

Angola

Update on the context and situation of children

In 2023, Angola faced challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, which continued to impact the country's economy and social services. The Southern part of Angola, with its susceptibility to cyclical drought, posed a significant risk to the well-being of children, exposing them to hazards associated with climate change. The nation's heavy reliance on the oil sector, accounting for 30 per cent of its GDP in 2022, left it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations. Despite the Government's efforts to achieve macroeconomic stability through various reforms, inflation remained high, reaching 18 per cent by the end of 2023. Additionally, 45 per cent of the state budget was allocated to public debt servicing, limiting the Government's ability to invest in children. The sharp devaluation of the Angolan Kwanza in relation to the US dollar further exacerbated the economic outlook, leading to increased prices of essential goods due to the country's import-based economy. While there is no updated data, it is anticipated that poverty has risen in a country where over 40 per cent of Angolans were already living below the monetary poverty line, with 75 per cent of children classified as multidimensionally poor.

During 2023, the Government expanded its social protection programme, which provides cash transfers for vulnerable families, reaching 951,204 households. While this brought welcome support, the selection criteria for the cash transfer programme are not currently child sensitive. Nevertheless, the inclusion of cash transfers for children in the recently approved National Development Plan (PDN 2023-2027) signals major progress.

The under-five child mortality rate decreased from 75 in 2019 to 69 per 1,000 live births in 2021, according to UN inter-agency estimates. However, child health in Angola continues to be a cause for concern. Outbreaks of measles and maternal neonatal tetanus have persisted. The 2023 Joint Malnutrition Estimates indicate a continued high prevalence of stunting. In drought-affected areas, household resilience was weakened, resulting in an increased number of children suffering from severe wasting and an ongoing need for humanitarian support.

The Government intensified immunization efforts, achieving coverage of 66.8 per cent for the third dose of DTP vaccine and reaching an additional 83,195 zero-dose children. Also, the Government became a member of the Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children by 2030. Despite an increase in the state budget allocation to the health sector to 6.7 per cent in 2023, this level of investment remains below the Abuja target of 15 per cent.

While a larger proportion of the sector budget is invested in drinking water supply over sanitation services, the 2022 WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme estimates show that access to basic drinking water and sanitation are similar at 58 and 52 per cent of the population respectively. Nevertheless, overall sector financing levels have constrained progress during the SDG era with only modest increases in access. Moreover, disparities in access between rural and urban populations remain marked. The reactivation of the national water and sanitation coordination platform and recruitment of new staff to the National Directorate of Water authorized in 2023 for the first time in several years signal renewed impetus in the sector.

Increasing access to education and enhancing learning outcomes were significant challenges, partly due to the shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural areas where the pupil-teacher ratio is as high as 54:1. In 2023, the Government approved the Long-Term Strategy for 2050, which identifies education as a key area for investment, with a focus on pre-primary and primary education. However, while education is prioritized in the Long-Term Strategy for 2050, this is not reflected in the state budget. The allocation for education remains below the recommended international benchmarks, with a bias towards secondary education. Additionally, the execution of the allocated budget has consistently fallen below 80 per cent for the past three years. The transition for girls from primary to secondary education remains problematic in rural areas (gender parity index 0.51), with barriers to this transition including child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and gender norms that prioritize boys' learning.

Regulations for pre-school, primary and secondary education were validated by the Ministry of Education in 2023. This legislation should help increase access and retention, particularly for girls, facilitating a learning environment free from discrimination, abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment. The Local Education Group (LEG) established under the Global Partnership for Education, emerged as a crucial coordination platform, influencing policy decisions and enhancing policy dialogue, resource mobilization and advocacy.

