



Syria at a Turning Point:

*A New Chapter
for Children*



Copyright: @UNICEF 2026
All rights reserved. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
Any part of the report may be freely reproduced with the appropriate
acknowledgement.

Date of publication: April 2026

FORWARD

To our readers,

Syria's children have waited long enough. After 14 years of devastating war, 2025 brought something the country had not dared to hope for in over a decade: the possibility of a different future.

Yet even as that hope begins to take shape, challenges remain. Nearly 7.5 million children still need humanitarian assistance, 2.45 million remain out of school, and the ground beneath their feet is still laced with deadly explosives.

But across Syria, something has shifted, and UNICEF has been privileged to be part of it. In 2025, we achieved significant results for children in collaboration with and under the leadership of the Government of Syria. Some 2.1 million children were vaccinated; 1.36 million children were screened for malnutrition, with nearly 20,000 treated for severe wasting; safe water was restored to 4.1 million people; and education services were delivered to 3.7 million girls and boys. In addition, child protection services reached over 1.5 million people across all 14 governorates and over 80,000 vulnerable people received cash transfers to cover their basic needs.

Equally important is what is being built for the long term. National health and nutrition plans, child protection frameworks, and



social protection roadmaps are now in place. Government counterparts and frontline workers have been trained, strengthening the state's own capacity to lead and sustain services for Syria's children.

UNICEF has stood by Syria's children for nearly 60 years. We will continue to do so in partnership, with resolve, and with the firm conviction that every child in Syria deserves to live, learn, and thrive in safety.

To every child in Syria,

We see you. We hear you. We are with you. Through every challenge ahead, UNICEF will stand beside you, not because it is easy, but because you deserve a future of peace, dignity, and opportunity. Your dreams matter. Your rights matter. You matter. Together with your families, communities, partners, and donors, we are committed to turning hope into reality. The path ahead is long, but you are not walking it alone. For every child, a stronger and peaceful Syria. For every child, a future they deserve.

Meritxell Relañó Arana

UNICEF Representative in Syria



Table of Contents

10

SYRIA'S CHILDREN
A generation shaped by war

04

FORWARD
The Year of Change

13

The UNICEF response in 2025
Achieving Results Together
in 2025

15

Health and Nutrition
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
Education
Child Protection
Social Protection
Adolescent Development

34

Working Smarter:
Cross-Sectoral Approaches
that Multiply Impact

36

Cross-sectoral: The numbers
behind the impact in 2025

37

What Syrian Children
Need Next

38

Partners who made
2025 possible

39

Funding status

The Year of Change

Khadijeh stood in front of what used to be her home in Deir-ez-Zor in eastern Syria, staring at the rubble. She and her husband Mahmoud had fled Syria's war in 2014, seeking safety in Lebanon, where their daughter Ghuson was born. For three years they rebuilt a life in exile – until Mahmoud lost his job and the family had no choice but to return to a country still scarred by conflict, to a house that no longer existed.

"We came back with nothing but the clothes we wore," Khadijeh recalls. "I stood there, heart broken and lost."

Then, on 8 December 2024, everything changed.

The year 2025 marked a significant shift in Syria's trajectory following major political developments and a reduction in large-scale hostilities. For the first time in over a decade, Syrians could speak of hope and possibility instead of survival.

The year that followed has been one of extraordinary changes. Over 3 million people have returned home in Syria in the past year, including 1.2 million from abroad and 1.9 million internally – in one of the largest voluntary returns in modern history.¹ International engagement around Syria has increased, opening new channels for cooperation and discussions on recovery and reconstruction. The country is steadily reclaiming its place regionally and globally, rebuilding diplomatic bridges with neighbours, international institutions, and global partners. Political developments have also created space for dialogue on reforms and

recovery, including renewed attention to youth participation and women's leadership.

Although hope and new opportunities have emerged, the journey of transition is marked by formidable challenges. At the time of this report, nearly 1.9 million internally displaced people and 1.2 million refugees have come home to rubble and broken infrastructure, with limited access to clean water, functioning schools, or health care while 7 million remain displaced inside Syria.² Close to 300,000 explosive devices³ remain buried across the country, threatening children in fields, playgrounds, and along roads. Nine out of 10 Syrians live in poverty,⁴ and at current growth rates, it will take until 2080 for Syria to regain its pre-war economy.⁵

For Khadijeh and Ghuson, the turning point came when they found a UNICEF-supported community centre. Ghuson, now 10, attends psychosocial support sessions, learns how to stay safe amid the dangers still lurking in her environment, and draws pictures of the future she wants.

"I want to become an artist," she says, eyes bright with determination.

This is Syria in 2025: a country at a turning point, a people rebuilding from ruins, and children like Ghuson who deserve the chance to dream again.



Khadijeh, 47, with her daughter Ghuson, 10, at the UNICEF-supported community centre at Deir-ez-Zor.
@UNICEF/UNI844307/Youssef Aljumaa

SYRIA'S CHILDREN

A generation shaped by war

Nearly

14,700

children killed or injured since 2011.

1,600+

children killed by explosive ordnance since 2020.

7.5 million

children need humanitarian assistance (up from 7 million in 2024).

90%

of the population lives below the poverty line.

Coming home...but to difficult circumstances

Over

3.2 million

Syrians have returned home (as of November 2025).

