

ANNUAL REPORT

2024





ABOUT THIS REPORT

MPTF Office generic annual program narrative progress report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, UNITLIFE deepened its mission to combat chronic childhood malnutrition through high-impact, scalable, and locally anchored interventions. The Fund continued to support solutions that operate across the nutrition spectrum—from targeted maternal and child health initiatives to broader systemic efforts focused on climate-smart agriculture, women’s empowerment, and food system resilience.

UNITLIFE’s strategic vision is evolving toward a more integrated, systemic approach to nutrition financing—one that spans the full continuum from nutrition-specific to nutrition-sensitive interventions. This includes direct investments in supplementation, behavior change, and maternal-child health, as well as support for food system transformation, financial inclusion, and climate-resilient livelihoods. This shift is driven by evidence and the pursuit of maximum impact, recognizing that meaningful progress against malnutrition requires coordinated action at the nexus of health, nutrition, and climate.

In a context of constrained official development assistance (ODA), UNITLIFE is positioning itself as a complementary financing mechanism that brings additionality to the global nutrition ecosystem. Through its instruments and convening role, UNITLIFE helps unlock new resources, fill critical funding gaps, and serve the ecosystem by mobilizing capital and technical support for governments, NGOs, and multilateral organizations. It promotes synergy across actors and sectors, aligning interventions with national strategies while supporting partners to deliver integrated, country-led solutions.

In 2024, UNITLIFE made substantial progress in advancing its programming and partnerships. In Niger, it launched the third phase of its flagship initiative with GOAL, building on the success of previous phases to reach more communities with a model that links agriculture, nutrition education, and women’s financial inclusion. In Senegal, the PIARAN project implemented by Action Against Hunger is delivering strong results in household nutrition, food production, and women’s economic empowerment. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNITLIFE concluded a project with UN Women that established biofortified cassava value chains, empowered women as actors in food systems, and improved access to nutritious, locally sourced food.

At the same time, two new country programs were finalized for launch in Burundi and Madagascar. These programs reflect UNITLIFE’s evolving strategic approach—linking nutrition and food security with climate adaptation, nature-based solutions, and inclusive economic development, in alignment with national priorities.

Throughout the year, UNITLIFE strengthened its alliances with key donors and strategic partners. The Presidential Court of Abu Dhabi continued to play a central role in the design of UNITLIFE's new financing instrument. The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is expected to play a key role in the launch of UNITLIFE's new innovative financing tools in 2025, particularly in the wake of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris. The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI) Foundation also renewed its support through the One Billion Meals Campaign, enabling the continuity of UNITLIFE's work into priority countries. The Ecobank Foundation continued to raise awareness through digital engagement efforts and reinforced the Fund's commitment to financial inclusion.

In parallel, UNITLIFE co-designed a set of financing mechanisms to be launched in 2025, including a direct nutrition financing window, a crowdfunding platform, and a roadmap to integrate blended finance approaches into its operations. These tools are intended to mobilize new forms of capital and help drive systemic change by supporting interventions that are both impactful and financially sustainable.

Looking ahead, UNITLIFE will continue to serve as a strategic financing engine for the nutrition ecosystem—supporting country-led, evidence-based, and financially innovative solutions. Through deeper collaboration, smarter capital deployment, and a relentless focus on results, UNITLIFE remains committed to ensuring that every child has the chance to grow up nourished, healthy, and empowered to thrive.



PURPOSE

Chronic malnutrition remains one of the most underfunded global development challenges. Despite affecting 149 million children worldwide, nutrition receives less than 1% of total development aid. According to the World Bank's 2024 Investment Framework for Nutrition, an estimated \$21 billion is needed annually to meet global nutrition targets, yet current investments amount to just \$8 billion—leaving a \$13 billion annual financing gap. Without greater investment, countries face long-term losses in human capital, productivity, and economic growth.

