

### Update on the context and situation of children

This report sets out the progress made during the second year of implementation of the UNICEF-Government of Ghana Country Programme of Cooperation (2018-2022). The report reflects on the contribution of UNICEF in Ghana to the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018-2021, the Key Results for Children in West and Central Africa and the UN Sustainable Development Partnership (UNSDP) in Ghana (2018-2022).

### Key programme changes relevant to children and young people

The programme environment in Ghana is characterized by underlying political and social stability and a positive economic outlook. Real GDP growth reached 7 percent in 2019, with other basic economic indicators favourable. The government promoted the '*Ghana Beyond Aid*' agenda, disseminating a charter and strategy, which proposed a transformation period for the country to achieve aid independence. However, insufficient domestic revenues and debt obligations limited fiscal space for social programmes in 2019. Accountability for development, efficiency and transparency in public spending also remained challenging. District elections were held with presidential elections planned in December 2020.

Ghana was the first country worldwide to ratify the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) and marked the 30th anniversary of the CRC, celebrating the progress made for children – including by convening a high-level national summit on children and inaugurating the national children's parliament in November 2019 - and by highlighting remaining challenges.

### Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

Disparities in access to quality maternal, newborn and child health services remain significant drivers of early childhood and maternal mortality, with populous regions such as Ashanti experiencing higher than average rates of under-5 and neonatal mortality (79 and 52 per 1000 live births respectively). The authorities prioritised strengthening health system data (e.g. district health management information system (DHMIS) and e-tracker systems) to determine appropriate responses to stagnating Maternal Newborn and Child Health outcomes. In November 2019, the Ministry of Health (MoH) convened a financing forum with Development Partners (DPs) to map strategies to improve sector financing. Nearly every child is breastfed until 12 months but exclusive breastfeeding for six months is declining (at 43 per cent), contributing to stunting (19%, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/18). Only 12 per cent of children eats the minimal-acceptable diet for optimal growth and development, while 21 percent suffer from Vitamin A deficiencies. The Girl's Iron-Folate Supplementation (GIFTS) programme was scaled nationwide in 2019 with accompanying nutrition guidelines for schools.

Ghana responded to twelve cases of circulating vaccine-derived polio-Type 2 (cVDPV2), with acute flaccid paralysis identified in eight regions. Under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), 2.8 million children were vaccinated with six rounds of monovalent Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV)-Type 2. UNICEF ensured the effective management of vaccines including the retrieval and incineration of used vials. UNICEF also supported social mobilisation with high coverage for all the campaign rounds. An Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) campaign is planned for February 2020 to reach unvaccinated children, including the 2.5 million children who were not protected during the change to bivalent OPV in 2016 and the introduction of IPV in 2018.

### Goal area 2: Every child learns

Education reforms aimed to strengthen pre-tertiary systems to deliver quality services, by improving teaching quality and developing standards-based curricula for KG1 to P6. With UNICEF technical support, the sector leveraged the International Development Association (IDA) country allocation and Global Partnership for Education (GPE) multiplier to catalyze comprehensive improvement programmes in 10,000 low-performing schools nationwide.

The Ghana Annual Schools Census (2018-19) showed that gross and net enrolment rates decreased against previous years (through not for high school), while the number of students increased overall. About 7% of primary school age and Junior High School (JHS)-age children and one in four SHS-age children are out of school.

Ghana provides free education from Kindergarten to Senior High School. While completion rates for both primary and lower

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secondary education improved, 11 years of schooling effectively yield only five years of learning. The National Education Assessment showed unchanged performance between 2016 and 2018, with one in four P4 and P6 students proficient in English, while one in five P4 and P6 students were proficient in mathematics.

### Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) finalised and launched several policy and procedural documents covering children without parental care, foster care, case management and early childhood development. As a result of UNICEF advocacy in public finance for children, the government continued to allocate over GHC 100,000 for the coordination of the National Strategic Framework to end child marriage. UNICEF supported the drafting and validation of strategic plans for the Department of Social Welfare and Department of Community Development, aligning roles and responsibilities for the social welfare workforce.

