

NIGERIA

Country Programme
2023-2027



UNICEF is working to ensure the rights of every child in Nigeria, especially the most excluded, so they can survive, thrive and learn in a safe and sustainable environment. Supporting systems that alleviate poverty and provide access to quality health, nutrition, water, sanitation, education and protection services enables children to reach their full potential.

Our joint programming approach with other United Nations agencies, government partners, civil society organizations and NGOs utilizes child-sensitive programming to reduce vulnerabilities and address climate change and disaster risks.

Our focus includes:

- States and local government areas where children face the greatest deprivations
- Areas vulnerable to climate-related shocks
- Remote rural and urban poor areas where the hardest-to-reach children reside
- Generating and promoting gender-disaggregated and local-level evidence and data on children
- Providing service delivery while strengthening systems to ensure sustainability
- Innovation and technology for effective social service delivery

Situation for children in Nigeria	
102 million children	live in Nigeria making up 49% of the population nearly half of all children live below the poverty line
#2	for stunting and mortality of children under age five
1 in 4 children	are out of school 10.2 million are of primary age 8.1 million are of secondary age 2.1 million are Almajiri children
1.4 million children	suffer from severe acute malnutrition
1.7%	GDP is allocated to WASH, leaving a 64.1% gap for improved rural sanitation
43% of children	under age five have not had their births registered

Over the life of the
Country Programme (2023 -2027)

UNICEF seeks to mobilize

US\$845 million

to support women
and children in Nigeria.



HEALTH: Maternal and child mortality, routine immunization and primary health care

Challenges

- The uptake of routine immunizations is still poor, with only one in three children fully vaccinated and 2.5 million zero-dose children
- One of every two babies are delivered in a health facility highlighting an urgent need to scale up interventions and increase skilled birth attendance
- Despite declines of 34% for under-five child mortality, 33% for infant mortality and 19% for neonatal mortality from 2003 to 2018, Nigeria still carries the highest burden of under-five deaths, the second highest rate of newborn deaths and about 11% of the total global burden for neonatal mortality
- The annual maternal mortality rate is 512 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births
- Despite being free of wild polio for three years, the threat of vaccine derived polio is increasing due to the disruption of services at health facilities and scheduled polio campaigns
- Risks of disease outbreak due to climate and conflict-related emergencies are moderate to very likely

Priorities

- **Immunization:** Increase coverage and reduce inequalities (zero-dose); improve vaccine logistics management; eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus and sustain polio-free status
- **Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health:** Support the expansion of health workers; reduce maternal and neonatal mortality and ensure quality care
- **Primary health care:** Support system strengthening, leadership, governance and universal health coverage
- **Public health emergencies:** Support preparedness and rapid response to public health outbreaks

Results by 2027

- **Over 1 million additional zero-dose children** are immunized
- **15,000 additional community health workers** are trained
- **Over 1,700 primary health care facilities** (out of 3,476) in 14 states meet primary health care minimum standards
- **25 health care facilities** have functional Level-2 newborn units
- State and national capacities are strengthened to prepare and respond to public health emergencies

Nutrition: Prevention and treatment of malnutrition, breastfeeding and supplements

Challenges

- Malnutrition is a direct or underlying cause of 45% of all deaths in children under five
- 37% of children experience stunting yet only 2 out of 10 children affected are reached with treatment; states in northern Nigeria are the most affected by stunting and wasting
- Approximately 68% of children under five are anaemic
- While 12% of women of childbearing age are thin about 30% are overweight and obese
- Just 34% of babies are exclusively breastfed during their first six months of life
- Only 12% of children aged 6–23 months are fed the minimum acceptable diet
- High rates of malnutrition pose significant public health and development challenges for the country

Priorities

- **Diets and practices:** Ensure behaviour change strategies and nutrition messaging that support optimal nutrition practices at household and community levels
- **Enabling environment:** Support evidence-based decision-making, at-scale financing for prevention and treatment of malnutrition, and partnerships for strengthened policies
- **Strategies:** Support the First 1,000 Days campaign; prevent, integrate and scale nutrition; increase programming in North West Nigeria
- **System strengthening:** Support the development of health, food and social protection systems and the integration of nutrition services and commodities; ensure the availability of shock responsive cash transfers

Results by 2027

- **50 million children** (80% of children aged 6–59 months) receive vitamin A twice a year
- **16.5 million children** (50% of children aged 6–23 months) are fed a minimum diverse diet
- **12.5 million women** (50% of pregnant women) receive more than 90 iron-folic acid tablets or multiple micronutrient supplements
- **5 million infants** (50% under 6 months) are exclusively breastfed

By 2027, UNICEF aims to provide

4 million women and
**10 million primary
caregivers**

of children aged 0-23 months
with defined packages
for nutrition counselling.