UNITLIFE was established to help bridge this gap. It is a multi-partner trust fund hosted by the United Nations, dedicated to ending chronic childhood malnutrition—a condition that leads to stunted growth, impaired cognitive development, and weakened immunity. UNITLIFE focuses on the first 1,000 days of life, a critical period when access to adequate nutrition can determine a child's lifelong health, education, and earning potential.

Recognizing that no single solution can address malnutrition, UNITLIFE supports both nutrition-specific interventions (such as supplementation, breastfeeding, and treatment of wasting) and nutrition-sensitive solutions (including climate-smart agriculture, women's empowerment, and food system transformation). This integrated approach ensures maximum impact while addressing root causes. It also aligns with UNITLIFE's broader objective to operate at the nexus of health, nutrition, and climate—an ambition that is increasingly reflected in its pipeline of new programs and co-investment strategies. These integrated efforts are designed to generate both human capital and environmental returns, reinforcing resilience at the community level.

In 2024, UNITLIFE sharpened its positioning as a nutrition financing engine for the broader ecosystem. Together with key partners, it co-designed new instruments to be launched in 2025:

- A direct nutrition financing window targeting high-impact interventions;
- A crowdfunding platform to engage individuals, companies, and the global diaspora;
- And a pathway to explore blended finance approaches, including guarantees and repayable funding to scale sustainable solutions.

These tools aim to unlock more and better resources for national governments, NGOs, and multilateral actors working to fight malnutrition. UNITLIFE's ambition is not only to deliver high-impact programs, but also to mobilize the capital, partnerships, and innovations needed to scale nutrition solutions where they are needed most.

PROGRAM & 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.*

Budget: USD 650,000 (Phase III)

Timeline: Phase III – Sept 2024 to Aug 2026

We acknowledge the support of the MBRGI foundation



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

Phase II (November 2022 to December 2023) Summary and Outcomes:

Faced with high population growth and a food insecurity rate affecting 13% of its population, Niger is a priority context for nutrition financing. From November 2022 to December 2023, Phase II of the GOAL-led initiative focused on reducing chronic malnutrition among children under five and pregnant and lactating women through community-led agricultural innovation, women's empowerment, and behavior change. The project exceeded expectations, reaching **24,118 direct beneficiaries** (118% of the original target) and impacting **146,248 people** overall.

Key results included:

- **Seed Access and Smart Subsidies:** Significant increases in access to climate-resilient and biofortified crops (millet, cowpea, groundnut, vitamin A maize and cassava) through smart subsidies in partnership with local suppliers (FESA & AINOMA), stimulating supply and demand.
- **Women's Economic Empowerment:** Over 20 villages engaged in Community Conversations helped catalyze shifts in gender norms and improve women's roles in household decision-making. VSLAs improved women's access to savings and credit, enabling them to invest in productive assets and income-generating activities.
- **Improved Nutrition Behaviors:** Over 100 Nutrition Impact and Positive Practice (NIPP) circles, combined with Family MUAC tools, led to earlier detection and referral of malnutrition cases. Women and men caregivers increased their knowledge of nutrition and health practices.
- **Food Production and Dietary Diversity:** Increased household consumption of micro-nutrient rich foods through widespread adoption of home gardens, strengthened by training on agroecological practices and food preservation.
- **Community Ownership and Scalability:** Strong local engagement and clear alignment with community priorities created a solid base for sustainability and further scale-up.

These outcomes provided actionable insights for Phase III, particularly the need for broader market access, deeper financial inclusion strategies, and improved coordination among community structures and private sector actors.

Phase III Description (Sept 2024 – Aug 2026):

Launched in September 2024, Phase III of the program is now under implementation. It builds directly on the lessons and successes of Phase II, with a focus on deepening systemic impact and expanding to new communities. The program maintains its integrated approach based on Market Systems Development (MSD), Social & Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC), and Financial Inclusion, while placing greater emphasis on market access and natural resource regeneration.

