Highlights

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the containment measures are having a serious impact on health, education, safety of children and women, economy and the overall development trajectory of Ghana.

Factors include:

- Limitations within the already inadequately resourced health system and public health infrastructure, with potential of reversal in gains made in some of the health indices.
- Poor water and sanitation systems, as well as hygiene practices.
- An expected slowdown in the economy considering the movement and travel restrictions.
- Children in poor households are at increased risk of hunger and lack of access to necessities as they are most vulnerable to economic disruption. These families may also take undue health risks in order to economically survive.
- Containment measures may also contribute to additional stressors upon families, which may result in increased threats to the safety and well-being of children – including child exploitation, mistreatment, gender-based and other forms of violence. This is of concern in a context where, according to recent data, 94 percent of children aged 1 to 14 years experienced some level of violent discipline (Multiple indicator Cluster Survey 2017/2018).

Funding Overview

By mid-April, the UNICEF Ghana Covid-19 Humanitarian Action for Children is 5 per cent funded, with $599,000 received so far, against the 12.7$ needed.

Funds received come mainly from multilateral donors (World Bank) and bilateral donors (DFID). Other funds are also being re-programmed to address the urgent needs of the most vulnerable children, young people and families in Ghana.
Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

As of 15th of April, 636 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Ghana, with eight deaths. The number of cases has more than doubled over the last week. As shown in the attached graph, this places Ghana with the third highest cumulative cases in the West and Central Africa Region. Currently, cases of COVID-19 have been reported in 10 of Ghana’s 16 regions. Since Ghana reported its first two cases of COVID-19 on 12 March 2020, national response mechanisms have been activated. As confirmed cases have increased, the president has issued several directives to mitigate transmission risks.

The COVID-19 outbreak and the consequent containment measures may have significant impact on the health, security and overall economic development of Ghana, including:

- A slow in trade and reduced economic growth, resulting in a loss of revenue opportunities, especially for poor, mainly women-led, households who live on daily subsistence;
- Potential reversal in gains in well-being, given under-resourced health system and public health infrastructure and low access to basic sanitation;
- Limited access to social support services, education and health services, livelihood support programmes disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations;
- Increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, including, domestic violence and sexual exploitiation and abuse, especially during the lockdown period, and increased cases of child exploitation and human trafficking;
- Given Ghana’s population of 30 million, a significant number may be affected, with conservative models estimating 15% infection rate and

Summary Analysis of Programmes Response

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

In coordination with the UN Country team in Ghana, a risk communication strategy has been drafted and is currently being implemented, prioritizing hygiene and sanitation, and preventative measures. UNICEF has developed assets, including short films for online and television purposes; relevant and regularly updated content on website and social media channels; and posters and fliers designed to suit the Ghana context. Social influencers have contributed through the #SafeHands Challenge.

UNICEF is also leveraging existing media platforms such as U-Report, and the interactive voice response platform “Agoo” to engage young people with accurate information. The availability of information relating to coronavirus via U-Report has contributed to a 16% increase in U-Reporters in three weeks and in that time frame, more than 1.8 million people have been reached with risk communication messaging.

UNICEF has also been engaging with key community influencers, including chiefs and traditional leaders, community groups, women and youth groups, health workers and community volunteers to build their capacity to raise awareness, promote healthy practices and address stigma and discrimination for COVID-19 survivors.
UNICEF will continue coordinating with national authorities to track and respond to misinformation and ensure pregnant women, children and their families know how to prevent COVID-19 and seek assistance. UNICEF will keep supporting the Government to monitor information from media sources - radio, television, social and the other traditional media - to ensure that accurate information is amplified, and false information and rumours are appropriately managed.

Medical and WASH supplies, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)
UNICEF has started to procure and distribute critical hygiene and prevention items (including soap, hand-sanitizers, chlorine, masks (as appropriate), water dispensers, disinfectant and personal protection equipment) for use in health and nutrition facilities, schools, and public spaces.

