

BUILDING BACK BETTER FOR SENEGAL'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH

UNICEF SENEGAL ANNUAL RESULTS FOR CHILDREN 2021



BUILDING BACK BETTER

FOR SENEGAL'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH



FOREWORD



While the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact dominated our lives throughout 2021, this human tragedy also equipped us with a new resolve to help rebuild communities, strengthen resilience and ensure that the rights of children are fulfilled, no matter the circumstances. A year ago, we were cautiously optimistic... and a year later, we remain so. Despite how uncertain the world is, we remain certain about our objectives, principles and values in a rapidly changing world.

This annual report showcases the results we were able to achieve for children during this challenging year, and the many ways in which we supported the national COVID-19 response while safeguarding the continuity of key social services in Senegal.

Ensuring safe, fair, and widespread immunization were key to curb the pandemic and advance recovery: we supported country's access to COVID-19 vaccines, through the COVAX facility. We focused our efforts on a number of issues that have emerged with heightened relevance. Among these are equitable access to vaccines, tackling the learning crisis with greater investment, and bringing an end to the neglect, abuse and violence against children that drive poor life outcomes.

The precious lesson of 2021 is that creativity tends to thrive in highly constrained environments: this is when magic happens and new ways of partnering and engaging flourish. UNICEF took steps in fostering the role of adolescents and youth as actors of change. To expand opportunities for adolescents to participate meaningfully in their communities, we have empowered them to actively engage and voice their views and opinions.

Also, we will continue strengthening partnerships, including with international financing institutions to support upstream advocacy on priority spending in social sectors, and accelerating the implementation of innovative and multisectoral approaches, working closely with the Government of Senegal. Our Business for results roadmap developed in 2021 will be key to broaden our pool of partners and advocates for child rights and access innovations.

2021 has been a year of many challenges and opportunities. We delivered great results despite the extraordinary circumstances and we have full confidence we will make 2022 even greater.

We look forward to working with all our partners, communities and families to make Senegal a country where children and adolescents can thrive and become their best selves.

As we reimagine a safer, fairer and better world for every child, we invite you to seize the moment and work with us to rapidly accelerate action for children where it matters most.

Sincerely,

Silvia Danailov
UNICEF Representative in Senegal

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2021 Context Highlights

Economic growth

5%

GDP Economic growth compared to 1.5% in 2020

37.8%

Poverty rate compared to 42.8% in 2020

Covid-19

92%

increased cases in 2021

75%

of the total doses for Senegal via the COVAX initiative

11%

of the adult population fully vaccinated

Health

+90%

immunization coverage rate for the main routine antigens



2.6 millions

children vaccinated against polio



Nutrition

17.9%

of children under 5 are stunted



4.2 million

people are food insecure

14%

rise in admissions of children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM)



Senegal committed to fully funding the Ministries' Nutrition Sector Action Plans

Water, sanitation and hygiene

10%

Decrease in open defecation compared to 11.3% in 2020

Education

83.8%

gross enrolment rate at primary level compared to 86.4% in 2020



64.9%

primary school completion rate compared to 59.8% in 2020

41.9%

lower secondary completion rate compared to 35.2% in 2020

20+%

of Senegal's budget allocated to Education sector

Child protection

15.000

estimated girls aged 15–17 victims of sexual violence

78.7%

children under 5 have a birth certificate

Climate

22nd

in the world (Children's Climate Risk Index)

Youth

1/3

of the population aged 10–24



Building back better for children and youth

Despite how uncertain the world is, we remain certain about our objectives, principles and values in a rapidly changing world

As COVID-19 continued to spread in Senegal, new variants emerged resulting in a 192% increase in cases, with a cumulative fatality rate of 2.5% in 2021. However, the pandemic response witnessed a breakthrough when vaccines were introduced early in the year, thanks mainly to the COVAX initiative and its partners that provided 75% of the total number of doses for Senegal in 2021. A nationwide vaccination campaign enabled close to 11% of the adult population (18 years and older) to be fully immunized.

A recovery in economic activity was noted, with an estimated GDP growth of 5% in 2021 compared to 1.5% in 2020. Inflation was kept under control at 2.2% in 2021. The latest government poverty report (2021) revealed that the incidence of overall poverty has decreased from 42.8% in 2011 to 37.8%, representing a drop of 5 percentage points. However, inequality has not changed over the past decade (the Gini Index was 0.351 in 2019 compared to 0.356 in 2011) and is growing in urban areas. Children continue to bear the brunt of poverty.

Moreover, in March 2021, mass protests in major cities revealed social dissatisfaction, particularly from youth and populations affected by the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. This situation led to a nationwide debate on youth employment, culminating in a Presidential Council meeting in which UNICEF represented all development partners. This process resulted in the adoption of an Emergency Programme for Socio-Economic Integration and Youth Employment and a focus on defining a National Youth Agenda, an initiative at the heart of UNICEF support to the government throughout 2021. More than one third of Senegal's population is between the ages of 10-24. Harnessing this demographic dividend can transform the social, economic, and political destinies of the country.

