Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

Financing the
UN Development System

Executive Summary

Managing Unprecedented Times

September 2025

The *Financing the UN Development System* annual report and the associated microsite *financingun.report* is a partnership initiative between the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (including the UN Development Programme). Full acknowledgement goes to all the authors, data managers and visualisers for their contributions.

This report is supported by a grant from the Swedish government, received by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

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September 2025
ISBN 978-91-987398-9-3

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Acknowledgements

The annual report on Financing the UN Development System is the result of a longstanding partnership between the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

A special thank you goes to Aparna Mehrotra, Jennifer Olmsted, Prya Alvarez, Cecilia Corsini, Christopher Fabian, John Hendra, Peter Linnér, Marijana Markotić Andrić, Sergiy Prokhoriv, Bernhard Reinsberg, Issa Sanogo and Giuseppe Zaccaria for their contributions to this edition of the report.

As in previous years, for the 11th edition of this report we relied on our colleagues to provide the primary data used in the figures and tables in Part One.

We thank Andrew MacPherson from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Laura Gallacher and Lukman Olaitan Jinadu from the UN system Chief Executives Board for Coordination Secretariat, and Marisa Berbegal Ibañez from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

We acknowledge and thank colleagues from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, namely Diana Fajardo Ardila for authoring and providing the data analysis for the first two chapters of Part One together with Rod Mamudi and Clemence Nyamandi for their overall support in the production process. Henriette Keijzers provided revisions and quality assurance for Part 1 of the Report. Laura Gallacher from the Chief Executives Board Secretariat is the author Chapter 3 in Part One.

Thank you to Annelies Hickendorff as the 2024 co-author of the country-level Funding Compact Review.

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Introduction

'The mere fact that the governments created the United Nations and have maintained it is, in itself, evidence that mankind is capable of responding to the challenge of interdependence with which the evolution of human society has now brought us face to face as never before.'

Dag Hammarskjöld[1]

This report is the latest edition in the Financing the United Nations Development System series, offering a comprehensive overview of financial trends and flows across the UN system and the UN Development System (UNDS). It is underpinned by the availability and utilisation of high-quality, disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policymaking, enhance accountability, build public trust, and foster international cooperation.

Part One analyses funding sources, allocation patterns, and emerging challenges to enhance transparency, support informed decision-making, and contribute to a more coherent and predictable financing landscape in support of the 2030 Agenda. It provides a detailed analysis of funding trends from 2010 to 2023, with preliminary data from 2024.

Part Two, the Marketplace of ideas, features expert contributions that explore innovative approaches to improving the quality of development funding. These insights highlight global conditions and propose ways to build a more resilient and effective financing ecosystem for multilateral cooperation.

A review of past reports reveals a growing sense of urgency, driven by escalating climate crises, increasingly complex conflicts, deepening geopolitical divides, and widening income inequality. This sense of urgency has become even greater. In 2025, the gap between global needs and available resources is reaching alarming levels while multilateralism remains under significant strain. These realities inspired the title of this 11th edition: '*Financing the UN Development System: Managing Unprecedented Times*'.

Yet, even in times of crisis, there are opportunities for reflection and transformation. The collective nature of the UN's work underscores that its success relies on the active contributions and meaningful collaboration of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, and other relevant groups, through inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships.

The United Nations system plays a central role in delivering official development assistance (ODA), channelling a catalytic proportion of global ODA through its operational and normative functions. This report presents a retroactive

analysis that shows a decline in funding towards the UN system between 2022 and 2023, and a worrying trend of declining ODA that is expected to continue after 2023, which will most likely further impact resources in 2024 and 2025.

This downward trend challenges the UN's ability to deliver results, particularly in least developed and fragile contexts, where such funding is most critical and where the consequences of underfunding are often measured in lives.

Overall, the world is currently off track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The annual investment gap in developing countries has grown to approximately US$ 4 trillion, up from US$ 2.5 trillion a decade ago.[2] This widening gap underscores the need for a significant shift in funding availability to advance sustainable development.

Equally concerning is the shortfall in quality funding against the UN Funding Compact's 2027 targets, something that will be explored in detail throughout this report. The way the UN is funded directly impacts its ability to support the most vulnerable and deliver meaningful results at scale. Achieving this requires not only increased support from Member States but also greater efficiency and trust within the UN system itself.

The year 2025 marks several significant milestones in the work of the United Nations. In July 2025, world leaders adopted the Sevilla Commitment, a renewed global financing framework that builds on the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2008 Doha Declaration, the 2002 Monterrey Consensus, and the Pact for the Future.[3] The Sevilla Commitment seeks to accelerate progress toward the SDGs by closing the financing gap and reforming international financial systems. It emphasises inclusive multilateral cooperation, debt relief, and increased investment in sustainable development, especially for developing countries.

Within the reality that the multilateral system is facing increasing pressure, the future of UN funding will require approaches that maximize efficiency, transparency, and co-ownership, with a focus on putting people at the centre of all actions. There is an urgent need for a global rally to reinvigorate cooperation and mobilise the resources necessary to deliver on the promise of the SDGs.

Earlier this year, the Secretary-General launched the UN80 initiative, whose aim is to strengthen impact and make the UN more operationally effective, supported by more predictable and quality funding in line with the targets outlined in the UN Funding Compact. Achieving this goal will require leadership and a renewed commitment to the UN Charter from all partners.

Whilst facing unprecedented challenges, Member States have a unique opportunity to seize renewed urgency to achieve the SDGs, strengthen the UN Funding Compact, and advance peace through conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Endnotes

1 Address by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld at University of California Convocation Berkeley, California, Thursday, 13 May 1954, accessed online at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1291161?v=pdf in July 2025.

2 United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 'SDG investment is growing, but too slowly', *SDG Investment Trends Monitor*, Issue 4, September 2023, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diae-misc2023d6_en.pdf. See also United Nations, Inter-agency Task Force on *Financing for Development, Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024: Financing for Development at a Crossroads* (New York: United Nations, 2024), accessed online at https://desapublications.un.org/publications/financing-sustainable-development-report-2024 in July 2025.

3 United Nations, 'Sevilla Commitment, Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, Sevilla, Spain, 30 June–3 July 2025', A/CONF.227/2025/L.1, (New York: United Nations, 18 June 2025), accessed online at https://docs.un.org/en/A/CONF.227/2025/L.1 in July 2025.

Executive Summary

Financing the UN Development System: Managing Unprecedented Times is the 11th edition in its series. As in previous iterations, the report provides an in-depth overview of the financing systems of United Nations development system, with a focus on financial data. The 'www.FinancingUN.Report' dedicated webpage is also available as a platform for sharing the latest and previous reports, as well as the interactive datasets.

Part One of the report looks at how the UN is funded, by whom, and through which modalities, based on the most up-to-date official data sources. Chapter 1 is focused on the revenues of the UN system, while Chapter 2 is focused on the expenses of the UN system, and where these resources are allocated: geographically, by country income-level, and by SDGs, among other parameters. Chapter 3 is a contribution from the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Secretariat, on the implementation of the 'Data Cube' initiative (2022-2025), aiming to improve the quality of financial data reported to the CEB.

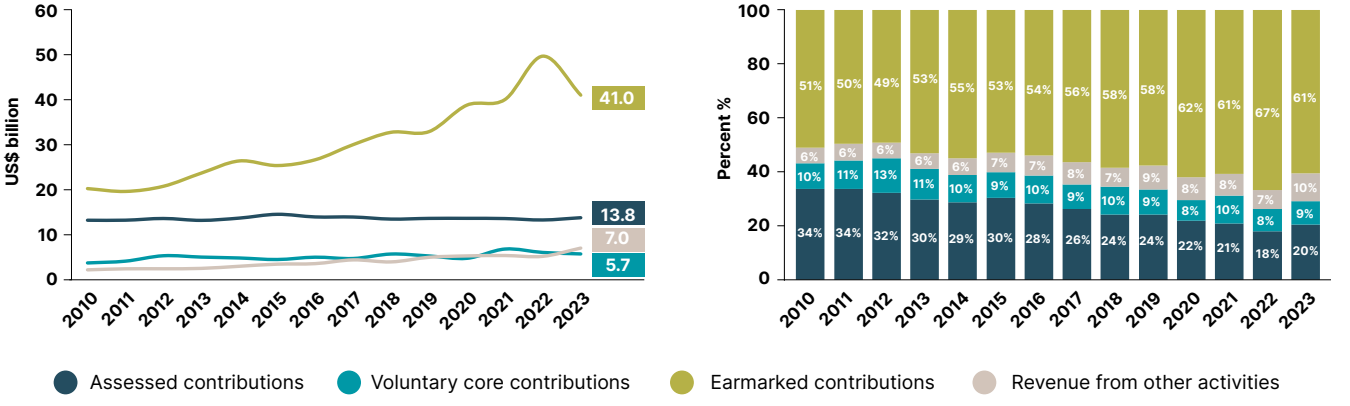
Part Two of the report, called Marketplace of ideas, frames the 'bigger picture', emphasising the need for better quality funding to achieve quality results, and discussing the unprecedented funding challenges facing global development. Voices from practitioners at the country level, academia, UN senior leadership give a sense of prevailing challenges and opportunities, and the part concludes with a look at progress on the UN Funding Compact at country level.

Chapter 1: How is the UN funded?

The first section of Chapter 1 looks at overall revenues. In nominal terms, the UN system's total revenue decreased by almost 10% in 2023 to US$ 67.6 billion, down from US$ 74.3 billion in 2022. The five UN entities with the highest revenue in 2023 (Table 1) were, respectively, the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Secretariat, the UN Department of

Distribution of UN system funding by financing instrument, 2010–2023 (US$ billion)

(Figure 2 from Part One)



Source: see page 111

Peace Operations (UN-DPO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

The UN system is to a high degree financed by earmarked contributions: resources earmarked to a specific programme or project. As can be seen in Figure 2, there had been steady nominal growth in funding to the UN system over most of the past decade-plus, with volumes increasing by 71% (from US$ 39.6 billion, in 2010). The vast majority of this growth is accounted for by increases in earmarked contributions.

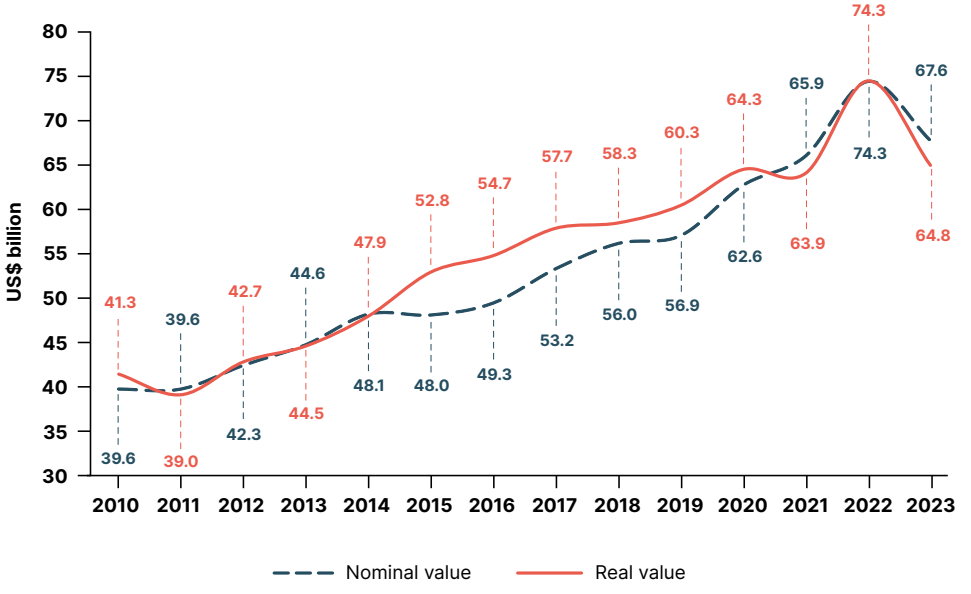
The *real-term* decline in revenues in 2023 was even more dramatic (Figure 3) than the nominal decline, coming to 12.8%, from 74.3 billion to 64.8 billion (or a decrease of 9.5 billion, in fixed 2022 US$). The only other years since 2010 to see dips in revenue levels were 2011, following the global financial crisis, and 2021, attributable to major price-inflation across the globe. Much of the reduction in 2023 can be seen in three humanitarian-focused entities (WFP, and to a lesser extent, UNICEF and UNHCR) and is driven by supplementary budget allocations made by Member State partners in response to the war in Ukraine in 2022, that were not replicated in 2023. To that extent, it can be seen as a reversion to a trend.

