

AN UNPRECEDENTED GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PREVENT A DEADLY CHILD MALNUTRITION CRISIS

June 2023

unicef  for every child



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In 2022, the world faced a historic food and nutrition crisis. With \$766 million in new funding, UNICEF delivered the largest nutrition response on record. But \$434 million is still needed to fulfil our commitment to these most vulnerable children.

AN URGENT CALL FOR ACTION

In June 2022, UNICEF warned that without timely action, almost 8 million children in the 15 countries most affected by the global food and nutrition crisis could suffer from severe wasting – the most lethal form of child malnutrition – and face an increased risk of death.

The gap between the need and funding was immense. An additional \$1.2 billion was urgently required to save and protect the lives of 26 million children and women in these 15 countries. The call went out. Would the world respond in time?

A HISTORIC FUNDING RESPONSE

In July, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Samantha Power announced that the United States would provide \$200 million to UNICEF, the single largest contribution ever made by a government for the scale-up of life-saving programming to address child wasting. In addition, philanthropies including the Eleanor Crook Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies as well as Sir Chris Hohn committed an additional \$50 million. Administrator Power called on others to raise an additional \$250 million by the time the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) met in September.

The world responded. At an UNGA side-event in September co-hosted by USAID, UNICEF, the Government of Senegal and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) an additional \$280 million was pledged to scale up efforts, including from the governments of Canada, Ireland, The Netherlands and a number of philanthropies including CIFF, Dangote Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. To date, UNICEF has received \$766 million out of the \$1.2 billion goal.

RAPID SCALE-UP OF THE PRODUCTION OF LIFE-SAVING SUPPLIES

Much of the funding provided was earmarked for treatment of child wasting using Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF). Over the past decade, UNICEF has helped expand and diversify the number of RUTF producers, especially in the Global South and now the majority of RUTF is procured from manufacturers based in these countries.

However, RUTF manufacturers faced challenges constraining their ability to rapidly increase RUTF production including high interest rates and raw material prices. Manufacturers needed access to working capital to buy raw materials, hire and train additional staff and cover overhead costs for running extra shifts to meet demand.

To alleviate these constraints, advance payments of up to 70 per cent were made to suppliers to increase production thanks to a \$50 million financial guarantee from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and an additional \$20 million mobilized through UNICEF USA's Bridge Fund. These efforts are already enabling manufacturers to expand their capacity and significantly increase production of RUTF.¹

With the production of essential therapeutic foods expedited, could vulnerable children, women and their communities be reached with life-saving programmes in time?

“ We know how to save children from severe malnutrition and death. How can we fail to act? We cannot. And we will not. ”

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, September 2022

1 In March 2023, UNICEF launched the [RUTF Market Dashboard](#). Updated daily, the interactive tool allows partners at global and country levels to see the quantities and timing of RUTF deliveries to support their planning, and provides visibility on the extent of UNICEF's procurement from local suppliers.

DRAMATIC INCREASES IN EARLY PREVENTION, DETECTION AND TREATMENT OF CHILD WASTING

UNICEF and partners reached 5.5 million children in the 15 crisis-hit countries with life-saving treatment for severe wasting in 2022, a 37 per cent increase from the 4 million children treated in 2021.

However, these gains were not only reported in the 15 most-affected countries. Following years of investment by UNICEF in building systems, supply chains and programmes in partnership with national governments across the globe, several important global results were achieved in 2022:

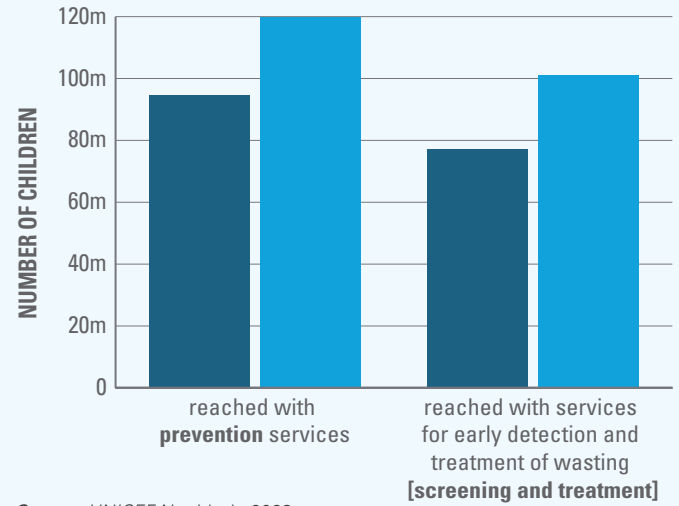
- 7.3 million children under 5 reached with life-saving treatment for severe wasting (a 35 per cent increase from 2021), the highest annual increase and the highest number of children treated for severe wasting since large-scale treatment began.
- 182 million children under 5 screened for early detection of wasting (an increase of 18 per cent from 2021).
- 356 million children under 5 and women reached with services for the early prevention of stunting and wasting (an increase of 6 per cent from 2021).

