

Zambia

Update on the context and situation of children

Preliminary results from Zambia's first electronic National Census of Population and Housing suggests that the population is at 19,610,769 (9.6 million males, 10 million females) with a growth rate of 3.4 per cent and an average household size of 4.8 persons. Rural-urban differences remain stark with around 40 per cent of the population living in urban areas and 59.9 per cent in rural areas.[1]

Inflation stabilised at 9.9 per cent as of September 2022, compared to 22.1 per cent in September 2021. Social sector spending increased to 30.5 per cent in the 2023 budget, from 23.5 per cent in 2022. In terms of Gross Domestic Product, the social sector budget increased to 9.6 per cent from 8.7 per cent. [2] Zambia's Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) has expansionary targets for the delivery of social services. The International Monetary Fund also supported the economic reforms and social sector spending by approving a new Extended Credit Facility for Zambia worth US\$1.3 billion; the first disbursement of US\$195 million was received in September 2022.

Another key development is the increase in the allocation to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) by 10 per cent, from ZMW4.0 billion in 2022 to ZMW4.4 billion in the 2023 budget. These are decentralised monies available to fund local development needs. Of the total 2022 CDF allocation, 75 per cent was released, although only 10 per cent of this had been utilised at the time of the 2023 budget address due to administrative challenges.[3] Amendment of the CDF Act to enable simplification of procedures and guidelines will be cardinal to improving utilisation and driving local development.

The Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme received the biggest increase from ZMW3.1 billion in 2022 to ZMW3.7 billion in 2023: 45.8 per cent of the proposed social protection budget. The Government commits to scale up the number of beneficiaries by 37 per cent from 973,323 households to 1,374,500 and increased the transfer amount in 2022 from ZMW150 to ZMW200 and ZMW300 to ZMW400 for households without and with a member with severe disability, respectively. Improved disbursements towards social sector spending for SCT resulted in regular and predictable payments to beneficiaries in 2022. The continuous expansion of the SCT programme will mitigate unintended consequences of shocks on vulnerable populations.

Despite the positive momentum in key economic indicators, sectoral studies indicate a worsening situation for the vulnerable population. Two major surveys – the *National Housing and Population Census* and the *Living Conditions and Monitoring Survey* - will bring clarity on this situation once data is analysed in 2023.

COVID-19 vaccination rates improved from 6 per cent in January 2022 to 78 per cent by November 2022. Zambia's national health indicators have improved over the years, such as infant mortality rate, under-5 mortality and maternal mortality. However, the neonatal mortality increased from 24 per 1,000 live births in 2013/14 to 27 per 1,000 live births in 2018.[4] Challenges in the delivery of quality health services remain. An overstretched health system that is responding to concurrent public health emergencies (polio, COVID-19, measles, cholera), lack of availability and consistency in delivery of essential medical supplies, high patient-health personnel ratios and inadequate health infrastructure and equipment continue to negate service delivery. The Government has increased allocation of funds to

health, from 8 per cent in 2022 (ZMW13.9 billion) to 10 per cent (ZMW17.4 billion) in 2023.[5] The Government also proposed to recruit an additional 3,000 health personnel, in addition to the 11,000 recruited in 2022.

The 2020 Food and Nutrition Act was operationalised, and the Food and Nutrition Steering Committee became functional. The Office of the Vice President assumed an oversight role as a coordination structure for Zambia’s nutrition agenda. With these major milestones, reversals are expected in child stunting, currently at **35 per cent, and wasting** at 4 per cent.[6]

The Government has increased its allocation to education by 28 per cent (ZMW23 billion) compared to previous years. Free education is now offered up to Grade 12. Over 30,000 teachers were recruited, and bursaries were provided to vulnerable learners. In 2023, the Government plans to recruit an additional 4,500 teachers to be deployed mostly in rural areas. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centres and schools are also being constructed and/or rehabilitated to ease pressure on the limited infrastructure.[7]

To provide a strong regulatory framework for the protection of children, the following plans were enacted and launched: Children’s Code; Social Worker’s Act; Anti-Human Trafficking Act; Migration Policy; Human Trafficking and Smuggling Policy; Volunteerism Policy; Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Policy, including the second CRVS National Strategic Action Plan; and the Juvenile Justice Strategy.

