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for every child

RESPONSE & RESILIENCE IN **2020**

ZAMBIA



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CONTEXT OF WORK

Zambia is a stable and peaceful democratic nation. It is also a young one, with 53.4% of its population under 18. Despite being a middle-income country, poverty and deprivations persist. Around 54.5% of the population live below the national poverty line; 59.5% of children live in poor households, with 45.4% living in extreme poverty. A striking 35% of children under five are stunted.

Over the last decade, Zambia has made progress on child health, including reducing maternal and child mortality rates. HIV prevalence has also somewhat decreased.

Primary school enrolment has increased over time, yet the quality of learning remains a concern. Access to secondary education is a challenge, especially for girls, for children with special educational needs and for families living in poverty who cannot afford the fees and other hidden education costs. The primary-to-secondary transition rate stands at 74%, with wide variances across regions. Only 32.8% girls and 35.3% boys complete Grade 12 (EMIS 2019).

Children, girls and women face multiple adversities. Approximately 34% of women and 40% of men (18-24 years) experienced physical violence before age 18, and 20% of women and 10% of men experienced sexual violence before that age.¹ Zambia also has one of the highest child marriage and teen pregnancy rates in the region (both 29% as per DHS 2018)².

¹Violence Against Children in Zambia study (2014)

²https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328760285_Too_young_to_be_a_wife_analysis_of_the_factors_influencing_child_marriages_and_its_influence_on_the_preferred_number_of_children_among_women_in_Zambia

Zambia is susceptible to health and climate related humanitarian crises. Emergencies in 2020 in addition to COVID-19 included an outbreak of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus type-2, floods and the tail end of a three-year drought.

The COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the health system's regular functioning and capacities and disrupted delivery, causing a 10-15% decline in access to critical services. It has also exacerbated risks faced by children, such as a 50% decrease in birth registration rates, which were already some of the lowest in the region.

With schools closed for parts of 2020, education in Zambia has suffered. A UNICEF-supported survey revealed that under 20% of children accessed technology-based distance learning while most relied on take-home assignments and textbooks. Only 8% of the children reported being able to maintain the same level of learning from home, and 52% of teachers never contacted their students during closures. Furthermore, 29% of the 500 schools surveyed reported incidences of pregnancy.

All these come amid shrinking government revenues and debt servicing. Only 42% of the national budget was disbursed to the social sectors in 2020, and rapid household assessments conducted on the impact of COVID-19 indicate that poverty and vulnerability have increased.

OVERVIEW UNICEF ZAMBIA

Since the 1960s, UNICEF has been an all-weather friend to Zambia and its children, working hand-in-hand with the Government to support national development efforts and ensure boys and girls survive and thrive. These efforts aim to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals, the Seventh National Development Plan and Zambia Vision 2030 for a prosperous and inclusive society that leaves no child behind. UNICEF's programme of cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Zambia focuses on the key sectors of child protection, education, health and HIV, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and social protection, while also promoting cross-sectoral interventions in areas such as early childhood development, gender equality, social inclusion, and the push to end child marriage.

COVID-19

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges, requiring an urgent recalibration of systems, programmes and resources, and intensified collaboration with government and partners. UNICEF plays a key role in Zambia's multisectoral response to the pandemic, implementing dedicated actions and mainstreaming the COVID-19 response into existing programmes. Ensuring the pandemic does not evolve into a child rights crisis and unravel progress towards the healthy development of children in Zambia remains a key concern. Robust programming, technical dexterity, efficient financial mechanisms and strong partnerships and support from donors have enabled UNICEF to meet the year's challenges, and support the continuing fight against COVID-19 and its impacts.

DONORS TO UNICEF ZAMBIA'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

The European Union; the Federal Republic of Germany/KFW Development Bank; the Global Partnership for Education; the Government of Ireland; Standard Chartered; the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO); the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



COVID-19 RESPONSE

UNICEF, as part of the UN response, provided key technical and financial support to the Ministry of Health and other key line ministries for a coordinated response to the pandemic and to sustain the delivery of essential health services. UNICEF helped improve the quality of COVID-19 case management by strengthening the provision of essential health commodities and life-saving medical oxygen therapy, by supplying test kits, by providing personal protective equipment, and by supporting extensive risk communication and community engagement on COVID-19 prevention.

Procured **310** oxygen concentrators and **310** oxygen cylinders. Rehabilitated oxygen plants at three hospitals.



Supported COVID-19 diagnosis for **38,000** suspected cases and PPE for **12,000** health workers.



Reached over **9 million** with COVID-19 prevention messages.



Provided water treatment chemicals for 3 months in 2020 to 11 commercial utilities reaching approximately **6 million** people in urban and peri-urban areas.



