



CLIMATE & EMERGENCY NEWSLETTER

Issue 2: October 2025 - June 2026

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AT A GLANCE

Since October last year, our partnerships have translated into tangible results for children, families and communities across Zambia. We have responded to immediate needs of children while strengthening the systems that help communities withstand future shocks.

From treating malnutrition and restoring access to safe water services after emergencies, to building climate-proofing health facilities and strengthening national preparedness to respond

to emergencies, this support is helping deliver lifesaving assistance today while building more resilient services for every child, tomorrow. Together, we have:

- Screened **28,523 children for malnutrition**, treated over **1,000 acute malnutrition cases**, and trained **156 Community-Based Volunteers** and **7,647 caregivers** in Family MUAC.
- Solarised **126 health facilities**, supported the cholera response in **7 districts**, and reached over **117,000 people** and **20,000 households** with outbreak prevention messages.
- Integrated protection into nutrition services, identifying and referring vulnerable children, including **68 children with disabilities** linked to social welfare support.
- Developed the Climate Rationale for the WASH sector, installed **climate-resilient water systems serving 15,000 people**, and provided safe drinking water to **12,000 households** during the cholera response.
- Restored water services for **50,000 people** following the Lundazi dam breach and developed a resilience plan for the affected catchment.
- Installed solar-powered water systems at **2 ECDE hubs** as part of an initiative expected to benefit over **100,000 children**.
- **Advanced disability- and gender-inclusive climate planning** through a multi-stakeholder study informing Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR) and anticipatory action.
- **Finalised key national emergency preparedness frameworks** and launched the first joint climate workplan between UNICEF Zambia and the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment.

A MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE

For Zambia's children, climate change is a lived reality. The reporting period was marked by cholera outbreaks, severe flooding in Lundazi and continuing drought, disrupting access to safe water, nutrition, health services and education.

In this Issue Report, UNICEF strengthened preparedness while maintaining emergency response. A key milestone was the first joint UNICEF - Ministry of Green Economy and Environment workplan, strengthening Government leadership in coordinated, child-sensitive climate action. With Government and partners, UNICEF supported the validation of the national WASH Climate Rationale, expanded solar-powered water systems and solarised health facilities, restored safe

water in flood-affected areas, supported cholera prevention and control, and screened and treated children for malnutrition.

These results protected children through resilient services, reduced environmental footprints through renewable energy, and empowered communities through information, participation and stronger preparedness. They were made possible by donors, partners, Government, staff, volunteers and communities.

Looking ahead, UNICEF will continue advancing these objectives through anticipatory action, early warning systems and partnerships. UNICEF thanks everyone who made this work possible.

Dr. Saja Farooq Abdullah

Representative

UNICEF Zambia

BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT NUTRITION SERVICES



Communities in Gwembe and Sinazongwe districts face recurrent droughts, climate variability and seasonal flooding that disrupt food systems, livelihoods and access to nutrition services. Poor roads, long distances to health facilities and difficult terrain compound these challenges. The resulting food and nutrition insecurity disproportionately affects children under five by contributing to seasonal food shortages, poor dietary diversity, rainy-season disruptions in the supply of nutrition commodities, a heightened risk of acute malnutrition and suboptimal infant and young child feeding practices.

In partnership with **Plan International Zambia** and the **Ministry of Health**, and with support from **CERF** and **UKAid**, UNICEF implemented a climate-resilient, community-based nutrition programme to improve access to lifesaving services. Interventions included strengthening the last-mile delivery of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) and Corn-Soy Blend (CSB); training Community-Based Volunteers (CBVs) and caregivers in the Family MUAC approach; expanding the community-based management of acute malnutrition; and promoting climate-resilient nutrition practices using locally available, drought-tolerant crops. Protection was mainstreamed through messaging on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, and child safeguarding.

The programme strengthened the capacity of **45 district multisectorial team members (13 women and 32 men)** as well as **156 CBVs and members of Community Welfare Assistance Committees**, to identify, refer and follow up on vulnerable children. These efforts were reinforced through mentorship, supportive supervision and regular data reviews.

