Viet Nam, as many other countries, has been deeply affected by the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Economic Update released by World Bank in April 2020, the impacts of COVID-19 could double the poverty rates in Viet Nam from 18 per cent to 31 per cent among households linked to manufacturing reliant on imported inputs. Viet Nam’s economic growth rate in 2020 is expected to reduce to 2.7 per cent compared to Government target of 7.2% (IMF, 2020). Viet Nam is among the most vulnerable economies to global crises, due to its strong economic integration, tourism and 50 per cent of the population working in agriculture and the informal sector – key aggregated impacts include elevated external debts and sizable fiscal deficits that negatively and directly affect social services.

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. Loss of income and social distancing leads to economic and psychological stress, which among others, resulted in increased levels of domestic violence and gender-based violence (GBV) affecting women and children.

UNICEF Viet Nam has developed 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.

To date, UNICEF has reached over 64 million people with COVID-19 messaging on prevention and access to services, more than 9 million people have engaged on COVID-19 through RCCE actions and nearly 14 thousand people have shared their concerns and asked questions/clarifications for available support services. With UNICEF support, 3,300 people received nutrition messages, and 5,000 children had access to essential nutrition services during the COVID-19 pandemic period. Over 43 thousand schools implemented safe school protocols and approximately 15.1 million children were supported with distance/home-based learning.

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

---

2 International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, April 2020: The Great Lockdown.
the Global Partnership for Education have generously contributed a total of US$1,815,957 to UNICEF Vietnam for COVID-19 response. UNICEF sincerely appreciates this financial support which will enable a swift response to Government’s urgent requests and sustains regular communication and services essential to the well-being of Vietnamese children and families.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 11 May 2020, 288 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, 241 cases have fully recovered. 261,004 tests have been undertaken for screening of the virus. Currently, there are 131 suspected cases under surveillance and isolation and approximately 25,361 close contacts/returnees from overseas under health monitoring and isolation.

Following 3 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. As of today, 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 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 5 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 media range of 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,

---

3 All data drawn from Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Latest Update (7th May 2020)
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.

Actions taken

- The UNICEF-MOH “Kindness is Contagious” mass and social media campaign was launched on 5 May 2020 with a press release, a 1-minute video with influencers, and creative platforms for sharing drawings on kindness on Facebook (FB) and Instagram. Within six hours of launching on Facebook, the 1-minute video reached 18.5 million views and 218,000 engagements. Six young influencers including a famous actress, musicians, artists and a leading publishing house participated in the campaign.
- 12 episodes of “Staying home during pandemic” have been broadcast 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.
- UNICEF’s technical assistance allowed MOLISA to adopt a Communication Plan to protect Children and Adolescents from Violence during COVID-19 pandemic.

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

- UNICEF handed over 15,000 PPE (coveralls) to MOH on 17 April 2020, which will be used by 2,000 health staff.
- N95 and surgical masks for front-line health staff were procured on behalf of WHO through UNICEF Supply Division.
- WASH supplies (soap, hand sanitizers and ceramic water filters) have been procured for schools, commune health centers and communities, serving 340,000 people including 306,000 school children.
- As a part of the response to the dual emergencies in the Mekong Delta (drought and COVID), UNICEF is preparing to distribute 250,000 soap bars donated by Colgate to schools in that region.
- Online training materials on infection prevention and control (IPC) and WASH in health care facilities have been developed and are expected to strengthen the IPC and WASH capacity of around 200 health care staff.

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, post-natal 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 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.
- WHO and UNICEF released a joint statement on ensuring children are vaccinated during the COVID-19 pandemic on the occasion of World Immunization Week.
- 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.

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 services during 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 planned and 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 enabling pathways back to school and support, summer schools and catch-up education programmes.

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 43,186 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 15,077,592 students (48.7 % girls) including 62,846 children with disabilities, in order to ensure their continuity of learning during the pandemic.
- 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 quarantine centres throughout the country.

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.

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 planning and implementation. To this end, UNICEF will conduct 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. To monitor the impacts and consequences, UNICEF Viet Nam will explore real-time sentinel surveillance monitoring on the health and well-being of women and children.

**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.

After the completion of data collection, key findings and recommendations of these assessments will be developed and disseminated to inform policy making in both humanitarian and long-term development programming to safeguard the well-being of children. Furthermore, the social assistance assessment aims to 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 economic, climate change-related natural disasters and disease outbreak.

**Humanitarian Performance Monitoring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Areas</th>
<th>Estimated number of beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RCCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 million people reached on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 million people engaged on COVID-19 through RCCE actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,500 people sharing their concerns and asking questions/clarifications for available support services to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Supply &amp; Logistics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,000 health workers provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>930,000 people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Addressing Primary Impacts (Health/ Nutrition and WASH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 local health officers trained in detection, referral and management of suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 healthcare facility staff and community health workers trained in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11,200 women and children that have continued access to obstetric, neo- and postnatal and child health care including immunization services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 people reached with nutrition messages in the context of COVID-19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,800 children that have access to essential nutrition services during the COVID-19 pandemic period</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addressing secondary impacts (Education, Child Protection, Social Protection and ECD)

- 43,966 schools implementing safe school protocols (COVID-19 prevention and control)
- 21.2 million children supported with distance/home-based learning
- 22,000 children, parents and primary caregivers provided with community based mental health and psychosocial support
- 50,000 children and parents that have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse
- 1,721 UNICEF personnel, and partners that have completed training on GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors

Human Interest Stories and External Media

- Kindness media campaign video (Facebook), [https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietnam/videos/328527015232430/](https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietnam/videos/328527015232430/), 03 May 2020
- Stop motion video for children (Facebook), [https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietnam/videos/1420817158127691/](https://www.facebook.com/unicefvietnam/videos/1420817158127691/), 03 May 2020

Next SitRep: 12 June 2020


UNICEF Viet Nam COVID-19 media assets: [https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1e4hs2N6baVTsH3uL8WvvAR1JH5M0j4IIm](https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1e4hs2N6baVTsH3uL8WvvAR1JH5M0j4IIm)


Who to contact for further information:

Name: **Rana Flowers**  
Title: Representative  
Viet Nam Country Office  
Tel: (+84)2438500201  
Email: rflowers@unicef.org

Name: **Lesley Miller**  
Title: Deputy Representative  
Viet Nam Country Office  
Tel: (+84)2438500202  
Email: lmliller@unicef.org