

Lebanon

Update on the context and situation of children

Lebanon hosts the highest number of refugees/displaced persons per capita and per square kilometre globally.[1] Out of a population of nearly 5.5 million [2], over 3.8 million people are in need including 2.1 million vulnerable Lebanese, 1.5 million Syrian refugees, and 211,400 Palestinian refugees.[3] The collapse of the banking sector and economic crisis that began in 2019 has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, resulting in the loss of jobs and income, high inflation, and a shortage of essential services including electricity and medication. Further, Lebanon's state budget decreased from US\$15 billion to US\$ 2 billion in 2023, impacting access to services across the country.[4] This complex crisis unfolded in a context of structural gender inequalities. Women, girls, people living with disabilities, refugees, migrants, minority groups such as the Dom people, and people with diverse SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics) are particularly affected, facing structural and economic marginalisation, increased violence, employment discrimination, and underpayment. Lebanon also ranks 132 out of 146 countries in the 2023 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report due to low scores in economic and political participation.[5]

The unemployment rate in Lebanon more than doubled between 2018 to 2022, rising from 11.4 per cent to 29.6 per cent.[6] The number of families sending children out to work to supplement the household income rose to 16 per cent by December 2023, up from 11 per cent in April. Amongst Syrian refugees, one in three families reported sending their children to work due to the economic crisis.[7] In October 2023, tensions at the southern border of Lebanon began to escalate following the outbreak of conflict between Israel and the State of Palestine. By 28 December 2023, 74,471 people were displaced including 27,554 children, putting additional strain on the ability of Lebanon's public sector and communities across Lebanon to deliver support to displaced populations.[8]

Prior to the onset of this conflict, Lebanon's public health system was already on the brink of collapse after years of underinvestment. The system is unable to meet the demands for public healthcare due to a scarcity of resources including financial resources, energy (due to heavy reliance on generators), human resources, equipment, and medication. Health indicators are worsening across the country, with rising rates of maternal and neonatal mortality, declining vaccine coverage, and limited access to hospitalisation.[9] The nutritional status of some of the most vulnerable children in Lebanon continues to decline – with over 60 per cent of children are living in food poverty and 277,000 children under five experiencing food poverty in early childhood. On average, 48 per cent of the 85,000 children living in severe food poverty are eating at most one of the eight recommended food groups. For Syrian children living in informal settlements and Palestinian camps, this figure rises to over 50 per cent.[10]

Mental health concerns are rising with an increasing number of adolescents and caretakers experiencing high levels of stress, often linked to families' economic situations. Nearly 38 per cent of households reported that their children were anxious and 24 per cent reported that their children were depressed daily. Among Palestinian refugee children, almost half of the children surveyed suffered from anxiety, while 30 per cent reported feeling depressed. Poor living conditions, factional clashes in refugee camps, and uncertainty about the future have collectively placed the mental health of Palestinian children at risk.[11]

Frequent school closures have disrupted children's education; 26 per cent of households have children not attending school, which rises to 52 percent amongst Syrian refugee households.[12] Due to the ongoing crisis in southern Lebanon, dozens of schools have been closed since 7 October, impacting

more than 8,000 students. Families are also deprioritizing education due to the lack of affordability and instead resorting to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and child marriage. Amongst Syrian refugee families, the most reported reasons for not attending school included the cost of transportation to school and the cost of educational materials.[13]

WASH services across the country remained in a poor state in 2023; most wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) continue to be non-functional due to the impact of electricity cuts and the cost of fuel for running back-up generators. This is resulting in environmental damage as untreated wastewater is being discarded along the coast and in-land, impacting water across Lebanon. It is also impacting access to water, sanitation, and hygiene services amongst vulnerable populations living in informal settlements.[14]

Families are increasingly relying on negative coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs. For example, twelve per cent of Syrian refugees in Beirut reported that they accepted high-risk, dangerous, or exploitative work to afford food. In 2023, the Child Protection sector witnessed a significant increase in case referrals, rising from 19 per cent to nearly 28 per cent.[15] Gender-based violence (GBV) is also increasingly becoming a risk, including forced prostitution and the sexual exploitation of women and girls. Without urgent support, vulnerable families will be unable to meet their basic needs in a safe and dignified manner.

