



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited  
9 May 2025

Original: English

**For decision**

---

## United Nations Children's Fund

Executive Board

Annual session 2025

10–13 June 2025

Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

### Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

#### *Summary*

The present report shows how UNICEF worked in 2024 with local, national and international partners to save children's lives and meet their needs amid conflict and violence, extreme climatic events, forced displacement, nutrition crises, disease outbreaks and other disasters.

Innovative financing mechanisms are a special focus of this report. Given the trend of declining official development assistance, including steep cuts for humanitarian action, alternative and innovative sources of funding will be critical for saving children's lives today and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals tomorrow.

Elements of a draft decision for consideration by the Executive Board are provided in section X.

---

\* [E/ICEF/2025/11](#).

*Note:* The present document was processed in its entirety by UNICEF.



## I. Overview

1. The United Nations estimated that a total of 314.7 million people globally required humanitarian assistance in 2024.<sup>1</sup> UNICEF estimated that 183.5 million children required humanitarian assistance. Conflict, climate emergencies and natural disasters left children killed and injured; suffering other grave violations of their rights; forcibly displaced; malnourished; without healthcare; with their education disrupted; and with their prospects for a childhood free from fear shattered.

2. The 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal requested \$9.33 billion to assist 94 million children, a requirement that increased to \$9.9 billion by the end of the year. As at 31 December 2024, UNICEF had received \$3.02 billion in humanitarian funding for the 2024 appeal (31 per cent of the requirement).

3. Drawing on its agility, expertise and collaboration with Governments, local and international non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, academia, businesses, other United Nations agencies and other local, national and international partners, UNICEF humanitarian action achieved the following results for children in 2024:

- (a) Clean water and sanitation for 41 million people;
- (b) Measles vaccinations for 24.7 million children;
- (c) Early detection and treatment of wasting and other forms of malnutrition benefiting 109.3 million children under 5 years of age;
- (d) Access to education for 9.2 million children;
- (e) Community-based mental health and psychosocial support services for 22.3 million children and families, and interventions to prevent gender-based violence and support survivors for 17.7 million women and children;
- (f) Access of 79.5 million children and adults<sup>2</sup> to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian, development, protection and/or other personnel who provide assistance to populations;
- (g) Humanitarian cash assistance for 3.6 million households;
- (h) Delivery of \$1.234 billion worth of humanitarian supplies in 68 countries, with 50 per cent going to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies.

4. UNICEF humanitarian expenses totalled \$4.8 billion in 2024 – 62 per cent of all UNICEF expenses.

5. UNICEF thanks its resource partners for their commitment and strives to use resources as effectively and efficiently as possible to save children's lives. In a climate of diminishing resources, a reconfiguration of UNICEF humanitarian action is required, echoing the broader humanitarian system "reset".

## II. Introduction

6. This report provides a snapshot of the humanitarian situation in 2024 and the UNICEF response. Highlights provided are indicative, not exhaustive.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2024: October update – Snapshot as of 31 October 2024*, OCHA, New York, 2024, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> This figure covers both humanitarian and development contexts.

### III. The humanitarian situation in 2024 – global overview

7. For another year, conflict, climate-related emergencies and severe economic shocks jeopardized children's rights to protection, life and safety, adequate nutrition, education, clean water and healthcare. In January 2024, alarms of famine and disease in the Gaza Strip, State of Palestine, affected thousands of children who were already living “at the sharp end of an unrelenting war” and facing “disease from lack of safe water, and deprivation due to lack of food”<sup>3</sup>; severe wasting levels among children hit 7 per cent, with emergency levels of mortality in one camp for internally displaced persons in the Sudan; 2,500 more women and children were displaced by violence in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; multiple attacks across Ukraine, including on schools and hospitals, killed and injured children; blazing fires left Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh homeless and without access to education; earthquake-affected children in Afghanistan required coats and supplies to survive winter; and children in southern Africa became sick due to a surging cholera epidemic. In these and other crises, the poorest and most marginalized – girls, ethnic, linguistic and other minorities and children with disabilities – were often impacted with greatest force.

8. The increase in grave violations against children accelerated globally. In 2023, the latest year for which complete data are available, grave violations against children increased by 21 per cent from 2022,<sup>4</sup> compared with a 13 per cent increase between 2021 and 2022.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations verified 32,990 grave violations in 2023, 30,705 of them committed in 2023 and 2,285 committed earlier but verified in 2023. Violations affected 22,557 children (15,847 boys, 6,252 girls, 458 sex unknown) in 25 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement.<sup>6</sup> Preliminary information for 2024 suggests a continuation of this trend.

9. Disease outbreaks were driven by conflict and climate-related emergencies that devastated water, sanitation and health infrastructure. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the rapidly escalating mpox epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other African countries a public health emergency of international concern in August 2024, and UNICEF subsequently declared a Level 3 corporate emergency. Cholera threatened around 1 billion people, with the disease's resurgence impacting families in 33 countries. More than 800,000 cases and 5,800 deaths were reported globally between 1 January and 29 December 2024.<sup>7</sup>

10. Natural hazards and climate-related emergencies often compounded existing vulnerabilities faced by children. These included typhoons (the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Viet Nam, the Philippines and Thailand) and cyclones (Malawi and Mozambique); flooding (Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria, and Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan); drought (the Amazon regions of Brazil, Colombia and Peru, and Botswana, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe);

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'Children in Gaza still at the sharp end of unrelenting war', Press release, 12 January 2024.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/78/842–S/2024/384, United Nations, New York, 3 June 2024.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/77/895–S/2023/363, United Nations, New York, 5 June 2023.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, Children and armed conflict, Report of the Secretary-General, A/78/842–S/2024/384.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization, 'Multi-country outbreak of cholera', *External Situation Report*, No. 22, WHO, 2025.

and heatwaves, with more than 2 billion people facing more than 30 days of extreme temperatures.<sup>8</sup>

11. The physical and fiscal space for assisting children was constrained in 2024. States and armed non-State actors hindered humanitarian access, often disregarding international humanitarian and human rights law in keeping people from the assistance they needed and humanitarian actors from providing relief. Conflict and violence against aid workers made 2024 the deadliest year for humanitarian actors ever recorded.<sup>9</sup> Official development assistance (ODA), money given by Governments for humanitarian and development efforts, continued its downward trajectory. By early 2025, significant reductions in funding for humanitarian action threatened to further upend and even halt life-saving care for millions of children.

