Highlights

- The situation remained relatively stable in the months of January and February 2021. However, over the past months, South Asia has experienced an unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19. As of April 30, there have been reported 21,271,547 confirmed cases, 247,916 deaths and 17,538,774 recovered, marking increases of over 8.6 million confirmed cases and over 64,000 deaths in two months in South Asia.

- While the peak of the outbreak seems to have passed, there are still nearly two million new cases and 32,000 new deaths registered over the week ending 28 May 2021. The healthcare system of several countries (including India and Nepal) is under extreme pressure, with many hospitals in capitals at full capacity and daily reports of oxygen shortages. The situations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan are being closely monitored following religious festivities and as infections are on the rise.

- From mid-January to late-May, 211 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered in the region, only amounting to 2.6 per cent of the total population fully vaccinated.

- UNICEF continues to deliver life-saving and essential services to women, children and most vulnerable populations in South Asia, in parallel with its commitment to the COVAX. This includes over 200,000 6-59-months-old children admitted for SAM treatment, over 926,000 frontline health workers trained on IPC and over 486,000 children and caregivers provided with mental health and psychosocial support in the region.

- South Asia region is entering into its yearly monsoon season, where pre-monsoon cyclones and heavy rain has previously caused additional humanitarian impacts on the lives of women and children.

- Substantial additional funding is required to deliver lifesaving support. Despite generous donor contributions, a funding gap of US$ 425 million (75 per cent) hampers UNICEF’s ability to respond.

UNICEF Appeal 2021
US$ 568.8 million (regional total)
Regional Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

While the situation remained relatively stable in the months of January and February 2021, the surge in the spread of COVID-19 has now many countries in South Asia in its grip. Over the past months, South Asia has experienced an unprecedented outbreak of COVID-19. As of April 30, there have been reported 21,271,547 confirmed cases, 247,916 deaths and 17,538,774 recovered, marking increases of over 8.6 million confirmed cases and over 64,000 deaths in two months in South Asia. While the peak of the outbreak seems to have passed, there are still nearly two million new cases and 32,000 new deaths registered over the week ending 28 May 2021. The highest numbers of new cases were reported from India (1,846,055 new cases) and Nepal (57,939 new cases). Maldives continues to have highest number of new cases and deaths per one million, exceeding that of Nepal and India. The healthcare system of several countries (including India and Nepal) is under extreme pressure, with many hospitals in capitals at full capacity and daily reports of oxygen shortages.

The situations in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan are being closely monitored following religious festivities. Furthermore, South Asia region is entering into its yearly monsoon season, where pre-monsoon cyclones and heavy rain has previously caused additional humanitarian impacts on the lives of women and children. Protracted displacement in Bangladesh and an evolving situation in Afghanistan as International Forces are leaving amidst fragile peace talks between the government and the Taliban further require attention and/or support. During the reporting period, humanitarian action was however heavily dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic response.

COVID-19 Vaccination

A total of 12,336,250 doses have been received across six countries in the region through COVAX facility: Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Only Bangladesh and Bhutan are yet to receive vaccines through COVAX facility. Doses received equate to only 9.5 per cent of the allocated doses through May 2021 and 1.7 per cent of the required doses to fully vaccinated 20 per cent of the entire population in the region.

Delivery of vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) has been suspended with production re-directed to domestic needs in response to severe COVID-19 outbreak in India. There is considerable political pressure to secure vaccines: a total of 214.4 million total doses have been received from India, China and Russia through government-to-government agreements.

Since the mid-January until the late May (at the time of writing this report), 211 million doses have been administered in the region; however, this constitutes 2.6 per cent of the total population fully vaccinated and the majority of high-risk population remains unvaccinated. Less than 1 in 10 persons has received their first dose. Only Bhutan (61.8 per cent) and Maldives (56 per cent) mark a significant percentage of the total population receiving at least the first dose. Only 0.9 per cent and 1.1 per cent have received the first dose in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Additionally, weekly trends indicate COVID-19 vaccination rates

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have fallen by 40 per cent since peak early April, though all countries continue their respective vaccine introduction, mainly using vaccines produced domestically or obtained through government-to-government agreements. Currently, 4.3 million AstraZeneca second dose vaccines are required urgently in the South Asia Region; however, the supply line remains unclear.

UNICEF is committed in leading the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines to reach the most vulnerable populations in the region. In making progress, some of the major challenges encountered include:

- **COVID-19 outbreak in the region:** Low percentage of populations vaccinated is inadequate to halt the spread of COVID-19 transmission with majority of high-risk populations unreached. Emerging challenges include virulent spread and seroprevalence of new variant strains – both impacts on transmission, and effectiveness of vaccine is unknown.
- **Limited vaccine availability:** ongoing delay/uncertainty around shipment of vaccines from COVAX facility and bilateral procurement has resulted in reorganization of deployment plans, risk of delay in 2nd doses and uncertain access to vaccines in emerging humanitarian context.
- **Multiple vaccines sources:** many with short-shelf life, vaccine platforms not interchangeable (1st and 2nd doses) and roll-out of non-WHO EUL vaccines - efficacy and quality not established.
- **Logistics issues:** cold chain equipment through multiple grants with challenge of tracking gaps, and deliveries and installation after vaccines arrived in country.
- **Mixed pattern of behavior:** some pockets of vaccine hesitancy, with demand generally exceeding supply requires agile and responsive demand, risk communication and community engagement strategies.

**Summary Analysis of Programme Response**

In the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic that has now entered into its second year, UNICEF continues to deliver life-saving and essential services to children and most vulnerable populations in South Asia. Across the region, UNICEF continued to respond to the existing humanitarian situations through its versatile interventions in sectors of Nutrition, Health, WASH, Child Protection, Education and Social Protection, whilst also responding the humanitarian needs emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as risk communication and community engagement as well as providing support to infection, prevention and control (IPC) of frontline workers. Country-specific interventions and results achieved by UNICEF are as follows:

**Afghanistan**

**Nutrition**
- UNICEF and partners treated 88,012 children (39,221 boys and 48,791 girls) with severe acute malnutrition (SAM), reaching 20 per cent of the annual target and 10 per cent of the total children in need.
- UNICEF supported the delivery of lifesaving nutrition and health services for the underserved population in the hard to reach areas and IDP settlements in five provinces through 26 mobile teams.
- Over 6,000 pregnant and lactating women were provided with Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergency (IYCF-E) services, mainly through mobile teams, reaching 10 per cent of the total target (60,000) for 2021.

