Highlights

- A total of 397 confirmed cases have been reported in the South Asia region representing a 530% increase compared to last week. The largest increase has been reported in Pakistan 187 cases, followed by India 127 cases, Sri Lanka 29 cases, Afghanistan 21 cases and Maldives 13 cases.
- On Sunday, seven head of states and representatives from the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held a video conference to discuss a regional joint strategy to contain and respond to the corona virus outbreak. This is the first formal engagement in six years between top-leaders of the SAARC since the Kathmandu-summit in 2014.
- As part of containment and prevention strategy action, most countries in the region have restricted movements of people, closed their land borders, suspended visas for tourists and imposed mandatory 14 days quarantine for passengers arriving from hotspot affected countries.
- Schools including colleges have been closed in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and India.
- UNICEF country offices continue to support governments in promoting risk communication and community engagement to prevent the spread of the disease. So far, 36 million people have been reached with key messages using different social media platforms.
- With the high demand for Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) combined with export ban from major markets, procurement for these critical supplies for small countries is a major challenge and UNICEF is exploring local alternatives and engaging diplomatic embassies.
- UNICEF is appealing for $13.8 million to reach 60 million people with risk education, critical supplies, adequate health care, continuous education and child protection services. In view of the escalating situation and needs UNICEF is reviewing its plans and the budget is likely to increase.

UNICEF’s Response Budget in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Funding Status (%)</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Medical &amp; WASH Supplies</td>
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UNICEF Appeal 2020
For South Asia
US$ 13.8 million

Funding Status (in US$)

- Funding received, $10,500,000
- Funding gap, $3,339,730
- 67%
**Funding Overview and Partnerships**

UNICEF South Asia appeals for US$ 13.8 million to support government efforts and interventions to prevent the spread of the virus and respond to those that have been affected through provision of critical supplies and adequate health care. UNICEF has so far received $10.5 million from the Asia Development Bank, Japanese Government and Facebook Foundation. In view of the worsening the situation, additional funding is urgently required to support government, communities and children to scale up intervention for preparedness and response to stop the spread of the virus and support government service delivery system to respond to needs of affected people.

**Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs**

Over the past week the number of cases in the region has spiked from 63 cases to 397 cases\(^1\) as shown in figure 1 below. The overall situation in the region is rapidly escalating with Pakistan reporting a total of 159 cases in a single day. The highest increase has been reported in Pakistan (187) followed by India (127), Sri Lanka (29), Afghanistan (21), Maldives (13), Bangladesh (8) and one each from Nepal and Bhutan. While all the cases in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan are imported, there are increasing reports of local transmission in Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. India has reported both imported (Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) and locally transmitted cases in five states; Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh\(^2\). Although some of the land borders with neighbouring countries have been closed, there are concerns for the mass movement of Afghan returnees from Iran to Afghanistan. According to IOM, more than 20,000 returnees crossed the Islam Qala border crossing alone over a two days period between March 14 and 15 thereby increasing the risk of the spread of the disease\(^3\).

![Figure 1; South Asia COVID-19 confirmed cases March 01 - 16, 2020](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/wrindia/situation-report/india-situation-report-6.pdf?sfvrsn=12d97759_2)

**Partnership and Coordination**

On Sunday, seven head of states and representatives from the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) held a video conference to discuss a regional joint strategy to contain and respond to the coronavirus outbreak including a regional mechanism for disease surveillance. This is the first formal engagement in six years between top-leaders of the SAARC since the Kathmandu-summit in 2014. In addition, India offered $10 million to set up a common voluntary Emergency Fund for the SAARC members to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. UNICEF will engage with the SAARC secretariat to develop strategies on COVID-19 response focusing on preparedness, health and distance learning.

