Highlights

- As of 02 October 2020, a total of 242,255 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 3,863 associated deaths (CFR: 1.6 per cent), were reported in West and Central Africa Region (WCAR).
- The WASH humanitarian sector response has provided safe water to 400,000 people and sanitation services to 182,000 people.
- A total of 1,112,676 children with severe acute malnutrition were admitted in health facility for treatment across the West and Central Africa region¹.

Situation Overview and Needs

The rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in West and Central Africa (WCAR) has slowed during the reporting period, with a 48 per cent decrease in new confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a 54 per cent decrease in new associated deaths compared to August 2020. However, the data need to be interpreted with caution as the testing capacities remain limited in most of countries of WCAR (Ghana and Senegal are among the top countries performing the highest number of test with respectively 15 tests/1,000 population and 10.43 tests/1,000 population, compared to Italy with 172.55 tests/1,000 population).

The five countries in WCAR reporting the highest number of confirmed cases are Nigeria (59,001), Ghana (46,656), Cameroon (20,838), Côte d'Ivoire (19,755) and Senegal (15,051). Between them, they represent 67 per cent of all confirmed cases. In WCAR, West Africa accounts for 72 per cent of all confirmed cases.

The average Case Fatality Rate (CFR) in the region stands at 1.6 per cent. The countries with the highest CFR include Chad (7.07 per cent), Liberia (6.11 per cent), Niger (5.76 per cent), Mali (4.18 per cent) and Sierra Leone (3.22 per cent).

Infection among health care workers remains an issue with 20 per cent of all infected health workers reported in Africa coming from WCAR. The highest proportion of infected health workers among confirmed cases can be found in Liberia (16 per cent), Niger (15 per cent), Guinea-Bissau (12 per cent), Sao Tome & Principe (10 per cent) and Sierra Leone (10 per cent).

¹ Data available from January to July for 14 countries out of 20 in the region.
Coordination and Partnerships

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF continues to support governments in the development, fine tuning and implementation of their COVID-19 response plans. UNICEF’s Regional Office and all UNICEF Country Offices have developed and are implementing dedicated response strategies that contribute to outbreak control as well as to mitigate secondary impacts of the pandemic. These include support to Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), provision of critical WASH-Infection Prevention Control (IPC) materials and the continuity of essential health, socio-economic response and recovery for making sure children’s rights and needs are well addressed, as well as the social services for children, adolescents, women and vulnerable populations. UNICEF is leading the coordination of regional partners’ support on RCCE pillar, and co-leading on Operational Coordination, case management, WASH/IPC, and logistic & operational support.

UNICEF’s COVID-19 response

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

The UNICEF-led WCAR RCCE working group organized two media webinars on the use of masks and fear of health care in English and French with over 100 journalists from the region. UNICEF led a series of five webinars for national RCCE leads and members in Benin, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Togo on how the RCCE COVID-19 experience can be used to prevent or respond to other non-public health crisis.

Medical and WASH supplies, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 7.9 million people in WCAR have been reached with critical WASH services out of 12.2 million people targeted (65 per cent progress), including an estimated 5 million people who are living in crisis-affected areas. More than 167,400 healthcare facility staff and community health workers were trained in infection prevention and control procedures (41 per cent of target). The regional WASH/IPC response is 44 per cent funded, with USD 46 million received out of USD 104 million required.

Supply

UNICEF conducted seven webinars to support countries in development of supply chain integration roadmaps for the nutrition response. This benefited staff in 10 countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Cameroon, Chad, CAR, DRC and Senegal). Following a devastating warehouse fire with loss of all stocks in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, UNICEF was able to restock its supplies from the sub-regional warehouse in Accra. UNICEF has continued to deliver life-saving supplies and assistance, after advocating for humanitarian exemptions from sanctions imposed by the regional organization ECOWAS in reaction to the 18 August military coup d’etat.

Health

The regional working group on immunization for West and Central Africa, in which UNICEF participates, has begun preparing for the expected roll-out of COVID-19 vaccination. The initiative, known as COVAX2, is aligned around five pillars:

1. Vaccine regulation, registration & safety monitoring
2. Country decision making, equitable vaccine service vaccine delivery & implementation
3. Surveillance, data, monitoring & evaluation
4. Risk communication and community engagement
5. Supply chain, logistics and vaccine forecasting

COVAX is the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator the ACT Accelerator is a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

COVAX is co-led by Gavi, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and WHO. Its aim is to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, and to guarantee fair and equitable access for every country in the world.
Ongoing work include establishment of coordination platforms and mechanisms and readiness assessment at the country level.

Nutrition

UNICEF continues to lead the Regional Nutrition Working Group and its Nutrition-In-Emergency sub-group, while also co-leading the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG).

As of late July 2020, a total of 1,112,676 children with severe acute malnutrition were admitted in health facilities for treatment across the West and Central Africa region. This represents 30 per cent of the expected 2020 target (estimated at 4.9 million) and a decrease of 12 per cent compared to the same period last year. Analysis is being carried out to understand if the decrease can be attributed to COVID-19/fears of presenting in health facilities or if there are other reasons.

