

Spotlight on the UNICEF Health Fund

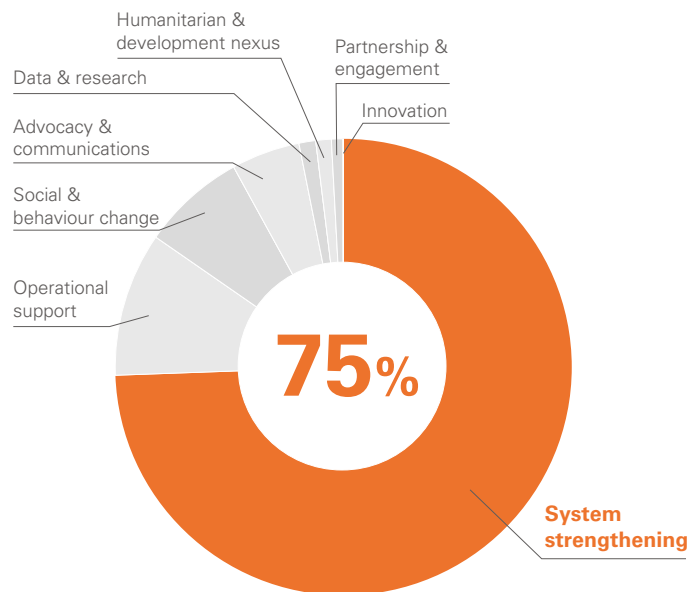
Results achieved in 2022
to ensure children's health

UNICEF's Health Thematic Fund is a global flexible funding pool. It enables us to **strengthen systems** to ensure sustainable results for children's health.

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

Thanks to our generous donors, UNICEF's Global Health Thematic Fund income in 2022 reached close to \$2 million. We are so grateful for your kind support.

Partner Type	Partner	Total (US\$)
Public Sector	Luxembourg	645,161
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	505,537
	United States Fund for UNICEF	350,314
	Italian Committee for UNICEF	143,611
	Balance from previous year	137,065
Private Sector	Slovenska Fundacija za UNICEF	64,340
	UNICEF Ireland	41,182
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	35,169
	Polish National Committee for UNICEF	28,624
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	21,002
	New Zealand Committee for UNICEF	14,012
	Slovenska nadacija pre UNICEF	4,848
	Grand Total	1,990,866



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 health-related programming. This includes thematic expenses for both development and humanitarian related activities. In 2022, system strengthening was the core focus of our health work, accounting for 75 per cent of all expenses. For more information on expenses, refer to the [2022 Global Annual Results Report for Health](#).












Through this system strengthening work, we don't just respond to health inequalities and challenges. We get to the root causes of these issues, by addressing access to health care, health centre infrastructure, supply chains for medical equipment, 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 a safer and healthier world 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.

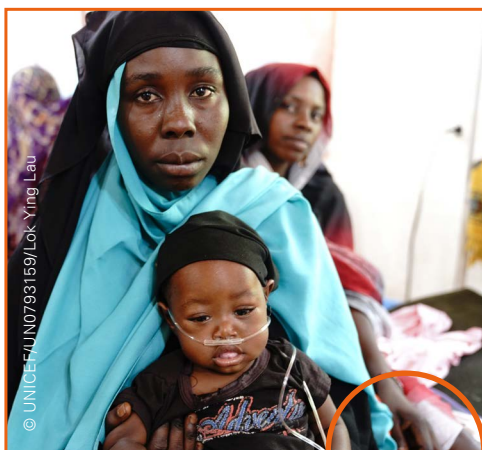
The 11 global thematic funds are:

- 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 health challenges that women and children face are addressed at scale through strong systems.



Sudan

Malaria is a leading cause of child mortality, with one child under 5 dying from the disease every minute globally. Maza, 9 months, is receiving oxygen as he recovers from acute respiratory infection and malaria.

Tremendous progress has been achieved in child health over recent decades. But millions of children are still suffering and dying from causes that can be prevented. Infectious diseases, premature birth delivery complications, and malnutrition are the leading causes for death for younger children. At the same time, adolescents also face significant health challenges, including from non-infectious diseases and mental health conditions.