The Zambia Water Investment Programme 2020–2030 was launched to ensure national water security, sustainable management, and utilisation of water resources.[8] This initiative hopes to leverage over US \$5 billion for water security investments aimed at improving access to clean and safe water. The Water Resource Management Authority (WARMA) strategic plan (2022–2026) was also launched to provide strategic direction to water resource management. Despite these advancements, unlike other sectors, WASH was the only sub-sector in the social sector that recorded a reduction in allocation in 2023 national budget, underscoring the need to consolidate financing around the sector.[9]

[1] Zambia 2022 census of population and housing, preliminary report – *Zambia Statistics Agency*[2] UNICEF-Zambia-Social-Sector-Budget-Brief-2022.pdf[3] Zambia 2023 Budget Speech.pdf[4] Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS), 2014 and 2018.[5] UNICEF-Zambia-Social-Sector-Budget-Brief-2022.pdf[6] ZDHS, 2018[7] UNICEF-Zambia-Social-Sector-Budget-Brief-2022.pdf and Zambia 2023 Budget Speech.pdf[8] <https://www.devere-zambia.co.zm/news/President-unveils-Zambia-Water-Investment-Program>[9] UNICEF-Zambia-Social-Sector-Budget-Brief-2022.pdf

Major contributions and drivers of results

Together with partners, UNICEF helped Zambia’s health system respond to concurrent public health emergencies (COVID-19, Polio, measles, cholera) while also building the health system’s resilience and ensuring continuity in the delivery of essential health services.

Zambia achieved over 70 per cent COVID-19 vaccination coverage among the eligible population of 12 years and above, with UNICEF’s contributing to the acquisition and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines; cold chain expansion; and risk communication and community engagement. UNICEF support also included technical and operational coordination, micro-planning and monitoring of facility and community-based vaccines delivery. In the same period, the country responded to wild polio virus

type-1 (WPV1) threat detected in neighbouring countries (Malawi and Mozambique) and vaccinated 5.8 million children under the age of 5 years against polio.

The health sector also continued to deliver high-impact Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child; and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) essential services. As of 31 October 2022, the District Health Information System reported that 78 per cent infants received all antigens while 84 per cent received Penta-3 vaccination; 81 per cent infants received first dose of measles containing vaccine (MCV-1); 92.5 per cent women attended one Antenatal Care (ANC) visit while 90 per cent women attended ANC four times (ANC-4); 92.5 per cent women delivered by a skilled health personnel while 72 per cent women delivered at health facilities; 54 per cent new-borns and their mothers received a postnatal visit within 48 hours of birth; 661,318 children under age 5 received treatment against childhood illness; 485,724 pregnant women protected against tetanus; and 1.3 million people benefited from essential medicines with basic curative care.

The health system's dual roles of emergency response and delivery of essential health services were fulfilled by ensuring essential health commodity security with donor support, specifically for vaccines and essential medicines. Zambia was able to maintain minimal disruption of service coverage with less than 5 per cent decline along the continuum of RMNCAH services in 2022 compared to 2021. Other key areas of UNICEF support included policy advocacy and resource mobilisation; procurement, pre-positioning and last-mile delivery; the development of guidelines and protocols and their operationalisation; strengthening RMNCAH outreach and community health; and supporting building back better to improve the health system's resilience to shocks and crises.

