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The compounding impacts of multiple crises like the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and impacts of climate change have left more than 800,000 people in Tajikistan, including children, severely food insecure. UNICEF, WFP and FAO have helped the Government to meet people's needs by providing targeted cash assistance and nutrition services to children and families.

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Humanitarian Action for Children

Europe and Central Asia Region

HIGHLIGHTS

- Children and families across Europe and Central Asia face multiple risks, including earthquakes, floods, disease outbreaks, conflict and mixed migration movements.
- An estimated 4.7 million people are at risk of earthquakes¹ and 7.5 million children are exposed to flooding.^{2,3} Measles cases have increased seven-fold since 2022.⁴ Political and socioeconomic volatility and rising inflation have exacerbated vulnerability of communities and resulted in a 19 per cent rise in child poverty.⁵
- Pressure on the Mediterranean and Balkan routes intensified in 2023, with arrival of approximately 240,187 refugees and migrants, (32,412 children) in five key countries⁶, a 49 percent increase from 2022. Among them, 16,638 children were unaccompanied and separated from their families⁷. Afghan refugees and their host communities remain in need of specialized support, with continued risks of new arrivals in Central Asia.
- UNICEF requires \$39.6 million to deliver critical humanitarian support, including for refugee and migrant children on the move and to address sudden onset emergencies; invest in emergency preparedness and ensure disaster risk reduction capacities of Governments and partners. The goal is inclusive, gender-responsive, climate-adaptive humanitarian action and risk mitigation.

IN NEED⁸



744,518
refugee/migrant
present in 5 countries⁹



154,528
refugee/migrant
children present in 5
countries¹⁰



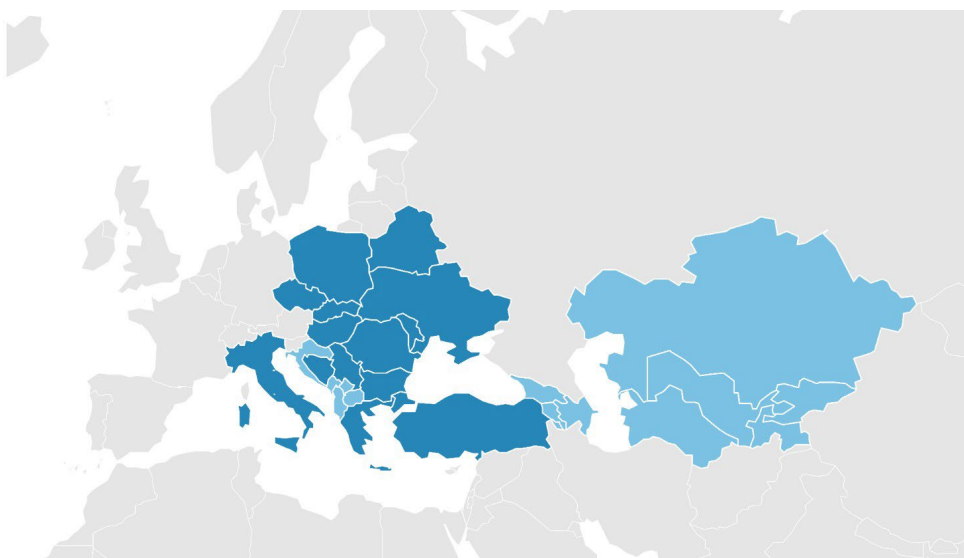
7.5 million
children exposed to
riverine floods in the
region¹¹



4.7 million
people on average
affected by
earthquakes yearly¹²



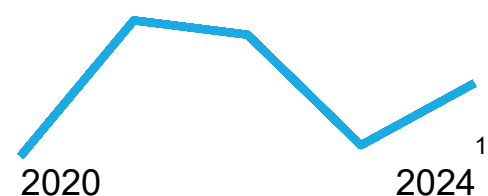
4 million
children live in
poverty¹³



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.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$39.6
million



