



A student of Osu Presbyterian Girls 1 Basic School poses for a picture during a visit by the United Nations in Ghana, the Ministry of Education and partners as they undertake a tour of some selected schools in Accra as part of the activities to mark this year's International Day for Education. Accra, Ghana. January 24, 2023. UNICEF/Francis Kokoroko

UNICEF, GHANA

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY – MARCH 2023



Dear Partners, and Friends,

Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2023. We would like to share a summary of our joint achievements during the first quarter of this year. In the first three months, the UNICEF team in Ghana continued to focus on supporting the country's key development priorities. This include supporting maternal and newborn care health services, children living with disabilities, youth engagement, and strengthening community resilience in districts affected by the spillover of the Sahel crisis. Our work spanned empowering youth in technology through the inauguration of the third cohort of the UNICEF StartUp Lab to child online protection. As part of our efforts to deliver efficient responses to ongoing challenges, UNICEF provided support to build the capacity of workers in health, nutrition, sanitation, and education.

This could only be achieved through our strategic partnership with you: the Government of Ghana, the United Nations system, Development Partners, private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations, academia, the media, youth, and children. We are delighted to have worked together and are confident that our relationship will only continue to grow in strength.

I encourage you to read this newsletter to learn more about our interventions and actions in the first quarter of 2023 as they also mark our first achievement in our new Country Development Programme established for 2023 to 2025.

Yours sincerely,
Fiachra McAsey
UNICEF Representative a.i.

Health

Global Network Meeting on Quality of Care held in Accra

In March, UNICEF participated in the Global Network for Quality of Care (QoC) conference organized in Accra, Ghana. Representatives from 11 countries; Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda participated with government and development partners from Ghana. Lessons from country-level implementation of the Quality of Care initiative to reduce newborn and maternal mortality were shared to outline the successes and challenges of the five-year programme. Ghanaian delegates presented their experiences and preliminary results from a UNICEF-supported Nationwide Newborn Care Unit Assessment to inform efforts to improve newborn outcomes. UNICEF also supported Ghana Health Service to exhibit an innovative board game designed to improve knowledge of mothers with low-birth-weight babies in Kangaroo Mother Care practices.



UNICEF Representative OiC, Ebrima Sarr delivering speech at the opening ceremony of the Global Network Meeting on Quality of Care in Accra ©UNICEF/ Roger Yebuah / 2023

Regional Health Specialist visit to newborn care units in Greater Accra region

UNICEF's Regional Maternal and Child Health Specialist Dr Tomomi Kitamura visited two newborn care units in the Greater Accra region on Friday 17th March 2023. The purpose of the visit was to document Kangaroo Mother Center practices and to observe the testing of an innovative newborn care unit procurement tool developed by UNICEF Supply Division Innovation Center. Dr Kitamura interacted with the Greater Accra newborn care specialist Dr. Nana Okai Brafo and other members of staff the Ashaiman and Maamobi polyclinics in Accra, who took the opportunity to thank UNICEF for this contribution to their success in improving the quality of care.



Dr. Kitamura interacting with staff at Maamobi Polyclinic.

First Quarter Extended Newborn Subcommittee Meeting

With support from UNICEF, the Family Health Division of the Ghana Health Service organized the 2023 first quarterly Extended Newborn Subcommittee Meeting. The meeting brought together newborn focal persons from all 16 regions, and partners to review progress of the implementation of Ghana's Newborn Strategy. Participants shared progress on the implementation of sub-national action plans. UNICEF is working with the Family Health Division and other stakeholders to further review the subnational plans and work together to accelerate the achievement of targets for newborn health.

Saving children's lives through vaccination

In the first quarter of 2023, UNICEF continued to work with the Ministry of Health and its Expanded Programme on Immunization to make sure that every child in Ghana could access to the vaccines they need. This includes prompt, reliable and cost-efficient vaccines procurement and distribution. It also includes dedicated support to cold chain system strengthening to keep vaccines safe and effective as they reach the communities that need them most. Ghana made substantive gains on immunization over the past 30 years. However, the resurgence of measles in Ghana, as in other countries, is alarming and demonstrates how quickly gains in child survival and development can be reversed. Outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases early this year are an unwelcome reminder that we cannot take continued progress for granted.



A nurse carrying a child during COVID-19 and Polio Vaccination campaign, UNICEF/Romuald Ngomssi/ 2023

Nutrition

Launch of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines

As part of the UN joint effort, UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture for the development and launch of Ghana's first Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs). The National launch occurred on 22nd February 2023. The guidelines will be disseminated to inform the public about consuming more nutritious foods and living healthier lives.

