Angola remains a highly unequal country, and disparities have continued to rise in recent years, indicated by a Gini coefficient of 0.43 in 2008 to 0.51 in 2019. Furthermore, Angola is ranked 148 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index. It is forecast that the position on the index may worsen because of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNDP, 2020). Angola also stands among the lowest countries in the world in terms of the Human Capital Index, largely driven by the persistent and high prevalence of stunting.

Angola presented its first SDG National Voluntary Review at the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The key finding from the review is that Angola is still far from the desired targets. Some progress was identified in the areas of Education, Health, Gender Equality, Social Protection, Justice and Human Rights but programmes and policies accompanied by substantial budget allocations are needed to address the long-standing poverty and inequality.

In 2021, the overriding challenge faced by Angola was to sustain efforts to control the COVID-19 pandemic through accelerating vaccination and ensuring the provision of basic services. Additionally, however, southern Angola experienced a worsening of the drought situation, recognized as the worst in 40 years. The overall situation being exacerbated by six consecutive years of economic recession. As of 30 December 2021, Angola reported 79,871 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 1,764 deaths, among which 13,547 cases were children and adolescents (0-19 years old), with sixty-four deaths. The pandemic was exhibiting a downward trend late in the year with vaccination efforts in line with the national plan. Almost 4 million people have so far been vaccinated with a complete dose. The government implemented a reduction in VAT in 2021 to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inflation.

The health sector’s ability to provide quality care to its population and the latter’s access to and uptake of the services were further constrained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The government’s focus on the pandemic response with the rollout of COVID-19 vaccination campaign witnessed a repurposing of a significant proportion of the health workforce, resulting in declines in key intervention coverages during the year. As a result of the continued drought in southern Angola, global acute malnutrition rates above the emergency threshold of 15% were recorded in two provinces (19.2% in Huila, and 16.6% in Benguela); while in two others, they approached the threshold (14.8% in Huambo and 12.4% in Cunene). An enormous effort will be required from both government and partners to adequately respond to the nutrition and other consequences of the severe drought situation, as well as those of the pandemic, to reverse the current declining trends in the population’s health service coverage.

Globally, Angola ranked 10th worst on the UNICEF Children’s Climate Risk Index (CCRI). The CCRI is closely linked to child vulnerability. For example, children with lower levels of educational attainment are more vulnerable to environmental shocks and stresses. The advocacy agenda on this front was taken up by two Angolan youth champions at the Milan ‘Youth4Climate’ event – the pre COP26 youth event. The Angolan Ministry of Environment hosted its own event, the “Ecological and Digital Transition and Climate Diplomacy Seminar” aiming to stimulate a youth climate advocate movement. The impacts of climate change in Angola are most notably felt through the impacts of water scarcity due to decreasing rainfall, especially in the southern provinces of Huila, Cunene and Namibe.

Almost 4 million children (29% of the child population) are experiencing extremely high water vulnerability according to the recent water vulnerability index developed by UNICEF. The resulting impact on Angolan children’s health, development, and safety threatens the progress made in child survival and sustainable development over the past several decades. It is putting Angolan children’s lives at risk today and threatens future generations.

Violence against girls and child marriage in Angola continue to represent major child protection
concerns, with almost one in every four girls between 15 and 18 years old having suffered physical or sexual violence; almost one in every three girls are married (or in a union) before the age of 18, and one in every ten before their 15th birthday (DHS 2016).

In the most drought-affected provinces, child protection risks have been heightened, particularly for women and children. Food insecure households may adopt negative coping strategies which result in increased protection risks, such as child labour and child marriage, including sexual based violence for women and girls who must travel longer distances seeking food and water.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated women and girls’ vulnerability to violence, particularly among the poorest and most socially marginalized groups. Restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 have impacted livelihoods leading to loss of family income, increased risks of violence, including gender-based violence, and heightened child protection concerns.

