



**EDUCATION  
CANNOT  
WAIT**

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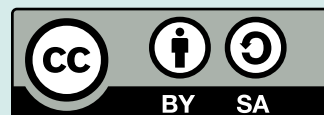
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# STRATEGIC PLAN 2027- 2030

#### ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This Strategic Plan was developed through a consultative process with country partners, United Nations and multilateral agencies, donor governments, civil society organizations (including representatives of youth and teachers), the private sector and foundations. This plan has also been informed by feedback gathered through a consultation process led by the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies. We thank everyone who contributed to the strategy process. Your input has been invaluable. This plan was adopted by ECW's High-Level Steering Group in March 2026.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or UN Member States. The boundaries, names and designations in this publication do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations, Education Cannot Wait or partner countries. All figures are presented in US dollars.



March 2026

#### ABOUT EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is the global fund for education in crises. The Fund provides rapid, flexible funding to locally led education responses that protect learning for refugee, internally displaced, and other children, while strengthening systems to sustain learning and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. ECW works with governments, public and private funders, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and other humanitarian and development aid actors so that no child is left behind.

As global crises intensify and the education financing gap widens, ECW calls on public and private sector partners to scale up investments so millions more crisis-affected girls and boys can learn and rebuild their futures.

Follow us:

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Additional information is available at [www.educationcannotwait.org](http://www.educationcannotwait.org)

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# INTRODUCTION

The world stands at a critical juncture. Violent conflicts are escalating, climate-induced disasters are devastating communities, and over a quarter of a billion children are out of school and being denied their right to a quality education. We can either turn away in resignation or act decisively.

**Education Cannot Wait chooses to act.**



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**Our mission is clear:  
To protect learning for  
children caught in the  
world's most severe  
crises – rapidly, safely and  
inclusively.**

This 2027–2030 Strategic Plan reaffirms Education Cannot Wait's (ECW) unique mandate and added value: as the global fund that responds first, rapidly providing financing for education when emergencies strike, while also investing in crisis readiness and resilience. Building on lessons and evidence from our first decade of operations, our ambition for 2027–2030 is to mobilise **US\$600 million** and streamline our portfolio to **reach 10 million of the most vulnerable children in crises**. To achieve this, we will intensify efforts to secure new and innovative partnerships and enhance our investment modalities, making it simpler and faster to access ECW funding.

At the heart of this plan is a strategic shift towards a sharper focus on the most severe and under-financed crises, supported by clearer investment and exit criteria. We are introducing a single investment window via the Crisis-Oriented Resilience and Emergency (CORE) programme. This will simplify processes, improve crisis readiness, enable rapid delivery and strengthen continuity from emergency response through to resilience-building. This redesign will improve coherence across humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. Building on evidence from pilots in Pakistan, Somalia and Chad, we will scale up anticipatory action to mitigate the impacts of predictable hazards before they take hold. We will align these efforts with existing country-level actions and frameworks, and make sure education is included within them. We will also reduce reliance on in-house technical support and explore opportunities with partners, particularly at country level, to deliver these services. The result is a more focused approach that reduces fragmentation and strengthens sustainable impact.

As we embark upon this new strategic period, ECW renews its commitment to protection, gender equality and inclusion; ensuring that refugees and internally displaced children are not left behind, girls can overcome gender-specific barriers and children with disabilities have equal access to safe, quality learning. Complementarity is central to our strategy. ECW will work closely with governments, UN agencies, other global funds and education partners to maximise efficiency, reduce duplication and ensure that every dollar invested achieves the greatest possible impact for children in crises.

The stakes could not be higher. Global aid for education is falling as needs rise, yet education remains one of the best investments for stability and growth. Research shows much of economic growth is linked to basic literacy and numeracy. The real cost is inaction – a generation deprived of learning, vulnerable to exploitation and unable to contribute to peace and prosperity. Young people are demanding accountability and communities want a seat at the table. ECW listens. Increased localisation is at the heart of this plan: more funding as directly as possible to local organisations and greater leadership for those closest to the children we serve.

This plan is set against a backdrop of unparalleled global change – challenges to multilateralism, substantial declines in development assistance, ongoing UN reforms and a resetting of the humanitarian aid system. Together, we must navigate these shifts with a resilient ECW capable of financing the promise of education as a human right and a foundational driver of sustainable development. Together, we can ensure that every child – even in the darkest of crises and amidst volatile external environments – can learn, thrive and shape a better future for all.

# MANDATE, FUNCTIONS AND VALUE PROPOSITION

## Education Cannot Wait: The global fund for education in crises

### Vision

A world where the right to education for all children affected by crises is realised, enabling them to learn safely and without disruption.



### Mission

To provide rapid, flexible funding to locally-led education responses that protect the learning of the most marginalised children affected by crises, while strengthening education systems to sustain learning and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.



### Key functions

To achieve its mission, the ECW Secretariat and its governance bodies:

- **Mobilise** political will and resources for education in crisis contexts
- **Fund** and quality assure a portfolio of grants
- **Advocate** for education in crises to be prioritised at the global and local levels



### Added Value

ECW is the only global fund focused solely on education in crisis settings within the multilateral system, and which operates according to the Humanitarian Principles. This clear focus and our crisis-response approach set us apart within the global education aid architecture.

### Principles

ECW is a partnership fund, hosted by the UN system. Five principles underpin and inform the approach to all our investments:

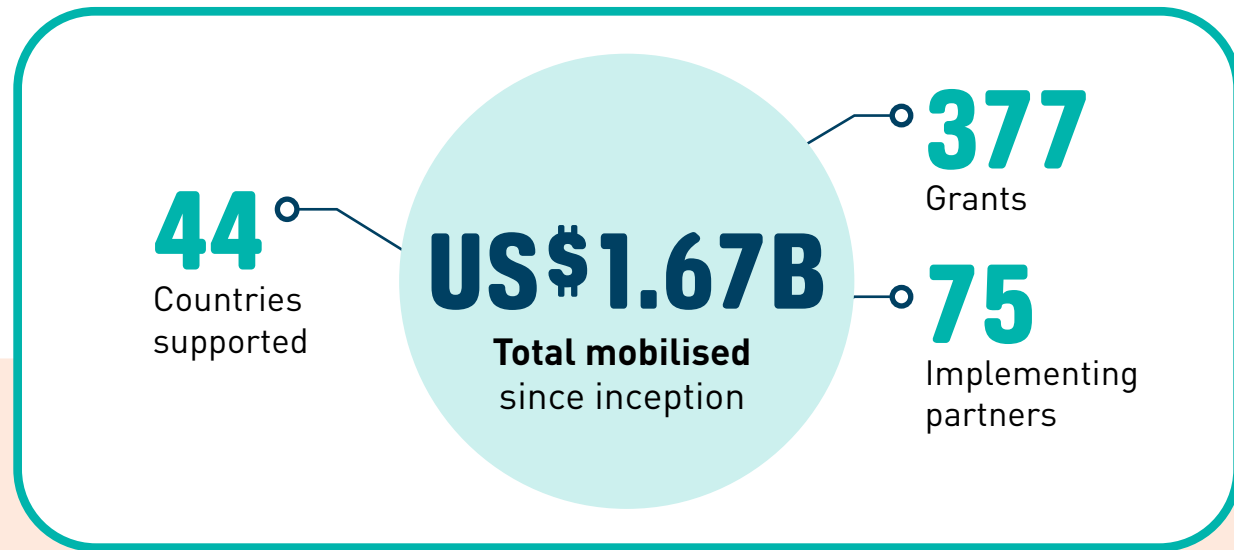
1. **Investing in local actors** and supporting them to lead and deliver education services
2. **Applying a rights-based approach** and defending education as a fundamental human right
3. **Championing holistic, quality education** through safe, gender equitable and inclusive investments from early childhood through secondary education
4. **Embedding a risk-informed and resilience strengthening approach** across all our work
5. **Supporting and advocating for agile, coordinated, evidence-based and sustainable responses**

Our added value comes from four main strengths:

- **Fast and flexible crisis funding:** We provide support within weeks of the onset of a crisis, backing locally-led solutions that reach children in the hardest-to-reach and conflict-affected areas, including in politically contested settings.
- **Linking emergency response to recovery:** We act quickly in emergencies while also supporting longer-term resilience, financing education at the junction of humanitarian, development, peace and climate efforts.
- **A catalyst and convener of global action for children in crises:** We mobilize and leverage partnerships between governments, donor countries, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector and philanthropists.
- **Driving crisis-specific data and evidence:** We spearhead compiling crisis-specific data, generating evidence and prioritising the measurement of both academic learning, and emotional well-being and social skills in crisis-affected contexts.

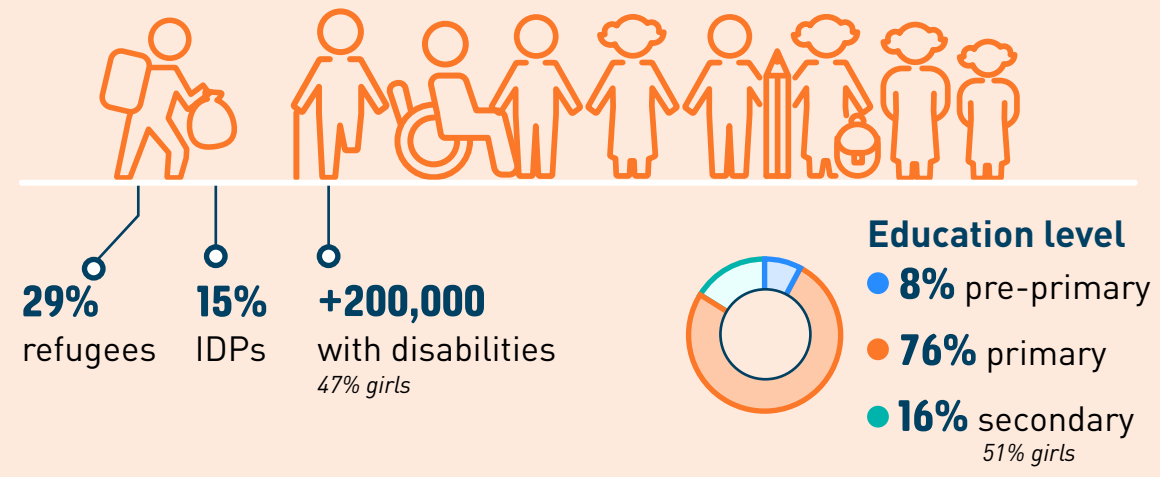
# ECW RESULTS

## Since inception



Total children reached  
**+14 MILLION**  
50% girls

Unless otherwise noted, girls represent 50% of the populations below; children with disabilities represent less than 2% (where data is available)