One major evolution in Phase III is the strengthening of the financial inclusion component, informed by a recent financial systems assessment and expanded through new partnerships with financial and digital service providers. These efforts aim to equip unbanked women and smallholder farmers with the tools and knowledge necessary to increase their financial resilience.

Key Components and Innovations of Phase 3 include:

- **Increased Food Production and Market Linkages:** Continuing to use a market systems development approach, this phase aims to reduce food waste, increase food production, and enhance market linkages for small-scale farmers. New to this phase are the inclusion of Vitamin A-improved maize, cassava, sweet potato, and organic fertilizer; the establishment of two new community gardens and irrigation system maintenance.
- **Financial Inclusion for Small-Scale Food Producers:** Informed by a financial systems assessment conducted in 2023 and the recent political context, this area focuses on increasing financial inclusion through forming 100 new Village Savings Loan Associations (VSLAs) and partnering with financial and digital service providers to improve financial and digital literacy among small-scale farmers. UNITLIFE will explore synergies with UNCDF to leverage blended finance solutions for small scale farmers and SMEs.
- **Protection and Regeneration of Natural Resources:** Partnering with local social enterprises to protect and regenerate key natural resources like soil and water through initiatives like the harvesting of products from indigenous plants and the construction of Zai pits for water harvesting and soil regeneration.
- **Digital Mass Media Communication:** Continuing the partnership with Viamo to use digital platforms for mass media communication, with a new module on financial services.
- **Nutrition Impact & Positive Practice (NIPP), Family MUAC, and Community Conversations:** Continuing these evidence-based social and behavioural change methodologies to improve nutrition security, with plans to support an additional 100 NIPP circles and train more caregivers in the Family MUAC approach.

Direct Impact on Children:

Children's well-being is a central focus, with targeted interventions designed to reduce chronic malnutrition and improve overall health. By increasing the availability of nutritionally dense and climate-adapted crops, the project ensures that children under five receive the nutrients they need. Additionally, training caregivers through the Family MUAC approach enables early detection and timely treatment of malnutrition. Education initiatives, such as Nutrition Impact & Positive Practice (NIPP) and Community Conversations, further empower caregivers with the knowledge to support healthy development. Enhanced economic opportunities and climate-smart agricultural practices also contribute to creating a stable and supportive environment for children's growth and well-being.

This comprehensive, gender-responsive, and community-driven model aims to build long-term resilience and support systemic change in the Zinder region for **43,247 direct beneficiaries** and **~240,000 indirect beneficiaries**.

UNITLIFE extends its appreciation to MBRGI Foundation for its support in financing this program.

SENEGAL

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



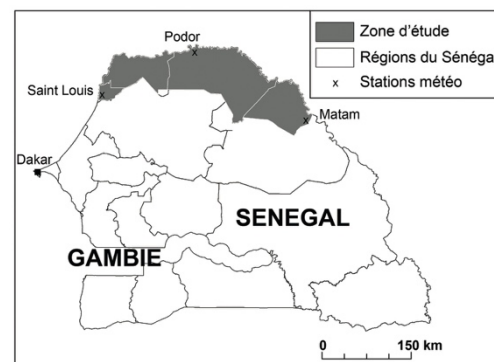
Objective: *Contribute to a sustainable improvement of food and nutritional security and the livelihood of vulnerable households in Matam, Podor and Linguère.*

Duration: 24 months

Project Budget: 595K USD

Timeline: April 2023 to March 2025

We acknowledge the support of the MBRGI foundation



Overview

Action Against Hunger (AAH), supported by UNITLIFE, is advancing the second phase of the Food and Nutritional Resilience Support Integrated Project (PIARAN) in Senegal. This project, operational since 2016, originally concentrated in the Podor department, has now expanded its activities into the departments of Matam and Linguère. Starting in March 2023, the project spans 11 communes across these four departments, including Louga. PIARAN aims to enhance the food and nutritional resilience of populations vulnerable to recurrent food and nutritional insecurity, proposing climate-adapted solutions for a healthier diet. The project focuses on consolidating previous achievements and extending activities to address the four pillars of food security. It adopts an integrated and partnership-based approach, structuring a sustainable agri-food system that emphasizes the development of local value chains. Central to this initiative is improving community food practices by providing high nutritional value foods from market gardening and promoting their adequate consumption.

