

Burundi

Update on the context and situation of children

Burundi continued to be challenged by a weak economy and low rate of human development[2], compounded by monetary and multidimensional poverty as well as natural disasters.[3] Children under 18 account for 47% of the population totalling 6 million.

Agriculture accounts for over 40% of GDP and employs 80% of the population. Monetary poverty affects more than 51% of the population, particularly those dependent on agriculture and female-headed households[4], while 8.1 million people live in multidimensional poverty[5] and more than 64% of children suffer from deprivations in the areas of food, health, water, sanitation, education, and protection[6].

0-6 years old

Burundi has one of the youngest populations in the region and one of the fastest growing in the world. Children under 6 represent nearly 18.7% of the population, or about 2.4 million children.

Despite significant improvements in the health of young children, the gains remain fragile. The under-five mortality rate[7] declined from 62 per 1,000 live births in 2017 to 53 in 2021 but remains high because of the small improvement in neonatal mortality, which declined only from 22.4 per 1,000 live births to 20.9.

55.8% of children under five are chronically malnourished[8], 4.8%[9] are acutely malnourished and 27.6%[10] are underweight. This situation is exacerbated by recurrent illnesses, poor access to water and sanitation[11], low quality parental care, and poor households that are unable to provide sufficient, well-balanced and quality food.

These children have little opportunity to access early learning and stimulation activities. In 2019-2020, the gross enrolment rate in the preschool cycle was 12% children[12] out of a school-age population of 1 million[13]. In 2017, 84% of children under the age of five were registered with the civil registry, but 34% of children under five did not have a birth certificate.

7-13 years old

Children aged 7-13 years represent nearly 18.7% of the total population, or about 2.4 million children. School enrolment has improved significantly in recent years thanks to the policy of free primary education implemented since 2005, the implementation of the general reform of the basic cycle and the significant increase in resources[14]. In 2020/2021, the gross enrolment rate (GER)[15] in the primary education cycle reached 115%, while the net enrolment rate (NER)[16] reached 88%. Despite these high enrolment rates, approximately 260,000 children drop out of school each year[17]. The reasons include a lack of classrooms, teachers[18], textbooks and basic equipment (only 45% of schools have hygienic latrines and 46% have a water point). Non-enrolment is also the result of parents' lack of financial resources (21% of cases) and parental attitudes and behaviour.

Child labour remains a widespread phenomenon. 31% of children aged 5 to 17 reported[19] having participated in economic activities during the week preceding the interview[20]. Violence within families remains common in Burundi, with 90% of children aged 1-14 having experienced any form of violent discipline; 66%, corporal punishment and 23%, psychological aggression[21].

14-19 years old

Adolescents aged 14-19 constitute 13.5% of the total population, or about 1.7 million adolescents. In the area of health, adolescents are confronted with the risk of exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, psychosocial problems and early and unwanted pregnancies. 8% of women aged 15-19, or 57,275 adolescents[22], had begun a reproductive life, 6% had at least one child and 2% had been pregnant with their first child[23].

Adolescents' rates of enrolment in the post-basic cycle[24] are lower than those recorded for the basic education cycle, with greater disparity for adolescents with disabilities. The GER for adolescents aged 16 to 18 is not improving significantly (29% between 2019 and 2021), the repetition rate is increasing

significantly (19% in 2019 and 26% in 2021) while the dropout rate is 18% in 2021 compared to 10% for basic education[25]. Almost half (47.7%) of young people aged 15 to 24 are inactive[26], the majority in urban areas, due to their schooling (64%), domestic work (especially for women), their disability (14%), and the mismatch between employment needs and the availability of technical and professional training[27].

[1] In 2021, under President Evariste Ndayishimiye, the Council of Ministers adopted the President's National Programme for Peace Capitalization, Social Stability and the Promotion of Economic Growth.

[2] Ranking 187 of 191 countries on the Human Development Index 2021-2022.

[3] According to the World Bank data, the GDP per Capita was of US\$ 221.5 in 2021. According to the FMI, in 2021, the economic growth reached 1.63%. It is projected at 3.6 - 4.7% for 2023, close to the estimated average for East Africa. For the year 2021, an inflation of 8.4% has been calculated by the World Bank.

