



Girls play in the yard of a UNICEF-supported girls' primary school in Basra, Iraq.

unicef 
for every child

Humanitarian Action for Children

Iraq

HIGHLIGHTS

- More than 25,000 Iraqis in northeast Syria, of whom 64 per cent are children and 26 per cent women, are expected to return to Iraq; UNICEF is supporting the return and reintegration of these children and women, who have acute protection, health and education needs.
- In areas that were affected by the 2013–2017 conflict in Iraq, unmet needs persist for more than 1 million internally displaced people; girls and women in particular have urgent needs for protection, and for education. A transition to government-led coordination and service provision has been partially completed; however, a public financing crisis may create gaps in services.
- At the same time, especially in southern Iraq, communities face a rapidly evolving water crisis, which has displaced families and affected services for children.
- UNICEF is requesting \$41.2 million in 2024 to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families affected by multiple crises, especially returning children and families from northeast Syria, along with internally displaced children and those in extremely water-stressed areas.

KEY PLANNED TARGETS



29,202

children/caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support



300,000

children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning



15,827

children and adolescent returnees from AI-Hol accessing rehabilitation and reintegration services

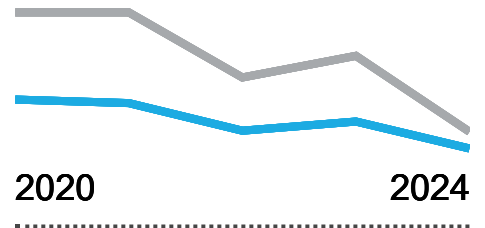


52,141

People reached by WASH in health care facilities and learning environments

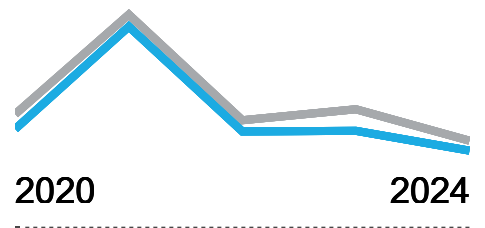
IN NEED

1.1 million people¹ **649,170 children**²



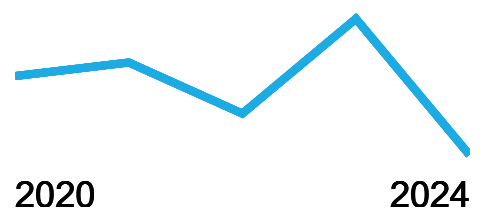
TO BE REACHED

572,393 people^{3,4} **349,170 children**⁵



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US\$41.2 million



HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Humanitarian needs linked to the 2013–2017 conflict in Iraq persist, further compounded by emerging challenges linked to a changing climate. Authorities have taken over many services supporting displaced people, yet the transitions for protection and education remain incomplete. With the fiscal crisis in the Kurdish Region of Iraq, there is a risk of loss of services for internally displaced people. In federal Iraq, all camps were closed in 2023. However, 1 million people are unable to return to their communities; they live instead in informal settlements, many of them in female-headed households in a situation where the child poverty rate is 55 per cent and one in three children is anaemic. Despite reconstruction efforts, humanitarian needs in Iraq remain, especially for returnees in remote, disputed areas with few services. Overall, 3 million people, including 1.3 million children, have humanitarian, education and protection needs, especially adolescent girls and young women, who are at the greatest risk of violence, exploitation and abuse. Female-headed households without male guardians are particularly vulnerable.

In 2024, one of the greatest challenges facing Iraq will be water scarcity driven by climate change, which is leading to decreased groundwater levels and reduced flows in major rivers.⁷ Overall, nearly 740,500 people need WASH services, including those facing severe water scarcity in the southern governorates, along with those facing cholera risks. Water shortage in schools especially affects adolescent girls. Iraq is the world's fifth most vulnerable country to climate change.⁶ Particularly in southern Iraq, communities face rapidly evolving water shortages, which are displacing families and affecting services.

The return of 25,000 Iraqi citizens from northeast Syria continues. Ninety per cent of these returnees are children and women. Children have suffered severe child rights violations and multiple deprivations in Al-Hol camp in the Syrian Arab Republic and have received little education while living in a violent environment. Returnees from Al-Hol arrive at Jeddah 1 Rehabilitation Center in Iraq, where UNICEF supports education, child protection, WASH and health and nutrition services; this is followed by reintegration support in communities of return. Access to civil documentation is critical for the returnees' journey; without documents it is difficult for children to access essential services and return to communities. Women without male guardians find it particularly difficult to obtain documents. Currently, UNICEF is a co-chair with the Government at the national level, coordinating the return process from northeast Syria.

