(left to right) Lydia Galley, 16, and Mary Tease, 14, photographed in their classroom at the Unity Cluster of School in Accra, Ghana, on June 9, 2023. They both participated in the Menstrual Hygiene Education program held by the Ayawaso North Municipal ©UNICEF/Dennis Nipah/June 2023

UNICEF in Ghana
NEWSLETTER
April to June 2023
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Message

During the second quarter of 2023, UNICEF worked closely with you, our partners, to progress our efforts to advance the rights of children in Ghana. Highlights include the graduation of the 20 social impact startups from the UNICEF StartUp Lab six month incubator programme; a roundtable discussion with stakeholders from across multiple sectors to discuss equitable approaches and solutions to the situation for children with disabilities; the launch of Ghana’s Accelerated Action Plan against Child Labour, and the installation of newborn equipment such as radiant warmers and kangaroo chairs in the Upper East and North East regions which can benefit approximately 20,000 new-borns. In addition, UNICEF has supported Ministry of Finance to develop the 2022 SDG budget. The SDG budget shows how the Government of Ghana is using the national budget to implement and achieve the SDGs.

In May, we welcomed Marie-Pierre Poirier, UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa Regional Director to Ghana, during her visit to participate in a meeting of UNICEF Staff Association. While in Accra, Regional Director had an opportunity to meet with adolescents, young people and partners at the Youth Engagement Centre at the Central Library, as well as with staff. We also marked the Day of the African Child on 16th June together with partners at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and Menstrual Hygiene Management Day on 28th May with partners, including the Ministry of Water and Sanitation Resources.

Together with strong collaboration from our partners, we continue to reach country programme milestones for children and young people, convening partners in government at all levels, the United Nations system, donors, private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia, the media and young people across the quarter. It is heartening when so many unite for the good of the children of Ghana.

Thank you for your partnership over the first six months of 2023, and we look forward to continued momentous achievements together for the rest of the year, and beyond.

Sincerely,

The UNICEF team in Ghana
Achievements this Quarter

Health

More hospitals equipped with newborn equipment

In support of the KOICA - Ghana Health Service (GHS) partnership to strengthen comprehensive community-based primary healthcare in the Upper East and North East Regions, UNICEF in partnership with KOICA, procured hospital equipment including radiant warmers, kangaroo chairs, oxygen concentrators and phototherapy units which will be installed in health facilities across the two Regions. Approximately 20,000 new-borns will benefit from the new equipment which will be deployed by recently trained community nurses and other healthcare staff.

Increased reach for routine immunization in remote areas

About 15,000 additional children under five years can now be reached through the provision of seven new vehicles to the Ghana Health Service in June 2023. Thanks to funding from the German Federal Foreign Office, health workers will be able to access more remote communities to provide routine immunization services for children and families located there.

Strengthened cold chain through refurbished Regional Cold Rooms

To expand Ghana’s vaccine cold chain storage capacity, UNICEF supported the second phase of refurbishment of nine Regional Cold Rooms across the country. In addition, 47 Vestfrost cold chain equipment (refrigerators) procured were distributed to all the 16 Regions.
Health Sector Gender Policy strengthened

UNICEF is providing technical support to the Ministry of Health to revise the Health Sector Gender Policy. The original policy, developed in April 2009, is being reviewed to strengthen gender equality strategies to improve health outcomes for all.

Nutrition

Lactation management skills improved

In April and May, UNICEF supported lactation management training for 301 health workers, including midwives, community health nurses, medical doctors, public health nurses and nutrition officers across North East, Savannah and Upper East regions, equipping them with requisite skills to support and implement practices that protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

Preventing malnutrition in food-insecure district

Work began on a joint UNICEF-World Food Programme food assistance project with GHS, to be implemented in the highly food-insecure district of Karaga in Northern Region. Thanks to funding from the Government of France, the work seeks to prevent all forms of malnutrition among extremely poor and vulnerable children. This will be done by ensuring access to safe, affordable, adequate, and nutritious diets and services through an integrated multisectoral response.

