Pakistan

HIGHLIGHTS

- Pakistan's most vulnerable children are at high risk from the harms of recurrent natural and human-caused disasters, whose impacts are deepened by entrenched inequality, climate change and political and economic uncertainty. Food insecurity, high malnutrition, soaring inflation and minimal access to essential social services heighten people's risks. Limited government resources as well as competing priorities impede prevention and constrain the response to humanitarian crises.

- Pakistan hosts approximately 3.7 million Afghans of varying legal status, and providing them access to essential services is further straining the country's already fragile systems.

- More than a year after the devastating 2022 floods, severely affected districts face persistent vulnerabilities and limited access to essential services. UNICEF remains committed to supporting the Government with post-flood recovery, addressing humanitarian needs and strengthening climate resilience and emergency preparedness at the national and provincial levels.

- UNICEF is appealing for $135.6 million to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable Pakistani and Afghan populations in Pakistan.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS

- 1.3 million children vaccinated against measles
- 1.4 million children and women accessing primary health care
- 217,891 children with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- 669,675 people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water

Figures are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of the inter-agency planning documents.
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Pakistan is highly susceptible to climate change, making it one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.12 And the impacts of climate change are intensifying, leading to frequent floods and extreme weather events that are converging with other challenges to create a difficult humanitarian situation, especially for the most vulnerable people.

In 2022, catastrophic floods swept through the country, affecting 33 million people, half of whom were children. There were more than 1,100 fatalities.13 A year later, many of the hardest-hit districts still have limited access to essential services. The loss of infrastructure to the floods has aggravated pre-existing inequities, placing the most vulnerable children at an even greater risk of hunger and disease outbreaks. Despite extensive humanitarian response efforts to address the impacts of the flooding, ongoing support remains crucial in the most vulnerable flood-affected districts.

Pakistan also grapples with severe food insecurity and persistently high global acute malnutrition rates. Approximately 16 per cent of the population is food insecure14 and lacks access to essential services, including health care and nutrition, further exacerbating nutritional challenges. Limited fiscal space in the government’s budget further complicates the situation, and a surge in inflation rates that peaked in May 2023 at 38 per cent had lead to reduced purchasing power for many.15 Most of the vulnerable populations are concentrated in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Provinces. Food insecurity and malnutrition have long-term consequences on the health and well-being of the population. Children, in particular, are extremely vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition, which can result in stunted growth, developmental issues and a weakened immune system. Pakistan’s global acute malnutrition rate stands at 17.7 per cent, which exceeds the emergency threshold. The severe wasting rate is 6 per cent.16 If urgent action is not taken to address this protracted nutrition emergency, the under-five mortality rate will rise.

The presence and prolonged stay of Afghan populations, which have been in Pakistan for more than four decades, adds an additional load to an already overburdened system.17 Pakistan currently hosts approximately 3.7 million Afghans (49 per cent children), providing them with access to essential services. Afghans are mostly concentrated in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces, which are also home to high levels of multidimensional poverty. The implementation of the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan is expected to lead to further displacement and an outflow of Afghans, which will intensify the humanitarian challenges.

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STORY FROM THE FIELD

Usman was born a week after the devastating floods hit Pakistan in 2022, and some months later he was diagnosed with severe wasting through UNICEF-supported screening programmes set up in the aftermath of the floods. Over the next few months, the baby received ready-to-use therapeutic food, a life-saving essential supply item that treats severe wasting in children under 5 years of age. He has now made a full recovery.

Usman received treatment at an outpatient therapeutic programme centre established by UNICEF as part of its emergency response in Nasirabad, one of the worst-hit districts of Balochistan during the floods.26

Read more about this story here
UNICEF remains committed to delivering life-saving humanitarian and sustainable interventions aligned with its country programme of cooperation with Pakistan and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. To respond to emergencies and climate-related disasters, UNICEF has pre-positioned emergency supplies and developed contingency plans, including standby partnerships for a rapid humanitarian response.

Addressing malnutrition is a priority. UNICEF will identify and admit for treatment affected children in health facilities and communities. Empowering mothers and families to recognize and refer malnourished children is crucial. Support groups for parents will be strengthened to enhance infant and young child feeding practices. Pregnant and lactating women and adolescents will receive iron and folic acid and multiple micronutrient supplements to combat nutritional deficiencies.

