

# UNICEF SOMALIA 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



## SITUATION ANALYSIS



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The humanitarian situation in Somalia in 2024 continued to be highly complex and challenging, driven by multiple, overlapping crises, including armed conflict, extreme weather shocks, and disease outbreaks. Earlier in the year, the El Niño-induced floods severely impacted 2.4 million people, including 1.5 million children, leading to massive displacement, and exacerbating already high levels of acute malnutrition and overwhelming fragile healthcare systems. Compounding the crisis, persistent drought conditions due to La Niña, coupled with anticipated failed Deyr rains in late 2024, are forecasted to continue into 2025, further heightening food insecurity and water scarcity, especially in the Central and Southern regions.

Armed conflicts and military operations, particularly against the non-state armed group Al-Shabaab (AS), led to significant displacement, damage to critical infrastructure, consequently causing, among others, outbreaks of disease such as cholera, which infected around 19,000 people in 2024. Clan disputes and localized violence, particularly in south-central Somalia (Galmudug, Hirshabelle, Southwest State, Jubaland, and Banadir), further exacerbated humanitarian needs. Furthermore, conflict and political instability in contested regions like Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (proclaimed SSC-Khatumo) continued to fuel displacement and restrict humanitarian access, leaving vulnerable populations without essential services.

In 2024, Somalia was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Having the decades-long arms embargo lifted in December 2023 and pushing forward to liberate areas controlled by AS, the country negotiated the orderly process of withdrawing and closing the UN and African Union peacekeeping operations. Overlapping security challenges coupled with critical transitions, including the shift from the African Union Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission (AUSSOM), the transition from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) to the United Nations Transitional Assistance Mission (UNTMIS) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) significantly impacted humanitarian operations, particularly UNICEF's ability to deliver services in hard-to-reach (H2R) areas. The drawdown of ATMIS forces and the subsequent transition to AUSSOM reduced the availability of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys, compelling UNICEF and other actors to explore alternative security solutions, such as community-

based approaches and partnerships with private security providers.

After averting a famine and achieving debt relief in late 2023, Somalia is developing the next national development plan, the National Transformation Plan (NTP) 2025-2029. During 2024, government, private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners engaged in the preparations of the NTP, which aims to deliver a measurable impact to citizens, fostering growth through accountability and public-private collaborations. The NTP aims to produce a quantum leap from the current development trajectory to achieve growth rates of 6-8 per cent and reach a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$22.1 billion in 2029 from US\$12.8 billion in 2024 and a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of US\$981 from US\$667. Having received US\$4.5 billion in debt relief from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and other creditors, the country leadership pushed forward in 2024 a comprehensive long-term vision and medium-term development plan with the goal to change the course of Somalia for decades to go.



Approximately 53 per cent of Somalia's population is under 18 years old, which is both an opportunity for economic development and a challenge for the provision of social services. The nation ranks low on the International Human Development Index. In 2024, UNICEF provided support to the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS) to conduct the most recent analysis of multidimensional child poverty using the 2022 integrated household budget survey data. The analysis confirmed an anticipated rise in child poverty from 82.2 per cent in 2022 to 97 per cent in 2024. Much remains unknown about Somalia's progress towards the 48 child-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, and the latest (2022) Voluntary National Review report suggests weak SDG progress coordination has challenged measurement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development advancement. UNICEF is supporting the Government to implement a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 7 that will contribute 40 per cent of SDG indicator data, covering six key child rights sectors and other cross-cutting areas, and provide baselines for the National Transformation Plan, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the next UNICEF Country Programme (2026-2030).

The under-five mortality rate stands at 106 deaths per 1,000 live births, with 1.3 million zero-dose children lacking vaccinations, contributing to outbreaks of diseases like measles and cholera. Nutritional issues are prevalent, with 18 per cent of children under five stunted and 63 per cent living in severe food poverty. There was notable progress on access to basic water services, as access increased from a mere 30 per cent (JMP) in 2004 to 71 per cent (UNICEF WASH Needs Assessment) in 2024. However, only 39 per cent of the population have access to basic sanitation facilities, a decline from previous years. There is a need to cross 'the last mile' and reach the 29 per cent of the population that still does not have access, most notably in rural areas. Successes in basic water coverage can now be translated into elaborating and implementing a safely managed water service strategy, the last step of the SDG water ladder.


In terms of sanitation, progress has been made in the elimination of open defecation as national rates have decreased from 51 per cent in 2004 to 16 per cent in 2024. Improvements in basic sanitation have, however, been only marginal as coverage only increased from 23 per cent in 2004

to 39 per cent in 2024. It also seems that coverage stagnated from 38 per cent in 2020 to 39 per cent in 2024, which indicates that gains in sanitation are generally offset by population growth. These numbers generally mean that communities are halting the harmful practice of open defecation but are not 'moving up' the sanitation ladder to basic access. There is therefore a need to design and scale up a workable model for basic sanitation, most notably in rural areas. Progress during 2024, albeit partially, continues to be visible.

