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# UNICEF SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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A young boy with a serious expression is seated in a blue wheelchair. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt with a green collar and blue denim jeans with rips at the knees. He is holding a white rectangular sign in front of him with both hands. The sign has black text in Portuguese. The background consists of a wall made of vertical wooden planks and a dirt floor. To the left, there is a wooden structure that looks like a pallet or a frame. The lighting is natural, coming from the right side, casting shadows on the wall.

**CRIANÇAS DEFICIENTES  
TÊM DIREITO A TER  
UMA VIDA DIGNA**

# Preface

It is with immense pleasure and gratitude that we present to you the annual report showcasing UNICEF's contributions to São Tomé and Príncipe's efforts to improving the lives of children. Through this report, we aim to highlight our organization's unwavering commitment to safeguarding and advancing the rights of children worldwide. Within these pages, we are delighted to share the outcomes of a year filled with both challenges and rewarding endeavors in our tireless pursuit to ensure that every child in São Tomé and Príncipe has access to vital services in health, education, protection, and participation. These essential services are crucial for their holistic development, well-being, and future happiness.

Throughout the past year, we encountered different challenges on our path, yet we also celebrated notable improvements. It is thanks to the relentless dedication of our invaluable partners, staff, and collaborators that we have

made significant progress in enhancing the living conditions of children in São Tomé and Príncipe.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to closely collaborate with the government and local partners, striving to overcome the challenges that still persist. Together, we aspire to empower the children of São Tomé and Príncipe, nurturing their abilities and enabling them to realize their full potential. We sincerely hope that this report offers you valuable insights into our work in São Tomé and Príncipe, inspiring others to join us in this vital mission. Only through collective action can we truly make a tangible difference and contribute to constructing a brighter future for all children.

With heartfelt gratitude,

**Noel Marie Zagre**

*UNICEF Regional Representative Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe*



# Update on the context and situation of children



Left: Landscape of the community of Água-Izé, in the south zone

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# A

The Democratic Republic of Sao Tomé and Príncipe is a Small Island Developing State with a population of 219,0781 in 2022

of whom approximately 41% are children and adolescents aged 0-19. After the holding of presidential elections in 2021, legislative and regional elections were conducted in September 2022, leading to a peaceful transition and the swearing of a new government in November. Tensions heightened on 24 November, after a coup attempt was averted by Santomean authorities. Stability was reestablished immediately and has been maintained since.

Dominated by the tourism and agricultural sectors, the economy, insufficiently diversified and strongly dependent on international aid remains fragile and highly vulnerable to external shocks as well as climate change. Unemployment rate stays high at 15.9% in 2021 (World Bank). The COVID-19 pandemic followed by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have negatively impacted the country. The drop in tourist income, compounded by the sharp rise in food and fuel imports prices, have dramatically increased inflationary pressures deteriorating household purchasing power and adversely impacting revenues.

The poor and most marginalized groups<sup>2</sup> are most likely to be disproportionately impacted. As a result, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth declined from 1.9% in 2021 to 1.4% in 2022 (International Monetary Fund- IMF).

Sao Tome and Principe is classified as a Lower Middle-Income Country. The country has made significant progress in terms of social development. Hence, the Human Development Index rose to 0.62 in 2021 (0.56 in 2010), with medium-low gender equality (Gender Development Index of 0.907-UNDP).



The gender gap is particularly marked in terms of decent employment, sexual and reproductive health and violence, affecting particularly the most marginalized adolescent girls. In 2022, a Voluntary National Review assessed progresses towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

## Every child survives and thrives

In terms of healthy life and well-being (SDG-3), the average life expectancy increased to 70.4 years in 2019 (World Health Organization). In 2022, the country remained free of polio transmission and has eliminated maternal and neonatal tetanus. The operationalization of the National Deployment Vaccine Plan was a key achievement. Sao Tome and Principe ranks among the 10 African countries with the

best COVID-19 vaccination coverage. The redeployment of health staff to COVID-19 immunization efforts led to a decline in routine immunization coverage. The percentage of children aged 12-23 months fully immunized increased from 41.5% in 2021 to 69% in 2022, above pre-COVID level (66% in 2019) and annual target. The country faced its first dengue outbreak, reaching 1,161 cases (April to January 2023)<sup>1</sup>.

