Update on the context and situation of children

Children are bearing the brunt of the 11-year-old crisis in Syria. The scale of children in need of humanitarian assistance rose 27 per cent from 2020 to 2021, with 6.1 million children affected. Overall, 13.4 million people now require assistance, up from 11 million in 2020. This includes three million people with disabilities and seven million internally displaced persons (IDPs)[1]. This escalation is being driven by a severe economic crisis, which is worsening the impact of hostilities, mass displacement, a widely devastated public service infrastructure and the COVID-19 pandemic. Women and girls continue to suffer disproportionately as the conflict magnifies existing inequalities; as social networks deteriorate, they become even more vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

Ninety per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, with the Syrian Pound losing 78 per cent of its value in 2020. The average price for the standard food basket in December 2021 was its highest since tracking began in 2013 and up 97 per cent from the year before[2]. Allocations to ministries critical for children dropped in real terms from 2020 to 2021: Social Affairs by 59 per cent, Education by 55 per cent, Health by 53 per cent and Water and Sanitation by 56 per cent. Government expenditures decreased by almost a third from 2020 to 2021 to 60 per cent below 2010 levels.

Only half of health centres are fully functional[3]. Neonatal mortality has increased from 8.7 to 11.8 per thousand live births from 2008 to 2019, with under 5 mortality rising from 17.4 to 23.7[4]. One in three children suffer from chronic malnutrition[5].

Syria has registered 50,310 COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, including 2,901 deaths. Actual cases are assumed to be higher due to limited testing capacity. There were two main waves in 2021: April/May and September/October. These waves stretched hospital capacity and led to local lockdowns, repeatedly interrupting education. Only eight per cent of the population in government-controlled areas are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. While vaccine availability is the current driver of low vaccination levels, vaccine hesitancy is also being reported. In October, 26 per cent of respondents reported mistrust in the vaccine[6].

Prior to the crisis, water networks served 92 per cent of the population while 82 per cent had access to an improved sanitation facility. Forty-eight per cent of the population now relies on alternative and often unsafe water and 70 per cent of discharged sewage is untreated. This is the result of damage and destruction as well as limited operations and maintenance (O&M).

Only a third of schools are fully functional. There are 2.45 million children out of school, and 1.6 million children at risk of dropping out. Younger children, adolescents and children with disabilities face major barriers including the limited availability of early childhood education, secondary education and vocational training[7].

From January to December 2021, 2,271 grave violations against children were recorded, including recruitment, deaths and injuries, a slight decrease from 2020.[8] A third of communities are contaminated with explosive ordnance.[9] The economic crisis is worsening negative coping mechanisms and contributing to the normalization of gender-based violence (GBV), which predominantly affects women and girls. Sixty-two per cent of surveyed communities reported child marriage (often affecting girls) and 67 per cent that children are forced to work rather than study (often affecting boys).[10] In August, the Government passed a new Child Law, guaranteeing citizenship, protecting children from abuse and neglect, setting the age of marriage at 18, prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and protecting children with disabilities. It calls also
for the rights to child and maternal health and prohibits the promotion of infant formula as a breastfeeding alternative.

Conflict has intensified in north-west Syria (NW Syria), which hosts 2.8 million IDPs. Humanitarian needs in NW Syria are among the worst in the country, with 3.4 million out of 4.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 1 million out of 1.7 million school-age children out of school.[11] Meanwhile, a flare up in violence in Dara’a displaced 36,000 people; tensions had reduced and most of the displaced returned by the end of the year.[12] On 9 July, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2585 extending the use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing point in NW Syria until 10 July 2022, based on increased crossline assistance.

In the north and north-east (NE), 4.5 million people faced a water crisis driven by unprecedentedly low water levels in the Euphrates River; low and erratic rainfall during the 2020/21 winter season leading to drought-like conditions; and recurring shutdowns and reduced operational capacity of Alouk water station (83 days out of service and 26 days with partial service).[13] The low water levels in the Euphrates are also negatively impacting electricity production and therefore social services and livelihoods.

IDPs in Al-Hol (58,000 people, 65 per cent children) and Al-Roj (2,600 people, 67 per cent children) Camps, face concerning security situations. Despite repatriation efforts, the population of Al-Hol Camp decreased by only 10 per cent in 2021, including 3 per cent of third-country national (TCN) children. As of October, 7,800 TCN children still require repatriation.[14]

The UN remained without access to the 12,000 people believed to still be living in Rukban on the Syrian-Jordanian border. No aid has entered the area since September 2019 with UNICEF and other agencies supporting those medically evacuated or voluntarily departing.

