

Honduras

Update on the context and situation of children

Children in the country continue to be greatly affected by the social and economic effects of the Covid19 pandemic and other crisis. The Ministry of Health confirmed 465,915 Covid19 cases cumulatively since the start of the pandemic, and 11,063 Covid19 related deaths as of December 2022. Among children and young people under 30 years there were 11,582 cases during 2022 (13% of the total). The year ended with a peak of 30.2% positivity rate considering daily tests performed, although hospitalized cases fell from a peak of 423 on February 6th to 60 cases on December 28th. As of December 17th, the vaccination coverage based on the eligible population in each case was 74% for the first dose, 66% for second dose, 66% for first reinforcement and 54% for second reinforcement, showing there still an important gap to cover.

Crime remains a major social concern in Honduras, which has violence rates above the Latin American average. According to data from the police statistical system, in 2021 the homicide rate was 41.7 per 100,000 inhabitants, more than double the average rate for the region. Data from the National Violence Observatory indicate that 10% of these homicides were of children and youths up to 19 years of age. Despite the fact that the total number of homicides in 2022 decreased by 13% compared with 2021, the perception of public insecurity prevails as most of these crimes go unpunished according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights which reports that in cases of femicide impunity reaches 90% and 95% in murders of children and adolescents.

Honduras also remains a country highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, being grouped in a very high-risk category for exposure to environmental degradation and drought according to the 2022 Risk Management Index. In addition, other international vulnerability indices place the country at a 'severe' level that is projected to be 'acute' by 2030 and the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) also place it at "high" level severity to children. In addition, safely managed services such as access to clean drinking water reach only half the population. In September 2022, heavy rains flooded dozens of communities in 21 municipalities in four departments, affecting some 30,000 people. In addition, Tropical Storm Julia had its impact on the country, affecting between 140,000 and 190,000 people during October, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

External and internal factors caused a sharp increase in the cost of living, as year-on-year inflation stood at 10.2% as of October 2022, which, according to World Bank data, had not been the case for more than a decade. The impact of this economic crisis on the level of household poverty is yet to be analysed. The repercussions of a possible economic recession on the state's fiscal space will make it difficult to combat poverty in the country and to strengthen food and nutritional security. Preliminary data from a study conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), together with Action Against Hunger (ACH), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF show that the regions of Occidente and Gracias a Dios have a 'very high' and 'high' severity of chronic malnutrition according to World Health Organization (WHO) thresholds. On the other hand, the Occidente and Valle de Sula regions have a third of their population in food insecurity, while in the Gracias a Dios region this rises to almost half its population.

This context of socioeconomic crisis and generalised violence that Honduras faces makes it a country of origin of refugees and migrants who leave in search of protection and/or better opportunities. According to data from the Consular and Migration Observatory of Honduras, a total of 857,162 Hondurans were returned from January to 11 December 2022, an increase of 62% over 2021. Children and adolescents represent about 16% of this group. It is also important to note that adult migration

flows leave children without parent figures.

Honduras also continued to be a transit country for many migrants during 2022. According to the National Migration Institute, more than 188,000 migrants crossed into Honduras irregularly in 2022 (10 times the number recorded in 2021), mainly using entry points on the southeastern border. Of the total, approximately 20% were children and young people under 20. Priority areas of assistance for this population continue to be child protection services, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as well as critical nutrition and health interventions.

The crisis scenario described, especially caused by the Covid19 pandemic, means access to the educational system continues to deteriorate. According to INE data, school attendance fell from 62.8% to 50.4% between 2019 and 2021. With regard to the general conditions of the educational centres, the infrastructure master plan states that more than 75% of the educational centres in Honduras need some intervention in water and basic infrastructure. All these aspects affect the quality of education, which is low according to the latest UNESCO ERCE (Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study), and this in turn has an impact on the opportunities of most children and adolescents in Honduras, who cannot aspire to decent jobs or develop the necessary skills to forge a better future for themselves.

An important political milestone in 2022 was the new Government taking office, formed by a different party from the two major parties of recent decades, with the country's first female president. One of the main promises of the new government is to respond to the popular demand for the establishment of an International Commission Against Impunity in Honduras supported by the United Nations (UN), and an agreement to this end was signed between the UN and the Government of Honduras at the end of 2022. On the other hand, the turnover of the civil servants with the change of administration tends to erase institutional memory, which slowed down some programmes previously initiated by agencies such as UNICEF.

