



UNICEF Armenia/2020/Margaryan

UNICEF Europe & Central Asia Region (ECAR)

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Situation Report No. 3



7 – 14 April 2020

Highlights

UNICEF works for children and adolescents in 22 countries and territories¹ in Europe and Central Asia (ECA). UNICEF is also present in Italy, supporting refugee and migrant populations.

Despite widescale government containment efforts, all but two countries (Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) are reporting infections. All but three have closed schools and most businesses.

- Countries are generally reporting increased numbers of confirmed cases, including among health personnel (as seen in Croatia, Georgia, Moldova). Some governments have imposed stricter quarantine measures on the worst-affected counties and municipalities.
- With countries struggling for financing to procure personal protective equipment (PPE), UNICEF is advocating with financial institutions like Asian Development Bank (ABD) (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan), and World Bank (WB) (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova) to make the necessary investments for governments to procure life-saving supplies.
- In Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine, UNICEF’s private sector appeals have resulted, to date, in over \$1.3 million in financial support from individuals and new and long-standing business partners in banking, IT, telecoms, and media. In addition to cash support, donations-in-kind (PPEs, hygiene and education materials) and the mobilization of corporate networks and employees demonstrate the private sector’s strong commitment to children.
- Global shortages of critical supplies, suspension of international flights, and local quarantine procedures on imported cargo have contributed to acute delays in delivery. Despite these difficulties, this week UNICEF in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Serbia, and Tajikistan distributed PPEs for personnel in health and social services systems.
- In Georgia, UNICEF is supporting the Government in projection modelling of the spread of COVID-19, which is used in response planning. The country’s top Diseases Department official recognised the tool as “the best of what we have seen on modelling so far”. UNICEF expertise was also used to launch the Ukraine Government’s online [dashboard](#) on new COVID-19 cases.
- The severe socio-economic impact of this crisis is felt throughout ECA Region, particularly by vulnerable families. UNICEF is supporting governments to scale up existing social assistance programmes, including child benefits for low income families. Data collection, assessments, reviews and registration of socially vulnerable and at-risk groups of children were conducted in Georgia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Tajikistan.



86,224 COVID-19 cases in 22 countries*



2,039 COVID-19 deaths in 22 countries*



50.1 million children affected by COVID-19-related school and learning centre closure



US \$38 million funding requirement for ECAR response

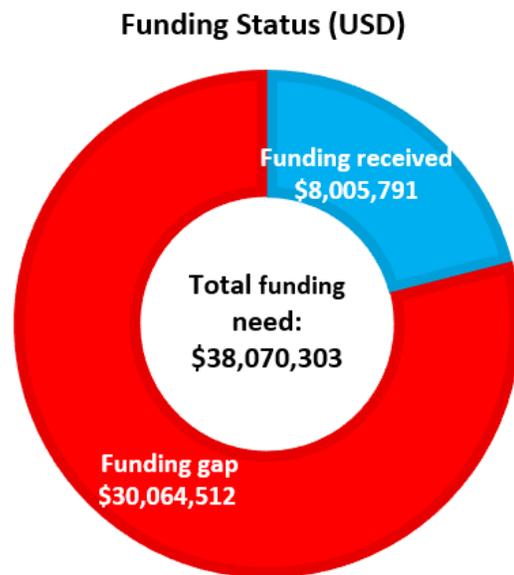
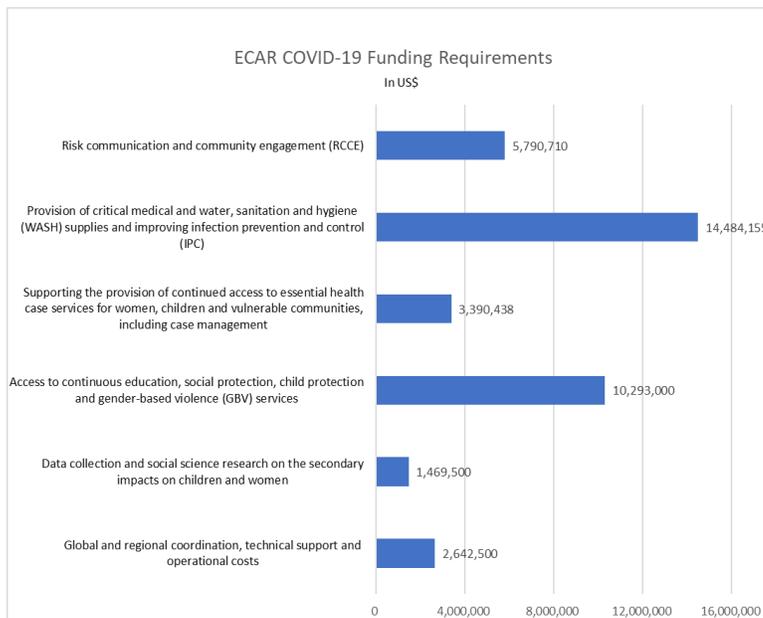
¹ Albania, Armenia, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kosovo* (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

* Source: World Health Organization (WHO) 6 April 2020. Figures do not include Italy.

Funding Overview and Partnerships

Under UNICEF’s Global Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) for the COVID-19 response, Europe and Central Asia is appealing for a little over **\$38 million**. Against this target, the Region has raised **\$8 million²** or **21%** of required funding. The situation remains fluid, and as impacts of COVID-19 spread across the region, UNICEF continues to coordinate with Government and partners, updating country response strategies to respond to children’s humanitarian needs.

