




OUTCOME AREA 5

A young South Sudanese refugee (right) in Rhino Camp settlement, Uganda, cares for her younger siblings after losing her parents to conflict, supported by informal foster care and child protection services that help safeguard unaccompanied and separated children. © UNHCR/Yonna Tukundane

Child protection

Children represent 40% of all forcibly displaced people UNHCR works with and for. In conflict and displacement, they face heightened risks of family separation, violence – including sexual violence and abuse – child marriage, trafficking, and recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups. Despite significant funding cuts, UNHCR operations prioritized supporting forcibly displaced children, including asylum-seeker and refugee children in mixed and onward movements. UNHCR works with families and communities to protect children, and with governments to promote refugee-inclusive national child protection systems and strengthen child-friendly protection and solutions.

Core output indicator

 **1.4 million** children and caregivers received child protection services from UNHCR and partners in 69 countries, a 4% decrease from 2024. Among them 82% were refugees and asylum-seekers, 9% returnees, 8% IDPs and 2% others.

Key results

- UNHCR worked with government institutions and partners to make child protection systems more inclusive. In Bangladesh, collaboration with the Department of Social Services helped double the number of complex cases involving children being processed through the Best Interests Procedure.
- In Ethiopia, the adoption of the Civil and Family Registration Proclamation facilitated the registration of 19,500 births, achieving 62% coverage among children under five.
- In Yemen, UNHCR supported 1,400 children through the Best Interest Procedure and placed all identified unaccompanied and separated refugee children in alternative care.
- UNHCR supported child-friendly protection and solutions, including through the route-based approach. In Spain, UNHCR helped improve asylum decisions and trained 300 professionals on the regional protocol for identifying children in need of international protection.

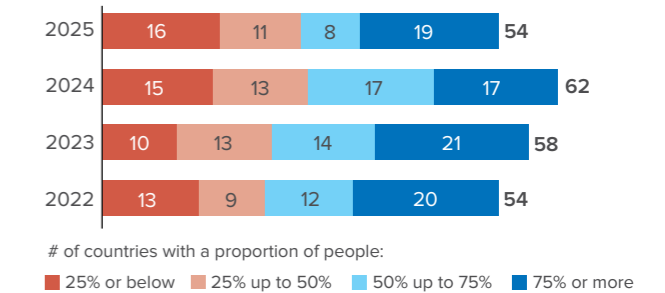
- UNHCR and UNICEF established cross-border Standard Operating Procedures for case management to facilitate the case transfer of Afghan children at risk returning from Pakistan to Afghanistan to ensure continuity of care and protection.
- In South Sudan, UNHCR supported nearly 49,000 children through the Best Interest Procedure. In Lebanon, UNHCR supported 7,000 children, and 92% of children and caregivers reported that their situation improved after the intervention.
- Alternative care arrangements ensured the protection of unaccompanied and separated children while family tracing and reunification were pursued in Chad and Sudan.
- UNHCR-backed community-based child protection structures and parenting programmes formed the backbone of prevention efforts in Bangladesh, Chad and Uganda, reaching over 157,000 parents, para-social workers, caregivers and others.
- Adolescent programming – including life skills and sport for protection– strengthened resilience and reduced exposure to harm in South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda, reaching over 256,000 refugee children and adolescents.

Challenges

Progress on child protection was constrained by funding shortfalls and challenging operating environments. Reduced funding forced UNHCR to prioritize and scale back some of its core child protection services, including Best Interests Procedure, alternative care for separated and unaccompanied children and other critical services. In many contexts, national child protection systems lacked the capacity, resources and coverage to meet growing needs. Insecurity and access restrictions also limited regular engagement with displaced children and their communities. Together, these factors placed significant pressure on protection responses and limited UNHCR's ability to sustain quality child protection services at scale.

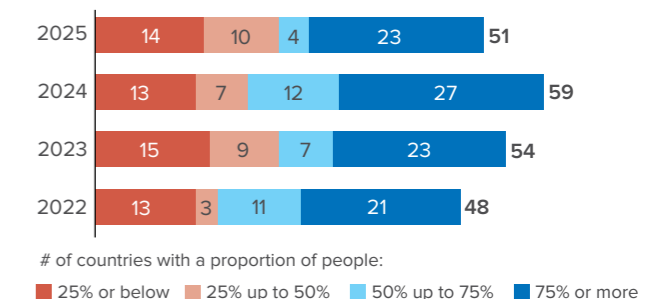
Core outcome indicators

Proportion of children at heightened risk who were supported by a Best Interests Procedure



In 2025, 19 of 54 reporting countries (35%) indicated that more than 75% of refugee children at heightened risk are supported by a Best Interests Procedure by UNHCR and partners, an improvement from 17 of 62 countries (27%) in 2024. High coverage was reported in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Italy, Mexico, Niger and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Proportion of unaccompanied and separated children who are in an alternative care arrangement



23 of 51 reporting countries (45%) indicated that more than 75% of unaccompanied and separated refugee children were placed in alternative care arrangements, similar to 27 of 59 countries (46%) in 2024. High coverage was reported in Bangladesh, Chad, Lebanon, Pakistan and Türkiye.

Financial overview

Global expenditure and budget for Child protection

- With the funds available, UNHCR could spend **\$76 million** towards budgeted needs of **\$224 million**.
- **29% decrease** in expenditure compared with 2024
- **\$147 million** of unmet needs or **66%** of the budget.
- **34%** of total expenditure under this outcome area, or **\$26 million**, was funded by flexible funding, including **\$17 million** of unearmarked funding.

Child protection: largest operations by expenditure

These operations accounted for **\$28 million** or **37%** of global expenditure for this area in 2025

