



UNICEF-IFRC-CRP/Panama/2020/Vial

Programmatic reporting period: April 22 to June 30, 2020
 Situation in figures: June 30, 2020

Panamá

COVID-19

Situation Report No.2

for every child

Highlights

- In alliance with local organizations, UNICEF implemented psychosocial support and life skills programs for children and adolescents in marginal urban areas.
- UNICEF made a "Call to Action" to prevent the COVID-19 crisis from becoming a crisis of children and adolescents.
- A nationally representative household survey was conducted by UNICEF in order to find out the main needs of families with children and adolescents during the COVID-19 crisis.
- UNICEF continued to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education on emergency management and for implementing the National Plan for Return to School.
- UNICEF maintained WASH, maternal health and protection services for extra-continental migrants at the borders.

Situation

113 days after the detection of the first positive COVID-19 case in Panama, the rate of cases per 100,000 inhabitants is 784, the third highest in Latin America and the Caribbean, behind Chile and Peru. In the last two weeks, there has been the fastest increase in cases since the start of the pandemic, after the opening of a few economic sectors. Most of the positive cases have occurred in urban regions characterized by high levels of poverty, overcrowding and social exclusion.

Schools nationwide remain closed and the Ministry of Education announced the official reestablishment of distance educational processes beginning July 20. A total of 2,531 extracontinental migrants in transit through Panama continue to be trapped in Migratory Reception Stations near the borders with Colombia and Costa Rica, and 757 of them are children and adolescents.

To understand the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on children and adolescents, UNICEF in Panama carried out a nationally representative telephone survey (excluding Darien and indigenous comarcas) of 1,000 households. Results suggest that, in the last month, families with children and adolescents have experienced significant deprivations, such as:

- **77% of households declared total or partial loss of income due to COVID-19.** This percentage increases to 89% in households of the lowest socioeconomic level (with an average monthly income of \$400 or less).
- **47% of households reported having less food than usual in the last month.** This percentage increases to 68% in households of the lowest socioeconomic level.
- Among those who declared having less food, in **59% the amount and / or type of food for children and adolescents was affected.**

Situation in Figures

33,550 (784 per 100,000)
Positive cases of COVID-19 nationwide

631
Number of deaths from COVID-19

12
Number of deaths from COVID-19 in under 20

905,065
Number of boys and girls impacted by the closure of schools

- **Half of households (53%) reported that their children or adolescents received some type of distance education in the last 15 days.** This percentage decreases slightly in households of the lowest socioeconomic level (46%). Households with children in private schools showed a higher percentage (68%) of access to distance education than households with children in public schools (59%).
- **1 in 5 households declared having required medical attention in the last month.** Of these, 19% could not access medical services and 26% experienced delays.
- **1 in 3 stated that there was some kind of conflict in the home in the last month.**

Funding Summary

The need for \$1.5 million in funding remains in order to sustain UNICEF's Response Plan in Panama, as reflected in the review of the [Humanitarian Action for Children \(HAC\)](#) for UNICEF's Global Response released in May 2020.

Leadership, Coordination and Humanitarian Strategy

UNICEF in Panama coordinates its response within the structure of the United Nations Country Team, which is now operating as a Crisis Management Team. UNICEF has an active role in the elaboration of the Inter-Agency Plan for Socioeconomic Response of the United Nations System in Panama. The interventions are carried out by informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in coordination with its government counterparts, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Government, the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family (SENNIAF) and the National Border Service (SENAFRONT). The private sector is an important ally for the execution and amplification of the actions described.

Summary of the Response

LINE 1: Limit transmission and protect people from exposure to COVID-19

1.1. Risk communication

UNICEF continues to disseminate general information on COVID-19, handwashing and respiratory hygiene on social media, reaching 105,631 views in the reporting period. UNICEF website in Panama on COVID-19 continues to be a reliable and up-to-date source of information for children, adolescents, caregivers and teachers.

1.2. Delivery of personal protection equipment and others

Regarding personal protection equipment, in the reporting period UNICEF has delivered 3,000 KN95 masks, 500 surgical gowns and 20,000 disposable gloves for the protection of the Ministry of Health personnel in Darien, and 12,000 surgical masks for the protection of National Border Service (SENAFRONT) personnel.

The migrants in transit currently in Darien have been unable to continue their journey north due to the closure of the borders. To contribute to providing decent living conditions within the Migration Reception Stations (ERM), UNICEF has delivered to the Ministry of Health and SENAFRONT a total of 2,500 mosquito nets, 6 tents, 1,500 mattresses and 100 sets of pillows, sheets and towels.

LINE 2: Minimize socio-economic effects of the crisis

1.1. Access to continuing education

UNICEF supports continuing education through the development and dissemination of materials for learning at home, especially for boys and girls in early childhood; technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to implement its distance education plan; and managerial support to the Ministry of Education in the definition of reopening scenarios, biosafety protocols, curricular adaptations and evidence generation. UNICEF has a team of multidisciplinary specialists who support the Ministry of Education to achieve these goals.

