



GOAL AREA 2

Every child and adolescent
**learns and acquires skills
for the future**

Global Annual Results Report 2025

unicef 
for every child

Cover image: © UNICEF/UNI869131/Htet

Two best friends stand together in front of a UNICEF-supported temporary learning shelter at a monastic education centre in Sagaing Region, Myanmar. Both children were forced to flee their homes due to ongoing conflict and were further affected by the devastating earthquake on 28 March 2025.

Expression of thanks: © UNICEF/UNI881040/Khayyam

On 1 September 2025, children race each other with UNICEF staff in tow at Toryab Kishindra School in Badakhshan Province, northeastern Afghanistan.



Expression of thanks

As UNICEF concludes its 2022–2025 Strategic Plan period, this report presents a reflection on progress made in support of children's learning and skills.

Over the past four years, the global education landscape has faced unprecedented challenges, from pandemic learning recovery to protracted crises and widening inequities. Across these challenges, one constant has endured: a shared commitment to ensure every child can realize their right to learn. The achievements presented in this report are a testament to that collective resolve.

Behind every skill gained, every lesson learned, and every child empowered through education are the contributions of millions around the world - strengthening education systems and delivering the tools and resources to support learning. This includes the generous contributions of governments, private sector partners, civil society organizations, education personnel, caregivers, and many others. Their trust and continued commitment have enabled UNICEF to protect children's right to learn and deliver safe, inclusive and quality education and skills, in both development and humanitarian contexts.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all partners who contributed to education and adolescent development programmes across the Strategic Plan period. Specifically, in 2025, UNICEF is appreciative of all its partners, and especially grateful to the governments of Norway, Sweden and Luxembourg and to private sector partners including Chery Automobile, Pandora and EasyJet for their incredible support to global thematic funds. This trust in UNICEF has been instrumental in providing the flexibility needed to reach the most marginalized children and young people and adapt to rapidly changing needs.

As we look ahead to a new strategic plan period, partnerships remain essential to building more resilient, inclusive, and future-ready education systems – systems that support every child and young person to learn and acquire skills for life and work.

Contents

Executive summary	2	Results Area 2: Improved learning, skills, participation and engagement for all children and adolescents	22
Context	4	2.1 Learning in early years	24
Results in Goal Area 2 in 2025.....	8	2.2 Foundational learning	25
Introduction and overview of results and funding	9	2.3 Secondary education, skills development and learning to earning.....	27
Results Area 1: Equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities	12	2.4 Gender-responsive education systems for learning and skills development	29
1.1 Access to education in the early years	13	2.5 Strengthening teachers' development and teaching practices	29
1.2 Reaching out-of-school children and adolescents with learning opportunities	15	2.6 Digital transformation of education systems and digital learning	32
1.3 Strengthening inclusive and gender-equitable education systems	15	2.7 Environmental sustainability and education.....	34
1.4 Ending violence in and around schools	17	2.8 School-based mental health and psychosocial support.....	34
1.5 Social and behaviour change for education	19	2.9 Data and evidence	35
1.6 Education in emergencies and humanitarian fragile contexts	19	2.10 Adolescent and youth development and participation.....	37
1.7 Conclusion	21	2.11 Conclusion.....	37
		Looking forward.....	38
		Endnotes	40
		Financial annex	44

Abbreviations and acronyms

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa	NEET	Not in employment, education or training
ADHD	Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder	OOSC	Out-of-school children
AI	Artificial intelligence	P2E	Passport to Earning
CBE	Community-based education	SBC	Social and behavioural change
ECD	Early childhood development	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ECE	Early childhood education	SEA-PLM	Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics
ECCE	Early childhood care and education	SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
ECEC	Early childhood education and care	SP	Strategic plan
ECW	Education Cannot Wait	STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
FLAT	Foundational Learning Action Tracker	STEAM	Science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics
GCI	Gender at the Centre Initiative	TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
GEC	Global Education Cluster	Tech4Ed	Technology for Education
GenU	Generation Unlimited	TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
GPE	Global Partnership for Education	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
IFC	International Finance Corporation	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies	UNWRA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
MFPs	Multiple and flexible pathways		
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support		



© UNICEF/UNI779658/Ralaivita

Executive summary

Students study in a temporary classroom provided by UNICEF after tropical storm Jude hit Madagascar in March 2025.

The UNICEF Global Annual Results Report (GARR) 2025 highlights both significant progress and important opportunities to advance children's right to quality, inclusive and resilient education. As the final year of the current Strategic Plan, results demonstrate that change is possible at scale when systems, partnerships and investments align. At the same time, persistent and interconnected challenges underscore the need for renewed collective action to ensure that all children can learn, thrive and contribute to their societies as UNICEF moves into its next strategic phase.

UNICEF has supported 147 countries to expand access to education, including in fragile and crisis-affected contexts, showing that even in the most challenging environments, barriers to meaningful education participation can be overcome. Throughout this Strategic Plan period, millions of children have accessed learning opportunities through strengthened systems, community engagement and cross-sector partnerships. However, with hundreds of millions of children still excluded from schooling globally, progress continues to vary across contexts. Poverty, gender norms, displacement, disability and other structural barriers continue to limit access for the most marginalized. Accelerating progress will require sustained efforts to address these barriers while strengthening national systems to deliver inclusive and equitable education at scale.

UNICEF has supported 147 countries to expand access to education, including in fragile and crisis-affected contexts, showing that even in the most challenging environments, barriers to meaningful education participation can be overcome.

At the same time, the global learning crisis presents a critical opportunity for transformation. With an estimated two third of 10-year-olds unable to read with comprehension globally, ensuring that children not only attend school but acquire foundational skills has become a central priority. UNICEF-supported programmes show that learning gains are achievable where government leadership, evidence-based approaches and sustained investment align. Improvements in literacy, numeracy and socio-emotional learning demonstrate the potential of integrated, system-focused approaches to deliver meaningful results.

Teachers remain at the heart of this transformation. Strengthening teacher systems – through recruitment, training, professional development and support – has been central to improving teaching quality and learning outcomes. Digital tools and innovation are increasingly

supporting teachers to adapt instruction and respond to diverse learning needs while expanding access. Addressing the global teacher gap, estimated at more than 50 million educators, will be essential to sustaining progress and ensuring quality at scale.

UNICEF has also supported countries to strengthen pathways from education to skills and employment. Education systems are increasingly integrating digital, transferable and green skills and linking them to opportunities for young people to transition into work and active citizenship. While progress is evident, particularly in expanding access to skills programmes, ensuring that these opportunities translate into meaningful livelihoods remains a priority. Stronger alignment between education systems, labour markets and broader development agendas will be critical in the years ahead.

Across these areas, a clear message emerges that progress is possible, but not inevitable. Sustaining and accelerating gains will require stronger alignment between service delivery, system reform and financing. Education systems must be equipped not only to expand access, but to ensure learning, skills development and equity for all children.

Looking ahead, delivering on this ambition calls for renewed commitment and collective resolve. Increased and better-targeted domestic financing, alongside sustained and aligned international support, will be essential to strengthening education systems and scaling impact. At a time of growing global pressures, investing in education is not only urgent, but also a smart and shared responsibility that underpins stability, resilience and inclusive growth.

By working together – governments, partners, communities and young people themselves – there is a real opportunity to transform education systems so that every child can learn and develop their full potential. With sustained commitment, stronger systems and coordinated investment, the global community can meet this challenge and deliver lasting results for children everywhere.

At a time of growing global pressures, investing in education is not only urgent, but also a smart and shared responsibility that underpins stability, resilience and inclusive growth.



© UNICEF/UNI979171/Al-Majid ElNaimi

Context

On 4 September 2025, a 9-year-old girl participates in a learning support session at the Makani centre at Gaza Camp (Jerash Camp) in Jordan. "We love our teachers and want to become like them when we grow up," she and her twin sister share.

With less than five years remaining to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), and as UNICEF transitions into its 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, progress toward universal and equitable education remains inconsistent across regions. While access has expanded in some regions, gains are increasingly undermined by persistent and, in some contexts, deepening challenges. Education systems are operating under mounting pressure, shaped by conflict and displacement, economic and political uncertainty, climate-related shocks and long-standing gaps in financing and system capacity.

Exclusion from learning remains widespread. During the strategic plan (SP) period, an estimated 273 million children and young people are out of school, concentrated in the poorest and most fragile contexts and with global progress largely stalled over the past decade.¹ The challenge is most pronounced at secondary level and in humanitarian settings, particularly for girls. Current trends show reductions in official development assistance, which could push up to 6 million additional children out of school by 2026, risking a reversal of progress in the lead-up to 2030.²

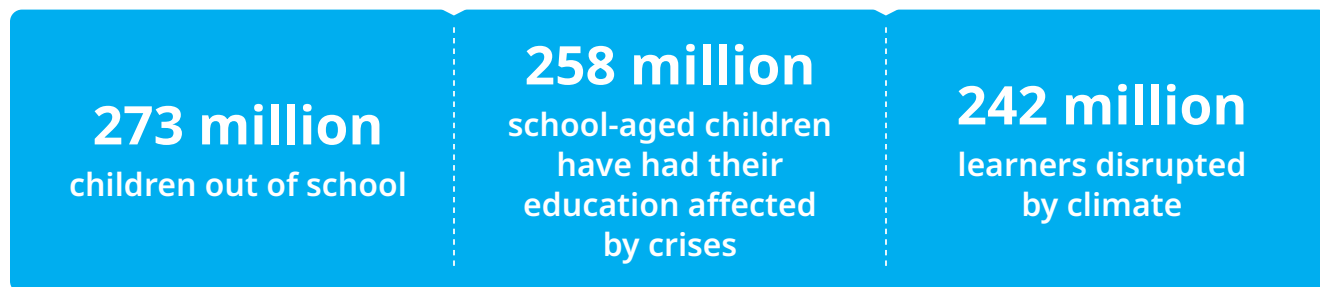
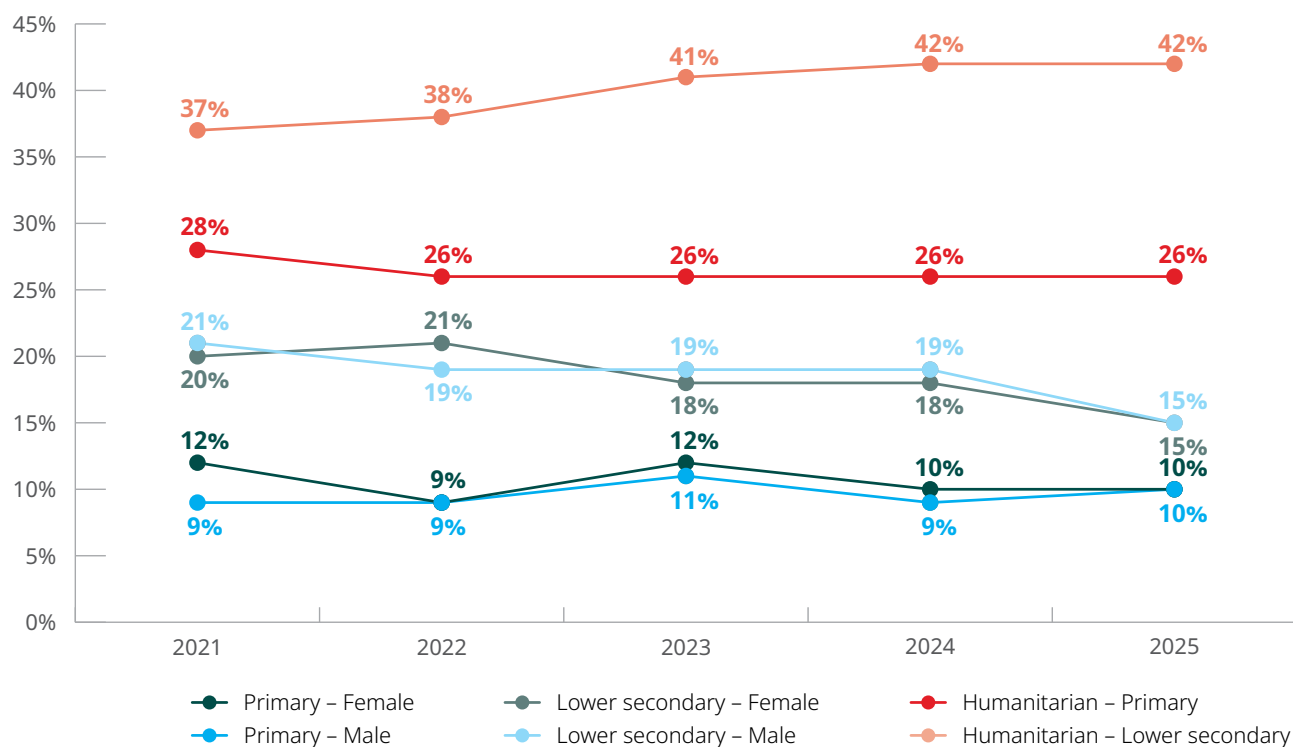


FIGURE 1: Out-of-school rate for girls and boys of primary and lower secondary school age in UNICEF-supported countries, 2022-2025³



Note: Strategic Plan Outcome Indicator 2.4

Source: UNESCO-UIS. The 2025 data cover 133 UNICEF-supported countries at primary and lower secondary levels. For humanitarian affected counties the data is based on 14 countries.

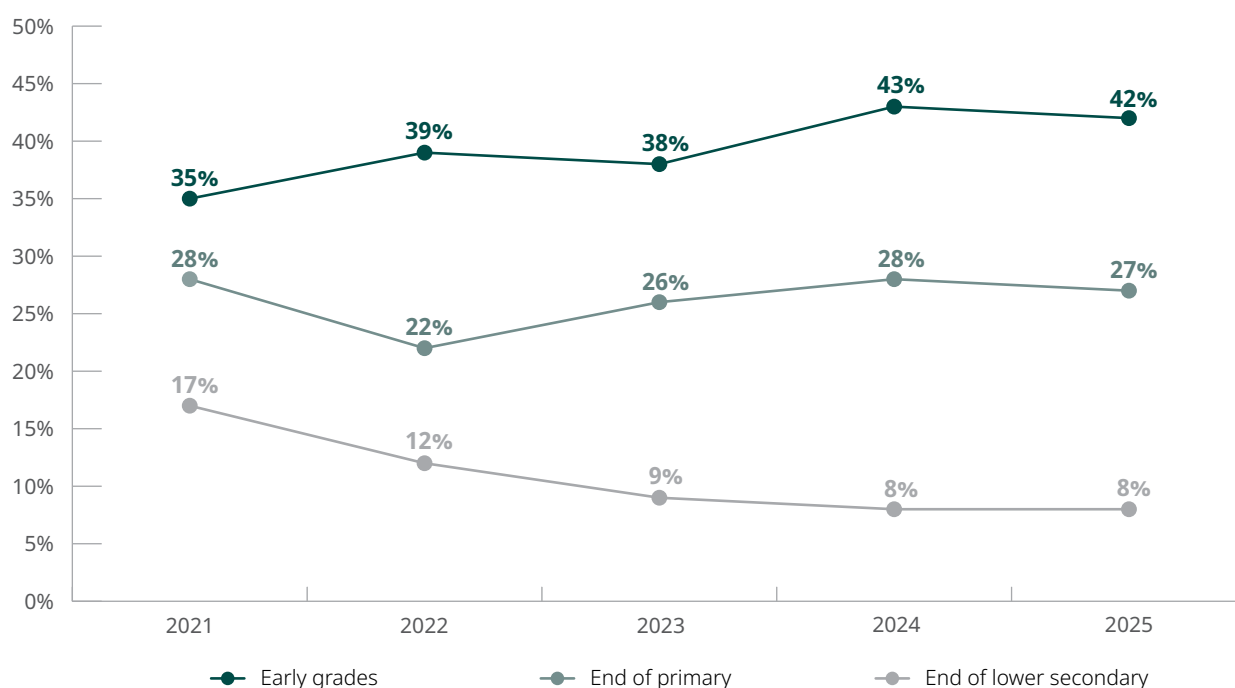
At the same time, an estimated 258 million children and adolescents of school age (49 per cent girls) have had their education affected by crises across 87 countries in 2025. This is an increase of 21 million since the last update of 2024.⁴ Climate- and weather-related events disrupted schooling for at least 242 million learners across 85 countries in 2024.⁵

In many low- and middle-income countries, large numbers of children complete several years of schooling without acquiring foundational literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills needed to succeed in school and life. Globally, 6 in 10 children still fail to reach

minimum proficiency by the end of primary school, pointing to a persistent learning crisis. Evidence highlights systemic constraints, including limited teacher support, misalignment with learner needs and weak data systems.^{6,7,8}

Learning gaps widen across the school cycle, as shown by Strategic Plan Outcome Indicator 2.6. The pattern indicates that while children remain in school, education systems are struggling to sustain learning as curricular expectations rise across grades, pointing to persistent system-level challenges rather than individual learner factors.

FIGURE 2: Percentage of countries with more than 60 per cent of children reaching the minimum level of proficiency in reading and mathematics in UNICEF-supported countries, 2022–2025



Note: Strategic Plan Outcome Indicator 2.6

Source: UNICEF calculation using data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics as of March 2026. The 2025 data cover 41 UNICEF-supported countries at the early grade level, 81 at the primary level, and 59 at the lower secondary level.

Across regions, evidence shows that progress in learning is strongest where reforms are sustained over time. Countries that anchor education reform within clear governance and planning frameworks, supported by national leadership, institutional capacity and predictable financing, are better positioned to move beyond short-term recovery toward longer-term improvement. Increasingly, this progress is associated with efforts that place equity and inclusion at the centre of system reform, prioritizing the needs of the most marginalized learners

across all entry points. Systems designed to reach those furthest behind ultimately benefit all learners. Yet, despite progress, improvements remain unevenly distributed, with gains in access not consistently translating into stronger learning outcomes or equitable transitions.

Teachers and school leadership are central to system performance. However, reform efforts are unfolding against the backdrop of a significant global teacher workforce gap. An estimated 44 million additional

teachers are needed to achieve universal primary and secondary education, rising to over 50 million when early childhood education is included.^{9,10} This underscores the need to expand and strengthen the workforce sustainably.

Early childhood education is increasingly recognised as a strategic entry point for system strengthening. Growing evidence and policy attention point to the role of pre-primary education and educator capacity in shaping learning trajectories across the school cycle.¹¹ Countries that invest early in quality teaching, pedagogy and learning environments are laying foundations for more equitable outcomes over time, even as shortages of qualified early childhood educators continue to constrain expansion globally.

At the secondary and adolescent levels, education systems are also adapting to changing social and economic realities. Many countries are placing greater emphasis on transferable, digital and employment-relevant skills, alongside more flexible learning pathways that support transitions between school, training and work. Large-scale initiatives in India and Nigeria illustrate how education, skills development and youth engagement can reinforce one another when aligned with government priorities and labour-market realities.

Digital transformation is increasingly seen as an enabler when aligned with governance, pedagogy and equity. UNICEF's Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030 signals a move away from fragmented, technology-led initiatives toward integrated, system-level approaches that strengthen teaching, learning, and education management. Digital and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled tools can expand opportunities for learning continuity and acceleration, continuous teacher support

and data-informed improvements in teaching and learning, but also require strong governance to ensure equity, child protection, data privacy and responsible use. Positioning digital education as a public good, guided by clear standards and safeguards, is becoming central to sustainable reform.

Finally, education systems are increasingly incorporating resilience and participation into reform agendas. More countries are integrating risk-informed planning into education sector strategies to better anticipate and respond to shocks such as conflict and climate-related disruption. At the same time, there is a growing emphasis on strengthening community-engaged approaches to education system design and delivery, reflecting broader efforts towards localization and more inclusive, accountable systems that respond to the needs of learners and the communities they serve.

While progress toward SDG 4 remains uneven, pathways to improvement are becoming clearer. Where governance, teacher support, data and digital approaches align, systems are better able to improve learning. **The challenge ahead is to sustain and finance these reforms in the years leading to 2030.**



A teacher supports a student in Bhutan to learn through a digital storytelling e-book, which includes inclusive learning features such as text, audio and sign language.



© UNICEF/UNI1851142/Kruglinski

Results in Goal Area 2 in 2025

Noor, 13, studies during her Grade 5 class at a UNICEF learning centre in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in January 2025. UNICEF provides education to 244,609 children across 31 camps in Cox's Bazar and 21 schools on Bhasan Char Island – reaching 75 per cent of all children in learning facilities and 86 per cent of those in formal education.

Introduction and overview of results and funding

Across diverse and increasingly fragile contexts, education remains a fundamental right, reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and reinforced through UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children. Under the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, UNICEF's education work aligned with SDG 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education, translating these global commitments into country-level results.

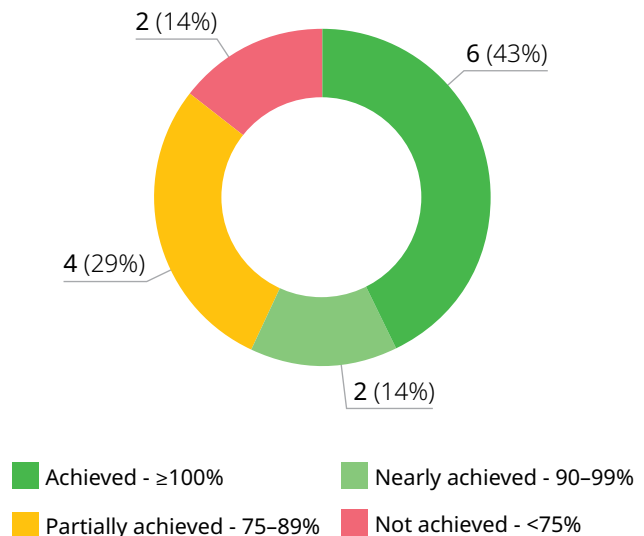
This report presents results over the 2022–2025 period, highlighting trends in access, learning and skills, and progress against core indicator targets.

