

South Sudan

Update on the context and situation of children

Ten years after South Sudan's independence in July 2011, hopes for peace and stability are fading. Recurring floods, droughts and other extreme weather events fueled by climate change, a deepening economic crisis, and sub-national and politically motivated conflicts, have led to extremely high food insecurity, and one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Almost 4 million people remain displaced: 1.7 million internally and more than 2.2 million as refugees.

The formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) in February 2020 signaled a shift into development and systems building efforts. However, the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in September 2018, has been only partially implemented, and has failed to alleviate the challenges facing the country's children and young people.

South Sudan is highly dependent on oil, accounting for 70 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and more than 90 per cent of public revenues. The economy is especially vulnerable to weather, oil price, and conflict related shocks, and has suffered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. GDP per capita (US\$ current prices) stands at US\$230; 91.9 per cent of the population experience multidimensional poverty; and South Sudan is fourth of 179 countries in the Fragile States Index.

Out of a population of 13.2 million, over 8.3 million people (including 4.5 million children), needed humanitarian support in 2021. Flooding impacted more than 800,000 people, causing displacement, and damage to homes and public facilities including 800 schools. Food and nutrition insecurity identified in 10 most at-risk counties exacerbated the situation of women and children. In Jonglei State, some indicators surpassed the Famine - Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 5 - thresholds, resulting in an IPC Famine Review.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the various crises due to factors including ubiquitous gender-based violence (GBV) and mobility restrictions. During emergencies including floods and after the closure of schools due to COVID-19, violence against children, teenage pregnancies, child marriages and child sexual abuse all increased in South Sudan.

Public financial management (PFM) including Government budget allocations to provide basic care and protection are vastly inadequate. The combined proportion of budget allocations for health, education, and the social and humanitarian pillar rose to 14 per cent in the fiscal year (FY) 2020/21, from 9 per cent in FY2019/20. The budget allocation for social and humanitarian affairs decreased from two to 1 per cent in FY2020/21. An increase in the health budget allocation for FY2021/22 to 10 per cent is considered an important step in this sector realignment. However, it is still way short of international and national commitments, such as 10–15 per cent for education and 15–20 per cent for health.

As South Sudan scales back from Level 3 corporate emergency, there has been a decline in emergency funding, along with simultaneous declines in development funding. The resources mobilized against the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal was US\$65 million in 2021, compared to US\$140 million in 2020.

UNICEF continues to operate in a very volatile programming environment. While the national security situation generally improved in 2021, sub-national insecurity is a major challenge and led to suspension of some programmes. The number of Serious Security Incident Reports increased from 64

in 2020 to 88 in 2021, including civil unrest, compound intrusions, arson, and physical attacks.

COVID-19 continues to affect the overall implementation context, hindering mobility, face to face contact and supply chains, and requiring adaptation of all programmes, and a pivoting of the health programme for COVID-19 vaccine roll out. A total of 15,626 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 136 deaths have been reported in 2021, though very limited testing capacity masks true figures.

South Sudan continues to flounder in its progress towards the sustainable development goals (SDGs):

SDG Goal 2, Target 2 ending all forms of malnutrition: The prevalence of malnutrition among young children remains a public health issue: wasting is 16.2 per cent, above the 15 per cent emergency threshold. Despite increasing efforts to promote adequate maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN), just 7 per cent of children receive a minimum acceptable diet.

SDG Goal 6 water and sanitation for all: An estimated 59 per cent of the population do not have access to an improved water source within 30 minutes of their home; just 11 per cent have access to a private improved sanitation facility; and 75 per cent do not have access to a latrine. Women and girls face increased risk of GBV when collecting water and using communal latrines; access to menstrual hygiene products and dignified washing locations are needed. The poor funding situation could soon lead to a peak in water borne diseases.

SDG 3 ensure healthy lives and well-being for all: One in ten children in South Sudan do not reach their fifth birthday, one of the highest under-five mortality rates in the world. Malaria continues to be the leading cause of morbidity among children under five accounting for 246,900 (30%) deaths, followed by pneumonia 170,904 (21%) and diarrhoea 162,264 (20%). The maternal mortality ratio stands at more than 1 in 10 maternal deaths, more than double the rate for sub-Saharan Africa.

SDG target 4(1) ensure free, equitable and quality education: In May 2021, schools successfully reopened after 14 months of closure. However, there are 2.8 million out-of-school children, a significant increase from 2.2 million in 2016.