The prevalence of undernutrition (moderate and severe stunting) in children under age 5 reduced from 17.2% in 2014 to 11.7% in 2019, marking progresses towards zero hunger (SDG-2). Increasing prices in commodities have worsened access to food and diet quality, impacting the poorest households. UNICEF furthered its support to supplementation interventions focusing on the most vulnerable.

<sup>1</sup> European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

## Every child lives in a clean and safe environment

Progress on access to drinking water and sanitation (SDG-6) has remained slow. 45% of the population still practices open defecation (MICS-6, 2019). In 2020, 36% of households had safely managed drinking water (34% in 2015<sup>2</sup>). With UNICEF support, the National Strategy for Environmental Sanitation was validated. A WASH partners group was established to enhance intersectoral coordination. Maintenance of systems and facilities remains a key issue, prioritized by UNICEF in 2022.

<sup>2</sup> JMP ([washdata.org](http://washdata.org))

Under the emergency response, the country office supported the rehabilitation of water supply systems damaged by floods in four communities and distribution of purification tablets.

## Every child learns

The country reached the enrollment of 93% of children in primary education in 2019. However, lower secondary education completion rate remains low at 60% (MICS-6). Out-of-school children from ages 11-17 significantly increased during the pandemic. Despite improvements in 2022, the country has not recovered the pre-level crisis



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Hence, UNICEF intensified interventions to increase life skills, while supporting a more equitable access to early childhood education. The Transforming Education Summit offered a unique opportunity for sectoral concertation and inclusive dialogue, with adolescents' participation resulting in a renewed commitment from the government on access, inclusion and quality education (SDG-4).

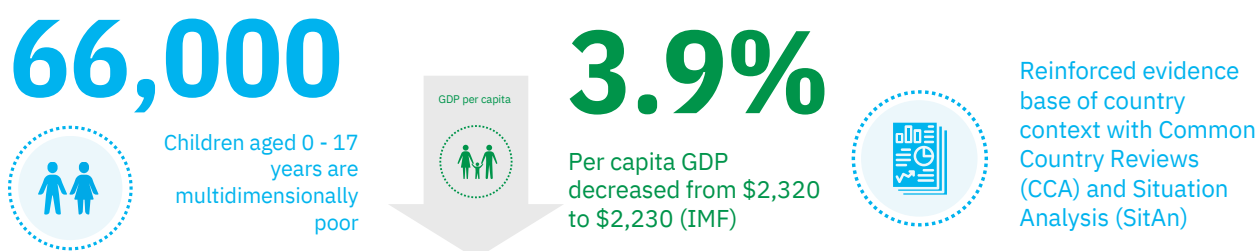
## Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

Violence against children, including sexual violence, remains widespread, perpetuated by social practices that pose challenges and gender inequality. 84% of children aged 1-14 experienced violent discipline, out of whom, 14% severe physical punishment (MICS-6). Despite achievements made in 2021 in the operationalization of the multi-sectoral coordination mechanism for the child protection system and of the Multi-sectoral Protocol for Child Protection Case Management, progresses in 2022 stalled due to insufficient ownership and political changes. UNICEF facilitated a reflection leading to the redefinition of priorities to revise the Protocol and strengthen administrative data systems in 2023.

## Every child has an equitable chance in life

The social protection system was reinforced, reaching around 21% of the total population<sup>5</sup>. Poverty and inequality levels remain high. One third of the population lives on less than \$1.90 a day (World Bank). According to the Multidimensional Deprivation Overlap Analysis (MODA), finalized in 2022, 63% of children aged 0-17 years (66,000) were identified as being multidimensionally poor. In 2022, GDP per capita decreased from \$2,320 to \$2,230 (IMF). UNICEF has increased its support to complement the cash transfer program with care interventions while increasing public finance advocacy efforts to reduce inequalities and poverty (SDG 1 and 10).

