



Save the Children

**INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAMME  
REPORT  
2022–2025**

**SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND**

# INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME REPORT 2022–2025

SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND

This report serves as the final report of the 2022–2025 programme 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 PHOTOS:

**Front cover:** Photo: As part of the humanitarian response in Sudan, Save the Children provides newborn and maternal health services. Photo: Mussab Hassona / Save the Children

**Back cover:** Children at a Save the Children supported school in Sudan. 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

<b>4Ps</b>	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme
<b>CCA</b>	Climate change adaptation
<b>ChP</b>	Child participation
<b>CM</b>	Case Management (in social services)
<b>CO</b>	Country office (of Save the Children International)
<b>CoP</b>	Centrality of Protection
<b>COP28</b>	United Nations Climate Change Conference 2023
<b>CP</b>	Child protection
<b>CPIMS</b>	Child Protection Information Management System
<b>CRBP</b>	Children's rights and business principles
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>CSSP</b>	Child-sensitive social protection
<b>CVA</b>	Cash and Voucher Assistance
<b>DATIX</b>	Save the Children's Incident Reporting and Case Management System
<b>DG INTPA</b>	EU Directorate-General for International Partnerships
<b>ECHO</b>	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
<b>EIE</b>	Education in emergencies
<b>FCRA</b>	Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (India)
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>FIBS</b>	Finnish Business & Society - corporate sustainability network
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>HF</b>	Humanitarian Fund (of Save the Children)
<b>HH</b>	Household
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organisation
<b>IP</b>	International Programme
<b>ISELA</b>	International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment Tool
<b>JCTR</b>	The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (CSO in Zambia)
<b>KfW</b>	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau ('Credit Institute for Reconstruction')
<b>MEAL</b>	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry for Foreign Affairs (Finland)
<b>MFA-PBS</b>	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Programme-Based Support
<b>MHPSS</b>	Mental health and psychosocial support
<b>MOLSAF</b>	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Somaliland)
<b>MPCA</b>	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
<b>MUAC</b>	Measure the upper arm circumference of children/ adults
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>OCD</b>	Organisational capacity development
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Aid
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	OECD Development Assistance Committee
<b>OI</b>	Outcome indicator
<b>OpT</b>	Occupied Palestinian territories
<b>PLGHA</b>	US Government policy "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance"
<b>PSEAH</b>	Protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial support
<b>RI</b>	Result indicator
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SC</b>	Save the Children (global organisation)
<b>SCC</b>	Somali Cash Consortium
<b>SCF</b>	Save the Children Finland
<b>SCI</b>	Save the Children International
<b>SCT</b>	Social Cash Transfer (Zambia)
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SOP</b>	Standard operational procedure
<b>SP</b>	Social protection
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>VSLA</b>	Village Savings and Loans Associations
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme

# FOREWORD

Save the Children Finland (SCF) has implemented its 2022–2025 Global Programme in a historical moment for the development sector. These years have been dangerous and disruptive for children in many places globally. Children have been living in humanitarian crises due to conflicts and climate-related hazards in locations ranging from Europe to several spots in Africa and Asia. These struggles that children face are not only numbers in reports or pictures in social media: these include individuals losing their homes, schools and loved ones due to devastating conflicts, violence, drought and hunger. It should never have to be this way.

Development funding, as we know it, is experiencing a historic decline: the ‘stop working order’ and new requirements given by the US government and other development funding cuts by many donors have shaken development aid. This downward trend is accelerating, with a further decrease projected for 2026. The continued shrinking of civil space was evident throughout continents and countries, with a broad rise in authoritarianism around the globe, paired with a retreat of personal rights of speech, assembly and privacy.

Despite all the challenges that children have faced, with the support of our donors, supporters and partners, we were able to make an impactful effort for child rights and development during 2022–2025. In our constantly changing working and funding environment, we managed to implement the programmes well. There was a steady increase in our total reach figures throughout the period, and the financial figures were strong: the overall expenditure of our International Programme approximately ranged from EUR 25 million to EUR 35 million annually. Partnerships with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), the EU and the World Bank continued and diversified our funding base during 2022–2025.

As the development sector navigates ongoing disruption, SCF has invested in thinking about how we sustain our impact. To reinforce the behavioural change of duty bearers and to sustain results, we also need future long-term funding and responsive and responsible national governments in both the Global south and Global north.

As the results in this report show, change is possible in child protection, in the fight against child poverty, and in securing the right to education and health in emergencies, but it requires time, resources, skills, and commitment from us and our partners.

Hearty thanks to our partners, Save the Children Country Offices, SCF staff and donors.

**Anne Haaranen**

Global Programme Director,  
Save the Children Finland

# 1. SAVE THE CHILDREN FINLAND INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME TOTAL REACH DURING 2022–2025

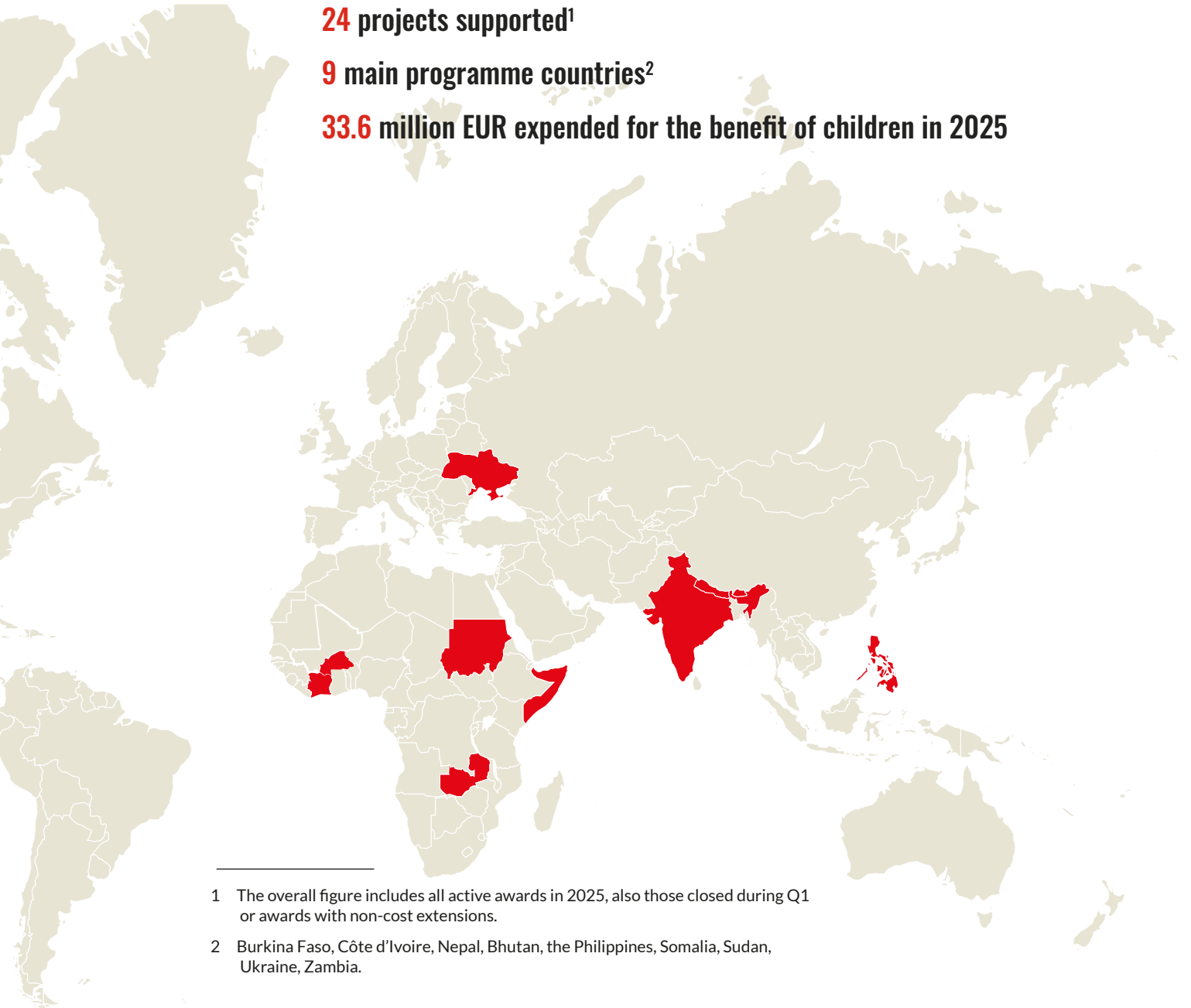
**384,595** children reached in 2025 (52% of them girls)

**808,471** adults reached in 2025 (89% of them women)

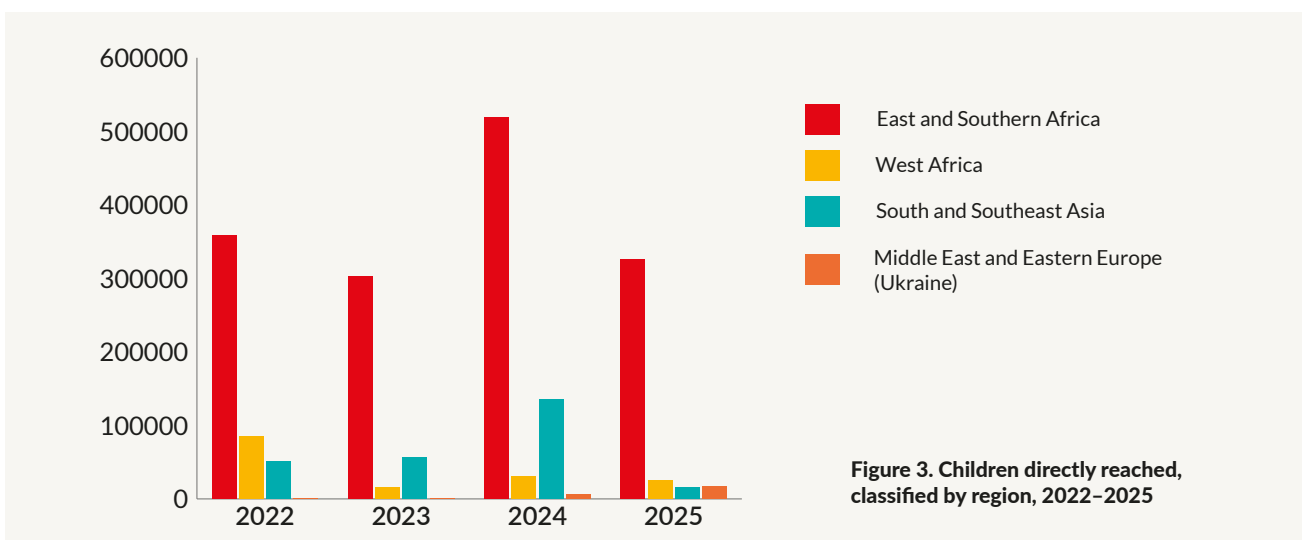
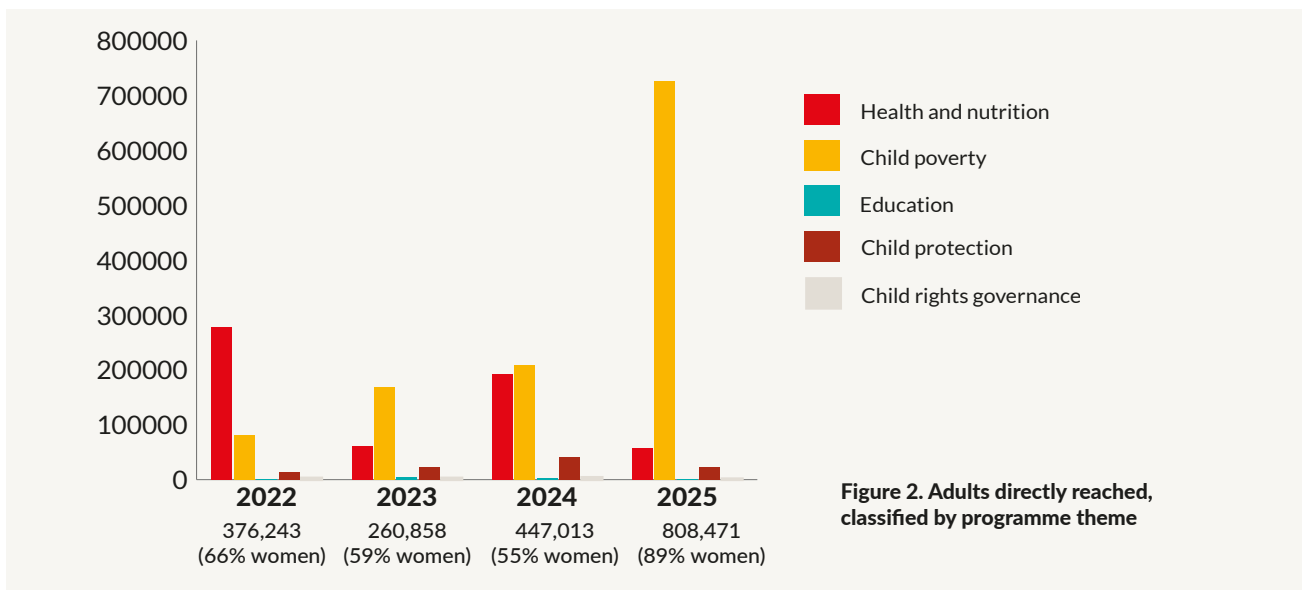
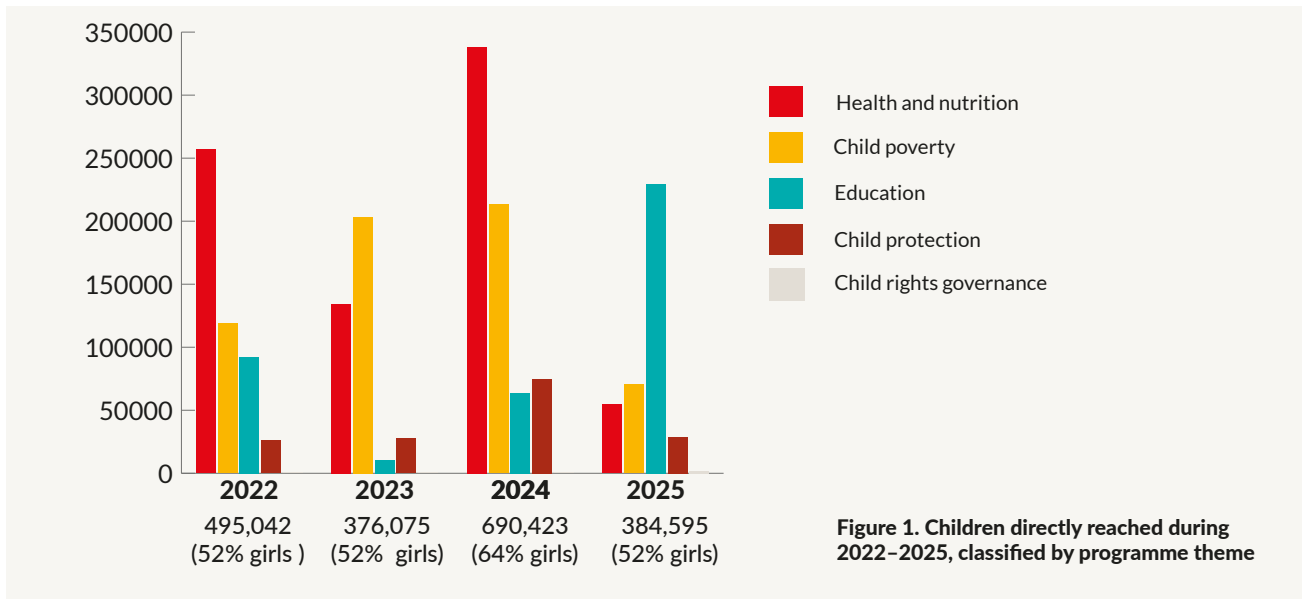
**24** projects supported<sup>1</sup>

**9** main programme countries<sup>2</sup>

**33.6** million EUR expended for the benefit of children in 2025



- 1 The overall figure includes all active awards in 2025, also those closed during Q1 or awards with non-cost extensions.
- 2 Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, Bhutan, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Ukraine, Zambia.



## 2. A SUMMARY OF THE PROGRAMME RESULTS FOR 2022–2025

This SCF<sup>3</sup> *International Programme Report 2022–2025* provides a comprehensive overview of the organisation's efforts to improve the lives of children across the programme countries, focusing on results contributing to the strategic goals and programme outcomes for child protection (CP), education, health and nutrition, and social protection (SP).

Across 2022–2025, the SCF programme generated measurable and lasting improvements in children's well-being, protection, development and access to essential services in highly diverse and often fragile contexts. The work consistently managed to translate resources into concrete change: more caregivers supporting their children's well-being, more responsive care, more children being protected from violence and receiving adequate support once survivors, stronger SP systems, better access to basic services and learning in safer environments. Central to these gains were partnerships with the responsible government actors in the programme countries, with the communities and with civil society organisation (CSO) partners, which paved the road towards impact at scale and supported long-term system strengthening. Across all the thematic areas, the programme demonstrated strong adaptability, especially in crises marked by displacement, drought, political instability or conflict.

CP outcomes demonstrated substantial transformation: over 145,000 children and caregivers accessed prevention and response services, and the quality and reach of these services expanded significantly. Community-based protection mechanisms, case management systems and integrated feedback structures created safer, more responsive environments while, on average, 86% of the formal and 46% of the informal CP service providers in four African programme countries now meet the required quality of service standards. Parenting programmes reshaped family relationships: while children expressed greater emotional well-being, caregivers shifted away from violent discipline and communities reported increased confidence in identifying and responding to protection risks. These changes were reinforced by broader norm shifts,

including improved gender attitudes and slowly increasing male engagement in parenting. Importantly, the SCF CP programme managed to influence national CP systems as well as legal and policy frameworks, advocating for 29 processes across the countries.