#### IV. UNICEF humanitarian response in 2024

12. UNICEF responded to 448 emergencies in 104 countries. A Level 3 corporate emergency response – the highest level of UNICEF humanitarian response – was applied to eight crises. These included those in Haiti; Lebanon; the State of Palestine and related cross-border operations; the Sudan; the Syrian Arab Republic and related cross-border operations; specific countries where exceptional use was made of UNICEF emergency polio procedures; and specific countries with mpox preparedness and response. The response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri Provinces) was Level 3 until 14 June 2024. Level 2 responses were ongoing in Myanmar; and were deactivated during the year in eastern Chad, Ethiopia, Mali, Ukraine and Yemen.

13. In 2024, 307 deployments were made from internal and external surge structures. Internal staff surge mechanisms provided support to 33 countries: 23 Emergency Response Team members on 49 deployments; and another 138 staff members via 144 deployments. Through external surge mechanisms, 55 country, regional and headquarters offices received 88 deployments of standby partners, 19 Rapid Response Teams and 7 deployments through other mechanisms. UNICEF deployed dedicated gender capacity to every Level 2 and Level 3 response.

14. UNICEF continued to lead the nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) clusters, co-lead the education cluster with Save the Children, and lead the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. By the end of 2024, UNICEF had implemented all policy recommendations of the second evaluation of the role of UNICEF as a cluster lead/co-lead agency (CLARE II). The “Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidance on Cluster Transition and Deactivation” – initially developed by UNICEF – was approved by the Global Cluster Coordination Group and the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group.

15. In 2024, UNICEF transferred \$850.4 million in cash to humanitarian partners, with \$386.6 million (45.5 per cent) going to local and national civil society organizations – exceeding the Grand Bargain commitment. Of the cash transferred to these local organizations, \$72.4 million (19 per cent) went to local women-led organizations and \$2.6 million (0.67 per cent) went to local organizations of persons with disabilities. Involvement with local and national partners extended well beyond cash transfers. With the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, UNICEF

<sup>8</sup> Climate Central, *People Exposed to Climate Change: June-August 2024 – A Climate Central seasonal analysis of how climate change boosted temperatures worldwide between June-August 2024*, Climate Central, Princeton, New Jersey, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> ACAPS, *Humanitarian Access Overview: Spotlight on violence against aid workers*, ACAPS, Geneva, 2024.

co-organized global consultations with non-governmental and civil society organizations in April 2024 to find ways to leverage partnerships for the highest impact on children. Global partnerships were also critical. The UNICEF-UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) Strategic Collaboration Framework, for example, expanded to encompass 19 countries – home to 11 million refugees, 37 per cent of the global caseload in 2024.

### **Humanitarian diplomacy, access and advocacy**

16. Strategic engagement with Governments, Member States and other stakeholders was instrumental to UNICEF humanitarian action in 2024. UNICEF briefed the Security Council seven times and issued 14 child-focused, country-specific messages to Security Council members. UNICEF also engaged in humanitarian diplomacy on behalf of children, improving access in the State of Palestine and the Sudan, promoting inclusive education programming in Lebanon and promoting the protection of children in Myanmar. UNICEF strengthened the children and armed conflict agenda as Co-Chair of the Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting, and through the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, high-level advocacy, and diplomatic engagement with listed parties and via programmatic responses. An important achievement was the launch of the Global Alliance to Spare Water from Armed Conflicts.

17. UNICEF tackled substantial obstacles to humanitarian access in 2024. A global assessment indicated that the most extreme access constraints occurred in Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Somalia, the State of Palestine, South Sudan, the Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.<sup>10</sup> UNICEF has significantly bolstered its local humanitarian access capacities in recent years, and in 2024 UNICEF specialists trained approximately 350 UNICEF personnel and partners on humanitarian access in Ethiopia, Mali and Mozambique and through regional workshops in Colombia and Senegal. The Access Emergency Response Team and specialist staff deployed to Ethiopia, Haiti, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to build capacity, create access strategies and map key actors.

18. To advance the inclusion of children with disabilities, 70 per cent of UNICEF country offices with a Humanitarian Action for Children appeal (28 country offices), and 25 country offices without appeals, systematically included children with disabilities in response efforts. The UNICEF partnership with Norway resulted in important advances in 14 countries, including addressing the needs of children with disabilities on the move in Romania by supporting national systems and community-based approaches, and enhancing disability-inclusive accountability to affected populations (AAP) mechanisms in Somalia. This partnership also supported engagement of local organizations of persons with disabilities and deployment of advisers in Ethiopia, the State of Palestine and Yemen, and in two regional offices. Globally, 23,394 women and children with disabilities received gender-based violence response services through UNICEF programmes, up from 3,153 in 2023. This increase is likely due to corrections in previous underreporting, with more country offices disaggregating data by disability, as well as better technical support. Eighty-eight UNICEF country offices implemented large-scale disability inclusion capacity development programmes for front-line workers, up from 45 in 2021. UNICEF leadership resulted in the inclusion of folding active dual terrain wheelchairs, transport wheelchairs, and axillary and elbow crutches on the Emergency Supply List. The Disability Reference Group, which UNICEF co-leads, has more than 550 members and became an associated entity of the IASC in 2024.

<sup>10</sup> ACAPS, *Humanitarian Access Overview*. (Data cover the period July to November 2024.)

19. In humanitarian settings, 105 country offices – approximately 80 per cent of those reporting – advanced gender equality priorities, 62 countries included key actions for gender in their preparedness plans, and 64 countries conducted rapid gender analyses during 2024. Nearly 90 per cent of country offices (112 of 129) ensured that a core package of gender-based violence mitigation services was available. These results reflect a significant upward trend. In Afghanistan, UNICEF strengthened the capacity of 11,743 front-line community health and nutrition workers (30 per cent female) to proactively adjust their service delivery (supporting referrals to other life-saving services, and adapting care to the unique vulnerabilities and needs of women, men, girls and boys) to mitigate the harmful impacts of women's and girls' restricted movements. This initiative covered 2,400 health facilities and 96 tertiary facilities in 34 provinces.

