



Nurse Bertha González provides medical care at the Sor María Romero health centre in the city of Matagalpa, Nicaragua. UNICEF supports these efforts to ensure completion of routine vaccines.

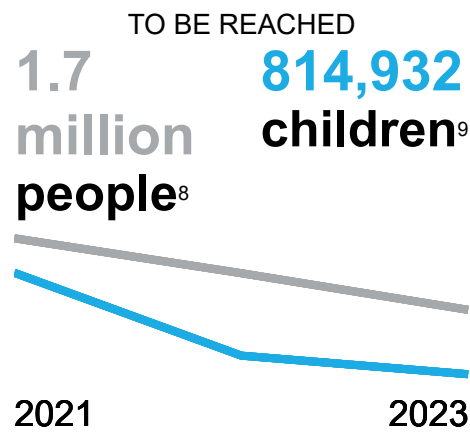
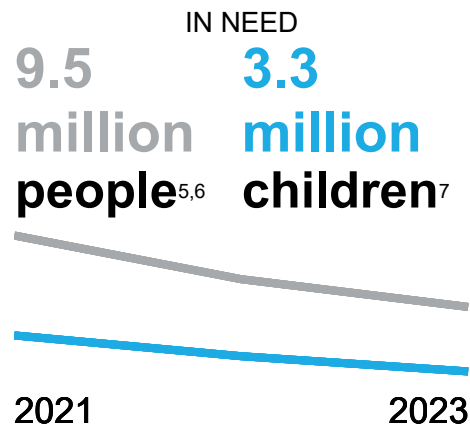


Humanitarian Action for Children

Children on the move in Mexico and Central America

HIGHLIGHTS^{1,2}

- Increased and multidirectional migration flows across Mexico and Central America are compounding a humanitarian crisis for children on the move across the subregion. This is a protection crisis. Facing tightened border controls, more families and children travel irregular routes. The journeys can be extremely perilous - such as for those crossing through the Darien Gap - and entail a high risk of abuse, exploitation and family separation. This threatens children's growth, and their development and well-being.
- The situation of children on the move and vulnerable communities in the subregion is compounded by the residual consequences of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, including deepened poverty; by the impact of the war in Ukraine on access to essential goods and services;³ and by people's exposure to natural hazards and other effects of climate change. In 2023, 3.3 million children will need humanitarian assistance in Mexico and Central America.⁴
- UNICEF requires US\$113.9 million to provide humanitarian assistance to 1.7 million people (including more than 800,000 children) along migratory paths and in vulnerable communities; and to support governments and partners in building better shock-responsive systems.



KEY PLANNED TARGETS



185,685

children and women accessing primary healthcare



111,776

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



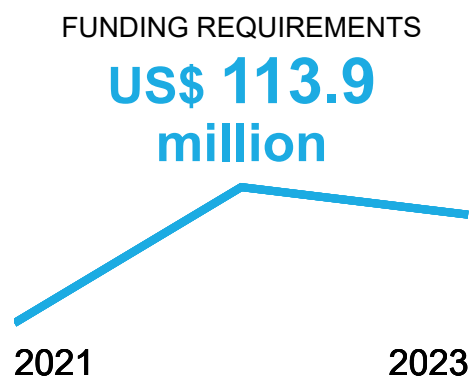
116,534

children receiving individual learning materials



318,639

people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water



Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of the inter-agency planning documents.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

The increased flow of children on the move continues in Central America and Mexico. The movement has become multidirectional, with more families and children returning (both forced and voluntary) and traveling along irregular routes due to tightened border controls.¹⁰ This puts children at risk of abuse, exploitation and family separation. Children's growth, development and well-being is under threat in what is truly a children's crisis.

The recovery from the pandemic has been slow and unequal. Poverty remains high, and extreme poverty is expected to worsen in 2023.¹¹ The situation is compounded by the global disruption of supply chains and inflation triggered by the war in Ukraine, and by the residual effects of natural hazards. These all challenge access to food, goods and essential services for the poorest, most shock-prone, migrant families and host communities. Some countries, for example Costa Rica and Mexico, have become hosts of migrants from other countries in the region, with influx of hundreds of thousands of migrants settling down each year, adding pressure on the existing services.

