



Spotlight on the UNICEF Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition

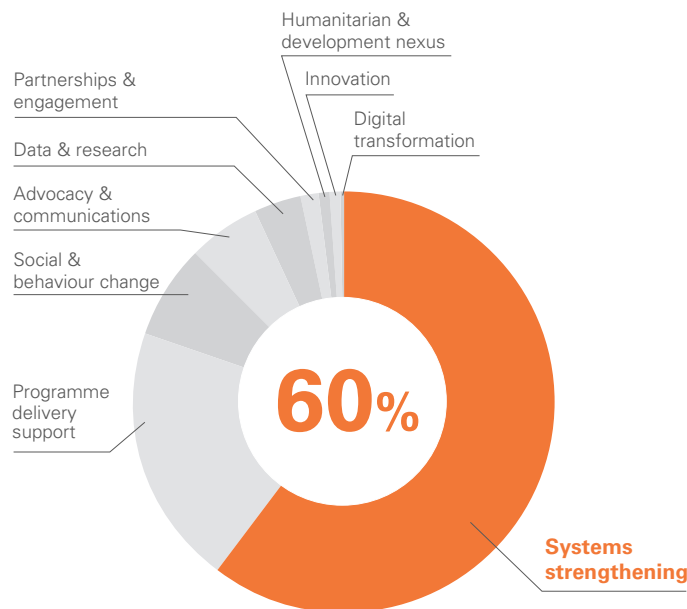
Results achieved in 2022 to ensure
good nutrition for every child

UNICEF's Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition is a flexible funding pool. It enables us to **strengthen systems** to ensure good nutrition for every child.

This offers donors an exciting opportunity to target your funding specifically to nutrition outcomes, while also giving UNICEF the flexibility to allocate funds based on where the need is greatest for children, including critically underfunded priorities at the country level, humanitarian response activities, and where funds will have the greatest impact.

Thanks to our generous donors, UNICEF's Global Nutrition Thematic Fund income in 2022 reached \$71.9 million. We are so grateful for your kind support.

Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public sector	Germany	62,047,570
	Luxembourg	752,688
Private sector	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	7,818,032
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	751,925
	United States Fund for UNICEF	313,366
	Slovenska Fundacija za UNICEF	46,296
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	41,167
	French Committee for UNICEF	38,969
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	29,937
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	27,492
	The New Zealand National Committee for UNICEF	9,664
Grand Total		71,877,105



The chart above illustrates how thematic expenses at global, regional and country level were apportioned across UNICEF's nine implementing strategies for nutrition-related programming. This includes thematic expenses for both development and humanitarian-related activities. In 2022, systems strengthening was the core focus of our work for nutrition, accounting for 60 per cent of all expenses. For more information on expenses, refer to the [2022 Global Annual Results Report for Nutrition](#).

Through our work on systems strengthening, we respond to the immediate, underlying and enabling determinants of malnutrition, ensuring that all children have access to nutritious food, essential nutrition services and positive care practices – the three pillars for good nutrition outcomes for all children. 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 systems strengthening work for the greatest impact – bringing together your passion with our mission to ensure good nutrition 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 more than 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 nutrition challenges that children face are addressed at scale through strong systems.

The backdrop of nutrition has changed. New forces – globalization, urbanization, climate change and humanitarian crises – are posing critical challenges to providing nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices to children today and for the future. In particular, the combined effects of conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate-induced droughts and floods are fueling a global food and nutrition crisis that is putting millions more children and women at risk of malnutrition.

These nutrition challenges are not only diverse but can differ from one country to the next. But what unites these diverse challenges is that they are caused or exacerbated by weak systems.



© UNICEF/JUN072219/AL-filastini

Yemen

The war in Ukraine has caused disruptions in the global supply of key food products, worsening nutrition crises as far afield as Yemen and beyond.



Some **148 million children under 5 are affected by stunting**. This means they are too short for their age because of malnutrition, and their brains may never develop to their full cognitive potential.



Wasting affects 45 million children globally. Children with wasting are desperately thin, have weakened immune systems, and face an increased risk of death. They require urgent treatment and care to survive.



Micronutrient deficiencies affect more than 340 million children under 5 globally, delaying their growth, weakening their immune systems and impairing their brain development.



Overweight affects an estimated 135 million children aged 5-9 worldwide. This form of malnutrition is driven by failing food systems, characterized by poor access to nutritious, safe and affordable foods and the marketing and consumption of cheap, nutrient-poor ultra-processed foods and beverages.