In 2023, the Ministry of Social Action, Family and Women's Promotion (MASFAMU) launched the National Programme to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage, which led to a National Strategy and Plan of Action and establishing of a multi-sectoral monitoring platform. This is of particular importance as Angola has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy (35 per cent of adolescent girls aged 15-19 are childbearing) and child marriage (30 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were married or in a union before age 18) in the region. The Domestic Violence Law 25/11 and the Family Code are currently under revision, which provide opportunities to end harmful practices regarding various forms of interpersonal violence that affect children and child marriage. A dedicated gender programme was established and budgeted to help advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

In 2023, the Government approved the National Plan of Inclusion and Support for Persons with Disabilities. It includes relevant priorities in the PDN 2023-2027, such as early detection, inclusive schools and cash transfers for persons with disabilities. The Government consulted 18 organizations of persons with disabilities during the drafting of its Long-Term Strategy for 2050 to incorporate their perspectives.

The national priorities established in the PDN 2023-2027 placed human capital development at the forefront, hence the focus on improving social indicators such as health, education and social protection should positively impact the situation of children in Angola. However, the expected population growth, increased effects of climate change, the risks of regional instability, as well as the poor economic growth outlook represent serious challenges to the country's efforts to achieve national goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Child survival and development

Immunization: In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization and other key development partners, UNICEF played a pivotal role in strengthening Angola's immunization programme, which is recovering from the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of 30 October 2023, at least 80 per cent of children under the age of one year in 60 out of 164 (36.5 per cent) of Angolan municipalities were vaccinated with three doses of the DTP vaccine. This included 933,450 children who received a first dose of DTP vaccine, representing an 84.6 per cent coverage rate, and 757,618 children under one year of age who received the third dose of DTP vaccine, representing a coverage rate of 66.8 per cent. In addition, after significant efforts to reach them, a total of 83,195 zero-dose children aged 12-59 months received their first dose of the DTP vaccine. Two rounds of polio campaigns integrating Vitamin A supplementation (VAS) were also supported, with a coverage rate of 112 per cent for the second round (6,093,290 children) and VAS reaching 4,087,018 children (75 per cent) in all provinces, demonstrating the synergy and efficiency of integrated health and nutrition interventions. For the first time, evidence on zero-dose children was generated through the polio campaign itself, with a total of 45,092 zero-dose children aged 12 to 59 months from nine provinces successfully mapped. This exercise has helped raise the significance of zero-dose children at the provincial and municipal level and demonstrated the feasibility of engaging health authorities and community leaders in generating local data for decision making.

Nutrition: In 2023, following joint advocacy by UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank, the Government of Angola procured essential nutrition supplies valued at almost US\$1,000,000 through

UNICEF support. This enabled access to the Match Fund, doubling the amount of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) procured, which will enable the treatment of over 20,000 children with severe wasting. With UNICEF support, a total of 610,619 children aged 6-59 months were screened for wasting and 72,899 with severe acute malnutrition were admitted to a treatment programme. Through engagement with local communities 89,134 caregivers were reached with counselling on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. Furthermore, a total of 508 health staff were trained on the national protocol for the integrated management of acute malnutrition, including 21 nutrition supervisors across the six targeted provinces. UNICEF also supported the reinvigoration of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative in Angola, a past success in promoting breastfeeding, through health staff training. The focus was on the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding, which aims to improve key practices from the initial prenatal consultation through to the newborn's birth and beyond. In 2023, VAS in Angola also gained momentum, receiving US\$1.2 million from Global Affairs Canada for a three-year project (2023-2025) to support increased uptake of VAS by addressing gender-related barriers linked to care-taker access.

Child health: UNICEF supported the institutionalization of a monitoring framework for the eight commitments of the Luanda Declaration for Primary Health Care and Immunization. The results were used for decision making and advocacy at a high-level event led by the Minister of Health during the celebration of Universal Health Coverage Day. A costed community health policy, which includes integrated community case management of childhood illness and nutrition, and a community digital health roadmap were developed by the Government of Angola with support from UNICEF and other partners. A total of 180 health staff were trained on the national protocol for management of childhood illness, and 30 were trained on the use of health management and information system platform (DHIS2). The scale-up of integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI), resulted in adequate treatment of 20,006 children 0-59 months. Capacity building on the health information system resulted in improved reporting rates of maternal, child health, immunization and nutrition data in 566 health facilities supported by UNICEF, which has increased from 70 per cent in 2022 to 82.5 per cent in 2023.

Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS): This year has been critical in further engaging the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights in the uptake of birth registration and legal identity services using a more inter-ministerial approach. As a result, the multi-sectoral CRVS Working Group was revitalized and expanded to include members beyond the Ministry of Health and Education. Namely, the National Institute of Statistics (INE), the Ministry of Territorial Administration and State Reform, the Ministry of Interior, and other departments of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, including information technology. A thorough revision and assessment of the CRVS system in Angola will be undertaken in 2024 under the supervision of the CRVS intersectoral working group, and the integrated activities with the Ministry of Health will be expanded to fit with the programme developed by the World Bank and the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights on the decentralization of services.

Upstream work in the WASH sector: UNICEF has advocated for the national WASH sector coordination forum (FONAS) since 2009. First activated in 2019 but interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was reactivated in 2023 with UNICEF support. A functional FONAS is a critical cornerstone for the sector to improve its governance. FONAS work will be informed, among others, by a national Climate Landscape Analysis for Children (CLAC) and a WASH finance bottleneck analysis that UNICEF finalized in 2023 and the deep groundwater research mapping which is currently underway.

Addressing urban sanitation: The Simplified Sanitation pilot is the result of a strong collaboration between UNICEF, the Ministry of Environment, UNICEF Brazil, the Brazilian Cooperation Agency, the Brazilian private water utility CAGECE, the National Health Foundation of Brazil, and the Secretariat of Cities of the State of Ceará. This pilot brings together 14 different Angolan institutions, which reflects the complexity and inter-institutional work required for urban and peri-urban sanitation. The Simplified Sanitation pilot led to technical cooperation and shared knowledge between UNICEF and the World Bank on the methodological approaches. As a result, the World Bank is also introducing simplified sanitation in Uíge province and plans to extend the model to Malanje province.

Child and adolescent development and participation

Sector coordination and resource mobilization: Following high-level advocacy efforts, UNICEF contributed to establishing the first LEG in Angola (active since February 2023), and was nominated as the coordinating agency. The LEG has started to play a key role as a platform for coordination within the education sector, helping to enhance policy dialogue, mobilize resources, advocate for and influence policy decisions to transform education in Angola. With UNICEF support, a multiplier grant concept note for US\$50 million was endorsed by the LEG and submitted to the Global Partnerships for Education. UNICEF received funding from the GPE System Capacity Grant, which allowed UNICEF to embed technical assistance for sector coordination within the Ministry of Education. Additionally, the LEG completed the enabling factors analysis report that will allow the Government of Angola to benefit from further funding from the Global Partnership.

Quality of learning: Under the leadership of the Ministry of Education and with the support of the organization Teaching at the Right Level Africa (TaRL), UNICEF Angola supported the development of a Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) programme model for remedial education to respond to the learning crisis, which will be piloted in 65 schools reaching approximately 22,000 children. The model was developed through a highly participatory and iterative process involving education stakeholders at the central, province, municipality and school level, which aims to adapt TaRL methodology to the national context and foster ownership from the onset. To ensure systemic integration, the model leverages existing supervision and monitoring mechanisms and structures. With advocacy efforts supported by a learning exchange mission to Zambia, there is a strong commitment from the Ministry of Education for a gradual scale-up of the FLN programme model nationwide. A total of 50,868 children (27,064 girls) in the drought affected provinces of Southern Angola benefited from continued opportunities for quality learning through UNICEF's support to distribute learning kits and empower education stakeholders of disaster-prone areas to implement a remedial education methodology.

Youth empowerment: UNICEF, in partnership with UNDP and UNHCR, strengthened youth participation and engagement of young people (including vulnerable groups such as refugees, persons with disabilities, out-of-school youth, adolescent girls, LGBTQIA+, and others) through the organization of youth forums in Luanda, Huíla, Benguela and Lunda Norte provinces. A total of 164 young people, including 85 girls, participated and were offered the opportunity to share and discuss their perspectives on issues such as education, employment, environmental protection and digital connectivity, while also discussing gender-related barriers to access services and resources. UNICEF's strong collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Youth and Sports led to the co-creation of the first Angolan National Youth Climate Forum which gathered 550 participants in Luanda and had more than 700 online viewers. The event not only fostered dialogue between participants and sensitization to the issue of climate change, including critical themes such as gendered impacts of climate change, but also provided inputs to the Angolan delegation (including two young people sponsored by UNICEF) for their participation in COP28. The contributions of the youth during the national forum led to the ministries' commitment to develop an action plan for 2024-2025 to encourage further youth engagement in climate-related issues, empowering young girls and boys to have increased voice and agency to take action against climate change.

