

## Somalia

### Update on the context and situation of children

Children in Somalia live in a protracted complex emergency setting where half the population (5.1 million children) requires humanitarian assistance, and 3.8 million people are internally displaced (1.7 million children). In 2023, children bore the brunt of concurrent crises, including climatic shocks, historic drought, floods, disease outbreaks and conflict. Following interagency efforts to avert famine, in September 2023 UNICEF deactivated the Level 3 emergency scale-up initiated in 2022 due to drought that left one in every six children acutely malnourished. Amid the scale-down, flooding associated with the El Niño climate phenomenon commenced during the October–December *Deyr* rainy season. By December, El Niño had affected 2.5 million people (1.5 million children), causing at least 40 deaths (40 per cent children) among other consequences.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank approved Somalia’s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion in December, achieving debt service savings of US\$4.5 billion and reducing the country’s external debt from 64 per cent of gross domestic product in 2018 to under six per cent. While Government education, health and social protection budget allocations as a proportion of overall budget declined from 2023 to 2024, debt relief may drive improved public finance and poverty trends. Somalia’s 2023 admittance to the intergovernmental East African Community also presented new economic potential. The latest Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (2022) indicates 82.2 per cent of children in Somalia experience multidimensional poverty; however, the situation is likely worse given that the underlying data was collected pre-drought.

Overlapping security challenges coupled with African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) troop withdrawal that began in mid-2023 and is scheduled to conclude in late 2024 created a multi-dimensional threat environment and could cause internally displaced person migration towards urban communities, straining limited infrastructure and increasing humanitarian needs. A December vote to lift the United Nations Security Council full arms embargo on Somalia—existent since 1992—and place an arms embargo on non-state armed group Al-Shabaab may impact security risks for children.

The complexity of the operating environment in Somalia was reflected in an increase in reported aid diversion cases in 2023, leading the humanitarian community to conduct a joint evidence-finding effort to deepen understanding of the scale, scope and effects of diversion on vulnerable people. This prompted UNICEF to invest substantially in revisiting its way of working and further strengthening prevention and reporting mechanisms to mitigate aid diversion.

Despite the first-ever Somalia Integrated Household Budget Survey (SIHBS) providing child well-being measurements in 2023, available data are insufficient to understand the situation of children, including those with disabilities and others at risk of being left behind. Much remains unknown about Somalia's progress towards the 48 child-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets and the latest (2022) Voluntary National Review report suggests weak SDG progress coordination has challenged measurement of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development advancement. UNICEF is supporting the Government to implement a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 7 that will contribute 40 per cent of SDG indicator data, covering six key child rights sectors and other cross-cutting areas, and provide baselines for the next Somalia National Development Plan (10), United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and UNICEF Country Programme.

It is estimated that Somalia has 1.3 million zero-dose children, with many living in hard-to-reach, internally displaced or nomadic communities. This large immunity gap has spurred seven years of polio virus circulation and vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. Over 8,000 measles cases affected children in 2023, and 29 drought-affected districts reported approximately 15,000 cholera cases (half among children). SIHBS findings indicate the main barriers to utilizing medical services are affordability (48.5 per cent) and perceiving illness as minor (33.3 per cent).

Despite relative nutrition situation improvements in 2023 due to scaled-up integrated response and April–June *Gu* rainfall, concerns remain. Wasting prevalence among young children exceeded the World Health Organization (WHO) emergency threshold of 15 per cent in nine of the 36 livelihood zones assessed by the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit - Somalia in September 2023. Overall wasting rates in Somalia decreased from 15.9 per cent (2022) to 12.4 per cent in 2023 but 1.5 million children are still need of care for wasting, of whom 330,630 need care for severe wasting.

The Education Cluster reports 4.8 million children in Somalia aged 5–17 years are out of school—one of the world's highest proportions of out-of-school children. Children with disabilities face greater education barriers, such as community misconceptions, insufficient teacher capacity and inaccessible infrastructure. School attendance rates for newly displaced children were as low as 21 per cent in 2023 versus 39 per cent for non-displaced children. An early childhood education (ECE) system that will improve primary school readiness and learning in Somalia is in development for subsequent integration into a broader early childhood development system.