The primary gross enrollment rate is only 33.8 per cent, and 45 per cent of children aged 6 to 13 have never attended school. Children with disabilities face greater educational barriers, such as community misconceptions, insufficient teacher capacity and inaccessible infrastructure. Child protection issues are critical, including child marriage, gender-based violence and the need to develop juvenile justice systems and birth registration. According to the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting co-chaired by UNICEF and UNSOM, between January and September 2024, 1,946 grave violations against children were documented, impacting 1,478 children (1,057 boys 421 girls), This includes recruitment and use, sexual violence, abduction, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. Ninety-nine per cent of girls and women aged 15–49 years have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), while 34 per cent of females are married by age 18.

60 per cent of children may experience multidimensional poverty, and only 11 per cent have access to a social protection programme. The Gender Inequality Index is notably high at 0.776, while 11.7 per cent of the adult population lives with disabilities. Somalia ranks near the top of most at-risk countries (4 /163) on the Children's Climate Risk Index. The synthesis underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address these multifaceted challenges and improve the rights and well-being of Somali children.

## MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND UNICEF'S CONTRIBUTION



In support of the SDG and the 2030 Agenda progress, UNICEF contributions to results for children in 2024 were guided by the UNICEF Somalia Country Programme (2021–2025) and fully aligned with the Somalia UNSDCF (2021–2025) and national priorities, including the Somalia National Development Plan 9 (2020–2024).



## Goal 1: Survive and Thrive

Through comprehensive efforts, UNICEF has made substantial progress in improving health outcomes for vulnerable communities in Somalia, particularly for mothers and children, despite the challenging context. In 2024, UNICEF made significant strides in maternal and child survival, focusing on advocacy, strategy development, service delivery, and strengthening resilient health systems.

Advocacy and strategy efforts were ramped up, with UNICEF and WHO leading initiatives such as the launch of the Somalia Immunization and Polio Eradication (SIPE) Task Force and the high-level Forum on Child Survival. The Prime Minister's involvement was pivotal, launching SIPE and the high-level Forum on Child Survival, which focused on reducing child mortality.

For maternal health, the proportion of pregnant women delivering with skilled birth attendance slightly decreased from 46 per cent in 2023 to 43 per cent in 2024. However, antenatal care improved significantly, from 82 per cent in 2023 to 92 per cent of pregnant women receiving at least one antenatal care service in 2024. The proportion of pregnant women completing four recommended visits slightly increased from 31 per cent to 32 per cent. In terms of child health and immunization, coverage for the third dose of DTP vaccines rose to 82 per cent in 2024 from 81 per cent in 2023. Measles vaccination increased to 78 per cent from 75 per cent, though still below the target of 81 per cent. The introduction of PCV-13 and Rotavirus vaccines is expected to significantly reduce under-5 mortality.

UNICEF supported the expansion of the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) to 200 facilities, with 78 per cent offering nutrition services. Approximately 7.5 per cent of outpatient consultations reported in the District Health Information System (DHIS2) were in UNICEF-supported facilities.

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In 2024, UNICEF contributed to notable improvements in malaria and HIV support. Malaria treatment coverage marginally increased, with 92 per cent of cases receiving first-line treatment in 2024, up from 91 per cent in 2023. HIV services were integrated into 100 facilities, though the proportion of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving ART decreased from 37 per cent in 2023 to 32 per cent in 2024.

UNICEF also supported the development of the Social and Behaviour Change Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn Child and Adolescent Health strategy, linked to the RMNCAH strategy launched in 2024. These strategies aim to expand access to quality RMNCAH services and promote key health behaviours.

In response to emergencies, UNICEF provided lifesaving services to nearly 1 million people, including over 430,000 children, and enhanced emergency preparedness to strengthen health system resilience. Support for the DHIS-2 system and the development of an electronic logistics information system helped improve supply management.

UNICEF focused on system strengthening and continued improving healthcare infrastructure in Somalia, supporting the DHIS-2 system, and initiating an electronic logistics information system to improve supply management. Furthermore, UNICEF installed 379 Solar Direct Drive units, increasing functional cold chain-equipped facilities from 959 in 2023 to 1,117 in 2024. UNICEF equipped three newly constructed District Hospitals in Puntland, serving 1.5 million people, and installed eight oxygen plants across Somalia, greatly enhancing capacity to provide critical care and support for children and communities in need, ensuring better access to essential medical services. UNICEF's capacity injection supported a total of 2,198 health staff, enhancing health information management, supply chain systems, vaccine management, and health service delivery in the ministries of health and public health facilities. To address gender barriers in immunization, as part of the Gender Programme Review (GPR), UNICEF conducted an immunization gender barrier analysis, an assessment to understand the influence of social norms and power dynamics on vaccination patterns. This evidence is guiding the redesign of gender responsive immunization interventions in the country.

