

UNICEF Lebanon

Annual Report 2024

Acknowledgments

This narrative annual report summarizes the key programme results achieved by UNICEF in Lebanon over the course of the year 2024. To learn more about the UNICEF programme in Lebanon, including details at the outcome and output level, as well as financial analyses, please visit the UNICEF Transparency Portal www.open.unicef.org.

UNICEF would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to all partners whose collaboration and contributions supported the achievement of results for children.

UNICEF Lebanon Annual Report 2024

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Contact:
United Nations Children's Fund
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
Tel: +1 (212) 326-7000

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Section 1

Update on the Context

Children in Lebanon had every aspect of their lives affected by conflict and crises in 2024. Hostilities along the Lebanon-Israel border, which began in October 2023, violently escalated across all Lebanese governorates in September 2024. On 27 November 2024, a ceasefire agreement brought a truce to the hostilities.

The conflict marked the deadliest period Lebanon has experienced in decades, with increasing reports of grave violations against children's rights. More than 4,040 people were reported killed, including 316 children, while 16,590 people were injured, including 1,450 children. Approximately 1.2 million people were internally displaced, and over 600,000 people departed for Syria, according to government records. Security in the Palestinian camps also remained a key challenge leading to the suspension of many services in the last quarter of 2024. Children affected by armed conflict, including those injured, orphaned, or separated from their families, faced an increased need for psychosocial support (PSS). Mental health indicators have worsened, with 38 per cent of children experiencing anxiety and 24 per cent reporting depression, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

Following the ceasefire announcement, more than 900,000 displaced persons began returning to their homes in areas affected by hostilities and potentially contaminated with unexploded ordnance. National authorities gradually closed collective shelters, decreasing from 1,100 shelters in mid-November to around 50 in December 2024. However, nearly 180,000 people remained displaced by the end of the year. Families with damaged properties and those from southern villages yet to be demilitarized are likely to remain displaced for longer.

The conflict caused significant damage to civilian infrastructure and public services. Forty hospitals experienced disrupted operations, 98 primary health centres and dispensaries were closed, and 37 water facilities were damaged. The World Bank estimates that 100,000 housing units were partially or fully damaged, with the overall cost of physical damages and economic losses from the conflict estimated at least US\$ 8.5 billion.

Syrian families in Lebanon have endured increasing restrictions and the politicization of aid. Growing hate speech and restrictive policies have further challenged their rights and opportunities. Changes to the Syrian government on 7 December 2024 and a series of attacks across Syria have caused significant internal displacement, outward movement to neighboring countries — including Lebanon — and the return of some Syrian refugees from Lebanon. According to UNHCR, refugees are still assessing the safety and dignity of returning to Syria before making informed and voluntary decisions. Preliminary reports from local authorities indicate tens of thousands of Syrians are entering Lebanon through both official and unofficial routes.

The combination of conflict, inflation, and dollarization of the economy has deepened poverty and vulnerability across Lebanon, increasing dependency on international humanitarian and development support to deliver basic public goods. The World Bank estimates the conflict reduced real GDP growth by at least 6.6 percent in 2024, exacerbating a five-year economic contraction exceeding 34 percent of real GDP. UNDP highlighted significant short-term economic impacts, including contractions in key sectors, disrupted trade routes, and rising unemployment, with unemployment projected to exceed 32 percent by the end of 2024[IM7]. The rise in poverty has driven children into labour and early marriage as coping mechanisms, limiting their access to education and increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Children and adolescents, especially those with

intersecting vulnerabilities based on disability, gender and social class, are now more exposed to abuse, neglect, trafficking, juvenile crime, and armed recruitment. Lebanon continued without an elected President and a fully empowered cabinet throughout 2024, with a caretaker government in place since October 2022. Presidential elections, conducted through the parliament, are set for January 2025.

Some progress was made in the public sector, including the launch of the disability inclusive and gender responsive National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) and the rollout of social grants, such as the National Disability Allowance (NDA). The national budget for 2024 was adopted within constitutional deadlines for the first time in two decades, with increased allocations for social ministries, though these still amounted to only 40 percent of pre-crisis levels in 2019.

Overlapping crises significantly affected the provision of key social services for children and the realization of their rights. Health services were further strained due to infrastructure damage and the increased number of casualties, contributing to declining health indicators. The number of children receiving three doses of diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis (DTP3) vaccines dropped by 14 per cent between 2022 and 2023. Newborn mortality rates among all population groups in Lebanon increased from 8.1 in 2020 to 9.5 per 1,000 live births in 2022. Lebanon also experienced a significant exodus of skilled health workers, including the emigration of 40 per cent of doctors, 30 per cent of midwives, and 15 per cent of neonatal intensive care nurses. These indicators are likely to have further deteriorated due to the 2023-2024 conflict. WHO reported that 47 percent of attacks on healthcare in Lebanon proved fatal to at least one health worker or patient—the highest percentage of any active conflict globally at the time.