UNICEF scaled-up child protection services, targeting drought affected population, until early 2023, through the restoration of protective environment and service for children.

From January–September 2023, 1,742 verified grave violations impacted over 1,300 children (25 per

cent girls) versus 1,698 violations during the same 2022 period, according to the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting co-chaired by UNICEF and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). Girls and women experience discrimination, marginalization and gender-based violence (GBV) driven by social norms and insufficient protection mechanisms. Ninety-nine per cent of girls and women aged 15–49 years have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), while 34 per cent of females are married by age 18.

Half of Somalia’s population experienced shortages in sustainable and safe water for drinking and other household needs in 2023 and only 33 per cent use safely managed sanitation services, exacerbating public health concerns. Somalia falls into the UNICEF Children’s Climate Risk Index’s most severe category of extremely high risk, underscoring its concerning climate, environmental and child vulnerability indicators.

Sixteen per cent of children live in poor households covered by Government social protection programmes. While more progress is required, 2023 saw improvements to Somalia’s social protection system, which includes cash transfer capacities to support effective and rapid respond to the country’s high humanitarian crisis burden.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

In support of SDG and 2030 Agenda progress, UNICEF contributions to results for children in 2023 were guided by the UNICEF Somalia Country Programme (2021–2025) and Annual Management Plan, and fully aligned with the Somalia UNSDCF (2021–2025) and national priorities, including the Somalia National Development Plan 9 (2020–2024).

### **Goal 1: Survive and Thrive**

In 2023, UNICEF and partners supported Somalia’s efforts to expand coverage of an essential package of health services (EPHS), including to address malaria, and strengthen health system performance to ensure more neonates, infants and children survive and thrive and fewer women, including adolescents, die during pregnancy and childbirth. UNICEF directly supported the Government on EPHS delivery in 219 facilities and contributed to the number of women attending four antenatal visits improving from 24 per cent (2022) to 31 per cent as of September 2023.

Given Somalia's large burden of zero-dose children, UNICEF supported the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) to develop a strategy to accelerate immunization for children and assisted the Government to maintain a steady vaccine pipeline for routine and supplementary immunization. UNICEF delivered nearly 17.7 million polio vaccine doses in 2023, vaccinating over 3.8 million children under five years of age to help them survive and thrive.

Amidst multiple public health emergencies, UNICEF and partners ensured nearly 1.8 million crisis-affected people, including 409,167 girls and 466,5833 boys, received life-saving health services and conducted two single-dose cholera vaccination campaign rounds in 15 hotspot districts that reached over 1,494,766 people in 2023.

While Somalia has a concentrated HIV epidemic with a 1 per cent prevalence rate, fighting HIV remains a crucial component of improving overall health care. UNICEF supported access to HIV testing and treatment in 100 health facilities across Somalia, enabling HIV positive women to access lifelong antiretroviral therapy. In 2023, 37 per cent of pregnant women diagnosed with HIV were on antiretroviral therapy, surpassing the 27 per cent target.

UNICEF supported an increase in the reach and greening of Somalia's cold chain coverage in 2023. For example, UNICEF procurement and distribution of cold chain items helped ensure 91 per cent of health facilities offering immunization services have environmentally friendly and sustainable solar-powered vaccine fridges.

In 2023, UNICEF and partners helped alleviate malnutrition among young children in Somalia, such as by increasing nutrition service coverage and use, including where access was challenged. With partners, UNICEF offered life-saving care in 70 of Somalia's 74 districts through 1,127 nutrition facilities and treatment sites, of which over 40 per cent were mobile to serve hard-to-reach communities. UNICEF technical and financial support contributed to a reduction in the prevalence of wasting among young children from 15.9 per cent (2022) to 12.4 per cent. Working through 39 implementing partners and with the FMoH, World Food Programme (WFP) and WHO, as of October 2023, UNICEF had contributed to the quality treatment of 517,090 children aged 6–59 months (51 per cent girls) for severe wasting, representing an 11 per cent increase from 2022.

