Equatorial Guinea was once one of Africa’s fastest-growing economies thanks to the oil sector. Drops in oil prices in the past years and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the country’s economy and exacerbated its already serious growth problems. Real GDP shrank 6.1% in 2020, compared with 5.6% in 2019. It was the eighth consecutive year of recession due to problems in both the oil (–7.2%) and non-oil sectors (–4.7%). While there was a slight improvement in 2021 owing to the successful completion of a large gas project, the country is expected to return to recession in 2022, with a real GDP decline of 4.4%.

The government aimed to diversify the economy beyond oil through attracting investments for other sectors like agriculture, fishing, mining, and tourism. However, international investors remain cautious due to report of corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and capacity deficit which hinder effective implementation of its economic and social transformation policy. Its ranking on the human development index (2020) was 145 out of 189 countries, which is low compared to countries with the same income per capita.

The COVID-19 pandemic further strained the health system. At the end of 2021, 249,840 people received one dose of the vaccination against COVID-19 while 203,662 received two doses (13.5% of the total population). Many health personnel were reassigned to care services for people infected with COVID-19, affecting basic services such as the care of patients with HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and routine immunization. Strict measures were imposed including border closure, travel restrictions and curfew for most of the year. Consequently, it is estimated that 60% children infected with HIV/AIDS could not receive their treatment while 26,077 children missed out on routine vaccination. The closure of schools, especially in Malabo and Bata districts, affected 65% of the student population nationally. Schools were closed for over 5 months, increasing the risk for dropout. Birth registration services were also affected as communication campaigns at community level could not be carried out as planned.

In the absence of a social protection system, the mitigation of the COVID-19 effects was limited as poverty and inequality continued to rise. However, a national plan on socioeconomic response and recovery 2022-2023 was developed by the government and UN partners to reduce the systematic vulnerabilities revealed by the crisis and to better handle future shocks. The UN also seized this opportunity to establish the first Multi-Partner Trust Fund with “acceleration of vaccination against COVID” being the first funding window. IMF approved Equatorial Guinea’s request for emergency assistance of US$67.38 million under the Rapid Financing Instrument.

Equatorial Guinea responded to the explosions in Bata which caused 107 deaths and extensive structural damages, including schools. Over 700 people were wounded, mostly children, while many lost their homes and businesses. Although catastrophic, the situation provided an opportunity to highlight the added value of a social protection system and prompted the government to finalize the social protection system law for approval in 2022. The emergency also showed the added value of UNICEF, other UN agencies and the civil society in the response. UNICEF engaged with new partners and donors, contributed to 20% of the mobilized emergency funds and led on sector responses, including the launch of the first humanitarian cash transfer (HCT) with valuable lessons for future programming.

The country’s first household income and economic survey were delayed while capacities and resources were shifted to conduct an enterprise census. The survey completion is expected in 2022.
UNICEF and other UN agencies intensively advocated for the undertaking of a national DHS/MICS as the last DHS was published in 2011. It is envisioned that funding will be mobilized in 2022.

On the health front, malaria, acute respiratory infections, and diarrhea remained the main causes of child mortality. Intensified routine immunization activities against child preventable diseases resulted in a national coverage of DTP3 at 68% which is higher than the coverage pre-COVID (61% in 2019) but remains inadequate and below the national target of 70%. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Health launched the baby-friendly hospital initiative to increase breastfeeding rates (EBF at 7%, 2011).

While school children were impacted by the school closures, a key milestone was achieved when UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in formally assessing primary students to evaluate learning outcome for the first time in decades. The access to WASH facilities in schools remains inadequate but the recent survey, supported by UNICEF, conducted in 94% of the schools will provide sound data for evidence-based advocacy.

A concern of the population and government is the increase in the number of adolescents and young people in conflict with the law, possibly another pandemic effect. Overall, there is a lack of recreational activities and job opportunities for young people in the country. To this end, UNICEF will seek to collaborate with NGOs and other UN agencies.

Many of the government officials were involved in preparation for the Party Congress ahead of the elections in 2022 which affected the implementation of activities. Nevertheless, both laws for anti-corruption and child adoption were approved in 2021. Meanwhile, the approval of the Code of persons and family is still pending. The discussions on the Penal Code reform were concluded in Parliament. Some new articles include cybercrime and gender-based violence.