Work underway to develop a school-based food and nutrition education curriculum

UNICEF supported GHS and Ghana Education Service (GES) to conduct a capacity needs assessment for the development of a school-based food and nutrition education curriculum and its integration in Ghana’s school system. More than 40 stakeholders drawn from GHS, GES, academia and development partners participated in the workshop and identified gaps and capacity needs to strengthen the food and nutrition curriculum.

Code of practice reviewed to guide the manufacture, packaging and distribution of iodised salt.

With the support of UNICEF, the Food and Drugs Authority organized a technical meeting and reviewed the Code of Practices for Manufacture, Packaging, Distribution and Sale of Iodised Salt; the Progressive Licensing Scheme for artisanal salt producers and Manual for sensitization of various actors on salt iodization. The reviewed documents were used for a broader stakeholder engagement to revamp Universal Salt Iodization in Ghana.
Education

Promising progress for learning outcomes through Communities of Excellence initiative

In April, a team from the Jacobs Foundation joined UNICEF and GES to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Communities of Excellence initiative in Afram Plains North, Eastern Region. The visit included a range of formal stakeholder meetings with the Chief Executive Director, the District Education Oversight Committee, Change Leaders, and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to explore cross-sectoral collaboration towards better learning outcomes.

During these meetings, the visiting team engaged with Change Leaders who shared success stories, the way forward and the impact the Change Leadership programme has been having in the education system and in their communities. Nana Otukwa Mpareko VI, Chief of Kwahu Asedi and Change Leader said, ‘UNICEF and the Jacobs Foundation have been instrumental in bringing change. Now even without them in our local communities, we have this knowledge, and we plan to take it to our local communities to create a community where they’ll be excellent, and where everybody will participate and bring a direct change to their community’.

After engaging stakeholders, it was reported that despite the lack of teachers and poor school infrastructure, parental income poverty and rural livelihoods, there are promising signs of progress where there is the uptake of school governance in the form of increased Parent Teacher Association meetings and improvement in school plans. School enrolment for children has increased due to parental engagement and teacher training in new ways like Differentiated Learning and the provision of teaching and learning materials.
Using games to build digital skills through MINECRAFT Education

In June, the Center for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS) with UNICEF’s support and in collaboration with GES and other partners organized a training on MINECRAFT Education in Kumasi for 30 head teachers and ICT teachers from 13 Senior High and two basic schools. The workshop aimed to inform participants about how to use games to build digital skills, such as coding. The application of games is also to enhance a deeper appreciation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programmes. During the opening session, Nana Gyamfi Adwabour, Executive Director of CENDLOS said ‘The 21st century calls for employable skills, digital skills, and coding is one of them. ICT is taking over; coding AI is taking over, and Ghana doesn’t want to be left out.’ The UNICEF-Minecraft partnership programme builds on the Learning Passport initiative - a technology already deployed and used in Ghana to amplify self-paced learning for students and learners in both Junior and Senior High Schools.

Assessing progress on foundational learning with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

Asyia Kazmi, Global Education Policy Lead, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation interacts with students during a Differentiated Learning program class at the Oblogo M/A Basic 1, in Accra, Ghana. June 6, 2023. ©UNICEF/Vera Acquah/2023
In June, a delegation from UNICEF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Cambridge Education conducted a field visit to monitor the scale up of a remediation model for foundational learning, which is being rolled out to improve learning for primary school children in Ghana. During the visit, the delegation engaged with various stakeholders, including the technical working group involving National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the National Teaching Council, the National School Inspection Authority and GES. The purpose of the engagement was to familiarize the delegation with Ghana’s Differentiated Learning model; to understand how and how well basic schools are using differentiated learning to improve student learning.

