



unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

Since August 2025 UNICEF and its partners supported refugee and displaced children, as well as host communities, in Koro (Bandiagara) by setting up tents as classrooms and creating child-friendly spaces for psychosocial support and social cohesion. Photo taken in November 2025.

Mali

HIGHLIGHTS

- Political instability, climate change and escalating violence has caused humanitarian conditions in Mali to further deteriorate. Insecurity is spreading south, with armed groups increasingly using drones, blockades and attacks on industry and fuel supplies. This has led to shortages, higher living costs and aid disruption. Around 415,000¹ people are internally displaced, 58 per cent of them children. The combined effects of ongoing crises have left approximately 5.9 million² people requiring assistance, with children making up 54 per cent of those affected. In 2026, 1.4 million³ people will need urgent nutrition assistance, including nearly 391,000 children under 5 years of age with severe wasting.
- UNICEF will intensify its efforts to address the crisis by leveraging its field presence, strengthening national systems and partnering with local actors to reach those most in need. It will deliver integrated, multisectoral life-saving interventions in nutrition, health, WASH, education, social protection and child protection while reinforcing community resilience and social cohesion in a rapidly evolving, conflict-sensitive context.
- To reach 2.2 million of the most vulnerable children in areas with high-severity need, UNICEF urgently seeks \$109.1 million to provide essential assistance and ensure that those most in need receive the support they require.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



1.5 million

children and women
accessing primary health
care



202,575

children with severe
wasting admitted for
treatment



250,000

children accessing formal
or non-formal education,
including early learning

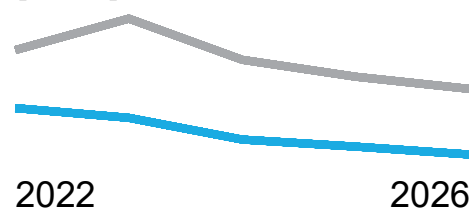


376,927

people accessing a
sufficient quantity and
quality of water

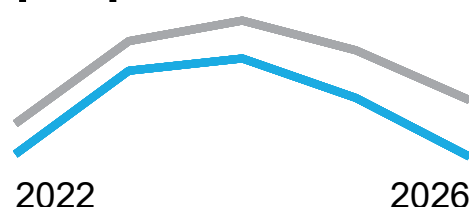
IN NEED

5.9 million people^{4,5} **3.2 million children**⁶



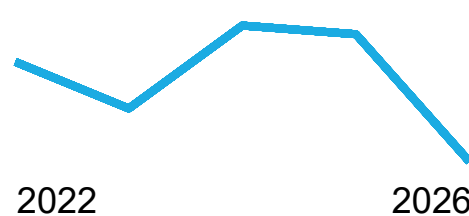
TO BE REACHED

2.8 million people⁷ **2.1 million children**⁸



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$109.1 million



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

In 2025, Mali's humanitarian crisis further deepened amid persistent conflict, climate shocks (droughts and floods) and political instability, including the dissolution of all political parties.⁹ The country also withdrew from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹⁰ to form the Confederation of Sahel States with Burkina Faso and the Niger.¹¹ The security situation in Mali remains highly volatile. Evolving armed-group tactics increasingly target civilians, industrial infrastructure and major trade routes, constraining humanitarian access and disrupting supply chains. The expanded use of drones and the spread of violence into southern regions – particularly Sikasso and Kayes – disrupted routes from Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, which in turn limited humanitarian access and supply chains. These dynamics also caused fuel shortages, blocked roads, rising prices and frequent power outages, ultimately worsening living conditions, straining essential services and heightening social tensions and political uncertainty. In addition, armed clashes and violence have driven a slight increase in the number of internally displaced people, who now number about 415,000, mainly in Gao, Ménaka and Mopti regions, with children accounting for up to 58 per cent of those internally displaced. At the same time, the number of refugee arrivals from Burkina Faso continued to rise, with more than 51,000 newly arrived Burkinabe refugees recorded in Koro, Bandiagara Region, between April and September 2025.¹² Mali, with a Children's Climate Risk Index of 7.3,¹³ is among the 10 countries in the region most affected by climate shocks, impacting children and their families.

