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Evaluation of UNICEF's L3 Response in Ukraine (December 2021–March 2023)

Evaluation of UNICEF's L3 Response in Ukraine (December 2021–March 2023), Final Report

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The report was prepared by Andy Featherstone (Team Leader), Julian Murray (Deputy Team Leader), Hussein Amery, Ellie McGovern and Joey Blindt.
Lorraine O'Toole from Landell Mills managed and led the overall evaluation process.
The primary field research was led by RMTeam International and the Evaluation Team would like to acknowledge Mariam Symonova's exceptional support in this role.

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For further information, please contact:

Evaluation Office
United Nations Children's Fund
Three United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
evalhelp@unicef.org

Preface

This evaluation report offers a comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's response in Ukraine, undertaken in the wake of the war that began in 2022. It provides a crucial opportunity to review how effectively UNICEF adapted to this challenge, highlighting both the strengths of its response and those areas where improvements are needed.

The evaluation findings provide more than a mere retrospective; rather, they are a roadmap for strengthening future humanitarian action. By examining the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and coherence of UNICEF's interventions, the evaluation sheds light on how the organization evolved from an initial broad-based response to a more targeted, equity-driven approach. It also underscores the importance of principled humanitarian action, robust accountability mechanisms, and inclusive programming that reaches the most vulnerable, especially in complex middle-income contexts.

This report is intended to support informed decision-making, foster transparency, and promote learning across the humanitarian sector. It reaffirms UNICEF's commitment to continuous improvement and to delivering results that uphold the rights and dignity of every child, even in the most challenging circumstances

UNICEF's humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis demonstrated both resilience and adaptability in the face of an unprecedented emergency. The first six months were marked by a broad, rapid-response model that prioritized scale over precision. However, the organization successfully transitioned to a more strategically focused, localized, and equity-oriented approach as its field presence and operational capacity expanded.

Key strengths of the response included the rapid expansion of partnerships with government and local NGOs, improved use of data for planning and accountability, and the integration of short-term humanitarian aid with long-term recovery efforts. Innovations such as mobile service delivery and increased use of cash-based assistance also contributed to more responsive and flexible programming.

At the same time, UNICEF encountered significant challenges . These included unclear leadership roles between headquarters and regional offices, delays in field deployment, and slow partner vetting processes. Gender and inclusion strategies were inconsistently applied, and the overreliance on private funding raised concerns about global funding equity.

More broadly, UNICEF's response in Ukraine underscored the need for the organization to refine its emergency response model in middle- and high-income countries, where traditional humanitarian approaches might not fully apply.

In response to these findings, the evaluation team—together with UNICEF staff and partners—developed a set of strategic and operational recommendations aimed at enhancing UNICEF's agility, equity, and effectiveness in future crises. Strategic recommendations focus on improving global leadership structures, adapting corporate guidance for diverse contexts, and advocating for more equitable humanitarian financing.

Together, these conclusions and recommendations provide a roadmap for strengthening UNICEF's humanitarian action by ensuring that future responses are not only faster and more efficient, but also more inclusive, principled, and sustainable. I am grateful to all colleagues and partners at the national, regional and global levels who contributed so constructively and openly to this evaluation, and hope and trust it provides valuable insights that shape our future work to achieve the best results possible for the children of Ukraine.

Robert McCouch
Director of Evaluation
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

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List of acronyms

AAP	accountability to affected populations
AoR	area of responsibility (usually child protection or gender-based violence sub-cluster)
CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
CCCs	Core Commitments to Children
CCPM	cluster coordination performance monitoring
CLA	Cluster Lead Agency
CPD	Country Programme Document
CRM	Child Rights Monitoring
CSO	civil society organization
DLC	digital learning centre
ECARO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office
EMOPS	Office of Emergency Programmes
EPP	Emergency Preparedness Platform
EQ	evaluation question
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
FMM	Field Monitoring Module
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	gender-based violence
GBViE	gender-based violence in emergencies
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children
HACT	harmonized approach to cash transfers
HCT	humanitarian cash transfers
HOPC	Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
HQ	headquarters (UNICEF)
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	internally displaced person
IP	implementing partner
IYCF	infant and young child feeding
JOPs	Joint Operating Procedures
KII	key informant interview
KPI	key performance indicator
L3	Corporate Emergency Procedure Level 3
LSE	life skills education
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MHPSS	mental health and psychosocial support
MIS	management information system
MMT	multi-disciplinary mobile team
MRM	monitoring and reporting mechanism
NatComs	National Committees
NGCA	non-government-controlled area
NGO	non-governmental organization
PBR	programme budget review
PME	Programme Monitoring and Evaluation
PMR	programme monitoring and response
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RAM	Results Assessment Module
SEL	social and emotional learning
SBC	social and behavioural change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPM	third-party monitoring
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2027
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene



Executive Summary

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, the war in Ukraine escalated, triggering a humanitarian crisis with a level of devastation Europe had not experienced since World War II. Within one year from the start of the full-scale war, 1,148 children were killed[1]; 6.5 million people, including 1.2 million children, were displaced within Ukraine; and 7.7 million refugees, 90 percent women and children, fled to Europe[2]. Attacks on critical infrastructure left millions without electricity, water, sanitation and heating. Education was disrupted for an estimated 5.7 million children. Furthermore, 1.5 million children faced mental health issues[3]. More generally, according to the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), 21.3 million people were affected by the crisis and 17.6 million were in need[4]. In response to the crisis, UNICEF declared a Level 3 (L3) emergency on 5 March 2022 and mobilized its internal capacity and resources accordingly. In accordance with the *Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (2023)*, the Evaluation Office commissioned an independent evaluation of the UNICEF's L3 response *inside* Ukraine shortly before its deactivation on 7 March 2023.

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose: Like all UNICEF evaluations, this evaluation was undertaken with a view to strengthening both organizational learning and accountability. The recommendations put forward by this evaluation are aimed to assist UNICEF and its partners in Ukraine to adjust and improve the preparedness and response for a more equitable and effective provision of assistance/service delivery which, in turn, will help better meet the needs of children, and reduce their vulnerabilities and risks.

Objectives: With these end purposes in mind, the evaluation sought an overall objective: to provide a comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's overall response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, as measured against the Organization's own mandate, its corporate commitments and stated objectives. More specifically, the evaluation assessed, among others, the levels of **emergency preparedness and organizational readiness**[5]; the **relevance and appropriateness** of UNICEF's response in relation to the **needs of the most affected populations**; the quality and timeliness of operations, Human Resources (HR), supply and fundraising; the alignment of the response on the ground with the **Core**

Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) and humanitarian principles; the level of mainstreaming of **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) into the overall response;** the extent to which UNICEF considered **gender, nexus, accountability to affected people (AAP), disability, equity, localization and the centrality of protection during both the planning, implementation and monitoring of the response; the quality of leadership** during the coordination of and collaboration with sister UN agencies (including in clusters), partners and local and national authorities across the response (including within the scope of clusters) and, lastly, the **gaps from which to distil lessons and make operationally and strategically relevant recommendations**.

Criteria and evaluation questions

In order to pursue the double purpose and envisaged objectives of this exercise, the evaluation team's inquiry was guided by five evaluation criteria: four criteria developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and coherence; and one additional criterion pertaining to gender, equity and inclusion. The evaluation questions addressed by this evaluation were grouped around the five criteria. The overarching questions guiding this exercise included the following:

- To what extent did the UNICEF response align with the needs and preference of the affected populations and vulnerable groups? To what extent were UNICEF's strategies, preparedness and response plans appropriate to the context?
- To what extent did the UNICEF achieve its intended targets? To what extent has the UNICEF response adhered to the CCCs and is aligned to principles, standards and commitments?
- How efficiently were funds mobilised, allocated and used? To what extent have human resources supported the response to achieve programmatic and operational needs?
- To what extent have UNICEF's management systems/structures (at all levels country office/regional office/HQ), resources/tools and Emergency Procedures (both mandatory actions and simplified procedures) supported a flexible, timely and effective response?
- To what extent has the UNICEF response been gender and disability responsive, and has been effective in tackling priority concerns during the design, implementation, and monitoring phase?

Evaluation Scope

Thematic scope: The evaluation covered the L3 response, including all UNICEF's key programmatic areas engaged in the response efforts, such as the distribution of non-food items; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); education; child protection; social policy; health and nutrition; and social and behavioural change programming. It assessed, from an operational standpoint, the functioning of decentralized institutional arrangements, as well as the modalities of deployment and use of supplies, humanitarian cash transfers (HCTs)[6], human and financial resources, humanitarian-development nexus considerations, as well as advocacy and partnerships during the implementation of the response. The evaluation also covered UNICEF's role as cluster lead and co-lead.

Chronological scope: The evaluation covered all UNICEF's response activities from December 2021 (3 months before the activation) until the end of the L3 response on 6 March 2023.

Geographical scope: The evaluation covered the entirety of UNICEF's response in Ukraine. To the greatest extent possible, it aimed to assess the organization's response in both government-controlled areas of the country and non-government-controlled areas (NGCAs). However, because of challenges associated with access to and data collection in NGCAs, this aspect of the evaluation was constrained.

Methodology

The evaluation team first developed an intervention logic as the overall analysis framework and, following the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data (including 143 interviews, 86 focus group discussions, an online survey with a 67% response rate and the review of 1,224 documents), triangulated and synthesized the available evidence in order to develop the findings and answer the different evaluation questions.

Key findings (by criterion)

Relevance: the extent to which the response was relevant to the context and needs

UNICEF's response evolved from an initial blanket approach to a more targeted, needs-based model as the crisis developed. The first phase prioritized scaling up supply distribution and humanitarian cash transfers (HCT) but lacked equity. Over time, enhanced needs assessments and field presence enabled a shift to a strategic, partnership-driven approach, addressing the most vulnerable populations effectively.

Effectiveness: the extent to which UNICEF achieved its intended results and met key commitments.

It is first worth mentioning that, despite its long-established field presence in Ukraine, UNICEF – like the other UN agencies -- **was not fully prepared to respond to the level of humanitarian needs induced by the outbreak of a full-scale war in the country.** Moreover, some reflection should go first into the extent to which the response was rolled out according to the humanitarian principles. In particular, the breadth and depth of the needs on the ground led UNICEF to opt for rolling out a **broad response that privileged– especially during its first phase – the principle of *humanity* and, with it, the delivery of assistance at scale,** which was strengthened over time as UNICEF's capacity increased, **over that of *impartiality* and *neutrality.* Furthermore, the provision of a humanitarian response in the context of a middle-income country with a functional government at times made it challenging for UNICEF to maintain its *independence***, particularly given the solidarity that many countries (and donors) had signalled to the government of Ukraine. Despite its limitations from a humanitarian principles' standpoint, UNICEF's response -during its early months- made **ample use of a 'no-regrets' blanket programme approach to ensure the supply of large volume of supplies and cash transfers and sustain a wide coverage of its interventions** on the ground. However, this approach almost inevitably led to a **reduced focus on quality of the response overall and discouraged the well-customized coverage of the most vulnerable people.** However, programme quality and equity-based approaches improved *across all sectors* once UNICEF recruited additional staff and the centre of gravity shifted from delivering supplies to providing more strategic support to programme partners and frontline *oblasts* (regions/provinces). While UNICEF met critical needs across multiple sectors, effectiveness varied due to evolving capacities and improvements in targeting as follows:

- **HCT:** Expanded significantly (UNICEF had distributed over $300 million in cash transfers to 220,000 vulnerable families by the end of 2022 against an initial target of 50,000 households) but suffered from staffing constraints and strategic engagement limitations.
- **Child Protection:** Early branding as a "child protection crisis" led to large-scale reforms (e.g., Better Care initiative which aimed to address deinstitutionalization where previous reform efforts failed). Programs like Spilno centers and multi-disciplinary mobile teams (MMTs) provided vital services (in the case of Spilno centres, children went to fixed service delivery points, for MMTs the team went to where the children). However, such initiatives lacked coordination both internally (different sections of the UNICEF Country Office managed different centers without aligning their activities) and externally (MMTs did no not coordinate systematically with the other mobile service providers, funded by both the government and other United Nations agencies).
- **Education:** Initial supply-heavy response addressed immediate needs but was untargeted (e.g., 750,000 children were provided with ready-made education items of various sorts, including School-in-a-Box, Early Childhood Development (ECD) kits, and 350,000 grade 5 mathematics textbooks were distributed. UNICEF also created digital learning centers or DLC distributed 50,000 digital devices). Later efforts focused on advocating for school reopening and promoting learning recovery. However, many schools remained yet to be rehabilitated and threats of attacks on schools without adequate shelter continued.
- **WASH:** UNICEF Ensured water supply despite infrastructure damage (**WASH supplies were distributed to almost 4.7 million people** of whom 760,000 children). UNICEF also implemented a **system strengthening approach** through support to vodokanals, the municipal water management systems. Overall, **UNICEF contributed to keeping water flowing in frontline regions** despite the rather outdated country's water infrastructure and the damages

provoked by the war (estimated at $11.6 billion). Coordination and data-driven targeting improved over time.

- **Health:** Transitioned from supply distribution ($US36 million of supplies including 30,000 medical kits and 2,200 items of medical equipment) to system support, immunization, and primary healthcare restoration (UNICEF supported 1,005 healthcare facilities, including 312 maternity houses in 24 regions of Ukraine and invested in infectious disease control in a context of power outages). UNICEF also supported an **innovative evoucher medical project** which allowed displaced beneficiaries to receive free medicines based on doctors' prescriptions in the absence of functioning government hospitals and health centers nearby was identified as a good practice.
- **Nutrition:** Integrated into health and protection but remained limited due to initial capacity constraints.

Across all sectors, UNICEF had to ensure accountability to various stakeholders but took months to strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms. While third-party monitoring improved risk mitigation, the AAP strategy remained weak, with inconsistent stakeholder participation and limited use of feedback for course corrections

Efficiency: the extent to which not only the sectoral response but also the coordination, communication and collaboration across the three levels of the Organisation delivered or contributed to deliver results in an economic and timely way

While supply delivery was timely, staffing and localization efforts were delayed. UNICEF's rapid scale-up and large funding influx enabled significant interventions but strained planning and risk management. Local procurement and cash-based assistance were cost-effective but underutilized due to bureaucratic processes. In addition, the pressure to respond to the needs on the ground and, therefore, to spend rapidly the resources mobilized during the L3, did not always allow the Organisation to plan and budget thoroughly (e.g., opting for the most economical delivery of goods and services and vetting local partners as attentively as expected). While this signalled UNICEF's strong risk appetite at a time of emergency, it also exposed the Organization to significant risks that -in retrospect- could have been better mitigated (including through a better partnership preparedness). In addition, while surge staff deployment was critical, challenges included reduced capacity, limited local knowledge, and delays in operational oversight and fund disbursement. With respect to the large volume of funding that UNICEF received to support the response, a **significant portion of it was private during the first year of the response. This permitted an unprecedented level of flexibility in the use of the resources made available to UNICEF, as also confirmed by the allocation to sectors (e.g., protection and education) that frequently struggle to attract adequate funding**. Lastly, coordination between headquarters, regional, and country offices was initially unclear, impacting efficiency.

Coherence: the extent to which the response was not only complementary, harmonised and coordinated with other actors' interventions on the ground but also compatible with international norms and standards

UNICEF's coordination improved over time, particularly with the Ukrainian government, but initial leadership deployment gaps and sectoral silos hindered a harmonized response. Cluster coordination was strengthened, and by 2023, area-based approaches led by local governments enhanced integration across sectors. UNICEF's strong position in linking humanitarian and development efforts reinforced long-term recovery.

Gender, Equity, and Inclusion

- **Gender:** Poorly integrated due to limited awareness, insufficient prioritization by the Senior Management, lack of data disaggregation, and competing priorities (e.g., GBV and PSEA overshadowing gender equality).
- **Equity:** Targeting improved over time but was initially weak. Some vulnerable groups, particularly in HCT, remained excluded due to accessibility issues.
- **Inclusion:** Varied across sectors, with inconsistent results for marginalized groups, such as Roma communities and children with disabilities. Regarding disability, results varied across sectors. Important efforts were made in the emergency response to include children with disabilities in the HCT programme.

Final Conclusions

UNICEF, like other UN agencies, was initially unprepared for the scale of the crisis. The response took six months to transition from a broad but shallow model to a strategic, localized approach.

Strengths included:

- Expansion of partnerships with governmental and local NGOs.
- Strengthening of accountability mechanisms and data-driven planning.
- Greater integration of short-term aid with long-term recovery efforts.
- Increased use of localized procurement and cash-based interventions.
- Development of mobile and multi-service delivery models.
- Greater focus on humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



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Challenges included:

- Unclear leadership roles between HQ and regional offices.
- Slow field office deployment.
- Lengthy partner due diligence processes.
- Lack of gender mainstreaming and equitable targeting.
- Insufficient assessment of individual intervention outcomes.
- Overreliance on private funding, raising concerns about global humanitarian funding equity

Lastly, the Ukraine crisis highlighted the need for UNICEF to refine its emergency response strategies in middle- and high-income countries. Key takeaways include the increased need for:

- Strengthening organizational agility in displacement crises.
- Enhancing partnerships with local actors for faster deployment.
- Balancing rapid response with long-term sustainability.
- Advocating for equitable humanitarian funding globally.
- Improving gender and inclusion strategies across all sectors.

Recommendations

The strategic and operational recommendations developed by the evaluation team were validated in collaboration with UNICEF staff and partners during a series of 6 co-construction and validation work sessions over a period of 8 weeks. Ushering directly from the findings and conclusions described above (in ways that are detailed in the full evaluation report), these recommendations are summarized in short form here.

Strategic recommendations (mainly aimed at either HQ only or HQ and Regional Office together)

1. L3 Emergency Leadership should be delegated by HQ to RO depending on crises' specific circumstances and the decision to do so should take place at the time of the L3 declaration
2. Ensure that UNICEF Corporate Guidance on Emergencies is better tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of country offices operating in middle- and high- income-countries.
3. Accelerate decentralization of the humanitarian response in a strategic and timely fashion.
4. Introduce flexibility in clusters' activation processes when needed.
5. Advocate for greater equity of public funding across crises globally.
6. Ensure more systematic leveraging of private funding, including for underfunded crises.
7. Enhance UNICEF's global cash capacity through substantial investment in strengthening human resources and improving internal systems.

Operational recommendations (mainly aimed at the Ukraine CO)

8. Strengthen use of evidence to ensure greater balance in programme coverage and equity with quality.
9. Address the gap between gender commitments and action.
10. Improve current efforts to implement a comprehensive, unified strategy for child and youth mental health.
11. Ensure the integration of AAP across programme sections.
12. Support and advocate for a transition to national leadership in the WASH sector.
13. Integrate and mainstream disability and MHPSS across the country office's health and nutrition work.
14. Plan for the transition of cluster leadership to governmental institutions.
15. Integrate child protection models of effective and sustainable support.
16. Strengthen the country office's contribution to IP capacity and localization.
17. Support the government at central and local levels to facilitate inclusive learning recovery by fully and safely reopening schools in as many places as possible as fast as possible.



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1 Introduction

UNICEF's Evaluation Office commissioned the evaluation of UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Procedure Level 3 (L3) response in Ukraine as part of its commitment to evaluate all L3 responses. It addresses the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of the response over the period December 2021–March 2023. This report is divided into three parts: part A (this report) is the main report, which covers all the evaluation's main findings; part B is a sector report, which goes into more detail about what was achieved at sector level; and part C comprises our annex documents.

Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation of the L3 response in Ukraine has both an accountability purpose and a learning purpose. The evaluation provides a comprehensive assessment of UNICEF's overall response in Ukraine between December 2021 and 6 March 2023, measured against its mandate, corporate commitments, stated objectives and standard evaluation criteria.[7]

The evaluation builds on and complements the findings of and recommendations from the 2022 evaluation of UNICEF's response to support the influx of refugees from Ukraine[8] and the 2022 Operational Review of UNICEF's Response in Ukraine.[9] It also incorporates a country office-commissioned study of the UNICEF Ukraine Cash Transfer Programme, which was conducted concurrently with it.[10]

Thematic scope: The evaluation covers the L3 response including all of UNICEF's key programmatic areas engaged in the response efforts, including the distribution of non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, child protection, social policy, health and nutrition, social and behavioural change (SBC), and social protection programming. It assesses, from an operational standpoint, the functioning of the decentralized institutional arrangements as well as the modalities of deployment and use of supplies, humanitarian cash transfers (HCTs), human and financial resources, humanitarian-development nexus considerations, and partnerships during the implementation of the response. The evaluation also covers UNICEF's role as cluster and co-cluster lead.

Chronological scope: The evaluation covers all UNICEF's response activities from December 2021 until the end of the L3 response on 6 March 2023. The inclusion of the three-month period preceding the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in February 2022 has permitted the evaluation to assess the level of UNICEF's preparedness efforts. The period from the end of the L3 response to the time the evaluation was conducted was also examined, albeit less closely, to assess efforts to integrate recovery and reconstruction into the humanitarian response, but also with a view to ensuring the relevance of the recommendations.

Geographical scope: The evaluation covers the entirety of UNICEF's response in Ukraine. To the greatest extent possible, it includes UNICEF's response in both government-controlled areas of the country and non-government controlled areas (NGCAs), although because of challenges associated with access to NGCAs and data collection in those areas, this aspect of the evaluation was constrained.[11]



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2 Context

General overview

Ukraine since independence, size and population

Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Geographically, it is bordered by Belarus to the north; the Russian Federation to the north and east; the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea to the south; Moldova and Romania to the southwest; and Hungary, Slovakia and Poland to the west. It occupies a total area of 603,550 square kilometres.[12] As of 2022, Ukraine had a total population of 38 million (54 per cent female and 46 per cent male), which was a decrease from 43.8 million in 2021. Approximately 15 per cent of the population are children aged 0–14 years, while 19 per cent are over 65 years.[13]

Economy

Ukraine is a lower middle-income country, ranked 77 out of 191 countries in the Human Development Index in 2022.[14] According to the Gender Inequality Index, Ukraine ranks 48th out of 166 countries.[15] With an economy primarily based on industrial, agricultural and energy exports, Ukraine's annual gross domestic product growth rate has been consistently positive in the past 20 years, with exception of the years of the financial crisis (2009), the war in eastern Ukraine (2014) and the COVID-19 pandemic (2020).[16] Following the escalation of the war in February 2022, Ukraine reported a 29.1 per cent drop in gross domestic product in 2022.[17] The war has had an extremely negative impact on the economy, eliminating around 30 per cent of Ukraine's employment prior to the full-scale war,[18] while inflation has risen by over 20 per cent and raw food prices by over 40 per cent compared with pre-war pricing.[19] Ukraine's economic prospects remain extremely uncertain and dependant on the duration of the war. The war's escalation led to the emergence of high levels of sudden poverty. The country's poverty rate, based on the global poverty line of US$6.85 per person per day, increased from 5.5 per cent in 2021 to 24.1 per cent in 2022, pushing an additional 7.1 million people into poverty and reversing 15 years of progress.[20]

Humanitarian and child protection challenges in Ukraine from 2014 until February 2022

Prior to the full-scale war, the armed conflict in the east of the country that began in 2014 resulted in many child protection challenges, such as disrupted social services, stresses on mental health and mine risks. These, combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, complicated development progress. Despite these challenges, Ukraine upheld the rights of children and adolescents between 2016 and 2021.[21] Inequality, however, remained high. Children have traditionally been the most vulnerable to poverty in Ukraine; therefore, the war has affected households with children more than other households.

Prior to the escalation of the war in 2022, 2.9 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance.[22] At the start of the crisis and declaration of the L3 response, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased to 16 million (12 million within Ukraine and 4 million in neighbouring countries).[23] By 2023, the number of people in need had risen to 17.6 million.[24] In February 2023, it was estimated that 3.4 children were in need.[25]

The escalation of the war in 2022 resulted in many civilian fatalities and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, forcing people to flee their homes, seeking safety, protection and assistance. As of May 2023, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) stood at 6.3 million individuals.[26] IDPs have faced shortages of food, water, basic goods and energy, and faced greater access challenges to education, health services and medicines. Multiple forms of gender-based violence (GBV) were reported as women and girls were on the move and staying in temporary shelter far from home. Millions have fled and been uprooted from their homes, separated from their families or put at risk of violence. With a reduction in the possibilities of care and support, older people and people with disabilities are finding it challenging to flee active conflict areas.[27]

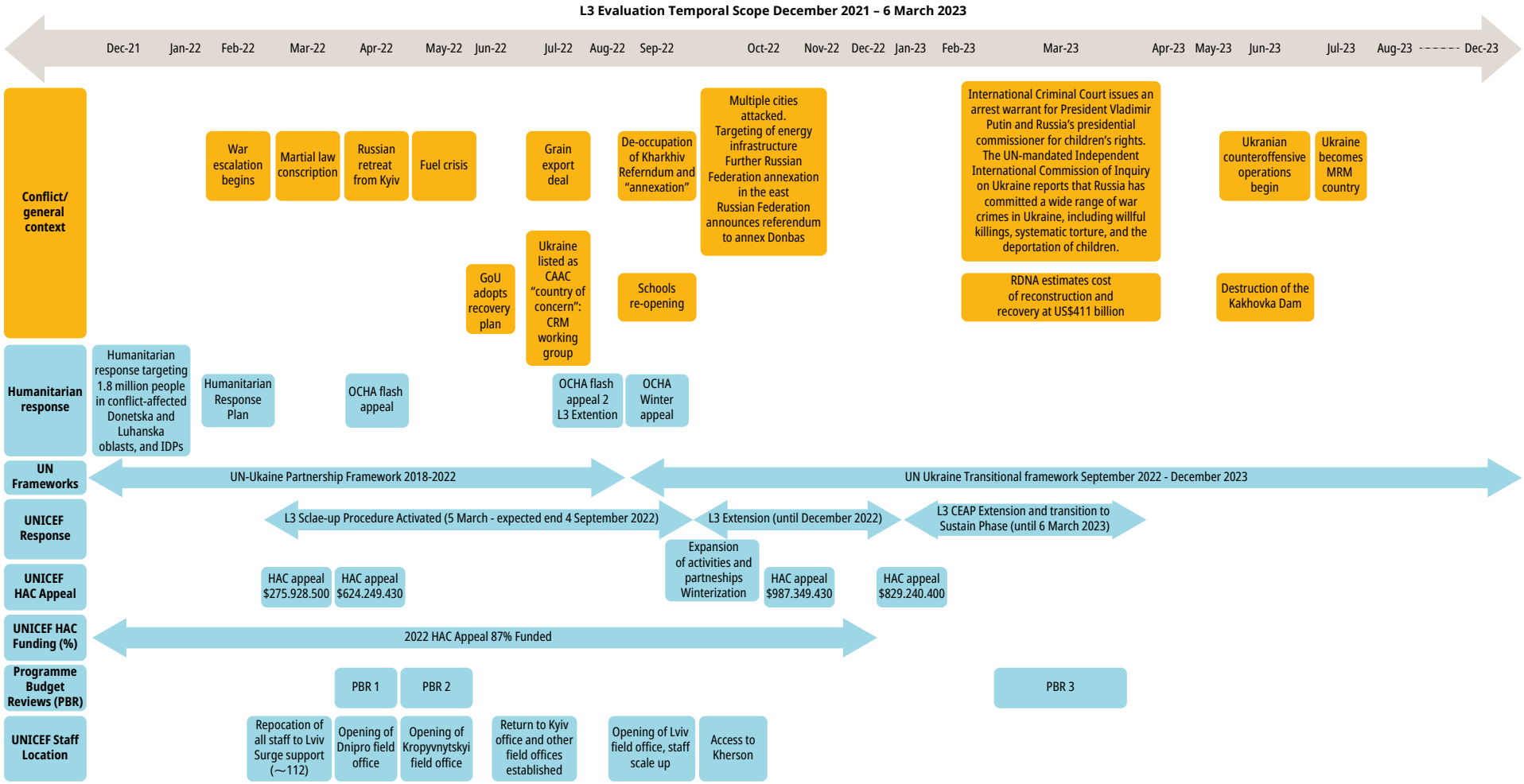
United Nations response in Ukraine

Figure 1 provides a timeline of the United Nations humanitarian response in Ukraine, alongside a timeline of the war and general context. In response to the humanitarian crisis, on 5 March 2022, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals declared a system-wide scale-up.[28] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched an initial Ukraine Flash Appeal on 1 March 2022 (covering the period from March to May 2022), which was the largest appeal in the history of emergency response in Ukraine. It was also unprecedented in terms of the number of people in need of assistance (18 million), its funding requirements (US$1.1 billion) and the number of people it targeted (providing 6 million people with multisectoral assistance across Ukraine).[29] The August revision to the Ukraine flash appeal, which covered needs between March and December 2022, had funding requirements of US$4.3 billion, and targeted 11.5 million of the estimated 17.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. In 2022, the Ukraine Flash Appeal served as the main humanitarian planning framework, superseding the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). In 2022, OCHA reported that together the United Nations response had reached close to 16 million people with lifesaving and life-sustaining humanitarian assistance, and carried out the world's largest humanitarian cash response, supporting almost 6 million people in Ukraine.[30]

Until 2022, the work of the United Nations in Ukraine was guided by the *UN-Ukraine Partnership Framework 2018–2022.* This strategic document was formulated with participation from the Government of Ukraine, the United Nations country team in Ukraine, civil society and other stakeholders. It affirmed the commitment of all partners in support of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 in areas that coincide with national development priorities. This was due to evolve into a new *UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024–2027* (UNSDCF). However, given the unprecedented changes in circumstances in the country, the United Nations deferred the development of the UNSDCF until 2024.

A *Transitional Framework for the UN in Ukraine September 2022–December 2023* was instead developed and adopted. The transitional framework was designed to be the strategic document of the United Nations in Ukraine in support of the Government of Ukraine's response to the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine, and to serve as a bridging document between the previous *UN-Ukraine Partnership Framework 2018–2022* and the UNSDCF. The transitional framework was extended to the end of 2024. It put life-saving humanitarian response at the core of United Nations interventions during the transitional period. However, it also stated that in parallel, and sequenced and layered with humanitarian response, the United Nations would also support interventions for development and social inclusion designed to promote recovery and reconstruction, and reduce and prevent the need for humanitarian aid in the future, to the extent circumstances would allow.[31]

Figure 1. Timeline of Evaluation temporal scope December 2021–March 2023



UNICEF's response in Ukraine

Nine days after the Russian incursion into Ukraine, on 5 March 2022 the Executive Director of UNICEF activated the L3 Scale-Up Procedure for Ukraine for a period of six months. This was later extended for three more months and further extended for another three months (L3 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure extension and transition to sustain phase). Once activated, the procedure, which has implications for a range of UNICEF functions,[32] including introducing the global coordinator to lead the organization-wide response, provides for the rollout of a package of minimum actions and introduces simplifications into UNICEF operations, which aim to make UNICEF more "predictable, timely and efficient in its coordination, response and advocacy."[33]

Since the escalation of the war, several key documents, chiefly the UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) Appeal 2022 and 2023, the United Nations Country Team Ukraine flash appeals and the inter-agency regional refugee response plan have contributed to the design of UNICEF's programming plans. As humanitarian needs quickly escalated across the country, UNICEF responded and scaled up rapidly and developed strategies for conflict-affected, IDP-hosting and newly liberated areas.

As the magnitude of the crisis became apparent, UNICEF's humanitarian funding requirements (HAC) for 2022 were US$987 million for Pillar 1 within Ukraine;[34] with the war continuing and remaining acute, UNICEF launched a new US$829.2 million appeal for Pillar 1 within Ukraine for 2023.[35] Funding levels up to 2022 were high (Table 1) but with a significant drop in 2023. All UNICEF's response plans fully align with the respective inter-agency appeals: the April 2022 regional refugee response plan and Ukraine flash appeal, and the February 2023 HRP and regional refugee response plans.

Table 1. Ukraine HAC Appeal Pillar 1 and funding (US$)

Year	Appeal	Funding available	Funding (%)	Funding gap	Funding gap (%)
2022	987,349,430	859,908,604	87	127,440,826	13
2023	829,240,400	337,980,190	41	491,260,210	59

Sources: Appeal data for 2022: UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC), November 2022; funding data for 2022: UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 24, reporting period 24 February–31 December 2022; appeal and funding data for 2023: HAC, August 2023.

Donor composition varied considerably between the two years; 2022 witnessed unprecedented contributions from the private sector, which represented approximately 75 per cent of overall funding received.[36] The proportion of private sector contributions fell drastically in 2023 to 36 per cent of overall funding. Similarly stark annual variation emerged for funding flexibility. In 2022, fully flexible humanitarian thematic funding represented 62 per cent of contributions. Funding flexibility decreased markedly in 2023, with humanitarian thematic funding representing only 14 per cent of the appeal.[37]

The humanitarian response saw the UNICEF Ukraine Programme scale up dramatically, from a US$40 million annual work plan with 91 staff before the war to a US$1 billion humanitarian appeal (inside Ukraine only) with 294 personnel by March 2023.[38] Consequently, significant modifications were required to ensure that adequate human resource, technical, programme and financial inputs were available to deliver lifesaving multisectoral emergency programmes to meet the urgent needs of war-stricken children and their families, and to manage the large funding available to the response.[39] An aspect of this was surge capacity; there were 120 surge deployments in Ukraine as of November 2023, of which only one remains deployed.[40]

Table 2. Summary of number and length of surge deployments

Status	Number of deployments	Sum of length of surge deployment (days)	Average of length of surge deployment (days)	Sum of length of surge deployment (months)	Average of length of surge deployment (months)
Total	120	6,976	58	165	1.4

Source: UNICEF dashboard (9 November 2023).[41]

Partnerships and coordination

UNICEF rapidly scaled up a multisectoral response with other United Nations agencies, humanitarian organizations and government bodies, while also leveraging its longstanding presence in Ukraine. UNICEF established 126 partnerships.[42]

The partnership strategy was mostly localized, with less than 2 per cent of partners being international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, UNICEF's response was closely aligned with government priorities and local authorities, achieved through close dialogue with local authorities at regional, district and municipality levels.[43]

Table 3. UNICEF Ukraine Country Office's number of partners by partner type (30 November 2023)

Partner type	No. of partners	% of total
Civil society organization	87	69
Government	38	30
United Nations agency	1	1
Total no. of partners	**126**	

Source: Partnership management report dashboard (30 November 2023).[44]

UNICEF is an active member of both the United Nations country team and the humanitarian country team, and is a key actor in the United Nations HRP. Under the Humanitarian Cluster Coordination System, UNICEF led/co-led the WASH, nutrition and education clusters, as well as the child protection area of responsibility (AoR), the social protection sub-group under the cash working group and the maternal child health care sub-group under the World Health Organization-led health cluster. Dedicated WASH, child protection, education and nutrition cluster coordination and information management capacities were put in place.



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Multisectoral response

UNICEF's multisectoral response covered the following areas.

BOX 1

UNICEF's multisectoral response

Social protection 	▶ Providing households with UNICEF-funded HCTs ▶ Providing children in foster families and family-type children's homes assisted with multi-purpose HCTs
Health and nutrition 	▶ Providing infant and young child feeding counselling to caregivers of children aged 0–23 months ▶ Providing vaccines against measles to children aged 6–59 months ▶ Providing primary health care to children and women in UNICEF-supported facilities
Water, sanitation and hygiene 	▶ Providing safe water for drinking and domestic needs ▶ Providing critical WASH supplies
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA 	▶ Providing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) ▶ GBV risk mitigation, prevention and/or response intervention ▶ Providing individual case management services to children ▶ Offering training on explosive ordnance risk education and information on preventive practices for young people and care givers ▶ Providing access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers
Education 	▶ Providing children with psychosocial support, social and emotional learning (SEL), or life skills education (LSE) ▶ Providing children with formal or non-formal education, including early learning ▶ Supplying girls and boys with education, early childhood development and recreation kits or learning materials ▶ Training teachers and educational personnel on MHPSS and SEL/LSE ▶ Teacher training on learning loss through remedial and catch-up learning

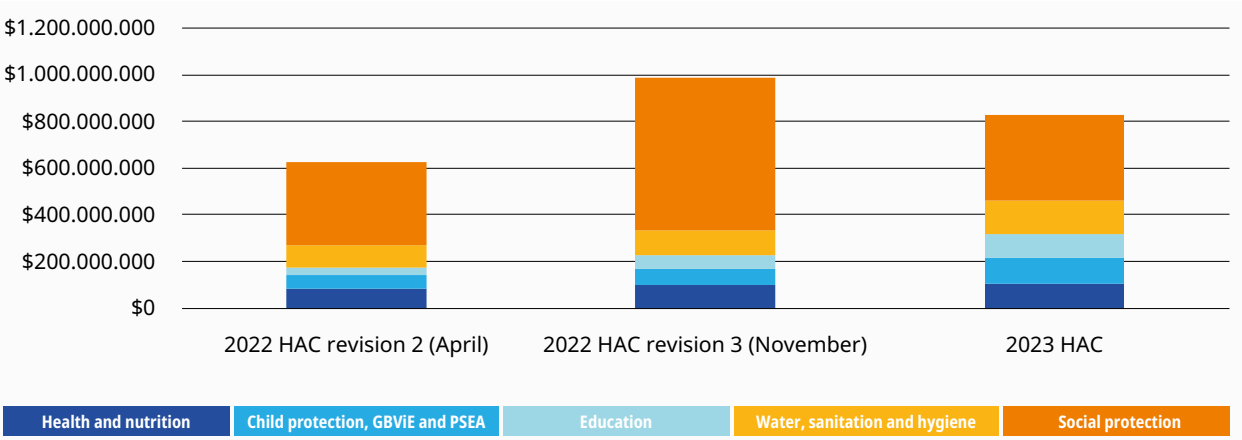
Note: GBViE = gender-based violence in emergencies; PSEA = protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
Source: 2022 target and actual data: RAM3 Full Approved Report, CP 2022; 2023 target data: UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) Ukraine and Refugee Response 2023 – Revision 2, August 2023.

Funding and resource mobilization

The available funding for the response is outlined in Table 1, highlighting the comparatively high volumes of funding available until the end of 2022. Below, we present this funding by sector.

Figure 2 shows the division of funding across the five main sectors of the response from 2022 to 2023. Social protection consistently received the predominant share of available funding.

Figure 2. Ukraine HAC Appeal 2022–23 by sector (US$)



Note: GBViE = gender-based violence in emergencies; PSEA = protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
Source: UNICEF Ukraine Country Office data – Funds Utilization Report 2023 (30 November 2023).

Table 4 shows the allocation of funding and compares it to the levels utilized across UNICEF sectors and sections, which shows a strong utilization of funds across the organization.

Table 4. Fund allocation, utilization, commitment and actuals by section (US$) (30 November 2023)

Section (short)	Allocation	Utilization	% utilization	Commitments	% commitment (out of utilized)	Actual	% actual (out of utilized)
Gender	893,763	889,501	100	173,832	20	715,668	80
Social policy	63,225,072	62,872,224	99	21,609,294	34	41,262,930	66
Programme effectiveness	49,860,866	49,393,892	99	4,723,981	10	44,669,911	90
Communication and advocacy	3,978,001	3,863,649	97	1,029,548	27	2,834,101	73
Education	91,345,270	88,488,627	97	29,695,793	34	58,792,834	66
SBC	47,704,788	45,424,035	95	15,143,343	33	30,280,692	67
Child protection	45,119,971	41,468,525	92	14,376,160	35	27,092,366	65
Health	78,973,348	72,511,300	92	9,469,442	13	63,041,858	87
WASH	72,275,481	65,161,849	90	21,751,709	33	43,410,140	67
Operations	23,363,459	20,564,875	88	3,250,404	16	17,314,471	84
Overall	**476,740,018**	**450,638,477**	**95**	**121,223,505**	**27**	**329,414,972**	**73**

Source: UNICEF Ukraine Country Office data – Funds Utilization Report 2023 (30 November 2023).



3 Methodology

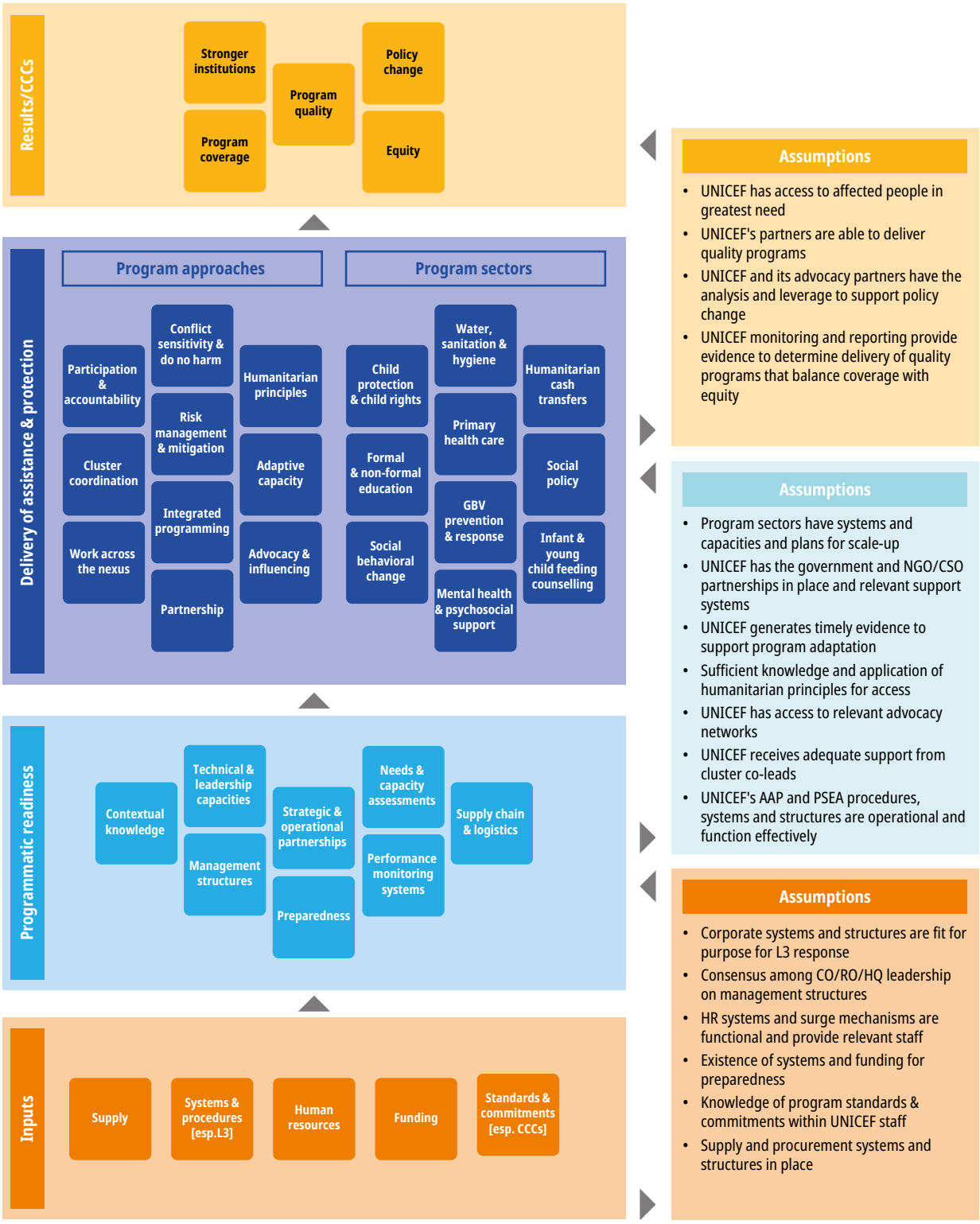
Intervention logic

Given the primary focus of this evaluation on practical solutions rather than theory, an intervention logic was used that articulated the critical building blocks and enablers of success for the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office to achieve quality results in its humanitarian response. The intervention logic drew on the Core Commitments to Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action, in addition to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation. The intervention logic recognizes the emphasis of the response on strengthening government systems and social inclusion, as articulated in the HAC, while dovetailing with its first-line response.

Evaluation use and stakeholder analysis

The evaluation addresses the requirement of the UNICEF Evaluation Policy (2018) that all L3 emergencies are evaluated; it is also expected to assist the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, the Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) and a number of UNICEF headquarters (HQ) divisions in distilling key lessons to support programming strategy and operational planning, while shaping the ongoing response in Ukraine in the future. Table 5 summarizes the users and uses of this evaluation.

Figure 3. UNICEF's intervention logic for the L3 response in Ukraine



Source: UNICEF

Table 5. Evaluation users and uses

Stakeholder	Expected use in the evaluation
Internal stakeholders	
UNICEF Ukraine Country Office and field office	▶ To inform management and programming decisions, targeting and prioritization to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are being met, and that UNICEF's value proposition is being maximized. ▶ To provide evidence to strengthen UNICEFs work in the response's priority areas. ▶ To provide learning on processes to help balance considerations of efficiency, risk mitigation and quality. ▶ To help ensure the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has optimal organizational arrangements in place to meet the challenges of the rapidly evolving context. ▶ To inform UNICEF's intended role in the recovery agenda and the development of the next country programme document. ▶ To provide inputs into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. ▶ To support and inform advocacy efforts.
UNICEF HQ	▶ To contribute to continuous learning to improve policy, procedures and practice in emergency response. ▶ To enhance accountability for the effectiveness of the corporate L3 response vis-à-vis the Executive Board and affected populations. ▶ To generate learning to inform any future corporate L3 emergency responses. ▶ To offer the opportunity to mainstream good practices and lessons learned in future programming and technical assistance work (including in supply and human resource surge deployment).
UNICEF ECARO	▶ To inform ECARO's management and support of the ongoing response, and permit the engagement of regional leadership and advisory staff. ▶ To enhance accountability for the effectiveness of the corporate L3 response vis-à-vis the Executive Board and affected populations. ▶ To offer the opportunity to mainstream good practices and lessons learned in future programming and technical assistance work in ECARO.
UNICEF National Committee	▶ To provide information on results arising from the emergency response and accountability for resources provided for the response. ▶ To inform the future orientation of the National Committee. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in governance-level issues and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.
UNICEF Executive Board	▶ To provide information on results arising from the emergency response and accountability for resources provided for the response. ▶ To inform the future orientation of the Executive Board and budget allocations of respective Member States' contributions to the emergency response in the future. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in governance-level issues, and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.

Stakeholder	Expected use in the evaluation
External stakeholders	
Affected people	▶ To determine agency effectiveness and strengthen affected peoples' ability to hold UNICEF to account as a duty-bearer. ▶ To determine agency effectiveness for the provision of assistance and protection that meets quality standards.
NGO/civil society organisation partners	▶ To draw on lessons learned and good practices to inform partners' own work. ▶ To determine agency effectiveness and strengthen partners' ability to hold UNICEF to account for meeting partnership obligations. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in partner-level issues, and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.
National government and ministries	▶ To determine agency effectiveness and strengthen government and ministries' ability to hold UNICEF to account as a duty-bearer. ▶ To provide information on results arising from the emergency response and accountability for resources provided for the response. ▶ To inform future engagement with UNICEF. ▶ To inform use of government budget allocations. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in government-level issues, and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.
Local government and hromadas (municipalities)	▶ To draw on lessons learned and good practices to inform local government and municipalities' own work. ▶ To determine agency effectiveness and strengthen local government and municipalities' ability to hold UNICEF to account as a duty-bearer. ▶ To provide information on results arising from the emergency response and accountability for resources provided for the response. ▶ To inform future engagement with UNICEF. ▶ To inform use of oblast (region/province)/hromada (municipality) budget allocations. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in government-level issues, and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.
United Nations Humanitarian Country Team and clusters	▶ To draw on lessons learned and good practices to inform the Humanitarian Country Team and clusters' own work. ▶ To determine agency effectiveness and strengthen the Humanitarian Country Team and clusters' ability to hold UNICEF to account as a member of the Humanitarian Country Team/Cluster Lead Agency, Humanitarian Response Plan member/participant and fund recipient. ▶ To provide information on results arising from the emergency response and accountability for resources provided for the response. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in United Nations country-level issues that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.
Donors	▶ To ascertain UNICEF's overall performance and thus further reinforce UNICEF's accountability for funds received for the response. ▶ To consider any external factors that might be rooted in donor-level issues, and patterns that might have helped or hindered UNICEF's performance.

Evaluation matrix, evaluation questions and indicators

The evaluation matrix provided a foundation for the evaluation. For each of the evaluation questions, the evaluation matrix outlined the data collection methods and type of analysis to be used to interpret the data collected. It is reproduced in Annex 4 of this report. The evaluation questions were outlined in the Terms of Reference. They provided the basis for the data collection methods used in the evaluation, as well as the structure of this report.

Table 6. Evaluation questions

No.	Evaluation questions
	Relevance
1a	**Contextual relevance**: To what extent were UNICEF's strategies, preparedness and response plans appropriate to the context? [How comprehensive were the situational and needs analyses underpinning UNICEF's programme design, field presence and targeting in all zones?]
1b/c	**Adapted to evolving needs**: To what extent was the response aligned with the needs (including mental health) and preferences of the affected populations and vulnerable groups? To what extent was the response able to adapt to the evolving situation/needs/population movements, even in the absence of up-to-date situational analysis and needs assessments?
1d	**Integrated programmes to meet priority needs**: To what extent was the response multisectoral/integrated and coherent (and employing the right mix of interventions to achieve objectives)?
	Effectiveness
2	**CCCs**: To what extent has the UNICEF response adhered to the CCCs and is aligned to principles, standards and commitments?
3	**Preparedness**: To what extent have UNICEF's preparedness efforts supported the delivery of the response, considering the peculiar features of this emergency?
4	**Community feedback and accountability**: To what extent was an accountability to affected populations framework in place and implemented? [To what extent were communities (especially women and girls and other vulnerable groups) informed and effectively involved and able to take part in the different stages of the response? To what extent did communities have the opportunity to share feedback and complaints, and was feedback, in turn, acted on? How accessible and safe were these mechanisms?]
5	**Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**: To what extent did UNICEF meet its global commitments on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse? [To what extent were internal and external reporting systems, referrals and survivor assistance appropriate, available and accessible, including for women, girls and other vulnerable groups?]
6	**Humanitarian principles and access**: To what extent was humanitarian access established and maintained for all zones so communities could safely reach assistance/services? [To what extent did UNICEF manage to operate as a neutral, impartial, independent humanitarian actor? What were the facilitating factors and challenges, respectively, for a principled humanitarian response? (Is there evidence of whether trust in UNICEF across communities has changed in any way over time?)]
7	**Advocacy**: How has UNICEF positioned itself in advocating for children in view of the recovery phase and what has been the added value (if any) of its work in this area?

No.	Evaluation questions
8	**Sectoral results**: To what extent did the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office achieve its intended targets?
9	**Monitoring and reporting**: What was the overall quality of UNICEF's monitoring and reporting?
10	**Conflict sensitivity**: To what extent was the response conflict sensitive (across analysis, design, implementation)?
11	**Unintended outcomes**: What were the response's unintended outcomes (positive and/or negative)?
	Efficiency
12	**Human resources**: To what extent have human resources supported the response to achieve programmatic and operational needs? [To what extent was the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office adequately staffed at central and local offices, including antennas, for the L3 response and to what extent were the personnel deployed 'fit for purpose' for the required programming and operational pivot in Ukraine? To what extent was UNICEF global surge capacity sufficient for all functional areas? Was a plan to move from surge to longer-term capacity integrated across all areas?]
13	**UNICEF's management**: To what extent have UNICEF's management systems/ structures (at all levels country office/regional office/HQ), resources/tools and Emergency Procedures (both mandatory actions and simplified procedures) supported a flexible, timely and effective response? [To what extent were the Emergency Procedures set appropriately and implemented as intended, and L3 simplifications contained in the Emergency Procedures supportive of the response? To what extent and in what specific areas were the Emergency Procedures used and what difference did they make, if any?]
14	**Supply**: How well was UNICEF able to provide access to supplies that otherwise would not have been accessible to affected populations in Ukraine?
15	**Funding**: How efficiently were funds mobilized, allocated and used?
16	**Partnership and localization**: On what basis did UNICEF select its partners at national, *oblast* (region/province) and *hromada* (municipality) levels? To what extent and in what ways was partners' capacity assessed? Where gaps were identified, how effective were UNICEF's efforts to provide support? Through these efforts and broader support to local partners, to what extent has UNICEF advanced the localization agenda?
17	**Country office structure**: To what extent has the decentralized model in UNICEF Ukraine's response added to the effectiveness and efficiency of activities on the ground? [What have been the enablers and obstacles to the implementation of the model?]
18	**Risk management**: How well has UNICEF identified, managed and mitigated risks inherent to the response (including relative to its scale-up response and the increased level of scrutiny deriving from it), especially vis-à-vis affected populations and children in particular?