In 2021, access to education and learning outcomes continued to be significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the drought in southern Angola; exacerbating the problems of learning loss and school dropouts. Primary schools reopened in February 2021 but only returned to a full timetable in September, after almost one year of closure; pre-schools only re-opened in April. To mitigate these impacts, the government implemented a series of measures for COVID-19 prevention in schools and promoted the continuity of learning through radio and TV classes and via an online distance learning platform (Xilonga). It is also rolling out an accelerated learning programme for primary education. Angola currently invests around 2.2% of GDP in the education sector, whereas global recommended levels of investment are 4 to 6%. However, Angola is now eligible for the Global Partnership for Education funding initiative in its new 2021-2025 Plan and can access funds to strengthen the education system (USD 3.7 million) and accelerate girls' education (USD 25 million). Furthermore, in 2021 the Ministry of Education started implementation of the ‘Girl Empowerment and Learning for All PAT II Project’ to address issues related to gender inequality, with a total value of USD 250 million over five years.

Major contributions and drivers of results

From birth to fifth birthday: the early years
UNICEF provided logistical support for the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, information and communications technology (ICT) equipment for registration of vaccination service users and human resource support for the scale-up of vaccination centres across the country. Additionally, UNICEF facilitated, the acquisition and timely delivery to Angola, of the different COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination supplies. During the reporting period, UNICEF facilitated the procurement and/or logistics for more than 35 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to Angola, enabling the administration of nearly 11.5 million doses.

Through UNICEF’s technical assistance, three 30-cubic metre Walk-in Cold Rooms were installed in three provincial vaccine stores (Bie, Cunene and Moxico), enhancing by ten-fold, the vaccine storage capacity in these provinces. Furthermore, 229 solar direct drive refrigerators were installed in 17 provinces, bringing vaccination services closer to an estimated 70,000 eligible children.

In 2021, a total of 626,595 children aged 0-11 months were given a third dose of Pentavalent vaccine and 489,689 pregnant women were vaccinated against tetanus. To ensure a smooth introduction and rollout of the nOPV2 polio vaccine, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop an advocacy/behaviour change strategy and a crisis communication plan.

UNICEF supported nutrition activities resulting in the screening of 344,923 children under five for acute malnutrition; 48,001 of these children then received treatment for severe acute malnutrition in the most-deprived provinces and seven municipalities of peri-urban Luanda. A total of 81,942 caregivers of children under-five in most drought-affected communities in the provinces of Huila, Cunene, Cuando Cubango, Namibe and Bie were reached with counselling on positive infant and young child feeding practices. More than 300 nutrition technicians and supervisors from Huila, Cunene, Bié, Uige, Moxico and Luanda Provinces received training on the integrated management of acute malnutrition to improve nutrition outcomes for children.
UNICEF supported the Provincial Cabinet of Health of Luanda to ensure the continuity of the provision of the essential maternal and child health services in five municipalities. In 2021, a total of 77,323 pregnant women were attended in antenatal clinics, and 27,741 deliveries in the maternities. Furthermore, 726 children living with HIV registered in 15 health facilities in Luanda benefited from social cash transfer as part of the response to the COVID-19 emergency.

UNICEF facilitated the Climate Risk-Informed Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) bottleneck analysis (WASH BAT-IR), and contributed to the Nationally Determined Contributions to climate change mitigation. The WASH BAT-IR provided government with actionable recommendations on how to strengthen resilience and adaptation to climate change in the WASH sector. The mainstreaming of resilient WASH services in Angola’s first NDCs will open opportunities for WASH climate financing.

UNICEF achieved three Open Defecation Free communes in 2021 which represent a positive change of scale from villages to communes. With this change, UNICEF will move away from service delivery and focus on technical support to government to achieve economies of scale.

