

### Update on the context and situation of children

Congo is a stable democratic state, yet fragile. In 2019, Congo continued to maintain its peace, security and political stability based on constitutionalism and rule of law. The 2015 Congo's Constitution enshrines a wide range of civil rights. Congo ratified most of the international human rights conventions and treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child in October 1993. The country submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2010 and its last periodic report was submitted in November 2019.

Congo's Human Development Index is 0.606, a medium human development which ranks the country 154 out of 188 countries at global level and 8th out of 48 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. During 2019, the economy showed signs of modest growth likely to stabilise around 2 per cent, but this level remains too low to have an impact on poverty reduction according to IMF. A high debt burden in combination with the decline of the oil-based economy has seen the administration face liquidity problems in 2019. Structural reforms have allowed the approval by the Executive Board of the IMF of a three-year arrangement under its Extended Credit Facility (ECF) for US \$448.6 million, to restore macroeconomic stability and lay the foundations for higher and more inclusive growth. However, the first review of the programme in November 2019 from which depends the disbursement of the remaining amounts, showed that despite some progress, many commitments were not respected. As a result, the IMF postponed the second disbursement.

In December 2017, a peace agreement was signed after two years of civil unrest and a Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme has been established with the support of the UN and the European Union, however its implementation remains low. Congo remains an unequal country with some 35 per cent of the population living in poverty. In his speech of December 17, 2019 on the State of the Nation address, the country's President recognised that despite the efforts made to guarantee a minimum level of investment for the social sectors, public health spending remains low. Wide income disparities, expanding peri-urban population, unpaid retirement pensions and students grants, high rates of youth unemployment - first-time job seekers representing 79.4 per cent of the unemployed - and limited access to economic opportunities may fuel tensions in the country, particularly, in the Pool region. Worth noting is that Congo will hold its presidential elections in March 2021.

The CO supported the government to produce its Voluntary National Review (VNR) to track progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda. As a "custodian" agency for child-related data, UNICEF contributed with reliable baseline indicators on the social situation and ensured that the process was child-centred, gender-sensitive and focused on the most vulnerable to ensure that no-one is left behind. In addition, the CO contributed to building capacity of national partners by ensuring their participation to the Forum of the Francophone Network of Evaluation, so that they acquire technical skills required to effectively promote, strengthen and institutionalise evaluation in Congo.

Progress on SDGs towards children's rights realisation is ongoing. For example, progress towards SDG 3 on health and well-being is advancing at good pace. At national level, coverage of DTP3 increased from 75 to 79 per cent between 2018 and 2019, for OPV3 from 74 in 2018 to 78 per cent in 2019. The percentage of districts with a coverage of DTP3 of at least 80 per cent has increased from 42 per cent to 47 per cent. Progress has been achieved in attaining SDG 2 on nutrition. According to MICS 2014-15, 21 per cent of under-five children is stunted. A SMART survey is planned for 2020 to have a trend analysis. However, progress made in 2019 has helped redress the situation. For example, breastfeeding being a key priority for UNICEF Congo, with only 25 per cent of infants being breastfed within one hour after birth and 33 per cent of under-six-month old children exclusively breastfed (MICS 2014-15), recent data from the Regional Health Directorates shows that in 2019, 40 per cent of children under 6 months were exclusively breastfed in 2019. Also, a total of 771,583 children aged 6-59 months (89 per cent) received two doses of Vitamin A at the national level in 2019. This has been achieved thanks to strategic integrated efforts to Scaling Up Nutrition in Congo.

In 2019, school access indicators progressed towards achieving SDG4 on the quality of education. Although children aged 3 to 5 have limited access to pre-school education (36 per cent), primary education is available to all children aged 6 to 11 (96 per cent). Despite this progress, challenges persist in terms of school skills because only few students complete the primary education with required skills in both mathematics (41 per cent) and reading (21 per cent) according to the PASEC 2014, in terms of dropout because 14 per cent of children aged 12 to 17 are out of school and 29 per cent of children aged 12 to 14 are involved in economic activities. Also, protecting children and adolescents against violence is a major concern because 82 per cent of children aged 1 to 14 are victims of violent disciplinary practices in the communities.

Congo has engaged in eliminating open defecation by 2025 in line with SDGs 3 and 6. The current rate of open defecation (OD) is estimated at around 8 per cent. UNICEF supported Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) interventions to end OD are underway.