In its HIV/AIDS response towards achieving the 95:95:95 global targets, Zambia achieved the following: 89 per cent of people living with HIV know their status, 98 per cent of those diagnosed with HIV are on treatment, and 96 per cent of those on treatment are virally suppressed. Persistent challenges include a large treatment gap with up to 20,000 children living with HIV not yet initiated on life-saving ART, low coverage of Early Infant Diagnosis (43.7 per cent), weak linkages in the testing and treatment continuum, geographic barriers in accessing HIV treatment, and new infections amongst adolescent girls that are six times higher than boys. UNICEF contributed to improvements in the Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT), paediatric HIV, adolescent health, and HIV outcomes through its support at both policy and service delivery levels. Differential service delivery models for pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women contributed to higher utilisation rates of HIV testing, Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) coverage and retention in care, with UNICEF's technical support. UNICEF-supported advocacy and evidence has been instrumental in the development of the national plan for the triple elimination of MTCT of HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B, and the Adolescent Health Strategic Plan 2022–2026.

With donor support to the Scaling-Up Nutrition phase II (SUN-II) programme, UNICEF, together with Civil Society Organisation (CSOs), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO), supported the National Food and Nutrition Commission and six government line ministries at national, provincial and district levels deliver multisectoral nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Illustrative results include: improved access of Vitamin A supplementation for 3,310,224 children aged 6–59 months through procurement of Vitamin A; 90,781 households with children under the age of five were reached with Maternal, Adolescent, Infant and Young Child Nutrition counselling and promotion including lessons on improving children's dietary diversity; 201,800 people benefiting from hygiene promotion and 81,362 households gaining access to basic sanitation services; 35,795 SUN-II households supported with homestead food production, and 78,019 SUN-II households supported with agricultural production interventions.

Additionally, UNICEF supported early identification of children with acute malnutrition and screened a total of 490,674 children through the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition programme. Out of the total screened, 42,700 children were identified with acute malnutrition: 12,782 with Severe

Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 29,918 with Moderate Acute Malnutrition, with 77 per cent SAM recovery rate, 19 per cent defaulter rate and 4 per cent death rate.

UNICEF's sustained advocacy contributed to the identification of Early Childhood development (ECD) as a key priority area in the 8NDP. This has provided a favourable political environment for the ongoing development of the national ECD policy framework with stronger cross-sectoral coordination. The community-led integrated hub (*Insaka*) model reached its maturity where multisectoral leadership at district level mobilised community leadership to ensure and sustain holistic social service delivery for young children. As a result, close to 20,000 caregivers were reached with counselling in integrated ECD [responsive care, health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)] administered through home visits, group counselling sessions in community settings, including at *Insakas* and health centres. A total of 7,737 children aged 0–3 years were also reached with integrated ECD, and an additional 3,229 children aged 3–8 years were reached through play-based learning opportunities provided in the *Insaka* ECE classroom and accompanying playground. Capacities of health workers (42), ECE teachers (43), instructors of nurse trainees (59) and Community Based Volunteers (836) were built in delivering integrated ECD.

Financial support from UNICEF to four district-level offices and three implementing Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) partners enabled construction of a dozen *Insakas*, drilling of 12 boreholes and provision of *Insaka* programming across 26 community sites and at several surrounding health facilities—all of which increased access to integrated ECD services for families.

Universalisation of free education up to secondary level and Zambia's renewed commitment to transforming education through curriculum review, the recruitment of 30,496 teachers and strengthening alternate modes of learning have been key to enhancing access to equitable and inclusive quality education. A significant increase in enrolment at all levels, especially at secondary and ECE have been reported, putting the system under pressure to provide more spaces and ensure quality learning.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education address the issues of quality and access, and also supported high level advocacy through the Transform Education Initiative, to shine a light on the learning crisis in Zambia. Through the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) COVID-19 support, the Ministry of Education and UNICEF developed over 2,300 radio/audio materials for ECE and Grade 7 learners including development of over 500 interactive e-learning contents for children with disabilities. These materials will help accelerate blended learning in the classroom setting, provide remedial learning materials for learners, and support young people and adults to gain necessary skills for career development. To improve, remedial learning, UNICEF supported the Catch-Up programme in Luapula, one of Zambia's most underserved provinces. Since its launch in in October 2021, a total of 42,861 (21,642 females and 21,219 males) learners were reached in 260 schools. At midline, 44 per cent of learners could read at least a simple paragraph compared to 31 per cent at baseline while 62 per cent of the learners were able to perform addition at midline compared to 39 per cent at baseline. A total of 1,322 Ministry of Education staff had their capacities built in the Catch-Up methodology. This included teachers, administrators, zonal and district officials. The Catch-Up programme is being implemented in eight provinces through the support of multiple partners.