Education for over 1.5 million children was disrupted in 2024. The start of the 2024-2025 school year in public schools was delayed for several weeks due to the conflict. Classes for morning shifts, serving mainly Lebanese children, began on 4 November 2024, with nearly 276,940 students registered by year's end. Of the 1,126 public schools in Lebanon, more than 805 in demilitarized areas reopened for in-person learning. Initial assessments show that at least 10 schools were destroyed, approximately 80 were heavily damaged, and nearly 500 previously used as collective shelters sustained light damage. Registration for afternoon shifts for non-Lebanese students began on 25 November 2024, with around 60,000 children registered by year's end. However, these classes for non-Lebanese (mainly refugee) students did not start in 2024 and certification of the previous school year remained unissued for thousands of students. Moreover, no agreement could be reached with the Government concerning the registration of some 50,000 non-Lebanese students without valid legal documentation, effectively excluding them from public education.

The decline in Lebanon's socio-economic, security, and development situation throughout 2024 has caused lasting effects not only on children but also on entire communities, severely undermining their well-being. Key assessments issued in 2024, including the Lebanon Integrated Micronutrient Anthropometry and Child Development Survey (LIMA) and the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees (VaSyr), reveal concerning trends. The LIMA shows that stunting prevalence among children under five has doubled since 2021, with 39 per cent of children in Syrian informal tented settlements affected—a significant public health concern. While wasting rates have stabilized, infants under 6 months remain highly vulnerable, with a 6 percent prevalence. Nationwide, only about 65 percent of children aged 0-23 months and 69 percent of those aged 24-59 months are developmentally on track. This figure is lower among Syrian children, at 61 percent and 55 percent respectively, highlighting the impact of displacement on children's developmental outcomes. The VaSyr found that 37 percent

of Syrian refugee households had at least one member with a disability, with many living in non-permanent shelters lacking adequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. In Palestinian camps, safety concerns, poor socio-economic conditions, and challenges in accessing education have heightened psychological distress among children and youth, with significant short- and long-term implications for their development.

Section 2

Major Achievements and UNICEF's Contribution

The economic and governance crisis worsened across Lebanon in 2024 as the conflict threatened already overwhelmed national systems capacity for the delivery of basic social services. In 2024 UNICEF focused on sustaining service delivery for vulnerable Lebanese and non-Lebanese populations alongside emergency preparedness and response measures. From September 2024, following the increased intensity of conflict and the declaration of the L3 emergency, UNICEF programmes focused on the delivery of humanitarian programming for internally displaced people, vulnerable people in conflict hotspots and children on the move.

Goal Area 1: Every Child Survives and Thrives

Health

Lebanon's health system for many years has been deeply fragmented in service provision and financing. Despite the extreme challenges in the health system under attack, UNICEF worked with partners to achieve significant progress towards continuing essential services during the war while building more robust integration of care and health service integration across sectors. Using this integrated approach a new program called AaSalameh used multidisciplinary health worker teams to provide facility and community-based service delivery. The AaSalameh approach was implemented across 40 percent of PHCCs under the PHCC network providing over 50,000 health checkups for children. Routine immunization also led the way for an integrated approach, vaccinating 479,752 children while reaching 78,287 individuals with a variety of awareness messages. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to conduct the first-ever integrated School Health Screening by 240 PHCCs providing outreach to 255,940 children and adolescents in 1,030 public schools.

In 2024, ten hospitals and 100 of the 300 primary health care centers (PHCC) and health posts were damaged or destroyed, and over 16,000 people were injured by aerial bombing. Managing care for the wounded put a severe strain on the already under-resourced health system and facilities, including by disrupting civilian access to critical medical services. To save lives during the emergency, UNICEF covered the cost of hospitalization for 790 neonatal and pediatric intensive care patients, 235 acute pediatric cases, and 407 deliveries in governmental hospitals. UNICEF applied an integrated approach to reaching displaced and conflict-affected families through 60 Primary Healthcare Satellite Units (PSUs) and 100 AaSalameh PHCCs, bringing healthcare services to 452 shelters covering 208,365 people. Oxygen generation plants in two governmental hospitals were set up, solarized, and equipped with generators, this was the sole source of lifesaving oxygen during the war in these hospitals.

UNICEF's comprehensive newborn care initiative, HAYAT, focused on policy, access, coverage, and quality in eight governmental hospitals, optimizing post-discharge care, strengthening the referral network, and supplying 500 HAYAT newborn care kits.

