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for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

Majd, 6, joins a UNICEF-supported drawing activity aimed at improving the mental health and psychosocial well-being of conflict-affected children in Sayyeda Zeinab, Rural Damascus, in September 2025.

Syrian Arab Republic

HIGHLIGHTS

- Children in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to face significant vulnerabilities after 14 years of conflict. Despite renewed engagement following the change in authorities in late 2024, humanitarian needs are rising due to large-scale returns, economic decline, climate shocks and damaged infrastructure. More than 1.9 million internally displaced people and 1.1 million refugees – of these 3 million, 1.7 million are children – have returned to areas with limited access to basic services. Explosive ordnance contamination continues to threaten children's safety and access to education and essential services.
- In 2026, UNICEF will maintain an integrated, equity-based and resilience-focused response under the One Syria Coordination Framework.¹ Efforts will focus on reaching the most vulnerable children and families in newly accessible and returnee areas through life-saving and protection interventions, while also strengthening systems for early recovery and resilience-building.
- UNICEF is appealing for \$481 million to assist 7.3 million people, including 4.8 million children, with life-saving and protection interventions that are critical to ensuring their survival, learning and well-being.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



2.5 million

children and women
accessing primary health
care



1.5 million

primary caregivers
receiving infant and young
child feeding counselling



2.6 million

children supported with
educational services and
supplies in formal settings

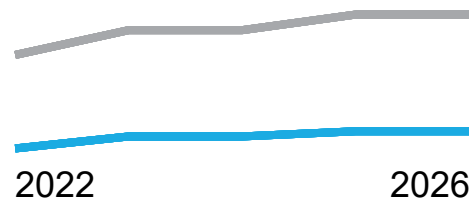


4.4 million

people accessing a
sufficient quantity and
quality of water

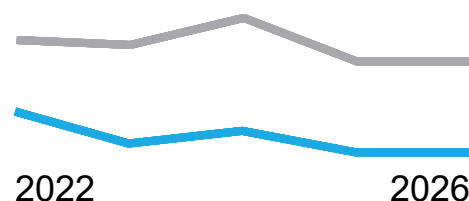
IN NEED

16.5 million people² **7.4 million children³**



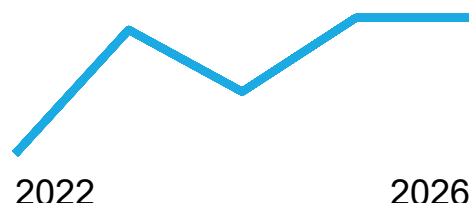
TO BE REACHED

7.3 million people⁴ **4.8 million children⁵**



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$481.4 million



The figures are sourced from HNRP 2025. The data will be updated once the results of the 2025 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment are available and HNRP 2026 is published.

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

The enduring effects of 14 years of conflict and instability will continue to shape the lives of Syrian children and women in 2026. While the change in authorities in December 2024 brought cautious optimism, intermittent violence, localized escalations and regional tensions persisted, deepening humanitarian needs. Damaged infrastructure, limited services and restricted access – often due to insecurity – remained major barriers to delivering essential support to vulnerable communities. With only 1 per cent economic growth⁶ expected in 2025, extreme poverty affects one in four Syrians, and two thirds live below the lower middle-income poverty line.

Displacement remained widespread despite substantial returns in 2025. An estimated 6.2 million people remain internally displaced, 1.4 million in camps and 4.8 million outside camps.⁷ Since November 2024, more than 890,000 people have been newly displaced.⁸ At the same time, around 1.9 million internally displaced persons – including 1.1 million children – and approximately 1.1 million Syrian refugees, including 627,000 children, have returned to their areas of origin or other locations.⁹ Internally displaced and refugee returnees are resettling in areas where basic services are already overstretched, minimal, or severely damaged. These populations – particularly children – remain among the most vulnerable due to limited access to education, healthcare and livelihoods.

Explosive ordnance contamination poses a serious threat, with 760 incidents causing 1,419 casualties since December 2024, with 155 children killed and 359 injured.¹⁰ Children comprise nearly two thirds of all civilian casualties. These hazards hinder access to education, safe spaces and essential services, while affecting psychosocial well-being.

The health system remains under-resourced and overwhelmed, with only 57 per cent of hospitals and 37 per cent of primary healthcare centres fully functional.¹¹ Sporadic violence and limited access continue to disrupt health and nutrition services. An estimated 14.6 million people are food insecure,¹² including 600,000 children under age 5 suffering from wasting (177,000 of them severely wasted).¹³ With rainfall at just 54 per cent of the average, the country is experiencing its worst drought-like conditions in 36 years, affecting 8.5 million people, including 1.8 million who are severely affected.¹⁴ Water scarcity, poor sanitation and hygiene gaps are contributing to waterborne diseases, leishmaniasis and rising malnutrition.