WASH humanitarian action focused on drought response and COVID-19 prevention. A total of 1,903,863 people (916,734 male and 987,129 females) were reached with WASH services during 2021. Climate-friendly technologies such as rainwater-fed schemes and solar-powered systems were introduced to build community resilience.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities related to COVID-19 emergencies and drought reached 3,705,856 people. The affected population were provided with access to an integrated package of communication interventions on COVID-19 prevention, hygiene promotion and popularization of practices to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the continuity of health services and maintenance of positive hygiene and nutritional practices. UNICEF’s technical assistance to the national Risk Communication and Community Engagement coordination effort with evidence-based mass communication activities contributed to the high demand for the COVID-19 vaccine across the country.

In 2021, more than 2.5 million Angolan children obtained a birth certificate as a critical document to prove their legal identity, the basis upon which to access social services and seek protection from violence and exploitation. Of those children, 276,669 have been registered with UNICEF direct support through routine registration of newborns in hospital maternity wards and deployment of mobile brigades for late birth registration. A total of 7,481 primary school-aged children received National Identity Cards through the UNICEF supported programme of Birth Registration at school, implemented in 18 primary schools in rural areas in Cunene Province (Safe Haven Project).

UNICEF incorporated birth registration into the SMS reminder project. This tool, already in use in the health sector, relies on the use of SMS-based messages and information on birth registration services to families and communities. So far, 9,620 parents have been contacted and received reminder messages about the importance of birth registration with the supporting documentation in-hand, resulting in 13,206 children registered.

UNICEF achieved three significant results for Angola’s youngest children in 2021. First, UNICEF finalized the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices study on prenatal care and parenting practices for children aged 0-59 months. This study provided important findings for the intersectoral National Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for ECD currently under development in partnership with the Comissão Especializada da Criança of the Conselho Nacional de Accao Social (CNAS), and to be finalized in 2022.

Second, UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Education to implement the “Todos Unidos pela Primera Infancia” (TUPPI) programme, a low-cost community based ECD initiative aimed to strengthen parenting practices for nurturing care which benefited 6,741 children (3,521 girls) aged 0-59 months. UNICEF advocated for its sustainability and scalability, as a result, two municipalities in Uige and Bié integrated TUPPI interventions into municipal and provincial planning cycles linked to birth registration, care for pregnant adolescents, poverty alleviation, among others. The municipalities of Camanongue and Lucusse (Moxico), Catabola and Chingaur (Bié) and Cacula (Huila) committed to allocate funding to support the implementation of TUPPI activities in 2022. In addition, UNICEF launched an evaluability assessment of the TUPPI programme to assess the extent to which the
initiative’s impact can successfully be evaluated and to recommend areas for improvement to guide the implementation of the TUPPI approach, such as a theory of change, a results chain, a logical framework, and a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Third, UNICEF achieved results around strengthening data and governance in 2021. Thanks in part to UNICEF’s advocacy efforts, the DHS planned for 2022 will include the 2030 Early Childhood Development Index 2030 (ECDi2030). This will track the key development milestones of children 24-59 months of age (SDG indicator 4.21). In addition, UNICEF supported CNAS to develop the National ECD Policy, which is tentatively scheduled to be submitted for approval in early 2022.

UNICEF worked with the African Early Childhood Network and Angolan civil society partners to expand ECD's network of alliances and partnerships through the establishment of Angola's National Early Childhood Development Network.

**School-age children and adolescents**

UNICEF continued to roll out existing interventions targeting the most vulnerable children, adolescents, and women, to address harmful practices and violence against girls in Angola. This included investments focused on caregivers and communities to prevent and respond to any form of violence, abuse and exploitation against children, with a stronger focus of gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation.

UNICEF provided technical support to the National Children’s Institute to raise public awareness and concern regarding violence against children, but also to increase service uptake and strengthen state actors’ capacity to address the increasing demand for responsive services (demand generated by the National SOS Hotline 15015, which also benefitted from UNICEF technical assistance throughout 2021). Out of a total of 45,679 cases of violence reported to the National SOS Hotline in 2021, 22,839 children who experienced violence were reached by at least one response service, among health, social work, justice or law enforcement services.