The child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) programme strengthened families' resilience by improving access so the entitlement to SP benefits for more than 53,000 individuals and, in addition, for more than 3,300 households (HHs). At the same time, these SP programmes were made more child sensitive through a variety of cash-plus approaches and by training of thousands of the caregivers who participated in parenting programmes. This showed a good impact on child development in all the programme countries. In Nepal, children in the intervention groups (from HHs participating in the Child Grant Plus parenting programme) achieved markedly stronger developmental outcomes than their peers, while in Zambia, maltreatment by caregivers decreased to nearly zero and the socio-emotional skills of children improved sharply. Parenting interventions also reduced school dropouts, improved cognitive and emotional development, and built stronger caregiver-child relationships. Evidence showed that combining cash with parenting support was significantly more effective – and more cost-efficient – than cash alone. System-level influence and collaboration were also the defining achievement. Governments in Nepal, Somaliland, the Philippines and Zambia adopted the policies, strategies and standards of SP, and became increasingly more child sensitive. In the Philippines, the integration of the parenting curriculum of SC into the national SP programme – the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (the 4Ps) – means millions of families from all over the country will benefit from improved caregiving long after programme funding ends. In Nepal, municipalities started to co-finance parenting components themselves, signalling their ownership and sustainability related to more child-sensitive poverty reduction.

In humanitarian settings, SC support played a critical role in safeguarding children's survival and access to basic

3 Save the Children Finland is referred to as 'SCF' while Save the Children is referred to as 'SC' and mostly means SCF and the Save the Children International Country Office (CO) together.

services amid conflict and displacement. In Sudan – despite the country facing one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world during the reporting period – both education and health and nutrition services supported by SC reached well beyond initial targets, drastically improving maternal care, safe deliveries and the early detection and treatment of malnutrition. Education support in conflict-affected states enabled tens of thousands of children to continue learning and helped revive schooling in places where education had nearly collapsed. Community-based protection structures re-emerged as reliable support systems, connecting families with services and strengthening local safety nets. In Somalia, in 2025 only, the humanitarian funding of the MFA) – as well as the ECHO and UNICEF-funded Somali Cash Consortium (SCC), which SC was part of – played a crucial role in providing unconditional cash transfers to meet the immediate needs of more than 18,000 vulnerable HHs while improving the protection, and health and nutrition of the beneficiaries. Similarly, in Ukraine, children living near the frontlines benefitted from protective school environments, improved shelters, psychosocial support and recreational spaces that helped restore emotional stability and a sense of normalcy under constant stress.

Child participation (ChP) flourished as a cross-cutting principle, with the intention to significantly influence the programme quality but also to follow the rights-based programming principles. The ChP criteria were met annually in 90–95% of the projects supported by SCF. Digital tools, such as the AskKids tool, opened new channels for safe, independent feedback, directly improving programme accountability. Apart from ChP, SC's vision for localisation was advanced through CSOs, youth groups, community committees and frontline volunteers taking on growing leadership roles in service delivery, accountability, awareness raising and system strengthening. Evaluations found that the programme strongly contributed to the strengthening of national CP and SP systems through the active partnership and involvement of governments and local actors at national, provincial/regional and local levels.

Following the lessons learnt throughout the programme, efforts and investigation were invested in creating more impact on gender equality. This was done through, for example, 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. Disability inclusion progressed while we managed to adapt programme spaces; target support and the inclusion of caregivers and children with disabilities; and collaborate with disability organisations. While the proportion of participating children with disabilities remained below desired levels, attitudinal shifts and community-level changes took place. Challenges persist though, especially in parental attitudes and facilitator skills, underscoring the need for deeper investment in accessible programming.

Climate change adaptation (CCA) emerged as an increasingly urgent dimension. While integration varied across contexts, important lessons were learned about the connection between climate shocks and rising protection risks and requirements for appropriate SP. Resilience building of families is a good asset against climate-related challenges, but the evaluations point to the need for more deliberate climate-responsive design, integrated risk analysis and stronger links between community action and CP and SP systems.

Overall, the programme not only achieved its intended outcomes but also strengthened the foundations for long-term, child-centred systems. By strengthening families' and communities' awareness of their entitlements to public services and advising authorities on child-sensitive policy and service delivery, the programme directly contributed to the 2030 Agenda's principles of leaving no one behind, equality and non-discrimination, and it advanced progress across several SDGs, including those related to health, education, gender equality, CP and CCA. The overall figures for the children reached by the programmes supported by SCF are depicted in the tables in Chapter 1.

# 3. SCF PROGRAMME COUNTRIES: THE MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OPERATIONAL CONTEXTS

## 3.1. East and Southern Africa

### Sudan

Between 2022 and 2025, Sudan moved from a fragile political transition to full-scale armed conflict and state fragmentation. Tensions following the 2021 military coup escalated throughout 2022 and culminated in open conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in April 2023, derailing prospects for civilian governance, deepening institutional collapse and triggering one of the world's largest and fastest-growing humanitarian crises. Sudanese people are facing a protracted armed conflict that has triggered a dramatic deterioration in civic space and humanitarian conditions with devastating consequences for child rights and CP.

According to OCHA, over 30 million people – more than half the population – require humanitarian assistance, including around 16 million children. More than 12 million people have been displaced, creating the largest child displacement crisis globally. Economic collapse, inflation and disrupted livelihoods have significantly increased child poverty, pushing families toward negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage.

Children have been disproportionately affected. As of the end of 2025, 13 million children are out of school due to widespread school closures, the destruction of infrastructure and the occupation of schools by armed actors or displaced families. The health system has largely collapsed, and 3.4 million children under five are at risk of deadly diseases. According to UNICEF, vaccination rates in Sudan have fallen to their lowest level in 40 years. An estimated 3.7 million children suffer from acute malnutrition, hundreds of thousands suffering with its severe form. In total, nearly five million children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women require urgent nutrition support.

Since April 2023, the six grave violations against children<sup>4</sup> in Sudan reached record-breaking levels, with the UN verifying thousands of cases of killing, maiming, sexual violence and recruitment into armed groups. Girls are at heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) while boys face elevated risks of military recruitment and forced labour. Psychosocial distress among children has increased sharply while access to mental health and psychosocial support services remains extremely limited.

Throughout the programme period, Sudan's civic space steadily deteriorated. The CIVICUS<sup>5</sup> Monitor continued to rate Sudan as repressed, reflecting systematic restrictions on freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly. CSOs, including child rights groups and humanitarian actors, faced harassment, bureaucratic constraints, security risks and limited access to conflict-affected areas. Since 2023, the environment has become even more constrained due to insecurity, communication



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

Two-year-old Bashir received treatment for an infection and malaria at a Save the Children health clinic in Sudan.

4 The UN Security Council has identified six grave violations against children in times of war: killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children.

5 CIVICUS is a global alliance of CSOs and activists working to strengthen citizen action and civil society throughout the world.

blackouts and the fragmentation of authority across territories controlled by different armed actors. At least 84 humanitarian workers,<sup>6</sup> all Sudanese nationals, have been killed since the current conflict began in 2023.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Sudan:

- Four humanitarian projects, funded by ECHO, were implemented across 13 states of the country, providing 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.
- An MFA-funded humanitarian project provided life-saving health and nutrition interventions in the Blue Nile and Gedarif states.
- A large development project funded by the EU (DG INTPA) provided formal and non-formal education services, school feeding, CP and child rights interventions in the North and South Kordofans, Red Sea, River Nile, Blue Nile and Sennar states.

## Somalia and Somaliland

From 2022 to 2025, Somalis faced protracted and complex humanitarian conditions amidst political and economic instability. Ongoing conflicts – involving state actors, clans and Al-Shabaab – continued to force the displacement of people across the region. Somaliland was a relatively stable political environment and was able to hold democratic elections with a post-election transition period. However, the socio-economic context in the region remained fragile, with limited employment opportunities and reduced HH incomes. Climate catastrophes worsened the situation, with recurrent droughts in the driest conditions recorded since 1981,<sup>7</sup> combined with intense flooding when rain did fall. This has resulted in livestock losses, reduced herd productivity and the rising cost of water, among other increased HH costs. The CIVICUS Monitor rated civil society conditions in Somalia and Somaliland as repressed throughout this time.

While 2022 started with 7.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance,<sup>8</sup> by the end of 2025, 7.5 million people – representing 39% of the population – were affected by the continuous and intensifying crisis of drought, conflict and disease outbreaks. The crisis situation is being compounded by the significant global funding cuts to humanitarian operations in 2025. Food assistance coverage dropped sharply, dropping from reaching 1.1 million people to reaching just 350,000 within a few months in 2025. More than 200 health and nutrition facilities were closed nationwide, and over 1.7 million vulnerable people lost access to protection services by late 2025.

Children continued to face protection risks, including school dropouts linked to child labour, vulnerability to early marriage, neglect and family separation. Cases of grave violations against children (including sexual assault, abductions and recruitment into armed groups) remained rampant. Displacement further exacerbated the risks faced by children, especially risks related to food consumption and inadequate assistance. Overall, the children whose rights are most affected are from urban poor, rural and nomadic pastoral communities. Girls and children with disabilities continue to be disproportionately affected.

Somalia's federal parliament ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in late 2025, with the government now legally obliged to align national laws and policies with the provision of the charter. Meanwhile, SC and SCF's work in Somaliland paved the way for both the Somaliland government's Child Rights Act (2023) and the launch of the Somaliland Social Protection Policy (2024). These achievements mark significant gains for the rights of Somali children.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Somaliland:

- A CP project funded by MFA Programme-Based Support (MFA-PBS) aimed to strengthen CP systems and provide high-quality response and prevention services, and parenting and child training sessions.
- An MFA-PBS-funded CSSP project aimed 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.

<sup>6</sup> UN meetings coverage, April 2025.

<sup>7</sup> UN OCHA Somalia Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026.

<sup>8</sup> UN OCHA Somalia Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2022.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Somalia:

- The MFA humanitarian funding contribution enabled vulnerable internally displaced person (IDP) and host families in Galmudug State to receive emergency cash transfers, CP services (including case management) and training for non-violent and gender-transformative parenting practices.
- In the ECHO-funded SCC, SC and other INGOs implemented unconditional cash transfers in order to meet the immediate needs of vulnerable HHs 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

Between 2022 and 2025, although maintaining relatively stable political conditions, Zambia faced overlapping economic, climatic and public health shocks that deepened child poverty and heightened protection risks. In 2022, the World Bank reclassified Zambia's *lower-middle income* status to *low-income* status, reflecting the country's deepening economic constraints and high debt burden. The structural and persisting poverty amongst the population groups (60% live below the poverty line, with rural poverty reaching nearly 79%), climate-driven food insecurity, and recurring cholera outbreaks continued to undermine children's well-being. The programme period was marked by the worst drought in decades in 2024, which affected 15.5 million people and pushed families toward harmful coping strategies such as child labour, early marriage and transactional sex affecting adolescent girls. A large-scale cholera outbreak during 2023–2024, with more than 23,000 cases, further strained services and led to repeated school closures, interrupting learning and increasing protection risks.

Despite the challenges, there were significant policy gains related to child rights, such as the Children's Code Act (2022) and the free education policy. Throughout the period, the CIVICUS Monitor consistently rated Zambia's civic space as obstructed, reflecting ongoing restrictions on freedoms of assembly and expression. However, the

operating environment for development actors was well supported by the line ministries and community structures and facilitated joint collaboration for increased access to CP and SP. In response to the crisis faced by the population, the government expanded shock-responsive SP, including emergency Social Cash Transfer (SCT) top-ups that reached over one million HHs, helping families meet basic needs amid rising food and fuel prices. SC collaborated with Zambian ministries on this, as well as on strengthened CP systems and improved case management services.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Zambia:

- An MFA-PBS-funded CP project strengthened children's access to online and offline protection services, reinforced formal and informal CP systems and fostered non-violent parenting and child rights in the Copperbelt Province.
- An MFA-PBS-funded project 'Moving from Social Protection to CSSP in Zambia' advanced CSSP by supporting vulnerable HHs' access to the government's SCT programme, strengthened community-level transparency and accountability systems, and improved parenting practices through the cash-plus parenting model delivered to SCT HHs.

## 3.2. West Africa

### Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is experiencing a severe, protracted humanitarian crisis. Extreme poverty, violence, food insecurity, climate disasters, GBV and early marriages affect many children in Burkina Faso, which is among the poorest nations in the world.<sup>10</sup> The violent conflict that has been sweeping across the Sahel region for several years has uprooted many families from their homes, disrupted children's learning and threatened their safety. Humanitarian needs remained high, with almost 4.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Different adverse trends involving political, security and humanitarian factors are contributing to the worsening of the humanitarian crisis. The two military coups of 2022 have led to, amongst other things, the country's

9 2022 Living Conditions Survey, Zambia Statistics Agency.

10 HDI 186/193, UNDP Human Development Report 2025.

withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States, raising concerns about regional integration and democratic development. In the meantime, the Alliance of Sahel States – an intergovernmental organisation initially founded as a mutual defence pact concluded between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso – was established in 2024. The government maintained general mobilisation and gave warnings on the fight against terrorism. The opportunity to restore democratic civilian governance through the postponed elections intended for July 2024 has not been realised. 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. Despite the volatile security context and the dramatic reduction in global humanitarian funding, which affected Burkina Faso severely, the UN OCHA coordinating body for the humanitarian response was able to maintain robust coordination.

The security and humanitarian crises have exacerbated the vulnerability of the population, especially the children, women and persons with disabilities. Children are exposed to high protection risks, such as poverty, low levels of school attendance and literacy, population displacements, various forms of violence and exploitation, and low coverage of protection services. The Ministry of Education announced that the gross enrolment rate for primary school had declined to 74.4% in 2023 but further announced an increase to over 100% for 2024. The international data on the primary enrolment rate remained below 80%<sup>11</sup> on average. At the same time, growing food insecurity affected around 2.7 million people with over 466,000 children under five years old at high risk of severe malnutrition. Despite the government's efforts to increase the cereal production and food self-sufficiency rates, there are significant regional disparities, particularly in the provinces affected by violence. Also, climate change and droughts have significantly worsened the ongoing crisis.

There is no reliable source for the exact numbers of IDPs in the country, but the total is estimated to be almost four-fold compared with that of 2019 at 2.1 million people, this rise being the fastest rise in the Sahel region. Most displaced families live without stable shelter, regular access to clean water or basic infrastructure. Loss of income, the breakdown of family and community structures, and pressure on local resources exacerbate their precarious situation in a context marked by mistrust and social ten-



PHOTO: NADINGA TABRIMANI / SAVE THE CHILDREN

As part of Save the Children's humanitarian response in Burkina Faso in 2025, food was distributed to internally displaced people.

sions. This especially affects the youth, linking up with marginalisation, low access to services, mistrust and the dissemination of hate messages on social media, further stressing social cohesion. The CIVICUS Monitor continues to rate the civic space conditions in Burkina Faso as obstructed. The government has strengthened control over the activities of CSOs and prior authorisation from the relevant authorities slows the implementation and monitoring down occasionally.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Burkina Faso:

- An MFA-PBS-funded CP project aimed 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 acting 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

The deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, particularly in Burkina Faso and Mali, continues to trigger significant cross-border movements into Côte d'Ivoire. Only in 2025, more than 82,000 people, including nearly 38,000 school-aged children, crossed the border seeking asylum, most of whom were granted prima facie refugee status. This massive influx of displaced people has had

11 <https://www.ceicdata.com/en/burkina-faso/social-education-statistics/bf-school-enrollment-primary--gross>.

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 central Sahel will spill over into the coastal countries is growing significantly.

Despite the humanitarian crisis on the border areas, the economic situation remained relatively stable in the country in general. Côte d'Ivoire maintains its role as a regional economic engine, representing 40% of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union's GDP and ranking as the world's leading producer of cocoa and cashew nuts. According to IMF projections, throughout the period of 2022–2025, the projected GDP growth was above 6%. Despite this performance, sustained growth masks deep socioeconomic inequalities that are particularly notable between Abidjan and the rest of the country. Poverty still affects 37.5% of the population, while more than 90% of the workforce operates in the informal sector, limiting their access to sustainable livelihoods. Regional disparities, food insecurity, limited coverage of essential services and the absence of universal SP profoundly affect children and vulnerable families.

The Ivorian civil society conditions are continuously considered as obstructed by CIVICUS. A new order on the organisation of civil society and the corresponding draft ratification law was adopted in 2025, and this allows the authorities to exercise surveillance and control over civil society. Ahead of the elections in 2025, the main opposition candidates were banned from running and civil society supporters were restricted.

Although Côte d'Ivoire has ratified the main international instruments for child rights and the policy framework has improved during 2022–2025, national survey data shows the persistence of violence, abuse and neglect. More than half of all children have been exposed to physical or psychological violence, and 27% of young women aged 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18. In addition, it is estimated that nearly 29% of children aged 5 to 17 work outside of home. This indicates that the implementation of the policies and legal framework remains constrained by limited institutional capacities and resources, and strong social demand.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 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' aimed to strengthen the SP system by enabling the most vulnerable children and their families to access it and a complementary parenting programme.

## 3.3. Asia

### Nepal

Nepal has made immense progress towards improving the lives of children during the past few decades. Considerable developments have been made in child-focused policies as a result of increased investments in healthcare, SP and education. However, Nepal's long-lasting success in poverty reduction is threatened by the widening income gap that is driving political instability and social unrest.<sup>12</sup>

During 2022–2025, the CIVICUS Monitor kept rating the civil society conditions in Nepal as obstructed and in 2025 children and young people defined as Gen Z took to the streets to protest their concerns about corruption and demanded greater accountability and transparency from the government. The demonstrations quickly escalated into violent confrontations as the state responded with excessive force. The Gen Z-led movement in Nepal resulted in grave and widespread violations of children's rights, exposing critical weaknesses in the country's CP systems during political unrest. Ultimately, the protests led to the resignation of the Nepalese Government in September 2025.

