The humanitarian situation remained dire in South Asia despite downward trends of the COVID-19 infection in some countries. As of August 31, there have been 36,915,068 confirmed COVID-19 cases of which 35,745,850 cases recovered and 518,391 deaths were reported in the region. From mid-January to end of August, 53.5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered to the region through COVAX Facility.

UNICEF continues to deliver life-saving and essential services to women, children and most vulnerable populations in South Asia, including its continued response to repair and reconstruct facilities and infrastructure damaged by the heavy rain and flooding in Cox’s Bazar refugee camps in Bangladesh.

In Afghanistan, the already dire humanitarian situation was further challenged by the recent escalation of violence and its aftermath, which brought the country to the brink of an economic collapse. The funding suspension of Sehatmandi project has brought negative consequences on the delivery of life-saving health and nutrition services.

Substantial additional funding is required to deliver lifesaving support, response to natural disasters, as well as containment and mitigation measures of COVID-19. Despite generous donor contributions, a funding gap of over US$259.8 million (41 per cent) remains and hampers UNICEF’s ability to respond.
Regional Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of 31 August, a total cumulative of 36,915,068 confirmed COVID cases of which 35,745,850 cases recovered and 518,391 deaths were reported in the region of South Asia. In the month of August, Sri Lanka was hardest-hit by a new surge of COVID-19 infection; its upward trend continued until the very end of month, with daily cases of over 5,000. In India, the confirmed COVID-19 cases have stabilized for several weeks; however, it remains to be a country of concern, as it accounted for 6.6 per cent of global number of newly confirmed cases at the end of August, with over 42,000 daily cases (seven-day average).

Beyond the global pandemic of COVID-19, monsoon heavy rain and subsequent flooding continued to exacerbate the already dire humanitarian situations in the region. In Bangladesh, hundreds of monsoon-related incidents—largely windstorms, slope failures and flooding—continued to affect the lives of Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar camps, increasing the total number of affected refugees to 87,617, including 25,469 refugees displaced. In the north of Bangladesh incessant heavy rains caused inundations, affecting approximately 2,000 families.

In Afghanistan, the already dire humanitarian situation was further challenged by the recent escalation of violence and its aftermath, which brought the country to the brink of an economic collapse. Since the end of May, the number of people internally displaced because of conflict more than doubled, reaching over 570,000 by end August. The funding suspension of the Sehatmandi project which is the backbone of the health system in Afghanistan has critical negative implications for the delivery of the health services in Afghanistan. More than 2,300 health facilities are affected by this decision, with reports indicating growing gaps in the delivery of life-saving interventions including routine immunization services, limited medicine and supplies, and lack of salaries for health personnel. Over 80 per cent of life-saving nutrition services for children and women are provided through these health facilities.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Over 773 million doses have been administered across South Asian countries since January 16, 2021 with 10 per cent of the total population fully vaccinated and 31 per cent having received the first dose. Within this figure, a total of 53.5 million doses have been received across all eight South Asian countries through COVAX facility. Only in Bhutan (73%), Maldives (71%), and Sri Lanka (57%) have a significant percentage of the total population received at least one COVID-19 vaccination dose (61%, 56%, and 37% fully vaccinated, respectively). In other countries, the level of coverage is still alarmingly low, though steadily increasing: 19% in Pakistan, 18% in Nepal, 11% in Bangladesh and 2% in Afghanistan.

![](https://example.com/sar_covid9_vaccine_coverage_by_total_population.png)

2 Inter Sector Coordination Group, Flash Updates #6 on Monsoon Response of 1 September 2021.
Across the region, there have been efforts to reach particularly vulnerable groups such as people living in remote areas as well as migrant and refugees, including internally displaced persons and returnees in Afghanistan, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, undocumented migrants in Maldives and people without valid registration card in Pakistan.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Afghanistan

Health

- Between 21 and 31 August, more than 2,500 individuals (including 650 children) received primary healthcare services at IDP settlements in and around Kabul. UNICEF also supported mobile health teams in 14 provinces to continue delivering basic health services to women and children in hard-to-reach areas.
- With the suspension of the funding for the Sehatmandi project, immediate actions need to be taken to restore the funding, as the health system is at the brink of collapse in a context where the system is already overburdened by the increased internal displacements and the COVID-19 epidemic. In addition to doubling the number of Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams (MHN'Ts), UNICEF is actively engaged with donors and partners to leverage support for the minimum integrated health and nutrition package continuity in more than 500 prioritized health facilities across the country.

Nutrition

- Nutrition programmes have also been experiencing a substantial disruption in all provinces as result of the discontinuation of funding for the Sehatmandi project. During the last week of August, an estimated 4,000 under-five children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) were provided with lifesaving therapeutic treatment through the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) at health facilities and mobile teams across the country, which is significantly lower than normal.
- Despite various challenges, UNICEF continues its work with partners for the distribution of therapeutic supplies for the fourth quarter of 2021 and prepositioning of required supplies for the winter to be used in the first quarter of 2022.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- UNICEF provided safe drinking water to 166,536 drought-affected people through water trucking at their places of origin in six districts (Chimal, Kishende, Zari, Sholgar, Charkent and Dawlatabad) in Balkh province, where people mostly rely on rainwater harvest due to lack of potable groundwater availability.
- 2,275 people affected and people who have been displaced from their villages due to flash flood in Kamdish district of Nuristan provinces received essential WASH supplies such as family hygiene kits, jerrycans, buckets, soap bars, products for household level water treatment.
- in informal settlements of Kabul province, 3,185 people accessed safe drinking water through construction and/or rehabilitation of handpump wells, and 14,460 people received hygiene supplies and benefited from hygiene promotion sessions.

Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA

- Through its implementing partners, UNICEF provided 8,870 (4,885 boys and 3,985 girls) children affected by conflict and displacement with immediate and life-saving services. Of the 8,870 children reached, a total of 8,447 (4,625 boys and 3,822 girls) children were reached with Psychosocial Support Services (PSS) and 423 (260 boys and 163 girls) children reached with integrated case management mainly in North, Northeast, South, Eastern and West Region provinces, including 38 boys who were provided with immediate cash assistance, transportation, referral to medical and other services.
- UNICEF supported identification, registration, for evacuation of unaccompanied and separated children from Kabul airport. Of the 163 (134 boys and 29 girls) children identified and registered, 17 (9 boys and 8 girls) children were reunified in Kabul (10 inside the airport and 7 in Kabul city) and 146 (125 boys and 21 girls) children were evacuated to Qatar for onward Best Interest Assessment (BIA) process and subsequent support. Since 25 August, UNICEF and partners supported 224 unaccompanied children in the Doha airbase in Qatar. UNICEF-Qatar worked with Government of Qatar institutions and the Qatar Charity Fund to arrange care, including social workers and pediatricians, for 158 of these children.
- In addition, at the Ramstein airbase in Germany, UNICEF had been supporting an initial caseload of 46 unaccompanied children, with more expected to arrive.

