

Ethiopia

Update on the context and situation of children

The context and situation for children in Ethiopia continued to be challenging in 2023. The compounding impacts of conflict, insecurity, health emergencies, and climate events threatened the health, nutrition, education, and protection of Ethiopia's 48.6 million children. Ethiopia is also experiencing rapid population growth, and the social service system is projected to care for an additional 1 million children in 2023 compared to the previous year.

The peace agreement that ended the Northern conflict remained intact, but the recovery, reconstruction, and demobilization efforts underway are largely underfunded. Conflict in Amhara region and insecurity in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Somali regions also posed challenges. In addition, drought impacted large populations in Oromia, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), and Afar regions, while floods impacted Somali, SNNP, and Oromia regions. Cholera reached endemic proportions in Oromia, Somali, Amhara, SNNP, and Sidama regions, requiring adjustment of the prevention and control approach. According to the Displacement Tracking Matrix of the International Organization for Migration, 2.9 million people (over 807,900 girls and 775,000 boys) were displaced due to conflict, and an additional 1.1 million people (over 306,400 girls and 294,000 boys) were displaced due to climate events as of November 2023.

The 2023/24 federal budget demonstrated the economy faced high inflation, foreign exchange shortage, high debt burden, and low domestic resource mobilization, affecting Ethiopia's macroeconomic stability. The rate of inflation stood at 30.6 per cent in November 2023, ranked third highest in Africa and eighth highest globally. Exchange rate depreciation continued, with the parallel-market rate of ETB 105 to USD 1 as of December 2023, compared to the official rate of ETB 56 to USD 1. Ethiopia's total stock of public debt stood at USD 57.15 billion at the end of November 2023, 52.1 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product. In December 2023, Ethiopia defaulted on a USD 33 million Eurobond payment. Unless debt restructuring is agreed to soon, this will have economic consequences in 2024 and beyond.

Ethiopia continued to have the second highest number of zero-dose children in Africa at 1.13 million. Zero-dose children experience multiple deprivations in nutrition, education, and protection, and often reside in conflict-affected, disaster-prone, and hard-to-reach areas. Ethiopia also had the third highest number of children unprotected from measles in the world at 1.7 million. Although strides were made in reducing under-five mortality, there was no recent improvement in neonatal mortality. Neonatal deaths comprised of almost half of all under-five deaths in Ethiopia. The malnutrition situation of women and children deteriorated due to prolonged humanitarian crises that contributed to increased food insecurity. Notably, 39 per cent of children under-five were stunted, 21 per cent were underweight, and 11 per cent were wasted (Food Nutrition Survey 2022). Micronutrient deficiency remained a major challenge.

From a water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) perspective, to mitigate the impact of drought and build community resilience, UNICEF and partners continued building on previous investments and entrenched climate-resilient durable solutions that link development and humanitarian response in the context of multiple and complex emergencies, so children have access to clean water and hygiene services.

Safeguarding children's education remained challenging due to conflict and emergencies. Learning outcomes in Ethiopia demonstrated a deteriorating trend according to the World Bank: 90 per cent of children aged 10 were unable to read and understand short, age-appropriate text. Learning assessments

also revealed boys slightly outperformed girls in reading and math. The out-of-school rate remained persistently high: one-third of primary school-age children did not attend school, while almost two-thirds of secondary school-age adolescents were not enrolled or have not completed secondary education in 2023. UNICEF invested financial and technical resources towards timely resumption and continuation of education for emergency-affected and vulnerable children. In addition, development programming such as Assessment for Learning and life skills education was extended to children and adolescents in humanitarian settings.

UNICEF evolved its nexus programming to address increasing child protection risks, adapting system strengthening, birth registration, and harmful practices interventions into humanitarian response. It initiated local partnerships to address gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation and response, expanded digital and inter-operable civil registration, strengthened community-based prevention of harmful practices, developed new policies, and diversified social service workforce strengthening to improve access to protection services. UNICEF's trend analysis in January-April 2023 showed the incidence of child marriage decreased by 26.7 per cent in drought-affected Somali, Oromia, and SNNP regions. This is likely because of the tailored prevention interventions delivered by UNICEF and partners, and the established community surveillance mechanisms.

