



# HOW BUSINESS CAN HELP REDUCE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

7 April 2020

This document identifies actions businesses can take to help reduce the impact of COVID-19 on children and families.

## OVERVIEW OF THE CRISIS

Since the start of the outbreak in December 2019, COVID-19 has spread around the globe. Hundreds of thousands of confirmed cases have been reported in different regions. The pandemic has added yet another layer of vulnerability worldwide for the most disadvantaged children and families, many of whom are already living in conflict, poverty, violence or displacement.

In many countries, especially those with ongoing humanitarian crises, COVID-19 has created significant additional pressure on affected populations. The urban poor, migrant, internally displaced and refugee populations are especially at risk as they tend to live in overcrowded settings, making it near impossible to practice physical distancing.

Many vulnerable communities lack access to water and sanitation services. Children on the move are at further risk of exposure to the disease, as basic essential and life-saving services are hindered due to control measures, movement restrictions, border closures and discriminatory access to testing and health services.

### Global situation in numbers



**1.2 billion**  
Children housebound due to COVID-19-related school closure



**US\$651.6 million**  
Funding required for UNICEF's global response

UNICEF is focused on meeting the urgent needs of children and families, especially in the most vulnerable communities, by working with partners to ensure children and families have the support they need through supplies, water and sanitation facilities, health care, education and protection services.

UNICEF is committed to continuing to deliver assistance to children across areas affected by COVID-19 and is working with governments and partners in business, civil society and other sectors to find solutions to ensure children continue to receive the assistance they urgently need.

To respond to the needs of children and communities affected by the pandemic, UNICEF is appealing for US\$651.6 million for programmes worldwide.

 For more information, visit: <[www.unicef.org/appeals/covid-2019.html](http://www.unicef.org/appeals/covid-2019.html)>

## HOW CAN THE PRIVATE SECTOR HELP?

### FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

In response to the fast-evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF has revised the requests in its original appeal for US\$651.6 million to address the latest needs around the globe.

Providing financial contributions to humanitarian appeals is the most effective way in which business can assist before, during and after the onset of a crisis.

The need for flexible funding is critical, particularly given the highly dynamic nature of emergencies that children are facing and to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and help rebuild communities.



To donate, please click [here](#)

Your donation will help UNICEF and its partners reach the most vulnerable people quickly, saving lives wherever the crisis hits.

#### How financial contributions can help

- **By providing access to education, child protection and psychosocial services**
  - Remote lesson support, books and materials
  - Adequate, alternative care arrangements including counselling and helplines
- **By providing critical hygiene and medical supplies for the health-care system**
  - Critical hygiene, medical and prevention supplies to support the control of transmission
  - Procurement of personal protection equipment and other health supplies

### CONTRIBUTIONS IN-KIND FOR GOODS, SERVICES AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES



#### GOODS

For the COVID-19 pandemic response, **the supply of personal protective equipment** is critical because of increasing demand and export restrictions for these commodities. UNICEF is working with suppliers globally to source additional products and with relevant authorities to waive export bans for life-saving supplies.



**More details about the supply and logistics challenges** UNICEF is facing can be found on the corporate website.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <[https://www.unicef.org/supply/index\\_68059.html](https://www.unicef.org/supply/index_68059.html)> and <<https://www.unicef.org/supply/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>>

For businesses wishing to contribute to the relief efforts by providing in-kind goods or services, **UNICEF currently needs these products:**<sup>2</sup>

- Personal protective equipment: surgical face masks, N95 masks, gowns, coveralls, gloves, goggles
- Other medical equipment: oxygen sets, pulse oximeters, infra-red thermometers



### TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

The COVID-19 outbreak is having an unprecedented impact on air freight operations globally. Most countries and regions are increasingly placing restrictions on international transport. Limitations to arrange air freight resulting from reduced airline carrying capacity for passengers and supplies is presently the biggest challenge for UNICEF and humanitarian logistics operations, including for the uninterrupted supply of vaccines. The disruption has affected international supply chains, causing bottlenecks, delays and higher costs in delivery of emergency and life-saving supplies for humanitarian and development programmes. UNICEF is reviewing global cargo aircraft capacity and coverage and is working with country offices, freight forwarders and partners in prioritizing shipments and arranging charter operations as needed for delivery of emergency and critical supplies.