**Health**
- UNICEF deployed 62 mobile health teams in remote, unserved and conflict affected areas and the mobile health and nutrition clinics supported provision of basic health services to childbearing women, antenatal care, postnatal care, family planning and Tetanus vaccination.
- The mobile health and nutrition teams supported 12,270 newborns with basic newborn health care services through distribution of 1,607 emergency newborn kits and 7,455 clean delivery kits and 4,208 hygiene kits which protected newborns from hypothermia and umbilical sepsis—the main causes of newborn deaths in Afghanistan. They also provided children under five with quality primary healthcare services, including integrated management of childhood illnesses, immunization and nutrition services. In total, 100,584 (48,918 girls and 51,666 boys) benefitted from basic health services provided by UNICEF-supported mobile health teams.
- 16,211 children under five received measles vaccination through expanded programme on immunization (EPI) outreach services, in response to the surge of suspected cases in the Helmand Province in the Southern region.
- Through UNICEF’s continued support on the COVID-19 response, 2,611 healthcare providers and community health workers received training on infection and prevention materials.
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- UNICEF provided safe drinking water to 52,152 people, where 48,467 people benefitted from durable water supply system/water networks and 3,685 people from water trucking.
- Through UNICEF’s support, 7,565 people accessed to sanitation facilities/services, while 18,834 people were provided with hygiene supplies and hygiene promotion.
- WASH supplies and services were provided to the people affected by conflict, natural disasters as well as most vulnerable people in high COVID-19 risk communities (IDPs, returnees and host population both in rural areas and urban slums), including four healthcare facilities (each facility with 140 visitors/day) and 11 schools of total 8,553 students (3,566 girls and 4,987 boys) with access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities/services including Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) rooms and handwashing facilities.

Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA

- In partnership with 15 national and international NGOs, a total of 38,925 children and adults (17,277 women/girls) benefitted from child protection services, of which 37,237 (96 per cent) have received community-based psychosocial support through door-to-door activities, referrals for specialized mental health services, static and mobile child friendly services and peer to peer support.
- 1,526 unaccompanied and separated children (51 girls)—predominantly returning from Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Europe and Gulf States, including a stretched system at the Kabul Airport for children arriving by flights—were reunified with their primary caregivers or provided with family-based care/alternative care and reintegration services.
- UNICEF has provided training on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) to a total of 137 frontline workers (37 male/100 female) who are members of Education in Emergency (EiE) working group. Polio female frontline workers were also trained on PSEA including reporting mechanisms.

Education

- UNICEF supported the enrolment of 10,612 children (5,120 boys and 5,492 girls) through Community Based Education (CBE) programs during the first week of school reopening after nearly 12 months of suspension of all education activities.

Social Protection and Cash Transfers

- UNICEF supported 900 households, equivalent to 3,727 beneficiaries (1,082 boys, 861 girls, 794 men and 990 women), including 547 persons with disabilities with cash assistance in Ghor and Herat Provinces. UNICEF used a cash plus approach, combining cash assistance with COVID-19 information sharing sessions to support the affected populations. Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) reports show that assistance was used by households primarily to access food and children’s winter clothing. UNICEF Afghanistan also started preparations to roll-out UNICEF’s dedicated management information system (MIS) for cash assistance in Afghanistan.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP

- As a lead agency for risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), UNICEF came up with integrated COVID-19 RCCE and COVID-19 vaccination plans and advocated with partners to use available resources of COVID-19 prevention for demand generation for COVAX. A media campaign conducted before opening of the schools targeting children and teachers reached 700,000 students on COVID-19 preventive measures. Another media campaign was conducted to increase awareness on COVAX, reaching 1.2 million people across the country.
- One TV spot and three posters for COVAX were developed and key messages on vaccination were integrated into existing posters on COVID-19 prevention. 400,000 posters for different target groups are being printed and ready for distribution. 5,300 members of different community platforms were oriented on COVID-19 prevention and vaccination and 282,782 people were reached through community engagement interventions.
- Capacity building training on “Conceptualization of AAP and integration into existing programing” was conducted for 30 participants from UNICEF and focal points from MoPH and MoE. This resulted in the development of an action plan for AAP for upcoming two years with focus on strengthening existing complaints and feedback mechanisms and to further cascade AAP trainings to government departments, implementing partners and NGOs.

Gender and Adolescent Development and Participation

- Through women and girls’ safe space, UNICEF reached a total number of 300 adolescent girls (10-19 years) and women (15-49 years) with information on gender roles, GBV risk mitigation and available basic services (GBV and health). They also received psychosocial counselling including referrals for specialized care.
- A total of 53 girls and 42 boys aged 15 to 19 years shared their voices on gender equality, learning and skills, issues affecting children and adolescents in humanitarian and protracted crisis, as well as how to mitigate the same. The findings will be use for the new UNICEF Strategic Plan (2022-2025) including ways to partner with adolescents and youth in implementation of the new Strategic Plan.
- A total of 10,000 young people/U-reporters (45 per cent girls and 55 per cent boys) were consulted and shared their views on gender-based violence (GBV) through U-Report survey, which is used to inform and shape GBV response. Additionally, through U-Report chat box, 6,407 young people inquired about GBV causes and available services within their respective locations, which helped young people enhance their knowledge of where to seek help in case of GBV.
Bangladesh

Nutrition

- As of 30 April 2021, a total of 4,803 children were admitted for SAM treatment. This figure is about three-fold higher compared to that of the last year, as the admission rate is on average over 80 per cent for the past four months that increased number of SAM children through screening. This has been possible due to intensive follow up with districts using nutrition information system and visualization tools, and monthly district meetings to discuss the performance and bottlenecks. UNICEF supported the government to conduct second round of online SAM health facility preparedness and functionality assessment, which will guide the activities for six months.
- UNICEF is also supporting the Government of Bangladesh to organize the National Vitamin A Campaign targeting 23 million children in June.

