



**INTERNATIONAL
PROGRAMME
REPORT 2024**

SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND

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This report serves as the 2024 annual programme report to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland for programme-based support. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the ministry.

The names of children and caregivers have been changed to protect their identities.

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Cover photo:
Queen is one of the mothers participating in the Safe Families positive parenting training programme implemented in Zambia.
Photo: Save the Children

OUR 2030 AMBITION FOR CHILDREN

Save the Children is working to deliver a shared vision for 2030, focused on three breakthrough goals:

SURVIVE:



By 2030, no child will die from preventable causes before their fifth birthday

LEARN:



By 2030, all children learn from a good-quality basic education

BE PROTECTED:



By 2030, violence against children will no longer be tolerated

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ABBREVIATIONS

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CCM	Community case management
CFS	Child-friendly space
ChP	Child participation
CO	Country office (of Save the Children International)
CP	Child protection
CPIMS	Child Protection Information Management System
CRBP	Children's rights and business principles
CRG	Child rights group
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSSP	Child-sensitive social protection
DG INTPA	Directorate-General for International Partnerships
DLC	Digital learning centre
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development (the Philippines)
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EiE	Education in emergencies
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GBV	Gender-based violence
HF	Humanitarian Fund (of Save the Children)
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IP	International Programme
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau ('Credit Institute for Reconstruction')
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (Zambia)
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland)
MFA-PBS	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Programme-Based Support
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MIS	Management Information System
MOLSAF	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Somaliland)
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCD	Organisational capacity development
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
PSSNP	Productive Social Safety Nets Programme
SC	Save the Children
SCC	Somali Cash Consortium
SCF	Save the Children Finland
SCI	Save the Children International
SCT	Social Cash Transfer (Zambia)
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SOP	Standard operational procedure
SP	Social protection
UCT	Unconditional cash transfer
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (the office of)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

FOREWORD

The year 2024 was a dangerous, disruptive and frightening year for children. The struggles children face include losing their homes, schools and loved ones due to devastating conflicts, violence, drought and hunger. It should never have to be this way.

However, despite all the challenges that children have faced, with the support of our donors, supporters and partners, we were able to make incredible strides for them and their universally recognised rights in 2024. In our working and funding environment, we managed to implement the programmes well. For example, there was a 78% increase in our total reach figures and there were strong financial figures: the overall expenditure of our International Programme in 2024 was 36.47 million EUR, which was 52% of Save the Children Finland's total expenditure in 2024. Other highlights include a new partnership with the World Bank in two countries and the facilitation of scaling up of our programme contents with local and national governments in several countries. The results measured in 2024 exceeded many targets, as will be shown in this report.

As the development sector navigates ongoing disruption, ranging from shifting donor priorities to the dismantling of major funding institutions, organisations like Save the Children must think differently and innovatively about how we sustain our impact. To reinforce the behaviour change of duty bearers and to sustain results, we also need future long-term funding and responsive and responsible national governments both in the south and north. As the results shown in this report highlight, sustainable changes require time, resources and commitment.

Anne Haaranen
Global Programme Director,
Save the Children Finland

1. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME TOTAL REACH IN 2024

690,423 children reached (64% of them girls)

447,013 adults reached (55% of them women)

25 projects supported¹

9 main programme countries²

36.47 million EUR expended for the benefit of children



1 The overall figure includes all active awards in 2024, also those closed during Q1 or in countries not related to Save the Children Finland anymore or awards with non-cost extensions.

2 Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Bhutan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine, Zambia.

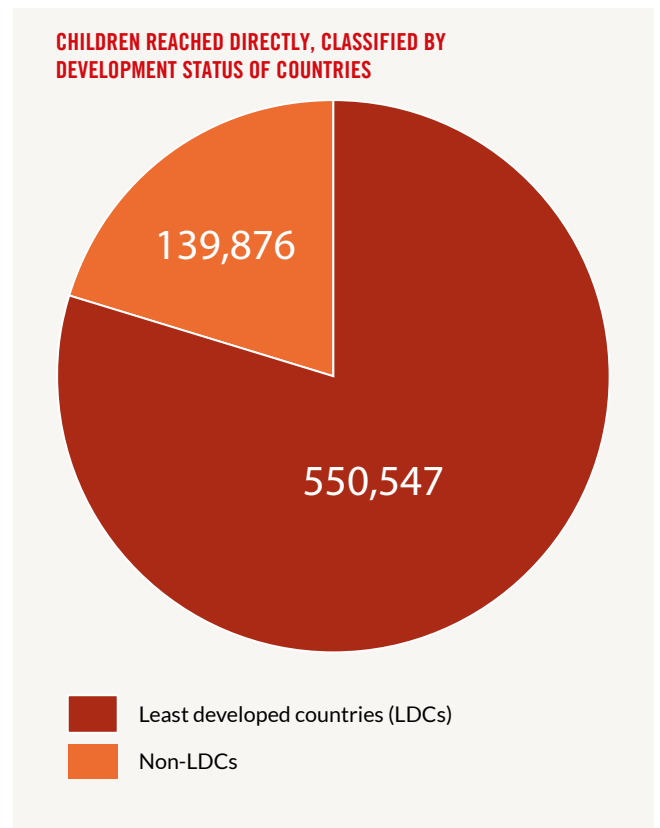
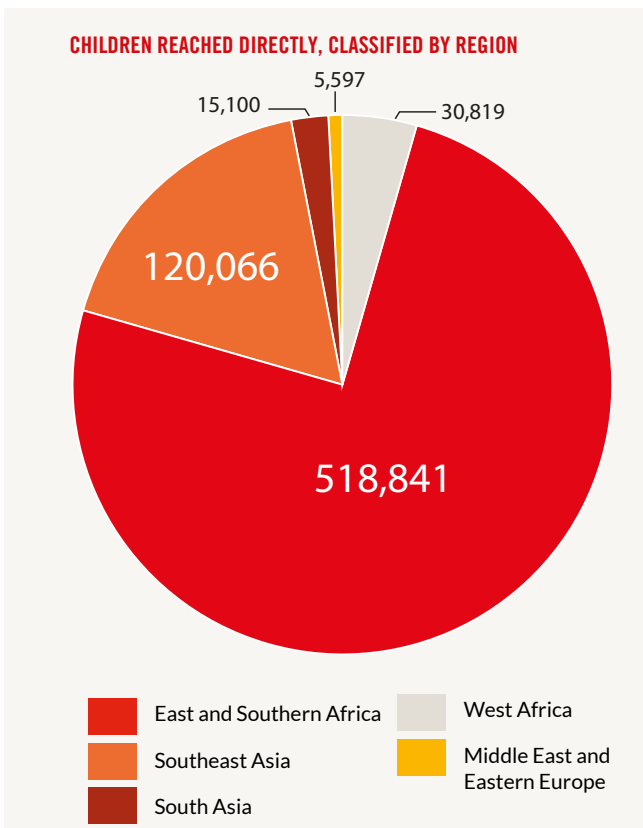
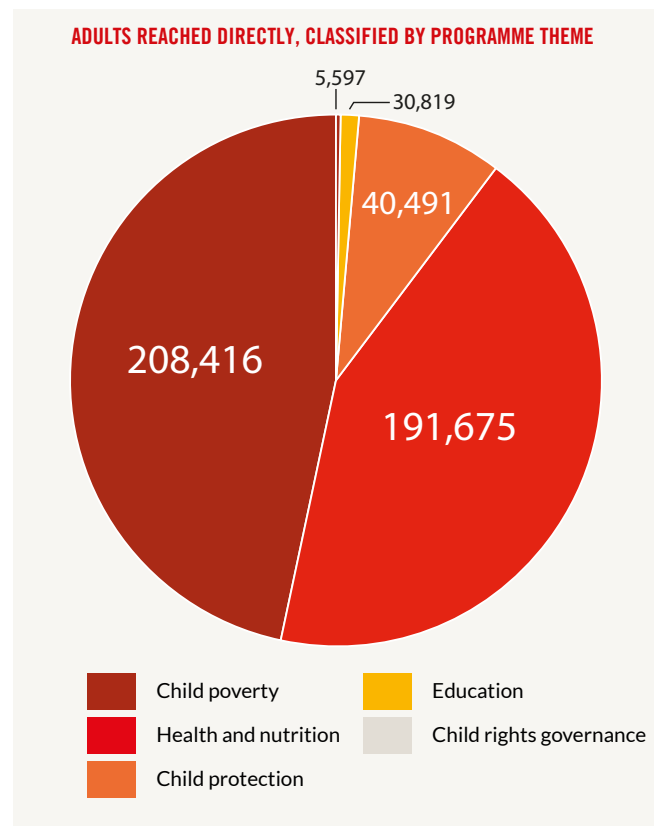
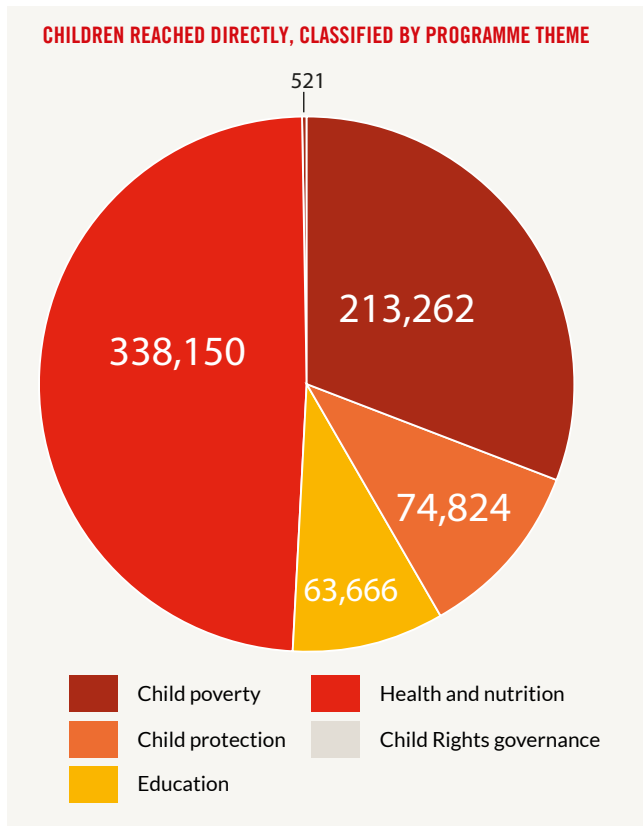


Figure 1-4: Programme direct reach in 2024

2. A SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR 2024

This *Save the Children Finland International Programme Report 2024* provides a comprehensive overview of the organisation's efforts to improve the lives of children across the programme countries, focusing on the results contributing to the strategic goals and programme outcomes in child protection (CP), education, health and nutrition, and social protection (SP). The report refers to the third year of the 2022–2025 programme period.

In 2024, Save the Children Finland (SCF) reached a total of 690,423 children and 447,013 adults across nine main programme countries, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Bhutan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine and Zambia. This marks an around 78% increase in the reach figures compared with the previous year. The main reason for this growth lies in the more successful implementation of the projects in Sudan despite the ongoing war, in the scaling up of the SP programming in the Philippines and Nepal, and in increasing the beneficiary numbers of the Safe Families training sessions in the CP projects in Africa. Also, the results measured in 2024 exceeded many targets, as will be shown in this report, although for several outcome indicators next round of data collection will follow in 2025.

In Sudan, Save the Children (SC: meaning SCF and the Save the Children International Country Office [CO]), together with partners, managed to operate in 13 out of the 18 states despite the ongoing war and challenging operational context. We provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and communities trapped in conflict zones. Through EU-funding from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA), SC delivered essential health and nutrition services to 233,940 vulnerable people, significantly improving food consumption scores from 38% to 52% and providing treatment for malnutrition to 10,338 children. Additionally, we supported the informal and formal education of children, ensuring that 56,839 children continued to have access to learning despite the near collapse of the formal education system. In Somalia,

with the humanitarian funding of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), SC provided emergency cash transfers and CP services to 675 vulnerable households in Galmudug State, improving household dietary diversity scores from 3% to 68%. ECHO and UNICEF-funded Somali Cash Consortium which SC is part of, also played a crucial role in providing unconditional cash transfers (UCTs) to meet the immediate needs of 19,221 vulnerable households. SCF also supported Ukraine, where six digital learning centres (DLCs) were established with MFA humanitarian funding to improve children's access to remote learning and where psycho-social support, and essential learning equipment and materials were provided to almost 4000 vulnerable children.

SCF also channelled 2.8 million EUR of humanitarian funding, mostly from private donors, to support Ukraine and Gaza and other humanitarian global responses through the SC Humanitarian Fund (HF), which is a global mechanism for distributing flexible funding to immediate humanitarian responses.

In 2024, 91% of SCF-supported projects met with the child participation (ChP) criteria, ensuring that children receive relevant information, that their feedback influences decisions and that they are informed of the impacts of the projects. ChP was particularly fostered through supporting child rights groups (CRGs) and child-friendly safe spaces (CFSs), implementing child-led research or applying digital means for feedback sharing.

The CP programming funded by MFA Programme-Based Support (MFA-PBS) and contributing to our Strategic Goal 3, 'Life Without Violence' aims to strengthen protective family environments and support communities in Africa in preventing and responding to exploitation, abuse and violence against children. Significant strides in improving public CP services were documented in 2024. Satisfaction levels among children and caregivers regarding the formal and informal case management services provided in their respective areas exceeded targets in all four African countries, reaching 96% in Burkina Faso, 85% in Côte d'Ivoire, 93% in Somaliland and 88% in Zambia. The Safe

Families Common Approach promoted positive, non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices, empowering children to protect themselves from harm and challenging harmful gender norms. Of those children whose caregivers had participated in Safe Families training sessions, 75% reported improved psychosocial well-being, surpassing our target of 52%. However, only 33% of caregivers reported only using non-violent discipline methods, while at the same time we identified room for improvement and fine-tuning of the data collection method. We managed to address the gap of responding better to the child survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) through additional training, supervision and coaching, which then resulted in improved ChP and better problem-solving and decision-making during the development and implementation of case management plans. In Somaliland, for example, 27% of the supported cases were SGBV survivors.

In 2024, we collaborated with local and national governments in Asia and Africa to enhance access to existing SP programmes. In Nepal, SCF supported municipalities and wards in four districts, enabling 17,473 more people to access the government social assistance programmes like the Child Grant and Disability Allowance. The municipalities also allocated their own funding for the Child Grant Plus (parenting) programme, which indicates potential for wider scaling up. In the Philippines, 29 local governments in the Province of Samar adopted SCF's approach to increase SP access, mapping beneficiaries and advocating for improved benefits. In Zambia, SCF's efforts in the Copperbelt Province supported to a 56% increase in SP beneficiaries, mainly due to emergency cash transfers. Altogether more than 33,000 caregivers continued to be integrated into the child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) parenting component across Asia and Africa. In Nepal, most of the impact assessments are due in 2025, but qualitative data from 2024 shows that Child Grant Plus parenting programme improved the parenting behaviour that is crucial for children's development. In Zambia, the 'cash plus' approach combined a parenting programme and life-skills package, significantly enhancing children's social and emotional learning. In the Philippines, the

steps towards the national scale-up of the CSSP parenting programme were taken through further training social workers, making the current network of facilitators nationwide. This means that in the future, the parenting programme will be provided to all four million households receiving the government SP benefit (through the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme [4Ps]).

Following the recommendations of our previous year's midterm stocktaking, we enhanced the cross-cutting themes of gender equality and disability inclusion during the year. This was done through incorporating family budgeting and dedicated gender equality sessions into parenting in CSSP programming and in CP. A key achievement was the increased engagement of male caregivers in Safe Families sessions in Somaliland and Zambia. Many reported a better understanding of children's needs and rights, and of the father's role in supporting positive parenting. In 2024, efforts were intensified to address the persistent underreporting of SGBV. In Burkina Faso, 11 children with disabilities were supported through individualised care plans and foster care; in Côte d'Ivoire we facilitated access to protection services for 97 children and 381 adults with disabilities and 371 duty bearers were trained on disability-sensitive case management. Collaboration with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) supported participation in parenting sessions and CRGs.

SCF continued implementing its localisation policy, increasing its partnerships and engaging with various local actors – including child and youth groups, women's groups and government actors – to advocate for child rights and strengthen SP and CP systems. SCF worked closely with national-level authorities, municipalities and local councils to integrate child sensitivity and quality elements into public SP and CP programmes and continued strategic partnerships with civil society organisation (CSO) partners in Nepal, Zambia and Burkina Faso, focusing on improved organisational policies and sustainability.

