Key results and partnerships for children

State of Palestine

2021
In December 2021, UNICEF marked 75 years since its inception, when the world came together and agreed that providing relief and supporting the long-term needs of mothers and children was of critical importance. As the current COVID-19 pandemic has shown us, among other crises, this mission remains as important today as it ever was. In 2022 the pandemic continues, and children and young people will be living with its impacts, and how the world responds, for years to come. It is critical, therefore, that girls, boys, and youth be included in decisions that affect their future. Some 75 years on, UNICEF remains committed to the rights of children and is determined to protect and to promote the rights of all children everywhere, including in the State of Palestine.

This document outlines key results for children achieved by UNICEF in the State of Palestine in 2021 with the support of all partners and stakeholders, including children and young people. The document is structured into two main parts, with the first part outlining primary achievements and results based on UNICEF’s key priorities, and in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals. The second part outlines achievements obtained through the development of partnerships and collaboration.

In 2021, the UNICEF in the State of Palestine office (UNICEF in the SoP) continued to provide support to the Palestinian Government to adapt its programmes to better respond to COVID-19, working with WHO and other partners. This included leading a communication response strategy to prevent and mitigate risks associated with COVID-19 and promoting vaccination. With UNICEF co-leading the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) taskforce, alongside MoH and WHO, over 6 million people were cumulatively reached with risk messaging, while over 3 million people were engaged through multi-format activities to help disseminate these messages.

As the country experienced a significant increase in tension in April/May, culminating in 11-days of active hostilities in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF, in line with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), shifted its focus to providing live-saving humanitarian assistance to affected children and their families. Simultaneously, UNICEF also ensured links between this humanitarian response and the longer-term development strategy.

Finally, the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) remains high on UNICEF’s agenda, with dedicated capacity building sessions organized and action plans developed with partners. The scaling up of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and community engagement has been incorporated into all new partnership agreements.
Every Child Survives and Thrives

In 2021, the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) prioritized the roll out of its COVID-19 vaccination campaign and revision of the National Deployment Vaccination Plan (NDVP). UNICEF, jointly with WHO, played a leading role in finalizing and implementing this plan, while submitting COVID-19 vaccine deployment support application requests to the COVAX initiative.

UNICEF reached approximately 56,000 people with essential lifesaving health services, both in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the most vulnerable pregnant women, lactating women, and children under five.

As a result of significant input to the NVDP, UNICEF ensured that quality essential health care services were promoted whilst also responding to immediate COVID-19 related needs. This included the use of innovative approaches to ensure services reached the most vulnerable women and children through mobile postnatal clinics. Over 9,000 women and nearly 50,000 children under five (half of whom are girls), including nearly 8,000 neonates, benefited from access to improved quality health and nutrition services in the Gaza Strip. Some 14 maternity and neonate units were equipped with essential drugs, medical consumables, furniture, and medical lifesaving equipment. Additionally, over 5,500 high-risk pregnant and lactating mothers benefited from individual hotline counselling sessions on child health, nutrition, and hygiene in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The rehabilitation of Khan Younis maternity hospital continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and a total of 15,500 mothers and new-borns accessed improved maternity and neonatal health care services directly impacting and improving the neonatal mortality rate.

In parallel to the procurement of commodities and medical supplies, UNICEF undertook logistics information system mapping, including supply chain assessments in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a focus on warehouse data management. The results are being validated by the MoH and will form the basis for developing an action plan for a medical supplies intervention.

1 COVAX is a global facility representing partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO), Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) working on the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. It includes 190 countries with a total population of more than 7 billion people and ensures fair and equal access to COVID-19 vaccines supplied through UNICEF. Some 31 countries have contributed vaccine doses to COVAX.
In line with UNICEF’s regional accelerators to strengthen primary health, UNICEF, with WHO and UNFPA, continued to invest in the strengthening of gender-responsive services and scaling up the implementation of a comprehensive package of sexual, reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health care (SRMNC) services.

During and after the escalation, these health services remained fully operational, complemented by additional support provided to MoH for essential lifesaving services that benefited approximately 56,000 people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the most vulnerable pregnant women, lactating women, and children under five.

UNICEF continued to play a vital role in Early Childhood Development (ECD), providing technical assistance and coordination between the MoH, the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), and the World Bank to leverage resources for strengthening ECD and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) systems.

