

THE POWER BEHIND THE PROMISE

# IMPACT COMPANION

Core Resources  
Annual Report  
2024

# From the Deputy Executive Director

**Progress at scale only happens when partnership becomes the strategy – not just the support.**

At UNICEF, we are privileged to witness the power of partnership every day. We see it in the rapid deployment of life-saving supplies to crisis zones, the steady rise of national investment in child protection and health, and the growing momentum behind universal child benefits and sustainable water systems.

And behind every one of those advances is a partner – a government, a business, a philanthropist, a foundation or an individual – who made the choice to act.

At the heart of many of these results are UNICEF's Core Resources: unrestricted funding which is the most flexible and strategic source of funding, provided by both public and private sector partners.

**This Impact Companion reflects what that choice makes possible.** In a year when global aid contracted and crises intensified, the partnerships we share delivered measurable, systemic results for children. They enabled us not only to respond but also to strengthen national systems, unlock innovation, and lay the groundwork for sustainable change.

But today's challenges demand more than a return to what worked before. They require a shift in how we think about scale, strategy and shared value.

The development landscape is changing rapidly. Needs are intersecting in new ways, and resources are under pressure. To meet this moment, we must move beyond transactional funding models and embrace transformational partnerships rooted in trust, powered by unrestricted and flexible funding, and guided by a shared vision of equity and resilience.

**This is the value of a portfolio approach to impact.** Core Resources form the bedrock of UNICEF's work. **Thematic funding** adds targeted, flexible support across geographies and sectors, such as health, education, nutrition and WASH. And earmarked resources provide targeted support for specific needs. Together, a portfolio of investment offers children what no single modality can achieve alone: **responsiveness, scale and sustainability.**

This is where UNICEF is uniquely positioned to lead: not just through programmes, but as a trusted partner to governments and as a platform for coordinated, systemic impact.

To every partner who has helped make these results possible, thank you. Your leadership extends far beyond your financial contributions – it is your ideas, influence, and ambition for children that shape what UNICEF can achieve and where we go next.

But to meet this moment, and to truly scale up the systemic change children need, we must match ambition with investment. **Core Resources are not only the most strategic resource we have; they are the engine that drives everything we do.**

Let us deepen this partnership. Let us keep moving forward together – with purpose, with trust, and with the flexible resources it takes to deliver lasting results for every child, everywhere.



**Kitty van der Heijden**  
Deputy Executive Director,  
Partnerships, UNICEF





# Core Resources Impact Directory

In 2024, partnerships continued to power UNICEF's mission. At the heart of this effort were Core Resources: unrestricted funding that is our most strategic funding source. Core Resources are allocated where the needs of children are greatest, and allow UNICEF to deliver results across:

**7** regions      **149** countries and territories      home to **2.1** billion children

The yearly allocation of Core Resources to UNICEF offices in low- and middle-income countries is driven by equity. Funds are allocated as follows:

- A fixed minimum amount of **\$850,000 per year** for each country programme.
- A variable amount resulting **from three indicators** which are used to determine the severity of children's deprivations, demand for social services, and the capacity of the countries to deliver these services to children:



**Under-five mortality rate**



**Child population**



**Gross national income per capita**

In this **Impact Companion**, you will read stories about how Core Resources is accelerating progress and delivering results across 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals for children.

## Taking the work to scale



**India:** Core Resources continued to play a vital role in the delivery and scaling up of the government's flagship water and sanitation programmes, **providing safely managed water supplies for 59.3 million people and sanitation services for 17.9 million people** in 2024. ([p. 6](#))



**Republic of Moldova:** Core Resources **paved the way for \$68 million of government and other investment** in the RESTART social protection reform, **mitigating a 3.4 per cent rise in child poverty** and increasing the value of social benefits for families with children, including Ukrainian refugees, by 42 per cent. ([p. 10](#))



**Bangladesh:** Core Resources helped UNICEF mobilize and sustain government action to transform children's nutrition outcomes, contributing to **a 40 per cent reduction in stunting** among children under five and **a nearly tenfold increase in domestic investments** in nutrition services over a decade. ([p. 12](#))

This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.



## Leading, convening and pioneering

**Horn of Africa:** Core Resources scaled up an innovative solution using satellite data to detect groundwater, mapping nearly a million square kilometres of territory in drought-prone countries, **with the potential to benefit 10 million people in need.** ([p. 14](#))



**Guatemala:** Core Resources positioned UNICEF as a key partner in the transformation of the social protection system, offering the government strategic policy advice and partnerships, which **resulted in a \$1 billion investment in social protection programmes and mitigation of a three-to-four-fold increase in poverty** during the COVID-19 pandemic. ([p. 16](#))



**Global:** Core Resources fast tracked the **integration of cross-sectoral mental health services and care into national systems in 13 countries**, modelling new solutions, and **reaching more than 8.8 million children**, adolescents, caregivers and service providers. ([p. 18](#))



## Before, during and after an emergency



**Yemen:** Core Resources safeguarded continued access and expansion of essential health services, **contributing to a 23 per cent drop in under-five mortality** over the course of the last decade of conflict. ([p. 20](#))



**Democratic Republic of the Congo:** Core Resources **supported more than 1,700 health-care facilities to stay operational**, securing lifesaving supplies and treatment for **more than 129,000 children** facing severe wasting. ([p. 22](#))



**Madagascar and Mozambique:** Core Resources provided the seed funding for **UNICEF's Today and Tomorrow Initiative**, an integrated climate and disaster finance solution, **supporting more than 120,000 people** in Madagascar and Mozambique with life-saving services in the aftermath of cyclones. ([p. 24](#))



**Rwanda:** Core Resources reinforced the government's response to the Marburg disease outbreak, contributing to **more lives being saved and a low fatality rate of 22.7 per cent.** ([p. 26](#))

## Expert staff

**Jordan:** Core Resources funded the **first-ever One Stop Centre which offers a proven model for replication** across Jordan including Syrian refugee camps, successfully supporting an initial 500 children and women survivors and witnesses of violence, abuse or exploitation with multi-sectoral services. ([p. 27](#))



**Sierra Leone:** Core Resources strengthened the child protection and case management system, **accrediting social workers for the first time and facilitating protection services for more than 675,000 children in five years**, including those who have faced violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect. ([p. 28](#))



## Meeting the holistic needs of children and adolescents



**Côte d'Ivoire and Cabo Verde:** Core Resources provided instrumental support to the governments to bring universal child registration within reach, **with more than 9 in 10 children registered before their first birthdays.** ([p. 30](#))



**Viet Nam:** Core Resources supported a more inclusive system for access to learning opportunities for children with disabilities, embedded disability inclusion into national teacher training, and **enabled scaling up the Inclusive Education Resource Centres across 14 provinces** to prepare children with disabilities to enter mainstream classrooms. ([p. 32](#))

# A Decade of Progress: How India's WASH transformation is saving lives



Vani (5) practises good handwashing technique. Yuvoday volunteers also conduct sessions for better hygiene with children in Mohlai village, Durg, Chattisgarh.

In India, a decade-long effort to bring safe sanitation and hygiene to every home has done more than improve toilets – it has helped to save children's lives.

Between 2014 and 2022, India saw a 37 per cent reduction in child mortality. While progress on child health is never the result of a single intervention, improved access to clean water and sanitation played a pivotal role by dramatically reducing incidence of diarrhoeal disease, malnutrition and infection – some of the leading causes of death in young children. Few programmes have had such a far-reaching and systemic impact as India's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) revolution. At the heart of that transformation has been an ambitious government-led movement, backed by UNICEF and enabled by sustained investments of unrestricted funding.

In 2014, the Government of India launched the Swachh Bharat (Clean India) Mission, one of the largest sanitation programmes in the world. Its goal was bold: provide universal access to sanitation and eliminate open defecation by constructing over 110 million toilets for 550 million people across the country. This ambitious target was achieved by 2019.

## SDG target 6

In the last 10 years, 550 million people have been reached with at least basic sanitation, and 580 million people with improved drinking water in their homes.





