



Issatou holds her newborn baby, who is being vaccinated during a UNICEF-supported polio vaccination campaign in Jenoi, the Gambia, in March 2022, as part of an outbreak response.

unicef   
for every child

## Humanitarian Action for Children

# West and Central Africa Region

### HIGHLIGHTS<sup>1</sup>

- Major humanitarian crises continue to unfold across West and Central Africa, with devastating consequences on children and communities. The region is facing multiple conflicts that are resulting in escalating violence and large-scale population displacements. The worsening security situation across the Sahel is spilling over into coastal countries. Public health emergencies, food insecurity and climate shocks are increasing risks to children.
- In this regional appeal, UNICEF is requesting US\$75.5 million to prepare for and respond to emergency needs in 11 countries (Benin, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo). The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and education sectors represent the most significant funding requirements.
- This appeal also includes UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office support to all countries in the region for enhanced emergency preparedness and response in the nutrition, health, WASH, child protection, education and social protection sectors.

### IN NEED



**6 million** people in need of nutrition assistance



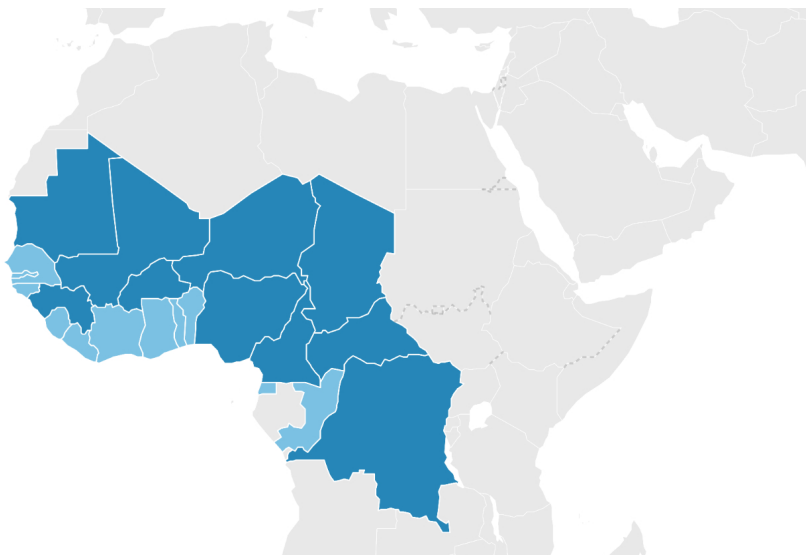
**4.2 million** children in need of protection services



**4.5 million** children in need of education support

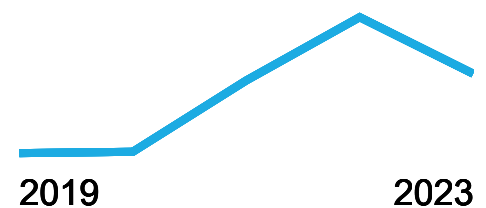


**4.8 million** people lack access to safe water



### FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

**US\$ 75.5 million**



<sup>1</sup>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

West and Central Africa is home to 12 per cent<sup>3</sup> of the world's children but accounts for one third of under-five mortality globally; one third of all unvaccinated children; one third of all out-of-school children<sup>4</sup> and one fifth of all stunted children in the world.<sup>5</sup> Children are also particularly at risk of violence and exploitation, with only 4 in 10 children registered at birth,<sup>6</sup> 8 in 10 girls and boys aged 1-14 years having experienced violent discipline,<sup>7</sup> the world's highest adolescent birth rate and 7 of the 10 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage.<sup>8</sup>

Conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon persisted in 2022 and in the central Sahel deteriorated further. The spillover effects of the central Sahel crisis into neighbouring countries (particularly Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo) are creating additional humanitarian needs. Conflicts in the region have led to massive population displacements, both internally and across borders, affecting more than 135 million people, half of them children.<sup>9</sup>

Conflicts have also put children at further risk of grave violations of their rights. In recent years, the region has recorded one of the highest numbers of United Nations-verified grave violations against children in armed conflict in the world, including recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence.<sup>10</sup>

Climate shocks including floods, landslides and droughts are worsening. Seven countries in the West and Central Africa region are in the top 10 countries where children are most affected by climate change worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the region, countries are also facing multiple, simultaneous epidemics ('multidemics'), including coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Ebola, Marburg virus, mpox, Lassa fever and recurrent outbreaks of malaria, cholera, measles, polio and other diseases.

