

# UNICEF GAMBIA

## ANNUAL REPORT

2022



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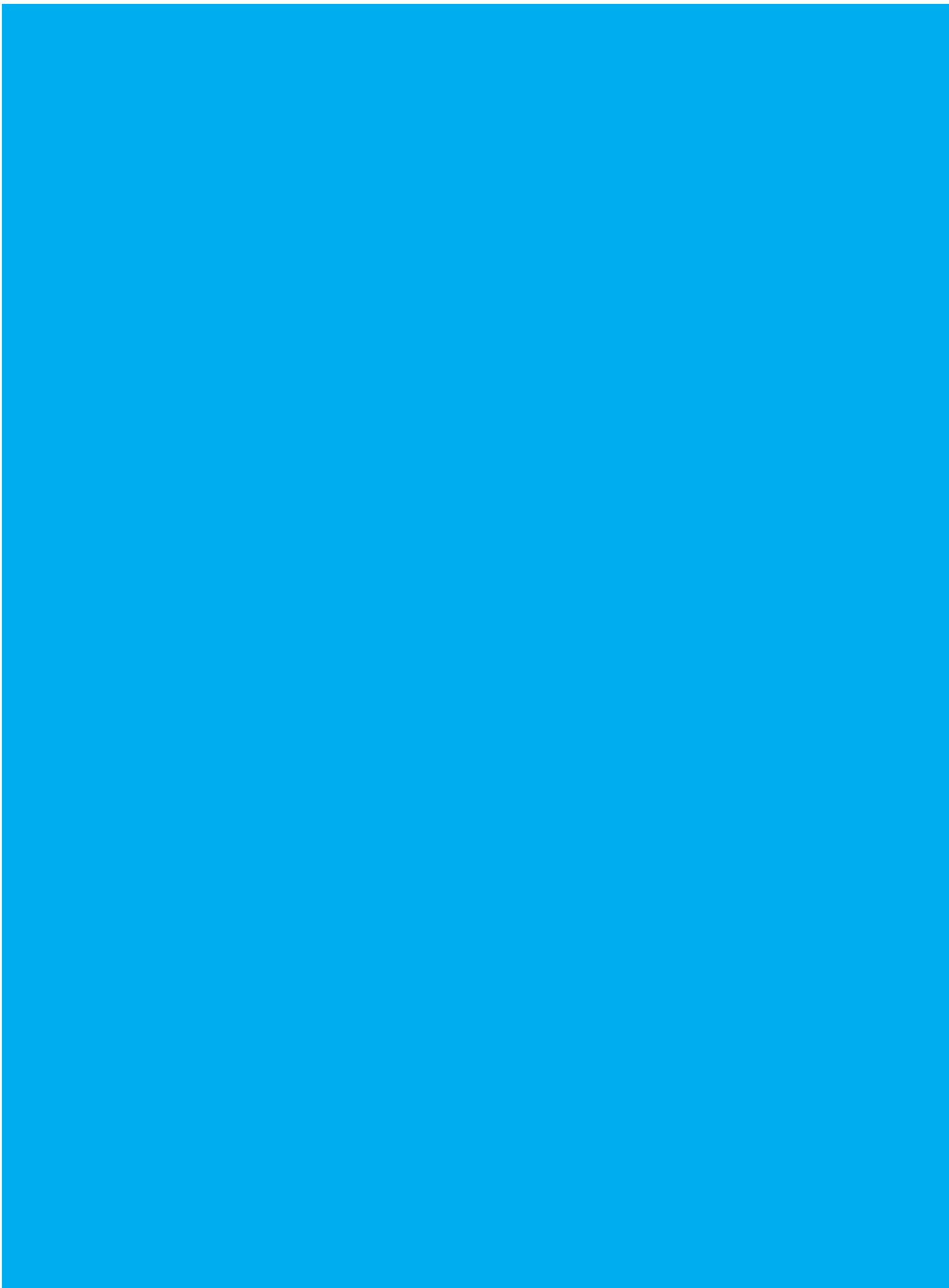
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for every child



**UNICEF GAMBIA**  
ANNUAL REPORT

**2022**





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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AKI</b>	Acute Kidney Injury	<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>AMP</b>	Annual Management Plan	<b>GAVI</b>	The Vaccine Alliance
<b>BCP</b>	Business Continuity Plan	<b>GBoS</b>	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
<b>CCTVs</b>	Closed Circuit Television	<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Rate
<b>CMT</b>	Country Management Team	<b>GSM</b>	Global System for Mobile Communications
<b>CPD</b>	Country Programme Document	<b>HACT</b>	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
<b>CPMP</b>	Country Programme Management Plan	<b>JCC</b>	Joint Consultative Committee
<b>CRC</b>	Contract Review Committee	<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>CRITAS</b>	Care, Respect, Integrity, Transparency, Accountability, Sustainability	<b>KRC</b>	Key Result for Children
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations	<b>LEG</b>	Local Education Group
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development	<b>LTAs</b>	Long-Term Agreements
<b>ECCE</b>	Early Childhood Care and Education	<b>MoBSE</b>	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education	<b>MoGCSW</b>	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States	<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System	<b>MR</b>	Measles Rubella
<b>EMNCH</b>	Emergency Maternal, Neonatal and Child Healthcare		