Nepal's progress in the past decades is also being put at risk due to natural disasters and climate-related crisis, which pose disproportionate risks to children and their families. This is aggravated by the limited ability of communities to adapt to and rapidly recover from unexpected shocks. In November 2023 a magnitude 6.4 earthquake heavily affected Nepal's Karnali Province and the western district, causing delays in SC project implementation.

12 World Bank: Poverty and Equity Brief Nepal 2025.



With support from local authorities and the CSSP project in Nepal, Harikala was able to secure disability allowance for her son.

In 2022, the government directed INGOs to implement their projects through local partners, and SC also increasingly aligned its CSSP programme to local government actors. After the revision of the Citizenship Act in 2023, more individuals were able to obtain their citizenship certificates, which facilitated the support of an increasing number of eligible people accessing SP allowances. During the same year, the Department of National ID and Civil Registration endorsed the SC Parenting Guidelines as part of its Child Grant, which helped to create a supportive environment for SC's programme expansion. In addition, the Government of Nepal prioritised SP at all levels, and the National Planning Commission emphasised integrated SP systems in its 16th five-year periodic plan (2024/25–2028/29), officially recognising SP as a key strategy for poverty reduction in the country. CSOs, including the Social Protection Civil Society Network, actively contributed to shaping these policy directions.

#### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Nepal:

- The MFA-PBS-funded 'Realising the Rights of Children through CSSP (Pahunch)' project aimed to ensure that SP policies and programmes are child sensitive and result in improved development outcomes for children.
- An ECHO-funded project in which SC, in a consortium led by People in Need, strengthened 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

In the Philippines, the robust and growing economy has boosted poverty reduction, accompanied with strong national SP programmes. According to the World Bank,<sup>13</sup> the population living in poverty reduced from accounting for 18.1% of the population to accounting for 15.5% between 2021 and 2023, and the falling unemployment rate and rice price index suggest that the poverty will continue to decline. However, due to global economic uncertainty, the future poverty projections remain unpredictable.

During 2022–2025, the Philippines was ranked as the most disaster-exposed country according to the World Risk Index. The Philippines sits on the seismically active Pacific Ring of Fire where earthquakes are frequent. In 2025, magnitude 6.9 and 7.4 earthquakes struck Cebu and off the coast of Davao Oriental, leading to casualties and destroying or damaging classrooms and school facilities. According to OCHA, the Philippines has also experienced increasingly massive and more frequent tropical cyclones, totalling 20 by early November in 2025 alone. In October 2024, Typhoon Kristine prompted widespread evacuations, affecting 805,000 families and disrupting learning for more than 90% of the children in schools. The role of the national 4Ps (the SP programme) and the cash provided through it have been instrumental to the most vulnerable families in responding to these disasters. SC's parenting approach, scaled up through the 4Ps nationwide, will continue to increase the resilience of the families in relation to both climate and natural hazards.

During 2022–2025, CIVICUS Monitor continued to rate the state of civic space in the Philippines as *repressed*. Harassment and attacks against journalists have been documented by civil society. In the past years, activists and other dissenters have been arrested and detained for prolonged periods, often on fabricated charges. In May 2024, the Philippine Supreme Court issued a ruling where it declared that the red-tagging of human rights defenders threatens the right to life, liberty and security.

#### The project supported by SCF in 2025 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

13 World Bank: Poverty and Equity Brief Philippines 2025.

## Bhutan

Bhutan has been committed to improving the rights and well-being of children for decades. The extreme poverty in Bhutan has virtually vanished from the country according to the 2022 Bhutan Living Standards Survey. Also, literacy, sanitation and caloric intake have improved in the past years. According to the World Bank,<sup>14</sup> remittances and social transfers have played a key role in poverty reduction, especially in rural areas. However, poverty remains unevenly spread between urban and rural areas as most of the poor continue to live in the countryside.

CIVICUS Monitor has rated the state of civic space in Bhutan as obstructed. In respect to this, SC's CSO project in Bhutan focused on strengthening the enabling environment underpinning civic space and developing more structured avenues for policy dialogue. In terms of press freedom, Bhutan's ranking dropped from 147<sup>th</sup> place out of 180 countries in 2024 to 152<sup>nd</sup> in 2025, according to the World Press Freedom Index. Correspondingly, the EU-funded civil society strengthening implemented by SC has enhanced CSO and media collaboration and increased public-interest reporting on social and governance issues, thereby reinforcing the media's role as a key accountability actor. One example of the stronger and more structured CSO engagement in legislative processes was the adoption of the Marriage Bill (Amendment) by parliament in 2025, setting the legal marriage age at 18 years old for both women and men. This marked a significant milestone for gender equality and CP.

### Projects supported by SCF in 2025 in Bhutan:

- An EU / DG INTPA co-funded project aimed at strengthening Bhutanese CSOs as independent actors for good governance, including supporting and empowering youth and children to claim their rights and hold duty bearers accountable.
- SCF provided consultancy services as a contracted vendor for the World Bank in a project called 'Exploring Options to Expand Access to Childcare in Bhutan' that aimed to conduct assessments of the childcare situation and workplace crèches and to develop a training package that enhances the knowledge, skills and competencies of childcare service providers in early childhood care and development activities.



PHOTO: YURI LAVRYK / SAVE THE CHILDREN

In Ukraine, Stefaniia was able to resume classroom learning in a shelter renovated with support by Save the Children and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

## 3.4. Support to Ukraine

The full-scale war in Ukraine has changed the lives of 7.5 million children forever. Children have been forced from their homes and schools, lost loved ones and friends, and lived in fear as air raid alerts, drones and explosions consume the world around them. From children living on the frontline of the war to those who have been displaced from their homes, the scale of loss is catastrophic. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, the year 2025 was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since 2022, with the total number of killed and injured civilians being 31% higher compared with the figure for 2024 and 70% higher than the figure for 2023.

A third of children in Ukraine are missing out on full-time, in-person learning because they live too close to the front line or because their schools are not equipped with a bomb shelter. They also miss the chance to see and connect with their friends and teachers, creating a sense of loneliness and isolation. The bombings and shelling have affected 3,745 educational institutions, with 394 of them destroyed. Beyond the physical devastation, growing up in a conflict has significant impacts on children's mental health, with 63% of HHs reporting at least some form of mental health challenge in their family. Children are particularly vulnerable, with an estimated 1.5 million children at risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other mental health issues.

### The project supported by SCF in 2025 in Ukraine:

- MFA humanitarian funding improved access to education, protection and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for conflict-affected children in Sumy and Kharkiv Oblasts, also supporting their teachers and caregivers.

14 World Bank: Poverty and Equity Brief Bhutan 2025.

## 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 Strategic Goals of SCF are illustrated below in

Table 1. 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). Below, the main elements of the impact of our programming, based on the thematic outcomes for 2022–2025, are described in chapters.

OUR AMBITION FOR CHILDREN: 2030 BREAKTHROUGHS			
<p><b>SURVIVE</b> No child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday</p>	<p><b>LEARN</b> All children learn from a quality basic education</p>	<p><b>BE PROTECTED</b> 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><b>OUTCOME 1:</b> 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><b>OUTCOME 2:</b> 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><b>OUTCOME 3:</b> 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.

## 4.1. Children and adolescents receive the services they need in a timely manner

### Humanitarian and development projects in Sudan in 2025

Despite the ongoing conflict and highly constrained operating environment in 2025, SC maintained a presence in 13 of Sudan's 18 states. Working closely with national and international partners, SC delivered life-saving humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable populations, including newly displaced people, returnees and communities cut off in active conflict areas.

During 2025, the MFA funded humanitarian project significantly expanded access to essential health and nutrition services, reaching 34,639 people (that figure being 160% of the annual target) across four strengthened health facilities in Gedarif and Blue Nile. Service quality and utilisation improved markedly due to skilled staffing, reliable supplies and upgraded infrastructure. Maternal health services supported over 2,000 pregnant women and enabled 609 safe deliveries, while nutrition activities screened 5,687 children and treated 866 acute malnutrition cases, complemented by the strong uptake of the SC's Assida Plus programme. The project adapted effectively to rising IDP influxes, maintained continuity despite supply shortages and strengthened community outreach and staff capacity. Disability-inclusive measures, including accessibility improvements and staff training, ensured more equitable service access for all.

Through the ECHO-funded health and nutrition programme, life-saving health and nutrition services were delivered to 58,585 vulnerable people in 14 states<sup>15</sup>. By ensuring access to safe and rehabilitated healthcare centres, 27,511 patients received outpatient consultations. In addition, through the crisis modifier 16,980 people were reached with emergency support activities for a cholera outbreak. More than 31,000 children under five were screened for malnutrition using MUAC tapes

by trained community nutrition volunteers and nutrition staff, enabling early detection and timely treatment. Furthermore, in 2025 SCF's continuous efforts included scaling up screening, treatment and nutrition-sensitive interventions and treating, screening and referring children with severe or moderate acute malnutrition to treatment. Across the health facilities supported by SC, a total of 821 live births were attended by a skilled health staff, trained by the Ministry of Health.

Despite the widespread destructions and closures of schools, SC and national partners were able to enrol a total of 17,292 boys and 20,694 girls into formal education and 1,196 girls and 1,205 boys into non-formal education facilities with ECHO funding for EiE and CP. Additionally, SC registered a total of 40,387 students into alternative education programme classes. Both formal and non-formal education activities were implemented to ensure continued access to safe learning opportunities for children, while 262 teachers received teaching materials and 307 teachers improved their knowledge and teaching skills through training sessions. To address the negative effects of the conflict on children, integrating CP into learning activities was essential. The access to quality case management services for children and their caregivers has been improved and 75 children's and caregivers' needs have been addressed through these services.

The project funded by INTPA and implemented by a consortium led by SC<sup>16</sup> significantly expanded access to formal education, supporting the enrolment of 64,408 children.<sup>17</sup> In addition, 1,995 children were enrolled in Accelerated Learning Programmes and catch-up classes which substantially improved the access to education for out-of-school children or those lagging behind due to displacement or other vulnerabilities. This progress was possible, despite conflict and operational constraints, due to strengthened community mobilisation, targeted advocacy and close coordination with local education authorities. Also, the school feeding programme, reaching over 65,000 children, has made schools more attractive to families, enhancing learning as well. The efforts to restore education in conflict-affected areas have generated positive spillover effects, including encouraging teachers' return and prompting the Ministry of Education to reopen schools beyond the project's direct reach,

15 The North, Central, West and South Darfur states and the North and South Kordofans, Khartoum, Blue Nile, Red Sea, White Nile, River Nile, Sennar, Aj Jazirah and Gedaraf states.

16 In partnership with four local partners: Sabah, SORR, JFC and CDF, and one international partner, World Vision.

17 Total reach being 37,928 boys and 39,722 girls (including 655 children with disabilities) across North Kordofan, South Kordofan, Red Sea, River Nile, Blue Nile and Sennar states.

demonstrating that education can be sustained even in highly insecure and complex contexts.

In addition to education, 2,547 children have received CP services through comprehensive case management support with INTPA funding. Moreover, almost 2,000 caregivers participated in monthly Safe Families sessions led by trained SC social workers, and special attention was given to engaging fathers. Caregivers reported greater confidence in managing child behaviour and fostering emotional bonds, while communities increasingly embraced shared responsibility for CP and the well-being of all children. Currently there are 26 Community-Based Child Protection Networks functioning across the six states and one multi-purpose centre for children is fully operational, with preparations underway for a new centre in River Nile. These structures are strengthening community-level CP systems, providing safe spaces for children, supporting the early identification of protection risks and fostering stronger linkages between families, schools and local authorities.

## Humanitarian projects in Ukraine in 2025

Supported by the MFA, SC – with its partners Posmishka UA and the League of Modern Women – implemented CP and MHPSS activities in the Kharkivska and Sumska oblasts and ensured safe and conducive school environments for children in the Sumska oblast. With children's lives in both front-line areas severely impacted on by the war, by the end of 2025 the project had benefited over 3,000 children and 172 caregivers with CP activities, while 25 schools (with almost 15,000 children enrolled) received school furniture, three schools' infrastructure was improved and 125 teachers and facilitators received psychological first aid and well-being training.

Children and teachers who can attend school in person in Sumska often study in shelters (such as basements), with frequent interruptions caused by air alerts. This is a stressful learning environment. Training provided to teachers helps them to not only enhance their emotional resilience but also helps them to support children's stress reactions, feeling of safety and the creation of a more focused learning environment. In close coordination with the Department of Education, SC provided 803 benches to 25 schools so that children have seating in protective shelters during air alerts. Three schools were renovated in the project period to further improve safety and functionality in their shelter spaces, the renovations including

acoustic curtains to divide larger spaces into classroom settings and better ventilation systems and latrine facilities to ease the time spent underground.

Outside of school, 1,526 children in Kharkivska and 278 in Sumska participated in recreational activities in child-friendly spaces, kindergartens, libraries or community centres. Children reported that these engaging spaces helped them communicate better and feel happier and calmer. They also reported that the close to 200 structured MHPSS sessions helped them adapt to new environments, form friendships and cope better with stress. The children completing full PSS cycles resulted in improved emotional expression, reduced anxiety and enhanced peer interaction. At the family level, SC's partners held Safe Families sessions for 172 parents and 57 children. The participants described having built stronger emotional bonds and connected with other families. Monitoring visits confirmed high levels of engagement and visible improvements in parent-child interaction.

## 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's 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 the projects it supports in order to drive accountability for children and communities, to strengthen project impact and to create opportunities for children's voices to be heard. In 2025, 90% of both humanitarian and development projects supported by SCF met the designed accountability criteria. This means, for example, that in 90% 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 regarding how their participation influenced the decision-making.

According to the monitoring data, the CP programming managed to foster ChP significantly. Children were placed at the centre of the programme – not just as beneficiaries but as active agents of change. Across all four countries in Africa where the CP programme was implemented during 2022–2025, children were given structured opportunities to voice their views, lead initiatives and influence decision-making, strengthening their sense of agency, protection and inclusion. For example, in Côte d’Ivoire, children’s parliaments were revived, enabling children to create action plans and lead advocacy on digital rights, environmental protection, GBV and child domestic labour. In Burkina Faso, through group discussions, children shared experiences on issues like violence and child marriage and reported increased confidence, improved family relationships and reduced peer violence. Many took on roles in conflict resolution and respectful communication at home and school and over 1,500 children received training in rights, life skills and leadership, resulting in school awareness sessions and community forums.

The Finnish innovation for child accountability and participation, the digital AskKids tool, provided a safe and independent way for literate and illiterate children to give feedback in their own languages, strengthening accountability. The feedback collected through AskKids in Burkina Faso directly helped to adjust our programme contents and schedules, to improve communication with parents and to integrate more practical activities (such as beading sessions and the production of reusable sanitary pads) into activities, reflecting the children’s expressed preferences and constraints. AskKids significantly strengthened ChP by enabling children to express themselves freely and individually, which proved to be particularly inclusive for younger children with limited literacy and for more reserved participants, with 95% of participants reporting that they could speak without fear of judgment.

In Somaliland, ChP was operationalised through child rights groups, disability inclusive clubs, storytelling training and peer-to-peer sessions. Children led campaigns on FGM, child marriage, school dropouts and environmental actions (like a youth-led tree-planting initiative tied to COP28). They also represented their peers at regional and global forums, raising concerns about climate change and inequality. In Zambia, children participated in Safe Families sessions, and also in school councils and community child rights groups, advocating for the prevention of violence, promoting online safety and education. Two children joined the national parliament, with one presenting at the SADC summit. A child-led research project in



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

Members of a Save the Children–supported child rights club in Burkina Faso discuss child rights and related responsibilities with representatives of local social services.

Kitwe focused on teenage pregnancy and led to a local action plan. Children also shaped school infrastructure improvements through structured feedback. In addition, ChP was promoted in humanitarian contexts, such as Sudan and Somalia, through multi-purpose centres and child-friendly spaces. 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.

### 4.3. Life without violence: Child protection

In 2025 an overall external programme-level evaluation of the CP programming during 2022–2025 was commissioned by SCF. The independent evaluation team looked into, among other aspects, the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence of the CP programming. The evaluation was based on a mixed-methods approach, combining extensive desk review, focus group discussions and key informant interviews with staff, partners and government actors. The endline outcome indicator data of the four projects formed the basis of the analysis. Please see the overall evaluation report annexed to this report.

## A summary of the overall impact findings on the CP programme in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia:

**Strengthened community and national CP systems** are now contributing to longer-term protective environments in the countries in which we work. Community-level innovations across countries – like child-friendly spaces, One Stop Centres and integrated feedback mechanisms – are promising results. Local partnerships and community-based implementation contributed to making our programming more cost-effective too.

**Impact was reached at scale:** Over 145,000 children and adults accessed prevention and protection services, partly exceeding the targets. The Safe Families training sessions reached thousands of parents and children, having transformative effects on caregiver–child relationships, parenting practices and child well-being.

**Gender and social norm shifts took place:** Evidence from Zambia showed statistically significant changes in attitudes toward male caregiving, while Côte d'Ivoire's gender-transformative model engaged male advocacy groups and community leaders to shift entrenched norms around gender-based violence. However, having an impact on deep-rooted social and gender norms remains a challenge, and there is some disparity between countries in reaching targets.

**CP service quality improved:** Formal services improved in all countries in terms of quality and coverage, with children and caregivers increasingly aware of where and how to seek support. Informal services remain uneven in quality, and access to services, including services for children with disabilities, is still often limited.

