

Syrian Arab Republic

Update on the context and situation of children

Children across Syria face one of the most complex emergencies in the world. There are 14.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.9 million children, 4.2 million people with disabilities and 5.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).[1] This is driven by the worsening economic crisis, disease outbreaks, localized hostilities, mass displacement, devastated public infrastructure and weakened social services. Forty-one per cent of Syria's 7,266 communities have low to medium levels of accessibility due to insecurity and/or control, complicating aid efforts.

A cholera outbreak was declared on 10 September, and quickly spread across the country, especially in crowded informal settlements.[2] Across Syria, 70,220 cases were reported by the end of the year (including 98 deaths).[3] A quarter of suspected cases were children under 5.[4] The outbreak is a result of the destruction of water and sanitation infrastructure, electricity outages, prolonged drought and population movements. Meanwhile, 21,606 COVID-19 cases were reported, though this is a significant under-count.[5]

Forty-seven per cent of the population relies on alternative water sources, up from 37 per cent in 2021; two million fewer people are using water networks as their main source water than in 2020.[6] Of the 4,788 UNICEF beneficiaries interviewed as part of a Child Well-Being Monitoring (CWM) exercise [7], half received water from the network once a week or less frequently or had no network access. Meanwhile, 41 per cent of public hospitals and 43 per cent of primary health care (PHC) facilities are non- or partially functional.[8] Many cannot afford health care where it is available, including 39 per cent of CWM participants.

Ninety per cent of families live in poverty and 55 per cent are food insecure.[9] In the first seven months of the war in Ukraine, food prices in Syria increased by a half.[10] Of participants in the CWM, 75 per cent were not able to provide their children with enough meals each day and 87 per cent were not able to provide minimum dietary diversity.[11] Food insecurity has contributed to the increase of acute malnutrition rates by a third from 2021 to 2023.[12] Undernutrition (stunting, acute malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies) and overweight affect 3.75 million children.[13]

There are 2.4 million children out of school and 1.6 million at risk of dropping out. Children with disabilities are particularly likely to be deprived of their education.[14] Economic pressures push children out of school to support their families and limit teachers' ability to afford transportation to work.[15] One in three schools have been damaged or destroyed.[16] There is 1 classroom for every 54 children nationally, going as low as 1 for every 101 children in Damascus. Meanwhile, the fragmented education system is depriving children of an accredited education and future educational pathways.

Protection concerns remain paramount. In 2022, more than 2,400 grave violations against children were verified, including recruitment by armed groups and conflict-related deaths and injuries.[17] The economic crisis is worsening negative coping mechanisms, especially affecting female-headed households, and contributing to the normalization of gender-based violence (GBV), which predominantly affects girls.[18] Seventy-one per cent of communities surveyed reported child marriage (often affecting girls) and 84 per cent that children are working (often affecting boys).[19]

Ninety-one per cent of the 4.5 million people living in the north-west are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.8 million IDPs.[20] Food insecurity affects 3.1 million families in the area, and 1.9 million are reliant on water trucking. Protection concerns are acute, and worsening with the

increase in hostilities which began in October.[21]

In north-east Syria (NE Syria), political and conflict dynamics drive protection concerns and complicate aid delivery. There are 53,000 IDPs in Al-Hol (64 per cent children) and 2,500 in Al-Roj (66 per cent children) Camps,[22] including third-country national children in urgent need of repatriation to their countries of origin. Of the children in these detention-like camps, 12,000 are Syrians, 16,200 are Iraqis and 6,800 are from 60 other nationalities. On 20 January, an attack on Ghweiran detention centre in Al-Hasakeh City in NE Syria temporarily displaced 45,000 people. Nearly 700 boys, most Syrian and Iraqi with the rest of 20 other nationalities, some as young as 12 years old, were amongst those detained in Ghweiran.

Alouk water station was out of service for 128 days in 2022, with 54 days of partial service. Since the end of 2019, over 460,000 people in Al Hasakeh City and surrounding areas, and an additional half million in NE Syria, have been intermittently deprived of access to safe drinking water due to interruptions to the pumping of water and electricity provision.

The 8,000 people estimated to remain in Rukban on the Syrian-Jordanian border face extreme vulnerability. Despite advocacy efforts, the last crossline mission to Rukban was in 2019. UNICEF and other agencies support those medically evacuated or voluntarily departing, including in their new hosting communities.

[1] Of the total 6.9 million IDPs, 5.3 million are considered in need.

