

Libya

Update on the context and situation of children

Following 15 months of acute armed conflict in and around Tripoli, in October 2020 the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army (LNA) signed a ceasefire agreement, enabling the establishment of the provisional Government of National Unity (GNU) in March 2021. The ceasefire and the formation of the GNU ushered in a period of relative stability, allowing for the reunification of line ministries in the east and west. Despite progress, the government has not been able to advance key governance priorities, essential to an enabling environment for women and children. Notably, approval of the draft constitution (2017) is still pending and national development policies, plans and frameworks have not been adopted. Presidential and parliamentary elections, originally scheduled for December 2021, were postponed as a result of political tension as well as technical delays.

Prior to 2014, Libya was an upper middle-income country, well on its way to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The situation significantly deteriorated in the years that followed; by 2021, Libya was struggling to meet many of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Libya's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has declined significantly in the last decade, impacted by armed conflict, the oil blockage, and the pandemic. In 2021, oil production showed signs of recovery and the projected GDP growth rate was 78.2 per cent.[1] The devaluation of the Libyan Dinar at the end of 2020 and improvements in the liquidity crisis during 2021 contributed to macroeconomic stabilization. However, households across Libya experienced reduced purchasing power. During 2021, the government was unable to approve a national budget. Though salary expenditure continued, and some development projects were taken forward through presidential decree, the lack of a national budget seriously impacted line ministries' progress and rehabilitation efforts. As a result, essential basic services continued to deteriorate, including education, healthcare, water and sanitation services.

Periods of acute armed conflict over the last several years have resulted in internal displacement; as of September 2021, there were approximately 200,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across Libya.[2] At the end of the year, an estimated 800,000 people, including 240,000 children, were in need of humanitarian assistance.[3] The humanitarian crisis has particularly affected children in the following areas: deterioration in public services (particularly education and health); shelter loss; livelihood and asset loss; high levels of violence; and explosive remnants of conflict. Rising food prices and economic factors pushed vulnerable families deeper into poverty. At the end of 2021, over 500,000 people in Libya, 32% of which were children, were food insecure and in need of assistance, with the highest need in the south.[4]

Due in part to its close proximity to Europe as well as internal employment opportunities, Libya has historically been a destination and transit country for migrants. In 2021, there were an estimated 610,128 migrants in Libya, approximately 9% of which were children.[5] An estimated 2% of children were unaccompanied or separated.[6] As of October 2021, roughly 6,300 refugees and migrants were being held in detention centres,[7] 25% of which were children. Migrant and refugee children face multiple rights violations, including barriers to accessing basic goods and services, and high levels of violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Approximately, 803,000 people are in acute need of health assistance.[8] The third wave of COVID-19 put extraordinary pressure on the already fragile healthcare system. In response to a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases mid-year, the Ministry of Health declared a public health emergency. Hospitals across the country struggled to respond to increased hospitalization rates, crippled with weak data systems and critical gaps in supplies and medicines, including personal protective equipment (PPE).[9]

The majority of laboratories are located in the west of the country, making transmission monitoring difficult. With support from UNICEF, the COVID-19 vaccine became available in mid-2021. At the end of 2021, an estimated 27% per cent of the population had received one dose and roughly 12% had received two doses.[10]

Although Libya provides free and compulsory education, school attendance and enrolment have steadily declined since 2011, with 11% of Libyan households with school-aged children reporting that at least one child was not enrolled or attending school in 2021.[11] Years of armed conflict have resulted in extensive damage to schools' infrastructure; 245 schools are damaged or destroyed and 74% of schools lack adequate safe drinking water.[12] An estimated 159,030 children are in need of humanitarian education support.[13] In June 2021 all schools and universities were suspended due to COVID-19. The combined legacy of underfunding and weak governance, armed conflict and COVID-19 has accentuated gaps in the quality of education. Even before 2014, there was a significant gap between education and market demand, impacting youth transition to the labour market.

There are high rates of violence against children in homes, schools and communities, a result of widespread human rights violations, breakdown of the rule of law, and weak child protection services. Reported deterioration of the psychosocial well-being of children is a significant concern. At the end of 2021, an estimated 271,000 children required protection services.[14]

Libya is one of the most water scarce countries in the world and is poised to be heavily impacted by climate change. Faced with crumbling infrastructure, critical gaps in technical capacity and supplies, regular power outages and a lack of resources, the water and sanitation systems are increasingly unable to meet household demand: as of 2021, 50% of households relied on bottled water and only 22% had access to the higher WASH standard of safely managed sanitation facilities. During 2021, continued sabotage of the Man-Made River (MMR), which provides water to more than 60% of households in Libya, was a critical concern. The alarming state of solid waste management in urban settings has resulted in increased water and vector-borne disease for the most vulnerable. Evidence of a significant depletion in underground water resources and the continued disposal of untreated wastewater into the sea requires urgent investment in innovative solutions. Currently, desalination plants operate at 27% of capacity and water losses from the national network are estimated at 50%.