Health

- 5,819,656 people have received the first and 2,805,694 people received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- To ensure oxygen supply, UNICEF is supporting establishment of Liquid Medical Oxygen plant in 30 facilities. Procured oxygen equipment and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be distributed to high priority facilities.
- 7,324 service providers received training on IPC guideline, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (MNCAH), oxygen therapy, quality improvement, health management information systems (HMIS) with UNICEF support. UNICEF supports the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) on continuous data analysis and visualization of COVID-19 information through District Health Information Software system (DHIS2).
- UNICEF and partners provided 88,093 primary health consultations with 39,694 Rohingya refugee children under five (47 percent female) at 13 UNICEF-supported health facilities. 32 percent of consultations were attributed to respiratory tract infection. Overall, 60 Rohingya infants (33 per cent girls) received special newborn care at one of five UNICEF health facilities. 12,354 (48 per cent female) children aged 0-11 months received penta 3 vaccination.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- As of April 2021, UNICEF and the Department of Public Health Engineering provided 136,508 people (24,025 girls and 51,054 women) with access to safe water and functional latrines reaching 166,508 people (29,305 girls and 58,445 women) with improved sanitation.
- In eight camps in Cox’s Bazar, UNICEF with partners provided access to WASH services for 242,000 Rohingya refugees (51 per cent female, 5 per cent persons with disabilities—PwD). In two fire affected camps, UNICEF and partners distributed 4,353 hygiene kits, bathing and laundry soap to 5,007 households and repaired 523 tube wells, 39 tap stands and constructed 334 emergency latrines and 165 bathing spaces.
- In host communities, through partners, UNICEF reached 65,456 individuals (47 per cent female, 1 per cent PwD) by disseminating COVID-19 IPC messages, and 166,098 people (47 per cent female, 1 per cent PwD) with critical WASH services such as disinfecting and repairing facilities, installation of handwashing devices and creating new facilities.

Child Protection, including GBV

- As of April 2021, there has been a significant increase in child protection concerns at the national level. The Child Help Line received over 40,000 calls, which is already equivalent to a half of usual yearly calls during the pre-COVID time. Over 79 per cent of these calls are related to violence against children and women (VACW), other abuse, exploitation, neglect, and psychosocial support.
- Virtual courts have been activated and released more than 500 children released on bail in April 2021. Funding continues to be a dire need for reintegration of these children into their societies.

Education

- Nationwide learning was interrupted for 76 days (33 per cent) out of 240 active school days in a year. To mitigate the learning loss, the Ministry of Education (MoE) with UNICEF’s technical support has produced the secondary schools reopening guideline, coherent with the global framework.
- In the Rohingya refugee camps, UNICEF through partners supported Home Based Caregiver Led Education (CLE) to minimize the learning losses. Burmese language instructors visit households at least once a week to monitor the CLE and provide instructional support to the students and their caregivers. 435,348 subject based workbooks and other supplies were distributed among 190,663 children (91,518 girls) for CLE in camps.
- In the host communities, UNICEF and the Directorate of Primary Education Office trained 1,400 teachers (30 per cent female) and school management committee members on the safe reopening guidelines.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP

- 9.8 million population (0.8 million girls and 3.6 million women) have been reached through Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC) interventions, including small scale courtyard and group meetings at the community level, community radio programming, street and mosque miking. Key life-saving messages focused on health, nutrition, WASH, education and child protection in the context of COVID-19 have been disseminated to increase awareness.

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2 Violence against women and children is prevalent with an estimated 45 million children locked down in homes that use violent discipline (MICS 2019). It is estimated that violence against children and women has increased by 31 per cent due to COVID-19 (MJF, 2020). An estimated 26 per cent increase in Child marriage due to the COVID-19 crisis-induced economic instability (BRAC, UNFPA, 2021).

3 Child Helpline, Department of Social Services (DSS), Ministry of Social Welfare (MoSW), May 2021

4 Since LCs remained closed during the reporting period, learning materials were distributed to children at household level by BLIs. Distribution data shared by the BLIs has not been disaggregated. Generally, about 1% of learners enrolled in LCs before closure due to the COVOID-19 pandemic were children with disability.
knowledge and create demand in seeking services. Different types of communication materials such as posters and leaflets were disseminated as well.

- A total of 78,000 radio listeners (15,830 girls and 22,780 women) shared their concern through phone-in programmes and 3 million people (608,850 girls and 876,150 women) called UNICEF-supported hotline numbers.
- In the refugee camps, UNICEF and partners mobilized a total of 348,214 individuals (60 per cent female) through 171,392 inter-personal communication sessions with tailor-made and language-appropriate messaging and information on COVID-19.

**Bhutan**

**Health**
- UNICEF supported the roll-out of the mass COVID-19 vaccination (which started from 27th March) through training of health workers, development of the COVID-19 vaccine deployment plan and development of the RCCE strategy for the vaccine.
- The Bhutan Vaccine System (BVS) online app was developed for registration, screening for vaccine eligibility, recording of the vaccination programme, and reporting of adverse events following immunization, among others. 497,825 individuals registered this system.
- To support strengthening of vaccine cold chain supply management, eight walk-in-cold room (WIC) and one walk-in freezer (WIF) have been transported to respective health facilities of which installation will start in the month of May 2021.
- As of April 30, 87.5 percent of eligible population were vaccinated with 1st dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
- To ensure continuity of health services, UNICEF supported procurement of 50,000 doses of DTP; 164,000 doses of Td, 80,000 doses of bOPV and 14,500 doses of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine. As a result, between January and March 2021, 1,799 children were immunized. Additionally, 1,412 pregnant women availed of antenatal care 4+ (ANC4) visits.

**Nutrition**
- UNICEF continues to support the government in implementing the 2020 SOP on continuity of essential nutrition services during COVID-19 pandemic.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**
- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in developing information, education and communication (IEC) materials to promote safe practices and printed 4,000 hand hygiene posters for distribution to schools across the country.
- UNICEF supported the installation of handwashing stations in four primary health care centres in Paro district estimated to benefit 100 people daily and in two public places in Haa district estimated to benefit about 60 people on a daily basis. While the aim is to reach all 20 districts in the country with handwashing stations, the main challenge faced is the shortage of skilled labor for fabrication of the handwashing stations due to the entry restrictions on foreign labor.

**Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA**
- To harmonize response systems and improve case management for GBV survivors, UNICEF supported the National Commission for Women and Children to develop GBV case management guideline, standardized tools, and a training package following the SOP on GBV developed last year. 15 participants (12 female) from the three case management agencies (including two NGOs) were trained on how to provide case management services to the survivors of GBV including during emergencies in line with the guidelines and the SOP on GBV.
- Since the reopening of schools, UNICEF oriented 140 (63 female) school counselors on the Psychosocial Support (PSS) Welcome Back Check-in Session with children. These counselors further oriented 3,182 (1,612 female) class teachers on the package who conducted the check-in sessions with their respective students in their classes. As of May 2021, 54,095 (34,943 female) children have been reached.
- To improve youth employability and workplace readiness, UNICEF supported the department of youth and sports to provide 45 youth (20 female) with skills in demand from the job market such as, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, as well as technical, project management and business development skills.