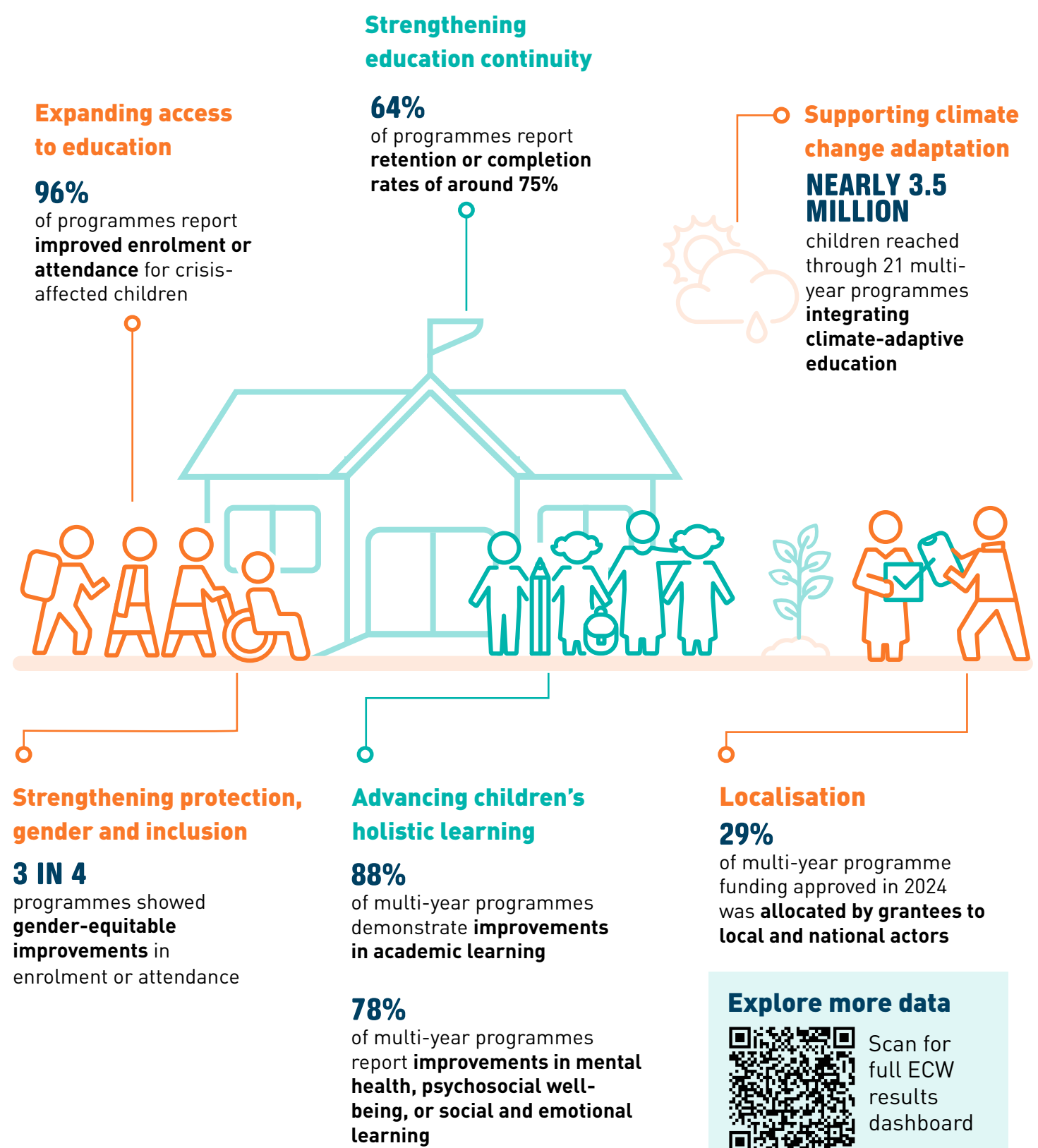


**+220,000** teachers trained  
53% female

**25,000** schools built/rehabilitated

# Evidence of impact

Among programmes active under the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan with available data



# A SHIFTING GLOBAL LANDSCAPE

ECW's strategic direction is being defined in a landscape marked by rapidly evolving challenges and shifting global realities within which the education of millions of children is in jeopardy.



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## By the numbers:

### EDUCATION NEEDS ARE INCREASING:

**+230 MILLION CHILDREN**

Globally, more than 230 million school-aged children and adolescents (50% girls) across 60 countries are affected by crises – an increase of at least 35 million over the past three years. This figure is expected to rise as extreme weather events become more frequent and intense.

### CHILDREN IN CRISIS SETTINGS DISPROPORTIONATELY PAY THE PRICE:

**18% INCREASE**

In 2024, 34% of crisis-affected children were out of school. At the end of 2023, 16% of children were out of school globally.

### WITHIN CRISIS CONTEXTS, THE MOST MARGINALISED FALL FURTHEST BEHIND:

**20% CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Girls in crisis contexts are more likely than boys to drop out as they progress through the education system. Children with disabilities represent 20% of those who are out of school in crisis contexts. The early years are the among the most underfunded and least prioritised within humanitarian education responses.

### SHRINKING FUNDING WILL FURTHER EXACERBATE NEEDS:

**+6 MILLION CHILDREN**

The projected decline in international aid for education is expected to push an additional 6 million children out of school by the end of 2026 – equivalent to emptying all primary schools in Germany and Italy.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES ARE CRITICALLY LOW:

**70% CHILDREN**

As of 2022, it was estimated that 70% of children worldwide cannot read and understand a simple sentence by age 10, with even worse learning poverty in crisis contexts.

## Needs are increasing and funding is shrinking

Aid to education is projected to fall by US\$3.2 billion (24%) by the end of 2026 at a time when the number, scale and complexity of crises, along with the associated needs, are increasing along with the impact of climate change. According to UNHCR, over 117 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced due to conflict, terrorism, armed violence, persecution, climate disasters or violence, with refugees accounting for over a third of this total. Children account for 40% of all forcibly displaced people, despite making up only 29% of the world's population. Education is a strategic investment in peace and productivity, yet resilience and economic growth cannot be achieved without additional funding and political commitment.



With global budgets under pressure, ECW's role in advocating for education in crises is more critical than ever.

## Education is being squeezed out of the humanitarian system

A tighter focus on fewer priorities has led to a 33% drop in requests for education funding in crises and a 43% drop in people targeted for assistance, with countries like Chad, Sudan and Haiti seeing cuts of up to 90%. Other pooled funds are not compensating; in 2025, education received only US\$1.6 million (0.5%) from OCHA's Central Emergency Response Fund. Ongoing reforms – including the New Humanitarian Compact and UN80 – are reshaping coordination, with some clusters set to deactivate by 2026 and OCHA-UNHCR efforts streamlining structures in mixed displacement settings.

As the global architecture consolidates, national governments and local partners will need to fill gaps left by the international community's gradual withdrawal. In addition, space for civil society is shrinking dangerously and rapidly, and this has the knock-on impact of stifling those meant to hold government to account for delivering on their duty to provide education for all. With shrinking funding, there is also a risk of humanitarian response limiting its targeting both in terms of inclusivity of age and disability groups, and scope of interventions – jeopardizing both reach and quality of education responses in crisis.



**ECW will continue to champion funding for inclusive and holistic education in crises, to advocate for accountability and to adapt to unpredictable coordinating environments.**

## The cost of inaction has never been higher

Recent crises show how quickly education disruption causes lasting harm. Even short interruptions to schooling can lead to long-term learning loss and widen existing inequalities. Delayed responses make recovery harder and more costly. Over time, lost schooling harms economies, with girls most affected, leading to major productivity losses and slower development. Excluding girls from quality education also limits women's leadership and participation in economic and political life, especially in countries moving from crisis to long-term development. Early, risk-informed action helps maintain learning and reduces rebuilding costs. Education also helps stabilise crisis settings by providing safe spaces, routines and mental health support and, when provided equitably, it can reduce the risk of conflict.



**ECW supports local and national implementing partners to minimise learning losses and ensure children aged 3–18 years in crises can develop their full potential.**

## Crises today are increasingly protracted and complex

The average humanitarian appeal now lasts 10 years. For a child, this puts an entire learning cycle at risk. The term "protracted crisis" does not imply that a situation has evolved into a more development context or that emergency conditions have ceased. Rather, it signals a prolonged state of fragility, where emergency conditions – displacement, insecurity, disrupted services – persist even as recovery takes place in parallel. In such settings, children's needs remain urgent, and education continues to serve both humanitarian and developmental purposes simultaneously. This is evidenced by the fact that, for example, Education Clusters in countries like South Sudan and Ethiopia have been active for over 17 years.



**ECW responds to this prolonged reality and supports work at the nexus of these approaches, bridging the gap between emergency responses and longer-term development efforts.**

## The promise of localisation remains largely unfulfilled

Local and national actors received only 4.4% of humanitarian funding in 2023 from Grand Bargain signatories as directly as possible, and less than 1% directly. Government and national NGOs took on leadership roles in Humanitarian Country Teams in only a few contexts. These figures reveal enduring structural barriers: funding channels still heavily favour intermediaries, decision-making power remains concentrated in international agencies, and country-level roles for local actors in coordination and agenda-setting remain minimal. The result is an architecture that limits local and national leadership despite a current call for actors closest to communities to lead, adapt and mobilise.