3. SCF PROGRAMME COUNTRIES: THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXT AND THE PROJECTS

3.1. East and Southern Africa

Sudan

Since the outbreak of war in Sudan in April 2023, the country has been facing one of the world's fastest-growing humanitarian crises. Over 30.4 million people, including 16 million children, now require urgent humanitarian assistance. Ongoing violence has forced more than 12.4 million people to flee their homes, including 2.8 million children under five years old, making Sudan the largest child displacement crisis globally. Children are disproportionately affected by the ongoing crisis. Over 17 million children are being deprived of their fundamental rights to safety, nutrition, healthcare and education. The CIVICUS Monitor continues to rate Sudanese civil society conditions as repressed.

The collapse of Sudan's healthcare system and ongoing attacks on health facilities have left over 20 million people in need of medical care, including 7.4 million IDPs. Less than 25% of health facilities remain functional in the worst-affected areas. During the crisis there have been 141 verified attacks on health facilities. The national vaccination rate has dropped from 85% before the war to about 50% in early 2025, leaving children highly vulnerable to preventable diseases. Around 3.7 million children, including 750,000 under five, suffer from acute malnutrition. In total, 4.9 million children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women require urgent nutrition support – a 22% increase since early 2023. High levels of food insecurity, displacement and limited humanitarian access are driving malnutrition rates even higher.



Baby Sara* was the first baby born at Save the Children's mobile health clinic in Gedaref. Her mother Asma was displaced by the conflict in Sudan and spent two months on the move before arriving at the Reception Center in Gedaref. Photo: Mussab Hassona / Save the Children

Ninety per cent of school-age children lack access to formal education since more than 80% of schools remained closed for a second consecutive year, and many schools are destroyed, occupied by armed groups or used as shelters for displaced families. In addition, as of late 2024, 3200 schools (17%) were counted to host displaced families, further limiting children's access to schools. Although efforts to reopen schools are ongoing, less than 20% of schools reopened by the end of 2024, primarily in what were then safer areas, such as the Red Sea State, the River Nile State and the Northern State.

Children are among those most impacted on by the violence and displacement. Over 27,000 people have been killed since the conflict began, including thousands of children. Children face grave risks of recruitment by armed groups, sexual violence, family separation and child marriage as families resort to desperate coping mechanisms. Girls, although more likely to remain with their families, are at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and psychosocial distress while boys are more frequently found among unaccompanied and separated children, exposed to exploitation and abuse.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN SUDAN:

- Four humanitarian projects, conducted in partnership with ECHO, provided crisis-affected vulnerable children and families with improved access to lifesaving and life-sustaining health and nutrition interventions, disaster risk reduction, shelter, non-food items, education in emergencies (EiE), CP, cash interventions, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. The MFA co-funded two of these projects by supporting SCF's self-financing share.
- 'Inclusive Quality Education for the Most Vulnerable Children in Sudan', funded by the EU's DG INTPA, targeted 83,000 children through formal and non-formal education and was implemented by a consortium led by SC.

Somalia and Somaliland

During 2024, Somalia continued to face a protracted and complex humanitarian crisis, characterised by a convergence of factors, including political instability, on-going conflicts and the escalating impacts of climate change (primarily taking the form of recurring droughts and floods). This multifaceted crisis has led to widespread displacement and left millions of Somalis in a state of vulnerability. The economy continued to depend heavily on remittances from the diaspora which is crucial for sustaining livelihoods but makes it vulnerable to external economic fluctuations. The CIVICUS Monitor continued to rate Somalian civil society conditions as repressed due to limitations on peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

The political and security situation in Somalia was characterised by uncertainty. Political conflict between the Federal Government of Somalia, Jubaland and Puntland continued following disagreements on an election modality to replace the indirect clan-based voting system with universal suffrage. The armed conflict between the Somali Security Forces and Al-Shabaab continued, although with slightly reduced violence. At the same time, the clan

conflicts kept over 250,000 people displaced and killed more than 600. However, displacement was also driven by severe flooding linked to the El Niño phenomenon, which caused above-average rainfall during the two rainy seasons in the country. Flooding forced people to flee and also severely damaged infrastructure and essential services.



Jamila*, 13, lives in one of the camps for internally displaced persons in Hargeisa, Somaliland. Through the CSSP project, Jamila* and her siblings could attend school for the first time. "For me, education is not just about learning; it is a beacon of hope, a chance for a better future." Photo: Save the Children

During the year, 6.9 million people reported themselves to be in need of humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian crisis had a devastating impact on CP, putting children at risk of various forms of exploitation including, GBV, trafficking and recruitment to armed forces. Conflict remained a significant source of grave violations against children, with 1930 incidents recorded between January and September 2024, impacting on 1478 children. Displacement further exacerbated the risks faced by children, especially on food consumption and inadequate assistance.

In Somaliland, holding its self-declared status as a republic, the fourth presidential elections were held in November after being postponed for two years, and the opposition candidate, Mr Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, took office after his win in December. Until the elections, the implementation of the Child Rights Act (2023) continued, the long-awaited Somaliland National Anti-FGM Policy was signed, and the Somaliland Social Protection Policy was officially launched. These legal and policy frameworks mark significant gains for child rights in the country and have all received significant technical support from SCF.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN SOMALILAND:

- An MFA-PBS-funded CP project aims to strengthen CP systems and provide high-quality response and prevention services, as well as providing parenting and child training sessions.
- An MFA-PBS-funded CSSP project aims to establish and strengthen SP systems by enabling vulnerable children and their families to access child benefits, complemented with strengthened child and gender sensitivity through cash-plus approaches.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN SOMALIA:

- The MFA humanitarian funding contribution enabled vulnerable IDP and host families in Galmudug State to receive emergency cash transfers, as well as CP services (such as individual case management) and training for non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices.
- In the ECHO-funded Somali Cash Consortium SC and INGOs implement UCTs in order to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable households recently displaced by an acute crisis.
- With German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) back donor funding for UNICEF, SC implemented a cash transfer component in alignment with the national Baxnaano SP programme for pregnant and lactating women in the Mudug region of Puntland.

Zambia

In 2024, the most severe drought in decades marked the overall socio-economic context in Zambia heavily, affecting 15.5 million people, over half of them children. The drought had devastating consequences for many sectors – such as agriculture, water provision and energy supply – risking the national food security and the livelihoods of millions. In addition, during the first half of the year the cholera outbreak continued, and 23,221 cases were reported along with 740 deaths – lead-

ing to the closing of schools in many areas. The CIVICUS Monitor rates Zambian civil society conditions as obstructed due to restrictions on public gatherings and freedom of expression, especially when linked to opposition parties.

The severe drought, a result of the El Niño weather pattern, worsened harsh weather conditions attributed in part to climate change. President Hakainde Hichilema declared a state of national disaster and, according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee out of the 9.7 million people affected by food insecurity, 6.5 million needed immediate assistance. The National Assembly approved an approximately 250-million-EUR supplementary budget allocation for the drought response, of which, more than half was directed to the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) for its Social Cash Transfer Programme. This funding provided an around six EUR emergency cash transfer top-up for the 1.3 million households already enrolled as beneficiaries of the mentioned SP programme. In the Province of Copperbelt, the project area of SCF, several thousands of households were included in this emergency social cash transfer, thereby improving their ability to meet the needs of children.



The family of Sanda (middle) has participated in the Safe Families positive parenting programme in Zambia. Our data shows, that there are positive changes, like better relationships and improved psychosocial wellbeing of family members. Photo: Save the Children

The consequences of a shock like the drought resulted in increased vulnerability to protection risks for children, especially for girls who face risks such as SGBV, teenage pregnancies and child marriages due to the negative coping strategies used by many families.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN ZAMBIA:

- The MFA-PBS-funded 'Protecting Zambian Girls and Boys Offline and Online' project supports prevention and response efforts, targeting children, caregivers and service providers in the Copperbelt Province to improve children's access to formal and informal CP services and to strengthen the legislative framework and coordination between key CP stakeholders at local and national levels.
- The MFA-PBS-funded 'Moving from Social Protection to CSSP in Zambia' project seeks to strengthen SP systems to contribute to improved child poverty and household vulnerability trends by enabling access to the Social Cash Transfer- programme (SCT); this is then complemented with strengthened cash-plus approaches. Simultaneously, the project helps to strengthen the government's capacity to be able to increase the financial allocation to CSSP interventions
- A consultancy sub-contract with the World Bank called 'Inclusion of Cash Plus Care for Vulnerable Children Affected by COVID-19 within Social Protection Programming in Zambia' supported the Government of Zambia in designing and piloting service delivery models for the inclusion of vulnerable children orphaned or affected by COVID-19 and other adversities in mainstream SP programming and cash-plus care.

3.2 West Africa

Burkina Faso

Extreme poverty, violence, food insecurity, climate disasters, GBV and early marriage affect many children in Burkina Faso. The country is ranked to be among the poorest in the world, with a very low human development index (being the 185th country out of 193). Since 2019, the violent conflict sweeping across the Sahel region has uprooted many families from their homes, disrupted children's learning and threatened their safety. As a result of conflict, climate shocks and poverty, communities are

facing a severe hunger crisis with children at risk of malnutrition. The CIVICUS Monitor continues to rate the civic space conditions in Burkina Faso as obstructed.

Ending year 2024, humanitarian needs remained high, with almost six million people in need of humanitarian assistance, but only 46% of the required funding for the national Humanitarian Response Plan was reached, leaving many people without assistance. Different adverse trends involving political, security and humanitarian factors are contributing to the worsening of the crisis. The two military coups of 2022 have led to, amongst other things, the country's withdrawal from the regional organisation, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), raising concerns about regional integration and democratic development. The government missed the opportunity to restore democratic civilian governance by postponing the elections intended for July 2024, and in December, the Prime Minister, appointed during the coup, was dismissed and replaced. Violence has spread across the western, northern and eastern regions of the country. Due to the tactics used by armed groups, areas under blockade have multiplied, making access to livelihoods and social services and the delivery of emergency assistance extremely difficult. Moreover, the exposure of children and young people to violence continues to increase. According to the latest report by the UN Secretary-General from 2023, more than 1200 serious violations of children's rights were documented. Forecasts for 2025 are even more worrying with 1.8 million children in need of protection, more than half of them girls.

The number of IDPs increased almost four-fold compared with 2019, reaching 2.1 million people (the latest, 2023 figure), being the fastest rise in the Sahel region. At the same time, growing food insecurity affected around 2.7 million people and almost half a million in the emergency phase. Although agricultural production reached 515 million tons of cereals in the 2023–2024 agricultural year and a slight increase, this stability is relative as it entails significant regional disparities, particularly in the provinces affected by violence. The country is characterised by a chronically underfunded and dysfunctional health system with shortages of medicine, essential equipment, qualified staff and a lack of engagement of the health authorities. Also, climate change and droughts have significantly worsened the ongoing crisis by exacerbating food insecurity, resource conflicts, displacement and economic instability.

Poverty and the lack of socio-economic prospects for youth, some communities' feeling of being stigmatised or marginalised by others, mistrust of the defence forces, the dissemination of messages of hatred and the influence of social media have all contributed to radicalising the already tense positions between communities. All these factors, in addition to the low capacity of basic social services to cover the needs of the population, particularly young people, further stress community dynamics and social cohesion.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN BURKINA FASO:

- An MFA-PBS-funded CP project aims at strengthening the CP systems and the provision of appropriate care for child victims, strengthening the protective family environment and supporting communities and communes in taking action in order to prevent and respond to situations of exploitation, abuse or violence suffered by children.
- The Sahel-Facility project, funded by the KfW, aims at enhancing resilience and social cohesion in the Cascades region.

Côte d'Ivoire

In 2024, the north-east of Côte d'Ivoire has been plunged deeper into an increasingly complex humanitarian crisis, intensifying an already fragile situation in these regions, which are among the poorest in the country. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 68,505 asylum seekers and refugees, mainly from Burkina Faso and Mali, were registered. This massive influx of displaced people has had dramatic repercussions on basic services, thus considerably increasing the pressure on access to protection and health services for vulnerable populations, including children. The situation is further complicated by the security risks associated with the possible infiltration of

armed groups among the displaced, as well as the reluctance of the Ivorian authorities to communicate about security incidents and humanitarian needs. The fear that the crisis in the central Sahel will spill over into the coastal countries is growing significantly. The Ivorian civil society conditions are continuously considered as obstructed by CIVICUS.

Despite the humanitarian crisis on the border areas, the economic situation did not worsen in the country in general. According to the International Monetary Fund report from 2024, growth was expected to reach 6.5%, which shows the country to be consolidating its role as an economic driver in West Africa. While inflation appeared to be slowing down, a peaceful march in Abidjan in September to denounce the increase in food and electricity prices was banned by the authorities and several citizens were arrested and sentenced to prison for 'disturbing public order'. In addition, a new order on the organisation of civil society and the corresponding draft ratification law was adopted, and this allows the authorities to exercise surveillance and control over civil society.

However, in the thematic areas of CP and SP, collaboration and information sharing between CSOs and authorities has been strong, and the interest shown by all the stakeholders prevails in achieving common goals for Ivorian children. For example, SC has been able to support



In Côte d'Ivoire, children's groups in 20 villages have been supported to advance child rights and child protection. Photo: Save the Children

the operations of the Gontougo regional CP mechanism chaired by the regional representation of the government. This mechanism supports the two CP platforms in Tanda and Bondoukou which carry out prevention and response activities for protection cases throughout the region.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2023 IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE:

- The MFA-PBS-funded project 'Towards an Inclusive, Violence-free Environment for Most Vulnerable Girls and Boys in Bondoukou' contributed to strengthening formal and informal CP mechanisms through girls' and boys' increased access to quality services in vulnerable communities, focusing on the prevention of violence.
- The MFA-PBS-funded project 'Social Protection in Côte d'Ivoire' aims to strengthen the SP system by enabling the most vulnerable children and their families to access it, complemented with a parenting programme.
- The UNICEF-funded project 'Afiba – Support for the Training and Integration of Young Girls in Bouaké and Abidjan' contributed to the employability of vulnerable young girls and women through reforming the institutional system, improving educational pathways and offering them training.

3.3. Asia

Nepal

Significant improvements have been made in child-focused policies in Nepal, and there has been increased investment in SP, education and healthcare. Despite this, children continue to face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to reach their full potential. Persisting poverty and social inequality are making it difficult for children and their families, especially those from marginalised backgrounds to access services. The state of civic

space continues to be rated as obstructed by CIVICUS due to the excessive use of force during protests and the targeting of journalists, amongst other issues.

While Nepal has made significant progress in children's school enrolment rates, issues persist in retention and in the quality of education, due to which, many children do not meet the expected level of learning achievement. Additionally, more than one million children are engaged in child labour due to poverty. Malnutrition also persists as an issue of concern as one in four children remain stunted. Thus, improving the child sensitivity of SP programmes continues to be an important means in improving child development outcomes.

Nepal is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, and multiple shocks and disasters (such as earthquakes, floods and droughts) can pose disproportionate risks to children. In September, unprecedented rainfall caused floods and landslides, resulting in casualties, damaged homes, destroyed livelihoods and closed schools in the central and eastern districts.



"The winterization tent is the first home of my newborn twins." Sandhya was seven months pregnant when the earthquake struck Nepal in November 2023. She was one of the over 5000 persons, that benefitted from the European Union funded humanitarian aid project. Photo: Save the Children

The Government of Nepal is increasingly focusing on SP at all levels. Municipalities are including these initiatives in their plans to support marginalised and vulnerable groups who are not already covered by federal and provincial programmes. This alignment has strengthened collaboration with CSOs, leading to active contribution to the 16th five-year periodic plan of the National Planning Commission which has now officially recognised SP as a key strategy for poverty reduction in the country.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2023 IN NEPAL:

- The MFA-PBS-funded 'Realising the Rights of Children through CSSP (Pahunch)' project aims to ensure that SP policies and programmes are child sensitive and result in improved development outcomes for children.
- An ECHO-funded project that is a response to the children and families affected by the Jajarkot earthquake.
- An ECHO-funded project in which SC, in a consortium led by People in Need, strengthen at-risk communities' and local and provincial governments' leadership and joint ownership in disaster mitigation, preparedness and early action using a whole-of-society approach. The MFA co-funded the project, supporting SCF's self-financing share.