By 2024, Swachh Bharat had reached nearly every corner of the country. But more importantly, it had catalysed a shift in mindset – from building toilets to strengthening systems for sustainable sanitation services, including solid and liquid waste management and climate-responsive initiatives. From the start, UNICEF has been a trusted partner in the mission's design, delivery and scaling up, helping ensure that infrastructure was matched with systems-strengthening, community engagement and behaviour change. UNICEF supported this shift by embedding technical advisors in every state, and building the capacity of local governments to improve and monitor services over time. As Ms Vini Mahajan, Secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources, said: *"UNICEF has been a very valuable partner to us. I have personally seen how much engagement has been shown by your team in water and sanitation."*

Building on the gains of the sanitation movement, India launched the Jal Jeevan (Water is Life) Mission to achieve universal access to safe and adequate drinking water – a natural and essential next step in improving child health, development and protection. UNICEF's support expanded accordingly, providing technical expertise, developing equity-focused tools for state and district governments, and helping improve service delivery for the most marginalized children and communities. Over the last five years, more than 115 million rural households have gained piped water connections in their homes for the first time.

For UNICEF, as the government's partner of choice on WASH, this has been a unique opportunity to expand and accelerate services for women and children. Unrestricted Core Resources have been critical to this success. While other resources can be fragmented or time-bound, Core Resources allowed UNICEF to be a consistent, strategic partner, year after year – playing a central role in planning, monitoring and scaling up the programme. That consistency helped ensure not only national reach, but also the strategic and equitable delivery of water and sanitation services to maximize impact for children and communities.

One of UNICEF's most transformative contributions has been improving the way India collects, manages and uses WASH data. Despite massive public investment, fragmented definitions, reporting formats and data systems had made it difficult to measure progress consistently and spotlight inequalities. UNICEF worked closely with government to strengthen these systems, enabling more accurate, timely and actionable data to guide decisions and track progress at every level.



*"Since the inception of the United Nations, its main objective has been to improve people's lives. The Swachh Bharat Mission has not only made the lives of crores [tens of millions] of people better, but has also protected their dignity and has also played an important role in achieving the goals of the United Nations."*

*"UNICEF has estimated that every family living in the village who are constructing toilets in their homes is saving at least 50,000 rupees (\$650). Another UNICEF study has revealed that the quality of ground water has improved in the last five years, and I believe that Swachh Bharat Mission is also a major contributor to the same."*

*"When a developing country is able to successfully implement the world's biggest sanitation campaign... all its achievements and outcomes are an inspirational message for the entire world."*

*"Swachh Bharat mission is this century's biggest and most successful people's movement with people's participation and people's leadership."*

— **Narendra Modi**,  
Prime Minister of India

The Government of India has backed its commitment with a game-changing investment of over \$120 billion in water and sanitation over the past 10 years. The results speak for themselves: achieving 110 million toilets constructed, more than 550 million people using improved sanitation, more than 580 million rural people using improved drinking water, and lasting reductions in waterborne diseases – a major contributor to child mortality and morbidity.

This impact was made possible by unrestricted funding, which gave UNICEF the ability to work flexibly across sectors, test and adapt approaches in real time, and remain engaged for the long haul. Over 10 years, that flexibility has enabled UNICEF to help take the programme from proof of concept to national scale, and from rolling out infrastructure to transformation of systems.

UNICEF's efforts have also sparked lasting behavioural change, particularly in schools, and children are empowered to carry healthy habits back to their families. *"Swachh Bharat has created that dialogue,"*

noted UNICEF India Representative Cynthia McCaffrey, *"children now have the knowledge, talk about it and grow with it."* The programme has also laid the foundation for climate-smart, sustainable solutions. *"UNICEF is working through its water and sanitation programmes to add climate change and environmental sustainability – and in this, the youth becomes very important, helping us to live sustainably,"* McCaffrey added.

This is more than a national success story – it is a global milestone. With sustained support from the Government of India, partners and donors to UNICEF's Core Resources, India has achieved progress at a scale that is shifting the global dial on water and sanitation. Every Core Resources donor should feel immense pride: your investment has helped transform millions of lives and brought the world closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6. The results are measurable, replicable and, with continued partnership, within reach for every child, everywhere.

#### SDG target 6

In 2024, 17.9 million people accessed safely managed sanitation, and 59.3 million people accessed safely managed water in their homes.



AWW helps kids with handwashing and accompanies them to clean toilets in the AWC centre. Suka Village, Naramada, Gujarat.

Grade 11 student taking sanitary pad from pad bank to give to other students

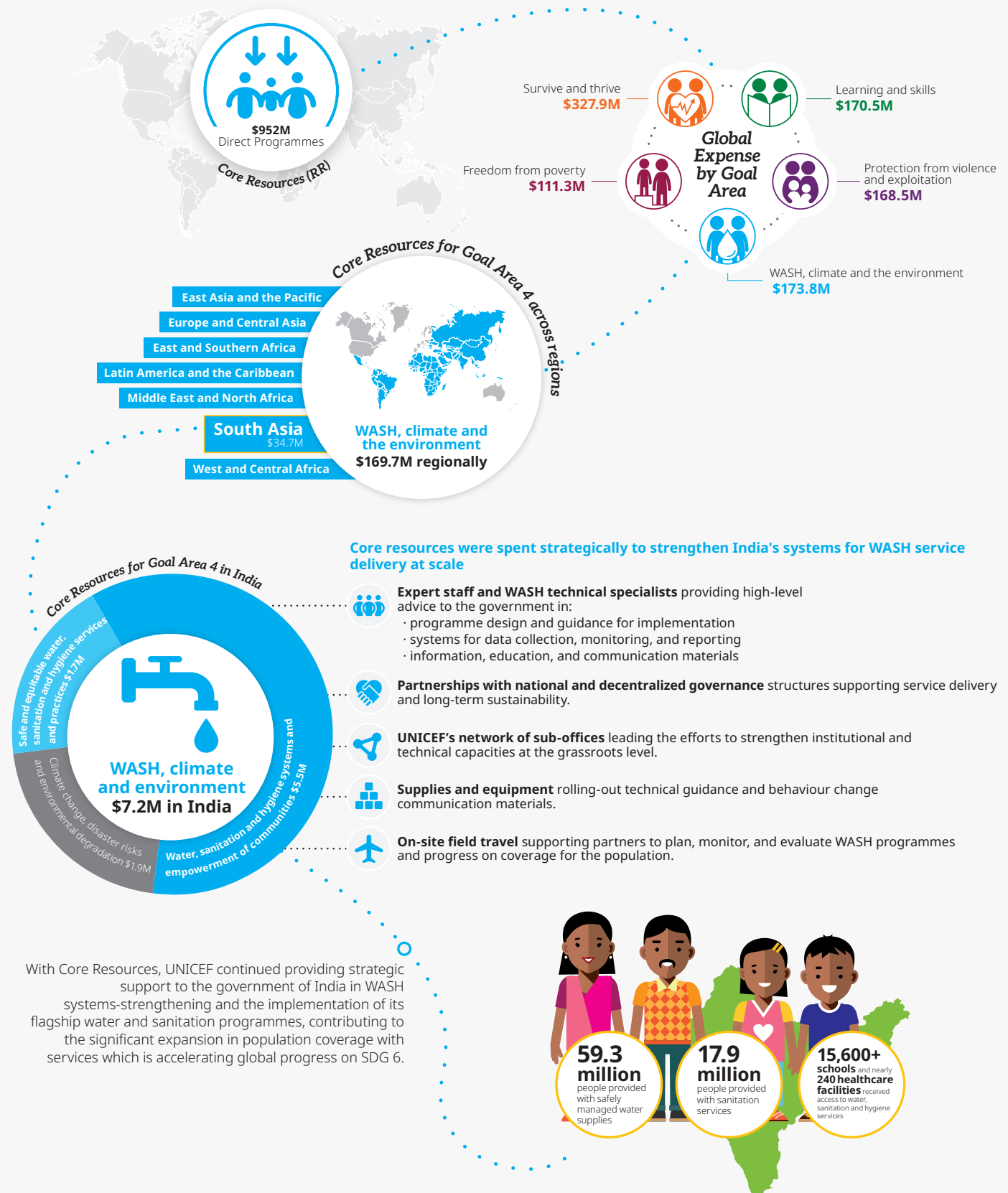




# How We Spend Core Resources in Countries: The journey from allocation to results in India

The Core Resources journey begins with UNICEF's Strategic Plan Goal Areas. These are the basis on which we budget and allocate for our Direct Programmes at the global, regional, and country level.

This illustration shows how UNICEF strategically used Core Resources under the WASH, Climate and Environment Goal Area to advance access to safe water and sanitation for children in India.



