



Mohamed Badel Majeed (left), displaced from Khartoum, attends class at a safe learning space in Kassala state, Sudan.

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Spotlight on the Global Education Thematic Fund 2024



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UNICEF works across 12 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to bring about positive change for children. The Global Education Thematic Fund makes vital contributions to SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

1. UNICEF's Global Education Thematic Fund: Promoting every child's right to learn

Every child has the right to learn. Yet for far too many, that right remains unfulfilled. Poverty, environmental shocks, conflict, displacement, disability and discrimination continue to keep children out of school or stuck in classrooms without meaningful learning, or disrupt learning altogether. This is especially true for girls and other vulnerable children. In emergencies, education is often one of the first services disrupted and one of the last to recover.

UNICEF is working to change this – not only by delivering education services but by helping countries, especially low-income countries, to build stronger, more resilient education systems that provide inclusive learning for all children, in all contexts.

At the heart of this work is the Global Education Thematic Fund, UNICEF's most strategic tool for advancing quality education at scale. Powered by flexible, multi-year contributions, the Fund enables UNICEF to work with agility, respond to emergencies, support national reform, scale what works, and integrate education across health, protection and social services.

Investments to the Global Education Thematic Fund support a more inclusive, resilient and prosperous world for every child and have a transformative effect across multiple SDGs.

"Every child deserves the chance to learn, and every partner who contributes to thematic funding is helping make that possible. This fund is more than a financial tool, it is a shared commitment to equity, resilience and the power of education to transform lives."

Kitty van der Heijden, Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, UNICEF

2. Financial results

Investment catalysing progress for generations

The progress made in education over recent decades – including 5 million more children enrolled in primary school – has been possible thanks to partners who choose to support inclusive, resilient and equitable education systems that unlock opportunity for generations.

In 2024, the Global Education Thematic Fund mobilized US\$17.5 million in flexible, catalytic funding from committed public and private partners. UNICEF extends sincere thanks to the Governments of Norway, Sweden, and Luxembourg, and private sector partners Chery Automobile, easyJet, ING España, Ahlström Collective Impact, Sandvik Coromant, Saxo and others who contributed to the Fund, including through National Committees. Every contribution to the Fund accelerates impact, helping deliver not just classrooms but futures full of potential.

Top Global Education Thematic Fund partners by contributions received, 2024¹

Sector	Donor	Amount (US\$)
Public	Norway	4,678,581
	Sida – Sweden	3,399,709
	Luxembourg	715,647
	Swedish Committee for UNICEF	2,710,131
	Dutch Committee for UNICEF	1,105,540
	Japan Committee for UNICEF	878,493
	Spanish Committee for UNICEF	864,852
	UNICEF Country Office PSFR	800,000
	Finnish Committee for UNICEF	749,683
Private	Italian Committee for UNICEF – Foundation Onlus	458,837
	Norwegian Committee for UNICEF	222,036
	Korean Committee for UNICEF	177,855
	United States Fund for UNICEF	166,282
	German Committee for UNICEF	142,632
	United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF	121,554
	Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF	100,347
	Danish Foundation for UNICEF	72,995
	Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF	68,827
	French Committee for UNICEF	30,333
	Committee for UNICEF Switzerland and Liechtenstein	30,333
	Portuguese Committee for UNICEF	17,694
	Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited	10,040
Grand Total		17,522,401

Note: Numbers may not add up due to rounding. PSFR: Private sector fundraising.

¹ The thematic funding contributions relate to the Strategic Plan 2022–2025.



A group of children, dressed in their bright red and white uniforms, in Sri Lanka, run with laughter and excitement, their smiles radiating happiness.

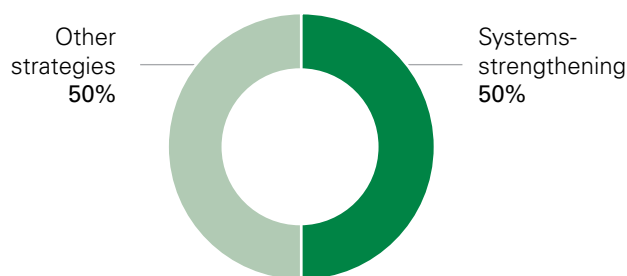
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Why flexible funding matters

What sets the Global Education Thematic Fund apart is not just where the money goes, but how it works. With flexible, multi-year funding invested over the four-year period of UNICEF's Strategic Plan (2022–2025), UNICEF can strengthen education systems to deliver progress towards achieving SDG 4 – quality education for all.

