

MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT REPORTING PERIOD: 1 JANUARY – 31 DECEMBER 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The operations of the UNITLIFE Trust Fund were launched in 2020 to fight against chronic malnutrition. During the first year, the UNITLIFE Secretariat became fully operational and the governance and operational structures were established.

The first call for proposals was launched in June 2020 and the selected pilot project was launched in Niger in November 2020 by the implementing partner, international NGO GOAL. The project prevents chronic malnutrition in the highly affected region of Zinder, in the South of Niger by supporting the capacity of the local businesses to provide biofortified seeds to women farmers; women farmers in accessing nutritious food for them and their community; and enhancing women's empowerment through access and control over household income.

Despite the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic created for fundraising and for creation of partnerships with the private sector, two innovative finance partnerships were signed with private sector partners: Pan-African bank Ecobank and French Fintech company OnlyOne.

Furthermore, UNITLIFE successfully positioned itself as an important partner delivering a value proposition to the nutrition community by organizing consultations with nutrition experts and by partnering with Sight and Life, the leading international think tank on nutrition and innovation to co-sponsor an elevator pitch contest on the theme of climate-smart nutrition. UNITLIFE also hosted an online event highlighting the importance of good nutrition as a cornerstone of a healthy and prosperous life and as a means to empower vulnerable communities.

I. 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 a child's growth and development. They determine the rest of their lives. The rapid growth of their bodies and brains, during this period, 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 are largely irreversible, preventing affected children from reaching their full potential and thriving into adulthood.

Today, 1 in 5 children worldwide are chronically malnourished. Compared with their peers, they will struggle to do well in school, and will on average earn 22% less as adults. In addition to the human tragedy, chronic malnutrition is an enormous obstacle to countries' economic development. For example, 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 144 million children worldwide, chronic malnutrition remains little known and underfunded. Yet, the business case is strong for companies to invest in preventing chronic malnutrition: every dollar invested in nutrition generates eleven 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 its initial phase, UNITLIFE will focus on supporting programming in two key areas: Addressing childhood stunting and addressing the gender gap in climate-smart agriculture.

Outcomes and expected results

To contribute to and realize the goal and strategy of UNITLIFE, UNCDF will serve as the Secretariat to operationalize and scale up UNITLIFE in its initial phase. To this end, the programme in support of UNITLIFE will focus on the following three outcome areas:

Outcome 1. UNITLIFE financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing

- The programme will establish UNITLIFE's governance and operational structure. This includes the establishment and operationalization of the Steering Committee, which planned composition is outlined in the Governance and Management section of this programme document. It also entails electing a chair and drafting and approving its operating procedures;
- The programme will set up and operationalize the UNITLIFE Secretariat, advisory council and advocacy networks. This will include finalizing the secretariat's organizational structure and recruitment of necessary and competent staff, complete necessary hosting arrangements, and set up the secretariat office. It will also involve setting up the advisory council and other advocacy networks, including champions, to advise and advocate for UNITLIFE's work;
- The programme will draft and finalize the fund's management and technical instruments, which includes development of UNITLIFE standard operations manual, development of its risk management solutions, regulatory instruments and monitoring and evaluation frameworks as well as communication and outreach materials;
- The programme will test and set up the innovative fundraising instruments such as the microdonation platform for UNITLIFE by finalizing SAAs with participating private sector partners and MPTFO, deploy the platform via the private partners, implement an outreach strategy for fund collection and transfer of funds to pilot projects for testing.

Outcome 2. UNITLIFE successfully implemented at least one programme funding cycle

- The programme will capitalize the UNITLIFE fund by primarily mobilizing funds from private and public foundations and via operationalization of the micro-donation platform from citizens. It will also transfer the donations to the MPTFO trust fund for management;
- The programme will carry the first-round of the programme funding cycle with guidance and approval by the Steering Committee. This includes the development of the programme funding plan for the first cycle of UNITLIFE, launch of the call for proposals, screening of the proposals in accordance with the funding priorities and guidance from the Steering Committee, and approval of the proposals and completion of MOUs with approved organizations and agencies for programme funding;
- The programme will complete the transfer of funds to the recipient organizations/agencies and carry out monitoring of the performance and impact of the fund supported activities. It will ensure and manage risks during and after the fund transfer by operationalizing its risk management tools, monitor performance and impact based on the results framework, review implementing organizations' progress reports, and develop and publish an aggregated impact report on UNITLIFE's finance and development impact.