Gender equality still faces challenges. The gender-based violence legislation is still in draft form while the national gender plan is in development. The government is committed to increase the female candidates (30% of the total) for the next elections.

Lastly, the mid-term review was organized in consultation with the government and the RO. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the role of UNICEF in a middle-upper country and identify programme shifts that are required to prepare for the new country programme 2024-28. The exercise produced a proof of concept to influence policy dialogue and leverage domestic resources to accelerate results for children. The recent approval of the government to contribute to the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) will facilitate implementation of key pending activities.

**Major contributions and drivers of results**

Several important programme and management priority results were achieved in 2021.

**Legal frameworks**

UNICEF advocated for the strengthening of the legal and regulatory frameworks for a more child-sensitive social protection system. UNICEF provided support in the development of the law on the social protection system, paving the way for a social protection system in Equatorial Guinea. Building on experiences gained in protection interventions implemented during the Bata emergency response, the law on the social protection system was updated to include new sections on resources allocation, governance of the system, and accountability mechanisms. The law is expected to be approved in 2022.

Meanwhile, UNICEF continued working with the Ministry of Social Affairs to improve the Single...
Social Registry (RUS), particularly to identify vulnerable persons. Through the Bata emergency response, the RUS has a database of more than 5,100 registered families.

UNICEF also supported the amendment of Equatorial Guinea’s Penal Code, which had not been updated since the country’s independence. The amended Code was recently approved by the Chamber of Deputies. With UNICEF support, the Penal Code is now more aligned with the international treaties and conventions on human rights ratified by Equatorial Guinea.

Furthermore, the Law on Adoptions, and the National Gender Policy were approved with UNICEF support. UNICEF is currently collaborating with the government to develop a roadmap for implementation.

UNICEF continued its high-level advocacy to the government for the submission of CRC report as the last one was submitted in 2004. The CO is also collaborating with the Resident Coordinator Office and other agencies on developing a roadmap to mainstream disability inclusion within the United Nations System, promoting disability inclusion in society and advocating to the government for the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Immunization**

UNICEF worked with WHO and partners to strategically support the country in mitigating the COVID-19 effects on the access to essential health services. These strategies aimed to increase the DPT3 vaccination coverage and reached 17,733 children (68%), which is close to the planned target of 18,254 children (70%). This increased result meant reaching 44% of the districts in the country with coverages above 80% (in each district), compared to 33% in 2020. Some key factors for these achievements, with UNICEF support, include the continuous supervision of vaccination posts, capacity building of 150 vaccination health workers in interpersonal communication, and improved management of inventory as well as maintenance of the cold chain.

According to the national protocol in 2021, 1,380 children were registered under ARV treatment (40% coverage), and 1,258 pregnant women under antenatal care received ARVs (40% coverage). This is higher than the 28% coverage in children and 31% coverage in pregnant women in 2020. These results were achieved with UNICEF support through continuous capacity building and the implementation of a new family approach to HIV diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, 1,358 children of HIV-positive mothers benefitted from HIV testing. Despite the availability of cartridges procured with UNICEF support and the existence of 5 GenXpert machines, the government did not realize the testing of children for early HIV diagnosis due to a lack of sampling material, reflecting planning and procurement bottlenecks in the MoH. With regional office (RO) collaboration, UNICEF supported the MoH in developing and validating a roadmap for early diagnosis, evaluating the quality of laboratory tests for Early Diagnosis (EID), and improving quality assurance of cartridges and laboratory supplies management for EID. As a novelty, the government formed partnerships with NGOs to improve HIV-related follow-up of children and families as well as to increase their adherence. On this, UNICEF collaborated with WHO, UNFPA, and Medical Care Development International to train 15 members of 7 NGOs to manage HIV programmes.

**Education**

With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Education finalized the national situational analysis of WASH which included 94% of the schools in the country. As the data is being validated, the preliminary results show that 52% of the schools have at least one water source; 32% of water sources at school were drinkable; and only 35% of the schools have functional toilets. Schools from the rural and remote districts consistently tend to have lower access to safe water sources and basic sanitation. This highlights the need for progressive resource allocation to overcome disparities ultimately affecting children’s learning and attendance.
On learning assessments, it is estimated that 14,032 primary students (7,136 from Grade 3; 6,896 from Grade 6; 52% of girls and 48% of boys) were evaluated in Spanish and Mathematics. The Grade 6 students were examined in two additional subjects: Science and Social Science. Through UNICEF support and advocacy, the initiative is a huge milestone for the country to formally assess learning on a district scale, including public and private schools. The preliminary results indicate that 10,487 students (75%) passed the assessments. The discrepancies between public and private schools are minor: the passing rate for students enrolled in public schools is 72.5%, while for students in private schools is 76%.