[4] Field studies by MOH with UNICEF and WHO.
[7] 2021 HNO.
[8] UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.
[9] 2021 HNO.
[10] 2021 HNO.
[12] OCHA, Dara’a Sitrep, 7 September 2021

Major contributions and drivers of results

UNICEF Syria Country Office (SCO) reached over 11.3 million people in 2021, including 3.7 million boys and 3.6 million girls. Families living in the most severely affected and inaccessible areas were prioritized, with 320,772 people reached in difficult to access and 3.1 million in moderately accessible areas. These results were achieved through coordination and joint advocacy with a range of stakeholders, including 313 UNICEF staff, consultants and technical third-party facilitators, 6 field offices and 35 implementing partners along with sister United Nations agencies and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Steps were taken to build the resilience of families, communities and systems, with building blocks such as evidence around barriers to immunization and education, and
strategies for maternal and child health and social protection, now in place with UNICEF support.

SCO conducted a full-fledged Gender Programmatic Review for the first time since the start of the crisis. Critical challenges have hampered gender programming, including the lack of sex- and gender-disaggregated data and the limited capacity of implementing partners to conduct gender equality programmes. As part of a longer-term gender equality strategy, SCO integrated gender into its Communications for Development (C4D) Strategy, built the capacity of programme-level gender focal points and increased the focus on men and boys to combat harmful gender norms.

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF provided over 4.1 million people with health and nutrition assistance in 2021. Considering the widespread devastation of the health system and the COVID-19 pandemic, lifesaving services were prioritized. UNICEF provided 1.5 million medical consultations (up from 1.4 million in 2020) through its partners including 687,246 for boys, 694,544 for girls, 6,152 for men and 162,380 for women through 80 clinics and 63 mobile teams. In parallel, UNICEF built the capacities of district-level health services, providing supplies, vaccines and cold chain equipment, and training 375 health staff on the management of the district health system to prepare for increased decentralization.

UNICEF expanded the network of Every Newborn Action Plan hospitals from five to seven, increasing the availability of quality services for newborns. The number of communities covered by UNICEF-supported trained community volunteers increased from 94 to 135, reaching newly accessible areas in Idleb, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor. UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA supported the Ministry of Health (MOH) to finalize the National Strategy for Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health, to be published in early 2022. A mapping of the maternal and child health data system was agreed with MOH; UNICEF is recruiting a consultant for the exercise which will identify support needs.

To protect health workers and ensure the continuity of services during the pandemic, UNICEF distributed 18.6 million items of personal protective equipment and trained 711 health workers (498 female) on infection prevention and control, surveillance and case management for COVID-19.

UNICEF provided technical support to the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP) for COVID-19, in coordination with MOH and WHO. The NDVP laid out strategies for the deployment and monitoring of COVID-19 vaccination in line with national COVID-19 recovery and response plans. UNICEF supported the importation of three million donated vaccine doses; installed 180 solar refrigerators and 16 cold rooms; led Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) efforts reaching 12,463,171 people (6,059,942 female) with mass messaging and 1,982,481 people (1,180,646 female) with two-way engagement; and trained over 2,000 health workers to maintain the cold chain system. This capacity development is expected to help the system respond better to future emergencies. The COVAX facility provided 85 per cent of the 1,260,427 COVID-19 vaccinations completed in 2021.

COVID-19 vaccinations temporarily disrupted routine immunization. Only 67 per cent of children under 1 had received a third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine by October, triggering a national routine immunization campaign which vaccinated 781,189 defaulter children. Polio vaccination campaigns reached over 2.4 million children, keeping Syria polio-free. UNICEF procured all vaccines for the country and supported a study on the Expanded Programme of Immunization used to identify and improve vaccination rates in low-coverage districts.

UNICEF and its implementing partners screened 1,333,065 children and women for malnutrition, identifying and treating 6,469 severely malnourished children (2,810 boys) through 284 nutrition centres with a recovery rate of 83 per cent, a defaulter rate of 12.5 per cent and a death rate of 0 per cent, with 4.5 per cent not responding. To combat chronic malnutrition, 1,152,766 caregivers (123,583
men) were counselled on optimal breastfeeding and complementary feeding (a third more than in 2020). Additionally, 566,339 children (283,342 girls) and 272,033 women received micronutrients. UNICEF also supported a field study on iodine deficiency to support efforts to strengthen salt iodization.