No.	Evaluation questions
	Coherence
19	**Coordination**: How well has UNICEF fulfilled its cluster lead/co-lead agency role and responsibilities (including vis-à-vis the Humanitarian Country Team)? [How effectively did it perform at the sub-national/field level, including its information management accountabilities, and the coordination between national and local levels?]
20	**Promotion of nexus programming in support of reconstruction and recovery**: To what extent did UNICEF consider the humanitarian-development nexus during planning and implementation of the L3 response? To what extent has UNICEF engaged with national mechanisms in planning for reconstruction and recovery? How has this positioned UNICEF to add value in view of the recovery and reconstruction phase?
	Gender, equity and inclusion
21	**Social inclusion**: To what extent has UNICEF reached the most vulnerable groups (women, boys and girls; communities in hard-to-reach areas, including in NGCAs; IDPs; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities; unaccompanied/separated children; children under the care of the State)?
22	**Gender and disability**: To what extent has the UNICEF response been gender and disability responsive, and effective in tackling priority concerns during the design, implementation and monitoring phases?

Data collection methods and evaluation tools

A mixed-methods approach was used to collect and analyse the data, which are composed of qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation used a range of methods, which included document review, key informant interviews (KIIs), direct observations, quantitative data review, online surveys, a U-Report poll and focus group discussions. Table 7 outlines the coverage of the methods used.

Table 7. Coverage achieved by evaluation methods

Data collection method	Number
KIIs completed	143
Focus group discussions held	86
Documents consulted	1,224
Survey responses received (*staff survey)*	129
Survey responses received (stakeholder survey)	43
U-Report poll responses	8,005

Source: Evaluation Team.



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Quantitative data analysis

The evaluation harvested evidence from a range of quantitative data sources. Included among these were UNICEF's internal monitoring databases and dashboards, humanitarian situation reports and annual reports, and third-party monitoring (TPM) data. The key quantitative data sources used in the evaluation included those detailed in Table 8.

Table 8. Key quantitative data sources used in the evaluation

Data source	Description and use during the evaluation
Results Assessment Module (RAM) reports	As UNICEF's core monitoring platform, data from RAM reports informed the evaluation across evaluation questions (EQs), and provided the source for results indicators.
UNICEF Ukraine and refugee outflow situation reports	These reports were a key source of data for the evaluation, particularly to inform EQ2.1 on UNICEF's consistency with global standards and commitments, EQ3.1 on context analysis and adaptive capacity, and EQ3.3 on the overall quality of UNICEF's monitoring and reporting, among others.
TPM reports	The Evaluation Team drew on these reports in particular to inform evaluation question EQ3.3 on the overall quality of UNICEF's monitoring and reporting, as well as EQ2.1 on UNICEF's consistency with global standards and commitments.
UNICEF Ukraine dashboard reports	▶ Funds Utilization Report 2023 ▶ Partnership Management Report 2023 ▶ E-Tools Field Monitoring Dashboard ▶ Spilno centre monitoring (daily self-reporting) ▶ Supply Dashboard ▶ Public Funding Dashboard and Donor Data Explorer
OCHA dashboards	Analysis of UNICEF's footprint relative to other United Nations agencies, especially regarding presence and investment in frontline regions and NGCAs.

Document review

The evaluation drew on significant secondary documentation related to the response. A database of documents was categorized and prioritized. The evaluation reviewed key UNICEF and national policies and strategies as context setting, checking for relevance and coherence. The evaluation analysed relevant documents including those related to management decision-making, the design and implementation of activities, progress reports and evaluations, joint working documents with implementing partners (IPs), etc. External data and reports from national authorities, United Nations/cluster members and other key international actors were also examined.

Documentary evidence was used to provide an overview of the UNICEF response and its context, and provided a foundation for more in-depth data collection. Secondary data and documentation were also crucial for triangulation and to support the overall analysis. By reviewing all available documentary evidence, the Evaluation Team made the best use of time and resources to pursue lines of enquiry that could not be explored through analysis of secondary data.

Semi-structured KIIs

KIIs were conducted during the evaluation by the Evaluation Team through both remote and in-person means. Interviewees were identified and selected based on the added value they could provide in relation to specific evaluation questions, or their potential to address information gaps or enrich secondary or quantitative data with qualitative insights. The interviews followed specific interview guides developed for respondent groups, with questions adapted from the evaluation matrix. A list of interviewees is given in Annex 3.

Surveys

Two online surveys were conducted; one focused on UNICEF staff and the other on external stakeholders.

Staff survey

The staff survey targeted all Ukraine programme staff, gathering evidence across a range of evaluation questions. It was designed so that a selection of the questions were consistent with the staff survey that was undertaken as part of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office operational review to permit a comparative analysis to be undertaken.

Stakeholder survey

A stakeholder survey targeted UNICEF's partners (governmental and non-governmental) and cluster partners. It used many of the same questions as in the staff survey to offer a comparison between internal and external perceptions of UNICEF's performance.

U-Report

UNICEF Ukraine has been implementing U-Report since 2016, and through U-Report it has conducted hundreds of surveys and polls of Ukrainian young people on a wide range of issues. About 100,000 young Ukrainians are on the U-Report platform, spread throughout the country (and now spread outside Ukraine as well); some surveys capture several thousand responses. UReport provides gender, age and location metadata, although the location data is understood to represent the 'home city' of respondents, not their current location.

During the evaluation, a new U-Report survey was designed that specifically asked a small number of poll questions, seeking responses differentiated by where respondents were currently located (allowing differential analysis of refugees, IDPs and 'stayees'). Questions covered: awareness of services provided by UNICEF, gender equality, perceptions about Better Care for children with special needs, personal priorities, and priorities for local government action. Full analysis of the U-Report survey can be found in Annex 5.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs)[45] were used for all data collection directly from the affected population, serving as a forum to discuss knowledge and perceptions. The FGDs primarily provided data on relevance and effectiveness, as well as accountability to affected populations (AAP), protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and gender/disability inclusion.

FGDs were designed in accordance with the specific stakeholder and age group to be consulted, and were distributed across three categories of programme participants: children, caregivers/adults, and people with disabilities. The Evaluation Team used a sampling strategy that included specific *oblasts* (regions/provinces) and locations in which to conduct FGDs (*see section 3.4*). To ensure manageable discussions, FGDs consisted of 5–8 participants.

Gender and disability inclusion

Specific **evaluation questions and indicators** in the evaluation matrix focused on gender and inclusion to ensure that the evaluation produced analysis of the extent to which UNICEF's response in Ukraine targeted women and girls (as well as men and boys), and people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, in the design, coordination and implementation of the response:

- **Data analysis** disaggregated information by gender to highlight numerical differences in terms of targeting, involvement and effects of interventions. This was done both in the analysis of secondary data (e.g., from existing surveys) and in the evaluation's own primary data collection (country-level KIIs, FGDs, U-Report, etc.).
- The evaluation also sought to draw on the knowledge of **key informants** with specialized expertise on accountability frameworks for gender and disability inclusion.
- The **document review** focused on specific initiatives to enhance attention to gender and disability inclusion, and examined to what extent these produced anticipated results.
- During the country mission, **programme observation** and assessment reviewed the extent to which emergency preparedness and response planning was grounded in gender analysis, and followed through in design and implementation.

- The **community engagement** process that was part of this evaluation sought to ensure that, where possible, it captured the views of participants on gender and disability inclusion. To the greatest extent possible, the Evaluation Team sought to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in FGDs.
- The Evaluation Team undertook **data collection** in Ukraine gender-sensitive ways, taking steps to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities. Gender-balanced teams conducted focus groups with participants.

Sampling approaches and methodologies

An outline of the sampling strategies followed for the FGDs, surveys and U-Report survey is summarized below.

The challenge of convening FGD participants

UNICEF made it very clear to the Evaluation Team that it was required to obtain the perspectives of a large number of programme participants, especially children. An underlying problem, however, was that UNICEF's Ukraine programme has very few direct, identifiable and contactable participants. After consulting the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, it was determined that the **only** location where UNICEF beneficiaries congregated, in a way that could be reliably sampled nationwide, was at Spilno centres.


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Geographical selection of FGDs

The selection of focus *oblasts* for FGDs started with the identification of the top two *oblasts* (in terms of the number of Spilno centres) in five regions, ensuring there was a focus on frontline regions, and regions far from the frontline with more IDPs. Within each of the 10 *oblasts*, 2 different Spilno centres were selected.[46]

Spilno centre selection for FGDs

Across the whole sample of 20 available Spilno centre locations, efforts were made to distribute these proportionately among the Spilno IPs, and to balance the sample across Spilno centre sizes, with 7 Spilno centres selected from the high-usage group (>15,000 child visits in the first 9 months of 2023), 6 from the medium-usage group (5,000–15,000 child visits in the first 9 months of 2023) and 7 from the low-usage group (<5,000 child visits in the first 9 months of 2023). In this way, the Evaluation Team ensured that the sampled Spilno centres were representative in size, IP and location.

FGD participant selection and informed consent

The Evaluation Team then engaged with the operators of each Spilno centre to set up the FGDs. The hosting organizations were asked to convene FGD participants by soliciting volunteers from among participants in their regular programmes, attempting to ensure a balance of ages, genders and abilities among the volunteers. To ensure that IDPs were well represented, convenors were asked to invite IDPs and non-IDPs in a way that oversampled the IDPs (assuming that IDP needs are greater). However, the actual IDP proportions in any FGD varied by Spilno centre and location. Adult participants were asked to provide written informed consent at the start of the FGDs. Parents or caregivers/guardians of child participants provided written consent in advance of the FGDs; this prior consent was verbally confirmed during the FGD. The approach to FGD participant selection was the most objective that the Evaluation Team could develop in light of constraints. However, this approach introduced several levels of bias, which are discussed below (*see section 3.7, Table 9*).

Online survey participant selection

Online surveys were administered to two populations: UNICEF staff (primarily, UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff and Country Office staff involved in the early response who have left Ukraine, plus select ECARO and HQ staff) and external stakeholders. The external stakeholders were UNICEF's IPs (governmental and non-governmental), members of UNICEF-coordinated clusters and working groups, and donors.

U-Report

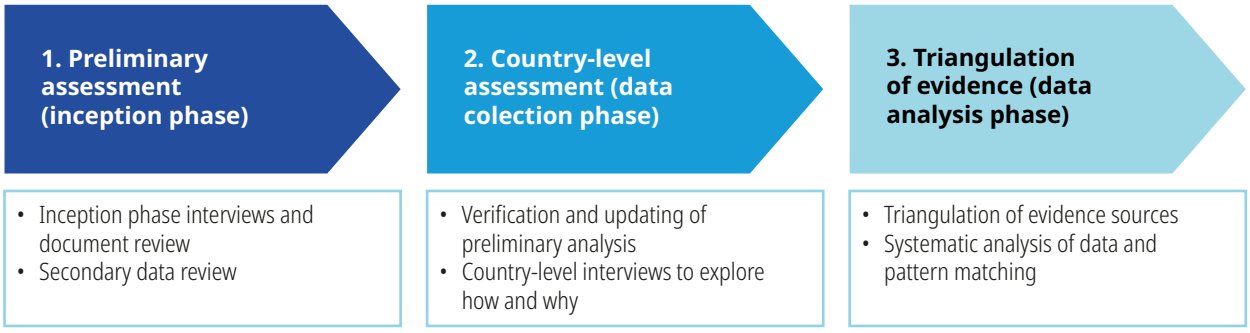
The sampled population was taken from among U-Report subscribers from Ukraine, whether they were currently inside or outside the country. the Evaluation Team was informed that approximately 100,000 users had subscribed to Ukraine's U-Report, and approximately 8,005 responses were received (585 from outside Ukraine, 1,171 from among IDPs, and 6,249 from participants in their usual home towns).

Evidence analysis and synthesis

The Evaluation Team adopted an approach that placed primacy on exploration and observation as ways of identifying patterns, as well as systematic triangulation across evidence sources, and by exploring inductively and collaboratively with UNICEF staff and key stakeholders where good practice and learning existed.

In support of this, a three-step process enabled the team to gather data in a systematic and transparent way that minimized bias, and took a pragmatic but systematic approach to analysing a substantial amount of data and evidence.

Figure 4. Three-step process for systematic evidence gathering and analysis.



Risks and mitigation measures

Table 9 provides details of the key risks in implementing this evaluation and lists mitigation measures the Evaluation Team followed to reduce these risks.

Table 9. Risk matrix

Risk	Risk level	Mitigation measures taken by Evaluation Team	Residual risk
Risks associated with the conduciveness of the context to the evaluation			
Health, safety and security risks	**High**	As part of Landell Mills Duty of Care policy and procedures, health, safety and security risk assessments were conducted prior to fieldwork taking place. Landell Mills liaised with its security providers, in-country partner and UNICEF to ensure that risk management plans were relevant and effective.	**Low**
Delays to the inception phase and start of data collection	**Medium**	Because of the slow start to the evaluation, UNICEF took the decision to cancel the inception visit, which was a considerable constraint on the Evaluation Team's ability to gather and analyse key evidence in advance of commencing the evaluation. The team subsequently regularly liaised with the UNICEF evaluation manager and UNICEF Ukraine Country Office to ensure the timely start of the data collection phase. A work plan with a detailed time frame was articulated and shared with the evaluation office and country office. The provision of prompt support by the country office was a prerequisite for problem-solving.	**Medium**
Challenges associated with engaging UNICEF stakeholders in NGCAs	**High**	UNICEF informed the Evaluation Team it would be unable to engage with stakeholders in NGCAs and would need to limit its analysis to the perceptions of internal staff and external agencies.	**High**
Risks associated with clarity about the scope and scale of the evaluation			
Importance of building trust in the independence of the evaluation and confidentiality of the data	**Medium**	The Evaluation Team employed ethical principles and developed culturally appropriate approaches to informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality. The use of an approach to evidence analysis that ensured triangulation of data while anonymizing the sources was an important element.	**Low**
The scale and breadth of the response made it difficult to fully capture the breadth of evidence	**Medium**	The development of an analytical framework assisted in focusing the evaluation to the greatest extent possible on how UNICEF works in practice and on the causal logic between different levels in the results chain, but the breadth of the evaluation scope and questions made it challenging.	**Medium**

Risk	Risk level	Mitigation measures taken by Evaluation Team	Residual risk
Risks associated with the quality and availability of data			
Lack of staff continuity	**Medium** 🟠	Staff turnover at the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office presented a challenge, limiting continuity in key positions and meaning that knowledge of some aspects of the response was lost or incomplete. This was mitigated to some extent by engaging staff who had left Ukraine but still worked for UNICEF.	**Low** 🟢
Data limitations affecting the strength of evidence	**Medium** 🟠	The evaluation benefited from a significant volume of data, which went some way to addressing gaps in other evidence, including the Evaluation Team's ability to engage across all aspects of the UNICEF response. The Evaluation Team's use of a range of data collection methods permitted a good level of triangulation of the evidence.	**Low** 🟢
Participant selection bias	**High** 🔴	FGD participants were identified by the Spilno centre managers. The Evaluation Team required that participants covered a representative range of locations, displacement status, ages and genders; nevertheless, the participants selected were more likely to be active participants in the Spilno centre and favourable to the Spilno experience. Furthermore, Spilno participants had limited experience or understanding of aspects of UNICEF's programme beyond the Spilno centres themselves, and their Spilno centre experience was limited to the present (not related to the L3 period). The selection of U-Report participants is expected to be biased towards educated, wealthy and politically engaged young people.	**Medium** 🟠
Harvesting community perceptions on UNICEF's L3 Ukraine response and ensuring that they complement other data sources	**Medium** 🟠	Undertaking community-facing research in Ukraine posed challenges. the Evaluation Team's use of a local partner with prior experience of engaging communities provided an important foundation. The use of the evaluation matrix to identify relevant evaluation questions, use of local research staff, and the emphasis placed on training and support reduced potential risks.	**Medium** 🟠

Ethics

Table 10 illustrates how Landell Mills ensured adherence to the ethical responsibilities of the evaluation supplier and how any ethical issues that arose during the evaluation process were addressed.

Table 10. Approaches for fulfilling ethical responsibilities/mitigating risks

Ethical responsibility/ issue	Approach to fulfilling ethical responsibilities/mitigating risks
Ensuring informed consent	The Evaluation Team was fully transparent with all stakeholders in relation to the purpose of the assignment and use of the data provided. During interviews and informal group consultations, evaluators informed participants in advance of the evaluation's purpose, process and intended use/dissemination of data before requesting their verbal or written consent to participate (which could be withdrawn after interview at the participant's request). A separate and formal process of obtaining written informed consent was followed for the FGDs with adult and child beneficiaries.
Protection of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants	Data collected were used in a way that does not compromise sources. Personal data have been securely protected and identities have not been exposed without the written permission of informants and participants. In addition, and as part of Landell Mills' obligations, data protection will be ensured for all confidential information, including participants' personal data (in line with Landell Mills' Data Protection Policy, the RMTeam Privacy Policy and the Data Security and Protection Policy) and confidential data that are made available to the Evaluation Team for the purpose of the evaluation. Experts were required to sign a declaration of confidentiality, in accordance with this procurement procedure. These requirements were further reinforced in experts' contractual terms of engagement. FGD participants were convened by the organizations hosting Spilno centres; beyond the signed consent forms, the Evaluation Team did not collect or retain any personal identifying information on the adult or child FGD participants.
Ensuring cultural sensitivity	The Evaluation Team developed a sound understanding of the local context; the team included national experts, and international team members who possessed prior experience of the Ukraine context. In addition to the core Evaluation Team members, RMTeam used a localized approach to recruit and deploy field enumerators, ensuring understanding of contextual nuances and relevant languages, thus enabling risks to be minimized and methodologies to be adapted as necessary. The Evaluation Team and additional enumerators maintained sensitivity towards the beliefs, manners and customs of local social and cultural environments, and the Evaluation Team ensured its work did not exacerbate tensions or conflicts within or between communities.
Respecting the autonomy of participants	The evaluators respected the dignity and self-worth of respondents, project participants and other evaluation stakeholders, behaving in a non-discriminatory manner. Evaluators integrated concerns and respect for human rights, children's rights and women's rights; they did not, however, neglect to ask questions and probe difficult or sensitive areas of enquiry where this was necessary for the purpose of the evaluation.
Adherence to 'do no harm' principles	The Evaluation Team took into account the diversity of general and public interests and values related to the evaluation. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, which expand on the Ethical Code of Conduct for Evaluation of the United Nations System (UNEG/FN/CoC [2008]) and emphasize the avoidance of harm, including adhering to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Ethical responsibility/ issue	Approach to fulfilling ethical responsibilities/mitigating risks
Safeguarding	During the evaluation, FGDs conducted with children and adolescents were done in a way that ensured their physical and psychosocial safety, and that they understood how the Evaluation Team would use their information. FGD participants were assured of an available bomb shelter in the event of an air raid warning, and Spilno centres ensured that a support worker was on site to support children if they experienced discomfort during the FGDs. Evaluation Team members were fully aware of and committed to both Landell Mills' Safeguarding Policy and relevant UNICEF policies. Landell Mills had a designated safeguarding contact point through which the Evaluation Team could anonymously report any complaint or safeguarding issue.
Ethical research involving children	Research grounded in sound ethical principles is critical in ensuring that children's rights are respected throughout the process and beyond, and that the research itself is relevant, useful and valid. Key principles that the Evaluation Team considered included the capacity of team members to appropriately and respectfully engage children in research, understanding power relations, securing informed consent and assent, ascertaining harms and benefits, maintaining privacy and confidentiality, and ensuring appropriate communication of findings.[47] the Evaluation Team submitted its research protocols and data collection tools to UNICEF's ethical review provider, HML, for approval. RMTeam also sought ethical approval at national level in Ukraine for the child-focused data collection tools. Landell Mills ensured that, as its partner in conducting the FGDs, RMTeam recruited field researchers and experts with experience of working with children and in humanitarian settings. Furthermore, UNICEF staff and RMTeam's expert on child protection and evaluation methods provided the field researchers recruited with specific training on safeguarding, and on how to work effectively and ethically with children, including training on child-appropriate methods of convening discussions involving children.



4 Findings and conclusions

This section presents the findings of the evaluation against each of the evaluation questions. Relevant benchmarks and commitments from UNICEF's CCCs are outlined under each evaluation question.

Findings are highlighted in bold text and summarized at the beginning of each sub-section. Lessons are highlighted in orange boxes in the text.

Relevance

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

⇒ **Finding Relevance 1:** UNICEF prioritized the provision of much-needed assistance over needs assessments in the first six months of the response, which was justified by the limited capacity that existed. Even after this time, however, the response remained largely focused on the provision of supplies, frequently relying on consignees to determine and target those who were most vulnerable.

⇒ **Finding Relevance 2:** UNICEF placed greater emphasis on targeting the most vulnerable people as staff capacity increased and as the response shifted towards the east of the country. Inconsistencies in staffing, the scale of need in newly accessible areas, and challenges of maintaining access meant that a blanket approach to coverage continued to be adopted in many areas of targeted *oblasts*.

⇒ **Finding Relevance 3:** It was not until the end of the L3 response that UNICEF's internal capacity and implementing partnership portfolio was sufficiently strengthened to permit greater use of assessments to inform response plans and priorities.

⇒ **Finding Relevance 4:** UNICEF adapted its geographical presence and the nature and scale of its response to reflect shifts in the context and in the needs of affected people. This necessitated quite significant changes, which required managerial courage, operational agility and staff resilience.

CONCLUSIONS

⇒ **Conclusion Relevance 1:** While the prioritization of immediate response over assessment was justified in the short term, the shift to assessing the needs of vulnerable people, and UNICEF's framing of how the response was organized and coordinated between sectors and field offices, should have occurred earlier.

⇒ **Conclusion Relevance 2:** The relevance of UNICEF's response was strengthened towards the end of the L3 response as it gave greater priority to the conflict-affected east and south of the country, with increases in staff capacity and with a shift towards a partnership model of programming that permitted more detailed needs assessment, analysis and prioritization.

⇒ **Conclusion Relevance 3:** The need for constant adaptation – in its organizational structure and staffing, its response and its geographical positioning – placed UNICEF under fairly constant stress. Despite this, the evidence shows that there was a consistent willingness to maintain agility and to shift gears when required, which was important for maintaining the relevance of the L3 response. This is an area where UNICEF performed well.

UNICEF's programme commitments emphasize the need to balance the objective of reaching the greatest number of people (**coverage**) with the objective of reaching the people in greatest need (**equity**), while maintaining the **quality** of programmes. Coverage is guided by estimates of people in need. The evaluation sought to assess the L3 response in Ukraine according to these standards. Quality is measured against UNICEF and inter-agency and IASC standards. Equity is judged by appropriate prioritization of the people most in need, informed by assessment and analysis of vulnerability and deprivation, and the principle of leaving no child behind.[48]

> **Conclusion Relevance 1**
> While the prioritization of response over vulnerability assessment was justified in the short term, the shift to assessing the needs of vulnerable people, and UNICEF's framing of how the response was organized and coordinated between sectors and field offices, should have occurred earlier.

To what extent were UNICEF's strategies and response plans appropriate to the context?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Equity-focused data:** Disaggregated data is collected, analysed and disseminated to understand and address the diverse needs, risks and vulnerabilities of children and their communities

⇒ **Needs assessment:** Coordinated, timely and impartial assessments of the situation, humanitarian assistance and protection needs, vulnerabilities and risks are undertaken

⇒ **Response planning:** Response plans are evidence-based and consistent with interagency planning [ref. 2.3.1]

UNICEF's ability to plan and deliver contextually relevant and evidence-based responses is predicated on undertaking either its own or participating in inter-agency needs assessments. The benchmark outlined in the CCC's are for assessments to be undertaken within 72 hours of a crisis occurring.[49]

Early response phase of the response (Mar–Aug 2022)

> **Finding Relevance 1**
> UNICEF prioritized the provision of much-needed assistance over needs assessments in the first six months of the response, which was justified by the limited capacity that existed. Even after this time, however, the response remained largely focused on the provision of supplies, frequently relying on consignees to determine and target those who were most vulnerable.

During the early phase of the L3 response, UNICEF typically used secondary data to determine needs; analysis tended to be ad hoc and the response was frequently driven by requests made to UNICEF by local and national governments and public institutions (demand driven) rather than based on needs assessments. As UNICEF had not anticipated the full-scale war, because of insecurity across large parts of Ukraine and widespread, large-scale and rapid population movements immediately following the Russian invasion, UNICEF was initially unable or ill-equipped to undertake assessments, which was common among humanitarian agencies. Furthermore, UNICEF's staff were geographically spread across numerous locations both within and outside Ukraine. It took time before UNICEF was able to establish and consolidate

its operational base in Lviv, which occurred in April 2022.[50] These factors did not stop a response from being initiated or being taken to scale, but they did hamper UNICEF's ability to ground-truth its operations; thus, rather than seeking to identify and determine the needs of specific vulnerable people, UNICEF's initial approach was to consider everyone equally vulnerable.

UNICEF's planning initially focused on high-level response objectives; the 2021 HAC Appeal, which was prepared prior to the full-scale war for the ongoing response in the east of the country, was revised in March 2022, and then in April and November as the magnitude of the crisis became apparent and as more information became available. It drew on data from official sources including the government, inter-agency assessment initiatives and mandated agencies.[51] At this time, UNICEF's needs assessment and analysis capacity was modest, which was evidenced by a lack of detailed response planning.[52] An interview with a programme staff member aptly summarized the challenge that the rapid change in the situation posed for UNICEF's planning: "at the time we were designing and planning, it was one situation. And when we came to the practice of implementing it, the situation was already different." While the pre-existing country programme document (CPD) continued to provide an overarching strategy for the programme in Ukraine, it was extended for an additional year to the end of 2023. Despite this, the three strategic priorities outlined in the CPD were quickly superseded by more contextually relevant response priorities.[53]

It is not possible to determine whether UNICEF targeted those in greatest need during the early phase of the response, as it emphasized distributing supplies to consignees. It was then that these people and organizations determined how and to whom assistance was distributed. Where UNICEF established services, rather than identifying and targeting those who were most vulnerable, UNICEF's response tended to focus on supporting static service posts such as Spilno centres, health centres and hospitals, which could provide services to affected people (*see Part B, the Sector Report, Section 7*). Given the context of mass displacement in the months following the full-scale war, this strategy went some way to ensuring that UNICEF's response met urgent needs and priorities. Despite the lack of targeting, the FGDs undertaken during the evaluation revealed that this approach ensured that affected people received critical support, albeit with the caveat that they required access to a mobile network and a smartphone to access the resources and services provided (for a more detailed analysis of UNICEF's sectoral responses, *see part B*).

Mid-phase of the response (September 2022–February 2023)

> **Finding Relevance 2**
> UNICEF placed greater emphasis on targeting the most vulnerable people as staff capacity increased and as the response shifted towards the east of the country. Inconsistencies in staffing, the scale of need in newly accessible areas, and the challenges of maintaining access meant that a blanket approach to coverage continued to be adopted in many areas of targeted *oblasts*.

The mid-phase of the Ukraine L3 response was a period of transition for UNICEF as the locus of the response started to shift towards the east of the country where humanitarian needs were greatest and more persistent.

With the opening of field offices in the south and east of the country and scale-up of staffing, planning capacity began to increase, although limitations persisted. With the rapid gains made by the Government of Ukraine and the removal of large swathes of territory from the temporary military control of the Russian Federation from September 2022, there was significant need and space for UNICEF to respond. UNICEF set out its approach in newly accessible areas in clearly articulated plans, which provided a framework for its response.[54] At a collective level, UNICEF also continued to support assessments and planning for inter-agency missions to high-risk zones in such areas.[55]

During the latter half of 2022, however, the response continued to focus on the provision of supplies; while it was reactive and responsive to shifts in the context, needs assessments remained ad hoc and limited – therefore hindering assessment of whether the response was aligned with the greatest needs at the time. To a certain degree, this corresponded to the number of supply requests that came in the early stage of the response and which continued to grow as the Government of Ukraine regained control of previously occupied areas and sought assistance for them. Targeting and confirmation of requests, however, continued to rely on identification of the areas and populations in greatest need by municipalities, mayors or civil society partners, with little scope for triangulation or deeper analysis. Interviews with field office staff highlighted the limited scope in

this period for more nuanced targeting of vulnerable people, given the speed of the evolving crisis, the scale of immediate need and the limited data available.

While some sections and teams produced planning strategies during this time,[56] these were limited in scope and number. As the staffing of the field offices was strengthened, UNICEF faced the dilemma of whether to continue to respond in a timely but ad hoc way, or whether to take stock and consolidate its response. Interviews with staff highlighted that the former approach prevailed at least until the end of 2022. It was not until this time that efforts were made to take stock of the response by undertaking an internal operational review. A key finding of the review was a lack of planning and prioritization. During the exercise, UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff strongly noted the need for a "more evidence-based approach to programming and for better national and regional planning". They raised "concerns that strategy development had been inconsistent across programme sections and FOs [field offices] which had contributed to prioritization challenges."[57] The recommendation made in the review for "better programme prioritization and a clear strategic direction"[58] was prescient for the relevance of UNICEF's response and informed the 2023 Annual Management Plan written at the end of the year.[59]

Late phase of the response (March–November 2023)

Finding Relevance 3

It was not until the end of the L3 response that UNICEF's internal capacity and implementing partnership portfolio was sufficiently strengthened to permit greater use of assessments to inform response plans and priorities.

By April 2023, UNICEF's field offices and programme sections had greater capacity, and the decentralization process had gathered pace. This permitted the organization greater latitude to shift from a focus on supplies, to one delivered by IPs, which permitted a more nuanced understanding of vulnerability and resulted in a more refined approach to targeting. The shift in focus was accompanied by the preparation of partner programme documents; at oblast level, efforts were made to outline UNICEF's recovery proposition;[60] and at sector and programme levels, strategies were more fully and formally articulated, which strengthened strategic direction.[61]

Conclusion Relevance 2

The relevance of UNICEF's response was strengthened towards the end of the L3 response as it gave greater priority to the conflict-affected east and south of the country, with increases in staff capacity and with a shift towards a partnership model of programming that permitted more detailed needs assessment, analysis and prioritization.



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To what extent was UNICEF's response aligned with and adapted to the needs of affected people?

Geographical adaptation

Finding Relevance 4
UNICEF adapted its geographical presence and the nature and scale of its response to reflect shifts in the context and in the needs of affected people. This necessitated quite significant changes, which required managerial courage, operational agility and staff resilience.

Programme adaptation is an aspect of humanitarian response where significant learning took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was just ending at the time of the full-scale war of Ukraine. The COVID-19 response placed a premium on agencies' ability to learn and adapt, and the evaluation of UNICEF's pandemic response noted "extensive programme adaptations" across its responses worldwide.[62] In the Ukraine context, the sudden and significant shift in context required organizational agility and adaptation both in terms of agency presence and programming.

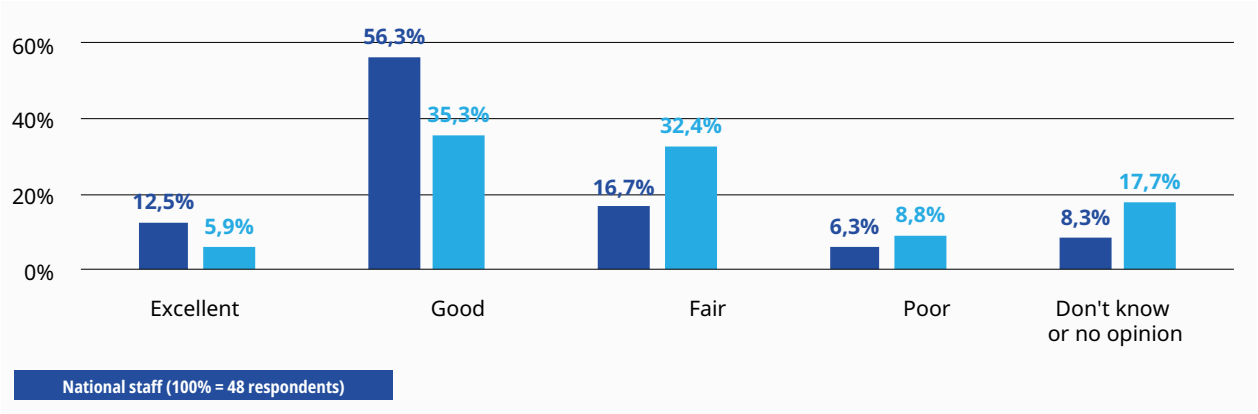
UNICEF's field presence went through continuous adaptation during the L3 response, reflecting the fluid nature of the war, IDP movement patterns and changing needs. As the scale and geographical breadth of the response became clear, UNICEF sought to establish and set up field offices which were in closer proximity to people requiring assistance.

BOX 2

A summary of UNICEF's shifting field presence in Ukraine

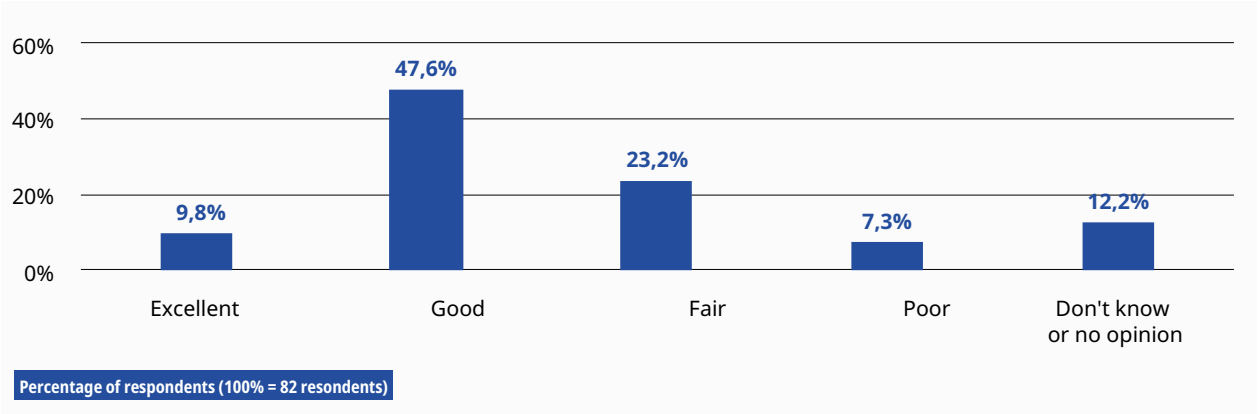
Interviews conducted across UNICEF's field offices in Kropyvnytskyi, Kharkiv and Dnipro, supplemented by internal reports, provide evidence of the shifts in UNICEF's geographical footprint. In May 2022, UNICEF expanded its presence into Kropyvnytskyi and a sub-office was opened to enable access to the east; this access point, however, shifted to Dnipro when that office was expanded in August. This shift also reflected the fact that Dnipro started to host large IDP numbers, whereas at the start of the war IDPs were primarily in the west. A more significant presence in Vinnytsia was planned, but was later scaled down according to needs. The shift in positioning to Dnipro and the opening of the Odesa office in August facilitated operations in newly accessible areas such as Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and Kherson in September and October.

Figure 5. Staff perceptions of UNICEF's effectiveness in adapting its presence to maintain relevance



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Figure 6. Staff perceptions of UNICEF's effectiveness in adapting its presence to maintain relevance (consolidated responses)

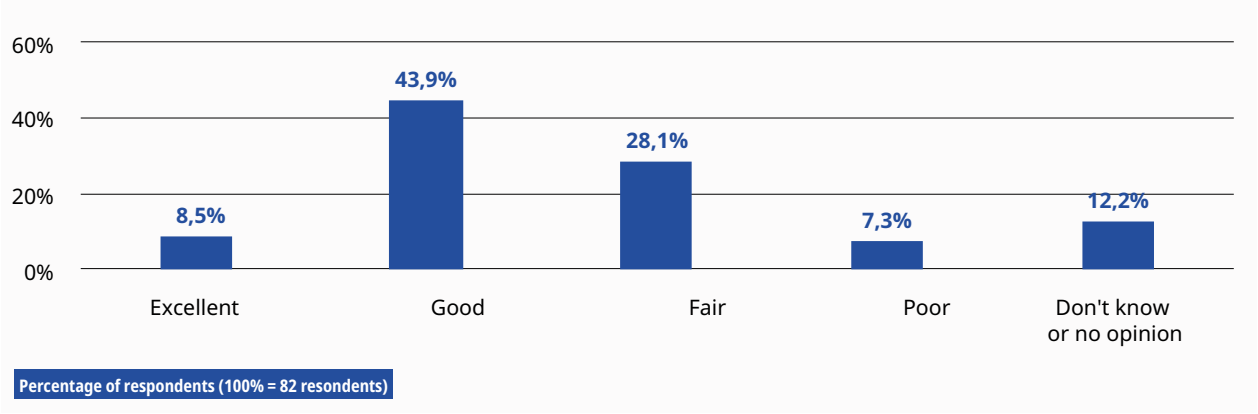


Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Despite the organizational challenges posed by the changes in UNICEF's presence and staffing, there is strong evidence of the positive effect that these efforts had on maintaining its relevance throughout the L3 response. The results of the staff survey endorse this finding (*see Figure 5 and Figure 6*), showing broad satisfaction with UNICEF's performance in shifting its organizational presence over time to the areas in greatest need. There were challenges, however, in realizing these aspirations in a timely way, which resulted in some internal criticism of inertia in UNICEF's organizational footprint and focus. This perception was highlighted in interviews, and the staff survey revealed a difference in perceptions of national and international staff, with the latter being considerably more sceptical than the former. An institutional motivation for adapting UNICEF's geographical presence is to meet its commitment to "stay and deliver",[63] to be more proximate to those affected by the war, and to be more responsive to assistance and protection needs. Specifically on this commitment, the staff survey received a significantly positive response, with 68 per cent of staff respondents considering UNICEF's performance in maintaining an operational presence as "excellent" or "good".

Sectoral and response adaptation

Figure 7. Adaptation of UNICEF's sectoral response



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Both during and after the L3 response, the UNICEF response was adapted to address changes in the context. Prior to the full-scale war, UNICEF had a modest humanitarian response in the east, with a longer-term development programme across other parts of the country. Over a period of just six weeks, UNICEF's focus shifted to supporting a country-wide response as a quarter of Ukraine's population fled their homes and an estimated 7.7 million people were internally displaced.[64] Concurrently, the crisis in eastern and southern areas was accelerating, which caused massive devastation in urban centres, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, severely disrupting critical services, especially health care, education, water and protection services. In response to these needs and in the latter phase of the L3 response, UNICEF adapted its response to support infrastructure rehabilitation alongside delivery of services and humanitarian supplies. Interviews with programme staff across UNICEF's sections offered examples of how the response had adapted over time and in reaction to contextual changes (*see section 4.3*). The shifts required in the scale and nature of the response took time for sections to plan and execute; this did not happen as quickly as was desirable in some aspects of the response (*see section 4.1.1*). Despite this, however, efforts were made across the response to maintain the relevance of programming actions on the ground (*see Sector Report*). Staff perceptions of ongoing programmatic relevance were generally positive, with 53 per cent of staff considering performance to be "excellent" or "good" (*see Figure 7*).

Conclusion Relevance 3

The need for constant adaptation – in its organizational structure and staffing, its response and its geographical positioning – placed UNICEF under fairly constant stress. Despite this, the evidence shows that there was a consistent willingness to maintain agility and to shift gears when required, which was important for maintaining the relevance of the L3 response. This is an area where UNICEF performed well.

Effectiveness

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

⇒ **Finding Preparedness 1**: While UNICEF had a sound analysis of the potential humanitarian impact on children and their parents of an escalation of the conflict to a full-scale war, the scale of the emergency was not envisaged or planned for; as a result, it was a challenge to respond effectively in the early stages of the response.

⇒ **Finding Preparedness 2**: The process by which UNICEF's sections identified and prepared for some of the priority effects of the upsurge in the then-conflict ensured the organization was prepared to respond, although not on the scale that was ultimately required.

⇒ **Finding AAP 1**: With the notable exception of the cash transfer programme, UNICEF did not have a systematic approach to collecting complaints and feedback or adjusting activities accordingly.

⇒ **Finding AAP 2**: UNICEF generated and collected substantial information on the evolving needs of the affected population, but only a portion of this information was used to inform planning and response.

⇒ **Finding AAP 3**: While UNICEF's AAP systems improved in the late phase of the response; full realization of the 'participation promise' of AAP has yet to be achieved.

⇒ **Finding PSEA 1**: After a slow start (due in part to low UNICEF Ukraine Country Office capacity in gender equality/gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE) and PSEA), PSEA became a country office priority in the mid-phase of the response; by the time of the L3 evaluation most PSEA commitments had been met.

⇒ **Finding PSEA 2**: Among national partners and project participants, there was some confusion regarding the distinction between GBViE and PSEA, and a lack of clarity about the distinction between and mechanisms for PSEA reporting and general complaints.

⇒ **Finding PSEA 3**: Even though PSEA reporting channels are generally available to the public, only half the people questioned during FGDs were aware of them.

⇒ **Finding principles 1**: UNICEF's early response frequently focused on responding to government requests (from national and local governments, municipalities and mayors) for assistance and was delivered to consignees. While this achieved volume, it was not possible for UNICEF to adequately target or monitor the response, particularly in the early months. This had implications for perceptions of its proximity to government and its operational independence.

⇒ **Finding Principles 2**: UNICEF took time to shift the locus of its operations from the west and centre of Ukraine to a more specific focus in the south and east of the country. Over time, UNICEF has strengthened the relevance of its response through a process of shifting from a response largely focused on supplies, to implementation through IPs. By the end of the L3 response, UNICEF was well positioned to deliver more targeted and impartial assistance through its IPs to some of those in greatest need.

⇒ **Finding Principles 3**: In 2023, UNICEF's programming footprint did not match the geography of needs: with the exception of WASH, insufficient services were focused on frontline *oblasts* in the east and south.

⇒ **Finding Principles 4**: UNICEF has been a consistent supporter of the inter-agency Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell, providing staff and supplies, and where relevant providing access to its 'last-mile delivery partners'. Through its support of this collective response modality, UNICEF has reached some of those most severely affected by the war in high-risk, frontline and newly accessible areas.

⇒ **Finding Communications/Advocacy 1**: The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office provided regular, high-quality communications material in the form of SitReps (situation reports) and updates from the response.

⇒ **Finding Communications/Advocacy 2:** The UNICEF communications and advocacy team regularly updated the humanitarian advocacy strategy developed in 2022, but it was not until 2023 that a single, coherent strategy was in place.

⇒ **Finding Communications/Advocacy 3:** UNICEF has made important progress in supporting Ukraine's efforts to replace its child residential institutions with a system of Better Care, but to fully complete this transition will require continued effort and resources.

⇒ **Finding Communications/Advocacy 4:** The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office is effectively supporting the accurate and verified reporting of grave violations, which enables the advocacy of the United Nations, including UNICEF, at country level, as well as providing the Secretary-General with United Nations-verified information to enable his advocacy, including with parties to the conflict, and decision-making.

⇒ **Finding Monitoring 1:** UNICEF's ability to monitor and report on the early stages of its L3 response was limited by human and material resources. The engagement of third-party monitors permitted a more coherent and comprehensive approach to be adopted, but it was not until the end of 2022 that field monitoring commenced. UNICEF's monitoring tools were enhanced in tandem with its internal capacity; while there were initial gaps, these have been rectified, which has enhanced oversight and reduced risk.

⇒ **Finding Monitoring 2:** UNICEF identified the need to increase its monitoring capacity fairly early on in the L3 response, but full UNICEF Ukraine Country Office and field office staffing was not in place until towards the close of 2022. While monitoring data were routinely gathered and reported, there was a gap in the use of this evidence to inform programme planning and adaptation.

⇒ **Finding Conflict sensitivity 1:** UNICEF staff apply a limited, 'do no harm' understanding of conflict sensitivity at the programme level.

⇒ **Finding Conflict sensitivity 2:** In some regions, mild social tensions continue between Russian and Ukrainian language speakers, and between IDPs and host communities, but addressing these tensions was not a UNICEF priority.

CONCLUSIONS

⇒ **Conclusion Preparedness:** UNICEF, like other humanitarian agencies, was ill prepared for the humanitarian implications of the full-scale war. Despite this, the contingency planning that was undertaken did contribute to its response, particularly the analysis undertaken by sections on how UNICEF could intervene.

⇒ **Conclusion AAP:** UNICEF's Ukraine operation is not meeting the expectations of UNICEF's AAP commitments. While some feedback is collected, the use of evidence to inform decision-making is uneven across the office, and the participation of the affected population in planning is limited to isolated activities.

⇒ **Conclusion PSEA:** UNICEF Ukraine has mostly met its PSEA commitments. Indeed, so much attention was paid to PSEA that this detracted from advancing the organization's gender equality objectives.

⇒ **Conclusion Principles:** Like many agencies, UNICEF has struggled at times to achieve a balance in maintaining its humanitarian principles in practice. While the complexity of programming in the initial response may go some way to justifying this, the shift in focus of the response to the south and east has offered scope to strengthen the impartiality of its programming. The shift away from a supply-driven response to one delivered by partners offers scope for UNICEF to focus on better understanding needs and targeting those who are most vulnerable.

⇒ **Conclusion Communications/Advocacy:** Advocacy for children's rights has been successful at the national level in areas such as Better Care, and Children and Armed Conflict, which align with national government policies. However, UNICEF has been less effective in engaging on child rights issues that confront government policy, particularly in the education sector. Decentralization offers opportunities to increase advocacy at the local level, which is key to the changes envisaged by both Better Care and education.

⇒ **Conclusion Monitoring:** The pace that UNICEF scaled up its L3 response was not matched by the pace with which it expanded its monitoring team and tools, which led to gaps in its ability to adequately oversee and assure the delivery of its supplies and services. In the absence of its own capacity, third-party monitors provided an important safety net, supplemented by UNICEF's incremental improvements in staffing and tools. It was not until the middle of the L3 response that full capacity was in place.

⇒ **Conclusion Conflict sensitivity:** Some social tensions remain between IDPs and the host community that UNICEF is not sufficiently addressing in its programming.



To what extent has the UNICEF response adhered to the CCCs and is aligned to principles, standards and commitments?

The summary table below shows the assessment of CCCs, each of which is analysed in its respective chapter of Part A, the Evaluation Report, and Part B, the Sector Report. Assessment of humanitarian principles is found in chapter 4.2.5. The assessment of effort is the Evaluation Team's judgement based on its analysis; performance is directly lifted from UNICEF's own indicator ratings as set out in the full Results Assessment Module (RAM) report for 2022; the quality of evidence also reflects the Evaluation Team's judgement as set out in the Strength of evidence analysis in Part C, Annex 9.

Table 11. Strength and quality of evidence

Title of the Core Commitment to Children	Effort	Performance	Quality of evidence
Preparedness	🟡	🟡	🟡
Coordination	🟡	🟡	🟢
Supply and logistics	🟢	🟡	🟢
Humanitarian access	🟡	🔴	🟡
Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)	🟢	🟡	🟢
Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)	🟡	🟡	🟢
Quality of programmes	🟡	🟡	🟢
Multisectoral and integrated programming	🟡	🟡	🟢
Equity (Target and reach disadvantaged children)	🔴	🔴	🟡
Linking humanitarian and development	🟢	🟢	🟢
Localization	🟡	🟡	🟢
SBC (not fully assessed)	🟢	🟡	🟡
Humanitarian cash transfers	🟡	🟡	🟢
Needs assessments, planning, M&E	🟡	🟡	🟡
Health	🟡	🟡	🟢
Nutrition	🔴	🟡	🟡
Child protection (GBViE, MHPSS)	🟡	🟡	🟢
Better Care	🟢	🟡	🟢
Education	🟡	🟡	🟢
Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)	🟢	🟢	🟢
Social protection	(See HCT in section 2.2.8)		
Gender equality and empowerment of girls and women	🔴	🟡	🟢
Disabilities	🟡	🟡	🟡

Title of the Core Commitment to Children	Effort	Performance	Quality of evidence
Early childhood development (ECD)	(See education in section 2.3.6)		
Adolescent development and participation (ADAP)	🟢	🟢	🟢
Large-scale movements of refugees, migrants, and IDPs	🟢	🟢	🟢
Human resources	🟢	🟡	🟢
Communication and advocacy	🟡	🟡	🟡
Partnerships with governments and CSOs	🟢	🟢	🟢
Resource mobilization	🟢	🟢	🟢
Supply and logistics	🟢	🟢	🟢

Source: Evaluation Team.

To what extent did UNICEF's preparedness support its response in Ukraine?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Improve humanitarian response through investing in preparedness with a focus on enabling effective and timely response, reducing costs and reaching the most vulnerable [ref. 2.1.1]

Emergency preparedness is a key means by which UNICEF assures the delivery of its CCCs in an effective, timely and cost-efficient way.[65] Preparedness planning is mandatory; it is a core aspect of UNICEF's planning processes and integrated throughout the planning cycle. Accountabilities are outlined in a set of mandatory Minimum Preparedness Actions and Minimum Preparedness Standards for country offices, regional offices and HQ.[66] The Emergency Preparedness Platform (EPP) is the online tool for implementation of the procedures. The EPP assists teams to analyse risks, self-assess and monitor their operational preparedness, and identify high-return actions in advance of an immediate response.

UNICEF's emergency preparedness and organizational readiness

Finding Preparedness 1
While UNICEF had a sound analysis of the potential humanitarian impact on children and their parents of an escalation of the conflict to a full-scale war, the scale of the emergency was not envisaged or planned for; as a result, it was a challenge to respond effectively in the early stages of the response.

With heightened tension in eastern Ukraine in late 2021, UNICEF developed contingency plans based on the possibility of an emergency situation; it recognized the volatility of the situation and the increasing threat of war, which would heighten the risk for children and vulnerable groups. Accordingly, UNICEF's multi-hazard risk analysis noted that the effects of a potential escalation to a full-scale war would be borne most heavily by those who were already most vulnerable.

To address these heightened risks, UNICEF in December 2021 drafted a contingency plan for a potential escalation.[67] The (offline) contingency plan was prepared as an alternative to using the (online) EPP.[68] This brief plan was prepared as a placeholder for further development in the following weeks. The contingency plan considered four scenarios (*see Box 3*).

BOX 3

UNICEF contingency plan scenarios (January 2022)

Scenario A: This scenario comprised the status quo as outlined in the 2022 HAC on which UNICEF's activities were based.

Scenario B: This scenario envisaged a significant increase in hostilities, which had been confined within the two eastern *oblasts* of Donetsk and Luhansk. It envisaged additional preparedness measures for a spillover of the then-conflict into central and western Ukraine.

Scenario C: This scenario required immediate enhancement of preparedness in six *oblasts* in Central and Western Ukraine, which included pre-positioning critical supplies to meet the needs of 40,000 people, in addition to capacity-building of frontline responders/partners to deliver humanitarian response.

Scenario D: This scenario envisaged the then-conflict escalating into new areas outside of the two eastern *oblasts*.

Scenario E: This scenario, also termed by interviewees 'the Doomsday scenario', catered for an increase in hostilities across the country at an unprecedented scale.

Source: UNICEF.[69]

Under each of the scenarios, priority needs of women and children were identified for health and nutrition, WASH, child protection, education and social protection sections. UNICEF identified the capacity and presence of government and partners in government-controlled areas, highlighting the limitations of many United Nations agencies and international NGOs in areas not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. The plan foresaw that frontline response capacities for priority humanitarian response activities would need to be enhanced.

