In 2020, the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle-East and North Africa (RO) supported all country offices (COs) in the region to achieve significant results for children in contributing to the global UNICEF Strategic Plan around the three core functions identified in the Regional Office Management Plan (enhancing programming excellence; generating, promoting and leveraging public goods; and strengthening organizational management effectiveness and efficiency), in the cross-cutting areas of work, and through the Whole of Syria humanitarian programme.

In 2020, large-scale protracted crises continued to generate significant humanitarian needs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where there were 38 million (one in five) children in need, representing 20 per cent of the children in need globally. The region hosts over six million internally displaced children and 6.3 million refuge children. It is also the region with the highest unemployment rates among young people in the world.[1] The year saw a 9th year of crisis in Syria, a worsening humanitarian situation in Yemen, alongside ongoing recovery efforts for children affected by conflict in Iraq, the State of Palestine and Sudan. In 2020, existing inequalities and vulnerabilities deepened in MENA as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a region already characterized by protracted humanitarian emergencies and high levels of poverty.

The COVID-19 pandemic defined much of 2020, with the vulnerability of children increasing overall, and out-sized impacts felt by the most at-risk children and families. Millions of jobs and livelihoods have been lost as countries shut down their economies to contain the pandemic, compounding already low youth employment rates and affecting many young people who are informally or precariously employed. Most countries in the region were not equipped with the medical staff, hospitals, and equipment necessary to provide adequate care during a pandemic, nor the financial resources to bail out their economies.

The pandemic created the largest disruption of education systems in history. All places of learning—from preschools to universities—in most MENA countries were closed for several months in an effort to stop transmission of the virus. This affected the education of more than 110 million children, adolescents and young people, including the 1.3 million Syrian refugees enrolled in formal and non-formal education in five refugee-hosting countries. While governments with the support of their partners, including UNICEF, were quick to set up alternatives, COVID-19 brought out existing weaknesses in systems and increased disparities between those that benefit and those that could not. The scale of impact was enormous, threatening to wipe out an entire decade of progress in child poverty reduction in the region. More and more children came closer to poverty. A UNICEF study of nine countries in MENA, representing three quarters of the whole child population in the region, revealed that, within nine months of the start of the pandemic, more than 12 million children are likely to fall into multidimensional poverty—largely as a result of lockdowns, their severe economic impact on household livelihoods and the impacts on essential social infrastructure and services, including health and education. COVID-19 also exacerbated the shadow pandemic of gender-based violence (GBV) in MENA. As families were forced to stay at home during lockdowns, women and children who experience violence at home have been trapped with their abusers.
Although children have largely escaped the direct impact of the pandemic—they are not as susceptible to the severe form of COVID-19 disease as adults—they have been hard hit by its secondary socio-economic impacts. The disruption of health care services (supply and demand), especially during the initial lockdown in spring 2020, had the potential to revert decades of progress in the reduction of childhood mortality. A simulation study conducted by Johns Hopkins University found that the COVID-19 related disruption of health care services could have led to an increase of 40 per cent in under-5 deaths in MENA by the end of the year compared with the pre-COVID situation, if appropriate health care responses were not put in place.[2] Additionally, 53 per cent of parents and caregivers report that their children have struggled mentally or emotionally during the crisis.[3]

The pandemic aggravated an already difficult economic situation in MENA, which was faltering from the impact of collapsed oil prices in early 2020. The region’s economy is expected to contract by 5.7 per cent, with the economies of some conflict countries projected to shrink by as much as 13 per cent. The consequences of the pandemic are likely to be deep and long-lasting. The twin shock of the pandemic and low oil prices prompted the International Monetary Fund to lower its MENA economic forecast to its lowest level in 50 years.[4] The informal economy felt a higher toll, where an estimated 89 per cent of workers were significantly impacted by lockdown measures.[5] Governments are struggling fiscally and making some crucial choices to cut and re-prioritize public spending.

In a year defined by hardship across the region, the August 4 Beirut port explosion compounded the health and economic stresses facing children in Lebanon. Over 1,000 children were injured, and UNICEF estimates show that nearly 100,000 children had their homes damaged or destroyed. Many households were left in poor living conditions with limited access to water and electricity.[6] Similarly, the collapse of the Syrian Pound to historic new lows in mid-2020 led to high price inflation and a disintegration of living standards for most vulnerable populations inside Syria.