High prevalence of malnutrition among young children, pregnant and lactating mothers remains a public health issue in Somalia. UNICEF continues to enhance the enabling environment for large-scale implementation of high-impact nutrition interventions, facilitate service delivery, and coordinate the nutrition sector. UNICEF's support to the delivery of various nutrition services contributed to reducing waste among children under five years old, from 12.3 per cent in 2023 to 11.7 per cent in 2024. However, wasting among young children remains above the World Health Organization emergency threshold (15 per cent) in 29 of the 74 districts.

To protect and promote optimum breastfeeding, UNICEF supported the revision of the Code for Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, including its translation into the Somali language, making it ready for endorsement by the Parliament.

Working with 39 implementing partners, UNICEF contributed to providing quality treatment to 416,121 children aged 6-59 months (51 per cent girls) for severe wasting through a network of 700 treatment sites, thanks to existing mechanisms to ensure early case detection and referrals, timely treatment, uninterrupted availability of supplies, well-trained and well-supervised workforce. In 2024, UNICEF supported human capital development of 900 health and nutrition workers and 3,000 community health workers to deliver quality Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition services. Nutrition service delivery point in Somalia emerged as a trusted platform for the delivery of integrated health, nutrition, WASH and Child Protection services.

UNICEF contributed to enhancing the knowledge of 1,862,262 caretakers of children aged 6 to 23 months (146 per cent) on appropriate Infant and Young Child Feeding and care practices, along with hygiene and sanitation, through a network of 3,000 skilled counsellors. Young children's resistance to infections was enhanced through a vitamin A supplementation campaign, reaching 3,589,888 (106 per cent) children 6-59 months (51 per cent girls) in 70 out of the 74 districts. Likewise, 1,882,970 children aged 12 to 59 months (960,314 girls) were treated for worm infestations in 60 out of the 74 districts.



To mitigate aid diversion and its impact, UNICEF is championing the digitization of nutrition registers to address inefficiencies, improve treatment quality, and link nutrition information to the Health Information System. In addition, UNICEF is spearheading the Last Mile Supply Monitoring (LMSM), another digital solution to enhance the management of nutrition supplies. Thanks to UNICEF's advocacy and support, the government issued regulations criminalizing aid diversion across the country, and implementing partners demonstrated notable advancements in strengthening enabling environments to counter aid diversion risks, with 100 per cent of partners having anti-fraud and anti-corruption policies, and 50 per cent adopting specific aid diversion protocols.



## Goal 2: Learns

In 2024, UNICEF made significant strides in improving access to quality pre-primary and primary education across Somalia, especially for children from marginalized and crisis-affected communities. Through a combination of targeted interventions, UNICEF tackled critical bottlenecks, expanded educational opportunities, and improved learning outcomes, focusing on systemic barriers that hindered educational access and equity.

A key achievement in 2024 was the marked increase in the national primary education enrollment rate. The gross enrollment rate (GER) for the Federal Government of Somalia rose from 31 per cent in 2023 to 33.8 per cent in 2024. Although enrollment in Somaliland and Puntland increased more modestly, GERs in these regions reached 39.3 per cent and 33 per cent, in 2024, respectively.

UNICEF worked closely with the Ministries of Education to strengthen Education Management Information Systems (EMIS); these improvements enabled evidence-based decision-making. At the federal member state level, UNICEF further supported the decentralization of EMIS tools, empowering regional offices to collect and input data, thus improving accuracy and ensuring that local decision-makers had the information they needed to plan equitably.

In addition to enhancing data systems, UNICEF played a role in strengthening governance and coordination within the education sector. By supporting the monthly Education Sector Coordination (ESC) meetings and leading the humanitarian cluster and various Technical Working Groups (TWGs), such as those focused on gender and children with disabilities, UNICEF fostered collaboration among stakeholders and ensured alignment with national and regional priorities. These coordination mechanisms connected with the Education Donor Group helped reduce overlaps and enhanced the effectiveness of service delivery in education.



UNICEF supported the development of literacy and numeracy skills for children who were at risk of falling behind and 18,919 (8,993 girls) children successfully completed the pilot.



Expanding access to education, particularly for children in remote areas and conflict zones, was another area where UNICEF's efforts bore fruit. UNICEF rehabilitated 365 primary classrooms across Somalia, creating safer and more conducive learning environments and reinforced in Puntland by the development of school construction guidelines, ensuring that new or rehabilitated schools met minimum standards for safety and quality. In Puntland, UNICEF's "Go Back to School" campaign innovated with social media platforms, engaging graphics, videos, and testimonials, coupled with hashtags like #GoBackToSchool and #EducationMatters, sparked widespread community interest and participation, and encouraged parents.

