Highlights

- As of 26 March 2020, 100,640 cases were confirmed positive of COVID-19 in the East Asia and Pacific with 3,601 deaths. This entails 81,961 confirmed cases in China and an additional 18,679 confirmed cases in other East Asia and Pacific countries. Of these the Republic of Korea (9,241 cases), Malaysia (1,796 cases), Japan (1,291 cases), Thailand (934 cases) and Indonesia (790 cases) are among the most heavily affected.

- Most countries in the East Asia and Pacific region have been taking measures to prepare for or mitigate community contagion of COVID-19. While the outbreak’s burden on health systems is increasing rapidly, necessary mitigation measures are affecting livelihoods and access to public services. Urgent efforts are needed to contain the outbreak and to support health systems and communities to mitigate the impacts.

- So far, UNICEF has reached over 80 million people with its COVID-19 related messages and provided critical personal protective equipment supplies to China, Malaysia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Indonesia, DPRK, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific. UNICEF plans to reach an additional 210 million people throughout the region.

- UNICEF’s Country Offices in the region are also supporting Governments with mitigating secondary impacts on education, child protection and other public services. UNICEF supports governments in the region, among others, with continuity of learning for the 323 million children affected by school closures, preparedness of schools and institutional care facilities as well as trainings of social workers to continue child protection services. Additional resources are needed for this response, including for supplies and programmatic support.

UNICEF’s Funding Status

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*Accounting for the evolving situation, UNICEF updated its global Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) and the regional response plan.

Regional Funding Status 2020 (US$)

Funds Received, $25.40M
Funding Gap, $43.23M
Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

Declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the COVID-19 has already resulted in 3.601 deaths in the East Asia and Pacific region. Necessary mitigation measures have interrupted public life and slowed down economic activity, affecting the lives and livelihoods of the 2.2 billion people living in the region. While the response by China and other countries in the region has been unprecedented, medical supplies, including personal protective equipment, are in short supply across the East Asia and Pacific region. Countries with weaker health systems and limited capacity to deal with a major disease outbreak are at particular risk, especially now that community transmission and epidemics seem all but unavoidable for most countries in the region. Moreover, public anxiety about transmission risks in healthcare facilities might severely affected healthcare-seeking behaviour, including by pregnant women and families with young children. School closures implemented by countries in the region to contain the spread of the virus have affected 323 million children and may have unintended consequences in terms of child protection, if alternative care arrangements are not in place. The impact of the closure of companies and economic slowdown is mostly felt by those families that were already on unstable and low wages. Moreover, COVID-19 poses a risk to women in particular as women are overrepresented among healthcare workers. A surge in violence against children and gender-based violence (GBV) and a drop in care and support for children and GBV survivors is to be feared. Underlying health conditions make children with disabilities especially vulnerable to COVID-19, compounding their disproportionate social and economic vulnerabilities. UNICEF’s response to the COVID-19 outbreak therefore focusses on the reduction of human-to-human transmission as well as the mitigation of the secondary impacts of the crisis, in line with United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

Partnerships and Coordination

At the regional and country levels, UNICEF is coordinating efforts to reduce transmission and mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 with national authorities, UN and other partners, including WHO, IFRC, national Centres for Diseases Control (CDCs), NGO partners and the private sector. With the support of UNICEF’s East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, Country Offices developed a regional response plan aligned with the WHO COVID 19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, as well as the United Nations Global Humanitarian Response Plan that covers the following areas: (1) risk communication and community engagement, (2) critical supply and logistics and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services, (3) provision of healthcare and nutrition services, (4) access to continuous education and child protection services and (5) data collection and analysis.

Summary of UNICEF’s Preparedness and Response Actions in the Region:

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

In the East Asia and the Pacific region, UNICEF is providing public information on how to prevent transmission of the virus and particularly how to protect children, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups. To gauge awareness and availability of accurate information, UNICEF is also engaged in “social listening” by closely monitoring the public’s perception of the COVID-19 situation in programme countries and actively conducting polls among youth.

- All UNICEF Country Offices in the East Asia and Pacific region continued to disseminate information to children, adolescents, their caregivers, partners, Government and the wider public about transmission prevention through printed media, television, radio and social media.
- UNICEF in China, disseminated essential information related to COVID-19 through its own channels and with partners, reaching at least 42.07 million people on Sina Weibo alone.
- In Thailand, UNICEF’s video “Careful but not panic” was launched on UNICEF’s social media channels, including its Facebook channel where the video was already viewed 306,000 times. The video was also aired on Thai public television. UNICEF in Thailand also worked with WHO and the Migrant Working Group to develop a COVID-19 prevention and response plan for Thailand’s migrant population, which was shared with health authorities.
- UNICEF supported the Government of Cambodia at national and sub-national level in providing accurate information on COVID-19 and handwashing to ID-poor households, children in drug rehabilitation centres, visitors of healthcare facilities and many others.
- In Malaysia, UNICEF and WHO are supporting the Ministry of Health with the development of key message packages for vulnerable groups.
- In Vietnam, UNICEF’s social media have reached over 2 million people already. The more than 30 online assets published include, among others, videos, images with prevention and public health messages and mummy bloggers.