Education

- ‘Cold Climate’ schools in 22 provinces have completed or are in the process of completing their mid-year exams. On 24 August, the de-facto authorities instructed schools to reopen for grades one to six for both girls and boys (cold climate). Grade seven and above remain closed— with the exception of some provinces in the North, where all schools opened— awaiting for further instructions that seem to be delayed due to operational challenges, including financial constraints and organization of classrooms in terms of separation of female and male students and ongoing reflection on the inclusion of religious subjects into curriculum.
- At the moment, no official data is available on the number of teachers or children reporting to UNICEF for initial education reviews. As such, no official data is available on the number of teachers or children reporting to UNICEF for these updates to the situation on the ground in terms of separation of female and male students and ongoing reflection on the inclusion of religious subjects into curriculum.
- Currently, 1,234 community-based education (CBE) classes are operational supported by UNICEF and implementing partners. In the current reporting period, 479 grade-1 CBE classes were established in Faryab and Zabul provinces reaching 22,470 out-of-school children (13,830 girls and 8,640 boys).

Social Protection and Cash Transfers

- New registration of households in Kabul is continuing, with nearly 800 households registered through UNICEF’s new dedicated Management Information System (MIS) for Humanitarian Cash Transfers (HCT) in the period between 21-31 August. These households have been selected to receive cash assistance in combination with case management services to reduce and prevent negative coping mechanisms for children. UNICEF has been working closely with Financial Service
Providers (FSPs) and other UN agencies on monitoring the financial situation in the country and assessing capacities of FSPs in preparing for a scale up of cash assistance.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
- During the reporting period, UNICEF conducted a U-Report poll (on behalf of the interagency AAP Working Group) to assess the information and other priority needs of at risk and affected populations receiving over 121,000 responses from all over Afghanistan. The results have been shared widely including the AAP Working Group and Inter Cluster Country Team (ICCT) to inform response decisions.
- In response to the above poll, U-Report launched chatbot to share lifesaving information to the community. The content of the chatbot is about how and where to get food, water, and other humanitarian services. The chatbot has been sent offline, via SMS to 10 million people including 500,000 U-Reporters.
- In Kabul, social mobilizers were able to engage with 250 families and about 1,500 individuals in Dasht-e-Padola IDP camps with critical information on how to access available humanitarian services. In Eastern Region 500 mothers and adolescent girls were educated on COVID-19 prevention measures, how to access vaccines and other services. 13 radio programmes and 5 TV roundtables were broadcast on COVID-19 reaching over 200,000 people.

Gender and Adolescent Development and Participation
- Platforms for engagement of communities to mitigate the protection risks for women and girls remain active in some of the provinces, mainly Herat in Herat province and Bagrami in Kabul. Through these structures, UNICEF supported the training of (45 (23M/20F) key community mobilisers from community on their role on promotion of empowerment of women, protection and GBV risk mitigation and including their role on facilitating women access to services delivery structures.
- GBV risk mitigation training materials have been translated into local languages (Pashto and Dari). The training materials will be used by the Nutrition partners and women-led CSOs in cascading local capacity on addressing GBV risks and other protection concerns as women and children try to access nutrition services in 5 provinces.

Bangladesh
Nutrition
- A total of 7,866 children (4,492 girls) were admitted for Sever Acute Malnutrition (SAM) treatment as of 31 August 2021. Compared to last year, SAM admission rate has increased by 1.4 times. In Cox’s Bazar, 4,572 Rohingya children (2,912 girls) with SAM received treatment in 27 UNICEF-supported nutrition facilities in camps. 542 host community children (297 girls) were identified with medical complication in five inpatient SAM units.

Health
- As of August, 18,459,742 people (42.5 per cent female, 15.66 per cent of population) and 8,045,469 (39 per cent female, 6.82 percent of population) have been vaccinated with the first and second dose respectively. A mass vaccination campaign was organized across the country to increase the accessibility of COVID-19 vaccine, including remote areas. As a result, 3,717,352 people (45 per cent female) in rural areas and 1,302,803 people (44 per cent female) in urban area were vaccinated.
- UNICEF and partners provided 24,417 primary health consultations to 10,476 children under five (48 per cent female) at 13 health facilities in camps, out of which 33 per cent were attributed to respiratory tract infection and eight per cent were attributed to diarrheal disease. Cases of respiratory tract infection continue to be the most common reason for attending consultations.
- UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) for the establishment of 30 liquid medical oxygen system. Two more facilities became functional with uninterrupted supply of oxygen in August 2021 in addition to 24, which were already operational.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
- 284,170 people (143,420 female) gained access to safe water supply and 161,580 people (82,240 female) benefitted from functional latrines in August. Additionally, 255 paddle operated handwashing stations have been installed in the communities and healthcare facilities to prevent COVID-19. UNICEF and the Department of Public Health Engineering are supporting the safe school reopening through the provision of supplies, such as soap and disinfection for infection prevention and control.
- In August, UNICEF restored access to water supply for 22,000 floods affected Rohingya refugees (of which 11,304 are children, 11,601 female and 660 people with disabilities) in camp 22 through relocation of the submerged water pumps. In addition, 1,356 flood affected latrines have been rehabilitated, benefitting 20,190 refugees (10,377 children and 5,249 women).

Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA
- UNICEF delivered mental health and psychosocial support activities for 57,618 individual (46.4 per cent female) including 1,387 people with disabilities. Children and families benefitted from strengthened social relationships, community connectedness and social support structures, including improved positive feelings, hope and knowledge on how to protect oneself. Activities were delivered through a combination of individual and family approaches by Case Workers through home visits and remote support by volunteers and community mechanisms.
- UNICEF supports 21 Safe Spaces for Women and Girls (17 in camps and 4 in the host community) to implement Gender Based Violence (GBV) interventions. These facilities were mostly closed in August or operational with limited activities. Nevertheless, 103 frontline staff (81 per cent female) were trained on GBV risk mitigations, prevention, and response.