UNICEF regional office and country offices continue to engage and work in close collaboration and coordination with WHO, governments, Inter Agency taskforces/other UN agencies, Centre for Disease Control, INGOs and other stakeholders including donor agencies such as ADB, World Bank and others. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka, UNICEF is actively engaged in the UNCT coordination mechanism to support the government response. In Nepal where government led cluster mechanism remain active, UNICEF co-leads the WASH sector, Education, Nutrition and Child Protection and is engaging in the inter sectoral working group to develop joint inter-sectoral preparedness and response plan. As part of the business for result strategy, UNICEF is engaging the

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Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) to support preparedness and response actions including conducting mass scale outreach for risk communication and hygiene promotion. Similarly, UNICEF is working with Unilever to explore co-creation and dissemination of handwashing messages and provision of essential WASH supplies including soap to frontline health providers to support hand-washing campaign. UNICEF Pakistan country office advocated for and supported the government to establish communication coordination task force both at federal and provincial levels, which included development of Terms of References (ToRs), identification of task force members and technical discussions.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

The Regional Office and Country offices response plans have been developed in alignment with the 2020 WHO Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP), and the 2020 UNICEF COVID-2019 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. The key priority for the RO/CO response plans is on the immediate measures that must be undertaken to ensure preparedness and response actions to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in each country focusing on the following areas; (1) risk communication and community engagement, (2) critical medical and Water Supply and Hygiene (WASH) supplies and services, (3) provision of healthcare and nutrition services, (4) access to continuous education and child protection services.

Building on UNICEF wide network of offices, ongoing programs and vast network of partners, UNICEF in South Asia stepped up its engagement in risk communication and community engagement relying on its know-how on hygiene promotion, social and behaviour change communication and experience from previous epidemics, including in this region (SARS, H1N1 etc).

Afghanistan Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- UNICEF continue to support the government and health partners in strengthening the surveillance system building on the existing National Disease Surveillance Reporting (NDSR) system of Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), by training the health professionals and increasing number of sentinel sites;
- A total of 800,000 brochures have been developed and printed for distribution by MoPH.
- A community mobilization concept has been developed which will be used to mobilize different community groups for risk communication and community engagement.
- Developed two television and two radio spots on corona virus prevention.
- In Herat province, the current epicenter of the disease, 17 media partners are broadcasting the TV/Radio spots for free for the duration of 10 days.
- Risk communication presentation integrated into community dialogue training of Child Protection in Northern Region of the country.

Critical medical supply and WASH Services
- UNICEF in collaboration with the Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development Directorate (PRRD) completed the WASH assessment for the screening facilities at Islam Qala Border crossing between Iran and Afghanistan.
- UNICEF and partners have constructed six temporary washing stations for Afghan returnees at screening facilities and will soon finalize the construction of 19 permanent WASH facilities at the Islam Qala border crossing to ensure appropriate preventative measures of travelers returning from affected COVID-19 areas.

Provision of adequate health and nutrition care
- 60 UNICEF-supported Mobile Health Teams are on stand-by across 13 provinces to provide primary health care services in potentially affected areas.

Bangladesh Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- UNICEF continues to support the government in its implementation of the National Preparedness and Response Plan.
- UNICEF is engaging with the Risk Communication Working Group led by the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) to developed various materials on COVID-19 prevention for general population, for immigrant and returnees and Rohingya Refugees. So far 500,000 leaflets/copies and a poster (20,000 copies) with key messages on COVID-19 prevention were printed by IEDCR with support from UNICEF.
- UNICEF has reached 4.5 million people through social media posts with prevention messaging, promoting handwashing and cough etiquette since the start of promotion.
- Developed and published a statement on countering misinformation in Bangla and English.
- Developed a handwashing video co-created by UNICEF volunteers and UNICEF WASH experts
- UNICEF and partners have prepared COVID-19 messages in Burmese and Rohingya for the refugees. Dissemination of messages started this week in the camps after approval from local Government.
- UNICEF is supporting the development of a comprehensive inter-sectoral response and preparedness plan for the Rohingya refugees.
Bhutan Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Health and other relevant ministries to update the Crisis Communication Strategy and develop IEC materials to promote preventive health and hygiene practices in schools, monastic institutions, nunneries, Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centers, youth centers and communities.
- UNICEF continue to disseminate and amplify messages on prevention and handwashing. So far, a total of 200,000 people have been reached through social media channels.
- Responding to misinformation/ rumours through social and mass media and directing public to verified information centers/ websites
- Engaging mass media, risk communication committee at the Ministry of Health/ WHO and the UN Communications Group to share advocacy messages

Critical medical supply and WASH Services
- UNICEF is supporting the government to procure critical medical supplies for the paediatric Intensive Care Unit (ICU) including paediatric and neonate ventilator, CP monitor with accessories, ICU bed, Paediatric defibrillator and ultrasonic nebulizer; PPE and lab equipment for case management.
- UNICEF is providing technical support to the WASH cluster to design and install WASH facilities in common public places such as bus terminal, vegetable market, and taxi stations. Four strategic locations have been identified to install WASH facilities in common public places to promote good hygiene practices in conjunction with social mobilization.