**ECW's 2027–2030 strategy delivers a more ambitious and effective commitment to localisation.**

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2027–2030

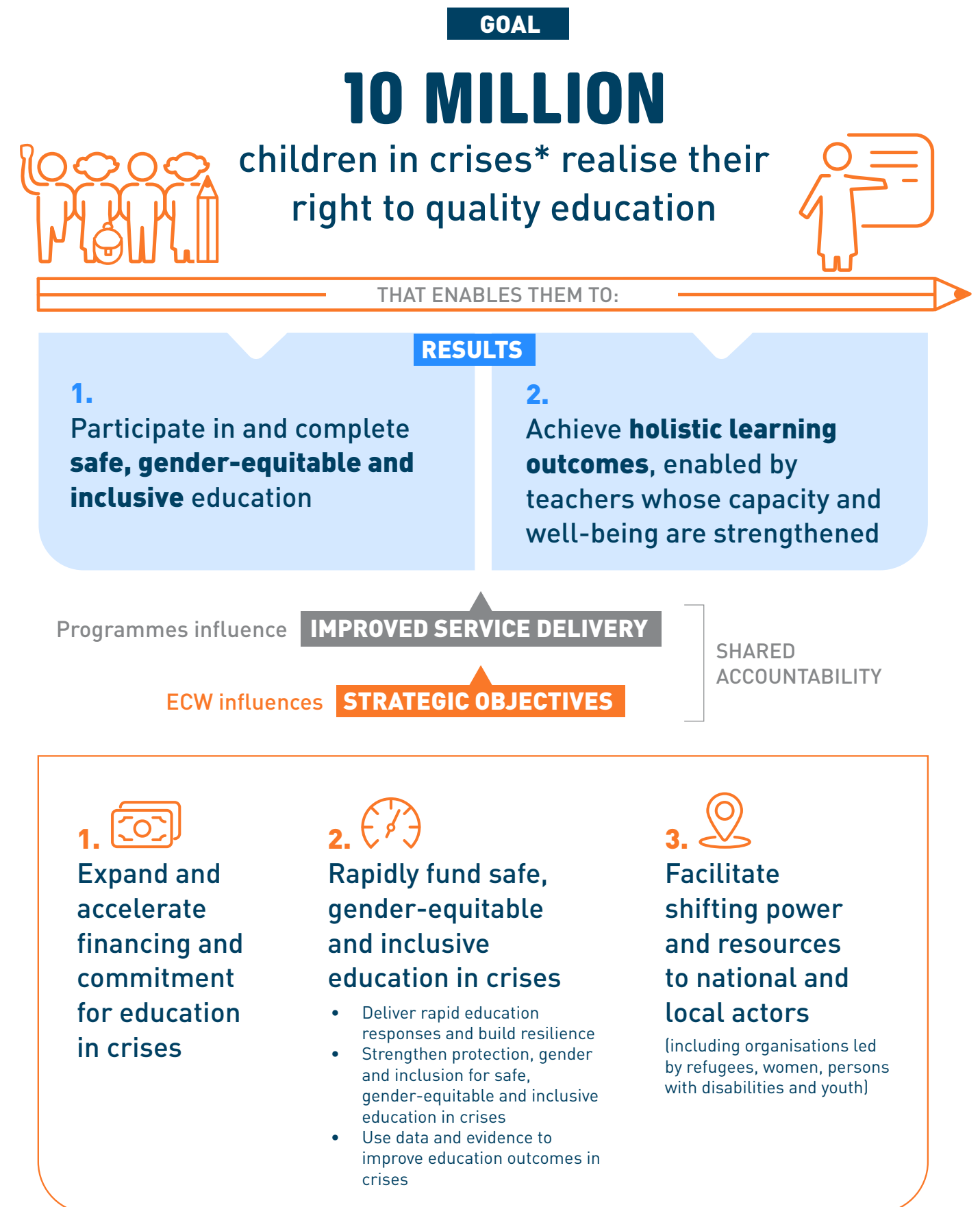
ECW’s strategic approach for the 2027–2030 period is underpinned by a robust theory of change which explains how funds mobilised translate into holistic learning outcomes for children in crises in the context of an unpredictable and rapidly evolving global environment.

The below theory of change highlights ECW’s mission to provide rapid funding for education for the most marginalised children in crisis settings. ECW achieves this mission by funding partner organisations who implement programmes to minimise learning disruption, and safeguard and sustain access to safe, gender-equitable and inclusive learning opportunities for 3–18-year-old learners in crises.

ECW mobilises political will and financing to enable fast, locally-led education responses in crises and to strengthen data on affected learners. Working across humanitarian, development, peace and climate efforts, and in sensitive contexts with local and humanitarian partners, ECW ensures support reaches those most in need. Rapid, flexible funding maintains access to education, while resilience-focused efforts support continuity of learning.

Given the persistent structural marginalisation of education within humanitarian financing, ECW’s strategy places the mobilisation of political will alongside financing at the centre of its response. This reflects the fact that sustained progress depends on shifting global and national prioritisation of education in crisis contexts.

**ECW mobilises political will and financing to enable fast, locally led education responses in crises and to strengthen data on affected learners.**



\*ECW prioritises the most marginalised - including young learners, adolescent girls, girls and boys with disabilities, and forcibly displaced learners - ensuring they are reached quickly in emergencies and throughout protracted crises.



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## Goal

**Crisis-affected children realise their right to quality education that supports their learning and well-being.** ECW prioritises the most marginalised – including forcibly displaced learners, adolescent girls, children with disabilities and young learners – ensuring they are reached quickly in emergencies and throughout protracted crises.

## Results for children and teachers

TWO RESULTS WILL DEMONSTRATE ECW'S CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING THIS GOAL:

- 1. Children participate in and complete safe, gender-equitable and inclusive education.** ECW investments improve equitable access and support learners to stay in, complete and transition through formal and non-formal pathways. This includes support for early learning through to foundational skills for employability and teaching that matches students' needs.
- 2. Children achieve holistic learning outcomes enabled by strengthened teacher capacity and well-being.** ECW investments support foundational learning – including both academic, and social and emotional learning and well-being, by placing children and teachers at the centre of programme investments.

## Strategic objectives

THESE RESULTS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY PURSUING THREE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, SUMMARISED BELOW AND OUTLINED IN MORE DETAIL IN THE NEXT SECTION.

-  **Expand and accelerate financing and commitment for education in crises.**  
ECW mobilises rapid and predictable crisis-responsive financing, elevates political commitment, and pursues innovative and new approaches to raising resources.
-  **Rapidly fund safe, gender-equitable and inclusive education in crises.**  
ECW finances rapid and risk-informed education responses so that children in places facing the most severe crises can learn and thrive. To this end, it promotes evidence-based decision-making by using high-quality data on crisis needs and outcomes. Through sustained support, it lays the groundwork for long-term education efforts by development partners and national governments.
-  **Facilitate shifting power and resources to national and local actors.**  
ECW increases funding, visibility and leadership for local civil society – including organisations led by women, youth, refugees, teachers and people with disabilities – to achieve effective, sustainable and context-relevant results.



READ MORE ABOUT OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ON THE NEXT FEW PAGES.

## Strategic Objective 1

### Expand and accelerate financing and commitment for education in crises

Mobilise political commitment and resources to ensure ECW can deliver fast, flexible and predictable financing for education in crises.

As the global fund for education in crises, ECW's unique added value lies in its ability to mobilise resources and disburse them rapidly and reliably in the most challenging contexts. Over the 2027–2030 strategic period, ECW will focus on securing predictable, multi-year financing that protects learning continuity and enables partners to respond swiftly to escalating needs.



#### Mobilising resources for the ECW Trust Fund

ECW will work with partners to mobilise US\$600 million to replenish the global Trust Fund. To achieve this, ECW will pursue a Defend-Deepen-Diversify approach:

- **Defend** contributions from ECW's largest and long-standing donors who will continue to anchor the Trust Fund and provide the foundation of predictable financing.
- **Deepen** engagement with new and returning donors, and those whose support can be strengthened, to secure steady, multi-year contributions and close financing gaps.
- **Diversify** funding by engaging new government, foundation, philanthropic and private-sector donors, many of whom may start with thematic or innovation-linked contributions.

#### Catalytic financing to expand the resource base

ECW will test catalytic financing approaches that complement Trust Fund resources and attract new forms of capital. While it will not act as a financing intermediary, ECW will use its programme results and measurement capacity to leverage co-financing from development banks, climate funds, pension funds, insurers, private investors and philanthropic partners; explore incentive structures such as matching arrangements or performance-linked contributions; and pilot models where enabling conditions exist and risks can be managed within the new investment modality (see section on *Investment Approach* below). Evidence from these new approaches will inform the potential to scale within the wider financing architecture

#### Advocacy to drive political and financial commitment

Advocacy that is implemented jointly with the wider education in emergencies community will remain central to securing political commitments and expanding financing for education in crises. ECW will work collaboratively with its partners to elevate evidence and voices from affected communities to influence global, regional and national policy agendas. Advocacy will reinforce the strategic value of flexible, predictable financing for emergency responses, crisis readiness and resilient systems, while positioning ECW's country investment approach as a model that strengthens the sector's collective capacity.



**US\$600 MILLION**  
AMOUNT ECW WILL  
MOBILISE WITH PARTNERS  
TO REPLENISH THE GLOBAL  
TRUST FUND.

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## Strategic Objective 2

### Rapidly fund safe, gender-equitable and inclusive education in crises

Provide rapid, risk-informed funding for children and adolescents in the world's toughest crises.

ECW will support 10 million crisis-affected children to access safe, inclusive and gender-equitable education when it is most needed. This will combine rapid emergency responses with investments in preparedness and resilience. ECW will support integrated approaches to protection, gender and inclusion to ensure programme design and implementation start with those left furthest behind. ECW investments will aim to reach the most marginalised learners – including refugee and internally displaced children, girls and children with disabilities – and work across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. ECW will also step up advocacy to raise awareness and mobilise timely action for education in crises.



#### Responding faster through simplification and anticipation

ECW will invest in rapid, anticipatory and risk-informed responses so that education does not stop when conflict erupts or climate disasters strike. Applications and processes to access ECW's emergency funding will be simplified so that response times can be accelerated. This will be complemented through the pre-positioning of funding, pre-identification of partners and the development of contingency plans. ECW will thus shorten the time between crisis onset and the provision of funding for the education response.

#### Crisis-ready schools and communities

Beyond Rapid Responses, ECW investments will help schools, teachers and communities prepare for and withstand shocks. This includes strengthening disaster-risk reduction, emergency preparedness, anticipatory action and local capacities to maintain education in unstable environments. Special focus will be on displaced populations – refugees, internally displaced persons and crisis-affected host communities. ECW will safeguard learning continuity through inclusive, crisis-responsive school and community systems, integrating conflict-sensitive programming and climate-risk measures. Together, these efforts build the foundation for early recovery and resilient education systems able to endure repeated shocks.

#### Reaching the most marginalised through an integrated approach

Approaches that drive lasting change in gender norms, inclusive learning models, accessible infrastructure and strengthened child protection systems will be embedded into programmes. This child-centred and integrated model ensures that speed never compromises quality, equity or safety, and that resources are intentionally directed to learners who face the greatest risks. ECW funding will continue to target crisis-affected learners across the 3–18-year-old age range, with a sustained focus on early childhood education in recognition of the critical value of investing in the early years.