**Inclusivity was integrated in the programming:** Children with disabilities took on leadership roles (e.g. in child rights clubs in Somaliland), while participatory tools like AskKids enabled the safe expression of views and improved the responsiveness of children.

**The policy influence was effective:** The programme supported or contributed to 29 national CP-related laws, policies, guidelines and studies, including alternative care and foster care laws in Côte d'Ivoire and both an information management system rollout and case management reform in Somaliland.

Regarding **effectiveness**, the evaluation states that although families and children continue to face significant vulnerabilities due to HH poverty, widespread violence, socio-cultural beliefs and persistent challenges in service reach in our programme areas, a lot has been

achieved, and the expected outcomes of the programme have been reached. Moreover, the consistent use of monitoring tools from the baseline at the beginning of the programme through to the endline was considered effective. The most relevant data and evaluation analysis are presented below per outcome:

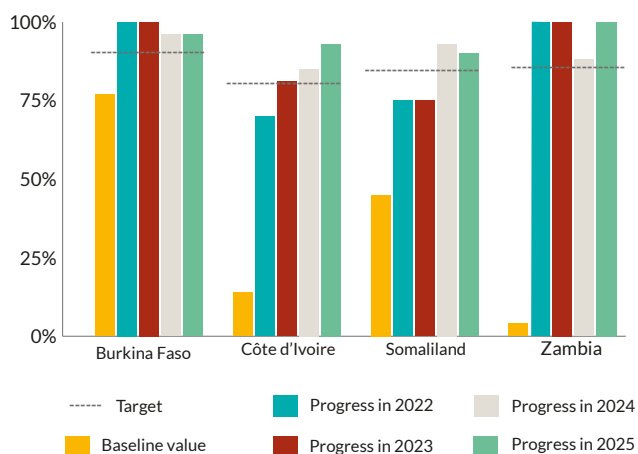
### OUTCOME 1: CHILDREN'S AND FAMILIES' ACCESS TO SERVICES HAS IMPROVED

The programme strengthened access to quality CP services for girls and boys through community-based approaches, case management and the capacity building of social service providers. 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/Somalia 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.

The numbers of children and community members accessing services with the support of the SC programme (indicator R 1.2.2) exceeded the targets for 2022–2025 in Burkina Faso (50,049 persons) and Côte d'Ivoire (43,314 persons). In Somaliland, the target was nearly reached (12,186 persons accessed services), while in Zambia the number of persons accessing CP services remained below the target (7,058 persons). Differences in these figures across countries were largely the result of varying interpretations of the indicator and the reporting tool, particularly regarding the definition of a direct beneficiary and regarding setting the target levels. In Zambia and Somaliland, the target levels were based on the total reach figures, although the access indicator refers to a more limited population and is not equivalent to overall total reach. Given these ongoing interpretation challenges, this indicator and its tool are no longer applied in the new programme phase.

Case management is an elemental part of CP services that SCF programming intends to increase, both in terms of access and quality. This work is also supported by the roll-out of inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the Child Protection Information System (CPIMS) and Primero so that all CP case workers and service providers use the same reference point.

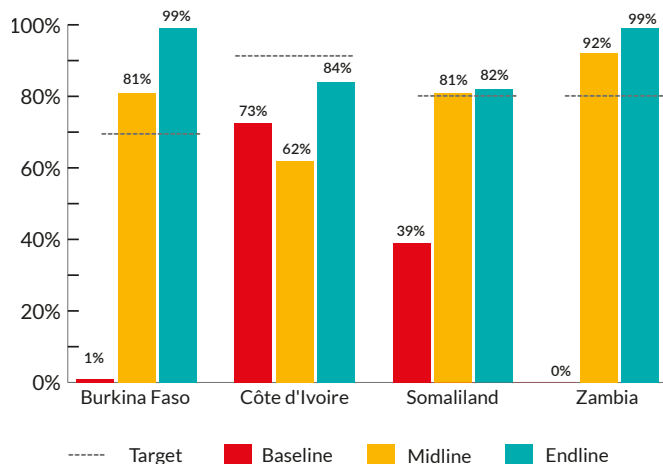
Throughout the case management process, the involvement of children and their families in planning and decision-making has been one of the key principles. To assess the quality of our supported case management services, we conducted interviews with children and their caregivers who have received assistance and measured the satisfaction of children and caregivers with the case management service received. The data for this outcome indicator (OI 1.2) below shows that each of the projects has exceeded its target for this indicator:



**Figure 4. The percentage of children and caregivers who reported satisfaction with the services received and the response actions given through the case management process. Note that for Burkina Faso the baseline value is high as the baseline took place in locations where case management has already been supported through previous projects. Also, in Zambia the decrease in 2024 compared with 2023 was due to the small sample size and one case which was not completed.**

Despite the high levels of satisfaction with existing services, there are still weaknesses in the case management processes, mainly linked to technical staff capacities and under-resourcing by governments. The evaluation recommends that in SCF's next programme it continues to invest not only in training but also in a comprehensive professional development system (including structured supervision, mentorship and workload management) to ensure quality services in challenging contexts.

One crucial element of improved access to services is the ability and confidence to seek support when in need. During 2022–2025, the share of those children and adolescents in the project areas who would ask for help and know a place they can go for help in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence rose steadily, as can be seen in the graph on the right (indicator RI 1.2.1.). The sample size of interviewed children varied between 363 and 420 in different countries.



**Figure 5. The percentage of female and male children and adolescents who would ask for help and know some place they can go for help in cases of emotional, physical or sexual violence.**

There were several examples of the new services being increasingly community led. In Côte d'Ivoire, the establishment of the so-called One Stop Centres in the project communities has enabled the provision of legal and psychosocial support for child survivors of violence (including sexual and GBV) – a service that previously did not exist in these locations. In Zambia, the government noted success in coordination among key stakeholders in Ndola district, resulting in referrals of children to CP services. A directory of service delivery for these referrals has been established and supported by SC. In Somaliland, community desks with a focal person responding to SGBV and CP concerns were established in each of the project locations. In Burkina Faso, three Provincial Child Protection Networks (in Mouhoun, Nayala and Balé) and two Municipal Child Protection Networks (in Safané and Siby) have been revitalised.

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

The Safe Families Common Approach, which SC applies for improved CP, resulted in relevant impact during the programme period. Children reported improved relationships with caregivers: on average, from the four countries and measured annually with a different participant group, the share of children who reported a positive change with their caregiver interactions, was 73% in 2022, 57% in 2023, 75% in 2024 and 75% in 2025 (indicator RI 2.2.2). This demonstrates a constant positive shift in relations

between children and their parents. Children also widely reported greater emotional well-being and strengthened psychosocial well-being after SC trainings. The results exceeded the targets set before the programme (indicator OI 2.5).

The evaluation states that the signature work of SC here includes several successful elements: positive parenting practices; community-level interventions, including mobilisation and awareness to create an overall support system for children and their families; the inclusion of boys, girls and children with and without disabilities and with diverse identities in decision-making; and evidence of positive changes in norms, awareness and behaviour in children, families and communities, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment and addressing the perpetuation of violence against children, including SGBV. This includes community perceptions of violence, children’s sense of safety and community reporting of CP issues.

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. Below, the figures show the share of those participant community members who have increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to CP risks (indicator OI 2.6). Almost all of the participants reported increased confidence, which is a good asset in the fight against the violence children might face. For children, the first in line to address any problems are always the people near them in their communities, and these people need to have the confidence to identify violence and act.

According to the evaluation, the community engagement and work with community-level CP structures and mechanisms have been critical for the above-described impact and the communities ‘have acted as a constant barometer with which to know and address real concerns as opposed to simply following project logframes and activities. Across the four countries and their respective projects, the way that the programme worked with families and communities and with children to support and enhance their protection was assessed to have translated into significant progress in supporting child and gender sensitivity in both families and communities, and progress in work with local and district government authorities.

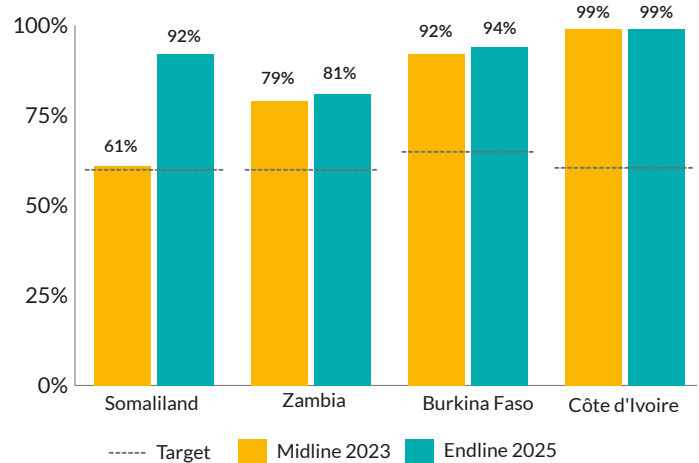
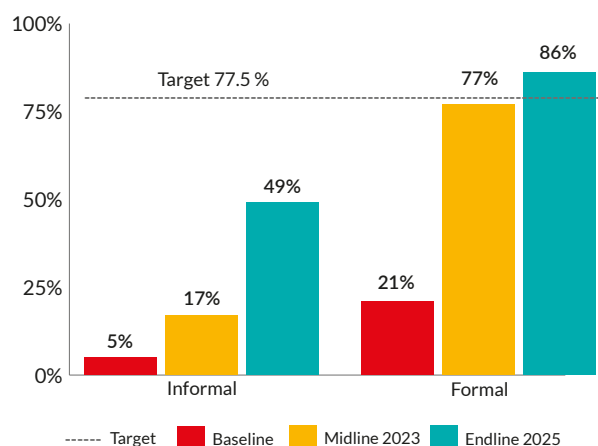


Figure 6. The percentage of community members who have increased confidence in their ability to prevent and respond to child protection risks. Confidence is measured based on a set of interview questions asking people to assess their confidence, for example, their confidence in detecting when a child is at risk or in communicating about a child in risk situation. An average score is calculated from the replies to the interview questions. The share illustrated in the figure indicates those respondents in the communities who have a higher average confidence score than the baseline data collection’s average.

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

The training, motivation and support provide for the social service workforce – formal or informal, paid or voluntary – is critical to progressing the quality of CP services. The quality of services was measured in the programmes through minimum quality standards of service.<sup>18</sup> The overall targets of the share of those service providers who comply with the minimum quality standards were as follows: Somaliland: 70%; Zambia: 90%; Burkina Faso: 70%; and Côte d’Ivoire: 80%. The data generally shows a good average from baseline to midline with more progress at endline, especially in the case for formal services but less so for informal services (indicator OI 3.2). The operational context in all four countries (including droughts, the humanitarian and security situation, etc.) also impacted on access to support services during the four years of the programme and has challenged the ability of the formal and informal social service workforce to respond.

18 The Quality of Services Tool applied by SCF to measure the CP service quality refers to the # of supported CP service providers that score an average of at least 3 across the quality standards compared with the total # of these. The tool has 10 standards, including the elements linked to information about the service; child safeguarding; compliance with national legislation and regulations; non-discrimination; child participation; staff experience; case management; information management; community ownership etc.



**Figure 7. The percentage of child protection prevention and response service providers (formal and informal) that meet the minimum quality standards per country (OI 3.2). For informal service providers, the target was set too high, and e.g. in Burkina Faso, data collection for informal service providers was not possible at all times and in Côte d'Ivoire no formal survey for informal service providers was conducted at baseline since the community child protection committees came into existence with the help of the project and therefore only recently started building the necessary conditions for the minimum quality standards.**

The outcomes reached in this area also link with the external coherence: the programme has engaged in meaningful partnerships with government ministries, UN agencies and community organisations in all four countries to avoid duplication and to contribute to more coherent national CP systems. In addition, the mid-term review and endline data showed that the work done to strengthen legislation, systems and structures to better protect children through strong linkages to and between national and community CP systems and mechanisms was progressing through all four countries. 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. The evaluation states that this progress has been strong and has resulted in 29 laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies that have been developed or revised to protect children from violence across the four countries with the contribution of SC. This exceeded the target of nine laws, policies, guidelines, frameworks and studies (indicator RI 3.2.1).

In Côte d'Ivoire, SC contributed to the development of two CP laws by participating in the technical groups and supporting the Ministry of Social Affairs in drafting the technical guidance leading to these laws. The Alternative Care Law sets the norms and standards that are applicable to alternative childcare facilities. Institutions which

provide childcare are now regulated and are obliged to follow minimum quality standards. In addition, the Foster Family Law, which regulates foster care and ensures certification guidelines for a foster family, was adopted.

In Burkina Faso, SC supported the development of technical guidelines regulating child-friendly spaces through advocating the community involvement in managing a child-friendly space and for improved processes in choosing the sites for these spaces, including the stronger accountability of local government in providing the land. SC provided technical assistance also for the elaboration of the Child Protection Children's Code in Burkina Faso.

In Zambia, SC supported the review of the Volunteer Policy (2023) and the Zambia National Information and Communication Technology survey tools. It also supported the development and enactment (2022) of the Children's Code Act that provides a platform for the legal protection of children. SC also supported the simplified version of this Code in 2024 which helps to roll it out to children in schools and communities so that they know and understand the law.

In Somaliland, one of the key achievements in strengthening the system was the approval of the Somaliland Child Rights Act in 2022. SC's long-term goal was to see the realisation of this Act and supported its development and enactment with financial and technical resources. SC has also supported the drafting of the five-year implementation plan of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MOLSAF) of Somaliland, the Child Rights Act, the CP policy and the Alternative Care policy. The approval of the policy regarding eradicating FGM was also a decisive step forward in safeguarding the health, dignity and rights of women and girls in Somaliland, and SC has been instrumental in advocating for it through awareness campaigns, community-driven projects and partnerships.

## OTHER KEY FINDINGS AND LEARNINGS OF THE THEMATIC PROGRAMME

Apart from the achievements in terms impact and effectiveness, the evaluation highlighted the strong contribution of the CP programme in terms of **localisation** through the strengthening of national systems, the active involvement of local- and national-level government actors and communities. Rooted in the national priorities of each country, the programme's design and implementation were guided by a bottom-up approach, ensuring that interventions were not only contextually relevant but also community owned. The evaluation assesses that across all four countries, SC and its partners worked to

shift local actors from being passive beneficiaries to being active co-creators – supporting them to lead planning, coordination and service delivery efforts while strengthening links with public institutions and national policy frameworks. Community leaders, parents, youth and local authorities were engaged in design, monitoring and social norm change activities, while volunteers and frontline service providers received training on positive parenting, CP and case management. All 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. These also improve referral pathways with public institutions such as police, social workers, schools and health services.

Based on the strong localisation and founded on communities and local government actors, the programme has promoted **sustainability**. There was strong collaboration with technical government departments, alignment with national CP priorities, participatory planning, joint missions and coordination mechanisms, which strengthened local structures and community ownership and reinforced local capacity in regard to shifting social norms. However, reliance on volunteers at community levels, partly still-weak institutional systems and their limited budgets remain the key challenges. According to the evaluation, the CP programme has made considerable efforts to mitigate the sustainability challenges but needs to focus on these while implementing the new programme phase.

According to the evaluation, one of the key lesson learned and elements that led to the success of the CP programme was the demonstrated strong **adaptability** across diverse and challenging contexts – conflicts, displacement, climate shocks and economic crises – where the needs of children were high and evolving. This flexibility was enabled by the deep contextual knowledge and local counterparts and stakeholders, but also by the agility permitted by a responsive donor, allowing interventions to be rapidly recalibrated. For example, in Burkina Faso, adaptability proved critical in the face of escalating insecurity and political instability. The programme had to quickly adjust its geographic scope and delivery model and reallocate focus to immediate protection and survival needs. In Somaliland, project teams responded to displacement, economic crisis and recurring droughts by reprogramming activities: Safe Families sessions were expanded to support stressed families while case

management services were scaled up to assist children affected by the Waaheen market fire, conflict and displacement. In Zambia, the programme demonstrated adaptability during the 2024 drought emergency. Power outages and school closures delayed implementation, but project teams adjusted timelines, introduced solar backup systems and worked with district disaster management committees to integrate CP into crisis planning. These examples illustrate the importance of flexible, locally informed programming that can effectively pivot in response to evolving risks – particularly when built on strong local relationships, real-time feedback loops and multi-level coordination.

Another key lesson learned across countries was that gender transformation requires deliberate, sustained and multi-level engagement – moving beyond inclusion to actively shifting social norms and power dynamics. For example, successful strategies across programmes included the co-creation of girl-friendly spaces, participatory tools to challenge gendered roles and targeted male engagement through safe, gender-segregated spaces. Crucially, programming that fostered local ownership and intersectional approaches, including work with faith leaders and disability-inclusive platforms, proved most effective in building momentum for change. The importance of strengthening partnerships across national, sub-national and community levels to address harmful traditional practices and CP risks is a key and the national structures must be supported to develop and enforce their CP policy framework. At the same time, the sub-national authorities require resources and training to implement the policies and coordinate locally.

Despite these gains, several barriers remain. For example, male participation in Safe Families sessions continues to be uneven due to time constraints, gendered expectations and reluctance to engage in mixed-gender discussions. To address this, SCF supported piloting the measurement of the gender-transformative elements of the Safe Families approach in Zambia. This study showed that the Safe Families approach can measurably shift gendered attitudes among both caregivers and children, with the strongest improvements seen in the increased acceptance of men's engagement in childcare and more equitable gender views among adolescents. The study also highlighted that male-only groups and stronger community-based sensitisation can improve men's participation. The study recommends the inclusion of the piloted new question blocks on gendered attitudes into routine monitoring processes to provide further evidence on gender-transformative change.