With over 10 million internet users and 38.8 million mobile subscribers, more cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation were identified in 2019. While the Cybercrime Unit of the Ghana Police Service (GPS) recorded over 550 cases of online sexual exploitation of children in 2018, only 5 percent were prosecuted, indicating limited capacity to acquire, analyze and report on digital evidence. A further 7,000 cases were relayed to GPS through Interpol in 2019.

### Goal area 4: Every child lives in a clean and safe environment

Only one in five people in Ghana have access to basic sanitation, one in five practice open defecation (JMP 2019) and three in four use drinking water contaminated by fecal matter (MICS 2017/18). Weak WASH systems compound natural hazards and disease outbreak. The spread of the cVDPV-Type 2 in 2019 was linked to poor sanitation systems across the country. More positively, open defecation rates in northern Ghana were reduced from 79 per cent to 59 per cent (MICS 2017/18). Over 965 additional rural communities achieved Open Defecation Free (ODF) status benefitting 237,250 people (Basic Sanitation Information System (BaSIS) 2019), and over 32,000 latrines were installed in urban households in Accra, Ashaiman, Ho and Tamale reaching 183,000 people. A moderate earthquake reaching 3.9 on the Richter Scale, caused two tremors and highlighted challenges to embed disaster preparedness in national systems.

### Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

With UN support, the government convened the Voluntary National Review (VNR) across Ghana and shared its progress report on the Agenda 2030 at the 2019 UN High Level Political Forum, at UN headquarters. Recent survey data and analysis confirmed that the benefits of Ghana's economic growth have not been equally shared, widening inequalities and disparities. For example, 73 percent of children are multi-dimensionally poor (MICS 2017/18).

Social protection initiatives such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) reached over 1 million people living in extreme poverty. Untimely disbursement of funds to the programmes, turnover and gaps in senior positions at the MoGCSP were key challenges. Delays in negotiating the new Ghana Productive Safety Net Programme also led to sector funding gaps, tempering progress.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

### Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives

In 2019, UNICEF continued to help strengthen national immunization systems to ensure that 803,000 children in Ghana aged 0-11 months are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases each year (a WCAR Key Result for Children by 2021). This involved advancing micro-plan implementation to reach at least 80 percent of children with DTP/ Penta-3 in seven hard-to-reach districts. UNICEF supported a comprehensive inventory of the immunisation cold chain, which leveraged US\$ 4.7 million from Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), under the Global Vaccine Action Plan towards a cold chain equipment optimization platform. UNICEF also facilitated a temperature mapping study in all fifteen walk-in cold rooms in Ghana, analyzing functionality, quality and efficiency, and identifying needed replacement of cooling units and temperature monitoring systems. A comprehensive review of the Expanded Program on Immunization highlighted national financing and cold chain system gaps. In response to the Type-2 cVDPV outbreak in 2019, six rounds of monovalent OPV Type-2 were conducted in nine regions, reaching 2.8 million children under five years of age, with

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UNICEF leading vaccine management, including vial availability, retrieval and incineration, and social mobilisation to achieve high coverage in all rounds. With the National Aids Control Programme, UNICEF contributed to the expansion of health facilities offering Anti-Retroviral Treatment (from 330 to 488 facilities). In 2020, UNICEF will pilot innovative Point-of-Care technologies for early infant diagnosis and HIV viral load in five districts.

UNICEF worked with the Government to prevent stunting in 3.3 million children in Ghana by 2021 (a WCAR Key Result for Children). With MICS 2017/18 confirming a declined rate of exclusive breastfeeding (43 per cent), UNICEF supported the 'Breastfeeding Only No Water' campaign in four districts, targeting the 17 percent of mothers combining breastfeeding with water and herbal preparations. The campaign reached over 15,000 individuals and 1 million people with behavior change messages. UNICEF also worked with the academia and civil society to assess existing infant and young child feeding practices (responsive feeding, dietary diversity, and exclusive breastfeeding) in the Central Region.

