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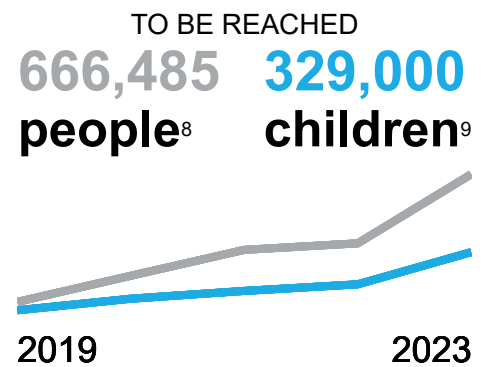
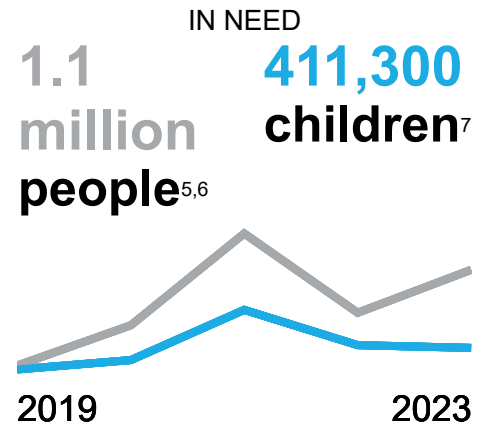
Humanitarian Action for Children

A child nurses in the UNICEF-supported Centre for Recovery and Ambulatory Nutritional Health Education in Bassiknou, in Hodh Ech Chargui Region. The baby is at the centre to recover from wasting.

Mauritania

HIGHLIGHTS¹

- Mauritania is experiencing an accelerated influx of refugees, coupled with the return of Mauritanian refugees from Mali due to the deteriorating security situation there. According to estimates, during the lean season, nearly 880,000 people faced food crisis conditions of Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or higher,³ and about 80,227 children are affected by global acute malnutrition.² Mauritania is among the countries where children are most exposed to climate risks.⁴ In 2023, nearly 1.1 million people, including 411,300 children, will be in need of humanitarian assistance.
- In 2023, to maximize the impact of its interventions UNICEF will implement a multisectoral response only in the 19 most vulnerable moughataas (departments) and in the district of Bassiknou, which hosts refugees and returnees. The focus will be on saving the lives of the most vulnerable children and strengthening the resilience of communities, individuals and systems to shocks. A systematic gender lens will inform analysis and programme design.
- UNICEF is requesting US\$11.3 million to meet the needs of the population of the 19 most affected moughataas, particularly in the areas of education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition, and in the refugee- and retounee-hosting district. The ongoing SMART survey will soon provide more accurate data on needs, and the appeal will be adjusted accordingly.



KEY PLANNED TARGETS



80,624

primary caregivers receiving infant and young child feeding counselling



6,250

women and children accessing gender-based violence mitigation, prevention, response



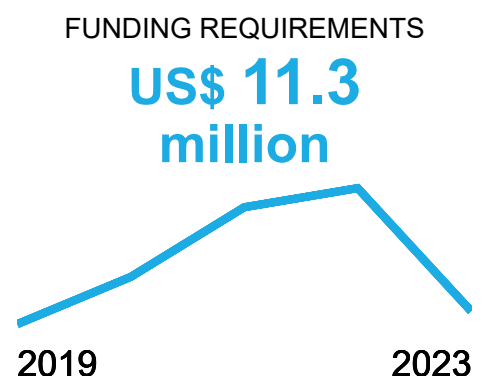
60,750

children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning



18,774

people reached with hand-washing behaviour-change programmes



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Following the resurgence of tensions in Mali, Mauritania has recorded an influx of refugees in the Mbera camp in Bassiknou and in the other departments of Hodh Ech Chargui Region in the eastern part of the country. Around 80,600¹⁰ refugees are registered in 2022, including nearly 9,200¹¹ new arrivals. In addition, 5,570 Mauritians returned from Mali in 2022. Many had lost assets, properties and livestock as they escaped violence. Returning pastoralist herds are estimated at 800,000 head of livestock, putting further pressure on already scarce resources and sparking fears of tensions with the host population over access to water. Moreover, pressure on essential social services (health, education, nutrition, WASH) has increased, as have protection concerns, particularly around child labour and child marriage. The influx of people also risks raising tensions among populations and impacting social cohesion.

The situation in northern Mali remains unstable, with a new influx of refugees and returnees is highly likely. Refugees and Mauritanian returnees from Mali need access to education, protection and water services.