Major contributions and drivers of results

This year, MENARO adopted a multipronged approach to fight the spread of COVID-19 and protect the rights of children and women in the region, which underpinned all areas of work. UNICEF worked to prevent transmission and treat those who became ill, including through the provision of protective equipment, infection prevention control, risk communication and community engagement for hygiene behaviour change, promoting social distancing and building trust with public health authorities. UNICEF addressed the effects of lockdowns on the delivery of routine health, education and protection services and worked with Governments to expand and strengthen social protection programmes. Simultaneously, MENARO launched 5 region-wide roadmaps supporting acceleration of results in 5 areas agreed upon with Cos: 1/ primary health care; 2/ skilling, learning and transition to work; 3/ violence against children; 4/ social protection; and 5/ climate change with emphasis on water scarcity.

A. Enhancing Programme Excellence Health and Nutrition
A crucial part of the COVID-19 response efforts, MENARO’s efforts focused supporting COs to ensure continuity of health services for the most vulnerable including immunizations and nutritional support and disseminating accurate information about COVID-19 prevention and response. MENARO provided technical support in the development and promotion of collective multi-sectoral action which contributed to reaching around 4.7 million women and children with essential health services. MENARO supported COs in planning the restart of immunizations, especially in Djibouti, Iraq, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, Sudan and Yemen where vaccination campaigns had come to an abrupt halt in March as health workers were diverted to the COVID-19 response. The Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen made great progress as the immunization campaigns resumed and close to 2.8 million children were protected against vaccine preventable diseases. MENARO supported the campaign for circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (cVDPVs) in Yemen and Sudan in 2020. MENARO supported COs to design and launch a ‘jumpstart package’ in Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Egypt and Lebanon. To prepare for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, MENARO and the World Health Organization (WHO) EMRO co-lead the Regional Working Group for COVAX to support national governments’ implementation plans including supporting countries in the preparation and submission of vaccine applications to COVAX facility as well as the development of National Deployment and Vaccination Plans.

Adolescent Development and Participation, and HIV

MENARO provided integrated technical support to COs in moving towards better outcomes for adolescents and youth, including establishing adolescent participation and civic engagement volunteers in three countries. MENARO supported participatory action guidelines that enabled COs and governments to contribute to active engagement of adolescents in policy processes and decision making. MENARO provided technical support to the Generation Unlimited (GenU) agenda on learning to earning in GenU frontrunner countries.

Education

In a year defined by the closure of schools, UNICEF supported Ministries of Education to scale up and improve remote learning approaches to ensure children remained engaged in learning. MENARO supported COs in remote learning initiatives that reached nearly 3.9 million children. In Iraq, for example, UNICEF worked with the government to launch the first online learning platform in the country called ‘Newton’. Close to 26,000 schools registered, more than 112,000 teachers interacted with children through the platform, and nearly 570,000 students livestreamed the channel. In Jordan, UNICEF developed ‘Learning Bridges’ as a strategy to support learning at home through carefully designed work sheets.

MENARO, as part of the Global Framework for Reopening Schools, coordinated with regional partners and national governments on learning continuity. UNICEF’s Back to School campaigns focused on guidelines and checklists for schools, preparedness training for educators, including infection prevention and control (IPC) protocols in schools, and community awareness raising, reaching 28,000 schools in the region by October. MENARO launched the “Rej’et El Sineh” ['Learning is Back'] song at a Ministerial Meeting to encourage the return to learning for all children and youth. UNICEF’s online Teachers Preparedness Training Package, published in Arabic, English and French, helped teachers adapt to the COVID-19 school context.