The CP programme increased the visibility and participation of marginalised groups and contributed to measurable shifts in community perceptions of persons with disabilities. However, challenges remained, particularly in addressing parental reluctance and ensuring that facilitators had the necessary skills to effectively communicate with and engage children with disabilities. The evaluation revealed only 3% participation of persons with disabilities against a 10% target, which highlights systemic challenges. Future programming should analyse if the targets were realistic, whether training was sufficient, if budgets were adequate and how strong partnerships with organisations of persons with disabilities truly were. These gaps underscore the need for continued investment in inclusive training and sensitisation to fully realise the rights of all children, regardless of their abilities.

## 4.4. Safety nets and resilient families: Child-sensitive social protection

SCF commissioned an evaluation of SCF's CSSP programme covering the period 2022–2025. The programme-level evaluation was a synthesis of six independent country-level project evaluations in Zambia, Somaliland, Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, the Philippines and India (the evaluation for India was not MFA funded). The independent evaluation team looked into, among other aspects, the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and coherence of the CSSP programme.

### **A summary of the overall impact findings of the CSSP programme in Nepal, the Philippines, India, Cote d'Ivoire, Somaliland and Zambia:**

There were tangible outcomes for child development resulting from tackling poverty, malnutrition and barriers to learning through the cash-plus model. The programme has strengthened nurturing care and positive parenting, which has materialised in improved children's nutrition and school attendance, reduced child labour and the better socio-emotional development of children.

There were strengthened community and national SP systems: across multiple contexts, SC has provided technical and financial assistance to governments in developing SP policies, strategies and operational frameworks. This aligns with

global understanding that sustainable systems must be state anchored, with external actors acting as catalysts rather than substitutes.

There were increased accountability mechanisms for citizens: the programme has significantly bolstered the integrity and responsiveness of SP systems through enhancing governance and citizen feedback loops.

There was increased access to SP: the programme has made a tangible impact on SP system strengthening by supporting the creation of practical on-ramps that connect citizens to their entitlements. Between 2022 and 2025 the programme has resulted in creating access to public SP benefits for more than 450,000 people and 6,384 HHs in the five countries. The evaluation valued the principle that access begins at the local level through documentation, enrolment, registration and grievance redressal.

The evaluation stated that the CSSP programme has been effective, achieved tangible outcomes and, among other things, strengthened nurturing care and positive parenting, and improved children's nutrition and socio-emotional development. Across the programme outcome areas, the expected outcomes of the CSSP programme have been reached. The most relevant data and evaluation analysis are presented below per outcome:

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

During the programme period, SCF worked closely with local and national governments across our CSSP programme in Asia and Africa to support people in accessing SP programmes by institutionalising inclusive, transparent and accountable approaches. According to the evaluation, SCF, with its partners and stakeholders, succeeded in making a tangible impact on SP system strengthening by supporting the creation of practical ways to connect citizens to their entitlements (SP benefits or other basic services). SC's initiatives are based on the principle that access begins at the local level through documentation, enrolment, registration and grievance redressal. The evaluation picks up the following highlights which demonstrate measurable progress in access (indicators OI 1.1 and RI 1.1.1):

In Nepal, by the end of 2025, 88 wards<sup>19</sup> in total (against a target of 40) were carrying out eligibility mapping in their areas of jurisdiction, which means that people who were not yet registered as SP recipients could be iden-

<sup>19</sup> A ward is the smallest unit of local government in Nepal.

tified. Altogether, more than 3,800 new eligible persons gained access to their corresponding SP benefit with the support of SC<sup>20</sup>. Transparency and widespread awareness campaigns (radio jingles, booklets, door-to-door campaigns) have contributed to eligible populations, especially marginalised groups, securing their entitlements. Another key achievement is that the 88 wards started to implement the SOP to streamline the process of access to the social allowances at municipal level. Municipalities have also co-financed the CSSP parenting programme, illustrating growing subnational accountability. In Nepal, SC also prioritised the formation and operationalisation of grievance-handling committees in line with the government's established grievance-handling guidelines, and 88 grievance-handling committees were established by the end of 2025.

In Zambia, during 2022–2025, SCF supported the enrolment of 4,349 HHs onto the SCT and Keeping Girls in School and further SP programmes and thus boosted the coverage of SP<sup>21</sup>. Prioritising capacity building at the local level through Community Welfare Assistance Committee (CWAC) members has improved enrolment processes. SC worked through a partner, JCTR, to institutionalise child-centred social accountability platforms in all the 12 target areas in two districts, combining public expenditure-tracking surveys, budget analysis, the strengthening of grievance redressal mechanisms, community scorecards, interface meetings and public hearings to advocate for increased budget allocations and to ensure both improved access to essential services by the communities and enhanced responsiveness to local needs by the local government.

In the Philippines, where the major element of the CSSP programming links up with integrating the CSSP parenting model into the large national-level SP programme (the 4Ps), SC has also advanced the access to other available SP schemes. The mapping of HHs that are eligible for SP in 75 *barangays*<sup>22</sup> enabled the surfacing of previously invisible HHs that are eligible for SP; however, integration with national registries remains partial, reflecting wider data interoperability challenges.

In Somaliland/Somalia, where no government-led SP schemes are available, SCF continued to support the development of a child grant scheme with MOLSAF. At the same time, SC provided cash assistance in the form of a 'child grant' to 625 HHs in IDP camps in Hargeisa and Berbera. A key component of this programme focused on establishing and strengthening transparency and



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

**In the Philippines, 15-year-old Ash has taken part in Save the Children's child-centered social accountability sessions. With the strong support from her mother, Ash now actively engages with local decision-makers, advocating for children's rights and possibilities to address concerns and needs.**

accountability mechanisms, which aimed to improve the access of poor and vulnerable HHs to essential and basic services through applying social accountability tools such as community scorecards, public hearings and direct advocacy. The evaluation stated that, as a result, the communities have successfully begun to demand better services, which has translated into tangible infrastructure improvements, such as the construction of school fences, classroom extensions, security streetlights and a health facility by municipal authorities. These achievements underscore the CSSP programme's profound impact, demonstrating how community-led initiatives and advocacy can translate into vital infrastructure and access to services that directly enhance the quality of life for people. Moreover, these infrastructural improvements are likely to outlast the programme, providing future support for communities.

In Cote d'Ivoire – supported by the prefectural body, the health department and the Regional Directorate of National Education and Literacy in the Gontougo region – transparency and accountability committees were formed at the community level to monitor the provision of the government's Productive Social Safety Nets Programme and the functioning of health centres and schools. The monitoring led to interface meetings 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 messages on the importance of birth registration were delivered. Currently, 1,410 HHs (covering 607 male beneficiaries and 803 female beneficiaries) have

20 See Annex 2 for the overall figures from 2022–2025.

21 See Annex 3 for the overall figures from 2022–2025.

22 A barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the local government in the Philippines.

access to the Productive Social Safety Nets Programme in the 20 target villages of the project. Despite of good results in regard to empowering communities to demand essential and basic services, the evaluation states that the implementation of this component is uneven in quality based on capacity and staff turnover.

The evaluation stated that across these cases, SC’s role supports the current thinking that delivery systems determine whether fiscal and political commitments translate into effective coverage and the scaling up and expansion of SP. By strengthening identification, enrolment and grievance systems, SC has provided the governments with the support necessary for expansion. In addition, all of SC’s targeted interventions throughout the SP programme have significantly bolstered the integrity and responsiveness of SP systems through enhancing governance and citizen feedback loops. Since accountability is both a governance and social inclusion function, the results in this area support both pushing the duty-bearers to deliver and empowering the community members. Collectively, these approaches demonstrate that accountability and transparency are not merely add-ons but are structural pillars of SP system strengthening. According to the evaluation, SC has been successful in developing these systems at the local level and helping communities understand their entitlements.

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

To safeguard the most important essence of our SP programming, the impact on children, we implemented the CSSP parenting component across all projects in Asia and Africa. The parenting programme is SCF’s most widely replicated and most successful cash ‘plus’ component. Altogether, in all CSSP projects during the programme period, 593,344 female caregivers and 78,284 male caregivers were trained applying the International Child Development Programme- approach parenting programme through group sessions and home visits. Delivered through existing public and community cadres (such as government social workers or community committee members), these programmes focus on nurturing care and child development. Evidence from the 2022–2025 projects reveals consistently positive outcomes, particularly regarding improvements in caregiver–child relationships, a reduction in maltreatment rates and improved

child development outcomes, which correspond well with the expected outcomes of the different projects. According to the programme-level synthesised data, improvement of the parental engagement of caregivers took place in all programme countries:

In Nepal, the Child Grant Plus, the ‘plus’ being a parenting intervention, significantly increased caregiver’s positive engagement with children through activities such as reading books, playing games, telling stories and praising the child. Almost 100% of the intervention group reached the measurement scores fully for all activities, thus far surpassing the comparison group.

Below, in the compilation of the data from the three African programme countries, the caregiver engagement score shows the tendency that those families who participated in the CSSP parenting training to express having improved their daily practices as parents much more than the families in the comparison groups in the same areas (indicator RI 2.1.2).

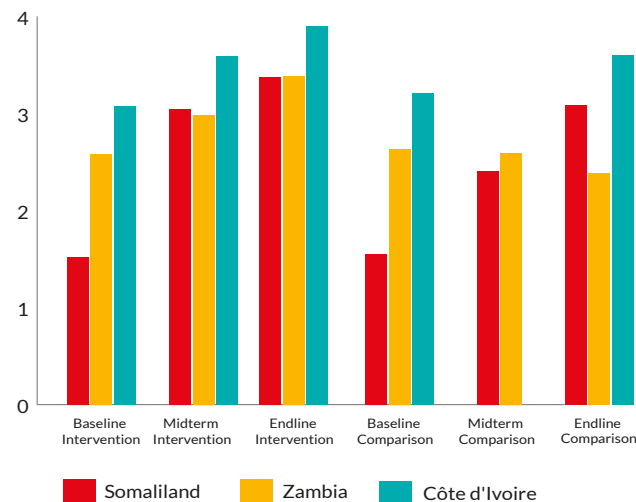


Figure 8. Caregiver engagement scores reported by children at baseline, midterm and endline in three African countries. The caregiver engagement score consists of a series of statements about different interactions that children and caregivers participated in together. To assess caregiver engagement with their children, raters read these statements to children and caregivers individually. For each item in this domain, the scores ranged from 0 to 4, with 0 meaning ‘never’ and 4 representing ‘always’. A caregiver engagement score was developed by averaging the individual item scores for all statements in this domain with equal weights.

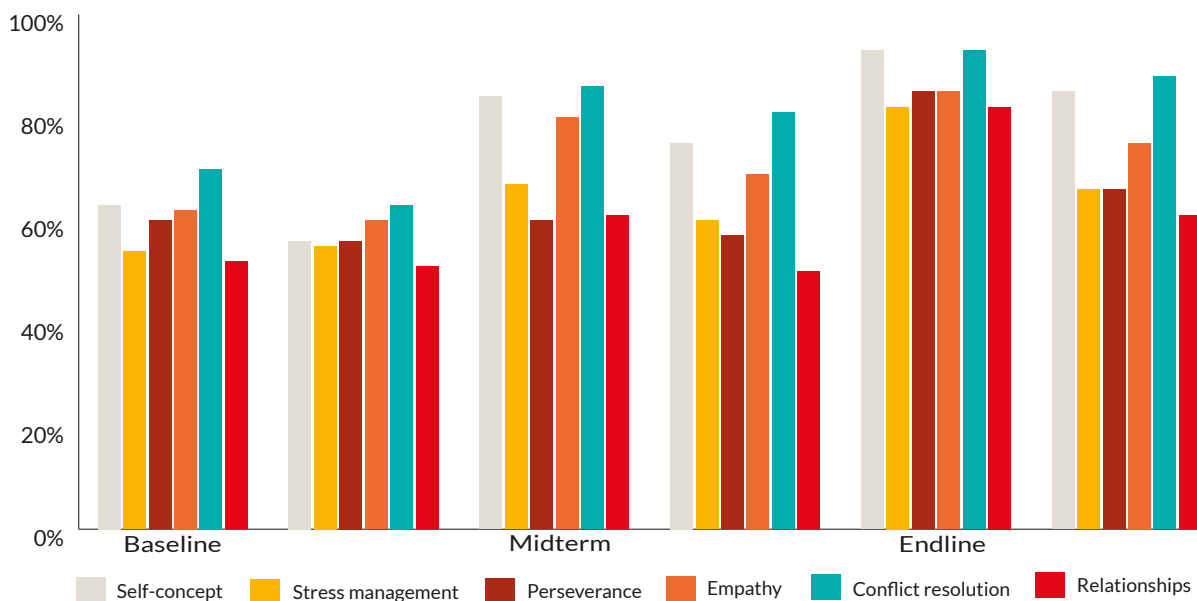
Apart from increased caregiver engagement, the parenting programme had other positive impacts on children. In Somaliland, by the endline, the rates of child labour outside of the home dropped to 0% following the parenting

sessions, along with clear increases in physical affection and praising for children. The number of children enrolled in school increased from 77% at the baseline to 97% by the endline, suggesting a much greater prioritisation of education. Furthermore, in Somaliland, Zambia and Côte d'Ivoire, the share of the students of targeted families who did not complete the grade in which they started a given school year (the drop-out rate) came close to 0%, even reducing from 14% to 0% among boys by the endline in Côte d'Ivoire (indicator OI 2.1).

Endline data collection in Nepal and Somaliland indicated that interventions targeting caregiver engagement led to measurable improvements in children aged 0–3. Using the Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments,<sup>23</sup> the results show that intervention groups achieved higher scores across motor, cognitive, language and social-emotional domains compared with comparison groups. This led to significant developmental improvements for the children in the programme: in Nepal, by the endline, the children in the intervention group scored more than one full standard deviation higher on overall developmental measures compared with their peers which, according to the evaluation researcher, was an exceptional effect size for an early childhood intervention. The largest improvement was seen in cognitive development (indicator OI 2.2).

In Nepal, anthropometric data was also collected of children under three years old from a sample of more than 900 children to measure the impact of the parenting intervention on growth. The average of continuous anthropometric Z-scores was below the international reference mean (zero) for both the intervention and comparison groups, and it generally declined over time. This means that the small children in both the intervention and comparison groups were relatively small and light compared with the healthy children in the international reference groups. Both intervention and comparison groups faced rising stunting and incidents of being underweight; however, the increases were less severe for children whose parents were participants of the parenting intervention (indicator OI 2.3).

Beyond these developmental benefits, a cost-effectiveness study commissioned by SCF demonstrated high economic value in Nepal, generating an estimated return on investment of USD 12 for every USD 1 invested.<sup>24</sup> This return on investment is driven by a projected 2.9 additional years of schooling and a 7% increase in lifetime earnings for the children whose parents participated in the programme. The combination of the child grant with the parenting programme has been proven to be three times more cost-efficient than the cash transfer alone in regard to achieving comparable cognitive gains.



**Figure 9. Mean scores given by children aged 6–12 on the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA) domains tracked at baseline, midterm and endline by an intervention group in Zambia (N = 208)**

23 The Caregiver Reported Early Development Instruments (CREDI) is a set of tools specifically designed to assess early development in children aged 0–3 years old. It evaluates four key developmental domains: motor, cognitive, language and social-emotional skills. CREDI provides raw scores which are unique to CREDI and do not correspond to any other known metric.

24 Nystrand, C. (forthcoming). Preliminary results from the long-term cost-effectiveness of CG Plus. Helsinki: SC Finland.

Even among older children, those aged 6–12, the parenting interventions significantly improved social-emotional learning. As illustrated in the example from Zambia that is shown in Figure 9 (previous page), the intervention group demonstrated greater pre-to-post gains than the control group across the following six domains: self-concept, stress management, perseverance, empathy, conflict resolution and relationships.

According to the CSSP programme evaluation, these findings illustrate that cash-plus parenting interventions not only drive holistic developmental gains in early childhood but also represent a fiscally compelling strategy, delivering significantly higher economic returns and cognitive outcomes compared with cash transfers alone. These findings validate the wider discourse that emphasises the powerful potential of parenting programmes. Moreover, despite a limited geographic scope in each of the countries (with the exception of the Philippines which has nationwide coverage), SC's approach exemplifies CSSP principles by embedding parenting programmes within existing SP delivery structures, thereby maximising efficiency and sustainability.

In addition to parenting being the essential cash-plus element of our CSSP programming, livelihood opportunities were built in parts of the programme with the intention of creating a sustainable and long-term stable pathway out of poverty and graduation from cash assistance. This can be essential for children as caregivers are able to financially invest in children's access to health, education and nutritional support. However, according to the evaluation, these livelihood-oriented components remained at a nascent stage within the programme but represent a strategic direction for the next phase.

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

During the programme period, SC worked closely with governments across the programme countries to support the development, review and adoption of formal policies, strategies and frameworks that embed CSSP principles (see indicators OI 3.1 and 3.1.1). In Nepal, SC supported the development of the later adopted municipal-level SP by-laws and policies on cash-plus and the adoption of an SOP on how to ensure access to SP. The municipalities in several districts of the Madhesi and Karnali provinces started to contribute to the costs of the parenting sessions in their areas. By the end of 2025, nine municipalities had allocated a total of EUR 58,083 for the imple-

mentation of the Child Grant Plus programme through their regular planning and budgeting process. This indicates that the possibilities of scaling up the initiative widely with Nepalese public funding is likely in the future. 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 related to expanding coverage from the current 25 districts and increasing the benefit amount. The parenting guidelines for the Child Grant were formally endorsed by the Department of National ID and Civil Registration.

