Highlights

- The State President in his state of the nation address on COVID-19 on 14 February announced that the African Union has allocated Malawi 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca. The MoH is planning to start vaccinating front line health workers in the next two weeks upon arrival of the vaccines. The countrywide vaccination campaign is expected to commence in the month of March.

- UNICEF is providing support in the establishment of Grievance and Redress Mechanisms (GRM) as part of its support in enhancing accountability and handling of complaints during the COVID-19 response. After the COVID-19 response, the Call Centre is expected to expand its functionalities and become a permanent feature of Malawi’s national social protection system.

- Under a UNICEF supported initiative called “Chiefs’ wives initiative”, Malawi police Services has oriented 800 chiefs’ wives and female chiefs on child protection issues and related laws. Each of them will be responsible for reaching out to 300 girls in her area of jurisdiction through awareness-raising meetings. This will help to raise awareness about prevention and responding to violence against children, including child marriage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 cases and 7 day moving average
**Situation Overview**

As of 14 January 2021, Malawi has conducted 171,195 tests out of which 29,035 turned out positive for COVID-19. Of the positive cases, 22,253 (77 per cent) have been recorded in 2021 alone. Since the beginning of the outbreak, 952 deaths have been reported (CFR=3.3) of which 764 (80.2 per cent) occurred in 2021.

Out of the total cases, 93 percent are locally transmitted. A total of 13,607 cases (47 per cent) have now recovered while 76 cases are under investigation. This brings the total number of active cases to 14,266 across all the 28 districts.

In the last one week, Malawi has started to experience reduction in the number of confirmed cases. The positivity rate reduced from 32% to 16% with evidence of flattening the curve. Increased awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures among the population as well as improved surveillance at the community level have contributed to the reduction. See the distribution below:

**Comparision of cases Vs Deaths**

On the 9th February 2020, Malawi through Ministry of health with support from WHO and UNICEF successfully submitted the National Vaccine Deployment Plan and Cold Chain Equipment request. The two documents are undergoing the regional reviews for approval and subsequently the vaccine is planned to be introduced to Malawi in the month of March. The State President in his state of the nation address on COVID-19 on 14 February announced that the African Union has allocated Malawi 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca. The MoH is planning to start vaccinating front line health workers in the next two weeks upon arrival of the vaccines.

**Programme response by UNICEF and partners**

**Humanitarian Strategy**

UNICEF Malawi is working in the following areas of strategic priority against COVID-19:

- Public health response to reduce coronavirus transmission and mortality
• Continuity of health, education, nutrition and protection services
• Assessing and responding to the immediate secondary impact of COVID-19
• Strengthening Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

UNICEF maintains critical preparedness and response operations, including operational humanitarian access corridors and delivery of services in Health, Education, Child and Social Protection, WASH, Nutrition and Communication for Development (C4D). This is being done to prevent and control infections, ensure continuity of education, promote positive behaviours, prevent transmission and ensure the protection of children rights, especially of the most vulnerable ones.

Humanitarian leadership and coordination

• To support coordination, the Humanitarian Country Team is holding bi-weekly meetings
• Clusters continue to meet for better response coordination. Information relating to COVID-19 resource mobilization, allocation, programmatic implementation (RM and 5Ws) is regularly being updated. Currently the clusters are finalising the development of the 2021 COVID-19 response plan.
• UNICEF is the co-lead agency for the Education, Nutrition, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Protection Clusters, while also playing a key role in the Health Cluster.

Malawi COVID-19 Supply Chain

• UNICEF is facilitating the distribution of assorted COVID-19 supplies valued at $200,271 to targeted district health offices and government central hospitals. The supplies included 1,705 body bags, 300 N95 Masks, 90 gumboots, 30 hand sanitizer bottles, 486 pulse oximeters, 212 resuscitators, 30 packs of water purification tablets each with 50 tablets, 3,905 oxygen nasal prongs, 60 Gowns, 30 packs of surgical masks, 27 Oxygen concentrators, 6 Plastic sprayer, 6 clinical thermometers, 12 flow splitters for oxygen concentrator, 51 bed screens and 5 ventilators.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Public health response to reduce coronavirus transmission and mortality

With funding from the Irish Embassy, UNICEF through Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) has continued to support government with screening of all travellers entering Malawi at Kamuzu International airport (KIA), Mangochi and Songwe border crossing. In the past two weeks, 4,308 travellers (Male 2,283; female 2,025) were screened. All travellers entering through KIA had valid negative COVID-19 certificates. However, most of those entering through Songwe and Mangochi ground border crossings had no COVID-19 certificates. In line with MoH guidelines such travellers are supposed to be tested on arrival. However, logistical challenges have affected the establishment of border testing sites thus most of the travellers entering the country through Songwe and Mangochi don’t have COVID-19 negative certificates. This is presenting a challenge in the control of the pandemic. A team from MoH visited all the nine border points in the week ending 12 February and they have recommended that all ground points of entry should implement the standard operating procedures that require a negative certificate.