To positively impact nutrition-supportive caretaker behaviours, UNICEF promoted adequate infant and young child feeding practices, reaching 1,785,626 primary caretakers of young children with related

counselling. To strengthen resistance to infections and contribute to reduction of morbidity and mortality among young children, UNICEF supported a round of vitamin A supplementation in 2023 that reached 3,312,726 children 6–59 months (116 per cent of the 2023 target, 53 per cent girls). Through UNICEF’s support, young children and pregnant and lactating women benefitted from preventive interventions against iron deficiency anaemia: 315,285 children 6–23 months received multiple micronutrient powder sachets to be consumed over 180 days and 1,116,805 pregnant and lactating women received iron and folic acid/multiple micronutrient supplements.

UNICEF led nutrition sector coordination in Somalia and contributed to advocacy around creating an enabling environment for scaling up high-impact nutrition interventions that resulted in the establishment of a National Food Systems, Nutrition and Climate Change Council in the Prime Minister’s Office to lead a multi-system approach to malnutrition.

## **Goal 2: Learns**

UNICEF contributed to improve education trends in 2023, including the Federal Government of Somalia national primary gross enrolment rate rising from 31 per cent (2022) to 37 per cent; the Gender Parity Index rising from 0.80 (2022) to 0.84; and the student survival rate increasing eight points to reach 88 per cent. A key results enabler was UNICEF’s investment in the Education Cluster’s rejuvenation through increased staffing, strengthened leadership and streamlined organization.

UNICEF partnerships with Government and civil society organizations delivered quality education services in formal schools, Alternative Basic Education (ABE) learning centers and temporary learning spaces to improve learning outcomes for 272,782 children (126,796 girls), many of whom had never enrolled in school or were at grave risk of dropping out. UNICEF supported the enrolment of 171,192 crisis-affected children (80,608 girls) in schools and temporary learning spaces in displacement sites. To increase education demand, UNICEF engaged with 627 community education committees, which are critical for increasing education coverage. UNICEF and other education stakeholders are increasingly emphasizing ABE programmes as a viable pathway to increase quality basic primary education access for girls and other children lacking opportunities through the formal education system. The UNICEF-managed Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Emergency Drought Response and KfW Development Bank-funded United Nations Joint Resilience Programme retained approximately 150,000 children within 400 vulnerable primary schools, positively impacting gross enrolment, student survival rates and gender parity. Emergency and resilience support packages provided through these programmes included construction or rehabilitation of temporary learning spaces, classrooms, and gender-sensitive water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities; student placement in and support to host community schools, where available; provision of safe drinking water and school meals; distribution of learning materials; student scholarship support; and training of teachers.

UNICEF enhanced federal and state-level Government education capacity, this included embedding 24

technical advisers to advance ECE, ABE and education in emergencies. UNICEF spearheads girls' education in Somalia and in 2023, managed the UNdaunted Programme to improve outcomes for adolescent girls, including those with disabilities, by improving access to safe, quality, and inclusive education. Cognizant of the disproportionate climate crisis impacts on children and communities in Somalia, UNICEF worked with counterparts on a strategy that incorporates climate change and environmental education into the existing primary education curriculum to increase awareness and address the longer-term implications of climate change.

### **Goal 3: Protection**

In 2023, UNICEF contributed to legislative progress that improved the environment for children in line with international standards, including development support for the Child Rights Bill, Juvenile Justice Bill and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Bill, all of which the Federal Cabinet passed in 2023. Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs endorsed the national Age Verification Policy, which will enhance protection of children against detention and recruitment and use by armed forces. While the Somaliland Government launched a Child Rights Act in 2023, which reinforces protection measures for children, it defines the age of majority (adulthood) at 15 years, prompting multi-faceted protection concerns, including regarding recruitment of children by armed forces or armed groups and the age of marriage and consent. To improve protection of children associated with armed forces and groups, UNICEF advocacy resulted in the Government considering a revision of the Puntland Anti-Terror Law and Federal Anti-Terror Law to include provisions for children to ensure protection from interrogation, detention and harsh sentencing, including the death penalty.