Not only are these health issues diverse: they can also differ from one country to the next. But what unites these diverse challenges is that they are caused or exacerbated by weak systems.



Every day, some 6,300 babies die in their first month of life.



67 million children missed out on routine immunizations between 2019 and 2021.



Pneumonia is the leading infectious cause of death among children under 5, killing approximately 700,000 children a year.



An estimated 0.92 million adolescents die every year – mostly from preventable injuries and non-communicable diseases.



Worldwide, 10-20 per cent of children and adolescents experience mental disorders.



Over 1 million child deaths due to environmental risks. Climate-related risks, such as heat stress and changing patterns of disease are threatening progress on child survival.

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 rely on doctors, nurses, clinics and hospitals to keep them safe and healthy as part of their local and national health systems. When these systems are stronger and more equitable, children are more likely to survive and thrive.

2

When we strengthen health systems – by training medical professionals, improving equity of health care for the most disadvantaged, ensuring medicines are available, and more – we do not 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 health systems for children across an entire country.

4

Donors to the Health 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.

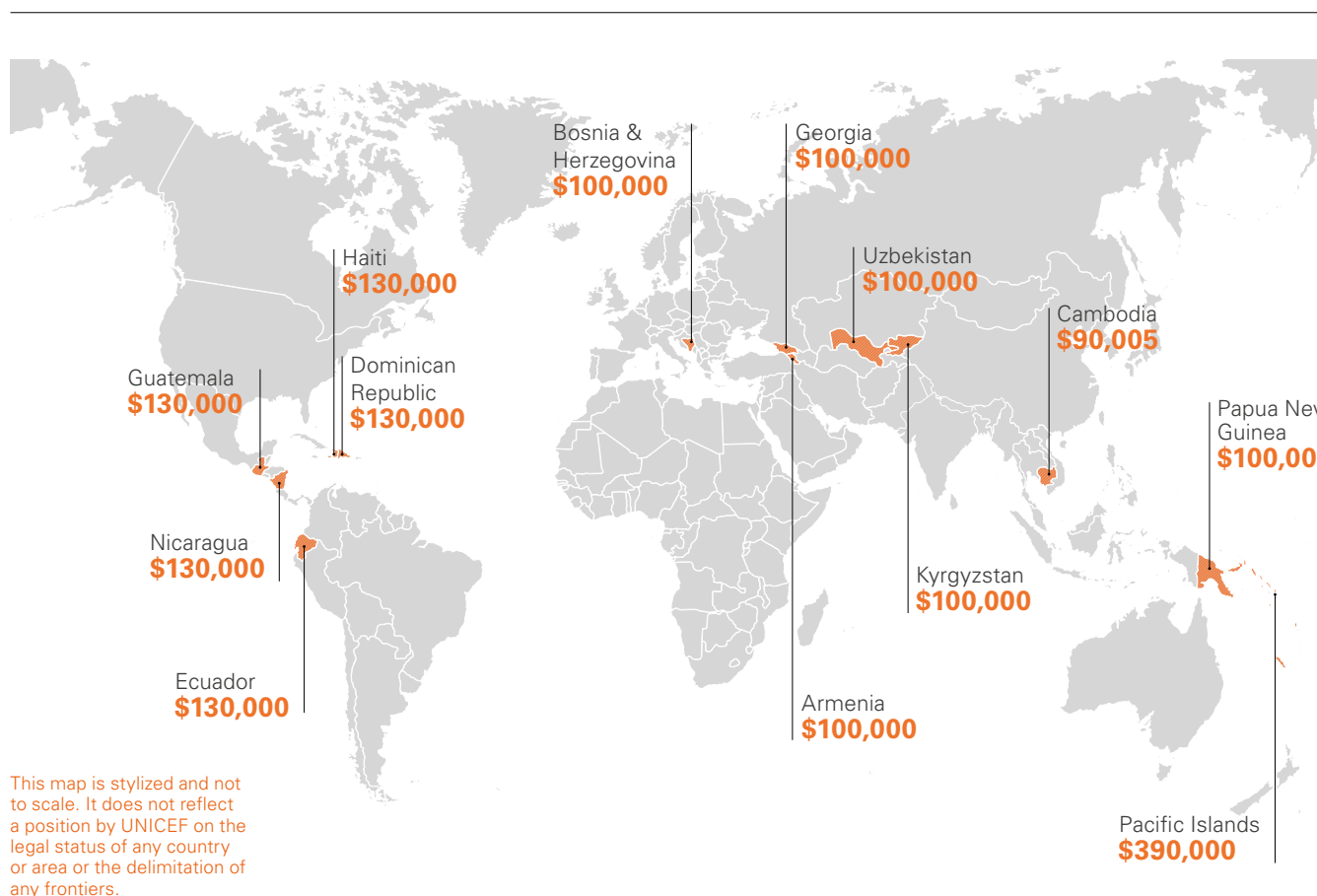
Based on our 75 years of experience working for and with children and women, we have seen **how powerful it can be to address cross-cutting issues by focusing on strengthening systems.**