**Education**
- UNICEF provided soaps and disinfectant to approximately 500 community based ECD centres across all 20 districts.
- UNICEF, together with other development partners, supported the development of the Framework for New Normal Curriculum (NNC) which is now being implemented in the schools. The NNC features: a reduction of content by 35%; a greater focus on competencies; textbook-less and ICT-driven; adherence to minimum standards/objective-based learning outcomes; blended learning in case of another lockdown; and is above all transformative (embedding 21st century skills).
- UNICEF supported the training of 67 (58 female) frontline workers (ECCD facilitators and District Education Officers) on the Caring for Caregiver package in three pilot districts – Trashigang, Tsirang, and Punakha representing the Eastern, Central and Western regions of Bhutan.

**C4D, Community Engagement and AAP**
- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in implementing community engagement interventions (RCCE) to support the national COVID-19 vaccine roll out plan. This included virtual Q&A sessions for 30 chairpersons of the local government and more than 60 district scout secretaries and leadership scouts with experts from the Health Ministry. As a result, local government leaders-initiated community engagement activities in their respective communities to
promote vaccination, while scouts provided support to the districts health officials in mobilizing communities to come for the vaccination.

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction

- The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) interagency task team has been revived under the lead of WFP to review the inter-agency contingency plan and bring a more coherent and coordinated approach to emergency preparedness and response as One UN in support of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) disaster risk management (DRM) actions.
- UNICEF Bhutan actively supported the DRM Interagency task group discussions to prepare an intersectoral response planning as part of disaster preparedness with the aim of supporting DDM in establishing a humanitarian staging area and potential hubs in case of a major larger-scale emergency. This process will be fundamental to sensitize both the Government and partners to fully understand the complexity and requirements of a possible earthquake or large disaster response.

India

Nutrition

- During January and February 2021, 63,615 children with SAM were admitted to either facility or community-based programmes as compared to 39,596 children admitted during the same period in 2020.
- Iron folate acid (IFA) supplements reached 90 per cent of pregnant women in February 2021, still down from 98 per cent in February 2020 but significantly up from 58 per cent in April 2020. Also 21 per cent of adolescent boys and girls received IFA in February 2021, close to the 23 per cent in April 2020.

Health

- UNICEF procured 62 thermal scanners for installation in ports and seaports of India and 85 RT-PCR test machines, to be installed and used in 22 states. To sustain the COVID-19 vaccine drive, UNICEF deployed additional dedicated technical assistance to national and states level and procured cold chain equipment to sustain the increased capacity of the cold chain system in the country.
- UNICEF supported 256 facilities in 50 priority districts across 24 states on strengthening WASH and IPC protocols and practices.
- Online mentoring sessions were conducted for 150 Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) and 100 labor and delivery staff to improve the quality of care.
- 380 Nurses and Midwives were reached with capacity building session on Quality of Care during COVID-19 pandemic in partnership with Nationwide Quality of Care Network.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Over two million people were reached with handwashing messaging in UNICEF-supported states.
- UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education to develop guidance, e-modules, and safe school protocols to support and promote COVID-19 appropriate behaviors, for which trainings reached 12,178 schools across multiple states.
- Over 400,000 people were reached with critical supplies such as soaps, sanitation, masks and handwashing stations across 15 states.
- UNICEF successfully advocated for the reallocation of government funds and leveraged CSR and development partner funding to reach a greater number of vulnerable communities with WASH and IPC tools and supplies. 202,181 community service providers were trained on IPC, including state Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) officials, civil society organization (CSO) members, urban and rural sanitation workers, frontline workers, and teachers.

Child Protection, GBVIE, and PSEA

- A total of 81,906 women, girls and boys were reached through UNICEF supported interventions on gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response in collaboration with partners across sectors (health, education) and through various referral service mechanisms such as the One Stop Centres, Women Helpline, Child line and Advika (adolescent) platform.
- 47,797 (including 18,070 boys, 18,227 girls, 3,290 men and 4,387 women) children and caregivers benefited from mental health and psychosocial support through online platforms and community-based outreach interventions supported by UNICEF and partners.
- 5,789 children without parental or family care were provided with appropriate alternative care arrangements.
- UNICEF provided technical support to government for the urgent development of a guidance note on the care of children who have lost both parents due to COVID-19.

Education

- UNICEF provided technical support to the central and state governments and partners to support the safe reopening of schools, continuity of learning for children from home and in preparation for back-to-school campaigns. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education in the development of an online training module and guidance document on water, sanitation, and hygiene related precautions to support the safe reopening of schools.
- With UNICEF support, most state governments had started re-opening of schools but due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, schools have started closing again, with a greater number of children and young people affected during this second wave. It is anticipated that schools may remain closed until June 2021.
- Efforts to support continuity of learning from home continued through the provision of technical support to government and partners, that reached around 12.3 million (48 per cent girls) in 17 states, including ‘Mobile Learning Centres’
Social Protection and Cash Transfers
- In Jharkhand, a first phase lockdown situation analysis was conducted in partnership with government to inform its response plan. With UNICEF support, the capacity of Gram Panchayats in Karnataka to manage COVID-19 were enhanced. Results from an assessment of humanitarian cash transfers during floods in Bihar during 2020 are now being disseminated and used to influence Departments for Disaster Management on preparedness and response systems. UNICEF completed an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 induced fiscal shock on government finances in Tamil Nadu and submitted to the Department of Finance with recommendations for enhancing buoyancy of state taxes going forward.
- UNICEF is supporting to enhance the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (local self-government at village level) in facilitating access and awareness of social protection schemes among the most vulnerable families and women. UNICEF supports CSOs and women’s self-help groups to increase community awareness particularly among the vulnerable families on eligibility, application procedures and grievance redressal of social protection benefits.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
- In the context of the severe spike in COVID-19 cases, UNICEF intensified community engagement and social mobilization across 16 states to support Jan Andolan (People’s Movement). Such intensive campaigns reached more than 21 million in both rural and urban locations.
- Close to 650,000 frontline functionaries have been trained in 16 states on key messages and vaccine communication focusing on balancing vaccine eagerness and vaccine hesitancy.
- Innovative partnerships with private sector and civil society organizations have empowered communities to adopt COVID Appropriate Behaviors by reaching over 3.1 million people in 61 districts of 16 states.
- UNICEF Communication, Advocacy & Partnership kicked off 2021 with compelling content and campaigns through its high performing Digital channels in ten different languages to support the #LargestVaccinesDrive across India. The impact COVID-19 on children was brought into focus including disruptions in learning, nutrition, basic services and mental health.
- UNICEF supported National Media Rapid Response teams focused on risk communication efforts of the government, sharing real time critical updates, and counter misinformation, leveraging Jan Bhaagidari (public participation) concepts.