The Philippines

The economy continues to remain robust and growing that can boost poverty reduction through the creation of jobs and improvements in household incomes. Economic recovery and strong SP programmes have contributed to the reduction in poverty rates. At the same time, the country is very disaster prone and remains vulnerable to typhoons and heavy monsoon rains. This is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change. CIVICUS has rated the state of civic space in the Philippines as repressed.

Girls, children with disabilities and those from disad-



Cath, 17, and her mother benefited from the Youth Resilience Program and parenting training linked to the CSSP project in the Philippines. Photo: Save the Children

vantaged communities are particularly at risk from the shocks caused by climate change and natural disasters. Children not only face disrupted learning but also exposure to exploitation and trauma. When Typhoon Kristine hit the Philippines in October, it prompted widespread evacuations, affected 805,000 families, and disrupted learning for more than 90% of the children enrolled in education. The public SP programme, the 4Ps, with which SC collaborates, played a role in responding to the emergencies caused by the typhoon (e.g. through cash assistance).

There have been concerns over activists being arrested or detained based on fabricated charges. Human rights defenders have also been 'red-tagged'. In May, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a ruling where it declared that red-tagging threatens the right to life, liberty and security. During the same month, CSOs raised concerns over the creation of the Special Committee on Human Rights Coordination that aims to answer to the human rights problems in the Philippines. CSOs raised concerns over the committee since it is led by the government agencies that failed to address human rights issues during the 'war on drugs'.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN THE PHILIPPINES:

- The MFA-PBS-funded 'Advancing Child-Sensitive Social Protection in the Philippines' project aims to increase access to SP and improve child development outcomes

Bhutan

Over the years, Bhutan has made progress in fulfilling child rights by enrolling children in school and by reducing malnutrition, under-five mortality and child labour. Despite this, many vulnerable children are excluded from access to education, health and protection. For example, nearly 18% of children suffer from stunting due to malnutrition. Bhutan has free education but being one of the most mountainous countries in the world, some schools are too far to reach, especially for children with disabilities. The civic space in Bhutan was rated as obstructed by CIVICUS due to continued concerns about media independence and access to information.

According to Human Rights Watch, independent information about human rights in Bhutan is limited, and Bhutan's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index fell from 90th place to 147th place out of 180 countries. CSOs role as independent actors of good governance and their engagement in key legislative and policy development processes has been restricted due to limited capacities and strategic partnerships, and a general lack of a collective CSO voice and representation. Although the current 12th five-year plan of the government acknowledges the need for the stronger involvement of CSOs, none of the national key result areas reflects the CSO engagement.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN BHUTAN:

- An EU / DG INTPA co-funded project aims to strengthen Bhutanese CSOs as independent actors of good governance, including supporting and empowering youth and children to claim their rights and to hold duty bearers accountable.
- SCF provided consultancy as a contracted vendor for the World Bank called 'Exploring Options to Expand Access to Childcare in Bhutan' that aimed to conducting childcare situation assessments and provide support in designing and piloting childcare models in early childhood care and development centres in Bhutan.

3.4. Support to Ukraine

The war against Ukraine, with intensified hostilities and attacks throughout 2024- increased humanitarian needs, especially near the front line. Civilians across all regions were affected, with the heaviest impact in the east, south and parts of the north. Targeted attacks on energy infrastructure drastically reduced the country's power-generating capacity, disrupting essential services such as water, gas and winter heating, impacting on homes and schools. At the end of 2024, an estimated 12.7 million people, roughly 36% of Ukraine's population, needed humanitarian assistance. and an estimated 3.6 million people remain internally displaced. More than 2400 children have died.

The war in Ukraine continued to affect the right to education for an estimated 1.6 million children. Intensified missile attacks disrupted learning for one-third of the boys and girls nationwide. Access to in-person education remained particularly challenging in the areas close to the front line and along the border with the Russian Federation. About 70% of children in the east continued to rely on remote learning. According to the government, 2000 schools have been damaged, including 371 facilities that have been destroyed. The war has affected children's emotional and psychological well-being and created psychological distress and digital fatigue. In 2024 SC opened a new office in the Sumy region to help more families at the northeastern border and operated DLCs to help children to continue learning.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY SCF IN 2024 IN UKRAINE:

- MFA humanitarian funding enabled improved access to education and psychosocial support for war-affected children through integrated response activities during the first quarter of 2024.

4. THE STRATEGIC FOCUS AND PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

Globally, SC focuses its resources on achieving three breakthroughs by 2030. All SC members and COs are accountable for their contribution to the breakthroughs, which will be delivered through strategy cycles. SCF’s Strategic Goals 2023–2024 contributed to the breakthroughs accordingly.

The expected outcomes of the SCF International Programme (IP) 2022–2025, and how they link to the overall

2023–2024 Strategic Goals are illustrated below in Table 4. Central to all programming is a focus on child rights and child development and on partnerships with local CSO and government actors. For the IP outcomes, a corresponding selection of indicators was defined in 2022 and the monitoring data of the achievement of these is illustrated in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan of the IP (see Annex 1). The relevant available data from thematic outcomes in 2024 is described under each respective

OUR AMBITION FOR CHILDREN: 2030 BREAKTHROUGHS			
<p>SURVIVE No child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday</p>	<p>LEARN All children learn from a quality basic education</p>	<p>BE PROTECTED Violence against children is no longer tolerated</p>	
STRATEGIC GOALS: What will we achieve with and for children?			
GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3	GOAL 4
Children receive the services they need in a timely manner	Children’s right to participation is enforced	Life without violence	Safety nets and resilient families
THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME 2022–2025:			
<p>OUTCOME 1: Children’s and families’ access to services has improved</p> <p>Thematic areas: Humanitarian health and nutrition, education, food security and livelihoods, CP, CSSP</p>	<p>OUTCOME 2: Improved child development outcomes and protection of children through the strengthened child and gender sensitivity of caregivers, children and the community</p> <p>Thematic areas: CP and CSSP</p>	<p>OUTCOME 3: The improved child and gender sensitivity of services, systems, policies and programmes</p> <p>Thematic areas: CP and CSSP</p>	

Table 1: The SCF strategy for 2023–2024 and the International Programme 2022–2025.

chapter in this narrative report. However, many of the outcome indicator measurements will follow, appearing during 2025, the last year of the multiyear programme in 2025.

4.1. Children and adolescents receive the services they need in a timely manner: Humanitarian projects in Sudan and Ukraine

In Sudan, despite the ongoing war and extremely difficult operational context in 2024, SC managed to run its operations in 13 out of the 18 states and, in collaboration with national and international partners, provided life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people, including recent IDPs, returnees and communities trapped in conflict zones. Through the ECHO-funded Health and Nutrition programme, life-saving health and nutrition services were delivered to 233,940 vulnerable people in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. By ensuring access to healthcare, nutrition and CP services and by providing cash assistance, we were able to increase the average percentage of households with an acceptable food consumption score from 38% to 52%. This means that an increasing number of households are consuming more diverse and nutritious food and are able to have meals more frequently. Furthermore, in 2024, we provided treatment for malnutrition through 18 health and nutrition facilities and were able to support a total of 10,338 malnourished children over the implementation period. Continuous efforts included scaling up screening, treatment and nutrition-sensitive interventions, treating children with severe or moderate acute malnutrition and screening and referring many more for treatment. In addition, safe deliveries and life-saving reproductive health support for mothers and newborns were given, despite the extreme, difficult circumstances. Across the health facilities supported by SC, a total of 2191 live births were attended by a skilled health staff, trained by the Ministry of Health. Altogether 2084 midwives were trained in safe birth practices, strengthening frontline reproductive health services across the country.

As described above, in 2024, only 20% of the schools in Sudan had reopened, primarily in safer states. As the Education Cluster co-coordinator and one of the largest education implementers in Sudan, SC played a leading role in responding to this critical challenge. Both formal and non-formal education activities were implemented to ensure continued access to learning for children, despite the near collapse of the formal education system. With ECHO funding and in a consortium with the Norwegian Refugee Council, we concluded an EiE project. A total of 1230 children were enrolled in formal and non-formal education services, while 207 teachers and parents received training to better support children's learning. Since 2022, more than 50,000 children were reached with support to meet their educational needs.

The largest education project – led by SCF and implemented by a consortium of SC, World Vision and four local partners – is funded by DG INTPA. Altogether 57,424 children in formal and non-formal education activities were reached in 2024, and 1023 teachers and parents were trained. Furthermore, 54,499 students benefited from the distribution of learning, teaching, reading and recreational materials. Their parents expressed relief and gratitude as these materials relieved financial pressure and motivated children to attend school, even during challenging times. In addition, the project also focuses on CP, which is essential for children's well-being and their ability to learn. As part of these efforts, 792 children were supported through comprehensive case management services, including identification, documentation/registration, case planning and implementation. Furthermore, 4460 partners and caregivers participated in the Safe Families training sessions on positive parenting. In parallel, 108 teachers were trained in CP principles, related processes and psychological first aid.

In Ukraine's Kharkiv Oblast and Zaporizhzhia Oblast, supported by the MFA and in partnership with local partners Right to Protection and Posmishka UA, SC improved access to education and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) through integrated response activities. Since the primary and secondary schools were not able to deliver education in person, except for a handful of schools with underground classrooms, the six DLCs established by SC improved children's access to remote learning. The DLCs provided essential learning equipment, materials and equipped teachers; they supported children's mental health and learning by providing them with a chance to play and socialise with one another, build their communication skills and, most importantly, build

their self-confidence and resilience. Despite the security challenges, the project targets were still largely met as the project reached a total of 6729 direct beneficiaries out of the targeted 6124. For instance, 557 girls and 486 boys attended the DLCs with 79% of them being able to spend more hours on learning per week than before the establishment of the DLCs. In the DLCs the children were actively engaged in the educational process, and both children and parents expressed their satisfaction with the DLCs. In addition, equipment and materials (like interactive whiteboards, web cameras and power banks) were provided to 30 schools with the greatest needs. The distribution of Individual Learning Kits reached 3954 vulnerable children (1938 girls, 2016 boys) from low-income families or those displaced by the conflict in Kharkiv Oblast to ensure they could continue learning from home.

To support caregivers in their role in the difficult context, the local partners conducted parenting sessions for 231 caregivers, although achieving only 77% of the target number due to the unstable security environment which made it difficult for people to gather. The teachers received training on MHPSS, inclusive education, child safeguarding and gender equality. Due to high interest in these topics, particularly in Kharkiv, the project reached more teachers than planned (134%) through capacity building. In addition, 50 bunker kits (including games and play materials) were provided to 10 shelters, helping children to engage in constructive and comforting activities while in the shelters during air raids.

The security situation and finding safe locations for the establishment of the DLCs caused several challenges in the project (e.g. challenges in finding safe locations – the locations needed to start as mobile units until safe places could be found). The delay in identifying safe locations meant that we did not manage to benefit the planned 1200 children during the project timeline and continued operating after the end of project funding to reach more children. The delay in starting the DLCs meant slower budget utilisation which, combined with foreign exchange rate gains, resulted in savings which were used to provide 400 IDP children with psychosocial kits (which included, for instance, a backpack, learning materials, a flashlight, an anti-stress puzzle and a blanket).

4.2. Children’s right to participate has been reinforced

ChP refers to the informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them, either directly or indirectly. *ChP* is a way of working and an essential principle that cuts across all programming. The Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children’s Participation, included in the UNCRC General Comment 12 since 2009, is a key tool for us for ensuring quality *ChP* in any initiative with children. SCF annually measures the level of fulfilment of key *ChP* criteria in projects it supports in order to drive accountability to children and communities, to strengthen project impact and to create opportunities for children’s voices to be heard. In 2024, 91% of both humanitarian and development projects supported by SCF met the designed accountability criteria. This means, for example, that in 91% of our projects all the following criteria were met: (i) children and communities receive relevant and timely information in languages, formats and media that are appropriate and accessible, (ii) children’s feedback is taken into account in decision-making processes and (iii) children hear from us how their participation influenced the decision-making.

Child-Right Groups

Within the CP programming, CRGs are an elemental part of accountability and through training and peer sessions children share experiences and learn about national laws that protect children, and how to seek support. In **Zambia**, for example, four CRGs and 12 school councils were supported, reaching 194 girls and 198 boys. Additionally, children collaborated with vetted, trained and publicly known social media influencers to raise awareness about online risks and safe internet use. In **Somaliland**, 108 child rights champions participated in the development of child-friendly advocacy materials and trainings to enhance the reporting of child rights violations. In **Burkina Faso**, 14 CRGs, reaching 207 girls and 143 boys, were trained in life skills, child rights and community mobilisation; these groups developed and implemented action plans addressing issues like child marriage and GBV, leading to influencing the local protection strategies. In **Côte d’Ivoire**, 20 community-based children’s groups and child

parliaments remained active, contributing to the reporting and management of over 500 CP cases with local authorities. In addition, 15 cases were reported through girls' safe spaces, showing children's growing ability to seek support. Children also participated in radio programmes and community sensitisation, directly reaching over 7550 people.

Child-led research

Child-led research engages young researchers in gathering evidence on child rights and child right violations; it empowers them to conduct research on issues that matter to them, ensuring that the process is both child-friendly and participatory. Child-led research is not just about collecting data; it actively involves young people in the preparation, analysis and reporting of research findings. In 2024, nine girls and seven boys aged 12 to 18 from one of our target areas in Zambia chose to study teenage pregnancies to understand the main causes, the underlying factors contributing to the phenomenon, its consequences and practical solutions to address the problem. The groups were trained on data collection methods, interviewing skills, data analysis and action planning. The children conducted FGDs with caregivers and adolescents, and carried out key informant interviews with community leaders, teachers and healthcare staff. Based on the findings, the children provided some key recommendations for parents and caregivers, health workers, policymakers and for teenagers themselves. These included encouraging parents to talk openly about safe sex and the impacts of risky behaviour, ensuring that health facilities and schools provide youth-friendly spaces where young people can access information and services about sexual health, and working with communities to change negative attitudes toward young people seeking sexual health services. The study findings are disseminated, and concrete actions were planned in early 2025.

In addition, ChP was promoted in humanitarian contexts, such as Sudan and Somalia, through multi-purpose centres and CFSs. Children need safe spaces where, under the supervision of trained staff, they can interact with peers, participate in structured sessions that support their well-being and engage in activities that are both fun and joyful. In 2024, a total of six multi-purpose centres and CFSs were supported in Sudan and Somalia, reaching 692 girls and 746 boys.

AskKids

In 2024, we continued investing in innovative tools, like the digital platform AskKids, to empower children (especially those who are illiterate or shy to speak in front of adults) to voice their views safely and confidently. In total, 1107 children used AskKids in 2024. In Burkina Faso, AskKids was applied not only in an SCF-supported CP project but also in four projects funded by SIDA, ECHO and Danida to appraise whether these projects had met the Nine Basic Requirements for Meaningful and Ethical Children's Participation. Data was collected from a total of 327 children with the help of AskKids, out of which 64% were internally displaced children. An SCF-supported CP project achieved the highest overall performance in meeting the ChP requirements. Similarly in Cote d'Ivoire, the use of AskKids was extended to several SC projects, and 780 children were interviewed (e.g. it was used to consult the children about their satisfaction with the CP services they received, to collect data on their knowledge about environmental damage in their communities and to ask for their opinion on the activities of SC).

4.3. Life without violence: Child Protection

OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES' ACCESS TO SERVICES HAS IMPROVED

Case management is an elemental part of CP services that SCF programming intends to increase, both in terms of access and quality. Case management supports at-risk or harmed children through a caseworker who provides direct assistance and referrals to any further essential services. In Zambia and Cote d'Ivoire, SCF programming has focused on strengthening the capacity of social service workers to improve case management quality. In humanitarian and conflict-affected areas, such as Somaliland and parts of Sudan and Burkina Faso, where the governments lack resources to provide adequate service systems, SC has provided these services with the help of the local implementing partners, in close collaboration with government social workers. Particularly in Somalia and certain Sudanese states, SC and partners had to fully substitute these services. In 2024, the projects supported by SCF provided case management support to 2535 girls and boys, of which at least 255 were children with disabilities.