[4] Enquête intégrée sur les conditions de vie des ménages au Burundi (EICVMB) 2019-2020, ISTEEBU

[5] UNICEF Burundi Humanitarian Situation Report No. 1, 1 January to 30 June 202

[6] Ibid.

[7] U5MR

[8] 1.1 million

[9] 99,000

[10] 569,000

[11] 42% of the population does not have access to a safe water source within a 30-minute round trip. Enquête nationale sur la situation nutritionnelle et la mortalité, Ministère de la santé publique et de la lutte contre le SIDA, 2022

[12] 125,667

[13] Total enrollment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the officially school-age population at that level in a given school year

[14] One quarter of public spending in 2021

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ratio of the number of children enrolled in the age group officially corresponding to a given level of education to the total population in that age group, expressed as a percentage

[17] Troisième Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Burundi, 2016-2017

[18] In public basic education schools, the ratio is 52 students per teacher

[19] 2016-2017 Demographic and Health Survey

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Department of Health Services

[23] Troisième Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Burundi, 2016-2017

[24] Equivalent to secondary school

[25] MENRS 2021

[26] Indicator of the level of activity in the labor market.

[27] Enquête intégrée sur les conditions de vie des ménages au Burundi (EICVMB) 2019-2020, ISTEEBU

Major contributions and drivers of results

In implementing the country programme 2019-2023, the country office continued to focus on key cross-sectoral themes and synergetic results. Priority cross-sectoral themes included early childhood development (ECD), adolescent programming and climate change.

Early childhood development

Following the 2021 cost-benefit analysis of ECD, which revealed a high return on investments[1] and potential good results for decreasing U5MR and stunting by 2050, UNICEF continued contributing to national efforts to implement the new national ECD strategy. Through an internal ECD task force, the office elaborated both an ECD operational plan and a multisectoral minimum intervention package. This latter will be rolled out in 2023 in provinces showing the highest rates of vulnerabilities. UNICEF also developed ECD budget briefs to follow financing trends in that sector. Thanks to the evidence generated and advocacy made around ECD, the budget allocated to ECD increased from 2.3% in 2020-2021 to 6.2% in 2022-2023. UNICEF's strong advocacy and high-quality evidence led to maintaining the amount of budget allocated to social sectors in real terms, while increasing the budget allocated to immunization and the public investments in non-contributory social protection programmes per capita. Local councils also that were supported by UNICEF have seen huge increase in their revenues.

In 2022, 239,073 children (52% girls) received their birth certificates thanks to the organization of late birth registration campaigns.

In 2022, 19 new community day care centres for children aged 2-5 years were completed and 12 preschool classes were constructed/rehabilitated and equipped. In tandem, UNICEF strengthened the capacities of educators and the content of the care provided, allowing this sub-sector of preschool education to become more firmly rooted in the educational landscape. UNICEF support ensures the reliability and sustainability of preschools, which now have qualified supervisors and content adapted to the needs of young children. Beyond the construction of classrooms, the improved quality of supervision and care given to children increases popular demand for more preschools. UNICEF supported the roll-out of a SMART survey which showed a decline in the prevalence of wasting among children under 5 from 6.1% in 2020 to 4.8% in 2022. Treatment for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) is offered in all districts in 638 health facilities and 61 hospitals. Some 54,534 children (52% girls) under 5 with SAM, representing 99% of the annual caseload, were admitted and treated. Performance indicators remained above SPHERE standards with a cure rate of 90% and default rate of 3.8%. The first mini survey of end-user monitoring was conducted to ensure the availability, correct storage conditions and use of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) by end users. The results revealed that 66% of beneficiaries received RUTF but only 60% of caregivers were satisfied with the quantity received[2]. Following this situation, UNICEF will continue to support the Ministry of Health through capacity-building and technical guidance to address identified challenges behind these findings. Up to now, on-site capacity-building for nutrition care providers in the nine most needy hospitals along with nationwide formative supervision have already been held to improve the quality of care.