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<b>MUAC</b>	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference	<b>SMT</b>	Stock Management Tool
<b>NAC</b>	National Advisory Council	<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>NaNA</b>	National Nutrition Agency	<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>ODF</b>	Open Defecation Free	<b>U5MR</b>	Under-five Mortality Rate
<b>OMT</b>	Operations Management Team	<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>OOSC</b>	Out-of-school Children	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>PF4C</b>	Public Finance for Children	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>PMT</b>	Programme Management Team	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>PRC</b>	Programme Review Committee	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>PSB</b>	Property Survey Board	<b>VIP</b>	Ventilated Improved Pit
<b>PSEA</b>	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse	<b>VSG</b>	Village Support Groups
<b>PSV</b>	Peer Support Volunteer	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>RCCE</b>	Risk Communication and Community Engagement	<b>WCARO</b>	West and Central Africa Regional Office
<b>RUTF</b>	Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>SAM</b>	Severe Acute Malnutrition		
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals		









**GORDON JONATHAN LEWIS**  
*Country Representative*

I am pleased to present UNICEF Gambia's Annual Report 2022. This report showcases the many ways UNICEF has supported key results for children and women in The Gambia, that are directly linked to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as national priorities related to children. This has been done through very strong partnerships with the Government of The Gambia and a wide range of organizations and movements to realize the rights of children and build their resilience.

The Gambia's economic outlook has been challenged by the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; the interlinked food, fuel, supply chain and insecurity crises, as well as severe flooding and less remittances; resulting in a slower economic growth and a reduced fiscal space to support human development priorities. Also, the analysis of child poverty in The Gambia showed that many child-focused SDGs are significantly challenged. Hence, in the pages that follow, we will update you on the progress we have made in implementing programmes that delivered results for children and women. We also outlined the steps taken to expand the national COVID-19 vaccination outreach, despite the enormous challenges faced because of the pandemic.

In 2022, we continued to build on the results from 2021, consolidating and expanding our reach towards all children, but with a specific lens on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Focusing on key results for children, investments were made towards under-five immunization, especially through campaigns to reverse the downward trends in polio and measles-rubella coverage. We continued to empower mothers through the training on how to use the MUAC (mid-upper arm circumference) tape for early screening of malnutrition in their children. This simple, hands-on exercise empowers mothers as caregivers and was expanded to 37 new communities, reaching 59,879 caregivers. Cognisant of the interrelations between WASH, malnutrition, and morbidity, we worked with our partners in expanding the provision of eco-friendly water systems in communities, schools, and health facilities, which has contributed to reducing cross-infections and an enabling environment for health service provision. Our public advocacy with parliamentarians was targeted at improving budget allocations for children resulting in a notable increase from 14 per cent in 2021 to 17 per cent (2022) in education, although still below the African Union benchmark of 20 per cent. We also continued to work with mothers' clubs, and village support groups through training, creating sensitization, and storytelling to put an end to female genital mutilation (FGM), whilst we simultaneously supported efforts to improve birth registration, case management and prevention of gender-based violence against girls.

UNICEF Gambia registered a substantial increase in financial support from partners and donors, from US \$4.2 million in 2021 to US \$7.8 million in 2022, thanks to the generosity of donors such as the Government of Japan, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Italian Agency for International Development and the Education Above All Foundation-Qatar. We also received important contributions of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility from France and the United States of America. Additional financial support was received from the UNICEF National Committees of Germany, Sweden and Belgium which were instrumental to scale up innovations, and from several joint UN programmes, including the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint FGM programme, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Multi-partner Trust Fund and the SDG Fund. We harnessed the power of virtual communities in our social and behavioural change communication programmes, sharing more than 50 videos featuring influencers discussing issues affecting women and children. Also, our social media platforms reached 1.9 million people with information, sensitization and awareness on children's rights, services, and programmes.

I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts made by all UNICEF Gambia staff and our numerous and growing implementing partners. Our ability to generate results for children, whilst strengthening capacities of national and local institutions, as well as communities, could not have been possible without their resourcefulness, dedication, and commitment.

# Update on the context and situation of children



The Gambia's economic outlook is challenged by the aftermath of COVID-19, the global food, fuel, supply chain and insecurity crises, severe flooding and less remittances<sup>1</sup> resulting in a slower growth of 4.5 per cent (2022) from 5.6 per cent (2021).<sup>2</sup> Inflation reached double digits (13.4 per cent), forcing the government to increase fuel, fertilizer and grain subsidies affecting fiscal space and budget execution.<sup>3</sup> Although public debt is expected to decline to 79 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) (2022) from 83.8 per cent (2021), debt distress remains a risk.<sup>4</sup> Limited fiscal and monetary policy buffers will affect social protection for the most vulnerable children.

The overall poverty rate is projected to fall from 11.07 per cent (2021) to 10.9 per cent (2022), but the above-mentioned crises may decelerate

continued poverty reduction.<sup>5</sup> A recent multidimensional analysis of child poverty estimated that 9 out of 10 children in the country are poor and deprived of at least one dimension: sanitation (80 per cent), nutrition (47 per cent) and education (31 per cent).<sup>6</sup>

Despite availability of vaccines, the country has only fully vaccinated 18.2 per cent of the total population against COVID-19 by the end of 2022. A total of 71 young children died due to acute kidney injury (AKI), associated to contaminated cough and paracetamol syrups.