Nutrition Friendly School Initiative programme

UNICEF participated in a national review of nutrition friendly school initiative programme. Organized by the Ghana Health Service and the Ghana Education Service, the programme

aims to improve the school food environment and promote healthy eating habits among children and adolescents. UNICEF has provided financial and technical support for the roll out of the initiative in 1600 schools across all of Ghana's 16 Regions. Implementing regions used the platform to share their achievements, best practices, challenges, and way forward in the implementation of the programme.

Education



Three students at the Football for Inclusion Unified Football Tournament at the Akropong School for the Blind, October 2022 (c) UNICEF / Francis Kokoroko / 2023

In collaboration with the National Council on Persons with Disabilities, UNICEF participated in the second Disability Inclusion Summit. Engaging over 400 stakeholders to dialogue on disability mainstreaming across different sectors and to share Ghana's efforts in the realization of the 2018 and 2022 Global Disability Summit (GDS) commitments. Key areas discussed included Inclusive Education and the role of ICT, and innovation in employment creation for persons with disabilities. Further, some key documents including the Driver

Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) policy for testing and training drivers with disabilities, and the National Inclusion Disaster Risk Management guidelines were launched at the summit. In attendance were key policy makers including the UN Resident Coordinator, who shared the UN's commitment to promote inclusion.

Adolescent girls and mothers in Ghana welcome Women UNlimited from Canada

This quarter, UNICEF welcomed representatives from 'Women UNlimited' – a Canada National Committee initiative which brings together a circle of women committed to creating maximum impact for children. Over the past four years Women UNlimited has supported efforts of Ghana to promote retention, completion, and transitioning among adolescent girls in schools in five districts: Tolon, Saboba, Nanumba North, West Mamprusi and West Gonja. Areas include the promotion of the guidelines on prevention of pregnancy among



UNICEF Staff Gloria listening to a group of adolescent mothers (c) UNICEF / Francis Kokoroko / 2023

schoolgirls and re-entry into school for young mothers after childbirth, and the Safe Schools Initiative. Others include the supply of teaching and learning materials for Science and Mathematics, the training of teachers on subject content and gender-responsive pedagogy, among others. Young mothers who had returned to school and now enjoy a safe and conducive School environment also told their stories. Girls who benefitted from bursary support (covering sanitary pads, textbooks, mathematical sets, school uniforms, school sandals, etc.) and have completed Junior High School and are preparing to transition to Senior High School were on hand to thank Women Unlimited for their support.

Family and Community Engagement

In March, UNICEF collaborated with the Ghana Education Service to complete the training plan for the Family and Community Engagement Guidelines and accompanying materials developed to support engagements in communities. The FCE training package will equip national and district education officers as well as parents in communities across the country to support children’s learning, especially at home.

Child Protection

UNICEF presents at the USAID Global Webinar in celebration of World Social Work Day

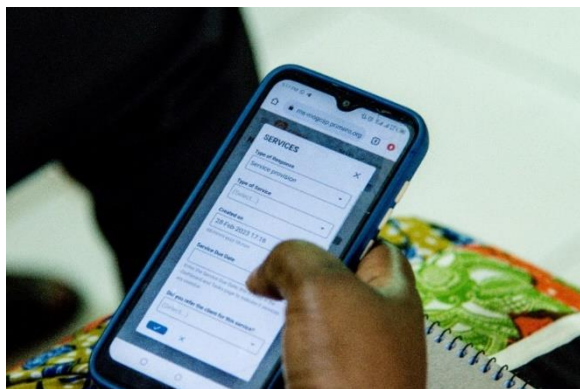
In celebration of World Social Work Day, 21st March 2023, UNICEF delivered a presentation to a USAID Global Webinar about its ongoing support to the Government of Ghana in strengthening the social service workforce in Ghana through the Integrated Social Services (ISS). Implemented in 160 districts out of 261 in Ghana, ISS brings child protection, social protection, and health service providers together to address multiple vulnerabilities of children. So far, ISS has positively impacted over 175,000 vulnerable people, including over 90,000 children.



60 MMDAs are introduced to the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS)

From February to April 2023, the Office of the Head of Local Government Service (OHLGS), Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development (MLGDRD), Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) and UNICEF conducted in-person training on the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) for nearly 350 people from 60 MMDAs from all the 16 regions in Ghana.