In anticipation of the start of oil and gas production in 2023, the government adopted a draft law on the distribution and management of revenues from the exploitation of hydrocarbons. This law will strengthen the country's fiscal space for greater investment in human capital and requires continuous attention in order to maximize the social dividend for children and the poorest.

A 2021 UNICEF-supported global analysis on the Children's Climate Risk Index showed that children living in Senegal are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, with the country ranked 22nd in the world. The overall increased security risk in the Sahel region warranted a closer monitoring of its potential impact, particularly in the border areas. Renewed efforts to tackle climate change through youth engagement and address the impact on children's health, as well as youth dialogue and initiatives in the context of the Sahel sub-region, were pursued through UNICEF advocacy and action.

In the health sector, the resumption of services in the second half of 2020 was enhanced in 2021, making it possible to achieve an immunization coverage rate above 90% for the main routine antigens, in contrast to the first half of 2020, when vaccine coverage dropped from 92% to 85% for measles/rubella, for example, due to decreased use of health services.

As a result of strengthened disease surveillance in the context of COVID-19, small-scale measles outbreaks were detected and contained through an immunization campaign in November 2021 targeting children aged 9–59 months. The country declared a polio emergency in April 2021 with cases of the cVDPV2 paralytic form reported. With the support from global polio partners and in close harmonization with neighboring countries, Senegal implemented a countrywide oral vaccine campaign in December that successfully achieved a 95.1% coverage rate.

Progress to reduce stunting, which stood at 17.9% in 2020, continues to be fragile due to COVID-19. However, 2021 saw a significant resumption of community-based nutrition programmes, including growth monitoring and micronutrient supplementation. This led to a 14% rise in admissions of children with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and a doubling of Vitamin A supplementation between 2019 and 2021. In addition, at the Tokyo International Summit on Nutrition for Growth in 2021, Senegal committed to fully funding the Ministries' Nutrition Sector Action Plans and increasing maternity leave from three to six months to support exclusive breastfeeding.

In water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), drawing on the strong community commitment induced by the response to COVID-19, the implementation of the expanded Community-Led Total Sanitation paved the way for a reduction in the open defecation rate from 11.3% in 2020 to around 10% in 2021. If maintained over the next six years, this positive trend will contribute to achieving the objective of an Open Defecation Free Senegal by 2030.

As an immediate response to the post-COVID-19 context, the government prioritized safe school re-opening, catching up on learning loss and preventing dropouts. All public schools were provided with essential hygiene equipment and remedial education interventions were implemented, which contributed to reducing learning loss among vulnerable learners by nearly half. Initiatives for school reintegration and alternative education programmes targeting out-of-school children and young people were also accelerated.

Despite significant improvements in the education system's performance regarding transition to secondary school, including for girls, and primary and lower secondary completion, the gross primary enrollment rate declined sharply in 2021 (by more than three percentage points, to 83.8% from 86.4% in 2020). This trend suggests a significant increase in out-of-school children compared to previous years. It reflects the growing challenges the education system faces in meeting the demand for education in a context of high population growth. The urgency to further "reimagine education" remains a priority and has, throughout 2021, gained increased recognition in the national debate.

Violence against children, in particular sexual violence, continues to be a major challenge in Senegal, with an estimated number of about 15,000 girls aged 15–17 victims of sexual violence. Positively, the government undertook measures to systematize monitoring and detection of violence through the education and health systems. However, there was no progress in the adoption of a national Children's Code that will address the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child long-standing recommendations on strengthening the legal protection framework for children.

NEW CONTEXT, NEW FOCUS

A mid-term review of the current UNICEF country programme (2019–2023) assessed multisectoral actions to address chronic malnutrition and accelerate adolescent and youth programming. A comprehensive evaluation of UNICEF Senegal's COVID-19 response and preparedness and response capacity for future crises informed the review. In addition, a national consultation with adolescents and youth gathered their views on UNICEF programmes and priorities. Recommendations were also made to accelerate key results for children through greater focus on knowledge management, risk-informed programming, decentralized multisectoral programming, and public finance for children. Increased public-private partnerships and the pursuit of the Business for Results agenda were also recommended for scaling up UNICEF programmes.



Every child survives and thrives

A crucial window of opportunity to strengthen health systems and reimagine health for every child in Senegal.



In 2021, UNICEF supported systems strengthening and community capacity development in the health and nutrition sectors, implemented with strategic and operational partners including WHO, World Bank, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Mastercard Foundation, Gavi, Japan, France, and Canada.