In 2023, UNICEF worked with a countrywide network of 20 CSOs and 20 Government entities to improve the protective environment through advocacy for policy reform, supporting stronger child protection systems and promotion of positive social norms and reached a total of 81,788 individuals (22 per cent girls, 21 per cent boys) through grassroots efforts to reinforce help-seeking behaviour and positive norms, including less tolerance for violence against girls and women, with a focus on addressing female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Life-saving child protection services, including mental health and psychosocial support, reached 190,174 affected population (34 per cent girls, 35 per cent boys)—an increase from 164,680 individuals reached in 2022. Essential gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, response and mitigation activities reached 200,902 affected population (24 per cent girls, 15 per cent boys). UNICEF worked closely with child protection partners to identify 14,291 unaccompanied and separated children (46 per cent girls) and place them in kinship or other alternative care arrangements and ensure reintegration support and care services to 1,244 children (214 girls) released from armed groups and armed forces and at risk children.

Building on 2022 Committee on the Rights of the Child observations, UNICEF supported the Federal

Government to develop a five-year National Action Plan for Children, including a costed plan for addressing the Committee recommendations, such as lifting the Reservation of Article 20 on alternative care. The Reservation of Article 20 review is of utmost priority given frequent displacement increasing the risk of family separation in Somalia.

Despite progress, acceleration is needed to meet key indicator targets, including for under-five birth registration (3.5 per cent in 2023, below the 12 per cent target). With UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal only 47 per cent funded for child protection, there is need to scale up fundraising.

#### **Goal 4: Safe and Clean Environment**

With UNICEF support, since 2015 the proportion of people in Somalia using basic water services has increased from 49 per cent to 58 per cent and the proportion of people using basic sanitation services rose from 34 per cent to 41 per cent, while open defecation rates reduced from 31 per cent to 21 per cent. Despite these positive trends, acceleration is needed to meet SDG targets, and a huge proportion of Somali children still lack access to clean water, toilets and adequate hygiene, increasing the risk of contracting preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera and respiratory infections. This is particularly true for people in displacement settings. Progress was hindered by inadequate financing; cyclic emergencies that reverse sector gains; destruction of WASH infrastructure by El Niño-related flooding and non-state armed groups; insufficient evidence to guide policy and interventions; and public and private WASH service provider technical capacity gaps.

To improve the WASH situation for crisis-affected people, UNICEF assisted 1,215,890 people by distributing hygiene kits, providing household water treatment and promoting safe hygiene practices—reflecting 56 per cent of the overall 2023 Cluster reach for safe hygiene practice at household level. UNICEF also built or rehabilitated sanitation facilities that benefited 278,690 people and procured menstrual hygiene management kits that reached 122,125 girls and women. In response to drought and El Niño-induced flooding, UNICEF supported 867,945 people (55 per cent of WASH Cluster reach) to access emergency water services. As part of the exit strategy from emergency water access towards more sustainable approaches, UNICEF supported establishment of 29 new strategic boreholes (a WASH Cluster classification indicating boreholes serving a wide population, usually more than 5,000 people); development or rehabilitation of 75 water supply systems and boreholes; and upgrading of 33 shallow wells. These efforts collectively contributed to 730,263 people having improved sustainable access to safe water. UNICEF's advocacy with donors also drove a shift towards increased support for climate-resilient boreholes, which serve both people and their livestock—the economic spine of many rural communities. To ensure access to and use of quality WASH services in health care and learning facilities, UNICEF supported a total of 105 schools and 139 health care facilities, benefiting an estimated 47,000 school children and 80,000 people, respectively.

