



Children eat a nutritious meal at the UNICEF-supported Pietro Bonilli Health Centre in Odienné, in northwest Côte d'Ivoire.

unicef   
for every child

## Humanitarian Action for Children

# Response in coastal countries linked to central Sahel crisis spillover

### HIGHLIGHTS<sup>1</sup>

- Children and adolescents in the northern regions of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo are facing the humanitarian consequences, including population displacement, of the spillover of the central Sahel crisis. Basic services are becoming overburdened, with schools and health facilities closing or functioning at minimum capacity, even as people are also coping with public health emergencies and such climate-related disasters as floods.
- UNICEF will ensure emergency preparedness and response in affected areas while simultaneously strengthening national and local capacity and resilience to cater to the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons and support the communities that are hosting them.
- UNICEF requires \$68.4 million to provide humanitarian assistance to 1.6 million people (refugees, internally displaced people and affected host communities), including 994,000 children. Needs are particularly acute for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), child protection and education services. Supporting basic services will contribute to longer-term, sustainable solutions for these vulnerable communities.

IN NEED

**6.1 million**  
people<sup>2,3,4</sup>

**3 million**  
children<sup>5,6</sup>

TO BE REACHED

**1.6 million**  
people<sup>7,8</sup>

**994,000**  
children<sup>9,10</sup>

### KEY PLANNED TARGETS



**380,611**

children vaccinated against measles



**233,254**

primary caregivers receiving infant and young child feeding counselling



**404,435**

children receiving individual learning materials



**609,676**

people reached with critical WASH supplies

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$68.4**  
million

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

The spillover of the crisis in the central Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger) has become a permanent threat to northern communities in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. Between January 2021 and October 2023, 882 security incidents were reported in the northern regions of these four coastal countries, including the emerging use of improvised explosive devices.<sup>11</sup> This situation is progressively leading to more restrictions on social services and markets and a reduction in economic activity, which is also causing movements of populations internally and across borders.

Growing insecurity is forcing families to flee and is impacting negatively on the well-being and development of children and their families. In these four coastal countries, the number of internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees is now estimated at 123,000, including 36,000 children.<sup>12</sup> These numbers could increase given political and conflict dynamics in the central Sahel countries.

The frequent cross-border and internal displacement of populations has placed pressure on already weak social services (health, nutrition, education) and has made access to limited vital resources (food, drinking water, housing, etc.) very difficult. This impacts refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities alike. It also heightens tension among communities and in some areas has led to prejudice and violence against minorities. For host governments, the control of borders and the maintenance of safety and security in a volatile regional context is a primary concern. This has led at times to movement restrictions for affected populations and for humanitarian actors, impacting both access to services and the continuity of service provision.

An increasing number of schools have been obliged to close or are unable to function due to insecurity and other life-threatening events. This has put children and adolescents out of school and at risk of exploitation (child labour), child marriage, migration (including by unaccompanied and separated children) and gender-based violence, with a disproportionate burden on adolescent girls. In Benin, 33 schools were closed due to insecurity at the end of June 2023, affecting 4,321 students (including 1,669 girls), compared with 9 closed in December 2022.<sup>13</sup> A 2022 nutrition survey in Togo showed a prevalence of wasting approaching the 10 per cent critical threshold in the areas bordering Burkina Faso.<sup>14</sup>

Coastal countries are also subject to other shocks and have experienced recurrent flooding and health epidemics that have aggravated existing vulnerabilities of affected communities. These are expected to have a long-term impact on hygiene, sanitation, livelihoods, social infrastructure and public health.

## SECTOR NEEDS



**1.1 million**  
people in need of health assistance



**738,000**  
people in need of nutrition assistance



**2.4 million**  
children in need of protection services



**1.4 million**  
children in need of education support



**5.6 million**  
people lack access to safe water

## STORY FROM THE FIELD



Conflict in the central Sahel is forcing families from their homes and into coastal countries. Communities in northern Benin are welcoming refugees from Burkina Faso, like Abasse's family. UNICEF and its partners are providing essential supplies including household items, clothes and toys to help families restart their lives. Support with school enrolment means that children are back at school after three years of interrupted learning. Yet in this community that is dependent on agriculture, unpredictable rainy periods have made it hard for Abasse's dad to find work, and the family's future remains uncertain. For now, they are taking it one day at a time.

**[Read more about this story here](#)**

Abasse smiles outside his home in Tanquiéta, northern Benin, where his family was welcomed after fleeing violence in Burkina Faso. UNICEF provides essential supplies to support families like Abasse's.

In line with its Strategic Plan, 2022–2025 and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF's humanitarian strategy for these four coastal countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo) is built around ensuring emergency preparedness and response to humanitarian situations, while simultaneously looking for opportunities to strengthen national and local capacities, systems and services and build community resilience to meet needs linked to the influx of refugee and internally displaced populations. UNICEF applies a gender-sensitive approach and promotes the participation of communities and youth.