Outcome 3. UNITLIFE instruments have matured with increased capitalization, well-established structure and diverse partnerships for scale up.

- The programme will facilitate the full capitalization of the UNITLIFE fund by broadening its partnership, signing new SAA agreements and deploying the other innovative fundraising schemes to new sectors and scales;
- The programme will keep UNITLIFE's technical solutions and strategies up-to-date. This involves improving and diversifying its fundraising solutions, exploring innovative solutions for social giving (e.g. blockchain, internet of things) as necessary. It will also review its resource mobilization and allocation strategy by the track record and assessments of its micro-donation system and funding strategy.

II. Results

Key Results under Outcome 1: UNITLIFE's financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing

UNITLIFE governance and operational structures were established. Although physical meetings could not be organized the UNITLIFE Steering Committee had three virtual meetings joined by members from Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Government of France, UN Women, Ecobank Foundation as well as World Food Programme which joined the Board in 2020. The Steering Committee approved its Rules of procedure and UNITLIFE's the terms of reference of the Advisory Council, as well as the Fund's Investment strategy and standard operating procedures. UNITLIFE's Secretariat became fully operational.

The Secretariat finalized its fundraising strategy, advanced important conversations with private sector actors in UNITLIFE's regions of interest and signed two partnerships with private sector actors to implement innovative finance transactions.

UNITLIFE engages the private sector and leverages innovative finance to bring new, additional resources for the fight against malnutrition. Thus, UNITLIFE partnered with OnlyOne, the first payment bank card supporting positive and sustainable impact in France to raise funds to fight chronic malnutrition. Every

month, from March 2021, the digital bank will donate 0,60 euro per customer to finance UNITLIFE's investments.

Furthermore, UNITLIFE partnered with Ecobank, the foundation of the leading independent pan-African banking group to support its fundraising activities in Africa. Under this partnership, Ecobank will mobilize its resources to raise awareness about chronic malnutrition and its lifelong consequences on the abilities and talents of the children – the future of Africa and devise digital fundraising campaigns. Throughout 2020, Ecobank worked with UNITLIFE to design and prepare the implementation of a pan-African campaign that was then launched on 10 February 2021.

Key Results under Outcome 2: UNITLIFE successfully implemented at least one program funding cycle

In Niger, approximately half of the children under the age of 5 are chronically malnourished. An open call for proposals to identify a pilot project was launched in June 2020, with support from the UN nutrition cluster in Niger, and after consultations with the Government of Niger. To help choose among the proposals, and ensure value for money, UNITLIFE relied on the expertise of an independent Technical Review Committee. The panel was comprised of leading experts from the African Development Bank, the African Union, as well as a Senior Independent Consultant who worked on the Cost of Hunger in Africa studies. The selection process resulted in choosing a project designed by the international NGO GOAL.

The project places women at the center of its actions by: (1) helping local businesses provide female smallholder farmers with access to biofortified seeds, which increase the nutrient content of crops such as millet, beans, and vegetables; (2) supporting women's access to *habanaye*, a revolving goat bank system, in order to increase access to fresh goat milk (a good source of protein and calcium) and provide a source of revenue for women; and (3) increasing awareness and understanding among women and local communities about good nutrition and its critical importance for children, as well as training women to detect early signs of acute malnutrition.

The project started in November 2020: Partner NGO GOAL is using UNITLIFE's funding to support a local business to expand its distribution network to reach small-holder women farmers in 20 villages of the Zinder region with biofortified seeds. These seeds have more vitamins and minerals than traditional seeds and are more resistant to the region's climate.

At the same time, GOAL set-ups community gardens and a revolving goat-rearing business to provide women in income-generating activities while improving the supply of nutritious vegetables and goat milk. To encourage good nutrition practices, radio messages and debates are organized, and a mass awareness campaign sensitizes the communities through text messages. Over an initial 18 months, the project will reach over 283,000 people, more than half of whom are women and girls.

Key Results under Outcome 3: UNITLIFE's instruments have matured with increased capitalization, well-established structure and diverse partnerships for scale-up

UNITLIFE took out several actions to position itself as an important partner delivering a value proposition to the nutrition community: In April 2020 UNITLIFE organized consultations with over 30 nutrition experts from the United Nations, NGOs, research, funding and regional institutions to determine how UNITLIFE can invest available funds to best complement existing efforts and make a real difference in the lives of children. Based on their inputs, UNITLIFE's Steering Committee approved a strategy for investment, which focuses on interventions at different points of the food value chain that position improved nutrition as a

primary outcome, promote nutrition-sensitive and climate-smart agriculture, and place women at the centre. Priority is given to projects which integrate other determinants of chronic malnutrition, a sustainable approach and an innovation component.