1.9 million

internally displaced people returned to places of origin.

Over

7 million

internally displaced people remain displaced inside Syria.

1.2 million

refugees returned from neighbouring countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan).

57%

of returnees since December 2024 are children (+410,000)





Children still waiting for safety

5 million

children at risk from nearly 300,000 unexploded ordnance devices.

1,521

casualties from explosive ordnance (January–September 2025); one third of them children.

A crisis of basics

5.7 million

people, including 3.7 million children, need nutrition support.

500,000

children under 5 affected by life-threatening malnutrition.

13.6 million

people need safe water and sanitation services

2.45 million

children are out of school.

1 million

more children are at risk of dropping out.

²UNHCR, 2025. *Regional Flash Update #52 Syria Situation*, 8 November 2025

³The Carter Centre

⁴UNDP, 2025. *The Impact of the Conflict in Syria: a devastated economy, pervasive poverty and a challenging road ahead to social and economic recovery*.

⁵Ibid.



Always There for Syria's Children

For nearly 60 years, UNICEF has stood by Syria's children, and through 14 years of war, it stayed to deliver life-saving assistance.

That enduring presence, guided by the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, has forged deep, trusting relationships with the communities, families and children UNICEF serves.

Today, **UNICEF operates across all 14 governorates** through six field offices and 260 dedicated staff, 43 per cent of them women, supporting the efforts of government counterparts and Syrian civil society and grassroots organizations who know their communities best.

From health and nutrition to education, water and sanitation, child protection and social protection, UNICEF collaborates with the Syrian government and other national and international partners, using **a twin-track approach to its programming**. This means scaling up humanitarian assistance in newly accessible areas while driving recovery and development by strengthening national systems and institutional capacity, shaping sector-wide policies, improving coordination, and helping rehabilitate critical social infrastructure.

The results on the following pages belong to the Government of Syria and every partner, donor, civil society organization, community, and family that has put in immense dedication, effort and passion to protect the country's children. Together, we made sure children survived, learned, healed, and found reasons to hope.

Achieving Results
Together in

20
25





Abdulrahman, one year old, eats a fortified small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplement, provided by UNICEF to boost young children's diets and help prevent malnutrition, fed by his mother in Kafr Zeita, Hama.

© UNICEF/UNI947516

Health and Nutrition

The long war in Syria has compromised the health system. Half of all primary health-care facilities are not operational, and a severe brain drain has left just 20,000 doctors in the country, barely half the international standard. Malnutrition ravages young bodies and minds, with half a million children under five⁶ facing life-threatening malnutrition, and over 650,000 children already stunted.⁷

For families like Walaa's, these statistics are their life. When her one-year-old son, Abdulrahman, began receiving UNICEF-provided fortified nutrient supplements, it marked a turning point for a family that had returned from years of displacement to find their Kafr Zeita home in Hama governorate in northwestern Syria destroyed, debt mounting, children sick, and survival

dependent on irregular daily labour. Cash assistance and nutrition counselling gave Walaa the means and knowledge to feed all five of her children adequately and eventually the confidence to support other mothers in her community.

In 2025, UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Health and partners to tackle Syria's health crisis from different angles, responding to urgent needs while also addressing the deeper structural barriers undermining the health system and its services for children and women.

Mobile health teams worked tirelessly in areas where fixed facilities do not exist or remain non-functional, bringing immunization, nutrition screening, and



Across Syria, thousands of health workers worked across the country, protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases during a nationwide immunization campaign from 13 to 23 October 2025. Led by the Ministry of Health, in partnership with UNICEF and the World Health Organization, the campaign targeted children under five, with a focus on reaching zero-dose and under-immunized children.
© UNICEF/UNI886105/Shahan

primary care directly to vulnerable children and families, many of whom had recently returned to Syria. At the same time, UNICEF embedded **technical experts** inside the Ministry of Health, collaborating with Syrian counterparts to build the government's own capacity to lead and sustain the health system.

Getting a health system off the ground after prolonged conflict starts by rebuilding its foundation. In 2025, with UNICEF support, Syria developed its first **Ministry of Health Strategic Plan 2026–2028 and the National Immunization Strategy**, as well as the National Multisectoral Nutrition Strategy 2026–2030 and completed a National Syria SMART nutrition survey. This will give the new health authorities the roadmap and evidence needed to prioritize the country's most at-risk children.

Syria's vaccination schedule and cold-chain systems were unified nationally, so that every child around the country now has access to the same standard of immunization protection. A particular focus was put on **reaching zero-dose children**, that is children who had never received a single vaccine, through targeted immunization campaigns that reached deep into returnee and displaced communities.

Masa, two and a half years old, receives her vaccine at a health centre during the national immunization campaign in Arbin city, Rural Damascus, Syria, on 15 October 2025.

"I bring my children on time because vaccines save lives. It's simple, safe, and essential," explained her father, Ahmed.

After 14 years of conflict, UNICEF's 2025 **nutrition response** in Syria focused on both the urgent crises and underlying drivers of malnutrition.



Community-based treatment reached **acutely malnourished children** close to home, while nationwide vitamin A distribution, home food fortification programmes, and anaemia support for pregnant and lactating women tackled the less visible but equally damaging effects of micronutrient deficiency.

Recognizing that hunger and poverty are inseparable, **nutrition-sensitive cash transfers** were provided to the most food-insecure families, helping them feed their children properly.