In 2019, in collaboration with key partners, UNICEF provided support to the country which continued to face recurrent

emergencies that have affected an estimated 112,000 children. Currently, more than 33,000 refugees in Likouala Region, 8,452 DRC's asylum-seekers in the Plateaux Region and 28,313 internally displaced people in the Pool Region are exposed to persistent humanitarian crises. The main recurring natural risks in the country are heavy rains and subsequent flooding. In 2019, 170,000 people in the northern regions situated along the Ubangi and Congo Rivers have been affected by unprecedented floods. This situation is likely to continue in 2020.

Capacity and resources were put in place to address these persisting risks while maintaining a focus on a humanitarian-development continuum to ensure that adequate capacity and resources are in place to enable emergency preparedness and response to emergencies while strengthening the system and building national capacities to prepare and respond to the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations.

### Major contributions and drivers of results

2019 was the last year of implementation of the country programme of cooperation 2014-19. During this year, the CO made a significant shift in its programme by setting-up the working bases for the new programme cycle 2020-2024, notably by promoting a life-cycle programming approach and by providing an integrated package of basic social services targeting specific groups of disadvantaged children. The CO continued its efforts to strengthen the multisectoral approaches for the five prioritised Key Results for Children.

2019 was also the year of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), where advocacy for universal access to quality services, resource leveraging for children, partnerships strengthening, particularly with the private sector, and the participation of children were strongly promoted throughout the year.

Despite a difficult context with limited national resources and numerous institutional challenges, the CO has seized new opportunities to accelerate progress towards the SDGs and advocate for the rights of children, especially the most disadvantaged, in the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan, focusing particularly on the KRCs which are a common agenda for children in WCAR, while ensuring that adequate capacity and resources to enable emergency preparedness and effective response to emergencies are in place.

**Goal area 1: Every child survives and thrives**, aims to provide an essential package of quality, high-impact integrated services to children and pregnant women in the targeted most vulnerable areas. In 2019 UNICEF Congo used a series of strategies including system-strengthening, capacity development, communication for development and evidence generation to help the country achieve these results.

**Key Result for Children 1 (immunisation)** aims to ensure that 90 per cent of children 0-11 months are vaccinated with 3 doses of DTP-containing/Penta vaccine nationally. This Key Result for Children is on track. Since 2017 there has been a 10 per cent increase coverage and the CO expects to close the 10 per cent gap remaining to reach the 90 per cent target by the end of 2021.

In 2019, there were joint and strategic efforts of UNICEF, WHO, GAVI and Government to strengthen routine immunisation through the support to the cold chain, vaccine supply and the community outreach and sensitisation in low performing districts. At national level, coverage of DTP3 increased from 75 to 79 between 2018 and 2019, for OPV3 from 74 in 2018 to 78 per cent in 2019. Furthermore, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to accelerate routine immunisation in three low performing regions (Cuvette-Ouest, Likouala and Pool) and in the two major cities (Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire). The Likouala region is host to 25 per cent of the total of indigenous population in the country and these interventions will contribute to leaving no one behind and reduce the 20 per cent between vaccination rates of the Bantou population and that of the indigenous populations. These actions made it possible to catch up 81 per cent of the missed children in DTP 3, which increased the vaccination coverage from 77 per cent in 2018 to 85 per cent in 2019 in Pointe-Noire, and from 63 per cent in 2018 to 77 per cent in 2019 in the Pool region and from 42 per cent to 47 per cent in the Likouala region.

To achieve this, the CO supported Congo to have access to the pre-financing mechanism of the Vaccine Independence Initiative (VII). This mechanism has allowed Congo to leverage its financial resources for vaccines and other health commodities amidst the financial and economic crisis. Congo also used VII mechanism to purchase the measles-rubella combined vaccine for the national campaign in March 2019 as well as for routine immunisation. The VII mechanism has contributed to prevent recurrent stockouts of essential drugs and vaccines and provided efficiency gains through effective and quality procurement services. Importantly, VII has helped the country to introduce measles and rubeola vaccines into routine immunisation in accordance with the 2011-2020 global action plan for vaccines.

**Key Result for Children 2 (nutrition)** aims to ensure that at least 90 per cent of U5 children, pregnant & lactating women in Congo have good nutritional status. To this end, UNICEF Congo implemented a two-prong strategy. First, as part of the multisectoral approach with Key Result for Children 1, to ensure that children vaccinated during campaigns and

routine immunisation received vitamin A and were dewormed. This Key Result for Children is on track.