Ending teenage pregnancy and child marriage: As a result of high-level advocacy and technical support from UNICEF and UNFPA, MASFAMU launched a National Programme on Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage on the International Day of the Girl. Furthermore, a National Strategy and Plan of Action to address child marriage and teenage pregnancy was developed, which is currently under review by a multi-sectorial platform. A comprehensive review of the National Framework to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy in Angola was completed, which provided clear programmatic direction on adolescent pregnancy and supported the national campaign on teenage pregnancy. UNICEF strengthened gender-related interventions through establishing an advocacy group comprised of young mothers in Luanda to further guide upcoming interventions, initiated ethnographic research on root causes of child marriage, and supported MASFAMU with the organization of a national conference on violence against women and girls for the 16 Days of Activism. These actions will lead to important

coordinated programming for adolescent girls going forward into 2024.

Violence against children: There were 14,221 (including 7,618 girls) reported incidents of violence against children as of 30 November 2023. In an effort to address this ongoing problem, a national coordination body was established to strengthen the prevention and response to violence against children in Angola. This coordination body, led by the National Institute for Children, not only includes key ministries such as health, education, justice, and youth, but also includes civil society organizations (CSOs) active in the prevention of violence against children. This initiative is the cornerstone for coordinated and integrated action such as the implementation of case management tools previously developed with European Union funding (referral mechanisms and Standard Operation Procedures) and the development of a multi-sectoral data collection system building on the information management system introduced within the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights for real-time data collection (PRIMERO).

Decentralized convergent social services, coordination and public finance for children

Social protection: UNICEF continued to build the national capacity of key actors on social protection through different training modalities (group training, individual training, and coaching for the Minister and Vice-Minister of Social Action), and support to national-level coordination mechanisms. UNICEF used its convening role to identify opportunities for improving coordination and maximizing the impact of existing policies and programmes. Through a joint ILO-UNICEF project, a review of coordination mechanisms for social protection was undertaken, resulting in a multi-partner workshop which analysed case studies of good practice in coordination as well as the policy and legislative practices that support coordination for social protection. UNICEF also facilitated a South-South cooperation (SSC) study mission to Mozambique which highlighted the importance of effective coordination and provided examples of integrated social services and social protection programmes. It resulted in renewed commitment from the Angolan institutions for the revision of the Social Protection Law and to securing a functioning multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at the national level to continue to support convergent and integrated social service delivery.

UNICEF also contributed to evidence generation for increasing coverage of the social protection programmes and for child-sensitive cash transfer with the publication of the impact assessment of Valor Criança (Angola's first cash transfer programme), completed in partnership with the UNICEF Office of Research. The impact assessment provided substantive evidence of the positive results and benefits of cash transfers for children zero to five years of age in the country, contributing to the advocacy for the institutionalization of the nationwide cash transfer programme valued at US\$420 million financed by the Government of Angola and the World Bank. Government commitment to the continuation of cash transfers for children was made through its National Development Plan (2023-2027) and through a key recommendation from the III (third) National Conference on Social Action.

Public finance for children (PF4C): UNICEF's advocacy with the National Parliament directly influenced the 2023 and 2024 state budget proposals. UNICEF's analysis of state budget proposals led to increases in allocations to key social sectors from 2022 to 2023, particularly health (48 per cent) and pre-primary education (almost five times). In 2023, UNICEF produced five budget briefs (General Vision, Education, Health, Social Protection and WASH), complemented by further public finance education activities including webinars, Citizens Budget, podcasts to increase budget literacy, transparency and participation. UNICEF introduced the Ministry of Finance to the International Budget Partnership on the Open Budget Survey, which led to the development of the Ministry's plan to improve its 2026 score. UNICEF facilitated a side-event during the 147th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to promote dialogue on the role of parliaments in securing effective public spending for children's rights. UNICEF conducted a Public Expenditure Review on Health and Nutrition and an Analysis on the Bottlenecks to financing the WASH Sector which presented key recommendations for improving budget allocations and the quality of the expenditure. To support public financial management reform, UNICEF provided programme-based budgeting training sessions for the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy and Planning and key social sectors, and developed a manual and a roadmap for the rollout of programme-based budgeting.