The Gambia's 2022 SDG Report indicates a country score of 60.2 (above the regional average of 53.6) and a ranking of 122/163. Many child-focused SDGs are significantly challenged.<sup>7</sup>



UNICEF/UN00924/Abdoullie



As of 2020, childhood malnutrition and young child feeding (**SDG-2**) had improved: stunting (25 to 18 per cent), wasting (9 to 5 per cent), underweight (15 to 12 per cent) and exclusive breastfeeding (47 to 54 per cent).<sup>8</sup> However, a recent analysis showed high rates of stunting (18.6 per cent), wasting (9.2 per cent) and underweight (16.8 per cent), potentially the result of the polycrisis affecting the most vulnerable children.<sup>9</sup> Vitamin A supplementation has dropped from 99 per cent (2010) to 30 per cent (2018).<sup>10</sup>

For **SDG-3**, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) and neonatal mortality rate remain high at 56 and 29 deaths, respectively, per 1,000 live births,<sup>11</sup> the result of limited access to sufficient well-equipped quality of maternal and newborn services. The maternal mortality ratio dropped from 597 (2017) to 289 (2019/20) deaths per 100,000 live births.<sup>12</sup> The adolescent birth rate decreased slightly from 73 (2019) to 71 (2020) births per 1,000 women, lower than the sub-Saharan African average of 98 births.<sup>13</sup> In 2021, 80 per cent of children (0–11 months) received the Penta 3 vaccine, while 78 per cent received the Measles-Rubella-1 (MR-1) vaccine; 63 per cent of children (12–23 months) received the MR-2 vaccine.<sup>14</sup> This data apparently signals a reduction from previous years.<sup>15</sup> The National Health Budget increased from 7.26 per cent (2021) to 9.53 per cent (2022), but still below the regional 15 per cent minimum target.<sup>16</sup>

Despite COVID-19, more children are attending school at all levels (**SDG-4**), albeit with geographic and gender disparities. Enrolment from early childhood to upper secondary level increased from 723,848 students in 2021 to 747,216 students in 2022 (53.36 per cent girls). Early childhood education (ECE) has increased to 54 per cent (2022) from 37 per cent (2013), with 27 per cent (urban) and 20 per cent (rural). Gross enrolment rate (GER) was 76 per cent for Lower Secondary and 50.9 per cent for Upper Secondary levels. The lower basic education completion rate also increased to 96 per cent in 2022 (100 per cent girls, 91 per cent boys), from 74 per cent (2010); however, the upper basic education rate decreased to 63 per cent (68 per cent girls, 58 per cent boys) from 65 per cent (2021). The out-of-school children (OOSC) rate is 14.41 per cent (2022), representing 62,607 OOSC children (ages 7–12 years).<sup>17</sup> The budget allocation for education increased from 14 per cent (2022) to 17.4 per cent (2023), still below the regional 20 per cent minimum target.<sup>18</sup> The National Assessment Test, administered to Grades 3, 5 and 8, showed a decline between 2018 and 2022 from 52 per cent to 46 per cent in English, and from 39.8 per cent to 30.7 per cent in Mathematics, possibly due to the learning loss caused by the COVID-19 school closure.<sup>19</sup>



UNICEF initiated ECCE to expose children to global best practices, **trained 140 education officers** and partnered with the University of The Gambia conducting research on “**Learning through Play**” aiming to develop a learning model to improve ECE learning.



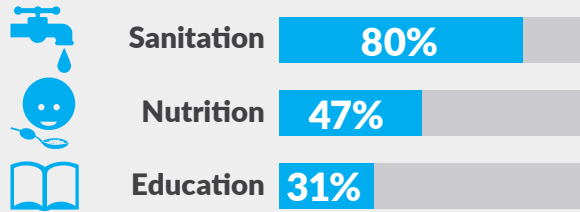
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# Situation of Children and Women

## Poverty

9 out of 10  children in the Gambia are poor and deprived of one dimension

(Recent multidimensional analysis of child poverty estimated)  
Source: UNICEF 2022



(Children deprived in at least one dimension from the Multidimensional analysis of child poverty in Gambia)

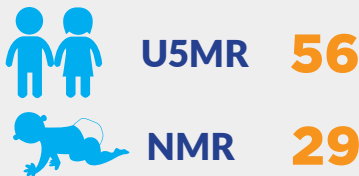
## Zero Hunger



Source: WFP 2021

## Good Health & Wellbeing

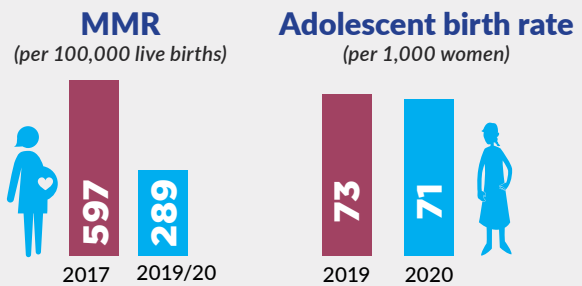
### High mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)



Reason: Limited access to sufficient well-equipped quality and maternal and newborn services

Source: DHS 2019/2020

### Improvements



Source: DHS 2019/2020

### Children Vaccinated (%)

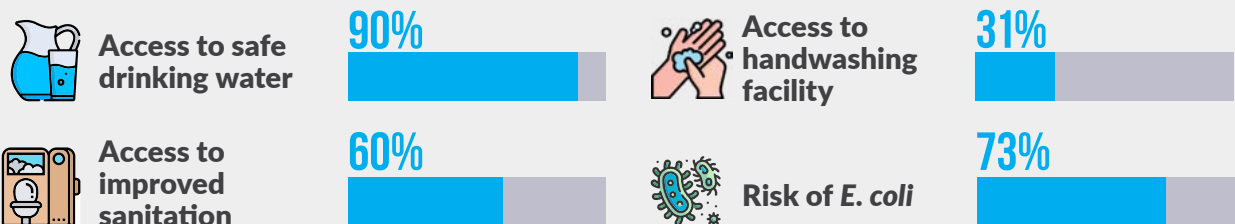


Source: MoH 2021/2022

National Health Budget increased from 7.26% (2021) to 9.53% (2022), but still below the regional 15% minimum target



## WASH



Source: JMP 2022

Environmental degradation, regular flooding and drought conditions continue to expose more children to health and sanitation deprivations, including water-borne diseases.



