The year 2022 began with an estimated 274 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Throughout the year, these needs grew considerably, largely due to the war in Ukraine; to rising food insecurity and threats of famine brought about by this war and by climate-related and socioeconomic factors; and to the devastating floods in Pakistan.

**Conflict leads to humanitarian needs**

Conflict drives 80 per cent of all humanitarian needs. The number of countries experiencing violent conflict is at a 30-year high. And, around the world, attacks on children continue unabated. From Ukraine to Yemen and from Ethiopia to Nigeria and beyond, warring parties are flouting one of the most basic rules of war: protect the children.

Conflict is disrupting access to the necessities of life, like food and water, and is forcing people into extreme poverty. The poorest and the most vulnerable people are paying the highest price. What’s more, reaching people who require assistance in conflict-affected environments has become more difficult, because humanitarian access – the ability to reach people with the life-saving items and services they require – has severely deteriorated in recent years. Increased violence against humanitarian workers and assets has intensified this phenomenon.

Conflict, violence and instability are forcing people out of their communities. Political instability and unrest in Lebanon, Myanmar and the Sudan – and these are only a few examples – drove people away from their homes in 2022, increasing their vulnerability. By the end of June 2022, the number of individuals forcibly displaced from their homes over the years due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order had surpassed 103 million people.

**The climate crisis is a child rights crisis**

Climate change is a top driver of humanitarian need and human suffering, particularly for the poorest countries and the most vulnerable people living in them. The effects of climate hazards linger long after the climatic “event” has passed. The aftermath of floods, for example, is often deadlier for children than the extreme weather events that initiate them. In 2022, flooding contributed to the increased spread of such major killers of children as malnutrition, malaria, cholera and diarrhoea.

The climate crisis is deepening already wide inequalities, because climate change, weather variability and the steady rise in natural hazards are affecting large numbers of people who are already living in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The consequences of the climate crisis will nonetheless be felt by the world at large, and they will include more instability, violence and displacement.

These consequences are already being felt by millions of children worldwide, as the climate crisis becomes visible in their lives as everyday threats to their rights: as a water crisis; a health and nutritional crisis; an education crisis; a protection crisis; and a participation crisis.

**Record child displacements, a record nobody wants**

Children are crossing borders in record numbers, with their families or separated from them, or unaccompanied. Altogether, nearly 37 million children worldwide are displaced due to conflict and violence, a number of displaced children not seen since the Second World War. And this number does not even include those children displaced by poverty or climate change or by the search for a better life. Nor does it include those children displaced in 2022 due to the war in Ukraine, which itself has
caused the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War.

Many displaced children are living in limbo, without official immigration status or access to education and health care. And far too many displaced children encounter danger, detention, deprivation and discrimination on their journeys, at their destination or upon return home. In short, when children are displaced from their homes and communities, they are at greater risk of rights violations.

**We must work together to alleviate the stresses on the rights of children**

The great stresses on the rights of children brought about by the intensifying humanitarian situations of our era are only expected to grow. UNICEF has the mandate to address the emergency and long-term needs of children and women; it has demonstrated its capacity to do so at a worldwide scale; and it is constantly adapting to provide an ever-better response to the needs to children. This is what makes UNICEF the humanitarian leader that is called for in these particularly challenging times.

In this context, the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) provided strategic and coordinated support to UNICEF country offices preparing for and responding to humanitarian crises, in accordance with UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

EMOPS leads efforts to ensure that UNICEF’s role in any emergency situation – complex, protracted or sudden-onset – is clearly defined, that the organization is well equipped to fulfil that role and deliver on our mandate at all levels.

**Major contributions and drivers of results**

**Strengthened humanitarian preparedness and response to support principled humanitarian action that enables greater humanitarian access and promotes the provision of assistance and protection for children and communities affected by humanitarian crises**

**In 2022, EMOPS continued to shape, promote and coordinate humanitarian policies and advocacy to support principled humanitarian action.** EMOPS strengthened its commitment to address global humanitarian policy issues and concerns related to children in armed conflict by advocating with various stakeholders including United Nations actors, Member States, intergovernmental bodies and inter-agency platforms, with the goal of strengthening the protection of children, women and civilians affected by armed conflict.