Preliminary data from 2024 (Figure 6) and the developments of early 2025, however, also indicate the beginning of a new trend: lower levels of resourcing reducing operational capacity and challenging the UN system's ability to deliver on development and humanitarian priorities for its Member States.

The second section of Chapter 1 looks at how UN entities are being funded. The UN system's ability to function is not only dependent on the volume of funding, but also its quality. This is classified into four types of contribution, or 'instruments': assessed contributions, voluntary core contributions, earmarked contributions, and revenue from other activities. Table 1 shows the combination of instruments by UN entity. Flexible resources (particularly 'assessed' and 'voluntary core') can be applied more flexibly and strategically to support the integrated implementation of Agenda 2030. Moreover, it gives the UN system the ability to adapt and reallocate resources in times of crises,

UN system funding, 2010–2023: Nominal values at current prices and real values at constant 2022 prices (US$ billion)

(Figure 3 from Part One)



Source: see page 111

UN system total revenue by entity and financing instrument, 2010-2023 (US$ million)

(Table 1 from Part One)

Entity	Assessed 2023	Voluntary core 2023	Earmarked 2023	Revenue from other activities 2023	Total revenue 2023	2010-2023
UN Secretariat	3,278	228	2,983	1,057	7,546	3.7B 7.5B
UN-DPO	6,494		336	159	6,990	8.0B 7.0B
CTBTO	132		8	10	151	128.0M 150.5M
FAO	530	44	1,814	11	2,399	1.4B 2.4B
IAEA	460		325	34	819	598.2M 819.3M
IARC	27		22	4	54	45.4M 53.7M
ICAO	87		128	34	249	223.3M 248.5M
ICC	188		24	3	215	169.8M 215.1M
IFAD		349	258	213	820	434.7M 820.0M
ILO	411	17	393	100	921	673.7M 921.0M
IMO	43	18		26	87	74.4M 87.3M
IOM	71	46	3,158	253	3,528	1.2B 3.5B
IRMCT	69			7	76	80.2M 76.2M
ISA	9	1	0	3	12	10.0M 12.5M
ITC	40	3	108	8	160	76.3M 159.5M
ITLOS	13	4	1	1	18	11.7M 18.1M
ITU	153		23	56	231	173.5M 231.1M
OPCW	68		12	3	83	87.7M 83.3M
PAHO	105		234	807	1,147	850.1M 1.1B
UN Tourism	16		11	5	32	25.1M 31.8M
UN Women	10	109	476	24	619	236.2M 619.1M
UNAIDS		153	61	8	223	266.0M 222.5M
UNCCD	8		10	2	21	29.8M 20.6M
UNCDF		5	156	7	168	59.7M 167.6M
UNDP		548	4,822	565	5,934	5.7B 5.9B
UNEP	218	79	557	96	951	395.1M 950.8M
UNESCO	291	62	322	172	847	764.6M 846.7M
UNFCCC	33	0	55	28	116	85.7M 115.7M
UNFPA		364	1,091	223	1,678	890.2M 1.7B
UN-HABITAT	17	4	173	37	231	198.3M 230.7M
UNHCR	50	587	3,947	123	4,707	1.9B 4.7B
UNICEF		1,350	7,144	438	8,932	3.7B 8.9B
UNIDO	79		260	34	373	335.4M 372.9M
UNITAID		151	29	36	215	190.7M 215.3M
UNITAR			11	32	43	20.9M 43.3M
UNODC	35	7	417	71	529	259.4M 529.4M
UNOPS				1,280	1,280	90.5M 1.3B
UNRWA	38	718	737	40	1,533	408.7M 1.5B
UNSSC		5	16	1	23	11.3M 22.6M
UNU		21	32	65	118	61.5M 117.8M
UPU	45		41	30	117	40.0M 116.6M
WFP		624	8,150	350	9,124	4.3B 9.1B
WHO	494	237	2,564	46	3,341	2.3B 3.3B
WIPO	21		10	553	584	310.1M 583.7M
WMO	81	2	30	1	115	99.1M 114.6M
WTO	235		26	3	264	236.7M 264.3M
Total	**13,848**	**5,737**	**40,980**	**7,057**	**67,621**	**39.6B 67.6B**

i) Values are rounded and slight differences in totals may occur. ii) Values shown as zero in the table represent amounts below US$ 1 million.
iii) UNV and UNICRI revenues are included under UNDP and UNODC, respectively.
Source: Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
For notes – see page 110

such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the benefits of core contributions, UN funding remains highly earmarked to specific programmes and projects.

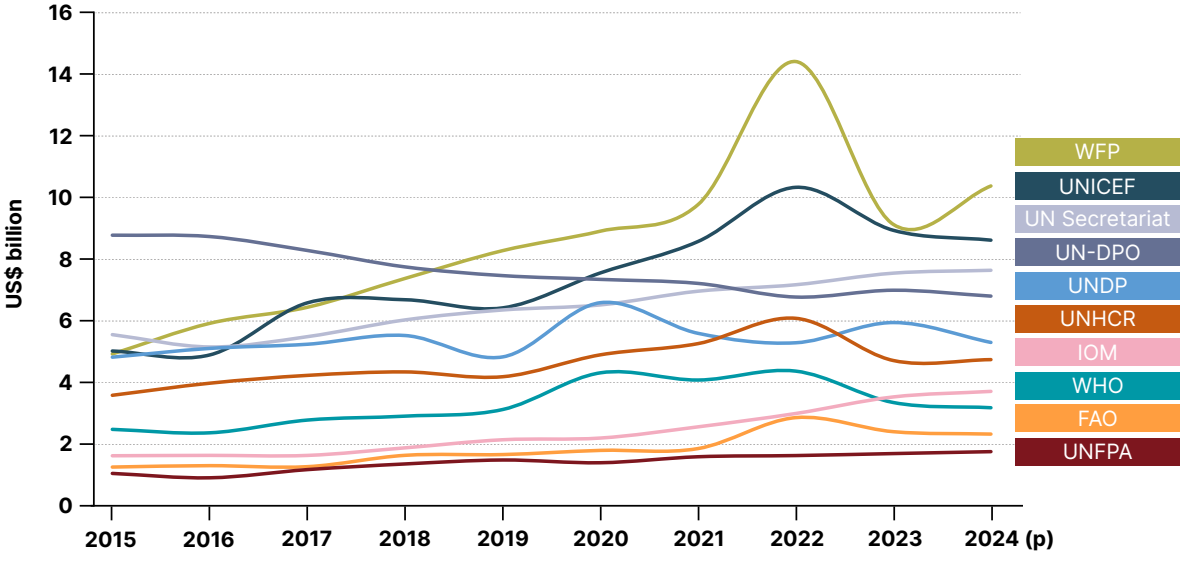
Voluntary core contributions are an important source of funding for many UN entities that receive little or no assessed contributions. In 2023, the top five recipients of voluntary core funding were: UNICEF (US$ 1,350 million)[1]; the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA; US$ 718 million); WFP (US$ 624 million); UNHCR (US$ 587 million); and UNDP (US$ 548 million). Together, they received two-thirds, or 67%, of voluntary core resources contributed to the UN system in 2023.

As depicted in Figure 2, however, earmarked contributions have been the main driver behind the overall increase in UN system funding, more than doubling from US$ 20.3 billion in 2010 to US$ 41 billion in 2023, and accounting for over 60% of total resources. This remains true, even as the UN system's earmarked revenue shrunk from US$ 49.6 billion in 2022 to US$ 41 billion in 2023, a decrease of US$ 8.6 billion or 17%. Figure 6 shows how three UN entities – WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR – accounted for much of this reduction and are the same entities that saw significant growth between 2021 and 2022. Preliminary data for 2024 shows the downward trend reversing somewhat for WFP, with UNICEF and UNHCR remaining closer to the reduced levels of 2023.

The third section of Chapter 1 looks at who is funding the UN. In 2023, 69% of funding came directly from governments, with an additional 18% from multilateral institutions also largely funded by governments (Figure 7). Although the share of government funding remained relatively stable overall compared to the previous year, the share from OECD-DAC[2] governments fell from 59.4% in 2022 to 55% in 2023, while the share from non-OECD-DAC governments rose slightly, from 13% to 14%.

Figure 8 illustrates how the distribution of total UN system revenue among contributors has evolved since 2010. Funding to the UN remains highly concentrated, with the top five Member State contributors providing 38% of total UN system revenue in 2023, and top ten providing 48% – almost

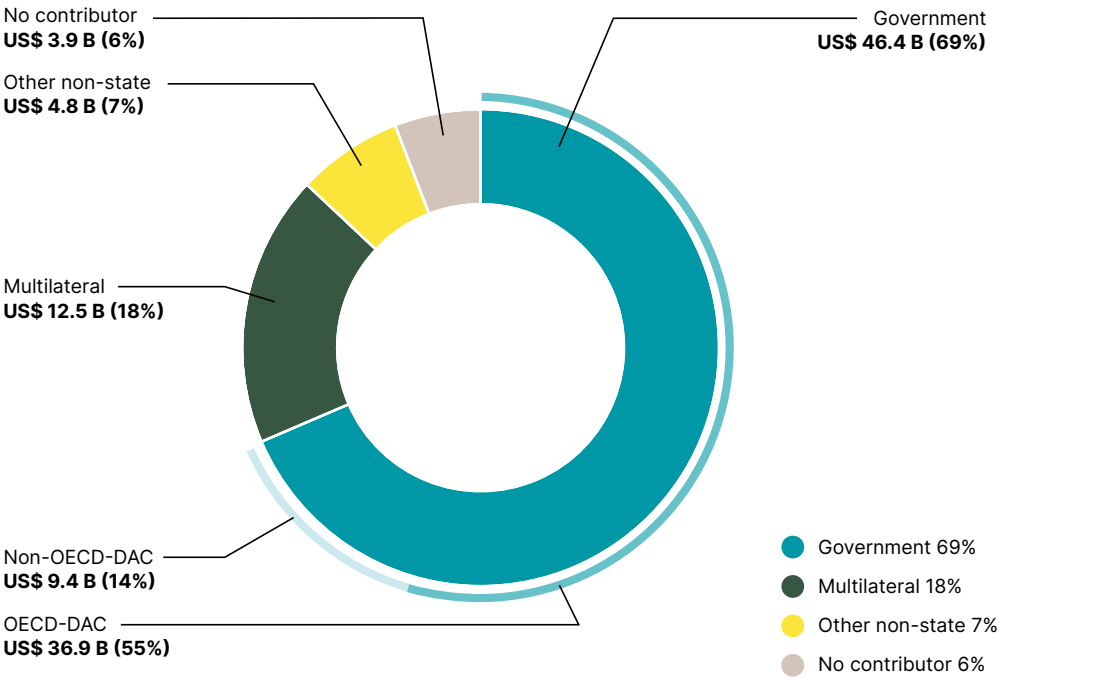
Total revenue of select UN entities, 2015–2024 (US$ billion)
(Figure 6 from Part One)