UNICEF with UNRWA reached 59,834 Palestine refugee children and pregnant women as well as lactating women with preventive health interventions, including antenatal and postnatal care, routine immunization, breastfeeding support, growth monitoring and developmental screening and other child health services. In addition, 2,668 children under one year old received Penta-1 vaccine.

Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (ECD)

The MoPH endorsed the “Rising” Initiative as a national program on integrated Nutrition and ECD. The Rising Initiative reached 241,498 caregivers of children under two years old with counseling and awareness on integrated young child feeding (IYCF), and 108,655 caregivers of children under five years old with interventions promoting stimulating and responsive care and nutrition. Under the Rising Initiative national ECD education systems were developed including digital tools, a social media package, 19 training modules and nine age-specific milestone monitoring cards, with 143 ECD frontline workers trained from multiple sectors. The Rising Initiative utilized multiple platforms, including daycare facilities, PHCCs, community platforms, kindergartens, and digital platforms to offer services to prevent developmental and nutritional deprivations. UNICEF supported nutrition and ECD community outreach and home visitation practices and supported the establishment of 95 ECD corners in the most deprived Informal Settlements, municipalities, and social centers such as Makani. To further strengthen ECD in daycare facilities, UNICEF developed a scorecard system and dashboard in partnership with the MoPH, in addition to drafting a Child Safeguarding Policy for daycare in Lebanon.

During the emergency, UNICEF supported the cross-sectoral scale-up of the nutrition and child development response, reaching over 110,000 IDPs and affected caregivers of children under five years old. UNICEF procured 180 tons of essential nutrition supplies to prevent malnutrition and developmental deprivations.

To combat micronutrient deficiencies: 107,182 children under five received Vitamin A supplementation; 66,165 children under two years received Micronutrient Powder for home fortification; and 7,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and adolescent girls received Multiple Micronutrient Supplements to prevent anemia.

The UNICEF Lebanon Country Office was the first in the region to update the national guidelines on the prevention and management of wasting. UNICEF continued supporting 44 PHCCs to scale up the malnutrition program, with 3,194 PLW and children with wasting admitted to the program from January to October 2024.

Goal Area 2: Every Child Learns Education

UNICEF continued to support MEHE to reform and strengthen the education system including to increase access to and the quality of education alongside strengthening education system efficiency, governance, accountability, and transparency. This support included the development and implementation of the Transition Resilience Education Fund (TREF) as an innovative aid modality, improving data systems, expanding quality education services for the most marginalized, and executing learning recovery activities.

For education system strengthening UNICEF supported MEHE to enroll 386,932 children 3-14 years old in public schools in the 2023/2024 school year of whom 202,004 were Lebanese and 184,928 were non-Lebanese (50 percent girls). UNICEF covered salaries and incentive-based top-ups for 13,100 teachers and staff alongside school funds and parents’ council funds in 1,062 public schools (from cycles 1-4).

UNICEF continued to support out-of-school Lebanese and Non-Lebanese children (aged 3 to 18 years) to access learning opportunities through the newly established Makani and Dirasa multiple flexible pathways (MFP) programmes. Through Makani, a community center-based, multi-sectoral approach to learning, UNICEF supported 24,591 marginalized and vulnerable children and youth and their caregivers with education programmes. Through Dirasa UNICEF supported 18 financially struggling private schools to continue operating,

to support the enrollment of 13,558 out-of-school children, alongside supporting 40,892 students already enrolled in these schools who benefitted from supplies and PSS support.

UNICEF expanded its Digital Learning strategy to 50 Makani centers and 34 Dirasa schools introducing platforms like Akelius for language learning and the Learning Passport for literacy, maths, and science – reaching 7,033 children within Dirasa and 5,217 children in Makani. Additionally, 960 teachers were trained on digital learning techniques and teaching with technology, ensuring effective integration of these tools into classrooms.

Makani strengthened gender transformative results with targeted multi-sectoral programming for and with girls with more than 100 girls receiving life skills package for girls' leadership and agency aiming to address harmful gender norms. Dirasa is gender responsive with half of teachers and classroom observers (400) capacitated on gender and GBV for the purpose of overturning gender bias in the curriculum and not reproducing gender stereotypes while teaching.

UNICEF continued supporting MEHE to strengthen the School Information Management System (SIMS), including through operational support such as acquiring new hardware for the main and branch data center, update of the MEHE-NSL application to optimize data management for PM shift schools, and upgrade of the SIMS disability module. UNICEF also supported MEHE to build the capacity and awareness of school directors and SIMS operators to use the SIMS efficiently.