SDG target 16(2) ending all forms of violence against children: There has been a significant drop in the number of verified grave violations against children since R-ARCSS, from 803 in 2018 to 183 in 2021, affecting 174 children (36 girls). Children were mainly affected through recruitment and use (47%) and killing and maiming (31%). Since 2015, UNICEF has supported the release and reintegration of 3,739 children. However, the number of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) is unknown and UNICEF continues to advocate for increased access to military sites to screen for and release all children.

Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2021, despite significant funding and staffing constraints, UNICEF delivered critical life-saving services to over 5 million people, including 1.5 million children. COVID-19 continued to impact UNICEF programming, requiring reprioritization, adjustments to budgets, and new working modalities formalized through revised guidance and standard operating procedures, including strengthening remote field monitoring.

As part of the shift to a development focus, UNICEF is at the forefront of supporting Government to strengthen statutory systems in multiple sectors.

UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) to strengthen the

Education Management Information System and administration of Annual Education Census, Public Expenditure Review and Public Expenditure Tracking Survey studies to support increased and effective utilization of funds. The Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy Framework has been tabled to the parliamentary committee on social services. A nationwide measurement of learning achievement will provide a status on learning outcomes for the very first time.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) launched national community led-total sanitation (CLTS) guidelines, to accelerate improved sanitation. Establishing a model water utility to demonstrate effective management of urban water systems for possible replication has been initiated.

An assessment was undertaken of the digital birth notification system and its potential interoperability with a comprehensive Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system. Online national case management was significantly enhanced when the data of 18 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were migrated from the offline Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) to the online CPIMS+, bringing the number of CPIMS+ users to 23.

To support workforce strengthening, a social service workforce mapping and assessment was initiated linking social services provision under child protection in emergencies components including case management, psychosocial support (PSS), and family tracing and reunification (FTR). UNICEF collected health care worker data in the UNICEF-supported states of Jonglei and Upper Nile to support a nascent Human Resources Management Information System (MIS). UNICEF also supported the development of a robust Nutrition Information System for evidence-informed programming and resource allocation.

Increased engagement with Government in fulfilling treaty obligations included submission of the Initial State Party Report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and a report on the list of issues on the CRC initial State Party report, as preparation for Government dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva in 2022.

UNICEF is successfully phasing out the Integrated Rapid Response Mechanism (IRRM) in favour of locally-led emergency preparedness and response. The IRRM was activated exceptionally for the Tambura conflict response in Western Equatoria, which displaced over 90,000 people. The Tambura IRRMs reached 37,265 individuals, including 3,980 children under 5, providing a lifeline to those in otherwise inaccessible areas. Pre-positioning of supplies remains a critical activity due to continued access constraints, particularly during the rainy season.

UNICEF continue to integrate programming for peace and sustainability through the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus. Progress was made in promoting better integration between meeting humanitarian water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) needs and building the resilience of communities. In conflict-affected areas, UNICEF is fostering peace building through learning spaces as zones of peace.

In 2021, UNICEF and the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFP) concluded its joint UNICEF/MoFP workplan 2019-2021 which aims at improved budget allocations for children. Activities included a National Budget Brief and Citizens' Budget for FY2020/21 with associated citizen engagement; launch of the 2021 Open Budget Survey process; and budget preparatory, gender-responsive budgeting and PFM capacity building workshops. Key sub-national PFM oversight mechanisms - State Transfer Monitoring Committees (STMCs) and County Transfer Monitoring Committees (CTMCs) – were re-established.

Building on a social protection MIS mapping, a national roadmap will be developed to harmonize

humanitarian databases in South Sudan, the most significant of which are those of the World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP), and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

In 2021, UNICEF and partners reached 256,522 individuals (131, 983 females) with critical child protection services. In total, 92,790 children (43,700 girls) in humanitarian situations received mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and 2,456 children (1,227 girls) were reached with case management services. In all, 898 unaccompanied and separated children (336 girls) were supported with FTR, with 150 children (63 girls) reunited with their families. Thanks to UNICEF, 71,229 children (35,699 girls) were reached with birth notification in 2021, almost double the number in 2020.

The Communities Care Programme which promotes gender equitable social norms to prevent GBV and support survivors, was scaled up to address heightened child marriage, teenage pregnancies, and sexual violence, reaching 25,286 people (7,228 girls, 6,376 boys, 7,223 women). In total, 99,524 people (27,338 girls, 22,501, boys, 28,982 women) have been provided with risk mitigation, prevention, or response interventions to address GBV.