Over **4.5 million** people were reached with messages on handwashing and infection prevention and control.

UNICEF worked in support of the Ministry of General Education to implement a series of response activities, including developing radio learning content, remedial learning support, improved school water supplies, and psychosocial and safety support after reopening.

HEALTH

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health manage and contain the circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus in Zambia. Critical support to the immunisation programme was also provided by securing traditional vaccines and sustaining a functioning cold chain system. To ensure the continuity of essential health services, UNICEF supported the government's implementation of two rounds of nationwide Child Health weeks. UNICEF provided personal hygiene and sanitation materials and disinfectants to the frontline health service providers and volunteers who provided routine vaccination and dispensed Vitamin A capsules and deworming tablets.

Procured **12-months' stock**



of traditional vaccines for routine immunisation and 6-months' stock of essential medicines for basic curative care and maternal, neonatal and child health services.

Reached **90%** of children under five with polio (mOPV2) vaccination in four provinces and **77%** with polio (IPV) vaccines nationwide.



Reached **73%** of adolescent girls with with Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccines.



Over **120,000** mothers and newborns received essential care; **67%** of pregnant women had four antenatal care visits and **62%** gave birth at health facilities.



Over **11,000** children under five reached with antibiotics for pneumonia in **55** supported health facilities in two provinces (Lusaka and Copperbelt).



OVERVIEW OF



HIV/AIDS

Zambia has an estimated adult HIV prevalence of 11%, with rates twice as high among females and in urban areas. The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated adaptations in delivery of HIV services, including multi-month dispensation of treatments to stable patients, expanded psychosocial support for adolescents living with HIV, and self-testing. UNICEF and partners continued implementing high-impact interventions for the dual elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis and helped sustain high rates of antiretroviral therapy (ART) among pregnant and breastfeeding women and children living with HIV.

Helped establish seven new adolescent friendly spaces, trained **35** health workers and **65** peer educators and distributed **100** bicycles to support clinics for adolescent health.



Over **10,000** adolescents in selected peri-urban areas of Ndola and Lusaka reached with integrated SRH/HIV services including HIV testing, with up to **93%** linkage to treatment and care for those diagnosed with HIV.



Generated evidence that has been instrumental in informing evidence based national strategies including the Global Fund funding request.

Contributed technical content to the Global Fund funding request that led to **\$233 million** new support for HIV.



Other sector-wide results: **328,378** adolescents tested for HIV, with a **3%** positivity rate; **81%** of these linked into treatment. **99%** of antenatal facilities provide ART treatment for HIV-positive pregnant women.

Around **12,000** HIV infections averted (2020) through Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission.



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)

UNICEF continued to support government efforts to increase equitable access to WASH services. UNICEF provided water treatment chemicals for water utility companies to ensure a safe water supply to millions. UNICEF supported the drought response in Lusaka and Southern provinces by drilling and rehabilitating boreholes to provide safe water and continued to support the provision of safe water supply to refugees, health facilities and schools for enhanced sanitation and menstrual support.

106,543 people gained access to basic drinking water services and **187,510** to basic sanitation.



Emergency water supply interventions benefitted **88,050** people in drought-affected areas and **15,000** refugees.



Basic WASH facilities were provided to **78** schools, benefitting **42,844** learners (21,306 boys and 21,538 girls), and **37** health care facilities.



Pursued an integrated approach to programming to ensure alignment of sanitation and hygiene interventions with nutrition, early childhood development, education and ending child marriage programmes.

KEY RESULTS



NUTRITION

UNICEF continued helping the Government scale up nutrition, with recent surveys showing encouraging reductions in child malnutrition, although stunting remains high. With partners, UNICEF is helping the government offer comprehensive nutrition services to treat acutely malnourished children in 21 districts, monitor children in areas worst-hit by drought, and provide vitamin A supplementation. UNICEF programmes also address the quality and diversity of diets, including through gender-sensitive programming; aim to reduce anaemia; and promote micronutrient supplementation among women of reproductive age.

Routine vaccination, vitamin A and deworming reached over **1 million** children in 17 Scaling-up Nutrition (SUN) districts and over **3 million** children (6-59 months) nationwide.



Delivery of a multisectoral package of nutrition interventions, with partners, to reduce stunting within the Scaling-Up Nutrition Phase II initiative, as part of the government's First 1000 Critical Days Programme.

Helped reach and treat **8,521** children under five with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), with a recovery rate of **63%**.



Reached **5,153** children with moderate acute malnutrition in **58** drought-affected districts.



Procured **6,479** cartons of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) for a year to treat SAM in 17 target districts and distributed **36,044** RUTF boxes to 58 drought-affected districts.



