**Highlights**

- Viet Nam, as many other countries, has been deeply affected by the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. Among the most serious impacts are the disruption to essential healthcare (including reduced health seeking behavior), nutrition and education services; parents and caregivers struggle with alternative childcare arrangements, with some children left alone at home, others drawn into child labour. An online survey to assess secondary impact of COVID-19 outbreak on the routine health, nutrition and WASH services in commune health centres revealed disruption of healthcare and nutrition services such as immunization and micronutrients.

- UNICEF Viet Nam has developed and has been implementing a cross-sectoral preparedness and response plan to support the Government which covers 5 priority areas: (i) Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE); (ii) Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving Infection Prevention and Control (IPC); (iii) Provision of continued access to essential healthcare and nutrition services including case management; (iv) Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence services; and (v) data collection and social science research on the social impacts of COVID-19.

- UNICEF Viet Nam supported two sessions of online capacity trainings for a total of 1,210 health workers and teachers to strengthen their knowledge of IPC and WASH. The course evaluation showed a positive account of participants on virtual trainings, which could be utilized for capacity training beyond the COVID-19 period and across all sectors.

- With technical support from UNICEF Viet Nam, all 43,966 schools nationwide have implemented the safe school protocols to ensure a safe and healthy return of students and teachers to school. During the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 17.8 million students including 74,193 children with disabilities were supported for their access to distance learning through both digital and nondigital means of communication.

**Funding Overview and Partnerships**

UNICEF Viet Nam has issued an appeal of just over US$7 million to combat COVID-19 and its impacts. To date, USAID, the Government of Japan and the Global Partnership for Education have generously contributed a total of US$1,815,957 to UNICEF Viet Nam for COVID-19 response. In addition, UNICEF Viet Nam received US$390,784 from the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund. UNICEF sincerely appreciates this financial support which will enable a swift response to the Government’s urgent requests and sustains communication and services essential to the well-being of Vietnamese children and families, especially disadvantaged groups.
**Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs**

As of 4 June 2020, 328 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Viet Nam. This figure increased sharply in the latter half of March, rising by more than 250 cases. Among them, 302 cases have fully recovered. Currently, there are 12,987 suspected cases under surveillance and isolation and approximately 6,641 close contacts/returnees from overseas under health monitoring and isolation\(^1\).

Following three weeks of strict social distancing measures, on 22 April, these measures were loosened; however, all residents are strongly recommended to wear masks, keep 1.5 meter away from each other and practice strict hygiene standards. From 4 May, schools and educational institutions have reopened and have to meet a set of 15 criteria issued by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), to ensure a safe and healthy return of students and staff. These criteria meet international standards and have been developed with the technical assistance from UNICEF. Domestic road and air transport services have been resumed, essential services are permitted to reopen, but cultural and sports activities remain closed. Meetings of more than 30 people are not encouraged.

The three months of school closures have exposed a significant digital divide – between those with access to both a device and Internet and those without. The delivery of essential and routine healthcare (including vaccination and nutrition services) was interrupted or halted entirely, which poses the risk of other communicable diseases spreading. Great efforts and resources are needed in order to catch up and close gaps caused by COVID-19. Social distancing measures have affected income and employment of families, particularly hard hit are those working in the informal sector (representing 57.2 per cent of employees in the non-agricultural sectors) and those with low incomes. Self-quarantine and social isolation are producing side effects of psycho-social stress and heightened risk of domestic violence against children and women. Furthermore, Viet Nam is facing a dual crisis of COVID-19 and a drought and saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta, making the need for WASH supplies and services critically urgent.

The Government and subsequently the National Assembly have approved a financial support fund of US$2.5 billion targeting five groups of the poorest and most vulnerable people. While the policy is in place, delivery of the cash assistance to the people most in need will require a major administrative effort and be challenging to ensure equity, efficiency, transparency and timeliness.

**Humanitarian Leadership, Coordination and Strategy**

UNICEF coordinates closely with WHO and other UN agencies in planning and implementation of the UNCT COVID-19 Support Plan through the operation of UN Technical Working Group and sub-working groups. UNICEF is also collaborating with international financial institutions (IFIs) -- the World Bank, IMF and ADB -- on rapid assessments and surveillance, sectoral responses and advocacy to ensure that children are prioritized in the Government’s financial support packages and that social sector spending is protected.

