

UNICEF Argentina

Annual Report 2024

Acknowledgments

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

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

UNICEF Argentina Annual Report 2024

Published by UNICEF

Contact:

United Nations Children's Fund

3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: +1 (212) 326-7000

Suggested citation:

United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF Argentina Annual Report 2024, UNICEF, New York, February 2025.

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) February 2025.

Contents

Section 1: Update on the Context.....4

Section 2: Major Achievements and UNICEF's Contribution.....6

Section 3: Partnerships.....12

Section 4: Challenges, Lessons Learned and Future Outlook.....14

Section 1

Update on the Context

Argentina is an upper middle-income country with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of USD 12,520 in 2023[1]. Argentina's economy has been stagnant for over a decade. The average annual GDP growth rate was -0.3 per cent between 2012 and 2019, dropped to -9.9 per cent in 2020 due to the pandemic, rebounded to an average of 7.9 per cent in 2021-2022, and fell again by -1.6 per cent in 2023. This performance has been linked to the accumulation of imbalances in the fiscal and external sectors: between 2012 and 2023, primary fiscal deficit averaged 2.7 per cent of GDP, and overall deficit averaged 4.6 per cent. On the other hand, balance of payments' current account deficit averaged 2 per cent of GDP during this period. These imbalances resulted in successive currency devaluations, rising inflation, and the decline in real household incomes.

In 2023, USD appreciated 356 per cent against the Argentinian peso, and inflation, measured by Consumer Price Index, reached 211% in December 2023 compared to December 2022. National Government's Gross public debt reached USD 442.515 billion in June 2024, equivalent to 110.5% of GDP. For 2024, private analysts and international organizations project a contraction of GDP between -3.5% and -3.6% as a result of measures taken to restore macroeconomic balances, including a 211% devaluation of the peso at the beginning of the new administration and a 5-GDP-point fiscal adjustment to achieve fiscal balance in 2024. Inflation rate closed 2024 at 117,8% on a year-over-year basis compared to 2023.

During the first semester of 2024, 67.1 per cent of children lived in monetary poverty, showing an interannual increase of 10 percentage points. Food security continued to be a significant challenge: 27.3 per cent of children experienced extreme poverty. 52 per cent of households with children reported that they stopped buying certain food items due to income constraints, and around 30 per cent stated they had incurred debt to purchase food. Preliminary information for second semester shows a poverty rate decrease, which could return to end of 2023 levels.

In 2024, social protection system maintained an elevated coverage, reaching 95 per cent of children, with a persisting challenge of approximately 650,000 children that remain outside the system. It is worth highlighting that the *Prestación Alimentar* program was expanded to include adolescents aged 15 to 17, who were previously excluded. Furthermore, the mechanism for updating the amount of cash transfers and family allowances was modified, leading to a recovery of the purchasing power of main income protection policies addressed to children, reaching pre-pandemic levels. This helped to reduce the effects on children of current macroeconomic adjustment and marked a priority set on children in a context of national budget reductions. Nevertheless, *Prestación Alimentar* still lacks an automatic updating mechanism.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) services show varying attendance rates according to age. In 2022, only 20 per cent of children aged 0-2 accessed childcare and education services, while it rose to 64 per cent for 3-year-olds. Attendance was nearly universal among 5-year-olds and exceeded 93 per cent for 4-year-olds. These rates vary across regions and socioeconomic groups, largely due to disparities in service availability. Also, there is limited coordination among early childhood institutions, which hinder the delivery of quality services across sectors and regions.

Primary school attendance is virtually universal. At secondary level, while attendance rates remain high (92.3 per cent), almost 300,000 adolescents were out of school (2022 Census).

In terms of learning achievements, 34 per cent of primary school students did not achieve satisfactory levels in language, and 48.6 per cent fell short in mathematics in 2023. Learning achievements in secondary schools have deteriorated: the percentage of students not reaching satisfactory levels increased from 38 in 2019 to 43 in 2022 in language, and from 71 to 82 in mathematics.