The year-long Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations Against Children (CAP) was extended to 7 August 2022, with a high-level ministerial and technical committee on CAP implementation established, and 10 state level committees. In total, 1,093 staff from armed forces and groups (114 women) were trained on ending grave violations against children. Seven CAAFAG (all boys) were released in 2021, and 100 former CAAFAG (37 girls) enrolled for vocational training.

To support justice for children, 112 (40 female) Government staff such as judges, prosecutors, social workers, and prison and police officers, were trained on the Child Act 2008. The multidisciplinary training aimed to strengthen awareness of child rights and the coordination and collaboration on children in conflict with the law.

In conflict-affected areas, UNICEF provided essential education in emergencies (EiE) services and supplies to 948,428 children (435,121 girls) in humanitarian situations. UNICEF trained 3,245 teachers (617 women) on EiE including conflict sensitive learner centred pedagogy. A total of 64,208 individuals (20,587 girls, 21,730 boys, 11,376 women) living in high-risk mine areas were reached with key lifesaving explosive ordnance risk education.

UNICEF constructed and/or rehabilitated 21 schools in 2021 (713 cumulatively) equipping them with disability friendly gender-disaggregated WASH facilities, and with WFP constructed 20 climate-resilient kitchens and food stores to support school feeding. The pupil-to-textbook ratio dramatically improved from 8-to-1 to 3-to-1, through distribution of 4.9 million textbooks and teacher guides. In 2021 UNICEF supported 100,283 candidates (41,387 girls) to sit their primary eight (P8) or senior four (S4) examinations, to allow them to upward transition, and avoid repeating years or dropping out.

UNICEF's work in enhancing the capacity of government staff remained a key priority, with 91 officials attending training on sector coordination. Newly trained master trainers will roll out teacher training to 6,000 unqualified teachers from February 2022. UNICEF strengthened support to early learning and school readiness by training 102 ECD caregivers (34% female) on parenting education. 954 ECD kits were distributed to support early learning of children 3-5 years.

A competency-based school inspection framework will lead to 700 school inspectors being trained to reinforce teacher accountability and professional support. Further, 1,283 school management committee (SMC)/parent teacher association (PTA) bodies were functionalized and 14,113 SMC/PTA members (5,360 women) received training to enhance parental and community engagement for quality education services.

UNICEF continued to deliver high-quality child health services through the scale-up of Integrated Management of Newborn and Childhood Illness (IMNCI) and the roll out of the Boma Health Initiative (BHI) in 170 Bomas (each with several villages), through a network of 1,743 Boma Health Workers in two states. In all, 821,927 children under 5 were reached with lifesaving health services, with 99.9 per cent coverage.

UNICEF supported maintenance of COVID-19 triages in 191 health facilities. In a significant boost to COVID-19 testing, GeneXpert technology was expanded across the country and 178,368 people were fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The uninterrupted availability of childhood vaccines was assured through an increase in cold chain coverage to 881 health facilities (757 in 2020). Vaccination was provided for 368,902 children against DTP (82% of target) and 314,071 children against measles (70%), with a further 488,613 children age 6 months-15 years in humanitarian situations vaccinated against measles (86%). Supplementary immunization of polio vaccines has been provided to more than 2.5 million children, with no new cases since April 2021.

To reduce the high malaria morbidity, 331,711 long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) were distributed to 333,836 families, exceeding the target more than three-fold. Over 75 per cent of 65 UNICEF-supported basic emergency obstetric and newborn care (BEmONC) health facilities were operational 24/7 (up from 40% in 2019), through progressive improvements in availability, capacity, staffing and essential midwifery/delivery kits. Further, 59 per cent of 65 prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) sites were supported (target of 25).

Indicators in antenatal care (ANC) and skilled birth attendance improved. A 2020 household survey shows significant increments since 2016, from 23 to 29 per cent for fourth ANC visit (ANC4), and from 10 to 40 per cent for skilled birth attendance. A total of 172,020 pregnant women were supported with ANC4 in 2021. With direct UNICEF support, 54,015 pregnant women were reached with their first ANC visit; of these, 25,384 attended four ANC visits and 9,866 underwent deliveries by skilled birth attendants. Cumulatively, UNICEF has trained 2,242 community and frontline health workers on maternal and/or newborn care (537 in 2021).