Zambia made key strides in strengthening the regulatory framework for the protection of children. The adoption of the Children's Code Act, the Social Worker's Act, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act and policies on migration, trafficking/smuggling, volunteerism, and civil registration have introduced provisions for protecting children from violence, harmful practices and child marriage and prescribe access to services and access to child friendly justice. UNICEF's role was in providing continued technical support and ongoing high-level advocacy to align these instruments to international standards and social welfare systems building.

The Integrated Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system was rolled out to 40 of the 116 districts, leading to a total of 152,162 (76,543 male and 75,619 female) births being notified and 84,349 children (42,691 male and 41,658 female) being registered representing, a 70 per cent increase in birth registration compared to 2021. Despite this achievement, birth registration still remains significantly low.

UNICEF, through joint efforts with the Government, reached 311,958 children and 356,047 adults with protection services (including community case management, psycho-social support, alternative care, and protection of child victim/witnesses in judicial processes) and behaviour-change engagement which focused on ending child marriage and preventing unwanted teen pregnancy through gender transformative dialogues and local radio broadcasts. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) was mainstreamed across all programmatic areas reaching 737,446 community beneficiaries (365,036 males and 372,410 females) with PSEA messaging and access to safe reporting channels.

In social protection, the Government's SCT programme, with support from donors and UN agencies, covered 5,061,280 people (approximately 51 per cent of the country's poor population). Transfer values increased from ZMW150/300 to ZMW200/400 a month for households without or with a member with severe disability, respectively. The programme made full regular payments for the second year in a row and 13,381 SCT beneficiaries with disabilities were certified following audit queries. To expand coverage to pregnant and breastfeeding women and infants, the Government, with UNICEF support, commenced a new flagship pilot in four districts, enrolling 12,913 households for additional SCT payments. To drive integration across social sectors through the Cash Plus Agenda, the initiative will link beneficiaries to nutrition services provided under the framework of the Most Critical 1,000 Days Programme (SUN II).

UNICEF supported the development of the 8NDP, approved and launched by the Government in 2022. UNICEF also supported analysis and evidence around budgets to inform advocacy on gaps in the social sectors. This included the inaugural disability budget brief as well as strengthened sub-national budget analysis and budget briefs produced for four local authorities (Kabwe, Chikankanta, Livingstone and Zimba).

In a bid to maximise the impact of funding for vulnerable populations and to facilitate the strong push towards fiscal devolution and overall decentralisation, the Government embarked on numerous reforms of the public finance sector. With UNICEF technical and financial support, all 116 local authorities transitioned from activity-based to output-based budgeting and are now producing yellow books organised by outputs, which has enhanced accountability, transparency, and result-based monitoring. These efforts were further supported by the development of strengthened monitoring and evaluation indicators to be rolled out in 2023.

After two years of constrained data and evidence generation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting mitigation measures, the Government was able to regain lost momentum in 2021. Two major household surveys were completed, the 2022 National Housing and Population Census, and the 2022 Living and Conditions Monitoring Survey, with preparations for the 2023 Demographic Health Survey underway. UNICEF supported both surveys, whose results are expected in the first quarter of 2023, as well as the Vital Statistics analysis of demographic administrative data.

As per the Zambia District Health Survey (ZDHS) 2018, 64 per cent of Zambia's population has access to basic drinking water services, 33 per cent to basic sanitation services while 24 per cent to basic handwashing. For schools, 34 per cent lack access to basic sanitation and 21 per cent to basic water supply, 60 per cent of healthcare facilities lack access to basic water services whilst 40 per cent of non-hospital healthcare facilities do not have hygiene services at point of care (JMP, 2019).