[1] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2023

[2] World Bank 2022 (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=LB>)

[3] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2023

[4] Institut Des Finances Bassel Fuleihan, Citizen Budget 2019 & Citizen Budget - Executive's Budget Proposal 2023/2024

[5] Accessible here: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/global-gender-gap-report-innumbers/#:~:text=The%20world%20has%20closed%2068.6,years%20to%20achieve%20gender%20parity.>

[6] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2023

[7] Trapped in a Downward Spiral, UNICEF Report 2023

[8] IOM DTM Round 17

[9] Trapped in a Downward Spiral, UNICEF Report 2023

[10] Child Food Poverty: A Nutrition Crisis in Early Childhood in Lebanon, UNICEF 2023

[11] Trapped in a Downward Spiral, UNICEF Report 2023

[12] Ibid

[13] Lebanon Crisis Response Plan 2023

[14] Ibid

[15] DRC, 2023, Referral Information Management System Report

Major contributions and drivers of results

Goal Area 1: Every Child Survives and Thrives

UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to ensure the health and nutritional needs of every child. This included supporting the MoPH to adopt an integrated approach to healthcare by shifting healthcare provision towards preventative and promotive care at the primary healthcare level. This required extensive collaboration between healthcare providers, emphasizing services that are connected and integrated from households and communities to primary healthcare centres (PHCs) and hospitals. Under this integrated approach, nurses and midwives were reoriented and Community Health Workers (CHWs) were introduced to act as a bridge between PHCs and communities, supporting the MoPH's aim to implement universal healthcare by 2030.

UNICEF supported systems strengthening by generating evidence to support advocacy and decisionmaking related to PHC costing, fiscal space analysis, and supply chains. To maintain primary healthcare services, 172 PHCs were solarised to ensure they remained operational despite the energy crisis and 877 solar fridges, 1,000 remote temperature monitoring devices, and 1,350 freeze-free vaccine carriers were deployed.

In partnership with Harvard University, the Nutrition sector, and UNICEF, the MoPH launched the Lebanon Integrated Micronutrient, Anthropometry and Child Development (LIMA) survey, Lebanon's first-ever national nutrition and child development survey. Over 6,500 households were surveyed through LIMA and results will be used to develop targeted nutrition and child development interventions.

Due to rising nutritional and child developmental risks, UNICEF and the MoPH scaled up the 'Rising' Initiative. This programme integrates nutrition and child development to address the immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition and early childhood developmental deprivations and impairments amongst the most vulnerable children to help them reach their full growth potential. As part of this initiative, UNICEF developed 18 comprehensive modules covering all dimensions of the nutrition and nurturing care framework for frontline workers, while capacitating them on the social model of disability inclusion. UNICEF also supported the integration of Early Childhood Development (ECD) monitoring into the MoPH digital system for the first time in Lebanon. UNICEF continued supporting 44 PHCs to scale up their malnutrition programmes, resulting in 6,942 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) and children with wasting admitted to the programme.

Under the Rising Initiative, 50 PHCs were supported and 85 ECD corners were established in vulnerable areas. UNICEF trained 642 CHWs and ECD frontline workers who provided nutrition and child development interventions to 459,527 children and reached 416,141 caregivers with social and behavioural change (SBC) and counselling. To combat micronutrient deficiencies, 150,996 children under five were administered Vitamin A supplementation, 94,637 children under five were provided with micronutrient powders for home-based fortification, and 22,220 PLWs were provided with multiple micronutrient supplements to prevent anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies while ensuring optimal growth and development. The Initiative also supported 44 day-care centres, reaching 77 nursery instructors with essential skills and supplies. These instructors delivered an integrated package of nutrition and ECD services to over 2,000 young children and their caregivers.