The Contingency Plan committed UNICEF to prepare to respond to an impending crisis based on its emergency expertise and capacity, and its network of 17 (local and international) partners in the area. UNICEF planned to draw on existing programme cooperation agreements and long-term agreements in the event of an emergency or escalation of the then-conflict. It was envisaged that a decentralized model would be adopted to support any response scenario. In addition to the four scenarios, UNICEF's contingency plan identified potential risks and mitigation measures, including immediate human resource needs and surge deployments.

To strengthen preparedness measures at country office level, on 26 January 2022 UNICEF circulated the internal contingency plan for final input.[70] This contingency plan was based on scenario B (*see Box 3*). UNICEF's sectoral targets were estimated based on the cluster targets (taking into account 10–20 per cent of the cluster target). By 22 February, all planned UNICEF interventions in areas not under the control of the Government of Ukraine had been placed on hold as a consequence of frequent shelling. This escalation coincided with UNICEF's plans to transport contingency supplies to its warehouse in Kyiv as part of a first phase order to these areas.



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Preparedness actions taken in advance of the full-scale war

UNICEF mobilized US$3 million (US$600,000 from the Preparedness Fund and US$2.4 million from the Emergency Programme Fund) for procurement of supplies, logistics, human resources and capacity-building of partners in the week prior to the Russian invasion.[71] Efforts were also made to engage with the Public Partnerships Division for outreach and engagement of resource partners in readiness for a response.[72] A request for the deployment of 10 surge staff was made to HQ to support the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office for two months. The request was to have staff in position by the end of February/early March. As a precautionary measure, a decision was taken to relocate non-essential staff and dependents from Ukraine. Preparations were initiated to facilitate the relocation of dependents, including relocation points within Ukraine to receive staff and dependents at short notice.

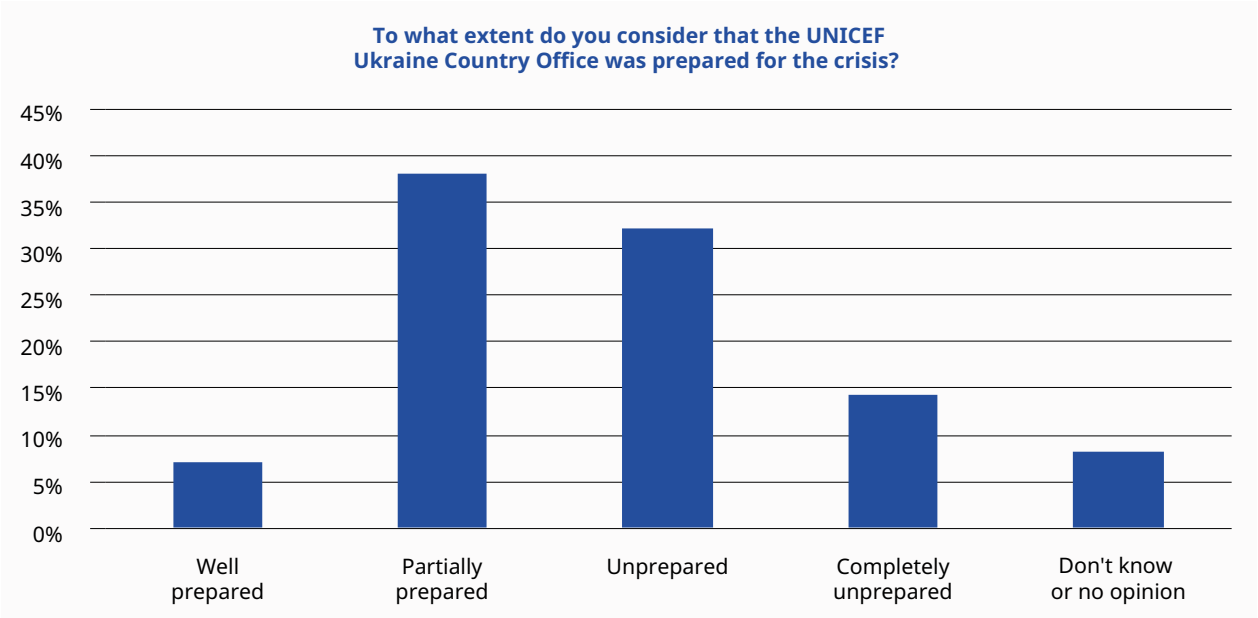
Preparedness actions of UNICEF sections

Finding Preparedness 2

The process by which UNICEF's sections identified and prepared for some of the priority effects of the upsurge in the then-conflict ensured the organization was prepared to respond, although not on the scale that was ultimately required.

In **health**, UNICEF focused on preparing to enhance the mobile response through existing institutional facilities, including home-visiting models. UNICEF worked with partners to enhance the readiness of health facilities to deliver extension of quality health-care services including primary health care; provision of emergency life-saving trauma care; services through mobile health teams to affected populations; and the establishment of a contingency medical stock to ensure continuity of health services provision.

Figure 8. UNICEF Ukraine Country Office preparedness



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The **WASH** section, which had engaged significantly with communities along the Line of Control, had already initiated a response to the upsurge in shelling, which had damaged strategic water infrastructure.[73] UNICEF had activated its WASH response through the provision of water trucking and distribution of bottled water targeted at the most vulnerable communities, in coordination with WASH Cluster. Recognizing the potential for further deterioration, the WASH section began planning to scale up its response capacity.

In coordination with the government, UNICEF commenced the development of an evacuation plan for children from institutional facilities. The focus was on establishing coordination mechanisms for a **child protection** response. The initial focus of contingency planning in child protection was on identifying alternative institutions in west Ukraine that could absorb children displaced from residential institutions in the east. Priority was also placed on monitoring and tracking children who were being relocated.

In **education**, UNICEF supported the development of emergency preparedness protocols and training of school personnel on their application. This work was scaled up as greater numbers of schools were closed.[74]

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, ECARO and HQ began to prepare to provide support for **social protection** and determined the need to commission a cash feasibility assessment, working in close collaboration with the Cash Working Group and the Ministry of Social Policy.

Prioritization for preparedness was given to UNICEF's **supplies**, which were procured and prepositioned in warehouse facilities in Kyiv; stock that had been ordered prior to the full-scale war included winter clothes for children, health supplies, recreational kits, early childhood development (ECD) kits and WASH supplies. A second order was made for additional supplies (comprising WASH, health, child protection and education supplies), which was received the first week of March. No distribution plans were prepared and no agreements were made for distribution of the goods in eastern, central and western Ukraine.

Conclusion Preparedness

UNICEF, like other humanitarian agencies, was ill prepared for the humanitarian implications of the full-scale war. Despite this, the contingency planning undertaken did contribute to its response, particularly the analysis undertaken by sections on how and where UNICEF could intervene.

To what extent were affected people informed of, able to participate in, and able to provide feedback on UNICEF's response?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Ensure that affected children and families participate in the decisions that affect their lives, are properly informed and consulted, and have their views acted upon [ref. 2.1.6]

⇒ Implement community engagement for behaviour and social change in collaboration with national and local actors [ref.2.2.7]

Table 12. Team assessment of output indicator achievement on community engagement and feedback

SBC output indicator target[75]	Indicator rating	Team assessment of overall sector results
# people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services	**Fully achieved** 🟢	With the notable exception of the cash programme, UNICEF did not have a systematic approach to collecting complaints and feedback, or adjusting activities accordingly. UNICEF's Ukraine operation is not fully meeting the expectations of UNICEF's AAP commitments. While some feedback is collected, use of evidence to inform decisionmaking is uneven across the office and the participation of the affected population in planning is limited to isolated activities.
# people who participate in engagement actions	**Partially achieved** 🟡	
# people sharing their concerns and asking questions/clarifications for available support services to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms	**Partially achieved** 🟡	

Source: Evaluation Team.

UNICEF's approach to AAP is governed by the 2020 AAP Handbook[76] and the AAP Strategy 2022–2025. Since 2022, AAP has been a mandatory theme in internal audits as well as a mandatory core indicator corporately. In brief, in an emergency response, the expectation (requirement for L2 and L3 emergencies)[77] is that UNICEF will designate a senior staff-member as AAP focal point, embed AAP in the programme management cycle, allocate resources for AAP, undertake a rapid information and communications needs assessment with the participation of affected populations, and set up an information provision, feedback and complaints mechanism.

Throughout the humanitarian system, AAP was for many years reduced to using complaints boxes and hotlines. However, since AAP became an IASC priority in 2015, followed by the Grand Bargain's emphasis on the Participation Revolution in 2016, AAP has

become much more structured system-wide and expectations of meaningful two-way engagement have increased. The current benchmarks for assessing AAP at UNICEF are set out in the CCC guidance, summarized below (*see Box 4).*[78]

BOX 4

UNICEF benchmarks for assessment of AAP

Affected and at-risk populations, including children and women:

1. Participate in humanitarian planning processes and in decisions that affect their lives;
2. Are informed about their rights and entitlements, expected standards of conduct by UNICEF personnel, available services, and how to access them through their preferred language and methods of communication (as per the Sphere standards);
3. Have their feedback systematically collected and used to inform programme design and course correction;
4. Have access to safe and confidential complaint mechanisms.

Source: UNICEF.[79]

AAP in UNICEF is led and supported at the country office level by the SBC section. At the same time, UNICEF's global AAP strategy makes it clear that accountability for AAP rests with the representative and deputy, and that AAP within a country office is a shared responsibility across programmes, cross-sectoral areas and operations (supply and partnerships).[80]

Finding AAP 1

With the notable exception of the cash programme, UNICEF did not have a systematic approach to collecting complaints and feedback, or adjusting activities accordingly.

Immediately after the crisis began, ECARO drafted a concept note for a regional complaints and feedback mechanism, but this was not implemented in Ukraine at that time. Starting in March 2022, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office set up three important components of an AAP system: (i) the country office launched a number of perception surveys to understand the concerns and priorities of the affected population;[81] (ii) it stepped up the transmission of key messages to the affected population through television, websites, social media and print channels; and (iii) it set up hotlines, in particular for the HCT programme, as well as a chatbot to collect feedback from mothers receiving newborn kits. As the AAP focal point, the SBC section took the lead on all these early initiatives, and partly for this reason early AAP activity focused primarily on transmitting messages to the affected population and listening to their needs as they evolved.[82]

According to the draft audit report,[83] and confirmed by the Evaluation Team's site visits in November 2023, there was little evidence of complaints and feedback mechanisms at the locations where the Ukrainian public received UNICEF's services. This is not altogether unsurprising, since in the early response the bulk of UNICEF's assistance was delivering supplies to consignees, who then distributed the supplies onwards to the affected population, many of whom were on the move. Any participant feedback would have been collected and managed either by these consignees, using their own mechanisms if they had them, or by the education and health institutions to which UNICEF delivered supplies, and which would not be expected to have complaints and feedback systems other than those used normally by government institutions.[84] In this early period, *direct* recipients of UNICEF assistance – recipients with individually assessed needs and tailored support – were limited to cash recipients, children visiting Spilno centres or similar service centres supported by UNICEF (e.g., youth centres) or people visited by multi-disciplinary mobile teams (MMTs). Of these, the only service-providing entity that had a fully developed individual complaints mechanism was the cash programme.

FGD participants across locations demonstrated awareness of specific feedback mechanisms, such as QR codes, verbal surveys and Telegram groups, and several adults mentioned the UNICEF hotline. However, some participants, especially in Kyiv city, were uncertain about the best ways to provide feedback or suggestions. Spilno participants were confident that they could complain if they needed to, but Spilno management explained that this was through ad hoc on-site complaints to the facility manager, or through the general UNICEF hotline. There was no systematic mechanism to solicit feedback to improve performance.

> "At this stage, there are no complaints. But if you have any suggestions, I think you can contact the UNICEF hotline. I really hope that reasonable suggestions will be heard and taken into account." (Dnipro, adult FGD)

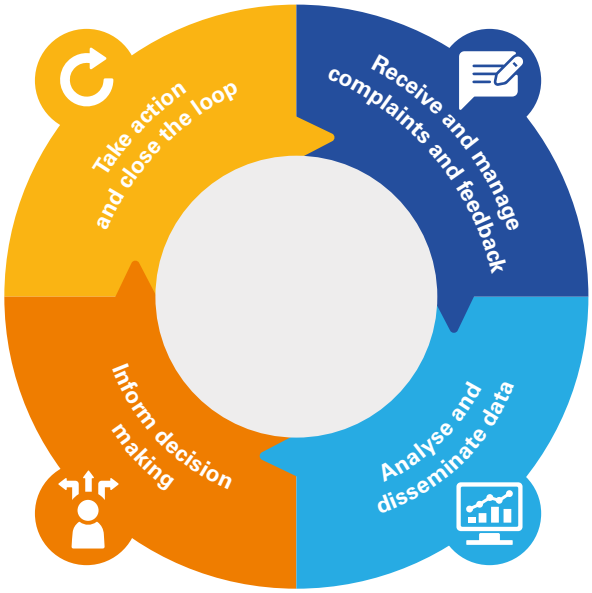
Finding AAP 2

UNICEF generated and collected substantial information on the evolving needs of the affected population, but only a portion of this information was used to inform planning and response.

AAP work continued to grow in scale from mid-2022 until the end of the L3 period in March 2023, but UNICEF's conceptual and programmatic approach to it did not change profoundly. AAP remained focused on the same three activities: perception surveys supported by social listening (including U-Report), transmission of an increasing range and complexity of messages, and complaints and feedback hotlines. There is little quantitative evidence on the quality of this AAP work, including use of feedback and complaints to inform programme decisions. In line with global HAC requirements, the RAM performance indicators for AAP in 2022 were relatively un-nuanced – measuring activities and participants[85] but not outcomes relating to accountability and change. Accordingly, to understand the *quality* of AAP at this time the Evaluation Team has relied less on the RAM and Country Office Annual Report, and more on KIIs, reports, FGDs and the staff online survey.

At the beginning of 2023, the UNICEF-led clusters undertook a United Nations system-mandated cluster coordination performance monitoring (CCPM) exercise. The exercise has one section and three indicators for AAP. Of the UNICEF-led clusters, the WASH and Health CCPM surveys both self-reported good performance on AAP and PSEA. However, the Education Cluster was scored by its members as only satisfactory on PSEA and unsatisfactory on "Mechanisms to receive, investigate and act upon complaints on the assistance received agreed upon and used by partners."[86]

Figure 9. UNICEF's feedback management loop



Source: UNICEF.[87]

Use of evidence to inform decision-making[88]

With reference to the feedback cycle outlined in Figure 9,[89] the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office performed well during the initial stage of widely disseminating information on programmes and broadly collecting information on needs (although as explained above, the individual complaints and feedback mechanism was only implemented systematically for the cash programme). On analysis and dissemination, despite the availability of a large amount of information from UNICEF's surveys, hotline data and other resources (e.g., social listening), the analysis of UNICEF-generated data by the respective programme divisions was limited.[90] Very little evidence exists of UNICEF's use of feedback to inform or adapt the response; with a few exceptions, the Evaluation Team found that, after activities commenced (supplies procured, services contracted, partnership programme documents finalized, etc.), then activities were rarely adjusted in response to new knowledge about needs and challenges, or recipient feedback (*see Box 5*).[91] The weakest link in UNICEF's implementation of the feedback mechanism was in taking action to close the loop as there was

little evidence of changes being communicated to project participants. In summary, as UNICEF moved through the feedback cycle, UNICEF's performance became progressively weaker.

BOX 5

Reasons given for not using feedback and evidence to adjust or adapt UNICEF's response

During interviews with UNICEF staff and partners, and in responses to the online staff survey, several reasons were offered for the infrequent and inadequate use of evidence to inform their decision-making. First among these, was the sense that there was too much information and too little time: staff felt overworked and did not have enough time to read and analyse reports and evidence. Some staff knew about the data but did not know where to find it; others felt overwhelmed by the quantity of data and found it difficult to identify what was most relevant. Some staff felt that they were not sufficiently data-literate to be able to fully use the data that was available; also, many staff are new to UNICEF and are unfamiliar with principles of feedback and course correction, or uncertain of what scope they had to adapt programmes as a result of new information. Finally, some staff felt that the administrative burden of changing a contract, partnership agreement, programme document, existing response or the composition of a kit was so great, or that the donor conditions were too inflexible, that it was more expedient to continue – in the knowledge that it did not precisely meet the needs but was 'good enough'. In all likelihood, the limited use of data for decision-making is a combination of all these factors and varies for each staff-member.

A structural reason given for the failure to use evidence to design or adapt the response in Ukraine was that UNICEF staff often drew on other experiences or prioritized other inputs to inform decision-making. Interviews highlighted that many staff tended to prioritize other knowledge sources or stakeholders above information from the affected population. An important source was staff members' own experiential knowledge of what UNICEF "usually does or provides in emergencies." Government counterparts were a second source that was prioritized; it was frequently the case that UNICEF responded to government requests in the absence of independent analysis of recipients' needs. The evaluation is not suggesting that prioritizing a government request is not valid; there were many situations where the government – especially local government – was well-placed to identify needs. But it was frequently used in place of engaging communities themselves about their specific needs.

Finally, several staff observed that linkages between the SBC section and programme sections were generally not strong: programme sections did not consistently use the information provided by the SBC section. With regard to underuse of the SBC section's AAP data, one reason for this disconnect raised during interviews was that at the time of the emergency response (i.e., prior to the renewed attention to AAP in late 2023), AAP was not 'owned' by programmes, but was instead seen either as an activity under the SBC section, or as one of many reporting indicators. In sum, the evaluation found that there were few examples of UNICEF Ukraine using evidence for decision-making during the L3 response – neither direct participant feedback through AAP mechanisms, nor more broad sources of research and evidence.[92]

Finding AAP 3

While UNICEF's AAP systems improved in the late stage of the response, full realization of the 'participation promise' of AAP has yet to be achieved.

Since the end of the L3 response, the office has made several commitments and taken steps to strengthen its AAP performance. Some of these new initiatives stem from the audit findings and the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office management response; some reflect an ECARO initiative to prioritize AAP (guided by the corporate AAP strategy that was approved in December 2022);[93] and some are initiatives instigated by staff benefiting from a bit more "breathing and thinking room" now that the L3 response is over, sections are fully staffed, and the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office is able to normalize its activities and processes. One key characteristic of UNICEF's more recent programming is that there is much less focus on the delivery of supplies to consignees, and more on activities supporting specific vulnerable populations through IPs – activities that lend themselves more to systematic complaints and feedback mechanisms, and participatory planning.

Specifically, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has committed to "develop a framework for evidenced-based, context-specific processes for consultation and participation of affected populations including mechanisms for collating the views of affected population in respect of interventions and responses that would impact on their lives";[94] and to that end the country office has started drafting an AAP road map for 2023–2024 for the country office, to inform current AAP activities and the CPD process. As part of this, UNICEF has established a new broad-spectrum hotline mechanism, with the intention of becoming a general public feedback mechanism about priorities and family well-being. To strengthen participation in its programme planning, UNICEF also created a Young People's Advisory Board and initiated several human-centred design pilots (*see Box 6*).

BOX 6

Human-centred design pilot – Mental health and psychosocial support

In autumn 2023, a UNICEF team travelled to six *oblasts* across Ukraine and used a range of innovative techniques to consult in depth with 230 children, parents and school psychologists, to identify barriers, drivers, communication channels and ideas to support the mental health of adolescents and young people. Insights were then presented to Ukrainian government agencies and mental health NGOs, and subsequently used to help shape an SBC communication campaign, and mental health and psychosocial support initiatives implemented by several UNICEF programme sections. In the next phase, selected concepts will be tested, then initiatives will be redesigned based on an additional feedback loop.

To strengthen accountability and performance, an AAP focal point has been appointed in the SBC section, in addition to AAP focal points across programme teams and a knowledge management officer in the Programme Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) section. While this constitutes important progress, there continues to be a discussion about shifting responsibility for AAP from the SBC section to the PME section; this may assist in broadening responsibility for AAP, and would allow the SBC section to focus on its primary role of providing information to the affected population and generating evidence for programme decision-making.

UNICEF has recognized that the capacity of its staff and partners to meet its AAP commitments is insufficient. To address this, the organization has made efforts to strengthen the capacity of UNICEF's partners in feedback and complaints mechanisms, in addition to the capacity of UNICEF's own staff to mainstream AAP as part of programme planning processes. While promising, the evaluation did not find evidence of specific results from these initiatives.

These efforts are laudable and will undoubtedly strengthen UNICEF's performance in meeting its AAP commitments, but it will take time and will need change at both strategic and operational levels. To fully realize UNICEF's commitments, further work is needed to strengthen understanding, prepare and disseminate guidance and tools, and strengthen capacities that UNICEF does not yet possess.[95] At

the time the evaluation was conducted, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office did not have a clear plan for engaging the Young People's Advisory Board in programme (or CPD) design, and there did not appear to be a strategy to specifically include women and girls in planning (as required by CCC 2.4.1 on gender inclusion – see below).

The end goal of the Grand Bargain's Participation Revolution is not better complaints and feedback, but that affected populations can "participate in humanitarian planning processes and in decisions that affect their lives … [and] adolescent girls, women and their respective organizations are actively engaged in the design and delivery of programmes."[96] In the specific Ukraine context, this has been framed as: "Creating safe, appropriate, equitable and inclusive opportunities for girls, boys, women, and men of all ages, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, to participate in decisions that affect them."[97]

Unfortunately, UNICEF is far from reaching this ideal of participatory planning in Ukraine. The staff survey showed that staff recognize there is still a gap (40 per cent of all staff felt that "community participation in the design and delivery of UNICEF's programs" was good or excellent, but only 18 per cent of international staff felt this). The FGDs noted that there was limited parent and child consultation regarding the Spilno centres, although consultation would be welcome.[98] Given this low starting point, by articulating its AAP aspirations in this way, UNICEF has set itself a high bar that will require a sustained investment in systems development and capacity-building to achieve success. Moreover, there will be a continued need for careful planning to ensure that UNICEF achieves an appropriate balance in the participation of government, civil society and affected population representatives.

Conclusion AAP

UNICEF's Ukraine operation is not fully meeting the expectations of UNICEF's AAP commitments. While some feedback is collected, the use of evidence to inform decision-making is uneven across the office, and the participation of the affected population in planning is limited to isolated activities.

To what extent did UNICEF meet its PSEA commitments?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Deliver on UNICEF's commitment to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse [ref.2.1.5]

Finding PSEA 1

After a slow start (due in part to low UNICEF Ukraine Country Office capacity in GE/GBViE and PSEA), PSEA became a country office priority in the mid-phase of the response; by the time of the L3 evaluation most PSEA commitments had been met.

Finding PSEA 2

Among national partners and project participants, there was some confusion regarding the distinction between GBViE and PSEA, and a lack of clarity about the distinction between and mechanisms for PSEA reporting and general complaints.

Finding PSEA 3

Even though PSEA reporting channels are generally available to the public, only half the people questioned during FGDs were aware of them.

UNICEF's approach to PSEA is governed by a 2019 strategy[99] and a 2020 handbook.[100] In brief, the expectation is that UNICEF country offices will designate a PSEA focal point; participate in the country-level PSEA coordination mechanism; develop a PSEA action plan; train UNICEF staff on PSEA; train and certify partners; include PSEA in the text of programme documents; establish a PSEA referral pathway; and build PSEA into country office-level planning, monitoring and reporting.

PSEA has a highly structured framework tailored towards compliance with United Nations system-wide norms. PSEA is conventionally managed by a country office gender equality or GBViE team, and usually plans and reports under the rubric of child protection. However, PSEA is distinct from GBViE and gender equality in that it is a compliance mechanism that governs all staff and partners, and is unrelated to issues of equity, results or effectiveness.

Early phase of the response (March–August 2022)

A humanitarian system-level PSEA task force has existed in Ukraine since 2020; UNICEF has been a member since the outset.[101] At the time of the Russian invasion, UNICEF did not have dedicated staff resources for PSEA (or gender or GBViE) and had not embarked on training partners on its PSEA requirements. A PSEA specialist was deployed on a surge assignment from 11 May to 29 July 2022, undertaking an initial round of PSEA capacity assessments. Also in the first half of 2022, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office developed a PSEA action plan,[102] which focused on staff training, in addition to capacity assessment and training of partners. Two dedicated GBV positions were created in the programme budget review (PBR) of May 2022. Appropriate staffing and a PSEA action plan were not put in place until June 2022, four months into an emergency that was identified from the outset as a child protection crisis, which suggests that PSEA was not a significant management priority in the initial response.[103]

Mid-phase of the response (September 2022–February 2023)

By August 2022, implementation of the PSEA Action Plan was in process. A national organization was identified to support PSEA implementation across UNICEF's diverse partnerships, PSEA training materials were translated into Ukrainian, and PSEA capacity assessments and training were delivered to partners and MMTs.[104] A PSEA allegation handling and referral mechanism was also set up and rolled out. A separate PSEA training programme was implemented for frontline workers and a major PSEA public information campaign launched on social media, running from August to November 2022. During this period, the Gender Team was recruited. Additional PSEA assessments of partners and training sessions for partners and frontline workers continued through the winter.

Interviews with UNICEF staff revealed that by March 2023, the end of the L3 response, out of UNICEF's 36 partners, 20 were assessed as having full capacity, 13 as having medium capacity, and 1 as having no contact with beneficiaries (2 partners were in the process of the PSEA assessment).[105] PSEA outputs were reported in the 2022 Country Office Annual Report,[106] and in the final L3 summary SitRep.[107] UNICEF staff interviews revealed that by the late emergency response the mandatory and auditable character of PSEA had been recognized by management, who reportedly made available whatever policy support and resources were needed to meet the expected standards.[108]

Late phase of the response (March–November 2023)

From March 2023 until the time of the evaluation, PSEA was further consolidated within the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, with a strong emphasis placed on prevention. Notably, PSEA partner capacity assessments continued;[109] PSEA was incorporated as a mandatory indicator into the overall UNICEF annual workplan for all field offices; it was added to partner programme documents and incorporated into all three monitoring tools used by the country office (programmatic visits, field monitoring and TPM). Training also continued, reaching a cumulative total of 196 UNICEF staff, 284 partner staff and 1,215 frontline workers.[110]

Table 13. Proportion of partners' personnel who have received training on PSEA in the past 12 months

Proportion of personnel	Number of monitoring visits
None	22
1–25% have received training	16
26–50% have received training	12
51–75% have received training	9
76–100% have received training	117
Total field monitoring activities	**176**

Source: Field Monitoring (eTools FMM) (1 December 2023).[111]

Table 14. Children and adults' access to a safe accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse

Channel access	Number of monitoring activities
No safe and accessible channel	28
Channel available but not widely known	153
Channel available and well known	126
Total field monitoring activities	**307**

Source: Field Monitoring (eTools FMM) (7 December 2023).[112]

Interviews with partners, sampled field monitoring reports and Evaluation Team field observations confirmed that most partners were aware of the PSEA requirements and had made PSEA feedback mechanisms available to their participants. FGDs[113] and third-party monitors, however, both came to the same conclusion that, despite their availability, only about half of participants in UNICEF programmes were aware of PSEA feedback channels Participants in FGDs did not readily distinguish between GBViE and PSEA, or between general complaints/feedback and PSEA-specific referrals. At the time the evaluation was conducted, in November 2023, no case of PSEA had been reported to UNICEF by staff or partners, although it should be noted that only half of the affected population knew how to report PSEA.[114] Because UNICEF's PSEA response and referral system had not been used, the Evaluation Team was not able to assess its adequacy and performance.

Conclusion PSEA

UNICEF Ukraine has mostly met its PSEA commitments. Indeed, so much attention was paid to PSEA that this detracted from advancing the organization's gender equality objectives.

To what extent was UNICEF able to deliver a principled response and use this to gain access to those in greatest need?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

- ⇒ UNICEF is committed to the following humanitarian principles in its operations: humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence [ref. 1.4.1]
- ⇒ UNICEF promotes compliance with humanitarian principles when supporting the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response along with national and local authorities [ref. 2.1.2]
- ⇒ Seek to establish and maintain humanitarian access, so that all affected populations can safely and consistently reach assistance and services. UNICEF is committed to the following humanitarian principles in its operations: Humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence [ref.2.1.4]

The CCCs require that UNICEF's action in every context is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, which are critical to enable operations, and to staying and delivering. More importantly, they provide guidance to make programmatic and operational decisions, as well as to earn and maintain the acceptance of communities and authorities, and among all parties to the war.[115] UNICEF has a suite of internal guidance that clarifies management responsibilities, strengthens staff capacities, and offers practical support for UNICEF's field presence and operations.

The literature on the challenges that humanitarian agencies have faced in translating humanitarian principles into practice in the Ukraine response is extensive;[116] the issues that operational agencies faced during the L3 response were complex and continue to be so, given the wider geopolitics at stake. Recognizing these complexities, during interviews and in the online surveys the evaluation elicited significant feedback on UNICEF's performance in navigating these dilemmas. Some of the key challenges that arose during the L3 response that have links to a principled response in Ukraine are outlined below (*see Table 15*).

Table 15. Dilemmas of a principled nature in the Ukraine response

Principle	Issues for the operationalization of the principle in the Ukraine response
Impartiality	Before the Russian invasion, half of donor funding was earmarked for areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine. However, humanitarian access to these areas since the full-scale war has been heavily impeded by the dynamics of the war itself, as well as restrictions imposed by military forces and authorities. At the same time, from the limited data that exist, evidence shows that people living in these areas have consistently had the greatest need for humanitarian assistance and protection.[117]
Neutrality and independence	The political stance of many traditional humanitarian donors is strongly aligned with Ukraine's position. While in and of itself this alignment is not uncommon in conflict-affected countries, the level of support – which for many donor countries includes military assistance – makes it so. At the same time, the Government of Ukraine's own understanding of humanitarian assistance is at odds with the normative definition as it includes "preparation for armed defence of the state and its defence in the event of armed aggression".[118] This conflation of humanitarian and military assistance has significant implications for the independence of humanitarian action. The blurring of distinctions has permeated into civil society, parts of which see little justification for strictly delineating humanitarian and military actions.[119] Engagement between international and national humanitarian actors has exposed the challenges of this clash of principles, highlighting concerns about how humanitarian resistance or solidarity challenge the principle of neutrality.[120]

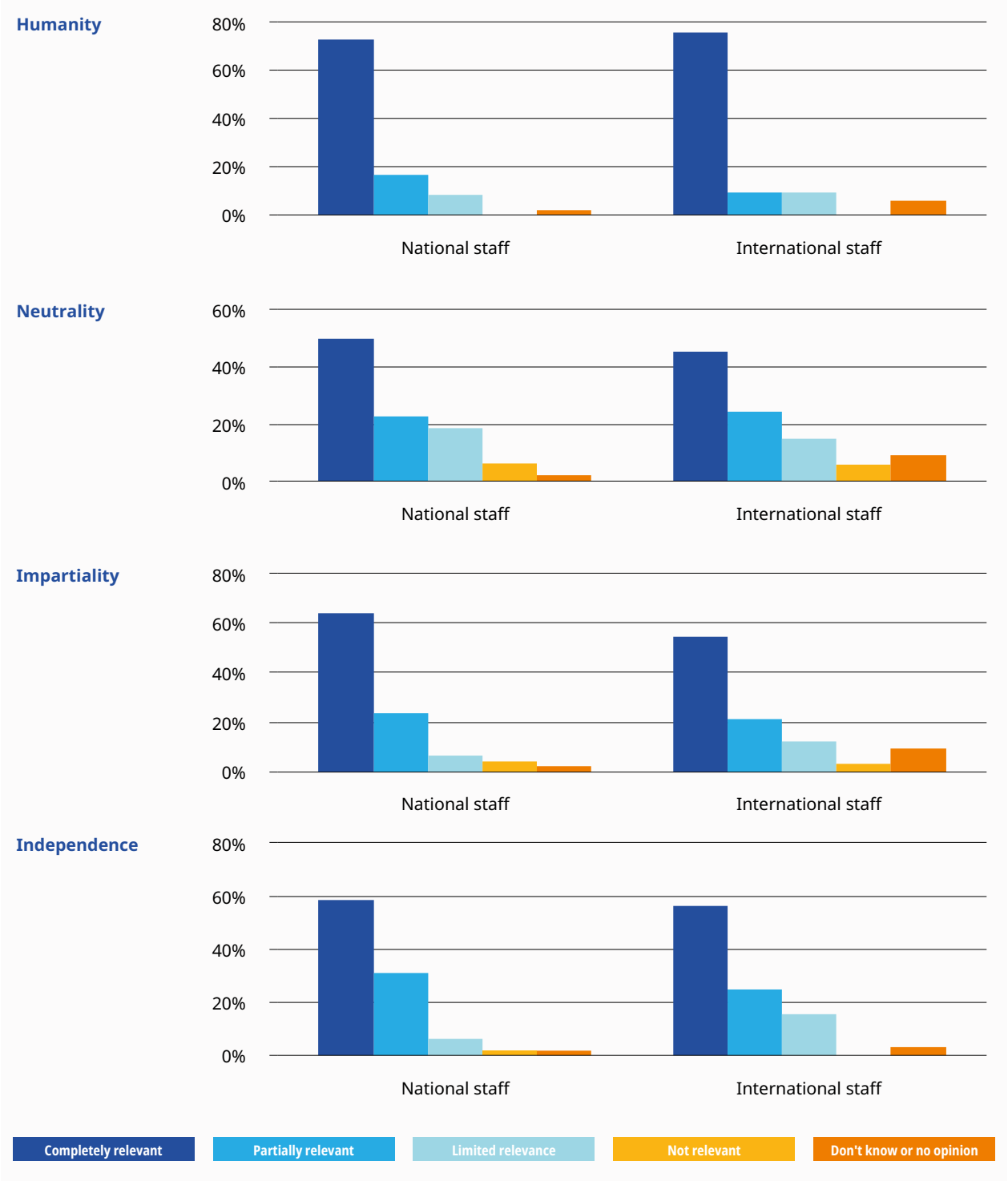
This evaluation recognizes the challenges posed by these dilemmas that UNICEF and other humanitarian organizations have had to navigate in the Ukraine response. To provide principled assistance, it has been necessary for UNICEF to position itself clearly on these and other issues. This has required real-time decisions to be made by staff, some of whom lack familiarity with the application of international humanitarian principles in practice, and particularly in such a complex operating environment. Moreover, until the re-launch in early 2023 of the Joint Operating Principles,[121] there was not a clear context-specific reference point for the collective humanitarian system.

Application of humanitarian principles in UNICEF's partnerships

Finding Principles 1
UNICEF's early response frequently focused on responding to government requests (from national and local governments, municipalities and mayors) for assistance and was delivered to consignees. While this achieved volume, it was not possible for UNICEF to adequately target or monitor the response, particularly in the early months. This had implications for perceptions of its proximity to government and its operational independence.

The issue of principled humanitarian programming was examined with UNICEF staff, partners and external stakeholders during interviews, and through the staff and stakeholder surveys. While there was a generally high level of commitment to the principles at all levels, there was also an acknowledgement of the challenges putting them into practice posed. This was not uniform across UNICEF staff (*see Figure 10*).

Figure 10. Staff perceptions of UNICEF's application of principles in practice – Response to survey question "How consistently has UNICEF implemented these principles in its L3 response in Ukraine?"



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The survey highlighted significant differences in local and international staff's perceptions concerning UNICEF's performance in delivering principled assistance. Interviews with staff revealed an acknowledgement that the rapid expansion of UNICEF's presence in Ukraine, which necessitated large-scale staff recruitment, means that familiarity with international humanitarian norms and standards varies significantly. The issue raised most frequently with the Evaluation Team during interviews, and which also figured prominently in the staff survey responses, was the implication of UNICEF's proximity to the government, both at the national and local levels. While this evaluation acknowledges the responsibilities that the government has for leadership and coordination of the humanitarian response under International Humanitarian Law, in addition to the essential role the government continues to play in the response, there were concerns that UNICEF needed to manage this relationship in a way that permitted it to maintain a principled stance on its humanitarian action. It is the view of the Evaluation Team, supported by feedback in the surveys and interviews, that it is of utmost importance that UNICEF maintain its own independent analysis of needs, and determine where and how to most effectively provide assistance.

Many of the staff interviewed found it difficult to openly discuss these issues because of the diverse opinions that exist among UNICEF's own staff, which have served to make the matter more challenging to resolve. UNICEF is not alone in having to navigate this challenge; the issue was also raised in the operational review the IASC Peer2Peer Support Project conducted, which acknowledged that the Ukraine response had "raised important questions on the application of the humanitarian principles of impartiality and independence."[122]

Conclusion Principles

Like many agencies, UNICEF has struggled at times to achieve a balance in maintaining its humanitarian principles in practice. While the complexity of programming in the initial response may go some way to justifying this, the shift in focus of the response to the south and east has offered scope to strengthen the impartiality of its programming. The shift away from a supply-driven response to one delivered by partners offers scope for UNICEF to focus on better understanding needs and targeting those who are most vulnerable.

UNICEF's access to those in greatest need

Finding Principles 2

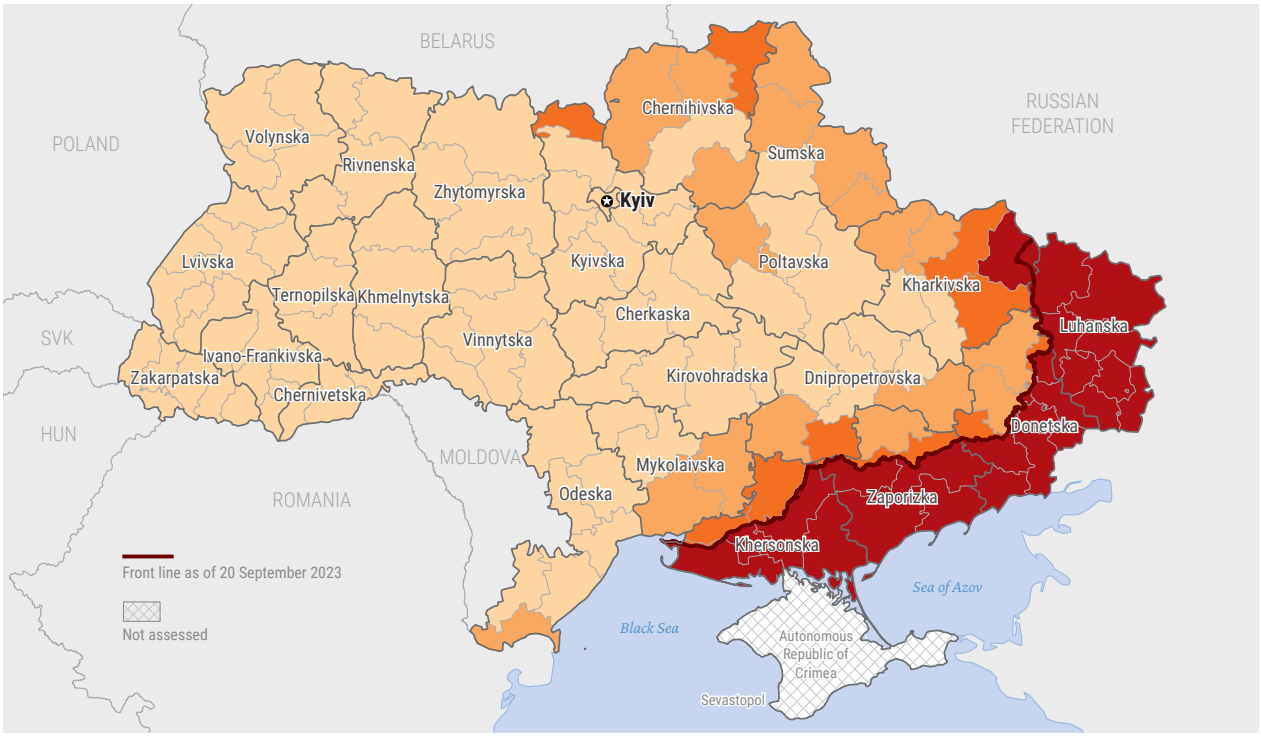
UNICEF took time to shift the locus of its operations from the west and centre of Ukraine to a more specific focus in the south and east of the country. Over time, UNICEF has strengthened the relevance of its response through a process of shifting from a response largely focused on supplies, to implementation through IPs. By the end of the L3 response, UNICEF was well positioned to deliver more targeted and impartial assistance through its IPs to some of those in greatest need.

The principle of impartiality requires that assistance is provided solely to those in greatest need without discrimination, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions. Insecurity and impediments created by the parties to the war have impacted the humanitarian community's ability to reach people in some of the areas most affected by the war, and to conduct assessments in cities and regions that are not under the control of the Government of Ukraine. Concentrated in the east and south of the country, these locations have the greatest level of impediments to access; they also contain communities that are in greatest need of humanitarian assistance and protection (*see Figure 11).*[123]



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Figure 11. Humanitarian access severity in Ukraine (25 October 2023)



Source: OCHA.[124]

In the early months of the response, during the mass displacement after the Russian invasion, UNICEF was generous in its application of the principle of impartiality, justifying a nationwide response on the basis that most people were equally vulnerable. At that time, UNICEF's operational capacities for assessment and targeting were limited, and it had sufficient resources for widespread coverage. While the response in central and western parts of the country provided significant assistance, interviews and feedback from the staff survey cast doubt on whether this could continue to be truly classified as a humanitarian response, particularly as the response continued over time and the situation in large parts of the country stabilized. Interviews highlighted a level of frustration with the time that it took for UNICEF to refocus and scale up its response in the areas of greatest need, which were in the east and south of the country. UNICEF's Emergency Management Team minutes and interviews conducted during the evaluation show that efforts were made at HQ to prompt swifter decentralization of the programme, but that these were slow to yield fruit.

Although delayed, the decentralization of UNICEF's programme towards the east and south of the country was important as it permitted the programme to refocus on some of the people most affected by the war. U-Report evidence (*see Annex 5*) showed that by the end of 2023 people living closer to the frontline received more UNICEF assistance, especially girls and women in frontline regions.

Interviews with staff, partners and external humanitarian agencies in the Dnipro, Kharkiv and Odesa field offices provided evidence of the strategy the UNICEF field office team adopted to gain and maintain access in these highly volatile parts of the country. UNICEF used its supplies as a means of gaining initial access to communities in areas of need. This facilitated access to and engagement with local mayors and *oblast* authorities. As the decentralization process gathered pace and its capacity increased, mobile teams were deployed that worked from semi-static locations to provide essential services. When UNICEF started to scale up its partnerships, it was able to provide static and more sustained services in coordination with local authorities. While an access strategy was not shared with the Evaluation Team,[125] a four-page operational plan for "newly accessible areas" was prepared to guide UNICEF's approach in the early phases of its response in the east.[126]

Finding Principles 3

In 2023, UNICEF's programming footprint did not match the geography of needs; with the exception of WASH, insufficient services were focused on frontline *oblasts* in the east and south.

While there was a gradual refocusing of UNICEF's L3 response towards war-affected parts of Ukraine, an important question remains as to whether there has been sufficient focus on these areas. By September 2022, while aerial attacks continued across the country, the front line had become relatively static in its location. By February 2023, the front line had hardened and the prospect of sudden military breakthroughs by either side had become very slim.

BOX 7

Did UNICEF get services close enough to the front line?[127]

The *oblasts* that are divided by war (where the new front line goes through the *oblast*) are Donetsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv and Kherson. (Note: Kharkiv and Mykolaiv each have only one *hromada* each under occupation). Of 80 schools where bomb shelters were repaired by UNICEF, 10 (13 per cent) were in the frontline zone (none in Donetsk, Kharkiv or Kherson); of 188 Spilno centres in 2023, 37 (20%) were in the frontline zone (zero in Donetsk).

At the time the evaluation was conducted, towards the end of 2023, the areas of greatest need (where affected people had the least access to the humanitarian and protection support they required) were along the new contact line. The regions under occupation were assumed to be in even greater need than those controlled by the government. All of this, as well as sectoral analysis of where the gap between needs and services is greatest (in education, health, WASH, child-friendly spaces, GBV risk factors, mental health, etc. – *see the Sector Report*) would suggest that throughout 2023 UNICEF should not only have been placing the bulk of its services in eastern and southern *oblasts*, but also as close to the front line as possible. As Part B, the Sector Report, shows, it was only in the WASH sector that UNICEF's programming footprint in 2023 aligned most closely with the geography of needs.

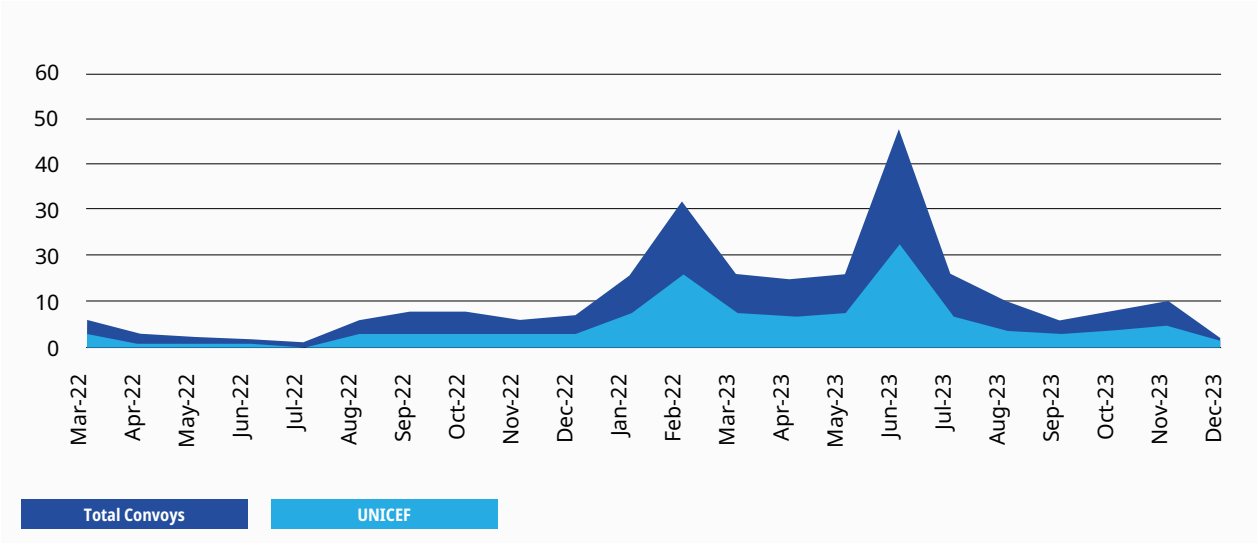
Finding Principles 4

UNICEF has been a consistent supporter of the inter-agency Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell, providing staff and supplies, and where relevant providing access to its 'last-mile delivery partners'.[128] Through its support of this collective response modality, UNICEF has reached some of those most severely affected by the war in high-risk, frontline and newly accessible areas.

One of the modalities that the humanitarian agencies collectively have used to access those communities that are hardest to reach and in greatest need is inter-agency convoys coordinated by the Humanitarian Operations Planning Cell (HOPC). Composed of United Nations agencies and NGOs, the HOPC prioritizes and plans the inter-agency delivery of humanitarian assistance to communities along the frontline, including areas recently retaken by Ukraine and those that are hard to reach due to full-scale war.[129] Interviews with coordination staff and participating agencies, and data from the HOPC Dashboard showed that UNICEF had been a regular contributor to and participant in the convoys throughout the L3 response up to the time the evaluation was conducted (*see Figure 12 and Figure 13*). Interviews highlighted UNICEF's willingness to provide material, cluster participation and facilitation for last-mile delivery using UNICEF's partners which were considered essential contributions.

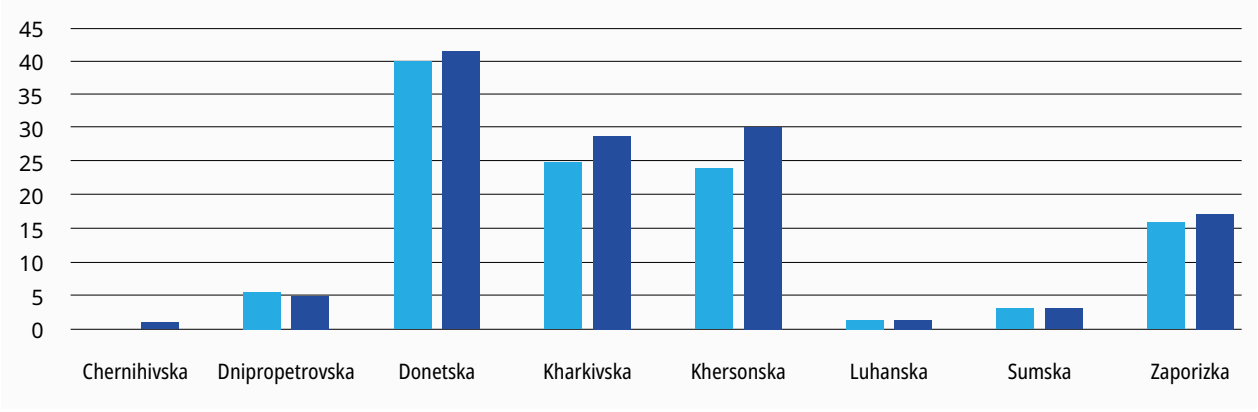


Figure 12. Interagency convoys by month (March 2022–December 2023)



Source: OCHA.[130]

Figure 13. Interagency convoys (total/UNICEF) by month (2022–23)



Source: OCHA.[131]

Gaining access to areas not under the control of the Government of Ukraine has been the most significant challenge for humanitarian organizations working in Ukraine. The Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview categorizes people living in areas under occupation and in areas directly affected by ongoing hostilities as having the highest severity of needs.[132] These same communities have been the most difficult for humanitarian agencies to gain access to, as outlined in the humanitarian access severity map above (*see Figure 11*). The humanitarian community in Ukraine collectively made efforts to access these areas using the humanitarian notification system,[133] but these failed. This evaluation is cognizant of the sensitivities posed by trying to access areas beyond the control of the Ukrainian authorities at political level, but it is also a divisive issue within the humanitarian community and UNICEF itself. The perceived challenges that UNICEF faced in responding proportionately in these areas elicited feedback from all parts of the organization (country office, ECARO, HQ), with interviewees and survey respondents questioning whether the organization had done as much as it could to live up to the principles it espouses.

Humanitarian organizations have made efforts to escalate this issue to the Emergency Director's Group and the IASC principals to gain access to areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine from outside Ukraine (*see Box 8*). But interviews with internal and external stakeholders in-country and at HQ cast doubt on the adequacy of the attention paid to the matter. While the crisis was deeply political, and complex, there was a strong sense from among internal (CO and HQ) and external interviewees that the

failure to access those in greatest need in these areas represented a collective failure of the humanitarian community. There was broad consensus among interviewees and across needs assessment reports that needs were not being met in NGCAs throughout the L3 response.[134]

BOX 12

The collective failure of the humanitarian system to negotiate access to areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine

The report of the IASC Peer2Peer Support Project reflected system-wide concerns about the challenges posed by accessing the estimated 5 million people living in areas beyond the control of the Ukrainian authorities, for which a solution had proved impossible to find. The IASC mission acknowledged that the Humanitarian Country Team was unable to make further progress on the issue and reported that it "required the sustained engagement … of IASC Principals and the EDG [Emergency Director's Group] in high-level advocacy with member states."[135]

How has UNICEF positioned itself in its advocacy for children?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

- ⇒ Humanitarian Advocacy: UNICEF is mandated to promote and protect the rights of all children, guided by the Convention on the Rights of Children and its Optional Protocols, as well as International Humanitarian Law [ref.1.4.2]
- ⇒ Accurate information on the situation and needs of children, women and their communities and UNICEF's response is shared in a timely manner [ref. 3.4.1]
- ⇒ Advocacy is conducted at country, regional and global levels to protect the rights of children, women and their communities, promote adherence to international laws and standards, facilitate principled humanitarian access and the delivery of programs, and promote child-friendly policies and practices [ref. 3.4.2]

UNICEF is a child rights protection agency with a mandate deriving from its role as the effective guarantor of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its humanitarian action derives from this and compels it to communicate and advocate on behalf of affected children, women and their communities. UNICEF's Emergency Procedures require that responsibilities are clear, that an advocacy strategy is prepared, and that UNICEF engages on issues linked to grave violations of children's rights in accordance with its mandate.[136]



Communications

Finding Communications/Advocacy 1
The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office provided regular, high-quality communications material in the form of SitReps and updates from the response.

