



Caregiver Flora conducts a nutrition screening for Memory, 10 months, who is sitting on her mother's lap outside their home in Malawi, in August 2025.

unicef   
for every child

## Humanitarian Action for Children

# Eastern and Southern Africa Region

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Nearly 30 million children<sup>1</sup> in Eastern and Southern Africa face life-threatening risks from conflict-driven displacement, escalating malnutrition, recurrent cholera and measles outbreaks and overlapping climate shocks. Household coping capacities are exhausted, and essential services are under severe strain just as children need them most.
- UNICEF will protect children's lives while sustaining essential services and working with governments, regional bodies, civil society and community partners to strengthen preparedness and a localized response, prioritizing the most affected and hardest-to-reach populations. A strong emphasis on anticipatory action and shock-responsive systems will help prevent crises from escalating while building local capacity to respond and recover in communities repeatedly impacted by displacements, droughts, floods and disease outbreaks.
- To meet urgent needs and sustain critical emergency readiness across the region, UNICEF requires \$129 million in 2026 to deliver life-saving support in nine countries and to provide surge capacity, technical expertise and coordinated cross-border preparedness and response across 22 country offices.<sup>2</sup>

### IN NEED



**17.9 million**  
women and children in need of primary health care



**5 million**  
people in need of nutrition assistance



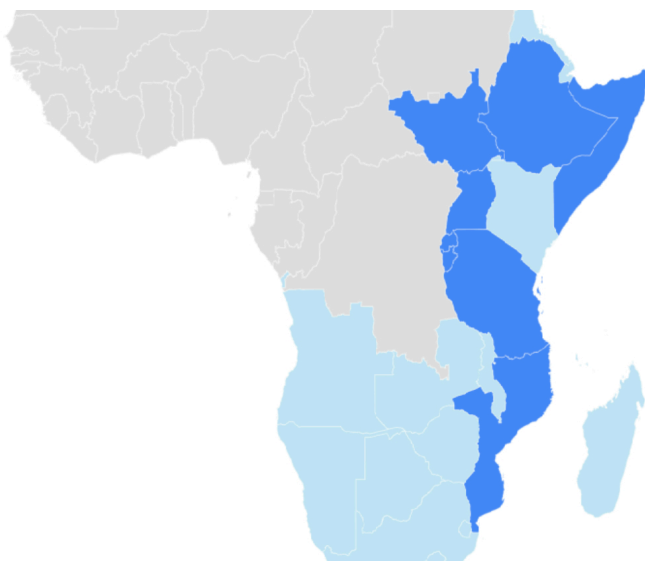
**6.8 million**  
people in need of MHPSS



**3 million**  
children in need of access to school



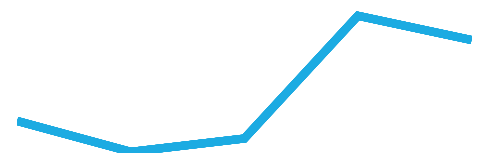
**14.7 million**  
people lack access to safe water



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The countries in darker blue are covered under individual country or multi-country appeals.

### FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$128.9 million**



2022

2026

## HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Nearly 30 million children in Eastern and Southern Africa are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance due to overlapping crises. Conflict and insecurity within the region, as well as spillovers from the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, combine with recurrent climate shocks, growing food insecurity and economic strain.<sup>3</sup> This leaves families with fewer means to cope and limits children's access to life-saving services, including protection.