More than 120,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended at the southwestern border of the United States between October 2021 and July 2022 - a more than 13 per cent increase from the same period last year.¹² And 2022 trends show an increase in the number of asylum applications, which has an impact in and beyond the region.¹³

Violence is one of the main drivers of migration in the region. For many unaccompanied adolescents, staying home means limited future prospects and the risk of gang recruitments and death.¹⁴ Violence is also a main risk of migration. For example, the Darien Gap is controlled by armed groups. Migrants taking this migration route are exposed to robbery, physical and sexual assault and rape.¹⁵ Multiple protracted and compounding crises - due to climate hazards,¹⁶ sociopolitical turmoil, inequity, food insecurity,¹⁷ malnutrition and¹⁸ limited access to quality essential services - continue to fuel migration and internal displacement in the region.¹⁹

The humanitarian needs of vulnerable children and families add pressure to existing services, often already scarce in remote communities, and overwhelm local authorities in transit and destination countries, especially during peaks or mixed mass movements ('caravans').²⁰

Violence, structural inequity and natural disasters uproot children and families within their own countries, and internal displacement is often considered a first step toward migration. In 2022, there are 900,000 internally displaced people in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala alone.²¹

SECTOR NEEDS²²



4.2 million people in need of health assistance²³



3.1 million children in need of nutrition services



1.1 million children in need of protection services²⁴



1.4 million children in need of education support²⁵



4.6 million people need WASH support²⁶

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Milton and his family left Nicaragua, looking for better opportunities. "My family was at risk. I did not see any future, neither for my children nor me," Milton says.

During their transit, they stayed in a shelter supported by UNICEF in Tapachula, Mexico, in the country's south near the Guatemalan border. There they have benefited from the improvements in the water and sanitation system. "Now, we have dignified restrooms and water access," Milton says.

The migration of families is an extremely complex phenomenon that has been increasing in the last decade. Mexico's southern border is an area of high migratory activity, with thousands of people entering the country every month.

[Read more about this story here](#)

Milton and his family stay in a shelter in Tapachula, Mexico. UNICEF contributes to connecting this shelter to the local drinking water and sewage network, reaching hundreds of migrant families.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

With multiple protracted crises in the region, an increasing number of children are migrating and travelling longer journeys in pursuit of a better and safer life. UNICEF's humanitarian strategy for the 2023 appeal will focus up to 80 per cent of activities on responding to their more acute needs. As the increased flow of migrants overwhelms services, with partners and governments, and guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action,²⁷ UNICEF will invest in addressing these acute humanitarian needs - such as access to safe water and sanitation facilities and psychosocial support for children at transit reception centres. UNICEF will also be a partner in building shock-responsive systems, for instance by supporting the creation and roll-out of alternative care or case management models and response protocols, reinforcing referral mechanisms and information systems on child protection issues or by strengthening social protection systems' capacities to adapt in times of crises.²⁸

UNICEF ensures that the most vulnerable migrant children and families receive humanitarian support at both sides of borders by deploying capacities to monitor the situation of children in hotspots.²⁹ An important component of this are mobile units that provide information, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health and nutrition services. UNICEF also works to strengthen the capacities of border authorities and partners and supports governments' binational coordination mechanisms, information sharing and protocols.

UNICEF ensures the systematic inclusion of cross-cutting issues,³⁰ such as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and accountability to affected populations, as well as a focus on building the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. UNICEF's evidence-based advocacy and humanitarian action is built on investment in information management and knowledge exchange, needs-assessment, close monitoring of humanitarian performance and evaluations. Grand Bargain³¹ commitments are mainstreamed across UNICEF strategies: localization; strengthening government and local actors' capacities; accountability to affected populations; and ensuring the quality and impact of humanitarian cash transfers.³²

UNICEF mobilizes its regional and global network to ensure that adequate staff capacity is made available, including as global cluster lead agency for the WASH and Nutrition Clusters, and co-lead for the Education Cluster and the regional cash working group, and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, UNICEF's humanitarian action is aligned with inter-agency Humanitarian Response Plans.³³

UNICEF will continue its collaboration and coordination with other United Nations agencies, particularly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, through joint or complementary advocacy and response efforts addressing the needs of children and families on the move. Joint efforts will also support humanitarian coordination and systems strengthening - at national, subnational and sectoral levels.