In addition, **early childhood development (ECD) services** were expanded into primary health centres, and the Early Newborn Action Plan extended its reach to 14 hospitals, strengthening the critical care that newborn babies need to survive and thrive in their first hours and days of life. As the Nutrition Sector Lead, UNICEF coordinated the nutrition response in Humanitarian Response Plan and has been the main supplier of nutrition commodities especially **ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF)**, helping to address severe wasting and prevent child and maternal undernutrition.

Syria in 2025 remained a country where new **emergencies** could erupt without warning. From the outbreak of violence in Tartous and Lattakia to the devastating wildfires that swept through Lattakia in summer, the violence that erupted in As-Sweida in southern Syria and the most severe drought in 40 years, UNICEF responded to several overlapping emergencies in a single year. In response, mobile health teams were deployed rapidly to the crisis-affected areas, bringing medical supplies and services to children and their families before the situation spiralled into a greater health disaster.

Across Syria, thousands of health workers worked across the country, protecting children from vaccine-preventable diseases during a nationwide immunization campaign from 13 to 23 October 2025. Led by the Ministry of Health, in partnership with UNICEF and the World Health Organization, the campaign targeted children under five, with a focus on reaching zero-dose and under-immunized children.
© UNICEF/UNI886105/Shahan

Health and Nutrition:

The numbers behind the impact in 2025

2.1

million children vaccinated through major immunization campaigns, backed by 14.9 million doses procured.

799,000

children reached with home food fortification.

98,000+

children reached by mobile health teams during emergencies (coastal violence, Latakia wildfires, southern Syria hostilities).

93,674

zero-dose children identified and reached with vaccines for the first time.

658,000

pregnant and lactating women received anaemia prevention support.

2.3

2.6

million children and 589,000 women able to access health care through 122 health centres and 87 mobile teams.

million children reached through national vitamin A campaigns.

8,373

24

health centres rehabilitated; 2,744 health workers trained.

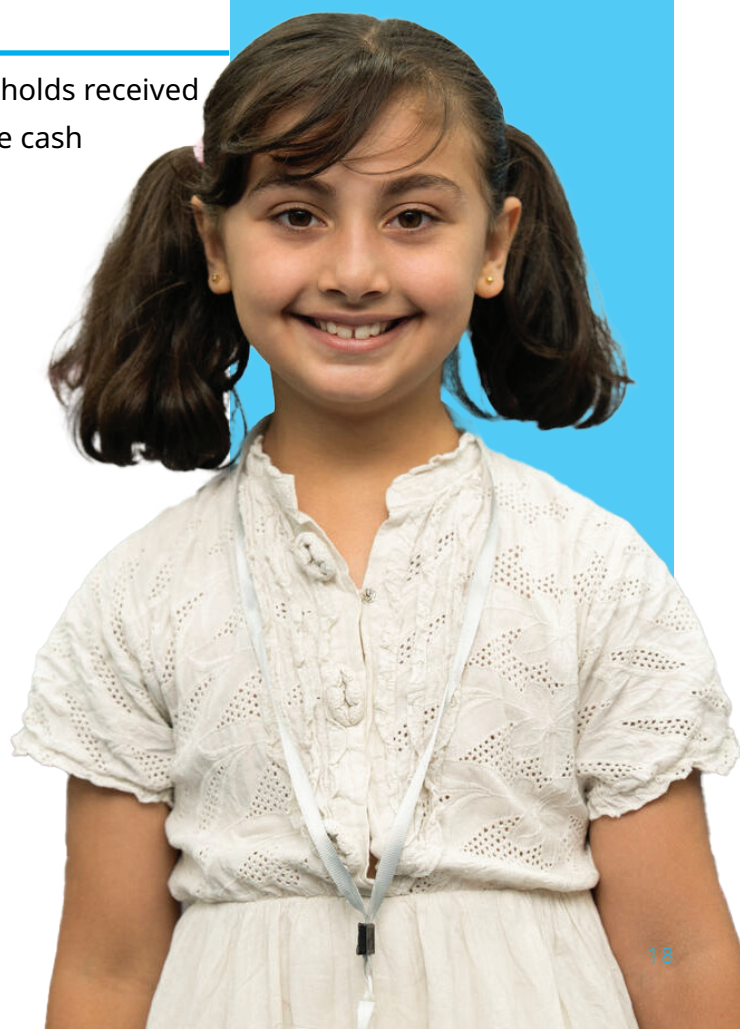
vulnerable households received nutrition-sensitive cash transfers.

ECD

services integrated into 79 primary health centres.

1.36

million children screened for malnutrition; 19,679 treated for severe wasting.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

For Syrian children already weakened by malnutrition and illness, drinking contaminated water can be fatal. With 13.6 million people⁸ in need of water and sanitation services, water systems running at less than half their capacity, and over 70 per cent of sewage discharged untreated,⁹ Syria is facing a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) crisis layered on top of every other crisis.

Thirteen-year-old Yahia, who lost his legs at the age of 6 when a shell exploded near his house in Zabadin, Rural Damascus, has been able to attend a new inclusive school rehabilitated by UNICEF, designed to be fully accessible for children with disabilities. For the first time, he could move around independently and use the school's WASH facilities without assistance. "I can move around on my own now. There's even a bathroom I can use without help!" Yahia said, his eyes lighting up.