[2] UN News, Syria: Cholera outbreak is ‘serious threat’ to whole Middle East, 13 September 2022.

[3] Humanitarian Country Team Update, 11 January 2023.

[4] UNICEF, What you need to know about cholera

[5] WHO, Monthly COVID-19 Bulletin (December 2022), 25 January 2023.

[6] OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2021, March 2021.

[7] 38 of 62 districts in 13 governorates (excluding Quneitra due to access)

[8] WHO, Whole of Syria Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System, 2022 Q2.

[9] OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2022.

[10] WFP, Syria Country Office Market Price Watch Bulletin Issue 94, October 2022 (published 30 November 2022).

[11] Minimum meal frequency is at least three meals a day and minimum dietary diversity is at least four food groups.

[12] 2023 Nutrition Sector HNO.

[13] Ibid.

[14] UNICEF, Post-Distribution Monitoring Surveys, 2002.

[15] OCHA, HNO, 2022.

[16] OCHA, HNO, 2020 (latest available data).

[17] UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.

[18] OCHA, HNO 2022.

[19] Ibid.

[20] OCHA, North-west Syria Situation Report, 11 August 2022.

[21] UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Briefing Note, 8 November 2022.

[22] Based on internal UN sources, December 2022.

Major contributions and drivers of results

UNICEF Syria reached over 10.0 million people in 2022, including 3.1 million boys and 3.2 million girls. Families in the most severely affected and inaccessible areas were prioritized, with 218,000 people reached in difficult to access areas (45 per cent of this population) and 3.5 million in

moderately accessible areas (63 per cent of this population); this was supported in part by a network of 77 third-party facilitators. These results were achieved through coordination and joint advocacy with a range of stakeholders, 6 field offices, 38 implementing partners, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and 201 UNICEF staff and 22 consultants. UNICEF is working along the humanitarian to development nexus to strengthen the linkages between the emergency response and essential service restoration, resilience and social cohesion.

Integrated cholera response

UNICEF and partners actively coordinated the cholera response, holding key roles in the incident management teams in Amman (Whole of Syria), Damascus and Gaziantep. UNICEF led the WASH and Risk Communication and Community Engagement Pillars, contributed to the Case Management Pillar and co-led the Operations, Supply and Logistics Pillar. As part of the inter-agency response, UNICEF ensured safe drinking water to 70,000 people, supported the vaccination of 1,943,907 people, provided supplies and technical support to treat 11,700 cases and increased the awareness of 1,784,145 people through messages and 1,398,564 people through two-way engagement.

Health and Nutrition

UNICEF provided over 4.6 million people with health and nutrition assistance in 2022 in support of Strategic Plan Goal Area 1. UNICEF worked along the humanitarian to development nexus by providing 1,795,582 medical consultations (271,113 for women, 13,409 for men, 767,482 for girls and 743,578 for boys) through NGO partners while supporting technical training and supplies to revitalize the district-level primary health care system. A costing study was finalized to support future planning for the health care system.

A key partnership with GAVI Alliance allowed UNICEF to procure all childhood vaccines for Syria, and finance 75 per cent of these vaccines. Routine immunization increased slightly with 77 per cent to children under 1 receiving a third dose of diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus vaccine in 2022 compared to 74 per cent in 2021 and 75 per cent in 2020. Rates remain low as the already weakened health system was over-burdened by COVID-19 and cholera. UNICEF and WHO supported a defaulter campaign (180,202 children vaccinated), and UNICEF is researching the demand-side barriers to routine immunization to inform community engagement efforts. Polio vaccination campaigns reached 2.3 million children, acting a bridge between humanitarian provision and routine immunization. Syria has remained polio-free since 2017.

UNICEF and WHO supported COVID-19 vaccination including monthly acceleration campaigns; 1.8 million people were fully vaccinated (40 per cent of the 4.6 million targeted) and 2.6 million received one dose (58 per cent of the target). Low risk perception and relaxed control measures are affecting demand. Community engagement and social listening being used to identify and address these challenges. UNICEF also provided 173 pieces of equipment and generated evidence to improve the cold chain for current and future outbreaks.

UNICEF and partners screened 1,095,435 children (557,673 girls) for malnutrition and admitted 7,501 children (4,232 girls) for severe wasting treatment. Partners also reached 1,347,668 primary caregivers with infant and young child feeding counselling (1,106,537 women) and provided 464,625 children (232,850 girls) and 150,758 pregnant and lactating women with multiple micronutrients. An advocacy breakthrough saw nutrition indicators integrated into the annual Food Security Assessment. This Joint Approach with WFP for Nutrition and Food Security Assessment provided updated acute malnutrition prevalence rates, as well as linkages between food security and nutrition, as an evidence base for programming. UNICEF also supported an iodine study; preliminary results showed 55.6 per cent of households are using iodized salt, down from 63 per cent in 2019.

