

Namibia

Update on the context and situation of children

As of end-December 2021, Namibia recorded a cumulative total of 141,045 COVID-19 cases (representing around 5 per cent of the country's population) and 3,593 total deaths (overall CFR 2.5 per cent), and the recovery rate stood at 91 per cent. Of the total confirmed cases, 4,803 (3 per cent) have been healthcare workers. After a devastating third wave in June 2021, a fourth is starting to rise with the rapid spread of the Omicron variant.

Namibia is facing considerable challenges in meeting its target of vaccinating 60 per cent of the population i.e. approximately 1,5 million people. After some major constraints, supplies have significantly strengthened during the second half of the year, such that Namibia now has adequate stocks with around 700,000 vaccine currently available. As of end-December 2021, a cumulative 399,935 persons received their 1st dose of COVID-19 vaccine (Sinopharm, AstraZeneca, Sputnik V, Pfizer or Janssen), and 235,698 received their second dose. With a vaccination coverage of only around 22 per cent, evidence in Namibia shows that the single most important impediment is insufficient demand among the general population as well as key populations such as healthcare workers and opinion leaders. Vaccine hesitancy is fueled by continuous circulation of misinformation.

The Namibian economy was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, experiencing a dip of 8.5 per cent in 2020. Furthermore, the 2021 growth projection of 2.2 per cent was revised to 1.9 per cent, reflecting the lingering impacts of the pandemic. The projected medium-term growth will remain below pre-COVID levels and National Development Plan (NDP) targets, further impacting on progress towards achieving SDGs. The prolonged socio-economic impacts of COVID have inevitably worsened the situation of children, especially the most deprived. The lockdown measures imposed to prevent its spread have pushed more children deeper into poverty, and families on the cusp of escaping poverty have been pulled back. The UN Namibia Socio-economic impact analysis of COVID-19 (2020) estimates that the pandemic pushed more than 105,000 people, including some 45,000 children into poverty. Further, the UNICEF supported Namibia Multidimensional Poverty Index (NaMPI 2021) report show that children are the poorest demographic at 51.3 per cent compared to the national average of 43.3 per cent. However, the Government is commended for its commitment towards social sectors benefiting children, whose allocation accounts for 53 per cent of the 2021/22 total budget. This notwithstanding, the constrained fiscal environment, coupled with growing interest payment obligations, remains the biggest risks towards sustaining investments in children and thus outcomes.

Comparing January-September 2021 to the same period pre-pandemic in 2019, malaria cases increased over four-fold (and almost 3-fold among under-fives), maternal deaths were 53 per cent higher, still births and neonatal deaths over 30 per cent higher, PMTCT/ARV stock-outs over 3-fold, wasting 79 per cent higher, while outreach services to underserved communities and school health visits decreased by 32 per cent and 74 per cent respectively. Additionally, 52,761 Namibian households lost livelihoods as a result of drought, floods, and locust infestations, 88 per cent in Kunene region. Driven by a severe drought in southern Angola, an estimated 6,000 migrants have settled in temporary camps, over 80 per cent of whom are women and children, and more in non-monitored dwellings throughout the border regions, with very constrained access to critical life-saving services.

Considering the additional threats to children posed by the pandemic, UNICEF Namibia Country Office (NCO) re-prioritized programming, focusing on interventions to ringfence essential services for children in the areas of maternal and neonatal health, nutrition, PMTCT, WASH, child protection. UNICEF also increased support to infection prevention and control measures in and around schools to avoid school closures, while supporting the implementation of the rationalised curriculum with more

emphasis on the mastery of key competencies and mental health and psycho-social support.

Although the Ministry of Education (MoEAC) managed to avoid large-scale and prolonged school closures, COVID-19 continued to affect education with learning loss, drop-out, pregnancy, and anxiety. The Government - managed to reduce the gap in availability of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools from 232 in 2019 to 121 schools by December 2021. The Violence Against Children and Youth in Namibia (VACS) report was launched in 2021 and provides the country with much needed evidence to prioritise interventions in line with its commitments as a Pathfinding Country (since December 2020).

Adolescent girls and young women still account for disproportionate number of new HIV infections due to overlapping factors such as sexual and gender-based violence, multiple sexual partnerships, and early sexual debut. These factors together with increased teenage pregnancies have been exacerbated since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF supported the joint efforts of the UNCT in Namibia to the Universal Periodic Review by identifying key areas of achievement and concern regarding child rights. In addition, UNICEF as part of the United Nations Partnership Framework (UNPAF), aligned its workplan priorities with the Harambee Prosperity Plan II (HPP II), thereby ensuring that the requisite support was provided to the government in its implementation. Furthermore, support was provided towards the preparatory work for the drafting of the sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), whose development will take center stage in 2022.