The humanitarian response in the coastal countries is multisectoral. Integrated interventions encompassing health, nutrition and WASH are a priority; and education, child protection and mental health and psychosocial support are also critical. UNICEF promotes localization by strengthening the capacity and resources of local organizations to lead humanitarian responses and deliver aid.

UNICEF will pursue a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach to develop resilience and support social cohesion among communities. UNICEF acknowledges host governments' efforts to provide basic services in northern regions affected by the central Sahel crisis spillover and to undertake integration processes for host communities and new arrivals.

To provide high-quality programmes for children in the region, UNICEF will keep investing in information management and knowledge exchange, regular needs assessments, the close monitoring of humanitarian response and evaluations. Using its risk monitoring dashboard, UNICEF will build evidence-based interventions supported by data collection, analysis and crisis mapping, and will sustain advocacy and release communication products to raise the attention of coastal countries.

UNICEF's strategy in these four coastal countries is closely aligned with the 2024 regional response plan for Gulf of Guinea countries designed jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to have a joined-up, complementary response to address the needs of children and families affected by the spillover of the central Sahel crisis.

Such cross-cutting issues as protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and accountability to affected populations are strongly prioritized. Disability inclusion will be systematically pursued. Social and behaviour change remain an integral component of UNICEF's humanitarian strategy.

UNICEF will continue to support preparedness and contingency plans using timely monitoring and the generation and management of humanitarian information, with increased utilization of smart technology for forecasting and risk analysis.

Anticipatory action, human resources support and pre-positioning of supplies will also be part of UNICEF's strategic approach.

## 2024 PROGRAMME TARGETS



### Health and HIV/AIDS

- **380,611** children vaccinated against measles, supplemental dose



### Nutrition

- **51,419** children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- **28,812** children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- **233,254** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling



### Child protection, GBViE and PSEA

- **215,499** children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- **482,865** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **806,313** people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations
- **10,500** children who have received individual case management



### Education

- **213,889** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **404,435** children receiving individual learning materials
- **1,102** teachers and facilitators trained in basic pedagogy and/or mental health and psychosocial support



### Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **154,676** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- **97,176** people accessing appropriate sanitation services
- **41,000** children using safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces
- **609,676** people reached with critical WASH supplies



### Social protection

- **101,000** households benefitting from new or additional social assistance (cash/in-kind) measures from government-funded programmes with UNICEF technical assistance support



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

- **47,000** households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers (including for social protection and other sectors)
- **4,368,400** affected people (children, caregivers, community members) reached with timely and life-saving information on how and where to access available services<sup>17</sup>
- **2,306,280** people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms
- **412,230** people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms

## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2024

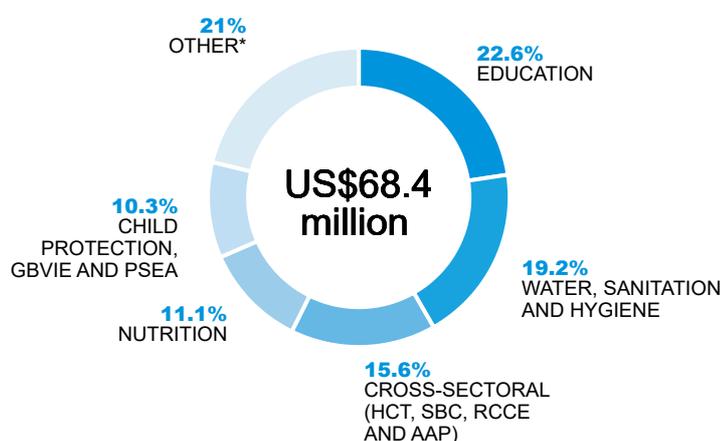
UNICEF is requesting \$68.4 million to meet progressively increasing humanitarian needs among children in the four coastal countries covered by this appeal, whether internally displaced, refugees or living in host communities. In alignment with inter-agency response plans and government initiatives, UNICEF will also work to meet other needs of vulnerable populations related to climate change, such as floods and potential disease outbreaks.

UNICEF's humanitarian strategy and its regular development programming are complementary. UNICEF will address the urgent needs of the most vulnerable and contribute to building more resilient and shock-responsive systems. To do this, \$7 million is critical to scale up child protection services, \$14 million to provide access to health and nutrition services, \$13 million to support safe water and safe hygiene practices and \$15 million to strengthen children's access to education.

Funding will facilitate the continuation of basic health, nutrition, WASH and education services and ensure local partners and authorities provide critical protection, mental health and psychosocial support to women, children and families forced to move and to host communities receiving and integrating these communities. It will also enable expanded investment in monitoring, preventing and responding to child rights violations.

Without sufficient and timely funding in 2024, UNICEF and its partners will not be able to address the urgent humanitarian needs of nearly 1 million children in the region and build systems that provide sustainable medium- and long-term solutions to address worsening humanitarian situations linked to the spillover of the central Sahel crisis.

Support for this appeal will empower UNICEF to continue investing in readiness for public health crises and fostering enhanced social cohesion and resilience. The funding will be used to reach marginalized populations with vital services while reinforcing connections across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.