When we strengthen health systems, we don't just work around existing barriers. We get to the root of the issues to remove these structural barriers that might prevent some children from accessing health services or lower the quality of the care they receive. 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 **Health Thematic Fund enabled UNICEF** to allocate resources to health programmes in 13 countries and territories, illustrated on the map below.

The allocations focused on countries in three regions: East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2022, programmes in these regions faced significant gaps in funding. Therefore, the flexible resources from the Health Thematic Fund were vital for filling gaps and delivering maximum value for children.

Funds were also allocated to UNICEF's regional and global headquarters, supporting the vital work that 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 Health Thematic Fund to have an impact far beyond the countries that receive direct allocations.

In 2022, just under 13 per cent of funds from the Health Thematic Fund were allocated to regional offices, focusing on East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Funds were used to help coordinate health programmes in the countries of each region, as well as for specific projects, such as a research programme in Europe and Central Asia focused on primary health-care costing and adolescent health integration.

Resources from the Health Thematic Fund were also allocated to UNICEF's global headquarters. These funds enable UNICEF's global specialists to analyse the health landscape and set our priorities. Our global health staff also maintain our presence and advocacy at important influencing events, such as the annual World Health Summit.

Finally, thematic funding also has significant value as catalytic investments to leverage and influence other funding to benefit children.

Achieving results for system strengthening

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

Workforce

All systems require a strong skilled workforce. In the case of health, this includes doctors, nurses, community health workers, and more. UNICEF works to ensure all health workers are properly trained, equipped and remunerated as part of a strong local or national health system.

- › In 2022, UNICEF strengthened the skills of 404,734 health workers to deliver essential maternal, newborn and child health services.

Quality

UNICEF works with governments to improve the quality of newborn, child, adolescent and maternal health care – especially at community level – through development of culturally- and age-appropriate health protocols and guidelines, and national quality improvement programmes.

- › In 2022, UNICEF implemented quality of care standards in 11,768 health-care facilities.



Vanuatu

A health worker gives an oral vaccine to a young child.

Infrastructure

To ensure all health-care facilities are appropriately equipped, UNICEF builds or improves essential infrastructure, including water, sanitation, hygiene, waste management and solar power. In the face of climate change, an increasingly focus of our work is on ensuring health facilities are climate resilient and able to withstand extreme weather events, such as floods or cyclones.

- › In 2022, UNICEF reached 10,827 health care facilities with basic water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Social and behavioural change

Social and behavioural change is any work that aims to shift attitudes on key issues. For example, social and behavioural change approaches can help encourage mothers to seek at least the minimum four antenatal care visits when pregnant. It can persuade parents to bring their children to the clinic to receive their routine vaccines. And, it can influence healthy lifestyle choices that reduce exposure to risks.

- › UNICEF reached over 1 billion people with vaccine messaging on social media in 2022.

Data and digital

When good quality health data are available, decisions can be better informed for improving national health services. As the world's leading source of data on children, UNICEF helps to collect and disseminate this high-level data. But, we also support the integration of digital systems into health services, so individual patient data can be captured digitally. This increases data security, enables data back-ups, and allows rapid sharing of information if a patient moves to a different health facility.

- › UNICEF, the World Health Organization and other partners recently released the [Geo-enabled Microplanning Handbook](#). This is a practical guide for health programme implementers to integrate geospatial data and technologies into health service microplanning.