In August UNITLIFE partnered with Sight and Life (SAL), the leading international think tank on nutrition and innovation to co-sponsor an elevator pitch contest on the theme of climate-smart nutrition. The contest is a competitive platform for entrepreneurs, young professionals, and students. For the fifth edition, contestants had to present their innovative climate-smart nutrition solutions to free the world from all forms of malnutrition. The jury awarded the prize to a Kenyan start-up company, Solar Freeze, that builds portable solar-powered cold storage solutions accessible to smallholder farmers through a pay-as-you-store system. This solution has the potential to increase both the income of farmers, and the availability of perishable nutritious foods like fruits and vegetable in poor communities, by reducing post-harvest food loss, which currently accounts for more than 45% of all perishable produce going to waste in developing countries.

On October 20, UNITLIFE celebrated International Chefs Day by holding an online event with Chef Pierre Thiam and African superstar Masta Just, from the famous music group Toofan. They raised the importance of good nutrition as a cornerstone of a healthy and prosperous life and as a mean to empower vulnerable communities.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 crisis has also had serious adverse impact on food systems: Movement restrictions, market closures, disruptions in the food supply chain and employment losses combined have jeopardized the ability of vulnerable people to access nutritious foods. By 2022, an additional 2.6 million children could be stunted as a result of chronic malnutrition and Covid-19 globally – as per the estimations of the Standing Together for Nutrition multidisciplinary consortium. As a result, UNITLIFE's mission is more important than ever and the Secretariat is making every effort to raise awareness on Covid-19's impact on malnutrition through online events and interviews.

However, Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to UNITLIFE's operations as many of the planned missions and launch events could not be executed. The Secretariat focused its efforts on partnership building and awareness raising through virtual means. However, the fundraising has been impacted by Covid-19 as most private sector actors have been dealing with and adapting to the financial impacts of the pandemic.

Key lessons learnt

The pilot project selection process experienced delays, with the project starting late and contracting significantly delayed. To minimize the impact on beneficiaries, the UNITLIFE Secretariat, the UNDP Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office and the partner agreed implementation could begin through internal pre-financing while contracting was being finalized. An analysis of the project selection and contracting process has been conducted and the bottlenecks at each step experienced were identified. These lessons-learned will serve to fast track the process during the next fund allocation.

Qualitative assessment

Despite the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, UNITLIFE managed to achieve most of the targets set for its first year of operations. Governance and operational structures as well as the management and technical structures were established and became operational. In terms of targets for innovative financial

instruments the target was even exceeded as 2 SAA's were signed instead of the target of 1. However, the fundraising target of \$US 1.5 Million for these partnerships was not achieved as the launch of the first campaign was moved to 2021. A microdonation platform was developed but in order to meet all technical requirements the launch was postponed to 2021 meaning that the target of raising \$US 0.2 Million through the platform was not achieved. Given the delay in resource mobilization, only one pilot project was selected instead of the target of two pilots and while the pilot project was launched in November 2020 the first disbursement didn't materialize until 2021. Due to Covid-19 pandemic the high-level advocacy events were cancelled and the target of 1 high-level advocacy event (e.g. G7, Davos) organized to promote UNITLIFE.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

		<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Outcome 1¹				
UNITLIFE financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing				
Output 1.1 UNITLIFE governance and operational structures are established and operational	Indicator 1.1.1 Established UNITLIFE StComm with developed and approved operating procedures (Y/N) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: Yes	Yes	N/A	StComm Minutes
	Indicator 1.1.2 Number of StComm sessions held per year (at least once annually) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: 1	3	Two ordinary StComm meetings were organized and one additional meeting was organized to agree on the approval process of the pilot project.	StComm Minutes
Output 1.2 UNITLIFE management and	Indicator 1.2.1 Set up and operationalized UNITLIFE	Yes		StComm Minutes

