



## **REMARKS BY H.E GOVERNOR SIMON KACHAPIN DURING VISIT BY UNICEF**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I stand before you today to highlight the significant strides made through the collaborative efforts of UNICEF, our valued development partners, and the West Pokot County Government. Together, we have forged enduring partnerships in vital sectors such as Health, Nutrition, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), Education, Child Protection, Public Financing for Children, Data, Budget Transparency, and Social Protection.

In the year 2022 alone, UNICEF directed over USD 1,365,508 towards West Pokot County, both through development partners and direct channels to the county and national government. These funds have been instrumental in implementing critical programs across various sectors.

The Health sector in West Pokot County still grapples with challenges such as limited health facilities and insufficient medical equipment, low enrolment in the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), inadequate latrine coverage, and suboptimal immunization rates persist. Furthermore, undernutrition remains a pressing concern, alongside a significant percentage of mothers delivering at home.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In response, my administration took proactive steps, enacting the West Pokot County CHVs Act of 2019, leading to the recruitment of 2,600 Community Health Volunteers and the construction of 154 new health facilities across wards. These CHVs play a pivotal role in expanding health service delivery at the community level.

UNICEF's investment in the Health sector has also been directed towards capacity building of healthcare workers, equipping them to provide high-quality maternal and new born care. This includes the provision of life-saving equipment such as KMC beds, CPAP machines, and oxygen concentrators. Moreover, there has been a concerted effort to establish Primary Health Care Networks, expand the cold chain system, and enhance immunization coverage.

The Nutrition sector has been a focal point in our efforts to combat chronic malnutrition. We have seen a reduction in stunting rates, but challenges persist. Household food insecurity, suboptimal feeding practices, high prevalence of teenage



pregnancies, and micronutrient deficiencies continue to undermine the well-being of our children.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am glad to note that UNICEF, in partnership with the county and civil society organizations, has implemented a comprehensive nutrition program to address these issues. Over 8,000 children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition received life-saving interventions in 2022. Training and support initiatives have empowered healthcare workers and Community Health Volunteers, reaching over 50,000 caregivers with crucial messages on nutrition.

In the realm of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, UNICEF combined efforts with the County Ministry of Health to develop a strategic plan to eradicate open defecation. Through the training of 802 health workers, significant progress has been made, with a notable 61% of villages now benefiting from integrated sanitation and nutrition interventions. Additionally, 10 educational institutions have been equipped with water storage facilities.

Child Protection remains paramount, particularly in the face of prevalent harmful practices like FGM and high rates of teenage pregnancies. UNICEF, in collaboration with the county, is actively engaged in developing a robust Child Protection Policy. Cash transfers have been provided to 400 households in North Pokot, safeguarding them from the risks of drought emergencies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In Education, my administration's focus remains on overcoming the challenges posed by high illiteracy rates. With the construction of 1,177 Early Childhood Development Education centres, we have made substantial progress. UNICEF's efforts, in conjunction with the GIGA project, have brought internet connectivity to nine schools, enriching the learning experience for our children.

In Public Finance Management, we recognize the vital role it plays in shaping our county's future. Capacity-building initiatives, specialized budget briefs, and poverty and gender profiles are among the steps taken to ensure an inclusive and equitable allocation of resources.



Disaster Risk Management is also a critical aspect of our work, considering the recurrent natural calamities faced by the county. Through policy review and contingency planning, we aim to fortify our resilience against these challenges.

As I conclude, I acknowledge the significant strides made, but also acutely aware of the gaps that persist. Together, we must remain committed to strengthening our collaborative efforts in these strategic focus areas. By doing so, we can forge a brighter, healthier, and more prosperous future for the children and communities of West Pokot County.

**Thank you.**