Due to the emergency response in Bata, the needs assessment on children with disabilities was delayed. However, this work is expected to be resumed in 2022 as part of the establishment of special classrooms for children with disabilities in public schools. Through UNICEF’s advocacy, the Ministry has increasingly paid more attention to the importance of inclusive education.

**Birth registrations**

Overall, the planned results by the government were affected due to emergency responses. However, UNICEF continued advocating for and providing technical support to the government to strengthen the legal frameworks on birth registration for improved coverage.

Through UNICEF’s advocacy, a work plan on modernizing the birth registry system was signed with the Ministry of Justice. The plan is aligned with the African Programme to Accelerate Birth Registration and Vital Statistics (APAI-CRVS) and aims to strengthen the integrated monitoring mechanisms and data on vital statistics.

There are some important progresses. Through increasing the availability of services at the district level, 3,550 (35%) children under twelve months, and 9,550 (70%) children under five years benefitted from having their birth certificates digitalized with UNICEF support. Meanwhile, 207,000 paper-based birth records were digitalized.

For the first time, all the registry offices in the insular region could report to the central registry on registered children born in 2021, either digitally or paper-based which is a milestone. UNICEF contributed to these results by strengthening the coordination with the authorities responsible for the national databases, advocating for revoking fines of late birth registrations, and providing capacity-building to civil registration personnel.

An awareness raising pilot campaign on the importance of birth registrations was carried out in 4 districts (Baney, Riaba, Luba, Malabo) and 3 municipalities (Moka, Batete, Rebola). To remove financial barriers for vulnerable families, especially during COVID-19 times, families were exempted from paying the penalty fees for late registration during the campaign.

The interoperability of health and justice data systems remains a challenge to increase digital registration coverage due to coordination barriers between the two ministries. With UNICEF support, the government will focus on selected priorities to scale up the services through a decentralization. There is also a need to improve the data to include disaggregated information.

Equatorial Guinea participated in the multi-country evaluation on birth registration, with support from the RO. As the evaluation is being finalized, the results are expected to generate evidence on Equatorial Guinea’s progress and challenges as well as inform the government’s planning.

**Emergency responses**

*Infection Prevention Control measures against COVID-19*

With UNICEF support, 3,511 people were trained (1,100 health personnel and 2,268 teachers) on
infection prevention and control (IPC) measures while 143 health personnel were trained on
disinfection of health facilities. Following the training, IPC committees were established in all health
facilities to ensure sustainability.

With funding from USAID/BHA, UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Health in procuring
and distributing infection prevention materials (chlorine bleach, soap, and PPE: 92,040 pairs of gloves,
50,500 masks, and 500 face shields) which benefitted 36 health facilities. Additionally, communication
materials on IPC in healthcare centers (1,000 posters and leaflets, 100 T-shirts, and 56 roll-ups) were
distributed and reached more than 2,500 healthcare workers and patients across 30 health centers.

Distance Education
The Ministry of Education continued to collaborate with the Ministry of Public Information on the
distance learning programme “La escuela en mi casa”. This initiative was launched in 2020 to respond
to the school closures due to the pandemic. It is estimated that 135,849 pre-primary and primary
students were reached through TV and radio educational programmes. Moreover, 118 TV sessions and
45 radio sessions were produced and broadcasted nationally, including in remote areas with scarce
electricity coverage.

Communication
For COVID-19 response, UNICEF supported the MoH in developing a communication campaign on
COVID-19 prevention and testing. The key features of the campaign included messages in both
Spanish and local languages; information materials for hospitals and health facilities on IPC; and a
survey on human behaviors on COVID-19 prevention. Additionally, a work plan on vaccination
campaigns for COVID-19 was developed with the Ministry.

