



Children attending classes in Toumodi-Sakassou, in the centre of Côte d'Ivoire. UNICEF is supporting a safe return to school, in the context of COVID-19, in West and Central Africa.

unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

West and Central Africa Region

HIGHLIGHTS¹

- The West and Central Africa region is facing concurrent public health emergencies, increasing violence and insecurity, and large-scale population displacement. Across the region, 107 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 60 million children.²
- The UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office will provide guidance and technical support to all countries in the region to prepare for and respond to emergencies, with support for programming in nutrition, health, water, sanitation and hygiene; as well as for child protection, education and social protection, and cross-cutting areas such as community engagement, resilience and emergency preparedness. This will be done using a systematic gender lens in the analysis and programme design.
- In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF will support the 10 countries embedded in this appeal to prevent the spread of the virus; control and mitigate its impacts; and ensure continuity in delivery of essential social services for women and children.
- UNICEF is appealing for US\$116.9 million to address humanitarian and COVID-19-specific needs in the region.

IN NEED³



25.4 million

people in need of
nutrition assistance



30.9 million

people lack access to
safe water



18.3 million

children in need of
protection services

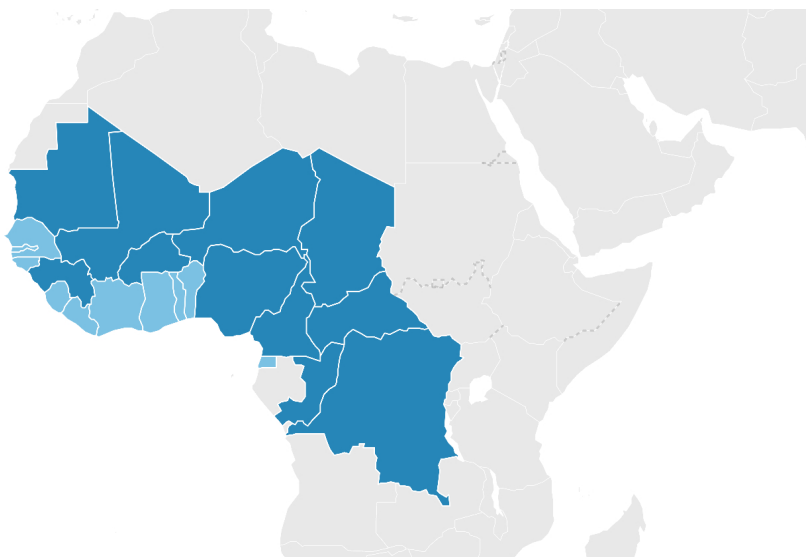
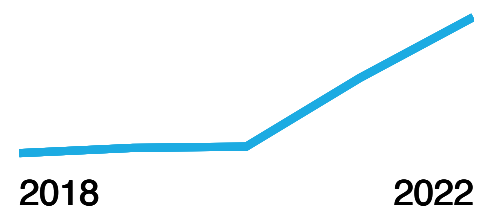


27.2 million

children in need of
education support

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$ 116.9
million**



This map does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers. The countries in light blue are embedded in this regional appeal. The countries in dark blue have corresponding standalone appeals or are covered under crisis appeals.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Children continue to bear the brunt of the multidimensional crises affecting West and Central Africa, leaving a steadily increasing number in urgent need of humanitarian assistance – this year a total exceeding 60 million. The security context across the region continues to deteriorate, impacting civilians and humanitarian activities. In the Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), Lake Chad Basin (Chad, Far North Cameroon, Niger and Northeast Nigeria), Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon, entire communities are caught in the middle of unrelenting conflict, triggering massive displacement both internally and across borders and increasing vulnerability to human rights violations and sexual and gender-based violence. Spillover of conflict in the Central Sahel to neighboring coastal countries is on the rise.

The region is highly vulnerable to public health emergencies. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, children, their families and their communities face recurrent outbreaks of cholera, measles and polio. Ebola outbreaks can reemerge years after initial infections, threatening affected areas. At the same time, access to essential health services remains limited. Even before the pandemic, an estimated one in three children born each year were deprived of vaccines, the lowest childhood vaccination coverage in the world.⁴

The cumulative effects of climate change, violence and the COVID-19 pandemic have left more than 4.3 million children under 5 years of age at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM).⁵ While many schools have reopened following earlier shutdowns, education remains under threat across the region. In the Central Sahel, 13 million children are out of school⁶ and in Nigeria, mass abductions of students continue unabated. Environmental shocks compound these challenges. The countries of the region are particularly vulnerable, with 16 among the world's top 30 having the biggest climate change risks for children, threatening their health, education and protection.⁷

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

The UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office humanitarian strategy is grounded in UNICEF's mandate to realize the rights of every child. Informed by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, the strategy supports the most vulnerable, including women, children and persons with disabilities, with humanitarian assistance through innovative multi-country partnerships with governments, United Nations agencies, and local, regional and international organizations. UNICEF will increase engagement in social protection, including humanitarian cash transfers; improve accountability to affected populations in line with Grand Bargain⁸ commitments; strengthen data and monitoring; and increase the use of new technologies. Results will be achieved through an integrated, multi-sector approach to build resilience, strengthen systems to prepare for and respond to crises, and link humanitarian action with development programmes.