UNICEF worked on Goal Area 2 in 147 countries in 2025, with total expenses of US\$1.56 billion. Of this US\$299 million (19 per cent) was spent in humanitarian settings, a reduction from the 24 per cent in 2024. For more information see the financial annex.

In 2025, UNICEF received US\$918 million in new funds for education with development contributions, accounting for 89 per cent. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of overall funding (82 per cent) while private sector partners contributed 18 per cent. Goal Area 2 received a total of \$32 million in thematic contributions in 2025, or 4 per cent of total contributions, consistent with trends since 2022 when UNICEF experienced a significant drop in flexible funding for education.

Between 2022 and 2025, UNICEF and its partners expanded reach by providing education to children and strengthened key elements of education systems, including in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. Eight of the 14 strategic plan indicators were met or nearly achieved. Four indicators were partially achieved or close to target, while two were not met.^a

FIGURE 3: Goal Area 2 results overview



UNICEF-supported countries made notable progress in strengthening education systems, particularly in foundational system elements. Advances were most evident in education sector planning, learning assessment, digital learning infrastructure, and the resilience to respond to humanitarian crises. The share of countries achieving or nearing targets on these foundational system elements increased by between 16 and 30 percentage points compared to the baseline in 2021. This points to steady consolidation of system capacity, particularly in technical and policy-driven areas.

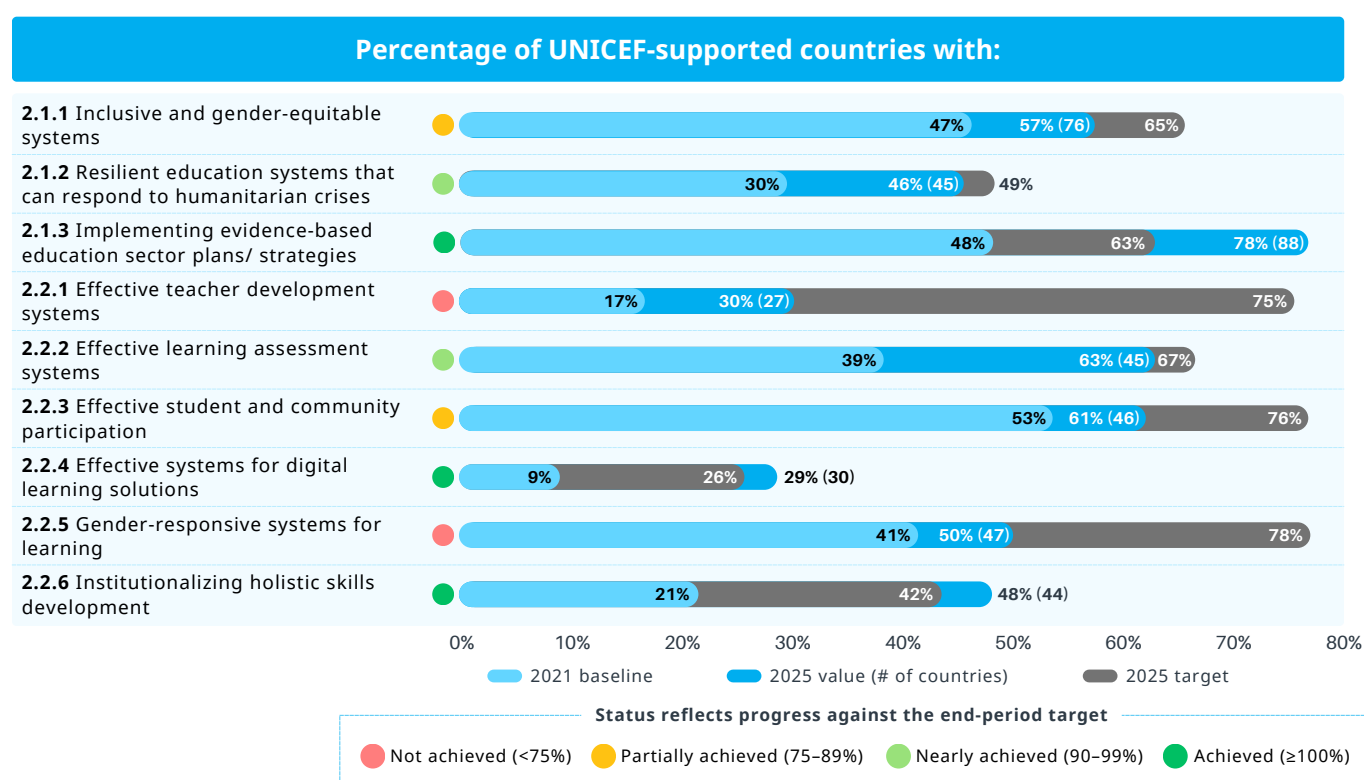
8 of the 14

strategic plan indicators were met or nearly achieved. Four indicators were partially achieved or close to target, while two were not met.

Advances were most evident in education sector planning, learning assessment, digital learning infrastructure, and the resilience to respond to humanitarian crises.

^a Result calculations reflect progress against the end-period target, expressed as per cent of target achieved (actual ÷ target × 100). The same formula applies to percentage and absolute indicators. Thresholds are: Achieved (≥100 per cent), Nearly achieved (90–99 per cent), Partially achieved (75–89 per cent), and Not achieved (<75 per cent).

FIGURE 4: Results dashboard - systems change



At the same time, progress in system behaviours, such as inclusive and gender-equitable access, effective teacher development, student and community participation, and gender-responsive learning, has generally been slower and more uneven, with an average increase of 11 per cent since 2021. While these areas have improved, gains have been less consistent and, in several cases, remain below target. This situation reflects the more complex, context-dependent nature of changes in institutional practices and behaviour, which involve multiple actors, incentives and longer implementation timeframes. Some areas, such as skills system development, have shown stronger progress, but overall behavioural change continues to lag improvements in foundational system capacity.

Regional trends reflect these patterns, with countries in regions such as Eastern and Southern Africa and Europe and Central Asia showing more consistent gains in foundational system elements, while progress in behavioural areas remains more variable in regions affected by fragility and capacity constraints including parts of the Middle East and North Africa and West and Central Africa.

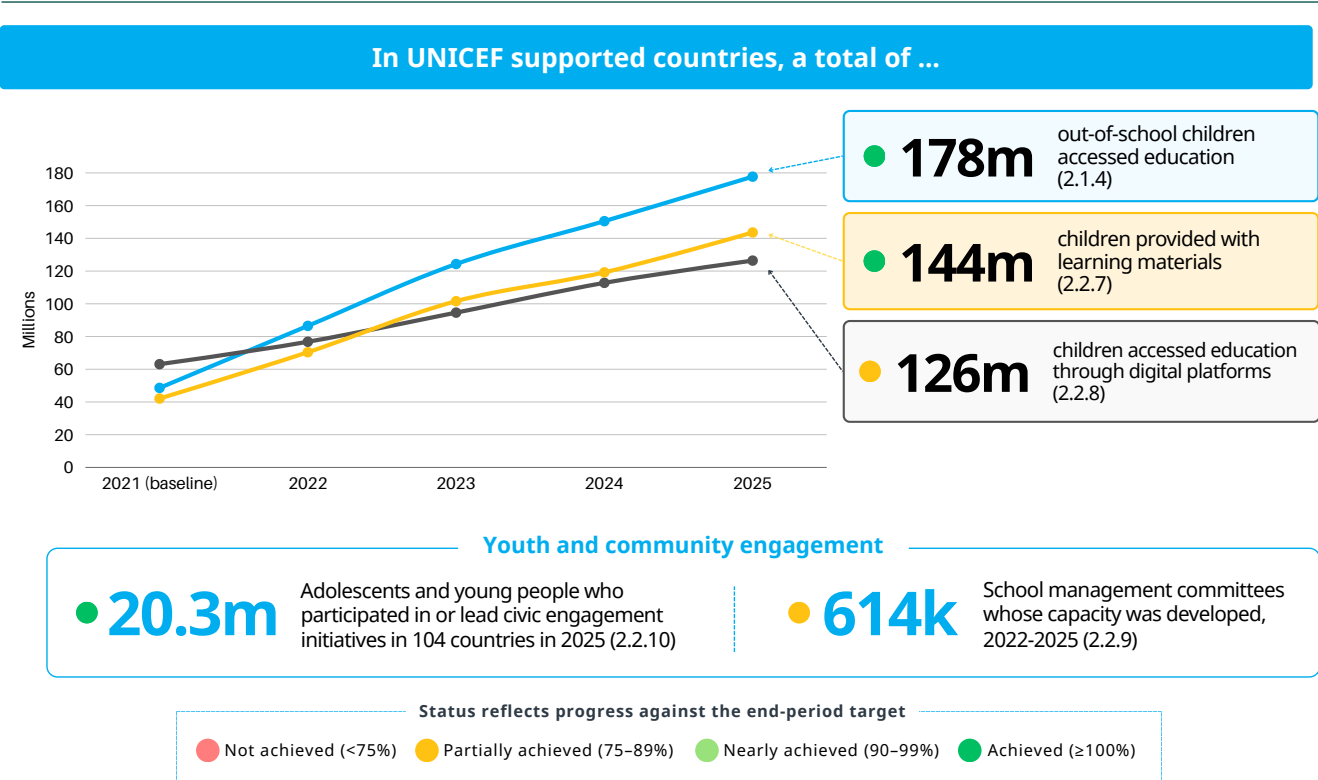
Over the strategic plan period reach numbers expanded rapidly, particularly in humanitarian contexts and high-population regions in South Asia, Eastern and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa. A total of nearly 178 million out-of-school children accessed education, and close to 144 million children were

provided with learning materials by the end of 2025, with girls and boys reached at broadly comparable levels. UNICEF-supported programmes also advanced on digital education and the safe, responsible and well-governed use of AI, and supported 126 million children through digital learning. Most scale related indicators met or exceeded end-period targets, demonstrating strengthened structural system capacity to operate at scale.

Taken together, these results point to a consistent pattern: while foundational system capacity has strengthened and supported rapid expansion in children reached, progress in system behaviours and practice is progressing more slowly. This highlights that while system investments are effectively building the foundations for scale, translating these gains into sustained, equitable improvements in learning, participation and inclusive outcomes requires longer-term effort, continued investment and stronger alignment between system capacity and practice.

A total of nearly 178 million out of school children accessed education, and close to 144 million children were provided with learning materials by the end of 2025, with girls and boys reached at broadly comparable levels.

FIGURE 5: Results dashboard - Reach and scale results



© UNICEF/ UNI798100/ San Diego - Highway Child

A girl studies at her home in Samoa. UNICEF supports Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the Pacific by promoting good health, adequate nutrition, safety, responsive caregiving, and learning opportunities, while also addressing gender-transformative norms and violence prevention.

Results Area 1: Equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities

Building on progress over the Strategic Plan period, this section examines results under Results Area 1: equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities. It assesses progress against indicators 2.1.1–2.1.4 and highlights UNICEF's contribution to expanding access to, and continuity of, education from early childhood through adolescence, including in humanitarian and fragile contexts. The analysis is structured across six interrelated areas: early learning; reaching out-of-school children; inclusive and gender-equitable systems; safe learning environments; social and behaviour change; and education in emergencies.

Access to education remains a prerequisite for learning, yet progress continues to vary across contexts. Participation gaps persist, particularly in pre-primary education and among children from the poorest households, where enrolment remains critically low at around 17 per cent. Gender disparities continue across countries and education levels, while in humanitarian settings exclusion is especially acute, with large numbers of adolescents, often half or more, out of school.

In this context, UNICEF supported countries to expand equitable access, with a strong focus on reaching children affected by poverty, gender inequality, disability, and

crisis. Across the Strategic Plan period, 177.7 million out-of-school children and adolescents accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes, significantly exceeding targets.

These results reflect substantial progress in expanding access at scale, while underscoring the continued challenge of reaching those furthest behind.

Across the Strategic Plan period, **177.7 million out-of-school children and adolescents accessed education through UNICEF-supported programmes, significantly exceeding targets.**

TABLE 1: Overview of result area 1 results - equitable and inclusive access to learning opportunities

#	Results/ Output-level indicators	2021 Baseline	2025 Value	2025 Target	Status ^b	Trend ^c
2.1.1	Percentage of countries with inclusive and gender-equitable system for access to learning opportunities	47	57	65	Partially achieved	↑ Moderate improvement
2.1.2	Percentage of countries with a resilient education system that can respond to humanitarian crises	30	46	49	Nearly achieved	↑ Moderate improvement

^b Status reflects progress against the end-period target, expressed as per cent of target achieved (actual ÷ target × 100). The same formula applies to percentage and absolute indicators. Thresholds are: Achieved (≥100 per cent), Nearly achieved (90–99 per cent), Partially achieved (75–89 per cent), and Not achieved (<75 per cent). Status is independent of baseline values, which are used only for trend analysis.

^c Trend reflects change over time and is measured in percentage points as the difference between the baseline and current value (current value - baseline), rather than relative percentage change. Categories are defined as: Substantial improvement (≥ +20 percentage points), Moderate improvement (+10 to +19 percentage points), Slight improvement (+3 to +9 percentage points), and No change or decline (≤ +3 percentage points).

#	Results/ Output-level indicators	2021 Baseline	2025 Value	2025 Target	Status ^b	Trend ^c
2.1.3	Percentage of countries implementing evidence-based education sector plans/ strategies addressing inequities and mainstreaming the SDG indicators	48	78	63	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.1.4	Number of out-of-school children and adolescents who accessed education (millions)	48.6	177.7	114.1	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement

1.1 Access to education in the early years

Expanding access to early childhood education (ECE) remains critical given its foundational role in education continuity and learning. Yet access remains unevenly distributed, particularly for children with disabilities, from the poorest households, and those in fragile contexts, for whom participation rates are significantly lower. Accelerating progress and continued investment for those left furthest behind is essential to ensure that all children benefit from early learning opportunities.

Over the Strategic Plan period, UNICEF supported countries to expand access while strengthening system capacity for ECE delivery. In 2025, UNICEF contributed to approximately 2.4 million children accessing pre-primary education, bringing the total number of children supported to just over 11 million between 2022 and 2025.

Progress has been underpinned by stronger policy, governance and financing frameworks. By 2025, 90 per cent of 125 reporting countries had established enabling environments for ECE in terms of policy, leadership and budget, while 72 per cent met benchmarks for effective governance, up from 65 per cent in 2022. Countries increasingly prioritised costing and financing strategies to support sustainable expansion. Examples include Cambodia, where a costing tool informed subnational planning for universal pre-primary enrolment, and Costa Rica and Haiti, where national cost analyses supported evidence-based policy decisions. Innovative financing approaches, including public-private partnerships in Kosovo and voucher models in Kyrgyzstan, further expanded access.

Several countries advanced system-level reforms to scale provision. In Ukraine, a new law on Preschool Education enabled more cost-effective service delivery models.¹² Uganda approved a national Early Childhood Education and Care policy, with this and other efforts contributing to expanded access over time for over 200,000 children (52 per cent girls),¹³ while Indonesia introduced one year of universal pre-primary education as part of broader education reforms.

In Somalia, UNICEF supported climate-resilient ECE facilities to sustain learning for displaced and conflict-affected children. In South Sudan, 51,482 children (47 per cent girls) accessed school readiness and early stimulation programmes while integrating psychosocial support and health services.

At global level, UNICEF strengthened advocacy and partnerships to elevate ECE within education and development agendas. Engagement with partners, including Theirworld and the Government of South Africa, helped build momentum towards the first International Financing Summit for Early Childhood planned for 2027, while global evidence - such as on the “second 1,000 days” – reinforced the importance of ECE and the role of ECE platforms in delivering integrated services for child development.



Young children build a tower during a play session at the UNICEF-supported Comprehensive Child Development Community Centre (CECODII) in Guatemala. These centres provide comprehensive care to children up to age 4, along with their families.

Case study – Kosovo^d: Promoting inclusive pre-primary education for all

In Kosovo, significant progress reflects efforts to strengthen early childhood education through system-level reform. UNICEF's technical support and advocacy contributed to the enactment of a dedicated law on Early Childhood Education in 2023, establishing a foundation for expanded access to pre-primary education, diversification of service delivery models and increased public investment. The law is being operationalized through the development of by-laws that aim to ensure both access and quality, while laying the groundwork for more integrated, cross-sectoral services.¹⁴

Building on this, Kosovo endorsed its first gender-responsive early childhood curriculum for children aged 0–6, representing the most comprehensive reform of early learning in decades and strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of provision. Efforts have also focused on ensuring that expansion translates into equitable access. UNICEF supported the introduction of inclusive infrastructure and services, including the country's first accessible preschool playground and the provision of assistive technologies in ECE settings, enabling greater participation of children with disabilities. Together, these reforms demonstrate how coordinated action across policy, curriculum and service delivery can drive more inclusive and resilient early childhood education systems.¹⁵



Four-year-old Viktor and Matija, together with three-year-old Sara, participate in a learning activity at the Community-based Early Childhood Development Centre in the village of Žerovnica, Zvečan municipality, Kosovo. The centre provides young children in rural communities with access to early learning opportunities before they enter pre-primary education. Supported by UNICEF and partners, Community-based Early Childhood Development Centres help children develop essential skills and prepare for a successful transition to school, particularly in areas where access to preschool services is limited.

^d All references to Kosovo are made in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

1.2 Reaching out-of-school children and adolescents with learning opportunities

Reaching out-of-school children (OOSC) remained central to UNICEF's efforts to expand access. Between 2022 and 2025, UNICEF supported nearly 178 million children and adolescents (49 per cent girls) to access education across 132 countries, including 27.8 million in 2025 alone. Nearly half were in sub-Saharan Africa, with a further 15 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa. Two-thirds accessed primary education, and a growing share, rising to 33 per cent, were reached in crisis contexts. In parallel, UNICEF provided close to 144 million children (48 per cent girls) with individual learning materials, including 24.5 million in 2025 alone, exceeding Strategic Plan targets.

Over the same period, UNICEF supported more than 1.1 million children with disabilities to access education in 40 UNICEF-supported countries. However, this likely underestimates the true reach, as identification and measurement of disability remain a sector-wide challenge. Data collection often relies on narrower or medically oriented approaches, which do not fully capture the range of functional, psychosocial and learning-related difficulties – including conditions such as anxiety, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism. This underscores the need for more holistic and inclusive measurement frameworks, such as the Washington Group/UNICEF Child Functioning Module, to be used at scale, including in humanitarian settings.

UNICEF supported governments to strengthen data systems, policies and evidence-based strategies to enable more sustainable reintegration pathways for out-of-school marginalized learners, including girls, refugees, children with disabilities and those affected by conflict. In India, UNICEF developed an Early Warning System to prevent secondary school dropout, initially piloted in Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam and now being scaled up to nine states. Using predictive analytics with 73 per cent accuracy, the system has helped identify at-risk students and prevent approximately 167,000 children (55 per cent girls) from dropping out.

To address the growing out-of-school children challenge, UNICEF expanded non-formal and catch-up programmes, improved infrastructure and learning materials, and supported cash transfers and social protection measures to reduce barriers to participation. These interventions were complemented by community-based approaches linking education with child protection and health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and psychosocial support, particularly in crisis settings. In Madagascar, system strengthening and emergency education interventions – including the provision of safe learning spaces, learning materials and psychosocial support – enabled over 101,000 children affected by climate-related disruptions to return to learning, demonstrating scalable reintegration pathways in crisis contexts.

Country examples illustrate the combined impact of targeted programming and system strengthening. In Pakistan, over 418,000 children (49 per cent girls) improved early grade learning outcomes, including more than 100,000 previously excluded learners, alongside expanded accelerated learning and skills programmes. In Syria, enhancements to non-formal education programmes strengthened quality and pathways back into formal schooling, reaching 3.7 million children (50 per cent girls). In Ethiopia, partnerships with government and the NGOs Imagine1Day and Norwegian Refugee Council supported accelerated learning for nearly 25,000 marginalized learners (45 per cent girls) and re-enrolment of over 50,000 children through community engagement. In Northeast Nigeria, accelerated basic education programmes reached over 60,000 out-of-school children (37 per cent girls) alongside investments in safe and resilient learning environments.

1.3 Strengthening inclusive and gender-equitable education systems

Strengthening inclusive and gender-equitable education systems is central to expanding access for the most marginalized children.

Gender-responsive access to learning opportunities

Key result

In 2025, 64 per cent of 99 reporting countries met targets for gender-responsive access, up from 50 per cent in 2022, reflecting steady progress. Persistent social norms and discriminatory practices continue to limit equitable access, particularly in fragile and low-income contexts.

In 2025, 64 per cent of 99 reporting countries met targets for gender-responsive access, up from 50 per cent in 2022, reflecting steady progress. Persistent social norms and discriminatory practices continue to limit equitable access, particularly in fragile and low-income contexts.