Under UNICEF leadership, 45 Nutrition Sector partners reached 1,001,257 children under 5 (472,446 girls) and 1,078,173 pregnant and lactating women with nutrition services. This included identifying and treating 16,265 children (7,050 boys) with moderate acute malnutrition and 7,885 (4,390 girls) with severe acute malnutrition.

**WASH**

UNICEF balanced the provision of emergency water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services with longer-term measures to mitigate the degradation of water and sanitation infrastructure, reaching 3.9 million people in 2021. Emergency WASH services, including water trucking, were provided for 486,215 IDPs (230,470 male) in camps and collective shelters while 352,143 people (162,439 female) received hygiene supplies, contributing to COVID-19 prevention. This was a 41 per cent reduction in people receiving emergency services from 2020, as UNICEF shifts to more sustainable solutions.

The repair and rehabilitation of critical WASH infrastructure was driven by a needs-based vulnerability mapping and the principle of “Minimum reliable services for all – rather than all services for some”. UNICEF supported 2,969,126 people (1,500,803 male) through the light rehabilitation of water infrastructure and 830,220 people (409,690 female) through sewage networks. In 195 schools, 107,955 students (48 per cent girls) were provided with gender-responsive and accessible WASH facilities. UNICEF Syria began a climate shift by ‘solarizing’ one water system in Dara’a and conducting studies to solarize two more in 2022.

UNICEF continued to provide the country’s sodium hypochlorite needs to ensure proper chlorination of water distribution systems for 13.6 million people. This contributed to preventing any major water borne disease outbreak. UNICEF has engaged with the Ministry of Water Resources (MOWR) to assess options for an exit strategy from the import of sodium hypochlorite (See Lessons Learned and Innovations).

UNICEF and the Government began implementing the WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool Action Plan designed in 2020. The plan is guiding the WASH sector to strengthen the enabling environment, including policy, regulation, planning, financing, monitoring and capacity development. In line with this plan, UNICEF is supporting MOWR to establish an information management system for Tartous Governorate. If successful, the pilot will be scaled up to all governorates; this is expected in 2023. Seven O&M standard operating procedures were developed for water authorities and sewage companies to standardize their work and guide new employees.

The WASH Sector, led by UNICEF and with 36 partners, reached 1,132,755 beneficiaries, including 289,929 boys, 218,743 girls, 287,678 men and 336,405 women. The Sector played a leadership role in negotiating access to Alouk water station as well as in the mobilization of funds to respond to the water crises in northern and NE Syria.

**Child Protection**

Child Protection interventions reached over 988,000 people, aiming to reduce violence, exploitation and abuse and mitigate the impact of the current crisis on children. With 138 children injured and 93 killed by explosive remnants of war (January to September 2021), risk education was an urgent priority, reaching 938,805 children and caregivers (495,234 females). UNICEF launched an evaluation to inform future risk education programming and advocacy.
Psychosocial support was provided for 188,013 children (96,491 girls) through 54 child-friendly spaces and 31 mobile teams. In pre- and post-assessments, 56 per cent of participating children showed improved well-being. A key achievement was the completion of a national Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Manual to ensure quality programming relevant to the Syrian context. It is now being tested across governorates for feedback, update and roll out in 2022.

A positive parenting campaign had 27 million views while structured parenting programmes reached 37,302 women and 7,820 men. Parenting programmes incorporated COVID-19 stress management, with sessions delivered through WhatsApp and phone calls. Preparatory work also started to develop a comprehensive parenting programme curriculum in 2022.

A new case management model for children facing violence and abuse was piloted with coordination and oversight by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) and a service referral pathway established between NGOs and service providers, including police, health and education service providers. In 2021, 22,014 children (12,649 boys) benefited from case management with UNICEF support.

UNICEF strengthened its child protection programme in NE Syria, with a particular emphasis on unaccompanied and separated TCN children. An action plan for the TCN and Child Protection NE Syria was developed to set the parameters for UNICEF advocacy and programming. UNICEF provides care for unaccompanied or separated children in two interim care centres in Al-Hol. The centres received 144 unaccompanied minors, with 5 Iraqi, 30 Syrian and 32 TCN children reunified with their families.

