Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families in Latin America and the Caribbean

Now Coronavirus (named COVID-19) has spread to all 36 countries and territories in Latin America and the Caribbean, upending the lives of children and their families across the region. This pandemic is as much a health crisis as a social and economic threat, creating extremely challenging situations, particularly to the most vulnerable. The impact on children and their families will be devastating, with illness, isolation, fear and loss of livelihoods.

Impact of COVID-19 outbreak across the region is threatening children’s rights at a scale not experienced before. It is estimated that the number of poor could increase from 185 to 220 million people; while people in extreme poverty could increase from 67.4 to 90 million. Children and their families are expected to suffer from large scale disruptions of basic social services. Their access to health, food, housing, minimum income and safe social interaction is increasingly affected. For instance, as a result of school’s closure, over 154 million children, about 95 per cent of the enrolled, are temporarily out of school in the region and 80 million children have stopped receiving hot meals. Those already living in poverty will be pushed into even more dire straits as livelihoods collapse and economies suffer. Across the region, millions of migrants and refugees are particularly exposed to the virus as they have limited access to water and sanitation and practicing social distancing is challenging. Constraining measures will severely impact on these groups and xenophobia is likely to increase.

Children are the hidden victims of this pandemic. Millions of boys, girls and adolescents are facing poverty, being affected by violence and conflict, uprooted, potentially dying from preventable causes, out of school, or missing out essential vaccines. Providing them with health, education, water and sanitation, nutrition and protection has never been so critical.

UNICEF has more than 70 years of experience ensuring the health, education, nutrition and protection of children, especially those most in need. The organization works in the most challenging and least accessible places and is present in 36 countries in the region.

UNICEF has an integrated approach to address the needs of children throughout their life cycle. UNICEF brings public and private sector actors together to find multi-stakeholder solutions and has a unique dual humanitarian and development mandate to work towards the realization of the rights of all children in emergency and development settings.

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UNICEF response to COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean

In line with the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic Preparedness and Response plan, **UNICEF is committed to continuing to deliver assistance to children, their families and health workers across the region.** UNICEF is actively taking steps to provide accurate information about the virus and working with governments and local partners to develop contingency plans to address the spread of the virus, especially in countries with weaker health systems.

Together with WHO and other UN agencies, governments and local partners, **UNICEF is leading on preventative actions** across affected countries with risk communication, providing hygiene and medical kits to health and other facilities and monitoring the impact of the pandemic. **The work of UNICEF contributes both to outbreak control and to mitigation of the collateral impacts of the pandemic and isolation measures,** including the risks to the continuity of essential social services for children, women and vulnerable populations.

Given the frequency changes in the nature and extent of the crisis, UNICEF’s response strategy is periodically updated. **UNICEF is working in the following five priority pillars** to protect children and their families from COVID-19 and to address the secondary impacts of both the disease and the efforts being made to halt its spread in Latin America and the Caribbean.

- **Strengthening risk communication & community engagement.**
  - Provide accurate and evidence-based messages.
  - Tackle and respond to misinformation.
  - Provide transmission prevention message to support disease prevention.
  - Develop FAQs, guidance and resources for parents, pregnant women and children.

- **Providing critical hygiene, medical and prevention supplies and improving WASH services.**
  - Distribute critical hygiene and prevention items (including soap, hand-sanitizer, personal protection equipment, etc) for use in schools, health facilities and public spaces.
  - Ensure immediate access to safe water in health facilities.

- **Supporting provision of adequate health care services for women, children and vulnerable communities.**
  - Ensure continuity of primary health care services especially in contexts with weak health systems and specialized health care services for women, children and adolescents affected by chronic diseases.
  - Support the continuation of school feeding programmes while schools are closed.

- **Providing access to continuous education and child protection services.**
  - Ensure educational continuity through flexible distance home-based learning.
  - Provide guidance for parents and caregivers on how to support children studying at home.
  - Provide psychosocial support to children affected by the COVID-19 and its secondary effects.

- **Preventing and addressing the secondary impacts of the outbreak.**
  - Provide analysis and monitor the impact of COVID-19 and containment measures on households and children wellbeing.
  - Advocate for social protection support for the most affected families.
Examples of UNICEF response actions in Latin America and the Caribbean

CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

**Costa Rica**
- Provide children in care or detention with vital hygiene kits to protect themselves.
- Monitor and respond to fake information and misinformation on social media.

**El Salvador**
- Support provision of hygiene supplies to public health workers.
- Provide professional emotional support and prevent gender-based violence during isolation.

**Guatemala**
- Provide technical support for cash assistance programmes for 188,000 families.
- Reach 1 million people with accurate health information to keep themselves safe from the virus.

**Honduras**
- Provide children who are detained or need alternative care due to virus with professional counselling and support.
- Provide protective hygiene kits to vulnerable people.

**Mexico**
- Distribute hand soap bars for use in schools and health centers.
- Reach 1.2 million indigenous people with health and hygiene messages.

**Nicaragua**
- Provide supplies of hygiene materials and critical infection control clothing for health workers.
- Disseminate health and hygiene messages campaign.