UNICEF supported governments to strengthen gender-responsive education systems through policy reform and planning.¹⁶ This included the development of a Girls' Education Bill in South Sudan to promote retention and protection, and a National Strategy for Gender-Sensitive Inclusive Education in Madagascar, alongside ongoing efforts to review and update national gender strategies across education systems, for example in Cambodia.

Targeted programmes remained critical in expanding access in challenging contexts. Community-based education initiatives reached children with limited access to formal schooling, particularly girls. In Afghanistan, over 442,000 children (65 per cent girls) accessed learning through community-based classes, while in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, almost 13,000 children (56 per cent girls) received remedial education through similar approaches.

Digital innovation further supported gender-equitable access. In Egypt, expansion of the Learning Passport increased access for about 23,000 learners, of which 85 per cent were girls. In Malaysia, a government-led AI-

enabled early warning system reached 5 million children and supported the return of over 8,000 out-of-school children (36 per cent girls). These approaches demonstrate the potential of technology to complement system and community-based interventions.

Disability-inclusive education

UNICEF support for disability-inclusive education expanded from 71 countries in 2021 to 106 in 2025, alongside an increase in countries with enabling inclusive environments from 47 to 59 per cent. This reflects growing prioritization of inclusive education within national systems.

Case study – Serbia: Advancing Inclusive Education through System Reform¹⁷

Since 2009, Serbia has reoriented its education system from segregation towards a rights-based inclusive education system for children with disabilities. This shift is reflected in measurable results. Enrolment in special education schools decreased from nearly 7,500 in 2014 to fewer than 4,700 in 2024, while Individual Education Plans in mainstream schools increased from 7,000 to over 20,000.

During the 2021–2025 country programme, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in strengthening systems to support inclusion across education, social protection, and health. This included the establishment of resource centres, expanded provision of assistive technologies, and capacity building for over 9,000 professionals. These efforts reached two-thirds of all primary and secondary schools and benefited more than 125,000 learners, including 7,000 children with disabilities. Moreover, twenty local governments (12.5 per cent) integrated inclusive education measures into annual plans and budgets, supported by strengthened data systems and capacity.

Inclusive education reforms began with the youngest children. The “Years of Ascent” preschool curriculum, emphasizing child-centred and inclusive learning, has been rolled out nationally, reaching 95 per cent of preschool educators, with Inclusive Teams embedded in all 162 preschool institutions.

The Family-Centred Early Childhood Intervention model has been scaled to 80 per cent of districts, with 350 professionals from health, education and social welfare supporting nearly 9,000 families – including in previously underserved rural areas. Delivered in homes and preschools, the model integrates learning and developmental strategies into daily activities.

Despite these gains, challenges remain. Weak coordination across education, social welfare and health systems continues to limit efficiency and quality at the local level, and disparities persist for Roma children, children in rural areas, and those with disabilities.

Serbia's experience highlights that advancing inclusion requires sustained system alignment across sectors, alongside strong implementation at local level. The 2026–2030 Country Programme will prioritise strengthening coordination and addressing persistent disparities to ensure that system-level reforms translate into equitable learning outcomes for all children.



Assistive technology helps remove barriers and supports Stefan to learn and thrive with his friends.

Across the Strategic Plan period, UNICEF reached about 2.2 million children with disabilities through education programmes, including over 640,000 in 2025. Of these, more than 250,000 children were previously out-of-school, nearly 400,000 received individual learning materials and close to 18,000 accessed education through digital learning platforms in 2025, highlighting both progress in expanding access and continued gaps in digital inclusion.

In 2025, UNICEF strengthened global momentum through partnerships and advocacy, including commitments at the Global Disability Summit and the launch of the Leadership Council on Disability-Inclusive Education led by UNICEF, the government of the United Kingdom, Norway, and the International Disability Alliance. This partnership aims to harness the collective expertise, influence, and commitment to advance disability-inclusive education globally.¹⁸

Country-level efforts demonstrate the potential for system-level change. In Egypt, scaling inclusive education across 840 schools reached 40,000 children with disabilities, supported by large-scale teacher training and leadership development. In Malawi, provision of assistive devices and resource centres contributed to increased enrolment of children with disabilities by 11 per cent supporting over 215,000 children, of whom 48 per cent are girls.

1.4 Ending violence in and around schools

Key result

By the end of 2025, **118 UNICEF-supported countries had laws and policies prohibiting corporal punishment in schools**, up from 104 at the start of the Strategic Plan period.

Violence in and around schools, including in classrooms, on the journey to and from school, and in online spaces, continues to undermine children's learning, well-being and mental health. It is associated with lower educational attainment, increased dropout and poorer learning outcomes, particularly where practices such as corporal punishment persist. UNICEF played a central role in strengthening global and country-level action through the Safe to Learn Initiative, supporting governments to embed violence prevention and response within education sector policies, plans and budgets.¹⁹ Progress in legal and policy frameworks remained significant. By the end

of 2025, 118 UNICEF-supported countries had laws and policies prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, up from 104 at the start of the Strategic Plan period. In 2025 alone, several countries²⁰ introduced new legal or policy measures. For example, Bolivia advanced an integrated framework combining national strategies, protocols on peer violence, and school-level implementation supporting 86 per cent of schools across the country.

Efforts increasingly focused on strengthening systems and risk-informed approaches to prevention. UNICEF supported the rollout of school safety frameworks and risk management plans in countries including Pakistan and Colombia, while investments in teacher development promoted inclusive and protective learning environments. In Nepal, these approaches benefited over 195,000 children (56 per cent girls), while in Jordan, 200 educators and stakeholders were supported to identify and respond to risks in digital learning environments.

Strengthening response systems has been critical to ensuring that violence is identified, reported and addressed effectively. In Honduras, a school-community model strengthened referral pathways, improving access to services across 500 schools and contributing to a 62 per cent increase in reported cases. In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education developed a Teacher Handbook on Managing Violence and strengthened educators' capacity to prevent and respond to violence in schools.

Addressing harmful social and gender norms remains central to prevention. Social and behaviour change approaches supported adolescents, educators and communities to promote non-violence and strengthen reporting mechanisms. In South Africa, youth engagement initiatives empowered over 11,000 adolescents to identify risks, promote non-violence, and support reporting pathways for gender-based violence enhancing safe learning environments.

Progress in data, evidence and accountability further supported sustained action. Governments increasingly monitored implementation of commitments under the Safe to Learn Call to Action, supported by diagnostic tools and benchmarking exercises. Since 2024, more than 45 UNICEF-supported countries have advanced national commitments to end violence in schools, while global and regional platforms strengthened coordination and accountability.²¹

Endorsements of the Safe to Learn Call to Action continued to grow, with Chile and Seychelles bringing the total to 20 countries. To accelerate implementation, Safe to Learn supported the Ending Violence in Schools Ministerial Taskforce established at the 2025 Education World Forum, alongside global and regional dialogues to track progress and sustain momentum.²²

Case study – Sierra Leone: Connecting policy to practice on safe learning

Violence in and around schools remains a critical barrier to children's learning and wellbeing in Sierra Leone. Nearly 9 in 10 children experience violent discipline at home, while corporal punishment, bullying and gender-based violence persist in and around school environments. These risks not only affect safety, but also attendance, retention and learning outcomes.

Since endorsing the [Safe to Learn Call to Action](#) in 2019, the Government of Sierra Leone has translated political commitment into tangible system reform. Violence prevention and response is embedded within education sector laws and policies, including the Basic and Senior Secondary Education Act (2023), the Education Sector Plan (2022–2026), and the Comprehensive School Safety Policy (2023). Together, these position safe learning environments as a central function of the education system rather than a standalone issue.



Students stand outside Methodist High School in Bo District, Sierra Leone.

With support from UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Sierra Leone is operationalizing these commitments through the Safe Learning Technical Assistance Initiative. The initiative focuses on strengthening education system functions: prevention and response mechanisms, social and gender norm change, and the generation and use of data to drive decision-making.

A significant area of progress has been the strengthening of response systems by linking schools more effectively with child protection and gender-based violence services. Standardized tools and harmonized guidance have improved reporting and case management, while coordination between education, child protection and gender-based violence actors has been formalized at national and district levels. In 2024, 240 School Quality Assurance Officers and Girls' Education Movement coordinators were trained and equipped to monitor school safety and address school-related gender-based violence risks, reinforcing routine oversight and strengthening referral pathways across the system.²³

At the same time, Sierra Leone is tackling the root causes of violence through a more coordinated approach to social and behaviour change. The national School-Related Gender-Based Violence Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy (2025–2029) provides a unified framework for prevention efforts.²⁴ Youth engagement has been central, with young people actively shaping advocacy and communication initiatives, increasing relevance, reach and community ownership.

The initiative is also strengthening the education system's ability to generate and use data. A national mapping of school safety interventions is informing the development of a Safe School Digital Coordination Hub, alongside integrated dashboards linked to child protection and gender-based violence information systems. These tools are enabling more systematic monitoring, strengthening coordination across actors, and supporting evidence-based planning and resource allocation.

Through these efforts, Sierra Leone is moving from fragmented interventions to a more coherent, system-wide approach. Policies are increasingly connected to implementation, sector coordination is strengthening, and data is being used to guide action. This shift marks an important step towards ensuring that efforts to ensure children are safe to learn are institutionalized – anchored in national systems and sustained at scale.

1.5 Social and behaviour change for education

Social and behavioural change (SBC) is a critical enabler of education outcomes, shaping the norms, attitudes and behaviours that influence participation, retention and learning. It plays a key role in addressing barriers such as gender inequality, stigma against children with disabilities, child labour and child marriage, while strengthening demand for education and engagement of households and communities.

During the Strategic Plan period, SBC in education evolved from stand-alone awareness campaigns towards more integrated, evidence-driven approaches that address both behavioural drivers and enabling environments. This shift has been particularly evident in priority areas such as gender equality, retention, violence prevention and climate-related behaviours. In 2025, of the US\$114 million invested globally in SBC programming, 18.5 per cent supported education.

SBC integration within the education sector strengthened significantly between 2022 and 2025. A total of 69 country offices implemented SBC programmes supporting education systems, representing a 17 per cent increase compared with the previous Strategic Plan period. Budget allocations grew by almost 14 per cent, while the use of behavioural data to inform programme design expanded, with 59 country offices reporting its application in 2025.

Country-level implementation demonstrates how SBC contributes to measurable changes in behaviours and education participation. In India, interventions targeting caregivers led to substantial increases in engagement in early learning activities, including daily play, storytelling and physical interaction. In Zambia, application of the Behavioural Drivers Model strengthened analysis of social and behavioural factors affecting enrolment, retention and participation in skills programmes, informing more effective programme design.²⁵

In Moldova, an evidence-based campaign contributed to increased acceptance of inclusive education, with the proportion of caregivers opting for inclusive schooling rising significantly, alongside improved teacher attitudes.²⁶ In Nigeria, integration of SBC insights into national policy processes supported the development of a National SBC Strategy for Education and strengthened community feedback mechanisms.

1.6 Education in emergencies and humanitarian fragile contexts

Across this Strategic Plan period, UNICEF strengthened its efforts to ensure that crises do not disrupt children's right to education. The share of programme countries reporting crisis-resilient education systems increased

from 23 per cent in 2022 to 46 per cent in 2025, approaching the 49 per cent target. In 2025 alone, UNICEF reached 9.1 million crisis-affected children, including 4.5 million girls. These results reflect a shift towards integrating education in emergencies within national systems, strengthening institutional capacity and aligning humanitarian response with longer-term system development.

Key result

UNICEF continued to play a leading role in global humanitarian coordination and advocacy in education. Through its leadership of the Global Education Cluster, it strengthened partner alignment and response capacity. Global engagement also supported the expansion of the Safe Schools Declaration, with endorsing states increasing from 111 to 123 over the Strategic Plan period.

This progress comes amid growing and increasingly complex needs. By 2026, 258 million children and adolescents of school age (49 per cent girls) have had their education affected by crises across 87 countries. This is an increase of 21 million in the eighteen months since the previous ECW Global Estimates Update early 2025. Among these crisis-affected children, 93 million (51 per cent girls) are out of school – equivalent to an out-of-school rate of 36 per cent – while a further 165 million remain enrolled under conditions that disrupt schooling, undermine progression and increase the risk of dropout. Nearly 60 per cent of all crisis-affected children live in just nine countries affected by protracted crises – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen.²⁷ Conflict, climate shocks and displacement continue to drive exclusion, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Middle East. At the same time, global humanitarian financing constraints have intensified. The 2025 Humanitarian Reset reduced education funding by 24 per cent, with education, already receiving less than 3 per cent of total humanitarian aid, disproportionately affected.²⁸

In this context, sustaining access while strengthening systems has been critical. In South Sudan, UNICEF supported over 325,000 children to access education while improving teacher accountability. In Yemen, support to teachers and national examinations helped maintain continuity in a system where learning poverty remains extremely high at 95 per cent. In Ukraine, digital platforms enabled over 800,000 students and teachers to continue learning despite ongoing attacks on schools. In Myanmar, community-based education reached over one million children despite severe resource constraints. These

examples highlight the importance of combining delivery at scale with system support in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Integration of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into education expanded across 30 countries, reflecting recognition that safe and supportive environments are essential for learning. In Gaza, where widespread school destruction has severely limited formal education, UNICEF-supported learning centres provided an integrated whole-of-child approach combining education, child protection, psychosocial support, nutrition and WASH.

UNICEF continued to play a leading role in global coordination and advocacy. Through its leadership of the Global Education Cluster, it strengthened partner alignment and response capacity. Global engagement also

supported the expansion of the Safe Schools Declaration, with endorsing states increasing from 111 to 123 over the Strategic Plan period. These efforts contributed to strengthening policy frameworks and protection of education in conflict settings.

Despite progress, funding constraints continue to pose significant risks. An estimated shortfall of USD 745 million for UNICEF threatens access to education for millions of children in crisis contexts. Flexible and thematic funding has been critical in sustaining operations where bilateral support declined, including in Bangladesh, where funding helped maintain learning opportunities for Rohingya refugee children. UNICEF's 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal of US\$1.22 billion, targeting 22.9 million children, reflects both the scale of need and the importance of sustained investment.²⁹

Case study – Sudan: Learning through crisis

When conflict escalated in April 2023, Sudan's already fragile education system collapsed, leaving an estimated 16–17 million children out of school by early 2025. The scale of disruption underscores the challenges of sustaining education in protracted crisis.

By the end of 2025, the number of out-of-school children had fallen to approximately 8 million, reflecting a significant, though fragile, recovery. UNICEF and partners supported 3.2 million children to access formal and non-formal education. The number of operational schools more than doubled, from 5,500 in 2024 to over 13,000, supported by school grants reaching three million students and expanded use of digital learning in inaccessible unsafe areas.

Despite progress, challenges remain substantial. Around 8 million children are still out of school, teachers remain unpaid, and girls face heightened risks of dropout, early marriage and violence. Severe funding gaps continue to constrain the sustainability of gains.

Insights show that flexible, thematic funding has been critical to maintaining access and system functionality under extreme pressure. UNICEF's role in coordinating partners, maintaining operational presence and supporting national systems highlights the importance of sustained, system-level engagement to prevent reversals in access and learning. Without sustained financing, these gains risk being rapidly reversed.



On 8 December 2025, a girl uses a tablet for structured e-learning inside the UNICEF-supported child friendly space at As-Senniya Internally Displaced People (IDP) site, Port Sudan.

UNICEF supports structured e-learning for hundreds of children at As-Senniya through safe learning spaces where children access digital lessons using tablets and headphones. The programme helps displaced children continue their education despite months of disruption, forming part of UNICEF's integrated multisectoral response at the site, which includes education, child protection, health, nutrition, WASH and community engagement services.

1.7 Conclusion

UNICEF's work demonstrates that progress in expanding access is possible, including in fragile and crisis-affected contexts, but remains inconsistent across contexts and constrained by persistent structural, social and systemic barriers. While system capacity to expand access has strengthened, sustained improvements in participation and retention depend on slower-moving changes in behaviour and practice. With an estimated 273 million children still out of school globally, the continued exclusion of the most marginalized reflects not only gaps in delivery but also deeper constraints related to poverty, gender norms, displacement and limited system capacity.

While targeted interventions and partnerships are enabling access at scale, sustaining and expanding these gains will require stronger alignment between service delivery, system strengthening and financing. Building

inclusive, resilient and safe education systems that address access, retention, completion and transitions simultaneously will be critical to ensuring that all children, particularly those most at risk, can enter, remain in and benefit from quality education. This will require sustained prioritization of education and stronger investment in system-level reform to translate access gains into equitable participation at scale.

While targeted interventions and partnerships are enabling access at scale, sustaining and expanding these gains will require stronger alignment between service delivery, system strengthening and financing.



After school, students participate in a physical exercise session at a temporary learning centre rebuilt with support from UNICEF, in Heya Ywarma village on Inle Lake, Shan State, Myanmar, following the earthquake in March 2025.

Results Area 2: Improved learning, skills, participation and engagement for all children and adolescents

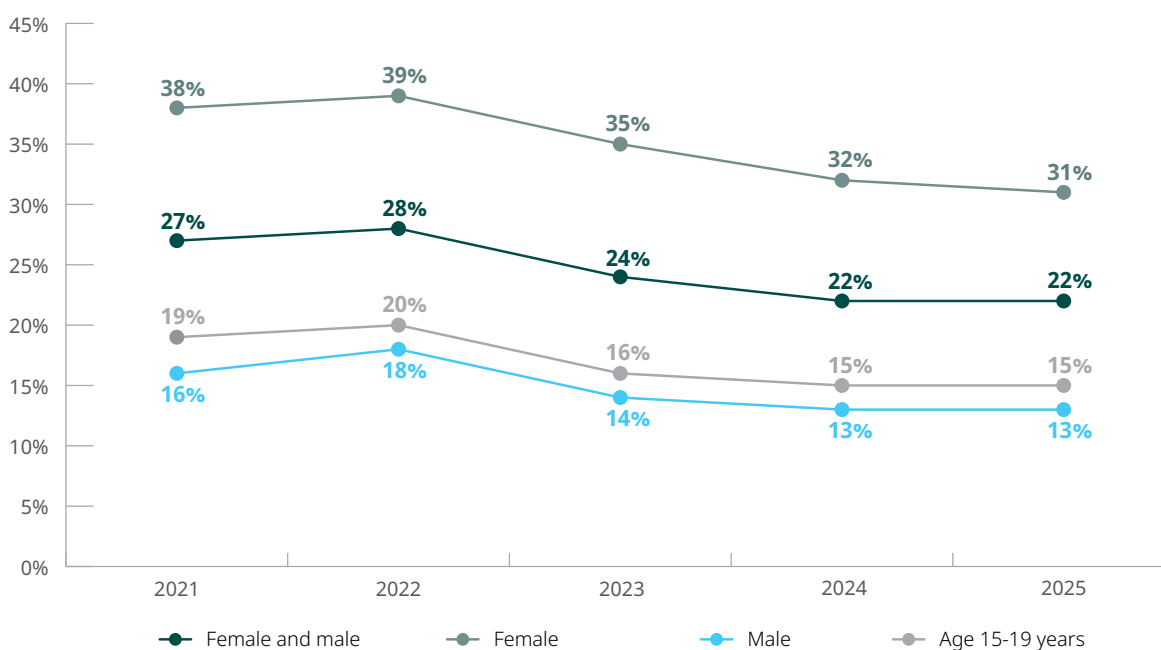
Over the Strategic Plan period, UNICEF prioritised improvements in learning outcomes as a central response to the global learning crisis. Efforts included strengthening education systems, advancing teaching and learning, and expanding opportunities for children and adolescents to acquire relevant skills and participate actively in their learning. While progress reflects scaling quality education provision and strengthening systems, improvements in learning outcomes remain uneven. This reinforces that expanding access alone is insufficient without corresponding gains in equitable learning.

Global data underscore the scale of these challenges. Between 2021 and 2025, the share of UNICEF-supported countries where at least 60 per cent of children achieved minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics in early grades increased modestly from 35 to 42 per cent. At the end of primary, progress stagnated at around 27–28 per cent, while at lower secondary level it declined sharply from 17 to 8 per cent. These trends highlight

widening learning gaps as children progress through the system, particularly in low-income and crisis-affected contexts. Together, these trends suggest that improvements in system inputs and access have not yet translated into sustained learning gains at scale.

Beyond foundational learning, skills development and transitions to adulthood remain key indicators of system performance. The proportion of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) declined from 27 per cent to 22 per cent across UNICEF programme countries. However, levels remain high, especially among young women, who are more than twice as likely as young men to be out of education, employment or training. Young people with disabilities also face substantially higher risks of not being in employment, education or training than their peers, reflecting additional barriers to learning, skills development and transition into the labour market.³⁰ These patterns highlight persistent constraints to participation, skills development and economic inclusion.

FIGURE 6: Percentage of youth (15–24 years) not in employment, education or training, in UNICEF-supported countries, 2022–2025 (SDG 8.6.1)



Note: Strategic Plan Outcome Indicator 2.7

Source: ILO. The 2025 data cover 94 UNICEF-supported countries.