During this reporting period, UNICEF continued to co-lead meetings of the WASH sector coordination group with Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Nutrition sector coordination group with National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), the education sector coordination group with Save the Children and MOET, and advanced the establishment of a formal Child Protection in Emergencies sector group with Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). These groups are enabling strong, coordinated responses, including comprehensive mapping of partner’s response measures, among UN, INGO, private sector and Government partners. In addition, UNICEF coordinates closely with leading Ministries and agencies on COVID-19 responses (Ministry of Health, MOET, MOLISA and the Ministry of Culture, Information and Sports, the Youth Union), provincial Departments of as well as bilateral donors, relevant INGOs and local NGOs in resource mobilisation, planning and implementation of strategic, comprehensive RCCE and response activities.

**Summary of Response Actions**

1. **Risk communication & community engagement (RCCE)**

UNICEF Viet Nam is reaching children, caregivers, pregnant/breastfeeding mothers, poor households and other high-risk communities with targeted and accurate information related to COVID-19 through a range of media communication channels. It also aims at increased accountability via promoting feedback and follow-up to community needs. UNICEF has helped reach children with accurate information on personal hygiene and handwashing, psycho-social support, and prevention of violence. This is done through; 1) developing relevant communication materials and messages in ethnic, sign, and child-friendly language disseminated through UNICEF and Government partners media networks, digital and social media channels and communal loudspeaker systems in rural area; 2) implementing joint UNICEF- Ministry of Health (MOH) media campaign to promote social solidarity and kindness among adolescents and young people; 3) developing a platform to reach students, parents and teachers with targeted awareness messages, including on mental well-being and online safety in partnership with MOET; and 4) conducting community level communication sessions on infection prevention and control (IPC) and WASH for children and parents.

\(^1\) All data drawn from Ministry of Health, [COVID-19 Latest Update (4th June 2020)](https://www.moh.gov.vn)
**Actions taken**

**Interpersonal communication**
- 40,698 copies of 6 posters and 121,139 copies of 2 leaflets on COVID-19 prevention at household, in school and community were distributed to community people and children in 7 project provinces. These communication materials benefited 687 students in schools of 3 project provinces who attended interpersonal communication activities on going back to school safely and 8,378 community people in group discussions.

**Social media**
- The Blue Heart campaign to protect children in emergencies was launched on 4 June during a Facebook Livestream that reached 76,000 people. The song *Under The Same Sky* by Trong Hieu was also released on the same day to support the campaign and has reached over 5 million views. Several other celebrities have lent their voice to the campaign, including H’Hen Nie, Bao Thanh, Duy Khoa, and more. The campaign is part of Viet Nam’s Month of Action for Children.
- Influencer Quang Dang participated in a WASH supplies distribution in Ben Tre province on 1 June. The engaging and interactive session with school children around the promotion of hand washing was documented for social media and reached 3.4 million people.
- The UNICEF-MOH “Kindness is Contagious” campaign reached 4.4 million people on Facebook. The Facebook event on making and sharing kindness drawing had 5,200 people interested. MOH Zalo (Vietnamese messenger app) posts on the kindness campaign reaches 53 million users.
- 22 COVID-19 related posts on UNICEF Facebook reached 23.4 million people and 666,000 engagements.
- UNICEF Website: the COVID-19 related articles had 107,000 page-views with 76,000 new visitors.

**Mass media**
- An estimation of 200 articles on UNICEF’s response to COVID-19 have been published in print and online media including those related to “Kindness is Contagious” campaign. One Love Asia online concert, distribution of WASH supplies to community. UNICEF’s opinion related to COVID-19 has been reflected in at least ten high-profile news and talk shows of national and provincial broadcast media.
- An animated storytelling version of *My hero is you* children story was developed in partnership with VTV7 and broadcasted in bedtime story programme in VTV7 on 1 June.
- 12 episodes of “Staying home during pandemic” have been broadcasted on VTV7 and through UNICEF social media channels, with UNICEF’s expert blogs to provide parents with practical information on how to care and protect children in relation to health care, nutrition, WASH practices, brain development, education, protection, online safety during the pandemic.
- UNICEF has carried out advocacy through national media, including an Op-ed on COVID’s social impact on children, interviews and talks on parenting and online protection.
- The 2nd batch of parenting tips from the Parenting for Lifelong Health was translated into Vietnamese and shared on the UNICEF website.