20. UNICEF supported risk analysis and preparedness in 50 crises in 2024, and 25 country and regional offices received \$7.5 million in preparedness funding through the Co-Funding Initiative, enabling investment in preparedness for such risks as droughts, floods, storms, cyclones and public health emergencies. An enhanced quarterly Horizon Scan improved preparedness and awareness of risks – and thus better planning for children's needs – in Bangladesh, Colombia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and the State of Palestine. Twenty-three country offices enhanced their capacity for geospatial analysis through training or new platforms, and seven country and regional offices engaged in simulation exercises. UNICEF country offices in Haiti, Somalia and the Sudan benefited from intensive support and training on preparedness, and scenario and contingency planning.

21. Dedicated accountability specialists supported work in six regions, contributing to significant progress on UNICEF AAP benchmarks. In 2024, 62 per cent of reporting country offices (80 of 129) met the benchmarks, up from 50 per cent (64 country offices) in 2023. There was a 30 per cent increase in offices with an AAP strategy, alongside gains in community participation and information-sharing. Seventy-seven per cent of offices (99) used community feedback to inform decisions, though only 55 per cent reported back on actions taken. UNICEF successfully piloted the UNICEF Community-driven Accountability Response Ecosystem (UNICARE), a complaints and feedback mechanism, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye. Furthermore, the Kits that Fit initiative – which uses QR codes, SMS and analogue tools to gather feedback and improve supply relevance to populations – won a Gold Anthem Award for social impact.

22. Working closely with national Governments, WHO and partners, UNICEF responded to disease outbreaks and global health crises. UNICEF provided technical support to 92 countries experiencing public health emergencies (e.g. mpox outbreaks, Marburg virus disease, dengue, diphtheria and cholera). In March 2024, UNICEF published its *Operational Response Framework for Public Health Emergencies*, which outlines priorities and actions needed for a comprehensive multisectoral response during an evolving public health threat.

23. UNICEF continued its critical advocacy on the proposed agreement to ensure that children's needs during future pandemics are given primary consideration in global responses – as called for in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and highlighted in a UNICEF editorial in *BMJ Global Health*.<sup>11</sup> UNICEF strengthened its partnership with WHO through a joint workplan on health emergency

<sup>11</sup> Chaiban, Ted, et al., 'Making the best interests of the child a primary consideration during pandemic preparedness and response', *BMJ Global Health*, vol. 9, no. 5, 2024.

preparedness and response and mobilized political commitment and resources to address infectious disease outbreaks.

24. Using a multisectoral approach, UNICEF delivered critical life-saving interventions to more than 8 million children on the move through 40 country offices in humanitarian settings and/or refugee-hosting countries. Whether in refugee camps, crowded urban settlements, or at borders, interventions included provision of WASH, shelter, meals, child protection, health, social protection and education services, and mental health and psychosocial support.

25. UNICEF delivered \$1.234 billion worth of supplies in 2024 to support humanitarian action in 68 countries, with 50 per cent going to Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies. Supply Division provided direct support through 31 deployments to 21 emergency locations.

## **V. Intervention spotlight**

### **A. State of Palestine**

26. Conflict continued for a second straight year in the State of Palestine, worsening widespread displacement, severe shortages of food, water, healthcare and education, and the destruction of critical infrastructure in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. At least 15,600 children were reportedly killed in the Gaza Strip between 7 October 2023 and 31 March 2025, an average of 32 every day; many more were injured, and thousands are likely buried under the rubble. At the end of the year, an estimated 17,000 children were unaccompanied and/or separated. Many children were at risk of famine or dying of exposure, with humanitarian access severely restricted. In the West Bank, since 7 October 2023, 201 Palestinian children and 3 Israeli children have been killed; and attacks have significantly increased children's exposure to conflict-related violence, grave violations and displacement, and impeded access to basic services. On 7 October 2023, 37 children were killed in Israel and 36 children were abducted into the Gaza Strip, with 34 subsequently released; the bodies of the two remaining children were returned to Israel in February 2025.

27. Throughout 2024, UNICEF called for a ceasefire and for improved humanitarian access to children and families, along with the release of hostages. Through persistent negotiation, UNICEF and WHO vaccinated 560,000 children under 10 years of age with a first dose of novel oral polio vaccine type 2 in September 2024. Following delays, most children received their second doses in November, reaching 94 per cent of the target. UNICEF supported clean water each month for, on average, 1.8 million people, including 700,000 children (125 per cent of the target). One million people, including 500,000 children, also received humanitarian cash transfers to help them to meet their daily needs (182 per cent of the target); and a cumulative 1.4 million people benefited from critical nutrition products, including critically needed ready-to-use therapeutic food, multiple micronutrient supplements for pregnant women (30 per cent of the target), multiple micronutrient powders for children (46 per cent of the target) and other items. Despite these life-saving results, the humanitarian action of UNICEF and its partners could not reach all children targeted for assistance due to denial of humanitarian access and entry of supplies into the Gaza Strip, destruction of critical infrastructure (for example, almost all hospitals in the Gaza Strip were non-functional) and extreme insecurity in some of the most difficult operating conditions globally.

## **B. Lebanon**

28. In October and November 2024, an average of three children were reportedly killed in Lebanon daily after hostilities near the country's border with Israel erupted in September 2024 and endured through a ceasefire on 27 November 2024. More than 1 million people were reportedly displaced at the peak of the conflict. UNICEF met the needs of affected people in collective shelters, host communities and border areas, and on their return home. UNICEF provided critical water services to more than 557,000 people (56 per cent of the target); and healthcare in UNICEF-supported health facilities to 156,258 people (78 per cent of the target) and via mobile teams to 235,959 people (59 per cent of the target). UNICEF provided education, WASH, child protection and other critical services to children and families, and delivered relief items and emergency services to 695 collective shelters hosting 121,602 people. Prior to the ceasefire, more than 620,000 people had left Lebanon for the Syrian Arab Republic, including 234,242 Lebanese and 390,656 Syrians.

29. As a result of the escalation, in Israel, dozens of casualties were reported from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and some 60,000 people were reportedly displaced. In July 2024, 12 children were killed in Majdal Shams in the occupied Syrian Golan.