Implemented as part of the Integrated Social Services (ISS) approach, SWIMS is a digital case management system which can securely collect, store, manage, and share data on child protection. Thanks to the training, now 160 Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDA) out of 261 in Ghana use the system. Participants included District Social Welfare Community Development Officers, District Planning, Finance and Budget Officers, District Heads of Social Welfare, and Regional Heads of Social Welfare, among others.



A trainee following instructions on how to use the SWIMS during the coaching session in Assin North District. © UNICEF/ Abansal /2023



A District Social Welfare and Community Development Officer exercising on the SWIMS during the coaching session in Assin North District. © UNICEF/ Abansal /2023

Set up of the Child Protection in Emergency (CPiE) Working Group

Following the L2 activation as a result of the spillover of the Sahel crisis in Ghana, UNICEF has worked with the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) to create a Child Protection in Emergency Working Group. The goal is to support the MoGCSP to lead the coordination for emergency preparedness and strengthen resilience for the protection of children at national and decentralized levels focusing particularly on the potential spillover effects from the Sahel crisis.



Child protection in Emergency meeting © Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection/2023

UNICEF and partners commemorate Africa Safer Internet Day

A Child Online Protection Forum for the Media and School Children was held on Tuesday, February 7, 2023, as part of Ghana's celebration of this year's Africa Safer Internet Day, in line with African Union's Cyber Security Agenda. Under the theme *"Empowering the African Child on Safer Internet"*, the event sought to generate awareness of the Child Online Provisions of the Cyber Security Act, 2020 (Act 1038), as well of current trends and emerging child online safety issues and concerns. It also sought to share safety tips for children and young persons including reporting channels. In attendance were children selected from Senior High Schools and dignitaries including the Director General of the Cyber Security Authority (CSA) and the Director for Guidance and Counselling Unit, Ghana Education Service.



Children presenting sensitization placards on safer internet during the commemoration of Africa Safer Internet Day © UNICEF/2023

WASH

Strengthening Ghana's sanitation sector policy environment: building WASH sector stakeholders' capacity on African Policy Guidelines

UNICEF is working with WASH stakeholders in Ghana to strengthen sanitation policy by supporting a review of sector policies and strategies using the framework of the African Sanitation Policy Guidelines and the African Sanitation Policy Assessment Tool (ASPAT). To this end, UNICEF facilitated a training session for sector stakeholders on both technical documents. The guidelines and tools were developed by the African



Participants attending ASPAT training

Minister's Council on Water (AMCOW) Secretariat to provide guidance to African governments on the review, revision, and development of sanitation policies and associated implementation strategies. The training, facilitated with the support of the AMCOW secretariat, was attended by policymakers, Development Partners, NGOs, and national and sub-national government agency representatives.

Following the capacity-building session, participants assessed Ghana's sanitation policy environment to identify gaps and areas that need strengthening. Based on the

outcomes of the assessment, the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) and the AMCOW secretariat engaged the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR) and the Parliamentary Select Committee on Works and Housing to share the key outcomes, whilst advocating on key sanitation issues that require legislative approval or support. The outcomes of the assessment will also feed into the review of Ghana’s environmental sanitation policy and related strategy documents.

World Water Day and UN Water Conference

In March, UNICEF joined sector partners to commemorate the 2023 UN World Water Day. Activities included floats, school competitions, and celebrations. UNICEF provided critical technical inputs to the multi-partner committee and contributed financially to ensure a successful commemoration. Three webinars, supported by UNICEF were held on water safety, water quality and accelerating partnerships to address water crises. UNICEF represented the UN in Ghana at the national commemoration of World Water Day concluded on 22nd March in the North East Region.

Social Policy and Inclusion



For the past three months, UNICEF has been engaged in building and strengthening the gender and shock-responsiveness of social protection systems globally. The government of Ghana has been receiving technical support from UNICEF to strengthen the gender and shock responsiveness of the country’s social protection system. This builds on commitments in the Ghana National Social Protection Policy and the National Gender Policy. UNICEF has worked very closely with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to initiate national consultations across the country to design and implement a roadmap for strengthening the gender responsiveness of the social protection system. Furthermore, UNICEF is supporting MoF to develop the 2022 SDG budget and revise the SDG budget manual which was developed in 2018. Revising the SDG manual will include updating the SDG codes in the chart of accounts to include new codes for



Representatives of the Local Conference of Youth presents citation to UNICEF Representative a.i. (c) UNICEF / Apag Annankra / 2023

gender and child-specific SDG expenditures. This will help track budget allocations and actual expenditures on gender and child-related SDG interventions.

