

## Kenya

### Update on the context and situation of children

In 2022, Kenya held a peaceful election and smooth transition of government both at the national and county level. The new leadership ushered in its priorities, focusing on five core pillars: agriculture; enterprise; housing; healthcare and the digital economy.

However, Kenya faced severe social and economic challenges. While emerging from COVID-19, it experienced worst drought in 40 years. At least 4.3million Kenyans are directly affected and in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2 million children. Inflation rose to 7.6 percent from 6.45 per cent in 2021, well above the Government of Kenya (GoK) upper limit of 7.5 per cent. This is mainly due to high food and fuel prices, which impacted the poorest families and children. The loss of agricultural livelihoods and income left many acutely malnourished. 238,373 children (6-59 months old) needed treatment for severe acute malnutrition (SAM)[1]. The drought also increased the number of children separated, unaccompanied, neglected or exploited as caregivers migrate looking for water and alternative livelihoods.

Poverty remains high with one in three Kenyans (15.9 million people) monetarily poor. Half of all Kenyans (23.4 million of which 11.7 million are children) are multi-dimensionally poor lacking access to basic services such as healthcare, safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition and housing. The rate of child multidimensional poverty was 52.5 per cent in 2022, unchanged since 2021, mainly due to the economic challenges posed by COVID-19, as well as a lack of adequate national resources to mitigate these causes of child poverty.

Meanwhile, Kenya's economic growth fell to 5.3 percent in 2022, compared to 5.9 per cent in 2021. This was largely due to massive crop failure resulting from severe drought affecting several counties.

To alleviate the resulting hunger and poverty, the government increased spending in the social sector. The national budget for this sector increased from 27 per cent in 2021 to 28.5 per cent in 2022 while devolved counties' allocation increased from 42.6 per cent to 43 per cent in same period.

The debt situation in Kenya portends a situation of declining fiscal space. Although the pace has moderated at 67 percent of the GDP, debt accumulation has increased the country's vulnerability. Governments response to the situation pose direct dangers to child well-being through their impacts on social goods and services as well as household consumption.

In the education sector, particularly in the arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) region, more than 1.57 million children are at risk of dropping out of school. In addition to the drought which has impacted school attendance because of family migration, other drivers of school dropout are insufficient sanitation in schools, limited access to school meals, inability to pay school fees and children needing to care for livestock. To avert these threats and safeguard the gains already made in increased school attendance, substantial support from both the government and from development and humanitarian organisations will be needed.

Kenya continued to undertake education reforms which include a Competency Based Curriculum Review to address the COVID-19 learning crisis, improve learners' outcomes and ensure equity in access to education. Such reforms are a great opportunity to improve the quality of education but could pose challenges including the need to further invest in infrastructure and human resources, in particular teachers

The Children Act was enacted in July 2022 after a decade of consultative and advocacy supported by UNICEF. The Act provides increased safeguards for at-risk children and has enhanced county government responsibilities and structures for child protection. This has come at a crucial time, because child protection risks have intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Girls continue to be at greater risk of being subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and forced into child marriage. Hence in December 2022, Kenya's President reaffirmed his support for the elimination of FGM.

UNICEF and partners continued to advocate for prioritizing social protection measures in emergency situations. The government's updated national social protection policy includes dedicated measures for this. They established and financed a National Drought Management Fund, as well as the Hunger Safety Net Programme, although funding of the latter has been constrained to just 0.29 per cent of GDP. Spending remained stagnant over the last five years and is below average of low middle-income countries, which spent 1.6 per cent of GDP on social protection.

UNICEF also led the UN Legal Identity Agenda (UNLIA) and continued to promote birth registration. Kenya scored 65 per cent of birth registration for children under 5 years of age in 2022. UNICEF supported studies and assessment still indicate that children with disabilities, those in residential care and on the streets are more likely to be undocumented compared to other children [2]. They then miss out on almost all government services, including birth certificates, national identification cards, higher education and vocational training, social protection for vulnerable groups and services designed for youths.