Access to safe and inclusive learning environments remains limited. More than 2.5 million children are out of school, and nearly 8,000 schools require urgent rehabilitation. Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate WASH facilities, lack of learning materials and a shortage of trained teachers continue to hinder learning and reintegration – especially for returnee children.¹⁵

Protection risks, mental health needs, violence against children and gender-based violence and limited access to services persist, particularly for children and women. Sustained, coordinated humanitarian action remains essential to upholding children's rights, ensuring access to life-saving services, supporting recovery and building resilience.

SECTOR NEEDS¹⁶



15.9 million

people in need of health assistance



6.4 million

people in need of nutrition assistance



6.7 million

children in need of child protection services



7.8 million

people in need of education support



14.4 million

people require access to WASH services

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Majd, 14, plays an educational game with his teacher at a UNICEF-supported self-learning centre for children with disabilities in Dar'a city, Syrian Arab Republic, in September 2025.

"Watching my son grow and thrive at the centre fills my heart with joy and gratitude," says Huda, a mother from Dar'a, as she looks proudly at her son Majd, 14. "Two years ago, Majd couldn't form a full sentence or express his needs. Now, we can talk for hours about all sorts of things."

Majd, 14, lives with his parents and brother, Mohammed, 12. Their father, a tailor, is the sole breadwinner. The family fled violence in Dar'a and lived in Lebanon. Both Majd and Mohammed were later diagnosed with autism.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

UNICEF will continue to respond to the immediate, severe and protracted humanitarian needs of vulnerable populations in the Syrian Arab Republic, guided by its core mandate to protect the rights of every child. Through the One Syria approach, the response will focus on life-saving and protection interventions, ensuring equitable access to services based on vulnerability. This includes support for internally displaced persons, returning internally displaced persons and refugees¹⁷ and host communities. UNICEF will maintain a leadership role in humanitarian coordination in the nutrition, education and WASH sectors, while actively engaging with the protection sector to protect children.

UNICEF's response is guided by the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, with a strong focus on resilience-building, system strengthening and strategic engagement with national partners to ensure sustainability and inclusive service delivery. This will be achieved through strong partnerships with government, youth groups, civil society, women-led organizations, humanitarian actors and communities. UNICEF will enhance resilience through decentralized programming, efficient resource use, effective communication and advocacy, along with system strengthening at national, subnational and community levels. Efforts to engage line ministries and government counterparts to support a gradual transition to national ownership align with the interim Government of Syria's recovery initiatives.

UNICEF will engage in programming across sectors, promoting risk-informed, conflict-sensitive, child-centred and gender-responsive approaches; protecting children – including children with disabilities – against violence; and paving the way for transformative and sustainable results, including through preparedness actions.

UNICEF health interventions will ensure the continuity of safe, equitable and life-saving quality primary healthcare and support secondary care for mothers, newborns and children through outreach, capacity enhancement, community engagement, restoration of local health systems and vaccination. Using the life-cycle approach, UNICEF will support the most vulnerable children and women through high-impact preventive and curative nutrition interventions.

The WASH programme will focus on emergency and system-level interventions to ensure equitable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. It will support drought mitigation through climate-resilient water resource management, restoration of key infrastructure and sanitation and hygiene support. Education interventions will apply a life-cycle approach to support inclusive access to quality formal and non-formal education, focusing on the reintegration of returnees, school rehabilitation and strengthening institutional capacity. Child protection efforts will address abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence through mental health support and positive parenting programmes, complemented by explosive ordnance risk education to enhance children's safety.

Shock-responsive social protection and humanitarian cash assistance will help vulnerable families meet urgent needs while supporting children's nutrition, well-being and protection.

UNICEF will empower adolescents through safe, meaningful engagement and resilience-building. Social and behavioural change approaches will foster trust, demand for services and people-centred community engagement. UNICEF will strengthen data-driven and evidence-based programmes, mainstreaming protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and accountability to affected populations.

2026 PROGRAMME TARGETS¹⁸



Health (including public health emergencies)

- 2,500,014 children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities
- 691,895 children under 1 year reached with routine vaccination (DTP3 containing vaccine)
- 2,900,000 caregivers reached with health promotion, including immunization messages
- 15,000 pregnant and lactating women and their new-born babies reached through home visits



Nutrition¹⁹

- 1,770,000 children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- 25,000 children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- 1,510,300 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- 828,000 children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder
- 538,000 pregnant women receiving preventative iron supplementation
- 691,896 children 6-59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation



Child protection and GBViE

- 200,000 women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- 18,000 children who have received individual case management
- 900,000 Children and caregivers provided with landmine or other explosive weapons prevention and/or survivor assistance interventions²⁰
- 125,000 Children accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support²¹
- 65,000 mothers, fathers and caregivers reached through parenting programmes through UNICEF-supported programmes
- 450,000 women, men, girls and boys engaged by behaviour change communication (BCC) interventions for child protection issues



Education

- 2,614,570 children supported with educational services and supplies in formal settings
- 598,057 children in non-formal education benefiting from education services
- 26,556 teachers and education personnel trained
- 138,411 community members engaged activities promoting on the importance of education.



