




Situation in Numbers
(as of 31st March 2021)

 90,583 confirmed cases
743 deaths
2,410 active cases

 Over 9.2 million children benefiting from schools being open

 US\$ 17 million funding required

Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign began on 1st March 2021, starting with 600,000 doses of the CoviShield vaccine received through the COVAX facility (WHO, CEPI, GAVI, UNICEF). H.E. the President of the Republic of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, was the first in the country to take the initial dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The national launch also saw the First Lady of Ghana, the Vice-President and the Second Lady take the vaccine that day, contributing to the campaign to instil vaccine confidence. The regional campaigns in the Greater Accra, Central and Ashanti regions were launched on 2nd March. The vaccination of the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Ashanti King, also contributed to a subsequent successful participation of the population in the Ashanti region.



H.E. Nana Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, receiving the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine on 1st March 2021.
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H.E. Mahamadu Bawumia, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, receiving the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine on 1st March 2021.
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H.E. Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the King of the Ashanti Kingdom, receiving the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on 2nd March 2021.
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Starting on March 1st, the first phase of the vaccine rollout focused on three most affected regions: Greater Accra, Ashanti and Central. It prioritized health care workers and front line workers, adults over 60 years of age and persons with known underlying co-morbidities. Others have included essential service providers and the general population (excluding children below 18 years and pregnant women), including students.

On 21st March, a second round of vaccination targeted health workers in all regions of the country. According to the Ghana Health Service online dashboard, as of 31st March, 555,259 doses of vaccines had been administered. As of 31st March, the country had recorded 90,583 cases, with 2,410 active cases and 743 deaths.

UNICEF's support to the national COVID-19 response in Ghana

In close cooperation with the UN Country Team, UNICEF in Ghana continues to support the Government's overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other critical humanitarian risks, across the sectors below.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ghana Health Service (GHS) with the procurement and deployment of the COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility (CEPI, GAVI, UNICEF, WHO).

Following the arrival of the vaccines, GHS launched the vaccine campaign in 43 hotspots severely affected by the pandemic in Greater Accra, Ashanti and Central Regions, from 2 - 9 March 2021. A total of 30 UNICEF staff were deployed to the field to help monitor the campaign and contribute to quality assurance in rolling-out the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.



Porbilla Ofosu-Apea, Health & Nutrition Officer checks COVID-19 vaccines during the monitoring exercise of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.
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A health worker at the Manhyia hospital receiving a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine during the vaccination campaign in the Ashanti Region.
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Horatio Lartey, Procurement Officer reviewing vaccination data at an immunization center in the Central Region during the COVID-19 vaccination campaign.
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UNICEF supported a four-day workshop of the COVAX Logistics Working Group from 15-19 March 2021. The objective was to assist the country to complete the COVAX Cold Chain Equipment (CCE) Gap Analysis, CCE inventory, sizing, Operational Development Plan, budget and COVAX CCE application. Through this support, Ghana has completed all the COVID-19 vaccine introduction and country readiness dashboard indicators for vaccine procurement, shipment and deployment.

Nutrition

UNICEF has established a new partnership with four Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to support the GHS in creating demand for breastfeeding and quality maternal and newborn care in three districts in the Upper West Region.

UNICEF also cooperated with GHS in Greater Accra to conduct training on complementary feeding and the use of Micronutrient Powders (MNPs) for 84 health staff across all 33 districts. GHS received 60,300 boxes of MNPs from UNICEF for distribution to children aged 6-23 months across the Greater Accra region to improve the quality of complementary foods. The MNPs will benefit a total of 335 children (6-23 months) for one year.

To assess the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic on food and nutrition, UNICEF collaborated with GHS, WFP and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to prepare and release the Food and Nutrition Monitoring Bulletin, using routine food and nutrition data from the fourth quarter of 2020. Key highlights in the bulletin include improved household access to food due to the harvest in the fourth quarter, and increase in prices of cereals and household food consumption that are acceptable.



A child eats from a sachet of therapeutic food supplement in Bolgatanga, Ghana.
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Water Sanitation and Hygiene

In March, the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR), Environmental Health Officers and UNICEF reached over 75,690 people through risk communication in the Central, Greater Accra and Eastern regions. Five health care facilities in the Eastern Region were supported through improved WASH facilities, particularly in relation to water supply. Approximately 233 clients visit these five facilities each day, including clinical, antenatal care, child welfare clinics and family planning services. The National Board for Small-Scale Industries (NBSSI) trained 62 additional artisans/micro-entrepreneur welders, masons and soap makers using the *Kaizen* methodology. This training sought to strengthen the capacities of WASH supply industries in local communities, with support from UNICEF and the Government of Japan.