Major contributions and drivers of results

The current Country Programme Document (CPD) spans two years, from 2019 to 2020. The CPD was extended through 2022 to allow the Country Office to achieve the desired outcomes for children – with an emphasis on the most vulnerable – prior to launching a new programme cycle. It also allowed for an updated analysis of the situation of women and children, reflecting the emerging humanitarian and development needs and opportunities to be included in the new CPD. UNICEF's CPD and its extension are fully aligned with the United Nations Strategic Framework. As part of the programme extension cross-sectoral components were strengthened, including through a gender review and the development of a workplan to strengthen strategic engagement on children on the move. At the beginning of 2021, UNICEF launched its Humanitarian Action for Children, in line with the interagency Humanitarian Response Plan,[1] and continued to implement UNICEF's COVID-19 response plan with a focus on the rollout of CoVAX. Following creation of the GNU, UNICEF confirmed and renewed rolling workplans with relevant line ministries, towards implementation of the Country Programme and humanitarian action for the most vulnerable, in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus logic[2].

Aligned to the interagency planning process, UNICEF undertook a Situation Analysis on Children and

Women's Rights in Libya, and based on this deprivation analysis, began planning for the next Country Programme (2023-2025). During the year, the office also concluded the Evaluation of the current Country Programme. Building on its findings and the evolving situation, UNICEF will revisit programme plans for 2022 to ensure smooth transition to the new Country Programme.

In 2021, UNICEF's total budget was USD\$35,193,505, including US\$9,470,285 for humanitarian programming, US\$24,559,207 for development/resilience building programming, and USD\$1,164,013 million of internal resources. 28.5% of the budget contributed to UNICEF's COVID-19 response. In 2021, UNICEF received funding from Denmark, Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the European Union (EU), Germany, Italy, Japan, Libyana Mobile Phone, Poland, UNHCR, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs, and the US Department of State Bureau of Near East Affairs.

UNICEF continued to build its human resources; by the end of 2021 there were 56 staff based in Tripoli, 8 in Benghazi and 5 in Tunis. UNICEF prioritized strengthening its presence in the Benghazi Field Office, allowing for programme consolidation and strengthening in the east. UNICEF strengthened its Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) through 12 spot checks, 1 micro-assessment and 3 audits,[3] which supported partner capacity development efforts. During the year, 120 field monitoring and programmatic visits were carried out by staff members and Third Party Field Monitors. Field reports were regularly assessed by programme teams; findings and recommendations fed into programme planning and implementation.

In line with the Country Programme and to strengthen the triple nexus approach and increase complementarity between humanitarian, development and peace programming, UNICEF focused on (a) support to Government's provision of basic service provision, including in health, nutrition, education, WASH and child protection, with a particular emphasis on COVID-19 prevention and response. UNICEF contributed to improved basic services through information systems strengthening, policy and capacity development, rehabilitation of infrastructure; (b) building a protective environment for children and to contributing to and building national capacity and systems in evidence generation and social policy development. In line with the nexus logic, across its programmes UNICEF supported the development of risk-informed and resilient social services; (c) humanitarian action and strengthening emergency preparedness capacity. Gender, youth, and children on the move were cross cutting priorities. Where basic services were not available for the most vulnerable, UNICEF provided humanitarian assistance through government structures and services whenever possible, including for migrants and refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees.

Contributing to the realization of SDG 2 and 3, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF focused on strengthening primary health care through a system-building approach to reduce neonatal, child, and maternal mortality and morbidity. UNICEF provided primary health facilities with a package of essential medical supplies, capacity building, and risk communication to support demand creation. Approximately 281,610 women and children had access to primary healthcare in UNICEF-supported facilities (including 16,290 newborns) (reaching approximately 50% of women and children in need[4]). With the assistance of UNICEF, a Nutrition Unit was established in the Primary Health Care Institute (PHCI), thereby adding vital capacity to national nutrition services. In targeted health facilities, UNICEF supported the promotion of optimal Infant and Young child feeding practices, reaching approximately 41,987 women during the year.

