



May 25, 2020

unicef   
for every child

## UNICEF Flash Report

### COVID-19 Impact on Children in Ukraine

## Key Highlights and Advocacy Points

- Rapidly increasing child poverty (with [UNICEF estimates](#) of an additional 1.4 million children falling into poverty in 2020 because of COVID-19) requires immediate extraordinary **social protection measures**, including the possibility of temporary **universal payments for all households with children**.
- UNICEF is appealing to the Government of Ukraine to **scale up testing** and case tracing and put in place a **solid treatment protocol** to address the COVID-19 pandemic.
- From 22 May, Ukraine is expected to [transfer](#) to adaptive quarantine, which provides a gradual lifting of quarantine restrictions in certain territories. UNICEF recommends strengthening the evidence for such a decision and introducing contingency measures for these territories.
- UNICEF is deeply alarmed by [increased attacks on schools and child casualties](#) in eastern Ukraine during the pandemic.

## Overview of Child Rights



### Health and Nutrition

- The immunization programme is [reportedly interrupted](#) in many regions due to COVID-19. When children miss scheduled vaccinations, the risk of infectious disease outbreaks increases. UNICEF advocates — using every opportunity possible — to continue immunization and ensure a safe and protective environment following the “do not harm” principle. UNICEF is currently analyzing the availability of vaccines, to avoid stock-outs in the context of the delayed 2020 state budget disbursement.
- According to media reports, 51 newborn babies born to Ukrainian surrogate mothers are stranded in a hotel in Kyiv because their parents are not allowed to enter the country. UNICEF and partners are monitoring the situation related to surrogacy arrangements in Ukraine, including cases of violation of rights.



### Education

- Around 6.5 million children are affected by the closure of educational institutions, including preschoolers, following a Ministry of Education and Science decision on March 12 due to COVID-19. The Government launched television lessons for Grades 1-11 to ensure continuity of education; however, distance education options remain challenging for children with disabilities.
- Many children living in frontline communities in eastern Ukraine and/or remote communities with limited connectivity and informational technology equipment are left with no real options to continue their education.

## Epidemics Trends

As reported by Public Health Centre of Ukraine



**21, 245**

COVID-19 cases [are confirmed](#), 7,234 patients have recovered, and 623 have died as of 25 May.



Health care workers account for a fifth of cases. At least 28 healthcare professionals died.



**1,546**

children have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

**262** of them required hospitalization, including one child who needed ventilation.



The regions with the highest numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases are Kyiv city and oblast (20 per cent), Chernivtsi (14 per cent), Rivne (7 per cent), and Ivano-Frankivsk (6 per cent).



### Child Protection

- On 20 May, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a decision to reopen preschools from 25 May based on a phased approach in line with both national and local epidemiological situations. It is expected that preschools will start by opening 1-2 groups to test the new safety rules, which are yet to be issued by the Chief Sanitary Doctor.
- 42,000 children, including children with disabilities, [were sent](#) back home from boarding schools as a result of COVID-19 measures taken by the Ministry of Education. This was done without prior verification of the family conditions that the children returned to. Many children returned to homes where they are at risk of abuse and neglect and/or difficult economic conditions.
- There are reports that the outbreak is also affecting child care institutions and other alternative care arrangements. Recently, 81 students and staff members [tested](#) positive for COVID-19 in Kyiv's Darnytsia residential care institution for girls with disabilities. Of these, 53 were female residents aged from 7 to 35. The institution has now been shut down for quarantine.
- Data provided by UNICEF partners indicates that one third of calls reported to national hotline for children, supported by UNICEF, relate to mental health and the psychosocial well-being of children. 21 per cent of calls relate to violence against children.

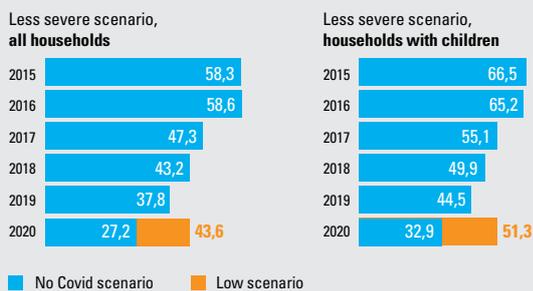


## Social Protection and Well-being

- According to UNICEF projections, the poverty rate in Ukraine is [expected](#) to increase significantly in 2020 due to the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with 6.3 million more people falling into the poverty, of whom 1.4 million will be children.
- The analysis indicates that absolute poverty is likely to increase from 27 per cent to 44 per cent. The impact on child poverty is estimated to be even larger: the expected rise is from 33 per cent to 51 per cent.
- UNICEF calls upon the President, Parliament, Government, and all local governments to develop short- and long-term social protection strategies. As an immediate measure, UNICEF is proposing considering the possibility of temporary universal payments to all households with children.