**Panama**
- Reach more than 88,000 families with educational activities for children 3-6 years old staying at home.
- Disseminate cultural and gender appropriate messaging to prevent xenophobia.

CARIBBEAN

**Eastern Caribbean Area**
- Distribute critical hygiene and prevention items for use in schools.
- Student learning through online platforms.

**Belize**
- Reach parents, teachers and children with health and hygiene education messages to help keep them safe from the virus.
- Provide pregnant women and their children with basic nutrition package to address and prevent malnutrition.

**Cuba**
- Provide vulnerable families with hygiene kits to help them keep safe from the virus.
- Develop online education materials and train teachers in remote learning.

**Dominican Republic**
- Disseminate information on hygiene and child rights across communities where migrant children are.
- Develop playful e-learning activities for primary’s school children.

**Guyana**
- Reach 580,000 people with hygiene messages.
- Provide infection protection wear and disinfectants supplies for health centers.

**Haiti**
- Provide Personal Protective Equipment and supplies for health centers and community health workers.
- Reach 11 million people with hygiene information to help them stay safe from the virus.

**Jamaica**
- Reach 1 million parents, children and pregnant and lactating mothers with prevention multi-media materials.
- Provide psychosocial support and guidance for addressing parenting challenges during the outbreak through a support helpline.

**Suriname**
- Disseminate hand washing campaign through all schools and childcare centres.
- Assess and monitor the secondary effects of the outbreak and containment measures on the population.
• Provide health workers and health facilities with protective equipment and supplies.
• Reach more than 1 million people with messages on virus prevention.

Bolivia
• Provide assistance to train teachers on remote classes and student support.
• Reach 2 million parents, teachers and children with health and hygiene education messages.

Brazil
• Support the development and adaptation of learning materials for 27 million children and adolescents
• Work with partners in immediate prevention, health and education measures focusing on migrant children and adolescents.

Chile
• Provide key prevention messages through social media channels.
• Provide teaching and learning materials to families to enable them to support home study.

Colombia
• Provide health workers with Personal Protective Equipment.
• Ensure continuity of primary health care services especially in contexts of migrant population.

Ecuador
• Provide cash assistance programmed for migrant and refugees from Venezuela affected by COVID-19
• Develop online education materials and train teachers on remote learning and pupil support.

Paraguay
• Provide handwashing and medical supplies across the country.
• Disseminate key messages on prevention of violence and gender-based violence due to isolation measures.

Peru
• Provide technical assistance in the development of training materials for teachers.
• Support, design and develop remote learning modules.

Uruguay
• Communicate to pregnant women with appropriate breastfeeding recommendations.
• Provide education and leisure activities for children living in residential care.

Venezuela
• Provide 500,000 people with access to critical water and sanitation supplies.
• Disseminate prevention messages via SMS, targeting 8.5 million people.

The maps in this document are stylized and they are not to scale. They do not reflect a position by UNICEF on the legal status of any country or territory or the delimitation of any frontiers.
The COVID-19 pandemic can have serious consequences on the lives of boys, girls and adolescents. **UNICEF calls upon the international donor community to prioritize the needs of children and their families** as part of the international response to the crisis. The consequences of prolonged funding gaps will hamper UNICEF’s capacity to address urgent needs and mitigate the medium and long-term effects of the crisis.

In order to provide urgent and adequate response to the COVID-19 crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF requires a total amount of US$ 48 million. This request is part of the 2020 UNICEF COVID-19 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal at the global level. The following tables provide an indication of UNICEF’s expected expenses to respond to the COVID-19 crisis in the region by pillar.

### 2020 Requirements: US$48 million

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pillars</th>
<th>Funding in US$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening risk communication and community engagement</td>
<td>6,362,697</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing critical hygiene, medical and prevention supplies and improving WASH services.</td>
<td>9,952,738</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting provision of adequate health care services for women, children and vulnerable communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing access to continuous education and child protection services</td>
<td>12,267,184</td>
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<td>Preventing and addressing the secondary impacts of the outbreak</td>
<td>2,171,644</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>48,046,129</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Funding Requirements per Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Office</th>
<th>Requirements in US$</th>
<th>Country/Office</th>
<th>Requirements in US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>756,000</td>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>1,422,868</td>
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<td>Belize</td>
<td>280,800</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
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<td>Bolivia</td>
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<td>Honduras</td>
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<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>Jamaica</td>
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<td>Chile</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>540,000</td>
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<td>Colombia</td>
<td>5,451,653</td>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>259,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>270,000</td>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>54,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>378,000</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>1,173,952</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>756,000</td>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>864,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Caribbean Area</td>
<td>5,677,560</td>
<td>Suriname</td>
<td>1,339,401</td>
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<td>Ecuador</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Given the evolving nature of the COVID-19 crisis UNICEF will be revising its response plans and funding appeals regularly.
“UNICEF is working to help prevent the spread of the virus among communities in the affected countries. We are sharing accurate information on how to keep families safe, providing hygiene and medical kits to schools and health clinics, and mitigating the impact of the outbreak on children’s access to health, education and social services. Now more than ever, we count on our donors to continue supporting our mission for those with nothing and no one – despite these difficult times.”

Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director