Supply chains

Supplies are a vital cornerstone of any functioning health system. These include everything from vaccines to oxygen cannisters to face masks. UNICEF not only delivers these supplies to health centres. We also work to strengthen the supply chains themselves, so life-saving commodities can always be readily available for the long term in the countries that need them.

- › In 2022, UNICEF supported effective vaccine management in 14 countries. These assessments lead to multi-year improvements, including plans and investments to strengthen supply chain systems.

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 Health 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 health systems, UNICEF monitors several key indicators, as illustrated on the table below.

Area Description	Baseline (2021)	Progress (2022)	Target for 2025
Workforce Number of health workers receiving the skills and support for delivering essential maternal, newborn and child health services through UNICEF-supported programmes (cumulative)	800,000	1.2 million	1.6 million
Infrastructure Number of countries that have strengthened climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health-care facilities with UNICEF support	56	59	68
Data and digital Number of countries in which UNICEF has strengthened systems (including data) for primary health care	97	119	125
Social and behavioural change Number of countries integrating adolescent health priorities, including sexual and reproductive health, in primary health care services or through school and digital platforms	27	37	42
Quality Number of children benefiting from UNICEF-supported integrated management of childhood illnesses services (annually)	56.5 million	56.2 million	60 million
Supply chains Number of countries with a national-level stock-out of DTP or measles vaccine for at least one month	29	17	23
Governance Number of countries integrating the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases as part of primary health care with UNICEF support	16	22	30

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Spotlight on the UNICEF Health Fund

Results achieved in 2022 to ensure children's health

STRATEGY FOR HEALTH

UNICEF's work for women and children in 2022 was driven by the priorities outlined in our [Strategy for Health](#) (2016-2030).

UNICEF's Strategy for Health is aligned with the timeline of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to achieve a selection of targets by 2030. UNICEF's Health Thematic Fund is a key contributor to Sustainable Development Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Since the Sustainable Development Goals were established in 2015, we have already made progress on some indicators. For instance, the under-5 mortality rate has fallen from 45 per 1,000 lives births to 38. But we still need to accelerate progress to reach the Sustainable Development Goal target of 25.

The flexibility of thematic funds will be critical in enabling us to reach the Sustainable Development Goal targets, by providing investment for the two overarching goals of our Strategy for Health:



1. End preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths
2. Promote the health and development of all children.

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 health inequalities and achieve real, long-term results.

Thematic funding around the world

The Health Thematic Fund supported UNICEF's work globally, in three regions, and in 13 countries and territories in 2022. Here are four examples of UNICEF's work for strengthening health systems in countries that received allocations of global thematic funding.



Haiti and the Dominican Republic

In Latin America and the Caribbean, resources from the Global Health Thematic Fund were used to strengthen primary health care. On the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, funds were used to strengthen maternal and newborn care among women and children on the move. The countries received \$130,000 from the Global Health Thematic Fund each.



Marshall Islands

UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 17 health facilities with the installation of Solar Direct Drive refrigerators. This increased the storage capacity for life-saving vaccines in these facilities. Thematic funds were used to hire vehicles, boats and the technicians to transport these refrigerators to remote health facilities.



Armenia

In Europe and Central Asia our thematic funding spend supported initiatives for adolescent health. With road traffic injuries representing the leading cause of death for those between the ages of 5 and 19 in the world, UNICEF supported improving road safety in Armenia in 2022. We also supported the accelerated integration of child and adolescent mental health services into primary health care.



Solomon Islands

UNICEF supported trainings to improve interpersonal communication skills among health workers and help influence demand for vaccines among the public. So far, a total of 612,700 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered among a population of 721,000 people.

Guatemala

Juana, a midwife, visits her patient Sonia to monitor the progress of her pregnancy and provide her with advice. UNICEF's work in Guatemala was supported with \$130,000 from the Health Thematic Fund in 2022.



Progress from the pandemic in Cambodia

Sony's story

On a sweltering day in June 2022, a family of three generations of women came to a small rural grocery store. They had come to receive protection from disease, courtesy of a team of vaccinators, who had temporarily set up a one-stop shop for immunization.