Major contributions and drivers of results

It was a year of intense programme activity for UNICEF in Honduras in 2022, in both the development and humanitarian fields, with a total available budget of USD 16,584,883. UNICEF worked in cooperation with 25 implementing partners, 64% of them from civil society and 36% from Government. The response to the pandemic, migration, violence and floods reached some 2.16 million people in 151 out of 298 municipalities, who directly benefited from interventions in the areas of WASH, child protection, education, social protection, health and nutrition. Overall, in 2022 UNICEF reached with direct interventions around 2.4 million people, 88.9% of them children. Additionally, through sustained communication efforts throughout the year, UNICEF reached an estimated 4.3 million people in the country with promotion messages on vaccination against COVID19.

Health and Nutrition

According to the December 2022 COVID-19 vaccination bulletin of the Secretariat of Health (SESAL), 70% of the population between 5 and 11 years of age has been covered with the first dose of the vaccine and 58% with the second dose. On the other hand, 30% of the population over 12 has been covered up to the second booster of the vaccine.

UNICEF, in support of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI) and in coordination with PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) and WHO, contributed to vaccinating 747,258 children aged 5 to 11 against COVID-19, 32,194 girls aged 11 against human papilloma virus and 849,851 children aged 1 to 6 with the different vaccines of the regular vaccination programme. UNICEF prioritized support for the cold chain, vaccination campaigns, communication and social mobilization.

In two months of UNICEF support in partnership with Doctors of the World in the Cortés health

region (one of the health regions of the country with the lowest vaccination coverage), coverage has increased from 38% to 51% in polio and measles vaccines, from 65% to 74% in paediatric COVID-19 vaccines and from 51% to 56% in COVID-19 vaccines in children over 12.

UNICEF promoted the evaluation of 32,682 children between the ages of 6–59 months (16,381 boys and 16,301 girls) from seven of the country's 20 health regions using the MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference) tape. This action led to the recovery of 292 children (179 girls, 113 boys) with moderate (251) or severe (41) acute malnutrition and another 432 are in the process of recovery through UNICEF supported treatment. UNICEF also provided technical support for the development of the national simplified protocol for the recovery of children with acute malnutrition. Advocacy efforts and technical support to the new Government and health authorities were initiated to institutionalize the protocol and implement it throughout the country.

567 community health volunteers from the Cortés Health Region (main city with COVID-19 cases) received virtual training in mental health and wellness, risk communication and community participation, and vaccination against COVID-19, among others

In addition, 1,497 children aged 6–59 months, 5,176 children aged 6 to 18 years and 16 pregnant adolescents from two cities in the country with high levels of violence and insecurity received humanitarian nutrition services promoted by UNICEF.

To date, 171 caregivers of children under the age of 5 have received counselling under the Child Development Care (CDI) approach due to the extension of the child development care programme to two new departments in support of the country's early childhood programme.

WASH

UNICEF supported the national sector plan (PLANASA) and contributed to closing structural and humanitarian gaps in an effective and timely manner in multiple emergency scenarios. In support of the Ministry of Education (SEDUC), UNICEF was able to promote and integrate guidelines for climate resilience and a gender approach in school sector regulations, allowing continued access to WASH during and after an emergency, as well as in the integration of climate resilience and menstrual hygiene management (MHM) guidelines in normative instruments. In coordination with its implementing partners, UNICEF provided humanitarian assistance in communities affected by flooding and loss of vehicular access, bringing critical humanitarian assistance by river to families without access to WASH services.

In cooperation with municipalities, UNICEF led the integration of a focus on children into the emergency preparedness and response plans of six municipalities. In this process, 60 municipal officials were trained in key concepts and tools for risk management and child-sensitive services, laying the groundwork for a national scale-up with the National Mayors' Association. In addition, UNICEF led the strengthening of knowledge on climate change in six other municipalities, reaching 600 people with climate awareness generation, with the ultimate goal of promoting the integration of these activities in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

UNICEF directly supported 76 schools in 17 municipalities with improvements in WASH services and infrastructure with climate resilience and MHM standards and with the development of school safety plans for greater resilience to climate risks, reaching 20,060 students, who also received content on climate resilience in their class programmes. Similarly, in support of SEDUC, humanitarian basic WASH services in 56 other schools, including rapid programmes for healthy and climate-resilient WASH habits, reaching 19,425 students.

With schools as the entry point to communities, and in coordination with municipalities, UNICEF supported 18 community water systems for the elimination of faecal contamination, achieving Basic+

level access (available at the point of use and free of faecal and chemical contamination) for 20,052 people. WASH behavior change communication campaigns, including MHM, were also provided.

In the face of multiple emergencies in 2022, UNICEF was able to ensure that 28,342 people in shelters and affected households had Basic+ access to water for all uses.

