

Spotlight on the UNICEF Education Fund

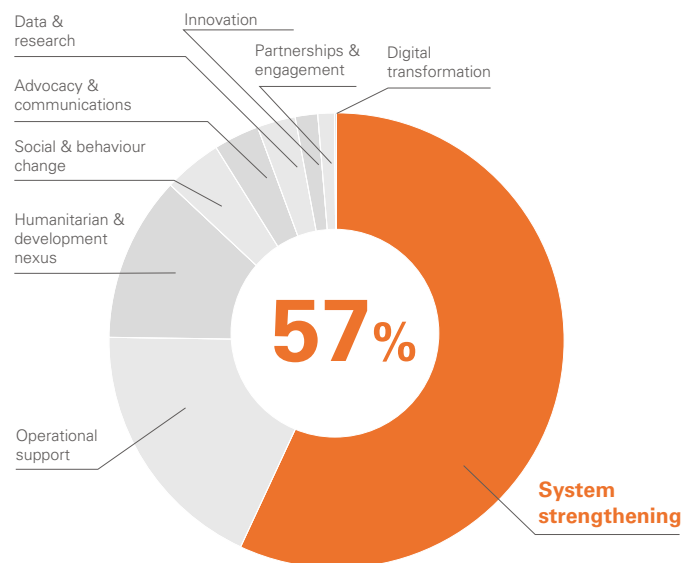
Results achieved in 2022 to
ensure every child learns

UNICEF's Education Thematic Fund is a global flexible funding pool. It enables us to **strengthen systems** to ensure every child learns.

This offers donors an exciting opportunity to target your funding specifically to education outcomes, while also giving UNICEF the flexibility we need to deliver our mission for children in the most effective way possible.

Thanks to our generous donors UNICEF's Global Education Thematic Fund income in 2022 reached \$39.4 million. We are so grateful for your kind support.

Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public Sector	Norway	27,959,440
	Sweden	6,602,528
	Luxembourg	645,161
Private Sector	Italian Committee for UNICEF	797,394
	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	767,655
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	603,814
	United States Fund for UNICEF	548,205
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	484,812
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	351,812
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	348,945
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	149,160
	Danish Committee for UNICEF	53,461
	German Committee for UNICEF	26,980
	French Committee for UNICEF	22,831
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	15,352
	Canadian UNICEF Committee	12,424
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	11,734
	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	3,446
Grand Total		39,405,156



The chart above illustrates how thematic expenses at global, regional and country level were apportioned across UNICEF's nine implementing strategies for education-related programming. This includes thematic expenses for both development and humanitarian related activities. In 2022, system strengthening was the core focus of our work for education, accounting for 57 per cent of all expenses. For more information on expenses, refer to UNICEF's [2022 Global Annual Results Report for Education](#).





Through this system strengthening work, we don't just respond to education inequalities. We get to the root causes of these issues, by addressing access to schools, classroom infrastructure, national curricula, laws and behaviours, and much more. Working in this 'big picture' way is cost effective, sustainable, scalable and it works.

In this spotlight report, you will see how thematic funds enable this vital system strengthening work for the greatest impact – bringing together your passion with our mission to help create stronger education systems for every child.

What is thematic funding?

UNICEF has 11 global thematic funds. These are flexible funding pools which support specific cause areas. This enables donors to direct their funding to an area of their choice, while giving UNICEF the flexibility to distribute resources wherever they are needed most. UNICEF distributes around three quarters of global thematic funds to our country programmes, while also making allocations at the global level and in our seven regions of operation.

The 11 global thematic funds are:

- Health 
- HIV/AIDS 
- Nutrition 
- Education** 
- Child Protection 
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) 
- Climate, Energy, Environment, and Disaster Risk Reduction (CEED) 
- Social Policy and Social Protection 
- Gender Equality 
- Mental Health 
- Humanitarian Action 

The challenges



Thematic funding ensures that the spectrum of education challenges that children face are addressed at scale through strong systems.

Despite the progress we have made in recent decades, many children are still deprived of education. Today, we are facing a learning crisis where, increasingly, there is a rift between the levels of learning children receive and those that they, their communities and entire economies need. This is exacerbated by the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced children to miss out on months or years of education, which they now need to urgently catch up on.