In 2025, forced displacement, protracted conflicts and sociopolitical turmoil have had a devastating impact on the well-being of children across the region. The region is home to more than 5 million refugees and asylum seekers and more than 8 million internally displaced people, one of the largest and most protracted displacement situations globally.<sup>4</sup> Separated from their families, forcibly recruited, or being killed and maimed, children continue to be deprived of their fundamental right to protection. Girls are disproportionately affected. They face heightened risks of gender-based violence, child marriage and exploitation,<sup>5</sup> especially in displacement sites and in drought-affected areas where economic collapse has deepened vulnerabilities. Safe learning spaces serve as critical protective environments, but education systems have also been under severe strain: 46 million children are out of school in the region. Limited resources and disrupted schooling further expose children to violence, exploitation and irreversible learning loss.<sup>6</sup>

Climate shocks are hitting the region in rapid succession, leaving families no time to recover. The 2023/2024 El Niño-induced drought devastated agricultural production in Angola, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where most households rely on rain-fed farming. Djibouti remains affected by persistent drought and extreme heat, compounding water scarcity and malnutrition.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, Comoros, Madagascar and Mozambique remain highly exposed to destructive cyclones, recurrent flooding and coastal erosion, with climate extremes repeatedly destroying infrastructure, damaging schools and health facilities and displacing communities.<sup>8</sup>

Malnutrition remains extremely high across the region, with some areas in South Sudan facing hunger at increasingly alarming levels. An estimated 4.2 million children under age 5 are severely wasted, an 8 per cent increase compared with 2025.<sup>9</sup> Reduced dietary diversity, unsafe water and overstretched systems are escalating risks for young children. Without timely treatment and front-line nutrition services at scale, many children face long-term, irreversible developmental impacts.

Simultaneously, the Eastern and Southern Africa region is facing multiple, recurrent public health emergencies. Cholera outbreaks – often following climatic shocks, conflict, displacement, limited access to safe water and overstretched WASH systems – remain widespread in 19 out of 22 countries. Between January and June 2025, cholera cases in the region increased by 21 per cent compared with the same period in 2024, while deaths rose by 35 per cent, highlighting both the scale of transmission and the persistent gaps in early detection, treatment and sustained outbreak prevention.<sup>10</sup> Measles is also resurgent across the region due to gaps in routine immunization services. These recurrent outbreaks are further straining already fragile health, WASH and education systems, increasing preventable illness and mortality and placing children at heightened immediate risk.

## HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

In 2026, UNICEF will continue to safeguard the lives and rights of children affected by crises in Eastern and Southern Africa, while reinforcing the systems that families depend on for care, learning, protection and dignity. The strategy focuses on children and communities facing the most severe and urgent needs in contexts disrupted by conflict, climate shocks and disease outbreaks. It prioritizes life-saving assistance while supporting governments and partners to strengthen preparedness and build resilience to withstand and recover from future shocks.

UNICEF will deliver timely integrated support in the areas of health, nutrition, WASH, child protection, gender-based violence, education and social protection, ensuring children can access essential services and treatment and safe, protective environments. This includes scaling up treatment for severe wasting; improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation to prevent disease; ensuring continuity of primary healthcare; providing mental health and psychosocial support; preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse; and keeping children learning, including through safe temporary learning spaces and school readiness support.

Localization remains central to the approach. UNICEF will work through and alongside local authorities, civil society, youth networks and community structures to ensure assistance is trusted, appropriate and sustainable. UNICEF will also collaborate with the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and national governments to strengthen preparedness, coordination and localized response capacities, prioritizing the most affected and hardest-to-reach populations.

Preparedness and anticipatory action are core pillars of the UNICEF response. UNICEF will expand the use of early-warning triggers to activate anticipatory actions before crises escalate; reinforce community-based surveillance and referral systems to detect risks early; and strengthen shock-responsive social protection and humanitarian cash transfers so families can withstand shocks without resorting to negative coping strategies. Pre-positioned supplies, efficient supply chains and trained front-line capacity will enable fast, agile response to disease outbreaks, natural disasters and sudden population movements.

At the regional level, UNICEF will monitor emerging risks, guide scenario and contingency planning and coordinate support to country offices, including for cross-border preparedness and response. The UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office will also support rapid scale-up at the onset of crises through surge deployments, targeted technical support and programme quality assurance to ensure responses are timely, accountable and aligned with the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action.

Across all interventions, UNICEF will uphold strong commitments to accountability to affected populations, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and gender- and disability-inclusive programming. This will ensure assistance is safe, equitable and protective for children and their caregivers, while supporting communities to recover and build lasting resilience.