SECTOR NEEDS



34,170

Children in need of health and nutrition services⁸



221,990

Children in need of protection services⁹



600,000

Children in need of access to education¹⁰



740,514

Children needing access to safe water¹¹



73,000

Adolescents and youth returnees from al-Hol camp¹²

STORY FROM THE FIELD



In the heart of the Baharka camp for internally displaced people, the Barzani Namr School is offering summer catch-up and remedial classes. Hala Adam, a sixth-grade student says, "The summer classes helped me a lot, especially in mathematics which used to confuse me. Now, I really enjoy solving problems and working with numbers."

Hala's family was among the countless victims of ISIS, fleeing their home and seeking refuge in multiple locations and finally in the Baharka camp. Supported by Germany through KfW Development Bank, these catch-up lessons teach core school subjects and also help children build resilience skills to better face life challenges.

A girl walks by a colourful wall at the Barzani Namr School in the Baharka camp for internally displaced people, in Erbil, Iraq.

UNICEF's multi-pronged humanitarian strategy in Iraq focuses on delivering humanitarian services to vulnerable children, providing reintegration support to returnees and contributing to peacebuilding and strengthening national systems to meet the longer-term needs of the Iraqi people.

As Iraq transitions from receiving humanitarian assistance to meeting the needs of its population through government services, UNICEF's humanitarian actions align with the triple nexus humanitarian–development–peace approach outlined in the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. UNICEF supports the transition from humanitarian assistance to a longer-term gender-responsive and inclusive development approach, notably by supporting government-led humanitarian coordination and response.

Multisectoral reintegration support is especially needed for families returning from northeast Syria. This will include peacebuilding for communities for reintegration of sometimes highly stigmatized children, along with mainstreaming accountability to affected populations.

In 2024, protection will remain central to UNICEF's response in Iraq. UNICEF will adopt a holistic/multisectoral case management approach, integrating gender-based violence response and prevention. Access to relevant gender-sensitive and inclusive mental health and psychosocial support services and legal assistance will continue. UNICEF will also support specialized programming for responding to and preventing gender-based violence and integrating related risk mitigation measures into programmes. Creating a permanent solution for educating young Syrian refugees will be a policy priority in addition to providing support to schools and teachers.

UNICEF will continue to provide gender-responsive WASH services for displaced people where government services have not taken over and will strengthen existing water systems in areas of water scarcity. Using a systems strengthening approach, UNICEF works closely with the Government to create sustained access to health and nutrition services, including antenatal and postnatal care especially for teenage mothers, and to immunization, nutrition screening, counselling and management of malnutrition. Gender and disability-inclusive programming will address the special needs of women, girls and boys and people with disabilities. Risk communication and community engagement will promote positive behaviour change.

UNICEF will support the financial access of vulnerable households to essential commodities while facilitating their transition to the government's social safety net. Capacity building of government and civil society partners, including women- and girl-led organizations, will be done to identify, prepare for and respond to crises/shocks. Emergency preparedness activities will address the impacts of water scarcity and the response to epidemics and disease outbreaks, including cholera. Preparedness work will enhance the Government's capacity to respond to other potential emergency events. This strategy complements the durable solutions components in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iraq.

Progress against the latest programme targets is available in the humanitarian situation reports: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/iraq/situation-reports>



Health and nutrition¹⁷

- **6,030** children vaccinated against measles, supplemental dose
- **34,170** children 0-59 months vaccinated against polio, supplemental dose
- **34,170** children 6-59 months screened for wasting
- **341** children 6-59 months with severe wasting admitted for treatment
- **12,060** primary caregivers of children 0-23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling¹⁸
- **6,030** Newborns children reached through the home-care visit program



Child protection, GBViE and PSEA¹⁹

- **29,202** children, adolescents and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- **39,375** women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention and/or response interventions
- **630,000** people with safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel who provide assistance to affected populations
- **15,827** Children and young people returning from AL Hol camp that received child protection services



Education²⁰

- **300,000** children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning
- **200,000** children receiving individual learning materials
- **53,000** teachers and facilitators trained in basic pedagogy and/or mental health and psychosocial support
- **15,827** children and adolescent returnees from Al-Hol accessing rehabilitation and reintegration services
- **52,141** People reached by WASH in health care facilities and learning environments