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1 As per the WHO Situation Report of 26 March 2020
In Lao PDR, UNICEF supported the Government in developing a RCCE strategy as well as media orientation.

In Timor-Leste, UNICEF, helped to establish the national RCCE technical working group, which UNICEF co-chairs with the Ministry of Health.

In the Philippines, UNICEF supported the Department of Health with its mass and social media plans as well as with its first live Facebook event following the lockdown in Manila. The event was watched over 500,000 times on Facebook, as well as on the pages of major national news outlets.

In Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati, UNICEF helped to develop COVID-19 communication materials for health workers and communities, and translated these materials into local languages.

UNICEF in Myanmar, has been targeting its COVID-19 messaging to vulnerable populations in IDP camps in Kachin state as well as at other at-risk groups, including communities with high levels of labour migrants.

In Indonesia, UNICEF is supporting the emergency coordination authority with its public information campaign. As part of this, UNICEF helped to launch a website that provides the public with content and messages for key target groups, a hoax buster section, educational materials, articles and case data. The site has been visited more than 4 million times in the week after its launch.

UNICEF is harnessing mobile technology to both provide populations with accurate information, as well as to listen to children and adolescents. In Cambodia, UNICEF supplied a telecom provider with COVID-19 messages for SMS dissemination. In Kiribati and Federated States of Micronesia, UNICEF similarly reached about 75,000 people with SMS-based COVID-19 messages. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, more than 300,000 people registered to receive practical and information through a chatbot created by UNICEF. In Malaysia, UNICEF used its U-Report system to listen to adolescents’ experiences of the COVID-19 crisis.

Critical Supply and Logistics and WASH services
UNICEF is providing critical hygiene, medical and prevention supplies and services to support the control of transmission in healthcare settings and communities and strengthen health systems’ response capacities. As in many countries in the East Asia and Pacific region Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and other health supplies cannot or can no longer be sourced locally, UNICEF’s support is critical to fill supply gaps.

- Critical PPE supplies were provided to the Governments of Lao PDR, Mongolia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea as well as DPRK. In the latter, these supplies will equip 500 health workers as part of the Government-led preparedness measures.
- In Cambodia, UNICEF provided the Government with handwashing supplies for distribution to residential care facilities, religious facilities, ID-poor households and communities.
- In Mongolia, UNICEF supported the drafting of the Humanitarian Country Team’s WASH cluster’s preparedness and response plan. UNICEF now supports the implementation of the plan, among others by developing preventive WASH messages for children and the wider public.
- In the Philippines, UNICEF provided logistics support to the distribution of PPE and disinfection equipment to target facilities in Visayas and Mindanao.
- In the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Kiribati, UNICEF provided governments with tents to be used as holding areas, testing centers and hospital extensions.
- UNICEF in Timor-Leste, helped to set up WASH infrastructure in places where COVID-19 transmission is more likely, including at border posts, the airport and health facilities.
- In the Federated States of Micronesia, UNICEF installed handwashing stations with ample supply of soaps in schools, hospitals, airports and seaports.
- In Papua New Guinea, UNICEF constructed WASH stations in schools that will benefit 56,000 schoolchildren.

Supplies and Logistics Challenges
Although UNICEF has many pre-existing long-term agreements with local suppliers, local sourcing has become more challenging as stocks of certain PPE articles have been running low, globally and in the region, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly due to increased demand and decreased supply of PPE articles from China. Where PPE supplies are available on local markets, quality certification according to international standards is sometimes challenging. Due to the school closures that effect nearly all countries in the region, it has also become more challenging to ensure that handwashing and sanitation reach children in schools. Regional export restrictions of PPE and WASH supplies as well as border closures have made it significantly more difficult to source such supplies regionally.

Provision of Healthcare and Nutrition Services
UNICEF, in close coordination with partners and health authorities, is supporting countries’ health systems in the region to respond to and prepare for COVID-19 outbreaks. At the same time, UNICEF is also ensuring the continued provision of adequate health care, including nutritional services, for children, pregnant women and vulnerable communities.