Building on previously developed models for parenting education and ECI, UNICEF supported the three sectoral ministries to roll out and implement the Palestinian national multi-sectoral Developmental-Behavioural Scales tool. In addition, a cost analysis of the ECD services package was conducted and an ECD investment case was developed, which included an action plan for the scale-up of ECD services. This ECD investment case was validated, and recommendations were endorsed by the three sectoral ministries for action, informing the ongoing revision and update of the national sectoral strategies including on health, social protection, and ECD/ECI. In 2021, some 630 children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with disabilities had access to early detection of developmental delays and intervention services, including with assistive devices.
Furthermore, in 2021 the MoH, in partnership with UNICEF, WFP, and partners, finalized and rolled out the National Nutrition Protocol for women, adolescents, and children. UNICEF contributed to the dissemination of this updated protocol, which included capacity building sessions with 150 health professionals. An action plan for the introduction and rollout of the Complementary Feeding Bowl - an innovative tool for ensuring good feeding practices at home – was also jointly supported with WFP, targeting 20,000 children under the age of two in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

## Every Child Learns

The education sector was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting over 1.4 million children. The pandemic added challenges to an already strained educational system, including challenges to operationalize safe access protocols and provide remote quality learning. To support the MoE in addressing these learning losses, UNICEF with and other UN agencies supported the development of the recovery and protection priorities plan for 2021-2020. Specifically, UNICEF contributed to improving access to quality, safe and inclusive learning opportunities by supporting the learning environment. The capacity building of teachers, parents, students, and education stakeholders was provided at national and subnational levels, especially on how to ensure safe learning environments free from infection.

### Number children of secondary school age non-attending

- **96.9%** Basic school attending
- **74.5%** Secondary school attending
- **29.5%** boys
- **11.6%** girls

### 7-14 year olds achieving reading level

- **39.6%** poorest households
- **64.4%** wealthiest households
Following hostilities in the Gaza Strip in May, UNICEF delivered recreational activities that provided wellbeing and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for over 55,000 children and adolescents. UNICEF provided over 74,000 (50 per cent girls) vulnerable children with essential stationery kits, and 3,019 children were provided with electronic tablets to enable access to remote learning. Twenty damaged schools were rehabilitated, providing a safe learning environment to 46,200 children. An additional 26 schools continue to be rehabilitated, which will benefit over 120,000 students (half of them girls).

High youth unemployment remains a major challenge for Palestine, reaching 60 per cent in the Gaza Strip for youth under 26 years. In line with the UNICEF Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Accelerators on improving adolescents’ skills, learning, and employability rights from early childhood, as a frontrunner country for the Generation Unlimited initiative (GenU), UNICEF worked closely with UNDP, UNFPA, the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Higher Council of Youth and Sports to establish a National Youth Volunteer Services Platform (NYVSP). This platform is being established to connect potential youth volunteers with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their communities, while gaining valuable work experience and skills for future employment. In its first phase, it aims to reach 10,000 unemployed youth. An assessment mapping of volunteerism has already been completed and a NYVSP framework has been drafted.

As Education Cluster co-lead with Save the Children, UNICEF successfully coordinated the education response plan following the Gaza Strip escalation, the education component of inter-agency multi-sector needs assessment, and cluster inputs for the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Through the education cluster, UNICEF also advocated for children’s safety and facilitated safe access to schools through protective presence partners in the H2 area of Hebron.
Every Child is Protected from Violence and Exploitation

UNICEF continued to support the strengthening of comprehensive child protection systems, while further aligning humanitarian and development approaches to better address the protection needs of children. After being updated to reflect COVID-19 needs this included the launch of the National Inter-Sectoral Violence Against Children Strategy (NIVAC), in line with the UNICEF MENA the Regional Accelerators/ This was complemented by a child protection mapping review, following which UNICEF cumulatively supported the implementation of 69/39 recommendations.

In 2021, the MoSD increased the number of child protection counsellors to 35 (an increase of 12 per cent), enabling protection support to nearly 2,400 children (one out of five are girls) across all six West Bank governorates. The development of a professional Social Worker diploma was also jointly initiated through UNICEF’s partnership with the Palestinian Government, which aims to further develop the skills of nearly 3,000 active social workers in government and civil society organizations. In 2021, the social work curriculum is being taught at two universities, reaching 60 undergraduate students.

To enhance the protection of children during COVID-19 and ensure a coordinated response, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CPAoR) and the Protection Cluster collected data on the protection impact on vulnerable communities of COVID-19 to identify child protection needs and inform responses. Primary child protection concerns identified include psychological distress, domestic violence, child neglect, lack of specialized services for children with special needs, child separation, and a lack of space and privacy. UNICEF supported 30,500 children (nearly half of them girls) with Child Protection and MHPSS services, while the cluster reached 64 per cent of children targeted. Out of those reached, over 3,000 children (more than half girls) accessed case management services. Structured psychosocial services reached over 30,000 caregivers (50 per cent women).
UNICEF conducted risk-education sessions on Explosive Remnants of War in the Gaza Strip, reaching over 8,600 children (more than half of whom were girls) and nearly 12,000 caregivers (over half of whom were women). UNICEF also supported more than 600 children affected by conflict-related violence with legal assistance in East Jerusalem.

