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UNICEF is supporting refugee and displaced children in Duhok, Iraq through psychosocial support, early childhood education and resilience-building activities that empower children to learn, grow and build a brighter future.

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Humanitarian Action for Children

Middle East and North Africa Region

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Middle East and North Africa region will face overlapping, protracted crises in 2026 that are expected to leave 92.6 million people, including 44.8 million children, exposed to life-threatening risks and vulnerabilities.¹ Escalating conflict, displacement, disease outbreaks and climate-related shocks continue to strain communities and humanitarian systems across the region.
- In 2026, UNICEF country offices in the region will implement tailored humanitarian responses to address country-specific crises, ensuring timely and context-appropriate support for the most vulnerable children and families, with particular attention to hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations. This includes children on the move, such as Afghan, Sahrawi, Sudanese and Palestinian refugees and populations, along with people affected by disease outbreaks, extreme climate events and other shocks.
- The UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office will strengthen country office capacities for preparedness and humanitarian response and recovery through targeted technical and operational support, and will also lead cross-border coordination for subregional contingency planning to ensure continuity of services.
- UNICEF requires \$148.7 million to deliver gender-responsive, inclusive and equitable humanitarian assistance through health, nutrition, WASH, education and child protection programmes. UNICEF will also strengthen preparedness, rapid response and coordination efforts for affected populations across the region.

IN NEED^{2,3,4}



99.2 million people in need of health and nutrition assistance



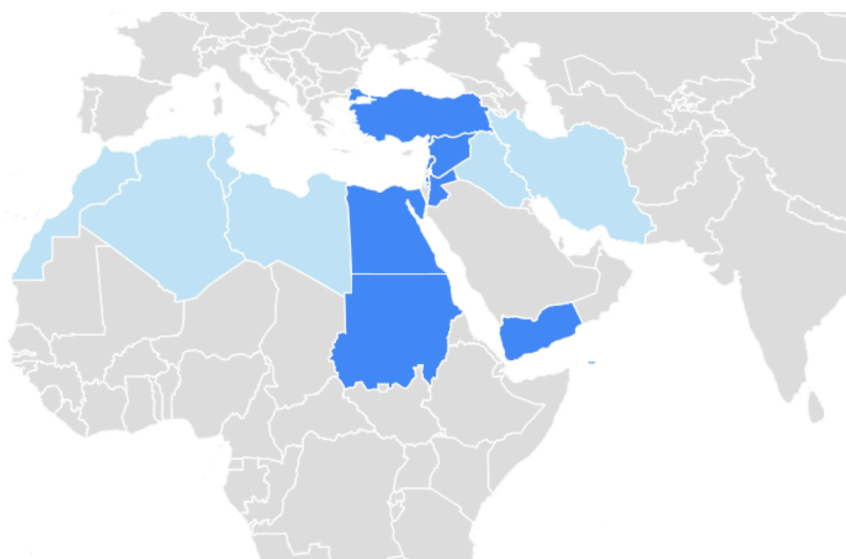
40 million children in need of protection services



38.5 million children in need of education support



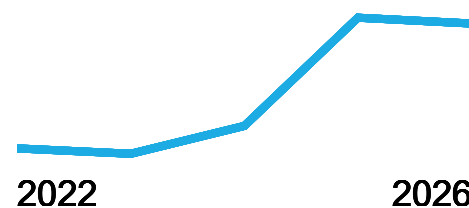
75.7 million people lack access to safe water



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; those in darker blue are covered under individual country or multi-country appeals.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$148.7 million



2022

2026

Figures are provisional and subject to change upon review, including upon finalization of inter-agency response plans covered by this appeal.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Overlapping and protracted crises in the Middle East and North Africa are compounded by complex and converging risks that disproportionately affect children, particularly those in vulnerable households. As a result, 92.6 million people, including 44.8 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance.

In the State of Palestine, escalating violence in the West Bank and the conflict in the Gaza Strip have created a devastating humanitarian situation with regional impacts. Famine (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Phase 5) was confirmed in parts of the Gaza Strip (1 July 2025 - 30 September 2025), reflecting catastrophic nutrition conditions for children and vulnerable populations.⁵ Neighbouring countries including Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic face increasing challenges in providing services to vulnerable populations who have been impacted and are absorbing displaced people. Further escalation could aggravate fragile political and humanitarian conditions across the region, significantly affecting Palestinians as well as host communities.