In 2024, UNICEF incurred US\$22.2 million in flexible thematic funding expense through the Education Thematic Fund. These investments advanced foundational learning, inclusive education, and the development of resilient, green and digitally enabled learning environments. Every flexible dollar helps bring the world closer to inclusive, quality education for every child.

UNICEF expense by programme strategy, 2024



In 2024, 50 per cent of Education thematic funding was spent on strengthening education systems.

Note: The category 'other' consists of strategies that enable systems-strengthening, including advocacy and communications; social and behaviour change; data and research; digital transformation; innovation; partnerships and engagement; and support to programme delivery.

A call to scale what works

Achieving SDG 4 is not a distant ambition. It is an urgent necessity. It requires accelerated investments in education systems, especially in low-income countries, that make inclusive, equitable and resilient education possible for every child.

The Global Education Thematic Fund is UNICEF's most strategic tool for driving that transformation. The Fund enables countries to go beyond short-term fixes and deliver long-term impact – improving foundational learning, investing in teachers, expanding digital access and ensuring schools can withstand conflict, environmental shocks and other crises.

We call on partners to help us scale what works.

Together, we can accelerate progress, close equity gaps and create a future where every child learns, leads and thrives – no matter where they live.



Transparency with Thematic Funding

UNICEF has a strong financial transparency record, including for thematic funding. We encourage UNICEF partners to the Global Education Thematic Fund to visit the Transparency Portal and access real-time information on spending in the countries receiving funds.

3. The footprint of the Global Education Thematic Fund

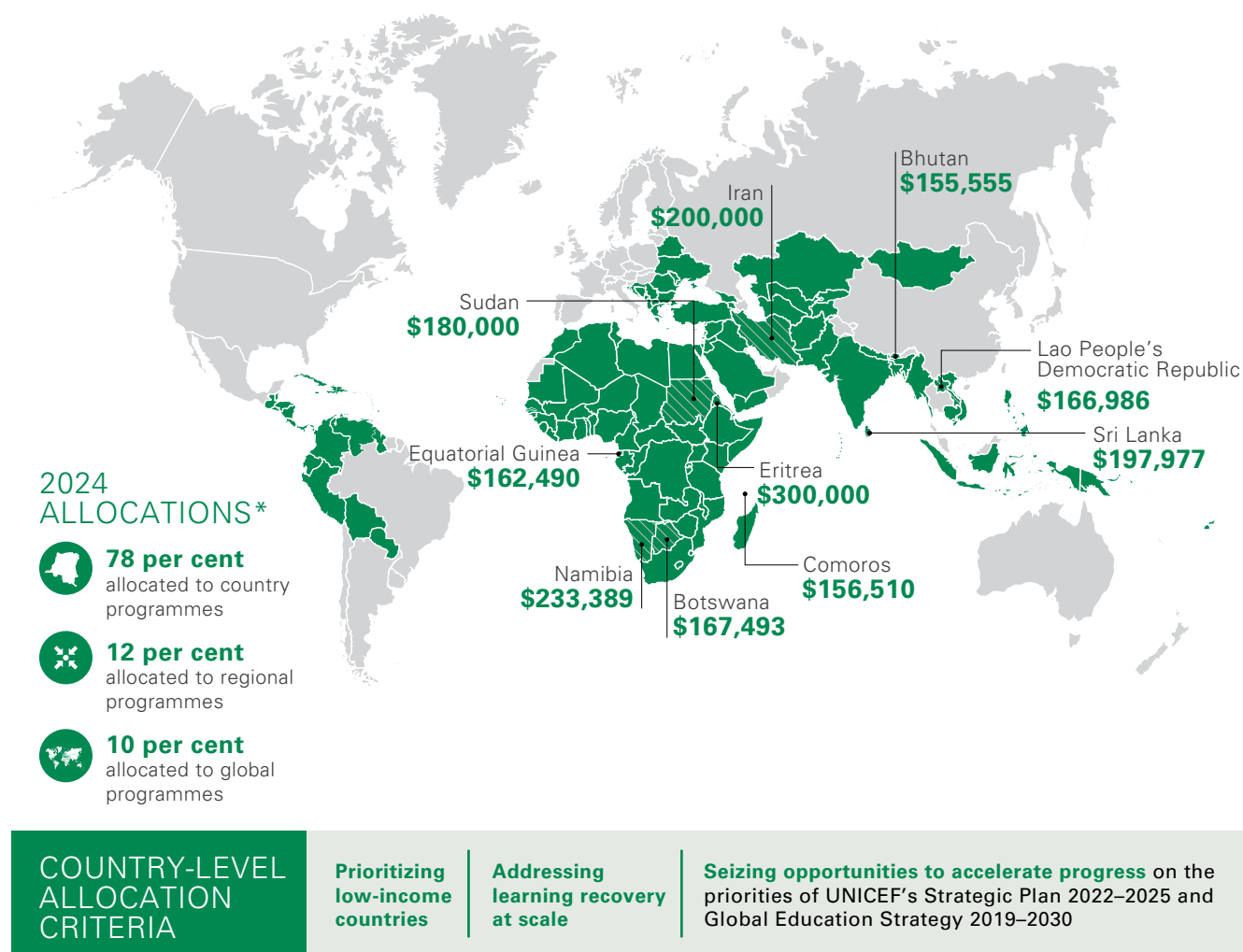
The reach of the Global Education Thematic Fund spans all seven UNICEF regions, delivering impact across three interconnected levels:

- At the **country level**: Investments help strengthen national systems, expand services and target support to children who are furthest behind.
- At the **regional level**: Investments build technical expertise, foster collaboration across borders, position policy and accelerate the adoption of promising practices.

- At the **global level**: Investments support UNICEF's technical and thought leadership in developing tools, guidance, data frameworks and innovations that help scale results for children everywhere.

Each level reinforces the others, enabling UNICEF to drive sustainable improvements in education with every investment.

The Global Education Thematic Fund allocations around the world²



Note: This map is stylized and not to scale. It does not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or area or the delimitation of any frontiers.

² The map shows all countries that received allocations from the Global Education Thematic Fund between 2022 and 2024. The 10 highest allocations in 2024 are shown with full amounts.

4. From programmes to policy: A systems shift in education

The global education crisis is not just an issue of access; it is also an issue of equity, quality and resilience. UNICEF's response is rising to meet the scale of the need. Across regions and contexts, the Global Education Thematic Fund is advancing a transformation from fragmented interventions to strong education systems that uphold every child's right to learn, thrive and shape their future.

UNICEF's systems-strengthening model is anchored in workforce development, policy and legislative reform, social and behaviour change, data and evidence, infrastructure for service delivery and sustainable financing – and proven in delivering measurable and holistic results.

In 2024, flexible thematic funding played a catalytic role across UNICEF's global Education portfolio, both in development and humanitarian contexts, ensuring that investments across four pillars not only expand access but also improve learning outcomes and system resilience.

Below are some headline sector results for which thematic funding, as part of a broader portfolio of funding, was a key contributor.

Infrastructure for service delivery

Robust infrastructure is essential for effective education systems. Beyond buildings, it means safe, inclusive learning environments with reliable water and sanitation, digital connectivity, and access to quality learning materials. When infrastructure is robust and resilient, children can continue learning even during crises, and communities are better equipped to withstand disruption. UNICEF is helping countries build education systems that are not only functional but also resilient.

In 2024, the proportion of countries with resilient education systems grew to 40 per cent, from 32 per cent in 2023.

UNICEF supported adaptation of school infrastructure and introduced environmental education in 91 countries, up from 65 in 2023.

Flexible thematic funding made it possible to translate these global shifts into tangible results in numerous countries:

- In **Myanmar**, UNICEF's targeted support to the most marginalized crisis-affected children ensured more than **277,580 children and adolescents**, including nearly **470 children with disabilities**, can access and continue education through temporary learning centres established in camps for internally displaced persons and surrounding communities.
 - In the **State of Palestine**, UNICEF supported nearly **5,660 children in Gaza** to return to learning, through the delivery of educational activities in 12 safe temporary learning spaces.
 - In **Ukraine**, UNICEF established 12 youth spaces that have reached around **500,000 young people**. These spaces have fostered mental well-being, social inclusion and career readiness.
 - In **Eritrea**, UNICEF helped ensure uninterrupted learning for **6,500 children** by equipping 12 remote schools with solar panels, batteries and computers, enabling sustainable access to quality education.
 - In **Ecuador**, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education piloted an early warning system in 17 schools and trained **510 educators**. These actions led to improved emergency coordination and ensured timely support for more than **5,800 students**.
- These efforts show that with the right infrastructure, every child, no matter where they live, can stay connected to learning.



