

Spotlight on the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition

2025



UNICEF works across 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to bring about positive change for children. The Global Nutrition Thematic Funding Pool makes vital contributions to SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Cover: Seven-year-old Maria and one-year-old Alif prepare to eat Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan. Dressed for the occasion, they come together to share a meal that, though simple, is rich in nutrition and thoughtfully prepared in their home near Makrail Bazar, Durgapur Union, Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

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1. UNICEF's Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition: Providing the bedrock for child survival, growth and development

Good nutrition is foundational to a child's future – yet too often overlooked

Good nutrition sets children on the path to thrive. It boosts survival, strengthens immunity, unlocks physical and cognitive development and fuels learning. Without good nutrition, children cannot reach their full potential. Yet around the world, millions of children are held back by malnutrition – from stunting and wasting, to deficiencies in essential vitamins and nutrients, to overweight and obesity.

Despite the scale of the challenge, investment in nutrition remains far too low, with consequences that jeopardize children's survival, growth and development today and continue far beyond childhood, undermining health, education and national development.

UNICEF is changing this through programmes that improve access to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices – and by strengthening the systems that make progress last. UNICEF's Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition is the engine behind this strategic work. It is more than a

funding mechanism; it is a catalyst for system-level change, reaching the children and caregivers most often left behind. Rooted in equity, resilience and partnership, the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition is a smart investment that protects children's rights and boosts economic development.



South Africa
Yolanda breastfeeds her two-month-old baby in Mthatha, in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province.

2. Financial results

Investment catalysing progress in the final year of the Strategic Plan

UNICEF made significant strides to expand preventive and life-saving nutrition services to record numbers of children over the course of the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan period. These achievements were powered with the support of partners who invested in systems strengthening to sustain long-term change. Their support has helped countries deliver more comprehensive, inclusive and sustainable nutrition results.

In 2025, the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition mobilized **US\$4.72 million** in flexible, catalytic funding from committed public and private partners, compared to US\$4.58 million received in 2024.

UNICEF extends sincere thanks to the Governments of Norway and Luxembourg, and to our private sector partners who contributed to the Fund in 2025, including through National Committees. UNICEF also extends special thanks to the Government of Germany for its landmark US\$62 million contribution to the Fund in 2022, which continued to underpin transformative, systems-level nutrition programming through to the close of the Strategic Plan in 2025.

The vision and commitment of our partners is helping us advance progress towards a future where no child suffers from malnutrition. With your support, countries are building stronger systems and bringing real change to children's lives through better access to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices.

“Investments in nutrition have the power to build healthier, more sustainable futures for children and nations. Flexible funding helps UNICEF reach the children and communities most in need of nutrition support with locally driven solutions that are timely, impactful and put children's rights at the centre.”

Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, UNICEF



Top Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition partners by contributions in US\$, 2025

Resource Partner	Donor	Contributions Received
Public Sector	Norway	2,980,330
	Luxembourg	781,779
Private Sector	United States Fund for UNICEF	460,830
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	267,809
	Italian Committee for UNICEF – Foundation ETS	105,217
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	103,646
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	14,451
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	10,341
Grand Total		4,724,404

Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding.



Uganda

Adolescents enjoy eating the sweet potatoes they harvested from the school garden. School-based food production boosts nutrition, encourages teamwork, and helps keep learners motivated and engaged.

Why flexible funding matters

Ending malnutrition in all its forms is a long-term commitment. That is why flexible, multi-year funding invested over the four-year period of UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2022–2025) through the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition has been so critical. It enabled UNICEF to adapt to country contexts, respond swiftly to emerging needs, test new ideas and scale what works for children – all while reinforcing critical food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection systems.

In 2025, UNICEF spent **US\$24.9 million** in flexible thematic funding from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition. Each flexible dollar spent has brought us closer to a world without child food poverty and malnutrition.

Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition expenses by region, 2025

Region	Expenses (US\$)	Share of total
Latin America and the Caribbean (LACR)	4,581,028	18%
Eastern and Southern Africa (ESAR)	4,521,899	18%
East Asia and the Pacific (EAPR)	3,855,868	15%
West and Central Africa (WCAR)	3,509,428	14%
Headquarters (HQ)	3,042,536	12%
Middle East and North Africa (MENAR)	2,206,599	9%
South Asia (SAR)	1,943,874	8%
Europe and Central Asia (ECAR)	1,233,851	5%
Grand Total	24.90M	100%

Note: Numbers and percentages may not add up due to rounding.