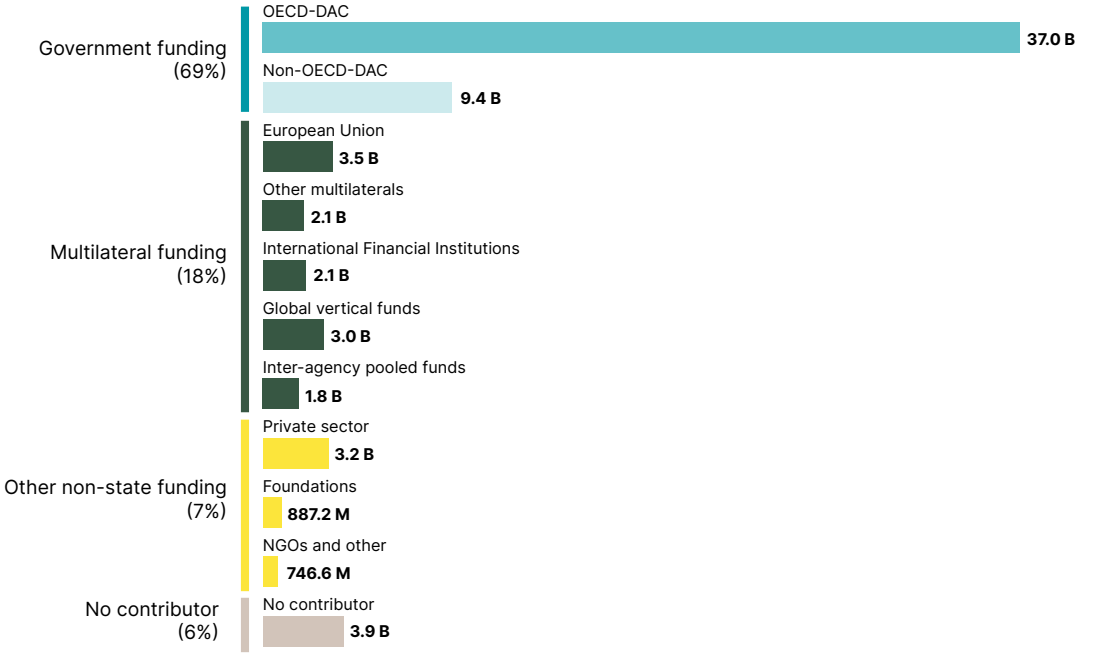


Source: see page 112

Funding sources for the UN system, 2023

(Figure 7 from Part One)





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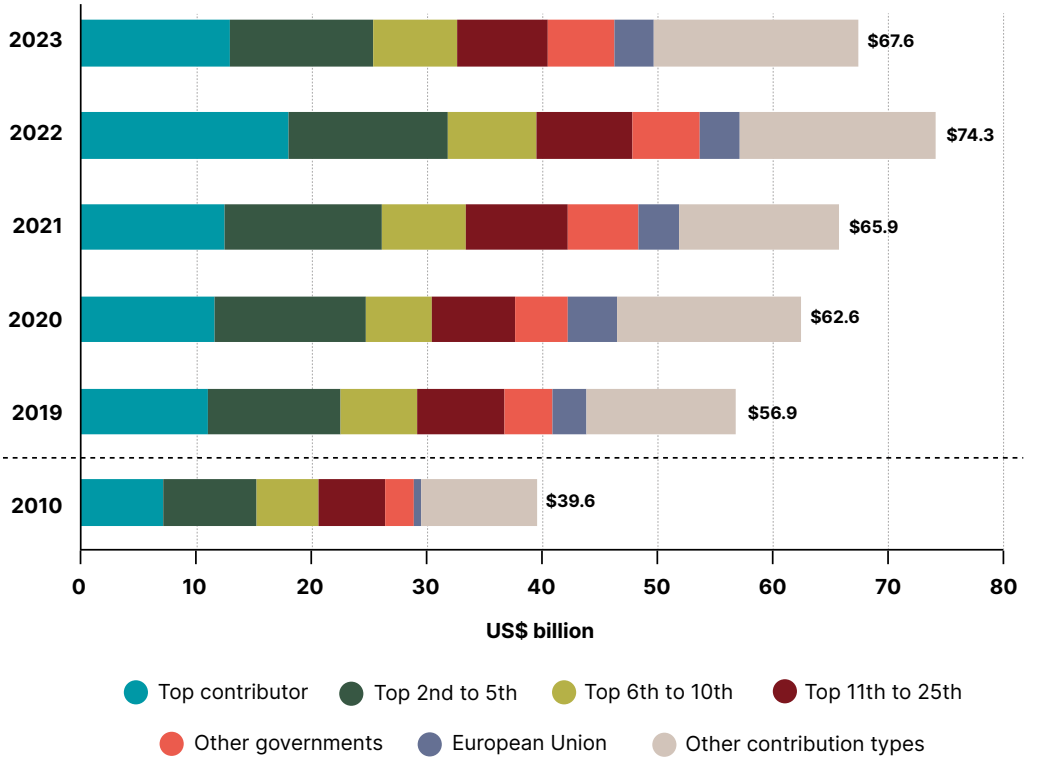
half of all resources. The United States maintained its position as the largest contributor to the UN in 2023, providing 19.2% of total funding.

But, as noted above, major increases from 2021 to 2022 were 'mirrored' as decreases from 2022 to 2023: in 2022, the United States increased its funding to the UN system by US$ 5.6 billion, reaching an all-time high of US$ 18.1 billion; while in 2023 they decreased by US$ 5.1 billion, to US$ 13 billion.

The fourth section of Chapter 1 looks in particular at the UN development system (UNDS), and its funding 'composition' – in other words, the distribution of contributions across a sub-set of instruments: core (as discussed above), and three types of earmarked funding: inter-agency pooled funds, single-agency thematic funds, and other earmarked funds. The UNDS encompasses entities promoting sustainable development for and within Member States; in essence, those entities with a mandate to promote economic and social development. Together, their work is referred to as UN Operational Activities for Development (OAD). Despite the name, UN OAD includes both 'development assistance' and 'humanitarian assistance' activities. In 2023, contributions to UN OAD were 68%, or US$ 45.6 billion, of total UN system revenue, down by US$ 8.9 billion from 2022 (see definitions in Box 2, page 94).

The top ten OECD-DAC contributors together provided 61% of overall UN OAD funding in 2023, with the mix of financing instruments varying between contributors (Figure 14). France and the Netherlands contributed more than 30% of

UN system funding by Member States and other contributors, 2010–2023 (US$ billion)
(Figure 8 from Part One)



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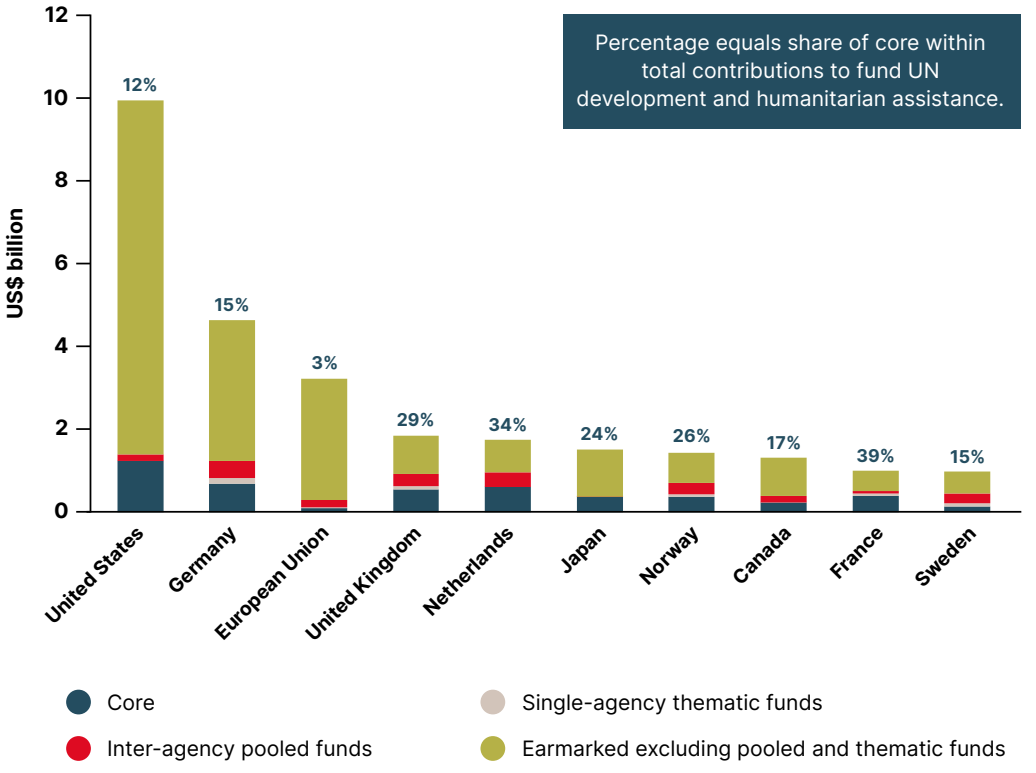
Funding composition for UN development and humanitarian assistance: Top OECD-DAC contributors, 2023 (US$ billion)

(Figure 14 from Part One)



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their funding as core resources (a target of both the 2019 and 2024 iterations of the Funding Compact). The United Kingdom, Norway, and Japan also provided a substantial share (over 20%) of their contributions as core. The European Union (EU) is a unique case, rarely providing core funding due to internal regulations and constraints.

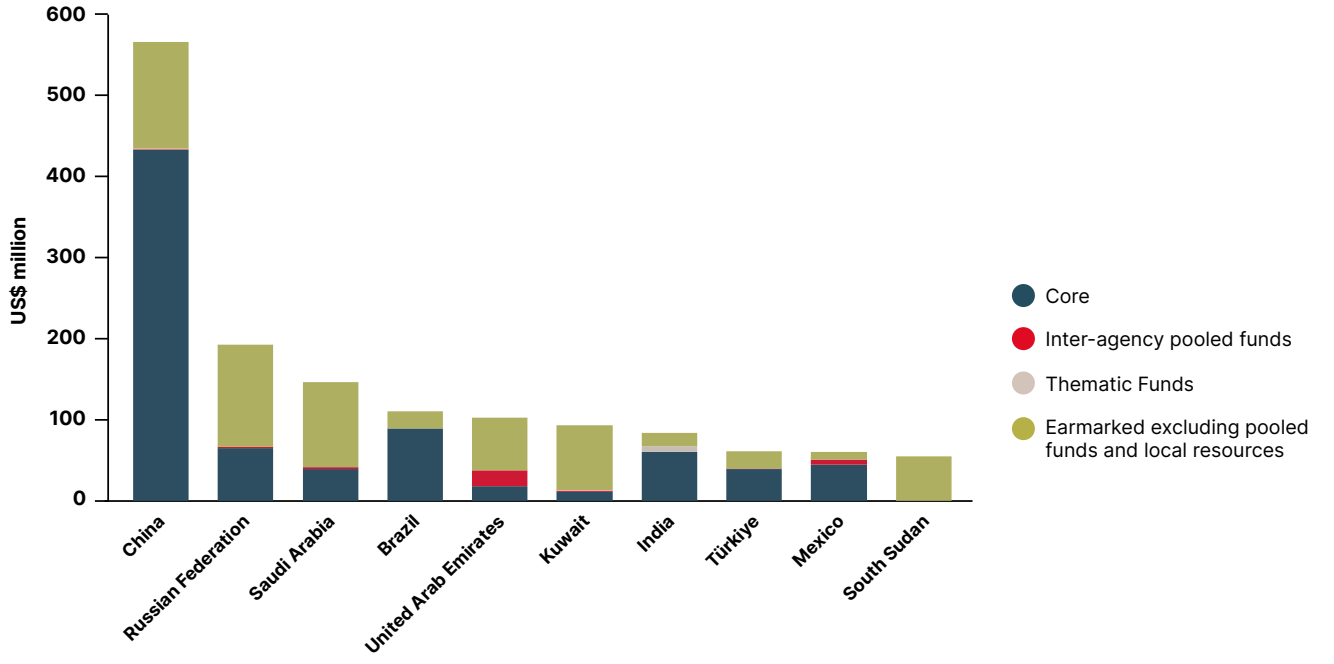
Figure 15, conversely, illustrates the top ten non-OECD-DAC members' total OAD contributions in 2023. In figure 15 (A), the ranking excludes local resources – which are provided by countries for the purposes of implementing their own national development plans – while in figure 15 (B), they are included. In both cases, China is the largest contributor to UN OAD, providing close to US$ 600 million. When considering local resources, Argentina, Benin, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, all enter the top ten non-OECD-DAC partners providing funding for UN OAD.