## **C. Syrian Arab Republic**

30. The day of the ceasefire in Lebanon, hostilities escalated in the Syrian Arab Republic, ushering in significant changes that culminated in the collapse on 8 December 2024 of the former Syrian Government. This brought about a mix of optimism and uncertainty. Large movements of people intensified humanitarian needs. The hostilities in Lebanon beginning in September, and the collapse of the Syrian Government, led to the influx of more than 473,000 Syrians (58 per cent of them children) displaced from Lebanon, alongside Lebanese refugees. Internal displacement within the Syrian Arab Republic peaked at 1.1 million newly displaced people following the 27 November escalation of hostilities. As at 29 December, more than 627,500 people remained displaced, including 275,000 children. A total of 7.24 million people were internally displaced in the country in 2024, including 2.4 million children, and 16.7 million people required humanitarian assistance altogether.

31. UNICEF and its partners reached more than 12.5 million people in the country, including 7.3 million children (51 per cent girls); 225,792 were persons with disabilities. Nutrition sector results underscore how contextual changes impacted children's access to services: UNICEF substantially exceeded its targets for access to healthcare and screening of children for wasting due to the influx of people from Lebanon, higher demand for healthcare due to a contracting economy and the fall of the Government in December. However, UNICEF met only 69 per cent of its target for admission to treatment for severe wasting, primarily because of access constraints and temporary suspension of programmes due to the collapse of the Government.

## **D. Sudan**

32. In the Sudan, the conflict deepened in 2024, causing the number of internally displaced persons to reach 11.5 million by December 2024 – nearly 2.5 million more than in December 2023, and the highest number of any country.<sup>12</sup> Another 3.3 million

---

<sup>12</sup> International Organization for Migration, *A Year in Review: Displacement in Sudan (2024)*, IOM Sudan, Port Sudan, 2025.



people fled the Sudan for neighbouring countries. Conflict and displacement intertwined with flooding and severe economic contraction to threaten children in many ways: children faced hunger, malnutrition and famine; cholera, dengue and measles outbreaks; violence and protection risks; increasing poverty; and lost education opportunities as 17 million children remained out of school. The harsh conditions led to high levels of global acute malnutrition, with famine in five hotspot areas by the end of the year and expected in additional locations in 2025.<sup>13</sup>

33. Through UNICEF support, safe drinking water was available for 9.8 million people in the Sudan in 2024 (110 per cent of the target), and targets for access to appropriate sanitation services and handwashing behaviour change programmes were met or exceeded. Critical protection services benefited 2.8 million people, including 2.7 million children and 168,792 caregivers, with most protection interventions achieving around 80 per cent or more of their targets. UNICEF scaled up nutrition interventions as part of the humanitarian country team's comprehensive famine prevention plan, expanding humanitarian support to 144 localities through 1,925 health facilities and 83 mobile teams. In 2024, admissions for severe wasting were 43.8 per cent higher than in 2023: 431,015 children received treatment for severe wasting through UNICEF nutrition programmes (77 per cent of the 2024 target). Disruptions at key border crossings (which forced convoys to take longer and more dangerous routes), bureaucratic delays, deepening insecurity (particularly in regions such as Darfur and Kordofan) and a greater number of communities cut off by military action continued to harm Sudanese children and hinder efforts to assist them.

## E. Democratic Republic of the Congo

34. Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced violence, climate-related emergencies, the spread of infectious diseases and mass displacement. Escalating conflict in the country's east, and particularly in North Kivu Province due to the expanding zone of influence of the 23 March Movement armed group and conflict with other armed groups in and around the city of Goma,<sup>14</sup> brought record levels of gender-based violence, displacement and hunger.<sup>15</sup> Belligerents bombed sites for displaced persons.<sup>16</sup> UNICEF provided rapid responses to conflict, floods and the mpox outbreak. Among the many programmatic intervention areas, child protection remained central to the UNICEF response. Around 38,000 survivors of sexual violence, unaccompanied and separated children, and children released from armed groups benefited from services, including family tracing, temporary care, reunification, mental health and psychosocial support, health and socioeconomic or school integration – a 95 per cent increase compared with 2023.

35. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was the epicentre of a sharp increase in mpox cases in 2024, with 64,173 suspected mpox cases and 14,053 people with positive tests. Children and pregnant women were particularly affected. UNICEF supported risk communication and community engagement with information on mpox prevention, symptoms and health services reaching more than 52 million people through SMS, digital platforms, media, influencers and face-to-face engagement.

<sup>13</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, *Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Snapshot – October 2024 - May 2025*, IPC, Rome, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> International Organization for Migration, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo: North Kivu', *M23 Crisis Analysis Report*, No. 23, IOM, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 'Crushing levels of violence, displacement fuel unprecedented civilian suffering', Statement by Principals of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 30 April 2024.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNHCR and UNICEF condemn the bombardment of displacement camps in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo', Statement, 3 May 2024.

UNICEF supported mpox treatment centres with nutrition interventions and, with the Government, implemented an mpox vaccination campaign. Building on models developed during responses to the Ebola virus disease and the COVID-19 pandemic, child protection, including mental health and psychosocial support, was built into the response.

## **F. Haiti**

36. A fragile political transition in Haiti has not stopped the proliferation of violence perpetrated by armed gangs that directly threatens children. The Multinational Security Support Mission, intended to restore security, was only at half capacity by the end of 2024. In Port-au-Prince, 1 million people, including 550,000 children, had fled armed violence in their neighbourhoods by the end of the year. Displacement in the country jumped by 187 per cent between March and December. Nearly half the country's population experienced acute food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Phase 3 or higher). Instances of grave violations against children in the country surged in the second quarter of 2024. Among the grave violations, the number of children in Haiti recruited into armed groups increased by 70 per cent between November 2023 and November 2024.<sup>17</sup>

37. The UNICEF multisectoral humanitarian response throughout 2024 reached more than 970,000 people, including 470,000 children. More than 103,000 children, parents and caregivers received mental health and psychosocial support (31 per cent of the target). UNICEF provided 401,000 people with hygiene supplies, cholera kits and services (45 per cent of the target); and screened 459,000 children for wasting (76 per cent of the target), of whom 48,000 were admitted for treatment of severe wasting (46 per cent of the target) and 58,639 children under 5 years of age received treatment for moderate wasting. Wasting treatment results were far short of their targets due to persistent insecurity, health facility closures and the remoteness of some locations – and because only 462 of the 888 health facilities providing treatment reported data for most of the year. UNICEF provided \$1.8 million in humanitarian cash transfers to 8,721 households in critical need (more than 41,000 people, including more than 20,000 children and 1,178 persons with disabilities) and \$1.9 million in incentive cash transfers to 3,000 healthcare workers, teachers and social workers.

