



Children and families in an earthquake-affected community in Doti District in far western Nepal walk with blankets, tarpaulins, water containers and chlorine solution provided through UNICEF support. Nepal is located in an active seismic zone and is prone to mega-earthquakes.

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Humanitarian Action for Children

South Asia Region

HIGHLIGHTS

- Approximately 80 million people,² including more than 35 million children, are projected to need humanitarian assistance in South Asia in 2024 due to sudden-onset, cyclical and protracted emergencies, including natural disasters, disease outbreaks and human-caused crises.
- UNICEF will support life-saving humanitarian interventions through multisectoral responses that encompass health, nutrition, education, WASH, child protection and shock-responsive social protection. These intervention areas will be prioritized to alleviate the suffering of crisis-affected children and families. Regional surge support to countries will be provided when required.
- UNICEF will support preparedness and proactive investments in country system strengthening in line with the regional disaster risk reduction strategy by using a multi-hazard focus, emphasizing child-centred disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action.
- UNICEF requires \$37.7 million to support humanitarian action throughout the region. This includes \$25.3 million to address the humanitarian needs of 5.8 million people¹ in Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka and \$12.4 million for the South Asia Regional Office to support preparedness for recurrent emergencies, response to emerging crises and technical support for cross-cutting issues.

IN NEED³



18.6 million people in need of health assistance⁴



17.4 million people in need of nutrition assistance⁵



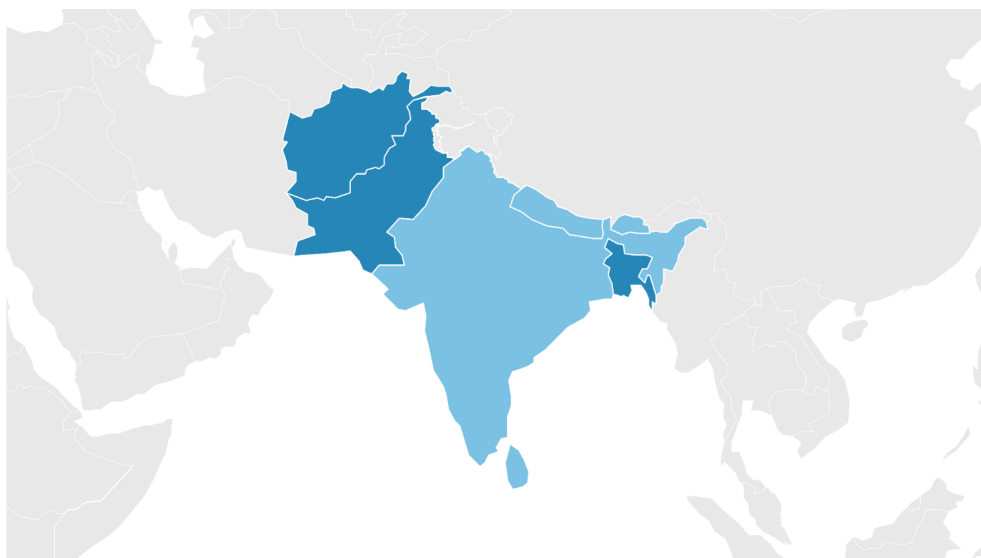
1.5 million children in need of protection services⁶



6.1 million children in need of education support⁷



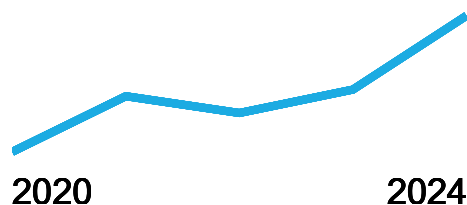
17.9 million people in need of WASH support⁸



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\$37.7 million



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

South Asia is home to more than 625 million children,⁹ many of whom are at risk of exposure to sudden-onset and protracted emergencies including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts and public health emergencies,¹⁰ as well as economic crises, political turmoil and malnutrition. In 2023, more than 55 million children in South Asia required humanitarian assistance.¹¹ These emergencies do not respect boundaries and often requiring cross-border, multisectoral responses.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan continue to face significant humanitarian crises. The situation in Afghanistan is protracted and complex, driven by political and economic crises, natural disasters and disease outbreaks. Bangladesh faces multiple natural disasters each year while also hosting nearly 1 million Rohingya refugees¹² in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char, individuals who require sustained humanitarian support. Pakistan is grappling with various humanitarian challenges, including extreme flooding and drought, high malnutrition and the continued hosting of 3.7 million Afghan nationals.¹³

The remaining countries in the region also face natural hazards that frequently lead to associated humanitarian needs. In India, climate change and environmental degradation are leading to unprecedented disasters; approximately 6 million children are affected by weather- and climate-related calamities every year.¹⁴ In Nepal, more than 500 such incidents occur every year,¹⁵ and the country, which sits in one of the world's most seismically active zones, is also prone to mega-earthquakes. In Sri Lanka, floods¹⁶ and droughts¹⁷ are impacting the ability of people who are already vulnerable to recover following the economic crisis there. While there are no active emergencies in Bhutan and Maldives, Maldives faces risks of rising sea levels and associated inundation,¹⁸ while Bhutan, like Nepal, is in one of the most seismically active zones of the Himalayan belt and is at risk for a major earthquake.¹⁹

