

Somalia

Update on the context and situation of children

Somalia faces famine, grappling with a drought of historic severity alongside high food prices, conflict and disease outbreaks. At the end of 2022, an estimated 2.2 million internally displaced people (IDPs), (50.1 per cent female, 64 per cent children), required urgent humanitarian assistance. The water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) Cluster reported that 6.4 million people (4.1 million children, 1 million women) suffer water shortages, with 14 out of the 18 regions hardest hit, forcing people to resort to unsafe water sources, triggering spikes of acute watery diarrhoea (AWD) and cholera cases.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) predicts that between April and June 2023, approximately 8.3 million people, of whom 5.1 million are children, will experience acute food and livelihood crisis (IPC Phase 3). Agropastoral populations in Baidoa and Burhakaba districts of Bay region and internally displaced people (IDP) in Baidoa city and Mogadishu are already experiencing high levels of wasting and mortality consistent with an emergency (IPC Phase 4). By mid-2023, these three areas are predicted to be in a catastrophic situation/famine (IPC Phase 5) along with many other areas across Somalia. To cope, families often resort to harmful strategies, such as engaging their children in child labour and marrying girls before the age of 18.

Somalia is one of the most dangerous places in the world for children. An estimated 2.3 million children are at imminent risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, neglect or facing death from severe wasting (HNO 2022). In 2022, more than 1,600 grave child rights violations were verified through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). With about 2.9 million people internally displaced throughout the country, Somalia has one of the world's highest numbers of IDPs. Of those displaced 64 per cent are children and 50.1 per cent are women.

In the past year, the number of out-of-school children has increased from 4.1 million to 4.84 million, representing a 15 per cent increase from the previous year. Some 2.4 million school-aged children are affected by the drought, with 1.7 million currently out of school and an additional 900,000 (47 per cent of whom are girls) at risk of dropping out. Without timely action, learners' absenteeism will probably increase, putting more children at risk of dropping out, vulnerable to sexual violence, child labour, child marriage and recruitment into armed groups. The average age of children recruited and used by armed forces and groups is between 14 and 17 years.

An estimated 1 million IDPs need mental health and psychosocial support. Gender-based violence (GBV) is pervasive with women and girls in Somalia structurally disempowered. Some 99.2 per cent of Somali girls and women aged between 15 and 49 have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C). Somalia has the 10th highest rate of child marriage with 16 per cent of girls marrying before the age of 15 and about 34 per cent before the age of 18 (SHDS, 2020).

According to reports from the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster, children without their primary caregivers make up 40 per cent of the population in new IDP sites, and the numbers are increasing. UNICEF and its partners have registered an 80 per cent increase in unaccompanied and separated children receiving family tracing services in priority one and two districts compared to 2021.

Based on pre-drought statistics, about 73 per cent of children under 14 years of age are poor and a recent Multiple Deprivation Analysis (MDA) indicates that at least 81 per cent of children aged 5-17 years are deprived in two or more dimensions (monetary, electricity access, education and/or water and sanitation).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have exacerbated inequality. Food inflation rates exceeded 10 per cent in the first half of 2022, pushed up by lower domestic agricultural output and higher global food prices. In most regions, prices in October 2022 were far above the 2017-2021 five-year average, including for local cereals (32-142 per cent) imported rice (27-85 per cent) and diesel (43-102 per cent).

In 2022, Somalia averted a political crisis by completing federal elections just before the deadline set by the International Financial Institutions to re-evaluate the debt relief process.

The parliamentary and presidential elections which should have taken place in 2021 were only completed in the second half of 2022. However, Somalia continues to make strides in administrative and policy reforms, crucial for attracting development finance, including through internal strategic frameworks, such as the National Development Plan, and international agreements such as the Extended Credit Facility by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) agreement. Completing the HIPC process guarantees debt relief from bilateral and multilateral partners, and should lead to a debt reduction from US\$ 4.38 billion to US\$ 557 million, almost 87 per cent.

Somalia's scores on the Open budget survey (OBS) continued to improve with transparency scores rising to 20 in 2021 from 3 in 2017 and oversight scores rising to 30 from 20. Social sector spending expanded to 35 per cent of the budget. With additional staff capacity for Public Finance Management (PFM), UNICEF completed a budget brief for Somalia, kicking off evidence generation on PFM expenditure aimed at social development and child well-being. Somali representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development (MoPIED), the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Health (MoH) also started the pilot of UNICEF CABRI 'Building public finance capabilities for improved social services for children'.