Section five of Chapter 1 focuses on UN inter-agency pooled funds, disaggregated by development and humanitarian assistance. As seen in Figure 18, total contributions doubled between 2016 and 2021, from US$ 1.7 billion to US$ 3.4 billion. Both 2022 and 2023 however saw declines in contributions to pooled funds development-related and humanitarian – to US$ 2.8 billion in 2023. The blue trend-line shows the share of earmarked contributions for development activities provided by Member States through UN inter-agency pooled funds, one of four pooled funding-related indicators established under the 2024

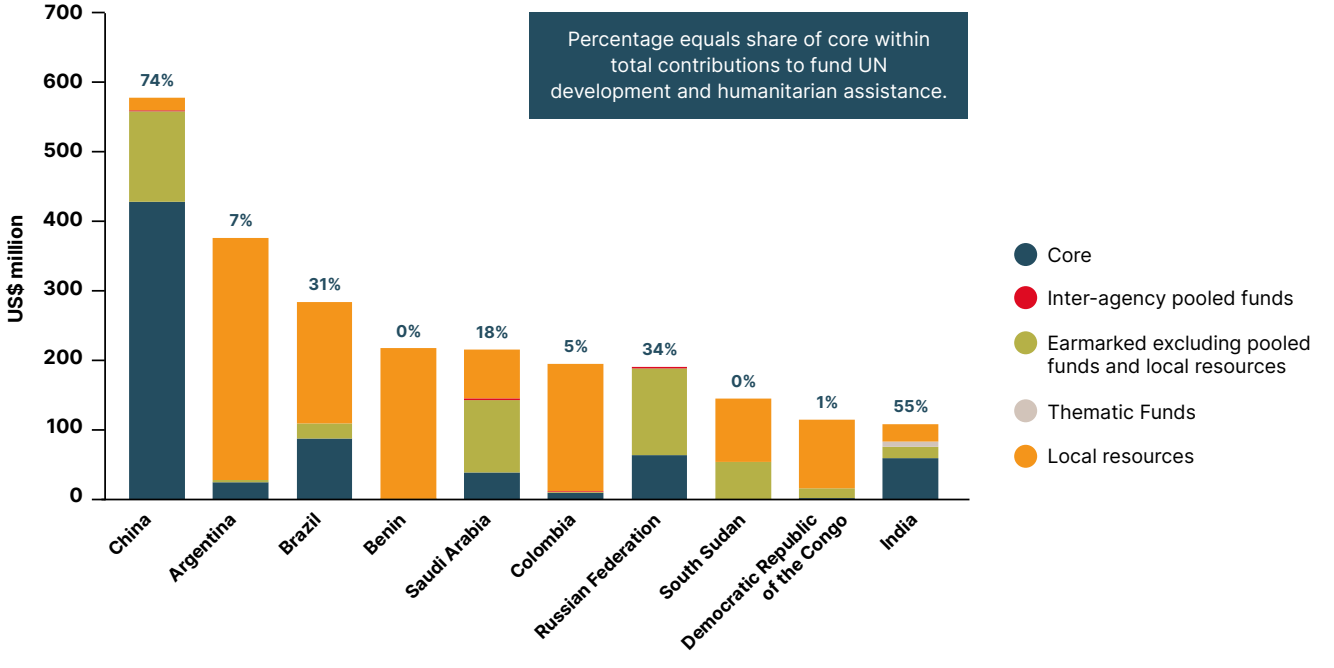
Funding composition for development and humanitarian assistance: Top non-OECD-DAC member state contributors, 2023 (US$ million)

(Figure 15 from Part One)

(A) Excluding local resources



(B) Including local resources



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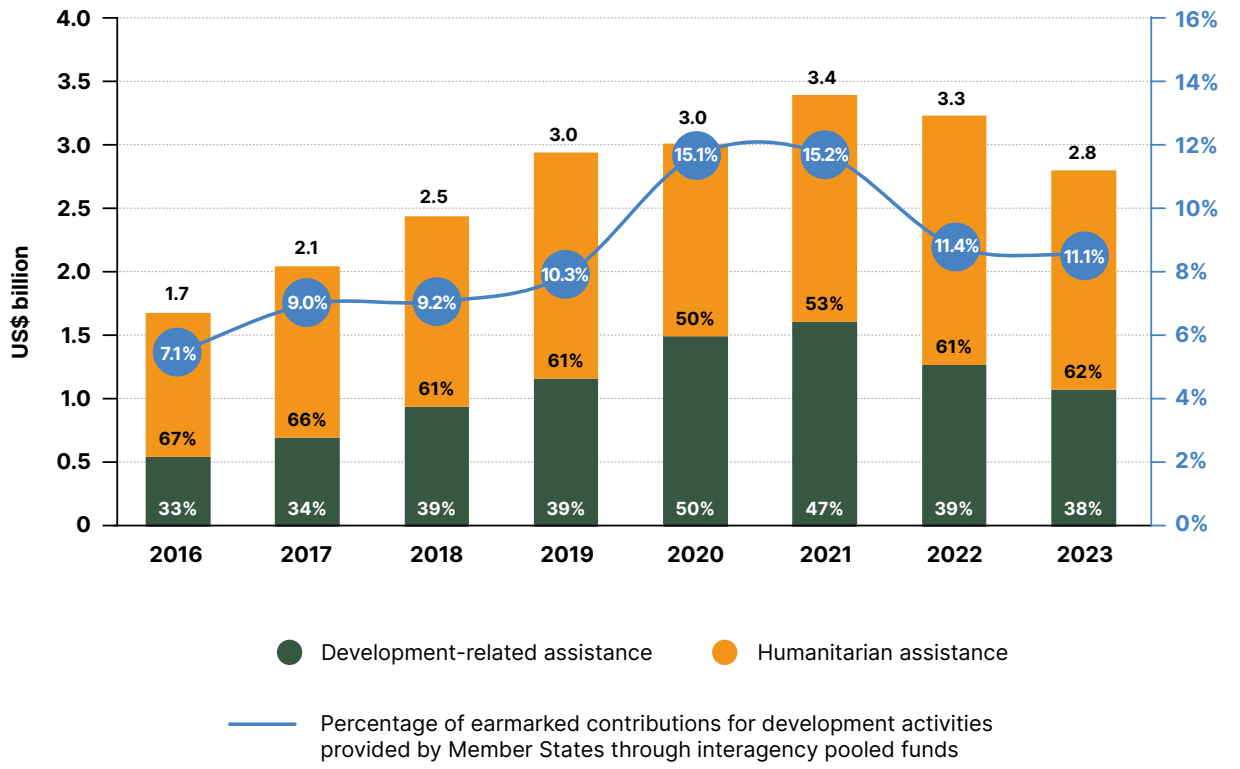
Contributions to UN Inter-agency pooled funds, 2016–2023 (US$ billion)
(Figure 18 from Part One)



Source: see page 114

Funding Compact. In 2023, it stood at 11.1% (also a decline from 2021), against a 2027 target of 30%.

In 2023, humanitarian funds constituted 62% of all the contributions received by UN inter-agency pooled funds, reflecting a long-term trend of pooled funding being used to flexibly respond to emerging humanitarian needs.

Funding for development-related pooled funds rose from US$ 551 million in 2016 to a high of US$ 1.6 billion in 2021, before declining to US$ 1.1 billion in 2023, constituting 38% of total pooled fund contributions for the year.

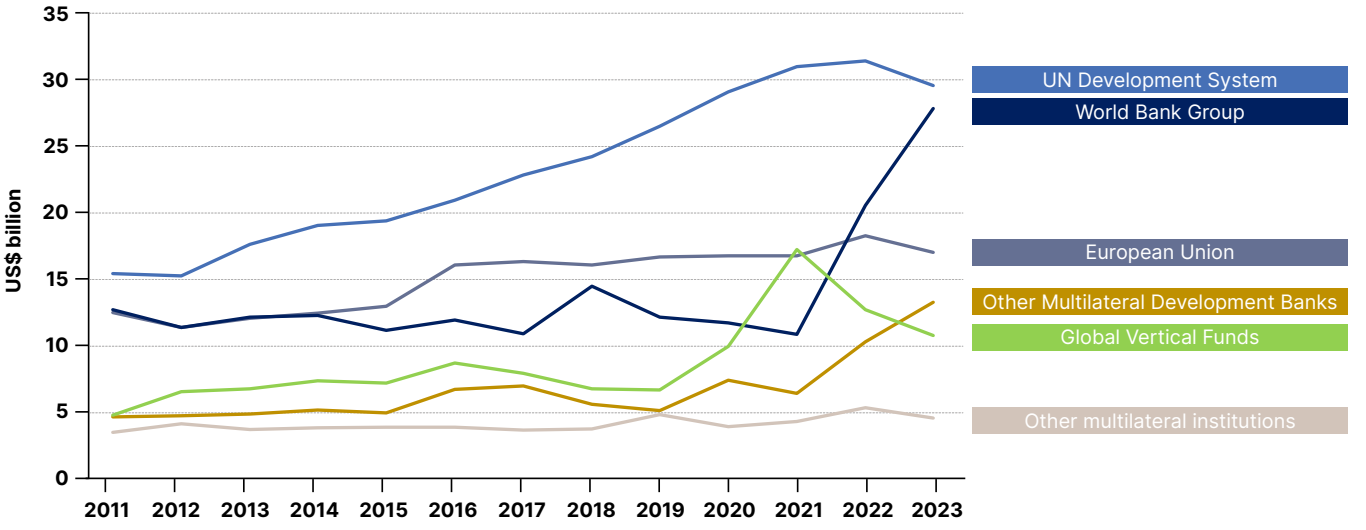
The sixth and final section of Chapter 1 contextualises the analysis on UN funding with a perspective on the broader 'official development assistance' (ODA) picture. In 2023, ODA provided by OECD-DAC members reached a record high of US$ 223.5 billion (including US$ 31 billion in 'in-donor' refugee costs); a stark contrast to UN system revenues, which declined. But there are also parallels: since 2019, the growth in ODA has largely been driven by funding earmarked for crisis responses, starting with the COVID-19 pandemic and, from 2022 onward, for Ukraine and other humanitarian emergencies.

Figure 25 compares the ODA provided by OECD-DAC members to various multilateral institutions, comparing the UNDS to the World Bank Group (WBG), European Union, multilateral development banks, vertical funds, and others.

The UNDS has consistently received the highest volume of contributions, peaking at US$ 31.5 billion in 2021 before declining to US$ 29.6 billion in 2023. The World Bank Group, meanwhile, experienced a rapid expansion in funding

OECD-DAC countries use of the multilateral development system, 2011–2023 (US$ billion, constant 2022 prices)

(Figure 25 from Part One)



Source: see page 115

after 2019, attributed to heightened support for Ukraine and large contributions to the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), notably in 2023.

Chapter Two: Where is UN funding allocated?

Chapter 2 looks at UN 'expenses': where the funding received, described in chapter 1, is allocated. And the first section of the chapter focuses on total expenses, which reached US$ 68.5 billion in 2023, an increase of US$ 1 billion, or 1.6%, in nominal terms compared to 2022.