A call to scale what works

Ending child malnutrition and achieving SDG 2: Zero Hunger requires more than delivering food. It requires a bold shift towards strengthening the systems that improve access to the nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices that every child needs to survive, grow and develop to his or her full potential.

The Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition is UNICEF's most strategic vehicle for making this happen. It enables governments to strengthen essential systems and tackle the inequities that keep millions of children malnourished. These are investments that will deliver results now and for generations to come.

We invite our partners to help us go further. Together, we can transform systems, scale what works, and build a future where every child is well-nourished, resilient and full of possibility.



Flexible funding.
Direct reach.
Real results for children.



Ecuador

Vilma spends time with her daughter, Noemi, at her fresh fruit stall outside the Wawa Wasi Municipal Child Development Center in Riobamba, where Noemi and several other children receive play-based educational activities, as well as care and meals.

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3. The far-reaching impact of the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition

The reach of the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition spans all seven UNICEF regions, delivering impact across three interconnected levels:

- At the **country level**: Investments influence policy reform and support governments to scale services and strengthen systems that reach the most vulnerable children and communities.
- At the **regional level**: Investments strengthen the capacity of regional institutions and enhance technical expertise, foster collaboration and accelerate knowledge-sharing across countries and regions.
- At the **global level**: Investments support UNICEF's technical and thought leadership and the development of tools, guidance and evidence that underpin quality programming and measurable results worldwide.

Together, these levels reinforce one another, ensuring that flexible funding improves access to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices to drive sustainable outcomes for children everywhere.

The **Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition** contributed to the following results in 2025:



423 million children under 5 years of age and their caregivers in 78 countries were reached with policies, programmes and services for the prevention of malnutrition in early childhood, up from 336.4 million children in 2021



158 million school-age children and adolescents in 71 countries were reached with policies, programmes and services for the prevention of anaemia, overweight and other forms of malnutrition, up from 67 million children and adolescents in 2021



More than 255.3 million children under 5 were screened for wasting in 54 countries; of these, 9 million children with severe wasting were admitted for life-saving treatment (up from 154.4 million children screened and 5.4 million treated in 2021)



Republic of Moldova

Children enjoy a nutritious lunch in Bucuria village, Cahul District, Republic of Moldova.

The Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition allocations around the world, 2025

Overall, 64 countries received allocations from the Global Nutrition Thematic Funding Pool during the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan period. The eight countries that received country-level allocations in 2025 are shown with full amounts below.

 **64 countries**
supported by the Fund
since 2022

Ecuador \$100,000
UNICEF helped advance national legislation to protect breastfeeding and monitor compliance.

Peru
\$195,000

Lebanon \$196,116

UNICEF helped design and implement the country's first National School Nutrition and Meal Assessment and carried out a retail food environment assessment of the marketing of unhealthy food products to children.

Moldova
\$170,000

Kosovo*
\$75,000

Armenia
\$175,000

Zimbabwe \$175,000

UNICEF provided support to develop a national multisectoral action plan to improve nutrition and operationalize national strategies to prevent stunting and improve food and nutrition security.

Zambia \$175,000

UNICEF support drove an increase in the number of health facilities providing counselling on infant and young child feeding, ultimately increasing the number of caregivers reached with this critical intervention.



78%
allocated to country
programmes



12%
allocated to global
programmes



9%
allocated to regional
programmes



1%
allocated to evaluation for
evidence-based programmes

COUNTRY-LEVEL ALLOCATION CRITERIA

Levels and burden of
child food poverty and
malnutrition in a country

Opportunity to influence national
child nutrition and development
policies, strategies and programmes

Prospect of catalysing
domestic resources and
national scale-up

* All references to Kosovo in this report should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

Note: this map displays the countries having received allocations from this GTF pool in 2025.



Zambia

A nutrition promoter
meets with Chinosore
Nyambeye as part of
a community-based
Nutrition Support Group.

4. Smarter policies, stronger systems and greater impact

Despite the important progress, the scale of unmet needs in tackling child food poverty and malnutrition remains vast. But UNICEF's response continues to be equally ambitious. Across every region, the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition has helped drive a shift from isolated service delivery to strong systems that put nutrition at the heart of every child's right to survive and thrive.

UNICEF's systems-strengthening model is anchored in policy and legislative reform, sustainable financing, data and evidence, infrastructure for service delivery, workforce development, and social and behaviour change – which together deliver measurable results for children and families.