Children and families across Europe and Central Asia are exposed to earthquakes, floods, disease outbreaks, conflict, extreme weather events and increased population movements. Central Asia, South Caucasus and the Western Balkans are particularly prone to earthquakes and flooding. Nearly 30 per cent of capital cities in the region have been destroyed by earthquakes or floods in their history.¹⁴ In 2023, floods, avalanches and earthquakes affected over 15.2 million people in Türkiye¹⁵ and over 450,000 people in the Western Balkans and Central Asia.¹⁶ In Central Asia, natural disasters cause US\$10 billion in economic losses annually.¹⁷ Approximately 92 million children¹⁸ experience heatwaves,¹⁹ 32.4 million face water scarcity²⁰ and 7.5 million are exposed to floods.²¹ Political instability, conflict²² and displacement have further impacted millions of children and families. Refugee and migrant movements along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes increased by 49 percent in 2023, with over 240,187 arrivals, including 32,412 children (16,637 unaccompanied and separated), in five key countries²³, overwhelming national capacities to ensure sufficient hygiene, accommodation, health, protection and educational services. An estimated 744,518 refugees and migrants, including 154,528 children (29,252 unaccompanied and separated), are present in these countries. Women and girls face particular risk of gender-based violence. Inadequate reception, identification and protection mechanisms and limited alternative care and legal guardianship heighten vulnerability of unaccompanied children. Adolescents lack opportunities for skills building; xenophobia and discrimination are increasing. Risks of violence against children persist in reception sites, and families have limited assistance while awaiting asylum procedures.²⁴ Additionally, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Albania host over 22,000 refugees from Afghanistan²⁵, many of whom require specialized support. The continually desperate humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, brings risk of new refugee arrivals. Continuing war in Ukraine, volatile political and socioeconomic conditions and rising inflation have increased child poverty in the region by 19 percent, pushing four million children into poverty.²⁶ Disruption of services during COVID-19, coupled with significant population movements, has increased risks of vaccine-preventable diseases and cross-border epidemics. Measles cases have increased seven-fold since 2022.²⁷ These situations require immediate investment in emergency preparedness, response and risk mitigation measures to enhance preparedness of communities and uphold rights of children.

In 2024, UNICEF will continue working with country offices, governments, other partners and (sub)regional entities to strengthen capacities for emergency preparedness, response, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.²⁹ Guided by the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action³⁰, UNICEF will continue to ensure humanitarian support for refugee and migrant populations.³¹ Under leadership of host governments, to safeguard the rights of children and families on the move along the Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes, UNICEF will fill critical gaps in specialized services and strengthen national/local capacities, advocating for children's rights, aligning policy reforms at national, regional and European Union level to international norms. Specific actions will include support to improved procedures for determining best interests of children, ending child immigration detention, ensuring safe relocating unaccompanied and separated children to European Union Member States, and enhancing access to essential services and capacity building for first responders³². Efforts will also address preparedness for and support priority, emerging needs of current Afghan refugees and affected host communities as well as support reintegration of families repatriated from conflict zones. In 2024, investments in preparedness will advance risk assessments, anticipatory action, and strengthen systems to be prepared to deliver inclusive, gender-informed, child-sensitive humanitarian responses that conform with global standards. This will entail providing emergency preparedness and response training to front-line responders, pre-positioning supplies and ensuring alignment of national emergency preparedness and response with global frameworks. Interventions will focus on mitigating and responding to sudden and slow-onset emergencies, triggered by climate-induced hazards, conflict, pandemics and potential migrant and refugee influx.³³ Working with authorities and communities, UNICEF will enhance capacities for and advocacy on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, strengthen risk-informed programming and reinforce linkages between humanitarian and development programming. Priorities will include advancing shock-responsive social protection, promoting safety of children and education personnel in schools and empowering children and youth. UNICEF and partners will engage to enhance child-sensitive, cross-border preparedness and response. The capacity of regional rapid response mechanism³⁴ will be enhanced; monitoring systems and knowledge management aligned across countries; and supply and logistics capacity augmented to facilitate timely procurement, warehousing and delivery services.

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



Maria, 16, from Egypt, is making great progress in the courses she attends at the Education and Creative Activities Centre in Athens and aspires to become a pharmacist. Maria is joined by her three younger siblings. Through the courses and other activities, children of all grades and ages are supported to integrate smoothly into the Greek public school system. They can socialize and gain confidence in an environment that embraces diversity and enhances its advantages. This is made possible through UNICEF's All Children in Education initiative, which is co-funded by the European Union and implemented by SolidarityNow and other partners.

Maria, 16, studies at the Education and Creative Activities Centre in Athens, Greece. Maria is from Egypt.