UNICEF has launched private sector appeals in Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Ukraine, which, to date, have generated over \$1.3 million in financial support from individuals and from new and long-standing business partners in banking, IT, telecommunications, and media. Alongside cash support, agreements around donations-in-kind (PPEs, hygiene and learning materials), and the mobilization of corporate networks and employees are demonstrating a strong commitment from the private sector.



Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

Every aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates inequalities that exist within the middle-and high-income countries of ECA Region. UNICEF is most concerned about the situation of marginalised children and families and is working with Government and partners to ensure their needs are adequately considered in response efforts. While every effort is usually made, sometimes limitations to co-ordinated preparedness and response planning at national, regional and local levels make it difficult to ensure a multi-disciplinary, equitable, inclusive approach, both in addressing immediate concerns and in overcoming anticipated longer-term impacts of the crisis.

As resources in the health system are diverted to address the outbreak, routine health services become increasingly rationalized. In Kazakhstan for example, routine immunization has been suspended for the duration of the quarantine, with only two vaccines (BCG and HepB) administered for new-borns at perinatal centres. In Bulgaria, suspension of the national immunization program, and restricted antenatal care for pregnant women and services for children with disabilities could impact children’s longer-term wellbeing.

There is a need for close cooperation between the Child Protection and Health sectors to ensure adequate protective equipment (PPE) for care and social workers and to prevent unnecessary separation of children from families during the crisis. Children who lose parents or caregivers to COVID-19 must have access to protection services and alternative care arrangements. There is also concern of newborns at risk of becoming deprived of breastfeeding if they are separated from mothers who have confirmed COVID-19 status.

Evidence-based COVID-19 safety advice like hand washing, staying at home, and keeping two meters away from other people, is impossible to practise in communities where soap and running water are not easily accessible, and where decent housing with plenty of space, simply does not exist. In ECA Region, this includes:

- Vulnerable communities including those of ethnic and linguistic minorities, such as the Roma, many of whom are living in poverty with inadequate housing conditions.

² List of donors available on request

- Refugee and migrant families, particularly those in Greece, many of whom are living in overcrowded Reception Centres. In this reporting week, there were 32 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the refugee and migrant population. Three sites (Malakasa, Ritsona, Koutsochero) are now under quarantine. Coordination is ongoing among humanitarian actors to ensure that people living in these sites have access to services (including through remote modalities) and receive continuous information through established WhatsApp groups and staff field visits. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is providing additional food supplies to limit the number of visits by humanitarian staff. On the sites with confirmed cases, the national health institution (EODY) is performing tests on the whole population and on any humanitarian staff member who recently visited.
- Children who live in residential care and children in detention facilities, who are also at increased risk if staff are not trained and no protocols are in place to protect them from infection. Restricted domestic travel and social interaction is making it more complicated for assistance to reach these groups.

In Italy, UNICEF has been strongly advocating for COVID-19 prevention and control measures to adequately consider migrants and refugees, whether they are those hosted by the reception system or outside the formal system. Families with young children, young boys and girls, and those about to turn 18 and lose protection rights, are most in need of continued protection and access to health services. Following a recent joint cross-Ministry declaration that Italian ports are not a “place of safety”, UNICEF has been encouraging the Government to continue ensuring search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea and appropriate disembarkation procedures in line with the COVID-19 emergency.

In Ukraine, COVID-19 related restrictions have been imposed at checkpoints in the East for civilians, including UN staff crossing from government-controlled areas (GCA) to non-GCAs and vice-versa. In the past week there was a significant increase in hostilities which resulted in civilian casualties and damage to private houses, electrical grids, water facilities, and other non-military infrastructure. Government, partners and affected communities are being challenged to cope with the pandemic, on top of a protracted emergency.

Most countries have temporarily closed schools. To ensure children can continue learning at home, alternate teaching and learning methods need to be established quickly and efficiently and be accessible to all. In Belarus, a survey found only 81% of multi-child families and 86% of families with a single parent own a personal computer or laptop. A study in Romania found 30% of children unable to learn at home. Besides the absence of internet and/or computer, children’s home environments might not be conducive to learning. Schools might not know how to make on-line content useable, and teachers could lack the capacity to conduct classes online. Findings suggest that tools and strategies to reach all students equitably must include support to teachers and to family members at home.

A major worry for UNICEF is the severe socio-economic consequences on vulnerable households linked to economic slowdown and massive unemployment. In ECA Region, the World Bank has ominously forecasted sharp declines in GDP (for example, 3.7% in Bulgaria and 4% in Belarus) owed to the toll that COVID-19 will take on export and domestic activity. Kosovo*, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan report food prices steadily increasing. Without a safety net able to withstand the shocks that emanate from this emergency, families who are especially vulnerable to losing their livelihoods, will sink deeper into poverty.

In a backdrop of intensified stress, uncertainty and isolation, many of the measures that have been imposed to control the spread of the disease are not only increasing violence against children (VAC) and gender based violence (GBV) against women and girls, but also limiting the ability of survivors to distance themselves from their abusers and to access external support. Across ECA Region, UNICEF is collaborating with other UN partners and social services providers to build capacity in preventing and addressing violence against children and women and ensuring access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS).

Partnerships & Coordination

In many ECAR countries, the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (RCO) is taking a leadership role in activating sector coordination mechanisms and ensuring a concerted approach between the UN, Government, key partners and donors. UNICEF is an active participant in these coordination mechanisms and is providing inputs into COVID-19 national-level preparedness and response plans, and related discussions on reducing longer-term socio-economic impacts.