Children in different countries and contexts face a range of education challenges. But what unites these diverse challenges is that they are caused or exacerbated by weak systems.



Ukraine

Conflict is disrupting the education of 10-year-old Margaryta. "When the air raid siren occurs, there are explosions or planes are flying around," she says. "That's why we always go to the shelter."



Nearly 260 million children and adolescents are out of school across the world.



Pre-primary education creates a vital learning foundation in children's early years. But **only 61 per cent of children are accessing education at this vital stage of life.**



Marginalized children, such as girls, children on the move, children with disabilities and those living in poverty, **are much less likely to attend school.**



Two thirds of school-aged children do not have internet access at home, creating a divide between those with digital capacities and those without.

A key role of thematic funding – strengthening systems

System strengthening makes change happen at scale, creating a ripple effect across a district, country or region.

- 1 Every day, children around the world rely on local and national education systems for their learning. When these systems are stronger, children can learn more effectively.
- 2 When we strengthen education systems – by training teachers, improving classroom infrastructure, revising curricula, and more – we don't just help one child. We make large-scale changes for many children at the same time.
- 3 UNICEF can deliver this impact because we are uniquely placed to work with governments to improve education systems for children across an entire country.
- 4 Donors to the Education Thematic Fund support this work, helping to define and build this most sustainable way for UNICEF to create impact. Thank you so much for your support.

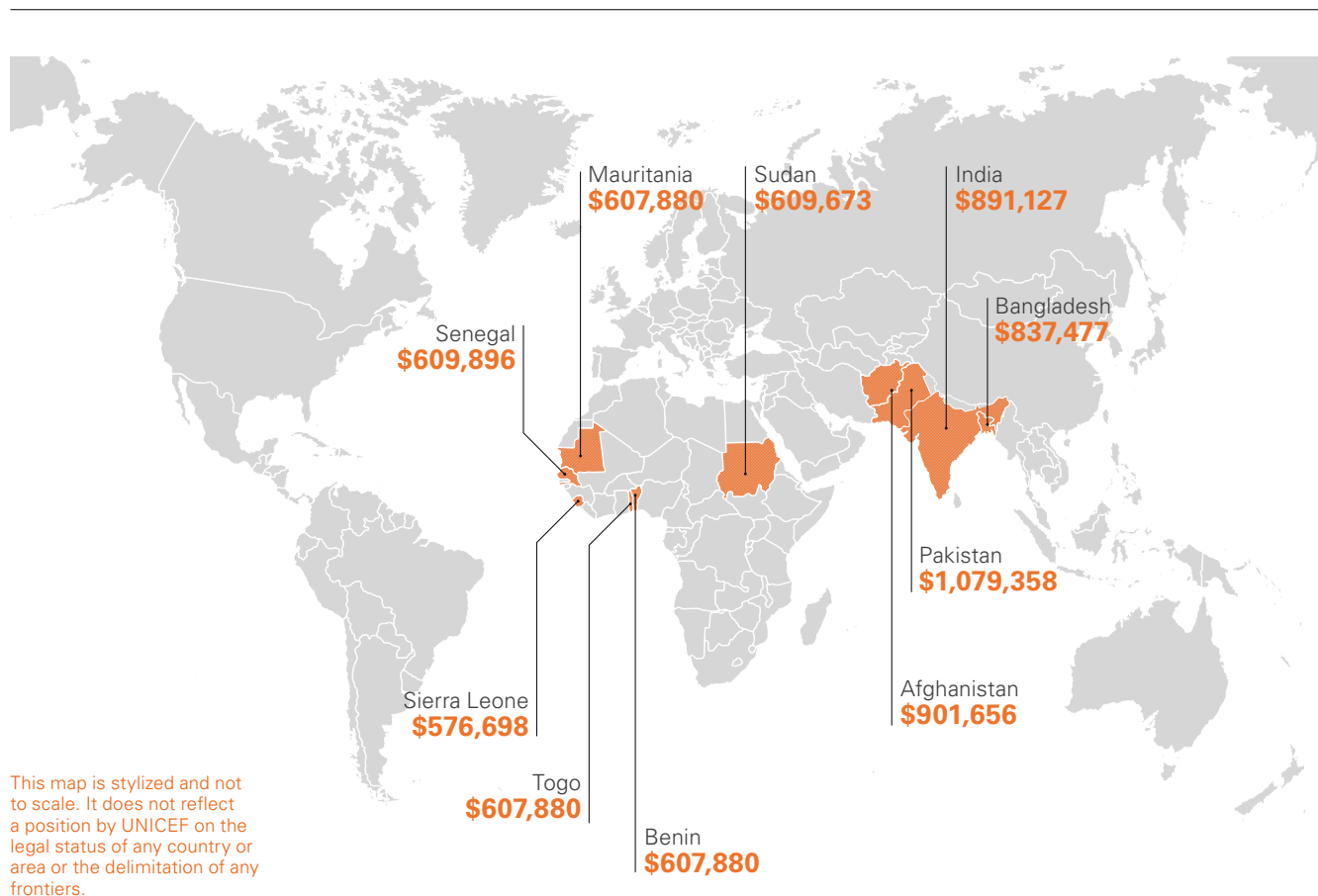
Based on our 75 years of experience working for and with children and adolescents, we have seen **how powerful it can be to address cross-cutting issues by focusing on strengthening systems.**

