Highlights

- As of 15 April 2020, a total of 5,025 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 137 deaths, were reported in West and Central Africa Region (WCAR). During the reporting, the situation has quickly evolved from 18 countries affected to all the 24 countries of the region reporting confirmed cases.

- The classification of transmission has also switched from imported and local transmission to clusters of cases, sporadic and community transmissions. On March 22, five countries reported local transmissions and 13 countries reported imported cases. As of 15 April, all the 24 countries reported local transmissions, including 10 countries with clusters of cases and 13 countries with sporadic cases.

- All countries in the region have postponed planned immunization campaigns, with the exception of the Central African Republic where reactive campaign against a persistent epidemic of measles continued while there are still low reported numbers of COVID-19 cases.

- More than 11 million children under 5 years old will be acutely malnourished in 2020 in WCAR while 21.2 million people will face a critical lack of food in West Africa and Sahel countries (Jun-Aug 2020 projection, Cadre Harmonisé - March 2020).

Situation Overview and Needs

All 24 countries in the region are now reporting confirmed COVID-19 cases, with the 10 most affected countries accounting for 89% of all of the confirmed cases. As of 15 April 2020, a cumulative total of 5,025 confirmed cases and 137 associated deaths (case fatality ratio: 2.7%) have been reported.

It is worth noting that despite the relatively low case fatality ratio of 2.7% across the region, three of the most strongly affected countries are showing relatively high case-fatality ratios (DRC 8.24 %, Mali 8.13% and Burkina Faso 5.7%). In WCAR, it is estimated that more than 11 million children under 5 years old will be acutely malnourished in 2020, while according to the latest Cadre Harmonise exercise, the number of people expected to be food insecure during the coming lean season in the West African and Sahel countries is 21.2 million. The expected strain on already weak health systems, within a context of deteriorating household food insecurity will further exacerbate the nutrition situation of young children and mothers if swift actions are not taken.

With regard to the public health situation, there is an urgent need to rapidly test and isolate confirmed cases, identify and trace contacts both at national and decentralized levels. In addition, there are urgent requirements to equip health

---

1 As of 15 April, the 10 most affected countries cumulating 4,491 confirmed cases: Cameroon, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, DRC and Mali (WHO and Ministries of health)
workers with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including medical masks, and rapidly upgrade facilities, especially Intensive Care Units with additional beds and equipment including oxygen. Appropriate measure should also be taken to mitigate collateral impacts of the epidemic and measures put in place that create pressure on already weak social service delivery systems, and particularly affect children, women and vulnerable people.

Coordination and Partnerships

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF is supporting Governments in the development and implementation of their COVID-19 response plans. UNICEF’s Regional Office and all UNICEF Country Offices have developed internal response strategy and plans that will contribute to outbreak control as well as the mitigation of the collateral impacts of the pandemic and the response. These include support to Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), provision of critical WASH-Infection Prevention Control (IPC) materials, the continuity of essential health and social services for children, adolescents, women and vulnerable population across the areas affected by COVID-19.

UNICEF is leading the coordination of regional partners’ support on RCCE pillar, and co-leading the Operational Coordination, the case management & IPC and the logistic & operational support.

UNICEF’s COVID-19 response

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

The UNICEF-led Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Regional Working Group launched a new information sharing website for RCCE actors across the region.2 The available community engagement tools have been sourced from multiple organizations across the region and are tailored to the unique cultural contexts of the region. The website is searchable by category, language and country, is updated with new materials twice weekly and allows community networks such as religious, youth and women groups to submit their own engagement materials and tools.

Drawing on the lessons learned from the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), UNICEF is working to establish Social Sciences Analysis Cells to support the COVID-19 response. The cells aim to use real-time social sciences analysis to help governments improve COVID-19 response in select countries (including the mitigation of negative health and socio-economic impacts). The integrated and compiled multi-country analyses will be used to provide national and international partners with greater insight and understanding of the sub-Saharan Africa context and specific COVID-19 approaches (including international research roadmaps and strategy discussions).

The global Inter-Faith COVID-19 Campaign was launched in WCA with the participation of dozens of religious leaders who committed to respond to the crisis, providing more coordinated and evidence-based support for the protection and well-being of children and their communities. The initiative aims to mobilize religious leaders, women of Faith and Interfaith Youth within the world’s largest multi-religious network Religions for Peace, through its Interreligious Councils at country level to support COVID-19 preparedness and response.