## **G. Ukraine**

38. The war in Ukraine intensified in 2024, impacting 1.5 million children in regions on both sides of the front line. Access to children in affected areas, including occupied areas, remained constrained. By the end of 2024, 3.6 million people were internally displaced, with more than 100,000 people displaced between August and September alone. UNICEF reached 9.8 million people, including 2.5 million children, with humanitarian assistance. More than 1.1 million children and caregivers accessed UNICEF-supported health services, exceeding the target of 920,000 as stock was distributed beyond the targeted areas; nearly 760,000 children, adolescents and caregivers accessed mental health and psychosocial support (85 per cent of the target); and 5.8 million people accessed safe drinking water, exceeding the target as UNICEF prioritized needs in densely populated urban areas through cost-effective infrastructure repair and supply of equipment and water treatment materials to utilities.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 'Number of children in Haiti recruited by armed groups soars by 70 per cent in one year – UNICEF', Press release, 25 November 2024.

## H. Myanmar

39. Conflict in Myanmar escalated throughout 2024, pushing the number of internally displaced people to 3.5 million by the end of the year, up nearly 1 million from December 2023. Children and families also faced threats due to climate shocks, public health emergencies, explosive ordnance contamination and diminishing access to life-saving services. Soaring prices and infrastructure damage placed significant additional burdens on the population. Flooding in June impacted 230,000 people; and Typhoon Yagi in September caused severe flooding, impacting 1 million people in 70 townships with loss of livelihoods, household assets, infrastructure and essential services, and opening the way for the communicable disease spread. Access constraints, bureaucratic impediments and funding shortages impeded humanitarian assistance. UNICEF worked with communities, local and international partners and other stakeholders to deliver life-saving assistance while investing in community resilience, supporting an array of services for children and families across programmatic sectors. In an environment of funding shortages and severe access constraints, UNICEF achieved or exceeded some targets due to greater reliance on digital means of intervention (for many psychosocial support activities, tele-consultations for primary healthcare, and infant and young child feeding campaigns). In other areas, for example, treatment for severe wasting, restrictions on movement of personnel and supplies, especially in conflict-affected Rakhine State (where 80 per cent of cases were identified), led to UNICEF falling short of its targets.

## I. Burkina Faso

40. Multiple crises – conflict, flooding, drought, epidemics and widespread displacement – impacted the children and families of Burkina Faso in 2024. Armed conflict increased with reports of improvised explosive devices and localities (home to 1.1 million people) under de facto blockade by armed groups. The children of Burkina Faso experienced violations of their rights to healthcare, education, safety and a clean environment, and in 2024, around 6.3 million people, including 3.4 million children, required assistance.

41. UNICEF and its partners provided 2.3 million people with emergency WASH, education, nutrition, health and child protection assistance, including 301,471 people in hard-to-reach areas and 39,809 displaced persons supported with a multisectoral response. UNICEF screened more than 2 million children under 5 years of age for malnutrition (172 per cent of the target) and provided 146,103 children with severe wasting with life-saving commodities and packages of multisectoral services (82 per cent of the target). While results exceeded targets in some areas (e.g. access to gender-based violence prevention and response, reporting channels for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and measles vaccination), in others (e.g. ensuring people's access to appropriate sanitation services) results fell short due to the constrained operating environment and lack of funding.

## VI. Organizational performance: Focus on innovative financing and anticipatory action

42. Through its diverse innovative finance for children portfolio and new innovative financing transactions, UNICEF has successfully unlocked resources for children, and accelerated results to deliver lasting impacts for children and young people. Innovative financing will help UNICEF to fulfil its mandate to uphold children's rights in the face of significant gaps in traditional resources.

43. In 2022, UNICEF launched the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, the world's first public-private climate risk financing solution for children that links rapid, innovative financing for humanitarian response with disaster risk reduction and resilience. As of the end of 2024, the Today and Tomorrow Initiative had successfully accessed cyclone risk insurance coverage of up to \$100 million from private sector insurance companies, benefiting up to 13.5 million people in eight countries highly exposed to cyclones. The initiative's risk insurance mechanism was funded by the Global Shield Financing Facility, a multi-donor trust fund hosted by the World Bank and financed by the Governments of Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Today and Tomorrow Initiative has already generated \$8.4 million in rapid, flexible payouts from insurers for UNICEF cyclone response in the eight pilot countries. Additionally, in 2023, UNICEF allocated \$6.9 million of complementary funding for resilience/preparedness efforts from other public and private sector partners. Building on the successes and lessons of the pilot, UNICEF expects to renew the Today and Tomorrow Initiative for one additional year to cover at least 12.7 million people, and to add a new trigger for payouts linked to extreme rainfall. UNICEF is looking at expanding the Today and Tomorrow Initiative to include a first-of-its-kind, insurance-backed anticipatory action fund for drought, to benefit up to 4.5 million people in an estimated 14 countries.

44. In 2023, UNICEF partnered with WHO to implement an innovative €500 million outcome-based financing mechanism, where the European Investment Bank provided upfront financing backed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the European Commission (via the Global Gateway Initiative), aimed at vaccinating nearly 370 million children annually. In 2024, this funding contributed to the procurement of more than 1.5 billion doses of polio vaccine and supported response to 45 polio outbreaks in around 30 countries, more than half of them fragile or affected by conflict. A total of \$43.6 million was disbursed to support countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen, where the UNICEF Emergency Procedures activated for polio-affected countries enabled the vaccination campaigns to reach the most vulnerable children.

45. In 2024, UNICEF increased access to therapeutic and supplementary foods that treat severe wasting in children through the Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) Advance Payment Facility, created in 2022 to facilitate advance payments to give suppliers access to working capital to maximize production to meet the high demand for RUTF. The RUTF Advance Payment Facility provided \$43.7 million in advance payments to 16 suppliers to expedite the availability of 2.6 million cartons of RUTF, addressing supply constraints and enabling local suppliers in programme countries to scale up production. In addition, the Child Nutrition Fund's Match Window – a mechanism for Governments to double domestic investments in essential services and supplies for the prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting – matched \$13.3 million in domestic budgets and enabled the procurement of more than 550,000 cartons of RUTF.

