UNICEF in South Asia
COVID-19
Situation Report No.17

Reporting Period: September 30 – October 30, 2020

Highlights

- A total of 2,024,086 new cases were reported during the reporting period bringing the cumulative total to 9,053,536 confirmed cases and 136,263 deaths. While this represents a 29% increase compared to the previous reporting month, the overall situation shows a declining weekly and daily rates. For instance, the total new reported cases decreased by 15% across the region in the last week of October, compared to the previous week. However, Sri Lanka (with 190% increase) and Nepal (116% increase) new cases continue to spike and WHO is warning of a potential second wave in some of the countries.

- UNICEF support to continuous access of health and nutritional services has helped to reverse the trend of declining uptake of services as new data shows that monthly immunization service uptake has either normalized or surpassed pre-COVID-19 levels in Bangladesh and other countries.

- UNICEF has reached 27.4 million women and children including 100,698 Rohingya refugees with essential health care services (62% of the target) including immunization, prenatal and postnatal care, and SAM treatment (224,983 children).

- A total of 22.3 million people (92% of the target) including 307,744 refugees and migrants benefitted from WASH supplies and services as part of UNICEF infection prevention and control programme. In addition, an estimated 256,000 health workers have received personal protective equipment (PPEs) which are critical in protecting them and ensuring continued essential health services.

- UNICEF continues to support governments to safely re-open schools while at the same time providing homebased and online learning opportunities. A total of 63.5million children (66% target) have been reached with homebased learning including 171,631 refugee children.

- Over 1.5 million children, parents and primary caregivers are provided with community-based mental health and psychosocial support services including 18,747 provided with alternative care arrangements.

UNICEF’s Response Budget in South Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community engagement</th>
<th>90%</th>
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<tr>
<td>IPC &amp; WASH services</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential Health Care</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home based learning</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data and Research</td>
<td>36%</td>
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Situation in Numbers

- 2,024,086
  No. of new cases over the reporting period
  (SAARC DMC Oct 30, 2020)

- 9,053,536
  Total cases of COVID-19
  (SAARC DMC Oct 30, 2020)

- 1,000,000,000
  # of targeted population to be reached with risk messages by UNICEF response (ROSA Response Plan 2020)

- 94,000,000
  # of targeted children to be reached with home learning (UNICEF 2020)

UNICEF Appeal 2020
For South Asia
US$ 293.95 million

Funding Status (in US$)

| IPC & WASH services | 95% |
| Essential Health Care | 62% |
| Home based learning  | 67% |
| Data and Research    | 36% |

Funding gap, $110,156,510
Funds received, $149,289,172
Other resources, $24,416,578
Funding Overview and Partnerships
As part of a Global COVID-19 Appeal, UNICEF South Asia appeal stands at US$ 293.95 million to support government efforts and interventions to prevent the spread of the virus and respond to those that have been affected through provision of critical supplies and ensuring continuous access to essential health services and responding to the social economic impacts of the disease. This appeal is in line with the escalating needs due to the spread of COVID-19 in South Asia. UNICEF South Asia has so far received $149 million from the Asia Development Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, CERF, CIDA, DFAT, DFID, Facebook Foundation, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Government of Denmark, Government of Finland, Government of Germany (KFW), Government of Japan, London Stock Exchange, World Bank, UN Solidarity Fund, Standard Chartered Bank, Government of Sweden (SIDA), Unilever and Government of USA (USAID). In this COVID-19 response, partnership with IFIs has substantially expanded, with all country offices in the region benefitting from the generous contribution of the Banks to support government responses. In view of the worsening situation, additional funding is still urgently required to support government, communities and children to scale up intervention for preparedness and response to stop the spread of the virus and support government service delivery system and respond to social impacts of the pandemic which threaten to reverse development gains.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs
South Asia region recored a total of 2,024,086 new cases during the reporting period bringing the cumulative total to 9,053,536 confirmed cases and 136,263 deaths. This represents a 29% increase compared to the previous reporting month when cases increased by 73%. Apart from Nepal where new cases increased by 116% and Sri Lanka (190%), the overall situation across the region demonstrate a decreasing trend in the number of new cases. While India registered 1,863,068 new cases to bring the total to 8,088,851 cases, the monthly rate has significantly declined from 75% increase last month to 30% as shown in figure 2. Similarly, Bangladesh added 42,717 new cases (12% increase), Pakistan added 19,923 new cases (6% increase), Bhutan 65 new cases (23% increase) and Maldives 1,422 new cases (16% increase). While Afghanistan added only 2,014 new cases (5% increase), it is worthy noting that testing capacity remains weak and less than 115,968 people (0.3% of the population) has been tested. Therefore, the actual number of cases could be significantly under reported. Across the region, there are concerns that widespread complacency, laxity and failure to follow preventative guidance is creating grave risks in the community with people generally not observing physical distancing and wearing masks. With localized rising of cases, WHO has warned that the second wave of COVID-19 may be deadlier than the first if people continue to disregard following public health preventative measures. Underlying vulnerabilities and hazards such as limited access to water and sanitation for good hygiene, widespread food insecurity and high rates of malnutrition, and the ongoing monsoon and flooding season continue to exacerbate the situation in the region. With over 70 million people affected by the cyclones, monsoon floods and droughts across the region, the rapid increase of COVID-19 cases combined with the socio-economic impact, has exacerbated the situation and increased vulnerability amongst the poor population while rendering them more exposed to the spread of the disease. Therefore, increased investment in risk communication and community engagement, surveillance, and contact tracing remains critical to prevent the second wave across the region.

![Figure 1: South Asia Confirmed Cases March 11 - October 30, 2020](http://www.COVID19-sdmc.org/sites/default/files/situation_report_document/Situation-Report_30-10-2020.pdf)

![Figure 2; South Asia Total Weekly Increase from March 11- October 30,2020](http://www.COVID19-sdmc.org/sites/default/files/situation_report_document/Situation-Report_30-10-2020.pdf)

Source: WHO COVID-19 Daily Sitreps⁴ and SAARC Disaster Management Centre⁵

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⁵ OCHA, Afghanistan COVID-19 Multi-sectoral Response, Operation Situation Report October 15, 2020


Summary Analysis of Programme Response

The Regional Office and Country Offices response plans have been developed in alignment with the 2020 WHO Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP), Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) and the 2020 UNICEF COVID-19-2019 Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal. The key priority for the RO/CO response plans is on the immediate measures that must be undertaken to ensure preparedness and response actions to prevent and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak in each country focusing on the following areas; (1) risk communication and community engagement, (2) Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies, (3) Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women, children and vulnerable communities, including case management, (4) access to continuous education and child protection services, and promoting cash transfers to address the social impact of the epidemic. With schools re-opening across the region UNICEF has stepped its support to the governments to ensure that schools re-open safely in line with COVID-19 protocols.