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

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

2023 PROGRAMME TARGETS³⁴



Health

- **7,887** children receiving the minimum set of vaccines
- **185,685** children and women accessing primary healthcare in UNICEF-supported facilities



Nutrition

- **216,897** children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- **445,786** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- **1,750** children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder



Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA³⁵

- **139,630** children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- **111,776** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **96,600** people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations
- **10,280** unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care and/or reunified



Education

- **70,093** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **116,534** children receiving individual learning materials³⁶
- **3,740** children and adolescents accessing skills development programmes



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **318,639** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- **26,856** children using safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces
- **259,110** people reached with hand-washing behaviour-change programmes
- **330,089** people reached with critical WASH supplies



Social protection³⁷

- **18,890** households benefitting from new or additional social assistance (cash/in kind) measures from governments with UNICEF-technical assistance support
- **8,128** households reached with UNICEF-funded multi-purpose humanitarian cash transfers



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

- **2,113,450** people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services³⁸
- **170,520** people with access to established accountability mechanisms and interagency reporting platforms

Programme targets are subject to finalization of response planning documents during the first quarter of 2023, including the inter-agency Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

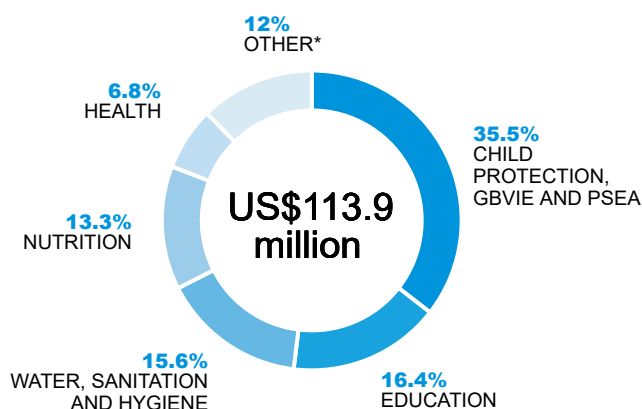
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2023

UNICEF requests US\$113.9 million to meet the increasingly complex humanitarian needs of children on the move and their families, along their migration journey, in all countries in Central America and Mexico: Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize and Mexico. In addition, in alignment with inter-agency appeals, UNICEF will work in support of other vulnerable populations in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to meet needs related to climate change, food insecurity and violence.

UNICEF's humanitarian strategy and regular development programming are linked. UNICEF will address the urgent needs of the most vulnerable and also contribute to building more resilient and shock-responsive systems. To do this, US\$40.5 million is critical to scale up child protection services; US\$17.8 million to provide access to safe water and safe hygiene practices; and US\$18.7 million to strengthen continued access to education for children on the move. Funding at the regional level will ensure continuous technical support to country offices for quality programming.

Without sufficient, timely, flexible and multi-year funds, UNICEF and its partners will be unable to respond to immediate humanitarian needs or build systems that provide sustainable medium-and long-term solutions to address worsening humanitarian situations. This could potentially reverse developmental gains made during the last decades.

The context of the 2023 appeal is one of overall increased needs that call for a scale-up of the UNICEF response. However, the funding requirement for 2023 has decreased by 11 per cent compared with 2022, reflecting the exclusion of COVID-19 pandemic-related needs and response from the current appeal. Of note is that Nicaragua is now included in the appeal.



Sectors	2023 total requirement (US\$)
Health	7,759,700
Nutrition	15,179,131
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	40,463,358
Education	18,702,008
Water, sanitation and hygiene	17,781,063
Social protection	7,260,396
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	3,268,941
Regional Support	3,520,000
Total	113,934,597

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Social protection (6.4%), Regional Support (3.1%), Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (2.9%).

Sectors ³⁹	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Mexico	Nicaragua	Panama	Regional Support	2023 total requirement (US\$)
Health	99,230	-	491,400	230,410	1,473,060	3,955,600	700,000	810,000	-	7,759,700
Nutrition	25,520	-	380,720	7,459,319	3,721,372	2,807,200	410,000	375,000	-	15,179,131
Child protection, GBV/E and PSEA	555,698	1,585,040	3,611,500	12,328,120	3,824,600	13,908,400	2,500,000	2,150,000	-	40,463,358
Education	757,093	1,555,224	3,457,676	797,465	5,896,710	5,537,840	700,000	-	-	18,702,008
Water, sanitation and hygiene	344,012	451,195	1,088,440	5,312,616	4,200,000	2,934,800	1,300,000	2,150,000	-	17,781,063
Social protection	1,196,416	-	-	1,074,820	3,713,160	1,276,000	-	-	-	7,260,396
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	96,753	307,185	574,200	345,603	1,075,200	-	400,000	470,000	-	3,268,941
Regional Support ⁴⁰	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,520,000	3,520,000
Total	3,074,722	3,898,644	9,603,936	27,548,353	23,904,102	30,419,840	6,010,000	5,955,000	3,520,000	113,934,597

