



UNICEF staff plays with migrant children in transit in Esquipulas, Guatemala.

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for every child

Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1

Reporting Period
1 January to 31 December 2023

Mexico and Central America: Children on the Move and other Crises

HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2023, the flow of migrant children surged across Central America and Mexico, notably at the Darien border in Panama, where over 520,000 entries were recorded, 22% of them children.
- UNICEF's efforts supported over 830,000 people, providing safe water access, mental health support for nearly 320,000 children and caregivers, education for over 88,000 children (mostly migrants), malnutrition screenings for 81,000 children, and cash transfers to 4,639 families. Additionally, 3.4 million received messages on access to services.
- Despite being 39% funded in 2023, UNICEF aims to secure flexible and sustained funding in 2024 to adapt its response strategy to the increasingly complex humanitarian landscape, in response to the needs of children and families on the move and those impacted by compounding crises across the sub-region.

SITUATION IN NUMBERS



4,000,000

Children in need of humanitarian assistance



10,830,000

People in need of humanitarian assistance



2,001,848

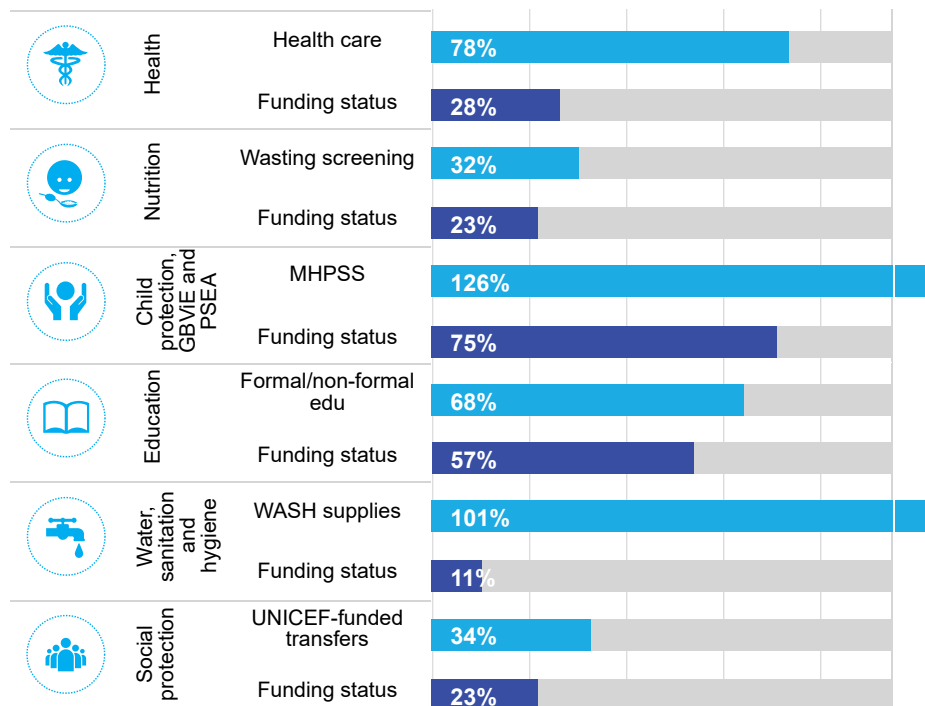
People to be reached



730,288

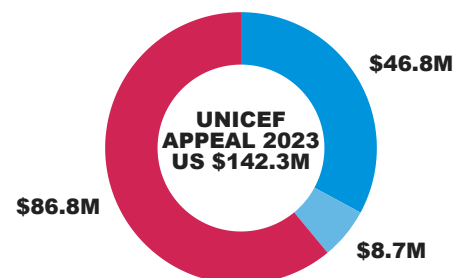
Children to be reached

UNICEF RESPONSE AND FUNDING STATUS*



* UNICEF response % is only for the indicator, the funding status is for the entire sector.

FUNDING STATUS (IN US\$)**



- Humanitarian Resources
- 2022 carry over
- Funding gap

** Funding available includes: funds received in the current year; carry-over from the previous year; and repurposed funds with agreement from donors

FUNDING OVERVIEW AND PARTNERSHIPS

As of December 2023, UNICEF had US\$55.5 million available out of its appeal of US\$142.3 million: US\$8.7 million carried over from 2022 and US\$46.8 million received in 2023, leaving a funding gap of 61%. Critical funding in 2023 included contributions from the Government of France, the United States Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), allocations from OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), the French, Spanish, and Swedish Committees for UNICEF, the United States Fund for UNICEF, and UNICEF's Global Humanitarian Thematic Funds. This support enabled UNICEF Country Offices (COs) to address the humanitarian needs of migrant children and other vulnerable communities in 2023.

In 2024, UNICEF requires US\$153 million to address the urgent needs of the increasing numbers of children and families on the move across Central America and Mexico, as well as to assist other vulnerable communities affected by violence, climate threats, or food insecurity.¹ Flexible funding is crucial to provide targeted support to local systems and authorities in assisting migrant children and host communities, invest in strategies that protect children's rights and well-being while enhancing resilience, maintain access to basic services like safe water, education, and child protection for migrants and host communities, ensure educational opportunities for migrant children, and provide continuous access to health and nutrition services along migration routes and in hard-to-reach communities. Urgent support is also needed for other vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced persons or repatriated migrants, whose humanitarian needs often go unnoticed.

SITUATION OVERVIEW AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

In 2023, there was an unprecedented surge in the movement of children across Central America and Mexico. The number of migrants crossing into Central America via the Darien border (Panama-Colombia) reached record highs, totalling over 520,000 entries between January and December 2023, marking a 110 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2022.² Worryingly, one in every five migrants trekking through the Darien jungle were children.

Costa Rica, known as a transit country, witnessed an astounding 133 per cent increase in arrivals via its border with Panama in 2023, compared to 2022. The majority of these migrants were Venezuelans, accounting for 84 per cent. Honduras also saw a surge in entries, up by 189 per cent compared to 2022, while Mexico reported a 58 per cent increase in incidents involving individuals in irregular situations.³

Furthermore, between October 2022 and September 2023, authorities at the Southwestern border of the United States recorded 137,275 encounters with unaccompanied children.⁴ Additionally, in 2023, more than 152,000 people (including 12 per cent children) from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador were repatriated mainly from Mexico and the United States.⁵

The multidirectional migration dynamics across the sub-region, encompassing mixed flows of migrants, refugees, and returnees, coupled with varying nationalities subject to different policies, create complex migratory paths. These paths come with multiple risks, particularly for children and women, throughout their journeys. Surveys at borders in Panama, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico revealed that around 60 per cent of interviewed migrants

reported protection incidents en route. Furthermore, at least 567 people on the move were reported missing in the sub-region in 2023, including 48 children and 74 women.⁶

While on the move, children and families need life-saving assistance, protection, and access to education, health, nutrition, and social protection systems. Through UNICEF's monitoring and information mechanisms in Chile, Colombia, and Panama,⁷ migrants have emphasized the critical need for food, supplements for children, shelter, clothing, immunization, and health services along their journeys.

The humanitarian needs of vulnerable migrant children and families strain existing services, particularly in remote communities or transit hotspots, overwhelming local authorities in transit and destination countries, especially during periods of high migration. While countries in the sub-region have made efforts to strengthen response capacities and policies, there's a pressing need to adapt policies for regularization and integration. Reports of growing xenophobia, discrimination, and misinformation on humanitarian assistance further characterized 2023.

Moreover, the needs of other affected populations such as internally displaced persons, returnees, and children left behind remain largely unnoticed. Data on their scale, profiles, and specific needs are scarce, funding for returnees is lacking, and there's limited public interest overall.

Adding to the migration crisis and existing vulnerabilities, Central America's Dry Corridor, spanning parts of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, faces extreme weather conditions impacting agricultural production and livelihoods, due to the El Niño phenomenon. This coincides with 7.7 million people in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity in 2023. The phenomenon exacerbates inequality in basic service access, increases food insecurity, child malnutrition rates, and the risks of diseases due to inadequate sanitation and safe drinking water.⁸

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMME RESPONSE BY COUNTRY

BELIZE

Apart from the traditional migrant patterns from neighbouring countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico, Belize has been experiencing an increase in the number of migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Africa, and Brazil. As Belize evolves into a country of transit and temporary destination, the Government has announced plans to set up a detention facility to manage and address the situation.

With approximately 62,000 migrants requiring assistance, UNICEF is scaling up its advocacy initiatives, urging the Government to consider the establishment of a reception centre to provide humanitarian and rights-based services for both transiting and settled migrants in Belize. Due to the absence of designated shelters at the borders, migrant families are held at the local Police stations along with detainees awaiting trial. Quality drinking water, along with safe and clean sanitation and hygiene services are absent along the border, and access to WASH facilities is only guaranteed when migrants are at the Police Department.

UNICEF, in collaboration with Child Development Foundation and RET International, led a joint exploratory border mission in communities hosting migrant population⁹ and irregular entry points. The mission aimed at assessing the humanitarian needs of migrants and children on the move. The findings underlined gaps in access to primary health care, hygiene kits and information.

HEALTH

Migrant children in rural communities face a disproportionately higher impact of constrained access to timely and consistent health care services due to a variety of transportation, financial, legal, and cultural bottlenecks. UNICEF advocated for and supported authorities for increasing mobile clinics/ outreaches with a specific focus on rural areas within the Toledo District. The health programme effectively delivered emergency primary healthcare services to 11,838 children and women across the country in facilities and mobile clinics.

A notable success was the vaccination campaign, where 5,493 children received a complete set of vaccines, including the vital second dose of the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine (MMR2). In addition, the training of 795 health workers in essential maternal, newborn, and child health services, and on-the-job mentorship, reinforced the commitment to national standards and protocols.

NUTRITION

With the support of UNICEF, access to child-critical health and nutrition services reached some of the most remote villages, particularly in the Toledo District of southern Belize, with an estimated population of 43,000 people, including settled migrants. A total of 4,132 primary caregivers received infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling. In addition, 6,270 children under 5 were screened for malnutrition at 55 health facilities and mobile clinics. Among them, 114 (1.8%) were underweight, 32 (0.5%) were stunted and 201 (3.2%) were not malnourished. Preventive measures were successful implemented, as 2,317 pregnant women received iron and folic acid supplementation, and 14,230 children aged 6-59 months received Vitamin A supplementation.

A nutrition-responsive cash transfer programme (NRCTP) was implemented, reaching 449 beneficiary households with children under 5 (402 children) and pregnant women, using a multisectoral intervention to address all determinants of malnutrition. The project also aimed to address social norms and cultural beliefs through social behavioural change communication; the plus component of the cash programme provided sessions on WASH, health and nutrition practices, community and school gardening.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE AND PSEA

The persistent challenge of the lack of proper documentation and statelessness condition, continue to impact the growing migrant population in Belize. UNICEF supported the Attorney General's Ministry's Vital Statistics Unit to conduct two birth registration clinics: the first was put in place in the city of Cayo, covering Camalote, Roaring Creek, and Belmopan, and migrant communities of Armenia, Salvopan, Las Flores and Maya Mopan; the second clinic was set up in Orange Walk/ Corozal. A total of 1,300 children (656 males, 644 females) were registered, including Belizean-born children of migrant parents from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico. Furthermore, 79 families with 191 children (108 males, 83 females) also benefited from services that focused on using play to enhance the bond between parent/caregiver and child counselling.

EDUCATION

Access to education remains a systemic challenge for migrant children due to lack of proper documentation and language barriers. In 2023, with UNICEF's support, over 18,000 children accessed foundational skills programmes in migrant communities, and online digital assessments for learning recovery actions. Students, particularly those in the early grades, gained entry into both formal and non-formal education such as community-based early learning,

parenting actions and the Think Equal programme - a comprehensive, play-based, early childhood development initiative that has been implemented in all primary schools nationwide. This programme, focusing on early stimulation and social and emotional learning was integrated into the national curriculum under the leadership of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in March 2023. This is particularly relevant for migrant children, as their lack of documentation or statelessness is often a barrier to enter into formal education. In addition, the action provided access to social and emotional skills for both teachers and students.