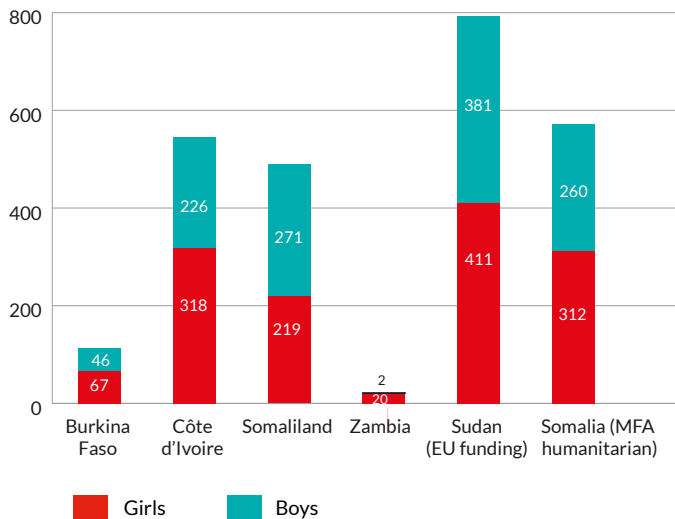


Figure 5: The number of children that received case management services with the support of an SCF programme in 2024.

Throughout the case management process, the involvement of children and their families in planning and decision-making is one of the key principles. This is not only because children have the fundamental right to express their opinions and participate in decisions affecting their lives but also because their involvement enhances the appropriateness and effectiveness of case management services. To assess the quality of our supported case management services, we conduct interviews with children and their caregivers who have received assistance and measure the percentage of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with the case management service received. The data for this outcome indicator is collect-

ed annually in four programme countries, and as shown below, each of the projects has already exceeded its target for this indicator by 2024. Even in Côte d'Ivoire and Somaliland where children reported lower satisfaction levels than their caregivers in 2023, the 2024 data show clear improvement. Continuous training and mentoring support for case workers have been highly valued and are key in achieving this change.

In addition to case management support, our CP programming supports engaging with further prevention and responses, provided by trained community committees and volunteers, SC and local partners. These include parenting sessions for caregivers, support for children's groups in building resilience and self-protection skills, structured psychosocial support and recreational play activities in CFSs and girls' safe spaces. Peer groups for the caregivers of children with disabilities are also supported and community sensitisation initiatives with influential leaders and the general public are conducted on CP risks and harms, and effective prevention and response measures.

In 2024, a total of 52,762 children and adults directly participated in prevention and/or response services to support CP provided by SC and its partners in SCF-supported projects in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia. A key achievement this year is the increased reach of adults and children with disabilities, now accounting for nearly 6% of those reached through the projects. The cumulative number of individuals reached through these services has steadily increased every year, as can be seen in Figure 7 on the right, which also shows the cumulative reach from 2022 to the end of 2024.

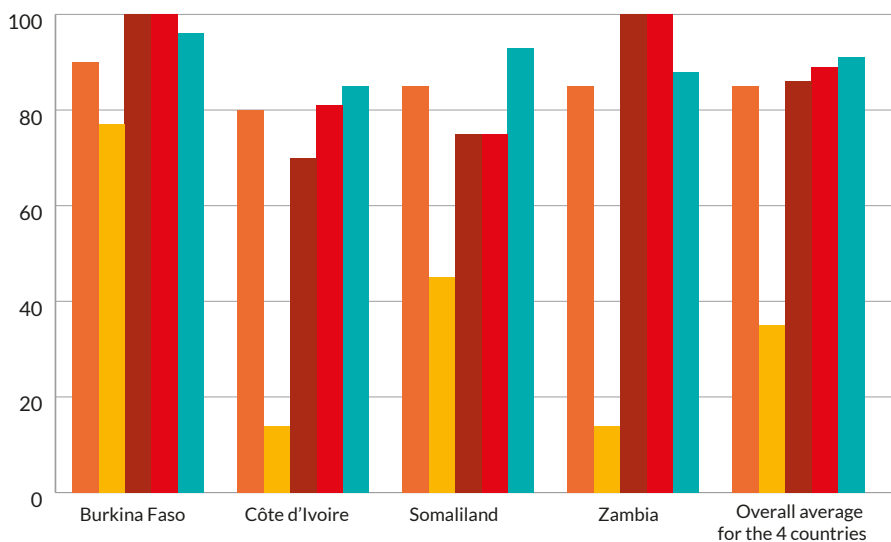


Figure 6: The percentage of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with the services received and the response actions given through the case management process³.

³ The baseline value for Burkina Faso is high as the baseline took place in locations where case management has already been supported through previous projects. In Zambia, the decrease compared with 2023 was due to the small sample size and one case which was not completed.

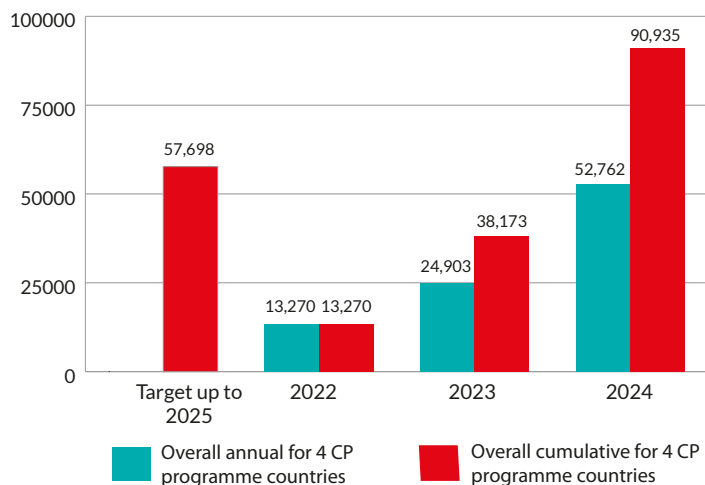


Figure 7. The cumulative reach of persons for CP services from 2022 to the end of 2024 in SCF programme areas.

One crucial element of access to services is the ability to seek support when in need. During the midterm stock-taking in 2023, the evidence demonstrated a big increase in our programme areas in terms of the extent to which the targeted children had the confidence to ask for help in the case of emotional or physical violence and sexual violence and their ability to name at least one place/person they could go to for help in regard to such violence. This data will be collected again in 2025.

OUTCOME 2: IMPROVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND CP THROUGH THE STRENGTHENED CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF CAREGIVERS, CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY

The Safe Families Common Approach, which SC applies for improved CP, promotes positive, non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices, empowers

Country	Female caregivers	Female caregivers with disabilities	Male caregivers	Male caregivers with disabilities	Girls	Girls with disabilities	Boys	Boys with disabilities
Zambia	450	7	250	18	133	6	117	6
Somaliland	255	3	135	4	92	4	88	2
Somalia humanitarian	90	12	60	9	75	7	75	5
Burkina Faso	45	n/a	30	1	38	n/a	37	n/a
Côte d'Ivoire	215	5	202	8	188	4	225	5

Table 2. The attendance of Safe Families Common Approach sessions in 2024.

4 In 2022, on average, 14% of the caregivers reported mainly using non-violent disciplining methods; in 2023 the figure was 20%, and in 2024 it was 33.4%.

children to protect themselves from harm and challenges harmful gender norms. Caregivers learn about parenting strategies, stress management and child development while children participate in age-appropriate sessions to strengthen their support networks and communication skills. The sessions, led by trained community mentors and facilitators, are voluntary and run weekly over three months. In 2024, more caregivers and children's groups were supported than in previous years, and the attendance is shown below in Table 1:

According to the pre-assessment surveys, which are conducted before the sessions start and again in the form of post-assessment at the end of the intervention period, show clear improvements in the 2024 cohorts. The average share of children aged 10 to 17 in the five African programme countries who reported improved psychosocial well-being is 75.2%, which exceeds our average target share of 52%. While supporting children and caregivers in CP, it is crucial for communities to understand why children need to be protected, why violence is not tolerated and what role community members play in preventing and responding to violence against children. We will address the confidence level of community members to prevent and respond to CP risks again in surveys in 2025.

While there is progress amongst the trained caregivers regarding the extent to which they adopt non-violent discipline methods after attending Safe Families sessions, the improvement is more modest than, for example, the improvement in children's psychosocial well-being (mentioned above) or in the positive changes in children's interactions with caregivers. Only an average of 33.4% (against a target of 60%) of caregivers report primarily using non-violent methods. The measurement approach for this indicator is very strict. For instance, many caregivers still struggle to completely abandon disciplinary practices (such as shouting), and in this case, a more nuanced methodology for measurement would better reflect the overall progress made in non-violent caregiving methods. It is also noteworthy that, although the target is still to be reached, there has been steady improvement of the caregivers' assessment of this over the programme period⁴. In addition, testimonies across programme areas reveal clear improvements in family relationships: communication has increased, tensions have reduced, and dialogue is increasingly favoured over confrontation. The data that children in post-assessments report on improved positive changes in their interaction with caregivers shows good progress in 2024: the average indicator value is 75%, exceeding the target by over 20%.

OUTCOME 3: THE IMPROVED CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF SERVICES, SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

One of the key focus areas when improving CP is to strengthen the public structures and the legal frameworks linked to CP. Within our CP programming we work both with formal service providers, like national and local government ministries and NGOs, and with informal service providers, like community-based CP networks and committees. We measure the impact of our programming in this field through assessing how the service providers fulfil the minimum quality standards of services, defined with a specific Quality of Services Tool (which assesses, e.g. service responsiveness, information management, staff training, ChP, etc.). This measurement tool was applied in midline measurement in 2023 and will be applied again in 2025.

Support for the development of laws, policies and guidelines is a crucial element for good quality services, and it is also the basis for child rights-based programming. Establishing national standards and guidance that align with the UNCRC strengthens CP efforts and reinforces accountability to children. Advocacy for these changes is often carried out in close collaboration with other child rights-focused CSOs and can take several years to achieve. Additionally, SC and its partners have supported studies that enhance knowledge and evidence of CP risks and their impact and have provided recommendations for the sector. Examples of advocacy efforts and studies produced in 2024 follow:

In Somaliland, SC and its partners actively contributed to the drafting and finalisation of an implementation plan for the Child Rights Act and supported the establishment and training of the National Child Rights Committee, which oversees its implementation. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MOLSAF) has approved a landmark policy to eradicate FGM, adopting a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of this practice, including its medicalisation. In a region where an estimated 98% of women and girls have undergone FGM, this policy marks a decisive step forward and SC has been instrumental in advocating for it through awareness campaigns, community-driven projects and partnerships. This achievement is a significant breakthrough in safeguarding the health, dignity and rights of women and girls in Somaliland. Additionally, SC conducted a study with 83 boys and 23 girls on children living or working on the streets of Hargeisa. Street children face multiple challenges, including violence, a lack of access to education and healthcare, substance abuse and so-

cial stigma. This study aimed to amplify the voices of these children, shedding light on their experiences and the support they need, particularly in the context of implementing the Child Rights Act. The findings revealed, amongst other issues, that the key push factors driving children to the streets include poverty (50%), a lack of support (48%), family conflict (39%) and abuse (22%). The recommendations, which will inform advocacy efforts among stakeholders, emphasised the urgent need to address the significant service gaps and to raise awareness about greater community support for street children.

In Zambia two research projects were conducted: child-led research on teenage pregnancies (see more under Section 3.2.) and a participatory community action research project to map both risk and protective factors for children. The main CP risks identified in the community action research included the sexual abuse that happens in form of transactional sex, often driven by the busy border activity between the Copperbelt Province and the Democratic Republic of Congo, resulting in an influx of truck drivers and construction workers. This is increasing adolescent girls' vulnerability to teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV, yet limited support services were provided to ensure their protection. A World Bank-funded assignment, conducted a consortium with Genesis Analytics, provided recommendations on revisions to the Community Case Management Guidelines, additional findings, lessons learned and recommendations for the improved implementation of community case management (CCM) by the MCDSS (for more details, see Section 3.4).

In Burkina Faso, SC continued its work on the development and dissemination of a standard operational procedure (SOP) for case management. This document was shared with caseworkers to serve as a practical guide for social workers to carry out effective and timely interventions for children and to enable them quickly to determine which cases are eligible for case management, to assess risk levels and to prioritise interventions accordingly. By providing clear guidance, the SOP strengthens the efficiency and responsiveness of case management, particularly in addressing high-risk cases and ultimately saving lives. We also continued supporting the rollout of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), following the development and validation of the CPIMS guidelines in late 2023.

In Cote d'Ivoire, SC successfully contributed to enhanced advocacy for child- and gender-sensitive services through targeted engagement with key government stakeholders.

As a result, our CP project influenced the integration of gender and CP priorities into two municipal development plans. At the same time, we made significant progress in strengthening local governance for CP by conducting an in-depth budget review analysis on CP allocations in the Gontougo region. This analysis helped identify key funding gaps and develop a strategic advocacy plan to improved, inclusive and gender-responsive budgeting, which now serves as a reference tool for engagement with local authorities.

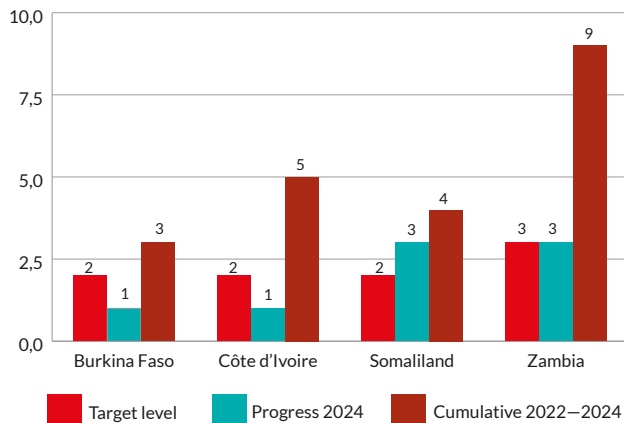


Figure 8: The number of key laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies to protect children from violence reviewed, developed or modified with support from SC.

Overall challenges in improving CP in the SCF programme

As described in earlier years' reports, support and response for the child survivors of SGBV continues to be a challenge, hindered by stigma, the weak coordination of service providers and limited awareness. In response to this challenge, additional training, supervision and coaching were carried out in 2024. This has resulted in improved ChP and better problem-solving and decision-making during the development and implementation of case management plans. In Somaliland, caseworkers began using the CPIMS for documenting case management. This, along with additional training, has strengthened case management support for SGBV survivors. In 2024, 27% of the supported cases were SGBV survivors.

In both Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, significant challenges related to the support and capacity of foster families caring for vulnerable children were identified in 2023. Many foster caregivers lacked adequate training on child rights, trauma-informed care, stress management, struc-

tured follow-up and psychological support, which limited their ability to provide safe and nurturing environments for children in need. In response to this, our targeted training in 2024, linked with better coordination with social services, manage to improve foster families' capacities in child safeguarding and trauma-informed care, benefiting 187 children in Burkina Faso's Nayala and Balé Provinces. In Côte d'Ivoire, the efforts focused on professionalising foster care as part of a broader capacity-building strategy for social centres. Although a structured foster care system is still emerging, the project developed engagement with foster families through awareness sessions, and social workers were also trained in psychosocial support and mental health, enabling better supervision of family-based care. These efforts laid the foundation for a more protective and responsive foster care environment, contributing to improved outcomes for children placed outside of their biological families.

To address the very modest progress among informal CP service providers (like community CP committees) in meeting quality service standards from 2023, ongoing training and mentoring of these community structures continued in 2024. In Burkina Faso, efforts focused on increasing ChP to enhance peer-to-peer awareness. In Côte d'Ivoire, CP committees began organising income-generating groups to reduce reliance on project support. In Zambia, collaboration between district and community CP committees was reinforced through joint review meetings, improving accountability and referral mechanisms. In Somaliland, internships for social work students continued with enhanced supervision by project staff, significantly strengthening the capacity of community committees.

Key strategies towards sustainability in CP

Advancing local ownership and strengthening civil society

All our Safe Families sessions' facilitators are from the local communities, and community members actively contribute to the establishment and maintenance of mobile teams, referral pathways and the monitoring of CP activities. These participatory processes help reinforce legitimacy, build trust with service providers and ensure that local realities and norms are reflected in protection responses. As a result of advocacy efforts made with CSOs, in several programme areas women leaders were formally integrated into CP decision-making bodies, a key step toward inclusive and community-driven protection

systems. At the same time, we invested in building the capacities of civil society to ensure that a strong local CP workforce and children's rights defenders remain in place at the local level after the project ends.