When we strengthen education systems, we don't just work around existing barriers. We get to the root of the issues to remove these structural barriers that might keep some children out of school or lower the quality of their learning experience. Working in collaboration with governments and other influential partners helps us get to these root issues and to achieve long-lasting results at scale.

In 2022, supporters of the **Education Thematic Fund** enabled UNICEF to allocate resources to education programmes in 120 countries and territories. The map below shows the ten countries which received the highest allocations.

The allocation amounts were based on country contexts, needs, and progress against critical education indicators. Other factors were also considered, such as the number of children in the country and the proportion of children living in learning poverty. Overall, 79 per cent of the funds distributed at the country level were allocated to low- and lower-middle-income countries.

Funds were also allocated to UNICEF's regional and global headquarters, supporting the vital work that allows thematic funding to unlock wide-scale results and impact the world over.



Regional and global programming

Thematic funds don't only support UNICEF's work in countries. They are also used to provide critical support for UNICEF's programming across wider regions and globally. These vital allocations of flexible funding are what enable the Education Thematic Fund to have an impact far beyond the countries that receive direct allocations.

In 2022, \$5.7 million from the Education Thematic Fund was allocated to regional offices. UNICEF has seven regional offices, covering East Asia and the Pacific, Eastern and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and West and Central Africa. With support from the Education Thematic Fund, these regional offices are able to help coordinate education programmes in the countries of their region, and provide expert advice and guidance when needed.

Resources from the Education Thematic Fund were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters, totaling \$4.8 million. These funds enable UNICEF's global specialists to analyse the education landscape and set our priorities. Our global education staff also maintain our presence and advocacy at important influencing events, such as the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit.

Achieving results for system strengthening

As the world's largest organization for children, UNICEF achieves results for education on a massive scale every year. Below are some headline sector-level results, to which thematic funding, as part of an overall portfolio of funding, was a key contributor to the long-term system strengthening work.



Democratic Republic of the Congo

A student sits in his new classroom, built by UNICEF and the local community. In 2022, \$226,900 was allocated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the Education Thematic Fund.

Laws and policies

UNICEF works directly with governments to support them to make the best policy decisions for education. UNICEF is monitoring and engaging on: inclusive education laws and policies for children with disabilities, early education policies, inclusive laws for children on the move (such as refugees), and policies for inclusion of mental health care in schools.

- › We have increased the proportion of UNICEF-supported countries with policies or laws for inclusive education from 41 per cent in 2016 to 86 per cent in 2022.

Workforce

All systems require a strong skilled workforce. In the case of education, this includes teachers, school management professionals, and more. As learning losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have made the job of teaching more challenging and complex, UNICEF is supporting countries to strengthen teacher preparation and professional development.

- › In 2022, UNICEF support in 27 humanitarian and refugee-hosting countries reached 701,189 teachers and educational personnel.

Data

When the right data are in the right hands at the right time, decisions can be better informed, more equitable and more likely to protect children's rights. For instance, as part of our efforts to strengthen Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), we assist educational authorities to collect data from students, schools and local authorities, so together we can understand which children are being left behind and increase the effectiveness of education systems to meet their needs.

- › The percentage of UNICEF-supported countries with an effective national EMIS for data increased from 32 per cent in 2016 to 52 per cent in 2022.