UNICEF has been instrumental in providing Somalia with the support and guidance needed to develop four critical policy and strategy documents to support climate crisis response. These documents, including the National Climate Change Policy (2010), the National Water Sector Policy (2019), the National Water Resources Strategy (2021) and the National Hydro-Meteorological Services Strategy (2022), provide clear and concise guidance on how to prioritize in the WASH sector, which is severely impacted by climate change. Somalia must take swift and decisive action to address the high dependency and vulnerability of its population, and these documents provide a solid foundation for doing so. In 2023, UNICEF supported Government participation in climate negotiations and decisions, including the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, to ensure Somalia is not left behind in climate-related decision-making.

## **Goal 5: Equitable Chance in Life**

In 2023, UNICEF was critical in supporting Government and interagency efforts towards reducing the number of children in Somalia facing income and multidimensional poverty and ensuring that more have an adequate standard of living to support them reaching their full potential. UNICEF's technical assistance enabled the establishment and implementation of a functional Somalia Unified Social Registry (USR), a key social sector policy trigger for Somalia completing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, which should positively impact public finance for children, job creation and poverty reduction. The Registry will enhance the Government's ability to coordinate the effective delivery of social services by eliminating duplication.

In 2023, UNICEF contributed to reducing the multiple deprivation of children by technically and financially supporting the Office of the Prime Minister's Social Sector Development Pillar, including during the drought response in collaboration with the Somali Disaster Management Agency. UNICEF contributed to ensuring children living in poor households are covered by Government social protection programmes by jointly implementing the national Shock-Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (*Baxnaano*) with support from the World Bank, WFP and Government. As of reporting, 199,913 households had received eleven quarterly transfers to date in the Project, with the last expected in December 2023. The Government and World Bank agreed on additional financing of US\$100 million to extend *Baxnaano* through December 2025, including UNICEF implementation through June 2024. The funding will enable two more quarterly transfers before households are reassessed for eligibility under a new World Bank-funded programme that is expected to be Government-led using the UNICEF-supported USR and *Baxnaano* operations manual and management information system.

In 2023, UNICEF commenced implementation of the KfW-funded Child-Sensitive Social Protection Programme to expand social protection coverage for children targeting approximately 27,700 pregnant and lactating women in three districts across three federal member states (80–90 per cent of pregnant and lactating women in these districts). Of the total targeted, 8,663 pregnant and lactating women in the Programme's first cohort were registered, verified and received cash transfers as of December



2023; registration and verification required to reach the remaining targeted women was ongoing at the time of reporting. UNICEF successfully aligned the Programme design with the USR and *Baxnaano* management information system and the Programme's second phase is scheduled to start in January 2024, targeting an additional 13,500 pregnant and lactating women in two other districts across two additional federal member states. The Programme's two phases apply a cash-plus approach by providing complementary services, such as health and nutrition, among others, to recipients.

The United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery, implemented with support from UNICEF and other partners to increase the contribution of local authorities to providing basic social services, concluded its third phase in June 2023. UNICEF, in collaboration with federal, state and district-level counterparts and civil society, implemented the Joint Programme service delivery model across 19 districts, leading to strengthened local administrative capacity and use of public financing to increase the coverage of equitable quality education services for children. A continued increase in commitment and local ownership of the service delivery model indicates a promising sustainability outlook, with districts now contributing 65 per cent of the investments required for the service delivery model interventions compared to 48 per cent in 2018. However, delay in approval of the Joint Programme's next phase and an anticipated significant funding decline are challenges.

In 2023, UNICEF-supported bottleneck analysis of health and education sector budget execution was valuable and provided lessons on the need to strengthen effective utilization of available resources. Further unpacking causes of low execution rates and supporting implementation of remedial actions agreed on with the Government will be 2024 priorities.