Boosted in part by the global COVID-19 pandemic and UNICEF's steadfast support to the National COVID-19 Response, UNICEF NCO's generated 7.5 million USD in 2021 (and utilized 7.1 million USD of those), against the planned resources of around 5.2 million USD per annum, reflecting the continued resource mobilization efforts for an upper middle-income country. To date NCO raised funds primarily from a variety of multi-lateral donors, and in particular the EU, from Governments of Japan, and UNICEF National Committees (notably Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and Canada), as well as multiple sources of UNICEF thematic and emergency funding. The engagement of the Private Sector through the UNICEF Business Council has resulted in a shared value partnership with B2Gold. There is an opportunity to expand the current pool to tap into the Private sector locally and regionally to mobilize and leverage resources for children moving into 2022.

Major contributions and drivers of results

As the COVID-19 pandemic overstretched capacities both nationally and worldwide, in 2021 UNICEF in Namibia prioritized the continuity of essential services to the most vulnerable children. As key contribution to the National Development Plan and the UNPAF and in line with UNICEF's Strategic Plan, NCO focused on ensuring that every child in Namibia survives and thrives, learns, participates, and is protected from violence and exploitation.

In 2021, NCO continued to reposition itself in relation to upstream advocacy to leverage resources for children and influence decisions that will positively impact the rights of children and women in the country. With this repositioning, UNICEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering 2021-2023 with Parliament. The aim of the MOU is to strengthen Parliament's coordination mechanism, address the gaps in policies and strategies that are geared towards a comprehensive approach in implementing to achieve sustainable results for children. The 2021 World Children's Day and the 75th Anniversary of UNICEF celebrations at the Kazungula bridge, focused on interactions and engagement by the four Heads of States and over 200 children representing Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The outcome of the event resulted in the establishment of a Presidents' Network by the

four Heads of State. The network will focus on children's rights and initiatives promoting effective governance as an enabler of socio-economic development to deliver quality public services for all children in their respective countries. UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare, Civil Society and the Media organised a week-long series of events to commemorate the Day of the African Child, and the Day of the Namibian Child. Using this year's theme "*30 years after the adoption of the Charter: accelerate implementation of Agenda 2040 for an African fit for children*". The country used 2021 various events as a springboard for raising awareness on the additional challenges derailing the gains made by Namibia in child rights due to COVID-19.

UNICEF's strong focus on evidence-based advocacy in Namibia contributed to several strategic shifts in 2021; for instance, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development moved away from exclusive toilet subsidies to incorporating community-led total sanitation (CLTS) as a core programme component; access to quality ECD services, and improving nutrition were also prioritized in the Presidential 2021-2025 Harambee Prosperity Plan II. Furthermore, UNICEF's advocacy to ensure children's right to education by keeping schools open, combined with assistance to clarify and disseminate information on Infection, Prevention and Control of COVID-19 in schools, broadcasting video and radio messages from leaders in education targeting parents and communities, and supporting rapid response teams for schools in cases of a community outbreak, resulted in Namibia being amongst the few countries in ESAR to avoid school closures in 2021. UNICEF supported the implementation of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture's school recovery plan developed in 2020 for children in inclusive and resource schools, including a rationalized curriculum, additional learning support to all learners and assistive technology for children with disabilities, and distribution of 6 million workbooks which reached close to 40 per cent of pre-primary classes (27,700 learners) and 85 per cent of primary schools (over 350,000 learners daily). To improve school readiness, UNICEF supported capacity strengthening of 300 pre-primary novice teachers on early literacy and numeracy skills. To reinforce IPC measures and ensure adequate psycho-social support to teachers and learners in schools, UNICEF as part of UN Delivering as One (DaO) increased its engagement with regional integrated school health task forces comprised of stakeholders from all sectors relevant for the health and safety of children in schools. Furthermore, under the DaO, UNICEF supported the Early and Unintended Pregnancy campaign in three regions targeting 10,000 adolescent girls with prevention and response services, and an impact study on the Policy on the Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancies before and since COVID-19.

