Reporting Period: 01 May – 30 June 2022

Highlights

• UNICEF has continued to scale up its financial and technical support in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations following new funding. The support includes direct cold chain technical support embedded at National and Provincial level to the National Department of Health (NDoH) and through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) including social listening, data and evidence collection, community mobilisation and engagement. As a result of the support, the national vaccination rate has now topped 50% of the adult population, but variations (due to the tiered vaccine rollout and comparatively low levels of vaccine demand amongst youth) exist, from 37% of youth (18 – 34 years old) vaccinated, to almost 70% of the 60+ cohort.

• UNICEF’s financial and technical support and response to the flooding in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) continues to help alleviate the impact on children and families in the most devastated areas in and around Durban. This includes through WASH, psychosocial support and cash assistance, as well as engaging with community radio to provide lifesaving information and initiate dialogue and feedback about the situation and needs. This is coordinated as part of the UN emergency response, working with government and partners to assess and provide the specific support required.

Situation Overview

• In late May, the South African government reported\(^1\) that the country had reached 50% COVID-19 vaccination coverage of the adult population. The focus now is on achieving the set 70% target by the end of 2022.

\(^1\) https://sacoronavirus.co.za/latest-vaccine-statistics/
• The NDoH announced the end of remaining COVID-19 restrictions on 20 June 2022. Despite this, messaging from the NDoH and partners\(^2\) continues to encourage mask wearing in crowded or closed spaces and to promote outdoor events and gatherings to help lower the risk of contracting COVID-19.

• The KZN flooding in April 2022 killed at least 435 people and more than 19,100 households were directly affected. A recent survey by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition also put the cost of damage at ZAR 7 billion, with more than 31,200 jobs affected, the majority being in eThekwini district, Durban.

**Summary of Emergency Preparedness and Response Actions (COVID-19)**

**Education**

• UNICEF’s early learning and basic education emergency response reached approximately 470,000 children from birth to 18 years. This included the provision of learning through play material such as storybooks, activity worksheets, and information on useful tips to help parents support children in distress, reaching at least 39,000 parents for distance and home-based learning. Additionally, early learning programmes and schools were supported with capacity-building training workshops on learning through play with toolkits supporting the curriculum used, training on well-being, and distribution of storybooks. The focus now is on learning recovery following the broad-ranging COVID-19-related disruption to education.

• UNICEF’s support for education programme adaptation and capacity resulted in the development, updating, and promotion of COVID-19 content promoting a safe learning environment for teachers and learners. Distance and home-based learning support continue to be provided through the distribution of the *ActiveLearning@Home* series.

• In providing children under six years with home-based learning materials and activities, the *Tshwaragano ka Bana* and the ‘Let’s play, learn and grow together’ series reached 36,963 parents/primary caregivers and 66,484 young children.

• UNICEF participates at the national level in the ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund, supported by the Presidential Employment Stimulus, which disbursed funding to the ECD sector and its workforce following the impact of COVID-19. UNICEF provided non-financial technical assistance for this national effort that ultimately benefited 58,243 ECD-related workers (approximately 50% female) across ECD programmes and partial care facilities.

• The European Union funded REALS-South Africa programme to strengthen reading and learning in response to the impact of COVID-19 on education reached nearly 300,000 learners, including the procurement and distribution of approximately 194,000 storybooks.

• As a result of UNICEF’s response to the July 2021 unrest in KZN, through the provision of technical and financial support, 5 affected schools were refurbished. This includes the mapping of ICT needs, which has been completed, as well as the procurement and installation of new equipment and training and support on the use of equipment. The rehabilitation of five schools was initially delayed but is now back in progress.

• The ECD emergency response to last year’s KZN civil unrest has now supported 1,169 ECD programmes. Through capacity development and training, there was increased knowledge and skills for at least 2,500 parents to continue learning and developing at home through play-based approaches. Some 20,000 young children under six years of age have also been reached directly through capacity-building workshop to the practitioners. Additionally, the procurement and distribution of 16,500 books in 100 primary schools in IsiZulu.

\(^2\) Provided primarily through the convening of partners in the RCCE Technical Working Group (TWG) on COVID-19 and the Demand Acceleration Task Team (DATT) for the COVID-19 vaccine.
In response to the KZN floods, UNICEF advocated and worked with partners, including the DBE to ensure that the impact on early childhood development programmes and schools is obtained as part of the initial and ongoing assessments. UNICEF joined efforts with donors and contributed 582 textbooks to 16 affected schools, as well as play-materials for early learning and development of young children through their parents in temporary shelters, as well as to ECD programmes affected.

**Child and Social Protection**

- The DSD, UNICEF and UNFPA continued to monitor the impact of the KZN floods on households using a Real Time Monitoring Tool. Field teams consisting of child and youth care workers, reported on the immediate impact to inform responses and measure impact. Ongoing feedback has helped identify the needs of households. This includes children exposed to violence in affected communities, exploitation, abuse and in need of psychosocial support, as they do not have access to services like education and health care. As a result, multi-purpose cash grants have been disbursed through NGO, Refugee Social Services and the Faith-Based Child Protection Movement reaching 560 families. In addition, 100 blankets and 100 school uniforms have been handed out to children to families in shelters who lost their belongings in the floods.