Education
- Schools in Bangladesh were closed for 18 months, disrupting learning for over 41.8 million children. Following continued advocacy of UNICEF and partners for safe reopening of schools and Learning Centres (LCs), schools across the country...
have been re-opened on 12 September 2021 in phases. On 20 September, the government has also issued a directive allowing reopening of the LCs for the Rohingya children in the camps on 22 September 2021.4

• While the LCs in camps are being prepared for learning activities with children from Sunday 26 September 2021, Level 1 students (pre-primary/Early Childhood education) are not allowed to return to class, and no reference was made on the Myanmar Curriculum Pilot (MCP). UNICEF will continue advocating for resumption of learning for the pre-primary/early grades and the implementation of MCP.

• At the national level 664,302 children (332,151 girls, 9,964 children with disabilities) have continued their education through remote learning platforms. In the camps, 16,667 children (6,733 girls) benefitted from the caregiver led education, making a cumulative total of 90,961 children (44,266 girls and 46,695 boys).

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP

• In August, 96,731 people asked questions/clarifications through UNICEF U-Report/helpline and social media feedback mechanism. Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Pillar reorganized the Task Forces in six thematic areas to identify gaps and duplications in each area, which is expected to yield data-driven and evidence-based communication interventions.

• In Cox’s Bazar, 123,118 people (71,206 female) were reached with messages on COVID-19 prevention, vaccination and Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD), 7,563 people (3,848 female) in the camps and host community visited the Information and Feedback Centres with complaints, feedback and queries. Most of the concerns related to health and non-food items and were referred to the relevant service points immediately.

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction

• By August, UNICEF and partners repaired 145 damaged LCs, a Health Post and a Diarrhea Treatment Centre, 1,346 latrines, 212 tube-wells, 438 bathing cubicles, 58 tap stands, 7 water networks and 16 Faecal Sludge Management. UNICEF partners have accelerated reconstruction works in the fire and flood affected camps and started preparatory works in LCs to be ready for reopening as soon as the government approves.

• 6,648 flood-affected families in camp 8W received two-month stock of soap in response to AWD, benefitting 33,240 people, including 8,310 women and 17,105 children. Additionally, 704 children with SAM were treated in the Nutrition facilities. UNICEF advocated with concerned authorities to continue regular monitoring of seasonal AWD and timely implementation of preventative measures.

Bhutan Health

• 97 percent of children aged 12-17 years in the high-risk red zones were vaccinated with the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

• COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Support (CDS) Early Access Window, for immediate needs for vaccine delivery application was submitted and approval for USD 230,000 received.

• The procurement of Pfizer vaccines by Royal Government of Bhutan funds and syringes with World Bank funds was initiated for children in the age group of 12-17 years. Additionally, two ultralow temperature freezers (-86°C) procurement order placed for Pfizer vaccines and one 15KVA stabilizer procured for 30m³ WIC.

• Joint MOH, WHO and UNICEF Mental Health programme meeting organised to discuss the situation analysis and way forward.

• UNICEF led a joint UN team to provide global good practices and recommendations on mental health promotion to the National Council Social and Cultural Affairs Committee.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

• Installation of four handwashing stations in public places in Trongsa and Bumthang districts was completed and is expected to benefit approximately 800 people.

• Installation of handwashing stations outside with provision of safe water at entrance and provision of safe water in 7 Primary Health Centres (PHC for hand hygiene, drinking and IPC completed) in Dagana district was completed and estimated to benefit approximately 140 people daily (daily estimate of how many visit all PHCs across the district).

Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA

• UNICEF supported National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and NGO RENEW to train 44 case managers (30 female) from the three case management agencies from western and central regions to provide case management services to survivors of GBV including during emergencies. The training is expected to result in survivors of GBV receiving quality care and support that addresses harmful consequences of violence to help them heal and recover.

• To enhance skills of teachers in monastic schools and nunneries in identifying and referring child protection issues to service providers, the Monastic Body’s Child Care and Protection Office with support from UNICEF is training 153 teachers (21 female) from monastic institutions in eastern and central districts. The skills and knowledge provided during the training will help teachers identify signs and symptoms of violence, abuse and neglect against children, and provide children in distress with appropriate case management services.

Adolescent Development and Participation

• To support young people to get better opportunities for employment in various sectors as well as self-employment, and to connect them with potential employers, UNICEF supported the Department of Youth and Sports of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in a week-long workshop focused on building skills like résumé writing, cover letter, interviews, communication, proposal writing, access to finance, career information and employability skills. 40 active job seekers (26 female) benefited from this workshop.

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4 This report belongs to the September update. However, as the above-mentioned development is a major one, it has been incorporated hereto. More up to date and detailed information will be provided in the September update.
• UNICEF in partnership with the MoE and Loden Foundation organized one-day orientation sessions in six schools, reaching 500 young people (350 female) with sessions on entrepreneurship, design thinking, pitching ideas using digital skills and technology, and developing social community projects. To encourage continuity of learning, promote skills development programmes and help them to translate their classroom ideas and lesson into practice, the school management committees of the six schools introduced entrepreneurship clubs to provide space for children to learn and build entrepreneurial mindset from an early age.

Education
• Due to the continued cases of community transmission and lockdown in the border town of Phuentsholing, schools have been closed and children of grades PP-VIII have been learning through online platforms, while children of grades IX through XII have been relocated to Punakha district. This is to ensure that children of higher grades do not miss out on their learning, and particularly those sitting for high stake examinations in December.
• UNICEF supplied 5,000 washable cloth masks and 200 liters of hand sanitizers to benefit the 866 (480 boys and 386 girls) relocated children.
• UNICEF facilitated a consultation with MoE, National Commission for Women and Children, Bhutan Board for Certified Counsellors, and RENEW (a CSO) on mental health promotion.

Cross Sectoral Issues
• Towards supporting the government’s response to the growing mental health issues in the country, UNICEF is leading (on behalf of the UN (including WHO, UNDP, UNODC, UNFPA), a series of high level consultations aimed at enhancing coordination around this important shadow pandemic issue.

Gaps/Challenges
• Health workers not being allowed to attend face-to-face training workshops impede skills building on quality health and nutrition services during the pandemic.
• It is difficult to monitor the effectiveness of online learning of children in grades PP-VIII studying from home in the Phuentsholing town, as the capacity of teachers in integrating ICT in teaching is limited.
• Mental health has emerged as an important shadow pandemic issue which needs to be urgently addressed.

India
Nutrition
• Capitalizing on World Breastfeeding week, communications were intensified to support breastfeeding during COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF supported the ministry with production and dissemination of guidance on breastfeeding and COVID-19 shared through programme functionaries, development partners and professional bodies. At the state level, UNICEF supported sensitization of service providers to support adoption of the guidelines.
• UNICEF supported the Ministry of Women and Child Development with the Jan Andolan Dashboard to track all community-based behavior changes events during the Poshan Maah. A partnership with 195 community radio stations leveraged to focus on broadcasts on COVID-19 Appropriate Nutrition practices leading up to Nutrition Month.