UNICEF anticipates that a substantial number of donated flights or charters will be required over the next weeks to support the delivery of vaccines, personal protective equipment and other essential supplies currently affected by the disruption of airfreight. Donated charters, either through funding for UNICEF to arrange or through donation of services and assets, are therefore UNICEF's main requirement to support its logistics operations. Charters will be required from the main regions where vaccines and other commodities originate – Europe (Belgium, Holland, France, Denmark), India and China – to the regions and countries in which UNICEF operates. Destinations and timelines for these donated charter operations will be defined as the needs become clearer and depending on partners' capacities. In most cases, UNICEF will consolidate the various goods to ensure sufficient cargo to maximize aircraft capacity and supply of essential commodities to children.



For further information about contribution for kind in goods and transportation services, please contact Ms. Bronwyn Williams at [bawilliams@unicef.org](mailto:bawilliams@unicef.org) and Mr. Diego Cid at [dcid@unicef.org](mailto:dcid@unicef.org).



### IN-KIND SERVICES

Supporting our human resource capacity through provision of in-kind pro bono services - to support health, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and child protection programmes - can help us to stay and deliver, where help is most needed. UNICEF can work with private sector companies to determine opportunities for collaboration, by leveraging the core competencies of companies and the people who work for them. Our work should be needs driven and solutions orientated bringing together private sector expertise and resources to UNICEF so that we can work together.



For further information about in-kind services, please contact Ms. Eilish Hurley [ehurley@unicef.org](mailto:ehurley@unicef.org)

### How in-kind resources can help

UNICEF purchases the most appropriate supplies for children and has in place strategic and best value-for-money procurement and distribution systems. In-kind contributions, therefore, are most useful when:

- They are requested and fit an expressed need;
- They are new, of high quality and fit for purpose;
- They are accompanied by a financial donation to cover the cost of transport and in-country distribution, installation, maintenance and commissioning/training for proper use and monitoring;
- They assist UNICEF in delivering on its mandate. For a list of items that UNICEF procures, please refer to the [Supply Catalogue](#);
- They are planned through a long-term agreement with an organization in advance of an emergency;
- They are legal in the country of destination and carry a benefit that clearly exceeds the cost of handling.

<sup>2</sup> The required technical specifications can be found in UNICEF's Supply Catalogue: <<https://supply.unicef.org>>

## SUPPORT TO ADVOCACY EFFORTS

UNICEF is working alongside its partners to slow the spread of COVID-19 and minimize its effects. But UNICEF is increasingly concerned about the impact of COVID-19 response measures on the most vulnerable children and their families. Urgent action is required to protect these children, to ensure this pandemic does not threaten child health and well-being, damage education and put already vulnerable children further in harm's way. Through concerted national action – and through global solidarity – child rights can be upheld and millions more families prevented from falling below the poverty line. Businesses are critical to this effort, to amplify the voices of children within their spheres of influence; leveraging *their* voice and leadership; helping UNICEF design innovative solutions; and supporting employees in this challenging time.



### HELP UNICEF ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN

- **Keep children healthy.** Overburdened health systems are not only struggling to cope with COVID-19, but in the poorest parts of the world, child survival is also in jeopardy. Help UNICEF keep maternal, newborn and child health a priority.
- **Promote hand washing and reach vulnerable children with water, sanitation and hygiene.** Children can be kept safe from COVID-19 by making sure key messages on hygiene and hand washing continue to reach them. But many children and their families struggle to access basic water and hygiene facilities, so UNICEF is issuing an urgent call for funding and support for children without these facilities – especially those living in slums or on the street.
- **Keep children learning.** Parents, caregivers and educators have responded heroically to school closures, finding new ways to keep children learning. Help UNICEF support these efforts by designing new remote-learning solutions and championing the needs of vulnerable children.
- **Support families to cover their needs and care for their children.** The economic impact of COVID-19 is profound. Many children already live in poverty, and the socio-economic fall-out of this crisis risks plunging these children further into financial and economic hardship. It is critical to continue promoting responsible workplace practices – including through family-friendly policies – and government social protection measures that support vulnerable workers and their families.
- **Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse.** For many of the most vulnerable children, school closures, social distancing and heightened family and community stress caused by COVID-19 present a danger to their physical and mental well-being. Child protection and other support services must be ramped up quickly and plans for social distancing must put the most vulnerable children first.
- **Protect refugee and migrant children and those affected by conflict.** In many cases, these already vulnerable children do not have access to key services or are living in cramped conditions where social distancing is not possible. As the global community responds to COVID-19, special attention must be paid to these children's needs.

