

UGANDA

Annual Report 2024



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Abbreviations

TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level	US\$	United States dollar
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund		



A message of hope

As we look back on 2024, I feel blessed to have been appointed as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative to the Republic of Uganda and to have taken up my position at the end of September. I am proud to lead a high-functioning team that achieved so much during the year under the leadership of my predecessor, Dr. Munir Safiaddin. We must, and will, build on our efforts to do even more for the children of Uganda.

During 2024, UNICEF Uganda supported policy formulation across sectors – for example, the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy – and implemented enhanced service delivery, an example of which is improved newborn care through health worker mentorship.

Communities were engaged to devise local solutions to challenges facing children, such as the instrumental work of child well-being committees in leading integrated responses to child protection issues in their communities. Social and behaviour change and service uptake were strengthened through multimedia campaigns on health, education and protection. UNICEF also addressed humanitarian needs, responding effectively to refugee influxes and natural disasters such as the floods and landslides in Bulambuli, eastern Uganda. In this report, you will find details of all these activities and the results we have achieved alongside our partners.

I am particularly excited as 2025 will be the year we develop our next five-year cycle of cooperation with the Government of Uganda. Given that this will be our last country programme before the end of the Sustainable-Development-Goals-2030 period, we want to ensure that our efforts are designed to address key areas that will need accelerated progress for women and children who are the most deprived and vulnerable.

We are aware that while international development resources are shrinking, we must address several complex challenges that children in Uganda face – poverty, teenage pregnancy, health threats, malnutrition, poor access to water and sanitation, climate change impacts, low completion of education, youth unemployment, violence against children, gender inequality and humanitarian crises, such as disease outbreaks, floods, droughts and ongoing refugee influxes. We also must strike a balance between development and humanitarian response, including ensuring the preparedness and resilience of communities.

Regarding these challenges, we will need to focus on specific vulnerabilities faced by children and identify UNICEF's comparative advantage to address them. Secondly, we will need to work across sectors and leverage our presence as a multisectoral agency with the government in the lead. Thirdly, we will need to enhance our partnerships, within the United Nations family, with development partners, donors, non-governmental organizations, civil society and, importantly, the private sector. The challenges are so complex that addressing them is beyond the capacity of just a few entities – it needs us all to come together. And finally, we will need to ensure efficiency so that all our finite resources go towards enhancing the lives of our children.

To get there, we will need your support! Let's do this together!

Dr. Robin Nandy
UNICEF Representative

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During 2024,
UNICEF Uganda
supported policy
formulation
across sectors
and implemented
enhanced service
delivery.”



The trends shaping children's future in Uganda



UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY

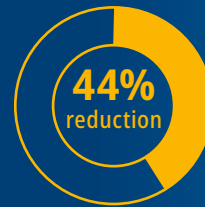


Per 1,000 live births:



64 deaths (2016)
52 deaths (2022)

MATERNAL MORTALITY



Per 100,000 live births:



336 deaths (2016)
189 deaths (2022)



NUTRITION

Stunting



decreased
29% (2016)
26% (2022)

Wasting



stagnant
at around
4%

Exclusive breastfeeding



increased
66% (2016)
94% (2022)



WATER AND SANITATION

Clean water supplies

stagnant from
2016 to 2022



67% (rural)
73% (urban)

Basic sanitation access

improved from
2016 to 2022



27% (2016)
29.5% (2022)

HIV/AIDS



New paediatric HIV infections

decreased per 1,000
susceptible population



1.3 (2022)
1.23 (2024)

Knowledge of HIV prevention is low

56% for males
aged 15–24 years



54% for females
aged 15–24 years

Early HIV diagnosis testing for infants

declined from 2022/23
to 2023/24 financial year



91% (2022/23)
81% (2023/24)

Antiretroviral treatment coverage

for children (aged 0–14 years)
living with HIV **increased**



69% (2020)
83% (2024)

CHILD PROTECTION



76% of children (aged
1–14 years) experience
violent discipline



40% of children
(aged 5–17) are engaged in
harmful child labour



42% of women (aged
25–49) are **married**
before age 18



50% of girls (aged 15–19) and **64% of**
women (aged 20–24) face **sexual abuse**
as children (**before age 15**)



While the **national female genital**
mutilation rate is 0.3%, rates in practising
districts range from **13% to 52%**

EDUCATION



Primary leaving examination pass rate dropped from **88.6%** (2022) to **78.6%** (2023).



SOCIAL PROTECTION



National monetary poverty rate **decreased**

21.4% (2016/17 financial year)

20.3% (2019/20 financial year)

While the national **multidimensional poverty rate is 4%**, it is **much higher** in some subregions:



84.9% (Karamoja)



63.6% (Acholi)



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS



At the end of 2024, Uganda **hosted the most refugees in Africa**

1,796,609

refugees and
asylum-seekers
registered



54% children



25% youth



189,522 refugees and asylum-seekers were newly registered in 2024



2.4 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2024, including 1.6 million children



SOCIAL SECTOR SPENDING

National budget expenditure on the social sector **decreased** overall from the 2023/24 to 2024/25 financial year:

Education	Health	Child protection	Water, sanitation and hygiene	Social protection
8.4% 7%	7.7% 5.5%	0.6% 0.5%	2.0% 1.4%	unchanged at 0.6%

Sources: Kwaggwa, et al., 2022; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2025; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016, 2021, 2023, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; UNICEF Uganda, n.d.; United Nations Development Programme and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2024; UNHCR and Government of Uganda, 2025.