Provision of adequate health and nutrition care
- UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to ensure provision of safe health care services for women, children and vulnerable communities including case management in case of COVID-19 outbreak through strengthening of ICU capacity and mobilization of clinical staff from other hospitals.
- UNICEF is providing technical support to MoH in strengthening delivery of routine community based maternal, newborn and child health services inclusive of vaccination sessions and emergency services within COVID-19 epidemic context.

India Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
The government of India has invoked powers under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and declared COVID-19 a 'notified disaster' under the Disaster Management Act 2005. UNICEF’s is engaging with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as part of the UN preparedness and response strategy that is led by WHO. Through this engagement, UNICEF has taken following actions to date:

- Developed a draft risk communication and community engagement strategy that is shared with WHO
- Developed risk communication materials that are uploaded on the website of National Center for Disease Control https://ncdc.gov.in/index4.php?lang=1&level=0&linkid=127&lid=432
- In collaboration with WHO, CDC, and USAID, UNICEF has developed a national Trainer of Trainer package on risk communication and communication engagement which is being rolled across the country.

Maldives Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
- UNICEF is engaging with health staff in the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) bilaterally on sub-activity areas, such as risk communication and community engagement.
- UNICEF continue to disseminate prevention messages developed by the Regional Office and the Government of Maldives through social media and mass communication channels.
- The country office is working to develop messages beyond infection prevention behavioural messages and develop key messages focusing on continuation of learning via online platforms; child protection in the current emergency context; psychosocial well-being and engagement of children through activities to uplift their morale

Access to continuous education and child protection services
- With the closure of the schools the Ministry of Education has already activated online learning platforms to ensure children are continuing learning. However, major gaps in teacher and parental capacity have been identified in terms of guiding and providing online learning. Therefore, UNICEF is planning to support the government to train 7,000 teachers to acquire Google classroom certification.
- UNICEF is providing support to the government in development of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the state-run alternate care institutions to ensure safe behaviours among social workers in the homes to protect both children and staff members.
- Initiated discussion with the government agencies (Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services, Maldives Police Service, and Ministry of Education) to identify needs and preparation of prevention and response plan to violence against children and gender-based violence during this quarantine period, as leaving children at home due to closures might add another level of risk to already vulnerable children.
UNICEF is providing support to the Maldivian Red Crescent in their psychosocial support response – specifically to support parents to inform children on COVID-19, and managing their emotions.

Provision of adequate health and nutrition care
UNICEF is supporting the government to ensure existing programmes (such as EPI, nutrition) include emergency lens and approach both the ongoing Measles outbreak, chicken pox outbreak, and COVID-19 as one public health emergency. Current COVID-19 response is diverting attention, human resources from existing programmes including the measles campaign.
Providing technical support to the government to develop clinical guidelines for COVID-19 and pregnancy, and disseminate resources for health education on pregnancy and breastfeeding in the context of COVID-19.

Nepal Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
UNICEF continue to supporting the government to develop, pre-test and disseminate messages and information on COVID-2019 through social media, radio broadcasts, and other channels including targeted messaging for key stakeholders and at-risk groups based on community risk perceptions (including children, parents/care givers, pregnant women, health providers, etc.);
So far, around 25 million SMS and 1 million outbound calls on COVID-19 have been sent through the telecommunication partners NCELL, SMART Cell and Nepal Telecommunication. In addition, COVID-19 messages are being disseminated through over 125 radio stations, three television channels and four mainstream print media. Currently, COVID-19 audio, visual and print communication products are being revised based on feedback from WHO and Ministry of Health and Population.
UNICEF is providing support to the Risk Communication and Community Engagement working group to developing risk communication and community engagement consolidated work plan.
Supported the government to organize two media engagement sessions with the editors on major media outlets and journalists reporting on health.
Developed a dedicated bilingual (English and Nepali) landing page on COVID-19 and is being updated on UNICEF Nepal website www.unicef.org/nepal/
Rumours tracking and community perception survey tools developed and shared with the community engagement working group. A rumour tracking platform has been set up to track rumours being spread through face to face interactions, media and social media.
UNICEF is engaging the Federation of Water and Sanitation User Committee, NGO Federation and all cluster members to use their networks members for risk communication and hygiene promotion.