UNICEF also focused on improving educational opportunities for young children through its support for Early Childhood Education (ECE) by supporting the Federal Government to finalize the development of the ECE teaching and learning materials and the establishment of 10 new ECE centres in Galmudug and 24 in Puntland aiming to benefit thousands of young learners, including a significant number of girls. In Puntland, twelve of these centres were renovated to expand classroom space, and ECE programs were integrated into 12 primary schools across five districts. These initiatives made it easier for preschool-aged children to attend school in their communities.

They also engaged 120 stakeholders and trained 84 Community Education Committee (CEC) members to sustain early education efforts. Puntland finalized its ECE policy, which will serve as a blueprint for sustainable early learning services. Improving the quality of education was central to UNICEF's work in Somalia. UNICEF trained 4,006 primary teachers (1,015 women) focused on child-centred pedagogy, inclusive practices for children with disabilities, and classroom management in crisis-affected areas. An additional 66 teachers were trained, and the Girls' Education Forum was piloted in 30 schools, creating supportive environments to encourage girls' participation in education. 44 master trainers and 795 teachers were trained as part of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) pilot.



Inclusivity in education was another major focus for UNICEF. At the federal member state level, in Somaliland, the establishment of a Children with Disabilities advisory board contributed to the development of an education roadmap aiming at integrating children with disabilities into the education system. Alternative Basic Education (ABE) was a viable pathway for marginalized children, particularly girls and children with disabilities. Through the TaRL approach, UNICEF supported the development of literacy and numeracy skills for children who were at risk of falling behind and 18,919 (8,993 girls) children successfully completed the pilot.

On learning outcomes, UNICEF conducted Measuring Learning Assessments (MLA) in Puntland, focusing on literacy and numeracy in Grades 3 and 7. These assessments provided valuable data on the effectiveness of educational interventions and contributed to shaping future programming. Similarly, UNICEF supported the national examination department, improving the efficiency and credibility of exams.

Crisis resilience remained a priority for UNICEF to ensure education continued for 68,676 (31,775 girls) vulnerable children in crisis-affected areas. UNICEF helped education officials in Somalia by building their capacity to monitor out-of-school children and maintain education services during emergencies.

Through its integrated approach, focused on data generation, infrastructure improvement, teacher professional development, and inclusive education, UNICEF made substantial contributions to addressing educational barriers, increasing enrollment, and improving learning outcomes. These efforts have laid the foundation for evident, equitable, and sustainable education programming in Somalia.





## Goal 3: Protection

With the support of UNICEF, the Somali Government launched the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Children 2024 to 2029 in September 2024, prioritizing the domestication of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and application of the 2022 CRC Committee recommendations to Somalia. The Government pledged to implement the NPA, ratify the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child and enact the Child Rights Bill on November 8, 2024, at the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children. To reinforce Somalia's adherence to international conventions, UNICEF supported Somalia's participation in the March 2024 Human Rights Committee (HRC) on Somalia's report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The HRC review focused on issues including access to justice, women and girls' rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the impact of conflict on human rights.

On 30 March 2024, Somalia's Federal Parliament adopted amendments to the Provisional Constitution on the prohibition of all types of FGM and the definition of a child as a person under 18 years, preventing potential child rights abuses and adherence to international human rights standards.

The country has seen other positive developments in protecting girls and women from FGM, with Galmudug State enacting their own FGM Bill in February 2024 and therefore setting an example and pathway for other Federal Member States (FMS) to follow. Draft anti-FGM laws are under consultation in all other FMS, while an anti-FGM policy was adopted in Somaliland. FMS are reviewing the draft Child Rights Bills, while the Federal level Government is planning to resubmit their draft Child Rights Bill. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the review of key child rights draft legislations as well as for consultations, while sustaining advocacy at technical and principal levels for adherence to the CRC.



UNICEF is supporting a large network of civil society organizations to implement child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response programming across the country.



UNICEF supported evidence generation to improve understanding of child protection sector needs, including a study on Children in Conflict with Law carried out by UNICEF and the Federal Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (MoJCA) to assess the situation of children in detention, the procedures for criminal cases involving children, and resource and capacity gaps. An assessment of UNICEF Somalia's UPSHIFT program effectiveness showed that female-led businesses exhibited higher profitability and a higher business survival rate than male-led businesses. A mapping of Quranic schools and their child safeguarding policies in place was conducted with the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs. Less than 2 per cent of the schools reviewed had safeguarding procedures in place, signalling the need for oversight and establishing protocols.

To address grave violations against children, UNICEF implemented Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms (MRM) in line with Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1612. Between January and September 2024, 1,946 grave violations against children were documented, impacting 1,478 children (1,057 boys, 421 girls). This includes recruitment and use, sexual violence, abduction, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access. UNICEF works with civil society partners to facilitate child victims' access to services and with the Government to increase accountability mechanisms and create a more protective environment through stronger policy.