In addition, EMOPS led initiatives to support the localization of humanitarian aid by country offices, including promoting inter-agency collaboration and efforts towards a comprehensive and coherent approach to localization in humanitarian response. EMOPS developed a UNICEF guidance note strengthening institutional capacity for local actors and provided support to the development of an International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)/UNICEF preparedness framework for subnational local actors. At the inter-agency level, EMOPS co-chaired the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on localization; led efforts to mobilize the humanitarian system in operationalizing IASC guidance on participation of local actors in IASC coordination mechanisms; developed a common approach to capacity sharing arrangements with local actors; and advanced IASC guidance on overhead in financing of local actors.
To advance commitments on linking humanitarian-development-peace, EMOPS facilitated the update of the UNICEF Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus and its dissemination within the organization. Using policy advice, tailored capacity building initiatives and dedicated country support, EMOPS helped UNICEF country offices establish and sustain timely, equitable and unimpeded humanitarian access to children and populations living in complex and high-threat environments (CHTE). EMOPS conducted two CHTE Humanitarian Leadership Workshops in 2022 and a tailored peer-to-peer workshop for Representatives in CHTE. This was a collaborative effort among EMOPS teams including the Humanitarian Policy Section, the Office for Security Coordination and the Humanitarian Evidence and Learning Section.

EMOPS continued to support UNICEF’s strong engagement on collective approaches to establish and strengthen accountability to affected populations (AAP). At the organizational level, UNICEF outposted technical specialists in AAP in five regions, boosting regional capacity to provide technical support to country programmes. A total of 54 country offices received dedicated support to improve accountability to affected populations between January 2021 and December 2022. In addition to this regional capacity, substantial support was provided in 2022 to the responses to the crisis in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa drought emergency and the war in Ukraine. These efforts were guided by the new UNICEF AAP strategy for 2022–2025, “taking accountability to affected populations to the next level”. Feedback mechanisms enacted in various country contexts were tailored to the needs of people experiencing humanitarian emergencies. Feedback received helped UNICEF programme and operations teams adapt their programming and service delivery mechanisms.

In 2023, EMOPS mobilized headquarters divisions, regional offices and humanitarian partners to improve humanitarian response by investing in risk analysis and preparedness that focused on enabling an effective and timely response, reducing costs and reaching the most vulnerable. EMOPS works with country and regional offices to develop online geospatial dashboards that bring together frequently updated subnational data on risk, early warning, UNICEF programme activities and such operational considerations as access to provide an up-to-date view into how all these factors intersect, and thereby influencing key decisions. These tools support operational decision-making across sectors and operational areas and provide a common operational picture. The Horizon Scan consolidated its role as UNICEF’s main forward-looking warning and preparedness coordination mechanism. Horizon Scan involves multiple sections and units across EMOPS; Programme Group (including Public Health Emergencies); the Division of Data, Analytics, Planning and Monitoring; and Supply Division.

EMOPS led the way in developing UNICEF’s first anticipatory action strategy, contributed to inter-agency risk and preparedness systems such as the IASC Early Warning Early Action Report and the Regional Monthly Reviews. Throughout, EMOPS focused on strengthening collaboration with internal divisions as well as with the IASC, other United Nations agencies and academia.

EMOPS recognized the importance of preparedness for an emergency response before a loss event and incorporated emergency preparedness into Humanitarian Action for Children appeal budgets: For the first time, starting with the 2023 appeals (issued in December 2022), the global humanitarian appeal includes a percentage of the global ask dedicated to preparedness (5 per cent on average; $564 million in total for the 2023 appeal).

Finally, to support emergency preparedness interventions, EMOPS allocated $4.26 million in 2022 through two emergency preparedness initiatives, the First Action Initiative (FAI) and the Co-Funding Initiative (CFI). Twelve allocations were made throughout the year (nine through CFI and three through FAI), reaching 20 country offices and including subregional actions.

In 2022, EMOPS, acting as the one-stop shop for emergency-affected countries, contributed to effective leadership and support to a total of 442 new or ongoing humanitarian crises.
programme countries, including six Level 3 crises and ten Level 2 crises. EMOPS engagement was notable through strengthened inter-agency and inter-divisional coordination; in-country support through via 20 field missions; and targeted support for humanitarian financing, with a focus on underfunded and forgotten emergencies.