According to the results of the Cadre Harmonisé in March 2022,¹² around 878,900 individuals faced food security crisis conditions (IPC Phase 3 or greater) during the peak of the lean season (June-August 2022). This corresponds to 20 per cent of the population, the highest rates in the Sahel region, and reflects an increase of 64 per cent compared with 2021. With the SMART survey still underway, estimates of global acute malnutrition based on figures from the last five years show that 19 out of 55 moughataas are experiencing a nutrition crisis. In addition, the war in Ukraine has had significant impacts on food prices in Mauritania. Mauritania has a cereal-import dependency of more than 80 per cent, and 50 per cent of this was imported from Ukraine or the Russian Federation in 2021.¹³ Most of the underlying drivers of the current food crisis, which is also affecting other Sahelian countries, are likely to worsen and further raise acute food insecurity.¹⁴ Additionally, pandemic Rift Valley fever, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever and measles¹⁵ continue to circulate. And, not least, according to the Children's Climate Risk Index, Mauritania is among the countries where children are most exposed to climate risks.

Mauritania faces enormous challenges in terms of preparedness for crises. This has recently prompted the Mauritanian Government to set up an intersectoral crisis prevention and response mechanism linked to food security and nutrition and to develop a multi-risk contingency plan.

SECTOR NEEDS¹⁶



323,391
children in need of
immunization
services^{17,18}



359,672
people in need of
nutrition assistance¹⁹



97,002
people in need of
GBV services^{20,21}



60,750
children in need of
education support²²



37,150
people lack access to
safe water²³

STORY FROM THE FIELD



"Lely is the brightest among her brothers and sisters, she is learning so fast that, at only 7 years old, she is already in the third year of primary school," confides Fatimetou, Lely's mother. She does not hide her pride.

Upon her arrival at Mbera camp several years ago, Fatimetou made the decision to send her children to the Mahadra (Koranic school) to continue their interrupted religious education. But she also chose to enroll them in one of the formal education schools in Mbera camp. Encouraged by little Lely's results, Fatimetou is now happy with her decision.

[Read more about this story here](#)

Lely, 7, smiles with her mother in Mbera refugee camp in Bassiknou district, southeastern Mauritania. Lely is first in her class.

UNICEF's response in Mauritania will be multisectoral, evidence-based and focused on saving lives and strengthening resilience. It will be aligned with government response plans and complementary to the actions of other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. The response will improve equity and target the most vulnerable people, including disabled children, while applying a gender-sensitive approach. UNICEF will support engagement and partnership with young people to empower them to create positive change, contribute to social cohesion and increase resilience to shocks. UNICEF and its partners will undertake gender-based violence risk mitigation and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse activities in all sectors.

UNICEF will draw on its strong presence and partnerships in Mauritania to ensure a timely response to conflict-related displacement and natural hazards through leadership of the WASH, education, nutrition and child protection sectors, in line with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, as part of a broader humanitarian-development nexus approach. Comprehensive actions will be carried out in the framework of social cohesion and resilience through essential social services in conjunction with state services, non-governmental organizations and other United Nations agencies.

In 2023, UNICEF will also respond to the needs of those most affected by wasting by focusing on emergency areas (19 moughaatas out of 55) and on Bassiknou, including Mbera camp. The Government of Mauritania will support the cost of 100 per cent of the ready-to-use therapeutic food that is required. UNICEF will therefore focus on early detection and treatment of severe wasting in children under 5 years of age. To reduce malnutrition in the long term, UNICEF aims to increase the proportion of infants aged 0-5 months who are exclusively breastfed to 75 per cent and the proportion of children aged 6-23 months who are receiving the minimum dietary diversity to 60 per cent (by 2025). To achieve this and to reduce the need for emergency treatment in the long term, UNICEF will apply a multisectoral approach using health, food and social protection platforms. All actions will be supported by capacity building and innovation to ensure quality and equitable service provision and creating demand.

UNICEF will expand community engagement and risk communication through such innovations as chatbots and voice recordings to equip communities with the skills to develop protection-prevention practices, promote appropriate behaviour and engage leaders more effectively. Feedback mechanisms, including social listening media platforms, U-Report and call centres, will be improved to address community concerns, guide decision-making and ensure the effective inclusion of gender, disability and youth priorities in all programmes.

UNICEF will provide technical assistance to the Government to strengthen its emergency preparedness and its coordination role and response capacity at the national and decentralized levels.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/mauritania/situation-reports>

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.