#### ECW's value add: Driving coherence across the triple nexus

Working in crises requires acting fast, planning for the long term and being sensitive to conflict. ECW will continue to bridge these worlds by supporting emergency responses, strengthening school and community resilience, and promoting conflict-sensitive programming that contributes to social cohesion – with climate change embedded across this work as a cross-cutting risk multiplier. ECW will use high-quality crisis and learning data to guide investments, monitor risks and identify what works for children in the most volatile contexts, further promoting knowledge sharing and elevating data and evidence.



## Strategic Objective 3

# Facilitate shifting power and resources to local and national actors

Increase the leadership and meaningful participation of local and national actors in preparedness, response and recovery, including through direct funding and shared decision-making.

Localisation is essential in delivering more cost-effective, country-led education responses in crises. ECW will accelerate the shift of power, resources and decision-making to local and national actors as first responders and leaders of sustainable change. This underscores ECW's commitment to increasing funding for local partners, rebalancing roles across the humanitarian-development nexus, and strengthening local leadership and accountability while maintaining speed, quality and principled action. Realising these ambitions will be complex, context dependent and subject to constraints including future hosting arrangements. ECW will pursue practical solutions without assuming a single blueprint for delivery and will elaborate more detailed operational guidance, evolving as lessons are learned over the 2027–2030 period.



### LOCALISATION

is essential in delivering more cost-effective, country-led education responses in crises. ECW will accelerate the shift of power, resources, and decision-making to local and national actors as first responders and leaders of sustainable change.

## Ensuring more funding for local and national actors

ECW aims to raise the amount of funding transferred as directly as possible to local and national partners **from 29% to 50% by 2030**, in line with the localisation agenda and Grand Bargain 2.0. This shift will prioritise equitable access to funding for diverse local organisations facing systemic barriers, while recognising their role as first responders in crises. ECW will allocate proportional budgets to national and local partners, supported by host-agency-compliant due diligence measures while balancing risk, speed and quality. Consortium leads will retain fewer funds and invest in local institutions. ECW will test flexible models to advance localisation while maintaining effectiveness. As more funding goes to local and national partners, ECW will strengthen how it tracks and manages risks.

## Upholding partnership principles and clarifying responsibilities

ECW will promote fair, trust-based partnerships that support local leadership and shared decision-making. This includes transparent funding, fair costs, joint risk-sharing and predictable multi-year support. ECW will promote clear roles and responsibilities that enable national and local actors to lead in programme design, delivery, monitoring and governance. International partners will focus on enabling roles, such as supporting strengthening skills and organisational systems, particularly where local organisations can take the lead. Consortia will also be structured to facilitate shared decision-making and leadership. ECW will enhance the representation of diverse national and local partners across its governance, with clear and practical avenues for participation. ECW will also reflect national perspectives in its global advocacy, ensuring that local experience informs both strategic decisions and external engagement.

## Investing in country-level partnerships

ECW will continue to invest in and engage partners at all levels in support of its localisation agenda.

- **Governments** remain responsible for educating children in crises, while ECW supports them by linking emergency and long-term education efforts. Where possible, education authorities will lead planning, prepare for crises, drive domestic resource mobilization, and ensure safe and fair access to education.
- **Local and national organisations** – including women, youth, teacher, refugee and disability-led groups – will lead consortia where possible, supported by shared governance arrangements that uphold quality, accountability and timely delivery. When they cannot lead, these organisations will play a central role in programme implementation and delivery, and ensure local leadership and accountability.
- **UN agencies** will be encouraged to prioritise political engagement, technical support, fiduciary oversight, safeguarding and administrative functions, and will undertake direct implementation only when necessary.
- **International NGOs** will prioritise programme delivery through partnership models, with a strong emphasis on mentoring, skills development, risk sharing, and operational support to national and local actors.

# INVESTMENT APPROACH

A flexible, integrated multi-year country-level investment modality that is simpler, faster and focused on the most marginalised learners – ensuring sustained, high-quality education.

As complex overlapping conflict and climate crises become increasingly frequent, ECW is enhancing its investment model to provide more agile and dynamic support for the most vulnerable.

## ECW'S CRISIS-ORIENTED RESILIENCE AND EMERGENCY (CORE) INVESTMENT MODALITY



PROMOTES  
HOLISTIC  
LEARNING  
OUTCOMES



COLLABORATIVE  
SUPPORT FOR  
RESILIENT  
EDUCATION



DELIVERS  
MULTI-YEAR,  
FLEXIBLE  
FINANCING



ENSURES  
FASTER  
ACTIVATION



## Crisis-Oriented Resilience and Emergency investments

Crisis-Oriented Resilience and Emergency (CORE) programmes are ECW's flexible, integrated, multi-year financing approach for emergencies and protracted crises. Designed and implemented by country-level partners, CORE programmes bring together crisis preparedness, emergency response and resilience building into a single, streamlined approach. This enables faster financing to protect learning during emergencies while strengthening education systems to sustain learning and resilience in protracted crises.

The implication of this shift is that the previous First Emergency Response and Multi-Year Resilience Programme modalities will be fused together under the CORE modality. At the design stage, CORE programmes will allocate resources flexibly across crisis readiness, emergency response and resilience building, with each country programme tailoring its distribution to context-specific risks. This approach embodies ECW's localisation ambitions and avoids the need to determine fixed or predefined budget splits between allocations to emergencies and protracted crises. Additional operational elements of the CORE approach are outlined in Annex 3.



The implication of this shift is that the previous First Emergency Response and Multi-Year Resilience Programme modalities will be fused together under the CORE modality.

## Faster responses

ECW is the first responder for funding education in emergencies. One of the major drivers for moving to the CORE model is therefore to enable faster responses in such highly fragile and volatile contexts. Over the 2027–2030 period, for sudden onset emergencies in countries which have already developed CORE investments, ECW aims to disburse funding within 8 weeks of an appeal or request for support from a country-level coordination mechanism. This objective is supported by simpler processes, stronger risk controls and a flexible, context-specific approach that closely tracks delays and adjusts when needed to ensure both

speed and accountability. Achieving this target will require efforts to streamline and accelerate both application development aspects, as well as the fund disbursement procedures for approved grants.



### 8 WEEKS

TIMEFRAME WITHIN WHICH ECW AIMS TO DISBURSE FUNDING.

## Portfolio overview

ECW's 2027–2030 investment portfolio focuses on 13–18 prioritised countries, reflecting both a streamlined portfolio and a resource mobilisation target of US\$600 million. These countries will be selected using ECW's established investment criteria, which balances the severity of education needs and ECW's comparative advantage. Each country will be supported through multi-year investments comprising all three CORE components: crisis readiness, flexible emergency support and resilience building. In line with ECW's global mandate to safeguard learning during sudden-onset crises, funds will also be reserved to ensure flexibility for rapid emergency responses outside of CORE programme countries. This dedicated funding ensures ECW can fund responses to acute shocks even when they fall outside of pre-planned country portfolios. A standardised set of criteria consistent with the previous First Emergency Response criteria will guide decisions on where ECW intervenes, ensuring prioritization of contexts where needs are highest.

ECW's crisis-readiness investments go beyond preparedness by enabling education actors to operationalise sub-national disaster-risk reduction, climate change adaptation and anticipatory action frameworks. It puts schools, learners, teachers and communities at the centre of efforts to reduce risks, act ahead of disasters using pre-arranged finance and sustain learning as a critical factor in children's resilience. Crisis readiness will leverage the increasing availability of open risk data and capitalize on local knowledge to support communities in reducing the impacts of shocks on their wellbeing.



### 13–18 COUNTRIES

PRIORITISED IN THE 2027–2030 PORTFOLIO, WHERE RESOURCES WILL BE CONCENTRATED THROUGH FASTER, MORE FLEXIBLE MULTI-YEAR EMERGENCY RESPONSES.

## A tailored approach for every context

CORE investments will be designed as flexible context-driven frameworks tailored to local realities, ensuring responses are practical, inclusive and grounded in country needs. The targeting, mix and sequencing of components will be determined during country-level design, informed by needs and risk analysis, crisis typology, system capacity and comple-

mentarity with other actors. This approach enables rapid responses, continuity of learning and resilience building while maintaining strategic coherence and accountability. By strengthening humanitarian-development-peace coherence, the CORE investments will also support smoother transitions to national systems and long-term partners.

## Coherence across all phases of crisis

Using one investment window reduces fragmentation, strengthens coherence between emergency and longer-term education efforts, and ensures support to children is continuous. The CORE approach will also streamline processes for partners, reduce transaction costs and align efforts across clusters, refugee education working groups, local education groups, ministries and humanitarian-development-peace actors.



### STREAMLINED APPROACH

USING ONE INVESTMENT WINDOW REDUCES FRAGMENTATION, STRENGTHENS COHERENCE BETWEEN EMERGENCY AND LONGER-TERM EDUCATION EFFORTS.

## Rapid Response where CORE programmes are not present

ECW's Rapid Response retains the key strengths of the current First Emergency Response approach by providing fast, flexible and needs-based education support when sudden or rapidly worsening crises hit non-CORE countries. As a first responder, ECW funds partners to support children to continue learning

safely with as little disruption as possible, protecting education during emergencies. The offer supports a full range of education –in emergencies activities aligned with INEE Minimum Standards, using a streamlined process that allows funding and support to reach partners quickly at the onset of a crisis.

## Complementarity with other actors

ECW works closely with partners at global and country levels to make sure its support complements, rather than duplicates, the work of others, such as the Global Partnership for Education,<sup>29</sup> especially in high-risk or politically sensitive contexts. ECW's CORE investments focus on filling gaps in crisis preparedness and emergency response, and keeping children learning during crises. In long-lasting crises, CORE programmes also help identify activities that can later shift to longer-term, sustainable funding through Ministries of Education and other financing partners.

During programme design, implementation and exit: ECW will continue to use the relevant humanitarian coordination mechanism as the entry point for CORE programme development and will ensure that design and implementation are undertaken in liaison with the associated development coordination mechanism. As part of planned exits, ECW will engage associated development coordination mechanisms to ensure responsible handover and conclusion of priority activities.

When funding decisions are made: ECW will liaise with OCHA and partners to ensure emergency responses complement and leverage wider humanitarian funding. In protracted crises, when ECW cannot respond or funds are insufficient, it will work with partners such as Global Partnership for Education to coordinate efforts and fill gaps.



