

Partnership strengthens resilience in five countries
as climate change increases child risks

The escalating impacts of climate change are compounding insecurity and conflict across the Sahel. These impacts disproportionately affect children – especially the youngest – who now face acute food shortages and disrupted access to essential services. In the central Sahel, more than half of children aged 6 to 23 months experience food shortages, a crisis intensified by recurrent and worsening climate shocks.¹

Rapidly rising temperatures – 1.5 times faster than the global average – combined with chronic water scarcity, are fueling severe droughts. At the same time, destructive floods are damaging cropland, upending livelihoods and forcing thousands to relocate, further driving hunger and displacement.² Girls are especially at risk, with many dropping out of school or being forced into early marriage as families struggle to survive amidst intensifying environmental and economic pressure.³

In response to these escalating climate shocks and conflict, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the German Development Agency (GIZ) launched the **Sahel Resilience Partnership (SRP)** in 2023. This four-year initiative targets climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected communities in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. By focusing on the resilience of individuals, communities and essential social systems, the SRP aims to mitigate the growing impacts of climate change and disasters on children – the most vulnerable to the Sahel's deepening crises.

The SRP builds on the foundation of UNICEF's 2019–2023 Building Resilience in the Sahel (BRS) programme, which reached over 3.5 million people, including 2.7 million children.⁴ For example, UNICEF constructed over 400 climate-resilient water systems through BRS. During the 2024 flooding in **Mali, Niger** and **Mauritania**, more than 85 per cent of households relying on these systems experienced minimal or no disruption to their water supply, demonstrating the effectiveness of resilient infrastructure in protecting communities during climate-related shocks.

The Sahel Resilience Partnership is already delivering tangible results as well.⁵ In 2024, UNICEF constructed or rehabilitated 152 climate-resilient water systems across **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania** and **Niger**, providing safe and continuous water access to over 100,000 people.

Building Resilience
in the Sahel
2024 Results



152
climate-resilient
water systems
built or
rehabilitated



100,000
people
with safe and
continuous water
access



5,300
education leaders
at 300 schools
in Burkina Faso
trained in disaster
preparedness



5,000
students
at 20 schools
in Mauritania
benefited from
new risk reduction
strategies



25,440
students
in Mali accessed
education during
a flooding disaster

Disaster risk management in schools has also been further strengthened. In **Burkina Faso**, 300 schools across 20 municipalities participated in preparedness training, engaging more than 5,000 school committee members and nearly 300 education supervisors. The training incorporated a national approach to safe schools, peacebuilding education and continuous learning in fragile settings.⁶ Schools are now applying these measures to protect students and sustain learning before, during and after natural hazard events.

Mauritania saw similar progress, with teachers and school management committees from 20 schools implementing risk reduction strategies. These safeguarded nearly 5,000 students from disruptions caused by heatwaves, severe flooding and conflict-related displacement. In **Mali**, proactive preparedness enabled 25,440 students, aged 3 to 17, to continue their education during crises. Temporary learning spaces were rapidly set up and fully equipped with furniture, supplies and educational materials, ensuring continuity of education for displaced students.

The SRP promotes inclusive governance by ensuring that youth concerns and solutions are integral to local decision-making processes. In the **Niger**, engagement through the Building Resilience in the Sahel programme led to 90 per cent of village committees in SRP areas including youth representatives – compared to just 25 per cent in other communities. Their inclusion enhances the relevance and sustainability of climate resilience planning.

During the 2024 floods in **Mali, Mauritania** and the **Niger**, disaster management committees trained under the BRS programme responded swiftly, utilizing preparedness plans, pre-positioned supplies and standardized emergency protocols. Their actions enabled a faster and more coordinated response across government agencies, UNICEF, United Nations partners and civil society, thereby lowering humanitarian costs and mitigating the crisis's impact.

By 2028, the Sahel Resilience Partnership – supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – aims to scale its efforts across 30 regions and 250 municipalities, reaching 8 million people, primarily women and children.

Through integrated resilience-building across health, nutrition, education, child protection, social protection and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the initiative is helping Sahelian governments and communities withstand and adapt to growing climate and disaster risks. These efforts protect children's rights and futures in one of the world's most fragile regions.



Students return home from school in Mali after devastating flooding in their region. As part of the Sahel Resilience Partnership, UNICEF is strengthening local flood forecasting and disaster preparedness, such as pre-positioning school kits and critical supplies in disaster-prone areas. These actions help prevent school disruptions that can lead to harmful coping strategies to avoid poverty, including child labour and child marriage.
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1 UNICEF, 2023, Sahel - Extreme Jeopardy.
2 Ibid.
3 Plan International, 2025, How climate crisis is disrupting girls' lives in the Sahel.
4 UNICEF, 2024, Building Resilience in the Sahel Programme (2019–2023).
5 UNICEF, 2024, Building Resilience in the Sahel Progress Report.
6 Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale et de L'Alphabétisation (Ministry of National Education and Literacy), Guide de formation sur l'école de qualité amie des enfants (EQAmE) (Training Guide on Child-Friendly, Quality Schools).