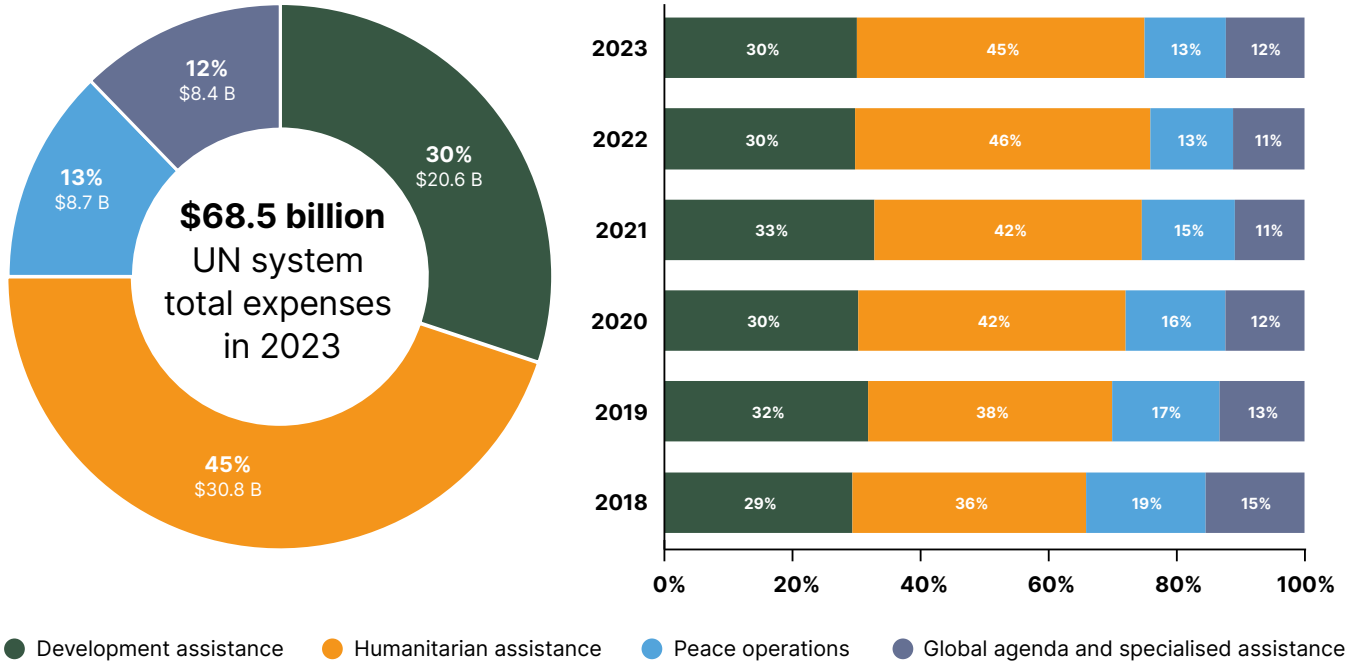
The central role played by the UN in responding to growing humanitarian need across the world – saving lives, alleviating suffering, and maintaining human dignity in the most extreme circumstances – is evident in Figure 27, which illustrates the evolution of total UN expenses by four key functions. Development assistance accounted for US$ 20.6 billion, comprising 30% of total annual UN system-wide expenses, while humanitarian assistance came to US$ 30.8 billion, or 45% of expenses. The two together constitute UN OAD and amounted to US$ 51.2 billion; some 75% of UN expenses (a larger figure than the US$ 45.6 billion in *revenues* [referred to above] aligned with UN OAD, because of lags in the receipt and expenditure of funds).

The other key functions, 'peace operations' and 'global agenda and specialised assistance' – essentially the normative mandate of the UN, from Human Rights to various 'conference of the parties' conventions, such as on climate change – together constitute 25% of UN expenses, a similar proportion to 2022.

Whilst there was a marginal decline in humanitarian expenses in 2023, Figure 28 shows how, in the long-term, humanitarian expenditure has been on a notable upward trend, growing around 10% annually between 2010 and 2022, and comprehensively out-pacing development assistance by 2018. This is an inversion of the previous trend, whereby development expenses were nearly double humanitarian expenses. By contrast, funding for development assistance, an area in which numerous other development partners,

Expenses of the UN system by function, 2018–2023

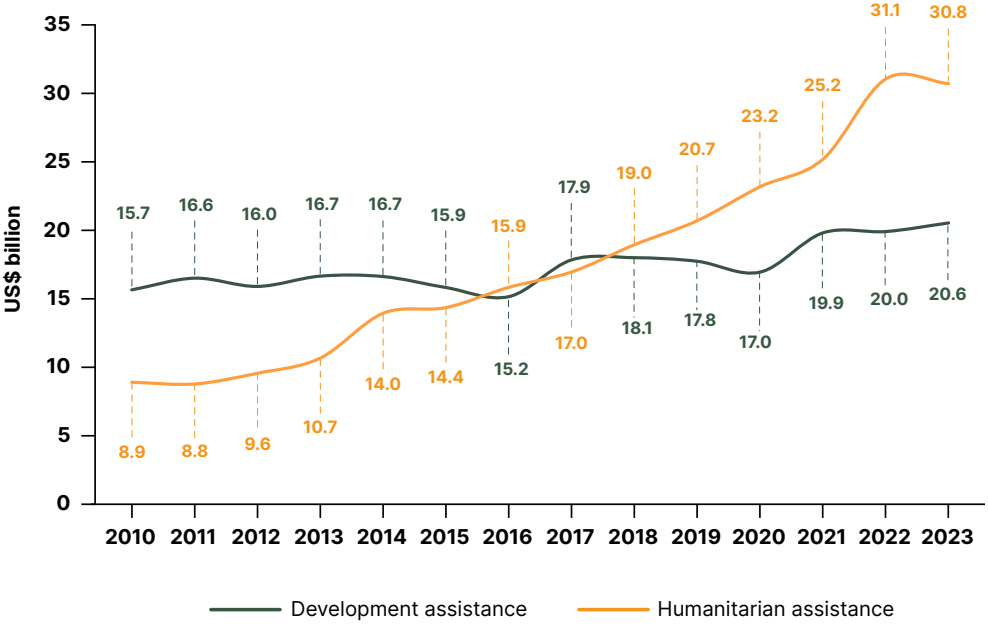
(Figure 27 from Part One)



Source: see page 115

Total UN expenses for development and humanitarian assistance, 2010–2023 (US$ billion)

(Figure 28 from Part One)



Source: see page 115

UN system total expenses by entity and function, 2010-2023 (US$ million)

(Table 4 from Part One)

Entity	Development assistance 2023	Humanitarian assistance 2023	Peace operations 2023	Global agenda 2023	Total expenditure 2023	2010–2022
UN Secretariat	1,252	2,756	1,294	2,344	7,646	4.0B 7.6B
UN-DPO			7,227		7,227	7.6B 7.2B
CTBTO				129	129	124.9M 128.6M
FAO	1,677	237		206	2,119	1.4B 2.1B
IAEA				750	750	584.9M 750.3M
IARC				51	51	46.5M 50.6M
ICAO				247	247	235.1M 247.1M
ICC				201	201	186.7M 200.7M
IFAD	226				226	783.8M 226.3M
ILO	590	89		172	851	587.0M 851.3M
IMO				87	87	67.9M 87.4M
IOM	748	2,236		436	3,419	1.4B 3.4B
IRMCT				79	79	85.7M 79.3M
ISA				12	12	8.3M 12.3M
ITC	159				159	70.8M 158.8M
ITLOS				18	18	11.9M 17.8M
ITU	66			195	261	193.1M 260.7M
OPCW				94	94	84.2M 94.2M
PAHO	1,099				1,099	927.3M 1.1B
UN Tourism				35	35	21.8M 34.6M
UN Women	417	71		58	546	198.3M 546.1M
UNAIDS	204				204	284.0M 204.1M
UNCCD				27	27	18.6M 26.9M
UNCDF	101				101	64.6M 100.8M
UNDP	4,878	706			5,584	5.8B 5.6B
UNEP	672				672	448.9M 671.9M
UNESCO	517	15		207	738	796.7M 738.2M
UNFCCC				124	124	95.4M 124.3M
UNFPA	770	741			1,510	823.9M 1.5B
UN-HABITAT	107	34		37	178	200.5M 177.7M
UNHCR		5,320			5,320	1.9B 5.3B
UNICEF	3,647	5,389			9,037	3.6B 9.0B
UNIDO	373				373	225.2M 372.8M
UNITAID		193			193	216.3M 193.4M
UNITAR				49	49	20.3M 49.5M
UNODC	452				452	210.9M 451.5M
UNOPS	919	106	210	3	1,239	65.4M 1.2B
UNRWA		1,461			1,461	554.8M 1.5B
UNSSC	20				20	10.0M 19.6M
UNU				81	81	59.8M 81.4M
UPU				109	109	50.2M 108.8M
WFP	411	10,337			10,748	4.3B 10.7B
WHO	1,198	1,065		1,848	4,111	2.1B 4.1B
WIPO	94			380	474	324.4M 474.3M
WMO				126	126	88.5M 125.6M
WTO	26			288	314	225.6M 314.2M
Total	**20,621**	**30,756**	**8,731**	**8,393**	**68,500**	**39.8B 68.5B**

i) Values are rounded and slight differences in totals may occur. ii) UNV and UNICRI expenses are included under UNDP and UNODC, respectively.
Source: Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
For notes – see page 110

including Multilateral Development Banks and other International Financial Institutions, are active, fluctuated between US$ 15 billion and US$ 20 billion over the same period, growing by a more modest 2% annually.

The second section of Chapter 2 looks at the functional distribution of these expenses by UN entity. Table 4 provides a comprehensive breakdown of 2023 expenditure by select UN entities, with the sparklines (far right-hand column) showing how expenditure has evolved over time. As already noted in Figure 27 and reflected in Table 4, humanitarian assistance accounted for US$ 30.8 billion in 2023. Three entities together accounted for more than two-thirds of these expenses: WFP (34%), UNICEF (18%), and UNHCR (17%).

And Figure 29 indicates how the aggregate decline in humanitarian expenses may well extend beyond 2023, with preliminary data showing these decreases continuing into 2024 for all three of these top providers of humanitarian assistance.

By contrast, development assistance expenses – which amounted to US$ 20.6 billion – were less concentrated, with roughly half attributable to UNDP (24%), UNICEF (18%), and FAO (8%).

The third section of Chapter 2 looks at the distribution of these expenses by geographic region, while the fourth section focuses on UN expenses in 'crisis-affected' countries, and the UN's capacity to 'stay and deliver'. Figure 31 provides an overview of how UNDS expenditure has evolved by region since 2010, while concurrently – for the first time in this report – showing that breakdown by function (development, humanitarian, peace operations).

Africa and Western Asia had the largest shares of UN OAD expenditure in 2023, with humanitarian expenses (indicated in orange) dominating in both regions, and Africa also having significant expenses for peace operations – over US$ 6 billion a year, dating back to 2010.

Notably, humanitarian expenses across all regions begin to increase in the latter part of the period under review: in Europe in 2022 and 2023, a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine; in Asia and the Pacific also in 2022 and 2023, as a result of conflict in both Afghanistan and Myanmar; and in the Americas beginning in 2019 with significant migrations out of Venezuela and parts of Central America, and the deterioration of the security situation in Haiti.

In 2023, UN expenses across 39 countries classified as 'crisis-affected' totalled US$ 35.3 billion, or 52% of all UN expenses; operating in the most challenging environments, attempting to reach those furthest behind.

Figure 32 illustrates UN expenses in the 30 crisis-affected countries with total expenses over US$ 200 million in 2023, again indicating relative shares for development assistance, humanitarian assistance, and peace operations. In most crisis-affected countries, development assistance was for the most part significantly lower than humanitarian assistance, although some countries – such as Burundi, Colombia, Mozambique, and Pakistan – featured a more balanced profile, perhaps shaped by a focus on post-crisis recovery, and support for populations affected by protracted displacement.