NCO continued to strive in championing children's rights through the use of data, effective programme planning, coordination, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation. Buttressing the administrative data systems was an essential tool in 2021 for improving service provision, identifying and acting on child-focused development goals, and reporting against international commitments. UNICEF supported line Ministries responsible for education and health to conduct and disseminate COVID-19 epi-data pertaining to schools which informed decisions on school reopening. EMIS continued to produce high quality data, including on learners with disabilities through incorporation of the 6 Washington questions. The 2021 15th School Day Report was particularly important to assess the number of learners who have not returned to school due to pregnancy, COVID-19 or other reasons. The MoEAC finalized the development of the new OpenEMIS examination system for Namibia which replaced the outdated system from the early 1980, resulting in costs savings of over NAD4 million (approximately USD 250,000) in 2021 alone.

UNICEF Namibia strengthened COVID-19 vaccine management and logistics, data management, risk communication and community engagement and procured vaccines and supplies on behalf of Government, contributing to full vaccination of 16 per cent of the eligible population and approximately 48 per cent of targeted high-risk groups. UNICEF NCO was among the first countries to successfully implement a 60-days Facebook paid campaign, highlighting the importance of routine vaccination. The campaign reached and engaged over 700,000 people globally and nationally. To ensure sustained access to COVID-19 messages and to address vaccine misinformation, UNICEF used

radio as the main source of information - with over 80 per cent of Namibians relying on the national and indigenous radio stations for the daily update on COVID-19 testing and vaccination sites. However, vaccine hesitancy remains a key bottleneck to achieving national vaccination targets, both among health care workers and the general public, requiring a strategic shift to differentiation of messaging and service delivery platforms.

In addition, UNICEF influenced the on-going reforms to the Procurement Act, to make it more efficient, particularly the adoption of pooled procurement and framework agreements for health procurement. This was achieved through the study on Strengthening of Health Procurement for Impact led by the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with MoHSS and Partners. This intervention also improved coordination between MoF and MoHSS. Upon implementation, these reforms will help ensure efficient procurement of vaccines and essential medicines, for improved availability and outcomes for children.

UNICEF also continued to monitor and track the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, with a view to support Government's socio-economic recovery efforts, while strengthening Public Finance for Children. Partly on account of budget analysis and advocacy efforts by UNICEF and Partners, social sectors benefiting children, continue to receive the highest budgetary allocation at 53 per cent of the total 2021/22 national budget. With UNICEF support, the NaMPI Report was officially launched in June 2021. The launch of the report was a major milestone in ensuring comprehensive measurement of child poverty, thereby ensuring that both monetary and non-monetary child poverty is routinely measured and reported by the government. In addition, the launch of the report helped address the palpable data gap with respect to measuring and reporting on SDGs progress, particularly SDG indicator 1.2.2. The report shows that children are the poorest demographic at 51.3 per cent compared to the national average of 43.3 per cent, hence the need for a well-coordinated and multi-sectoral approach, coupled with greater public investments in children. Through UNICEF's strategic stakeholder dissemination and advocacy targeting Government, IFIs, Development Partners, Embassies and NatComs, the Government committed to prioritise child poverty in the National Development Plan and to use the measure as an official permanent poverty statistic for informing national policies and tracking progress. The advocacy efforts also helped to galvanize Government and Partners collaboration in resource mobilisation for child-rights based programming in Namibia.

In the area of social protection, technical and financial support to the line Ministry resulted in the Cabinet approval of the Social Protection Policy in March 2021. The Policy seeks to strengthen the child grants through data cleaning and review of the targeting mechanism. In addition, noting projected improvements in fiscal space, the Government committed to preserve value and account for inflationary losses of the child grants by topping up the amounts (including the Child Disability Grant).

Supporting the -by COVID- overstretched health system, over 600 Community Health Extension Workers' (CHEWs) capacity to deliver integrated services on Nutrition, PMTCT, and COVID-19 prevention was enhanced and were provided with risk-appropriate personal protective equipment to enable continued safe service delivery at household level. UNICEF's supply and capacity-building support contributed to average monthly screening of 34,430 children for acute malnutrition exceeding the 2020 baseline of 19,648 leading to treatment of 8,258 wasted children compared to 7,022 in 2020. Through UNICEF's support, 56 per cent of under-fives received Vitamin A supplementation compared to 50 per cent in 2020.

Furthermore, 5,000 children in 135 Early Childhood Development centres vulnerable to food insecurity in informal settlements received daily meals through UNICEF support. Children at these centres were also supported with handwashing facilities for infection prevention and home-based learning materials for COVID-19 school closures, resulting in 718 children at 18 of these centres having access to safe toilets. Moreover, through UNICEF-supported CLTS, two urban blocks were

certified open defecation free and three blocks and 4 rural villages verified and awaiting certification. This brings to a total the number of 14,698 people accessing sanitation with UNICEF support since 2019, 53 per cent of whom accessed sanitation in the reporting period.