In 2019, 771,583 (89 per cent) of children aged 6-59 months received two doses of Vitamin A supplement and 772,204 (89 per cent) were dewormed through UNICEF supported interventions. The second strategy has been to strengthen Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) in all 12 regions. As a result, the number of UNICEF-supported health districts providing high impact interventions on nutrition including Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) increased from 29 in 2018 to 33 in 2019. As part of World breastfeeding week, 171,472 pregnant and lactating women in seven regions were reached with behaviour change communication activities by UNICEF partners on nutrition. According to the data from the Regional Health Directorates, 40 per cent of children under 6 months received during growth monitoring sessions in health facilities were exclusively breastfed in 2019.

**The CO conducted high-level advocacy for nutrition**, in partnership with the National Assembly, FAO and WFP. UNICEF supported a regional forum for parliamentarians of Central Africa on "*Food and nutritional security*". The forum contributed to creating positive change from decision-makers and parliamentarians committed to advocate for an increase of budgetary allocations dedicated to nutritional and food security. In addition, the CO continued to provide technical support to the Congo chapter of the Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) movement including the elaboration of the National Plan to fight Malnutrition 2019-2021 and the establishment of the Private Sector Network for Nutrition in Congo.

**Regarding Maternal and new born health**, UNICEF Congo, in partnership with WHO and UNFPA, supported the development of Standards and procedures in maternal, newborn and child health and strengthened the capacities of 135 midwives in two regions on neonatal resuscitation and essential new-born care. The CO supported the rehabilitation of three health centres in three regions (Bouenza, Kouilou and Plateaux) and equipped 48 health centres in seven regions (Brazzaville, Bouenza, Kouilou, Likouala, Plateaux, Pointe-Noire, Pool) with medical equipment. As a result, 23,326 live births were delivered in UNICEF-supported health facilities, while great improvements for dignified and safe deliveries from mothers were noticeable. These joint efforts will be pursued in 2020 through collective contributions within the UN reform platform.

**In so far as HIV and AIDS**, priority was given to relaunching of PMTCT programme that was interrupted since 2015, due to recurrent stock-outs of screening tests and ARVs. To this end, the country took advantage of the VII mechanism to acquire tests, ARVs and laboratory reagents for biological monitoring including early diagnosis. 52 health facilities in the two major cities, Pointe Noire and Brazzaville permitted the relaunch PMTCT in November 2019. Regarding HIV among adolescents, according to the Spectrum 2019, new infections among adolescents represented 13 per cent of new infections and girls are ten times more infected than boys. To address this situation, in partnership with WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, and civil society organisations, UNICEF CO supported the development of the national strategic plan for HIV prevention among adolescents and young people which aims to put the country back on the road to eliminating the HIV epidemic by 2030. The strategic plan will support the development of Congo's submission to the Global Fund in January 2020.

**Goal area 2: Every child learns:** Through this goal area, the CO aims to ensure that by 2019, 100 per cent of girls and boys of primary school and 70 per cent of girls and boys of first cycle of secondary school, particularly the most vulnerable, achieve quality and inclusive education, and 100 per cent of adolescents' girls and boys who are out of formal school benefit from alternative education.

In the framework of **Key Result for Children 4 (Improved learning outcomes)**, and in support to pillar one of the country's National Development Plan, UNICEF CO has set a target of 75 per cent success rate in the target primary school. This Key Result for Children is on track.

In collaboration with UNESCO, the World Bank, and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), among others, UNICEF, as coordination agency of the education partners group, facilitated the review of the 2015-2025 Education Sector Strategy. The review resulted in a transition plan for the implementation of the Education Sector Strategy which will be developed and financed by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

UNICEF supported the practice of curative pedagogy to improve the quality of the results of the end-of-cycle examinations for primary education in which an elementary primary school certificate is awarded to eligible students. 153 teachers were provided with training including on school management and 100 teachers on the practice of curative pedagogy in French and Mathematics in the targeted regions of Lekoumou, Niari and Plateaux. As a result, the average student success rate in UNICEF supported schools has increased from 75 per cent in 2018 to 81.53 per cent (95 per cent girls and 72 per cent boys). In addition, the CO supported the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to conduct a national large-scale skills assessment of students entering primary education as part of the PASEC initiative. Results will be available in 2020.