- UNICEF received OCHA funding for the flood response and has entered a partnership with the SA Red Cross to provide mental health and psychosocial support to 3,650 children, parents and caregivers to ensure their well-being and resilience against violence related shocks. In addition, 2,600 children, youth and caregivers have increased their capacity to prevent and respond to violence against children, sexual and gender-based violence, and on prevention against sexual exploitation and abuse. Cash grants and dignity kits will help 1,875 girls, boys, and caregivers to meet their basic needs.

- UNICEF partner Childline South Africa’s monthly reports continued to highlight the challenges that children face related to the impact of COVID-19 on their safety and well-being. During May and June 2022, children continued to place calls related to sexual exploitation stemming from neglect and abuse. The data provided by Childline SA showed that of 189,766 children reached, 33,042 needed and received further assistance through referrals and relevant service providers. Some 269 cases were referred to the DSD to assist with access to protection and GBV services.

- Peacebuilding engagements and mediations continued to be held by the Faith Based Child Protection in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, and Northwest provinces, as networks are strengthened to promote social cohesion and ensure that communities build safety networks. Some 600 people from the affected communities were reached during May and June. The community engagements, including peacebuilding community sessions, were broadcast on national television and on social media. Interviews and programming on mainstream news networks were conducted and the programs have been televised to encourage citizens support vulnerable families.

- UNICEF worked with faith-based partners to advocate for the protection of and support to communities affected by crises and rising costs of living. This includes through social media and on DSTV channels, such as Soweto TV program, Ebulhante, and the Dumisa channe program, Thetha Nam.

**Health and Nutrition**

- UNICEF appointed 5 cold chain consultants were embedded within provincial health authorities in six provinces to further strengthen the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and routine childhood immunization. Technical inputs focused on cold chain management, the forecasting of vaccines and ancillary supplies, vaccine stock management, supervision visits with onsite mentoring, and capacity building sessions on effective vaccine management.
• The declaration of a measles outbreak in Tshwane District, Gauteng province, led to a rapid response in support of the NDoH and National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD). UNICEF has provided technical inputs to the planning and coordination of the outbreak response, while plans are being set in place to undertake supplementary immunization activities for children under 15-years across the district.

• A nationwide immunization drive for children under five years is taking shape with UNICEF technical support in the planning, coordination and training, as well as communication and community engagement activities to drive up vaccine demand.

• In the global drive towards the ‘polio endgame’, UNICEF is providing technical support to the NDoH to develop the deployment logistics plan for the roll-out of the novel oral polio vaccine type 2 (nOPV2).

• UNICEF supported the modelling of simplified methods to rapidly identify children who are at risk of malnutrition in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces. The family mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) can be used by community health workers and caregivers to monitor nutritional status and to ensure prevention and early treatment of acute malnutrition. The evaluation of the modelling project will provide insights on the potential scalability of family MUAC across the country.

• UNICEF provided psychosocial support and HIV counseling to 5,794 pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent and young women in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. Some 150 peer mentors in KwaZulu-Natal will ensure programme sustainability as national, provincial and local health authorities take the lead. UNICEF will continue its capacity building and technical assistance approach, while working with the government and partners across provinces to further scale up the programme.

WASH

• UNICEF and partners, World Vision and Envirosan, launched a WASH response in support of flood relief efforts in KwaZulu-Natal province. The work focused on improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene supplies and practices for affected families.

• UNICEF, working with partner Envirosan, installed 20 water storage and handwashing stations in community halls where displaced people gathered following the floods across eThekwini Metro, Durban. The water stations include tanks for water storage, serviced by a water tanker, and provide decent handwashing facilities, improving essential services for some 8,300 people.

• UNICEF, with the DSD and the NDoH, will be distributing 1,000 WASH kits to vulnerable households impacted by the floods. The WASH kit provides supplies for households so they can practice safe hygiene and are linked to a WASH risk communication and community engagement programme that provides access to lifesaving information and advice.

• UNICEF’s engagement in the Care and Support in Teaching and Learning (CSTL) pillar included the construction of 151 handwashing stations in schools and 12 Early Childhood Development centers across three provinces, improving hand hygiene for 91,000 children.

Communication & Partnerships

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

• UNICEF developed an emergency booklet and stickers in English and isiZulu, in partnership with the provincial government’s health and environmental safety structures, that provides life-saving information on water, hygiene and broader child health wellbeing for families affected by the KZN floods and any future crises. KZN Environmental Health Officers are distributing the booklets.
UNICEF is playing a lead role in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of targeted district-level COVID-19 vaccination campaigns to push towards the country’s 70% coverage target by the end of 2022. This follows the new Demand Acceleration Strategy developed by the NDoH in May 2022 to focus messaging on specific districts with low vaccine uptake.