The social protection system has been strengthened reaching about 21% of the total population<sup>3</sup>. The levels of poverty and inequality remain high. One-third of the population lives on less than \$1.90 per day (World Bank). According to the Multidimensional Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA), finalized in 2022, 63% of the children aged 0-17 (66,000) were identified as multidimensionally poor. In 2022, the GPD per capita decreased from \$2,320 to \$2,230 (IMF). UNICEF increased its support to complement the cash transfer programme with care interventions while raising the advocacy efforts for public finance, to reduce inequalities and poverty (SDG 1 and 10). 2022 was pivotal for UNICEF in Sao Tome and Principe. The Country Programme Document (CPD) 2023-2027 was developed ensuring strong collaboration with United Nations agencies and joint consultations with the government, partners and civil society including adolescents and youth, strengthening the evidence base of the country context with the Country Common Analyses (CCA) and the Situation Analysis (SitAn). The country office contributed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027 and prepared the Convention of the Rights of the Child's Confidential Report.



3 CCA, 2022



# Main contributions and drivers of results

In 2022, UNICEF and its partners continued to sustain critical programme interventions for transforming children's lives, in alignment with the Transformation Agenda on the Horizon 2030. Despite the aftermath of the pandemic and the global impact of the war in Ukraine, UNICEF reached significant targets contributing to the CPD 2017-2022 and the outcomes of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF): Social Cohesion, Good Governance, Economic growth and resilience.

## Every child survives and thrives

The annual management plan priorities pursued the consolidation of vaccination programme one of the key results for children for UNICEF in Sao Tome and Principe. The focus on the COVID-19 coverage stretched available human resources for immunization. The country managed to achieve a three-dose of pentavalent vaccination coverage rate for children aged 0-11 months of 90% (96% in 2021), below the target planned. 88% of districts exceeded a vaccination coverage rate of 80% and no stock-outs were registered at district level. Measles and Rubella coverage reached 91% following catch-up campaigns implemented by UNICEF and WHO. Despite the blip in pentavalent coverage, the country is maintaining an encouraging trajectory in coverage for all major vaccines. An Effective Vaccine Management assessment conducted with WHO will inform an improvement plan for 2023.

2022 marked a key milestone as UNICEF effectively supported the operationalization of the National Deployment Vaccine Plan and COVID-19 vaccination was integrated in the routine programme. By December 2022, 73% of the inhabitants aged 12 and more were fully vaccinated with the support of the COVAX platform.

UNICEF successfully mobilized important resources which provided opportunities to strengthen routine immunization logistics and vaccine management, improving cold chain and stocking capacity, with a focus on primary health care, to reach recovering unvaccinated children. Immunization efforts were accelerated by increased social and behavior change interventions and efficient adolescents' engagement through the U-Report platform. UNICEF supported the government in fulfilling its commitment towards vaccine co-financing and successively advocated to GAVI to revise the deadline for the country vaccine independence from 2024 to 2026.

The pandemic immunization response strained the health workforce affecting other health interventions in the country. Despite the context, to ensure quality and access of equitable primary health care services, UNICEF supported the country for the provision and equitable distribution of essential medicines and equipment for the Integrated Management of Child Illnesses and Maternal Health. About 26,850 children under-five (25,915 in 2021) were covered with essential medicines for the treatment of child illnesses, contributing to the reduction of morbidity and mortality in this age group. Acknowledging the need to scale up multi-sectoral initiatives, financial and technical support was provided to line ministries to expand high impact health interventions at health facility, school and community levels, supported by a strong social and behavior change component, with a focus on adolescent girls for reproductive health.



As the food security deteriorated, UNICEF reinforced its support to the National Nutrition Programme by providing fortified complementary foods and supplements. 16,500 vulnerable children received multiple micronutrient powder. Over 17,800 children (6-59 months), were supplemented with Vitamin A (1,370 more than 2021) and 16,417 with micronutrients. Campaigns to promote exclusive breastfeeding increased reach to 7,010 families (6,868 in 2021). UNICEF focused additional efforts on evidence-based advocacy for increased and equitable budget. UNICEF continued to support the strengthening of Prevention of Maternal to child Transmission. Two newborns were tested HIV positive, failing to maintain the zero vertical transmission target of the CPD, achieved in 2021.

Under UNICEF initiative, 19 facilitators were trained on bottleneck analyses to build up evidence-based planning and data analysis at national and district level with an equity approach.

## Every child lives in a safe and clean environment

In 2022, no communities were certified free of open defecation and progress towards the SDG and the CPD is lagging behind. Emergency interventions in the districts affected by floods constrained the team’s capacity to advance Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) implementation. Efforts focused on social and behavior change interventions. 333 employees in 56 schools were trained for the use and maintenance of hand-washing devices to ensure their sustainability. 15 communities and cooperatives benefited from training on positive practices and CLTS, with a gender lens, paving the way to scale up community engagement in service delivery in 2023. To improve data-driven decision-making, with the support of UNICEF in Guinea Bissau, UNICEF introduced mWater an innovative digital tool for assessments of hygiene, sanitation and water supply.