In the Philippines, SCF achieved a major breakthrough during the programme period. The formal integration of the CSSP parenting module (MaPangBata) into the government's flagship cash transfer programme, the 4Ps, was solidified through an MOA for a national scale-up in 2022. MaPangBata is designated as a mandatory onboarding course for all new SP beneficiaries of the 4Ps in the entire country. The module is already progressing towards implementation with existing beneficiaries, which means that eventually close to four million HHs will be provided with improved parenting skills. SC has trained social workers to be trainers of the parenting programme in all 18 regions of the country with the objective of handing over the initiative to the government. The objectives of MaPangBata are strongly aligned with broader national strategies for social development and child welfare, as well as with the Philippine Development Plan 2023–2028's goal of strengthening social cohesion.

In Zambia, SC played a key advisory role in the government's review of the National Social Protection Policy and the accompanying Cash-Plus Strategy. SC's technical inputs and advocacy successfully ensured that child sensitivity was formally recognised as a cross-cutting pillar in the revised strategy and a specific focus was put on nutrition-sensitive SP, prioritising pregnant women and children under two to reduce chronic malnutrition and stunting. SC also implemented an assignment for the World Bank in 2024, reviewing the existing SCT programme and community case management guidelines of the government and providing recommendations to the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services that the ministry committed to undertake. However, the scaling up in terms of at least two districts replicating the CSSP approach was not fully achieved during the programme period.

In Somaliland SC worked with UNICEF and MOLSAF to develop the draft National Social Protection Policy,

which was then approved by parliament and formally launched in early 2024. SP is now a standalone sector in the National Development Plan 3 of Somaliland and a SP implementation strategy is under-way, these being major achievements on the path to creating an SP system in the country. SC has since been asked to co-chair the National Social Protection Sector Coordination Committee along with MOLSAF, emphasising their strong relationship with the government, putting them in a good position to advocate for change. SC has also been a key actor supporting MOLSAF in the process of developing a social protection act for Somaliland.

According to the evaluation and given the relatively small scale of SCF's CSSP projects (with the exception of those in the Philippines), the policy influence achieved has been impressive. The projects have served as policy laboratories for evidence, illustrating at the local level what could work and then collaborating with governments to advocate for a scale-up. Across the five countries, SC has achieved significant policy influence, as opposed to achieving a system transformation, something which still requires support if it is to be achieved. SC's comparative advantage lies in demonstrating what works at the local level, using its results to advocate for institutionalisation at the national level.

### Other key findings and lessons learnt of the CSSP programme

The evaluation stated that, in addition to the impact and effectiveness described in the sections above, the CSSP programming of SCF demonstrates **high relevance** and **coherence**, being aligned with state-anchored SP priorities and integrated within the government delivery systems. **Efficiency** emerges from the adaptive use of local cadres and co-financing mechanisms that enhance partly significant coverage at relatively modest cost.

Some of the projects are showing more signs of **sustainability** than others. As described above, in some cases local and municipal governments have started to co-finance activities and national governments have begun integrating the approaches. Thus, sustainability is partially achieved where fiscal ownership and institutional embedding are progressing, though dependence on external financing persists in nascent SP systems. Governments' commitment to investing or continuing to invest in system strengthening and cash-plus approaches is critical to the sustainability. The evaluation recommended that SCF should therefore continue doing more of what is already working: strengthening the existing cash-plus

components; embedding CSSP elements within national strategies, guidelines and budgets; applying participatory accountability mechanisms more consistently; and continuing to build an evidence base on child outcomes. In addition, SC should systematically leverage local and national government functionaries as facilitators and trainers for parenting and other 'plus' modules, to enhance scalability and ensure that the delivery capacity sits within government systems rather than project structures. While NGOs have a role to play in advocating to and influencing governments and donors, a robust SP system which is capable of providing long-term support, as well as responding to the shocks and crisis citizens may face, will ultimately have to be led and steered by the governments.

A key lesson learned for SCF is that, in order to focus on the employability and livelihood development of the cash transfer beneficiaries as a way to break the cycle of poverty, alignment with the thinking of key global SP actors – such as the development banks, the ILO and the WFP – is important. 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. The evaluators recommend that SCF should, where feasible, explore expanding the CSSP framework to include a new 'cash-plus economic strengthening' strand, consolidating the livelihood-support and economic-opportunity linkages already emerging in several projects. However, for the further prioritisation and integration of the livelihood component in SCF's programming, it is key to balance cost-effectiveness with in-depth support, ensuring that any productive inclusion element complements (rather than dilutes) the core child-sensitive mandate.

### Humanitarian cash and voucher assistance

In terms of budget size, the cash and voucher assistance (CVA) projects funded by ECHO, UNICEF and the MFA formed a relevant share of SCF's overall programme in different years during the 2022–2025 period. Vulnerable families in Somalia and Sudan were supported with CVA to meet their basic needs amidst the humanitarian crisis; 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 savings and loans schemes. In 2025, altogether 2,773 HHs in Sudan and 18,294 HHs in Somalia benefitted from CVA within projects managed by SCF, and the level was approximately the same in 2024. Some of the main results are described below:

In Somalia, with UNICEF and KfW funding through the SCC, 14,142 pregnant and lactating women in the Mudug region of Puntland received CVA. These women received USD 20 a month for 18 months (starting in cohorts from December 2023), with the final payments made in 2025. The cash transfers were complimented with direct messaging regarding maternal health services in the area. The scale and regularity of the cash transfers provided a critical financial buffer for beneficiary HHs during a period of sustained climatic and economic stress. Monitoring data and qualitative feedback indicate that the majority of the transfers were used to purchase staple foods, complementary foods for young children and to cover health-related costs (such as covering the costs of transport to health facilities, medicines and consultation fees where applicable, as well as other essential HH needs). Some HHs also reported using part of the transfer to reduce small debts or support petty income-generating activities. Overall, the timely and predictable delivery of cash played an important role in mitigating the impacts of drought and inflation, reducing reliance on negative coping strategies and enabling pregnant and lactating women and their HHs to better prioritise nutrition and health-seeking behaviour for themselves and their children.

Also, ECHO provided funding for the SCC, with which SC was able to provide humanitarian CVA to 2,777 HHs in 2025 in Puntland and southern Somalia. These HHs faced dire humanitarian need due to displacement, a deteriorating security and conflict situation, and drought and the resulting flash flooding. The recipients of three months of emergency cash assistance were identified through rapid needs assessments. Five hundred of these HHs were reached by SC's local partner, GREDO, whose capacity in CVA has been systematically built by SC and the SCC throughout 2025.

With the MFA humanitarian funding, SC and the local partner Somali Peace Line supported IDPs and vulnerable host communities in Dhusamareb in the Galmudug region in 2025. The project has improved food security, economic resilience and child well-being through multi-purpose cash assistance (MPCA), strengthened VSLA capacity, and enhanced community-based CP services. MPCA was delivered to 650 HHs, each receiving USD 110 a month for four months, and an additional 100 HHs receiving the same combined with CP case management. This latter component was implemented in Dhusamareb following successful piloting in nearby Abudwak with MFA funding in the preceding years. Based on a study conducted by SCF in 2025, the integrated approach of MPCA and the case management of CP cases led to measurable

improvements in HH food security, school enrolment, the ability of caregivers to set effective discipline rules and caregiver-child interaction. The findings included the finding that the children in families who received case management plus MPCA were 8.5 times more likely to be enrolled in school at endline than children who were only supported by case management. The children and caregivers in the CM plus MPCA group described feeling healthier, less anxious and more food secure, while food-related concerns persisted in CM-only HHs. The study results offer actionable insights for strengthening integrated CP and cash programming and are intended to inform the scale-up of similar approaches in Somalia and other humanitarian settings.

### Other projects

SCF and SC continued to implement a project entitled Ben Kadi in Burkina Faso in a consortium with Norwegian Church Aid and two national partners, funded by the Sahel Facility (the KfW). The project – aiming to strengthen social cohesion, conflict prevention and the development of human and economic capital through for children, young people and women in the Cascades region – is structured around two phases. The first phase lasted 14 months and was focused on the planning and implementation of a participatory process with 653 community members, identifying tailored, multi-sectorial responses together with each stakeholder group, empowering them to formulate their development priorities. As a result, a total of 69 different community actions is planned, including 51 infrastructure projects and 18 capacity-building projects. In 2025 the communities in 15 villages primarily worked on preparatory work for physical infrastructure construction projects, as well as on community awareness-raising activities, including the validation of action plans for local peace structures and conflict observatories.

In Nepal, during 2024–2025, SC was part of an ECHO-funded consortium, led by People in Need, which improved the multi-hazard preparedness and early action in the Hill region in the western part of the country. The project targeted provinces recently impacted on by earthquakes and susceptible to landslide risks. The project aimed to strengthen the leadership and joint ownership of at-risk communities and local and provincial governments in disaster mitigation and preparedness and reached more than 180,000 beneficiaries.

For more information on the INTPA-funded project in Bhutan, see Chapter 5.4.

# 5. CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

## 5.1. Gender equality

From the outset, gender and inclusion were integrated as cross-cutting priorities across all stages of programme design, implementation and monitoring (e.g. the use of the Gender Equality Marker of SC and specific SCF tools for cross-cutting issues at the planning stage and the deliberate consideration of cross-cutting issues during monitoring and internal mid-term reviews). Ensuring equitable access, representation and outcomes from the point of view of inclusion and equality were a priority. This was monitored through disability and gender-disaggregated data to track access and outcomes, and additionally, the projects' staff and partners were trained on gender equality and disability-inclusion.

All projects sought to achieve a gender balance for adult participation and ensured that boys and girls were engaged in project activities and were able to access services. Intentional efforts were made to recruit men to participate in parenting programmes and CP groups. Overall, across the four CP-programme projects, 22% of the participants were women and 18% were men. Amongst the children, more girls participated (32%) than boys (25%). Projects began with ensuring access, safety and the participation of all sexes and evolved toward transformative goals that will forcefully address harmful norms and the root causes of inequality. According to an evaluation, there was steady progress in gender equality. Some examples of gender-transformative achievements in the CP programme follow:

- Engaging men's network groups to challenge negative gender stereotypes, encouraging fathers to participate in childcare and positive parenting through Safe Families sessions (Zambia)
- Supporting girls and boys to question harmful practices like child marriage and FGM through community awareness activities, radio broadcasts and youth clubs (Burkina Faso)
- Boys joining menstrual hygiene sessions that have traditionally been reserved for girls to help break taboos and promote gender equality (Zambia)
- Increasing the reporting of GBV against boys, challenging the silence and stigma around male victim-

hood, and co-creating community-driven girl-friendly spaces with communities to promote girls' self-protection and leadership (Côte d'Ivoire)

- Training community and religious leaders to speak out against harmful traditional practices, including child marriage and FGM, and to support children's rights (Somaliland).

In Zambia, following the Safe Families intervention, the proportion of caregivers who agreed that men should actively participate in child rearing more than doubled, increasing from 29% at baseline to 60% at endline – a statistically significant change ( $p < 0.001$ ). Implementation strategies – such as male-only parenting groups, engagement with male faith leaders and the formation of men's networks – created safe spaces for reflection and action.

Despite these gains, the evaluation stated that several barriers remain. For example, male participation in Safe Families sessions continues to be uneven due to time constraints, gendered expectations and reluctance to engage in mixed-gender discussions. While attitudinal shifts were observed in many participant cohorts (the share of male caregivers who reported using mainly non-violent disciplining methods increased in all countries in the 2024 cohort), they did not always translate into sustained behavioural change – especially among men who still held inequitable beliefs. This demonstrates the need for continued support in non-violent parenting

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 Nepal, women reported having a greater say in family spending decisions and a targeted 'mini course' to engage fathers, which has resulted in their greater involvement in childcare and HH chores. In Zambia, the project more actively considered the needs of boys and CWAC members stated that they have noticed boys and girls taking on similar roles whereas previously their roles were very gendered. Challenges include the community perception of programmes disproportionately benefiting women and girls (potentially increasing GBV risks and neglecting boys), low male participation in parenting sessions (due to SCT eligibility and seasonal work) and deeply entrenched harmful gender norms which are taking a long time to change.

## 5.2. Disability inclusion

SSC's human rights-based approach to disability emphasises 'reaching every last child' so children with disabilities are able to enjoy equal opportunities and participation without discrimination. During 2022–2025, SC worked with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities<sup>25</sup> who supported the training but also identified persons with disabilities who could, and should, be part of the programme activities. This aligned with SC's Disability Inclusion Policy, although it is acknowledged that reach was still too low. Accountability mechanisms and project spaces were also adapted to ensure accessibility, for example, in the CP-programming:

- Community feedback mechanisms were made physically accessible and supported with sign language or accessible formats.
- Safe Families sessions were adapted with transport support and disability-specific sessions
- Persons with disabilities were included in Child Protection Committees and peer support groups.
- Meeting spaces and inclusive events (e.g., Day of the African Child) were made accessible to ensure the full participation of children with disabilities.

Although it is estimated that 15% of populations have disabilities and SCF set a 10% target for the inclusion of children with disabilities in its programmes, in CP programmes only 3% (2,947 people) of the participants across countries were people with disabilities.

Programmes applied both targeted interventions (i.e. tailored sessions for the caregivers of children with disabilities, such as the Isha Boroma Peer Support Group in Hargeisa, Somaliland) and mainstreamed inclusion strategies (i.e. inclusive parenting sessions, child rights groups and case management). This approach ensured that the specific needs of children with disabilities and their caregivers were addressed while also promoting their full participation alongside peers in broader CP and parenting initiatives. As a result, children with disabilities were not only included but also empowered to take on leadership roles and advocate for their rights. Another promising practice from Somaliland is that child and youth disability champions were trained to raise awareness, identify



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

**In Zambia, Yvonne and her mother have benefited from the Safe Families sessions, which include lessons on disability inclusion.**

peers with protection needs and represent their voices in community forums, helping shift norms and enhance peer support.

The evaluation states that the CP-programme not only increased the visibility and participation of marginalised groups but also contributed to measurable shifts in community perceptions – reducing stigma and fostering inclusive, rights-based environments for all children, regardless of gender or ability. Community-based capacity building focused on making inclusion a guiding principle in implementing child rights. However, challenges remained, particularly in addressing parental reluctance and ensuring that facilitators had the necessary skills to effectively communicate with and engage children with disabilities. These gaps underscore the need for continued investment in inclusive training and sensitisation to fully realise the rights and potential of all children, regardless of their abilities.

Within the CSSP programme, the projects managed to improve access to the SP benefits for people with disabilities. In Nepal, for example, 14,458 people were supported in gaining access to the national disability allowance. In the Philippines, those persons with disabilities in the project area who were lacking the disability ID card were identified to access the card which allows them to government disability benefits. In Somaliland, the project actively prioritised HHs with members with disabilities during beneficiary selection, resulting in 4% of the targeted HHs having at least one member with a disability. In addition, moving beyond access towards an actively

<sup>25</sup> The Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities, the Disability Action Network in Somaliland and the Daryeel Disability Organisation in Somalia. In Zambia, SCF and the Finnish Abilis Development Organization for Persons with Disabilities piloted three disability-focused parenting sessions to supplement the core Safe Families model.

inclusive environment was the aim of the programme and, for example, child resilience training sessions were conducted for children with and without disabilities together, actively discouraging discrimination or bullying. While the overall proportion of children with disabilities remained very low in the programme, in Somaliland, for example, 93% of these children with disabilities reported that their caregivers had improved parenting practices.

At the policy level, SC worked with MOLSAF to establish an inclusive SP policy and strategy in Somaliland where the highest priority is being given to people and children with disabilities. Another example is from Zambia where the community members in the CSSP programme area in Kalulushi District included a specific proposal in their budget submissions that called on the government to construct a school for learners with special needs, improve the access for children with disabilities and promote their rights to inclusive, quality learning environments. These actions demonstrated a growing awareness and commitment at the community level to the inclusion and rights of people and children with disabilities, with advocacy efforts being geared toward influencing government investment in disability-sensitive infrastructure and services.

## 5.3. Climate change adaptation

CCA is a cross-cutting area for SCF as it is undoubtedly a critical child rights issue that impacts on their rights to survive, learn and be protected. The evaluations commissioned in 2025 summarised a few key lessons learned on how CCA has been integrated into SCF programmes.

A key lesson from the CP programmes is the urgent need to integrate CCA more systematically into them. The evaluation said that, in general, links between climate and CP were sometimes weak, highlighting the need for a more holistic and environmentally conscious approach. Climate-related shocks – such as droughts, floods and crop failure – are increasing in frequency and severity, and these deepen the existing CP risks and create new ones, particularly for girls, for children with disabilities and for displaced families. In Zambia, for example, the 2024 drought revealed major preparedness gaps, with harmful coping strategies like child marriage and transactional sex emerging in response to food insecurity. In the programme implementation, for example, coordination with

disaster risk committees and community awareness raising were done, but the approach remained largely reactive. In Somaliland, however, promising efforts included child-led climate advocacy, the integration of MHPSS for climate-affected children and community awareness campaigns on fire and flood risks. The experience in Burkina Faso offered further insight into addressing CCA in a context of insecurity. Community awareness campaigns – timed to occur before the rainy season – received strong feedback, and children’s participation in playful, practical climate activities proved effective, as did the income-generating activities helping to bolster HH resilience.

The evaluation suggests that obstacles to better CCA integration are the limited staff capacity on CCA, weak linkages between potential community actions and national policies, and a lack of inclusive planning that ensures that the voices of children, youth and persons with disabilities are represented. The evaluation suggested that SCF invests more strongly in building and prioritising climate-informed CP systems and strengthening local-to-national coordination.

