

Angola

Update on the context and situation of children

While new data on the situation of children is not available in 2022 given delays of key household surveys due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some aspects of the macro socio-economic context that impacts children's lives have improved. A positive trend in economic growth that started in 2021, following five years of recession, continued. Although in 2021 real GDP grew by only 0.8 per cent, in 2022 the economy is estimated to grow by 2.9 per cent, and the outlook for 2023 is positive. The sharp increase in oil prices, caused in part by the war in Ukraine, helped boost Angola's fiscal revenues and its currency, which saw one of the highest appreciations in relation to the US dollar in the first quarter of 2022. These factors led to an increase in net international reserves and a decline in the public debt-to-GDP ratio from approximately 86 percent in 2021 to an estimated 57 per cent in 2022. As economic growth picks up steam, GDP is estimated to surpass USD 125 billion, helping Angola regain its position as the third largest sub-Saharan economy.

Inflation decreased but remained high at approximately 17 per cent, especially for a country in which more than half of the population is multidimensionally poor, (with children 0-10 years old being the most affected), and almost one third live below the USD 2.15 poverty line.

Despite the declining public debt, resources needed to service it limit the fiscal space for investment in social sectors that most directly impact children's lives; in 2022 more than half of the annual budget was allocated to debt servicing. All the while, investment in key social sectors remain very low, with allocations to education, health, water and sanitation and social protection combined adding up to only 17 per cent of the State Budget and approximately six per cent of GDP. Yet, the sharp rise in the price of oil raises expectations among civil society for higher execution rates in the social sectors, since the assumptions underlying the annual budget included oil prices that ended up being about half of the actual observed price.

Social protection in Angola in 2022 witnessed significant milestones. The EU-UNICEF project APROSOC, which successfully piloted two approaches to social protection, namely the municipalization of social action and cash transfers to families, came to an end, having reached more than 35,000 children 0-5 years old. This eight-year long project laid the foundations for non-contributory social protection in the country and allowed for the quick scale up of a similar cash transfer programme (Kwenda), financed through a World Bank loan, which in 2022 reached more than 800,00 households.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt on many fronts such as childhood immunization and learning. With more than 550,000 children who missed out on vital first vaccine doses, Angola is among the top ten countries in the world in terms of number of children who never received any vaccines. To raise attention to this and other primary healthcare issues, UNICEF organized a high-level event which successfully led to the adoption of eight commitments by the Government (Declaração de Luanda) to sustainably increase equitable funding for health at the three levels of the national health service, with a focus on primary care.

COVID-19 related school closures have aggravated pre-existing challenges in the education sector. According to research conducted by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UNICEF in 2022, dropout and non-return rates increased 15.6 per cent following the school closure during the pandemic, ranging from 13 per cent in urban areas to 50 per cent in rural areas. Another major challenge is low learning outcomes. According to World Bank estimates, in 2022 the learning poverty rate increased to 89 per cent in the Sub-Saharan African region. Furthermore, the number of years of schooling is still suboptimal. An Angolan child who starts school at age five can expect to complete 7.9 years of schooling by age 18, with effective learning of 4.2 years.

Moreover, in 2022 children's routines were disrupted and vulnerabilities exacerbated with strikes by key social sector professionals such as Teachers, Doctors and Judicial Staff from Courts, who have been requesting higher salaries and better working conditions, but which caused significant impact in

already strained public systems.

Children in Angola are also affected by its vulnerability to climate change, with Angola ranking 10th globally in the Children's Climate Risk Index. In 2022, the southern provinces continued to face the consequences of the worst drought in 40 years which. Although the rains in 2022 were improved on that of 2021, some communities did not experience any rainfall with widespread water insecurity among vulnerable pastoralist and sedentary communities. Households whose livelihood assets had been sold during the drought struggled to recuperate. The poor 2021 harvest combined with inflationary pressure resulted in an estimated 1.6 million people experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity in March 2022. Based on the number of children admitted for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition in 2022, the southern provinces of Angola continue to experience high levels of acute malnutrition.