# The Republic of Moldova: Turning modest funds into monumental reform

In a country navigating both promise and pressure, a small, strategic investment of unrestricted funding helped spark one of the boldest social protection reforms in the Republic of Moldova's recent history.

In 2022, Moldova stood at a crossroads. On one hand, it had just been granted EU candidate status, signalling a new era of opportunity. On the other hand, more than a third of Moldovans were living in poverty. The country was managing overlapping crises: inflation, energy insecurity, a fragile social safety net, and the ongoing responsibility of hosting over 100,000 refugees from Ukraine. Despite the overwhelming need, only a very small portion of impoverished households were receiving government social assistance.



## SDG target 1.2

More than 50,000 vulnerable children and their caregivers, including refugees from Ukraine, have accessed services through the new minimum package of care in 2024.



For Moldova's children, the consequences were clear – and unacceptable.

That same year, UNICEF deployed just \$20,000 in flexible, unrestricted Core Resources (RR). Rather than filling temporary gaps, the country office used this catalytic funding to lay the foundation for something far more ambitious: a nationwide transformation of Moldova's social protection system.

With RR support, UNICEF conducted a deep analysis of Moldova's fragmented safety net – uncovering weak data systems, inconsistent service availability, and an overstretched workforce. **This formed the technical and evidence base for a new national vision: RESTART – a comprehensive, equity-focused reform designed to dramatically expand and modernize social protection**, with the bold target of increasing the number of vulnerable families covered by 35 per cent every year between 2023 and 2026.

Backed by UNICEF's technical expertise and evidence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection presented the case for reform. **In late 2023, the government approved a \$68 million budget to roll out RESTART**, including the establishment of 10 new territorial social assistance agencies, the launch of a new national department for social assistance, and the adoption of a harmonized, nationwide package of essential services.

## SDG target 1.3

UNICEF's measurements, analysis, and policy advice paved the way for \$68 million government and other investments in the RESTART social protection reform, mitigating an increase in child poverty by 3.4 per cent and increasing the value of social benefits for families with children by 42 per cent.





The results are already tangible.

- Without child benefits, the child poverty rate would have increased by 3.4 percentage points in 2023.
- The total value of social benefits for families with children rose by 42 per cent.
- Nearly 50,000 vulnerable children and their caregivers, including over 1,215 refugees from Ukraine, have accessed services through the new minimum package of care.

UNICEF's technical support also helped redesign Moldova's cash transfer systems to include refugees and remove access barriers, reaching tens of thousands of refugee and host population families. The childbirth grant was nearly doubled and is now automatically distributed to eligible families, including refugees with Temporary Protection status.



### **RESTART is doing more than expanding services; it is building resilience.**

With a stronger, more responsive system in place, Moldova is better equipped to provide equitable and inclusive support to families during times of crisis. Social assistance for children with disabilities and marginalized families is now more adequately financed, more accessible, and aligns more closely with EU standards.

For many families from Ukraine, the dream of a peaceful and prosperous life was shattered by the war that broke out.



A \$20,000 RR investment helped unlock over \$68 million in national and donor financing within a single year – a remarkable return on investment by any measure.

**More than a programme, RESTART is a proof point:** when UNICEF has the flexibility to act strategically – and when governments are ready to lead boldly – even modest RR contributions can catalyse lasting, system-wide change.

This is the power of unrestricted funding.

# How Bangladesh is beating the odds of stunting

With long-term investment and system-wide reform, a country is shifting the future for millions of children.

Stunting is one of the most devastating forms of malnutrition. It holds children back before they've even had a chance to begin. A stunted child may never reach their full height or cognitive potential. They are more likely to fall ill, struggle to learn, earn less later in life and suffer from long term health problems. The damage is often irreversible.

In Bangladesh, this silent crisis once affected millions. But that story is changing.

## SDG target 2.2

Stunting in children under the age of 5 decreased by 40 per cent. (from 41 per cent in 2011 to 24 per cent in 2022).



For more than two decades, UNICEF has deployed unrestricted Core Resources to support the Government of Bangladesh in transforming nutrition outcomes for children.

**That long-term investment has paid off. Stunting in children under five has fallen from 41 per cent in 2011 to 24 per cent in 2022.** Over the same period, government spending on nutrition rose from just \$1.83 per child per year to \$18.

UNICEF's support has played a transformative role in enabling the Government of Bangladesh to implement priority nutrition actions, strengthen institutional frameworks, and build critical capacity. This collaboration has helped embed nutrition targets across 22 ministries and their affiliated departments, enhancing inter-ministerial coordination and reinforcing accountability at all levels of the government.

Primary health care facilities across the country have been equipped to gather and act on real-time data, with the number reporting on children's nutrition outcomes rising from 15 per cent in 2008 to nearly 78 per cent today. And high-level political commitment has been galvanized, with nutrition enshrined as a constitutional right and the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, driving efforts forward. UNICEF played a central role in formalizing and supporting this body.

**This is what it means to achieve results at scale. Not a single programme or intervention, but a coordinated effort across society.** Not quick wins, but sustained progress over time.

Dressed for the occasion, they come together to share a meal that, though simple, is rich in nutrition and thoughtfully prepared. Their choice of wholesome, unembellished dishes reflects their deep awareness of healthy eating, prioritizing nourishment over indulgence.





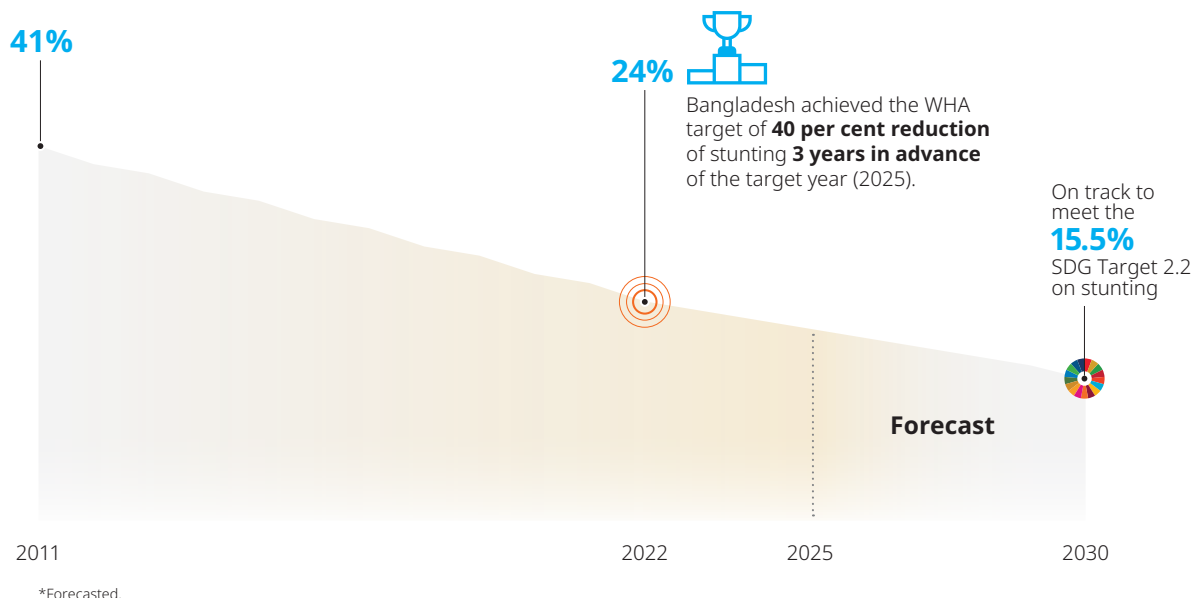
## SDG target 2.2

Government investments in nutrition services increased from \$1.83 per child per year in the mid-2000s to \$18 per child in 2021.



Thanks to Core Resources, Bangladesh has already achieved its World Health Assembly target of 40 per cent reduction. It is now on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of Target 2.2 reducing stunting to 15.5 per cent by 2030.

## Bangladesh's journey in reducing stunting in children under the age of five, 2011–2030\*



Yet challenges remain. More than 3.7 million children in Bangladesh are still affected by stunting. And recent shocks — including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rohingya refugee crisis, and rising food insecurity — have made clear just how fragile these gains can be.

**That's why Core Resources continue to matter. They allow UNICEF to stay the course, adapt quickly, and keep driving change across the system.** They are helping Bangladesh not just reduce stunting, but build a future where every child can grow, learn and thrive.

Every donor to Core Resources is part of this story. Together, we are helping rewrite the future for children in Bangladesh — one that begins not with disadvantage, but with possibility.