Snapshot of impact by UNICEF Uganda and its partners in 2024: A year in photos



UPSTREAM POLICY RESULTS

With support from UNICEF Uganda, **child rights indicators** were integrated into the **2024 Census and 2023/24 Household Survey**, providing a strong data foundation for targeted child poverty reduction initiatives.



UNICEF Uganda influenced a landmark decision to waive birth certificate fees, **improving children's access to birth registration.**

UNICEF Uganda's efforts led to the **adoption and nationwide implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)** under the U-Catch Up programme to **improve foundational skills** in children.



UNICEF Uganda's advocacy effectively resulted in the **approval of the Early Childhood and Care Policy, enhancing early learning and care programmes** for young children.

UNICEF Uganda helped develop **National Electronic Community Health Information System implementation guidelines** to improve health data accessibility and quality.



UNICEF Uganda's advocacy led to the designation of remand homes as magistrates' courts, **improving children's access to juvenile justice services.**





SERVICE DELIVERY RESULTS

Amidst a **polio outbreak**, **3.3 million** and **3.5 million children** were **vaccinated** in the first and second round respectively, under the leadership of the Ministry of Health with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; Global Polio Eradication Initiative; UNICEF; the World Health Organization and other partners.



A total of **9.7 million children** aged 6–59 months, including **2.5 million in Karamoja** and **refugee-hosting districts**, were provided with **vitamin A supplementation** through the initiatives of UNICEF and other partners.



In districts supported by UNICEF Uganda, **69 per cent of births** occurred in **health facilities** compared to the national average of 67 per cent.





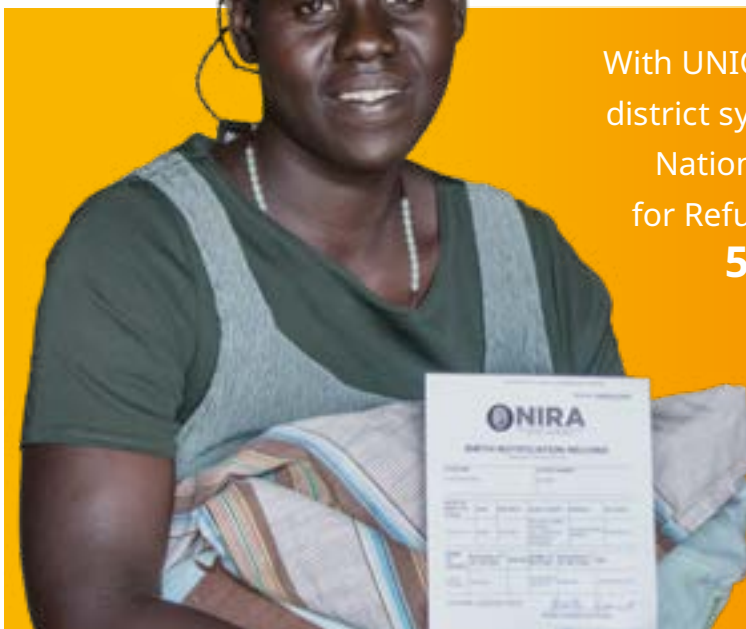


Some **3,435 vulnerable adolescent girls** were supported with **peer mentoring, youth-friendly services and cash transfers** in Kampala through the GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme, which is supported by UNICEF and partners with funding from the Belgian government.

A total of **112,465 people** were reached with **mental health and psychosocial support services** through the Sauti 116 child helpline and mental health chatbot across UNICEF-supported districts.



With UNICEF's support through district systems and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), **over 540,000 children** had their **births registered**, including 297,138 under age 5 in 33 UNICEF-supported districts.





¹ The campaign to end female genital mutilation reached 1,128,047 people and the child marriage campaign reached 40,156 people.



HUMANITARIAN RESULTS



More than 82,186 emergency-affected women, girls and boys obtained access to **gender-based violence prevention, risk mitigation and/or response interventions** in the districts of Ntoroko, Kasese and Kiryandongo.



**More than
33,200 children**

aged 6–59 months
with **severe
wasting** affected by
humanitarian crises
were **admitted
for treatment.**



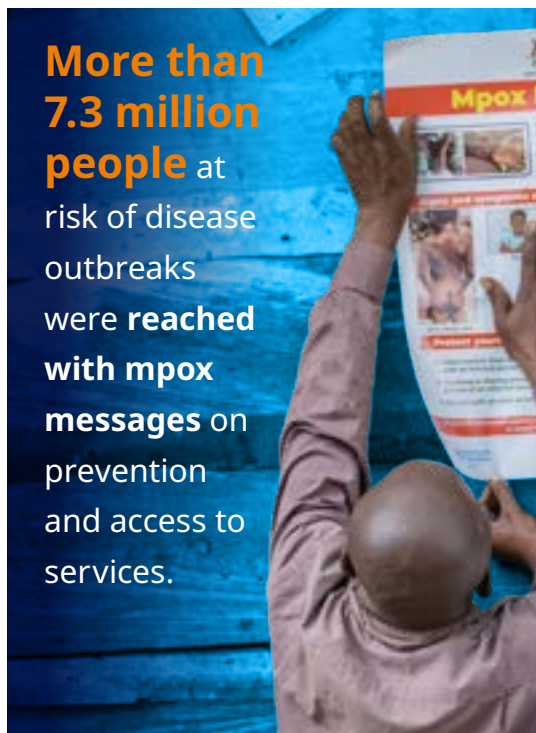
A total of **152,155 children**
affected by crises were
**vaccinated against
measles** in Karamoja
and other districts
like Ntoroko,
Kiryandongo and
Koboko.