As part of UNICEF’s accountability for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the country, qualified technical assistance was provided to enhance the capacity of implementing partners (state and non-state actors) to strengthen community-based complaint and feedback mechanisms. This allows identification of potential entry points for safe and confidential reporting of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse allegations with a focus on the education and health sectors (in selected schools and health centres in Luanda, Huila and Cunene provinces).

Intense UNICEF advocacy efforts with the Government of Angola resulted in the approval and entry into force of Joint Executive Decree No. 455/21 of 24 September 2021, which approved the Child Protection Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), within the scope of reinforcing the implementation of the Juvenile Judgment Law (Law no. 9/96). The Child Protection SOP are the result of the long partnership between the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights and UNICEF and aim to promote inter-ministerial collaboration among key sectors involved in the child protection system, clarifying roles and responsibilities of professionals (from the education, health, social services, justice and interior sectors) in the identification, registration, referral and case management of all children in situations of violence and vulnerability in a cohesive manner.

UNICEF continued to support education authorities at the national and decentralised levels to improve the quality of learning environments and the safe return to school through the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) and Safe Havens models for primary schools in Huila and Cunene provinces respectively, through which 16,250 children (8,648 girls) in 35 schools were reached. The gender and transferable skills review of key educational materials of the CFS project, regarding student-centred pedagogy, School Management Committees, and WASH in schools.

Key results of UNICEF’s support to the education response to COVID-19, include: hygiene conditions improved in 61 schools of Luanda Province benefiting 57,276 children (27,889 girls); joint education and health response plan developed to increase capacity for advocacy to keep schools open; 238 teachers (136 female) and 53 directors (23 female) trained on COVID-19 prevention and response measures and 61 teachers trained on using theatre within pedagogical practices for COVID-19 awareness and prevention.

Significant progress was made in 2021 towards the adolescent agenda through a joint UNICEF-UNDP learning to earning initiative for urban adolescents and young people (AYP), particularly girls and
young women, in Cazenga Municipality in Luanda. This is laying the foundation for other opportunities for youth skills-building, entrepreneurship, participation and engagement and for the launch of the Generation Unlimited initiative in Angola in 2022. The initiative, supported by Norway, brings together the ministries of education and labour, municipal authorities and private sector. Key results include: 300 AYP (180 female) obtained scholarships for vocational training and 19 AYP (2 female) benefitted from internship placements. Ongoing activities include the development of a training manual and programme on transferrable, employment and entrepreneurship skills to train teachers of secondary education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training and accelerated education; a Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy to address barriers to girls’ access to education. Additionally, a digital alternative learning initiative to promote life and employability skills and digital competencies is planned for early in 2022.

As part of strengthening the education system, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education through research on alternative education modalities for access and transition from primary to secondary education, which is informing accelerated education and learning loss recovery initiatives. It also enhanced understanding on the impact of COVID-19 on education, including the situation of out of school children.

**Decentralised Convergent Social Services, Coordination and Public Finance for Children**

UNICEF and partners focused their actions at decentralized level in the COVID-19 emergency response and socio-economic impact mitigation. Two pilot projects in the social protection sector were adjusted to the emergency context. Namely, the Social Cash Transfer project (Valor Criança), and the decentralisation of social action services through the Centres for Integrated Social Action (CASIs). The pilots were implemented jointly with the Ministry of Social Action, Family and Women (MASFAMU), the provincial governments of Bié, Moxico and Uige and the targeted 6 municipalities, according to a joint plan agreed between UNICEF and MASFAMU for the response to COVID-19. The vertical expansion (top-up payments) implemented at the onset of the pandemic continued and was expanded horizontally to new areas in the targeted municipalities. This reached 40,000 children (aged up to 5 years old) of almost 20,000 households enrolled in the programme. The project is addressing gender inequality by focusing on caregivers. The recipients of the funds are the caregivers, 98% of which are women.