Maria and her father at the Makrail Bazar, carefully selecting a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. As they shop for wholesome ingredients to prepare their Sehri and Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan, he imparts valuable lessons on nutrition and mindful eating.

# Core Resources seed a groundwater revolution in the Horn of Africa

In the Horn of Africa, 25 million people still lack affordable, reliable, long-term access to water. For children, this means a higher risk of disease, malnutrition, and missed education.

**But how do you find clean water in a region where drought is intensifying and rivers are drying up?**

The answer lies beneath the surface. And now, thanks to \$9 million in Core Resources from the set-aside fund for strategic and innovative activities, UNICEF is helping to unlock it.

With unrestricted funding, UNICEF scaled up a breakthrough approach to groundwater mapping. By combining satellite data, remote sensing and advanced geophysical surveys, UNICEF can now accurately locate deep, sustainable groundwater sources, even in the harshest desert terrain. The result? The drilling success rate has more than doubled, from 45 to 90 per cent. This work is part of a UNICEF-led effort to drive water security across the Horn of Africa, using innovation, data and systems thinking.

This single innovation is changing everything. Instead of dry wells and failed efforts, UNICEF is helping governments deliver safe, sustainable water even in times of crisis. But the impact doesn't stop there.



## SDG target 6.4

Nearly a million square kilometres of territory in drought-prone countries mapped for groundwater suitability, with the potential to benefit 10 million people in need.



With Core Resources, UNICEF has:

- Mapped nearly 1 million square kilometres for groundwater suitability, with the potential to benefit 10 million people
- Supported the successful drilling of multiple deep wells in Kenya and Ethiopia, building on groundwater mapping and technical insights
- Equipped 15 wells with systems that are already delivering safe drinking water
- Trained local drillers, strengthened utilities, and improved government-data systems to ensure long-term results

*"Core Resources helped UNICEF show that it was possible to do things differently. Today, this work has the potential to provide long-term water security to 25 million people in the Horn of Africa. Because of our donors, it's now expanding into Southern Africa and the Middle East, and we're exploring options for future expansion into the Sahel. If that happens, a \$9 million investment could help transform the lives of 100 million people."*

—David Duncan, Senior Advisor, Innovation, UNICEF Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub

A girl fetches water in Arbilla, in the Borena zone in the south of Ethiopia, where the water system was installed by UNICEF.





This work has been driven by collaboration across UNICEF – from the Programme Group and Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub, to Regional and Country Offices – combining technical leadership, and on-the-ground implementation. Core Resources didn't just fund innovation. They created momentum.

Denmark's support to UNICEF's Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub helped scale up the approach. Then JICA invested \$4.9 million to expand it into Djibouti, bringing the total leveraged to more than \$10 million

**Investing in long-term water security is transformative.** It reduces conflict, unlocks economic growth, and protects children from the compounded risks of drought, disease and displacement. It also frees women and girls from the burden of fetching water, giving them time to learn, work and thrive.



Rebecca Anyuduk washes dishes at her home in Kanyangapus, Turkana County, Kenya. Turkana County is experiencing one of the worst droughts in decades, following the failure of four rainy seasons.

## Kenya

Kenya is pioneering this innovative solution to improve security for drought-affected regions.

Across six counties, UNICEF and the government are turning mapped groundwater into climate-resilient water services. So far, nine boreholes have been successfully drilled with the potential to provide safe access to water for an estimated **113,600 people**. Two of these boreholes are already operational, and they have been fitted with solar-powered pumping systems, bringing clean, sustainable water to **6,300 people**. By strengthening local capacity and working in partnership with the government, this work is laying the foundation for sustainable access to water and more resilient communities.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to see the work in action.



## Ethiopia

In drought-prone areas of Ethiopia, groundwater offers the most viable path to long-term water access. UNICEF's groundwater mapping, combined with detailed geophysical surveys and in-depth data analysis, has identified potential groundwater sites across regions. Using core and other resources, numerous boreholes have been successfully drilled, providing water for more than **500,000 people**. Distribution systems for the remaining sites are still being developed, with the goal of ensuring reliable access to water for communities. As implementation continues, this model is becoming a blueprint for how Ethiopia can protect its people from climate shocks and water scarcity.



# From Emergency Response to Lasting Equity: Strengthening social protection in Guatemala

When the pandemic hit Guatemala, it wasn't just a health emergency. For millions of families, it triggered a financial crisis. Jobs vanished, incomes dried up, and households were suddenly unable to afford food, rent or medicine.

The fastest and most effective solution? Cash assistance – a dignified response that empowers families to decide what they need most, while supporting local markets and building resilience.

But at the time, Guatemala didn't have the infrastructure to deliver it. There was no national system in place, and no existing platform that could move funds safely and quickly at scale.

## SDG target 1.2

UNICEF's policy advice and partnerships led to \$1 billion of government investment in social protection programmes over the last 5 years, including *Bono Familia* and Bono Social.



That's where UNICEF came in. With support from unrestricted funding, UNICEF worked with the Government of Guatemala to design and deliver a secure, scalable digital cash transfer system. What made this effort remarkable was its foundation: an unprecedented alliance between public and private actors – from banks and mobile networks to retail partners and government agencies – all working together to make the impossible possible.

The solution became the backbone of **Bono Familia**: the largest social protection programme in Guatemala's history. People could access funds easily, including through ATMs and major retailers, helping the response reach families fast.

In partnership with the World Bank, the government used this system, developed with UNICEF's technical expertise, to reach more than 2.6 million poor and vulnerable families (80 per cent of all households) with vital cash assistance. This contributed to mitigating the increase in poverty caused by the pandemic by 2.6 percentage points.



But this wasn't just a short-term fix. **It was the start of something bigger.**

UNICEF helped turn an emergency solution into a long-term foundation for change. Working with the government and other United Nations agencies, UNICEF supported the design and rolling out of the Social Household Registry (SHR), a mobile-enabled system that

Carmen Ozaeta, 40, buys a backpack for her daughter Paulina, 11. Conditional cash transfers help the most vulnerable families in the country so that children can attend school. In Guatemala currently only 2 per cent of children receive initial early childhood education, while only 36 per cent of children between 16 and 18 years of age are at school. It is necessary to increase investment in education so that all children have access to education and can reach their full potential.





captures socio-economic data for the first time and helps target support to families more effectively.

The SHR, like the earlier cash system, was built through collaboration, with UNICEF once again convening actors across central government and municipalities to ensure technical solutions worked in practice. What began as a pilot with 19,000 households in 2021–2022 is now on track to reach more than 200,000 households by 2025, enabling the inclusion of more than 49,000 new households in social protection programmes.

The SHR has also enabled implementation of the **Mano a Mano Intersectoral Initiative**, a coordinated effort to reduce vulnerability among people living in poverty and extreme poverty. Delivered through **10 government institutions**, it links services across housing, health, education, agriculture, economic inclusion, social protection and more.

### SDG target 1.3

*Bono Familia* has mitigated a three-to-four-fold increase in poverty, and reached 2.6 million vulnerable families with cash transfers.



Telma Paz, 36, along with her children of 11, 9, and 4 years old, benefit from the *Bono Familia* programme granted by the Government of Guatemala, thanks to the support of UNICEF and the World Bank.

Since 2020, **Guatemala has delivered \$1 billion worth of cash transfers**, with stronger coordination, better targeting and broader reach supported by **UNICEF's technical assistance**, sustained partnerships, and the **strategic use of Core Resources**.