Beneath a shady tree, Satha, the baby, was immunized against measles and rubella. Her mother, Pum Sony, and grandmother, Krak Nhung, received booster shots to protect them from COVID-19.

For mother and grandmother, the store-front vaccination service was a sign of progress for Mondulkiri, a remote region in the northeast of Cambodia, home to the Bunong indigenous community.

"There's more information on all vaccines, and they're delivered right here in our community," Sony said. "Before, we had to travel on 15 kilometres of dirt roads to get vaccinated at a health centre."

In 2022, UNICEF's strategic deployment of resources from the Global Health Thematic Fund to East Asia and the Pacific centered on work to strengthen primary health care and ensure continuity of essential services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this, our health programming in Cambodia was supported with \$90,005 of these flexible funds.

Of course, thematic funding also serves a longer-term vision of improving health services through system strengthening. And Cambodia has seen a lot of progress in recent years thanks to this work.

For instance, the government's response to COVID-19 has inspired innovations in communication, technology and social behavioural change that are being applied to the national childhood vaccination programme. At the start of the pandemic, the Government of Cambodia, with the support of partners including UNICEF and the World Health Organization, launched an intensive communications and social behavioural change campaign aimed at reaching the entire adult population with COVID-19 vaccines.

As a result of these efforts, Cambodia is among the countries with the highest COVID-19 vaccination coverage rates in the world, with over 99 per cent of adults protected. And now these successes are being redeployed to improve routine vaccine services for children, including measles, polio and tuberculosis.

For Sony, the improvements in routine immunization services mean that her daughter will benefit from a full range of immunizations that are supported by better registration, targeted communications and expanded integrated outreach services.

"Previously, children from poor families who couldn't afford to travel to health centres missed out on vaccinations," Sony said. "I'm so happy my children won't miss out and will be properly protected."



Cambodia

The mobile vaccine team are helping to ensure that all children can be protected from disease, even if they live far from health centres.



Cambodia

Sony shows the card her daughter received after getting her vaccines. Sony said improvements in vaccination systems in Cambodia mean that she and her daughter will not miss out.

Combating vaccine misinformation in Uzbekistan

In 2022, UNICEF allocated \$885,000 from the Health Thematic Fund to programmes in Europe and Central Asia. The funds were spent on strengthening health services to improve equity in access to timely quality health services, to improve the resilience of health systems and advance emerging programme areas. This work has a particular focus on adolescents, ensuring they reach their full potential in terms of health, well-being and development.

Uzbekistan was one of the four countries in the region that received funding, with an allocation of \$100,000. In the country, UNICEF is supporting a vaccine programme with a particular focus on adolescent girls.

Nargiza received her first HPV vaccine shot at her school when she was 16. At the time a doctor visited her school to tell her and other students that the vaccine would protect them from cancers and assured them of its safety.

"I remember there were rumours that your fertility could be impacted, but I understood that the purpose of vaccines is to prevent disease," Nargiza said. "I had no doubts about receiving the shot."



Uzbekistan

A health worker prepares a vaccine in Uzbekistan.

Nargiza disregarded myths and put her faith in scientific facts. Now aged 26, Nargiza is making sure her whole family is guarded against preventable illness, through vaccines given to her children at the prescribed ages. While her daughters, aged 2 and 4, aren't ready to have the HPV vaccine, they have received all their other vaccinations in good time with few side effects.

But not everyone is as committed to vaccination as Nargiza. Despite the HPV vaccination's critical importance in guarding against life-threatening cancers and the proven safety of these and all other vaccines in medical use, a phenomenon of "vaccine hesitancy" remains. This fear of accepting a vaccine is founded on misinformation and myths, which are dangerous to the individual, the community and to countries as a whole.

UNICEF and our national partners are fully committed to bridging these gaps.

In addition to establishing 'cold chains' that ensure vaccines stay at optimal temperatures during shipping, storage and delivery to hospitals, UNICEF and the Ministry of Health are taking vital steps to ensure every eligible citizen receives all the vaccines they need.

UNICEF, together with the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in Uzbekistan, works to raise public awareness of vaccine-preventable diseases. Partner organizations have developed a range of informative materials to support healthcare providers in communicating with parents and caregivers. Those materials help medical staff answer frequently asked questions.