Nationwide first-day-of-school screening promoted the early detection and referral of developmental delays and other health and nutrition issues. Over 250 schools in five regions promoted better diets and cultivate healthy dietary practices. UNICEF supported the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and Ghana Education Services (GES) in the nationwide rollout of the girls' iron folic acid tablet supplementation (GIFTS) programme, to reduce anemia and improve the health and nutrition of adolescent girls (10 - 19 years) in- and out-of-school. An evaluation led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention noted a 26 per cent reduction in anaemia levels among targeted girls within the first 12 months of the programme, with coverage over 90 per cent in the four pilot regions. The result catalyzed government investment in the scale-up of GIFTS, reaching 900,000 girls each week (27% of eligible girls). This also helped leverage World Bank-funded procurement of iron-folate tablets and Vitamin A capsules.

In 2019, UNICEF continued to lead the Scaling-up Nutrition partnership (combining UN and DPs), focusing on inter-sectoral coordination and achieving closer links to the health and agriculture sector working groups.

### Goal area 2: Every child learns

UNICEF supported education reforms to strengthen systems for improved learning outcomes for children (a WCAR Key Result for Children), building on evidence indicating that most children are not attaining basic foundational literacy and numeracy levels (MICS 2017/18). The 'Strengthening Teacher Accountability to Reach all Students' – a remedial learning initiative based on 'targeted instruction' – was implemented in 140 schools and demonstrated reduced student absenteeism (by 20 percent) and increased literacy and numeracy outcomes for P6 students at their grade level (by 50 and 37 per cent respectively).

To improve girls' completion of Junior High School (JHS), 200 teachers of science, mathematics, English and social studies from two districts gained knowledge on gender-responsive pedagogy and improved subject instruction. To increase access to information and life skills for adolescent girls and boys, UNICEF helped integrate reproductive health education in lessons and school 'clubs' in 24 districts, although the application by schools was delayed. The 'Safe Schools' initiative engaged 9,000 teachers and 90,000 students in making school environments violence-free. Ghana endorsed the global "Safe to Learn" campaign and is exploring a gender and safeguarding policy.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education (MoE) and GES to draft the policy framework for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and cost its implementation. Given the prevalence of both over-age and under-age children in kindergarten, the social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) campaign "Right Age Enrolment" was launched nationwide, reaching 4,000,000 people and involving political, traditional, and faith-based influencers. KG-specific resources were developed for training and equipping 40,000 teachers with appropriate skills. The GHS and GES were also supported to screen new school entrants for early identification of health and ability challenges, reaching 35,000 children nationwide.

UNICEF supported the design, finalization and submission of the IDA-GPE-funded 'Ghana Accountability for Learning Outcomes Programme' (GALOP), and its focus on and targeting of 10,000 low-performing schools. Several UNICEF-supported methodologies will be scaled-up within GALOP, including: targeted instruction, safe schools, and the mobile School Report Card. UNICEF coordinated the Ghana Teaching Taskforce towards developing a harmonized comprehensive teacher policy for Ghana, working with UNESCO, MoE, its agencies, and teacher unions.

UNICEF advocated for revised guidance for schools on the use of capitation grants, to align with School Improvement Plans and link to learning grants under GALOP. Selected District Education Oversight Committees (DEOCs) were trained on their roles and responsibilities and held consultative meetings with nearly 2,000 School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs). The exercise informed revised guidelines for the operation of these various bodies. The UNICEF Office for Research is providing technical assistance in conducting a Qualitative study on teacher absenteeism and time-on-task, with data collection and transcription completed. Research related to skills scoping and the MICS-Education

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Analysis for Global Learning and Equity will continue in 2020.

### Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

UNICEF supported national and sub-national authorities to strengthen the quality and coverage of protection and response services for children affected by violence. Over 6,171 girls and 3,815 boys who experienced violence were reached by enhanced health, social welfare, law enforcement services in 2019. The capacity of 3,846 social workers, police personnel, NGO caseworkers and community mobilisation staff was strengthened on case management, community mobilisation, and standard operating procedures for handling child victims and offenders of crimes, including sexual and gender-based violence. Considering that 94 per cent of children experienced violent discipline (MICS 2017/18), UNICEF supported community engagement activities to prevent violence against children, reaching 507,703 people in 72 districts (106,295 women, 88,574 men, 185,529 girls, 127,405 boys). The application of the 'child protection toolkits' is central component of SBCC activities, contributing significantly to efforts in eliminating child marriage (19 percent, among women aged 20 to 24 years, MICS 2017/18) - a Key Result for Children. The grassroots social movement "Ghanaians Against Child Abuse" reached 12.9 million people on its social media platforms (up from 5 million in 2018). UNICEF also supported child-friendly policing and justice in 2019, under which 12,526 (or 40 percent) police personnel received training since 2016. An operational manual for the functioning of sexual- and gender-based courts was finalized, and 176 cases of sexual violence against children (165 girls and 11 boys) were prosecuted in 2019.