Kenya has committed to end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat and adolescent pregnancies by the year 2030. While the effort to put adults on HIV treatment has been a major success in Kenya, many children's infections are undetected and untreated. An estimated 37,750 children and adolescents living with HIV were not on treatment. Adolescents and young adults aged 15-29 years contributed 61% of all new adult infections in the year 2021 with those aged 15-24 accounting for 42% (female 72% and male 28%). Of the 1,547,619 pregnancies that occurred in 2021, 896,317 (58%) occurred among Adolescents and Young People (AYP) (10-24 years), whereas 21% (317,644) were among adolescents aged 10-19 years.

[1] Long Rains Assessment (LRA) Report: NDMA (2022)

[2] Kenya Vital Statistics Report, 2021

## Major contributions and drivers of results

Under **Outcome-1 (Health, Nutrition, WASH, and HIV)**, UNICEF continued supporting taskforces and committees of experts engaged in the integrated planning of the national and county health agenda. Effective advocacy by UNICEF meant that universal health coverage (UHC) is now one of the highest government priorities post-election.

The proportion of children under five years of age with pneumonia treated with Amoxicillin DT increased to 75.5 per cent, up from 69 per cent in 2021. The proportion of children with diarrhoea treated with ORS/ ZINC increased to 53 per cent from 50.1 per cent in 2021. In response to the drought emergency, 397,841 people were reached with an integrated package of critical life-saving interventions in six drought affected counties (Turkana, Wajir, Mandera, Garissa, Marsabit, Samburu). UNICEF continued supporting the government's Immunization Program, contributing to rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations as well as others. During the reporting period, coverage of three doses of the Penta vaccine increased to 89 per cent from 84 per cent in 2021. 88 per cent of children received at least one dose of the Measles Rubella vaccine. In response to the yellow fever outbreak, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and the affected counties (Garissa and Isiolo) with an emergency

responsive campaign reaching 366,898 people.

The proportion of newborns receiving postnatal care increased to 67.5 percent. Mother to Child Transmission of HIV reduced to 9.7 per cent from 10.8 per cent. Paediatric ART coverage improved from 70 per cent in 2021 to 80 per cent in 2022. There was also reduction in reported adolescent pregnancies: 18 per cent, down from 20.4 per cent in 2021. These achievements can be attributed to UNICEF's support in development and launch of National Maternal Newborn Health standards, National Quality Obstetric and Perinatal Care guidelines, National ART guidelines 2022, 1st edition of IYCF HIV FAQ booklet, National Pediatric ART optimization plan, implementation of evidence based Last Mile to EMTCT framework and rejuvenation of the triple threat elimination new HIV infections, adolescent pregnancies, and sexual and gender-based violence agenda that requires sustained multi-sectoral collaboration, effective coordination and resources.

The severe acute malnutrition (SAM) treatment programme reached 100,228 children under five years old in ASAL regions and refugee camps. 122,560 cartons of therapeutic food were supplied and the stock out rate was 2 per cent in November down from 27 per cent in February 2022.

Vitamin A supplementation coverage was 83.7 per cent (6,184,490 children 6 to 59 months) as of December 2022. UNICEF supported six counties to improve the dietary diversity of children 6-23 months through the scaling up of Baby Friendly Community Initiatives, reaching on average 10,307 households every month with nutrition counselling. A total of 703,334 people benefited from the infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling against a target of 800,000, attaining 88 per cent of the target.

As part of early warning, preparedness and emergency response, UNICEF supported heightened situation analysis and monitoring, which informed the development and implementation of county nutritional contingency plans in 23 ASAL counties. This has been crucial in addressing challenges due to the worsening of the drought and the subsequent acute levels of malnutrition, as well as the capacity gaps resulting from the transition and redeployment of government officials following the 2022 election.

UNICEF co-chaired the Kenya Sanitation Alliance (KSA), which brought together the 15 counties with the highest open defecation rates, alongside the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Water, Sanitation, and Irrigation (MoWSI). With the support of UNICEF, an additional 1,145 villages were certified as Open Defecation Free (ODF) this year, resulting in 286,250 more people living in safe and clean environments. 265,423 people gained access to at least basic sanitation services, including 113,088 people serviced through a network of 3,623 container-based toilets which ensure the safe removal and reuse of waste in urban informal settlements.