Due to numerous factors, including the high cost of transportation, immunization levels in Lebanon continued to decline in 2023. UNICEF therefore scaled up the outreach and immunisation programme, including training over 1,000 vaccination nurses across 800 health facilities, reaching 588,519 children with 1,180,829 doses of critical vaccinations. Under the integrated approach, 379,272 missed children and adolescents were immunized, 327,304 individuals were reached with COVID-19 awareness messages, and 10,944 were reached with Cholera awareness messages along with services related to growth monitoring, malnutrition screening, and school enrolment. SBC edutainment strategies to enhance immunization rates in low coverage areas reached 1,321 beneficiaries.

To improve the early detection of potential health outbreaks, 364 healthcare workers and volunteers across different PHCs were trained on community surveillance and screening and 142 CHWs, PHC nurses, and partner staff were trained on SBC and community engagement. In addition, 350 midwives, nurses, and other health workers were trained on essential maternal and newborn health services. Over 30 midwives were employed in select PHCs, reaching 17,300 PLWs. To contribute towards the management of acute illnesses, UNICEF procured 683,938 units of acute medication for distribution in PHCs. As part of its emergency response following the outbreak of conflict in the south, 285,049 additional units of acute medication and 1,023 emergency kits were procured, and Psychological First

Aid (PFA) trainings were delivered to 101 healthcare workers in high-risk areas.

In Palestinian camps and gatherings, UNICEF supported over 86,703 children and PLWs who accessed preventive healthcare interventions including antenatal and postnatal care, routine immunization, breastfeeding support, growth monitoring and developmental screening and other child health services. In addition, more than 4,047 children under one year received the Penta 1 vaccine.

Goal Area 2: Every Child Learns

UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to strengthen education for every child, adolescent, and youth across Lebanon. The MEHE-UNICEF-Sector partnership supported the enrolment of 404,391 children aged three to 14 years in public schools during the 2022/2023 school year by covering the salaries and productivity allowances of 13,766 special contract teachers and school staff and the school and parent council funds of 1,074 public schools, covering all children in kindergarten through grade nine in public schools. To strengthen the quality and inclusivity of education at the systems level, UNICEF supported MEHE in implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities in 110 schools, strengthening school information systems and procedures by generating unique identification numbers for students and teachers, and updated data collection procedures including teacher and student daily attendance. In addition, UNICEF digitalised teacher training modules on Child Protection, Gender Equity, and Inclusive Education.

UNICEF supported MEHE to strengthen the education system through the Transition and Resilience Education Fund (TREF), an innovative aid modality that improved data systems, expanded quality education services, supported learning recovery activities, and enhanced general school operation. UNICEF launched the first TREF external annual audit to verify payments at the school level. As part of the TREF's Multiple Flexible Pathways (MFP) platform, UNICEF and partners scaled up the implementation of two gender responsive programmes – the nonformal education programme, 'Dirasa' ("My study" in Arabic), and multiservice community centres, 'Makani' ("My place" in Arabic) – through which it supported 66,036 out-of-school children (OOSC) and vulnerable children with accessing learning opportunities. Through Makani, a community centre-based multi-sectoral approach integrating child protection, education, and youth interventions, 25,821 marginalized and vulnerable children and 15,303 of their caregivers were supported with interventions that aim to reduce barriers and enable retention in learning. Dirasa, which supports financially struggling private-free and private schools to continue operating, supported the enrolment of 7,080 OOSC and the continuity of learning for 24,000 in-school children across 62 private and private-free schools as well as capacitated teachers on gender equal teaching, classroom practices, interpersonal communication, and SBC knowledge and skills to ensure effective community engagement.

UNICEF supported the Government of Lebanon (GoL) with implementing the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) National Strategic Framework, which contributed to enhancing the quality of Lebanon's TVET education system. UNICEF and the GoL designed flexible pathways for education and established accelerated TVET pathways to reintegrate out-of-school adolescents into formal TVET education. ILO and UNICEF initiated the accreditation of Non-Formal Education (NFE) curricula within TVET, supporting the digitalization of the NFE department to enhance the certification quality standards of NFE curricula and training centres. This included distributing school supplies to 20,163 students in TVET public schools and supporting 45,000 students from private and public TVET schools with their official exams.