The Emergency Procedures were rolled out for use in ongoing crises and all newly activated L2 and L3 emergencies. More than 2,800 staff were trained in more than 40 country and regional offices addressing Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 crises. The Emergency Procedures have filled a gap in defining UNICEF’s risk appetite in humanitarian contexts by laying out how to apply a no-regrets approach when appropriate. However, even though UNICEF’s organizational approach to risk in humanitarian emergencies is now defined with the Emergency Procedures (which were finalized in 2021 and rolled out in 2022), risk-averse behaviours remain all too common in UNICEF humanitarian response.

EMOPS also implemented innovative approaches to strengthening humanitarian response and preparedness. For example, in response to the Sahel crisis, UNICEF scaled up the response in the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger) while also strengthening preparedness and resilience building in coastal countries (Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Togo) in preparation for possible spillover of the crisis.

Throughout the year, EMOPS worked closely with various stakeholders, especially on inter-agency engagement through in such forums as the Inter-Agency Task Force and the Emergency Task Force. This work was multi-dimensional and included the development of key advocacy messages aimed at various audiences, notably donors and Member States on the Security Council. EMOPS’s engagement with external partners included work with, notably, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on humanitarian financing, as UNICEF was the largest recipient of funds from the Central Emergency Response Fund in 2022.

In 2022, EMOPS also improved knowledge management and needs-based planning and promoted multiple humanitarian learning opportunities for staff and partners focusing on research and evidence generation. EMOPS raised $2 million to realize its expanding humanitarian learning and development agenda, which was enacted during 2022 through increasing collaboration within EMOPS and with several other UNICEF Divisions.

EMOPS strengthened country-level programme planning and monitoring through nine support missions in Afghanistan, Kenya, Pakistan and Ukraine and to two regional offices (Europe and Central Asia and Eastern and Southern Africa). These missions supported the development of response plans, the establishment of partner reporting and field monitoring systems and evaluative reviews of responses to date. Humanitarian planning was fully integrated into the new UNICEF procedure on country programme planning that was released in October 2022, which guides the development of five-year plans for UNICEF country offices and includes humanitarian programming for protracted crisis and preparedness for known hazards.

EMOPS also supported the development of the UNICEF humanitarian knowledge management strategy to ensure that more UNICEF knowledge can be accessible to more people, including affected populations.

Based on the recommendation of the Humanitarian Review to strengthen humanitarian leadership, four humanitarian leadership workshops of the types ‘Leading in Emergencies’ and ‘Leading in Complex and High Threat Environments’, trained 67 senior (inter-)national field and country staff.

In July 2022, EMOPS launched the eSitRep module on the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal platform. This tool allows country offices to more easily produce SitRepS on their emergency
Reinforced key strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels and enhanced cluster leadership capacity as an integral part of its contributions to humanitarian action.

In 2022, EMOPS strengthened key strategic partnerships at all levels as an integral part of its contributions to UNICEF humanitarian action. For example, building on their work enacting the Blueprint for Joint Action, UNICEF and UNHCR have now solidified a new strategic partnership, which will replace their 1996 Memorandum of Understanding. This new Global Strategic Collaboration Framework builds on an overall vision for the strategic collaboration between UNICEF and UNHCR to encourage and facilitate cohesive, predictable, cooperative action between the two organizations. In 2023, the intensified joint effort of the Blueprint, which was very successful in its pilot phase, will be scaled up through the new Framework.

As part of the Grand Bargain, EMOPS participated in the Caucus on the role of intermediaries, whose outcome document was endorsed during the Grand Bargain annual meeting in July. This Caucus was set up to face ongoing challenges within the relationships of donors, intermediaries and local/national organizations. Recognizing the need to build and foster robust relationships, the members of the Caucus (the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, International Federations of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, European Community Humanitarian Aid Office, Germany, the Alliance for Empowering Partnerships, the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR), UNHCR and UNICEF) have prioritized actions which strengthen principles of equitable partnerships and better support locally led humanitarian action.