Recent analysis of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey and the Welfare Monitoring Survey suggested that poverty continued on an upward trajectory due to socioeconomic shocks and the rising cost of living, especially in urban, drought-affected, and conflict-affected areas. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the poverty headcount ratio increased in all regions based on projected estimates. For instance, the poverty headcount ratio increased from 34.5 per cent in 2020 to 48 per cent in 2023 in Oromia region, significantly above the national average (26%) in the pre-conflict period. An estimated 36 million children continued to experience multidimensional poverty. With support from UNICEF and partners, the social protection system in Ethiopia covered over 14.9 million children in 2023, an increase of 4.7 per cent from 2022.

While responding to significant humanitarian needs, UNICEF continued to invest in long-term development programming, and promote gender equality and disability inclusion as per UNICEF's Strategic Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, balancing humanitarian response, peacebuilding, and recovery was difficult. To "leave no child behind", UNICEF advocated for development funding to enable building back better while adhering to humanitarian principles.

UNICEF committed to accountability and learning by completing key evaluations of the northern response, the end child marriage programme, and the adolescent nutrition-WASH-education joint programme, along with preliminary findings on the response to the Horn of Africa drought. Learnings from these evaluations – putting children at the center of UNICEF programming and fostering agency among girls – will be used to accelerate program delivery and inform the development of the new country programme.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Every child survives and thrives

According to the Ministry of Health (MOH), 3.3 million children under-one received three doses of the pentavalent vaccine in 2023. UNICEF and GAVI jointly supported cold chain management, which contributed to increased cold chain capacity in health facilities (from 53% in 2022 to 67% in 2023). UNICEF also procured and installed 6,143 Solar Direct Drive refrigerators across the country to ensure safe vaccine storage.

UNICEF deployed 16 Technical Assistants to support intensified immunization outreach in 265

woredas with the highest proportions of zero-dose children. UNICEF supported integrated measles immunization campaigns, where 4.5 million children were vaccinated, and more than 108,000 zero-dose children were identified and received the pentavalent vaccine. UNICEF's technical and financial support to the government helped reach 60 million people with information on COVID-19 vaccination, and six million adolescent girls and caregivers on Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination. This resulted in 58 million people vaccinated against COVID-19, and 1.9 million adolescent girls vaccinated for HPV.

The neonatal mortality rate saw a slight decline, from 30 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 to 26 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2023. UNICEF supported the strengthening of neonatal intensive care units (NICU) and essential newborn care by coaching 1,132 health workers, providing maternal newborn care equipment, and supporting the maintenance of NICU equipment in 19 hospitals in Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, SNNP, Somali and Amhara regions. Over 146,200 newborns were admitted to the NICU, and 80 per cent recovered in 2023.

To ensure the continuity of essential health services, UNICEF provided 749 emergency drug kits (EDKs) and deployed 68 Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHNTs). More than 2 million women and children in camps for internally displaced people and host communities (over 1.6 million conflict-affected, over 385,500 drought-affected) received health services. In 2023, 29,487 cases of cholera were reported, and UNICEF provided 138 Cholera Treatment Centre (CTC) kits and WASH supplies (e.g., Aquatabs, emergency water treatment units, water tanks) to support treatment. Comprehensive social and behavior change (SBC) interventions for cholera prevention were conducted in Somalia, SNNP, and Oromia regions, and reached over 5.2 million people through radio broadcasts, audio van campaigns, community conversations, house visits, and materials distribution.

UNICEF delivered lifesaving supplies to children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). As of December 2023, almost 670,000 children with SAM were treated, averting the deaths of over 67,100 children. The food consumption pattern and market assessment supported by UNICEF led to the development of 45 context-specific recipes for Oromia, Amhara, SNNP, Afar, Somali, and Sidama regions, and reached over 2.3 million children aged 6-23 months. UNICEF supported an advocacy workshop on the National Baby Food Control Directive released by the Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, which reached 400 nutrition managers and experts at national and sub-national levels. UNICEF developed the first nutrition toolkit for religious leaders, and 2,500 religious leaders were sensitized on nutrition care practices. A national media campaign to promote nutrition behaviors and services reached over 20 million people.