A diagnostic of the hand washing devices installed in 2021 (which provide basic sanitation to over 56,200 people) was conducted in 88 schools and 8 health units.

A landscape analysis on climate change will be conducted in 2023 to strengthen risk-informed programming for all goal areas.

## Every child has an equitable chance in life

In 2022, UNICEF pursued its technical collaboration with partners (ILO, UNFPA, UNDP) and government to strengthen the capacity of the National Institute for Statistics and generate and disseminate analyses on deprivations to inform advocacy for policy development and equitable investment in child sensitive social protection and social services. State budget diagnoses and budget briefs (Health, Wash, Education, Social Protection sectors), the SitAn and the MODA were developed. With a technical support from UNICEF, the regulation of the National Policy for People with Disability was validated and will be disseminated in 2023.

In 2022, 1.6% of the state budget was allocated to Social Protection (1.5% in 2021) below the expected CPD target. The update of a National Strategy for Social Protection emerges as a priority for 2023. In preparation, UNICEF supported the training of 30 social service workers in Transform, an innovative learning initiative to strengthen capacity for the management of social protection systems.

UNICEF further leveraged the Parental Education Programme (PEP), launched in 2020, which combines existing cash transfer programme for vulnerable families financed by the World Bank with parenting education activities. In 2022, the scope of the PEP was extended to 2624 families. Partnerships were engaged with civil society organizations (CSO) for the delivery of gender-sensitive care services. 235 social services and frontline workers were trained on PEP themes and 71 on nutrition, education, prevention of violence, alcohol abuse (Helpo) and psychological support (Psychologists Association), reinforcing cross sectoral and integrated programming. A programme was broadcast on national TV. The 2022 mid-term evaluation highlighted the positive impact of the PEP on demand for social services and the acquisition of knowledge about parenting practices.



## Every child learns

In 2022, in line with the annual management plan priorities, UNICEF focused on Equitable and Sustainable Access to Education, a key result for children. In 2022, over 13,700 children (51.5% female) completed the year in pre-primary and 29,200 (52% female) in secondary school, representing a 15% and a 3% increase respectively from 2021, underlining a positive trend in enrollment ratio. For primary, figures dropped by 1.7% to 36,995 children (48% female).

In support of the Preschool Education Improvement Program, in 2022, UNICEF supported the creation of pre-school spaces in two communities and itinerant education initiatives reaching 155 out-of-school children. Social and Behavioural Change campaigns and educational fairs involving parents and teachers' associations were conducted in all districts. UNICEF successfully secured funds for the creation and revision of pedagogical guides and related trainings for 60% of the kindergartens in 2023 to improve learning outcomes. A study on Early Childhood Education Services conducted with the Social Policy programme was used by the government to design actions to improve access and retention of children and enrolment in pre-primary education.

To strengthen school management, ensure an enabling and safe environment, and accelerate primary and lower secondary retention rates, UNICEF coordinated joint effort with the Camões Institute and the Ministry to identify good practices in the design of School Improvement Plans in 21 schools, involving 116 teachers, among whom 68% managers. Joint advocacy was engaged with other sections and their line ministries for improved sanitation in schools and a reduction in violence and will be further informed by a study on knowledge, attitudes and practices on violence in schools, family and community settings, launched jointly with the child protection programme.

TUNICEF stepped up its support to the government to expand digital learning and promote equity in primary and lower-secondary schools, with the acquisition of 515 tablets, to implement the digital learning programme to improve literacy and numeracy. 264 teachers and 60 young volunteers were trained to support the initiative, ensuring the preparation of 18 schools (including all 13 schools in Principe region). 1,050 students have already registered. The collaboration with the Akelius programme for equitable access to literacy skills development, reached 833 children and 24 teachers in 5 pilot schools (first grade). A mapping of the national digital learning landscape was conducted and will inform the Digital Learning Strategy 2023. UNICEF office of research-Innocenti is working with the government and university to improve practices.