The shift towards gender-transformative education advanced, UNICEF supported MEHE to complete a Gender Analysis and Gender Audit of the TREF, following which MEHE established a TREF Gender Working Group. A Gender Action Plan for TREF was drafted to outline programmatic and institutional priorities as a basis for the planned reform of the gender-transformative curriculum.

The UNICEF gender responsive Cash for Education programme expanded to include Lebanese and Non-Lebanese children enrolled in public schools for the first time. Programme efficiency was also strengthened with student attendance data obtained through the MEHE SIMS for both AM and PM schools for the first time. Two cash programme rounds were implemented supporting 47,042 children during the school year.

UNICEF continued to support MEHE in implementing inclusive education for children with disabilities through the inclusive education schools programme in 117 public schools, reaching almost 7,000 children with disabilities, 14 percent of all children with disabilities in the education system. For Palestine refugee children with disabilities over 27 early childhood education (ECE) centers were rehabilitated or equipped to enhance accessibility and foster an inclusive learning environment. Among children enrolled in MFP, four percent were children with disabilities who received assistive devices, classroom support, and therapy services. This programme specifically creates learning opportunities for children with disabilities who have traditionally been excluded. Following approval of the National Policy on Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in 2023, UNICEF provided technical support to MEHE and the Centre for Educational Research and Development for the development of the Inclusive Education Road Map - a costed three-year action plan to implement the policy - alongside the Inclusive Education Handbook for schools.

In Palestinian camps, with the Education Consortium of NGOs, UNICEF supported access to preschool education for 6,568 children, including 500 children with disabilities. Additionally, 447 early childhood education (ECE) and

primary facilitators and teachers had their capacity built on topics including inclusive education, active and online learning. With Terre-des-Hommes Italy, 6,428 children in the Palestinian camps received community and school-based retention support, in addition to digital learning opportunities to improve their performance and work on learning difficulties.

Adolescents and Youth

As part of system strengthening, and within the framework of the National Youth Policy Action Plan (NYAP), UNICEF supported the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports for the NYAP under which youth groups were integrated at decision making level to increase advocacy, and the youth volunteer platform was established with a signed national Volunteer Charter. This committee is led by the Prime Minister's Office, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and attended by various ministries to review priorities for youth and set a work plan, in 2024 the committee participated in the development of the NYPAP costing tool.

Additionally, UNICEF invested in the reform of the TVET sector through the design of the TVET Strategic Framework (2024-2028), developed with MEHE and ILO which reflects the government of Lebanon's commitment to a quality TVET system that equips young people for the labour market and contributes to social development through improving and reforming the TVET in cooperation with the UN, private sector and young people. The TVET National Strategic Framework is considered the 5 years plan of MEHE to improve and reform the TVET system in Lebanon through a strategic cooperation with UN agencies, private sector and young people.

Within the Learning to Earning Pillar, UNICEF designed an integrated package of services which included the support to the enrollment of 11,876 boys and girls in learning and skilling opportunities, namely; Basic and Functional Literacy and Numeracy; competency and market-based training and digital and entrepreneurial skills to foster employability; and training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Out of those, a total of 3,198 youth had access to work-based learning and 2,552 youth were placed in income generation activities post-graduation. A gender transformative girls' life skills package for girls' leadership and empowerment was finalized. The package is part of multisectoral programming for girls leading to the building of girls' networks.

Climate change, the emergency and insecurity across Lebanon affected social cohesion and youth wellbeing. Under its engagement and participation pillar, UNICEF was the lead agency to establish the Nahno national volunteer platform with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA); engaging youth in volunteering and community-led initiatives through which they could raise their voice and enhance their well-being. A total of 32,938 youth were trained on life skills focusing on positive leadership, social cohesion, employability and wellbeing/ mental health. Out of those, 2,452 youth implemented 126 youth-led initiatives; while 11,321 youth registered on the Nahno volunteer platform, of whom 4,742 youth actively volunteered. To respond to the emergency, UNICEF pivoted the programme to support over 94,000 IDPs with access to supplies and support through economic and civic engagement, with around 5,000 youth were engaged in the humanitarian response.

For Palestine refugees UNICEF provided life-skills trainings for 2,677 youth and adolescents in Palestinian camps and gatherings. Under the skills, training and education programme implemented by Right to Play and the building resilient and vibrant environments project implemented by the Arab Resource Center for Popular Arts, 977 Palestine refugee youth and adolescents were engaged in youth-led initiatives for community development.

Additionally, based on labor market assessments UNICEF accredited educational institutions for the enrollment of 2,719 youth and adolescents in formal and non-formal vocational training and education.