# Education

Enrolment of early childhood to **upper secondary level students (53.36% girls)** increased

**723,848** (2021)  **747,216** (2022)

Source: EMIS 2021/2022



**Early childhood education** increased

**37%** (2013)  **54%** (2022)

 **URBAN 27%**  **RURAL 20%**

Source: EMIS 2021/2022

**Gross enrolment rate**

**76%**  
Lower Secondary levels



**50.9%**  
Upper Secondary levels

Source: EMIS 2021/2022



**Budget allocation**

**14%** (2022)  **17.4%** (2023)

Regional target 20%

Source: MoFEA 2022



**Primary level Education completion**  
rate increased

**74%** (2010)  **96%** (2022)

Source: EMIS 2021/2022

More children attending school at all levels (SDG-4)

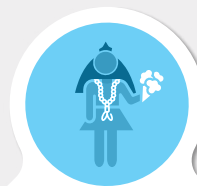
# Child Protection

**32%**  
Child with birth certificate



**25.7%**  
Women married before 18 years

**7.5%**  
Women married before 15 years



More than **89.2%** children experiencing multiple forms of violence



**76% & 51%**  
women & girls experienced genital mutilation



**15%** children work in hazardous occupations

Source: MICS 2018

Despite the improvements in child protection legislation and policies, serious challenges affect the achievement of SDGs 5, 8, 11 and 16.

WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) (SDG-6) indicators show 90 per cent of households have access to safe drinking water (81 per cent have at least basic and 9 per cent limited access to drinking water) out of whom 45% had access to safely managed drinking water, and 60 per cent of households have access to improved sanitation (47 per cent have at least basic sanitation and 13 per cent improved sanitation) out of whom 29 per cent have access to safely managed sanitation.<sup>20</sup> Only 30.9 per cent of the households possessed a handwashing facility and 73.2 per cent of the households (rural, 92.1 per cent; urban, 63.5 per cent) are at risk of *Escherichia coli* faecal contamination. Environmental degradation, regular flooding and drought conditions continue to expose more children to health and sanitation deprivations, including water-borne diseases (SDG-13).

Despite the improvements in child protection legislation and policies, serious challenges affect the achievement of **SDGs 5, 8, 11 and 16**. While 58 per cent of children have their births registered and 79 per cent of mothers/caregivers know how to register them, only 32 per cent of children have a birth certificate. More than 89.2 per cent of children experience multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence, bullying, psychological aggression by caregivers and physical punishment; 25.7 per cent of women (20–24 years) were married before the age of 18 years (44 per cent in the poorest households), and 7.5 per cent before the age of 15 years (12.9 per cent among the poorest); 76 per cent of women (15–49 years) and 51 per cent of girls (0–14 years) have experienced FGM; and 15 per cent of children work in hazardous occupations (rural, 39 per cent; urban 17 per cent).<sup>21</sup>

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UNICEF/JUN00868/Alhagie

Mixed progress on children's rights requires a coordinated and multidimensional approaches to support the most vulnerable children. The new Green Recovery focused National Development Plan (2023–2027) addresses many of these challenges and it will inform the 2024–2028 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UNICEF Country Programme.



# Major contributions and drivers of results



The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in The Gambia supported a wide range of governmental and civil society organizations (CSOs) to achieve key results for children while strengthening systems and coordination mechanisms across health, nutrition, education, WASH, child protection and social protection.

In the area of **Immunization**, UNICEF Gambia supported the development of the COVID-19 vaccination strategy and budget, resulting in improved coordination, micro-planning and identification of priority target groups. The country received a cumulative total by year's end of 847,110 doses of vaccines, out of which 332,400 in 2022. UNICEF Gambia provided technical and financial support to all vaccination campaigns in 2022. Vaccine hesitancy, inadequate communication strategies and the complexity and cost of campaigns

limited the ability to reach the global target of 70 per cent (only 18.2 per cent of the total population is fully vaccinated) by the end of 2022. With The Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and World Bank financial support, UNICEF and World Health Organization (WHO) helped to set up the country's first ultra-cold chain facility. The COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership mission positioned the need for sustained efforts at the highest policy level.

UNICEF Gambia also supported the national polio and Measles-Rubella (MR) campaign, albeit with mixed results, with vaccines procurement and distribution, demand creation through community engagement and capacity building of 138 health care workers, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This support was also used to strengthen monitoring and reporting of vaccine use through the Stock Management Tool (SMT) in all the regions and



UNICEF/JUN09984/Alhagie



Under **MR vaccination campaign 176,048 children** (6–59 months) were supplemented with **Vitamin A** and **155,044 children** (12–59 months) were **dewormed**, assisted by MoH and National Nutrition Agency. UNICEF Gambia supported the **development of COVID-19 vaccination strategy and budget**

collect information on vaccine stock level from the regions. The polio campaign registered a 105 per cent coverage although the Lot Quality Assurance Sampling identified 21 districts that failed to reach the required quality benchmark. The MR campaign only reached 52 per cent coverage, largely due to the fear and trust spillover caused by the AKI crisis.