Under UNICEF leadership, 46 Nutrition Sector partners reached 958,886 children under 5 (501,086 girls) and 1,432,689 pregnant and lactating women with nutrition services. This included identifying and treating 25,853 children (14,493 girls) with moderate and 9,129 (5,002 girls) with severe wasting.

WASH

UNICEF reached over 5.0 million people with WASH assistance in 2022, in line with Strategic Plan Goal Area 4. Where possible, UNICEF rehabilitates WASH infrastructure to provide sustainable solutions, while preventing the national system from significant deterioration. With UNICEF's support, 4,418,493 people (1,127,850 boys, 1,194,037 girls, 934,990 men, 1,161,616 women) gained access to safe drinking water through the rehabilitation of 50 water networks, 8 pumping stations and 95 wells, and the provision of operation and maintenance equipment. To improve sustainability, while considering climate change and the fuel crisis, seven pumping stations and two wells in Aleppo and Quneitra were solarized, benefiting 730,000 people. Meanwhile, 1,440,138 people (387,858 boys, 407,111 girls, 282,786 men, 362,384 women) were supported with basic sanitation.

Emergency-focused interventions such as water trucking and latrine desludging were provided for 359,172 people (94,195 boys, 97,662 girls, 75,814 men, 91,501 women) in camps and collective shelters. UNICEF also delivered all the sodium hypochlorite required to chlorinate the country's water distribution systems, benefitting 13.8 million people.

UNICEF supported 170,363 students (87,144 girls) in 423 schools with water trucking, hygiene supplies and promotion and/or rehabilitation of WASH facilities. Of these, 114 schools with 67,854 students (34,545 girls) benefitted from gender-responsive, accessible WASH facilities. With the ADAP section, 164,613 people (40,032 boys, 49,016 girls, 33,571 men, 41,994 women) received hygiene promotion and 15,793 females (11,974 under 18) participated in menstrual hygiene sessions and were given dignity kits.

The WASH Bottleneck Analysis Tool Action Plan, supported by UNICEF in 2020, acts as the roadmap to strengthen the WASH enabling environment. In line with this Plan, a WASH information management system in Tartous and Latakia is nearing completion and Water Safety Planning[1] was scaled up from its pilot in Rural Damascus to Hama, with plans to expand to three more governorates. UNICEF also supported the initiation of a National Strategy for Drinking Water and Sanitation, which will underpin work along the humanitarian to development nexus. The strategy is expected in the first half of 2023.

Twenty-two WASH Sector partners, led by UNICEF and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), reached 8.1 million people (4.1 million females), prioritizing resilience-focused interventions while delivering emergency services to 1,194,571 people (576,331 females). A Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in Syria was initiated to document the baseline situation of climate, energy and environment for improved planning and prioritization.

Child Protection

UNICEF and 18 implementing partners and in coordination with line ministries, provided quality child protection services to 1.5 million girls, boys, women and caregivers in support of Goal Area 3. This included 87,301 children (46,239 girls) provided with psychosocial support, 26,701 caregivers (22,862 female) who participated in parenting programmes, 138,952 people (107,948 children) reached with gender-based violence prevention and response activities and 1,123,312 people (904,389 children) who received explosive ordnance risk education.

The pilot of the new case management system in two districts in Rural Damascus was completed, testing the new standard operating protocols and assessment tools. It has been endorsed as the national

case management system by the Government, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MOSAL) and National Steering Committee on Case Management and should be rolled out across the country in 2023.

High-level advocacy continued with member states for the repatriation of children with foreign citizenship stranded in prison-like camps and detention facilities in NE Syria. Support included assistance with emergency travel documents for foreign children, logistical support before and during transportation and facilitating connections with UNICEF offices in receiving countries. This advocacy and support allowed 1,591 children and their caregivers to be repatriated to countries of origin: 1,281 Iraqis (971 children) and 310 third-country nationals from nine countries (228 children).