The distribution of WASH supplies to institutions (schools and health care facilities) in Greater Accra, Eastern, Volta and Central regions continued, in close cooperation with the Regional Ghana Education Service (GES) and GHS teams.

With the support of the World Bank through the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF), 28 schools across the Northern Region received Infection Prevention Control supplies, including handwashing stations (veronica buckets). Over 14,677 children benefitted from these supplies.

UNICEF and the Government of Denmark jointly launched the 'COVID-19 Response Ghana' programme at a meeting with the Hon. Minister of Sanitation and Water Resources. The initiative targets low income urban communities in the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions, which are the main epicentres of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ghana. The main programme interventions are aimed at improving access to WASH services to households, schools and health centres and other important public spaces. They also seek to strengthen health and child protection systems. An online inception meeting was also held after the official launch to ensure the participation and support of key stakeholders in the relevant sectors.

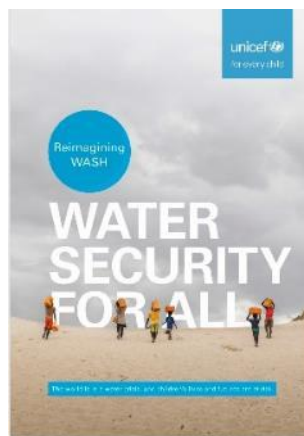


Handwashing Stations ready for transportation from Duraplast factory, Accra
(c) Adatsi/UNICEF2021

The Basic Sanitation Fund (BSF), a revolving loan fund, was launched in two new Metropolitan, Municipal District Assemblies (MMDAs) of Cape Coast and Elmina, with continued support from the Netherlands. Low-income household and small businesses will be able to obtain loans at a lower interest rate (12%) from the Fund to build their household toilets.

UNICEF participated in the planning of Ghana's celebrations to mark World Water Day (22nd March). UNICEF provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources for related awareness and advocacy events. These included media initiatives on issues related to this year's theme – e.g. "valuing water" - and within the broader context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics include effectively targeting the most vulnerable with sustainable drinking water, water safety and water security.

UNICEF also launched its global report 'Water Security for All' and shared key messages through the media and social media channels. The contribution of strategic partners was highlighted, with calls for increased attention and investment in these critical areas. Water security for all, including children in school, adolescent girls and health workers, is essential.



Education

UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ghana Education Service (GES) in ensuring that all children are safely learning through formal education. Schools re-opened in October 2020 (for classes with exams) in January 2021 (for most schools) and on 18th March 2021 (for first-year Senior High School (SHS) Students). This completes the return to school of all students in Ghana.

UNICEF partnered with the GES in selected districts to provide bursaries and school supplies including uniforms, sandals stationery, among others, for 1,000 identified vulnerable adolescent girls in Junior High Schools. The intent is to support retention, completion and transitioning into Senior High Schools. The Supplies and logistics Unit of GES has also started procurement and contracting processes for additional set of school supplies including PPEs to support 8,050 girls.



Students at St. Monica's Junior High School, Northern Region
©Buta/UNICEF2020

With UNICEF's technical and financial assistance, regional and district directorates reviewed the national guidelines on the reopening of schools. The GES has been monitoring the situation and issuing reports. All 260 districts and 16 regional directorates of education in the country have used the experience gained from two months of school reopening in a COVID-19 environment to update the guidelines. As a result, each district in the country now has guidelines that address their particular situations and needs. The support also ensured the safe return to school of first year Senior High School students, the last batch of eligible students to do so. This marked the completion of the exercise to get all students to return to school.

UNICEF continued to support the Ghana Education Service and Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to expand broadcasting of the 350 lessons, which were developed to complement the classroom lessons and generate interest

among learners. In addition, UNICEF worked with the MoE and GES to develop additional 700 lessons in English, Mathematics, Social Studies/Our World, Our People and Integrated Science for the Distance Learning radio programmes, which was set up in 2020. In March 2021, scripts were developed, presenters were trained and accompanying worksheets were drafted. These additional lessons will sustain the Distance Learning programme for an additional 30 weeks.

UNICEF continues to partner with the MoE and GES to strengthen the policy and enabling environment, to create a safe and conducive learning environment (including in the cyber/virtual space). The draft safe school policy has undergone stakeholder validation processes in the northern (Garu District), middle (Techiman) and southern (Swedru) belts, with the engagement of 80 stakeholders from government and non-governmental agencies, civil society organizations, opinion leaders, and faith-based leaders. The digital literacy package (including a five-year costed implementation plan) seeks to complement the ICT curriculum for pre-tertiary. It will also help teachers, caregivers, students and other key stakeholders ensure children's safety in the online space.