Accountability and transparency mechanisms

Ensuring accountability and transparency remained central to operational strategies. The implementation of the AskKids tool in West Africa enabled the confidential collection of children's feedback on services, allowing for real-time responsiveness and corrective actions. In addition, open safe spaces for communities were offered to help children share their perspectives directly with project staff and local authorities. More attention has also been paid to feedback boxes being accessible to children. Creative and participatory methods, such as community theatre forums and radio programmes, were leveraged to increase public awareness and feedback loops, ensuring that community voices were both heard and acted upon. These mechanisms not only enhanced transparency but also helped strengthen the legitimacy of CP systems in the eyes of children and their families. The accountability of SC towards the rights holders was invested in through regular community meetings, child-friendly materials and interactive discussions on the project results and lessons learnt. Trained CP committees and youth clubs helped disseminate information and facilitate dialogue.

Key thematic learnings on CP

SCF supported the implementation of the revised sessions guidance of the Safe Families common approach used by the whole SC movement. As part of the global team, SCF led a community of practice in West Africa, sharing knowledge in French between staff and partners. SCF also supported piloting the measurement of gender-transformative elements in Safe Families in Zambia. The learning and recommendations from this study will be utilised globally (see more on this in Chapter 5). Organising parenting groups for male caregivers only and work with the caregivers of children with disabilities continued. Some of the key lessons learned are that community trust and early sensitisation are critical to success in the implementation of Safe Families. Initial reluctance – particularly from men, traditional leaders and religious actors – highlighted the importance of clear, culturally sensitive messaging to build buy-in. Gender dynamics also shaped participation as men were more difficult to mobilise due to their outside household work demands. Consistency and quality in facilitation emerged, forming another essential factor: some volunteers lacked facilitation experience and limited supervision and resources

hindered their performance. Language barriers also hampered understanding in several contexts, underlining the need to translate and adapt content into local languages. Recommendations include increasing budgets to support more cohorts and improve working conditions for community mentors and facilitators, developing an illustrated glossary of key concepts to support volunteers, providing coaching support for facilitators with lower literacy levels, aligning session schedules with local calendars (e.g. avoiding the rainy season) and producing audio-visual versions of sessions for broader accessibility. Finally, fostering stronger coordination among stakeholders and investing in localised communication strategies will be crucial to reinforce behaviour change and sustain the results.

SCF, together with other Nordic SC members and the SCI global team, supported the design of an integrated CP, MHPSS and EiE toolkit that is used in transition centres with displaced children. Transition centres are temporary safe learning centres designed for displaced children during the first three months of a crisis. They provide a structured environment where children aged 6 to 12 can continue learning, receive psychosocial support and regain a sense of stability and normality while feeling safe and protected. These centres are set up rapidly after a population displacement and serve as a bridge to help children reintegrate into formal or long-term education systems.

4.4. Safety nets and resilient families: Child Sensitive Social Protection

OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' ACCESS TO SERVICES HAS IMPROVED

During 2024, SCF continued to work closely with local and national governments across our CSSP programme in Asia and Africa in order to support people in accessing SP programmes by institutionalising inclusive, transparent and accountable approaches.

In Nepal, we continued to support local governments in four districts to ensure that people who are eligible for key SP programmes secure their entitlements. This resulted in 17,473 additional people gaining access to social assistance programmes, such as the Child Grant and the Disability Allowance, during 2024.

In consultation with selected municipalities, an SOP was developed for detailing the processes to be adopted by local governments to ensure access to available SP programmes. The SOP will be piloted in selected localities during 2025, and from 2026 onwards, the objective is to use it as a base for wide-scale replication with local governments across the country.

In the Philippines 29 local councils (Barangays) in the Province of Samar have adopted, through a resolution, the Barangay Social Protection and Related Initiatives approach, developed by SC, as a way of increasing access to government SP programmes. Based on this model, the elected representatives in 10 Barangays took the responsibility (in the areas under their jurisdiction) to generate an overview of people who are currently registered as SP beneficiaries and to identify those who are potentially eligible for various programmes as per the criteria shared by the different departments. Through the mapping, 1297 people were identified as eligible for programmes such as a disability allowance, a social pension, an allowance for single parents and crop insurance programmes.

Following the mapping, the Barangays supported 947 people in processing their applications, out of which, 550 were eventually registered as beneficiaries. In addition to the mapping, there was more information available on SP benefits to citizens, and the elected representatives of the Barangays also mobilised groups – such as groups of single parents, senior citizens and people with disabilities – to reflect on the SP benefits provided by the government and related concerns. They will continue advocating for improvements of these benefits within their province since some of the benefits are extremely limited.

Although our support to **India** has come to a halt due to foreign funding restrictions imposed by the Government of India, it is worth mentioning that the Management Information System (MIS) that was developed for local governments (panchayats) with the support of SCF throughout the years has now been adopted by an entire district in the state of Rajasthan. The MIS is a tool developed for the local governments to track persons with eligibility to key SP programmes and to ensure that vital events – such as age, birth, death and marriage – are captured as these

Public SP programme in Nepal	Gender	Baseline 2021	Additional people who accessed SP in 2022	2022 cumulative reach	Additional people accessed SP in 2023	2023 cumulative reach	Additional people who accessed SP in 2024	2024 cumulative reach
Child Grant	Girls	112,304	625	112,929	2983	115,912	6290	122,202
	Boys	124,360	731	125,091	4164	129,255	7089	136,344
Total		236,664	1356	238,020	7147	245,167	13,379	258,546
Disability Allowance	Girls	858	5	863	83	946	68	1014
	Boys	1329	8	1337	58	1395	86	1481
	Women	4844	2	4846	283	5129	98	5227
	Men	6091	8	6099	305	6404	163	6567
Total		13,122	23	13,145	729	13,874	415	14,289
Senior Citizen Allowance	Women	50,551	9	50,560	2151	52,711	1369	54,080
	Men	45,066	29	45,095	2329	47,424	1474	48,898
Total		95,617	38	95,655	4480	100,135	2843	102,978
Widow / Single Women Allowance	Women	36,023	36	36,059	515	36,574	836	37,410
Total		36,023	36	36,059	515	36,574	836	37,410
Allowance for People from an Ethnic/Endangered Community	Girls	15	0	15	0	15	0	15
	Boys	22	0	22	0	22	0	22
	Women	179	0	179	1	180	0	180
	Men	191	0	191	3	194	0	194
Total		407	0	407	4	411	0	411
Grand total		381,833	1453	383,286	12,875	39,6161	17,473	413,634

Table 3: Access to SP programmes in the CSSP project areas in Nepal during 2021–2024.

are circumstances that make people eligible for these programmes. This increases the access to the many SP programmes available, such as the orphan cash transfer, widow allowance and old age allowance.

In **Zambia** we continued to strengthen access to SP programmes and related services in the two project districts of the Copperbelt Province – Luwinyama and Kalulushi. This strengthening was done through the administration of social accountability tools, community score cards, public hearings and a social audit, done together with the Department of Social Welfare of the MCDSS. The number of SP beneficiaries rose in our project areas by 56%. This was mainly due to higher number of recipients of the emergency cash transfer since the government decided to allocate resources to the population affected by the drought. In addition, a public expenditure tracking survey was undertaken to determine whether the SCT benefit was reaching the intended beneficiaries. The findings brought out that since the time that the mobile payments had commenced in 2024, at least 14 beneficiaries had not received their transfers. This was followed up with the Department of Social Welfare and we supported the department’s intensified sensitisation, as a result of which, challenges with regard to mobile transfers were drastically reduced. In addition to improved access to SP, our interventions to increase transparency and accountability also resulted in the building and roofing of a classroom block and the construction of a community school in the Luwinyama district. This will reduce the distances that children walk to the nearest school. A social audit was

conducted on the Keeping Girls in School government benefit, and it proved that there is a lack of awareness about the process involved in girls receiving the educational grant.

In **Somaliland/Somalia**, where no government-led SP schemes are available, SCF has continued to support the child grant in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family of Somaliland. One component of this programme has focused on transparency and accountability, and it aims to improve the access of poor and vulnerable households to essential basic services in the targeted IDP camps in Hargeisa and Berbera. During 2024, our transparency and accountability work resulted in the construction of classrooms in primary schools, the fencing of schools for the safety of children, the construction of a warehouse by the Hargeisa local municipality for a government health centre at Sheikh Omar IDP camp, medical laboratory room being equipped by the Ministry of Health and the provision of an ambulance for the Magalo Cad Health Centre in Berbera.

In **Cote d’Ivoire**, supported by the Prefectural Body, the Health Department and the Regional Directorate of National Education and Literacy, the transparency and accountability committees have been formed at the community level to monitor the provision of the government’s Productive Social Safety Nets Programme (PSSNP) and the functioning of health centres and schools. A total of 14 schools and six health centres were assessed by the committees, focusing on the quality of service provision,

Public SP programme in Zambia	Disaggregation per households	Cumulative reach in 2022	Additional households accessed in 2023	Cumulative reach in 2023	Additional households accessed in 2024	Cumulative reach in 2024
Social Cash Transfer (SCT)	Male-headed	240	300	540	0	540
	Female-headed	751	424	1175	0	1175
Total		991	724	1715	0	1715
Emergency Cash Transfer	Male-headed	0	0	0	266	266
	Female-headed	0	0	0	832	832
Total		0	0	0	1098	1098
Keeping Girls in School		95	20	115	41	156
Total		95	20	115	41	156
Food Security Pack	Female-headed	75	118	193	45	238
	Male-headed	47	75	122	21	143
Total		122	193	315	66	381
Grand Total		1208	937	2145	1205	3350

Table 4: Access to SP schemes in Zambia, 2023-2024

infrastructure and equipment. Interface meetings were held between the committees and service providers responsible for health and education services in the presence of the sub-prefects, resulting in the development of 19 action plans. The sub-prefects also took the opportunity to provide solutions to certain community concerns linked to infrastructure and to deliver messages on the importance of birth registration. Currently, the PSSNP provides access to 607 male beneficiaries and 803 female beneficiaries in 20 target localities in the region.

Furthermore, in Côte d'Ivoire, SCF and SC implemented the UNICEF-funded project Afiba, which ended in October 2024, and aimed to support the employability of vulnerable girls through the institutional framework of the Women's Training and Education Institutions in Abidjan and Bouaké. The project supported the access of women and girls to quality training in order to gain a profession and enhance their full participation in society. The Women's Training and Education Institutions' educational curricula and training programmes were improved, involving the networks of master craftsmen of the National Chamber of Crafts and the various ministries in the apprenticeships. Initially, 550 out-of-school and vulnerable adolescents were identified and targeted, and finally, 350 girls and 34 boys were actively enrolled in this non-formal education service, including training and apprenticeship. Dropouts were mainly due to distances or the lack of an appropriate training centre. However, the graduates were actively involved and saw their access to education services improve, as well as their employability. In fact, by the end of the project, 71 beneficiaries were able to successfully transition into decent work, with the rest still in the apprenticeship programme.

In **Burkina Faso**, funded by the Sahel Facility (KfW), SCF and the CO started to implement a project entitled Ben Kadi in a consortium with Norwegian Church Aid and two national partners⁵. The project aims to strengthen social cohesion, conflict prevention and the development of human and economic capital through a participative, structured and inclusive approach for children, young people and women in the Cascades region, eventually ensuring a dignified, resilient and peaceful life between communities. The planning phase and implementation of the initial activities was done during 2024 in a participatory process with 653 community members; this enabled us to identify vulnerabilities and tailored, multi-sectorial responses to-

gether with each stakeholder group, empowering them to formulate their priorities. In 2025 and 2026 the project will aim to have contributed to peace building and conflict resolution, based on a conflict sensitivity analysis.

OUTCOME 2: IMPROVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AND IMPROVED CP THROUGH THE STRENGTHENED CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF CAREGIVERS, CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY

To safeguard the most important essence of our SP programming, impact on children, we continued implementing the CSSP parenting component across all projects in Asia and Africa. Altogether 27,687 female and 5979 male caregivers were trained in the parenting programme through group sessions and home visits. Sustainability plans were developed for the parenting groups to ensure the continued practice of parenting behaviour. For assessing the impact of this work on caregiver behaviour and child development, follow-up assessments were conducted in selected projects in 2024. Most of the assessments, impact research and evaluation will, however, be conducted during 2025, the last year of the programme cycle.

The Child Grant Plus programme in Nepal aims to boost the parenting behaviour that is recognised as crucial for children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. In 2024, a qualitative study using direct observation with a sample of 21 mother-child dyads before and after the parenting programme was implemented. For this, a tool known as 'Parenting Interactions with Children: A Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes' was used. This tool is a globally validated checklist of 29 developmentally supportive types of parenting behaviour that are related to the domains of affection, responsiveness, encouragement and teaching. It is a practical, culturally sensitive, valid and reliable tool for practitioners that shows how parents interact with and support their children's development. The findings indicate that the parenting programme has been successful in significantly improving the parental behaviour related to all four domains studied (i.e. affection, responsiveness, encouragement and teaching).

⁵ The Union des Religieux et Coutumiers du Burkina pour la Promotion de la Santé et Le Développement and the Initiative Communautaire de Prise en Charge de Personnes Vivantes avec le VIH, les Maladies Chroniques, les Maladies Invalidantes et Protection des Droits de l'Enfant.

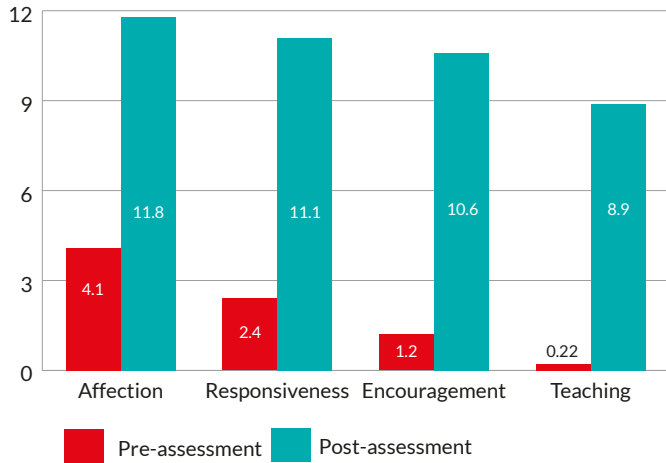


Figure 9: Changes in parental behaviour after the parenting training in Nepal, based on the domains of a checklist of a qualitative study conducted in 2024.

In Zambia, the cash-plus approach, comprising of a parenting programme and a life-skills package supporting children to develop their social and emotional skills, was delivered in the districts of Lufwanyama and Kalulushi to 1000 caregivers (mostly women) who are recipients of the government’s SCT programme and their children. Figure 10 below demonstrates that children in the area where the cash-plus package was implemented significantly improved their social and emotional learning when compared with children in the control area, where no parenting programme was attached to the SCT. The

International Social and Emotional learning Assessment scale applied in the study measures the development of self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy and conflict resolution in children aged between 6 and 14.

OUTCOME 3: THE IMPROVED CHILD AND GENDER SENSITIVITY OF SERVICES, SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

As in earlier years, also during 2024, SCF advocated to and otherwise engaged with governments to replicate or scale up our CSSP approaches and support them in order to make their SP policies, strategies and programmes child sensitive.