WASH: Water-borne disease, open defecation and climate resilience

Challenges

- 73% of the diarrhoea and enteric disease burden is associated with poor access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene and is disproportionately borne by poorer children
- 70,000 children under five die of diarrhoea annually contributing to 18% of the under-five mortality rate
- Frequent episodes of WASH-related ill-health in children contribute to malnutrition and absenteeism in school
- 28% of the population does not have access to an improved drinking water source and 22% of the population defecates in the open
- Funding for the sector remains weak and, despite low family income, significant household contribution is needed to eliminate open defecation

Only 14% of schools and 7% of health facilities have access to basic WASH services

Priorities

- **Enabling environment:** Strengthen mechanisms for sector policies, plans and strategies; support knowledge management and evidence generation
- **Institutional WASH:** Support multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral collaboration and access to climate-resilient and equitable WASH services in schools and health care facilities
- **Safely managed WASH services:** Leverage government and private sector resources and capacity; ensure climate resilient, equitable and safe water supply and service delivery
- **WASH practices:** Support sustained national and subnational open defecation free campaigns, social behaviour change and innovative sanitation and hygiene promotion

Results by 2027

- **5 million people** have access to basic sanitation services
- **2 million people** have access to basic water supply services
- **5,000 community WASH committees** monitor progress and advocate for community use and maintenance of WASH facilities
- **500 schools and 250 primary health care facilities** have access to basic WASH services

EDUCATION: Access, quality and learning

Challenges

- 73% of children aged 7–14 do not demonstrate foundational reading skills and 75% are not equipped with foundational numeracy skills; rates are lowest in the North West at 10% and 9%
- Only 39% of the poorest girls attend primary school and 15% attend junior secondary school
- Retention and transition rates remain low; each year, 5.9 million children enter primary school but only 2.4 million remain by the end of junior secondary school
- Significant gaps in infrastructure and capacities exist, with only one junior secondary school for every five primary schools and a deficit of 168,000 qualified primary teachers and 6,700 junior secondary teachers
- Protracted conflict and insecurity have left schools vulnerable with 25 schools attacked and 1,470 learners abducted in 2021 and over 1 million children afraid to return to school

Priorities

- **Access:** Develop and expand models to reach out-of-school children and ensure their completion of school; create systems of credible alternative pathways
- **Enabling environment:** Advocate for and support education financing, inclusive education and climate change education
- **Learning:** Support early childhood education, foundational literacy and numeracy and skills development
- **System strengthening:** Improve the education information system and use data for decision-making

Results by 2027

- **10 million children** have access to formal or non-formal education
- **4.8 million children** have access to learning materials and 21 states scale up foundational literacy and numeracy learning
- **22 states** use integrated data systems for sector planning
- **12 states** have improved adequacy, efficiency and equity in education finance



Despite increased allocations, Nigeria's spending on education is **only 1.9% of GDP** which is substantially below the 4–6% benchmark.

CHILD PROTECTION: Birth registration, social norms and children affected by armed conflict

Challenges

- Only 57% of children under age five have had their births registered and even fewer have birth certificates
- Abuse is a daily reality for many Nigerian children: 6 in 10 experience some form of violence before age 18; 50% of children suffer from physical violence, and 25% of girls and 10% of boys experience sexual violence
- Nigeria has the largest number of child brides in Africa with more than 23 million girls married as children; by 2030 this is predicted to increase by 1 million
- Nigeria is ranked third in the world for female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); 15% of girls and women aged 15–49 years in Nigeria have undergone the procedure
- The economic burden of child marriage totaled 4,018 billion NGN (US\$12.4 billion) in 2019, accounting for 2.76% of the country's GDP
- Providing child-focused assistance to vulnerable children and their families is challenging; Nigeria has one social worker per 20,000 people and documentation for professional social work training is lacking
- 11,707 grave violations incidents were verified and documented from 2018–2021

Priorities

- **Child affected by armed conflict:** Ensure the protection of children and that grave violations monitoring, reporting and response mechanisms are in place
- **Legal identity:** Advocate for civil registration laws and ensure the availability of free, decentralized universal birth registration
- **Social norms:** Support positive social norms and behaviours to protect children; support legislative and policy frameworks and a movement to end FGM/C
- **System strengthening:** Support the social workforce, community-based child protection structures, integrated case management services and a specialized justice system

Results by 2027

- **40 million children** have their births registered
- **5 million people** are engaged through community platforms to eliminate harmful practices and 1.5 million girls and women access prevention and protection services for FGM/C
- **4 million children** have quality preventive and responsive child protection services
- **200 local government areas** (26%) have specialized police desks and skilled staff to provide child protection services
- **100% of UNICEF-targeted boys and girls** who have exited armed groups receive specialized reintegration services

SOCIAL POLICY: Child poverty, social protection and public spending

Challenges

- Almost half of Nigeria's 102 million children live below the national poverty line including 59% of rural children and 23% of urban children
- 66% of rural children and 30% of urban children are multidimensionally poor
- Married and pregnant girls suffer higher multidimensional poverty (74%) compared to never married or pregnant girls (45%)
- Health, education, sanitation and housing are the highest overlapping dimensions of poverty
- Health insurance coverage is 5% in the formal sector and 3% in the informal sector, despite 77.5% out-of-pocket health expenditures
- Gender inequality is pervasive in Nigeria and manifests through limited access to education and health facilities, political representation, access to and control over land, and limited or no access to credit facilities, technology and income opportunities

Priorities

- **Child poverty:** Develop evidence on the situation of girls, boys, adolescents and women
- **Local governance:** Support risk-informed, child and gender-sensitive state development planning and ensure the participation of girls and boys in these processes
- **Public financing:** Increase public investment in key sectors that impact girls, boys and women
- **Social protection:** Ensure protection mechanisms and coverage are in place for girls and boys, including in humanitarian contexts

Results by 2027

- **15 states** have mechanisms to provide routine measurements of monetary and multidimensional child poverty and risk informed development plans
- **18 states** have updated social protection policies and 16 states have functional social registers
- Support the government to increase its share of public spending on health, education and/or social protection sectors from 3–5% to 5–7%
- **Over 40 million children** are covered by social protection systems

Thank you for your support. For more information please contact:

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