UNICEF worked to integrate stimulation in both inpatient and outpatient care and treatment of SAM in 200 hospitals and equipped 147 nutritional rehabilitation homes with ECD play kits. At the community level, 23 spaces dedicated to the promotion of child development for more than 3,000 children, including 100 particularly vulnerable children (children from ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, etc.), were built. To implement those activities, local associations were trained and supported in the local manufacture of toys. UNICEF and partners strengthened the capacities of community members on ECD and sensitized parents on early stimulation and positive parenting, so as to reduce the risk of violence against children at home, in four provinces. Finally, ECD was promoted in two prisons where children were incarcerated with their mothers, and 34 children under age 3 years benefitted from stimulation activities.

UNICEF continued to support the social protection system through the finalization of the national social protection policy and strategy, which were formulated around a life-cycle approach with a specific focus on ECD and gender. UNICEF will ensure that the work plan as well as identified indicators contribute to implement the ECD and gender focus already included in the policy. The policy is designed to be shock-responsive while supporting the resilience of households to bridge the nexus between humanitarian and development. The previous policy developed in 2011 and the strategy

in 2014 were also supported by UNICEF with a strong focus on social transfers, which helped to develop the national safety net programme. This programme gave a large place to ECD activities highlighting the main challenge of the first 1,000 days[3] and nutrition especially.

UNICEF also continued to provide technical assistance to the Merankabandi project, which combines e-cash transfers (mobile payment) with complementary interventions (cash plus) including community activities on ECD which reached 56,090 households with children under 12 in four provinces. All 56,090 households benefited from complementary interventions that reached an estimated 283,971 children. In 2022, an additional component was added to support the exit strategy. UNICEF developed interventions to reinforce community groups with financial subsidies and specific financial training to guarantee the sustainability of programmatic achievements. ECD interventions on early stimulation have also been added to complement social and behavioural change (SBC) activities as part of the complementary activity package.

UNICEF has revised the - Essential Family Practices – package delivered at community level in order to improve behaviours towards children mostly for the under 6 years old.

Adolescent skills development

In the fourth year of the country programme, UNICEF interventions focused on consolidating support to the Ministry of Youth and its partners to deliver at scale the blended multiple pathways for adolescents transitioning from learning to earnings. Solidarity groups remained an important delivery channel for the programme and UNICEF developed a graduation and certification strategy aimed at assessing the readiness of solidarity group members for referral and handover to partners, including training and microfinance institutions, where they can benefit from additional coaching/training and access financial assets. Data collected from more than 1,900 groups in eight provinces were analysed to assess the financial health of group savings, the liability of governance systems and members' learning outcomes. To continue advocacy for recognition of skills-building in the informal sector, operational research is under preparation with the support of the University of Burundi.

UNICEF reinforced its support to the Ministry of Youth to implement the blended skills-building programme through a mix of community approaches (peer education), multiple online platforms (UReport, IOGT, Yoma) and since November 2022, a soap opera targeting adolescents and the community. From 2019 to date, 306,529 adolescents (48% girls), including 129,269 (57% girls) who were reached in 2022, participated in skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship, and employability through the UNICEF-supported programme. Among them, 91,660 (45% girls) are organized in 3,943 solidarity groups led by 3,943 peer educators and leaders (50% girls) trained to deliver a standard twenty-first century skills curriculum. These solidarity groups are recognized as a valuable network and supportive space for adolescent empowerment and participation and, importantly, contribute to social cohesion and economic self-reliance. The solidarity groups continued to meet regularly under the leadership of the peer educators who use these gatherings to deliver the skills building sessions at every meeting. Among the solidarity groups supported by UNICEF are 130 groups composed of 3,581 adolescents (2,602 girls and 979 boys) who have experienced violence, exploitation or abuse. Their participation in these solidarity groups offers them a protective environment and gives them the opportunity to access income-generating activities and support their socioeconomic reintegration. Since 2019, these groups collectively accumulated financial capital of almost 500 million Burundian francs (BIF) (equivalent to \$263,125) and have provided an average loan of 50,000 BIF (equivalent to \$25) to more than 10,000 adolescents at least twice. Similar skills building programmes have been introduced in 10 schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. As of December 2022, more than 20 schools in 10 provinces have successfully piloted the programme, exposing 1,060 adolescents in school (including 636 girls) to skills development programmes for learning, personal empowerment, active citizenship and/or employability through UNICEF-supported programmes. UNICEF also enhanced the capacities of the Government and its partners to foster adoption of positive health practices and utilization of adequate services, supported by community engagement, that