In 2022, the infant mortality rate was 8.4 per 1,000 live births, reflecting a slight increase from 2021 (8.0 per 1,000 live births). Maternal mortality rose to 7.4 deaths per 10,000 live births in 2021 but decreased to 3.4 in 2022, though it remained above pre-pandemic levels. Adolescent mortality rate in 2022 was 4.2 per 10,000, unchanged from 2021. The adolescent fertility rate in 2022 was 12.7 per 1,000 adolescent females, a 50% decrease compared to 2018. Significant disparities in these indicators persist among provinces.

Regarding nutrition, overweight remains the most prevalent form of malnutrition: 13.6 per cent of children under 5 years old and 41 per cent of school-aged children and adolescents.

Between 2009 and 2019, national vaccination coverage declined by an average of 10 percentage points, with an additional 10-point drop in 2020. Although there was some recovery in 2021-2022, vaccination rates declined again in 2023.

Violence remains the primary reason for separating children from their families. In 2020, approximately 6,400 children were in the care of extended families, while 9,154 were in residential care facilities.

Despite 97.4 per cent of parents believing that children should not be physically punished, 59% of children under 15 experienced violent parenting practices. 11% of women aged 18-49 reported experiencing sexual abuse during childhood.

National juvenile justice system remains inconsistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, allowing judicial discretion. In 2023, 4,156 adolescents and young adults who committed offenses as minors were held in penal facilities. Among them, 1,971 were under 18 years old, including 44 under the age of 16.

Adolescents aged 16-17 have the right to vote since 2012. In 2023, 93 per cent were aware of this right, however 30 per cent did not meet all the formal requirements to vote.

Migrants represents 4.2% of the total population, but this proportion drops to 1.5% among children. Migrant population faces worse living conditions: 12% experience unmet basic needs compared to 9 per cent among native population. Migrant children have lower school attendance rates: while 4 per cent of children aged 10-14 overall is out of school, this figure more than doubles to 9 per cent among migrant children.

[1] This report uses the latest available information.

Section 2

Major Achievements and UNICEF's Contribution

In 2024, significant progress was made in addressing barriers to child well-being in Argentina, driving systemic changes to improve outcomes for children and adolescents. Efforts to promote informed advocacy highlighted key challenges such as child poverty and inequities in social protection systems. This supported the implementation of targeted public policy interventions. Research efforts, including reports on child poverty, cash transfer programs, and the national budget, provided critical insights. These insights supported adjustments like the expansion of the Alimentar Card to benefit adolescents and the adaptation of transfer amounts to address inflation's impact.

Data on public finance included three analyses of the national budget with a focus on children, based on official public information from a long-standing cooperation with the Ministry of Economy. Policy dialogue actions included participation in an informative session of the National Lower House's Commission of Social Security in April and the 2025 budget informative session in the Lower House's Commission of Family, Childhood, and Youth in October. Despite fiscal challenges, significant investments in child-focused governmental programs were preserved, particularly through increased budget allocations for social protection programs benefiting children and their families nationwide.

Technical assistance led to the development of tools like the Child-Care Basket in Buenos Aires province and Buenos Aires City. This tool generates concrete evidence to inform judicial decisions on child-support –when there are unmet child-support obligations that lead to legal proceedings- and policy decisions regarding income security for female single-headed households.

Efforts prioritized reaching vulnerable and marginalized communities in four provinces, addressing food insecurity and enhancing access to essential resources through partnerships with community-based organizations Monte Adentro and Food Bank Network. Initiatives provided nutritional support, healthy food kits, and capacity-building workshops for families, promoting long-term development opportunities for these communities. Additionally, local governments received technical support and capacity-building training to strengthen planning processes, fostering the development of inclusive policies prioritizing the rights of children with disabilities.

