

## Cabo Verde

### Update on the context and situation of children

At the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, Cabo Verde was showing clear signs of recovery from the health crisis, caused by the covid-19 pandemic, in almost all sectors of the economy, with emphasis on tourism, which contributes 25% to the national GDP. Indeed, Cabo Verde's commitment to the SDGs is producing results and development gains. Between 2018, the first year of the programmatic cycle (2018-2022) and 2022, annual economic growth averaged 4.7 percent, contributing to a fall in extreme poverty from 23.7 percent in 2018 to 13.1 percent in 2022. The proportion of the population living on half the average income dropped from 15 to 5 percent over the same period. In 2020, Cabo Verde's population was estimated at 556,857 of which 49 percent were women. The 2nd Voluntary National Review (2021) highlights improvements in indicators related to water and sanitation, environmental sustainability, and governance. The impact of COVID-19, four years of drought and Russia Ukraine war have highlighted the country's vulnerability to exogenous shocks. The food, energy and finance crisis has led to the declaration of a Social-Economic Emergency in June 2022, with supply chain constraints and rising costs putting at risk the country's recovery and emphasizing the need to strengthen resilience/risk informed programming, development finance and a focus on the SDG accelerators. Cabo Verde faces formidable challenges in the short to medium term, compounded by the pandemic and armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which resulted in a 14.8 percent drop in growth in 2022 and a 9 percent loss in employment. Over half of households (50.4 percent) reported a loss of income. Declining revenues and investment in social protection, in response to COVID-19, have contributed to the debt to GDP ratio climbing to 157 percent in 2022 from 124 percent in 2019, constraining fiscal space for vital investment in institutional and human capital and infrastructure. This crisis, followed by th

e escalation in prices of essential goods has had serious repercussions on the lives of people who are in extreme poverty, with dramatic effects on the lives of the most vulnerable populations, including children, young people, women, and the elderly.

Regarding the situation of children, Cabo Verde has made considerable progress in the last five years in the areas of maternal health, child and adolescent health, education, and protection. However, in the last two years, the main indicators have suffered considerable decreases, due to the harmful effects of the covid-19 pandemic and the war between Russia and Ukraine, which caused a rise in prices on a world scale, affecting mainly the poorest countries and most vulnerable to such shocks. Aware of the situation, the Government took a series of measures of a social nature aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis. In this context, and in order not to leave no one behind, the social protection measures that had already been taken at the outbreak of the pandemic crisis were reinforced, through the attribution of income to the most vulnerable people, particularly families whose household includes children. So, Cabo Verde's cooperation partners, including United Nations agencies, and in particular UNICEF, promptly mobilized to respond to the Government's requests expressed in the package of social measures defined for this purpose.

The real situation of children in Cabo Verde, as well as the results achieved in recent years in favor of child development, are widely described and reported by area of intervention (goal area), in the chapter that follows, supported by baselines, indicators and targets. The Joint Office of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF in Cape Verde has just approved its Country Program for the next five years (CCPD 2023-2027). Areas such as maternal health, child, and adolescent health, with emphasis on vaccination and nutrition, pre-school, and primary education, as well as child protection, with an emphasis on combating the scourge of abuse and sexual exploitation of children, will be at the center of priorities. This new program, which largely derives from the UNSDCF 2023-2027, is perfectly aligned with the country's priorities expressed in the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development (PEDS II), with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and with the Strategic Plans of the three agencies, has a budget of approximately \$42,000,000, of which more than 50% are resources to be mobilized. This is indeed a

major challenge that the three Joint Office agencies will face over the next five years.