STRENGTHENING THE COLD CHAIN

The introduction of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen the health system through the cold chain. With UNICEF support, Senegal's cold chain capacity was reinforced to cope with a large increase in vaccine volume by providing five ultra-efficient refrigerators, 40m³ of mixed cold room, 270 refrigerators, and 3,500 vaccine carriers for passive cold chain units. At the same time, optimal continuity of equitable access to routine immunization was ensured, with high coverage rates (90% Penta3) and optimal campaign coverage (90% for measles-rubella and 95.1% for polio). This kept the country on track towards achievement of key results in immunization for the second consecutive year.

INNOVATING FOR CHILD'S SURVIVAL

The Scaling Pneumonia Response INnovaTions (SPRINT) witnessed significant progress in increasing Senegal's ability to provide life-saving oxygen therapy, especially in remote rural communities. With UNICEF support, 500 oxygen concentrators and accessories and seven oxygen production plants were purchased for health facilities in UNICEF priority regions. The SPRINT initiative relied on pneumonia as an entry point but also provided critical care to more than 1,000 patients, including newborns suffering from neonatal complications.

UNICEF launched an initiative to address air pollution in Dakar's schools. An asthma prevalence study revealed a high prevalence (18.4%) amongst middle-school children. UNICEF subsequently initiated a programme to protect children from the health effects of air pollution. The engagement on climate change and system resilience was identified as a key pillar to accelerate the UNICEF Child Survival and Development programme.

TACKLING CHILD MALNUTRITION

UNICEF and partners' advocacy to increase domestic financing for the prevention of stunting resulted in the country's pledge, at the Nutrition for Growth summit in Tokyo, to increase funding for the Multisectoral Strategic Plan for Nutrition to US\$70 million per year (15% of which comes from innovative financing). The advocacy also resulted in financial and technical commitments from the private sector to produce and market healthy and nutritious food accessible to the whole population and extend maternity leave from three to six months to assist mothers in exclusive breastfeeding. A strategic partnership with the World Bank supports the investment in sustainable funding for maternal and child health and nutrition programmes, including procurement of nutrition supplies for four years (ISMEA project).

Service provider capacity was strengthened to manage SAM cases, with a focus on stock management, the continuous availability of nutritional inputs, and

the resumption of on-site supervision and coaching. In addition, community-level treatment of SAM was implemented in nine districts in partnership with Helen Keller International and Action Against Hunger. These efforts resulted in an increase of 14% in new admissions from 27,459 in 2020 to 32,223 in 2021, as well as a decrease in the dropout rate from 20% in 2020 to 17.5% in 2021, and an excellent cure rate of 80%. For Vitamin A supplementation, the number of children who received two doses of Vitamin A increased from 723,670 in the first semester of 2019 compared to 1,413,624 under five children, almost twice, for the same period in 2021.

CLEAN, HEALTHY, AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS

UNICEF prioritized strengthening and scaling up institutional capacity to address the heightened WASH and infection prevention and control (IPC) needs due to COVID-19. As a result, 968 hygiene and health workers and 2,755 community volunteers (60% female) were trained on IPC; 4,560 public handwashing stations were installed in health care and other public facilities. In total, an estimated number of 203,520 children have access to WASH interventions, more than what was planned.

The UNICEF-supported community response to COVID-19 reached 1,572,535 people (896,345 women and 676,190 men, including 7,076 people with disabilities) with information on hygiene measures to stop the spread of the infectious disease. This was a 40% increase in the total population reached compared to 2020 and contributed to better community ownership of the pandemic response.

Strong commitment and action also helped to expedite the implementation of the Community-Led Total Sanitation programme. A total of 870 new villages were triggered, including 757 villages achieving open defecation free status and helping to advance progress on key results for children. These expanded interventions improved access to healthy living environments for 392,004 people, including children and women.

Young entrepreneurs developed 17 prototypes for handwashing stations through an innovative public-private entrepreneurship initiative supported by the MasterCard Foundation. Two prototypes were awarded the production of 6,000 devices for distribution to households and public settings.





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FEATURE STORY

I got vaccinated not just for myself but for my family

Bourama Manka, 43

Early in the morning, Bourama Manka, 43, walked into the mass vaccination site in Marsassoum, Casamance, in southern Senegal, to get the COVID-19 vaccine. He was eager to receive the vaccine and finally protect himself and the ones he loves from the potentially devastating effects of the coronavirus.

“Like many, I have been watching the news about COVID-19 in Senegal and internationally and looking forward to a reprieve, which it seems will only come about with a vaccine” says Bourama Manka, 43, from the city of Marsassoum in Casamance, southern Senegal.

“Vaccines are a normal part of how I look after my health and the health of my kids. I understand that every medical intervention carries risk, but on balance, the benefits of vaccines far outweigh the risks for me and my family” he explained.

As the COVID-19 vaccination program is implemented across the country, health agents are trying new and creative ways to vaccinate their communities. The mass vaccination site set up in the city of Marsassoum helped the health workers reach people who have experienced barriers in vaccine access and distribute life-saving shots more equitably and conveniently across the city.

