

# Spotlight on the UNICEF Child Protection Fund

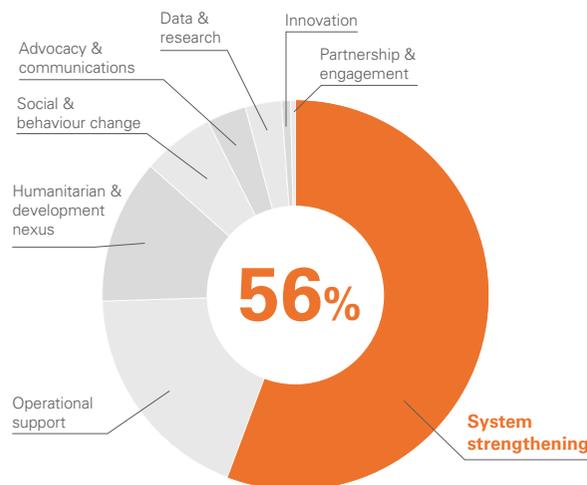
Results achieved in 2022 to  
ensure sustainable impact  
for the protection of children

UNICEF's Child Protection Thematic Fund is a global flexible funding pool. It enables us to **strengthen systems** to ensure every child is protected from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.

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

**Thanks to our generous donors UNICEF's Global Child Protection Thematic Fund income in 2022 reached \$9.4 million. We are so grateful for your kind support.**

Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public Sector	Sweden	7,870,237
	Hungary	150,000
Private Sector	Korean Committee for UNICEF	568,283
	German Committee for UNICEF	426,439
	United States Fund for UNICEF	152,938
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	129,534
	Balance from previous year	68,743
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	52,414
	Canadian UNICEF Committee	15,360
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>9,433,950</b>



The chart above illustrates how thematic expenses at global, regional and country level were apportioned across eight out of UNICEF's nine implementing strategies for protection-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 child protection, accounting for 56 per cent of all expenses. For more information on expenses, refer to the [2022 Global Annual Results Report for Child Protection](#).

Through this work, we don't just respond to violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices. We get to the root causes of these issues, by addressing access to social services and mental health care, influencing 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 protect children from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.

## 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 protection challenges that children face are addressed at scale through strong systems.



Iraq

A young boy walks through a neighbourhood of Mosul, destroyed by conflict. According to UNICEF data, 52 children were killed and 73 maimed by explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance in Iraq in 2021.

Around the world, children experience diverse and often multiple forms of harm. They face violence at home and in communities. They endure grave violations in armed conflict, and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Children can find themselves alone and separated from their families. We know that mental health issues are on the rise for children and adolescents. And, violating one of their most basic rights, many children do not have a birth certificate, and therefore do not have a legal identity.

These protection issues 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.



**1 out of 3 girls will experience physical and or sexual violence in their lifetime**, worldwide.



In 2022, **the United Nations verified 27,180 grave violations against 18,890 children** committed by parties to conflict, such as children killed, maimed, abducted, and recruited to armed groups.



**23 per cent of children under 5 have not had their births registered** and lack proof of legal identity.



Today, **one in five young women aged 20 to 24 years were married as children**.

## 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 systems for protection, such as social services, courts of law, and mental health providers. When these systems are stronger, children's lives are better.

2

When we strengthen child protection 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 child protection systems for children across an entire country.

4

Donors to the Child Protection 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.