*"COVID-19 had a real impact on Guatemala," says Alejandra Contreras, UNICEF Social Policy Specialist. "The poverty rate only increased from 45.6 per cent to 47 per cent in 2020. Before the social protection programmes made possible with Core Resources, the World Bank estimated that poverty could have been as high as 53.9 per cent. Children and their families can really feel the difference made by our work, and that is wonderful to see."*

The future is looking brighter. The SHR has already enabled the *Bono Social* and *Bolsa Social* conditional cash transfer programmes to increase the number of beneficiary families by 1.7 times between 2022 and 2024 — **a clear sign that public-private collaboration, powered by flexible funding, can drive real systems transformation for children and their families.**

**\$1 billion**  
government investment in social protection programmes delivering cash transfers to 2.6 million families



Resources leveraged from public and private sector partners

A **416x** return on UNICEF's investment

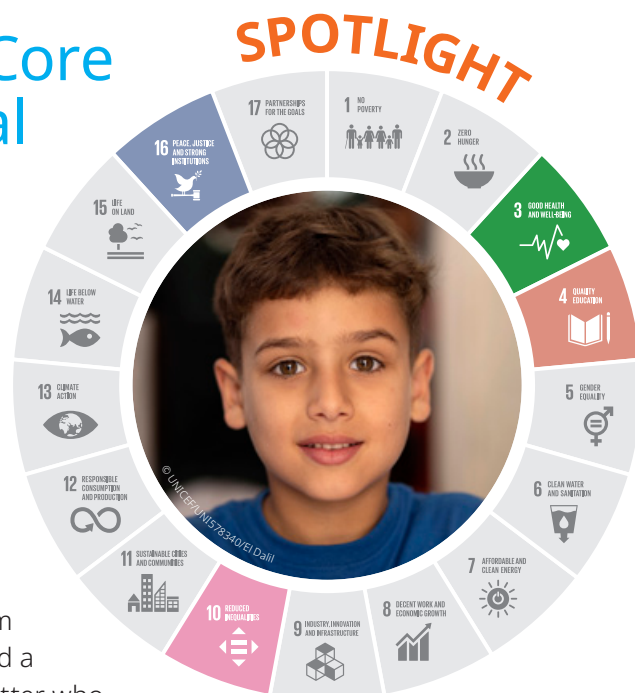
**\$2.4 million**  
UNICEF Core Resources invested in technical capacities on social protection



# Unlocking Possibility: How Core Resources launched a global mental health movement

Around the world, far too many children face anxiety, depression, distress, and social isolation, but receive no support. In low- and middle-income countries, on average there are fewer than 0.1 psychiatrists who specialize in treating children and adolescents per 100,000 population. At the same time, just 2 per cent of government health budgets are allocated to mental health, and only a sliver of that ever reaches children and adolescents.

Against this backdrop, a \$10 million unrestricted investment from UNICEF's Core Resources set a bold new vision in motion: to build a world where every child has access to mental health care, no matter who they are or where they live.



## SDG target 3.4

Mental health services and care integrated into national systems in 13 countries, reaching more than 8.8 million children, adolescents, caregivers and service providers



Implementing a package of mental health care interventions for adolescents offers a **23-fold return on investment** for every dollar spent.

This catalytic funding launched the **WHO–UNICEF Joint Programme on Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being and Development of Children and Adolescents**, a 10-year initiative operating in 13 countries across every region: from Bhutan and Côte d'Ivoire to Colombia and North Macedonia.\*

Rather than offering short-term, project-specific support, the Programme focuses on four strategic priorities that are transforming national systems: policy reform, workforce development, cross-sector care, and services which help children thrive.

The vision is bold: that by 2030, children and adolescents living in the 13 countries will experience reduced suffering and improved mental health and psychosocial well-being.



## Phase I (2021–2023)

Developing and testing programme models for children

## Phase II (2024–2027)

Expanding scalable models

## Phase III (2028–2030)

National coverage of models

Grade 7 students read the Magnificent Mei comic, during the Helping Adolescent Thrive (HAT) consultation at Genekha Primary School, Thimphu, Bhutan.

\*Albania, Bhutan, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Jordan, Egypt, Malaysia, Maldives, Mozambique, North Macedonia, Papua New Guinea and Serbia.



In just the first phase of implementation, the Programme has reached more than **8.8 million children, adolescents, caregivers and service providers** through direct mental health and psychosocial programming. This includes efforts to strengthen coordination and leadership, provide multisectoral care services, implement promotive and preventive interventions in schools and community settings, and nurture an enabling data and evidence ecosystem for child and adolescent mental health.

- Close to **42,000** teachers, health workers, social services workers, and frontliners have been equipped with tools and training to reach over 10.2 million children and caregivers with mental health care and support every year
- More than **333,700** children and caregivers have received mental health, psychosocial well-being, and care services
- More than **4.9 million** individuals have been reached through mental health prevention and promotion campaigns

In North Macedonia, the Programme supported the development of the country's first-ever **national action plan** for child and adolescent mental health, a milestone that will shape systems for years to come.

What made this possible was the freedom to imagine and test bold ways to strengthen mental health systems: to shift strategies when data and evidence reveal gaps, and dynamically respond to country-specific needs.

### The Joint Programme is now gaining global momentum.

It is attracting new investment, generating political will, and expanding UNICEF's ability to deliver strategic, long-term support in some of the world's most under-resourced mental health contexts. But this is just the beginning. With the goal of expanding to 30 countries by 2030, the need for continued flexible funding is greater than ever.

This is what unrestricted funding makes possible: it unlocks innovation, drives systems change, and gives millions of children the chance to heal, grow, and thrive – not just today, but for generations to come.



In partnership with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity, UNICEF developed and piloted an early childhood development centre called the Family and Early Childhood Services Center (FECSC). This centre delivers a package of services for both children and their parents, where they can find educational, psychological, and parental counseling services, as well as entertainment to practice learning through play.



Beneficiaries receive psychological therapy through Capoeira at the Mutewa school in the Maganja Da Costa district, Zambezia Province, Mozambique.

# Closer Than Ever: Yemen's community health workforce is reaching children and families in need

Yemen is one of the most challenging places in the world to be a child. After nearly a decade of conflict, essential services remain fractured and overstretched. Yet in 2023, child mortality had dropped by 23 per cent compared to a decade earlier – a powerful sign of progress against the odds.

This progress hasn't happened by chance. With nearly three quarters of Yemen's 30 million people living in remote, mountainous areas, **UNICEF has worked year after year to keep the country's primary health-care system operational**, using Core Resources to sustain the basic functionality of services and ensure they remain available to the children and mothers who need them most.

That support has been critical. UNICEF and partners – including the World Bank, FCDO, the EU and Gavi – now support 60 per cent of Yemen's 5,000 primary health-care facilities, maintaining essential services for around 3.7 million women and children. But where health facilities are out of reach, UNICEF has gone even further by taking services directly into the heart of communities.

In 2024 alone, nearly 1.8 million women and children were reached with services delivered by community health workers, while 2.6 million people benefited from their health promotion and prevention efforts.

"The reality in Yemen is that the systems are fragile and require our continued support to deliver life-saving assistance, but also to become more resilient in the long-term," explains Kebir Hassen, UNICEF Yemen Chief of Health. "Using Core Resources means we can persevere, secure our hard-won gains, and steadily remove the barriers to progress on child survival."

This ability to persevere has been central to UNICEF's approach. In a country where humanitarian needs often dominate the headlines, **Core Resources have enabled UNICEF to maintain focus on strengthening systems, bridging the gap between emergency response and long-term development**. From safeguarding immunization efforts to supporting nutrition, maternal health and disease surveillance, this work has been instrumental in preventing total system collapse and laying the foundation for recovery.

As part of the community health workers training conducted by UNICEF at Ibn Khaldoun Hospital, community health workers in Lahj Governorate are reaching out to neighbouring houses to provide vaccination services to children.



## SDG target 3.2

23 per cent reduction in under-five mortality rate amid the conflict (between 2013 and 2023).





Ulfat Saeed is one of 3,600 community health workers trained and deployed across Yemen. In her village of Bayhan, in Lahj Governorate, she visits homes, diagnoses malnutrition, educates mothers on prenatal and postnatal care, and encourages vaccine uptake. She knows what's at stake. "Pneumonia, measles, malnutrition and diarrhoea are widespread here," she explains. "People refused vaccines and did not know much about malnutrition and its risks, which put their children's lives at risk."



Before this model, community health-care delivery was fragmented, with volunteers working in silos across health, nutrition, and social and behaviour change. **Thanks to the flexibility of Core Resources, UNICEF was able to reimagine and restructure the system, building a unified community-health workforce trained across disciplines and linked to formal health-care facilities.** The results are transformative: more services, better data, and stronger systems that provide timely care to more women and children and save lives.

This integrated model has also strengthened trust. **By embedding health workers within their own communities, UNICEF has helped to overcome cultural and logistical barriers to care,** especially for women and children. The presence of trained local workers – equipped with knowledge, supplies and supervision – means that more families are seeking and receiving timely care, and more children are being protected from preventable disease and malnutrition.

#### SDG target 3.2

In 2024, community health workers reached nearly 1.8 million women and children with health services, and nearly 2.6 million with health promotion and prevention activities.