The Sudan is home to the world's largest child displacement crisis, with millions forced from their homes internally and across borders. Famine has been confirmed in parts of Darfur and Kordofan (September 2025 - January 2026).⁶ Egypt, the largest recipient of Sudanese refugees, hosts an estimated 1.5 million Sudanese (780,000 of whom are registered) who have fled the conflict since April 2023.⁷ Libya hosts more than 357,000 Sudanese. Hosting large numbers of refugees places immense pressure on both countries' national systems.⁸

In Yemen, years of conflict, economic decline and climate shocks have left families struggling to access food, healthcare and education.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, one of the world's largest refugee-hosting countries, economic constraints and sanctions limit humanitarian capacity. The June 2025 escalation of conflict with Israel further increased vulnerability and overstretched national services, risking regional spillover. Although the return of Afghan refugees accelerated in mid-2025, 4.2 million remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran, placing pressure on national systems. An acute water crisis threatens population displacement from the capital, Tehran.⁹

In the Syrian Arab Republic, insecurity, displacement and drought-like conditions continue to strain communities and hinder the delivery of essential services. Returning refugees and internally displaced persons require sustained reintegration support. In Iraq, accelerated returns from Al-Hol camp in the Syrian Arab Republic mean that many require urgent assistance, particularly women and children. Iraq's worst water crisis in 80 years threatens people's access to safe water and heightens their risks of disease and of climate-induced displacement.

In North Africa, complex migration flows intersect with intensifying climate risks, including droughts, floods and water scarcity. Algeria continues to host Sahrawi refugees, while ongoing instability in Libya may drive refugees and migrants, including children, across borders. In Morocco, unaccompanied and separated children remain highly vulnerable, and drought and post-earthquake recovery continue to strain communities.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

In 2026, guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, UNICEF will strengthen preparedness and deliver urgent, timely and effective humanitarian assistance across the Middle East and North Africa region.

The Regional Office will support country offices in enhancing their overall preparedness, including monitoring current and emerging risks, developing scenarios to anticipate crises and implementing fully costed contingency plans (including subregional approaches) that will enable the rapid allocation of funding, technical support and supplies. The Regional Office will lead cross-border and subregional collaboration to ensure timely and coordinated assistance. It will provide leadership, coordination, advocacy and surge support for emergencies, facilitating strategic planning, information-sharing and rapid deployment of human, operational and financial resources. It will also ensure minimum emergency preparedness and response capacity across country offices and partners through technical and operational support and through tailored learning and capacity-building initiatives. The Regional Office will enhance preparedness to ensure children receive life-saving and dignified assistance in the event of a crisis. Support will also focus on accountability to affected populations and localization by strengthening feedback systems, integrating local needs into decision-making and empowering local actors to deliver context-specific, effective and sustainable humanitarian assistance. These efforts aim to enhance the dignity, capacities and resilience of the most vulnerable. Through technical guidance and operational support, country offices will be better equipped to negotiate and maintain principled humanitarian access, unblock constraints and apply risk-informed strategies to reach the most vulnerable children and families.

UNICEF's response will encompass core sectors including nutrition, health, WASH, education, child protection and social protection. UNICEF will deliver urgent assistance to Palestinian populations in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. In Libya, UNICEF will support life-saving assistance and essential services for Sudanese refugees and host communities. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNICEF will support refugees and host communities, while scaling up preparedness for potential conflict escalations, climate-related risks and earthquakes. In Iraq, children and families affected by returns from northeast Syria and by camp closures, along with host communities, will access integrated services. In Algeria, UNICEF will continue responding to the needs of Sahrawi refugees. In Morocco and Tunisia, UNICEF will reinforce humanitarian preparedness, with a focus on children on the move and those affected by climate-related risks.

Through these efforts, UNICEF aims to provide timely, equitable and coordinated humanitarian assistance that is gender-responsive and inclusive, reaching children and families in need across 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



At Mehrabani School in Tehran, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the sound of laughter has started to return. Just weeks ago, many students sat in silence, still shaken by the fear and tension of the recent conflict. Now, through a mental health and psychosocial support programme supported by UNICEF and its partners, these children are learning to express their emotions and reconnect with others. In group sessions filled with drawing, storytelling and play, they are finding safe ways to heal. "I learned how to talk about my feelings," shares Haroun, 13. Already reaching nearly 20,000 people in five provinces, the programme is helping young minds rebuild confidence and hope.

[**Read more about this story here**](#)

Children at Mehrabani School in Tehran attend a mental health and psychosocial support programme in November 2025, where they make art, play and learn to express their emotions, to be able to heal.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

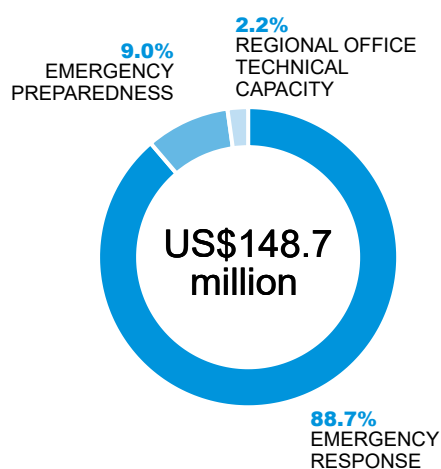
In 2026, UNICEF requires \$148.7 million to strengthen preparedness and respond to the urgent humanitarian needs of children, families, refugees, displaced populations and host communities in the Middle East and North Africa.¹⁰ This appeal ensures a coordinated, equitable and timely approach to crises with regional impacts that enables UNICEF to act quickly where needs are greatest.