UNICEF also increased its support to two hotlines, reaching more than 7,900 people (2,700 children – 59 per cent boys) and over 5,000 adults (65 per cent men) with psychosocial counselling and referral to appropriate child protection, gender-based violence and legal services. MHPSS peer support was provided to 71 child protection professionals in the Gaza Strip to ensure healthy interactions and sustained support to children most in need.

In terms of justice for children, the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) and MoSD trained 50 community mediators, child protection counsellors, juvenile police, and juvenile prosecutors on the mediation guidelines that were developed with the support of UNICEF in 2020. The first 20 community mediators were appointed in 2021, creating an institutionalized pool of professionals to manage minor crimes involving juveniles. Following last year’s Alternative to Detention (A2D) assessment, UNICEF supported the scaling up A2D initiatives in seven governorates in the West Bank reaching 143 children.
Every Child Lives in a Safe and Clean Environment

In 2021, UNICEF made progress in constructing the second phase of the Southern Gaza Seawater Desalination Plant to increase access to safely managed water by 175,000 people (from 75,000 people to 250,000 people). By the end of 2021 per cent of the second phase was completed. The first phase remained operational throughout the year maintaining uninterrupted water production for 75,000 people. In line with UNICEF’s regional accelerators on Water and Climate change, UNICEF also initiated the upgrade and operation of the water network in the Yatta Municipality in the West Bank, aiming to reach over 76,000 people (half of them women) with safe access to water whilst strengthening the capacity of the Yatta water utility and the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) to operate the system.

As a flood prevention measure to mitigate the potential impact of climate change and unreliable power supply in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF implemented storm water drainage projects that prevent 80,000 people from being affected by seasonal flooding. UNICEF also equipped six critical water or wastewater pumping sites with photo voltaic (PV) systems as alternative energy sources, which will ensure reliable WASH services for 200,000 people.

In close collaboration with the MoE, UNICEF rehabilitated and upgraded WASH facilities in 20 schools to meet minimum child-friendly standards, facilitating the safe return to school of nearly 50,000 children (more than half of whom are girls). UNICEF and partners also conducted hygiene promotion and menstrual hygiene promotion reaching nearly 8,000 students.

In response to the escalation in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF released prepositioned essential supplies, which allowed the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility (CMWU) to rapidly repair damaged sections of the water and wastewater networks and plant equipment across the Gaza Strip. Within 90 days following hostilities an estimated 800,000 affected people (nearly half of whom were women) had benefitted from this restored access to improved WASH services. UNICEF also continued to support CMWU with WASH supplies and repairs to various WASH services across the Gaza Strip.
As WASH Cluster lead, UNICEF supported the coordination, management, and dissemination of information among Cluster partners to ensure a timely response to the most vulnerable people across West Bank and the Gaza Strip. With direct support from UNICEF, the Cluster conducted a WASH partners’ capacity building program targeting 35 organizations that focused on WASH strategies, advocacy, information management, and risks analysis. In cooperation with the PWA and CMWU, the WASH cluster led the rapid needs assessment following the May 2021 escalation of hostilities, the results of which led to resource mobilization and advocacy. The WASH Cluster also conducted several national-level assessments to measure access to WASH services, including WASH in schools and WASH standard assessments in healthcare facilities.
Every Child has an Equitable Chance in Life

The continuous impact of COVID-19 on the Palestinian economy, the May hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the fiscal crisis faced by the Palestinian Authority, and the resulting steep declines in Social Protection payments through the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (PNCTP) all create the conditions for increased child poverty. To partially mitigate the most extreme effects of this, UNICEF has begun an innovative cash transfer programme that distributes multi-purpose cash for 4,300 children in 1,160 households affected by the conflict in the Gaza Strip and an additional 687 households affected by COVID-19.

These programmes are built in support of the Ministry of Social Development's national social assistance programmes and are planned to contribute to strengthening the shock responsiveness of the PNCTP and to promote linkages between humanitarian and development programmes with social assistance.