In 2025, flexible thematic funding continued to play a catalytic role, enabling UNICEF to deliver results in development, fragile and humanitarian contexts.

Legal and policy change

Strengthening systems for child nutrition and development begins with shaping the policies and legislation that underpin them. UNICEF and partners work hand in hand with governments to advocate for and strengthen national nutrition policies and strategies, and to revise legislation to protect children's right to nutrition.

As a result of these efforts, by 2025:

- **80 countries** had a national policy or strategy to prevent stunting, wasting or micronutrient deficiencies in children under 5, up from 66 in 2021, achieving the Strategic Plan target.
- **76 countries** had a policy or strategy to promote optimal child nutrition, including monitoring the marketing of breastmilk substitutes and unhealthy foods, up from 66 in 2021 and surpassing the Strategic Plan target.
- **55 countries** had adopted large-scale food fortification with iron, up from 38 in 2021. As a result, more than one third of the world's population (34.3 per cent) now consumes at least one cereal fortified with iron and folic acid, up from 21 per cent in 2021.

Thematic funding supported policy advocacy in Ecuador, one of the eight countries that received a 2025 Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition allocation:

- **Ecuador:** UNICEF supported important advancements to national legislation to protect breastfeeding in 2025, including reactivating the technical advisory commission of the National Council for Breastfeeding Support to ensure compliance with the national breastfeeding law and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

Financing the future of nutrition

Without sustainable financing, nutrition services cannot be delivered at scale. UNICEF works to improve how nutrition is financed, by securing adequate public investment and ensuring that funding is allocated in ways that prioritize children, especially the most vulnerable. In 2025, this focus drove measurable progress:

- **61 countries** included care for children with severe wasting in national health and nutrition budgets, up from 36 in 2021.
- **54 countries** included ready-to-use therapeutic food in their national essential medicines lists, up from 46 in 2021.
- **79 countries** tracked child wasting within their national nutrition information systems, up from 52 in 2021.
- **The Child Nutrition Fund**, UNICEF's innovative, flagship financing mechanism, secured US\$939 million for maternal and child nutrition across 45 countries as of December 2025, of which US\$478 million had been received and was being actively deployed to support nutrition policies, programme scale-up and supply systems.

Thematic funding directly supported national financing and planning processes in Zimbabwe, one of the eight countries that received a 2025 Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition allocation:

- **Zimbabwe:** In Zimbabwe, UNICEF convened senior government officials from various ministries for a Public Financing for Nutrition and Early Childhood Development workshop, which led to the development of a government-owned, multisectoral action plan to improve nutrition budgeting, coordination, and support the operationalization of national strategies to prevent stunting and improve food and nutrition security. Stakeholders also committed to advocating for increased domestic financing for nutrition to support an application for matched funding from the Child Nutrition Fund, reflecting a shift towards more sustainable, nationally led financing.

Workforce development

Behind every child reached with nutrition support is a dedicated professional – a nutrition or health worker, a community volunteer or a caregiver – equipped with the tools and training to prevent malnutrition before it starts, and to ensure timely detection and treatment when prevention falls short. In 2025, these investments enabled countries to expand the reach and effectiveness of nutrition services at scale:

- **102 million caregivers** were reached with counselling and education on infant and young child feeding – the highest number ever reached and a 77 per cent increase from the 57.5 million caregivers reached in 2021.
- **82 countries** included the early detection and treatment of severe wasting in community worker training packages, up from 73 in 2021, contributing to a 13.6 per cent increase in the number of children treated for severe wasting annually since the start of the Strategic Plan.
- **More than 1.4 million caregivers** were trained to identify children with wasting using simple colour-coded measurement tapes and refer them to treatment services.

Thematic funding directly supported workforce capacity strengthening in Peru, one of the eight countries that received a 2025 Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition allocation:

- **Peru:** Peru strengthened infant and young child feeding through national capacity building on breastfeeding counselling, complementary feeding and enforcement of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to deliver a national virtual course that reached 5,265 health professionals and created 48 regional facilitators, while culturally adapted materials were produced in Spanish, Quechua and Shipibo. More than 1.3 million children under 2 are estimated to have benefited indirectly from improved counselling and communication on breastfeeding and healthy complementary feeding.