In relation to the CSSP programme, the evaluation findings show that CCA has been approached very differently across programme countries but in many cases it is not systematically integrated into project design. Overall, the CSSP interventions in different countries have aimed to enhance resilience by expanding access to SP, ensuring predictable cash assistance to vulnerable families (and thus strengthening their financial security and resilience), promoting savings and enhancing caregivers’ psychosocial capacities during crises. In Côte d’Ivoire and Zambia, although the programme has occasionally contributed to greater resilience – for example, by encouraging the beneficiaries to diversify their livelihoods or by providing some environmental protection messaging and guidance for parents on supporting children during climate-related stress – a documented strategy to address climate risks was missing. The situation in Somaliland was similar: while the project reacted to crises, such as floods and the COVID19 pandemic, these responses have been ad hoc rather than systematic. A deliberate shock-responsive design in the cash support is needed for the future phases.

In Nepal – a country facing frequent, severe climate-induced disasters such as floods, landslides and cold waves – shock-responsive SP is becoming a clearly articulated government priority. Furthermore, Nepal is developing municipal-level contingency plans that aim to improve the coverage of eligible individuals, adjust payment schedules to avoid monsoon disruptions, introduce mobile banking

options and strengthen coordination between SP and disaster management systems. Although the national system is still in transition, the direction is clearly heading towards more systematic shock-responsive SP.

## 5.4. Civil society strengthening and collaboration with local actors

Over the programme period, the attacks on civil society persisted in all SCF programme countries as the local civil society actors operated in increasingly restrictive and insecure environments, with conflict, political instability and shrinking freedoms directly affecting their ability to advance child rights. Civic space ratings (from CIVICUS) across SCF programme countries remained in the categories of obstructed, repressed or closed, reflecting the severity of limitations on fundamental rights and the pressures faced by civil society actors during this period. The year 2025 was marked by ever deepening human rights violations and democratic backsliding, with civic actors operating under mounting pressure. According to CIVICUS, Sudan's civic space was downgraded to the most severe rating, closed, due to more than two years of devastating war and systematic repression by both sides of the conflict that has left the country's once active civil society 'splintered, scattered and killed'. In Nepal in 2025, major anticorruption and anti-social media ban protests took place, resulting in killings and attacks on media workers, ultimately forcing political change and raising concerns about increased state control and restrictions on civil society. Burkina Faso's civic space remained repressed, with the military junta further tightening its rule and indefinitely postponing a return to civilian governance, pushing elections to 2029. Civil society actors continued to face threats from armed groups or restrictive state measures that affect their capacity to work with child rights issues and provide humanitarian assistance.

Our local civil society partners and community-based actors – including child and youth groups, women's groups, parents' associations and community committees – played an essential role in advancing children's rights within their communities. Their role was especially critical in humanitarian settings, where they often served as frontline watchdogs, service providers and community voices amid overstretched or weakened state systems. Throughout the programme period, we partnered with around 30 local CSOs annually through project-based

agreements, and we partnered with other INGOs through consortiums and thematic or country networks to ensure coordinated and sustainable results for children. These partnerships were critical for achieving our objectives in our key thematic areas, as described throughout this report. The evaluations found that the CP programme strongly contributed to the localisation of actions and to the strengthening of national systems through the active involvement of government and local actors. It demonstrated that early and sustained engagement with local partners – across community, sub-national and national levels – is critical for effective and sustainable CP programming. When local actors are engaged from the design phase, given space to lead and supported with targeted capacity building, interventions become more responsive, locally owned and system strengthening. In the CSSP programme, we directly partnered with the local government actors at national, provincial/regional and local levels to strengthen state capacity to develop SP policies and strategies reinforcing their responsibilities as duty bearers.

SCF advanced the implementation of SC's global agenda in line with the SC localisation policy (2020) and the vision for localisation outlined in 'Local to Global for Impact Ambition' (2022). In 2025, SCF continued to diversify the partnerships with local actors, to increase funding to them and to promote noncompetition for funding while ensuring the visibility of local partners. For example, in Sudan the partnership portfolio was reviewed to adapt to the realities of operating amid the ongoing conflict, with findings feeding into a new localisation strategy. Localisation progress is visible in funding flows: the share of resources passing to subgrantees increased from 20% in 2023 to 22% in 2025, and the value of subgrants rose from USD 8.54 million to USD 30.16 million. While the overall portfolio expanded, partner allocations grew faster, underscoring a clear commitment to strengthening local leadership.

SCF also invested in capacity building of the partners to strengthen their technical and operational capacities to become independent civil society actors. Our MFA partners were supported through tailored capacity building plans with a mandatory 3% of annual project budgets being allocated for capacity building. With this support, our partners in Nepal, for example, improved financial accuracy, updated key policies and disaster risk reduction competencies, contributing to stronger and more resilient organisations. In Cote d'Ivoire, our partner Notre Grenier, a leading CP actor, continued to strengthen its operational capacity and the quality of its interventions,

reinforcing its role as a key local actor in the Gontougu region.

The four-year organisational capacity development (OCD) programme aimed at strengthening the long-term institutional capacities of five of our strategic partners in Nepal, Zambia and Burkina Faso. The OCD programme was designed as a holistic and partner-owned approach to supporting local CSOs in developing them as independent, sustainable actors in ways going beyond project-specific requirements. All our partners reported that the OCD process have enhanced their operational efficiency, reinforced accountability, positioned them as a more reliable and sustainable local civil society actor, contributed to the professionalisation of the organisation and strengthened their credibility with partners. The detailed results of the OCD programme are described in detail in Annex 4.

In Bhutan, with the funding of INTPA, we strengthened the role of Bhutanese CSOs and media as independent

actors of good governance and inclusive development. While national civic space remains obstructed and other relevant index scores remained unchanged, we delivered concrete improvements in the systems and capacities that underpin these indicators. Structured engagement mechanisms between CSOs, parliament, government and the media were consolidated, including refined Parliament–CSO Engagement Guidelines, which have begun shifting consultations between CSOs and parliamentary stakeholders from ad hoc dialogue to more transparent, evidence-informed dialogue. The project also contributed to clear policy results, most notably parliament’s adoption of the Marriage (Amendment) Bill 2024, which set the legal marriage age at 18 and where CSOs demonstrated the effectiveness of structured CSO engagement in legislative processes. Through coordinated media engagement, an estimated 245,280 citizens were reached cumulatively by 2025, strengthening public awareness of SP, rights-based issues and CSO contributions to national development.

## 6. LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

During the programme period, SCF rigorously applied its MEAL framework, building on the programme outcome-level and thematic results-level indicators, ensuring that the required data was collected on project level (at baseline, annually or bi-annually for monitoring and at endline) and brought up to the programme level. The comprehensive programme-level results framework – which also included general indications on data collection methods, tools and frequency – was applied with an inter-linked detailed programme monitoring plan specifying indicator definitions, data collection methods, tools and frequency, and baseline and target values, as well as other key considerations relevant to tracking the programme indicators. In all countries, baseline-level data was collected, and later, the impact was monitored through annual or bi-annual data collection, which was then used as the main data for the independent evaluations in 2025. In 2023 a comprehensive internal Midterm Stocktaking Exercise across CSSP and CP projects was implemented. Both processes were implemented in close cooperation with implementing partners, both CSO partners and governance-level stakeholders, to collect relevant data and create a common understanding on the impact as well as on the lessons learnt for the future programming. The

SCI evaluation procedure’s minimum requirements were followed. The requirements aim at systematically generating and disseminating evidence of what had worked for children and this evidence was used to increase our effectiveness and influence others. The SCI ethics and evidence-generation policy and procedure were followed when conducting evaluation and research.

The data collection for the final thematic evaluations was already commissioned during the first half of the year in order to be able to use the recommendations and lessons learnt in the detailed project planning for the new programme. Scaling up the chosen approaches in, for example, CP system strengthening, inclusive parenting training or the integration of cash-plus approaches in national SP systems were integrated into the new programme for 2026–2029 in all countries. The strong evidence from the data and evaluations was used in advocating and collaborating with the local- and national-level governance actors. For lessons learnt and recommendations on sustainability matters, for instance, in the Philippines, SCF will support the quality of the parenting programming implemented entirely by the government. In Zambia, SCF advocates for integrating parenting approaches into gov-

ernment schemes in new provinces and districts, and in Nepal, SCF encourages local governments to co-fund the Child Grant Plus programme. SCF also enhances public CP services, through building the social welfare workforce capacity in all African programme countries. Supporting coordination mechanisms at national, district and local levels ensures that CP processes are regulated by authorities and embedded in national budgets as much as possible, both at statutory and non-statutory levels.

Apart from the indicator monitoring, to build evidence, SCF conducted impact assessments for specific approaches, value-for-money studies and needs assessments to support project planning and other research (including operational research and/or child-led research). This data was also used in the final thematic evaluations. Investing in evidence building which is based on globally validated research methods, supports the advocacy work with the governments in the programme countries related to adopting, replicating and scaling up child-sensitive, impactful approaches. During the programme period, several knowledge products were commissioned by SCF, some examples of these follow below:

- A gender-transformative learning study in Zambia to pilot new monitoring and evaluation tools within the Safe Families Common Approach and to strengthen evidence-building on male engagement in parenting and CP
- A study on the cash-plus case management’s effectiveness in Somalia done in collaboration with SC’s Research and Evaluation Unit
- A Zambia Kids Online study on the needs and CP risks faced by children and youth on the internet
- A compendium of case studies regarding the impact of mining on children in Kitwe District at the ‘Black Mountain’
- A study on children living and working in the streets in Hargeisa in Somaliland
- An impact evaluation of the Child Grant Parenting Programme in Nepal
- An economic evaluation of the Child Grant Plus programme in Nepal
- An SOP for access to SP in Nepal
- An impact study of parenting in the Philippines
- A fiscal space analysis for SP in Somalia, Zambia, Malawi and Uganda

Evaluations and research are uploaded to the SC Resource Centre for sharing, learning and increasing our global evidence base across the movement, and some of these publications are also accessible to the public through the Resource Centre’s public webpage.<sup>26</sup>

SCI’s key performance indicator on accountability measures how all the projects perform in relation to core standards on information sharing, participation and feedback. This indicator, as described in Chapter 4.2., has varied from 93% to 90% during the programme period, the percentage indicating the share of projects fulfilling the accountability criteria. These criteria include, for instance, providing regular, timely and accessible information to the children and adults concerned about who we are, our projects, our staff and code of conduct, our child safeguarding and PSEAH policies, our feedback and reporting mechanisms, how people can be involved within the programmes which affect them, and the feedback and reporting mechanisms that are applied.

In addition to all the above, we continued applying learning practices (such as quarterly and monthly project meetings between COs, partners and SCF staff); annual review meetings in each of the programmes; regular thematic meetings to reflect on experiences and learning in different SCF operating regions and across the thematic approaches within SCF; and an annual programme meeting for strategic steering. SCF staff also participated in the global thematic SC community of practice groups and technical working groups, specifically around CP, child poverty, MEAL, partnership, localisation, grant management, institutional partnerships and global funding.

**Sample of studies and evaluations produced during the programme period.**



26 <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/>

## 7. SUPPORT FOR THE SCI HUMANITARIAN FUND

The SC Humanitarian Fund (HF) is a global mechanism for ensuring the fast and efficient distribution of flexible funding to humanitarian responses. It enables SC to prioritise early action and preparedness activities, and to respond to the needs of children, regardless of external funding forces.

During the past five years and since 2021, the SC HF has allocated over USD 500 million to support timely, needs-driven humanitarian action across SC's global portfolio. The year 2025 was another demanding year, shaped by intensifying needs, tightening resources and an increasing number of complex emergencies globally. The SC members were able to contribute less than previous years to reach the HF's annual funding target. During 2025, the HF was able to allocate USD 79.8 million to 61 COs/ implementing offices, enabling them to sustain critical programmes and to adjust responses as conditions changed in places like the OpT, where scaling-up after a ceasefire to restore critical services was needed. SC shared 16% of the HF fund allocations with 83 local and national partners. HF-supported interventions contributed to SC globally, reaching a total of 26.3 million people, including 14.2 million children across all the humanitar-

ian programmes. In 2025, the HF served more than just a funding stream as HF acted as a strategic tool enabling the COs to sustain essential, lifesaving services after sudden aid cuts and adapt responses as risks and needs evolved.

SCF's contribution to the HF in 2025 was about EUR 2 million and the majority of this was earmarked to the responses in Ukraine and Gaza. In Ukraine, the HF addressed the urgent needs of Ukrainian refugees through CP, education, MHPSS and livelihoods. In Gaza, HF support enabled local partners to deliver large-scale, life-saving WASH services despite the extremely volatile conditions. One fourth of SCF's HF support was unrestricted, flexible contributions that were not tied to specific projects and allowed implementing COs and partners to allocate resources where they were most urgently needed and allowed them to adapt as contexts evolve. Unrestricted funding was used, for example, to strengthen preparedness and anticipatory action ahead of predictable risks and to empower local partners. SCF's contributions to the HF were funded by donations received from individuals, corporations and foundations.

## 8. COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

### Communications

During 2022–2025, SCF strengthened its communications to raise awareness of child rights, global development challenges and humanitarian crises while enhancing the visibility of SCF programme results. Throughout these years, SCF increasingly adopted a strategic, audience-focused and emotionally engaging approach across media, social platforms and public events.

In 2022, communications focused on child poverty, CP, EiE and the impacts of climate change, hunger and conflict. The escalation of the conflict in Ukraine early in the year was strongly reflected. SCF achieved exceptionally wide media reach, and engagement across social media channels increased significantly compared with previous

years. Traditional outlets – such as newsletters, research publications and the SCF's printed magazine (discontinued in 2024) – continued to connect with broad audiences. Communications also supported long-term advocacy achievements in several programme countries, in the EU and in Finland. In 2023, SCF refined its communication strategy to further prioritise high-quality, engaging content and improved analytics. SCF strengthened its presence across an expanded range of social media platforms. Themes included children in crises, child poverty, protection and climate-related risks. The outbreak of the conflicts in Gaza and Sudan in 2023 also led to a strong communications response, with increased messaging and visibility related to both crises. In 2024, SCF placed stronger emphasis on accountability, regularly commu-

nicating programme progress and impact. A campaign addressing children in crises (e.g. in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan) captured significant public attention, and social media engagement increased. Media outreach remained extensive, especially in relation to global conflicts. We also gained media visibility on gender equality, for example, through our *Global Girlhood Report 2024*, which focused on girls' rights and child marriage.

In 2025, SCF further increased public awareness of development challenges, highlighting children in conflicts, child poverty, education, protection, health and nutrition. Children's perspectives were highlighted across communication channels. Media outreach remained proactive, with high visibility around major humanitarian crises. The main annual campaign 'Kun pahaa tapahtuu' reached a wide national audience through both social media and television, while additional campaigns highlighted programme impact and supported advocacy for children affected by conflict in Gaza. SCF also broadened its social media audiences and maintained strong engagement through newsletters and online content.

### Advocacy

Throughout 2022–2025, SCF strengthened its advocacy for child rights, SP and adequate development cooperation funding in an increasingly challenging political and humanitarian landscape. Advocacy was carried out through active engagement with Finnish parliamentarians, ministries, civil servants and Members of the European Parliament, as well as through participation in national and international networks. We consistently highlighted the importance of CSSP as a means to reduce the poverty-driven inequalities affecting children and emphasised the CoP in humanitarian crises and

armed conflicts while also promoting access to education as a critical factor supporting both protection and well-being.

As Finland's political priorities shifted drastically during the programme period, linked to significant ODA budget cuts, SCF and other NGOs advocated for the need to sustain development cooperation and humanitarian funding and, specifically, to ensure that child rights remained central in Finland's global engagements. This included persistent efforts to advocate for this content to be noted in the government programme, budget negotiations and Finland's emerging foreign trade and development policy. In 2024, a particular focus of advocacy related to the *Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation* that was produced by the government. The shift of the main purpose of the development cooperation from poverty eradication to the promotion of Finnish trade made SCF raise concerns about both the lack of a specific child-rights perspective and the lessened focus on the least developed countries. In response, SCF engaged in highlighting that children's rights, humanitarian needs and long-term global equality should remain at the forefront of national and EU-level decision-making.

SCF invested in deepening its expertise and visibility on issues related to children in armed conflicts, taking a leading role in a national CAAC network and organising initiatives that addressed psychosocial support needs and human rights violations in conflict-affected areas such as Ukraine, Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria and Gaza. SCF communicated urgent child-focused messages to the Finnish government and contributed to hearings preparing Finland's positions for international human rights bodies

## 9. PRIVATE SECTOR COLLABORATION

Between 2022 and 2025, SCF strengthened its role in promoting children's rights within the private sector by engaging Finnish and international companies to integrate child rights into their operations, value chains and strategic partnerships. This work was guided by the child rights and business principles (CRBPs) developed by UNICEF, UN Global Compact and SC and implemented in a context of increasing corporate due diligence requirements, involving EU regulation, global crises and political uncertainty.

SCF collaborated with its key partner companies across different sectors and regions during the past four years. Humanitarian partnerships with the companies Fortum and UPM supported life-saving work and emergency responses. Konecranes invested in education and psychosocial support for children affected by the war in Ukraine. Our long-term partner Paulig continued to support the humanitarian response in fighting the hunger crises in Africa in addition to the multi-year programme

supporting the spices supply chain that was carried out in Andhra Pradesh in India. The Kone Foundation and Nokia supported SC's emergency response work (e.g. during the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria and Ukraine's escalated war). Health and nutrition programmes were supported by Athensmed and Orion in Eastern Africa. SCF cooperated with S Group on improved child rights and family-friendly practices in textile supply chains in Bangladesh. The renewed partnership with Nokia to enable better digital access and inclusive learning in Kenya kicked off in December 2025.