The Municipality United for Childhood and Adolescence (MUNA) initiative expanded its scope, engaging a new province and 46 new municipalities, totaling 138, representing over half of the child population in participating provinces and near 40 per cent of total children in the country. Municipal teams developed strategic action plans, enhancing their ability to design, implement, and monitor policies focused on child and adolescent well-being. Forty new municipalities were certified as "Municipality Committed to Children and Adolescents," totaling 86 with this status. Collaboration between local and provincial governments facilitated cohesive planning and resource allocation processes aligned with child-rights priorities. Training sessions and thematic workshops empowered municipal teams to adopt evidence-based approaches. New MUNA models are being designed to achieve scale and sustainability for the initiative during 2025, with intense support from provincial governments.

At the subnational level, innovative budgetary frameworks were incorporated into planning processes in two

provinces, ensuring sustained resource allocation for children's priorities. Agreements are being signed to scale up this initiative to other provinces in 2025. Twelve local governments advanced their public financing strategies by improving budget management, adopting participatory approaches to budgeting, and addressing disparities in access to essential services. These initiatives demonstrated the tangible benefits of enhanced governance and inclusive development practices and are expected to be scaled up in 2025 as part of the new MUNA models.

To promote the well-being of children from 0 to 6 years of age and reduce social and territorial disparities, UNICEF carried out technical assistance at different government levels.

At the national level, the emergence of a Human Capital Ministry with responsibilities over Education, Social Development, and Labor posed new opportunities for developing comprehensive childhood policies. UNICEF provided technical assistance to the Under Secretary of Family Policies in defining the Federal Early Childhood Strategy for 2025.

At the provincial level, UNICEF's continued technical assistance to implementing and monitoring Comprehensive Provincial Early Childhood Strategies in four provinces. Actions included updating comprehensive analysis to inform public policy priorities and intersectoral plans for the year. The Ministries of Human Development and Health of Entre Ríos, Jujuy, and Salta implemented a community-based ECD program for vulnerable families, emphasizing play and responsive care.

At the local level, the improvement of government capacities to design, implement, and monitor comprehensive early childhood policies continued as part of the MUNA initiative in 51 municipalities. UNICEF provided technical support and capacity building for local public officials to design and implement action plans in early childhood, including interventions on health, nutrition, education, and care and protection.

UNICEF contributed to the Federal Literacy Plan, working with the Ministry of Education in Salta to ensure foundational learning by implementing an early literacy program with an intercultural perspective in two prioritized vulnerable and indigenous localities. This reached 139 teachers and 9,400 pre-school and primary school children. UNICEF also provided technical assistance to establish a Monitoring Taskforce led by the Ministry of Education to manage a provincial literacy plan for enhancing the teaching skills of 192 community educators, benefiting 1,300 children.

To promote the right to health, UNICEF contributed to strengthening perinatal health services in rural areas with indigenous populations by focusing on the quality of perinatal care, women need, and equality with an intercultural approach. Strategies implemented in 15 maternity hospitals across four provinces helped reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity, benefiting more than 20,000 mothers and newborns. Additionally, UNICEF supported the provincial implementation of the Healthy School Environment component of the Promotion of Healthy Eating Act by conducting studies to measuring public awareness and school-based barriers to improve nutritional quality. Evidence on digital Breast Milk Substitutes (BMS) marketing was published, an AI system to document non-compliances on the International Code on Breast Milk Substitutes (ICBMS) was developed, and 300 health professionals were trained on breastfeeding across four provinces. During World Breastfeeding Week, UNICEF contributed to certify public and private spaces as breastfeeding-friendly and also ran a communication campaign on breastfeeding. These efforts included raising awareness and training "breastfeeding counselors" in hospitals, health centers, educational spaces, and industrial parks, where a large number of women work. This

initiative significantly improved support for breastfeeding mothers in these areas.

UNICEF strengthened the response to the health emergency in Salta, addressing acute malnutrition through technical support to the Ministry of Health and procurement of RUFT and therapeutic formula for 600 children. Also contributed to improve food security among vulnerable families, training 190 indigenous women in culinary and healthy eating skills.