Additionally, two emergency cash transfer programmes were launched in Luanda Province, with the support of the Luanda Provincial Government, Ministry of Health and MASFAMU, reaching 3,500 malnourished children (aged up to 5 years old), and a further 600 children receiving antiretroviral treatment.

Following the approval of the new National Policy for Social Action in December 2020, UNICEF engaged in several nationwide events to raise awareness and understanding of Policy in coordination with MASFAMU and other UN agencies, such as the ILO. Training activities in social protection were implemented, including the TRANSFORM programme which is an innovative training initiative that strengthens individual and institutional capacity for the management of national social protection systems in Africa.

At decentralized level, local integrated intersectoral activity budgeted plans were developed for the CASIs in 2022 in 6 municipalities. In addition, several of the actions were developed within the scope of integrated and convergent social services, such as the TUPPI project (early childhood education programme), the project on sanitation led by the community, the birth registration programme, and were funded by municipal administrations.

The mechanisms at the national level of multisectoral coordination to support social services at municipal level were strengthened under the Project "Improving synergies between Social Protection and Public Finance Management", with the technical assistance of UNICEF and ILO. The project involves four ministries, and the Project Steering Committee which is led by the Minister of State for the Social Area.

Enabled by the Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Finance, UNICEF implemented a webinar series, workshops in universities, and two roundtable discussions on participatory budgeting and on the impact of COVID-19, with the participation of the International Budget Partnership and the World Bank.
UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF Angola has been working closely with the Government and Civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure timely support for service delivery, both in development initiatives as well as in humanitarian assistance. Many CSOs are also engaged in advocating for improved efforts for service delivery. For instance, CSOs are advocating for scaling up of CASI in the country. They are also engaged with other stakeholders in supporting the effective coordination of the National Policy of Social Action.

UNICEF and WFP collaborated in 2021 under the newly signed Memorandum of Understanding to carry out SMART nutrition surveys in Angola. With the support of the Ministry of Health, provincial authorities and implementing partners World Vision and JAM, four surveys took place in Benguela, Cunene, Huambo and Huila in the month of November with technical support from the Global Nutrition Cluster Technical Support Team. Survey results are expected to be finalized in January while preliminary results are now under review.

The Government is also bringing together development partners in the Education sector, including the CSOs, to ensure that the local education group is an effective consultative body in the country. This group will not only guide the country to improve quality of education but is also a necessity for being eligible for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funding facility.

Working closely with other UN agencies has contributed significantly to at scale results or testing innovations, as UNICEF complemented with the strengths of other agencies to accelerate results for children and youth; and enhanced efficiency of working in Angola. Examples include: collaboration and coordination with WHO in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, with UNICEF providing technical support to cold chain and vaccination logistics; with UNDP on empowering youth by modelling a ‘learning to earning project in one municipality as a first step towards launching a GenU ‘chapter’ in Angola; with WFP, UNDP, FAO, UNFPA and WHO on the major drought response in southern Angola mobilizing CERF funding of USD 5m; and with UNFPA on the U-Report that has surpassed expectations with more than 70,000 U-Reporters.

As Chair of the United Nations Communication Group (UNCG), UNICEF worked closely with the RCO and other agencies to finalize the UN Communication Strategy 2022-2023, and the work plan for 2022. Joint advocacy efforts of the UNCT with different embassies and government partners was further enhanced by UNICEF’s active participation and leading role in UNCG.

While Angola presented its first SDG National Voluntary Review at the 2021 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, UNICEF worked closely with other UN agencies in supporting the Government in articulating its review and SDG tracking.

Through the chair of the UN Operations Management Team and ICT Working Group, UNICEF helped the UN to finalise the Business Operations Strategy, together with other UN Agencies, which contributed to improved efficiency and effectiveness of UN operations in Angola.

