

A photograph of a man with a dark beard and mustache, wearing a patterned shirt, looking up at a baby. The baby is being held by a woman whose hands are visible, wearing a ring and bangles. The baby is wearing a colorful patterned sweater. The background is a blurred blue wall. The text "THE POWER BEHIND THE PROMISE" is repeated in a circular arc around the image.

# CORE RESOURCES

for every child, everywhere

# Annual Report 2025

# From the Executive Director

Every child deserves a childhood that offers safety, opportunity and hope. Yet for millions of children around the world, conflict, poverty, climate shocks and disease continue to threaten their lives and futures.

UNICEF works every day to protect children's rights and help them survive and thrive. To do that effectively, we rely on flexible funding that allows us to act quickly, strengthen essential services and respond wherever children are most at risk – often before a crisis becomes an emergency and through recovery.

In 2025, that flexibility was more important than ever. Sharp reductions in development assistance had immediate consequences for children. Although they did not create this crisis, children are among those most affected by it.

UNICEF's Core Resources declined alongside other funding streams, putting at risk our ability to respond rapidly and sustain vital services. Education, nutrition, clean water, health care and protection cannot be paused without significant impacts. For children, interruptions to these services can have lifelong effects.

Core Resources provide the foundation that enables UNICEF to reach children when their lives are upended by conflict, climate-related emergencies or poverty.

No project grant can fund readiness. Core Resources can.

I am deeply grateful to every partner whose support made this work possible. I would especially like to recognize the governments of Germany and Sweden and the National Committees in Japan, Germany, Korea, Spain and France for their steadfast commitment during a year that demanded both resolve and leadership.

The results presented in this report demonstrate what flexible funding makes possible for children. They are also a reminder that investing in children today creates stronger, more resilient societies tomorrow. This report is both an account of impact and a case for continued investment to enable UNICEF to respond wherever and whenever children need us most.

In 2026, UNICEF enters its eightieth year. Eight decades of evidence tell us two things with equal force: that sustained investment in children works, and that the need for it has not diminished. The case for protecting childhood is, if anything, more pressing now than ever. So too is the case for Core Resources, which remain the foundation of UNICEF's ability to respond, adapt and deliver for children in an increasingly uncertain world.



**Catherine Russell**  
UNICEF Executive Director





# Core Resources: Uniting the private and public sectors for children

Governments, corporations, foundations and millions of individuals worldwide made a collective decision in 2025 to invest in children without conditions. UNICEF thanks every donor and partner for your Core Resources contributions this year. It is this kind of giving – unrestricted, sustained and placed in trust – that makes a childhood possible for the children who need it most.

## Top 30 Core Resources partners by contributions received, 2025

PARTNER	USD (MILLIONS)	PARTNER	USD (MILLIONS)
Japan Committee for UNICEF	130.0	Denmark	14.2
German Committee for UNICEF	80.9	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	14.0
Korean Committee for UNICEF	75.5	Polish National Committee for UNICEF	13.3
Spanish Committee for UNICEF	75.0	Belgian Committee for UNICEF	13.2
French Committee for UNICEF	70.3	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	12.9
Germany	63.6	Republic of Korea (the)	12.8
Sweden	60.8	Australia	12.5
Italian Committee for UNICEF - Foundation ETS	48.0	Canada	11.9
Dutch Committee for UNICEF	45.1	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	11.8
Norway	42.6	Belgium	11.7
Netherlands (Kingdom of the)	39.6	Japan	11.1
Swedish Committee for UNICEF	39.3	Canadian UNICEF Committee	10.3
United States Fund for UNICEF	38.9	Danish Foundation for UNICEF	10.3
United Kingdom	21.5	Ireland	9.0
Switzerland	16.9	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	8.5

Note: Contributions received in cash and in kind. Excluding UNICEF Country Office Private Sector Fundraising (PSFR).

## Contributors to multi-year\* Core Resources revenue\*\* recognized, 2022–2025

UNICEF particularly thanks the partners who made multi-year Core Resources commitments. Sustained giving of this kind does something annual contributions cannot: it allows UNICEF to plan for the full arc of a child's development, not just the funding year ahead.

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Sweden <b>\$162.8 million</b>				
Netherlands <b>\$122.1 million</b>				
Switzerland <b>\$69.2 million</b>				
Australia <b>\$50.6 million</b>				
Belgium <b>\$43.6 million</b>				
Canada <b>\$35.2 million</b>				
Luxembourg <b>\$25.8 million</b>				
New Zealand <b>\$21.8 million</b>				
Denmark <b>\$20.5 million</b>				
Qatar <b>\$16.0 million</b>				
Iceland <b>\$5.6 million</b>				



Note: Ireland made two core resources contributions under two single-year grant agreements totalling \$17.5 million under the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and UNICEF which provides predictable core funding for the period 2024 to 2025.

\*Agreements with a lifetime of two years or more defined as multi-year agreements.

\*\*Revenue represents the full value of the agreement in the year it is signed and any revaluations due to exchange rate fluctuations. Revenue data exclude private sector resource partners and write-downs.

# What Every Childhood Needs

There is a meaningful difference between being a child – which is biological and inevitable – and having a childhood: the protected, nourishing, opportunity-rich period of formation that every child deserves but that far too few actually receive.

**UNICEF's work is about childhood, not merely survival. Its obligation is to ensure that every child gets the years that shape everything that follows.**

Childhood is the period during which the fundamental architecture of a human being is established. Brain development in the early years is more rapid than at any other point; the neural pathways governing cognition, emotional regulation, social connection and resilience are laid down during this time. What happens in this window, or fails to happen, has consequences that do not simply resolve themselves later. They compound across a lifetime and across generations.

We know what every childhood requires for those foundations to take hold: safe and healthy beginnings; adequate nutrition during the years when the brain and body are growing fastest; protection from violence, exploitation and chronic stress; and the opportunity to learn and develop skills.

And play. Development investment has reliably undervalued it; children worldwide are steadily losing it to poverty, conflict and the economic pressures that compress family life until the time and space for it disappear. Play is a developmental necessity, one of the primary mechanisms through which children build cognitive flexibility, emotional resilience and the social understanding that no formal instruction can replicate.

These are the basics. For hundreds of millions of children, one or more of these is missing.

The solutions exist and the knowledge is there. What has not kept pace is the investment: sustained, flexible and able to reach every child regardless of geography, circumstance or crisis.

**The nature of what childhood requires is also the nature of what Core Resources enable.**

Core Resources give UNICEF the capacity that childhood demands from any serious investment in it: sustained over years, present across the sectors a child's life crosses and free to move where the need is greatest rather than where a grant agreement specifies. Childhood is the foundation of a life. Core Resources are the foundation of UNICEF's capacity to act.

***Core Resources do not underwrite a single project. They underwrite the conditions that make results possible.***





Both are foundational: neither can be easily restored once the window has passed.

The stories in this report illuminate different dimensions of that central argument. They span the developmental arc from early childhood through adolescence, and the geography of need from island communities in the Pacific securing legal protections and climate-resilient systems to Syrian children returning to an education system being rebuilt from the ground up. Together they show what becomes possible when UNICEF has the resources to work at the pace and with the flexibility that childhood itself demands.