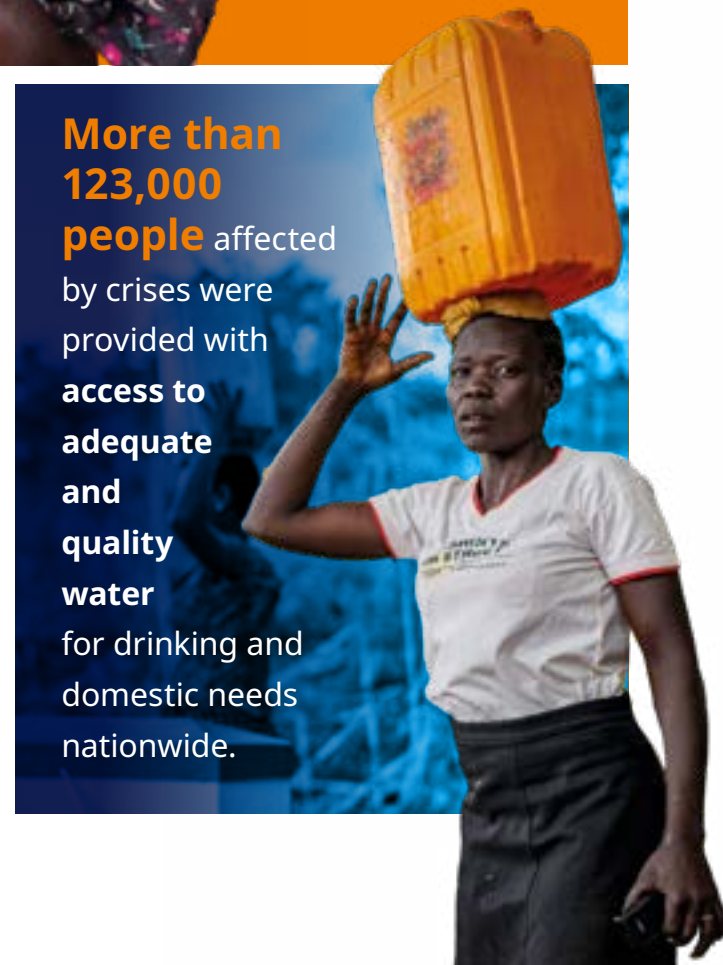
A total of **42,393 children** (20,126 boys,
22,267 girls) and **462 caregivers**
(335 female, 127 male) accessed individual
case management and community-
based **mental health and
psychosocial
support
services** in
Kiryandongo,
Ntoroko and
Kasese
districts.



**More than
7.3 million
people** at
risk of disease
outbreaks
were **reached
with mpox
messages** on
prevention
and access to
services.



**More than
123,000
people** affected
by crises were
provided with
**access to
adequate
and
quality
water**
for drinking and
domestic needs
nationwide.



HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WASH

Healthy beginnings, thriving futures

Under the blazing sun in Nakoreto, Kotido District, north-eastern Uganda, mothers gather for nutrition education sessions at an early childhood development centre. During these sessions, they learn to measure their child's nutritional status using a mid-upper-arm circumference tape and understand the importance of balanced diets, thanks to practical demonstrations. The centre is part of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Uganda-supported Karamoja Early Childhood Nutrition project, funded by the Government of Ireland, which integrates nutrition services into early childhood development activities. Mary Lochlil, one of the participants, shares her story of transformation after she started including fruit and vegetables in her baby Emmanuel's diet. "I didn't think greens were that important," she admits. Her son is now doing well, thanks to Mary learning about balanced diets and sustainable farming through the project's educational sessions. By incorporating these lessons, Mary now grows her own vegetables and ensures a balanced diet for her family.





To read the full story,
scan the QR code.

These grassroots efforts to improve community nutrition and health are part of Uganda's wider child survival and development agenda, which has seen a notable decline in both child and maternal deaths and a reduction in stunting. Successful HIV interventions have also decreased new infections and increased antiretroviral coverage, while small gains have been made in sanitation access. The coverage of clean water supply in both rural and urban areas, has, however, stagnated.

While ongoing challenges persist, the Government of Uganda, supported by UNICEF Uganda and partners, has made remarkable strides in ensuring children and families receive vital health, nutrition, HIV and WASH services. This work has been made possible by generous funding from the governments of Canada, Iceland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, the Finnish and Japanese National Committees for UNICEF and the United States Fund for UNICEF, as well as the European Commission, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, European Investment Bank and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office/United Nations Road Safety Collaboration.

UNICEF Uganda has been actively supporting the health sector by focusing on the development of crucial policies and guidelines aimed at improving service quality and delivery. With support from UNICEF Uganda, the Electronic Community Health Information System was effectively implemented in 21 out of 146 districts, involving 18,454 community health extension workers and village health teams. The roll-out resulted in a 40 per cent improvement in reporting rates through the District Health

Information System 2 from 2022 to 2024, vital for identifying and monitoring zero-dose and under-immunized children and addressing access to basic sanitation and nutrition services.

Support was also provided to create a geospatial data framework that will enable better tracking and allocation of health resources. Additionally, UNICEF Uganda played a technical role in formulating the National Community Health Services (NCHS) implementation guidelines and an urban health framework, both designed to strengthen health services delivery. A draft investment case for the NCHS was also developed to attract funding and ensure the sustainability of health initiatives.