Child Protection

Ghana’s Accelerated Action Plan against Child Labour launched

The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations took this year’s World Day against Child Labour event as an opportunity to launch the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labour 2023-2027 (formerly known as the National Plan of Action). Representing a significant milestone toward achieving SDG 8.7, the five-year plan recognizes the importance of multisectoral collaboration to address the root causes of child labour and promote holistic development and well-being of children in Ghana. The Action Plan was developed with support from UNICEF, International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) and other partners.

The Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) is now hosted by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Since 2022, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection and UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Information Technology Agency, have been developing and testing a Proof-of-Concept for the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) to be hosted by the Government of Ghana. In April, testing was completed, and equipment was developed. In May, the server location changed which
led to the full migration of SWIMS from UNICEF to the new platform. In June, approximately 480 staff of the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development were trained on how to use SWIMS for child protection case management.

The hosting of this information management system with the government is a significant step towards full incorporation and data sovereignty by the national system, as is in line with Ghana’s data protection laws.

**Training conducted for National Child Protection in Emergency Working Group**

In April, UNICEF carried out training for the National Child Protection in Emergency Working Group. About 30 participants from government agencies in charge of Social Welfare, Justice, Education, Health, Disaster Management, as well as representatives from UN and civil society participated in the child protection in emergency training. Topics covered included responding to children affected by armed forces and armed groups, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). Key preparedness activities were also identified to inform the development of the National Child Protection Emergency Preparedness Plan and other important tools.

**Ghana helps develop Phase III of the Global Programme to end Child Marriage Phase III (2024 – 2030)**

In May, alongside 22 other countries, a delegation from Ghana attended a workshop in Kenya in support of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase III. The workshop included a review of the second phase of the Global Programme, and looked ahead to inform the development of the third phase of the programme. The delegation included representatives from government, civil society organizations, UNFPA and UNICEF. Two presentations were delivered by Ghana to profile the country’s gender-responsive social protection system, and progress made in the empowerment of marginalized adolescent girls.

**New Project launched to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) in Ghana**

In June, with key partners and stakeholders across sectors and supported by the End Violence's Safe Online Initiative, UNICEF launched a two-year project to prevent and respond to online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Leveraging earlier achievements to integrate targeted interventions on online CSEA into the national child protection systems and the wider cybersecurity agenda, the new project will scale-up selected interventions that have the biggest potential for impact and can demonstrate pathways of change, especially in the areas of policy, legislation and governance; criminal justice; and victim support and empowerment. 10,000 girls and boys are expected to benefit from multi-sectoral case management services.
Children’s Rights in the digital environment was the topic of discussion at this year’s African Union Day of the African Child celebrations in Ghana. Led by the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection, and supported by UNICEF and partners, a series of activities took place to sensitize children, caregivers and others. This included radio discussions and an event where the Honourable Deputy Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection invited all relevant partners to foster collaboration, saying “We must encourage multi-stakeholder cooperation as we have done here today, by collaborating and sharing best practices. We can build a safer and more inclusive digital environment for children.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Urban Sanitation Project Completed

In April, an event was held to mark the successful completion of the Government of Ghana-UNICEF Urban Sanitation Project support by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana. Approximately 235,000 people gained access to basic sanitation under the project in five target Metropolitan and Municipal Assemblies of Tamale, Ho, Ashaiman, Cape Coast and Elmina. The high-level event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources, the Ambassador of the Netherlands, the UNICEF Representative a.i., and the Volta Regional Coordinating Director. Highlights included the launch of the Liquid Waste Management Strategy for Ghana, handing over of a faecal sludge treatment facility serving 160,000 inhabitants and the screening of a short documentary capturing the eight-year history of the project.

This was one of the most comprehensive sanitation projects implemented in urban landscape in Ghana targeting low-income households. The project tried to address the entire sanitation value-chain from containment, emptying, transportation, treatment, and up to the reuse of the treated faecal matter as composts. A blended approach consisting demand creation, technology options, sanitation marketing, innovative financing, governance (gazetting local by-laws against open defecation and their enforcement) and monitoring and evaluation were implemented in tandem which resulted 39,000 household toilets at a per capita cost of just around $125; four times cheaper than the conventional subsidy based programming.