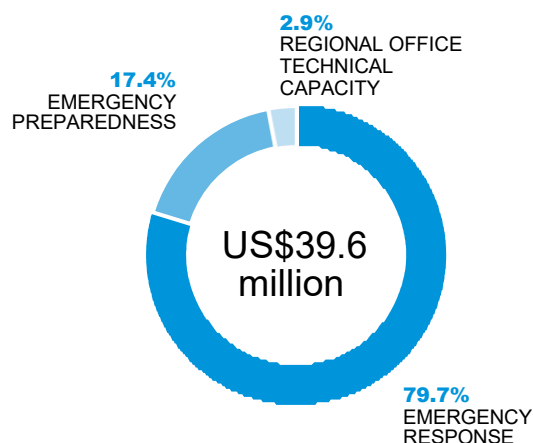
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2024

In 2024, UNICEF is appealing for \$39.6 million to address urgent humanitarian needs of refugee and migrant children and families traveling along the Mediterranean and Balkan routes as well as those exposed to the consequences of sudden and slow-onset emergencies across 20 countries³⁵ in Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Europe. In addition, funding will be utilized to enhance preparedness efforts, mitigating the impacts of disasters and building resilience of communities at risk through capacity building in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation at the local, national and regional levels. The approach emphasizes risk-informed programming, partnerships and strengthening humanitarian and development linkages.

Timely funding will enable UNICEF and its partners to respond effectively to ongoing and emerging disasters and is essential for addressing critical service gaps for refugee and migrant children, allowing anticipatory action and immediate responses to emergencies not covered by other appeals. The appeal also includes interventions to prepare for potential arrivals from Afghanistan into Central Asia, as well as addressing the evolving needs of current Afghan refugees and host communities in Albania.

Lack of sufficient and timely resources heightens children's vulnerability, increasing exposure to the adverse effects of emergencies and limiting access to essential services such as healthcare, water sanitation and hygiene, education, child protection, and support for addressing gender-based violence. This could result in irreversible negative consequences on children's physical and psychological well-being.

UNICEF emphasizes the need for flexible funding to adhere to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ensure an equitable response to the needs of children in the region. This approach aims to guarantee their safety, healthy development, and future opportunities, irrespective of their country of origin, race, or ethnicity.



| Sector | 2024 requirements (US\$) |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Emergency response | 31,578,626 ³⁶ |
| Emergency Preparedness | 6,880,000 |
| Regional Office Technical Capacity | 1,150,000 |
| Total | 39,608,626 |