Samrawit Gebrihwot, 10-year-old student, who attends the UNICEF-supported FreKalsi Primary School, Tigray Region, Ethiopia. She shares "I love learning, but I also love to play with my friends, especially jumping rope."

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Justine, 10, poses by the window of a classroom at Munoza Primary School in Walikale, North Kivu province, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2024.

© UNICEF/UNI767626/Benekire

Laws and policies

Strong education systems require laws, policies and budgets that guarantee every child's right to learning.

UNICEF works hand in hand with governments on national education sector plans and programmes and the pioneering of inclusive education policies.

In 2024, 73 per cent of countries where UNICEF has education programmes had implemented evidence-based education sector plans that address inequities and align with the SDGs, up from 65 per cent in 2023.

UNICEF supported 102 countries to advance inclusive education systems, with 58 per cent reporting an enabling environment, up from 55 per cent in 2023.

Thematic funding was pivotal in enabling context-sensitive programming at the country level:

- In **Indonesia**, UNICEF helped local governments develop tailored education programmes that prevented an estimated **176,000 children** from dropping out and helped **71,300 children** return to school.
- In **Algeria**, to reduce repetition rates (estimated at 20 per cent), UNICEF supported pedagogical remediation strategies targeting first-year middle school students. Training educators to interpret primary school evaluations and tailor responses to students at risk of repetition led to **an average increase in students' grades of five points**.
- In **Honduras**, to accelerate learning recovery, UNICEF and the government:
 - Developed and implemented a national plan to increase enrolment and reduce dropout rates, with over **160,000 more students** enrolled in comparison to the previous year.

- Leveraged resources to provide internet connectivity to more than **402,100 students** and over **22,100 teachers**.
- Developed digital learning initiatives benefiting over **47,200 students** in the country.

UNICEF's approach is clear: build strong systems, empower educators and remove barriers so that every child can access the education they deserve.

Workforce development

Teachers are at the heart of quality education. UNICEF works globally to ensure that educators receive high-quality, continuous professional development that is responsive to local needs. This not only improves learning outcomes but also makes education more inclusive and accessible, particularly for marginalized children and youth, including girls and children with disabilities.

Thematic funding helped advance quality teaching and the use of inclusive pedagogy:

- In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, UNICEF enhanced the skills and capacity of more than **1,840 teachers** in key aspects of curricular reform and distributed learning materials to more than **311,500 children**, laying the groundwork to improve the quality of learning and foundational skills, particularly in reading and mathematics, where national assessments showed concerning proficiency levels.
- In **India**, UNICEF supported inclusive education for **450,000 children** by developing a toolkit for infrastructure accessibility audits and training nearly **168,000 schoolteachers, educators for children with disabilities, and therapists**.

- In **Sri Lanka**, UNICEF's modelling of child-centred teaching strategies reached nearly **7,200 teachers** and **143,000 children**, strengthening foundational learning outcomes at scale.
- In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, UNICEF supported the integration of assistive technology into higher education and teacher training by partnering with the University of Sarajevo. A dedicated module on assistive technology was added to the permanent inclusive education training programme.

Data, research and evidence for education solutions

Reliable data and strong evidence are essential to transform education systems and reach the children most often left behind. UNICEF supports governments to strengthen data systems, generate research and use evidence to drive smarter, more equitable education responses.

By identifying who is out of school or is not learning – and why – UNICEF helps countries design programmes that not only expand access but improve the quality and impact of learning.

Using thematic funding, UNICEF deepened its engagement on accountability tracking globally. The Foundational Learning Action Tracker (FLAT) expanded its data coverage to 123 low- and middle-income countries in 2024 (up from 120 in 2023). It generated 30 country scorecards, 7 regional briefs and 2 African snapshots, offering actionable insights that informed 5 national education policy discussions and were featured in 18 global and regional events. FLAT has been a vital accountability tool, helping to catalyse government awareness and drive action on foundational learning. In 2024, the Country Action Tracker for Children – Early Childhood Education (CATCH-ECE) was successfully piloted within the FLAT framework, engaging 89 countries in the process.