70 per cent of births for children under 12 months were registered in 2018 (pending 2019 data). With over 300,000 infants not registered in 2018, efforts continued with GHS and the Births and Deaths Registrar to establish an inter-operable birth notification system, to see birth registration rates reach near universal immunisation rates. UNICEF is engaging with the World Bank and other stakeholders to consolidate relevant data systems across sectors in 2020, and to advance the births and deaths registration bill (drafted in 2017).

UNICEF supported the government to strengthen legislation underpinning child protection services. Proposals to amend several legislative documents were submitted to the government, including the Children's Act, Juvenile Justice Act, and Electronic Transaction Act, and to finalise the Child Online Protection framework. UNICEF supported the preparation of seven procedural documents, strengthened case management, family-based care and early childhood development. The development of strategic plans for the social welfare workforce was prioritised. A comprehensive assessment and mapping of the social welfare workforce identified gaps in national budget allocation, performance assessment, and available training, tools and skills. This has informed inter-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures for all social services; and in-service training manuals for social welfare and community development staff. An operational manual for the functioning of the child-friendly and gender-based court system was finalized. UNICEF also supported the review of the Operational Plan of the National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage. As a result of UNICEF advocacy, the government dedicated budget for the implementation of the Plan for the second consecutive year. In 2020, UNICEF will support a formative and summative evaluation of the child protection programme covering 2012-2019.

### Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

Ghana's low sanitation coverage, poor drinking water quality and moderate hand-washing rates present challenges to providing a clean and safe environment for children in the home, schools and health facilities. In 2019, efforts focused on consolidating gains in sanitation with the completion of the national sanitation strategy, piloting innovative financing approaches for sanitation and strengthening government's capacity to facilitate service delivery through private sector engagement.

UNICEF supported SBCC initiatives to encourage household toilet use. The results-based funding (RBF) approach continued to yield results for rural sanitation programmes, leveraging local investment and commitment from Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Nine additional districts qualified for RBF in 2019, with MMDA capacity strengthened in programme and fiscal management through civil society organisations (CSOs) and financial consultants. UNICEF was identified in the national budget guidelines for 2020 as a source of MMDA financing through RBF. In 2020, the RBF will be extended to include the sanitation service delivery chain. UNICEF continued to support MMDAs to facilitate and regulate the private sector. Sanitation marketing support in urban and rural areas through service providers and business development partners saw 1,117 artisans and 83 SMEs construct 32,468 household latrines.

The roll-out of the Basic Sanitation Fund (BSF) in three municipalities and the District Sanitation Fund (in eight rural districts) continued in 2019. Qualifying households obtained loans for latrine construction at low interest from a revolving fund managed through rural and community banks, and with the full principle returned to UNICEF after a set number of

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rotations. The approach has the potential to accelerate toilet construction by households at-scale, by leveraging public and private investment. Overall, UNICEF's support enabled 655 communities and 22 small towns to be declared open-defecation free in 2019 (against a target of 500 communities), enabling 166,500 people to live in open-defecation free communities (against a target of 150,000). Over 273,000 people gained access to improved sanitation in 2019, a modest contribution to Ghana's target of reducing open defecation by 2.6 million people by 2021 (a WCAR Key Result for Children).

UNICEF supported increased access to sanitation in Ghana's schools, benefitting 44,034 children (21,544 girls and 22,460 boys) from 130 schools with gender-separated and child-friendly WASH facilities and 312 schools with improved WASH facilities. In addition, 150,755 children (74,317 girls and 76,438 boys) benefited from access to information and knowledge on menstrual hygiene management. BaSIS was strengthened and is operational in 80 districts, improving data compliance and timeliness. WASH sector coordination was reconvened by the Government. Water safety planning in rural areas was consolidated, while UNICEF also facilitated mentorship and exchange between Coliban Water (an Australia company) and Ghana Water Company. Technical support on IPC skills training to GHS in 14 accelerated WASH districts helped reach 571,152 caregivers with hand washing messages.

### Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life

UNICEF supported the Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) to complete Ghana's first multi-dimensional child poverty analysis and report. Over 73 per cent of children are multi-dimensionally poor - i.e. deprived of their needs and rights in at least three dimensions. UNICEF also supported NDPC to conduct Ghana's VNR, including stakeholder consultations across Ghana.

Relevant ministries were supported with child-sensitive budget analyses, including budget briefs, for 2020 budget discussions with the Ministry of Finance (MoF). With UNICEF support, the MoF and MoGCSP launched a social protection expenditure tracking tool across ministries. UNICEF and DPs supported the MoGSP to increase expenditure on social protection, including for LEAP, achieving GHS200 million in 2020 (a 19 per cent increase). Capacity in Public Finance Management (PFM) was enhanced, with 33 UNICEF staff completing the global PF4C course, including face-to-face training in Ghana.

The revised District League Table for 2019 highlighted disparities in social well-being across and between districts. The report on the formula for distribution of the District Assemblies Common Fund indicated inequitable resource allocation for social service delivery. UNICEF also partnered with the MoF, NDPC and GIZ to monitor budget implementation by all 260 districts, enabling MMDAs to provide data on child-specific expenditures and to conduct variance analysis.

UNICEF supported the LEAP to expand coverage to extremely poor households and improve programme quality. LEAP covers 332,000 families (around 1.5 million people), including 853,704 children. In 2019, UNICEF worked closely with MoGCSP, World Bank and DFID to address delayed disbursements from the Comptroller and Accountant General Department, which impeded regular payments to beneficiaries. Support to LEAP operations included updating the operations manual to reflect programme enhancements and maintain service delivery quality. 'E-reporting' was piloted in 30 districts, enabling district reporting through LEAP MIS. UNICEF also supported LEAP to work with CSOs on new modalities for beneficiary-community communication.

The Cabinet will consider the revised Social Protection Bill in 2020, following extensive review by six parliamentary select committees and CSOs in 2019. UNICEF enabled three civil society platforms (230 individual CSOs) to build demand for social protection. A social accountability framework was drafted, nationwide consultations generated inputs for a civil society social protection manifesto ahead of presidential elections, and, 36 bodies across government, civil society, media, and academia participated in TRANSFORM Social Protection training.

UNICEF worked with diverse government partners to build consensus on supporting the delivery of integrated social services to address multi-dimensional poverty and vulnerability by strengthening links between health, child protection and social protection services through the social welfare workforce. In 2019, building blocks and multi-sector agreements were put in place to facilitate testing in 60 districts in 2020.

### Results in Cross-cutting Areas of Work

#### Gender equality and Gender-Responsive Programming

UNICEF contributed to the implementation of the National Gender Policy and targeted strategies on adolescent girls'

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empowerment. The MoGCSP was supported to organize an annual summit to review progress and identify key priorities across all areas of its mandate, and to conduct stakeholder consultations for the preparation of the Beijing +25 Country Report. UNICEF provided technical support to the GES, GHS and other institutions to deliver a multisectoral package of services to adolescent girls focusing on those at risk due to pregnancy, child marriage, disability or poverty. UNICEF also sustained an active role in gender equality coordination with the Government, development partners and the UN Country Team, contributing to stronger synergies in the area. Joint policy and public advocacy initiatives were completed around the Affirmative Action legislation and key international days. Contributions were also made to the VNR on SDGs.