Angola's children remain vulnerable to child marriage, early pregnancy, sexual violence, child labour and other forms of abuse and neglect, despite actions to end violence at home and within communities. In 2022, the Government launched the National Action Plan for the Eradication of Child Labour to move towards elimination of this major form of exploitation. According to the latest available data on birth registration, only 53 per cent of the Angolan population is registered, a percentage dramatically decreasing to 25 per cent when it comes to children under five years of age.

Finally, this year Angola held its fourth presidential elections since the end of the civil war. MPLA, the ruling party since the country's independence, won by the smallest margin in history, demonstrating a growing opposition party (UNITA), who gained 26 more seats in Parliament than previously held.

Major contributions and drivers of results

Child Survival and Development

UNICEF convened a high-level National Forum on Primary Health Care and Immunization, bringing together key government stakeholders and partners, including Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Minister of State for Social Affairs and provincial governors. The event culminated with the adoption of the "Luanda Declaration," which set eight ambitious targets and commitments from government, including: to progressively increase budget allocation for primary health; to reach 85 per cent coverage of the integrated package of essential care for maternal and child health; and to enhance partnership and community participation. Following the Declaration, the Government allocated an additional USD 13 million to fill gaps in vaccine procurement for 2022 and committed a further USD 42 million for 2023.

In 2022, over 500,000 children were reached with nutrition screening at health facility level and more than 100,000 were treated for severe acute malnutrition across seven UNICEF-supported provinces. By training over 420 health facility staff, UNICEF supported an improved nutrition response in stabilization centres and outpatient therapeutic feeding facilities. In the Luanda Declaration, the Government committed to reducing the prevalence of stunting in children under-five by 20 per cent by 2027, from its current rate of 38 per cent.

UNICEF focused on reaching zero-dose and under-vaccinated children through strengthening micro-planning, community mobilization, cold chain capacity and vaccine logistics. UNICEF played an important role in vaccine procurement and installing remote temperature monitoring systems in all main provincial vaccine deposits, along with 30-day temperature freezer tags in the rest of the cold chain network. As a result, 633,793 children below age one were immunized with the first dose DPT (Pentavalent), representing 75 per cent administrative coverage (849,096 children were planned to be immunized countrywide). By Q3, administrative coverage of children reached with the first dose Pentavalent is estimated to be 83 per cent. In Cunene, Huila and Bié provinces, as well as Quissama municipality in Luanda province, where UNICEF focused its support on micro-planning and service delivery, 130,313 children were immunized with first dose Pentavalent (representing 77 per cent of administrative coverage) and 113,119 with the first measles dose.

In spite of significant efforts to increase access, the drop-out rate between children who benefited from the first and third dose remains high at 17 per cent. UNICEF is currently supporting the development

of a National Immunization Strategy, based on recommendations of the effective vaccine management assessment, led by WHO with UNICEF technical support.

UNICEF supported public health emergency response to COVID-19 through at-scale vaccine roll-out, strengthening cold chain capacity, training of logisticians and demand-creation through social mapping of key community influencers to tackle vaccine hesitancy. In 2022, 14,695,566 people received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine (77.6 per cent of target), and 8,056,576 completed the two-dose vaccination course.

At national level, UNICEF assisted in planning and implementing a national integrated measles, rubella, polio and vitamin A campaign in two phases, reaching all 18 provinces. Overall, 3.5 million children were reached across all provinces (3.4 million children vaccinated against measles and rubella; 3.1 million children received polio vaccination; 3.2 million vitamin A supplementation). UNICEF supported the review and finalization of the National Action Plan 2022-25 to improve maternal, newborn, and child health; the development of a comprehensive community health policy, and the Kangaroo mother care manual. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the mainstreaming of mental health into youth-friendly spaces dedicated to promoting and delivering sexual and reproductive health rights in 16 health facilities of three provinces.