UNICEF WASH programming in 2025 worked at every level of the system simultaneously. **Large-scale rehabilitation projects,** implemented by the government with UNICEF support, restored damaged water supply and sanitation networks and added solar infrastructure to reduce dependence on unreliable electricity, while water trucking and hygiene supplies kept the most vulnerable

families, especially those living in internally displaced persons camps, from going without.

To protect against waterborne disease, sodium hypochlorite was distributed at scale, shielding children from deadly diarrhoeal illnesses.



Yahia, 13, washes his hands in the bathroom of his school in Zabadin village, Rural Damascus. The school was rehabilitated with UNICEF support to improve learning conditions for children.

© UNICEF/UNI733335/Shahan

⁸ OCHA, Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Needs Overview 2024
⁹ UNICEF, 2024. Water Infrastructure Assessment



UNICEF also provided governance support. As WASH Sector lead, UNICEF coordinated the development of the 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan and supported national WASH vulnerability mapping, as well as partner reporting systems. Thirty engineers were trained and 14 water authorities equipped with digital management tools, and a centralized national database of all WASH facilities was established for the first time, strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Energy and Water to plan, monitor, and manage water systems.

When emergencies struck, UNICEF moved fast. During the March violence in Lattakia and Tartous, supplying fuel kept a critical water station operational. During the As-Sweida escalation, rapid delivery of supplies and activation of backup wells maintained minimum water access for displaced people and residents. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Energy and Water strengthening data systems for the sector and provision of technical assistance.

UNICEF-supported WASH efforts focus on restoring access to safe water in areas heavily affected by conflict. UNICEF support is helping rehabilitate the drinking water network in Harasta, eastern Ghouta, an area once devastated by conflict that is now seeing displaced families return home. Workers on the ground are replacing damaged pipelines, reducing water losses, and preventing waterborne diseases, bringing safe, clean water back to a community rebuilding its daily life.
UNICEF/UNI875299/AI-Asadi ©

WASH: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

4.1 million

people provided with safe water through 60 rehabilitation projects.

2 million

people in Aleppo, Deir-ez-Zor, Idleb, and Hama had water services restored.

15.4 million

people protected from waterborne disease through sodium hypochlorite supply.

1.6 million

people reached with sanitation services.

501,624

people in camps for internally displaced people and collective shelters received water and hygiene supplies and benefitted from facility maintenance.

1.5 million

people-maintained access to safe water during March violence.

385,000

displaced people and residents reached during As-Sweida escalation.



Education

The war has taken a heavy toll on Syria's education system.¹⁰ Some 2.45 million children are out of school entirely, and over a million more are on the edge of dropping out.¹¹ School functionality remains a major challenge with nearly 8,000 schools are non-functional.¹²

The longer a child stays out of school, the harder it is to come back, and the higher the risk of child labour, early marriage, or recruitment into armed groups.

Jassem, a 12-year-old boy from Rural Damascus, has spent his entire life in displacement and hardship, conditions that contributed to stunting caused by malnutrition and siege during infancy. Despite being one of the top students in his class, his short stature made school a painful experience – bullying eroded his confidence and, as he recalls, “Every time someone called me ‘short boy’ or laughed at me, my heart just hurt. I wanted to run away.” School-based mental and psychosocial support helped him reframe his self-image and reconnect with his strengths, allowing him to re-engage with learning rather than withdraw from it. “Now I know that no one is perfect, and everyone has something unique,” he says, beaming.

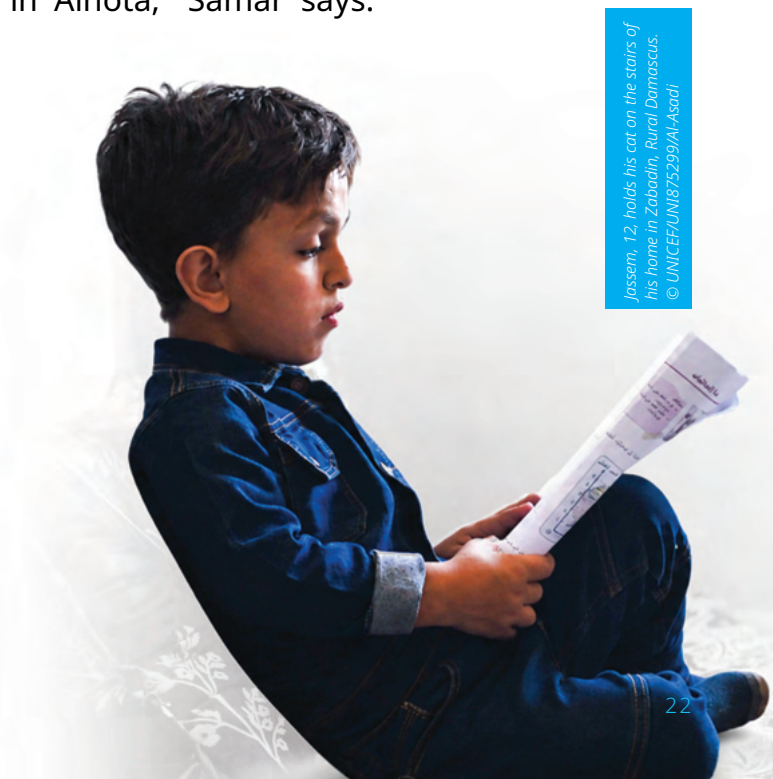
In 2025, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to get children back into classrooms while also building the systems that will keep them there. Across 14 governorates, girls and boys were reached through **formal and non-formal education services** in a massive push to keep learning continuous for children who have already lost years of their education.