UNICEF has provided detailed and consistent communication on its work in support of children in Ukraine, despite capacity gaps in the communications and advocacy team throughout much of the first year of the response.[137] Using the HAC Appeal as a foundation, detailed SitReps were prepared and shared with colleagues, supporters and the public throughout the response and provide an important knowledge repository on UNICEF's response.[138]

Humanitarian advocacy

Finding Communications/Advocacy 2
The UNICEF communications and advocacy team regularly updated the humanitarian advocacy strategy developed in 2022, but it was not until 2023 that a single, coherent strategy was in place.

The advocacy and communications team has also performed diligently in maintaining updated internal briefings and Q&As for senior UNICEF staff, in addition to preparing regular advocacy briefs and key messages on the situation of children in Ukraine.[139] While an initial advocacy strategy was approved at the end of March 2022,[140] it was subsequently updated in a piecemeal way, drawing on updated core messages as a means of remaining relevant. The process of developing a single, coherent advocacy strategy has been laboured; it has taken time for senior management to agree on core messages. The document was being finalized as the evaluation mission was undertaken in November 2023.[141]

Child rights advocacy

> "Children and women's best interest and protection are at the center of the humanitarian response, including those acutely at risk such as children living with disabilities, children without parental care, or children of ethnic minorities", *Ukraine Advocacy Strategy, 21 March 2022.*

Better Care

Finding Communications/Advocacy 3
UNICEF has made important progress in supporting Ukraine's efforts to replace its child residential institutions with a system of Better Care, but to fully complete this transition will require continued effort and resources.

Deinstitutionalization of children[142] and of people with disabilities has a long history in Europe. It is buttressed by several United Nations conventions on the rights of children and of people with disabilities, as well as non-binding instruments such as the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and is a core tenet of European policy.[143] Deinstitutionalization has become a core objective of UNICEF child advocacy throughout post-socialist central and eastern Europe, but it had made only modest headway in Ukraine before the full-scale war,[144] reportedly because of the entrenched economic and power interests of the institutions themselves, supported in large part by political entities and to some extent by public opinion.[145]

On the eve of the Russian invasion, there were approximately 91,000 children in institutional care in Ukraine, approximately half of whom were living with a disability.[146] It is important to note that being in an institution does not mean that a child was an orphan: 90 per cent of these children had at least one living parent who would not or could not care for them.[147] With the abrupt closure of most residential institutions in February 2022, students who were attending residential schools on a daily basis stopped attending, and approximately 42,000 residential students were sent home to their families – reportedly without the authorities determining if their families could properly and safely accommodate them.[148] Some disabled students were reportedly unable to move quickly and remained in their institutions with some form of care. Other residential students remained in institutions in parts of Ukraine that were not under immediate threat; the remainder of the residential students were evacuated either west to other regions of Ukraine and beyond to Europe, or to the east where they were absorbed into institutions and families in areas under occupation.

This sudden shock to the framework of residential institutions has had a profound impact on the well-being of the children concerned, but has also provided a disruptive opportunity for UNICEF and deinstitutionalization advocates to accelerate reforms. This has led to the rebranding of deinstitutionalization as Better Care, a forward-looking and constructive approach that focuses on the future of the child in a family (rather than the closure of an institution), and which envisages the creation of a new system of alternative, family-based care. Better Care has received a significant policy boost from the President and the First Lady of Ukraine; it is seen as a key component of European Union (EU) accession[149] and is now underpinned by an enabling institutional mechanism in the form of the Better Care Reform Office. As part of this initiative, UNICEF launched its 'Leave no Child Alone' campaign inside Ukraine for families willing to foster unaccompanied and separated children: by August 2022, of the 22,000 applications, 1,280 families had been selected and trained to become foster families.[150]

Table 16. U-Report finding on where children with special needs should live and study

Where do you think children with special needs should live and study?	Under 14	14-18	19-24	25-34	35+
Live in a family and go to a specialized school	64.3%	58.7%	43.9%	34.6%	35.1%
Live in a family and go to a regular school	19.2%	24.9%	40.5%	48.5%	50.4%
Live in an institution and go to a specialized school	4.6%	2.9%	1.8%	2%	1.2%
Live in an institution and go to a regular school	1.2%	0.7%	0.5%	3%	3%
Difficult to answer	10.7%	12.7%	13.3%	15.8%	10.3%

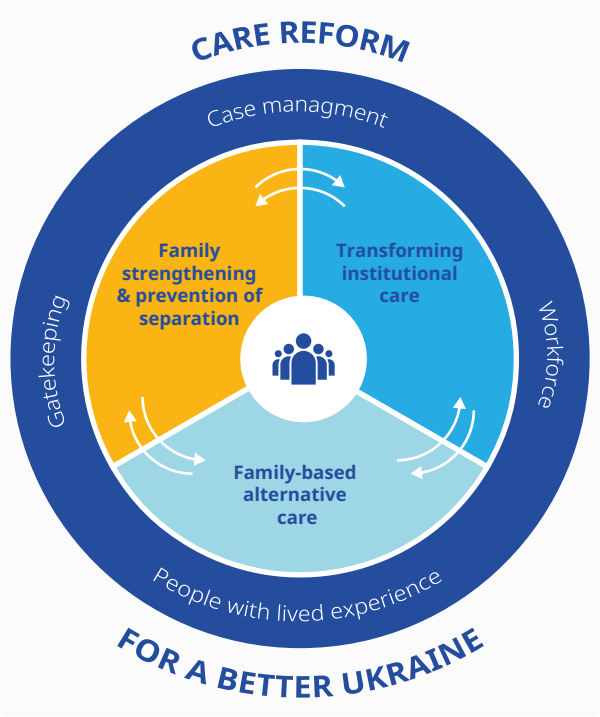
Data from the Evaluation's U-Report survey, N=6150. Responses did not vary by gender or region.

Note: N=6,150. Responses did not vary by gender or region.
Source: U-Report Evaluation Survey.

There is optimism and significant efforts are being devoted to seizing this disruptive opportunity to 'make Better Care stick' where the earlier deinstitutionalization efforts had gained less traction; there are signs that public opinion among young Ukrainians favours deinstitutionalization (*see Table 16*).[151] But many countervailing forces have made this a daunting and long-term endeavour. Among these are the deeply entrenched and powerful economic and patronage interests of the institutions themselves, many of which were reputed to be corrupt, and others reputed to be abusive of children's rights (allegations include child labour, child trafficking and sex work).[152] In addition, it is anticipated that as a direct result of the war, there will be a surge in the number of truly orphaned children and a significant (albeit minority) social view that institutionalization remains a preferred strategy to mitigate the effects of sharply increased poverty. Finally, there is some internal concern within UNICEF that the high-profile Kyiv-level advocacy and regulatory work, while necessary to the overall success of Better Care reforms, may be insufficient.[153] A key weakness is at the local level – at the level of the local authorities which are responsible for the institutions and their resources, and for responding to local social pressures.

Interviews revealed that UNICEF has made important progress, but that to overcome these obstacles will require sustained advocacy and policy work from UNICEF and its partners, with a focus on emphasizing that: change is a precondition for EU accession; sustained efforts to dismantle the remaining institutions (which are reportedly now increasing in size again) are necessary; and the creation of a robust, resourced and quality system of decentralized social services and alternative care is essential.

Figure 14. Better Care



Source: UNICEF.

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has a strategy for implementing Better Care that combines advocacy, policy reform, capacity-building and programmatic support (*see Figure 14*). Progress has been made, but success will require a substantial policy commitment, resources, and active engagement with local authorities. The window for transformation is limited, as the shift in mindset is not yet complete, and the new systems have not yet been fully built and resourced, while the countervailing conservative cultural and institutional pressures to push children back into institutions remain strong. The evaluation concurs with the emphasis that the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has placed on this as a central pillar of UNICEF's advocacy for the next CPD period.

Child rights monitoring and the creation of a monitoring and reporting mechanism

> **Finding Communications/Advocacy 4**
> The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office is effectively supporting the accurate and verified reporting of grave violations, which enables the advocacy of the United Nations, including UNICEF, at country level, as well as providing the Secretary-General with United Nations-verified information to enable his advocacy, including with parties to the conflict, and decision-making.

Child rights monitoring (CRM) monitors how children's rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child are being obtained by children in a specific context. In the past, the approach to CRM has varied widely between UNICEF offices, but over time it has become more systematic, with guidance on the inclusion of child rights indicators and reporting against them.[154] The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office included CRM as an indicator in the 2018–2022 CPD, and has reported against the outcome and output statements in every RAM since 2018, despite a dearth of child rights data due to the interruption of data collection by the government as a result of the war. The 2022 RAM reporting referred substantially to new research on the situation of children since the full-scale war, and work to strengthen the capacities of the ombudsperson as well as local governments. This can generally be regarded as 'regular programme' activity that is not part of the humanitarian response, although (like everything else in the country office) it underwent significant adaptation following the start of the full-scale war.

To strengthen the evidence base for CRM (including Sustainable Development Goals, etc.) and to monitor government implementation of the CRC – some UNICEF offices have a staff position in the PME unit to support this work and ensure that the indicators are capturing the correct data for proper evidence. In Ukraine, this was covered under the evaluation unit before the full-scale war, but was suspended during the initial months of the full-scale war mainly because of a lack of reliable data. This work resumed under PME in late 2023.

Also, per commitment number 5 in the CCCs, in situations of armed conflict, grave violations against children (and other serious rights violations and protection concerns) are documented, analysed and reported, and this also informs programmatic response and advocacy interventions. The

monitoring and reporting of grave violations is formalized into a monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM) once a party to conflict is listed in the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC).

Accordingly, immediately following the Russian invasion and the occurrence of grave violations against children in the context of the armed conflict, the obligation under the CCCs to monitor these violations were triggered. This obligation was reinforced on 11 July 2022 when Ukraine was identified as a "situation of concern" in the United Nations Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC,[155] which in turn triggered the CAAC mandate of the United Nations in Ukraine, including monitoring and reporting on grave violations.

In response, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office in June 2022 created a senior staff position specifically to monitor child rights violations resulting from the war itself. In June 2023, the next iteration of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC contained its first report on Ukraine and verified 2,334 grave violations against 1,482 children (including the killing and maiming of children, recruitment into armed forces, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and abduction). Most of these violations were verified as attributable to the Russian Federation; some were attributed to Ukraine. The 2023 Secretary General's Annual Report on CAAC listed Russian armed forces and affiliate groups as state parties to the war,[156] and this in turn triggered the creation of a formal MRM to end and prevent grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict.[157] From this point on, the previous United Nations working group was transformed into a formal country task force on monitoring and reporting, still co-chaired by the United Nations resident coordinator and the UNICEF representative.

The MRM is not a UNICEF entity, although it receives substantial support from UNICEF and is co-led by the UNICEF Representative. The MRM is an independent mechanism that is extremely careful about the data it collects, verification and reporting facts. As a formal and neutral United Nations reporting and accountability mechanism, the MRM is not an advocacy tool. The facts reported in the Secretary-General's annual reports on CAAC, however, provide a definitive basis for advocacy by any organization concerned with child rights in Ukraine, including UNICEF.

Advocacy on education[158]

UNICEF's public advocacy on education during the L3 response focused primarily on the safety and use of schools in Ukraine (safety from attack and for their return from military/civilian use to educational purposes); outside Ukraine, it urged access to education in countries of temporary asylum.[159] There was no evidence that UNICEF advocated for the use of mother tongues in early childhood education, as suggested by UNICEF's long-standing universal policy on mother tongue-based multilingual education. The Evaluation Team concluded that this is because it would confront Ukraine's current policy of prohibiting the use of the Russian language in state institutions.[160]

Behind closed doors, UNICEF staff reported that advocacy within Ukraine urged the reopening of schools, which was considered absolutely essential for child mental health and social development, as well as for learning. However, the policy on school closures is governed by national regulations concerning bomb shelters; its administration was and continues to be largely under the jurisdiction of local governments and to some extent national security agencies, but not the Ministry of Education and Science or schools themselves. The policy has been applied in an extremely conservative manner; the Government of Ukraine reported that from the start of the war until November 2023 there were 20 child casualties in schools and health facilities;[161] as far as the Evaluation Team can determine, no casualties were reported in 2023. Much like during the COVID-19 pandemic, the debate on opening and closing schools has focused on a difficult ethical balance between the benefits of in-school learning versus the physical risks from shelling or airstrikes. Interviews elicited mixed views on the effectiveness of UNICEF's advocacy on school reopening, which stepped up in the last quarter of 2023.

Conclusion Communications/Advocacy
Advocacy for children's rights has been successful at the national level in areas such as Better Care, and CAAC, which align with national government policies. However, UNICEF has been less effective in engaging on child rights issues that confront government policy, particularly in the education sector. Decentralization offers opportunities to increase advocacy at the local level, which is key to the changes envisaged by both Better Care and education.

Sectoral results: To what extent did the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office achieve its intended targets?

The Evaluation Team's findings, conclusions and recommendations on sector-level activities and results are contained in Part B of this Evaluation Report. To summarize: in the early months of the response, programme delivery appropriately took a 'no regrets' blanket approach and provided large volume and wide coverage rather than quality and targeting of the most vulnerable. In all sectors, programme quality and depth improved after additional staff were recruited and as the centre of gravity shifted from providing supplies to building the capacity of partners, and towards the frontline *oblasts*. Humanitarian cash and WASH were two relatively sectors that had to work hardest to successfully overcome initial staff shortages. Child protection proceeded on two main tracks: The major advocacy focus was on seizing the disruptive opportunity of the forced closure of residential institutions to better anchor the principles and practices of Better Care. At the same time, UNICEF built up two signature programmes providing direct services to children: the Spilno network and the MMTs. Both initiatives were very effective in the emergency period, but became less relevant in areas further from the front line as other national service providers stepped in. The education sector significantly increased access to education through bomb shelter repairs and improved online learning, and since the emergency period has increased its efforts to address learning loss. However, advocacy for school reopening has met with limited success.

As required by UNICEF's evaluation guidance, the findings regarding results are also summarized in a table format, which is embedded in Part B, the Sector Report, and reproduced in Table 17, which shows UNICEF's output targets for the humanitarian sector response, alongside a red-amber-green rating, which has been assigned by UNICEF based on self-assessment of achievement of the indicators, as recorded in UNICEF's 2022 Year-end Results Report. A short narrative assessment of the sector results, based on the Evaluation Team's findings, has been added in the third column. Readers should refer to Part B, the Sector Report, for sectoral details.

Table 17. Results of UNICEF's humanitarian sector response in Ukraine

HCT output indicator	Indicator rating	Team assessment of overall sector results
# households reached with UNICEF funded HCTs	**Partially achieved** 	UNICEF delivered cash transfers to 83% of the targeted population of 265,000 households in 2022 (with some overflow into 2023), thus broadly meeting the ambition set out by the emergency appeal. UNICEF monitoring reports that HCTs were well received by affected households at a time of great need, although there were challenges over registering and timely payment in the first six months of the response. The HCT team was understaffed in part because the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office did not invoke L3 emergency recruitment procedures and the staffing level was designed against an original lower target of 50,000 households. This affected overall programme quality. Financial reconciliation was undertaken late in the response; as a result, risk management was limited, despite proactive steps taken by the HCT team to identify and mitigate these risks. The HCT approach in the east and south in 2023 worked well, through closer UNICEF field office engagement with local authorities that resulted in stronger understanding of needs and targeting. However, the total amount of HCTs transferred in 2023 were less than 2022 when needs were higher and more acute.

WASH output indicator target	Indicator rating	Team assessment of overall sector results
# people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water	**Fully achieved**	UNICEF has substantially increased its investment in WASH during the emergency, thereby making an important contribution to ensuring access to safe water and essential WASH items for at-risk communities. UNICEF has made a significant contribution to advancing WASH coordination, data gathering, information systems, needs assessments and effective targeting, greatly enabled by effective WASH Cluster leadership. Nevertheless, due to the scale of the crisis and the state of infrastructure, the absolute number of people reached was below the target. UNICEF's in-kind supplies to families and institutions were timely and relevant, although they might not have been as cost-effective as cash/vouchers.
# people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items); services	**Partially achieved**	
Health output indicator target	**Indicator rating**	**Team assessment of overall sector results**
# children aged 6–59 months vaccinated against measles	**Partially achieved**	UNICEF continued and expanded critical momentum in the immunization campaign and in the fight against the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF's provision of equipment and supplies helped keep child and maternal health services functioning through maternity hospitals, primary health centres and mobile health teams. UNICEF did not have the staff resources to do careful targeting; some assistance did not reflect the highest-priority needs, resulting in diminished contribution to outcome achievements, but nevertheless meeting the stated target.
# primary caregivers of children aged 0–23 months who received infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling, including during emergencies	**Fully achieved**	
# children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEFsupported facilities and via mobile teams	**Fully achieved**	
# primary caregivers of children aged 0–23 months receiving IYCF counselling	**Fully achieved**	Nutrition was not a priority of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office before 2022. Early risk analysis suggested the potential for a nutrition crisis, so a separate nutrition budget was created, but little spending took place and focused mainly on wide-scale distribution of information on IYCF.

Child protection output indicator target	Indicator rating	Team assessment of overall sector results
# children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)	**Fully achieved**	UNICEF covered a very large number of adults and children with basic mental health support, and provided higher levels of quality, and personalized and sustained mental health services to a number of children with severe mental health needs. UNICEF's broad-spectrum attention to GBV prevention was appropriate in the emergency response phase, but UNICEF missed opportunities to mainstream GBV awareness and action across all sectors. With the important exception of efforts to identify and support children relocated from residential institutions, UNICEF's early child protection response was broad and shallow, aiming for widespread coverage with basic levels of support, rather than higher levels of quality care for children as individuals. This 'no regrets' blanket approach was appropriate in the early response.
# women, girls and boys accessing GBV risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions	**Partially achieved**	
# of children who received individual case management services	**Fully achieved**	
# of people who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers	**Fully achieved**	
# women, girls and boys accessing GBV/violence against children response interventions	**Fully achieved**	

Education output indicator target	Indicator rating	Team assessment of overall sector results
# children accessing psychosocial support, social and emotional learning or life skills education	**Partially achieved**	In the education sector in Ukraine, there is a very wide gap between corporate gender equality requirements and UNICEF's actions (*see education chapter in Part B for detailed discussion*). Although construction is outside UNICEF's 'comfort zone' and had its challenges, the programme of bomb shelter rehabilitation has facilitated the return to in-school learning in regions far from the front line. UNICEF's initial supply-heavy response in the education sector was a reasonable 'no regrets' approach, although it was untargeted and some delivered items were not appropriate to the context. With the stabilization of the front line, attention needs to turn to education quality, and especially to addressing learning loss, starting with reopening schools.
# children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	**Fully achieved**	
# of girls and boys benefitting from supplied education, ECD and recreation kits or learning materials	**Fully achieved**	
# teachers and educational personnel trained in MHPSS, SEL/LSE	**Partially achieved**	

Source: Evaluation Team.

What was the quality of UNICEF's monitoring and reporting?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Monitoring:** The humanitarian situation and the coverage, quality and equity of the humanitarian response are monitored to inform ongoing corrective action and future planning processes [ref. 2.3.1 (4)]

UNICEF's CCCs require that progress is monitored at the field level through an assessment of high-frequency indicators in consultation with partners and affected people. Monitoring is the means by which UNICEF can determine the extent to which it has achieved coverage, quality and equity in its humanitarian response and should inform corrective action and future planning processes.[162]


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Programme monitoring

Finding Monitoring 1
UNICEF's ability to monitor and report on the early stages of its L3 response was limited by human and material resources. The engagement of third-party monitors permitted a more coherent and comprehensive approach to be adopted, but it was not until the end of 2022 that field monitoring commenced. UNICEF's monitoring tools were enhanced in tandem with its internal capacity; while there were initial gaps, these have been rectified, which has enhanced oversight and reduced risk.

Monitoring of UNICEF's L3 supplies: At the outset of the response, UNICEF had only modest monitoring capacity, which was further limited by the relocation of UNICEF staff and the need for armoured vehicles, which made it more difficult for UNICEF to access its programme areas. Consequently, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office entered into institutional contracts with thirdparty monitors in May, with a focus on monitoring supplies (which was later expanded to include Spilno centres, MMTs and cash) in the summer of 2022. Programmatic and field visits by the country office commenced in the third quarter of 2022.[163] Once the third-party monitors had been deployed in the field, the Evaluation Team's analysis of evidence found a significant volume of reports that included physical checks and user feedback on the timeliness and relevance of items. An analysis of TPM reports on specific aspects of UNICEF supply operations is provided below (*see Table 18*).

Table 18. Summary of TPM reports on UNICEF-supplied items

Supplies	Nature of monitoring	Reporting date
WASH equipment	Monitoring undertaken during November–December 2022 and March 2023 of supplies (generators, chemicals, pipes and components, machines, water purification tablets and tanks) provided by UNICEF to Vodokanal in 44 locations across Ukraine.	November 2022, March 2023
Water testing kits	Interviews with institutions that received water testing kits from UNICEF to determine receipt of the items and gather feedback on the relevance, quality and use of the kits.	January 2022
Hygiene kits	Monitoring of receipt of UNICEF-supplied kits. Feedback on the relevance, quality and use and overall satisfaction with the items provided.	May 2023
New-born kits	Monitoring focused on the availability, quality, timeliness and sufficiency of kits provided by UNICEF, including an assessment of their compliance with the real needs of recipients and feedback on the supplies received.	December 2022
Generators	Monitoring focused on the availability, quality, timeliness and sufficiency of generators provided by UNICEF, assessing compliance with the real needs of recipients and their feedback on the supplies received.	November, December 2022 January 2023
Health equipment	Monitoring of facilities that received medical equipment (incubator, artificial lung ventilation, warming system for newborns) from UNICEF. Feedback from beneficiaries on the accessibility, quality, timeliness and sufficiency of the supplies received.	December 2022 January 2023
Laptops	Assurance of receipt of laptops provided by UNICEF and feedback from institutions and beneficiaries on their relevance, quality and use, and overall satisfaction.	March 2023 (update)
Winter clothes	Telephone interviews with recipients of UNICEF-supplied children's winter clothes to determine receipt of the clothes and overall levels of satisfaction.	April 2023

Source: Based on TPM reports.[164]

Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers: UNICEF's Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) provides an assurance framework for UNICEF to monitor risk in transferring cash to partners. Implicit in this and dependent upon the assessed risk are a range of monitoring activities UNICEF is required to undertake. Efforts were made to prioritize HACT programmatic visits to the extent that UNICEF's capacity permitted, although these struggled to keep up with the rapid scaleup of the L3 response. Despite this, the volume of reporting undertaken by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was significant. Highlights from TPM reports from three of UNICEF's most significant services are provided below (*see Table 19*).

Table 19. Highlights from TPM of services delivered by UNICEF partners

Supplies	Nature of monitoring	Reporting date
Spilno centres	Weekly reports from December 2022 to April 2023 that focused on the functioning of the Spilno centres and attendance, observations about the conduct of staff, and feedback on relevance and use by children and parents.	December 2022–April 2023
MMT	TPM included face-to-face interviews with MMT partners and personnel, field observations and interviews with service recipients.	March 2023

Source: Based on TPM reports.[165]

To identify and mitigate potential risks, the risk self-assessment matrix was revised in June 2022,[166] which included proposed controls and a description of what actions the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was taking to mitigate those risks. Concerns were identified in the risk matrix that field and programme monitoring potentially might not meet UNICEF quality, impartiality or frequency requirements due to internal planning/capacity reasons or because of insecurity. Central to the approach was ensuring all monitoring activities were documented and tracked in UNICEF's eTools software package.

As the L3 response scaled up and field offices were established, new tools and processes were put in place, which included those related to UNICEF's HACT. Programmatic visits and spot checks were added as field-level capacity increased and TPM was enhanced to accommodate UNICEF's expanded programmatic activities. Humanitarian programme monitoring was also strengthened. To improve accountability across UNICEF's offices and to ensure staff were aware of their responsibilities, a monitoring and accountability matrix and nine associated monitoring matrices were developed. The monitoring and accountability matrix identifies staff responsibilities and accountabilities to validate and support analysis, improve implementation and partnerships, generate quality information and complete eTools field monitoring modules (FMMs). It is important to note, however, that the development/operationalization of the FMMs occurred in April 2023 after the end of the L3.

One aspect where challenges were experienced was in scaling up monitoring capacity to adequately manage risk; during the L3 response, the audit report indicated that the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office made significant cash transfers to high-risk partners in the absence of corresponding monitoring and assurance activities; while the intent existed to monitor, the necessary assurance activities were frequently delayed, which meant that programmatic visits, spot checks and audits did not consistently achieve the scale required to offer assurance.[167]

HCT monitoring: Monitoring of the HCT programme has proved challenging for UNICEF for a number of reasons (these are dealt with in detail in the HCT section of Part B of this evaluation). It was anticipated that confirmation that the targeted beneficiaries had received cash payments would be possible through bank statements, but problems accessing these meant an alternative solution was required until this became possible in November 2022.[168] A hotline and SMS service were established that compensated for this and permitted real-time feedback to be provided, albeit with some challenges during peak times when the hotline became overwhelmed. UNICEF's TPM contract included HCTs, although the findings of the HCT study suggest that monitoring levels were low in 2022.[169] Additionally, two months after the first round of payments, a post-distribution monitoring exercise was conducted.

UNICEF's internal monitoring capacity

Finding Monitoring 2
UNICEF identified the need to increase its monitoring capacity fairly early on in the L3 response, but full UNICEF Ukraine Country Office and field office staffing was not in place until towards the close of 2022. While monitoring data were routinely gathered and reported, there was a gap in the use of this evidence to inform programme planning and adaptation.

Prior to the full-scale war, PME roles in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office were modestly staffed, reflecting the comparatively small budget and programme, but capacity and staffing were strengthened over time; at the time the April 2022 PBR was drafted, it had been recognized that effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) would be critical to ensure adequate oversight, control and accountability; UNICEF's PME function was reorganized and considerably strengthened. In the revised organizational chart, accountability for monitoring sat with different units (PME, programme monitoring and response (PMR), humanitarian performance monitoring and field offices), which took time to recruit and capacitate.

Staff interviews and organization charts revealed the challenge that UNICEF's limited capacity posed as it was scaling up the L3 response at the same time as it was seeking to bolster its own monitoring capacity, which invariably meant there were gaps. During this time, there were concerns that systems were only partially in place; while the PMR section produced a monthly monitoring report, the report did not specify how issues of concern should be reported on or how programme sections should follow up;[170] interviews revealed that it was often the case that programme sections lacked capacity to follow up in any case. A key finding of UNICEF's internal operational review undertaken towards the end of 2022, which was corroborated by interviews undertaken by the Evaluation Team, was the missing link between evidence and programme adaptation. The review noted that there was a "need for a more evidence-based approach to programming and for better national and regional planning."[171] Implicit in this was a lack of using monitoring data in a way that influenced planning decisions. The operational review was prescient in raising these issues and prompting action. It resulted in important changes being made, which included a shift towards committing resources to generating stronger evidence, analysis and accountability. This was marked by an increase in the staff capacity of UNICEF's team; by the close of the L3 response in March 2023, UNICEF's PME capacity comprised 13 staff members (1 field office based and 12 country office based). The adjustments in the composition of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office included the country office being the first office to create a separate seniorlevel evaluation position. Building on these efforts, in July 2023 a UNICEF Ukraine Country Office M&E accountability matrix was prepared that provided a clear detail of the roles of the country office PMR, field offices, satellite offices and PME to provide clarity, and identify focal points and accountability. At the time of writing this report, UNICEF had mobilized an M&E officer in each field office.

Conclusion Monitoring
The pace that UNICEF scaled up its L3 response was not matched by the pace with which it expanded its monitoring team and tools, which led to gaps in its ability to adequately oversee and assure the delivery of its supplies and services. In the absence of its own capacity, third-party monitors provided an important safety net, supplemented by UNICEF's incremental improvements in staffing and tools. It was not until the end of the L3 response that full capacity was in place.


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To what extent was the response conflict sensitive?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Response planning:** Response plans are evidence-based and consistent with interagency planning. They address coverage, quality and equity, adapt to evolving needs, **ensure conflict sensitivity** and link humanitarian and development programming [ref 2.3.1 (3)]

Finding Conflict sensitivity 1
UNICEF staff applied a limited, 'do no harm' understanding of conflict sensitivity at the programme level.

Finding Conflict sensitivity 2
In some regions, mild social tensions continue between Russian and Ukrainian language speakers, and between IDPs and host communities, but addressing these tensions was not a UNICEF priority.

UNICEF takes a two-tiered approach to conflict sensitivity. In all emergency responses, UNICEF must ensure that its activities do not aggravate social tensions or place the affected population in a situation of increased risk or harm: "Conflict sensitivity, (framed as 'do no harm') is defined as developing and implementing programmes to work most effectively in conflict, principally through: (a) understanding the conflict context; (b) carefully considering the interactions between planned or ongoing interventions and the conflict context; (c) acting upon the understanding in programme design and implementation, to minimize potential negative impacts; and (d) responding to changes in conflict dynamics by adjusting programming."[172] In some situations, it may be necessary for UNICEF to go beyond a 'do no harm' approach and deliberately plan its activities to address the root causes of conflict (peacebuilding).

The Ukraine conflict is the result of an invasion by a neighbouring state against a society that had not experienced domestic or internal conflict. As a result, social divisions or tensions within Ukrainian society were not a primary focus of the humanitarian community prior to 2022.[173] Accordingly, there is no conflict sensitivity working group in the humanitarian system, no major conflict sensitivity training programme and limited conflict sensitivity analysis. Along these lines, UNICEF's approach has been to focus on implementing a 'do no harm' approach.

The evaluation noted several examples of activities designed to avoid placing the affected population at greater risk or harm. For example, the recommended responses to GBViE and to children involved with the law both attempt to avoid re-traumatization by gathering testimony and providing counselling in a safe, neutral and welcoming way. In another example, partners providing support to IDPs have taken steps to also provide assistance to host communities that are experiencing unemployment, poverty and dislocation (moving away from status-based assistance). FGDs confirmed that Spilno centres welcome all comers regardless of displacement or social status.

IDP-host community relations

Beyond these operational examples of 'do no harm', the main dimension of social tension that the humanitarian community and UNICEF are concerned with is IDP-host community relations (issues related to Roma exclusion are discussed later in this report).

> "I heard that one family had received humanitarian aid, but the neighbours did not. The neighbours offered to divide the aid in half, the family refused, and a conflict arose." *Female youth in Kharkiv FGD.*

According to the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, in the early response (2022) "IDPs were largely economically and socially marginalized because of a lack of national integration strategy or sufficient resources. United Nations agencies reported the influx of IDPs led to tensions with local residents due to competition for scarce resources … NGOs reported employment discrimination against IDPs. IDPs continued to have difficulty obtaining medical care and necessary documents. According to the law, the government should provide IDPs with housing, but authorities did not take effective steps to do so."[174] Much of this perceived discrimination is not deliberate on the part of government or society, but rather the reported result of administrative weakness (i.e., a lack of government planning and resources, and a lack of civil documentation). Some discrimination, however, has occurred because of perceptions that Russian-speaking Ukrainians from the eastern *oblasts* of Ukraine may be more sympathetic to Russia.[175]

> "Every member of our family communicates in Ukrainian, but still imperfectly, sometimes Russianisms or Surzhik come out in the conversation, to which my daughter's peers reacted not at all hospitably, but aggressively insisted that my daughter return to where she came from. The incident got solved and it is happening less now." *Parent/guardian, Lviv, 15 June 2023.*

As a consequence, and particularly in the immediate aftermath of the full-scale war, being a Russian language speaker was sometimes a source of social tension.[176] The potential for such tension was exacerbated from July 2022 onwards, when the Government of Ukraine started enforcing a 2019 law prohibiting Ukrainian state institutions from using the Russian language, and requiring all entities registered in the country to use the Ukrainian language on their social media and websites.[177] There is also evidence from surveys conducted by the Education Cluster[178] that some children who had access to in-person learning in government schools in the west of Ukraine elected to keep studying online in part because of a social barrier resulting from language: "69 per cent of interviewed educational personnel in local community schools confirmed that IDP children face language barrier in local communities and schools in West of Ukraine as majority of local community children communicate in Ukrainian and IDP children mostly in Russian", which led to instances of bullying: "23 per cent of interviewed educational personnel flagged that such incidents occur in connection to the usage of Russian language by the IDP children, who receive negative comments from the local community children." Such incidents appear to have been infrequent, but it is nevertheless an issue of concern for humanitarian agencies.

In the Evaluation Team's interviews and document review, the majority of UNICEF staff (particularly national staff) stated that there is no discrimination against IDPs or Russian speakers, especially not at present;[179] neither was the issue highlighted in UNICEF reports or programming documents as a matter of concern. Despite the difference of opinion between national and international staff in this matter, it is important that UNICEF remains vigilant to possible threats to social cohesion, particularly in areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine in the south and east of the country, where there is far greater potential for tensions to surface.[180]

Conclusion Conflict sensitivity
Some social tensions remain between IDPs and the host community that UNICEF is not sufficiently addressing in its programming.

What were the response's unintended outcomes?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Monitoring:** Intended and unintended consequences are monitored, with a focus on equity and conflict sensitivity [ref. 2.3.1].

UNICEF defines an unintended consequence as "any unforeseen effects e.g., community participation programming that exacerbates existing inequalities by favouring community members with the ability and status to engage in processes and/or increasing women's time burden."[181] Unintended consequences can be positive or negative. The following sections of the report offer insights into some of the unintended results of the UNICEF response.

The implications of achieving coverage on addressing equity

UNICEF strives to balance reaching the greatest number of people in need (coverage) with reaching those in greatest need (equity), while maintaining the delivery of quality programming.[182] During the L3 response, there were challenges in the ability of UNICEF to determine where the greatest needs were and how to meet them. In the early months of the response, a decision was taken to work across the whole country – a focus on achieving scale and coverage. Following IDP movements and delivering services in western and central Ukraine was practical in light of the initial movement of people westward, resulting in significant UNICEF delivery far from the front line. **What this approach failed to deliver, and subsequently militated against, was in achieving equity.** As documented in Section 4.2.5 of this report, UNICEF had invested so much capacity in delivering a nationwide response that it was unable to refocus in a timely way to address the needs of those who were most vulnerable in the south and east of the country. Thus, a response that achieved coverage but lacked a comprehensive approach to equity was one of the unintended outcomes of the response.

Counter-intuitive implications of decentralization

In the Ukraine L3 response, decentralization of the UNICEF office enhanced the quality of its analysis and programming, but in the short term **decentralization also proved to be an impediment to UNICEF's operational agility as it took momentum away from the response**. The amount of organizational effort that was placed in decentralizing the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office placed huge stress on many UNICEF staff and ultimately took close to 12 months to move from conceptualization to delivering significantly improved results. The challenges it posed led many staff to question its value, as at times it took energy and focus away from UNICEF's humanitarian response.

Once the decentralization process had been completed, staff had been recruited and trained, and partners selected, UNICEF was then far better positioned to strengthen its response, although this did not occur until towards the end of the L3 response. This comes with the caveat that once a field office has been established, it can be difficult and disruptive to move it again as the geography of needs change and the locus of response moves. The challenge that this poses to UNICEF is whether it is possible for UNICEF to establish a decentralized organizational structure while retaining its capacity to adapt and respond to the needs of affected people – wherever they may be.

Unintended results of UNICEF's sectoral response

The influence of digital learning on school opening: Digital learning centres (DLCs) provide a connected digital learning space for children who otherwise cannot study in person and who have difficulty with digital access. Some DLCs have been set up using available space in schools, but the schools are still closed due to perceived security risks. However, because the DLCs themselves are not considered part of the official school establishment, and because participation in DLCs is voluntary on the part of parents and students, many students are regularly attending DLCs in schools that are closed. In some cases, teachers are also attending, and the DLCs are starting to resemble classrooms. In this way, some teachers and students are able to work around local restrictions and informally resume some in-person education.

Strengthening the management of the WASH sector in Ukraine: One of the outcomes of the support provided by UNICEF's WASH section and the WASH Cluster to the state water utility company, Vodokanal, during the L3 response is the establishment of a management information system (MIS) cell in Vodokanal. This has proved to be a significant achievement in improving collaboration and coordination of services. It is now used to identify and validate needs, and support the establishment of priorities for coordinating the delivery of emergency supplies and investment, and avoiding duplication in assistance. The MIS cell is founded on an MIS system that can be used more broadly by the utility company for planning in Ukraine. Technical advice provided during the humanitarian response assisted in supporting specific innovations that improve environmental sustainability, reliability, water security and energy efficiency.

Efficiency

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

⇒ **Finding Human resources 1**: UNICEF mobilization of human resources from HQ, ECARO and other offices to support the L3 and the surge was critical to deliver the L3 response effectively.

⇒ **Finding Human resources 2**: UNICEF's staffing requirements changed as its response expanded and recruitment adapted. While UNICEF's PBRs provided an overall framework for its staffing, and recruitment undertaken by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office met corporate key performance indicators, it was challenging for UNICEF to have fully staffed teams in place in a timely way.

⇒ **Finding Human resources 3**: UNICEF recognized the importance of staff well-being quite quickly in the L3 response. The provision of a menu of options ensured that staff could access the type of support that was relevant to their needs.

⇒ **Finding Management systems 1:** Tensions regarding the leadership of the L3 response by the global emergency coordinator made it difficult at times for the organization to provide coherent and consistent support. However, with the changes that have been made in the Executive Office through the creation of a new deputy executive director role tasked with oversight of humanitarian action and supply operations, there is now greater capacity for leadership to address these issues directly and in a more timely way.

⇒ **Finding Management systems 2:** Senior staff in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office frequently referred to the 'no regrets' policy when concerns or challenges were raised about implementation. This suggests a misinterpretation of the policy, which refers to the early deployment of capacity and resources for humanitarian response rather than the application of procedures and controls to ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently.

⇒ **Finding Management systems 3**: While UNICEF's decentralization process was initiated within five months of the Russian invasion, it was not until towards the end of the L3 response that field office-level capacity was sufficient to reap the benefits of the change.

⇒ **Finding Supply 1**: In the absence of alternative capacities, UNICEF focused on the provision of supplies for the early phase of its Ukraine L3 response, which – with strong support from the Supply Division – was effective in achieving considerable scale and meeting some of the immediate needs of affected people.

⇒ **Finding Supply 2**: While the supply response was timely, there were instances where supplies were not relevant to the context. These challenges were largely addressed as procurement from Ukrainian suppliers scaled up.

⇒ **Finding Supply 3**: Risk management was strengthened over time through the use of TPM and the implementation of innovative monitoring systems. While the early months of the response exposed UNICEF to risk due to a lack of adequate oversight, it was considered to be outweighed by the need to respond in a proportionate and timely way.

⇒ **Finding Partnership 1**: UNICEF faced a localization dilemma in its Ukraine response. While there was undoubtedly significant capacity and motivation from within civil society and government IPS to provide assistance, at the onset of the crisis, UNICEF (like other organizations) was not prepared for this.

⇒ **Finding Partnership 2**: The scale-up in UNICEF's partnerships included many new partners, at a time when it had significant capacity limitations of its own, which meant that UNICEF took on considerable risk. The quid pro quo was the benefits that the shift towards partnership would provide to affected people in terms of the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF's response.

⇒ **Finding Partnership 3:** Both UNICEF and partners' staff considered that the relationship was strong and broadly fit for purpose. UNICEF received positive feedback for its communication and the quality of its funding. Where there was greater challenge was in going beyond the standard menu of partner support to be more responsive to partners' needs in addressing perceived capacity gaps. Despite this weakness, the majority of partners considered that UNICEF had played a positive role in strengthening localization in the response.

⇒ **Finding Funding 1:** National Committees played a key role in resource mobilization, providing the majority of UNICEF's funding in the first year of the response. While this benefitted the response in Ukraine, it also had broader unintended benefits, which included the addition of new donors that have provided funding for other crises.

⇒ **Finding Funding 2:** The volume and flexibility of the funds that UNICEF received for the Ukraine response offered significant opportunities to fund the totality of its response, including sectors that are traditionally underfunded.

⇒ **Finding Funding 3:** While fund volume and flexibility offered important benefits for UNICEF's response, they also posed challenges, which included the pressure to spend funds, with limited requirements for planning.

The scale of funding for Ukraine was in stark contrast to humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world, many of which struggle to raise adequate funds. The internal debate within UNICEF that this prompted over the equity of humanitarian funding led to some nascent initiatives that may offer potential for the organization to be a stronger advocate for addressing humanitarian funding inequities in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

⇒ **Conclusion Human resources 1:** In adequately resourcing the staffing needs of its L3 response, UNICEF faced a daunting task; while it more than met organizational key performance indicators, the needs of the response were such that it struggled to keep up with the high demand for staff, with many teams significantly under-staffed for much of the L3 response. Given the scale-up of the team, which more than doubled in size, the evaluation acknowledges the significant challenges that were posed to UNICEF. What the organization has been able to achieve during the response is testament to the commitment and dedication of UNICEF personnel.

⇒ **Conclusion Human resources 2:** The diversity of UNICEF's staff, the significant numbers of new team members (new to UNICEF and/or new to Ukraine), and the rapid pace of change in UNICEF's structure and operations in Ukraine during the L3 response meant that clear communication and transparent staff engagement were an essential success factor. Challenges in delivering these have meant that issues have not been addressed and staff have not always felt valued. While this has now been recognized, it will continue to be important if performance is to improve.

⇒ **Conclusion Management systems 1:** While the existence of a high-capacity regional office played an essential role in the implementation of the Ukraine response, the tensions that arose from the lack of clarity on leadership affected both the coherence and effectiveness of the response. Harnessing global support for the L3 response required clarity about leadership and ways of working that leave little room for exceptionalism.

⇒ **Conclusion Management systems 2:** While the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was under intense pressure, the use of a 'no regrets' approach as a catch-all to justify a lack of adequate controls cannot be justified. It remains essential in all operations, irrespective of their level, to clarify both risks and risk tolerances, and the mitigation actions required to address them.

⇒ **Conclusion Management systems 3:** A combination of issues, including management decisionmaking, defeated UNICEF's aspirations to decentralize more quickly. This raises important questions about how operationally agile UNICEF can be. It has led to suggestions that there would need to be fundamental change for significant improvements to be made, with the caveat that more temporary solutions would come at the expense of a more sustainable structure that was best placed to serve UNICEF's best interests – and those of affected people – in the medium and long term.

⇒ **Conclusion Supply:** Despite its modest capacity, UNICEF's L3 response drew heavily on the support of the Supply Division to deliver a timely and proportionate response. While it took time to put systems in place, and despite some concerns about the relevance of some of its globally procured relief items, UNICEF strengthened its monitoring systems, expanded its local procurement, and bolstered its supply and logistics capacity to strengthen both its relevance and effectiveness.

⇒ **Conclusion Partnership 1:** Prior to the full-scale war, UNICEF had undertaken little preparedness for partnership and its partner management capacity was limited; its early partnerships were therefore ad hoc and exposed the organization to significant risk.

⇒ **Conclusion Partnership 2:** Despite challenges, UNICEF performed well in scaling up its partnerships, which delivered a vast array of support and services in an extremely complex context. UNICEF has focused its support to partners on the delivery of the response, which means that it has been unable to support partners' broader aspirations for capacity strengthening or learning.

⇒ **Conclusion Funding 1:** The generous volume of flexible funding UNICEF received allowed it to design and implement the humanitarian response it felt was most feasible and relevant – unfettered by the shortfalls, inequities and sectoral funding disparities common to most L3 responses. Where the volume and flexibility were less helpful was in promoting a culture that put action and spending before planning. There were many justifications for such an approach, as it was consistent with criticisms from the government, which had raised concerns about United Nations inaction, and it was also consistent with the aspirations of many of UNICEF's own staff, who were understandably keen to act.

⇒ **Conclusion Funding 2:** The high levels of funding for UNICEF's Ukraine response in 2022 provided a springboard for a set of internal debates across the organization about fund equity and strategies to address the global mismatch between humanitarian needs and funding.

⇒ **Conclusion Risk:** The risk appetite of the Ukraine Country Office played an essential role in allowing UNICEF's response to achieve scale. However, it did expose the organization to significant risks – this is hardly surprising given the pace and scale of change and the volatility of the context. It is not possible for this evaluation to determine whether more could have been done to manage these risks in a more timely way, but there continues to be scope for UNICEF to address the internal audit findings in addition to ensuring that it is consistently meeting its commitments to balancing coverage, quality and equity in its humanitarian response.

To what extent have UNICEF's human resources structures at HQ, regional office and country office levels, and Emergency Procedures supported the response in Ukraine?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Timely deployment:** Timely deployment of personnel at the onset of emergencies enables rapid emergency response

⇒ **Planning:** Regional offices, COs and field offices are adequately staffed to enable ongoing humanitarian response

⇒ **Well-being**: Duty of care for UNICEF personnel is assured

⇒ **Capacity:** UNICEF personnel have appropriate knowledge of emergency preparedness and response

⇒ **Standards of conduct:** UNICEF personnel observe organizational standards of conduct, both as an individual responsibility and an organizational commitment. These include standards on discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority, child safeguarding and SEA [ref. 3.2]

UNICEF has a comprehensive set of commitments to human resources, which include planning, deployment and capacity-building, in addition to staff well-being and duty of care. Because of the need to considerably scale up UNICEF's staff, the dynamic nature of the context, which required significant organizational change and agility, and the challenging work conditions that staff were required to operate in, significant attention was placed on the human resources function throughout the L3 response.

The initial surge

Finding Human resources 1
UNICEF mobilization of human resources from HQ, ECARO and other offices to support the L3 and the surge was critical to deliver the L3 response effectively.

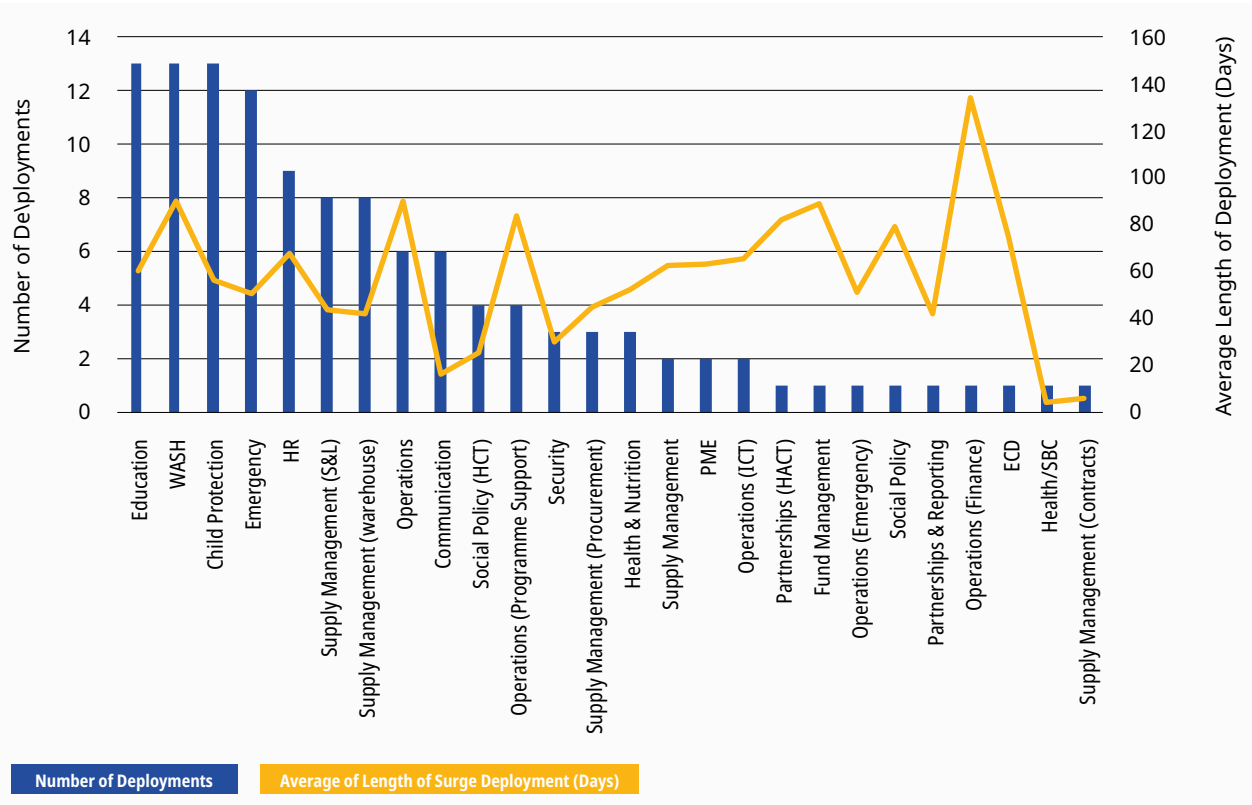
The L3 Emergency Procedures provide clear guidance on staff mobilization; within the first 24–48 hours of an L3 declaration, it provides for repurposing and/or redeploying staff already in-country to support the response. The modalities that UNICEF uses to resource its emergency operations include (i) single source recruitment without any process and based on a review of a CV; (ii) direct selection from a talent pool that has already been vetted; (iii) lateral reassignment for personnel who work at the level of the required post; and (iv) competitive selection. Each of these modalities were used to scale up the Ukraine response.

Table 20. Number and length of surge deployments by location

Status	Number of de-ployments	Average of length of surge deployment (days)	Average of length of surge de-ployment (months)
Lviv	83	54	1.3
Remote	21	68	1.7
Kyiv	12	51	1.1
Dnipro	3	87	2.0
Zhytomyr	1	184	6.0
Total	**120**	**58**	**1.4**

Source: UNICEF data

Figure 15. Number and average length of deployments (days) by function



Source: ECARO.[183]

Analysis UNICEF provided to the Evaluation Team shows that the greatest share of Ukrainerelated surge deployments (69 per cent) were to Lviv, where the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office temporarily relocated immediately after the Russian invasion. This was also the locus for significant numbers of IDPs in the early stages of the response; 18 per cent of surge deployments worked remotely, 10 per cent went to Kyiv and the remaining 3 per cent provided support to Dnipro and Zhytomyr (*see Table 20*). Figure 15 shows the breadth of surge deployments across programme sections, which demonstrates the breadth of capacity that the surge provided in the early weeks and months of the response.

Interviews with UNICEF staff highlighted a strong perception from national and regional office staff that many international/humanitarian surge staff did not have an adequate understanding of the Ukrainian context, and that the generic humanitarian skills and experience they had was a poor fit for the operating context. Many surge staff and some HQ staff rejected this view, defending the value and professionalism of the skills that were made available to the Ukraine team.

Conclusion Human resources 1

In adequately resourcing the staffing needs of its L3 response, UNICEF faced a daunting task; while it more than met organizational key performance indicators, the needs of the response were such that it struggled to keep up with the high demand for staff, with many teams significantly under-staffed for much of the L3 response. Given the scale-up of the team, which more than doubled in size, the evaluation acknowledges the significant challenges that were posed to UNICEF. What the organization has been able to achieve during the response is testament to the commitment and dedication of UNICEF personnel.

The role of human resources in expanding the L3 response

Finding Human resources 2

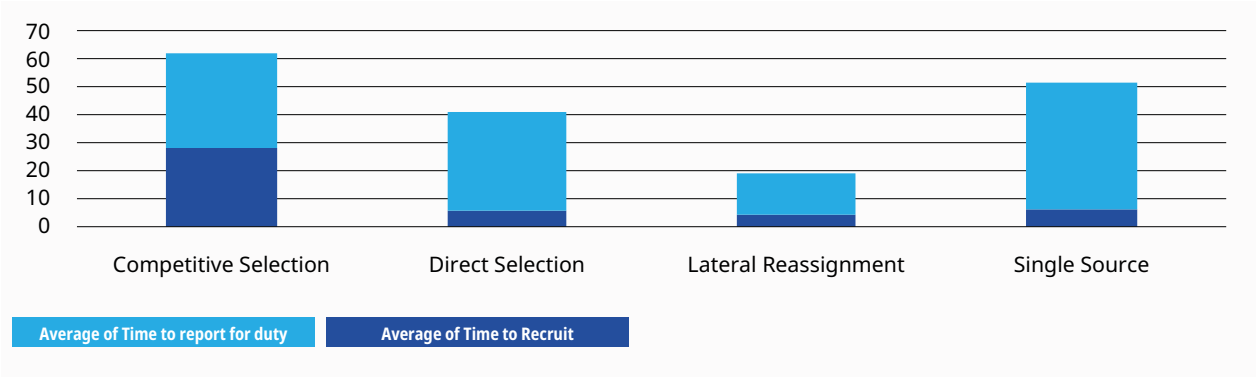
UNICEF's staffing requirements changed as its response expanded and recruitment adapted. While UNICEF's PBRs provided an overall framework for its staffing, and recruitment undertaken by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office met corporate key performance indicators, it was challenging for UNICEF to have fully staffed teams in place in a timely way.