These unprecedented increases, however, were primarily achieved in the 15 most-affected countries. Over 30 per cent of the children and women reached with preventative services and over 70 per cent of all children treated for child wasting were reached in these countries.

In 2022, UNICEF reached 5.5 million children in 15 crisis-hit countries with treatment for severe wasting, a 37 per cent increase compared to 2021.

To support the response in 2022, UNICEF procured 8.6 million and delivered 5 million cartons of RUTF. In the first quarter of 2023 an additional 4.6 million cartons of RUTF have been procured for the 15 most-affected countries, almost 50 per cent of which were procured with the \$200 million global contribution from USAID. This amounts to 32 per cent of all 2023 forecasted needs in those countries, allowing us to reach our target this year.

FIGURE 1: NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 REACHED IN THE 15 MOST-AFFECTED COUNTRIES



Source: UNICEF Nutridash, 2023.

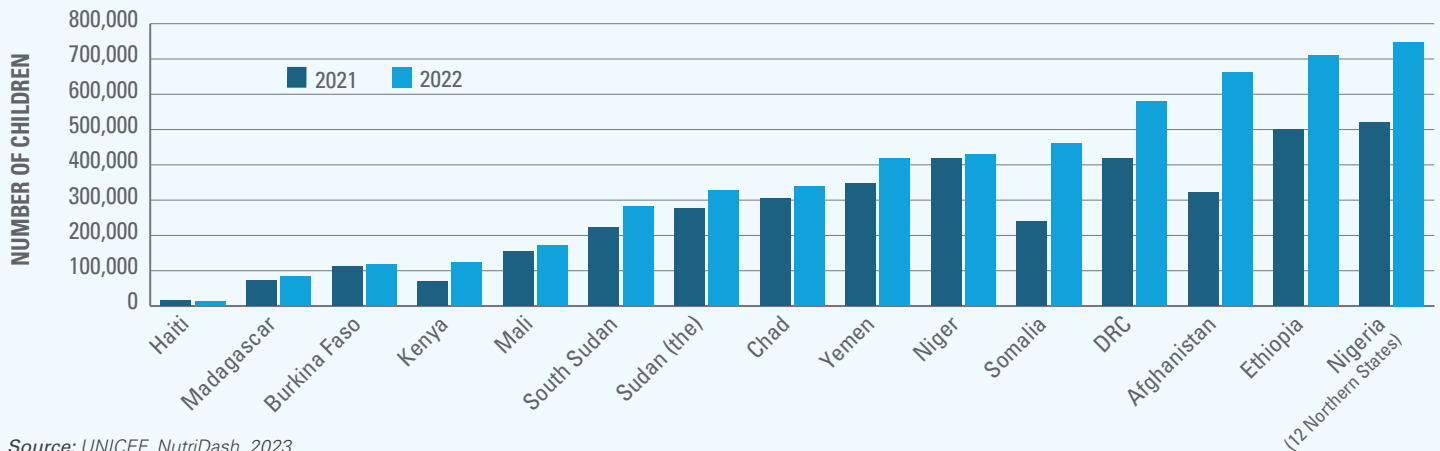
WE MUST NOT LOWER OUR AMBITION

We have shown that we can deliver programmes and strengthen supply chains to prevent and treat child wasting at scale when resources are provided. But maintaining this coverage and delivering on our commitment to reach 26 million children and women with preventative and treatment actions hinges on whether funding commitments are met.

In short, we need partners to deliver on their pledges and mobilize the remaining \$434 million necessary to extend much-needed prevention and treatment services in the 15 most-affected countries.

Last year, the world showed that when called upon to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of the food and nutrition crisis, the world responds. We now need the world to protect and expand these gains so that children can survive and thrive long past the current crisis.

FIGURE 2: NUMBER OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 TREATED FOR SEVERE WASTING IN THE 15 MOST-AFFECTED COUNTRIES IN 2021 AND 2022



Source: UNICEF, NutriDash, 2023.