Data for evidence-based decision-making: UNICEF engaged with the National Institute of Statistics to advocate and provide technical assistance for the inclusion of the Early Childhood Development

Index Module and two internationally accepted modules on disability (Washington Group Short Set on Functioning, WG-SS; and Child Functioning Module, CFM) in the on-going Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). This will allow for an in-depth understanding of the prevalence of disabilities in the country and will enable the country to measure Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 4.2.1.

Technical support to the drafting of the 2024 Census questionnaire led to the inclusion of key questions related to WASH, social protection, albinism, child protection and disabilities.

Gender-transformative programming: Significant efforts were undertaken to strengthen gender programming across all outcome areas, with attention to Gender Action Plan (GAP) III priorities. In addition, the importance of capacity building on gender for civil society partners was prioritized given gaps identified in the 2022 Gender Programmatic Review. This included conducting a two-day capacity-building training for 32 youth and women-led CSOs, covering key topics such as gender-based violence, women's leadership, climate change, and employment. Additionally, a training session addressing gender-related barriers in accessing VAS was delivered to nutrition directors and technicians. UNICEF also collaborated closely with ministries in gender-transformative programming, which included active support for the National Programme to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage led by MASFAMU and the National Strategy for Vitamin A Supplementation led by the Ministry of Health. Through support to the Education section, a gender-lens was integrated across the national school regulations, guidelines and student-centred pedagogy and WASH in school manuals for teachers and school managers. Additionally, by looking into the allocation of female teachers across the country, the Teachers for All research aims to generate meaningful evidence to address gender inequities in learning outcomes.

Disability-inclusive programming: Beyond ensuring availability of adequate data on children with disabilities, UNICEF has been playing an important role in advocating for the inclusion of children with disabilities. A series of advocacy events, including visibility of girls and women living with disabilities, was launched on International Women's Day and successfully carried out throughout the year. UNICEF promoted initiatives that amplify the voices and participation of persons with disabilities, particularly women and girls. Meetings were organised between youth with disabilities and parliamentarians, and a consultation meeting facilitated between the Ministry of Economy and Planning and organizations supporting persons with disabilities for the development of a national policy document. UNICEF has positioned itself as a key convenor and thought leader, who is sought to provide technical assistance to the Government, including during the drafting of a national plan for inclusion. UNICEF also hired young persons with disabilities as interns throughout the year, and is taking steps to make the office more accessible.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF and ILO promoted the inaugural Social Protection Week as chair and co-chair of the Development Partners Group on Social Protection. The Social Protection Week was implemented with Government leadership and preceded by the third National Conference on Social Action. It will be promoted annually and aims to reinforce the continual need for coordination and improved social services delivery. The engagement between the International Training Centre of ILO and UNICEF resulted in three training events with each addressing specific needs of the Government and supported a more in-depth and contextualized understanding for the national institutions responsible for the social protection system. Through the training, UNICEF strengthened its partnerships with MASFAMU, the National Department of Social Action, the Institute for Local Development and with the World Bank, as the training offered opportunities to identify joint initiatives, clarify roles and deepen understanding of programmatic differences as well as similarities.

To address teenage pregnancy and child marriage, UNICEF and UNFPA jointly supported MASFAMU to launch a National Programme to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage on the International Day of the Girl. This was followed by the development of a National Strategy and

Plan of Action to address child marriage and teenage pregnancy, currently under review by a multi-sectorial platform. UNICEF also developed proposals with UNFPA to tap into global funding and combine the agencies' expertise in coordinated programming for adolescent girl, advancing the agenda of ending child marriage and addressing teenage pregnancy in Angola.