UNICEF renewed its collaboration with Banco Fomento de Angola, and engaged with other private sector organizations like UNITEL and Hotel Intercontinental for non-financial partnerships.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

New National Policy for Social Action

The new National Policy for Social Action (PNAS), which was developed with UNICEF support and enacted in February this year, is a milestone in system strengthening and advocacy for the creation of multi-sectoral coordination platforms. The PNAS offers a further opportunity to engage with government counterparts and provides the much-needed institutional push for greater coordination at central, provincial and local levels to enhance the Social Protection agenda. Strategic partnerships with civil society have also proved crucial in adapting to the ever-evolving pandemic situation and are complementary to the new PNAS in ensuring timely and effective social service delivery for children.
Improving Information management system for social cash transfers
Further to the Social Protection agenda, the social cash transfer Management Information System (MIS) was strengthened, and digitalization of all the operational processes rolled out even amidst the protracted COVID-19 pandemic. Technology continues to play a critical role with the digitalization of all these processes leading to greater efficiency through timely performance monitoring of operations for the social cash transfers programme. In addition, the quality of the Social Registry was enhanced, allowing for better planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of service provision. During the emergency response, the local level health system (health units) MIS was also included in the roll out and this innovation served to provide a boost in efficiency and again allowed for the monitoring of data and information in a timely manner.

Digitizing Outreach to Youth
The Digital Livelihoods Challenge was promoted in collaboration with the UNICEF regional office for Eastern and Southern Africa, in Portuguese language, with 70,000 adolescents and young people engaged through social media and U-Report. With UNICEF efforts, more than 18,000 young people expressed their interest in the regional initiative to network with other youth to develop entrepreneurial opportunities. It also demonstrated the importance of having these resources in the Portuguese language to bring to scale such opportunities to empower young people in Angola.

Giving voice to young people of Angola - U-Report
Further to the U-Report (SMS Jovem), with its soft launch in Angola in December 2020, key stakeholders (UNICEF, UNFPA, Ministry of Youth, Ministry of Telecommunication) developed a common vision to empower young people to express their views on issues important to them. The youth of the country welcomed the platform with initial polls showing an engagement rate of well over 80%, and in 2021 in Angola more than 70,000 U-Reporters subscribed. Subsequently, UNFPA and UNICEF collaborated to organize the U-Report (SMS Jovem) campaign, which brought impressive positive results with massive registration of young people during and following the campaign.

To sustain the U-Report (SMS Jovem) initiative, stable financial support must be ensured, especially to avoid delays in expansion, along with cooperation and agreement between the local mobile operators. Going forwards, UNICEF will focus on ways to engage girls, young people in remote provinces and specific vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.

Enhancing the Quality of Education
Through consistent advocacy and constant technical guidance to both the Ministry of Education (MED) and Ministry of Finance, the groundwork was laid for the formulation of the local education group (LEG officially endorsed January 2022), representing a wide range of strategic partners and stakeholders. With the LEG in place, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funds can now be accessed by the Government of Angola to further support MED translate high-level policies and guidelines, for example the National Special Education Policy Oriented towards Inclusion (2018) into more tangible change in practice at the municipality and school levels. This is a valuable funding opportunity that can strengthen the education system to address gaps between policy guidelines and on the ground practices to achieve universal coverage and quality education for children and adolescents in Angola.

Strengthening synergies among WASH and Education
UNICEF Angola has been actively engaging local and central health authorities to successfully overcome the challenge of taking an integrated approach in planning and carrying out emergency preparedness and response activities in schools. Specifically, UNICEF imparted critical information for sound risk-informed preparedness and planning for WASH programmes within the education sector.

The importance of high-level buy-in was emphasized in a regional event in May 2021 organized by the UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, the provincial education cabinet and the World Health Organization. The focus was on how UNICEF worked with WHO and colleagues from the two ministries to develop a comprehensive action plan to strengthen coordination between the health and education sectors to ensure schools remain open and provide enhanced opportunities for
safe learning. The Action Plan remains to be approved due to competing priorities, which highlights the need to further enhance advocacy efforts.