### Young People Engagement and Empowerment

In 2019, UNICEF supported young people to engage meaningfully in supporting the country programme in a variety of ways. For example, in close collaboration with local partners, UNICEF and UNDP co-hosted the GenU Youth Challenge 2019/20, which reached over 400 teams, including most vulnerable youth. Through the Challenge, UNICEF connected with public and private sector stakeholders in support of young people. U-Report was officially launched in Ghana, as a platform for youth participation and tool for programme and policy advocacy. The platform registered over 75,000 users in 2019 and conducted regular polls on various topics and issues affecting young people. Teams of young advocates supported UNICEF in the promotion and dissemination of poll results to relevant stakeholders. Offline activities related to U-Report engaged over 20,000 young people across Ghana in discussions around youth participation barriers and opportunities. UNICEF also supported the NDPC to conduct consultations with youth and children and prepare a technical report on youth engagement to inform the VNR on SDGs.

### Fostering Innovation for Children

In 2019, UNICEF opened a technology and social impact startup incubator located at the country office in Accra. The UNICEF Startup Lab is a co-creation space that aims at actively engaging early-stage startups in the development of innovative, market-driven products and solutions that help address complex problems impacting the wellbeing of children and young people – including in health, nutrition, sanitation, and social protection. The Lab brought together partnerships from within the startup ecosystem in Ghana (including among civil society, academia and the private sector) to identify and enable the next generation of impact-focused businesses. In October 2019, the first cohort of 14 young entrepreneurs began a six-month entrepreneurship and incubation programme at the Lab, delivered by UNICEF partners MEST Africa and the African Health Innovation Centre. Uniquely, the startups work with UNICEF programme specialists to gain market knowledge, prototype their products, and test solutions on the ground. During the six-month programme, the startups also gained access to investment opportunities.

### Emergency preparedness and response

UNICEF worked with the Inter-Agency Working group on Emergencies (UN and DPs) to provide WASH supplies and services to about 1,500 persons (including about 600 children) displaced by inter-communal conflict in the north of Ghana. The country office, with technical assistance from the regional office, also continued to strengthen its preparedness against the emerging risk of earthquakes and the potential impact of the conflict crisis in the Central Sahel region. Risk informed programming is planned in 2020, to feed into the Mid-Term Review. In 2019, UNICEF took over chairmanship of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Emergencies (IAWGE), with the UNICEF Representative also serving as IAWG “Champion”.

### Winning support for the cause of children from decision makers and the wider public

The CO celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the CRC and Ghana’s status as the first country to ratify the Convention. Advocacy in 2019 focused on the progress made for children and the remaining challenges, culminating in a national summit on children and the inauguration of the national children’s parliament in November, involving children and young people, high-level government officials, DPs, CSOs and UN agency representatives, including the UNICEF Regional Director for WCAR. Messages around CRC@30 reached over 2.2 million people on social platforms, with 800,000 reactions and 25,000 people viewing the live stream of the lighting of ‘Black Star Gate’ in blue. National newspapers, television and radio stations featured stories related to CRC@30 over the year, reaching about 3,000,000 people. Over 200 children and young people of diverse backgrounds and abilities participated in the celebrations.

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The office raised awareness around the national response to the polio outbreak, documenting vaccine distribution, and immunization through compelling photographs and stories - gaining 150,000 new followers and reaching over 10 million. The fifth and sixth edition of the popular Humans of Ghana series showcased young people and adolescent girls' empowerment in Ghana and were complemented by three television documentaries, reaching 1 million people.

### Communication for development

As part of the GPEI, UNICEF led social mobilization activities for the polio response, reaching 78 per cent of targeted communities and contributing to an overall vaccination rate of over 90 percent. Institutional capacity for social mobilization was ensured among 48 government stakeholders, including the Health Promotion Division of MoH. Overall, community engagement involving traditional and faith-based leaders and government partners, reached over 1.2 million people with SBCC interventions. These were facilitated by NGO partnerships including community dialogue, interactive theatre, radio and digital technology tools with objectives ranging from promoting positive social norms to prevent child marriage to birth registration and maternal and child health. The interactive voice-recorded messaging platform 'Ago' experienced a surge in usage by young people in 2019 with new content and strengthened interventions across sectors (with 1,112,989 calls during the polio response). The 'talking book' programme reached 94,793 people in three districts with SBCC messages. Over 80 stakeholders, including policy makers, participated in UNICEF's third national C4D seminar to share evidence and priorities for collaboration. The quality of DHIMS2 data on SBCC outcomes was strengthened, increasing data collection and reporting timeliness over the year. Revised SBCC modules were included in six pre-service training curricula on immunization and WASH in Health Facilities. With GHS, GES and MoGCSP, UNICEF supported an ECD study on parenting practices to inform the *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2014)* review, in line with the nurturing care framework. A related comprehensive communication package is under development.