Education

UNICEF, in collaboration with SEDUC, Save the Children, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Pure Water for the World (PWW), with the support of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) supported the rehabilitation of 126 educational centres, including cleaning and disinfection, restoration of classrooms, recovery of water and sanitation systems with a gender focus, restoration of electrical systems, furniture, blackboards, provision of spaces for recreation and leisure, benefiting more than 67,780 children and adolescents. In the same line of enabling educational recovery, 156,299 children and adolescents received support in educational materials, school and biosafety kits, technology equipment and connectivity.

These improved conditions enhanced the use of flexible modalities for the recovery of learning and the development of life skills, reaching 47,406 children and adolescents (23,673 girls) through: the tutorial learning system (SAT) as a flexible model adapted to the needs of young people in rural areas; the programme of dignity and hope, in partnership with the NGO ACOES, of integral education based on youth volunteering and learning spaces; and the programme for the development of life skills, employability and entrepreneurship, with training models in partnership with Fundación Bayan and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) initiatives. To support these experiences, teacher training programmes were developed that reached 3,558 teachers (66.9% women).

UNICEF prioritized innovation and the use of information technologies through the Learning Passport in Educatrachos, SEDUC's official portal with 20,987 active accounts (8,643 were activated in 2022). Through this platform, teachers and any children and adolescents both inside and outside the formal education system have access to educational resources related to the basic education curriculum.

The visibility and recognition of the Giga, and the Learning Passport system has allowed UNICEF to leverage equipment for 6,600 students through two initiatives, one in partnership with the national programme for educational transformation (PNTED) and another in support of the Educa Roatán project (a private strategy of the LASIFE bank advised by UNICEF, which is mobilizing more than USD 2 million to provide equipment to 5,500 children and adolescents in the Islas de la Bahía).

To this end, UNICEF facilitated the participation of 33,286 students in 555 educational centres through school management committees in 40 municipalities. The teenagers participated as volunteers in community projects such as: support in teaching to stimulate preschool children; partnerships with low-income families to raise broiler chickens, grow vegetables, and other initiatives to raise resources and support low-income families. They developed service-learning experiences under approaches of solidarity, responsibility and gender equality. The participation of children and adolescents accelerates the recovery of learning, since a high percentage of students who benefited from the different participation strategies and initiatives made progress in their learning. This is further evidenced in the grades they obtain, in security and positive self-perception.

These actions have not only had a specific impact but have also been the basis for informing policy and guiding UNICEF advocacy as demonstrative experiences or sources of evidence. As an example, the critical rehabilitation and improvement model is being adopted as part of the Honduras school construction master plan. A similar situation is occurring with the Learning Passport, which is now fully part of the educational offer of the official SEDUC portal.

In a similar vein, the Giga connectivity standard is being progressively adopted. UNICEF, in coordination with SEDUC, has advocated in this regard with the country's telecommunications regulator so that the provision of connectivity that service providers must make to schools within the framework of current legislation follows this standard.

Social protection

UNICEF focused on giving continuity to the integral system for guarantees of rights of children and adolescents in Honduras (SIGADENAH), whose approval and municipal modelling was one of the main achievements of the previous cooperation programme. Accordingly, a technical round-table was established to review the national policy for children and adolescents in Honduras (POLNAH) and advocated for its prompt approval, as it provides guidelines for progressive advances in the universal coverage of key services for children, which currently have huge gaps, such as health, education and protection against violence.

With the purpose of modelling what was stated at the decree level, UNICEF encouraged SEDESOL to undertake an exercise to measure multidimensional child poverty in 2,007 villages prioritized by the Government as having the highest prevalence of poverty. This will allow for better targeting of RESOL (Red Solidaria) social protection programmes to topics that most affect children.

In the same vein, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of six municipalities to design humanitarian cash transfer programmes and to create emergency preparedness and response protocols at local level that take the specific situation of children into account. SEDESOL and the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AMHON) participated in this process as key actors, seeking to ensure its scalability.

UNICEF also supported the reactivation of the Committee for Public Investment for Children and Adolescents (IPNA), which plans to carry out more advocacy actions to increase public investment in favour of children and to carry out specific analyses to measure investment in social protection.

Child protection

The child protection programme gave continuity to the strategies of prevention and attention to violence and the strengthening of the specialized child protection system, but also opened new areas of intervention around the protection of children in human mobility and the provision of psychological care services.

In 2022, 52,389 children, adolescents and adults received psychosocial and mental health support in response to the vulnerability in which they find themselves due to the conditions of armed violence in their communities or the situation of human mobility. This strategy included the installation of 20 safe and friendly spaces in schools, churches and community centres, where 19,743 children and adolescents were able to carry out recreational, socioeducational and life skills activities. Thanks to the involvement of UNICEF partner's field teams, 1,207 children and adolescents with specialized protection needs were referred.