In the months ahead, this workforce will be fully integrated into a new, three-tiered national primary health-care structure, helping to defragment service delivery and embed resilience for the future. Thanks to these sustained investments, Yemen is already seeing measurable improvements across key child health indicators, progress made possible by Core Resources and a commitment to long-term system reform.

A young girl beams with pride and joy, displaying her marked finger after being vaccinated against polio as part of the ongoing precautionary campaign in Aden, Yemen, supported by UNICEF. This simple gesture not only signifies her protection against this devastating disease but also reflects the success and impact of this campaign.



# A Lifeline Amid Crisis: How Core Resources help children survive and hope in Democratic Republic of the Congo

For almost 30 years, children in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been born into one of the world's most complex and difficult humanitarian situations. Families torn apart by violence. Children losing safety, stability and hope. Decades of recurrent violence, displacement, climate-related disasters and disease outbreaks have led to a significant breakdown in the social systems that keep children safe.

Today 14.9 million children are battling preventable diseases like mpox, cholera and measles. And the children in conflict areas are facing widespread rape, abuse, killing, maiming, abductions and other forms of harm. But despite this overwhelming need, humanitarian agencies – UNICEF included – have faced an increasingly severe funding crisis. As James Elder, UNICEF spokesperson, said after visiting DRC in April 2025: *“The cost of inaction isn't abstract. It's measured in preventable suffering and lost futures.”*

UNICEF exists for every child. And it is in these difficult times that we call on the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF), a revolving loan supported by Core Resources. *“It is a lifeline: there when we need it most, when children's needs are greatest.”* said Mariame Sylla, UNICEF Deputy Representative in DRC, in 2024. **Without the EPF we would not have been able to:**

- **Provide safe drinking water and lifesaving supplies** to nearly 1,770,000 people in almost 300,000 households affected by or at risk of cholera. These included oral rehydration solution, soap, water treatment products, jerrycans and more. These items save lives today and strengthen resilience to tomorrow's outbreaks
- **Help children facing malnutrition.** EPF funds paid for nutritional supplies and support to help ensure that more than 1,700 health facilities stayed operational, securing essential treatment for more than 129,000 children facing severe wasting
- **Provide safety to children.** The funds enabled UNICEF to keep providing child protection services with partners, despite increased insecurity. UNICEF assisted over 500 children formerly associated with armed groups (20 per cent of whom were girls), and close to 1,900 children separated from their families were either helped with referrals to other key services or were reunited with their families

With your continued support for Core Resources, UNICEF will carry on helping children in underfunded emergencies and ensure their suffering is not forgotten.

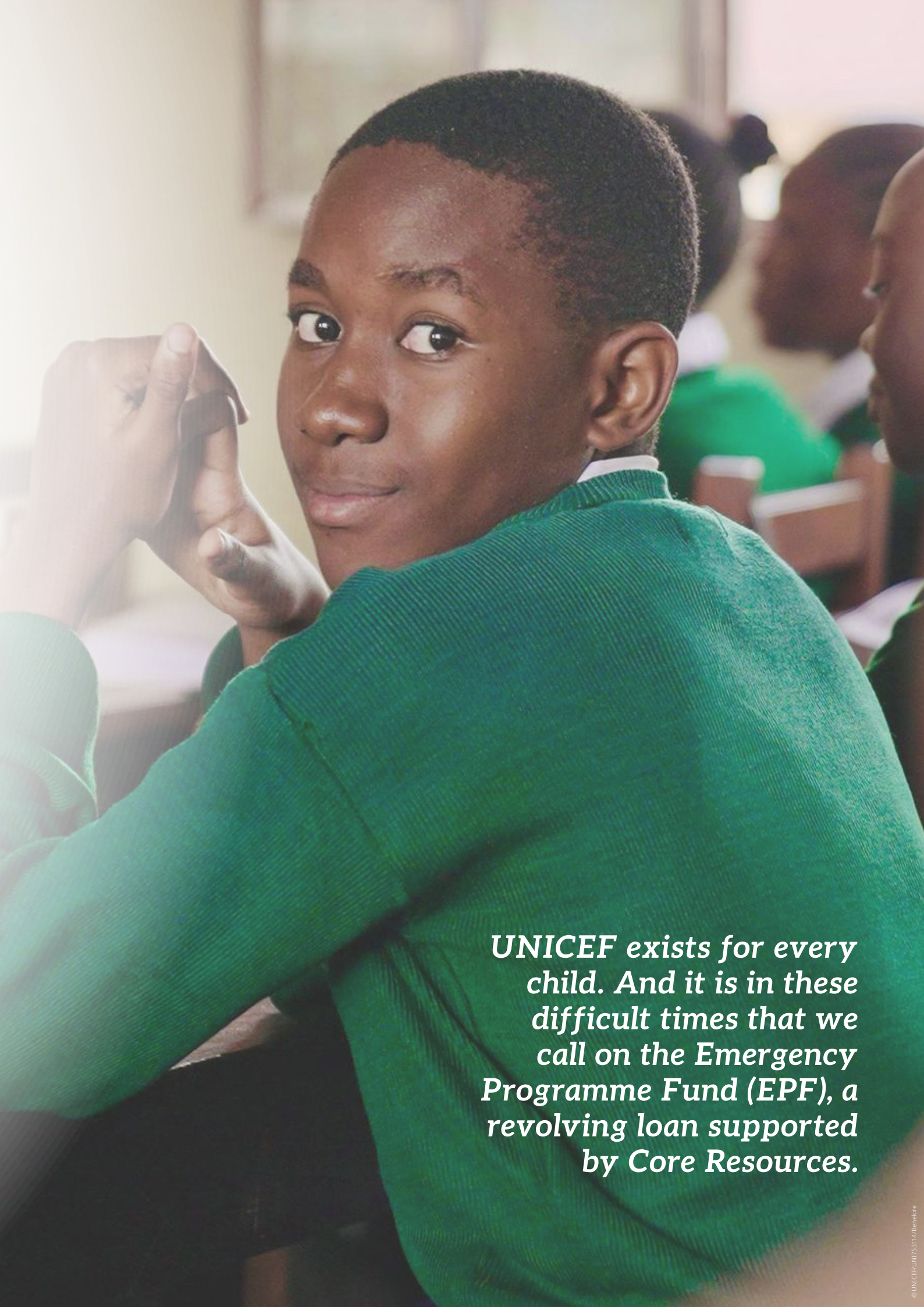


## SDG target 2.2

UNICEF secured lifesaving supplies and treatment for more than 129,000 children facing severe wasting.







**UNICEF exists for every  
child. And it is in these  
difficult times that we  
call on the Emergency  
Programme Fund (EPF), a  
revolving loan supported  
by Core Resources.**

# Protecting Children in a Changing World: UNICEF's Today & Tomorrow initiative

## THE URGENT REALITY

**Fifty per cent** of the world's children live in countries at extreme risk from climate change. Imagine a world where children are not victims of climate disasters but are protected, resilient, and empowered. This is the vision behind UNICEF's groundbreaking **Today & Tomorrow Initiative**.

## A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

The initiative is the world's first holistic climate change solution specifically designed for children, breaking the traditional disaster response cycle.

## HOW TODAY & TOMORROW WORKS

The initiative operates on two interconnected fronts:

### Today



- Building resilience
- Investing in climate change adaptation
- Developing disaster risk reduction strategies
- Creating climate-resilient schools and services
- Reducing children's exposure to environmental risks



### Tomorrow



- Innovative protection
- Pioneering a first-of-its-kind parametric insurance mechanism
- Enabling a rapid financial response within 48 hours of a disaster
- Providing flexible resources to protect vulnerable children and families

## The Impact: By the numbers



**1 billion** children are exposed to extreme climate risks



**13.5 million** vulnerable people are targeted for protection



Every **\$1** invested in resilience and disaster risk reduction saves up to **\$15** in future recovery costs



Up to **\$100 million** in insurance coverage over three years secured with support from a \$15 million grant from the Global Shield Financing Facility

### Mozambique

#### Cyclone Freddy response

- **\$1.8 million** payout triggered automatically
- Nearly **65,000** people reached within days
- Over **41,000** children protected with critical services

### Madagascar

#### Sustainable recovery

- **\$1.5 million** in payouts across multiple events
- Protected **80,000** people
- Funds used to disaster-proof education facilities, reducing future risks

## The power of flexible funding

The Today & Tomorrow initiative is made possible by flexible funding, with an initial \$400,000 Core Resources as seed funding, which allows UNICEF to:

1. Invest in innovative financial instruments like parametric insurance
2. Respond rapidly to emergencies without waiting for traditional fundraising
3. Allocate resources where they're most needed, when they're most needed

## Award-winning innovation

Recognized globally with three major awards, including:

- Axco Global Insurance Award: Excellence in Global Programmes
- Sustainable Insurance Initiative of the Year
- Systemic Risk Solution of the Year

## The fundamental truth: The climate crisis is a child rights crisis

By investing in resilience today and securing rapid response capabilities for tomorrow, UNICEF is transforming how we protect children in an increasingly unpredictable world.