WASH

Access to adequate WASH services remains a critical gap in Belize, disproportionately affecting minorities and marginalised groups, including migrants, accompanied, unaccompanied and separated children. UNICEF facilitated the improvement of WASH facilities in four schools (three schools in the Toledo District and one school in the Cayo District), in migrant and host communities, reaching 1,100 beneficiaries, including 525 adults, 290 boys and 285 girls. These schools were also identified by the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO) as the only safe structures in the communities to be used as temporary shelters in the event of a hurricane. In addition, backup water harvesting systems have been installed in the villages to ensure that the schools are fully resilient in times of disaster.

UNICEF established an agreement with the Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government, to implement WASH actions at the community level in five migrants' communities in the Toledo District. The project aims to provide climate resilient and high-quality water services to the targeted communities, schools and health facilities with limited access to an adequate and safe source of drinking water. This initiative aligns with existing primary health care in the same area to achieve healthy households and resilient communities.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

An initial pilot humanitarian cash transfer programme for migrant children was successfully completed from December 2022 to March 2023. UNICEF and Belize Red Cross reached 899 children from 330 families, through four disbursements. In addition, the NRCTP project was launched in October 2023, reaching 449 beneficiary households/ 402 children. UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, as the lead implementing agency, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise, the Ministry of Human Development, Families and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs and Belize Telemedia Limited (operating DigiWallet) as the Financial Service Provider (FSP). At the end of December 2023, three cash transfers of US\$100 per household were successfully completed.

The use of the digital payment system was not feasible for the project due to the limited telecommunication infrastructures and the weak internet connection within the 12 villages of the Toledo district. Beneficiary households were issued with temporary cards which are topped up on a monthly basis and are notified of the disbursement of funds by the village coordinators assigned to the project. Over 70 per cent of funds were used to purchase food.

An assessment was conducted on the NRCTP project targeting migrant families. During the activities, individuals from various age groups, including men, women and adolescents participated in focus groups, and 91 households took part in a survey. The project received positive feedback from the beneficiaries regarding the flexibility and responsiveness of the programme. Limitations were identified such as the lack of case management support for beneficiaries and the need for a more systematic approach to

household registration and enrolment.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

Several focus groups were held with a total of 70 women, men and girls in migrant settlements to discuss the design and implementation of the NRCTP. Women were instrumental in identifying the needs of pregnant and sick people for frequent mobile health services such as antenatal care, immunization and medicines for their communities. The feedback resulted in the following actions: increasing the number of mobile health clinics, improving and increasing access to quality water for the communities.

Several feedback channels were established for the NRCTP, including the appointment of Village Coordinators from the targeted villages, which acted as a link between the implementing agencies and the beneficiaries.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR established a working group to implement the UN Agency Workplan on Migration. UNICEF leads education, nutrition, WASH and child protection initiatives with cross-sectoral programming in early childhood development (ECD), gender equity and C4D. Coordination meetings include planning, monitoring and organization of the Amnesty hub interventions in coordination and communication with national authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) in responding to humanitarian and development needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

The United Nations Emergency Technical Team (UNETT) is the main humanitarian coordination mechanism in the country, which is being chaired by UNHCR. UNICEF provided technical support to UNETT in 2023 through a peer review of the Hurricane Contingency Plan. The Contingency Plan is since being reviewed to include the recommendations. Furthermore, a Standard Operational Procedure was developed to support the governance structure of the coordination mechanism.

In partnership with UNHCR and IOM, UNICEF signed its third MoU and migratory work plan for 2024-2025. The work plan will continue to foster synergies among the UN agencies with added focus on strengthening the data collection system and integration in Belize.

COSTA RICA

In 2023, the number of children migrants and those in transit reached a record high. Between 1,500 and 2,500 migrants entered the country daily from Panama and Nicaragua, for a total of around 530,000. Among them, one out of four were children and 40 per cent were under the age of five. This unprecedented surge marked a staggering 133 per cent increase compared to 2022.¹⁰ Migration pressures increased the need for child-focused support services in border and destination communities, particularly related to health and nutrition, psychosocial support, child protection against all forms of violence, including GBV, and international protection for unaccompanied children.

In response to the escalating numbers, the government of Costa Rica declared a National State of Emergency on 29 September. Upon arrival, family groups, typically comprised of two or three children and/or adolescents, face immediate humanitarian needs. There are currently no shelters operating along the northern border, where additional risks include economic exploitation and human trafficking, with migrants often opting for irregular, high-risk migration

routes due to strict immigration controls at official border crossings.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE AND PSEA

In collaboration with Costa Rica's Child Welfare Agency, UNICEF established five child-friendly spaces for migrants in transit, located across both borders - the southern with Panama and the northern with Nicaragua - and the metropolitan area, providing crucial psychosocial support, preventing violence (including prevention of GBV), offering recreational/educational activities, and referral of cases. More than 35,000 children and adolescents participated in these initiatives. The referral services included protection, GBV services, health care and psychological care. In addition, emergency accommodation was provided to 1,317 vulnerable migrant children and their families.

UNICEF conducted training and awareness session on PSEA with 14 institutions and civil society partners, which in turn delivered PSEA-SBC training to 588 children and adolescents.

EDUCATION

Pivotal support was provided to ensure inclusive, quality education and continuity, benefiting over 13,000 students from vulnerable border communities with high concentration of migrant populations, including the distribution of educational kits, early-stimulation kits, uniforms, desks, and computers. These activities focused on assisting socio-economic vulnerable communities that host large numbers of migrants, including irregular migrants, and were designed and implemented to prevent educational exclusion and dropout of migrant children whose families wish to remain in Costa Rica as well as to support educational continuity of children whose families are in transit, with a particular focus on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, while reducing the economic burden on families with limited resources.

In partnership with the Directorate General for Migration (DGME), the status of 1,314 children and adolescents was regularized, receiving legal and monetary support from UNICEF.

The Strengthening Reading, Writing and Life-skills programme, implemented by UNICEF's Costa Rica INSPIRA volunteers, helped 687 children accelerate their reading comprehension, writing skills and recover from educational setbacks. In addition, 263 educators were equipped with essential skills in Education in Emergencies through the online course "Creando Aulas" (creating classrooms).

WASH

By rehabilitating and constructing WASH facilities on both the southern-Panama and Northern-Nicaraguan borders, and in the metropolitan area, UNICEF provided safe, 24/7 facilities, that met the diverse needs of over 200,000 migrants, who benefited from safe drinking water and sanitation services. These activities were essential to ensure access to life saving services and to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, particularly during the peak of migration observed during the second half of the year.

UNICEF plays a key coordination role in the WASH sector response at the Centre for the Temporary Attention of Migrant Persons (CATEM, at the Panama border), which hosts an average of 2,000 migrants per day. Leading the WASH humanitarian sector, UNICEF works to strengthen the coordination of WASH actions with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the DGME and United Nations agencies. Throughout 2023, UNICEF undertook extensive construction and rehabilitation projects for water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure in the CATEM, including seven toilets, eight showers and five hydration points.

Improvement was also made to increase access to drinking water,

effectively meeting the increased needs of migrant children in transit and their families. This implied the refurbishment of the water treatment plant, the installation of five laundry piles and the construction and enhancement of the garbage dump area. These investments were accompanied by capacity building for key stakeholders, specifically the migration police stationed at the CATEM, which was trained in the provision of safe drinking water.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

In 2023, UNICEF prioritised the development of an SBC strategy to fight discrimination and xenophobia. Through capacity-building initiatives, UNICEF involved 150 community leaders, 15 UNICEF counterparts and key national partners. As part of the Inter-agency Coordination Working Group, UNICEF actively tracked migration flows in line with the AAP framework. Through in-person communications and social media, the initiative informed 12,000 migrant families about their rights and available services.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

To address the increasing humanitarian needs of migrants in transit, UNICEF collaborated with OIM, UNHCR, PAHO/WHO, UNFPA, and OCHA, under the guidance and coordination of the DGME. Together, agencies implemented a Contingency and Action Plan specifically focused on managing mixed-migration flows. The Government and the UN System established an interinstitutional working group to jointly evaluate evolving conditions and provide humanitarian aid to various migratory movements.

In October, the Government's Interinstitutional Coordination Committee for humanitarian response activated the migratory station at the southern border. UNICEF took the lead in the WASH sector, ensuring the provision of WASH services. Furthermore, UNICEF established five child-friendly safe spaces in collaboration with national authorities, offering psychosocial support, violence prevention, recreational and educational activities, and referral services to over 35,000 girls, boys, and adolescents.

EL SALVADOR

In El Salvador, migration is fuelled by the search for better living conditions and the need to escape from violence. Over 70,000 children live without one or both parents as the result of migration.¹¹

Between January and November 2023, 12,055 migrants were returned to El Salvador, 2,194 of whom were children and adolescents (18.2 per cent of the total). Of these, 86 per cent came from the United States and 12.6 per cent from Mexico. People on the move across the country, including migrants in transit and asylum seekers, continue in need of basic services such as shelter, water, food, health, WASH items, psychosocial support, continuity of education, and access to legal aid and protection services, according to the exchanges held with authorities and participatory diagnostics at border sites and shelters. Main triggers for migration continue to be mainly economic factors (70.3 per cent), family reunification (19.3 per cent), and insecurity (8.1 per cent).¹² Between October and September 2023, United States' authorities reported 61,515 encounters with Salvadorans in the Southwest Border, around 168 per day. Of these, 10,160 were unaccompanied children -16.5 per cent of the total.

El Salvador remains a migration route towards the United States. Between September 2022 and August 2023, at least 4,377 migrants

in transit were identified, 2,733 were children and adolescents (62.4 per cent), and 1,644 adults (37.6 per cent). Their nationalities included: Hondurans, Nicaraguans, Venezuelans, Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Brazilians, Indians, Chinese, among others.

According to the General Directorate of Migration and Immigration (DGME), through the Migrant Attention Office (GAMI), the Comprehensive Attention Center for Foreign Migrants (CAIPEM) provided assistance to 201 people in 2023.¹³ Among these, 18.4 per cent were children (27 boys and 10 girls). This figure exceeds the combined totals for the years 2021 and 2022, which stood at 73 people (11 per cent children) and 84 people (8.3 per cent children), respectively.

As of August 2023, DGME Border Patrols identified in the different border areas of El Salvador increasing numbers of migrants, in an irregular situation, including family groups with children lacking valid travel documents or migratory registration, exposed to serious risks, including human trafficking, smuggling and/or other types of exploitation. A registration module is under development under the leadership of DGME to generate evidence to conduct relevant humanitarian actions.

The Commission for the Determination of the Refugee Status (CODER) has registered 201 people seeking refuge between 2020 and 2022, including 42 children and adolescents (20.9 per cent of the total). As of September 2023, there were 158 applicants, 27.2 per cent children.

People on the move across the country, including returnees, IDPs, migrants in transit, refugees and asylum seekers, continue in need of basic services such as shelter, water, food, health, WASH items, psychosocial support, continuity of education, and access to protection services.

HEALTH

UNICEF supplied maternal and infant care kits to 50 healthcare facilities located in border areas, along with essential equipment. These 50 healthcare facilities are projected to deliver healthcare services to around 47,200 children and 900 pregnant women annually.