Social and Behavior Change

In March, Ghana Health Service and UNICEF held a Behavior Science and Human-Centered Design workshop initiative to reduce and improve on Adolescent, Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH). In addition to capacity-strengthening on the two approaches, ideas were developed from suggestions put

forward by surveys completed with adolescent health service providers, NGO partners and others. These ideas were tested with adolescent users and recommended intervention pathways to reduce adolescent pregnancies in Ghana.

In partnership with Common Thread Communications, research using Human-Centered Design methodologies to improve the quality of ASRH and Mental Health Services was conducted. Research included in-depth interviews and eight focus group discussions around quality of and access to health services for adolescents were completed across two districts in Ashanti Region.

Gender, Adolescence and Youth

Youth Climate Action - COP27 Debriefing Workshop & Citation from LCOY Team

Following the COP27 conference, UNICEF supported a debriefing workshop with Green African Youth Organization (GAYO) and the Youth Climate Council. UNICEF supported the training programme for 10 youth negotiators in 2022, and 4 of them attended COP27 and joined various negotiation tables along with the official negotiators. During the debriefing session, negotiators shared key outcomes on adaptation and mitigation, climate finance, and the global forum on climate vulnerability. UNICEF Representative a.i., Fiachra McAsey participated and encouraged continued action by young people to solve climate-related issues in innovative ways.



In addition to the debriefing workshop, the Local Conference of Youth (LCOY) Ghana team paid a courtesy call on Representative a.i. and presented a citation in appreciation

for UNICEF's support with youth climate action. In partnership with GAYO and YCC, UNICEF has been supporting the LCOY Ghana for the past two years, which feeds into the Global Conference of Youth (COY) and then COP, delivering young people's voices to the global dialogue. In this meeting, UNICEF expressed its continued support for adolescents and young people, including their empowerment and engagement in climate action.



GenU Global team, UNICEF staff & young adolescents after the youth roundtable at Ghana Library Authority
© UNICEF/ Romuald Ngomssi/2023

Roundtable with Adolescent Girls & Young Women in STEM

On 13 February, adolescent girls and young women in STEM were visited by the Women Unlimited (WU) delegation from Canada. More than 40 participants, including UNICEF UPSHIFT graduates, engaged with five delegates from Women Unlimited who shared their personal career experiences. Participants also shared their challenges including stigma, limited opportunities, and unsupportive environments they faced as women in STEM, in addition to the challenges around skills development and unemployment they encounter as young people. Soronko Academy, an UPSHIFT partner, presented their experiences and lessons learned in tailoring and delivering UPSHIFT programme for girls, and women, and advocated for more support for girls and women in digital skilling, technology, and innovation.



Youth Roundtable with Generation Unlimited Global Team

As part of a mission by the Generation Unlimited team, 34 adolescents and young people joined a Youth Roundtable at the Youth Engagement Center Ghana Library to share experiences and challenges around skilling and employment, entrepreneurship, youth

participation, and civic engagement across Ghana. The need for more practice in schools, access to information and services, opportunities to explore aptitudes, and more support for entrepreneurship and employment were shared as some of the key concerns of young people. During the GenU Global Team mission to Ghana UNICEF and GenU Teams engaged with various stakeholders including government partners, CSOs, private sector, and young people, which enabled a deeper understanding of the youth ecosystem and discussions of UNICEF’s support for youth skilling, employability, entrepreneurship, and engagement.

International Women’s Day



UNICEF Chief of Social Policy and Inclusion Pauliina Mulhovo & staff taking part to the walk organized to celebrate International Women’s Day. © UNICEF/Vera Acquah /2023

In celebration of International Women’s Day (IWD) 2023, UNICEF participated in the National Equity Walk organized by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. Under this year’s theme “*DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality*” as well as a campaign theme “*#Embrace Equity*”, the work sought to highlight the contribution of girls and women around the world, in leading innovation and technological transformation including education. The walk was attended by 150 walkers including ministry staff, market women, traditional leaders, Civil Society Organisations, the European Union, and UN agencies.

UNICEF U-report poll ([results here](#)) on the digital gender divide, found that social norms were identified as the main reason for the gender gap in STEM. U-reporters also identified the importance of girl’s and women’s involvement in technology and innovation, to advance gender equality and economic development.

UNICEF StartUp Lab

On January 11th at MEST Africa in Accra, the third batch of the UNICEF Startup Lab (USL) was officially launched. The USL is a six-month accelerator program for transformative tech-driven firms seeking to promote the SDGs for children and young people, funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and run by MEST.