SCF strengthened corporate capacity in regard to child rights through assessments, research and training on child rights due diligence. A key example is the Bangladesh textile study done with Work Ahead for the S Group, which provided actionable recommendations on child rights, women's rights and family-friendly workplace practices. SCF also contributed to policy development, including engagement on the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (adopted 2024) and its subsequent revisions. Cooperation with Fingo, FIBS and Finn-

partnership strengthened dialogue between companies, CSOs and public actors. Innovative approaches included digital learning solutions, such as the digital learning pilot with Funzi in Côte d'Ivoire, the long-term collaboration with Poimapper on the use of the AskKids application in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, and the inclusive education programme with Nokia.

The private sector collaboration also faced some emerging challenges, including the limited voluntary uptake of child rights standards, the shifting of corporate priorities due to global crises, regulatory uncertainty and limited co-funding opportunities. The key lessons learnt are that long-term partnerships are key in the collaboration and that combining advocacy with financial support opportunities might be a good entry point for collaboration, as is the possibility for companies to contribute to humanitarian responses. Continued efforts are needed to scale-up the implementation and deepen partnerships to ensure children's rights are respected across business operations and value chains.

## 10. RISK MANAGEMENT

Throughout the programme period 2022–2025, SCF strengthened its risk management systems in response to both internal organisational developments and to increasingly complex global operating environments. SCF's work was guided by SC's globally established risk management framework, which includes 18 principal risk areas covering programme quality, safeguarding of children and adults, fraud and corruption, compliance, data protection, financial sustainability, staff management, governance, safety and security and organisational legitimacy ('not speaking out'). These global systems provided a solid foundation for risk identification, mitigation and monitoring, while SCF complemented them with strengthened internal processes, including the development and use of audit log, incident log and enhanced oversight mechanisms.

The programme years saw substantial volatility in several partner countries, and risk management systems were put to active use. Political and regulatory shifts particularly marked the period. In Afghanistan, a sudden ban on female staff imposed by the de facto authorities in

2023 disrupted MFA-funded activities. SCF and the CO later adapted operations and implemented contingency plans to continue programming in early 2024. In India, SC India's FCRA licence was not renewed during 2023–2024, forcing the suspension of the SCF-supported CSSP programme, which was funded through the SCF's funds. EU sanctions equally resulted in the suspension of a project in Russian Karelia. In Sudan, the escalation of the conflict during 2023–2024 made it impossible to launch the planned MFA-funded CSSP project and the EU-funded projects required swift reprogramming in safer locations, again demonstrating SCF's ability to rely on flexible donor support and SC's operational adaptability.

Beyond political instability, environmental and public health risks also materialised. An earthquake in Nepal temporarily halted the MFA-programme activities in Karnali, while SCF actively responded to the humanitarian situation caused by the earthquake with targeted ECHO funding, and a cholera outbreak in Zambia delayed the start of school-based work. Despite these events, most programme activities were eventually resumed or

adapted, highlighting the resilience afforded by effective risk planning and strong partnerships at country level.

To manage risks, SCF applied a layered set of tools and procedures. Pre-proposal assessment was strengthened through the use of the Go / No Go Tool, which evaluates strategic alignment, feasibility and risks before any proposal development begins. During proposal development and implementation, projects were assessed using the Proposal and Awards Risk Tool and the Awards Management Effort Tool. In high-risk contexts – including Ukraine, Sudan, Burkina Faso and Somalia – SCF and the COs applied the Awards Aid Diversion Risk Assessment tool to mitigate the risks of funds being diverted to sanctioned groups or terrorist entities. These tools proved essential for identifying potential challenges early and for ensuring compliance with donor expectations, particularly given the growth of regulatory and sanctions-related obligations.

SCF also invested in its internal capacities for risk management. The recruitment of a senior compliance and audit advisor strengthened our oversight of donor compliance, audit follow-up and internal controls. The SCF Code of Conduct was updated in 2024 to include explicit guidance on countering terrorism financing and anti-money laundering, ensuring alignment with global SC standards. Mandatory training on fraud, bribery, corruption and terrorism financing was introduced for all International Programme staff, reinforcing an organisation-wide culture of integrity. The audit log and incident log enhanced the monitoring of safeguarding concerns, financial misconduct and systemic issues identified during donor audits and internal reviews. These systems complemented the SC DATIX reporting mechanism and SCF's public whistleblowing channel, strengthening transparency and accountability.

The programme risk matrix remained a central tool throughout the cycle. In 2023, SCF expanded the matrix to include internal sustainability risks – financial, institutional, technical, cultural and environmental risks – along with governance-related risks. In 2024, the matrix was updated again to reflect wider geopolitical risks, including changes in the US administration affecting development assistance (PLGHA), political conditionalities introduced into Finland's development cooperation and the ongoing impacts of Russia's war against Ukraine. These updates ensured that the risk matrix remained responsive to the rapidly shifting external landscape and supported informed decision-making by SCF's Senior Management Team and Board.

Human rights considerations remained central to risk management throughout the programme. Safeguarding standards, the Code of Conduct, Do No Harm principles, continuous training and systematic incident reporting ensured that the risks of unintended negative impacts on children or communities were minimised. Reported cases during the period were few, small in scale and resolved without consequences for programme delivery. No sexual exploitation or abuse cases were reported in MFA-funded projects. SCF continues to strengthen context-specific human rights risk screening and partner capacity building as part of its proactive risk management approach.

Despite many contexts being categorised as high risk, SCF managed to deliver planned activities with only limited delays or restructuring. This reflects the organisation's capacity for adaptive programming, effective collaboration with COs and partners, and strong engagement with donors who provided necessary flexibility. At the same time, the period demonstrated that certain geopolitical risks – particularly those related to national regulatory environments and sudden escalations of conflict – were initially underestimated. In response, SCF introduced annual verification of its internal controls, strengthened scenario planning and intensified collaboration with Nordic SC members to protect partners' ability to remain compliant with human rights and child rights commitments in restrictive contexts.

Overall, the programme period marked a significant strengthening of SCF's risk management practices. While several major external risks materialised, SCF's systems – together with strong leadership, flexible programming models and close collaboration with SCI – allowed the organisation to safeguard programme results and maintain operational continuity in highly complex and rapidly changing contexts.

# 11. LINKAGES TO NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

During 2022–2025, SCF’s Global Programme remained firmly anchored in international human rights norms and aligned with Finland’s development cooperation priorities. The programme is grounded in the UNCRC and applies a human rights- and child rights-based programming approach. Throughout the period, SCF worked with both rights holders, such as children and families, and with duty bearers, including local and national authorities, to strengthen the realisation of children’s rights at family, community and systems levels. By strengthening families’ and communities’ awareness of their entitlements to public services and advising authorities on child-sensitive policy and service delivery, the programme directly contributed to the 2030 Agenda’s principles of leaving no one behind, equality and non-discrimination, and it advanced progress across several SDGs, including those related to health, education, gender equality, CP and CCA.

SCF’s work is closely connected to Finland’s broader political and development policy agenda. The programme supports Finland’s commitment to human rights, gender equality, the rights of women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, ChP, disability inclusion and CCA – all highlighted in Finland’s Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation and the Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy. The programme’s emphasis on strengthening local actors and promoting democratic participation aligns with the Finnish government’s view of CSOs as strategic partners in building resilient, rights-respecting societies. SCF’s ‘Shifting power’ agenda is closely aligned with the OECD/DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation, and this was also reflected in the SCF strategy for 2025–2027, where localisation became one of the key approaches, including the increased trend of sharing resources.

SCF’s programme further contributes to Finland’s goals related to private sector engagement and responsible business conduct. As described in Chapter 9, SCF actively collaborated with private sector companies to promote child rights and respond to humanitarian needs. We also responded to the rapidly changing development financ-

ing context by developing expertise in more innovative financing and seeking new financing partnerships in addition to traditional institutional development cooperation funding. In 2025 SCF launched an education technology partnership with Nokia in Kenya, which is in line with Finland’s increasing emphasis on linking trade and development and supporting innovative, sustainable financing models.

Across all its work, SCF has contributed to the SDG targets related to poverty reduction (SDGs 1.2 and 1.3), CP (SDG 16.2), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality and SRHR (SDG 5), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), CCA and resilience (SDG 13) and strong institutions and inclusive governance (SDG 16). By empowering children and communities, strengthening local systems and supporting civil society’s role in democratic processes, the programme has generated positive changes that enhance social cohesion and help build peaceful, inclusive and rights-based societies in line with Finland’s long-term development objectives.



PHOTO: SAVE THE CHILDREN

**Save the Children’s CSSP programming in Nepal and elsewhere is linked to both national and international poverty reduction efforts and policies.**

## 12. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS DURING 2022–2025

Across 2022–2025, SCF’s work with institutional partners continued to serve as a major driver of impact and financial sustainability for SCF’s IP. During these four years, SCF strengthened long-standing donor relationships, expanded into new development-finance partnerships and increased its role in humanitarian response in an increasingly fragile global operating environment.

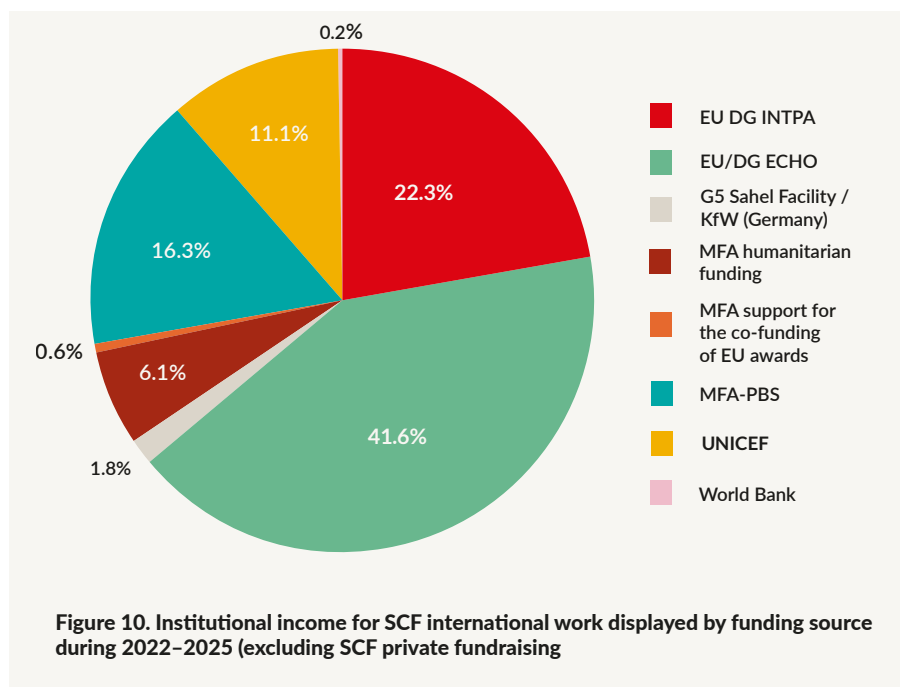
Since 2022 SCF’s IP institutional funding has grown steadily, accounting for approximately half of the total institutional income of the whole organisation, the peak year being 2024 with some major funding from the EU and UNICEF. The EU continued to be our principal donor, providing more than 60% of total funding, with yearly variation of funding amounts. Within the volatile funding context, MFA funding (accounting for approximately 23% of funding) represented stable and long-term support, allowing SCF to build up high-quality approaches and evidence, leading to sustainable results and contributing to the programme goals. Notably, UNICEF, the KfW/G5 Sahel Facility and the World Bank together represented 13% of the 2022–2025 portfolio, signalling diversifica-

tion into new development-finance partnerships.

The IP was also supported by SCF’s fundraising from individuals, corporates and foundations, which contributed 14% of the IP’s income.

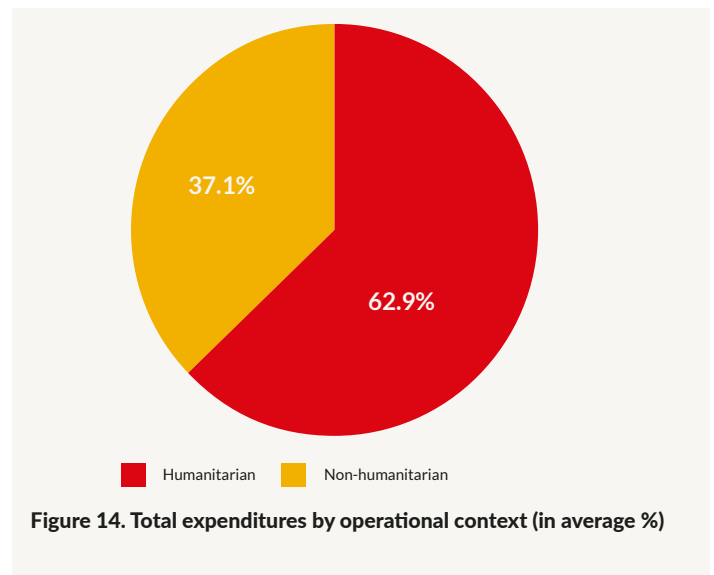
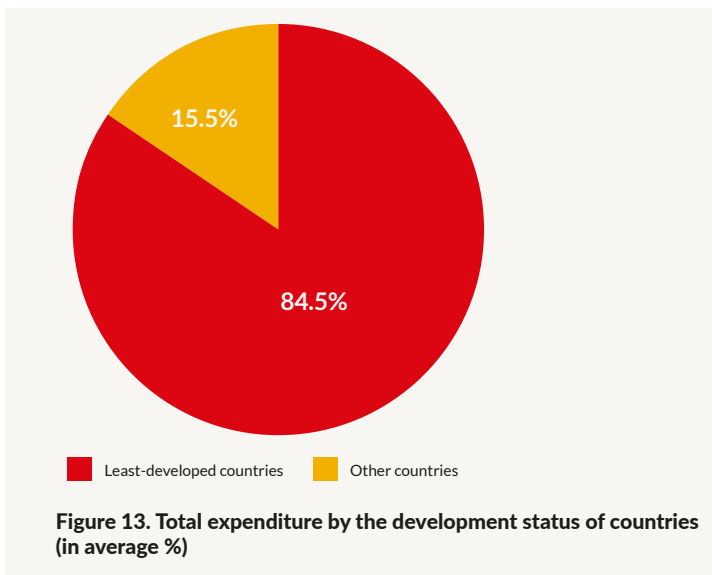
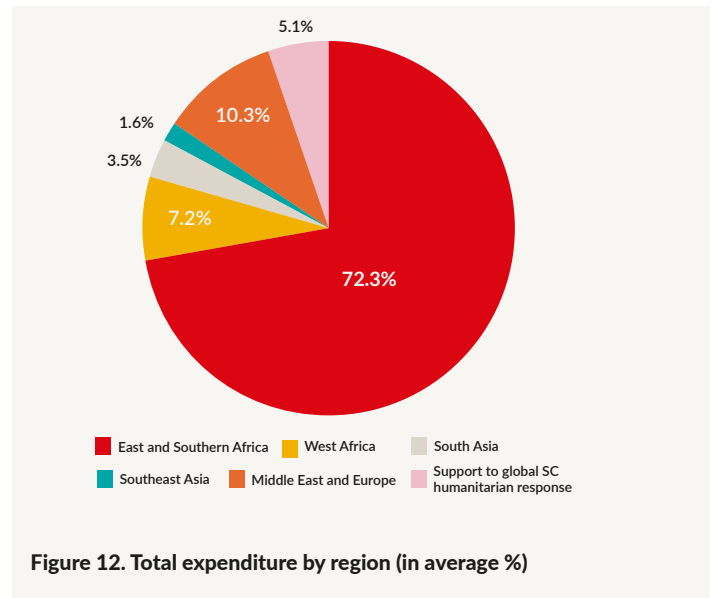
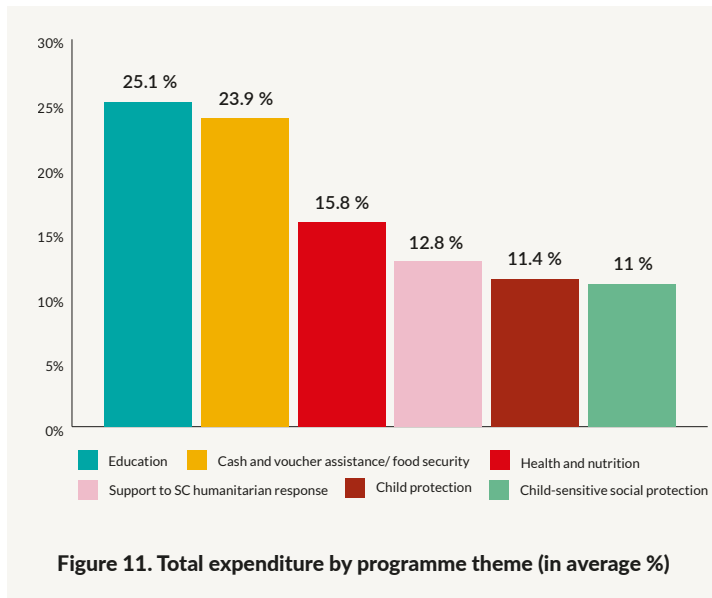
Humanitarian assistance has represented a large share of the portfolio (around 60% or more) during the four years. This trend reflects the deteriorating political, economic and climate-related conditions in SCF’s partner countries, including the escalating conflict in Sudan, the ongoing crises in Somalia and Ukraine, and the Nepal earthquake response.

Despite increased needs, since 2024 the development and humanitarian sector has faced a dramatic shift in the global funding landscape with several traditional donors reducing or redirecting their development budgets. These trends underscore the urgency for continued diversification of SCF’s funding base and the strengthening of strategic multistakeholder partnerships to ensure sustained impact for children in fragile contexts.



# 13. TOTAL INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE

The overall expenditure of EUR 128.3 million of the SCF IP during 2022–2025 was divided as depicted in Figure 11.





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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.

[www.savethechildren.fi](http://www.savethechildren.fi)  
[info@savethechildren.fi](mailto:info@savethechildren.fi)



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