Health
• UNICEF continues to strengthen medical oxygen and related products and testing capacity: delivered 4,650 oxygen concentrators, 512 High Flow Nasal Cannulas and 99 RNA extraction machines; and installed 265 RT-PCR test machines, 53 Mass thermal scanners and 9 OGP’s with additional 31 in pipeline.
• Out of 3,694 electrical Cold Chain Equipment (CCE) initially procured, nearly 100% of planned equipment have been delivered. Similarly, 501 electrical CCE, 237,228 non-electrical CCE delivered with additional 242,800 non-electrical CCE under procurement.
• UNICEF continued supporting health system preparedness for pediatric services, through readiness assessments; health workforce capacity development; development and deployment of guidelines and treatment protocols; procurement of supplies for training and for pediatric health screening; and development of health information technology solutions.
• UNICEF is supporting health system resilience for the pandemic response through investment in psychosocial and mental health support to the health care workforce.
• UNICEF partnered with the National Health System Resource Center in orienting 2000 master trainers from the state and district mental health program teams on the topic.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
• At the national level, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education collaborated in supporting Niti Ayog (the premier policy think tank of the Government of India, providing directional and policy inputs) to revise the guidance note on WASH in School and COVID-19 Responsive behaviors for safe school reopening.
• UNICEF across all programme states continues to provide critical WASH supplies and services to communities. A total of 2.4 million people has been reached till date, in partnership with Lixil etc. The state of Madya Pradesh plans to distribute 15,000 Lixil sato taps for promoting easier access to handwashing practice, and Assam is currently distributing 10,000 sato pans and masons are being trained on installing them properly in toilets.
• UNICEF is developing a compendium of best practices on WASH in school for safe school reopening.
• To promote WASH and Infection Prevention and Control protocols in healthcare facilities, UNICEF and its partner, Administrative Staff College of India, trained 560 health staff in support of a partnership with CDC.
UNICEF is also preparing to disseminate the rapid assessment report on continuation of WASH service during COVID-19 with line ministries and other key stakeholders.

State offices in Maharashtra and Bihar have been involved in the disaster response efforts in the aftermath of experiencing flooding; in Maharashtra, volunteers on-ground have been trained to collect data for a rapid needs assessment and UNICEF is supporting the two states prepare relief plans and distribution kits.

**Child Protection, GBVIE (GBV in Emergency), and PSEA**

- In partnership with National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, certificate courses of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) have been rolled out in several states including Bihar (54 counsellors) and Assam (46 Childline functionaries), Uttar Pradesh, 300 (166 female and 134 male) professionals received training on counselling and 5,500 children were provided with MHPSS services in partnership with Lucknow University and partner.
- In Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF continues to promote awareness of violence against children and gender-based violence. In Madhya Pradesh, under the Safe City programme, 155 staff and management of the entire fleet of local public bus services in Bhopal city were oriented on violence against girls, boys and women in the moving buses, responsibilities of the drivers, conductors, and actions to prevent and respond.
- In Rajasthan, 4,349 children affected by COVID-19 were linked to social protection programmes, 200 vulnerable families received ration and medical kits.
- In Madhya Pradesh, UNICEF and CSO partners have launched “Aagaz - Voices for Child Protection” promoting and advancing adolescent and youth participation in addressing key protection issues reaching 217,838 persons (110,718 male and 107,120 female) across six districts.

**Education**

- By the end of August, schools have reopened in 25 States/Union Territories with only 7 states with opening at the primary level. Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres are open in two states only. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, schools in one state reclosed.
- 15.5 million children (50.5 per cent girls) in 17 states access formal or non-formal education, including early learning with the continued technical support from UNICEF to state government and partners.
- Technical support was provided to the continuity of learning related activities such as digital and non-digital content development in local languages, sharing e-content, capacity building of teachers and volunteers, and tools development to assess learning gap. UNICEF also technically supported state governments in conceptualizing and planning of interventions and monitoring to reach children from the most disadvantaged groups including children with disabilities.
- UNICEF provided support for remedial programmes and back to school campaign, especially in development of learning package and monitoring of out-of-school children. It also supported the adaptation and development of guidelines and manuals for reopening and manuals for schools and ECD centres respectfully.

**Social protection and Cash Transfers**

- Advocacy efforts with national and state governments to inform emergency social assistance measures to emerging vulnerabilities continued. Across multiple states, UNICEF provides technical support in design and monitoring of newly launched cash transfers to address acute vulnerabilities of children orphaned during COVID-19 in India.
- UNICEF is building evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on migrant families and convening partners and advocating portable social services for children on the move.
- Technical support was provide to national policy commission (NITI Aayog) on microsimulation evaluation of national social protection schemes to develop national integrated social protection framework to aid resilient and inclusive COVID-19 recovery. Phase 2 is completed and shared with inter-ministerial Advisory Group.
- Over 55,000 households benefitted from UNICEF case management support in accessing wage support programs, food rations, and old age and disability pensions.
- UNICEF is working with national and state governments to institutionalize women and child participation in village development planning processes, to build resilient communities and strengthen shock responsive social protection. It is also working with a leading think tank (NIPFP) to build evidence for greater devolution of funds to local governments empowering them for local action especially in rural, tribal, high pandemic burden, and marginalized communities.

**C4D, Community Engagement and AAP**

- Community Rapid Assessment survey (round-02) is conducted. Initial results discuss positive intent to vaccinate (73.9%) and 7.4% were already vaccinated against COVID-19. The study notes high trust (85.3%) in the government vaccination and information dissemination efforts. Religious festival regional communication campaigns have been rolled out through community engagement and electronic media platforms to encourage COVID-19 appropriate behaviors (CABs).
- Tribal communications campaign continued to focus on secluded tribal areas with special messages on livelihood and vaccine.
- Community influencers engagement is intensified to address vaccine hesitancy in North-Eastern states of India (Meghalaya and Assam)
- Orientation programme of schools’ teachers is being launched ahead of schools re-opening.
- Partnership with Confederation of All India Traders and transport associations is signed to counter vaccine hesitancy with using vehicles as mean for branding, vaccine promotion.

**Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction**

- UNICEF and its development partners continue to engage in flood response across several programme states integrating risk governance with CAB. In the state of Maharashtra, multi-sectoral Flood Joint Rapid Needs Assessment completed and relief and recovery for WASH, DRR, CAP and Education response started covering 120000 population and 24000 children.
- In the state of Maharashtra, vaccine promotion and decentralized risk governance with CAB+ behaviors reached out to six districts and nine cities covering nearly 0.5 million population.
• In the state of Bihar, 2,987 department functionaries in the intervention districts trained on flood preparedness and social sector recovery plan, integrating COVID-19 context. Under the Young Covid Warrior initiative, trained 15,243 National Youth Volunteers and Youth Leaders on Young COVID Warrior campaign, CAB and Flood preparedness and role which can be played by youth in combating COVID-19 and reducing loss during floods. 4,864 personnel from NGOs/CSOs, voluntary organizations trained on flood preparedness and non-pharmaceutical COVID-19 response.

Maldives Nutrition
• UNICEF continues to provide technical support to the urban primary health centre to strengthen growth monitoring and IYCF services. A total of 607 children received growth-monitoring services (319 females and 288 males) and a total of 16 children (10 females and 6 males) received nutrition counselling through UNICEF technical assistance. In addition, 187 children in the ages of 2 to 5 years received deworming and 393 children received vitamin A supplementation from the centre during the reporting period.
• A session on gestational diabetes was conducted for healthcare professionals from the main tertiary hospital, through UNICEF supported technical assistance.

Health
• UNICEF Maldives continues to support the government’s efforts to plan and rollout the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, through UNICEF supported technical assistance placed within the EPI programme. To date, 60% of the total population has been fully vaccinated and 73% of 12 years and above population has been fully vaccinated.
• In the month of August, the Urban Health Centre vaccinated 496 children (231 Males and 265 females); public health officer in the centre supported by UNICEF continues to support the implementation of safe immunization of children with the routine vaccines.
• Public health officer in Health Protection Agency, with support from UNICEF, provides technical assistance to monitor and track routine data on pregnant women, including identification of the number of pregnant women in the periphery for the purpose of COVID-19 vaccination.
• Technical assistance was provided for the government to implement individual birth preparedness plans for pregnant women and identification of high-risk pregnancies.
• UNICEF supported the government to conduct a consultative workshop to update the ANC/PNC package, with total participation from 16 stakeholders.

Education
• All schools across the country reopened for in-person learning on August 10 for the start of the new academic year 2021. UNICEF continues to provide support for the implementation of the IPC protocols in the schools.
• UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education to identify and address learning loss due to COVID-19. Currently, the assessment data on learning loss is being analyzed.
• UNICEF continues to support capacity development of teachers in online learning focusing on online pedagogy and assessment.
• An initiative on cyber safety, focusing on creating a safe environment for online learning is underway targeting parents, students, and teachers. In addition, a training package for parents on online safety is being developed.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
• UNICEF continues to support the development of a video series for the Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC) to document socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially its impacts on children and families. 10 videos will be produced by 30 Sept, and 10 more in the next months.
• To engage the unvaccinated groups left, UNICEF supported HEOC to develop social media content (videos) featuring young people, musicians, a pregnant woman and others stating their reasons to get vaccinated and asking everyone to do so.
• To clarify the process followed to get vaccinated (to address barriers to getting vaccinated), 3 videos and print materials were produced with UNICEF’s support to guide people on how to get registered and get vaccinated at designated centers.

Nepal Nutrition
• 7,932 children aged 6-59 months with SAM have been treated in 863 Outpatient Therapeutic Centers (OTCs) across the country over the period of January - August 2021 with support of UNICEF.
• In August, 23,152 caregivers of children under five years old were counselled on breastfeeding and complementary feeding, 8,907 children aged 6-23 months received multiple micronutrient powder and 16,934 pregnant women received full course of iron and folic acid tablets.
• UNICEF also supports the continuity of infant and young child feeding information dissemination and counselling services via telephone, radio, TV and other social media communication channels.
• To assess the nutrition situation, UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to conduct Standardized Monitoring and Assessment in Relief and Transition (SMART) nutrition survey in Saptari district.

Health
• During this reporting period, 27,177 children (8,048 boys and 19,129 girls) under 15 months were vaccinated against vaccine preventable diseases, a total of 21,378 women received the first Antenatal Care (ANC), 18,712 women had four focused ANC and 17,182 women delivered safely in health facilities.
• A total of 16 pediatricians and pediatric nurses participated in pilot Pediatric Essential Critical Care Training (ECCT) for COVID-19 management.
• With UNICEF technical campaign and vaccine logistics support, Nepal vaccinated an additional 4,390,914 people against COVID-19 in the month of August. UNICEF also supplied one million COVID-19 vaccination cards to the government.
UNICEF provided 11,520 PCR test kits and 6,250 RNA mini kits for COVID-19 testing and 99,100 pieces of surgical disposable masks, 150,000 disposable gloves, 9,013 alcohol-based hand sanitizers (500 ml/bottle) and 5,000 face shields.

UNICEF supported 12 units of autoclaves (79 litres), 3 autoclaves (150 litres), 11 hospital-grade 15-kg laundry washing machines 2 hospital-grade, 30 kg laundry washing machines.

UNICEF with the Biomedical Engineer Federation of Nepal trained 91 frontline health workers on oxygen therapy and operationalization of equipment and devices.

In August 2021, UNICEF provided mental health support to 7,189 people through trained counsellors and mental health workers including 787 children age less than 10 years, 5,377 adolescents, 86 from LGBTIQs community, 20 COVID-19 patients in isolation centres and 37 frontline health workers.

In preparedness and response to the monsoon in several areas of Nepal, UNICEF also distributed 4,518 units of long-lasting insecticidal bed-nets and 760 sets of New-born Incentive Kits.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**

UNICEF reached 172,952 people including 148,720 migrant returnees since January 2021 (4,500 in August) with at least one or more WASH services and supplies (hygiene kits, soap, sanitisers and drinking water) including risk communication messages.

In August, 750 people benefited from the installation of hand washing stations in various settings such as schools, health care facilities (HCF), isolation centres, schools and points of entry.

300 people benefitted from provision of sanitation facilities in points of entry, schools and HCF. In addition, 68 health workers were trained on WASH/IPC in relation to COVID-19. A total of 15 HCFs were supported with WASH facilities.

As part of flood response, UNICEF reached 4,379 people in two districts that were adversely affected by flood and inundation, through provision of water purification tablets and bucket sets as per the request of local government.

**Child Protection, GBViE, and PSEA**

UNICEF and its partners supported 2,783 people (1,191 males and 1,592 females) including those staying in home isolation and vulnerable children and families affected by floods and landslides with psychosocial support

65 teachers (38 males and 27 females) were trained on linkages between gender-based violence (GBV) and psychosocial distress faced by students, psychosocial first aid and referrals to appropriate services and mandatory reporting of incidents related to violence against children in Dhanusa and Kanchanpur districts.