Water, sanitation and hygiene

- **380,756** people accessing a sufficient quantity and quality of water for drinking and domestic needs
- **140,919** people accessing appropriate sanitation services
- **52,141** children using safe and appropriate WASH services in learning facilities/safe spaces



Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)

- **700,000** affected people (children, caregivers, community members) reached with timely and life-saving information on how and where to access available services²¹
- **20,000** people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms
- **50,000** people sharing their concerns and asking questions through established feedback mechanisms



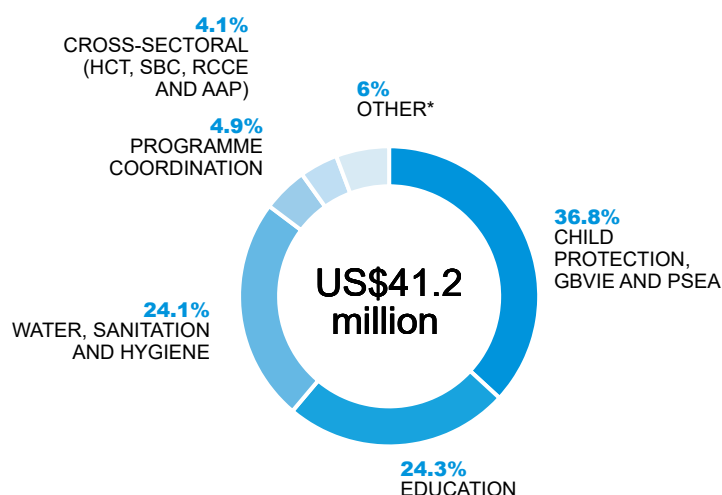
Adolescents/youth

- **500** Young people completed the Life Skills and Citizenship Education Programme (LSCE)
- **500** children and adolescents accessing skills development programmes
- **300** people engaged in reflective dialogue through community platforms

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2024

In 2024, UNICEF is requesting \$41.2 million to meet the acute humanitarian needs of vulnerable children and families affected by protracted conflict and water scarcity. The child protection response is the largest component of the country's appeal, comprising 38 per cent of the appeal amount, followed by education and WASH. Overall, funding requirements are 47 per cent lower in 2024 compared with 2023, reflecting the integration of displaced populations into government services, particularly WASH. The funding requirement includes multisectoral assistance and reintegration support (including health and nutrition support) for returnees from Al-Hol camp. It also covers the response to the impact of water scarcity on the most vulnerable populations. Support to displaced children and host community education remains an area that is critical to burden-share with the Government and for which UNICEF will maintain support during the transition.

UNICEF requests timely, multi-year and flexible funding to support its national partners to deliver improved and sustainable services. This is also vital to ensuring a transition where services can be sustained while national capacity – including budgetary capacity – is ramping up. Without sufficient and timely funding, UNICEF will be unable to support the delivery of essential services for vulnerable children and families in Iraq, and in particular protection services, which have no other provider.



Sector	2024 requirements (US\$)
Health and nutrition	1,362,550
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	15,164,800 ²²
Education	10,000,000 ²³
Water, sanitation and hygiene	9,929,735
Cross-sectoral (HCT, SBC, RCCE and AAP)	1,700,000 ²⁴
Adolescents/youth	1,000,000
Programme Coordination	2,000,000 ²⁵
Total	41,157,085

*This includes costs from other sectors/interventions : Health and nutrition (3.3%), Adolescents/youth (2.4%).

Who to contact for further information:

Sandra Latouf
Representative, Iraq
T +964 782 782 0216
slatouf@unicef.org

Lana Wreikat
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), a.i.
T +1 212 326 7150
lwreikat@unicef.org

June Kunugi
Director, Public Partnerships Division (PPD)
T +1 212 326 7118
jkunugi@unicef.org