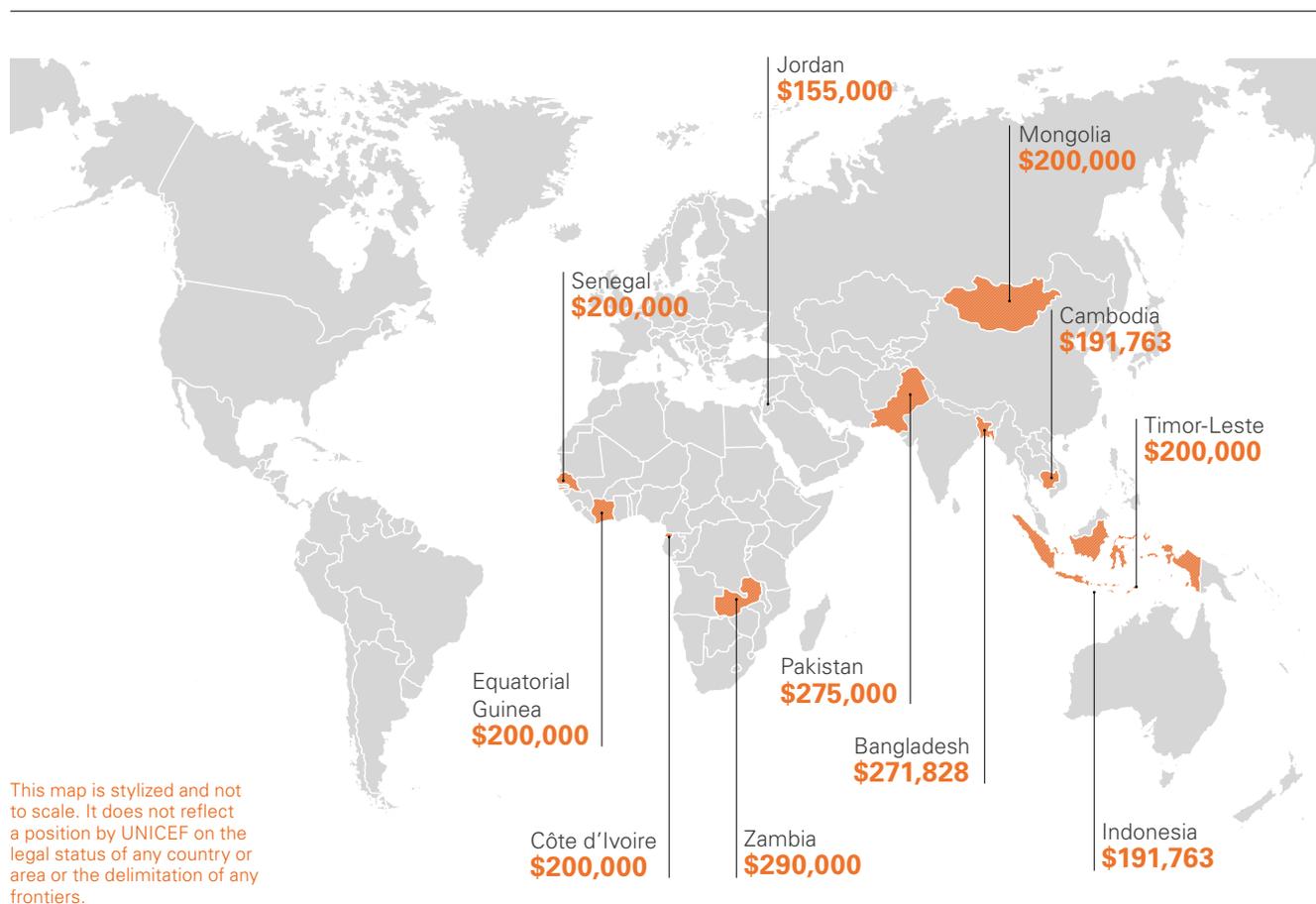
Based on our 75 years of experience working for and with children and women, we have seen **how powerful it can be to address cross-cutting issues by focusing on strengthening systems**.

When we strengthen child protection systems, we don't just work around existing barriers. We get to the root of the issues to remove these structural barriers that might put children at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse. 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 **Child Protection Thematic Fund** enabled UNICEF to allocate resources to child protection programmes in 47 countries and territories. The map shows the 10 countries which received the highest allocations.

The allocations for countries were determined using a needs-based formula which considered criteria such as birth registration rates, prevalence of sexual violence, percentage of children in residential care, and more.

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 Child Protection Thematic Fund to have an impact far beyond the countries that receive direct allocations.

Around \$1 million was allocated across UNICEF's 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 Child Protection Thematic Fund, these regional offices are able to help coordinate child protection programmes in the countries of their region, and provide expert advice and guidance when needed.

Resources from the Child Protection Thematic Fund were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters, totaling approximately \$800,000. These funds enable UNICEF's global specialists to analyse the child protection landscape and set our priorities. Our global child protection staff also lead our advocacy at important influencing processes, such as the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA) in 2022, and a policy call for national governments for universal parenting support to prevent abuse and neglect.

# Achieving results for system strengthening

As the world's largest organization for children, UNICEF achieves results for child protection 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.



Pakistan

Abdul, age 16, enjoys a UNICEF Child Friendly Space that was set up after severe floods in 2022 to provide children with a safe place to learn and grow.