Challenges
- The nation is reeling under an acute shortage of medical-grade oxygen and the critical COVID-19 patients are dying of painful shortage of breath. Hospitals in various parts of the country have been sending SOS to the administration as the demand rapidly outstrips supply. India’s medical oxygen requirement had once increased to 6,785 mtic tonnes per day, almost double the needed in usual circumstances. Currently stands at around 4,600 mtic tonnes per day.
- The second wave of COVID-19 infections caught India’s healthcare system off-guard, with delays in testing and reports of shortages in critical-care beds and oxygen and hospitals turning away critically ill patients. The panicked hunt for hospital beds is a sad common sight across the country. UNICEF is working closely with the Government to contribute to address most urgent shortages.

Maldives
Nutrition
- UNICEF Maldives is supporting the government to promote breastfeeding during COVID-19 through developing and disseminating messages on social media. Furthermore, safe growth monitoring promotion (GMP) in urban health centre was supported through UNICEF’s technical assistance, and in the three months, delivered growth monitoring to 2,907 children, vitamin A and deworming tablets to 692 children under two years, with the cumulative reach of UNICEF contributed to nutrition services reaching more than 3,500 children under five years in first quarter of 2021.
- UNICEF’s support to implement the Social and Behavioral Change Communication Strategy on first 1000 days implemented in 12 pilot islands reached 3,763 children and their families, and provided specific nutrition interventions including breastfeeding counselling, GMP and IYCF.

Health
- UNICEF and partners closely supported the country to plan and roll-out COVID-19 vaccine to the eligible population. By the late May, over 305,850 people had received the first dose. Specifically, UNICEF successfully delivered syringes and part of first allocation donated by the COVAX facility.
- The cold chain equipment sizing tool and gap analysis was completed with UNICEF’s technical support.
- UNICEF has delivered essential cold chain equipment and other materials to the Ministry of Health that has significantly enhanced the cold chain capacity of the country, critical for the successful roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in the country.
- UNICEF, in partnership with key agencies and civil society organizations, provided mental health and psychosocial support for over 2,500 people in the reporting period. UNICEF’s technical assistance in the area of clinical supervision and research is helping to strengthen the quality of these services.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- UNICEF is providing critical IPC supplies for prevention and control of COVID-19 in schools.
Key hygiene supplies, including soap and hand sanitizer, have been provided to mosques in the capital city of Male’ via the Male’ City Council to support hand hygiene practices in mosques.

**Child Protection, GBVIE, and PSEA**

- UNICEF has provided technical support for clinical supervision to strengthen capacity of social workers at the Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services. A total of 698 sessions have been conducted as of 10 May 2021. Additionally, UNICEF in partnership with the ministry has launched a nationwide campaign on prevention of sexual violence against children and women.
- UNICEF is supporting Maldives Police Service to conduct a Sensitization Programme on Child Rights and Child Protection, envisaged to improve service provision in VAC cases. Currently, 7 different atolls have been covered, with a total of 156 officers.
- UNICEF, through its partnership with NGOs Advocating the Rights of Children and Thibaa Psychology, reached 890 (558 girls and 332 boys) high-school students with mental health and psycho-social support awareness sessions.
- UNICEF, through its partnership with NGO Hope for Women, is providing Pro-bono Legal Services for survivors of Domestic Violence and Gender-based Violence. As of April 2021, 15 legal consultations were held for five clients and one online peer support group sessions were conducted for 8-15 participants.

**Education**

- UNICEF has provided support to strengthen capacity for monitoring learning continuity during COVID-19. As a result, data in MEMIS is of good quality and timely.
- UNICEF provided support to develop regulations under the newly enacted Education Act. A total of 42 regulations will be developed by end of July 2021.
- UNICEF is in the process of providing technical support to MoE on addressing learning loss and remediation and increasing capacity of teachers in online learning and assessment.

**Social Protection and Cash Transfers**

- UNICEF provided support to 691 families (single mother and parents with disabled child) with a food basket during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.
- A policy concept paper was developed on providing cash assistance to all children under five. UNICEF is advocating for a single registry for social protection schemes and an introduction of a universal child grant. The policy concept paper is under discussion at the President Office.

**C4D, Community Engagement and AAP**

- With UNICEF’s support, the Health Emergency Operation Center (HEOC) continues to engage the public with fact-based messaging which is crucial right now with the fourth and biggest wave of COVID-19 razing through the country.
- UNICEF and Maldivian Red Crescent is currently leading the sub-group (with key stakeholders) under the communication cluster at the HEOC to engage people with special needs and most vulnerable such as migrant workers and people with disabilities to ensure all preventive messaging/engagement efforts reach these groups and confirm if they act upon it.
- Getting to engage people face to face to create awareness around COVID-19 prevention and engage in vaccine demand generation, as planned by the Government and partners supporting the RCCE efforts, is a key challenge due to the current restrictions to travel between islands and also curfew enacted from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Greater Male’ Area where approximately 40% of the population reside.

**Nepal**

**Nutrition**

- UNICEF supported the national vitamin A and deworming campaign that reached 2,320,000 6-59 months old children (85 per cent of the target) for vitamin A supplementation and 2,026,840 for deworming (84 per cent of the target).
- UNICEF supported Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to train 2,354 health workers and female community health volunteers in comprehensive nutrition specific interventions and 42 nutritional focal persons from government and NGOs in ‘nutrition in emergencies’ training.
- 3,308 children under five suffering from SAM were treated using ready to use therapeutic food within 22 nutrition rehabilitation homes and 620 outpatient therapeutic centres.
- 61,920 pregnant and lactating women received telephone counselling on maternal, infant and young child feeding.
- 265,242 households were reached with nutrition messages, 482,580 households with telephone messages on nutrition and COVID-19 awareness, and 1,265,470 households with radio messages on nutrition and care from 175 FM radio stations.