COVID-19 prevention and response, including vaccination efforts and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), emerged as a priority in 2021. In partnership with WHO, UNHCR, and IOM, UNICEF provided extensive technical and operational support to the Ministry of Health and the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) in the development of a national vaccine deployment plan and supported coordination between government agencies. UNICEF worked with national counterparts to undertake a nationwide cold chain inventory which will inform the development of a

national cold chain improvement plan in 2022. UNICEF worked with partners to enable 438 vaccination sites to administer COVID-19 vaccines, including through provision of essential cold chain equipment and PPE. Additionally, UNICEF supported the establishment of the cold chain at the national, regional and municipal level, providing and installing 1,191 electronic monitoring devices to ascertain quality of vaccines, and distributing essential guidance and capacity building for health staff on cold chain management and vaccination supervision. Through the CoVAX facility, UNICEF provided pre-financing for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, resulting in the successful delivery of over 700,000 doses. By the end of the year, about 1.9 million people had received their first COVID-19 vaccination dose and approximately 860,000 people had received two doses.[5] UNICEF and the NCDC co-led the RCCE working group and supported the development of the national strategy; during the year more than 5 million persons were reached with awareness raising information regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. In addition, UNICEF continued to support routine vaccination, with a particular focus on migrants and refugees held in detention centres, in cooperation with PHCI.

Contributing to the realization of SDG 6, UNICEF worked with national stakeholders to prevent and mitigate the impact of disease outbreak (including COVID-19 infection) by ensuring access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, with a focus on the most vulnerable. National capacity development was prioritized during 2021; over 800 competent authorities were equipped with knowledge and skills to effectively implement WASH services[6] and national and sub-national coordination between WASH authorities was strengthened. As a result of UNICEF interventions, approximately 245,000 people were provided with sustainable WASH services and hygiene supplies in 24 targeted municipalities (reaching approximately 64% of people in need in Libya[7]). Humanitarian assistance was provided to migrants and refugees held in detention centres and displaced families (including those living in collective shelters). In line with its climate change draft strategy, UNICEF provided emergency assistance to coastal cities facing water shortage, through technical support and supply provision to the General Desalination company and the installation of a solar powered water system in collaboration with national water authorities. In coordination with the Ministry of Health, UNICEF also started the first medical waste management project using clean technology. As a pilot project, UNICEF provided cash support to 1,000 displaced persons in Misrata to respond to hygiene needs. As WASH Sector Lead, UNICEF advocated for the protection of water infrastructure to ensure that water is not used for political gain. UNICEF also advocated with government partners for the allocation of resources to operate and maintain WASH infrastructure.

Contributing to the realization of SDG 4, UNICEF work with national partners to improve access and quality of education. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the NCDC, UNICEF initiated workshops across Libya on Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC) measures to develop an epidemiological framework to support the reopening of schools and to put in place related prevention and control measures. Additionally, UNICEF worked with national stakeholders to conduct a national Back-to-School campaign, and distributed PPE to over 3,000 schools in 60 municipalities. In parallel, UNICEF advocated for the establishment of a distance learning platform to respond to the continuing pandemic context; this has resulted in the development of a Roadmap with the Ministry of Education.

Responding to the 171,000 children in need of education support, [8]UNICEF continued to strengthen teacher capacity in classroom management and pedagogy, reaching 767 teachers; education supplies were distributed to over 136,000 children in both formal and non-formal education settings; 17 schools were fully rehabilitated and WASH facilities were rehabilitated in an additional 8 schools. With a focus on the most vulnerable, including migrant, refugee and displaced Libyan children, UNICEF provided community-based non-formal education (both remedial and catchup classes as well as lifeskills) to 10,602 children. Additionally, UNICEF worked closely with national government and local partners to identify avenues for enrollment of out-of-school children, including migrant and refugee children, in formal education facilities. As a pilot, UNICEF supported the enrollment of 105 children during 2021.

Contributing to SDG 16, during the first part of 2021 and in the context of the newly established GNU, UNICEF focused on strengthening its partnership with government counterparts relevant to the development of a national child protection system. To contribute to the long-term goal of strengthening the social work force and building a national child protection system, UNICEF worked closely with government and civil society partners to map existing resources, identifying bottlenecks and barriers to comprehensive and inclusive service delivery. This on-going research will support policy and capacity development in the coming years. Additionally, UNICEF received approval from the Ministry of Education for a training module on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and violence prevention and response in schools. Initial training of trainer workshops were held, reaching 40 persons. Cascade training of teachers is scheduled for 2022, which will allow for improved management of MHPSS services in and around schools and contribute to a reduction of violence.