## **Programme and Operational Effectiveness**

In 2023, UNICEF collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to address aid diversion root causes and scale up mitigation measures. For example, UNICEF enhanced internal monitoring systems to improve aid diversion detection; collaborated with others to build capacity of 650 UNICEF personnel, staff from 69 partners and frontline workers on managing aid diversion risks throughout the programme lifecycle; and, given the risk of aid being diverted away from marginalized people, strengthened community feedback mechanisms to decrease minority group exclusion. Monitoring strengthening included UNICEF further integrating beneficiary interviews and market scans into field monitoring and prioritizing scanning markets near nutrition sites. To generate evidence to inform UNICEF and partner response efforts, UNICEF commissioned a study to estimate ready-to-use therapeutic food leakage and misuse in Somalia at various supply chain levels. UNICEF improved supply chain monitoring and financial assurance by updating its harmonized approach to cash transfers spot check tool, which was employed during 87 spot checks to facilitate better oversight on UNICEF funds disbursement and supplies. UNICEF implementing partners in Somalia also signed new programme documents and amendments containing clauses on aid diversion prevention and inclusion of minority groups in beneficiary selection for UNICEF-supported programme interventions. Aid

diversion and minority group exclusion issues were a communication and advocacy focus, with UNICEF delivering related messaging in approximately 25 meetings with donors, implementing partners and Government.

UNICEF collaborated with partners on child rights messaging and advocacy to encourage more child-friendly approaches and policies in 2023, including reaching over 4.6 million individuals through social media. To encourage increased use of community feedback mechanisms and accountability to affected populations, UNICEF led 45 sessions with local leaders on available mechanisms, including the UNICEF-launched U-Report digital platform, which enables anonymous SMS-based communication and was used by 350,000 people in Somalia in 2023. UNICEF applied social and behavior change approaches to address child deprivations, including reaching 8.5 million people with timely and life-saving information on UNICEF available services.

UNICEF in collaboration with Ministry of Planning Investment and Economic Development, supported the national evaluation landscape analysis to generate the evidence required to address national evaluation capacity gaps. Based on findings, UNICEF will support the government with national evaluation capacity initiatives.

## UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

To benefit child rights in Somalia in 2023, UNICEF leveraged a wide range of external resources and partnerships with Government at all levels, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CSOs, the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other public and private partners. Flexible funding enabled UNICEF to programme quickly and effectively, while strong collaboration contributed to critical joint advocacy and strategic steer, particularly to address aid diversion.

Federal, state and sub-state Government cooperation was key in furthering the child rights agenda across sectors, including close collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and line ministries, departments and agencies. For example, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Government to improve the health situation for children through the Somalia Health Coordination Forum and determine ways of reducing the impact of climate change on WASH service delivery.

UNICEF collaborated with other United Nations agencies on UNSDCF implementation, including participating in the United Nations Country Team and joint initiatives. These included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme, Food and

Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM, UNFPA, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, UNSOM, WFP and WHO. Implementation of the WFP–UNICEF joint nutrition action plan addressed wasting and other nutrition needs, such as by strengthening referrals to care for children in hard-to-reach districts; the UNICEF–UNSOM Joint Programme on Human Rights Phase 2 reinforced actions on child protection, supporting Somalia's commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM and joint programming on community-based reintegration for displaced people also supported results for children. UNICEF partnered with UNDP, UN-Habitat, ILO and the United Nations Capital Development Fund on the United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery to strengthen community resilience through economic development and improved government operations. The KfW-supported Joint Resilience Programme in South-Central Somalia with FAO and WFP delivered important integrated multi-sectoral results for children in 2023 and will enter a second phase in 2024. A United Nations-to-United Nations agreement between UNICEF and UNESCO in 2023 supported effective operationalization of the Somalia Education Sector Strategic Plan to improve the country's education sector; achieve key enrolment and retention targets; and efficiently prepare and manage the Joint

Review of the Education Sector. UNICEF participated in after-action reviews following security incidents coordinated by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and supported lessons learned identification and application to improve future incident response.