Health

- **150,000** children vaccinated against measles²⁵



Nutrition²⁶

- **15,744** children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment²⁷
- **80,624** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling²⁸
- **39,237** children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder²⁹
- **248,702** children 6-59 months receiving Vitamin A supplementation³⁰



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **3,125** children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support³¹
- **6,250** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions³²
- **66,648** people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations³³



Education

- **60,750** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning³⁴
- **60,750** children receiving individual learning materials



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **10,000** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs³⁵
- **8,376** children using safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces³⁶
- **18,774** people reached with hand-washing behaviour-change programmes



Social protection

- **1,000** households benefitting from new or additional social assistance (cash/in kind) measures from governments with UNICEF-technical assistance support³⁷



Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)

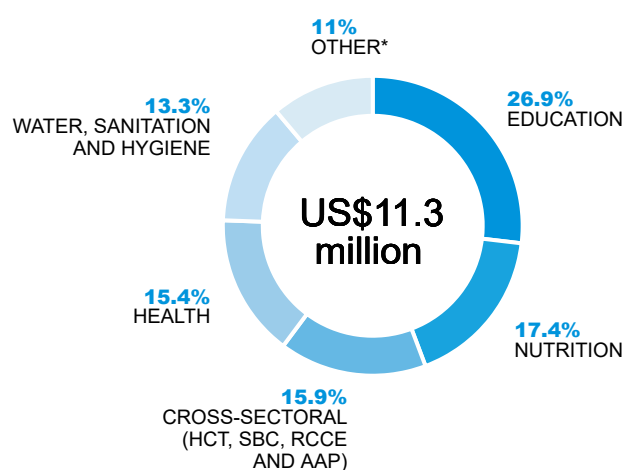
- **337,928** people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services³⁸
- **100,000** people who participate in engagement actions³⁹
- **54,300** people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms⁴⁰

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2023

UNICEF is requesting a budget of US\$11.3 million in 2023 to meet the humanitarian needs of crisis-affected children in the 19 most affected moughataas in Mauritania. With this funding, UNICEF plans to address the nutrition crisis as well as respond to both refugee and returnee needs and impact on host communities. This will be carried out through a combination of nutrition, health, WASH, education, social protection and child protection interventions.

The budget requested for the 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal for Mauritania is 40.2 per cent lower than in 2022. This is because COVID-19-related work is now integrated into regular development programmes and is not part of the 2023 humanitarian appeal, and also due to UNICEF refocusing on multisectoral interventions for the most vulnerable children only in the 19 moughataas where children are most at risk of malnutrition. With regard to the nutritional response, despite the country's commitment to purchase ready-to-use therapeutic food⁴¹ using its national budget, funds are needed to support the implementation of malnutrition management operations on the ground and to strengthen infant and young child feeding and micronutrient deficiency interventions in humanitarian settings.

Without adequate and timely funding, UNICEF and its partners will not be able to meet the critical humanitarian needs of nearly 670,000 people (including 329,000 children and adolescents) in Mauritania.



Sector	2023 requirements (US\$)
Health	1,740,000
Nutrition	1,967,500 ⁴²
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	780,000
Education	3,037,500 ⁴³
Water, sanitation and hygiene	1,500,000
Social protection	480,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	1,800,000 ⁴⁴
Total	11,305,000

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Child protection, GBViE and PSEA (6.9%), Social protection (4.2%).