Child Protection

MENARO supported 13 COs on strategies to end violence against children, including violence in schools, parenting programmes and strengthening the social services workforce. UNICEF launched coordinated efforts with justice sector agencies to take urgent action to protect children in detention from COVID-19, including encouraging governments to use alternatives to deprivation of liberty and
to reintegrate released children. By the end of 2020, more than 3,000 children were released from detention in 13 countries. UNICEF, with the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates, conducted two webinars in French on access to justice for children in times of COVID-19. MENARO supported the Syria Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) to draft six Children and Armed Conflict reporting requirements to the Security Council.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

WASH was a crucial component in UNICEF’s integrated COVID-19 response. MENARO supported COs on ensuring continuity of WASH services in primary health care facilities and isolation centres across the region, including in Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen. Twelve million people in MENA were able to better protect themselves from COVID-19 infection through the provision of handwashing stations, hygiene kits, soap and hand sanitizers. MENARO supported COs in WASH preparedness measures for school reopening, and strengthening WASH services in communities and public health facilities. More than 7,500 health staff and community health workers were trained in IPC and more than 82,500 facility-based and community health workers received PPE, including gloves and masks.

**Social Protection**

MENARO took a two-pronged approach to supporting social protection responses to COVID-19, supporting COs with the swift expansion of cash transfers to affected families, and increasingly on leveraging these initial responses to make national systems more shock responsive. Over 65,000 households received a humanitarian cash grant, and under 12 million households benefited from new or additional social assistance measures. MENARO was at the forefront of supporting reforms in national social protection policies, programmes and systems in Jordan, Iran, Iraq and Morocco. UNICEF generated evidence on the potential child poverty impact of COVID-19 in Morocco and Tunisia, as well as technical support to strengthen the social protection systems to be more child sensitive in Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Iran and Oman. In Lebanon and Tunisia, UNICEF engaged international financial institutions with concrete proposals to either protect key areas of social sector spending or ensure conditionalities for social spending in concessional financing proposals.

With an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of COVID-19, MENARO generated evidence on prevalence rates, including assessments in Lebanon and Jordan. Adaptations included reaching women and girls with key messages and referrals to available resources. With most shelters and safe spaces in MENA closed or curtailing operations, UNICEF and partners adapted service provision to make use of pre-existing hotlines and helplines.

**B. Generating, Promoting and Leveraging Public Goods**

This result pillar in the ROMP focuses on enhancing partnership, accelerating advocacy, support programming based on the evidence, which encompasses key UNICEF Strategic Plan strategies such as public engagement, advocacy, partnership, leveraging resources, and using power of evidence to guide and support country offices to deliver more effective results for children.

**Public Engagement**

To counter misinformation widely circulated on social media, MENARO adopted the approach of “flooding the market” with reliable information. UNICEF reached nearly 270 million people – close to 40 per cent of the region's population - with material and information on COVID-19, acting as an essential and trust-worthy source of information, with over 40 million people engaged. A regional “Mask Up” campaign, launched with well-known influencers, continues to reach tens of millions of...
Harnessing Partnerships and Resources for Children

In 2020, MENARO continued to be more intentional and systematic to partnerships and resource mobilization, focusing on setting up systems, and mobilizing resources and supporting COs in fundraising for the COVID-19 pandemic response. The RO engaged key partners, including the UK, Germany, the EU, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Canada, Qatar and France on the COVID response and beyond. MENARO developed a high-level framework on engaging the private sector, concluded a regional flagship partnership with mobile operator Zain, and launched a Children’s Rights and Business network for COs to build capacity on strategies to address the adverse impacts of business on children’s rights.

Co-led by MENARO, the No Lost Generation (NLG) initiative, together with the EU and the Government of Luxembourg, held a successful side-event to the Brussels IV conference on the Future of Syria. Under UNICEF’s leadership, NLG also undertook a revision of its Phase III Strategy and advocacy priorities, in order to adapt to the new context.

Leveraging Resources and Markets for Children

Public Finance for Children (PF4C) witnessed progress despite a significant re-orientation in programming focus with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. MENARO updated PF4C country briefs, with a focus on the economic/fiscal impacts of COVID-19 and provided technical support to Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen via the regional PF4C support system with OPM. MENARO also provided support to Tunisia, Sudan and GAO on PF4C, as well as supporting CO submissions for the second SDG joint fund (Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq and Djibouti COs eventually received allocations).