Medical and WASH supplies, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

WASH technical guidance on COVID-19 response have been shared with all countries and presented through global and regional webinars. UNICEF’s Regional Office led regular calls with country offices and the Country/Global WASH Clusters to capture the impact of the pandemic on WASH coordination and on-going humanitarian programs.

Handwashing demonstration for students at Urie Primary School, Delta State, Nigeria, in March 2020. © UNICEF/UNI319571/Owoicho

The funding required for the provision of critical medical and WASH supplies and improving infection prevention and control (IPC) is estimated at USD 60.4 million. The Regional Office coordinated the inputs from 12 country offices to contribute to regional and global resources mobilization opportunities. The procurement of COVID-19 WASH materials has been launched in 19 out of 24 country offices. WASH supplies are essentially procured locally or regionally (Soap, Chlorinated solutions, water

---

2 West and Central Africa RCCE website: https://coronawestafrica.info/
Provision of Healthcare and Nutrition Services

The regional nutrition working group, led by UNICEF, issued a first guidance on nutrition programming in the context of COVID-19, highlighting the possible impacts of COVID-19 on population’s nutritional status and nutrition services, and programmatic adjustment modalities to ensure services continuity at all level (health facilities and Community) while ensuring mitigation measures.

In close collaboration with WFP, UNICEF’s Regional Office is working to re-estimate the burden of acute malnutrition expected for 2020, considering two major aggravating factors: 1. the severe deterioration in food security projected by the latest "Cadre Harmonisé (March 2020)" for the next lean season and 2. the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. This impact analysis will feed into a revised hotspot Food-Security and Nutrition mapping for the region to refine operational programming according to the contexts.

Education

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting learning for over 128 million children and youth directly affected by nationwide school closures in all 24 countries of West and Central Africa. School closures have put gains made in access to education and learning at risk in a region where an estimated 41 million children between aged 6-15 years already estimated to be out of school prior to the onset of the pandemic. One-quarter of UNICEF’s Country Offices in the region (Sao Tome and Principe, RDC, Benin, Mauritania, Guinea Bissau and Gambia) have finalized the Education Sector Response plan.

In Côte d’Ivoire, a nationwide distance education programme, "Mon école à la maison" was launched on 13 April, with lessons now broadcasted on national radio and TV.

In Cameroon, UNICEF is supporting continuity of formal learning for seven million children who lost access to education through Radio Education Programming and Mobile Learning Platform.

Child protection

Already high protection risks to children in the region related to violence, abuse, sexual or economic exploitation, and separation from parents or caregivers have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially with long term consequences. There are particular concerns for children in already high-risk situations – children in residential care, detention, children living on the street and across all children the disproportionate risk to girls. The Regional Office is providing tailored technical support to affected countries for coordination, monitoring and programmatic response through an online resource library and webinars as well as through individualized support through UNICEF’s Regional Helpdesk (working in English and French).

Across the region UNICEF’s support is ensuring that social workers, community workers and/or psychologists are adequately trained (i.e. on psychosocial first aid, remote case management) and equipped (with masks, gloves) to prevent and respond to violence. In response to COVID-19 relocation measures, UNICEF is supporting child protection services for children that have been forced to move within a country as well as across borders, including through fast-track case management, family tracing and reunification (i.e. Nigeria, Niger, Gambia). UNICEF is also supporting advocacy efforts for the release and reintegration of children and providing assistance to detention centres continues to ensure that children remain safe (i.e. Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritania).
Adaptations to ongoing UNICEF programmes

Across the region, all planned immunization campaigns (supplemental immunization activities and outbreak response) have been postponed, except in the Central African Republic where a low number of COVID-19 cases have been reported and it was decided to continue with the reactive measles campaign in the face of a persistent epidemic. The campaign is currently ongoing in one district and is hoped to reach 25 additional districts before June. In Kinshasa, the DRC’s capital, a planned measles outbreak response had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 situation.

UNICEF is supporting the training of health workers on integrated management of acute malnutrition, while reinforcing awareness communication targeting communities on Nutrition in the context of COVID-19.

With regard to child protection, UNICEF is working to ensure that essential social services such as health and civil registration centers remain accessible (i.e. in Cote d’Ivoire, DRC, Ghana). While family tracing and reunification are ongoing, UNICEF is also providing temporary care for vulnerable children in foster care families or in centers that have been equipped and provided with adequately trained staff (i.e. Cameroon, Senegal, Chad).