UNICEF also supported the MoH on national monitoring systems providing information on sanitation and thus facilitated planning of sanitation interventions by national and county authorities. In addition, rollout of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) policies in schools was strengthened through partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) to develop and pilot real-time monitoring information systems for Safe Management of Onsite Sanitation Systems (SMOSS). Gender and disability responsive WASH facilities were also constructed in 149 schools, benefiting 56,770 schoolchildren.

By working with five key Water Service Providers in three counties, 5,191,426 people gained sustainable access to basic water services. UNICEF supported 977,807 people (244,251 men, 254,230 women, 234,674 boys, and 244,652 girls) with permanent access to safe water through rehabilitating 274 non-functional boreholes in 8 drought-affected counties. An additional 463,381 people (115,845 men, 120,479 women, 111,212 boys, and 115,845 girls) gained access to safe water through household water treatment and hygiene promotion training.

**Under Outcome-2, Education,** UNICEF successfully lobbied the new government to include Early Childhood Education and Development as one of its key pillars of growth and continued to support this integrated approach for grassroots child wellbeing and education. Adequate nutrition is key to a child's ability to learn. Therefore, UNICEF supported and promoted an integrated service delivery targeting women, children, and other vulnerable groups in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 956,910 children (514,973 girls and 441,937 boys) were reached with various interventions, representing 45 per cent of children in need of humanitarian assistance.

A total of 49,257 (22,073 girls and 27,184 boys) out of school children returned to school in 2022. This was achieved mainly through social and behavioral change strategies, through the provision of teaching and learning materials, improved WASH facilities in schools, and increased child protection and social protection activities.

UNICEF supported budget analysis for the education sector which showed declining education spending. Currently, education spending is just 4 per cent of GDP and 17 per cent of government outlays in 2021/22 compared to 6 per cent of GDP and 26 per cent of government outlays in 2017/18 respectively. Investment in education is crucial to ensure equity in access to education and to address county disparities.

The new government announced a plan to connect 27,000 schools to the internet. To improve learning outcomes as well as enhance digital literacy among learners, 22 additional primary schools were connected to the internet through UNICEF supported programmes and 2,599 teachers were equipped with digital skills and pedagogical approaches to integrate internet connectivity into learning.

As a co-lead of the Education in Emergency (EiE) coordination group along with Save the Children, UNICEF supported evidence generation, advocacy and resource mobilisation for drought response as a key influencer on education. Together with the Ministry of Education, this led to the development of preparedness plans for 16 emergency-prone counties. This helped to secure \$2 Million USD from the 'Education Cannot Wait' campaign supporting access to safe water in schools, child protection, getting children back to learning with supplies, back-to-school campaigns and support for teachers, strengthening the overall coordination on education in emergency responses in Kenya and resumption of the disrupted school feeding programme by the government.

**Under outcome 3, on child protection,** the enactment of the Children Act in July 2022 was a key achievement after more than 10 years of consultative and advocacy work supported by UNICEF. Rules and regulations were drafted for implementation and the government will be supported to align existing laws and policies with the Children Act.

The launch of the Care Reform Strategy also took place this year, focusing on the promotion of alternative family-based care for children at risk of living in institutions. UNICEF continued to support Kisumu County, where 359 children were reintegrated back to families or placed in alternative family-based care in 2022. Since 2018, 1,007 children have been reintegrated, which includes 33 children with disabilities. Guidance and support for children with disabilities within families has been developed. As a result, in Nairobi, 122 children with disabilities and their families have been assessed for reintegration.

UNICEF supported the development of the National Action Plan to tackle Online Child Sexual and Exploitation Abuse, which is an emerging protection concern. To guide county governments' work on child protection, UNICEF supported three counties to develop model Child Protection policies, and the Memorandum of Understanding among the Directorate of Children Services (DCS), Council of Governors and the National Council for Children Services. As a result, a total of 29,989 girls and boys who have experienced violence were reached by health, social work, or law enforcement services in

2022.