#### How business can support advocacy efforts

- Through community-based communication, mass media and social media and youth platforms such as [U-Report](#);
- By using their voice and influence to help UNICEF make the case to decision makers;
- By providing UNICEF a platform and/or advertisement space to disseminate advocacy messages;
- By implementing responsible business practices and family-friendly policies.

JOIN US



# IN PRACTICE: ACTIONS BUSINESSES CAN TAKE TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

## A TO-DO LIST FOR COMPANIES

Given the unprecedented scale of this crisis, UNICEF is rallying every business – small, medium-sized or large company – to do whatever it can to anticipate and mitigate negative impacts on children. **THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW.**

Children are key stakeholders of business. Companies interact with children every day, as workers, consumers and community members. Business has enormous power to improve children's lives through the way in which it operates facilities, develops and markets products, provides services, and influences economic and social development, even more so in the context of humanitarian crises. Companies of all sizes, therefore, have a role to play. They can contribute to reducing the impact of the pandemic on millions of children living in areas severely affected by the spread of COVID-19 or in areas that are in danger of facing its spread.

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES?

So far, relatively few cases of COVID-19 have been reported among children. Children are mostly affected by the pandemic in indirect ways, as it can **affect their primary caregivers, parents, grand-parents and family**. In addition, children can suffer from possible **stigma resulting from family members' infections**.

The pandemic also affects children **as schools are closed and access to education is disrupted**. Children are asked to remain in **physical distancing or confinement** for long periods. Separated children with no appropriate childcare environment are at **increased risk of child abuse and trafficking** or other child protection concerns.

Due to the closure of businesses and the overall impact on countries' economies, children risk **being deprived of basic services such as access to food, water and health care**. Children living in areas with already weak basic services, and from poor and vulnerable families, are especially at risk. Compared to adults, **children bear a disproportionate psychosocial effect from these circumstances** and can face life-long psychosocial trauma.

## THE ROLE OF BUSINESS IN SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Companies can help reduce the impact of COVID-19 on children, adolescents and their families:

- As employers of mothers and fathers of children of all ages, from infants to teenagers;
- As providers of essential services, such as health, food, water and energy, to communities in which children live;
- As experts in child-related sectors such as education, sports, entertainment, food and communication.

Below are **TO-DO LISTS of practical FAMILY PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS** that companies can take **immediately** to support families and children.

- The first to-do list is for **ALL companies**, regardless of size.
- An additional to-do list is for companies in the **business of essential services** (health, social work, water and sanitation, food and essential goods, energy, ICT, road repair, banks, payroll).
- An additional to-do list is for companies in the **business of communication, media, ICT**.

Whatever the stage of the pandemic in your country, **start preparing now by minimizing the impact of COVID-19 on children.**

## FOR ALL COMPANIES

### TO-DO LIST TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**Communicate information from trusted sources to your employees and their families/children** (using posters, flyers, email, radio) in a child-appropriate way about hygiene behaviours and physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, stigma prevention, disease symptoms and preparedness measures.

#### Hygiene behaviours

### Protect yourself and loved ones from coronavirus.

**Wash** your hands regularly with **soap** and **water**.

**Cover** your mouth and nose while **sneezing** or **coughing**.



**Avoid close contact** with anyone who has a cold or flu-like symptoms.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, **seek medical care early**.

#### Physical distancing behaviours

Postpone events and staff meetings, advise employees not to participate in social gatherings, and proscribe unnecessary travel (unless for a medical emergency). If the virus spreads, all should remain confined at home with their children and with drastic limitation of contact with other people.

#### Prevent stigma

- Do NOT talk about people “transmitting” or “spreading” COVID-19 virus. Instead, talk about people “contracting” or “affected” by COVID-19, and “treated” or “recovering from” COVID-19.
- Do NOT associate the disease with any specific group (ethnic, minority or religious) but say “anyone is susceptible to contracting the virus”.
- Do NOT repeat unconfirmed rumours and do NOT use language that generates fear such as “plague”, or “apocalypse”. Instead, repeat scientific and preventive messages such as, “By protecting myself, I protect others”.

### Disease facts

With up to 21 incubation days, anyone (even children) can contract the virus. Children get very mild or no symptoms, while parent and caregivers can become sick and the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions can be severely affected or die. It is important to care for the elderly and the most vulnerable.