ROSA IPC/WASH strategy focuses on accelerating the infection prevention and control programmes particularly in health care facilities (HFC) and schools for the safe return of students. In addition, the region has prioritised addressing critical issues relating to clinical waste in HCF through proper waste management practices. Recognizing the specific impact on women, adolescents and children, the strategy includes engagement with women leaders and organizations to reach communities, and integration of measures for Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response across sectors. With more cases concentrated in urban centres, UNICEF is adapting its response approaches to focus on these densely populated areas with low capacity including slums. Similarly, building on UNICEF country wide networks, ongoing programs and vast network of partners, UNICEF in South Asia has stepped up its engagement in risk communication and community engagement relying on its know-how on hygiene promotion, social and behaviour change communication and experience from polio and previous epidemics, and engagement of local leaders.

Afghanistan Country Office;
Risk Communication and Community Engagement

- With reports of increasing number of cases in some provinces such as Herat and warning of the second wave from the Ministry of Public Health and Population, UNICEF continued to strengthen risk communication and community engagement. A total of 318 community health supervisors and 7,260 community health workers (3,933 male and 3,327 female) have been mobilized and oriented on COVID-19 through social mobilizers and health extenders to engage communities on COVID-19 prevention and treatment. So far, 141,417 families have been reached with COVID-19 prevention messages.
- Similarly, 355 nutrition counselors oriented on COVID-19 and 8,515 lactating mothers received briefing on COVID-19 preventive measures and child breastfeeding during COVID-19 pandemic period. In addition, 3 talk shows focusing on issues around maternal, newborn and breastfeeding related to COVID-19 reached 150,000 families.

Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies

- With increasing number of people passing through the Melak border crossing between Nemroz Province and Iran, UNICEF continued to support provision of WASH services at border. As result, 17,354 individuals have accessed WASH services such as safe drinking water, sanitation and handwashing supplies and facilities.
- Cumulatively, the WASH response has so far reached over 739,455 people (377,397 males and 362,058 females) as part of infection and prevention efforts to prevent transmission of virus through distribution of hygiene supplies, hygiene promotion and WASH services in health care facilities and communities.

Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children

- Ministry of Public Health has observed decrease in utilization of essential health services across RMNCH main indicators. UNICEF through 50 mobile health and nutrition teams in 14 provinces supported provision of essential health services to 4,495 children under five and pregnant women in unserved and remote areas of 14 provinces. UNICEF also support COVID-19 centers in all provinces with provision of necessary PPEs, medical oxygen, and consumable items. Total of 726 health care providers were trained to detect, refer and appropriately manage COVID-19 cases including children, pregnant, and lactating women.
- UNICEF continue to monitor the implication of COVID-19 on nutrition programming across the country. The analysis revealed a significant decrease in the trend of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) admission in inpatient services during quarantine time (March to May). The admission has increased gradually since May, and as of September the admission reached to a normal/usual trend.
Access to continuous education, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services

• To support the re-opening of the schools, UNICEF produced 4 Back-To-School TV and radio spots including COVID-19 mitigation in schools for students and parents. These spots will be broadcasted throughout the country by 182 national and local TV and Radio channels. Furthermore, UNICEF will distribute education learning materials for 1 million students in formal schools as part of the back to school campaign, giving them a fresh start. In addition, UNICEF has recently finalized the selection of implementing partners for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support (i) the re-opening of 1,250 schools in 10 hard-to-reach (HTR) emergency-affected provinces with high numbers of out-of-school children (OOSC), (ii) the provision of COVID-19 safe, child-friendly, grade and gender-sensitive learning environment targeting 625,000 girls and boys, and (iii) the provision of remedial classes for girls and boys who fallen too far below grade level so that they are later readmitted at the right placement

• UNICEF provided masks, hand sanitizers, and hygiene kits for 126,000 students (60 percent girls) in 394 schools upon school re-opening for proper COVID-19 prevention measures at schools.

• A total of 10,882 people including (3,223 girls, 5,468 boys) and 1,856 parents and community members including 1,442 female received psychosocial support structured and semi-structured activities including door to door and helpline psychosocial support provision.

• Child Protection community-based awareness raising on the protection of children and positive coping mechanisms in the COVID-19 situation was provided to 31630 community members including 25,094 children (9,916 girls, 15,178 boys). A case management survey has been completed for 1,151 street working children and their families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, 790 most vulnerable children and families will be targeted by 3-times cash support to mitigate the COVID-19 implications by end of December 2020.

Social Protection/Humanitarian Cash Transfers

• UNICEF and partners have completed cash distribution to 2010 households in Herat province, combined with case management and COVID-19 information sessions. Post distribution monitoring is ongoing.

• Preparation for cash-based winter assistance is ongoing in Ghor province, targeting between 400 and 500 households with children to support basic needs during harsh winter months

Bangladesh Country Office;

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

• UNICEF is leading RCCE efforts to promote the Community Support Team (CST) initiative. The CST Initiative, which is part of the Bangladesh Preparedness and Response Plan, focuses on community-level actions including awareness raising, quarantine of probable cases and the promotion of key actions including mask usage. UNICEF has been supporting the development of a comprehensive SBCC strategy to promote the use of CST services and actions. This includes the production of stickers and frequently asked questions for household visits, leaflets to be used alongside miking and job aides for CST volunteers.

• Social media posts on COVID-19 reached 25.8 million users during the reporting period. The #ThankYouTeacher campaign was launched to appreciate teachers’ efforts and their resolute work to prevent disruption of education services. To engage children and youth with the #WearAMask campaign, a video featuring 5-year-old Zainab reached 2.9 million people. A video report on child depression due to prolonged school closures was viewed over 1 million times, produced by a child journalist. There is also continued focus on safe breastfeeding (reach: 5.7 million) good parenting (reach: 4.6 million) mental health (reach: 4 million) and protecting vulnerable family members (reach: 3.3 million).

• The key focus of RCCE activities in camps and host communities remained mask usage and the uptake of proper handwashing behaviours. These messages reached 194,806 people (35 per cent female) in camps and 16,881 (35 per cent female) in host communities through inter-personal communication, adolescent radio listeners’ clubs and loudspeaker announcements. RCCE activities were interrupted by insecurity in the camps during the reporting period. However, radio programming continued on mental health and antenatal and post-natal care.

Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies

• UNICEF provided technical support to the WASH Sector Hygiene Thematic Group to develop the Hand Hygiene for All (HH4A) Roadmap to achieve 100 per cent hand hygiene in Bangladesh by 2030 from the current status of 74%. Within the Rohingya camps, ninety-eight per cent of refugees reported increasing their handwashing in response to COVID-19 according to the 2020 Inter-Sectoral Working Group Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment. Soap was observed in 95 per cent of households, up from 69 per cent in May 2019.

• UNICEF continue to support the government with procurement of medical equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) to fill the gaps. Recently arrived PPE includes 5,500 reusable aprons; 3,934 surgical caps; 505 oxygen concentrators; and 522 flow-splitters which will be distributed to the health facilities.

• The first phase of the 200-bed UNICEF-supported severe acute respiratory infection isolation and treatment centre (SARI ITC) is currently operating 24 hours a day with 21 active beds. As of 13 October, 317 patients had received
services from the SARI-ITC and 246 COVID-19 samples were tested, among which 14 were positive and 2 reports are pending. Twenty-one patients (10 men, 10 women and 1 boy) have been admitted so far, among them 6 patients have been discharged, 2 patients with complications referred to a higher level of care and 3 patients are currently admitted. To operationalize all 200 beds, a transformer is required to address the voltage fluctuations in the permanent power supply.

Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children

- UNICEF support to continuous access of health and nutritional services has helped to reverse the trend of declining uptake services as new data shows that monthly immunization service uptake has surpassed pre-COVID-19 levels in Bangladesh despite the challenges faced by parents, communities and health services during the pandemic.

- A total of 381,139 children were vaccinated with BCG vaccine in September 2020, which is 116 per cent of the monthly target and 7 per cent higher than August. Similarly, 371,896 children were vaccinated with their first dose of pentavalent vaccine and 371,331 children were vaccinated with their first dose of measles-rubella vaccine which are 10 and 2 per cent higher than the previous month respectively. During same time, 132,327 vaccination sessions were held, which is 2.8 per cent higher than previous month and 98.8 per cent of planned sessions. Similarly, Routine immunization coverage improved in September in both camps and host communities. Ninety-nine per cent of planned immunization sessions took place in both camps and host communities. The coverage of the third dose of pentavalent vaccine in the camps increased from 50 per cent in August to 81 per cent in September.

- As of September, maternal health services had increased by a third compared to May 2020. 95,300 mothers attended their first antenatal care visit; 29,845 delivered in health facilities and 44,724 had their first post-natal care visit. These were increases of 40 per cent, 21 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, compared to May 2020.

- Utilization of priority nutrition interventions continues to increase. The number of caregivers receiving nutrition counselling increased from 355,343 in August to 460,319 in September, a 30 per cent increase in one month. Screening and admissions for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) increased by 73 per cent from 450 children in August to 778 in September. In September 2019, 838 children with SAM were admitted for the therapeutic care. The number of pregnant women receiving iron folate acid supplementation also increased from 221,750 to 283,330, which is a 28 per cent increase compared to August.

- The National Vitamin-A plus campaign (NVAC+) across the country completed during the reporting period reached a total of 21.51 million children aged 6 to 59 months which is 98 per cent of the total target.

- To understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nutritional status of children under 5 years in the camps, UNICEF and other Nutrition Sector partners undertook a second round of house-to-house mass screening 126,812 children, with 1.68 per cent of children screened identified with SAM and 8.59 per cent with moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), children with MAM as measured from 120mm to <130mm increased from 6.8 to 8.6 per cent between July and October.

- During this reporting period, 859 children (527 girls) with SAM were admitted to UNICEF-supported facilities for treatment. From January to September 2020, 4,875 Rohingya refugee children (3,068 girls, 21 with disabilities) have been admitted for SAM treatment, 81.3 per cent of the annual target. Of children with SAM discharged in September, 91.3 per cent were cured (SPHERE standard >75 per cent) with a default rate of 0.1 per cent.

Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services

- The closure of all educational institutions has been further extended until 31 October 2020. School re-opening guidelines for primary schools have been developed by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and disseminated to schools. Similarly, in the Rohingya refugee camps, all learning centres (LCs) in the camps remain closed. The delayed resumption of education is adversely impacting every child in the camps as their academic progress has been in suspension since April and further delays in the resumption of classes could lead to dropout and protection concerns. Meanwhile, caregiver-led education is ongoing to bridge the gaps.

- UNICEF is concerned that the cost implications may hinder the safe reopening of schools as per the guidelines since the school improvement grant (around USD 500 per school) may not be adequate. In addition, all students may not return to schools to regain necessary learning competencies. A recent World Bank survey reported that the uptake of

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6 While not yet costed, the guidelines include disinfection of school premise, installation/maintenance of WASH facilities, procurement of masks and hand sanitizer, parental awareness, orientation of teachers and School Management Committees and monitoring of the implementation of the guidelines.
remote learning has been low with only 39 per cent (of a sample of 2,000 Grade 9 stipend recipients) accessing government televised lessons, while less than 10 per cent regularly participate in these sessions.

- UNICEF is working with the government to ensure that drop-in centres and similar facilities are equipped with information on how to prevent spread of COVID-19, as well as essential services such as protection, hygiene and psychosocial support. Approximately 1,600 children in vulnerable communities are receiving recreational and psychosocial support, non-formal education, life skills education and case management services from 16 Child Protection Support Centres and children living on the street are receiving food support in Chattogram City.

- UNICEF continues working with the Supreme Court Committee on Child Rights and the Ministry of Law, and more children in detention have been released and reunified with their families. Due to economic hardships, as a result of COVID-19, there has been an increase of number of children in conflict with the law and sent to detention centres despite efforts to release them through virtual courts. Data collected from detention centres indicates that every week an average of 30 to 35 children are being admitted. Since May, 923 children in institutions or detention have received bail and 781 been reunified. UNICEF is working to reinstate the community-based protection mechanism; strengthen probation services for children; and improve local level coordination.

**Bhutan Country Office;**

**Risk Communication and Community Engagement**

- To date, over 756,000 people have been reached with lifesaving messages on COVID-19 prevention and access to services. A total of 27 more scout leaders (15 female) and 6 district scouts secretaries (1 female) from eastern districts were sensitized on COVID-19 preventive messages, creating awareness on COVID-19 triggered social issues, and linking families to support services while disseminating accurate information to the public. Since May, around 500 trained scout leaders (290 female) are trained and engaged in organizing online campaigns and educating public in their respective districts on the importance of maintaining physical distance, wearing masks, and washing hands.

- More than 100 adolescents (40 female) were trained and engaged in mapping the impact of COVID-19 on young people as well as their communities in 10 districts. The volunteers will present the findings of the mapping and organize dialogue with community leaders and the public in November to identify solutions to address the issues.