To support sustainability efforts, UNICEF assessed 850 public schools and 158 TVET schools to determine their energy supply needs for future solar systems installation. An in-depth energy audit of 50 public schools was conducted to support MEHE in making informed decisions to improve energy efficiency in public education facilities. In 2023, 26 public schools, a TVET school in Akkar, the

Lebanese University in Rashaya, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) were solarised.

UNICEF supported an Education ‘summer catch-up’ programme in 587 public schools which included 156,477 children enrolled in formal education between grades one to nine. This programme helped prepare children for the following school year and encouraged OOSC to reenrol.

To support children’s education in Palestinian camps and gatherings, 10,078 children, including 400 children with disabilities, participated in preschool interventions. UNICEF and its partners initiated a coordination mechanism between early childhood education (ECE) providers and UNRWA schoolteachers to facilitate the transition between preschool and primary education. UNICEF improved the physical environment and infrastructure in 28 kindergartens to ensure a safe space for children and ensure its accessibility for children with disabilities. Moreover, 2,274 children in the Palestinian camps received community and school-based retention support to improve their performance and reduce learning gaps. Partners expanded the referral process and followed-up on the provision of specialised services for children with disabilities enrolled in NFE activities such as psychomotor therapy, speech and language therapy, psychotherapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. Further, 286 ECE and primary teachers received capacity building trainings on topics such as inclusive education, active learning modules, classroom management, and lesson planning.

The national volunteering platform Nahno Volunteers was launched in 2023, through which 2,115 youth volunteered in 84 opportunities to support their communities. A second platform offering youth access to industry-certified training from companies like Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, and LinkedIn was also launched and has over 10,000 registered youth. To further support youth capacity and employability, 10,204 vulnerable youth were empowered with market-relevant skills through formal and non-formal TVET, alongside basic foundational skills. 4,341 youth were supported with social entrepreneurship and digital skills through the Generation Innovation Leaders programme, which enhanced their employability, provided them with on-the-job trainings, and improved their overall livelihood prospects. Due to the conflict in southern Lebanon, UNICEF employed 120 vulnerable youth to produce and distribute 8,000 winter kits benefitting 4,500 families, fostered youth agency through the establishment of youth groups in shelters, facilitated recreational activities, and promoted the mental health and wellbeing of internally displaced people (IDPs).

To support youth and adolescents in Palestinian camps and gatherings, UNICEF provided life-skills trainings to 3,463 beneficiaries on conflict resolution, positive leadership, critical thinking, and healthy lifestyles. Based on labour market assessments and studies, 2,467 youth were enrolled in formal and non-formal vocational trainings to acquire the necessary skills for vocations of their choosing and based on market needs. Further, 51 qualified youth were placed in internships in the private sector to enhance their on-the-job skillsets.

Goal Area 3: Every Child is protected from violence and exploitation

Through its child protection programme, and to support children and families, psychosocial support (PSS) interventions were delivered to 63,926 children and caregivers and 3,419 children received case management and specialised services including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), medical, legal, and community-based alternative care services. To support street-connected children,

two minibuses were introduced to ensure that children living or working in Beirut could access critical services.

UNICEF supported 21,999 women and girls with accessing a comprehensive package of GBV prevention and response services in eight static and mobile safe spaces. Under the gender transformative QUDWA programme, over 500,000 people were sensitised on the severe consequences of harmful social norms. Over 1,163 community volunteers were engaged as agents of change to address issues like child marriage, child labour, and violence in communities and 73,002 individuals were reached with impactful community-based dialogue and advocacy. UNICEF also provided trainings on handling sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) disclosure from children and prevention against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) basics for more than 200 PSEA focal points in humanitarian organisations in Lebanon.