The specific objectives of PIARAN 2 include:

1. Improving the availability, access, and use of high-nutritional-value products for vulnerable households, thereby enhancing food security and community resilience.
2. Enhancing optimal nutrition and hygiene practices, aiming to prevent acute malnutrition and improve overall community health.

These objectives are in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2024-2028 for Senegal, which seeks to enhance community well-being by helping them meet basic needs and secure food and nutritional security. Additionally, the project supports strengthening women's economic autonomy through the establishment of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), improving food practices, further empowering women within their communities.

Progress in 2024:

By the end of 2024, PIARAN had reached 94% implementation, marking a year of significant impact across nutrition, economic inclusion, and agroecological resilience in northern Senegal. Implemented in 13 communes, the program adopted a community-driven model, empowering women and local cooperatives to take the lead in food production, transformation, and distribution.

Key Achievements:

- **25 Health Community Gardens** (Jardins de la Santé – JDS) have been installed/revitalized, equipped with irrigation systems and provided with high nutritional value seeds; thus enabling diversified vegetable production adapted to local needs. 1,022 beneficiaries were trained in agroecological best practices to maximize the sustainability and impact of these initiatives.
- **154 vulnerable farming households were equipped and trained** in plant protein production, notably through niébé cultivation. 625 beneficiaries also received targeted support to develop skills in agricultural product processing and conservation techniques, while 16 representatives of 4 women's association were trained in enriched flour production, therefore improving access to nutritious products.
- **4 Dairy Processing Units (DPUs)** have been equipped to strengthen local value chains, and forage/animal feed plots have been coupled to 3 of these units.
- **A self-diagnosis of community practices** was carried out to identify local nutritional needs.
- The creation of **21 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)** has fostered the economic empowerment of women, consolidating the foundations of sustainable community resilience.
- On the nutritional front, AAH has undertaken **behavioral change activities** by raising awareness of good mother, infant and young children feeding, with 1891 vulnerable households reached; while awareness on hygiene and sanitation good practices is still ongoing, 617 household have been reached out with dotation of Aquatabs tablets to purify drinking water. 1436 households actively participated in cooking demonstrations. To date, the teams have indirectly reached over **18,000 people**.

The project contributed to improved food security, strengthened household economies, and heightened awareness of nutrition best practices. It is currently on track to close in March 2025. With strong momentum and positive feedback from local communities and authorities, UNITLIFE and ACF are engaged in active dialogue to design a follow-up phase that will deepen the impact and scale up successful innovations.

In this new phase of the project, AAH and its partner FAFD (Fédération des Associations du Fouta pour le Développement) plan on identifying 10 new villages vulnerable to food insecurity and/or with high nutritional needs. The specific nutrition activities will be concentrated in these 10 villages. However, these will be added onto the existing 25 villages of PIARAN where AAH will continue to support the VSLAs (AVEC) and the Health Community Gardens (JDSs). In order to guarantee a deeper impact, the project will specifically target women, due to their central role in the family unit, especially as it concerns food.

UNITLIFE extends its appreciation to MBRGI Foundation for its support in financing this program.

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.*

Duration: 17 months

Project Budget: 500K USD

Timeline: January 2023 to July 2024

We acknowledge the support of the MBRGI foundation



Overview

In Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), UNITLIFE collaborated with UN WOMEN on a project that focuses on establishing a biofortified cassava chain to empower women within their communities. This initiative, part of a broader effort to combat chronic malnutrition, targets the economic empowerment of women through improved agricultural practices. It commenced in January 2023 and spans several provinces, including Kongo Central and Kwango.

Final Results (2024): The project concluded in July 2024, successfully empowering women and contributing to improved food security through the development of local value chains for biofortified cassava. It significantly enhanced women's access to productive resources, food transformation infrastructure, and market opportunities.

