



OUTCOME AREA 12

Refugees in Sudan's White Nile State access UNHCR's solar-powered water systems, which are transforming daily life for more than 400,000 refugees and host community members. © UNHCR/Antonia Vadala

# Clean water, sanitation and hygiene



Reliable access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is essential for health and dignity. In the context of a 22% reduction in expenditure in 2025,

UNHCR prioritized lifesaving interventions, maintaining existing critical water infrastructure and making targeted investments in water system optimization. Deprioritized operations and maintenance activities impacted particularly on the longevity of sanitation infrastructure. Ongoing coordination with authorities, humanitarian and development partners, private sector and communities facilitated the processes of transition of WASH services into national systems.

### Core output indicator

UNHCR supported **6.8 million** refugees and asylum-seekers to access to water and/or sanitation services across 25 countries, a 6% decrease from 2024.

### Key results

- In Sudan, despite the ongoing conflict, UNHCR worked with local authorities to progressively link camp-based water services with state systems while upgrading water infrastructure, supporting reliable water supply for nearly 800,000 people.
- In Uganda, UNHCR supported the transition of refugee water systems to national utilities, with over 10% of systems under direct utility management by the end of 2025.
- UNHCR expanded waste-to-energy projects in sanitation. In Bangladesh, 10 material recovery facilities processed more than 10,000 cubic meters of solid waste, producing compost and recycled plastic products for refugees and host communities.
- In Mauritania, a faecal sludge treatment and valorization site for toilets was established in collaboration with the government and World Bank, aimed at converting sludge into fertilizer to support reforestation activities.

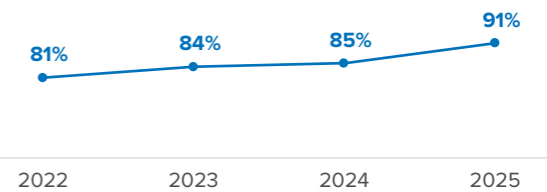
- UNHCR helped make WASH systems more resilient to the impacts of climate change. In Chad and Malawi, UNHCR piloted managed aquifer recharge to diversify water sources and make supplies more reliable.
- In Bangladesh, Cameroon and Nigeria, smart water sensors contributed to enhanced groundwater monitoring for short-term operational effectiveness and longer-term safe extractions of water.
- [Project Flow](#) solarized its first five boreholes in Mauritania and began solarization works in Ethiopia and Rwanda with country operations repaying the solar investments through fuel cost savings.
- UNHCR solarized 27 boreholes in Chad, Ethiopia, Niger, Pakistan and Uganda, cutting an estimated 1,300 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, lowering operational costs and reducing reliance on fuel deliveries.

### Challenges

Underfunding amid growing needs required difficult trade-offs, with operations prioritizing immediate lifesaving WASH services at the expense of maintenance. Climate change, ageing infrastructure, high population density and capacity gaps added further pressure, weakening the sustainability and resilience of water and sanitation services. This underscored the need for predictable, longer-term investment and strengthened partnerships. Many operations supported newly arrived people during ongoing emergencies while working with budgets equal to, or smaller than, those in 2024.

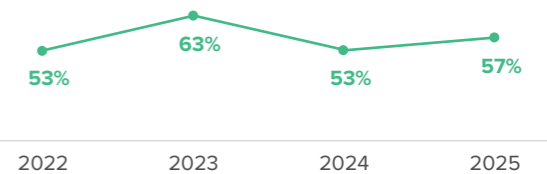
### Core outcome indicators

#### Proportion of refugees and asylum-seekers using at least basic drinking water services



In 2025, 91% of refugees and asylum-seekers had access to basic drinking water services across 32 countries, up from 85% in 2024, reflecting the prioritization of resources for this lifesaving activity. Coverage remained high in Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. However, the progress was uneven across settlements, with notable decreases in Cameroon and parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

#### Proportion of refugees and asylum-seekers with access to a safe household toilet



In 2025, 57% of refugees and asylum-seekers had access to a safe household toilet across 28 countries, up from 53% in 2024, reflecting gradual progress in household-level sanitation. Coverage exceeded 85% in several countries, including the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Access remained lower in dense, emergency or space-constrained settings, including Bangladesh, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Niger and Sudan, where urgent needs limited investment in durable sanitation systems.

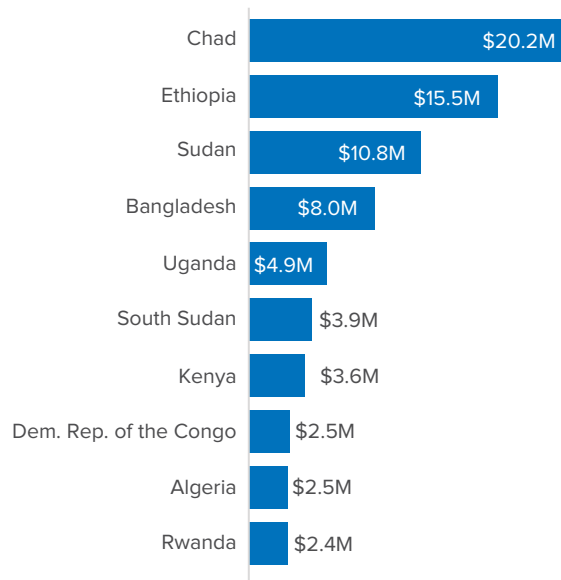
## Financial overview

### Global expenditure and budget for Clean water, sanitation and hygiene

- With the funds available, UNHCR could spend **\$86 million** towards budgeted needs of **\$241 million**.
- **22% decrease** in expenditure compared with 2024
- **\$155 million** of unmet needs or **64%** of the budget.
- **32%** of expenditure under this outcome area, or **\$28 million**, was funded by flexible funding, including **\$13 million** of unearmarked funding.

### Clean water, sanitation and hygiene: largest operations by expenditure

These operations accounted for **\$74 million** or **87%** of global expenditure for this area in 2025



### Band Aid Charitable Trust sustains life-saving support for refugees in Ethiopia



© UNHCR/Sona Dadi

Band Aid Charitable Trust deepened its long-standing partnership with UNHCR, delivering critical assistance to refugees and host communities in Ethiopia. Band Aid’s support played a vital role in maintaining and expanding WASH services, to prevent disease outbreaks and safeguard public health in overcrowded refugee settings. In the Ura refugee settlement, expanded water systems increased supply from 9 to 18.5 litres per person per day, while targeted infrastructure upgrades raised sanitation coverage in Ura and Sherkole by 42%, enabling more refugees to access latrines and improving safety, especially for women and girls. As a steadfast partner, Band Aid Charitable Trust enables UNHCR to save lives, ensure dignity and deliver critical assistance where it is needed most.