In line with the Emergency Procedures, the shift from surge capacity to recruiting longerterm staff capacity was planned and implemented periodically through the use of PBRs.[184] Three PBRs were issued during the L3 response, planning for an increase in UNICEF's staffing from 84 staff before the full-scale war to 294. These positions were filled through a mix of competitive selection, single source recruitment, direct selection and lateral reassignment (*see Figure 16*).

Human resources data show that UNICEF's human resources team performed effectively in meeting UNCIEF's key performance indicators (KPIs) for recruitment, with 272 recruitments being undertaken in 2022 in an average time of 23.5 days. At the time the evaluation mission was being conducted in 2023, the human resources team had undertaken a further 165 recruitments in an average time of 25 days.[185] UNICEF's performance compares very favourably to average global performance. Despite this, staff interviews noted considerable concern that the pace of recruitment failed to match the pace of the response, with many operations and sectoral teams considerably under-resourced long into the response.

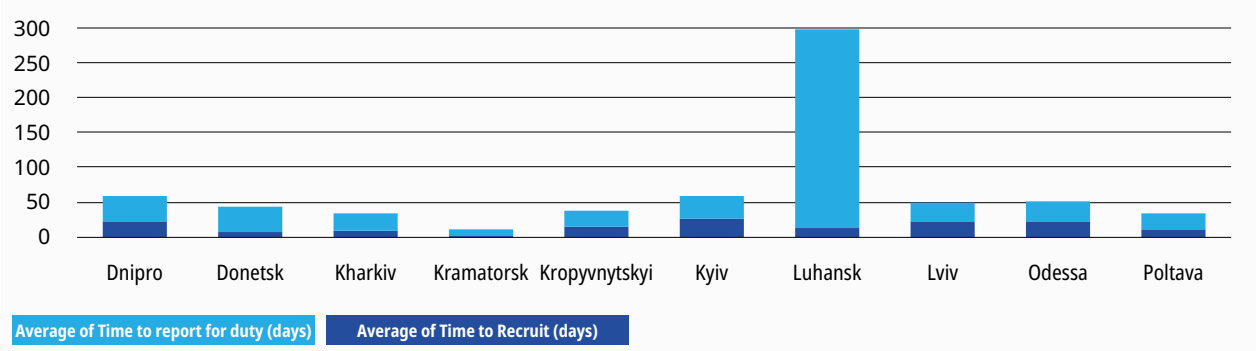
Many challenges were a result of factors that were external to UNICEF, including issues such as personnel shortages due to conscription and competition from other agencies. Interviews with UNICEF's staff highlighted some practices that impeded the swift mobilization of new staff. For example, staff who had gone through the hiring process indicated they were requested to provide documents as verification of their competencies and experiences; they included copies of degrees or grades, and references. While these requests are understandable in peace time, given that so many Ukrainian families had been displaced, it often served to lengthen the recruitment process. An analysis of the time taken to recruit staff into posts and then deploy them by recruitment type and duty station is provided below (*see Figure 16 and Figure 17*).

Figure 16. UNICEF staff recruitment and deployment by recruitment modality



Source: UNICEF data

Figure 17. UNICEF staff recruitment and deployment by duty station



Source: UNICEF data

From an internal perspective, many of the interviews for longer-term capacity were not triggered until four months after the Russian invasion; while UNICEF quickly doubled its staff complement, even in November 2022 152 staff still remained to be recruited. Human resources data show that for most UNICEF sections, staffing levels were not realized at least until the end of 2022.[186] For the decentralized field offices, interviews highlighted that many of the sections felt the lack of adequate staffing constrained UNICEF's ability to shift gears; in particular, it was felt that UNICEF was unable to make the shift to working in partnership until there was sufficient staff capacity to manage this.

Staff capacity and engagement

With the massive surge in new staff, the turnover of a significant proportion of UNICEF's leadership and management, and changes in the location of its offices, which included temporary closures and the opening of new offices, there were understandable challenges in establishing a rhythm and consistency across UNICEF's team. A number of UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff commented that the frequent staff changes in the early stages of the response hampered delivery and were challenging.

UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staffing was quite modest prior to the L3, and the arrival of so many new staff and surge deployments was a challenge to manage. While the human resources team sought to address knowledge gaps through onboarding sessions and a learning and development programme that included organizational guidance, the changes still caused considerable challenges. Interviews with UNICEF staff at all levels acknowledged the steep learning curve that staff faced. Many staff who joined UNICEF during the L3 response indicated they had received very little training or support to meet the

expectations of their role. In addition, with frequent changes in staffing (due to short deployments), there were limited opportunities to learn from a mentor or grow in the position. Although this was understandable given the pace of the response and did change with time, the shift was gradual. One of the implications of this was that there were considerable gaps that existed in staff members' knowledge about how UNICEF works, and its norms, standards, commitments and principles (including humanitarian principles), which had implications for the pace of UNICEF's scale-up and response. What was evident across all UNICEF's staff, however, was a consistent motivation to scale up the L3 response, which meant that staff worked extremely long hours and went above and beyond their normal duties to deliver on UNICEF's commitments to those in need.

One aspect considered to be particularly challenging was staff communication and engagement in decision-making. Interviews with national staff indicated a common perception that, despite being significantly affected by changes in the response and how UNICEF sought to deliver it, experienced national staff were infrequently consulted. These concerns are expressed in the operational review[187] UNICEF conducted towards the end of 2022 and in the results of the 2022 Global Staff Survey.[188] There was an acknowledgement that the rapid changes necessitated by the L3 response required UNICEF to take decisions, but there was a strong sentiment that the fact they often resulted in staff having to change their function, move duty station or be relieved of duties made it essential investment was made in adequately consulting with and listening to those affected by the changes.

Conclusion Human resources 2

The diversity of UNICEF's staff, the significant numbers of new team members (new to UNICEF and/or new to Ukraine), and the rapid pace of change in UNICEF's structure and operations in Ukraine during the L3 response meant that clear communication and transparent staff engagement were an essential success factor. Challenges in delivering these have meant that issues have not been addressed and staff have not always felt valued. While this has now been recognized, it will continue to be important if performance is to improve.

Staff well-being and duty of care

Finding human resources 3

UNICEF recognized the importance of staff well-being quite quickly in the L3 response. The provision of a menu of options ensured that staff could access the type of support that was relevant to their needs.

As noted earlier in this section, UNICEF staff were placed under tremendous pressure due to the pace of the scale-up, but were also working in an extremely volatile and precarious environment. Many staff (both international and national) were separated from their families and had themselves been traumatized during the Russian invasion. To address this, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office took a number of measures to support staff. The staff well-being framework was based on four pillars, which included: (i) recruiting an internal staff counsellor in addition to a specialized service;[189] (ii) group resilience training, which selected areas of focus from staff experiences; (iii) a staff well-being committee whose role it was to connect people and build relationships; and (iv) an occupational safety initiative that had links to staff safety and security. UNICEF recognized that staff have different needs, which justified the menu-driven approach.[190]

Interviews with staff suggested that access to this support was welcome and services were certainly well used (*see Box 9*). Where the greatest challenge was perceived, however, was in the differential ways national and international staff were compensated for the long hours worked; while during the L3 response there were arrangements for all staff to accrue time off in lieu and to take breaks to see family, since the end of the L3, the provisions made for national staff had been reviewed and cut back in line with corporate procedures. Staff found this difficult, as many continued to be separated from their families, either because of the location of their duty station or because family members had moved out of the country.

BOX 9

Uptake of UNICEF's well-being and staff support services 2022–23[191]

- 305 individual counselling consultations including 137 on mission environment/working conditions
- 45 critical incident sessions
- 3 grief and loss sessions
- 20 interpersonal relationship sessions
- 99 personal/family relationship sessions
- 27 group sessions and 28 managerial consultations.

LESSON

The need to re-think staff mobility: The Ukraine L3 response highlighted the challenges posed by a rapid scale-up. On the one hand, UNICEF met its human resources KPIs, but on the other, it struggled to attain the organizational agility required to recruit staff and to move and/or deploy them in a location that was proximate to the most affected people in a timely way. The Ukraine experience should be used as an opportunity to explore some of the organizational challenges that UNICEF faces in rapid scale-up.

To what extent have UNICEF's management systems and structures at HQ, regional office and country office level, and Emergency Procedures supported the response in Ukraine?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ **Over-arching commitment:** All UNICEF offices are fit for purpose and personnel know and contribute to the application of the minimum preparedness standards and Emergency Procedures, to enable to timely delivery of humanitarian assistance by UNICEF and its partners [ref. 3]

⇒ **UNICEF field presence and operations:** Ensure that UNICEF field presence and operations allow for adequate identification and response to the needs of affected populations including those in hard-to-reach areas [ref. 3.1]

UNICEF's work in humanitarian crises is guided by its Emergency Procedures,[192] which define the minimum package of actions that must be taken in an emergency, clearly identifying roles and responsibilities. They also detail simplifications of existing processes required to meet urgent humanitarian needs, which benefit from their own specific guidance.[193]



Leadership and accountability in the Ukraine L3 response

Finding Management systems 1
Tensions regarding the leadership of the L3 response by the global emergency coordinator made it difficult at times for the organization to provide coherent and consistent support. However, with the changes that have been made in the Executive Office through the creation of a new deputy executive director role tasked with oversight of humanitarian action and supply operations, there is now greater capacity for UNICEF to address these issues directly and in a more timely way.

The nature of an L3 emergency – determined by the scale, urgency, complexity and capacity of regional offices and country offices affected by the crisis – has a specific set of accountabilities, which require that the executive director declares that organization-wide mobilization is needed to scale up and respond, and appoints a global emergency coordinator. Regional office support to the country office is also enhanced.[194]

By the time the L3 was declared in UNICEF on 5 March 2022, which coincided with the IASC declaration, two weeks had passed since the crisis had begun. Both the World Food Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had declared their L3 emergencies on 25 February, so concerns were raised in interviews that UNICEF was comparatively slow to respond.[195] While the UNICEF L3 initially applied to both the response inside Ukraine and the refugee response in neighbouring countries, the refugee response was shifted to an L2 in September 2022, at which time the regional director took on formal leadership of the response in line with procedures. Ukraine remained an L3 for an initial term, which was then extended until 7 March 2023.[196]

Interviews with staff in HQ, ECARO and the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office acknowledged that the same tensions surrounded the Ukraine response as the refugee response. While the L3 Emergency Procedures handed formal leadership of the response to the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) chief who took on the role of the global emergency coordinator, there was an uneasy relationship with ECARO where capacity and experience were considered as justification for playing a more prominent role than was anticipated by the procedures. While there may have been potential to accommodate this, boundaries were blurred and there was considerable internal tension, which made decision-making on some key issues laboured.[197] Interviews with HQ staff reported a level of dissonance; senior staff and departments reported that they felt unable to engage in providing advice and support about aspects of the response. Interviews highlighted that ECARO played a gatekeeping role that sought to 'protect' the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office from unnecessary disruptions that might have detracted from the important task of scaling up the programme; while staff in the country office welcomed this, support functions at HQ felt they were at times 'locked out' of the response.

Some senior staff interviewed questioned the relevance of UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedures and whether there should have been scope for shifting greater responsibility to regional offices; others felt strongly that the procedure was fit for purpose and that there was a need for robust implementation and accountability. Of relevance to this issue was the creation of the new deputy executive director role tasked with oversight of humanitarian action and supply operations and with it an increase in the capacity of the Executive Office, which would permit greater attention to be paid to addressing any lack of clarity in the implementation of corporate procedures and addressing similar tensions in the future.

Application of the Emergency Procedures and L3 simplifications in the Ukraine L3 response

The Emergency Procedures highlight specific simplifications that supersede global policies and procedures that would otherwise apply in non-emergency contexts, which CO, regional office and HQ staff are mandated to take to facilitate a timely, predictable and efficient response. A formal process and recommended set of actions are outlined in the Emergency Procedures for the transition into and out of a corporate emergency activation, which the Evaluation Team assessed as part of the evaluation (*see Table 21*).

Table 21. Assessment of the Ukraine response against the Corporate Emergency Activation Procedures[198]

Anticipated actions	Application in the Ukraine L3 response
Emergency coordination	
Establishment of Emergency Management Team and Technical Management Team	The Emergency Management Team and Technical Management Team were established at the outset of the response and continued to meet periodically during the L3 activation. Meetings were well attended, particularly at the outset of the crisis, and actions were regularly updated.
Monitoring of emergency procedures application	
Training, monitoring and audits of the application of the procedures	There is evidence that discussions occurred regarding the L3 procedures (a presentation is available) that included participation of UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff. While a monitoring checklist exists,[199] it has only been partially completed and is not dated. There is no evidence of any additional monitoring activities. An internal audit was conducted in February–March 2023 that addressed key areas of risk in the context of the L3 response.
Exiting the emergency procedures	
Extension and exit strategy	The L3 emergency was extended before being classified as an L2 in March 2023. There is no evidence of an exit strategy outlining how the emergency response will be maintained at scale as required by the emergency procedures.

Interviews with the different sections and departments of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office revealed that L3 simplifications were frequently employed by the Ukraine team as and where they were required, but there is little documentation on when they were applied or accountability for their use. With this in mind, the use of specific simplifications by UNICEF's teams and departments have been highlighted in relevant sections of this report where relevant evidence was available.

Conclusion Management systems 1
While the existence of a high-capacity regional office played an essential role in the implementation of the Ukraine response, the tensions that arose from the lack of clarity on leadership affected both the coherence and effectiveness of the Ukraine response. Harnessing global support for the L3 response required clarity about leadership and ways of working that leaves little room for exceptionalism.

Application of UNICEF's 'no regrets' policy in the Ukraine L3 response

Finding Management systems 2
Senior staff in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office frequently referred to the 'no regrets' policy when concerns or challenges were raised about implementation. This suggests a misinterpretation of the policy, which refers to the early deployment of capacity and resources for humanitarian response rather than the application of procedures and controls to ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently.

The concept of 'no regrets' has been prominent in the humanitarian sector since it was determined that the international community failed to act in a sufficiently timely way to take early action to save lives during the 2011 drought in Somalia, which ultimately claimed the lives of over 250,000 people.[200] Since that time, many agencies have defined an approach that supports early action or 'no regrets'. The importance of this was recognized in UNICEF's 2020 Humanitarian Review,[201] which included a recommendation to adopt such an approach. Subsequently, 'no regrets' has been incorporated into UNICEF's Emergency Procedures, which state that: "throughout its humanitarian action and its organization, UNICEF maintains a 'no regrets' approach, meaning the organization will err on the side of deploying more capacity and mobilizing

more resources in support of the response even if this proves to have been unnecessary after the fact."[202] The same procedures specifically refer to 'no regrets' 12 more times, in each case with reference to the organizational commitment for the provision of supplies and resources.

As reported earlier in this document, the internal audit that preceded this evaluation highlighted several weaknesses for which it proposed a series of recommended actions.[203] Despite the audit report continuing to be a draft document, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has been proactive in seeking to address many of these weaknesses. It was noteworthy that on occasions when the Evaluation Team sought to raise and discuss challenges in implementation, the justification for weak controls that was most frequently given was that of the implementation of UNICEF's 'no regrets' policy. While the Evaluation Team is sympathetic to the intense pressure the country office was under to respond in a timely and proportionate way to the unfolding humanitarian needs, the matter suggests there is some confusion in the definition of 'no regrets' for which there is need for clarification. As the genesis of the term suggests, it refers to a commitment to deploy "capacity and resources"[204] and should not be conflated with the controls put in place to ensure the efficient and effective deployment and use of the same; these are governed by UNICEF's Emergency Procedures, which are clearly outlined.

Conclusion Management systems 2
While the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was under intense pressure, the use of a 'no regrets' approach as a catch-all to justify a lack of adequate controls cannot be justified. It remains essential in all operations, irrespective of their level, to clarify both risks and risk tolerances, and the mitigation actions required to address them.

Decentralization of UNICEF's field presence and operations

Finding Management systems 3
While UNICEF's decentralization process was initiated within five months of the full-scale-war, it was not until towards the end of the L3 response that field office-level capacity was sufficient for it to garner the benefits of the change.

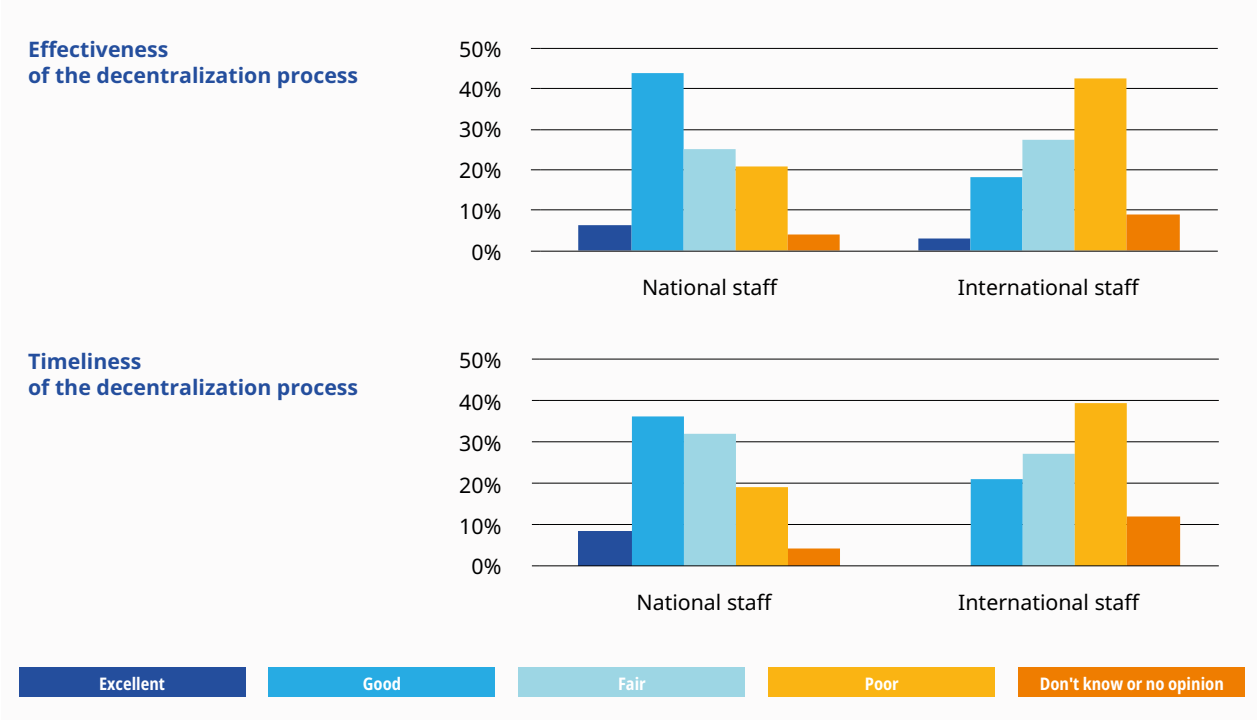
As outlined earlier in this report, an important shift was made with the decision to decentralize the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office. At the time, the locus of UNICEF's response remained in the centre and west of the country, despite acknowledgement that the greatest needs were in the east and south, and the external context required a change; but the operational review, survey results and interviews show there was also considerable anxiety internally that UNICEF was not sufficiently prioritizing the most vulnerable communities, particularly those returning to frontline and newly accessible areas. The anticipated benefits of decentralization of decision-making, cost centres and field staffing were outlined in the operational review as "quicker processes, more agile and responsive delivery, and closer links to affected communities", with the constraints being cautious risk management given the volume of funding, challenges in coordination and communication between Kyiv and field offices, and the slow staff scale-up in field offices.[205]

LESSON

The value of an operational review to strengthen staff consultation and prompt management action in the L3 response: The operational review played an essential role in harvesting the diverse opinions of UNICEF's staff and distilling them to inform an important and coherent set of messages about the future positioning of the organization. In several important aspects of UNICEF's work, the review played an important role in amplifying important messages, communicating them clearly and galvanizing action.

The results of the Evaluation Team staff survey – undertaken almost 12 months after the operational review – provide an indication of the extent to which benefits accrued and risks were mitigated. Overall, staff gave a very mixed response, the most notable difference being between national and international staff, who have very different perceptions (*see Figure 18*). It is difficult to account for the difference in perceptions with any degree of accuracy, since in interviews both international and national staff voiced the need for more decisive action to be taken. Moreover, the challenges associated with the decentralization process tended to be felt more keenly by national staff, who were often required to move their lives – and often those of their families – to field office locations to realize UNICEF's decentralization aspirations.

Figure 18. Results of staff survey on effectiveness and timeliness of UNICEF's decentralization process

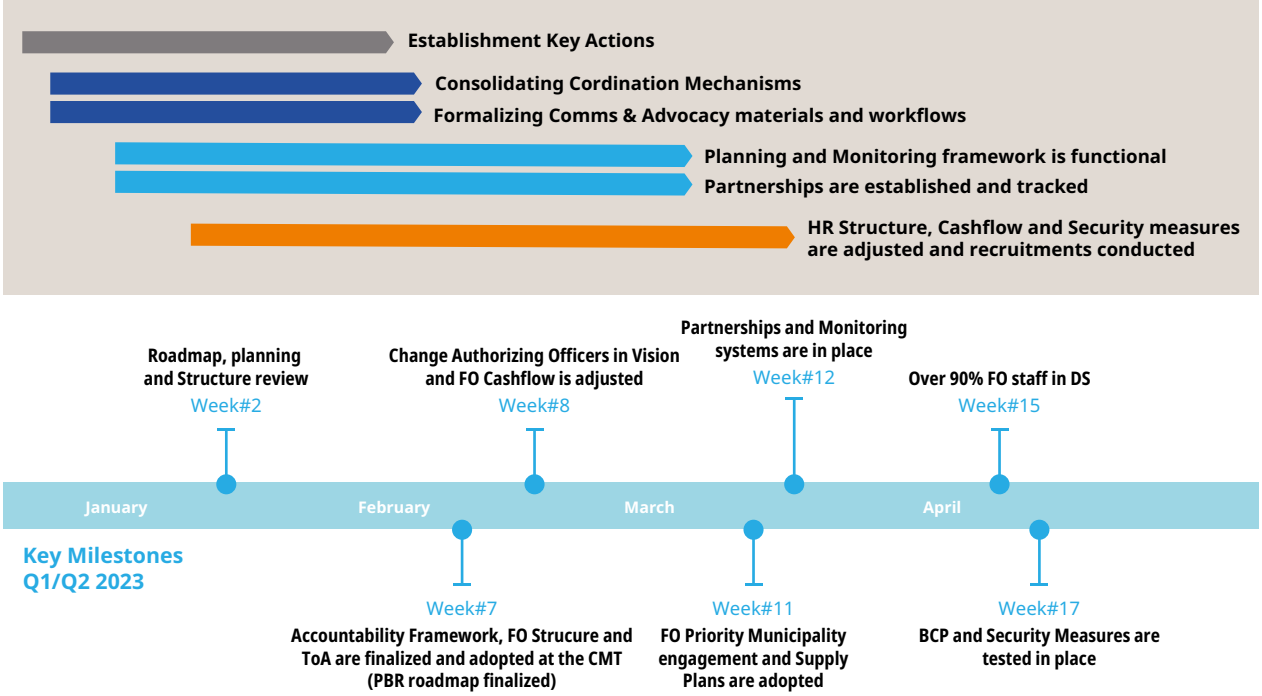


Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The only other significant anomaly was that staff who had been in the office for less than six months perceived UNICEF's decentralization as far timelier and more effective than those who had been in the office for six months and longer (who would therefore have had far greater involvement in the transition).

While decentralization for 2023 was outlined in the May 2022 PBR[206] and included in the Annual Management Plan in July 2022 as one of five priorities,[207] and a strategy and road map prepared in September 2022,[208] implementation was not anticipated until the beginning of 2023 (*see Figure 19*). Interviews with field office staff revealed a strong view that there was insufficient capacity until well into 2023. Improving the effectiveness of decentralization was one of the most frequently suggested recommendations in the staff survey.[209]

Figure 19. Key milestones for completion of decentralization of UNICEF's offices in 2023



Source: UNICEF Ukraine Country Office.

One of the challenges with this analysis is in accurately determining the factors that hindered a more rapid process of shifting the centre of gravity of UNICEF's response closer to where the needs were. But on closer analysis, the fact that discussions were initiated in July and implementation did not start in earnest until January 2023 accounted for a significant amount of the delay. Overall, the process took at least 10 months from concept to completion. When the time required to get staff into their posts and sufficiently capacitated to work effectively is added to this, the timeline shifts beyond 12 months. It is noteworthy, however, that recruitment was undertaken in a timely and efficient way as outlined in the human resources section of this report.[210]

Conclusion Management systems 3

A combination of issues, including management decision-making, defeated UNICEF's aspirations to decentralize more quickly. These raise important questions about how operationally agile UNICEF can be. It has led to suggestions that there would need to be fundamental change for significant improvements to be made, with the caveat that more temporary solutions would come at the expense of a more sustainable structure that was best placed to serve UNICEF's best interests – and those of affected people – in the medium and long term.

How well was UNICEF able to provide access to supplies that otherwise would not have been accessible to affected populations?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Ensure the timely delivery and distribution of supplies and essential household items to affected populations, partners and/or point-of-use [ref. 2.1.3]

Supply and logistics is an integral component of programme and service delivery. In the CCCs, UNICEF commits to ensuring the fast delivery and distribution of appropriate supplies and relief items to affected people. This is facilitated through the timely development of supply and logistics strategies based on needs assessment and response plans.

Timeline of the supply response

Finding Supply 1

In the absence of alternative capacities, UNICEF focused on the provision of supplies during the early phase of its Ukraine L3 response, which – with strong support from the Supply Division – was effective in achieving considerable scale and meeting some of the immediate needs of affected people.

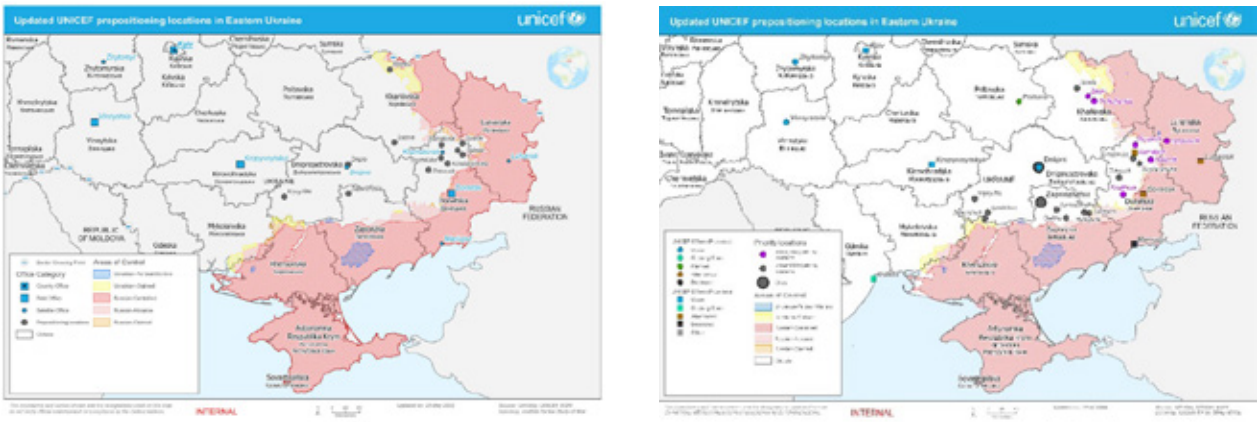
Prior to the full-scale war, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office had minimal logistics and warehousing capacity. According to interviews, this included family hygiene kits, institutional hygiene kits, education kits and basic medical supplies for 3,000 families that were prepositioned in warehouses in Kyiv and Kramatorsk.

After the Russian invasion and in line with the Emergency Procedures, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office developed an emergency supply and logistics strategy, underpinned by a 'no regrets' approach, which was completed by 17 March. Scaling up preceded this and involved mobilizing support from across UNICEF's offices. A rapid response mechanism was established and led by the global emergency coordinator; surge personnel were deployed to Ukraine from the Supply Division in Copenhagen, Denmark. Interviewees had a favourable view of the support the country office received from the Supply Division, in particular its support for the initial scaleup of supply operations. Supply Division staff arrived in Lviv within six days of the invasion and were quickly able to secure warehousing and establish operations and logistics support. Remote support was also provided. Supplies were procured from UNICEF's warehouses in Denmark and from the country offices in Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. The first order included winter clothes for children's health supplies, recreational kits, ECD kits and WASH supplies (local procurement).

UNICEF previously had a much smaller programme, as evidenced by KIIs conducted with UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff and partner staff, as well as the internal audit report.[211] consequently, in the early phase of the response, UNICEF lacked sufficient capacity and scale of staffing required to respond to a large-scale emergency, a wide enough network of partners to respond, and suitable storage capacity or transportation arrangements for delivery of supplies via secure routes. With these limitations in mind, the country office used a model of delivery to 'consignees' (frequently government partners, but also civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteers and other procurement service providers), with an estimated US$108 million worth of supplies distributed to 1,026 consignees in the early months of the response.[212]

There were other challenges with the initial implementation of the supply plan. Considering the high value of the supply and logistics component, and the limited capacity that existed in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, the lack of warehouse capacity was one; another more general concern was the continued risks and limitations as a consequence of the ongoing conflict. The capacity of sector teams to adequately absorb the supplies also posed challenges. Consignees and partners experienced similar capacity limitations in receiving and distributing supplies.

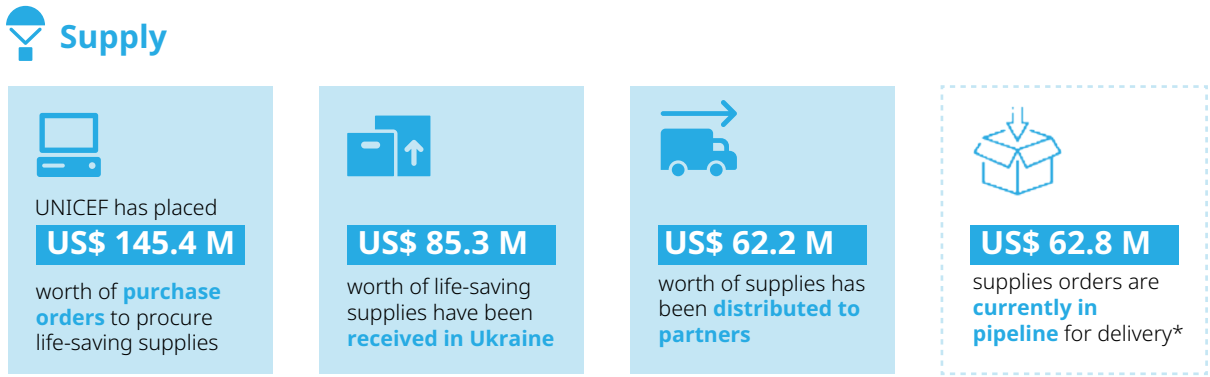
Figure 20. Comparison of UNICEF's prepositioning of supplies between May and July 2022



Source: UNICEF.

Once the first wave of supplies had been distributed, a regional sourcing strategy enabled UNICEF to shift to suppliers from Bulgaria, Poland and Turkey that were more proximate and offered more timely delivery. Once production capacity became viable again in Ukraine, UNICEF started to procure supplies from the local market. In the first six months of UNICEF's response, prepositioning of supplies was significantly enhanced from February 2022 to May 2022 to July 2022 (*see Figure 21*). This strengthened UNICEF's contribution to the response in areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine, and specific responses such as to the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam.

Figure 21. UNICEF Ukraine Country Office supply report (30 November 2022)



Source: UNICEF.

By October 2022, a new workplan was under development that included supply plans for Kyiv, and for the field offices in Dnipro, Kropyvnytskyi, Lviv and Odesa.[213] This necessitated the continued scaling up of procurement; between September 2022 and November 2022, the cost of supplies ordered nearly doubled in value from US$88 million to more than US$145 million (*see Figure 21*).[214] This trend of increasing supplies expenditure continued; the supply plan for the fourth quarter of 2022 was almost US$230 million, US$200 million of which was for goods. In total, between February 2022 and March 2023, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office procured supplies amounting to US$185 million. The distribution of these supplies by UNICEF sector is outlined in Table 22 and the monthly value of supplies by method of dispatch is summarized in Figure 22.

Table 22. Supplies dispatched to partners from the UNICEF warehouse (March 2022–September 2023)

Section	Total value (US$)	% of total
Child protection	12,572,828	8
Education	18,654,202	12
Health	56,505,992	37
Operations	15,455	0
Prog. effectiveness	27,169,844	18
SBC	453,142	0
Social policy	96,056	0
WASH	36,545,059	24
Total	**152,012,577.21**	

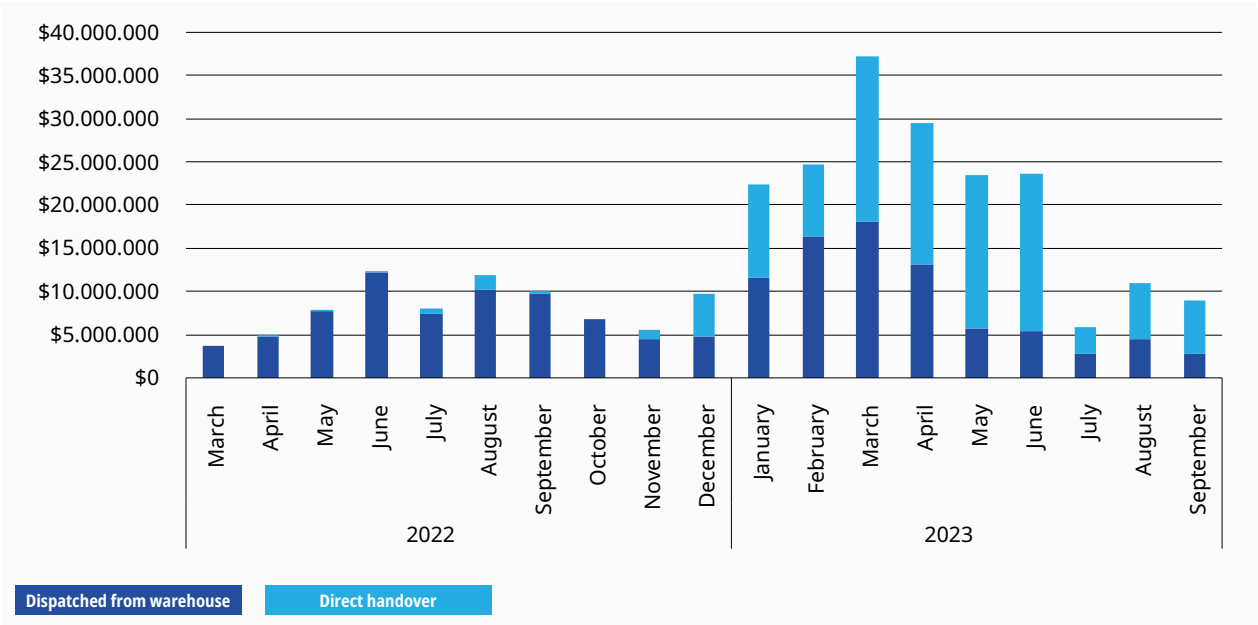
Source: UNICEF data

Timeliness and relevance of the supply response

Finding Supply 2
While the supply response was timely, there were some instances where supplies were not relevant to the context. These challenges were largely addressed as procurement from Ukrainian suppliers scaled up.

As noted during interviews with UNICEF staff in Copenhagen, country offices require available funds to make purchase orders; in the case of Ukraine, the volume of unearmarked funding contributions enabled these to be made in a timely way. It was also noted that the initial supply response in Ukraine was perceived internally as being 'unprecedented' in the speed with which resources were ordered, mobilized and delivered.

Figure 22. Value of supplies by dispatch modality by month (US$, March 2022–September 2023)



Source: UNICEF Ukraine L3 quantitative data analysis.

One of the challenges was the existence of redundant stock, which was not considered relevant to the context in Ukraine. Interviews with UNICEF staff revealed several examples, some of which arose from the provision of generic supplies, which was informed by global crises rather than by the need in Ukraine specifically. Examples of this included High Energy Biscuits, water purification tablets and diapers (nappies). Interviews with UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff suggested that some education supply items, such as the School-in-a-Box, were more relevant to developing country camp settings, and were not considered to be useful, an issue which was also raised in the evaluation of UNICEF's response to the refugee crisis arising from the Ukraine context.[215] Some items that may have been useful earlier in the response, such as school backpack kits, for example, were superfluous by the time they arrived. As evidenced during KIIs with Ministry of Education and Science staff, standard kits were helpful in the early part of the response, but as time went on more targeted items were required to meet the specific needs of affected people. Challenges were also noted in the supply of winter clothing, with concerns received by UNICEF and/or the Evaluation Team about relevance, quality and timeliness given the season. These challenges were subsequently addressed when Ukrainian suppliers were able to repurpose production capacity and produce the types of clothing required.

Supply items that were considered most relevant included the adapted version of children's education kits, which were locally procured and contained support for digital home-based learning (power banks and solar lamps rather than notebooks and pencils), and to some extent digital devices – which were appropriate for the country context where 75 per cent of school lessons were still taking place fully or partly online. Digital devices had their own challenges, such as the high cost per beneficiary, insufficient supply to meet needs-based distribution, sustainability and ownership.

Risk management, control and reporting

Finding Supply 3
Risk management was strengthened over time through the use of TPM and the implementation of innovative monitoring systems. While the early months of the response exposed UNICEF to risk due to a lack of adequate oversight, it was considered to be outweighed by the need to respond in a proportionate and timely way.

Risk management was underpinned by the use of TPM and a consignee monitoring tool that was employed alongside end user monitoring. Specific actions taken by the Supply Division to offset risk included:[216] (i) mapping of partner logistics and warehouse capacity for forward positioning of stocks; (ii) weekly monitoring and reporting on inventory; (iii) weekly follow-up with programme staff on supply dispatch; and (iv) engagement with the Logistics Cluster.

While the use of consignees was an efficient means of distributing supplies that otherwise would not have been possible, it also carried risks as highlighted in the audit conducted by UNICEF. Supplies were frequently provided in response to request letters or distribution lists submitted to UNICEF and were not consistently accompanied by agreements. When formal agreements were in place, the consignees still determined the distribution of the supplies.

From a programme delivery perspective, this approach achieved volume and it did so in a comparatively timely manner. But UNICEF had limited oversight over how the supplies were distributed or used. TPM did engage in verification activities, but this frequently occurred long after the distributions had been made. TPM targeted consignees that received the largest volume and value of supplies; of the 100 largest consignees in terms of value, 94 per cent were ultimately monitored; in total, 702 consignees were monitored through TPM. Overall, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office determined that the risk presented by the use of consignees was outweighed by the need for UNICEF to respond in a proportionate and timely way.[217]

LESSON

An innovative approach to monitoring emergency supply: The development of the comprehensive Emergency Supply Dashboard by the Supply Division was an important innovation during the Ukraine L3 response. Webinars and training were used to strengthen knowledge of the dashboard, and start-up support was provided by the Supply Division in-country and remotely. Adjustments were made based on feedback from the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office using a learningby-doing feedback loop. The effectiveness and utility of the dashboard have since been evidenced by its uptake in all UNICEF L2/L3 emergencies.

Reporting mechanisms on supply and logistics (stock, pipeline supply plan) were established at the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office that mirrored the Emergency Supply Dashboard established in the Supply Division in Copenhagen, which was the first of its kind (*see Lesson box above*). Interviews with supply staff suggest that the dashboard proved to be a relevant tool for ensuring effective management, tracking and inventory of supply for UNICEF, the Supply Division and the country office.

Significant challenges were experienced collecting data during the L3 emergency. The sheer size of the supply operation necessitated rapid recording of information to keep up with the speed of the expansion of UNICEF Ukraine Country Office programming. It took time to build adequate capacity within UNICEF for data collection, but with the expansion of the M&E team and enhancement of specific information management capacity, monitoring was strengthened.

The Supply Division supported the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office in end user monitoring through the rollout of a methodology for monitoring the last-mile delivery of supplies, which was piloted in Ukraine. The purpose of the pilot was to demonstrate that it was possible to monitor last-mile delivery and to ensure beneficiaries received deliveries even in a complex emergency such as in Ukraine, requiring only minimal staff oversight. This initiative has subsequently been used in other emergencies.[218] While the pilot report was not available at the time this Evaluation Report was drafted, interviews with the Supply Division indicated the methodology's performance was highly satisfactory and is being refined in other implementation scenarios.

The status and role of UNICEF's supply in the recovery phase

At the time of the evaluation visit, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office had seven warehouses. These facilities were rented and associated costs had been incorporated into the supply plan.[219] They were adequately staffed by a team that had an understanding of the procedures and had capacity to respond to new and emerging needs. New long-term-agreements had been signed that included improved arrangements for timely delivery, complemented by an improved monitoring and reporting system. Enhanced transportation arrangements and contracting mean that past distribution challenges have now been overcome.[220]

Ultimately, the question for UNICEF in the recovery phase is how to determine whether it is appropriate for the organization to take responsibility for/provide assistance to address structural problems that the Government of Ukraine/*oblasts* are responsible for. In some areas of the L3 intervention, such as health, UNICEF's supplies were often high end and constituted technology upgrades for hospitals to replace outdated or unserviceable equipment with more advanced equipment. As UNICEF shifts towards supporting transition and recovery, it has become clearer that there is a need for policy reform, alongside longer-term financial support.[221] With the knowledge and partnerships that UNICEF has developed during the L3 response, it is now better placed to develop longer-term plans to support government departments and utility companies to address these issues rather than play a substation role.[222]

Conclusion Supply

Despite its modest capacity, UNICEF's L3 response drew heavily on the support of the SD to deliver a timely and proportionate response. While it took time to put systems in place, and despite some concerns about the relevance of some of its globally procured relief items, UNICEF strengthened its monitoring systems, expanded its local procurement, and bolstered its supply and logistics capacity to strengthen both its relevance and effectiveness.

How has UNICEF worked in partnership to deliver the response and in so doing to what extent has it contributed to localization?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

- ⇒ **Invest in strengthening the capacities of local actors** (national and local authorities, CSOs and communities) in humanitarian action [ref. 2.2.6]
- ⇒ **Preparedness:** Humanitarian programs and partnerships are identified in advance through contingency planning and preparedness measures
- ⇒ **Simplified procedures:** Simplified procedures are used to establish timely partnership agreements
- ⇒ **Timely disbursement of funds:** Disbursement of funds to partners is timely
- ⇒ **Technical assistance for quality and results-based programming:** Technical assistance and capacity-building are provided to partners to foster quality programming
- ⇒ **Monitoring:** Continuous improvement in program quality, coverage and equity is driven by partner dialogue, feedback mechanisms, field monitoring and corrective actions [ref. 3.5]

Implementing partnerships and localization are dealt with separately in UNICEF's CCC; the former are addressed under Operational Commitments, which focus on the procedural aspects of IPs, while the latter is dealt with under Programme Approaches, which focus on UNICEF's support to strengthen delivery capacities.



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UNICEF's partnerships

Finding Partnership 1
UNICEF faced a localization dilemma in its Ukraine response. While there was undoubtedly significant capacity and motivation from within civil society and government IPs to provide assistance, at the onset of the crisis, UNICEF (like other organizations) was not fully prepared for this.

Prior to the full-scale war, UNICEF's programme was delivered through 46 partners (43 CSOs and 3 government partners). By the end of the L3 activation in March 2023, the number of partners had doubled, and the composition had changed to 64 CSOs and 31 government partners with 63 per cent of the partners new to UNICEF.[223]

As outlined earlier in this report, one of the key challenges for UNICEF was scaling up its own team sufficiently to manage and oversee the transition from a response that was focused on a consignee-delivered supplies approach. As part of this process, UNICEF created a partnership/HACT team in the April PBR, which was in place by September 2022. While this team was being recruited, UNICEF brought in short-term surge staff to address the gap, in addition to providing staff training (in June 2022).

One of the most significant challenges was the limited exposure that many partners (particularly non-government ones) had in delivering humanitarian assistance at the scale that was required given the pace and magnitude of displacement across Ukraine. While much has been written about the limitations of international organizations to adequately support local humanitarian action in the Ukraine response,[224] there was a dilemma: Many local and national CSOs were not familiar with the United Nations system; many had not worked at the scale that was required to respond proportionately to the crisis. In many respects, this represented a 'wicked problem' of localization. While there was undoubtedly significant capacity and motivation from within civil society and government to provide assistance, at the onset of the crisis, UNICEF and other United Nations and international NGOs were poorly placed to harness this as they were insufficiently prepared to do so. Ultimately, one of the key failures of the international humanitarian system's early localization efforts was born out of a lack of preparedness.

LESSON

The importance of preparing for partnership: One of the key localization lessons from the Ukraine L3 response is to prepare for partnership. While UNICEF had significant partnerships in the east of the country, it had limited engagement with partners beyond those it already worked with. Looking through a localization lens requires that the organization should engage more broadly as part of preparedness planning, but also as a means of its broader contribution to localization.

Interviews revealed an acknowledgement that for the first six months of the response, UNICEF did not have a coherent approach to its IPs and that different sections used different strategies, which were determined by a range of factors that included internal IP management capacity, partners' capacity to deliver quality standards and perceptions of longer-term IP needs.

A second challenge with IPs was that many had themselves undergone significant changes and were working in sectors and communities or with constituencies outside their traditional scope of work.[225] UNICEF's staff faced the dilemma of having to balance the potential risks of new implementing partnerships against the potential results that could be achieved for affected people. Moreover, these decisions had to be made quickly and with limited knowledge. As one staff member explained, in the initial phases of the response: "UNICEF had to take a trial-and-error approach".[226] The approach was refined and improved with time, particularly with support from the Partnership Team, which strengthened rigour once it was established in September 2022. There was an acknowledgement from those interviewed that there was little time for reflection about what worked and where the challenges lay, which justified the trial-and-error approach.[227]

Conclusion Partnership 1
Prior to the full-scale war, UNICEF had undertaken little preparedness for partnership and its partner management capacity was limited; its early partnerships were therefore ad hoc and exposed the organization to significant risk.

Finding Partnership 2

The scale-up in UNICEF's partnerships included many new partners, at a time when it had significant capacity limitations of its own, which meant that UNICEF took on considerable risk. The quid pro quo was the benefits that the shift towards partnership would provide to affected people in terms of the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF's response.

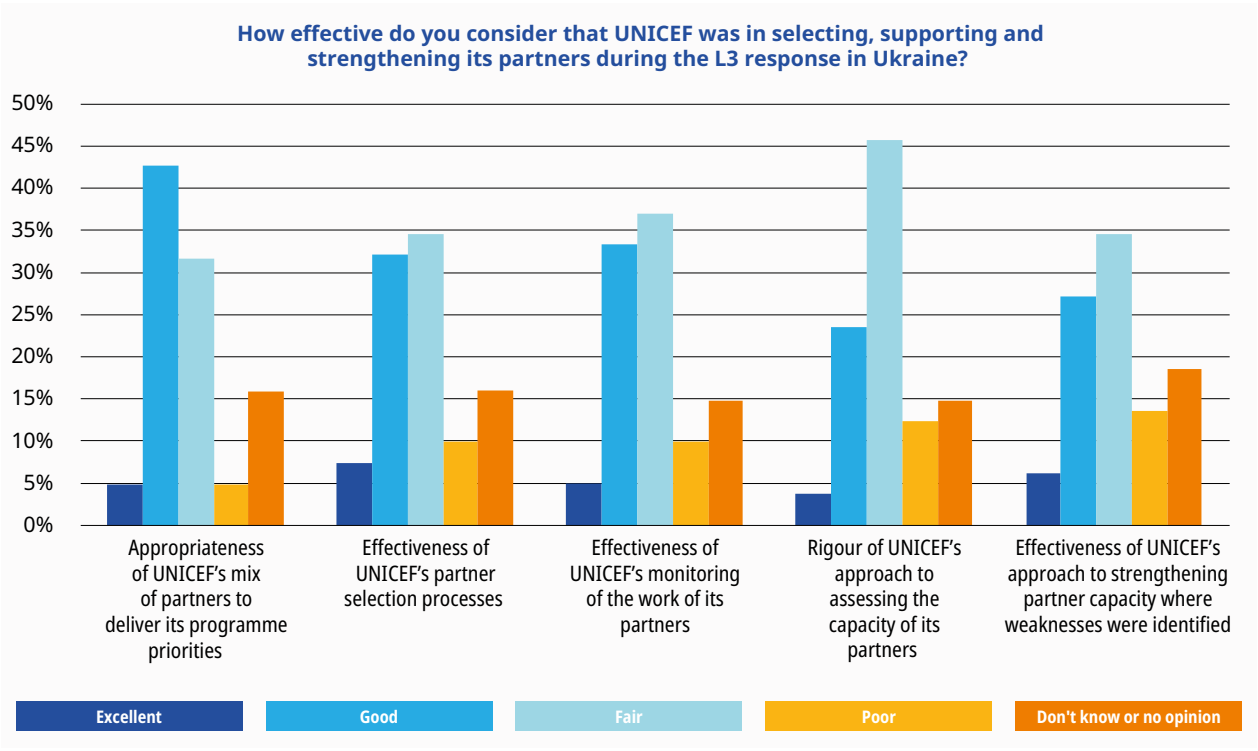
While UNICEF adopted a very deliberate policy of partnering with government organizations and NGOs, it took significant time for familiarization – UNICEF's culture and ways of working were not familiar to some partners. Interviews with UNICEF and partners' staff revealed an acknowledgement that there was a lot to learn.[228] It is to the credit of both UNICEF and its partners that strenuous efforts were made to overcome these initial challenges, but this potentially came at a cost; from a risk management perspective, in seeking to be agile, UNICEF exposed itself to a high degree of risk.[229]

The traditional approach to evaluating efficiency requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving an output, to see whether the most efficient approach has been used.[230] In the absence of being adequately prepared to scale up implementing partnerships in a more timely way, and noting the considerable exposure to risk, a number of staff posed the question to the Evaluation Team about whether an alternative might have been to engage an international NGO to play a mediating role, which could have included more explicit and sustained capacitybuilding that went beyond the inputs that UNICEF could provide. While other staff rejected this as an option, it acknowledges that throughout much of the L3 response UNICEF struggled to provide adequate support and oversight, which provided the justification for exploring alternative approaches. Since this strategy received little support and was not pursued, it is not possible to gauge its potential for achieving a better outcome.

What is important to stress is that the shift towards partnership was appropriate and that it provided an important route towards UNICEF's ability to achieve its CCCs – in terms of delivering a response that balanced coverage with equity and quality. UNICEF's appetite to scale up its partnerships was fundamental to achieving this important change.

Feedback from UNICEF's staff on its partnership performance was mixed. Overall, there was a level of satisfaction with the approach that was taken to supporting national NGOs and government entities, with just under 50 per cent of staff considering that UNICEF had an appropriate mix of government and NGO partners (*see Figure 23*).