### Lessons Learned and Innovations

There were notable lessons and innovations in 2019 related to emerging programme focus areas with implications for UNICEF's programme strategies in Ghana in 2020.

#### 1. Key Results for Children in Ghana

The 2019 country office annual management plan set out the overall strategic contributions of the country programme to five of the eight Key Results for Children (KRCs) for WCAR (immunization, stunting, learning outcomes, child marriage and open defecation). Emphasis was placed on inter-sectoral coordination and monitoring to enable effective contributions by office programme sectors. The CO Programme Group Meeting was used as regular forum for updates against KRC targets (in line with WCAR framework) by result manager and RG contributors. The strong alignment between the result frameworks of the KRCs and the country programme greatly facilitated mid- and end-year reviews and communication on KRCs with external partners. In 2019, the Representative was co-chair of the working group for the KRC on Ending child marriage and partially KRC8 WG on Ending open defecation. The Groups promoted coordination between offices in WCAR and facilitated the sharing of best practices and innovation to accelerate results. Based on regional lessons learned so far, the office will continue prioritising the following **strategies** to address remaining bottlenecks: Public Finance for Children, advocacy, social/behavioral change, and partnerships. In 2020, UNICEF Ghana will undertake a mid-term review of the country programme, with a focus on progress to date, facilitating factors and constraints. This exercise will help identify strategies to further accelerate results for children.

#### Programming for at-scale results for children - Illustration - Learning outcomes (KRC):

The '**Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System**' (STARS) initiative aims at improving learning outcomes for children through targeted instruction, and is one of the UNICEF-supported models in Education due to be brought to scale under GALOP in 2020. Over 10,000 low performing schools across Ghana will implement STARS based on the experience gained from 140 schools. The pathway to scale and sustainability provides useful lessons for the country programme on the importance of the design process and securing government ownership early on.

- Firstly, STARS comprised an **evidence**-based design process grounded in existing government systems and structures. This process considered evidence on targeted instruction and engaged stakeholders from the service delivery chain in an active community of practice.
- Secondly, structured opportunities were created to facilitate **partnerships** between the key agencies that were critical for implementation (i.e. curriculum, training, school inspection and implementation). A two-tier coordination structure facilitated decision-making and communication including at national and sub-national levels. A technical

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team met regularly to plan for key project activities, lead implementation, conduct monitoring, and report on progress. A steering committee comprised of agency directors and technical officers met on a quarterly basis to oversee progress and address bottlenecks.

- Thirdly, while the intervention was designed as an impact evaluation, timely process monitoring encouraged shorter feedback loops and enabled education staff to assess their efforts by monitoring children's progress from one ability group to another - a factor which increased motivation and compliance.

Combined with further evidence from costing and analysis, the three components underpinned the **sustainability** of STARS and facilitated its incorporation into GALOP, which will be catalytic in **accelerating progress** in improving **learning outcomes** for children (a Key Result for Children in WCAR).

Notwithstanding development assistance, fiscal space in the social sectors remained limited overall, reducing opportunities for child-sensitive investments through the national budget. Various sector initiatives in 2019, such as the Health Sector Financing Summit by the MoH, also highlighted limited knowledge among sector actors on decision-making processes behind budget formulation. In 2019, the UNICEF office in Ghana invested in strengthening staff capacity on **public financial management** (PFM). As a result, staff members intensified support to line ministries around budget formulation and interaction with the MoF. Sector budget briefs were also developed to provide child-sensitive analysis and budget policy recommendations. PFM support will continue to be prioritised in 2020 towards key results for children, including in relation to nutrition (i.e. the elimination of stunting) and sanitation (i.e. the elimination of open defecation).

### 2. Partnerships for children - Harnessing the power of business and markets for children

In 2019, the office continued to explore multi-stakeholder partnerships for children and young people with the business sector, including transformative partnerships in finance, healthcare, sanitation and technology.