# Key Results for Children

## Immunization



Strengthened capacity on community-level management (childhood illnesses):

**40** Health professionals on EMNCH



**40** Nurses on newborn care



**80** Village health workers



## Nutrition



Development and costing of **National Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Strategic Plan (2022–2025)**

Trained **40** Community Health Nurses on Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition protocol

Scaled up MUAC to **37** new communities

Procured an overall **1,000** cartons of RUTF for SAM treatment

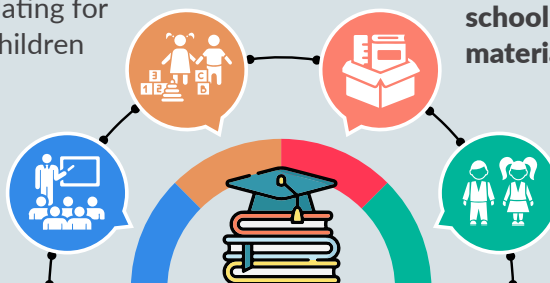
## Equitable and Sustainable Access to Education

Made **ECE classrooms** more stimulating for growth of children

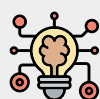
Provided **individual and school-wide learning materials**

Supported training of **240** ECE facilitators on methodologies

Improved **student's attendance** in school



## Improved Learning Outcomes



Prepared play materials for **4,700** ECE children in **60** centers

Provided learning and play materials to **15,350** children in **60** primary schools

Removed the **burden of cost** on parents

Reached **1.9** million people through **social media platforms** by delivering messages on child rights

## Protecting Children from Sexual Violence



Worked with CSOs to combat:

Female genital mutilation | Child marriage | Sexual violence against children

Targeted **77** communities and reached **49,000** people



## Birth Registration



Trained **31** health officers on: Civil Registry and Vital Statistics systems

Provided **supplies and equipment to Birth Registration Unit** under MoH

Supported **growth and drafting SOP protocol** for Birth Registration processes

## Open Defecation



Provided **safe drinking water to 250,795** people

Installed **solar-powered water systems**



Inaugurated **282** handwashing points at **47** health facilities

## Support for Children's Participation in Climate Advocacy

Rolled out **11** polls through **U-Report**

Generated information to **support Gambia's evidence-based advocacy**

**Strengthened** young people's voices

Participated in **climate advocacy**



UNICEF/UN00655/Alhagie



UNICEF Gambia supported the review of National Health Policies and Plans and the Joint Annual Review Meeting to assess achievements and challenges in the sector to develop an improvement plan. Capacity strengthening was provided for 40 health professionals on Emergency Maternal, Neonatal and Child Healthcare (EMNCH); 40 nurses on newborn care; and 80 Village Health Workers on community-level management of childhood illnesses. UNICEF Gambia also provided the Ministry of Health (MoH) with supplies for the management of maternal and newborn health complications and pneumonia at community and health facility levels.

In **Nutrition**, UNICEF Gambia supported the development and costing of the National Nutrition Multisectoral Strategic Plan (2022–2025) that will improve sector coordination and resource mobilization. Capacity building was conducted for 40 Community Health Nurses on the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition, which will improve services on Out-Patient Management of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) at the primary health care level. To improve the current low early initiation of breastfeeding practice, 40 nurses were trained on the WHO/UNICEF 2018 revised protocol on the 10 steps of successful hospital-based breastfeeding. Additional efforts included the orientation of 210 40 nurses on newborn care with a focus on early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, using the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) concept. Furthermore, 240 village support group (VSG) members from 25 communities were trained in counselling mothers on exclusive breastfeeding. Orientation was also conducted for nurses to advice 1,800 pregnant women who came for antenatal services at health facilities. UNICEF Gambia supported the scaling up of mother MUAC screening of children with SAM and referring them for treatment. From the pilot phase, 37 new communities benefited from the training and 370 mothers were reached with this simple skill training, using color-coded measuring tapes. Overall, a total of 59,879 caregivers were engaged and counselled on optimal infant and young child feeding practices. To ensure a successful SAM treatment outcome, a total of 1,000 cartons of Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) were procured, which was critical to support 3,157 children admitted for treatment in 2022. The treatment scheme registered a successful cure rate of 91.6 per cent of children admitted, thereby reducing deaths to 1.1 per cent, with a 5.7 per cent default rate. The 2022 admission rate was lower than in 2021 because the RUTF stock-out

negatively influenced the number and reporting of admissions. UNICEF Gambia assisted the Ministry of Health and the National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) to incorporate vitamin A and deworming into the MR vaccination campaign, resulting in 176,048 children (6–59 months) supplemented with vitamin A and 155,044 children (12–59 months) dewormed. UNICEF Gambia also supported the routine programme which has been strategic to help reduce the drop in coverage recorded in recent years. This effort has reached 143,281 children with vitamin A supplementation and 97,339 children with deworming, which has been strategic to address the drop-in coverage recorded in recent years.



UNICEF/JUN05704/Alpha

- National Nutrition Multisectoral Strategic Plan 2022–2025 developed to strengthen sector and resource mobilization
- 40 Community Health Nurses were trained on the Out-Patient management of SAM, both at community and facility levels
- Scaled up mother MUAC screening to **37 new communities** and trained **370 mothers** for early detection of malnourished children and referral for treatment

Despite some slowing down of national efforts to support **Ending Open Defecation**, UNICEF Gambia stepped up its assistance to provide WASH services to schools, health facilities and communities, and capacity building on infection prevention control for health workers. This included the construction of gender-friendly Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines in 16 schools benefiting 10,070 people (47.7 per cent boys, 52.3 per cent girls), as well as the development of a geo-referenced database to track WASH services including the open defecation free (ODF) status at the household, community, and district levels. This database facilitated the identification of 610 households prioritized with climate smart latrines. UNICEF Gambia also supported the reactivation of the National WASH Forum and other coordination mechanisms to strengthen the monitoring of WASH services in the country. In response to the flooding emergency, an impact assessment was supported by UNICEF Gambia, resulting in humanitarian WASH support to 42,000 people in 70 communities.