The programme screened **28,523 children** under five, including **11,654 children** screened by their caregivers using the Family MUAC approach. Following the screening, **149 children with severe acute malnutrition** and **942 children with moderate acute malnutrition** were admitted for treatment. The programme also distributed **324 cartons of RUTF** and **1,650 cartons of CSB to 51 health facilities**, equipped **7,647 caregivers with Family MUAC skills**, and reached **7,120 people with infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling** and information on climate-resilient food production.

The initiative contributed to the early detection and treatment of malnutrition, reduced travel barriers, strengthened caregiver knowledge and enhanced household resilience to climate shocks. Going forward, UNICEF will continue to strengthen nutrition supply chains, expand the Family MUAC approach to other climate-vulnerable districts, and deepen the integration of nutrition, health and protection services.

STRENGTHENING CLIMATE-RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS



Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of floods and droughts in Zambia, contributing to outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and disrupting routine health services for women, newborns, children and adolescents. Flooding damages health infrastructure, contaminates water sources and limits access to health facilities, leaving vulnerable communities, particularly children, without essential health care when they need it most.

Working closely with the **Ministry of Health** and other partners, UNICEF has strengthened climate-resilient health systems while supporting emergency preparedness and response. With support from **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance**, UNICEF has solarized **126 health facilities** to date in 2026, ensuring the continuity of essential services during climate-related emergencies and power outages and strengthening the resilience of frontline health services. UNICEF also supported the cholera response in **7 districts** through technical assistance, coordination and the delivery of essential interventions.

Recognizing that effective outbreak control depends on informed and engaged communities, UNICEF integrated Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) into responses to cholera, mpox and flooding. Through social and behaviour change interventions, **33,347 community members** in Mpulungu and **84,512 community members** in Nakonde were reached with cholera prevention messages. In addition, more than **20,000 households** received essential information on preventing disease transmission. At the systems level, UNICEF supported the finalization of three key preparedness documents: **the RCCE Multi-Hazard Plan, the Cholera**

Social and Behaviour Change Plan, and the Community Feedback Mechanism Standard Operating Procedure. Together, these documents have strengthened national capacity to prepare for and respond to multiple public health emergencies.

By building resilient health systems and empowering communities with lifesaving information, these investments are helping to reduce children's vulnerability, protect their health and development, and save lives. UNICEF will continue working with the Government to strengthen subnational, multisectoral coordination for emergency preparedness and response, ensuring that communities are better equipped to anticipate and respond to future climate-related health emergencies.

PROTECTING CHILDREN DURING EMERGENCIES



Protection continues to be mainstreamed into nutrition programming to safeguard vulnerable children during emergencies. A protection lens was integrated into nutrition platforms, enabling the early identification of risks, strengthening referrals to social welfare and specialized services, and facilitating psychosocial and caregiver support to promote children's well-being, inclusion and resilience.

Through this integrated approach funded by the **European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)**, **Community-Based Volunteers (CBVs)** and **Community Welfare Assistance Committees (CWACs)** leveraged Family MUAC and community nutrition platforms to identify and respond to the broader protection and social welfare needs of vulnerable children and their families. During follow-up visits involving **398 children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM)** and **18 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)**, community structures identified protection risks extending beyond the children's nutritional status. Through this process, **68 children** with cerebral palsy were identified and referred to social welfare services. They subsequently received assistive walking aids through the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme. This support improved the children's mobility and inclusion while reducing caregiving burdens and enabling their parents and caregivers to participate more effectively in livelihood and household activities. Children with SAM and their caregivers also received psychosocial support.

The intervention demonstrated how nutrition platforms can serve as effective entry points for protection mainstreaming, enabling the early identification of vulnerable children, strengthening referral pathways and improving access to integrated protection, nutrition, psychosocial and social welfare services. Community engagement further strengthened the intervention by raising awareness of child protection risks, gender-based violence (GBV), protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and available referral pathways. It also empowered CWACs and CBVs to connect vulnerable children and families to appropriate services while strengthening community ownership of the intervention.