Despite these positive developments, the current constitution remains provisional and as a result, lacks clarity on the distribution of power and resources across different levels of government.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Goal 1: Survive and Thrive

In 2022, UNICEF provided essential health services in Somalia through humanitarian and development programmes by supporting the expansion and utilization of immunization and maternal, newborn and child health services. The proportion of children under the age of 1 year who received three doses of the pentavalent-3 vaccine rose from 86.4 per cent in 2021 to 88 per cent in 2022, totalling 499,582 infants. UNICEF also supported mass vaccination campaigns that contributed to 6,324,409 adults (40.4 per cent of the Somali population) being fully vaccinated against COVID-19; 1,243,484 children aged 6-59 months being vaccinated against measles in hotspot districts and a further 2,311,466 children receiving measles vaccination in a nationwide integrated vaccination campaign. In addition, two rounds of an oral cholera vaccination campaign each reached 897,086 people, 96 per cent of the population in cholera hotspot districts. Skilled health personnel attended 46.4 per cent of live births (50,199 deliveries). Some 67,139 (32.5 per cent of pregnant women) attended at least four antenatal care (ANC) visits. A total of 1,384,943 people received curative care through the first outpatient and day (OPD) visit, including 655,025 children under 5 years of age. These achievements are a result of UNICEF's contributions in several areas. UNICEF is the lead agency supporting the federal and national health ministries on vaccine logistics and cold chains, enabling timely vaccine deliveries and preventing stock-outs. UNICEF supports health ministries on demand creation and social and behaviour change (SBC) efforts through a social mobilization network (SOMNET). Besides 108,807 hours of public addresses in communal places, religious

leaders, community leaders/elders and other influencers were engaged in promoting service-seeking behaviour and positive social norms. A total of 16 million (160 per cent of the initial target) people were reached with key lifesaving messages using various community-based and mass media-based communication channels and community engagement. Furthermore, an additional 748,444 people were reached through health education sessions and another 384,335 people in community meetings. Depending on the programme and behaviour indicators, 11.45 per cent to 32.3 per cent of people have been observed changing their behaviour. As the principal recipient of Somalia's Global Fund resources for Malaria and HIV, UNICEF is well placed to influence programming and policy decisions for children. Also, UNICEF engaged with the federal health ministries and AIDS commissions, and used UNICEF's Supply Division for the procurement of Global Fund HIV, malaria and nutrition commodities which ensured the best value for money. The Resilient and Sustainable System for Health (RSSH) activities has enhanced UNICEF's visibility and influence in the cross-operationality of the health sector, contributing to the ministry's emerging policies. With comprehensive development-oriented support in cash and supplies for the implementation of the essential health package for health services (EPHS) across 186 health facilities in Somalia, UNICEF is at the forefront to strengthen the health resilience of a fragile population. UNICEF in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Health and partners continued to prioritize malnutrition prevention interventions, including identifying and treating children suffering from wasting, providing fortified foods and supplements to prevent vitamin and nutrient deficiencies and providing counselling on infant and young children feeding. In the first semester of 2022, some 2,330,477 children aged 6-59 months (1,141,900 boys and 1,188,547 girls) received vitamin A supplementation, 96 per cent of the targeted 2,429,562 (VAS Campaign Report, 2022). Yet, between December 2022 and January 2023, 459,616 children (251,765 girls and 207,851 boys) were admitted for management of severe wasting (ONA, December 2022). Moreover, by December 10, 2022, an estimated 16,578 cases of measles were reported, surpassing the total of 2021, 2020 and 2019 combined. The 2022 post-Gu integrated food and nutrition assessment shows an increase in wasting in children under the age of 5 years from 11.1 per cent to 15.9 per cent (Post Gu 2022) during the same time in 2021 (FSNAU, 2022), crossing the threshold for an emergency. Following the survey, an adjustment in the number of children to be targeted was made, increasing the numbers from 386,410 to 513,550 for the next 12 months.