On the Bata emergency, the Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) programme implemented a
communication strategy targeting both beneficiaries and the overall population. The CO disseminated
information on cash transfers and good care for children via SMS messages, collaborating with the
mobile phone operator MUNI. Additionally, key messages were disseminated at community level
around child protection, nutrition, early learning, vaccination, and hygiene. It is estimated that 300
families directly benefitted from the communication strategy while 80% of the Bata district was
reached (60% at the national level).

With funds from the Korean government, UNICEF and UNESCO worked with the Mines Advisory
Group (MAG) and the Ammunition Management Advisory Team (AMAT) to launch a social media
educational and awareness campaign. The communication materials included an emergency phone
number to alert the public, especially children, about the presence of unexploded ordnance and risks
involved. UNICEF also coordinated with the Ministry of Information to train 17 social mobilizers to
deliver key messages to the residents in the areas affected by the Bata explosions.

Humanitarian cash transfers
Building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 response, in collaboration with the Ministry of
Social Affairs, UNICEF designed and implemented the first-ever cash-based intervention in Equatorial
Guinea to provide HCT to the vulnerable families with children affected by the explosions in Bata in
March 2021.

300 families benefitted from the HCT through mobile money (MUNI Dinero). The post-distribution
monitoring reported that families used the cash to cover basic needs, including house reparations, food,
hygiene items, child-care, transport, and education-related costs. The HCT was complemented with a
child-oriented communication strategy.

The CO provided technical support to the selection of families, using a vulnerability scorecard.
UNICEF worked on the data collection through collaborating with NGOs and partners (ASAMA,
Despite not having a WASH programme at the country level, UNICEF, with support from EMOPS, stepped up to lead an assessment of the quality of water sources in the area affected by the Bata explosions through a successful multi-partner arrangement with the government and the private sector. By this analysis, the CO turned the emergency into an opportunity to establish innovative partnerships, generate evidence, and prevent health risks in the affected area. Moreover, this assessment should inform policy design beyond the emergencies.

**Logistics support**

UNICEF played an important role in coordinating the assistance provided by different donors for the Bata emergency. The European Union, through the French Embassy, a consortium of oil and gas extraction companies (Trident), and UNHCR made donations to the country which UNICEF supported in channeling with support from NGOs.

To ensure effective and transparent management of donated goods to the hospitals, UNICEF recruited seven volunteers to improve the control of the warehouses. Thanks to this support, the Bata Regional Hospital established an electronic system for managing their stock in the central warehouse.

**Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse**

The CO advocated for and provided support on capacity development to prevent and address gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA), involving several ministries, NGOs, and UNICEF’s national goodwill ambassador, Nelida Karr.

In the emergencies, the CO with NGO partners MOSART and Bocamandja implemented initiatives for prevention of GBV and SEA by producing and disseminating communication materials and organizing informative sessions on referral mechanisms at the community and school levels in the insular region.

Moreover, UNICEF and partners trained 60 people to provide support to survivors of violence via hotline managed by public officers and representatives of NGOs. The CO also collaborated with MOSART and Bocamandja on providing services and informal training opportunities, such as sewing and cooking workshops, benefitting 100 survivors of violence, mainly adolescent mothers, who also benefitted from the psychosocial support provided by BiriaElat.

This short-term experience suggests that low-cost and community-based strategies can be effective in addressing violence. It will also serve as an advocacy example to the government.

**Risk management and control**

By late 2021, all the PBR recommendations were actioned in alignment with the CO’s budget based on the new organizational structure and the Common Back Office (CBO). The temporary solution in arranging part-time staff sharing one position number are expected to be back on full-time basis with different position numbers by 2022. The onboarding of key management staff was completed, including the newly created Deputy Representative and Operations Manager positions.

The outsourcing service for ICT support was enabled in the last quarter of the year. Meanwhile, all posts funded by IB/RR were allocated. The statutory committees were also completed and functional. Additionally, the HACT assurance plan with eTOOLS continued to be implemented, while the Business Operation Strategy (BOS) 2.0 was populated. The implementation of the CBO within UN premises is in its initial stage. Furthermore, flexible time arrangements remain available but most of the staff and personnel were working in UNICEF premises in Malabo and Bata. The CO completed all the eight audit recommendations.
Resource mobilization
With support from the RO, UNICEF finalized its Resource Mobilization and Advocacy and Communication Strategies. These documents will serve as roadmaps for the country office in resource mobilization and advocacy efforts. UNICEF submitted over 10 donor proposals and concept notes to partners with over 30% successful rate in mobilizing new funds, particularly for emergencies. The mobilized funds from the private sector (250,000 USD) through UNICEF-USA are noteworthy and complemented the funds from USAID/BHA to launch the HCT programme. This established an important partnership step for other possible future collaborations. With support from the RO, the office completed a private sector mapping.