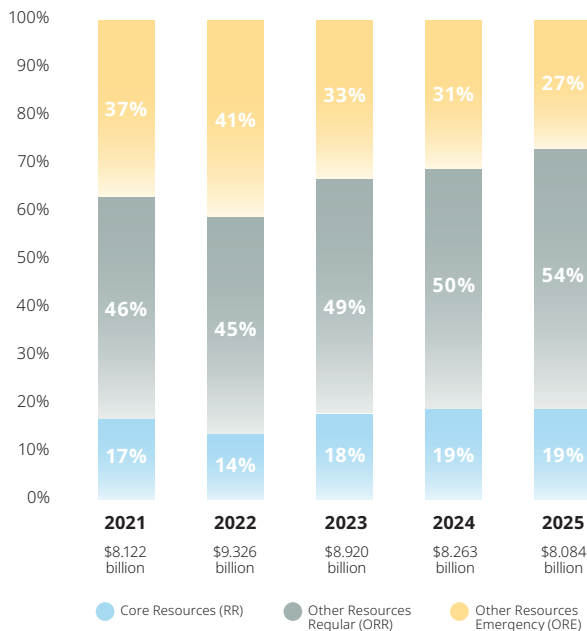
The years of childhood are the years when the investment that matters most can still be made. Core Resources are how UNICEF makes that investment.



# Core Resources: Income and trends

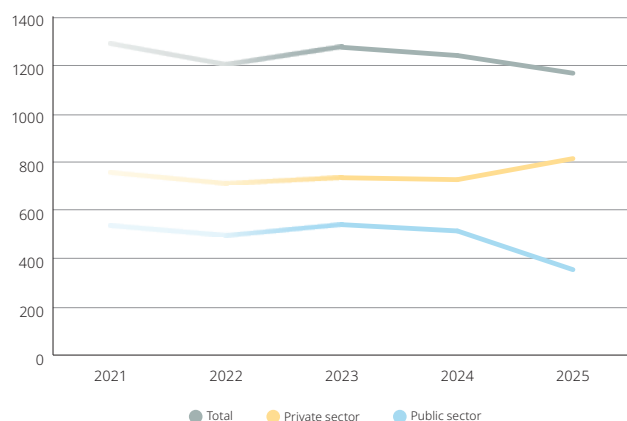
In 2025, Core Resources income amounted to \$1.5 billion, accounting for 19 per cent of UNICEF's total \$8.1 billion income.

## Income ratio by type of funding, 2021–2025

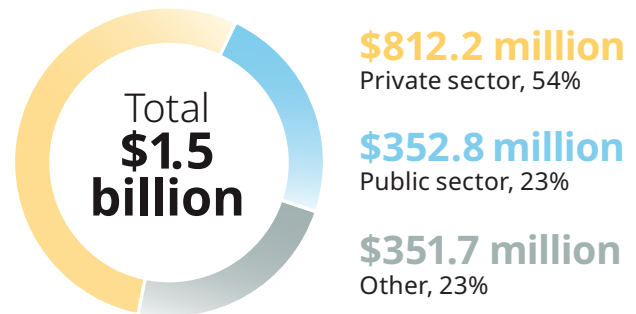


The Core Resources income from voluntary contributions from the public and private sector fell by 6 per cent or \$72.5 million compared to the 2024 levels. While public sector Core Resources contributions contracted by nearly a third – to their lowest level in nearly two decades – private sector contributions increased by 12 per cent, to the highest level ever recorded. The Core Resources from other income – including interest, procurement services and other sources – also increased by 2 per cent.

## Core Resources income from voluntary contributions by type of resource partner, 2021–2025



## Core resources income by type of partner, 2025



## Call to action

In 2025, people around the world stepped up for children in record numbers. Core Resources from the private sector reached their highest level ever recorded, demonstrating that when people understand what unrestricted giving makes possible, they choose it.

The question now is whether governments will meet that momentum. Core Resources from the public sector fell to their lowest level in nearly two decades. At a moment when the needs of children are accelerating, this is a gap that earmarked funding, however well-intentioned and targeted, cannot fill. The flexibility that children's lives require cannot be procured project by project.

UNICEF calls on United Nations Member States to fulfil their Funding Compact commitment of 30 per cent Core Resources as a share of total public sector income. We also urge all donors and partners to prioritize flexible funding within their overall portfolio of giving to UNICEF. What children need most is a collective commitment to act on the generational horizon. At a time when the private sector has made their intentions clear about investing in children at scale, we now ask all governments to mirror their citizen's interests and invest with UNICEF in core resources.

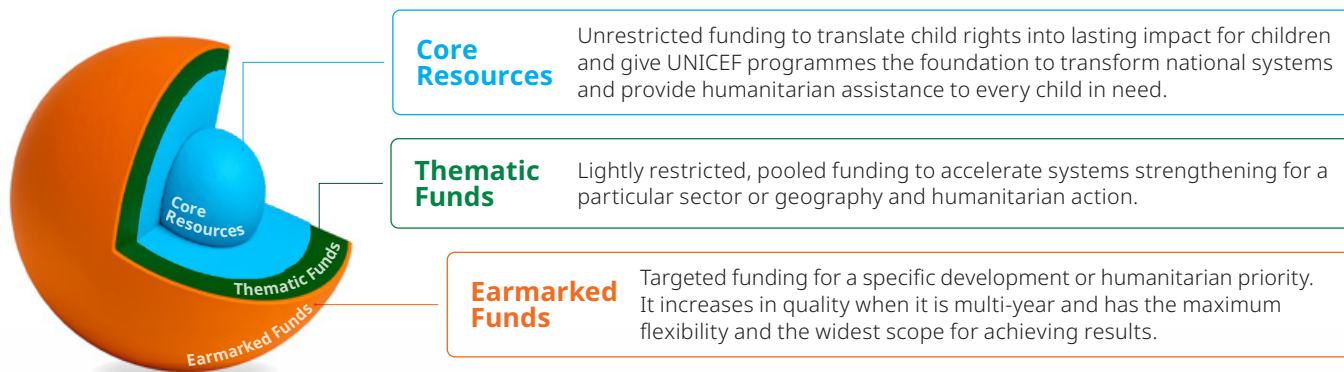




# Core Resources: The common ground

Core Resources are the foundation for achieving UNICEF's mandate and lasting results for children. Core Resources hold together an often delicate funding model, ensuring a coherent whole when restricted funding is layered. Without it, the other streams have no common ground to stand on.

## UNICEF's funding portfolio



# How We Spend Core Resources to Achieve Results for Children

Core Resources do not flow to a single programme or a single crisis. They are deployed to direct programmes, institutional capacity for results and programme excellence, and private sector fundraising – each making the others more effective. Together, they are how a contribution to Core Resources becomes impact at every level of a child's life.