Through UNICEF support, over 11.8 million children aged 6-59 months (78%) received two doses of vitamin A supplementation; over 8.8 million children aged 24-59 months (73%) received deworming tablets; and over 2 million pregnant women (44%) received iron and folic acid (IFA) supplementation. Weekly IFA supplementation was implemented in schools across 70 woredas, and reached more than 400,000 adolescent girls. More than 100,000 pregnant women received multiple micronutrient supplementation across 21 woredas in Oromia, Somali, SNNP, Sidama and Gambella regions. Findings from the Food and Nutrition Survey 2022 showed improving trends in anemia among adolescent girls and pregnant women (from 24% in 2016 to 13% in 2022).

To strengthen food systems, UNICEF supported the scale-up of local production of egg and papaya powder, and the use of hydroponics technology to increase vegetable production. The public finance for nutrition training led to the development of budget codes and expenditure tracking for nutrition. As a result, the government allocated USD 1.3 million to procure ready-to-use therapeutic foods, which was matched by UNICEF.

Every child learns

To accelerate progress towards provision of equitable and inclusive access to quality education for all school-age children in Ethiopia, UNICEF continued its strategic investment in supporting the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Regional Education Bureaus (REBs). As part of upstream policy advocacy and technical support, UNICEF ensured the design, finalization, and dissemination of the Early Childhood Development and Education Policy Framework and its operational and strategic implementation plan were inclusive and participatory. As a key member of the national task force led by MOE, UNICEF contributed towards the timely finalization of the Enabling Factor Analysis and the Partnership Compact for Ethiopia, submitted to the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). UNICEF was selected as the grant agent for GPE's System Transformation Grant and Girls Education Accelerator, with a total investment of USD 132.59 million. Through the implementation of high-impact change strategies on teachers' and school leaders' development, modernization of education data collection and analysis, and data-informed decision making, the grants will address equitable access to quality pre-primary, primary, middle, and secondary education while ensuring gender equality and inclusion of children with disabilities.

UNICEF invested in the design and implementation of development and humanitarian interventions, which enabled the provision of equitable and inclusive access to quality education for over 118,300 (48.5% girls) pre-primary school children and over 314,500 (48% girls) primary and secondary school children. Out of the latter figure, 61,600 (54% girls) were from refugee and host communities in Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali regions, almost 2,500 (54% girls) were primary school children from pastoralist communities, and over 7,800 (44% girls) were children with disabilities in Amhara, Afar, South West Ethiopia Peoples', South Ethiopia, and Sidama regions. UNICEF also supported the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 32 classrooms and WASH facilities damaged during the Amhara conflict to provide facilities for learning, benefiting 16,000 children (50% girls).

UNICEF continued to play a critical role in the implementation of the MOE's comprehensive general education curriculum reform. In September 2023, MOE launched the revised curriculum for secondary education. With UNICEF support, an orientation was conducted for 409 secondary school teachers (37% female) to increase awareness on the curriculum revision, discuss shortcomings of the previous curriculum, and explain key revisions to the curriculum. UNICEF also supported capacity development for over 4,000 authors, editors, and evaluators from the MOE and the Centers of Excellence in universities.

UNICEF delivered technical and financial assistance to the MOE for the revision of the School-Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV) Code of Conduct, incorporating issues such as child marriage and bullying. To strengthen SRGBV prevention and mitigation, especially for girls, four training modules targeting teachers, parents, multi-sectoral stakeholders, and local education leadership were developed and rolled out. In total, 126 personnel (55% women) from the MOE, REBs, and Colleges of Teacher Education were trained to cascade the training to schools across all regions. Over 134,400 adolescents (58.5% girls) from Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, and South Ethiopia regions benefitted from life skills education (almost 38,400 in humanitarian contexts, over 96,000 in development contexts). UNICEF also spearheaded the development of SBC strategies and tools on education and WASH in schools.