NUTRITION

As part of the implementation of the "Amor Convertido en Alimento" Law - which aims to promote breastfeeding - and in coordination with the Office of the First Lady, the MoH and the General Directorate of Migration (DGME), UNICEF provided equipment for breastfeeding rooms at border points (El Poy, Chalatenango; La Hachadura, Ahuachapán; San Cristobal, Candelaria de la Frontera; Anguiatú, Santa Ana), which are expected to be fully operational by the end of 2024 first quarter. The aim is to provide a dignified space for 800 breastfeeding women in transit, guaranteeing their children's right to adequate nutrition. Furthermore, 5,000 copies of the "Amor Convertido en Alimento" Law and guidelines for installation and operation of breastfeeding rooms have been delivered to the MoH to be distributed throughout the country.

Furthermore, given the concerns regarding the potential effects of El Niño phenomenon on food security, UNICEF, in coordination with OCHA, FAO, WFP and PAHO submitted a proposal to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) secretariat on anticipatory actions in the WASH and nutrition sectors, with the aim - in case of activation - of reaching 1,500 children under five years of age, pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and vulnerable families living in high-risk areas of the San Vicente department.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE AND PSEA

UNICEF strengthened partnerships with government institutions and implementing partners to carry out comprehensive programmes for the protection of migrants, with focus on vulnerable migrant children and families in transit, refugees and asylum-seekers, including the provision of humanitarian assistance, psychosocial support and referrals to protection services, at land borders,¹⁴ border communities and other strategic sites.

UNICEF worked with national and local authorities to set up temporary health assistance support points at three border sites to provide essential health care, including medical services, mental health, and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Over 3,000 people, including children and adolescents, received mental health support at border points of La Hachadura, Angiatú and El Amatillo, and services provided at migrant assistance centres¹⁵ and the Ahuachapán shelter.

UNICEF ensured capacity building and technical support to 1,021 staff involved in the national and local child protection system, aiming to strengthen protection services and raise awareness on PSEA and GBV, focusing on psychosocial support, legal support, reintegration activities and case management for vulnerable migrants. Participants included staff members from the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence, the DGME, the National Civil Police and border municipalities, as well as community leaders, who received training on child protection, international protection, and national protection mechanisms for children on the move. A total of 672 people from government institutions, local authorities and partners improved their skills in PSEA, while 315 improved their skills in preventing and responding to GBV. In addition, 192 children and their families participated in community activities aimed at reinforcing child protection, human rights, and the prevention of GBV.

Following a needs assessment, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of 17 public institutions and CSOs responsible for assisting children and their families on the move by providing clothing, hygiene and recreational kits, as well as equipment and supplies. In addition, UNICEF contributed to strengthen the DGME's registration system for foreigners, facilitating the referral to care services; and supported the DGME's strategies for preventing human trafficking and smuggling, aimed at informing people in transit, including migrant children and adolescents, about national prevention and reporting services.

UNICEF promotes compliance with PSEA across humanitarian programmes. UNICEF trained Humanitarian Country Team focal points and implementing partners on PSEA in humanitarian contexts, 58 per cent of the participants had not received PSEA training prior to this course. A total of 110 participants from 28 organizations attended this training (11 international NGOs, six UN agencies, six governmental institutions and five national NGOs).

As part of its response to the impact of tropical storm Pilar in October, UNICEF provided warm clothing kits and other items to support 267 at-risk families who were sheltered by civil protection authorities.

EDUCATION

UNICEF, along with its implementing partners, has designed educational interventions in emergencies for children and adolescents on the move. Key actions during the year included:

- Two age-appropriate safe spaces were equipped in the Migrant Attention Centre (CAIPEM) during 2023 for the development of educational and psychosocial activities aimed at promoting learning continuity and providing mental health support. These spaces typically accommodate at least 200 children on the move per year.
- Educational continuity was promoted through the distribution of educational kits (both physical and virtual) and interventions at border points and national institutions.
- 102 schools in border areas (Ahuachapán, Santa Ana, Chalatenango, Cabañas, Morazán, and La Unión) were strengthened through the delivery of educational and psychosocial kits, reading and writing materials, benefiting over 19,000 children and adolescents. Additionally, ESLengua books were provided to 1,850 teachers, 218 teachers were trained in life skills, and 260 books were delivered to them to reinforce the learning skills of approximately 20 students each, ultimately reaching an estimated 4,320 children in vulnerable situations during the project's implementation.
- Interventions for learning recovery are being established in host communities, national institutions, and organizations that cater to children and adolescents on the move.

WASH

During the first half of the year, UNICEF supported the enhancement of WASH infrastructure, including sanitary and handwashing facilities in care and reception spaces. Critical WASH supplies were provided to more than 22,600 people, including 1,162 migrant children and their families, in shelters, schools, border sites, and health care facilities.

In the second half of the year, WASH infrastructure improvements were carried out at one migrants' shelter in Ahuachapán, one local healthcare facility, and one Child Welfare Centre (CBI) in Rancho Quemado, Morazán. These improvements, including sanitation, handwashing facilities and access to water sources. These will enable health and education services for migrants, benefiting 1,488 people, 766 of whom were vulnerable migrants.

Moreover, 360 family hygiene kits, 140 personal hygiene kits, 360 menstrual hygiene kits, and 220 hygiene kits for children under 2 years of age were delivered to nine government institutions, including the Commission for the Determination of the Status of Refugees (CODER), the National Council for Early Childhood, Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA), the Attorney General's Office, the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women (ISDEMU), and the CAIPEM. These items will be distributed during the first quarter of 2024.

Additionally, through the WASHFIT methodology,¹⁶ seven healthcare facilities were assessed during the reporting period, identifying their main needs related to water availability and quality, as well as access to adequate sanitation facilities with handwashing facilities. In response to these needs, improvement plans have been developed and prioritized for 2024.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

UNICEF conducted 15 participatory assessments involving 370 people, including 131 migrant children and adolescents or those residing in border areas with migratory flows. These assessments comprised listening sessions and feedback on the outcomes of activities conducted by UNICEF and its partners. The assessment confirmed that interventions are aligned with the most pressing

needs of the migrant population, especially children. Among findings of these sessions were the need for psychological services for families to alleviate stress and anxiety, alongside health services; the necessity for access to washrooms and hygiene products; the need for safe spaces and shelters where they can feel secure; the importance of information on where to seek help or assistance (legal, protection, etc.).

Furthermore, partners received training on qualitative research and the significance of qualitative data for SBC and AAP, methods, and tools for data collection. This was a preparatory step before fieldwork was undertaken to co-design the SBC strategy.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNICEF took a leading role in coordinating WASH, education, nutrition, child protection and health sectors, spearheading the national humanitarian needs analysis process and formulating sectoral response plans for the 2023-2024 humanitarian programme cycle. Providing technical assistance to partners, UNICEF facilitated the development of 31 projects under the humanitarian response plan (HRP).

The Protection sector has a key role in promoting a coordinated response to identified protection risks and needs. As Child Protection group lead, UNICEF ensured effective participation, resource mobilization and information management, facilitating strategic planning and inter-agency monitoring for improved results. Programmatic integration and synergies were evident in WASH and Nutrition sector, particularly in addressing hydro-meteorological events and implementing mitigation and prevention actions related to El Niño Southern Oscillation phenomenon. The education sector focused on ensuring continued education for out of school children, including children on the move, and providing psychosocial support for improve mental health.

UNICEF's involvement in the United Nations' Migration Network contributed to the development of the human mobility policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the comprehensive migration policy of the Directorate of Migration and Immigration.

GUATEMALA

During 2022 and 2023, Guatemala has experienced an alarming increase in the humanitarian and protection needs of children and people on the move through and back to the country, reflecting a broader regional trend.

The Guatemalan Migration Institute¹⁷ reported that in 2023, 79,697 people (20 per cent children, 24 per cent women), were returned from Mexico and the United States. Notably, among the returned children, 3,978 were unaccompanied, 60 per cent of them were indigenous. In the same year, the National Migration Institute of Honduras (INM) reported the entry of 545,043 migrants and refugees in transit through Honduran territory, a substantial increase compared to 2022 (188,858). Of these, 26 per cent were women and 20 per cent were children. The main nationalities included Venezuelans (42 per cent), Cubans (16 per cent), Haitians (15 per cent) and Ecuadorians (8 per cent).

Data from the Specialized Migration Group in Guatemala (GEMIG), including UNHCR, UNICEF and IOM, revealed that in 2023, the main needs of the population in a situation of human mobility, with focus on children and adolescents, were food (65 per cent); medicines and medical assistance, including nutrition (36 per cent); housing (32 per cent); drinking water (27 per cent); and early childhood items (7 per cent).

With regards to the impact of El Niño phenomenon, livelihoods and quality of life of people living in the Guatemala's dry corridor have been affected, resulting in crop losses and an exacerbated increase in acute malnutrition. This situation was further compounded by sporadic yet intense rainfall, contributing to hydro meteorological disasters, mainly in coastal areas and low basins across the country. A total of 1,378 events were documented (including floods, landslides, or drought), affecting over 4.2 million people. In response, 57,189 people received assistance, and 1,220 people were accommodated in temporary shelters throughout 2023. Guatemala started experiencing the impact of El Niño across the country between May and July 2023. Some areas experienced a reduction in rainfall from 10 to 20 per cent below normal (western Guatemala, Pacific coastal plains, and eastern Dry Corridor). The July-August Dry Wave lasted between 25 and 30 days in most of the country, with reductions of up to 70 per cent. Based on this situation, the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) identified a high risk of forest fires, crop loss and drought in five departments, including 45 municipalities - with a total population of approximately 2.4 million people. CONRED issued an Orange Alert in August to mobilize resources to monitor crops harvest, food prices, and rainfall patterns. The Ministry of Agriculture identified potential damage to 642,000 hectares along the Dry Corridor and Pacific Coastal Plains.

HEALTH

In 2023, UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance expanded primary health care services at the MoH centre and the clinic in the migrant's house in Esquipulas, Chiquimula, one of the land borders with the highest influx of migrants entering the country. In addition, assistance continued to be provided to returnee children, offering them medical evaluation services while they remain in government-run shelters.

NUTRITION

Children and women on the move are highly vulnerable to declining nutritional status and acute malnutrition, putting their lives at risk. The extended journey, poor accessibility to adequate food and WASH supplies, and lack of nutrition and health services add complexity to the challenge these groups face. Mothers report both weight loss and loss of appetite among their children. The absence of an effective means to monitor children's nutritional status during the journey further complicates an appropriate response. In 2023, UNICEF reached over 1,800 children on the move with nutritional support and supplements, mainly those in transit through the Esquipulas border.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE AND PSEA

In 2023, nearly 53,000 children and caregivers (28 per cent girls, 35 per cent boys) received mental health and psychosocial support services supported by UNICEF. Most migrants received group attention, with individual support prioritised for specific cases. Field teams focused on emotional care, psychological first aid, and psychoeducation, incorporating techniques such as breathing and relaxation. In addition, recreational activities, art therapy workshops and sessions fostering parenting skills. Approximately 80 per cent of beneficiaries were reached with interventions in the context of the migration response, and 20 per cent were affected by other crises. Within the same period, close to 33,000 women, girls and boys received GBV risk reduction, prevention or response actions. A total of 3,864 unaccompanied and separated children (30 per cent girls, 70 per cent boys) were provided with alternative care or reunified.

EDUCATION

As children in transit through Guatemala only stay for a short period of time, UNICEF focused its efforts on prioritising psychosocial support activities to help them to adapt to their new environment. UNICEF's education programme addressed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic through the establishment of Non-Formal Education Centres, providing educational opportunities to out-of-school adolescents in rural areas. In 2023, 1,244 children and adolescents received educational materials and access to non-formal education (including early learning).

WASH

Over 104,000 children and adults transiting through Guatemala received water, sanitation, and hygiene services in appropriate and improved facilities, primarily within the government-operated Centre for Attention to Migrants and Refugees (CAPMiR), health facilities, and shelters. Additionally, 1,392 boys and girls improved their water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions in education sites.