The office continued to cooperate closely with the APEX Bank and rural banks in Ghana, to enable households and small businesses to borrow money and build toilets. The rapid uptake of the UNICEF-supported **Basic Sanitation Fund** loans in early 2019 evinced household willingness to access financing for toilets, with concurrent research indicating 90% utilization of acquired toilet by households. On the one hand, some constraints tempered loan uptake, as the 12 per cent interest rate remains unaffordable for the poorest households, with uneven application of lending criteria by banks, and the relatively high costs of latrines. On the other hand, the BSF presented a scalable, market shaping approach for public and private financing to expand and widen its availability. Competing sanitation financing approaches by some IFIs/DPs (including full and partial subsidization and pro-poor targeting) may however be slowing progress to eliminate open defecation in Ghana. In 2020, the MoSWR will lead an assessment of sanitation financing models and their sustainability, which shall inform Government strategies.

UNICEF and ILO have been discussing a transformative **public-private partnership with the cocoa industry** around the **elimination of child labour** in cocoa supply chains. This has been involving multiple actors - including UNICEF headquarters, regional and country offices, ILO HQ and RO, government and industry representatives, Cocobod, WCF and ICI - and has required significant contributions from office staff in due diligence, content development, and relationship management at technical and strategic levels.

### 3. Harnessing the power of evidence and innovation as a driver of change for children

- **Strengthening Data Systems.** Evidence suggests that the Mother & Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative was instrumental in reducing institutional maternal and neonatal deaths. However, recent analysis of coverage of health services versus their impact on health outcomes highlighted the lack of clear denominators and data to cover a wider range of information gaps (e.g. quality of care, where child and maternal mortality is taking place and why). On-going collaboration with the GHS and University of Manitoba will seek to bridge data gaps and systematize systems to track coverage and quality of health services.
- **Environmental Health.** With climate change effects and rapid urbanization in Ghana, the children in urban areas are exposed to higher vulnerabilities and are more likely to suffer the negative impacts of environmental degradation. Studies are already showing heightened exposure to lead poisoning among children living in urban slums in Ghana. In partnership with GHS and CSOs, UNICEF plans to expand its focus to urban areas, to assess and prevent factors that can affect adversely the health of children.
- **Child Online protection.** The internet has proliferated the spread of child sexual abuse images and messages, sexual and non-sexual harassment, and sextortion. Easily retrieval and sharing of content implies recurring harm to

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survivors that complicates actions to address online child sexual exploitation and abuse. While efforts have been made in Ghana since 2017, 2019 data shows an exponential increase in mobile internet use in Ghana, reaching 10 million subscriptions and the concerning increase in reported cases in child exploitation online - from 620 in 2016 to over 7,000 in 2019 (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children Cyber Tipline Report). Actions responding to the situation must be innovative and situated within an overall child protection system response and include all influential actors from the telecommunications and ICT sectors. In this regard, UNICEF is supporting the Ghana Police Services to establish a dedicated digital forensic laboratory and increase prosecution rates (5.3 per cent in 2018).

#### **4. United Nations working together in Ghana - Decade of Action and Acceleration**

In line with the SDG Agenda 2030, the UNICEF Strategic Plan and the UNSDP for Ghana, UNICEF continued to be an active member of the UNCT. The office delivered results through two joint programmes on adolescent girls, worked closely with WHO around the polio campaigns, and contributed to UN joint advocacy efforts. UNICEF also shared capacity and knowledge on various initiatives ranging from supporting Ghana's Voluntary National Review to emergency response. The UNICEF-GoG country programme is aligned with the objectives of the UNSDP, which UNICEF supports in five of eight outcome areas. As Chair of the UNSDP Result Area Two on "Social Investment in People", the Data Group and Inter-Agency group on Emergencies, UNICEF played a prominent role in the formulation, coordination, review and coherence of UN joint work plans. In addition, through its field presence in Tamale, UNICEF played a key role in ensuring the safety and security of UN staff in the north of Ghana. In 2020, the office will continue to develop and implement UN joint programmes and will coordinate with the UNCT in relation to risk informed programming, especially considering the situation in the Central Sahel.