UNICEF reached over two million children with lifesaving nutrition services. A network of 1,213 UNICEF supported outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP) treatment allowed treatment of 239,387 children (130,293 girls) aged 6-59 months suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) in 2021 (to November). Further, 1,816 children were treated for SAM in 11 refugee camps. The quality of SAM treatment remained high at 95 per cent cure rate and death rate less than 1 per cent.

A total of 3,582 health and nutrition workers (74% of target) were trained on providing quality preventative nutrition services and 3,894 health and nutrition workers were trained in the management of acute malnutrition.

UNICEF continued to deliver sustainable WASH services and in 2021, 205,703 people in non-humanitarian and 623,995 people in humanitarian situations were provided with access to safe drinking water (up from 127,153 and 568,741 people respectively in 2020). Meanwhile, 153,295 people have been empowered to access basic sanitation facilities and 77,199 people in humanitarian settings have been provided with emergency sanitation. Water treatment chemicals ensured safe water for 600,000 people connected to the South Sudan Urban Water Corporation water network.

UNICEF has continued to build capacity at grassroots level towards eliminating open defecation, particularly in Eastern Equatoria and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states with 87 villages declared open defecation free (ODF). Construction of gender separate latrines commenced in 20 health centers and schools, and drilling of boreholes was undertaken in 87 of the 192 targeted schools. Overall, 43,500

students have been provided with safe water.

UNICEF supported partners with its evidence-based communication for development (C4D) programming reaching 7,579,988 people with integrated lifesaving messages, promoting demand for services and addressing harmful social norms. Hygiene promotion activities were accelerated in 2021, reaching almost 3 million people (130% of target).

More than seven million individuals were reached with COVID-19 vaccine promotion messages including 15,195 community and religious leaders, by 1,801 trained Integrated Community Mobilization Network (ICMN) mobilizers and 30 radio stations broadcasting in over 10 languages. Five community studies were conducted to provide real-time evidence for socio-behavioural communication programme planning and implementation, with 87 per cent of respondents expressing willingness to receive COVID-19 vaccines.

To support UNICEF's commitment to Accountability to Affected People (AAP), UNICEF South Sudan developed a Grievance Redress Mechanism for its health service provision in Jonglei and Upper Nile, to allow service users to provide feedback, raise abuse allegations and take part in decisions that affect their lives. In addition, 29,124 calls were received through the UNICEF-supported 2222 hotline, which facilitated information sharing, tracking of rumors around COVID-19, and providing PSS to callers.

Integrated advocacy, communication, resource mobilization and child participation and youth engagement campaigns were conducted on World Water Day, the tenth anniversary of South Sudan (including the publication of a Child Rights crisis report), Breastfeeding Week, the International Day of the Girl Child, World Children's Day and UNICEF 75. An updated Situation Analysis of Children and Women in South Sudan engaged multiple stakeholders in its development including persons with disabilities, children, Government, United Nations (UN) partners, civil society and media, and was published with a high-level Government launch event.

The network of 100 UNICEF Child Reporters has grown to maturity with children involved in a growing number of activities, including the Situation Analysis and new UNICEF country programme 2023-2025, ensuring that the voices of children are heard. South Sudan has been virtually inaccessible for international media because of COVID-19 quarantine measures. These were lifted in late 2021, resulting in multiple international media missions of National Geographic, New York Times, Danish Public Television, Channel 4 and CNN. The focus on climate change and the floods affecting children generated significant visibility for the humanitarian crisis and UNICEF's response.

Priority results in the Annual Management Plan for 2021 have been fulfilled as follows:

Priority Result 1 - Integrated multisectoral approach to wasting reduction in children under 5 years. UNICEF supported the Government of South Sudan to implement high impact multisectoral interventions to improve the nutrition status of the young child and contribute to reduction of wasting. In total, 2,138,581 caregivers of children under two years were counselled on MIYCN practices at OTP sites and through a network of community nutrition volunteers (CNVs). This contributed to maintaining an exclusive breastfeeding rate at 68 per cent. A total of 4,742,571 children received vitamin-A supplementation (91.6% of target including 2,494,721 girls) and 4,026,061 children (86.4%) received deworming tablets.