## Major contributions and drivers of results

**The Country Programme Document (CPD) 2018 - 2022, which constitutes an agreement between the Joint Office of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF and the Government of Cabo Verde, remain expressing the strong commitment of the three agencies to support the country in its development efforts through the adoption of policies and strategies aimed at strengthening human capital, drastically reducing poverty and inequality, promoting inclusive economic growth, and building resilience to climate change. The three agencies are committed to supporting the country in (i) improving the conditions of access of the population, particularly the most vulnerable, to education and health services, in (ii) natural resource and biodiversity management, in (iii) promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development, and in (iii) strengthening democratic governance.**

**In 2022, UNICEF played an important role in efforts to support the country in achieving the above-mentioned objectives, particularly in the areas of strengthening human capital, by improving the conditions of access of the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children, to basic services such as education and health. The key results achieved during this period, by result areas of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025, are presented below.**

### Goal Area 1 - Every child survives and thrives

In 2022, the country has seen its response capacity consolidated in Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health and Nutrition, with technical support of UNICEF as a member of the National Coordination Technical Committees of the Ministry of Health (MoH), for intervention coordination and monitoring of the Expanded Program on Immunization, Nutrition National Programme, Maternal/Child and Adolescents Health Programs which were technically strengthened, resulting on i) Infant mortality rate 11,6 per 1,000 live births, Immunization rate 95%, and 93% of 10-year-old girls vaccinated against HPV; ii) Strategic documentation developed/updated (Immunization Technical Manual) at 100% health facilities; iii) EPI/data information system strengthened; iv) Immunization cold chain evaluated and strengthened with adequate equipment; v) 41.246 girls and 42330 boys dewormed during the deworming campaign in pre and basic schools, with a rate of 98.1%. The breastfeeding program promoted resulting in i) 2 Regional Hospitals evaluated and reinforced on Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) and one recognized Child-friendly Hospital; ii) 21 health professionals trained on 10 Steps/BFHI; iii) 2nd national Human Milk Bank implemented in cooperation with UNICEF and Brazil; iv) 169 health professionals with enhanced technical capacity in Breastfeeding Management and Human Milk Processing/Quality Control, in 60% of the municipalities; v) Anemia prevention reinforced with 100% of micronutrients and MNPs purchased through national budget and available in 100% of the health structures, 45,005 girls and 46,674 boys, from 1 to 12 years old, dewormed and 67,539 children (6 and 12 years old) received iron supplementation; vi) National Survey on Food and Nutritional Vulnerability of Families carried out in 100% of the 22 municipalities, in collaboration with Agriculture sector/MoH/World Bank; vii) Survey data of prevalence of intestinal parasitosis and iodine deficiency disorders in pre and school children (4 to 12 years old) analyzed with 41.3% prevalence of intestinal parasitosis, and iodine urinary deficiency reduced from 43,2% to 28,6%, and 0,9% of goiter prevalence; viii) Program of Non-Communicable Diseases strengthened with regulatory law for reducing consumption of salt, sugar, and fat analyzed, with 35 general inspectors of Health, Agriculture, Customs, Regulatory Entity, and Economic Inspection from 13 municipalities trained in control and monitoring. Communication to prevent overweight/obesity and anemia in under-five children, adolescents, and pregnant women was carried out in national media. Maternal and infant Health was reinforced with 100% of technicians of Neonatology Service (Regional Hospital) and 18

doctors and nurses from 100% of Health Centers trained in Basic and Emergency Neonatal Care/Intrapartum Care. Maternal and Neonatal Care Monitoring Manual implemented in all health structures. Process certification of Mother-to-Child HIV/Syphilis Transmission elimination supported, with 387 pregnant women/mothers and 9 children exposed to HIV, with psychosocial follow-up and counseling; capacity of 6 laboratories technicians strengthened on Point-of-care/early infant diagnosis/m-Pima equipment's operation.