5,541 people (613 males and 4,928 females) were reached with GBV prevention or response services through Nepal Police, national and district based civil society organizations supported by UNICEF.

A total of 46 service providers (3 males and 43 females) were also trained on providing survivor sensitive GBV services in Lumbini province.

UNICEF supported 418 children (148 boys and 270 girls) with appropriate care arrangement including family reunification, placement in interim/transit care and emergency assistance, out of which 70 children (23 boys and 47 girls) were referred to different services such as health, security and justice.

**Education**

181,699 children (90,544 girls) continue to be reached through 984 learning support groups of parents since January 2021.

UNICEF supported 278 pre-primary schools and teachers to conduct telephone-based teaching at home through the caregivers reaching 3,541 children (1,877 girls).

Provided a two-hour psychosocial support orientation package aligned to the Child Protection Cluster’s psychosocial messages to 3,278 teachers (1,194 female), school management committee members and local level education officers to help overcome their anxiety.

A total of 516 phone calls have been received from five call centres that were established as a part of learning continuity campaign to address concerns about teleteaching, parenting education, online education and others.

**Social Protection and Cash Transfers**

UNICEF conducted a special survey with Ward officials, mayors and deputy mayors to track the situation of the families and their access to basic services.

UNICEF has also developed Cash Plus Interventions targeting the most vulnerable children from Dalit families in highly COVID-19 impact Municipalities and this has been endorsed by Nepal’s Inter-agency Cash Coordination Group as an important initiative for cross-agency effort.

**C4D, Community Engagement and AAP**

UNICEF led the design and organization of a national mask week campaign (7-13 August) along with the government to promote mask wearing behaviour in Nepal for a week and beyond.

Altogether 75 multi-media products around on COVID-19 and vaccines were produced by the UNICEF-supported crisis media hub.

RCCE focused on messages related to vaccination priority, venue and date for priority groups, pre-registration, COVID-19 testing and service availability including reinforcement of public health safety measures in day to day life and festivals. The content was based on monthly COVID-19 insight brief that used multiple sources of information and mechanisms to collect the feedback, questions and concerns from the communities.

More than 2,369 youths and adolescent volunteers from 69 municipalities in collaboration with elected and administrative representatives and other civil society partners were engaged in promoting the importance of practicing public health safety measures and vaccination through megaphone announcements, door to door visit and community dialogue.
Gaps/Challenges

- As the monsoon caused flooding and landslides blocking many roads, vaccine and commodity delivery to districts and municipalities was increasingly challenging especially in remote areas. There was limited coverage of testing by Antigen and PCR in the communities mainly in the hilly districts.
- While UNICEF continues to support health care facilities with autoclaves and washing machines needed for infection prevention and control, challenge remains in finding technically trained human resources to set up these systems in facilities that are remote and have limited access to support services.
- Due to COVID-19 lock-down and social distancing requirements, it has been difficult to identify children with severe and moderate acute malnutrition and treat them at the OTC. Therefore, UNICEF has been supporting MoHP to initiate a family mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) approach in 4 out of 77 districts of Nepal.
- Continuity and access to child protection services for children and their families remains a challenge due to limited access to vaccination among front line social worker service providers.
- The Federal government has yet to come up with a comprehensive package to address the secondary impacts particularly targeting the most vulnerable population.

Pakistan Nutrition

- UNICEF supported a total of 2,949 OTP sites, which provided nutrition services (Balochistan: 185; KP: 124; Punjab: 1,720 and Sindh: 920).
- A total of 47,670 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM) (boys: 21,695 and girls: 25,975) have been admitted for treatment.
- A total 469,262 children 6-59 months received Multi-Micronutrient Supplementation

Health

- UNICEF is supporting provincial and regional health departments to ensure continuity 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 3.11 million people.
- Measles immunization reached total of 91,631 children vaccinated against measles in the 136 UNICEF supported health facilities to date.
- UNICEF has provided basic PPEs (gloves, sanitizers and masks) to a total of 17,831 frontline workers in 2021.
- UNICEF-supported IPC training reached 10,178 frontline health workers in total
- UNICEF supported the training of 4,154 frontline health workers and community volunteers on COVID-19 and case identification and referral of suspected cases.
- Clinical Management of Children with COVID-19 training was provided to a total of 1,400 pediatricians trained.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

- To date, more than 500,000 people have gained access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities in 98 Health Care Facilities, contributing towards reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection
- Almost 1.8 million people have been supported with hygiene promotion services including COVID-19 prevention and control information.
- To date, UNICEF has supported the training of 3,679 frontline sanitary and health workers on WASH/IPC in health care facilities and high-risk communities on WASH/IPC.
- UNICEF reached an overall of 282,256 children (138,305 girls and 143,951 boys) in 472 schools (331 in KP, 30 in Balochistan and 111 in Sindh) with WASH/IPC services.

Child Protection and GBVIE

- UNICEF and its partners have trained a total of 9,279 social workforce professionals (5,610 women and 3,669 men) in psychosocial support and stigma prevention in all provinces through a package developed by UNICEF.
- A total of 324,286 children, caregivers and other community members (51,232 girls, 50,452 boys, 114,454 women and 108,148 men) received psychosocial support by trained social workforce professionals. This includes 1,859 individuals (199 girls, 438 boys, 851 women and 371 men) who received specialized counselling sessions in all the provinces.
- Messages on stigma and violence against children have reached a cumulative total of 11,304,962 people.
- The total number of children who received child protection services supported by UNICEF in Sindh and Balochistan has reached 3,646 children (1,572 girls and 2,074 boys).

Education

- As a part of Teachers Vaccination campaign, positive images of teachers and education officials being vaccinated from provinces were shared on UNICEF social media under #VForVaccinated campaign.
- Parents have been reached with encouraging messages for enrolment/ attendance of children through SMS and different social media platforms, taking total number of parents reached to 536,719.
- Safe operation of schools is supported through adoption of SOPs in schools with the guidance and support of 9,641 teachers and education officers (3,552 women) who are trained on safe reopening and operations of schools in all provinces.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP

- The federal and provincial RCCE teams finalized a strategy and action plan to help reduce infection and virus transmission during the religious month of Muharram.
- Through health alliances and existing polio structures, 86,577 religious leaders were engaged and mobilized to promote a higher risk-perception towards COVID-19 and its hidden dangers.
• Through national and private media channels with messages on COVID-19 prevention and vaccination reached 54.6 million people.
• On social media, Facebook has been the best performing platform for UNICEF Pakistan with 107,275,615 total impressions and 1,534,724 total engagements.
• 13.34 million at risk people have been reached with COVID-19 preventive messages through social mobilization activities supported by polio health workers.
• The helpline also provided critical information on where the population can get tested and/or get treatment for COVID-19. 2,115,934 calls have been responded to so far.