UNICEF also supported MOSAL to develop a plan to operationalize the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child to create an enabling policy and legal framework for child rights. UNICEF advocacy with and technical assistance to the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population allowed for the finalization of the Domestic Violence Law which was submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister.

The UNICEF-led Child Protection Area of Responsibility (30 members) focused on coordination, advocacy and capacity building of partners in 2021.

Education

UNICEF supported 1.7 million school-aged children attending formal and non-formal education (NFE), focusing on out-of-school girls and boys. Support to formal education included the rehabilitation of 90 schools benefitting 59,798 students (29,426 girls); training of 13,500 temporary teachers to support 405,000 students; and distribution of 901,429 national textbooks to 894,822 students and 127,121 Curriculum B books to 55,725 students.

In crossline areas, 480,570 copies of self-learning programme (SLP) materials were distributed to community schools, allowing children to learn in the absence of the formal system. This was part of overall NFE support to 363,654 children (179,678 boys). UNICEF rolled out the Child-Level Monitoring System (CMS) to monitor attendance, retention and learning in NFE, tracking 38,000 SLP students and 7,000 children attending remedial classes (See Lessons Learned and Innovations). The SLP is flexible, designed to meet the needs of children who are out of school, including to work. SLP students have the option to transition into formal school; 3,227 out-of-school children (1,247 girls) transitioned in 2021.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education (MOE) continued the Back to Learning social media and outreach campaign, with special focus on girls and children with disabilities. The campaign reached
3,421,584 people with messages and engaged 59,552 teachers and children (27,394 male) with door-to-door visits and community dialogues.

UNICEF provided technical assistance to the National Center for Curriculum Development to align Curriculum B and SLP materials with the recently upgraded National Curriculum. The curricula were assessed and adopted, and now reflect child rights and gender-sensitive learning, and promote child-friendly approaches, children’s psychosocial wellbeing and resilience and gender equality. This alignment will help students more easily re-integrate, catch-up and prepare for year-end exams.

The MOE published its first Out-of-School Survey in 2021 with UNICEF support, officially recognizing that 2.45 million children are out of school (based on data from 2019/2020). The survey identified barriers, including gender barriers, that lead to exclusion from education. Recommendations from the Survey are aligned to the new Midterm Education Strategic Plan, which was launched in December 2021. The Plan was developed by MOE in consultation with technical experts and civil society; UNICEF and UNESCO provided inputs to ensure the plan is risk-informed and protects the resilience and well-being of children.

UNICEF leads the 95-member Education Sector, which reached 1,756,190 children in 2021. This includes 1,095,938 children (557,507 boys) supported through formal education and 660,252 (342,226 girls) through NFE. Education Sector coordination efforts allowed over 15,000 crossline or cross-border students to sit their national exams (See UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships).

Social Protection and Cash Transfers

Over 360,000 vulnerable people benefitted from UNICEF social protection interventions, including over 11,000 children with severe disabilities (6,400 boys) who received regular cash transfers and case management services. These interventions indirectly benefitted over 55,000 people in the families of children with disabilities since part of the cash was used to pay for essentials (e.g. food) for the family. Winter clothes were provided to over 104,000 displaced children (54,000 girls) to protect them from harsh weather and over 42,000 families (210,000 people with 100,000 children) received cash transfers to help them mitigate the socio-economic crisis.

Progress on critical building blocks for effective cash transfer interventions included (i) a One Registry consolidated database of all beneficiaries of UNICEF social protection interventions; (ii) a centralized grievance mechanism; (iii) the extension of benefits from 12 to 24 months for the children with disabilities programme; and (iv) the regular monitoring of effectiveness and impact, supported by a gender analysis. Nine post-distribution monitoring surveys were conducted and three reports disseminated. The surveys provided information about the socio-economic situation of beneficiaries, as well as feedback to improve the interventions. Case management was strengthened to address beneficiaries’ feedback about the need to improve the timeliness of services. Surveys also indicated the positive impact of interventions. For example, post-distribution monitoring of the children with disabilities programme in Rural Damascus indicated increased investment in children with disabilities after receiving their first transfer (a 57 per cent increase in spending on education and a 48 per cent increase on health).

Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF and partners provided nearly 298,156 young people with skills development and social engagement opportunities in 13 governorates, up from 170,000 reached in 2020. This includes 224,563 young people (112,173 girls) provided with social and civic engagement opportunities. Life skills sessions provided 100,405 young people (57,513 girls) with critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills. In addition, community-based vocational and entrepreneurship training courses were provided on topics including nursing and mobile repair. Services were provided in 12 integrated
learning centres, amongst other modalities. These centres were developed with the UNICEF Education Section and Ministry of Culture as a sustainable and scalable modality offering multiple pathways to learn, connect and play.

**Cross-sector**

Gender-related achievements were noted across UNICEF’s sectors, although not at a scale resulting in vital gender transformative results. Adjustments were made to ensure gender is integrated into the development of proposals, terms of reference for research and curricula; data collection and post-distribution monitoring; and capacity building for implementing partners. GBV was mainstreamed in the MHPSS Manual; life skills curricula review; national case management system pilot; and Sector Annual Work Plans.

UNICEF strengthened its evidence-driven risk communication and community engagement to promote positive practices. While TV, radio and social media remain powerful communication channels (reaching over 12 million people in 2021), working with religious leaders and service providers to engage, empower, and enable has been effective to support the most disadvantaged and marginalized (two million people reached).

**UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships**

UNICEF coordinated with MOH and WHO to roll out COVAX, with UNICEF leading on the importation of donated vaccines; strengthening the cold chain; and RCCE. UNICEF also built the capacity of vaccinators and recruited international consultants to provide technical support national counterparts.

In response to repeated shutdowns of Alouk water station, UNICEF with the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator’s Office, OCHA and ICRC continues to advocate for unhindered safe humanitarian access to the water station, and to the electricity network that supports it.

UNICEF and the Resident Coordinator co-chair the Syria Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) responsible for Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) functions in-country with eight member UN agencies. The Task Force ensures the documentation and verification of grave violations against children, as well as Security Council reporting requirements and dialogue with listed parties to the conflict. The CTFMR met twice in 2021 and made significant progress on a key engagement with the government on the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda. UNICEF also contributes to the MRM4Syria, reporting on violations in partnership with the Whole of Syria Education Cluster.

UNICEF interacts with Member States through the Syria CAAC Group of Friends, a group of Amman-based embassies which acts as a platform for interactions between UNICEF and interested Member States on CAAC issues. The group met three times in 2021, twice at the technical level and once at the ambassador level.

UNICEF and UNMAS participated in a side event of the 24th international Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers in May and presented their joint work on the impact of explosive ordnance, including on children. Australia presented the donor perspective.

The PSEA In-Country Network is co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR and with 12 UN entities participating. Breakthroughs in 2021 include assessing 48 partners which form 40 per cent of all UN agencies partners in the country and the decentralization of the network for improved investigations and follow-up.
The UNICEF-led Education Sector supported over 15,000 students from crossline areas and cross-border to participate in the national Grade 9 and 12 exams, including 5,800 students supported in accommodation centres. The Education Sector coordinated 23 partners to provide: food; water; non-food items such as mattresses, blankets and fans; WASH supplies; light rehabilitation of accommodation centres; transportation; bursaries; remedial classes; psychosocial support; case management and risk education, as well as COVID-19 PCR tests for students crossing the border from Lebanon.

UNICEF co-chairs the UN Risk Management Working Group with UNHCR. To build towards a common risk management strategy, the group identified common risks among UN agencies and established mitigation measures, in addition to sharing common practices on addressing different risks.

UNICEF has an annual Memorandum of Understanding with WFP covering contributing to improved coverage of malnutrition prevention and treatment activities as well as attendance in formal and non-formal learning spaces. UNICEF is also part of a Joint Programme with the European Union, FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat and WFP to strengthen urban and rural resilience and the conditions for recovery.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

The UNICEF-led COVID-19 RCCE Pillar used an evidence base developed through a demand generation assessment. The first round of the assessment was undertaken by UNICEF in June 2021, surveying beneficiaries at UNICEF-supported service points. Based on the quality and importance of the data collected, the subsequent round in October was administered by MOH preceded by capacity development of MOH health workers to collect (75 staff) and enter (30 staff) data. The second round surveyed 10,346 respondents in 88 health facilities in 14 governorates. It revealed that 98 per cent of respondents had heard of the COVID-19 vaccine, up from 72 per cent in the first round. Seventy-four per cent expressed trust in the new vaccine, up from 56 per cent in the first round. Data from the assessment has been used to strengthen MOH COVID-19 vaccination communication efforts including key messages and dissemination modalities. UNICEF will support MOH to continue this assessment in 2022 to increase vaccine uptake as additional doses arrive in-country.