UNICEF supported development of the new National HIV/AIDS strategic plan PENVII (2023-2025), addressing gaps in HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B; the scaling up of maternal and infant diagnosis, through point of care approach, and the introduction of simplified HIV treatment protocols to prevent vertical transmission. Sixty adolescents and youths living with HIV in Cunene, Huambo and Huila were trained as peer support groups to promote adherence to ART, reduce stigma and discrimination. The health management information system (DHIS2) was strengthened in Luanda, Cunene and Huila, focusing on training of health professionals to improve report completeness, quality control and data use for decision making.

In 2022, as UNICEF continues to shift its focus from service delivery to upstream advisory support, UNICEF contributed to the WASH and Environment sector with critical studies and investigations. This included hydrogeological mapping at sub-national levels to identify productive drilling sites and increase access to sustainable water sources through climate resilient, multi-village supply schemes. The first draft of a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children to understand the overall landscape in terms of data availability, existing laws, policies and regulations, risks to children and potential benefits of climate actions was shared with the technical peer review committee. In addition, a climate finance strategy was completed to leverage additional financing and explore innovative mechanisms to finance the WASH and Environment sector, complementing an ongoing WASH financial bottleneck analysis in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Water, the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Environment and MoF. The latter will analyse the institutional, legal and regulatory framework governing WASH sector public finance operations to identify impediments and constraints to develop recommendations to remove or mitigate them. WASH service delivery interventions were focused on the humanitarian response to drought-affected areas in southern provinces, reaching 210,637 people (72,770 women, 61,338 men, 40,732 girls and 35,797 boys) with WASH services, and Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) projects in Bié benefiting 15,241 people (5,226 women, 4,004 men, 2,700 boys and 3,311 girls).

In 2022, almost 2.7 million Angolan children under five obtained a birth certificate to prove their legal identity, as every child's right and the basis for access to social services. Of those children, 114,830 have been registered with UNICEF's direct support through onsite Birth Registration and Certification services provided by the Civil Registry in Health Facilities (established with UNICEF support in 2019), which provide reproductive, maternal, newborn and child (RMNCH) services. Currently, only 4.3 per cent of all Health Facilities which provide RMNCH in the country are equipped with onsite Birth Registration and Certification services.

Under the framework of the continental "No Name Campaign," a game-changer in ensuring all African children acquire their legal identity, UNICEF promoted South-South Cooperation between Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), organizing the first virtual coordination meeting of Civil Registration authorities to review their efforts to increase birth registration coverage. With a focus on birth registration and inter-operability with other sectors such as health, social protection, among

others, UNICEF actively supported the preparation and participation of Angola to the experts' segment of the 6th Conference of Ministers Responsible for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (COM6) held in Ethiopia. Both initiatives provided a great learning and knowledge sharing opportunity for civil registration and vital statistics stakeholders to advance the legal identity and birth registration agenda. To strengthen the policy and regulatory framework for Early Childhood Development (ECD), UNICEF supported MoE (MoE) in the Evaluability Assessment (EA) of the All United for Early Childhood Programme (TUPPI), a community-based parenting programme that promotes positive parenting practices in health, nutrition, responsible care, protection, and early stimulation. UNICEF has been supporting the government in piloting this approach in five municipalities since 2019 and the government wants to scale up. UNICEF supported action on the main EA recommendations i.e. strengthening capacities of core teams of TUPPI trainers, 167 (73 women) facilitators from eight provinces (Bengo, Bié, Huambo, Huila, Malanje, Moxico, Uíge and Cunene) who will implement and replicate the methodology.

A Social and Behavioural Change Strategy (SBC) for ECD was designed in coordination with the Ministry of Social Action, Family and Women's Empowerment (MASFAMU) and other strategic government stakeholders in Health and Education. The strategy builds on analysis of current context, recognition of positive national experiences, identification of key actors targeted for behaviour change, and the core methods and messages. The SBC strategy will be implemented from 2023 onwards and includes an operational plan of activities, a coordination and monitoring system, and a budget.