- With the pandemic scare causing anxiety and stress, and especially among youth, a mental health campaign called ‘Project Gawa’ was launched on World Mental Health Day to encourage young people talk about mental health.

**Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies**

- Installation of WASH facilities has made a major impact in the country, with the number of handwashing tap points in schools across the country increasing by 77 percent since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. There is now 1 tap point for every 9 students compared to 1 tap point for every 17 students in the beginning of the year.7

- Respecting social distancing norms and restrictions on gatherings, the Global Handwashing Day was marked virtually with a sensitization speech delivered by a prominent religious leader heading the Central Monastic Body, together with hand hygiene songs, awareness videos for health workers and press releases to all media channels/social media platforms.

- The pre-positioned soaps in schools and hand hygiene posters have benefited additionally 25,167 students since the reopening for schools for classes 9 and 11 in September.

- 5,285 health workers across the country have been reached with handwashing communication packages and 7,015 children (6,571 monks and 444 nuns) received soaps in 90 monastic institutions.

- With support from ADB grant, 15,000 boxes of surgical masks were procured and handed over to MOH on 5 October 2020. Additional 10,000 soap were distributed to 90 monastic institutions reaching 7,015 children (6,571 monks and 444 nuns).

**Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children**

- Influenza vaccination for high risk groups initiated on 7 October 2020 and is ongoing. The high-risk groups comprise of health workers, pregnant women, children 6-23 months, elderly 65 years and above, people with existing co-morbidities and frontline workers for COVID-19 responses. The importance of Influenza vaccination is emphasized more due to risk of COVID-19 infection. In addition, the cost of COVID-19 testing will be greatly reduced when number of people with flu symptoms decrease after influenza vaccination.

**Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services**

- Except for grade 9-12 students, all other students continue with online learning based on video lessons uploaded in Sherig YouTube channel for children with internet connection and using the Self-Instructional Materials. To date, printing

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7 [https://kuenselonline.com/schools-now-have-80-percent-more-handwashing-taps/](https://kuenselonline.com/schools-now-have-80-percent-more-handwashing-taps/)
of first Self-Instructional Materials (SIM) package print materials for stages I and II had been completed and distributed. The development, printing and distributing of SIM package for stages III and IV are ongoing.

- In terms of access to service, 1,270 children (555 girls) and 437 (176 female) adults have been referred to counsellors in their respective districts and provided with counselling services through the Sherig Counselling online platform set up to provide counselling and psychosocial support in response to COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, since the reopening of schools for Class X and XII students from July 1st and class IX and XI from 21st September 2020, 18,271 children (9,089 girls) have been reached through counselling classes.

- To ensure the availability of PSS services for children who are in schools, counsellors in 117 schools have started bi-monthly PSS sessions. The sessions are being conducted online and face-to-face (where allowed) and will run until end of December. Till date, it has reached 2465 children (1,399 girls).

- After the start of the pandemic, the helplines saw an increasing number of children and young people reaching out for support on mental health related issues. To complement the efforts of the Government on increasing the reach of mental health and psychosocial support to children and young people, UNICEF in partnership with Youth Development Fund, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health launched an online campaign on mental health for young people on 8th October 2020. The month-long campaign will help create awareness on COVID-19 triggered mental health issues and link young people to the service available.

**India Country Office;**

**Risk Communication and Community Engagement**

- With the relaxation in lockdown norms and opening up of economic and social activities, UNICEF with Government of India and its partners accelerated the RCCE interventions with special focus on promotion of COVID Appropriate Behaviours and the National anti-Stigma and Discrimination campaign. These efforts are reaching over 35 million people, while 18 million people were engaged through both outreach and digital platforms. UNICEF continues to support GoI’s COVID Jan Andolan to promote three key practices (wearing mask, maintain hygiene practices, maintain physical distance) with focus on festivals and the winter season.

- UNICEF continued providing technical inputs and support to the government in COVID-19 RCCE activities reaching over 39 million to date, through its integrated Risk Communication & Community Engagement strategies and diversified partnerships. The special focus during this month was intensive state-wide Global Handwashing Day engagement, focusing on the importance of hand hygiene for all in prevention of diseases such as COVID-19.

**Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies**

- Over 3 million population reached with critical WASH supplies and services to date. UNICEF supported state governments, other development partners, and civil society organizations to reach out to vulnerable populations of rural and urban areas across 15 states. The supplies included hygiene items such as soaps, PPEs, and disinfectants, sanitary pads. The supported services included the installation and construction of handwashing units.

- Around 0.6 million community service providers have been reached with IPC messages/orientation related to COVID-19 to date. It includes Swachagrahis, Sanitation workers, Government stakeholders, PRI members, teachers and education department staff etc.

**Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children**

- UNICEF has continued to provide technical support for a range of essential RMNCH+A interventions across states. Example include: organizing the first State level Committee meeting on the School Health Program in Guwahati; organizing an Expert group Consultation on “Ending Preventive Maternal Mortality” (EPMM) for the Government of Telangana; sustain the community follow up of SNCU discharged newborns in Uttar Pradesh; scale up of ‘Telephonic Outreach to Pregnant and Postpartum Women’ in West Bengal; extension of Intensified Diarrhea Control Fortnight round to additional 7 days to cover dropouts; supportive supervision of flood relief camps in 16 districts through SMNet in Bihar; Japanese Encephalitis Campaign in 11 districts in Bihar; quality improvement mentoring for health facilities in Madhya Pradesh; amongst others.

- The UNICEF team continues supporting the MoHFW and states in the planning and preparations for the Introduction of COVID-19 vaccine(s). In this regard, during the month of October 2020, a detailed list of cold chain equipment to be procured for the vaccine introduction was finalized with MoHFW, and initial orders for the procurement of offshore cold chain equipment are being processed with the UNICEF Supply Division in Copenhagen

- The National Nutrition Month (POSHAN Maah) intensified actions of nutrition were organized nation-wide from the 7 to 30 September 2020. During this period, community workers across several Ministries and Departments worked together to deliver critical messaging on nutrition including breastfeeding (reaching over 400,000 individuals) and complementary feeding (reaching almost 700,000 individuals).

- UNICEF India is committed to reach 220,000 children with Severe Acute Malnutrition across 12 States through treatment services in 2020. The cumulative coverage up until August 2020 was 102,491 children (47% of target).
UNICEF strongly advocated for the re-establishment of essential nutrition services following the lockdown at state and national levels. As a result, Government of India announced the initiation of early identification and treatment of children with acute malnutrition (SAM and MAM) as priority action.

**Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services**

UNICEF India continued its technical support to state government and partners in continuity of learning from home reaching to around 44 million children (49.8 % girls) out of the targeted 60 million children in 17 states. Multiple pathways and outreach strategies were developed towards access and use of e-learning materials to support in accelerating the efforts towards reaching children from marginalized and disadvantaged communities and hard to reach geographical areas.