Provision of adequate health and nutrition care
Awareness raising actions have been ongoing through Comprehensive Nutrition Specific Interventions Training to Health Coordinators. So far, approximately, 175 Health Coordinators from province number 2 and Sudur Paschim province have been trained.
Nutrition cluster formed a technical group composed of the Nutrition cluster behavior change communication (BCC) working group and contingency planning working group to develop contingency plan and nutrition messages for the COVID-19 response.

Pakistan Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement
UNICEF has deployed a Communication for Development (C4D) staff members to the Federal Ministry of Health and Sindh Provincial Ministry of Health to provide support on Risk Communication and Community Engagement.
UNICEF continue to provide support at both Federal and Provincial level in developing communication strategies and dissemination of key preventative messages using the existing channels such as the social media and the polio extension services. So far 1,773,242 number of people have been reached through social media and 561,195 people have been engaged
UNICEF has supported the establishment of emergency control room for managing communication on COVID-19 by providing equipment and human resources support at federal and provincial level.
UNICEF through the polio programme continues to support the helpline 1166 to address public concerns regarding COVID 19. Support to MOH on media monitoring and sentiment analysis is also provided.
Through advocacy and communication section UNICEF has supported the development of guidelines for journalists and media professionals reporting on COVID-19 and has been shared with the ministry for approval.
IPC and WASH strategy has been developed and shared with government for adoption into the overall provincial response plan. IEC materials have been shared with partners for dissemination including 40,000 leaflets in Balochistan;
With support from UNICEF the provincial government of Baluchistan started the training of frontline workers on risk communication and community engagement.
Trained 28 master trainers from the Ministry of Health on COVID-19 prevention; cascading workshops have been planned to reach 1300 frontline workers.
Critical Medical and WASH Supplies and Services

- UNICEF is facilitating procurement of PPEs and essential medical equipment on behalf of the government through World Bank Grant. UNICEF has received offers from 9 local suppliers for 8 items while the rest of the PPE items will be supplied through Offshore procurement by UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen.
- UNICEF coordinated with WHO and developed a consolidated IPC and WASH assessment checklist. To date, 9 designated isolation/health care facilities have been assessed in Sindh, 26 in Punjab, 17 in Balochistan and 1 KP. UNICEF is also providing support to activate WASH sector coordination meetings in provinces.

Sri Lanka Country Office
Risk Communication and Community Engagement

- UNICEF and WHO have rapidly developed a Mass media campaign for TV, radio, print and digital channels including social media, which highlights key prevention messages, specifically on hand washing, coughing and sneezing etiquettes and social distancing. The campaign is to run for 10-14 days starting from 18 March 2020.
- UNICEF is engaging key religious leaders to use the gatherings with their congregations to relay key prevention messages (i.e. Friday prayer, Sunday mass).

Critical Medical and WASH Supplies and Services

- Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF are coordinating to identify the procurement needs for hygiene, medical and prevention supplies. In addition, the CO is engaging donors (ADB; World Bank) to support provide support for essential supplies.
- UNICEF is working closely with Supply Division to prepare cost estimates to purchase critical hygiene and prevention items and medical supplies. However, there is shortage of Personal protective equipment in the local market, in addition to global shortages, given the extent of the response requirements. Those items, which are not available locally will be procured from overseas or through UNICEF Supply Division.

Funding Status

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<th>Sector</th>
<th>Requirements ($)</th>
<th>Humanitarian resources received ($)</th>
<th>Other Resources ($)</th>
<th>Funds available</th>
<th>Funding gap ($)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Next SitRep: 25th March 2020
UNICEF continues to monitor the situation very closely and situation reports will be issued on regular basis as the developments unfold.

Internal and External Media

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