The ‘Multimedia Truck’ is hitting the road again to create vaccine demand, with new multimedia content being produced for screening on the ‘Truck’. The activations will focus on targeting low vaccine uptake areas, with the pilot run set for Mpumalanga province.

The Zvakala campaign is playing a critical role in providing clear and facts-based information about the COVID-19 vaccine to targeted communities. In the Mpumalanga pilot, this includes vaccine information pamphlets and live reads for community radio in local languages, with a view to a broader package of support in future interventions.

To tackle the broad ranging impact of COVID-19 on child wellbeing, UNICEF has incorporated additional social and behaviour change (SBC) activities into the emergency response strategy. This includes issues such as gender-based violence and violence against children, as well as teenage pregnancy in the Lusikisiki area, Eastern Cape.

The ‘Child and Young People Participatory Research Project’ provided critical insights into how mental health issues are affecting children and young people. A participatory model is now being developed to systematically engage young people in research, communication, and action.

The first weekly social listening report of online narratives around the KZN flooding was generated using digital monitoring tools previously developed by the regional office to track online COVID-19 engagements. This tool serves as an early warning system, enabling UNICEF to intervene in divisive and toxic narratives related to the disaster emerge. An ongoing community radio response with Children’s Radio Foundation and its four partner stations has reached 190,000 listeners in affected districts.

UNICEF provided a weekly report tracking online and digital media engagements around the COVID-19 vaccine, to help inform South Africa’s Weekly Social Listening Report. This is distributed through online channels, including the SA Coronavirus website, and presented to, among others, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social and Behaviour Change. It provides a baseline for content development and creative work streams in crafting communications. The reports also informed weekly national communication priorities identified by the national vaccine Demand Acceleration Task Team (DATT).

Three abstracts on UNICEF’s COVID-19 response were submitted to the International Social and Behaviour Change Summit (SBCC) to be held in Morocco in December 2022, with two accepted for oral presentation at the conference.

UNICEF in partnership with World Vision, has reached youth, faith and community leaders in 11 priority sites, across five provinces, through training to promote COVID-19 vaccine uptake and strengthen local systems to gather community feedback. As part of the project, the new “Make WASH fun” methodology – developed by Clowns without Borders – is being piloted in the Western Cape, to invigorate hand hygiene promotion and COVID-19 prevention.

**Communication**

UNICEF South Africa worked with the Cotton On Foundation on an in-store fundraising campaign to support children and families affected by the KZN flooding. This raised some ZAR 500,000 for the response. The campaign included a social media drive to articulate the specific impact of the floods on children, including a field visit by Cotton On Ambassador, Nomzamo Mbatha.
• New multimedia content focused on telling the story of UNICEF South Africa’s vaccine cold chain support, the work of UNICEF volunteers in supporting the elderly to get vaccinated and the impact of the KZN floods on children and families affected.

• The Press Release marking the 50% COVID-19 vaccine coverage was picked up and included two key advocacy points to drive towards 70% vaccine coverage by the end of the year and to strengthen routine childhood immunization coverage.

Funding Overview and Partnerships

• UNICEF support to the NDoH COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and routine childhood immunization work received another significant boost in May 2022, thanks to a generous donation by the German Federal Foreign Office of US$4.88 million. This funding will further strengthen vaccine cold chain systems and build capacity in promoting and rolling out vaccinations across South Africa.

• The Humanitarian Aid department of the European Union provided a generous donation of EURO 200,000 to UNICEF South Africa for the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) flood disaster response. The funding will improve WASH, mental health and psychosocial support services, as well as provide multipurpose cash grants for some of the most vulnerable populations, including displaced families.

• Vital support from Proctor and Gamble has enabled UNICEF to work with the DBE in rehabilitating schools affected by the unrest across KZN in 2021. The completion of rehabilitation work is nearing its end and classrooms will be ready to increase school capacity again.

Challenges

• The lifting of all COVID-19 restrictions has led to more lethargy with regards to COVID-19 vaccination. With 50.7% of the adult population vaccinated, the challenge now is to push towards 70% coverage by the end of the year. UNICEF’s support to the COVID-19 vaccine roll out and broader strengthening of immunization systems, thanks to additional funding, will help to drive up COVID-19 and routine childhood immunization, while UNICEF’s youth focused vaccine promotion work continues, including through the Zwakala campaign and other initiatives.

• The broader impact of COVID-19, climate related natural disasters and the Ukraine war threatens to further impact on the wellbeing of children across South Africa. The impact on livelihoods and disrupted food chains could more specifically worsen the nutritional status of the country’s youngest children, particularly given the already high burden of severe wasting that affects 100,000 children under-five years. UNICEF is prioritizing prevention and early treatment at the community level by promoting and strengthening the active role of community health workers and caregivers.

• The KZN flooding reiterated the importance of emergency preparedness and mitigation efforts. While UNICEF and partners continue to adapt and scale-up the response to mitigate the mid to longer-term impact on children, work is also being scaled-up to strengthen internal and external emergency preparedness actions, including actively engaging children and young people in this work.

Who to contact for further information:

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