In some countries, UNICEF leads UN coordination (e.g., Bulgaria, Turkmenistan). Across ECA Region, UNICEF is leading, co-leading or supporting sector specific COVID-19 task forces or working groups, including: Child Protection (Albania, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan); Education (Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan); Gender (Moldova); Infection, Prevention and Control Capacity (Serbia); Risk Communication (Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan); Socio-economic impact, e.g., cash transfer, social protection (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan); Social Protection and Psychosocial Support Group (Armenia) and WASH (Kyrgyzstan). UNICEF co-leads or supports task force and working groups in partnership with IOM, WHO, IFRC, UNDP, UNHCR, UNESCO, UN Women, among others.

This week, new or expanded continuing partnerships were reported with professional organizations and NGOs that are working with line ministries to support: children with disabilities, (e.g., Special Olympics, and the Association of Young People with Disabilities in Montenegro; Open the Windows in Macedonia); outreach to vulnerable families, (e.g., the Agency for Social Assistance, Family

Consultative Centre for Community Support in Bulgaria; municipalities in Bulgaria and Kosovo*; Red Cross in Montenegro); logistics (e.g., IFRC in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*); psychosocial support (e.g., the Mental Health and Associations of Psychologists in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Voice against Violence in North Macedonia).

UNICEF is building on existing work conducted through European Union (EU) supported programmes that aim to protect the most vulnerable children in the immediate term. UNICEF teams in ECA Region are closely engaging with the EU at the headquarters and country levels, using a Social Protection perspective to assess the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis in the short-, mid- and long- term. Special attention is being placed on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Education sectors.

Summary of UNICEF's ECA Region Preparedness and Response Actions

Supplies: With deliveries pending and more orders being placed, this week UNICEF delivered: PPEs (including masks, gloves, surgical gowns) to health and social workers in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia and Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Serbia; medical equipment (oxygen concentrators) to priority hospitals in Ukraine; hygiene items (including sanitiser, disinfectant, hygiene kits) to vulnerable families, children and staff in residential institution, in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo*, and Serbia. UNICEF distributed donations-in-kind, including PPE and sanitiser from the Korean Embassy to children's institutions in Georgia.

Provision of Healthcare and Nutrition Services: Safeguarding access of children and women to essential health services is urgent as health infrastructure and resources, including medical staff, are diverted to address the spread of COVID-19. Without exception, close partnerships with WHO and national and local health authorities have been essential through:

Publications, guidance and capacity-building, for example:

- Provision of guidance on clinical case management, infection prevention and control (IPC), maintaining essential health services, adolescent mental health, immunization, and infant and young child feeding, provided to the Management Union of Medical Territorial Units (TABIB) of the State Agency on Mandatory Health Insurance (SAMHI) in Azerbaijan.
- Dissemination of publications, including "COVID-19: Recommendations on Breastfeeding for Maternities", "WHO Guidance on routine immunization during COVID19", "A guidance brief for Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) in the context of COVID19" (translated to Croatian) to Government health professionals in Croatia.
- Provision of technical advice on IYCF, immunization, breastfeeding, and with UNFPA and WHO, to prevent separation of new-born babies from mothers with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, as it will negatively impact breastfeeding and care practices in Kazakhstan.
- Development of PPE standards based on WHO guidelines for the Ministry of Health in Kyrgyzstan.
- Launch of a national level position paper on breastfeeding in the COVID-19 context and preparing a training IPC for approximately 6,000 community health workers, health mediators and social workers in Romania.
- Provision of inputs related to nutrition to a draft paper on social assistance response plan developed by Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSPP) and active engagement in the World Bank's nutrition sensitive cash transfer in Tajikistan.
- Drafting a strategy with WHO, Centres for Disease Control (CDC) to scale up laboratory capacity for COVID-19 response in Ukraine.

Moving service delivery online, for example:

- Establishment of new social media pages and groups, to provide real-time live group counselling sessions, parenting information on child development and health, by paediatricians, breastfeeding counsellors, psychologists and child neurologists in Azerbaijan
- Replacement of home visits to pregnant women, mothers and families with young children with online consultations via telephone, Skype and Viber in Bulgaria.
- Supporting the National Mental Health Center launched a website for COVID-19 and mental health information, support and counselling (see [here](#)) in Kazakhstan.
- Enabling 200 trained home visiting nurses at primary health care level in 22 municipalities to reach parents through phone calls and other virtual communication channels in Kosovo*.
- Supporting primary health care to provide distance support to pregnant women and families with young children in Moldova.
- Supporting Roma Health Mediators to intensify their contacts with families through proactive phone calls. As well, providing technical support to home-visiting nurses and early childhood interventions teams, so they can continue their critical work in reaching out to children and families, newborns and children with disabilities in Serbia.

Supporting procurement, for example:

- Procuring ARV for pregnant women and children and medicines related to COVID-19 treatment in Moldova.