National response against COVID-19 pandemic was strengthened, with a high level political, diplomatic and international commitments, with UNICEF support, as member of the Central Committee for Risk Communication and Community Engagement and the National Coordination Committee for COVID-19 Vaccination resulting in: i) COVID-19 Vaccination Acceleration Plan developed in the framework of the Continental Workshop organized by CDC Africa with the support of UNICEF for COVID-19 vaccination the acceleration in Africa; ii) Pediatric vaccination (5-11 years old) launched targeting 65,000 children; iii) Additional funds mobilized for vaccination and vaccines rollout; iv) Cold Chain equipment and PPEs and Vaccination cards purchased, delivered to protect 100% of the vaccinators and data registrars; v) COVID-19 Vaccination's Adverse event following immunization (AEFI) management supported with 100% of the 123 members (medical doctors/Nurses/Pharmacovigilance Focal Points) of the AEFI National Investigation Team technical capacity strengthened on AEFI investigation and Causality Assessment of AEFIs, vi) Communication/Risk Communication and Community Engagement interventions developed and implemented with targeting materials/products for COVID-19 vaccination, in multisectoral approach through media, resulting in 93,6% of target population trusted on COVID-19 vaccine and 100% of the remote municipalities received interpersonal and proximity communication interventions, and vii) 100% of the vaccination posts with additional 160 vaccinators and data registrars hired and trained on vaccination/data registration in DHIS2 with daily data available and COVID-19 vaccination weekly bulletin published <https://covid19.ev/>. The COVID-19 vaccination coverage is 98,8% of the target population (= 18 years old) with the 1st dose of the vaccine against COVID-19 and 86,6% with 2nd dose; 89,2% of adolescents (12-17 years old) with 1st dose 75,6% with 2nd dose, and 43,5% of children from 5 to 11 years old with the first dose and 32% fully vaccinated.

## **Goal Area 2 - Every child learns**

In 2022, 129, 513 children were enrolled, 16,000 in pre-school, 82,707 in compulsory basic education (1st to 8th grade), with a net enrollment rate of 94%, and 30,806 in secondary education (9th to 12th grades). In preschool access, there was gender parity while in basic education there were slightly fewer girls (48%) than boys (52%), and in secondary education, the situation was the opposite, girls represent 54% of the total student population. The learning crisis effect can be seen, since the transition rate from the 8th to the 9th grade decreased from about 80% in 2020 to 74%, with boys being the most affected. The rate of access to preschool has not increased and still difficulty in recovery after the pandemic COVID-19. The year 2021-2022 was peculiar as it was the first after special measures due to COVID-19, the teaching time was increased to help school facing learning losses in primary and secondary education, but there is no in-depth assessment of these losses.

UNICEF CO contributed to strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education to deal with learning losses by training 30% (252) of the total number of pedagogical coordinators and sub-directors identified around pedagogical supervision in the classroom context in basic education. On the other hand, UNICEF has contributed to improving learning conditions by providing all 255 public kindergartens (around 8,000 children) in the country with more up-to-date and innovative teaching and playful materials. In addition, and on the path to increase inclusion, particularly of children with SEN, UNICEF has supported the strengthening of pedagogical skills of the 23 multidisciplinary teams throughout the country that support inclusive education in schools and 700 teachers who deal with children with SEN in the classroom, out of a total of about 3,000 teachers of compulsory primary education (1st to 8th grade), covering 9 of the 22 municipalities of the country.

In 2022, with UNICEF advocacy and in preparation for the Education Transformation Summit, it was possible to have a greater commitment from the country to place investment in access and quality in preschool as one of the priorities of Transforming Education, as well as increased funding for education and a better distribution of the budget among the different sub-systems, particularly preschool which represented 0.3% of the total budget for education. Advocacy also resulted in a commitment to prioritize innovative solutions such as digital learning to increase access and improve learning for vulnerable children at risk of falling behind. This commitment was embodied in the Cabo Verde President's statement at the Education Summit and is being integrated into the new Education sector plan for 2022-2026. UNICEF led, together with the Ministry of Education, the process of national consultation and preparation of the country for the Education Transformation Summit, involving about 120 children and adolescents, as well as stakeholders from the State, Civil Society, and Private Sector.