In this context, UNICEF-supported countries made progress in strengthening key system drivers of learning. Learning assessment systems improved significantly from 39 to 63 per cent of countries, approaching Strategic Plan targets, while holistic skills development was increasingly institutionalised. Digital learning systems also expanded rapidly. However, progress in other areas, including teacher development, gender responsiveness and student participation, remained more limited, reflecting persistent constraints in capacity, system coherence and social norms.

At the same time, learning inputs and delivery modalities, including non-formal programmes, expanded substantially. The number of children receiving learning materials more than tripled to 144 million in 2025, while access to digital platforms doubled to over 126 million. Community engagement also expanded, with over 600,000 school management committees capacitated.

Key result

The number of children receiving learning materials **more than tripled to 144 million** in 2025, while access to digital platforms **doubled to over 126 million**.

Despite these gains, a persistent gap remains between expanded access to inputs and improvements in learning outcomes. Progress in adolescent participation has been more limited, highlighting the need for greater investment in young people as active contributors to learning. Closing the gap between system improvements and sustained learning outcomes will require stronger alignment across teaching, learning, assessment and skills systems.

TABLE 2: Overview of result area 2 results - Improved learning, skills, participation and engagement for all children and adolescents

#	Results/ Output-level indicators	2021 Baseline	2025 Value	2025 Target	Status ^e	Trend ^f
2.2.1	Percentage of countries with effective teacher development system	17	30	75	Not achieved	↑ Moderate improvement
2.2.2	Percentage of countries with effective learning assessment system	39	63	67	Nearly achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.3	Percentage of countries with effective student and community participation	53	61	76	Partially achieved	↗ Slight improvement
2.2.4	Percentage of countries with effective system for digital learning solutions	9	29	26	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.5	Percentage of countries with gender-responsive systems	41	50	78	Not achieved	↗ Slight improvement

e Status reflects progress against the end-period target, expressed as per cent of target achieved (actual ÷ target × 100). The same formula applies to percentage and absolute indicators. Thresholds are: Achieved (≥100 per cent), Nearly achieved (90–99 per cent), Partially achieved (75–89 per cent), and Not achieved (<75 per cent). Status is independent of baseline values, which are used only for trend analysis.

f Trend reflects change over time and is measured in percentage points as the difference between the baseline and current value (current value - baseline), rather than relative percentage change. Categories are defined as: Substantial improvement (≥ +20 percentage points), Moderate improvement (+10 to +19 percentage points), Slight improvement (+3 to +9 percentage points), and No change or decline (≤ +3 percentage points).

#	Results/ Output-level indicators	2021 Baseline	2025 Value	2025 Target	Status ^e	Trend ^f
2.2.6	Percentage of countries institutionalizing holistic skills development	21	48	42	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.7	Number of children provided with learning materials (millions)	42	143.6	91	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.8	Number of children accessed education through digital platforms (millions)	63.1	126.4	148.6	Partially achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.9	Number of school management committees capacitated (thousands)	86	614	402	Achieved	↑ ↑ Substantial improvement
2.2.10	Number of adolescents and youth who participate in or leading civic engagement initiatives (millions per year) ^g	19.6	20.3	25	Partially achieved	— No change

2.1 Learning in early years

Key result

UNICEF contributed to strengthened early learning systems in 75 per cent of 125 reporting countries in 2025, up from 63 per cent in 2022. Progress was most evident in the development of policy frameworks, quality standards and system-level mechanisms to support early learning.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, access to quality early childhood education continues to vary significantly, particularly for the most marginalized children. These disparities limit opportunities for early learning and contribute to widening gaps in school readiness and later learning outcomes. In response, countries are increasingly prioritizing pre-primary education within system reforms, with a focus on strengthening teacher capacity, improving learning environments and expanding access. However, ensuring that expansion is both equitable and of sufficient quality remains a key challenge for education systems.

UNICEF contributed to strengthened early learning systems in 75 per cent of 125 reporting countries in 2025, up from 63 per cent in 2022. Progress was most evident in the development of policy frameworks, quality standards and system-level mechanisms to support early learning, including teacher development, curriculum reform and quality assurance. As a result, 80 per cent of reporting countries met benchmarks for improved teaching and learning environments in early childhood education, up from 69 per cent in 2022. These gains reflect progress in building foundational system capacity, but their impact will depend on sustained investment and effective implementation at scale.

At global level, UNICEF supported prioritization of early childhood care and education (ECCE) through platforms such as the G20 Education Working Group under the leadership of the Government of South Africa, advocating for workforce development and strengthened quality assurance. These efforts translated into system-level reforms across countries. In Indonesia and Lesotho, support focused on upgrading teacher qualifications, while countries such as Senegal, Uganda and Ukraine advanced national quality standards and assessment systems. At regional level, UNICEF supported the African Union Commission to develop a harmonized framework and tools to track early learning across the foundational learning continuum.

^g This indicator measures annual reach rather than cumulative progress over the years. The estimated total of adolescents and youth who participated in or led civic engagement initiatives over 2022–2025 is 81 million. This figure may include a small degree of double counting that cannot be disaggregated.

Countries also progressed in strengthening pedagogy. Child-centred, play-based curricula were increasingly institutionalized, including through nationwide reforms in Sri Lanka and Serbia. In Serbia, over 95 per cent of preschool educators were trained in the new curriculum, benefiting approximately 235,319 children (48.5 per cent girls), while Bhutan integrated environmental and climate education into early learning.

Parental engagement remained an important component of early learning systems. UNICEF-supported initiatives strengthened caregiving practices and demand for inclusive ECE, including programmes in Morocco and Türkiye, where approximately 12,000 caregivers were reached, to better engage in children's learning at home.

2.2 Foundational learning

Key result

By 2025, **63 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had effective learning assessment systems**, up from 56 per cent in 2022.

Foundational learning remains central to achieving education outcomes across the system. Yet for many children, learning is insufficient, interrupted or not progressing, with large shares of learners completing primary education without acquiring minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy. Evidence shows that learning gaps widen as children progress through the system, particularly in low-income and crisis-affected contexts.^h

UNICEF supported countries to strengthen foundational learning through a shift from fragmented project-based interventions to system-level reform. Efforts focused on embedding evidence-based approaches within national systems, including structured pedagogy, level-appropriate learning, curriculum reform, assessment for learning, and continuous professional support for teachers and school leaders. Increasing emphasis was also placed on socio-emotional learning and better alignment between instruction and learners' actual levels.

Progress is reflected in the expansion of national programmes, with countries increasingly institutionalizing these approaches. In Ghana and Zambia, remedial and level-based learning approaches were integrated into national frameworks, while South Africa advanced reading reforms. Cambodia scaled its Early Grade Learning Programme nationwide, and Jordan adapted structured

pedagogy for crisis-affected learners. Across selected programmes, interventions reached over 160,000 learners and 5,000 teachers, demonstrating the growing scale of implementation.

Evidence shows that improvements in learning outcomes are strongest where curriculum, instruction, assessment and teacher support are aligned within coherent system frameworks.^{31,32} Measurable gains are emerging, including improvements in literacy and numeracy following the scale-up of level-appropriate teaching approaches in Ghana, where English scores increased from 53 per cent to 60 per cent and mathematics scores improved by 20 percentage points, and strengthened reading outcomes among Syrian learners in Jordan, where 73 per cent of participants in structured interventions improved reading skills.

At global and regional levels, UNICEF supported stronger system coherence and use of data. Through tools such as the Foundational Learning Action Tracker (FLAT), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) Foundational Learning Module and regional assessments including Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), countries strengthened learning assessment systems and use of data for policy and instruction. By 2025, 63 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had effective learning assessment systems, up from 56 per cent in 2022.

UNICEF also strengthened partnerships and coalition-building, working with the Global Coalition for Foundational Learning, the African Union, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), while convening high-level platforms such as the UN General Assembly, the African Union Continental Education Conference and regional learning exchanges. These efforts contributed to 39 governments and 38 organizations endorsing the Commitment to Action on Foundational Learning, up from 16 in 2022.

Progress has also included a stronger focus on equity. Across the Pacific, UNICEF supported the development of inclusive education systems, helping countries translate policy commitments into classroom practice and ensuring that foundational learning reforms reach children with disabilities and those most at risk of being left behind.

Despite these advances, progress remains inconsistent. While policy frameworks have strengthened, translating these into consistent improvements in classroom practice and learning outcomes remain constrained by gaps in teacher support, limited alignment between curriculum and learner levels, and uneven use of data. Financing constraints and shifting priorities in some contexts further risk slowing progress.

^h See context chapter and Strategic Plan Outcome Indicator 2.6 on learning outcomes across the education cycle.

Case study – Senegal: Reading corners to strengthen foundational literacy

In Senegal, improving foundational literacy remains a critical priority, with only one in three children achieving basic reading proficiency by the end of primary school and just nine per cent reaching minimum proficiency at lower secondary level. Limited access to books and reading materials, particularly in rural and disadvantaged schools, has been identified as a key constraint to learning outcomes.

To address this challenge, UNICEF supported the Ministry of National Education to launch the Reading Corners initiative in 2021 as part of broader national efforts to strengthen foundational learning.³³ The initiative provides dedicated, child-friendly spaces within classrooms to promote reading through both structured and self-directed activities. These include guided reading, storytelling, book discussions and community-led reading sessions, supported by diverse materials in both French and national languages.

The approach complements wider system reforms, including structured pedagogy and Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), by addressing a key gap in access to reading materials while strengthening pupil engagement and motivation. Each reading corner is designed to support independent learning, creativity and social interaction, enabling teachers to better respond to diverse learner needs.

Between 2021 and 2022, the initiative reached over 133,000 children across 300 schools in eight regions. Teachers received training to integrate reading into daily instruction, while community volunteers supported learning through remedial camps and extracurricular activities.

Evidence from implementation highlights strong improvements in classroom engagement and reading habits. Teachers report increased student confidence and participation, while parents note improved learning outcomes and motivation. The initiative has also strengthened collaboration between schools and communities, contributing to more inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Beyond its impact, the model is highly cost-effective, with an estimated cost of approximately US\$1.60 per child. This demonstrates how relatively small investments, when embedded within national systems and combined with proven pedagogical approaches, can support scalable improvements in foundational learning.

Building on early success, the Government is now working to expand the initiative, strengthen teacher capacity and integrate reading corners within national bilingual education reforms.



Two learners sit in a Reading Corner at Ataba Tabarta Ba School in Ziguinchor, Senegal.

2.3 Secondary education, skills development and learning to earning

Expanding access to secondary education and strengthening skills development remain critical challenges. Enrolment and completion at this level continue to lag, particularly in low-capacity and crisis-affected contexts. Of the 273 million children and young people out of school globally, nearly half are of secondary school age, while 31 per cent of female youth and 13 per cent of male youth remain outside education, employment or training, with limited access to relevant skills.

Over the Strategic Plan period, UNICEF supported countries to strengthen secondary education systems and expand pathways for adolescents through more flexible and inclusive learning opportunities. Countries are increasingly integrating skills development within education systems, alongside bridging programmes, accelerated learning pathways and alternative models. As a result, the share of UNICEF-supported countries institutionalizing holistic skills development increased from 21 per cent to 48 per cent, exceeding the target.

A central shift has been the integration of life skills, socio-emotional learning and transferable competencies within curricula, teacher training and system delivery. In India, life skills were mainstreamed across multiple states, reaching over 1.6 million students. In Bangladesh, system-level reforms integrated digital literacy and climate resilience within national programmes, reaching over 59,000 students (52 per cent girls) through secondary education innovations and supported by more than 100,000 teachers trained and national digital platforms designed to reach millions of learners. In Egypt, skills development was embedded within secondary education through the Mostakbaly programme, supporting over 38,000 students and 1,200 educators and laying the groundwork for expansion through technical and vocational pathways.

Greater emphasis has also been placed on linking learning to employment pathways. UNICEF supported countries to strengthen technical and vocational education systems, expand employer partnerships and facilitate transitions into work. In Tajikistan, innovation labs and employment pathways reached over 22,000 young people, while in India and other countries, system-level initiatives expanded science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) education and reached more than 1.2 million learners through nationally scaled programmes.



On 3 December 2025, students from Lamashegu Technical Institute (LAMTECH), Tamale, Ghana operate a metal rolling machine in the plumbing department, shaping pipes with precision and care. One student handles the equipment while another observes closely, reinforcing safety and teamwork in a hands-on learning environment.

Through UNICEF's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and Skills Strategy in Northern Ghana, girls are gaining practical experience in plumbing and other technical trades. The programme promotes gender inclusion, challenges stereotypes, and empowers young women to lead in industries where they have long been underrepresented.

Digital platforms have increasingly supported access to skills development and transitions to employment. In Brazil, the One Million Opportunities (1MiO) initiative enabled over 200,000 youth to access training through micro-certifications, while in Rwanda, the "Ingazi" AI-enabled platforms supported 43,000 youth in completing over 90,000 skills courses and accessing career guidance and job matching services.³⁴

Scaling of skills programmes accelerated during the Strategic Plan period. The UPSHIFT programme equips adolescents and young people with transferable skills for life and work and expanded from 42 to 58 countries, reaching 3.5 million young people and demonstrating how system-embedded, school-based and digital approaches can deliver skills at scale.³⁵

UPSHIFT India: Scaling Skills Development through Government-Led Reform

UPSHIFT is a global UNICEF programme that equips adolescents and young people with transferable skills for life and work through human-centred design and experiential learning, in partnership with governments, the private sector and donors.

In India, implementation is led by UNICEF/Yuwaah in collaboration with the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the Ministry of Education, Atal Innovation Mission and the UNICEF Office of Innovation. In 2025, AICTE assumed operational leadership, scaling UPSHIFT rapidly from 120,000 to 350,000 secondary schools and onboarding over one million teachers. This expansion positions UPSHIFT as a key mechanism for embedding future-ready skills within the national education system.

The programme reflects a shift from stand-alone interventions to system integration, supporting the transition from traditional instruction to interactive, project-based learning. UPSHIFT serves both as a student learning model and as on-the-job teacher training, strengthening facilitation skills and enabling more learner-centred pedagogy at scale.

To support this transformation, AI-enabled tools are being introduced to guide teachers across critical teaching moments, drawing on real-time data and user insights. In parallel, digital content workflows are reducing the cost and time required to adapt materials across languages and contexts.

UPSHIFT's use of platforms such as Google Classroom further lowers barriers to scale, delivering blended, project-based learning to over two million students while minimizing operational costs. Evidence from India and other countries points to improvements in higher-order cognitive skills, problem-solving, collaboration and socio-emotional learning, demonstrating the potential to deliver skills development at scale.



Students work together as part of a STEM-focused UPSHIFT programme in Kamareddy, Telangana state, India.

2.4 Gender-responsive education systems for learning and skills development

Progress in strengthening gender-responsive education systems continued. By 2025, 50 per cent of reporting countries met the target, up from 41 per cent in 2022. Gains reflect sustained investment across teaching, learning environments and system strengthening, but progress continues to vary significantly across regions with more significant advances in Eastern and Southern Africa, where 75 per cent of countries met the target.

UNICEF supported countries to move from isolated interventions towards embedding gender responsiveness within education systems. This included integrating gender considerations into curricula, pedagogy, digital learning and skills pathways, while strengthening alignment across policy, delivery and community engagement.

At country level, gender-responsive approaches were increasingly applied at scale. In Costa Rica, a national STEAM strategy with a gender lens expanded significantly, strengthening girls' participation in science and digital learning. In Kyrgyzstan and Thailand, targeted STEAM initiatives supported by UNICEF and private sector partners improved teaching practices and increased girls' participation.^{36,37} These efforts demonstrate the importance of integrating gender considerations into programme design and system delivery to expand girls' participation in STEAM education.

UNICEF also supported gender-responsive skills development and transitions to employment. In Nigeria, implementation of the National Policy on Skills Development expanded access to technical, vocational and transferable skills, reaching over 580,000 learners (46 per cent girls). In Syria, integrated programmes combining skills, entrepreneurship and life skills supported 150,000 adolescents and young people (57 per cent girls) with income-generating activities and strengthening livelihood opportunities.

Investments in teacher development and pedagogy further contributed to more inclusive learning environments. In Ghana, strengthened teacher training improved gender-responsive teaching practices, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, evidence from the IT Girls programme showed increased digital skills, and higher participation of girls in STEM, with participants developing programming skills and demonstrating reduced gender stereotypes and more positive attitudes towards girls' participation in technology fields.³⁸

Through United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), UNICEF supported system-level reform by strengthening gender-responsive education policy and planning, coordination across ministries and partners, and leadership for gender equality in education systems. Initiatives such as Gender at the Centre advanced the development and implementation of gender-responsive

education sector plans, teacher training frameworks and monitoring systems across multiple countries, while also supporting interventions to address harmful gender norms and school-related gender-based barriers to access and learning.³⁹

At the school level, UNICEF's Ending Gender Stereotypes in Schools initiative in India, Niger and Pakistan applied structured play-based and life skills approaches that contributed to promote gender equality, reaching thousands of students and contributing to increased knowledge of gender rights, more equitable attitudes among students, and safer and more inclusive classroom environments.⁴⁰

2.5 Strengthening teachers' development and teaching practices

From 2022 to 2025, UNICEF supported countries to strengthen teacher development systems, contributing to a shift from fragmented training to more system-embedded approaches. Countries increasingly focused on the full teacher professional lifecycle, including pre-service preparation, continuous professional development and ongoing instructional support. Greater emphasis was placed on coaching, mentoring and peer learning, alongside strengthening supervision and intermediate-level support structures.

Digital platforms and data-driven systems increasingly supported teachers and education delivery at scale. In Bangladesh, over 100,000 teachers accessed training through national learning management systems, enabling continuous, self-paced professional development and strengthening inclusive pedagogy. In other contexts, digital monitoring and data systems enabled real-time planning, adaptive delivery and improved support to frontline educators, while emerging AI-enabled platforms, such as Rwanda's "Ingazi", demonstrate the potential of technology to enhance learning pathways and system responsiveness.

These efforts contributed to progress in teacher systems, with the share of countries with effective teacher development systems increasing from 17 per cent in 2021 to 30 per cent in 2025. However, this remains well below the target of 75 per cent, reflecting the complexity of system reform and the time required to translate improvements into consistent classroom practice.

Progress was strongest where teacher development was embedded within broader system reforms. In Viet Nam, alignment between teacher development, curriculum and assessment reforms strengthened instructional practices at scale, reaching over 1.3 million educators. In Angola, evidence generation supported reforms in teacher deployment and workforce planning⁴¹, while across West Africa, countries moved from one-off training towards sustained models combining structured pedagogy, coaching and regular supervision.

Case study – Regional initiative: Advancing gender-transformative education through the Gender at the Centre Initiative in Africa⁴²

The Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) – jointly coordinated by United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (UNESCO-IIEP) and implemented in partnership with UNICEF country offices – is a whole-of-system programme working with governments and civil society across Africa to advance gender equality in and through education.

In 2025, GCI leveraged findings from its Phase 1 external evaluation (2020–2023) to strengthen its approach to system-level reform. The evaluation concluded that GCI had made a significant contribution to government and civil society capacity. Ministries of Education were supported to embed gender equality in policies, planning and programmes, moving beyond isolated interventions toward more systemic approaches.



Capacity-building workshop on advocacy and digital communication for members of the National Youth Coalition for Gender-Transformative Education in Mali, Gender at the Centre Initiative, 2025.

Through their institutional presence, operational capacity and government partnerships, UNICEF country offices translated GCI's technical guidance and regional frameworks into national action. This included supporting gender analyses, the development of gender-responsive education sector plans, and engagement with civil society and young feminist leaders to strengthen both policy and demand for reform.

The evaluation found early evidence of system-level change, particularly through policy influence and strengthened institutional commitment. In Niger, gender equality budget lines were introduced in the national Education Sector Plan for the first time. In Burkina Faso, gender equality became a formal criterion for education budget approval. In Sierra Leone, a fully gender-responsive Education Sector Plan (2022–2026) was developed, including costed strategies on pedagogy, school safety, menstrual health and comprehensive sexuality education.

At the same time, the evaluation highlighted key challenges, including limited coherence across partners and risks to sustainability due to fragmented support and inconsistent financing. It underscored that lasting transformation requires sustained efforts to align actors, embed reforms institutionally, and connect policy change with implementation and community-level leadership.

In response, GCI recalibrated its model in 2025 to strengthen institutionalisation and system coherence. This included deeper engagement with Ministries of Education, streamlined country-level partnerships and stronger alignment with major reform platforms such as Global Partnership for Education processes. The initiative also expanded its focus on gender-transformative leadership, particularly among senior officials and women leaders, while continuing to support civil society and youth-led engagement to sustain reform momentum.

A key lesson from the first phase is the importance of data and evidence in driving system change. GCI therefore strengthened its investment in diagnostics, research and analytical tools to support governments in identifying gender gaps and translating evidence into policy and financing decisions. By integrating evaluation findings into its second phase, GCI demonstrates how evidence can be used to adapt and scale a whole-system approach, supporting countries to move from project-based interventions toward sustained, system-wide gender-transformative education reform.

Despite these advances, progress varied across contexts. Conflict, climate shocks and economic pressures continue to constrain investment in teacher systems, particularly in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. Gaps in data on teacher supply and training needs further limit responsive planning, while some variations in reported progress reflect the sensitivity of measurement thresholds rather than structural change.