UNICEF completed a rapid assessment on learning to understand the access to and strategies being used to promote student learning during the school closures in the context of COVID 19 across six states (Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh) in India. Some key findings are: Around 60% of students have access to some form of remote learning and access in urban areas is slightly higher than in rural areas; there is no difference in access to remote education for girls and boys while children from other vulnerable groups such as ST and SC face lower access and in remote education. Mental health has been a challenge for over a third of primary students (as perceived by their parents) and nearly half of secondary students.

UNICEF in collaboration with Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare is supporting the roll out of Home-Based Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Parenting Programme reaching around 2.7 million children in ECD centres across all 23 districts of West Bengal. An example of UNICEF continued support at the state level in nine states to roll out responsive parenting programme for young children.

The schools and AWC’s are yet to reopen; in preparation to the reopening, staff from education departments in various states have been oriented on Safe School Protocols (SSP), including 1,119 in Bihar, 5,695 in MP, 6,400 in Odisha and 7,000 in Uttar Pradesh.

UNICEF and NIMHANS finalized and released training manuals for Psychosocial Care for Frontline Health Care Workers, and Psychosocial First Aid for Children Affected by COVID-19. So far 446,180 children (48% Girls, 52% boys) and their parents as well as caregivers have been supported with community based mental health and psychosocial services.

Over 2.4 million adolescents and youths have been reached with targeted messages and information on prevention to COVID-19. The Department of Women and Child Development in Odisha launched with support from UNICEF, ADVIKA – Every girl is unique.

With UNICEF’s guidance, guidelines for sponsorship and aftercare have been approved for implementation in states of Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Till date, 5,695 children have been provided with family based alternative care. 485,450 and caregivers in institutions/ foster care that have received information on prevention and response to COVID 19. States have been actively working towards de-institutionalization of children and guidance for follow-up and care are being issued.

**Social Protection/Humanitarian Cash Transfers**

In Assam, evidence generation through process monitoring of the Pradhan Mantri Mattriva Vandana Yojana scheme and advocacy has led to the government's agreement to set up a state and district level monitoring mechanism for enhanced monitoring of the reach of the scheme in Sonitpur and Morigaon. UNICEF technical support to Tea Tribes and Welfare Department led to more than seventeen thousand applications being submitted for three state schemes targeting adolescents across 31 districts.

In Jharkhand, advocacy through UNICEF analysis led to allocation of resources for girl child cash transfer, which had been discontinued due to the pandemic. In Madhya Pradesh, analysis conducted of 134 Social Protection schemes and suggested key criteria that could be used for targeting the most vulnerable population to access food and cash transfer support generating list of beneficiaries using the state social registry.

In Uttar Pradesh, a one-month campaign was successfully advocated to clear the backlog of birth and death registration in the aftermath of COVID-19 to register all births and deaths that occurred on 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020 through door- to-door visit by ASHAs.

**Data Collection and Social Science Research**

The second wave of the Community Based monitoring (CBM) on socio-economic impact of COVID pandemic on marginalized population has been completed in August – September 2020; results show that while economic situation of the families under study remain challenging, around three-forth (74%) of the families reported that their monthly income has declined while 75 percent of the respondent mentioned that the family has debt burden due to pandemic.
and of this, close to two-fifth, (46%) stated that they had to sell their personal belongings, significantly, more in rural areas than in urban areas (R/U, 51/42 percent).

**Maldives Country Office;**
**Risk Communication and Community Engagement**

- During the reporting period Maldives saw steady reduction in the daily infection rates owing to the movement restriction measures put in place, especially in the capital Male’ as well constant engagement with the public through key preventive messages on social media, TV/Radio and on bi-weekly press events. Even with the downward trend, UNICEF continue to support the government in engaging the public on the upkeep of key lifesaving behaviours as well as address queries and concerns raised by the public which are monitored consistently. This consistent engagement based on evidence from social listening has ensured that misinformation, disinformation as well as messages that promote stigmatization of certain groups of people are caught early and addressed with correct information that the public requires.

**Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies**

- UNICEF and partners marked the Global Handwashing day on 15 October. The main activities included the inauguration of 44 handwashing stations UNICEF provided to 22 schools which did not have enough handwashing facilities for teachers and students. A special theme song on handwashing with soap along with key messages by doctors from the HEOC were released on the social media and on TV channels.

- UNICEF has initiated discussions with Male’ City Council, Maldives Water and Sewerage Company and private sector companies on establishing hand washing stations in 16 strategic locations in the Capital city, Male’ and Villi Male to promote handwashing with soap, to prevent diseases such as COVID-19.

- UNICEF donated PPE items have been distributed to COVID-19 designated facilities and Atoll hospitals, servicing to protect front line workers of 20 Hospitals in the periphery. The current distribution will protect 1,500 frontline and health staff working across the country, including the COVID-19 designated facilities.

**Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children**

- With the aim of ensuring continuation of essential child health services, UNICEF supported the placement of Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) Technical officer to prepare for COVAX introduction. Further, a communication coordinator supported by UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health to implement the Measles-Rubella campaign’s communication plan aimed at selected Atolls. Before COVID-19 struck, the Maldives faced a measles outbreak and a declining vaccination rate, and the pandemic had disrupted the initially planned nation-wide Measles immunization campaign. The strategy is to implement the SIA in islands with no COVID-19 community transmission, and effective communication and messaging will be critical to the uptake of MR vaccine.

**Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services**

- Schools in Greater Male’ Area have reopened for grades 7-12. The Ministry of Education has announced that preschools and primary grades in schools in Male’ will not reopen in 2020. Primary grades in schools of Male’ continue to provide online learning.

- UNICEF and the MoGFSS are working with other partners on a nationwide campaign to combat sexual violence against children and women. During the lockdown, there were multiple reports of instances of sexual abuse of children and women in the Maldives, as people were confined to their homes. UNICEF supported the initial consultation held with stakeholders to determine key outcomes of the campaign. UNICEF is supporting the government through a local communication company to design the campaign material as well as by a local technical consultant focusing on the media component and other interventions related to the campaign. UNICEF through partnership with NGO Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC) published 27 social media posts covering messages to address mental health and violence against children. A total of 292,084 people reached through Facebook, 12,943 persons reached through Instagram and 108,010 reached through twitter.