Goal Area 3: Every Child is Protected from Violence and Exploitation

UNICEF supported MoSA for policy development including to develop an operational plan for its vision on social services for children and families under the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), and the creation of the National Child Protection Strategy. UNICEF also collaborated with the National Mental Health Program to finalize a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sub-strategy, integrating mental health into child protection systems.

UNICEF built alliances among national and decentralized actors to address key issues like child justice, case management, child labor, prevention of violence (through the Qudwa initiative), school violence, positive parenting, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), children affected by armed conflict (CAAC), and MHPSS. The prevention and response to these issues, including through referral and social behavior change (SBC), was integrated into services like health, non-formal education (NFE), and youth programming through initiatives such as Makani and the National Disability Allowance.

During the conflict, to ensure timely service delivery to IDPs and referrals for children facing heightened protection risks, UNICEF responded by implementing GBV risk mitigation activities, awareness campaigns, and community-based psychosocial support (PSS) sessions in 262 shelters. Community-based PSS was delivered in IDP shelters, while prevention and response interventions, including MHPSS were deployed outside shelters. During the conflict 94 unaccompanied and separated children were identified, with 88 such children reunited with caregivers or placed in alternative care. UNICEF's winterization efforts mitigated GBV risks through in-kind support including the distribution of 22,000 dignity kits alongside lifesaving information to mitigate risks for displaced women and girls. UNICEF also strengthened referral pathways, including in the education and health sectors, collaborating with MEHE and MoSA.

UNICEF trained social assistance providers, healthcare workers, Makani staff, WASH partners, and government Disaster Risk Reduction Units on child protection, GBV, PSEA and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). This training aimed to enhance safety, prevention, and early intervention measures for vulnerable children and women.

Through the SBC Qudwa strategy, UNICEF targeted harmful practices against children and women, promoting equity and well-being. In 2024, 22,838 individuals were reached (71 percent women and 29 percent men) from Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian communities. The program mobilized 1,620 community influencers (82 percent women) alongside 134 religious leaders to foster advocacy and social change.

Under the CAAC agenda, UNICEF partnered with the Lebanon Mine Action Center and Mines Advisory Group to deliver Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE). Over 500,000 individuals received EORE educational materials, 14,594 participated in EORE sessions, and 60 community members were trained to implement EORE activities. Digital campaigns further promoted safe practices and educated communities about the dangers of explosive hazards.

UNICEF identified and supported children affected by violence, including GBV, through the provision of case

management and referrals for specialized services including MHPSS, medical care, and family tracing and reunification. Key child protection concerns were emotional abuse, child labor and children in conflict with the law. For street-connected children UNICEF deployed mobile units offering child protection interventions, learning, and health services. For women and girls at risk of or survivors of GBV UNICEF ensured access to safe spaces, providing recovery support, case management, and access to justice. UNICEF also monitored grave child rights violations while implementing integrated services to prevent children's association with armed groups.

UNICEF supported community-based and school-based PSS for Palestine refugees reaching over 31,167 vulnerable children, including 400 children with disabilities. UNICEF partners also provided focused and specialized MHPSS services to 1,314 Palestine refugee children, and 822 children at high risk or survivors of maltreatment and abuse. During the peak of the conflict UNICEF partners reached 7,933 IDP children with community-based PSS, 167 children with focused PSS and case management services, and 2,259 caregivers with PSS.

Goal Area 4: Every Child Lives in a Clean and Safe Environment

UNICEF WASH interventions focused on addressing Lebanon's ongoing challenges, including aging water and sanitation infrastructure and the need for continued support to Syrian refugees in the informal settlements, while responding to new humanitarian needs. Over 400 essential repairs and maintenance interventions were conducted at water stations across the country, ensuring the public water system continued to serve communities effectively, reaching at least 4 million individuals. In response to the displacement crisis, UNICEF delivered targeted WASH services in collective shelters for over 68,000 conflict affected IDPs.

Through active collaboration on restructuring, digitalization, and water quality management, UNICEF remained a critical partner in strengthening Lebanon's water sector. The release of the updated National Water Sector Strategy (NWSS) marked a significant step forward, with UNICEF contributing key technical inputs, including working papers with actionable recommendations to enhance implementation. New initiatives promoting climate resilience, such as rainwater harvesting in schools and wastewater reuse, were launched to address long-term water sustainability.

Water, Health and Nutrition (WHN) activities were implemented in nine Palestinian camps at 10 Makani centers. Community mobilization activities and awareness raising sessions around WHN practices reached over 9,167 individuals at community level. ANERA developed the WHN Basic Minimum Standards, tailored for the Palestinian context and trained over 100 focal points to apply these standards at community level through mainstreaming WHN basic minimum guidelines and procedures, the adoption of WHN within personal values and culture, and the integration of cross-cutting WHN service provision within existing Makani center programming.