Every child protected from violence and exploitation

With strategies adapted to humanitarian situations, UNICEF continued its effort to strengthen the child protection system, particularly through interventions to improve birth registration, address violence against girls, boys, and women, and end child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). UNICEF invested in development-humanitarian nexus programming by leveraging interventions and funding to tailor protection interventions that build resilient child protection systems and solutions.

To enable continued access to protection services in Ethiopia's complex context, UNICEF transformed

service delivery modalities. With UNICEF support, social workers were trained and deployed to humanitarian hotspots, and specialized teams of social workers and psychologists were deployed in crisis zones. Community resilience and access to basic care was built through supporting community care coalitions. Creative solutions to allow birth registration inside IDP camps were delivered, and the methodology for community conversations to address FGM and child marriage was adapted and delivered in humanitarian contexts. These innovations allowed UNICEF to deliver protection services to more than 941,500 boys, girls and women (596,500 children and 89% girls and young women), including specialized response to household violence or abuse, GBV prevention, clinical management of rape, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), family tracing and reunification, alternative care services for unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), and explosive ordnance risk education.

Continued investments were made to strengthen child protection data management. UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MOWSA) for the roll-out of the Child Protection Information Management System, which will go live in January 2024.

Based on feedback from vulnerable women and girls, UNICEF contributed to strengthen the resilience and self-reliance of vulnerable households by supporting top-up grants and humanitarian cash transfers to over 42,300 women, girls of reproductive age, and UASC, conducting home visits, and providing cash in lieu of dignity kits. Partnerships with nine local women's organizations were initiated on GBV, and an agreement was reached to integrate GBV into the work of MHNTs in 2024.

Through the successful engagement of formal service providers and non-formal community structures, UNICEF and its partners achieved the cancellation of 3,755 child marriages and the prevention of 167 FGM arrangements. This is the result of intensive gender-transformative, community-based work to achieve social norm change in ending child marriage and FGM, and supporting alternative life options for adolescent girls. Over 40,800 men and boys were also engaged in gender transformative dialogues and capacity building. Community mobilization and awareness raising interventions reached over 1.5 million people, with the SBC assessment in 2023 showing positive changes in the knowledge, attitudes and practices on gender at the individual and community levels.

Between July 2022 and June 2023, birth registration of children under-one increased to over 1 million, accounting for 40 per cent of the total estimated live births excluding Tigray region. Notably, about 70 per cent of newborns in refugee contexts were registered. About **24 per cent of the total births registered in 2023 were completed through the UNICEF-supported Mobile Ethiopian-Civil Registration and Vital Statistics digital platform.**

UNICEF became a trusted partner in the UN-wide disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in 2023, and supported the newly formed National Rehabilitation Commission to protect, rehabilitate, and reintegrate women and children in armed conflict, including those formerly associated with armed groups.

Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Through construction, rehabilitation, and extension of water schemes, and delivery of lifesaving humanitarian responses, more than 8.9 million people (over 3.7 million men and boys, over 5.1 million women and girls) had access to safe water, more than 3.5 million people (over 1.6 million men and boys, over 1.9 million women and girls) had access to improved sanitation, and almost 9 million people (over 4.48 million men and boys, over 4.45 million women and girls) lived in an Open Defecation Free (ODF) environment. Despite challenges related to conflict and emergencies, over 1,560 communities (kebeles) became ODF through UNICEF's direct support in 2023. More than 22 million people were reached with hygiene promotion focused on the prevention of communicable diseases and menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). Comprehensive MHH services were implemented

in 664 schools, and benefited more than 88,900 girls and boys. As a result, school attendance among adolescent girls improved as they did not have to be absent from school during menstruation.

Under the Resilient-WASH project, UNICEF remained instrumental in strengthening the coordination mechanism with support from MOWE and partners. This resulted in funding for 14 borewells in Kebribeyah, Aw Barre and Shedder in Somali region, including the establishment and strengthening of water utilities for operation and maintenance of climate-resilient water systems.