Infection, Protection and Control (IPC)/WASH Services: Soap, sanitizer, disinfectant and clean water are the first line of defence against the spread of infection. UNICEF is prioritizing delivery of these, and the promotion of safe practice to the hardest to reach communities, for example:

- In Armenia, UNICEF translated a Ministry of Health guidance on disinfection of educational facilities guide and is supporting supply requirements to enable safe return to school after restrictions are lifted.
- In Moldova, UNICEF initiated a rapid hygiene and WASH needs identification in consultation the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR), the Ministry of Justice, and managers of health facilities, placement centres and civil society organizations (CSOs).
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF-supplied hand sanitisers, soap and chlorine are enabling practice of better hygiene and infection control by health care workers and persons quarantined in 10 locations across the country. A Donor Coordination Council Meeting was convened, at UNICEF's request, to discuss WASH gaps in the COVID-19 response and the way forward to increase WASH access.
- In Turkmenistan, a hand-washing campaign together with IPC messaging to promote personal hygiene and improve protective hygiene practices is being launched as part of the information campaign aimed at school children and the wider population.
- In Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts in the government-controlled areas (GCA), a rapid assessment to identify urgent WASH needs of 20 health care facilities (14 in Donetsk, 6 in Luhansk) was completed, 283 institutional hygiene kits were distributed to 32 social institutions and 3 health care facilities and e-voucher provision for hygiene supplies for health care facilities and vulnerable households located along the contact line was initiated.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE): UNICEF often leads this area in partnerships with other UN agencies and with the Government. Some examples of collaboration with UN and state entities highlight UNICEF's technical expertise in this area of outreach:

- UNICEF's family-oriented [#LearningAtHome](#) , [#LearningFromHome](#), and [#FunAtHome](#) social media campaigns had significant uptake and are still going strong in multiple languages (including in [Azerbaijan](#), Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine), with Albania joining this week. Social media campaigns have also been developed with specific target audiences in mind, for example: fathers of young children, children with special needs.
- In Azerbaijan UNICEF continues to support the Government's national communication team with strategic advice and inputs to strengthen coordinated public risk communication, and last week a national online handwashing campaign continued (see [here](#)). Communication products were produced and disseminated through UN and government media and social media focusing on the importance of social distancing and recognition and reporting of symptoms.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF deployed risk communication consultants to the Federal Ministry of Health and Federal Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina/Federal Crisis Management Team to support the government in dealing with external communication and coordination of messages towards the public.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF's key strategic RCCE is carried out in coordination with WHO. At country level, UNICEF tailors both UNICEF and WHO content to produce messages aimed at specific audiences. The recently ended digital campaign [#FunAtHome](#), generated positive media interest, with five interviews and stories dedicated to this digital mobilization published in mainstream media assets. Messages on risk communication, hand washing, learning at home and psychosocial support have also been shared with the employee and customer networks of more than 20 UNICEF corporate partners.
- In Georgia, six informational videos, including one in Abkhaz language, were produced and aired through digital and media platforms in Abkhazia to inform children and their families about COVID-19 and related prevention measures.
- In Croatia, UNICEF is reaching children, adolescents, youth, parents, schools and health professionals with messaging on prevention, access to services and building community resilience via social and traditional media. UNICEF's social media channels have attracted 600,000 visits and engaged around 94,000 people, and UNICEF's website featuring COVID-19 information has experienced a 550% increase in visits. In partnership with Facebook, Agency for Electronic Media, and top tier online media outlets, UNICEF launched a media literacy campaign to raise awareness on dangers of fake news.
- In Moldova UNICEF supported the dissemination of COVID-19 prevention materials and messages in Gagauz and Romani, languages of ethnic minorities.

- In North Macedonia, child-friendly material on fighting COVID-19 was printed in Macedonian, Albanian and Romani languages, and distributed along with hygiene kits to vulnerable families
- In Kosovo*, to develop soft skills of children UNICEF engaged a local influencer, a female hiker to explain/describe to children and young people some tactics of hiking.
- In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF developed several RCCE products that have reached an audience of one million via television and/or social media. These include: eight video spots on health and protection, 29 episodes of UNICEF's serial "The Family Stories", and animated cartoons on WASH aimed at parents.
- In Moldova, UNICEF partnered with the Special Olympics to engage parents, fathers in particular, in home-based [sport activities with young children](#) with special needs, using hashtags #FunAtHome, #DadsAtHome. Three video stories on parenting were produced, featuring [fathers](#) and [children with special needs](#).
- In Montenegro, UNICEF is supporting national RCEE activities led by the National Coordination Body, the Institute for Public Health and the Ministry of Health. Risk communication activities are informed by weekly public opinion surveys commissioned by UNICEF – see the [latest IPSOS survey](#) and a related [UNICEF web story](#). UNICEF included in the #PlayAtHome campaign a fact-checking page made by Young Reporters to combat fake news and misinformation and various polls via Instagram stories.
- In Romania, UNICEF partnered with Romanian Post to distribute information materials on COVID-19, reaching 360,000 people in the two counties where UNICEF implements programmes. COVID-19 materials were posted on UNICEF's social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok).
- In Serbia, UNICEF developed and [disseminated](#) communication materials targeting families with children and young people on how to prevent COVID-19 and seek assistance; psychosocial support for children, young people and parents; promotion of mental health. UNICEF, in partnership with Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), launched a daily telecast dedicated to parents of young children in which child psychiatrists and child development professionals give advice on how to cope while staying at home.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF and partners finalized the RCCE Coordination Draft Resolution and terms of reference (TORs) for the National Task Force, submitted for approval by the Prime Minister's Office. Draft guidance for community engagement was jointly prepared with WHO and Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan and also submitted for Government approval. UNICEF updated the behaviour change communication (BCC) package design and prepared a set of school-focused print materials that will reach over 13,000 teachers and 1,100 schools and their partners, including the EU, USAID, Good Neighbours, Mission East, and Mercy Corps.
- In Turkey, UNICEF RCCE activities are closely coordinated with Government, using a wide range of communication channels through partners to reach all families, including refugees and other vulnerable populations, with adapted messages. Thematic, targeted materials on COVID-19 were disseminated via UNICEF social media platforms.
- In Ukraine UNICEF continued communication and C4D support to Ministry of Health and Public Health Centre with informational materials and content development, through a creative team deployed for MOH in-house production, for government communication channels on COVID. UNICEF locally developed parenting content, including infographics, videos and Facebook LIVE streams with celebrity mothers and experts on COVID related topics, disseminated through UNICEF social media accounts.

