



## **MPTF OFFICE GENERIC ANNUAL PROGRAMME NARRATIVE PROGRESS REPORT REPORTING PERIOD: FROM 01.2021 TO 12.2021**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

UNITLIFE is a multi-partner fund hosted by the United Nations, with UNCDF serving as the Secretariat. UNITLIFE is dedicated to fight against chronic childhood malnutrition, a disease which results in stunting, impaired cognitive development and weakened immune system.

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.

In 2021, the operations of UNITLIFE remained significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which created a global context of uncertainty and limited interactions with potential partners. On the other hand, the topic that UNITLIFE addresses became even more pressing, as it is estimated that COVID-19 will result in an additional 2.6 million chronically malnourished children, reversing the decreasing curve for the first time in 3 decades. This is in addition to the already 144 million children under five years old affected by chronic malnutrition worldwide.

In this context, 2021 was a year focused on project and portfolio building, resource mobilization and advocacy and communication. On the project side, 2021 was the first year of implementation of UNITLIFE project in Niger, in partnership with the NGO GOAL. During the year of reporting, this project directly benefited 17,163 small-holder farmers, 98% of the initial target. In addition, a portfolio of innovative and impactful projects was built with the objective to match the needs of these projects with private sector expertise and funding, through a newly conceptualized innovation hub. On the resource mobilization side, UNITLIFE secured crowdfunding / micro-donations operations in the MENA region and in Africa, with effective implementation planned in 2022. On the advocacy side, while UNITLIFE continued to increase awareness of chronic malnutrition through digital events, the year was marked by UNITLIFE High level launch, which took place during the Generation Equality Forum in June 2021.

### **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.

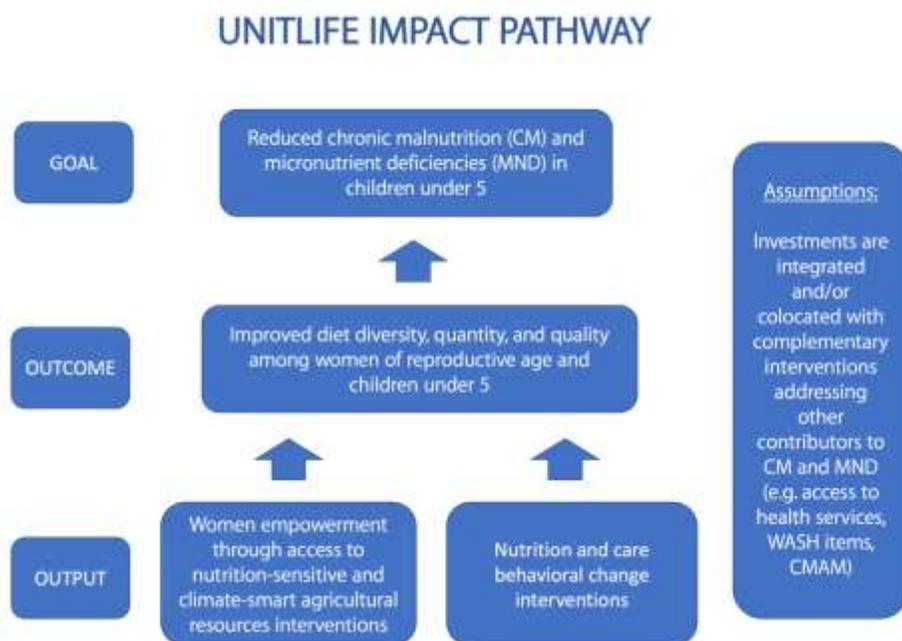
Children who do not receive the nutrients they need during this key development stage suffer from chronic malnutrition. The consequences of chronic malnutrition are largely irreversible, preventing affected children from reaching their full potential and thriving into adulthood.

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.

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.



## **II. Assessment of Programme Results**

In 2021, UNITLIFE Secretariat focused on 3 workstreams in order to address its strategic objectives:

- Programme & 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

### **On programme and projects portfolio:**

In 2021, a Technical Review Committee (TRC) was formed to ensure the strategic value and impact of UNITLIFE projects. The TRC is composed of leading external experts and technical advisors of UNITLIFE's Executive Board member organizations who are recognized as experts on nutrition, food security, women's empowerment, and climate-smart agriculture. In May 2021, the TRC provided an independent review of close to 15 project proposals based on their strategic value to UNITLIFE's Investment Strategy as well as technical soundness and potential for impact. Providing recommendations to the Executive Board and the Secretariat on which projects to prioritize, the TRC played a key role in ensuring a fair and transparent proposal review process resulting in the selection of the 5 most deserving projects.