Goal Area 5: Every Child has an Equitable Chance to Life

UNICEF strengthening of the national social protection system continued, prioritizing inclusive measures for vulnerable populations, especially children and youth with disabilities. A key achievement was the expansion of Lebanon's first social grant programme, the gender responsive and disability inclusive National Disability Allowance (NDA), which benefited approximately 27,500 persons with disabilities aged 15-30.

Amid the conflict UNICEF embedded responsiveness and adaptability into its support for the national social protection system in line with the NSPS, with UNICEF delivering humanitarian cash transfers for targeting

families with persons with disabilities including:

- Emergency cash assistance for vulnerable Lebanese families enrolled in social safety nets, in partnership with the Government of Lebanon and WFP.
- One-time emergency transfers to refugee families with children.
- Monthly transportation allowances for displaced children re-enrolled in public schools to offset displacement impacts and facilitate access to education.
- US\$100 emergency top-ups for families in the NDA residing in the affected southern and eastern regions.
- Continuity of payments to all 27,000 NDA recipients nationwide.
- Cash assistance to 169,300 Palestine refugees in coordination with UNRWA, ensuring continuity despite funding constraints caused by the Gaza conflict.

UNICEF worked with the Prime Minister's Office and MoSA to operationalize and implement the NSPS during the emergency. A significant milestone was that MoSA for the first time utilizing US\$5 million from the national budget towards social transfers to facilitate a one-off US\$100 cash transfer to approximately 45,000 families with a valid Personal Disability Card (PDC), addressing critical needs during the crisis, with the payment starting in December 2024.

UNICEF's focus on strengthening the coverage, adequacy, and effectiveness of national programmes has yielded tangible results. By scaling up the NDA, delivering timely humanitarian assistance, and fostering sustainable budgetary commitments, UNICEF has reinforced Lebanon's social protection system during one of its most challenging periods. These efforts have mitigated the impact of the crises on children, youth, and persons with disability, while laying a foundation for more inclusive and resilient social protection systems in Lebanon.

Communications and Advocacy

UNICEF strengthened the reach of communications and advocacy in 2024 with social media content posted by UNICEF Lebanon seen 111.8 million times in 2024, a 37 percent increase from 2023. Alongside this UNICEF Lebanon had 9.9 million social media engagements, a 216 percent increase from 2023, and UNICEF Lebanon social media platforms achieved a total of 45.3 million video views, a 20 percent increase from 2023. By the end of 2024 UNICEF Lebanon had 765,410 followers across all our social media platforms, a 17.5 percent increase from 2023, with 113,777 new followers joining organically as they chose to follow UNICEF Lebanon without any paid promotion. On the UNICEF Lebanon website 350,426 page views were generated, a 8.1 percent increase from 2023.

Section 3

Partnerships

UNICEF continues to work within the UN system and with national and international organizations under the **Lebanon Response Plan** which is an integrated humanitarian and stabilization response plan co-led by the Government of Lebanon and the United Nations, supported by international and national partners. In addition to the LRP, from September 2024 a humanitarian Flash Appeal was issued by the UN to support immediate life-saving assistance in response to needs arising from the conflict. UNRWA also remained a key partner for implementation of programming for Palestine refugees, including in the camps for Palestine refugees.

As per the **humanitarian coordination** architecture under the LRP UNICEF leads the WASH, Education, and Nutrition sectors; co-chairs the Child Protection Working Group under the Inter-Agency Protection Sector, and the Cash Working Group; and participates in the Health, Livelihoods, Protection and Social Stability sectors as well as the working groups on Basic Assistance, GBV, Gender, and Humanitarian Access. UNICEF also co-leads field-level education, WASH and child protection working groups and technical task forces such as for MHPSS with MoPH and WHO, under the National Mental Health Program. UNICEF also co-leads the Social Protection Partner's Forum with the EU, the World Bank and the ILO bringing together donors, development partners and UN agencies to strengthen the social protection system. With the national Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Unit and the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC), UNICEF is supporting emergency preparedness and response planning across all governorates.

UNICEF supported the National **Nutrition** Taskforce, led by MoPH, bringing together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, international non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions. Through this collaboration, UNICEF helped drive the implementation of Lebanon's national nutrition strategy, ensuring that efforts are aligned, coordinated, and impactful. UNICEF partnered with MoPH, the Harvard School of Public Health, Groundwork, and the American University of Beirut (AUB) to design and implement Lebanon's first Integrated Micronutrient, Anthropometric, and Child Development Survey (LIMA) survey and the ECD formative research. These partnerships were essential in ensuring the survey's scientific rigor and broad applicability, providing invaluable data to inform nutrition and child development interventions across nationwide. The results in the reports will set the ground for nutrition and ECD evidence-informed policymaking and programming from 2025.