Child and Adolescent Development and Participation

UNICEF supported the Mission Recovery Initiative (MRI) in partnership with MoE to recover learning loss and ensure the psychosocial well-being of children who have been out of school due to the pandemic. More than 56,000 children benefited from the Child-Friendly Schools and Safe Haven initiatives, which provided quality, healthy and safe learning environments, and the provision of foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN). Through this joint Education-Child Protection initiative, the MRI developed an innovative mechanism for mobilising school councils and communities in the process of tracing, identifying and referring out-of-school children, and providing them with FLN and psychosocial care. The MoE has indicated its intention to take FLN to scale, beyond the emergency context. UNICEF also continued to advance the Adolescent and Youth agenda, generating evidence through a Landscape Analysis of the youth ecosystem, designing a youth volunteering strategy, and contributing to the transferable skills curricula for employability and entrepreneurship, as well as digital learning initiatives.

UNICEF is capitalizing on expertise gained from its work on service delivery to inform its growing upstream work to enhance enabling factors to accelerate the achievement of SDG 4. Efforts include: the generation of evidence to better understand social norms that impede greater access to education and employment opportunities for children with disabilities, adolescent girls and young women, and to inform the design of strategies to address them; the development of child rights-based school regulations to ensure all girls and boys have the right to an education free from discrimination, abuse, exploitation and/or sexual harassment; a Gender-responsive curriculum and skills development in relation to pedagogical practices, school management, WASH infrastructure, and transferable skills; and extensive consultations through U-Report and studies on the state of the education system from a transformative perspective. These initiatives have contributed to a better understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and alternative modalities of distance education, including digital education, as well as the challenges faced by teachers to ensure universal access to quality education. Through a UN-to-UN agreement between UNICEF and UNESCO, 40 (five female) statistical focal points from the MoE in six provinces are being trained in a six-month specialized course on data collection, processing and statistical analysis. In addition, UNICEF continues to support the Data Must Speak initiative in coordination with ESARO and MoE. Progress achieved includes the elaboration of education profiles for municipal, school and community levels that help understanding of the challenges that keep children from going to school and learning.

UNICEF successfully advocated and provided technical guidance for the inclusion of Angola in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The GPE is led by MoE and MoF, and represented by major development agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, AFD, WB, ADB), key embassies (UK, EU,

Japan, Norway), civil society and the private sector. The GPE represents an important opportunity to access more resources to strengthen the capacity of the education system, accelerate girls' education and to transform the education system.

In collaboration with World Vision and the National Institute for Children, UNICEF conducted qualitative research on the drivers of violence against children (knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, social norms, environmental factors). This will inform the design and implementation of national social and behavioural change strategies and action plans to address harmful norms conducive to violence, and ensure Government has a strengthened programmatic framework on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harmful practices.

As part of the MRI, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) intervention is being implemented in partnership with the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiatives. This contributes to improving the psychosocial environment of 17 selected schools and communities in Huila, ensuring 5,000 children and 200 parents and caregivers have access to MHPSS services.

UNICEF supported the development of a more specialized Justice for Children system, including advocacy for political endorsement through a Presidential Decree. The 'one-stop-shop' model for child-friendly service delivery for children in contact with the law, was designed and established with UNICEF support in 2020. The Presidential Decree was issued and came into force in early 2022.

Decentralized Convergent Social Services, Coordination and Public Finance for Children

In 2022 the Support to Social Protection Strengthening in Angola project (APROSOC), an eight year-long EU-funded project that's been a major game changer for social protection, came to an end.