Finally in 2022, the EMOPS standby partners (SBP) mechanism ensured the rapid deployment of 168 external surge/SBP experts from 17 standby partner agencies/institutions to 57 countries. The three top priority support areas requested were child protection, WASH and nutrition. After two years of negotiations, a new partnership agreement with Germany’s Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) was finalized, with formal signature expected in early 2023.

EMOPS continued to support UNICEF’s cluster leadership or co-leadership roles in the nutrition, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) humanitarian clusters and child protection area of responsibility. In 2022, the Global Nutrition Cluster (GNC) launched the Global Nutrition Cluster Strategy 2022–2025, which underscores the continued commitment by GNC partners and UNICEF as Cluster Lead Agency to ensure quality, rights-based and context-specific nutrition programming and coordination, informed by evidence and innovation. In addition, the cluster also launched an advocacy strategy to create an enabling environment and to better position nutrition coordination within the humanitarian agenda both in countries and globally. These two strategic documents guided the development of a yearly rolling work plan and the prioritization of activities. In 2022, the GNC provided coordination and technical support based on these strategies to 57 countries for both cluster and sectoral coordination mechanisms at all levels before, during and after emergencies.

The Global Education Cluster Strategy 2022-2025 was launched in 2022. UNICEF and Save the Children co-lead the cluster. The strategy articulates priorities and actions to help country teams plan and coordinate timely, quality, appropriate, effective and accountable education responses for children and youth in humanitarian contexts. In 2022, more than 27 contexts were supported through 1,090 days of remote support, in-country deployments and remote deployments through the Global Education Cluster’s Rapid Response Team. During the year, 141 cluster coordination staff and partners were trained in foundational coordination and information management skills. The GEC also bolstered its support to countries in needs assessment and rapid education response.

The Global WASH Cluster (GWC) launched the Global WASH Cluster (GWC) Strategic Plan 2022–2025. The strategy, which demonstrates the cluster’s role as a thought leader, puts forward a renewed focus on excellence in effective and accountable humanitarian WASH coordination for the
people most affected by and vulnerable to crises. The strategy’s Implementation Plan and Monitoring Framework provides a common framework for collective action by the GWC’s members and National Coordination Platforms (NCPs) to better position coordination within the humanitarian WASH sector. Through the provision of direct support to NCPs in more than 30 countries, the GWC sought to achieve impact through targeting for assistance 171.6 million people most affected by crisis in the WASH sector in 2022.

The Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility supported 52 contexts with child protection coordination, information management and thematic technical support in 2022, through a mix of in-country and remote deployments and via the global and language-specific Help Desks. An evidence review of the links between child protection and food security, as well as dedicated technical support to countries, highlighted the impact of food insecurity on the protection of children and their wellbeing. This work equipped child protection and food security actors with a knowledge of tools that can enhance inter-sectoral collaboration to address child protection risks.

Programme and operations management, including resource mobilization efforts and enabled conditions for secure programming and safe environment for staff

In 2022, EMOPS continued to strengthen and implement changes to UNICEF humanitarian action, as recommended by the Humanitarian Review, to ensure that UNICEF is prepared to respond in a timely, predictable, and equitable way with quality programming to crises today and to the emergencies of tomorrow. As of December 2022, 87 per cent of recommendations contained in the Humanitarian Review were completed or under way. Meanwhile, EMOPS, in line with Headquarters Efficiencies Initiative (HQEI), continue to participate in the assessment of how UNICEF’s headquarters presence, resources and capacities – across teams, functions and geographies – could work more efficiently to contribute to results for children.

EMOPS ensured that humanitarian and development mandates are represented at several levels in the new Strategic Plan’s Theory of Change. Humanitarian principles, equity, human rights and leaving no-one behind are stated at the overarching level of principles. Both resilience and climate action figure as cross-cutting programmes. Notably, systems strengthening to leave no one behind and risk-informed humanitarian and development nexus programming are clearly positioned change strategies.

EMOPS coordinated the development of the 2022 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal in accordance with the new UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2022–2025. At its launch in December 2021, the appeal called for $9.4 billion, but by the end of 2022 the total requirement had risen to $11.74 billion. In addition, EMOPS continued to improve reporting and information sharing on its humanitarian response, focusing on funding modalities such as global humanitarian thematic funding.