**Today and Tomorrow  
initiative is the world's  
first integrated climate  
and disaster risk finance  
mechanism specifically  
targeted and designed to be  
effective for children and  
young people.**



# Rapid Response, Lasting Impact: How unrestricted funding helped Rwanda stop a deadly outbreak

When Rwanda confirmed its first-ever case of Marburg Virus Disease (MVD) in September 2024, it was more than a health scare – it was a potential national crisis. With health-care workers among the first infected, the threat of interruptions to access to health services for children and their families and risk of widespread transmission loomed large.

Marburg virus disease (MVD) is a severe illness with a fatality rate of up to 88 per cent, so every outbreak puts the entire world on alert. Within hours, **the Government of Rwanda, supported by WHO, UNICEF and partners, mobilized a full-scale emergency response.**

The government-led strategy and efforts focused on three urgent priorities: supplies, surveillance, and containment.

Supported by rapid, unrestricted funding from UNICEF's Emergency Programme Fund (EPF), UNICEF delivered essential supplies, including personal protective equipment, infection prevention materials, and hygiene kits, to health facilities, schools, and border crossings. In a disease as deadly as Marburg, where transmission often occurs through direct contact, supplies aren't just helpful, they are the first line of defence.

## SDG target 3.1

UNICEF reinforced the government's response to the Marburg disease outbreak, contributing to more lives being saved and a low fatality rate of 22.7 per cent.



At the same time, **over 55,000 community health workers** were trained in surveillance through active case finding. In an outbreak of a disease with no cure, early identification and isolation of cases are critical for stopping transmission. Meanwhile, **risk communication campaigns reached more than 3 million people.** Containment depends on community awareness and trust. With clear information on symptoms, prevention, and reporting protocols, communities became active partners in stopping the spread.

*"This was a true test of our emergency response capacity, and it showed what is possible when flexible funding is matched by national leadership," said Lieke van de Wiel, UNICEF Representative in Rwanda. "Because of the rapid support we received through the Emergency Programme Fund, we were able to act fast, and support the government to contain a devastating outbreak."*

On 20 December 2024, Rwanda officially declared the outbreak over with a case fatality rate (CFR) of 22.7 per cent (66 confirmed cases, 15 deaths), one of the lowest in the world. Compared to the 20–88 per cent CFRs in other outbreaks, this can be considered a success for the Government of Rwanda and its partners. The lesson is clear: **when governments and global partners act fast and work together, and have the flexibility to allocate funds where they are most needed, even the deadliest threats can be stopped in their tracks.**

On 11 October 2024, Rwanda's Ministry of Health conducted an exercise to prepare health care facilities for hemorrhagic fever viruses in Kigali.





# A Safer Path to Justice: Jordan's One-Stop Centres for children and women

When a child or woman survives or witnesses violence, abuse or exploitation, the journey to protection and justice can be long, traumatic and unclear. Repetitive interrogations, unfamiliar environments, and limited specialist support often worsen the experience, deterring children and women from seeking help.

The Government of Jordan, UNICEF, and partners recognized the need for change. **Thanks to unrestricted funding, Jordan achieved a crucial milestone** by introducing a solution that provides effective protection to victims and witnesses of crime: **child- and woman-friendly One-Stop Centres at the Family Protection and Juvenile Departments of the Ministry of Interior.**



## SDG target 16.3

The first ever One-Stop Centre offers a proven model for replication across Jordan including Syrian refugee camps, successfully supporting an initial 500 children and women survivors and witnesses of violence, abuse or exploitation with multi-sectoral services.



## What is a One-Stop Centre?

*One-Stop Centres bring medical, legal, psychological and social support services together under one roof. This integrated model reduces retraumatization, safeguards dignity, and helps survivors access the support they need without delay. Special interview rooms and one-way mirror identification units help children and women feel safe while avoiding direct confrontation with perpetrators. At every step, services are delivered in ways that respect the emotional and psychological well-being of survivors.*

UNICEF drew on its proven global expertise in child protection, offering government ministries technical advice and resources to create the first One-Stop Centre, which launched in North Amman. With a proven concept tested with 500 children and women, UNICEF and the government now aim to bring services to each of the 19 Family Protection and Juvenile Departments in the country – including those in the Za'atari and Azraq Syrian refugee camps.



But infrastructure alone doesn't change systems. **This is why unrestricted funding has also supported the training of more than 420 police officers and social workers in child-sensitive procedures.**

This ensures that justice professionals and social service providers are equipped to support children in contact with the law as victims, witnesses or alleged offenders.

With every One-Stop Centre, Jordan is building a justice system that is more accessible, more compassionate and more protective – especially for those who need it most.

Women and children, referred to the One-Stop Centre, are provided with integrated services, including child protection.

# Sierra Leone: Laying the legal and digital foundations to protect every child

In Sierra Leone, a quiet transformation is underway – a transformation that is reshaping how the country protects its most vulnerable children and is setting the stage for lasting change. At the heart of it all is unrestricted funding.

**Over the past five years, more than 675,000 children in Sierra Leone have received protection services through UNICEF-supported programmes**, including many who have faced violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect. But this is not just a story of reaching more children. It is a story of building the workforce, tools and laws to protect children for generations to come.

Sierra Leone's social service sector has long suffered from critical gaps: too few social workers, fragmented case management, and a lack of data to drive system-wide reform. Thanks to unrestricted funding, UNICEF has helped change that.

In 2021, just 53 government-recognized social workers were serving the entire country. By 2024, that number had jumped by 264 per cent, to 193, thanks to UNICEF's support in human resource planning for the social welfare sector and government investments. This growth means more outreach, more referrals, and more children connected to lifesaving care..

## SDG target 16.2

More than 675,000 children, including those who have faced violence, exploitation, abuse or neglect have received protection services between 2020 and 2024 through UNICEF-supported programmes.



But expanding the workforce was just one piece of the puzzle. **In April 2025 – after years of policy dialogue, technical support and advocacy – the government passed a landmark Professional Social Workforce Regulatory Act.** The legislation, supported by UNICEF and enabled by unrestricted giving, formally recognizes and accredits social workers for the first time in Sierra Leone's history. It raises professional standards, strengthens public trust in social services, and paves the way for greater national investment in social workers. Most importantly, a professional, accredited system with national reach will now protect children.

## This system is going digital.

With the support of unrestricted funding, UNICEF introduced a powerful new Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+, known as Primero) and a complementary Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS+). These digital tools are transforming the way social workers do their jobs – moving from unreliable paper-based records to a secure, real-time case management system.

A group of women hold their children's birth certificates in the village of Mateneh, Bombali district.





Over 20,000 child protection cases have already been registered in the new system. More than 16,000 of those cases have been referred for essential services such as psychosocial support, legal aid, or reunification with family members. Across Sierra Leone the data collection and management of child protection cases is improving rapidly – enabling smarter policy decisions, better case tracking, and more effective service delivery to children.

This digital shift is empowering frontline social workers and helping them deliver faster, more coordinated care. But it is also transforming the system itself: how the government sees vulnerability, allocates resources, and plans for the future.

**The results in Sierra Leone are a direct outcome of long-term, unrestricted funding.** Core Resources enabled UNICEF to stay engaged over several years, not only responding to emergencies but also supporting the structural changes that make sustained protection possible.

This is the kind of impact that unrestricted funding unlocks: smarter systems, stronger laws, skilled workers, and real-time tools that collectively safeguard the rights of every child. It's not just a service. It's a foundation for a safer future.

This is how we end abuse and violence against children – not just today, but for good.



Ishmael Beah, former child soldier and UNICEF Advocate for children affected by war, talks with Adama, 8. Adama was sexually abused by her teacher this year during lunch break. She reported the incident to her mother who informed the local and school authorities.