Infrastructure

Strengthening infrastructure can greatly improve children's education. For instance, installing toilet facilities that are accessible can improve school attendance for children with disabilities. An increasing focus of our infrastructure work is internet connectivity and online learning. By 2030, we aim to connect every school to the internet, as part of our Giga initiative.

- › UNICEF was able to connect 5,561 schools in 20 countries to the internet through the [Giga initiative](#) in 2022.

Social and behavioural change

Social and behavioural change is any work that aims to shift attitudes on key issues. For example, social and behaviour change approaches can help prevent bullying, stigma against children with disabilities, gender inequality, child marriage, child labour and other harmful practices which affect learning outcomes and can cause children to drop out of school.

- › In 2022, UNICEF supported education-specific social and behaviour change strategies in 66 countries. In Kenya, for example, social and behaviour change strategies enabled 49,257 out-of-school children to return to class.

Targets

Thematic funds form a vital cornerstone of our **system strengthening** work, which unlocks the greatest impact for children. But this takes time. That is why resources from the Education Thematic Fund are spent over a four-year period, aligning with UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2022-2025). To measure our long-term impact in strengthening education systems, UNICEF monitors several key indicators, as illustrated on the table below.

Area Description	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2022)	Target for 2025
Workforce Percentage of countries with effective teacher development systems	17%	21%	75%
Infrastructure Percentage of countries with effective systems for digital learning solutions	9%	16%	26%
Data Percentage of countries with effective learning assessment systems	39%	56%	67%
Laws and policies Percentage of countries implementing evidence-based education sector plans/strategies addressing inequities and mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goal indicators	48%	62%	63%



Pakistan

Muhammad, age 7, is immersed in his studies with a book provided by UNICEF. In 2022, Pakistan received more from the Education Thematic Fund than any other country.

Education Strategy (2019-2030)

UNICEF's work for children in 2022 was driven by the priorities outlined in our [Education Strategy](#) (2019-2030).

The flexibility of thematic funds enables us to make strategic allocations to all areas of the Education Strategy, supporting the three goals of our vision:

1. Equitable access to learning opportunities
2. Improved learning and skills for all
3. Improved learning in emergencies and fragile contexts.

In 2022, UNICEF's work building stronger education systems for children followed the three goals of our vision set out in the Education Strategy. To achieve this, we prioritized support to teachers and human resources, planning and budgeting for national education systems, improving digital systems for managing student and teacher information, and more.

By giving UNICEF the flexibility to support work at the country, regional and global levels, thematic funding achieves wide-scale results.

And, by supporting work across the four years of our Strategic Plan (2022-2025), thematic funding enables us to address the root causes of education inequalities and achieve real, long-term results.

Thematic funding around the world

The Education Thematic Fund supported UNICEF's work globally, in seven regions, and in 120 countries and territories in 2022. Here are six examples of UNICEF's work for education in countries that received allocations of global thematic funding.



Myanmar

In Myanmar, children's access to education has been severely impacted by ongoing conflict. In response, UNICEF launched the Bring Back Learning programme, which has been mainly funded by thematic contributions. So far, the programme has supported 247,903 children across the country to access learning. It has provided 210,898 children with home-based learning materials. And it has enabled 2,219 community facilitators to be trained, using the Teacher Resource Package.



Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, UNICEF is establishing 'Para Centres' to ensure equitable access to social services for ethnic minority communities. A key component of the Para Centre programme has been providing at least one year of early education for children. UNICEF used thematic funding to facilitate access to quality early learning services for 58,206 children in 4,800 Para Centres.



Bhutan

Education thematic funds have contributed significantly to expanding inclusive education for children with disabilities in Bhutan. Now, all 20 districts in the country have at least one inclusive school, bringing the total enrolment of children with disabilities up to 926. Thematic funds have proven critical for this system strengthening work, which has included equipping teachers and principals with skills and knowledge on inclusive education.



Uganda

First students in Uganda had to contend with the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, as it was subsiding, Ebola broke out in 2022. Movement restrictions were put in place to stop the spread of disease. But these put students at risk of missing out on their final exams, which many had also missed the previous year. UNICEF collaborated with the government to find a solution. This involved using thematic funds to safely transport 12,468 students and 370 examination officials to and from the exam centres over three days. This vital intervention helped prevent children from missing out on progressing to the next level of their education.