With support from the Government of Denmark and Germany's Credit Institute for Reconstruction (KfW), UNICEF installed solar pumping systems that enabled the use of clean and green energy to mitigate climate change by reducing carbon footprint of WASH projects. Solarization of 30 water systems was achieved across the country, which helped provide safe water to 135,000 people, protect against water-borne diseases, and build the resilience of communities against future shocks. This could also lead to accumulation of carbon credits, and minimize operation costs of water supply services in Ethiopia.

UNICEF further entrenched climate-resilient durable solutions that linked development and humanitarian response in the context of multiple and complex emergencies. Notably, UNICEF supported the use of treated surface water for drinking in the Gambella town upgrading project where groundwater resources were limited. In addition, a multisectoral approach to strengthening resilience was initiated in Oromia, Afar, and Somali regions, with plans to expand to other regions.

In collaboration with development partners, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Water and Energy (MOWE) in the preparation of the action plan for the second phase of the One WASH National Programme (OWNP) - Consolidated WASH Account (CWA), completed in August 2023. UNICEF played a lead role in CWA joint technical review missions conducted biannually in 2023, and involved key development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), federal government ministries, and regional bureaus.

UNICEF also played a vital role in strengthening the WASH system by supporting the development of inclusive interventions for the SBC WASH programme. In partnership with the Population Media Center, UNICEF developed a national WASH mobile application to allow religious leaders, health extension workers, media practitioners, school-age children, and community members to access information and services related to WASH. A 3D virtual reality platform was also developed to promote WASH practices among school-age children, including proper hand hygiene, MHH, use of improved toilets, safe water management, and safe disposal of child feces and solid waste. Moreover, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance to the disability and gender inclusive national task force under the MOWE to develop key documents like community feedback and response mechanisms, national SBC WASH school guidelines, MHH in humanitarian settings, and inclusive WASH guides.

Every child has an equitable chance at life

In 2023, UNICEF reached 62,000 households through shock responsive cash transfer (SRCT), and contributed to the alleviation of hunger and improvement in dietary diversity. Through the CashPlus support funded by the Swedish International Development Agency, 1,674 children were re-enrolled in schools and 78 child marriages were cancelled in Amhara region. Over 61,200 SRCT recipients were connected to multisectoral services, including over 33,300 recipients who accessed GBV risk mitigation, prevention, and response interventions. Over 51,300 recipients were supported to access safe reporting channels for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse through social workers, kebele appeals committees, and the UNICEF Hotline. To mitigate the increased financial burden experienced by recipients with disabilities, UNICEF introduced supplementary financial support for more than 1,720 households (44% female-headed). UNICEF worked with the Bureau of Labor and

Social Affairs in Oromia region and Cooperative Bank to improve the financial inclusion of SRCT recipients through life skills training, financial literacy support, and self-help groups to stimulate income-generation.

UNICEF delivered cash grants to 2,000 households living in humanitarian contexts in Amhara and Sidama regions, with support from the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office to increase utilization of nutrition and health services. This fostered better health among pregnant mothers and caregivers of children under-two by reducing hunger and improving child dietary diversity. An additional 1,363 households were supported using other resources.

A major conference supported by UNICEF hosted 400 attendees, and heightened support for social protection financing. The event resulted in a Call for Action that advocated for adjustments in policy, coordination, sustainability, job creation, and economic inclusion. UNICEF's role in co-chairing the Ethiopian Cash Working Groups in seven regions (i.e., Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, SNNP, Somalia, Tigray) focused on enhancing partner coordination. UNICEF continued to support the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in urban and rural areas, which reached over 2.59 million households and 21 million children through the social protection system in 2023.

UNICEF's advocacy to increase public investment in social services continued. The federal government approved a budget of ETB 801.7 billion (USD 14.7 billion) for 2023/24, an increase of 1.9 per cent over 2022/23, but a 17.8 per cent decrease in actual terms given the 32.6 per cent inflation rate. Sector allocations for the federal government's implementation covered tertiary services, with 9.7 per cent allocated for education (1.8% reduction from 2022/23), 3.4 per cent allocated for water resources and energy (1% decrease from 2022/23) and 3.9 per cent allocated for health (0.5% increase from 2022/23).