Adolescents in Argentina face several problems, including a learning crisis, limited access to quality health services, and insufficient opportunities for meaningful participation. To address these challenges, UNICEF focused on a multidimensional approach fostering intersectoral programming. UNICEF made significant strides in advancing adolescents' rights by implementing key strategies such as system strengthening, advocacy and communications, community engagement, social and behavior change, research and evaluation, digital transformation, and gender-transformative programming. UNICEF directly impacted over 152,000 adolescents and indirectly benefited 1.5 million more through initiatives to ensure the expansion of quality educational opportunities, formal participation, and access to adolescent-oriented health services in priority provinces.

To tackle the adolescent learning crisis, UNICEF contributed with the education sector to enhance foundational learning, promote out-of-school adolescents' inclusion, and foster secondary school transformation. The PLaNEA program implemented in Tucuman and Cordoba benefited 35,500 students and improved the skills of 7,247 teachers and principals. Additionally, a new annual training program to transform secondary education reached 5,440 teachers and principals in 7 provinces (Jujuy, Santiago del Estero, Mendoza, Cordoba, Tucuman, Misiones, Salta y Mendoza), impacting 900,000 students. The Unique Opportunities-APP initiative, supported by 10 business partners and 35 local governments, trained 2,800 adolescents in digital and transferable skills.

Efforts to reduce out-of-school adolescents included strengthening 60 local governments to ensure school attendance for 3,000 adolescents and scaling Technology-rural-based-secondary-schools by 32%, reaching 177 communities. The intervention comprised installing Starlink Satellite connectivity in 100 isolated rural schools and provide literature books through a key private sector alliance.

In the health sector, UNICEF expanded technical assistance and capacity development to enhance adolescents' access to quality health services, focusing on adolescent girls. This included supporting 14 local governments in developing epidemiological monitoring systems and training health professionals to address pregnancies in girls under 15. Moreover, to foster adolescents' mental health support, UNICEF scaled a pilot innovative peer-to-peer support initiative, Listening Centers, in three priority provinces, and trained primary health care workers in comprehensive adolescents' health, impacting near 72,000 adolescents.

UNICEF also strengthened adolescent participation by creating institutionalized spaces and providing technical assistance to create local participation strategies with 40 municipalities through the MUNA initiative. The PLAN A annual meeting, held with UNFPA and civil society organizations (Asociación Conciencia and Centro Ana Frank) promoted intergenerational dialogues with adolescents from different provinces. Additionally, UNICEF collaborated with 11 leading youth organizations to change social norms, develop platforms for adolescents to share their experiences, and propose solutions to stakeholders on issues that concerned them.

In 2024, ACO made significant technical contributions to improve parenting skills and prevent all forms of

violence at national level and local levels. The launch of a new parenting portal proved both necessary and highly successful, garnering over 100,000 online visits in less than a year. The portal's publications, videos, and podcasts in addition will also be utilized in a pilot parenting program, designed in collaboration with the Province of Salta, to bring the online content closer to local communities. Provincial authorities praised this intersectoral approach for its effectiveness in enhancing caregivers parenting skills with a transformative perspective about fatherhood. They also highlighted the positive impact on children through the reinforcement of municipal initiatives that promote positive child-rearing environments. This pilot program will provide essential insights and lessons for scaling the initiative to other provinces across the country.

ACO's efforts yielded significant results through a study providing recommendations and lessons learned on specialized protection responses for victims of violence against children (VAC) in the context of domestic violence and other forms of violence across Buenos Aires, Chaco, Jujuy, Salta, Tucumán, and Santa Fe. Furthermore, to promote the participation of children and adolescents in defining violence prevention policies and eliminating adult-centric biases, the project "Corners, Rounds, and Playgrounds" was successfully conducted in the provinces of Salta and Santa Fe, engaging numerous local stakeholders in the process. This initiative engaged over 500 children and adolescents, local grassroots organizations, and municipal authorities, fostering collaboration and dialogue. Based on the guidelines provided by the INSPIRE initiative for ending VAC, this project strengthened community involvement and awareness, paving the way for more effective and inclusive violence prevention strategies. The findings and impact of this initiative are detailed in the publication "Rincones, rondas y patios" (2024).