The combined effects of ongoing crises have left about 5.9 million people – approximately 27 per cent of the population in Mali – requiring humanitarian assistance, 54 per cent of whom are children. In 2026, about 1.4 million people will need nutrition assistance,¹⁴ including nearly 391,000 children experiencing severe wasting. The health system is overstretched, leaving more than 2 million¹⁵ vulnerable people in critical need of healthcare. Among them, 414,071 pregnant women and 1,022,706 children under 5 years of age are exposed to preventable diseases amid outbreaks of diphtheria, dengue, meningitis and measles. WASH needs remain critical,¹⁶ with more than 3.3 million¹⁷ people needing assistance in 2026. More than 2,320 school closures have disrupted education for 696,000 children and affected 13,920 teachers.¹⁸ In 2026, nearly 2 million¹⁹ children will require education support. Conflict has led to child rights violations, including recruitment and use, abduction, rape and others grave violations. More than 600 grave violations were verified through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.²⁰ More than 2 million²¹ children require protection services. In addition, children face broader protection risks, including the use explosive weapons in populated areas and increasing psychosocial distress, as well as the risk of becoming unaccompanied or separated. Gender-based violence persists, with an estimated 961,367²² people in need of assistance in 2026. And people with disabilities face risks of violence compounded by barriers to accessing protection services and assistance. Urgent, well-resourced action and coordination are needed to protect children and families, as chronic underfunding²³ and insecurity-driven access constraints²⁴ continue to hinder the delivery of life-saving assistance.

SECTOR NEEDS²⁵



2.1 million
people in need of
health assistance



1.4 million
people in need of
nutrition assistance



2.1 million
children in need of
protection services



2 million
children in need of
education support



3.4 million
people in need of
emergency WASH
assistance

STORY FROM THE FIELD



Dr. Dolo, nutrition specialist, plays with Fatoumata, 10 months, during a malnutrition screening session at Kabara health centre, Timbuktu, July 2025. Balkissa (far right) helps lead community efforts against malnutrition.

Balkissa, a young mother, leads the fight against malnutrition in Kabara, the village where she lives and one of 10 villages in the Kabara health administrative area, located 7 kilometers from Timbuktu. Balkissa, 23, is making a real difference: she has become a driving force in the fight against child malnutrition in her community. Balkissa is one of 1,000 women in Kabara who have been trained to become front-line actors in the prevention of malnutrition starting in their own homes and communities. A powerful movement is taking root: mothers are teaching other mothers; villages are taking care of their children; and a chain of solidarity is growing through the spread of good practices.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

Amid increasing humanitarian needs and reduced aid, and in line with the humanitarian reset, UNICEF is contributing to building a more responsive, agile, efficient and people-centred humanitarian response in Mali. UNICEF's appeal for Mali aligns with the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan. UNICEF focuses on life-saving actions – including child protection and education in emergencies – to assist people in the most affected areas falling within the HNRP's scope and in additional districts.²⁶ Despite funding constraints, UNICEF remains dedicated to assessing and meeting children's real needs by strengthening humanitarian assessments,²⁷ mobilizing resources, streamlining resources and integrating humanitarian, development and peace efforts to safeguard response effectiveness and strengthen resilience and social cohesion.

UNICEF's strategies include enhancing emergency preparedness and response by reinforcing national and local capacities, supporting humanitarian planning tools (e.g., the Multi-Hazard National Contingency Plan and the National Flood Plan), adopting anticipatory measures (including adaptive social protection) and improving supply chains. Collaboration with local and national authorities, other United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders will strengthen coordination, especially in southern regions impacted by crisis spillover. UNICEF will deploy an adaptive access strategy combining localization,²⁸ real-time digital monitoring and an agile field presence to maintain life-saving services in hard-to-reach areas (e.g., Kidal).²⁹