The joint United Nations training for government partners and civil society on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) was an important and efficient initiative, as most partners are common to United Nations agencies. UNICEF participated by sharing internal best practices, indicators and tools, and by dedicating staff to support the delivery of the joint PSEA training. UNICEF also provided important training on gender to both government partners and to youth and women-led CSOs. The training addressed knowledge gaps and promoted partnerships for gender transformative programming in alignment with the GAP III. The trained CSOs have developed an action plan to replicate gender capacity building in their respective organizations and are also part of community of practice where they will receive modules, resources, courses, and new learning opportunities going forward.

UNICEF Angola led dialogues with United Nations agencies to promote the establishment of a new gender working group (GWG) to support enhanced collaboration for gender programming and advocacy and monitor the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2024-2028) cross-cutting theme on gender equality and women's empowerment. The inter-agency GWG is now being established, with UNAIDS as chair, with plans for a joint work plan next year. The GWG will support collaborative action, shared knowledge, resources and good practices, and will be pivotal in advocacy efforts for gender equality in Angola.

Partnership with WHO and the World Bank in 2023 bolstered UNICEF's advocacy efforts for nutrition and influenced the Government of Angola to increase budget allocation for nutrition supplies.

Collaboration with key immunization stakeholders, including WHO, UNDP, USAID, World Bank and Gavi optimized support for the immunization programme in Angola. Action around sexual and reproductive health and rights, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV was implemented in collaboration with WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNDP through the United Nations Joint Technical Assessment platform and the Reproductive Health Technical Group.

UNICEF collaborated with the National Committees, particularly Japan for health system strengthening and child friendly schools, and the US for newborn care, education and immunization through the Latter-Day Saint Charities, and advocacy for improved primary health care through Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

ECHO further supported UNICEF's humanitarian response in 2023, notably for nutrition.

Additionally, UNICEF Angola received funds from the Republic of Korea for improving COVID-19 vaccine related infrastructure, and the UAE for conducting polio vaccination campaigns.

The Banco de Fomento Angola is an important local partner and supported UNICEF to provide integrated services in school and addressing malnutrition in selected provinces. Collaboration with UNITEL provided free SMS services for U-Report and free internet access to Internet of Good things. Civil society partners, including the Angolan Paediatric Society, and implementing partners CUAMM, ForAfrika, PanAfricare, People in Need and World Vision contributed to the joint efforts in the nutrition and WASH sectors to deliver capacity building and life-saving services in humanitarian settings. The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative also contributed by delivering mental health and psychosocial support to children in drought-affected schools and by mainstreaming interventions through curricula and teacher training. ADRA supported engagement with parliamentarians and decision makers for improving PF4C.

UNICEF facilitated SSC between Angola, Brazil and Mozambique. The SSC with Brazil focused on simplified sanitation for urban and peri-urban areas and brought new skills to Angolan institutions around human-centred and sustainable water, sanitation, hygiene and solid-waste solutions. It also yielded new approaches to complex urban sanitation issues. Fourteen Angolan institutions were convened by UNICEF for the first time, as all play a critical role for a successful implementation of the ongoing simplified sanitation pilot project.

The SSC with Mozambique facilitated the exchange of good practices between the Mozambican National Institute for Management and Disaster Risk Reduction and a multisectoral team from various government agencies including the Civil Protection and Fire Brigade Service, the National Directorate

for Public Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy and Planning, and the National Institute for Meteorology and Geophysics in Angola. The exchange visit led to a draft Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in reinforcing institutional capacity and preparedness for disaster risk reduction.