Figure 23. UNICEF staff perceptions of partnership performance



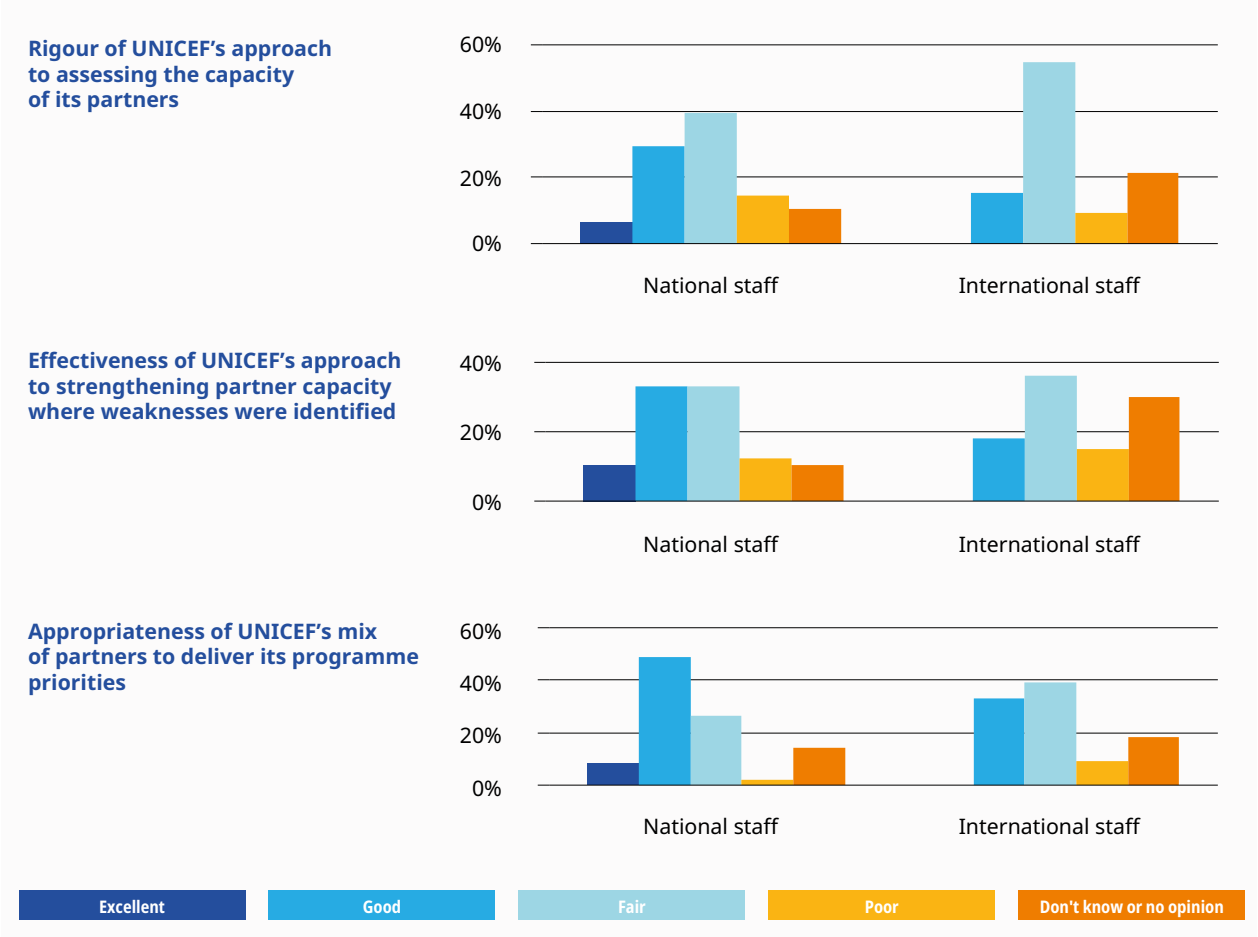
Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The aspect of UNICEF's partnership performance where opinion was more divided was on issues of capacity assessment and strengthening. Just under 60 per cent of UNICEF staff considered the rigour with which capacity assessments were undertaken was only fair or poor (27 per cent considered it was either excellent or good); 58 per cent of staff survey respondents considered that UNICEF's effectiveness in addressing identified capacity gaps was fair or poor (33 per cent considered it was either excellent or good). As has been highlighted earlier in this report, international staff were considerably more critical of UNICEF's partnership work, particularly on the issues of the partnership mix, and capacity assessment and strengthening (*see Figure 24*).

Conclusion Partnership 2

Despite challenges, UNICEF performed well in scaling up its partnerships, which delivered a vast array of support and services in an extremely complex context. UNICEF has focused its support to partners on the delivery of the response, which means that it has been unable to support partners' broader aspirations for capacity strengthening or learning.

Figure 24. Comparison of UNICEF's partnership performance between national and international staff



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Partners' perceptions of UNICEF

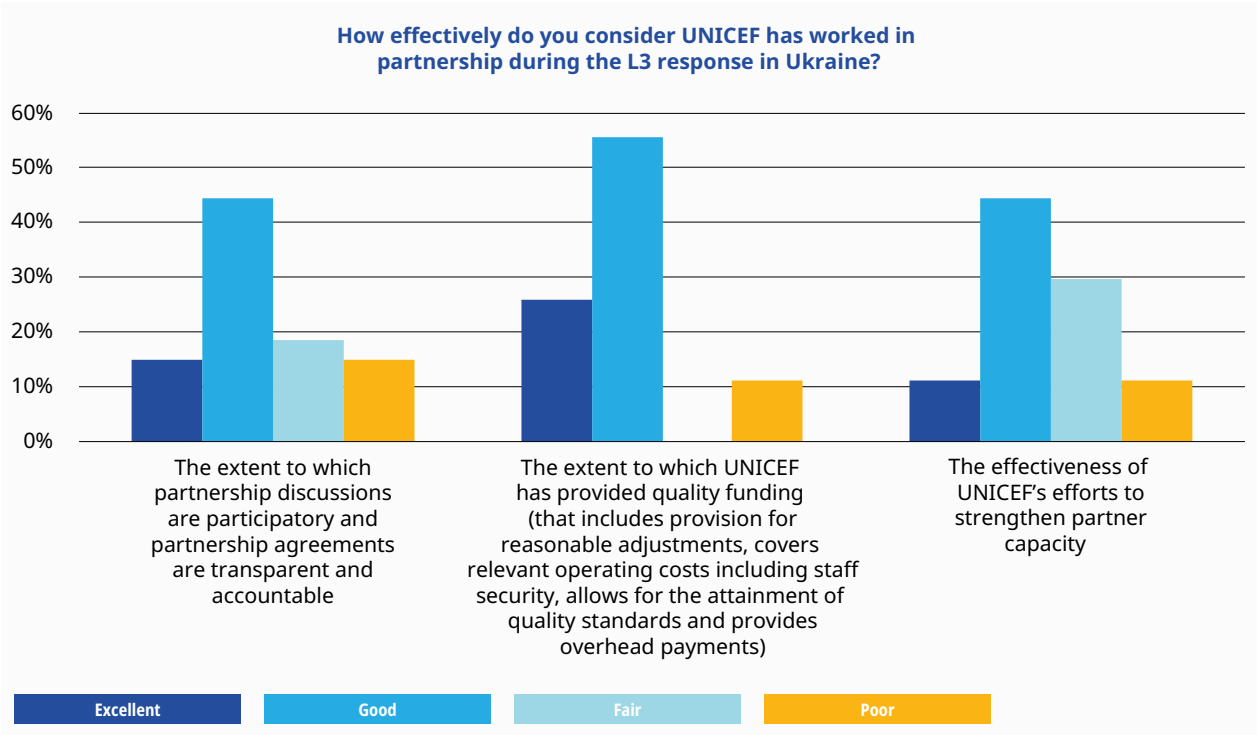
Finding Partnership 3

Both UNICEF and partner staff considered that the relationship was strong and broadly fit for purpose. UNICEF received positive feedback for its communication and the quality of its funding. Where there was greater challenge was in going beyond the standard menu of partner support to be more responsive to partners' needs in addressing perceived capacity gaps. Despite this weakness, the majority of partners considered that UNICEF had played a positive role in strengthening localization in the response.

The evaluation interviewed a number of UNICEF's CSO partners and elicited their feedback through the stakeholder survey. Government partners (which included national government, line ministries, municipalities and private utility companies) were engaged through interviews and visits. Government entities generally viewed working in partnership with UNICEF positively; interviews revealed broad satisfaction with both the relevance and timeliness of UNICEF's support to the government in meeting the needs of affected people. Some of the partnerships were considered particularly important or innovative as they provided technical and material support for new needs (e.g., on issues of mental health and psychosocial support) or assisted in maintaining and repairing essential services (e.g., with Vodokanal in the WASH sector). These partnerships are examined in more detail in the Sector Report.

Interviews with CSO partners revealed the value they placed on their partnership with UNICEF; many organizations welcomed the opportunities and resources that their partnership with UNICEF had provided, permitting them to expand their work with affected people across a range of sectors and geographical locations. While concerns were raised about perceived levels of bureaucracy that accompanied partnership, most CSOs were ultimately able to navigate this and appreciated the support that UNICEF had provided, particularly in the core aspects of administration and finance, with a focus on ensuring understanding of and compliance with UNICEF's policies and procedures, which included an emphasis on PSEA. The external stakeholder survey focused on three specific aspects of UNICEF's engagement on issues of: (i) partnership discussions and agreements, (ii) the provision of quality funding and (iii) capacity strengthening (*see Figure 25*).

Figure 25. Local and national NGO partners' perceptions of their engagement with UNICEF during the L3 response



Source: Evaluation Team External Survey.

UNICEF's partners expressed broad satisfaction in the external survey. Partners considered UNICEF's strengths to include the timeliness of its response, the organization's willingness to listen to partners and the technical capacity that they possessed.[231] There was an acknowledgement that it was bureaucratic and, in particular, partners noted the shifts that occurred once the L3 Simplified Procedures had been superseded at the end of the L3 activation. Partners expressed frustration with frequent changes in UNICEF's staffing, which adversely affected continuity of engagement and communication. The survey showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of UNICEF's funding, which permitted reasonable adjustments and allowed the delivery of quality programmes. Some 81 per cent of respondents considered UNICEF's performance to be either 'excellent' or 'good' (*see Figure 25*). Where the greatest challenges were encountered was with UNICEF's provision of capacity-building, which 50 per cent of partners judged to be only 'fair' or 'poor' (50 per cent considered it to be 'good' or 'excellent'). On this issue, interviews elicited significant feedback on the difficulties that partners faced in asking UNICEF to address self-identified capacity gaps that went beyond the comparatively small basket of training that was routinely provided. Overall, partners were positive about UNICEF's effort to strengthen localization, with 62 per cent considering it to be 'good' or 'excellent'.

How efficiently were funds mobilized, allocated and used?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

Administration and finance

⇒ **Efficient use of resources:** Programs are delivered through transparent and efficient use of resources

⇒ **Timely disbursement of funds:** Cash is disbursed to partners and vendors in a timely manner and in compliance with established procedures [ref. 3.1]

Resource mobilisation

⇒ **Mobilization of adequate and quality resources:** Adequate and quality resources are mobilized in a timely and predictable manner to support preparedness and response to humanitarian and protection needs, particularly of the most vulnerable populations [ref. 3.6]

UNICEF's CCCs place emphasis on the adequacy of its resource mobilization, and the timely and efficient use of its funds in support of its assistance and protection activities. This section of the report focuses on issues of resource mobilization; while the more specific Sector Report provides details of how the funds were allocated to and used in programme sectors.



Resources mobilized for the Ukraine response

As outlined in the context section, UNICEF's HAC Appeal received an extremely generous response from individuals, private companies and donor agencies, which placed the organization in the privileged position of meeting its financial requirements for 2022. UNICEF received US$855.7 million for its response inside Ukraine, out of its revised appeal of US$987 million in the updated UNICEF HAC Appeal, resulting in it being 87 per cent funded for 2022.[232] It is noteworthy that this included a significant carry-over of funds from 2022 to 2023 (*see below*).

The 2022 appeal resulted in unprecedented levels of flexible funding. Since the beginning of the crisis, fundraising campaigns by UNICEF National Committees and country offices had generated timely and flexible support, which included donations received from over 788 businesses, 234 philanthropy partners, 136 foundations and a large base of individual donors in 47 countries.[233] For the 2023 HAC Appeal, by November UNICEF had received US$433.2 million for its response inside Ukraine against its revised HAC Appeal of US$829.2 million. This included US$168.6 million carried over from 2022 and US$264.6 million newly received in 2023. UNICEF estimates the funding gap to be US$396 million.[234]

Conclusion Funding 1

The generous volume of flexible funding UNICEF received allowed it to design and implement the humanitarian response it felt was most feasible and relevant – unfettered by the shortfalls, inequities and sectoral funding disparities common to most L3 responses. Where the volume and flexibility were less helpful was in promoting a culture that put action and spending before planning. There were many justifications for such an approach, as it was consistent with criticisms from the government, which had raised concerns about United Nations inaction, and it was also consistent with the aspirations of many of UNICEF's own staff, who were understandably keen to act.

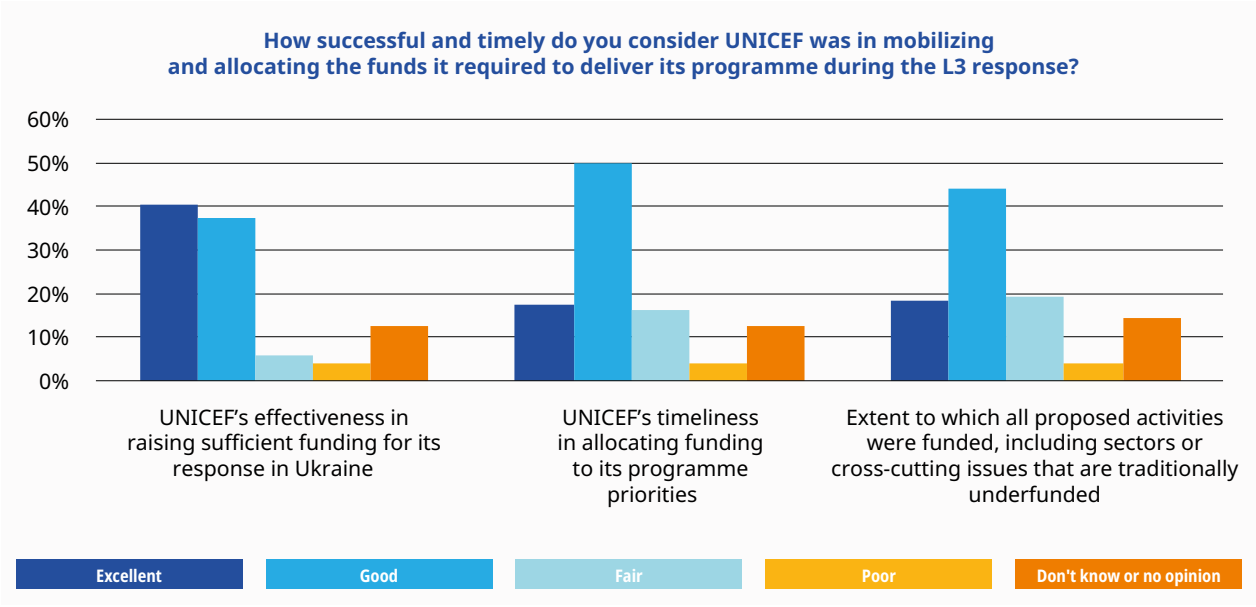
Implications of the generous funding received by UNICEF for its L3 Ukraine response

Finding Funding 2

The volume and flexibility of the funds that UNICEF received for the Ukraine response offered significant opportunities to fund the totality of its response, including sectors that are traditionally underfunded.

Interviews conducted with UNICEF staff highlighted a range of different ways its response benefitted from both the quantity of funding that UNICEF received and the speed with which it was generously donated; from a very practical perspective, and as outlined in Section 4.3.3, access to significant funds so early in the response permitted UNICEF to procure supplies from its procurement hub in Copenhagen without delay. In addition, it provided the financial support required to transport those supplies immediately, which provided a springboard for the initial supply-focused response. Given that in the early weeks of the response, UNICEF's presence was in flux and it lacked the implementing partnerships and stability to deliver a more traditional response, the supplies were fundamental to its early response. Over time, they also acted as a foundation for the organization to shift into a semi-static and then a more traditional IP-delivered response as outlined in section 4.2.5 of this report. The supply-focused response provided immediate assistance in addition to addressing broader concerns over the slow initial pace of the international response to the crisis. The staff survey elicited very positive responses on issues of fundraising, timeliness of fund allocation and funding across sectors, including those sectors that are traditionally underfunded (*see Figure 26*).

Figure 26. Staff perceptions of the effectiveness and timeliness of UNICEF's fundraising and fund allocation



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The flexibility of the funding offered UNICEF the potential – in principle at least – to deliver a needs-based response. Analysis of funding trends in the humanitarian sector shows disparities in the extent to which certain sectors are funded. There have been long-running debates within the humanitarian community about the challenges these disparities pose, which often see sectors such as protection[235] and education[236] as being routinely underfunded, despite affected communities ranking them as high priorities. Against the revised 2022 HAC Appeal requirements, child protection/MHPSS access was reported as 131 per cent funded and education/education materials were 115 per cent funded, which made the Ukraine response one of the only instances when UNICEF has been able to fully fund its response. The response of both these sectors is examined in greater detail in Part B, the Sector Report.

Private fundraising and the prominent role of National Committees

Finding Funding 1

National Committees played a key role in resource mobilization, providing the majority of UNICEF's funding in the first year of the response. While this benefitted the response in Ukraine, it also had broader unintended benefits, which included the addition of new donors that have provided funding for other global crises.

The role of National Committees (NatComs) was particularly important in the Ukraine response; they are an integral part of UNICEF's global organization and play an important role in collectively raising income for UNICEF, in addition to engaging with a range of partners on issues related to child rights.[237]

The close relationship between the NatComs and the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was considered to be a strength of the response and mutually beneficial. That the Ukraine response achieved global media coverage for such a sustained period of time meant that it was extremely high profile both politically and publicly; the availability of senior country office staff and dissemination of communications materials were considered to have supported fundraising efforts. The volume of funding the NatComs mobilized was unprecedented; with this came an appetite from some high net worth individuals and corporations for greater engagement over a longer period, which required different and more immersive

communication products to meet accountability needs, as well as maintaining engagement. One such method was through the use of immersive, virtual field visits. In many cases, the sustained engagement with NatComs donors was important as not only did it lead to additional funding, but it has also led to some success in strengthening institutional partnerships, which have already benefitted UNICEF's programmes elsewhere, both in the short and longer terms. This is a significant unanticipated outcome of the Ukraine response.

Public fundraising

The Ukraine response was peculiar in that public fundraising played a secondary role to that of private donations and yet it remained an important source of funds, particularly at the outset of the response; USAID's Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance provided initial funding that was used to launch UNICEF's early actions just in advance of the Russian invasion. While UNICEF had not fully prepared for a full-scale war, the funds were used to procure essential relief items that were among the earliest supplies distributed after the escalation in the conflict. UNICEF maintained strong relations with other institutional donors. While there was some internal discussion within UNICEF about messaging and the need to prioritize public donor funding for other less well-funded crises, given the existence of significant private donations for Ukraine, there was no consensus on the matter.

It is noteworthy that private donations started to decrease after the first year of the response, which placed far greater emphasis on public fundraising to maintain UNICEF's scaledup response.

Analysis of the costs and benefits of UNICEF's flexible funding

While there were significant benefits to the generous funding raised for UNICEF's Ukraine response, interviews and staff survey responses show that it also presented some challenges. These are examined below.

The implications of a funding-driven response

> **Finding Funding 3**
> While fund volume and flexibility offered important benefits for UNICEF's response, they also posed challenges, which included the pressure to spend funds, with limited requirements for planning. The scale of funding for Ukraine was in stark contrast to humanitarian crises elsewhere in the world, many of which struggle to raise adequate funds. The internal debate within UNICEF that this prompted over the equity of humanitarian funding led to some nascent initiatives that may offer potential for the organization to be a stronger advocate for addressing humanitarian funding inequities in the future.

A significant number of interviewees voiced concerns about the high volume of (flexible) funding received for the Ukraine response, which introduced perverse incentives – some of which are contrary to the commitments and good practices outlined in UNICEF's CCCs. At the time the crisis was unfolding and donations were being received, UNICEF was still in the process of building its programme team for the response, so its absorption capacity was initially modest. While the lighter reporting requirements that came with private funding were welcomed and provided greater scope for UNICEF to focus on implementation, this also reduced the internal imperative to plan and determine where the greatest needs existed (*see section 4.1.1 and section 4.1.3*). During interviews, many staff spoke of a lack of strategic and operational planning frameworks to guide the early response; one interviewee spoke of "not wanting technical experts to waste time talking to people and assessing but wanted [UNICEF] to get stuck in and act". It was felt that the lack of planning made it difficult to clearly determine UNICEF's response priorities. This was in part an outcome of the flexibility of funding that was received, which permitted a high degree of operational ambiguity.

LESSON

The benefits and challenges of flexible funding: Within the humanitarian sector, flexible or unearmarked funding is considered the gold standard as it has the potential to support truly needs-based programming. The lesson from the Ukraine response is that flexible funding introduces perverse incentives such as pressure to maintain spend rates. Combined with organizational capacity constraints, and the limited capacity and scope that existed to conduct needs assessments and undertake programme planning in the early stages of the response, there is a risk that programming can become fund driven. There is an important need to achieve a balance between these conflicting organizational requirements if the greatest benefits of assistance are to be derived by children, who are most affected by crises.

Perceptions of over funding, equity and the HAC Appeal

Interviews highlighted a narrative – within some parts of UNICEF and the broader humanitarian community – that framed the war as "a different kind of crisis", one that was unprecedented and which for this reason required a "different range of solutions".[238] Justifications given included Ukraine's status as a middle-income country and its proximity to Europe, which was considered to merit solidarity with the plight of Ukraine. This narrative played an important role in generating the high levels of funding and assistance channelled to Ukraine compared with other crises.

The generous funding that the Ukraine response received was the subject of significant debate across the organization, one of the key dilemmas being the actions that UNICEF should take to (i) use the resources it has responsibly to meet the needs of affected people; and (ii) what position the organization should take on broader, global issues of fund equity, particularly in light of chronic shortages for affected people in other countries. Interviews with UNICEF staff revealed that four actions were discussed as potential means of addressing this challenge.

Relaunching the HAC Appeal: The HAC Appeal was the subject of intense debate, with proposals made in 2022 for UNICEF to split the Ukraine HAC Appeal between the response inside the country and a second funding stream to support global refugee operations (both inside Ukraine and elsewhere) in support of equitable funding. This was opposed; ultimately the decision was taken to split the HAC Appeal between the Ukraine response and the Ukraine refugee response. There was general acceptance of this approach, although some NatComs raised concerns that it would need to be managed and messaged very carefully to ensure accountability to UNICEF's donors.

Advocating on the secondary impacts of the Ukraine crisis: UNICEF pivoted its advocacy from the Ukraine crisis to the impact of the crisis on global hunger. Advocacy messages were developed with support from the Global Nutrition Team and the Executive Director travelled to the Horn of Africa to highlight the crisis. Interviewees linked the advocacy to decisions that were made to increase levels of US assistance to Somalia, which played a key role in averting famine.[239]

Addressing issues of funding equity: A dialogue was initiated between HQ and regional offices about the secondary effects of the Ukraine crisis. This triggered reflection about the use of explicit messages about using funds for other crises elsewhere in the event that the HAC Appeal was fully funded. Linked to this was an initiative jointly proposed by EMOPS, the Public Partnerships Division and a number of NatComs for 20 per cent of funds raised to be used for emergencies elsewhere.

Initiating a dialogue with public donors about ring-fencing funding for other crises: There were initial discussions about the potential for UNICEF to request that steps were taken to ringfence private funds for other crises, particularly those where United Nations appeals were significantly underfunded. This initiative was not pursued.

Overall, staff feedback on funding for the Ukraine response was divided; while there was strong appreciation at the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office for the scale and flexibility of the funds that were raised, there was also recognition that it posed challenges for UNICEF. Elsewhere in the organization, and particularly at HQ, there was significant concern that UNICEF could have better used the opportunity to highlight the inequities of humanitarian funding and to 'do the right thing'.

Conclusion Funding 2

The high levels of funding for UNICEF's Ukraine response in 2022 provided a springboard for a set of internal debates across the organization about fund equity and strategies to address the global mismatch between humanitarian needs and funding.

How well has UNICEF identified, managed and mitigated risks?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

> UNICEF ... supports well-managed risk-taking and mitigating strategies. This implies accepting risk when benefits for children are maximized and outweigh costs; anticipating and managing risks through continuous risk assessment, and proper mitigation measures; making prompt decisions; and recognizing that affirmative management of risks is critical to success [ref. 1.5.3].

At the centre of UNICEF's approach to risk management is the enterprise risk management (ERM) policy. ERM is a systematic approach to managing risks to an organization's strategic objectives, intended to facilitate risk management by staff at all levels of the organization. It provides assurance to internal and external stakeholders that the organization has the structures, processes and capabilities to fulfil its mandate responsibly, effectively and with transparency.[240] The ERM explicitly acknowledges that there is no one-size-fits all approach as it must be tailored to UNICEF's specific objectives, and the prevailing operating environment, culture and available resources.

Specific to humanitarian response, there is a section on humanitarian risk management in the Emergency Procedures. The word 'risk' appears 180 times in the CCCs and cuts across many of the sections of this report. Rather than address all aspects of risk, this section will confine itself to some of the key risks that the Ukraine L3 was exposed to, analysing the ways and extent to which these were managed and mitigated.[241] More minor risks, or those that are specific to technical sectors or teams, are addressed in the relevant sections of this Evaluation Report and the accompanying Sector Report.

UNICEF's risk appetite during the L3 response

> **Finding Risk 1**
> The L3 response was of a magnitude that took the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office (and the regional office) well beyond the scope and scale of previous practice. Despite this, the country office leadership team had a risk appetite that permitted UNICEF to scale up its response to unprecedented levels.

The draft audit of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office undertaken towards the end of the L3 response report notes "a lack of defined risk appetites and tolerances for the unique risks the Country Office faced in Ukraine during the period under review",[242] which it lists as including political risks, partnership risks and supply chain risks, compounded by gaps in internal fiduciary controls such as bank reconciliations, financial and conflict disclosures, and delegated authority.

Despite the lack of a clearly articulated position, the scope and breadth of the programme suggest that UNICEF in Ukraine had significant risk appetite, although it was not possible for the evaluation to rigorously assess this for the reasons outlined above. The assessment of risk appetite is based on an analysis of proxy indicators; UNICEF's willingness to grow the response to such a large scale; its decision to take on the number and breadth of new partnerships and suppliers; its readiness to work in new sectors (such as HCT) and to take them to scale; and the (eventual) decision that was made to shift programmes to the south and east of the country, and to support programming in volatile newly accessible and frontline areas. These decisions were justified by the needs that were manifest and required UNICEF to take on significant risk.

Where the challenge lay for the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was in consistently applying a risk management lens to these decision-making processes – and ensuring that decisions taken were consistent with UNICEF's humanitarian commitments as outlined in the CCCs and Emergency Procedures. Interviews with senior managers acknowledged there was a need to make a series of judgment calls at key moments in the response, and that no single manager or country office leadership team possessed sufficient experience, skills or judgment to consistently take the right decision; as highlighted by the audit, there was often insufficient clarity or documentation about tolerances or mitigation measures to ensure the level of consistency or due diligence required.

UNICEF's risk management and mitigation during the L3 response

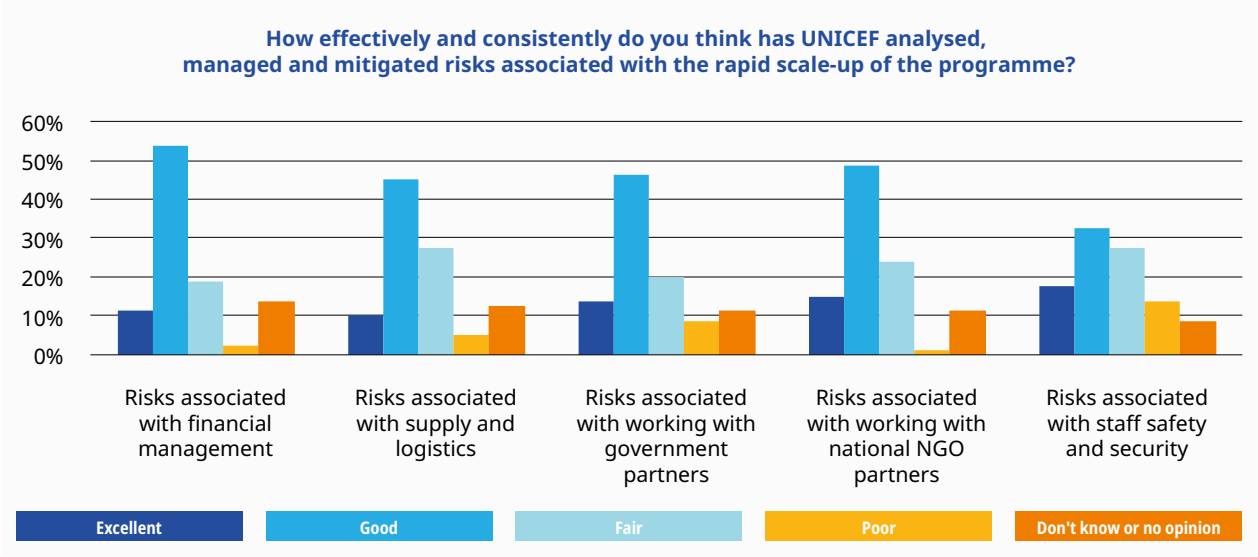
Finding risk 2

The rapid scale-up of UNICEF's response exposed it to significant risk. While efforts were made to mitigate and manage this, significant residual risk persisted throughout the response, albeit alongside UNICEF Ukraine Country Office actions to minimize them as its capacity was strengthened.

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office prepared a risk matrix in June 2022,[243] which was later updated in 2023,[244] and adapted it so that it listed risks and control measures; 24 risks were identified in 2022, which had risen to 86 by 2023. As indicated in the section above, the 2022 matrix lacks sufficient detail and completeness to address many of the risks that the Ukraine response was subject to, although it did provide a starting point that was further elaborated on the following year.

In totality, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office took a number of measures during the L3 response to address a range of risks, which included the following: development of an anti-fraud plan; staff and partner anti-fraud training; partner assessment and (some) capacity-building; the hiring of four accounting companies to assess and audit partners; an institutional agreement with a TPM provider to monitor aspects of the response; the formation of the Partner Management Team within the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office; the development of inventory and stock management systems; the rollout of a consignee management tool; and the establishment of an emergency supply coordination group with participation from the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, ECARO and the Supply Division to ensure high-quality support. These actions ensured a responsible approach was taken to managing some of the greatest fiduciary, fraud- and partner-related risks.[245] From a staff security perspective, UNICEF ensured compliance with the security management measures approved by the designated official, which included, Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments training for UNICEF staff, individual first aid kit training, physical security assessments of UNICEF offices and security briefings for all new staff.[246]

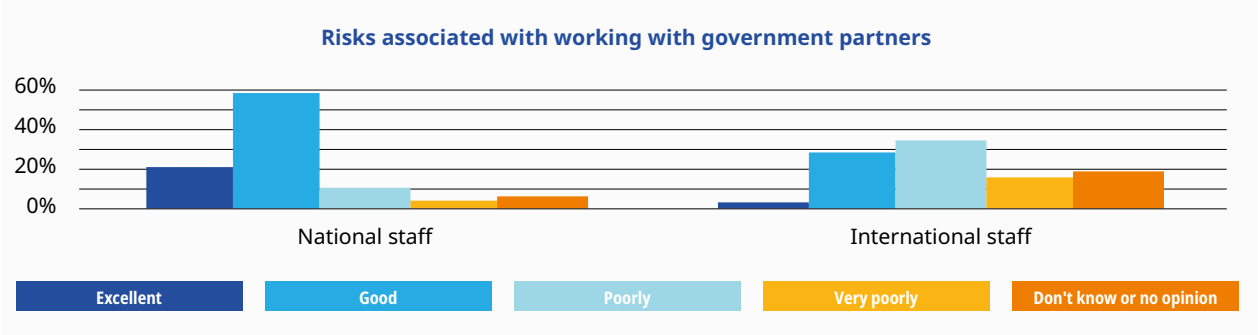
Figure 27. Staff perceptions of UNICEF's risk management and mitigation during the L3 response



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

The staff survey revealed a generally positive perception of UNICEF's risk analysis, mitigation and management (*see Figure 27*), particularly with regard to financial management, where there was a level of consistency in the perceptions of both international and national staff on the management of risk, with a strong endorsement of UNICEF's management of risk. As with other aspects of UNICEF's work, there was a noteworthy difference in staff perceptions of risk, which was most pronounced on issues of implementing partnerships (*see Figure 28*). This issue is examined in Section 4.3.4 of this report, but the significant difference that exists between the perceptions of national and international staff, in addition to the significant level of concern that exists, warrants further examination by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office. There were diverging views on UNICEF's management of staff security; while a significant proportion of UNICEF staff felt that this was managed poorly, it is important to add that it was rated excellent by the greatest proportion of staff. While the evaluation did not examine staff security in depth, it was noted that UNICEF has strong security management procedures in place in areas of the country that are particularly volatile.

Figure 28. Perceptions of national and international staff of UNICEF's partnerships with government and national NGOs



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Important evidence related to risk management was provided by the internal audit conducted towards the end of the L3 response in March 2023. The specific issues raised are examined alongside additional evidence gathered by the evaluation in the relevant sections of this report; the overall conclusion that it reached was that the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office required major improvements in its risk management and control processes.[247] The country office raised a number of concerns about the audit process, specifically that it did not take into account the progress made in strengthening controls over time and neither did it take the L3 emergency/conflict context into sufficient account. The Evaluation Team has some sympathy for this position; this report acknowledges the incremental improvements that were made in the management of risk as the response progressed.

Perhaps one area of most significant risk, but also one that is not traditionally examined by audit teams, is to do with risks associated with the delivery of UNICEF's humanitarian commitments. These risks are not linked to fiduciary risk but have an important impact on the intended beneficiaries of UNICEF's assistance, in addition to posing reputational risk. As they are fundamentally linked to UNICEF's mission and mandate, the evaluation considers them material. Specific challenges that UNICEF faced (and continues to face) are linked to its commitment to deliver a principled humanitarian response and, as an extension of this, balancing coverage, quality and equity.[248] The key challenge for UNICEF was in consistently focusing its L3 response to assist those in greatest need (*see section 4.1.3 and section 4.2.5*).

Conclusion Risk

The risk appetite of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office played an essential role in allowing UNICEF's response to achieve scale. However, it did expose the organization to significant risks – this is hardly surprising given the pace and scale of change and the volatility of the context. It is not possible for this evaluation to determine whether more could have been done to manage these risks in a more timely way, but there continues to be scope for UNICEF to address the internal audit findings in addition to ensuring that it is consistently meeting its commitments to balancing coverage, quality and equity in its humanitarian response.

Coherence

How cohesive was UNICEF's response internally and externally?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

⇒ **Finding Coordination 1:** UNICEF was generally 'light and late' in its initial support for cluster coordination in Ukraine.

⇒ **Finding Coordination 2:** A UNICEF-led Nutrition Cluster was activated and then deactivated in the early phase of the L3 response. The mobilization was advocated for by HQ/EMOPS on a 'no regrets' basis and scaled back after six months.

⇒ **Finding Coordination 3:** UNICEF was alone in placing its national cluster coordinators in Dnipro – a decision which on balance was more detrimental to system-level coordination than it was of benefit to tactical or decentralized planning.

⇒ **Finding Coordination 4:** UNICEF-led clusters are currently performing well, although there is scope to strengthen their support for developing the capacity of local and national organizations, with a view to strengthening the transition from humanitarian response to recovery.

⇒ **Finding Integration 1:** The nature of planning during the L3 response was perceived as being siloed throughout much of 2022; but despite this, there were positive examples of integrated programming, which included UNICEF's Spilno initiative, MMTs and Better Care. Later in the response, UNICEF field offices made deliberate efforts to build integrated programmes that reflected local government priorities, albeit with varying levels of success.

⇒ **Finding Nexus 1:** UNICEF's Ukraine response placed an emphasis on strengthening relationships and adopting programme approaches that would contribute to longer-term recovery and development in Ukraine. While different sectors engaged in this at different times, linking aspects of the L3 humanitarian response to recovery was generally considered to have been a strength of UNICEF.

⇒ **Finding Nexus 2:** UNICEF has found it challenging to navigate the differing demands of the nexus, which has required it to engage closely with government at the same time as maintaining sufficient space to challenge it when this is in the best interests of children .

CONCLUSIONS

⇒ **Conclusion Coordination:** UNICEF has adequately filled its cluster lead and co-lead responsibilities but could have been quicker and more responsive in its cluster support, in particular, at the sub-national level.

⇒ **Conclusion Integration:** UNICEF's signature integrated programmes achieved some impressive outcomes for children and their parents during the L3 response. While there were later efforts to strengthen programme convergence, greater progress is required to strengthen joint assessment and planning. As UNICEF's structure in Ukraine matures, and the emphasis shifts towards recovery, there is significant opportunity to take stock of weaknesses implicit in the way that its sectors functioned and planned to address these weaknesses.

⇒ **Conclusion Nexus 1:** UNICEF drew extensively from its good relations with government and its knowledge of national systems to inform its medium-term response strategy, which established clear linkages between its humanitarian response and recovery work. Where it faced greater difficulty was in moderating this relationship to ensure a principled response .

⇒ **Conclusion Nexus 2:** UNICEF has found it challenging to navigate the differing demands of the nexus, which has required it to engage closely with government at the same time as maintaining sufficient space to challenge the government when this is in the best interests of children.

How well has UNICEF fulfilled its cluster lead/co-lead agency role and responsibilities?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Support the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response, along with national and local stakeholders, and in compliance with humanitarian principles [ref. 2.2.1]

UNICEF's commitment to meeting its responsibilities as a cluster lead agency (CLA) is enshrined in the CCCs and outlined in detail in the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination.[249] The purpose of the clusters is to support service delivery, to inform the strategic decision-making of the humanitarian coordinator, to develop and implement cluster strategies, to monitor and evaluate collective performance, to build national preparedness and to support robust advocacy.[250]


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Early phase of the response (March–August 2022)

Finding Coordination 1
UNICEF was generally 'light and late' in its initial support for cluster coordination in Ukraine.

Prior to the full-scale war, UNICEF was responsible for leadership of the WASH Cluster and the Education Cluster, and the Child Protection AoR under the Global Protection Cluster. Coordination support had been reduced to a modest footprint, with some clusters led by a P3 international coordinator (usually double-hatting) and others by a national officer. At the beginning of 2022, cluster coordination was centred on the east, and most of the activities were along the 'contact line' or inside the NGCAs.

All clusters sought to resume their functions as soon after the Russian invasion as possible. For UNICEF as well as other CLAs, the initial coordination was quite chaotic as the clusters re-established themselves in Lviv, often with new staff and new partners/members, and in most cases information management systems were rebuilt from the bottom up. At the same time, the displaced populations that were the target of cluster support were themselves on the move, which necessitated new needs assessments and 5W ('who does what, where, when and for whom') mapping. Even if technically the clusters 'continued' into the new humanitarian phase, in practice they were reset.

The prevailing view from interviewees outside UNICEF, supported by some staff within the organization, is that in this early response period UNICEF was slow to scale up its cluster coordination to the level required to meet the expanded needs in Ukraine, and especially to coordinate the expanded resources that were available for the response. A timeline analysis suggests that scaling up and adequately staffing the WASH Cluster seems to have been exceptionally slow in light of the acute needs in the conflict-affected areas. This perception is supported by UNICEF's human resources data and cluster coordination meeting records.[251] KIIs with senior UNICEF staff revealed there were discussions within the humanitarian community about whether the international community should hold back and leave space for the government to coordinate the response, or whether to press ahead with mobilizing the international coordination architecture. Some internal interviewees considered that this was a factor in UNICEF's slow mobilization.

Finding Coordination 2

A UNICEF-led Nutrition Cluster was activated and then deactivated in the early phase of the L3 response. The mobilization was advocated for by HQ/EMOPS on a 'no regrets' basis and was scaled back after six months.

Of note during the early phase of the response was the activation and deactivation of the Nutrition Cluster. There was a Nutrition Cluster in Ukraine prior to the full-scale war, focused on the conflict in the east of the country, but a swift decision was taken to create a UNICEF-led whole-of-response cluster in March 2022.[252] A high-level Nutrition Cluster appeal document was assembled in April (requesting US$23.5 million);[253] accordingly, nutrition was included in the initial Ukraine Flash Appeal. Interviews with UNICEF staff suggest that the decision to activate the Nutrition Cluster was not made by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office or by the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator, but by the Global Nutrition Cluster.

There was considerable Nutrition Cluster activity in the first few months of the response: guidance on infant and young child feeding (IYCF) was translated and distributed; infant food was distributed (infant formula and energy biscuits); one nutrition sector project was approved through the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund; IYCF training was provided to partners; an IYCF social media campaign was conducted; and a guidance note was developed specifically aimed at IYCF in situations of mass movement.

The activity of the Nutrition Cluster, however, appeared to stop abruptly around September 2022. Interviews suggest that this occurred without warning or consultation with cluster members,[254] but with the agreement of the UNICEF representative and the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator, both of whom felt that there was no need for a Nutrition Cluster in a middle-income country that was a global food exporter.[255]

The Nutrition Cluster was formally deactivated on 13 October 2022 and transformed into a technical working group under the Health Cluster.[256] With the benefit of hindsight, the story of the creation of the Nutrition Cluster is an example of the 'no regrets' approach (an assumed need, combined with resources and supplies, and a global humanitarian reflex to mobilize all conventional clusters in such a large-scale L3 crisis). It is to the credit of UNICEF and cluster members that the Nutrition Cluster was deactivated within six months, although the manner of its dissolution could have been more consultative and transparent.

Mid-phase of the response (September 2022–February 2023)

Finding Coordination 3

UNICEF was alone in placing its national cluster coordinators in Dnipro – a decision which on balance was more detrimental to system-level coordination than it was of benefit to tactical or decentralized planning.

Once the humanitarian community had re-established itself in Kyiv in the late summer of 2022, the Inter-cluster Coordination Group and most of the clusters moved to Kyiv. From this point on, most external stakeholders and cluster members regarded UNICEF cluster coordination as well managed and adequately resourced. In interviews, however, some UNICEF cluster coordinators themselves felt that they required additional resources to coordinate in a situation that required a very different type of response in different regions and given growing subnational cluster coordination requirements.

Cluster coordination performance monitoring was conducted at the start of 2023; the WASH Cluster, however, declined to participate due to a lack of capacity to support it at that time. Cluster members self-report cluster monitoring, which is intended to be constructive and indicative, rather than formal and evaluative. Nevertheless, it shows that members of the Child Protection AoR under the Global Protection Cluster generally regarded it to be performing better than the Education Cluster (the two UNICEF-led clusters that participated). On closer examination of the Education Cluster, it appears that many of the weaknesses identified were beyond the control of the cluster to address, as these mostly rely on government data or systems, which might not always have been available and/or functioning (*see Table 23*).

Table 23. Results of cluster coordination performance monitoring undertaken in Ukraine (2023)

	Education	Child protection
1. Supporting service delivery		
1.1 Providing a platform that ensures service delivery is driven by HRP and strategic priorities	**Good**	**Good**
1.2 Developing mechanisms to eliminate duplication of service delivery	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
2. Informing strategic decisions of the humanitarian coordinator and United Nations Humanitarian Country Team		
2.1 Preparing needs assessments and analysis of gaps (across and within clusters, using information management tools as needed) to inform the setting of priorities	**Unsatisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
2.2 Identifying and finding solutions for (emerging) gaps, obstacles, duplication and cross-cutting issues	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
2.3 Formulating priorities on the basis of analysis	**Good**	**Good**
3. Planning and implementing cluster strategies		
3.1 Developing sectoral plans, objectives and indicators that directly support realization of the overall response's strategic objectives	**Satisfactory**	**Good**
3.2 Applying and adhering to common standards and guidelines	**Satisfactory**	**Good**
3.3 Clarifying funding requirements, helping to set priorities and agreeing on cluster contributions to the humanitarian coordinator's overall humanitarian funding proposals	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
4. Monitoring and evaluating performance		
4.1 Monitoring and reporting on activities and needs	**Satisfactory**	**Good**
4.2 Measuring progress against the cluster strategy and agreed results	**Good**	**Good**
4.3 Recommending corrective action where necessary	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
5. Building national capacity in preparedness and contingency planning		
5.1 National contingency plans identified, updated and shared	**Satisfactory**	**Good**
5.2 Cluster roles and responsibilities defined and understood	**Satisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
5.3 Early warning reports shared with partners	**Weak**	**Satisfactory**
6. Advocacy		
6.1 Identifying concerns, and contributing key information and messages to the humanitarian coordinator and United Nations Humanitarian Country Team's messaging and action	**Unsatisfactory**	**Satisfactory**
6.2 Undertaking advocacy on behalf of clusters, cluster members and affected people	**Unsatisfactory**	**Satisfactory**

7 Accountability to affected people		
7.1 Mechanisms to consult and involve affected people in decision-making agreed on and used by partners	**Good**	**Good**
7.2 Mechanisms to receive, investigate and act on complaints about the assistance received agreed on and used by partners	**Unsatisfactory**	**Good**
7.3 Key issues relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse have been raised and discussed	**Satisfactory**	**Good**

Source: Authors' own based on information from 2023 Education and Child Protection CCPM reports.[257]

In the period from September 2022 to February 2023, the main issue facing all of the UNICEF-led clusters was the location of the cluster coordinators; UNICEF was the only United Nations agency that decided to place its national cluster coordinators in Dnipro – on the grounds that this was closer to the activities and the affected population, and in anticipation of an eventual move of the centre of gravity of national coordination from Kyiv to the east. The OCHA Operational Peer Review of the system-wide response[258] discussed at some length the advantages of having the locus of coordination in the east (primarily to enable an area-based approach to coordination and programming), while also retaining close ties to the government, especially with an eye on transition to recovery. Ultimately, however, the Operational Peer Review and the resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator[259] both recommended that national cluster coordination should remain in Kyiv, to allow proper functioning of the Inter-cluster Coordination Group, in addition to the advantages that proximity to government offered. Interviews undertaken by the Evaluation Team support the preference for relocating the national cluster coordinators to Kyiv,[260] which was perceived to have the added benefit of better-anchoring the cluster coordinators in the work of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, as well as harmonizing UNICEF's approach with that of the collective humanitarian system. The Evaluation Team was informed by UNICEF that the country office had reached a similar conclusion, and the changes were in process as the Evaluation Report was being prepared.[261]

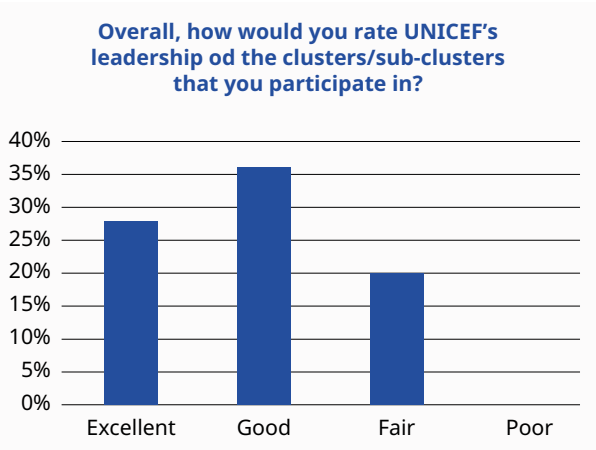
Late phase of the response (March–November 2023)

Finding Coordination 4

UNICEF-led clusters are currently performing well, although there is scope to strengthen their support for developing the capacity of local and national organizations, with a view to strengthening the transition from humanitarian response to recovery.

External stakeholders perceived clusters as performing relatively well (*see Figure 29*).[262] In general, clusters are regarded as more neutral and independent than UNICEF itself – more able to challenge the government (albeit with less leverage) and to advocate on behalf of the affected population in the NGCAs.[263] While the OCHA Operational Peer Review exhorted all clusters to consider whether their presence was still relevant and requested that they adapt their operations according to the needs of the response,[264] there were no indications that the UNICEFled clusters or sub-clusters are considering exit strategies.

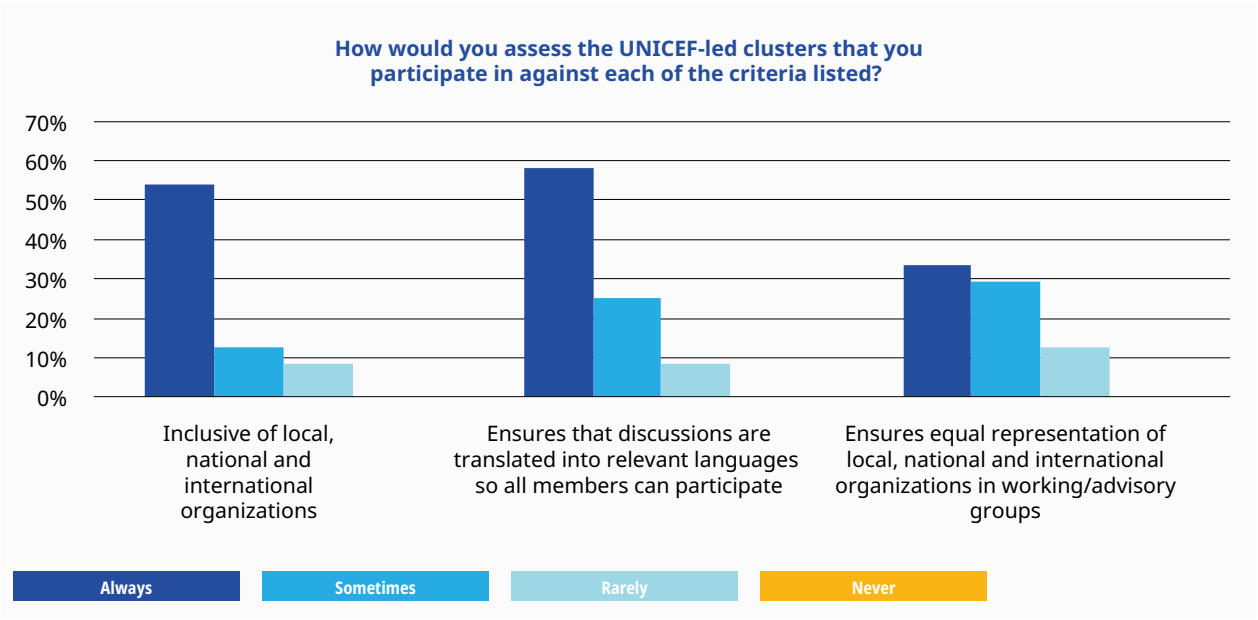
Figure 29. External stakeholders' perceptions of UNICEF's cluster leadership



Source: Evaluation Team External Survey.

The survey also revealed that the clusters are currently regarded by their members as being inclusive and accessible to national organizations (*see Figure 30*). There was consensus among cluster coordinators regarding the roles of international and national NGOs. On the one hand, it was widely recognized that national NGOs are more contextually relevant, sustainable and costefficient than international NGOs – demonstrating the benefits of localization. On the other hand, most national NGOs are relatively new and lack experience with the accountability, management and quality standards of international donors.

Figure 30. UNICEF cluster participation



Source: Evaluation Team External Survey.

Specifically, interviews suggested that national NGOs were finding it a challenge to meet international donors' expectations of financial management and reporting. In addition, weaknesses were identified in the level of NGO consultation with affected people in their planning, in addition to limitations in their understanding of AAP, PSEA or gender equality, as well as other dimensions of inclusion. Overall, the gap between the highly technical approaches and expectations of the international humanitarian system and the capacities of Ukrainian NGOs was considered to be significant. Cluster coordinator interviews suggested that one strategy to bridge this gap would be for international NGOs to play a mentoring and bridging role, examples of which were provided by the WASH, Education and Child Protection Clusters.