UNICEF provided financial and technical assistance to improve equitable access to basic education. As a result, 10,155 vulnerable and disadvantaged children (4,805 girls and 5,350 boys) including 33 hearing-impaired children in the Niari region and 10,122 indigenous children (4,597 girls and 5,327 boys) in the Lekoumou, Likouala and Sangha regions were

enrolled in school. The number of indigenous children enrolled in ORA schools increased from 7,768 in 2018 to 7,940 in 2019 and the school completion rate increased from 75 per cent in 2018 to 82 per cent in 2019. UNICEF further supported a school for the hearing-impaired with equipment and resources for its operations. 10 educators were trained and acquired the necessary skills to support and teach children without and with disabilities within an inclusive school environment.

As part of its knowledge generation strategy and the multisectoral approach to implementing Key Results for Children 4 (Quality education) and 5 (Violence), the CO conducted a national study on gender-based violence and online violence in schools in Congo, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Telecommunications. This study analyses the impact of gender-based violence on the education system, especially on girls and suggests ways of addressing violence in schools and online. The country programme 2020-2024 will build on key recommendations of this study and other evidence to support evidence-based advocacy for an enabling environment free from violence, exploitation and abuse.

**Goal area 3: Every child is protected from violence and exploitation:** The focus made in **Key Result for Children 5 (Protection of children from violence)** aims at ensuring that all boys and girls from at risk areas, including in emergency settings, are better protected against violence, trafficking, abuse and exploitation. This Key Result for Children is on track.

In 2019, the CO continued to provide its support to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action for the implementation of the Integrated Child Protection System in the regions of Brazzaville (urban model) and Lekoumou (rural model). In the Brazzaville region, 10 new child protection committees, including 1 district child protection coordination committee and 9 child protection neighbourhood committees, were created. 81 members of neighbourhood child protection committees were trained on the case management for the identification of children without birth certificates, out of school children, unvaccinated children, abandoned children and children victims of rape and abuse. As a result, 883 children without a birth certificate, 12 out-of-school children, 1 child raped, and 78 children victims of abuse have been identified and referred to the relevant service providers to receive medical, educational, psycho-social and legal care. This experience revealed that ownership by local authorities of the process -especially mayors- is crucial to achieving meaningful results.

Regarding interventions aiming at improving the access to quality services by indigenous people in the Lékoumou region, 1,368 indigenous out of school children (693 girls and 675 boys) of school age have been identified, provided with school kits, and enrolled in primary school; among 7,155 indigenous children without birth certificates (3,625 girls and 3,530 boys) identified, 5,040 children (2,553 girls and 2,487 boys) were provided with one.

**Goal area 4: Every child lives in a safe and clean environment:** In 2019, the WASH component worked on strengthening the national system with a view to improve access of water and sanitation in urban and rural areas by the end of 2021. This Key Result for Children is on track.

In the framework of **Key Result for Children 8 (Ending open defecation)**, UNICEF supported the community-led total sanitation (CLTS) approach in two targeted regions (Plateaux and Lékoumou). Out of 100 triggered villages, 89 have been certified Open Defecation Free (ODF). These ODF-certified villages cover a population of 40,761 people, including 8,464 children and 21,772 women. Furthermore, 8,100 additional people were provided with access to safe drinking water as a result of UNICEF-supported interventions including the rehabilitation and construction of 19 water points in the Lekoumou and Plateaux regions and the establishment of 18 water point management committees. In addition, 650 students in four schools benefitted from the construction of thirteen (13) separate latrines, and 550 people benefitted from 11 latrines built in 11 health facilities.

The CO provided technical and financial support to improve the enabling environment through the organisation of an international workshop on water point management in rural and urban settings and which have been considered in the draft version of the national water and sanitation policy, developed with UNICEF support and which is expected to be validated in early 2020.

**Goal area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life:** The aim is to ensure that, by 2019, girls and boys in the most vulnerable areas are benefitting from inclusive social policies and increased resources. In 2019, the CO focused its interventions on evidence-based advocacy, Public Finance for Children (PF4C) and adolescent's participation.