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ENDNOTES

1. COVID-19 remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern as declared by the World Health Organization in January 2020. On 1 July 2022, UNICEF deactivated its Level 3 Sustained Phase for the global COVID-19 pandemic response. All activities related to COVID-19 pandemic response, including programme targets and funding requirements, have been shifted into regular development programming and operations. While UNICEF's Level 3 emergency response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic was deactivated, the organization is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, their families and their communities and on the social systems they rely on.
2. Based on the average SMART survey over the past five years, 80,227 children are affected by global acute malnutrition (above 15 per cent of children, the SPHERE threshold for 'very high' severity) and 18,523 children are experiencing severe wasting (above 2 per cent of children). The 2022 SMART survey is currently in progress. The 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal figures will be updated based on the SMART forthcoming data.
3. Cadre Harmonisé/Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or greater.
4. Mauritania is ranked 40 in terms of children at highest risk, out of 163 countries. Source: UNICEF, The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index, UNICEF, New York, 2021.
5. The figure is rounded up from 1,086,023. The figure was calculated using the following data to avoid double counting: 1) 359,672 children under the age of 5 in the 19 moughataas (departments) in nutritional crisis (where the prevalence of severe wasting is equal to or greater than 2 per cent and global acute malnutrition is greater than 15 per cent) according to the average of the SMART surveys of the last five years, plus the district hosting the Mbera refugee camp, along with remaining cases of severe wasting in other parts of the country (data from the 2022 SMART survey currently underway will be used to update these appeal figures); 2) 51,637 children aged 6-17 years from vulnerable areas including Mbera camp, returnee communities and host communities; and 3) 674,741 people over 18 years of age facing multidimensional poverty in the same 19 moughataas and in the district of Bassiknou.
6. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
7. The figure represents 411,309, rounded down to 411,300. It was calculated using the following data to avoid double counting: 1) 359,672 children under the age of 5 living in the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis (where the prevalence of severe wasting is equal to or greater than 2 per cent and global acute malnutrition is greater than 15 per cent) according to the average of the SMART surveys of the last five years, plus the district hosting the Mbera refugee camp, along with remaining cases of severe wasting in other parts of the country (data from the 2022 SMART survey currently underway will be used to update the appeal figures); 2) 51,637 children aged 6-17 years from vulnerable areas including Mbera camp, returnee communities and host communities.
8. This figure was calculated using the following data to avoid double counting: 1) 276,920 (77 per cent of 359,672) children under the age of 5 in the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis (where the prevalence of severe wasting is equal to or greater than 2 per cent and global acute malnutrition is greater than 15 per cent) according to the average of the SMART surveys of the last five years, plus the district hosting the refugee Mbera camp, along with the remaining cases of severe wasting in other parts of the country (data from the 2022 SMART survey currently underway will be used to update the appeal figures); 2) 51,637 children aged 6-17 years from vulnerable areas including Mbera camp, returnee communities and host communities; and 3) 337,928 people over age 18 years facing monetary poverty in the same 19 moughataas plus the district of Bassiknou. This total includes 50 per cent women/girls and 1 per cent people with disabilities.
9. This figure represents 328,557, rounded up to 329,000. It was calculated using the following data to avoid double counting: 276,920 (77 per cent of 359,672) children under the age of 5 in the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis (where the prevalence of severe wasting equal to or greater than 2 per cent and global acute malnutrition is greater than 15 per cent) according to the average of the SMART surveys of the last five years, plus the district hosting the Mbera refugee camp, along with the remaining cases of severe wasting in other parts of the country (data from the 2022 SMART survey currently underway will be used to update the appeal figures); and 51,637 children aged 6-17 years from vulnerable areas including Mbera camp, returnee communities and host communities. This total includes 50 per cent girls and 1 per cent children with disabilities.
10. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mauritania Map: Situation of refugees and asylum-seekers as of 31 August 2022, UNHCR, 11 September 2022, available at <<https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/95654>>.
11. UNHCR, Mauritania Map, 11 September 2022.
12. Cadre Harmonisé/Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.
13. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), The importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the war in Ukraine: Information note, 10 June 2022 update, FAO, Rome, 2022.
14. In the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger), most of the underlying drivers of the current food crisis - conflict and insecurity, political instability, climate shocks and high food prices - are likely to worsen and thereby raise food insecurity. Source: World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO, Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity - October 2022 to January 2023 outlook, WFP and FAO, Rome, 2022.
15. In Mauritania, 712 people were affected by measles in 2022.
16. Estimates of sectors' needs have significantly decreased compared with 2022, due to the geographical concentration of the humanitarian response in the 19 most vulnerable moughataas of the country, the district hosting returnees and refugees and the refugee camp.
17. Children aged 6 months to 5 years (42 per cent) of the population. Mauritania Ministry of Health, Cible des interventions et données démographiques (CIDD) 2015-2025, December 2019.
18. Mauritania Ministry of Health, Cible des interventions et données démographiques (CIDD) 2015-2025.
19. Population of children under the age of 5 in the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis (where the prevalence of severe wasting is equal to or greater than 2 per cent and MAG greater than 15) according to the average of the SMART surveys of the last five years, plus the district hosting the Mbera refugee camp, along with the remaining cases of severe wasting in other parts of the country (data from the 2022 SMART survey currently underway will be used to update the appeal figures).