Funding will strengthen UNICEF's capacity for inter-agency coordination, surge deployment and risk-informed programming. Full support will improve monitoring and data systems, support localized responses and strengthen accountability to affected populations, ensuring that assistance reaches the most vulnerable children and families without delay.

Programmes will be gender-responsive and inclusive, addressing the needs of specific age groups; girls and boys; and children and adolescents with disabilities. UNICEF will continue building local capacity for child protection and life-saving and life-sustaining services for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Proactive investment in preparedness and contingency measures before crises escalate will enable rapid, principled and effective assistance, while also ensuring a higher return on investments for children and families.

Without timely and flexible support, vulnerable households, particularly those with children, can face severe consequences including interrupted education, worsening health, malnutrition and reliance on harmful coping strategies. Adequate funding will allow UNICEF to scale up preparedness, deliver critical services and ensure that children and their families survive, recover and thrive.

Supporting UNICEF will help safeguard the rights of children, protect the most vulnerable. It will provide communities with the opportunity to live with dignity, safety and hope.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$) ¹¹
Emergency response	131,973,097
Regional office technical capacity	3,291,809
Emergency preparedness	13,453,000
Total	148,717,906

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ENDNOTES

1. The total number of people and children in need has decreased in 2026 due to the removal of Djibouti from this appeal. Needs for Djibouti are now included in UNICEF's Eastern and Southern Africa Region appeal.
2. The figures for people and children in need, as well as sector needs, are based on the sum of sector needs outlined in the 2025 Humanitarian Response Plans. This encompasses UNICEF country offices under this Middle East and North Africa Region appeal; countries with standalone appeals (Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the State of Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen); and countries covered under the multi-country Syrian Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations appeal (Egypt, Jordan and Türkiye). The people and children in need and sector needs figures reflect needs across the entire region and are provisional, subject to revision upon finalization of inter-agency planning documents.
3. This 2026 Middle East and North Africa regional appeal covers preparedness and response in Algeria, Egypt (for Palestinian populations), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Libya. Egypt's response for Sudanese and Syrian refugees is included under the multi-country Syrian Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations appeal. Preparedness measures for Morocco and Tunisia are also included under this regional appeal. Additionally, this appeal covers some of the response for Palestinian populations in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. As hostilities and humanitarian impacts in the State of Palestine unfold, requiring coordinated regional preparedness and response, the figures for people in need and associated funding requirements will be continually updated.
4. Sector-specific needs may exceed the total number of people in need due to differences in population coverage. The Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) number of people in need of 13 million includes both Syrian refugees and host communities (10.74 million in Türkiye, 2.23 million in Jordan, 0.18 million in Egypt). Some country-level people in need figures (e.g., Türkiye) focus only on refugees, while sector needs reflect all populations covered by the 3RP (refugees, asylum seekers and host communities), which can result in sector-specific numbers being higher than the reported total number of people in need.
5. Famine (IPC Phase 5) was confirmed for one of the five governorates of the Gaza Strip – the Gaza Governorate (Gaza City area) – between 1 July and 30 September 2025. Following the ceasefire that came into effect on 10 October 2025, the IPC's 19 December 2025 Special Brief reported that no areas of the Gaza Strip were then classified in Famine. Sources: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Gaza Strip: Famine confirmed in Gaza Governorate, projected to expand (Special Snapshot), 22 Aug 2025 available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPpt2025_Special_Snapshot.pdf and IPC, Gaza Strip Acute Food Insecurity Analysis: Special Brief (Oct 2025–Apr 2026), 19 Dec 2025; available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Gaza_Strip_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Oct2025_Apr2026_Special_Brief.pdf.
6. Integrated Food Security Phase Calculation (IPC), IPC Alert: Sudan, IPC, 5 February 2026, available at https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Alert_Sudan_Feb2026.pdf.
7. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Egypt: Factsheet – September 2025, UNHCR, available at www.unhcr.org/media/egypt-factsheet-september-2025.
8. UNHCR, Sudan Situation: Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya – as of August 2025, UNHCR, 9 September 2025, available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/core-libya-sudanese-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-august-2025>.
9. United Nations, Iran in crisis: UN stays and delivers, 1 July 2025.
10. This total appeal request this 2026 Middle East and North Africa regional appeal includes the funding requirement of the Regional Office to enhance emergency preparedness and humanitarian coordination for ongoing humanitarian crises across the region. It also covers covers preparedness and response in Algeria, Egypt (for Palestinian populations), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq and Libya. Egypt's response for Sudanese and Syrian refugees is included under the multi-country Syrian Refugees and Other Vulnerable Populations appeal. Preparedness measures for Morocco and Tunisia are also included under this regional appeal. Additionally, this appeal covers some of the response for Palestinian populations in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. As hostilities and humanitarian impacts in the State of Palestine unfold, requiring coordinated regional preparedness and response, the figures for people in need and associated funding requirements will be continually updated.
11. These are provisional figures and subject to change upon revision of the relevant humanitarian plans.