The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism documented the situation of children and armed conflict. UNICEF's co-chairing of the UN Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, together with the UN Resident Coordinator, enabled mutual engagement with the Government of Syria to co-develop a framework for strengthening child rights and the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

Capacities built during the humanitarian response were leveraged to improve the national child protection system. A National Mental Health Psychosocial Support Manual was finalized and adopted in coordination with MOSAL and Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population, with participation of other ministries, NGOs and UN agencies. All UNICEF partners are now using the manual; results from pre and post-tests show a 60 per cent increase in the well-being of participating children.

Foundations were also built towards expanding work on child marriage (scoping mission and report); introducing restorative justice (initial agreements with the Ministry of Justice); standardizing parenting programmes (draft Manual under review); and professionalizing the social work workforce (selecting universities to establish community and localized professional capacities for dealing with vulnerable children at Diploma and Bachelor's levels).

UNICEF leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (23 members) focusing on coordination, advocacy and capacity building of partners, and reaching 736,861 children (389,522 girls) and 161,771 adults (130,042 women) in 2022.

Education

UNICEF supported 1,368,879 (685,946 females) children with learning opportunities in 2022 in line with Strategic Plan Goal Area 2. This was accomplished through school rehabilitation, and the provision of non-formal education (NFE) services for out-of-school children and children at risk of dropping out. National, Curriculum B (CB) and Self-Learning Programme (SLP) textbooks were distributed, the latter emphasized for students in NE Syria. Of a random sample of 466 parents, 72 per cent were satisfied with SLP and 86 per cent felt their children had improved in at least three aspects of their learning.

UNICEF continued to link its humanitarian education services with upstream efforts. A critical achievement was the alignment of CB with the national curriculum, ensuring high pedagogical quality; promoting child rights, gender equality, social cohesion and human rights; and being free from political and ideological content. The improved CB was piloted and rolled out, reaching 67,286 students. Work has begun to align and update the Self-Learning Materials (SLM) for out-of-school children.

Key strategic developments include supporting an intersectoral 2020-2027 Early Childhood Development strategy, and the distribution of the "Syria Education and Development Investment Case: Economic, Social and Psychological Costs and Risks Resulting from Not Investing in Education

Systems in Syria”; both pieces will inform longer-term education programming.

UNICEF leads the 38-member Education Sector, which reached 1.06 million children in 2022. This includes 913,149 children (443,476 girls) supported with formal education and 146,659 (71,266 girls) through NFE. UNICEF also co-leads the No Lost Generation Initiative, bringing together 39 UN and NGO partners to advocate for the protection, education and development of Syrian children, adolescents and youth.

Social Protection and Cash Transfers

UNICEF expanded access to inclusive social protection for 120,440 children in line with Strategic Plan Goal Area 5. This included 11,350 children with disabilities (4,628 girls) and their families provided with quarterly cash assistance and case management services. Regular post-distribution monitoring surveys demonstrated the importance of this programme, for example, in increasing access to services: 28 per cent of children in Rural Damascus, 33 per cent in Hama and 40 per cent in Al-Hasakeh received specialized or basic health care for the first time. Additionally, 41,689 highly vulnerable families were supported with humanitarian cash assistance to cope with economic hardship during winter.

Progress continued to position UNICEF as a credible source of knowledge about children. An analysis of the 2022 national budget, focusing on key sectors for children, was disseminated. The analysis highlighted Syria’s catastrophic fiscal situation and highlighted policy recommendations, including the need to protect allocations to sectors that matter most for children from cuts, and to increase and change the nature of international assistance (invest in the early recovery of national systems rather than short-term aid). The Budget Brief laid the foundation to institutionalize UNICEF’s work on public finance for children in the 2023 workplan, including partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and Parliament.

Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP)

ADAP programming supports the UNICEF Strategic Plan cross-sectorally, with a focus on Strategic Plan Goal Area 2, and its result area on ‘Learning, skills, participation and engagement’. In 2022, UNICEF and partners provided 241,532 young people (1,137,161 female) with skills building courses while 360,310 (189,813 female) accessed opportunities to engage in their communities including 91,044 (38,701 female) through Sports for Development. This was accomplished through 129 adolescent-friendly spaces (70 operated in coordination with Ministry of Culture-MOC) and 125 youth mobile teams who work in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Eighty per cent of life skills graduates reported that the training enhanced their active community engagement.

Opportunities facilitated by UNICEF include a Social Entrepreneurship workshop where 25 youth (12 females) competed for seed funding and the imaGen Ventures Youth Challenge with UNDP. Through the latter, Techno Blind Team advanced to the global competition, securing seed funding, incubation and mentorship to transform their idea into a sustainable enterprise.