UNICEF Gambia supported the provision of safe drinking water for more than 250,795 people (51 per cent females; 49 per cent males) through the installation of solar-powered water systems in three healthcare facilities, four schools and three communities. A backup of 10,000 litre water system was installed in seven health facilities in the Greater Banjul Area to ensure 24-hour running water in health facilities. To reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, with the support of USAID and Government of Japan, UNICEF and regional Gambia constructed 282 handwashing

points in 47 health facilities, and the testing and treatment of 250 and 343 water points, respectively.

In the areas of **Protection of Children from Violence and Birth Registration**, UNICEF Gambia supported the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare (MoGCSW) to strengthen the National Child Protection System through the development, revision and validation of key legal instruments including the Children's Act 2005, the Disability Policy 2022–2031 and its Strategic Workplan 2022–2026 and Child Labour Policies.



Over **500 law enforcement agents** and **Community Child Protection Committees** and **200 children** were trained and engaged on principles of child justice and child protection issues. UNICEF commissioned the **first-ever situation analysis on child protection** to confirm the urgency of sustained investment in data collection, analysis and dissemination for improved planning and implementation



UNICEF/JUN00454/Alhagie

UNICEF Gambia supported the ministry to develop and validate the overdue report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF Gambia also supported the inauguration of the Persons with Disabilities National Advisory Council (NAC) and the re-establishment of the National Child Labour Steering Committee accompanied by relevant media campaigns on child labour. To address data gaps in the sector, UNICEF commissioned the first-ever situation analysis of child protection.

Supplies and equipment were provided to the Birth Registration Unit under MoH, which also received support to develop a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Birth Registration processes and train 31 health officers on the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system.

UNICEF Gambia worked with more than a dozen CSOs to combat FGM, child marriage and sexual violence against children, targeting 77 communities and reaching 49,000 people. This work included social and behaviour change, mobilization of youth and adolescents, and engagement with in- and out-of-school girls, mothers' clubs and regional authorities. UNICEF Gambia supported the establishment of a national Safe School Programme focusing on social workers, police and education officials to address child protection and rights issues in schools and trained 140 education officers on child protection. UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the international steering committee meeting of the Joint Programme on the Elimination of FGM, bringing together 16 countries to discuss acceleration strategies. UNICEF Gambia sponsored a formative study on FGM and child marriage to identify the drivers of these harmful practices. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), The UNFPA and UNICEF produced a documentary on sexual and gender-based violence against children and women.

UNICEF Gambia enabled 106 children in contact with the law to access legal aid, through the United Nations (UN) Peacebuilding Fund's Rule of Law project, where 60.37 per cent children were either granted non-custodial measure/diversion, released and reintegrated into society, or provided psycho-social support. Over 500 law enforcement agents and Community Child Protection Committees and 200 children were trained and engaged on principles of child justice and child protection issues. In addition, 80 border officials were trained on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Support Procedures and Standards

for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants.

### In the areas of **Equitable and Sustainable Access to Education** and **Improved Learning Outcomes**

UNICEF Gambia continued to lead the Local Education Group (LEG) coordination mechanism resulting in improved collaboration between national government and development partners. In 2022, UNICEF Gambia continued its support to policy development, system strengthening, institutional capacity building, and service provision.

UNICEF Gambia advocacy resulted in the upgrading of the ministry's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Unit to a full Directorate, and national authorities participated in the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education to expose them to global best practices. UNICEF Gambia also supported the second Early Learning Assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) sub-sector and help develop the national assessment system at the pre-primary level. UNICEF Gambia partnered with the University of The Gambia to conduct research on Learning Through Play aimed at developing a learning model to improve ECE learning.

Two national policy consultations took place as part of the engagement with the Transforming Education Summit, helping to reaffirm foundational training, technical and vocational education and learning, and teacher's professional legislation, sector financing as core priority areas.

UNICEF Gambia supported the training of 240 ECE facilitators on methodologies to make ECE classrooms more stimulating for children's learning and development. To build capacities of communities to create demand for and participate in ECE service delivery, 1,800 community members, Mothers' Clubs and School Management Committees from 25 communities were sensitized on the importance of ECE. Children's playgrounds were constructed in nine communities to promote children's physical and socio-emotional development.

UNICEF Gambia continued to advocate and support mainstreaming Majalis (Koranic) education into the formal education stream, including orientation to 180 Majalis operators, caregivers and facilitators to achieve this goal. Overall, more than 700 teachers and educational managers were involved in various capacity-building interventions.

Individual and schoolwide learning and play materials were provided to about 4,700 ECE children in 60 centres, and 15,350 children in 60 primary schools





were supported with learning and play materials to remove the cost burden on parents and improve school attendance.

In cross-sectoral areas, UNICEF Gambia supported the development of a Public Finance for Children strategy, guidelines and a facilitator guide for capacity building of government planning and budget officers on child-friendly budgeting techniques. UNICEF Gambia continued to collaborate with the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) to strengthen and streamline data systems with the University of The Gambia to support data collection.

Through the *Nsa Kenno* programme, UNICEF Gambia continued to support the strengthening of community-based structures to foster social change and promote children’s rights. A total of 25,000 people in 30 communities were trained on promotion of key household practices, interpersonal communication and development of participatory Community Action Plans. An evaluability assessment of this programme has been commissioned, which will help to identify major areas for improvement in design, methodology and implementation.

UNICEF Gambia continued as the lead agency in COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE). In close partnership with MoH, UN agencies and CSOs, UNICEF Gambia strengthened the capacities of 7,000 community actors, including religious leaders, youth and adolescents in creating the demand for vaccination and building vaccine confidence. A total of 249,034



**UNICEF Gambia advocacy resulted in upgrading of ministry’s ECD Unit to a full Directorate, and national authorities participated in the World Conference on ECCE and climate.** The launch of “Time to Teach” Report triggered important public conversations on teacher’s performance.

people were engaged, resulting in increased vaccination uptake.