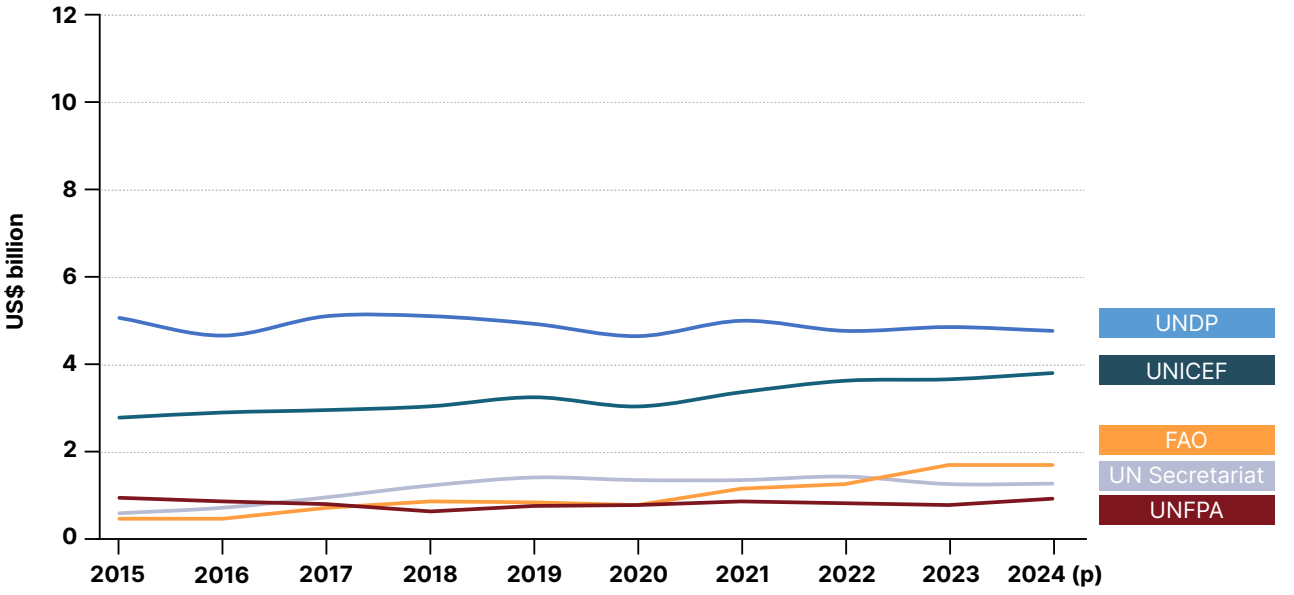
The fifth section of Chapter 2 looks at the distribution of expenses by countries' income level, while the sixth section looks specifically at resources in 'Least Developed Countries' (LDCs). Figure 33 displays UN development and humanitarian (UN OAD) expenses according to the income level of UN programme countries, while also distinguishing between crisis-affected and non-crisis-affected contexts (the total allocation for crisis-affected countries in this graph differs to the figure noted above, as this does not include allocations designated as 'global' or 'regional' but ultimately reaching that country).

Total allocations to low-income countries increased from US$ 17.4 billion in 2022 to US$ 18.3 billion, roughly aligned with the overall increase in expenses (though against a backdrop of declining revenues, as discussed in Chapter 1). The analysis here underscores the role – and value – of the UN in helping Member States and other partners bring humanitarian relief and sustainable development to where it is needed most: aggregate expenses to 26 low-income countries was only a little below the allocations to 106 middle-income countries. In a similar vein (and touched on above),

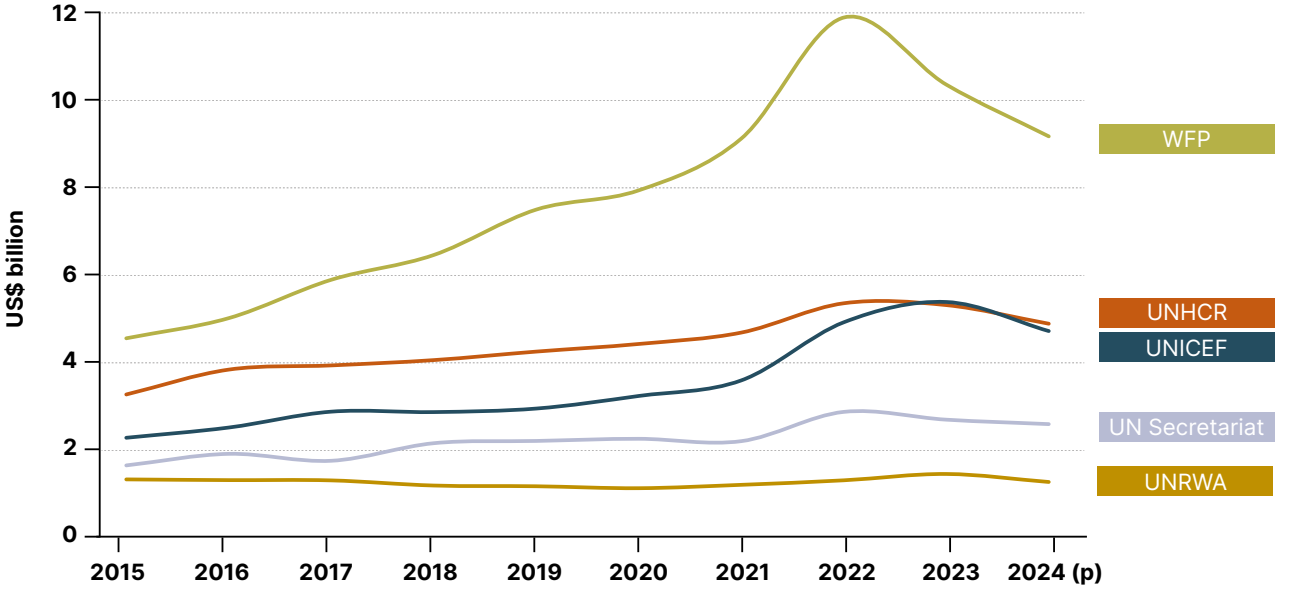
Total expenses for development and humanitarian assistance by select UN entities, 2015–2024 (US$ billion)

(Figure 29 from Part One)

(A) Development



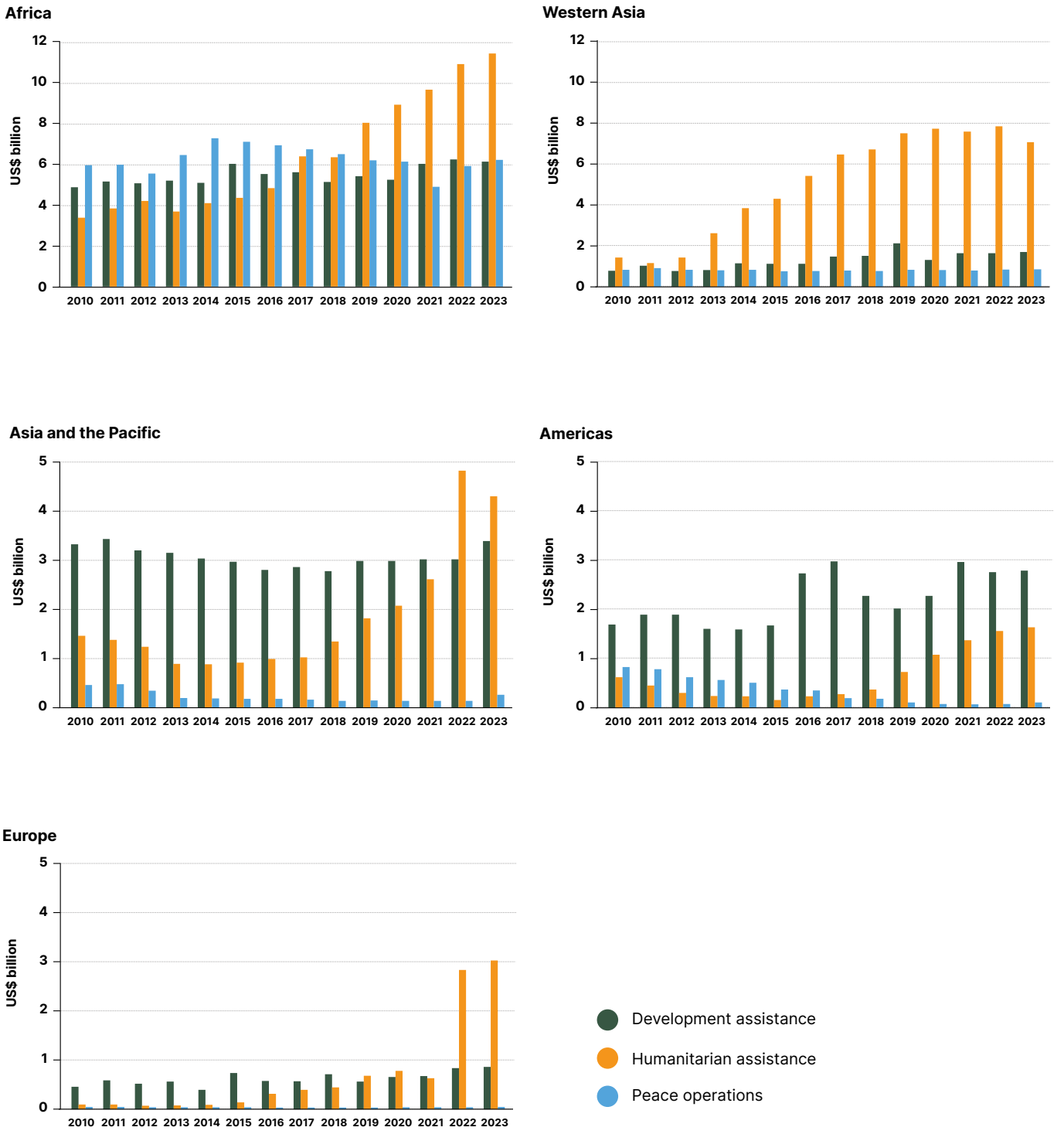
(B) Humanitarian



Source: see page 115

Development, humanitarian and peace by region, 2010-2023 (US$ billion)

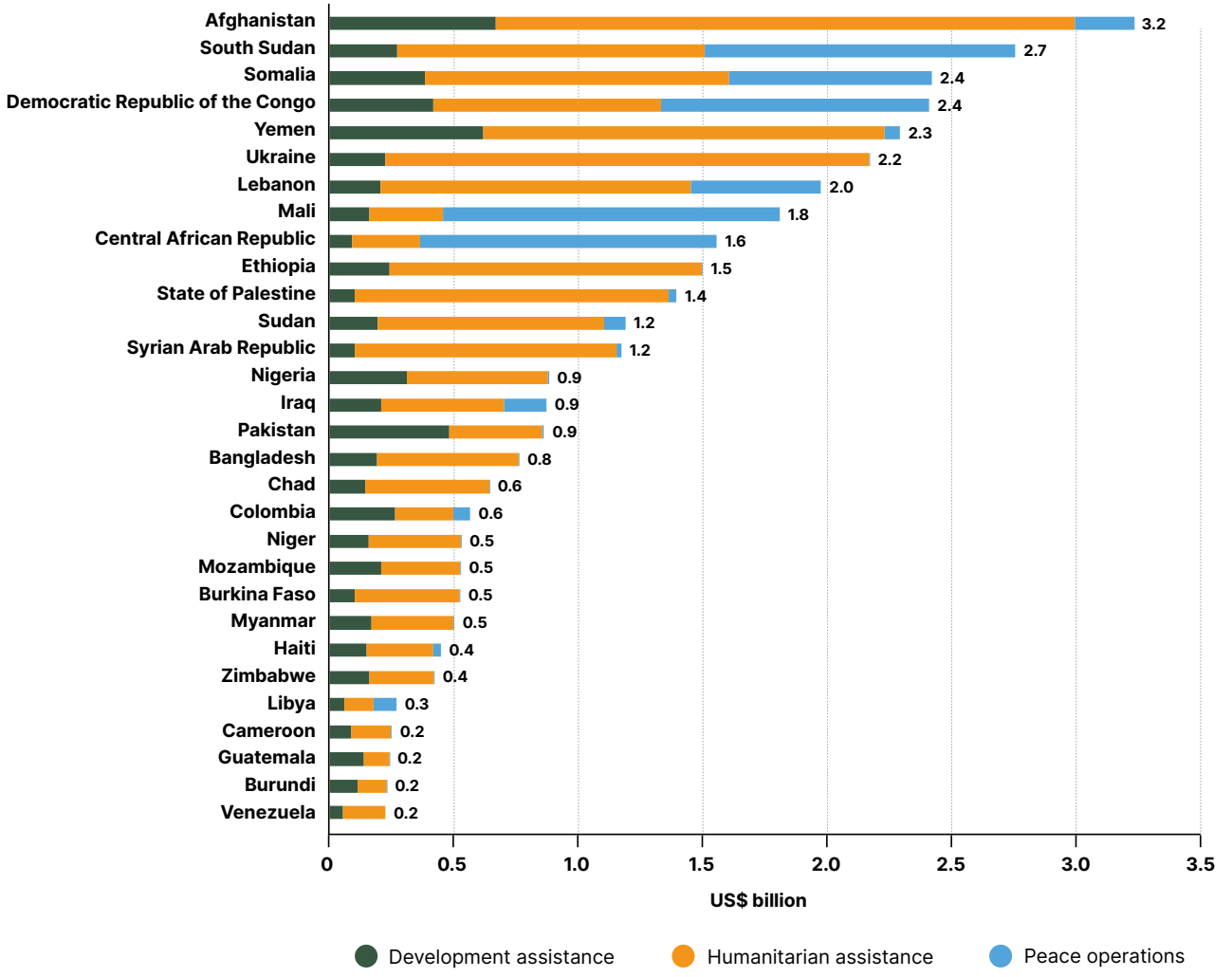
(Figure 31 from Part One)