In strengthening health-care services, UNICEF will offer health services through mobile teams, later transitioning to health-care facilities. Measles vaccinations will be provided to children aged 6 months to 15 years and UNICEF will support delivery of antenatal care through functional health facilities and specialized mobile teams. Community health-care workers will be engaged to bolster awareness of health practices to safeguard against disease outbreaks. UNICEF will invest in disaster risk preparedness and response by adopting sustainable clean energy and the use of digital solutions.

UNICEF’s WASH programme will contribute to the nutrition and health response by providing safe and sustainable water and sanitation solutions to affected communities, among them hygiene education to promote safe and hygienic practices and solid waste management at the communal level. UNICEF will also support the provision and rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure in schools, temporary learning centres, child-friendly spaces and health-care facilities.

Continuity of learning will be supported through the establishment of temporary learning centres and transitional school shelters, the repair and rehabilitation of schools, teacher and parent-teacher/school management committee training and provision of critical education supplies.

UNICEF will strengthen province-level and community-based child protection and gender-based violence response systems. Coordinated services for children at risk and survivors of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation are a priority. Building a professional social service workforce, extending prevention and response services and promoting inclusion of vulnerable children within these systems are key objectives. UNICEF will provide essential information on child protection and gender-based violence risks, support mental health and psychosocial support activities and establish an integrated case management and referral system, including for unaccompanied and separated children.

UNICEF will lead in the development and rollout of an integrated framework for accountability to affected populations.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/pakistan/situation-reports](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/pakistan/situation-reports)

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action. Programme targets are provisional and subject to change upon finalization of the inter-agency planning and 2024 Afghan Refugee Response Plan documents.
UNICEF requests $135.6 million for 2024 to meet the critical humanitarian needs of more than 5.5 million people in Pakistan, including 3.4 million children. The 2024 funding requirement takes into account the protracted and ongoing nutrition emergency following the 2022 floods, as well as the ongoing response to support Afghan populations in Pakistan. Funding will help 1.3 million people gain access to safe water and sanitation, provide essential health and nutrition services for 5 million people and enable 180,000 children to access formal or non-formal education. With full funding, UNICEF will be able to reach 15 per cent of children in critical need of life-saving, humanitarian support in Pakistan.

The funding will support interventions for health, nutrition, water sanitation and hygiene, social and behaviour change, access to education and protection, as well as preparedness. This includes contingency supplies for disasters and to respond to potential regional crises and population movements.

Of the total funding request, $35 million will support the Afghan refugee response, including the provision of essential health and nutrition services, access to education and protection for children.

UNICEF seeks multi-year and flexible funding, in alignment with Grand Bargain commitments, for the multifaceted humanitarian needs faced by children and families in Pakistan. Without adequate and timely funding, UNICEF and its partners will not be able to address children’s needs for health services, nutrition support, prevention of school drop-out and protection from violence, exploitation and abuse.

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UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations. UNICEF targets 60 per cent of sector needs.

Education sector needs are derived from the Pakistan Floods 2022: Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), Government of Pakistan Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Islamabad, December 2022, available at <www.undp.org.pk/islamabad/publications/pakistan-floods-2022-resilient-recovery-rehabilitation-and-reconstruction-framework-4rf>. The population targeted is higher than the total number of people/children to be reached because the target includes mass media outreach.

Nutrition targets are comprised of 217,891 children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment, including 32,684 Afghans; 1,614,000 primary caregivers of children aged 0–23 months vaccinated against measles, including 422,220 Afghans; 700,000 children under age 5; 2 million individuals requiring primary health care services; 2m; and 400,000 pregnant and lactating women along with other ailments. The funding requirements include $35 million for the Afghan refugee response.

Health targets are comprised of 1,422,220 people accessing primary health care services, including 422,220 Afghans; 1,315,109 children aged 6 months 15 years vaccinated against measles, including 422,220 Afghans; 1,171,320 Afghan men, women boys and girls. The 'in need' numbers for child protection, gender-based violence in emergencies and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are derived from assessments done by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. UNICEF targets 60 per cent of sector needs.

These include 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees, 480,000 Afghans Citizenship Card holders, 57,000 Unregistered Members of Registered Families, 1,300,000 undocumented Afghans and 600,000 new arrivals. Sources: UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Afghanistan Situation, available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan-category/14-384569>. The 'in need' numbers for child protection, gender-based violence in emergencies and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are derived from assessments done by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. UNICEF targets 60 per cent of sector needs.