The advance in the reduction of out-of-school children (11.6% in 2014 to 6.5% in 2019) has been dampened by the pandemic. In 2022, a total of 655 out-of-school children (including 155 in pre-primary) participated in early learning primary or secondary education through UNICEF supported programmes, exceeding the 500 annual target.

Technical assistance was provided to the Ministry on the Legal Framework on special education including accessibility. Through a UNICEF-supported programme, 18 children with disabilities were identified and further trained in computing and programming. As coordinator of the local education group, UNICEF is a major partner of the Ministry of Education, in support of the inclusive education agenda, joint sector review, update of the Education Policy Charter, and preparation of the State of the Education System Report.



## Every child is protected from violence and exploitation

In 2022, the programme was fully engaged towards protection of children from violence. UNICEF continued to support and advocate for a holistic and systemic approach to protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation. The secondary analysis of child protection-related data from the MICS-6 was disseminated and informed UNICEF's advocacy efforts. 121 children who experienced violence were reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services in 2022 (72 in 2021).

The lack of solid administrative data hinders progress and its measurements. In this perspective, UNICEF efforts focused on the capacity building of the social affairs department for child protection administrative data system, the preparation of an integrated information system and a new cooperation with the Public Prosecutors Office to include disaggregated data on children in the information management system.

UNICEF pursued the strengthening of the child protection system to improve the coordination and implementation of multi-sectoral responses to cases of violence, including sexual violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect of children. Leveraging on the PEP programme, UNICEF supported capacity building of the social service workforce of the Directorate of Social Protection, Solidarity and Family on data management, psychosocial support and case referral. 71 social workers were trained on basic psychosocial support with a gender focus. 1,798 children were assessed for psychosocial support, 1,394 children and their caregivers were referred to psychosocial support services as 408 are some forms of support. 50 child protection actors were also capacitated on legal procedures. Overall, a total of 121 professionals were trained (110 in 2021).

To accelerate results, the office engaged in new partnerships. The cooperation with the Public Prosecutors office effectively increased the capacity to conduct child-friendly procedures. SOS Mulher, key local actor in the prevention and management of cases of sexual violence and abuse of women and children reinforced the institutional capacity for case management and identified 10 cases of sexual violence against children (reported and reached by social, health, psychological and legal services). 467 secondary school students and 62 child parliamentarians benefited from awareness raising interventions to act as agents of change. Fundação Filhos de STP trained 60 community workers, activists and journalists on social behavior change approaches to contribute to violence prevention including gender-based and sexual violence. Closer coordination was established with UNDP and UNFPA, to identify synergies and complementary interventions with regard to violence against children and gender-based violence agendas, with a focus on adolescent girls. The study on violence against children, conducted jointly with the education programme, will inform social and behavior changes initiatives for prevention and response.

Due to competing priorities of the partners, training for case management and psychosocial support in collaboration with UNICEF Mozambique and Cabo Verde did not progress in 2022. They will be implemented in 2023.



## Adolescent development and participation

In 2022, UNICEF furthered the collaborative approach with different programmes in line with the Youth Action Plan 2020-2024 strategy.

UNICEF continued to support learning opportunities to adolescents and improved education to employment transition with alternative education services, targeting out-of-school adolescents. Partnership was reinforced with the National Youth Institute to expand skill trainings, through the 28 interns of HABILITA-TE in charge of Youth Interaction Centers. In 2022, 600 adolescents and youth were trained (5,000 adolescents since 2018) with a gender lens. The Ubuntu Leadership Academy capacitated 80 members (56% female) of the Children and Youth Parliament on leadership skills. Additionally, civil society associations organized various sports activities with social behavior change components on early pregnancy, sexual violence, and positive masculinity to encourage gender equality. More than 1,000 adolescents and youth were reached, including those with disabilities. 7 Youth Interaction Centers were rehabilitated, to be effective platforms for safe peer interaction

UNICEF supported the re-configuration of the Children and Youth Parliament for more inclusivity and ensure representation of out-of-school children and children with disabilities. 55 permanent members (32 female) were capacitated on implementing a child rights approach in practice.

The participation in the U-report platform, initiated in 2021 increased to 7,000 adolescents and youth (50% female) in 2022.

Key to deliver services for adolescents, targeting out of school and youth at risks and to relay information related to health, learning and capacity-building opportunities (including a back to school campaign), the use of U-report was expanded for social accountability purposes. U-report for girls will be launched in 2023.