To date, UNICEF messages and posts on COVID-19 prevention and access to services were viewed more than 151.8 million times through mass, online and social media nation-wide. Almost 690 children were reached with targeted messages and information on COVID-19 on personal hygiene and improved sanitary practices. The communications response to the pandemic has magnified the need to ensure communication messages reach the most vulnerable populations. As such it has sparked new partnerships with the ethnic minority publishing house and association of the deaf, which will further enhance the inclusiveness of UNICEF’s communications activities. Likewise, the new partnership with TikTok has expanded UNICEF’s reach to children and adolescents and will be a valuable platform for amplifying youth voices during and beyond the pandemic.

2. Provision of critical medical and WASH supplies and improving IPC

UNICEF Viet Nam ensures that health workers in charge of prevention and control of COVID-19 are protected from infection and that health and social protection staff and communities are provided with essential WASH supplies and services by procuring and providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), medical masks, and WASH supplies and services such as soap, hand sanitizers, ceramic water filters, water storage tanks, and handwashing stations. UNICEF is supporting commune health centres through capacity development of health workers on IPC, WASH and COVID-19 case detection/management for children and pregnant/breast-feeding women. Schools and teachers will be trained on IPC and WASH and women and children will benefit from community sessions on nutrition and distribution of nutrition supplies. In the WASH sector, a rapid needs assessment on WASH in commune health centres and schools will be conducted to identify urgent needs. In addition, supporting rapid and low-cost upgrading of piped water systems will contribute to provision of water to vulnerable communities and schools without running water, including installation of compact water filtration systems applying new treatment technologies.
**Actions taken**

- N95 and surgical masks for front-line health staff were procured on behalf of WHO through UNICEF Supply Division. WHO is working with MOH on the custom clearance and distribution plan.
- WASH supplies (soap, hand sanitizers and ceramic water filters) are being distributed to schools, commune health centers and communities in seven vulnerable provinces, serving 340,000 people including 306,000 school children.
- To respond to the dual emergencies in the Mekong Delta (drought and COVID-19), UNICEF is distributing 250,000 soap bars donated by Colgate to schools in that region.
- Online trainings on IPC and WASH in health facilities and schools were provided to strengthen the IPC and WASH capacity of around 122 health staff (58% of whom are female) and 1,088 teachers and education managers (76% of whom are female). Feedbacks were very positive, with participants giving the courses high average ratings of 8.6 and 9.2.

Despite a few recognized limitations (e.g. sporadic connectivity), the new approach of virtual training was well-received. Out of 495 course evaluation submissions, 99% responded that they find online training highly suitable for their needs or suitable but can still be improved. Many considered the virtual training method as time-saving, cost-saving and accommodating of larger numbers of participants. These encouraging results show that virtual training can potentially be further utilized for capacity training beyond the COVID-19 period and across all sectors.

3. **Provision of Healthcare and Nutrition Services**

To protect women and children from infection with COVID-19 and ensure continued access to maternal and child healthcare, nutrition and WASH services, Commune health staff will also be trained in skilled delivery, new-born care, postnatal care and immunization and outreach/mobile teams organized to provide these services in hard to reach communities.

**Actions taken**

- UNICEF provided technical advice to MOH and the national Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) to develop and disseminate an interim guideline for continuing provision of immunization services for children. The provision of Hep B birth dose and BCG vaccine is being maintained in hospitals providing childbirth services.
- UNICEF co-led the National Nutrition Working Group (NNWG) to monitor and advocate for compliance with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes during the COVID-19.
- UNICEF led the NNWG to carry out a mapping of nutrition interventions in response to COVID-19.
- UNICEF provided technical support for the MOH and NIN in development of the four sets of standard key nutrition messages in response to the COVID-19 outbreak: i) the 10 basic nutrition messages during the COVID-19 pandemic; ii) Health family eating during the pandemic; 3) Feeding of young child during the pandemic and 4) Nutrition for pregnant women during the pandemic. Those sets of nutrition messages were used by the MOH to guide nutrition communication activities at national level, and in 63 provinces of Viet Nam.
- In 27 UNICEF project communes, the group communication and counseling have been resumed. Local media communication activities continue to deliver health, nutrition and COVID-19-related messages to parents of children 0-8 years old and the villagers with 17,900 people reached with nutrition messages.
- Multiple micro-nutrient supplements intervention is ongoing that covers about 4,500 young children and 1,000 pregnant women in 27 UNICEF project communes.