In collaboration with the Policy Studies Institute (PSI) and the American Institute for Research, UNICEF began a national level child poverty analysis to bolster PSI's capacity to conduct similar analyses. For the fifth round of the Ethiopian Demographic Household Survey, UNICEF advocated for the inclusion of child-focused modules, and provided support to survey questionnaire translation, survey instrument standardization, and enumeration area map update. In 2023, UNICEF ensured the inclusion of adolescents and youth in evaluation and research whenever possible, with ethical safeguards implemented.

To foster the inclusion of children with disabilities, UNICEF provided assistive devices to 300 children in partnership with Cheshire Ethiopia and MOWSA. The partnership with the Federation of Ethiopian Association of Persons with Disabilities amplified discussions on disability inclusion in the public media. UNICEF conducted assessments of people with disabilities in urban, rural, and emergency settings, which recommended the need to improve access to safety net services, income and food security support, housing, as well as health and education services. UNICEF published the Disability Inclusive Bulletin to share updates on its ongoing work in disability inclusion.

UNICEF supported MOWSA, Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, and Ethiopian Institute of the Ombudsman in monitoring and reporting on child rights and gender equality. Through the development of tools and frameworks (e.g., comprehensive accountability directives, gender levelling tools), strengthening of the national gender information system, and convening advocacy platforms on gender equality, discriminatory and outdated national and regional laws and policies were reviewed, such as the Afar Family Law and the National Gender Policy.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

To achieve these results, UNICEF Ethiopia relied on partnerships that it maintained, expanded, and initiated throughout 2023. The government remained the main implementing partner, with 111

governments entities at federal, regional and woredas levels contributing to the normative framework of child rights, strengthening institutional capacities, and developing and updating policies and strategies. Significantly, capacities to deliver MHPSS, SRGBV and child protection case management at the community level was strengthened thanks to a partnership with MOWSA. UNICEF continued its support to MOWSA in the development of the National Roadmap on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, building on the National Gender Policy. Moreover, UNICEF and MOWSA enhanced the engagement of almost 10,000 young adults aged 15-25 on the U-Report platform, providing a dynamic framework for civic participation. The results of U-Report polls were shared with policymakers, youth, and development partners to inform the formulation of the National Youth Agenda. The three-year National Health Sector Investment and Development Plan was developed by the MOH with notable UNICEF support. The plan encompasses objectives related to the health of children and women, with a costed plan to achieve maternal and newborn goals. The partnership with the MOE was key to the implementation of the sixth phase of the curriculum reform. *UNICEF had 125 Partnership Documents: 20 for development programming, and 105 for humanitarian programming.*

In 2023, the country office partnered with more than 60 CSOs and academic institutions, and disbursed around USD 60 million to implement UNICEF programmes. Partnering with CSOs was instrumental in delivering downstream services to the most marginalized children and those affected by conflict and other humanitarian situations in hard-to-reach areas. Notably, 58 per cent of CSOs that UNICEF partnered with in 2023 were local CSOs. The country office aims to increase its local partnership through opening funding windows specifically for local CSOs. In both development and humanitarian settings, over 1,280 social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists were deployed to provide essentials services to children through partnerships with CSOs. This enabled UNICEF to provide life-saving protection services for boys, girls and women and equitable and inclusive access to quality education for primary, middle, and secondary school-age children in conflicts and drought affected regions. Notably, the partnership with Cheshire Ethiopia helped UNICEF foster the inclusion of children with disabilities by providing assistive devices to 300 children. The partnership with the Federation of Ethiopian Association of Persons with Disabilities also amplified discussions on disability inclusion in the public media. UNICEF also collaborated with 65 youth-led and youth-focused organisations to create impactful advocacy campaigns that increased youth engagement on the regional and global climate agenda, including the African Climate Action Summit 2023.