In Philippines, SC continued to support the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the national scale-up of the CSSP parenting programme. The parenting approach was adapted and consolidated into a contextualised and concise version, referred to now as MaPangBata, which will eventually be provided to all four million households that are recipients of the government cash transfer programme, the 4Ps, aimed at poor households’ under-18 children . During 2024, 213 additional staff members of DSWD were trained as parenting facilitators, bringing the total number of trained facilitators within the department to 549. We also initiated the training of two staff members from each of the 18 regions of the country as parenting trainers. The purpose of the training of trainers is to create an in-house training pool

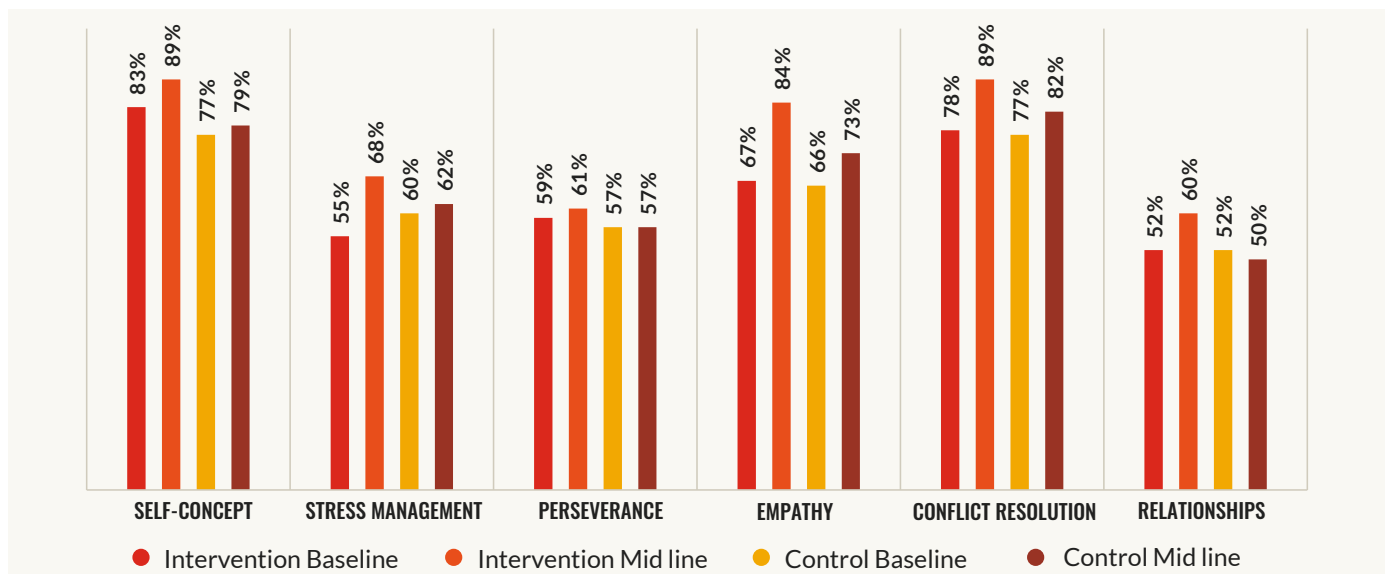


Figure 10: Improvement in the social and emotional learning scores of children in Zambia, intervention versus control group.

of parenting experts in DSWD to make the programme an integral part of the 4Ps and ensure its sustainability after the support of SC.

In Nepal, the municipalities in several districts of the Madhesi and Karnali provinces continued to show their appreciation of and commitment to the CSSP parenting programme, linked to their Child Grant programme, by contributing to the costs of the parenting sessions in their areas. In 2024, eight municipalities allocated a total of 18,622 EUR for the implementation of the Child Grant Plus programme through their regular planning and budgeting process. These financial contributions indicate that the possibilities of scaling up the initiative widely with Nepalese public funding is likely in the future. Furthermore, SC supported seven municipalities in formulating their own SP policies. The objective of these policies is to induce the municipalities to allocate funds for marginalised and vulnerable groups who are not covered by federal or provincial SP programmes in Nepal. Currently, three out of the seven municipalities have officially got the approval of the policy through their municipal assembly, while the rest are preparing for approvals in 2025. At the federal level, the Social Protection Civil Society Network, initiated by SC, actively held national-level dialogues with ministries and parliamentarians on the need to expand the Child Grant cash transfer programme throughout the country, resulting in positive indications for expanding coverage and increasing the benefit amount. Currently, the government Child Grant is implemented in 25 out of 77 districts.

In Zambia, we continued to build on our CSSP and cash-plus approaches and experience as SC was selected by the World Bank to undertake an assignment titled 'Inclusion of Cash Plus Care for Vulnerable Children affected by COVID-19 within Social Protection Programming in Zambia', in a consortium with Genesis Analytics. The purpose of this assignment was to review the existing SCT-programme and CCM guidelines of the Government of Zambia and provide recommendations to the MCDSS for necessary revisions to these in order to make them inclusive and to cater to the needs of vulnerable and marginalised children and their households. The assignment comprised of reviewing secondary literature, primary data collection, analysis of the existing guidelines and piloting of the recommendations being made in close collaboration with the MCDSS. Finally, the consortium provided three reports for the government: (1) recommendations for revisions to the existing CCM guidelines, (2) capacity assessment and recommendations for strengthening the government workforce for delivering SCTs and CCM, and



Through the parenting sessions of the Child Grant Plus Programme in Nepal, Anjita has acquired knowledge and skills for creating a safe and nurturing environment for her children. Photo: Save the Children

(3) additional recommendations on the coordination and interoperability measures. The reports were approved by the World Bank and the MCDSS committed to take the recommendations for improving the implementation modalities of the SCT and CCM programme into consideration.

In Cote d'Ivoire, with a view to capitalise on the achievements of the CSSP parenting approach, a mission of the Ministry of Women, Family and Children, and the Protection Programme for Vulnerable Children and Adolescents (which is the structure in charge of harmonising common approaches to parental education in Cote d'Ivoire) was organised in the project area. A CSSP advocacy group comprising of CSOs was also established to lobby the state for the adoption of the CSSP parenting programme as part of delivering their PSSNP. These efforts resulted in the organising of a capacity-building workshop for training a pool of trainers on the CSSP parenting approach at the national level to facilitate its integration into the training curriculum for social workers; the trainees were staff from Ministry of Women, Family and Children, the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection and attached Regional Directorates, media actors and our local NGO partner, Soleil Levant Education.

In Somaliland, SC has been a key partner and one of the most critical allies of MOLSAF in working towards the development and approval of the Somaliland Social Protection Policy, which was approved in 2023 and successfully launched in 2024. Following the launch, a national SP conference, organised by SC and MOLSAF, emphasised the need for a road map for the financing of SP in

the country and it engaged with the Ministry of Finance and other key government stakeholders in a dialogue to increase investment in gender-sensitive and inclusive CSSP through public finance instruments. It was agreed to closely engage with Ministry of Religious Affairs to explore with them the possibility of financing SP through the Zakat Fund. With MOLSAF we also conducted the fourth SP sector coordination meeting, following up on the Third Somaliland National Development Plan. SC was appointed as the sector Co-chair by the Director General of MOLSAF. SC and UNICEF also provided MOLSAF with technical and financial support to develop an SP strategy implementation plan for the approved Social Protection National Policy, but the draft plan could not be finalised as all the policy and strategic interventions got deferred due to presidential elections in November.

Following the launch of the fiscal space analysis report (commissioned by SC in late 2023) for developing a public investment case for CSSP in Somaliland/Somalia, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia; dissemination workshops were organised in all four countries engaging key donors, CSOs

and the relevant government ministries and departments. The dissemination focused on advocating with governments and other key actors working on SP in each of the four countries regarding instruments and approaches that can be adopted to create the fiscal space needed for enhanced investments in CSSP.

Cash and voucher assistance

In terms of budget size, the cash and voucher assistance projects – funded by ECHO, UNICEF and the MFA – formed a relevant share of SCF’s programme in 2024. Vulnerable families in Somalia and Sudan were supported with UCTs in order to meet their basic needs; according to need, this was coupled with other complementing activities, such as livelihood support, CP services, family budgeting sessions, child feeding, appropriate care practices, prevention, and village saving and loans schemes. Altogether 3405 households in Sudan and 19,221 households in Somalia benefitted from cash and voucher assistance in 2024. Some of the results are described below:



In Somalia, poverty and climate change forced Nafisa to make difficult decisions, including taking three of her children out of school. However, after being registered to receive a monthly cash transfer, Nafisa could cover the school fees and costs for other necessities, like food “I hold onto hope for my children’s future. I want them to have a good life”, says Nafisa. Photo: Save the Children

With the MFA humanitarian funding, SC and its local partner, Somali Peace Line, continued to provide Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) to IDP and host communities in the Abudwak district in the Galgaduud region of Somalia. The population in the district has faced significant humanitarian challenges, including conflict, climate change and severe food insecurity. UCTs of 110 dollars per month were provided for four months to 675 vulnerable households (of which 205 were male-headed households and 470 were female-headed households) and 100 households with CP concerns from IDP and vulnerable host communities. The project prioritised the most vulnerable households (classified as Integrated Food Security Phase Classification 3 or higher) for the provision of MPCA and the Household Dietary Diversity scores improved significantly from 3% to 68%, indicating better household access to a variety of food. Food Consumption Scores (FCSs) rose from 3% to 45%, which meant moving from a poor level to an *acceptable* level due to MPCA assistance. The households also experienced a 70% reduction in the use of negative coping strategies, such as meal skipping and reducing portion sizes, improving overall food security and nutrition.

Through the Somali Cash Consortium (SCC), a coalition of six NGOs led by Concern Worldwide⁶ coordinating the use of cash assistance in the country, SC continued to provide MPCA to vulnerable populations in disaster- and conflict-affected Somali regions. The work was funded by ECHO and KfW through UNICEF and implemented with the most vulnerable 3600 households with a total population of 14,742 females and 15,043 males from both the host and IDP communities affected by climatic shocks or conflict in the regions of Lascaanod, Buloburde, Hudur, Zeilla and Wajid. Based on MPCA monitoring between June and December, the proportion of households with a poor FCS dropped significantly (from 61% at baseline to 12% at the endline). Concurrently, the number of households with an acceptable FCS increased, demonstrating improved food access. The distribution of MPCA also affected the average reduced Coping Strategies Index score, which declined from 19 to 11, indicating a decrease in the use of negative coping strategies. Additionally, the percentage of households buying food on loan decreased from 18% at the baseline to 10% at the endline. Based on the market assessment of the prices of essential goods, the monthly MPCA provided per household varied be-

tween USD 100 and 140 per month and was provided for three months. The SCC also improved the resilience of households to climate-related shocks and disasters, and it cushioned the economic effect of rising food prices exacerbated by the Ukraine–Russian conflict. The main components of this partnership with UNICEF and KfW included the provision of monthly cash transfers to 14,151 pregnant and lactating mothers in times of drought in the Jariban district, in the Mudug region of Puntland. Each mother received a monthly cash transfer of USD 20 that helped them to address essential needs and contribute to household stability.

Overall challenges in improving CSSP in the SCF programme

The lack of a dedicated government work force that can implement cash-plus interventions, such as the parenting programme, has been one of the key challenges in the scaling up of the programme results. There are government staff that can be drawn on to deliver the parenting programme in only two of our programme countries (i.e. Cote d'Ivoire and the Philippines). In Somaliland, Nepal and Zambia, we have been adopting the approach of utilising community based or quasi-government committees or structures, or utilising contractual staff to advance the programme. In Nepal, municipalities have been allocating a budget for payment to the facilitators. In Zambia the Community Welfare Assistant Committees of the Department of Social Welfare are being leveraged to implement the programme. Sustaining the quality of the parenting programme when scaling it up at regional or national levels needs careful attention in the future. In our current programme, there has been intensive investment in the training and capacity building of the parenting facilitators, resulting in improved parenting behaviour and an impact on children's development. However, when the government scales up the programme, it might be difficult to maintain the same level of investment in the training and capacity building of the parenting facilitators. In order to tackle this, we are creating a corps of local, highly skilled parenting trainers (including trainers from the government system) across the programme countries.

One more challenge for the CSSP programme is the limited funding provided by governments to SP and thus the insufficient (as well as irregular) cash transfers in exist-

⁶ The SCC was established in 2018 in response to the need to coordinate and harmonise the ever-growing use of mobile-cash transfers in Somalia. Since then, its work has been implemented by six partner NGOs: ACTED, Concern Worldwide, Cooperazione Internazionale, the Danish Refugee Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council and SC. The SCC builds better and more robust cash transfer systems by working with all stakeholders to streamline each stage of the cash-transfer process, from community registrations to payment aggregation, reporting, forecasting and coordination. Alongside short-term humanitarian cash assistance, the SCC supports the building of SP mechanisms in Somalia.

ing government programmes. In our project countries, there is a limited budget allocated to the SP sector in general which limits households' capacity to take care of consumption and other basic needs (like children's education, nutrition and health). This is further exacerbated by the irregularity in payments hindering households in undertaking financial planning. A solution that we are providing is to form savings groups and train households on family budgeting, which supports the prioritisation of savings and capacitates caregivers to undertake planned expenses, even in the face of uncertain and irregular cash transfers.

Key strategies towards sustainability in CSSP

The key strategy for ensuring the sustainability of our CSSP initiatives lies in its very essence of strengthening the governments' SP systems. Targeted capacity building and strengthening measures – such as training the staff of government line ministries and departments, and community-based institutions – form an integral part of this strategy. We have also supported establishing or strengthening existing transparency and accountability mechanisms as a regular practice. This further facilitates community members' direct engagement with duty bearers in order to access SP benefits and basic services on a regular basis. Sustainability plans for the parenting programme, made in consultation with local governments, were also developed for each of the CSSP projects in 2024. The plans focus on drawing on the community committees and local networks that support undertaking refresher sessions, identifying community champions who can act as catalysts and promote the parenting groups to

continue meeting regularly, sharing their experiences and providing peer support to each other, even after the project is over.

The key thematic lessons learned related to CSSP

A synthesis of various impact studies and evaluations on our cash-plus parenting approach was initiated in 2024; this will further help inform and strengthen evidence for cash-plus parenting in different project countries as an activity which governments and donors are increasingly prioritising and in which they are keen to invest. In order to align with the thinking of key SP actors – such as the development banks (the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, KfW), the ILO and the World Food Programme – we have initiated studies related to employability and livelihood development focusing on youth and women. Given that SP funding is increasingly becoming time bound and limited, the idea is to augment the incomes of SP recipients so that they are more resilient to shocks and in a position to graduate out of poverty.

In the event of SP systems being absent, nascent or inadequately resourced and organised, creating pathways to move from humanitarian cash and voucher assistance to long-term SP support for poor and marginalised communities remains a challenge. While NGOs, like SC, have a role to play in advocating to and influencing governments and donors regarding nexus thinking, a robust SP system which is capable of providing long-term support, as well as responding to shocks and crisis, will ultimately have to be led and steered by the governments.



Bhanu was supported to register the birth of her son and to access the government child grant through the CSSP project implemented in Nepal. "With the grant, I have been able to manage food and meet other basic necessities for our child", Bhanu tells. Photo: Save the Children

5. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

5.1. Gender equality

SC's Gender Equality Policy continues to guide our efforts and those of our partners in tackling gender discrimination and advancing gender equality. At minimum, we strive to ensure that all our work is gender sensitive, meaning we recognise and respond to the different needs, abilities and opportunities of girls and boys, as well as women and men. Wherever possible, we go beyond this to adopt a gender-transformative approach that actively challenges and changes the underlying causes of gender inequality in collaboration with children and adults. The SC Gender Equality Marker serves as our main tool for assessing and measuring gender integration in new proposals. It helps ensure that all submissions meet the standard of being either gender sensitive or gender transformative. In 2024, two out of three new funding proposals developed with support from SCF met this key performance indicator.

Our 2024 milestone for gender equality was to revise gender equality action plans based on the findings and recommendations from the 2023 Midterm Stocktaking Exercise, which revealed that 8/9 of the MFA-PBS projects were rated as 'mostly on track' in regard to mainstreaming gender equality. Below are examples of revised actions taken by the projects to address the recommendations and ensure that the objectives related to gender mainstreaming and gender transformation are achieved by the end of the programme period. Some actions aim to further strengthen proven strategies, others focus on addressing identified gaps.

In the CSSP projects in Africa and Asia, incorporating family budgeting and dedicated gender equality sessions into parenting activities has further enhanced women's decision-making power. In CP, a key achievement was the increased engagement of fathers and male caregivers in Safe Families sessions in Somaliland and Zambia. This was achieved by organising male-only groups in collaboration with existing men's networks, such as church groups. While a comprehensive lessons-learned document will be developed in 2025 to capture the outcomes of this approach, early feedback from male participants has been very positive. Many reported a better understanding of children's needs and rights and of the fa-



Both children and adults have been offered training on how to advance gender equality. Photo: Save the Children

ther's role in supporting positive parenting. This, in turn, has led to improved communication with both their children and their spouses. Interestingly, men who were previously reluctant to join mixed-gender groups are now advocating for their spouses to be included in the discussions as they recognise the value of joint dialogue. As a result, SC and our partners are already considering the inclusion of 'spouse interaction' sessions in future Safe Families activities.