Early April, with support from Canada, UNICEF Ghana has donated eighty-seven (87) veronica buckets and stands to twenty tree (23) health facilities and other public utilities in the north of Ghana. The ongoing distribution targets forty (40) health facilities (including thirty-three (33) CHPS compounds, three public military and prison health facilities in five districts in Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions. The intervention contributes to the improvement of infection prevention and control practices in health facilities as part of ensuring equitable quality health care for mothers and children as part of the COVID-19 pandemic response in the country.

With World Bank support, UNICEF is procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline health facilities. In coordination with UNICEF HQ and the Supply Division in Copenhagen, efforts are also underway to procure 10 oxygen concentrators and accessories.

UNICEF has developed a WASH Response Plan and supported the WASH in Emergencies group with its national plan. Veronica Buckets have been released for health facilities and discussions with Micro- and Small-Scale Enterprises are ongoing to explore fabricating new pedal operated Handwashing Facilities.

Access to essential health care and nutrition services
The UNICEF Ghana Country Office is coordinating with the UNCT, especially WHO, in supporting national efforts in healthcare, sanitation and hygiene to minimize community transmission of COVID-19 and potential resultant morbidity and mortality, especially among vulnerable communities. UNICEF is cooperating with key actors in strengthening and accelerating the COVID-19 testing capacity at Public Health Laboratories, to adopt and roll out rapid testing. UNICEF is also procuring Personal Protective Equipment, Rapid Diagnostic Kits and new PCR machines for COVID-19 testing. UNICEF also supports the Ghana Health Service to develop guidelines on maternal nutrition and infant and young child feeding in the context of COVID-19. Considering Ghana’s recent outbreak of vaccine-derived polio virus (vDPV), WHO, UNICEF and other actors continue coordinating and supporting monitoring and response to the outbreak.

Access to education services
In collaboration with development partners in Education, UNICEF helped develop a draft Education in Emergency (EiE) contingency plan and a joint workplan, in response to COVID-19. An initial discussion with potential Implementing partners was held regarding radio-based and SMS learning materials/platform for teachers and students. UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and other partners seek to ensure that investment made in education response also supports the scale up and sustainability of learning platforms.
Access to child protection services and prevention of gender-based violence
UNICEF has been supporting Child Protection services to monitor and respond to potential increases in the incidence of violence against children and women, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancies and child marriage. The child protection team continued supporting the Department of Social Welfare on Standard Operating Procedures for case management, especially for children in alternative care affected by the COVID-19 crisis. UNICEF also shared: Guidelines on volunteers with the Department of Social Welfare; Online safety guidelines with the Ministry of Communication; a Guidance note on community engagement; and a Psychosocial Support Strategy for district child protection teams.

Access to continuous social protection services
UNICEF will continue monitoring the situation of 330,000 vulnerable families who rely on regular cash transfers from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme. UNICEF has supported advance payments to LEAP households to ensure support of vulnerable households to minimize economic impacts of prevention measures and enable them to practice good hygiene and social distancing practices. Plans are underway to identify innovative delivery mechanisms to enable families to receive future payments safely and on time. LEAP communication channels will be leveraged to reach 1.5 million vulnerable people with accurate information and knowledge on infection prevention.

Data collection and analysis of secondary impacts on children and women
In cooperation with the UNCT, UNICEF Ghana will continue the collection and analysis of social sciences data (including KAP studies, qualitative and mixed methodology studies) related to COVID-19, including data on interpersonal practices (e.g. handshaking, hand hygiene, cough etiquette), on behavioral drivers and on local care seeking patterns. Rapid situational assessments will target specific at-risk/ vulnerable populations as appropriate (e.g. market workers, health care providers in public, private, traditional practices, pharmacies, community health workers). Findings will be disseminated through coordination structures for immediate action, such as the NTCC, EOC and the Health Sector Working Group platforms.

In collaboration with the Ghana Statistical Service and the World Bank, a household panel survey will be conducted to ascertain the secondary impacts of the outbreak. UNICEF Ghana will employ innovative data collection approaches that ensure the “do no harm” principle is maintained. Routine rapid assessments are to be conducted through the U-Report platform. These will be complemented with big data analysis from social media platforms and other sources to continuously track the sentiment of the population based on different thematic areas.