A new cycle of Participatory Action Research was launched in Tartous to generate evidence and recommendations on climate change with Directorate of Culture, WASH section and UNICEF Regional Office. Fourteen young researchers (4 females) have completed their research and the findings will be used to develop climate action plans in 2023.

Cross-sectoral

UNICEF is preparing an office-wide, integrated initiative to prevent and respond to violence against children by transforming the social norms that underpin and perpetuate violence against children in

schools, homes and communities. Following a series of consultations with parents, teachers, principals and students, a framework was developed jointly by the Child Protection, Social and Behaviour Change, ADAP and Education sections that integrates positive parenting and peer relationships alongside improved safety in schools. An in-service teacher training curriculum was piloted, equipping 200 education staff (120 teachers and 80 school administrators and counsellors) from 24 schools with skills for positive classroom management.

Twelve Integrated Learning Centres operated with MOC supported 6,490 children (3,310 female) with remedial and learning support. The centres provide children and youth with a second chance to learn and move towards certified education, along with access to child protection services and community engagement opportunities.

Social and behaviour change was a key change strategy. Evidence-based efforts were used to identify and overcome demand-side barriers to COVID-19 vaccination, routine immunization and cholera prevention and to increase enrollment through Back to Learning campaigns. Efforts included assessments; capacity building of partner staff and volunteers; mass media; and community engagement interventions. This was done in partnership with ministries, four UN agencies and 15 implementing partners, reaching 18,585,585 people with messages and engaging 7,128,461 people in two-way communication.

Lessons from the L3 and Strategic Shift to Resilience evaluations led to the introduction of an Outcome+ initiative to track change at outcome level. Outcome+ revealed information on learning among children in NFE and the need to transition away from NGO-implemented technical training for youth. The latter was triangulated with an ADAP Evaluability Assessment (See Lessons Learned). Advocacy continued for a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey to provide information on children and women and monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

[1] Capacity building, identification of bottlenecks, developing plans to eliminate risk factors and implementing the plan

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

The UN Secretary-General convened world leaders for a Transforming Education Summit from 16-19 September. UNICEF, UNESCO and the Resident Coordinator supported the Syrian Ministry of Education to participate in the summit. The Minister of Education established a national committee and held consultations with line ministries including Health, Social Affairs and Labour, Culture and Higher Education; Education Sector members; and youth-focused and youth-led NGOs. A national report was drafted which enabled the delegation to present on-going work as an example of transforming education in wars and disasters.

National exam support continued under the coordination of UNICEF as Education Sector lead. In 2022, 27 organizations participated, including UN agencies, NGOs and SARC as well as governmental bodies. This cooperation ensured the provision of education services and supplies, as well as accommodation and 24/7 logistical support in 34 centres for 17,414 crossline and cross-border students (7,655 girls) to sit certified national exams.

The UN Joint Programme (JP) on Urban and Rural Resilience in Syria led by the EU and the RC and brings together FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF and WFP, to deliver coordinated resilience and recovery-oriented interventions in Dar'a and Dier-ez-Zor, which have been damaged during the conflict. The JP is underpinned by a commitment to resilience solutions, applying an area-based and conflict-sensitive approach, which optimizes community participation and targets efforts for the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups including women, youth and people with disabilities. Joint planning, coordination and discussion among the participating UN agencies and the formulation of joint activities and services along with substantive consultations with local stakeholders has led to a more integrated design and efficient allocation of resources. The successful collaboration and outcome of the two phases of the programme have encouraged other donors and attracted them to join and provide additional resources to expand the programme to other locations with same approach and agencies.

With GAVI and WHO, UNICEF obtained the waiver needed for the co-financing of vaccines by the Syrian Ministry of Health as well as securing funding for health system strengthening. The latter will support the rehabilitation of 36 primary health care centres for the immunization programme and other critical maternal and child health services.

Building on the evidence generated during the and in line with the L3 evaluation findings, the Office developed an Expansion Plan to scale up its integrated response for children with disabilities. A core group of donors committed to children with disabilities was established to (i) accompany the implementation of the plan; (ii) mobilize attention of the donor community to the programme; and (iii) identify funding opportunities. UNICEF is developing new partnerships with national actors to build an alliance for children with disabilities; this includes engagement with the inter-ministerial committee for people with disabilities and the establishment of an NGO coordination forum for social inclusion. This forum will be established in 2023 to fill in the existing coordination vacuum among partners about social inclusion and leverage support to expand the social protection response for children with disabilities.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

In 2022, UNICEF Syria released a series of think pieces under the theme of Every Day Counts which outlined how UNICEF – along with other UN agencies - seeks to shift its programming towards early recovery while maintaining the delivery of humanitarian assistance based on needs on the ground. The

pieces covered child protection, education, health, nutrition and WASH and reviewed the impact and lessons taken from staying and delivering during the 11 years of conflict in Syria. Based on these lessons and considering the immense humanitarian needs facing children in 2022, the pieces then laid out a way forward, including the strategic shifts and investments required to support children at scale focus on resilience and early recovery. The way forward also aligned with the formative evaluation on the Strategic Shift to Resilience completed in 2022.

