, and social, economic, behavioural and cultural changes – to make a difference for children in all contexts over the remainder of the decade.

107. Through the new country programme procedures and guidance issued in 2022, country offices are receiving more support in prioritizing relevant elements of the Strategic Plan in their contexts, including in middle- and high-income countries, while a joined-up approach to data, research, evaluation and knowledge management will build technical capacity. UNICEF will address the gap between the financial resources available for Strategic Plan implementation and actual global needs, strengthen its United Nations partnerships, and accelerate its strategy to mobilize the flexible resources required to be the mandate-driven organization that the world's children need.

108. The organization will clearly articulate its approach to the intersecting deprivations and discrimination facing children, and how to address them effectively through programming. In 2022, a new report on children with disabilities on the move laid some groundwork for this effort, highlighting barriers from

discrimination due to race, ethnicity, gender, language, ability and migration status.³⁵

109. UNICEF will define and enact a systematic approach for anticipatory action and responses to global shocks, engaging in horizon-scanning risk assessments with partners. To clarify the focus of its climate action, beyond disasters and preparedness, the organization will finalize the development of an Action Plan on Sustainability and Climate – recognizing that climate change affects not only children’s development trajectories, but also the ways that UNICEF can deliver.

110. Programmatic priorities will focus efforts on areas in which the organization is best positioned to work with its partners to make an impact on multiple deprivations and reach the world’s most disadvantaged, discriminated-against children, wherever they may live. To address inequalities, UNICEF will strengthen front-line service delivery systems rooted in communities, including social protection to reach children who have remained out of reach – and will redouble its efforts to ensure that these essential social services can adapt in the face of climate and environmental hazards.

111. Community-based primary health care and nutrition will be key entry points, and girls and children with disabilities will be a focus in all contexts. Across all sectors, the Adolescent Girls Programme Strategy, 2022–2025 will increase the focus on girls’ education, skills acquisition, digital access, protection, health and nutrition, and on sustaining high-level political commitment to eradicate harmful practices including female genital mutilation and child marriage.

112. In the face of the global pushback against child rights, UNICEF will remain the most steadfast advocate and champion for children and their rights, in everything that it does. Children and young people are taking action to secure their future, and demanding that adults do better. UNICEF will not only amplify their voices, but be led by them and guided by their hopes and aspirations.

V. Draft decision

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2022 of the Executive Director of UNICEF, as well as the report on the implementation of the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025; the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; the description of independent oversight functions/bodies in UNICEF; and the data companion and scorecard;

2. *Decides to* transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board;

3. *Takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit, including the management responses to the four recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit intended for consideration by the Executive Board.

³⁵ UNICEF, *Included, Every Step of the Way: Protecting the Rights of Migrant and Displaced Children with Disabilities* (New York, 2023).