**Health**

- UNICEF Nepal has been supporting the COVID 19 vaccination roll-out, such as developing and implementing COVID-19 vaccination guidelines, micro planning, supply and transportation of vaccines, cold chain supplies, health care waste management, as well as monitoring of the vaccination sites and verification of data jointly with WHO and the government counterparts.
- UNICEF Nepal delivered 348,000 doses of COVISHIELD vaccine, 350,000 syringes and 5,000 safety boxes from COVAX facility. UNICEF Nepal also provided one million auto-disable (AD) syringes to the government, while additional two million have just arrived. UNICEF has further provided procurement services for five million AD syringes. Nearly seven per cent of the eligible population in Nepal were vaccinated; however, there is a fear that the additional vaccination efforts will be constrained, considering current situation in India and globally.
• UNICEF Nepal provided 150 oxygen concentrators, 100 pulse oximeters, 1,000 oxygen monitors, 50 high flow oxygen delivery devices, 5000 health kits and 20 sets BiPap machines to the government and partners for meeting the increased demand of severe COVID-19 patients requiring oxygen. In addition, UNICEF Nepal has provided procurement services to the government for buying 155,000 Antigen test-kits.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
• UNICEF Nepal reached out to about 20,238 people through various interventions, such as installation of contactless hand washing stations, as well as distribution of hygiene items, soap, sanitizers and provision of sanitation facilities at points of entry (PoEs), communities, schools and health care facilities. UNICEF Nepal trained 585 frontline workers on WASH/IPC in relation to COVID-19 and 104 frontline workers on healthcare waste management.

Child Protection, GBVIE, and PSEA
• UNICEF Nepal and partners scaled up the deployment of community-based psychosocial workers within under-serviced communities reaching a total 21,658 persons. UNICEF continued to invest in the support to community-based alert, monitoring, referral networks and helplines, which helped early identification, rescue and support to 1,452 children (60 per cent girls) at risk of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.
• UNICEF Nepal continues to support child helpline services in seven locations through two implementing partners as the services are expanded to 18 locations from 12 locations last year.
• UNICEF continues working with the Government and CSOs to address the needs of children without parental care particularly those in correction homes and care institutions. UNICEF supported a study to assess prevalence of mental health and associated psychosocial factors among 670 children in 8 child correction homes. The study revealed that 49.8 % children had emotional and behavioral problems in clinical range and 17.9 percent reported suicidal ideation.

Education
• UNICEF Nepal supported Master Training of Trainers to education stakeholders followed by orientation of School Management Committees from 55 districts on how to ensure the safe operation of schools and alternative learning in case of school closure.
• UNICEF Nepal provided training on psychosocial support to 3,100 teachers from 20 municipalities, increasing their knowledge and skills to identify the psychosocial issues of children, the role of teachers and schools to address them.
• Local level stakeholders including teachers, parents and school management committees were oriented on parenting education, including the role of parents for the continuity of learning and child’s development during school closure in 14 municipalities.
• 51 education stakeholders were trained on comprehensive school safety minimum package, vulnerability capacity assessment, light search and rescue, and first aid. Hazard vulnerability capacity assessments were conducted in 66 schools, of which five schools were supported with anti-lightning devices.

Social Protection and Cash Transfers
• UNICEF partnered with ‘eSewa’ a mobile wallet service provider for the provision of the digital cash transfer to the identified households, which has the option of opting-in or voluntarily opting-out. Every household with one child or person with a disability received NPR 2,000 (US$17) and household with more than one child/person with a disability received a fixed amount of NPR 4,000 (US$35). A total of NPR 23,675,849 (USD$205,000) was disbursed to 6,868 households from January to March 2021.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
• UNICEF Nepal supported the dissemination of messages to more than 15 million people (47 per cent female) on COVID-19 vaccination and COVID-19 risks through radio, television, online and print media, in addition to 7.8 million NCELL mobile subscribers through outbound dialing and SMSs.
• UNICEF Nepal provided additional media-focused support to the government to establish a Media Crisis Hub inside the Ministry of Health that ensures timely and accurate communication regarding COVID-19 and the national vaccination campaign. The hub generated 40 multi-media assets reaching millions.
• UNICEF Nepal trained 300 radio programme producers and 36 hotline service providers on COVID-19 vaccine, adverse effect following the immunization and COVID-19 risk communication messages.
• More than 7,000 people (32% female) asked questions related to COVID-19/vaccination and responded to through MoHP press brief, radio programme corona capsule, hotline service providers and community-based volunteers.
• More than 1,200 youth volunteers and 5,000 volunteers from Red Cross and Scouts reached more than 200,000 people with COVID-19 vaccination and public health safety measures.
• A survey on vaccine awareness conducted across over 8,000 young people through U-Report provided insights into their willingness to get vaccinated, as well as empowering them with important vaccine related information.

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction
• UNICEF Nepal provided technical and financial assistance to 42 municipalities to develop and implement COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. Similarly, UNICEF Nepal has supported 50 municipalities/rural municipalities to upload and update COVID-19 related information on the COVID-19 Information Management System.
• UNICEF supported the returnee migrants from India at the Points of Entry with RCCE messages, water, basic protective gears (mask, sanitizers), counselling services and transportation services for positive cases to the nearest isolation facility.
Challenges

- The situation in Nepal is alarming during the current second wave with a 47 per cent positivity rate (highest in the world) and an already weak health system is completely overwhelmed with insufficient beds, ICU capacity, ventilators and human resources. The impact on children is devastating on all fronts. With the rise in cases, there is a very high demand in terms of response and preparedness in health facilities, isolation centres and communities. UNICEF is working closely with authorities to contribute to address most urgent demands. Most critical gaps include:
  - Addressing oxygen and testing gaps, (due to insufficient O₂ cylinders, concentrators consumables, PPE equipment and testing kits at all levels).
  - Vaccinations: only eight percent of eligible Nepal population vaccinated with the first dose. COVISHIELD deliveries were halted as cases surged up in India and there is no allocation reconsideration in outbreak context.
  - Education: limited clarity strategies for new school year, re-opening schools and continued learning, coupled with emerging demand from teachers for vaccination as pre-requisite to return to school.
  - Rapid decline in provision and uptake of routine services such as health, nutrition and protection.

Pakistan

Nutrition

- 3,016 UNICEF supported health sites are providing nutrition services (1,720 in Punjab, 994 in Sindh, 120 in KP, and 182 in Balochistan) with 46,033 children (25,611 girls and 20,422 boys) suffering from SAM admitted for SAM treatment during the reporting period.
- 111,317 children of 6-59 months of age (consisting of 55,008 boys and 56,309 girls, of which 24,868 in Balochistan and 86,449 in KP) received Multi-Micronutrient Supplementation (MMS).
- With UNICEF’s support, counselling on IYCF practices in the COVID-19 context through Lady Health Workers (LHWs) and other community-based networks was conducted in the community and reached 431,388 pregnant and lactating women and caregivers.