Key Achievements:

- **Capacity Building:** **420 women** were trained in climate-resilient agriculture, food processing, and commercialization techniques, equipping them with the tools to operate as entrepreneurs.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Two **AgriFed Centers** were constructed and equipped with modern cassava processing, drying, and storage technologies. These facilities also serve as training and exchange hubs.
- **Economic Inclusion:** Women launched diversified income-generating activities such as poultry farming, cassava-based products, and vegetable gardening, leading to increased household income and local market engagement.
- **Nutrition Education & Gender Empowerment:** Community-wide awareness campaigns improved nutrition practices during the first 1,000 days. The project enhanced women's leadership in food systems and challenged traditional gender roles.
- **Partnerships and Sustainability:** Collaboration with INERA (Institut National pour l'Étude et la Recherche Agronomiques), Helen Keller International, and local stakeholders improved access to biofortified cassava varieties and supported the dissemination of good agricultural practices.

The project's integrated design and strong partnerships created enabling conditions for future replication, positioning women as key actors in the fight against malnutrition and in the transformation of local food economies.

UNITLIFE extends its appreciation to MBRGI Foundation for its support in financing this program.

New Projects

In 2024, UNITLIFE advanced the design and preparation of two new country-level programs in **Burundi** and **Madagascar**. These initiatives build on UNITLIFE's commitment to local leadership, climate-smart solutions, and nutrition financing, and are expected to launch in 2025 with catalytic support from strategic partners.

BURUNDI

Climate-Smart Nutrition and Nature-Based Solutions in the Kibira Buffer Zone

In partnership with the Kibira Foundation, UNCDF, and local stakeholders, this 24-month initiative will be implemented in the buffer zone of **Kibira National Park**, targeting food-insecure and indigenous communities, with a focus on Batwa women. Co-financing is expected from MBRGI, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, and the Cartier Foundation.

Key features:

- **Budget:** USD 650,000 | **Direct beneficiaries:** 40,000 | **Indirect beneficiaries:** 200,000

Program pillars:

- **Green Villages and Household Nutrition:** 700+ home gardens, community food production, and nutrition education in 20 schools.
- **Women's Empowerment & Digital Inclusion:** 1,000 Batwa women supported through VSLAs, blockchain-based voucher transfers, and financial education.
- **Local Value Chains:** Development of plant-based snacks and supplementary foods using local processing units.
- **Behavior Change:** NIPP roll-out in 500 households and promotion of inclusive nutrition practices.

The Burundi program represents a bold step in UNITLIFE's ambition to deliver high-impact, nature-based nutrition solutions in fragile ecosystems. By focusing on indigenous and marginalized groups such as Batwa women, and by embedding digital innovation and financial inclusion in the heart of the intervention, the initiative has the potential to break entrenched cycles of malnutrition and poverty. With strong community ownership and a cross-sectoral approach, the program will create replicable models for resilience and equity in biodiversity-rich but underserved regions.

MADAGASCAR

Climate-Smart Food Systems and Coastal Resilience in the Sava Region

Designed in order to maximize synergies with existing initiatives, this 18-month program will operate in the **Sava region**, including the Masoala Park buffer zone. The initiative links nutrition, regenerative agriculture, and nature-based economic development.

Key features:

- **Budget:** USD 650,000 | **Direct beneficiaries:** 20,000 | **Indirect beneficiaries:** 100,000

Program components:

- **Food Security & Nutrition:** Training for 300+ farmers in agroecological methods; establishment of nutrition hubs and gardens; and support for local food transformation (e.g., fortified flours, plant-based solutions).
- **Nature Conservation & Coastal Livelihoods:** Support for climate-smart aquaculture, reforestation, and eco-tourism that generate alternative income while protecting biodiversity.
- **Women's Financial Inclusion:** Business training, VSLA models, and linkages to digital financial services to empower women entrepreneurs.
- **Vanilla Value Chain Development:** Collaboration with private sector to pilot sustainable vanilla sourcing, traceability, and farmer inclusion in premium markets.