After three years of sustained intervention and thanks to the work of community leaders, in 2022 UNICEF was able to reduce the disastrous consequences of 2,348 conflicts that could have led to serious crimes and provided support to 4,945 survivors of violence in their physical, emotional and social recovery processes, reintegrating them into school, alternative learning programmes, employment and entrepreneurship. In these communities, 54,000 adolescents and youth reported positive changes in their resilience to overcome adversity and develop their life projects. Community leaders have also reported that they were able to disengage 3,600 adolescents and youths from armed groups and criminal activities.

With the support of 23 local organizations and 2,300 young people, 80,883 children, adolescents, youth and women participated in community strategies to promote social cohesion and challenge

beliefs based on gender inequality. Of these, 5,948 men and adolescents regularly participated in transformative masculinities programmes.

In addition, the Secretariat of Security and the Council for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Youth were able to provide continuity and support for the national plan for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents, formulated during the previous administration.

With the Directorate of Children, Adolescents and Family, the 110 helpline was reactivated to report situations of violence, provide emotional support and be an active listening channel for children. Likewise, the special protection route was strengthened in the North and Centre-East regional offices to improve the follow-up of children and adolescents under protection measures. In 2022, the family situation and access to rights of 142 children were reviewed. In addition, with the formation and training of 15 child protection officers located at different border points, 10,134 children and adolescents in human mobility received protection services.

The child protection programme coordinated partner capacity-building actions to ensure that UNICEF interventions in 2022 included measures for the protection of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); 195,983 people were made aware of PSEA reporting mechanisms or channels.

Migration and childhood

UNICEF coordinated a comprehensive strategy on children and their families in human mobility through partnership in consortium with five organizations, providing cross-sectoral actions and services in child protection, health, education, social protection and WASH to address the most critical humanitarian needs of thousands of migrant families.

In total, 147,294 intersectoral services were provided in six municipalities of the country, of which 13,704 were protection services; 4,411 people received health and nutrition services, strengthening SESAL's capacity to provide quality maternal and child health, nutrition and immunization services for migrants. In WASH, 69,566 migrants on the move had water to drink through mobile hydration points. A total of 48,894 migrants were reached in shelters with access to dignified, safe and gender-differentiated hygiene services and 15,553 people received critical hygiene supplies, including items for MHM. In social protection, a total of 2,276 children benefited from monetary transfers, and through this intervention, learning was generated such as identification mechanisms, transfer delivery protocols, piloting of feedback and complain mechanisms and linkage to social services.

In the absence of basic response services in the municipality of Trojes in the south of the country, UNICEF and its partners set up a temporary rest centre for families in human mobility (CDTFM), where 6,449 children and families have been provided with a safe place to rest and where recreational and socioeducational activities and nutrition, health, medical and psychosocial care, unconditional transfers, food, hydration and hygiene services are provided.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF is an active member of the UN Country Team in Honduras under the strong leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator. Together with UNESCO, the Resident Coordination Office and SEDUC, UNICEF led the process of participation of Honduras in the United Nations Summit on Education Transformation.

The cooperation between UNICEF, UNRCO, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women in the framework of initiatives financed by the Peacebuilding Fund and the UN Spotlight initiative were key to the integration of 23 organizations to promote peace and social cohesion and 12 other organizations to work on gender norms and local services, allowing for a broad coordination action among feminist, women, sports, religious and adolescent sectors in favour of violence prevention.

UNICEF cooperated with SESAL, specifically its expanded programme on immunization (EPI), strengthening its capacity in the cold network component, social communication and deployment of vaccines, both against COVID and the regular programme. For this purpose UNICEF developed strategic alliances with the COVAX mechanism, the GAVI Vaccine Alliance, and in the middle of the year the government of Japan who approved funding of US\$ 2 million to support the country's cold chain network. Through the cooperation with Japan, UNICEF is in the process of acquiring 350 refrigerators for vaccine storage, 4 refrigerated carts for vaccine transport, 200 vaccine boxes for vaccination campaigns the construction of a vaccine warehouse in Gracias a Dios.

On nutrition issues, UNICEF partnered with PAHO/WHO within the UN System to reactivate the National Breastfeeding Commission. With Kimberly Clark Corporation, UNICEF supported nutrition and child development interventions. In addition, through the implementation of a Joint Program between WFP and UNICEF financed by the Joint SDG Fund, the Honduran government updated relevant nutritional and food security data available for 4 prioritized regions of the country. This information will allow the design of better policy measures and an informed decision-making process to respond to the current crisis in the sector.