Engaging Adolescents and Young People: U-Report is a social messaging tool and data collection system developed by UNICEF to improve citizen engagement, inform leaders, and foster positive change. The program sends SMS polls and alerts to its participants, collecting real-time responses, and subsequently publishes gathered data. Issues polled include health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, youth unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and disease outbreaks. U-Reporters include the voices of young people across ECA Region, for example:

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 66% of U-Reporters support Government measures to restrict the movement of children and the elderly. In Bulgaria UNICEF launched U-Report to a wide partnership of major national youth organizations and is currently recruiting the first U-Reporters via online poll, on challenges faced by adolescents.
- In Italy, 481 young migrants and refugees registered on the U-Report "On the Move" platform. U-Reporters now total 5,208 users.
- In Moldova, up to 30,000 U-Reporters engaged in a social media campaign on cyber hygiene. In Serbia, UNICEF's COVID-19 website and U-Report messaging amplified via social media channels. In Uzbekistan, over 65,000 U-reporters are engaged in raising awareness on COVID-19 preventive measures.

Mental health and psychosocial support is also a major concern for adolescents and young people which UNICEF is working to address, for example:

- In Armenia, UNICEF mobilized adolescents from different regions to tell their stories on staying at home and keeping a positive

mood during COVID-19 self-isolation. The series “#CopingWithCOVID-19” is hosted by UNICEF, WHO and the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth.

- In Azerbaijan, 11 “Youth Houses” under the Ministry of Youth and Sport and four non-governmental organizations working with youth, joined UNICEF’s risk communication campaign, disseminating information on COVID-19 related risks and positive behaviour among adolescents and youth through their social network platforms.
- In Belarus, UNICEF is developing a plan to advance peer-to-peer counselling, and a webinar was conducted for volunteers, adolescents and medical students on COVID-19 and mental health.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF is using social media to share guidance and tips on how youth can protect their mental health during COVID-19 pandemic.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF has launched an online Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices (KABP) survey to evaluate how isolation affects adolescents and inform new programmatic and communication actions – related to rise of negative online trends such as cyberbullying and positive trends such as digital activism and volunteering.
- In Georgia, UNICEF supported the dissemination of materials on supporting mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic to adolescents, 40 schools and preschool directors.
- In Romania, adolescent members of UNICEF’s children’s boards are publishing articles on how to turn this difficult period into an [opportunity](#) and encouraging teenagers to [stay united](#).

Access to Continuous Learning: In this reporting period, 50.1 million children were forced to stay at home. To enable all children to continue learning, UNICEF is helping to ensure that lessons are accessible to everyone, and that teachers and family members are properly supported, to allow children to learn.

- In Albania, UNICEF translated and shared guidance on safe schools and COVID-19 with school networks and Ministry of Education (MOE), Sports and Youth (MOESY) to prepare for re-opening of schools. UNICEF has also translated and widely shared, via social media, guidance for parents with young children and an activity booklet on COVID-19. UNICEF is supporting MOE in offering distance learning through the Akademi.al platform and television, to ensure children without access to online tools can learn.
- In Armenia, UNICEF has partnered with the National Centre for Education Technologies (NCET) to accelerate production of video-lessons being broadcasted on national and local TV and upgrade digital skills of teachers. Simultaneously NCET and Ministry of Education and Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) drafted an e-school concept note and action plan to scale up distance learning interventions.
- In Azerbaijan, UNICEF supports the Institute of Education under the MoE in developing remote early education classes for broadcasting on Culture TV channel and various digital platforms (e.g., MoE Facebook /YouTube), and the joint MoE/EU/UNICEF parenting education [portal](#).
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF is supporting Ministry of Education and Science and education partners to ensure continuous support for learning for the Roma children and children with disabilities. In partnership with the National Association of Resource Teachers UNICEF is working on an online interactive platform to facilitate learning and additional support for children with disabilities and special needs.
- In Croatia, UNICEF provided 100 tablets enabling Roma children lacking devices to participate in online education. 500 SIM cards with free access to Ministry learning apps were donated by UNICEF partner (TELE2) for students without internet access.
- In Greece 1,500 homework packages were distributed to school-age refugee and migrant children living in Open Accommodation Sites. Educational podcasts were completed by UNICEF partner NGOs and 55 formal/non-formal teachers trained to deliver distance learning, through the Education Sector Working Group and implemented by UNICEF.
- In Italy, skills-building through online non-formal education continued with attendance of 65 young migrants and refugees, while skills-building UPSHIFT lessons were delivered online for 20 students. Skills building through socio-recreational activities (e.g., yoga, capoeira, dance and music, circus, guitar photography, theatre online and cooking classes) were held on the U-Report “On the Move” platform, via Facebook live or video sessions, with an average of 800 users reached per lesson.
- In Kazakhstan, over three million students started distance learning in April. One learning platform (Kandelik) identified 2.2 million unique users accessing over 32 million sessions delivered in a single day. UNICEF and UNESCO are working together to provide on-line support to schools and teachers during distance learning.
- In Kosovo*, UNICEF supported Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) to develop an early childhood education

and development online learning platform, now available for parents and educators. Thirty-one teachers from 20 primary schools from 10 Kosovo* municipalities have been virtually certified to deliver online training focusing on Youth empowerment for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future in Kosovo*.