**Nepal Country Office;**
**Risk Communication and Community Engagement**

- Considering the increased movement of people during the Dashain and Tihar festivals (these are the main Nepali festivals where people travel to visit their families), the government has urged general public to stay where they are to celebrate festivals. Crowd management and adherence to public health safety measures at temples during nine days of “Nava Ratri”, in marketplaces and public transportation remain crucial to prevent the further spread of the disease. There is a need to further reinforce risk communication messages (distancing, mask use and sanitize) in the highly populated areas including public service offices engaging the community to reduce the increasing numbers of positive cases in Kathmandu Valley, which covers almost 45 percent of the total infection. Therefore, UNICEF engaged with media professionals, key influential figures and MoHP continued to disseminate the messages of festival celebration
guidance and travel in and out during the festivals. Safe celebrations with direct family members, care of elderly family members were the key messages promoted through the influential figures.

- UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS) to celebrate “Hand Hygiene for all” – a month long campaign starting from 29 September. Handwashing practice as a critical defence against COVID-19 behaviour along with distancing and mask use reinforced in partnership with the NCELL, private telecommunication company through radio, television, print and online news, social media platforms, megaphone announcement and community outreach activities by Nepal Scouts and Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) volunteers reaching more than 15 million people.

**Improving Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies**

- Over 50% of the COVID 19 positive people are in home isolation and there is no or weak monitoring system for tracking isolation practices at home and community level. Therefore, community level WASH/IPC packages and counselling are needed which will require a big undertaking under the leadership of local governments. UNICEF handed over 4,100 sets of health kits to the government to support home isolation.

- In addition, UNICEF handed over over 100 Oxygen Concentrators and 50 Pulse Oximeters to the Management Division of Department of Health Services of which 30 Oxygen Concentrator (17 hospitals) and 15 Pulse Oximeter (10 hospitals) to the COVID-19 designated hospitals in Kathmandu valley. Other key medical supplies and equipment supported by UNICEF include: 85,000 protective coverals; 2,000 protective goggles; 1,095 IR thermometers; 842 blankets; 2,394 bed nets; and 7 medical tents to support designated COVID-19 facilities. To ensure provision of essential health services, UNICEF further equipped 11,590 health workers with critical personal protective supplies such as 347,700 surgical masks, 277,010 surgical gloves; and 34,406 bottles of hand sanitizer.

- UNICEF reached almost 3,150,000 people through hygiene behavior change messages. In addition, 167,006 people (88,513 males and 78,493 females including 16,701 youth below the age of 18 and 150,305 adults) benefitted directly with at least one or more WASH services including supplies in communities, institutions such as health care facilities, quarantine centers, isolation centers and points of entry/holding centers.

- A total of 52 health care facilities received WASH support through provision of supplies and rehabilitation and construction of WASH services such as installation of hand washing stations, toilet repair, replacement of fixtures, supply of essential hygiene and cleaning/disinfection items. About 1,348 health workers, 12,058 patients and 7,140 visitors benefitted from these services.

- Over 9,200 people in quarantine centers and 1,538 people in isolation centers have directly benefitted from essential WASH supplies and services that includes repairing existing toilets, installation of emergency/mobile toilets and hand washing stations, drinking water supply and essential WASH and disinfection supplies.

- Alongside the COVID-19 response, UNICEF responded to five districts severely affected by landslides and flooding. 1,100 landslide affected families in four districts were responded to with provision of hygiene kits, buckets, water purification tablets and soap. Similarly, 1,000 flood affected families in Kailali district were provided hygiene kits, buckets, water purification tablets and communal toilets.

**Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children**

- A total of 230,994 women and children received EHS, including antenatal care (ANC), postnatal care (PNC), facility-based deliveries, mental health and immunization services (114,157 children were immunized - 49 per cent boys and 51 per cent girls).

- In partnership with CWIN, UNICEF has been supporting the organization of on-line mental health wellbeing sessions targeting children, adolescents and parents/caregivers. As of 28 October, trained mental health workers conducted 1,161 sessions reaching a total of 24,185 people (7,159 girls, 6,731 boys and 10,295 parents/caregivers). Furthermore, in partnership with national health training centre (NHTC), an online training manual on mental health has also been developed and rolled out. The purpose of this training is to help cope the stress caused by COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 50 health workers working in Isolation centers and COVID-19 designated hospitals have benefitted from the training.

- UNICEF provided technical and coordination support to MoHP to treat 5,143 children under five with SAM using ready to use therapeutic food (RUTF) through 620 outpatients therapeutic centres (OTCs) and 18 nutrition rehabilitation homes (NRH). 488 cases were admitted to outpatient treatment programmes in the past two weeks. Through UNICEF support, a total of 854,470 pregnant and lactating women received telephone counselling (20,218 in the past two weeks).

**Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services**

- To ensure learning continuity of children during school closure, UNICEF distributed self-learning packs to 30,118 pre-school and primary level children (51 per cent girls) out of the total of 34,000 targeted from schools that were used as quarantine centres. UNICEF supported the radio schooling for grades 4-10 reaching 58,000 children (49 percent girls). Out of about 5,000 schools used as quarantine centres, 227 schools have been disinfected to prepare for reopening ensuring the safety protocols.
A total of 26 episodes of parenting education radio programme was aired national-wide in Nepali, Bhojpuri and Maithili languages through 87 radio channels and digital media reaching cumulatively 3.4 million. To promote listenership, 1,436 listener groups have been formed with 11,483 members. The programme provides information on parenting education and tips on ensuring early learning of children.

The emotional and psychological toll of the pandemic and ensuing social and economic consequences continues to be of concern. Psychological distress and anxiety are rising among already vulnerable groups. High levels of stress among families with high burden of care has been reflected in UNICEF child and Family Tracker survey findings: 49 per cent of families with child care responsibilities report increased anxiety, among youth (42 per cent of youth surveyed reporting stress) as well as detected changes in behaviors among children and adolescents (province level data from the protection monitoring and incident reporting tools).

A total of 2,325 people (1,229 males, 1,055 females, and 41 third gender) were reached with individual psychosocial counselling service through existing helplines, online platforms and one to one counselling. Concerns over health and increasing feelings of fear, anxiety and stress from various causes, including exposure to discrimination and violence are the reasons the support were sought. Out of 2,325 people who were provided with counselling service, 95 people with suicidal thoughts and 125 people experiencing gender-based violence were supported and regularly followed up.

Stress management and psychological first aid in quarantine centers and isolation facilities were provided to a total of 7,254 people (6,043 males and 1,211 females) from 211 centers in Province 2, Lumbini, Karnali and Sudurpaschim. So far, an estimation of 27,035 people has been reached with psychosocial support through UNICEF’s contribution to achieve the cluster target which has exceed the target set by the cluster. Out of 27,035 total people supported nearly 29 per cent are children under 18 years.

A total of 1,157 children (600 boys, 557 girls) were provided with support for care arrangements (family reintegration support, placement in interim/transit care centres, family preservation assistance). So far, UNICEF has contributed 77% to the initial cluster target [i.e. 1500 children].