To support children impacted by humanitarian crises, including displacement because of climate-induced emergencies or conflict, UNICEF is supporting a large network of civil society organizations to implement child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response programming across the country.





## Goal 4: Safe and Clean Environment

Somalia has made tremendous progress in terms of improving access to basic water services, as access increased from a mere 30 per cent (JMP) in 2004 to 71 per cent (UNICEF Needs Assessment) in 2024. As access to basic water services has increased drastically, there is a need to cross 'the last mile' and reach 29 per cent of the population that still does not have access, most notably in rural areas. Successes in basic water coverage can now be translated into elaborating and implementing a safely managed water service strategy, the last step of the SDG water ladder.

In terms of sanitation, progress has been made in the elimination of open defecation as national rates have decreased from 51 per cent in 2004 to 16 per cent in 2024. Improvements in basic sanitation have, however, been only marginal as coverage only increased from 23 per cent in 2004 to 39 per cent in 2024. These numbers generally mean that communities are halting the harmful practice of open defecation but are not 'moving up' the sanitation ladder to basic access. There is therefore a need to design and scale up a workable model for basic sanitation, most notably in rural areas.

In 2024, UNICEF played a crucial role in contributing to the above results by strengthening the enabling environment for the sector, delivering WASH services to communities and institutions, as well as providing humanitarian WASH support.

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UNICEF provided both technical and financial support to federal and state-level Ministries of Energy and Water Resources to develop various strategies, Policies and Plans. Through this support, the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources at the federal level has strengthened the Water Sector Coordination Facility (WSCF) to improve sector governance, facilitate alignment of sector programs, and coordinate interventions. In 2024, UNICEF also supported a Nationwide WASH Needs Assessment to measure current WASH access as per the SDG 6 ladder at the national level with a disaggregation at the district level. In addition, at the member state level, UNICEF supported the elaboration of the Somaliland National WASH Strategic Plan (2025-2029), the Puntland Public Private Partnership Policy and the first-ever sustainability check in Somalia (conducted in Puntland).

To improve WASH in communities, 29 new boreholes were drilled, and 62 existing boreholes were rehabilitated and upgraded with solar power

pumping systems to reduce GHG emissions and lower operation and maintenance costs, while 200 shallow wells in rural areas were rehabilitated and disinfected. UNICEF has undertaken innovative new approaches to groundwater mapping, utilizing remote sensing to develop a sustainable groundwater map, which has supported exploratory drilling of the deepest well in Somalia, with positive results found at depths greater than 700 meters.

Finally, the UNICEF WASH programme continued to provide critical life-saving humanitarian interventions throughout the year 2024, through the provision of safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and the promotion of appropriate hygiene practices. UNICEF supported 915,722 people with the means to practice safe hygiene and household water treatment through the distribution of Hygiene kits and hygiene promotion messaging.





## Goal 5: Equitable Chance in Life

In 2024, social policy outcome indicators benefited from the new government planning cycle and increased funding for the social sector. Other indicators were impacted by delays in key government and UN programmes supported by UNICEF.

The year was marked by the development of the National Transformation Plan 2025–2029 (NTP). Social Policy, through its partnerships with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), provided critical technical and financial support for these initiatives. UNICEF also worked with the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics to generate child-sensitive indicators data on the results of the National Development Plan (NDP-9). Despite these efforts, funding gaps delayed the completion of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), limiting further influence on planning processes. Pending the first draft of NTP, investments in maternal health, nutrition, education, WASH, and social protection are likely to be central to the government's next five-year plans.

The federal budget continues to increase allocations to social sectors, particularly social protection, health, and education. UNICEF's budget briefs and bottleneck analyses for government programmes provided evidence of the role of these initiatives in enhancing social expenditure for children. The fiscal space created by Somalia's 2023 debt relief holds potential for improving children's well-being, provided that the execution of externally funded social sector projects improves. UNICEF has offered actionable measures to support progress.



UNICEF and WFP support, has provided regular cash transfers to 200,000 households, with the last payment completed in June 2024.



Social protection efforts faced setbacks in 2024. Since its inception in 2019, the Baxnaano programme, which UNICEF and WFP support, has provided regular cash transfers to 200,000 households, with the last payment completed in June 2024. MoLSA was expected to pilot new initiatives using government delivery systems supported by UNICEF, WB investments were to be informed by these pilots, but did not materialize in 2024. UNICEF's Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme (CSSP-I) phase I accelerated in 2024 to reach 27,700 pregnant and lactating mothers, and phase II made progress on expanding to an additional 13,500 in early 2025.