APROSOC piloted two novel approaches to social protection: the Municipalization of Social Action, which brought social assistance services closer to beneficiaries through Integrated Social Action Centres; and Valor Criança, a cash+ transfer programme for families of children 0-5 years old. Valor Criança was the first social cash transfer experience in Angola, and in 2022 reached over 35,000 children from almost 20,000 households in six municipalities, across three provinces. First payments started in 2019 and in 2022, the last payments cycles were successfully implemented by the MASFAMU with support from UNICEF. The field visit during the final cycle had representatives of the MoF, Ministry of Economy and Planning, MASFAMU, Ministry of Territorial Administration (MAT), Civil Society, EU, UNICEF, and World Bank. The presence of MAT and World Bank was important as they are implementing the current flagship cash transfer programme of the Government, known as Kwenda. Kwenda is a model of cash transfer based on the foundations laid out by Valor Criança. The Government recognises that the pilot experience of Valor Criança was critical to inform the design and planning of Kwenda, which aims to reach 1.6 million households by end of 2023. This project shows that a relatively small UNICEF-supported pilot initiative can lead to a large, nationwide programme.

UNICEF and the National Institute of Statistics (INE) conducted an impact study of Valor Criança, collecting data through an end-line survey from 2,586 households (treated and control population), returning to households that were part of the baseline in 2019. The results will be publicly presented in 2023 to key stakeholders at a high-level event.

UNICEF strengthened national capacity on Public Financial Management, particularly on Programme-Based Budgeting; generated evidence on sector financing and promoted budget transparency and participation in collaboration with MoF. Under the leadership of MoF an online training reached more than 100 participants from national and subnational governments and a training manual was developed. This additional capacity will contribute to improving planning and budgeting for social protection and influence the structure of the State Budget from 2024 onwards.

UNICEF initiated a Public Expenditure Review on Health and Nutrition, and a WASH financial bottleneck analysis that examine the levels and quality of expenditure in these critical sectors. UNICEF also developed ten sectoral Budget Briefs that will be updated with 2023 budget data and launched in the first quarter of 2023. In addition, a rapid analysis of the State Budget proposal was undertaken to be shared with Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to advocate for strategic investment in social sectors. Following a request from MoF, UNICEF organized a roundtable meeting on health financing to help explore options for sustainably financing the sector. It brought together representatives from MoF, MoH, development partners, academia and CSO, and showcased

international examples from the region. A key achievement is the agreement on the need to develop a Health Financing Strategy, which UNICEF will support.

UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF, UNDP and other UN agencies, implemented the joint UN Angola Project on the Integrated Simulation Model of the SDGs ('iSDG Project') under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy and Planning, in partnership with MoF, and INE. The Systems Dynamics (iSDG) model analysed and determined the potential medium-term impact of the policy and programme interventions outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP) on the achievement of national priorities and tested their effects towards achieving the SDGs by 2030. This kind of holistic analysis can help build further commitment to the development ambition outlined in the NDP and move Angola towards fully realising the potential of social investments.

The development of strategic partnerships to secure climate financing is key to addressing the adaptation needs of children and women in Angola. UNICEF initiated an inter UN agency partnership with UNDP to jointly develop a Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal for submission to the GCF Secretariat in 2023. The strategic partnership with UNDP to mobilize climate finance was fully endorsed by the Ministry of Environment through an official communication to UNICEF and UNDP. UNICEF started a new partnership with a youth-led Non-governmental organisation called ECO-Angola. The partnership aims to explore how best to use their extensive network of youth activists across the country to raise the profile of climate change among young people, create a space for youth in the local and global climate conversation and leverage opportunities for job creation in the green sector with a focus on the circular economy. Partnership with youth-led organizations can enable the development and implementation of strategies that address the dual crises of youth unemployment and climate change, while helping develop the next generation of Angolan leaders.

UNICEF continued to work together with ILO under the "Improving synergies for Social Protection and Public Finance Management," having organized joint events and studies. Collaboration with UNDP also brought attention to the importance of measuring poverty in a multidimensional way by presenting the results of two studies done by INE to key stakeholders from national and subnational governments.

UNICEF worked closely with UNOCHA and WFP to deliver life-saving response to drought-affected families in southern Angola. While UNICEF led the WASH response to ensure that families have access to clean drinking water, WFP and UNICEF collaborated to address the situation of malnourished children. The European Union and USAID joined the advocacy efforts of UNICEF to strengthen the collective drought response in the country.