## Acceleration Facility

Driving innovation, coherence and system-level impact for more efficient and effective investments.

The Acceleration Facility is ECW's global investment window that helps guide education responses in crises. ECW is strengthening this mechanism to boost innovation, improve coordination, deliver better results for crisis-affected children, and reduce costs for partners and donors. In recent years, it has supported global tools, coordination, better crisis-sensitive data and efforts to protect education from attack.

A refocused Acceleration Facility, with a targeted portfolio determined by its strategic priorities, positions ECW as a driver of innovation, collective learning and policy influence. By delivering practical solutions for children affected by conflict, climate shocks and protracted crises – which link directly to its investments – ECW will also contribute to help strengthen the global education in crises architecture.

**ECW will allocate up to 5% of the programme budget to the Acceleration Facility in 2027–2030. This will ensure predictable funding for global system strengthening and cross-country learning.**



### ACCELERATION FACILITY

Supports new tools and innovations



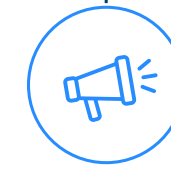
### CORE

Tests new tools and innovations in ECW country programmes



### EVIDENCE

Generates and assesses evidence on what works



### SECTOR ADVANCEMENTS

Uses evidence to inform and influence the sector

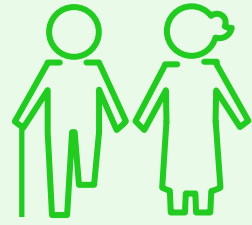
## A more strategic and high-impact window

ECW's shift to a more focused Acceleration Facility aims to maximise collective impact while improving efficiency and strategic alignment with the new CORE approach. The refined modality will remain ECW's engine for advancing global policies on protection, gender and inclusion, and climate resilience. It will generate actionable, pilot innovations that inform ECW country investments and mobilise collective action across partners. The portfolio will be streamlined around key themes in line with ECW's learning agenda, which will focus on improving EiE programme practices for access, continuity and learning; strengthening ways of working through evidence, nexus coherence and localisation; and advancing innovation in financing, EdTech and digital transformation, and emerging issues such as AI and peacebuilding. Grants will be larger, reducing overheads and enabling deeper, more sustained impact. Similar to the country-level investments, grants under the Acceleration Facility window will favour consortia working toward shared thematic

outcomes to enable complementarity within the education in emergencies architecture. This shift will strengthen innovation, diversify expertise and promote collective problem solving.

## Direct link between investments and country-level programmes

ECW will create a direct built-in link between its global Acceleration Facility and country investments. From the outset, partners designing grants under the Acceleration Facility will know that they are expected to engage with CORE country programmes as part of the implementation. In practice, selected CORE countries will serve as real-world testing and learning platforms for priority themes such as climate risk, protection and inclusion. Acceleration Facility partners will work alongside country consortia to pilot and refine new tools, standards and approaches in live crisis settings. This "preloading" ensures global innovations are quickly applied, improved through practice and scaled so investments in global leadership translate into faster, higher-quality results for children on the ground.



## Protection, gender equality and inclusion

A new approach for 2027–2030.

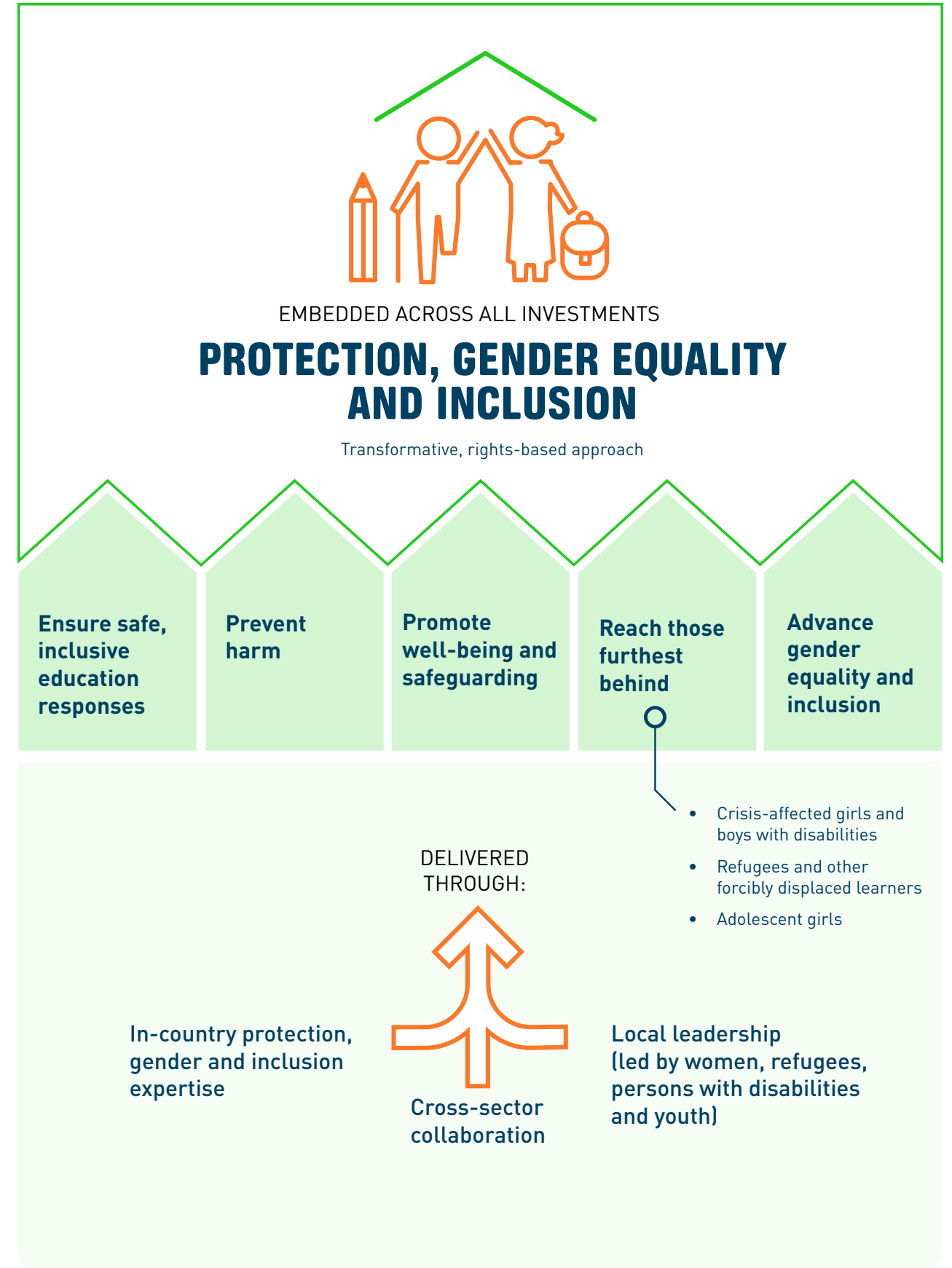
For 2027–2030, ECW is adopting a unified, rights-based protection, gender equality and inclusion approach across its investments to help ensure that education responses prevent harm, promote wellbeing and safeguarding, and advance gender equality. This prioritises reaching those left furthest behind – particularly crisis-affected girls and boys with disabilities, refugees and other forcibly displaced learners, and adolescent girls.

This new approach to protection, gender equality and inclusion supports the inclusion of refugees in national education systems, in line with Global Refugee Forum commitments, and applies conflict- and trauma-sensitive design across all areas of work. It responds to the combined challenges of conflict, displacement, gender inequality, disability exclusion and psychosocial distress, positioning education as both immediate protection and a pathway to longer-term resilience. Implementation builds on strong in-country expertise and partnerships, with a focus on cross-sector collaboration and the leadership of local organisations, including those led by women, people with disabilities, refugees, teachers and youth, throughout the investment cycle. ECW will also continue to advocate to protect education from attack in line with the [Safe Schools Declaration](#).

Applying this approach will result in:

- Safer learning environments, reducing risks of violence, exploitation and abuse.
- Improved wellbeing and resilience, supporting sustained access to and participation in education.
- Stronger gender equality outcomes, including for adolescent girls and women teachers.
- Equitable access for those furthest behind, particularly children with disabilities and forcibly displaced learners.
- More inclusive education systems, aligned with national priorities and global commitments, and driven by local and cross-sectoral partnerships.

The operational approach for this new approach to protection, gender equality and inclusion can be found in Annex II.





## Climate and disasters: Strengthening preparedness and resilience

ECW will integrate climate, disaster and environmental resilience into its investments to help communities better prepare for, and withstand, climate and conflict shocks. Leveraging the growing availability of risk data, ECW will systematically invest in risk reduction, preparedness, anticipatory action and risk-informed recovery across its portfolio to improve the resilience of learners and communities at the intersection of climate and conflict shocks.

This approach will include:

1. Making risk information available and usable for education in emergencies by leveraging hazard, exposure and vulnerability data to strengthen anticipatory action in schools and temporary learning centres
2. Strengthening early-warning systems for all, capitalizing on the central role that schools and temporary learning centres play in crisis-affected communities to communicate risk and trigger timely, trusted, anticipatory and early action for children, teachers and parents
3. Improving resilience by making climate- and disaster-smart education investments, and supporting children to build the skills and knowledge needed to navigate, anticipate and adapt to future risks

Building on ECW's ability to fund the delivery of programmes in the world's most fragile contexts, these investments will help close a major gap in disaster risk and climate finance for education. ECW will thus support donors to deliver on their climate and disaster risk finance commitments to those who need it most in the world's most challenging contexts.