Pakistan Country Office;
Risk Communication and Community Engagement

Through existing polio alliances and the health programme 328,994 (1,141 new) religious leaders have been engaged and mobilized to promote the risk perception of the Corona virus, emphasize the importance of handwashing, use of mask and physical distancing as well as convincing other religious leaders on risk perception. The religious leaders use the information provided to talk to their followers during the Friday sermons and to make announcements in mosques with key preventive messages on COVID-19. During the reporting period a total of 328,994 mosque announcements were made. The religious leaders have been engaged in increasing risk perception related to COVID-19 and promote both the polio campaigns and Essential Immunization (EI).

While Pakistan's anti-polio infrastructure has been utilized so far for local COVID-19 "surveillance, contact tracing and care", these calls highlighted the need for specialized community-led action on COVID-19 in the country that works closely with real-time surveillance. It is therefore a recommendation that RCCE develop and rollout nationwide community engagement on COVID-19. In addition, there is need for district-level responses informed by real-time district surveillance data and delivered by district-level rapid response teams led by field-epidemiologists.

Community feedback is highlighting the perception that COVID-19 has been eradicated. Community feedback indicates that the perceived eradication of COVID-19 is more prevalent among people who have lower literacy levels, who have lower access to healthcare facilities, and who are younger. Therefore, UNICEF is supporting the RCCE task force in developing communication content especially targeted at people displaying low-levels of perceived threat to fact-check that COVID-19 has not been eradicated and to highlight the personal risk these people have of getting COVID-19 within their local settings.

Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies

UNICEF is supporting WASH/IPC interventions in 20 out of 27 high burden districts. To date, UNICEF has rehabilitated and installed WASH facilities which include Ultraviolet (UV) water filters, toilets and handwashing stations in 569 (1 new) Health Care Facilities (HCFs, Sindh: 38, KP: 88, Punjab: 373 and Balochistan: 70). More than 1.7 million people (198,014 new) have gained access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities in these HCFs contributing towards reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection among healthcare workers. Over 8.3 million people (458,919 new) have been supported with hygiene promotion services including COVID-19 prevention and control information. Over 4.5 million (327,966 new) people have used the 1,675 (321 new) handwashing stations at communal points in affected areas. To date, UNICEF supported the training of 5,903 (74 new) frontline sanitary workers to enhance the capacity of sanitary and frontline health workers on WASH/IPC in HCFs and high-risk communities.
To contribute toward ensuring safe return to school for children, UNICEF is supporting WASH-IPC initiatives in 1,152 schools (Ballochistan 232, Punjab 500, Sindh 120, KP 300) and to date 428 schools have been reached (KP: 183, Punjab: 53, Ballochistan: 39, Sindh: 153) with WASH – IPC services.

UNICEF supported IPC training reached 86,186 frontline health workers in total (1,777 trained during reporting period) and supported the training of 79,270 frontline health workers and community volunteers on COVID-19 and case identification and referral of suspected cases (2,447 trained during the reporting period).

**Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children**

UNICEF is supporting the Provincial and Regional health departments to ensure continuation of essential primary health care services including immunization, Ante-Natal Care (ANC), Post-Natal Care (PNC), delivery services, childcare and curative care for adults in 136 targeted health facilities reaching 202,445 people in the reporting period (Ballochistan: 2,492; Sindh: 111,988; KP: 3,391; Punjab: 84,574) with a total reach of 2,064,156 since the onset of COVID-19. Measles immunization reached a total of 1,334 children (under 1 year) (Ballochistan: 111; KP: 387; Sindh: 836) during the reporting period, with a total of 51,231 children vaccinated against measles in the 136 UNICEF supported health facilities. UNICEF has provided basic PPEs (gloves, sanitizers and masks) to 13,650 frontline health workers during the reporting period (Balochistan: 9,650; Punjab: 2200 and Sindh: 1,800) and reached a total of 96,872 frontline workers.

During the reporting period, across Pakistan, a total of 2,643 UNICEF supported health sites provided nutrition services, an increase of 8 sites compared to previous report. A total of 87,616 SAM children have been admitted for treatment with 10,066 children (5,576 girls and 4,490 boys) admitted for treatment during the reporting period (Balochistan 3,929; Sindh 2,104; KP 1,890 and Punjab 2,143).

With UNICEF support, inter-personal communication on Infant Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices in the COVID-19 context reached 113,021 mothers/caregivers (Balochistan: 7,363; Sindh: 38,474; KP: 9,609 and Punjab: 57,575) through counselling during the reporting period, reaching 828,673 in total.

**Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services**

The phased reopening of schools has started across the country. Students from grade 9 and above started their return to school from 15 September onwards, and middle schools (grades 6-8) reopened their doors on 23 September. Sindh reopened middle and primary schools on 28 September. Students attend on alternate days to reduce student numbers physically present in schools to enable social distancing. Schools will remain open on Saturdays and there will be no break for winter vacation. However, there is significant levels of public anxiety about schools reopening due to perceived low levels of preparedness and compliance of schools to safety protocols.

A total of 4,337 social workforce professionals (2,205 women and 2,132 men) have been trained in psychosocial support and stigma prevention in all provinces through the training package developed by UNICEF. In the last two weeks however, 1,015 (500 female and 515 males) have been trained in Punjab and KP provinces. The trained social workforce across the four provinces have provided Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and specialized services to more than 56,383 persons including children, caregivers and individuals (3,332 girls, 3,757 boys, 25,311 women, 23,983 men). Out of this total, 3,009 people were reached within the reporting period (Punjab: 1,225, KP: 1,123, Sindh: 213, Balochistan: 237 and GB: 211) with 1,176 people (69 girls, 77 boys, 634 women and 387 men) received specialized counselling services in KP and Balochistan.

The 10-week digital media campaign with adolescents and youth reached more than 98,000 people (59 per cent male, 41 per cent females) including 53,420 (55 per cent) adolescents and about 45,000 viewers reacting to the postings. 3.8 million were reached through UNICEF Facebook account with 56,000 actively engaged. A radio program to provide online mental health and psychosocial services for youths by a certified psychotherapist is aired frequently and has reached more than 3.5 million radio users.

