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One year on: COVID-19 through the eyes of children



2,727,128
women and children
had continued access
to obstetric, neo- and
postnatal and child
health care including
immunization services

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200,000,000
people reached with
COVID-19 messaging
on prevention and
services each month

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53,792
primary health
facility staff trained in
COVID-19 and infection
prevention and control

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45,600,000
children and adolescents
supported with distance/
home-based learning

© UNICEF/UNI337413/Veska



3,237,926
people reached with
nutrition messages

© UNICEF/UNI374528/Ijazah

2,761,763
children, adolescents, parents
and caregivers provided with
community based mental health
and psychosocial support

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3,421,260
people reached with
critical WASH supplies

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7,863,870
COVID-19-affected families receiving
cash assistance for basic needs

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The pandemic placed significant strain on Indonesia's health system, diverting workers and resources to respond to COVID-19. Fear of contracting the virus and physical distancing led some parents to defer their children's health treatment.

One year on: COVID-19 through the eyes of children

"COVID-19 is the first truly global crisis we have seen in our lifetime. No matter where we live, the pandemic affects every person – children most of all."

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore

When COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic in early March 2020, only a few confirmed cases of the virus had been detected in Indonesia. One month later, despite the introduction of physical distancing measures, COVID-19 was confirmed in all 34 provinces.

COVID-19 is threatening hard-won development gains, from child and maternal health and nutrition to education, child protection and social services – and further burdened an already weak water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure.

From the outset of the pandemic, UNICEF took decisive action and provided core support to the Government of Indonesia.

Since January 2020, UNICEF's work with the Government has included

- Risk communication and community engagement and developing the national COVID-19 website
- Ensuring health workers at the primary care level are equipped to safely respond to COVID-19 while maintaining essential health and nutrition services

- Providing critical supplies and community outreach in support of handwashing with soap as well as infection prevention and control
- Facilitating remote learning for children and the safe return to classrooms
- Ensuring the needs of vulnerable children are met
- And facilitating cash assistance programmes to address wider social and economic effects.

One year on, existing inequalities are exacerbated, and children risk being among the pandemic's biggest victims.

One year on, there is also a vaccine. The first shipment through the COVAX facility has arrived in Indonesia and healthcare workers, teachers and other key workers are receiving their vaccinations.

The stories in this document provide a brief insight into how children in Indonesia experienced the COVID-19 pandemic.



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Muhammad Asruhan Zuhri is one of the first teachers to receive a COVID-19 vaccine supplied by the COVAX facility.



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Elma found it lonely learning from home and is happy to be back at school with her friends.

As part of transmission prevention measures and keeping classrooms safe, all students and teachers have their temperature taken before entering school.



© UNICEF/2021/Dayne



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During an awareness session at an Islamic boarding school, Programme Manager Hidayatus Solihah tells students how COVID-19 is transmitted.

Keeping COVID-19 out of the classroom

It's 'back to school' in a careful – not carefree – way for some of Indonesia's children.

Meeting COVID-19 health protocol requirements before re-opening was a top priority for Elma's school – and the 11-year-old has to follow special rules, too – like wearing a mask, having her temperature taken and washing or sanitizing her hands before class. In her classroom, Elma sees half the children she did before school closed and desks are far apart. But perhaps the hardest part for Elma and all the children is keeping their distance during breaks.

After months out of school and away from friends, the children are excited to see one another – so staff have to be alert and available at all times to monitor activities outside the classroom.

Despite the pandemic-imposed restrictions, Elma is one of the luckier children, unlike most of Indonesia's 68 million students still trying to study from home.

Since the start of COVID-19 and school closures, UNICEF has supported the government's efforts to keep children learning – providing educational materials, training for parents and teachers and psycho-social support for children – but poor or no internet access prevents 35 per cent of children from learning online. Children from lower economic households and those with disabilities have been hardest hit.

With a special focus on remote and rural areas, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Education and Culture to make sure schools meet health protocols before re-opening. UNICEF's RapidPro, a mobile tool, collects real-time data via online communication channels. It's a fast, effective way to assess the situation of schools.

COVID-19 has not only severely disrupted children's education, it also affected young people mentally and socially.

"It's lonely learning from home," says Elma, who is delighted to be back at school and see her friends and teacher again.

Doing whatever it takes to immunize children during the pandemic



A health worker gives vitamin A drops to a child at a community-level health post in Jarum village, Central Java province, Indonesia.

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Health worker Lena visits Bambu Kuning, a remote village in Sorong, West Papua, to provide vaccinations for children during the pandemic.