With the Ministry of Economy and Trade UNICEF launched the National Salt Iodization Program, the first example of a public-private partnership, and supported the development of national standard operating procedures on quality assurance and quality control of salt iodization. This was coupled with national training and continuous monitoring and support to the three salt factories.

In the **education** sector UNICEF, with MEHE and Regional Education Offices, continued piloting direct partnerships with the private sector to ensure children have access to high-quality education in a safe and secure environment. UNICEF worked with MEHE at national and regional levels to manage the Second Shift Program for formal education for Syrian refugees while the Multiple Flexible Pathways (MFP) team worked with MEHE on the MFP non-formal education program and framework at MEHE. Furthermore, UNICEF worked with the MEHE including with the Center for Educational Research and Development and the Directorate of Guidance and

Counseling on inclusive education systems.

UNICEF and the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Consortium initiated a coordination mechanism between ECE providers and UNRWA, to facilitate the transition between preschool and primary education. Educators' capacity was enhanced through training on inclusive and active learning modules. With local partners, efforts were combined to improve the quality of ECD services in more than 54 ECE centers for Palestine refugee children, enhancing the physical environment and infrastructure, to ensure a safe space for children and to provide accessibility for children with disabilities.

The **adolescent and youth** programme continued strengthening collaboration with the private sector, engaging more than 200 small and medium-sized enterprises in the skilling and employability of youth. The TVET directorate in MEHE and ILO remained key counterparts for the finalization and implementation of the TVET National Strategic Framework, in addition to local and international organizations involved in the skilling programme alongside improving the quality of services for young people. Moreover, a new collaboration was initiated with Ministry of Environment on youth engagement in climate action. Finally, the engagement with the World Bank was sustained together with Simplilearn, Amazon, LinkedIn and Microsoft to support the digital training of young people through NamiSkill. UNICEF has been strengthening the collaboration with young people as partners and allies, with the establishment of sub-national youth advisory groups connected to the already established Youth Advisory Group at national level.

The **child protection** and GBV working groups play a pivotal role in harmonizing standards for services and ensuring children and women have access to quality services. UNICEF leads the Qudwa Taskforce, dedicated to preventing violence against children and women while ensuring the effective implementation of the Qudwa Strategy. To address child labor, UNICEF partnered with FAO and ILO to launch a comprehensive framework outlining urgent actions, advocacy priorities, and inter-agency synergies. This framework emphasizes the revival of the national action plan on the Worst Forms of Child Labor including mobilizing support to effectively tackle this critical issue. UNICEF prioritizes building national and local capacities to address abuse, exploitation, neglect, and violence against children, including child labor and child marriage, including collaboration with the Beirut Bar Association to strengthen child justice mechanisms.

UNICEF collaborates with the Lebanon Mine Action Center and the Mines Advisory Group to deliver EORE interventions in contaminated areas. These initiatives aim to raise awareness among children and adults about the dangers of explosive ordnance, fostering safety and reducing risks in affected communities.

In **Social Policy** UNICEF, with UNDP and ESCWA, launched a new initiative to support the Ministry of Finance in key public financial management reforms. These efforts include the digitization and modernization of public finance data, updating financial records to issue the periodic public finance monitor that help in the budget preparation and execution, and the establishment of a social expenditure monitor. Coordination through the Basic Assistance Working Group facilitates collaboration with UNHCR, WFP, and other partners to ensure harmonized approaches to humanitarian cash programming and alignment with national social protection systems.

UNICEF continued collaboration with leading think tanks, establishing long term agreements with eight qualified

local think tanks and national research institutions. Despite the crises, these partnerships went beyond institutional contracts, adopting a collaborative approach throughout the year allowing UNICEF to amplify its advocacy work in relation to inclusive development, public finance, and social protection, with the aim of enhancing policymaking for the wellbeing of children and vulnerable groups in Lebanon, particularly in the rapidly changing and unpredictable context.