During the year, integrated support to the government's primary healthcare service delivery saw significant progress, with 69 per cent of births taking place in health facilities in districts supported by UNICEF Uganda. Mentorship in early essential newborn care benefited 908 healthcare providers across 186 health facilities in 24 districts, leading to 90 per cent of deliveries being safe and ensuring that 75 per cent of newborns received kangaroo mother care, which emphasizes skin-to-skin contact between mother and baby. Children's and women's survival rates were also notable, with 97 per cent of 13,669 pregnant women in high dependency units and 99 per cent of 10,894 sick newborns in special care units recovering, following treatment in the West Nile subregion. The key lessons learned will be disseminated and scaled up nationwide.

Following an outbreak of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus, UNICEF Uganda, in partnership with the Uganda National Expanded Programme on

Immunization, local district governments and the World Health Organization, conducted a successful polio vaccination campaign across 49 districts. Two rounds of vaccination were completed, reaching 3.3 million children in the first round and 3.5 million children in the second round. This campaign was strengthened by the dedicated contributions of health workers (including community health workers), who were instrumental in vaccine advocacy and the dissemination of reliable health information.

UNICEF Uganda joined forces with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and communities of people and children living with HIV to support the government in developing and implementing a comprehensive national accelerated action plan aimed at ending paediatric AIDS by 2030.

In the 29 districts supported by UNICEF Uganda, 568 facilities continued to provide antiretroviral therapy to 19,765 (98 per cent) of pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV, as well as 7,358 children aged 0–9 and 19,000 adolescents living with HIV. Impressively, 94 per cent of mothers, 88 per cent of children and 90 per cent of adolescents on antiretroviral therapy achieved viral suppression, meaning that the level of HIV in their blood was reduced to undetectable levels.

With UNICEF Uganda's assistance, the Ministry of Health reached over 5.1 million mothers and caregivers with counselling on infant and young child feeding, such as exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months, appropriate introduction of complementary foods and continued breastfeeding up to 2 years and beyond. At the same time,

UNICEF provided Vitamin A supplements for all children, including child refugees, in Uganda that were used in the supplementation intervention. UNICEF Uganda contributed technical and financial assistance for national planning, including need quantification, programme coordination and monitoring and the printing of Child Health Cards for documenting the intervention.

Climate-induced drought, the influx of refugees and high child food poverty in Uganda increase children's vulnerability to wasting. UNICEF supported the government in pre-positioning nutrition supplies, and identifying, detecting, referring and treating children with severe wasting to prevent deaths. In 2024, over 53,000 children aged 6–59 months suffering from severe acute malnutrition were treated with UNICEF's support.

To increase access to quality diets, UNICEF Uganda engaged with the private sector to produce egg powder for children and carried out a scoping exercise for 'early foods' for children. UNICEF also rolled out interventions for school-age children and adolescents, reaching 783,331 young people through nutrition messaging at community level. Efforts to enhance the food environment include ongoing development of nutrient profile modules and research on front-of-package labelling.

Approximately 12,500 children in 25 learning facilities and safe spaces in the West Nile and Karamoja subregions accessed appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services. UNICEF Uganda supported community-led total sanitation and market-based sanitation initiatives to drive demand for sanitation services, promoting a private sector-driven approach to open defecation-free communities, which resulted in 121,875 people gaining access to basic sanitation

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UNICEF Uganda is particularly grateful to the Government of Sweden for contributing to the whole UNICEF Country Programme. The provision of flexible funds by Sweden supports the flexibility and agility of the Country Programme to provide critical support to children in Uganda when and where this is most needed.

services in 2024. UNICEF Uganda also supported the installation of durable, solar-powered water systems and sanitation facilities in five healthcare facilities in Terego and Adjumani districts.

In preparation for the United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP29), the Ministry of Water and Environment endorsed the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action and committed to prioritizing child-sensitive policies, integrating children's voices into decision-making and ensuring that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) reflect the unique vulnerabilities and needs of children.

During the year, UNICEF Uganda continued to invest in upstream work, enhancing normative guidance for the operation and maintenance of water infrastructure.





EDUCATION

Bright minds in the making

Esther, a 13-year-old, was supported by UNICEF Uganda to travel to the Ivory Coast. She joined other young people from across Africa to participate in education advocacy training. "Education for a refugee is no easy feat anywhere in the world. In the advocacy training, I learnt that it takes refugee children six times the time it takes a native child to finish school. For example, I had finished my primary education in Congo by the time my family fled to Uganda. Still, when I was enrolled into school in Uganda, I was taken four years back into Primary 4 because there was no integrating process for people from French-speaking countries," says Esther.



To read the full story,
scan the QR code.

For youthful minds like Esther's and those of her peers across Uganda, the key to unlocking their full potential lies in quality education. This essential foundation not only fuels their personal growth but also shapes them into productive adults poised to drive Uganda's development.

Yet, despite continued efforts to improve its education system, Uganda faces substantial challenges. Declining examination pass rates, gaps in early childhood education, developmental setbacks near school age, decreasing literacy and numeracy skills and low primary completion rates highlight major issues in preparing children and adolescents for further education and employment.

However, 2024 marked a year of considerable progress in addressing these challenges, with the Ministry of Education and Sports, UNICEF Uganda and its partners making substantial advancements in enhancing education, early childhood development and youth skilling services across the country. These achievements were made possible by significant funding from the governments of Canada, Iceland, Ireland and the Netherlands, as well as the Canadian, French, Italian and United Kingdom National Committees for UNICEF, the Lego Foundation (through the Danish National Committee for UNICEF) and the European Commission.

UNICEF's support successfully reached 52,365 children across 645 early childhood development centres, integrating WASH, nutrition and health services to provide a holistic early learning and care environment. Additionally, through nationwide campaigns and advocacy, 4.5 million people were made aware of the crucial role of play in child development.