Community Health Worker and Mother's Support Group Facilitator Mbalu Turay (right) meets with parents in Masiaka Community, Kambia District, Sierra Leone, to provide basic mental health and psychosocial support services.



# West Africa: Birth registration as the gateway to every right

In West and Central Africa, millions of children remain invisible – denied access to education, health care, and protection simply because they don't have a legal identity. Just 45 per cent of infants have their births registered, which is one of the lowest rates in the world.

But in Côte d'Ivoire and Cabo Verde, bold government leadership, long-term partnership with UNICEF, and the catalytic power of unrestricted funding are changing that, bringing the region closer than ever to universal birth registration.

**In these two countries, more than 9 in 10 children are now registered before their first birthday.** These are not small wins. They are national milestones and blueprints for how progress can be accelerated across the region.



## Côte d'Ivoire: Building systems to reach every child

In 2012, only 65 per cent of children in Côte d'Ivoire were registered at birth. **By 2021, that number had climbed to 96 per cent despite population growth of nearly 3 per cent per year**, even though only around half of children under 5 possess a birth certificate. **Today, over 650,000 children are registered annually.** This extraordinary leap earned Côte d'Ivoire recognition as the African Union's Champion for Birth Registration.

### SDG target 16.9

More than 9 in 10 children registered before their first birthday.



Behind this success is strategic investment in systems change. With support from unrestricted funding, UNICEF helped ensure full interoperability between the health and civil registration systems. Every child born in a health facility now receives a birth certificate as part of routine care, and community outreach ensures that non-facility births are not left behind.



**To extend access, unrestricted resources also enabled the establishment of regional civil registry hubs across all 33 regions of the country.** These hubs bring birth registration closer to communities, particularly in cocoa-producing areas where registration rates were once lowest.

Legal reform played a critical role. Previously, free registration was limited to births declared within three months. After that, families faced fees of \$30–\$100, a prohibitive cost for many. Unrestricted funding enabled UNICEF to support government advocacy and finance the production of registration forms, resulting in a landmark policy change: today, birth registration is free for every child, and certificates are issued for less than one dollar.

Fatoumata Djebate, a 22-year-old woman with her newborn at the health centre of Kokolopozo, in the southwest of Côte d'Ivoire.



## Cabo Verde: Nearing the finish line

In Cabo Verde, where around 10,000 children are born each year, the government set an ambitious target: achieve universal birth registration by 2027. **Today, 98.5 per cent of children are registered before the age of one and the country is well on track to meet its goal.**

UNICEF, through the sustained use of unrestricted funding, has been a core partner on this journey since 2003. With predictable, unearmarked support, UNICEF helped strengthen the national registration infrastructure by training hospital staff and implementing standardized registration protocols across the country.

More recently, unrestricted resources enabled UNICEF to reinforce digital systems through the Business Intelligence Project, giving national authorities real-time insights and enabling better planning, coverage tracking, and policy development.

To reach the final 1.5 per cent of children – often those born at home or in remote island communities – UNICEF and the government have launched a national awareness campaign, using radio and television to mobilize families and local leaders.



### SDG target 16.9

- Free and universal birth registration system in accordance with international standards institutionalized.
- Interoperability between the health system and civil registration system established to facilitate birth registration



A child is registered by a community health worker, in the village of Korobekaha, in the North of Côte d'Ivoire.

## A regional model for change

What Côte d'Ivoire and Cabo Verde show is that with political will, technical expertise, and sustained unrestricted funding, it is possible to bring birth registration within reach for every child. These successes are not isolated, but proof points for the region and beyond.

More than 100 million children in sub-Saharan Africa still lack a legal identity. **But by applying the lessons from these countries and scaling up what works, UNICEF believes the number of unregistered children can be cut in half by 2050.**

This is what unrestricted funding makes possible – not just a child's first right fulfilled, but an entire system transformed.



# Viet Nam: Making inclusive education a reality for every child

Viet Nam has made impressive progress for children and is rapidly advancing on the global stage – with near-universal access to basic education, sustained gender parity, and high learning outcomes as demonstrated by regional and international assessments. A key challenge that remains is ensuring that every child – regardless of ability, background or location – can access quality education.

In Viet Nam, more than 400,000 children with disabilities remain out of school. Many who do enrol find themselves in classrooms that lack the resources, training and infrastructure needed to support their learning. Just 3 per cent of schools are physically accessible, and only 1 in 10 lower-secondary schools have any teachers trained in inclusive education. **These barriers reflect a broader truth: that without intentional investment, education systems often leave the most vulnerable behind.**



## SDG target 4.5

Inclusive system for access to learning opportunities for children with disabilities. New Universal Design for Learning framework which embedded disability inclusion into national teacher training rolled out.



But with government leadership and sustained support from UNICEF, powered by unrestricted funding, this is beginning to change.

Viet Nam now boasts a 98 per cent primary school enrolment rate, and one of the fastest-growing education technology markets in the region. With 9 in 10 schools connected to the internet, digital transformation is reshaping how children learn and how systems

respond. **UNICEF has seized this opportunity to drive inclusive innovation, in order to ensure that connectivity reaches the children who need it most.**

Across 14 provinces, UNICEF has helped to scale up a network of Inclusive Education Resource Centres, community-based hubs that prepare children with disabilities to enter mainstream classrooms and support their families along the way. In Ninh Thuan province, Le Thanh Ngan describes how her son Nhan, once isolated and uncommunicative, began speaking, waiting his turn, and engaging with others after attending one of these centres. “Suddenly, our child has made fantastic progress,” she said. “It’s better than what we thought was possible.”

With unrestricted funding, UNICEF has also supported the development and national roll-out of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a game-changing framework that equips teachers to deliver inclusive, child-centred instruction.

In partnership with Ha Noi University of Education, UNICEF has produced national UDL guidance and teacher training tools that are now being adopted by the Ministry of Education and Training for use nationwide.

## SDG target 4.5

Inclusive Education Resource Centres preparing children with disabilities to enter mainstream classrooms, scaled across 14 provinces, bringing closer the government goal to convert the functions of all special schools into 160 Inclusive Education Resource Centres by 2045.



The digital frontier is also opening new doors. In Viet Nam’s Mekong Delta, UNICEF works with the Global Digital Library to adapt books into Vietnamese Sign Language. In Soc Trang, special education teacher Ms Tong Ta Kieu Mi describes how the new tools have expanded her students’ vocabulary, lightened her teaching

load, and made room for more interactive group learning. Meanwhile, a UNICEF partnership with Viet Nam's National Centre for Special Education and an ed-tech startup has produced five virtual reality (VR) game modules for children with disabilities and neurodevelopmental differences, including ADHD, enhancing focus and cognitive development through immersive play.

Together, these innovations are changing how learning is delivered and who gets to learn. From sign language books to VR-based skills development, inclusive digital tools are no longer theoretical; they are in schools, in hands, and making a difference.

Behind this progress is a clear vision: that education in Viet Nam must be for all children. **Unrestricted funding allows UNICEF to stay at the table over the long term, to bring what works to scale, and to integrate inclusion into the heart of system reform.**

And the results are real. New national guidelines on inclusive education have been introduced, and fourteen provinces have already expanded access for children with disabilities. Building on this momentum, UNICEF is supporting the Government of Viet Nam in bringing to life its ambitious 2025 master plan on inclusive education institutions. The plan envisions at least one Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) in every province by 2030, while gradually transforming existing specialized schools into IERCs. These centres aim to support the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms – where they can learn, play, and grow alongside their peers. This progress comes at a pivotal time. In a landmark move, Viet Nam has waived tuition fees for all students in public primary and secondary schools, removing one of the most persistent financial barriers to education. But while this opens more doors, financial access alone is not enough. To make education truly inclusive, other barriers – physical, social, and attitudinal – must also be addressed so that every child, including those with disabilities, can fully participate and thrive in school.

Viet Nam's transformation is far from over. But the direction is clear – and so is the evidence. When governments lead boldly and partners invest flexibly, real change becomes possible.

This is the power of unrestricted funding: not just to open classroom doors, but to unlock a child's full potential.



Vang A Huy 5 years old and Ly May Anh (both members of the Dao minority ethnic group) interact with the augmented reality (AR) technology on the tablet and glasses equipment supported by UNICEF in Viet Nam.



Students with hearing impairments using free digital books/digital learning programmes supported by UNICEF in Soc Trang Primary School for Children with Disabilities in My Xuyen District, Soc Trang.





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