Data, research and evidence for nutrition

Context-specific evidence generation and reliable data are foundational for driving policy change. UNICEF is committed to strengthening national data systems and generating knowledge and evidence, helping governments identify who is being left behind, what works to reach them, and what resources are needed to do so. In 2025, these investments in evidence generation included:

- **An Early Childhood Food Insecurity Experience Scale**, developed by UNICEF in 2025 to monitor children's access to food in real time in fragile and humanitarian contexts.
- **A revised NutriDash maternal nutrition module**, resulting in more and better-quality country programme data, improved global data on women's nutrition, and standardized programme indicators for iron-containing supplements to enhance programme monitoring.
- **New flagship publications**, including the fourth Child Nutrition Report (Feeding Profit), the Framework for Action on Child Nutrition and the Climate Crisis, and UNICEF's first Global Parenting Report.

Through the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition, UNICEF supported a targeted evidence-generation initiative in Lebanon, one of the eight countries that received a 2025 allocation:

- **Lebanon:** In collaboration with the World Food Programme, UNICEF designed and implemented the country's first National School Nutrition and Meal Assessment to assess eating patterns, nutrition knowledge, overweight and obesity prevalence and the food and nutrition environment. UNICEF also carried out a retail food environment assessment of the marketing of unhealthy food products to children in supermarkets and convenience stores, undertaken with the Ministry of Economy and Trade to enhance the availability, accessibility and quality of nutritious foods for children. Findings from both assessments will guide evidence-based school health and nutrition interventions and policy reforms.



Lebanon

At a temporary shelter in Beirut, Lebanon, a mother holds her one-year-old daughter, Mira, while a staff member of one of UNICEF's partners feeds the child baby food as part of an integrated response to prevent child food poverty and malnutrition in this fragile, emergency context.

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Social and behaviour change for lasting impact

Empowering caregivers, families and communities to make informed nutrition choices is central to UNICEF's work. UNICEF also supports large-scale social and behaviour change communication programmes for children and adolescents to increase awareness of the benefits of good diets, healthy eating practices and physical activity. In 2025, UNICEF leveraged these strategies to drive nutrition progress for maternal, child and adolescent nutrition:

- **49 countries** implemented gender-responsive anaemia prevention programmes for adolescent girls and boys through school- and community-based approaches, up from 28 countries in 2021 and surpassing the Strategic Plan target.
- **The Fix My Food Campaign**, a global movement amplifying young people's voices for healthier food policies, expanded from five countries at its 2023 launch to 18 participating countries across five regions in 2025, with a network of more than 800 trained young advocates. Fix My Food has empowered adolescents and young people to be change-agents in healthier food environments within their countries. In **Mongolia**, after a network of young people gathered evidence on school meal quality and presented its findings to Government, the Ministry of Finance allocated an additional US\$37 million in the 2025 budget to improve school nutrition programmes nationwide. In **Jamaica** and **South Africa**, young advocates catalysed government commitment to introduce front-of-pack warning labels and marketing restrictions in 2025.

In Zambia, thematic funding in 2025 supported targeted social and behaviour change interventions and the promotion of positive nutrition practices to improve early childhood nutrition:

- **Zambia:** In Zambia, access to infant and young child feeding counselling was expanded to reach 3.1 million caregivers – an increase of 150,000 caregivers from the previous year and exceeding the annual target of 1.2 million. This expansion was driven by UNICEF support to 10 additional districts, covering 100 health facilities, which strengthened subnational capacities and improved equitable access to quality infant and young child feeding services, including counselling, education, social and behaviour change communication and community engagement to shift feeding practices and social norms.

Results that last

In 2025, strategic, catalytic, thematic funding contributed to the following nutrition results for children at the close of the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan:

- **423 million children under 5 and their caregivers** in 78 countries were reached with services to prevent malnutrition in early childhood – a 26 per cent increase from the 2021 baseline of 336.4 million and surpassing the 2025 target of at least 300 million.
- **More than 158 million school-age children and adolescents** in 71 countries were reached with gender-responsive policies and services to prevent anaemia, overweight and other forms of malnutrition, more than doubling the 67 million reached in 2021 and exceeding the 2025 target of at least 90 million.
- **More than 255.3 million children under 5** were screened for wasting across 54 countries – 100 million more than in 2021 and well above the target of 200 million. Of these, 9 million children with severe wasting were admitted for life-saving treatment, of whom 89 per cent recovered fully, exceeding globally defined standards. Some 6.6 million of the children treated in 2025 were reached in humanitarian crises.

These gains reflect not only the expanded reach of nutrition services but the resilience of the systems delivering them. They illustrate how nutrition programmes, when accompanied by committed leadership, evidence-based policies and strategies and flexible investments, can deliver nutrition results at scale, protecting the future growth and development of generations of children and creating prosperous societies.