While teacher development frameworks and delivery mechanisms have expanded, translating these into sustained improvements in classroom practice requires stronger system coherence – particularly effective support, supervision and capacity at intermediate levels – alongside greater attention to teacher well-being, as reaffirmed by a 2026 UNICEF evaluation.⁴³

Case study – Viet Nam: Embedding teacher development within system reform to improve learning outcomes

Viet Nam strongly demonstrates how aligning teacher development within broader system reform can strengthen teaching practices and improve learning outcomes at scale. Teacher professional development was embedded within national competency-based education reforms, aligned with a revised curriculum, strengthened formative assessment approaches and the promotion of differentiated instruction. Continuous professional development was integrated across the teacher lifecycle and supported using national standards, digital platforms and structured in-service training, reaching over 1.3 million educators nationwide.

A key feature of the reform has been the systematic use of learning assessment data to inform policy and practice. Through participation in regional assessments such as the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM), Viet Nam strengthened the use of data to guide instructional improvement and system-level decision-making. This contributed to high levels of foundational learning, with Vietnamese students consistently achieving the strongest results in the region, including 66 per cent reaching advanced proficiency in reading and 88 per cent in mathematics, and the highest share meeting minimum proficiency benchmarks.⁴⁴

Targeted investments further strengthened teaching practices in priority areas, including training in climate-responsive pedagogy and psychosocial support, improving system resilience in the face of shocks. Overall, evidence from learning assessments and policy analysis suggests that the coherent alignment of curriculum reform, teacher development and assessment has supported more consistent instructional practices and strong learning outcomes at scale.⁴⁵

At the same time, persistent disparities in access and learning outcomes among rural, ethnic minority and vulnerable learners highlight the need to sustain reforms and strengthen equity-focused approaches.



On 22 April 2025, students at Hoa Ban Preschool in Lao Cai Province, Viet Nam, gathered for a class supported by UNICEF. Working with teachers, school managers, parents and the community, UNICEF provided support to help students develop social-emotional skills by promoting play-based, child-centered learning activities.

2.6 Digital transformation of education systems and digital learning

Key result

By the end of 2025, **29 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had effective digital learning systems in place**, up from 9 per cent in 2021, reflecting steady progress in system adoption.

UNICEF's Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030 is advancing global and country-level efforts to leverage technology and AI to accelerate learning and skills development.⁴⁶ The Strategy shifts away from fragmented, technology-led initiatives towards evidence-based, system-level approaches in which digital tools strengthen teaching, learning and system management. It focuses on five priorities: teacher empowerment, foundational learning, skills development, systems strengthening, and global thought leadership, with a strong emphasis on reaching the most marginalized children, including those out of school or affected by crisis and displacement.

By the end of 2025, 29 per cent of UNICEF-supported countries had effective digital learning systems in place, up from 9 per cent in 2021, reflecting steady progress in system adoption. To accelerate implementation, UNICEF mobilised catalytic funding for an initial 18 countries and strengthened cross-sectoral collaboration.⁴⁷ These efforts are supporting the scale-up of digital learning systems to improve the quality, continuity and inclusiveness of education, strengthen teacher capacity, and ensure the safe and responsible use of digital and AI technologies through appropriate safeguards and system-level guardrails.

Teacher empowerment and pedagogy

UNICEF places teachers at the centre of digital education reform, following a “teacher and pedagogy first” approach. Efforts focus on enabling teachers to integrate digital tools meaningfully into classroom practice and to strengthen inclusive, learner-centred pedagogy. Tools such as the Superstar Teacher Toolbox, now used in nine countries, support teachers in applying digital pedagogy and mobile learning approaches and are reaching thousands of educators through scalable, school-based use.^{48,49}

In 2025, the Pathways Digital Competency Framework for educators in sub-Saharan Africa was launched, providing ministries of education with practical guidance to strengthen teacher digital skills in low-resource contexts.⁵⁰ With the potential to reach millions of teachers and learners through national adoption, the framework supports more systematic approaches to teacher

development. Looking ahead, UNICEF is increasing its focus on supporting teachers in the effective and safe, responsible and well-governed use of AI to enhance instructional practices and enable more personalized learning, while ensuring safe and ethical use.

Learning and skills

Digital platforms are expanding equitable access to foundational learning and supporting the development of 21st century skills. In 2025, 13.6 million children (54 per cent girls) in 71 countries accessed education through platforms such as the Learning Passport.⁵¹ The Akelius Digital Language Learning Course has been integrated into literacy programmes in 18 countries, supporting refugee and migrant children to develop foundational language skills and facilitating their inclusion in formal education systems.⁵²

Progress has also been made in improving accessibility and inclusion. Through the Accessible Digital Textbooks initiative, children in 13 countries⁵³, particularly those with disabilities, gained access to adapted learning materials. The use of open-source AI tools has significantly reduced the time and cost required to convert textbooks into accessible formats, supporting scalable adoption by governments and publishers and strengthening inclusive education systems.⁵⁴

To improve quality and strengthen the evidence base, UNICEF continues to curate and evaluate digital learning tools through the Learning Cabinet.⁵⁵ By 2025, over 1,100 tools had been reviewed, with 48 meeting established quality standards. Selected tools are being piloted and scaled in six countries through implementation research, with early evidence indicating improvements in learning outcomes and informing system-level expansion.⁵⁶

Digital initiatives are also supporting skills development for the future of work. UNICEF's Tinkering with Tech and AI initiative promotes digital literacy, computational thinking and problem-solving.⁵⁷ Since its launch in 2024, it has reached over 16,500 learners directly (52 per cent girls) and more than 330,000 indirectly. Early results indicate strong teacher engagement and improvements in learners' critical thinking and digital skills, with further expansion planned in response to growing demand for AI-related competencies across education systems.

Systems strengthening and partnerships

UNICEF is supporting governments to build more inclusive, resilient and scalable digital education systems. The Technology for Education (Tech4Ed) initiative, supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), provides technical assistance in eight countries to strengthen planning and implementation capacity. The Learning Pioneers Programme has expanded to 12 countries, building government capacity to design and scale system-level digital interventions.⁵⁸

To strengthen leadership for digital transformation, UNICEF partnered with the University of Cambridge and the GPE in 2025 to launch a Digital Education Leadership Programme, engaging 45 delegates from 18 countries⁵⁹ and fostering a community of practice focused on systems thinking and innovation.

The Learning Passport, developed in partnership with Microsoft, has reached 12.5 million registered users across 51 countries, supporting access to learning content in both formal and non-formal settings.⁶⁰ It has expanded in crisis-affected, remote and low-connectivity environments, reaching diverse learners, including out-of-school children, girls and children with disabilities. Beyond expanding access, it is increasingly supporting ministries of education to institutionalise digital learning across key areas including formal education, early childhood development, teacher training and adolescent skills pathways.

UNICEF's Digital Inclusion work is further expanding equitable access to connectivity. Giga, a joint initiative with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), has

mapped 2.2 million schools in 48 countries and enabled connectivity for an estimated 8 million additional learners through newly connected schools.⁶¹

At the global level, UNICEF continues to shape digital education through research, partnerships and normative frameworks, working with governments, UNESCO, the ITU, the GPE and private sector partners. Frameworks such as EdTech for Good and the Six Pillars for Digital Transformation of Education support countries to design safe, equitable and effective digital systems.⁶² Regional analyses on AI are informing policy and programme design, including recommendations to improve the quality, relevance, safety and accessibility of digital learning tools.⁶³

Global initiatives such as Gateways to Public Digital Learning, implemented jointly with UNESCO, further support collaboration and knowledge exchange across 28 countries. Together, these efforts position digital education as a public good and support governments in strengthening governance, aligning investments and ensuring that digital transformation contributes to equitable learning outcomes for all children.

Julieta's journey with Accessible Digital Textbooks in Uruguay

When Julieta first started school, her parents noticed that learning was more difficult for her than for other children. "We went to a psychologist, and they told us she had a learning disability," recalls her mother, Erika. "Her level was lower than the others. She used to go just one hour a day to Special School 192."

Now in fifth grade, Julieta attends classes twice a week on a full schedule in an inclusive school, with additional therapy sessions at Timbó. Her days are busy, but they are also filled with joy and progress.

"She's built such a strong bond with her classmates since kindergarten," Erika says. "Thanks to the audiobook, she's progressing more. She's no longer afraid to raise her hand or participate in front of others. She even claps for herself when she gets something right. It would be amazing if there were always accessible books like these to help all children."

UNICEF and partners first introduced the Accessible Digital Textbook for All (ADT) initiative in Uruguay in 2018.⁶⁴ The broad, systems-oriented effort advances inclusive education by ensuring that all learners – regardless of disability, language or connectivity – can engage with high-quality learning materials in formats that are flexible, engaging and meet their needs. Through UNICEF's AI-powered, open-source tools to facilitate their production, ADTs are becoming more affordable for all countries.

For students, this initiative means real change. Children with learning disabilities like Julieta can now learn alongside their peers with and without disabilities using the same curriculum resources that adapt to their needs, while teachers gain tools to foster inclusion in every classroom.

[Meet Julieta](#)



2.7 Environmental sustainability and education

Climate change is an escalating threat to children's right to uninterrupted, quality education. Climate-related shocks are increasingly disrupting schooling, damaging infrastructure and deepening inequalities, particularly in fragile contexts.⁶⁵ In response, UNICEF supported countries to strengthen the resilience of education systems, with a growing focus on integrating climate considerations into policy, planning and delivery. This reinforces the need to integrate resilience within education systems as a core function, rather than as a response to crises.

Progress has been most visible in strengthening resilience and continuity mechanisms. Through initiatives such as the Today and Tomorrow Initiative, countries improved preparedness and response capacity in high-risk contexts.⁶⁶ In Mozambique, over 1,000 reinforced classrooms, temporary learning spaces and disaster preparedness measures helped sustain learning for hundreds of thousands of students, including over 235,000 children accessing education through temporary learning spaces and rehabilitated classrooms. Similar efforts in Madagascar supported the continuation of learning for children affected by climate-related disruptions, including nearly 95,000 children who received learning materials and the establishment of over 500 temporary classrooms to restore access to education. These efforts reflect growing adoption of climate-resilient approaches to safeguard access to education.

At the same time, climate change is reshaping the skills required for future generations. By 2025, 99 countries had integrated climate literacy and green skills into education systems, more than doubling since 2021. Global initiatives supported this shift at scale. Through Green Rising, 23 million young people across 108 countries engaged in climate action, while UNICEF with and through Generation Unlimited supported the development of over 2,000 youth-led green enterprises, of which 68 per cent are led by young women.⁶⁷

Country-level efforts increasingly combined system integration with youth engagement and innovation. In Türkiye, curriculum-linked programmes reached over 2 million students with green and digital skills, while in Egypt, integrated approaches linked climate-relevant skills with pathways to sustainable livelihoods. These examples illustrate the growing alignment between education, skills development and climate action.

Despite increased attention, climate remains insufficiently integrated into education policy and financing. While most governments report that climate change is already affecting schools, only 21 per cent have undertaken comprehensive risk assessments or embedded resilience within education planning.⁶⁸ This gap highlights the challenge of translating awareness into sustained system-level action and investment.

To address these gaps, UNICEF supported countries to strengthen the integration of climate resilience within education systems. This included the development of climate-responsive curricula, resilient infrastructure standards and teacher professional development. This included support for green school building guidelines in Iraq, climate education strategies in Kyrgyzstan and teacher professional development systems in Uzbekistan.

At the regional level, UNICEF strengthened coordinated support to education systems through the Multi-Year Programme on Education in Emergencies, Climate Resilience and Adaptation, funded by the UK People's Postcode Lottery through the Postcode Education Trust. Implemented across Eastern and Southern Africa, the programme supported cross-country learning, evidence generation and policy dialogue in 21 countries.

Sustained progress will depend on embedding climate resilience within education systems, strengthening financing and expanding cross-sector collaboration. Ensuring that education systems can anticipate, withstand and respond to climate shocks will be critical to protecting learning and safeguarding progress for the most vulnerable children.

2.8 School-based mental health and psychosocial support

Key result

The number of UNICEF-supported countries incorporating MHPSS into education programming increased from 51 in 2022 to 79 in 2025, with growing numbers meeting established performance benchmarks.

The mental health and well-being of learners and educators are increasingly recognized as a core dimension of education system strengthening, with direct implications for learning, participation and retention. Education systems are expected not only to deliver learning, but also to provide safe and supportive environments that foster resilience, particularly in crisis-affected contexts.

Over the Strategic Plan period, substantial progress was made in integrating mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) within education systems. The number of UNICEF-supported countries incorporating MHPSS into education programming increased from 51 in 2022 to 79 in 2025, with growing numbers meeting established performance benchmarks. Progress has been strongest at the level of policy development and strategic planning, while implementation at school and community level remains more limited.

UNICEF supported this progress through the development of global public goods to strengthen advocacy and system integration. These include policy guidance and learning materials on MHPSS in education, alongside a global cost-benefit analysis demonstrating that every US\$1 invested in school-based mental health interventions yield strong social and economic returns, including improved learning outcomes and reduced dropout.^{69,70,71,72} Regional analyses further supported countries in identifying gaps and strengthening linkages between education, health and social protection systems.⁷³

At country level, these efforts have contributed to the institutionalization of MHPSS within education systems. By 2025, 88 countries reported progress in developing or implementing policies, strategies and plans addressing the mental health needs of learners and educators. In Viet Nam, school counselling and social work services were formalized within national policy. In Uzbekistan, mental health literacy was integrated into the curriculum, reaching approximately 6 million learners.⁷⁴ In South Africa, teacher training strengthened early identification and response, while in Nepal, increased domestic financing contributed to a significant expansion in access to services.⁷⁵

Teachers and school staff play a central role in delivering these outcomes. In 2025, UNICEF supported MHPSS capacity development across 97 country offices, with increasing use of professional development models to equip educators to support both their own well-being and that of their learners. Large-scale training initiatives in countries such as Poland and Türkiye demonstrate how system-wide approaches can strengthen inclusive and responsive learning environments.⁷⁶

2.9 Data and evidence

Key result

By 2025, 78 per cent of 113 UNICEF-supported countries had evidence-based education sector plans and strategies addressing inequities and aligned with SDG indicators, exceeding the Strategic Plan target.

By 2025, 78 per cent of 113 UNICEF-supported countries had evidence-based education sector plans and strategies addressing inequities and aligned with SDG indicators, exceeding the Strategic Plan target. In parallel, 63 per cent of supported countries had effective learning assessment systems in place, reflecting sustained investment in strengthening sector diagnostics, education management information systems (EMIS) and the integration of data into planning and monitoring processes.



On 2 May 2025, two girls study mathematics using an abacus they received through UNICEF's Learning Material Distribution Programme in Sri Lanka. This initiative provides essential educational tools to schools, enabling students to understand concepts more easily, engage in practical, hands-on learning, and build confidence in their abilities.

Over the Strategic Plan period, UNICEF strengthened the link between data and policy action, positioning accountability tracking as a key lever to improve learning outcomes. Tools such as the Foundational Learning Action Tracker (FLAT) supported systematic monitoring of government efforts across more than 120 countries, following the 2022 Transforming Education Summit.⁷⁷ The expansion of accountability tracking into areas such as the Country Action Tracker for Children – Early Childhood Education (CATCH-ECE) reinforced a more comprehensive, lifecycle approach to monitoring education system performance.

UNICEF also supported the generation and use of high-quality, comparable data. Through MICS⁷⁸, and regional learning assessments such as the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM)⁷⁹, countries were supported to generate robust and internationally comparable data on foundational learning and equity. Since 2016, the MICS Foundational Learning Skills Module (FLS) has assessed children in about 50 countries and territories.⁸⁰ In 2024, six countries participated in the second round of SEA-PLM; this round also added focus on the utilization of the data to inform foundational learning policy and practice, leading to evidence-based reforms of curricula, teacher training and pedagogical approaches. In South Asia, initiatives such as SIKAI further supported countries to strengthen the use of learning data from national policy level to classroom instruction.

A key shift has been the growing focus on closing the gap between data and action. UNICEF expanded support to implementation research across large-scale programmes in 21 countries, generating real-time evidence to inform programme design and policy decisions. In Ghana, for example, this approach contributed to improvements in teacher practices and increased participation of girls in STEM. Globally, the Data Must Speak initiative supported ministries of education to analyse school-level data, identify effective practices and integrate findings into sector plans and financing strategies.⁸¹

UNICEF also strengthened its role in generating and applying data in humanitarian and crisis contexts. It supported joint global estimates of children in need of education in emergencies, advanced analysis of climate-related school disruptions and developed forward-looking tools such as early warning systems.^{82,83} At country level, these approaches informed policy and programming, from cost-of-inaction analyses in Sudan and Syria, to learning assessments in crisis-affected settings in Afghanistan and Rohingya refugee learning centres in Bangladesh.

Case study – Southeast Asia: Strengthening data to improve learning outcomes

The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) is a regional assessment and capacity-building initiative led by UNICEF and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) to strengthen the measurement and improvement of foundational learning among Grade 5 students. By generating comparable data on reading and mathematics, alongside contextual information on students, teachers, schools and households, the programme supports governments to better understand learning outcomes and inform education policy and reform.

SEA-PLM is distinctive in being designed and led by countries in the region, combining large-scale assessment with technical support and regional collaboration. It contributes to monitoring progress toward SDG 4, particularly foundational learning at the end of primary education, while strengthening national assessment systems and capacity for data use.

The latest cycle, SEA-PLM 2024, represents a major step forward, providing comparable data across six countries and expanding the scope of analysis to include deeper system-level insights. This enables a more comprehensive understanding of how teaching practices, policy frameworks and learning environments influence outcomes.

Results indicate modest progress alongside persistent challenges. Approximately 53 per cent of students reached minimum proficiency in reading, up from 47 per cent in 2019, while 67 per cent achieved minimum proficiency in mathematics, compared with 56 per cent previously. However, nearly half of students remain below reading benchmarks, and around 15 per cent perform at only Grade 2 level. Significant inequalities persist, with socioeconomic differences equivalent to up to two years of schooling, alongside disparities related to gender and language.

A key development is the strengthening of evidence-to-policy linkages, supporting governments to translate assessment findings into action. Through targeted technical assistance, capacity building and country-level projects, SEA-PLM is already informing curriculum reforms, improvements in teacher training materials and the introduction of innovative approaches, including the use of artificial intelligence in assessment design.

SEA-PLM demonstrates the value of linking data to policy and practice, showing how strengthened evidence systems can support more equitable and effective learning outcomes at scale.

2.10 Adolescent and youth development and participation

Adolescent participation is increasingly recognized as a core dimension of inclusive and responsive education and social systems, with direct implications for equity, accountability and sustainable development. UNICEF's work focused on strengthening systems that enable meaningful and safe participation at scale, recognizing that participation is most effective when embedded within institutional processes and governance frameworks.

Across 103 countries, UNICEF engaged 20.2 million adolescents (53 per cent girls), including 1.1 million in humanitarian settings. While this represents an increase from 15.7 million in 2022, it falls short of the Strategic Plan target, reflecting constraints in financing, capacity and enabling policy environments. Progress has varied significantly across contexts, with countries such as Brazil, India and Ukraine achieving scale and influencing policy and programmes, while others faced limitations due to reduced prioritization and restrictions on civic space.

System strengthening has been central to scaling participation. By 2025, 101 countries had established national platforms for youth engagement, enabling more structured and sustained participation. These platforms increasingly link adolescent engagement to planning, policy processes and service delivery, allowing young people to contribute more directly to decision-making.

Country experiences demonstrate how these systems translate into results across development and humanitarian contexts. In Cambodia, over 240,000 adolescents (54 per cent girls) contributed to local planning and national climate policy. In Egypt, nearly 376,000 young people engaged in more than 300 community-led initiatives. In India, 11.9 million adolescents mobilised through the Meri LiFE platform contributed to climate action while strengthening green skills and leadership.⁸⁴ In Indonesia, over 1 million young people engaged through youth participation platforms and community programmes spanning climate action, skills development and civic engagement. Schools have also played a central role, with mechanisms such as Eco-Clubs in Tajikistan linking youth participation to district development planning.⁸⁵

Participation systems have also supported continuity in crisis contexts. In Ukraine, young people engaged in volunteering and life skills development, while in Sudan and Syria, adolescent-led initiatives contributed to learning, skills development and community recovery efforts.

A significant achievement has been the institutionalization of adolescent participation within governance systems. Countries including Argentina, Armenia, Indonesia and Romania strengthened legal and policy frameworks to formalize youth consultation and participation in decision-making, reflecting a shift from programme-based engagement toward sustained system-level inclusion.

At the global level, UNICEF scaled initiatives to support participation and skills development. The Adolescent Kit, a resource supporting adolescent participation, life skills and psychosocial well-being, reached approximately 2 million people in emergency settings.⁸⁶ The Youth-led Action Initiative, a global platform supporting youth-led solutions, innovation and community action, expanded to over 70 countries.⁸⁷ Under the Adolescent Girls' Strategy, 49.5 million girls and community stakeholders were reached through multisectoral programmes, supported by partnerships such as the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action and the PROSPECTS partnership, strengthening education, protection and employment opportunities in displacement-affected contexts.^{88,89}

2.11 Conclusion

Findings across this result area highlight that improving learning outcomes and skills requires sustained system-level transformation across teaching, curriculum, skills pathways and the use of data and evidence. With an estimated 70 per cent of 10-year-olds unable to read with comprehension in low- and middle-income countries, the scale of the learning crisis underscores the urgency of translating access into meaningful learning. While measurable gains are emerging, including in foundational learning, skills development and system strengthening, progress remains uneven and often fragile, particularly in under-resourced and crisis-affected contexts.