Following dedicated UNICEF Uganda advocacy, May 2024 marked a milestone with the Ugandan cabinet's approval of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy. This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for enhancing children's early learning and welfare, which is anticipated to boost the quality and reach of ECCE initiatives dramatically throughout Uganda.

Investing in teacher capacity, particularly through focused training programmes, was also key. A total of 605 teachers received specialized training in competence-based learning assessment, which included considerations for children with disabilities. This effort enhances student performance appraisal, ensuring that teaching methods are inclusive and effective.

UNICEF Uganda supported the Ministry of Education and Sports in extensive evaluations of literacy and numeracy for 116,880 learners, half of whom were girls. Focused on children's reading comprehension and numerical skills, these assessments are critical for tailoring interventions that enhance foundational learning outcomes.

To address low learning outcomes, UNICEF Uganda piloted TaRL, a remedial education approach designed to help children acquire foundational reading and arithmetic skills quickly. TaRL has been adopted by the Ministry of Education and Sports and is set for nationwide implementation under the U-Catch Up programme, reflecting a commitment to providing all children with the chance to learn and fulfil their potential.

Another major focus was on equipping adolescents and young people with essential skills for the 21st century. A total of 126,836 adolescents, including vulnerable and marginalized groups from 23 UNICEF-supported districts, were trained with



Another major focus was on equipping adolescents and young people with essential skills for the 21st century.

support from UNICEF Uganda in skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and effective communication. This was complemented by the integration of holistic life-skills education in 12 per cent of all primary and secondary government schools thus far. By targeting multiple skill sets and prioritizing inclusive practices, UNICEF Uganda ensured that diverse adolescent populations had opportunities to develop market-relevant skills, positioning them for better future employment and societal engagement.

In 2024, digital education transformation was a significant focus, emphasizing the move towards technology-enhanced learning environments that will prepare children for the modern economy. With funding from the Government of Sweden, UNICEF Uganda supported the government in launching the National Digital Agenda Strategy and Digital Skills Framework. Leveraging UNICEF Uganda's partnership with Airtel, 139 schools were connected to free internet, expanding access to digital learning to more than 45,000 learners. A digital skills training toolkit was successfully piloted by the Ministry of Education and Sports in secondary schools and information and communication technology centres and will be integrated within the education system.

CHILD PROTECTION

A safer environment for children

Following a brutal 19-month war in Sudan that displaced nearly 3 million people, there has been a significant influx of Sudanese refugees into Uganda, particularly to the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement. Most of the refugees are women and children, and some children are unaccompanied due to the loss or unknown status of their parents. Nine-year-old Faima Mohmm, who fled the conflict in Khartoum with her mother and sister, recounted, "We were in a group of 10 people and moved a long distance up to the Ugandan border in Nimule, where we were received by a UNHCR team." At Kiryandongo, children like Faima benefit from child-friendly spaces set up by the Lutheran World Foundation and funded by UNICEF to provide psychosocial support and healthcare to those traumatized by the war.





Child-friendly spaces illustrate how UNICEF Uganda provides immediate support to at-risk children. These interventions, implemented in collaboration with the government and other partners, are part of significant efforts to improve child protection services and increase awareness of child rights in both humanitarian and development settings. Nevertheless, harmful practices like violent discipline, sexual abuse, child labour, child marriage and female genital mutilation continue to threaten the lives of many children in Uganda. Moreover, issues such as mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, are prevalent among children, who also face obstacles in securing legal identity due to low birth registration rates.

To address these challenges, UNICEF Uganda and its partners, funded by donors such as the governments of Spain and the United Kingdom, as well the Spanish, Swedish and Swiss National Committees for UNICEF and UNHCR, continue working closely with the government to strengthen the country's child protection system and improve the well-being and safety of children and women.

In 2024, UNICEF Uganda's advocacy efforts led to a landmark government decision to waive birth certificate fees for children registered within six months of birth, significantly improving children's access to legal identity rights. With funding from the Government of Sweden and support from UNICEF and UNHCR, over 540,000 had their births registered (including 151,708 refugee children and 145,430 registered through health facilities). These children, under the age of 5 years, were registered in 33 UNICEF-supported districts. UNICEF's support for the strengthening of the National Identification



and Registration Authority contributed to the birth registration of 243,327 children above 5 years of age.

A critical policy change involved the designation of remand homes as magistrates' courts, which expedited juvenile justice cases and improved children's access to justice services. These services were extended to over 10,300 children in contact with the law, and more than 1,500 were successfully reintegrated into their communities.

UNICEF Uganda supported the work of child well-being committees (CWCs) in 32 out of 34 districts. CWCs foster collaboration among judiciary, health, education, community services, police and civil society, thus driving integrated responses to child protection issues. They also set clear priorities and promote accountability, leading to substantial resource allocations for child protection. For example, because of CWC support, Kaabong District in northern Uganda allocated 3 million Ugandan shillings (US\$800) for child protection in the 2024/25 financial year.

To address fragmented data-collection systems, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, with support from UNICEF Uganda and the Government of the United States, developed standardized tools for a unified child well-being management information system. The procurement process for an information-and-communication-technology-based system was started, which will enhance the efficiency of data collection and reporting. Platforms like the Sauti 116, a child helpline, continued to offer real-time data on abuse and amplify children's voices, ensuring timely support for children affected by abuse and violence.

Close to 50,000 parents and caregivers across 24 districts were empowered through evidence-based parenting programmes, fostering nurturing family environments and reducing the risk of violence against children. At the same time, 3,060 children were equipped with life skills to identify and report violence, building a generation better prepared to protect themselves and others.