In 2024, efforts were intensified to address the persistent underreporting of SGBV, a key challenge also highlighted in our Midterm Stocktaking Exercise in 2023. To strengthen the response to SGBV, SC in Côte d'Ivoire implemented a comprehensive strategy focused on both prevention and response. Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives were conducted, targeting community leaders, parents and children to challenge and shift harmful social norms. The programme also partnered with 'Male Defenders of Women's and Girls' Rights' groups in over 20 villages in the Gontougo region, engaging 100 men in gender equality training. In parallel, the project empowered girls by building their confidence and capacity to express themselves, protect themselves and report abuse. In each targeted village, SC established girls' safe spaces, where over 318 girls could safely share their experiences and receive support from trusted female mentors. In collaboration with the government, two one-stop centres were set up, offering legal, psychological and medical support to 92 girls affected by violence in 2024. Additionally, 40 foster families were trained and certified to provide safe, nurturing homes for vulnerable children, including survivors of SGBV. Advocacy efforts led to commitments from local governments to allocate more resources to CP. A multisectoral committee was also formed to develop a budgeted action plan addressing key CP, with SGBV identified as a primary area of focus.

5.2 Disability inclusion

SC's human rights-based approach to disability emphasises 'reaching every last child' so children with disabilities are able to enjoy equal opportunity and participation without discrimination. Disability inclusion is strongly embedded into SCF's programming as a cross-cutting theme. Our 2024 milestones for disability inclusion were (i) the Midterm Stocktaking Exercise assesses the achievement of milestones for 2022–2023 and (ii) the implementation of activities identified and proposed to address barriers/challenges and to enhance child sensitivity regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities. All projects reviewed disability-related outcomes during their midterm assessment processes, ensuring that lessons from 2022–2023 informed the adaptation and scaling of inclusive practices. These efforts contributed to enhancing the visibility and responsiveness to the specific needs of children and adults with disabilities across project areas. Below are examples of actions taken through 2024 across the various projects.

In West Africa, disability-sensitive awareness-raising activities were conducted through the provincial and communal CP networks reaching children and adults with inclusive messages on violence, harmful practices and child rights. In Burkina Faso, 11 children living with disabilities were supported through individualised care plans (PAI) and getting placed in foster care, benefitting from regular home visits by trained social workers, and four girls with disabilities were supported to access educational and psychosocial support services. In Côte d'Ivoire, access to protection services were facilitated for 97 children and 381 adults with disabilities through the mobile social service teams and one-stop centres, where multidisciplinary teams provided medical, legal, psychosocial and nutritional assistance. Targeted community sensitisation campaigns were also implemented, reaching over 7550 people with messaging that addressed both child rights and disability inclusion. Capacity-building efforts included training 371 duty bearers (ranging from social workers to justice officials) on disability-sensitive case management. Awareness-raising activities for the acceptance of persons with disabilities and supporting them in becoming economically independent also led to getting them enrolled in apprenticeships, and they are continuing their training.

In Zambia, support for the peer support groups of the caregivers of children with disabilities was further expanded. Members of these groups received training and have ac-

tively engaged in advocacy efforts to raise awareness of disability issues and to promote better support for families with children with disabilities among service providers and community members. Two female and three male persons with disabilities were capacitated and participated in the community budget consultation process, and two persons with disabilities were actively involved in the national budget consultation process where they advocated for an increase in the social cash transfer amount from K 800 to K 1000 bimonthly for individuals with disabilities. In Somaliland, peer support group members organised door-to-door campaigns that reached 120 individuals from families with children with disabilities. We worked with MOLSAF in Somaliland to develop an inclusive SP strategy that lays special emphasis on prioritising vulnerable groups in the community, particularly adults and children with disabilities.

In Nepal we continued to facilitate people with disabilities accessing the SP benefits that they are eligible for, and 415 people (of whom, 154 were children) were supported in gaining access to the national disability allowance. Through convergence with another SC Nepal project, some of the children who are unable to attend regular school were provided with home schooling by special needs-trained teachers. In the Philippines we identified people with disabilities in the project area who are lacking the disability ID card that is a prerequisite to accessing the benefits (e.g. vouchers, groceries, special discounts) that the government provides to people with disabilities from time to time.

An important element of SCF disability inclusion work is the collaboration with OPDs, such as the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities in Zambia, the Disability Action Network in Somaliland and the Daryeel Disability Organisation in Somalia, as well as with CRGs.

5.3. Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation (CCA) is a priority area for SCF as it is undoubtedly a critical child rights issue that impacts on their rights to survive, learn and be protected. The strategy update processes completed in SCF and in SC at the global level for 2025–2027 led to putting a strong focus on children whose rights are eroded by conflict, the climate crisis, poverty and violence. SC's Environmental Sustainability and Social screening tool and

action plan were already made mandatory in 2023 and are fully endorsed by all COs, enabling each new project to be climate risk-informed and include mitigation measures where necessary. The tool is now supplemented by a climate-risk informed guide for all sectors designed to assist SC staff in identifying and addressing climate-related risks to humanitarian and development projects in all our thematic areas.

In 2024, SC published a report called *Prioritising Children's Health amidst the Climate Crisis*. The main findings of this report show that climate change threatens the health and well-being of children, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and has an impact on health systems, as well as causing population displacement and food insecurity. Therefore, SC believes that the following three factors are key to addressing those most affected: (1) sustainable, predictable and adequate financing, (2) creating and strengthening climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems and (3) ensuring that communities', children's and adolescents' rights, needs, expertise and voices are front and centre in climate-health action.

The milestone set for the SCF programme for 2024 in terms of CCA was to identify all the activities linked to CCA within our CP and CSSP projects and to pursue new partnerships to advance our work. The 2024 project reports show that significant progress has been made in most, but not all projects. For instance, in Zambia, both the CP and CSSP thematic projects included a focus on building community resilience and mobilisation in the event of shocks or hazards; members of the Ndola District Disaster Management Committee were trained in integrating CP and disability inclusion into vulnerability assessments. The District Disaster Management Committee is working with its satellite committees in communities, which are now able to recognise the specific vulnerabilities faced by children affected by climate change-related disasters and able to plan appropriately for children in the event of a crisis. In the area of CSSP, parents and caregivers participating in the parenting programme were sensitised on how to ensure that children are not abused or neglected, even during periods of high stress due to climatic hazards.

In Burkina Faso and Somaliland, within the two CP projects, awareness-raising campaigns for community leaders were organised on disaster and security risk prevention and on hazards and their potential impacts on children. In Nepal, in the parenting sessions the importance of keeping documents safe during disasters was emphasised. This was a lesson learned from the 2015 earthquake in the country where many people lost their

essential documents, affecting their ability to receive government assistance and SP.

Nevertheless, strengthening the resilience of communities and families remains at the core of our interventions, for example, the family budgeting sessions help families to plan their income and allocate funds to feed their children and send them to school while saving to cope with future shocks.

5.4. Civil society strengthening and collaborating with local actors

According to CIVICUS's State of Civil Society Report 2024, attacks on the civic space continued and civil society globally was tested again by a series of multiple and accelerating crises. In all SCF programme countries, local civil society actors continued to operate in an increasingly hostile environment in the shadows of crisis and conflict. CIVICUS rates the civic space in SCF programme countries either as obstructed (50%) or repressed (50%). For example, in Burkina Faso, authorities announced an extension of the transition to civilian rule by another five years, starting from July 2024, and the transitional military authorities have increasingly used abductions, enforced disappearances and mandatory military conscriptions to silence human rights defenders, opposition members and critics of the military transitional authorities. In Sudan, the last quarter of 2024 was the most violence since the war began nearly two years ago with significant violent attacks against children and other civilians continuing into 2025. The ongoing conflict has had a catastrophic impact on civilians with reports of over 27,000 deaths caused.

Local civil society and national actors, whether related CSOs or local governance actors, are essential in supporting child rights and humanitarian needs in all contexts as the localised approaches produce the best results for children to elevate their voice and leadership in driving sustainable results. In 2024 we continued the implementation of an SCI-wide localisation policy (adopted in 2020) and a set of institutional commitments, such as commitments to increase and diversify our partnerships with local actors, increase funding to local actors including women's rights organisation and youth/child-led groups, establish a principle of non-competition for funding and

the visibility of local and national actors in our work. For example, the Somalia CO took some significant steps towards localisation within their development and humanitarian programmes, allocating 31% of their budget to local partners, with commitment to increase this to 50% by 2027. The Somalia CO also provided indirect cost recovery for local partners and further enhanced collaboration and strategic partnerships with women's rights organisations, youth groups and OPDs. In our humanitarian work we worked towards ensuring that local and national actors actively participate in the design of the response and offer demand-driven capacity strengthening and supported to local and national actors' co-leadership in humanitarian coordination.

In 2024, we partnered with 33 local CSOs through formal project-related partnership agreements, as well as through more strategic partnerships aiming at strengthening broader civil society in our programme countries. We continued to engage with a wide range of local actors – such as child and youth groups, women's groups, parents' associations and community committees – to build their capacity to advocate for child rights and protect children. We strongly engaged and partnered with government actors at national, provincial/regional and local levels to strengthen their roles as duty bearers in child rights and child well-being and in strengthening the SP and CP systems in their respective countries. In addition, SCF collaborated actively with other INGOs in consortiums, thematic/country-level networks and with private sector actors.

In 2024 we entered our third year of the long-term organisational capacity development (OCD) process with five of our strategic partners in Nepal, Zambia and Burkina Faso. The OCD is a partner-led and partner-owned process which initially started back in 2019 to strengthen the CSO partners' capacities as independent actors. The capacity strengthening is primarily based on a holistic analysis of the recipient organisation, and prioritised weaknesses are addressed in a systematic way over the programme period, building on the organisation's priorities. The process is owned by the partner organisation and independent of other project-related support, focusing on the role of the partner as an independent and sustainable civil society actor rather than ensuring compliance of the project implementation. During 2024, our OCD partners focused on further improving their organisational policies, systems, tools and procedures in the organisation's best interest and for the future sustainability of these organisations. For example, in Nepal, our partner, the Community Development and Advocacy

Forum Nepal, and the Social Protection Civil Society Network conducted good governance trainings for members and staff, ensuring that they understand the necessary policy procedures, team structures and authority delegation. Following the training sessions, several policies were revised to clarify the roles and responsibilities and thereby ensure alignment with the organisation's context and implementation of new policies, such as safeguarding. In Zambia, the Young Women's Christian Association strengthened their partnerships and networking through promoted visibility and increased engagement with other CSOs and by taking a lead role in Safe Families sessions.

In Bhutan, significant progress was made within the EU / DG INTPA-funded project in improving the access of CSOs and media to policymakers and decision-making processes and strengthening their structured participation in policy dialogue; the Bhutanese CSOs were empowered to act as independent actors of good governance and inclusive development. They also continued advocating for policy changes and equipping CSOs and media with the necessary tools to engage effectively in governance processes, with a target of 60% improved access to decision-makers by 2026. Public outreach expanded with 178,280 citizens reached through media coverage on social and civil society issues. Other achievements included the development of the CSO-Parliament Engagement Framework and Operational Guidelines, achieving greater flexibility for CSOs in regard to meeting financial sustainability requirements and positive outcomes from the capacity-building of 166 individuals in governance, advocacy, research and financial sustainability, as well as from training programmes for journalists enhancing their understanding of CSO contributions to development.

In addition to the support for civil society and CSOs, SCF contributes to localisation, promotes local ownership and enhances the resilience and capacities of other key actors too, such as CP and health service providers, community committees, local councils, municipalities and local authorities. As widely described in the previous chapters, for the sustainable development results of our thematic approaches it is vital to integrate our support with existing public structures and strengthen the capacities of the actors there, when needed. In 2024, we continued to focus on enhancing public SP programmes and CP services in all programme countries, aligning the child sensitivity and related quality elements into these with the intention to scale up beyond specific projects. See Subsections 3.3 and 3.4 for the specific results.

6. LEARNING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

In 2024, insights from the internal Midterm Stocktaking Exercise, conducted the previous year, were put into action. Project-level action plans were implemented in collaboration with partners to address key findings and recommendations. Progress was systematically tracked at the project level, while the programme-level Action Plan was executed and regularly monitored by the SCF IP Team to ensure alignment with strategic objectives. During 2024, we also executed several internal exercises, learning sessions and analyses to prepare our next Global Programme Plan for 2026–2029.

The study, assessing the impact of gender-transformative elements within the Safe Families Common Approach, was continued in 2024. This initiative was a collaborative effort between the SCI Global Evidence and Learning Team, the Live Free from Violence Goal Team and the SCF-supported CP project in Zambia. The study aimed to pilot new monitoring, evaluation and learning tools specifically designed to measure gender attitudes through supplementary question blocks. The indicators assessed included the percentage of male and female caregivers who believe that men should actively participate in child-rearing and the percentage of boys and girls who hold gender-equitable attitudes.

Post-assessment data collection took place in 2024, following pre-assessment data gathered in 2023. A data analysis session brought together participants from SCF, the Zambia CO, the local partner and data collectors to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools used and to in-



In Zambia, both qualitative and quantitative data is gathered systematically as part of the implementation of the CP project. The photo shows female caregivers participating in the Safe Families programme together with Save the Children staff. Photo: Save the Children

terpret the findings. Preliminary results indicated that the Safe Families approach positively influenced participants' attitudes towards gender equality, with noticeable improvements in gender-equitable perspectives among boys, girls, women and men. The final report is currently under development and is expected to be completed and disseminated in 2025.

Another study commissioned in 2024 focused on the effectiveness of cash-plus case management in Somalia. The study is being conducted in collaboration with the SC Research and Evaluation Unit. The key research questions are: (1) How have the CP issues (school enrolment and attendance, child labour, family separation, child marriage, and physical and humiliating punishment) for households receiving CP case management plus MPCA changed compared with a control group receiving only CP case management? (2) What are the observed changes in food security and child well-being outcomes in the target households? and (3) How was the integrated approach delivered in the project areas? In 2024, the study protocol was developed and approved by the Ethics Committee, and data collection tools were developed. Data collection and reporting are scheduled for 2025.

A synthesis of the CSSP/cash-plus parenting approach impact studies and evaluations was initiated in 2024 to help inform and strengthen evidence for the approach in different contexts and will be completed in 2025. This will serve as a learning opportunity for SCF but also support the donor engagement around CSSP in the future.

Towards the end of the year, SCF initiated preparations for the endline data collection of programme indicators and the final thematic evaluations of the 2022–2025 programme, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the programme's relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence.

SCI's Key Performance Indicator on accountability measures the project performance in relation to core standards on information sharing, participation and feedback. In 2024, SCF-supported projects maintained a high level of compliance with 91% of projects meeting the required accountability criteria – comparable to the 93% recorded in 2023.

7. SUPPORT FOR THE SCI HUMANITARIAN FUND

The SC HF is a global mechanism for ensuring the fast and efficient distribution of flexible funding to humanitarian responses. It covers diverse categories of response, enabling SC to prioritise early action and preparedness activities, and to respond to the needs of children, regardless of external funding forces. In times of crisis, the swift deployment of resources can determine whether a child receives critical medical treatment, education, or emotional support—or endures extended hardship.

In 2024, the HF enabled frontline responders to act swiftly, allocating close to EUR 68 million to 71 countries, supporting them to reach 23.8 million people, including 12.7 million children. Nearly half of the allocations were fully flexible funding, with the rest earmarked for specific countries or regional responses. HF allocations made up only around 5% of the overall funding ambition outlined in the 2024 SC Humanitarian Plan, but this flexible funding was critical for SC and partners to deliver strategic, innovative and anticipatory responses. Throughout the

year, the HF allocated EUR 6.4 million towards anticipatory action and risk-informed preparedness in 47 SC COs. Consistent with SC's aim to be as local as possible and as international as necessary, SC also channelled EUR 10.9 million of HF funding to 106 local and national actors.

SCF contributed roughly EUR 2.8 million to the HF to support humanitarian responses, for example, the responses in Ukraine, Poland, occupied Palestinian territories, Syria and Lebanon. In Ukraine and Poland HF addressed the urgent needs of Ukrainian refugees through CP, education, MHPSS, livelihoods and CP advocacy activities. Two partner organisations in Ukraine have been able to increase their level of sustainability and to lead the newly created Education Subclusters in the west and north of Ukraine. These organisations coordinate the work of dozens of subcluster members and facilitate collaboration with authorities.



