



**THE
CHILD
NUTRITION
FUND**

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WHAT IS THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND?

The Child Nutrition Fund (CNF) is a new financing mechanism designed to accelerate the scale-up of sustainable policies, programmes and supplies to end child wasting.

WHY DO WE NEED A CHILD NUTRITION FUND?

Because child wasting is a tragedy. In 2022, an estimated 45 million children under five years of age were suffering from wasting in early life. About 30 per cent of them require therapeutic feeding and care. Wasting is one of the most critical threats to child survival, growth and development. However, despite two decades of progress in reducing child malnutrition globally, the number of children with wasting is rising due to a perfect storm of increasing inequities, conflict and climate-driven crises.

Because child wasting is preventable. When nutritious diets, essential nutrition services, and positive nutrition and care practices are available to children and women, wasting does not happen as seen in entire regions, countries and continents. However, scaling up access to nutritious diets, essential nutrition services and basic supplies to prevent, detect and treat child wasting early cannot be achieved – as is often the case – with only short-term funding, for only the treatment of severe wasting, and only in emergencies.

Because we can and must act fast. The current global and national responses to child wasting are woefully inadequate, particularly in high-prevalence, high-mortality settings. We can and must transform how we protect children from life-threatening wasting in early life. And this transformation starts with a fundamental shift in the way global and national responses to protect children from wasting in early childhood are financed and implemented.

WHO IS THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND FOR?

The CNF is designed to support government-led efforts in a selected number of countries that carry some of the highest numbers and/or proportion of children under 5 years of age with wasting.

As such, the CNF will support government-led efforts in countries that have developed operational roadmaps as part of the United Nations Secretary-General's Global Action Plan (GAP) on Child Wasting. As of today, the GAP includes the following **23 countries**: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Burkina

Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Timor-Leste and Yemen.

WHAT ACTIONS WILL THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND SCALE UP?

The CNF is designed to support the scale-up of **five essential government-led actions** for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting in early childhood, as described in the GAP, recognizing that implementing partners may need to support the direct delivery of these interventions during humanitarian crises. These five actions, selected based on their proven impact, scalability, and cost-effectiveness, are:

1. Support for exclusive and continued breastfeeding in the first two years of life, with responsive feeding, stimulation and care, including adequate counselling and support to caregivers and families.
2. Adequate complementary foods, with micronutrient supplements (i.e., vitamin A) and home fortification with micronutrient powders, including timely and quality counselling and support to caregivers and families.
3. Weight gain monitoring, nutrition counselling, micronutrient supplements (multiple micronutrient supplements or iron folic acid), deworming prophylaxis, and malaria control for women, particularly during pregnancy.
4. Early detection of child wasting using mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measurement and treatment with ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) through community-based programmes, with adequate training, supervision and referral.
5. Food supplements for young children under 5 years of age (i.e., small-quantity lipid-nutrient supplements) and for women, particularly those who are pregnant and breastfeeding (i.e., balanced energy-protein supplements).

HOW WILL THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND ADD VALUE?

The CNF aims to improve the coordination and transparency of financing for child wasting by offering UNICEF and its partners a range of tools designed to achieve three specific goals:

Goal 1. Incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of global resources to essential programmes and supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

Goal 2. Incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of domestic resources to programmes and essential supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

Goal 3. Ensure greater availability, accessibility and timeliness of essential supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC CHALLENGES THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND IS TRYING TO TACKLE?

With respect to Goal 1: Incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of global resources to programmes and essential supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

- The lack of adequate global funding and the lack of information about the funding that is available and where it is most needed. The CNF will strengthen the resource allocation process by regularly publishing information on the need for, availability of, and expenditure of those resources.
- General food assistance cannot on its own prevent child wasting. Actions to prevent child wasting needs to focus on the nutrition needs of young children, who are at highest risk. Funding for essential nutrition actions for children and women has plateaued in the last five years.
- Funding for child wasting is mostly linked to humanitarian response, making it unpredictable and fragmented. Furthermore, this funding is typically directed to treatment-only programmes, and mostly for the procurement of RUTF, creating major programme gaps and inefficiencies.

With respect to Goal 2: Incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of domestic resources to programmes and essential supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

- The primary responsibility for meeting children's right to proven solutions for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting is and must remain with national governments.
- The domestic resources currently available to support these proven solutions are wholly inadequate, with only a fraction of national GDPs invested in the services and commodities required to meet the demand in these countries.
- No global financing mechanism has been put in place to incentivize national governments to increase the allocation of domestic resources to policies, programmes and supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting in a sustainable manner.