UNICEF will strengthen its multisectoral, integrated and conflict-sensitive approach to meet urgent needs, while fostering early recovery, resilience and social cohesion. UNICEF's nutrition strategy will focus on expanding prevention and treatment of malnutrition, ensuring early detection and referral for at-risk children and integrating infant and young child feeding counselling into health and community services. Health interventions will bridge gaps in remote areas through mobile clinics and community health workers and reinforce epidemic preparedness and response. UNICEF will promote equitable access to climate-resilient WASH services and community-driven WASH solutions, encouraging active participation of adolescents and young people to improve access and reduce disease and malnutrition risks. UNICEF will support formal and non-formal education; provide alternative learning opportunities such as accelerated programmes, community-based learning and distance education; and strengthen capacity for education in emergencies and disaster risk reduction. Child protection interventions will reinforce community-based mechanisms; improve case management and mental health and psychosocial support services; ensure safe family reunification; prioritize prevention of and response to gender-based violence; support explosive ordnance risk education; and provide confidential reporting pathways for sexual exploitation and abuse. Additionally, in 2026, UNICEF will work with local and national authorities to strengthen Mali's social protection system, notably through the country's Unified Social Registry.³⁰ By integrating humanitarian action within Mali's national social protection framework, UNICEF and national authorities will improve their capacity to reach more vulnerable households with social assistance, including in conflict-affected areas.

Despite changes in the humanitarian system,³¹ UNICEF will continue leading the WASH, education and nutrition clusters in Mali, positioning itself as a critical actor to safeguard children's rights and support the 2026 Humanitarian Programme Cycle.³² UNICEF is also collaborating with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to strengthen Protection Cluster coordination³³ and will co-lead, with the Humanitarian Coordinator, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism.³⁴

UNICEF will implement an accountability to affected populations strategy with United Nations partners to foster transparency and community involvement, while maintaining zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse.

2026 PROGRAMME TARGETS



Health (including public health emergencies)³⁵

- 1,500,000 children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities
- 73,057 children vaccinated against measles, supplemental dose
- 765,220 children 0-11 months receiving pentavalent 3 vaccine
- 254,195 live births delivered in health facilities in UNICEF-supported areas



Nutrition³⁶

- 202,575 children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- 359,288 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling
- 137,955 children 6-59 months receiving micronutrient powder
- 454,027 children 6-59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation



Child protection and GBViE³⁷

- 306,200 children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- 186,867 women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- 450 children who have exited armed forces and groups provided with protection or reintegration support
- 2,250 unaccompanied and separated children provided with alternative care and/or reunified
- 75,537 children in areas affected by landmines and other explosive weapons provided with relevant prevention and/or survivor-assistance interventions



Education³⁸

- 250,000 children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- 700,000 children receiving individual learning materials
- 2,000 teachers and facilitators trained in basic pedagogy and/or mental health and psychosocial support



Water, sanitation and hygiene³⁹

- 376,927 people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- 42,500 people accessing appropriate sanitation services
- 226,927 people reached with critical WASH supplies



Social protection

- 176,530 households benefitting from social assistance from government funded programmes with UNICEF technical assistance



Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)

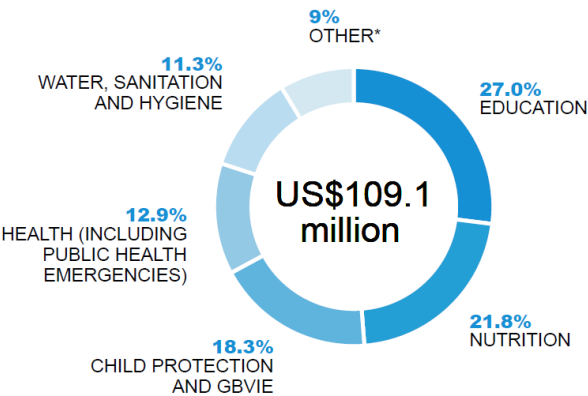
- 32,000 households reached with UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers (including for social protection and other sectors)
- 450,000 people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms
- 250,000 people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms
- 176,990 people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2026