With the support of the Meri Foundation and Prudential funds, UNICEF initiated cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and implemented climate change activities at the local level. With support from the Republic of Korea, Canada and Spain, UNICEF contributed to reducing the WASH gap in schools in support of SEDUC.

Another very strategic relationship for UNICEF is that with SEDESOL, and the coordination with Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which is currently collaborating in the updating of the social protection policy of Honduras. Likewise, the relationship with DINAF (Directorate for Children, Youth and Family) is strategic to giving continuity to SIGADENAH.

Financial support from the US Government was critical to providing a humanitarian and dignified response to migrants passing through Honduras on a large scale. Another key partner was Action Against Hunger, co-leading with UNICEF the LIFE Consortium for migrant children and families, which also includes ADRA, GOAL, Child Fund and the local Relief from Suffering Foundation.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Migration

One of the most innovative UNICEF strategies was the articulation of integrated actions for migrants, through partnerships in consortium with specialized organizations. By integrating their work in common intervention spaces, it has enabled the implementation of multisectoral actions and services

for children and families in the areas of protection, health, education, social protection and WASH. The Consortium Life, has enabled a much better coordination between implementing partners, increasing efficiency in the joint actions, impact and visibility in the ground. The Consortium Life, co-led by UNICEF and ACH, and integrated by another four NGOs has established itself as a key player in immediate technical assistance, advocacy and provision of integrated services for migrant families.

Health and Nutrition

Within the framework of UNICEF support to the country for vaccine deployment, most of the resources were focused on supporting the cold chain, due to the challenges identified in the national vaccine deployment plan. However, it is recognized that in order to achieve better vaccination coverage against COVID-19 and the regular programme in 2023, greater emphasis should be given to the network of vaccinators, coordination and social mobilization.

Based on a recent assessment led by the UNICEF regional office that identifies weaknesses and opportunities in relation to information systems in the health sector, UNICEF identified the need to strengthen the health system's epidemiological surveillance. As a demonstration experience, a dashboard has been shared with three health regions with interactive information from UNICEF implementing partners on the number of children assessed with the MUAC tape, number of children with acute malnutrition, children admitted to the programme and number of children recovered by each municipality. UNICEF should place more emphasis on technical and financial support in this area by 2023.

WASH

Assessment of the humanitarian response to the devastating effects of Tropical Storms Eta and Iota showed that the WASH sector was effective, as well as showing the need to provide humanitarian assistance on a larger scale from the onset of the emergency. As a lesson learned, inputs were prepositioned to assist 25,000 people in 2023 and two contingency programme documents were signed, which will allow a large-scale start-up in the first days of a potential humanitarian situation.

Some innovations from the sector were: a new cooperation model between child protection and WASH, for safe access to WASH services at the household level for returned migrants, with potential for scaling up; production and integration of standards for child-sensitive services in municipal emergency preparedness and response plans; and identification of climate action priorities for children at the municipal level for integration into institutional action plans.

Education

The early involvement of SEDUC officials in coordination and monitoring actions of the programmes undertaken by UNICEF and its partners not only expedites their implementation but also increases the possibility of institutionalizing and scaling up certain actions, as has occurred with the incorporation of sanitation elements in the school construction guide.

In terms of innovation, the combined Giga and Passport to Learning model has enabled accelerated digitization by considering the five key elements of the UNICEF global digitization of education model. The first three would be the provision of connectivity with Giga, platforms with the Learning Passport and content in connection with Educatrachos. This approach has also proven to have a direct catalytic effect on the other two elements of equipment and teacher training, since it has been possible to provide and leverage equipment (with the private sector and within the framework of official programmes) and to align educational instances.

Social protection

The development of more adequate financing strategies and greater efficiency in public investment for social protection is required in order to overcome limited fiscal space to promote social protection programmes, along with low investment execution capacity. These are windows of opportunity for

interventions that UNICEF and other UN agencies can support.

Child protection

During the past three years, UNICEF has been able to implement and expand violence prevention strategies based on conflict de-escalation and outreach for social and behavioural change in favour of children's rights and gender equality. There is an opportunity to systematize and strengthen the intervention models, to expand the implementation methodologies and identify the changes produced.

Regarding the specialized child protection system, it is undoubtedly necessary to continue strengthening the institutional capacities of the national protection authority but based on a more clearly defined logical framework that allows for improved monitoring of progress and measurement of results.

As an innovative component, self-care workshops have been conducted for field staff of implementing partners, which deal with how to prevent burnout and other mental health problems.