UNICEF has contributed substantially through advocacy, technical, and financial assistance to ensure that the main concerns regarding access to education for all and the quality of learning are important elements in the new Country Sustainable Development Plan and Education Sector Plan (2022-2026). Of note is the inclusion dimension that considers out-of-school children, a policy of universalizing preschool with internationally recognized standards, proficiency in languages and mathematics, greater gender balance in pedagogy, and greater use of digital learning.

The country is being pioneered with the support of UNICEF in the introduction of digital learning in the early years of elementary school, as during 2022, it was not only able to lay the groundwork for the introduction of LP for elementary school children but also to mobilize partnerships for a pilot experience in digital language learning. These initiatives are in line with the transformation of education initiative and are part of the Ministry of Education's Digital Transition Strategy.

### **Goal Area 3 - Every child is protected from violence and exploitation**

UNICEF CO in partnerships and collaboration with the child protection stakeholders has significantly contributed to the achievements in the period of 2018-2022 (CCPD). As part of the national COVID-19 crisis response, the program joined forces with the relevant national institutions to ensure that child protection was included in COVID-focused risk communication, mental health, and wellness programs targeting children, parents, and caregivers. Around 53,000 children/parents/caregivers were provided with community-based health and psychosocial support. UNICEF was notably the main and strategic CP partner of the government of Cabo Verde, being publicly recognized by the Prime Minister. As one of the core priorities across the West and Central African region, Cabo Verde carried out the major reform already done on sexual crime against children that culminated with the 4th revision of the Penal Code (law n.º 117/IV/2021) and the 3rd revision of the Code of Penal Procedure (122/IX/2021). The technical capacities of the social service workforce were increased to prevent and fight VAC, and 1,501 girls and boys who have experienced violence were reached by social work and justice enforcement services, and around 6,000 were reached from the period of 2018-2022. The main legal and structural instruments/documents on the child protection system were approved and implemented such as the National Policy for Child Protection; the II National Action Plan to Prevent and Fight Sexual Violence 2022-2024 (resolution 122/2021); National Multi-stakeholder C4D communication strategy to prevent and fight against child SEA (resolution 101/2021), Communication Plan “Cabo Verde pela Infância e Adolescência- (resolution 100/2021); the revision of the Statute of Child and Adolescent – ECA (2022); the guidelines to control, supervise and monitor actions of the public and private institutions that develop activities directed to children. Around 3370 paternity investigation cases were investigated and closed from March 2021 to December 2022 with a tremendous impact on the child's rights with the father's name in their birth certificates. In 2022, 1/3 of the pending cases/processes of sexual crimes against children in the public ministry (Praia) were

concluded. More than 205 professionals of justice the system (judge, prosecutor, socio-educative center staff), child protection, and health professionals were trained in forensic psychology and interview techniques of children and medico-legal examinations as part of forensic clinical examinations vis a vis to support the legal process. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Justice in the creation of 3 special rooms for forensic exams intended for children's victims of sexual violence, as well as the ongoing process for the creation of the Institute of forensic sciences and forensic medicine in the country. The country with UNICEF support counts on a free and universal birth registration service within civil registration and vital statistics in accordance with international standards and best practices. UNICEF also supported the country in the reinforcement of the digital system - Business Intelligence Project and carried out a national campaign on radio and TV on the right to register the child immediately after his birth, which has had an impact on the birth registration rate at the national level. In 2022 the percentage of children registered under 5 years was 97%.

The participation of children in matters that related to them was notably reinforced during the celebration of World Children's Day from 2018-2022, five editions of the Juvenil Parliament were carried out with more than 500 adolescent and juvenile deputies involved annually at the national level. In 2022, UNICEF continued supporting the country's work with the private sector in the tourist islands (Sal, Boa Vista, Maio, and Santiago), through the World Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The government has been invited by the SRSG on VAC to take part in Global initiatives, namely the engagement in 3 Side Events organized by the SRSG on VAC. UNICEF CO supported the country in the development of a case management and information system. A manual of procedures was established, and the digital system has been set up with the support of the UNICEF regional office.