Technical support with thematic funding at country level helped governments turn data into action:

- In **Guinea Bissau**, UNICEF-supported school mapping uncovered nearly 3,000 non-active staff positions. This efficiency measure freed up **US\$3.5 million** of government funds, enabling the hiring of over **4,000 contract teachers** and expanding access to learning for thousands of children.
- In **Bangladesh**, UNICEF helped establish and strengthen quality assurance in pre-primary education delivered in government primary schools across the country. The monitoring and oversight skills of **3,100 field officers** and **180 government officials** were enhanced through guidance and training to ensure adherence to standards, and **3,400 teachers** gained specialized knowledge and skills to implement pre-primary education.

- In **Iran**, UNICEF's assessments informed targeted support for Afghan refugee families and host communities. The result:
 - **2,500 children** gained learning opportunities.
 - **17,000 children** benefited from improved learning environments.
 - **2,400 parents** and **150 teachers** and education officials received capacity-strengthening support.

Evidence is not just collected; it is used. With flexible funding, UNICEF helps governments translate data into action, turning insights into impact for millions of children, and stronger accountability for progress.

Results that last

In 2024, flexible thematic funding played a catalytic role in UNICEF's strategic education investments, delivering measurable, system-level progress; ensuring more children, including those in crisis contexts, could access quality learning and build brighter futures; and contributing to meaningful progress at scale:

- **26 million out-of-school children and adolescents** gained access to education, including **9 million in humanitarian settings** and **3.7 million children** on the move.
- Learning materials reached **17.5 million children**, 27 per cent in crisis-affected areas.

These numbers reflect more than just scale; they represent lives transformed, rights fulfilled, and systems strengthened to deliver education that lasts.



Scan the QR code or click on the image to read UNICEF's Data Companion and Scorecard for more information on progress against SDG and Strategic Plan targets. Thematic Funding as part of UNICEF's overall funding portfolio contributes to this progress.

5. Impact story

Building foundations: Transforming early learning in the Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, a quiet revolution in education is reshaping the earliest school years. For too long, children struggled with low learning outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics, not because they lacked potential but because the system lacked the tools to support them. Inadequate teaching methods in the early grades were holding students back from acquiring the foundational skills they need to learn and thrive.

Now, that is beginning to change. With the support of the Global Education Thematic Fund, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education have launched a national transformation. The Building the Foundations for Learning (CON BASE) programme is equipping teachers with the training, resources and methodologies they need to help children build strong early literacy and numeracy skills. What began as a pilot has now reached every corner of the country – a full national scale-up.

The government has backed this ambition with a three-year commitment of US\$10 million. Flexible thematic funding was the catalyst. It enabled UNICEF to recruit technical experts, co-design the programme, develop teaching materials and support the pilot phase, laying the groundwork for the government to expand and institutionalize the programme nationwide. Today, 16,000 teachers are trained each year, supporting more than 450,000 students in the first three grades of primary school.

Change is already visible in the classroom. Data from a national learning assessment in 2024 show sharp gains, particularly among the children struggling the most. In Spanish language, the proportion of students in the lowest-performing group achieving satisfactory results in writing jumped from 17 per cent to 50 per cent. In mathematics, the proportion increased from 47 per cent to 65 per cent in basic competencies such as solving calculations and counting.



Children in a classroom in the Dominican Republic.

@UNICEF/McFarlane/2024

This progress is not just a testament to the programme's quality; it is a powerful reminder of what is possible when systems are strengthened from the inside out. UNICEF is now supporting the full transfer of CON BASE to government management, ensuring that gains are not just preserved but sustained.

The Dominican Republic's commitment to foundational learning is part of a global effort. Around the world, UNICEF is working to help countries transform early education, with literacy and numeracy as the bedrock of lifelong learning.

This is the impact of the Global Education Thematic Fund. Your support ensures not just access to learning but quality learning that lasts, reaching children who have been left behind and giving them the tools to succeed.

"Literacy is the most important tool for children. It is their right – and the foundation for a country's development and participation in the global economy."