With respect to Goal 3: Ensure greater availability, timeliness and accessibility of essential supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

- The unpredictable funding for essential nutrition supplies like RUTF and preventive supplements (e.g., vitamin A, micronutrient powders, small-quantity lipid-nutrient supplements) for children means these supplies cannot be produced at the volume needed for national systems to make substantial improvements for children.
- A similar negative impact is seen on essential preventive nutrition supplies for women, particularly multiple micronutrient supplements and balanced energy-protein supplements, which cannot be produced and delivered timely enough to make a positive difference for women and children.
- The producers of these essential commodities have historically been given little coordinated support to ensure that they can play their critical role and can manage the challenges presented by fluctuations in the demand for their products.

HOW DOES THE CHILD NUTRITION FUND TACKLE THESE CHALLENGES?

The CNF aims to reach these three goals through working in partnership with governments and investors on coordination and advocacy and using **three windows** that aim to incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of global and domestic resources to essential programmes and supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting:

- A. The Programme Window** is designed to increase the amount of global funding available for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting, and ensure that resources prioritize evidence-based actions across the continuum of prevention-detection-treatment. It does so by: 1) identifying investment needs; 2) developing robust investment propositions; 3) tracking global allocations against needs; 4) monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of allocations; and 5) using this information to identify key investment gaps and advocating for a reprioritization of partner contributions.
- B. The Match Window** is a catalytic one-to-one matching mechanism that allows national governments to double their investment in essential services and supplies for the prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting to the extent (upper limit) of the funding available in the Match Instrument. Funding for the procurement of essential nutrition supplies (both domestic funding and match funding) must include funding for the implementation of the programme that will deliver the supplies.
- C. The Supplier Window** offers a range of financing tools to support producers of essential nutrition supplies in delivering their commodities in the amounts required and in a timely manner to point of use. This includes pre-financing tools to enable producers of essential nutrition supplies to increase the volumes they produce; financial options to facilitate access to loans from local financial institutions; and improved visibility on demand.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITY ACTIONS IN 2022–2023 TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?

To respond to the negative impact of the global food and nutrition crisis on child nutrition in 2022–2023, the inception phase of the CNF has focused its attention on mobilizing support for the rapid scale-up of essential actions for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting in the worst affected countries.

To demonstrate that national governments are able and willing to invest domestic resources to address child wasting, the Match Window has focused on allocating much of its resources for RUTF. The instrument was able to match an initial \$US6 million or more in domestic resources in seven countries – Cambodia, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Uganda. In Mauritania, for example, the CNF enabled the government to cover 75 per cent of the RUTF needs for 2022 and 100 per cent in 2023. Meanwhile, the Financing Window launched a new tool capable of pre-financing up 30–70 per cent of all RUTF orders to help producers manage the unprecedented strain from short-term demands for RUTF. This provided producers with much needed capital to purchase raw materials, increase production shifts and put in place other measures to ramp up production and reduce delivery times for these essential supplies.

In 2023, the CNF will continue to work with partners to mobilize the funds needed to complete the scale-up of essential actions in countries affected by the global food and nutrition crisis.

The CNF will aim to ensure that the Matching Window is sufficiently resourced to meet growing demands for essential nutrition services and supplies – beyond RUTF – for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

Further, the CNF will continue to support pre-financing measures whilst developing new tools to support producers in expanding production capacity and improving visibility and predictability of essential supplies for prevention, detection and treatment.

WHAT ARE THE PRIORITY ACTIONS IN 2024–2025 TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS?

Treatment-only approaches to child wasting are not aligned with UNICEF's child rights-based approach to programming, nor are they sustainable. Sustainable approaches to child wasting must prioritize prevention, which explains why the SDG target for child wasting is to prevent wasting (i.e., reduce the prevalence of child wasting), and – in doing so – reduce the number of children in need of treatment.

In 2024–2025, the CNF will embark on its most ambitious two-fold goal to improve global and national governance for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting:

- 1.** Work with global partners to mobilize higher levels of funding to address child wasting and re-prioritize these higher levels of funding towards essential services and supplies for the early prevention and detection of child wasting. In doing so, we aim to improve the nutrition of women and mothers and to reduce the number of children who die or become chronically undernourished due to wasting in early childhood.
- 2.** Work with national partners to increase domestic resource allocations for essential services and supplies for the prevention and early detection of child wasting. To do so, the CNF will link goal 1 and goal 2 of the CNF, increasing global allocations for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting (Goal 1) and placing them in the Match Instrument to incentivize, increase and prioritize the allocation of domestic resources to child wasting (Goal 2). The CNF will also deploy dedicated technical expertise in a range of contexts to support national governments with fiscal planning to make multi-year commitments towards essential services and supplies for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting.

Hence, 2024–2025 will signal the period of maturity of the CNF, where the Fund will primarily contribute to improving global, national and local governance for the early prevention, detection and treatment of child wasting, increasing the commitment and accountability of both global and national decision makers and partners towards sustainable solutions to child wasting.

In 2024–2025, on the essential supplies front, the CNF will aim to stabilize demand forecasting for treatment (i.e., RUTF) and shift its attention to supporting production of essential supplies for the prevention of child wasting.

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