#### **Goal Area 4 - Every child lives in a safe and clean environment**

The UNICEF CO WASH initiative was on reducing risk and vulnerability through water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in schools. The reduction of these risks starts when there is an assumption of responsibilities at all levels, and it is in this sense that in 2022 the focus was on education, awareness, and accountability of the school community, participating and contributing to the welfare of them, their homes and the entire community. Thus, UNICEF CO has developed a playful and dynamic approach to communicate the importance and relevance of topics such as water, sanitation, hygiene, and disaster and risk reduction, by teaching children between the ages of 10 and 12 to contribute to improving socio-economic development, growth, as well as responding to global emergencies and outbreaks of life-threatening diseases. This methodology was oriented to active, attractive, and interactive learning, leading the whole school community to have a different learning experience that rescues the emotional learning of the school group. To this end, specific didactic and audiovisual materials were prepared, such as memory card games, jigsaw puzzles, painting books, posters, and support material for the classes, all related to the theme, presenting to the children the need, importance, and urgency for them to collaborate to keep the school community healthy and the entire surrounding community, thus reducing potential risks and vulnerabilities.

## **UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships**

As in previous years, in 2022 the collaboration between the agencies of the Joint Office (UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF) and the other agencies represented in Cabo Verde was formidable and made it possible to join efforts and respond jointly and in an integrated manner to the various appeals launched by the Government of Cabo Verde in the context of combating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine, with serious repercussions on the food security of the most vulnerable populations, including children and adolescents. Indeed, as part of the implementation of Projects financed by the SDG's Funds, several joint interventions were carried out between SNU Agencies represented in Cabo Verde, particularly in the areas of Development Financing, the blue economy and above all in terms of social protection with emphasis in food security domain. All these initiatives are in line with the Government's priorities expressed in

the document "**Ambição 2030**" and some of them (blue economy and food security) result from concrete demands made by the Government and aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis through the implementation of a package of measures to social protection, in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

In the scope of UNSDCF 2023-2027 preparation, the Joint Office (UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF) actively engages in UNSDCF results groups and M&E groups, designating the Portfolio Managers and M&E as focal points in each of the three Strategic Priority Areas and leads the Strategic Priority Area Group *Transformative governance and strengthened territorial cohesion*, and co-leads the strategic priority area related to *Inclusive economic transformation, prosperity, and just transition to a healthy environment*, and the strategic priority area *Strengthened human talent and social capital*. These groups met several times during the year with tangible results. The interagency results were presented at a year-end with the participation of the Joint Office Head of Office, Portfolios Managers, and M&E Focal Points. The Joint Office also supports the UNCT by managing corporate operations (including human, physical and financial resources) of various agencies, programs, and common premises.

## Lessons Learned and Innovations

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine, highlighted the need for coordinated and integrated interventions to deal with this type of crisis. Thus, at the level of the Joint Office, the program approach and joint action, allow the three agencies to respond jointly and in an integrated manner to the various appeals launched by the Government of Cabo Verde in the context of combating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the effects of the war between Russia and Ukraine, with serious repercussions on the food security of the most vulnerable populations, including children and adolescents.

It is also worth mentioning the leadership assumed by government authorities in partnership with development partners, particularly SNU agencies, in implementing the social protection and socio-economic measures taken by the Government. In the field of social protection, the coordination of actions, particularly regarding the resources mobilization for food security is an example of good practices that should be extended to other areas. In the field of education, the opportunities taken by national authorities to introduce mechanisms for alternative and innovative education, with emphasis on the implementation of digital learning methods, highlight the opportunities to promote inclusion and ensure that no one is left behind, even in an adverse context characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Another excellent lesson learned has to do with the continued promotion of dialogue with national partners and development partners, which made it possible to overcome administrative constraints and articulate with the EUROPE Union, Government of Luxembourg, World Bank, Spain and Portuguese cooperation in terms of planning and avoiding duplication or overlaps in the programmatic interventions.