While continuing to apply the United Nations Security Framework of Accountability (FoA) throughout the organization, EMOPS updated the UNICEF Security FoA based upon lessons learned, consultations and feedback from regional and country offices. The FoA, combined with the United Nations Security Risk Management framework and procedure, enabled UNICEF to carry out activities globally in 2022 within acceptable levels of security risk. The oversight and matrix management by EMOPS of the UNICEF security workforce and advice to security decision makers and senior managers (directly or through Regional Security Advisers) ensured the effective implementation of security policy.

A support mission to Ukraine was conducted in February/March 2022 at the onset of the war, providing critical support in the relocation of the country office, establishment of new warehouses, support to the relocation and evacuation of personnel and high-quality, timely security advice to support decision making and enable emergency response activities in a dynamic conflict environment.
Lessons Learned and Innovations

Challenges

Underfunded humanitarian emergencies: in 2022 there were many high-profile humanitarian crises, from the war in Ukraine to the severe flooding in Pakistan. The global attention and response to these crises demonstrates what is possible when the international community rallies behind a crisis response. This is in stark contrast with the daily reality for the millions of people who are suffering far from the spotlight. Too many humanitarian emergencies have been neglected due to a lack of media attention, international political will and humanitarian funding. This has led to extremely high levels of humanitarian needs that remain unaddressed. EMOPS will continue to advocate for more financial support to address critical humanitarian needs, including by expanding the donor base and by demonstrating the important role of anticipatory action, cooperation and quality funding.

Climate change is making these crises worse and unleashing new ones. EMOPS support the broader organization to elevate climate action as a priority across the organization in 2022 and accelerate the response to the effects of climate change in humanitarian contexts globally. EMOPS will continue to support children and families experiencing humanitarian crises due to climatic events and build resilience to such shocks in development and humanitarian programming. UNICEF interventions focus on: (1) scaling up climate change adaptation models in its global operations; (2) advocating and engaging in policy development; and (3) prioritizing climate-adaptive anticipatory action and preparedness efforts to ensure timely, effective and cost-efficient actions to save lives and build resilience.

Global food and nutrition crises: the number of children living in food and nutrition insecurity is rising. The combined effects of conflict – including the war in Ukraine – along with climate-induced drought, environmental degradation and the ongoing socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic are pushing already vulnerable children into unprecedented levels of food and nutrition vulnerability. EMOPS will continue to advocate for an accelerated, urgent, integrated and multisectoral response to famine prevention.

Public health emergencies: the frequency and severity of public health emergencies continue to increase, driven by increased population mobility due to globalization, population growth, urbanization, growing human encroachment into natural habitats, climate change and protracted humanitarian crises.

UNICEF is currently building a global strategic plan of action for public health emergencies preparedness and response that is complementary to the work of WHO and supports a reinvigorated global health architecture.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward
UNICEF role as Cluster Lead (Co-lead) Agency (Clare II)

UNICEF holds a unique role as cluster lead/co-lead for the Nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Education Clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. In 2023, UNICEF will continue to support the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders and in compliance with humanitarian principles. UNICEF’s work will reflect the recommendations of the Humanitarian Review and the CLARE II evaluation on the UNICEF role as cluster lead or co-lead agency of several clusters. Implementation will focus on strengthening, at all levels, UNICEF accountability for its cluster role; prioritizing adequate staffing and funding levels for cluster functions; supporting and maximizing collective impact; and ensuring UNICEF’s experiences and tools as cluster lead agency support effective humanitarian action through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

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

**Programming to strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus:** in 2022, EMOPS encouraged requiring country offices to consider humanitarian, development and peacebuilding dimensions when developing new Country Programmes, a direct response to the Formative evaluation of UNICEF work to link humanitarian and development programming (2021). EMOPS also supported the development of the revised UNICEF Procedure on Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus and is in the process of developing a Global Peacebuilding Framework, to be launched in 2023.

In 2023, EMOPS will continue to empower UNICEF staff and partners in the field to stay and deliver in complex emergencies and to access the most vulnerable children in the hardest-to-reach areas. This is a central commitment of UNICEF. EMOPS will pursue a three-pronged approach: developing and implementing humanitarian policies and guidance on emerging issues; strengthening partnerships to maximize synergies and complementarities; and intensively supporting UNICEF field offices to stay and deliver.