Children's access to social services delivered by local governments was impacted by the transition between the UN Joint Programme in Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery, which ended in September 2023, and the new UN Joint Programme Dowlad-Kaab, which began in October 2024. It is notable that this period marked the first instance of district-level provision of basic social services using local resources after the cessation of UN support. UNICEF played a key role in influencing the design of Dowlad-Kaab and supporting MoIFAR's engagement with development partners. MoIFAR acknowledged UNICEF's leadership in ensuring the continuity of UN support to build local government capacity.



## PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

UNICEF Somalia conducted a comprehensive Gender Programme Review (GPR), which revealed that partners had positive experiences with UNICEF, aligning well with national gender priorities. The GPR further revealed that the office has made strides in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), with 91 per cent of respondents acknowledging a robust feedback mechanism for confidential complaints. The GPR highlighted variations in understanding intersectionality and conducting gender analysis, underscoring the need for enhanced capacity development.

Through a partnership with the Ministry of Planning, Investment & Economic Development (MOPIED), UNICEF Somalia proactively spearheaded support towards enhancing the public sector evaluation policy framework through the development of the federal level Evaluation Guidelines. The evaluation guidelines will assist the Somalia Federal government to conduct quality evaluations based on valid and reliable empirical evidence, ultimately contributing to improved decision making and accountability to not only the donors but also its citizenry. UNICEF supported the development of

the evaluation curriculum, which will support the enhancement of evaluative skills in the public sector. This is also relevant to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the national development plans, as assessing their progress draws significant attention to the availability of evaluative evidence.

UNICEF Somalia commissioned a Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) Joint Risk Assessment (JRA) in Somalia to establish a national SEA risk baseline, assess intervention needs, and evaluate the capacities of national and international actors in mitigating SEA risks. The assessment, covering key regions across Somalia, provided crucial insights into SEA dynamics in humanitarian and development contexts. Findings will be presented to the UN Humanitarian Country Team in January 2025, by the UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) in Somalia.



## PARTNERSHIPS



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UNICEF partnered with UNDP, UN-Habitat, on the United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance the revamped Dowlad-Kaab initiative to strengthen community resilience through economic development and improved government operations.

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In 2024, UNICEF leveraged a wide range of external resources and partnerships with the Government at all levels, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CSOs, the United Nations system, international financial institutions, and other public and private partners. Flexible funding enabled UNICEF to programme quickly and effectively, while strong collaboration contributed to critical joint advocacy and strategic steer.

Federal, state, and sub-state Government cooperation was key in furthering the child rights agenda across sectors, including close collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and line ministries, departments, and agencies and Parliament. For example, in 2024, UNICEF collaborated with Parliament and signed a work plan to ensure an enabling environment is created to accelerate the scaling up of basic social services required for the child to survive, grow, thrive, and learn. In 2024, UNICEF and WHO ramped up advocacy for Child Survival and Immunization in Somalia. The Prime Minister's launch of the Immunization and Polio Eradication Taskforce and the high-level Forum on Child Survival marked a pivotal step towards reducing child mortality. UNICEF and WHO supported the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) in reviewing the World Health Assembly resolution to accelerate progress on the SDG targets for maternal, newborn, and child health. These efforts will have a substantial impact on improving the health outcomes of children in Somalia.

As a key partner in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, UNICEF, alongside WHO, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the US Centres for Disease Control (CDC), bolsters Somalia's efforts to enhance routine immunization and manage the polio outbreak. A task force, chaired by the Prime Minister, has been established, with UNICEF leading state-level advocacy. The first round of the "Big Catch Up" campaign was launched in all six states by their respective presidents, with strong support from professional associations and Islamic religious networks.

UNICEF's collaboration with other UN agencies, including WHO and UNFPA, has been vital in developing key Maternal, Newborn, Child, and Adolescent Health policies and strategies. This joint effort extends to the Joint UN Sustainable Development Programme (UNSDP) and the humanitarian cluster mechanism during emergencies.



UNICEF Collaborating with sister UN agencies has been pivotal in advancing resource mobilization through developing joint advocacy documents, such as the La Niña preparedness plan, which successfully secured US\$2 million in emergency funding for UNICEF's WASH initiatives. Coordinating joint UN proposals throughout the year, fostering greater technical understanding among respective agencies, identifying complementary areas, and enabling more strategic resource mobilization and engagement. UNICEF is also in the process of securing its first-ever African Development Bank Funding for an urban WASH program and has been working with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on the design of a blended financing facility for the WASH sector.