In response to the disasters caused by hydro meteorological phenomena in 2023, UNICEF supported the purchase and handover of 500 hygiene kits (dignity) to the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction (CONRED) for distribution to the affected families.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Social Development to enhance the Social Registry of Households, enabling the establishment of an effective humanitarian cash transfer program during crises. Additionally, through the Cash Working Group, UNICEF is aiding in updating CONRED's National Response Plan to include a more precise component on cash transfers. This ensures that coordinating institutions have the necessary tools, means, and mechanisms to integrate efforts and make informed decisions in case of any adverse events affecting the country.

With support from CashCAP, the Cash Working Group has bolstered its capacity in intersectoral coordination and streamlined actions and decision-making during the implementation of cash-based strategies, particularly in response to adverse events. This initiative leveraged the expertise of various organisations, including governmental bodies, the United Nations System, and humanitarian NGOs active in Guatemala, with the aim of enhancing the sustainability of these actions.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

In line with AAP principles and a commitment to integrating the perspectives of beneficiaries, interviews were conducted with migrant parents of young children. The objective was to comprehend their information requirements and gather suggestions regarding humanitarian services related to health and nutrition. Key findings revealed a lack of awareness among participants upon their arrival in the border area regarding available support for the health and nutrition of children, adolescents, and their families. Migrants reported receiving micronutrients for their children at care centres throughout their journey from Panama to Guatemala.

In Esquipulas, Chiquimula, an AAP strategy focusing on disseminating culturally appropriate messages on preventing health and nutrition issues in young children and accessing services for the migrant population commenced with the involvement of response institutions and local governments. Suggestions and complaints were collected through a mailbox located in UNICEF Mobile Units

and with field partners. By December 2023, people expressed satisfaction with the services they received. They also suggested adding feedback mechanisms in locations such as terminals or banks along the main routes so that all migrants can access them conveniently. Children's input regarding food and cultural relevance needs was considered, and the information gathered was shared with care institutions and first responders to humanitarian needs.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Humanitarian intervention are coordinated through the Humanitarian Country Team. UNICEF leads in Nutrition, Education, WASH and Child Protection sectors. Under UNICEF's leadership, sectors have increased emergency response capacities of institutional actors, and contributed to the 2023 HNO/HRP processes.

The nutrition sector - coordinated by UNICEF, has been strengthened after several emergencies. UNICEF collaborated with the MoH at both central and territorial levels, supporting the sectoral humanitarian response, however, integrating human mobility in health remains a challenge. The child protection group worked to increase the effectiveness of humanitarian response, under the leadership of UNICEF and the United Nations System Migration Specialist Group (GEMIG).

The education group in Guatemala is led by UNICEF, fostering collaboration with educational authorities to develop emergency response plan and the governance system, with the participation of the forty-six organisation members of the cluster. UNICEF also leads the WASH in Emergencies sector, ensuring the provision of immediate WASH services to those in need, coordinating with partners, local and sectoral authorities, and advocating for new technologies to enhance the delivery of safe and potable water services.

HONDURAS

In 2023, Honduras recorded a significant increase in mixed migratory flows, posing a major challenge for a country with escalating violence, political instability, high levels of poverty, and gaps in the response to the needs of migrants, IDPs and returnees.

According to the National Migration Institute (INM) over 545,000 people (26 per cent women, 9.3 per cent girls, 11.6 per cent boys), from 115 different nationalities (mainly from Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, and Ecuador), transited Honduras in 2023, representing an increase of 189 per cent compared to 2022.¹⁸ In addition, the INM reported over 56,000 Honduran returnees in the same period, including 15,519 children (41 per cent girls; 59 per cent boys) and 10,291 women. Despite the government's efforts to promote regular migration, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) estimates an underreporting of 40 per cent of influx, due to continuous irregular migration driven by trafficking networks.

The Mixed Migration Centre reported that children arriving in Honduras face various challenges threatening their survival, such as violence (including GBV), malnutrition, dehydration, diarrhoea and fever.¹⁹ The primary needs of these children include food, protection, health, and psychosocial support. In addition, children often undertake their journey without legal documentation.

Honduras continued to experience the adverse effects of climate change. According to national authorities (COPECO) estimates, some 34,000 people in the northern and western regions have been affected by seasonal rains. As a result of flooding and landslides, people faced the loss of their homes, the deterioration of basic infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, the separation of families and the temporary closure of schools. Furthermore, the

effects of El Niño continued to hit Honduras, particularly in the Dry Corridor area, where a red alert for drought was declared in 140 municipalities. Increased rates of violence and poverty, combined with the use of negative coping mechanisms, exacerbated children's vulnerability to food insecurity, malnutrition, health problems, violence, and neglect.

HEALTH

UNICEF delivered vital primary healthcare services to children and caregivers on the move across three distinct Honduran border regions (Choluteca, El Paraíso, and Ocotepeque). A total of 24,382 individuals (29 per cent girls, 28 per cent boys) received medical attention, with 5,586 children on the move (51 per cent girls, 49 per cent boys) receiving the essential set of vaccines at these medical care points.

Through initiatives supported by UNICEF, access to fundamental vaccinations was ensured for half a million children (51 per cent girls, 49 per cent boys) in three health regions with low immunisation coverage. However, access remains severely restricted, especially in densely populated areas, due to heightened violence and security risks for vaccination teams, alongside limited availability of qualified personnel. Other challenges include the accessibility of essential medications. To enhance healthcare provision for children affected by violence, UNICEF deployed medical teams in three cities facing high levels of violence and insecurity, benefiting over 2,119 children.

NUTRITION

UNICEF implemented nutrition responses for children under five years, pregnant and lactating women on the move. Over 14,000 children (49 per cent boys; 51 per cent girls) participated in nutritional screenings in the southern and western borders, which identified 0.4 per cent of children with acute malnutrition and provided treatment. Nutritional supplements were provided to 2,521 pregnant and lactating women, while 5,958 primary caregivers received counselling on healthy eating and breastfeeding.

Mid-year saw a surge in migration flows, leading to an uptick in identified cases of malnourished children and a subsequent reduction in available nutritional supplements. Consequently, treatment doses were adjusted following WHO guidelines. Enhanced cross-border collaboration with Guatemala was also established to oversee the nutritional treatment of children.

Moreover, UNICEF focused on communities impacted by escalating violence and climate change, including droughts. A total of 33,310 children (50 per cent girls, 50 per cent boys) were screened for acute malnutrition by health teams trained in a simplified protocol. The identification of malnourished children decreased due to team overburden and low caregiver attendance at medical consultations. Hence, UNICEF, in partnership with local health authorities, devised strategies to deploy community brigades for identifying and treating children with moderate and severe acute malnutrition.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE, AND PSEA

As part of its migration-related response, UNICEF reached around 86,000 children and caregivers with psychosocial support, including access to child-friendly spaces and individualized psychological first aid. Awareness-raising on positive parenting and referrals to complementary services were also provided including referrals to cash transfer, GVB response, sexual and reproductive health assistance, medical first aid or legal assistance.

Moreover, 119,873 people (35,123 girls, 26,432 boys and 58,318 women) accessed GBV risk reduction, prevention or response interventions, including PSEA. A further 79,533 people accessed safe and accessible channels to report SEA, through the placement

of posters in visible locations, reporting channels and voice-to-voice messaging by humanitarian staff to migrant families entering temporary shelters.

In addition, at least 52,000 children and caregivers, accessed temporary shelter and received multi-sectoral assistance such as health, food and nutritional supplements, WASH, cash transfers, education, and psychosocial support. They also received a brief induction to the services offered, PSEA and protection messages to reduce risks and prevent GBV. Staff received training on safe case identification and referral protection routes were developed, including how to access child protection and GVB services provided by the child protection authority and humanitarian organisations.

Furthermore, to support the needs of children in armed violence settings, UNICEF and its partners reached 5,186 children and caregivers with psychosocial care activities, including participation in child-friendly spaces, 6,188 children (3,060 boys and 3,128 girls) in need of specialised services were referred to health, social welfare, or justice services. In addition, through dissemination in public places (posters, mailboxes, QR) and through informative activities with beneficiaries, nearly 340,000 people were made aware of safe and accessible channels for reporting SEA.

EDUCATION

UNICEF provided access to education for 17,228 children (52 per cent girls, 48 per cent boys) in human mobility, including: 13,180 children accessing formal and non-formal education; 4,048 children accessing learning platforms in educational spaces during their stay in the country, including the learning passport methodology (LP); and 4,628 girls and 4,807 boys received educational kits. In addition, 430 teachers (67 per cent women) received materials and training on how to care for children and adolescents on the move, and 3,074 children and adults received psychosocial support in their learning programmes.

Through the use of LP for children on the move, UNICEF aims to promote the standardisation of learning and contents, prioritising flexible contents and enabling re-engagement with education.

As part of its response to other emergencies, UNICEF-supported actions reached 7,048 children with access to formal (alternative modalities) or non-formal education. Beneficiaries included children internally displaced, affected by poverty and at risk of dropping out of school due to violence. UNICEF supported the implementation of flexible strategies, alternatives and educational bridges that promoted inclusion, with the aim of restoring learning and strengthening the gradual return to the regular education system. In addition, 600 teachers (482 women) received support and training to provide psycho-emotional support and psychological first aid in educational centres.

WASH

As part of its migration-related response UNICEF delivered 554,111 WASH services, including access to drinking and personal use water through fixed and mobile hydration points (318,044 attentions), offering cost-effective customised hygiene items including those for menstrual hygiene (60,815 attentions), and providing safe and dignified mobile and fixed sanitation services (175,252 attentions) in four municipalities. In addition, UNICEF implemented durable WASH solutions for sanitation and waste management in two municipalities, while also providing training to 25 women from the local women's office in Trojes on manufacturing hygiene supplies for migration centres.

In addition, UNICEF trained staff (50 people) from ten health care facilities in two municipalities with poor access to WASH services. The training focused on climate-resilient WASH and solid waste

management. Additionally, UNICEF pre-positioned essential WASH supplies, ensuring their availability to assist 16,000 people in multiple emergency scenarios, and 4,000 people affected by drought, as anticipatory measures.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNICEF and its implementing partners reached 2,827 migrant families with multipurpose humanitarian cash transfers, according to specific eligibility criteria based on vulnerability levels, ensuring a lifesaving response approach. As a result, 9,145 people benefited from cash transfers including 4,980 women - most of them GBV survivors, and 3,827 children - out of which 54 per cent were children under the age of 5.

Furthermore, UNICEF implemented cash transfers to address various needs, including those caused by violence: in 2023, a total of 1,032 families with children, affected by violence, received support. To improve the targeting of monetary transfers for live-saving purposes, more detailed criteria have been established. Specific criteria related to the MHPSS intervention pyramid were established to prioritise children in need of psychosocial support. Households with children suffering from psychological disorders requiring specialised support received cash transfer to address their mental health needs. This initiative aimed to support and better address the need of high-vulnerable children, including children survivors of GBV, victims of domestic violence, those diagnosed with mental health disorders and those suffering from emotional distress.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

UNICEF continued to strengthen safe participation mechanisms with an age and gender focus, to promote accountability and transparency with partners and beneficiaries. As part of UNICEF's engagement with humanitarian cash transfers in Honduras, an inter-agency survey was developed, with the support of humanitarian organisations, to map AAP interventions in each sector. This provided an overview of the gaps and capacities of AAP mechanism in the country. Furthermore, through the LIFE Consortium, UNICEF conducted surveys and interviews with migrant women and children to understand their most urgent needs, and promote a more effective response and human-centred programming. Despite these efforts, challenges persist in the adaptation of culturally sensitive materials and feedback mechanisms with beneficiaries due to the complexity and characteristics of migration flows, including a large number of languages and nationalities.