In 2026, UNICEF is requesting \$109.1 million to respond to escalating humanitarian needs in Mali by focusing on critical sectors including health, WASH, nutrition and child protection. Approximately \$97.2 million of this requirement is aligned with the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, while the remaining \$11.9 million is required for UNICEF activities that fall outside the scope of the HNRP. The total requirement is roughly 18 per cent less than in 2025, a decrease driven by scaled-down sectoral targets due to chronic underfunding in all sectors. The largest reductions in funding requirements are for nutrition, education and health, while social protection requirements have increased to sustain humanitarian cash transfers. The appeal is a reflection of shrinking global humanitarian resources – especially for the Sahel – and a more focused, realistic approach that matches available funding and operational capabilities.

If current funding trends persist, UNICEF's ability to deliver on its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action will remain severely constrained, threatening to reverse critical progress for Mali's most vulnerable children. In 2025, only 27 per cent of UNICEF's appeal was funded, significantly limiting the provision of life-saving and essential services for vulnerable children and women. Severe resource gaps in health (99 per cent in 2025) and WASH (81 per cent in 2025), programming that is vital for an effective response to the country's nutrition crisis, significantly weaken the ability of UNICEF to address malnutrition. Likewise, persistent shortfalls in child protection resources undercut UNICEF's ability to protect children impacted by prolonged instability and conflict. Without urgent support in 2026, an estimated 391,000 children under 5 years of age with severe wasting will be at heightened risk of mortality, and more than 2.1 million children will face significant protection risks. Inaction will deprive around 2 million children of safe learning opportunities, increasing their risk of exploitation. This threatens an entire generation and jeopardizes Mali's progress towards Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). Failing to act will escalate future humanitarian needs and the costs of addressing those needs. It will perpetuate the cycle of crisis for the most vulnerable communities in the region.

Urgent, flexible and sustained investment is required to protect the most vulnerable children and women in Mali.



Sector	2026 requirements (US\$)
Health (including public health emergencies)	14,078,000
Nutrition	23,787,000
Child protection and GBVIE	20,010,000
Education	29,452,000
Water, sanitation and hygiene	12,344,000
Social protection	2,000,000
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	2,472,000
Emergency preparedness and response coordination	4,990,000
Total	109,133,000

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Emergency preparedness and response coordination (4.6%), Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP) (2.3%), Social protection (1.8%).

Of the overall funding requirement, approximately \$97.2 million is aligned to the Mali Humanitarian Needs and response Plan, while \$11.9 million is required for UNICEF activities that fall outside the scope of the HNRP.