- In Kyrgyzstan, in April, the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) successfully launched remote learning country-wide, reaching approximately 1.2 million children. UNICEF continues its support MOES to finalize the Education Sector Response Plan and work on ensuring access to education/entertainment TV programmes for all pre-school children and supplementary materials for parents on early age development activities for children at home.
- In Romania, UNICEF is part of a group of stakeholders, including Ministry of Education, Institute of Educational Sciences, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education System, University of Bucharest, HoltIs Association, Foundation Impreuna Agency, Step by Step Association and Council of Europe), identifying solutions to ensure equitable access to quality education. A response plan is being developed based assessment results and available data on challenges to distance learning.
- In Serbia, UNICEF provided technical support to the MoE to develop a national education response targeting pre-school children and their families via social media, national broadcast media, and weekly activity-based parenting messages. UNICEF purchased 79 software licences to support MoE to improve technical conditions for recording distance learning lessons and is working with the Pedagogic Society of Serbia to design a web portal with a repository of resources for psychologists and pedagogues that will help teachers prepare teaching materials for distance learning.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF helped to finalize the National Education Response Plan to mobilize 11 million dollars in additional education resources, leveraging Global Partnerships for Education (GPE) catalytical funds. UNICEF supported the launch of a blended learning initiative for secondary school subjects, including via TV broadcasts, which will train 150 teachers and support students prepare for post-secondary entrance exams.
- In Turkey, UNICEF is supporting MoNE to ensure the national distance learning programme can adequately support online learning for 19 million learners, including over 680,000 Syrian refugee children. UNICEF has supported enhancement of platforms to improve access and production of animated messages to promote information on the programme, including in Arabic, targeting refugee children and parents. 7,500 learners currently enrolled in non-formal education have already been reached. Over 12,000 Syrian volunteer education personnel are being mobilized through Rapid-Pro to spread messaging on distance learning. All existing UNICEF early childhood education (ECE) programmes have been converted into distance learning, reaching 4,500 Syrian and Turkish families daily.
- In Ukraine, UNICEF conducted two webinars attended by 400 teachers on how to talk with pre-schoolers about COVID-19 and how to organize learning activities at home. Another 1,500 educators completed an online orientation course on COVID-19 for teachers using [resources](#) produced by UNICEF and WHO. MoES issued a brief note on distance learning of pre-schoolers which includes UNICEF's key global [recommendations](#) for teachers and parents on learning at home. UNICEF also provided technical review of the ministerial decree on distance learning and is working on deployment of UNICEF Global E-Learning Passport – an online platform for formal and supplementary learning - with Microsoft and Cambridge University.

Access to Child Protection and Preventing Violence: UNICEF's support to countries around child protection and preventing violence focuses on the most vulnerable, including children in institutions, children without parental care, and children in the justice system. Support to prevent and address Gender Based Violence (GBV) focuses on women and girls who have little or no ability to distance themselves from an abusive situation and to get help.

- In Albania, UNICEF supports mental health and psychosocial assistance for children and caregivers via www.nukjevetem.al and the national child helpline. This period saw an increase in children and young people seeking help, due to or worsened by the COVID-19 situation. UNICEF launched a series of country-wide webinars, supporting the social and child protection work force.
- In Armenia, the preparation of GBV responsive actions in response to COVID-19 is coming together through the UN Gender Thematic Group (GTG) mechanism. Support is provided to child protection professionals in maintaining early identification and response to cases of violence against children - through development of tools (e.g. helplines, online support, phone counselling) to ensure continuity of child protection functions. UNICEF is cooperating with the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs, Justice, Education, Science, Culture and Sports, and the Police to identify support children in residential care institutions or left without parental care who need alternative care arrangements. An app for women to prevent and respond to GBV is running, and will be tailored to children and adolescents, including with content from the GBV Pocket Guide.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF undertook a brief child protection and social service delivery survey with line ministries at Entity/District Brcko/Canton levels to assess the scope of their response and support needs. To ensure country-wide psychosocial support, UNICEF with Ministry of Health FBiH and Ministry of Health and Social Welfare RS, is supporting procurement of 70 tablets and mobile phones to make mental health centres across accessible electronically.