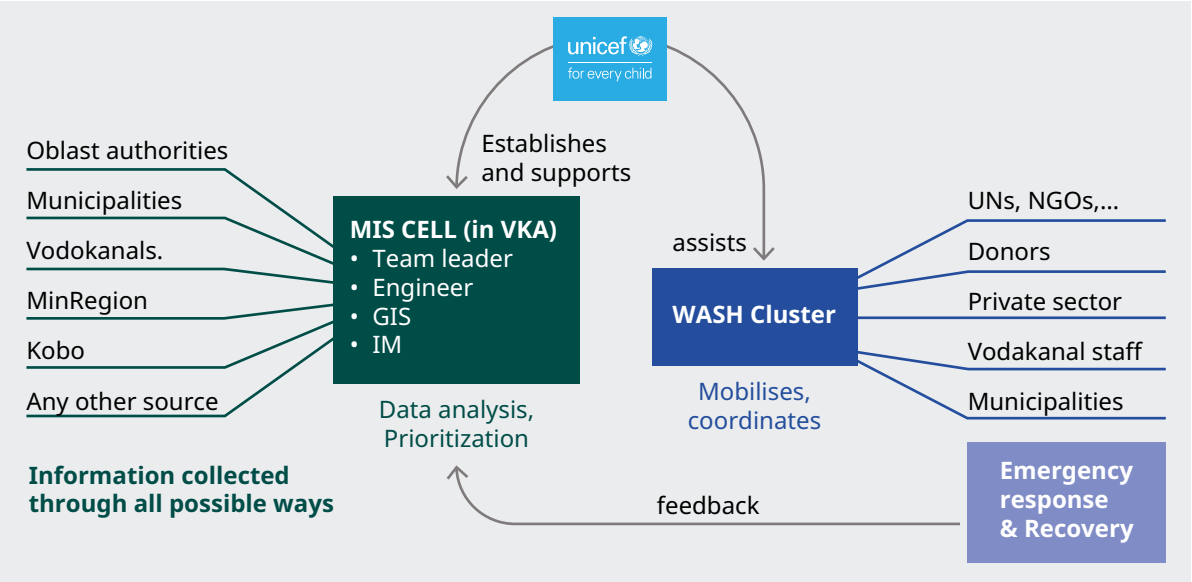
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Perspectives on the future of cluster coordination in Ukraine

BOX 10

The MIS cell and the future of the WASH cluster in Ukraine

The Vodokanal (VKA) management information system (MIS) cell is a WASH Cluster unit embedded within Vodokanal that provides a brokerage function between Vodokanal's needs and WASH Cluster members. The MIS cell is highly regarded by stakeholders; by the end of 2023, its role was changing as humanitarian needs in Ukraine transitioned from humanitarian to recovery and development. The challenge is that the WASH Cluster is not mandated or resourced to play a longer-term role in Ukraine, yet there is no development coordination mechanism in the water sector. Faced with this gap in coordination/transition, the MIS cell has the potential to become a bridge for operational coordination in the medium to long term.



Source: WASH Cluster

WASH Cluster: In the late phase of the response, many of the initial WASH requirements have been met and the main contributions of the cluster are now twofold. Firstly, to facilitate water supply to areas close to the front line that are still under active attack and in response to conventional humanitarian need – supplying water to locations where local distribution has been damaged and water trucking or local temporary piping or borehole solutions are required. Secondly, the WASH Cluster continues to provide highly valued support to the operations of the Ukrainian water utility company, Vodokanal, through a dedicated unit known as the Vodokanal MIS cell (*see Box 10*). The function of this unit is to receive, organize, technically vet, prioritize and ultimately broker demands from across the Vodokanal system, connecting them with the supplyside capacities of WASH Cluster members and donors. The unit holds significant potential for the transition of the WASH Cluster to a development-oriented water sector coordination body in the future, while retaining a smaller humanitarian component that responds to attacks and new displacements.

Child Protection AoR: The Child Protection AoR is providing effective 5W mapping and coordination of partners, strengthening capacity of external stakeholders especially in MHPSS, maintaining case management referral pathways, and supporting its strategy with research and advocacy notes. In Ukraine, there are three separate 5W and mapping systems for General Protection, GBV and Child Protection, as well as separate coordination processes for each dimension of protection at national and local levels. While this might meet the vertical needs and expectations of each coordinating entity, interviews suggested that it also creates a confusing maze of reporting and coordination for multisectoral entities in Ukraine – especially local NGOs and Ministry of Social Policy social workers, who carrying out a combination of general protection, GBV referral and

Child Protection tasks. As the nature of coordination evolves, with a shift away from humanitarian response in areas further from the front line, there is a need for greater consideration of whether sub-cluster databases and mapping could be merged, and coordination structures consolidated, particularly in stable regions looking towards recovery.

Education Cluster: The work of the cluster has almost entirely centred on resuming the safe operation of schools. Although it has also focused on issues of MHPSS, explosive ordnance risk education and early childhood development, the majority of the cluster's resources have focused on rehabilitating schools (particularly school bomb shelters), and providing access to digital learning through devices, DLCs and teacher training. Since the sector's work is so closely linked to the government and provides limited space for non-state actors, interviews suggested there was a case for considering the closure of the Humanitarian Education Cluster and handing over its remaining functions (with its vital information databases) to the government. However, UNICEF reports that government mechanisms mandated to assume this responsibility are not yet ready to do so; for this reason, the Evaluation Team suggests that the Education Cluster should focus efforts on the 'Recovery and Transition' component of the Education Cluster Strategy 2023–2025, with a view to handing over coordination as soon as the government is ready to take it on.

As highlighted above and endorsed during interviews, one of the most pressing issues concerning the clusters in Ukraine is their future and responsible phase-out. This includes how they might evolve into, or connect to, transitional mechanisms for recovery and eventually development. Experience from other responses shows that a responsible exit is often considered too late in the response, and lacks the resources and attention it requires.

Conclusion Coordination
UNICEF has adequately filled its cluster lead and co-lead responsibilities but could have been quicker and more responsive in its cluster support, in particular, at sub-national level

How integrated and coherent was UNICEF's response in Ukraine?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Foster multisectoral/integrated programming and geographic convergence at all phases of the program cycle [ref. 2.2.2]

The CCCs require that UNICEF fosters a multisectoral/integrated approach and geographical convergence in the design and implementation of its programmes and partnerships.[265] This is justified by its approach of focusing on the most disadvantaged communities to realize the rights of every child, starting with the most vulnerable, which compels it to target its interventions accordingly.

Programme integration during the L3 response

Part B, the Sector Report, addresses each of UNICEF's sectoral responses, which include some aspects of integration. Rather than duplicate this, this section will provide a broad overview in addition to identifying some of the initiatives that have promoted the most effective programme integration.

Finding Integration 1
The nature of planning during the L3 response was perceived as being siloed throughout much of 2022; but despite this, there were positive examples of integrated programming, which included UNICEF's Spilno initiative, MMTs and Better Care. Later in the response, UNICEF field offices made deliberate efforts to build integrated programmes that reflected local government priorities, albeit with varying levels of success.

At the start of the response, integration was not prioritized as the response focused on the delivery of supplies and sectoral teams themselves were in the process of forming. Interviewees spoke of early programming reflecting UNICEF's sectoral silos. A supplies-focused response was not conducive with achieving the type of integration envisaged by the CCCs – one that builds on a phased approach of joint needs assessment, planning, partnership design and implementation. The lack of cross-sectoral integration was also a key finding of UNICEF's Operational Review conducted at the end of 2022.[266]

The type of integration that did exist, however, were initiatives that sought to co-locate UNICEF's support and services to provide a one-stop shop for children and their families who had either been displaced or were conflict affected. The three specific examples most frequently referred to were UNICEF's Spilno centres, MMTs and Better Care.

BOX 11

Examples of integrated programming in UNICEF'S L3 response

Spilno centres: The child-friendly integrated social services programme implemented in eastern Ukraine was transformed into the nation-wide signature initiative '*Spilno*' (meaning 'together'). In the emergency response, UNICEF sought to establish temporary Spilno Child Spots as safe areas for children to have access to a range of services, which included education, psychosocial care and mine education. They were also used to promote good nutritional practices. In 2022, more than 300 temporary and permanent Spilno Child Spots were established across 20 regions of Ukraine to provide a sense of normalcy for children – providing access to play, social cohesion, community engagement and behaviour change interventions in a safe environment, in partnership with the Government of Ukraine, civil society and local partners.[267]

MMTs: UNICEF supported MMTs as a key pillar of its emergency response. These teams worked in UNICEF/United Nations distribution points and provided a focal point to support affected communities. MMTs were composed of four specialists (social worker, psychologist, lawyer, health-care specialist) who served cases via integrated services across regions. Where additional support needs were identified, children and adults were referred to specialized services (health, social and legal institutions). The MMTs were also tasked with identifying cases of GBV, with a view to ensuring treatment and referral to specialized services.

Better Care: Through the Better Care programme, UNICEF seeks to leverage previous *oblast* efforts and plans of 'deinstitutionalization' to implement a comprehensive care reform approach based on international best practices, customized for Ukraine's unique context. An explicit part of this is the integration of social protection services and case management procedures to ensure a comprehensive approach to care. This involves targeted interventions to prevent the separation of children from families, support and promote alternative care for children, and offer meaningful alternatives to the institutionalization of children through community-based child and family support services, including early intervention for children with developmental delays and disabilities, and children subjected to or witnessing violence and neglect. Moreover, large-scale national and international monitoring of children who were in institutions before the war who were subsequently moved was conducted to assist the government with tracing and following up on these children.

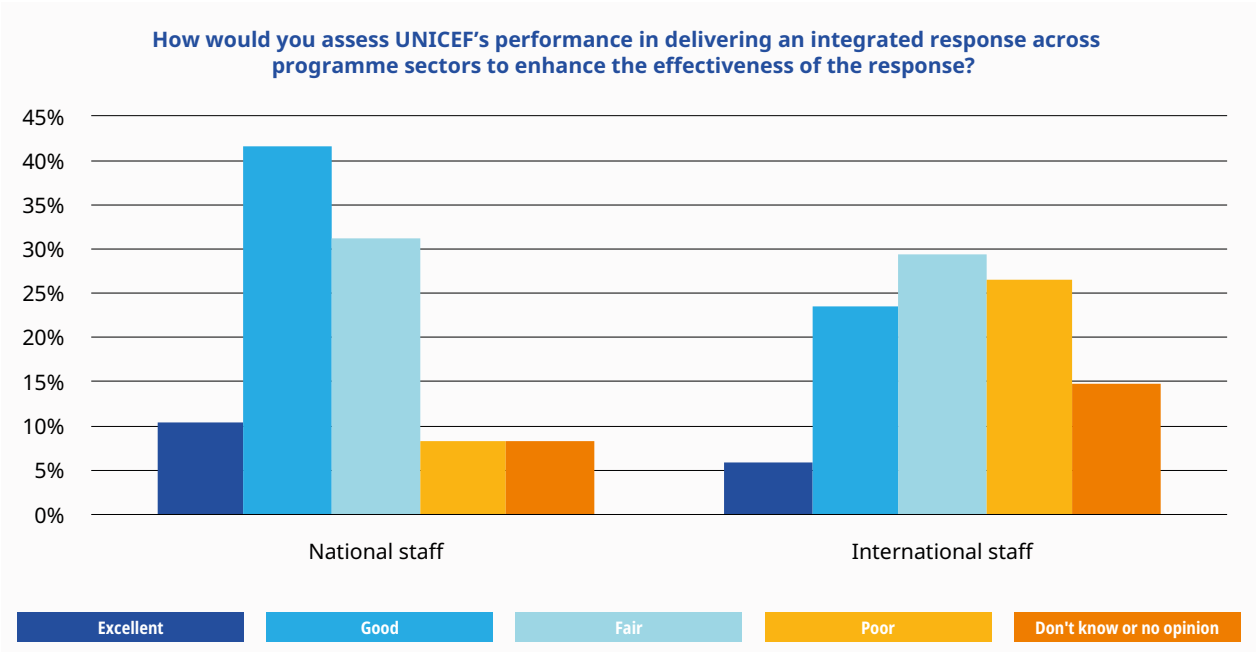
In addition to the examples provided above, there were smaller-scale examples of integration where sectors collaborated at a technical level to achieve shared outcomes. An example of this was equipping teachers with knowledge and skills on MHPSS and self-care for their students, as well as launching versions of a chatbot on Telegram and Viber to track the students' well-being, and help teachers to identify early signs of distress and anxiety among students and inform them about referral mechanisms.[268] Joint efforts by the education and WASH sections provided WASH in education and health facilities.

During the field visits and interviews conducted by the Evaluation Team, UNICEF staff described more recent efforts to foster programme convergence – not full integration, but attempts to better link programmes in a region or *oblast* and strengthen coherence through delivery by a single multisector partner. The key components of this strategy include: (i) close consultation with *oblast* authorities to determine a list of priorities and an *oblast* action plan; (ii) a local letter of intent that outlines what the authorities and UNICEF would respectively contribute; (iii) a requirement for UNICEF's sectors and partners to align with the prioritized *oblast* plan; and (iv) the engagement of a single, multisector partner in each

oblast responsible to bring all the pieces together and fill gaps. Interviews with UNICEF's partners suggest that while this convergence approach has achieved mixed results, it does offer a route towards strengthening convergence. Moreover, experience suggests that it had the greatest chances of success when UNICEF was able to oversee and support implementation.[269]

Despite these signs of progress, there continues to be a perception within UNICEF, most keenly felt among international staff, that more needs to be done if programme integration aspirations are to be achieved (*see Figure 31*). While progress is being made in engaging the strong participation of *oblasts* (regions/provinces) and *hromadas* (municipalities) (e.g., through the Integrated Recovery Programme in priority *hromadas* that is being planned), the onus is now on UNICEF to break down its programme siloes by strengthening internal processes of joint needs assessment and programme planning.

Figure 31. UNICEF staff perceptions of programme integration during the L3 response



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Conclusion Integration

UNICEF's signature integrated programmes achieved some impressive outcomes for children and their parents during the L3 response. While there were later efforts to strengthen programme convergence, greater progress is required to strengthen joint assessment and planning. As UNICEF's structure matures, and the emphasis shifts towards recovery, there is significant opportunity to take stock of weaknesses implicit in the way that its sectors functioned and planned to address these weaknesses.

To what extent did UNICEF's L3 response link with recovery and reconstruction needs?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Foster coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development programming [ref. 2.2.4]

⇒ **Response planning:** Response plans are evidence-based and consistent with interagency planning. They address coverage, quality and equity, adapt to evolving needs, ensure conflict sensitivity and link humanitarian and development programming [ref 2.3.1]

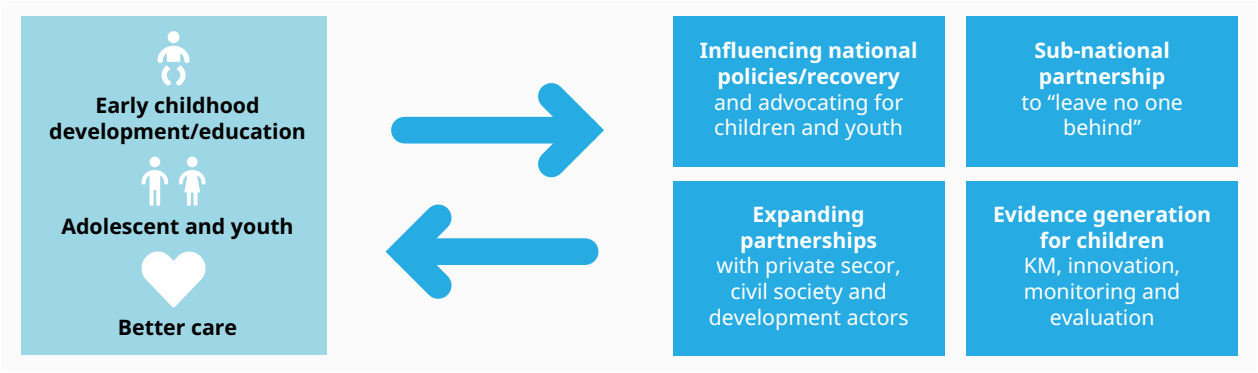
UNICEF's procedures make linking humanitarian and development programming a mandatory requirement for all country offices.[270] UNICEF has a breadth of support and guidance to support country offices in this task that includes sectoral commitments and benchmarks on system strengthening in addition to key considerations for country offices.

At the July 2022 Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano, Switzerland, the Government of Ukraine presented a draft National Recovery Plan.[271] Based on this plan, the United Nations and the government jointly agreed on a Transitional Framework, with a focus on emergency early recovery actions.[272]

The Transitional Framework (July 2022–December 2024) serves as a bridging document between the previous United Nations-Ukraine Partnership Framework (2018–2022) and the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2025–29). For similar reasons, UNICEF's CPD (2018–2023) was extended to December 2024.[273]

Drafted in 2023, UNICEF's approach to child- and youth-centred humanitarian response incorporated aspects of recovery and reconstruction from the outset (*see Figure 32*). It built on relevant aspects of its 2018–2023 CPD, which was in the process of being revised at the time the evaluation was undertaken.

Figure 32. Summary diagram of UNICEF's approach to child- and youth-centred humanitarian response and recovery



Source:

Coherence of UNICEF's L3 response

Finding Nexus 1

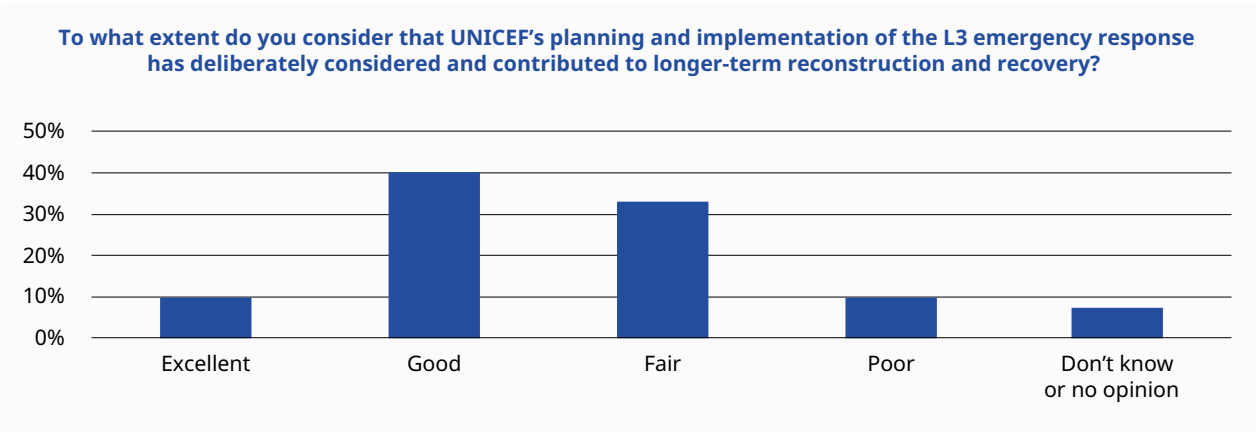
UNICEF's Ukraine response placed an emphasis on strengthening relationships and adopting programme approaches that would contribute to longer-term recovery and development in Ukraine. While different sectors engaged in this at different times, linking aspects of the L3 humanitarian response to recovery was generally considered to have been a strength of UNICEF.

Concurrently with the delivery of the L3 response, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office developed a strategy paper in August 2022 that articulated UNICEF's approach to delivering recovery and resilience.[274] While the granting of EU Candidate Status to Ukraine was a notable lever for this, interviews with staff inside and outside the country office spoke of the prioritization afforded to incorporating a long-term focus into the L3 response, which was considered to be a strength. While some sectors were already closely aligned with national programmes and priorities, such as education and health, others such as WASH, developed a longer-term strategy as the response progressed.[275] It is noteworthy that for social protection UNICEF has been tasked with leading the Perekhid initiative, the objective of which is to guide the transition of humanitarian multipurpose cash assistance caseloads to an inclusive shock-responsive social protection system. This broadly positive perception was represented in the responses received to the online survey (*see Figure 33*).

Conclusion Nexus 1

UNICEF drew extensively from its good relations with government and its knowledge of national systems to inform its medium-term response strategy, which established clear linkages between its humanitarian response and recovery work. Where it faced greater difficulty was in moderating this relationship to ensure a principled response.

Figure 33. Staff perceptions of UNICEF's contribution to linking its humanitarian programme to recovery needs in the L3 response



Source: Evaluation Team Staff Survey.

Issues for UNICEF to address as it shifts between humanitarian and development programming

Finding Nexus 2

UNICEF has found it challenging to navigate the differing demands of the nexus, which has required it to engage closely with government at the same time as maintaining sufficient space to challenge the government when this is in the best interests of children.

It is important to acknowledge that the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is not linear but is a continuum that will shift in emphasis as needs and context change;[276] given the complex situation in Ukraine, which includes active conflict on one hand, with a highly politicized policy reform agenda on the other, the agility required to deliver programmes across the different facets of the nexus will be particularly important for UNICEF if it is to retain both its relevance and effectiveness. Interviews with internal and external stakeholders raised some important considerations as it seeks to do this. These are outlined below.

The importance of evidence to underpin UNICEF's engagement with the government: UNICEF has a strong relationship with the Government of Ukraine, which provided a foundation for its L3 response. While this has strengthened the relevance and coherence of UNICEF's support, interviews revealed that proximity to government also posed a challenge due to perceptions that UNICEF had a deferential relationship. With the policy reform agenda required for EU accession in mind, there was acknowledgement that the changes that are in the best interests of children may require UNICEF to adopt a more challenging posture towards the government.[277] In this respect, the EU integration agenda is an important lever and facilitator of reform as it requires the attainment of international standards, which UNICEF is also working towards in its recovery interventions.

The missing 'peace' of the nexus: Social cohesion is not an issue the evaluation explicitly addressed, but it was implicit in many of the interviews, particularly those that sought to explore issues of need and prioritization. While research undertaken by the United Nations and CSOs suggests a comparatively high level of social cohesion exists in Ukraine,[278] challenges are more evident in areas retaken by the Government of Ukraine and, in particular, areas not controlled by the national authorities. In these areas, the ongoing conflict has led to polarization among communities, who may also be affected by deep mistrust and may themselves be or have been exposed to misinformation and indoctrination. While analysis of these issues is limited, UNICEF's commitment to conflict sensitivity in Ukraine may in future require that its efforts to meet needs are complemented by efforts to support peacebuilding (or at least to 'do no harm').

Conclusion Nexus 2

UNICEF has found it challenging to navigate the differing demands of the nexus, which has required it to engage closely with government at the same time as maintaining sufficient space to challenge the government when this is in the best interests of children.

Gender and inclusion: How well did UNICEF's response address issues of gender and inclusion?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

⇒ **Finding Exclusion 1:** UNICEF included Roma (Ukraine's most excluded community) to some extent in its L3 response. Staff were generally aware of Roma exclusion; some UNICEF sections sought to strengthen analysis or tackle aspects of Roma exclusion in programmes, but there was not a systematic approach across the response.

⇒ **Finding Gender 1:** Awareness and implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan is very limited in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office. Because most UNICEF staff, partners' staff and project participants are women and girls, and because UNICEF is addressing GBViE and PSEA, the prevailing view of UNICEF staff in Ukraine, particularly among national staff, is "there is no gender issue in the Ukraine programme."

⇒ **Finding Gender 2:** In the emergency period, UNICEF did not systematically collect sex-disaggregated data, and rarely included gender analysis in research and analysis terms of reference. As a result, UNICEF in Ukraine did not know how many boys or girls were benefiting from UNICEF services directly or indirectly, and had no starting point for understanding the gender differential reach and impact of its emergency work.

⇒ **Finding Gender 3:** Once UNICEF had recruited a gender adviser onto the team late in the humanitarian response, priority was given to PSEA compliance. As a result, limited attention was given to issues of gender equality during the L3 response.

⇒ **Finding Gender 4:** UNICEF has launched several initiatives to improve its understanding of gender equality among strategic occupations, which include frontline health and education workers, as well as UNICEF staff, but is not yet mainstreaming gender through all sectors and projects.

⇒ **Finding Disability 1:** In the very confused early months of the response, when UNICEF was short-staffed, and reliable data and capable partners were both in short supply, UNICEF took reasonable measures to identify and support children with disabilities, in particular children previously in institutions.

⇒ **Finding Disability 2:** There is a strong connection between UNICEF's support for alternative care and inclusive education because children with disabilities need both to be available and resourced to complete the move out of residential institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

⇒ **Conclusion Vulnerability/Exclusion 1:** In the early response, the supply-focused programming model did not permit targeting of the most disadvantaged children, with the exception of localized support for children with disabilities. UNICEF's capacity to target the most disadvantaged children improved in the mid-phase of the response as it shifted programming to partners, and to the east and south of the country. Throughout 2023, however, only a small proportion of UNICEF programming went to frontline *oblasts* where needs were greatest, and the availability of essential services was weakest. In sum, UNICEF could have done better to target and reach the most disadvantaged children – and to have done so sooner – in frontline areas.

⇒ **Conclusion Gender:** The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office did not prioritize gender equality during the emergency response and is far from meeting the expectations of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan. Although the Gender Unit has engaged in a wide spectrum of gender activities in the period since the L3 emergency, understanding of gender equality and of the importance of gender mainstreaming are limited throughout the country office.

⇒ **Conclusion Disability:** Important efforts were made in the emergency response to include children with disabilities in the HCT programme, and to address pockets of acute need in those regions of western Ukraine where UNICEF had partners experienced in supporting recently deinstitutionalized children. The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office does not, however, have specific targets or indicators for disability, and is missing a strategic opportunity to focus on the nexus of inclusive education and alternative care.

To what extent has UNICEF reached the most vulnerable and excluded groups?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

⇒ Target and reach the most disadvantaged children and their communities with humanitarian assistance, protection and services [ref. 2.2.3]

UNICEF's performance in reaching the most vulnerable people in its L3 response

EQ3.5.1 on 'targeting and reaching the most vulnerable' overlaps with EQ3.1.1 ('To what extent were UNICEF's strategies and response plans appropriate to the context?'), EQ3.1.3 ('To what extent was UNICEF's response aligned and adapted to the needs of affected people?'), EQ3.2.5 ('To what extent was UNICEF able to deliver a principled response and use this to gain access to those in greatest need?') and EQ3.5.2 ('To what extent has the UNICEF response been gender and disability responsive, and has been effective in tackling priority concerns?'). This section of the report should therefore be read in conjunction with the sections relating to the evaluation questions listed.

To avoid repetition, high-level findings from the sections in this report that address the question of vulnerability are outlined below and a provisional conclusion is made. Analysis of these sections supports the following statements:

- UNICEF's early approach of providing supplies through consignees to general categories of the affected population ('blanket distributions') probably reached vulnerable people – but the extent of this reach and the level of vulnerability is not measurable because UNICEF did not identify the beneficiaries.
- The ability of UNICEF to reach vulnerable groups improved as it started providing services through partners and intermediary service providers such as Spilno centres, MMTs, medical facilities and the HCT programme. There is evidence that targeted programming reached children with disabilities, but the focus tended to be on western regions.
- Even though UNICEF's programming lagged behind the movement of returnees, the organization's reach to vulnerable populations was enhanced when it shifted the focus of programming towards the east and south of the country, as well as through its participation in humanitarian convoys to frontline regions.
- As explained below (*see section 3.5.2*), throughout 2022 and into mid-2023, UNICEF did not systematically collect disaggregated data on recipients of its assistance (neither gender nor disability data). As a result, data on the differential needs of particularly vulnerable recipients were not always available; ultimately, UNICEF was only able to construct a partial picture of who was actually reached – vulnerable or not.

UNICEF's performance in reaching excluded groups in its L3 response

There were estimated to be anywhere between 45,000 and 400,000 Roma in Ukraine before the full-scale war,[279] who experienced a broad range of social exclusions.[280] Attention has tended to focus on Roma views of women's role in society, labour and the family; early marriage and large families (with their consequences in terms of poverty and vulnerability); and distrust of state institutions, which creates barriers for children's access to health and education services.

Based on the known pattern of discrimination and the particular problem of documentation that is a prerequisite for access to many state services, UNICEF determined that the Roma community in Ukraine was particularly vulnerable; the Roma constitute the only defined excluded group in UNICEF's CPD.[281] Roma also figure prominently in UNICEF's 2021 Situation Analysis, which was prepared as a foundation document for the new (but now-postponed) CPD.[282] This explains why the evaluation examines how well UNICEF sought to address the needs of Roma communities in its L3 response.

> **Finding Exclusion 1**
> UNICEF included Roma (Ukraine's most excluded community) to some extent in its L3 response. Staff were generally aware of Roma exclusion; some UNICEF sections sought to strengthen analysis or tackle aspects of Roma exclusion in programmes, but there was not a systematic approach across the response.

After the Russian invasion, UNICEF continued to include Roma in lists of vulnerable people/communities in project and programme documents, although there does not appear to have been any reporting on numbers affected or specific results for Roma in UNICEF's country-level reporting. the Evaluation Team found evidence of scattered activities that sought to strengthen UNICEF's analysis and support

to the Roma. These included: (i) a Roma gender analysis, which was initiated to gather evidence on issues such as Roma children being left behind in education, where informed assumptions are made but evidence is weak; (ii) a small project with the ombudsperson that considered the best models of alternative care of greatest relevance to the Roma community; (iii) changes in the composition of dignity kits to the menstrual management preference expressed by Roma women and girls; (iv) the inclusion of Roma teams in UNICEF's UPSHIFT social innovator accelerator for young people; and (v) the specific inclusion in UNICEF's MMTs of a team that had specific knowledge of supporting Roma villages, using a different technique where the Roma community leader (instead of local government) convened the population for MMT consultations and provided lists of needs, and who provided services differently to people who mistrust local authorities. These are all anecdotal examples of Roma inclusion, which in totality suggest a deliberate but scattered effort to target Roma communities on UNICEF's part.

Conclusion Vulnerability/Exclusion 1
In the early response, the supply-focused programming model did not permit targeting of the most disadvantaged children, with the exception of localized support for children with disabilities. UNICEF's capacity to target the most disadvantaged children improved in the mid-phase of the response as it shifted programming to partners, and to the east and south of the country. Throughout 2023, however, only a small proportion of UNICEF programming went to frontline *oblasts* where needs were greatest, and the availability of essential services was weakest. In sum, UNICEF could have done better to target and reach the most disadvantaged children – and to have done so sooner – in frontline regions.

In the staff survey, which enquired about "which vulnerable groups are overlooked by UNICEF", the largest number of responses (38 per cent – but of a fairly small sample) identified the Roma community. Based on the analysis of UNICEF documents, interviews and the staff survey, UNICEF staff are generally aware of the risks of Roma exclusion from UNICEF (and government) programmes; there is evidence that staff in some sections initiated activities to either study this, or to tackle specific aspects of Roma exclusion at a tactical/technical level. However, there was no evidence of a systematic approach to Roma exclusion in UNICEF's L3 response.

To what extent has the UNICEF response been gender responsive and effective in tackling priority concerns?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

- ⇒ **Ending Gender-Based Violence:** GBV prevention and risk mitigation for all is included in programmes, with a focus on the safety and resilience of girls and women
- ⇒ **Community engagement and AAP with girls and women:** Adolescent girls, women and their respective organizations are actively engaged in the design and delivery of programmes
- ⇒ **Gender-responsive programming, including a lens on adolescent girls:** Analyses, needs assessments, programming and enabling environments (e.g., partnerships, communications) respond to the distinct needs and experiences of girls, women, boys and men [ref. 2.4.1]

Gender equality is a core UNICEF value and enshrined in the CCCs, which require that children, adolescents and their communities benefit from gender-responsive programmes and services.[283] UNICEF has a range of supplemental policy and strategy documents, the most important of which are the Gender Policy[284] and Gender Action Plan.[285]

BOX 12

A new social divide?

It seems possible that Ukrainian society could be primed for a step-up in domestic stress. If men become more militantly masculine as a result of the war, and women and children outside Ukraine are becoming accustomed to European examples and norms of gender equality at home and in the workplace, when the families return to Ukraine, the gap in domestic behaviours and expectations between women and men could have increased.

Gender in Ukraine

There are two key dimensions to persistent gender inequality in Ukraine. The first is the wide gap between legislation and practice, with legislation generally far in advance of official and public norms and behaviours. The second dimension is the prevalence of harmful gender norms:

According to a [2018] landmark study initiated by UNFPA [the United Nations Population Fund],[286] a masculinity crisis is emerging in Ukraine, which is thought to be worsening as a result of the current war. The study draws on interviews and surveys from over 1,500 men across the country, as well as interviews with 355 men referred to intervention programmes for domestic violence. The study finds that men in Ukraine are holding fast to gender norms, and the consequences for women and girls are dire. The majority of men believe showing signs of weakness and submission, whether at home or in public, is disgraceful. Roughly 82% say that women should adhere to traditional gender roles, like cooking, cleaning and caring for children. Yet men are going to violent lengths to enforce this division. One in ten Ukrainian men believe that women should tolerate violence to keep their families intact – to devastating effect.[287]

Ukrainian legislation relating to gender equality is generally adequate, with specific laws and regulations governing discrimination, domestic abuse and, more recently, gender bias in the education curriculum.[288] Importantly, boys and girls have equal access to health and education; because participation rates of males and females are comparable, most Ukrainian nationals interviewed for this evaluation, including many staff in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, do not accept that gender inequalities exist. At the same time, there is strong evidence from the UReport survey that Ukrainian young people believe there are more opportunities for boys (38 per cent) than for girls (9 per cent) (*see Annex 5*). Secondary U-Report analysis showed that respondents currently outside Ukraine anticipate or perceive the highest level of inequality (51 per cent more opportunities for boys compared with 5 per cent more opportunities for girls).

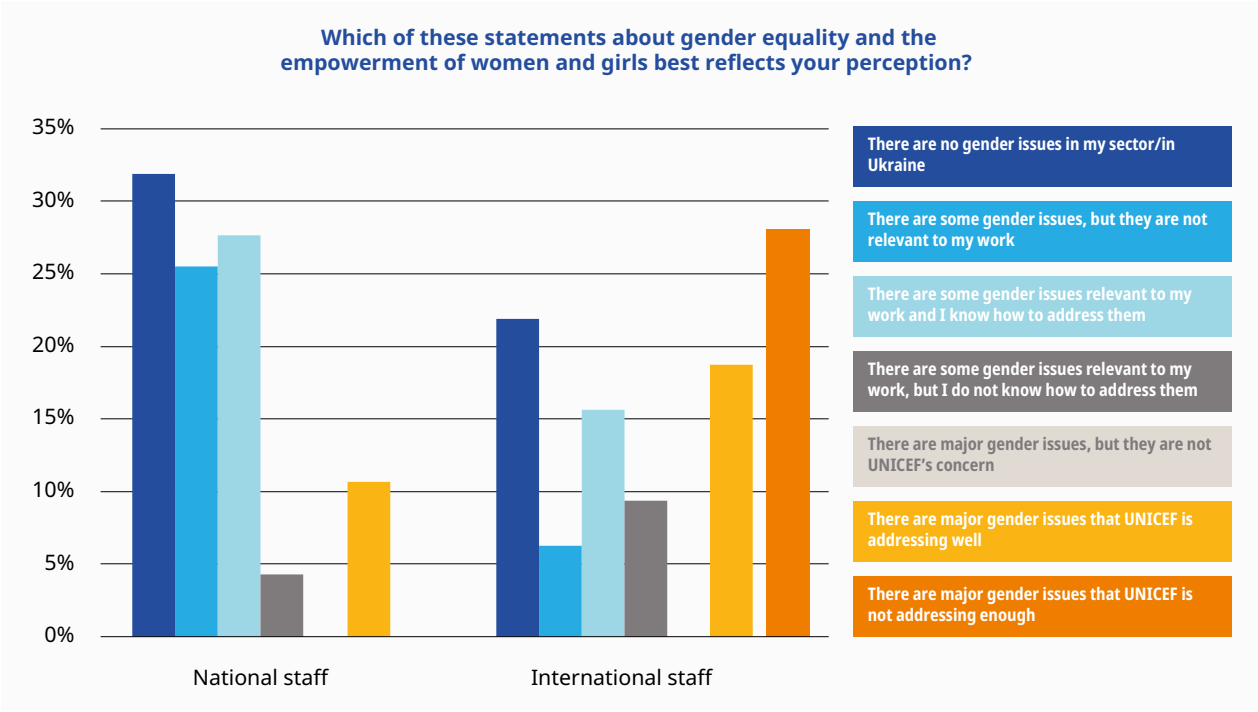
Perceptions of gender inclusion in UNICEF Ukraine

> **Finding Gender 1**
> Awareness and implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan are very limited in the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office. Because most UNICEF staff, partners' staff and project participants are women and girls, and because UNICEF is addressing GBViE and PSEA, the prevailing view of UNICEF staff in Ukraine, particularly among national staff, is "there is no gender issue in the Ukraine programme."

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office has been consistently assessed as performing poorly against UNICEF's benchmarks. In the most recent Gender Programmatic Review, the country office had "the lowest score in the ECA [Europe and Central Asia] region across all COs [country offices], with only 31 per cent compliance to the UNICEF Gender Action Plan standards."[289] The 2021 Gender Programmatic Review included a set of recommendations to rectify the poor performance, but a rapid assessment conducted in 2023 found that in 2022 the country office had made "'only marginal progress" against these recommendations.[290] This Evaluation Report does not intend to reiterate the findings of these reports, but instead examines some of the reasons this weak gender performance might persist.

Interviewees provided four reasons for the weak gender performance. Firstly, awareness of the Gender Action Plan is low throughout the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office, particularly among the large number of recently recruited national staff who have experienced a very steep learning curve. Second, management did not make it an explicit priority. Third, staff often conflate gender equality with GBViE and PSEA. Of key importance, however, is the fourth reason: a widespread perception that there is no "gender problem" in Ukraine, because gender participation (not gender status or gender influence) is even between males and females. The evaluation examined this issue in the staff survey (*see Figure 34*, which revealed a strong discrepancy between international and national staff perceptions.

Figure 34. UNICEF staff perceptions of gender equality and empowerment



Source: Ukraine Country Office Staff Survey in conjunction with this evaluation, 2024.

The results show that 57 per cent of national staff (compared with 28 per cent of international staff) believe that there are no gender issues in their sector, or that that there are some gender issues, but they are not relevant to their work. Conversely, 28 per cent of international staff (and no national staff), felt that: "There are major gender issues that UNICEF is not addressing enough." The results of the survey suggest that many international staff believe there are un- or under-addressed gender issues in the programme, while national staff tend not to believe that is the case. It is also striking that national staff seem so confident in their perceptions, with only 4 per cent of national staff believing that they are not fully equipped to address gender issues and none believing there are issues UNICEF is not adequately addressing. These results go some way in explaining why the weak gender performance of the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office is so persistent.

Early phase of the response (March–August 2022)

Finding Gender 2

In the emergency period, UNICEF did not systematically collect sex-disaggregated data, and rarely included gender analysis in research and analysis terms of reference. As a result, UNICEF in Ukraine did not know how many boys or girls were benefiting from UNICEF services directly or indirectly, and had no starting point for understanding the gender differential reach and impact of its emergency work.

Very quickly after the Russian invasion, ECARO provided a set of briefing notes to the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office that were adapted from generic models, and which provided guidance on how each sector could and should consider gender in its response. In May 2022, an ECARO Technical Emergency Team on Gender Integration in the Ukraine Response (inside and outside Ukraine) was established/visited the country, which was accompanied by offers of support from ECARO and links to additional resources. At that time, the country office did not have a gender adviser position; it seems that the available advice and guidance were not systematically actioned by the country office or applied to its early programming.[291] Several interviewees suggested the reason for this was that integrating gender added complexity and was given low priority in the hectic early days of the L3 response.

The 2022 HAC Appeal and the 2022 Country Office Annual Report do not refer to gender other than in the context of GBV. A sample of programme documents examined by the Evaluation Team did not refer to gender, sex, or in some cases even boys or girls. Despite the requirement written into a small number of programme documents that partners should undertake '*gender-sensitive*' or '*gender-responsive*' planning and activities, there is no reporting by partners or by UNICEF on performance against this expectation. Furthermore, it appears that gender-disaggregated data was not consistently being collected and reported by UNICEF or its partners – with the exception of gender- and age-disaggregated data on HCT recipients and Spilno centre participants.[292] Furthermore, it was reported that gender equality is rarely included in the scope of sectoral analyses. Even the TPM reporting and UNICEF's own surveys of parents do not appear to disaggregate data by gender. In essence, UNICEF in Ukraine did not know how many boys or girls were benefiting from UNICEF's direct or indirect services, and was not collecting the data to permit it to understand the differential reach and impact of its work.


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Mid-phase of the response (September 2022–February 2023)

> **Finding Gender 3**
> Once UNICEF had recruited a gender adviser onto the team late in the humanitarian response, priority was given to PSEA compliance. As a result, limited attention was given to issues of gender equality during the L3 response.

In August 2022, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office received its first staff-member dedicated to gender equality. The priorities assigned to this staff-member by senior management were PSEA and GBViE, which also lacked dedicated staffing. As a consequence, country office support to gender analysis continued to be given a lower priority until additional staff were recruited who could focus on these competing higher priorities. At that time, emphasis was placed on undertaking gender reviews of the new programme documents that were in preparation for UNICEF's new programming, and opportunities were taken to ensure that objectives and activities addressed issues of discrimination and inequality.

With additional resources and advice, UNICEF was able to engage more confidently in system-wide gender analysis and forums. In contrast to 2022, the 2023 HAC Appeal makes greater reference to gender; the 2023 Annual Workplan includes a gender equality mainstreaming objective that was created and resourced. In the 2022 Operational Review, there was widespread recognition that the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office needed to improve its performance on gender equality; the review concluded that there was "inadequate gender inclusion" and "a lack of gender focus in programmes" and it was recommended as an area for improvement in 2023.

Late phase of the response (March–November 2023)

Finding Gender 4

UNICEF has launched several initiatives to improve its understanding of gender equality among strategic occupations, which included frontline health and education workers, as well as UNICEF staff, but is not yet mainstreaming gender through all sectors and projects.

Progress on prioritizing gender equality was made during 2023 as UNICEF's Gender Unit placed an emphasis on building gender competencies and GBV awareness of partners and frontline workers (including pre-school teachers, teachers, psychologists, youth workers, nurses and social workers), in addition to tackling the problem of harmful gender norms. Concurrently with this, UNICEF commissioned a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis[293] to provide UNICEF-contextualized and sector-oriented data on problems and solutions, and initiated a strategic dialogue with the government commissioner on gender equality policy.

Table 24. UNICEF's 2023 Annual Workplan outputs related to gender equality

Output	Strategic inclusion of gender equality and girls' empowerment is embedded in all country programming, advocacy, networking, and partnership building to accelerate GAP [Gender Action Plan] implementation at the country level
Indicator	# frontline workers trained with materials on gender discriminatory roles and practices (disaggregation by sex, type of worker by sector)
Indicator	# UNICEF staff or IPs trained on GBV risk mitigation (disaggregation by sex, duty-bearer)
Indicator	# people reached with community-based, interactive discussions on gender-equitable roles and practices (disaggregation by sex, age: <18, 18 years and above)

Source: UNICEF's Annual Workplan outputs

Despite making progress, the challenge remained that work on gender in UNICEF's L3 response was being championed and progressed by the gender unit, but not broadly integrated within the rest of the programmes.[294] Despite the provision of additional resources, interviews suggest that there continued to be limited strategic understanding of and commitment to gender mainstreaming throughout the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office.



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Gender inclusion in clusters

The Evaluation Team examined the performance of UNICEF-led clusters in integrating gender equality during interviews and document review, which offered some encouraging results. While the clusters are not consistent in collecting gender-disaggregated data, presumably because this is limited by the performance of cluster members, much of the data was disaggregated. Each of UNICEF's clusters has gender-, GBV-, disability- and war-sensitivity guidance – albeit in the form of global cluster guidance some of which has been adapted to Ukraine. Most clusters also have gender focal points among their membership, and many have conducted gender equality and/or GBV training of their members. Importantly, all the clusters have framed their objectives in 'gender-sensitive' or 'gender-responsive' terms. Despite this encouraging progress, none of the clusters had undertaken Ukraine-specific gender analysis and reporting specifically on gender results was limited.

Conclusion Gender

The Ukraine UNICEF Ukraine Country Office did not prioritize gender equality during the emergency response and is far from meeting the expectations of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan. Although the Gender Unit has engaged in a wide spectrum of gender activities in the period since the L3 emergency, understanding of gender equality and of the importance of gender mainstreaming are limited throughout the country office.

To what extent has the UNICEF response been disability responsive and effective in tackling priority concerns?

UNICEF'S CORE COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

- ⇒ **Inclusive needs assessments, planning and monitoring:** The needs of children with disabilities and their caregivers are identified and reflected in planning and monitoring.
- ⇒ **Inclusive and safe access to information and services:** Children with disabilities and their caregivers have safe access to humanitarian programmes.
- ⇒ **Participation:** Children with disabilities participate in the design of programmes and in the decisions that affect their lives [ref. 2.4.2]

UNICEF's CCCs provide a commitment to ensuring children and adolescents with disabilities and their caregivers have inclusive and safe access to humanitarian services and programmes. This requires that disability and inclusion are considered throughout the project cycle. In addition to delivering quality programmes, UNICEF is committed to systematically building its own capacity for analysis and response as well as that of its partners. UNICEF also emphasizes the importance of advocating for the provision of inclusive and accessible services.

Disability inclusion in Ukraine

While reliable data do not exist, 2022 estimates suggest that 156,100 children in Ukraine were officially recognized as having a disability.[295] Moreover, data from 2019 suggest that at least 70 per cent of this number were girls.[296] Ukraine has historically considered that residential institutions and boarding schools offer appropriate State care for the support of children with severe disabilities. Prior to the war, it was estimated that these institutions accommodated approximately 45,000 children living with disabilities.[297]

Early phase of the response (March–August 2022)

Finding Disability 1

In the very confused early months of the response, when UNICEF was shortstaffed, and reliable data and capable partners were both in short supply, UNICEF took reasonable measures to identify and support children with disabilities, in particular children previously in institutions.

As described in the child protection section of Part B, the Sector Report, on the eve of the Russian invasion, UNICEF sought to identify alternative safe locations for children who might be evacuated from Donbas (UNICEF's anticipated scenario being an increase in localized fighting). It was discouraged from proceeding in this by the government, which wanted to retain control over children in institutions.[298] As soon as the fighting began to spread over a much wider region than expected, children were evacuated in an increasingly chaotic manner. In this turbulent period, with limited staff and little information (often because information was not shared by the government), UNICEF did what it could to trace and support children from institutions, including children with disabilities.

Tracing was mainly undertaken by UNICEF and the government through a special working group on child protection, supplemented by UNICEF staff and partners. UNICEF had a pre-existing project with an IP, the Dzherelo Centre, based in Lviv. The centre undertook a significant amount of the early work on tracing, assessment and supporting children with assistive devices, adapted hygiene items and accessible learning materials. The quality of this work was assessed as very good,[299] but the Dzherelo Centre's reach was limited to western Ukraine; children with disabilities in other parts of the country were not as well reached by UNICEF.[300] UNICEF complemented the tracing and targeted assistance with advocacy, a unified message covering the responses inside and outside Ukraine.

The main country-wide support for children with disabilities was the result of disability being specified as an eligibility criterion for UNICEF's HCT programme; UNICEF made additional efforts to include children with disabilities by admitting children into the scheme who were only part way through the formal assessment process (i.e., they had a doctor's note, but had not yet qualified for inclusion through the arduous and lengthy government certification process). Finally, in the early phase of the response, UNICEF ensured that physical access to service centres such as Spilno centres and bomb shelters was either built into partnership agreements and programme documents as a requirement, or that resources were allocated to build access ramps and accessible washrooms.[301]

Late phase of the response (March–November 2023)

Finding Disability 2

There is a strong connection between UNICEF's support for alternative care and inclusive education because children with disabilities need both to be available and resourced to complete the move out of residential institutions.

Table 25. Evidence of exclusion or marginalization of children with disabilities from services or information

Disability exclusion assessment options	Monitoring activity	% of total
1. Clear evidence of exclusion or marginalization	3	1
2. Possible evidence of exclusion or marginalization	16	4
3. No evidence of exclusion or marginalization	256	62
4. Evidence of specific efforts at inclusion	89	22
5. Evidence of effective efforts at inclusion	48	12
Total field monitoring activities	**412**	

Source: Field Monitoring Reports (March 2023–November 2023).

As UNICEF acquired more staff resources, greater efforts were made to address structural exclusion of children with disabilities, merging with pre-war work on national child protection policies and the renewed focus on Better Care. UNICEF built on the early advocacy note and developed a broader guidance note on protecting children with disabilities inside and outside Ukraine.[302]

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office engaged actively with the Age and Disability Working Group (under the Global Protection Cluster) and addressed disability inclusion more systematically in new programme documents. Assessment of disability inclusion was also added to the mandate of the TPM for Spilno centres and MMTs (*see Table 19*). Reporting on the specific disability inclusion components of new programme documents, however, was inconsistent; there did not appear to be system-wide data on the implementation or effectiveness of activities aimed at including children with disabilities. Although several UNICEF partners supported children with disabilities, UNICEF did not have specific disability targets or reporting requirements in the 2022 or 2023 HAC Appeals or workplans, or in the 2022 Country Office Annual Report. In sum, clear efforts were made to include children with disabilities in UNICEF's emergency response, but no data are available on how comprehensively or effectively this was done.

In addition to Better Care (under the child protection sector), the sector where KIIs suggested that UNICEF engaged most extensively on disability inclusion was education. Children with disabilities faced multiple challenges in education. Firstly, as residential schools were closed, children with disabilities were hurriedly transferred into regular government schools, where facilities, teaching methods and materials had not been adapted to fully support children with disabilities.[303] Secondly, children with disabilities often face additional challenges with accessing online learning, which at the time the evaluation was conducted continued to be the only medium of education for at least a third of Ukrainian children (another third were learning in a hybrid format). Thirdly, children with disabilities often face social stigma and isolation, and in interviews UNICEF staff and partners agreed that, generally speaking, neither Ukraine's teachers nor its student population were technically or socially prepared for the sudden inclusion of these children in regular classrooms.

As with Better Care, the humanitarian response brought a critical window of opportunity to Ukraine, a moment when the previous system of boarding schools was disrupted and change was possible. Given this disruptive opportunity, it should be the highest priority to make a new system work (based on alternative care and inclusive education), before the strong conservative and countervailing pressures of the former institutional education system prevail and children with disabilities are placed back into boarding schools. U-Report data (*see analysis in Annex 5*) suggest that there is less social acceptance of inclusive education than of alternative care, and that students (i.e., school-age U-Report respondents) are less accepting or understanding of inclusive education than adults (who are potentially parents). In interviews and document review, the Evaluation Team found little information specifically on what UNICEF's education section was doing in this regard in 2023, but there is clear evidence that the UNICEF-led Education Cluster had made disability inclusion a high priority; disability inclusion was specifically identified in 12 of 13 Education Cluster strategy output indicators.[304]

There was, however, consensus among UNICEF education and child protection staff, that disability inclusion in education is a pressing child protection issue and should be given a higher priority in 2024 and in the CPD. This will not be easy or quick; overcoming old patterns of behaviour and social norms takes years if not decades, but eventually Ukrainian educators and students will come to appreciate, as one staff-member put it, that "the problem is not the child but the system: we need to work to overcome resistance from parents and from teachers – who do not really understand the meaning of inclusiveness."

Conclusion Disability

Important efforts were made in the emergency response to include children with disabilities in the HCT programme, and to address pockets of acute need in those regions of western Ukraine where UNICEF partners were experienced in supporting recently deinstitutionalized children. The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office does not, however, have specific targets or indicators for disability, and is missing a strategic opportunity to focus on the nexus of inclusive education and alternative care.



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5 Final conclusions

Relevance

The escalation of the war in Ukraine had a devastating impact on the well-being of children and prompted an unprecedented response from UNICEF – in terms of scale as well as complexity.

In the early stages of the L3 response, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office was quick to scale up its activities in west and central Ukraine in support of displaced communities, but lacked internal capacity to adequately assess needs and provide detailed programme planning. In the absence of this, it focused on distributing supplies to consignees who took on responsibility for targeting and distribution. UNICEF's initial programmes, such as the Spilno centre network, which provided a platform for partners to offer a basket of basic services to children, were an appropriate response to large numbers of people on the move (coverage), but lack of targeting and delays in monitoring meant UNICEF did not adequately prioritize its response on the basis of vulnerability (equity).