Building on this progress, the integration of protection into nutrition and community platforms will be sustained by embedding Family MUAC-based identification, community case management, referral pathways and psychosocial support into routine government and community systems. This will help ensure that vulnerable children and their families continue to receive support beyond the project period. Community ownership will also be strengthened by continuing to equip CWACs, CBVs and frontline workers with the knowledge and skills needed to identify protection risks, prevent and report sexual exploitation and abuse and GBV, and link children with disabilities and other vulnerable children to social welfare, health and specialized services.

SAFEGUARDING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IN EMERGENCIES



Climate hazards in Zambia are increasingly disrupting water systems, transforming the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) operating environment and threatening children's survival, health and well-being. Droughts have driven acute water scarcity and disrupted WASH services in health facilities, particularly in Southern Province. Thereby, they also have also increased the risk of healthcare-associated infections.

Zambia's reliance on hydropower further compounds these disruptions, as drought-related electricity shortages affect electricity-dependent water pumps and piped-water systems. Meanwhile, severe flooding continues to damage critical infrastructure. The December 2025 breach of the Lundazi Dam in Eastern Province disrupted water supplies for approximately **50,000 people**. During the 2025–2026 cholera outbreak, the disease spread across **25 districts**, resulting in more than **1,600 cases** and **26 deaths (a case fatality rate of 1.6 per cent)**. The construction of WASH infrastructure can also generate greenhouse-gas emissions, underscoring the need for low-carbon and climate-sensitive approaches.

In response, UNICEF supported the development of a nationally led Climate Rationale for the WASH sector, coordinated by the **Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Green Economy and Environment**. The Climate Rationale translates climate science and risk data into an operational roadmap for risk-informed WASH planning. With funding from **CERF** and **UKAid**, UNICEF constructed climate-resilient, solar-powered water systems and rainwater-harvesting facilities at **6 health facilities** in Sinazongwe

and Gwembe, benefiting approximately **15,000 people** and helping to maintain essential services during periods of drought and electricity disruption.

Following the Lundazi flooding, UNICEF deployed a surge expert to support the Eastern Water and Sanitation Company, provided hand pumps that restored water access for approximately **1,200 people**, and supported the redesign of the dam wall. UNICEF also co-developed a hydrometeorological resilience plan for the Lundazi catchment in consultation with more than **60 stakeholders**. In cholera-affected areas, UNICEF distributed emergency WASH supplies, enabling approximately **12,000 households** to access safe water; trained **30 environmental health technicians** in water-quality monitoring; and strengthened coordination through regularly updated Who-does-What-Where (3W) matrices. In Luapula Province, UNICEF also expanded **low-carbon sanitation interventions** through the use of environmentally friendly bricks.

Climate-resilient WASH systems help sustain access to safe water during droughts and floods, reduce the risk of disease outbreaks and protect children's health. In health facilities, these systems also strengthen infection prevention and control, helping to reduce risks such as neonatal sepsis and cholera transmission. Building on this progress, UNICEF will launch the Climate Rationale, install real-time groundwater-monitoring systems in drought-prone districts, validate the Lundazi hydrometeorological resilience plan, and further strengthen preparedness for waterborne disease outbreaks.

PROMOTING CLIMATE-RESILIENT EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT



Climate shocks are increasingly disrupting children's access to essential services in rural Zambia. The limited availability of safe water is a significant challenge for Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. These disruptions compromise hygiene and sanitation, threaten the health and wellbeing of young children, and adversely affect learning environments and children's readiness for school.

To address these challenges, under the **EU-funded Equal Chances for Human Development (EC4HD) programme**, UNICEF installed solar-powered water systems at **2 ECDE hubs** and strengthened local capacity to sustain the systems by training local pump minders in their operation and maintenance. This approach helps ensure that the infrastructure is not only climate-resilient but also locally managed, thereby reducing downtime and supporting its long-term functionality.

As a result, reliable and sustainable water systems are now operational at the two ECD hubs, supported by strengthened local capacity for their operation and maintenance. This intervention is part of a broader initiative that entails the construction of a total of **38 ECDE hubs** and expected to reach more than **100,000 children**. The initiative will contribute to expanding children's access to safe, inclusive and climate-resilient learning environments.