46. The initiatives above are some of the ways in which UNICEF aims to unlock additional grant, catalytic and financing capital that can be deployed to help to save children's lives and build community resilience to withstand future shocks linked to the climate, conflict and other hazards. These innovative financing initiatives can be sourced from both public and private sector actors. Public-private engagement is key to mobilizing innovative and sustainable financing capital – and to influencing government strategies aimed at channelling private capital so that it prioritizes children.

### Anticipatory action

47. Anticipatory action has proven to be a critical innovative programmatic – and financial – mechanism to ensure rapid response and efficient use of resources to protect the health and well-being of children who are impacted by natural hazards and climate emergencies. In 2024, UNICEF was involved in 10 anticipatory action frameworks led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and funded by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF),<sup>18</sup> and three UNICEF-led frameworks.<sup>19</sup> All of these frameworks support actions in countries, and current anticipatory action frameworks cover more than 15 million people (60 per cent women and girls) and include pre-arranged trigger-based financing. They address a range of climate risks spanning drought, tropical storms, floods and related public health emergencies, including cholera.

48. In 2024, more than 350,000 children benefited from UNICEF-led anticipatory action frameworks. In Madagascar, for example, UNICEF collaborated with partners, including the Government and local authorities, to implement anticipatory actions and a humanitarian response to support the well-being and protection of communities affected by drought. Activities under the anticipatory action included rapid assessment to identify and analyse protection risks, a Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions survey in August and September in 22 health districts and contributions towards emergency borehole drilling. Anticipatory action funded by CERF and linked to floods in eastern Nepal was coordinated by the Resident Coordinator and brought together UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Through this anticipatory action, 28,341 people received multipurpose cash support, humanitarian actors reached 7,668 children with child protection interventions and 10,222 people benefited from WASH interventions.

49. UNICEF has supported the creation of 30 anticipatory action frameworks at the country level (either inter-agency or for UNICEF country offices) since 2020. A further three regional frameworks are in development and expected to be finalized by 2026. Key partners in supporting UNICEF anticipatory action include Germany, the United Kingdom, the European Commission and all donors who provide global humanitarian thematic funding (GHTF).

## VII. Resource mobilization

50. At the launch of the 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal in December 2023, UNICEF appealed for \$9.33 billion to assist 94 million children impacted by humanitarian crises. By the end of 2024, humanitarian funding requirements had increased by \$565 million, to \$9.9 billion, due to threats to children stemming from new crises or escalation of existing conflicts; deteriorating conditions in protracted emergencies; public health emergencies such as cholera and mpox; and humanitarian needs created by the 2023–2024 El Niño weather pattern that contributed to a heat wave in Asia, cyclones and droughts in southern Africa and flooding in eastern Africa.

<sup>18</sup> Afghanistan for drought (in development), Bangladesh for floods (activated), Burkina Faso for drought (endorsed), Central America for droughts (endorsed), Chad for floods (activated), Fiji for tropical cyclones (endorsed), Haiti for cyclones (endorsed), Nepal for floods (activated), Niger for floods (activated) and the Philippines for typhoons (endorsed).

<sup>19</sup> Angola, Madagascar and Namibia, all of which were activated for droughts.

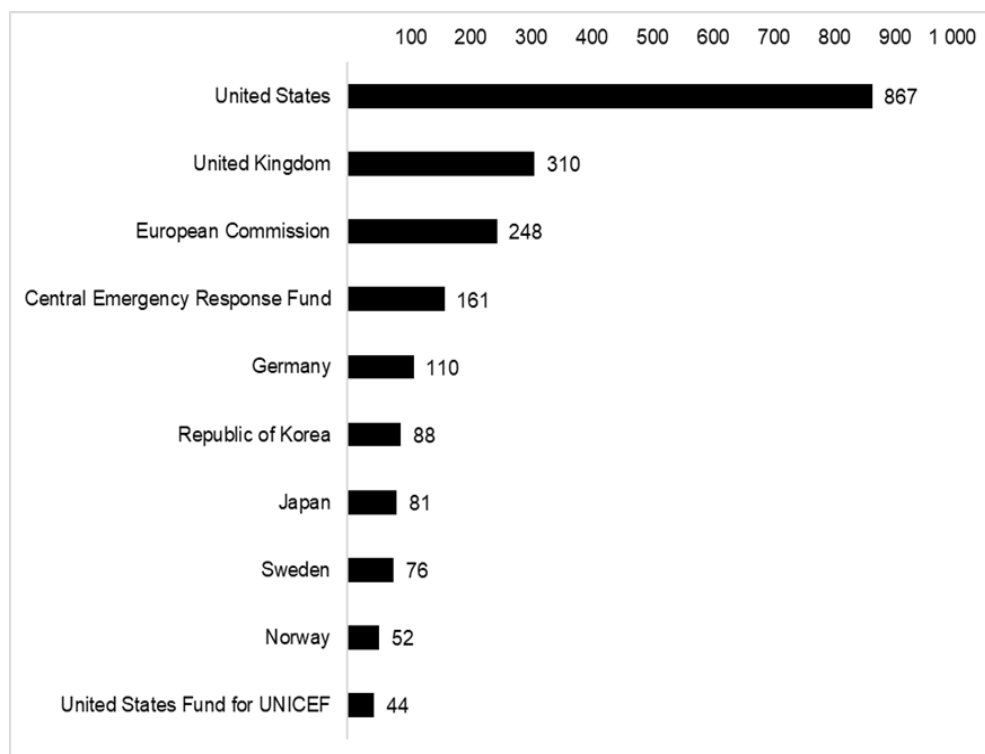
51. As at 31 December 2024, UNICEF had received \$3.02 billion in humanitarian funding<sup>20</sup> for the 2024 appeal (31 per cent of the requirement). This proportion is comparable to the previous year. However, the decline in the absolute value of humanitarian contributions received – which fell by nearly \$0.5 billion compared with 2023<sup>21</sup> – and in the quality of funding (humanitarian thematic funding dropped by 27 per cent) is significant and concerning. Private sector contributions decreased by 35 per cent, returning to pre-COVID-19 and pre-Ukraine war levels; contributions from public sector partners decreased by 10 per cent, driven by a decline in ODA.