Senegal recognized very early on that access to COVID-19 vaccines and a successful deployment could potentially reduce COVID-19 morbidity and mortality. These motivated authorities to work around the clock to reach the maximum of people.

“When I was called in, the doctor asked a couple more questions to confirm my understanding of the risks and benefits of the vaccine, then the nurse gave me the jab and I was sent back to wait for 15 minutes of observation” Bourama said.

“I got vaccinated because the coronavirus is a very dangerous disease that has wreaked havoc in the world. If you have been vaccinated, you are better protected. I know people who had the coronavirus and were very sick. Now I’m glad I did, I feel safer. For myself and for my family” he said.



Every child learns

*Even before the pandemic, the most marginalized children were being left behind. As the pandemic enters its third year, we can't afford to go back to "normal."
We need a new normal.*



COVID-19 profoundly impacted educational access and learning in Senegal. As a lead agency for the basic education sector, UNICEF consolidated dialogue and coordination between the Ministry of Education and development partners in the immediate post-pandemic response. It prioritized safe school reopening, learning loss catch-up, and prevention of dropout while continuing to scale up ongoing and innovative school reinsertion and skills development models for out-of-school children and adolescents.

SAFE SCHOOL REOPENING

Safe school reopening was supported by upgrading 7,067 educational institutions, which received essential supplies, including handwashing units and hygiene kits secured mainly through Global Partnership for Education emergency funding. Of these, 1,159 facilities were supported to improve their capacities and learning environment as part of the national back-to-school campaign. About 1.6 million learners were able to learn in more conducive environments as a result of UNICEF's support.

STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS' CAPACITIES

A total of 7,283 teachers and supervisors benefited from UNICEF support to capacity development in remedial education, multigrade management, gender, disability inclusion, and digital education. Remediation interventions were reinforced during school holidays, benefiting about 5,555 primary school learners (57.5% girls). These sessions reduced learning gaps on average by half, with about 80% of learners performing at desired levels in literacy and numeracy by the end of the programme. A total of 619 pupils (299 girls, 320 boys) with disabilities were referred to specialized services or provided with assistive devices, while 6,700 pupils without birth certificates were registered with UNICEF support.

The deployment of female teachers' networks and school-based peer support groups for girls was scaled up to three regions, alongside the introduction of menstrual hygiene management in 624 public schools covering the needs of 31,200 girls. Overall, 242,232 learners received direct support from UNICEF, including learning materials, school kits, and pupils' desks and chairs, thereby surpassing annual targets on learning. UNICEF, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Canadian government formed strategic partnerships to advance girls' education.

EXTENDING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Meanwhile, UNICEF spearheaded the development of innovations, partnerships and advocacy efforts to accelerate interventions for out-of-school children and adolescents. Learning opportunities were extended to 27,338 out-of-school children in 2021 (twice more than the pre-COVID-19 era and almost reaching the annual target). The model was implanted in 187 communities and is being scaled up by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the World Bank and USAID. In a partnership with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), UNICEF also invested in the deployment of 107 community-based preschools in underserved communities, hence offering a minimum of one year of pre-primary education to more than 5,000 children.

ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION

UNICEF used innovative and diversified approaches to strengthen alternative pathways to education, including foundational literacy and numeracy programmes in traditional Quranic schools, distance learning for secondary school dropouts to help them prepare for national examinations, and accelerated training initiatives to improve employability skills among youths with no prior qualifications. These programmes involved public-private initiatives with local Chambers of Commerce, private companies, local training centers, and civil society (e.g. in the context of the 'Entrepreneur by the Age of 20' initiative).

REIMAGINE EDUCATION

UNICEF engagement in sector coordination also brought about a significant breakthrough in joint advocacy efforts, resulting in the government's decision to recruit an additional 5,000 teachers to reduce teacher shortages. UNICEF was also actively engaged in the Reimagine Education agenda by helping initiate a national strategy on digital and distance learning, and by moving forward the curriculum reform, which led to the drafting of early learning and development standards. In addition, UNICEF helped finalize and operationalize the Bilingual Education Framework and promote mother-tongue reading instruction, including through support to pilot reading corners in 300 rural schools.





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FEATURE STORY

Ndeye's second chance

Ndeye Maguette, 12, is among of the thousands of children participating in the catch-up class initiative supported by UNICEF in Senegal

Ndeye Maguette, 12, wakes up very early in the morning. She does not want to be late for school. She has only been going to formal primary school since the new academic year started, in October 2021.

"I like to study Maths and French. Before going to primary school, I was only learning Arabic and memorizing Quran from time to time at the local Quranic school, as my parents could not afford having me going to formal school" she said.