Priority Result 2 – Integrated multisectoral approach to safe reopening and operation of schools. To support continued education during the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.5 million children and young people were reached with radio learning. The General Education Annual Review in April 2021 gave impetus to UNICEF advocacy efforts for safely reopening schools in May 2021. UNICEF supported schools to resume functioning including providing incentives to 34,881 teachers. In total, 2.7 million

school children re-enrolled into schooling, representing an increase of 350,000 children over March 2020 when schools closed.

Priority Result 3 – Innovative Business Processes. In November 2021, UNICEF launched a solar power plant in Juba and has since reduced generator run time to just 3 hours a day from 24 hours. The plant installation will save US\$152,400 per year and avoid 462 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions. Two Programme Budget Reviews are being implemented with expected annual cost reductions of US\$12 million. UNICEF implemented a Business Operations Strategy as part of the UN’s Reform and Efficiency Agenda, resulting in savings of over US\$15 million through collaboration in 16 common services in South Sudan.

Priority Result 4 – Enhanced implementation of the accountability framework. Through partnership agreements, UNICEF provided funds and capacity strengthening to 38 nutrition implementing partners, which led to improved quality of SAM treatment services. UNICEF conducted an assessment on warehousing and inventory management of nutrition supplies and in response, addressed the gaps identified through continued capacity development with each of the 38 partners.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF's long-term country-wide presence in South Sudan has cultivated intensive national and sub-national collaboration with a range of partners from Government and civil society, including clusters and local authorities.

UNICEF South Sudan continues to leverage its leadership on child rights to influence rights-based action for children and women in the country. UNICEF helps ensure women and children are prioritized through its leadership and membership of multiple national clusters, technical working groups (TWGs) and task forces. These include the inter-agency COVID-19 taskforce; regular participation in the Needs Assessment Working Group and Inter-Cluster Coordination Group to promote evidence-based decision-making; and as co-lead of the UN monitoring and evaluation (M&E) Working Group. UNICEF continued providing leadership to three clusters (education, nutrition, WASH) and the child protection Area of Responsibility, and co-chairing the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting alongside the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

UNICEF's leadership role in the WASH Cluster and management of core pipeline supplies, prepositioning and distribution to 62 WASH partners, allowed it to reach over 799,098 emergency-affected people in 2021. UNICEF and MWRI will co-lead new WASH TWGs at national and state level to coordinate sector partners. In 2022 there will be further discussions with MWRI on how the WASH donor group and the national TWG will be aligned or merged, to best coordinate the sector.

UNICEF's leadership of the Nutrition Cluster has increased donor confidence in the nutrition sector and helped to initiate a paradigm shift linking preventive nutrition interventions to treatment of wasting. UNICEF supported a network of 7,404 CNVs (2,947 women) (an increase of 1,000 from 2020) on a cost sharing basis with WFP to promote optimal MIYCN at household level. Similar efforts will increase the number of CNVs by a further 1,000 in 2022, to scale up availability and access to preventive nutrition services. A partnership with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP to promote kitchen gardens at community level will significantly contribute to reducing the prevalence of wasting among young children, with over 1,600 demonstration gardens established. UNICEF also revived the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Network to support the government to accelerate progress toward reduction of malnutrition among children.

UNICEF leveraged partnerships with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to create the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) to uplift the adolescent and youth agenda. IANYD has initiated the development of a national youth development strategy and operational plan. UNICEF continued to sustain its engagement in the "Faith for Positive Change for Children" initiative in collaboration with civil society organizations.

Relationships with new donors include a critical partnership with the Global Fund for Malaria and a joint partnership with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency. Large resource partners for UNICEF such as the World Bank and Global Partnership for Education looked to more systems-focused work with components that would help tackling the immediate and urgent needs while working within a longer-term framework.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Communities in South Sudan are choosing to take self-action for development, despite having faced conflict and division as well as becoming used to subsidies and aid. Significant gains were made in sanitation in Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria through the CLTS approach, which stimulates demand for sanitation which is then met by communities through building their own toilets and collectively agreeing to open defecation.

Localization in supply chains is also proving to be important, for example, to enable the flow of spare parts for sustainable operations and maintenance of improved water sources. In 2022, UNICEF will explore the development of strong WASH supply chains for the local market including the use of voucher systems. UNICEF is also working with partners to provide more sustainable WASH services as part of the transition away from Protection of Civilians (POC) sites in Juba, servicing displaced populations with water supply through a voucher system via WFP's SCOPE system that will be launched in 2022.