Philippines

A major typhoon hit the Philippines in December 2021, leaving over 900,000 children in need of humanitarian assistance. In response to this crisis, UNICEF provided learner and school kits to 154,278 children. We also provided temporary learning spaces and trained teachers on how to provide education in emergency contexts. In total, our work in the Philippines was supported with \$393,463 from the Education Thematic Fund in 2022.



Pakistan

In 2022, Pakistan received the largest allocation from UNICEF's Education Thematic Fund of any country, totaling \$1,079,358. In the wake of severe flooding, which plunged one third of the country underwater, this funding was urgently needed to ensure continuity of education. UNICEF established 837 temporary learning centres in camps for families displaced by floods. Through this work, 101,222 children were supported, with up to 40 per cent being first-time learners not previously enrolled in school.

Thriving with e-learning in Nigeria: How Bolade transformed her biology scores

Bolade's story

Bolade is a bright 14-year-old student with aspirations to become a lawyer. However, she has had some trouble with one of the subjects required for her transition from junior secondary school to the senior level.

"I had a weakness in biology," she admits. "I just couldn't seem to understand it. I used to get 40 out of 100 and this really bothered me."

Fortunately, UNICEF launched the [Learning Passport](#) in Nigeria in 2022. Resources from the Education Thematic Fund contributed towards this. The Learning Passport is a digital platform that includes educational content on a wide range of school subjects.

"When I heard about it, I went to go and check it," Bolade recalls. She downloaded the free app onto her mother's phone and her elder brother's laptop – giving her a double opportunity to access the platform outside the classroom.

Thanks to interactive quizzes, videos, and animations on the Learning Passport, she soon came to understand complex biological concepts.

"All topics we were taught in biology I would come and check it on the Nigeria Learning Passport," Bolade recalls. "It has really helped a lot. It summarized all the whole subject – everything that you want to learn."

Now Bolade's biology grades have improved, and she is scoring over 70 per cent.

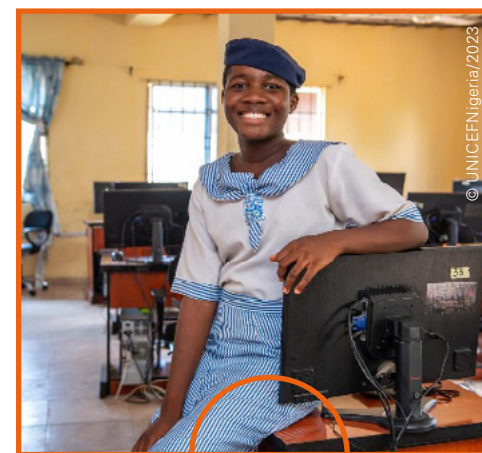
But the platform is not only benefiting students. "Our work as teachers is now less stressful as the students do most of the course work at their own time and pace even before coming to the classroom," says Asimi, a teacher at Bolade's school.

The Learning Passport now has over **15,000 teaching and learning materials aligned with the national curriculum in Nigeria. Content is available in four languages: English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. And the platform has reached 118,268 users.**

Based on a user survey at the end of 2022, 92 per cent of respondents said they use the Learning Passport more than once a week, and 51 per cent use it daily.

UNICEF believes that platforms like the Learning Passport represent the future of education. It's a future in which digital learning boosts the traditional classroom experience, making education more accessible, engaging, and practical, while also offering opportunities for teaching and learning to continue outside school.

"All you need is just this Nigeria Learning Passport," concludes Bolade, who has become a great believer in digital learning. "You can see so many subjects."



Nigeria

"I was impressed at the selection of courses available on the platform," Bolade says. "Everything from biology to mathematics to entrepreneurial and secretarial studies."



Nigeria

Students demonstrate the Learning Passport interface, which can be used both at home and in the classroom.

Twin refugees receive UNICEF support to chase their dreams in Iran



Iran

Zeinab (right) and her twin sister Zinat (left), are among the Afghan refugee children who took the health screening tests as part of their enrollment at a school in Iran.

Zeinab takes part in the health screening test to enable her enrollment in school.

Being a young refugee is hard. One of the biggest challenges is settling into school in a new country. There can be social barriers, such as navigating a new culture, context and language. But sometimes there are also legal barriers that make it harder for refugee children to get registered for school.