UNICEF will provide technical support to all 24 country offices to develop risk-informed, conflict- and gender-sensitive programmes. Country offices will receive strategic guidance and support for programming in nutrition, health, WASH, child protection, education and integrating cross-cutting aspects such as community engagement, resilience, social protection, advocacy and preparedness,⁹ all using a systematic gender lens in analysis and programme design. UNICEF will support integrated approaches to preventing and treating acute malnutrition by offering a continuum of care with emphasis on prevention, early detection and treatment through health facilities and community-based platforms. WASH interventions will address waterborne diseases, contribute to preventing undernutrition, and provide basic services for people affected by emergencies. Children associated with armed groups, victims of sexual violence, children who are detained and children separated from their families will be prioritized. UNICEF will scale up alternative learning platforms to provide quality basic education for vulnerable children and adolescents. Overall, UNICEF will take a multi-country approach, looking beyond national borders to address interconnected humanitarian needs in the region.

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Following the re-emergence of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in Guinea in 2021, UNICEF supported six neighboring countries to quickly scale up their preparedness and prevention efforts. In Guinea Bissau, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Secretary of State of Social Communication and the National Institute of Public Health, developed sensitization sessions with community leaders in vulnerable border areas. Through informal djumbai sessions (community dialogues), UNICEF worked with local partners to reach 18 different communities to strengthen vigilance and prevent EVD transmission. Participants ranged from traditional healers and chiefs to women's associations.

[Read more about this story here](#)

A trainer in Guinea Bissau, from the non-governmental organization Nadel, holding a poster demonstrating how to prevent transmission of the Ebola virus.

COVID-19 REGIONAL RESPONSE

Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION (COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on West and Central Africa, with far reaching effects on the region's children. Continued disruptions to essential services remain a challenge. Healthcare systems, which already struggled to cope with measles, malaria, cholera, polio and Ebola before the advent of COVID-19, have been severely overburdened.¹⁰ The effect of the pandemic on education has been pronounced. Although schools have progressively reopened in many places, the negative impacts of prolonged closures on enrolments and learning outcomes are likely to be felt for years to come. Disruptions to education have also increased the risk of adolescent girls being forced into marriage. The continuation of nutrition services remains difficult, as COVID-19 has created barriers to community-based activities, including early SAM screening. The stress induced by the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic has increased the risk of violence, abuse and exploitation at home, in institutions and on the street – particularly for girls. The COVID-19 pandemic remains far from over, and many direct and indirect effects are still to be fully understood. What is clear is that this health crisis has become a child rights' crisis, calling for continued and urgent humanitarian assistance.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY (COVID-19)

UNICEF's COVID-19 response strategy in West and Central Africa is focused on controlling the outbreak and mitigating the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic, including disruptions to essential social services. UNICEF will reinforce coordination at the regional level to support a rapid humanitarian response; lead risk communication and community engagement efforts; and co-lead, with WHO, the operational coordination group to support government efforts for national COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. UNICEF will support coordination, implementation and monitoring of WASH services and infection prevention and control in health care facilities, markets and other public spaces, and will prioritize WASH services in schools as they reopen. UNICEF remains active in surveillance, epidemiological investigation and case investigation, and will provide guidance on how to use existing community-based platforms and initiatives (child-friendly spaces, RapidPro) to strengthen community-based surveillance of COVID-19. UNICEF will continue efforts to prevent and address the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic and will ensure that these efforts are responsive to gender and disability. UNICEF will also work to strengthen social protection systems, making them more shock-responsive and child-sensitive. Particular efforts will be made to include young people in identifying and developing responses to their needs.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/wca/situation-reports>

This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.