Due to the conflict in southern Lebanon, UNICEF provided PFA along with dignity kits and critical child protection and GBV services to 860 women, children, and caregivers. UNICEF continued to verify grave violations against children in armed conflict and tailored integrated support services to prevent or mitigate the risks of children associated with armed conflict. Accountability to affected populations (AAP) and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) activities in the IDP shelters were also provided including focus group discussions, community dialogue, and information sessions with IDPs where they could raise questions, share concerns, and be informed about their rights, available services, and how to access complaints and feedback platforms to engage with UNICEF. PSEA and safety assessments were conducted and used to develop PSEA and AAP trainings for the Lebanese Civil Defence volunteers working in the shelters.

In Palestinian camps and gatherings, 25,738 children, including 300 children with disabilities, received community-based PSS services and 1,393 beneficiaries received specialised MHPSS services. In addition, 549 children at high risk or survivors of child mistreatment received case management and MHPSS services. GBV safe spaces were accessed by 6,212 individuals and 38,468 community members were engaged in sensitization sessions on child protection and GBV. UNICEF engaged 8,538 caregivers to promote the wellbeing and the protection of children. Following the outbreak of conflict in Ein El Hilweh Camp, UNICEF provided support in four UNRWA shelters through the provision of hygiene kits, dignity kits, and water to over 800 people.

UNICEF advocated to the GoL on the amendment of Law 422 which seeks to respect and protect the rights of the child, acknowledges that children need special assistance, and makes their best interests a central concern. As part of capacity-building efforts, an e-course for judges on child justice was developed and guidance on the implementation of four non-custodial measures provided for by Law 422/2002 were finalized. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), UNICEF supported the drafting of a new vision on social services for families and children as part of the reform of the children's care system as well as launched the Child Marriage National Action Plan which aims to reduce child marriage in Lebanon by 60 per cent by 2025. To strengthen multi-sectorial and interministerial collaboration to prevent and respond to violence against children, an internal referral pathway for MoSA and inter-ministerial referral pathway were developed. UNICEF also led the development of the National MHPSS Sub-Strategy for children, youth, and caregivers, in close coordination with the MoPH and WHO.

Goal Area 4: Every Child lives in a clean and safe environment

UNICEF's support to achieving the continuity of WASH services has mainly been through two pillars; firstly, by supporting the Regional Water Establishments (RWEs) to maintain the operation of water supply and wastewater facilities, and secondly, to provide direct WASH services through NGO partners

to Syrian refugees living in informal settlements. UNICEF also worked closely with the Ministry of Energy and Water to progress on policy and sector reforms.

The four RWEs have been supported to carry out over 600 repair and maintenance tasks through the provision of supplies, materials, and technical expertise, supporting over four million people. Repairs to pumps, electrical panels, generators, and chlorine dosing systems has been vital to keep water stations delivering safe drinking water to communities. In addition, new infrastructure including spring catchments and gravity-fed reservoirs have been constructed, to increase water availability and reduce power requirements. To address the poor state of wastewater management, 11 WWTPs were selected to be brought back into operation. By the end of the year, repairs were conducted in two WWTPs along with several sewage pumping stations. In Bebnine municipality, following the Cholera outbreak in 2022, UNICEF rehabilitated the water system and set up a Local Water Services Support Committee to facilitate community engagement and support the sustainability of the programme.

UNICEF continued to support informal settlements with essential WASH services, reaching 248,764 people with water supplies and 230,841 people with improved access to sanitation. 249,412 people were reached through hygiene awareness and SBC sessions. UNICEF constructed 38 latrines that are accessible for persons with disabilities. 240 sites no longer require water trucking due to the introduction of alternative cost-effective water supply options, including connecting to local boreholes or solarising existing boreholes to increase the number of hours that pumps are available per day, with 71 boreholes solarised thus far. In Palestinian camps and gatherings, community mobilization activities and awareness raising sessions on WASH practices reached over 5,722 beneficiaries including 3,501 children. To help address climate change, a new initiative to install rainwater harvesting systems in ten schools in Zahle Municipality commenced, alongside an innovative project to reuse wastewater from Zahle WWTP.