Responding to the emerging influx of migrants from Angola, UNICEF supported malnutrition treatment capacity assessment to inform preparedness of health facilities along the border. Support to the regional health team in Omusati to provide integrated maternal, child health and nutrition services at the Etunda camp, resulted in treatment of 53 children for malnutrition (of which 18 for SAM and 35 for MAM), immunization of 862 children against measles and other infections, COVID-19 vaccination of 461 adults, and 69 children with Pfizer, provision of temporary mobile toilets, and access to safe water for the over 3000 inhabitants of the camp. Resource mobilization for life-saving interventions in coordination with UNCT and OCHA commenced early December 2021.

Strengthening the child protection system to respond to the (increased) risks of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC), and as part of the popularisation and implementation of the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA), UNICEF trained 254 health workers, 56 social workers, 18 administrative officers, 57 police officers and 50 magistrates on the CCPA. A total of 7,400 posters, 38,800 factsheets, 140,000 comics on child protection-related issues were disseminated in schools, CSOs, health facilities and other public places. UNICEF also supported the publication of an article explaining the best interest of the child in two national newspapers, as well as an advertisement on the various instruments where public and key stakeholders can find these. To ensure child-sensitive and efficient investigation of child sexual exploitation and abuse, with support of UNICEF 135 multi-disciplinary team members at Gender-Based Violence Protection Units (GBVPU) were provided with capacity on the standard operating procedures (SOPs) on GBV/VAC/TIP and 37 justice professionals responsible for children on child-sensitive investigation (Child Witness Training), reaching a total of 93 per cent nationwide. With schools being a key location where sexual violence against girls seems to take place according to VACS, and learner pregnancies increasing dramatically, the MOEAC prioritised the roll-out of training on the National Safe Schools Framework together with training on MHPSS, reaching a total of 366 education professionals (194F/172M) with UNICEF support. The Namibian Police (NAMPOL) conducted 'keep me safe from COVID-19' campaign in three regions, which included messages on GBV, reaching over 4,000 learners in less than three months in 286 schools. The education and recreational sports sectors started rolling-out the Safeguarding Children in Sports Training Manual developed by UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Sports, Youth and National Service and GIZ. These partners are currently advocating with national sports federations and committees to work with their members to adopt a child safeguarding policy and train their members and children.

UNICEF supported the health sector in Ohangwena to reach 71 per cent of adolescents living with HIV in that region with the teen club service delivery model which is now available at all its 35 health care facilities. These ALHIV have achieved viral load suppression of 87 per cent compared to the national average of 77 per cent in their age group. To ensure continuity of care during COVID-19, UNICEF supported MoHSS to reach out to people with HIV through community-based Antiretroviral Therapy Sites and other outreach posts along the border with Angola and modelled a teen club community-garden initiative in Ohangwena to provide additional food and income, as an incentive to attend. For sustainability, UNICEF developed a Standardised Curriculum for Teen Clubs with meaningful engagement of 16 ALHIV and 24 HCWs who were subsequently trained as Master Trainers. The standardised curriculum is expected to expand the quantity and quality of teen clubs throughout the country, improve delivery of health services, increase retention into care, increase viral load suppression and sustained psychological support to ALHIV. To further support retention, adherence, and viral load suppression among ALHIV, UNICEF supported the development of an HIV information package centred around U=U (Undetectable=Untransmittable).

The year 2021 saw the introduction of UPSHIFT to Namibia. To date 55 adolescents (32f/23m) have

benefitted through UPSHIFT's social innovation workshops and bootcamps, and 32 (20f/12m) were able to pitch their innovative ideas and products to a panel of judges. Subsequently, 18 adolescents (13f/5m) have undergone social media training and participated in a social enterprise workshop, ready to further develop their ideas into viable solutions with seed funds, guided by experienced mentors from the UPSHIFT ecosystem. UNICEF also made great strides in ensuring active and meaningful participation of adolescents in C4D, research material development. This practical experience will feed into the meaningful adolescent participation framework which UNICEF NCO is currently developing, including the establishment of a Youth Advisory Group.