Social and behaviour change interventions reached 1,168,203 people, challenging harmful norms and promoting gender equality in 20² UNICEF-supported districts. Community dialogues led by local influencers engaged 126,159 individuals in discussions on child marriage and female genital mutilation, cultivating a culture of prevention and protection. Additionally, 59,727 individuals learned about safe reporting channels for sexual exploitation and abuse.

Since its launch in July 2024, innovative mechanisms such as the mental health chatbot have recorded 586 user interactions, contributing to UNICEF's efforts to provide mental health and psychosocial support to 112,465 people nationwide. Support was delivered through digital tools, including the Sauti 116 child helpline, and community-based interventions. In local communities, trained parasocial workers provided essential mental health services across all districts, while at the national level, Sauti 116 and the chatbot offered counselling support. Sauti 116 assisted 7,341 children affected by violence, providing tailored responses and referrals.

The government's endorsement of the National Operational Framework for Social Care and the National Strategy for Strengthening the Social Service Workforce was a major step towards delivering quality multisectoral

protection services. UNICEF Uganda helped train 1,182 parasocial workers and 200 police and health officers in child protection case management, strengthening the national response to violence against children.

Amid climate shocks, refugee influxes and public health emergencies, UNICEF Uganda also supported the government in scaling up protection services in refugee-affected districts. This included the training of parasocial workers, strengthening government coordination and integrating mental health and psychosocial support into child protection services. During the mpox outbreak, UNICEF Uganda mobilized resources to reinforce community-based services for children and women and strengthen the social service workforce's participation in government-led coordination. This commitment to a comprehensive response ensured strong case management and the provision of mental health and psychosocial support to 6,686 children.

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Social and behaviour change interventions reached 1,168,203 people, challenging harmful norms and promoting gender equality in 20 UNICEF-supported districts.

- 2 Kampala, Gulu, Arua, Mbarara, Kotido, Abim, Bukwo, Kween, Kapchorwa, Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Mukono, Kamuli, Wakiso, Kyenjojo, Koboko, Ntoroko, Kyegegwa, Yumbe and Kasese.



SOCIAL POLICY

Equal opportunities for all children

Pregnant, jobless and homeless at 15, Esther Wema turned to drugs and alcohol to escape her troubles, but only found herself deeper in despair. During Uganda's COVID-19 lockdown, she left her abusive uncle's home and lived in the streets of Kampala, giving birth in a one-room shack. Her life began to change when she was discovered by Belinda, a mentor from the GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme, implemented by UNICEF Uganda in partnership with Kampala Capital City Authority, with funding from the Government of Belgium, which supports vulnerable adolescent girls. Through regular mentorship, cash transfers and vocational training in hairdressing, Esther regained her confidence and self-worth. "We all marvel at the new Esther," said Belinda, highlighting Esther's transformation from addiction to a responsible young mother. Esther, aspiring to a better future, now sells apples to sustain herself and her 1-year-old daughter.



To read the full story,
scan the QR code



Esther's success story is just one example of the profound changes that can occur through dedicated support. It echoes the broader efforts by UNICEF and its partners, with funding from the governments of Belgium, Iceland and Sweden and the World Food Programme, to tackle child poverty, improve access to social protection and help increase the allocation of national resources to social sectors that benefit children and women.

Child poverty in Uganda remains a critical issue, with children experiencing consistently high levels of both monetary and multidimensional poverty. Children in specific subregions such as Karamoja and Acholi face even graver hardships. Addressing child poverty in Uganda needs a multifaceted approach that includes improving social services, enhancing economic opportunities and ensuring equitable resource distribution.

In 2024, a key accomplishment was the integration of child poverty measurement into policymaking processes. Through concerted advocacy efforts, UNICEF Uganda ensured that child rights indicators were embedded in the 2024 Population and Housing Census and the 2023/24 Uganda National Household Survey. This integration provides a robust data foundation for assessing monetary and multidimensional child poverty, thereby informing targeted poverty-reduction interventions.

A landmark development was the launch of the national chapter of the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty in Uganda. Co-chaired by UNICEF Uganda and Save the Children, this coalition represents an important step towards unified advocacy and comprehensive action against child poverty. A simplified and child-friendly version of the 2024 Multi-

Dimensional Child Poverty report (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024) was developed, broadening its reach among young readers and coinciding with the launch of the Coalition.

UNICEF Uganda, in collaboration with Kampala Capital City Authority, continued the impactful GirlsEmpoweringGirls programme, which extended vital support to 3,435 vulnerable adolescent girls in 2024. This programme encompasses peer mentoring, access to youth-friendly services and cash transfers, equipping these girls with the skills and resources needed to thrive.

The development of an investment case for social protection and the implementation of disability-focused studies highlighted UNICEF Uganda's commitment to inclusivity. These initiatives are foundational steps towards instituting a child disability grant, which would provide financial support to children with disabilities.

Additionally, UNICEF Uganda played a key role in finalizing the National Social Protection Strategy (2025–2029) and starting the process of setting up a single social registry – a centralized database that consolidates information on beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of social protection programmes, facilitating coordination, monitoring and targeted delivery of social services.

Capacity-building efforts targeted at national and subnational government bodies were key in optimizing public resource utilization for child-related spending. UNICEF Uganda's support enabled five local governments to enhance local revenue mobilization and ringfence funds for social services,

with specific successes observed in districts like Kyegegwa and Lamwo.

Budget analytics and policy advocacy facilitated an increase in per capita education spending from US\$50.5 in the 2023/24 financial year to US\$55.9 in the 2024/25 financial year. Although there was a substantial rise in the national budget, UNICEF Uganda's advocacy underscored the need for proportional allocation increases to the education and health sectors, ensuring sustainable investment in children's futures.