Section 4

Challenges, Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

Challenges and Lessons Learned

For emergency preparedness, prior to September 2024, UNICEF in Lebanon had a minimum preparedness level to respond to 20-100,000 affected people. This standing capacity was based on scenarios considered, including from the Inter-Agency Contingency Plan (IACP). The IACP was updated in February 2024, and envisaged a worst-case scenario of a full-fledged war affecting one million people, including 250,000 IDPs, a scenario which was significantly surpassed in the last quarter of 2024. UNICEF's preparedness plan included considerations for human resources, partnerships, and supplies, with the organization maintaining contingency stocks and Long-Term Agreements including through rapid deployment from the UNICEF Supply Division. UNICEF maintained partnerships for emergency preparedness and response including with the National Disaster Risk Management (DRM) unit. As part of preparedness efforts for the escalation, UNICEF engaged with stakeholders and ramped up resource mobilization, as a result, UNICEF in Lebanon received critical FCDO financial support in June 2024 for preparedness efforts. The office allocated more than two thirds of the funds to procurement of supplies and commodities and almost a fifth to strengthening office staffing capacity. Some of the lessons learnt from these preparedness steps were:

- Regular revision of emergency preparedness plans as essential including through scenario planning to anticipate triggers and escalation points.
- Pre-positioning essential supplies at strategic locations across the country enabled a rapid response and minimized delays in reaching affected populations. During the humanitarian response the delivery of an at scale Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) allowed UNICEF to reach over 151,000 people with life-saving supplies.
- A strong partnership network including close collaboration with government (DRM, DRR), the Lebanese Red Cross, NGOs and the private sector ensured a coordinated response.
- Investing in capacity building of first responders strengthened response capacity. Investing in and expanding community-based service delivery approaches, including integrating health services into packages delivered by primary care centers and community-level providers, was critical.
- Building on previous work to strengthen the national social protection system enabled rapid support for vulnerable households during the escalation.
- With the increasingly complex humanitarian context in Lebanon the investment that UNICEF made in Accountability to Affected Populations paid dividends to make UNICEF's programme more responsive to community needs. This included the Complaints and Feedback Management through which over 190,000 calls from affected populations were received in 2024.
- Maintaining flexibility within the humanitarian response allowed for efficient use of resources and a timely response. UNICEF built on capabilities from the Syrian refugee response and incorporating lessons learned from previous emergencies, such as the Beirut Blast, to enhance the response.

As an example of emergency preparedness and response, for humanitarian cash transfers UNICEF positioned the national social protection system as integral for the emergency response and used the UNICEF management information system to support the payment process for beneficiaries whilst building on the capacities of MoSA. UNICEF used U-Report, an interactive WhatsApp based tool, to administer a mini-post distribution monitoring survey to understand the challenges that cash transfer recipients faced during redemption, and the use of their assistance. As U-Report is simple to use the survey reached over 60 percent of beneficiaries and helped the

team to evaluate and adapt the programme during the emergency.

However, the highly uncertain funding environment in Lebanon remains a concern with the amount of funding raised in 2024 comparatively lower than in previous years and expected to continue to decline despite the continuing humanitarian and financial crises being experienced in Lebanon.

Future Outlook

The development and humanitarian forecast for Lebanon remains unclear going into 2025. The situation remains highly volatile due to political instability in Lebanon and across the MENA region, internal displacement an ongoing concern, and volatility limiting analysis and coordination around the recovery. The risk of a return to conflict remains with the sixty-day period of the ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel set to expire in late January 2025. While national reconstruction efforts are already underway across the country following the ceasefire, considerable effort will need to be put in place to rebuild damaged water, sanitation, education and health infrastructure. Despite the short-term influx of refugees into Lebanon in December 2024 following the change in government in Syria, humanitarian actors are planning for a gradual reduction in the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon over the coming months from the current estimate of 1.5 million, if some level of stability is achieved in Syria. Within Lebanon the presidential elections planned in early 2025 present an opportunity to strengthen governance.

Key plans for 2025 include:

- Continued focus on humanitarian preparedness to ensure readiness for a future emergency, this will include supply prepositioning and partner capacity building.
- Significant rehabilitation is required to restore education, health and WASH services for vulnerable communities.
- The legal framework for the transition of out-of-school children (OOSC) from non-formal education to formal education was endorsed by the Prime Minister at a high-level Strategic Management Board (SMB) meeting. The work on accreditation and certification processes is advancing with the development of a structured certification system designed to facilitate smoother transitions for OOSC into formal education.
- The reform of the TVET sector, initiated by UNICEF in 2023 and 2024 through the TVET National Strategic Framework, will benefit around 70,000 youth enrolled in TVET public schools from 2025.
- As part of care reform aiming to reduce reliance on residential care for family challenges in 2024 MoSA, with UNICEF support, finalized the Vision on Social Services for Children and Families. The Vision planned for launch in January 2025.
- UNICEF is engaging with MoPH to develop a sub-strategy on MHPSS for children and adolescents aligned to the national MHPSS strategy.

For nutrition UNICEF partnered with WFP and MEHE to conduct a school nutrition assessment with the results planned to inform policy advocacy on obesity prevention from 2025.