Moreover, TV shows, radio programmes and public service announcements aired through national and regional channels, encourage parents to trust immunization services and protect children from preventable diseases. This social and behavioural change work is a vital part of our system strengthening approach, which relies heavily on thematic funding.

"Vaccines train our bodies, train our immune systems to be ready to fight illness. This is what I tell people who don't want to get vaccinated," Nargiza concludes. "All people should vaccinate their children and themselves. It's our best protection."

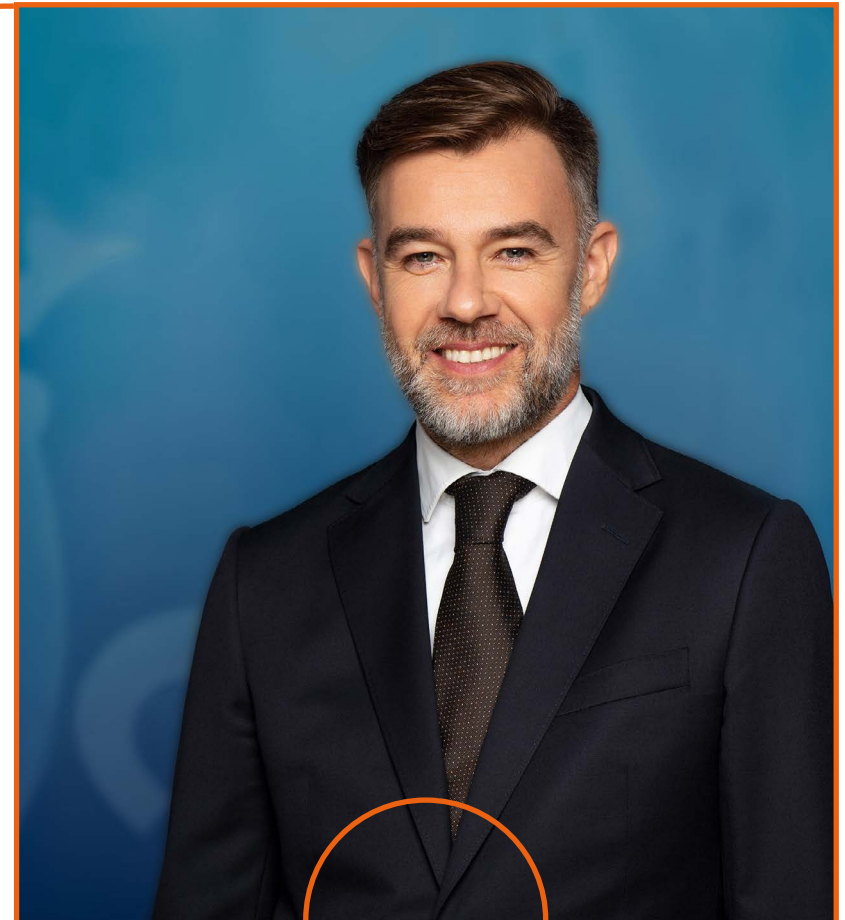
Hearing from our donors and partners

Luxembourg is UNICEF's biggest supporter of global flexible funds for health

In 2022, the Government of Luxembourg was the largest contributor to the Global Health Thematic Fund. Their generous donation of \$645,161 represented over 30 per cent of the total funds received. The importance of this support is reinforced by the fact that Luxembourg was the only public sector contributor to the Global Health Thematic Fund in 2022.

"The main objective of Luxembourg's development cooperation is to contribute to the eradication of poverty, while promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability," said Franz Fayot, Luxembourg's Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs, in 2022. "The survival and well-being of children is a key element of this commitment. Together with UNICEF, Luxembourg fights for the right of every child and youth to grow up healthy, strong and safe."

Looking forward, UNICEF's chief priority for the remainder of this Strategic Plan period (2022-2025) is strengthening primary health care. This vital system strengthening work relies on the flexibility that only the Global Health Thematic Fund can provide. So, the continued support of the Government of Luxembourg will be critical, as well as fresh support from other public sector partners.



"Our continued multi-annual flexible funding allows UNICEF to react where needed, when needed, and to strive towards young child survival and development," said Franz Fayot, Luxembourg's Minister for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs.

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for every child