Those 7 projects constitute the first portfolio of projects for UNITLIFE. The current portfolio includes different types of innovative interventions against chronic malnutrition which place women empowerment as a key component in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Egypt, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, and Mozambique. The projects in the portfolio have been selected among proposals submitted by the United Nations Rome-based Agencies and international NGOs.

In addition, UNITLIFE continued to work closely with implementing partner GOAL for monitoring and improving UNITLIFE on-going project, systems strengthening through biofortification in Zinder. The project started in November 2020 and has been in full implementation in 2021: Partner NGO GOAL is using UNITLIFE's funding to support a local business to expand its distribution network to reach small-holder 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. As of December 2021, the project had reached 17,163 small-holder farmers, 98% of the initial target.

### **On partnerships and innovative finance**

The first partnership with a private sector company in the MENA region was concluded with Majid Al Futtaim (MAF) and Dubai Cares in May 2021. Under this 2-year partnership, MAF, a company owning

shopping malls in the Middle East, agreed to put its technologies at the service of UNITLIFE. Clients will be asked to donate to UNITLIFE in the Carrefour supermarkets of Dubai and through MAF's loyalty programme. Dubai Cares supports the partnership, by facilitating and allowing the accreditation by the Dubai authorities. The funds collected will fund projects of the UNITLIFE portfolio. The first campaign will be launched in 2022.

In Africa, UNITLIFE worked with Koosmik, a digital payment provider for PanAfrican hotel chain Onomo, to design a micro-donation campaign targeting the hotels' clients. Due to the covid pandemic and borders restrictions affecting the hospitality industry, the campaign will be launched in 2022.

In addition, UNITLIFE undertook some research on companies in Asia. A list of stakeholders has been identified and will be engaged in the future. In addition, efforts to increase UNITLIFE's visibility in China were undertaken. These included the development of our website in Mandarin (finalized in August 2021), but also partnerships with selected media. In September 2021, a first interview of UNITLIFE's Executive Committee Chair was featured on [Xinhua.net](http://Xinhua.net), the official state-run press agency of China and the most influential media organization in the country. The article was largely shared by other Chinese media.

In parallel, the Secretariat further strengthened its partnerships model, placing UNITLIFE as a connector between INGOs, UN Agencies, and public and private sector organizations. As part of its role, UNITLIFE not only seeks to identify impactful projects, but also work with the INGOs and UN Agencies to define their needs (including technical needs, skills, and expertise). UNITLIFE would then match those needs with private sector partners and orchestrate the collaboration between entities. It would also monitor the project and ensure all partners are delivering for the highest possible impact on the ground. As part of this adaptive approach, UNITLIFE has built the foundation of an Innovation Hub gathering expertise and assets to inject at project level. The innovative hub would be furthered conceptualized and piloted in 2022.

## **On Advocacy & Communication**

During 2021, UNITLIFE raises awareness about chronic malnutrition among the general public and different target groups through various ways. UNITLIFE also supported the African Union to strengthen the position of the nutrition topic in the political agenda.

In particular, UNITLIFE organized multiple virtual online events bringing together multifaceted voices, including DJs, women entrepreneurs and gamers to discuss chronic malnutrition and the role different industries can have in the fight against it.

In January 2021, unexpected chronic malnutrition change-makers told their stories and experiences about "Working for Good". Sandra Agbessi, art expert and independent curator, Alex Heim, DJ at Birds of Mind and Carl Manlan, COO of the Ecobank Foundation shared their vision of working for good and inspired the audience to do what they can to support organizations like UNITLIFE in their own sectors.



In March 2021, UNITLIFE collaborated with ONU Femmes France to talk about women empowerment as the centerpiece of a sustainable and prosperous future. Siny Samba, a young women entrepreneur leading a baby food company in Senegal, Ali Rakib, a consultant in intangible cultural heritage and Chef Pierre Thiam discussed how empowered women invest in the wellbeing and good nutrition of their children and communities, lifting them out of poverty.