## UNICEF'S BUDGET

### Direct Programmes

Budget



**\$1.0 billion Expense\***

- **UNICEF country programmes** advancing children's rights and the SDGs for children around the world
- **Global and regional programmes** delivering data-driven insights, technical leadership and thought leadership
- **Strategic and innovative activities** solving the greatest challenges facing children
- **Emergency Programme Fund (EPF)** protecting children and saving lives in sudden-onset emergencies and humanitarian situations

### Institutional

Budget



**\$243.1 million Expenditure\*\***

(of which **74 per cent** or \$180.2 million was for development effectiveness)

- **Development effectiveness** through technical excellence in policy and programmes, procurement and management of supplies, and humanitarian action
- **United Nations coordination** through the resident coordinator system and humanitarian clusters
- **Management of human and financial resources** to deliver results for children
- **Independent oversight and assurance** mechanisms holding the organization to account
- **Capital costs** aligned with programme goals and strategies

### Special Purpose

Budget



**\$186.1 million Expense\***

- **Private sector fundraising** generating new income for children
- **Private sector partnerships** creating collective impact for children
- **Innovative finance** accelerating new approaches to funding, financing and investing in children



\***Expense** – refers to funds actually spent during the year.

\*\***Expenditure** – refers to funds spent during the year plus committed funds that will be spent in future periods.

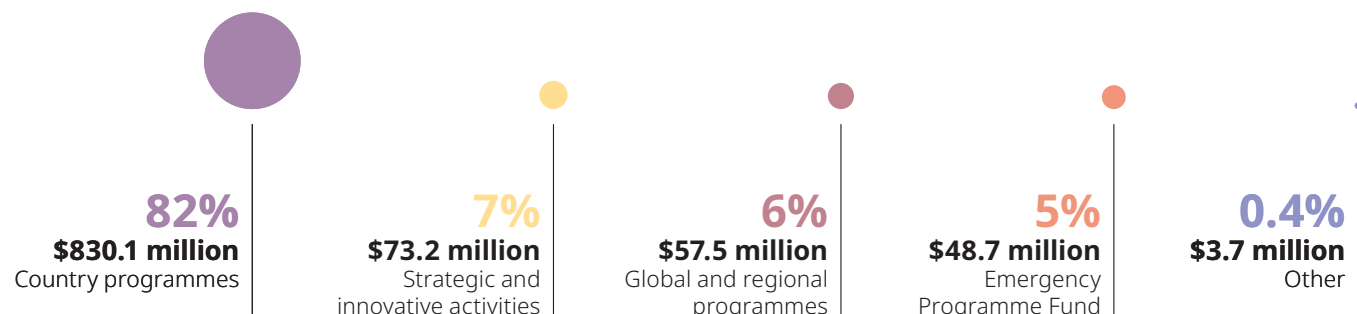




## Direct Programmes

The majority of Core Resources reach children directly, through programmes in the countries where UNICEF works, at regional level, and globally.

### Expense overview by category\*



\* Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

## Country programmes

82%  
\$830.1 million

The Country Programme Document – the multi-year strategy guiding UNICEF's programmes in a country – is the framework for Core Resources allocation and spending within countries. Developed with governments and local partners and grounded in child rights, UNICEF country programmes reflect what children in each context actually need, not what a funding stream permits. In 2025, Core Resources reached:

7

regions

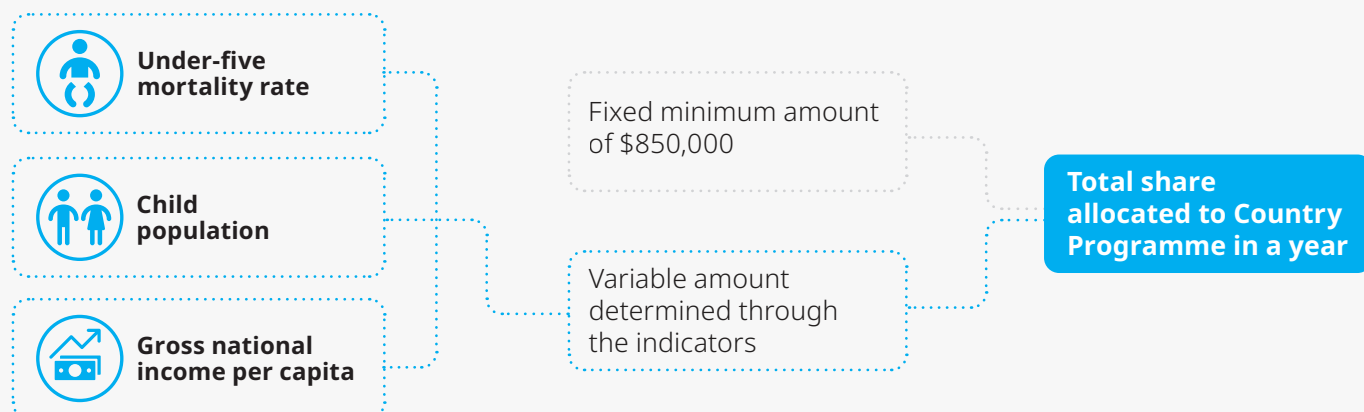
149

countries and territories

home to 2.1 billion children

The yearly allocation of Core Resources to UNICEF offices\* is equity-based. The severity of children's deprivations, demand for social services and the capacity of the country's systems to deliver these services to children guide the allocation process. All offices receive a fixed share of Core Resources as the minimum, and a variable share determined through a formula that ensures fair consideration of children's needs across the vastly different national contexts in which UNICEF operates.

### Allocation formula approved by UNICEF's executive board



Offices may also receive additional allocations for critical and unfunded priorities of the Strategic Plan 2022–2025, with a particular focus on: adolescent girls, community health and nutrition, education, or climate action.

\*UNICEF offices in low- and middle-income contexts are the primary recipients of the yearly Country Programme allocations. Offices continue to receive these allocations until the country achieves 'high income' status for two consecutive years.

# Tracing Core Resources Across the Pacific

## Where the money goes, and why it matters

The Pacific presents UNICEF with a challenge unlike any other. Fourteen island countries and territories span an area equivalent to 15 per cent of the Earth's surface – an expanse greater than Asia and Africa combined – stretching across five time zones on both sides of the International Date Line. Reaching communities across this vast geography is rarely simple. Travel to the North Pacific countries often requires multiple stopovers; Tokelau is accessible only by a two-day boat journey from Samoa; Kiribati's islands alone extend some 3.5 million square kilometres from east to west, crossing the International Date Line; and internet connectivity, even in capital cities, remains expensive and unreliable. Supply chains are among the most fragile in the world, while cyclones, earthquakes and disease outbreaks strike with little warning. In the most remote communities, distance compounds every challenge.

In 2025, UNICEF Pacific directed its Core Resources allocation within a clear strategic framework: the Multi Country Programme Document (MCPD). The MCPD is the formal agreement between UNICEF and governments across the region: it maps children's priority needs, commits offices to defined results and establishes the equitable logic that governs every investment. Core Resources are what give this commitment operational force: flexible, unearmarked funding that flows where the MCPD's evidence points, unconstrained by donor conditions. Restricted funding tends to support projects: time-bound, shaped by individual donor priorities. Core Resources enable UNICEF to sustain long-term programmes across multiple sectors simultaneously, funding the institutional capacity, technical expertise and government partnerships that no single project can build, and no donor-defined timeline can protect. Critically, when earmarked funding ends Core Resources bridge the gap: keeping programmes alive, maintaining the relationships that deliver results and ensuring that what partners have built with UNICEF is not lost between funding cycles.