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- 4,350,000 people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- 1,896,000 people accessing appropriate sanitation services
- 625,000 people reached with handwashing behaviour-change programmes
- 785,000 people reached with critical WASH supplies
- 290,000 people benefiting from access to life-saving/emergency WASH facilities and services



Social protection

- 150,000 individual reached through UNICEF social assistance (cash-based)



Adolescents/youth

- 200,000 affected adolescents and youth (10-24 years) receiving life-skills and citizenship education and employability skills
- 300,000 adolescents and youth (10-24 years) promoting social cohesion and civic engagement at community level



Cross-sectoral (AAP, SBC, and PSEA)²²

- 500,000 people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms²³
- 7,439 people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms
- 3,500,000 people who have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers

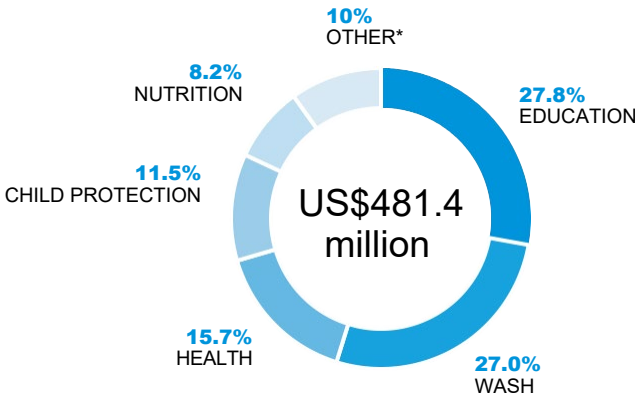
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

For 2026, UNICEF is appealing for \$481 million to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to 7.3 million people, including 4.8 million children, in the Syrian Arab Republic. This funding will enable a timely, sustained and equitable response to urgent and protracted needs, prioritizing newly accessible areas and returnees; strengthening essential, life-saving and protection services; and fostering resilience in host communities.

Fourteen years of conflict and instability mean that millions of children are facing violence, displacement and deprivation. The conflict and upheaval have also significantly weakened national systems, making recovery slow and uneven. Fragile public systems, worsening drought, damaged infrastructure, explosive ordnance contamination and limited access to basic services continue to put children’s lives and well-being at risk. People with protracted humanitarian needs will remain vulnerable as constrained funding hinders recovery and reconstruction.

Funding is necessary to restore primary healthcare and routine immunization, tackle severe wasting and ensure safe water and sanitation in drought- and displacement-affected communities. Urgent support is also needed to rehabilitate schools and learning spaces, expand psychosocial support and protection from violence and deliver cash assistance to the most vulnerable households. To anticipate and mitigate the impact of future shocks on families, funding is required to strengthen preparedness in the most at-risk communities. Investing in anticipatory action will help safeguard the resilience of vulnerable children and their families. Programmes will be implemented through the One Syria approach, strengthening partnerships and community systems for resilience and early recovery.

The Humanitarian Reset has underscored the urgency of prioritizing humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic, where UNICEF is recalibrating its response amid diminishing funding that makes maintaining critical services and support for vulnerable populations more difficult. Without adequate funding, millions of children will be deprived of the services they need to survive, learn and thrive. The consequences – rising malnutrition, preventable diseases, lost education and heightened protection risks – will be immediate and lasting. Flexible, predictable resources are vital to sustain UNICEF’s capacity to respond where and when children need it most.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$)
Nutrition	39,242,342
Child protection	55,273,846
Education	133,893,107 ²⁴
Social protection	28,661,539
Adolescents/youth	15,931,385
Cross-sectoral (AAP, SBC, and PSEA)	3,029,995
Health	75,461,599
WASH	129,938,901
Total	481,432,714

**This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Social protection (6.0%), Adolescents/youth (3.3%), Cross-sectoral (AAP, SBC, and PSEA) (<1%).*

Of the overall funding requirement, \$451,139,607 is aligned with the prioritized HNRP 2025, while \$30,293,107 is required for UNICEF activities outside the prioritized HNRP.