ENDNOTES

1. According to Mali DTM data from September 2025, this represents an increase from about 400,000 at the start of 2025. <https://dtm.iom.int/mali>
2. This figure includes 5.1 million people within the scope of analysis of the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, covering 97 districts, and about 800,000 people in 12 additional districts outside the scope of the HNRP where at least three key child-focused sectors showed severity levels of 3 or higher.
3. HNRP 2026/Nutrition Cluster: The figure includes 1,115,844 people within the HNRP 2026 scope of analysis and 303,537 people in the 12 additional districts.
4. Overall, there is a reduction in the inter-agency number of people in need for 2026. This decrease is primarily due to the narrower analytical scope under JIAF 2.0, which considers only areas of intersectoral severity levels of 3 or above, in line with the humanitarian reset.
5. For this 2026 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal, the number of people in need is estimated at 5.9 million people (3.2 million children). This includes 5.1 million people in the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, covering 97 districts, and nearly 800,000 people in 12 additional districts outside the scope of the HNRP. In these additional districts, at least three key child-focused sectors showed converging severity levels of 3 or above. This 2026 UNICEF appeal therefore covers 109 districts where life-saving humanitarian action for children remains critical.
6. This figure includes 2,754,000 children covered under the country's 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan across 97 priority districts identified in the scope analysis, along with nearly 432,000 children in 12 additional districts outside the scope of the HNRP.
7. The total number of people to be reached (2,823,760) is calculated by considering the sum of multiple intervention targets where targeted groups do not overlap geographically or demographically. The figure is calculated using the highest coverage programme targets: 2,121,822 children to be reached and 701,938 adults (437,143 women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities and 264,795 male caregivers benefiting from social assistance from government-funded programs with UNICEF technical assistance). Based on international standards, a projected 15 per cent of the population to be reached are persons with disabilities.
8. The figure is calculated using the highest coverage programme targets by demographic group: children aged 0–11 months receiving pentavalent 3 vaccine (765,220); children aged 6–59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment (202,575); children aged 6–59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation (454,027); and children receiving individual learning materials (700,000).
9. On 13 May 2025, a presidential decree led to the dissolution of all political parties, significantly reshaping the country's democratic landscape.
10. Mali's withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) became officially effective on 29 January 2025 after the required one-year notice period, marking the formal exit of Mali (along with Burkina Faso and the Niger) from the regional bloc.
11. Mali's withdrawal from ECOWAS and the creation of the Confederation of Sahel States with Burkina Faso and the Niger may weaken regional security cooperation, disrupt trade and deepen political isolation. While aimed at strengthening sovereignty, the move risks worsening internal instability, reducing collective capacity to counter insurgencies and intensifying humanitarian and economic pressures. The recent fuel crisis underscores the importance of regional cooperation in addressing insecurity.
12. The projected refugee population in need for 2026 is estimated at 268,000 individuals, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees during the Humanitarian Programme Cycle workshop in November 2025. Of the 167,304 refugees officially registered as of October 31, 2025, 52 per cent are children.
13. UNICEF, Analysis of the CCRI for least developed countries, UNICEF, New York, 2023, available at www.unicef.org/media/135686/file/Analysis%20of%20the%20CCRI%20for%20Least%20Developed%20Countries.pdf.
14. Acute malnutrition rates remain at critical levels in northern and central regions, along with the Kayes region (in the southwest). Regions including Ménaka, Gao and Kidal have surpassed emergency levels of 15 per cent global acute malnutrition. Access to health and nutrition services is restricted by insecurity and blockades, while funding gaps persist – only about half of required resources to treat severe wasting were secured in 2025. These factors, combined with rising food prices and disrupted markets, have left vulnerable populations at heightened risk of malnutrition and mortality.
15. Mali Humanitarian Programme Cycle/2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan.
16. Based on the 2025 multi-sector needs analysis, 31 per cent of households have WASH humanitarian needs, slightly worse than the 28 per cent in 2024. Needs are higher among internally displaced persons (35 per cent), with extreme severity (14 per cent) mainly in Kidal, Bandiagara and Ménaka. Thirty-three per cent of households lack drinking water and 12 per cent do not have an improved water source during the dry season, especially in Nara, Ménaka and Kidal. For sanitation, 22 per cent lack safe toilet access and 30 per cent share latrines with other households (rising to 54 per cent internally displaced persons and 52 per cent of refugees).
17. Mali 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan/Wash Cluster.
18. Mali 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan/Education Cluster.
19. Ibid.
20. Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, as of September 2025.
21. Mali 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan/Protection Cluster.
22. This figure includes 855,528 people identified as the people in need per the gender-based violence area of responsibility, under Mali's 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, with the additional people in other districts covered by UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal.
23. Mali humanitarian funding remains very low: just 20 per cent of requirements in the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and 27 per cent of requirements in the 2025 Humanitarian Action for Children were funded.
24. Blockades frequently hinder aid delivery, particularly in central, northern and, more recently, southern areas. Additionally, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flight disruptions predominantly affect Kidal and Ménaka.
25. Sector needs are estimated for 109 districts where humanitarian action for children remains critical – 97 priority districts covered by the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and an additional 12 districts included in the UNICEF appeal. In the additional 12 districts, at least three key child-focused sectors show converging severity levels of 3 or above. These estimates follow the JIAF 2.0 methodology.
26. Ibid.
27. UNICEF is one of the main contributors of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle assessments tools, including multi-sector needs assessments, SMART (standardized monitoring and assessment of relief and transitions) surveys, and National Food Security and Nutrition Survey (ENSAN).
28. Since the end of 2023, UNICEF has developed a new access approach or strategy based on localization to improve humanitarian access in the central and northern regions on Mali. This strategy aims to respond to immediate needs and promote access to essential social services in conflict-affected areas by working with local organizations, including women-led and youth-led organizations. A pilot project is currently under way and enabled UNICEF to reach 489 inaccessible villages in five regions and 21 municipalities, in partnership with four national NGOs, 410 local organizations and 412 community leaders. The project directly benefited 100,000 children and 80,600 internally displaced persons. A child rapid response component is also being developed in collaboration with the Mali Red Cross and national NGOs to further enhance the delivery of services to children in hard-to-reach areas.