As part of an improvement plan to prevent the institutionalization of children without parental care, UNICEF, in collaboration with RELAF (Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar), provided technical support to local governments. This initiative aimed to enhance and expand foster family programs in Buenos Aires, Salta, Jujuy, and Santa Fe. Through this partnership, provincial authorities received resources and guidance to strengthen their foster care systems, ensuring better care and support for children. ACO and RELAF also developed evidence and tools for case management and supported technical teams in their implementation, leading to improved interventions that prioritized alternatives to institutionalization in residential care.

Significant progress was made because of these efforts. In Buenos Aires, the children's agency agreed to strengthen the implementation of foster care programs, and provincial authorities committed to further improving the alternative care system. In Santa Fe, a governmental decree establishing procedures for foster care modalities is under development, alongside a bill proposal aimed at providing better legislative support for foster care programs. In Jujuy, a bill for family foster care is under legislative review; if approved, it will offer formal and budgetary support to foster care programs. In Salta, dialogue, training, and advocacy efforts with authorities led to the reinstatement of the family foster care program after a period of inactivity, successfully preventing further admissions of children under three to the Casa Cuna (residential care).

ACO also made significant advances in enhancing the judiciary's management of cases involving children and their access to justice. By partnering with provincial supreme courts and the Federal Board of Courts (JUFEJUS), ACO developed comprehensive data collection tools for child protection and juvenile justice, resulting in a nationwide data map. This tool was validated at the 7th annual meeting of the "Network of Judges Committed to the Rights of Children and Adolescents" in Buenos Aires, attended by top authorities from all 24 provincial courts and technical teams. Bilateral agreements with several provincial courts have been crucial in bolstering the

judiciary's capacity to handle cases of child violence and abuse more effectively.

UNICEF also played an important role in the legislative reform discussion of the juvenile criminal system by providing key evidence to inform public and legislative discussions. Works included the meticulous collection and analysis of data, which was then disseminated publicly and shared with key authorities and parliamentary committees. This evidence was also presented at a high-level roundtable organized in UNICEF's offices, ensuring that the insights reached influential stakeholders and contributed effectively to the legislative process.

To enhance migrant children's rights, CAREF, supported by UNICEF, conducted a study in Jujuy and Misiones, focusing on birth registration in border areas. This initiative addressed the unique challenges in these regions that affect children's right to identity and access to other rights. By collaborating with local authorities, the study aimed to develop robust solutions and provide recommendations to improve birth registration processes for migrant children at high-transit land borders. This effort will strengthen the protection and recognition of migrant children's identities and rights.

UNICEF took a proactive role in following up on the Committee on the Rights of the Child's recommendations made to Argentina in its ninety-seventh session in Geneva from 26 August to 13 September 2024. By providing technical assistance, facilitating consultations, and supporting the development of policies and programs at the national and local levels, UNICEF aimed to help Argentina meet its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This collaboration ensures that the Committee's recommendations are translated into concrete actions that improve the lives of children across the country.

UNICEF actively participated in consultations for the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 27, which focuses on children's rights to access to justice and effective remedies. Working with partners, UNICEF consulted with children to gather their views on matters related to the general comment, and the participation of an adolescent from Argentina in a meeting organized by UNICEF in Panama, ensuring that children's voices are represented and heard in these crucial discussions.

Argentine society knows, supports, and trusts UNICEF's work. In 2024, the country office reinforced its positive image, achieving 90% awareness according to the latest brand barometer. The 2024 activities and iconic events like Un Sol para los Chicos, the Festival for Children, and the UNICEF Run for Education, informed and nurtured the largest donor base in the region, exceeding 240,000 people about UNICEF's work. UNICEF Argentina garnered 97% positive media mentions and 1,847,255 social media followers. Up to November, over 13,500 stories about UNICEF and children's rights were published, including 33 op-eds signed by official spokespersons. On social media, key messages generated more than 19.2 million interactions and 93.2 million views. This astonishing performance benefited from successful collaboration with market's leading advertising agencies, which supported UNICEF pro bono. Throughout the year, 1,095 companies and business associations in Argentina increased their awareness and commitment to children's rights through initiatives like "Unique Opportunities," ACO's skills-for-life initiative that reached 7,000 adolescents, and "Companies that Care," which reached over 950 companies through training courses. Additionally, more than 1,500 companies subscribed to the digital platform.