Schools were rehabilitated, prefabricated classrooms installed, and textbooks distributed.

In September, for the first time in over a decade, children across Syria returned to school under a unified national calendar and education framework, with UNICEF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, supporting the ‘Back-to-Learning’ campaign to help ensure that every child could reclaim their right to education.

Eleven-year-old Samar sits in her remedial classroom, in the UNICEF-rehabilitated Mazraet Alhota school, in rural Aleppo, northwestern Syria.

“I love the new school! There are drawings, colouring activities, and fans to help with the heat. I’m now in Grade 6. My dream is to become a math teacher. I returned to my village and my school, which were both destroyed. My family and I had been living in a camp, but now we’ve returned to our home in Alhota,” Samar says.





UNICEF invested in the foundation of Syria's education system. **A national school-based needs assessment** – the first in 14 years – gave education planners an evidence base for informed decision-making, while Syria's new eligibility for the Global Partnership for Education promises to unlock access to long-term international financing.

UNICEF support enabled students to sit **national examinations**, including for the first time in northeast Syria. **Teachers were also trained** in psychosocial support, early learning, and safe school practices, and 56 Teacher Resource Centres across 11 governorates were upgraded. When violence erupted in coastal regions and As-Sweida, temporary learning spaces ensured children's right to learn remained non-negotiable.

After years of conflict and widespread damage to the education system in rural Aleppo, the return of displaced families has created an urgent need for safe and quality education. In response, UNICEF is helping rebuild children's futures by rehabilitating schools, installing prefabricated classrooms, and ensuring that returnee children can learn in safe and supported environments

UNICEF/UN86866/Asmar ©

Education: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

3.7 million

children, including over 1.8 million girls, reached with education services.

14,598

children reached through digital and distance learning.

717,669

students sat national examinations.

78 schools

rehabilitated; 126 prefabricated classrooms installed; furniture provided for 225,859 children.

Nearly 2

million textbooks distributed.

20,353

education staff trained in psychosocial support, early childhood education, and safe school approaches.

41,000

children reached with temporary learning spaces following coastal violence.

73,163

children reached with emergency education services in As-Sweida.





*Majd, 6, participates in a group activity provided by a UNICEF-supported child protection mobile team in Sayyeda Zeinab, Rural Damascus
UNICEF/UNI882906/Bashour ©*

Child Protection

After 14 years of war, trauma is prevalent among Syria's children, according to a household survey carried out in northern Syria, with over a third of girls and nearly a third of boys reporting significant emotional distress. At the same time, nearly 300,000 unexploded ordnance devices¹³ lie scattered across fields, roadsides, and playgrounds, making Syria the second highest country in the world for ordnance casualties in 2025; one in three of them are children. According to United Nations figures, over 1,000 grave violations against children have been documented.¹⁴

Six-year-old Majd from As-Sweida stopped drawing after his family fled to a shelter in Rural Damascus, a small but telling sign of the trauma displacement inflicts on children. "The thing I miss most about home

is my drawings," he said. "My mother used to hang them all over the house because she said they were beautiful."

His passion resurfaced during a therapeutic session run by a UNICEF-supported child protection mobile team. "We realized how much he missed drawing when he sketched our house during a psychological first aid session," his mother Wafaa recalled, prompting her to buy him a drawing book and resume hanging his artwork around their shelter room, a conscious effort, she said, to rebuild normalcy: "I know this is temporary, but I want to rebuild routines for my children, like before."

UNICEF's child protection programming in 2025 was comprehensive. On policy, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social

Affairs and Labour to complete Syria's **first national Child Protection System Mapping and Visioning exercise**, generating the evidence base needed to address structural weaknesses in the child protection system, such as fragmented governance, workforce shortages, weak justice systems, and civil registration barriers.

Restorative justice reforms for children in contact/conflict with the law advanced through partnership with the Ministries of Justice and Interior, and a **national social service workforce assessment** was initiated to develop a costed training plan for social workers and case managers.

As lead of the **Child Protection Area of Responsibility**, UNICEF coordinated services across all 14 governorates. Partners collectively served over 1.5 million people, including returnees and displaced families, through case management, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), parenting programmes, and prevention services.

Community-based MHPSS brought much-needed support to children suffering from trauma and distress, while structured parenting programmes recognised that children heal faster when the adults around them are supported too. Frontline workers were also trained across child protection disciplines, and local humanitarian workers, who work long and emotionally taxing hours, received well-being support.

Gender-based violence prevention programming was delivered to children and women facing heightened risk amid displacement. And in a country where unexploded ordnance remains a daily threat, children were equipped with know-how and skills to recognise and avoid landmines, grenades, and other deadly remnants of war during life-saving **explosive ordnance risk education (EORE)** sessions.

"Today, they showed us how to spot explosive ordnance and how to stay safe," Ghuson, 10, says, proudly during a psychosocial support session at the Li'ajliha community centre at Deir-ez-Zor. Syria remains one of the most heavily contaminated countries in the world, posing a severe threat to civilians, especially children. Through centres like the one above, UNICEF is providing psychosocial support and EORE for children and their mothers, helping them heal, regain strength, and cope with the daily challenges of their difficult reality.