5. Impact story

Country spotlight: Engaging communities in the prevention of child anaemia and other forms of malnutrition in Peru

Maria Alejandra, Humberly and Estefany are three mothers with similar stories of displacement and hope for a better future. They belong to an association whose primary goals include fighting against anaemia and wasting among Venezuelan and Peruvian children living in Tumbes, Peru – a region that has become their new home.

The three mothers had concerns when they first noticed that their children appeared underweight and lacked the vitality typical of early childhood. “My three-year-old daughter refused to eat, and she contracted a stomach bacteria that caused her health to decline. She was so weak that we ended up at the health centre, and the doctor told me she had anaemia and that her weight was borderline, putting her at risk of wasting,” says Estefany, who has lived in Tumbes since 2022. “I was terrified, but I followed everything the doctor told me.”

For them, gathering together started with the need to learn how to better feed their children. “A group of mothers formed a health committee,” says Maria Alejandra. “That’s where we met UNICEF, and they provided us with training to accompany the health centre nutritionists during home visits, offering guidance to mothers and alerting them if their children might be underweight or have anaemia. We participated in training sessions on how to use colour-coded mid-upper-arm circumference measuring tapes. When the tape is adjusted and reaches yellow or red, wasting is suspected, meaning the child needs to be seen by a doctor.”

Anaemia remains one of the most persistent and least visible forms of malnutrition in Peru. National figures show that anaemia among children aged 6–36 months reached 43.1 per cent in 2023. In Tumbes, this figure rose to 45.1 per cent, nearly 5 percentage points higher than in 2022 (40.5 per cent).

Humberly was born in Venezuela and has lived in Tumbes for six years. She feeds her children much better since attending the sessions at the health centre.

“I never imagined how much damage anaemia could cause until I attended the UNICEF sessions. They explained that anaemia has consequences for children’s development and cognition; they become apathetic, less active, and when they go to school, they may struggle to understand simple instructions or participate in learning activities. The good news is that if you feed them properly and follow medical advice, you can help a child recover. That’s also where I learned how to use food supplements.”

The food supplements that Humberly refers to are provided by UNICEF in the Tumbes region to prevent child wasting and provide essential nutritional support. “It’s like a fortified, ready-to-eat fortified porridge that contains iron and other essential vitamins,” she explains.

Maria Alejandra, another association member, notes that her initial concern was that many Venezuelan families did not know how to prepare local ingredients. “We faced a complete change in food products. At first, you don’t know what to cook – even the names of the ingredients are different. Many of us felt we were not feeding our children properly. But once I received the training on what anaemia is and how it affects young children, I decided to get more involved.”

Together with two other peers, the three mothers go out every week to conduct awareness sessions, demonstrate how to use nutritional supplements, and continue learning.

With support from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition, UNICEF has been able to take important national and subnational action to tackle anaemia, equipping local authorities with technical assistance, tools and continuous support, while facilitating the adaptation of the national framework on anaemia prevention into actionable local plans that include community outreach and support from people like Maria Alejandra, Humberly and Estefany.

Estefany reflects: “I can attest to how a healthy child has energy all the time. I say this because of my daughter; she wasn’t doing well, but we stayed consistent with her diet and supplementation, and now she is healthy, attends school, plays, and learns. That is what we want for all the children in our community. Having a healthy child is the greatest achievement one can reach.”



“Having a healthy child is the greatest achievement one can reach.”

6. Appreciation for our donors and partners

Norway: The leading thematic partner to the Fund in 2025

UNICEF extends its sincere appreciation to the Government of Norway, which contributed US\$2.98 million to the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2025. Norway's sustained, flexible support has allowed UNICEF to direct resources to the countries where they are needed most to prioritize systems-strengthening, playing a catalytic role in scaling up programming for the nutrition of school-age children and adolescents across Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, while also strengthening complementary feeding and healthy diets among younger children and reinforcing the national ownership of nutrition results.

Germany's innovative flexible funding model proved instrumental in both meeting urgent needs and driving systemic change throughout the Strategic Plan period. By delivering integrated nutrition programmes and strengthening national systems across more than 140 countries, this partnership helped build sustainable solutions, protecting millions of children from stunting, wasting and other forms of malnutrition.