Health

- UNICEF is supporting the Provincial and Regional health departments to ensure continuation of essential primary health care services including immunization, Ante-Natal Care (ANC), Post-Natal Care (PNC), delivery services, child care and curative care for adults in 136 targeted health facilities reaching 1.47 million people.
- Measles immunization reached a total of 45,594 children in the 136 UNICEF supported health facilities.
- UNICEF has provided basic PPEs (gloves, sanitizers and masks) to 14,960 frontline workers in the first quarter of 2021.
- UNICEF supported IPC training reached 6,825 frontline health workers till end March 2021.
- Clinical Management of Children with COVID-19 training was provided to 1,323 pediatricians till end April in 2021.
- UNICEF continues to support Telemedicine services through an implementing partner, Public Health Association KP’ focusing on the MNCH needs of the community. During the reporting period, a total of 6,586 beneficiaries have benefited from this service, which included diarrhea, acute respiratory infection patients under the age of 5 years and pregnant women received advice on ANC.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- Till April, UNICEF rehabilitated and installed WASH facilities which included Ultraviolet (UV) water filters, toilets and handwashing stations in 98 Healthcare Facilities (HCFs) (33 in Sindh, 2 in KP and 63 in Balochistan).
- More than 323,841 people gained access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities in these HCFs contributing towards reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection among the healthcare workers.
- UNICEF utilized existing WASH programs such as Clean and Green Pakistan and communication networks of volunteers for hygiene promotion and supporting RCCE efforts. Given the travel restrictions, digital and social media platforms were used to engage with communities, including with religious leaders in hygiene promotion.
- To promote handwashing by the public as one of the COVID-19 prevention and control measures, UNICEF supported the fabrication and installation of 957 handwashing stations placed at strategic points in cities and communities enabling over 2.2 million people to wash hands properly.
- Over 1,228,798 people were supported with hygiene promotion, COVID-19 prevention and control information.
- UNICEF supported the training of 1,936 frontline sanitary workers, health workers on WASH/IPC in HCFs and high-risk communities on WASH/IPC
- UNICEF reached 279,266 children in 467 schools (331 in KP;28 in Balochistan;108 in Sindh) with WASH/IPC service.

Child Protection

- UNICEF Pakistan and its partners have trained a total of 5,360 social workforce professionals (3,368 women and 1,992 men) in psychosocial support and stigma prevention in all provinces through package developed by UNICEF.
- Through UNICEF and it partners, 224,530 parents, caregivers, children and individuals (37,023 girls, 36,657 boys, 75,555 women, 75,295 men) received PSS by trained social workforce professionals in Punjab, KP, Sindh, Balochistan, GB and AJ&K.
- Messages on stigma and violence against children reached a total of 8,119,743 people. The total number of children who received child protection services supported by UNICEF in Sindh and Balochistan has reached 2,059.
Education
- To ensure continuity of learning, UNICEF has supported the development of two weeks tele school content for grades 1 to 5 which was aired during March and April 2021 on Pakistan Television.
- UNICEF is working with national and provincial education authorities for safe operation of schools through roll out of the guidelines, SOPs and use of corresponding training manuals/packages. 1,385 teachers and education officers (631 women) accessed training in safe reopening and operation of schools in March, bringing the total number of teachers/education officers trained on safe reopening/operation to 8,695 (3,217 women). In addition, 1,385 teachers/education officials (631 women) accessed training on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in March, taking the total numbers of teachers/officials trained to 4,380 (women: 2,276).
- UNICEF continued to provide support to implementation of safe schools protocols, with a total of 79,131 children (23,638 girls) continuing to access safe alternate education opportunities, including in 1,181 Accelerated Learning Programme centres.
- To encourage the continuity of learning, 288,064 parents reached with messages through SMS and different social media platforms. The celebrity video with ten famous celebrities who endorsed the continuity of learning and adherence to SOPs was shared via UNICEF social media platforms and WhatsApp. The video managed to reach out to 36,178 people (Impressions 33,074 and Engagements 3,104) via UNICEF social media.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
- Over 47.54 million people were reached (through national media channels) with messages on COVID-19 prevention and on access to services.
- Over 12.14 million at risk populations were reached with community engagement activities.
- 27,688 people engaged through social media.
- During the reporting period, 844,992 helpline calls were responded to. While the helpline is intended to respond to many health issues, and not only COVID-19, 18,370 calls were received from callers requesting information on COVID-19 vaccination.
- Through existing polio alliances and the health programme, 88,286 religious leaders have been engaged and mobilized to promote the risk perception of COVID-19, emphasize the importance of handwashing, use of mask and physical distancing as well as convincing other religious leaders on increasing risk perception.
- Upon request from the government, UNICEF produced 2 short video spots and GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format) for social media explaining the registration process.

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction
- Contingency stock being prepositioned for 100,000 people through minimum critical stock in the warehouse when cannot be secured through LTAs at required lead time.
- UNICEF technically supported and participated in the National Comprehensive Safe Back to School Draft guidelines Workshop held in Lahore on 3rd and 4th March.

Sri Lanka
Nutrition
- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to maintain the essential nutrition needs of the children under five, especially the children diagnosed with SAM, through procurement of BP100 therapeutic food to ensure continuity of services for 152,000 children.
- Continuous capacity building of the health staff on IYCF is essential to maintain quality IYCF services for children under five. The COVID-19 pandemic poses a challenge to continue the usual face to face training on IYCF. UNICEF is supporting the Family Health Bureau of the MoH to convert the existing training package on IYCF to an online package so that health workers can follow the course on their own and acquire the essential knowledge, skills and competencies in IYCF to ensure provision of quality nutrition services for children. This package is being developed in both Sinhala and Tamil languages to enable all the health care staff caring for children under five to acquire necessary skills in IYCF.