## Data

In 2021, UNICEF formally outlined an approach to measuring the strength of child protection systems, based on four phases of progression: system building, system enhancement, system integration, and system maturity. UNICEF is continuing to work with countries on ways to effectively measure their child protection systems using this four-phase model. The data are enabling countries to better identify patterns and evidence about why some areas of their child protection systems appear to be stronger or more mature than others.

- In 2022, UNICEF worked with partners in 158 countries to assess the stage of development of their child protection systems using the four-phase maturity model.

**Phase 1**  
System Building



**Phase 2**  
System Enhancement



**Phase 3**  
System Integration



**Phase 4**  
System Maturity



## Workforce

A diverse and robust social service workforce is the best way to ensure that a child protection system can function in an inclusive and effective manner. Social service workers are often the first and best placed to respond to needs at the community level. UNICEF helps train social services workers. We issue guidance to advise policymakers on social service workforce sizes and costs. And we invest in digital systems that help social workers to manage their caseloads more effectively.

- In 2022, UNICEF supported 152 countries to strengthen their social service workforce for child protection, an increase of 7 per cent from the 142 countries reporting progress in 2021.

## Social and behavioural change

Social and behavioural change is any work that aims to shift attitudes on key issues. UNICEF's social and behavioural change work for child protection focuses particularly on eliminating harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage, as well as to end violence against boys, girls and women. By working at the community level – with parents, teachers, local leaders, and children themselves – we aim to address the root causes of harmful practices at individual, social, and structural levels.

- In 2022, 82 UNICEF country offices supported specific child protection social and behavioural change strategies with governments and other partners to step up national social and behavioural change plans and programming.

## Laws and policies

UNICEF works directly with governments to support them to make the best policy decisions for child protection. Our priorities include influencing laws and policies on birth registration, corporal punishment, social services workforces, children in institutional care, and more.

- In 2022, 19 countries strengthened laws or policies to end corporal punishment of children and six countries adopted legislation and policy frameworks to end child sexual exploitation and abuse. In addition, 72 countries reported having legislative and policy frameworks to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, a 24 per cent increase from 58 countries the previous year.

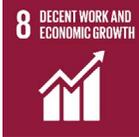
# Targets

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 Child Protection 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 inclusive and effective systems for child protection, UNICEF monitors several key indicators, as illustrated on the table below.

Area Description	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2022)	Target for 2025
<b>Workforce</b> Number of countries with a quality assurance system in place for social service work	40	41	47
<b>Data</b> Number of countries that have in place a free and universal birth registration service within civil registration and vital statistics, in accordance with international standards and best practices	47	50	64
<b>Social and behavioural change</b> Number of people engaged through community platforms in reflective dialogue towards eliminating discriminatory social and gender norms and harmful practices that affect girls and women through UNICEF-supported programmes	22.2 million	31.1 million	23.9 million
<b>Laws and policies</b> Number of countries with specialized justice for children systems	24	31	37

## CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGY (2021-2030)

UNICEF’s work in 2022 was driven by the priorities outlined in our [Child Protection Strategy](#) (2021-2030). 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. The Strategy aims to achieve the vision of “a world where all children are free from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect and harmful practices.” It contributes directly to the following Sustainable Development Goals targets:

- 
**3.4** Promote mental health and well-being
- 
**5.2** Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls
- 
**5.3** Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- 
**8.7** End child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers
- 
**16.2** End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 
**16.3** Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
- 
**16.9** By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

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 violence, exploitation and abuse and achieve real, long-term results.

# Thematic funding around the world

The Child Protection Thematic Fund supported UNICEF's work globally, in seven regions, and in 47 countries and territories in 2022. Here are six examples of UNICEF's work for child protection in countries that received allocations of global thematic funding.



## Senegal

In 2022, UNICEF's work in Senegal focused on strengthening the social service workforce, supported by \$200,000 from the Child Protection Thematic Fund. We undertook an assessment to identify gaps in the workforce and inform strategies for the future. We helped to equip almost 21,000 workers with enhanced skills. And we enabled almost 3,000 cases to be managed for survivors of violence, connecting them to the services they needed.



## Egypt

In Egypt, thousands of children interact with the justice system every year. They could be in need of care or safety, or seeking to protect their rights. They could be victims or witnesses to a crime. Or they could be alleged, accused or recognized as having broken the law. UNICEF is working to strengthen the justice system in Egypt to ensure it meets children's rights. In 2022, with support from a \$150,000 allocation from the Child Protection Thematic Fund, UNICEF initiated a pilot programme introducing child-sensitive rooms to family courts. We also helped to draft guidelines on child-sensitive interviewing techniques.