© UNICEF/UN184243

Child Protection: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

918,484

girls and boys reached with child protection services.

68,274

caregivers participated in structured parenting programmes.

707,199

children received life-saving EORE.

14,768

children received individual case management from 323 trained caseworkers.

1,157

humanitarian workers supported through well-being programmes.

4,276

frontline workers trained across child protection disciplines

178,965

children received community-based MHPSS.

214,899

children and 55,927 women reached with gender-based violence prevention programming.





Social Protection

In Syria today, there is almost no safety net for the most vulnerable families and children. Ninety per cent of the population lives in poverty, 1 in 4 adults is unemployed, and over a decade of conflict has gutted the social protection systems that families once relied on. For millions of households, a single setback such as a sick child or a sudden displacement is enough to tip a family into destitution.

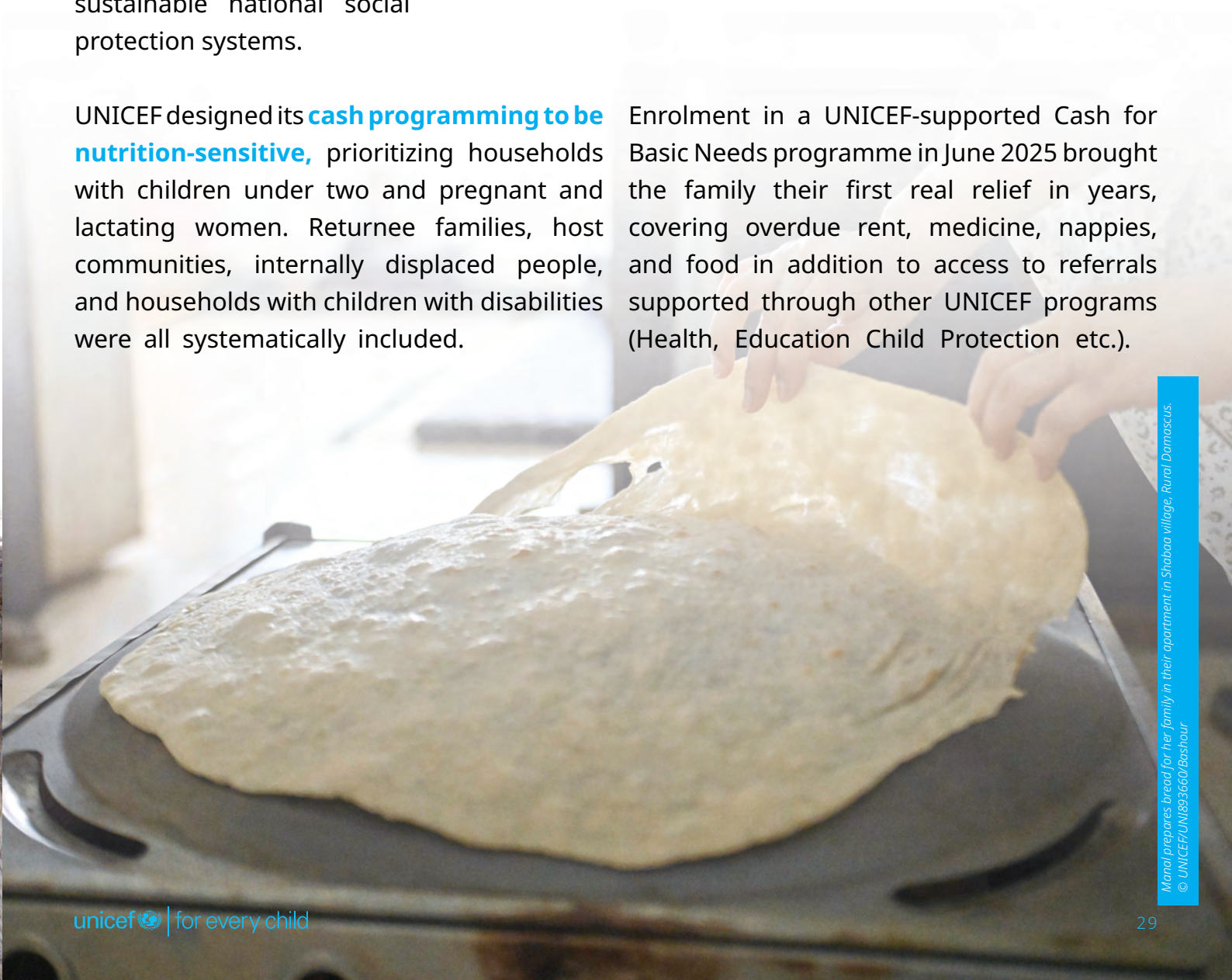
In 2025, UNICEF's social protection work focused on **delivering cash** to vulnerable families to cover their basic needs such as food, and hygiene, while also helping build sustainable national social protection systems.

UNICEF designed its **cash programming to be nutrition-sensitive**, prioritizing households with children under two and pregnant and lactating women. Returnee families, host communities, internally displaced people, and households with children with disabilities were all systematically included.