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.

## STORY FROM THE FIELD



Since the first recorded case on 7 January 2025, Angola has experienced a rapidly spreading cholera outbreak that has left a trail of concern in communities, with more than 3,000 confirmed cases as of June 2025. The outbreak has mainly affected the provinces of Luanda, Bengo, Icolo e Bengo, Huambo, Malanje, Zaire and Huíla. In response, UNICEF has supported the Government of Angola in prevention, community mobilization and volunteer training to ensure that information and solutions reach those who need them most.

[Read more about this story here](#)

In February 2025, children in Angola receive oral cholera vaccine to prevent cholera, which has spread rapidly in the country since early January 2025.

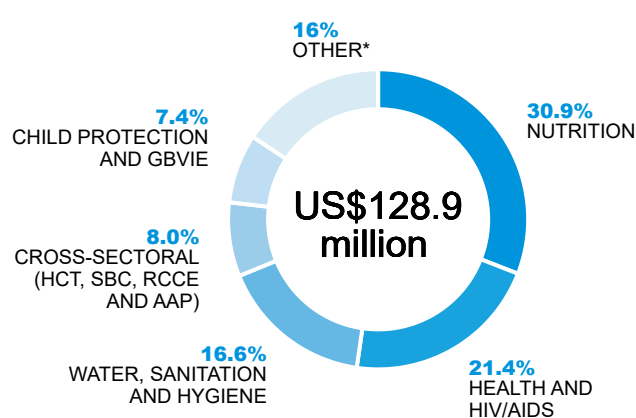
## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

UNICEF urgently seeks \$129 million in 2026 to respond to escalating and protracted humanitarian needs across Angola, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.<sup>11</sup> The reductions in the overall requirement and in the number of people in need and targeted (by 23 per cent, 38 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively) does not reflect an improvement in the situation of children and women. Children's needs are deepening. In line with the Humanitarian Reset, the reductions reflect a sharper focus on the most critical life-saving interventions and on ensuring readiness for sudden-onset emergencies – not a decrease in the severity of the crisis.

The requested resources are essential for UNICEF to deliver life-saving assistance to approximately 5 million children and their families, including treatment for severe wasting, access to safe water and sanitation, primary healthcare, child protection and gender-based violence response services and education in emergencies. Without timely and flexible funding, the situation for children will continue to deteriorate as they are increasingly exposed to preventable disease outbreaks and to malnutrition, violence and the loss of access to essential services.

This appeal also includes support from the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office to 22 country offices,<sup>12</sup> through surge deployments, technical assistance and coordination support. Strengthened regional leadership will ensure rapid mobilization; coherent multi-country preparedness and response including through anticipatory action; and effective inter-agency coordination, particularly in fragile cross-border and high-risk contexts.

Now more than ever, flexible and predictable funding is critical to sustain an agile and efficient response that protects children, maintains essential services and strengthens communities' ability to withstand recurrent shocks. This investment is vital to safeguard children's rights and their well-being, and to preserve prospects for a more stable future.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$) <sup>13</sup>
Health and HIV/AIDS	27,567,284
Nutrition	39,848,690 <sup>14</sup>
Child protection and GBVIE	9,594,567
Education	8,835,497
Water, sanitation and hygiene	21,354,815
Social protection	7,764,854
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	10,276,248 <sup>15</sup>
Regional office technical capacity	3,700,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>128,941,955</b>

\*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Education (6.9%), Social protection (6.0%), Regional office technical capacity (2.9%).