- In Bulgaria, UNICEF is ensuring service continuity of Child Advocacy and Community and Family Support centres by developing appropriate protocols and guidelines for remote support. UNICEF is promoting GB and sexual violence awareness in the context of the crisis and supporting Mother and Baby Units and Crisis Centres to provide temporary accommodation, care and pedagogical support for social inclusion and employment, including to refugee and migrant women, mothers of young children.
- In Croatia, in response to a suspension of early childhood intervention (ECI) services, UNICEF completed an initial assessment on the possible implementation of virtual home visits for children with developmental delays and disabilities.
- In Georgia, UNICEF is working with local NGOs to support provision of psychosocial support to children and caregivers in small group homes, foster care and state specialized institutions and develop guidelines, train and supervise social workers from child protection and justice systems. UNICEF is cooperating with line Ministries and Police to address needs of children in detention.
- In Greece, UNICEF contributed to a guidance note issued by Ministry of Labour and National Centre for Social Solidarity to inform accommodation providers for unaccompanied children on COVID-19 communication, prevention and response measures. UNICEF partners in refugee/migrant Open Accommodation Sites periodically visit to provide case management/psychosocial support while moving forward with remote modalities.
- In Italy, UNICEF continued to work closely with partners to ensure continued, remote support to foster families and children and volunteer guardians during quarantine, including psychosocial support, stress management and information on COVID-19 prevention, access to services and legal support. Calendars of virtual meetings have been established to enable foster families to share experiences and stay in touch. The “Refugees Welcome” programme continues to provide guidance to mentors and young people and is testing online modalities to match mentors and mentees.
- In Kazakhstan, UNICEF developed key messages on responsive, protective measures for children affected by migration and in closed institutions, used for advocacy with the Ministry of Interior, Human Rights and Child Rights Ombudspersons. A session on non-violent discipline and positive parenting was conducted for 30 employees of national postal operator ‘Kazpost’.
- In Kosovo* UNICEF partners organized virtual psychosocial, counselling, education and social mobilization activities for around 600 children with disabilities and in foster care and correctional facilities. A UNICEF press release urged judiciaries to implement home and community-based alternatives for children in pretrial, detention and with education-correctional measures.
- In Montenegro, Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance on mental health and psycho-social support was shared with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and Institute for Social and Child Protection to support child protection and social work professionals providing counselling and SOS services (parent line, national line for family violence, national child line).
- In North Macedonia, UNICEF is supporting MoH to establish safety protocols for group homes, correctional facilities to minimize infection and prevent impact from isolation. In partnership with Voice against Violence, and supported by the University Psychiatric Clinic, a helpline for positive parenting was established and has supported 100 parents and children/adolescents.
- In Serbia, UNICEF is supporting Government to develop guidance to prevent unnecessary separation of children from families or secure psychosocial support and supervised alternative care when a parent or caregiver is hospitalized. UNICEF supported hotlines are providing psychosocial support and first-aid counselling to children and their families, including on protection from violence. In coordination with Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, UNICEF continues to support monitoring and coordination of child protection actors in relation to GBV and safeguarding concerns for refugee and migrant children, women and families.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF is supporting an assessment of the needs of children in closed and semi-closed institutions, including Juvenile Colony, based on which specific prevention and response measures will be undertaken.
- In Turkey, UNICEF is partnering with Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) and national NGOs to ensure continued psychosocial support and case management for children and adults at risk. UNICEF adapted and widely disseminated global coronavirus guidance on child protection, parenting, mental health, psychosocial support and GBV case management for use by Turkish and refugee audiences. Advocacy with the Directorate of Migration Management, Ministry of Family and Ministry of Justice focuses on release of children in detention and ensuring adequate care and access to hygiene and health services for children in institutions and closed facilities.
- In Ukraine, discussion held with specialised NGOs on children in alternative care and 40,000 children sent home from boarding school revealed reports of increasing cases of neglect, abuse and economic hardship faced by families and caregivers, and joint calls for urgent national and local action are planned. UNICEF supported 1,759 online psychosocial and GBV consultations to children and families living along the contact line, where 7% related to violence with children under 18 years affected as victims or witnesses, 8% affected men and women 18-25 years old and over 50% related to domestic violence.

- In Uzbekistan, UNICEF prepared guidance on protecting children from risk of infection for staff and officials of residential institutions and detention centres.

Social Protection: UNICEF-supported actions aim to formulate evidence-based strategies and set priorities to strengthen social protection programming and reinforce safety nets for children most at risk in the face of unprecedented economic down in ECA Region.

- In Albania, UNICEF is formalizing arrangements with three municipalities to support over 1,000 households with a onetime humanitarian cash transfer payment.
- In Armenia, leading the Social Protection and Psychosocial Support sector coordination group, UNICEF is spearheading discussions to coordinate preparedness and response actions and ensure harmonised provision of social protection assistance. UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to provide multi-purpose cash assistance (as top-up a for those already in the family benefit system) for 3,500 children with disabilities and to develop mechanisms to expand the family benefit system, to cover those outside of current support packages and employed in the informal sector.
- In Azerbaijan UNICEF, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and “ASAN Volunteers Organization” carried out preparatory work to ensure a social protection package for 1,000 institutionalized children, deprived of parental care and temporarily returned home under quarantine measures, including risk communication materials and basic food and daily consumption items.
- In Belarus, where poverty is more frequent in households with children and where several dominantly female-employing services or textiles sectors are going to be affected in the crisis, particularly impacting single parent families, measures for policy response to support vulnerable families with children are being developed jointly with WB and the Resident Coordinator’s Office.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF, with UNDP, is co-chairing a UN Task Force on Assessment of Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID19 and has launched a rapid assessment of impact on social protection in one Canton (Zenica-Doboj).
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF is working closely with municipalities and local partners to support identification of vulnerable children and families to receive food packages under the EU operational programme for provision of food and basic material assistance managed by the Agency for Social Assistance, with 168 Bulgarian and 75 refugee and migrant households already identified.
- In Kosovo* where UNICEF co-chairs the COVID-19 Task Force Coordination Team on Socio Economic Impact Assessment, support focuses on the implementation of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment conducted by UNDP.
- In Moldova, UNICEF is undertaking an analysis of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on remittances for vulnerable families with children and advocating with Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to re-allocate funds for school meals to in-kind or cash-transfers to vulnerable families with children during school closure.
- In Montenegro, with UNDP and UN agencies, UNICEF is identifying groups most affected by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, including data collection on how these groups, including children, experience and cope with related shocks.
- In Romania, in partnership with Step-by-Step Association, Terre des Hommes, the Center for Health Policies and Services and the Council of Institutionalized Youth, and with technical support from World Bank and WHO, UNICEF has undertaken a rapid assessment on the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable children and families.
- In Serbia, UNICEF supported a phone-based survey of 1,800 families to assess the social impact of COVID-19 on access to social services, to be repeated during and after isolation, to help Government shape support measures for families with children.
- In Turkmenistan, UNICEF offered technical support to the Ministry of Labour and Social and the Ministry of Finance and Economy to assess the readiness of the existing Social Protection system to respond to reduction families’ disposable incomes and develop recommendations on how the system and cash transfers could be adjusted to respond to needs.
- In Ukraine, initial monitoring results from UNICEF’s 22 Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Networks show a wide range of responses including social support to vulnerable populations (delivering food and hygiene supplies), online child and youth engagement and development of innovative applications to find volunteers. An assessment of socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on poverty through micro-simulations and macro-economic consensus forecast is ongoing.
- In Uzbekistan, UNICEF is working with World Bank to assess the on children’s well-being and supporting Government to identify vulnerable families for social protection through a single registry platform piloted successfully in one region.