improve the health and well-being of children and adolescents. Community agents and extension workers strengthened knowledge on essential family practices including nutrition, menstrual hygiene management, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and protection of 1,047,000 adolescents. To sustain and contribute to scaling-up the skills development programme and fill intervention gaps by promoting better coordination among stakeholders, UNICEF continued promoting dialogue between government, the private sector, young people, and civil society as a strategy to pave the way to the launch of the Generation Unlimited platform. UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of youth for the organization of a dialogue session with partners during the second National Youth Summit convened by the President of Burundi. This dialogue provided opportunities for various stakeholders including the private sector, development agencies, youth-led organizations, and the President of Burundi to discuss the importance of coordinating actions promoting youth employability and entrepreneurship.

Finally, in order to address the high rates of detention among adolescents in Burundi, UNICEF supported the organization of five mobile courts and partnered with the Association of Female Jurists of Burundi (AFJB) and the Ministry of Justice to monitor the irregular detention of children in police cells, all together resulting in the release of 923 children in 2022.

Climate change resilience

To support participation of young people in debates on climate policy, UNICEF set up a youth climate and environment network with 12 youth associations. The network allows young people to exchange experiences, increase climate awareness of other youth and inform advocacy activities. In the context of the COP27 conference in November 2022 in Egypt, UNICEF organized a consultation during which 500 young people, including one climate leader from Burundi, were sensitized on climate governance and the conference. A competition to identify innovative youth-led solutions for climate adaptation was organized in Burundi. Of 10 proposed solutions, five were selected for further improvement and implementation. The main themes are agroecology and waste, wastewater treatment and waste management.

UNICEF supported a study to understand the impact of climate change on WASH services to enhance the resilience of the systems, ensure sustainable access to services and avoid incurring losses on the investments made. The results will help to orient the work of the different actors towards climate resilience and to consider risks in the development of WASH policies.

UNICEF Burundi was selected as one of the champion countries for advocacy on 'Climate and Water' and an internal team participated in trainings for the development of an advocacy strategy. The advocacy strategy was finalized and some of its lines of intervention have already been implemented. To achieve the expected results by 2023, an action plan has been developed to be rolled out in 2023. To increase the resilience of the education system to climate change, UNICEF contributed to the construction of more than 110 new classrooms and the rehabilitation of more than 750 others damaged by climate hazards (storms, floods, etc.), which together hosted 43,000 children from the most deprived areas affected by climate change effects. Some 1 million students (51% girls) were supplied with school materials through a back-to-school campaign in the six most disadvantaged provinces prone to the negative consequences of climate change. UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Education in rolling out the Creatable project which aims to foster STEM while harnessing the potential of adolescents through skills development. Adolescents from grade 8 developed and distributed rocket stoves in their communities to fight deforestation while improving the health of women and girls[4]. They did the same in promoting vertical agriculture in a context of land scarcity that leads to conflict contributing to promote community peace.

Development of the new country programme 2024-2027

In 2022, UNICEF began the development of its next country programme through a participatory process, co-led by the Government, that involved development partners and groups of children, including some of the most marginalized groups (ethnic minorities, displaced, children with disabilities, etc.). The process was built on the outcomes of the Strategic Moment of Reflection on the

current programme as well as annual reviews which has enabled the office to capitalize on lessons learned from the current programmes. Summary of evaluations and evaluative evidence conducted in the past years supported the development of the new country programme, including the 2022 GAVI evaluation, two evaluative reviews, and the ongoing synthesis of nutrition evidence. The selection of priority interventions for the country programme 2024-2027 was based on causal analyses of deprivation to understand the underlying and root causes of child rights violations. An analysis of the situation of children, based on secondary data and the results of consultations with children, identified the most significant deprivations faced by children in Burundi. The situation analysis builds on the one developed jointly with the other United Nations agencies involved in the Common Country Analysis. The UNICEF programmatic priorities are derived from the 2024-2027 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and are articulated around the outcomes related to (1) adequate and available human capital; (2) enhanced resilience to the impacts of climate change and other shocks; and (3) structural transformation of the economy and governance for inclusive growth. Designed to operationalize the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles of the humanitarian-development nexus, the UNSDCF was signed on 3 December 2022.