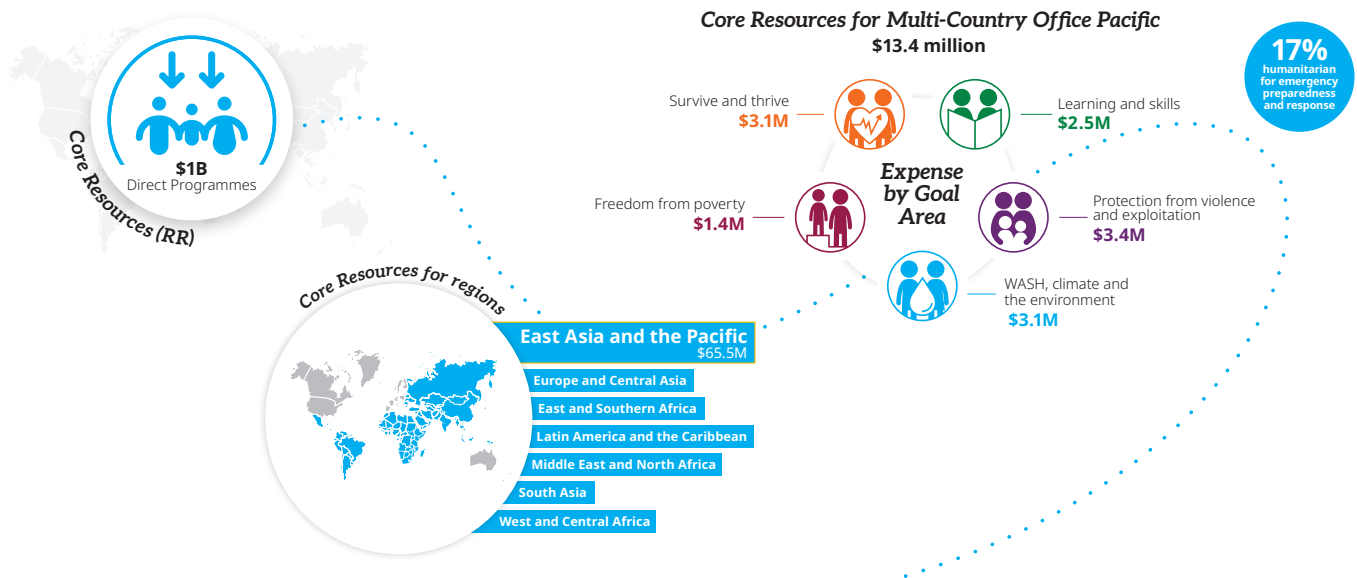
***Three island states – [Kiribati, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu](#) – are classified as least developed countries. In these contexts the predictability of Core Resources is especially critical: government systems are thinnest, external shocks hit hardest and UNICEF's ability to provide continuity depends most directly on flexible, sustained funding.***





# How We Spend Core Resources in Countries: The journey from allocation to results in the Pacific

The illustration below shows how Core Resources have moved across the Pacific region to meet children's priority needs and deliver results across every dimension of children's lives - from the water they drink and the schools they attend to the protection they deserve, the health systems that keep them alive and the social foundations their families rely on.



Core Resources are the foundation of UNICEF programming across all 14 Pacific Island countries and territories. They are spent strategically to strengthen national systems and drive long-term impact for all children.

- Partnerships with governments** to support policy implementation and service delivery
- Expert staff**, more than half of whom are Pacific Islanders, providing high-level technical advice grounded in local knowledge of communities and the situation of children
- Network of main office and five sub-offices** extending technical expertise at grassroots level across the islands
- Supplies and equipment** facilitating programme delivery, including emergency response
- On-site field travel** supporting implementing partners to plan, monitor and implement child-focused programmes



## SURVIVE AND THRIVE

**Fiji:** In response to an HIV outbreak, Core Resources supported the development and rolling out of a National Plan for Triple Elimination of Mother-To-Child Transmission of HIV, syphilis and Hepatitis B. Nearly 100 health-care workers across all divisional and sub-divisional health facilities have been trained in point-of-care testing to prevent the three infections in children. **Samoa, Tonga, Nauru, Kiribati and Tuvalu:** Emergency supplies pre-positioned with Core Resources enabled rapid deployment of 1,750 insecticide-treated nets during a dengue outbreak.



## LEARNING AND SKILLS

**The Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu:** Core Resources helped unlock the region's largest education financing stream of over \$12 million from the Global Partnership for Education to improve the quality of education at scale. **Tonga and Vanuatu:** National inclusive education policies developed with Core Resources have made it mandatory for mainstream classrooms to accommodate all learners, including children with disabilities. **Pacific states:** Pacific leaders' commitment to collectively monitor progress in early childhood development (ECD) was secured with Core Resources, accelerating implementation of 10 national ECD policies.



## PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

**Fiji:** The childcare, protection and child justice acts, developed and rolled out with Core Resources, increased the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years. Evidence on the costs of violence, produced with Core Resources, was used for policy advocacy, leveraging a 40-fold increase in the national child protection budget.



## WASH, CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Solomon Islands:** National and provincial action plans to end open defecation were developed with Core Resources, helping 52 villages achieve Open Defecation Free status and enabling approximately 7,000 people to access basic sanitation. **Fiji:** Core Resources made critical improvements in the water and sanitation situation. Through a validation of the first Rural Water Supply Services and Sanitation Master Plan, the systems for national planning, monitoring and coordination were strengthened and costed targets for achieving universal access to climate-resilient water and sanitation services were set.



## FREEDOM FROM POVERTY

**Pacific states:** National capacities for disability-inclusive planning were significantly strengthened using Core Resources to produce a disability situation analysis with national stakeholders across 10 states. **Fiji and Samoa:** Evidence-based policy advocacy with Core Resources secured the adoption of Universal Child Benefit schemes to tackle child poverty, with implementation scheduled to start in fiscal year 2026/2027.

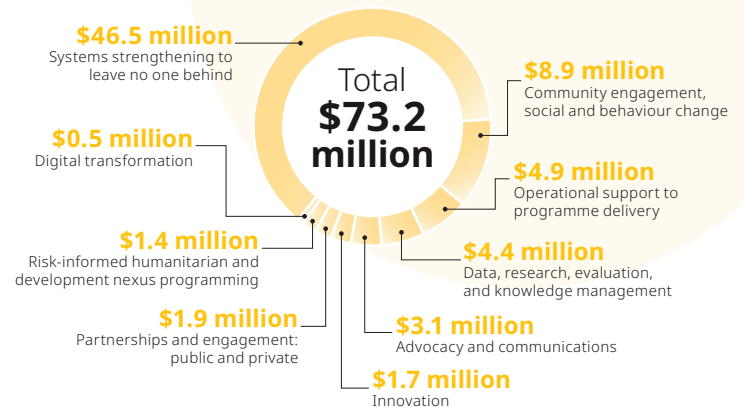
## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

Core Resources enabled rapid and coordinated response to 14 emergencies across the Pacific region in 2025. **Vanuatu:** Following a 7.3 magnitude earthquake, Core Resources restored access to water for 20,000 people, and supported learning continuity throughout the emergency through 55 temporary learning spaces and the provision of education supplies to nearly 3,400 children.