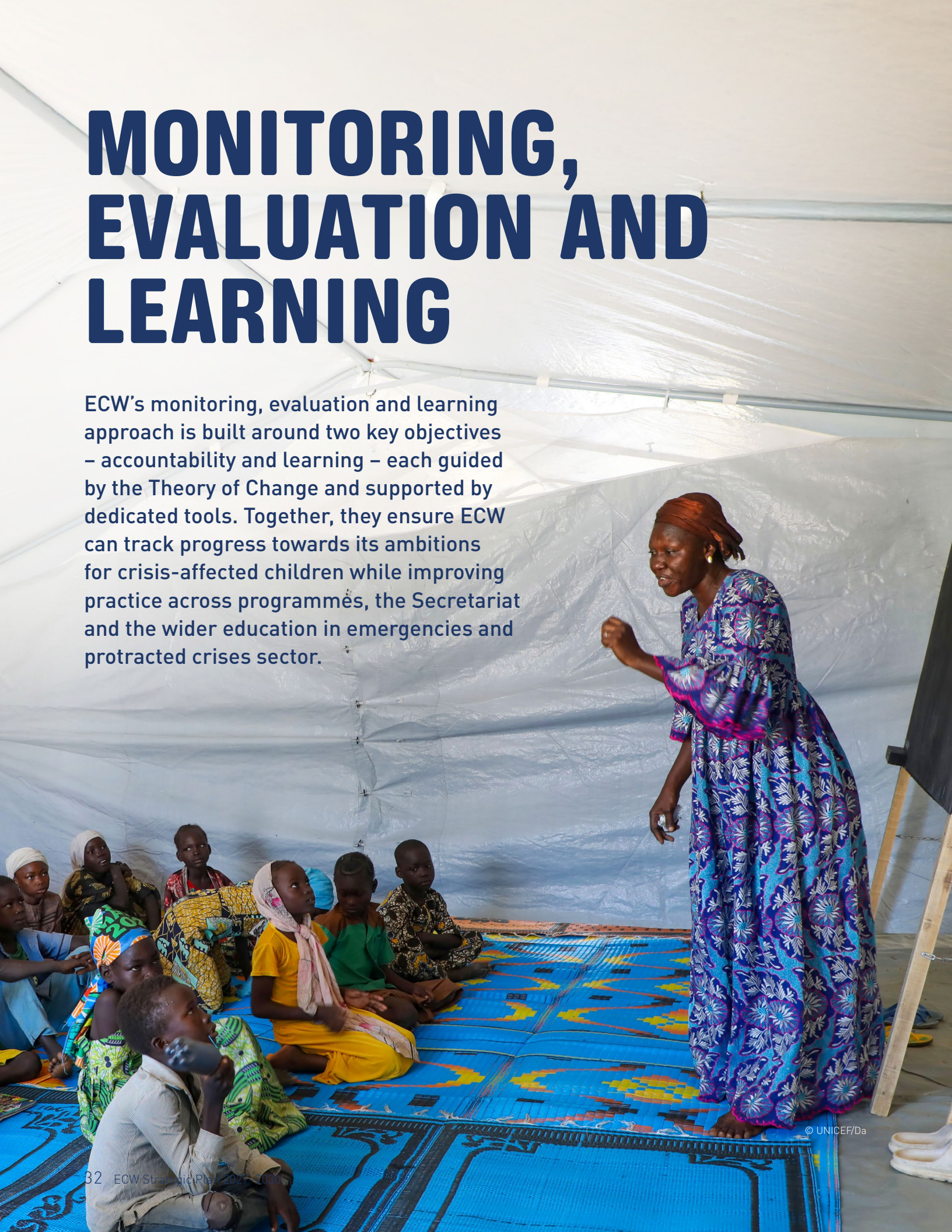
### CLIMATE RESILIENCE

ECW will integrate climate, disaster and environmental resilience into its investments to help communities better prepare for and withstand climate and conflict shocks.



# MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

ECW's monitoring, evaluation and learning approach is built around two key objectives – accountability and learning – each guided by the Theory of Change and supported by dedicated tools. Together, they ensure ECW can track progress towards its ambitions for crisis-affected children while improving practice across programmes, the Secretariat and the wider education in emergencies and protracted crises sector.



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## Accountability

Focuses on whether ECW and its partners achieve their commitments.



The Corporate Results Framework is the primary accountability instrument. It tracks reach, results for children and teachers, and progress towards the Strategic Objectives through a streamlined set of outcome-focused indicators and clear programme requirements for partners.

A central strategy under this framework is the strengthening evidence for accountability and learning (SEAL) approach. This recognises that some ambitions – such as localisation, gender equality or evidence-based adaptations – cannot be meaningfully and feasibly captured through portfolio-wide annual reporting. ECW will therefore complement routine monitoring with more qualitative, in-depth evidence from selected contexts on a rolling basis. Linked to ECW's Learning Agenda, these efforts will be supported in many instances through Acceleration Facility grants. Insights from SEAL will deepen learning throughout the strategic period and improve accountability by demonstrating progress on key reforms which are driven by ECW.

**ECW's Learning Agenda** is structured around three priority areas that reinforce the Strategic Plan and support organisational and programme learning.

- **Improved programme practices that enable access, continuity and learning** – including integrated protection, gender equality and

## Learning

Centres on how ECW and partners can do better.



The Learning Agenda is organised around broad priority areas that align with the Strategic Plan but allow flexibility across contexts and emerging issues. It will guide evidence generation and knowledge exchange through studies, evaluations, Acceleration Facility projects and adaptive, country-led monitoring and evaluation approaches. Advocacy and strategic communications approaches and tools will further support the promotion and dissemination of knowledge and evidence from the Learning Agenda to target audiences.

inclusion, as well as teaching and holistic learning.

- **Improved ways of working**, including nexus-coherent, evidence-based and localised approaches.
- **Innovations and emerging issues**, such as innovative financing, digital transformation (including the use of education technology and AI) and education's intersection with peacebuilding.

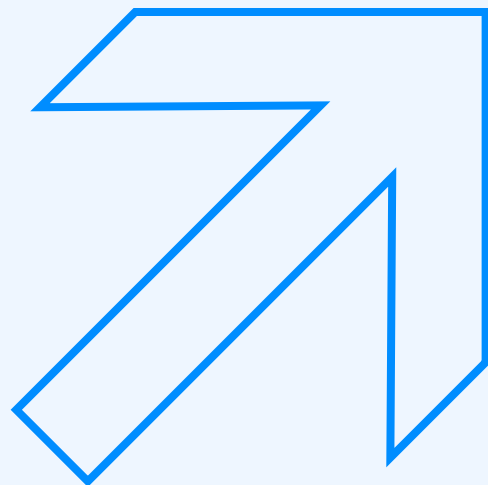
Learning questions will be further co-developed with partners to ensure relevance to diverse contexts and key learning needs.

ECW will develop an evaluation plan – underpinned by globally-recognized evaluation standards such as UNEG norms and standards and social science approaches – at the onset of the Strategic Plan period. The evaluation plan will prioritise formative evaluations and reviews to inform strategic and operational adjustments, including analyses of value for money and efficiency, alongside one to two summative evaluations.

# OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS

Ensuring the ECW Secretariat is fit for purpose to deliver on the ambitions over the 2027–2030 period.

For 2027–2030 ECW has undertaken essential steps to ensure that it is fit for purpose, leaner and more agile with a new structure in place at the start of the strategic period. Some key elements will have significant bearing on the operational aspects of ECW's work, such as implementation of the hosting review. The ECW Operational Manual outlines the operational setup, including the governance structure and engagement between the High-Level Steering Group, Executive Committee, Director and Secretariat. When a new host has been identified, the Operational Manual will be updated – this will also provide the opportunity to ensure it aligns with the strategies outlined in this plan.



## Ways of working

TO DELIVER THE STRATEGIC PLAN, ECW HAS BEEN STREAMLINED TO ENSURE A LEAN AND AGILE SECRETARIAT, LED BY THE DIRECTOR AND ORGANISED INTO FOUR FUNCTIONAL UNITS:



**PARTNERSHIPS,  
ADVOCACY AND  
RESOURCE  
MOBILISATION**



**PROGRAMME  
DELIVERY  
AND QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT**



**FINANCE,  
RISK AND  
OPERATIONS**



**EVIDENCE,  
RESULTS AND  
REPORTING**

All teams will be based in Geneva, working closely with the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies and other partners to strengthen coordination and joint action across the sector. The Secretariat's size and design reflect ECW's focus on impact, speed and optimised operations.

## Risk management and safeguarding

Risk management and safeguarding are essential and interlinked priorities underpinning ECW's work in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. ECW applies a risk-informed approach to identify, assess and manage strategic, operational, fiduciary and programme-level risks, informing decision-making and adaptive programming to strengthen resilience. Safeguarding is a central component of this framework. All grantees are required to maintain robust safeguarding policies and systems aligned with UN-wide standards, including Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance, to ensure that all programme participants – particularly children and other vulnerable groups – are protected from harm, with risks monitored through established governance mechanisms.

## Value for money

ECW is committed to delivering strong value for money in both operations and programmes. To do this, ECW will work more with specialised partners in the education in emergencies community through predictable, fair and transparent partnerships. ECW will use more flexible and cost-effective staffing approaches, in line with its hosting arrangements. Through its localisation agenda, ECW will increase funding to local and national actors and reduce reliance on costly intermediaries. ECW will also assess and demonstrate its efficiency through a detailed review after the first two years of the 2027–2030 strategic period, focusing on reducing transaction costs and improving performance.

## Hosting

During this Strategic Plan period, ECW expects to transition to a new host within the UN system. ECW will continue to manage its funds in line with UN financial rules and regulations. This will ensure strong financial management, clear accountability and the safeguards needed to work effectively in crisis settings.

# BUDGET FOR 2027–2030

ECW plans to disburse US\$560.7 million in the next strategic period of 2027–2030.

## Planned funding allocations for the 2027–2030 strategic period

<b>PROGRAMMATIC EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>US\$560.7M</b>	
<b>Crisis-Oriented Resilience and Emergency (CORE) and Rapid Response investment modalities</b>	<b>US\$532.7M</b>	95% of total programmatic expenditure
<b>Acceleration Facility</b>	<b>US\$28.0M</b>	5% of total programmatic expenditure
<b>OPERATIONAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>US\$39.3M</b>	7% of total programmatic expenditure
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>US\$600M</b>	

The Strategic Plan 2027–2030 is costed to ensure that ECW remains a financially disciplined and high-impact organisation. Operational expenditure will be up to 7% of total programmatic expenditures and will be pursued across the four-year period, with variation in individual years as needed to respond to operational realities.

In line with ECW’s programmatic priorities, ECW will direct about 95% of programmatic resources to the CORE programme and Rapid Responses, with the remaining share supporting the Acceleration Facility, recognising that the final balance may differ slightly.

This distribution reflects ECW’s funding to effective country-level implementation, supported by strategic investments in global public goods, learning and system strengthening.

Should ECW exceed or fall short of its resource mobilisation target, adjustments will be made proportionally across all cost areas and funding windows to preserve the overall balance and integrity of the financial framework presented above. This approach ensures that ECW remains flexible, predictable and financially sustainable throughout the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

### ECW’S FUNDING PRIORITISES THE MOST MARGINALISED

– including young learners, adolescent girls, children with disabilities and forcibly displaced learners – ensuring they are reached quickly in emergencies and throughout protracted crises.