Ndeye Maguette was offered the opportunity to participate in the catch-up class initiative supported by UNICEF about one year ago, when the community was being mobilized by the municipality to enrol overaged children who were not going to school in this accelerated learning programme.

She performed very well in the programme and was reinserted, after 9 months, in the local public primary school. Every morning from now, she goes to school with her little sister, Ndeye Ndiaye (7 years old) who did also manage to convince her parents to go to school, together with her older sister.

When she arrives at school and before entering her classroom, Ndeye Maguette washes her hands with water and soap at the handwashing unit procured by UNICEF.

"It is mandatory", she says. "We need to keep our hands clean all the time and to keep some distance with our friends, if we want to be safe from COVID and continue to go to school."

Ndeye Maguette studies hard and listens very carefully. She is also very meticulous. "I do not want to miss this chance to learn and to realize my dreams. I want to be a teacher, and I still need to learn so much" she says.

Beside studying, Ndeye likes to play with her new friends. "Some have followed the catch-up initiative, just like me. I am proud to now have the same chance as other children and adolescents: to learn, play, and be treated now as a 'normal' child."



Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

*No matter their story or circumstance, all children have
the right to be protected from violence, exploitation, and
abuse.*



In 2021, UNICEF continued to support the government and civil society to meet child protection needs, focusing on violence against children and their access to services, birth registration, and the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM).

Coordination of the multisectoral child protection system was enhanced, in particular with UNICEF and the Canadian government's support. In close liaison with the Ministry of Family, Women, Gender and Child Protection and the Ministry of Health and Social Action, district-level violence prevention platforms were established in five out of 14 regions. The Ministry of Justice officially launched national guidelines for case management platforms, thus further contributing to more coordinated prevention mechanisms and a stronger continuum of services for children needing protection.

BUILDING A PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT

The launch of the national guidance for health workers was a significant step to better detection and response to violence and abuse of children. Also important was the Ministry of Education's adoption and implementation of a strategy for safer schools that also includes setting up teachers' child protection networks and an alerts system. UNICEF efforts enabled the skilling of all 840 social workers in country on child protection-related social work based on new guidelines. With the Canadian NGO International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR), UNICEF finalized an assessment of child protection services and started to review and strengthen curricula on child protection competency training in different national institutes. Furthermore, a strategic and innovative partnership was finalized with the Municipality of Dakar, which voted a budget for to pilot city-based child protection services and address forced child begging. The Rapid Pro system of alerting and reporting child abuse cases to services, successfully piloted in one district, was scaled up to two other districts in the Region of Dakar. A road map was adopted to roll out the system nationwide.

STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

A total of 2,617 children (861 girls, 1,756 boys) needing protection accessed services. Among them, 1,921 child victims of violence (35% girls against 11% in 2020) and 139 child victims of sexual violence (135 girls, 4 boys) were provided with critical support to address their trauma and recovery. Seventy per cent of the yearly target was achieved. However, results are lower than in 2020 during which the government implemented large-scale child protection operations to withdraw at-risk children from the streets and other dangerous settings. This points to the importance of continuously investing in central and local systems to strengthen child protection services and in strengthening social and behaviour change communication.

To inform future child protection programming, building knowledge on violence against children and its drivers was a priority in 2021. A national survey on violence against primary school children was carried out with Ministry of Education and the Institute for Demographic Training and Research (IFORD), supported by the governments of Canada and France. In addition, a study on the socio-cultural determinants of violent discipline, conducted with IPSOS and support from the UNICEF Regional Office, will inform future programming in this area of child rights violations.

ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

With support from the Government of Canada and the



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joint UNICEF-UNFPA programme on FGM, 132,892 youth and parents (including 37,369 girls, 20,631 boys, 49,711 women and 25,181 men) were engaged in social dialogues on violence and harmful practices. For the first time in Senegal, the government initiated a large media and advocacy campaign (#garderentière) on FGM abandonment, also with UNICEF and UNFPA joint support.

ACCESSING REGISTRATION SERVICES

The ministries of Health and Education officially launched two strategic national guidelines on the establishment of civil registry support desks within health facilities and on systematic detection and registration of students without birth certificates. The setting up of civil registry support desks in health facilities was under way with support from the governments of Canada, Spain, and France. The European Union (EU) is reviewing a proposal to expand this initiative. Birth registration monitoring was systematized through Rapid Pro in 100% of civil registry centres in Kolda, Diourbel and Kaffrine regions, contributing to enhanced local accountability for accelerated birth registration and generation of routine data for central-level decision makers.

FEATURE STORY

Senegal kicked-off a nationwide campaign to end female genital mutilation

Campaigns like these are critical to creating an environment where young girls and their families feel supported.

The Government of Senegal, with the support of UNICEF, UNFPA and other partners, launched a public awareness campaign to accelerate efforts in the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the country.