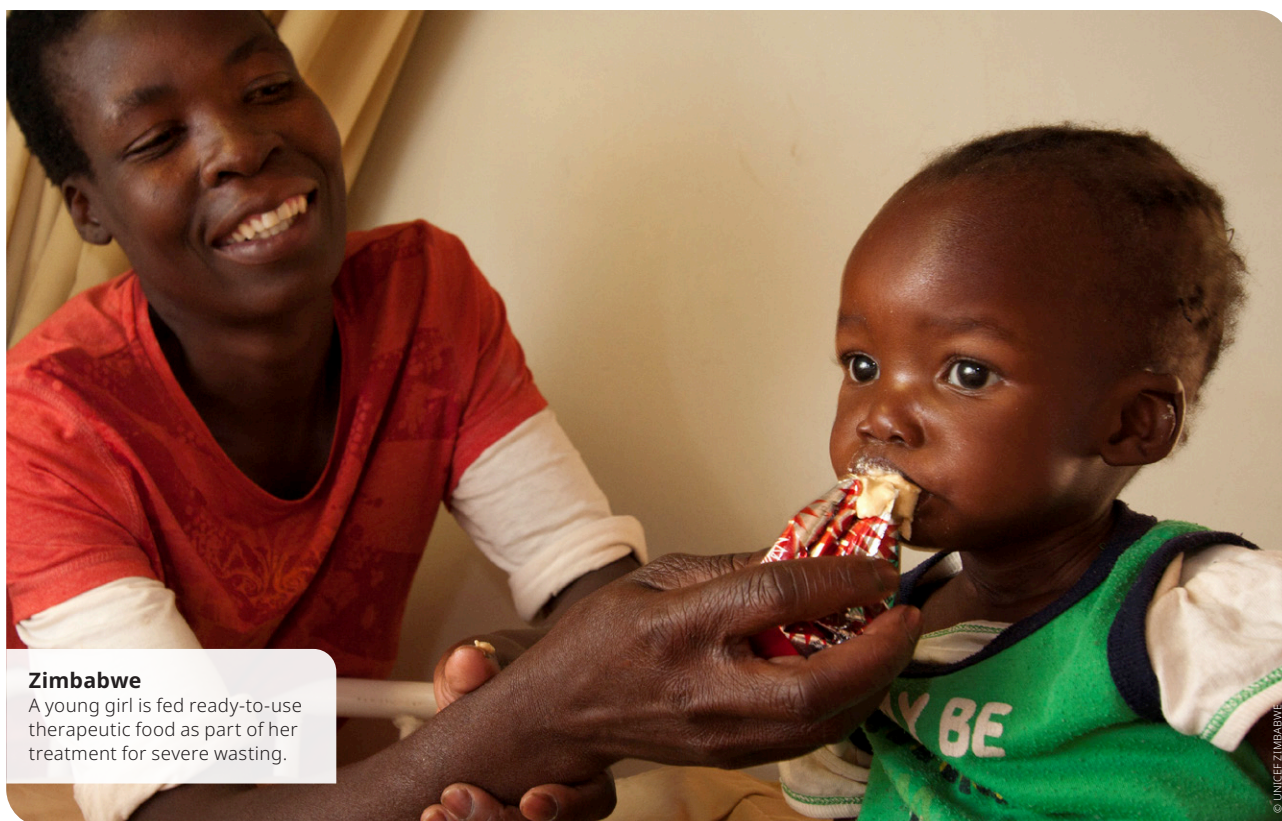
With two in three children under 5 in low- and middle-income countries still facing child food poverty, the need for action remains urgent and Germany's leadership continues to be vital. Together, we are working to ensure that every child has the chance to grow, develop and thrive to reach his or her full potential.

Germany and UNICEF: Leading the global fight against child malnutrition

UNICEF extends its deepest appreciation to the Government of Germany for its extraordinary commitment to ending child malnutrition. As the largest contributor to any UNICEF Global Thematic Fund during the 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, Germany's visionary US\$62 million investment in the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2022 revolutionized UNICEF's ability to combat child malnutrition, enabling the organization to significantly accelerate efforts to strengthen the systems that prevent malnutrition for generations to come.

Luxembourg: A longstanding supporter of flexible nutrition funding

UNICEF is deeply grateful to the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, a steadfast partner of the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition, for providing more than US\$3 million in flexible funding between 2022 and 2025. Luxembourg's strategic, multi-year support allows UNICEF to act where needs are greatest and to invest in the national systems that sustain results for children long after a programme ends.



Zimbabwe

A young girl is fed ready-to-use therapeutic food as part of her treatment for severe wasting.

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Spotlight on the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition

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September 2026