

*The Humanitarian cash Operations and Programme Ecosystem (HOPE) is UNICEF's Management Information System (MIS) for managing all humanitarian cash transfers (HCTs) personal identifiable information. The HOPE team is part of the Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) Unit within the Social Policy and Social Protection - Programme Group.*

### **It is not just about data; it's about people**

Amid an active war, in the aftermath of an earthquake or hurricane, the delivery of Humanitarian Cash Transfers (HCT) is one of the most efficient ways in which UNICEF can support children and families and restore their dignity. But implementing an HCT programme also requires UNICEF to manage a high volume of data. Data that informs the decision on who should be supported and why. Data that tracks the interactions of each person with the HCT programme. Data that is, therefore, sensitive and private about human beings who are highly vulnerable and live in very fragile and complex contexts.

This is why an operational digital tool like HOPE is so needed. HOPE enables managing the data required to implement HCT programmes mitigating the risk that this data is used to cause harm, foster discrimination or exclusion, lead to loss of dignity or privacy, and generate physical, emotional, or psychological abuse.

And with 2022 seeing an unprecedented rise in humanitarian needs - mostly driven by the start of the war in Ukraine in late February - UNICEF scaled up its HCT response and increased its reliance on HOPE to safeguard this data responsibly and ethically, not forgetting the human beings to whom this data belongs.

### **Serving one million people in one year**

This translated into HOPE facilitating the delivery of US\$305 million to over one million people (about 370,000 households) whose lives had been severely impacted by humanitarian crises. Around 642,000 of these were children.

This was an exponential growth since 2021 - when HOPE was launched and used to deliver US\$3 million to about 43,783 people – and reflects the launching or scale-up of HCT programmes in the countries where HOPE had been deployed in 2021, as well as new deployments which occurred in 2022 and brought to 13 the number of countries using this digital platform.

Ukraine and Slovakia were two of these countries. In [Ukraine](#), humanitarian cash transfers to families, notably those with children with disabilities, are a critical part of UNICEF's response to the conflict. The same happened in [Slovakia](#), where many Ukrainian families sought refuge. HOPE also started to be used in [Kenya](#), where Humanitarian Cash Transfer are a lifeline for children in the most drought-affected counties; in Bangladesh, where Humanitarian Cash Transfers are supporting mothers and children living

in extreme poverty within the Rohingya camps' host communities; and in Trinidad and Tobago, where humanitarian cash transfers are encouraging children from refugee and marginalized communities go back to school. Finally, HOPE was also deployed to the Philippines, as part of the response to Typhoon Rai, which hit the country in December 2021, and to Sri Lanka, where an HCT programme is being set up to help some of the poorest children thrive with a focus on their first 1,000 days of life.

### **Taking risks and the learning that comes with it**

This scale-up required us to be nimble to respond to emerging needs. In-person registration in Ukraine's HCT programme was not possible for safety concerns; a solution was needed and fast. And that is how an online registration platform was developed, leveraging the families' high digital literacy and connectivity. This platform went live on 30 March – just five weeks into the start of the war – placing UNICEF as the first organization to deliver cash across all 25 oblasts of Ukraine as early as 21 April 2022.

By the end of 2022, over 3 million people had inputted their data into the online registration platform, and many shared their feedback. One of their asks is to be able to check the status of their applications. That is in the pipeline for 2023 – making us accountable as we want to be.

### **Giving voice and listening**

Accountability is at the core of all we do. Including the grievances and feedback module in HOPE's original design reflects this commitment. UNICEF wanted to ensure that all Country Offices had a platform to support their efforts of giving voice and responding to HCT participants and their communities. And the reality is confirming the importance of this: in 2022, 147,296 grievances, including some of sensitive nature, such as fraud or sexual exploitation and abuse - were recorded in HOPE.

As we enter 2023, we know this is another area where we want to continue to invest. The more countries use HOPE, the more we learn about what they need to engage transparently and honestly with the families reached by HCT programmes. Our work plan for 2023 articulates this and more – knowing that each new child that HOPE supports makes it all worth it.

### **Navigating the unpredictable**

Preparedness is vital for child-centred humanitarian action to be timely and of quality – and ultimately save lives in a dignified and respectful manner.

Our experience has demonstrated the time advantage of having staff familiar with a digital tool like HOPE: it can easily save four to six weeks in response to a crisis. This is why we are working to deploy HOPE as a preparedness measure. We started in the Philippines, where HOPE has been endorsed by the local government as a ready-to-use tool to support the delivery of HCT to families living in geographical areas often affected by typhoons and the ongoing civil conflict. And going forward, we plan to expand working together to continually improve UNICEF's preparedness and response capacity — ultimately reducing the impacts of humanitarian crises on children and saving lives.