ENDNOTES

1. The World Bank, Europe and Central Asia: Country risk profiles for floods and earthquakes, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2016, available at <www.worldbank.org/en/region/eca/publication/europe-and-central-asia-country-risk-profiles-for-floods-and-earthquakes>. Includes figures for the Baltic, Caucasus, Central Asian and southeast European States.
2. UNICEF, The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index, UNICEF, New York, 2021, available at <www.unicef.org/reports/climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis>.
3. In 2023, 450,000 people were impacted by earthquakes, floods and avalanches. EMDAT Data, 2023 and UNICEF estimate for Kosovo* and Tajikistan. *All references to Kosovo in this Humanitarian Action for Children appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
4. In 2022, 909 cases were recorded, while in first six months of 2023 there were 6,727 cases reported. The highest numbers of measles cases were registered in Türkiye (2,051), Kyrgyzstan (1,507), Kazakhstan (869), Tajikistan (251), Armenia (197) and Uzbekistan (102).
5. Richardson, D., F. Otchere and A. Musatti, The impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on child poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, research brief, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, 2022, available at <www.unicef.org/eca/reports/impact-war-ukraine-and-subsequent-economic-downturn-child-poverty-eastern-europe>.
6. This represents arrivals in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia as of August 2023. Additionally, an estimated 744,518 refugees and migrants are currently present in the five countries, including 154,528 children (29,252 unaccompanied and separated).
7. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). These figures do not include Ukrainian refugees, support for whom is covered under the 2024 Ukraine and Refugee Response HAC appeal which comprehensively addresses the overall impacts of the war on Ukrainian children and families living within and outside of the country.
8. The in-need figures reflect the number of people with pressing needs in the major sectors that UNICEF supports in countries covered by this regional appeal.
9. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Serbia. Estimates are based on statistics from the following: National Centre for Social Solidarity (Greece), Ministry of Migration and Asylum (Greece), Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (Italy), State Agency for Refugees (Bulgaria), Ministry of Interior (Bulgaria), Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (Serbia) and Ministry of Security (Bosnia and Herzegovina), along with data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
10. *ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. The World Bank, Europe and Central Asia: Country risk profiles for floods and earthquakes, 2016.
13. Richardson, D., F. Otchere and A. Musatti, The impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on child poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, research brief, UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, Florence, 2022, available at <www.unicef.org/eca/reports/impact-war-ukraine-and-subsequent-economic-downturn-child-poverty-eastern-europe>
14. The World Bank, Overlooked: Examining the impact of disasters and climate shocks on poverty in the Europe and Central Asia region, The World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2021, available at <<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/493181607687673440/overlooked-examining-the-impact-of-disasters-and-climate-shocks-on-poverty-in-the-europe-and-central-asia-region>>.
15. UNICEF's response to the earthquake is supported under the 2024 Türkiye Earthquake Response Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.
16. EMDAT Data, 2023 and UNICEF estimate for Kosovo* and Tajikistan. *All references to Kosovo in this Humanitarian Action for Children appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
17. Burunciuc, Lilia, Natural disasters cost Central Asia \$10 billion a year – Are we doing enough to prevent them?, World Bank Blogs, The World Bank, 5 November 2020, available at <<https://blogs.worldbank.org/europeandcentralasia/natural-disasters-cost-central-asia-10-billion-year-are-we-doing-enough>>.
18. Ninety-two million in 50 countries, or 48 percent of all children in the region. UNICEF, 1 in 2 children in Europe and Central Asia are exposed to high heatwave frequency, double the global average, press release, 27 July 2023, available at <www.unicef.org/press-releases/1-2-children-europe-and-central-asia-are-exposed-high-heatwave-frequency-double>.
19. UNICEF, Beat the heat: protecting children from heatwaves in Europe and Central Asia, policy brief, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, July 2023, available at <<https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/beat-heat>>.
20. UNICEF, The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis: Introducing the Children's Climate Risk Index, 2021.
21. *Ibid.*
22. This includes geopolitical fragility as well as renewed tensions around frozen conflicts.
23. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Serbia.
24. Preparedness measures focus time when need intensify such as peak arrivals during the summer months and hardship during the cold winter. In addition, large-scale refugee movements could be triggered by the ongoing political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan as well as drought and other climate-induced crises, conflict and political and economic crises in the Middle East and in North and East Africa. (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global Report 2022, available at <www.unhcr.org/media/global-report-2022-0>.)
25. Source: UNHCR (for Central Asia figures) and UNICEF (for Albania figures).
26. Richardson, D., F. Otchere and A. Musatti, The impact of the war in Ukraine and subsequent economic downturn on child poverty in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2022.
27. In 2022, 909 cases were recorded, while in first six months of 2023 there were 6,727 cases reported. The highest numbers of measles cases were registered in Türkiye (2,051), Kyrgyzstan (1,507), Kazakhstan (869), Tajikistan (251), Armenia (197) and Uzbekistan (102).
28. This Europe and Central Asia Region Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal covers preparedness and critical humanitarian response for refugee and migrant children across the Mediterranean and Balkan routes, in Albania and in Central Asia; initial emergency response to sudden-onset crises, and regional emergency preparedness in countries without a standalone HAC appeal. Countries supported under this HAC include: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and any other emerging crises in the region. *All references to Kosovo in this HAC appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
29. This includes strong collaboration with UNHCR and IOM on the refugee and migrant response, the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for Southeastern Europe as well as regional partnerships in Central Asia with the International Federation of Red Cross and Crescent Societies and inter-agency collaboration through joint leadership of the regional Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative. The Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI) is a global partnership that helps countries reduce disaster and climate risks by providing access to a unique pool of multidisciplinary expertise in various socioeconomic sectors to achieve the 2030 Agenda and leave no one behind. See <www.cadri.net>.
30. UNICEF, Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, 2020, available at <www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>.
31. For 2024, the Refugee and Migrant response on the Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, and the Afghan refugee preparedness and support for Central Asia and Europe has been integrated within this overall Europe and Central Asia Regional Appeal.
32. UNICEF will enhance the capacities of health-care professionals, social workers and front-line responders to identify and mitigate health and protection risks. Access to education, health and nutrition will be ensured, and survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence will receive tailored assistance. Unaccompanied and separated children will be supported in accessing mental health and psychosocial support, life skills training and opportunities for meaningful participation. Tailored messages on access to services and social behavioral change will be disseminated through various platforms.
33. The refugees from Ukraine will be included under Ukraine and Refugee Response Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal.
34. The regional rapid response mechanism is a roster of qualified, vetted staff drawn from UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia region who can be deployed to any countries and locations within the region in the event of an immediate emergency. This includes Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 emergency responses in the region.
35. This Europe and Central Asia Region Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal covers preparedness and critical humanitarian response for refugee and migrant children across the Mediterranean and Balkan routes, in Albania and in Central Asia; initial emergency response to sudden-onset crises, and regional emergency preparedness in countries without a standalone HAC appeal. Countries supported under this HAC include: Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and any other emerging crises in the region. *All references to Kosovo in this HAC appeal should be understood to be in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).
36. This includes US\$ 25.6 million to address critical humanitarian needs of refugee and migrant children and families along the Mediterranean and Western Balkans route, US\$ 2 million for support to Afghan refugees in Albania and US\$ 4 million for other onset emergencies across the region.