Goal 2: Learns

In 2022, UNICEF accelerated efforts to ensure children participate in educational services and develop the foundational knowledge and skills required for their and their families' well-being. Yet drought and conflict have had a detrimental impact on the 3.85 million school-age children and school personnel, contributing to the limited progress in primary education enrolment rates over the 2021/22 academic year. Similarly, whilst gender equity in primary education had progressed in recent years, there was a slight decline in the Gender Parity Index (GPI). In 2022, GPI fell from 0.82 in 2021 to 0.80 in 2022. Technical and financial contributions supported 267,641 children (134,470 girls) with access to improved formal and non-formal early childhood and primary education services. Of these, 153,046 were children impacted by emergencies and requiring humanitarian assistance. The finalization of federal and state-level four-year Education Sector Strategic Plans (ESSP) (2022-26) represented a milestone in 2022 with UNICEF's continued engagement in the co-leadership of education sector coordination structures. The ESSPs improve the efficiency of investments in the sector, providing a framework with which development partners align and prioritise assistance. The plans also commit to increased investments for improved equity and effectiveness of the current educational services. Support to the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) system remained a strategic priority for the UNICEF education programme to reach the many older out-of-school children and those displaced due to conflict and drought. To mitigate the drought's impact on children's retention in primary school, UNICEF collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP) on a large-scale school-meal intervention, providing daily meals and water to over 78,500 children in 235 drought-affected primary schools. The quality of primary education remains a concern. In the absence of a nationally representative learning assessment for lower primary education, annual sector progress

measurement of children's foundational learning is challenging. Through UNICEF support, 2,983 teachers participated in in-service and pre-service teacher development programmes to improve curriculum delivery in primary schools. Following the programmes, 307 of the teachers qualified as primary school teachers. Furthermore, the government's management of primary school teacher deployment, professional development and remuneration systems was facilitated in Puntland through introducing an online teacher management database that captures data on 6,000 primary school teachers. Additional investments to improve children's learning and development included the provision of early learning materials to 181,897 children of whom 82,534 were girls and recreational and play materials to early childhood education (ECE) centres and primary schools.

Goal 3: Protection

UNICEF collaborated with the government and civil society to strengthen child protection systems. This involved continued professionalization of the social service workforce, increased government investments in justice for children, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) with a focus on birth registration, the release of children formerly associated with armed groups, multi-sectoral services including response to gender-based violence (GBV), and the scale-up of the response to conflict and drought. The second half of 2022 witnessed political developments with elections and new government appointments, creating momentum to push child rights legislation and policies at the federal government of Somalia (FGS) and federal member state (FMS) levels. UNICEF developed workplans with 19 government ministries and entities in Puntland, Somaliland, FGS and FMS levels to support policies, legislation, capacity strengthening and multisectoral child protection and GBV services throughout the country. Also, three-year partnerships were established with 18 local NGOs. Although there are only currently about 2,399 social workers (1,104 female, 1,295 male) in the country (approximately 26 /100,000 children), UNICEF partners have been providing clinical, legal, psychosocial, case management and safety services during times of crisis and non-emergency periods. By the end of November 2022, UNICEF reached 395,677 people (51 per cent children and 49 per cent caregivers) with at least one child protection service. Community-based mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services reached 195,439 people (65 per cent children). Some 105,517 people (41 per cent children) were reached through the GBV services, prevention and risk mitigation while 13,761 unaccompanied and separated children (46 per cent girls) received family tracing and reunification services, including alternative care. UNICEF partnerships with the Ministry of Internal Security (MoIS) and the Somali National Army (SNA) led to 302 children associated with armed forces and groups (CAAFAG) being handed over to UNICEF for reintegration support. Also, the reintegration programme supported 2,137 CAAFAG children (33 per cent girls) and children at risk of recruitment, providing them with shelter, access to medical services, psychosocial support and skills training. UNICEF reached 2,690 children in contact with the law (2,354 boys and 336 girls) with essential legal aid/representation and referrals, diversion and release from detention. In addition, 47,339 children (24,326 boys and 23,013 girls) were registered at birth in 17 districts across Puntland and Somaliland. In 2022, the Child Rights Act in Somaliland was enacted but the age of the child was set at 15 despite extensive advocacy efforts from UNICEF and partners. Continued advocacy will be required to raise the age of the child to 18. The Somali government, with UNICEF support, held the first dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which culminated with the issuance of concluding observations, boosting advocacy and accountability for a stronger policy and legislative environment. Additional progress made in 2022 included the drafting of Civil Registry and Vital Statistics (CRVS) legislation at federal level and the revision of the Anti-Terrorism law in Puntland, with child-related considerations, and the development of the five-year National Plan of Action on Children (NPA/C) 2023-2025. Social and behaviour change (SBC) plays a key role in all aspects of child protection. For example, UNICEF's community-led Community Care programme challenges social acceptance of harmful practices, including FGM/C, child marriage and GBV. UNICEF reached, in collaboration with local organizations, 426 (216 women and 208 men) community and religious leaders through training and community discussions.