The cumulative effects of crises and socioeconomic shocks in the region have left more than 4.2 million children under age 5 at risk of severe wasting, with record high levels of wasting in the Sahel.<sup>11</sup> More than 31.9 million people are in urgent need of WASH assistance.<sup>12</sup> Some 57 million children are out of school and more than 12,400 schools were forced to close by the end of the 2021-2022 school year due to insecurity.<sup>13</sup>

## HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY<sup>14,15</sup>

The humanitarian strategy of the UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office 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 people with disabilities - with humanitarian assistance through innovative multi-country partnerships with governments, United Nations agencies and local, national, regional and international organizations.

In 2023, UNICEF will provide technical support to all 24 country offices in the region to develop conflict- and gender-sensitive emergency responses and risk-informed, resilience-building programmes.

Addressing escalating needs in the central Sahel and scaling up response readiness and prevention for the spillover of that conflict through building resilience in coastal countries will be critical. Emergency preparedness for multiple epidemics and climate shocks will also be a priority.

Country offices will also receive strategic guidance and support for multisectoral programming that spans the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in health, nutrition, WASH, education, child protection and social protection, including humanitarian cash transfers. UNICEF will enhance cross-cutting approaches for emergency preparedness,<sup>16</sup> community engagement and accountability to affected populations and humanitarian advocacy; strengthen data and monitoring; and increase the use of new technologies. Preventing, responding to and reporting grave violations against children in the region, including recruitment and use by armed forces and non-state armed groups, sexual violence, abduction and detention will be prioritized. Efforts to prevent and protect girls from child marriage and to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support for children and parents will be stepped up. As part of these efforts, access and availability of social service workers as a front-line workforce and strengthened community-based protection mechanisms for enhanced prevention, resilience and referrals will be key investments.

All UNICEF responses will take a multi-country approach, looking beyond national borders to address interconnected humanitarian needs in the region.

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.

## STORY FROM THE FIELD



"We had to flee because there were frequent attacks, and neighbours and friends were killed. We are being hosted by a family here in Tougbo. We feel safe," says Odette Ouedraogo. She and her family fled Burkina Faso for Côte d'Ivoire in February 2022.

In northern Côte d'Ivoire, in the border area with Burkina Faso, vulnerabilities have increased with attacks by non-state armed groups and the arrival of refugees fleeing the crisis in the central Sahel. UNICEF is responding to community tensions and the rapid deterioration in living conditions by building community resilience and strengthening access to social services.

[Read more about this story here](#)

Odette Ouedraogo, 40, her husband, Madi Sinara, and their three children are refugees from Burkina Faso. They found refuge in Tougbo, in northern Côte d'Ivoire.

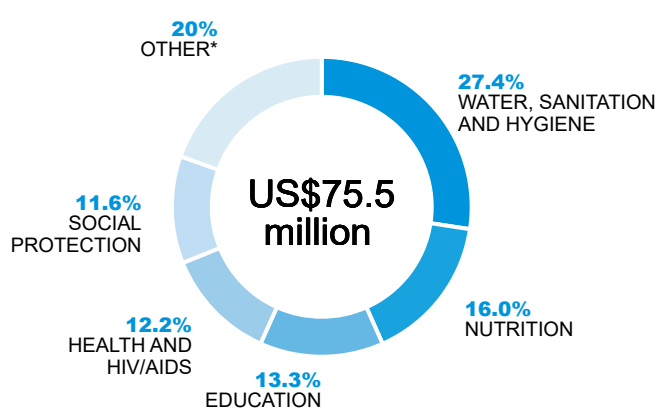


## FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2023

UNICEF is appealing for US\$75.5 million to prepare for and respond to humanitarian crises in the 11 countries covered by this Humanitarian Action for Children appeal. Funding this appeal will also help UNICEF provide multisectoral technical support to country offices throughout the region. Funding requirements for 2023 are shaped by multiple drivers of need: concurrent public health emergencies, the increasing impact of armed conflicts and large-scale population displacement. Funding requirements have decreased for 2023 compared with 2022 because response to the COVID-19 pandemic will now be fully integrated into UNICEF's regular risk-informed development programming.