UNICEF NCO sustained good governance throughout 2021 as evidenced in the embedding of risk management in business processes and adherence to internal controls and work processes ensuring that UNICEF's core business processes and related guidance are risk informed and amended accordingly. In 2021, NCO continued to effectively manage its financial resources and capacity building on HACT framework and implementation. NCO supported the procurement for COVID Emergency Response, coordinated the vaccination logistics management, and provided technical assistance to the Government and partners, resulting in procurement services value of over USD 3 million in 2021, which is the largest procurement services value in NCO's history. NCO pioneered the printing of MUAC tapes locally, the only CO in the ESAR to achieve this.

In 2021, UNICEF Namibia sustained effective inter-agency partnerships to accelerate UNPAF priorities and positioned UNICEF's priorities through the United Nation's Communication Group. UNICEF participated in regular coordination fora of UNCT, Operations Management Team (OMT), UNCG and other pillars to ensure efficiency and optimizing support resources for the operation of the UN system in support of DaO in Namibia. CO administrative services focused on improving environmental footprint and energy efficiency, supporting DaO UN efforts.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

Collaboration with UN agencies and other partnerships was consolidated by UNICEF to respond to much needed data, COVID-19 response, UMICs resource needs and programming including support to the Government priorities.

Under the UNSDG Joint Programme, UNICEF collaborated with other Agencies (ILO, UNFPA, UNDP and the RCO) in supporting the Government to develop an integrated national financing framework, aimed at enhancing the quality and scale of financing for SDGs and investments in child well-being. A key milestone for 2021 was the capacity strengthening of Parliamentarians, by equipping over 90 members of both the National Assembly and National Council with the requisite skills to support policies and legislative frameworks for SDGs, whilst ensuring effective oversight and transparency in the budgeting process for better outcomes for children.

As part of DaO, UNICEF partnered with UNFPA and WHO to improve the quality of maternal and new-born health interventions, and through the joint UN team on AIDS (JUTA), supported pre-validation assessment and data management which informed targeted interventions to accelerate PMTCT and achieve bronze status by 2023. Jointly with UNFPA and WHO, UNICEF successfully mobilized resources for sexual reproductive health services. Jointly with WFP with ECHO support, UNICEF implemented a Food Security and Nutrition humanitarian response to COVID-19, targeting 286,122 people. UNICEF collaborated with other UN agencies and development partners to facilitate COVID-19 vaccination, specifically supporting data management, procurement, vaccine logistics and risk communication and community engagement. UNICEF with UNESCO, UNFPA and WHO supported national rollout of integrated school health and safety programme, focusing on mental health and psycho-social support to teachers and learners amidst COVID-19 anxieties. In partnership with

UNICEF, Lifeline/Childline appointed more counsellors to provide psychosocial support to 1,423 survivors of gender-based violence and Uitani radio reached 3,678 children discussing topics on sexual violence and abuse.

Partnerships have been instrumental to the building of an ecosystem for the success of UPSHIFT in Namibia. UPSHIFT builds on the solid relationship between UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth (MSYNS), CSOs (Physically Active Youth), and increasingly the Private Sector through Business for Results initiatives with the extractive industry (B2Gold), the national telecom (MTC) and philanthropists (through the German NatCom) joining hands to train and mentor young people in social innovation.

UNICEF also collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in providing technical and financial resources to ensure scale-up of the teen club service delivery model in Namibia. This partnership led to increased retention into care for ALHIV including through the piloting a community gardening initiative aimed at increasing food security and skills building in small scale food production for ALHIV.

UNICEF in partnership with the National Assembly successfully held a session with 29 Child Parliamentarians in the 2021 VNRs process to ensure consultation, child participation and to enable inputs of children and youth to the National report. Finally, UNICEF also strengthened partnerships with IFIs (IMF, World Bank and the African Development Bank) and other UN Agencies to position children at the center of policy and budget making.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

National leadership is important for ownership. The NaMPI analysis was well entrenched and led by the Government ensuring ownership of the findings. The Director General of National Planning Commission (NPC) launched the Report and presented the same, at the 76th UN General Assembly, expressing the Government's commitment to the measure, as an official permanent poverty statistic for informing national policies and tracking progress in Namibia. Through the series of meetings convened by UNICEF with Government Ministries, International Financial Institutions, Development Partners and Natcoms, it was clear that awareness of the NaMPI Report was low, albeit several months after its launch. By strategically packaging the report findings and presenting to different stakeholders, UNICEF was able to ensure wider awareness of the child poverty situation and its implications on children themselves, the society and national development. Further, the dissemination meetings helped to galvanize Government and Partners to strengthen partnerships and collaboration for a Big Push on policies and programmes aimed at reducing child poverty in all its dimensions as articulated in SDG1. It was through these advocacy efforts that UNICEF was able to obtain Government commitment to include child multidimensional poverty indicators and targets in the NDP6.