Manal, a mother of three from Deir-ez-Zor in eastern Syria, spent years moving her family across Syria, sleeping in the desert, under tents, and in damaged buildings, before settling in Shabaa four years ago. All three of her children were born with congenital heart defects and anaemia, and with her husband's income consumed by medicine and tests, food security became a constant crisis.

"Sometimes, all we have is bread," she said. "Maize bread is essential for my children's condition, but it's too expensive."

Enrolment in a UNICEF-supported Cash for Basic Needs programme in June 2025 brought the family their first real relief in years, covering overdue rent, medicine, nappies, and food in addition to access to referrals supported through other UNICEF programs (Health, Education Child Protection etc.).



“When I started receiving the cash assistance, the nightmares began to ease,” Manal said. “But the most important thing, I finally bought an oven so I can bake bread at home, especially maize bread for my children.”

Cash delivery was developed from the start to connect families to the national systems being built alongside it. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Finance to develop a **national Social Protection reform roadmap**, advance child-focused budget planning, and initiate a Multidimensional Poverty Strategy, ensuring that as Syria rebuilds its public institutions, children’s needs are embedded in national budgets.

The commitment to leaving no child behind extended beyond income support. Syria’s first **report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** was supported through national consultations, marking a historic step toward accountability for children and adults with disabilities. UNICEF is also supporting Syria’s application to the Child Nutrition Fund, potentially attracting significant new financing for one of the country’s most urgent child survival priorities.



Social Protection: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

86,708

people reached across 11 governorates through the Integrated Social Protection Programme.

6,367

children with disabilities received cash and referrals support.

80,341

people received cash transfers for basic needs.

41,274

people supported through nutrition-linked cash targeting children under the age of one and pregnant and lactating women.



Adolescent Development

Syria has a large and energized youth population, and in 2025, UNICEF partnered with the government to invest in their energy, ideas, and voices.

That investment started with building the institutional base for adolescent development. UNICEF is supporting the newly established Ministry of Sports and Youth in the development of Syria's first **National Youth Policy**, while a **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) pilot** in Aleppo enabled a replicable model for reintegrating youth into quality vocational training.

Young people across Syria were able to access **vocational training, digital skills, and entrepreneurship programmes** in 2025 through youth centres and mobile teams, gaining valuable skills and tangible pathways to employment.

Beyond skills, over 400 community initiatives invested in **youth as civic actors**, and when emergencies struck, young people were mobilized, volunteering, for example, in Aleppo where they carried out damage assessments, cleared streets, and supported recovery efforts together with professional responders.

Farah, 21, from Dar'a in southwestern Syria, grew up cocooned by an overprotective family, a childhood she now recognises left her socially ill-equipped and isolated. "I was that girl sitting alone on the school bench," she says. "Every two or three girls were

laughing, playing, chatting. And there I was, quiet and invisible."

The trauma ran deeper still: at three or four years old, she witnessed a sniper kill her friend in the street, a moment she believes gave birth to the frightened, withdrawn girl she would spend years trying to leave behind. Everything shifted when she discovered a UNICEF-supported youth-friendly space in Dar'a, where vocational training and life skills courses unlocked something unexpected.

"Those courses helped me understand myself," she says. "During the life skills sessions, I discovered the roots of my fears." Today, Farah delivers child protection and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) awareness sessions at the same centre where her own recovery began and is studying Japanese with dreams of opening a counselling centre in Dar'a.



Farah, 21, speaks with the UNICEF protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) focal point from the Damascus Field Office during her visit to a UNICEF-supported youth-friendly space in Dar'a. © UNICEF/UN1816684/Al-Akhrad

Adolescent Development: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

156,662

young people, including 6,095 with disabilities, reached with skills-building programmes.

140

young people trained in digital content creation and cultural documentation.

2,000

youth volunteers supported post-hostility recovery in Aleppo.

200

youths gained on-the-job training; 100 transitioned to full-time employment.

69,109

young people mobilized during emergencies.

221,587

young people engaged through 400+ civic initiatives.





UNICEF Syria Ambassador Qays Sheikh Najib engages with a young inventor at the Blue Seed Art Contest, held at Tishreen Park in Damascus on World Children's Day, 20 November 2025. The contest drew over 300 entries from children and youth all over Syria, reflecting their creative vision of safety, learning, peace, and inclusion.
© UNICEF/UNI816684/Al-Akrad

Working Smarter: Cross-Sectoral Approaches that Multiply Impact

In Syria, where needs are great and resources limited, UNICEF's cross-sectoral work ensures that every intervention is amplified by communication, evidence, accountability, and coordination, reaching more children, more effectively, and leaving stronger systems behind.

In 2025, **social and behaviour change programming** reached 5.2 million people through multi-channel health messaging and community dialogue, driving demand for immunization, hygiene, and education services. A **Back-to-School mass media campaign** alone engaged 2.4 million people, helping families take the step of sending children back to learn.

Advocacy brought Syria's children to the centre of global attention at a time when international engagement and donor confidence are vital. UNICEF became the first United Nations agency in Syria to appoint a **Goodwill Ambassador for Children** – Syrian actor Qays Sheikh Najib, bringing a prominent and widely admired public figure to help amplify UNICEF's advocacy and mobilize support.

Syria also achieved the world's highest engagement in the **'I Am' campaign**, evidence-based advocacy directly enabled students in three governorates to sit national examinations. And on World Children's Day, over 300 children from across the country expressed their rights and dreams through art, music and robotics during the UNICEF-supported **Blue Seed Art Contest**.