In addition, through monitoring, field visits and feedback from beneficiaries, responses have been adapted to the changes of migratory flows, violent contexts and climate change, ensuring the quality of life-saving programmes. A total of 15,863 people (29% boys, 36% girls, 27% women, 8% men) accessed AAP mechanisms, expressing satisfaction with the response and services provided.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNICEF maintains effective coordination of the humanitarian response by leading the WASH and Education Clusters, the Nutrition Working Group (WG) and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (AoR), in accordance with the 2023 HRP. Prioritising areas such as human mobility, violence, food and nutrition security, and climate change, UNICEF ensured that each sector identified critical humanitarian gaps, advocated for the necessary resources and coordinate comprehensive responses. For instance, in the area of human mobility, the WASH Cluster and Nutrition Working Group

demonstrated its leadership by timely identifying most critical gaps and adapting programmes to address fluctuating migratory flows. In addition, the Education Cluster and Child Protection AoR have promoted joint initiatives to create safe educational spaces in violence-affected and migration context, incorporating protection measures through recreational and pedagogical activities. Despite progress, humanitarian coordination faced challenges due to limited financial resources and increased humanitarian needs across the country.

MEXICO

According to the Migration Policy Unit, from January to November 2023, the National Migration Institute identified nearly 686,732 irregular migrants transiting through Mexico, an increase of 293,127 people compared to the same period in 2022. Out of these, 105,110 (15.3 per cent) were children and adolescents, and 6,253 (6 per cent) were unaccompanied. Most of these children came from Venezuela (35,118), followed by Ecuador (15,379), Honduras (12,443), Guatemala (11,236), Colombia (6,676) and Brazil (3,780). The number of children and adolescents migrating increased 69 per cent compared to the same period in 2022, while the share of unaccompanied children decreased considerably compared to figures reported in previous years.

From January to November 2023, Mexican immigration authorities returned 6,382 children and adolescents to their countries of origin. Out of these, 3,424 (53.6 per cent) were unaccompanied. At least 87.5 per cent (5,585) of all returned children and adolescents are of Honduran and Guatemalan nationalities. In the same period, 201,713 Mexican citizens were returned from the United States. Out of these, 23,022 were children and adolescents, and 14,283 (62 per cent) were unaccompanied.

In addition, in 2023, the Mexican government reported a high number of asylum applications. A total of 136,934 persons applied for refugee status from January to November 2023, of whom 32,856 (24 per cent) were children and 1,359 (4 per cent) were unaccompanied.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

UNICEF's medical mobile units provided nutrition, psychosocial and primary healthcare services to children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women on the move in the Mexican cities of Tapachula, Ciudad Juárez, Tijuana, Mexicali, and Nogales. The main age group receiving services is 5 to 11 years old, followed by those aged 0 to 5 and 12 to 17. Over 18,000 children and women received primary healthcare and nutrition services.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE, AND PSEA

UNICEF continued to strategically support the implementation of the 2021 Migration and Refugee Laws Amendment, especially, UNICEF's programme aimed at strengthening the case management capacities of child protection authorities and the care capacities of welfare agencies, while providing mental health and legal services to children on the move, as well as GBV and child protection services to children who are victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation on the migration routes.

UNICEF reached over 86,000 people on the move through child protection actions. Of these, 27,367 children and 15,721 caregivers benefited from MHPSS and resilience building activities. In addition, 8,394 people received direct psychosocial counselling sessions (6,880 children and 1,514 caregivers). Child protection case management services were provided to 11,412 children on the move

by direct support to child protection authorities, and 20,849 children received appropriate alternative care arrangements. Over 11,000 people benefited from GBV risk reduction, prevention, or response actions. U-Report on the Move engaged over 7,900 users, providing them information on protection services. In addition, 502 children on the move received psychosocial support through U-Report, and 134 cases requiring protection were identified and referred to specialized services.

UNICEF continued to support the implementation of a national care reform roadmap in the country. A Methodological Guide on the residential care of children on the move was published by the national child protection authority (DIF) and UNICEF to provide technical guidance for the effectively implement of the National Care Model launched in 2022. Improving the quality of alternative care services and expanding the institutional shelter for children on the move remained a priority. UNICEF endorsed and broadened foster care programs for children and adolescents lacking family care in Baja California, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Michoacán, and Guerrero.

In Baja California, UNICEF supported state authorities in developing the “Protection Circle”, a coordinated mechanism between authorities and organisations to ensure that unaccompanied children have access to protection mechanisms and temporary care options, while a permanent care solution is determined according to their best interest.

Throughout the year, technical assistance on PSEA has been provided to implementing partners with recommendations on how to strengthen their PSEA policies, following the programme visits to partners' sites (shelters, camps, offices, etc.). 229 UNICEF and implementing partners' personnel were trained on PSEA, and 33,850 children and 41,572 adults had access to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel providing assistance.

EDUCATION

In 2023, UNICEF supported children and adolescents through non-formal educational activities, in early childhood and basic education levels in Baja California, Chihuahua, Chiapas and Sonora, reaching 4,313 children (2,053 boys and 2,260 girls) from 0 to 5 years, and 2,576 caregivers (268 men and 2,308 women) with early childhood activities in 27 shelters. The Akelius programme trained 24 teachers (7 men and 17 women) in the use of the English App, and reached 8,210 children and adolescents (4,453 boys and 3,757 girls) aged 6-17 in 10 schools and 30 shelters with activities, aiming at improving their foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, basic English language, and digital skills. In addition, 2,798 children, adolescents and young people (1,368 males and 1,430 females) accessed Skills for Life programmes.

UNICEF, with the Educational and Cultural Council of Central America / Central America Integration System (CECC/SICA), designed the regional policy for the recognition, validation and accreditation of Learning Outcomes. In May, UNICEF, in collaboration with the MoE and GIZ, conducted a KAP study on barriers to access education for children on the move. Through U-Report on the Move, campaigns against discrimination in schools and host communities, were carried out and 79,000 materials with key messages on integration and coexistence were distributed, reaching over 907,000 people in priority states.

WASH

In 2023, 64,043 boys, girls and adult men and women received essential WASH supplies, including hygiene and menstrual kits, and

benefited from cleaning and disinfecting kits in their shelters. During this period, WASH infrastructures were improved in 24 different spaces, including 20 shelters and four schools in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Tabasco. A total of 93,470 people benefited from access to new or rehabilitated sanitation and hygiene infrastructures, while other 149,236 people benefited from access to clean safe water in shelters hosting population on the move. On the southern border, UNICEF provided emergency WASH infrastructures in temporary camps to support rapid onset emergencies. The WASH response included the installation of water tanks and distribution of drinking water trucking, showers, chemical toilets, and hand-washing facilities, benefiting a staggering number of over 180,000 people on the move.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

Throughout the year, UNICEF sustained impactful strategies in SBC and AAP. The main focus remained on improving the quality and accessibility of critical information on protection, mental health, WASH, nutrition, and other vital topics. Using dynamic approaches such as theatre, storytelling, edutainment, museum actions, UNICEF aims to strengthen the social inclusion of migrants in major cities hosting people and children on the move. This is achieved through extensive collaboration with host communities. In particular, the establishment of AAP mechanisms within response actions was ensured through the diligent implementation of surveys and feedback mechanisms such as kobo surveys, letters collected, and U-Report on the Move chats.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNICEF, together with Save the Children, leads the subgroup for Protection of Children in Human Mobility, a national coordination mechanism including 26 organizations.²⁰ In addition, as part of the work of the Commission for the Comprehensive Protection of Children on the move and Asylum Seekers led by the Mexican authorities, UNICEF coordinates the support to five states to develop and strengthen internal mechanisms for comprehensive protection for children on the move.

NICARAGUA

Nicaragua is unique in Central America as it exempts citizens from several Caribbean, African, and Asian nations from visa requirements. This makes it a common transit point for migrants aiming to reach the United States. Monitoring migration trends in Nicaragua presents a complex challenge, largely due to the limited presence of civil society organizations in border municipalities that could provide assistance to individuals in transit. In October 2023, the Nicaraguan government made a concerted effort to prioritize the protection of its nationals, regulate the orderly and safe movement of both nationals and foreigners, and enhance security measures against migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and labour exploitation. This included a particular focus on the vulnerable groups of women, children, and adolescents. Notably, in 2023, authorities recorded the return of 881 children and adolescents from Mexico and the United States.

Drought is currently a pressing concern in Nicaragua due to the El Niño phenomenon, especially in the Dry Corridor encompassing several departments in the central and pacific regions. Preparedness efforts are actively addressing the potential impacts of this drought in nearly 44 municipalities, which are already grappling with acute malnutrition. Critical needs have been identified, including access to

safe water, food security, nutrition, healthcare, protection (particularly in light of potential increased migration), and access to education.

HEALTH

UNICEF provided specialised technical assistance to the MoH to establish an integrated delivery of a minimum package of immunisation, nutrition, and child development services in isolated communities. This approach aimed to bridge gaps in healthcare access for these communities. In addition strengthening collaboration between community health workers and religious leaders allowed to foster greater acceptance of vaccine and to integrate the regular immunisation programme with the COVID-19 vaccination efforts, ensuring a comprehensive approach to public health.

To address the prevalent of childhood illnesses, UNICEF supported the updating of care guidelines and improved the overall quality of health service through capacity building session in Child Development Care for 3,000 community workers. In response to the sustained increase in dengue cases in Nicaragua, UNICEF supported the MoH in developing a stronger communication strategy for dengue prevention, and 2,000 kits for the destruction of mosquito breeding sites were distributed.

NUTRITION

UNICEF provided technical assistance to the MoH for implementing the National Nutritional Status Monitoring Plan for Children 0-6 years old. This initiative was a proactive response to anticipate the potential impact of El Niño phenomenon in the Dry Corridor of Nicaragua, and included the preparation and delivery of materials for community counselling on breastfeeding/complementary feeding and food preparation. UNICEF supported the purchase of mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measuring tapes and Ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) for the identification and treatment of acute malnutrition cases, as well as the implementation of a mobile application tailored for individual nutritional screening for acute malnutrition.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE, AND PSEA

Through technical and financial assistance provided by UNICEF to the Ministry of Family (MoF), 659 unaccompanied children and adolescents were safely returned to their countries of origin and received special protection measures. A total of 4,231 individual kits were delivered to families with children and adolescents at border points. With technical assistance support from UNICEF, the MoF strengthened the capacity of the Anti-Trafficking Coalitions, the Directorate of Migration and Foreigners and border officials in child protection, to apply the Protocol of Attention for the Repatriation of National and Foreign Children and Adolescents in irregular migration situations; and promoted campaigns to prevent irregular migration in markets, schools and bus terminals.

EDUCATION

Protocols for the Care of Children Affected by Migration within the Educational System were developed and distributed to 2,000 teachers. In addition, training sessions were conducted to help teachers implement this protocol effectively, with a focus on schools and communities that are more exposed to migratory pressures. This targeted approach aims to address the challenges faced by children in border regions and areas characterised by increased internal and external mobility.

As a part of the emergency response to Hurricane Julia in 2022, six temporary learning spaces were set up in six rural communities whose schools were affected, benefiting at least 150 students at pre-

school and primary level with access to clean water and sanitation, as well as minimum conditions for the well-being. In addition, a training plan was developed for 84 teachers from six educational centres, which include 41 schools and a total of 1,820 students at the preschool and primary level, also from rural area. The training sessions were conducted with the participation of teachers and focused on socio-emotional support to strengthen children's emotional resilience, and the implementation of play-based pedagogy in the classroom. The training sessions were accompanied by the provision of 120 recreational-educational kits.

WASH

UNICEF conducted a training session for 35 WASH technicians, contributing to the strengthening of technical capacities in three communities located in border areas. The training also touched on issues related to conflict resolution practices to reduce the risk of community conflicts due to water demands from migrants. These communities were also supported to develop safe water plans, including action plans to reduce risks associated with emergencies due to natural threats, climate change and other factors. Safe water services were improved in these communities, benefiting a total of 1,434 people (739 women and 695 men).