20. The population in need of child protection assistance includes those children living in the Mbera refugee camp and those in the district of Bassiknou. Regarding populations in need of access to a safe and accessible channel for reporting sexual exploitation, the needs of the population of the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis have been included. The in need figures include the child protection, 30 per cent of 45,869 refugee children and 30 per cent of 55,912 host community children; and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, 10 per cent of the population targeted in the 19 moughataas.
21. Regarding the drastic decrease in the figure (compared with last year), this is explained by the fact that the population in need targeted last year was the one at national level. In 2023, the geographical focus is on the department of Bassiknou and the refugee camp. The population in need of child protection assistance included in this figure are those living in the Mbera refugee camp and in the district of Bassiknou. Regarding those populations in need of access to a safe and accessible channel for reporting sexual exploitation and abuse, the needs of the population of the 19 moughataas in nutritional crisis are included.
22. This figure includes 40,500 children aged 3-17 years in the Mbera camp (UNHCR, August 2022) plus 20,250 children in the host community, including children of people returning from Mali. The population currently living in emergency situations and requiring the support of the education service are those living in the Mbera camp, returnees from Mali and the population of the host community, for the purposes of cohabitation and peace in the area.
23. This figure represents the following: 100 per cent of children with severe wasting (15,774) treated in the outpatient nutrition rehabilitation centres who will benefit from the Wash in Nut package; the students from the schools in the Mbera camp (5,376) and those in 10 schools of the host population (3,000 students); patients from 10 health facilities in emergency areas (about 3,000 people); populations in 10 localities who will access safe water through solar water points (5,000 people); and Mauritanian returnees from Mali, who will benefit from water tracking, sensitization and the distribution of non-food items (5,000 people).
24. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
25. Children aged 6 months to 5 years old from districts in humanitarian and nutritional emergency situations.
26. Calculations are based on the average SMART surveys over the past 5 years. The 2022 SMART survey is currently in progress.
27. Eighty-five per cent of the burden is targeted in the 19 districts in nutritional emergency.
28. Sixty per cent of children 0-23 months old with their health care provider for infant and young child feeding counselling in emergency situations.
29. Forty per cent of children aged 6-23 months are targeted for supplementary feeding with micronutrient powders.
30. Eighty per cent of children aged 6-59 months in the 19 moughataas with nutritional emergencies will be targeted for vitamin A supplementation and deworming.
31. The geographical areas of intervention have been reduced compared with last year, which explains the decrease in targets compared with 2022. The targeted area for 2023 is limited to the district hosting refugees and returnees, including the refugee camp.
32. The geographical areas of intervention have been reduced compared with last year, which explains the decrease in targets compared with 2022. The targeted area for 2023 is limited to the district hosting refugees and returnees, including the refugee camp.
33. This figure is calculated on the basis of 10 per cent of the targets for each sector.
34. Children aged 3-17 years from vulnerable areas including Mbera camp, returnee communities and host populations. The target is reduced compared with 2022, because the 2022 target included children affected by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic nationwide, including refugees.
35. This is comprised of 100 per cent of children with severe wasting who are receiving treatment.
36. This is comprised of 100 per cent of children in learning facilities and safe spaces and schools in the Mbera camp.
37. Database of people with disabilities from Ministry of Social Action, Childhood and Family (MASEF), 2022. This list will be verified through a targeting process with the Social Registry.
38. Fifty per cent of the adult population in need is targeted for prevention messages and access to functional social services.
39. The total of 31,610 includes: 2,003 relays and community agents; 4,007 volunteer resource people (community and religious leaders); 1,300 actors from 113 community-based organizations (CBOs) (10 per CBO) and approximately 24,300 women from nutrition support groups out of the 81,000 in these localities, i.e., 30 per cent of these women, who are able to relay the messages and initiate discussions in their communities.
40. Each of the 19 targeted moughataas will be equipped with a mechanism for dialogue and operational feedback. This safe and inclusive mechanism will allow for the collection, discussion and treatment of problems encountered by the communities.
41. Thanks to advocacy efforts, the Government of Mauritania has committed to funding 100 per cent of ready-to-use therapeutic food needs, considerably reducing the budget needed to address malnutrition. Additionally, the targeting for the response is no longer national for the treatment of severe wasting, because UNICEF has focused its response on the most vulnerable/affected areas for 2023 Humanitarian Action Appeal.
42. The nutrition budget is reduced compared with previous years (US\$5.2 million in 2022 and US\$6 million in 2020). The budget reduction (compared with the 2022 appeal) is linked to the focus of UNICEF's response for the management of severe wasting in the most vulnerable areas in 2023. Last year, the response was nationwide, which required more resources. In addition, the inputs (ready-to-use therapeutic food) will be fully covered by the Government in 2023. The increase in the beneficiaries targeted in the nutrition sector in 2023 is linked to interventions to fight against micronutrient deficiencies, which were not included in the 2022 appeal. These interventions are less costly, allowing UNICEF to reach more children in the most vulnerable areas.
43. Unit costs for education interventions are high due to the absence of supplies on the national market; and the cost of transporting supplies to the intervention area. Additionally, the budget includes costs related to the resilience of the education system in the department hosting returnees and refugees, as well as preparedness-related costs.
44. Approximately eighty per cent of this amount (US\$1,440,000) is requested for social and behavioural change interventions.