A key role of thematic funding – strengthening systems

Systems 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 systems to support their nutrition, such as health services, school meal programmes, and clean drinking water facilities. When these systems are stronger, children's lives are better.

2

When we strengthen nutrition systems, 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 nutrition systems for children across an entire country.

4

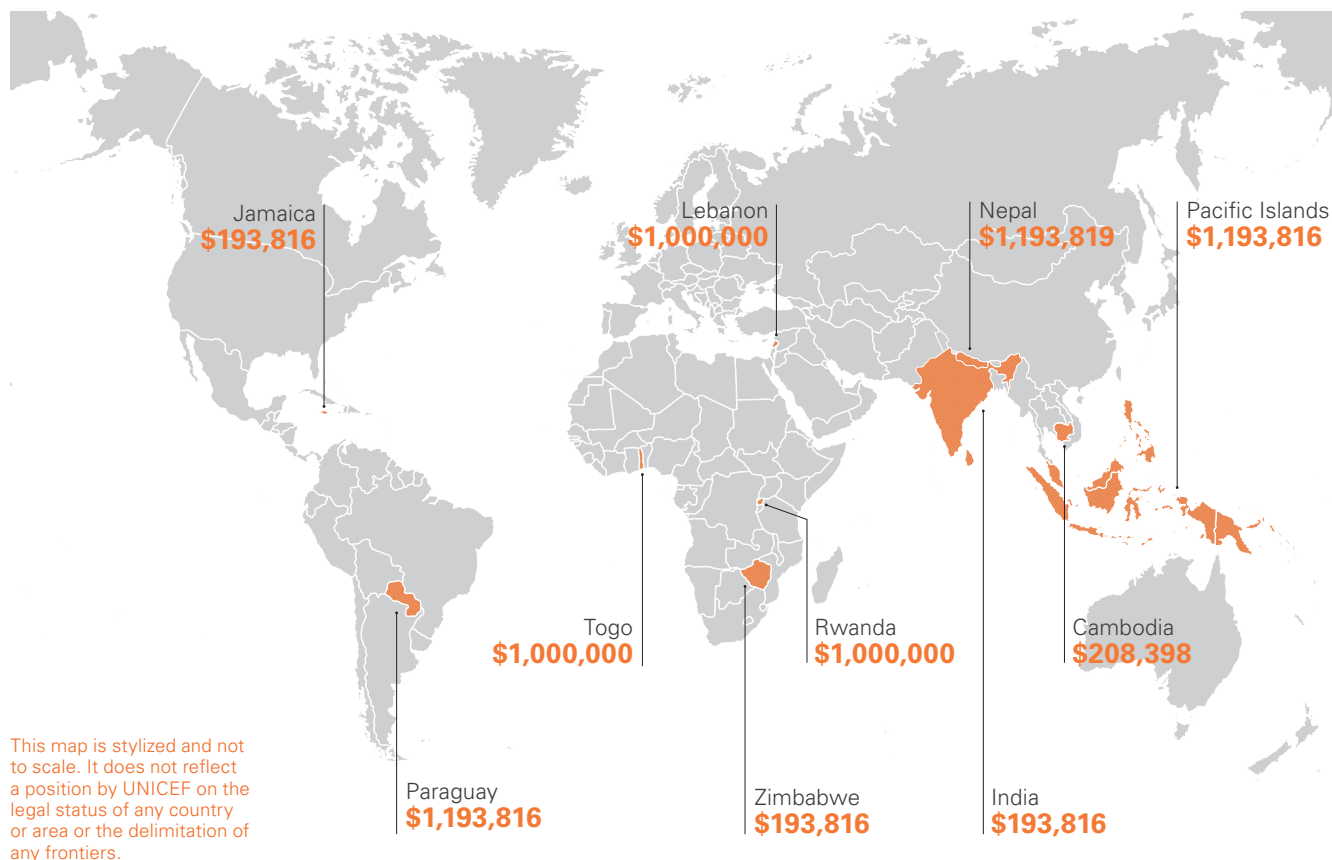
Donors to the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition support this work, helping to define and build this most sustainable way for UNICEF to create impact. Thank you so much for your support.

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

When we strengthen nutrition systems, we don't just respond to consequences of poor nutrition. We get to the root of the issues to remove the structural barriers that might put children at risk of malnutrition – whether that be undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, or overweight. 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 [Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition](#) enabled UNICEF to allocate resources to nutrition programmes in 18 countries and territories. The map shows the 10 countries which received the highest allocations.