# Strategic and Innovative Activities

7%  
\$73.2 million

Core resources go further than targeting only known problems. A dedicated portion is allocated by UNICEF's Executive Director – under a mandate from the Executive Board – to strategic and innovative activities: initiatives that test new approaches, open new areas of programming, and create the evidence base for what comes next. This is how UNICEF uses the flexibility of Core Resources not just to sustain what works, but also to discover what works better to meet the diverse and evolving needs of children.



## Selection of ongoing multi-year initiatives supported with Core Resources through the Strategic and Innovative Activities Fund for Children



**\$1.8 million** funds the Joint UNICEF and Africa Centres for Disease Control Action Plan for stronger primary health-care systems, public health emergency preparedness and response.



**\$5.0 million** funds the foundational Programme to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, an emerging area of programming for children, with the goal to expand to an additional 20 countries from the current 4 countries.



**\$5.8 million** funds the prevention of new cases of HIV and support for pregnant and parenting adolescent girls in 11 African countries.



**\$10.0 million** funds expansion, professionalization and sustainable financing of the 16,000-strong social service workforce for child protection across 12 countries.



**\$10.0 million** funds UNICEF's work with national governments in 14 countries to increase the proportion of girls enrolling, attending and completing secondary school, and to improve learning and life outcomes.



**\$15.0 million** funds the rolling out of UNICEF's Digital Education Strategy in 18 countries leveraging AI, digital tools and other innovative approaches to strengthen education systems and improve learning outcomes for children.



**\$10.0 million** funds technical support to 21 lower- and middle-income countries to introduce HPV vaccination, vaccinate adolescent girls aged 9–14 years, and deliver complementary girl-centred interventions.



**\$0.5 million** funds new evidence on AI and children, to understand the digital skills children need to thrive in an AI world and how these can be taught in formal and informal settings.



**\$11.0 million** funds a second phase of UNICEF's multi-sectoral initiative to catalyse national and other investments to scale up the community health and nutrition workforce and increase primary health-care system resilience in an additional 41 countries.



**\$3.2 million** funds the establishment of UNICEF's Centres of Excellence, which are a significant strategic transformation, strengthening the organization's capacity to provide impactful technical assistance with a focus on children to UNICEF offices and governments.



# Asking the Question No One Else Was Asking

How Core Resources are building the evidence base that will define children's digital futures.

When the world began grappling with what artificial intelligence means for children, UNICEF had already done the thinking. Core Resources funded the strategy and evidence base that gave UNICEF a clear framework on AI and children at a moment when governments, the private sector, and civil society were still working out what questions to ask.

UNICEF is now building the next layer of that evidence by going to the children and young people so often overlooked in AI discussions. In consultations across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Mozambique, Rwanda and Senegal, children shared that they are interested not just in technical AI mastery, but in a far broader suite of competencies including evaluating information, skills related to privacy, and knowing how to moderate the role that AI plays in their lives. This is in a context where they worry about dependency, job loss, and the trustworthiness of AI tools.

A \$500,000 investment from the 7 per cent set-aside mechanism is funding UNICEF's Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti to build the evidence required to address those demand: what skills children need in an AI world, and how those skills can be taught where the need is greatest and the existing evidence thinnest. Alongside a global synthesis of the knowledge base and implementation studies in Lebanon and Bangladesh, the work includes direct consultations with children across five African countries, generating comparative, child-centred evidence.

*“AI is in the end a tool that helps me do something. But I won't let it be a large part of my life.”*

— **Adolescent boy**, Egypt

One in five people in low-income countries use the internet. Those countries account for only 1 per cent of global generative AI traffic. Without evidence to build children's AI literacy in low-resource settings, the divide between those who shape the AI world and those it shapes will widen precisely where it already cuts deepest. The full findings will be published in July 2026. Core Resources made it possible for UNICEF to lead.



**\$500,000**

7 per cent set-aside investment from Core Resources



**200+**

**digital learning programmes** reviewed



**1%**

**of global generative AI traffic** from low-income countries



**97**

**children** consulted across 5 African countries



**230M**

**jobs** in sub-Saharan Africa requiring digital skills by 2030



# Global and Regional Programmes

6% ●  
\$57.5 million

Not all of UNICEF's programme work for children happens in country offices. Core Resources also fund global and regional programmes implemented by UNICEF's global divisions and regional offices to advance the implementation of the Strategic Plan. These programmes support the development and dissemination of global and regional public goods, including monitoring and analysis of children's situations for global accountability. They strengthen relevant global and regional policy and coordination systems, and contribute to the global evidence base and normative standards.

## GLOBAL DIVISIONS



## REGIONAL OFFICES



East Asia and the Pacific



Eastern and Southern Africa



Europe and Central Asia



Latin America and the Caribbean



Middle East and North Africa



South Asia



West and Central Africa



## From findings to change

The Evaluation Office leads UNICEF's global evaluation function, providing rigorous and impartial assessments of the organization's performance, funded in part through Core Resources.

In 2025, this effort resulted in an evaluation of UNICEF's early childhood development and education programming spanning 2018 to 2023. The findings were significant: UNICEF's support to national governments contributed to a 77 per cent increase in the number of countries developing multisectoral approaches to children's needs in their earliest years, from 47 countries to 83.

It also found that progress had been uneven. Children under two, those in remote areas and those raised by adolescent parents remained harder to reach. As a result, the evaluation recommended stronger systems for tracking child developmental outcomes, parenting practices and the work of frontline workers.

UNICEF is currently implementing a series of actions in response, set out in the formal Evaluation Management Response, a process that connects independent findings to institutional change.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **Evaluation of UNICEF's early childhood development and education programming**



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **UNICEF's Management Response to the Evaluation**

**Uganda.** A mother holds her baby with joy and love during a meeting of play at the Nakwang Early Childhood Development (ECD) lab. The ECD play labs are transforming the early childhood experience by nurturing cognitive, emotional and social skills in a region where access to quality early education has long been limited.

# Emergency Programme Fund

5% ●  
\$48.7 million

When a sudden-onset emergency strikes, the first 48 hours are decisive. Core Resources are what UNICEF deploys in that window – before earmarked funding is mobilized, before donor appeals are launched and before the full scale of the crisis is clear. This rapid response is made possible through the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF), a revolving mechanism that places financing in the hands of country offices at the moment it is needed most, and is replenished as other contributions follow.

In 2025, the EPF provided \$69.8 million in Core Resources to 25 UNICEF offices at regional and country levels, supporting immediate responses to sudden-onset emergencies and benefiting vulnerable children and families worldwide, including those affected by armed conflict and displacement. More than 70 per cent of EPF funding went to three regions: South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Eastern and Southern Africa.

## EPF 2025 allocations by regions\*

28%  
South Asia



In **South Asia**, EPF funded essential health and nutrition services, including ready-to-use therapeutic feeding (RUTF) supplies in Afghanistan; the Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh; and scaling up the Cyclone Ditwah response in Sri Lanka.

22%  
Middle East and North Africa



In the **Middle East and North Africa**, EPF funded the delivery of lifesaving services to children and families in famine-affected and conflict-affected areas in the Sudan.