In WASH, most of community-based sanitation programs have been slowed down due to restriction of movement. Humanitarian WASH hygiene kits distribution and water trucking modalities are being adapted to avoid any population gathering in line with governments measures.

Funding Overview

Out of required USD172.3 million to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 in West and Central Africa, the region has received generous contribution of USD12.4 million from the Governments of Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom and United States of America, Education Cannot Wait Foundation, Global Partnership for Education, and the French National Committee for UNICEF by 15 April. In addition, USD 25 million has been pledged by the Governments of China, Japan, the United Kingdom and United States of America, as well as the Solidarity Fund, the World Bank, Sogea Satom Foundation, and the French and US National Committees for UNICEF to support the immediate needs throughout the region. However, USD160.3 million is still required to meet the immediate humanitarian needs, with needs continuing to increase across the region as the pandemic spreads.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-19 Funding requirements (US$)</th>
<th>Funding Status (in US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical and WASH supplies and IPC</td>
<td>Requirement $172.6M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care services for women, children</td>
<td>Funds received $12M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)</td>
<td>Funding Gap $160.3M (93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, child protection and GBV services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>$1,790,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Funds received $12M

External Media

The Regional Office Communication section handled several media requests with top-tier media and produced supporting materials to support media engagement (talking points, briefing notes, quick line, SOPs, etc.). On 9 April, the Regional Director took part in the WHO weekly media briefing, gathering more than 130 international, regional and national journalists. A regional portal on COVID-19 was created on the West and Central Africa website, featuring regional and country initiatives. Products showcasing UNICEF’s work in the region were developed and disseminated via regional digital platforms (web and social media), covering both the response to COVID-19 and other issues. A successful social media initiative with young people, #COVID19Diaries, was successfully launched and rolled out via regional platforms, now being replicated in other regions. Weekly internal information notes were produced for regional staff.

West and Central Africa COVID information site: https://www.unicef.org/wca/coronavirus (in French)
UNICEF in action in West and Central Africa

Senegal WCARO: Loly Mbaye and Essi Amegandjin using the hand sanitizers and flash thermometer supplied at the office entrance.

Cameroon: The critical importance of washing hands, Jacques Boyer, UNICEF Cameroon Representative

Mali: Papa, UNICEF Mali Warehouse Specialist in action. Very proud of him and the Supply and Logistics team

Guinea Bissau: delivering WASH supplies

Gambia: UNICEF Gambia Representative Sandra Lattouf and staff with children

Mauritania: Community sensitization

Sao Tome and Principe: UNICEF Youth and Development officer, Neusa Carvalho, interviewed on engaging young people in COVID-19 response

Republic of Congo: UNICEF Representative Micaela Marques De Sousa and officials during a food distribution for school children

CAR: Delivering thousands of radios to help 15,000 children keep learning at home
Ghana: UNICEF Representative Anne-Claire Dufay handing over oxygen concentrators and accessories to Ghana Health Service Director

DR Congo: a UNICEF shipment of 63 cubic metres of vital health supplies arrives in Kinshasa

Cote d'Ivoire: Providing treatment to people living with HIV in the village of Gbaleka (North).

Niger: UNICEF Niger Immunization Manager, Moriba Kone, supervises the tent installations to treat COVID-19 patients next to Niamey’s National Reference Hospital

Who to contact for further information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Contact Person</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>UNICEF Representative Claudes Kamenga</td>
<td>Educativre Radio studio visit with Minister of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>UNICEF shipment of vital health supplies</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>Providing treatment to people living with HIV in the village of Gbaleka (North).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>UNICEF Niger Immunization Manager</td>
<td>Moriba Kone, supervises tent installations to treat COVID-19 patients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>TV/Radio taping of Alternative Education Programme “Escuela en Mi casa” supported by UNICEF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marie-Pierre Poirier
Regional Director
West and Central Africa
Regional Office
Tel: +221 77 450 4237
Email: mppoirier@unicef.org

Rene Ehouhou Ekpini
Regional Advisor Health, West and Central Africa
Regional Office
Tel: +66 (0) 23569235
Email: rekpini@unicef.org

Sandra Bisin
Regional Chief Communication
West and Central Africa
Regional Office
Tel: +221 77 819 2300
Email: sbisin@unicef.org