UNICEF partnerships with United Nations agencies strengthened compliance with the United Nations Business Operations Strategy in Somalia, helping to limit duplication, leverage common bargaining power and maximize economies of scale for children's benefit. United Nations system partnerships were also critical for facilitation of humanitarian assessments, response, monitoring, reporting and evaluations. This collaboration, as well as engagement with affected populations, was key to reducing the risk of and addressing aid diversion in 2023, while UNICEF's regular dialogue on aid diversion with Government officials was key to addressing its systematic drivers.

UNICEF results were supported by bilateral, multilateral and private sector donors, including the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; European Union; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; Germany's GIZ and KfW Development Bank; the Global Partnership for Education; the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway and Sweden; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; the World Bank; and the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. UNICEF National Committees also contributed to child protection, education, nutrition, social protection and WASH programming results, while a variety of funds enabled scaled-up efforts, including the Central Emergency Response Fund; Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; Somali Joint Fund; U.S. Fund for UNICEF; and United Nations Peacebuilding Fund.

UNICEF participated in numerous programme and operations coordination platforms in Somalia, including holding several leadership roles, such as co-chairing the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting with UNSOM. The Task Force operationalizes the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations to contribute to making Somalia a safer environment for children by documenting grave violations, including information to enable responsive action by the relevant parties that can range from informing advocacy to guiding programme scope. As Co-Lead of the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Committee (RCCE), UNICEF worked closely with federal and state health promotion departments to improve Government and partner staff application of RCCE approaches.

Collaboration with partners through the humanitarian cluster mechanism supported the delivery of quality programme results at scale for children affected by emergencies. In 2023, UNICEF co-led the Nutrition Cluster with WFP, the WASH Cluster with Polish Humanitarian Action and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Education Cluster with Save the Children International. In addition to coordination, UNICEF's cluster-dedicated staff support quality information management to support evidence-based response. UNICEF also participated in additional clusters and sub-clusters, adding value by contributing strategic advice, convening support and technical assistance. This participation included Logistics Cluster engagement that helped to achieve results such as identifying solutions to support local procurement and supply transportation for emergency response.

Working with coalitions of partners, including international and local NGOs; community-based organizations; and civil society, including affected populations, was particularly important to ensure implementation of UNICEF programming. For example, these partnerships were critical in furthering the localization agenda, with UNICEF collaborating to build the capacity of national and subnational partners. They were also essential in responding to public health emergencies in 2023, including work with Global Polio Eradication Initiative partners such as WHO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to respond to Somalia's polio outbreak. Partnership with social networks in Somalia was also supportive of results in 2023. Communities impacted by emergencies and recipients of UNICEF support provided crucial input via feedback mechanisms to improve programming and service delivery.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

Throughout 2023, UNICEF identified numerous lessons learned and implemented innovations to strengthen results for children. While good practices spanned a variety of areas, the value of integration was a cross-cutting theme.

In resource-constrained contexts such as Somalia, risk-informed humanitarian-development nexus programming is an opportunity to develop resilient health systems. Leveraging Global Fund resources,

UNICEF expanded the oxygen ecosystem through procurement and installation of five oxygen plants with solar power options that will ensure oxygen availability for treatment of pneumonia and emergency obstetric and neonatal care. UNICEF also leveraged these funds to strengthen health care waste management in Somalia, including to assess environmentally friendly technologies, such as microwave technologies, that can be introduced to move away from traditional incineration methods.

Since March 2022, UNICEF has worked with the Government, other United Nations agencies and CSOs using an effective approach to deliver an integrated minimum response package of life-saving services to people affected by shocks, largely in urban areas. Reaching 1.1 million people with life-saving health, nutrition, WASH and child protection interventions from January–November 2023, the response approach balanced accountability, speed and integration considerations, ultimately achieving effective operational integration with Government, United Nations and CSO partners. It also ensured provision of support to the most vulnerable children, such as through UNICEF-supported zonal-level mapping to understand their location in proximity to health and nutrition service sites and prioritization of populations in sites with zero latrines and water access limitations. Other good practices identified through the approach include the observation that the approach may facilitate stronger state-level inter-cluster coordination group function in future first-line responses and recognition that health, nutrition and WASH supply pre-positioning proved most strategic when done at the state level.