2022 PROGRAMME TARGETS^{11,12}



Nutrition

- **103,971** children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment
- **659,801** primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling



Health

- **1,447,991** children aged 6 to 59 months vaccinated against measles
- **3,598,799** children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **295,699** people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking and domestic needs
- **111,614** children use safe and appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces
- **1,933,747** people reached with critical WASH supplies



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA¹³

- **172,393** children and parents/caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support
- **579,655** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **5,933,444** people who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers



Education

- **6,879,027** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **7,626,750** children receiving individual learning materials¹⁴
- **65,767** schools implementing safe school protocols (infection prevention and control)



Social protection

- **121,000** households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and/or funding
- **27,839** households reached with UNICEF funded multi-purpose humanitarian cash transfers



Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, and AAP)¹⁵

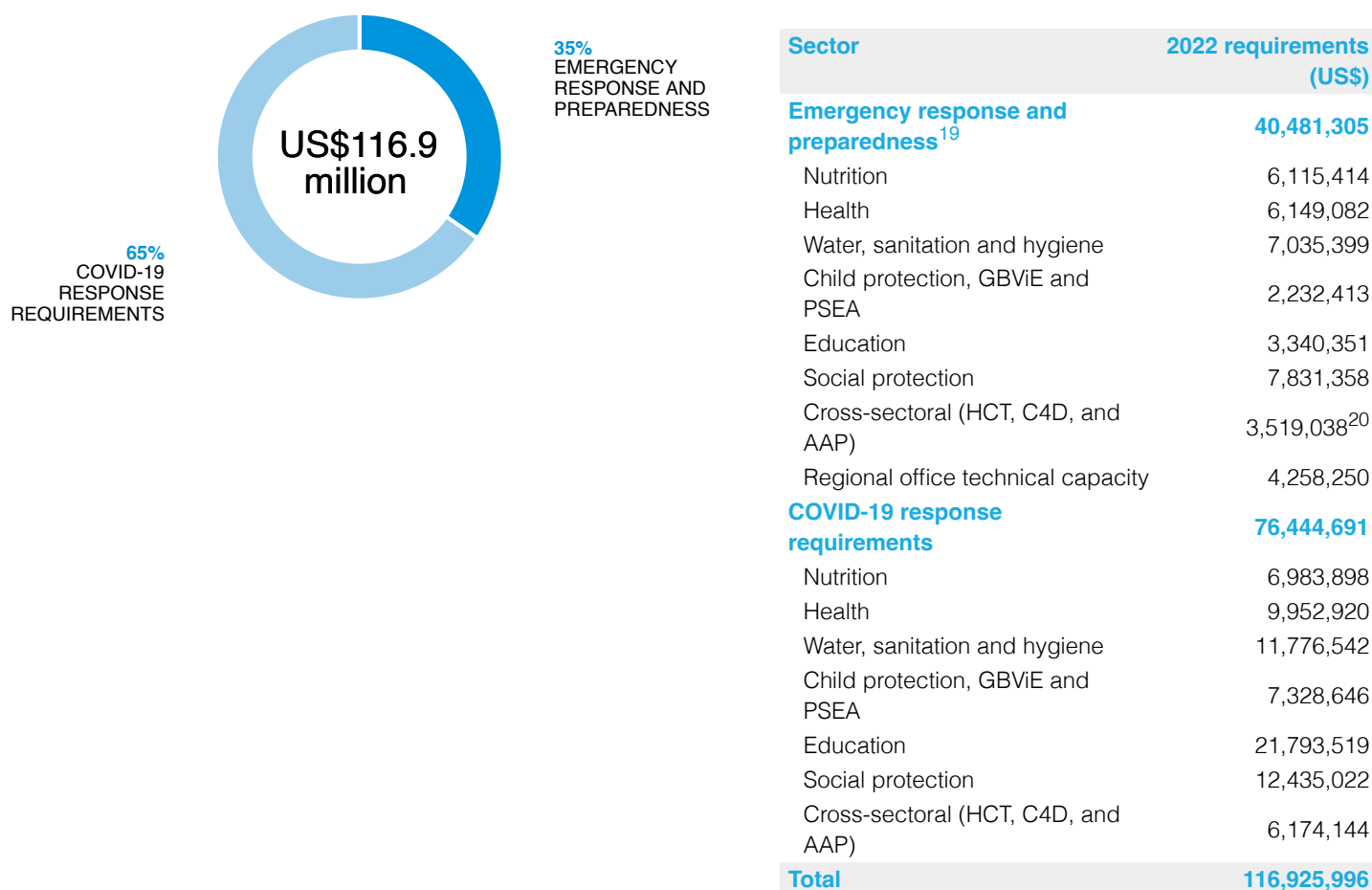
- **19,929,394** people reached through messaging on prevention and access to services
- **3,710,422** people engaged in risk communication and community engagement actions

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2022

UNICEF is appealing for US\$116.9 million to prepare for and respond to the humanitarian crises affecting West and Central Africa in 2022. This support will allow UNICEF to cover emergency and COVID-19 response needs in the 10 countries embedded in this appeal,¹⁶ and to provide all countries in the region with multi-sectoral technical support to prepare for and launch emergency responses. The increased funding requirement for 2022 reflects the context of multiple, concurrent public health emergencies, increasing violence and insecurity, and large-scale population displacement driving humanitarian needs, as well as the larger number of countries (10) without stand-alone HACs covered under this regional appeal.