Another Government of Ghana-UNICEF implemented project supported by the Government of Denmark under the COVID-19 pandemic response was also successfully completed and closed in May. The project, which addressed infection prevention and control integrated Social Behaviour Change, health and gender-based violence prevention components along with WASH infrastructure improvement, covering nine municipal assemblies of Greater Accra and Greater Kumasi. The project reached 65,000 people in low-income communities with sustainable water services, together with WASH infrastructure improvements in 32 institutions (17 schools and 15 Health) and 6 public places in these communities. One of the innovations of the project was provision of automatic water vending...
Machine in low-income communities providing 24-7 water supply at a much lower unit rate than by the regular private vendors.

Menstrual Hygiene Day celebrated
UNICEF and partners commemorated this year’s Menstrual Hygiene Day at an event on 26th of May. The event provided an opportunity for government and civil society to reaffirm their commitment to eliminate ‘period poverty’ – a lack of access to menstrual products, education and hygiene facilities which can lead to missed school hours. On 9th June, UNICEF joined the GES and volunteers from the Ghana College of Nursing and Midwifery, at the Unity Cluster of schools in Accra to support menstrual hygiene education.

Fieldwork for a WASH Resilience study started in June and is ongoing.
UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR) in conducting WASH sector resilience study for mapping hazards (natural, climate change and manmade) that water and sanitation infrastructures and services are exposed to and identifying the key mitigation measures to address them in shorter, medium, and longer-term. A consultative workshop was organized by MSWR in April to gather information from wider stakeholders. The study aims to provide evidence for improving the resilience of WASH services through risk informed programming.

WASH Sector Monitoring and Information Systems rolled out
In June, regional planners and environmental health officers were trained on the use of newly established WASH Sector Information System (SIS), a digital platform to monitor 14 Indicators to assess the progress in safely managed water and sanitation in line with the SDG 6 targets. The trainings are a key step in the roadmap towards full operationalization of SIS that will build the capacity of the districts to report on WASH progress. UNICEF has also worked with the Ghana Statistical Service to analyse progress on key WASH indicators between the 2010 and 2021 census.

Sanitation Financing
UNICEF is supporting MSWR in expanding the Basic Sanitation Fund (BSF), re-payable financing scheme to provide loans to households and small business for building toilets that was modelled in Ghana between 2019 - 2022. The expanded version of BSF, the “Ghana Sanitation Fund” will be managed by an independent Fund Manager under the overall guidance of a National Advisory Committee for Sanitation Financing (NACSF) in Ghana. A series of consultations were carried out during last 3 months with the Finance and Programme sectors aimed at understanding the financial instruments, regulatory frameworks and the overall governance repayable financing to support the establishment of the Ghana Sanitation Fund (GSF). The re-payable finance under the GSF would also be available for addressing other aspects of sanitation value-chain (e.g., safe removal of sludge, transportation, treatment and reuse) and small-scale water supply augmentation. For moving forward, the key stakeholders (Ministry of Finance, Bank of Ghana, GHAMFIN, Securities and Exchange Commission, MSWR, Ministry of Local Government Decentralization and Rural Development, and commercial financial institutions) have recommended the Governance modality of the GSF and the key roles of Independent Fund Manager.
Social Policy and Inclusion

Children and young people express opinion on their rights

In May and June 2023, UNICEF hosted two youth consultation sessions to discuss with adolescents and young people on the key issues that matter to their own lives: Learning outcome; Skilling; Gender equality; and Menstrual hygiene. 15 Junior High School students from Accra and Tamale participated in the first round (in-person) in May, while the second round (hybrid) was joined by more than 40 young people (aged 15-30) across the country. Both sessions – led by both Social Policy and Inclusion and the Adolescent, Gender and Youth team, with support from Communication and Advocacy provided meaningful points from young people's perspectives.