During rainy season, annual floods on the Zambezi River make roads inaccessible for 6 months of the year and cut off communities from access to vital health and laboratory diagnostic services such as HIV testing and routine immunization and COVID vaccination. UNICEF together with Government, the private sector and Johns Hopkins University, therefore initiated the establishment of the first-of-its-kind medical drone corridor to transport and deliver specimen samples, vaccines, and other medical commodities. The drone network will consist of one hub, that will act as a landing, maintenance, and recharging center and support five clinic sites with one trip per weekday to each clinic site, i.e. facilitating over 1000 flights per year starting in 2022 thereby improving the lives of around 90,000 vulnerable people from remote communities.

UNICEF is using its multi-sectoral expertise to strengthen multi-sectoral integration across different

delivery platforms, improving access to services for women and children through ECD centres, community health platforms, community outreaches, schools and health facilities. These ECD support modalities will be analyzed for cost efficiency and scale-up feasibility. In partnership with InterTeam and Botnar Foundation, UNICEF provided technical support to the design of an innovative Social Impact Bond strategy to finance ECD expansion and improve quality, currently at approval stage with the Ministry of Finance, with a view to strengthen joint Government, Private Sector and Development Partners' results-based investment in ECD. Strong understanding by the Government of the Social Impact Bond is key to ownership.

To inform policy and public advocacy for sanitation expansion through CLTS, UNICEF in partnership with Development Workshop Namibia captured over 5,000 constructed toilets in urban informal settlements in a GIS platform for real-time visibility. UNICEF and DWN are jointly developing a field note on this innovative monitoring to share lessons learnt beyond Namibia. Persisting challenges requiring further innovative approaches include effective delivery of differentiated messaging and platforms to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, strengthening data accessibility, visibility and utilization at service point and sub-national level across sectors.

Engagement of Government and private sector stakeholders with expertise in new information communication technologies (ICTs) resulted in increased in-house capacity, ownership and commitment within the MoEAC to accelerate access to ICTs in the basic education sector, equipping learners with essential skills to maximise opportunities in the 21st century, and thus decreasing inequities as Namibia reimagines education. This priority is clearly formulated in HPP II.

Furthermore, the multi-stakeholder approach of UPSHIFT, with regular interactions and updates on the progress and opportunities of the young person's ideas and solutions, has gained interest in UPSHIFT from both Government and private sector, as a tool for closing the compatibility gap between education, including TVET, and the labour market, to be considered for improving their own interventions and corporate social responsibility investments.

As UNICEF Namibia prepares to launch U-Report in 2022, Government ownership, youth mobilisation and resource-sharing is proving key to success. UNICEF maximised adolescent participation in its programmatic interventions in the development of the Safeguarding in Sports Training Manual, of the Teen Club Standardised Curriculum, of the U=U behaviour change campaign, of the Impact Study on the Policy on Prevention and Management of Learner Pregnancies, and of course as part of the human-centred design approach of UPSHIFT and U-Report. The adolescents and young persons' feedback inspired stakeholders to commit to further improving on adolescent participation in their own work. The experience has further influenced UNICEF's draft adolescent participation framework, which is expected to be finalised in 2022.

Another key lesson learnt is that strategic partnerships and forging close working relationship with the Ministry of Finance and the NPC is key to influence policy and action to deliver results. UNICEF supported the engagements between the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPEWS) with the Ministry of Finance and NPC, at both technical and executive level, which proved pivotal in obtaining fiscal commitment and Cabinet approval of the Social Protection Policy. These relationships need to be sustained to ensure successful implementation of the Policy.

NCO continued to monitor the COVID-19 situation and adjusted to an evolving environment through a combination of office and teleworking modalities as part of the Business Continuity Plan. This contributed to a reduction of office footprint to ensure staff safety and wellbeing. NCO supported staff wellbeing through HR procedures, including regular days off for staff.

In response to the Pulse Check and Global Staff Survey, NCO developed an action plan to address the key areas identified in the survey. A consultant was engaged to facilitate NCO efforts on racial

discrimination and biases in the workplace, psychological safety and trust, and performance management. NCO is committed to sustain the implementation of the action plan in 2022. A coaching session for managers following 360 degrees assessment is scheduled to be concluded by year end. Significant resources were invested in T4D interventions including the pilot drone and U-report projects.