Given the complexity of the COVID-19 emergency, its far-reaching impacts, and the likelihood of further waves of the pandemic, UNICEF urgently requires flexible resources to support more efficient and effective humanitarian response in West and Central Africa. UNICEF is appealing for US\$76.4 million to address COVID-19-related humanitarian needs in the countries embedded in this appeal, with the most significant support needs in education, WASH, social protection and health. In addition, UNICEF is requesting US\$40.5 million to provide technical assistance and support for emergency preparedness and response in the region as a whole. The most significant support needs are in health, nutrition, WASH and social protection, all of which have been consistently and significantly underfunded. The continued scale-up of preparedness efforts will also be an integral part of UNICEF's work, including in countries that are affected by or at risk of spillover effects of the large-scale emergency in the Central Sahel.¹⁷

This funding is needed to respond to the multidimensional crises affecting the region and the compounding impact of COVID-19 on humanitarian needs. This support will allow UNICEF to ensure continued investment in public health emergencies and to reach vulnerable populations with essential services, while strengthening the linkages between humanitarian action and development programmes. Without this funding, UNICEF will be unable to meet the overwhelming needs of children, their families and communities across the region, leaving 42 million people¹⁸ without humanitarian assistance. Continued timely, flexible and predictable resources will be instrumental to the organization's ability to address the pressing humanitarian needs of children and women in 2022.



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ENDNOTES

1. UNICEF's public health and socio-economic COVID-19 response, including programme targets and funding requirements, is integrated into the standalone country, multi-country and regional Humanitarian Action for Children appeals. All interventions related to accelerating equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments and vaccines fall under the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) global appeal.
2. PIN/CIN figures based on 2021 OCHA HNO/HRP for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger and Nigeria; 2021 UNICEF HAC for Guinea, Mauritania and Republic of Congo, and 2022 figures for the 10 countries embedded in this regional appeal. This figure is higher than the regional PIN/CIN figures from the 2021 HAC, which only included needs in countries with inter-agency appeals.
3. Sectoral needs figures are based on 2021 OCHA HNO/HRP for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Niger and Nigeria; 2021 UNICEF HAC for Guinea; UNICEF 2022 HAC for Mauritania and Republic of Congo; and 2022 needs figures for the 10 countries embedded in this regional appeal.
4. UNICEF Child Alert, Sub-Saharan Africa: Growing up in Crisis in a World of Opportunities, April 2021.
5. Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (West Africa), Sahel and West Africa: Alarming Food and Nutritional Insecurity, March 2021.
6. ECHO/Save the Children, Sahel: Consequences of Conflict and COVID-19 on Children, August 2021.
7. UNICEF, The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis, August 2021.
8. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations, who have committed to getting more means into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.
9. An integral part of UNICEF's work, preparedness is incorporated into all sectoral and cross-sectoral programming support.
10. COVID-19 vaccination rates in the region remain very low. For more information on UNICEF's work supporting COVID-19 vaccination, see the Global ACT-A appeal.
11. This section reflects the consolidated targets of the countries included in the regional appeal only.
12. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
13. The increased target for 2022 reflects the context of multiple, concurrent public health emergencies, increasing violence and insecurity, and large-scale population displacement driving humanitarian needs, as well as the larger number of countries (10) without stand-alone HACs covered under this regional appeal.
14. The increase in this target compared to the 2021 HAC is driven by the inclusion of Ghana and Sierra Leone in the regional HAC (both of which had stand-alone HACs in 2021), as well as the inclusion of education targets for Cote d'Ivoire, which were not part of the 2021 regional HAC.
15. Humanitarian cash transfers, communication for development, and accountability to affected populations. This includes risk communication and community engagement programming.
16. Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.
17. Preparedness funding requirements are no longer reflected in a separate budget line and instead have been integrated into programme and cross-sectoral pillars, in line with the integrated nature of this work.
18. In the 10 countries covered under this regional appeal (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo).
19. Includes emergency response and preparedness requirements, which primarily assist country offices in the region, as well as regional office technical capacity.
20. Humanitarian cash transfers, communication for development, and accountability to affected populations.