Supported by an intensive media drive, the campaign aimed to catalyze much-needed policy, social, institutional, community and family dialogue and change towards eliminating FGM in the country. A series of communication materials have been produced and disseminated across the country, using different channels and platforms including national and community medias, digital and social networking tools.

The campaign involved a wide range of stakeholders, including religious leaders, national and local authorities, influencers and celebrities, social mobilizers and actors, families, communities, youth and children themselves.

"Numerous factors contribute to the prevalence of the practice. Yet in every society in which it occurs, FGM is a manifestation of entrenched gender inequality" says Silvia Danailov, UNICEF Representative in Senegal.

"Campaigns like these are critical to creating an environment where young girls and their families feel supported. Because FGM is a cultural practice, parents may find it difficult to decide against having their daughters undergo FGM for fear that their families will be ostracized," she explains.

FGM can lead to serious health complications and even death. Immediate risks include haemorrhage, shock, infection, urine retention and severe pain. Girls subjected to FGM are also at increased risk of becoming child brides and dropping out of school, threatening their ability to build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Recent estimates show that one in four women aged 15-49 years old have undergone female genital mutilation and/or cutting (FGM/C) in Senegal. The practice is widespread in the southern and northern parts of the country, especially in the regions of Kédougou (91,0 %), Sédhiou (75,6 %), Matam (73,3 %), Tambacounda (71,8 %), Ziguinchor (68,2%) and Kolda (63,6 %). The prevalence of child marriage is also among the highest in these regions.

Among children under 15, the prevalence is around 16 per cent nationally. Girls in Senegal are increasingly being subjected to female genital mutilation (FGM) at an early age, before the age of 10.

"Ending FGM is a matter of rights, a matter of health and safety, a matter of equality and education. Ending FGM is matter of dignity — giving every girl and woman a chance to make her own decisions and shape her own future," Danailov concludes.





Every child has an equitable chance in life

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed an era-defining challenge which has put a sobering spotlight on inequalities in the country, laying bare the increasing risk to children growing up in poverty or exclusion.



PUBLIC FINANCE FOR CHILDREN

To increase investments for children, UNICEF built the capacity of the Social Expenditure Monitoring Observatory's (OSBS) members, sector ministries, and Parliamentarians on programme budget reform and public finance for children. One result was the creation of a Parliamentary Network for Social Sector Financing. OSBS also established itself as the major think tank influencing national social expenditure policies and approaches in Senegal, with further diversification of strategic partners, including most recently, the Government of Canada.

SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

As the lead of the sectoral coordination group on social protection, UNICEF initiated a dialogue with the public finance group members to identify joint actions for improving social protection financing. UNICEF advocated to address major challenges in this regard, in particular the adoption of an exit strategy for the beneficiaries of the national Cash Transfer Programme and options for mobilizing additional fiscal space to increase the level of financing from 1.5% of GDP in 2020 to 5.4% of GDP in 2035. Work began on a public expenditure review to refine financing options in partnership with ILO, the World Bank, the EU, and other development partners. In addition, UNICEF engaged with the IMF to reframe the scope of social protection spending.

KNOWLEDGE LEADERSHIP

In continued effort to ensure that child rights policies are informed by the best possible evidence, UNICEF strengthened its partnership with the National Agency of Statistics to monitor, in real time, the demand for social services. Through a series of household surveys, various dimensions are assessed, in particular, the level of vaccine hesitancy among households, knowledge on the pandemic, and alternative measures for the continuity of social services in the COVID-19 context. The findings of a multidimensional study on child poverty will help accelerate and better target UNICEF and partners' programmes.

CHILD-FRIENDLY MUNICIPALITIES INITIATIVE

UNICEF expanded its Child-Friendly Municipalities initiative to urban areas (Dakar), resulting in 57 local governments benefiting from capacity development on child-sensitive planning and budgeting. An evaluation of this model is ongoing to inform further scale-up. In 11 of the 57 municipalities, a multisectoral service delivery approach was piloted to increase access and quality of services and establish strong mechanisms for child and youth participation. UNICEF also helped develop nine local development plans reflecting the Sustainable Development Goal and tackling climate change challenges.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

The power of partnerships allows us to expand our reach, working with a wide range of like-minded partners to deliver our mandate for children.

UNICEF leveraged its lead role as the President of the National Development Partners Coordination Group to place child rights at the forefront of the national agenda. It rallied partners to advocate for additional social sector investments in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. UNICEF was also instrumental in organizing a Presidential Council on Youth and Employment representing development partners.

EXPANDING PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS

UNICEF continued to consolidate and expand its public partnerships with the governments of Canada, China, Japan, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States (USAID) and forged a new collaboration with JICA. Joint initiatives were reinforced with the World Bank, IMF and the EU on social budgeting and public finance for children. UNICEF also leveraged the Forum for Africa and China Cooperation in pursuit of key results for children.