Strategic Information, Research and Knowledge Management

The analytical work of the RO added analytical initiatives focusing on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on children, and reprioritized research efforts. MENARO analysed the impact of the crisis on children, through direct data collection in five countries and simulation analyses in 11 countries. With the WHO, it produced a report on the impacts of COVID-19 related-health care disruption on childhood mortality, a literature analysis on the behaviour associated to the prevention of COVID-19 transmission, and MENARO had a leading role in the production of a mapping report on the social protection response to COVID-19 in the Arab region. The RO provided technical support to the country offices in MENA in their evidence generation efforts in response to COVID-19 (147 analytical initiatives in the 20 MENA countries). Intense technical support to two Multiple Indicators Cluster Surveys (MICS), in Algeria and State of Palestine.

C. Strengthening Organizational Management Effectiveness and Efficiency

The MENA RMT focused on risk management given the heightened security, mobility, financial, reputational, and fundraising risks associated with the pandemic, including establishing a dedicated unit on risk management, and rolling out e-CRC to strengthen risk management in procurement processes. The RMT prioritized actions to address issues arising from the global staff survey as well as actions to tackle discrimination, including -but not only- on the basis of racism. Effective ICT enabled teams to stay connected and gain confidence in working remotely, as teleworking and virtual conferencing tools became mainstreamed during the pandemic. The RO transferred the procurement
portfolio to the Jordan CO with dedicated resources. A Regional- Operations Management Team was established with UN sister agencies.

D. Whole of Syria Programme

In 2020, the needs in the Syrian Arab Republic remained extensive with over 11 million people (4.7 million children) requiring humanitarian assistance, aggravated by the rapid devaluation of the Syrian currency, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and escalations in violence. Distribution methods were adapted to reduce face-to-face contact, and awareness raising efforts on COVID-19 risks and precautions were scaled up. Virtual meetings and activities remains in place, including for coordination and awareness raising, education and case management services.

The Whole of Syria programme saw its most significant change in 2020 when the non-renewal of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2504 curtailed humanitarian access into North East Syria through the Yaroubia crossing. This ended the Amman-based cross border programme’s ability to deliver humanitarian aid, although other UN roles such as coordination, convening, capacity building and advocacy continued. Under the Amman hub, UNICEF reached 321,231 people in 2020, with a phase out of programmes due to border closure. The UNSCR removed one crossing (Bab al Saleem) from the Gaziantep hub, covering Idleb, West and North Aleppo and North Hama, leaving only one open crossing – Bab Al Hawa. This did not have a significant impact in 2020, as advanced preparedness ensured that supplies were pre-positioned. The remaining crossing allowed access to areas formerly served by Bab al Salam – but with a greater cost in terms of time, funding and coordination. The Gaziantep hub reached 4,630,606 people in 2020.

E. Humanitarian Action

With protracted emergencies such as Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya, State of Palestine, IDPs in Iraq, and Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, MENARO provided continuous technical support to the COs in area of coordination, preparedness, planning and response. MENARO built stronger humanitarian leadership through partnerships, advocacy, context and situation analysis for children facing humanitarian crises. The humanitarian team played key role as a secretariat coordinating programmes and operations in response to COVID-19, leading quality assurance of response plans and SitReps, contribution to interagency efforts, overseeing allocation of resources and ensuring adherence to UNICEF standards and Core Commitments for Children. Six separate regional specific IPC protocols were developed covering these areas: health facilities, schools, camps, food premises, public places and transport and home isolation and quarantine centers with accompanying training of trainers being conducted to socialize the protocols.

F. Cross-cutting Programming Areas Programme Planning

MENARO led the guidance and coordination with COs to ensure the simplification of corporate processes so COs could prioritize the COVID-19 response; guidance to reflect the COVID-19 related results/activities in the VISION structure; guidance of the COVID-19 RAM indicators for harmonized monitoring and reporting and regular analysis of the COVID-19 monitoring data together with programme advisors. MENARO also successfully managed technical support to the COs which were in the UNSDCF and CPD preparation process, supported the RO in ROMP quality assurance and enhancement of programme excellence in regular planning, monitoring and reporting.