Global thematic funds were allocated to UNICEF countries to support the prevention of all forms of malnutrition, with a focus on areas of programming for which additional funding is needed to drive progress towards UNICEF's Strategic Plan results for Nutrition. For instance, funds were allocated to some countries where a small influx of global thematic funding could have a catalytic effect in leveraging other resources such as domestic funding hence driving sustainable change for Nutrition. Funds were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters and regional offices, supporting UNICEF's global thought leadership, strategic direction and technical support to countries. These vital allocations allow thematic funding to unlock wide-scale results and impact the world over.



Regional and global programming

Thematic funds do not only support UNICEF's work in countries. They are also used at global and regional levels to provide thought leadership, strategic direction and technical assistance to countries. These vital allocations of flexible funding are what enable UNICEF to have a sustainable impact on country programmes beyond the direct allocations received by countries.

In 2022, UNICEF allocated over \$1.1 million from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition across four of our regional offices: East Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia. These regions were selected to provide strategic direction and support to the countries receiving thematic funding in those regions. These regions were also selected after considering funding availability to other regions as part of the No Time to Waste Acceleration Plan 2022-2023 – a large-

scale UNICEF appeal for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

Resources from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters, totalling over \$1.1 million. These funds enable UNICEF's global team to drive critical thought leadership for policy and programmatic action to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending malnutrition in all its forms.

Achieving results for systems strengthening

As the world's largest organization for children, with 750 nutrition staff around the world, UNICEF achieves results 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 systems strengthening work.

Policies and strategies

UNICEF works directly with governments to support them to make the best evidence-based policy decisions suited to their contexts to support children's access to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and positive care practices. For instance, this includes legislation to protect children from the harmful marketing of ultraprocessed food and beverages, as well as creating financial incentives to produce and market nutritious foods for children.

- › In 2022, 19 countries implemented front-of-package warning labels to identify foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, free sugars and/or salt. In addition, 16 countries reported applying taxes to unhealthy foods or beverages.



India

In 2022, over \$190,000 from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition was allocated to India to strengthen systems for social protection and nutrition for families impacted by poverty.

Workforce

UNICEF strengthens breastfeeding promotion, as well as counselling for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers on their own nutrition and that of their children, with specific support to small and vulnerable newborns. We do this by training community health and nutrition workers. For instance, we provide training on how to use mid-upper arm circumference tape – a colour-coded measuring tape that is used to identify and treat children with wasting.

- › In 2022, UNICEF supported counselling on infant and young child feeding for over 79.3 million caregivers globally, a 37 per cent increase from the 57.5 million reached in 2021.

Supply chains

Any good system needs access to quality, affordable supplies. This includes vitamin A; micronutrient powders; multiple micronutrient supplements for pregnant women; therapeutic supplies, including ready to use therapeutic food; and tools for measuring children's height and weight. Making supplies available entails strengthening supply chains from end to end. One element of systems strengthening is to establish local factories to manufacture supplies closer to the point of use, reducing costs and delivery times, while also supporting local economies.

- › UNICEF is the main provider of ready-to-use therapeutic food globally. In 2022, we delivered 68,702 metric tons of this life-saving foodstuff to 64 countries.

Social and behavioural change

Social and behavioural change is critical to inform and influence the change in positive care practices needed for optimal nutrition. UNICEF's work to engage school-age children and adolescents and their parents to make healthy choices to mobilize and influence the diets of the next generation of children is a critical part of our work as part of transforming food systems.

- › UNICEF is the world's leading advocate for breastfeeding. Since 2000, the global prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding has increased by 37 per cent. This means that an estimated 655 million additional infants have experienced the nutrition and development benefits of exclusive breastfeeding.

Data

UNICEF invests in strong nutrition information systems to ensure that our work is grounded in the latest evidence. This allows us to see what the nutrition situation is for children and where the most vulnerable children are, enabling us to better target our response.

- › In 2022, UNICEF prepared and published its first-ever global database on women's nutrition, which informed the release of the flagship report [Undernourished and Overlooked A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women](#).

Targets

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

Area Description	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2022)	Target (2025)
Policies and strategies			At least
Number of countries with a nutrition policy or strategy to prevent undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in children under 5 years of age	66	71	80
Nutrition workforce			At least
Number of countries implementing integrated anaemia prevention and nutrition counselling in their pregnancy care programmes for women	30	40	45
Social and behavioural change			
Number of countries with gender-responsive programmes to prevent anaemia in adolescent girls and boys through school- and community-based approaches	28	30	45
Supply chains			
Number of countries with a national supply-chain strategy that addresses barriers to access therapeutic food and other essential nutrition supplies	21	26	40



Cook Islands

Students participate in an initiative that emphasizes the importance of fruits and vegetables. In 2022, our thematic allocations to the Pacific Islands helped to improve food environments for children – at home, in schools and in markets – as part of an approach to improve nutritious diets and prevent overweight and obesity.

