

Nigeria

Update on the context and situation of children

In 2021, children and their families faced multiple challenges, including escalating insecurity in parts of the country, a protracted crisis continuing in the North-East of the country, and the continuing uneven socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021 Nigeria's population was 214 million, making it the most populous country in Africa. Around half the population is under 19 years, and average life expectancy is 55 years. The country combines development and emergency contexts with an ongoing major humanitarian operation in the Northeast of the country.

Socio-economic progress has to some extent recovered from the severe shocks experienced in 2020, when GDP contracted by 1.8% and evidence indicates that some 25 per cent of jobs were lost. In 2021, projections indicate a recovery with the economy growing by 2.7 per cent. However, high inflation is frustrating the recovery and eroding the purchasing power of the most vulnerable households. At a projected 17 per cent in 2021, inflation in Nigeria ranks seventh highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, in the last two years surging domestic food prices accounted for almost 70 percent of the total inflation which disproportionately affects households in poverty and at risk of falling into poverty.

The security situation is of increasing concern to the well-being of children. As a result of several security threats in recent years, including the non-state armed groups involved in the protracted crisis in the North-East as well as domestic crime activities, there is a general perception of insecurity across Nigeria. An estimated 1.3 million children in 2021 the security crisis increasingly affected children directly. In 2021, there were 25 attacks on schools. 1,440 children were abducted, and 16 children killed. This resulted in closure of 618 schools in six Northern states contributing to learning losses for over two months.

Across the sustainable development goals (SDGs) relating to children, Nigeria has seen some progress but acceleration is needed to meet the SDGs by 2030. The under-five mortality rate in Nigeria was 114 per 1,000 live births in 2020, one of the highest rates in the world. While under-five mortality continues to fall—the rate was 135 per 1,000 live births in 2010—the rate of improvement must be accelerated for the country to achieve the SDG goal of 25 per 1,000 live births.

Malnutrition is one of the major drivers of child mortality, morbidity, and overall worsened life chances for children in Nigeria. Nigeria has the second highest burden of stunted children in the world, with a national prevalence rate of 32 percent of children under five. An estimated 2 million children in Nigeria suffer from severe acute malnutrition (SAM), but only two out of every 10 children affected is currently reached with treatment.

Poor access to improved water and sanitation in Nigeria remains a major contributing factor to high morbidity and mortality rates among children under five. The use of contaminated drinking water and poor sanitary conditions result in increased vulnerability to water-borne diseases, including diarrhoea which leads to deaths of more than 70,000 children under five annually. 19 per cent of the population defecate in the open.

Though Nigeria accounts for the largest share of out-of-school children (OOSC) globally, the primary OOSC rate declined from 37 per cent (2018) to 32 per cent (2021), and the transition rate from primary to junior secondary school increased from 59 per cent (2020) to 65 per cent (2021). Gender, like geography and poverty, is an important factor in the pattern of educational marginalization. States in the north-east and north-west have female primary net attendance rates of 47.7 percent and 47.3 percent, respectively, meaning that more than half of the girls are not in school. The education deprivation in northern Nigeria is driven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls.

Abuse in all its forms are a daily reality for many Nigerian children and only a fraction ever receive help. Six out of every 10 children experience some form of violence – one in four girls and 10 per cent of boys have been victims of sexual violence. Of the children who reported violence, fewer than five out of a 100 received any form of support. The drivers of violence against children (VAC) are rooted in social norms, including around the use of violent discipline.

Nigeria has the largest number of child brides in Africa with more than 23 million girls and women who were married as children, most of them from poor and rural communities. While data suggests a decline of 9 per cent in the prevalence of child marriage since 2003, and a projected further decrease of 6 per cent by 2030, Nigeria's rapid population growth means that on current trends, the number of child brides may increase by more than one million by 2030 and double by 2050.

Only 30 per cent of children under five years were registered at birth. Besides being a 'first right' of any child, improved birth registration is critical for national planning and governance functions, and serves as a foundation for achieving progress in wider child protection areas and the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.

The protracted conflict in north-eastern Nigeria continues to devastate the lives of civilians, resulting in a humanitarian crisis affecting 7.7 million women, men and children who are all in acute need of help and protection. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 20,000 people have been killed, more than 4,000 people abducted and 1.7 million remain displaced, most of them in Borno State. The humanitarian community has reached 4.5 million of those affected with life-saving assistance which has helped to stabilize living conditions for millions of people, reducing levels of mortality and morbidity. Nevertheless, ongoing threats of attacks by armed groups and military restrictions – particularly restrictions on population movements – continue to be obstacles to trade, livelihoods and markets, leaving a substantial proportion of the civilian population dependent on humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian need is ongoing and significant.