ENDNOTES

1. To support a more effective and inclusive humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Whole of Syria coordination framework was established in 2015, linking operational hubs in Damascus, Gaziantep and Amman. Following political and operational changes in December 2024, including a shift in authorities in Damascus, the humanitarian community began transitioning to a unified in-country coordination model – now referred to as the One Syria Coordination Framework.
2. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Response Priorities: Syrian Arab Republic – January–December 2025, OCHA, July 2025, available at www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-humanitarian-response-priorities-january-december-2025.
3. Ibid. Children are an estimated 45 per cent of the total number of people in need.
4. For the 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, the total number of people to be reached has been calculated using a harmonized methodology that draws on planned figures from output-level indicators disaggregated by age, gender, disability status, and beneficiary type at the field office level. This approach ensures equitable and targeted delivery of humanitarian assistance. UNICEF's planned response includes support to the following population groups: host communities, internally displaced persons, internally displaced persons returning to their place of origin and Syrian refugees returning from abroad. For children under age 18, the highest planned figures for those under and 5 and those aged 5–17 were combined to estimate the total number of children to be reached. For adults, the highest planned figures for women and men, including persons with disabilities, were used to calculate the number of adults to be reached. The total number of people to be reached in the 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal is the sum of unique children and adults identified through this approach.
5. Ibid.
6. World Bank, Syria Macro-Fiscal Assessment: June 2025, The World Bank Group, Washington, D.C., 7 July 2025, available at www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/07/07/-new-world-bank-report-highlights-syria-s-economic-challenges-and-recovery-prospects-for-2025.
7. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Syria governorates IDPs and IDP returnees overview (as of 15 Oct 2025), available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/119204>.
8. Ibid.
9. UNHCR, Syria governorates of return overview (as of 9 Oct 2025), available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/119206>.
10. International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO) data shared by Mine Action Area of Responsibility. The data cover the period 8 Dec 2024 – 10 Oct 2025.
11. Health Sector Syria, Health Sector Bulletin, May 2025, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/health-sector-syria-health-sector-bulletin-may-2025>.
12. Syria Food Security and Agricultural Livelihoods Sector, Interactive response dashboard 2025, online resource, available at: <https://fscluster.org/syria>.
13. Estimates by the nutrition sector using proxy indicators in the absence of the SMART survey. The results of the next SMART survey are expected to be available by the end of 2025.
14. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Syrian Arab Republic: Drought and widespread crop failure – Urgent call for assistance, covering the period June 2025 – March 2026, FAO, Rome, 2025, available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ee76feec-e0b3-409b-81bd-e13e9a615627/content>.
15. OCHA, Humanitarian Response Priorities, July 2025.
16. Ibid.
17. UNICEF Syria, in close collaboration with UNICEF offices in refugee-hosting countries including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye, is working closely to support Syrian refugee returnees. Coordinating and mapping services is a joint effort that aims to ensure a continuity of services across borders and facilitate safe, dignified and informed returns while maintaining access to essential protection, education, health and social services.
18. UNICEF's programme targets for 2026 remain unchanged compared with the revised 2025 appeal, reflecting a carefully prioritized response to the most pressing needs and gaps, based on currently available data. These targets have been developed considering humanitarian needs, operational constraints, severity scales and the funding landscape. The inter-sectoral planning process is ongoing and will conclude with the publication of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 in January 2026. The 2026 HNRP will incorporate updated assessments – including the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, Education Sector Needs Assessment and SMART survey – whose results are expected by the end of 2025. UNICEF will revisit its programme targets in the first quarter of 2026, and use the latest available evidence to ensure its response remains relevant, needs-based and adaptive to the evolving humanitarian context, particularly within a constrained funding environment.
19. UNICEF Syria is implementing a paradigm shift of broadening the focus from a predominant treatment approach to the one that focuses on identifying pathways to accelerate the prevention of all forms of malnutrition through delivery of a comprehensive package of essential services, improved access to diverse nutritious foods for the nutritionally at-risk groups and promotion of responsive caregiving.
20. The increase in return movements to areas contaminated by explosive ordnance has significantly heightened demand for mine risk education and explosive ordnance awareness. There is an urgent need to address critical protection risks faced by returning children and families in affected communities. The target covers all governorates, with a particular focus on such high-risk governorates as Homs, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Dar'a, to ensure adequate coverage of life-saving risk education interventions.
21. This target distinguishes between structured mental health and psychosocial support interventions and other psychosocial activities, such as psychological first aid and recreational support.
22. Key cross-cutting priorities integrated across sectors include social and behaviour change, accountability to affected populations and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
23. Inclusion of Syrian refugees and other community groups will be ensured through the existing community structures and ongoing community engagement interventions.
24. The HNRP 2025 outlines two planning figures for needs: 'total needs' and 'prioritized needs'. UNICEF's overall funding request aligns with the 'total needs' target of the HNRP 2025. However, UNICEF's education funding ask of \$133,893,107 exceeds the HNRP's prioritized education funding figure of \$103,600,000. UNICEF maintains that the significant reduction in targets and budget under the HNRP's prioritized needs would compromise children's right to access to basic education. Therefore, it has retained a higher funding ask and target for education – exceeding the prioritized needs but remaining within the overall HNRP 2025 budget of \$254.2 million.