UNICEF managed to include strategic child protection programmes (National Parenting, Care Reforms and Prevention of Violence) into the national and county government's latest plans. A training package for investing in child protection was developed to enhance the capacity of public finance for child protection. The National Parenting Training Manual was developed to promote positive parenting and its delivery piloted in Kilifi and Garissa.

Working to combat harmful practices such as FGM and child marriage, UNICEF provided technical support to the government to develop county costed action plans to eliminate FGM and utilize the innovative mobile application (PASHA) to promote reporting and rescue of girls at risk which increased from the ongoing drought emergency and the long school holidays.

UNICEF continued to roll out long-term child protection programmes, developed in conjunction with the DCS through its Child Protection in Emergencies (CPiE) response. During the 2022 general election, UNICEF supported the DCS to establish a functional command centre to respond to any child protection cases at national and county levels. A national CPiE Technical working group was activated to provide guidance and monitoring of CPiE drought response interventions in the affected counties and strengthen coordination at national and county levels.

UNICEF also supported strengthening the capacity of the child protection workforce and trained 40 (16 female, 24 male) children's officers and 255 (98 female and 157 male) child protection volunteers working in the drought affected counties. As a result, 42,593 children (19,838 girls and 22,775 boys) have benefited from UNICEF supported protection services including case management and support services for unaccompanied and separated children, family tracing and reunification for children separated from caregivers and families, alternative family-based care, provision of mental health and psychosocial support services to vulnerable children and survivors of violence, and access to Child Friendly Spaces, recreational activities and referrals. These services were provided to affected children in refugee camps and the drought affected counties.

**On outcome 4, on Social Policy**, UNICEF's provided tailored training on public finance for children to 250 government staff (175 male, 75 female), which improved the quality of the child protection networks and their ability to manage child inclusive planning, budgeting, and reporting. By sharing county specific budget analysis, child poverty data and guidance on how to read and utilize data, the social protection workforce has been strengthened.

UNICEF trained 32 Trainer of Trainers across the State Department of Social Protection, and the Kenya School of Government trained a further 70 trainees on social protection. Budget allocation to the social sector increased from 41 per cent in 2018 to 43 per cent in 2022. UNICEF offered further technical assistance in drafting national and county-level plans with data, children's priorities, and social sector analysis.

UNICEF supported the government in enhancing public finance management systems covering planning, updating of budgeting systems, spending and reporting, focusing on children's priorities. These include the Standard Chart of Accounts (SCOA) and the Controller of Budget Management Information System, which enhance budgeting and accountability processes. The Electronic County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System and Electronic Social Intelligence Reporting System enhance reporting of the non-financial indicators. The systems have been designed, data uploaded, and user testing done. The roll out will include training of users and allocating budgets to sustain the systems.

UNICEF-championed reforms in the Standard Chart of Accounts (SCOA) led to a system of "Extended Reporting" which entrenches high accuracy reporting with minimal technical support in

analytical reporting in the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). This will facilitate the process of grouping all budgets and transactions aligned to a particular subject e.g., climate change and will make reporting easy, responsive, and accurate. It will track and report climate finance flows within the IFMIS for both national and county budgeting processes.

UNICEF strengthened the social protection disaster responsive framework to appropriately target and swiftly scale-up cash transfers to drought affected people with a focus on reaching the hardest to reach. UNICEF supported emergency cash transfers in drought-affected communities, reaching a total of 14,032 people, of which 6,382 were children from 3,723 households.

In terms of addressing social and economic vulnerabilities, UNICEF utilised an integrated social protection approach to provide financial and technical support to the government in implementing cash plus programmes. The Nutrition Improvement through Cash and Health Education (NICHE) programme covered 12,064 households, reaching 8,007 children (3,904 Females, 4,103 Males) through the Universal Child Benefit (UCB) programme and 2,951 households in the Out of School Children (OOSC) programme.