Regarding PF4C, the CO continued to support financial analysis to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of budgetary allocations and spending. Following the online publication by the Ministry of Finance of the 2020 budget, the CO produced a budget brief for the Health, Education and Social Affairs sectors with a view to advocate with decision-makers to prioritise resources for the social sector. The budget brief analysis was shared with the chairpersons of Economy and Finance; Health, Social Affairs, Family and Gender; and Education Portfolio Committees of the National Assembly.

Regarding evidence-based advocacy, the CO launched the 'Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Congo-2018' on the Day of the African Child, June 16, officiated by the Prime Minister. This was an opportunity to mobilise alliances and

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to call on Government to prioritise resources to accelerate the realisation of children's rights in Congo.

**Emergency situations:** UNICEF provided a timely response to critical humanitarian needs of most vulnerable groups to more 28,313 IDPs in the Pool region, 33,000 refugees from CAR and DRC in Likouala region and 8,452 DRC asylum-seekers in the Plateaux region with the provision of essential primary health care services.

Regarding **health**, 15,057 children and 4,941 pregnant and lactating women were reached with emergency primary health care services. As part of the **nutrition** response, 2,377 children with SAM received treatment through therapeutic programmes and 89 per cent discharged as cured. On **WASH** component, 22,618 people, including 10,624 children, had access to safe drinking water through the rehabilitation, and construction of improved water facilities; 16,060 vulnerable people, including 8,351 girls and women had access to appropriate sanitation facilities through the construction of household and multi-family toilets; and 10,224 people at high risk of waterborne diseases regarding key hygiene practices through a partnership with local NGOs.

UNICEF supported the MoH to implement the Ebola national preparedness plan through production of communication materials and training of 117 frontline workers in the Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire regions. 26,771 people were reached with communication messages on preventing Ebola.

As part of **education in emergencies**, the CO provided 10,508 children (4,970 girls and 5,538 boys) with individual education learning materials to enable them to fulfil their right to education. Those children included 7,508 displaced children (3,508 girls and 4,000 boys) of the Pool region and 3,000 refugee children (1,462 girls and 1,538 boys) of the Likouala region. 6,766 students (3,210 girls and 3,556 boys) completed the school year, with a completion rate of 64 per cent (65 per cent girls and 64 per cent boys) and the success of 74 per cent (75 per cent girls and 74 per cent boys).

UNICEF provided a package of **protection services** which included health, social, legal and psychosocial support to 1,643 children (911 girls and 732 boys). Assistance was also provided to prevent violent disciplinary practices to 1,201 children in Child Friendly Spaces in the Likouala region where 143 refugee children (71 girls and 72 boys) who received psychosocial support and in the Pool region where the same support benefitted to 1,058 displaced children (606 girls and 452 boys). UNICEF supported interventions in emergencies were made possible with financial contributions from the Government of Japan, USAID Food for Peace project, UNICEF France and CERF.

To ensure **humanitarian-development continuum** and sustainability of interventions, UNICEF supported the creation of a coordination mechanism that provides an integrated response for refugees in the Likouala region. This coordination mechanism has enabled effective monitoring of actions, systematic collection of complaints and recommendations, greater ownership of interventions by affected populations and local communities, thus reinforcing a longer-term response capacity and resilience.

### **Normative Principles including the Gender Dimension and cross-cutting issues**

In 2019, UNICEF, through an inclusive process, has developed in consultation with the Government, the UN Country Team and development partners, its CPD 2020-2024 which was approved by the board in June. The CPD, guided by the UNICEF Strategic Plan (and its common chapter) and the Gender Action Plan, is aligned to the UNDAF and National Development Plan 2018-2022, both informed by the SDGs and African Union Agenda 2063.

The UN Reform and its implementation was launched in January 2019 in Congo, while a new UNDAF 2020-2024 was signed in March 2019.

UNICEF Congo strengthened its oversight over HACT and of financial transactions. The office conducted 16 spot checks out of 16 planned, seventeen micro-assessments, six audits and 46 programmatic visits out of 39 planned. All Audit Reports and Micro-Assessment activities were uploaded in the eTools. The CO had the on-site internal audit in November 2019. The Summary of Observations report has been issued and a management action plan is currently being developed for implementation in 2020.

Congo CO rolled out the protocol on prevention of Sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). All staff completed the compulsory training, a costed workplan was finalised and shared with the regional office. A PSEA focal point has been appointed and partners sensitisation carried out in 2019. The CO will further engage on PSEA in partnership with other UN agencies in 2020.

Regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, UNICEF together with UNDP and UNFPA, and in line with the Common Chapter, has supported the Government of Congo to implement the universal periodic review (UPR) recommendations, adopted in March 2019 to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through advocacy and policy dialogue for the ratification of international legal instruments and their harmonisation with the national



legal framework for the promotion of gender equality.

Regarding shared-value partnerships, UNICEF Congo conducted a mapping exercise to identify opportunities of partnering with the private sector. After preliminary contacts with the heads of a dozen companies, the office organised a series of sensitisation activities on children's rights, including an advocacy event in Pointe-Noire with the participation of 40 business leaders. Participating at this critical alliance building ceremony, were the Minister of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action; the US Ambassador to Congo; Ms Yvonne Chaka Chaka, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and UN agencies. This enabled to elevate the advocacy messages and to encourage private sector in Congo to make greater social investments in-country and to support and invest in children's rights realisation.

### Lessons Learned and Innovations

The following are key reflections on the lessons learned and innovations which emanated in 2019. One of the major constraints for the effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and national policies is lack of an accurate picture of children's vulnerability status and access to their rights owing to the shortage of recent and reliable data. This is in part due to the weakness of the legal framework governing statistics in Congo. The lesson learned is that the UN system and other development partners must increase their efforts to support the country in the strengthening of national statistical systems and to promote a culture of data driven decision making. For UNICEF, this means continuing to provide high-quality disaggregated data for children through the support to national surveys such as MICS, and to strengthen and improve the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, by promoting stronger evaluation culture and by producing robust evaluations on child-related programmes which are needed to support SDGs monitoring and reporting.

Regarding innovation, child participation was at the heart of interventions during 2019. There was the establishment of mechanisms that elevated and amplified adolescents' voices, ideas and creativity. As part of the celebration of the CRC@30, the CO organised a photography workshop that allowed a group of 20 Congolese children and adolescents, girls and boys, from six different regions and different backgrounds, to express their voices through photography. These children are now youth bloggers who take pictures and write stories on children's rights and during UNICEF's advocacy events. A contest to identify youth bloggers has also been set-up which calls for adolescents and young children to send pictures and information on a different issue every month. Together with UNDP, the CO embarked on a series of strategic discussions on Generation Unlimited bringing Young people together. As a result, the 'Youth Challenge' initiative was launched in December 2019.

Furthermore, CO continued to invest in staff career development; 74 per cent of staff members completed their individual training and all staff completed mandatory training. Group training was held on career development (through professional Coaching and Workshops) to support managers and staff in engaging in a smooth Change Management and transition into the new country programme 2020-2024.

As part of the 'Duty of Care' principles to boost the staff morale and improve working conditions, the funding and technical support from the Regional Office and the DFAM<sup>[1]</sup> (through AMS<sup>[2]</sup>) was highly appreciated and considered as the significant factor of the success of the renovation of UNICEF Congo CO for inclusiveness and accessibility of its premises.

The office reduced the carbon footprint, which was confirmed by the Energy and Water audit consumption done through a Regional Consultant in December 2019. The increase of the bandwidth through local Internet Service Providers has boosted the advocacy for the use of SharePoint and the cloud for data management, including archiving. In 2019, the use of those systems increased among the staff.

**Going forward**, the country office will capitalise on emerging opportunities that can help to reach the furthest behind children and accelerate results at scale in collaboration with the private sector. The CO will work to harness the power, reach and influence business actors on behalf of children with a view to support UNICEF's programmatic activities and reach the most disadvantaged communities by providing them with access to services and key information.

In addition, UNICEF will continue to advocate for 'value for money and improved budgeting for children' including supporting the Health Ministry to make good use of the VII platform to procure vaccines and health commodities, thus improving efficiency gains and reducing costs.

UNICEF Congo will strategically sustain the gains achieved in 2019 in the area of 'Duty of Care' and management excellence, PF4C, data for children, violence against children, resource leveraging and mobilization, into our 2020 AMPs. As the 2020 will be the first year of the new country programme cycle 2020-2024, the CO will explore new avenues such as those under PF4C, including poverty analysis and measurement, as a tool for reducing inequality and poverty in Congo. A greater focus on innovations through partnership building, will be central to strategic UNICEF supported interventions in 2020.

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[\[1\]](#) Division of Financial Management

[\[2\]](#) Administration and Management Services