The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters pose critical threats to the well-being of 17.7 million people,²⁰ including 6.5 million children,²¹ in Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

The South Asia Regional Office will prioritize life-saving humanitarian responses to new, protracted and cyclical emergencies. Multisectoral responses remain a priority to alleviate the suffering of crisis-affected children and families. The Regional Office will support all countries by ensuring high-quality and effective humanitarian responses for children, whether remotely or through in-person deployments of surge staff. It will invest in the capacity of country and regional surge roster staff through Emergency Preparedness and Response trainings.²²

In a region prone to diverse natural hazards, preparedness and proactive investment in systems strengthening are essential to ensure country preparedness and shock-responsive systems are in place. The disaster risk reduction strategy in South Asia uses a multi-hazard focus; it emphasizes child-centred disaster risk reduction and ensures anticipatory action. The Regional Office will work with country offices and Governments to build on partnerships with national disaster management authorities to enhance resilience to current and future climate-related shocks.

In line with Grand Bargain commitments,²³ UNICEF will build the capacity of country offices to implement humanitarian cash transfers for social protection. The Regional Office will also provide technical support to meet minimum preparedness requirements, while identifying opportunities to enhance existing government shock-responsive social protection systems. In addition, country offices will receive support to enhance accountability to affected populations by integrating it into existing risk communication and community engagement structures.

UNICEF country offices in Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka will collaborate with Governments to monitor risks and trends and strengthen and integrate preparedness and response mechanisms into national and subnational systems. UNICEF will engage with relevant authorities, organizations and communities, including young people, to ensure humanitarian programmes are linked to development programmes. Country offices in Bhutan and Maldives will invest in preparedness for future natural disasters. Those in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka will focus on linking the response to natural and human-caused disasters to system strengthening and sustainable recovery.

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



Dinithi, 5, enjoys her midday meal at the Sri Mihindu preschool in Udagama, a rural farming village in Sri Lanka's Central Province, in July 2023.

Five-year-old Dinithi and her friends join in the devotions led by their head teacher, and after this they enjoy a range of play and learning activities. The highlight of their day, however, is the free midday meal they receive.

"I am not hungry anymore because of the meal I get at school," says Dinithi on the impact of the midday meal, which is provided to thousands of preschool children across Sri Lanka. "My friends and I enjoy these meals."

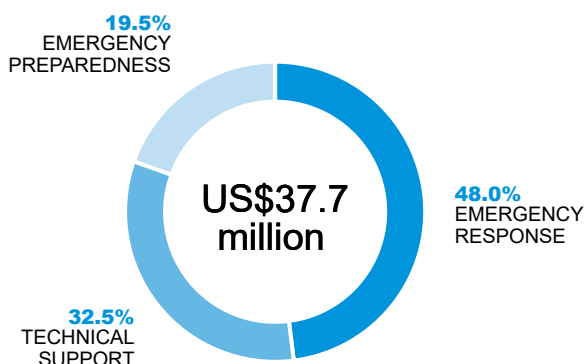
As economic crises in Sri Lanka continue to impact communities, preschool midday meals continue to bolster children's health and education. Facilitated by funding from UNICEF Australia and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this emergency response provides vulnerable children in resource-poor preschools and day care centres in eight districts with one cooked meal per day.

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

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2024

The South Asia Regional Office is requesting \$37.7 million to meet heightened emergency preparedness and response requirements in the region. With these funds, UNICEF will be able to provide swift and quality response to new crises while also ensuring multisectoral technical support and quality assurance for the ongoing humanitarian response throughout the region. Continued investment in preparedness will be prioritized through support to child-centred disaster risk reduction and risk analysis, and by investment in anticipatory action and response readiness. Additional funds will be used for regional technical support to scale up accountability to affected populations and humanitarian cash transfers and to strengthen local and national capacities in line with Grand Bargain commitments. The funds will also be used to address the specific needs of Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka in 2024. Of the total requested, \$25.3 million will be for strengthening preparedness and response capacities in these five countries, in close collaboration with regional and national authorities. The funding request has increased from previous years due to the integration of India and Sri Lanka into the 2024 appeal. These countries had standalone appeals in 2023.

Humanitarian funds channeled through the Regional Office will be further allocated to country offices to ensure humanitarian action priorities and gaps are addressed and to enable immediate support at the onset of disasters. The funds are also needed to support country offices to prepare for and respond to multiple natural and human-caused shocks and hazards. Without sufficient funding, UNICEF will be unable to prepare for and immediately provide support to humanitarian responses, and the pressing needs of many vulnerable children and women in this disaster-prone, yet resilient, region would remain unmet.