Recurrent cycles of floods are a clear manifestation of climate change calling for innovative, resilient, and environmentally sensitive infrastructure and better contingency and preparedness planning. UNICEF established agreements with NGO partners in advance of the rainy season, to rapidly respond to flood displacement response needs. UNICEF was able to deploy more durable solutions much more rapidly for repair of water points, installation of emergency water facilities, and support to communities for emergency sanitation facilities.

UNICEF will continue to advocate to donors for anticipatory financing, including for adaptable mobile light responses, considering the logistical challenges in South Sudan when the rains constrain construction and movements.

UNICEF is actively innovating for climate change adaptation, and in emergency contexts piloted elevated latrines constructed with the participation of households as a flood adaptation measure. This includes using local materials and raised superstructures to avoid collapse and flooding during the rainy season. Similarly, UNICEF piloted elevated handpumps in food insecure counties with regular flooding incidences. This is now being disseminated as climate adaptation good practice by the WASH Cluster.

Multisectoral programming continues to reap dividends in resource allocation, efficiently and effectiveness. By integrating underfunded initiatives such as WASH, GBV and Child Protection into integrated funding proposals, UNICEF provided much needed funding to these sectors.

Child protection and GBV continued its integration and mainstreaming in other clusters and sector programming through for example training on GBV risk mitigation for WASH and health. The multisectoral integration of MHPSS has shown a real impact with an increased number of reached beneficiaries (92,790 children including 43,700 girls in 2021) with low-cost implications.

In 2021 UNICEF's health programme strengthened its approach to integration with other sectors. This was reflected through the integration of Clinical Management of Rape into the package of essential health services; installing social workers in health facilities to enhance GBV referral pathways; the development of a GBV pocket guide for GBV first aid by community health actors; adequate water storage and waste management infrastructures in health facilities to enhance the quality of maternal and newborn health services; the ongoing integration of systematic HIV testing for malnourished children with complications; and the integration of nutritional screening for acute malnutrition by Boma Health Workers.

UNICEF nutrition and WASH collaborated to target hygiene and water treatment items to the caretakers and mothers of malnourished children. Nutrition sites where wasting treatment take place provided an excellent platform to deliver integrated nutrition, health, WASH and child protection services as evidenced by successful screening of children for malaria, distribution of 350,000 bednets, 745,000 bars of soap and 24 million tablets of Aquatab, and offers possibility for linkages with safety net programmes.

The integrated nutrition and food insecurity scale up brought innovation in the merging of multiple

intersectoral community networks and volunteers to improve reach, reduce the risk of disease, increase access to services and save lives. This model of local integration, as well as enhanced collaboration for preventative actions has enabled greater impact and scale of emergency programmes, increasing UNICEF's ability to reach more children, better, with less.

In 2021, the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System expanded for the first time to include other sectors such as education, child protection and shelter modules.

UNICEF South Sudan led global knowledge management efforts on scaling nutrition in complex emergencies through publication of a UNICEF field note and two peer reviewed articles to share experience and lessons learned on scaling up care for children with SAM through integrated community-based management of severe wasting programmes. UNICEF championed the family mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) initiative to improve SAM case-finding and referral. The initiative empowers mothers and caregivers of under-fives to assess the nutrition status of their children through distribution of MUAC tapes and training on identification of early signs of malnutrition using MUAC. This helped to mitigate the safety concerns associated with mass screening in the COVID-19 context.

The school closures due to COVID 19 provided any opportunity explore new partnerships with media houses and mobile network operators to support distance learning through radio programmes in the country. It also revealed the gaps in interventions for children with disabilities and children in vulnerable households. This requires a sharpened approach to reach the most vulnerable, including collection of disability disaggregated data, and increased advocacy for disadvantaged children (pastoralist communities, children with disabilities, children in hard-to-reach areas, girls subject to child marriage, etc.). There is a need to capitalize on UNICEF's supported radio programmes and make distance learning a credible pathway for learning through investments in children's access to digital technologies.

Finally, UNICEF is supporting MoFP to develop an innovative online PFM tracker/dashboard to enhance accountability in public finance for children. The dashboard will track progress against key milestones of the budget drafting and reporting processes at national and state levels; at state level, annual spending priority plans are to be submitted based on state strategic plans, and local governments set spending priorities based on county development plans and an annual participatory planning process. The dashboard will be rolled out 2022.