## Zambia

In 2022, Zambia received \$290,000 from the Child Protection Thematic Fund, which was one of the largest allocations of any country. UNICEF's work in the country covered a wide range of child protection programming. We helped secure the adoption of the Social Worker's Act, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, and others. We launched and piloted new minimum standards for the justice system, which impacted more than 600 child-related court cases. And we rolled out a new handbook on addressing sexual violence, which impacted the response to over 200 cases of violence against women and girls.



## Tajikistan

With \$150,000 from the Child Protection Thematic Fund, UNICEF's work in Tajikistan in 2022 focused on a number of policy reforms. For instance, UNICEF helped the government to develop the second phase of the national Juvenile Justice System Reform Programme (2023-2027).



## The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

UNICEF worked with partners to strengthen access to, and the quality of, specialized child protection services in 24 states and 152 municipalities. This included improving protection services in four hospitals and communities in border areas, as well as in vulnerable urban communities. As a result, up to 600 children per month were receiving specialized referrals. UNICEF also helped develop a protocol for psychosocial care of child and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse and gender-based violence. Overall, almost 759,000 children, adolescents and adults received child protection and related services in 2022.



## Mongolia

Child protection issues in digital environments are continuing to evolve, challenging the capacity of parents and caregivers, communities and governments to respond. To address this, UNICEF supported the training of law enforcement officers, prosecutors and other justice officials in Mongolia on victim identification, digital evidence and investigative techniques. Our work in Mongolia received one of the highest allocations from the Child Protection Thematic Fund in 2022, in excess of \$200,000.

# Working together to support a family devastated by child abuse in Cambodia



Bolivia

Mr. Sat (top left), Mrs. Wen (centre) and other members of the child protection workforce meet to discuss the case of Dara.

## Dara's story

When a child is sexually abused, it sends shockwaves of trauma through entire communities. This is what happened last year when Dara\*, age 12, was sexually abused by two men at a local festival. Despite her fear, the young girl reported the crime to the police.

The first person the police reached out to was Mrs. Wen, the local focal point responsible for the wellbeing of children in the community. "As a mother living in the community, I found the crime terrifying," Mrs. Wen recalls.

Fortunately, Mrs. Wen had been trained in child protection with UNICEF's support and knew what steps to take. She immediately called on a network of partners to bring the perpetrators to justice and provide healing and psychological support to Dara, her family, and the whole community. These partners included a Child Protection Lead and a social worker from the Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth; a social worker from a local NGO; and a Child Protection Officer from UNICEF.

"In a case like this, so much multidisciplinary support is needed, and we all have to work together," says Mr. Sat, the Child Protection Lead from the Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth. "Different actors have different roles to play. None of us can do it alone. Without collaboration, we will never address the issue of child protection and ensure the best interest of the child."

The highest priority was, of course, the welfare of Dara. Mrs. Wen played the pivotal role in working with her and supporting her, which meant establishing a relationship of trust. "When I first met her, she was so scared, and terrified of all men," she says. "After visiting her many times, I can say she is recovering. We have become close, and we can even joke a little now. Mentally she is stronger, and not just because of me but because of all the support from all the partners."

This collaborative approach is a key element of any strong child protection system and a vital area of UNICEF's focus through thematic funding. In 2022, UNICEF allocated \$191,763 to Cambodia from the Child Protection Thematic Fund, supporting critical work to strengthen the social service workforce. For instance, almost 3,000 social service workers undertook training on how to manage child protection cases and how to refer cases to other workers in the national child protection system.

According to Mr. Sat, this system strengthening work is paying off. "I started working in child protection 25 years ago and back then there weren't good coordination and reporting systems," he recalls. "Children were often victims of abuse and it was never reported. Now things are changing, and children and families have a better understanding of abuse and more trust that it will be dealt with."

Fortunately, in this case, Dara has received counselling and her parents are attending classes to support her as well. Dara is also receiving support through the legal process, as she presses charges against her attackers.

"My dream is that with support from us all, she will be able to have a good future," Mrs. Wen concludes. "I just want her to have a good life ahead."

\*Dara's name has been changed to protect her identity.

# One social worker changes Hasib's life in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a population of 170 million. But there are only 181 child protection social workers in the whole country. This shocking statistic shows the importance of investing more in strengthening the child protection system. And the powerful impact this can have is demonstrated by Hasib's story.