As one example of this shift, UNICEF is accelerating its shift from a primarily emergency WASH response to a continuum of rapid, sustained and equitable response with longer-term solutions that build the resilience of communities and sector systems to endure shocks and crises, including in response to the changing climate. The solarization of water systems is an important example of this shift: Two systems were solarized in 2021, increasing to nine systems in 2022. UNICEF will continue to scale up these investments moving into its new country programme.

The shift towards standardized curricula for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support demonstrates another key step in systematizing quality services for children throughout Syria. Lessons learned from the development of this Manual – including the early and genuine involvement of all relevant stakeholders – are now being applied to the development of a national manual for parenting programmes. These efforts, combined with emerging office-wide inter-sectoral Violence against Children programming, will support a ‘universal prevention’ pillar of UNICEF Child Protection programming by tackling the behavioural, social and cultural determinants of child protection violations at scale with the aim of addressing harmful social and gender norms. The successful case management pilot, started in Rural Damascus and to be expanded across the country, is also a key pillar of this work.

While no think piece was developed specifically reflecting on ADAP programming, evidence generated in 2022 has helped in identifying steps for a similar shift. An Evaluability Assessment was conducted by an independent Youth Specialist consultant along with NGOs, line ministries, young people, UNICEF sections and UN agencies, and six Syrian youth researchers (three females). The Assessment identified the clear relevance of the ADAP programme in terms of participation and social cohesion but also constraints to scalability such as declining funds and resource-intensive activities and need to linkages with available systems and accreditation. A separate survey of 450 TVET graduates (258 females) recommended increasing connections with community activities to enable graduates to apply their training; increasing the number and duration of the courses to learn on a deeper scale; promoting hands-on training; and providing equipment for users to train at home. To date, UNICEF has delivered TVET courses through its partnerships with NGOs. However, this service delivery mechanism is costly and has limitations on the sustainability and scalability, as well as the types of improvement requested by the TVET graduate survey. Based on these findings, UNICEF will increase its systems-focus for TVET in the coming years. This shift will also be informed by the 2021 UNICEF TVET assessment, which concluded that reform is required at various levels – access, quality, governance, funding.

Children and young people in Syria are on the wrong side of the digital divide, limiting their access to the same learning opportunities as their connected peers in other countries. As education systems increasingly invest in innovative and resilient delivery methods in the wake of the COVID-19, the need for solutions to deliver digital learning to the most marginalized has never been more urgent. As part of transforming education, the Learning Passport was adopted for digital learning in non-formal education activities supporting out of school children. A pilot project was initiated with first phase of digital material preparation, and the second phase started by reaching 500 children in two governorates (Aleppo and Hama) to be then expanded to five governorates (adding Al Hasakeh, Homs, Rural Damascus). Initial analysis of the project revealed that using the standardized and centralized content based on SLM was key factor to success. On the other hand, diversifying delivery platforms included using blended learning based on tablets, in computer labs and using their parents' mobiles helped

provide required flexibility.

The winter response was redesigned based on the lessons learned from the 2021/2022 response. Post-distribution monitoring highlighted the need to increase the amount and frequency of cash assistance, leading to an increase from one-off payments to three rounds of \$60 in unconditional cash assistance for a total of US\$ 180 between October 2022 and February 2023. Results also highlighted the need to focus on the most vulnerable families, leading to targeting based on four eligibility criteria: female-headed families; families with a child and/or adult with a disability; families with a child and/or adult with a chronic illness; and families with orphan children. Finally, it was noted that cash was most needed before the onset of winter. Thanks to the early financial contributions of partners, the winter response was initiated in the summer of 2022. Between August and October 2022, a lengthy and rigorous registration exercise was conducted through door-to-door visits in the communities identified for the winter response. As a result, 20,933 families meeting the eligibility criteria were identified and registered in Aleppo, Hama and Rural Damascus Governorate. Due to lack of funding, the winter response in Homs could not take place this year.