UNICEF supported Ministry of Finance to review the programme-based budgets

This quarter UNICEF supported the Ministry of Finance to review programme-based budgets for the Ministry of Education, National Commission on Civic Education and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. The objective of the review was to assess the weaknesses in the current structure of the Programme Based Budgets and to identify possible structural revisions, to ensure stronger links between the strategic objectives of the MDAs, indicators and targets to ensure proper monitoring of budget implementation and performance.

Support to Ministry of Finance to develop the 2022 SDG Budget

The SDG budget identifies how the government of Ghana is using the national budget to implement and achieve the SDGs. For the first time UNICEF supported in the revision of the SDG Budgeting Manual which was developed in 2018. The revision allowed for the introduction of the new codes in the chart of accounts for gender and child specific SDG interventions. This will help deepen transparency and tracking of gender
and child related SDG investments. UNICEF has been collaborating with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to develop a roadmap for integrating gender into social protection. After the nationwide stakeholder consultations earlier this year, a draft roadmap was produced which was validated in a workshop in Accra on 8th June. The roadmap provides practical guidance to the flagship social protection programmes on how to contribute to addressing key gender gaps in their programming. The key objective is to make practitioners intentional about integrating gender needs into programme design and implementation while seeking to achieve transformative outcomes for women, men, boys and girls. Priority gender gaps identified include sexual and gender-based violence, unpaid care responsibilities, teenage pregnancy, economic shocks, participation in decision making and old age vulnerabilities. The roadmap will be completed and operationalized in quarter three.

Adolescents, Gender Youth

U-Report findings

During the second quarter of 2023, three U-Report polls were generated. Approximately 500 young people responded to the polls which included topics of menstrual hygiene, girls in ICT roles and beliefs about immunization. The information of which is disbursed via UNICEF social media channels and would be used to inform future advocacy.

UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide Training

In June, UNICEF in partnership with Curious Minds applied the UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide to train over 60 young people on advocacy knowledge and skills. Three-day workshops took place in Cape Coast, Sunyani, and Bolgatanga where young people in the southern, middle, and northern belts (respectively) learned practical skills for public and policy advocacy, shared their own experiences as youth advocates, and networked with fellow advocates and youth-led organizations. Participants found the training and the Guide very practical and impactful, and also acknowledged it as a great peer-to-peer learning opportunity.
UNICEF Regional Director visits Accra’s Youth Engagement Centre

Young people in Accra met with the UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa during her visit to Ghana, at the Youth Engagement Centre where they discussed youth skilling, entrepreneurship, and engagement. Participants shared their achievements as well as challenges they face on the way to realize their potential and voice their opinions as young people, provided their perspectives about the situation for children and young people to the UNICEF Regional Director.

Feature: Leveraging Ghana’s startup ecosystem to impact communities: UNICEF StartUp Lab

On 22nd June, 20 young social-impact innovators convened at the University of Ghana to graduate from the UNICEF StartUp Lab six-month accelerator programme and to share how they have developed products, tools or services which are intended to address some of Ghana's and Africa's most pressing issues affecting children and young people today.

Led by UNICEF in Ghana and supported by KOICA under the “KOICA-UNICEF Accelerating Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Ghana” project, the UNICEF StartUp Lab is supports businesses working towards advancing the SDGs for children and young people. This milestone marks the culmination of a journey aimed at enhancing the business, technological, and communication skills of
participating entrepreneurs, strengthening their product and businesses, and ultimately increasing their social impact. UNICEF Deputy Representative in Ghana Fiachra McAsey said: “We continue to be inspired by this new cohort of talented startups, who are leveraging digital technology and their business acumen to build new products and services to tackle some of the most difficult challenges faced by young people in Ghana today.

“The 20 startups make up a cohort of resourceful, dedicated and talented individuals from across the country. It has been our pleasure to accompany them over the past six months through the UNICEF StartUp Lab Accelerator Programme, and we look forward to supporting them further, as they join our Alumni network, and continue to make a difference for children and young people in Ghana, and beyond."