Source: see page 115

UN development, humanitarian, and peace operations expenses by crisis-affected country, 2023 (US$ billion)

(Figure 32 from Part One)



Source: see page 116

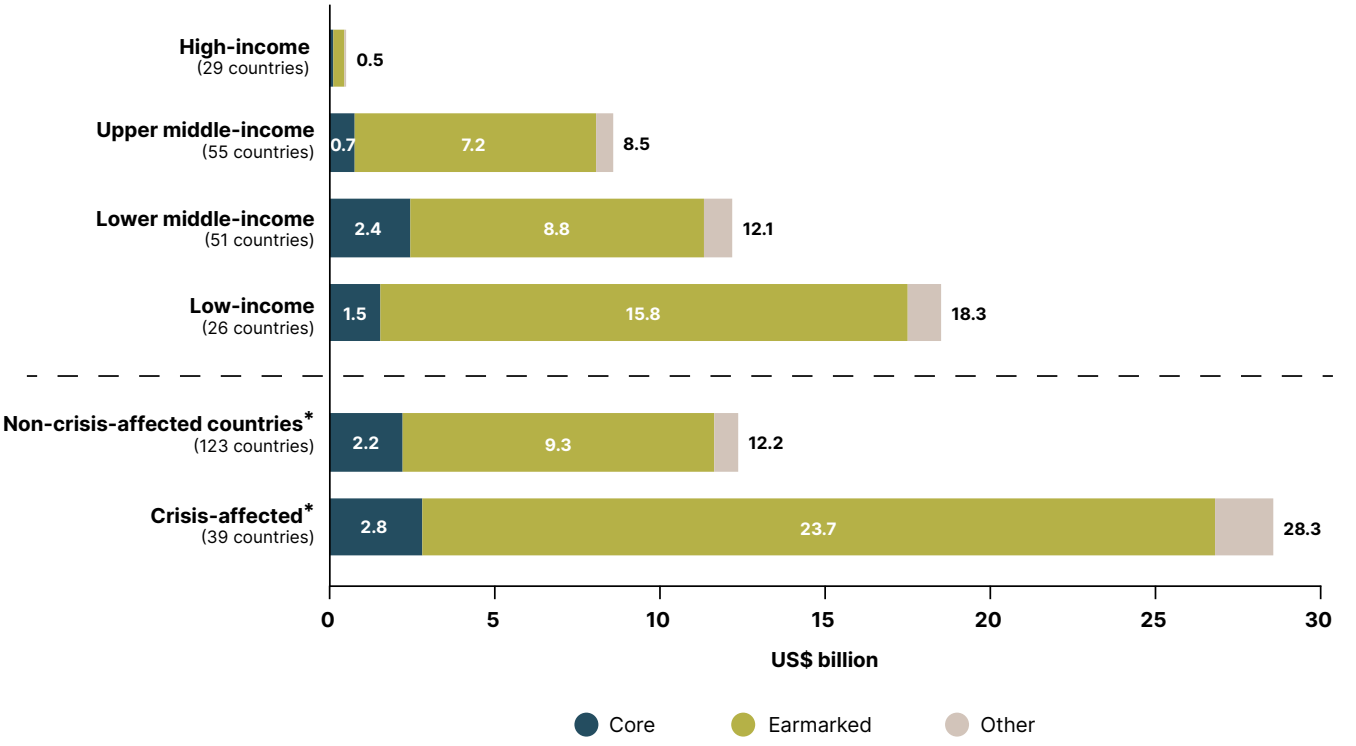
expenses in 39 crisis-affected countries were more than double the expenses in 123 countries not affected by crisis.

UN support to the 44 Member States classified as LDCs had displayed steady growth in the SDG 'era' (since 2016). Peaking at US$ 20.6 billion in 2022, there was a slight decline to US$ 20.5 billion in 2023, largely driven by declining humanitarian expenditure. But even this critical assistance remains precarious, largely reliant on tightly earmarked funding (consistently 80% plus since 2016).

The seventh and final section of Chapter 2 looks at allocations by SDGs. In 2023, UN entities reported on US$ 57.6 billion in allocations aligned with SDG goals, accounting for 84% of total UN system expenses of US$ 68.5 billion. Figure 35 illustrates how this was distributed among the 17 SDGs, with expenses primarily directed towards eradicating hunger (SDG 2), ensuring health and well-being (SDG 3), and promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). These three SDGs accounted for 57% of resources.

UN development and humanitarian expenses in UN programming countries by income status, 2023 (US$ billion)

(Figure 33 from Part One)



Source: see page 116

The lowest levels of UN expenses seen in 2023 related to environmental sustainability and resource use. Clean energy (SDG 7), responsible consumption (SDG 12), life below water (SDG 14), and life on land (SDG 15), each received less than US$ 410 million in reported spending by UN entities.

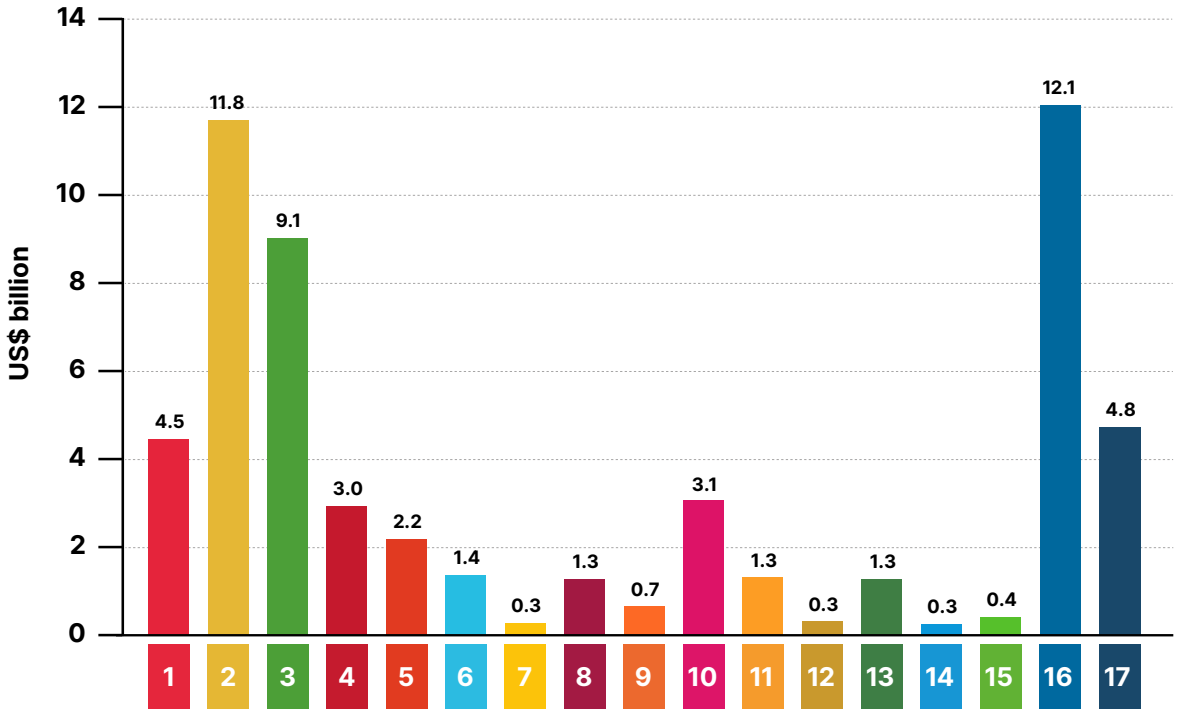
At the UN-entity level, the distribution of resources across SDGs varies significantly. Specialised and thematically-focused agencies often prioritise SDGs aligned with their core mission: UN-DPO, and the International Criminal Court, for instance, focus exclusively on promoting peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), while WHO dedicated 98% of its expenditure to health and well-being (SDG 3), and WFP recorded 90% against eradicating hunger (SDG 2). Other UN entities, meanwhile, such as the UN Secretariat and UNDP, contribute to all the SDGs, highlighting the integrated and interdependent nature of the global goals.

Chapter 3: 'United Nations system-wide financial data – Looking forward'

In closing chapter to Part One of this report, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) Secretariat, provides an overview of the UN system-wide financial. The Chief Executives Board (CEB) comprises the Executive Heads of the UN, its 12 funds and programmes, the 15 specialised agencies, and three related organisations.

Its Secretariat is the UN inter-agency entity responsible for supporting the CEB's work and the UN system's highest-level coordination forum for programmatic, policy and management issues. The foundation of the financial data is the United Nations Data Standards for United Nations system-wide reporting of financial data. These Standards were developed through a UN Data Cube initiative, jointly

Aggregated UN expenses linked to the SDGs, 2023 (US$ billion)
(Figure 35 from Part One)



Source: see page 117

through the CEB's High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM) and the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG).

It has a long-term goal to improve the quality of financial data reported to the CEB and ensure the UN system has timely, reliable, verifiable and comparable system-wide and entity-level financial data aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in order to 'make better decisions and deliver stronger support to those we serve'. As the UN development system evolves to meet increasingly complex global challenges, the future strategic discussions around the Data Cube strategy must prioritise usability, accessibility, and relevance. Enhancing the quality and availability of financial data – while keeping the UN's stakeholders in mind – is essential to support evidence-based decision-making, foster greater transparency, and enable more strategic allocation of resources across the UN system.

Part Two: Marketplace of ideas

In the first contribution John Hendra brings an experienced voice to discuss '**The perfect UN financing storm has arrived: It's a Tsunami!**'. He explores the implications of not only the current steep cuts in voluntary funding, but also the on-going UN liquidity crisis on the critical work of the UN more broadly, and the UN development system in particular.

After reviewing the trends of the last three years, the massive cuts in voluntary funding in the first few months of 2025 and immediate prospects, he focuses on the importance of ensuring success of the UN80 Initiative and building Member State ownership for more far-reaching UN reform. In doing so he asks whether possible UN reforms under the UN80 initiative 'meet the moment' of such unprecedented times while preserving the unique elements that only UN support can bring.

In the following contribution '**The impacts of earmarked aid on development effectiveness and ownership**', Bernhard Reinsberg, Cecilia Corsini and Giuseppe Zaccaria from the University of Glasgow focused on the principle of 'ownership' in development assistance. Ownership seeks to empower recipient countries by allowing them to set their own development priorities. It is seen as critical for achieving sustainable outcomes. The authors argue that how donors engage can affect their ability to promote recipient-country ownership.