EDUCATION

Worldwide, school closures affected children's learning and development progress, and Zambia was no exception. In Zambia, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented school closures, disrupting learning for more than 4.2 million children and adolescents. To enhance quality learning and education, UNICEF supported the government's Catch-Up literacy and numeracy programme. UNICEF supported the development of radio-based remote learning programmes delivered through national and community radios. A nationwide assessment to review school readiness for reopening was also supported.

Supported the development of the Ministry of General Education's COVID-19 Contingency Plan and sector coordination, resulting in an additional **\$10 million** funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) for remedial learning and safe school reopening.



Supported Catch-Up programmes reaching **239,663** learners in **1,877** schools.



Trained **7,902** education staff on Catch-Up methodology and **127** on data management skills.



Under the Insaka programme, multisectoral collaboration enabled the delivery of community-based integrated Early Childhood Development services, reaching **2,029** caregivers with parental counselling and **3,882** children.





CHILD PROTECTION

The COVID-19 situation has placed additional stress on domestic settings. UNICEF supported the social welfare system to transition to online working modalities, ensuring frontliners received technical support and supervision and COVID-prevention guidance. UNICEF worked with partners to accelerate use of diversions and prevent detention of juvenile offenders and migrant children. UNICEF helped standardise community-based case management protocols, reach children in facilities for COVID-19 prevention and provide online psychosocial support to both children and parents.

Contributed to revising key national policy documents such as the draft Children's Code Bill and finalising the Second National Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Strategy, and the National Strategy to End Violence against Children. The two latter documents were adopted and endorsed by the Government. Zambia became a Pathfinder country within the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children.

98% of prosecutors are now capacitated to implement the Handbook on Prosecution of Sexual Violence Offences.



Strengthened child-migrants Best-Interests-Determination panels by capacitating **62** frontline officers; separately, supported master-trainers on gender-based violence in **22** districts.



Reached **26,719** children through community-based case management, reunited **652** children with their families, implemented a health-to-social welfare referral pathway in seven districts, provided COVID-relevant psychosocial support for **16,506** children and reached a total of **37,579** vulnerable children and parents through Lifeline/Childline Zambia.



SOCIAL POLICY AND RESEARCH

COVID-19 worsened conditions for many of Zambia's already-poor population. UNICEF plays a key role in implementing the government's flagship Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme for social assistance and supported the launch of a supplementary COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfer to provide temporary relief to the most poor and vulnerable households. In 2020, UNICEF provided support to improve the efficiency and accountability of government transfers and advocated for increasing public financial management and social sector allocations.

UNICEF supported the negotiations leading to an additional **\$ 86.7 million** (over three years) World Bank funding for the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme.



Plays a key role in strengthening the systems of the SCT programme that covers **632,223** households, **68%** of which are female-headed.



Initiated a COVID-19 response Emergency Cash Transfer programme to reach **204,000** households by 2021 together with multiple partners.



Facilitated the delivery of Emergency Cash Transfers to **118,000** vulnerable households in **19** districts affected by drought.



Supported the Ministry of Finance to improve national budget transparency and accountability.

IMPACT STORIES

SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE FAMILIES



Mrs. Shishemu Matongo arrives at the health clinic in the village of Luandui to receive two lifelines. One is ready-to-use therapeutic food for Grace, one of her grandchildren, who is malnourished. The other is the monthly COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfer (C-ECT) payment, which supplements the regular Social Cash Transfer stipend Grace's mother receives. Grace's mother was born physically disabled and mentally challenged.

“The sole responsibility to ensure these children are safe and taken care of is left to me”

Mrs. Matongo says.

The C-ECT is a six-month programme to support households already identified as vulnerable and additional ones at risk of extreme poverty due to the pandemic. The programme reaches more than 200,000 households throughout 25 districts, giving families like that of Mrs. Matongo a better chance of weathering the COVID-19 crisis and protecting their health amid multiple challenges of poverty and disability.

OXYGEN LIFELINE

Early in the pandemic, the Lewanika General Hospital had to buy oxygen from Lusaka, about 600 miles away. Now it produces its own supply to deliver timely life-saving treatment to its patients and 16 nearby districts. UNICEF partnered with the Ministry of Health to rehabilitate the hospital's oxygen plant, as well as two other hospital plans in Lusaka and Mansa, and provide 310 oxygen concentrators and cylinders.

“Repairs came at the right time because oxygen demand became high due to the pandemic,”

said Sanki Chihinga Felix, Acting Head of Department at Lewanika's oxygen plant.



UNICEF Zambia is grateful to its partners, including:

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