UNICEF collaborated with other United Nations agencies on UNSDCF implementation, including participating in the United Nations Country Team and joint initiatives. These included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organization (ILO), IOM, UNFPA, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, UNSOM, WFP and WHO. Implementation of the WFP–UNICEF joint nutrition action plan addressed wasting and other nutrition needs, such as by strengthening referrals to care for children in hard-to-reach districts; the UNICEF–UNSOM Joint Programme on Human Rights Phase 2 reinforced actions on child protection, supporting Somalia's commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM and joint programming on community-based reintegration for displaced people also supported results for children. UNICEF partnered with UNDP, UN-Habitat, on the United Nations Joint Programme on Local Governance, the revamped Dowlad-Kaab initiative to strengthen community resilience through economic development and improved government operations. The KfW-supported Joint Resilience Programme Phase II in Puntland and South-Central Somalia, with FAO and WFP, delivered important integrated multi-sectoral results for children in 2024.

United Nations system partnerships were also critical for the facilitation of humanitarian assessments, response, monitoring, reporting and evaluations. This collaboration, as well as engagement with affected populations, was key to reducing the risk of and addressing aid diversion in 2024, while UNICEF's regular dialogue on aid diversion with Government officials and donors was key to addressing its systematic drivers.

UNICEF participated in numerous programmes and operations coordination platforms in Somalia, including holding several leadership roles, such as co-chairing the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting with UNSOM. The Task Force operationalizes the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations to contribute to making Somalia a safer environment for children by documenting grave violations, including information to enable responsive action by the relevant parties that can range from informing advocacy to guiding programme scope. Collaboration with partners through the humanitarian cluster mechanism supported the delivery of quality programme results at scale for children affected by emergencies. In 2024, UNICEF co-led the Nutrition Cluster with WFP, the WASH Cluster with Polish Humanitarian Action and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Education Cluster with Save the Children International. In addition to coordination, UNICEF's cluster-dedicated staff support quality information management to support evidence-based response. UNICEF also participated in additional clusters and sub-clusters, adding value by contributing strategic advice, convening support and technical assistance. This participation included Logistics Cluster engagement that helped to achieve results such as identifying solutions to support local procurement and supply transportation for emergency response.



Working with coalitions of partners, including international and local NGOs, community-based organizations, and civil society, including affected populations, was particularly important to ensure implementation of UNICEF programming. For example, these partnerships were critical in furthering the localization agenda, with UNICEF collaborating to build the capacity of national and subnational partners. They were also essential in responding to public health emergencies in 2024. Communities impacted by emergencies and recipients of UNICEF support provided crucial input via feedback mechanisms to improve programming and service delivery.

UNICEF results were supported by bilateral, multilateral and private sector donors, including the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; European Union; Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; Germany's GIZ and KfW Development Bank; the Global Partnership for Education; the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway and Sweden; Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; the World Bank; and the United States Agency for International Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. UNICEF National Committees also contributed to child protection, education, nutrition, social protection, and WASH programming results, while a variety of funds enabled scaled-up efforts, including the Central Emergency Response Fund; Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; Somali Joint Fund; U.S. Fund for UNICEF; and United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. UNICEF engaged donors to gain firsthand experience by facilitating field visits, accompanying them and maintaining a robust, consistent, and prompt communication channel with donors—preferably through in-person interactions—to address concerns about aid diversion and reinforce transparency. In 2024, UNICEF engaged donors through roundtable meetings with participation from key partners. These events were instrumental in addressing concerns about aid diversion while fostering open, transparent, and constructive dialogues with donors. UNICEF has been championing an internal strategy focused on delivering positive messages to combat donor fatigue and proactively addressing concerns around aid diversion. A significant achievement was UNICEF Somalia's groundbreaking milestone in digitalization, which donors such as BHA co-created and supported financially.



## CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE OUTLOOK (EXTERNAL) - REQUIRED

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UNICEF found that the Somalia theory of change and corresponding results framework logic remains credible at national and subnational levels and agreed on priority programme areas to focus on, in the next country programme to adequately instigate systemic change.

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The year 2024 has been marked by a series of critical geopolitical shifts and rising economic pressures that had an impact on UNICEF’s ability to deliver on its mission, including in Somalia. Global challenges, from increased nationalism and populism to economic turbulence and emerging conflicts, are reshaping the funding landscape. As donor priorities continue to shift, funding levels and flexibility are decreasing, with many countries repurposing Official Development Assistance (ODA) toward defense and domestic priorities. This anticipated reduced funding landscape shaped UNICEF’s donor engagement and resource mobilization efforts.

The environment in which the UNICEF programme is being implemented is constrained by several challenges affecting service availability, access and its uptake, quality of care at facility, community or at household level. These include insecurity, ongoing conflicts, violence and instability; acceleration of climate change, resulting in repeated droughts and floods that negatively impact on disease pattern, diets and feeding practices, especially among the most vulnerable young children; population displacement; large scale humanitarian aid diversion; frequent disease outbreaks; limited government capacity to lead and coordinate programmes; fragmented enabling environment to scale up high impact cost-effective nutrition interventions; inadequate budget and capacity to scale up interventions; lack of up to date population based data which has made it hard to measure some key outcome indicators making it difficult to assess progress against SDG targets; and decreasing funding for programming. Despite significant effort being made to address aid diversion, this remains a challenge which requires continued effort, agile programming, and strong institutional frameworks to mitigate aid diversion negative impacts on programme outcomes. Unfortunately, the pace at which the institutional framework is evolving is too slow to yield expected outcomes in a sustainable manner. Upstream advocacy and technical support to develop government capacity to mitigate aid diversion will remain a priority.