LEVERAGING INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN

UNICEF led the UN social services and social protection result group, a role crucial for leveraging inter-agency partnerships for children. UNICEF and WFP lead the mapping of UN interventions on disability and the production of a disability scorecard and action plan. UNDP and UNICEF lead the UN flagship engagement on the National Agenda for Youth with the government. UNICEF partners with UNFPA on FGM abandonment and on de-

centralized social services implementation. A strategic partnership with the World Bank was initiated to support sustainable funding of, and fund-matching for, maternal and child health and nutrition

UNICEF continued to be a pivotal role player in the process of Common Back Office, chairing three key working groups (common services, finances and protocol) for the upcoming establishment of a UN House.

PUBLIC FINANCE FOR CHILDREN

UNICEF accelerated its engagement with Parliamentarians on social budget monitoring and increased public financing for children. UNICEF engaged prominent Muslim and Christian leaders to mobilize communities in the fight against COVID-19. It also strengthened its child rights advocacy with the 'Joining Force' Coalition of child-focused international NGOs.

BUSINESS FOR RESULTS

UNICEF continued to leverage the strengths of the corporate sector in Senegal. Seventeen private companies endorsed a charter to protect child rights with a formal action plan. IAM GOLD and UNICEF jointly financed Mandina Baffé municipality's development plan as part of Business for Results efforts. UNICEF refined its private sector engagement strategy and defined a roadmap to accelerate initiatives. The partnership with MasterCard Foundation advanced an entrepreneurial concept involving young people in the production of innovative handwashing station prototypes.

CO-CREATING SOLUTIONS WITH YOUTH

UNICEF grew its partnerships with civil society organizations, increasing the number of formal agreements from six to eleven. The ongoing partnership with the Senegalese Red Cross contributed to coordinated action on humanitarian issues. UNICEF established an innovative partnership with the Youth Consortium of Senegal to accelerate the country's Generation Unlimited agenda and leverage resources in co-creating solutions for challenges faced by the youth.

In 2021, UNICEF secured US\$24.2 million to achieve results for children and young people in Senegal (compared to US\$9.8 million in 2020), doubling the fruits of its resource mobilization efforts.

UNICEF's increased digital presence and reach to 16 million+ people (with 3,5 million in 2020) was instrumental in helping accelerate partnerships and resource mobilization.



LESSONS LEARNED AND INNOVATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The precious lesson learned is that creativity tends to thrive in highly constrained environments: this is when magic happens and new ways of partnering and engaging flourish.

Use of COVID-19 response as an entry point for systems strengthening

Senegal has a strong track record in enabling access to oxygen in primary health care facilities through the innovative SPRINT initiative. Early lessons from its implementation have laid the groundwork for a large-scale deployment of oxygen equipment for the COVID-19 response and strengthened maternal and newborn care delivery. The preliminary data shows that SPRINT increased communities' trust in the quality of care and resulted in a higher demand for services. The whole health system was thus strengthened as many patients with COVID-19, pneumonia, and other illnesses were treated in health posts, with only severe cases referred to higher-level health facilities. This public-private partnership will be further scaled up in 2022, with increased investment and ownership by the government.

Efforts in addressing the pandemic's impact on education have diverted attention and resources away from initiatives benefiting pre-existing out-of-school children

Significant government efforts were geared towards safe school reopening, keeping vulnerable pupils in school, and learning loss catch-up. However, due to resource constraints, the government delayed responses to the largely unmet learning needs of pre-existing out-of-school children. UNICEF, World Bank, USAID, and the Canadian government partnered to counter-

balance this trend by supporting reinsertion models and alternative education strategies while advocating for the government's increased attention. UNICEF will also continue to accelerate learning interventions for out-of-school children and adolescents based on a planned programme evaluation, which will inform the achievement of key results for children in education for the remainder of the country programme.

Stronger national leadership is essential in tackling social norms for the protection of children against violence and harmful practices

For the past decade, civil society organizations and frontline workers have been at the forefront of grassroots engagement to change existing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour around the prevention of violence against children and gender-based harmful practices. Efforts to increasingly engage with political and institutional actors have, however, proven critical to influence public opinion, accelerate law reform and enforcement, and stimulate and sustain change in social norms. Joining forces with partners, different faith-based opinion leaders, media professionals, and women and youth organization representatives has enabled UNICEF to successfully engage in consensus building and political engagement to implement ambitious national communication campaigns on violence and harmful practices. This positive development, coupled with enhanced capacity development investments in community social work, will be pursued to accelerate the achievement of key results in child protection, in particular prevention and response to sexual violence.

