

ANNUAL REPORT



2022



unitlife
SAVING THE NEXT GENERATION

www.unitlife.org



ABOUT THIS REPORT

MPTF Office generic annual program narrative progress report.

Reporting period from 01.2022 to 12.2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNITLIFE Trust Fund continued to work towards its mission of fighting against chronic childhood malnutrition in 2022. Since the operational launch of UNITLIFE in April 2020, the strategic objectives of UNITLIFE remains unchanged: UNITLIFE funds interventions at different points of the food value chain that (i) position improved children nutrition as a primary outcome; (ii) promote nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agriculture; and (iii) place women at the center. UNITLIFE impact pathway is as followed: If (1) nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agricultural practices are promoted among rural women in combination with care and nutrition behavioral change programs, then (2) the prevalence of chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies will decrease because (3) diet diversity, quantity, and quality will be improved.

In 2021-2022, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remained a significant challenge, with limited in-person interactions and fundraising opportunities. However, the urgent need for UNITLIFE's work became even more evident as the pandemic continued to exacerbate malnutrition in vulnerable communities. UNITLIFE focused on project and portfolio building, resource mobilization and advocacy and communication.

In this context, UNITLIFE continued to scale-up the project implemented in Niger by the international NGO GOAL. The project achieved significant success in 2022, with an increase in the number of women farmers reached, as well as a positive impact on child nutrition indicators. The success of this project lead to the launch of the second phase of the project in Niger with focus on reducing the prevalence of chronic malnutrition through agricultural innovations that are nutrition-sensitive and climate smart.

UNITLIFE also expanded its operations in 2022, with the launch of two new projects: one in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with UNWomen and the second one in Senegal with Action Against Huger (AAH). These projects will focus on improving access to nutritious food, promoting nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agriculture, and empowering women in local communities.

UNITLIFE has established partnerships with both public and private sector companies to tackle malnutrition by mobilizing resources and expertise. In recent years, UNITLIFE has forged strong ties with several partners in the UAE. The Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi has been a significant supporter of UNITLIFE, having provided an initial contribution of 2.5 million USD followed by an additional commitment of 1 million USD. In addition, the Court recently renewed its membership to the UNITLIFE Executive Board. In January 2022, UNITLIFE made significant progress in tackling malnutrition through the signing of a Tripartite MoU between UNCDF, Majid Al Futtaim (MAF), and Dubai Cares, which was further bolstered by a crowdfunding campaign. During this mission, UNITLIFE also engaged with another partner, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI) foundation. The MBRGI foundation agreed to support UNITLIFE's activities as part of their recent "1 billion Meals Campaign," through a partnership representing a generous donation of 1.5 million USD. The MBRGI foundation is committed to building stable and prosperous societies by engaging in humanitarian, social, and development activities.

On the advocacy front, UNITLIFE continued to raise awareness about the importance of fighting malnutrition through digital campaigns and events. The UNITLIFE Innovation Hub, established in 2021, successfully matched several impactful projects with private sector funding and expertise.

Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic, the UNITLIFE Trust Fund has made significant progress in 2022 towards achieving its strategic objectives and fighting chronic childhood malnutrition. There have been changes to the team's administration, and UNITLIFE has been redefining its goals and objectives. As part of this process, UNITLIFE is developing a framework and operational matrix that will guide its activities, including the selection and shaping of new projects. The framework and operational matrix will help UNITLIFE to identify the most promising interventions and allocate resources efficiently. It will also include clear and measurable indicators to track progress and evaluate the impact of UNITLIFE's interventions.



PURPOSE

UNITLIFE is a multi-partner fund hosted by the United Nations, with UNCDF serving as the Secretariat, dedicated to the fight against chronic childhood malnutrition, which results in stunting, impaired cognitive development and weakened immune system. As such, its mission is carried out within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aims to deliver practical solutions in the fight against this silent and widespread pandemic.

The first 1,000 days of a child's life (through a women's pregnancy and until the child's second birthday) represent a critical period of growth and development. The rapid growth of their bodies and brains requires essential nutrients including protein, vitamins, and minerals.

Children who do not receive the nutrients they need during this key development stage suffer from chronic malnutrition. The consequences of chronic malnutrition – stunted growth, impaired brain development, and a weakened immune system - are largely irreversible, preventing affected children from reaching their full potential.

Today, 1 in 5 children worldwide are chronically malnourished. Compared with their peers, they will struggle to do as well in school and will on average earn 20% less income as adults. In addition to the human tragedy, chronic malnutrition is an enormous obstacle to countries' economic development. In Africa, where chronic malnutrition affects 1 in every 3 children, the cost of undernutrition is estimated at up to 16% of GDP in some countries.

Despite affecting 149 million children worldwide, chronic malnutrition remains little known and under-funded. Yet, the business case is strong for companies to invest in preventing chronic malnutrition: every dollar invested in nutrition generates up to sixteen dollars in benefits to local economies.