In the reporting period, the production of the storytelling series "*Leemos un Cuento*" continues for boys and girls from 0 to 8 years old, and the dissemination of messages about education for parents and caregivers also continues. The stories and messages are broadcast on cable television thanks to UNICEF's alliance with Millicom-Tigo and on radio / television thanks to UNICEF's alliance with Medcom. Messages from Sesame Street have also been disseminated, and in partnership with the private sector, UNICEF has participated in different forums on the subject of education and early

childhood, with allies such as Sumarse-Pacto Global, Terpel and the American Chamber of Industries and Commerce of Panama.

[1.2. Child Protection](#)

Official data from the Public Ministry, analyzed by UNICEF in Panama, suggest decreases between 22% to 30% in complaints of mistreatment and sexual violence against children and adolescents, comparatively between March 2019 and March 2020, and between 73% to 79% between April 2019 and April 2020. This drastic decrease suggests that victims may be having difficulties filing complaints for various reasons, among which we highlight mobility restrictions, lack of transportation and lack of information on telephone reporting channels. UNICEF advocates with responsible institutions to reduce gaps in access to reporting channels.

To contribute to the protection of children and adolescents in marginal urban areas, UNICEF implements psychosocial support and life skills programs. Through the Voces Vitales Foundation, UNICEF offers psychological care, newborn care and empowerment courses for pregnant adolescents in poverty. With the Espacio Creativo Foundation, prepaid cards for internet connection and food vouchers are offered to families, knowledge on prevention of abuse and violence online is reinforced, reading comprehension is strengthened and dance classes are offered to children and adolescents.

Finally, in the second week of June, the webinar “Safe Digital Experiences for Boys, Girls and Adolescents” was held in alliance with Millicom-Tigo. This event had 178 participants who completed the entire webinar and more than 240 total users, of which 77% indicated having children or adolescents in their care.

[1.3. Services for migrants in transit](#)

In the reporting period, UNICEF delivered 5,760,000 liters of drinking water to the migrant population, host population, and officials in Darien. It also delivered 6,821 hygiene kits to the migrant population at the Darien and Chiriquí Immigration Reception Stations, as well as to the host communities of Bajo Chiquito and Peñita.

UNICEF offered an average of 300 maternal and child health care appointments, which reduced the risk of malnutrition. At the same time, UNICEF contributed to strengthening the implementation of the delivery and postpartum protocol, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, PAHO and UNFPA.

Finally, in coordination with UNHCR, UNICEF influenced and supported the management of cases to avoid the risk of statelessness for 17 children born in Darién during their stay in the Immigration Reception Stations, obtaining access to documents for 11 of them.

For more information on our migration response, see a specific Situation Report at this link:
<https://www.unicef.org/panama/documents/reporte-tem%c3%a1tico-ni%c3%b1ez-y-migraci%c3%b3n-no-2>

[LINE 3: Generating evidence to advocate for the rights of children during the crisis](#)

On June 5, UNICEF launched "[A Call to Action](#)" for children in Panama: [Observations and recommendations to ensure a health crisis does not become a crisis of the rights of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 emergency](#). This document, presented at a forum with the participation of the IDB, the Minister of Social Development and civil organizations, is a succinct analysis of the situation in different areas of children's rights during the COVID-19 pandemic with recommendations to mitigate or reduce risks. The “Call to Action” has generated [television interviews](#) and [mentions of UNICEF in top-tier media](#).

Together with *Aliados por la Niñez*, an advocacy group made up of civil organizations, companies and international organizations that promote the rights of children and adolescents, UNICEF conducted a survey of 300 adolescent beneficiaries of their organizations to learn about their experiences during the COVID-19 crisis. Adolescents had the opportunity to share their experiences with distance education and the issues that most concern them. 30% of the participants expressed concern with delaying or losing the school year and 22% expressed sadness or concern with the current situation. The results of this survey will be presented in a communication campaign entitled "The Voice of Adolescents during the COVID-19 Crisis."

UNICEF is preparing to launch a series of Policy Briefs entitled “Dialogues for the Rights of Children and Adolescents”, which will be disseminated by various means over the next six months. Through a pro-bono alliance with the pollster Ditcher & Neira, a representative survey was carried out at the national level (excluding indigenous comarcas and Darién; margin of error 4%), to understand the opinion of the population (604 adults) on the issues which will appear at the “Dialogues”, offering a platform for “social listening”. According to this process of “social listening” to be presented in the Dialogues, 53% of the population thinks that the crisis caused by COVID-19 has affected children less than or equal to adults, 76% consider that health care centers and early childhood centers must remain open during the pandemic, and 70% believe that the State should invest in guaranteeing the well-being of children at this time.

Finally, we have carried out a national representative telephone survey of households (excluding indigenous comarcas and Darién; margin of error 3.1%), to find out the situation of families with children and adolescents during the COVID-19 crisis. A total of 1,000 families were surveyed between May 26 and June 9. A summary of the results in 5 areas (Health, Nutrition, Education, Child Protection and Social Protection) is found in the “Situation” section of this report. They will be presented locally and regionally in late June.

Next SitRep: To be defined

UNICEF Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office: www.unicef.org/lac

UNICEF LAC Facebook: www.facebook.com/uniceflac

UNICEF Global Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal: <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/covid-2019.html>

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