Closing the gap between access and learning outcomes remains a central challenge, compounded by persistent constraints in teacher workforce capacity, service quality and system implementation. Strengthening alignment between education systems and labour market demands, embedding resilience and inclusion, and improving the use of data for decision-making will be essential to translating policy and programme advances into consistent improvements in learning and skills. Sustained progress will depend on stronger system capacity, continued prioritization of domestic and international education financing and investment in quality teaching and learning so that reforms deliver equitable and relevant outcomes for all learners at scale.

Sustained progress will depend on stronger system capacity, continued prioritization of domestic and international education financing and investment in quality teaching and learning so that reforms deliver equitable and relevant outcomes for all learners at scale.



© UNICEF/UNI874308

Looking forward

A boy stands with his UNICEF bag in Mondossou school in Dedougou, Burkina Faso.

The security crisis has severely impacted education in Burkina Faso. In 2025, UNICEF distributed 123,000 school kits to displaced and vulnerable children in nine regions most affected by security challenges in the country, thanks to funding from Education Cannot Wait.

The UNICEF Strategic Plan (2026–2029) sets out a focused and ambitious agenda across five core impact areas: health and nutrition, education, child protection, safe water and sanitation, and social policy, supported by critical enablers including financing, digital transformation and strong governance.⁹⁰ Together, these priorities position UNICEF to deliver more integrated, scalable and sustainable results for children and young people worldwide. Investing in children is not charity, it is a strategic investment in stability, prosperity and peace. The question is not whether the world can afford to invest in children, but whether it can afford not to.

Within this broader framework, education programming is guided by an ambitious goal: to ensure 350 million more children and young people are learning and acquiring skills for life and work. This effort is structured around three mutually reinforcing result areas: expanding equitable access, improving learning outcomes, and strengthening skills development across the learning cycle.

Lessons from the previous Strategic Plan period inform this next phase. Expanding access has been essential but must now be matched by stronger and more consistent learning gains. Achieving results at scale requires embedding programmes within national systems, policies and financing to ensure sustainability beyond individual pilots and projects. It also requires targeted action to address persistent disparities affecting children most at risk of being left behind, through explicit equity-focused and inclusive approaches.

UNICEF will focus on learning across the full schooling cycle from pre-primary to end of secondary. This includes advancing literacy and numeracy, alongside socio-emotional skills that enable children to engage, adapt and succeed in school and life. Strengthening early childhood education, supporting transitions through primary and secondary education, and ensuring progression across primary and secondary education will be central to improving learning outcomes at scale, especially for the most marginalized children.

UNICEF's 2026-2029 education goal:

350 million

more children and young people
are learning and acquiring skills for
life and work.

A renewed emphasis on quality teaching and learning will underpin these efforts. Teachers will remain the most critical drivers of improved learning outcomes, requiring sustained investment in preparation, professional development, deployment and support systems. The responsible integration of digital technologies and artificial intelligence can support teachers, strengthen instructional practices and extend learning opportunities, while remaining inclusive and responsive to diverse contexts.

Stronger emphasis will also be placed on skills development so that adolescents and young people acquire competencies for life, work and active citizenship. This includes digital, transferable and green skills, and stronger pathways between education, training and employment, particularly for those previously excluded from formal education.

Delivering these results requires a continued shift towards system-level reform and catalytic engagement. The Global Education Practice within UNICEF's Centres of Excellence strengthens the capacity to provide high-quality technical support across key thematic areas, enabling more targeted support to national systems and reforms. In parallel, greater emphasis will be placed on financing education reform by strengthening domestic investment, improving efficiency and aligning external support with national priorities to direct resources towards equitable, high-impact solutions.

This approach is particularly critical in contexts of displacement and return, where education systems must operate across borders. In the Middle East, UNICEF is supporting governments across Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Türkiye to align education pathways for returning children, working with Ministries of Education, UNHCR and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to strengthen certification, reintegration and teacher accreditation systems. This underscores the growing importance of coordinated and flexible system responses to ensure continuity of learning.

Building crisis-resilient education systems remains essential. Strengthening preparedness and response to climate shocks, conflict and displacement will be critical to ensuring continuity of learning and enabling systems to withstand future crises.

Closing the gap between attendance and learning and strengthening pathways from learning to skills for life and work, will be central to this agenda. Progress will depend on sustained focus on equity and inclusion, ensuring that those facing the greatest barriers are reached. Anchored in stronger teaching and learning and supported by the responsible use of digital technologies and AI, as well as effective financing and partnerships, this approach aims to deliver durable improvements in learning and skills at scale.

Endnotes

1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Global estimates on out-of-school children and youth, 2025. Available at: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>
2. UNICEF, Education aid cuts: A broken promise to children (New York, 2025), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/education-aid-cuts>
3. Humanitarian estimates are derived as simple averages of female and male rates due to limitations in combined reporting.
4. Education Cannot Wait, Breaking Barriers: Understanding educational exclusion in crises. Global estimates 2026 update (New York, 2026), available at: <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/global-estimates-update-2026>.
5. UNICEF, Learning interrupted: Global snapshot of climate-related school disruptions in 2024 (New York, 2025), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/learning-interrupted-global-snapshot-2024>
6. UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, Global report on teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession (Paris, 2024), available at: https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024_TTF-UNESCO-Global-Report-on-Teachers_EN.pdf
7. UNICEF, *Tracking progress on foundational learning: Findings from the RAPID 2023 analysis* (New York, 2023), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/tracking-progress-foundational-learning-2023>.
8. UNESCO, UNICEF & World Bank, Learning data compact and supporting analyses (2023–2025), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/partnerships/learning-data-compact>
9. UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, Global report on teachers: Addressing teacher shortages and transforming the profession (Paris, 2024), available at: https://teachertaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/2024_TTF-UNESCO-Global-Report-on-Teachers_EN.pdf
10. UNESCO & UNICEF, Global report on early childhood care and education: The right to a strong foundation (Paris/New York, 2024), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/global-report-early-childhood-care-and-education-right-strong-foundation>
11. UNESCO & UNICEF, Global report on early childhood care and education: The right to a strong foundation (Paris/New York, 2024), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/global-report-early-childhood-care-and-education-right-strong-foundation>
12. Government of Ukraine, Law of Ukraine “On Preschool Education” (No. 3788-IX, adopted 6 June 2024, entered into force 2025), available at: <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=164700>; UNICEF, New early childhood education framework to drive forward access to quality, inclusive and sustainable services, 2025, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/new-early-childhood-education-framework>
13. Government of Uganda, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy (2025), Ministry of Education and Sports, available at: <https://www.education.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/ECCE-POLICY-2025-with-signatures-final.pdf>.
14. United Nations Kosovo Team, Early Childhood Development in Kosovo: A Leap Forward Enacted with the New Law, 16 April 2024, available at: <https://kosovoteam.un.org/en/266068-early-childhood-development-kosovo-leap-forward-enacted-new-law>
15. UNICEF Kosovo Programme and Ministry of Education and Science. UNICEF Partnership Advances Education Reform: New Early Childhood Education Curriculum Presented, 27 November 2025, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/press-releases/mestiunicef-partnership-advances-education-reform-new-early-childhood-education>
16. Government of Madagascar, Stratégie nationale de l'éducation inclusive sensible au genre (2025), developed with UNICEF support; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (Cambodia), Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2021–2025; UNICEF, support to gender-responsive education policy development, including girls' education initiatives in South Sudan
17. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, “Knowledge at UNICEF: Serbia Case Study – Advancing Inclusive Education”, available at: <https://clearinghouse.unicef.org/sites/ch/files/ch/teams-ECARO-Planning-ECA%20Knowledge%20at%20UNICEF-Serbia%20Case%20Study-2.0.pdf>
18. International Disability Alliance (IDA), “Global coalition launched to drive disability-inclusive education at GDS 2025,” 5 April 2025, <https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/blog/global-coalition-launched-drive-disability-inclusive-education-gds-2025>.
19. <https://www.safetolearncoalition.org/call-to-action>
20. Armenia, Chad, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Thailand.
21. <https://www.safetolearncoalition.org/countries-endorsing>

22. Following the first Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children in Bogota in 2024, in May 2025, Education Ministers or Representatives from Colombia, Germany, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Uganda, United Kingdom, Zambia, and Zimbabwe re-affirmed their commitment to ending violence against children by formalizing a Task Force to tackle violence in and around schools. More information available at: https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/2025-05/Ministerial_Taskforce_Ending_School_Violence_Declaration.pdf
23. Safe to Learn Coalition, Advancing safe learning in Sierra Leone (blog post), available at: <https://www.safetolearncoalition.org/blog/advancing-safe-learning-sierra-leone>
24. Government of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, School-related gender based violence social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategy 2025–2029 (Freetown, 2025), developed with support from UNICEF and partners, available at: https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/FINAL_SRGBV-SBCC-Strategy-Sierra-Leone_06-August-2025.pdf
25. UNICEF, University of Pennsylvania., The Behavioural Drivers Model: A framework for understanding behavioural drivers across psychological, social and environmental factors, available at: https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/5586/file/The_Behavioural_Drivers_Model_0.pdf
26. UNICEF, Learning Together: national campaign to raise awareness and promote inclusive education, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/press-releases/learning-together-national-campaign-raise-awareness-and-promote-inclusive-education>
27. Education Cannot Wait, Breaking Barriers: Understanding educational exclusion in crises. Global estimates 2026 update (New York, 2026), available at: <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/global-estimates-update-2026>.
28. UNICEF, Education Aid Cuts: A Broken Promise to the World's Children, 2025, available at: <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/education-aid-cuts-broken-promise-worlds-children>
29. UNICEF, Humanitarian Action for Children 2026, 2025, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-calls-urgent-investment-life-saving-services-children-global-humanitarian>
30. World Bank, Disability Data Hub, “Young persons not in employment, education or training (% of persons by disability)”, available at: <https://disabilitydata.worldbank.org/en/indicator/ytil>; see also evidence on labour market exclusion patterns for youth with disabilities in ILO youth employment analyses (accessed May 2026).
31. World Bank, *Improving the learning experience in the classroom: The RAPID framework* (Education blog, 2023); UNESCO, *Learning assessment for improved outcomes* (various publications).
32. Kaffenberger, M. 2026. ‘Systems strengthening’ in education: A core components approach. What Works Hub for Global Education. Blog. BL_2026/016. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-WhatWorksHubforGlobalEducation-BL_2026/016 and Kaffenberger, M., Angrist, N., Hwa, Y.Y., Kayton, H.L., Jukes, M. & Stern, J. 2026. Core components of teaching at the right level: Unpacking the black box of proven programmes into a set of ‘core components’ by systematically combining multiple sources of rigorous evidence with implementer insights. What Works Hub for Global Education Core Components Synthesis. 2026/001. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-WhatWorksHubforGlobalEducation-WP_2026/001
33. UNICEF, Reading corners are transforming literacy in Senegal (case study, April 2025), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/170131/file/Reading%20corners%20are%20transforming%20literacy%20in%20Senegal.pdf>
34. UNICEF Brazil, *One million opportunities (1MiO) initiative: Programme documentation*.
35. UNICEF, UPSHIFT: *Youth Social Innovation and Skills Development Programme*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/upshift>
36. UNICEF Kyrgyzstan, *STEM Schools in Kyrgyzstan*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/kyrgyzstan/stories/stem-schools-kyrgyzstan>
37. Pandora and UNICEF, *Community Engagement Partnership*, available at: <https://pandoragroup.com/sustainability/fair/community-engagement/unicef>; BMW Group, BMW Group and UNICEF create educational opportunities for young people in Thailand, available at: <https://bmwgroupthpress.com/en/articles/bmw-group-and-unicef/>
38. UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Impact Assessment of IT Girls Clubs in Schools Across Bosnia and Herzegovina*, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/bih/en/reports/impact-assessment-it-girls-clubs-schools-across-bosnia-and-herzegovina>
39. <https://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/overview/gci>
40. <https://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/overview/ending-gender-stereotypes>
41. UNICEF Angola, *Formative Evaluation of the AIC Pilot Programme in Angola (2024–2025)*, 2025, available at: https://www.unicef.org/angola/media/6286/file/Report%20of%20Formative%20Evaluation%20of%20AIC%20Pilot%20Programme%20in%20Angola%202024-2025_Final.pdf

42. UNGEI, "Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI): advancing gender-transformative education through whole-system approaches", available at: <https://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/overview/gci>
43. <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/evaluation-unicef-contribution-teacher-development>
44. SEAMEO and UNICEF, Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2024 results.
45. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/impact-evaluations>
46. UNICEF, Digital Education Strategy 2025–2030, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/reports/unicef-digital-education-strategy-2025-2030>
47. Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan, Tanzania, Ukraine.
48. Armenia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Kenya, Montenegro, State of Palestine, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.
49. UNICEF, Superstar Teacher Toolbox, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/superstar-teacher-toolbox>
50. UNICEF, Pathways: Digital Competency Framework for Educators in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2025, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/pathways-framework>
51. UNICEF, Learning Passport Platform, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/learningpassport>
52. UNICEF and Akelius Foundation, Akelius Digital Language Learning Course, available at: <https://languages.akelius.education/>
53. Bhutan, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Kenya, Nepal, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Uganda, Sri Lanka, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay
54. UNICEF, "Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADT) Initiative: Press and Technical Resources", available at: <https://github.com/unicef/adt-press/>.
55. UNICEF and partners, Learning Cabinet: Global Repository of Evidence-Based EdTech Tools, available at: <https://www.learningcabinet.org/>
56. Egypt, Ghana, Malaysia, Rwanda, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe
57. UNICEF, Tinkering with Tech and AI, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/tinkering-with-tech>
58. UNICEF, Technology for Education (Tech4Ed), available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/tech4ed>, and UNICEF, Learning Pioneers Programme, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/learning-pioneers-programme>
59. Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Jordan, Lao PDR, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe.
60. UNICEF, Learning Passport: Global Digital Learning Platform, available at: <https://global.learningpassport.org/>
61. UNICEF and International Telecommunication Union, Giga: Connecting Every School to the Internet, available at: <https://giga.global/>
62. UNICEF, EdTech for Good Framework, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitaleducation/edtech-for-good> ; UNESCO, Six Pillars for the Digital Transformation of Education, available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/dtc-financing-toolkit/six-pillars>
63. UNICEF, AI in Education in Europe and Central Asia: Tools, Gaps and Opportunities, available at: <https://knowledge.unicef.org/resource/ai-education-europe-and-central-asia-tools-gaps-and-opportunities>
64. UNICEF and partners, Accessible Digital Textbooks for All, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/accessibletextbooksforall/>
65. UNICEF, Learning Interrupted: Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/learning-interrupted-global-snapshot-2024>
66. UNICEF, Today and Tomorrow Initiative: Climate-Resilient Education Programming, UNICEF programme documentation, 2025. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/today-tomorrow>
67. UNICEF and Generation Unlimited, Green Rising Initiative, programme documentation, 2023–present. Available at: <https://www.generationunlimited.org/green-rising>
68. Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (2025). Global Status of School Safety: Key Findings of the 2024 Comprehensive School Safety Policy Survey.
69. UNICEF, Promoting and Protecting Mental Health in Schools and Learning Environments, 2022. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/promoting-and-protecting-mental-health-schools-and-learning-environments>
70. UNICEF, Learning Brief: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Education, 2023. Available at: <https://knowledge.unicef.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support/resource/learning-brief-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-mhpss-education>

71. UNICEF, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Education in Emergencies: Technical Brief, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/159916/file/MHPSS%20in%20EiE%20Technical%20Brief.pdf>
72. UNICEF, The Benefits of Investing in School-Based Mental Health Support, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/benefits-investing-school-based-mental-health-support>
73. UNICEF, Protecting Children's Mental Health in Schools: Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Analysis, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/reports/protecting-childrens-mental-health-schools>
74. UNICEF, Adolescent Health in Uzbekistan, programme information page. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/en/adolescent-health>
75. UNICEF, Child and Adolescent Mental Health in South Africa: Case Study, 2025. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/16506/file/UNICEF-South-Africa-Case-Study-Child-Adolescent-Mental-Health-2025.pdf>
76. UNICEF, Creating Classrooms that are Responsive to the Mental Health Needs of Learners, including Refugees in Poland, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/documents/creating-classrooms-are-responsive-mental-health-needs-learners-including-refugees-poland>
77. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/foundations-first-2025>
78. MICS-EAGLE supports education diagnostic analysis using MICS data and MICS-Link supports integration of MICS and EMIS data, <https://mics.unicef.org/>. In late 2025, UNICEF launched an enhanced version in Zimbabwe MICS aligned with the Global Proficiency Framework (GPF).
79. The six countries are Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Viet Nam, <https://www.seapl.org/>.
80. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/the-foundational-learning-skills-module/>
81. <http://www.unicef.org/innocenti/projects/data-must-speak>
82. UNICEF facilitated as the co-chair of INEE Data Working Group the first estimate in 2022. It later became an annual exercise by the Education Cannot Wait, <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/222milliondreams>.
83. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/learning-interrupted-global-snapshot-2024>
84. UNICEF, Meri LiFE: A Digital Innovation Platform for Youth to Lead Environmental Change, programme webpage, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/digitalimpact/meri-life>
85. UNICEF, Growing a Green Generation: Eco-clubs Empower Young People to Lead Climate Action in Tajikistan, programme feature, 2024. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/tajikistan/growing-green-generation>
86. UNICEF, "Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation," available at: <https://www.unicef.org/adolescentkit/>
87. UNICEF, "Youth-led Action Initiative," global platform for youth-led solutions and innovation, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/initiative>
88. Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, global initiative to promote youth participation and inclusion in humanitarian action. Available at: <https://agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3829>
89. Government of the Netherlands and partners (UNICEF, UNHCR, ILO, World Bank and IFC), PROSPECTS Partnership: Improving Prospects for Forcibly Displaced People and Host Communities, multi-year global programme (2019–2027). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/partnerships/prospects>
90. UNICEF, UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029 (Executive Board document E/ICEF/2025/29), 2025. Available at: <https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2025/29>

Financial annexⁱ

Glossary of key terms

Income, revenue and contributions received

- **Income:** Income includes contributions received in a given year from public sector partners (governments, including the European Commission, inter-organizational arrangements, global programme partnerships, and international financial institutions) and revenue from private sector partners. UNICEF uses income to prepare the financial framework, which forms part of the UNICEF Strategic Plan. Income is not part of the audited UNICEF financial statements.
- **Revenue:** UNICEF recognizes revenue for the full contribution agreement value when the partner agreement is signed in line with requirements of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). This includes multi-year contribution agreements reflecting the full commitment of our partners for current and future years.
- **Contributions received:** Cash and contributions in kind received from resource partners within a calendar year.

Expenses and expenditures

- **Expenses** are recorded according to the International IPSAS and are accrual based. These are used for official financial reporting.
- **Expenditures** are recorded on a modified cash basis. They are used for budget reporting as they are aligned with cash disbursements and goods receipts (the way budgets are consumed).

Financial overview

Resources by type of funding

UNICEF has several funding modalities that work together to contribute to lasting impact; these include core and other resources, which include softly earmarked thematic funds, as well as tightly earmarked funds.

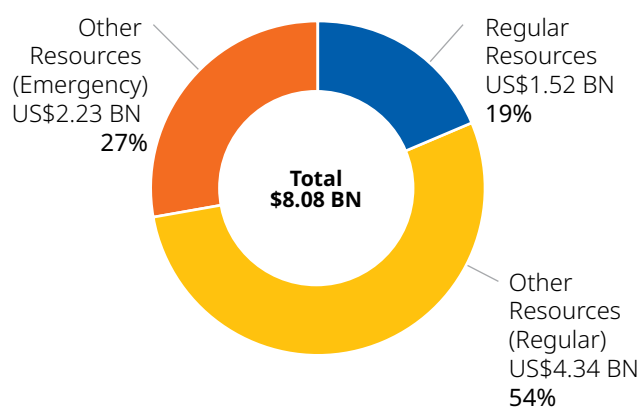
- Core Resources (RR) – contributions without restrictions within the framework of the Strategic Plan, to be used flexibly for children wherever and whenever the need is greatest.
- Other Resources Regular (ORR) – contributions that are earmarked by UNICEF partners for development programming. These can include flexible thematic funding at global, regional and country level. They can also be further earmarked for specific programmes or projects.
- Other Resources Emergency (ORE) – contributions that are earmarked by UNICEF partners for humanitarian programming. These can include flexible thematic funding for global, regional or country level humanitarian action. They can also be further earmarked for specific emergency responses.

In a challenging economic climate, UNICEF's total income continued to decline, reaching US\$8.08 billion in 2025, a 2 per cent decrease compared to 2024 and a 13 per cent decrease since 2022. These resources entrusted to UNICEF represent a spectrum, from funding earmarked to specific programmes to flexible funds given without any restriction to address the most pressing needs of children and to invest strategically in programming for scale, sustainability and resilience. The contributions from the public sector decreased by \$547 million compared to 2024, while private sector contributions increased by \$363 million.