Goal Area 5: Every Child has an equitable chance to life

UNICEF supported the GoL to reduce multi-dimensional poverty for children in 2023, focusing on both supporting families with children and developing national systems. This was achieved through three key initiatives; firstly, through collaborative efforts, the National Disability Allowance (NDA) was launched in April. Designed to address the additional costs of living with a disability, the NDA has already supported over 22,000 children and youth with disabilities, while systematically removing disability and gendered barriers. To ensure the sustainability of the NDA as well as the costeffectiveness of the Rights and Access centres that are mandated to conduct the disability assessments and issue personal disability cards - a main criteria to access the NDA programme - UNICEF solarized seven of the eight centres across Lebanon. Secondly, together with MoSA, the National Child Grant (NCG) was designed and finalized in June. The NCG aligns with the National Social Protection framework, contributing towards broader social protection coverage. Lastly, in November, the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) was approved. This strategic milestone signals a shift towards a disability-inclusive and gender-responsive social protection framework. The NSPS encompasses social assistance, social welfare, financial access to services, and labour and economic inclusion, marking a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of multi-dimensional poverty.

UNICEF's collaboration with local think tanks and Civil Society Organizations resulted in the development of 23 impactful products in 2023. Ranging from policy notes to articles, videos, discussions, dialogues, and infographics, these items played a crucial role in building consensus around the necessity of social protection, the need of a more equitable taxation system, and the need for a more transparent and participatory public finance management system. UNICEF also collaborated with The Policy Initiative to support the revision of the Municipal Act Law, empowering local governments to provide essential services for children.

UNICEF's achievements in saving the lives of children, defending their rights, and helping them fulfil their potential was only possible through collaborative approaches with its partners. UNICEF leads the WASH, Education, and Nutrition sectors as well as the Child Protection sub-sector and ensures strategies respond to the needs of vulnerable children and families. UNICEF leads the Skills Development Working Group which works towards a cohesive approach to skills development initiatives and policy work. As the RCCE Taskforce lead, UNICEF actively engages ministries, INGOs, UN agencies, community-based organizations, and academic institutions. UNICEF chairs the Social Protection Partner's Forum, alongside the EU and the World Bank, to strengthen coordination and align approaches among key partners supporting social assistance as well as vice chairs the Business Operations Strategy Procurement Working Group. UNICEF remains an active member of the Health Sector, GBV, and Gender working groups. In November, UNICEF successfully advocated for the creation of the UN Youth taskforce to enhance coordination on youth programming within the UN system.

UNICEF worked closely with the MoPH to ensure services reached the most vulnerable and helped support the goal of universal healthcare by 2030. Notably, UNICEF led in bringing Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, to Lebanon for the first time to fund all vaccines for three years. UNICEF and the MoPH activated a National Nutrition Taskforce to oversee the implementation of the National Nutrition Strategy and the LIMA survey. UNICEF also supported the MoPH to hold a national consultative workshop to take the stock of ECD in Lebanon including technical consensus-building on the UNICEF-led ECD formative research in partnership with the MoPH, the Harvard School of Public Health, and the American University of Beirut.

As part of the education reform agenda, UNICEF's strategic partnership with MEHE strengthened accountability, governance, and transparency. For the first time, MEHE presented a liquidation report covering public school-level expenditures of the disbursed allocations funded by UNICEF, a significant milestone to strengthen financial management at the school level. Similarly, with support from UNICEF, MEHE improved the quality, accuracy, and timeliness of its data management of students and teachers, including presenting student attendance data for the first time.

To implement the inclusive education programme, UNICEF built a strong partnership with the MEHE Department of Orientation and Guidance and its Inclusive Education Unit, which was created to support the enrolment of children with disabilities in public schools. The unit guides teachers on disability inclusion, refers families to centres and organizations collaborating with MEHE for assessments, and facilitates inclusive school enrolment.