© HAKLI Papua Barat/2020/Nusaybah Amatullah



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Mobile health workers who visit remote villages on foot to provide routine immunization, are the only hope of preventing childhood diseases during COVID-19.

Following a narrow, muddy path that's inaccessible to cars or motorbikes, health worker Magdalena Saribu walks carefully on the makeshift wooden platform placed on top of the mud. This is the only way to reach Bambu Kuning, a remote village in Sorong, West Papua, where more than 50 families are waiting for their children's tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis vaccinations.

Their community leader had told them that Lena was coming.

Rough conditions don't deter Magdalena – or Lena, as she's known. Even in the face of COVID-19, she's determined to reach isolated communities that were faced with even fewer services because of the pandemic.

Small, dispersed populations are a challenge to reach. Before COVID-19, Lena used to visit the posyandu (community health post) twice a month to immunize children. Now that Sorong's posyandus and schools are closed, health workers like Lena are the only hope.

Lena learned how to handle hardships caused by the pandemic by attending training supported by the Public Health Office and UNICEF. This is where she discovered how to identify children who missed out on their routine vaccinations by targeting them individually, through their names and addresses. As a result, she goes from village to village to ensure that children complete all immunizations.

Usually, Lena works at the local Malanu Health Centre, where she is responsible for providing vaccinations to over 600 children in four villages. But COVID-19 changed that, challenging her to adapt to difficult circumstances – without dimming her determination.

"We can still do what matters during the COVID-19 pandemic in Sorong: making sure that every child is immunized," says Lena.

A child is given routine immunization during the pandemic.

Chatbot gives nutrition care a helping hand during COVID-19 – and beyond



Health worker Yeni provides nutrition counselling to a mother at a health centre. Counselling is a key part of essential nutrition service delivery.

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Micke uses the nutrition chatbot on her phone at home.



© UNICEF/2021/Rey Padji



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Winda Ika Saputri receives nutrition counselling for her two-year-old daughter Fariska during a home visit from nutritionist Dessy Sandra Dewi.



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Micke plays with her daughter Felicity at their home. Thanks to treatment for wasting and Ready-To-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) during the pandemic, Felicity is on the road to recovery.

A diagnosis of ‘severe wasting’ – the most dangerous form of malnutrition – was the last thing that Micke Mboto expected to hear when she took her daughter to the health centre.

“I couldn’t accept it,” said Micke. Her daughter, 17-month-old Felicity, weighed only 6.5kg and was immediately given Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF), a peanut-based paste used to treat severely wasted children.

Like many parents, Micke and her husband initially resisted the diagnosis and didn’t trust the RUTF’s ingredients. To make matters worse, Felicity couldn’t be monitored by the health centre because of COVID-19 social restrictions.

Lack of access to health care during COVID-19 called for an innovative response – and it came in the form of a chatbot, used through WhatsApp, to provide an online counselling service for child health and nutrition.

The result of a pilot programme in Eastern Indonesia, the chatbot proved to be a game changer for parents, health workers and children during COVID-19 - but its benefits extend way beyond the pandemic.

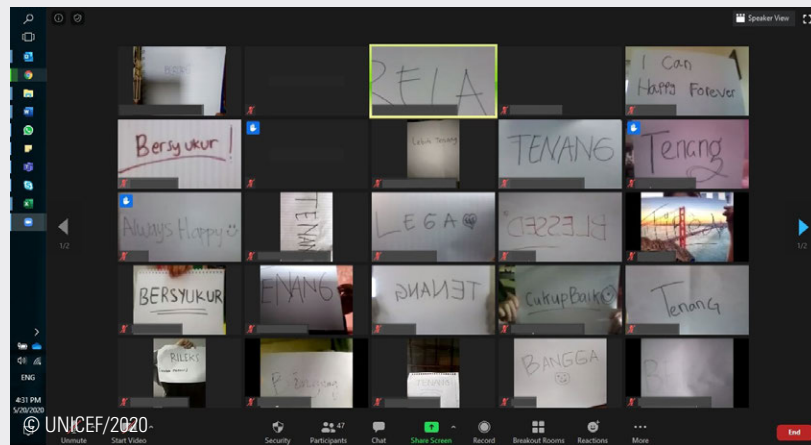
“Before, my husband thought the RUTF wasn’t enough, so he wanted to give her infant or follow-up formula instead,” said Micke. “But after reading the information through the chatbot, I was able to convince him.”

The chatbot’s instructional videos also teach parents how to measure a child’s mid-upper arm circumference to detect wasting. After learning this, Micke taught her neighbours, so they could also screen their children for wasting.