52. Public sector resource partners provided 89 per cent (\$2.70 billion) of total humanitarian contributions in 2024, and private sector resource partners contributed 11 per cent (\$317.3 million). This is similar to the public-private funding breakdown in 2023 (86 per cent versus 14 per cent).

Figure I

**Top 10 partners for emergency funding (other resources – emergency), 2024**

(in millions of United States dollars)



<sup>20</sup> Contributions received for 2024 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals encompass emergency funds (other resources – emergency) and development funds received for emergencies and recognized in fiscal year 2024. The \$3.02 billion in humanitarian contributions received in 2024 includes emergency funding as well as \$438.8 million in other resources (regular) that was dedicated to humanitarian responses. Also included is \$1.93 million that was received in insurance payouts through the Today and Tomorrow Initiative.

<sup>21</sup> In 2023, UNICEF received \$3.48 billion in humanitarian contributions for the 2023 appeal.

53. Funding earmarking is tightening. The top 10 appeals<sup>22</sup> garnered 63 per cent of humanitarian contributions received, a significant share. Furthermore, the top six appeals<sup>23</sup> accounted for 52 per cent of humanitarian contributions received in 2024. In contrast, all other appeals, including resources given towards GHTF, received only 37 per cent (\$1.11 billion, a decrease of \$263.9 million from 2023).

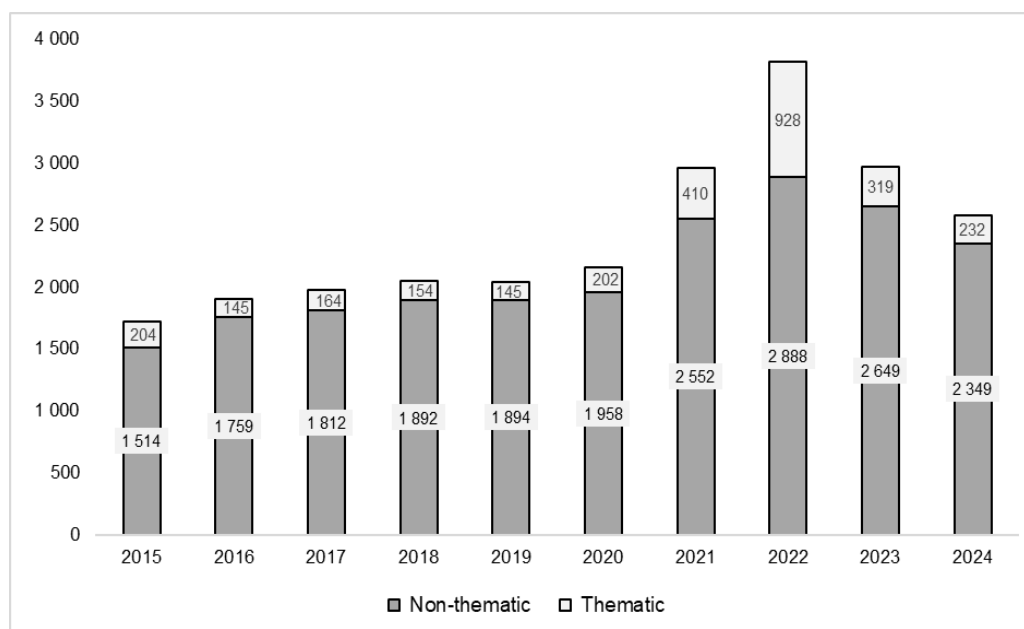
54. As a Grand Bargain signatory, UNICEF continued in 2024 to advocate for multi-year, flexible and unearmarked resources for humanitarian action for children. Such types of funding should become the norm rather than the exception because quality funding enables faster, more equitable and more effective responses for children in emergencies.

55. Yet quality funding for children is declining. Flexible humanitarian thematic contributions totalled \$231.5 million in 2024, down from \$319.3 million in 2023, a concerning decrease. Half these funds were earmarked to appeals for the State of Palestine, the Sudan, Türkiye, and Ukraine and Refugee Response; and 32 per cent was provided as GHTF. Public sector partners provided \$72.8 million in flexible humanitarian thematic funding in 2024, a 17 per cent decrease from 2023. Private sector partners' humanitarian thematic contributions reached only \$158.8 million, a 31 per cent decrease compared with 2023.

Figure II

**Thematic\* and non-thematic emergency funding trends, 2015–2024**

(in millions of United States dollars)



\*Thematic figures include the humanitarian action pools at the global, regional and country levels.

<sup>22</sup> Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Syrian Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations, the State of Palestine, Ukraine and Refugee Response, and Yemen. These appeals represented 65 per cent of the 2024 funding requirements.

<sup>23</sup> Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the State of Palestine, the Sudan, Syrian Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations, and Ukraine and Refugee Response. These appeals represented 49 per cent of the 2024 funding requirements.

56. The most flexible type of humanitarian thematic contribution is GHTF. It promotes equity in the humanitarian response by allowing UNICEF to allocate funds where they are most needed. In 2024, UNICEF received \$74.7 million in GHTF. UNICEF is grateful for the support of resource partners who provided GHTF in 2024, including the Governments of Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand and Sweden; the UNICEF National Committees in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, along with one-off donations from anonymous partners and private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices. Public sector partners provided \$47.1 million (63 per cent), and private sector partners contributed \$27.6 million. UNICEF was able to quickly allocate resources on 27 September to respond in Lebanon, upon the start of hostilities and the displacement crisis. In March 2024, GHTF allocations totalling \$700,000 to Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan furthered the response to increasing measles caseloads in these countries.

#### **Top 10 resource partners for global humanitarian thematic funding, 2024**

(in United States dollars)

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Resource partner</i>	<i>Amount</i>
1	Kingdom of the Netherlands	18 619 934
2	Germany	17 895 879
3	Private sector fundraising by UNICEF country offices	11 758 217
4	Sweden	10 523 401
5	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	3 576 985
6	United States Fund for UNICEF	3 230 687
7	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	2 081 797
8	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	2 008 194
9	Korean Committee for UNICEF	974 966
10	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	944 888

57. In 2024, multi-year humanitarian contributions reached \$591.7 million, an increase of 6 per cent compared with 2023. Overall, 18 per cent of emergency funding from public sector partners was multi-year, continuing an upswing in the share of public sector funding provided as multi-year funding and thus helping these partners to fulfil their Grand Bargain commitments in this area.