UNICEF, in close collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), also increased the production of data for evidence-based planning through the commissioning of a disaggregated analysis of the MICS results at the governorate and Area C level as well as a MICS Education analysis (EAGLE). It is expected that this data will inform the PA’s new National Policy Agenda (NPA) planning from 23/2022 and the preparation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework in coordination with the UNCT.
To promote social protection policy reforms for persons with disability and elderly persons, UNICEF, through the UN Joint Programme on the Sustainable Development Goals Fund with WFP and the ILO, has supported the MoSD to better integrate services for these vulnerable groups into the national social protection system. This has also included costing out the new draft Law for Persons with Disability and Mapping Social Service Providers that would act at referral mechanisms.

73% of households in the poorest wealth quintile had received a social transfer or benefit in the last two months.

Children with a disability

1/40 Boys

1/50 Girls
UNICEF collaboration and partnerships

2021 provided opportunities for UNICEF to strengthen and expand its strategic partnerships, in close coordination with the UN Country Team (UNCT) and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). UNICEF continued to lead the WASH cluster and co-lead the Education cluster, as well leading the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP-AOR). UNICEF also continued as technical advisor to the LACS Social Protection Sector Working Group. The role of the humanitarian clusters was reinforced in 2021 during the May escalation under the leadership of the RC/HC. These humanitarian clusters provided strategic coordination of response activities, including for humanitarian and early recovery needs assessments.

In WASH, UNICEF established a strategic partnership with the national Environmental Quality Agency as the designated national authority on climate issues. Additionally, UNICEF works with the Global Water Partnership and the Stockholm International Water Institute on climate resilience programming, further strengthening environment and climate related evidence generation.

In the health sector UNICEF continued to support the coordination of line ministries and the World Bank to strengthen systems for ECD and Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). Furthermore, UNICEF is leading a UN joint programme on Health Systems Strengthening in the Gaza Strip with UNFPA and WHO. The roll out of COVID-19 vaccination, as well as the revision of the National Vaccination Deployment Plan were further supported jointly with WHO.
Nearly 2 million COVID-19 vaccines were delivered through the COVAX initiative, while over 6 million messages on preventive and mitigative measures were shared widely. By the end of 2021, over 1.5 million Palestinians were fully vaccinated.

In the education sector, UNICEF is hosting the joint ‘Education Cannot Wait’ (ECW) funded Multi-Year Resilience Programme with UNDP, UNESCO, UNRWA and an INGO. The ECW/MYRP aligns with the UN’s ‘new way of working’, using partners’ complementing capacities and joint accountabilities towards collective education outcomes and applying ‘the whole of child approach’. For youth engagement and employment, through the ‘Generation Unlimited’ initiative, UNICEF worked with UNDP, UNFPA, the Prime Minister’s Office and the Higher Council of Youth and Sports to establish a flagship National Volunteer Service Programme. In parallel, UNICEF partnered with the Bank of Palestine to promote entrepreneurial and social initiatives through young people’s engagement and participation, further linking them to the private sector across the West Bank and Gaza.

In Child Protection the Sawasya-II rule of law joint programme with UNDP and UNWOMEN enabled child protection programming to capitalize on the mandates, skills and capacities of each partner. This strengthened synergies and approaches in support to the Palestinian justice sector. Furthermore, UNICEF worked through a joint programme on Social Protection reform for persons with disabilities and the elderly with WFP and the ILO. This programme strengthened UNICEF’s role in strategic engagement on national Social Protection reforms including through a costing of the national disability law and the mapping of social services for these groups.

The development of a national action plan to follow up on the Convention of the Rights of the Child’s (CRC’s) Concluding Observations provided inter-ministerial policy engagement opportunities. UNICEF worked with OHCHR and NGOs to support the Palestinian Authority to strengthen the fulfilment of child rights, including engaging with national actors through the Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict (OPAC) and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) reporting to build engagement on awareness and compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
UNICEF’s partnerships with the media have remained instrumental. During the May escalation, UNICEF’s media outreach increased significantly, with the office undertaking more than 30 interviews with major news outlets. This ensured that the impact of hostilities on children remained a central component of the narrative of the escalation, and reinforced UNICEF’s position as a credible source of information for children. UNICEF SoP’s Twitter account grew from 13,000 to 19,000 followers during this time, with some posts reaching tens of thousands of people. This occurred because UNICEF provided a trusted real-time, up-to-date information source on the impact the conflict and the protracted protection crisis continues to have on children.

In November and December 2021, UNICEF marked World Children’s Day and UNICEF’s 75th anniversary through two high-level events in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Both events renewed the commitment of the different participating stakeholders to put children’s rights at the forefront of social and political agendas in the State of Palestine. The events included mural painting, dancing, orchestral arrangements, the showing of films produced by and about youth in Palestine, and other performances by children.
thank you

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