Non-governmental organisations (NGO) including World Vision, People in Need and ADRA have been key implementing partners for UNICEF to support drought response. Besides engaging with the communities to counsel mothers and generate demand for services, the NGO have also been critical for training government officials to strengthen systems and improve service delivery.

Partnership with foundations and global alliances such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Gavi have led to successful advocacy with the Government to enhance immunization programmes, and also by providing financial support.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

When the impact study of Valor Criança was planned, it proved crucial to have involved INE from the beginning during the baseline phase in 2019. Meetings with the highest level of INE, where the lead researcher from UNICEF's Office of Research, Innocenti explained the methodology, were key to gain the full support of INE. This was important for ownership and credibility. Given the longitudinal nature of the study, where enumerators went back to thousands of households that they interviewed three years ago, INE faced several challenges during data collection. Thanks to the previous

collaboration with the local social action teams and strong coordination with municipalities and provincial governments where data was being collected, INE was able to reach the required number of households within the scheduled timeline. A key driver of success were the weekly meetings with representatives of the key stakeholders involved (MASFAMU, INE, UNICEF), which allowed the teams to find solutions and discuss the challenges and progress achieved.

The preliminary results of the Valor Criança Impact Study were shared by Innocenti in December 2022 and is an important platform for evidence-based advocacy and strategic discussions with the Angolan government on the importance of continuing to invest in cash transfers for children due to the positive impacts on the well-being of children and families. The preliminary results have shown consistent improvements in the material wellbeing of the children (shoes, clothing and bedding) as well as improvements in quality of the nutritional options for children. The children who received cash transfers also showed improvements in health practices such as vaccines and vitamins and having health cards; while the qualitative component of the study confirmed that families more readily accessed health services as they were able to pay for medicines and treatments. Importantly, family dynamics were also improved as the quantitative and qualitative data confirmed that families made joint decisions on how to spend funds and support the needs of the children and the family.

The preliminary results also highlighted challenges faced by the project with cash payment points defined by the banks and the long distances faced by some beneficiaries. This was exacerbated by the low coverage of banking services, which continued to show limited capacity for financial transactions and benefits in terms of financial inclusion as the structural problems remained. The lessons learned by the Valor Criança project in operationalizing services for social protection through local authorities has been instrumental in shaping the Government's scale-up of the project in 18 provinces; the impact study will further provide key recommendations for sustainability and improve the impact on the ground.

Finally, the process of doing the Valor Criança impact study provided valuable lessons that will influence our work with INE in 2023. There were some significant operational and ethical challenges that arose during the process. UNICEF had the opportunity to present and discuss these challenges with INE and agreed on some capacity building initiatives that will be useful and relevant for future surveys undertaken by INE in the future.

Drawing on guidance from the global UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank Mission Recovery Education initiative, the UNICEF emergency response in Angola addressed the challenges of learning loss, exacerbated by the pandemic due to school closures and limited access to distance learning modalities. Implemented in close collaboration with MoE and the Huila Provincial Government, the Mission Recovery project in Huila focused on foundational learning in literacy and numeracy to address this learning loss. The pilot project in Huila provided evidence of the critical need to prioritise learning in these subjects, and the rationale to scale up nationwide the three priority aims established in the Mission Recovery strategy that emphasise the holistic needs of children's health and psychosocial wellbeing and guided by teachers that have been adequately trained to address the learning loss.

To strengthen the immunization programme, UNICEF Angola procured and installed remote temperature monitoring equipment to be used in vaccine transport and storage, providing an accurate and continuous record of temperatures being maintained throughout the entire supply chain process. Besides this procurement, UNICEF Angola also trained the cold chain managers and vaccination staff on how to read the temperature monitoring reports and take informed decisions. Continuing to strengthen the immunization programme, UNICEF Angola trained technicians on how to use Logistimo software, which empowers the officials by providing an overview of vaccine management in the country.