Additionally, UNICEF provided technical assistance and resources to the National Water Authority to improve access to safe water for a total of 8,736 people, including 3,669 children and adolescents of eight municipalities located in the country's dry corridor, three of which are transit points for population on the move. In addition, to directly address water accessibility, the project aimed at strengthening the technical capacity of 30 service providers and engaging 50 members of the eight Water and Sanitation Committees. The goal was to equip them with the skills needed to develop water security plans that can be resilient to the effects of climate change and disaster risk reduction. Furthermore, behaviour change processes were set in motion to improve standards of handwashing, personal and food hygiene, and community hygiene. These transformative efforts were achieved through the collaborative engagement with teachers in educational centres and health workers at health facilities.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

In 2023, national capacities were strengthened in emergency communication, awareness of the risks of irregular migration, prevention of vector-borne diseases, and knowledge of services for families on the move. UNICEF trained 48 officials from as many municipalities in risk communication, enhancing their ability to integrate communication strategies in municipal emergency preparedness plans.

In addition, the campaign to prevent vector-borne diseases in homes and schools reached over 2.6 million individuals. In addition, messages related to child protection and education in emergencies reached 175,221 people while a multilingual health risk communication and immunisation campaign reached 2.5 million people. Community feedback mechanisms (surveys; suggestion boxes; community dialogues; social media; WhatsApp line) were set up and nearly 1,280 people provided comments.

To fulfil its commitment to addressing the needs of the populations it serves, UNICEF has adopted a comprehensive approach that includes diligent follow up of feedback, participation in technical teams' discussions to interpret feedback, review findings and suggestions, and make necessary adjustment especially those requiring cultural relevance.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

In Nicaragua, the national government, through its National Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response System (SINAPRED), takes the lead in preparing for and responding to emergencies. SINAPRED's structure includes sectoral working commissions, which bring together government institutions, United Nations Agencies and NGOs by programme area. UNICEF regularly participates in the WASH sectoral working commission, and engages in dialogue and cooperation with SINAPRED in the areas of WASH, protection, education, health and communications, strengthening the capacity of the system to function better.

UNICEF leads efforts in both emergency preparedness and response, in the areas of WASH, nutrition and education. For example, in 2023, a proposal for CERF funding to address the drought emergency caused by El Niño phenomenon was formulated as part of the work of UNETE. UNICEF assumed leadership in the WASH and Nutrition sectors. In the area of education, UNICEF is managing, as the delegate agency of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), an amount of US\$1 million for the repair of schools affected by Hurricane Julia.

PANAMA

In 2023, according to national authorities, 520,085 people crossed the dangerous Darien jungle towards North America, 113,180 of them were children and adolescents, representing 22 per cent of the total, and three times higher than in 2022 (40,438 in total). In the second semester, the daily number of migrants peaked at 4,500, with more than 6,000 people across all Temporary Migrant Reception Stations (ETRM) in Darien and Chiriqui, leading to overcrowding in the reception centres and exceeding the capacity of the government and humanitarian actors in the field. In October, the governments of Panama and Costa Rica signed a joint agreement to provide direct bus transportation for migrants, resulting in the closure of the Los Planes de Gualaca ETRM in Chiriqui province - border with Costa Rica. The socio-political situation in Panama, as a result of nationwide protests in the same month, impacted the migration flow, affecting overall mobility throughout Panama and forcing migrants and refugees to continue on foot due to blockages along the route.

The context dynamics had an impact on the humanitarian needs of children and families, requiring additional efforts to meet their basic needs and ensure their protection. Scaling up WASH, health and protection services was critical, especially to guarantee services for the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied and separated children and survivors of sexual violence. In 2023, more than 3,300 unaccompanied and separated children were identified by the UNICEF team and referred. In addition, from January to November, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) identified and assisted 462 survivors of sexual violence.

HEALTH

UNICEF provided maternal and child health services to 25,850 children and women, including more than 900 pregnant and lactating women at the three temporary migrant reception stations and two host communities, in the provinces of Darien and Chiriqui. Pregnant women are at risks of premature delivery along the route and at the migrant reception centres, among other health risks. UNICEF delivered post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) Kits for 300 survivors of sexual violence along the route and continues to work with the MoH and local health organisations to ensure survivors have access to health services.

NUTRITION

In 2023, UNICEF provided nutritional screening to 14,491 children aged from 6 to 59 months, at reception stations and host communities in the provinces of Darien and Chiriqui. Children identified as being at risk of malnutrition or suffering from acute malnutrition received supplementary vitamins and were referred to the health centre for treatment. Given the increase in the number of adolescents, UNICEF worked with implementing partner to screen children over 5 and adolescents as a preventive measure. UNICEF continued to provide technical assistance and training to the field staff, including through a dedicated nutrition officer.

CHILD PROTECTION, GBVIE AND PSEA

UNICEF provided psychosocial support through Child Friendly Spaces to 81,961 children, parents and caregivers in the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations and host communities in the Province of Darien and Chiriqui. A remarkable 93 per cent of participants rated the provided services as excellent.

Nearly 3,000 children and families participated in community-based protection activities in the host communities of Bajo Chiquito, Canaan Membrillo, and seven other communities affected by migration in the Embera Wounaan indigenous territory.

Case management, family reunification or alternative care was provided to 3,087 unaccompanied and separated children in the province of Darien. The total number of unaccompanied and separated children has almost tripled since last year. The risks faced by children on the route and at the migrant reception stations continue to increase making it necessary to provide humanitarian services to prevent, mitigate and protect children and women.

At the migrant reception centres, a total of 30,857 women and girls benefited from GBV risk mitigation and response services within Safe Spaces. Beneficiaries participated in activities and guided sessions that promoted self-care, listening, and the sharing of information and tools to cope with the effect of crossing the dangerous jungle.

UNICEF led the development of the national protocol for unaccompanied and separated children in collaboration with the National Child Protection Office. In addition, UNICEF provided technical assistance to National Ombudsman Office in revising the recommendations from the report of children on the move, which was launched the previous year. UNICEF continued as co-chair of the Protection Subgroup of the UN's coordination mechanism the Human Mobility Group and as lead on Child Protection and GBV.

WASH

In 2023, UNICEF scaled up its WASH initiatives in response to the increased number of migrants arriving at the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations and hosting communities in the Darien. UNICEF provided safe drinking water to 334,269 people, distributed 39,984 hygiene kits, and enabled safe and appropriate WASH facilities benefiting 78,836 people in transit.

At the Temporary Migrant Reception Stations, UNICEF increased the number of sanitation facilities, including toilets, showers, handwashing station and safe drinking water distribution points to reach more migrants and refugees. Water production at the Lajas Blancas station increased from 40,000 litres per day to 130,000 litres per day.

In host communities and other communities impacted by the increased migration dynamics, UNICEF continued providing technical assistance and operational support to the Local Water Communities to ensure the production and distribution of water. In

addition, UNICEF continued to lead the WASH subgroup, under the Humanitarian structure in Panama.

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (SBC) AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AFFECTED POPULATIONS (AAP)

Under UNICEF's AAP strategy, a total of 26,800 people accessed established accountability mechanisms by participating in feedback surveys, mailboxes and micro-surveys places at the various intervention points.

In order to mitigate the impact of the change in the route going directly from the Darien in Panama to Costa Rica, information leaflets were produced in coordination with the Costa Rica's country office. The information was developed based on the information and protection needs of children, families and people on the move at the reception stations in the Darien.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

UNICEF is part of the United Nations Human Mobility Group, a body dedicated to coordinating response to the migration crisis – particularly concerning movement through the Darien jungle. Within this framework, UNICEF collaborated closely with IOM and UNHCR, who have the lead roles. In addition, UNICEF is the lead sector coordinator for WASH, co-leads the Protection subgroup with UNHCR, and leads the Child Protection and GBV response. In these leadership roles, UNICEF facilitated the development of the first interagency PSEA SOPs for humanitarian actors in the field; the establishment of localised protection referral pathways for technical staff; preparation of recommendation reports for government counterparts, and creation of an annual contingency plan.

At the local level, in Darien, UNICEF provides technical support to SENNIAF for organising the local Child Protection roundtable and support the MoH in the WASH roundtable. In addition, UNICEF actively participates in the coordination mechanism for the migration response between Panama and Costa Rica. Through its involvement in the Human Mobility Group and its subgroups, UNICEF contributes to enhancing the efficiency and coherence of the response.

REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP, COORDINATION, RESPONSE AND SUPPORT TO COUNTRY OFFICES

UNICEF's Latin American and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) provides support to country offices' efforts in maintaining and further scaling-up their emergency response. LACRO ensures that capacities are in place, including human resources, tools and mechanisms, to support joint analysis, information sharing, exchange of good practices and lessons learned, regional partnerships and advocacy initiatives, regional and sub-regional coordination, and ensure technical assistance and quality assurance of the humanitarian response.

LACRO's regional experts have provided strong technical assistance to COs, both remotely and through surge missions, enabling COs to rapidly scale up their humanitarian response to the migration crisis, and to continue improving the quality of services for children on the move, in line with international standards. Given the unprecedented increase in the number of migrants crossing into Costa Rica in late September 2023, LACRO deployed technical experts in the areas of emergency, needs assessment, monitoring, child protection and accountability for affected populations (AAP), and ensured targeted remote support across areas, including on gender, health and

nutrition. These surge missions were critical for adapting UNICEF's response and operational structure to the scale of the emergency, and to the authorities' increased demands for support.

Throughout the year, Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico COs also benefitted from LACRO technical expert missions to support design and implementation of migration response programs in areas such as Child Protection, Education, Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) / AAP, Gender; technical guidance and quality overview of the response, preparedness, field operations, humanitarian planning and monitoring.

Tailored technical assistance on AAP in migration contexts has been provided to Honduras and El Salvador COs to better integrate AAP across sectors and to improve the quality of the AAP actions. UNICEF LACRO provided direct technical support for the implementation of cash transfer programs for migrants in Honduras and Belize.

LACRO leads engagement with key sub-regional partners, intergovernmental bodies and fora such as the CECC/SICA (Educational and Cultural Council of Central America / Central America Integration System), or the Regional Conference on Migration (CRM), to strengthen advocacy and collaboration around migration issues, and position the voices of migrant children. For example, in 2023, LACRO supported Mexico CO and CECC/SICA on the implementation of the Regional Policy for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Learning Outcomes for the SICA region and Mexico, which was approved by the Minister's Council.

UNICEF LACRO continued promoting cross-border coordination and knowledge exchange among UNICEF COs, and between UNICEF and other agencies and organizations, including by facilitating meetings or workshops for information and knowledge exchange. With the peak of flows into Costa Rica in September 2023, LACRO supported the exchange of staff capacity among Panama and Costa Rica COs, ensuring the best use of human resources. LACRO also promoted the exchange of experiences related to the Safe Spaces for Women strategy by Panama CO, which is being replicated in Costa Rica.

LACRO invested in developing capacities at country level, including those of key partners and counterparts. Capacity building efforts led / supported by LACRO in 2023 included a 12-hour online course on WASH and migration to promote common understanding of contexts, politics, frameworks and standards related to migration, strengthening capacities of 19 UNICEF WASH staff from the CAMEX region. Furthermore, LACRO supported capacity building efforts targeting sub-national WASH coordination platforms in Mexico, including in Tapachula, Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez, to ensure improved WASH humanitarian response. Additionally, two virtual trainings were conducted for UNICEF staff on 'Gender and WASH in humanitarian contexts', and 'GBV/Health response in humanitarian settings', both delivering key knowledge applicable in migration scenarios. Lastly, three webinars were conducted to share critical recommendations and guidelines to develop AAP working plans, including the interagency approach. Good practices and lessons learned were shared among COs in the region with valuable experience integrating AAP strategic actions into the migration response, particularly in establishing and managing complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFM), providing migrant families' meaningful information and promoting their participation.