The Madagascar program embodies UNITLIFE's integrated and forward-looking approach to development—positioning nutrition as an entry point for climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and inclusive economic empowerment. By leveraging local strengths in agroecology and the vanilla value chain, and anchoring interventions in the unique ecosystems of Masoala, the initiative aims to offer a replicable model for nature-positive, community-led development. With strong cross-sectoral partnerships and an emphasis on sustainability, the program is poised to deliver transformative change for rural and coastal communities while contributing to global priorities around climate, health, and equity.

These two new country programs reflect UNITLIFE's strategy to scale impactful, community-driven models that link nutrition, gender equity, climate resilience, and local economic transformation.

PARTNERSHIP & INNOVATIVE FINANCE

2024 was a pivotal year for UNITLIFE's strategic engagement with partners and the advancement of its innovative finance agenda. UNITLIFE continued to strengthen its collaborative model by co-designing new financing instruments, exploring blended solutions, and fostering partnerships that contribute to a more sustainable, systemic, and scalable response to chronic malnutrition.

- ◆ We extend our sincere thanks to the Presidential Court of Abu Dhabi, a longstanding donor and Board member, for its continued strategic engagement in shaping a new innovative finance instrument that will scale impact and unlock alternative capital for nutrition.
- ◆ We also thank the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs for its continued support in the governance of UNITLIFE. As host of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris (March 2025), France is well-positioned to champion a renewed push for nutrition financing. UNITLIFE foresees a key role for France in the roll-out of its new financing instruments and in anchoring a stronger, ecosystem-wide approach to resource mobilization.
- ◆ The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI) Foundation renewed its unique support in 2024 through the One Billion Meals Campaign, enabling continuity and exploration of new programs. UNITLIFE looks forward to further collaboration to deepen impact and expand its reach through this catalytic partnership.



- ◆ We are also grateful to the Ecobank Foundation, which continues to support UNITLIFE through the “Make the Connection” campaign, promoting financial inclusion and awareness through innovative digital channels.
- ◆ UNITLIFE's efforts in innovative finance were further advanced in 2024 through collaborations with leading partners in the nutrition ecosystem. Several co-financing strategies and new models were co-developed, aimed at unlocking untapped resources and strengthening countries' efforts to mobilize domestic funds. These mechanisms—some to be announced in 2025—will require bold financial engineering and new forms of cross-sector collaboration.

Looking ahead, UNITLIFE will increasingly leverage blended finance instruments, including guarantees and repayable funding, to crowd in private capital, de-risk investments, and deliver transformative solutions in last-mile settings.



LOOKING AHEAD: STRATEGIC DIRECTION & LEARNING



As the global nutrition financing landscape grows increasingly constrained, UNITLIFE is focused on building smarter, more synergistic solutions to achieve lasting impact. The lessons drawn from project implementation and evaluation in 2024 underscore the importance of integrated, context-sensitive approaches that combine high-impact nutrition-specific interventions with nutrition-sensitive strategies, such as climate-smart agriculture, women's empowerment, and food system resilience.

Looking ahead, UNITLIFE will continue to work in closer coordination with governments, implementing partners, and global stakeholders to ensure alignment with national nutrition strategies and to maximize collective impact. There is a clear need to mobilize diverse financing instruments, including blended finance solutions, to unlock new capital and deliver long-term value where traditional grant funding alone is no longer sufficient.

In this evolving environment, UNITLIFE is strengthening its role as a connector and catalyst within the nutrition ecosystem. The Fund will focus on leveraging data-driven insights and inclusive innovation to design adaptable, scalable models tailored to local needs. By reinforcing national capacity, driving cross-sector collaboration, and aligning its programming with country-led priorities, UNITLIFE aims to deliver resilient, sustainable solutions that can address both the immediate and structural drivers of chronic malnutrition.