Supply and Logistics
UNICEF has completed the forecast of Personal Protective Equipment required in the first phase of the COVID-19 preparedness and response, in collaboration with UN agencies and Development Partners. A Purchase Order has been placed and goods are ready for shipment. A shipment pre-alert is expected to be received this week. UNICEF also ordered ten oxygen concentrators through UNICEF SD, as well as fittings and accessories through local sources of supply. The Ghana Country Office is reviewing options to support government to access ordering COVID-19 test kits (Cepheid’s Xpert) and oxygen through regional and global arrangements.

Coordination and Partnerships

Government of Ghana:
The Inter-Ministerial Coordinating Committee (IMCC), chaired by His Excellency, President Nana Akufo-Addo, includes representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Health, Local Government, Gender, Children and Social Protection, Information, Transport, Interior, Defence and the Office of the President. It is the apex coordinating body for the COVID-19 response.

The National Technical Coordinating Committee (NTCC) serves as a technical expert committee in the monitoring of the implementation. The NTCC is chaired by Director General, Ghana Health Service and co-chaired by the WHO. The National Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC) is the mechanism responsible for coordinating COVID-19 response activities (Director, Public Health). It is activated when there is an outbreak and the activation is scaled-up depending on the risks and epidemiological situation of the outbreak.

In addition, the National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO) is a government agency responsible for the management of natural disasters and other emergencies (reporting to the Ministry of Interior). At the regional and district levels, preparedness and response activities are coordinated by the respective regional and district Public Health Emergency Management Committees (PHEMCS). UNICEF is a standing member of the National Technical Coordinating Committee, the PHEOC and the sub-group on Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE).
United Nations and Partners:

In Ghana, the UN coordination structure is as follows:
- UNRC a.i./Designated Official, advised by the COVID-19 Outbreak Coordination Committee
- UN Country Team / Security Management Team
- Five UNCT / SMT sub-working groups related to the COVID-19 response: 1) Medical SWG; 2) Psychosocial Support SWG; 3) Communications SWG; 4) Operations Management SWG; 5) Programme Response SWG.

UNICEF is represented in the UNCT and SMT and all sub-working groups. In addition, the Agency plays a leadership or technical role as follows: a) Chairs the Operations SWG; b) Chairs the UNSDP Result Area 3 on safe and protected environment, incl. WASH; c) Co-chairs and provides M&E technical assistance to the Covid-19 programme response SWG; and d) Leads and provides technical assistance on programme criticality (three UNICEF SM guiding and facilitating).

UNICEF is prominent across social sector coordination groups, including by leading DP coordination in Education, WASH and Nutrition. UNICEF currently supports the Education in Emergencies (EiE) sub-sector working group in developing sector-wide contingency plan for COVID-19 response and strengthening coordination in the sector. UNICEF participates in the WASH in Emergency Working Group, which has converged around a sector specific COVID-19 response plan. UNICEF leads the Scaling Up Nutrition development partners (SUN-DP) to support the nutrition response to COVID-19 and helps prevent malnutrition (including through capacity strengthening, development of nutrition tools and guidelines, and World Bank-supported procurement of Vitamin A and Iron Folic Acid).

The UNICEF Country office in Ghana has previously collaborated with Government agencies, UN, DPs and I/NGOs in earlier outbreak responses, including Cholera, Meningitis, influenza and the currently ongoing polio outbreak response. UNICEF’s large presence in Ghana, with a field office in Tamale, in the north, and experiences from previous outbreak response help support the Government’s capacity to prepare and respond to outbreaks. Finally, the UN Resident Coordinator a.i. and UNICEF cooperate closely with Development Partners.

External Media


Online news: Thanks to UNICEF for Tippy Tap [https://newsghana.com.gh/covid19-thanks-to-unicef-for-tippy-tap/]

Television: One of Ghana’s most popular TV channels, JOY News featured UNICEF’s mini-series of Health Specialist, Dr Peter Baffoe sharing information about preventative measures.

Children’s channel – GNTV: The UNICEF Health Specialist mini-series will be televised on this channel, as will a short film.

Next SitRep: 30 April 2020

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