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## ENDNOTES

1. The reduction in the number of people and children in need in 2026 compared with 2025 reflects refined targeting and prioritization in line with the Humanitarian Reset. This should not be interpreted as an improvement in humanitarian conditions, which remain severe and, in several contexts, continue to deteriorate.
2. The UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office covers 22 countries. The 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals in the region are structured as follows: four countries maintain standalone appeals (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and South Sudan); this Regional appeal covers nine countries for response and preparedness (Angola, Comoros, Djibouti,\* Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe); and a multi-country Great Lakes appeal covering in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. \*Djibouti was recently added to the Eastern and Southern Africa regional appeal, after being previously included in the Middle East and North Africa regional appeal.
3. Macroeconomic shocks, inflation and reduced aid are deepening vulnerabilities and further limiting access to basic services. As a result, children remain at the centre of the crises, and their needs are expected to remain high or intensify in the year ahead.
4. Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, South Sudan and Uganda are facing the greatest pressure related to displacement, because they host the largest numbers of refugees, returnees and internally displaced people.
5. In 2024, Eastern and Southern Africa accounted for 11 per cent of all verified grave violations globally, making it the third most impacted region.
6. UNICEF, "46 million school-aged children out of school across Eastern and Southern Africa", web article, 10 December 2023, available at [www.unicef.org/esa/stories/46-million-school-aged-children-out-of-school-across-esa?utm](http://www.unicef.org/esa/stories/46-million-school-aged-children-out-of-school-across-esa?utm).
7. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Djibouti: Acute malnutrition situation January – July 2025 and projection for August – December 2025, IPC, 24 June 2025, available at [www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159660/?utm](http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159660/?utm).
8. In 2024/2025, successive cyclones and floods intensified cholera and measles outbreaks, further straining already limited WASH and health systems. These cumulative shocks are accelerating the loss of livelihoods and pushing acute malnutrition rates upward, especially among young children in the hardest-hit areas. See UNICEF, Madagascar Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report #1, covering the period 1 January – 30 June 2025, available at [www.unicef.org/media/172996/file/Madagascar-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.1-%28Mid-Year%29%2C-30-June-2025.pdf?utm](http://www.unicef.org/media/172996/file/Madagascar-Humanitarian-Situation-Report-No.1-%28Mid-Year%29%2C-30-June-2025.pdf?utm); and Akbar, Tehir et al., Building a resilient future for Comoros, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, 18 July 2025, available at [www.gfdr.org/en/building\\_resilient\\_future\\_for\\_Comoros](http://www.gfdr.org/en/building_resilient_future_for_Comoros).
9. UNICEF NutriDash (<https://www.unicef.org/nutrition/nutridash>) and IPC (<https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/en>), 2025.
10. Cholera cases in the region increased from 114,873 in 2024 to 139,402 in 2025, and associated deaths rose from 1,674 to 2,287, with Angola and South Sudan experiencing their worst outbreaks in years. World Health Organization, Multi-country outbreak of cholera, External situation report no. 19, 18 October 2024, available at [20251029\\_multi-country\\_outbreak-of-cholera\\_sitrep\\_31.pdf](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/nipw/cdc/multi-country-outbreak-of-cholera_sitrep_31.pdf).
11. The UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office covers 22 countries. The 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeals in the region are structured as follows: four countries maintain standalone appeals (Ethiopia, Mozambique, Somalia and South Sudan); this Regional appeal covers nine countries for response and preparedness (Angola, Comoros, Djibouti,\* Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe); and a multi-country Great Lakes appeal covering in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. \*Djibouti was recently added to the Eastern and Southern Africa regional appeal, after being previously included in the the Middle East and North Africa regional appeal.
12. In 2026, support to the Djibouti Country Office will transition from the Middle East and North Africa Regional Office to the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office. The same will follow for support to the Sudan.
13. Reduction in funding requirements is driven by sharper prioritization of humanitarian needs to only focus on urgent life-saving needs and on ensuring readiness for sudden-onset emergencies in line with the United Nations-wide prioritization approach in emergency settings.
14. The increased nutrition funding requirement reflects the worsening nutrition situation across the region and the scale-up of treatment for severe wasting, which is a supply-driven and costly intervention.
15. The increase in funding requirements is primarily driven by Madagascar, which accounts for around 60 per cent of the cross-sectoral budget requirement due to the scale-up of humanitarian cash transfers. This approach supports households with greater dignity and flexibility, enabling families to meet their most urgent needs while strengthening community resilience.