Sector	2024 requirements (US\$)
Emergency Preparedness	7,363,378 ²⁴
Emergency response	18,094,288 ²⁵
Technical Support	12,230,011 ²⁶
Total	37,687,677

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ENDNOTES

1. The numbers are broken down as follows: Bhutan: 205,000; India: 4.8 million; Maldives: 1,000; Nepal: 804,000; and Sri Lanka: 670,500.
2. This number includes the five countries covered by this South Asia regional appeal, as well as provisional numbers for standalone appeals for Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The number is subject to change.
3. 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.
4. The numbers are broken down as follows: India: 16.8 million, Nepal: 600,000; and Sri Lanka: 1.2 million.
5. The numbers are broken down as follows: India: 16.8 million; Nepal: 64,000; and Sri Lanka: 500,000.
6. The numbers are broken down as follows: India: 1.2 million; Nepal: 61,200; and Sri Lanka: 180,000.
7. The numbers are broken down as follows: India: 4.6 million; Nepal: 153,530; and Sri Lanka: 1.4 million.
8. The numbers are broken down as follows: India: 16.8 million; Nepal: 600,000; and Sri Lanka: 500,000.
9. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects 2022, online data source, available at <<https://population.un.org/wpp/>>.
10. South Asia is prone to a wide variety of public health emergencies, including acute watery diarrhoea/cholera and dengue fever. For example, in 2023, Bangladesh faced the worst nationwide outbreak of dengue fever on record.
11. This is the sum of children in need based on the UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children appeals in 2023 for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and South Asia, which included Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal.
12. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Operational Data Portal, Bangladesh, available at <<https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bgd>>.
13. These include 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees, 840,000 Afghan Citizenship Card holders, 146,240 Unregistered Members of Registered Families, 775,000 undocumented Afghans and 600,000 new arrivals. Source: UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Afghanistan Situation, available at <<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/afghanistan#category-14-348569>>.
14. EM-DAT, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters/University of Louvain, Brussels, Belgium, The International Disaster Database, available at <www.emdat.be>.
15. Government of Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs, Risk to Resilience: Disaster risk reduction and management in Nepal, position paper for the seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Bali, Indonesia, 23–28 May 2022, available at <https://dpnet.org.np/uploads/files/Nepal_Position%20Paper_GPDRR2022_Final%202022-05-26%2016-58-49.pdf>.
16. From 2016 to 2018, floods and landslides affected more than 1.56 million people in Sri Lanka and resulted in more than 525 deaths. Source: post-disaster needs assessments in 2016 and 2017 and the Disaster Management Centre daily situation reports.
17. The 2016/17 drought – the worst in 40 years – reduced national output by 53 per cent and affected more than 2 million people, including 900,000 people who suffer from food insecurity.
18. The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, Climate Risk Country Profile: Maldives, The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, Washington, DC and Manila, Philippines, 2021, available at <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/15649-WB_Maldives%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf>.
19. The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, Climate Risk Country Profile: Bhutan, The World Bank Group and Asian Development Bank, Washington, DC and Manila, Philippines, 2021, available at <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/15874-WB_Bhutan%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf>.
20. This includes 270,000 people in Bhutan, 16.8 million in India, 1,000 in Maldives, 600,000 in Nepal and 2.1 million in Sri Lanka.
21. This includes 77,000 children in Bhutan, 6.4 million in India, 204,000 in Nepal and 1.4 million in Sri Lanka.
22. The South Asia Regional Office is rolling out a revised Emergency Preparedness and Response training in line with the revised Core Commitments for Children.
23. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations, who have committed to getting more means into the hands of people in need and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. In South Asia, the Regional Office is prioritizing the following workstreams: workstream 2 (more support and funding tools for local and national responders); workstream 3 (increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming); workstream 6 (a participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives); and workstream 10 (enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors).
24. The emergency preparedness budget line includes funding requirements for Bhutan (\$1,260,000), India (\$2,249,469), Maldives (\$85,000), Nepal (\$2,173,290) and Sri Lanka (\$437,500) along with South Asia Regional Office technical support (\$1,158,118) to build preparedness and disaster risk reduction capacity across country offices in the region and to set, maintain and train the surge roster for emergency preparedness.
25. The emergency response budget line includes funding requirements for India (\$7,310,776), Nepal (\$6,246,330) and Sri Lanka (\$3,290,000) and for the South Asia Regional Office (\$1,247,183) to support quality and timely response scale-up; this includes technical support and strengthening the capacity of country offices on the Grand Bargain themes, with dedicated focus on the scale-up of humanitarian cash transfers and accountability to affected populations across the region.
26. This funding requirement includes budgets for India (\$1,687,102) and Sri Lanka (\$572,500) to provide technical support to government partners on emergency preparedness and response. The remaining budget (\$9,970,409) is for the South Asia Regional Office to ensure overall regional capacity in emergency response, preparedness and disaster risk reduction (without duplicating activities already covered in the emergency response and preparedness budget lines); to reinforce evaluations; and to enable country offices to support national efforts in achieving results at scale through innovative, integrated and multisectoral approaches.