A Rapid Nutrition SMART survey carried out in July 2020 in conflict-affected communes of northern Burkina Faso showed a dire nutritional situation. The prevalence of global acute malnutrition in two sites surveys, Gorom-Gorom (Sahel region) and Barsalogho IDP site (Centre-Nord region), exceeded the WHO emergency threshold of 15 per cent, at 18.4 per cent and 16.1 per cent respectively. The alarming situation is attributed to several aggravating factors including populations displacement, limited access to basic social services, and reduced access to livelihoods as a result of conflict and COVID-19. Meanwhile, COVID-related movement/contact restrictions have resulted in the cancellation or postponement of many Vitamin A supplementation campaigns, leading to a 75 per cent decrease in results in the first half of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. The absence of Vitamin A supplementation further increases the risk of morbidity and mortality among children under five.

Education

All countries in the region have been moving forward with the gradual re-opening of schools since June. Twenty-one countries opened schools for the 2019-2020 end-of-year exams, while three countries (Benin, CAR and Mauritania) fully re-opened to complete the school year. For the 2020-2021 school year, twelve countries have decided on a date for their re-opening.

UNICEF’s multi-sectoral approach to support the re-opening of schools has relied on close cooperation between different programmatic sections (education, WASH, child protection, nutrition, health, and adolescent teams) to help country offices engage in advocacy, planning, and implementation of activities.

Child protection

Child protection interventions continue to be implemented in close coordination with other UNICEF activities, combining core child protection messages on the prevention of violence, FGM and child marriage and available services with COVID-19 prevention messages. Social workers and community leaders have been trained as frontline workers to support the most vulnerable children with COVID-19 prevention, and facilities such as civil registration centers, detention centers, residential care facilities, foster families and childcare institutions across the region have been supplied with essential handwashing and hygiene materials.

As of 25 September, 34,000 children without parental or family care have been provided with alternative care, and 1.2 million children in the region have been directly reached with mental health and psychosocial support.

Adaptations to ongoing UNICEF programmes

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

The seventh round of the communities’ feedback revealed persisting mistrust of COVID-19 response, challenges in following the recommended prevention measures, and rumours about the existence of the disease. Among other activities,
the regional RCCE working group launched its first ever COVID-19 self e-learning tool specifically designed for the regional context.³

Funding Overview

UNICEF’s West and Central Africa region has raised USD 248 million out of the required USD 424 million to respond to COVID-19. The funding gap against UNICEF’s Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) in the region stands at 43 per cent.

![Funding Gap Graph](https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/en/#/)

External Media

UNICEF has sustained its efforts to assist children in the context of the pandemic. Stories were shared on supply deliveries, the findings of the WASH in schools report, and an article from The Lancet on malnutrition.

West and Central Africa COVID-19 information site: [https://www.unicef.org/wca/coronavirus](https://www.unicef.org/wca/coronavirus)

UNICEF in action in West and Central Africa

![UNICEF in Action](https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/fr/#/)

A young girl washes her hands before returning to class after recess. As part of the Government of Ghana’s efforts in ensuring the education continues and in reducing the spread of the corona virus, final-year students were allowed to return to school to write their exams. Students were provided with masks to help curb the spread of the virus. Schools across the country have also been equipped with hand washing facilities and contactless thermometers. Students also practice physical distancing while in class.

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³ RCCE e-learning tool is a free access self-learning module on RCCE, that was drafted, tested and launched by the Regional RCCE Working Group led by UNICEF (Communication for Development - C4D team). It is updated and monitored based on the participants’ feedback. [https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/en/#/](https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/en/#/) and [https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/fr/#/](https://coronawestafrica.info/rcce/fr/#/)
Amadou Diallo, a 16-year-old boy, in the socio-educational health complex of Abobo, a suburban of Abidjan, in the South of Côte d’Ivoire. Amadou has been at the center for 2 months after a difficult period of 3 months living in the streets of Abidjan. He says: “I lived with my father in Conakry and wanted to become a professional football player. My father was told I could come to Abidjan to a football training camp. But when I arrived at the place of the woman who would take care of me I could not go to the school and had to work for her. I was accused all the time for things what disappeared and was beaten. One day I run away and survived in the streets. I met some friends, who helped me by giving food, and some times I could sleep at their place. One of his parents brought me in contact with a social worker and that’s how I arrived here in the center. I’m glad to be here, I have a bed to sleep, good food and they teach me things I didn’t knew. The center will find my parents and help me to travel back to Conakry to my father. I still dream to become a football player.” Social workers are preventing and responding to all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation of children. In this context, they train teams to meet street children to sensitize about COVID-19 and to offer them a space of protection and games. UNICEF supports this program for street children, led by the Program for the Protection of Adolescents and Vulnerable Children of the Ministry of Family, Women and Children, and also helps with family tracing and family reunification.

Côte d’Ivoire UNI362874
U-Reporters are raising awareness about COVID-19, in Man, in the west of Côte d’Ivoire. They distribute masks and aware people about the importance of hand washing.

Côte d’Ivoire UNI353907 (alternative)
U-Reporters are raising awareness about COVID-19, in the community of Cocody, a suburban of Abidjan, in the South of Côte d’Ivoire. The U-reporters distribute masks and aware people about the importance of hand washing and social distance.

Guinea UNI365047
Pierre Ngom, UNICEF Representative for Guinea visits the Centre for Treatment of Epidemics (CTEPI) in Boké, Guinea

DRC Congo UNI367492
Final year secondary school students sitting an exam in a context of COVID-19 in Kinshasa, DR Congo.
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