[1] For every dollar invested in ECD, Burundi would receive 18 dollars in return by 2050

[2] Ministry of Health Report, 2022

[3] The first 1,000 days of life - between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday - is a unique period of opportunity when the foundations for optimum health and development across the lifespan are established. The right nutrition and care during the 1,000 day window influences not only whether the child will survive, but also his or her ability to grow, learn and rise out of poverty. As such, it contributes to society's long-term health, stability and prosperity.

[4] This activity contributes to solving the issue of firewood access in communities, as well as improving household health by reducing the smoke emanated from traditional cooking stoves.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

In 2022, UNICEF Burundi continued to strengthen partnerships to establish agendas and set strategies for ECD, climate change, social protection, public finance, and child poverty. UNICEF continued to work closely with the Government, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), the Office of the Resident Coordinator, donors and CSOs.

Through the UNCT, UNICEF contributed to the development of the UNSDCF 2024-2027 as a core member of the technical team, as part of the steering committee and in leading the development of the social services and social protection pillars. UNICEF was co-lead of the Programme Management Team and lead of the Monitoring and Evaluation group. As part of the Steering Committee of the Multi-partner trust fund established for Burundi, UNICEF has served as technical lead for the first joint programme on nutrition channelled through this mechanism. As part of the partnership for resource mobilization, the country office was able to secure funds through joint programmes with FAO, WFP and UN-Women. UNICEF, FAO and WFP will together implement a multisectoral project to fight malnutrition, financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. UNICEF is leading the UN Agencies Working Group on Partnership and Resource Mobilization. WHO and UNHCR are co-lead.

UNICEF obtained high-level commitment to strengthen the national response against all forms of malnutrition focused on a multisectoral ECD approach, through collaboration with Government, Office of the first lady, SUN Secretariat, UN agencies FAO, WFP, UNFPA, UN-Women and World Bank.

The office is fully compliant with harmonized approaches to cash transfers programmatic assurance requirements. Mechanisms for effective partnership management processes continued to be strengthened through the Partnership Review Committee mechanism, with 46 partnership cooperation agreements and 24 Small-Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) signed since 2019.

In 2022, UNICEF strengthened its close relationship with the Government, through partnerships with sectoral ministries, the Ministries of Foreign affairs, the National Institute of Statistics, the Office of the President, to name a few. Jointly with the Government, UNICEF organized an annual review together with Implementing Partners in June 2022 to review the implementation of the workplan 2021-2023, reconfirm priorities for the implementation of the current country programme and plan for the implementation of the new UNSDCF. As part of this process, the office organized joint field missions on-ECD, adolescents and climate change to review progress made in the implementation of this workplan and adjust accordingly. The strengthened joint coordination between UNICEF and the Government in the review of the rolling workplan 2021-2023 resulted in a new rolling workplan 2022-2024 endorsed by the Government.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Lessons learned

In a context like Burundi where the needs of children are present in all the sectors, there is a need for more programmatic and geographic convergence to ensure a better impact for each child. UNICEF is therefore refocusing its interventions around multi-sectoral intervention packages especially around early childhood development. With the objective to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF support at community level as well as reinforce internal synergies, UNICEF will start prioritizing the implementation of community activities in a selection of provinces with the highest percentages of vulnerable children.

In 2022, UNICEF worked on building the resilience of systems as well as community to contribute to long-lasting and sustainable changes. UNICEF conducted significant work this year to harmonize

approaches used by the office as well as to bring partners in this discussion. An approach that has proven particularly effective is the support provided to community-based social protection initiatives such as the Solidarity Groups. UNICEF will continue its work with community platforms and approaches as well as work to establish the functional linkages between community systems and public social services. It will be more engaged at the commune level to see how to plan, monitor and coordinate activities with the community, which will help UNICEF to design a community approach linked to decentralized services in the coming years.