In Somalia, countrywide nutrition services are available through a network of 1,127 UNICEF-supported delivery sites. 2023 experience demonstrated that leveraging this site availability to provide an integrated set of nutrition; child protection; health; and WASH services would contribute to increased programme efficiency and reach. In 2023, UNICEF used available resources to ensure that nutrition; hygiene promotion; and malaria diagnosis and treatment were integrated into the package of health services provided during emergencies, which also proved to be a good practice for rapidly responding to multi-sectoral needs.

To enhance cross-sector collaboration and alignment and improve effectiveness and efficiency, UNICEF initiated new integrated programming in 14 districts. UNICEF mapped partners active in these districts and, where possible, facilitated integrated programme documents reflecting two or more sectors—ultimately involving 26 partners. UNICEF also included integration as a Somalia Country Office aid diversion workplan pillar to fortify the overall aid delivery system. Integration encourages the adoption of good practices across various sectors and assists in identifying and rectifying system weaknesses that could be exploited for aid diversion.

Furthermore, a joint integrated resilience programming delivered multi-sectoral, multi-agency targeted area-based interventions. This model, with Government buy-in at all levels, ensured the most vulnerable school-aged population had continuous and sustainable access to public services, including education. This resilience programming also enabled the UNICEF-supported introduction of the

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, which develops the capacity of teachers in both formal and non-formal contexts to critically assess individual students' reading and mathematics ability, regroup students according to their learning level and needs rather than by age/grade correspondence and then tailor the teaching and learning approach to optimize reading and mathematics outcomes for successful student progression through the primary cycle and beyond. The TaRL approach is not a new concept; in Somaliland, UNICEF is supporting piloting of the more typical TaRL model through the formal school system with a contextualized programme; educational materials; and a comprehensive monitoring framework. However, UNICEF's support to development of a TaRL model based on the Accelerated Basic Education curriculum implemented through CSOs supporting education in internally displaced persons sites and host community schools is an innovation for Somalia.

In Somalia, UNICEF–UNHCR implementation of the Regional Joint Programme on Water and Sanitation for Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Host Communities in East Africa (R-WASH) is proving to be a successful model for improving social cohesion, building the necessary in-country capacity to sustain water service provision and strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Experience to date has underscored the importance of building the water sector's professional capacity, implementing inclusive tariff-setting and supporting equitable water service provision through Government regulation. The Government is adopting R-WASH lessons learned to strengthen its approach, particularly where tensions exist between displaced people and host communities.

In 2023, digitalization and the use of digital tools emerged as important contributing factors to enhancing UNICEF effectiveness. For example, implementation of a mobile warehouse inventory management system improved accountability, visibility and transparency regarding supplies. Preparedness through procurement of emergency supplies for direct delivery to regional supply hubs strengthened supply delivery and response efficiency during emergencies. For example, this decentralized pre-positioning approach for emergency WASH supplies ensured the timely distribution of hygiene kits in hard-to-reach areas prone to insecurity and other emergencies.

With 2023 marking the mid-point of the current UNICEF Somalia Country Programme, the Office conducted a mid-term review with key Government partners, other UN agencies, donors, non-governmental partners and children to maximize programme effectiveness. UNICEF found that the Somalia theory of change and corresponding results framework logic remains credible at national and subnational levels and adequate to instigate systemic change. Looking ahead to 2024 and beyond, UNICEF plans to apply the insights gained throughout 2023 and from the mid-term review by investing in developing subnational capacities to increase the reach and scope of social services, especially prioritizing underserved communities through collaboratively conceived and sustainable capacity development plans. The review also helped identify that an important overall strategic Country Programme shift will be transitioning from large-scale humanitarian response with some development and nexus programming to greater investment in building resilient, shock-responsive systems at all levels for integrated service delivery to reach the most vulnerable. 2024 will also see UNICEF emphasizing mainstreaming protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and investing in

more effective advocacy, influencing, leveraging and development fundraising to benefit children in Somalia.