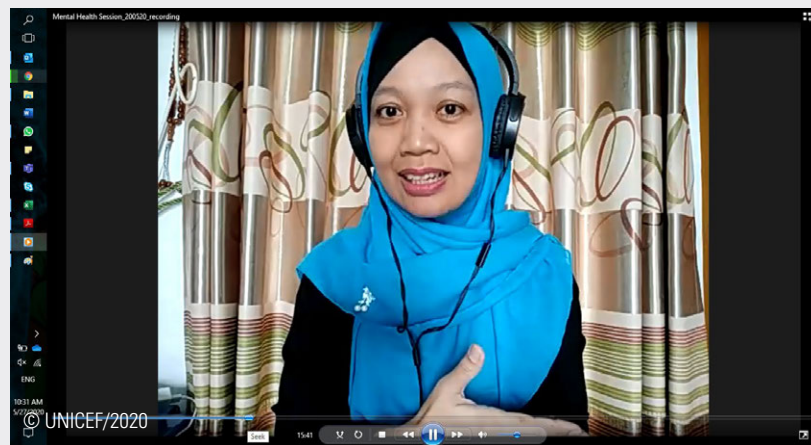
A survey of 1,000 young people showed that over half are afraid to tell others about their mental health.



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Some 1300 girls and boys connected to the first in a series of live online sessions to help young people cope with the COVID-19 crisis and deal with mental health issues.



During one online session, psychologist Ratna Yunita told young people to be wary of spreading misinformation and to limit the time they spend watching the news.

Mental health matters – every day – and especially during COVID-19

COVID-19 has taken a toll on the mental health of young people, many of whom are anxious – and a UNICEF survey found that they're also afraid to express their concerns or ask for help.

With schools closing, parents losing jobs and unprecedented social changes caused by COVID-19, many of Indonesia's children and adolescents were plunged into anxiety, depression and fear. But they weren't talking about it.

A survey of over 1,000 young people showed that 55 per cent are afraid to tell others about their mental health, and around 24 per cent are worried about the stigma associated with medication such as anti-depressants.

As mental health and psychosocial support are priority areas for UNICEF's work in crisis settings – including the pandemic – UNICEF collaborated with medical student association CIMSA, and young people themselves, to find empowering ways of providing support.

The solution was a dynamic, youth-driven initiative aimed at normalizing conversations relating to mental health, all conducted through a series of live, online sessions.

The series was hosted by 11 adolescents and youth from UNICEF programmes and networks. Of the group's six female hosts, one was living with a disability and one had schizophrenia. These hosts represented young people's perspectives on mental health – together with six NGO partners, two adolescent influencers, one popular motivational speaker and two ministries who joined the live discussions.

Moderated by UNICEF, the final session provided a virtual stage for a specialist from the Indonesian Psychological Association and Indra Sugiarto, a well known motivation writer. Their discussions covered numerous mental health-related topics and also encouraged young people to stay connected with others.

In addition to continuing support for mental health and psychosocial support, UNICEF also launched the COVID-19 Diaries, a campaign that provides a platform for young people to engage in meaningful activities and collectively cope with their concerns about the pandemic.

Social protection saves and supports families during COVID-19



Marlina holds her newborn baby at home.

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While Marlina looks for ways to earn money during the pandemic, she is receiving assistance to cover her children's essential needs through GEUNASEH, a local child grant scheme managed by the Government of Sabang.

As COVID-19 claimed lives and livelihoods throughout Indonesia, Sabang launched the country's first locally funded social protection programme, staving off hunger for thousands of children.

// In the past, I never thought that I could regularly provide healthy food like eggs, fish and vegetables for my children because I didn't have enough money," said Marlina, a mother of three who was the family breadwinner before COVID-19 struck.

This is only possible for Marlina – and many other mothers – because of GEUNASEH, a local child grant scheme managed by the Government of Sabang.

Supported by UNICEF through technical expertise, policy and programme guidelines and behaviour change communication, GEUNASEH provides an unconditional cash transfer of 150 thousand rupiah (\$10) per month for children under six. It has enabled

Marlina to feed her children and provide other essentials, such as transport to health services, through the shocks of COVID-19.

The pandemic put a stop to Marlina's job juggling to make ends meet. Baking cakes and doing laundry for others soon became a thing of the past as social restrictions were imposed to curb the spread of the virus.

Marlina had also been supporting her husband, who had been injured in a car accident and unable to leave home for weeks. Physically hampered by his injuries, the pandemic further hampered his ability to earn money through fishing.

"COVID-19 made our situation even worse," said Marlina, who remains grateful for the lifeline that GEUNASH has provided.

As a beneficiary, Marlina also receives counselling on infant and young child feeding, parenting advice and growth monitoring services at the *posyandu* – the community health clinic.