Continuity of health, education, nutrition and protection services

Due to the severity of the COVID-19 second wave, the school closure was extended for an additional 2 weeks to 22 February 2021. Distance learning programmes have been continued during the school closure, while MoE is preparing for school reopening.
Following the approval by Local Education Group (LEG) members in the reprogramming of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) funds, the Ministry has started the recruitment process of 995 auxiliary teachers to be deployed to targeted primary schools across the country for a period of 5 months. This will help to accommodate the shortage of teachers and decongest classrooms. Part of the MoE GPE reprogrammed funds have been transferred directly to the District Councils, which are responsible for the selection of teachers and disbursement of the teachers’ salaries. Another portion of the funds has been allocated to support the procurement of PPEs for lower secondary boarding schools and the airing of radio programmes for standard 1 to 4 for Term 1. UNICEF is Grant Agent lead and supported in mobilizing the funds for the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Since November 2020, UNICEF has been working with Malawi Police Service (MPS) to address the increased risks of violence under the COVID-19 situation. To date, UNICEF and MPS have oriented 800 members of community policing forums on how to manage child protection and GBV cases in Mchinji, Salima, Rumphi, Nkhatabay, Mangochi, Chiradzulo, Thyolo, and Chikwawa districts. Community policing forum plays a key role in promoting the linkage between the communities and Police Victim Support Unit and provide justice, thus helping to avoid unofficial settling down of cases at the community level.

UNICEF is also supporting the MPS with a programme called “Chiefs’ wives initiative”. Under this initiative, which is taking place in 8 districts (Karonga, Chitipa, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Balaka, Zomba, Mulanje and Blantyre), MPS has oriented chiefs’ wives and female chiefs on child protection issues and related laws. The chiefs’ wives have a big role in prevention and responding to violence against children, including child marriage. The districts were selected based on the reports of defilement, child marriage, and teenage pregnancy during the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, 800 chiefs’ wives have been involved and each of them will be responsible for reaching out to 300 girls in her area of jurisdiction through awareness-raising meetings.

UNICEF also continues to support District Social Welfare Offices (DSWOs) to provide community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to the people affected by COVID-19 by providing MHPSS training. Since the beginning of 2021, around 1,000 people in 3 districts (Blantyre, Mchinji, and Zomba) have been reached with community-based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) by DSWOs, including 377 people (138 children and 239 adults) reached during the reporting period in Blantyre and Zomba districts. This brings the total number of people reached with MHPSS through DSWOs with UNICEF support to around 25,900 since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, 104 street-connected children (including children living or working on the streets) were reintegrated to their homes or place of safety during the reporting period, which brings the total number of street-connected children supported to around 150 since January 2021. The total number of street-connected children supported since the beginning of the pandemic is now at around 1,050.

**Assessing and responding to the immediate secondary impacts of the COVID-19**

As part of UNICEF’s support on Grievance and Redress Mechanisms (GRM), a Call Centre is being established for enhanced accountability and handling of complaints during the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the emergency response, the Call Centre is expected to expand its functionalities and become a permanent feature of Malawi’s national social protection system. In addition, UNICEF is providing financial support to MoEPD and MoGCDSW to conduct GRM trainings for District Teams.
and communities in Mzuzu and Zomba. The funds will also enable District Councils to engage with Mobile Network Operators during data cleaning processes, which will fast-track cash transfer delivery.

UNICEF is also funding the implementation of a joint communications strategy for the COVID-19 Urban Cash Initiative (CUCI), which will enable the Government to raise awareness with consistent messages on eligibility criteria, payment procedures, and the availability and functionality of the Call Centre.

**Strengthening Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)**

UNICEF continued to offer technical support to the Health Education Services (HES) in development of the National Vaccine Deployment Plan and the development of the Risk/Crisis Communication and Social Mobilisation Strategic Plan. Such support was provided through inputs in virtual meetings, WhatsApp groups and through sharing of guidance documents from the regional office. In addition, UNICEF is supporting development of key messages on COVID-19 vaccination, which takes into consideration the misconceptions and rumours circulating in media.

UNICEF is also planning to conduct a U-report Poll to understand more on knowledge, attitudes and intentions surrounding vaccine acceptance and uptake. Such findings will continue to inform the strategic plan which will be revised from time to time.

**Human Interest Stories and External Media**

During the reporting period, UNICEF has reached 229,634 U-Reporters with messages via SMS through the U-Report platform that reminded them of the need to continue wearing masks, washing hands frequently and watching physical distances.

**Funding Overview and Partnerships**

In 2020, UNICEF received US$ 17,190,743 contributions from public and private donors against a funding requirement of US$ 55,600,000. UNICEF wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all partners whose support has been critical in maintaining and scaling up the response to COVID-19 in 2020. As the country continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, funding availability is very critical for UNICEF to meet the needs of women and children. UNICEF therefore looks forward to continued support from donor partners. A response plan for 2021 is under development.

**Next SitRep:** 2 March 2021

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