The regional funding requirement includes US\$4.3 million to provide technical assistance and support for emergency preparedness and response in the whole region. With WASH, nutrition, education, health, social protection and child protection sectors severely and systematically underfunded, UNICEF is appealing for urgent donor support to help the organization continue to deliver results for children. In 2023, UNICEF aims to scale up its preparedness efforts, including in countries that are affected by or at risk of a conflict spillover from the central Sahel. Support to this appeal will allow UNICEF to ensure continued investment in preparedness for public health emergencies and promote increased social cohesion and resilience. Investments in monitoring, reporting and response to grave violations against children will also be scaled up. Funding will be used to reach vulnerable populations with essential services, while strengthening the linkages between durable humanitarian action and risk-informed development programmes.

Without sufficient and timely funding, UNICEF will be unable to meet the overwhelming needs of children, their families and communities in West and Central Africa, leaving millions without assistance. Multi-year and flexible resources will be instrumental to UNICEF's ability to ensure quality programmes for children in the region.



Sector	2023 requirements (US\$) <sup>17</sup>
Nutrition	12,050,932
Health and HIV/AIDS	9,209,448
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	4,079,125
Education	10,074,814
Water, sanitation and hygiene	20,673,228
Social protection	8,739,625
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	6,407,667
Regional Office Technical Capacity	4,258,250
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,493,089</b>

\*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (8.5%), Regional Office Technical Capacity (5.6%), Child protection, GBViE and PSEA (5.4%).

### Who to contact for further information:

**Marie-Pierre Poirier**  
Regional Director, West and Central Africa  
T +221 338695858  
mppoirier@unicef.org

**Manuel Fontaine**  
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)  
T +1 212 326 7163  
mfontaine@unicef.org

**June Kunugi**  
Director, Public Partnerships Division (PPD)  
T +1 212 326 7118  
jkunugi@unicef.org

## ENDNOTES

1. COVID-19 remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern as declared by the World Health Organization in January 2020. On 1 July 2022, UNICEF deactivated its Level 3 Sustained Phase for the global COVID-19 pandemic response. All activities related to COVID-19 pandemic response, including programme targets and funding requirements, have been shifted into regular development programming and operations. While UNICEF's Level 3 emergency response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic was deactivated, the organization is continuing to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children, their families and their communities and on the social systems they rely on.
2. (in order of rank) Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, the Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNICEF, The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index, UNICEF, New York, August 2021.
3. UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2021, UNICEF, New York, October 2021.
4. UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Office, calculations based on UIS data.
5. The UNICEF/World Health Organization/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates (JME) group released new data for 2021.
6. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and national administrative data.
7. UNICEF global databases, 2022, based on MICS, DHS and other national surveys, 2006-2021.
8. UNICEF, Child Marriage in West and Central Africa: A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice, UNICEF, New York, June 2022.
9. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Monthly Statistical Report, August 2022. This also includes statistics on internally displaced people from the United Nations Office for the Coordination and Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
10. UNICEF, 25 Years of Children and Armed Conflict: Taking action to protect children in war, UNICEF, New York, June 2022.
11. WCA Regional Nutrition Working Group Joint Note on the Nutrition Situation in the West and Central Africa Region - March 2022, April 2022.
12. WASH sectoral needs figures are based on 2022 Humanitarian Action appeals for West and Central Africa countries; and on 2022 needs figures for the 11 countries embedded in this regional appeal.
13. Regional Education in Emergencies Working Group, Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa: 2022 Update, September 2022.
14. 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.
15. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
16. An integral part of UNICEF's work, preparedness is incorporated into all sectoral and cross-sectoral programming support.
17. Since UNICEF has made considerable progress in strengthening local capacities while responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and longer-term COVID-related needs in health, child protection, education and social protection are now integrated into UNICEF's regular development programming, there is a decrease in the overall funding ask for the 2023 regional Humanitarian Action for Children appeal compared with the 2022 appeal.