Aiming at improving regional data and evidence generation to support coordination, informed decision making, programming and advocacy, UNICEF LACRO, in collaboration with COs, UNHCR and WFP, has implemented a migration monitoring mechanism through the use of a chatbot in WhatsApp technology, with the aim of characterizing groups of migrant traveling with children, identifying their main humanitarian needs, and monitor the quality of services

provided to children on the move. In Central America, Panama and Costa Rica are part of this mechanism, with information being collected at irregular border crossing points, and at the migratory reception stations located in Darien and the Paso Canoas Temporary Reception Center in Costa Rica. LACRO is also exploring the feasibility of developing a platform that will enable migrants to digitally store their medical personal records and legal documents in a secure and easily accessible virtual environment for on-demand retrieval.

UNICEF LACRO led the implementation of regional advocacy and communication initiatives, and supported COs national advocacy initiatives and their efforts to amplify advocacy messaging for children on the move. LACRO – in collaboration with COs in the region, launched the Child Alert Report²¹ which examined the complex and changing nature of child migration in the region, and focused on movement patterns on three key migration flows (including across Central America and Mexico) as well as diving into broader trends such as the root causes of forced migration, the dangers experienced by children on their journeys and the barriers they face to accessing support.

LACRO, COs and HQ, also developed assets and messaging during key advocacy moments throughout the year, leveraging increased visibility key to mobilize the international community around the crisis of children on the move in Mexico and Central America. Key moments included, for instance, the Joint Declaration of the Inter-American Dialogue and UNICEF on the protection and integration of migrant children in the Americas, adopted at OAS General Assembly; Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell on the lifting of Title 42; coverage of UNICEF Regional Director's visit to Darien; statement on the Seven-fold increase in the number of children walking through the Panamanian jungle towards North America, and LACRO's Regional Director participation in the 1-year anniversary of the LA Declaration in Washington DC - co-organized by the Governments of the United States and Belize.

At regional level, LACRO plays a key role in regional coordination fora and mechanisms covering migration-related issues across Mexico and Central America, including the UN Issue-Based Coalition (IBC) on Human Mobility; and the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAC) led by OCHA, where UNICEF leads/co-leads inter-agency preparedness and response in WASH, Nutrition, Education sectors and Child Protection sub-group, and is a member of the GBV, Health and Cash groups. UNICEF is part of the Regional Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants (R4V) – which 2023-2024 response plan included UNICEF Panama and Costa Rica - leading/co-leading the Child Protection, Education, Nutrition, and WASH regional sectors; and the Cash, PSEA and Support Spaces regional working groups. Through operational interagency mechanisms at regional level, as leading/co-leading agency, UNICEF can contribute to support service delivery by supporting in-country coordination platforms that help to prevent gaps or duplications; inform strategic decision-making by the Humanitarian Coordination Teams; provide guidance and technical support for coordinated needs assessment, gap analysis and prioritization; supports the development of quality strategies and plans in accordance with standards and funding needs; monitors and reports on the sector results (at regional level), recommending corrective actions where necessary; and supports contingency planning/preparedness/national capacity-building where needed.

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES AND EXTERNAL MEDIA

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

- [Belize] The Faces of Statelessness
<https://www.unicef.org/belize/stories/faces-statelessness>
- [Belize] How UNICEF Belize is leading Cash Plus in Nutrition
<https://www.unicef.org/belize/blog/how-unicef-belize-leading-cash-plus-nutrition>
- [Honduras] Un año de acción humanitaria articulada
<https://www.unicef.org/honduras/historias/conmemoraci%C3%B3n-de-un-a%C3%B1o-de-acci%C3%B3n-humanitaria-articulada>
- [Honduras] Un viaje en busca de educación
<https://www.unicef.org/honduras/historias/un-viaje-en-busca-de-educaci%C3%B3n>
- [Panama] Gender approach in the migration response in Panama
<https://www.unicef.org/panama/historias/johanna-tejada-el-enfoque-de-g%C3%A9nero-puesto-al-servicio-de-las-personas-m%C3%A1s-vulnerables>
- [Panama] WASH response in Panama
<https://www.unicef.org/panama/historias/migrantes-y-comunidades-locales-se-benefician-por-igual-del-acceso-al-agua-potable>

PRESS RELEASES

- [Nicaragua] Strengthening capacities for emergency preparedness
<https://www.unicef.org/nicaragua/comunicados-prensa/unicef-fortalece-capacidades-de-comunicaci%C3%B3n-del-riesgo-en-preparaci%C3%B3n-para>
- [Panama] UNICEF support to the migration response in Panama
<https://www.unicef.org/panama/comunicados-prensa/apoyo-de-unicef-al-estado-paname%C3%B1o-en-beneficio-de-ni%C3%B1os-ni%C3%B1as-y-adolescentes>

SOCIAL MEDIA

- [Belize] UNICEF's Cash Plus Nutrition initiative
<https://bit.ly/3UhuC12>
- [Belize] ECD for migrant children
<https://bit.ly/3WkMhYB>
- [Costa Rica] Facebook #ConLaNiñezMigrante
<https://bit.ly/3QIbU7D>
- [El Salvador] Visit in "Las Chinamas" border
<https://bit.ly/3UvoPpY>
- [El Salvador] Pilar storm response
<https://bit.ly/3JAIH4U>

- [Guatemala] Migration in Guatemala (Swedish)
<https://bit.ly/4aNQBE4>
- [Mexico] Why do children and adolescents migrate
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Cw6UKqMO33b/>
- [Mexico] A letter from a Mexican girl to children on the move
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CtujZV8stCP/>
- [Panama] Bus crash migrant survivors story
https://www.instagram.com/p/C1CgqtfuAMQ/?img_index=1
- [Panama] Migrant children with disabilities
https://www.instagram.com/p/C0b7nsvugKX/?img_index=1

MULTIMEDIA

- [Belize] Think Equal Testimonial - Teacher Blair
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujiholeYLSk>
- [Belize] Humanitarian Response in Migrant Communities
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gZLkBB10kM&t=3s>
- [Guatemala] UNICEF response in Esquipulas
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KlmxS0MhkMY>
- [Guatemala] Unaccompanied children in migratory context
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU-wQ09teUg>
- [Honduras] Migración con un recién nacido
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GZiqf1SGgY
- [Honduras] A Honduran Safe Haven for Migrant Families
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouKBCrwiqjY>
- [Mexico] Círculo de Protección en Baja California
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVR4pd_M6Qk
- [Panama] Case Management story
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcbSwjDnhxM>

EXTERNAL MEDIA

- [Mexico] Animal Político. 'After the tragedy in Ciudad Juárez, the face of a boy or girl is hidden'
<https://www.animalpolitico.com/analisis/invitades/tras-la-tragedia-en-juarez-se-oculta-el-rostro-de-un-nino>

HAC APPEALS AND SITREPS

- Children on the move in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Appeals
<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/mexico-and-central-america>
- Children on the move in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean Situation Reports
<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/mexico-and-central-america/situation-reports>
- All Humanitarian Action for Children Appeals
<https://www.unicef.org/appeals>
- All Situation Reports
<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/situation-reports>

NEXT SITREP: AUGUST 2024

ANNEX A - PROGRAMME RESULTS

Consolidated Programme Results

Sector			UNICEF and IPs response		
Indicator	Disaggregation	Total needs	2023 targets	Total results	Progress*
Health					
Children and women accessing primary healthcare in UNICEF-supported facilities	Total	-	112,184	87,040	▲ 78%
	Belize	-	20,000	11,838	▲ 59%
	Guatemala	-	15,000	4,091	▲ 27%
	Honduras	-	15,000	26,500	▲ 177%
	Mexico	-	50,000	18,761	▲ 38%
	Panama	-	12,184	25,850	▲ 212%
Children receiving the minimum set of vaccines	Total	-	60,632	547,660	▲ 903%
	Belize	-	5,000	3,510	▲ 70%
	El Salvador	-	37,000	-	0%
	Guatemala	-	732	-	0%
	Honduras	-	5,700	538,250 ²²	▲ 9443%
	Mexico	-	6,000	-	0%
	Nicaragua	-	6,200	5,900	▲ 95%
Nutrition					
Children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment	Total	-	1,980	137	▲ 7%
	Guatemala	-	1,750	-	0%
	Honduras	-	230	137	▲ 60%
Children 6-59 months screened for wasting	Total	-	254,796	81,501	▲ 32%
	Belize	-	7,500	6,270	▲ 84%
	Costa Rica	-	500	-	0%
	Guatemala	-	177,500	3,131	▲ 2%
	Honduras	-	45,000	47,566	▲ 106%
	Mexico	-	5,000	6,127	▲ 123%
	Nicaragua	-	3,050	3,916	▲ 128%
	Panama	-	16,246	14,491	▲ 89%

Primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling	Total	-	488,871	14,474	▲ 3%
	Belize	-	25,000	1,052 ²³	▲ 4%
	El Salvador	-	67,081	-	0%
	Guatemala	-	345,090	126	0%
	Honduras	-	16,000	6,289	▲ 39%
	Mexico	-	30,000	3,347	▲ 11%
	Nicaragua	-	5,700	3,660	▲ 64%
Children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder	Total	-	46,300	16,667	▲ 36%
	Honduras	-	45,000	15,492	▲ 34%
	Nicaragua	-	1,300	1,175	▲ 90%
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA					
Children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support	Total	-	253,045	319,981	▲ 126%
	Belize	-	15,000	24,314 ²⁴	▲ 162%
	Costa Rica	-	12,400	18,416	▲ 149%
	El Salvador	-	16,000	3,607 ²⁵	▲ 23%
	Guatemala	-	16,600	52,986	▲ 319%
	Honduras	-	80,000	91,378	▲ 114%
	Mexico	-	20,000	43,088	▲ 215%
	Nicaragua	-	45,660	4,231	▲ 9%
	Panama	-	47,385	81,961 ²⁶	▲ 173%
Women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions	Total	-	264,162	216,224	▲ 82%
	Belize	-	18,000	4,314 ²⁷	▲ 24%
	Costa Rica	-	120	4,666	▲ 3888%
	El Salvador	-	2,500	250 ²⁸	▲ 10%
	Guatemala	-	41,000	32,941	▲ 80%
	Honduras	-	25,000	132,892 ²⁹	▲ 532%
	Mexico	-	8,000	10,304	▲ 129%
	Nicaragua	-	154,500	-	0%

	Panama	-	15,042	30,857 ³⁰	▲ 205%
People with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations	Total	-	527,657	532,446	▲ 101%
	Belize	-	6,500	-	0%
	Guatemala	-	11,000	-	0%
	Honduras	-	340,000	419,349	▲ 123%
	Mexico	-	60,000	71,078	▲ 118%
	Nicaragua	-	110,157	42,019	▲ 38%
Unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care and/or reunified	Total	-	19,350	27,870	▲ 144%
	Belize	-	5,000	70	▲ 1%
	Guatemala	-	2,750	3,864	▲ 141%
	Mexico	-	4,000	20,849	▲ 521%
	Nicaragua	-	6,300	-	0%
	Panama	-	1,300	3,087 ³¹	▲ 237%
Education					
Children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	Total	-	130,670	88,628	▲ 68%
	Belize	-	25,000	18,030	▲ 72%
	Costa Rica	-	11,950	10,040	▲ 84%
	El Salvador	-	8,970	1,756	▲ 20%
	Guatemala	-	2,230	1,244	▲ 56%
	Honduras	-	50,000	13,928	▲ 28%
	Mexico	-	4,400	11,810 ³²	▲ 268%
	Nicaragua	-	28,120	31,820	▲ 113%
Children receiving individual learning materials	Total	-	121,164	79,195	▲ 65%
	Costa Rica	-	15,950	13,832	▲ 87%
	El Salvador	-	13,470	22,444	▲ 167%
	Guatemala	-	14,744	1,244	▲ 8%
	Honduras	-	50,000	9,855	▲ 20%
	Nicaragua	-	27,000	31,820	▲ 118%