The family of Fatima inspecting the content of a food parcel from Save the Children, distributed to them by partner organisation Beir Lahia Development Association in Gaza. Photo: Beit Lahia Development Association/ Save the Children

8. CHILD RIGHTS AND BUSINESS, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS, COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

Child rights and business principles and corporate partnerships

Corporates and globally oriented foundations continued supporting SCF's work in Africa, Asia and in Ukraine in humanitarian crises and our thematic work, such as health and nutrition, and EiE. The work to promote child rights in the business setting, based on child rights and business principles (CRBP), continued with UN Global Compact Finland and UNICEF. We also trained partners' corporate key persons on CRBPs as part of the partnerships.

The Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive was approved in the European Parliament in April 2024, entering into force in June. The preparations for the implementation of this directive kicked off in Finland thereafter and SCF supported companies in promoting the need for a level playing field and a common set of rules. In addition, CRBP were promoted jointly with the umbrella organisations Fingo, the Finnish Business Society and Finnpartnership in ministerial meetings and in a big match-making event (Shared Goals) for corporates and CSOs in October.

Advocacy

On top of the advocacy wins of 2024 in the programme countries described in Subsections 3.3 and 3.4, SCF continued to advocate in Finland, specifically for including SP in development policy to reduce the inequalities caused by poverty and to ensure CP in humanitarian situations and armed conflicts. This was done through different hearings, meetings with and messages to Finnish parliamentarians and MEPs, and through networks in Finland and also at the EU level. The funding of development cooperation and humanitarian aid was in the scope of advocacy, particularly in regard to the response to overall budget cuts to the sector and supporting the continuation of Finland's support to UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the midst of the overwhelming humanitarian needs in Gaza. During the second half of the year, a particular focus of advocacy related to the Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation that was given to parliament in July 2024. The concerns around the report related to the shift of the

main aim of the development cooperation from poverty eradication to the promotion of Finnish trade, the lack of a specific child-rights perspective and the lessened focus on the least developed countries.

Communications

Prioritised themes communicated in 2024 were the access of children and their families to key services, like protection, CSSP and education. Issues highlighted throughout the year and by time-bound campaigning were child poverty and children in crises, including sub-theme like food security, livelihoods, climate change and children on the move.



Many of the reports of Save the Children published in 2024 gained wide media attention.

To advance the accountability and transparency of our programming, impact results were continuously delivered to supporters, stakeholders and wider audiences through all available social media and mass media channels. The newsletters and special editions of the organisation's magazine, Pelastakaa Lapset, alone reached in average 70,000 households in Finland. The organisation continued to have a strong presence on its social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and X). During the year, around 800 posts covering international topics were published. The impression engagement rate of 5.28% exceeded the overall target of the organisation. The campaign on children in crises alone reached a wide audience through 278 posts with 1.96 million views and an overall engagement rate of 37.6%.

Extensive media work was conducted for reaching wide audiences and raising awareness and understanding on aspects of development, child rights and humanitarian contexts. Over the year, altogether 878 news items at least mentioning the international work of SCF were registered across online, print and broadcast news outlets. Media coverage was particularly extensive related to the armed conflicts, particularly those in Ukraine and the occupied Palestinian territories. Also, the challenges of gender equality, as well as maternal and newborn health, got

attention in news media. The special broadcast of the *Tähdet, tähdet* TV music show in May, providing information on child rights needs globally, had an estimated 555,000 viewers. To complete the global education activities, SCF promoted the approach of 'safe spaces for children in crisis' in the World Village Festival in Helsinki and also presented education topics at the Educa Fair. We also collaborated with educational institutions and targeted young people through social media channels.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

SC has a globally established a set of risk management policies, procedures and tools and assigned staff members to put the policies into effect in every CO and through Global Risk Management Plans. In high-risk contexts – such as Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Somalia – SC has applied a complementary Awards Aid Diversion Risk Assessment tool. This tool helps to assess and mitigate the potential risks associated with SCF resources being diverted to terrorists or other sanctioned entities. Having these risk management policies, procedures and tools increases both SCF's preparedness for risks and its ability to identify potential risks and mitigate the impact of the risks at an early stage. At the IP level, SCF has developed a programme risk matrix which helps to identify the key programmatic risks, their potential impact and mitigation measures. At the individual project level, potential risks are already reviewed by both SCF and SC COs when a funding opportunity arises, applying the Go/No Go-Tool which allows for rapid analysis of the strategic fit, feasibility and risks of the potential project. At the proposal development phase, risks and project management complexity are assessed in more detail using the Proposal and Awards Risk Tool and the Awards Management Effort Tool. These tools are applied throughout the project implementation and high-risk projects are given extra attention and are monitored more frequently. Responsibilities for risk management are shared between SCF, SC COs and local partners; SCF provides oversight, training and resources to ensure compliance and effective implementation. The SCF Senior Management Team reviews the organisation's Risk Framework quarterly and Board of Members review it annually.

As part of the continuous improvement of our internal risk management, SCF updated its staff Code of Conduct and its statements on anti-terrorism finance and anti-money laundering in 2024 to increase the staff awareness of such matters and to ensure the alignment with SC global policies. There is also mandatory training on fraud, bribery and corruption and on terrorism financing awareness for all the SCF IP staff.

The SCF programme risk matrix was updated in 2024 related to the risks in operational environment, including strategic risks, due to changes in the US government and its implications for foreign aid and support to INGOs. While SCF stays non-compliant with the US government-imposed rules, we also continue working with other Nordic SC members to ensure that all our partners can also stay non-compliant and can continue working for human rights, child rights and women's rights in our programme countries. The possible implications of the political conditionalities of Finland's development cooperation, as well as the impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, were closely monitored by the SCF senior management during 2024.

Though in many of the SCF programme countries the operating environment was volatile and operating countries themselves are therefore of high risk, this did not have major effects on programme implementation. One risk that was realised was the cholera outbreak in Zambia, resulting in schools opening later than anticipated. Due to this, SC project activities, including direct engage-

ment with children, were scaled down and started later in March.

The risk regarding the shrinking space of civil society due to legislation was one of the risks realised in India in 2023 and it continued throughout 2024. The licenses for Indian NGOs to receive foreign funds is governed by the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. This license was not renewed for SC India (along with several other INGOs) in 2024 and resulted in SC India becoming una-

ble to accept foreign contributions. SCF's support to the CSSP programme in Rajasthan was put on hold in 2023 and remained on hold in 2024. Due to the sound legal and financial position of SC India, they continue to be eligible for operating with domestic funding and donations.

In 2024 SCF went through two major compliance audits, one linked to our ECHO funding and the other to the MFA programme. Overall, the results of the audits were positive with some recommendations for further improvements.

10. LINKAGES TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

SCF's Global Programme 2022–2025 is based on the UN-CRC and applies child rights programming and is human rights transformative. In 2024 we continued working with the rightsholders and the duty-bearers to influence the realisation of children's rights at family, community and systems levels. We supported children and families in better understanding their rights and realising them (accessing the services to which they are entitled). We also advised and supported national and local authorities to strengthen their knowledge of and capacities related to child rights and to strengthen their knowledge on how to make their public policies and programmes more child sensitive. Thus, our work continued to be fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda's key principles – leaving no one behind and supporting equality and non-discrimination – and it contributed to achieving several of the 2030 Agenda's SDG targets and indicators.

SC's 'Shifting power' agenda is closely aligned with the OECD/DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance, and it helps to support civil society actors as independent development and humanitarian actors. While updating the SCF strategy for 2025–2027 during 2024, localisation became one of its key approaches, including the sharing of resources.

In 2024 the Government of Finland published two key policies which guide development cooperation and hu-

manitarian aid, the Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation and the Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. SCF's programming in 2024 continued to be aligned with these new policy documents, with special emphasis on strengthening the rights of women and girls, sexual and reproductive health rights, education and CCA. Equally, disability inclusion and gender equality are strong cross-cutting elements in our programming. In addition, our programming principles are based on partnerships with civil society actors and the strong participation of children and their communities with the purpose of upholding democratic processes and promoting the right of participation. In 2024 we have also continued our work with the private sector on development co-operation and promoting CRBP through liaising with corporates.

11. SCF'S INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS IN 2024

In 2024 SCF's IP accounted for 56% of the total institutional income of the whole of SCF, with the income coming from a variety of funding sources. The EU continued being the biggest institutional donor with a share of 58% (EUR 17.1 million) of the total institutional donor income. Out of this, 37% was development funding from DG INTPA and 63% was humanitarian funds from ECHO. The funding from the MFA contributed to 19% of the total donor volume (EUR 5.6 million) with long-term programme funding, humanitarian funds and support to the co-funding of EU awards. The three other institutional donors – UNICEF, KfW (G5 Sahel Facility) and the World Bank – accounted for 23% of the total institutional funding in 2024. None of the institutional partnerships would have been possible without extensive fundraising from private donors, and our fundraising accounted for 19% of the total IP income.

Institutional donor	Income in MEUR	Funding share (%)
EU ECHO	10.8	36.5%
EU DG INTPA	6.3	21.3%
MFA-PBS	4.1	13.9%
MFA humanitarian funding	1.4	4.7%
MFA support for the co-funding of EU awards	0.1	0.4%
G5 Sahel Facility / KfW (Germany)	0.6	2%
UNICEF	6.2	20.9%
World Bank	0.1	0.3%
Total	29.6	100%

Table 5: Institutional income for SCF international work by funding source, in million EUR (excluding self-financing / SCF fundraising)

Out of the total institutional funding volume for SCF's IP, approximately 64% was focused on humanitarian aid. The growth of the share of humanitarian aid in recent years correlates with the changes in the political

and environmental context in the countries where SCF works. Many countries have faced a dramatic decrease in both civic space and human rights and an increase of poverty and armed conflicts, accelerated by the climate change and ongoing war in the case of Sudan and Ukraine. Our humanitarian work in 2024 was supported by the MFA, UNICEF and ECHO and focused on delivering aid to Ukraine, Somalia, Sudan and Nepal.

At the same time as the needs in our programme countries have increased, we have marked the shift in the funding context in 2024 more generally. Many of our key donors are facing political shifts away from traditional official development assistance and the future funding opportunities are decreasing at a very worrying speed, curtailing our possibilities to deliver aid where it is most needed.

In 2024, the MFA-PBS funding was channelled to six countries: Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland, Zambia, Nepal and the Philippines. This funding has played a key role in bringing more long-term impact and evidence, and thus, new funding; this has enabled us to deliver more sustainable programmes and develop our work further. Another strategically important part of the MFA funding in 2024 was the support provided to our EU awards' co-funding requirements, totalling EUR 135,269 and covering 50% of the co-funding needs of four projects in Sudan and Bhutan.

In 2024 we secured a new five-year development funding from G5 Sahel Facility in Burkina Faso and from UNICEF in Somalia (in both cases, the back donor is KfW). This funding (close to EUR 7 million in 2024) enables our work on reinforcing social cohesion and increasing the community-level resilience in Burkina Faso and cash assistance in Somalia.

We also became a registered vendor for the World Bank Group in 2024 and secured two consultancy contracts with the bank: one in Zambia with Genesis Analytics ('Inclusion of Cash Plus Care for Vulnerable Children affected by COVID-19') and another one in Bhutan ('Expanding Access to Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan').

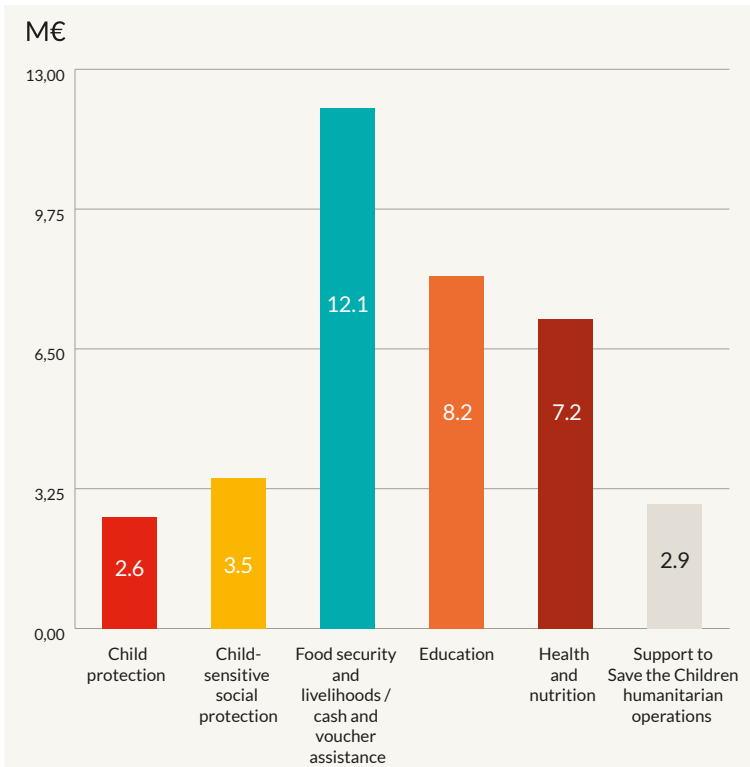


Figure 11: Expenditure by programme theme, in EUR, including self-financing

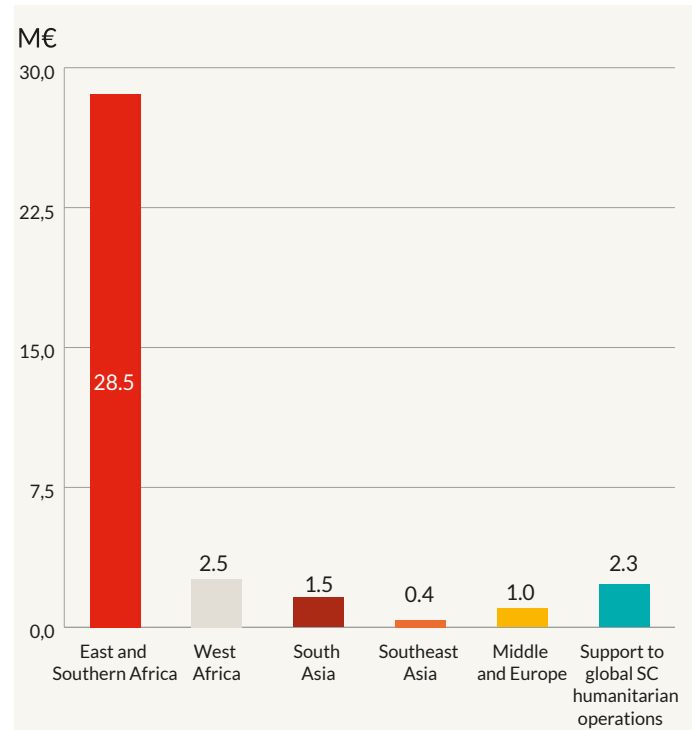


Figure 12: Expenditure by region, in EUR



Figure 13: Expenditure by the development status of countries, in EUR

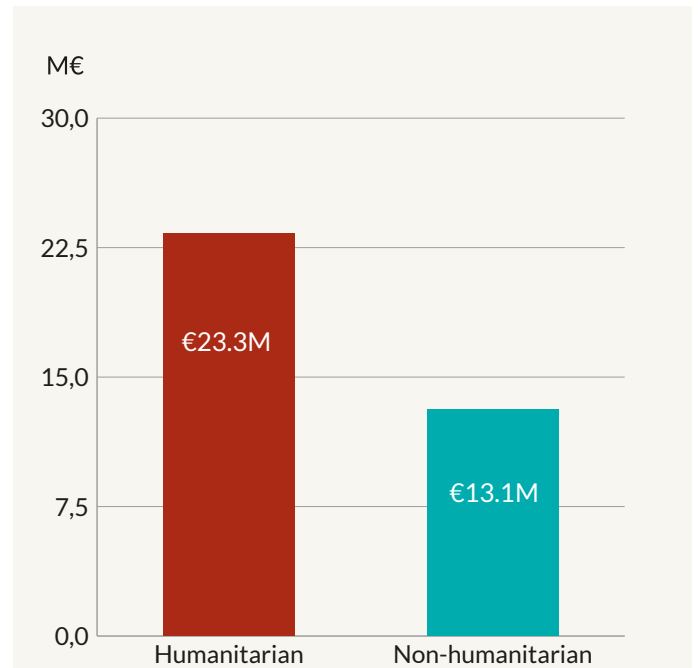


Figure 14: Expenditures by operational context, in EU



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OUR VISION

is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION

is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

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