The drive for budget transparency saw Uganda's oversight score in the Open Budget Survey improve from 56/100 in 2021 to 67/100 in 2023. Disability-inclusive budgeting was further promoted through capacity-building activities and the creation of accessible versions of the Citizens Budget, complementing the existing braille versions.

Moreover, the enhanced Equity Atlas continued to play a crucial role in linking budgetary data with developmental outcomes across districts, enabling evidence-based policymaking. Through UNICEF Uganda's support, districts like Adjumani and Lamwo were able to allocate increased resources for education and social spending.

Finally, in support of national planning processes, UNICEF Uganda successfully supported the design of the Human Capital Development Programme of the Fourth National Development Plan (NDPIV) 2025/26–2029/30 (Government of Uganda, 2024) and supported district development planning across 34 districts, with specific strategies to tackle challenges in the social sector that affect children and families.

Humanitarian response

Kasese District in western Uganda faced a crisis when it became the epicentre of the country's mpox outbreak in 2024, with two confirmed cases at Bwera Hospital. The community was engulfed in fear and uncertainty, with families overwhelmed and children facing stigma and isolation. Dr. Amon Bwambale expressed the severity of the situation: "Children from the affected homes were ostracized by the community. They were seen as a threat, and their fundamental rights to safety and dignity were severely compromised." To combat the outbreak, the Ministry of Health, with partners like UNICEF Uganda and the Uganda Red Cross Society, quickly acted to prevent further spread, rebuild community systems and educate the public through training sessions and community engagement initiatives.



During the year, Uganda faced several crises that significantly impacted the well-being of its children and families. On 2 August, the Ministry of Health confirmed an outbreak of mpox, which escalated to 1,126 cases by 29 December, resulting in six deaths. This outbreak placed pressure on the country's already fragile healthcare system, complicating access to essential medical care and preventive measures for children and families.

At the same time, Uganda continued to be a refuge for an increasing number of refugees and asylum-seekers. By year-end, the country hosted 1,796,609 registered individuals, with women and children constituting 79 per cent of this population.

Moreover, the country grappled with climate-induced emergencies, including floods, droughts and extreme temperatures, which devastated 31 districts. These environmental disasters affected 413,756 people, subjecting children to further hardship.

In response, UNICEF and partners, with funding from European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, the Government of the United Kingdom, the Italian, Spanish, and Swedish National Committees for UNICEF and Mastercard Foundation, prioritized key humanitarian interventions across all its programme areas, working closely with government disaster preparedness and response authorities. UNICEF also recognizes the contributions of the flexible and unearmarked Global Humanitarian Thematic Fund.

As a result, 83,526 crisis-affected children gained access to formal and non-formal education, including early learning opportunities, ensuring continued learning despite disruptions. Efforts to safeguard vulnerable populations resulted in over 58,900 women, girls and

boys receiving gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and response interventions. These measures were crucial in providing protection and support to those at heightened risk due to the ongoing emergencies.

Addressing acute malnutrition, UNICEF Uganda worked with local health authorities to admit more than 33,200 children aged 6–59 months suffering from severe wasting into therapeutic treatment programmes. This intervention was vital in preserving the health and well-being of young children during the crisis.

Emergency health interventions continued with 152,155 children receiving supplemental measles vaccinations, strengthening their immunity against outbreaks. Additionally, more than 123,000 people, including many children, gained access to safe drinking and domestic water, reducing the risk of waterborne diseases.

In tackling the mpox outbreak, UNICEF's outreach efforts successfully spread evidence-informed messages on how to prevent infection and access services to over 7.3 million individuals, including children, adolescents, parents, caregivers and community leaders. This widespread communication was essential for curbing the spread of the disease and protecting public health.

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83,526 crisis-affected children gained access to formal and non-formal education, including early learning opportunities.



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Cross-sectoral impact

Cross-sectoral support in UNICEF's programming significantly amplifies its impact by ensuring a comprehensive approach to addressing children's multidimensional needs.

In 2024, UNICEF Uganda drove significant results across its programmes through strategic multimedia campaigns that strengthened social behaviour change and service uptake. These campaigns, encompassing radio and television broadcasts, successfully shared essential health, education and protection messages with over 26.7 million people. The innovative U-Report chatbots engaged over 73,400 young people and community members in discussions on 21st-century skills, job readiness, human papillomavirus vaccination, mpox prevention and more, showcasing the effective use of technology.

Youth participation was exemplified by the U-Report Communities of Action, which engaged over 143,000 community members during a house-to-house polio campaign across 49 districts. Complaints, concerns and questions from over 30,000 users were addressed through the U-Report live chats and U-Partners platform, with support from trained partners such as the Ministry of Health's call centre and the Sauti 116 child helpline.

UNICEF collaborated with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in preparation for the review of Uganda's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, providing insights into legislative and policy developments in Uganda and supporting

alternative reports prepared by civil society and children. Furthermore, UNICEF Uganda's active role in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework facilitated the provision of essential services to approximately 90,000 refugee and host-population children.

Strategic communication efforts resulted in 623 media mentions and an online follower base climbing to over 5.3 million. Through media field visits and 3,252 advocacy materials, UNICEF Uganda highlighted critical programmes in health, nutrition, WASH, education, child protection, social protection and humanitarian response.

UNICEF Uganda also spearheaded the Business for Results framework, securing US\$417,085 for youth skilling and digital learning and facilitating 50 digital skills internships. The partnership with Airtel Uganda provided 111,600 gigabytes of data to 45,150 students and 1,935 teachers in 1,270 schools, furthering digital learning access.