Satisfied that her children are not going hungry, GEUNASH is also enabling Marlina to focus on other ways to earn money, despite the pandemic.



UNICEF/2020/Isra

Children walk on the beach in Sabang. Many families in the city have been hit hard economically by the pandemic and social restrictions.



Before the pandemic, Pak Ucup and his team used to fog for mosquitoes to stop the spread of the dengue virus in communities.

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Gina washes her hands at the community handwashing station in her village.



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A worker wearing protective gear sprays disinfectant at the Beurawe Health Centre in Banda Aceh, as part of an initiative to sanitize health facilities and reduce hospital-acquired COVID-19 infections.

Throughout Indonesia, unsung heroes help to curtail COVID-19

Overcoming their own fears of the virus, dedicated people like Pak Ucup and Ibu Pat help to keep communities safe.

Pak Ucup and his team walk with purpose. Clad in personal protective gear (PPE), spraying equipment in hand, they're about to disinfect a health centre in Banda Aceh – one of the COVID-19 epicentres in Indonesia's western Aceh Province. Pak Ucup's work is key to mitigating the spread of the virus.

Established in March 2020 as part of the District Health Office's COVID-19 response, Pak Ucup and his 12 colleagues help prevent virus transmission by spraying venues such as hospitals, health centres and other publicly accessible buildings every day.

A collaboration between UNICEF and the local government to improve infection prevention is helping to ensure that Pak Ucup's team reaches places that have never been sanitized before.

Far from that busy team – on the other side of Indonesia – 31-year-old village volunteer Ibu Pat prepares to distribute soap and teach her community how to wash their hands correctly. Ibu Pat and cadres like her are part of the effort to fight COVID-19 in a joint effort between the Government of East Lombok, UNICEF and other stakeholders.

Well-known in her area, Ibu Pat has been involved with community work since 2013. But COVID-19 scared her, especially when she needed to make house visits.

"Community members would reject me, sometimes even saying harsh words to me," said Ibu Pat.

But seven-year-old Gina, whose parents are labourers in a rice field, is not one of them. Ibu Pat taught her that handwashing with soap is key to preventing COVID-19 infection.

While Gina's mother wants COVID-19 to end so they can work again, Gina can't wait to play with her friends. Until that day, Ibu Pat is dedicated to helping families like Gina's to stay healthy.

Ramadhana, a volunteer with Muhammadiyah, provides information to residents about the importance of wearing masks, washing hands and physical distancing to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in Bekasi, West Java.



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© UNICEF/UNI347183/Wilander

A boy washes his hands at a hand washing station in his village in Bekasi, West Java.

Volunteers use knowledge to combat COVID-19 in communities

"I learned how to wash my hands correctly, stay healthy and get enough rest from a Muhammadiyah volunteer," said Endah, bouncing her three-year-old daughter on her knee.

Preventative behaviours include hand washing, physical distancing, wearing masks and staying at home," she added.

It is thanks to Ramadhana, a Muhammadiyah volunteer, that this pregnant mother was empowered with potentially life-saving information about COVID-19.

To help promote COVID-19-preventive behaviours, UNICEF has partnered with two of the largest Islamic organisations in Indonesia – Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) – that have voluntary networks involved in outreach efforts around the country.

"There is still stigma in the community; there are those who see the coronavirus as a conspiracy theory or hoax," explains Ramadhana.

In addition to going from house to house, this compassionate father also conducts outreach activities in public places, handing out flyers and educating community members about COVID-19 prevention.

Ramadhana has to be cautious, however. Not only does he risk exposure to the virus from his voluntary activities, but also from his work as a nurse at the Islam Pondok Kopi Hospital.

"I have six children ... I make sure to observe the safety protocols when I go home and we interact," adds Ramadhana. This includes showering and changing his clothes before he sees his family, and wearing protective equipment and limiting face-to-face interactions with patients at the hospital.

Although providing the right information to the right people in the right way is crucial, the true fruits of the volunteers' efforts is behaviour change.

Another MCCC volunteer, 30-year-old Ridha agrees. "I feel the community has not yet understood the danger of COVID-19 and what clean and healthy living actually is."

Unlike Ramadhan, Ridha doesn't often visit communities, although she is involved in putting up posters and banners, and sanitising mosques. As a chemist in the Environmental Department of the Water and Air Environment Laboratory, Ridha is no stranger to chemicals.

Despite the risks, Ramadhana and Ridha have already helped to change the course of COVID-19 in many communities by equipping residents with an effective defence against the virus: knowledge.



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Endah puts a mask on her daughter Fatima, before leaving their home in Bekasi, West Java.

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