Enhanced duty of care

One of the most important lessons learned in 2021 was the need to continuously focus on staff wellbeing through the different waves of the pandemic, in order to best pursue the achievement of key results for children. Highly flexible working arrangements and the investment in numerous wellbeing initiatives – in particular for colleagues in the Kolda sub-office – helped reduce stress and burn-out. The emergence and embracement of the ‘new normal’ of remote and hybrid working was also critical during the peak pandemic period. Acknowledging the key influence of managers on staff morale and a positive office culture, and based on an external diagnostic of staff wellbeing complementing the most recent Global Staff Survey, UNICEF Senegal rolled out an ‘appreciative inquiry’ approach to team and individual coaching, focusing on a strengths-based and positive outlook to leadership development and organizational change. This office-wide initiative was complemented by actions prioritizing professional development, with close to 30% of staff benefiting from stretch assignments and promotions in the past two years. The office will continue to prioritize advancement opportunities for all staff, especially in the General Services category, and initiatives to increase psychological safety, respect of UNICEF core values and standards of conduct, gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Innovations with, and for, young people

The engagement of young people as actors of social and gender normative change was strengthened through innovative youth participation approaches in the UNICEF mid-term review. UNICEF staff engaged directly with young people to co-create interventions and solutions to emerging issues such as gender-transformation, climate action, and mental health. The outcomes of this process are helping to accelerate the achievement of key results for children for the last two years of the country programme.

The Youth Consortium of Senegal – the Senegal Chapter of Generation Unlimited championed by UNICEF – was recognized as an innovative and strategic youth-led public-private partnership by global Generation Unlimited partners. Its composition of youth-led, non-governmental, and private sector organizations, with the involvement of government institutions and development partners, is inspiring other countries engaged in initiatives benefiting young people’s access to learning and employment opportunities.

Young people have also been involved as partners in programmes designed to fight violence against children, end FGM and child marriage, and produce WASH-related product innovation linked to entrepreneurship and employment. For the remainder of the country programme, the engagement of adolescents and young people will be further institutionalized in all thematic areas as a major strategy for the country programme.

Innovations in decentralized planning and programming

UNICEF started implementing a programmatic convergence approach articulated on priority key results for children in regions with the highest levels of child poverty and vulnerability. It is based on a new way of approaching multisectoral operational planning by targeting communities and authorities already targeted by the UNICEF’s supported Child Friendly Municipalities initiative. These communities offer an entry point for accelerating the decentralized delivery of a package of services for children. The approach provides an opportunity to design, plan, and implement innovative, locally-appropriate, and locally-supported interventions for children and adolescents by communities, local elected officials, technical services, and children and adolescents themselves.

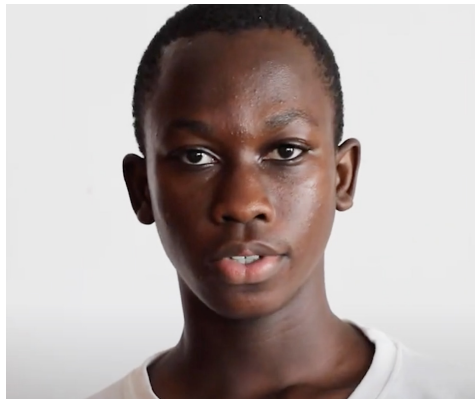


Voices of Youth

When young people are empowered, they can use their energy, creativity, and talent to turn an uncertain landscape into a world of opportunity – for themselves and us all.

"It is only through the direct participation of young people that the issues affecting them can be identified and that effective solutions can be developed"

Mignane Diouf, 18,
Member of the advisory board of CONAFE



"Climate change is having a dramatic impact in Senegal, affecting young people – especially girls. We, young people, need a seat at the table when we talk about climate action. Water scarcity, floods, erosion are climate-related events that affect us every day,"

Maguette Ba,
Young Volunteers for the Environment (JVE)

"Equipping young people with the right tools will help them defend their rights with vivacity and in a much more structured way. Our mission is to influence decision-makers at all levels to put girls' rights on their agendas."

Yaye Fatou Sarr,
President of the Alliance of Youth Organizations of Senegal



"In a country where only one in ten young people have access to a formal and decent job, where seven out of ten young people find it difficult to find work, it is crucial to broaden opportunities for young people by investing in vocational training and encouraging entrepreneurship"

Abdoul Khadre Diallo,
Head of the start-up Volkeno

"Many of us are working on local solutions that address issues affecting young people. From now on, it is important to look at Senegalese youth as potential partners and no longer as beneficiaries"

Sobel Aziz Ngom,
President of the Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal



THANK YOU

Our work in Senegal would not be possible without the continuous engagement, innovative initiatives and generous contributions from committed partners.

We could not have achieved these results without the solid partnerships we have with the Government of Senegal, the United Nations System, development partners, private sector, civil society, faith-based organisations, media, children and youth themselves. Their commitment and willingness to make Senegal a better place for children is exemplary.

We thank all our partners, in particular our direct donors for their support and look forward to continued collaboration to ensure a better future for all children in Senegal.



National committees for UNICEF





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