In response, UNICEF continued to support the Government increase equitable access to WASH services. An estimated 236,000 people gained access to basic drinking water source through small-piped water schemes and borehole drilling, and 6,000,000 people continue to have access to safely

managed water through water chemical treatment distribution to commercial utilities. Over 470,000 people gained access to basic sanitation facilities including access to household toilets/latrines with handwashing facilities. A total of 615 villages out of the targeted 1,000 were certified open defecation free through modified community-led total sanitation activities. Sanitation activities also strived to ensure inclusive facilities were built for schools and healthcare facilities for persons with disabilities. These achievements are attributable to advocacy efforts and government leadership at national, provincial, and district levels, including partnerships with NGOs, traditional leaders, sanitation action groups and Nutrition Support Groups (NSGs).

Through UNICEF support, 113 schools and early childhood learning centres, with 59,892 (31,474 girls and 28,418 boys) learners, benefited from improved WASH services. A total of 36 healthcare facilities reaching a total population of 43,765 (23,514 females and 20,216 males) benefited from improved WASH services through UNICEF funded construction. As part of cholera and COVID-19 prevention and responses, at least 50,574 refugees benefitted from critical WASH supplies. To enhance sustainability of water supply interventions, a total of 5,300 people that include 5,085 gender balanced Village WASH Committee members, 137 Area Pump Mechanics and 78 key District WASH officers were trained in management, operation, and maintenance of water infrastructure.

Besides supporting WASH service delivery, UNICEF also worked closely with the Government, cooperating partners and CSOs to improve the WASH enabling environment by providing technical inputs to the Water Policy 2022, Joint Sector Review, Zambia Water Investment Programme, WARMA strategic plan (2022–2026), National Water Quality Monitoring Protocol, Zambia Open Defecation Free Strategy, National WASH in Schools Standards and National WASH in Schools Strategy 2019–2030.

And finally, to put children's rights in the centre of public discourse and policy dialogue, UNICEF worked closely with national media and other partners to raise awareness through various platforms. Forty-four advocacy events/campaigns were supported on issues like COVID-19 vaccine rollout, a High-Level Engagement with the Vice President on Food and Nutrition, a Playful Parenting Campaign, and the Transforming Education Summit, among others, that mobilised media, communities, youth, and influencers. World Children's Day was particularly noteworthy, with Zambia hosting a multi-country event with the Presidents of Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the Vice President of Namibia and 500 children to amplify children's voices for child rights.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

Led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, UNICEF collaborated with all 23 UN agencies to develop the 2023–2027 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. This included the results framework, the governance structure to operationalise the Framework and UN Joint work plans for 2023-2024.

In support of Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, UNICEF led the implementation of Phase II of the UN Joint Programme on Social Protection, in close collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and WFP, a programme supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation (SIDA), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Irish Aid, the World Bank (WB), and the Swiss Development Corporation as the newest supporter.

Through the joint UN programme on Gender Based Violence prevention/response, and in support of the Gender Division under the Office of the Vice President, UNICEF worked closely with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), ILO, and International Organization for Migration. Collaboration with UNDP enabled work on civil registration and legal identity, volunteerism, and gender empowerment. UNFPA and UNICEF continued to jointly implement the Global Programme to End Child Marriage.

In nutrition, as the lead agency for the SUN-II Programme, UNICEF worked closely with WFP, FAO and WHO to deliver multisectoral nutrition interventions in collaboration with six-line Ministries, five implementing partners (Care International, Catholic Relief Services, Plan International, Save the Children and World Vision International) and with the generous support of five cooperating partners [KfW, SIDA, the European Union (EU), Irish Aid and FCDO].