Goal 4: Safe and Clean Environment

The UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme focussed on strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. The unprecedented drought has severely limited access to safe water, resulting in an almost three-fold increase in AWD/cholera cases in 2022 compared with 2021. By December 2022, 26 drought-affected districts reported 14,276 cumulative cases of cholera and AWD of which 9,137 were children under the age of 5 years, (64 per cent). There were 79 cumulative deaths, which is a case fatality rate (CFR) of 0.55 per cent. In response, UNICEF reached 1,985,241 (79 per cent of the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) target; and 50 per cent of the WASH cluster reach) with emergency safe water, 202,000 people (88 per cent of HAC target; 29 per cent of cluster reach) were provided improved sanitation facilities; and 1.2 million (50 per cent of the target) were reached with hygiene promotion, kits to practise proper hygiene and water treatment at household level. Of those reached, 109,000 women and girls were also provided with menstrual hygiene kits. In line with the National Water and Resource Strategy and Hydromet services Policy, 934,930 people were provided with access to sustainable and affordable basic drinking water services, over the HAC target at 106 per cent; and 50 per cent of WASH cluster reach. This was achieved through the drilling of new strategic boreholes, rehabilitating existing high-yielding borehole systems through pipeline extensions and increasing storage capacity, installing solar pumping systems and improving shallow-well based systems. At federal level, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop the National Hygiene Promotion Strategy and the National Standards for WASH in Healthcare Facilities. This involved consultations and validation at member-state level. Furthermore, UNICEF supported Puntland administration to develop the Puntland Water Resource Management Water Supply Strategy and Roadmap for Puntland, and to review the Puntland Water Act. In addition, UNICEF assisted the Somaliland administration in the ongoing development of National Development Plan III. The establishment of appropriate legislation, regulatory frameworks and policies will ensure a conducive environment for private sector investments to thrive which should increase investments in the WASH sector in both rural and urban areas.

Goal 5 Equitable chance in Life

The Federal Government of Somalia has confronted the current humanitarian crisis with varied policy and programmatic tools with support from partners. Over the last 24 months, about 194,122 households have received eight quarterly payments from the national cash transfer programme (Baxnaano), which is funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), with support from WFP and UNICEF. In addition to regular quarterly cash transfers, Baxnaano included emergency cash assistance to 164,013 drought-affected households. Beyond Baxnaano, UNICEF has begun registering families to provide cash grants to 2,000 households in Somaliland. UNICEF has also concluded negotiations with MoLSA for a child-sensitive social protection programme to be funded by the German cooperation (BMZ-KfW) to cover an additional 27,700 families, targeting pregnant and lactating women. UNICEF has made significant capacity development investments for social protection in Somalia. The Unified Social Registry (USR) software has been completed and installed at the MoLSA data centre at Villa Somalia and preparations are ongoing for a final handover to the Government. UNICEF also made progress towards completing the guidelines of the USR and making the Baxnaano manual and data protection operational. The development of the Baxnaano Management Information Systems (MIS) is scheduled to be completed by February 2023. Finally, there has been remarkable progress in building the capacity of MoLSA and other government ministries on social protection through trainings and study tours to selected countries. Some 70 participants (52 male and 18 female), mainly from government ministries at national and federal member state level, benefitted from the trainings. During the 2022 protracted electoral process, UNICEF has remained the only UN agency supporting the Social Development pillar of the Office of the Prime Minister, ensuring the continued operation of the Social Affairs Subcabinet meetings and demonstrating UNICEF institutional commitment to the operation of core government. UNICEF also supported the Somali national Statistics Bureau (SNBS) to finalise the

analysis of multidimensional child poverty (MDCP) in Somalia using Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) and the Social Sector Statistics development strategy. In addition, the strengthening of local governance and the decentralizing of basic social services has continued. In 2022, the UN Joint Programme in Local Governance got together 1,244 children (565 girls and 679 boys) with 13,890 citizens, of whom 40 per cent were female community members, for consultations with local government representatives. This was the first time that citizens had been consulted by the local governments in these 21 districts across Somaliland and federal member states (FMS) in Somalia. The priorities that the citizens identified will inform the development of the five-year District Development Frameworks. Basic social services in Somaliland have since been expanded and the commitment for the Service Delivery Model increased from US\$ 5.1 million (82 per cent) in 2021 to US \$6.3 million (85 per cent government contribution) in 2022. Also, the Puntland Federal Government commitment increased from 27 per cent in 2021 to 32 per cent in 2022 while the other federal member state's commitment remained between 3-10 per cent.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF's work on Social Protection leverages partnerships in highly competitive spaces where UNICEF is not in a command-and-control position. For example, UNICEF collaborates with WFP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the national cash transfer programme (Baxnaano) for households affected by severe drought. UNICEF, ILO and WFP jointly commissioned an evaluation of the programme to pave the way for a Somali-led transition to a National Social Protection system.