### Cross-sectoral support

**Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** – Awareness and monitoring were reinforced for all the staff and partners (43 participants) during a one-day training. Three partnerships with CSO were assessed.

**Knowledge management** –The country office started implementing the enterprise content management project. To leverage on the experience of Portuguese speaking UNICEF offices, the country office shared the preparatory documents for the Transforming Education Summit, initiated the creation of a child protection group and maintained technical cooperation with Mozambique, Brazil, Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau.

**Operations** – The office increased efforts to improve the operational efficiency. To further the One United Nations approach, an interagency training was organized with partners (43 participants) and UNICEF staff on Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers.

Career development, staff wellbeing and duty of care remains a key priority. In 2022, to foster staff engagement, 26 weekly “learning Friday” sessions were conducted. 90% of the team spent at least 5 days in learning time. The office engaged in a skills mapping to ensure alignment of the capacities with the programmatic priorities.



# UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

The country office continued nurturing strategic partnerships with the Government, civil society, bilateral donors, International Financial Institutions, the United Nations and National Committees.

UNICEF leveraged its convening role to coordinate development partners towards health system strengthening, immunization and WASH, with key partners, especially those who contributed to the pandemic response. The office furthered the collaboration with WHO and GAVI to foster the transition of COVID-19 vaccination towards routine immunization and build capacities on vaccine and cold-chain management alongside a new partnership with USAID. The Joint SDG Fund, alongside UNDP played a catalytic role, paving the way towards the strengthening of the capacity of national institutions to develop shock responsive health and social protection systems. Advocacy for cross-sectorial strategies was increased to scale up efforts to protect children from violence, ensure equitable and sustainable WASH in schools and amplify the voice of youth.

To improve learning outcomes for all children, UNICEF advocated for the development of a nation-wide vision for the integration of digital learning as part of the curriculum. Akelius Foundation, World Bank, GIGA and private sector for telecommunications were engaged strategically to ramp up the digital learning initiatives and provide funds, technical support and assets to UNICEF. The country office also successfully secured funding from the World Bank to improve the quality of early education and supported the Ministry of Education to unlock funding windows from GPE and World Bank, resulting in the selection of UNICEF as the grant agent for GPE in the country. UNICEF leadership led to the preparation of a Partnership Pact (GPE, World Bank, United Nations, other multilateral and bilateral partners) to mobilize coordinated funds in 2023 for education reform.

To address the increased levels of violence against children and improve the quality of social protection services, UNICEF continued leveraging resources from Joint SDG Fund Emergency and World Bank. UNICEF pursued its partnerships with key ministries and engaged effective new partnerships with CSO to implement the PEP, achieve multi-sectorial programming, improve the case management system to prevent and address cases of violence against children and foster a cross-sectorial care system.

In 2022, to pursue the positive trend engaged since 2020, UNICEF furthered its partnership approach, with significant efforts to enhance the capacities for resource mobilization internally throughout the programme. Donor relations and visibility were further improved with dedicated tools such as human stories and investment cases and two business cases to mobilize funding and increase the country visibility. The business cases were successfully used to engage with key National Committees in Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, Sweden, USA and Italy. Available data and analyses such as the SitAn and the MODA were disseminated and effectively used to reinforce evidence-based advocacy and resource mobilization efforts towards strategic partners.

As a result, the amount of other resources mobilized exponentially increased. In December 2022, at the end of the cycle, the budget reached US\$ 14.6 million, against US\$ 6.69 million initially planned.

# Lessons Learned and Innovations

Below: happy children coming home from school



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Adequate financing and efficient public spending are core to addressing inequities for faster progress for children. The crisis resulting from the COVID-19 and the current Ukraine conflict have affected the trajectory of the country towards the SDG. In the current context, there is a challenge in terms of public spending, to minimize the negative impacts of these shocks on children, especially the most vulnerable; while maintaining and increasing equitable and sufficient financial resources for social sectors for longer term development. As a result, it is key for UNICEF with other United Nations agencies, World Bank and civil society stakeholders to advocate for increased domestic funding in social sector and improved budget execution to tackle inequalities and build inclusive growth.