Partnerships in health included the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), SIDA, KfW and the Government of Japan. This enabled UNICEF to provide protective equipment and supplies, and strengthen medical oxygen, cold chain system, health commodities security and RMNCAH services. Collaborations with WHO, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and CSOs were also key in responding to the public health emergencies witnessed in 2022.

Promoting a multi-sectoral approach to ECD required partnerships with different government ministries (Education, Health, and Community Development and Social Services), as well as bringing different stakeholders together through the Zambian Early Childhood Development Action Network. The education programme, including ECD, has benefitted from the support of multiple donors, including National Committees for UNICEF (Korea, Denmark, Sweden, United Kingdom and Andorra) as well as GPE, LEGO, Hempel Foundation and USAID. UNICEF as a sector co-lead, together with the World Bank, coordinated all education sector cooperating partners (Irish Aid, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, USAID, ILO, and UNESCO).

In WASH, UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection at national, provincial and district levels, and in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Health. Other government agencies and institutions included National Water Supply and Sanitation Council, Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, WARMA, and commercial water utilities. Outside of government, UNICEF worked with UNHCR, WB; African Development Bank; KfW; and NGOs including World Vision, Plan International, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children, and the private sector.

UNICEF Zambia's experience in 2022 generated several lessons and innovations, with great potential to apply and accelerate results at scale for the new 2023–2027 country programme.

Lesson Learned #1: It is evident that the road to building back a better health system that is able to function at, or close to, pre-pandemic levels is compounded by recurrent PHEs. Re-building a resilient health system will require multisectoral efforts undertaken simultaneously with humanitarian response. Experiences from the COVID-19 response have taught us valuable lessons. For example, the importance of re-positioning the immunization programme to integrate COVID-19 vaccination and as a platform to strengthen primary health care- thus offering equitable access to high impact health interventions, while building a resilient health system. The COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated the underutilization of medical oxygen in the pre-pandemic era, and the need for more investment in the production and delivery of medical oxygen as well as operations and maintenance support for all medical equipment.

Lesson Learned #2: The complex nature of the SUN-II programme requires effective coordination of stakeholders at various levels and this has remained a critical area of focus for programme implementation. Facilitated discussions in all 17 districts with the involvement of Heads of Departments of line ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, District Nutrition Support Coordinators, and the District Nutrition Coordinating Committees has been a positive lesson in enhancing coordination, timely identification of challenges and response. Sustaining community level nutrition interventions through the NSG model and deliberate selection of volunteers known to communities is yielding positive results. This has enhanced trust amongst community members and led to improved volunteer motivation, recognition and reduced volunteer drop-out rates.

Lesson Learned #3: Elimination of user-fees for secondary and ECE learners has brought significant pressure to the new Government to provide additional learning spaces and quality of learning for those who are encouraged to access education. The Government considers the challenge as an opportunity to commit and invest more in education. Support for a well thought, evidence-based and costed longer-term education master plan is needed to realise the country's longer-term vision of equitable and quality education.

Lesson Learned #4: Supporting a comprehensive legislative framework that is in line with international standards in child protection is central to social welfare systems building. The strategic approach that worked for UNICEF Zambia included a combination of a) continued technical support, b) provision of fora for practitioners to provide input, making the legislation more applicable and securing buy-in and c) persistent/ongoing high-level advocacy. Engaging senior management and One UN, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Parliamentarians and NGOs in advocacy for accelerating the finalisation/adoption of child protection legislation proved worthwhile and led to enactment/launch of several child protection legislation/policies.

Lesson Learned #5: The innovation to work with UNICEF Zambia's Youth engagement team resulted in improved WASH activities and outcomes and provided a platform for adolescents to voice their opinions and learn. The organisation of changemaker workshops for adolescent children, including children with disability, in commemoration of Menstrual Hygiene Management Day and World Environment Day and in a refugee settlement, demonstrated inclusiveness and an enhanced way to both highlight key issues and celebrate key WASH days. This innovative WASH Youth engagement was a first for Zambia and has quickly expanded to other sectors that UNICEF supports.