29. UNICEF's approach demonstrates its commitment to stay and deliver for children in the epicentre of the country's crisis, particularly following the departure of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In line with this, the country office established an outpost in Ménaka in 2024 and is exploring opportunities to do the same in Kidal, where humanitarian actors, including United Nations agencies, remain scarce. That said, UNICEF carries out activities in Kidal through consultants and partnerships with NGOs and local organizations.

30. A critical platform through which the national authorities can rapidly identify vulnerable households and scale assistance during emergencies (e.g. as climate events, conflict and displacement), enabling a faster, more efficient and dignified transition from emergency relief to recovery.

31. Humanitarian action and coordination in Mali are still led by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, with support from the United Nations Humanitarian Country Team.

32. UNICEF will remain actively involved in Mali's Humanitarian Programme Cycle by supporting humanitarian assessments, such as the MSNA, SMART or ENSAN, and contributing to the Humanitarian Needs and Response planning sessions to ensure child-sensitive programming in line with its Core Commitments for Children.

33. Since the decision to merge the Child Protection Area of Responsibility and the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility with the Protection Cluster under UNHCR's leadership, UNICEF is working closely with UNHCR to adapt and contextualize Protection Cluster coordination to build on the progress and achievement reached so far by the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. This effort aims to maintain adaptability while leveraging comparative advantage and achievements of the child protection AoR, including the strong membership mobilized at national and regional levels, investment in capacity building, development of strategic documents and plans and resource mobilization.

34. In line with Security Council Resolution 1612.

35. The health targeting projection was based on the adjusted Health Cluster targets, including additional districts outside the HNRP 2026 analysis scope for this appeal. This analysis accounted for current and potential capacities (resources to be mobilized) within the health section. Of the 65 crisis-affected health districts, 58 were selected: 25 districts (Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao) are covered by the Building Resilience in the Sahel (BRS) funds, while other funding will be sought for the remaining 33 districts.

36. UNICEF's target is relatively higher than that of the Cluster because this Humanitarian Action for Children appeal targets 12 additional districts in the regions of Kayes, Kidal, Kita, Timbuktu, Taoudeni, Ségou and Koulikoro, in addition to the 97 districts covered in the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan scope of analysis.

37. The 2026 child protection targets in this appeal are based on the 97 districts (administrative circles) included in the HNRP, complemented by 12 additional out-of-scope districts retained by UNICEF, bringing the total appeal planning coverage to 109 districts. The targets reflect percentage-based calculations applied to Child Protection Area of Responsibility analytical figures and are adjusted according to actual implementation capacities, ensuring a progressive and realistic approach tailored to local contexts. This methodology emphasizes service quality, individualized follow-up and strong community engagement. At the same time, it maintains an ambition proportionate to the evolving risks and needs of the most vulnerable children.

38. The education target projection builds on Education Cluster objectives and incorporates additional districts with high severity beyond the 2026 HNRP. This projection considers both existing capacities and the level of resources expected to be mobilized within the education section. Acting as provider of last resort, UNICEF is set to reach roughly 60 per cent of the cluster's targets, ensuring coverage of critical gaps where other partners cannot operate.

39. The decrease in WASH targets for 2026 compared with 2025 is due to reprioritization, whereby reduced resources have driven a focus on the most acute needs.