## ANNEX I: CORPORATE RESULTS FRAMEWORK 2027–2030

#	INDICATOR	REPORTING APPROACH	2030 TARGET
<b>GOAL</b> Children affected by crises realise their right to quality education that ensures their holistic learning and well-being			
<b>1</b>	Number of 3–18-year-old children and adolescents in crises reached with ECW assistance  <i>Results reported separately by %:</i> <b>(a-b):</b> girls, children with disabilities  <b>(c-g):</b> ECE, secondary, refugees, IDPs, intersections of characteristics, geography, Rapid Response mechanism	Annually	<b>10 million</b> children <sup>①</sup>  <b>(a-b):</b> Girls: <b>50%</b> Children with disabilities: <b>10%</b>  <b>(c-g):</b> Reported on, but no targets <sup>②</sup>
<b>Result 1</b> Children participate in, advance through and complete safe, gender-equitable and inclusive education <sup>③</sup>			
<b>2</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved education participation	Annually	<b>95%</b>
<b>3</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved retention or completion <sup>④</sup>	Annually, for CORE programmes only	<b>73%</b>
<b>4</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved transitions from non-formal learning spaces to formal education <sup>⑤</sup>	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	<b>80%</b>
<b>Result 2</b> Children achieve holistic learning outcomes enabled by strengthened teacher capacity and well-being			
<b>5</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved literacy and/or numeracy for learners	Annually, for CORE programmes only	<b>80%</b>
<b>6</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved social and emotional learning (including girls' agency) and/or well-being – including mental health and psychosocial well-being – for learners <sup>⑥</sup>	Annually, for CORE programmes only	<b>80%</b>
<b>7</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved social-emotional skills, well-being – including mental health and psychosocial well-being – and/or motivation for teachers	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	<b>80%</b>

#	INDICATOR	REPORTING APPROACH	2030 TARGET
<b>Strategic Objective 1</b> Expand and accelerate financing and commitment for education in crises			
<b>8</b>	Amount of funding mobilised for the ECW Trust Fund	Annually	<b>US\$600 million</b>
<b>9</b>	Prioritisation of education sector within humanitarian financing: <b>a.</b> % education appeal requirements out of total appeal requirements  <b>b.</b> % EiE funding out of sector-specific humanitarian funding	Annually	<b>a.</b> Target to be established in 2026  <b>b.</b> Target to be established in 2026
<b>Strategic Objective 2</b> Rapidly fund safe, gender-equitable and inclusive education in crises			
<b>Sub-objective 2.1: Deliver Rapid Response and build resilience</b>			
<b>10</b>	Average length of time to disburse funds for new emergencies: <b>a.</b> In countries with existing CORE programmes  <b>b.</b> In countries without existing CORE programmes	Annually, for Rapid Responses only	<b>a. 8 weeks</b>  <b>b. 12 weeks</b>
<b>11</b>	ECW-supported programmes that contribute to climate adaptation objectives: <b>a.</b> % of total programme funding allocated to such programmes  <b>b.</b> Number and % of children reached through such programmes	Annually	<b>a. 50%</b>  <b>b.</b> Reported on, but targets not set
<b>12</b>	% of ECW programmes with quality coordination at the humanitarian-development-peace nexus	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	Target to be established in 2026
<b>Sub-objective 2.2: Strengthen protection, gender equality and inclusion for safe, gender-equitable and inclusive EiE</b> <i>Child-level results 1 and 2 (access, learning, well-being, disability inclusion) reflect the outcomes supported by PGI investments</i>			
<b>13</b>	% of ECW programmes with improved knowledge, attitudes and practices on gender equality in and through education among learners, teachers and/or caregivers	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	<b>80%</b>

#	INDICATOR	REPORTING APPROACH	2030 TARGET
14	% of ECW programmes with improved safety and/or protection <sup>①</sup> (including from gender-based violence) in and around ECW-supported learning spaces	SEAL	80%
15	% of ECW programmes that: a. Identify children with disabilities using quality tools b. Provide a quality response to needs based on data	Annually, for CORE programmes only	a. 60% b. Target to be established in 2026
<b>Sub-objective 2.3: Use data and evidence to improve education outcomes in crises</b>			
16	% of ECW programmes with sex-disaggregated data on time to monitor: a. Education participation b. Holistic learning outcomes	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	a. 95% b. 75%
17	% of ECW programmes with quality planning and/or programme adaptation based on: a. Programmatic or sectoral data and evidence b. Evidence generated through feedback from affected children and communities	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	Target to be established in 202
<b>Strategic Objective 3</b> <b>Facilitate shifting power and resources to national and local actors</b>			
18	% of ECW grant funds allocated to local and national organisations <sup>②</sup>	Annually	50%
19	% of ECW programmes with meaningful leadership and decision-making power exercised by local and national actors across key programme cycle stages	SEAL, for CORE programmes only	Target to be established in 2026

## General remarks

ECW recognises that the results above apply to all children in all their diversity. ECW aims to disaggregate data on results as much as possible for marginalised groups, e.g. girls, children with disabilities, refugees, IDPs and by education levels. Based on the current sector data architecture and the minimum sample size required for cross-portfolio reporting, ECW anticipates reporting separately on gender-equitable improvements for all results for children and teachers and introducing separate reporting on education participation for girls and boys with disabilities under indicator 2.

Data security and reliability are treated as vital key risk areas in ECW-supported MEL, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. ECW will (i) require partners to comply with UNICEF and host-country standards on data protection and informed consent; (ii) promote context-appropriate data collection modalities that minimize risks to respondents and enumerators; (iii) limit and de-identify any sensitive, individual-level data used for corporate reporting; and (iv) continue data quality assurance (e.g. documentation of methods, spot

checks, triangulation) proportionate to context and risk. These safeguards will be detailed in updated monitoring, evaluation and learning guidance and integrated into programme design, budgeting and review processes.

The “Reporting Approach” column describes the frequency (e.g., annual) and scope (e.g., whether for CORE programmes only and not including new rapid emergency responses, either within the same countries or in other countries, or only relevant to Rapid Responses) of anticipated results reporting. For indicators that specify a SEAL approach, ECW will support partners in selected contexts to generate evidence on results that are complex or difficult to measure at scale. Emerging insights from these efforts will be highlighted annually in the Annual Results Report. Quantitative reporting against targets will begin once a sufficient minimum sample of five programmes providing evidence is available. A fuller synthesis – including an assessment of progress against cumulative targets – will be undertaken at the end of the Strategic Plan period.

## Annex I notes

- ① Dependent on funding mobilised.
- ② In this Strategic Plan, ECW has set targets for reaching specific sub-groups where active commitments are in place (e.g., Global Disability Summit) and/or where dedicated funding is available.
- ③ For indicators 2-7, results will be reported separately by overall improvement, gender-equitable improvement and solid evidence of improvement. For indicator 2, results will also be reported separately by improvement among girls and boys with disabilities as a SEAL indicator. ECW will additionally encourage displacement-disaggregated reporting where feasible and ethical, and will report and aggregate such data where available, on a case-by-case basis. For indicators 3 and 4, results will additionally be reported separately by improvement over a certain benchmark at the most recently available data point.
- ④ Improved retention or completion is defined as either: (i) evidence of improvement over time, based on two comparable data points; or (ii) a retention or completion rate > 70%, where only a single data point is available.
- ⑤ Improved transition is defined as either: (i) evidence of improvement over time, based on two comparable data points; or (ii) a transition rate > 80%, where only a single data point is available. Non-formal learning spaces refer to settings in which planned, structured and organized education programming takes place outside the formal education system, as defined by INEE (<https://inee.org/eie-glossary/non-formal-education>). These spaces are characterized by their diversity, flexibility and their ability to respond rapidly to learners’ needs – including safety and protection needs – through holistic, learner-centred approaches. Some types of non-formal education lead to equivalent certified competencies, while others do not.
- ⑥ ECW uses the term social and emotional learning to broadly describe the process through which children acquire and apply a range of cognitive, social and emotional skills – as well as values, perspectives and identities – that enable them to succeed in school, work and life (Harvard EASEL Lab, 2025). How these skills are defined, expressed and prioritised differs within and across contexts, and thus requires diverse and contextually grounded measurement approaches. Within the indicator, ECW highlights girls’ agency as one aspect of social and emotional learning, reflecting our commitment to mainstreaming PGI throughout the Results Framework and ensuring gendered dimensions of children’s experiences in crisis are more visible.
- ⑦ ECW’s approach to safety and protection in education in emergencies follows the IASC Centrality of Protection principle and key guidance, including CP Minimum Standards (#23), IASC GBV Guidelines for Education in Emergencies, the Safe School Declaration and CPHA-INEE Guidance on integrated child protection and education. It focuses on three main intervention areas: reducing protection and GBV risks around learning spaces, safely identifying and referring at-risk children or survivors, and improving access to psychological first aid and mental health and psychosocial support through EIE services. Safety and protection outcomes refer to settings-level changes resulting from ECW-supported interventions, including: reduced exposure to protection risks; improved safety; and more supportive, inclusive and accountable learning spaces – including strengthened mental health and psychosocial support systems for children and education personnel. Robust evidence links these settings-level changes to improvements in children’s and teachers’ holistic learning and well-being outcomes in crisis settings, as measured under Result 2.
- ⑧ Results will be reported separately by % allocated directly and indirectly, and disaggregated by local women-led organisations, refugee-led organisations, organisations of persons with disabilities and youth-led organisations.

# ANNEX II: DELIVERING ON PROTECTION, GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

ECW operationalises its protection, gender equality and inclusion (PGI) commitments through a combination of country-led analysis, equitable partnerships, integrated programming and targeted investments – supported by clear enablers for accountability, learning and scale.

## Connecting and hardwiring in-country expertise

ECW anchors its PGI approach in national and sub-national expertise, recognising that local actors are best placed to identify risks, shape responses and sustain impact. ECW will:

- Support education in emergencies coordination mechanisms to systematically collaborate with in-country PGI humanitarian capacity<sup>①</sup> and relevant PGI mechanisms operating at the nexus.
- Meaningfully engage and support diverse local civil society organisations – including women-, refugee-, teacher- and youth-led organisations, as well as organisations of persons with disabilities – throughout the investment cycle, with opportunities for leadership in the education in emergencies sector.
- Operationalise country-specific education in emergencies-child protection-gender-based violence collaboration frameworks to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination, referrals and risk mitigation.