In March 2021 an [advocacy mission](#) was organized to the Democratic Republic of Congo to mobilize the Head of State and the First Lady in the fight against chronic malnutrition. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 43% of children are chronically malnourished. In addition, the President of the DRC is the current President of the African union. The mission served to secure his approval for raising the malnutrition agenda at the African union level. Furthermore, UNITLIFE and Fondation Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi, the foundation of the First Lady, have agreed to partner in advocacy and resource mobilization efforts in the African continent in the work against chronic malnutrition.



In addition, UNITLIFE contributed to the AU consultations organized to define the strategy and activities to be undertaken during 2022, AU Year of Nutrition.

During 2021, UNITLIFE also engaged the gaming industry as a pathway to reaching new audiences through innovative avenues. UNITLIFE's choice of industry is justified by the growth of this industry and the high level of commitments of the 2.7 billion players in the world. In addition, research has shown that gaming companies and gamers are looking at the social and environmental impact gaming can have in terms of fundraising and awareness.

On June 23, UNITLIFE organised its [first gaming live stream](#) hosted by the French female gamer, LyeGaia on her Twitch channel. During one hour, LyeGaia, and MadaraLeMal – a Ivorian male gamer – discussed women’s empowerment and chronic malnutrition with Representatives of UN Women and UNITLIFE, and with approximately 250 members of LyeGaia’s community. In a week, the video which was available on LyeGaia’s channel was watched by about 10,000 people.

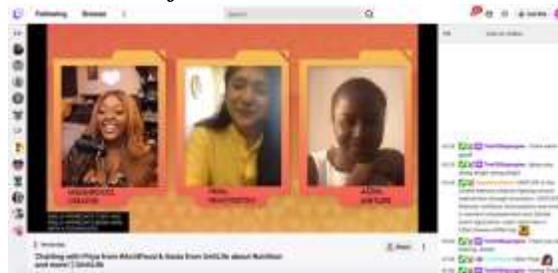
*Watched by 10,000+ people.*



Based on this success, UNITLIFE organised four more live streams hosted by gamer influencers in the US and Zambia, Belgium and France, on 6th and 11th of September, and then on 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September.

These events were marked by an important engagement from a new audience, and the gamers were also interested to support UNITLIFE further. These live streams were also joined by Youth Leaders (India and China) of [Act4Food Act4Change campaign](#).

*Live streams joined by Act4Food Act4Change Youth Leaders from India & China*



Act4Food Act4Change was a pledge campaign that galvanized youth action to defeat hunger, improve health and heal the planet in the lead up to the UN Food Systems Summit which took place in September 2021. Celebrating World Youth Day on 12 August, UNITLIFE and Act4Food Act4Change campaign officially announced their collaboration to raise awareness among the young populations about the need for youth to play a major role in food systems transformations. UNITLIFE played an active role in mobilizing more young people to support the Act4Food Act4Change campaign but also in spreading the word within its network of influencers.



## UNITLIFE's official launch

On June 28, UNITLIFE was officially launched at the Generation Equality Forum. The announcement was made at a virtual event opened by [Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France](#) and [H. E. Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, United Arab Emirates](#).

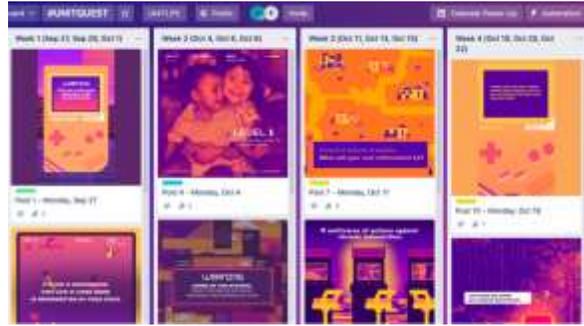
The event featured a high-level panel attended by Gerda Verburg (Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and United Nations Assistant Secretary General); Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (Executive Director, UN Women); Tala Ismail Al Ramahi (Associate Director, Office of Strategic Affairs, Crown Prince Court of Abu Dhabi); Ade Ayeyemi (Chief Executive Officer, Ecobank Group) and Preeti Sinha (Executive Secretary, UNCDF). The event was moderated by Philippe Douste-Blazy, UNITLIFE Chair and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, France.