To strengthen its efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services to vulnerable children and families, the country office signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Ethiopia National ID Program (NIDP) and the Refugees and Returnees Services (RRS). With NIDP, the aim was to integrate systems, grant unique identifiers to programme beneficiaries, and improve targeting and access to basic social services and protection for refugee and returnee children, while facilitating dialogue between NIDP and Immigration and Citizenship Services on alignment between digital ID and birth registration. With RRS, the aim was to facilitate UNICEF access to refugee camps, better assess the social service needs of children and families in these camps, and provide appropriate responses.

UNICEF also leveraged private sector resources to deliver results for children in Ethiopia. Notably, the partnership with Cooperative Bank was essential to improve financial inclusion of SRCT recipients through life skills training, financial literacy support, and assistance to self-help groups to stimulate income-generating activities. In 2023, a partnership was established with Virginia Tech Research Contracting Services based in the United States to support Ethiopian Airlines Aviation University for the implementation of the African Drone and Data Academy, which will provide training for youth in technology-related professions and improve employment prospects. Partnerships with mobile network operators such as Ethio Telecom and Safaricom are underway to use their text message, Internet, and mobile money services at a reduced cost, and facilitate technology support to UNICEF programmes, including child online safety. UNICEF's proposal on "Unlocking the Potential of Youth in Ethiopia's Conflict-affected Regions of Afar, Amhara and Tigray" aims to provide opportunities for youth to

build skills and capacities that support their socioeconomic development. Discussions are in progress with the MasterCard Foundation for multi-year support to the implementation.

UNICEF continued to be a key player in the UN ecosystem in Ethiopia, and increased interest among UN agencies for nexus programming in Ethiopia to support children and women's development. Notably, UNICEF chairs the Programme Management Team in the United Nations Country Team, and the UN Administration Working Group. It also co-chairs the UN Finance and Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers Working Group. UNICEF is a member of the Effective Development Cooperation Task Force of the Development Partners Group, and the co-chair of the Human Development Pillar. Moreover, UNICEF continued its engagement with the Donor Group on Gender Equality, and facilitated coordination and alignment on gender equality by different donors, UN agencies, and CSOs. UNICEF and the World Food Programme also conducted a gender analysis of the Ethiopia's School Feeding Programme to support evidence generation for gender transformative programming.

UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to partners who have provided critical support towards the country programme and the Humanitarian Action for Children in 2023. Australia, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Central Emergency Response Fund, Denmark, Education Cannot Wait, Ethiopia, European Union (e.g., Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, and European Commission), Finland, France, Germany, Global Financing Facility, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, KfW, Netherlands, Norway, Nutrition International, Poland, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, the United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates and the United States of America and the World Bank. Moreover, UNICEF received funding from various UNICEF National Committees in different countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

UNICEF remains a critical partner to Ethiopia, and it will consolidate programming in 2024 based on lessons learned and innovations. Due to the chronic nature and interrelation between conflict, natural disasters and health emergencies, it is imperative to prioritize and explore durable solutions.

Lessons Learned

Joint planning and coordination with partners was an efficient approach to leverage technical and financial support to achieve results at scale. This was evidenced by UNICEF's partnership with CHAI Ethiopia and the USAID Global Health Supply Chain Programme on cold chain maintenance, health facility solar electrification, and capacity building. This supported the scale-up of cold chain, vaccine, and logistics management, and contributed to the achievement of 81.3 per cent in the effective vaccine management composite score.

Persistent conflict, climate events, and health emergencies negatively affected demand, access, and uptake of multisectoral nutrition-responsive interventions. The coverage of most of the essential nutrition services remained below 50 per cent, attributable to the increased triple burden of malnutrition. There is an urgent need to focus on prevention in the context of the humanitarian-development-climate nexus, build resilience of communities and systems for nutrition. and address geospatial, socioeconomic, and gender inequities.

To maximize the general education curriculum reform, parallel reforms in areas such as teacher education and education assessment are also necessary. To overcome the persistent insecurity and inaccessibility posed by ongoing conflict and emergencies, UNICEF continued to strengthen partnerships with REBs as well as local and international NGOs to ensure timely and continuous

humanitarian response in education.