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ENDNOTES

1. This appeal covers Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. Nicaragua has been added to this appeal due to its geographical location on the routes of migrants. It covers the humanitarian needs of populations on the move in these countries. Other humanitarian needs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are pending, as comprehensive multisectoral, inter-agency Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) will be developed for these countries.
2. COVID-19 remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern as declared by the World Health Organization in January 2020. On 1 July 2022, UNICEF deactivated its Level 3 Sustained Phase for the global COVID-19 pandemic response. All activities related to COVID-19 pandemic response, including programme targets and funding requirements, have been shifted into regular development programming and operations. While UNICEF's Level 3 emergency response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic was deactivated, the organization is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, their families and their communities and on the social systems they rely on.
3. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Repercussions in Latin America and the Caribbean of the War in Ukraine: How should the region face this new crisis?, United Nations, 6 June 2022, available at <<https://hdl.handle.net/11362/47913>>.
4. This estimate is based on inter-agency planning figures (from 2021-2022 HRP) for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras; the 2022 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) and preliminary figures for 2023; and estimates made by UNICEF for other countries that are part of this appeal.
5. Figures for number of people in need were derived from the following sources: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, 2021-2022 HRP; Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama, based on the 2022 RMRP; and for Belize and Nicaragua figures, figures were derived from information on the impact the hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020.
6. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
7. Ibid.
8. Undertaking a light touch approach to update the planning numbers, this figure was calculated by removing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) response activities and using a projected increase on 2022 targets. This projected figure includes modified activities proposed by country offices, to be further reviewed in the first quarter of 2023. Estimations consider the various interventions planned for different age groups and locations to avoid double counting. This calculation considers approximately 660,000 children and caregivers receiving nutrition services; 186,000 children and women receiving health services; 474,000 people accessing WASH services; 230,000 people receiving protection services; and 190,000 children and teachers receiving education services. The total figure includes 997,408 women/girls and 142,076 people with disabilities.
9. Undertaking a light touch approach to update the planning numbers, this figure was calculated by removing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) response activities and focusing primarily on the population of children on the move. This projected figure includes increased response to growing migratory flows, to be further reviewed in the first quarter of 2023. Estimations consider the various interventions planned for different age groups and locations to avoid double counting. This calculation considers approximately 217,000 children receiving nutrition services; 102,000 children accessing health services; 168,000 children accessing WASH services; 144,000 children accessing child protection services; 156,000 children accessing education services; and 29,000 children benefiting from cash transfer programmes. The total figure includes 408,954 girls and 6,637 children with disabilities. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
10. Migration and Displacement Country Profiles, UNICEF data available at <<https://data.unicef.org/resources/migration-and-displacement-country-profiles-mdcp/>>.
11. By considering high climate change scenarios alone, the Latin America and Caribbean region could experience up to a 300 per cent increase in extreme poverty by 2030 due to climate change. Additionally, socioeconomic trends linked to the COVID-19 pandemic would further augment this projected growth in poverty. Source: Jafino, Bramka Arga et al., Revised estimates of the impact of climate change on extreme poverty by 2030, Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020, background paper, The World Bank, September 2020, available at <www.preventionweb.net/publication/revision-estimates-impact-climate-change-extreme-poverty-2030>.
12. Corresponds to 'encounters' statistics, including Title 8 Apprehensions, Title 8 Inadmissible and Title 42 Expulsions. Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Department of Homeland Security, Southwest Land Border Encounters, online dashboard, available at <www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>.
13. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Global Trends: Forced displacement in 2021, UNHCR, Copenhagen, June 2022, available at <www.unhcr.org/globaltrends.html>.
14. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 2022 Mid-year Update on Internal Displacement, available at <<https://story.internal-displacement.org/2022-mid-year-update/index.html>>.
15. UNICEF, "Twice more children migrating through the Panama Darien Gap this year," press release, 17 June 2022, available at <www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/twice-more-children-migrating-through-the-panama-darien-gap-this-year>.
16. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability, contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Pörtner, Hans-Otto et al., eds, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, February 2022, available at <www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.
17. In Mesoamerica, moderate or severe food insecurity had not shown significant variation until 2019. However, after a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the prevalence rose by 9.3 percentage points in 2020 (from 28.2 per cent to 37.5 per cent). Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF, Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional overview of food security and nutrition 2021 - Statistics and trends, FAO, Santiago, 2021, available at <<https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7497en>>.