22%  
Eastern and Southern Africa



In **Eastern and Southern Africa**, EPF funded the refugee responses in Burundi and Uganda, and the response to disease outbreaks, including in Angola, Ethiopia, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania.

11%  
West and Central Africa



In **West and Central Africa**, EPF funded the humanitarian response to the protracted crises in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad.

10%  
Latin America and the Caribbean



In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, EPF funded the humanitarian response to the protected crises in Haiti and the impact of Hurricane Melissa on Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti.

7%  
East Asia and the Pacific



In **East Asia and the Pacific**, EPF funded the emergency response to the earthquake in Myanmar.

\*Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.



## The Sudan: Nutrition funding that could not wait

In 2025, across the five Darfur states, more than 5 million children were living under extremely challenging circumstances. Families had been displaced repeatedly, often with nothing. In communities cut off from health care and food, children were bearing the heaviest weight of the war. In some areas of North Darfur, Global Acute Malnutrition rates exceeded 50 per cent, placing them at famine and catastrophic levels – among the most severe hunger recorded anywhere in the world.

Reaching those children required a response that was both ambitious and fast. Thirty-three localities were identified for targeted interventions, most in active conflict zones across Darfur and Kordofan, where shifting frontlines and repeated displacement defined the operating environment.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the photo essay **Wasting in their sight**

*“The crisis is deeper than it was 20 years ago, and this time the world is not watching. In the Sudan, millions of children are paying the price with their health, their futures and their lives. Every day without flexible, sustained funding is a day we cannot get back.”*

— **Sheldon Yett**, UNICEF Representative, Sudan

### People at Tawila locality (North Darfur) as internal displacement intensified

**95,520**  
April 2023

**238,084**  
March 2025

**652,079**  
September 2025

Supplies entered through the eastern port or were prepositioned in Chad for cross-border delivery into the hardest-to-reach areas. When the Al Fasher and Zamzam camp crisis escalated, UNICEF leveraged NGO partners already on the ground to establish early identification pipelines, Outpatient Therapeutic Programme (OTP) supply chains and preventive interventions at transit and reception sites. Mobilizing at this scale requires cash before donor contributions are confirmed.

UNICEF's 2025 humanitarian appeal for the Sudan closed the year just 49 per cent funded – and at the point the Emergency Programme Fund (EPF) was mobilized, the gap was wider still. This shortfall defined the operating environment the EPF was designed to address: needs were confirmed, but financing had not yet been secured.

The Sudan Country Office received US\$4.5 million from the EPF to deliver lifesaving services to children and families in famine-affected areas. Above all this allocation delivered what earmarked funding could not – resources without restriction or delay to be used where it was needed most.

### Darfur and Kordofan

**720,000**

children screened in the Integrated Nutrition Campaign round

**580,000+**

children receive Vitamin A supplementation, crucial for their growth

**\$4.5 million**  
in Emergency Programme Fund financing, drawn from Core Resources, made the response possible

The EPF reduced the interval between the evidence base and the financing that had not yet arrived. In a crisis accelerating at this pace, this interval determined how many children could be reached (and for how many children it would be too late).

## Other

Financial adjustments to country programmes in response to currency fluctuations or other economic factors.

**0.4%·**  
**\$3.7 million**

# How We Spend Core Resources on Priorities for Children Around the World

A child's life does not divide neatly into sectors. Their health depends on their nutrition. Their education depends on their safety. Their future depends on all of it at once. Core Resources follow that logic, spanning all five Goal Areas of UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and all seven regions where UNICEF works, because childhood itself is cross-sectoral in a way that earmarked funding can never fully be. Investing in Core Resources is a clear way to help UNICEF work for every child, everywhere.

## Expense overview by goal area



**Survive and thrive**  
**\$345.0 million**  
**34%**



**Learning and skills**  
**\$181.4 million**  
**18%**



**Protection from violence and exploitation**  
**\$180.3 million**  
**18%**



**WASH, climate and the environment**  
**\$184.0 million**  
**18%**



**Freedom from poverty**  
**\$122.4 million**  
**12%**



**Global**  
**\$26.6 million**  
**30% humanitarian**

**57%**  
 spent in least developed countries

**58%**  
 spent in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Europe and Central Asia**  
**\$39.0 million**  
**9% humanitarian**

**Middle East and North Africa**  
**\$89.0 million**  
**46% humanitarian**

**West and Central Africa**  
**\$321.1 million**  
**34% humanitarian**

**Latin America and the Caribbean**  
**\$60.8 million**  
**30% humanitarian**



**Myanmar** In one of the world's most heavily mined countries, Core Resources reached nearly 410,300 people with explosive ordnance risk education in 2025, helping protect children from the grave violations of killing and maiming. For 143 survivors of maiming, Core Resources funded comprehensive care: medical treatment, psychosocial support and rehabilitation.



**Nicaragua** Nearly 15,500 community health workers trained and equipped through Core Resources reached 220,000 children with health services in 2025. Coverage for children with disabilities grew by 20 per cent. Child mortality has fallen by 25 per cent since 2020.



**Nigeria** Child marriage has declined by one-third since 2003. Core Resources are the foundation for continuing that progress: they sustain community-based child protection systems that identify girls at risk and shift harmful social norms, and the research capacity to drive evidence-based behaviour change. In 2025 alone, this infrastructure mobilized 400,000 people to protect girls.





**The Sudan** When conflict stripped Darfur and Kordofan of almost every other source of humanitarian funding, Core Resources filled the gap. They enabled the screening of 720,000 children for acute malnutrition and delivered Vitamin A supplementation – critical to child growth and survival – to 580,000 more.



**The Syrian Arab Republic** After 14 years without a national school-based needs assessment, Core Resources delivered the data Syria's education system urgently needed. They also helped institutionalize Safe Schools across 286 schools in 12 governorates, producing measurable reductions in school violence and meaningful improvements in the learning environment.



**United Republic of Tanzania** Since 2010, national sanitation coverage in Tanzania has more than tripled. Core Resources accelerated that progress through a new delivery model now scaled up across the country, bringing verified open defecation-free status to 132 communities and improving access to sanitation for over 350,300 people in 2025 alone.



**Pacific** In Fiji, Core Resources shaped a generation of child protection law. The Childcare, Protection and Child Justice acts raised the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years. New evidence on the costs of violence secured a 40-fold increase in domestic finance for child protection. Across the Pacific islands, Core Resources sustained UNICEF's core mandate through policy, normative and data work, while maintaining capacity to respond to recurrent emergencies.



**Caribbean** When Hurricane Melissa made landfall in Jamaica as a Category 5 storm, UNICEF was already responding. An Emergency Programme Fund loan of \$2 million, approved hours before landfall, enabled the delivery of emergency supplies to 190,000 people. Across the Caribbean, Core Resources and the Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund had built the standing capacity.

East Asia and the Pacific  
**\$65.5 million**  
**23% humanitarian**

East and Southern Africa  
**\$269.1 million**  
**28% humanitarian**

South Asia  
**\$142.0 million**  
**25% humanitarian**

**30%**  
spent on  
humanitarian  
action



**Global** In Kyrgyzstan, Core Resources helped transform child poverty policy: the Bala Yrsky universal child benefit is now a permanent government commitment of \$73 million a year, delivering monthly cash transfers to 450,000 children aged 0–3 – a 1,014-fold return on UNICEF's investment. Across a further 10 countries, from Asia to Latin America, Core Resources drove comparable advances in mobilising domestic finance for children.