¹ Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be as outlined in the Project Document so that you report on your actual achievements against planned targets. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

technical structures are established and operational	Secretariat with adequate resources and staff (Y/N) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: Yes			
	Indicator 1.2.2 Number of UNITLIFE advisory council held per year (at least once annually) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: 1	0	UNITLIFE was planning to have a first meeting of the Advisory Council, in person. Due to the current pandemic, this wasn't possible. A meeting was organized in Q1 2021	AdCo Minutes
	Indicator 1.2.3 Developed and approved UNITLIFE SOPs, risk management solutions, M&E framework, communication and outreach strategies (Y/Partial/N) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: Partial	Partial	N/A	Secretariat materials
Output 1.3 The innovative fundraising instruments and micro-donation platform are	Indicator 1.3.1 Number of SAA finalized with participating private sector partners for resource	2	SAA finalized with Ecobank and Only One.	Signed SAA

tested and finalized	mobilization and participation in the micro-donation platform Baseline: N/A Planned Target: 1			
	Indicator 1.3.2 Pilot transfer of funds to two pilot projects completed (Y/N) Baseline: N/A Planned Target: Yes	No	One pilot project was selected in 2020. However, transfer of funds didn't materialize until early 2021 due to delays in pilot project endorsement by the StComm, fiduciary assessment and financial agreement preparation and signature.	MPTFO Disbursement documentation

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
Outcome 2 UNITLIFE financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing			
Output 2.1 UNITLIFE funds capitalized for operations from public/private foundations and micro-donations	Indicator 2.1.1 US\$ of funds mobilized from public/private foundations Baseline: - Planned Target: \$1.5M	\$0M	The fundraising efforts were impacted by Covid-19 pandemic and the launch of first campaigns with signed partnerships was moved to 2021. MPTFO documentation of funds transferred

	<p>Indicator 2.1.2 US\$ of funds mobilized from microdonations Baseline: - Planned Target: \$0.2M</p>	\$0M	The development of microdonation platform was delayed and the first version was completed in December 2020. However, the launch of the platform was postponed to 2021 in order to accommodate additional technical requirements.	MPTFO documentation of funds transferred
<p>Output 2.2 First round of UNITLIFE programme funding completed based on guidance and approval from ExComm</p>	<p>Indicator 2.2.1 Developed programme funding plan and launched call for proposal for first round of programme funding (Y/N) Baseline: - Planned Target: No</p>	Yes	Call for proposal was launched and project was selected through approved SOPs	Secretariat documentation
	<p>Indicator 2.2.2 Number of projects approved by StComm for first round of programme funding Baseline: - Planned Target: 2 pilots</p>	1 pilot	Only 1 project was launched and approved. The first StComm only took place in May 2020, which led to approval of the Investment strategy. Time and resource constraints did not allow two projects to be funded in 2020.	StComm Minutes
	<p>Indicator 2.2.3 US\$ of funds allocated to selected projects Baseline: - Planned Target: \$0.5M</p>	\$0.5M	N/A	Secretariat documentation

Output 2.3 Carried out active monitoring of performance and impact of selected funded projects	Indicator 2.3.1 Number of progress reports received and reviewed Baseline: - Planned Target: N/A	N/A	N/A	Secretariat documentation
	Indicator 2.3.2 UNITLIFE annual narrative and financial reports published on operation and impact (Y/N) Baseline: - Planned Target: Yes	Yes	N/A	Secretariat documentation

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification	
Outcome 3 UNITLIFE instruments matured with increased capitalization, well-established structure and diverse partnerships for scale up				
Output 3.1 UNITLIFE recognition, and partnerships enhanced to ensure full	Indicator 3.1.1 Number of high-level advocacy events (e.g. G7, Davos) organized to promote UNITLIFE Baseline: -	0	Due to Covid-19 pandemic the high-level advocacy events were cancelled. A virtual event to promote UNITLIFE was organized in November 2020.	Secretariat documentation

capitalization and maturity	Planned Target: 1			
	Indicator 3.1.2 Diversification of partners in terms of sector and country Baseline: - Planned Target: 1 country, 1 sector	1 Fintech in France 1 pan African bank	N/A	Secretariat documentation
	Indicator 3.1.3 Level of satisfaction from implementing partnerships with the programme funding cycle Baseline: - Planned Target: N/A	N/A	N/A	Partnership survey
	Indicator 3.1.4 Level of satisfaction with UNITLIFE as innovative financing mechanism from major donor and micro-donation partners Baseline: - Planned Target: N/A	N/A	N/A	Partnership survey

Output 3.2 UNITLIFE technical solutions and instruments are updated to ensure efficiency	Indicator 3.2.1 Number of upgrades on micro-donation platforms completed Baseline: - Planned Target: N/A	N/A	N/A	Secretariat documentation
	Indicator 3.2.2 Lessons learned documents in appropriate forms (e.g. annual report, policy briefs) and reported to StComm (Y/N) Baseline: - Planned Target: N/A	N/A	N/A	StComm Minutes, publications