Collaborative efforts with the MoYS and MoSA enhanced youth engagement and volunteering, while collaborations with the TVET Directorate under MEHE enhanced quality TVET education. UNICEF also worked closely with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) on youth engagement in climate action, culminating in Lebanon's first Local Conference of Youth, and on a cross-ministerial partnership under the Office of the Prime Minister with MoSA, MEHE, and the Central Administration of Statistics to enhance digital learning and connect vulnerable youth to the gig economy. UNICEF collaborated closely with young people as partners and allies, establishing subnational youth advisory groups and a national youth advisory group. UNICEF expanded its private sector network to over 100 companies and influential associations and established partnerships with the Association of Lebanese Industrialists, four TVET private sector taskforces, and other innovation and social entrepreneurship stakeholders.

UNHCR and UNICEF established a global strategic collaboration framework to promote the inclusion of refugees in the national systems of host countries and to bring about transformational change for

refugee children and their families. The framework outlines the strategic collaboration between the two organizations and is being used to inform joint programming.

UNICEF and MoSA invested in strengthening the capacity of Social Development Centres to deliver services to women and children at risk or survivors of violence, neglect, abuse, exploitation, and GBV. Through UNICEF's support, case management services continue to be provided nationwide by 58 social workers.

To address child labour in Lebanon, UNICEF, FAO, and ILO developed a common framework on the most urgent actions and advocacy to be undertaken including a call for the government to revive the national action plan on the worst forms of child labour, advocacy priorities to mobilise support, and funding to address this issue and identify key areas of complementarity between the agencies to amplify efforts.

In line with the Water Sector Recovery Plan, UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Energy and Water and the four RWEs to move the public water supply and wastewater services towards a financially viable and sustainable condition. UNICEF strengthened coordination at a national level through the creation of three taskforces; two to support water establishments (WEs) with their customer databases and staffing and the third for wastewater management.

UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP worked together to deliver cash and voucher assistance through the Lebanon One Unified Inter-Organizational System for e-cards (LOUISE). UNICEF also collaborated with MoSA and ILO in designing and implementing the NDA and the NCG. Using national systems underscores UNICEF's commitment to sustainability, national ownership, and transitioning programmes to the government. Further, through a UN joint programme with ILO, UNICEF is leading the policy and technical support to MoSA for the finalization and implementation of the new NSPS under the leadership of the government and in collaboration with line ministries.

As a Gender Lead Organization for the Multi-Year Resilience Programme, UNICEF, together with UN Women, supported partners to ensure gender responsiveness in their programmes by developing a gender action plan and endorsing a gender lens checklist to increase gender accountability. An officewide AAP strategy was developed to ensure that people centred approaches are systematically considered and adopted in management and decision-making processes. This strategy will be operationalised through an AAP taskforce in 2024. UNICEF scaled up its PSEA response and played an active role in fostering UN-wide commitment on PSEA at the interagency level. This included working with the PSEA in-country network to train 60 PSEA focal points on risk assessment tools for safer programming.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Based on lessons learned and as articulated in the new Country Programme approved in March 2023, UNICEF adapted its approach to ensure its programming reached the most vulnerable and marginalised children and families across Lebanon. The economic crisis disrupted service delivery and impacted children's access to basic services. One aspect of the economic crisis has been the prohibitively high cost of energy – often dependent on generators. To combat this, in 2023 UNICEF solarised 172 PHCs and distributed 877 solar fridges, 1,000 remote temperature monitoring devices, and 1,350 freeze-free vaccine carriers to ensure the continuation of health services and equity in healthcare, even during extensive electricity cuts. UNICEF also solarised 26 public schools, a TVET school in Akkar, the Lebanese University in Rashaya, and the MoYS to support the accessibility of education. To reduce reliance on emergency water trucking and desludging services, UNICEF solarised 71 boreholes in informal settlements. Lastly, seven MoSA Rights and Access centres were solarised across the country.

Another key innovation included integrating nutrition and ECD service delivery across multiple platforms, a crucial lesson learned to ensure maximum impact and reach. By utilising diverse platforms such as PHCs, community spaces, nurseries, and digital avenues, UNICEF met the needs of children whilst simultaneously fostering community engagement and a more inclusive approach to health.