ACO fundraising income grew 140 percent in pesos, reaching US\$11 million despite the long-standing socioeconomic crisis, a GDP reduction, high inflation, and currency devaluation. More than 80 percent of income

was non-earmarked funds generated from individual giving (216,000 monthly pledge donors). All major corporate alliances were renewed, and new ones secured, raising US\$1.3 million. Close to US\$450,000 was received from major donors and the Zemborain Family Foundation. Twenty-two legacies were pledged, totaling 97. US\$1.5 million was raised through events, especially the 'Un Sol para los Chicos' telethon.

Regarding evaluation capacities and activities, ACO started the evaluation of the current Country Programme, with results expected in the first quarter of 2025. The evaluation of MUNA is set to begin in 2025 to improve the program's design and implementation. Additionally, capacity-building actions were implemented to strengthen national evaluation capacities, and new activities are being planned for 2025, in partnership with the National Council of Social Policy Coordination.

The office achieved significant advancements across key dimensions of operational governance, risk management, financial efficiency, and staff well-being. These initiatives were executed with adaptive flexibility to navigate ongoing and unforeseen changes in the operational environment. Underpinned by robust internal controls, these actions resulted in optimized resource utilization, improved employee welfare, and reinforced the office's commitment to providing a resilient, efficient, and transparent operational environment.

Section 3

Partnerships

In 2024, UNICEF Argentina's commitment to fostering partnerships proved to be a cornerstone of its success in advancing children's rights. The year focused on strengthening alliances with various stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, universities, the private sector, and other UN agencies, creating a shared vision for advancing children's rights in Argentina.

The 2024 Annual Work Plan, signed with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was the result of productive dialogue with governmental entities. UNICEF engaged collaboratively with key ministries responsible for children's policies, including the Ministry of Human Capital, National Social Security Administration, National Institute of Statistics and Census, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Health. In a context of adjustments in various national programs and policies aimed at protecting children's rights, efforts underscored agreements to continue effective collaboration in 2025.

At the provincial level, ACO maintained cooperation with the provinces of Tucuman, Santa Fé, Buenos Aires, Entre Rios, Cordoba, Chaco, Jujuy, Salta, Misiones, and expanded cooperation with Chubut and San Juan for the first time. The strengthened collaboration between ACO and provincial governments ensured more effective implementation of strategies and programs.

Innovative approaches to measuring and addressing child poverty were expanded through partnerships with provincial-level Statistics Offices. Initiatives like the Child-Care Basket and multidimensional child poverty measurements were crucial in providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by children at the local level.

Early childhood development (ECD) programs benefited greatly from the collaborative efforts implemented by government ministries at the provincial and local levels, which included institutionalizing cross-sectoral worktables, developing joint workplans, and coordinating efforts across sectors. Partnerships with subnational governments also enhanced the quality of services for children and families and expanded coverage to reach children from isolated, indigenous, and rural communities.

Collaboration with provincial ministries has been crucial in maintaining the commitment to promote adolescents' comprehensive development. Local teams coordinated efforts across government agencies, civil society, and community actors to implement strategies aimed at including out-of-school children, improving learning and skills programs, enhancing health services for adolescents, including mental health support, and promoting participation and leadership of youth organizations to accelerate results for adolescents, especially girls.

Creating violence-free environments required working with national governmental child protection authorities, along with the judiciary, ombudspersons, provincial governments, and local authorities, which enabled UNICEF to adapt its efforts to local needs. Collaboration with four provincial Judiciary Schools was crucial for institutionalizing capacity development for judiciary workers.