**Global** Core Resources have enabled UNICEF to support a sustained response to the HIV epidemic in children and adolescents. A 7 per cent Core Resources set-aside has driven targeted responses for adolescent girls, who now account for the majority of new HIV infections among adolescents, contributing to a nearly 20 per cent decline in new infections since 2020.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **Impact Companion**: country and programme stories showing how Core Resources have changed children's lives.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **UNICEF's Data Companion and Scorecard** for the full scope of results for children to which Core Resources contributes.

This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.



## Institutional Budget

Programmes do not deliver themselves. Behind every result for children is an organization with the capacity for effective, results-based programme delivery. Core Resources invested in UNICEF's institutional budget are what sustain that capacity, the infrastructure beneath the impact that donors rarely see but that every programme depends on. These are investments essential to achieving results, rather than traditional administrative overhead.

In 2025, nearly three quarters of Core Resources in the institutional budget was invested in Development Effectiveness. Central to Development Effectiveness is UNICEF's technical excellence: the global expertise shaping policy and programmes for children, the unparalleled logistics network ensuring essential supplies can reach children in crisis without a delay and the infrastructure enabling effective humanitarian action the moment it is needed. The distinction matters. Reaching children and reaching them well are not the same thing, and Core Resources are what fund the difference.

In 2025,  
**Development Effectiveness** accounted for **74 per cent** of total spending under the Institutional budget

### Development effectiveness



Technical excellence in **policy and programmes**



Technical excellence in **procurement and management of supplies**



Technical excellence in **humanitarian action**

### The oversight that earns trust

Donor trust is not given unconditionally. It is earned, and sustained through strong oversight, accountability and assurance mechanisms that hold the organization to account regardless of who is watching. Core Resources fund the functions that do precisely that.

The Internal Audit function of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations provides independent assurance that resources are being used as intended. The Investigations function investigates when they are not. In 2025, the internal audit function completed 26 internal audits, designed to strengthen governance, risk management and internal controls across UNICEF. That assurance is itself independently verified. An External Quality Assessment completed in 2025 rated UNICEF's independent audit function at "generally conforms" – top available rating – against the Global Standards and Code of Ethics of the Institute of Internal Auditors. It confirms what partners need to know: that the function operates with professional independence, that its objective findings carry genuine assurance value, and that UNICEF's oversight framework meets international best practice.





# The Foundation of UNICEF's Humanitarian Action

How Core Resources sustain UNICEF's humanitarian action and global support for children in the most complex and high-threat environments.

In 2025, nearly 213 million children needed humanitarian assistance, as UNICEF responded to 414 crises worldwide, including in conflict zones. With almost half of all child deaths happening in humanitarian settings, this work is critical to children's survival.

Behind every one of those responses, UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) is driving UNICEF's humanitarian action including high-level diplomacy for the protection of civilians, including children, and equipping field teams and partners to stay and deliver in the most dangerous environments on earth. This capacity does not belong to any single crisis. It cannot be earmarked to any single programme. Core Resources provide the stable foundation on which it rests, and on which the Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund and earmarked contributions can operate.



## Humanitarian diplomacy

**6** contextual and thematic interventions at the United Nations Security Council in 2025

**5** presidential statements and resolutions advancing the rights of children affected by conflict

**14** sets of key messages shared with Member States ahead of Security Council sessions

**Country-level humanitarian negotiations** to protect children and facilitate access to hard-to-reach areas

EMOPS' global coordination hub ensures accountability for a timely and effective response, based on humanitarian principles, focused on critical multi-sectoral expertise, such as nutrition, protection, education, and water, sanitation and hygiene. It prioritizes the children most in need, including those in the areas hardest to reach. Furthermore, it works with Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) partners, leading the global Education, Nutrition and WASH clusters – and child protection capacities in the Protection cluster.

## Global coordination hub

**48-hour deployment target** from crisis declaration, backed by a 24/7 Operations Centre managing 30 or more simultaneous emergencies

**11 to 8 cluster system** simplified under UNICEF's co-leadership, to improve coordination on the ground

**278 surge deployments** across 23 countries, with teams spending 86 per cent of their working time in the field

**Localization**  
**58 per cent of UNICEF-led or co-led clusters** had co-leadership and co-coordination arrangements with local and national actors (as of 2025)



**The humanitarian system is undergoing significant reform under the Humanitarian Reset.** Core Resources facilitate UNICEF's engagement and thought leadership, ensuring reform efforts place children, and the systems that protect them, at the centre of humanitarian action.



## Special Purpose Budget

Core Resources invested in private sector fundraising and partnerships do something that programme budgets alone cannot: they grow the overall pool of resources available for children. In 2025, every dollar of Core Resources invested in this way returned \$11.8 in private sector funding for UNICEF programmes.



UNICEF mobilized **\$2.2 billion** private sector funding for children in 2025



For every **\$1** core resources invested in private sector fundraising and partnerships\* UNICEF raised **\$11.8** from the private sector for UNICEF programmes for children

The 11.8-fold return captures only what flows directly to UNICEF programmes. Core Resources also fund UNICEF's innovative finance work: using the organization's convening power and technical credibility to unlock financing for children that sits entirely outside traditional aid flows.

### Innovative Finance: Swapping debt for impact

Across developing countries, mounting debt is forcing governments to divert resources away from essential services for children. Forty-five countries now spend more on debt interest than on health, and 22 spend more on interest than on education. The consequences are generational: children inherit compromised futures as a result of debt incurred before they were born. Innovative finance mechanisms offer one way to break this pattern, and UNICEF's capacity to engage with them is becoming central to its role as a development partner.

In December 2024, the Government of Egypt finalized a bilateral debt swap agreement with Germany's KfW Development Bank, redirecting €29 million from debt servicing to development spending. KfW identified UNICEF as a partner of choice based on its technical expertise across the social sectors and its track record in managing large-scale programmes aligned with national priorities. UNICEF and WFP jointly developed a technical proposal spanning health, education and nutrition, and UNICEF received €14.5 million to implement priority programmes in underserved communities, including those affected by displacement and migration, from 2025. Closing the agreement required sustained in-country engagement with Egypt's Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the Central Bank and multiple line ministries. Legal and operational teams from UNICEF headquarters and the regional office navigated the procedural and compliance complexity the transaction demanded.

### Programme impact to date

**200,000**

**students** reached with inclusive education and life skills across 389 schools

**70-73%**

**reading proficiency rate** reached through the National Arabic Literacy Programme

**838**

**health-care workers trained** across 318 targeted facilities strengthening health and nutrition systems

**20,000**

**caregivers** reached through community engagements advancing social cohesion and positive parenting among vulnerable and host populations



\*In 2025, UNICEF spent \$186 million of Core Resources for private sector fundraising and partnerships along with \$80 million other resources leveraged with Core Resources and earmarked for initiatives scaling up private sector fundraising and partnerships.