– Carlos Carrera, UNICEF Representative, Dominican Republic

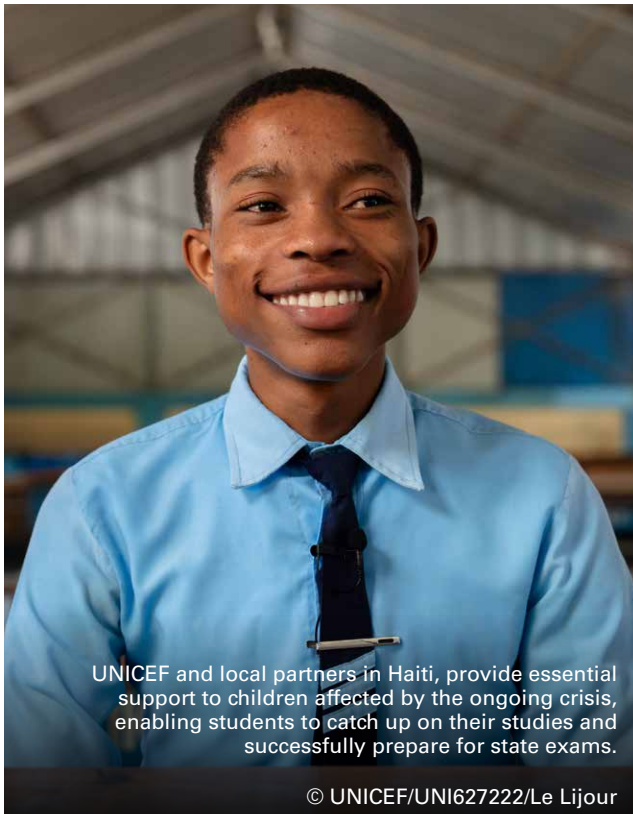
6. Hearing from our donors and partners

Norway and UNICEF: Advancing quality education through flexible investment

In 2024, Norway reaffirmed its position as UNICEF's leading public sector partner for the Global Education Thematic Fund, delivering flexible, innovative support to advance inclusive, quality education, especially in fragile contexts. By investing in UNICEF's mandate through strategic thematic funding, Norway enables system-wide change that reaches the most marginalized children.

Norway's multi-year contributions have been catalytic in addressing pandemic-related learning losses, expanding access for out-of-school children and strengthening equitable education systems. This approach – prioritizing national capacity-building and scalable solutions – exemplifies the power of thematic funding to drive cross-sectoral impact across education, child protection, health and gender equality.

As UNICEF advances its 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, its partnership with Norway stands as a model for achieving lasting gains in education access, retention and learning – demonstrating how schools can become transformative spaces of inclusion, safety and opportunity.



UNICEF and local partners in Haiti, provide essential support to children affected by the ongoing crisis, enabling students to catch up on their studies and successfully prepare for state exams.

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Chery Automobile: Powering every child's learning journey



In 2024, Chery Automobile, a leading global automotive manufacturer, was the most significant private sector contributor to UNICEF's Global Education Thematic Fund. This landmark partnership reflects Chery's commitment to supporting children's right to quality education and contributing to a more inclusive, equitable future.

Chery's commitment to supporting UNICEF's mission – ensuring every child, everywhere, has access to learning opportunities that unlock their full potential – aligns closely with its corporate social responsibility vision: to promote social progress and create a better way of life for all.

Transforming education through strategic support

Chery's catalytic investment in UNICEF's Global Education Thematic Fund is strengthening education systems to deliver transformative change for the most vulnerable children. By supporting girls' education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), teacher training and inclusive learning environments, this flexible funding helps break down barriers to quality primary and secondary education while pioneering innovative approaches to reach children in emergencies.

By investing in systemic solutions, Chery's partnership is helping drive progress towards SDG 4: quality education for all.

A partnership with global impact

Chery's support empowers UNICEF to reach millions of out-of-school children, strengthen education systems and promote inclusive, lifelong learning. This collaboration showcases how private sector leadership can accelerate progress and create a lasting impact for children worldwide.

UNICEF extends its sincere gratitude to Chery Automobile for its visionary support and shared commitment to ensuring quality education for every child.

Spotlight on the Global Education Thematic Fund

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