At the local level, another standout initiative was MUNA. UNICEF allied with provincial and municipal

governments, CSOs, private sector entities, and UN agencies in ten provinces. As a result, municipalities advanced self-assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring of local action plans on topics like early childhood development, violence-free environments, and health. This collaborative approach ensured effective initiatives, benefiting children across the regions.

Strengthening and expanding partnerships with Civil Society Organizations and academia was also critical to scale up local initiatives, particularly those related to developing certified training for capacity development of provincial frontline workers in ECD, health, and nutrition, and scaling up public funding for children (PF4C) ensuring children's needs were prioritized in budget decisions. Likewise, these partnerships also contributed to scaling education and child protection programs at subnational levels.

Community-based organizations were vital in reaching rural and isolated communities and safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable children and adolescents.

Corporate engagement saw UNICEF renewing ongoing relationships and negotiating new ones with over 25 companies. More than 100 companies participated as sponsors in three special events, with significant partnerships. These partnerships were crucial in mobilizing resources and raising awareness for UNICEF's initiatives.

Media partners played a key role in promoting events and generating sales. Various media outlets produced and promoted the telethon "Un Sol para los Chicos," while a local municipality provided the venue and financed the production. Additionally, support for UNICEF content was provided through dedicated TV spaces on regional channels. Special shows organized by community groups also supported UNICEF's efforts. Moreover, ACO innovatively partnered with pro-bono advertising agencies to develop awareness campaigns and raise visibility for missing children.

Coordination with the Resident Coordinator Office and other UN agencies was permanent during 2024, particularly in preparing inputs for the UNSDCF development process. In addition, ACO actively participated in interagency groups and promoted specific interagency coordination that was crucial to advancing the cooperation framework results. UNICEF also sustained collaborative efforts within the GENU local initiative, involving nine UN agencies (FAO, ILO, UNOPS, CINU, UNHCR, UNESCO, UNFPA, ITU and UN Women), which resulted in advancing critical results on secondary education, foundational learning, skills development, and transition to employability, among others. Moreover, collaboration with UNESCO Montevideo focused on accelerating secondary education transformation and conducting the Argentina Kids online study.

While the office has a well-developed private sector partnership and funding strategy, efforts were strengthened to advance collaboration agreements with the public sector, IFIs, and bilateral donors. In 2024, an alliance with the IDB allowed for the advancement of the early childhood education agenda.

Through these diverse and dynamic partnerships, UNICEF Argentina mobilized resources, implemented successful programs, and made significant strides in advancing children's rights across the country. The collaborative efforts of 2024 laid a strong foundation for continued progress in 2025.

Section 4

Challenges, Lessons Learned and Future Outlook

In 2024, Argentina navigated a challenging landscape marked by significant fiscal adjustments aimed at stabilizing the economy and improving financial health. These adjustments impacted social spending and economic indicators, leading to an increase in child poverty levels during the first semester. In this context, UNICEF's engagement in robust evidence and data analysis, policy dialogue, and advocacy actions on child poverty, social protection, and children's budgets proved pivotal in supporting national efforts to protect policies for children. The AUH-AUE and Prestación Alimentar programs were expanded, mitigating effects of inflation on child poverty. UNICEF's long-term cooperation with the National Ministry of Economy ensured the continuity of budget transparency tools to monitor children's budgets across changes in administration. By continuing to prioritize informed policy dialogue and strategic partnerships, UNICEF aims to contribute to systemic changes and improve outcomes for the most marginalized children in Argentina.

The new administration emphasized the critical role of subnational governments in implementing social policies within Argentina's federal arrangement and its predisposition to transfer funding and execution responsibilities for various children's policies and programmes to provinces. This context underscores the importance of continuing to expand UNICEF's work at the subnational level and establishing partnerships with provincial ministries to advance the outcomes of the cooperation programme. An example of this implementation strategy is the collaboration developed with the Ministry of Finance to advance the institutionalization of children's budgets at this government level. UNICEF's experience with the National Ministry of Economy and recent alliances with the Ministries of Finance of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos present an opportunity to scale up public financing for children (PF4C) work at the provincial level, providing technical assistance to these ministries.