The country suffers from a general lack of reliable and disaggregated administrative data, which impedes the strategic planning, the efficient monitoring and evaluation of results and impacts. One of the lessons learned is that national and district capacities need to be enhanced to generate quality disaggregated data to identify inequities, improve planning processes and investments for children. In 2022, alongside the five goal areas, UNICEF worked with governmental partners to improve data generation with adequate capacity building and introduction/ scale up of dedicated tools or systems. In 2022, the Country Office invested successfully on research and data analyses with SitAn, sectoral budget briefs, the MODA and several evaluations, which informed strategically the planning process. As a result, emphasis was given in the new CPD to the strengthening of administrative data systems to improve the quality of evidence, supporting the country to document progress towards SDG indicators. This will also benefit a more robust monitoring mechanism and the reporting on outcomes/outputs.

2022 confirmed the need to reinforce evidence-based planning and advocacy. The CO invested in an evidence-based-planning training to build UNICEF capacity to use data to identify inequities. In the next programme, UNICEF will support evidence-based planning, helping the Government to identify excluded children, and orient budgets and plans to support children's development. Evidence-based advocacy was also reinforced, capitalizing on the analyses and research conducted in 2022. The Country Office is committed to building upon the significant progress made in creating capacities and opportunities for evidence-based advocacy, with a particular focus on advocating for an increasing and more effective allocation of public resources. The social policy programme will lead and support the Health, Nutrition, HIV and WASH programmes to develop budget briefs as well as to disseminate findings and influence allocations and expenditures. The MODA will be disseminated in 2023, as a high-level advocacy tool for child-friendly decision-making. UNICEF will pursue advocacy efforts for increased equitable domestic allocation with a focus on priority areas, such as hygiene and environmental health to enhance the resilience to climate change.

UNICEF's contribution to the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy and reinforcement of the system, has been leveraged through the Parental Education Program (PEP). Feedback from the partners indicated gaps in key expertise such as alcohol consumption and psychological support. Based on these lessons, in 2022, UNICEF scaled up the scope of the programme through partnerships with CSO to provide specialized care. This significantly enhanced the professional service delivery while strengthening the management of cases of violence and abuse against children. Coordination of multi-sectoral services, information management and evaluation mechanism were consolidated with the adoption of an operations manual, the mapping of existing basic services to promote interoperability and the restructuring of the central and district leadership. Significant investments were made to consolidate the capacity of frontline workers from different programmes and social work force.

Building on the increased collaboration with Health, Education and Child Protection sectors, the PEP programme has laid strong ground for multi-sectoral programming. The 2022 mid-term evaluation underlined the need to improve coordination and supervision mechanisms of the PEP implementation platforms.





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As multi-sectoral interventions have ramped up, the weak coordination, lack of alignment and ownership have hampered the effective implementation of multi-sectoral programme. Multi-sectoral approaches need clear coordination and monitoring systems with defined roles and accountabilities, alongside strong capacity building.

The country fell short from achieving key results, related to ending open defecation, nutrition and violence against children with key bottlenecks linked to social norms and demand-related barriers. In 2022, the team transitioned from Communication for Development to Social and Behavioral Change, increasing the support to all programmes with dedicated interventions together with the adolescent programming. Several lessons emerged and will inform the new CPD. Evidence generation is a cornerstone for solid social and behaviour approaches, to have better understanding of the root causes. The lack of a coordination mechanism and synergy between different social mobilizers represents a missed opportunity to expand these interventions and is wasting limited resources available. There is a need to develop evidence-based sectoral and multi-sectoral social and behaviour change plan, at national and subnational levels with a strong monitoring framework, while ensuring community engagement for effective scale-up.

The support of young interns under the social affairs department to reinforce the capacities of the social workforce, at the decentralized level, provided a good and effective solution, especially during the pandemic to respond and provide care to children at risk or victims of violence. However, challenges were met with regard to the sustainability of the programme and the absorption of the capacities. It highlighted the needs to include such initiatives in a more comprehensive and budgeted human resources strategy for the reinforcement of the workforce and the system.

In view of the constraints and the lessons learned, UNICEF in Sao Tome and Principe identified the necessity to adjust its pathway to change towards a programme with a stronger focus on system strengthening and an increased technical assistance role at policy level. 2022 was a transitional year to progressively shift towards this new way of working which will be reflected in the new country programme 2023-2027 to accelerate contributions to longer term results towards the realization of the rights of the child and the SDG.



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**2022**



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