The Acting Country Director of KOICA Ghana, Mr. Seungmin Oh said: “KOICA firmly believes in the transformative power of entrepreneurship and innovation. We recognize the importance of creating an enabling environment that fosters creativity, provides necessary resources, and encourages collaboration.

“KOICA is proud to have been a part of the journey of the 20 startups, and we remain committed to supporting the growth of entrepreneurship and innovation in Ghana. We will continue to invest in programs that empower young entrepreneurs and equip them with the skills, resources, and networks needed to thrive in today's competitive landscape.”

The Korea Ambassador to Ghana, His Excellency Ambassador Lim Jung-Taek said, “The Republic of Korea is honoured to have been a part of this transformative initiative, which has nurtured the seeds of entrepreneurship and paved the way for a brighter future for these talented individuals. He said, “South Korea has long been a testament to the power of technology-driven progress which has seen it invest more than 4% of its GDP in research and development, fuelling ground-breaking discoveries and fostering an environment that thrives on innovation.”

The startups also gained valuable access to a network of experts from UNICEF, KOICA, and MEST, offering significant guidance and fostering networking and investment opportunities. Moreover,
qualified companies were given dedicated assistance towards achieving recognition as a UN-recognized Digital Public Good.

Now in its third year, the UNICEF StartUp Lab has accelerated over 50 startups from across Ghana, including by investing over $100,000 in prototyping funding to support the development and impact of these businesses. “We are thrilled to witness the successful completion of another cohort in the UNICEF StartUp Lab,” stated Gerhard Malah, UNICEF StartUp Lab Program Manager at MEST. “As these entrepreneurs graduate from the program, we have full confidence in their ability to make significant strides in developing and refining their businesses, ultimately serving their communities in even more impactful ways.” The UNICEF StartUp Lab is supported by KOICA and implemented with MEST Africa.

**Feature: Breaking Barriers, Building Inclusion – Disability Inclusion Advocacy Roundtable**

“The stigma is huge. It happens everywhere. At church, the community, school, everywhere,” said Rosalin Abigail, the Founder of Africa Dyslexia Organisation. Rosalin was speaking at a panel discussion on Tuesday 30th May when UNICEF in collaboration with the Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations and the National Council for Persons with Disability convened an roundtable discussion with approximately 80 stakeholders for an in-depth discussion about providing a more equitable landscape for children with disabilities in Ghana.
The UNICEF initiative, moderated by television personalities Gary al-Smith and Portia Gabor brought together more than 80 participants including children with disabilities, academia, policymakers, experts in the field of disability advocacy, the private sector, and first-hand stakeholders. 12-year-old Afia Ayeyi Boakye-Yiadom, living with Osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease) opened the event by telling her story to the audience and spoke of her courage and some of the challenges she faced. The programme also included an unveiling of new data, evidence and recommendations produced by the Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS) with UNICEF support on Access to Essential Services and Funding for Children with Disabilities in Ghana. Their presentation highlighted the fact that ‘The most shocking and embarrassing difficulty faced by children with disabilities is the negative attitude of society and families towards them.’ Following presentations, attendants of the programme shared their views about their progress. The audience included a range of stakeholders from government bodies to the private sector.

Ms. Rosalin Kyere-Nartey mentioned that ‘Regardless of our recommendation if the people don’t understand, it will not get anywhere. Therefore, I recommend awareness, awareness to our public, our education system, our traditional leaders, and our churches. Awareness is the key to getting people to understand the situation and act for its improvement in society.’

This event culminated in a two-week social media campaign during which UNICEF shared facts and evidence information on children with disabilities in Ghana and interacted with its online audience. The discussion was broadcast live on UNICEF Ghana’s social platforms: Facebook and YouTube. The total reach across all channels before, during, and after the event hit 125,401 people.
ENDS

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