Reliable access to safe water is critical to children's health and development. It promotes good hygiene and sanitation practices, reduces the risk of waterborne diseases and creates healthier learning environments. It also supports the irrigation and maintenance of on-site gardens, which can contribute to greater dietary diversity and improved availability of nutritious foods for young children.

To sustain these gains, UNICEF will support the completion of infrastructure at the remaining ECD hubs and further strengthen systems for operating and maintaining the solar-powered water facilities. These efforts will help sustain children's access to safe water while strengthening the resilience of ECD centres and surrounding communities to climate-related shocks.

BUILDING CLIMATE-RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE FOR ALL



Climate change is increasingly undermining the resilience of infrastructure, housing and public health systems. These interconnected risks create cascading impacts that disproportionately affect marginalised populations, persons with disabilities, older persons, women and children,

who face heightened exposure due to structural inequalities, accessibility barriers and limited participation in planning and decision-making.

To address these challenges, UNICEF, in collaboration with **Leeds Beckett University, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing, Copperbelt University, the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD), Apex Medical University, the Zambia Federation of Disability Organisations (ZAFOD) and Disability Rights Watch**, convened a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting to validate and enrich preliminary findings from a study on integrating gender and disability considerations within the nexus of climate change infrastructure, housing and health in Zambia.

The consultation strengthened cross-sectoral alignment by bringing together government, academic and civil society partners to review evidence, identify gaps and generate actionable recommendations for inclusive, climate-resilient infrastructure and service delivery. Expert inputs ensured the study reflected the lived experiences and priorities of women, girls and persons with disabilities amid rising climate risks. The engagement advanced inclusive policy dialogue and refined study outputs, laying the foundation for evidence-based advocacy and programming. The validated findings are expected to inform Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR), anticipatory action planning and equitable access to resilient housing, infrastructure and health services.

Inclusive climate action is essential because climate shocks to these systems directly shape the environments in which children grow, learn and survive. Where systems are not designed inclusively, children, especially girls and children with disabilities, face exclusion from essential services, heightened health hazards, and reduced voice in decisions affecting their lives.

As this work advances, UNICEF Zambia continues to strengthen government-prioritised systems by mainstreaming child- and disability-inclusive approaches, safeguarding the rights of children with disabilities, amplifying their participation, and addressing their specific needs. UNICEF will continue to support the Government and partners to promote equitable access, strengthen resilience and empower the most vulnerable children, in line with the DiDRR strategy.

CHALLENGES & FORWARD PRIORITIES

Despite the progress achieved since October, several interconnected challenges continue to put essential services for children under pressure and require to move from repeated emergency response towards stronger, more resilient systems. Key priorities and areas requiring sustained attention include:

Concurrent and recurrent climate-health emergencies: In the last six months, simultaneous shocks stretched coordination structures, frontline staffing and supply pipelines, while children faced compounded risks of disease, displacement, malnutrition and disrupted schooling. UNICEF and partners are deepening multi-hazard preparedness planning, expanding anticipatory action and Early Warning–Early Action systems with Government, and pre-positioning supplies in high-risk districts.

Short-term emergency financing versus long-term resilience needs: Much of the response was enabled by time-bound emergency funding, including **CERF** and **UKAid**. Sustaining the gains achieved from solarised facilities to community nutrition platforms and resilient water systems requires predictable, longer-term financing. UNICEF is working with Government and partners to leverage climate finance opportunities, using the new joint workplan with the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment to position child-critical services within national climate investments.

Last-mile access and infrastructure vulnerability: Poor road networks, long distances to services and hydropower-dependent water systems continue to interrupt service delivery during both rainy seasons and drought, with children in hard-to-reach communities being the first to lose access to nutrition commodities, safe water and healthcare. Priorities include expanding solarisation of health facilities and water systems, installing real-time groundwater monitoring in drought-prone districts, strengthening local operation and maintenance capacity, and scaling low-carbon sanitation solutions.

Sub-national coordination and inclusion gaps: Multisectoral emergency coordination remains weakest at district level, and children with disabilities and other marginalised groups are under-represented in preparedness and response planning. UNICEF continues strengthening sub-national coordination structures, embed Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction in preparedness plans, and reinforce community feedback mechanisms so affected children and families directly shape the response.



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