This year, the program admitted 20 startups from over 470 applicants across Ghana. The cohort comprises startups covering areas including in education, health, sanitation, climate action and skills.

The USL delivers a six-month curriculum to startups through intensive work week in Accra, as well as support and mentorship during key week hosted at partner hubs across Ghana. Experts from the Ghanaian ecosystem were engaged to deliver these modules and to act as mentors identified to provide hands-on support to startups on key problem areas. A demonstration day and investor week is planned for the end June 2023.

Each startup will also receive a grant for product prototyping. Several Startups among the cohort will become candidates for digital public good certification. To know more about this cohort and the previous ones, visit the UNICEF StartUp Lab [website](#).



Group photo of the third cohort of the UNICEF Startup Lab © UNICEF/ Denis Nipah/2023

Feature story

School children in northern Ghana are standing for peace

Peace Clubs in the Upper East formed as part of resilience-building in anticipation of Sahel Crisis spill-over



Students from Sapelliga JHS and Galaka JHS participate in a football match to foster unity and create awareness on the importance of peaceful coexistence in a community. © UNICEF / Roger Yebuah / 2023

Be it through football, skits or open discussion, children in Ghana's Upper East Region are finding ways to cultivate peace in their schools and communities. This is due to the formation of new after-school 'Peace Clubs', formed in response to the arrival of displaced children and their families from Burkina Faso to Ghana, because of the Sahel crisis.

At St Theresa's Junior High School in Paga, a few kilometres from the border, a group of 67 children between the ages of 12 to 17 years united to learn more about living in harmony with new arrivals into their community.

On the day of our visit, some members of the Peace Club are performing a drama about living in harmony with family and newcomers to the community.

Fourteen-year-old Magdalene Babweiwa, 15-year-old James Adutani and 14-year-old Ominatu Yahaya were the protagonists of the drama. “I feel sad that our neighbours are in danger,” Magdalene told UNICEF as she reflected on the reality for those facing the challenges of conflict and displacement. “We wouldn’t be able to farm, go to school. I wouldn’t even be able to fetch water,” she added.



Magdalene Babweiwe and Ominatu Yahaya (left to right), both members of St Theresa JHS Peace Club after a performance in school, on the need of maintaining peaceful co-existence in the community. Paga, Ghana. Feb 8th, 2023 © UNICEF / Roger Yebuah/2023

“I enjoy attending Peace Club,” James explains. “I learn about how to live with strangers, and I want to be able to share with them and treat them with kindness. I know that if I treat others with kindness, if I travel away from here, others will also show me love,” he beams.

Another member of the Peace Club is 14-year-old Hectorina Kanmong. She adds: “I enjoy attending Peace Club. I used to be quite aggressive, but now I like to practise peace and I

no longer fight.”

“Peace Club has shown us to be more friendly, to help others and to share our things,” added Ominatu.

With the support of UNICEF, in partnership with the Government of Japan through the Community Resilience Building Against the Sahel Spillover Project, Ghana Education Service (GES) has successfully established 262 Peace Clubs in all schools across two border districts in the Upper East Region. Recognising that peacebuilding plays a key role in supporting the settling of displaced persons, schools situated in regions close to the border of Burkina Faso where skirmishes have broken out, have prioritized the establishment of Peace Clubs as the communities are gradually seeing an influx of displaced persons.

In Sapeliga KG/Primary school in Bawku West – another town nestled at the border of Ghana and Burkina Faso - football matches between communities, and dramas are being used to spread the power of peace and to foster unity.



Peace Club Performance at Sapeliga KG/Primary , Bawku West © UNICEF / Roger Yebuah / 2023

Teachers and other school workers use opportunities at the start, half time and at end of matches to inform players and spectators alike of the benefits of cultivating peace and the steps to take when encountering strangers, which includes informing the local authorities.

Bawku West is home to an unsteady number of migrants who are arriving from Burkina Faso to

escape the conflict in the country. Weekly, families arrive to informal settlements to seek sanctuary in Kaare, with the number of migrants doubling from 110 to 235 in the space of 12 months.

UNICEF Education Officer Timoah Kunchire added: “Beyond the information absorption of learning about the importance of peace, girls and boys are developing their confidence, and soft skills of creativity, and public speaking.”

Ayimga Michael, headmaster of Sapeliga KG/Primary School: “We are happy that so many children in our schools are able to take part in the Peace Clubs. We are very thankful to UNICEF for their support of our children. It has allowed us to really inform and engage our students about this important life-long skill.”

To learn more about UNICEF’s work in Ghana, you can contact:

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