Major contributions and drivers of results

As part of the Government of Nigeria and UNICEF Country Programme of Cooperation (2018-2022), seven Key Results for Children (KRCs) have been identified. These KRCs are aligned to contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSDPF) 2018-2022, agreed by the Government of Nigeria and the United Nations country team. The primary focus of UNICEF contributions to the framework are under result area two of the framework, "Equitable Quality Basic Services," where UNICEF contributes to all four outcome areas: Health, Nutrition, HIV&AIDS; Learning and Skills Development; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH); and Protection.

In 2021, programming continued to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF provided direct COVID-19 response and leveraged opportunities to improve service delivery and accelerate results for children. As the key delivery partner for COVAX, UNICEF, in partnership with the Government of Nigeria, supported the shipment, storage, and distribution of over 14 million COVID-19 vaccines. Equally, UNICEF supported COVID-19 mass vaccination campaigns that aimed to reach 50 per cent of the eligible population.

KRC1 Immunization

In 2021, UNICEF assisted the government in vaccine and logistics management, including immunization supply chain and vaccine policy direction; standard operating procedures; cold chain deployment; and monitoring, forecasting, and procurement of vaccines and supplies. Nigeria also expanded delivery of immunization services into hard-to-reach areas through routine immunization intensification and supplemental immunization activities. The digital health information system (DHIS2) documented Penta3 coverage of 77 per cent (January to October 2021) for infants under one

vs. a 60 per cent target; however, data is unvalidated, and actual coverage could be lower. The annual Penta3 target for LGAs with 80 per cent was set at 31 per cent and Nigeria achieved 43 per cent (DHIS2).

Even though wild polio-free status was maintained, in 2021, more than 200 children suffered acute flaccid paralysis due to circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2 outbreaks. UNICEF supported the introduction and subsequent importation of 28 million doses of novel Oral Polio Vaccine type 2 in-country and supported the planning and implementation of vaccination campaigns and the development of the polio transition plan. Additionally, UNICEF supported the implementation of the effective vaccine management assessment. In 2021, no major outbreaks of measles, meningitis, or yellow fever were reported, with steady progress towards eliminating neonatal tetanus by approving the elimination plan.

UNICEF Nigeria also strengthened the cold chain system to increase government capacities to absorb new vaccines, including COVID-19. For example, 93 ultra low-temperature freezers (ULTF) were deployed across 36 states and the FCT, resulting in a combined capacity to absorb approximately 28 million doses of Pfizer vaccine.

KRC2 Prevention of stunting

UNICEF provided strategic technical, financial and logistics support for the implementation of high impact nutrition interventions and strengthening of key policies. Importantly, new Micronutrient Deficiency Control Guidelines (MNDC) were finalized and validated. Through consistent advocacy at the national and sub-national levels, the government released US\$ 2,480,544 for nutrition (107 per cent of the target). States were also supported to develop costed Multisectoral Plans for Nutrition, which included costing for improved exclusive breastfeeding and dietary diversity. The Government of Nigeria made commitments to enhance nutrition security for women and children at the Food Systems Summit (FSS) as well as Nutrition for Growth (N4G). UNICEF enabled inclusion of the voice of children and youth as key stakeholders for the FSS.

In contrast to 2020, when only 9 million children aged 6-59 months received one dose of Vitamin A Supplementation (VAS), 26.6 million children (85 per cent of target) received one dose of VAS in 2021. Data on the second dose is currently being collated. Success was achieved by leveraging partnerships to (i) secure in-kind donations of Vitamin A capsules for the entire country; (ii) ensure reach of the capsules to states; and (iii) closely monitor delivery and use.

UNICEF also worked to improve MIYCN practices, particularly optimal infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF) in both humanitarian and development context. While nationally exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rates have increased from 13 per cent in 2008 to 29 per cent in 2018, this lags behind global targets. Giving plain water to infants less than six months continues to be the biggest barrier to EBF. Consequently, UNICEF has continued to support the Government of Nigeria to implement the Zero Water campaign launched in 2019. Only one in five Nigerian children 6-23 months old get the minimum dietary diversity they need. To improve the quality of children's diets, UNICEF is piloting a Dietary Diversity project in Kano State in partnership with the State Government and the Emirate Council. Lessons from this pilot will inform other ongoing efforts. In addition to the Zero Water Campaign and the Dietary Diversity Project, through a variety of platforms, including mother-to-mother support groups, 913,985 among the planned 1,120,332 primary caregivers of children 0-23 months received nutrition counselling.