In 2021, the projected annual revenue was on track and increased by over 161%, from 1,135,760 USD in the previous year to 2,967,777 USD to the report year. This trend is promising as this annual budget is the largest, thus far, in the current programme cycle.

The training regarding financial management and mobile money were executed as planned: UNICEF sensitized government and NGO partners on financial management to strengthen overall project implementation. In coordination with the National Treasury, UNICEF provided refresher training on HACT procedures and on the use of mobile money to 29 participants.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships
The reporting period marked a productive year for UNICEF Equatorial Guinea. The collaboration with the government was also further strengthened, particularly through the emergency response in Bata.

For the COVID-19 response, there are noteworthy advances. Through a joint UN advocacy coordinated by the Resident Coordinator, a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) was established to enable transfers of funds for joint programmes, including the funding of 18.98 M USD to procure 600,000 COVID-19 vaccine full doses for vulnerable population, involving three UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO and UNDP). Under this agreement framework, UNICEF will manage 2.0 M USD to accelerate the vaccine coverage and strengthen capacity in vaccine management which is essential for the national immunization programme. Indeed, the establishing of MPTF was an important step in meeting the donor requirements to secure funding and will serve as an effective platform for other joint programmes.

For the Bata explosions, UNICEF and other UN agencies jointly developed the Emergency and Response Plan (ERP), in coordination with the government and partners. Against the ERP, UNICEF mobilized 67.5% of the total mobilized funds (2.96 M USD) which were used for sectors such as communication, education, health, protection, and logistics. At the onset of the emergency, UNICEF played an important role in coordinating the response between government and NGOs to ensure timely response, efficiency, and transparency, particularly for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Ministry of Health on the logistics of donated items to the affected population, such as clothes, medicine, hospital equipment, food, and household goods. UNICEF Equatorial Guinea collaborated with UNICEF Cameroon to deploy a logistics specialist to support the emergency response and to meet the increasing demands. UNICEF also coordinated with UNHCR to harmonize the distributions of materials to the most affected households.

Moreover, UNICEF worked with the government, local authorities, and NGOs such as ASAMA, BiriaElat, and Red Cross to respond to the needs on the ground, including identification of unaccompanied and separated children due to the explosions and registration of affected families. Working with the civil society was instrumental for the emergency response. UNICEF also mobilized funds from the Korean government and collaborated with the Ministry of Information, UNESCO, and MAG International (for their technical expertise) on an educational campaign regarding explosive...
ordinance risks, particularly at the community level for prevention. The campaign was inclusive and used both Spanish and other local languages for communication to ensure reach. It is worth mentioning that UNICEF mobilized funds from the private sector through UNICEF USA and USAID/BHA to launch the humanitarian cash transfer programme. The funding mobilization from the private sector with an amount of $250,000 established an important partnership step for any future collaboration not only with the same donor but also with other private sector partners.

Additionally, with support from the RO and EMOPS, UNICEF mobilized experts on water quality from Veolia Foundation (private sector) and KWR (water research institute), through the Dutch Government to conduct an analysis of the water quality and toxicity levels in affected areas.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Accelerating routine vaccination in the pandemic

Factors linked to COVID-19 impacted the supply and demand of essential services. From the demand side, there was a decrease in demand for immunization services due to transportation constraints; from the supply side, health workers for routine vaccination were assigned to vaccination against COVID-19. Almost 50% of the parents who participated in the survey of the multi-country evaluation on UNICEF’s contribution to immunization coverage, reported having experienced restrictions to access health services during the pandemic, especially in the rural areas.

To mitigate these challenges and increase vaccination coverage, UNICEF and WHO supported the government in conducting an equity analysis to identify bottlenecks at the district level and address them. This analysis contributed to identifying unvaccinated children and allowed a more efficient allocation of UNICEF’s resources to reach them. The CO used this analysis to support the target districts by increasing the number of outreach visits and reinforcing the fixed vaccination posts with more staff. According to the multi-country evaluation findings, parents reported the following as main barriers to access vaccination services: their deficient quality (70%), transportation (69%) and other costs (66%). In response, UNICEF will collaborate with the MoH and partners to identify alternatives to overcome these barriers.