The high prevalence of stunting, but also the exposure to stress (9 out of 10 children are exposed to violent disciplining practices), a lack of early stimulation and limited opportunities for early learning (only one out of ten young children are enrolled in preschool education) lead to far too few children thriving. Short-term consequences include increased morbidity and mortality, decreased cognitive, motor, language, and socio-emotional development, increased healthcare expenditures and opportunity costs related to the care of sick children. Long-term consequences include an increase in non-communicable diseases, low school performance, and decreased work capacity. Ultimately, this implies a high opportunity cost in terms of adult productivity and limits the ability of younger generations to grow out of poverty and contribute effectively to Burundi's development. UNICEF has therefore put increased emphasis on ECD interventions, because of the high return on investment for interventions targeting the youngest children. An integrated package of health, nutrition, protection, and WASH interventions at scale has been developed to increase the proportion of children reaching their full developmental potential and strengthen human capital development in Burundi – the package will be piloted and rolled out in selected provinces in 2023.

Other areas of concern remain chronic malnutrition and neonatal mortality. Burundi has some of the highest levels of under-five chronic malnutrition in the world, with rates that have plateaued at around 55% for over a decade. Current efforts around food systems by various stakeholders have not sufficiently prioritized children's food needs. There is a need to focus on nutrient-dense crops and animal husbandry. Moreover, existing nutrition interventions through health systems and community-based promotion of nutrition practices proved that they were not sufficient on their own, as nutritious food is not available or affordable for most households. Programmes need to be multifaceted and encompass nutrition counselling, cash and nutritious food to be able to make a difference for malnourished children.

Innovation

Innovation continued to be a key enabler for UNICEF's work in Burundi and UNICEF has the potential to be a future leader in driving innovation in Burundi. A series of capacity-building initiatives have been organized to enhance understanding on UNICEF's INVENT innovation platform, human-centred design, the global landscape of UNICEF's innovation portfolio.

An innovation challenge was launched in May 2022 with a focus on finding innovative solutions for cross-sectoral priorities: ECD, adolescents and climate change. Six projects were selected and received \$50,000 each as seed funding. One of the projects involved the production of toys adapted to local context using empty cartons of ready-to-use therapeutic food to improve stimulation for SAM children and therefore improve their recovery. A total of 100 children (including internally displaced children and children in street situation) participated in a toy designing contest, which showed a lot of innovative ideas from the children themselves. Selected models of toys will be designed, multiplied, and piloted from early 2023 in three health facilities that offer care and treatment for children affected by SAM in outpatient centres. Another innovative project aims to prevent and expose abuse, violence and exploitation, including sexual abuse. Vulnerable girls and those affected by climate change, living in IDP sites and host communities, benefited from empowerment activities through the production of ecological coals. This project provides 100 girls, called "Green Girls", with a protective environment and access to economic opportunities that allow them to meet their basic social needs as well as the children under their care. Participants are equipped with knowledge on the collection and management of household waste, the manufacture of ecological coals and improved stoves, entrepreneurial and business skills, and the mitigation of climate change risks within their community.

Human-centred innovation methodologies were piloted in the planning process of the next country programme. Incorporation of an Empathy Map[1] and insights from the consultations with children and youth supported the integration of a child-centred approach in the process. UNICEF strengthened its Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) mechanisms and organized country-wide consultations with the most marginalized groups of children to understand their priorities to be considered in the new country programme. A workshop with civil society partners was organized to gain a better understanding of the current approaches related to AAP and strengthen standards.

Despite the latest progress on innovation, challenge remains in mainstreaming innovation in a sustainable way. While several capacity-building initiatives were implemented, innovation is not yet perceived as the “everyone’s business”. After the completion of innovation challenge, capacity gaps remain in the coordination of project implementation, monitoring and documentation of lessons learned. More focus will be put going forward on evaluating the innovative projects towards a potential scale-up if proven that they are successful.

[1] Human-centered design tool