On disability mainstreaming, UNICEF supported a needs assessment survey for people with disabilities and their primary caregivers as part of Kenya's commitment during the 2018 Global Disability Summit and in preparation for the national disability survey in 2023 to enhance disability programming.

UNICEF Social and behaviour change (SBC) interventions played a major role in identifying, understanding, and addressing the complex socio-cultural practices and social norms that influence negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviours. Behaviour insights were generated across the programme areas of Health, Nutrition, WASH, Child protection and Social Policy and to inform further programming for UNICEF initiatives. Key achievements in 2022 include policy advocacy in health promotion and Violence Against Children (VAC), engagement of the nomadic communities in the cross-border context, social accountability through religious partnerships, and establishment of the national social listening dashboard, which presented feedback from the population on policy and programme responses, public opinions, and personal experience of COVID-19 through media and social media.

The findings of the evaluations were vetted through extensive consultations with stakeholders and finalized into actionable actions points of the Evaluation Management Response (EMR). The evaluations influenced policy development, enhanced coverage or scale-up of initiatives and more specifically in the development of the joint work plan of the new UN Sustainable Development Corporation Framework (UNSDCF) and our own new Country Programme Document (CPD).

**Overall, UNICEF continued to provide critical technical, financial, and capacity enhancement support in its coordination role among UN agencies, partners and government (both at national and county levels) to direct limited resources to the most vulnerable.**

## UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

In 2022, the Resident Coordinator's Office and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) led the coordination of humanitarian action for the UN and its partners while supporting the Government of Kenya's response to the multiple risks of drought, floods, disease outbreaks (measles, yellow fever, cholera) and the continuing effects of COVID-19. Government and partner structures and capacities were strengthened in order to improve resilience to natural and humanitarian disasters.

**Along with support from UNICEF and other partners, the government (national and counties) provided multi-sectoral responses to mitigate the effects of drought and ensure early identification and treatment of children with acute malnutrition. UNICEF supported the Resident Coordinator's Office in advocating for the disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience agenda on climate related risks through the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). UNICEF provided programme oversight as the sector lead for WASH, Child Protection, Nutrition and Education sector working groups, as well as support to county-level preparedness and response through its local offices. UNICEF-led sectors are all part of the Inter-Sector Working Group (ISWG) led by UNOCHA at the national level.**

**UNICEF and other UN agencies and NGOs (both national and international) had presence all over the country supporting both development and emergency responsiveness, and actively participated in interagency coordination, including the Kenya Humanitarian Partnership Team (KHPT) forum and Kenya Red Cross Partners' forum. UNICEF is also supporting the county hub coordination structure by leading the Kisumu and Garissa hubs through its local offices.**

UNICEF's office-wide work with the private sector was well-coordinated in 2022, through the improved Partnerships Hub. A new partnership agreement was signed with the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) and training conducted on child rights and business principles (CRBP) with a view to implementing this in key sectors such as ICT and the tea/coffee industry in 2023.

Existing media partnerships with the Standard Media Group and Nation Media Group supported UNICEF's election advocacy project, raised awareness of the six priority issues and amplified children's voices, including through a Children's Debate and World Children's Day event. Safaricom and AirTel Kenya invested in UNICEF's end violence campaign 'Spot it, Stop it' and provided in-kind support for youth voice and immunisation through free blast SMS messages.

UNICEF's partnership with the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya was used to bring religious leaders on board to support the election advocacy campaign, and a new informal partnership was developed with the Council of Elders. Thanks in part to this partnerships work, the election advocacy campaign resulted in all six priority issues for children being included in the manifesto of both leading Presidential campaigns, giving UNICEF a strong platform to work with the new government.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

The far-reaching effects of the continued drought led to an increased need for enhanced sector coordination in 2022. A mapping of both sector needs and funding gaps would likely lead to increased resource harnessing. Work done on this in the areas of health, nutrition, WASH, and Social Behaviour Change has led to the development of an integrated drought humanitarian programme document, and the design of a one-stop-shop for vulnerable communities receiving critical drought interventions. These integrated life-saving interventions included improved routine immunization coverage as well as COVID-19 vaccinations and increases in the number of children with Severe Acute Malnutrition

treated through the outreach programme.