Through 2021, with support from development partners, the supply pipeline of lifesaving nutrition commodities, including Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) for the management of acute malnutrition, was secure for Northeast Nigeria. Overall, RUTF was procured and distributed for the treatment of 419,057 children aged 6-59 with severe acute malnutrition (SAM).

In addition, significant contributions were made to the pipeline for the Northwest. The integration of

nutrition commodities into the national supply chain is a promising development for Nigeria, as is the near certification of local producer Nutri-K for RUTF.

KRC3 Equitable and sustainable access to education; and KRC4 Improved learning outcomes

Though Nigeria accounts for the largest share of out-of-school children (OOSC) globally, the primary OOSC rate declined from 37 per cent (2018) to 32 per cent (2021), and the transition rate from primary to junior secondary school increased from 59 per cent (2020) to 65 per cent (2021). UNICEF support to federal and state governments in education sector planning, strengthening school-based management committees, unconditional cash transfers, back to school campaigns, partnerships with traditional and religious leaders and peer education initiatives contributed to the reduction of the number of OOSC by 821,736 (48 per cent girls). The success of these strategies has led to the replication of enrolment drive initiatives by the national government and other donor agencies across the country. Furthermore, Nigeria's performance on SDG4.1 (access to schooling) was evaluated in 2021 with progress, challenges, and an actionable roadmap to be released in early 2022.

Nigeria's focus on improving the quality of education has been threefold:

- 1) At least 1,426,762 children were supported with catch-up learning programmes to remediate the learning losses caused by school closures during COVID-19, through diversified home and community-based learning, including remote use, low-and high-tech digital solutions.
- 2) Financing of and access to quality early childhood care development and education is very low. This prompted the development of an investment case for ECCDE and a play-based curriculum.
- 3) High-level advocacy with federal and state governments, development partners, and support from UNICEF's HQ and regional office led to buy-in for the scale-up of workable foundational literacy and numeracy models in five UNICEF focus states.

As part of education system strengthening initiatives, UNICEF supported 33 of 36 states and the FCT to develop evidence-informed, costed crisis response and gender-responsive education sector plans. Continuous capacity development of Education Management Information System (EMIS) coordinators led to functional EMIS in 21 states and the FCT. In 33 states, directors of Planning Research and Statistics were supported to coordinate teams leading planning and budget preparation across ministries, departments, and agencies. In five states, capacity was enhanced to use data and evidence for performance assessment of the education sector plan to increase accountability and efficiency in basic education service delivery.

School safety has become high priority in Nigeria due to the increasing number of attacks on schools and abductions of teachers and students impacting access to, and retention of learners in school. In 2021, there were 25 attacks on schools. 1,440 children were abducted, and 16 children killed. This resulted in closure of 618 schools in six northern states contributing to learning losses for over two months. At a federal level, UNICEF and partners set up a multi-sectoral advocacy forum to generate high-level political support and financing for safe schools. At a state level, the global Safe Schools Declaration including safe schools minimum standards, to which Nigeria is a signatory, is being operationalized in 11 states.

KRC5 Protection of children from violence and exploitation, including in humanitarian contexts and KRC7 Birth registration

In 2021, UNICEF supported 62,922 child survivors of violence (18,547 girls, 44,375 boys) with access to health, social work, and justice/law enforcement services. The target for the year was exceeded by 14 per cent, three times greater than the number of children reached in 2020. UNICEF provided technical support for family tracing, verification, reunification, and community-based psychosocial support to the case workers overseeing the Almajiri programme and those in charge of the safe release of children. Trainings on Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) and case management forms were conducted.

UNICEF's convening role was critical to move the agenda of child justice (through the Coordination Forum on Justice for Children) to address the issue of children in conflict with the law and child survivors of violence. As an example of the strengths of this Coordination Forum, a unique initiative to review cases of sexual violence on children was set up to identify justice bottlenecks and fast-track cases in court. UNICEF's convening role has also been critical regarding case management by establishing a task force to review all the case management forms and practices across the country. This will yield significant results in handling cases of violence against children and in the information management system for case management next year.