NUTRITION STRATEGY (2020-2030)

UNICEF’s work in 2022 was driven by the priorities outlined in our [Nutrition Strategy \(2020-2030\)](#). The Strategy is aligned to the timeline of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – a set of 17 global goals agreed by United Nations Member States to achieve by 2030. In particular, the Strategy aims to address Sustainable Development Goal Target 2.2: end all forms of malnutrition by 2030.

The strategy addresses this by focusing on the ‘triple burden’ of malnutrition: undernutrition, in the form of stunting and wasting, widespread micronutrient deficiencies, and a growing prevalence of overweight and obesity.



By tackling these diverse forms of malnutrition, UNICEF aims to achieve the ambitious vision of “a world where all children, adolescents and women realize their right to nutrition”. This vision is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which recognizes the right of every child to adequate nutrition.

By giving UNICEF the flexibility to support nutrition programming 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 strengthen the underlying causes to enable systems to secure good nutrition for all children and achieve real, long-term results.

Thematic funding around the world

The Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition supported UNICEF's work globally, in four regional offices, and in 18 countries and territories in 2022. Here are five examples of UNICEF's work for nutrition in countries that received allocations of global thematic funding.



Egypt

In 2022, a significant priority was to strengthen social protection systems to better target families, women and children to achieve better nutrition outcomes especially for the most vulnerable. UNICEF helped to support better nutrition for families affected by poverty. Overall, more than 12.5 million households globally received cash transfers together with counselling on infant and young child feeding in 2022. Egypt was one of the countries which benefited most, with the support of over \$190,000 from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition.



Jamaica

In 2022, Jamaica received over \$190,000 from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition to transform the country's food system for children. To support this effort, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education convened more than 2,000 stakeholders, including school principals, food vendors, parents, students and advocates to contribute to the draft National School Nutrition Policy. This crucial policy aims to ensure that standards for healthy foods in schools are established and monitored.



Nepal

In 2022, Nepal received almost \$1.2 million from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition. UNICEF's work in the country in 2022 included supporting scale-up of the government's Multisector Nutrition Plan, which covers all 753 local government areas. UNICEF also worked to integrate nutrition objectives in local government workplans and budgets. Through these efforts to foster an enabling environment for nutrition, we have seen the number of children affected by stunting fall by 22 per cent between 2019 and 2022.



Paraguay

In 2022, UNICEF worked to support governments to scale up use of multiple micronutrient supplements to prevent micronutrient deficiencies, anaemia and low birthweight among pregnant women. Through our advocacy, these supplements have now been added to the national lists of essential medicines in eight countries, including Paraguay, which received almost \$1.2 million from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2022.



Tanzania

In 2022, UNICEF and partners contributed to the signing of a new nutrition compact (2022–2030) in Tanzania, which is expected to benefit more than 10 million children under 5 years of age every year. Our vital systems strengthening work, which enables these kinds of major achievements, was supported with an allocation of over \$190,000 from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2022.

Building habits for healthy eating in Mongolia



Mongolia

Adilbileg, age 5, plays with toy fruits and vegetables to learn about nutrition at her kindergarten.

Adilbileg's story

Life in Mongolia is very different to what many of us are used to. A large proportion of the population are nomadic pastoralists, tending livestock in remote locations far from any major settlements.

This lifestyle comes with its challenges. Due to the long hours of outdoor work, many families struggle to prepare, cook, and store a variety of dishes. Children growing up in these settings subsist largely on boortsog, a doughnut deep fried in oil, and Mongolian homemade noodle soup.

Consequently, the intake of vitamins and minerals among children in Mongolia is alarmingly low. According to National Nutrition Survey 2017 data, 27 per cent of children under the age of five are anemic, 21 per cent suffer from iron deficiency, 70 per cent have insufficient levels of vitamin A, and a staggering 90 per cent lack adequate levels of vitamin D.

UNICEF is working hard to address this challenge. And, in 2022, the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition contributed to our work, with a flexible allocation over \$190,000.