UNICEF Gambia’s social media platforms reached close to 1.9 million people with important messages on diverse child rights topics, representing a major increase in people’s interactions with our platforms. Numerous advocacy opportunities were used to put the rights of children in the public spotlight. The launch of the Time to Teach report, along with compelling communication materials, triggered important public conversations on teacher absenteeism and performance. UNICEF Gambia rolled out national communication campaigns for the various COVID-19, polio and MR vaccination

efforts by using social media platforms like TV and radio stations. UNICEF Gambia developed and shared more than 50 videos featuring on influencers, health workers and others, reaching more than a million people and contributing to COVID-19 vaccine uptake. A communication campaign during World Breastfeeding Week included a video of a breastfeeding mother that reached more than half a million people on Facebook organically. As part of World Children's Day, UNICEF Gambia hosted the highly successful visit of UNICEF Sweden Goodwill Ambassadors Victor and Maja Lindelöf, whose interactions with children, parents and teachers at schools, health facilities, communities and nutrition centres reached numerous audiences with important messages and brand visibility. International Day of the Girl convened adolescent girls from all across the country for a dialogue on girls' rights.

Working with young climate advocates, UNICEF Gambia hosted dialogues and beach clean-ups, and supported a youth representative to the World Water Forum and COP 27 to strengthen young people's voices and participation in climate advocacy/action. U-Report rolled out 11 polls that generated important information to support UNICEF Gambia's evidence-based advocacy.

In the area of **Programme and Operations Excellence**, UNICEF Gambia's Annual Management Plan-2022 (AMP) preparation was consultative, participatory and transparent, and again received a very good performance score of 93.9 per cent by West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) for its completeness and details. To support staff security, UNICEF Gambia revised the business continuity plan (BCP) and provided mobile internet to staff on field mission to ensure that they stay connected. Additionally, UNICEF Gambia installed CCTVs and motion detectors in the office.

Funds allocated were utilized in a timely manner with little loss on expiring grants. All harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) assurance activities were implemented, including 109 per cent of Programme Visits and 91 per cent of Spot Checks. UNICEF Gambia increased its internet quality by doubling its bandwidth and acquired a central UPS backup to ensure uninterrupted power supply in the office.

To support humanitarian cash transfers to communities, UNICEF Gambia partnered with a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) company to disburse funds (US \$431,079) to beneficiaries in remote areas. Additionally, UNICEF Gambia partnered with the UN Gambia Credit Union as a fiduciary agency to process payments to implementing partners.

A comprehensive Supply Plan facilitated the increase in local procurement by 80 per cent and offshore procurement by 19 per cent, owing primarily to an increment in procurement services for the government (from US \$1.2 million to US \$3.2 million) confirming its confidence in UNICEF's procurement systems.

UNICEF Gambia management actively supported flexible working arrangements to improve staff work-life balance. Staff with COVID-19 received support from the UN Clinic and UNICEF Gambia management. Staff were supported to work from home when required and they were provided with mobile internet to telework. UNICEF Gambia continued to build team spirit and foster a conducive working environment respectful of CRITAS values through workshops organized by ethics focal points, Peer Support Volunteers (PSVs) and through regular staff meetings. Trainings took place on micro-aggressions and internal communications, whilst 27 per cent of staff participated in external trainings and two staff undertook stretch assignments. These initiatives contributed to the positive results of the Global Staff Survey and to an improved duty of care in the country office.





# UN collaboration and other partnerships



In 2022, UNICEF Gambia focused on partnership development to build back better and stronger after the COVID-19 pandemic. This entailed strengthening current partnerships and identifying emerging opportunities within the public, private and civil society sectors.

UNICEF Gambia continued to strengthen the partnership with the COVAX facility for sustained delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in collaboration with the MoH. This collaboration also provided the opportunity to strengthen bilateral partnerships with countries that donated vaccines, such as France and the United States of America. Community engagement, social mobilization and advocacy campaigns supported these partnerships.

The Japanese Government support of US \$2.5 million to strengthen cold chain systems will help to modernize the health system through supplies, equipment, vehicles and capacity building. The

USAID funding of US \$2 million supported the provision of essential health and water, sanitation and hygiene services, and access to safe water to 76 health facilities, 50 schools and 80 public places. Both partnerships present promising opportunities for future collaboration.

Funding from the Education Above All Foundation, Qatar of US \$3.7 million, matched by an additional sum of US \$3.75 million from implementing partners, will be instrumental to generate sustained progress on incorporating out-of-school children (OOSC) into mainstream education services.

Support from the UNICEF National Committees of Germany, Sweden and Belgium was instrumental to scale-up efforts in child protection and education. Several joint UN programmes, including the UNFPA-UNICEF-FGM programme, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Multi-partner Trust Fund and the SDG Fund, are proven and reliable platforms to generate greater





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results in ending FGM, addressing sexual and gender-based violence, enhancing access to justice, supporting children on the move, strengthening women's political participation and responding to the nutrition crisis.

UNICEF Gambia registered an impressive 83.7 per cent increase from 2021 to 2022 in other resources, from US \$4.2 million to US \$7.8 million.

With UNICEF chairing the UN Communications Group, there have been some important strides in strengthening partnerships with other UN agencies to communicate as one, including joint planning of key international days and development of communication and advocacy strategies.