In 2025, Core Resources (RR) – UNICEF's most flexible funding – decreased by \$67 million to a total of \$1.52 billion, representing 19 per cent of total income.

The Funding Compact commitment of member states to increase core funding as share of the overall public sector and member states income fell short of the 30 per cent target in 2025. UNICEF is continuing to encourage partners to increase RR contributions as part of a broader portfolio approach across all funding types, ensuring the organization's presence globally and its ability to bring about systemic change to meet the needs of every child, everywhere.

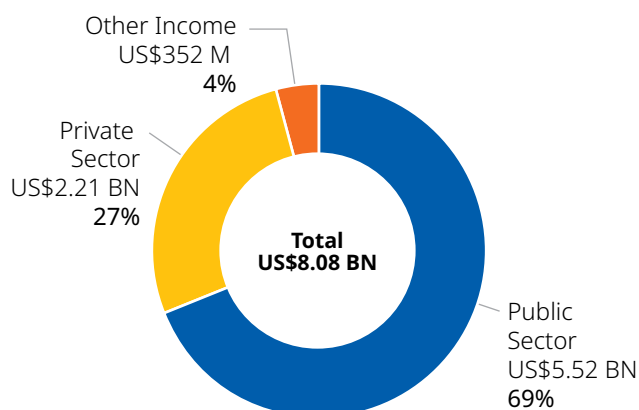
FIGURE A1: Income by type of funding, 2025ⁱⁱ



Resources by type of resource partner

In 2025, public sector income was \$5.52 billion, and made up 69 per cent of UNICEF's total income. Private sector income amounted to \$2.21 billion in 2025, which was 27 per cent of UNICEF's total income. Other income – including income from interest, procurement services and other sources – amounted to \$352 million or 4 per cent of UNICEF's total income.

FIGURE A2: Income by type of resource partner, 2025



ⁱⁱ Figures are based on 'income' which here represents contributions received from public sector, revenue from private sector and other income. See 'Revenue, Contributions and Income' on page 44.

Thematic funding

Thematic funds are softly earmarked pooled funds categorized as Other Resources (OR) and designed to support the achievement of results at country, regional and global levels. For partners, contributing to UNICEF's thematic funding pools enables them to champion the principles of good multilateral resource partnerships. Thematic funds deliver a higher return on investment for results for children, as their lower indirect cost recovery allows a greater share of funding to be directed toward programming, while also benefiting from transactional efficiencies compared to more tightly earmarked contributions. Thematic funding contributions continued to decline in 2025, from a record high of \$1.20 billion in 2022 (primarily driven by private sector funding for the Ukraine crisis) to \$361 million in 2024, down to \$331 million in 2025, constituting only 5 per cent of total OR. Thematic funding as a proportion of total OR from member states specifically decreased from 8 per cent in 2022 to 2 per cent in 2025, below the Funding Compact target of 15 per cent by 2027.

Private sector contributions – representing 60 per cent (\$197 million) of total thematic funding in 2025 – came from National Committees, Country Offices and additional individual donors, including through online donations. Public sector contributions were provided by governments and accounted for 40 per cent of thematic funding contributions in 2025 (\$134 million).

Apart from the spike in contributions in 2021 and 2022, largely from humanitarian private sector giving, the average level of thematic funding over the past decade has never reached more than 10 per cent of total OR contributions. UNICEF encourages partners to channel more contributions through these softly earmarked funds to allow maximum flexibility at the global, country and regional levels to strengthen results for children.

FIGURE A3: Thematic contributions received by resource partner, 2025: Public vs private

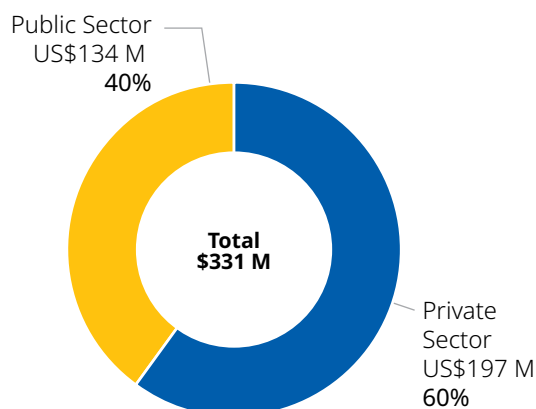
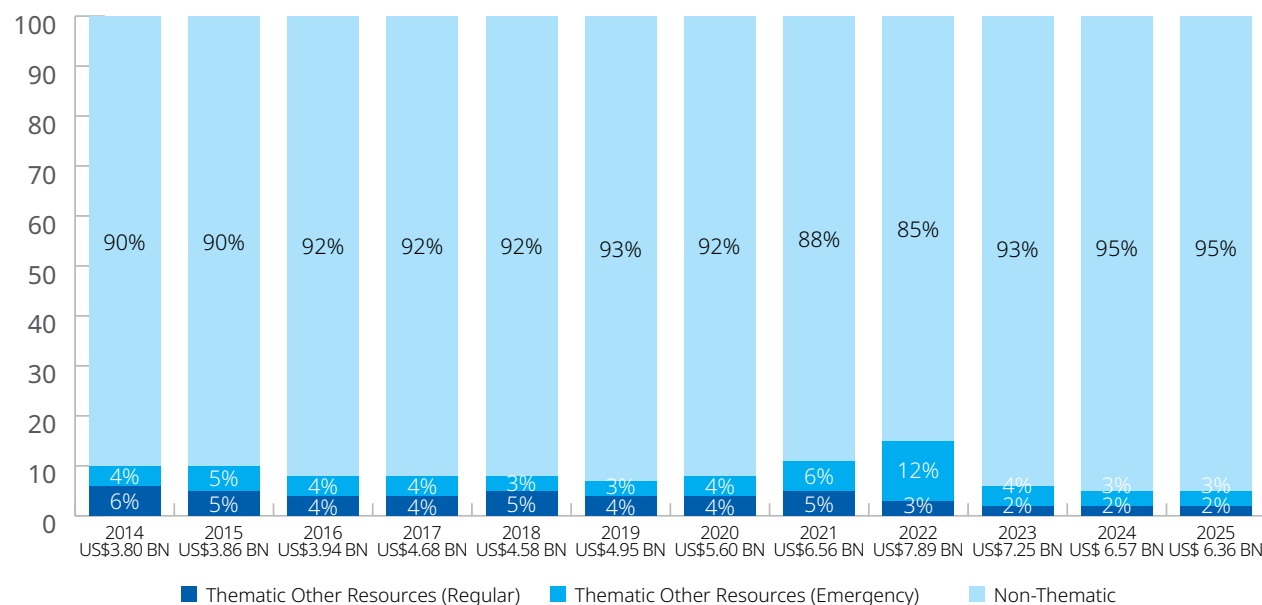
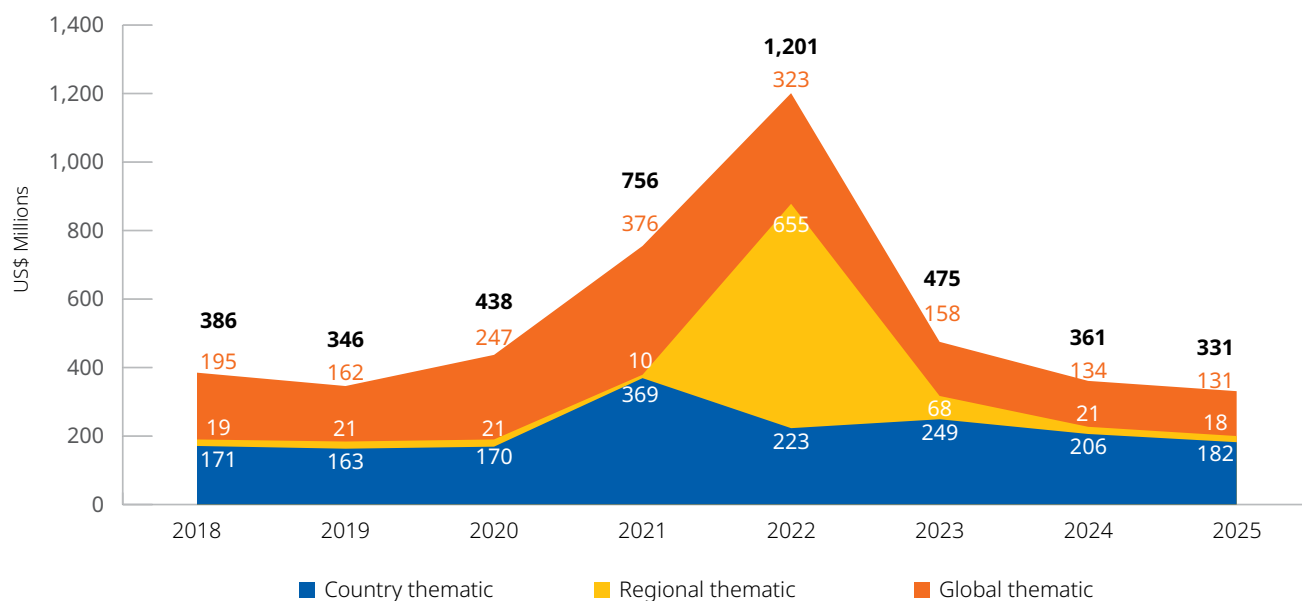


FIGURE A4: OR contributions received by type of funding, 2014-2025: Thematic vs non-thematic



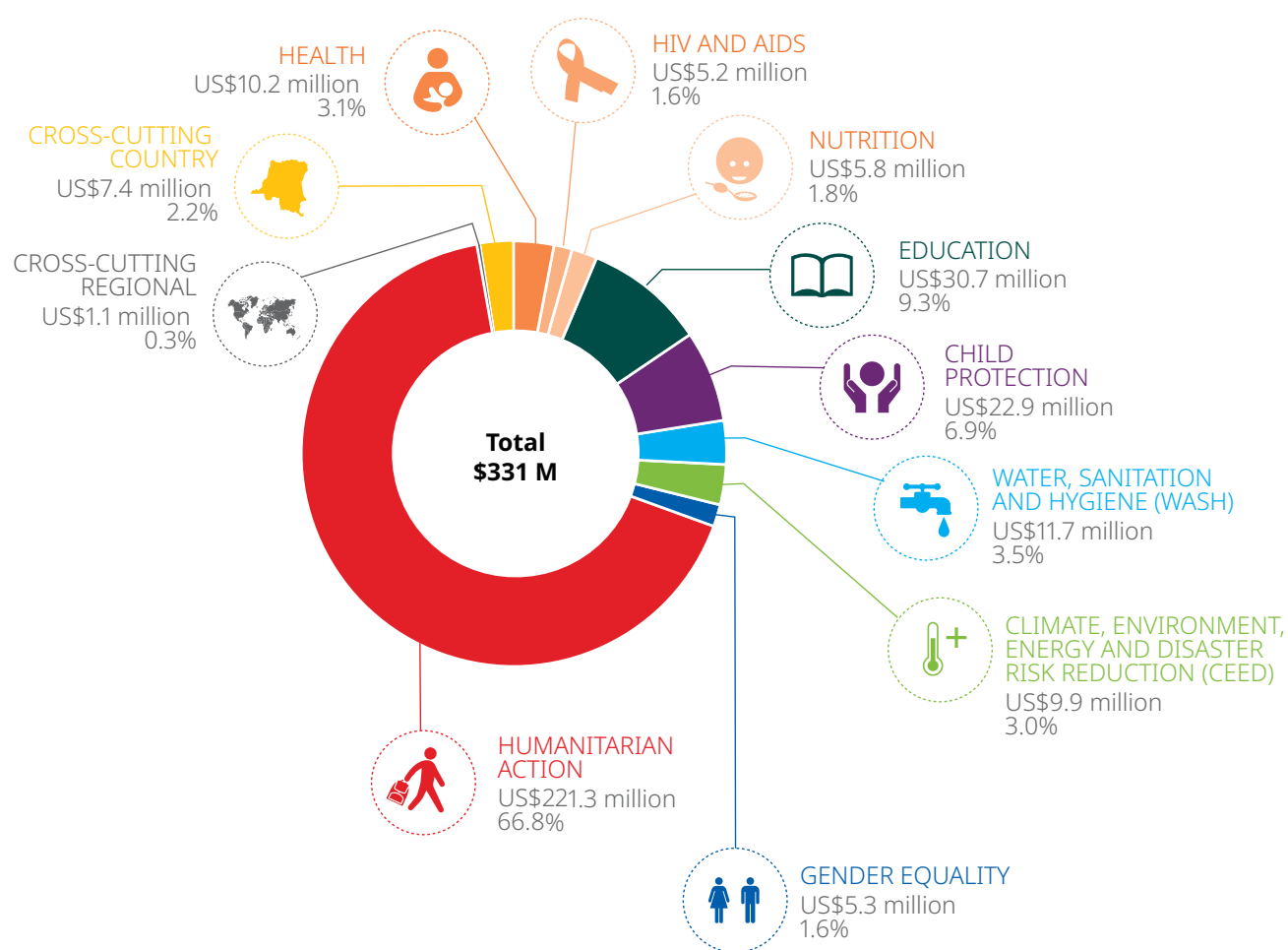
In 2025, 55 per cent (\$182 million) of thematic funding was received through country-level pools, and 40 per cent (\$131 million) through global thematic funding and 5 per cent (\$18 million) through regional thematic funding.

FIGURE A5: Thematic funding contributions received by type, 2018-2025



In 2025, the greatest amount of thematic funding received – 67 per cent – was for UNICEF’s humanitarian response. The increasing trend towards tightly earmarked resources in development programming erodes the sustainability and predictability UNICEF needs to contribute to long-term impact for children in line with the SDGs.

FIGURE A6: Thematic contributions by funding pool, 2025



Donor Recognition

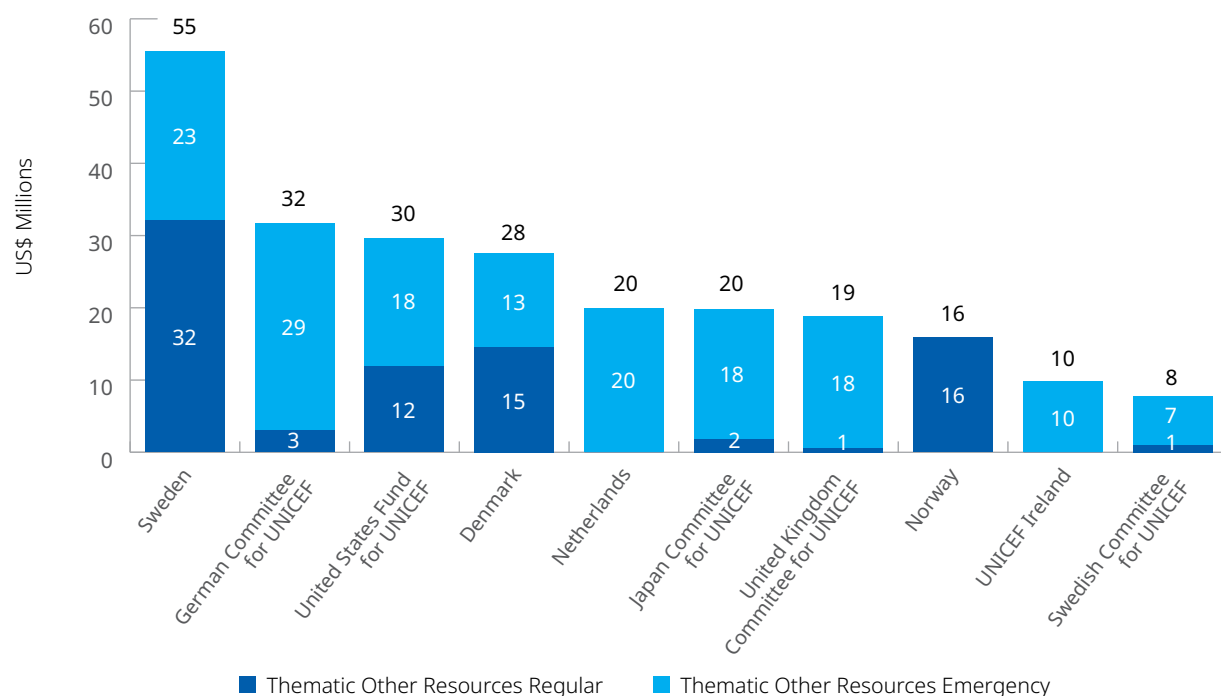
UNICEF programmes are funded entirely through the voluntary support of millions of people around the world and our partners in government, civil society and the private sector. Voluntary contributions enable UNICEF to deliver on its mandate to protect children's rights, help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential. We take this opportunity to thank all our partners who contributed so generously in 2025 to our work for children around the world.

UNICEF would like to convey special appreciation to partners that have provided thematic contributions. This support enables UNICEF to respond effectively by strengthening systems across priority areas of work and promotes sustainability to achieve the greatest impact for children.

UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 included the goal of doubling thematic funding as a share of all Other Resources. UNICEF is calling for member states to fulfill their Funding Compact commitment, and for all donors to increase flexible funding as a proportion of their overall portfolio of giving to UNICEF.

In 2025, the top 10 thematic funding resource partners contributed \$237 million, or 71 per cent of the total thematic contributions to UNICEF (see Figure A7). These partners provided 74 per cent of the total thematic funding for UNICEF's non-humanitarian thematic pools, and 70 per cent of the total humanitarian thematic funding. The top three thematic funding partners in 2025 were Sweden, the German Committee for UNICEF and the United States Fund for UNICEF. UNICEF would like to convey its sincere thanks to these partners for their ongoing and steadfast commitment to providing flexible support to the organization. These three partners alone contributed 35 per cent, or \$117 million, of UNICEF's total thematic funding in 2025.

FIGURE A7: Top 10 Resource Partners to Thematic Funding Pools, 2025, by Contributions Received



**Excluding UNICEF Country Office Private Sector Fundraising*

UNICEF would also like to recognize partners who have supported the new thematic modality of Country Programme funding for the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The Country Programme Document (CPD) thematic window, or flexible country window, allows maximum flexibility for UNICEF country offices to address challenges holistically, and supports an integrated approach, funding areas of work that may not be covered under other thematic grants or earmarked funding.

UNICEF is especially grateful to the United States Fund for UNICEF, Sweden and the Canadian UNICEF Committee, which were the top 3 contributors to this thematic modality in 2025. In 2025, these donors contributed \$5 million for CPD thematic funds, amounting to 75% of funding received for this modality. Overall, 32 countries benefited from CPD thematic funds in 2025. Sweden in particular has been a stalwart supporter of this modality, having contributed \$50 million during the period of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, amounting to 68% of contributions to CPD thematic funds.

In addition, UNICEF would like to recognize its private sector partners that are increasingly supporting the flexible country window. In 2025, the CPD thematic window received contributions from 16 National Committees, which, together, contributed \$5 million: the United States Fund for UNICEF, the Canadian UNICEF Committee, the Portuguese Committee for UNICEF, the United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF, the Korean Committee for UNICEF, the German Committee for UNICEF, the Polish National Committee for UNICEF, the Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited, the Spanish Committee for UNICEF, the Slovenia Foundation for UNICEF, the Turkish National Committee for UNICEF, the Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the Czech Committee for UNICEF, the Belgian Committee for UNICEF, the New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF, and the Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF.

Financial Information by Goal Area and/or sectorⁱⁱⁱ

Goal Area 2: Learning and skills acquisition

In 2025, UNICEF received a total of \$918 million in OR for Goal Area 2, of which development contributions (ORR) were the vast majority, making up 89 per cent of total contributions. Public sector partners contributed the largest share of overall funding (82 per cent) while private sector partners contributed 18 per cent.

FIGURE A1: Goal Area 2 - OR contributions received by fund type, 2025

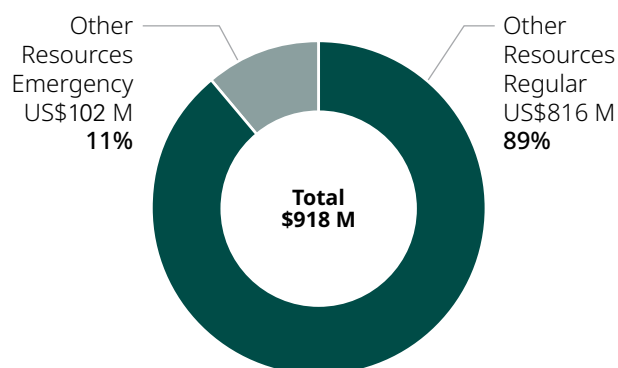
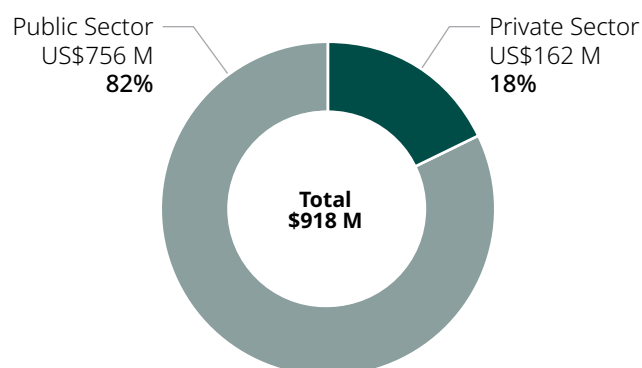


FIGURE A2: Goal Area 2 - OR contributions received by resource partner, 2025



Goal Area 2 received a total of \$32 million in thematic contributions in 2025, or 4 per cent of total OR contributions. Proportionally, this is the lowest in the 4 to 6 per cent range since 2022, and remains significantly below the levels attained during the period of the previous Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, during which thematic contributions oscillated between 11 and 14 percent of OR for the Goal Area. This poses a risk to the organization's ability to ensure predictable and timely funding to respond to emerging education priorities and under-resourced programmes.