In 2024, significant progress was made at the national level to address maternal and child mortality in Somalia. The expansion of the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) accelerated, with UNICEF’s Better Lives Project playing a crucial role. However, delays in the Damaal Caafimad Project hindered progress in immunization coverage, antenatal care, and skilled birth attendance. The donor-dependent fiscal space limits the scale and equity of health service delivery, especially in newly accessible areas. High level joint advocacy will be required for domestic resource allocation to enhance coverage of MNCH interventions.

UNICEF has focused on impactful primary health care interventions. By implementing a district-level health and nutrition service delivery model, UNICEF achieved cost savings of 22 per cent in health and 12 per cent in nutrition, enabling broader coverage with available resources.

The high number of “zero-dose” children remains a significant challenge. A cross-sectoral approach, leveraging nutrition treatment sites for vaccination and strengthened partnerships with WHO and other INGOs, has shown promising initial results. However, reaching children in remote areas requires innovative access and monitoring strategies. Lack of updated catchment population compounded with weak data and oversight in these areas continue to impede targeted initiatives.

Collaboration with key health sector partners, including UN agencies and donors, has aligned resources around priority actions. However, weak oversight and coordination between federal and sub-national governments remain major impediments. Strengthened subnational coordination structures are critical for effective implementation.

UNICEF decentralized and expanded its presence at the state level, enhancing oversight and support to state ministries. This improved resource alignment and laid the foundation for substantive systems strengthening. High-level advocacy efforts, particularly in immunization and Polio Eradication, provided strong evidence and momentum for broader child survival initiatives, focusing on primary health care, nutrition, WASH, and health promotion.



As UNICEF supports the expansion of public sector health services, the private sector's role in delivering vital services like immunization should be leveraged, measured, and integrated into broader health sector planning.

With support from the UNICEF Headquarters (HQ) Innovation Fund, UNICEF completed a deep groundwater mapping study in Somaliland and Puntland which identified some potential untapped and climate resilient aquifers in these states. A first test borehole was drilled in Qarxis (Puntland) and is currently, the deepest borehole ever drilled in Somalia at 750 meters. Additional boreholes have been contracted in Puntland and Somaliland, both of which are expected to be completed in 2025. If successful, this will be a game changer for the communities of Somaliland and Puntland by providing them with a high quality and climate resilient water source.

The successes in the Public Private Partnership (PPP) utility management models in various urban water supply systems, combined with a strong Somalia private sector and high willingness to pay for water for Somali communities, make the water sector in Somalia ripe for blended financing approaches. UNICEF is currently working with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on the design of such a facility which will de-risk investments into the sector and encourage further financial flows more private sector and financial lending institutions. There is also a huge potential for the use of PPPs in rural water management which UNICEF intends on further understanding next year through a specific rural water PPP study. The lack of progress in basic sanitation over the last few years (with basic access having regressed from 41 per cent in 2023 to 39 per cent in 2024), requires a re-examination of the current sanitation approaches. Moving forward, UNICEF will look at new options such as City-Wide Inclusive Sanitation but also new ways of implementing Community Approaches to Total Sanitation supported by adequate sanitation marketing strategies, and menstrual hygiene management approaches.

In a context like Somalia, where most services depend heavily on external funding, programme transitions pose a significant risk to achieving results for children. Nevertheless, the efforts to build state capabilities and deliver services through government structures, despite short-term gaps and challenges, represent a sustainable pathway to improving children's lives in the medium and long term. Continued support for capacity building and investments in human capital will be essential to achieving lasting progress for Somali children.

With 2024 marking the fourth year of the current five-year UNICEF Somalia Country Programme, the Office conducted a national Strategic Moment of Reflection (SMR) with key Government partners, other UN agencies, donors, non-governmental partners, in consultation with children and communities to design the theory of change for the next country programme. UNICEF found that the Somalia theory of change and corresponding results framework logic remains credible at national and subnational levels and agreed on priority programme areas to focus on, in the next country programme to adequately instigate systemic change. Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, UNICEF plans to apply the insights gained throughout 2024 from the SMR and the 2024 Annual Review by scaling up multi sectoral programme integration to increase the reach and scope of social services, especially prioritizing underserved communities while continuing strengthening subnational capacities, including human capital development to ensure equity and resilience are at the centres of programming to realize results for children.

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