

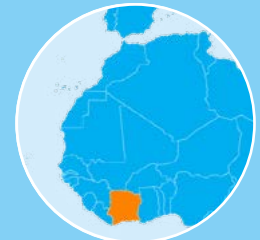
PLASTIC WASTE: building blocks for the future

Investing in a cleaner environment, employment, and education

Côte d'Ivoire



COUNTRY INFO



Population:
31 MILLION



15 MILLION
Children under 18
representing 50%
of the total
population

67 CHILDREN
Out of every 1,000
births, children die
before the age of
five.



**2,3 MILLION
CHILDREN**
and young people
are still not
attending school.

In Côte d'Ivoire, two problems are piling up: mountains of plastic waste and a severe shortage of schools. Together with partners, UNICEF has developed an approach that tackles both at the same time by turning plastic waste into building blocks for classrooms. This creates a cleaner living environment, local employment, and a place where children can learn.

Thanks in part to your support, 516 classrooms have been built since 2019. More than 25,000 children attend now attend these classrooms every day. Now that the pilot phase is coming to an end, we are ready to take the next step together: giving even more children a place to go to school.

4 results we aim to achieve:

1. We contribute to the construction of 528 classrooms in areas with a shortage of schools, all made from recycled plastic. Each classroom is equipped with educational materials.
2. We train at least 135 teachers to improve, for example, their pedagogical skills. We also provide 15 schools with toilets and water points.
3. We ensure that 25,000 children have a permanent place to learn and grow.
4. Since January 2023, we have been contributing from the Netherlands to the development of new prototypes made from recycled plastic waste, including school desks. This completes the circle: from waste to opportunity.



4 results achieved between 2019 and 2025

- 516 classrooms** have been built from recycled plastic, with the final 12 currently under construction. To achieve this, more than 3,220 tons of plastic waste were collected from the surrounding area and transformed into something lasting. In addition, 76 existing classrooms have been renovated and reinforced, ensuring they can be used for many years to come.
- Nearly 17,000 teachers** have been trained to improve their teaching. Sixteen schools now have access to clean water and toilets, facilities that help ensure children can attend school safely and in good health.
- More than 25,000 children** now have a permanent place to learn every day.
- 1,000 school desks** made from recycled plastic have been produced and delivered to schools in the region.

What have we achieved?

Plastic classrooms and renovation of existing classrooms

Over the past six months, 24 new classrooms made from recycled plastic have been completed. This brings the total to 516, with the final 12 already under construction. More than 25,000 children now have a place to go every morning.

But building alone is not enough. That is why 76 existing classrooms that were in poor condition have also been renovated and reinforced. What makes this especially meaningful is that 90 members of local school boards, 10% of them women, were trained to plan and oversee these renovations themselves. Together with community leaders, parents, and school staff, they supervised the works. In this way, we are not only building classrooms, but also strengthening the people and knowledge needed to maintain them sustainably, an investment that will continue to pay off for generations to come.

Plastic school furniture

What started as an experiment has now become a reality. Thanks to flexible support from the Netherlands, we had the space to test and further develop solutions, resulting in something remarkable: school desks made from recycled plastic. So far, 1,000 desks have been produced and delivered to schools in the region.

Quality education

A good classroom is just the beginning. What happens within those four walls is at least as important. That is why we also invest in the teachers who stand in front of the class every day.

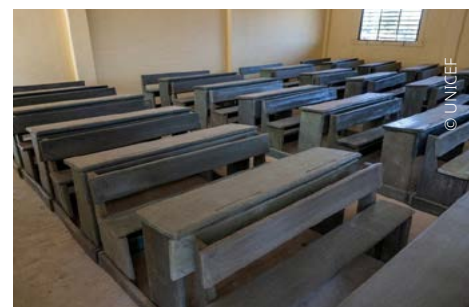
The results speak for themselves: for three consecutive school years, students in the five supported regions have achieved better results and passed their basic exams more often. Children are learning more and that is exactly the goal. Because building a school is one thing; ensuring that children truly benefit from it is what ultimately matters.



"To live is to learn. Without school, you can achieve nothing."

Sanogo Djakaridja (34), the son of the village chief of Tchèbakro in southwest Côte d'Ivoire, looks on with pride at the school being built on his father's land, entirely from recycled plastic building blocks.

"To live is to learn. Without school, you can achieve nothing," he says. "We may not have many resources, but this school marks the beginning of something great for our village."



Plastic school furniture



Madjara 19 & Elodie 34, teachers in training

The challenges

Being honest matters. During the pilot phase, we encountered a practical reality: coordinating procurement, managing contractors, and monitoring construction quality took far more time than expected, time that could not be spent on children.

That experience led to a smarter approach. We now work with a single industrial partner that manages the entire process, from producing the building blocks to delivering a fully equipped classroom. Fewer links, fewer delays, more impact. And most importantly: an approach that is scalable, allowing us to reach more children faster.

Future plans

The foundation is in place. Now it is time to keep building, both literally and figuratively. In 2026, we will launch Plastic Building Blocks 2.0: from waste to opportunity, education for every child. The need is urgent: more than 2 million children in Côte d'Ivoire are still out of school. This cannot and must not continue.

From summer 2026 onwards, we will build 240 classrooms made from recycled plastic each year. That means 12,000 children every year gaining a place to learn. We will continue to invest in well-trained teachers and are also taking a new step forward: digital education innovations that further strengthen learning.

We do all of this together with you. Because without your support, not a single classroom can be built. With your support, hundreds more will stand and children who otherwise would not have gone to school will be sitting in them. That is what we are working towards together.



UNICEF Nederland
Bezuidenhoutseweg, 74
2594 AW Den Haag
Nederland
088 444 96 66,
info@unicef.nl

For more information, please contact:

unicef 
for every child