\*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Health and HIV/AIDS (9.1%), Social protection (7.6%), Preparedness (3.1%), Rapid response (1.4%).

Sectors	2024 total requirement (US\$)
Health and HIV/AIDS	6,237,400
Nutrition	7,611,312
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA	7,067,292
Education	15,436,906
Water, sanitation and hygiene	13,100,634
Social protection	5,183,930
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	10,665,152
Rapid response	979,988
Preparedness	2,100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,382,614</b>

Sectors	Benin	Cote d'Ivoire	Ghana	Togo	2024 total requirement (US\$)
Health and HIV/AIDS	603,000	1,765,000	2,460,000	1,409,400	6,237,400
Nutrition	2,700,000	837,000	1,680,000	2,394,312	7,611,312
Child protection, GBVIE and PSEA	1,640,000	1,380,000	2,382,188	1,665,104	7,067,292 <sup>18</sup>
Education	2,200,000	4,583,750	6,663,960	1,989,196	15,436,906
Water, sanitation and hygiene	2,500,000	3,275,000	2,062,500	5,263,134	13,100,634
Social protection	-	3,183,930	2,000,000	-	5,183,930
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	5,600,000	1,180,000	1,612,301	2,272,851	10,665,152 <sup>19</sup>
Rapid response	-	-	500,000	479,988	979,988 <sup>20</sup>
Preparedness	300,000	750,000	1,000,000	50,000	2,100,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,543,000</b>	<b>16,954,680</b>	<b>20,360,949</b>	<b>15,523,985</b>	<b>68,382,614</b>

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## ENDNOTES

1. UNICEF activated its Corporate Emergency Level 2 Scale-up Procedure for Sahel Crisis for the following period: 19 July 2022 - 19 December 2023. UNICEF Emergency Procedures are activated to ensure a timely and effective response to all crises. The emergency procedures provide a tailored package of mandatory actions and simplifications required for all offices responding to Level 3, Level 2 and Level 1 humanitarian situations.
2. The number of people in need is the sum of people in need in the four countries covered by this appeal. The figures are calculated using UNICEF internal needs assessments, based on estimates/projections, given that for these four countries there are no inter-agency needs/planning documents.
3. People in need: Benin (3,513,515), Côte d'Ivoire (600,000), Ghana (1,132,000) and Togo (843,288).
4. 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.
5. The number of children in need is the sum of children in need in the four countries covered by this appeal. The figures are calculated using UNICEF internal needs assessments, based on estimates/projections, given that for those four countries there are no inter-agency needs/planning documents.
6. Children in need: Benin (1,791,893), Côte d'Ivoire (294,930), Ghana (475,440) and Togo (404,778).
7. The number of people to be reached is the sum of people to be reached in the four countries covered by this appeal. The figures are calculated at the country office level based on the 2024 programme targets.
8. People to be reached: Benin (500,000), Côte d'Ivoire (260,800), Ghana (298,851) and Togo (500,317).
9. The number of children to be reached is the sum of children to be reached in the four countries covered by this appeal. The figures are calculated based on the 2024 programme targets.
10. Children to be reached: Benin (255,000), Côte d'Ivoire (230,800), Ghana (173,454) and Togo (334,972).
11. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project, 23 October 2023. The northern regions considered are the following ones: Benin (Alibori, Atacora, Borgou, Donga); Togo (Savanes, Kara); Ghana (Upper East, Upper West, North East, Northern); and Côte d'Ivoire (Denguélé, Savanes, Zanzan).
12. Figures for Côte d'Ivoire as of 23 October 2023: 37,685 arrivals, including 10,867 school-aged children. Source: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Côte d'Ivoire, Direction d'aide et d'assistance aux réfugiés et apatrides. Figures for Ghana as of 31 August 2023: 15,000 estimated arrivals, mainly from Burkina Faso, including 1,416 children. Source: UNHCR Ghana. Figures for Togo as of July 2023: 18,429 internally displaced people, including 9,030 children (source: International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix, September 2023 and National Civil Protection Agency); and 28,263 refugees as of September 2023. Source: UNHCR Togo. Figures for Benin as of 30 September 2023: 23,533 displaced persons, including 14,120 children. Some 13,499 come from Burkina Faso, the Niger and Togo; plus 10,034 internally displaced persons (3,315 in Atacora and 6,719 in Alibori). Source: International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix, September 2023 and UNHCR Benin.
13. Ministry of Education, Benin.
14. Ministère de la Santé, de l'Hygiène Publique et de l'Accès Universel aux Soins, République du Togo, results of the SMART survey 2022 in the regions of Kara, Maritime and Savanes, undertaken with UNICEF's support.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. The population targeted is higher than the total number of people/children to be reached because the target includes mass media outreach.
18. Includes \$4,220,517 for child protection interventions; \$1,436,087 for gender-based violence in emergencies interventions; and \$1,410,687 for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse interventions.
19. Includes \$8,481,067 for humanitarian cash transfers and \$2,184,085 for social and behaviour change activities and community engagement.
20. These funds will be used for a timely response to the needs of vulnerable populations undergoing sudden displacement.