Based on lessons learned, UNICEF began conducting school fund transfers directly to school bank accounts in USD instead of local currency (Lebanese pounds) to ensure the efficiency and accessibility of funds. MEHE's budget planning processes at the school level prior to the disbursement was a breakthrough under the TREF framework. Schools shifted from paper-based budget planning to digital solutions which was an important milestone for MEHE as it will improve efficiency in the TREF modality. The Call and Learn Tutoring Hotline was another major innovation to support UNICEF to reach the most vulnerable children with high-quality, individualised learning support as it is at zero cost to families, low-tech, and accessible at home over the phone. This hotline was particularly helpful for children who had accumulated learning gaps and had no support at home.

UNICEF's innovative nonformal education programme called 'Dirasa', and the new multiservice community centres called 'Makani', are built upon valuable insights gained from NFE assessments, wellbeing package approaches, and a decade of experience in NFE and other programmes. These programmes aim to prepare children and young adolescents aged 3 to 18 for the future, facilitating their transition to formal education. Based on lessons learned, Dirasa indirectly supports in reducing the enrolment and education-related costs for children already enrolled in the targeted schools through the in-kind support of supplies including stationery and a dropout prevention fund for children who are at risk or have dropped out of education due to financial challenges. The ultimate objective is to create a community space that enables vulnerable children to have their own protected space to support their development as well as their physical, social, and emotional wellbeing through an integrated set of interventions. Notably, this model reduces the unit cost per child by 85 per cent by offering multiple services within the same geographical area.

The effects of climate change will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable children, particularly those with limited resources to deal with shocks and stresses, and those whose income relies on the natural environment. UNICEF is therefore developing an innovative climate change strategy to be implemented in 2024 that aims to ensure sustainable energy for health-care facilities, schools, and WASH is accelerated, essential services are protected and shock-responsive, and pathways are developed for young people to be more effective champions for sustainability.

Under its WASH programme, at the community level, UNICEF successfully implemented a new labour-intensive WASH infrastructure initiative to reduce tensions within communities due to limited resources, environmental degradation, and competition over jobs. A climate risk lens has also been applied to all WASH interventions; for example, UNICEF conducted rainwater harvesting of two education facilities to increase sustainable water practices and to increase knowledge and awareness of climate friendly innovations. UNICEF also partnered with the University of Saint Joseph to monitor snow melt, resulting in a summary report that will be used to inform the sector on this vital water resource.

Another key innovation was the design and implementation of the National Disability Allowance. UNICEF ensured that the NDA was fully inclusive by working closely with organizations of persons with disabilities and partners to develop inclusive communication materials, registration processes that include sign language registration and registration using WhatsApp, trainings for all service providers on inclusive communication, as well as encouraging financial service providers to assess and mark the accessibility of its centres on their website. Further, following the outbreak of conflict in southern Lebanon, UNICEF provided 2,900 recipients of the NDA residing in the south with an advance payment and an emergency cash grant of US \$100 to support them with meeting their basic needs

during the ongoing crisis based on lessons learned and to avoid them relying on negative coping strategies.

UNICEF endorsed the integration of the Lebanon country office SOGIESC strategy into the gender workplan, emphasizing a holistic approach to addressing social and gender inequalities. This integration ensures that gendered barriers are accounted for in all aspects of UNICEF's work, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society.

In line with the UNICEF's right-based approach to respond to the people served, UNICEF held workshops with 53 partners to discuss additional ways to enhance the participation of affected persons in decision making, improve information dissemination, encourage beneficiaries to raise their voices, and improve the transparency of activities. A key outcome of the workshop was the development of action plans and AAP tools to identify and address areas for improvement to ensure people-centred AAP approaches are systematically considered at the field level. All partners attending the workshop participated in an AAP survey as a pre-requirement to assess their capacity and compliance with UNICEF's AAP requirements. The survey results were used to inform the topics and priorities for partner workshops

