CONTEXT OF WORK

Zambia is a stable, peaceful and youthful nation with children making up more than half of the population (53.4%). Despite the lower-middle income status, inequalities mean a wide gap between the richest and the poorest, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. 57.8% of people now live below the national poverty line - a number that could grow with the country’s growing population.

The ongoing pandemic threatens strong progress over the last decade on child health, including reducing maternal and child mortality rates. HIV prevalence rates and stunting levels have also been decreasing. But the socio-economic stress of the pandemic has made life increasingly difficult for Zambians. COVID-19 has impacted the mental health of many and, increasingly, symptoms of anxiety and depression are linked to food insecurity, household violence and alcohol consumption at home.

Zambia is home to two million child brides; some 3 in 10 young women are married before the age of eighteen. This in turn contributes to the country’s large number of school dropouts. Placement of children in institutional care increased by more than 20% in 2021.

Elementary school enrollment has increased over time, though just 45% (Gross Enrolment Ratio) of young people enroll in secondary school. The new Government of Zambia announced plans to remove school fees beginning in January 2022 and promised to hire an additional 30,000 teachers to address performance shortfalls in schools.

Over 4 million learners were affected by two nationwide school closures introduced to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The impact of these closures is still being felt, as students seek to catch up in their learning. So far, Zambia has experienced four waves of COVID-19. By the end of 2021, the government reported 254,274 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 3,734 deaths. Despite vaccine hesitancy and misinformation, 1.2 million people were fully vaccinated by 31 December 2021.

Just 64 per cent of Zambia’s population has access to drinking water, 33 per cent to sanitation services, and just 24 per cent have a handwashing facility in their home. Some thirty-four per cent of schools lack access to sanitation facilities, and 21 per cent lack access to a water supply.

OVERVIEW OF UNICEF ZAMBIA

Since the 1950s, 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 (2016-2022) 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

With the COVID-19 pandemic reaching new heights in Zambia in 2021, UNICEF continued to support all facets of the government of Zambia’s multisectoral response, providing technical and financial support to the Ministry of Health and other key line ministries. UNICEF invested in supporting hospitals to respond to the virus, providing life-saving treatment for patients with COVID-19 and undertaking massive supply and logistics efforts to deliver life-saving vaccines into the arms of some of the world’s most vulnerable people. To address the low uptake of COVID-19 vaccines, UNICEF supported the National Vaccination Drive campaign and supported a multi-media campaign that reached about 7 million people through national and local mass media and 2,079,161 people through social media.

Health

To ensure the continuity of essential health services, UNICEF supported the government with health items related to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services. UNICEF supported the government’s implementation of two nationwide Child Health weeks, where a number of essential health services were delivered. Through high-level advocacy channels, UNICEF and partners ensured crucial medicines, vaccines and medical supplies for the government of Zambia’s health service delivery, avoiding potential stockouts.

- Child Health Week reached 3,875,299 children under five with a package of health interventions.
- UNICEF oversaw routine immunisation services for 544,766 infants and provided 1.4 million people with essential health items.
- In 58 drought-affected districts and refugee settlements, 416,922 infants received the measles vaccine.
- UNICEF contributed to strengthening the capacity of 7,685 health workers in COVID-19 diagnoses, management and referral.
- Over 13,000 adolescents in selected peri-urban areas of Ndola and Lusaka were reached with integrated disability-inclusive SRH/HIV services, including HIV testing.

Procured 14,760 N-95 masks, 292,700 surgical masks, 16,560 protective gowns and 521,600 pairs of gloves for the Ministry of Health.

Supported COVID-19 diagnoses for 149,180 people and ensured 1,000 COVID-19 patients benefited from critical care support (medical oxygen therapy and essential medicines).

UNICEF procured and delivered 4.8 million COVID-19 vaccines for the COVAX initiative and the Africa Vaccines Acquisition Trust (AVAT) initiative.

Over 13,000 adolescents in selected peri-urban areas of Ndola and Lusaka were reached with integrated disability-inclusive SRH/HIV services, including HIV testing.
**KEY RESULTS**

### Nutrition

In 2021, UNICEF continued to support the Government to develop best practices in nutrition and early childhood development. A national multisectoral ECD strategy framework was pushed forward; Nutrition Support Group tools to assist in targeted nutrition promotion were developed; and the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative, a multisectoral package of nutrition interventions to reduce stunting, continued to break new ground in nurturing care for children during their first 1000 days. UNICEF also strengthened the monitoring and evaluation of nutrition in the country by spearheading a communications system that allows practitioners to access nutrition information in all 116 districts.

Under the Scaling Up Nutrition Phase II initiative, UNICEF and partners reached 80,811 households with nutrition counselling. 206,569 children were reached with growth monitoring and promotion services.

Vitamin A supplementation and screening services reached 3.37 million and 564,654 children, respectively.

UNICEF support helped reach and treat 9,955 children under five with severe acute malnutrition, with a recovery rate of 79%.

31,195 children with moderate acute malnutrition were reached in 58 drought-affected districts.

The Playful Parenting campaign, launched by the First Lady in May 2021 with support from UNICEF and the LEGO Foundation, reached 812,672 people with messages on the importance of play in early childhood and learning.