### Disease symptoms

Anyone with symptoms – mild fever (between 38 and 38.5 degrees Celsius), a dry cough and respiratory problems – should stay home, increase physical distancing (even with family members) and call emergency service before going to the hospital.

### Family preparedness measures

Identify emergency numbers and where to be tested and treated. Identify alternative care for children in case parents, caregivers or grandparents are infected, and avoid having the elderly care for children. Keep track of family/colleagues' alternative care contact numbers.

**Enable flexible work arrangements (e.g. work from home or 'compressed work' with full pay)** and diminished workload for mothers, fathers and/or caregivers to take care of children when schools are closed, for workers aged 50 and more, for staff with pre-existing medical conditions and for pregnant women.

**Keep workplaces clean and safe and ensure hygiene messaging and items are available** (hand-washing facilities and toilets with clean running water, soap, a trash bin with a lid, or hand sanitizers with 60 per cent alcohol if running water is not available). Ensure clean breastfeeding and child-care facilities.

**Support ALL employee families by supplying hygiene items** (soap, tissues, safe water, hand sanitizers with 60 per cent alcohol), **health care** for children under 5 years old, pregnant women and staff with medical conditions, **and services** such as water, food/nutrition (complying with physical distancing measures).

**Help employees to pre-identify 'support networks'** (e.g. groups of non-infected relatives or staff, avoiding the elderly) to care for infected workers' children. Prepare to **help employees/relatives that become ill** to seek medical care and assist with transport if needed.

**Encourage education/entertainment support and positive relationships in the family during the confinement period** (e.g. older siblings entertaining/educating younger ones, playing board games, talking, etc.). Provide free education or play material to employees' families.

**Support local health facilities by providing free supplies as needed** (masks, sanitizers, respiratory devices) or services (energy, ICT, water and sanitation).

**Prepare plans to avoid job losses – consider priority support to low-income employees with children, informal workers and small and medium-sized suppliers.** Consider providing **health subsidies to affected employees and families.** Communicate the support measures DURING the confinement situation.

**Share this list of family preparedness measures with supply chain/other companies and business networks** (such as chambers of commerce, industry or business networks, or associations).

For more information about family-friendly policies in the workplace, please refer to the [Recommendations for Employers on Family-Friendly Policies and Other Good Workplace Practices in the Context of COVID-19](#), published by UNICEF, ILO and UN Women.

IN ADDITION to the above:

### If your business is an **ESSENTIAL SERVICE** (health, social work, water and sanitation, food and essential goods, energy, ICT, road repair, bank, payroll)

1. **Start preparing for implementing the Business Continuity Plan to ensure continuity of essential services, especially in remote and the poorest areas where the poorest or most vulnerable families live** (pre-identify essential staff and alternates and essential suppliers, and prepare to ensure continuity of their operations, including point 3 below).
2. **Purchase basic hygiene and protective equipment (masks, gloves) for health and social workers** that will remain in contact with patients (people who have contracted COVID-19 or vulnerable people, such as the elderly or those with pre-existing medical conditions).
3. **Support essential staff to identify day care or, if necessary, set up a day-care system for children of essential staff**, in small groups of maximum 4 to 5 children (complying with physical distancing measures).
4. Health centres and food and pharmaceutical shops: **Ensure compliance with physical distancing and set up priority lines for the elderly, pregnant women and women with children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable people.**

### If your business is related to **MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA, ICT and children/young people**

1. **Communicate widely to children and young people** in a child-appropriate manner about hygiene, distancing behaviours to prevent the spread of the virus, stigma prevention, symptoms and preparedness measures. **(C.f. Point 1 above.)**
2. **Provide free educational games, TV/radio programmes and remote entertainment for children.**
3. **Support the continuity of education for teachers and students to remain in virtual connection through free online platforms, by telephone or by using other innovative mechanisms.**
4. **Ensure child online safety to protect children from abuse and exposure to harmful digital content.**

## LOOKING AHEAD

Whether or not your business is currently affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, your company should consider preparing and mitigating future risks by:

- **Incorporating family-sensitive preparedness measures into the Business Continuity Plan** to prepare for the next possible pandemic, disaster or climate change-related risk;
- Ensuring that **business operations are protecting the environment and ecosystems**, as all companies and institutions have a responsibility to help prevent pandemics and disasters.



About UNICEF's COVID-19 response: <[www.unicef.org/coronavirus/Covid-19](http://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/Covid-19)>