ENDNOTES

1. The number of people in need is comprised of 414,688 adults in need of WASH services; 34,170 newborn children in camps in need of health and nutrition; 600,000 school-age in need for education; and 25,000 returnees from Al-Hol camp. This is based on UNICEF field office collaboration with local governments and with other United Nations agencies. For the numbers of the returnees and internally displaced persons, figures from the International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix were the source of information.
2. The number of children in need is comprised of 34,170 newborn children in need for health and nutrition; 600,000 school-age children in 10 governorates in need of education; and 15,000 children returning from Al-Hol camp.
3. The number of people to be reached is based on adults (56 per cent) of the highest response target of WASH (232,225); vaccination targets for children under age 5 (34,170), the highest target of education for school-aged children (300,000) and 25,000 returnees from northeast Syria. The number of women/girls to be reached is 50 per cent of the total number of people to be reached. The population with disabilities is estimated at 5.6 per cent of the population to be reached. This estimate is based on the National Disability Survey 2016. UNICEF is not targeting the whole population in need; the Government and other partners will reach the remainder. With increased government services reaching internally displaced people and areas of return, the total number of people to be reached by UNICEF will decline over time.
4. UNICEF is committed to needs-based targeting, which means covering the unmet needs of children; and will serve as the provider of last resort where it has cluster coordination responsibilities.
5. The number of children to be reached is comprised of the highest target of education for school-age children (300,000), vaccination targets for children under age 5 (34,170) and 15,000 returnee children from northeast Syria. The number of women/girls to be reached is 50 per cent of the total number of people to be reached. The population with disabilities is estimated at 5.6 per cent of the population to be reached. This estimate is based on the National Disability Survey 2016. UNICEF is not targeting the whole population in need; the Government and other partners will reach the remainder. With increased government services reaching internally displaced people and areas of return, the total number of people to be reached by UNICEF will decline over time.
6. World Risk Report 2022, available at <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/worldriskreport-2022-focus-digitalization>>.
7. According to the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Young People in Iraq (UNICEF Iraq), pp. 6 & 7: "...groundwater accounts for 7 per cent of the water used nationally, though it accounts for 65 per cent of potable water in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The water table has already fallen significantly and groundwater recharge from surface water from the river systems, and rainfall along the aquifer recharge basin, will be affected by climate change. Surface water is the primary source in the rest of Iraq, mainly from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. However, the discharge rates of the two rivers in Iraq has decreased over time, from over 2,500 m³/s before 1973 to below 1,500 m³/s on the Tigris and below 1,000 m³/s on the Euphrates. This is due to changes in precipitation and evaporation, and upstream dams in Türkiye, Syria and Iran."
8. These needs refer to needs in camps and areas of return. This number is comprised of the number of newborns and children who need immunization services, plus, in terms of nutrition needs, the number of children in need of growth monitoring/screening of children under age 5 years, those who require community-based infant and young child feeding counselling and those who require treatment for severe wasting.
9. Children in camps, informal settlements and returnees from Al-Hol camp.
10. This includes the education in emergencies interventions in GESP in eight governorates, encompassing 200,000 displaced children and 400,000 returnees.
11. Includes 175,514 people in the southern governorates who are affected by climate change, 543,500 people in camps and areas of return and 21,000 returnees from Al-Hol camp.
12. The adolescents and youth who return from Al-Hol camp, and those in areas of return.
13. 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.
14. UNICEF is committed to supporting the leadership and coordination of humanitarian response through its leadership or co-leadership of cluster coordination for the WASH, Nutrition and Education Clusters and the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. All cluster coordinator costs are included in sectoral programme budgets.
15. UNICEF is committed to empowering local responders in humanitarian crises in a variety of ways. The revised Core Commitments made investing in strengthening the capacities of local actors in the humanitarian response a mandatory benchmark for UNICEF action. A more localized response will improve humanitarian action and is fundamental to achieving better accountability to affected populations.
16. Beyond the UNICEF targets for these interventions, other humanitarian partners are expected to reach the remaining children/families in need.
17. The focus will be on the children in camps and areas of return.
18. In 2024, health section activities will focus on camps only.
19. The reduction in child protection targets is due to the focus on internally displaced people; and a reduction in scope that reflects the transfer of activities to the Government.
20. As part of the UNICEF Iraq Country Office transition strategy and with the need for durable solutions for people in need, UNICEF is supporting the Government to enable it to extend education services to those who require them.
21. The population targeted is higher than the total number of people/children to be reached because the target includes mass media outreach.
22. The total budget for gender-based violence interventions is \$5.6 million and the total budget for child protection is \$9,564,800.
23. There is a decrease in education funding requirements compared with 2023 because work in 2024 will build on what was achieved in previous years.
24. Accountability to affected populations and social and behaviour change interventions have an integrated budget of \$1.2 million and gender in emergencies has a budget of \$500,000.
25. The programme coordination budget line includes UNICEF coordination and support to emergency preparedness at the central and governorate levels, with a focus on climate change.