UNICEF Gambia continued strengthening partnerships on climate advocacy, including youth-led climate advocacy group, Clean Earth Gambia,

to develop and implement climate action activities, such as the first nationally televised climate action town hall between the Minister of the Environment and young people. UNICEF Gambia also broadened partnerships with youth-led organizations and other CSOs working with young people, building on existing partnerships with the Woman Boss and Catch Them Young, and initiated new partnerships with Social Change Factory and Media Run Challenge.

U-Report Gambia grew by 3.1 per cent to approximately 14,000 volunteers and 11 polls were published in the year. U-Report Gambia partnered with YES Africa, a non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to building entrepreneurial skills of young people, as well as with the European Union-African Union project on amplifying the voices of youth.

# Lessons learned and innovations



Important lessons have been documented across all of UNICEF Gambia's programmatic domains as a result of an intense and productive year.

These lessons will be useful for the continued improvement of interventions for children and for the development of the next Country Programme.

In the child survival and development domain, remarkable efforts have been made on institutional systems for strengthening a bottom-up community engagement approach, involving the active participation of youth, adolescents, religious leaders and the social media in the multiple vaccination campaigns. However, the AKI outbreak and COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy negatively impacted the trust of the population in the public health system resulting in less-than-optimal outcomes. A key lesson is the need to intensify continuous social mobilization through empowerment and retention of these stakeholders to generate greater confidence in the system. Multi-agency platforms such as the Intra-Action Reviews are valuable opportunities to position this lesson.

The Mother MUAC, a low-cost, equity-focused and effective innovation to treat malnourished children, is paying dividends, and is ripe for rapid escalation, as it successfully reached an increasing number of vulnerable families in many communities. It represents an alternative to high-cost nutrition surveillance, which has been difficult to finance. UNICEF Gambia will do a scale-up analysis to develop a theory of change and identify public and private financing streams and partnerships, as well as potential bottlenecks for removal. The integration of nutrition activities, such as vitamin A supplementation and deworming, with immunization campaigns represents an example of multi-sectoral programming that can be taken to scale and replicated in other sectors.

The key lesson learnt related to water and sanitation is the need for an equity-based balance between rural areas, concentrating on the majority of vulnerable communities and urban areas, which tend to be neglected, and yet have equally pressing needs as demonstrated during the recent floods



## The key lesson learnt related to water and sanitation

is the need for an equity-based balance between rural areas, concentrating on the majority of vulnerable communities, and urban areas

that disproportionately affected the urban poor. It will be challenging for UNICEF Gambia to respond to these enormous needs, therefore it will be critical to continue leading coordination mechanisms and engage with larger multilateral partners to ensure that infrastructure development and rehabilitation are equity driven. UNICEF can play an important role in developing innovative, low-cost, and replicable small-scale water and sanitation infrastructure, and advocate for national authorities to ensure that they are rolled out to vulnerable households and communities. Similarly, amplifying the country's commitment to end open defecation requires a bottom-up approach, thus working with youth organizations and local leaders will be instrumental to scale-up efforts.

Notwithstanding the important gains advancing the policy and legislative framework to support an effective National Child Protection System, there is an ample room to improve service delivery for the most vulnerable children. This will require, inter alia, accelerating the number and types of interventions, including more integrated services such as one-stop centres and Safe to Learn Schools, where vulnerable children and women can access health, psycho-social counselling and legal support. This must be accompanied by the stronger government commitments towards ensuring that national and local enforcement and compliance mechanisms are in place to address and prevent child rights violations, also requiring more investments in the social service workforce. The newly available training modules for the case management of vulnerable children is an important step forward. UNICEF Gambia must also accelerate its support to an effective National Child Protection Steering Committee. The first-ever situation analysis of the child protection sector confirms the urgency of sustained investment in data collection, analysis and dissemination for improved planning and implementation.

Against the pandemic backdrop, UNICEF Gambia will continue to strengthen the resiliency of the education system to be more shock-responsive. The Transforming Education Summit confirmed foundational learning and sector financing as core priorities, while the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education exposed the government to best practices and innovations to

continually improve this sub-sector. A lesson derived was the need for more homegrown research on the first 1,000 days of a child's life to better inform programming for young children. The revamped focus on out-of-school children (OOSC) is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the equity and inclusion agenda, and to expand it to other vulnerable children.

The important strides made in social protection, social policy and public financing for children (PF4C) have generated important lessons. As part of the development of the new country programme, the theory of change behind our policy work will be reviewed to identify the resources and the enabling environment required to transform policy commitments into results for children. The evolving PF4C agenda will sustain the capacity building of National Assembly Members and ministerial budget officers on public financing processes, accompanied by more UNICEF Gambia leadership in developing policy and budget briefs and expenditure reviews in key child-focused sectors. UNICEF Gambia will advocate for the establishment of a social sector budget allocation committee to promote Programme Based Budgeting and support the National Assembly to conduct mid- and end-line budget reviews and tracking. UNICEF Gambia will continue to support the National Social Protection Secretariat to improve coordination efficiency and monitoring instruments, as well as stronger legislative back-up of the National Social Protection Policy.

UNICEF Gambia's continued strengthening of coordination mechanisms and collaborative partnerships has yielded successes and resources for children. National institutions have been strengthened, but there is still room for improved governmental leadership. UNICEF Gambia has adopted a participatory approach with active engagement of government, UN agencies, development partners, CSOs, private sector and academia, as well as children and adolescents, in the development of Country Programme Document (CPD) process, ensuring capacity development of partners in results- and rights-based programming. Relatedly, strengthening data management systems (including surveys and administrative) and the culture of monitoring and evaluation across all the sectors is urgently needed to ensure the availability of accurate and timely data to monitor progress.





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Wherever he lives.  
Every child deserves a childhood.  
A future.  
A fair chance.  
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And never give up.**



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