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UNICEF Uganda drove significant results across its programmes through strategic multimedia campaigns that strengthened social behaviour change and service uptake.

On the horizon

As UNICEF Uganda moves forward into 2025, several key areas require continued focus and enhancement to address the challenges identified in 2024.

Addressing urban health disparities requires the adoption of the newly developed comprehensive Urban Health Framework. This framework, developed with support from UNICEF and soon to be approved by the Ministry of Health leadership, is a foundational component of a coordinated health ecosystem aimed at improving access, quality and equity for vulnerable populations, including slum dwellers, refugees and low-income households. Engaging strategically with private and not-for-profit sectors is essential to expanding service coverage and driving improvement in maternal, child and neonatal health outcomes through scalable and sustainable approaches tailored to the complexities of urban environments.

Expanding the routine immunization schedule to include the malaria vaccine will provide additional protection for children against severe malaria disease.

Strengthening community health by providing a comprehensive package of essential preventive and promotive healthcare services will lead to improved equity in access and service coverage.

Strengthening digital health integration, especially through improved data management and interoperability, is key to enhancing primary healthcare. Expanding the Electronic Community Health Information System from 21 to all 146 districts will improve community health monitoring, provide greater visibility and targeted

reach to underserved populations and households and link seamlessly with the District Health Information System 2 for enhanced coordination and service delivery.

Climate actions will strengthen resilience in key sectors affecting children. Support will be provided for national adaptation plans in the education, protection, health, nutrition and WASH sectors. Climate-resilient models will be implemented in areas with significant deprivations where vulnerable children and their communities face climate-change risks. WASH will serve as the entry point for these climate actions.

Moreover, the **expansion of community-based early childhood development centres and mobile early childhood development centres** remains essential for delivering inclusive education to underserved populations. This can be achieved by enhancing partnerships with the private sector to improve resource mobilization, foster innovation and optimize service delivery.

The **education programme will continue to focus on adolescent girls**, especially the most marginalized, helping them transition from primary to secondary school through tailored interventions, such as school-based management, improved teaching quality and cash transfers to families.

The Gender for Development Programme provides **educational opportunities for girls facing economic and social barriers** in the Adjumani, Yumbe, Lamwo, Nebbi, Oyam, Madi-Okollo and Kitgum districts. By addressing financial barriers

and offering holistic support, the programme represents a critical investment in Uganda's future, ensuring that vulnerable girls complete their education and achieve their dreams. With a generous European Union contribution, the programme will continue to provide performance-based school grants, support for children with disabilities and child mothers, accelerated education programmes, 21st-century skills training, early childhood care and development services and social and behavioural change interventions.

Significant progress has been made in **adolescent and youth skills development**. Nevertheless, efforts must be intensified to institutionalize 21st-century skills training within formal and non-formal education through high-level advocacy, market-driven skills training programmes and partnerships with the private sector, focusing on resilience, employability and preparedness for adulthood.

To maintain momentum, work on **strengthening the child protection system** will continue, with a focus on addressing violence against children and harmful practices and enhancing case management processes. Continued high-level advocacy with key stakeholders will be critical to **securing sustainable budget allocations for child protection services, including an enhanced social service workforce**.

Finally, improved collaboration with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics for new child poverty statistics and advocacy within the National Coalition to End Child Poverty will ensure **data-driven decision-making and better resource allocation** for 2025.

Thank you!

Our profound gratitude goes to our valued donors, without whose generosity our life-changing work for children in Uganda would not be possible.

Public partners/governments: US\$11.6 million

Government of the Kingdom of Belgium
 Government of Canada
 Government of Iceland
 Government of Ireland
 Government of Italy
 Government of Japan
 Government of The Netherlands
 Government of the Kingdom of Sweden
 Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
 Government of the United States of America

Multilaterals: US\$7.2 million

European Commission and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

National committees and private partners: US\$3.6 million

Canada Committee for UNICEF
 Danish Committee for UNICEF (Lego Foundation)
 French Committee for UNICEF (Compagnie Maritime d'Affrètement–Compagnie Générale Maritime Group)
 Japan Committee for UNICEF (Saraya Co., Ltd.)
 Italian Committee for UNICEF
 Spanish Committee for UNICEF
 Swedish Committee for UNICEF
 Swiss Committee for UNICEF
 United States Fund for UNICEF (Johnson & Johnson and Elma Foundation)

Global programme partnerships: US\$6.6 million

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

United Nations interorganizational arrangements: US\$2.2 million

Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office
 UNHCR
 United Nations Population Fund, United States of America
 United Nations Road Safety Collaboration
 World Food Programme
 World Health Organization

Private sector partnerships: US\$2 million

Airtel
 Mastercard Foundation
 Nutrition International

International financial institutions: US\$1.1 million

European Investment Bank

Programme contributions in US\$

Programme	Regular resources	Other resources: Regular	Other resources: Emergencies	Total planned resources
Health	3,896,660	20,358,000	4,587,173	28,841,833
Nutrition	1,641,813	4,373,000	6,791,402	12,806,215
WASH	1,272,127	5,118,400	7,515,236	13,905,763
Education	3,308,600	3,892,000	3,172,683	10,373,283
Child protection	2,573,800	2,279,000	3,118,907	7,971,707
Social policy	1,253,000	65,000	3,245,055	4,563,055
Programme effectiveness	5,399,400	2,676,600	0	8,076,000
Total	19,345,400	38,762,000	28,430,456	86,537,856





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