18. In 2020, 16.6 per cent of children under age 5 in Mesoamerica suffered from stunting, compared with 11.8 per cent in the Caribbean and 8.6 per cent in South America. Between 2019 and 2020, the prevalence of undernourishment in Mesoamerica increased by 2.5 percentage points, from 8.1 per cent to 10.6 per cent (from 14.4 to 19 million people), reaching its highest level in the last 20 years. FAO, IFAD, PAHO, UNICEF and WFP, Latin America and the Caribbean: Regional overview of food security and nutrition 2021.
19. International Organization for Migration and WFP, Understanding the adverse drivers and implications of migration from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras: A comprehensive analysis building on the report on "Complex motivations and costs of Central American migration", IOM and WFP, San Jose, Costa Rica and Panama City, Panama, 2022, available at <www.wfp.org/publications/wfp-and-iom-understanding-adverse-drivers-and-implications-migration-el-salvador>.
20. Migrant flows can experience abrupt variations and peaks, driven by factors including changes in national/regional regulatory frameworks. Changes in work visa requirements can cause change for a group of migrants (previously in a regular situation), who will then start to move in search of new locations for their subsistence. A border closure would affect the migration flow in neighbouring countries, which would experience denser population concentrations and/or longer stationary periods. In northern Central America this has created, since 2018, 'migrant caravans' - groups of thousands of migrants fleeing violence and poverty, often mobilized through social media.
21. IDMC, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022, IDMC, Geneva, 2022, available at <www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2022/>.
22. Sectoral needs are mainly extracted from 2021/2022 inter-agency planning figures, which may be overestimated because these included COVID-19-related needs.
23. The figures for people in need in the health sector were derived from the following sources: El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras used the 2021-2022 HRP; Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama used the 2022 RMRP; and Belize and Nicaragua figures were derived from the impact the hurricanes Eta and Iota in November 2020.
24. Gender-based violence remains a significant concern, particularly in northern Central America. Honduras has the highest femicide rate per 100,000 women in Latin America (6.2), followed by El Salvador (3.3) and Guatemala (2). Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Response Plan Summary (August 2021 - December 2022) El Salvador, Guatemala & Honduras, OCHA, August 2021.
25. Includes children in need of education support in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, according to OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan Summary (August 2021 - December 2022) El Salvador, Guatemala & Honduras, in the absence of inter-agency estimates for other countries that are part of the appeal.
26. Includes people in need of WASH support in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, according to OCHA, Humanitarian Response Plan Summary (August 2021 - December 2022) El Salvador, Guatemala & Honduras, in the absence of inter-agency estimates for other countries that are part of the appeal.
27. UNICEF, UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, available at <www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>.
28. In such key sectors as health, education, child protection, social protection and monitoring and planning, UNICEF promotes, through regular programming, continuous efforts to strengthen national and local systems by including/strengthening mechanisms to build resilience to various shocks and to be prepared for rapid-onset crises.
29. Including at border crossings and shelters.
30. Considering also cross-sectoral commitments (gender, disabilities, early childhood development, adolescent participation), as well as climate change and resilience.
31. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
32. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations, which have committed to getting more means into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.
33. OCHA, 2021-2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala & Honduras (August 2021 - December 2022), OCHA, August 2021.
34. Programme targets are projected based on the migration trends in the subregion. Lower figures compared with previous years can be due to the removal of COVID-19-related activities from the response and to the fact that sectoral needs are limited to specific population groups.
35. To ensure stronger support to key authorities and stakeholders, UNICEF will increase its focus on child protection actions, and the funding requirement in this area has increased accordingly.
36. UNICEF will increase its focus on providing learning opportunities for children on the move and host communities. This direct support can be more costly than virtual/distance education interventions, one reason for lower targets compared with previous years.
37. In 2022, UNICEF focused on providing technical assistance to government programmes in Guatemala and Honduras as well as in direct implementation to complement government assistance, particularly focusing on migrant and refugee children and their families. The 2023 targets considers a blended approach that comprises technical assistance to authorities and a higher portion of direct budget funding support to government-led and UNICEF-funded programmes.
38. The population targeted is higher than the total number of people/children to be reached because the target includes mass media outreach.
39. Sectoral amounts include other costs related to advocacy, communication, coordination, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, operations and security.
40. Regional Office requirements will cover regional-level resources and initiatives directly impacting UNICEF's response to the situation in Mexico and Central America, including: high-level advocacy, technical assistance, coordination support, information management, evidence generation, capacity building and support for scaling up responses to the sudden deterioration of humanitarian situations at the country level. The cost of actions impacting multiple subregions has been proportionally distributed across all multi-country appeals for the region.