Children and adolescents accessing skills development programmes	Total	-	153,500	29,809	▲ 19%
	Belize	-	1,000	-	0%
	Costa Rica	-	10,000	7,600	▲ 76%
	El Salvador	-	500	19,461	▲ 3892%
	Honduras	-	140,000	-	0%
	Mexico	-	2,000	2,748	▲ 137%
Water, sanitation and hygiene					
People accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs	Total	-	653,999	832,929	▲ 127%
	Belize	-	30,000	33	0%
	El Salvador	-	20,700	22,645	▲ 109%
	Guatemala	-	107,598	-	0%
	Honduras	-	125,730	318,043 ³⁴	▲ 253%
	Mexico	-	131,330	149,236	▲ 114%
	Nicaragua	-	13,000	8,736	▲ 67%
	Panama	-	225,641	334,269	▲ 148%
Children using safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces	Total	-	58,548	102,989	▲ 176%
	Belize	-	25,000	575	▲ 2%
	Costa Rica	-	7,850	10,683	▲ 136%
	El Salvador	-	2,000	10,050 ³⁵	▲ 503%
	Guatemala	-	7,704	1,392	▲ 18%
	Nicaragua	-	3,200	1,453	▲ 45%
	Panama	-	12,794	78,836 ³⁶	▲ 616%
People reached with hand-washing behaviour-change programmes	Total	-	263,968	354,185	▲ 134%
	Belize	-	25,000	-	0%
	El Salvador	-	450	2,974	▲ 661%
	Guatemala	-	208,058	310,487	▲ 149%
	Mexico	-	17,460	31,988	▲ 183%
	Nicaragua	-	13,000	8,736	▲ 67%

People reached with critical WASH supplies	Total	-	487,861	494,903	▲ 101%
	Belize	-	5,000	37	0%
	Costa Rica	-	12,288	225,568	▲ 1836%
	El Salvador	-	16,500	3,496	▲ 21%
	Guatemala	-	232,258	120,533	▲ 52%
	Honduras	-	131,627	60,815	▲ 46%
	Mexico	-	39,580	64,043	▲ 162%
	Nicaragua	-	13,000	-	0%
	Panama	-	37,608	20,448	▲ 54%
Social protection					
Households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers	Total	-	13,477	4,638	▲ 34%
	Belize	-	330	779 ³⁸	▲ 236%
	Guatemala	-	8,747	-	0%
	Honduras	-	4,400	3,859	▲ 88%
Households benefitting from new or additional social assistance (cash/in kind) measures from governments with UNICEF-technical assistance support	Total	-	5,400	-	0%
	El Salvador	-	1,000	-	0%
	Honduras	-	4,400	-	0%
Cross-sectoral (HCT, C4D, RCCE and AAP)					
People reached through messaging on prevention and access to services	Total	-	2.7 million	3.5 million	▲ 128%
	Costa Rica	-	20,150	12,000	▲ 60%
	Guatemala	-	1.7 million	552,261	▲ 33%
	Mexico	-	20,000	18,605	▲ 93%
	Nicaragua	-	1 million	2.9 million	▲ 286%
	Panama	-	11,200	17,920 ³⁹	▲ 160%
People sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms	Total	-	387,758	74,252	▲ 19%
	Belize	-	7,500	750	▲ 10%
	Costa Rica	-	4,390	-	0%
	Guatemala	-	159,720	1,487	▲ 1%

Honduras	-	189,000	15,863	▲ 8%
Mexico	-	2,000	29,352	▲ 1468%
Nicaragua	-	15,000	-	0%
Panama	-	10,148	26,800	▲ 264%

*Progress in the reporting period 1 January to 31 December 2023

ANNEX B — FUNDING STATUS

Consolidated funding by sector

Sector ⁴⁰	Requirements	Funding available		Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2023	Resources available from 2022 (carry over)	Funding gap (US\$)	Funding gap (%)
Health	11,062,687	2,371,875	765,350	7,925,462	72%
Nutrition	27,411,022	5,323,761	955,428	21,131,833	77%
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA	37,896,840	24,638,828	3,854,876	9,403,136	25%
Education	15,615,650	7,166,067	1,795,063	6,654,520	43%
Water, sanitation and hygiene	34,884,872	3,284,136	707,523	30,893,213	89%
Social protection	8,227,880	1,550,263	358,269	6,319,348	77%
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	3,700,959	712,511	277,634	2,710,814	73%
Regional Support⁴¹	3,520,000	1,745,939	-	1,774,061	50%
Total	142,319,910	46,793,380	8,714,143	86,812,387	61%

Consolidated funding by office

Office ⁴²	Requirements	Funding available		Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2023	Resources available from 2022 (carry over)	Funding gap (US\$)	Funding gap (%)
Belize	4,970,310	2,000,000	1,109,077	1,861,233	37%
Costa Rica	3,898,644	3,197,108	230,743	470,793	12%
El Salvador	12,794,795	3,429,453	772,933	8,592,409	67%
Guatemala	33,984,131	5,857,052	354,246	27,772,833	82%
Honduras	44,489,412	8,244,302	519,309	35,725,801	80%
Mexico	26,013,000	15,024,000	3,506,111	7,482,889	29%
Nicaragua	6,505,098	100,000	-	6,405,098	98%
Panama	6,144,520	7,195,526	1,626,465	-	0%
Regional Support	3,520,000	1,745,939	595,259	1,178,802	33%

Who to contact for further information:

Garry Conille
Regional Director, Latin America and the Caribbean
T +507 3017491
gconille@unicef.org

Michele Messina
Regional Emergency Advisor
T +507 3017491
mmessina@unicef.org

Laurent Duvillier
Regional Chief of Communication
T +507 3017491
lduvillier@unicef.org

1. UNICEF, 'Humanitarian Action for Children 2024- Mexico and Central America: Children on the move and other crises', <<https://www.unicef.org/appeals/mexico-and-central-america#download>>.
2. Migración Panamá, Estadísticas - Tránsito Irregular por Darién 2022 – 2023, <<https://www.migracion.gob.pa/inicio/estadisticas>>, accessed February 2024.
3. UN Issue-based Coalition (IBC) on Human Mobility, 'IBC Human Mobility. October - December 2023', March 2024.
4. U.S. Custom and Border Protection, Southwest Land Border Encounters stats, <<https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>>, accessed February 2024.
5. UN Issue-based Coalition (IBC) on Human Mobility.
6. Ibid.
7. The UNICEF-supported Aurora chatbot for migrants in transit, aims at providing reliable, secure, and free information that enables migrants to make informed decisions. <<https://aurorachatbot.com/>>.
8. OCHA, 'Global Humanitarian Overview 2024', December 2023, <<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfrsp>>
9. Norther border: Patachkan, Dougals and Santa Cruz; Western Border: Arenal; Southern border; San Vicente, Jalacte and San Antonio.
10. IOM, Global Data Institute Displacement Tracking Matrix Costa Rica, December 2023.
11. Central Reserve Bank, Multipurpose Household Survey 2022, March 2023.
12. IOM, Information Unit for Northern Central American Countries, <<https://infounitnca.iom.int/>>
13. The CAIPEM receives individuals who have been identified and are undergoing processing for suspected irregular entry into the country. Its role is to assess these individuals' protection needs and determine their immigration status.
14. Efforts are focused on seven of El Salvador's most transited border points, including with Guatemala: La Hachadura and Las Chinamas (Ahuachapán); San Cristóbal and Anguiatú (Santa Ana); and with Honduras: El Poy (Chalatenango); Perquín (Morazán) and El Amatillo (La Unión), as well as with communities in border municipalities.
15. Including CODER and CAIPEM offices.
16. UNICEF-WHO WASH FIT (the Water and Sanitation for Health Facility Improvement Tool) is a risk-based management tool for health care facilities, covering key aspects of water, sanitation, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, health care waste management and selected aspects of energy, building and facility management.
17. IMG Guatemala, <<https://igm.gob.gt/guatemaltecos-retornados-2/#>>.
18. INM, Estadísticas Migratorias, <<https://inm.gob.hn/estadisticas.html>>.
19. Mixed Migration Centre & UNICEF (2023). Experiencias migratorias de niñas, niños y adolescentes en tránsito a través de Honduras, <<https://mixedmigration.org/resource/migration-experiences-children-honduras/>>.
20. UNICEF, UNHCR, OIM, Save the Children, Aldeas Infantiles SOS, AVSI, Catholic Relief Services, Child Fund, Comunidad Loyola, Cruz Roja Mexicana, DHIA, FM4 Paso Libre, Fútbol Más, HIAS, IDC, IMUMI, KIND, La Jugarreta, Plan International, Programa Casa Refugiados, REDIM, RET International, OIT, Scalabrinianas - Misión con Migrantes y Refugiados, World Vision, Médicos Sin Fronteras.
21. UNICEF, 'Child alert: Child migration in Latin America and the Caribbean', <<https://www.unicef.org/child-alert/migration-latin-america-caribbean>>
22. The total number of vaccinated children reached includes data on UNICEF support for the vaccination campaign, which was not contemplated by the time of the 2023 planning.
23. Results constrained due to limited funding and human resources to conduct the health outreach.
24. Outreach increased through support provided to MHPSS programmes (i.e. interactions with families, youth outreach, community based activities and school engagement).
25. Results constrained due to limited funding, hence actions prioritized migrants in transit.
26. Overachievement is due to the increase in the number of people in transit through Panama who receive humanitarian services. The number of entries in 2023 doubled the number recorded in 2022.
27. Most of related activities were conducted during the Amnesty Hubs; however, due to funding constraints and end of the Amnesty Programme, the interventions were conducted on a smaller scale.
28. Results constrained due to limited funding.
29. Results have exceeded initial planned targets due to the increased flow of migrants receiving services and information in safe spaces, and increased outreach through social media and at community level.
30. Overachievement is due to the increase in the number of people in transit through Panama who receive humanitarian services. The number of entries in 2023 doubled the number recorded in 2022.
31. Overachievement is due to the increase in the number of people in transit through Panama who receive humanitarian services. The number of entries in 2023 doubled the number recorded in 2022.
32. By extending partnership agreements, UNICEF has been able to expand education programmes to additional sites.
33. Results constrained due to limited funding. Work in this area will be launched in 2024.
34. Results under this indicator include population reached through drinking water provided at mobile and fixed hydration stations, and those reached with water for all uses at shelters. Given the increased flow of migrants, the results have exceeded initial planned targets.
35. Targets increased in view of additional funding available.
36. Overachievement is due to the increase in the number of people in transit through Panama who receive humanitarian services. The number of entries in 2023 doubled the number recorded in 2022.
37. Work in this area will be launched in 2024.
38. During 2023, UNICEF supported 2 cash transfer programmes both addressing inequities faced by migrants. The first cash transfer programme was launched in November 2022 to support two migrant settlements affected by Hurricane Lisa; programme was concluded in March 2023. The second cash transfer launched in October 2023. Total number of families reached through the second cash transfer programme is 449.
39. Overachievement is due to the increase in the number of people in transit through Panama who receive humanitarian services. The number of entries in 2023 doubled the number recorded in 2022.
40. Sectoral amounts include other costs related to advocacy, communication, coordination, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, operations and security.
41. Regional Office requirements will cover regional-level resources and initiatives directly impacting UNICEF's response to the situation in Mexico and Central America, including: high-level advocacy, technical assistance, coordination support, information management, evidence generation, capacity building and support for scaling up responses to the sudden deterioration of humanitarian situations at the country level. The cost of actions impacting multiple subregions has been proportionally distributed across all multi-country appeals for the region.
42. Sectoral amounts include other costs related to advocacy, communication, coordination, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, operations and security