### WASH

UNICEF supported government efforts to increase equitable access to WASH services through technical support to policymaking, infrastructure, and service provision. UNICEF continued to aid refugees centers, health facilities, and schools with access to water and sanitation. Together with UNHCR, UNICEF supported refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo with access to safe water and essential items.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>50 schools</th>
<th>received Menstrual Hygiene Management interventions.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>128,500</td>
<td>people gained access to basic drinking water services and 98,552 to basic sanitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency water supply interventions benefitted 18,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and some 62,991 refugees received Menstrual Hygiene Management kits, soap and water containers.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic WASH facilities were provided to 179 schools, benefitting 47,380 learners (24,638 girls and 22,742 boys), and 75 health care facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10,963</td>
<td>government staff, community members, environmental health technicians, teachers, masons and pump-minders were trained on WASH facility maintenance and hygiene and sanitation best practices.</td>
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<td>Over 6 million</td>
<td>people in urban areas continued to benefit from water treatment chemicals from 11 commercial utilities.</td>
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</table>
**Child Protection**

Despite delays in policy introduction and legislation, UNICEF continued to support the Government of Zambia to advance its protection services for children. UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to establish a case management system to support prevention and response to violence in communities. UNICEF advocated for government legislators and policymakers to prioritise the Children’s Code Bill and the Juvenile Justice Strategy and to roll out a harmonised civil registration system. Through partners, UNICEF sought to bolster the provision of mental health services, both over the phone and through direct means. Together with partners like IOM and the EU, UNICEF advocated for the release of migrant children from detention and continued to support alternative care.

UNICEF advocated and aided in the reintegration of 574 children into their family units and bolstered calls for increased childcare facilities, resulting in facility numbers rising from 5,394 in 2020 to 6,517 in 2021. Advocacy and communication efforts also reached an estimated 2 million people on the importance of family-based care.

In 2021, the UNICEF-UNFPA Global Programme on Ending Child Marriage supported 6,928 girls. UNICEF will now scale the programme up from 2 to 10 districts.

UNICEF reached 12,618 community members with social and behavioural change messaging to tackle perceptions around gender norms.

Through partners, UNICEF reached 130,507 children and 264,296 adults with psycho-social support and 3,789 children and 844 parents with counselling in the Matapala refugee settlement.

**Education**

Since March 2020, over 4 million learners have been affected by two COVID-19 induced nationwide school closures. In 2021, UNICEF supported the government’s Catch-Up literacy and numeracy programme to aid learning recovery, reaching students in all primary schools in Eastern and Southern provinces. UNICEF continued to administer programmes to ensure no child is left behind, issuing bursaries and scholastic support to refugees, children with disabilities and other vulnerable children and adolescents. UNICEF lent support to the Examination Council of Zambia to assess the status of children’s learning, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supported the Catch-Up programme, reaching over 250,000 learners in all primary schools in Eastern and Southern provinces. Trained more than 8,500 education staff on the Catch-Up methodology, benefitting 303,037 learners from Grades 1 to 6.

In response to the COVID-19 induced learning crisis, UNICEF and GPE provided school kits and bags to 230,634 vulnerable children and constructed safer learning environments for 521,828 students.

14,042 learners received school bursaries, including 677 learners with disabilities.

Under the Insaka programme, multisectoral collaboration enabled the delivery of community-based integrated Early Childhood Development services, reaching 13,354 caregivers with parental counselling and 12,276 children.
The Government of Zambia's flagship Social Cash Transfer programme, supported by UNICEF, continued to act as a security net for the most vulnerable. The UNICEF-supported COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfer programme helped stabilise communities from being knocked further into poverty as the pandemic’s disruption continued to be felt in all areas of social and economic life, and acted as a vehicle to disseminate health and hygiene messages, nutrition, disability and protection.

Provided key technical and financial support to the Government to strengthen social protection delivery.

The Social Cash Transfer programme disbursement increased from ZMW90 per household per month to ZMW150.

To protect vulnerable students from dropping out of school, UNICEF supported 14,042 learners with bursaries, including 677 learners with disabilities.

The COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfer programme reached 204,160 vulnerable households in the 25 most-affected districts with ZMW400 monthly payments for six months.

As part of commemorations around UNICEF’s 75th anniversary year, UNICEF Zambia organised a retrospective exhibition at the Lusaka National Museum focused on the history of childhood in Zambia and the work of UNICEF. Our aim was to highlight the continuities as well as the radical changes that have occurred over the past century for boys and girls in Zambia. In child development terms, the progress has been significant. It is a story that deserves to be told more often of how health services and schools have expanded across the country, how access to clean water has improved, and how child mortality has dropped sharply. The exhibition also served to highlight continuing challenges in the way of securing every right for every child. We have come so far, but there remains much unfinished business.

Most of all, the anniversary is a moment to reimagine what we can do better for every child.
I am a child, I am a child, although my needs may be different from yours, it does not make me any different from you.

I am a child, I am a child, I may not walk or run fast like you, but I feel and hurt, just the same.

I may not be able to hug you easily, but I love and have emotional needs just like you. I may look a little different, but I can do, and achieve what you can.

We all know being a child has its ups and downs, but for children like me, these are twice as much. So many times, I am labelled helpless, wasting your time as I try to navigate my way, through the door or trying to explain my thoughts to you. Yet, all I need, is for you to be patient with me.

For a second, I want you to be me. It’s after school, like all other children. You are looking forward to going home, Outside, the rain is pouring, everybody is rushing not to get wet and so are you. As you are wheeling yourself, through the mud and puddles of water, your wheelchair gets stuck and you fall off your chair.

Struggling to get up. Tears start rolling down, there is no one to help, because everybody is rushing and running,

Imagine!

I am telling you this, not because I am looking for sympathy. I want to draw your attention, to the many challenges, that children like me still face.

If, and only if, you can make a world, where children like me can move with ease. A world, where children like me, are given a fair chance, to live to their full potential.

Then, only then, can we say there is hope For Every Child!

I Am A Child.

A poem written and presented in front of the Heads of State of Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe by Cleric Tembwe, a member of the Namibian Children’s Parliament, and one of child participants at the sub-regional World Children’s Day event at Kazungula Bridge on 20 November 2021.

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