With UNICEF support, 5,450 people received nutrition messages, and 5,000 children had access to essential nutrition services during the COVID-19 pandemic period. In the medium term, UNICEF Viet Nam provides support to strengthen capacity of local water and sanitation authorities and utilities to ensure business continuity and quality of water by applying Water Safety Plan standards and point of use water treatment and storage, and sanitation services. Focus is placed on avoiding deterioration or collapse of essential public services as a secondary effect of the COVID-19 outbreak. The long-term strategy entails technical support to strengthen the financing system for WASH services at national and sub-national levels for increased budget allocation for WASH during COVID-19 and drought and saltwater intrusion in the Mekong Delta.

4. **Access to Continuous Education, Child Protection, Social Protection and Gender Based Violence (GBV) Services**

UNICEF is committed to ensuring access to education, child protection and social protection and gender-based violence services and after the COVID-19. Focus is on continuous education through online/distance education lessons by 1) supporting MOET in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a large-scale and inclusive distance learning strategy to ensure continued learning, especially for the most vulnerable, including girls; 2) providing necessary supplies such as tablets and WIFI access to 2,800 poor households in four remote provinces in Viet Nam, directly benefiting 5,600 ethnic minority girls and boys and online videos and learning aids for students and teachers; and 3) ensuring meaningful participation of children and adolescents in the COVID-19 response through the student-led social innovation clubs, and building their capacity to educate and help their peers, families, and communities. In terms of safe back-to-school, UNICEF has provided technical assistance to MOET to prepare for school re-opening, including the provision of WASH supplies, the dissemination of ‘Safe back to School’ operational guidelines and the roll-out of a ‘back to school’ campaign and special measures to close any learning gaps, including back to school support and summer schools.
In response to the heightened risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, UNICEF is working with the government and NGOs partners to strengthen capacities in GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors. This necessitates development and adaptation of guidelines (including for quarantine centres) and training materials in GBV, VAC, and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), as well as implementation of trainings and coaching support for health staff and social welfare and child protection officers. Moreover, responses will address adequate provision of appropriate social care, mental health and psycho-social support and social protection services to children and caregivers to ensure their wellbeing.

UNICEF will support 1) online training for social workers and child protection staff in community-based mental health and psycho-social support; 2) holistic parenting sessions for mothers, fathers and other childcare givers and children; and 3) capacity building of social workers and child protection staff in case management services and delivery of such services to affected children.

**Actions taken**

- A total of 43,966 schools (kindergarten to 12th grade) have been supported with guidance to ensure that a set of 15 criteria for a safe and healthy return of students and staff are met. These equity-focused criteria have been developed with the technical support of UNICEF in line with global standards.
- UNICEF has supported the distance education (online, TV, radio and paper-based) of 17,799,935 students (48.7% girls) including 74,193 children with disabilities, in order to ensure their continuity of learning during the pandemic.
- At national level, with UNICEF support, MOET-led materials with videos on guiding young children and students from preschool to secondary school level to do exercise for keeping fit, strong and healthy have reached 21 million school children. At sub-national level, 1,237 children with disabilities, 252 young migrant children (118 female and 134 male) together with 86 teachers and staff and 500 parents who are migrant workers in Da Nang City benefited from the provision of picture books for stimulation and interaction amongst children, teachers, and childcare givers during the pandemic. In addition, 92 children with disabilities and 270 ethnic minority children in Da Nang and Ninh Thuan have also been supported at home from teachers of the City/Provincial’s Inclusive Education Resource Centres for persons with disabilities, for them to catch up with learning and some therapies.
- In Ninh Thuan, capacity of 405 teachers (preschools to upper secondary) are enhanced on safety protocols, online teaching skills to prepare for the re-opening. Besides, 18,705 students and 1,537 teachers and school staff from 65 schools in remote areas of Ninh Thuan have benefited from a student-led initiative with developing automatic hand sanitizers.
- Guidelines on protection of women and children in quarantine centres and communication materials on mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS) for children and adolescents in quarantine centres, issued by MOLISA with technical support from UNICEF and UN Women, were disseminated to all quarantine centres in Viet Nam.

The education sector response to COVID-19 is putting a spotlight on the stark digital divide in Viet Nam, particularly for ethnic minority children, children with disability and girls. As such it has been an opportunity to rally expanded engagement with new partners such as SAP, Microsoft and other technology firms to collaborate with UNICEF in support of MOET for much-needed longer term reform of the education system. Likewise, the lack of adequate WASH facilities in schools (an estimated 30% do not have running water), especially in the most marginalized communities, is catalyzing urgent action by a range of partners, and stronger cooperation between the WASH and education sectors.