UNICEF secured a high-level political commitment from the Nigerian Government to end violence against children at a national dialogue. The Vice-President made a seven-point commitment to increase the budget allocation, access to services, school safety, and legal frameworks for child protection.

Child Rights Act (CRA) domestication is progressing, with Sokoto State signing the Child Protection Bill into law and four states are awaiting their Governors' assent.

Though the target number of child survivors of violence supported in 2021 was a steep increase from 2020, it was exceeded by 14 per cent. The COVID-19 crisis facing Almajiri children – children sent away to Islamic schools – led to UNICEF developing a programme for children in street situations, including adolescent girls. Beyond the support provided to the 13,397 (280 girls), Almajiri children reunified with their families at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in three states – Kaduna (10,854), Kano (2,261) and Sokoto (282) – an estimated 1.9 million children (including 508,000 girls) were documented in Islamic schools across Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto States. Jointly with the Education section, a new programme is being developed for children in street situations, including adolescent girls, to access formal education, life skills, and social protection schemes.

The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) national policy and plan of action were validated this year. The emphasis of the FGM programme has been on defining localized community-owned FGM Elimination Action Plans in the current 46 focus LGAs. This approach shifts from previous interventions aimed at public declarations of abandonment.

Birth registration

3.1 million children under one and 5.6 million children under five received birth registration services relative to targets of 5.3 million and 9 million, respectively. Targets were set high in anticipation of a new automated birth registration system in 2021, which is now anticipated in 2022. 2021 achievements are comparable to 2020 results. 2021 results show that for children under five, 62 per cent of the target was achieved, while for children under one (KRC7), the outcome was 58 per cent (3.1 million vs. a target of 5.3 million; vs. 3,193,651 children reached in 2020).

In 2021, the Nigerian e-Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) readiness assessment provided a clear pathway to strengthen birth registration systems and generate consensus. A CVRS Coordination Committee will be inaugurated in 2022 to take this work forward.

KRC8 Ending open defecation

In 2021, Nigeria recorded progress in the number of people accessing WASH services. 2020 Joint

Monitoring Programme country reports indicated that 18 per cent of Nigerians in rural communities now have access to safely-managed drinking water services, a 1 per cent increase from the previous year. Similarly, the number of people using basic sanitation increased from 42 per cent to 43 per cent, while 19 per cent (38 million) of Nigerians are still defecating in the open. While progress was recorded, Nigeria is still far from achieving SDGs 6.1 and 6.2.

With less than five years to achieve the target of the National Roadmap for Achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) Nigeria by 2025, UNICEF is supporting the Federal Government of Nigeria to accelerate progress. In 2021, 28 LGAs attained LGA-wide ODF, while over 6.5 million people are living in 7,350 ODF communities. Furthermore, 6.6 million people gained access to basic sanitation, while 3.6 million people were reached with hygiene promotion messages. Results were achieved through mass mobilization for sanitation at the community and LGA levels and leveraging the capacity built over the years in these LGAs.

UNICEF participated in the National ODF Committee and other national bodies to promote sanitation and the achievement of ODF. Through these high-level meetings and engagements, UNICEF provided technical support for implementing the National ODF strategy, the Clean Nigeria campaign, and the achievement of ODF in 28 LGAs.

UNICEF also supported the government to procure consultants to develop the Hand Hygiene for All (HH4A) Roadmap and provided technical support for its national review and validation. Dissemination of the validated roadmap will follow in the coming year, and it will be incorporated into the National ODF Roadmap and the Clean Nigeria campaign.

Humanitarian response (humanitarian-development nexus)

In the Northeast, UNICEF-led Sectors are fully staffed, effective and responding to humanitarian needs. In the Northwest, UNICEF has established an informal nexus-oriented coordination system between INGOs, NNGOs, and UN agencies to increase complementary assessments and responses. Across the entire country, UNICEF, in close collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority, has conducted a risk analysis assessing 12 risks in the areas of floods, epidemics, conflict and violence, which resulted in an analysis of prevalent risks per LGA.

In 2021, the conflict situation in the Northeast was aggravated by the significant rise in food insecurity and acute malnutrition, and Northeast Nigeria was one of the six famine prevention focus countries/areas of the High-Level Task Force on Famine Prevention in 2021. While the food insecurity situation in Northeast Nigeria has improved, according to the latest Cadre Harmonisé assessment, the year ended with an additional 300,000 children identified to be acutely malnourished, bringing the total caseload at the end of 2021 to 1.4 million children, as per the draft 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview.