Emergency Preparedness, Response and Disaster Risk Reduction
• Contingency stock being prepositioned for 150,000 people through minimum critical stock in the warehouse when cannot be secured through LTAs at required lead time.
• Emergency Preparedness and Response training under workplan with NDMA conducted for Balochistan government officials in Karachi on 31st August and 1st September. 42 government frontline officials (including those from PDMA, Balochistan, education, local government, health and environmental protection and agriculture department) from most at-risk districts benefited.

Gaps/Challenges
• For Nutrition interventions in Balochistan, Lady Health Workers (LHW’s) coverage is very low in targeted union councils, with the gaps to be filled through Community Health Worker model and mobile clinic services.
• Gender Disparity on COVID-19 vaccine uptake is also an issue which needs clear directed activities to decrease this disparity. Funding constraints to maintain essential health care services running is also posing a challenge.
• Due to the high positivity rate during the fourth wave of COVID-19, child protection partners have delayed or changed the implementation modality for some capacity building training and community-based interventions. The reduction to 50 per cent presence of government staff in offices has also impacted on pace of implementation of many activities.
• Health care waste management remains an area requiring urgent attention from the authorities. UNICEF is therefore engaging the Ministry of Health to coordinate waste management efforts and mobilize all concerned stakeholders and donors to support the proposed initiatives.

Sri Lanka

Nutrition
• The 2021 Breastfeeding Week (1-7 August) under the theme “Protect Breastfeeding; A shared responsibility”, the Ministry of Health focused on strengthening continuation of support for breastfeeding for mothers affected with COVID-19 and supporting other mothers who would not receive the usual support due to country’s pandemic response. UNICEF’s technical contribution for this Breastfeeding Week through preparation of guidelines and webinars benefitted over 8,000 healthcare workers island wide.
• The ongoing analysis of the IYCF formative research supported by UNICEF, the chapter on “Understanding the downstream effects of COVID-19 on household food security in Sri Lanka – qualitative findings from rural, estate, and urban sectors” provided an early glimpse into the combination of both upstream and downstream factors contributing to impacts on household food security and child diets across Sri Lanka.

Health
• UNICEF supported to establish 11 high dependency units (HDUs) in maternity wards in tertiary and secondary level hospitals to strengthen care for antenatal and postnatal mothers affected with COVID-19. These HDUs spread across eight provinces in the country providing a wider coverage for all the pregnant mothers affected.
• UNICEF supported to install an Ultra Cold Chain (UCC) Freezer that can store 140,000 doses of Pfizer vaccines at the Central Vaccine Store (CVS) at the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health. This is the first UCC Freezer at the CVS, and prior to this, the UCC Freezer facilities at the Central Blood Bank of the Ministry of Health was utilized to store the Pfizer vaccines.
• The continued support by UNICEF in providing 300 Cold Boxes and 750 Vaccine Carriers to strengthen the Cold Chain Equipment system in the country, hugely supported the rapid COVID-19 vaccine roll-out campaign.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
• Booklet on safe handling of municipal waste was developed to build the capacities of the Public Health Inspectors and Health Education Officers attached to all the municipal and urban councils in the country. The trained officers (56) are expected to conduct awareness sessions for over 3,000 waste collecting staff and promote those infection and prevention measures and good practices to ensure safety of the waste handling staff from COVID-19 infections. These trainings are complemented with information and educational materials distribution among the target groups. A KAP survey will be conducted after the trainings to understand the level of knowledge improvement among the waste handling staff in local authorities.
• WASH facilities were provided/upgraded in eight rural Maternal and Child Health Care Centers in the central province benefiting over 6,760 women and children.

Child Protection, GBVIE, and PSEA
• UNICEF and partners supported around 3,782 children in lockdown areas to ease the psychosocial impact of lockdown by distributing family recreational kits and reunified 13 institutionalized children with their families. These children are supported with an established monitoring mechanism through the social service workforce at village level.
• District psychosocial forums in Jaffna, Batticaloa and Badulla districts were strengthened, and 81 children were supported through psychosocial first aid by trained Child Protection officers.
• Through continued advocacy by UNICEF and partners for proper alternative care arrangements for separated children due to COVID-19, the health authorities and Probation Department agreed to work together at village level to ensure proper care for the children who are being separated from infected and/or quarantined parents.
• 31 children were supported through coordinated case management during lockdown.

Education
• UNICEF supported the Provincial Departments of Education (PDE) in Uva and Central provinces to develop contents to train the school health club members on how to provide psychosocial support for children who have contracted COVID-19 once they return to school. Once the schools are reopened, school-based training programs will be organized.
• UNICEF provided hygiene and sanitation items for 200 schools in Uva and Central provinces to facilitate for school reopening process benefitting over 38,500 students.
• UNICEF, Ministry of Education and PDE in North and Eastern provinces developed a package of psychosocial support tools and material for teachers to address the needs of children and teachers themselves which was validated in these provinces in July 2021. UNICEF also discussed with the PDEs on training for teachers using virtual tools as originally face-to-face training was planned. In addition to Northern and Eastern provinces, with support from the Ministry of Education, the psychosocial guidelines for teachers have been validated among selected secondary teachers in Western and Southern provinces. For effective use, the PDE have requested to provide one copy for each teacher in secondary education. While UNICEF could support the North and Eastern provinces within the current programme, UNICEF is exploring funding opportunities to support the other provinces.
• UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Education’s Home-Based Learning programme by developing the teacher and parental guidelines to support the implementation. Due to the teacher strike however it is yet to be launched.

Social Protection and Cash Transfers
• UNICEF completed the data collection for a fifth round of the household surveys to assess the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in August 2021. The nationally representative survey will assess the entrenched vulnerabilities created by COVID-19 a year into the crisis and, unlike the four surveys in 2020, will include purposive samples from some of the districts with the highest cases/day. The data from the surveys will be used to inform government and for public awareness.
• UNICEF has continued to work on the Public Expenditure Review on Social Protection and a document on the government’s social protection response to COVID-19, together with the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. The evidence will be used to advocate for lifecycle based social protection and the expansion of the existing universal Voucher for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers, with the highest level of the government.
• UNICEF held consultations with government, civil society and development partners to assess the situation of children and the role UNICEF can play during the next country programme. Many of these consultations highlighted the impacts of COVID-19 on children.