Through the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery, UNICEF works with four UN agencies – the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the United Nations Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), ILO, and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). This joint programme is implemented in over 30 districts in all federal member states and is funded by six donors.

UNICEF partners with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP to improve nutrition services. For example, when WFP experienced a pipeline breakdown in its nutrition programme during the first half of the year, UNICEF and WFP advocated for more resources. UNICEF and WFP also had a joint Action plan to improve coverage of the programme to prevent and treat wasting in 16 hard-to-reach districts with low performance. In addition, UNICEF, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) and WFP launched a minimum response package – timely screening and treatment of wasting for children under the age of 5 years – to newly displaced people in Baidoa and Mogadishu IDP camps.

UNICEF works with private sector WASH service providers and donors, including for coordination and fundraising to scale-up the WASH response during the drought.

Partnering with WFP and UNESCO through the UN-to-UN collaboration framework, UNICEF has committed to high-level results in school feeding and improved implementation of the FGS education sector strategy plan. UNICEF has also concluded a partnership with Sisitech Enterprises on the delivery of a mobile application that tracks enrolment, attendance, retention and learner dropout rates even in marginalized areas where internet connectivity is unstable.

On the Human Rights Phase-2 Justice programme, UNICEF collaborates with the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and on FGM/C collaborates with UNFPA. UNICEF also contributed to joint UN initiatives and assessments that generate evidence, for example on children with disabilities and with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) on CRVS.

UNICEF supports six universities to provide scholarships and capacity support to almost 2,399 young social workers to accelerate the professionalization of social work/ child protection services.

Additional examples include UNICEF co-chairing the UN Country Task Force on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations with UNSOM and the Group of Friends of Children Affected by Armed Conflict (CAAC) co-led with the Danish Embassy to end and prevent grave child rights violations. The Danish, German and Swedish governments supported child protection and GBV systems strengthening while the US, the UK and German governments with the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian AID Operations (ECHO), the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund supported child protection in emergencies.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

Goal 1 Survive and Thrive

The network of social mobilisers working on polio eradication was critical in generating demand for the COVID-19 vaccination acceleration campaigns and the integrated measles campaign. This showed how social mobilisers can be instrumental in the delivery of integrated life-saving interventions at scale. Also, tailored-demand strategies targetting specific population groups, such as women, including female health workers, was important in addressing the gender gap in the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine. The targetting of women resulted in the almost doubling of the vaccine uptake among women from 25 per cent in 2021 to 45 per cent in 2022.

Simplified approaches can be critical for results: In eight hard-to-reach areas, UNICEF, with support from the Regional Office and the Global Nutrition Cluster, developed standard simplified approach protocols for the treatment of both moderate and severe wasting, using just one product of the Ready-To-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) in the range. The protocol has been instrumental in providing partner guidance while helping to prevent the misuse of RUTF.

Goal 2 Education

Whilst there have been considerable investments across sector partners to improve children's enrolment in primary school, there has not yet been a corresponding investment in strengthening foundational primary curriculum approaches. To reinforce children's acquisition of foundational learning skills, UNICEF initiated an accelerated early literacy and numeracy pedagogical package with federal ministries of education and TaRL (Teaching at the Right Level) Africa, to be implemented at scale both in a developmental context in Somaliland and in an emergency context in the federal member states.

Goal 3 Protection

Preventing child recruitment is effective when dialogue with parties to the conflict is complemented by targeted humanitarian responses. Sustained efforts with the Somali National Army (SNA) have resulted in a decrease in violations by the SNA, including recruitment and use. However, instances of killing and maiming and sexual violence by federal and regional State actors remain high.

Goal 4 Safe and Clean Environment

Access to the full package of basic WASH services in schools and health facilities requires a multi-purpose water supply system tied to surrounding communities' livelihoods to secure a return on investments. Yet the current focus is mostly on life-saving WASH support in AWD/Cholera treatment centres and drought-affected community service improvements which do not always include schools. Further Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) studies and compliance are needed to identify entry points for the multipurpose water supply systems.

Pre-positioning of the core emergency pipeline of emergency hygiene kit supplies for partners across the country has proved to be effective in fast tracking the response to disease outbreaks. Throughout the year, emergency supplies were pre-positioned by UNICEF across nine regional supply hubs.

Goal 5 Equitable chance in Life

Programmes need to take into account political transitions in fragile countries like Somalia. UNICEF's approach to remaining institutionally engaged with key government counterparts, such as the Office of the Prime Minister, through the long electoral period and transfer of power, has put UNICEF in a better position with the Government compared to that of other partners.