Responding to the 2710,000 children in need of child protection services,[9] UNICEF continued to invest in multi-sectoral community-based child protection service delivery for vulnerable Libyan and non-Libyan children (including migrant and refugee children) and their caregivers. Approximately, 8,500 children were provided with psychosocial support through community centres, of which almost 900 children were referred to specialized child protection services and case management. As part of its community-based approach, UNICEF and partners continued to support six 'Bayti centres' in Tripoli, Misrata, Zwara, and Sebha which provide child protection, education and health services to vulnerable families. Building the sustainability of these community centres is a key priority for 2022 and beyond. There was also a focus on the reinforcement of protection services for women and girls who are at risk of or are survivors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), reaching 4,430 women and children. In the context of COVID-19, UNICEF used mobile and online technology to ensure that psychosocial support and parenting sessions continued when in-person service delivery was limited.

During 2021, 13,594 children, parents and community members were reached with awareness raising regarding child protection, child rights, positive parenting and the negative impact of violence against children, including Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) and GBV preventative messages and information on how to access child protection and GBV services. In parallel, UNICEF worked towards the development of a social behaviour change strategy to prevent and respond to violence against children.

UNICEF and UNSMIL Human Rights continued to monitor and report on grave child rights violations through an informal monitoring and reporting mechanism. As the co-lead of the case management task force of the child protection sub-sector, UNICEF initiated the development of Standard Operating Procedures for case management and Best Interest Determination (BID) with the objective of ensuring a comprehensive child protection response for children at risk or survivors of violence, abuse and exploitation amongst Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Meanwhile, UNICEF and its partners supported the Government in drafting the Convention on the Rights of the Child State Party report (3rd and 4th combined report), submitted in June.

In coordination with UNDP and UNODC, UNICEF continued to ensure access to justice for children through its support to the Ministry of Interior by strengthening the functionality of family and child protection units, which provide child friendly and gender sensitive police services.

Contributing to SDG 1, in partnership with the World Bank, UNHCR, UNDP and WFP, UNICEF supported and contributed to critical dialogue on development of a national social protection policy. UNICEF, with UNHCR, conducted an assessment on the obstacles and bottlenecks experienced by vulnerable children when attempting to register in the national social protection programmes, which will contribute significantly to programming in 2022. In partnership with UNDP and IPC-IG, a national social protection policy roadmap was validated by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NEDB) and relevant line ministries. This roadmap aims to support the Government in its ongoing efforts to reform the social protection system, with the aim of enabling a

shock-responsive system and addressing fragmentation. UNICEF advocated within the Cash and Market Working Group for the inclusion of education expenditures in the Cash Transfer Value, provided to vulnerable communities in humanitarian situations.

Libya remains one of the most data scarce countries in the MENA region, which deeply impacts humanitarian and development programming for both government and non-government agencies. UNICEF continues to support the government in the development of national data management systems to allow for improved basic services, namely: (a) the Education Management Information System (EMIS) through the installation of the server system and software; and (b) the rollout of the District Health Information system in 24 municipalities, including equipment and training staff from 703 health facilities with the necessary skills to operate the software. At the interagency level work continued on the roll out of a Gender-based Violence Information System (GBViMS) which includes at least 3 UNICEF partners, including one national CSO.

During 2021, UNICEF reinforced its role as a child rights advocate, taking advantage of the UN's 75th anniversary to emphasize key messages. In reflection of the ongoing context of COVID-19, digital communications were the main platforms used for UNICEF's communications and community engagement. Priority issues during the year included the reopening of schools, messaging on COVID-19 prevention, water scarcity and climate change, and protection of children – particularly vulnerable children including migrants and refugees. UNICEF mobilized public figures (community leaders, young influencers, artists and athletes) to raise awareness, reinforce key messages on child rights and to call for action through public service announcements on television and radio. These efforts resulted in UNICEF's increased presence on social media. UNICEF's Instagram account was verified in 2021, enhancing the legitimacy of messaging; followers climbed by more than 27%, reaching 23,200. On Twitter UNICEF had 43,300 followers. UNICEF reached out to young people primarily through Facebook, accumulating 132,580 likes and 137,858 followers.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF strengthened its comprehensive approach to partnership, particularly deepening relationships with national authorities and line ministries in the context of the unified government and relative political stability of 2021. To these ends, UNICEF continued to work with government counterparts, both line ministries and municipal authorities,[1] to implement ten Work Plans. UNICEF partnered with 18 entities (11 national organizations and 7 international organizations).