MUNA initiative allowed UNICEF to strengthen its territorial reach and work in the most isolated and vulnerable places. MUNA is implemented in 138 municipalities across 10 provinces. Based on the results and significant advances made by the municipal governments to protect children's rights, there is an increasing demand from new municipalities to engage in MUNA initiative. To respond favorably, ACO is designing new MUNA models to achieve scale and sustainability for the initiative.

In 2024, ACO maintained a comprehensive approach to early childhood development and contributed to institutional efforts to improve the implementation of policies with a more holistic approach and the necessary budgets at different levels of the state. Supporting the design and implementation of Comprehensive Early Childhood Strategies in four provinces revealed that sustained technical assistance, prioritizing concrete goals that benefit from the coordinated work of different sectors, and effective policy dialogue and advocacy are essential. These lessons have also been utilized to inform the definition of the Federal Early Childhood Strategy in 2025 and its implementation at the subnational level.

Regarding adolescents' comprehensive development, UNICEF revised its strategies to address emerging priorities. These include strengthening foundational learning outcomes, expanding educational opportunities in isolated rural communities, integrating mental health and psychosocial support initiatives into public health policies, and continuing efforts to prevent adolescent pregnancy, particularly within marginalized groups. Engaging adolescents in these initiatives is crucial for enhancing strategy effectiveness and fostering community

ownership. Reflecting on lessons learned in 2024, UNICEF plans to continue advocating for quality connectivity in hard-to-reach schools, fostering public-private partnerships, and generating evidence to scale innovative technologies. In health, integrating mental health initiatives into public policies and engaging adolescents in leading roles will be prioritized. On-site training and collaboration with local entities outside urban centers will be vital for ensuring equitable health access. UNICEF Argentina will reinforce efforts to keep relevant issues on the public agenda through initiatives like Plan A, TED talks, and U-Report.

Regarding child protection, the government's decision to transfer responsibilities from the federal government to the provinces provided UNICEF with the opportunity to build upon previously established agreements at the local level. Increasing cooperation with local authorities, leverages the advantages of a federal system that grants significant legal and political autonomy to local governments. Additionally, collaboration with the judiciary has proven to be a driving force in advancing the child protection agenda across the country. UNICEF collaborates with the judiciary by providing technical assistance, documenting innovative strategies, promoting exchanges between provinces, documenting good practices, analyzing data, among other activities. This presents UNICEF with a significant opportunity to continue strengthening the role of the judiciary, which plays a crucial role in providing access to justice and restoring rights in cases involving constitutional rights, including those under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is part of Argentina's Constitution.

Collaborating with provincial and local governments to advance social behavior change initiatives appears to be a promising opportunity. For instance, in 2024, ACO completed a Social and Behavior Change (SBC) formative research project. The results will inform programme development, communicative content, and open discussions on early childhood, which is a national and subnational priority. The main lesson learned is the importance of continuing to build UNICEF's public discourse based on robust evidence to generate social consensus and commitment towards children's rights. Additionally, a programme for improving child-rearing practices and protecting children from violence, which will be implemented by Salta province with UNICEF's support in 2025, will be informed by this research.

In the context of economic reforms, ACO adapted its fundraising strategies. By implementing measures such as requesting minimum donations in advance, scheduling donation payment dates, and strengthening donor models, ACO maintained its fundraising efforts. Reinforcing partnerships with private sector and major donor strategies proved effective. Recruiting and training local solicitors in remote towns created new fundraising opportunities, which ACO plans to expand in 2025.

ACO's proactive risk management and enhanced internal controls significantly improved its ability to handle risks, ensuring quick decision-making and resilience. Cultivating a culture of compliance and transparency increased accountability and improved results. Additionally, process optimization promoted knowledge sharing and efficiency, while strategic resource allocation maintained high operational standards and critical investments.

UNICEF's 40th anniversary in Argentina in 2025 presents an opportunity to highlight the contributions that the office has made and continues to make to promote children's wellbeing in the country.