**An election simulation exercise enabled UNICEF to test its systems and response preparedness and identify gaps to be addressed. This proved to be an effective mechanism for identifying the gaps that exist in contingency and preparedness plans. Absence of real time data is a challenge to effective emergency response measures, and it would be worthwhile to invest more in data generation and analysis for evidence-based decision making.**

In the education sector, UNICEF's strategy has been to mobilise human resources and increase technical support to the MoE at the national and county level, including the establishment and training of EiE working groups in the 16 counties most affected by the drought. UNICEF leveraged its existing out of school programme implemented in 12 counties to reach OOSC as a result of the drought, allowing an immediate response to the needs of children impacted by the drought.

The drought has also highlighted the need to strengthen the operation and maintenance of boreholes which could be managed by improving training of local people.

Comprehensive adolescent health and wellbeing policies, which address the emerging triple threat of adolescent pregnancies, new HIV infections and GBV, require a multi-sectoral approach to provide a cohesive response. To implement a successful adolescent programme, there needs to be strong advocacy and Social and Behavior Change (SBC) components, as well as a monitoring and evaluation framework. It needs to consider health issues as a result of increased cases of violence, drug and substance use and abuse, and poor nutrition. There are also cultural considerations when developing guidelines, tools and curricula in terms of their appropriateness and acceptability within certain communities.

During the drought emergency response, Child Protection Volunteers (CPVs), working alongside sub-county children's officers, have been crucial in delivering and improving essential protection services. CPVs and other community volunteers have often provided support across multiple sectors, hence it was effective to offer integrated training, covering health, nutrition, child protection and HIV. The government, however, is yet to budget for their remuneration, instead considering them 'volunteers' and therefore unpaid. Long term, this arrangement is risky. Continued advocacy for them to be paid is required.

To further enhance reporting of child abuse, violence and cases of FGM, UNICEF worked with the Anti-FGM board to develop the PASHA mobile App for reporting, tracking and actioning cases of FGM. A key lesson learnt was the need to develop a non-internet-based functionality of the PASHA App to enable the use of Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) codes in areas without internet coverage.

Another key innovation in 2022 was the Chatbot App, which UNICEF supported the government on, to address mental health and psychosocial needs of youths and adolescents. The success of the Chatbot initiative will mean many adolescents will be able to receive mental health and psychosocial support, and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and VAC information including on Online Child Sexual and Exploitation Abuse (OCSEA).

UNICEF also supported Social Intelligence Reporting (SIR), an innovative tool to support social budgeting and accountability. SBC strengthened its partnership with the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) in 2022 to access community feedback as a mechanism to improve service delivery and increase transparency.

UNICEF partnered with UN Women to integrate gender and public finance for children. Several opportunities for improving gender equity have been developed.



The inequality study by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), which will be published in 2023, now has a full chapter on the gender dimensions of inequality. The Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) report 2022 by the National Treasury has a full annex on gender dimensions of public expenditure. UNICEF and UN Women jointly supported the two most important public finance reporting systems i.e. the Standard Chart of Accounts (SCOA) and the Controller of Budget Management Information System (CoBMIS), which report on children, gender and climate change expenditures.

UNICEF also played a leadership role in driving last-mile school connectivity, doubling the number of schools connected to 257 in 2022 from 100 in 2021, reaching 114,000 learners. Lessons from this have gone on to inform the government during the scaling up of its efforts for school connectivity with the ICT Authority in Kenya. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the scaling up of digital platforms for youth engagement and participation, including Yunitok and YOMA, reaching 110,000 young people with information on COVID-19, education, entrepreneurship, and training.

Finally, to support workplace culture and align staff behavior with UNICEF values, the office implemented office-wide internal communication initiatives and campaigns and launched the Spectrum of Behavior tool, developed to ensure core values are reflected in the way staff work and interact with colleagues.