Hasib does not know how old he is. He guesses that he should be 12 now, and that he came to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, from his village when he was just 7.

"When I first came to Dhaka with my mother, we lived at the bus stand," he recalls. "I was sad at how horrible people were to us. They threw water at us when we tried to sleep. They called us hurtful names."

Hasib lived on the streets with his mother for several years. With the arrival of his baby sister, his responsibilities grew. At times, the family was able to find a place to stay. "But they always threw us out when we couldn't pay the rent," Hasib explains.

Hasib now sells books and chocolate at the bus terminal. He makes about \$2 per day, and that is how he provides for his mother and sister.

Fortunately, Hasib has been able to receive some support thanks to UNICEF's work with the Government of Bangladesh. Together, we operate three Child Protection Service Hubs in Dhaka. At the hubs, children get free meals, a place to rest, counselling, and an opportunity to play and learn with other children. And Hasib has also received support from a social worker, Makhsuda.

Makhsuda helped Hasib's mother obtain a birth certificate and a job in the terminal. Although Hasib's mother no longer has the job, she was able to rent a room. And through Makhsuda's efforts, Hasib was admitted to a school for vulnerable children in the area.



**Bangladesh**

Makhsuda continues to keep in touch with Hasib and his family. With her support, Hasib started going to school again.

**Bangladesh**

Hasib plays with his younger sister and his mother in the room they now live in.



"I go to school five days a week now," Hasib says proudly. "They teach us everything. I come to the hub and practice afterwards as well."

Although Hasib still has to work to support the family, his situation has improved a great deal. But this is only possible because he was one of the lucky few in Bangladesh to have access to a social worker.

**In 2022, Bangladesh received one of the highest allocations from the Child Protection Thematic Fund – more than \$270,000. This funding is vital to our efforts to strengthen the child protection system in Bangladesh. And it is important to remember that behind these 'stronger systems' there are millions of children, like Hasib, whose lives can be changed forever because of one social worker.**

# Hearing from our donors and partners

## Long-standing support from Sweden provides vital flexibility for sustainable results

UNICEF relies on a predictable flow of flexible funds to implement the long-term programmes that make the biggest difference for children. That's why we are so grateful for partners like the Government of Sweden, who show a powerful commitment to thematic funding over multiple years.

The Government of Sweden is a critical partner for advancing children's rights and protecting them from violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect, and harmful practices and backs up its strong voice and vision with multi-year flexible funding. In UNICEF's last Strategic Plan period, from 2018 to 2021, the Government of Sweden contributed 71 per cent of all global child protection thematic funding – making them our most important partner for this vital area of work. In 2022, Sweden made a renewed multi-year (2022-2025) commitment to the Child Protection Thematic Fund.

Torbjörn Pettersson, Assistant Director General of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) explains why their partnership with UNICEF is so important. "Despite significant and positive changes in the child protection-related Sustainable Development Goals such as birth registration, child labour, child marriage and female genital mutilation, they are still mostly off-track.

"Sida provides long-term flexible thematic funding to UNICEF's child protection programme, as it enables UNICEF to strengthen the ability to deliver on long-term strategic activities and as it enhances effectiveness, promotes sustainability, innovation and better coordination, and reduces transaction costs."

The commitment of Sweden makes a vital contribution to reaching many millions of children across the globe, including adolescents, and their parents and caregivers with a range of UNICEF-supported child protection prevention and response interventions. UNICEF will continue to explore new partnerships to attract greater investment in child protection from both the public and private sectors, building on Sweden's example.

## Global Pop Icons act together for child protection

BTS are one of the biggest bands in the history of popular music. Their songs are streamed millions of times daily and their loyal fanbase, known as ARMY, is one of the most devoted in the world.

BTS and their record label BIGHIT MUSIC are eager to use this influential platform for a good cause. Since 2017, they have partnered with UNICEF through the LOVE MYSELF campaign. This campaign aims to spread messages of love and togetherness, while also raising vital funds for UNICEF, including contributions to the Child Protection Thematic Fund.

"Our jointly staged LOVE MYSELF campaign supports UNICEF's worldwide efforts to end violence against children and continues to promote self-love, kindness, and well-being," said the BIGHIT MUSIC team. "We look forward to continuing the partnership even further, to help ensure that every child, everywhere, lives a life free from violence."



### United Nations Headquarters

The members of BTS promote the LOVE MYSELF campaign at the United Nations in New York.

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for every child