Highlights

- To date, Iraq has confirmed 1,820 Covid-19 cases (87 death). The number of confirmed cases peaked on 6 of April (91 cases) and declined to an average of 30-40 cases a day. Najaf, Baghdad-Rusafa, Basra, Erbil and Sulaymaniyyah are the most affected governorates.

- UNICEF has procured 4,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) and started the distribution to health workers in displacement and refugee camps. Another 30,000 PPE kits have been procured and expected to arrive in Iraq by end of April 2020.

- In coordination with the Ministry of Health and Environment, sterilization and fumigation of Ninawa camps including Jedaa, Hamam Al-Alil, and Salamiyah as well as all camps in Salah Al-Din and Anbar governorates have taken place. Awareness campaigns have been concluded using mobile radio team to disseminate messages on handwashing with soap and the importance of social distancing and staying at home. Several communal WASH sinks were installed in different locations in Baghdad city at public markets and within those camps to encourage IDPs practicing wash their hand with soap. Additional quantity of soap was also distributed to all families.

**UNICEF Appeal 2020**

US$ 11.837 million
Summary of analysis programme
UNICEF’s response in Iraq is aligned with the 2020 WHO global Strategic Response Plan and the 2020 UNICEF COVID-2019 Humanitarian Action for Children appeal and Iraq’s National Development Plan. UNICEF is targeting up to 3 million vulnerable people (including IDPs, refugees, returnees, and conflict-affected communities) with preparedness and/or response activities in alignment with the WHO country guidance.

The key strategic priorities in the response plans are on the immediate measures that must be undertaken to ensure preparedness and response actions to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in each country focusing on the following areas: 1) Strengthening risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), 2) Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); Provision of critical medical (PPEs) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) activities and supplies to improve infection prevention and control (IPC) in primary health care centers in 35 IDP Camps; 3) Supporting continued access to essential health care services for women, children and vulnerable communities, including routine immunization, MNCH and Nutrition services, 4) Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and GBV services disrupted by the pandemic, 5) Data collection and analysis of impact on children and women.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)
A Rapid Assessment survey has been conducted on UNICEF Iraq’s Facebook channel as well as U-report to better understand the risk perception at the community level. The surveys had a total of 4,700 respondents across the two platforms. Major finding suggests that, over 90% participants are aware of different aspects of COVID19 but were unsure about safety measures on how to prevent the spread of the virus.

UNICEF is using both online and offline tools to disseminate key messages and response efforts through social media and offline messages in Arabic, Kurdish and English as well as mobile radio teams. Over 200,000 people were reached with COVID19 related messages on UNICEF’s social media platforms across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter over the reporting period.

Collaboration with WHO and partners is being strengthened for coordinated approaches including around rumour management. Approximately 44 mobile health promotion teams are being supported for social mobilization activities in Baghdad, Najaf and Kerbala— the areas having the highest number of COVID-19 cases.

Through Ministry of Youth and partners, UNICEF is promoting young people’s engagement to serve as peer to peer educators on COVID-19 prevention and response. Approximately 9,810 young girls and boys have been engaged through various platforms, including use of the U-Report COVID-19 Information Centre Bot that has been localized and translated into Kurdish and Arabic. Youth volunteers supported by UNICEF have also launched digital challenges on Facebook around COVID-19.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)
UNICEF’s Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) teams is working with the federal water authorities and utilities to ensure continuity and quality of water supply services, including the provision of water chemicals needed in all water facilities and to avoid deterioration or collapse of essential public services during the COVID-19 crisis. UNICEF is sustaining access to WASH products and services for the poorest and most vulnerable population groups (e.g. refugee/IDP camps, urban slums).

UNICEF is working with Federal Ministry of Health and Environment and the civil defence directorate at governorate level to complete sterilization of camps in Anbar and the Directorate of Health and Environment in Duhok to fumigate all camps, public markets, schools and malls. Fumigation activities are also taking place in reformatories, state homes and orphanages in coordination with the Federal Ministry of Justice.

Continuity of health care services for women and children
UNICEF is supporting Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop guidance on safe burial procedures, safe pregnancy and breastfeeding. Also working on the resumption of services, particularly immunization catch up once lockdowns are relaxed.
Supporting access to Education, Child Protection and GBV services

Advocacy with Ministry of Justice and Department of Reformatory has resulted in 63 children being released from pre-trial detention in Federal and Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections. However, challenges remain on the caseload for foreign children with perceived affiliation with armed actors (i.e. ISIS) who remain at the risk of violations and possible infections within the facilities.

Child Protection established referral mechanism between Child Protection service providers, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and Ministry of Health at Federal and KRG for children who may be affected and separated from their caregivers as a result of COVID-19. To date we have not recorded any case in need of alternative care.

During the reporting period UNICEF has supported the provision of individual/family based psychosocial support for around 6,000 children (approximately 50% of them girls), and 4,000 caregivers in IDP camps in Federal and KRG. The child protection partners are reaching community members with awareness messages focusing on coping with stress, hygiene awareness and maintaining healthy life.

Schools remain closed across Iraq, however UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education in preparing to reopen schools and the current efforts for home-schooling, through on-line platforms, TV and mobile networks. Based on a request from Ministry of Education-KRG, UNICEF plans to support the upgrade a local educational channel to a satellite channels to reach more children with educational content. The messages on prevention of COVID-19 have been disseminated through the educational tv and online portals of both Ministries of Education (Federal and Kurdistan) as well as the relevant Directorates of Education at the governorate level.

Data collection and analysis of secondary impacts on children and women

Evidence of secondary impacts of COVID-19 is increasing, with significant rise in the number of calls to on-line and phone support lines for domestic violence. Demonstrations against the stringent lockdown measures have taken place in Basra particularly by daily wage labourers' who have experienced loss of livelihood.

UNICEF in collaboration with the World Bank is supporting the Ministry of Planning on assessing the secondary impact of COVID and related containment measures on poverty and vulnerability. Findings which are being finalized underline devastating impacts on children. Informed by this analysis, the Ministry of Planning announced an ad-hoc emergency cash transfer to benefit 10 million individuals. UNICEF is supporting with evidence and tools to facilitate the implementation of this scheme.

External Communications

- UN in Iraq raises the alarm: Time to endorse the anti-domestic violence law
- COVID-19 pandemic could devastate refugee, migrant and internally displaced populations without urgent international action
- How teenagers can protect their mental health during coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): What parents should know

UNICEF Iraq website: https://www.unicef.org/iraq/
Humanitarian Action for Children: https://www.unicef.org/appeals/

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