UNICEF continued to work closely with UNSMIL, the Office of the Resident Coordinator and all UNCT agencies. UNICEF continued to actively support the Resident Coordinator's office and partner UN agencies in the development of the new cooperation framework for 2023 – 2025, where UNICEF will take the lead of the Social and Human Capital Development Pillar. In addition, further UN wide engagement led to the validation of the UNSF 2019 - 2022 Evaluation Report and finalization of the Common Country Assessment (CCA), where UNICEF led the people's pillar section. In 2021, UNICEF particularly strengthened partnerships with IOM and UNHCR in regard to migration and refugee issues, including as part of the landmark Blue Print Agreement signed between UNHCR and UNICEF; WHO in regards to the health programme generally and COVID-19 programming specifically; and UNDP and UNODC with regards to the child justice sector.

During 2021, UNICEF continued to act as the lead cluster/sector coordinator for the education sector, WASH sector, and the child protection sub-sector. UNICEF is a key partner in the health sector. UNICEF is represented in the Livelihood working group (led by the UNDP). UNICEF is an active

member of the interagency Operation Management Team and the Procurement Working Group. Currently, UNICEF is acting as the national coordinator for Libya COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment Supplies and the Supply Chain team. Further UNICEF and UNFPA co-lead the Interagency network on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, including playing a technical support role to the RC/HC for the Steering Committee of Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and supporting the development of the first country level PSEA Action Plan. Across the sector coordination groups, UNICEF worked with partners to promote a common strategy and good practices, avoid duplication, address gaps and share information. In several working groups, joint Standard Operating Procedures were developed and preparedness and response plans established to allow for more effective and accountable humanitarian action.

Progress was made in respect to both public and private partnerships. The continued development of UNICEF's private sector engagement strategy resulted in the signature of formal agreements with two Libyan private entities, a mobile phone company and an airline. During 2022, UNICEF will work with private sector partners to raise awareness around key issues related to child rights and climate change and to create child-friendly public spaces, including recreational spaces for children.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

During 2021, UNICEF revised and extended its Programme Strategy in line with emerging humanitarian and development needs as well as reflecting the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. The relative political stability of 2021 provided UNICEF with expanded opportunities to partner with the Libyan government in new ways. During 2021, UNICEF recognized that the progressive stabilization of Libya required a shift in programme implementation strategies, moving from a focus on humanitarian relief and support to service delivery at the municipal level to a wholistic engagement with national systems strengthening, including with regards to national capacity to respond to shocks and emergencies.

Specific lessons learned on the nexus programming from the success of UNICEF's Health programme in response to COVID-19 during the year illustrate how emergency response programmes can support long-term development efforts through (a) investment in building national health capacity and information management systems; (b) partnership with multiple humanitarian and development actors including donors, agencies, civil society and private sector to ensure sustainability of financial resources; and (c) utilization of information collected during the campaign to contribute to improvements in population and health data.

UNICEF has emerged as a leader in the national COVID-19 response, including with regards to the roll-out of vaccines and RCCE. UNICEF played a key role in coordination, policy and capacity development, supply and logistics at the national and local levels. During its lessons learned reflection, UNICEF identified additional opportunities for expanded engagement with the Government to strengthen the broader health sector, building on partnerships established during the COVID response rollout. During the coming year, UNICEF will continue to build on its success and further contribute to the Ministry of Health's system strengthening for EPI and in other areas of maternal and child health.

UNICEF was also able to strengthen national partnerships and expand risk-informed system strengthening. UNICEF capitalized on its strong partnerships with key line ministries to push for policy reform towards inclusive basic service delivery across a number of sectors benefiting development and humanitarian work. The lessons learned regarding the opportunities for systems building that were identified during 2021 will lay the foundation for programming during 2022 and beyond. For example, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education engaged in productive discussions regarding improved enrollment of vulnerable groups (including migrants and refugees) in formal

education and the rollout of national distance education, responding to humanitarian education needs through improved inclusive basic service delivery. UNICEF is also working closely with the Ministry of Social Affairs to strategically strengthen the social workforce as an important building block of a national child protection system. UNICEF's engagement in social protection system reform is a particularly strong example of the importance of this change in approach. Building a shock-responsive social protection system that is able to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs and welfare of the most vulnerable children and their families. To these ends, UNICEF worked with the government on the elaboration of a social protection policy, in partnership with development and humanitarian actors like the World Bank, UNHCR, UNDP and WFP. The roadmap was finalized and validated by the NEDB during 2021, laying the groundwork a joint policy vision.

Building on these lessons learned and opportunities s, UNICEF will further strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus approach to programming during 2022 and the next Country Programme (2023-2025) to address the immediate needs and long-term vulnerabilities, including through risk-informed system strengthening and building national emergency preparedness and response capacity.