UNITLIFE fights chronic malnutrition through innovation harnessing the power of local businesses and the digital economy. UNITLIFE builds innovative partnerships with businesses to unlock financial resources. The funds mobilized are allocated through a transparent model and invested in rural women via climate-smart agriculture and education on essential nutrients. UNITLIFE supports innovative, sustainable, and integrated solutions.

In 2022, UNITLIFE Secretariat focused on 3 workstreams to address its strategic objectives:

- ◆ **Program & Project portfolio: support implementing partners to maximize impact**
- ◆ **Partnerships & Innovative Finance: mobilize partners and leverage resources to scale projects**
- ◆ **Advocacy & Communication: be vocal in order to contribute to positioning chronic malnutrition the development agenda**

PROGRAM AND PROJECT PORTFOLIO

Ongoing Projects



NIGER

Sustaining bio-fortified and climate-resilient agriculture to serve women in remote areas

Project Lead: GOAL Global

Location: Niger | Zinder region

Objective: *Reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition through agricultural innovations that are nutrition-sensitive and climate smart.*

Phase: 1

Duration: 18 months

MBRGI Contribution: 350K USD



Project location: Zinder region (20 villages), Niger
53% rate of chronically malnourished children in Zinder

Overview

UNITLIFE continued to work closely with its implementing partner, GOAL, on the ongoing project *Sustaining bio-fortified and climate-resilient agriculture to serve women in remote areas* focused on systems strengthening through biofortification in Zinder, Niger. Between November 2020 and July 2022, GOAL implemented the project in 20 villages in Mirriah and Gouré areas, Zinder region, with the support of UNITLIFE to reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition among children under 5 years and Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW).

The project had three major objectives:

- improved production and availability of nutrition-sensitive crops,
- enhanced women's empowerment (agency, income, assets), and
- improved health through behavior change (nutritional improved practices and community well-being).

Achievements

The project reached 20,963 individuals (51% female) exceeding the planned target of 18,656 individuals, and 77% of those reached were adults. The percentage of target farmers producing nutrient-dense crops increased from 0% at baseline to 57%, and increased production was observed in improved millet and cowpeas and groundnuts. The project also saw significant improvements in the availability, access to, and uptake of improved seed and production. The percentage of households with poor Food Consumption Scores reduced significantly from 32.4% to 19%, resulting in a greater number of households achieving borderline food security scores. Moreover, 82% of households reported having heard of and knew the retail points to purchase improved seeds in the project area, and improved supply stimulated demand for new products and increased demand stimulated supply.

New Projects

UNITLIFE was able to fund three additional projects from its portfolio, demonstrating its commitment to investing in impactful and sustainable solutions to address malnutrition and improve the lives of vulnerable communities in Africa. The projects were chosen by a Technical Review Committee (TRC) in 2021, from proposals submitted by the United Nations Agencies and international NGOs. The current portfolio includes innovative interventions against chronic malnutrition and the three selected projects that were launched are the ones of UN-Women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, GOAL in Niger (phase II), and Action Against Hunger in Senegal, which place women empowerment as a key component.

NIGER

Sustaining bio-fortified and climate-resilient agriculture to serve women in remote areas

Project Lead: GOAL Global

Location: Niger | Zinder region

Objective: *Reduce the prevalence of chronic malnutrition through agricultural innovations that are nutrition-sensitive and climate smart.*

Phase: II

Duration: 12 months

MBRGI Contribution: 300K USD

Overview

The success of the project *Sustaining bio-fortified and climate-resilient agriculture to serve women in remote areas* has led to the second phase of this project. In November 2022, GOAL launched a project in the Mirriah and Gouré areas of Zinder region with the support of UNITLIFE. The project aims to improve food and nutrition security sustainably through Market Systems Development, Social & Behavioral Change, and Financial Inclusion. The intervention targets 20,355 people, with a focus on women's empowerment and reducing chronic malnutrition through nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agricultural innovations in 20 villages. The project has three main objectives: improving crop production, enhancing women's empowerment, and improving health through behavior change. In the first two months of the project, GOAL made significant progress, including training 20 women in improved organic seeds and smart agriculture, establishing 15 new Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, and holding a refresher training for 24 community volunteers on the NIPP circles approach.



Project location: Zinder region (20 villages), Niger
53% rate of chronically malnourished children in Zinder

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Establishing a biofortified cassava food chain to empower women in their communities



Objective: Empower women in the biofortified cassava value chain for fighting against chronic malnutrition.

Phase: I

Duration: 17 months

MBRGI Contribution: 500K USD

Overview

In Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), UNITLIFE collaborates with UN WOMEN on a project that aims to empower women in the bio-fortified cassava sector to combat chronic malnutrition. The project includes activities such as identifying places, food availability, and eating habits, as well as training women in the production, processing, and marketing of fortified organic cassava. The project also aims to prevent chronic malnutrition within children's first 1000 days of life by promoting the consumption of bio-fortified organic cassava recipes and nutrient-rich supplements. The project aligns with SDG2 and SDG5, and its outcomes include women's economic empowerment and prevention of chronic malnutrition. The project will involve communication for behavior change, workshops for recipe design and validation, and community-level engagement to promote good food and hygiene practices.