In the Northwest – a region covered by the HAC - the main emergencies in 2021 were the malnutrition crisis, as well as the cholera outbreak. In an effort to streamline partners' assessments and strengthen coordinated advocacy efforts UNICEF started co-chairing the informal Northwest Coordination Forum with the Nigeria INGO Forum in December 2021.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

Since the United Nations and the Government of Nigeria launched the COVID-19 Basket Fund in 2020, US\$ 73 million has been mobilized to ensure an efficient, effective and impactful response to the pandemic. Within the framework of the Basket Fund, UNICEF leads the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) pillar to influence individual behaviour change to mitigate socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. This financing and investment platform of diverse stakeholders (UN and other multi-laterals, bilateral, private sector, foundations, philanthropists, among others) has enabled a more coordinated UN response to the Government's efforts.

In 2021, UNICEF built on existing partnerships (GAC, BMGF, and GAVI, among others) to expand the range of interventions to strengthen the health system. These partnerships also helped respond to some of the country's new challenges (e.g., supporting COVID-19 vaccine logistics management and mass vaccination campaigns, and the response to the circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type 2).

Since 2008, UNICEF has partnered with UNFPA through the Joint Programme on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). In Nigeria, the partnership includes UNDP, UNESCO, UNWOMEN, and the Resident Coordinators Office, through the Spotlight Initiative (SI), critical to addressing violence against girls. In 2021, SI funding supported UNICEF to continue reaching out to girls, especially at the community level, and strengthened services for survivors of violence.

UNICEF fostered critical partnerships at the federal and state levels, which led to policy shifts such as the passage of the Child Rights Act in three additional states and leveraging over US\$ 6 million as direct government investment for water and sanitation.

In partnership with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and a network of private sector partners, UNICEF led a series of innovation challenges through the Youth Agency Marketplace (YOMA). The platform drove awareness among young audiences and empowered them to offer solutions during the pandemic to develop future-ready employability skills. YOMA fits into the broader framework of Generation Unlimited Nigeria (which formally launched in 2021) to provide, opportunities to 20 million young Nigerians by 2030 in education, skills development, employment, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. GenU, as a multi-sector public-private-youth partnership platform driving the agenda to support young Nigerians, aged 10 to 24, to transition from learning to earning. UNICEF hosts the GenU Nigeria Secretariat and, as such, continued building decisive partnerships with private sector partners, such as IHS Towers, Airtel, Microsoft and MTN under the "Connectivity and Digital Learning" strategy pillar; ILO, GiZ, Jobberman, PwC, Unilever and Olam under the "Workplace Readiness" strategy pillar; and Goodwall, NGGA and Cartedo under "Youth Engagement" strategy pillar.

U-Report, now fully integrated in GenU Nigeria, hit four million responders in Nigeria in 2021. In the face of the challenges posed by COVID-19, and many others, U-Report Nigeria was a trusted platform for sharing lifesaving information about the disease to mitigate the spread of the virus and mobilizing young people to fight vaccine hesitancy. Over 80,000 young people participated in the #COVID19Innovation challenge and many others related to climate change and entrepreneurship.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

In 2021, there were important lessons learned cutting across programmes, which will inform shifts in how we accelerate progress to deliver results for children in the future. These focused on shifting strategies to achieve more with less, driving the social behaviour change agenda, including gender norms, strengthening the response to outbreaks, innovative COVID-19 programming, and ramping up field monitoring.

Achieving more with less

Across programmes, a powerful lesson learned is that emphasizing prevention (Nutrition), sustainability (WASH), and shifting focus from coverage to targeting the most vulnerable (Health) will help UNICEF achieve more with less.

In Nutrition, prevention is the least funded and attended to both internally and externally but the best buy. It costs US\$10 to provide the complete package of preventive interventions during the 1,000 days window, whereas it costs US\$120 to manage and treat a child with severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Therefore, UNICEF will focus both human and financial resources on prevention, by investing in generating evidence to diagnose issues, identify solutions, and unlock barriers from financing to service delivery.

This year, focusing on sustaining WASH services rather than building new facilities proved cost-effective. UNICEF also learned that empowering communities to control and operate their water facilities makes them more willing to maintain and repair. UNICEF is encouraging statewide adoption of the revised Village Level Operation and Maintenance strategy, which is now community-owned and profit-oriented. So far, 12 states have adopted it, with more expected to come on board.