Data Collection Analysis and Research: UNICEF support to children and families must deliver measurable results. In the early stage of emergency response, such data collection often focuses on setting a baseline against which impact can be quantified or documented in qualitative improvement. Some examples:

- In Armenia, under the UN Multi-Sector Response framework, UNICEF is contributing to a joint COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment being undertaken in coordination with UNDP, WB, ADB and EU by launching a national household Vulnerability Assessment via phone interviews that will contribute to the assessment and inform Government efforts and UNICEF programming.
- In Azerbaijan, UNICEF has engaged two research companies to generate weekly data on changes in public awareness, perceptions and behaviours in relation to COVID-19, identify preferred, trusted channels of communication and undertake periodic rapid assessments of impact on health, mental health, nutrition, education, child protection and the economic situation of families. The initiative will also undertake real-time monitoring of social media and social listening to inform risk communications, community engagement and programme responses.
- In Georgia, UNICEF, in partnership with WHO, is carrying out a behaviour insight study to monitor public knowledge, risk perceptions, behaviours and trust in relation to COVID-19 outbreak and response activities.
- In Greece, a first round of data collection through the inter-agency joint monitoring tool on preparedness and response to COVID-19 in Open Accommodation sites was finalized. Key findings include the need to establish clear guidance and action around potential separation of children from parents due to COVID-19.
- In Kosovo*, UNICEF initiated a rapid phone assessment of families receiving Hygienic Kits to understand beneficiary satisfaction usefulness of the kits and the emerging needs of families.
- In Montenegro, a third round of the UNICEF supported IPSOS public perception survey was finalized and key findings shared with Government and through a [press release](#) on 11 April. The survey is widely used as public opinion monitoring tool by various stakeholders including the Government and Institute of Public Health.
- In Romania UNICEF, with input from WHO and World Bank, designed a rapid assessment to collect data on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on vulnerable families in four rounds, repeated every 10 days. Preliminary data reveals that many vulnerable families (e.g. Roma families, those experiencing job loss) have limited means to buy basic food items. As well, participation in on-line school is dropping. In parallel, data was collected from hospitals and maternity wards across the country, which reveal that access to basic services like pre-natal visits for pregnant women is becoming more difficult.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF developed an RCCE Rapid Assessment tool – a key data generation mechanism to support risk communication. It is ready and looking for approval and activation from the Government.

Internal and External Media

Albania: Twitter, #LearningAtHome launch https://twitter.com/albania_unicef/status/1246769309638164480

Armenia: OpEd by UNICEF Deputy Representative <https://www.vl.no/verdidebatt/utfordringene-star-i-ko-1.1695291>

Azerbaijan: #LearningAtHome launch <https://1news.az/news/v-podderzhku-roditelyam-idei-razvivayuschih-igr-s-det-mi-vo-vremya-karantina-ot-unicef-foto>

Bosnia and Herzegovina: How to protect yourself and your children: <https://www.unicef.org/bih/covid19>

Croatia: Interview with UNICEF Country Representative <https://www.unicef.org/croatia/en/stories/interview-regina-castillo-unicef-representative-croatia>

Georgia: UNICEF reaching out to most affected <https://www.unicef.org/georgia/press-releases/unicef-reaching-out-most-vulnerable-communities-hit-covid-19-pandemic-georgia>

Italy: U-Report on preventing GBV: <https://twitter.com/UReportOTM/status/1247509662565572608?s=03>

Kazakhstan: What you need to know (in Kazakh) <https://www.unicef.org/kazakhstan/kk/%D0%BA%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81-covid-19-%D0%BD%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%96-%D0%B1%D1%96%D0%BB%D1%83-%D0%BA%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%BA>

Kyrgyzstan: Distribution of PPE <https://www.01.kg/news/2724399/medrabotniki-kr-polucili-zasitnye-kostumy-ot-oon-i-abr>

Moldova: U-Report school survey <https://moldova.ureport.in/opinion/1648/>

Montenegro: Raising awareness <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/ijzcg-up-i-unicef-podizu-svijest-rae-populacije-o-koronavirusu>

North Macedonia: Launch of faith-in-action <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/press-releases/launch-global-multi-religious-faith-action-covid-19-initiative>

Romania: Romanian Football Federation support to UNICEF <https://platforma4.mediatrust.ro/browser/internet/YSOUJA/z/i>

Serbia: What parents should know <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/coronavirus-covid-19>

Tajikistan: UNICEF-Switzerland support <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20200318/shveitsariya-i-yunisef-predostavili-tadzhikistanu-sredstva-zatshiti-ot-koronavirusa-na-50-tisyach>

Turkey: UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sg4vy0Bq6VQ&t=904s>

Next Sitrep: 21 April 2020

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