As the context changed and the geography of need was more clearly concentrated in the east and south of the country, UNICEF was relatively quick to identify the need to decentralize its operations. Refocusing the response and working with partners were both necessary for the organization to better understand and address the specific needs of affected people. UNICEF's willingness to adapt was laudable; its corporate procedures, however, were unable to deliver the decentralization process in a timely way. It was not until towards the end of the L3 response that UNICEF had the proximity and partnerships required to better assess needs and strengthen the relevance of its response.

While UNICEF has provided consistent support to interagency missions to high-risk areas, which more clearly address the needs of the most affected people, the organization has been slow to reorient its own programmes. Geographical targeting in 2022 generally followed the movements of affected populations; first, to the west and centre of the country, then back to safe and newly accessible areas, although population shifts took place quickly and UNICEF's programme delivery took time to catch up. Throughout 2023, a relatively small proportion of UNICEF programming went to the frontline *oblasts* where needs were the greatest and the availability of essential services was the weakest. In sum, UNICEF could have done better targeting and reaching the

most disadvantaged children – and to have done so sooner. With this in mind, it remains important for UNICEF to ensure that its humanitarian footprint is sufficiently concentrated as close to the front line as viable, where support and services are most required.

While this re-orientation in focus has been taking place, UNICEF has continued to maintain significant programming in west and central Ukraine, which goes beyond the scale required for recovery. It is now important for UNICEF to have a strategy in place to clarify how to transition to the provision of longerterm support or exit these legacy programmes, so it can prioritize the needs of those most affected by the war.

Effectiveness

As with other humanitarian organizations, UNICEF was not prepared for the humanitarian consequences of the full-scale war, although the contingency planning the organization undertook did contribute to its response, particularly the analysis undertaken by sections. Once the Russian invasion had taken place, however, UNICEF was purposeful and timely in scaling up its supplies-based response, which spearheaded a massive mobilization of support and services to affected people.

Across its sectoral response, UNICEFs initial programme response favoured coverage over equity, and supplies over partnerships. The early emphasis UNICEF placed on scaling up and delivering humanitarian cash, Spilno centres, access to digital education, online mental health guidance, immunization and humanitarian kits was appropriate, but it took all its capacity. With the important exceptions of Better Care and the Vodokanal MIS cell, which made strategic contributions to child protection and WASH, respectively, in the mid-phase of the response, UNICEF was still focused on managing a long supply pipeline with too few staff. As a result, programmes lacked the agility (and partnerships) required to make a timely transition from delivering quantity to a greater focus on equity and quality,[305] and to shift its geographical focus to the east and south.[306]

What proved more challenging for UNICEF was ensuring that its monitoring, reporting and accountability functions kept pace. The speed with which UNICEF scaled up its L3 response was not matched by a corresponding expansion in its monitoring team, which led to gaps in its ability to adequately oversee and assure the delivery of its supplies and services. TPM provided an important safety net, although it took some months until programmatic visits were undertaken that could provide adequate oversight.

This evaluation reached a similar conclusion for AAP. UNICEF's Ukraine operation has struggled to consistently meet the commitments outlined in the CCCs. While there have been innovative approaches and feedback was collected for some programmes (for the HCTs, in particular), the use of evidence to inform decision-making is uneven across the country office, and the participation of the affected population in planning has been limited to isolated activities. Addressing this will offer an important opportunity for UNICEF, as greater engagement with communities at all stages of the project cycle will allow significant scope for it to strengthen the relevance and effectiveness of its response.

UNICEF performed well in raising its voice to support the L3 response; advocacy for children's rights was effective at the national level in areas such as Better Care and CAAC, which were aligned with national government policies. UNICEF's perceived proximity to the government, as demonstrated by its uncritical acceptance of government analysis and requests, was a common theme throughout the evaluation and had an important influence on UNICEF's delivery of a principled humanitarian response. The argument was made that being close to the government gave UNICEF leverage to have difficult policy conversations, but there is little evidence of those difficult conversations having taken place (on issues such as gender inequality and domestic violence, and working in non-government-held areas).

Efficiency

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should be commended for its ambition and tenacity in embarking on such a significant programme at the same time as seeking to grow its operational capacity, which at times struggled to keep pace. One aspect of HQ support that was particularly effective came from the Supply Division, which worked closely with the country office to support the delivery of a timely and proportionate supplies response. With the Supply Division's assistance and over time, UNICEF strengthened its monitoring systems, expanded its local procurement, and bolstered its supply and logistics capacity, which in turn strengthened the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall response.

UNICEF faced a daunting task in adequately resourcing the staffing needs of its L3 response. While it met organizational human resource KPIs, UNICEF struggled to keep up with the high demand for staff, leaving many teams significantly understaffed for much of the L3 response. The rapid increase in staff brought with it its own challenges – claims of redundancy in the surge response due to lack of familiarity with the needs of a middle-income country on the one hand, and a large intake into UNICEF of national staff, many of whom were unfamiliar with humanitarian norms and standards on the other. These knowledge and culture gaps took energy away from the response and have also been divisive within UNICEF. The care required to handle these issues sensitively and to build a cohesive UNICEF team was not always evident during the L3 response, although it has since improved. Despite these challenges, what UNICEF has been able to achieve through its L3 response is testament to the commitment and dedication of a team that has worked long hours often in very difficult conditions.

Staffing was a key factor in the slow pace of decentralization, albeit in combination with laboured management decision-making, which together defeated UNICEF's aspirations to decentralize more quickly. Despite this, it is important to highlight the heroic efforts of the staff based in the field offices. This cadre of staff has worked under intense pressure, often in very insecure conditions and with limited support, to scale up UNICEF's response, particularly in the south and east of the country.

The experience of decentralization in Ukraine raises an important question about the limits of UNICEF's operational agility and suggests there would need to have been a fundamental change for the pace to have increased – in UNICEF's management decision-making, procedures and capacity. Failing this, different tactics may have yielded better short-term results; while there is an argument that more temporary approaches to shifting UNICEF's offices closer to where the needs were may have achieved better outcomes for the L3 response, the caveat to this is that they would have likely come at the expense of a sustainable structure that, given the increasingly protracted nature of the war, is better placed to serve the longer-term interests of UNICEF – and those of affected people.

Greater staff capacity and decentralization permitted UNICEF to shift from a response focused on the distribution of supplies to a greater focus on delivering through IPs. In expanding its IP portfolio, UNICEF had significant work to do, as many of the IPs were either new or working in parts of the country that were new to them. Despite challenges, UNICEF performed well in scaling up its implementing partnerships, which have delivered an important array of support and services in an extremely complex context. UNICEF has tended to focus its capacity strengthening on ensuring compliance and knowledge of the organization's systems, which has meant that it has been unable to support IPs' broader aspirations for capacity strengthening or learning. These should be priorities in the future if UNICEF wants to contribute to a more sustainable, localized response. A strategy to achieve this should be a priority for the next phase of the response.

The complexity of the Ukraine L3 response required that the regional office shoulder some of the institutional burden, and it performed well in the task of supporting and defending the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office so it could focus on programme delivery. UNICEF was less effective in resolving tensions between the regional office and HQ in implementing L3 leadership arrangements. Given the complexity of the response, these detracted from UNICEF's efficiency and compromised the provision of HQ support. The strengthening of UNICEF's Executive Office with a humanitarian-focused deputy executive director offers an important opportunity to ensure that institutional L3 leadership procedures are effectively implemented in the future, and that differences of opinion are addressed in a timely way.

The unprecedented volume of flexible funding UNICEF received allowed it to design and implement the humanitarian response it felt was most feasible and relevant – unfettered from the shortfalls, inequities and sectoral earmarking distortions common to most L3 responses. Where the volume and flexibility were less helpful was in promoting a culture that put action and spending before planning, particularly in the early stages of the response. There were many justifications for rapid action – needs were great, UNICEF's own staff were keen to do all they could to address them, and there was also pressure from a government that was critical of perceived United Nations inaction. An important (and unintended) outcome of the generous funding that UNICEF received was the internal debate that it stimulated across the organization about funding equity, and strategies to address the global mismatch between humanitarian needs and funding. It will be important for these discussions to reach fruition so UNICEF can promote its approach to equity in its fundraising.

The volume of funding, the extent of the needs and the volatility of the context in Ukraine necessitated that UNICEF work beyond its comfort zone; the risk appetite of the UNICEF Ukraine country office played an essential role in allowing UNICEF's response to achieve scale. The level of risk that UNICEF took on was considerable. While the risk management and mitigation capacity of the country office improved with time, there continues to be scope for UNICEF to address the draft internal audit findings that have been the subject of considerable debate. While the Evaluation Team acknowledges that the country office was under intense pressure, the use of a 'no regrets' approach as a catch-all to justify the lack of adequate controls is inappropriate and suggests a misinterpretation of the term. While it is essential that UNICEF has a significant risk appetite in its L3 responses, this must be complemented by an approach and required resources for it to manage and mitigate risks to the greatest extent possible.

Coherence

The evaluation found that UNICEF adequately fulfilled its cluster lead and co-lead responsibilities but could have been swifter and more responsive in achieving this task, in particular, at the sub-national level. While the deployment of its senior cluster coordinators to Dnipro made good humanitarian sense from a needs perspective, in going against the decision of the regional coordinator and other CLAs, UNICEF only served to weaken the coherence of the collective humanitarian system. As with many other aspects of the response, UNICEF performed well in addressing capacity gaps over time and is now well placed to provide the leadership the humanitarian community requires. The decision taken recently to shift its cluster coordinators to Kyiv is an important one.

Coherence across UNICEF's long- and short-term programming was an area of strength for the organization's L3 response. It is an area where UNICEF's close engagement with the government was a significant benefit, as it drew extensively from its strong relations and knowledge of national systems to inform its medium-term response strategy, which established clear linkages between humanitarian response and recovery. One aspect where there is scope for the broader humanitarian community to reflect on more is the third element of the nexus – peace. While from a conflict sensitivity perspective Ukrainian society does not have deep structural divides, there are some social tensions between IDPs and the host community that would benefit from greater emphasis. There is also a more complex set of issues in newly accessible areas and areas that are not under the control of the government, which have resulted in fissures within communities that are still poorly understood.

The coherence of UNICEF's response and integration across its sectors offered mixed results. UNICEF's signature integrated programmes, such as Spilno centres and MMTs, achieved some impressive outcomes for children and their parents during the L3 response. While there were later efforts to strengthen programme convergence, steps towards programme integration will require a fundamental change in approach as they can only develop from joint problem statements, joint assessments and joint planning across technical sectors. As UNICEF's organizational structure in Ukraine matures, and as the emphasis shifts towards recovery, there is significant opportunity for it to take stock of weaknesses implicit in the way that sectors function and plan.

Gender and equity

Gender and inclusion are aspects of the response where UNICEF achieved mixed results. The evaluation found that issues of gender were generally poorly addressed in UNICEF programmes, while the organization's performance on addressing disability inclusion varied between sectors. UNICEF's broader work on excluded groups focused on Roma people; while some sectors sought to understand the specific needs of the Roma community during the L3 response, this was also inconsistent across the programmes.

As the custodian of child protection and inclusive education, and as the organization with a privileged relationship with the Ministries of Education and Science, Health, and Social Policy, UNICEF is well placed to take a lead role in gender and disability inclusion in the system-wide response in Ukraine. To do this will require an office-wide commitment to sector-specific analysis and staff training, in addition to ensuring that gender and disability have far greater visibility in the next CPD.



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6 Recommendations

Global and RO?		
Recommendations	**Recipients**	**Notes**
Recommendation 1: L3 Emergency Leadership should be delegated by HQ to RO depending on crises' specific circumstances and the decision to do so should take place at the time of the L3 declaration	HQ	
UNICEF should reflect on whether L3 leadership arrangements (both in terms of governance and accountabilities) should vary – rather than remaining fixed over time – across different contexts (as in the case of L3 with regional and cross-regional spillovers/dimensions).		
Deputy executive director role should have clear responsibility for deciding on the leadership arrangement. This will contribute to faster L3 activation and a faster response to addressing needs on the ground.		
Recommendation 2: Ensure that UNICEF Corporate Guidance on Emergencies is better tailored to the specific needs and opportunities of country offices operating in middle- and high-income-countries	HQ	
UNICEF HQ should ensure that the Corporate Guidance on Emergencies (Emergency Procedures and Preparedness Guidance, including how to interact with NatComs in non-traditional programme countries) is better attuned to different contexts/needs of country offices, including those operating in middle- and high-income countries characterized by relatively higher levels of government capacity.		

Recommendation 3: Provide a simplified step-by-step guidance on how to set up new FO or redeploy staff within a country at the time of a L3, including on how to establish cost centers and transfer accountabilities/authorities	HQ

UNICEF HQ should ensure that, within the scope of the ongoing revision of the Emergency Procedures, clear guidance is provided to country offices on how to effectively decentralize a humanitarian response to better respond to needs on the ground (e.g., listing the different modalities – and mandatory steps and requirements – to set up and staff new offices in a rapid and systematic fashion).

Recommendation 4: Ensure I greater flexibility in clusters' activation processes as per the current IASC Guidance	HQ

UNICEF HQ should ensure, within the scope of the ongoing revision of the Emergency Procedures, there is clear guidance on the circumstances in which it is admissible for UNICEF not to activate a specific cluster falling under its leadership, by also making sure that the justification and related narrative to partners and donors is agreed on at all levels of the organization (HQ, regional offices and country office).

Recommendation 5: Leverage well-funded humanitarian crises advocate for greater equity of public funding across crises globally	Public Partnerships Division (HQ) and regional offices

The Public Partnerships Division, in collaboration with the rest of the HQ divisions and regional offices, should enhance its advocacy to public donors in favour of a more equitable distribution of funding to support underfunded emergencies. This would entail, among other things:

- Implementing a portfolio approach, whereby donors could diversify their funding by combining support for one or more crises which they are particularly interested in with funding for forgotten or underfunded crises chosen from a list shared with them by UNICEF.
- Including an opt-out clause in HAC Appeal funding agreements with donors could be considered in some circumstances, whereby funds' donors could authorize – if and when the HAC Appeal's needs on the ground have been met – repurposing their funding for Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding to support underfunded crises where UNICEF is providing life-saving interventions (the understanding is that this may not work with larger public donors that are accountable to their own governments).
- Organizing periodic meetings/updates with donors (both at HQ and regional offices) on humanitarian funding needs by making sure to systematically refer to the real-time data included in the Funding Tracking System Dashboard.

Recommendation 6: Ensure more systematic leveraging of private funding, including for underfunded crises	Private Fundraising and Partnerships (HQ) and regional offices

Continue to nurture partnerships with high-worth individual donors and the private sector (and NatComs) for ongoing support to humanitarian crises, and advocate to both new and more established donors for the funding of other underfunded crises (e.g., through demonstrated efforts to increase allocation of resources to Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding). It will also be important for relationship managers to keep organizing periodic meetings/updates with high-worth individuals on humanitarian funding needs by making sure to systematically refer to the real-time data included in the Funding Tracking System Dashboard.

Recommendation 7: Enhance UNICEF's global cash capacity through substantial investment in strengthening human resources and improving internal systems	HQ and regional offices

UNICEF should support the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office and other medium- and high-income countries, both regionally and globally, to build on the lessons learned during the rollout of HCT interventions in Ukraine to inform technical assistance to government partners.

Options for consideration include:

- Developing new HCT capacity-building modules (or refining existing ones) specifically for a management level audience to promote the use of HCTs and management's understanding of what it takes operationally to deliver them.
- In communications to donors, emphasizing UNICEF's comparative advantage *across sectors* and in social protection across the nexus (integrated approach).
- Promoting peer learning and integrated (contingency) planning exercises between HCT and operations staff, including at director level, while more systematically creating a culture of flexible and hybrid assistance approaches.
- Disseminating HCT-related lessons learned internally through both HQ and regional office knowledge management and Executive Office channels.
- Commissioning a series of business cases highlighting the costs and benefits of HCT interventions implemented within the scope of L3 responses, including trade-offs and complementarity between HCTs and in-kind supplies (*already covered by the Operational Review).*
- Using lessons learned in Ukraine to strengthen UNICEF's global talent management and staff capacity building strategy.
- Enhancing the mainstreaming of the use of cash across sectors (especially those in which UNICEF is playing an important role), as well as through the design of a child cash grant approach that brings different sectors together.
- In the longer term, build skills required for cash programming more strategically and systematically across UNICEF, such that country offices: (a) are conversant in cash modalities; (b) are accountable and can demonstrate relevant assistance choices matched to needs; and (c) require less support from the organization at global and regional levels.

UNICEF should support UCO and other medium- and high-income countries, both regionally and globally, to build on the lessons (learned during the roll-out of HCT interventions in Ukraine) to inform technical assistance to government partners.	HQ and all ROs

Options for consideration include:

- Developing some new -or refining existing ones- HCT capacity building modules specifically for management level audience to promote the use of HCT and the management understanding of what it takes to deliver operationally to deliver HCT.
- Emphasizing in their communication to donors UNICEF's comparative advantage across sectors and in social protection across the nexus (integrated approach)
- Promoting peer learning; promoting integrated (contingency) planning exercises between HCT staff and operations, including Director level, while creating a culture of flexible and hybrid assistance approaches more systematically.
- Disseminating HCT related lessons learned internally both through HQ and RO Knowledge management and EO channels.
- Commissioning a series of business cases highlighting the costs and benefits of HCT interventions implemented within the scope of L3 responses, including the trade-offs and complementarity between HCTs and in-kind supply (already covered by the Op Review)
- Using the Ukraine lessons learned to strengthen UNICEF global talent management and staff capacity building strategy.
- Enhancing the mainstreaming of the use of cash across sectors (especially those that UNICEF is playing an important role in), and as well through the design of a child cash grant approach that brings together different sectors
- In the longer term, however, skills required for cash programming will be needed to be built more strategically and systematically across the organisation such that Country Offices: a) are conversant in cash modalities; b) are accountable to demonstrate relevant assistance choices matched to needs; and c) require less support from the global and regional levels.

UNICEF should build further understanding and awareness of HCTs, and consider a targeted communications and dissemination strategy of lessons learned with country offices across the region (i.e., on what worked in the Ukraine crisis response, what did not and what country offices need to know)	HQ and ECARO

Options for consideration include:

- As part of country-level strategic planning processes, working with country offices to determine what optimal cash-plus programmes might look like for UNICEF in different contexts, and guiding how to put basic preparatory steps in place.
- Ensuring value for money guidance is in place to capture critical evidence from large-scale supply and HCT responses.
- As part of UNICEF's organisational preparedness, considering 'off the shelf' guidance communicating with beneficiaries in digitally literate contexts in which grievance redress mechanisms and AAP are not only part of the initial design, but also equally scalable.

UNICEF should roll out guidance on how to boost the quality and effectiveness of HCT interventions monitoring (e.g., beyond the conventional post-distribution monitoring)	HQ and all regional offices

To this end, UNICEF should consider strengthening the monitoring modules of its capacity development programmes/guidance on HCT aimed at UNICEF staff and IP from different sections.

HQ and all regional offices should strengthen the alignment of risk management practices in the area of HCTs across the board. To this end, UNICEF should consider standardizing risk reporting/ risk measurement comparably between in-kind supplies (managed through EMOPS) and HCTs. In particular, lines of accountability pertaining to decision-making in HCTs should have better defined processes in place for a management response to an identified risk (e.g., protracted insufficient HCT staffing)	HQ and regional offices

UNICEF Ukraine Country Office recommendations

Recommendation 8: Strengthen use of evidence to ensure greater balance in programme coverage and equity with quality

The country office must ensure that it routinely assesses and analyses vulnerability, and that it takes an evidence based approach to ensure that it balances reaching the greatest number of people in need with maintaining the delivery of quality programming. [High priority.]

Recommendation 9: Address the gap between gender commitments and action

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should make gender equality a core theme of the next CPD, alongside a Gender Action Plan that prioritizes gender-transformative approaches to multisectoral interventions; and work across different levels (policies, systems, institutions, communities, interpersonal and individual) to shift unequal power relations. To do so, research and analysis should integrate gender dimensions; supporting the Government of Ukraine's gender strategies and priorities, gender capacity-building of staff and partners, and specific strategies to better integrate gender into the work of every sector are critical/crucial. [Medium priority.]

Recommendation 10: Improve current efforts to implement a comprehensive, unified strategy for child and youth mental health

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should coordinate with other United Nations agencies to develop a comprehensive, unified strategy for child and youth mental health in Ukraine that combines humanitarian response, recovery and long-term development, situating this as a key pillar of the next CPD. To this end, UNICEF should leverage this vis-à-vis other United Nations agencies and partners in-country to better understand the specific areas – in the child and youth mental health domain – in which to make impactful investments. It should continue to advocate for the inclusion of child and youth mental health in government and partner programming. [Medium priority.]

Recommendation 11: Ensure the integration of AAP across programme sections

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should strengthen its AAP work. Options for consideration include:

Deputy programmes should put together a unified system accessible by different levels (sections). AAP should explicitly be made the responsibility of every programme section; programme teams should be supported with relevant AAP tools and resources to enhance informed decision-making.

Specific resources should be allocated to every section for AAP, to allow sections to fulfil their enhanced responsibilities.

The results framework should include a separate AAP, preferably one that better reflects the participation responsibilities of AAP. [Medium priority.]

Diversify and strengthen complaint and feedback mechanisms across sections/areas of work

Building on the new '*Tell us how it is*' hotline, the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should extend a unified UNICEF feedback and complaints mechanism to all partners (especially those providing services directly to the public, such as MMTs, and partners working in Spilno centres and other similar service centres).

Such unified complaint and feedback mechanisms should deliberately include effective child- and female-friendly complaint and feedback components.

UNICEF should also help support strengthening national and local governments' capacity not only to elicit and manage complaints and feedback in schools and health centres, but also to feed that information back to UNICEF. [Medium priority.]

Recommendation 12: Support and advocate for a transition to national leadership in the WASH sector

UNICEF should continue its support for the MIS cell, until such time as a recovery- and development-oriented coordinating mechanism can replace it. Meanwhile, UNICEF should deepen its engagement with development donor governments and the multilateral development banks to address the structural problems of the water sector, with a view to handing over coordinating responsibilities and key databases from the WASH Cluster to the water recovery sector – co-led by the government and (probably) a bank – as soon as is practical.

Recommendation 13: Integrate and mainstream disability and MHPSS across the country office's health and nutrition work

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should ensure that identifying and responding to disabilities and mental illness is fully integrated throughout UNICEF's work on health sector policies and health system capacity-building.

Recommendation 14: Plan for the transition of cluster leadership to governmental institutions

UNICEF-led clusters should consider, plan for and ensure adequate resources are in place for transition to national coordination mechanisms. [Medium priority.]

UNICEF should refocus on quality, recovering learning loss, the organization's comparative advantages and policy. It should reduce the investment in construction and devices, which are high cost (even if they are government priorities).

Recommendation 15: Integrate child protection (including MHPSS) models of effective and sustainable support

UNICEF should undertake a case-by-case review of the effectiveness and efficiency of **different Spilno centre models**, with a view to concentrating fewer Spilno centres in regions of greatest need, addressing the gap between the number of boys and girls taking part, and transferring as many centres as possible to other service providers using a more sustainable, lower-cost approach.

UNICEF should analyse and mitigate the reputational risks for the organization in relation to the transition of Spilno-branded facilities once they have been transferred to other service providers and are no longer supervised by UNICEF.

UNICEF should follow through on the consolidation, redistribution and fine-tuning of the MMTs as recommended in the June 2023 MMT Review.

The UNICEF Ukraine Country Office should develop a comprehensive, unified strategy for child and youth mental health in Ukraine that combines humanitarian response, recovery and long-term development, and situate this as a key pillar of the next CPD.

Recommendation 16: Strengthen the country office's contribution to IP capacity and localization

As UNICEF's humanitarian response in Ukraine matures, the country office should continue to refine its IP capacity gap assessment to develop adequate capacity-building in both technical skills and procedures. This recommendation should apply to both CSO and government partners, especially at the decentralized level.

While an overall UNICEF Ukraine Country Office capacity development strategy may not be feasible, a common set of principles on how to do more strategic capacity development should be shared and taken into account by all sections when developing or continuing partnerships during the next phase of the response. [High priority.]

Recommendation 17: Support the government at central and local levels to facilitate inclusive learning recovery by fully and safely reopening schools in as many places as possible as fast as possible.

Endnotes

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83 United Nations Children's Fund Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office', Draft report, UNICEF, August 2023.
84 This was also confirmed in interviews with schools and medical facilities.
85 Indicators in 2022 were: (i) '# people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services'; (ii) '# of people with access to established accountability mechanisms'; and (iii) '# people who participate in engagement actions'. In 2023, (ii) was replaced with '# of people sharing their concerns and asking questions/clarifications to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms', which was an improvement on the indicator as it related to use rather than access.
86 Cluster coordination performance monitoring reports provided to the Evaluation Team.
87 *Accountability to Affected Populations: A handbook*.
88 This section of the Evaluation Report broadens out the analysis beyond AAP to consider how well UNICEF used evidence more generally to inform decision-making as required by the Terms of Reference.
89 *Accountability to Affected Populations: A handbook*. Note that in this discussion the graphic of the feedback cycle is being used in a broader context of using evidence from all sources for decision-making.
90 Interviews with UNICEF staff.
91 This was confirmed by the staff survey, where 33 per cent of staff (and 21 per cent of international staff) felt UNICEF was doing an excellent or good job at "adapting programmes based on community feedback."
92 It is important to note that this L3 observation does not relate to the CPD process, which in contrast seems to be very well informed by data, external information and UNICEF-commissioned research.
93 Interview with UNICEF staff member. The Evaluation Team was not able to obtain a copy of the revised strategy.
94 Draft UNICEF Ukraine Country Office management response to the draft audit.
95 The Evaluation Team could not find guidance on how to engage the affected population structurally in helping frame the design of a programme or CPD; several UNICEF staff members confirmed the absence of guidance at this strategic level.
96 UNICEF CCCs 2.2.7 and 2.4.1.
97 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Strategic Note on Accountability to Affected Populations 2022–2023', Internal document, UNICEF, February 2023.
98 Narrative responses to focus group discussion (FGD) questions 2, 9 and 10. See FGD Summary Report in annex.
99 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment*, UNICEF, 2019.
100 Only a draft of the PSEA handbook was available to the Evaluation Team, as the handbook had not yet been finalized by UNICEF HQ.
101 PSEA Network meeting minutes on ReliefWeb.
102 Reported by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office but a copy was not provided to the Evaluation Team. If this had been developed by the first gender based violence expert deployed, it would have been drafted after May 2022.
103 Confirmed in documents and interviews with UNICEF staff members.
104 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 18', UNICEF, 26 July 2022.
105 UNICEF Ukraine Country Office working document prepared by the country office for the audit response and provided by UNICEF to the Evaluation Team.
106 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Country Office Annual Report 2022*, UNICEF, 2023.
107 'One Year of Response Consolidated Humanitarian'. Note that this one-year anniversary situation report shows that 1 million people had "safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers" as against a target number of 1.7 million.
108 Interviews with UNICEF staff members.
109 At that time, 63 partners were assessed as having full capacity and 9 medium capacity; 1 was assumed to have low capacity at this time; UNICEF Ukraine Country Office working document prepared by the country office for the audit response and provided by UNICEF to the Evaluation Team.
110 UNICEF Ukraine Country Office working document prepared by the country office for the audit response and provided by UNICEF to the Evaluation Team.
111 See: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/UKR-DataExchange/SitePages/Key-Dashboards-for-Ukraine.aspx?web=1>.
112 Ibid.
113 Quantitative and narrative responses to FGD question 11; see FGD Summary Report in annex.
114 TPM reports.
115 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action'.
116 See, for example, Moallin, Z., Hargrave, K., and Saez, P., 'Navigating Narratives in Ukraine: Humanitarian response and solidarity and resistance', Working paper, UNICEF Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), September 2023; Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies, *Neutrality in the Humanitarian Response in Ukraine*, VOICE, June 2023; Humanitarian Outcomes, *Enabling the Local Response: Emerging humanitarian priorities in Ukraine, March–May 2022*, June 2022; and Slim, H., 'Solidarity, Not Neutrality Will Characterise Western Aid to Ukraine', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 3 October 2022.
117 ACAPS, *Ukraine: Quarterly Humanitarian Access Update*, *Th*ematic report, 13 July 2023.
118 Parliament of Ukraine, 2023, quoted in Moallin, Z., et al., 'Navigating Narratives'.
119 Bryant, J., et al., 'Humanitarian Action in an Evolving Russia-Ukraine conflict, Virtual Roundtable', UNICEF HPG Roundtable learning note, 15 September 2022.
120 Moallin, Z., et al., 'Navigating Narratives'; and Slim, H., 'Solidarity, Not Neutrality'.
121 Guided by the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team, the Joint Operating Procedures (JOPs) were revised by the Humanitarian Access Working Group in the first quarter of 2023 to ensure that the humanitarian response in Ukraine was guided by a normative humanitarian framework and operating principles. The JOPs are intended to present the

shared values and operating principles of the humanitarian community in Ukraine and provide an opportunity for awareness-raising and dialogue with all relevant actors, including national and local authorities, affected populations and donors. They outline the agreed common standards and ground rules according to which humanitarian actors work, or aspire to work, in Ukraine, to ensure a principled response. The JOPs were initially developed in 2021; see Ukraine: Humanitarian Response Plan.

122 Peer-2-Peer Support, *Ukraine: Operational Peer Review 20 to 31 March 2023*, IASC P2P Project, April 2023.

123 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Ukraine: Humanitarian Access Severity Overview*, OCHA, 25 October 2023.

124 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Ukraine Access Severity Overview, OCHA, 25 October 2023.

125 Accountabilities outlined in the Emergency Procedures require that an access strategy is prepared that includes: internal coordination mechanisms; access constraints and measures to mitigate or overcome them; and the decision to engage with armed actors, both state and non-state, where these are present and when engagement is programmatically or operationally necessary; see United Nations Children's Fund, *The Emergency Procedures: Guidance for UNICEF senior management at Country Office level*, UNICEF, n.d.

126 'UNICEF Emergency Operational Plan'.

127 The Evaluation Team did not receive data on the distribution of the multi-disciplinary mobile teams (MMTs), but it is clear from a mid-2023 MMT review conducted by UNICEF that UNICEF itself considered that the MMTs were too numerous in the west and centre of the country, and too few in the frontline regions, as the core of the new MMT strategy is to reorient MMTs to the east and south. WASH infrastructure work is mostly in frontline regions as it relates directly to war damage.

128 This term is used for national organizations that deliver humanitarian goods and services in frontline and high-risk areas.

129 Inter-agency convoys to frontline areas, coordinated by the HOPC; see <https://fis-ocha.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/721675856bdf48dc8b11ea1347eaefe4>.

130 Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Interagency Convoy Dashboard*, OCHA, <https://fis-ocha.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/721675856bdf48dc8b11ea1347eaefe4>.

131 Ibid.

132 *Ukraine: Humanitarian Response Plan.*

133 The humanitarian notification system in Ukraine was established in 2017 and includes both regular and emergency mechanisms for notification. Although the system was established prior to the full-scale invasion, it continues to be used in government-controlled areas in Ukraine. Efforts have been made to use it to access affected people in NGCAs, but these have been unsuccessful. For more information on the system, see <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/notification_mechanism_un-cmcoord_ukraine.pdf>.

134 See, for example, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan*, January 2024.

135 *Ukraine: Operational Peer Review.*

136 *Emergency Procedures: Guidance.*

137 Interviews showed there were only two staff in the team in October 2022; while recruitment began in a timely way, there was not a full complement until January 2023.

138 See: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/ukraine-situation-reports>.

139 See: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/war-ukraine-pose-immediate-threat-children#what-unicef-calling-for>.

140 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Ukraine Advocacy Strategy', 21 March 2022.

141 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Draft Ukraine Advocacy Strategy', November 2023.

142 A "[p]olicy-driven process of reforming a country's alternative care system, which primarily aims at: Decreasing reliance on institutional and residential care with a complementary increase in family and community-based care and services; Preventing separation of children from their parents by providing adequate support to children, families and communities; Preparing the process of leaving care, ensuring social inclusion for care leavers and a smooth transition towards independent living"; Eurochild, 'Lessons Learned', 2012, <https://www.openingdoors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/DI_Lessons_Learned_web_use.pdf>.

143 European Union Commission, 'Investing in Children: breaking the cycle of disadvantage', 2013/112/EU: Commission Recommendation of 20 February 2013.

144 See, for example the UNICEF statement 'UNICEF Urges the Government of Ukraine to Continue with the Deinstitutionalization Reform in Line with the Approved National Strategy', United Nations Children's Fund, February 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/unicef-urges-government-ukraine-continue-deinstitutionalization-reform-line-approved>; and the NGO Joint Statement, 'A Worrisome U-turn on Ending Institutionalisation of Children in Ukraine', Eurochild, October 2021, <https://www.eurochild.org/uploads/2021/10/Joint-Statement_Care-reform-in-Ukraine_October-2021.pdf>.

145 Several interviews with both UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff and external stakeholders.

146 UNICEF briefing notes. Ukrainian civil society, however, maintains that of these 91,000, approximately half were children studying in 'boarding schools' as day students – not fully residential, so the number of 'truly' residential students is thought to be closer to 52,000.

147 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection in Ukraine Secondary Data Review', UNICEF briefing document on Better Care, UNICEF Child Protection Sub-cluster, November 2023.

148 Interview with UNICEF staff member, 'Child Protection in Ukraine Secondary Data Review'.

149 A key advocacy success for UNICEF was working with the Government of Ukraine to reverse its policy on residential children outside Ukraine. Initially, the government determined that children from residential schools should remain together as a group in the care of their institutional caregivers, even when temporarily relocated to Europe. This created a major problem for European governments as this is contrary to European policy and regulations, and Europe does not have institutions capable of receiving formerly institutionalized Ukrainian children as a group. However, after a UNICEF-facilitated visit by senior Ukrainian officials to the Ossa orphanage in Poland, where up to 700 Ukrainian children were accommodated, the government reversed this policy in favour of children being temporarily relocated to family and family-like settings in the Europe Union.

150 Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, *ECARO Six-Months Consolidated Humanitarian Situation Report*, 24 August 2022.
151 Table 16 uses data from the U-Report survey. While the question depicted in the table had a high number of respondents (6,150), U-Report data should not be interpreted as an exacting representation of the Ukrainian population. On aggregate, respondents tended to be wealthier, more politically engaged, and more digitally savvy than the average Ukrainian. Consequently, the U-Report survey has only been used as a proxy for public opinion in this evaluation, and has been triangulated with other data sources to the greatest degree possible.
152 US Department of State, *2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Ukraine* states that children in institutions are at higher risk of being trafficked. "State-run orphanages have used children for illegal labour in business, seasonal agricultural work, construction and sexual exploitation"; 'Child Protection in Ukraine Secondary Data Review'.
153 Interview with UNICEF Staff member.
154 'Strengthening and Operationalising UNICEF Programming in Child Rights Monitoring in Europe and Central Asia: Progress and next steps', Briefing for RMT, July 2022.
155 United Nations, Security Council Report A/77/895-S/2023/363.
156 Importantly, Russia is listed as a party that has "put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children", implying that Russia is to some extent cooperating with CAAC.
157 See <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/monitoring-and-reporting/>.
158 Beyond child protection and education, the Evaluation Team did not find evidence of systematic advocacy for child rights in other sectors (health, WASH, HCT) in Ukraine.
159 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Ensuring continued education for Ukraine's children', Advocacy note, UNICEF, May 2022.
160 Repeated requests to the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office for clarification of its position did not receive any response.
161 'Child Protection in Ukraine Secondary Data Review'.
162 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action'.
163 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
164 All data contained in the table are from TPM reports and were provided to the Evaluation Team by UNICEF.
165 Ibid.
166 United Nations Children's Fund 'Risk Self-Assessment Matrix', Revised internal document, UNICEF, June 2022.
167 Ibid.
168 KIIs with UNICEF Ukraine Country Office staff members.
169 HCT study [updated when published].
170 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
171 'Operational Review of UNICEF's Response in Ukraine'.
172 United Nations Children's Fund, *Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programming Guide*, <https://www.unicef.org/media/96576/file/Programming-Guide-Conflict-Sensitivity-and-Peacebuilding.pdf>, UNICEF, 2016.
173 As evidence of inherent social cohesion in Ukraine, despite the war, Ukraine ranks 52 out of 180 countries on the Social Capital Index <https://solability.com/the-global-sustainable-competitiveness-index/the-index/social-capital> of social stability, and a detailed 2021 study shows that just before the renewed conflict vertical social cohesion (trust of state institutions) was low, but horizontal cohesion was moderate (and varied across the country); see: <https://api.scoreforpeace.org/storage/pdfs/PUB_SCOREUkr21_Social_Cohesion_Volume1.pdf>.
174 US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Ukraine*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>.
175 Interviews with UNICEF staff. Note that national staff were less likely to identify this language-based discrimination than international staff, who generally felt that social tensions between IDPs and host communities were higher than did national staff.
176 IASC P2P review, Interviews with UNICEF staff members.
177 *2022 Country Report*; Ukraine is a signatory to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, which protects and promotes the use of minority languages; it is possible that encouraging the use of minority languages (including Russian) is a condition of EU accession.
178 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Distance Education of Internally Displaced School-aged Children in Chernivetska, Ivano-Frankivska, Lvivska and Zakarpatska oblasts*, UNICEF Ukraine Education Cluster, August 2023.
179 When probed on this, most national staff stated that all young and middle-aged Russian-speaking Ukrainians can also speak Ukrainian because it has been the medium of education since the early 1990s; therefore, speaking Russian as a first language was not an obstacle to accessing services. For a brief discussion of the dilemma UNICEF faced regarding its potential use of Russian language to provide effective services such as mental health and psychosocial support, gender-based violence in emergencies counselling and early childhood development to Russian speakers, see the education chapter in Part B.
180 UNICEF's general underinvestment in conflict sensitivity analysis and training was observed in the report United Nations Children's Fund, *The Humanitarian Review: Strengthening UNICEF's humanitarian action*, UNICEF, September 2020: "UNICEF has high expectations of conflict-sensitive analysis, and now needs to develop the technical skills internally to support this, particularly at regional office and Country Office levels".
181 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action'.
182 Ibid.
183 Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, *ECARO Emergency Response*, ECARO, <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/ECARO-EmergencyResponse/SitePages/HR-Deployment-UNICEF's-response.aspx>, 11 September 2023.
184 United Nations Children's Fund, *Guidance Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 Emergencies, Humanitarian Field Support Section Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF, December 2021.*
185 Data provided by UNICEF human resources team (email exchange, 24 November 2023).
186 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Country Office Human Resource Recruitment Statistics', 8 December 2023.
187 'Operational Review of UNICEF's Response in Ukraine'.

188 United Nations Children's Fund, *UNICEF Global Staff Survey*, UNICEF, 2022.
189 The Headington Institute, which specializes in supporting frontline humanitarian staff and first responders, was selected; see <https://www.headington-institute.org/>.
190 Interview with UNICEF human resources team.
191 Data provided by UNICEF human resources team.
192 *Emergency Procedures: Guidance*.
193 *Guidance Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 Emergencies*.
194 See: <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/level-3-and-level-2-emergencies>.
195 The evaluation of the refugee response echoed these concerns; see: Betts, J. et al., *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response,* p. 23.
196 See: <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/past-emergencies>.
197 The evaluation of the refugee response echoed these concerns; see: Betts, J. et al., *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response*, p. 23.
198 The mandatory actions listed in the table are each outlined in *Guidance: Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 Emergencies*.
199 The checklist is not dated and is partially filled in. Of the 21 sub-actions listed and for which monitoring was required, the checklist shows that 1 had been achieved, 5 had been partially met and 2 had not been met; 13 actions had no update against them.
200 Oxfam & Save the Children UK, 'A Dangerous Delay: The cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa', Joint agency briefing paper, 18 January 2012.
201 United Nations Children's Fund, *Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action: The Humanitarian Review – Findings and recommendations*, September 2020.
202 *Guidance Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 Emergencies*.
203 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
204 *Guidance Handbook in L1, L2 and L3 Emergencies*.
205 'Operational Review of UNICEF's Response in Ukraine'.
206 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Project Budget Review II', UNICEF, May 2022.
207 'Annual Management Plan', 2022.
208 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Enhanced Decentralization: An initial assessment and expanded next steps*, UNICEF, September 2022; United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Decentralization Roadmap*, UNICEF, 2022.
209 In the staff survey, participants were asked an open question: "Based on your experience, please make one recommendation for how UNICEF could most significantly strengthen its response in Ukraine?"; 16 per cent of respondents suggested improvements to decentralization as their response.
210 UNICEF recruitment data shows that the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office achieved the human resource KPIs.
211 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office', p. 14.
212 Ibid.
213 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Revised Work Plan', Internal document, UNICEF, 2023.
214 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine Country Office, 'Supply Report', UNICEF, 30 November 2022.
215 United Nations Children's Fund, *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Ukraine Refugee Crisis*, UNICEF, 2022.
216 United Nations Children's Fund, *Program Risk Self-Assessment*, UNICEF, June 2022.
217 Internal report prepared by the UNICEF Ukraine Country Office in response to the internal audit report.
218 A pilot report has been prepared and analysed in Copenhagen and is under review.
219 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office (draft)', UNICEF, June 2023.
220 Interview with logistics and supply consultant posted during the surge.
221 An example is Mykolaiv city, which has a significant water problem as the overall supply is drying up (aquifer reduced, less rainfall due to climate change, lost reservoir due to destruction of dam, intake from river to city supply destroyed). As with many cities, the water systems are old, but little revenue is gained are there is practically no income from user fees.
222 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine Country Office, 'Section Evidence Synthesis', Internal documents, UNICEF, 2023.
223 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
224 See, for example: ACAPS, *Ukraine: Perceptions of Localisation in the Humanitarian Response*, Thematic report, June 2022; Humanitarian Outcomes, *Enabling the Local Response: Emerging humanitarian priorities in Ukraine*, March–May 2022, June 2022; Non-Violent Peaceforce, *Responsible Partnerships? Risk, protection and local actors in the Ukraine humanitarian response*, May 2023.
225 KIIs conducted with UNICEF partners working in the south and east of Ukraine undertaken during field visits to Dnipro, Kharkiv and Odesa.
226 KII with UNICEF senior staff member.
227 A similar finding was made in the evaluation of the Ukraine refugee response; see Betts, J. et al., *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response*.
228 KIIs conducted with UNICEF partners working in the south and east of Ukraine undertaken during field visits to Dnipro, Kharkiv and Odesa.
229 Significant volumes of funding were transferred to new and high-risk partners at a time when the necessary assurance activities (i.e., programmatic visits, spot checks and audits) were delayed; see: 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
230 Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance, *Summary Brief: Review of the OECD DAC criteria for evaluating humanitarian action.* London: ALNAP/ODI, 2023.
231 It is noteworthy that despite the generally positive feedback, when asked for one recommended improvement, several partners suggested there was still greater scope for UNICEF to improve its communication and transparency.
232 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Ukraine Country Office. Humanitarian Situation Report No. 24, reporting period 24 February–31 December 2022', UNICEF, 2022.
233 Ibid.
234 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, 'Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 34, reporting period 1–30 November 2023', UNICEF, 2023.

235 See, for example: <https://fts.unocha.org/global-sectors/10/summary/2022>; and <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/stc_still_unprotected_repport_high_sg.pdf/>.
236 See, for example: <https://fts.unocha.org/global-sectors/3/summary/2022>; <https://inee.org/collections/education-financing>; and <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/education-crisis-situations>.
237 See: <https://www.unicef.org/unicef-national-committees>.
238 Moallin, Z., Hargrave, K. and Saez, P. (2023) 'Navigating Narratives in Ukraine: Humanitarian response amid solidarity and resistance', HPG Working paper, London: ODI.
239 See: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/206/summary/2022?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiA4Y-sBhC6ARIsAGXF1g6OgZ-tzwTIJ_UspBfMxQGpWnrGt1agUDXfE2X5rlbjeTm1CS1cEgAoaAhG3EALw_wcB>.
240 United Nations Children's Fund, *Enterprise Risk Management Policy*, UNICEF, 2020.
241 Important context for this evaluation question is the recent internal audit of UNICEF's enterprise risk management policy, which concluded that the assessed governance, risk management and control processes were partially satisfactory, with significant improvement needed (see: United Nations Children's Fund Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, *Internal Audit of Enterprise Risk Management*, UNICEF, August 2022). This has resulted in significant reflection within the organization, the results of which will be a revised enterprise risk management policy scheduled to be launched in early 2024 (see: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Update on Enterprise Risk Management', UNICEF Executive Board informal briefing, UNICEF, 22 January 2024).
242 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
243 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Risk Self-assessment 2022*, UNICEF< June 2022.
244 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *Risk and Control Framework*, UNICEF 2023.
245 Confidential reports on humanitarian cash transfers, inventory management, partners' fiduciary risks and fraud risk management shared with the Evaluation Team by UNICEF.
246 Confidential reports on security management shared with the Evaluation Team by UNICEF.
247 'Report on the Internal Audit of the Ukraine Country Office'.
248 As outlined in UNICEF's CCCs, this refers to the process of balancing the objective of reaching the greatest number of people (coverage) with reaching the people in greatest need (equity), while maintaining quality of programmes. Coverage is guided by estimates of people in need. Quality is measured against UNICEF and interagency and IASC standards. Equity is judged by appropriate prioritization of the people most in need, informed by assessment and analysis of vulnerability and deprivation, and the principle of leaving no child behind.
249 Inter-Agency standing Committee (2015) *Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level* (revised version), IASC, 2015.
250 Ibid.
251 Accessed on the OCHA coordination website: <https://reliefweb.int>.
252 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Ukraine Country Office. Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3', reporting period 1–10 March 2022.
253 Internal working document provided to the Evaluation Team by UNICEF. To the Evaluation Team's knowledge, there was no needs assessment, but rather a broad estimate of the numbers of young children and women likely to need nutritional supplements.
254 Staff interviews.
255 Interviews with senior UNICEF staff.
256 United Nations Children's Fund, 'Ukraine Country Office. Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3', reporting period 1–31 October 2023.
257 Assessment parameters and colour-coded scoring transposed verbatim from the 2023 Education Cluster and Child Protection Cluster cluster coordination performance monitoring reports (which reflect the combined views of all cluster members).
258 *Ukraine: Operational Peer Review.*
259 Interview with UNICEF staff member.
260 Interview with UNICEF staff and external stakeholders.
261 The decision was communicated to the Evaluation Team during the evaluation feedback and validation meeting conducted in December 2023.
262 The survey represents the views of a small sample of respondents, drawn from the Evaluation Team's online survey of external stakeholders. The findings of the survey were validated during interviews undertaken by the Evaluation Team in four field locations where team members met with the sub-national cluster coordinators and cluster members.
263 Interviews with UNICEF staff members.
264 Peer-2-Peer Support, *Ukraine: Operational Peer Review.*
265 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action'.
266 'Operational Review of UNICEF's Response in Ukraine'.
267 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, End of Year Results Summary Narrative, UNICEF, 2022.
268 Ibid.
269 Interview with UNICEF staff member.
270 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action'.
271 See: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/aktuell/dossiers/urc2022-lugano.html#:~:text=At%20the%20end%20of%20the,that%20will%20guide%20Ukraine's%20reconstruction>.
272 United Nations in Ukraine, *Transitional Framework: Saving lives, strengthening systems, building community resilience, September 2022–December 2023*, United Nations, 2022.
273 United Nations Children's Fund, *Executive Board Second Regular Sessions, 2017: Country Programme Document, Ukraine, 2018–2022*, UNICEF, September 2017.
274 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *UNICEF's Approach to Supporting Child-Centred Recovery and Resilience-Building in Ukraine*, UNICEF, August 2022.

275 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *WASH Positioning for the Recovery Agenda*, UNICEF, July 2023.
276 United Nations Children's Fund Ukraine, *WASH Positioning for the Recovery Agenda*, UNICEF, July 2023.
277 Interviews with UNICEF staff and staff survey.
278 See for example, Minich, R., and Sera, P. Score-inspired Holistic Assessment of Resilience of Population (SHARP): Assessing social cohesion, resistance, and people's needs in Ukraine amid Russian full-scale invasion – Wave 1 (2022), May 2023.
279 Data for the low end of the range is from the 2001 Ukraine census; the top end of the range estimate is from academic and Roma activist research, and is broadly accepted by the Council of Europe and most non-state actors.
280 See: Oxfam, Further into the Margins: A regional report on Roma communities displaced by the Ukraine crisis, September 2023; and US Department of State, Human Rights Report 2022.
281 Aside from more general categories of exclusion, the Roma are the only specific group identified in UNICEF's CPD. See United Nations Children's Fund, *Executive Board Second Regular Sessions, 2017: Country Programme Document, Ukraine, 2018–2022*, September 2017.
282 Internal UNICEF Ukraine Country Office document provided to the Evaluation Team.
283 'Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action', Ref. 2.2.4 Linking humanitarian and development.
284 United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Gender Policy 2021–2030, UNICEF.
285 United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025, UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/executive-board/documents/UNICEF-Gender-Action-Plan-2022%E2%80%932025-SRS-2021>.
286 United Nations Population Fund, Masculinity Today: Men's Attitudes to Gender Stereotypes and Violence Against Women, UNFPA, 2018.
287 UNICEF internal document.
288 There is, however, some sensitivity regarding gender diversity: Ukraine has not ratified the Istanbul Convention due to disagreements within the government over certain vocabulary used in the document such as gender, gender identity, gender sensitivity and sexual orientation, and a perceived threat in the Convention to the "central family unit" (UN Women).
289 Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, *Gender Integration Deep Dive Analysis of Ukraine*, ECARO, July 2023.
290 Ibid.
291 Document review and staff interviews.
292 The Evaluation Team was informed that gender-disaggregated data started to be collected for 5W reporting in 2023; the Evaluation Team, however, was not able to access 5W reporting to verify this.
293 Equilo, *Ukraine Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis & Insights for Action*, October 2023.
294 *Gender Integration Deep Dive Analysis*.
295 UNICEF internal document citing State Social Service statistics from 2022.
296 UNICEF internal document citing State Social Service statistics from 2019.
297 This is a rough estimate provided by UNICEF in an advocacy note: United Nations Children's Fund, 'Children with Disabilities Key Messages', UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/ukraine-war-response-children-disabilities>, 25 April 2022. UNICEF is, however, the first to recognize that reliable data on institutionalized children are not available: they are not easily shared by the institutions and local authorities, and many children were evacuated without documentation.
298 Interviews with UNICEF staff members.
299 Interviews with UNICEF staff members, site visits, and review of UNICEF project documents and monitoring reports.
300 Interviews with UNICEF staff members. Children with disabilities were included in all forms of supply distribution and services, including MMTs, but only in the west were children with disabilities assessed and provided with targeted individual support.
301 Field visits undertaken during the country mission included to schools that had benefitted from the construction of inclusive toilets and access ramps.
302 United Nations Children's Fund, *Guidance for Protecting Displaced and Refugee Children in and outside of Ukraine*, <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/guidance-protecting-displaced-children-ukraine>, UNICEF, November 2022.
303 Interviews with UNICEF staff members.
304 United Nations Children's Fund, *Ukraine Education Cluster Strategy 2023–2025*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-education-cluster-strategy-2023-2025-enuk#:~:text=The%20situation%20calls%20for%20systematic,changes%20in%20the%20educational%20environment%2C>, UNICEF, 2023.
305 This would require greater levels of support and services provided to the most vulnerable people with an emphasis on evidence-based priority-setting, policy engagement and partner capacity strengthening).
306 The vast majority of Spilno centres, school bomb shelters and MMTs were in the centre and west of Ukraine until late 2023.

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for every child

For further information, please contact:

UNICEF
Evaluation Office
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA

www.unicef.org/evaluation

UNICEF Evaluation

@unicef-evaluation.bsky.social

@UNICEFEval

Evaluation YouTube channel

evalhelp@unicef.org

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