The overestimation of the target population according to the last census also influenced the low immunization coverage. UNICEF, in collaboration with WHO, Medical Care Development International, and Fundacion de Religiosos para la Salud (FRS), updated the target population in 78% of the 18 health districts. This allowed some districts with very low coverage to achieve coverage of over 80% and contributed to avoiding vaccine stock-outs.

Improved Learning Outcomes

UNICEF’s advocacy on the importance of measuring children’s learning to ensure foundational skills bore fruit; there were substantial progresses in improving the learning outcomes. Through UNICEF support, 14,032 primary students (7,136 from Grade 3; and 6,896 from Grade 6; 52% of girls and 48% of boys,) participated in the summative assessments to evaluate their learning outcomes primarily in Spanish and Mathematics. The Grade 6 students were evaluated on two additional subjects, Science and Social Science. The assessments were strategically conducted in two districts (Malabo and Bata) covering a significant number of Grade 3 (68%) and Grade 6 students (75%) in the country. The long-term vision of the government is to scale up the learning assessments to benefit all children in schools.
To this end, UNICEF will continue to advocate and strategize for increased government financing to improve learning outcomes. While UNICEF provided support to launch learning assessments in the two major districts, the Ministry of Education used its own resources to pilot similar learning assessment exercise in other districts with the aim to re-introduce the concept of evaluating children to support better learning outcomes. While the learning assessments in other districts were somewhat rudimentary and lacked the same rigorous quality control in the procedures due to the limited resources, it was a significant step forward for the government to increasingly invest in education.

The effects from the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures underpinned the importance of measuring learning outcomes for the government. It created an opportunity for the Ministry of Education to take an important decision in generating evidence about the realities in schools which is a comparatively courageous one given the context.

Strengthening the Birth Registration System

Despite the need to prioritize emergency responses in 2021, the CO achieved progress in modernizing the birth registration system. UNICEF’s advocacy and technical support to the government benefitted from the existence of international and regional commitments.

Although the Ministry of Justice remained as the principal counterpart to strengthen the birth registration system, UNICEF engaged with other stakeholders, such as the national authority in charge of the system of databases (CNIAPÉ), local governments and community leaders which proved to be beneficial. The role of local stakeholders was instrumental in removing access barriers for improved national coverage. The use of mobile units, capacity-building strategies and regular monitoring visits enhanced the government performance.

The CO will continue advocating for the inter-ministerial collaboration to increase birth registration accessibility and coverage. As reported in the multi-country evaluation on immunization, there is room for improvement regarding synergies between the ministries of justice and health to keep the registry on live births integrated into the Immunization Plus Programme, starting from increasing the interoperability of their systems. Additionally, UNICEF will resume high-level dialogue with decision-makers to leverage birth registration as a priority in the national agenda.

Turning Emergencies into opportunities

The CO’s experience in responding to two emergencies concurrently (COVID-19, in 2020-2021 and the Bata explosions) was a valuable opportunity for innovation, technical dialogue, political advocacy, and for gaining influence in public-policy making process.

Among the innovations, UNICEF’s social protection response in emergencies included the country’s first design and implementation of a HCT programme. Other innovations supported by UNICEF were the strengthening of the RUS. The RUS was not only used for targeting, and monitoring but also for transparency and accountability purposes. Building on the CO’s lessons learned from 2020 regarding the use of mobile money, the HCT programme used the same modality to reach beneficiaries with limited or no access to bank services. Through the successful use of these tools in the field, the government has recognized them as key components of a social protection system.

As recommended in the MTR, the CO will systematize this experience and include it in a broader but integrated advocacy strategy for policy. This systematization will be carried out with a participatory methodology and support the CO’s shift towards a system strengthening and policy formulation approach.

Looking ahead
These lessons learned along with reflections held during the mid-term review will inform UNICEF’s programme priorities and actions leading to the next country programme in 2024. In the meantime, the CO will continue its efforts to accelerate results particularly in immunization, learning outcomes and birth registrations while using social protection, advocacy for data and for increased financing for children and innovative partnerships, as key strategies to accelerate progress and achieve results.