C4D, Community Engagement and AAP
• UNICEF completed a KAP survey, the outcome of which is being used to inform key messages to produce awareness materials on COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviours. The KAP survey has been shared with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and a summary is being prepared for sharing broadly with the partners.
• Production of TV, Radio and Ad content on CAB has been completed. The materials have been scheduled for broadcast and dissemination throughout major TV and radio stations for the coming months, including on social media.
• Broadcast of content with key messages focused key prevention measures and the need to continue with CAB, even if fully vaccinated, started on Friday 3 Sept and will run for the next coming months on major TVs, Radio, and social media.
• To address emerging KAP issues during the campaign, the campaign includes slots to air interviews by health experts. This will be informed by the social listening on myths/rumors and immediate responses will be prepared and presented in the form of interviews by an expert from Ministry of Health.
• To track myths, rumors and misinformation, a social listening tool has been developed. Pre-testing pro-type has been completed and is scheduled to go live on HPB system within September.
• UNICEF is supporting the Health Promotion Bureau with deployment of two ICT officials upon the request of the HPB, to strengthen HPB tech system for general administration and COVID-19 preparedness and response activities.
• UNICEF together with the Ministry of Health and partners developed COVID-19 Community Engagement Guide as an overarching guidance to mobilize Community Leaders and Influencers during vaccine roll out and disseminated through community structures/CBOs managed by Ministry of Health and partners.
• UNICEF disseminated risk communication messages and promoted protective practices through the public address systems, mobile units and LED screens reaching 5.2 million highly vulnerable populations in high risk areas.
• UNICEF trained 4,363 community leaders on COVID-19 prevention and response measures, how to strengthen community support systems and created a mobile messaging group among a sample of leaders as an established feedback mechanism.

Gaps/Challenges
• Continued closure of schools and lack of access to online learning for the majority of vulnerable students in rural and estate sector remains a key challenge.

Human Interest Story
Bangladesh
Rohingya refugee camps: Safe Spaces give women a fresh start in life
Preventing and responding to violence against girls and women

Patiently, Rubaida (not real name) demonstrates to the woman how to use the sewing machine, slowly taking her through her paces. Although she keeps making mistakes, Rubaida does not lose her temper and calmly repeats the process. She understands that just like her, the woman’s confidence had been shattered and any harsh words would trigger memories better left in the past.
I met her when her husband had beaten her up badly and threw her out of the house during the lockdown. She had made the simple mistake of reminding her husband that there was no food in the house,” she says.

Rubaida took her to her own home, a small reed shelter that she shares with her family. She comforted her, gave her emotional support, and referred her to the Safe Space for Women and Girls in the Rohingya refugee camp that Action Aid runs with support from UNICEF.

The spaces are one approach to preventing and responding to violence against girls and women. They offer a safe, confidential and comfortable environment where women can meet and commune with each other away from the presence of men and boys, and without stigma. Here, the survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) can access psychosocial support and case management services. The spaces are situated at accessible locations for all women and girls including GBV survivors and those at risk of violence. It also provides skills like dress making and embroidery to economically empower women.

Access to professionally trained case workers has been especially critical at the peak of COVID-19. Incomes were depleted or lost, and the frustrations contributed to high levels of gender-based violence.

In the camps and the host community, the movement of women and girls outside their homes has traditionally been limited due to social norms, and this has been further exacerbated with COVID-19. Limited access to services, school closures and economic stress, increased risks of girl child marriage, intimate partner violence and exploitation.

Rubaida had also been identified for support by a community volunteer after she had been beaten by her husband and thrown out of the house, in the rain.

“As only essential services were being allowed in the camps, we were doing community outreach programmes and focusing on door-to-door interventions. One of our volunteers found Rubaida in a bad shape after she had been badly mistreated by her husband,” says Sheinaz Parvin, Programme Manager for gender-based violence in Action Aid.

Sheinaz explains that Rubaida was counselled and given psychosocial support. When the pandemic-related movement restrictions were partially lifted, she started frequenting the Safe Space for Women and Girls where she is now volunteering to help other women in her old shoes.

She has a deep smile that even though hidden by the veil, reaches her eyes and lights up her whole face when asked about her children. Rubaida dreams of a bright future for her children and imagines them to be educated and independent with no care in the world.

Rubaida dreams of a bright future for her children and imagines them to be educated and independent with no care in the world.

“They can choose what they want to become, but they must be educated and empowered with correct information. That is the only thing that can change their lives,” she says.

Rubaida has had it tough. Back in Myanmar, she got married at the age of 13 and now aged 25, has four children between the ages of 12 and four.

Now a Rohingya refugee living in Bangladesh’s Cox Bazar Camps, Rubaida recalls that until now, she has not had much choice in her welfare most of her life. She got married at an age when she had no clue as to what marriage entailed. She remembers that there were two families jostling for her hand and she chose the 19-year old boy who had previously spoken to her once or twice. Not that she had an option. Had she refused, one of the boys would have abducted her anyway, causing shame to her family.

“I got pregnant almost immediately. My husband was very violent and frequently beat me for minor issues like delaying food or waking up late. I always had bruises all over my body,” she recalls.

Constantly she was verbally abused by her husband’s family who reminded her every now and then that she was useless, just another mouth to feed and a waste of money. Her confidence was shattered, and she became withdrawn and isolated.

When they moved to Bangladesh, life was even harder. Her husband had no income for a long time and beat her up frequently. The day she was found by the community volunteer uniquely changed her life for-ever.

“Now my husband respects me and consults me before making any decision. What I also like the most is that now I get respect from the community as I help a lot of women. I get invited to a lot of weddings and social events.”
From the dress making skills that she has learnt from the centre, Rubaida is able to make just over $100 a month, enough to earn her a seat at the table and more than enough for her to have big dreams for her children.

Regional Funding Overview & Partnerships

At the end of August, UNICEF funding needs are a total of US$627.6 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 in particular for Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Regional HAC that covers cross broader need in South Asia as well as Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The total requirement is reflective of the revised Afghanistan HAC appeal in response to drought and recent escalation of violence. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all public and private donors for the contributions received and continues to rely on their generous support to cover the overall funding gap of 41 per cent, with sharp variation of funding status across countries. At the end of August, the overall gap amounts to US$259.8 million.

Funding Status

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<th>Other Resources ($)</th>
<th>Carry-over ($)</th>
<th>Funding gap ($)</th>
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Who to contact for further information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
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