FIGURE A3: Goal Area 2 - OR contributions received by type of funding, 2016-2025: Thematic vs non-thematic

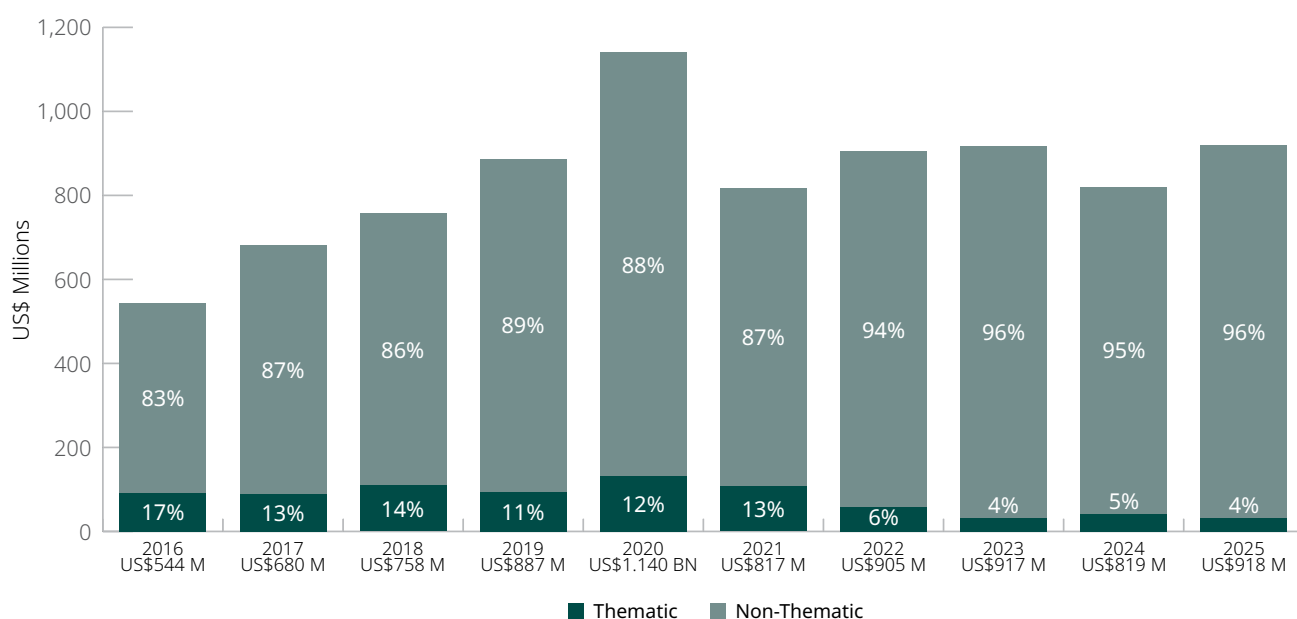


TABLE A1: Top 20 Resource Partners to Goal Area 2 by Total Contributions in US\$

Rank	Resource Partner	Contributions Received, 2025
1	Global Partnership for Education	248 M
2	European Commission	102 M
3	World Bank - Washington D.C.	89 M
4	Education Cannot Wait Fund	58 M
5	Asian Development Bank	50 M
6	United Kingdom	43 M
7	Germany	31 M
8	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	25 M
9	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	21 M
10	United States Fund for UNICEF	15 M
11	Norway	14 M
12	Danish Committee for UNICEF	14 M
13	German Committee for UNICEF	12 M
14	Canadian UNICEF Committee	12 M
15	Japan	11 M
16	Finland	11 M

Rank	Resource Partner	Contributions Received, 2025
17	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	11 M
18	Republic of Korea (the)	11 M
19	Australia	11 M
20	Denmark	10 M

Expenses for Goal Area 2 totalled \$1.56 billion during 2025 across its two Result Areas. Of this, \$299 million (19 per cent of total expenses) was ORE.

FIGURE A4: Goal Area 2 - Expenses by result area, 2025

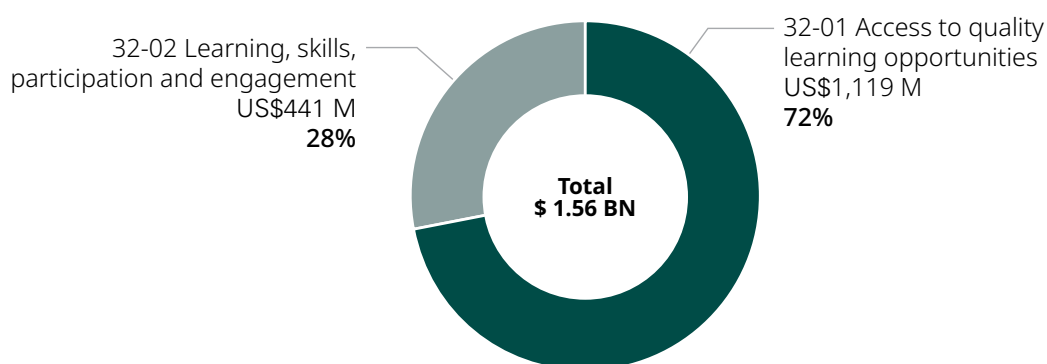
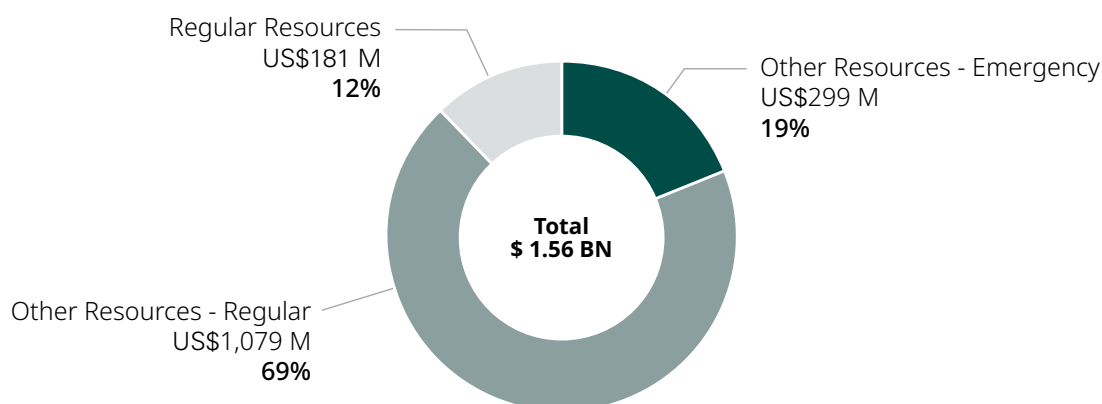


FIGURE A5: Goal Area 2 - Expenses by fund type, 2025



Countries affected by emergencies and protracted humanitarian crises continued to have some of the largest education expenses in 2025. The greatest amount of funding, \$190 million, was spent in Afghanistan, and the Middle East and North Africa reported the most spending amongst regions.

FIGURE A6: Goal Area 2 - Expenses by fund type and top 20 countries, 2025

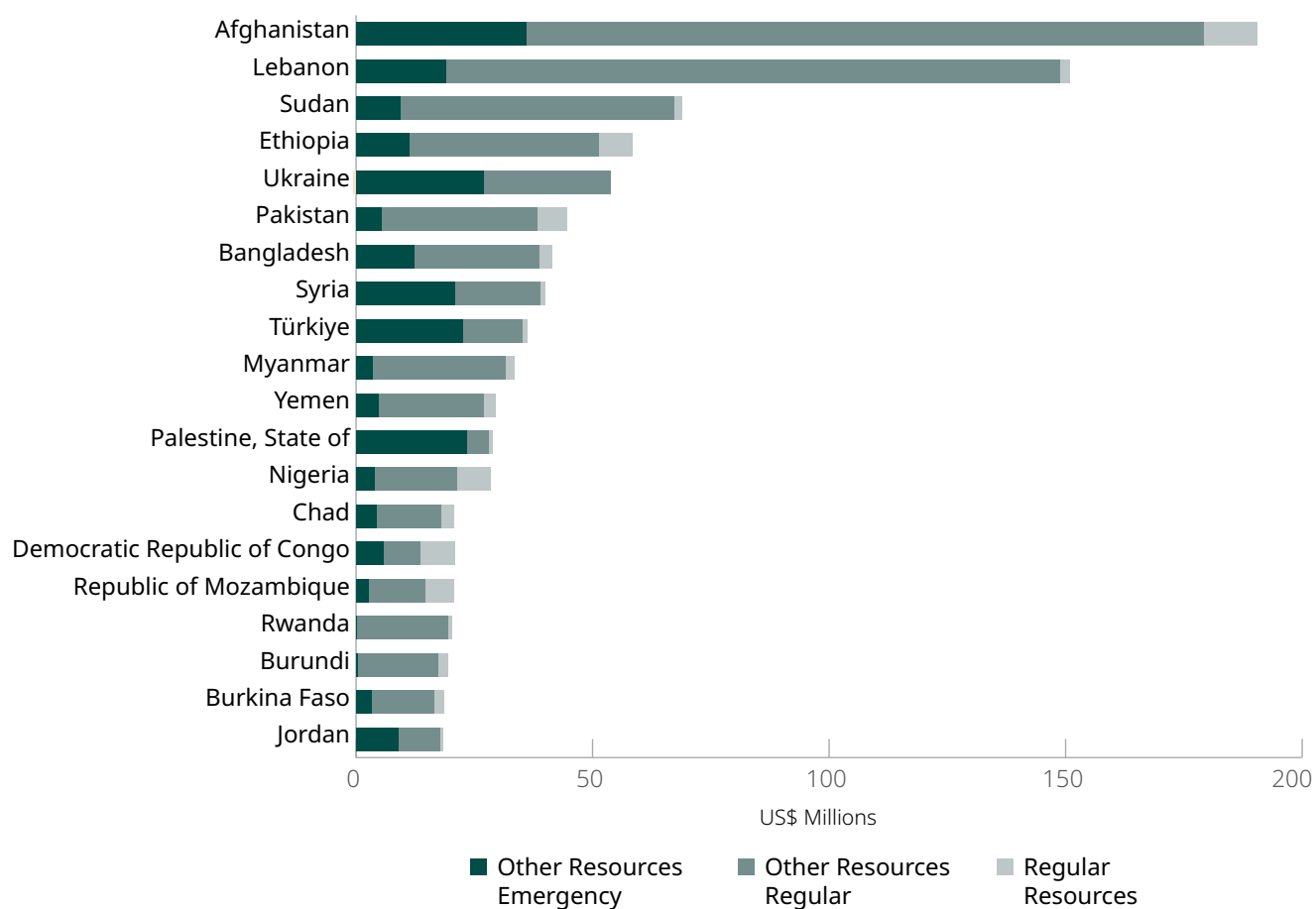
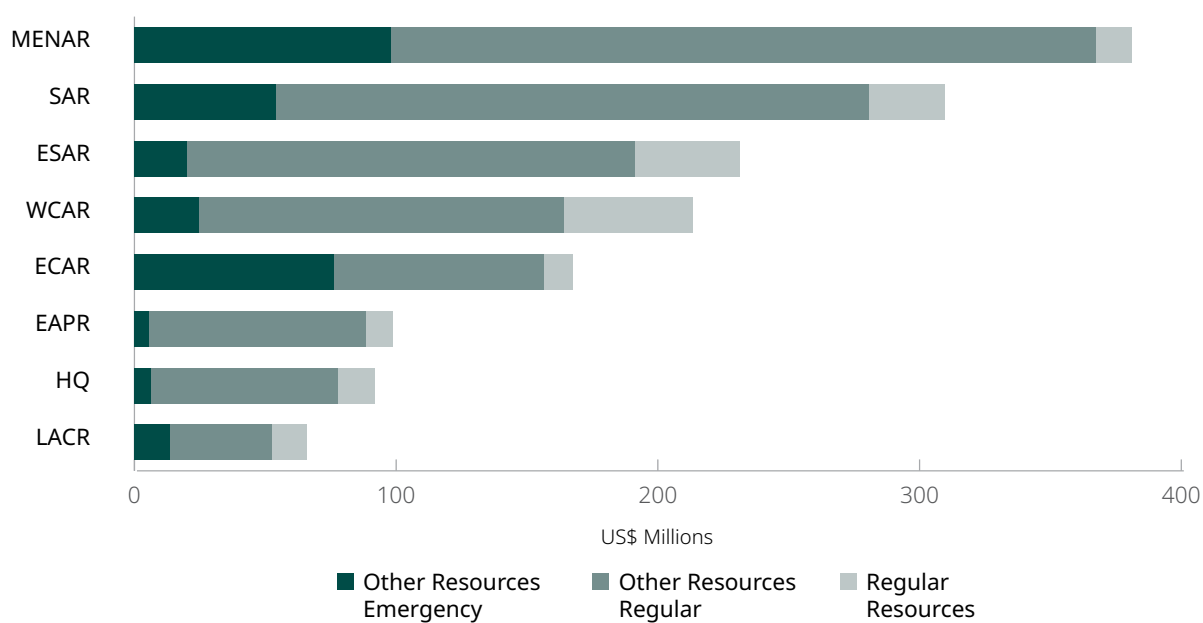


FIGURE A7: Goal Area 2 - Expenses by fund type and region, 2025^{iv}



Among UNICEF's thematic funding pools, Global Thematic Funds (GTF) are a key lever to invest in countries that are furthest behind Strategic Plan results and the SDGs and facing equity gaps.

In 2025, UNICEF received contributions amounting to \$12.1 million to its education GTF pool, and allocations were made to 42 countries. Total expenses amounted to \$15.8 million, with the greatest expenses occurring in Eastern and Southern Africa.

TABLE A2: Education Global Thematic Fund Pool, Contributions Received in US\$, 2025

Resource Partner	Donor	Contributions Received
Public Sector	Norway	4,974,629
	Sweden	2,163,332
	Luxembourg	725,938
Private Sector	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	823,905
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	787,574
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	521,843
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	364,658
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	348,371
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	312,525
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	277,888
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	241,381
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	106,561
	United States Fund for UNICEF	106,424
	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	101,412
	Danish Committee for UNICEF	100,252
	Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF	44,297
	French Committee for UNICEF	31,968
	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	31,968
	Italian Committee for UNICEF – Foundation ETS	31,968
	German Committee for UNICEF	18,648
Grand Total		12,115,543

FIGURE A8: Education Global Thematic Fund Pool, Top Allocations by Country, 2025^v

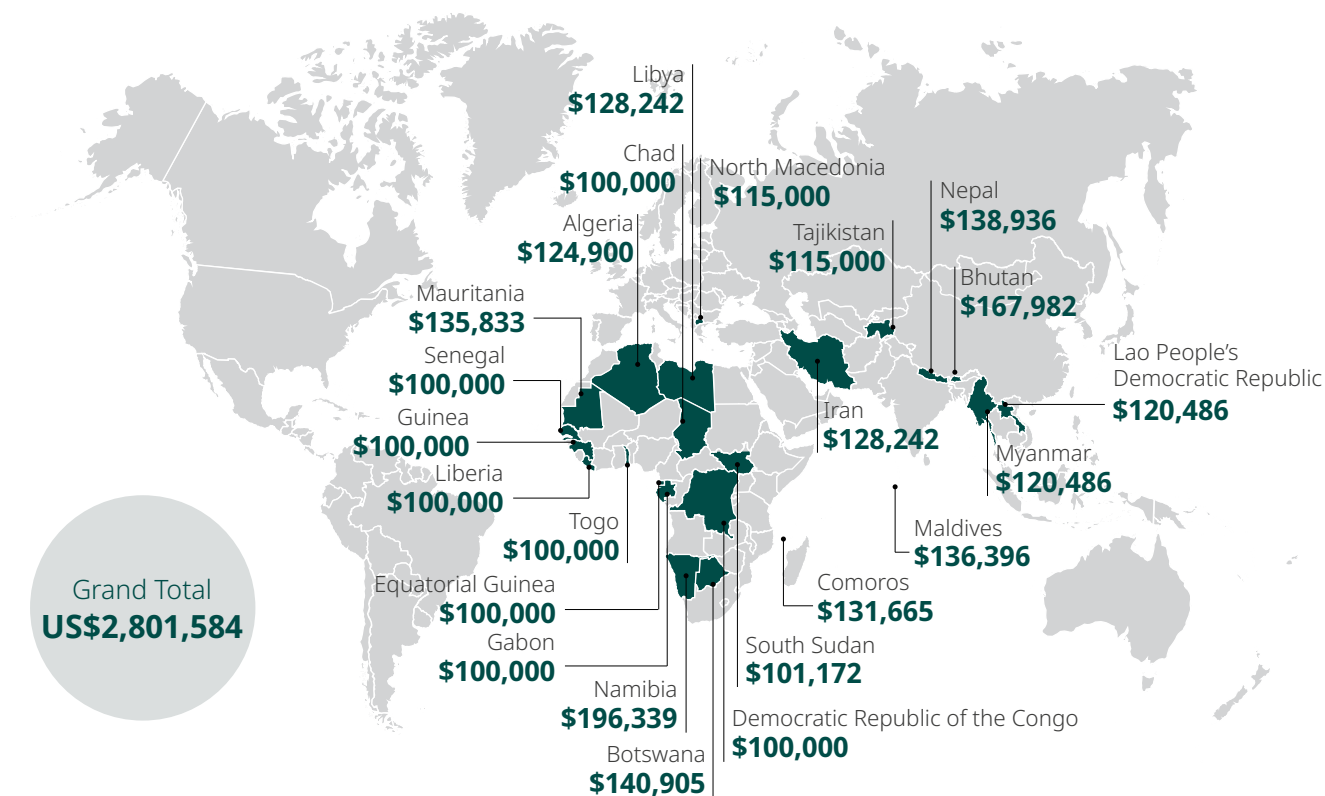
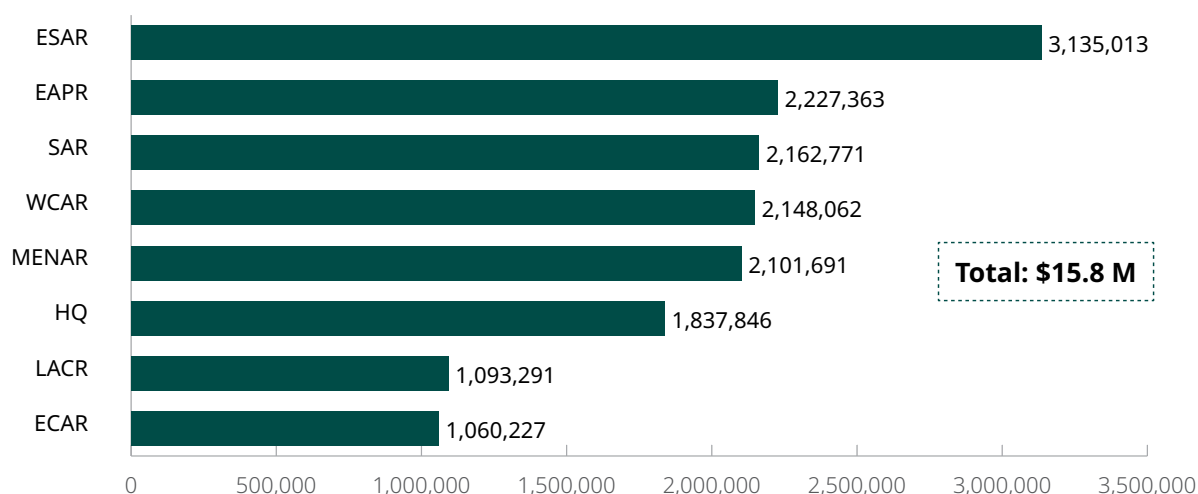


FIGURE A9: Education Global Thematic Fund Pool, Expenses by Region, 2025^v



i All figures in this chapter have been rounded and may not add up to the totals.

iii Aside from OR contributions received for specific Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, sectors and gender equality, other OR contributions were received for two or more Goal Areas and/or sectors. In total, \$2.22 billion was received as cross-sectoral OR contributions in 2025, of which 64% was for humanitarian response.

iv ECAR = Europe and Central Asia region, EAPR = East Asia and the Pacific region, LACR = Latin America and the Caribbean region, HQ = Headquarters, SAR = South Asia region, MENAR = Middle East and North Africa region, WCAR = West and Central Africa region, ESAR = Eastern and the Southern Africa region.

v This map displays the countries having received the largest allocations from this GTF pool in 2025. The total allocated amount displayed includes all country allocations from this GTF pool in 2025.

for every child

Whoever she is.

Wherever he lives.

Every child deserves a childhood.

A future.

A fair chance.

That's why UNICEF is there.

For each and every child.

Working day in and day out.

In more than 190 countries and territories.

Reaching the hardest to reach.

The furthest from help.

The most excluded.

It's why we stay to the end.

And never give up.

Published by UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

www.unicef.org

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), July 2026

unicef 
for every child