***This agreement is **UNICEF's Innovative Finance for Children strategy in action:** existing financial structures applied in new ways to unlock resources where traditional funding alone cannot keep pace.***

UNICEF's ability to participate, and to be selected, rested on capacity built well before the opportunity arose: the technical credibility and institutional relationships sustained through Core Resources. Egypt is now a model for other country contexts. This pipeline exists because the underlying capacity does.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **The State of the World's Children 2025 report.**



# A Public Sector Perspective on Giving to Core Resources

## Spain: Investing in the years that shape everything

In 2025, as a number of governments reduced their commitments to official development assistance, we increased ours. For the fourth consecutive year, Spain has strengthened its contribution to UNICEF's Core Resources. That is a choice, and it is a deliberate one.

Flexible, unrestricted funding is among the most powerful instruments available to the multilateral system. Reducing the ties attached to our investment does not reduce accountability; it increases efficiency. UNICEF can deploy resources to the front line of a crisis before a new programme cycle is agreed. It can pursue results across systems and borders, not only within the boundaries a specific programme permits. The difference is strategic, and for children in the most fragile contexts, it is often decisive.

Defending children's rights is a commitment to the present and the future. For the Spanish Cooperation, the protection of promotion of children's rights are the centre of our sustainable development policies and our international cooperation. The well-being of those children is not incidental to our vision of inclusive development. It is the ground on which everything else is built. Just and resilient societies are built in childhood, and Spain's investment in Core Resources reflects our understanding of that fact.

When we protect the rights of a child, we are not only changing their life. We are transforming the future we share. Spain's commitment to UNICEF's work and to meaningfully contributing to its Core Resources is grounded in that conviction, and we intend to sustain it.

*"In 2025, as a number of governments reduced their commitments to official development assistance, we increased ours. For the fourth consecutive year, Spain has strengthened its contribution to UNICEF's Core Resources. That is a choice, and it is a deliberate one. It does not mean less accountability; it means greater efficiency. We want UNICEF core mandates to be preserved and implemented, and we want to contribute to its ability to act fast and strategically. This is the practical value of Core Resources, and it is a commitment Spain intends to keep."*



– **Eva Granados**,  
Secretary of State for  
International Cooperation



Scan the QR code  
or click on the  
image to read  
Eva Granados's  
full essay in  
the **Partner  
Companion**.



# A Private Sector Perspective on Giving to Core Resources

## What flexibility makes possible

UNICEF's private sector partners give for different reasons. Yet, we are seeing many of our partners come to the same conclusion year on year: flexible, unrestricted funding is what holds the rest of their support together. The full accounts appear in the Partner Companion.

### The philanthropists

The members of UNICEF's International Council expected that giving without conditions would mean giving up visibility. They found the reverse. Unrestricted giving, they say, is what brought them closer to the work, through field visits and conversations with the country teams spending the funding.



*"I think giving unrestricted funding gives us greater access versus restricted funding."*

– **Marimo Berk**, International Council member

### The companies

For UNICEF's corporate partners, the question is how to invest in children in a way that stays credible and material whatever the regulatory weather. The companies that have gone furthest build their partnerships in layers, with targeted and thematic funding resting on a foundation of Core Resources, the unrestricted layer that keeps UNICEF present and ready.



*"Core Resources make long-term impact possible by enabling flexibility to act quickly. We believe that trust and steady support create the foundations for reliable, scalable responses where they matter most."*

– **Ulf Schawohl**, Senior Managing Director Regulatory Affairs & Sustainability, Hapag-Lloyd

### The individuals

Individual giving is the single largest source of UNICEF's Core Resources. The millions of people who gave in 2025, across dozens of countries and currencies, gave it without conditions, letting UNICEF move to where the need is greatest rather than where funding happens to be directed. Each gift, of any size, is also a signal to others weighing where to place their own trust.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **Partner Companion**: recognition and perspectives from the partners whose sustained investment makes this work possible.



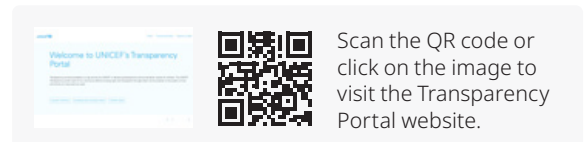
# How We Champion Transparency with Core Resources

UNICEF values the trust that our donors and partners have placed in us. Equally, we provide unparalleled transparency and accountability to our partners, and the wider public. We are proud to share:

- We are in the top 10 out of 50 organizations reviewed by the International Aid Transparency Initiative for our transparency in 2024 and have a perfect score for budgets and finance
- As part of the International Aid Transparency Initiative, we have achieved an industry-leading 99 per cent data publishing rate
- We provide real-time and public financial and results insights on UNICEF's programmes for children worldwide on the Transparency Portal



100 per cent of Core Resources are spent to advance UNICEF's mission for children worldwide. Our spending is firmly grounded in the principles of transparency and accountability, maximizing what goes to programmes for children.



## How much of Core Resources were spent on programmes\* for children in 2025?



Programmes includes direct programmes and technical excellence for policy and programmes, procurement and management of supplies, and humanitarian action. The remaining 17 per cent is spent on programmatic enablers such as United Nations coordination to achieve the SDGs, the management of resources for results, and the mobilization of new funding, including innovative finance for children.

### Core Resources reporting helps companies meet ESG goals while demonstrating real, long-term impact

This funding forms the foundation for UNICEF to strengthen systems – from health to education to water – that children and communities depend on. When those systems are resilient, societies are better able to withstand shocks like conflict, climate change and pandemics.

UNICEF is deeply committed to the SDGs, and contributes to 12 of the 17 goals. An investment in Core Resources reflects a commitment to shared global priorities and systemic progress for children. Results are reported annually, demonstrating the short-, medium- and long-term change UNICEF delivers every day for children around the world.

Our Core Resources Report and companion publications offer clear, credible and consistent insights that support ESG reporting, even when contributions are not linked to a specific initiative.

Every dollar contributes to stronger systems, greater equity and lasting change. This is value worth showcasing.



\*This figure shows combined expenditure of Direct Programmes and Development Effectiveness to demonstrate the total Core Resources spent on programmes for children in 2025.



# About UNICEF

We are the world's largest children's organization, an agency of the United Nations, and 100 per cent voluntarily funded. Mandated at the highest levels, we ensure that children and adolescents are protected, healthy, and educated. We have a presence in over 190 countries and territories, working during times of peace and stability and when emergency strikes. We partner with national governments and local communities, other United Nations agencies and NGO partners, and the public and private sectors to achieve our mission to create a better future for children and adolescents.

Importantly, UNICEF provides support to children from before birth all the way through to adolescence. Thus, please note that within this report the terms "children" and "childhood" encompass the full spectrum of a child's life, up to age 18.



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## Cover

In Kotri village in Rajasthan, Gopal is seen playing joyfully with his one-year-old daughter Khushi outside their home. In a community where safe water now reaches households through the Jal Jeevan Mission, families like Gopal's are experiencing more than convenience. With reduced daily burdens, parents have more time to nurture, play, and care for their children.

## Credits

Writers and producers: BRIDGE Team

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## Resources

### For more information:

If you have questions or want to know more about the work of UNICEF, please contact us at [rrreport@unicef.org](mailto:rrreport@unicef.org).



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read the **Annual Report**: the full account of income, allocation and UNICEF's results in 2025.



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