A press release was sent after the event to announce the official launch of UNITLIFE. The Press release was largely broadcasted in media on the African continent. It was picked up by 694 websites, including CNBC Africa (Circulation: 8 345 000), Africanews (Euronews subsidiary; Circulation: 11 700 000) and Venture Africa (Circulation: 120 000).



## UNITQUEST campaign

Between 27<sup>th</sup> September and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021, UNITLIFE ran a social media campaign, hijacking the pop culture's and video gaming's codes to talk about our chronic malnutrition in a joyful, sharp and straightforward way. The campaign is called "UNITQUEST: If life was a video game, malnutrition would be the hard mode". The light mood of video game allows us to go further in the argumentation without falling into the trap of miserabilism while sharing key messages.



The campaign included 12 assets pushed on UNITLIFE's social media platforms to inform about chronic malnutrition and call for donation. The format and universe of the campaign allowed UNITLIFE to reach a variety of markets. UNITLIFE also mobilised gamer influencers and its partners to promote the campaign wider and further.

**ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:**

		<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<b>Outcome 1<sup>1</sup></b> <b>UNITLIFE financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing</b>				
<b>Output 1.1</b> <b>UNITLIFE governance and operational structures are established and operational</b>	<b>Indicator 1.1.1</b> Established UNITLIFE StComm with developed and approved operating procedures (Y/N) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> Yes	Yes	N/A	Executive Committee Minutes
	<b>Indicator 1.1.2</b> Number of StComm sessions held per year (at least once annually) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> 1	3	Three ordinary StComm meetings were organized in January, March and November.	Executive Committee Minutes
<b>Output 1.2</b> <b>UNITLIFE management and technical structures are</b>	<b>Indicator 1.2.1</b> Set up and operationalized UNITLIFE Secretariat with adequate resources	Yes		Executive Committee Minutes

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<b>established and operational</b>	and staff (Y/N) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> Yes			
	<b>Indicator 1.2.2</b> Number of UNITLIFE advisory council held per year (at least once annually) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> 1	1	Took place in April 2021	Advisory Committee Minutes
	<b>Indicator 1.2.3</b> Developed and approved UNITLIFE SOPs, risk management solutions, M&E framework, communication and outreach strategies (Y/Partial/N) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> Partial	Total	N/A	Secretariat materials
<b>Output 1.3</b> <b>The innovative fundraising instruments and micro-donation platform are tested and finalized</b>	<b>Indicator 1.3.1</b> Number of SAA finalized with participating private sector partners for resource mobilization and participation in the	2	SAA finalized with MAF and Koosmik/Onomo but implementation set for 2022.	Signed SAA

	micro-donation platform <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> 1			
	<b>Indicator 1.3.2</b> Pilot transfer of funds to two pilot projects completed (Y/N) <b>Baseline:</b> N/A <b>Planned Target:</b> Yes	Yes, partially	Transfer of funds for the pilot project took place in January 2021	MPTFO Disbursement documentation

	<u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets	Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)	Source of Verification
<b>Outcome 2</b>  <b>UNITLIFE financing instruments are operational and ready for programmatic financing</b>			
<b>Output 2.1</b>  <b>UNITLIFE funds capitalized for operations from public/private foundations and micro-donations</b>	<b>Indicator 2.1.1</b> US\$ of funds mobilized from public/private foundations <b>Baseline:</b> - <b>Planned Target:</b> \$1.5M	\$1M	SAA's partners will implement campaigns in 2022 therefore no funds raised from the private sector. An additional 1 million USD committed from public donor in November 2021 but transfer took place in February 2022

	<p><b>Indicator 2.1.2</b> US\$ of funds mobilized from microdonations <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> \$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 due to lack of capacity and resources	
<p><b>Output 2.2</b>  <b>First round of UNITLIFE programme funding completed based on guidance and approval from ExComm</b></p>	<p><b>Indicator 2.2.1</b> Developed programme funding plan and launched call for proposal for first round of programme funding (Y/N) <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> No</p>	Yes	Call for proposal was launched and project was selected through approved SOPs	Secretariat documentation
	<p><b>Indicator 2.2.2</b> Number of projects approved by StComm for first round of programme funding <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target: 2</b> pilots</p>	5	A full portfolio was developed and approved in 2021	Executive Committee Minutes
	<p><b>Indicator 2.2.3</b> US\$ of funds allocated to selected projects <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> \$0.5M</p>	\$0.5M	From pilot project funds allocation	Secretariat documentation