- In Lao PDR, UNICEF supported the Government with the capacity strengthening of health village volunteers.
In Myanmar, UNICEF is working with partners in non-government-controlled areas (NGCA) to identify critical gaps and needs for strengthening screening at the Myanmar-China border.

UNICEF in Mongolia has launched a chatbot on Frequently Asked Questions to help healthcare-seeking behavior. UNICEF is also facilitating IPC training of the 500 health workers in three focus provinces.

In Vietnam, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health with the development of temporary guidelines for management of pregnant mothers and children with COVID-19, and discussed the continuation of nutrition services with the National Institute of Nutrition.

In the Philippines, UNICEF is providing technical assistance to the Department of Health and the National Nutrition Centre to develop key messages and advisories on mother and child nutrition.

In Indonesia, UNICEF has been working in close coordination with the Ministry of Health to support essential Maternal and Child Health services during the COVID-19 emergency. It also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health to develop a series of communication material on COVID-19 prevention strategies focusing on key nutrition messages.

**Access to Continuous Education and Child Protection Services**

UNICEF is supporting the continued access to of education, early child development (ECD) and child protection services, including integrated case management, alternative care and mental health and psychosocial support services. UNICEF is also supporting the preparedness of education, ECD and child protection services for possible COVID-19 outbreak in the region. Jointly with WHO and IFRC and with the support of Country Offices and the East Asia Pacific Regional Office, UNICEF released a guidance document on *Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools*. UNICEF’s Regional Office is also supporting Country Offices for their COVID-19 response programming to account for the disproportionate vulnerabilities faced by children with disabilities.

- Across the region, UNICEF is working with education authorities to contextualize UNICEF’s global guidelines for safe school operations. Related discussions with education authorities are ongoing in Thailand, Malaysia and several Pacific Island Countries. Contextualized guidelines have been endorsed and informed policy in Lao PDR, Indonesia as well as in Vietnam, where it benefited 22 million students and their families.
- In Malaysia, UNICEF has been supporting education authorities with continuity of learning and safe school guidelines, for mainstream and marginalized population, and successfully advocated with child protection authorities for the continued operations of the child helpline.
- UNICEF Thailand is working with national education authorities on learning kits on COVID-19 prevention for ECD centres and schools.
- In China, UNICEF continued to publish weekly activity-based parenting messages and tips to support children’s psychosocial needs through the Social and Emotional Learning sub-pages on its social media and Xinhua platforms, achieving over 3.4 million views.
- In Indonesia, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Social Affairs with circulating guidelines on transmission prevention in institutional care facilities among sub-national child protection authorities, to the benefit of the 183,000 children currently in these facilities.
- In Cambodia, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Social Affairs with rolling out COVID-19 prevention instructions to all residential care institutions and expanding the scope of the Child Protection in Emergencies Contingency Plan to also include COVID-19.
- In 14 Pacific Island Countries, guidance notes on child protection services during the COVID-19 outbreak were disseminated among child protection authorities.

**Data Collection, Analysis and Research**

To better understand trends, vulnerabilities and the impact on women and children, UNICEF is collecting and analysing data as well as conducting research on the impact of the disease on children and women and the measures taken to contain it.

- In China, UNICEF is supporting a multi-centre clinical study on transmission of COVID-19 and its health and developmental impact on among newborns of mothers with confirmed/suspected COVID-19. The study will help UNICEF and its partners to better understand vertical transmission and addressing theses in health responses.
- In Cambodia, UNICEF supported the development of a Government-led remotely administered survey to assess the delivery of a Cash Transfer programme for pregnant women and children 0-2 in order to assess supply and access barriers as well as the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on beneficiary households.
- In Myanmar, UNICEF will soon conduct a rapid analysis to the socio-economic impact of COVID-19; the development of the analysis happened in close collaboration with development partners.
- UNICEF in Mongolia continues to monitor children’s situation following school closures, reporting that children are often witnesses of domestic violence and noting a surge in domestic violence crimes of almost 47 per cent since the lockdown.
- In Indonesia, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Health to developing digital data collection tools that will allow to conduct needs assessments of health facilities and workers.
Funding
UNICEF revised its global Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) for the COVID-19 response seeking US$651.6 million. As part of that appeal, the East Asia and Pacific regional response plan budget totals US$68.6 million. So far, a total of US$25.4 million has been received for the region from different donors, including the Government of Japan, USAID, the Government of Korea, the Government of Australia, several private donors, ChildFund Korea and WHO. UNICEF is currently in discussion with several public and private donors to raise funding for the US$43.2 million shortfall for the East Asia and Pacific regional response. Please refer to Annex A for more detailed information on funding per functional area and country.

Internal and External Media

Next SitRep: 10 April 2020

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## Annex A: Funding Status

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