## Applying a twin-track approach

Building on a robust, country-driven intersectional analysis, ECW applies a twin-track approach to PGI that combines systematic mainstreaming with targeted programming. This approach ensures that PGI considerations are integrated across investments while specific barriers faced by marginalised groups

are addressed through tailored interventions. Intersectional analysis will inform the design of all investments, highlighting the differentiated needs, risks and capacities of all marginalised groups, including forcibly displaced children, children with disabilities, those affected by conflict and adolescent girls, as well as women teachers.

### Mainstreaming PGI across the investment lifecycle

ECW will ensure that PGI principles are embedded across the full lifecycle of its investments, from planning and design to implementation, monitoring and learning. Country-driven intersectional analysis will guide programme choices, ensuring that PGI is integral to ECW-supported responses rather than treated as parallel objectives.

### Targeted programming

Where needed, ECW will support targeted interventions across four priority areas.

**Protection:** ECW will expand its protection commitments beyond age-appropriate mental health and psychosocial support – including Psychological First Aid (PFA), social and emotional learning and teacher wellbeing – through integrated protection and education programming. This ensures that investments prevent harm, promote wellbeing and safe referrals to child protection and gender-based violence actors, and provide safe, inclusive and gender-equitable learning environments.<sup>②</sup> Moreover, ECW investments will support context-driven, trauma-informed curricula for conflict-affected children, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and child recruitment, in line with the Safe Schools Declaration.

**Gender equality:** ECW will advance its dual approach to gender-responsive education in crises and anticipatory action, and an approach that addresses gender norms and inequalities in resilience, and adapt it to the new CORE programme window. A gender lens will be applied across its protection, disability and refugee inclusion work. This includes renewing its commitment to cross-sectoral collaboration and systematic gender-based violence risk mitigation. ECW will also support gender-based violence prevention and work on shifting knowledge, attitudes and practices with regards to gender equality amongst learners, caregivers and teachers. Support will also be given to work on empowering adolescent girls where relevant.

**Disability inclusion:** In line with the 2025 Berlin-Amman declaration and ECW's Global Disability Summit commitments, ECW will systematically support principles of Universal Design for Learning. This includes accessible learning environments that provide learning opportunities for all – while meaningfully taking individual learner support needs into account through accessibility and reasonable accommodation, inclusive pedagogy and systematic data collection.<sup>③</sup> Applying an intersectional lens, ECW investments will pay particular attention to girls with disabilities as they tend to lag furthest behind due to intersecting gender inequalities.

**Inclusion of forcibly displaced children:** Refugee inclusion is integral to ECW's PGI approach. Refugee learners face intersecting legal, linguistic and socio-economic barriers that compound gender and disability exclusion. ECW will integrate refugee-sensitive design across its investments, support inclusion in national systems where possible, and strengthen data and accountability. Refugee inclusion will remain embedded across all PGI pillars to ensure barrier-free access to quality education for displaced children and adolescents. Accountability will be strengthened through greater leadership roles for refugee-led and community organisations in design, monitoring and governance of ECW investments.

## Annex II notes

- ① For example: Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Groups, Inter-Cluster Disability Working Groups, Protection sector, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Networks, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Technical Working Groups, UNHCR.
- ② In line with the Safe Schools Declaration, the IASC Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Guidelines in Emergency Settings, Child Protection Minimum Standards, IASC GBV Guidelines and the INEE-CPHA frameworks.
- ③ Washington Group tools.

## Renewed commitments

Building on lessons from the previous Strategic Plan and global best practices, ECW renews its commitment to allocate:

- **At least 5%** of programme funding to disability-targeted programming
- **15–25%** to gender-targeted programming

## Enablers for delivery

To ensure effective implementation, ECW will invest in the following enablers:

- **PGI capacity:** Transition from the Gender Lead Organisation to PGI Lead function, based on lessons learned from the Gender Lead Organisation review and strategic consultations.
- **Diverse and equitable localisation:** Increase funding and leadership roles for local women-, refugee-, teacher- and youth-led organisations, as well as organisations of persons with disabilities. These are enablers for delivering sustainable, safe and inclusive education that addresses harmful gender norms and unequal power relations for crisis-affected children and adolescents in all their diversity.
- **Measurement and learning:** Track PGI impact in the Strategic Plan Results Framework and in ECW investments outcome indicators and embed PGI in ECW's Learning Agenda.
- **Acceleration Facility:** As part of ECW's Learning Agenda, dedicate funding to advance PGI priorities.
- **Strategic engagement:** Strong collaboration with ECW's Technical Advisory Group PGI workstream for expert guidance.

# ANNEX III: OPERATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE CORE MODALITY

## ECW definitions

For the purposes of the CORE approach, ECW uses the following definitions.

- **Anticipatory Action:** pre-agreed, pre-financed interventions activated before a forecast climate hazard fully unfolds, using objective triggers to reduce disruption to learning and protect education investments.
- **Crisis readiness:** baseline operational capacity established through CORE investments that enables education actors and systems to anticipate, absorb and respond to shocks without delays.
- **Crisis-modifiers:** pre-agreed, trigger-based, flexible budget lines or contingencies embedded within grants or programmes that can be quickly activated to scale or pivot education activities when risk thresholds are reached, without waiting for a new full proposal cycle.
- **Rapid responses:** provide time-limited emergency funding and support to quickly restore access to education after a crisis. These can be both in CORE countries – for example, if the impact of the shock is greater than had been planned for under an anticipatory action or crisis modifier (which are built into all CORE programmes) – and outside of CORE countries. See below.

## Standalone, time-bound investments

CORE programmes are designed as standalone, multi-year country-level investments, with no expectation of continued ECW financing beyond the approved period. Sustainability and exit plans are embedded from the outset, with structured reviews in the final 12 months to determine which components should continue, transition or close.

## Approval and funding decisions

New CORE investments are approved by the Executive Committee based on needs, ECW's value added and standardised investment criteria. When a country no longer meets these criteria, ECW will initiate a planned exit in line with its internal guidance. Funding approvals follow ECW's standard governance and approval processes as per Operational Manual, applying the Executive Committee approved allocation model which guarantees a minimum base annual allocation, with additional funding considered based on criteria and resource availability.

## Transitioning to the CORE investment approach

Starting in 2026, all new multi-year country programmes will transition to the CORE modality, as the Multi-Year Resilience Programme model is gradually phased out. While a dedicated First Emergency Response portfolio will be maintained during this period, new investments will include an embedded crisis-readiness component to enable Rapid Response when needed. Lessons from early CORE pilots will inform detailed operational guidance for future investments, ensuring programmes are continually improved.

## Rapid Responses outside of CORE priority countries

In highly fragile or volatile contexts, ECW will also maintain Rapid Response frameworks for up to three years to pre-position financing, partnerships and operational systems, strengthening crisis readiness over time. ECW will leverage these Rapid Response mechanisms to mobilise additional resources from other actors, including the Global Partnership for Education and humanitarian donors, thereby maximising the impact of limited dedicated funding.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 UNESCO. (2024). [Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5: Leadership in education – Lead for learning.](#)
- 2 Education Cannot Wait. (2025). [State of education for crisis-affected children and adolescents: Access and learning outcomes.](#)
- 3 UNICEF. (2025). [Learning interrupted: Global snapshot of climate-related school disruptions in 2024.](#)
- 4 UNICEF. (2025). [Education aid cuts: A broken promise to children.](#)
- 5 Education Cannot Wait. (2025). [State of education for crisis-affected children and adolescents: Access and learning outcomes.](#)
- 6 UNESCO-GEM. (2024). [Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5: Leadership in education – Lead for learning.](#)
- 7 Education Cannot Wait. (2025). [State of education for crisis-affected children and adolescents: Access and learning outcomes.](#)
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Moving Minds Alliance. (2025). [Left behind: The funding gap for young children in crisis.](#)
- 10 The World Bank et al. (2022). [The state of global learning poverty: 2022 update.](#)
- 11 UNICEF. (2025). [Education aid cuts: A broken promise to children.](#)
- 12 UNHCR. (2025). [Figures at a glance.](#)
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies et al. (2025). [Futures cut short.](#)
- 15 United Nations CERF. (2025). [Allocation sector list.](#)
- 16 Jakubowski et al. (2024). [COVID-19, school closures, and student learning outcomes.](#)
- 17 UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. (2021). [The state of the global education crisis: A path to recovery.](#)
- 18 UNESCO, OECD and the Commonwealth Secretariat. (2024). [The price of inaction.](#)
- 19 The World Bank. (2018). [Missed opportunities: The high cost of not educating girls.](#)
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 WFP. (2024). [WFP's evidence base on anticipatory action: 2015-2024.](#)
- 22 ERICC. (2025). [Global rapid evidence review of the linkages between education and societal security.](#)
- 23 Humanitarian Action. (2025). [Global humanitarian overview 2025.](#)
- 24 Development Initiatives. (2024). [Falling short? Humanitarian funding and reform: Development Initiatives.](#)
- 25 Aligned with the INEE Minimum Standards, holistic learning outcomes refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that children demonstrate across academic, cognitive, social and emotional, and other developmental domains, in ways that are appropriate to their age and context.
- 26 These elements result in three sub-objectives outlined in the Results Framework as follows: i) deliver rapid responses and build resilience ii) strengthen protection, gender equality and inclusion; and iii) use data and evidence to improve education outcomes in crises.
- 27 ECW defines the triple nexus as "the collective effort of enhancing coherence between short-term humanitarian assistance, longer-term development, and efforts to support peace to reduce chronic vulnerability and risk."
- 28 This reflects a flexible planning range. The size of the portfolio will depend on available resources, crisis severity, and where ECW can have the greatest impact, allowing it to respond to changing needs and opportunities.
- 29 Forthcoming country-level guidance will build on the current [complementarity note](#) between ECW and the Global Partnership for Education.

## **ABOUT EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT**

Education Cannot Wait (ECW) is the global fund for education in crises. The Fund provides rapid, flexible funding to locally led education responses that protect learning for refugee, internally displaced, and other children, while strengthening systems to sustain learning and resilience in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. ECW works with governments, public and private funders, UN agencies, civil society organizations, and other humanitarian and development aid actors so that no child is left behind.

As global crises intensify and the education financing gap widens, ECW calls on public and private sector partners to scale up investments so millions more crisis-affected girls and boys can learn and rebuild their futures.

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Additional information is available at  
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