<b>Output 2.3</b>  <b>Carried out active monitoring of performance and impact of selected funded projects</b>	<b>Indicator 2.3.1</b> Number of progress reports received and reviewed <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> N/A	N/A	Ongoing monitoring with current project and preparations for end of project audit in 2022.	Secretariat documentation
	<b>Indicator 2.3.2</b> UNITLIFE annual narrative and financial reports published on operation and impact (Y/N) <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> Yes	Yes	N/A	Secretariat documentation

	<b><u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets</b>	<b>Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any)</b>	<b>Source of Verification</b>	
<b>Outcome 3</b>  <b>UNITLIFE instruments matured with increased capitalization, well-established structure and diverse partnerships for scale up</b>				
<b>Output 3.1</b>  <b>UNITLIFE recognition, and partnerships enhanced to ensure full capitalization and</b>	<b>Indicator 3.1.1</b> Number of high-level advocacy events (e.g. G7, Davos) organized to promote UNITLIFE <b>Baseline: -</b>	1	UNITLIFE was successfully launched at a high level on the margins of Generation Equality forum	Secretariat documentation

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

<b>Output 3.2</b>  <b>UNITLIFE technical solutions and instruments are updated to ensure efficiency</b>	<b>Indicator 3.2.1</b> Number of upgrades on micro-donation platforms completed <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> N/A	delayed	N/A	Secretariat documentation
	<b>Indicator 3.2.2</b> Lessons learned documents in appropriate forms (e.g. annual report, policy briefs) and reported to StComm (Y/N) <b>Baseline: -</b> <b>Planned Target:</b> N/A	1	See document: key achievements of 2021 to the attention of UNITLIFE donors.	Executive Committee Minutes, publications

In late 2021, UNITLIFE outcomes were reviewed by UNITLIFE Finance sub-committee and subsequently Executive committee. The Executive Committee decided to clearly separate fundraising for the Secretariat, and innovative finance which primary mission is projects finance. A new set of indicators will be fully developed and approved in 2022.

Outcome	Key Activities
Outcome 1: UNITLIFE governance structure is in place and optimized for maximum efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ExBoard and FinCo to meet twice</li> <li>• Narrative and financial reporting towards MPTFO</li> <li>• New office and registration with the French government</li> </ul>
Outcome 2a: UNITLIFE successfully generates funding, primarily through innovative finance, for the fight against chronic malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued building of private sector partnerships</li> <li>• Operationalization of micro-donation platforms</li> </ul>
Outcome 2b: UNITLIFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued building of bilateral partnerships</li> </ul>

<p>successfully generates funding, primarily through bilateral partnerships, for the work of the UNITLIFE Secretariat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued efforts to identify and engage foundations</li> </ul>
<p>Outcome 3: UNITLIFE is recognized as a leading actor in the fight against chronic malnutrition through advocacy, communication, and partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various communication activities including virtual events, media campaigns, and active participation among the relevant networks and events</li> <li>• The advisory council is to meet and provide support</li> </ul>
<p>Outcome 4: UNITLIFE programme funding cycles successfully implemented based on programmatic priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of the pilot project monitored</li> <li>• Selection of the TRC and implementation of new funding round</li> <li>• The programmatic priorities to be developed further and refined</li> <li>• Budget guidelines, including cost eligibility and asset management for the funded projects will be established</li> </ul>

### **iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned**

The main challenge experienced in 2021 is associated with Secretariat funding for UNITLIFE. Out of this difficult period it was obvious that it is critical to secure an appropriate model to ensure sustainable funding for the Secretariat. It was decided at the UNITLIFE Executive Committee that the Secretariat should start capturing a fee out of each private sector partnership signed, and that public stakeholders should be engaged to fund the gap until partnerships are significant enough to sustain the Secretariat. The results of the funding issues were challenges associated with human resource and therefore delays in planned activities.