### 1.4 million children in Ukraine will fall into poverty because of COVID-19

Poverty rate of all households with children in Ukraine, projection for less severe scenario



## Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

- Access to water in many settlements, in particular in eastern Ukraine, that are not connected to centralized water supply is jeopardized as a result of the quarantine measures. Not having access to a reliable water supply puts the population at risk of disease outbreaks, especially in communities relying on water trucking and/or on public wells (13 per cent of the population).
- Hygiene materials, while available, are expensive and vulnerable groups have to prioritize when buying basic commodities. In eastern Ukraine, 1 per cent of households report lack of access to hygiene materials, with this figure rising to 5 per cent within 5km of the 'contact line'.<sup>1</sup>
- According to a recent survey<sup>2</sup> conducted in Donbas region, 26 per cent of health facilities have problems with their main source of water for cleaning, including 2 of 14 of designated hospitals.
- Infection prevention and control needs to be significantly improved in health care and educational facilities in Ukraine, in particular to improve protection of health care workers and other frontline responders during the epidemics.

## Situation in Eastern Ukraine

- Despite the pandemic, the parties to the conflict continue to violate the ceasefire agreement every day. The situation has seriously deteriorated in recent weeks, resulting in civilian casualties, including children, and damage to school buildings and private houses.
- Ten conflict-related child casualties were reported since the beginning of this year, with six incidents occurring during the first week of May. This is double the number of child casualties in the same period last year.
- Nine attacks on schools have also been reported since the beginning of 2020, with five occurring in April alone.

During one incident, a 17-year-old girl was injured by shrapnel while in her schoolyard.

- Due to restrictions imposed by the Government and the de facto authorities, several small and remote communities are cut off from main services and supplies. Children living in these communities are experiencing challenges accessing education, health and basic services.
- Humanitarian access to the non-government-controlled areas remains restricted. UNICEF operations are impacted to a certain extent, but UNICEF field offices remain operational. However, UNICEF staff cannot travel to these areas, and there are serious barriers to sending in humanitarian and operational convoys to both Donetsk and Luhansk.

## Promising Practices and Solutions:

- With UNICEF support, Public Health Centre [introduced](#) new tools for COVID-19 data collection and analysis. This will enable better visualization of information about the situation and modelling of possible scenarios.
- UNICEF [launched](#) a solidarity campaign addressing stigma and social inclusion for COVID-19 first-line responders and affected families, with social media content and outdoor displays throughout Ukraine.
- Ukraine [will become](#) one of the three first countries to launch the Learning Passport platform, the joint project by UNICEF and Microsoft to help children and youth affected by COVID-19 continue their education at home. UNICEF [is also supporting](#) television lessons for primary school students and translation of online lessons for Grades 1-11 into sign language. Together with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF [developed](#) the lessons on COVID-19 for distance learning.
- UNICEF, in partnership with Ministry of Social Policy, is planning a comprehensive response programme to address the needs of the families to which 42,000 children from boarding schools had been returned, including support to social workforce and improvement of child protection case management. UNICEF is supporting the Ministry to mobilize resources from the private sector to provide protective equipment for frontline social workers.
- With support from the private sector in Ukraine, UNICEF [procured](#) hygiene supplies, medical and personal protective equipment for hospitals in eastern Ukraine for over US\$500,000. UNICEF also [provided](#) personal protective equipment to social workers in conflict-torn eastern Ukraine, who are particularly at risk during the pandemic.
- Together with partners, UNICEF launched an e-voucher programme for health care facilities as part of the COVID-19 response. Overall, 66 health care facilities in eastern Ukraine received e-vouchers for amounts ranging from US\$192 to US\$2,812, which they used to place orders for hygiene and cleaning supplies.
- UNICEF is scaling up its education campaign on COVID-19 in non-government-controlled areas by promoting tailored social media materials on preventive behaviors. As of 10 May 2020, UNICEF content on COVID-19 related practices reached 2 million people, with over 5 million impressions.
- UNICEF [supported](#) the COVID-19 challenge hackathon, organized by the Ministry of Digital Transformation and business associations. Over 445 participants united into teams to develop innovative solutions to the pandemic in the country.

## Funds

UNICEF is currently appealing for US\$23,000,000 for the COVID-19 response in Ukraine, in addition to an existing humanitarian appeal of US\$9,800,000 to support families with children in the conflict-affected east. As of yet, only 27 per cent of the 2020 Humanitarian Appeal for Children is funded.

For more information, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> WASH Cluster Assessment 2019

<sup>2</sup> RaHFA: Rapid Health Facility Assessment, April 2020, REACH