Good programming requires good evidence. In 2025, UNICEF secured a landmark endorsement to implement Syria's **first Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey** in 20 years, which will generate the national data on children and women that Syria needs to plan, budget, and deliver programmes effectively. **A Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents** provided the evidence base to inform UNICEF's next Country Programme.



Nearly 1.6 million beneficiaries were reached with **PSEA awareness activities** and a service hotline managed **complaints and feedback** cases. Additionally, 100 per cent compliance was achieved across all six field offices with the Emergency Preparedness Plan, meaning that if the next crisis strikes, UNICEF is ready.

Cross-sectoral: The numbers behind the impact in 2025

Social and behaviour change

5.2 million

people reached through health messaging and community dialogue.

2.4 million

people reached through Back-to-School mass media campaign.

941 frontline

workers trained on community engagement.

Advocacy and visibility



16 press releases, 50 stories, 90 photo albums, 44 videos published.



60,000 students enabled to sit national examinations through advocacy.

Accountability and protection

1.6 million

beneficiaries, including 808,595 children, reached with PSEA awareness.

5,325

complaints and feedback cases managed; 99% resolution rate.

774

individuals trained on Accountability to Affected Populations.

Emergency preparedness

100%

compliance with Emergency Preparedness Plan across all six field offices.

5 emergency

response plans activated, including inter-agency drought response.

What Syrian Children Need Next

2025 laid the groundwork for a new chapter for Syria's children. Building on that foundation, 2026 must be the year of sustained commitment, bold investment, and decisive action. We are calling for the following:

Restore essential services.

Health facilities, schools, and water systems must be rehabilitated and kept running so that children can extend their rights to access the basics they need to survive and thrive.

Protect families from poverty.

The high poverty levels in Syria mean that stronger cash assistance and a national social protection system are essential to give families a real chance to recover.

Make communities safe.

With nearly over 300,000 explosive devices buried across the country and children among the primary victims, demining and explosive ordnance risk education must be urgently scaled up.

Get every child into school.

2.45 million children are still out of school, making the need for expanded learning opportunities even more critical.

Invest in young people.

Syria's young generation is ready to lead; they need skills, opportunities, and a seat at the table to help rebuild their country.

Support Syria's recovery at scale.

Donors and the international community must turn commitment into action with flexible, sustained multi-year funding that matches the enormous scale of what Syria's children and the country need.

Protect every child from violence and harm.

Child protection systems must be strengthened, justice reformed, and mental health support scaled up so that no child is left to carry the weight of war alone.

The Circle of Support:

Partners who made 2025 possible



Governments:

Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.



Private Sector:

LEGO Foundation.



Multilateral:

Global Partnership for Education (GPE), GAVI the Vaccine Alliance



UNICEF National Committees:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland & Liechtenstein, and the United States.



Pooled Funds:

Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Syria Humanitarian Fund

Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) 2025 Funding Status

Syria's children cannot afford a funding gap of nearly 63 per cent. The tables below show what was raised in humanitarian resources and what is still urgently needed to keep UNICEF delivering for the millions of vulnerable children and their families in the country.

	Requirements (US\$)	Funds received in 2025 (US\$)	Funding gap (US\$)	Funding gap (%)	Expenditures in 2025 (US\$)
Health	75,461,599	32,647,057	42,814,542	57%	19,656,602
Nutrition	39,242,342	26,894,559	12,347,783	31%	14,233,106
WASH	129,938,901	40,889,530	89,049,371	69%	22,192,376
Education	133,893,107	37,305,703	96,587,404	72%	17,804,015
Child Protection	55,273,846	22,718,420	32,555,426	59%	11,613,557
Social Policy	28,661,539	14,158,513	14,503,026	51%	6,743,661
ADAP	15,931,385	2,734,490	13,196,895	83%	1,152,554
SBC	1,730,769	878,276	852,493	49%	683,229
PSEA	969,231	489,487	479,744	49%	114,454
AAP	329,996	51,150	278,846	84%	1,732
Grand Total	481,432,715	178,767,185	302,665,530	62.9%	94,195,286

2026 Funding Outlook

Delivering for Children Through Humanitarian Action and Systems Recovery

Syria remains at a critical turning point. While millions of children continue to face urgent humanitarian needs driven by displacement, poverty and damaged essential services, the country is also entering a phase of early recovery and systems rebuilding.

In 2026, UNICEF will continue to work across both tracks, delivering life-saving assistance while investing in stronger national systems and institutions to support sustainable progress for children.



A. Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC): **US\$481M**

Focused on immediate, life-saving interventions across health and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, child protection and social protection, ensuring vulnerable children and families can access essential services in times of crisis.



B. Country Programme . Document (CPD): **US\$87M**

Focused on strengthening systems, institutions and policy frameworks across key sectors to support recovery, resilience and long-term development outcomes for children and young people.



Together, these complementary funding streams reflect UNICEF Syria's dual-track approach: responding to urgent humanitarian needs while helping lay the foundations for stronger, more resilient systems for every child.



unicef  | for every child







Social media



Website

UNICEF Syria

For more information:

Meritxell Relano Arana
Representative
UNICEF Syria
mrelano@unicef.org

Suad Almarani
Acting Chief of Communication and Advocacy
UNICEF Syria
salmarani@unicef.org