Gender

Gender was a cross-cutting element in all programmatic areas in 2020, including UNICEF’s response to spikes in GBV due to COVID-19 lockdowns; prioritizing girls’ education; contributions towards the reduction of harmful practices; and ensuring that health, nutrition, WASH and hygiene programming
was gender responsive. MENARO developed an internal guide to integrate gender across COVID-19 response pillars to influence gender integration in programming. UNICEF also contributed to the ‘Girls Empowerment Forum’ organized by League of Arab States and UNFPA to address harmful practices against girls within the region. A dedicated MENARO-led review of CO expenditures evidenced that UNICEF in MENA spent more than 43% of its financial resources into supporting gender transformative programming, well above the global interagency threshold objective of 15%.

**Communication for Development**

In MENA, UNICEF and partners supported the risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) response to COVID-19 pandemic by reducing the spread of misinformation, sharing correct facts, and promoting long-term prevention behaviours and revitalizing public demand for health and education services. In most MENA countries, national RCCE working groups were formed, led by the government, and co-led by UNICEF in collaboration with WHO, supporting the rapid development and implementation of national RCCE plans. Strong digital engagement was also used for rumour monitoring and response across most countries. For example, in the Syrian Arab Republic, two million people were reached with COVID-19 facts and prevention messages through ‘Takamol,’ a Syrian social services mobile application. Under the Regional RCCE Interagency Working Group (IAWG), co-chaired by UNICEF MENA, WHO EMRO and IFRC MENA, joint initiatives and products have emerged including the Regional RCCE Guiding Framework, regional monitoring framework and other tools.

**Early Childhood Development**

MENARO continued to promote the Nurturing Care Framework in 2020, including supporting Egypt, Tunisia and Iran in adapting the Care for Child Development package and implementing it by providing practical training to frontline workers. MENARO initiated the development of a regional ECD Parenting Resource Pack to support countries in the region in addressing parenting behaviours that affect early childhood development. MENARO conducted a comprehensive situation analysis and four country case studies in Tunisia, Egypt, State of Palestine and Oman, highlighting key areas to advance the ECD agenda.

**Supply Management**

MENARO supported COs in a challenging year for supply management and procurement. UNICEF delivered nearly 1.6 million units of supplies across the region since the start of the pandemic, optimizing its different shipping hubs across the world and prioritized local and regional manufacturers. MENARO supported the procurement of a net worth of US$40 million from local markets in MENA, including hand sanitizers, surgical caps, surgical masks, gowns, gloves, soap, and thermometers. After the explosions in Beirut in August, MENARO supported procurement of additional humanitarian supplies locally and from the UNICEF global supply hub in Copenhagen. Over 20 shipments of critical humanitarian supplies, totalling over 110 tonnes, were delivered to Lebanon through two airlifts and commercial cargo routes.

**Evaluation**

In 2020, 14 evaluations were completed in addition a number of other products were completed assessing the COVID-19 situation (one real time assessment, three evaluative reviews, two iterative reviews and three theories of change). The Libya, Egypt, Iraq and Yemen evaluations started in 2020 to be completed by 2021 making all county offices compliant with having an evaluation in the past three years.

**Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)**

In 2020, MENARO launched a review of Community-Based Complaint PSEA mechanisms in eight
countries, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, State of Palestine, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, with partners in those countries receiving 7 per cent of set-aside funds for PSEA.

Harnessing the power of technology for children

With the support of MENARO, COs used digital technologies to reach out to families and children providing information, services and cash as well as promoting youth engagement and participation. The regional T4D e-repository now stands at 67 initiatives from 14 offices. Following the launch of INVENT, UNICEF’s new global unified platform for T4D and innovation initiatives, MENARO ICT has embarked on migrating these initiatives from our regional repository to INVENT.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

There were significantly more children in need at the end of 2020 than in past years, mainly due to the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This year called for innovative workarounds and custom solutions from MENARO, including lessons in scaling up digital approaches to education; health systems responses and health continuity of services; increased complex cross-sectoral and interagency partnerships; and operationally addressing the elevated teleworking modalities for staff members. While COVID-19 initially was treated as an emergency, it soon become clear that the situation is far beyond a “normal” emergency with far stretching impact on the way MENARO operates. Lessons learned this year included:

- With lack of initial clear understanding of the far-reaching impacts of the pandemic, UNICEF’s comparative advantages (e.g. in RCCE) helped the organization to provide a strong initial response. However, despite these efforts, opportunities were missed, including defining a multi-sectoral approach to IPC and taking a clear position on keeping schools open.
- At the country level, existing plans and programmes have sometimes hampered the rapid shift necessary, as COs felt bound to deliver on initially agreed upon workplans. Streamlining of planning and programming processes removed initial bottlenecks, as has the flexibility given by the reallocation of regular resources.
- Interagency operational coordination was enhanced in 2020 mainly for COVID response efforts. Engagement with UNHCR has benefitted from the blueprint agreement and better integrated support the refugee populations. These partnerships, including with WHO EMRO, need to be sustained and advanced, and focus on collaboration.
- The pandemic response demonstrated the importance of having built a strong supply community across the region. Early focus on local/regional procurement of PPE supplies allowed MENA region to gap-fill delays due to off-shore shipments complexities, borders closure, freight challenges.
- The onset emergencies this year, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut explosions created substantial fundraising needs. While UNICEF prioritized the private sector as a source of funds more broadly across the region, the pace at which these emergencies developed pointed to the need to increase private sector capacity in the region. This may mean a tripartite partnership among UNICEF-government-private sector.
- Resource mobilization needs to continue to prioritize flexible and predictable funding. Supportive donors need to be given greater recognition.
• Globally, RO accountabilities must be clearly spelled out in the current change management process to reflect the balance between support and oversight. Matrix management lines between CO specialists and RO advisers need to be reinforced.

• Lines of accountabilities, supporting and leading roles need to be refined between programming planning and humanitarian units, especially on issues of reporting, indicator and target setting, and streamline communication within other thematic units in MENARO and COs.

• Staff feedback showed that MENARO quickly and extensively provided a caring environment for staff during remote work. Effective ICT enabled teams to stay connected and gain confidence in remote work.

• However, after the first line of response, MENARO needed to readjust its internal structures and mechanisms, and there is a need to find the right governance for the right balance between inclusiveness, effectiveness and internal communication flow management.

For 2021-22, MENARO aims at supporting the following shifts:

• MENARO can play a role in data/evidence generation around framing and documenting the pandemic impacts on children and lessons learned for future similar events.

• Focus areas around gender, domestic violence and mental health need to be addressed in a multi-sectoral way in the continuing COVID response.

• RCCE needs to incorporate broader issues beyond prevention, such as restoration of the population’s trust in services, climate responsible behaviour and increased social protection.

• There will be a higher number of vulnerable adolescents and youth in the coming year, as they are at risk of not returning to school. There is an ever-more important need to focus on adolescent and youth learning, skills and employability for this age group, leveraging GenU.

• It is necessary to repurpose and repackage mental health and psychosocial support to address impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The “jumpstart package” to equitable access to primary health care for children and mothers, while effectively implemented in 2020, needs to continue well into 2021 to ensure that no child is left behind. With curtailed access to mother and children programming, as well as an increase in children in need, there is a need to scale up and adapt infant and young children feeding programmes and public messaging.

• UNICEF found innovative solutions to tackle malnutrition, including developing a new design of an essential tool for malnutrition screening: the disposable mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) tape. This innovative tape helped ensure the continuity of life-saving nutrition services in countries such as the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, the State of Palestine, Yemen and Sudan. The roll out needs to continue.

• UNICEF needs to work with national governments to ensure the prioritization and expansion of social protection systems to reach the most affected children and families including by expanding cash transfer programmes.

• Violence and armed conflict continues in far too many countries in the region, and many schools continued to be unsafe for children in this region. Attacks on schools are one of the six grave violations of children’s rights. This region continues to record the highest number of attacks against schools and education facilities, an underlying reality that did not receive its fair share of attention in 2020.

• An integrated set of services across health, nutrition, education, WASH, social protection sectors are needed. That is why, UNICEF in close collaboration with WHO, World Bank, the Arab
Network for Early Childhood Development and other regional partners mobilized to provide guidance for decision makers on operationalization of the Nurturing Care Framework in humanitarian context. During 2021, this will mean multicounty and national workshops with a selected number of countries that will result with an actionable regional roadmap that prioritizes policy and financing for the holistic development of crisis-affected young children, with a commitment from key stakeholders to implement it.