SENEGAL

Creating economic opportunities for youth and women along the food value chain in rural areas of Northern Senegal

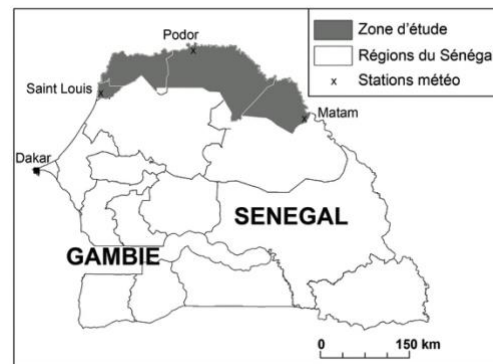


Objective: *Contribute to a sustainable improvement of food and nutritional security and the livelihood of vulnerable households in Matam, Podor and Linguère.*

Phase: I

Duration: 24 months

MBRGI Contribution: 595K USD



Overview

In Senegal, UNITLIFE works with Action Against Hunger (AAH) on the second phase of a previously successful project: Food and Nutritional Resilience Support Integrated Project (PIARAN). PIARAN is composed of a set of projects that have been implemented in the Podor department since 2016 as part of the program of the same name. This program aims at improving the food and nutritional resilience of populations subject to recurrent food and nutritional insecurity, by proposing a response adapted to climate change for a healthier diet for the most vulnerable communities. Thus, this project will consolidate the achievements, and extend the activities of previous projects to the departments of Matam and Linguère. It addresses the 4 pillars of food security and is based on an integrated and partnership approach through structuring a sustainable agri-food system based on the development local value chains, improving community food practices, through the provision of high nutritional value foods from market gardening and the promotion of their adequate consumption, strengthening women's economic autonomy through the establishment of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) improving community water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and food practices.



PARTNERSHIP AND INNOVATIVE FINANCE

UNITLIFE has established **partnerships** with both public and private sector companies to tackle malnutrition by **mobilizing resources and expertise**:

- ◆ The **Presidential Court of Abu Dhabi**, longstanding donor, and Board member of UNITLIFE, provided an initial contribution of **2.5 million USD** followed by an additional commitment of **1 million USD**.
- ◆ The **Ecobank Foundation**, Board member of UNITLIFE, run a pilot phase of the “**Make the connection**” microdonation campaign that will be scaled in 2023.
- ◆ The Artist **Mr Dadju Nsungula** joined UNITLIFE Executive Board and committed to participate and joining efforts with UNITLIFE through **fundraising events** that he will implement.
- ◆ UNITLIFE launch a first pilot campaign with **Majid Al Futtaim (MAF)**, and **Dubai Cares**, and aims to strengthen this **collaboration** further.
- ◆ UNITLIFE also engaged with another partner, the **Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI)** foundation. The MBRGI foundation agreed to support UNITLIFE's activities as part of their recent “**1 billion Meals Campaign**” through a partnership representing a generous donation of **1.5 million USD**.



- ◆ UNITLIFE partner with **Retreeb**, a digital payment solution using **blockchain technology** which adopts an **innovative model** of funding where they dedicate part of their revenue to support social projects, and where users can select up to six projects to support, UNITLIFE being their first and preferred partner. UNITLIFE also collaborate with Retreeb to create a **NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens)** art projects called **17 Goals for the Future**.
- ◆ UNITLIFE also developed its **Innovation Hub** as a space to envision innovation with partners willing to inject skills, expertise, and assets as part of **impactful field development** projects. A collaboration with the **University of Cambridge** was initiated to conduct research and workshops as part of the Innovation Hub, and the company **Sodexo** with its **Stop Hunger Foundation** participated to ideation activities.



ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

In order to be vocal and contribute to positioning further chronic malnutrition in the development agenda, UNITLIFE managed to deliver several Advocacy & Communication activities:



UNITLIFE Secretariat organized a trip in Dubai to meet several political and business actors and evangelize on its mandate.



UNITLIFE also engaged its ecosystem at Station F with several pitches in front of the ecosystem of Station F to present its models and explore potential collaboration.



UNITLIFE took the opportunities at the above mentioned microdonation campaigns to increase awareness and chronic malnutrition and its mandate to a broader public, in Dubai with MAF, among the crypto ecosystems with Retreeb, and across selected African countries with Ecobank.



UNITLIFE participated to Choiseul Africa Business Forum where President Mr. Philippe Douste-Blazy was a speaker. It was a unique opportunity for UNITLIFE to connect with various key actors of the continent.

EVALUATION, BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED



The year 2022 was challenging for UNITLIFE as COVID-19 pandemic remained a significant challenge, with limited in-person interactions and fundraising opportunities.

However, in this context, the UNITIFE Secretariat was able to involve additional long-term partners, including as part of its Executive Board. Such partnerships are important to provide a solid foundation for the future development of UNITLIFE.

UNITLIFE was able to secure the second phase of its project in Niger and launch two additional projects in DRC and Senegal. In addition to developing the programmatic portfolio, one of the main ambitions of UNITLIFE is to keep building tools and assets for more data-driven impact measurement and inclusive innovation.