Innovations enhanced the effectiveness of interventions, like the national WASH mobile application and the 3D virtual reality platform. Inclusive features and immersive experiences created impactful and memorable educational experiences, which effectively disseminated WASH practices among school-age children and within communities.

Adapting interventions to specific contexts and challenges helped tackle programme issues. Combining comprehensive cholera prevention with addressing taboos related to menstruation helped tackle WASH issues, while mobile birth registration in IDP camps and prevention of child marriage in conflict zones ensured greater safety for high-risk children. In addition, lessons from the rapid deployment model informed UNICEF's application of the MHPSS compendium to deliver evidence-based interventions, and provide clearer links between MHPSS inputs and results.

Capacity building and awareness raising must continue to bring child rights to the forefront of the government's social policy decision-making. Despite the ongoing implementation of the PSNP, there was limited understanding on social protection at the highest levels of government, and a downward trend in the generation and use of evidence for decision-making. This necessitates increased lobbying at all levels via international exchanges, high-level forums, and global conferences. Given the country's shrinking fiscal space, and increased vulnerability among women and children due to conflict and climate shocks, social protection programmes such as SRCT, CashPlus, and income generation can be prioritized to fill the gap.

Pre-positioning of lifesaving emergency supplies, such as WASH non-food items, EDKs, and CTC kits at five strategically located warehouses across the country enabled UNICEF to provide rapid humanitarian response to sudden population displacement due to conflict and climate events, as well as refugee influxes from Sudan and Somalia. In addition, UNICEF signed an MOU with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society for nine additional warehouses.

In order to realize gender transformative programming and advance the rights of the girl child, multi-sectoral interventions informed by a context-specific analysis is required. It is critical to work with organizations delivering gender equality at both subnational and national levels for sustainable change and enhanced accountability.

Innovations

Low food production and disrupted markets resulted in increased food prices, especially of nutrient-rich foods, contributing to food insecurity for children. The global supply chain for nutrition was challenged with overwhelming demand, while complex logistics, limited access to forex, and donor funding reliance affected overall sustainability. As a result, UNICEF promoted the engagement of public-private partnerships for local production of nutrition commodities. Feasibility assessments to produce egg powder and multiple micronutrient supplementation locally demonstrated positive results in cost-effectiveness, job creation, forex savings, and the potential to minimize carbon footprint.

In collaboration with financial service providers, CSOs, and regional bureaus for women and social affairs, UNICEF's Social Policy programme developed and piloted innovative financial inclusion interventions for humanitarian cash transfer beneficiaries to enhance their livelihoods and build resilience. This included provision of life skills and financial literacy training, support to establish self-help groups, and linkages with co-designed financing products with commercial banks (e.g., uncollateralized microloans).

UNICEF and MOWE are exploring the engagement of stakeholders for climate-resilient flood mitigation, such as development of check dams and artificial lakes in flood-prone areas. UNICEF also

initiated collaboration with academia to research and pilot projects on groundwater aquifer recharge in drought-affected regions. UNICEF worked with commercial banks to increase financing for WASH. The banks agreed to provide financial support to WASH programming based on an agreed proportion of their profits (0.5-1%), and provide loans directly to water utilities for the expansion or upgrading of the WASH services based on the minimum interest rate. This will help expand WASH services to more women and children.

Humanitarian situations can be better mitigated if development programmes are simultaneously implemented with humanitarian responses, such as appropriate water management instead of water trucking, use of solar energy rather than generators, and implementation of biogas technology to reduce deforestation and provide clean cooking energy sources. UNICEF will continue to investigate and innovate. Strengthening the logistics capacity of national and subnational governments to reduce programme implementation cost, and enhance monitoring and surveillance will also be a focus. It is imperative to find local solutions and support local economies to reduce household poverty and help communities stand on their own feet. UNICEF will continue to engage the private sector proactively in its poverty reduction work, and strengthen its engagement with the Ethiopian banking system. Lastly, it is critical for UNICEF to emphasize inclusion, leveraging the vitality and creativity of youth and adolescents to inform programme directions, and taking a people-centered approach focused on the most marginalized, particularly zero-dose children and children with disabilities.