The safeguarding guidelines for women and children quarantine centres have reinvigorated commitment to strengthen safeguarding and protection standards in other closed institutions, such as residential institutions, reformatories, and boarding schools. UNICEF will continue the support for delivering training in selected provinces to increase child protection responses in COVID-19.

**5. Data collection, Analysis and Research**

UNICEF’s COVID-19 response includes the identification and analysis of the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on children and their families to inform policymakers on non-pharmaceutical intervention (NPI) response and recovery planning and implementation. To this end, UNICEF has been supporting a rapid assessment on short and longer-term impacts, including vulnerability analyses covering children with disabilities in institutions, children of migrant workers, children in urban settings, residential care centres and educational settings. It also supports the General Statistics Office to compile and analyse critical disaggregated data at commune level in selected, vulnerable provinces for emergency monitoring and reporting.

**Actions taken**

- A rapid assessment on social assistance is collecting data from 63 provincial departments and selected families and children in residential institutions (social protection centers).
- The rapid assessment on socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on children and their families is being implemented in Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh City and Vinh Phuc to generate evidence in support of humanitarian and long-term programming and policy advocacy to safeguard the well-being of children.
- An online survey to assess secondary impact of COVID-19 outbreak on the routine health, nutrition and WASH services was conducted in 60 commune health centres (CHCs) of four provinces. The disruption of health and nutrition services and reduction in health-seeking behavior is evident in the findings of the assessment. For instance, 88% of respondents reported disruption of immunization services in CHCs and 57% for outreach service of measurement of children by
Village Health Workers and 21% of respondents reported shortage of micronutrients for children. Findings were shared and used by local health offices.

- A Nutrition Rapid Assessment is being conducted in three provinces between 27 May and 1 June, with ongoing data analysis.

On completion of data collection, UNICEF will identify key findings and recommendations and disseminated to inform both humanitarian and long-term development programming and policy making. Furthermore, the social assistance assessment will inform the on-going reform of social protection system, including its design to expand regular cash assistance to more children and building a ‘flex’ to effectively respond to various shocks including those due to climate change and pandemics.

**Humanitarian Performance Monitoring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Areas</th>
<th>Estimated target number of beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RCCE</strong></td>
<td>133 million people reached on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,000 community people engaged on COVID-19 through RCCE actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30,000 adolescents sharing their concerns and asking questions/clarifications for available support services to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>294,000 children reached with targeted messages and information on COVID-19 on personal hygiene and improved sanitary practices (specific to schools and ECD centres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Supply &amp; Logistics</strong></td>
<td>2,000 health workers provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>930,000 people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Addressing Primary Impacts (Health/ Nutrition and WASH)</strong></td>
<td>300 local health officers trained in detection, referral and management of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300 healthcare facility staff and community health workers trained in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11,200 women and children have continued access to obstetric, neo- and postnatal and child health care including immunization services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,000 people reached with nutrition messages in the context of COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,000 children have access to essential nutrition services during the COVID-19 pandemic period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.2 million children supported with distance/home-based learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22,000 children, parents and primary caregivers provided with community based mental health and psychosocial support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50,000 children and parents have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,721 UNICEF personnel, and partners have completed training on GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² The number of times people were reached with messages and posts including those in Zalo and Facebook.
Human Interest Stories and External Media


- The visit to Lao Cai by Ms. Rana Flowers (Facebook), [https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=301471994177917](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=301471994177917), 16 May 2020.

- The stop-motion video to encourage children going back to school after COVID-19 social distancing was lifted: “I have fun at school” (Facebook), [https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietsocial/videos/244454196977607/](https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietsocial/videos/244454196977607/), 28 May 2020.

**Next SitRep:** 2 July 2020


UNICEF Viet Nam COVID-19 media assets: [https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1e4hs2N6baVTsH3uL8WvVAR1JH5M0j4lm](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1e4hs2N6baVTsH3uL8WvVAR1JH5M0j4lm)


Who to contact for further information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Country Office</th>
<th>Tel.</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rana Flowers</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Viet Nam Country Office</td>
<td>(+84)2438500201</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rflowers@unicef.org">rflowers@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley Miller</td>
<td>Deputy Representative</td>
<td>Viet Nam Country Office</td>
<td>(+84)2438500202</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lmiller@unicef.org">lmiller@unicef.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>