UNICEF partners also explored social listening through social media channels (Facebook and WhatsApp) in NE Syria. Analysis of 118 comments (rumours, positive feedback or misinformation) about COVID-19, such as impacts on pregnant women and children, fed into further action. For example, one UNICEF partner created a ‘Your vaccine is your safety’ Facebook page to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention, receiving questions from the public and providing timely answers from the Directorate of Health.

After 10 years of conflict, no independent actors in Syria had conducted an analysis of government and aid spending in the sectors focused on children. To address this gap, UNICEF developed a Budget Brief to analyze the 2021 State Budget. Despite the current context, this analysis was crucial to gather available data on government and aid-financed spending in the social sectors. The analysis focused on 2021 State Budget, but put it in a broader framework, highlighting trends in social sector expenditure over the past ten years of conflict. This exercise was conducted internally and took seven months. Results have been process-oriented but critically important. The Budget Brief process led to (i) increased evidence; (ii) setting an agenda for research and policy engagement; and (iii) positioning UNICEF as a value-added actor in Syria, beyond the delivery of humanitarian aid. Key lessons learned include:

· Public Finance for Children activities are possible in a complex humanitarian environment, even where there is no budget transparency.
· Budget Briefs are a low hanging fruit that all Country Offices can develop to generate evidence,
communicate advocacy messages, build partnerships and identify a research and policy agenda.
- There is critical space for UNICEF to fill on budget and financing issues.
- It is important to take risks and not shy away from difficult and sensitive issues.

The analysis provided a series of recommendations to help inform UNICEF future research advocacy and policy agenda, including the need to (i) conduct a comprehensive review of government expenditures on key sectors for children; (ii) assess the impact of spending on subsidies; (iii) assess the socio-economic impacts of sanctions on children; and (iv) strengthen aid monitoring and reporting. All of these will be priority research to inform the Office advocacy agenda in 2022 and beyond.

UNICEF established the CMS as a detailed tracking tool to understand and respond to the needs of children participating in NFE. The CMS tracks each child’s age, disability status, caregivers’ education levels, reasons for dropping out, transitions to different education pathways, education history, attendance rate and services received. This tool is used by all 14 partners implementing the SLP and tracked 38,000 children in 2021. The CMS has also been expanded to track 16,500 crossline students supported to sit their national exams and 7,000 students participating in remedial classes. A milestone in 2021 was the first local training for the use of the CMS for the formal Curriculum B in nine governorates covering 103 schools. UNICEF will further expand the use of the CMS in 2022 for community-based early childhood education in all governorates.

UNICEF continued in 2021 to support all of the sodiumhypochlorite needs for the country to ensure proper chlorination of water distribution systems in all governorates. This ensured that 13.6 million people have access to chlorinated water, which contributed to preventing any major water borne disease outbreaks. UNICEF has engaged with the MOWR to assess options for an exit strategy away from importing of sodium hypochlorite and towards local production. In that respect, UNICEF has constructed one factory for sodium hypochlorite in 2021 meeting the needs of 1.8 million people in Damascus and Rural Damascus and has conducted a feasibility study for the construction of two additional factories.

Most of Syria is witnessing significant electricity shortages, which are at their worst point since the beginning of the crisis. Electricity provision in most rural areas stands at only two hours per day. UNICEF is looking at possibilities of installing solar systems on water infrastructure that it previously rehabilitated. In 2021, SCO ‘solarized’ the production boreholes of one water system in Dara’a and is conducting studies to solarize at least two more in 2022.

An Assessment of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) System in Syria was conducted with MOE and the Institute European for Cooperation and Development to improve TVET in the formal and nonformal systems. The assessment identified factors that affect the TVET sector in Syria, through consultations with stakeholders including the private sector, Chambers of Industry and Commerce and young people. The analysis included a review of available secondary data, a market study and a workplace analysis including the assessment of current gaps, needs and opportunities that will be leveraged to design a framework on the way forward in consultation with young people and Government in 2022.