Health
- UNICEF continued to support the improvements in the isolation treatment hospitals mainly in the Western Province which had the highest caseload. Six hospitals caring for suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases were supported in improving the IPC and WASH facilities.
- UNICEF together with the MoH updated the Cold Chain Equipment (CCE) Inventory that enabled successful identification of gaps in CCE in the country and are currently working with the Epidemiology Unit of the MoH in finalizing the CCE needs in order to proceed with vaccine procurement.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- UNICEF coordinated with the Ministry of Water Supply and the national advisory team of the Water Safety Plans, to update the Water Safety Plans (WSP) to integrate COVID-19 prevention and safety behaviours in rural water supply schemes management and a separate module was developed on emergency preparedness and response. WSP is a risk assessment tool introduced by WHO and is being implemented in rural water supply schemes in the country successfully. At the same time, it was used to capacitate the community-based organizations to implement water safety plans at scheme level to ensure the quality of water.
- UNICEF together the Directorate of Environmental and Occupational Health and Food Safety of the MoH developed a detailed training module for healthcare facilities targeting both medical staff and waste management staff, which includes separate chapters on general waste, infectious, pathological waste, waste and sharps, COVID-19 waste
management, occupational health and safety and policies, laws and regulations related to the healthcare waste management.

**Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA**
- UNICEF in partnership with the Department of Probation and Child Care Services (DPCCS) distributed family recreational kits for children in lockdown areas to provide entertaining opportunities to ease psychosocial impact of lockdown and around 625 children and families were supported through these initiatives during this period.
- Children in institutions are most vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic and these children were completely isolated from the community and their families because of COVID-19 safety measures. A total of 36 children in childcare institutions were reunified with their families during the reporting period and a monitoring mechanism was established through the social service workforce at village level to ensure continued monitoring and protection services for reunified children.

**Education**
- To mitigate the learning losses due to prolonged school closure, UNICEF has worked with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to develop and implement a strategy on learning continuity and learning recovery (remedial education) according to the local conditions. UNICEF supported the demonstration and documentation of a remedial education model in Uva, Central and Eastern provinces, using a blended approach to continuous learning and learning recovery for primary grades, which particularly helped disadvantaged children in an aim to mitigate widening learning gaps. The remedial education model applies diagnostic learning assessment, adjusted curriculum, formative assessment and individualized teaching, supported by parental engagement. Building on these experiences, UNICEF has agreed with the MoE for scaling and mainstreaming those models into an evidence-driven national strategy for nation-wide implementation. A national workshop was held on 20 April engaging all nine provinces for nation-wide implementation. A technical guidance and resources were developed and shared among all nine provinces.
- As part of ‘Back to School’ risk communication efforts, a child-friendly cartoon book with IPC messages was developed and printed targeting primary students, both in Sinhala and Tamil languages. This cartoon book has been distributed to all the primary schools in nine (9) provinces, to benefit more than 1.67 million children nation-wide. Furthermore, UNICEF also supported the additional procurement of IPC supplies which will be distributed to around 300 most disadvantaged schools.

**Social Protection and Cash Transfers**
- UNICEF Sri Lanka conducted the fourth round of the household survey to assess the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 on the households. This was conducted in person replacing the telephone interview method followed in previous rounds in 2020. The results of the survey will be used for advocacy purposes. High-level meetings with State Ministers and Directors at MoH also took place and proposals made for the extension of an existing universal Voucher for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers programme so to cover children for the first 1,000 days, as one of the ways to mitigate impact of the crisis on families with young children.

**C4D, Community Engagement and AAP**
- UNICEF supported MoH to promote visibility to the National Vaccine Deployment Plan focused on the activities around the COVAX and COVID-19 vaccination through digital and social media engagement, reaching over 5.7 million people with over 38,000 views and 55,000 engagements.
- UNICEF developed a Community Engagement and Social Mobilization Strategy as a component of the overall National COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Strategy and supported MoH to convene a forum of Civil Society Organizations to inform and engaged them with Community Engagement interventions.
- UNICEF together with the MoH and leading Civil Society Organizations, currently developing a ‘Training and Action Guide for Community Leaders & Influencers’ which would be utilized to mobilize communities during the Community Engagement interventions at village level related Covid-19 prevention and control.

**Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction**
- UNICEF and the DPCCS continues to build resilient capacities and skills among children’s club members to enable them to face any form of emergency situation (natural, human-made and health emergency), through the Child-Centred Disaster Risk Reduction (CC-DRR) programme which was enhanced to incorporate COVID-19 prevention safe behaviours. Around 67 Child Rights Promotion Officers were trained on adolescent engagement tools and skill development frameworks. These sessions were rolled out in selected children’s clubs and 317 children’s club members were trained. Full scale rollout will take place once children’s club members are physically allowed to gather.

**Challenges**
- After a year of living with COVID-19 and the commencement of the vaccination, the Sri Lankan public is relaxing COVID-19 preventive measures as seen during the New Year celebration times with large gatherings and crowds despite continuous warning from authorities and safe behaviour advocacy. Therefore, more rigorous risk communication and community engagement programmes required to maintain the IPC standards and practices. UNICEF is recycling risk communication campaigns implemented last year through social media; however, it requires more focused resources to update and renew the campaigns to have an efficient impact.
- Some essential response activities for child protection, education, health and nutrition and social protection are underfunded and require urgent attention of donors to ensure sustainable recovery of the whole society. More targeted support for psychosocial recovery, IPC and WASH is needed in the rural schools in the country which require additional funds.
Regional Funding Overview & Partnerships

UNICEF appeals for a total of US$568.8 million to sustain provision of life-saving health and nutrition services for women and children; promotion of safe behaviour through mass and community level mobilisation, including hand hygiene promotion; alternate education and/or return to school; provision of child protection; and data gathering and analysis on impact of COVID19. The Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) Appeals further covers manmade and natural disaster response and are focussed on Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Regional HAC that covers Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all public and private donors for the contributions received. However, UNICEF’s Humanitarian Response in 2021 in the entire region of South Asia still has the overall funding gap of 75%, amounting to more than US$425 million at the end of April.

This SitRep relies on data available up to the end of April, yet by time of issuance this Report two important updates occurred:

a) Revision of the India Humanitarian Appeal for Children to respond to the dramatic surge in country. The revised budget stands at US$126.6 million.

b) The Regional Office launched a Regional ‘Call to Action: Racing to Respond to the COVID-19 Crisis in South Asia’ articulating the urgent need for supplies throughout South Asia for immediate lifesaving support. A budget of US$163.9 million for immediate needs of supplies is required. More details can be found at: https://www.unicef.org/rosa/racing-respond-covid-19-crisis-south-asia

Funding Status

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1 These figures are reflective of emergency funds received at the end of April 2021 and do not include funds received under HAC-ACT-A. For details on HAC-ACT-A appeal, please refer to https://www.unicef.org/appeals/access-covid-19-tools-accelerator.net

2 India HAC appeal was revised in May 2021 (https://www.unicef.org/appeals/india) and the above table reflects the revised funding requirement.