Adilbileg, age 5, is one of the children who has seen a benefit from UNICEF's work. As part of a nomadic pastoralist family, Adilbileg is only able to attend kindergarten 72 km from her home. She stays with her grandmother during the school year and returns to her parents during the summer holidays.

A key element of Adilbileg's learning at kindergarten is around nutrition. In fact, with UNICEF's support, new



Mongolia

Adilbileg's grandmother prepares a variety of foods for her to ensure she has a nutritious diet.

kitchen equipment and a refrigerator was installed at Adilbileg's kindergarten. This has enabled the storage of fresh produce, fruits, and berries so children can be served a variety of safe, fresh healthy dishes during the school day. Thus, Adilbileg has started enjoying a variety of dishes that she had never seen before.

In addition, children and their caregivers are now learning how to cook diverse nutritious food and eat more vegetables, fruits, and dairy products. Adilbileg's grandmother attends the sessions too, to ensure her granddaughter can always eat healthy food – wherever she is staying.

The work seems to be having an effect on Adilbileg. Previously, when asked what her favourite food was, she would say noodle soup. Now she says fruit!

A few sprinkles of vitamin and minerals can enrich children's food and prevent anaemia

Saolele's story in Kiribati

On the Pacific Island of Kiribati, 11-month-old Saolele is benefiting from a healthier start to life, thanks to micronutrient supplements.

"Before Saolele's meal I separate a spoonful of her food on one side of her plate and then pour the micronutrient powder into it," explains Kerry, Saolele's mother. "I mix it thoroughly and then start feeding her with that portion first to make sure that she eats it!"

Micronutrient powder is a vitamin and food supplement that can be sprinkled into children's food from six months old to ensure they are getting all the nutrients they need – including vitamins A, B12, C, iodine, folic acid and iron. It therefore prevents children from malnutrition, stunting, and many other illnesses caused by micronutrient deficiency, which children are prone to whenever they lack essential nutrients in their diet. In 2022, UNICEF delivered 612.7 million sachets of multiple micronutrient powder to 42 countries across the world.

In Kiribati, we worked with the Ministry of Health and Medical Services to distribute the micronutrient powder to mothers like Kerry. They were also given a simple recipe book for cooking baby food with local ingredients and a guide on their child's needs and development. The guide, titled 'I love it when' (or in Kiribati, 'I tatangiria ngkana') was designed to also be used as a reading book.



Kiribati

Saolele browses her new favourite book with her mother Kerry.

This has now become Saolele's favourite book, as Kerry explains. "It is amazing that Saolele is now able to communicate in basic language such as 'eat' and 'thank you'. And whenever she hears me start reading her story book, she stops what she is doing, turns back and starts crawling back to me smiling," says Kerry, proud of the development she sees her daughter making. "She is a smart kid!".

As one of 14 countries and territories covered by UNICEF's Pacific Islands office, Kiribati benefited from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2022. Overall, almost \$1.2 million was allocated to the Pacific Islands.



© UNICEF

UNICEF's

Micronutrient powder comes in 1g sachets. It may seem small, but these simple grains of powder have a lifesaving potential.

Hearing from our donors and partners

Luxembourg was one of two public partners for the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition in 2022

The Government of Luxembourg has been a long-term partner of UNICEF, with a commitment to supporting our work across a broad range. As Franz Fayot, Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs in Luxembourg summarized in 2022, “Luxembourg’s financial contributions enable UNICEF to strengthen equal access to quality basic education, gender equality, access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, food security and nutrition, addressing HIV/AIDS among adolescents, as well as to reinforce maternal health systems.”

Within this wide-ranging support, nutrition forms a key pillar – especially through flexible funds. In 2021, the Government of Luxembourg provided \$906,190 in thematic contributions to nutrition. In 2022, Luxembourg provided \$752,688 to the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition and was one of only two public sector donors to the fund.



These flexible resources play a critical role in UNICEF’s work to strengthen nutrition systems for children. But, with two in three children under 5 still experiencing food poverty in low- and middle-income countries, there is much work to be done. And this work will only be possible with the continued commitment of flexible partners like the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Nepal

A student inspects the nutrition corner at her school library, where different foods are displayed to show their nutritional contents. In 2022, Nepal received more from the Global Thematic Fund for Nutrition than any other country – almost \$1.2 million.

Victor Aguayo
Director, Child Nutrition and Development
UNICEF Programme Group
New York, The United States of America

www.unicef.org

Programme Coordination Unit
Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, Geneva
Public Partnerships Division, New York
programmecoordination@unicef.org

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

February 2024