Their work is part of a larger inquiry on multilateral aid effectiveness where the researchers examined whether and how earmarked assistance affects recipient-country ownership and used the full dyadic Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) monitoring dataset covering over 80 donors and 92 recipient countries.[3] To measure earmarked assistance, they relied on the Earmarked Funding Dataset, the largest available dataset on the earmarked aid activities of 50 donors with 340 international organisations from 1990 to 2020.[4]

The study weighed in on the unresolved theoretical debate on the impact of earmarked assistance on recipient countries' degree of control over their development. It is a much-debated topic, with one view, aligned with official donor statements, suggesting improved coordination; a more critical view argues that earmarking undermines recipient control. To adjudicate between these competing views, data was collected from two monitoring rounds of the Global Partnership on Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC).[5]

This monitoring framework uses stakeholder surveys and other data sources to assess how well development partners perform against their commitments under the aid effectiveness agenda.[6]

In summary the authors' analysis revealed that data on ownership in the context of this type of monitoring is still patchy. To enable robust analysis in the future, development partners should continue to measure their performance against aid effectiveness and extend evaluation frameworks to include monitoring mechanisms for earmarked development assistance.

In the third contribution '**Catalysing change: Investing in gender equality across the UN system**', Aparna Mehrotra, Priya Alvarez and Jennifer C Olmsted write that gender equality is a fundamental human right and a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world.[7] The year 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a gender equality still largely unrealised.[8,9]

While public commitments – such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and gender-related targets across other SDGs – are vital steps, ensuring adequate financial resources is crucial to eliminating gender inequality.[10] UN Women is leading this work by providing normative guidance, technical support and coordination to the UN system to strengthen institutional accountability for gender equality across all areas of UN programming and policy. They lift the importance of establishing financial targets, discusses the technical challenges in establishing such targets and calculating an entity's financial investments in gender equality.

Their view on moving forward recognises that the UN system has made significant strides in tracking finances for gender equality. Only at 4% in 2012 the UN-SWAP-reporting entities implementing the Gender Equality Marker has risen to 56% by 2024. Considerable work remains with respect to harmonisation of practices. While 33 UN entities (78.5%) use the four-point scale GEM, nine still apply a different one.[11]

Addressing data quality also needs attention even with some entities implementing quality control measures. Amid current budget reductions across the UN system, maintaining a strong focus on gender financing remains critical to uphold commitments to gender equality. As the CEB reporting on the 7th UN Data Standard becomes mandatory, the ability to trace gender-related financial commitments will improve.[12]

In conclusion they emphasise that efforts must continue to strengthen data quality, financial transparency, and comparability across entities. The aim is to support better decision-making, enhance UN performance and secure sustained investment in actions that advance gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

This contribution is followed by Peter Linnér who asks the question: '**Where are the core contributions to the United Nations going?**' He is repeating a refrain often expressed by many politicians from donor Member States, sometimes rhetorically, sometimes for accountability reasons in order to ensure that resources from taxpayers will be put to good use.

The issue is explored in the context of contributors in this, and previous Financing the UN Development System reports that argued for the importance of core resources as quality funding or as more efficient compared to non-core resources.

He raises points around the value of core resources, as seen in the example of how UNICEF is funded, and how it finances effective programme delivery at country level as well as important accountability mechanisms such as audits, evaluations, financial management and tracking results and outcomes of the effects of the support. These accountability mechanisms tend to attract interest and support from all political camps, as all have an interest in understanding how their taxpayers' money is being spent in the most efficient way.

In conclusion he argues that without financing such vital oversight functions, the risks of corruption, waste, ineffective programming, unclear or vague results and less value for money will increase multi-fold with the highest certainty.

Next, in his contribution '**Open-source financing: Where technology and the United Nations system can shine**' Christopher Fabian writes as one of the founders of the Giga collaboration between UNICEF the world's leading organisation for children and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) that started in 2019 to connect every school in the world to the internet. His overview brings some of the lessons learned ranging from the technology-driven transparency, adaptive partnerships, and the scope of financial ownership to new windows for development funding.

The UN Secretary-General's Global Digital Compact calls Giga a 'stepping-stone' towards connecting all schools and many health facilities to the Internet. Given that 1.8 billion people do not have access to the internet. Without connectivity it is very difficult for young learners to reach the tools and information they need for the future. As of 2025, Giga is helping governments to connect schools and health centres in more than 40 countries across most emerging market geographies. They mapped more than 2.2 million schools whilst monitoring connectivity in more than 90 thousand schools and have helped mobilise more than US$ 1.6 billion giving more than 30 million children internet access.

The future of UN financing will require approaches that maximise efficiency, transparency, and co-ownership. Giga's experience suggests three principles that could inform broader financing strategies: (1) Open-source funding models reduce duplication and attract both public and private investment; (2) Flexible, government-led structures ensure sustainability beyond donor cycles; and (3) Modular, real-time, multi-stakeholder data can reduce fragmentation and align diverse types of money toward a common goal. In these times, choosing paths that are 'bold and different' offers lessons not just for connectivity, but for the broader UN system.

In the second-last contribution in this section of the report, '**Sustainable synergies impact: Cameroon - United Nations - International Financial Institutions strategic engagement**', Issa Sanogo gives a ground-up perspective as the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Cameroon as to how the country is working in a synergistic way with the implementation of the Funding Compact. In Cameroon the focus is on strengthening coherent actions via 14 funded and seven planned joint programs that addresses food security, climate change, education, and employment as well as peace consolidation. There are currently 14 UN entities and agencies working together with five development banks to leverage coherence, alignment, trust, confidence, and efficiency, key elements of the Funding Compact.[13]

This contribution provides examples of the partnership between the international financial institutions; various United Nations coordination bodies hinged on the role of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office. It shows that regular discussions with the African Development Bank provide opportunities to strengthen co-creation and to share the lessons learned through Program Management

Team, UN Results Groups, and the UN Country Teams. This strategic engagement of the United Nations system with the international financial institutions (IFIs) alongside the government, as part of the Funding Compact implementation, is an indispensable cornerstone of achieving effective and sustainable development outcomes in Cameroon, considering the UN's deep local presence, including in fragile areas, and its logistical expertise which are vital for timely assistance. This collaboration has also increased the consideration of UN agencies for joint advocacy on quality of public spending and for improving the absorption capacity of government projects funded by IFIs. Increased trust led to more resources, with implementation entrusted to UN agencies.

Rounding out the Marketplace of Ideas, is a contribution that focus on '**The UN Funding Compact in practice: Country-level lessons and reflections**' and presents the results of the continued qualitative assessment to explore the effectiveness of the Funding Compact implementation at the country level that is led by Marijana Markotić Andrić and Sergiy Prokhoriv.

They give a short overview of the recent history as the global attention has increasingly turned to the shrinking pool of official development assistance.[14] As the United Nations Development System is being called upon to deliver more ambitious results with fewer and less flexible resources, exposing severe vulnerabilities in how the system is financed and sustained. Amid this constrained landscape, much of the debate centres on the quantity of funding available. Yet in times of austerity, the funding quality, predictability, flexibility, and alignment with system-wide priorities are just as critical.

In this context, the UN Funding Compact, an agreement focused on making funding for UN development activities predictable and flexible, becomes increasingly important. As stated in General Assembly Resolution 71/243, the Funding Compact was launched in 2019 and revitalised in 2024. It represents commitment to a shared responsibility between Member States and the UN with the primary aim of securing predictable and flexible financing for UN development initiatives in support of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[16]

This qualitative assessment explored the effectiveness of the Funding Compact implementation at the country level with over 70 interviews with government representatives, UN agencies, international financial institutions and Member States in 19 countries across Africa, Europe, Pacific region and South America between February 2024 and March 2025.[17]

The respondents gave their frank views across the diverse country contexts and their answers were collated into several recurring themes. From the need for improved awareness; stronger mutual accountability; more effective coordination including on joint funding instruments; greater transparency to the strategic engagement of non-traditional funding partners. They highlighted that implementation of the UN Funding Compact at the country level reveals both promise and persistent challenges. While its principles are widely supported in theory, awareness gaps, operational barriers, and competing interests often hinder full realisation on the ground.

To strengthen the Funding Compact implementation and enhance the quality and availability of development funding these broad recommendations are proposed (with several sub-points listed in the full text): Strengthening the role of the Resident Coordinator; Improve coordination and incentives; Broadening the funding base; and improve transparency and donor visibility.

Endnotes

1 UNICEF receives voluntary core funding contributions both from governments and through National Committees, which raise un-earmarked funds from resource partners in the private sector (including civil society groups, companies and individual donors) and foundations worldwide. Voluntary core resources constituted 13% of UNICEF's overall income in 2022.
2 The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), comprising the 32 major contributors to official development assistance (ODA).
3 Factor analysis is a method to extract latent scores, which is appropriate here because ownership is not directly observable. Ownership is higher when donors perform well on these four indicators.
4 See note 6.
5 Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, 'GPEDC Excel Monitoring Database, 2020', online, https://www.effective-cooperation.org/content/gpedc-monitoring-excel-database (accessed on 13 July 2022).
6 These principles of good partnership behaviour include ownership and alignment, focus on results, inclusive partnerships, and transparency and accountability, Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, 'GPEDC Excel Monitoring Database, 2020', online, https://www.effective-cooperation.org/content/gpedc-monitoring-excel-database (accessed 13 July 2022).
7 United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.un.org/sustainable-development/gender-equality/, accessed in June 2025.
8 UN Women, 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women', online at https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm, accessed in June 2025.
9 United Nations, 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Fourth World Conference on Women', online at https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf, accessed in June 2025.
10 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 'Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', online at https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5 accessed in June 2025.
11 Some entities still implement a two-point scale (yes/no) or a three-point scale (0-2 scale) and are transitioning towards the harmonized 4-point GEM scale.
12 United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, UN Data Standards for systemwide reporting of financial data, https://unsceb.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/Data%20Standards%20March%202024%20edition.pdf, accessed in June 2025.
13 In alphabetical order the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Women, UNICEF, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
14 OECD, 'International aid falls in 2024 for first time in six years, says OECD', Press release, 16 April 2025, https://www.oecd.org/en/about/news/press-releases/2025/04/official-development-assistance-2024-figures.html, accessed on 5 May 2025.
15 General Assembly Resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the UN system, 2019: funding compact, https://shorturl.at/U2pln, accessed on 30 April 2025.
16 United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 'About Funding Compact', online, https://shorturl.at/HR3Ox, accessed on 30 April 2025.
17 The selected countries: Afghanistan, Barbados, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Chile, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Moldova, Montenegro, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uruguay.

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation

The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation is a non-governmental organisation established in memory of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Foundation aims to advance dialogue and policy for sustainable development, multilateralism and peace.

www.daghammarskjold.se

UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office

The Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) is the United Nations centre of expertise on pooled funding instruments. Hosted by the UN Development Programme, it provides fund design and administration services to multi-stakeholder coalitions working toward sustainable development, including the UN system, governments and non-governmental partners. Commemorating 20 years in 2024, the Office has administered pooled funds in more than 130 countries, with a cumulative portfolio of US$ 20 billion, supporting programmes led by more than 50 participating UN organisations.

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'Financing the UN Development System: Managing Unprecedented Times' is the 11th edition in the Financing the United Nations Development System series, offering a comprehensive overview of financial trends and flows across the UN system and the UN Development System (UNDS).

It is underpinned by the availability and utilisation of high-quality, disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policymaking, enhance accountability, build public trust, and foster international cooperation.

Part One analyses funding sources, allocation patterns, and emerging challenges to enhance transparency, support informed decision-making, and contribute to a more coherent and predictable financing landscape in support of the 2030 Agenda. It provides a detailed analysis of funding trends from 2010 to 2023, with preliminary data from 2024.

Part Two, The Marketplace of ideas, features expert contributions that explore innovative approaches to improving the quality of development funding. These insights highlight global conditions and propose ways to build a more resilient and effective financing ecosystem for multilateral cooperation.

Presented is an analysis showing a decline in UN system funding between 2022 and 2023, with this trend persisting in preliminary data for 2024. This is taking place against a worrying decline in official development assistance in 2024, expected to continue into 2025.