For instance, in Iran, all children must complete the Health Screening Programme before enrolling in school. This test examines children's hearing, vision, overall health and school readiness upon enrolling in first-grade primary school. The tests diagnose any special support children might need to enter school.

However, there is a price tag attached to it. Despite being a small fee, it can discourage some families, especially those on low incomes, from enrolling their children.

In 2022, UNICEF, with the support of the Education Thematic Fund, covered the cost of the screening for refugees, nomadic children and children living in the most disadvantaged provinces. We also provided equipment to ensure the screening centres could function properly.

Overall, we equipped 545 centres to conduct the screening more efficiently and we provided financial support for the screening of 97,454 children.

Among these children were twin sisters Zeinab and Zinat, age 7. They had come to Iran from Afghanistan as refugees. And they have big dreams for the future. For instance, Zeinab wants to be a doctor. "I want to go to school, study hard and become a good person," she says, "I love to go to school, to do sport, and become strong."

The girls' father, who accompanied them to the screening, is hopeful for a happy and successful future too. "All our efforts are for our children to have a bright future," says Mohammad." Given that UNICEF's intervention has now promoted increased public funding for the Health Screening Programme in 2023, it seems that a better future will now be possible for refugees in Iran. And the Education Thematic Fund has made a critical contribution to enabling that.

Hearing from our donors and partners

ING Spain mobilizes mass donations for greater impact



UNICEF's work has always been driven by partnership, collaboration and working together. So, we understand the enormous power that can be unleashed when we mobilize large groups for collective action.

One of UNICEF's private sector partners, ING Spain, understands this too. ING Group, a financial services company, has been donating to UNICEF since 2005. But their support takes a particularly collaborative approach, engaging their clients and employees to contribute as part of a larger group effort.

During this time, a portion of the funding has supported the Education Thematic Fund, which is helping to strengthen education systems so that every child learns and to harness the power of education as a lever for social change.

ING Spain is also a key partner in supporting UNICEF's emergency response work, enabling us to act when and where children need us the most.

Looking forward, both UNICEF Spain and ING Spain are committed to the aims of Generation Unlimited – a global partnership, including private and public sector members as well as young people, which aims to connect the world's 1.8 billion young people to opportunities for learning, working, and social impact. By working together with collective action for this ambitious aim, our impact is assured.

A comprehensive partnership for education with Finland

Partners can support UNICEF education programming through Thematic Funding contributions at the global level, as well as in every country and territory in which we work. These flexible funding pools are vital for enabling UNICEF to implement system-wide education changes in a country. They also give donors with a particular connection to a country an option to focus their support.

Finland is a close and long-standing, generous education partner to UNICEF in many countries, including Ethiopia, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nepal, Palestine, and Syria. In Somalia, Finland supports the whole UNICEF Education Programme through the most flexible support – Education Thematic Funds. Through its generous multi-year commitment totaling more than \$8 million to the whole education programme in Somalia, Finland is a forward-looking ally in improving access to early childhood and basic education, and improved learning outcomes for children, especially girls, while holistically supporting the development of the education sector plan in Somalia.

UNICEF and Finland's human-rights based approach to education also focuses on harnessing digital solutions for teaching and learning to transform education systems and to promote inclusive quality education for all.

Innovation is a hallmark of the UNICEF-Finland partnership, with the UNICEF Global Learning Innovation Hub based in the Finnish capital, Helsinki. The Hub is closely embedded in the Finnish education excellence ecosystem, including a partnership with the Finnish Centre of Expertise in Education and Development to maximize collective leverage in education sector development cooperation.

Alongside the Government, UNICEF's global education work has a broad support base in Finland. In 2022, the Finnish Committee for UNICEF raised nearly \$1.9 million in thematic funding for education, including the Global Education Thematic Fund. These funds came from a wide range of Finnish supporters – philanthropists, corporations, guardians of students through UNICEF Walk events, and more – demonstrating a strong commitment to the education of the world's children and awareness of the need for flexibility to achieve maximum impact. For example, Ahlström Collective Impact – an initiative bringing together companies, foundations, shareholders and employees – has been an important investor in the UNICEF global education programme over the past years.

With these strong commitments and vibrant collaborations, UNICEF and Finland truly embody a comprehensive partnership for children's learning, poised to deliver transformative results.

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