58. Partnership and coordination with other United Nations organizations play a critical role in UNICEF humanitarian response. Through joint programmes and UN to UN Transfer Agreements, UNICEF received \$32.3 million in humanitarian contributions in 2024 to support children in humanitarian crises in Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Mozambique, Myanmar and Nepal.

59. Allocations from CERF to UNICEF totalled \$158.9 million in 2024, making UNICEF the top recipient of CERF funding for the year.<sup>24</sup> Allocations through the rapid response window were instrumental in kick-starting the humanitarian responses

<sup>24</sup> Central Emergency Response Fund, Allocations by Agency (online dashboard), available at <https://cerf.un.org/what-we-do/allocation-by-agency>, accessed on 7 April 2025.



in Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Sudan, among others. Allocations made by CERF from the underfunded emergencies window supported responses, for example, in Chad, Haiti, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic. Thirty-seven per cent of CERF allocations to UNICEF were earmarked for emergencies caused by drought, floods, storms and cold waves.

60. Strategic and operational UNICEF partnerships with international financial institutions are essential to protect children's rights, meet their basic needs and expand opportunities for them to reach their full potential. In 2024, UNICEF received \$359.7 million in funding, including \$6.1 million in emergency funding, from several international financial institutions<sup>25</sup> to ensure the continuation of basic social services in countries with Humanitarian Action for Children appeals (compared with \$425.7 million in 2023). These countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Libya, Papua New Guinea, the State of Palestine and the Sudan. These funds in critical sectors (including education, health, and water and sanitation) directly support delivery of impactful, scalable solutions while fostering resilience in fragile contexts.

61. In 2024, \$270.0 million in core resources, the most flexible resource type at UNICEF, supported humanitarian programmes. One way in which core resources contribute to the humanitarian response is via allocations from the UNICEF Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) loan mechanism, which fast-tracks resources to affected countries within 48 hours of a crisis. In 2024, \$97.4 million in EPF loans was issued to 27 countries, a continuation of the upward trend in the total dollar amount of EPF loans issued to country offices to address the immediate needs of children while awaiting funding from humanitarian resource partners.

## VIII. Strategic priorities

62. The resource constraints for humanitarian action that intensified in 2024 and became even more profound in early 2025 have underlined the need to accelerate humanitarian system-wide reforms and have altered UNICEF strategic priorities for 2025 and beyond.

63. First, the humanitarian system: In the first quarter of 2025, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator called on the system to urgently regroup and renew. This involves reprioritizing core life-saving humanitarian programmes – “saving as many lives as we can with the resources we have”<sup>26</sup> – and responsibly transitioning out of areas of work that can no longer be sustained, shifting power to humanitarian leaders in-country, to local and national actors and to the people who UNICEF serves, and making coordination lighter and more efficient. These changes are to shape the reform and reimagining of future humanitarian work.

<sup>25</sup> The African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank.

<sup>26</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, ‘The humanitarian reset’, Letter to IASC Principals, 10 March 2025.

64. UNICEF is committed to this “humanitarian reset” and to leveraging its role at the inter-agency level. UNICEF is Co-Chair, with Save the Children, of the IASC Operational Policy and Advocacy Group that has been tasked with reviewing the cluster architecture, looking for ways to simplify the humanitarian coordination system. Given the role of UNICEF in humanitarian action, and its engagement with the IASC and in humanitarian country teams, it is well placed to advocate that children’s needs stay top of mind as this system undergoes a rapid reconfiguration.

65. In light of current uncertainty and volatility in the funding landscape, and due to projected reductions in ODA globally, humanitarian funding is projected to contract by at least 20 per cent. There is growing concern around geopolitical dynamics and conditionalities driving unequal attention and support given to crises. By mid-March 2025, numerous programmes had been halted due to stop work orders linked to specific funding streams. The greatest impact was, and will be, felt by children and their families. For example, in conflict- and disaster-affected Mozambique, nutrition services for 55,200 children under 5 years of age came to an immediate halt, and clean water and sanitation programmes for 22,500 people, including construction of toilets and solarization of community water systems, ended.

66. To address this new reality, UNICEF is simplifying and further prioritizing its humanitarian action, focusing on responding to the most acute humanitarian needs and prioritizing capacities to continue to deliver results for children. Within these changes, UNICEF has the following priorities:

(a) The focus will remain on country-level work to save children’s lives. Country programmes and the support required to make them successful will be at the centre of UNICEF humanitarian action, with a focus on addressing the most acute needs, ensuring quality of programming at scale and systems strengthening to keep essential services afloat. UNICEF has a comparative advantage as a thought leader for promoting effective, efficient humanitarian action that puts children first, and will find new ways to deepen and extend this thought leadership to expand the impact of its mandate.

(b) UNICEF intends to use its position as a partner of choice for children to leverage financing and national capacities, and to influence how others are using their resources to save children’s lives and improve their well-being. UNICEF is a leader in efforts to simplify and streamline cluster coordination. The humanitarian reset currently under way emphasizes greater support for local and national partners. The localization agenda is advancing within UNICEF. However, UNICEF will promote a greater role for local actors in defining priorities and shaping programme approaches, and focus on sharing risks more equitably.

(c) It is essential that UNICEF remain an independent voice for children, engaging in humanitarian diplomacy and speaking out when needed. Humanitarian advocacy and engagement will become even more crucial. UNICEF will continue to advocate for life-saving assistance for all children who require it, regardless of their gender; ethnicity, linguistic background or minority/majority status within a country; disabilities (or lack thereof); and political or social status.

## IX. Conclusion

67. The current crisis for children is not a “result” of funding cuts. It is the result of the proliferation of conflict; belligerents disregarding international humanitarian law and human rights law; climate shifts impacting the poorest and most marginalized communities; and deepening economic disparities. With its expertise and the resources at its disposal, UNICEF will always call for a halt to grave violations against

children, for ceasefires amid conflict and for the prioritization of children's needs. UNICEF will do everything in its power to save lives and build resilient communities, where children grow up and learn the lessons the world has to teach them.

## **X. Draft decision**

*The Executive Board*

*Takes note* of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action ([E/ICEF/2025/19](#)).

---