UNICEF also facilitated an SSC study mission to Mozambique for social protection, which highlighted the importance of effective coordination and provided examples of integrated social services and social protection programmes. It resulted in a renewed commitment from the Angolan institutions for the revision of social protection law and for securing a functioning multi-sectoral coordination mechanism at the national level to continue to support convergent and integrated social service delivery.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

There has been insufficient intersectoral coordination and communication between ministries (namely the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education) with regard to education sector planning and financing. For this reason, it is critical that UNICEF advocacy targets all key ministerial actors to optimize the impact. Support to strengthening inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms for sectoral planning and continued capacity building of Ministry of Education officials to plan, budget and design education programming should be two key areas for UNICEF intervention in the next country programme in order to leverage and/or increase the resources that the Government of Angola invests in the education sector. In 2023, the LEG, with UNICEF nominated as the Coordinating Agency, played an important coordination role, helping to enhance policy dialogue, resource mobilization, advocacy and the influence of policy decisions to transform education in Angola. In 2024, this role will expand because the LEG has approved the inclusion of the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the Ministry for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, UNHCR, the French Development Agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development, UNFPA and UNDP.

In the past, the Government of Angola has allocated minimal resources to address malnutrition, despite advocacy efforts from UNICEF to place it on top of the Government's agenda. In 2023, following the release of the Global Joint Malnutrition Estimates, a joint advocacy letter was sent by UNICEF, the World Bank and WHO to key nutrition-sensitive line ministers coupled with a timely nutrition advocacy event at the UNICEF premises held by the Angolan Paediatric Society. Nutrition training in Luanda also supported advocacy efforts for state budget allocations to procure therapeutic milk and ready-to-use therapeutic food. This demonstrated that joint advocacy efforts, combined with training and awareness raising, can lead to securing the necessary political will to increase the budget for addressing malnutrition.

For the first time, Angola integrated Vitamin A supplementation into the polio campaign by leveraging existing campaigns and infrastructure. UNICEF supported the Government of Angola to successfully reach over four million children with Vitamin A supplementation during the delivery of the polio vaccine for children under five, demonstrating the efficiency of integrated health interventions. Before the campaign, there were doubts about whether the add-on of Vitamin A supplementation would be detrimental to the overall operation of the polio campaign and impede the efforts of reaching children with the vaccine. However, the positive results showed that the integration of health and nutrition interventions yield better outcomes, and that this efficient and cost-effective approach should be considered for future campaigns.

UNICEF's advocacy with the National Parliament directly influenced both the 2023 and 2024 budget proposals. UNICEF facilitated a side-event during the 147th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the role of parliaments in ensuring effective public spending for children's rights. To increase budget literacy, the 'Citizens Budget – a document aimed at nurturing interest in the processes of establishing, discussing, and executing the State Budget – was developed and disseminated to high schools and universities. Parliament deputies showed great interest and important

lessons were learned through this process. For example, UNICEF needs to present its rapid analysis of the state budget proposal as early as possible to influence the final budget allocation decision. With a Memorandum of Understanding under development to formalize the engagement with the parliament, advocacy is expected to be carried out in a timely and streamlined manner to support Members of Parliament in their role to safeguard children's rights. Moreover, there is a huge demand, not only from students, but also from university professionals, to increase their engagement in public finance. This is an opportunity for future collaboration to increase the reach of UNICEF's key messages. Universities in Angola have a clear role when it comes to nurturing future professionals and UNICEF's engagement with them can help improve budget literacy with a wide reach.

UNICEF intensified its advocacy around the rights of young girls with disabilities. Starting with a dialogue with young girls with disabilities and the coalition of civil society organizations, UNICEF provided a platform to bring together these girls as rights-holders and to present their views and a charter of demands to parliamentarians and government officials, duty-bearers and legal experts. The government officials expressed their commitment to supporting these girls and acknowledging their rights. UNICEF initiated the use of Alt-text on X (formerly Twitter) and added sign language to videos to be more inclusive.

Investment in innovative approaches like the chatbot as part of the U-Report poll on mental health, showed encouraging results. Over 6,500 youth used the chatbot on topics to help understand and express their emotions and understand the signs for when they need help. Of these respondents, 65 per cent were male and 35 per cent were female. About half (48 per cent) were aged 15-24. Participating youth (U-Reporters) liked this platform as they could receive immediate responses to their questions. However, the limitation of this innovation is that it is dependent on internet availability and according to the latest DHS data (2015-2016), girls and women have less access to media, including mobile phones, which could be one reason for the lack of gender parity in U-Reporters.