**Sri Lanka Country Office; Risk Communication and Community Engagement**

With the re-emergence of major two COVID-19 clusters, the need to raise awareness on symptoms, caregiving and stigma associated with COVID-19 was identified. Therefore, the previous mass media campaign focusing on COVID-19 symptoms and caregiving, and stigma was re-launched on primetime TV and Radio. The campaign featured video and audio assets in English, Sinhala and Tamil languages. The campaign ran from 10 – 24 October with viewer reach of 7 million island-wide. The campaign was also boosted via UNICEF social channels and gained of reach of over 9 million with 671,013 engagements. UNICEF is currently working with the Health Promotion Bureau (HPB) of the Ministry of Health (MoH) to conduct research on COVID-19 messaging targeting children and young people, for action and inclusion in future communication campaigns.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in Sri Lanka, UNICEF engaged in vigorous risk communication campaigns continuously over printed, digital and social media reaching over 15.5 million people. However, in order to provide targeted risk communication to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while minimizing risk, there is a high need to establish
the level of understanding amongst children and young people of and their knowledge, perception of risk, and actions regarding COVID-19 prevention.

- UNICEF will be conducting a targeted assessment during the 4th quarter of 2020 and a new set of RCCE campaign materials will be designed and implemented based on insights gathered. The assessment will capture the level of understanding of COVID-19 in terms of how it spreads and precautionary measures, access to information, as well as the role parents and teachers play in providing support and proper information.

Improve Infection and Prevention Control (IPC) and provide critical medical and WASH supplies

- With the emergence of a new COVID-19 cluster in Gampaha District (which has highest population density in the country) there is urgent need to strengthen the capacity of health facilities for infection prevention and control. UNICEF supported the Provincial Director of Health Services Western Province who oversees Gampaha district to conduct assessments to identify more hospitals as treatment centers. From the assessment, 2 hospitals - District hospitals in Dompe and Divulapitiya - were identified as treatment centers. UNICEF together with the provincial health authorities are finalizing the improvement plans for these hospitals, which would be constructed with financial support from UNICEF. As part of UNICEF initial preparedness and response, a COVID-19 designated hospital (Base hospital in Minuwangoda) in Gampaha with 100 bed capacity was improved for COVID-19 treatment. However, due to the increasing numbers of COVID-19 patients in the district and required continuation of essential medical services, the provincial health authority’s capacity to respond in a timely manner is overwhelmed and over-stretched

- Based on the rapid assessment done in ECCD enters in Uva and Central provinces, 100 ECCD were identified to provide mobile handwashing facilities. Fifty (50) age-appropriate child friendly mobile handwashing units were manufactured complying with the national level minimum standards of preschool WASH and distributed in Uva province.

- The national events conducted to commemorate the World Habitat Day on Monday 5 October 2020 were used as appropriate platforms to disseminate key hygiene messages among the urban settlement population. UNICEF contributed and supported for the art competition among children living in high density low capacity urban settlements (Island wide), trade fair and stage drama that focused on key hygiene messages and measures to prevent COVID-19 and promotion of U-Report among adolescents (Link to the Video: here).

Support the provision of continued access to essential health and nutrition services for women and children

- In Sri Lanka at the moment, there is only 1 hospital catering to the needs of suspected and confirmed cases of pregnant mothers and newborns with COVID-19 which was rehabilitated previously with UNICEF contribution. With the new increase of COVID-19 clusters around the country, there is a high possibility of more and more pregnant women becoming suspected or confirmed with COVID-19. Therefore, it is urgently required to strengthen facilities and establish essential medical equipment to care for pregnant women and newborns in the hospitals. UNICEF supported procurement of essential medical equipment to care for pregnant mothers and newborns, for two (2) hospitals designated as isolation hospitals, on the request of the Family Health Bureau of the MoH.

- UNICEF through ADB funding supported the MoH in procuring 30,000 PCR test kits, 30,000 Extraction Kits, 30,000 Viral transport media and three thermal scanners, which would be added to the pool of kits of the MoH and would be used in the above-mentioned testing and surveillance.

Access to continuous education, social protection, child protection and gender-based violence (GBV) services

- Following the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, all schools were closed again from 5 October 2020 for a school holiday, one week earlier than originally planned, due to above mentioned COVID-19 crisis.

- Since the nation-wide school reopening in August 2020, UNICEF continued supporting three disadvantaged provinces (Central, Uva and East) for effective learning recovery of primary grades, including through adjusted curriculum and formative assessment. The first rounds of diagnosis on the learning level in Central and Uva provinces were undertaken and the remedial measures were taken. In Northern province, in partnership with the PDE and a private service provider, a capacity building programme for teachers on online/digital teaching techniques continued. This initiative will help promote blended approach to teaching-learning, which will inform the scale up to the entire Northern Province as well as at the national level.

- Due to concerns expressed by parents, teachers, education administrators and students on the need for psychosocial support to students and teachers, UNICEF started working with the MoE and Provincial Education Departments in two vulnerable provinces (Eastern and North) to prepare simple and practical guidelines along with orientations for teachers to support students as first responders.

- UNICEF has been advocating for the release of children in detention centres since the beginning of COVID-19 in the country, and so far, 33 children were released from detention centre in Northern province. Currently, UNICEF is working with the Department of Prisons to support the video evidencing of children in school of youthful offenders to avoid the physical travel to the courts.
UNICEF Sri Lanka continues to advocate for cash transfers for families with children, particularly young children. UNICEF has developed a concept note for the expansion and reform of an existing program of voucher for pregnant and lactating women to ensure that children continue to be supported until their second birthday. The cost has been estimated and advocacy efforts are ongoing to include this expansion of the program in the Budget 2021.

### Funding Status

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Next SitRep: 30th November 2020
UNICEF continues to monitor the situation very closely and situation reports will be issued on regular basis as the developments unfold.

### Internal and External Media

In the midst of COVID-19 Pandemic, Afghanistan women determined to end Polio; [https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/afghan-women-determined-end-polio](https://www.unicef.org/afghanistan/stories/afghan-women-determined-end-polio)


Supervised Supplementary Feeding Programme, Telangana, India; [Supervised Supplementary Feeding Programme, Telangana, India](https://www.unicef.org/my.sharepoint.com/w/g/personal/pallapati_unicef_org/EZ20fZjw1w1FhptcFXYVkJLABNVWDXSefxCVsihcGwgtA?e=YQ91zr)

Hello Didi! Building Instant Online Connect for Nutrition and COVID-19 Counselling in India; [Building instant online connect, Hello Didi Story from Uttar Pradesh, India](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/w/g/personal/pallapati_unicef_org/EZ20fZjw1w1FhptcFXYVkJLABNVWDXSefxCVsihcGwgtA?e=YQ91zr)

Continuity of HIV treatment services in Odisha, India; [Ensuring access to life-saving health services for children in Male’, Maldives; Dhamanaveshi story - RO SitRep #18.docx](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/w/g/personal/pallapati_unicef_org/EZ20fZjw1w1FhptcFXYVkJLABNVWDXSefxCVsihcGwgtA?e=YQ91zr)

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