Since 2020, the health system in Nigeria has faced significant stressors (polio outbreak, COVID-19, cholera outbreak). Although there is increased political will and consensus around the health systems strengthening (HSS) agenda, it is not translating to progress in reaching those most vulnerable—children receiving no vaccinations (“zero-dose”). This year, UNICEF intensified routine immunization efforts in 90 zero-dose LGAs, and in the future, will explore the use of GIS mapping to locate even more hard-to-reach communities.

UNICEF has learned that using a multisectoral approach to target these zero-dose communities with essential integrated primary health care (PHC) services (acting as a one-stop PHC for maternal health, immunization, and nutrition) will potentially yield better results.

Driving the social behaviour change agenda

This year highlighted the need to generate multisectoral evidence and collect qualitative formative data to address barriers to socio-cultural and gender norms, financing, and promoting attitudes and practices to reduce the high prevalence of violence against children. A gender program review of the program and a gender snapshot analysis of relevant indicators was completed. UNICEF will invest in the most impactful and realistic priorities, shifting from Communication for Development (C4D) to social and behaviour change communication (SBC).

UNICEF is developing an SBC strategy to strengthen community engagement and promote behaviour change, especially with regards to:

- focus on first 1000 days - priority sectors are WASH, Nutrition, CP, and Education
- improving uptake of COVID-19 and polio vaccines
- promoting positive masculinity in boys, empowerment of adolescent girls and adolescent parenting
- boosting demand for birth registration services and ending FGM
- addressing gender drivers for school dropouts and uptake of health care and WASH services

Additionally, UNICEF will map and strengthen community engagement platforms to address behaviour change initiatives holistically. This year, recruiting young U-Reporters as vaccine champions was an innovative strategy, and UNICEF will engage more young people and explore different digital platforms for SBC.

Strengthening response to outbreaks

Poor sector coordination affected the preparedness and response to the widespread cholera outbreak in

the country in 2021 which resulted in at least 3,600 fatalities. UNICEF is taking measures to improve sector coordination, strengthen emergency preparedness and response and build the capacity of stakeholders to manage WASH-related public health emergencies like cholera. This will begin with cholera preparedness training in the first quarter of 2022 and a robust emergency preparedness mechanism.

In health, although funding diminished after the polio-free status and a major cVPPV2 outbreak followed, the consensus on the way forward is to respond based on granular data, integrate community structures, and boost polio routine immunization targeting LGAs with existing outbreaks.

Innovative COVID-19 programming

Across programmes, UNICEF has leveraged opportunities from the COVID-19 pandemic to improve service delivery and accelerate results for children:

- **Health:** Although the COVID-19 pandemic affected routine immunization services, it provided an opportunity to strengthen the system, including cold chain storage capacity and oxygen supply systems. Supplemental immunization activities, including COVID-19 vaccination, will be integrated with routine services to maximize resource utilization and reduce missed opportunities.
- **Child Protection:** The COVID-19 crisis facing Almajiri children – children sent away to Islamic schools – led to UNICEF developing a programme for children in street situations, including adolescent girls, to access formal education, life skills, and social protection schemes to be rolled out in 2022.
- **Education:** A key lesson learned was diversifying learning opportunities for children in Nigeria in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent learning losses. UNICEF deployed several remote learning options, including low (radio and community-based learning) and high-tech digital learning solutions (Nigeria Learning Passport), to ensure continuity of education reaching at least 1,426,762 children.

Field monitoring

This year, UNICEF invested in developing a monitoring framework to strengthen field office governance, results' planning, and monitoring. The aim is to delineate accountability and responsibilities across levels and support field offices to focus on monitoring activities contextually.

UNICEF piloted the monitoring system and accompanying tools in some field offices, utilised lessons learned to refine the process, and will scale this up countrywide in 2022. The new monitoring framework guides the planning of activities in the context of the field office. It enables course corrections to improve performance and support program delivery.

In 2022, UNICEF will expand on several emerging innovations that have the potential to make a difference in the lives of children and young people in Nigeria: digital birth registration, the Child-Friendly Communities Initiative, the Primary Health Care Leadership Challenge Fund, and Generation Unlimited, fostering public-private partnerships to empower young people with education (Learning Passport), skills training (YOMA), employment, entrepreneurship, and empowerment.