UNICEF also cooperated with the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to disseminate the findings of the formative research on children with learning difficulties. The MoE, GES, academia, CSOs, and other partners joined a virtual workshop to discuss strategies to offer equal opportunities for children with learning difficulties. They used the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), already mainstreamed in government's in-service training structures. The lessons from the workshop will inform teacher training and in-classroom practices to address the learning needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities. As part of the ongoing initiatives to improve learning outcomes through differentiated learning (UDL) and Targeted Instruction (TI) in the low performing basic education schools across the country, UNICEF also continued supporting scaled-up implementation.

More over, UNICEF collaborated with the Ghana Library Authority to expand the Community Library Project to two more regions (Eastern and Central), with an additional 3,500 children receiving supplementary reading materials. The programme is now reaching eight regions with more than 8,500 beneficiaries.

Child Protection

In March, 958 people (196 girls, 206 boys, 293 women, and 263 men) were reached in the Central, Greater Accra, North East, Eastern and Volta regions with messages and community-based psychosocial support services on COVID-19 prevention, child protection, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Community facilitators used different tools from the Child Protection Community Facilitation toolkit to engage target audiences on child labour, adolescent pregnancy, gender roles and sexual and gender-based violence.

The engagements took place mainly in schools and small group meetings in the communities. Since the beginning of the year 2021, 3,577 people have been reached with community-based psychosocial support services.



Child protection teams in Okere district - Eastern region, sensitize adolescents of Adukrom Methodist school on gender roles analysis.
©GACA2021

The Ghanaians Against Child Abuse (GACA) campaign continues to reach out to people with information about COVID-19 and child protection related helplines and better parenting messages. The movement reached 36,638 people through GACA social media handles in March 2021 (increasing from 34,466 in the last reporting period).

Critical Government staff across all 16 Regions and their counterparts at the 260 MMDA level engaged in a two-day dialogue on the development of the National Medium Term Development Planning Framework (NMTDPF). This was led by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) with support from UNICEF. Participants included the Regional Coordinating Directors (RCDs), Regional Planning Officers (RPOs), Regional Directors of the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the Department of Community Development (DCD). The objective was to encourage the active support of these key stakeholders into the development process and to merge the Integrated Social Service (ISS) delivery initiative into the national policy, so that all would use it to plan their Annual Action Plans (AAP) between 2022 and 2025. The participants discussed the policy framework thoroughly and provided inputs for NDPC to update the framework to reflect the reality on the ground.

The continued sensitization on the role of foster parenting has been gaining momentum in most of the districts supported by UNICEF to deliver integrated social services. Staff of the Social Welfare and Community Development in the districts conducted regular home visits and engaged with the community members to help them understand and accept foster parents/caregivers. As a result, more community members are willing to become foster parents. However, they raised concerns about their difficult economic situation.

During this reporting period, 245 children, 116 girls and 129 boys, benefited from appropriate alternative care arrangements. A total of 73 children (41 girls and 32 boys) who were previously living in residential homes for children, were reunited with their biological families. Since the beginning of the year, 730 children (343 girls, 387 boys) without parental or family care were provided with appropriate alternative care arrangements.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement

UNICEF continued to support the roll out of the National Communication Campaign on COVID-19 Vaccine Introduction jointly with the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), Health Promotion Division (HPD) of the Ghana Health Service and other stakeholders. UNICEF has contributed to the development and distribution of the key messages, questions and answers, posters, leaflet and jingles on COVID-19 vaccination in targeted regions.

In addition, UNICEF continued to support the HPD in strengthening its social media strategy and started series of training for the Digital Unit. The office also contributed to training for leading NGOs and journalists on effective communication around COVID-19 vaccination. UNICEF also developed a series of information materials for health care professionals with messages around vaccine confidence.

Across social media platforms, the start of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign was extensively documented. Shortly after the launch, UNICEF joined partners in the field to support the roll-out of the first phase of the campaign. Messages and posters sensitizing citizens on the campaign reached over 5 million people across social media platforms.



UNICEF has conducted three surveys on knowledge, attitudes and practices around COVID-19 vaccination through telephone interviews (415), SMS (2,200), and mobile interactive voice responses (795) across different groups. The results have informed further priorities of the campaign, including a need to focus on vaccine safety and efficacy, manage rumours, focus on hesitancy level of religious leaders and teachers, as well as the younger population.

UNICEF subsequently facilitated the establishment of a Misinformation Management Task Force hosted at the HPD. Ten members of the Task Force were trained on misinformation management, online, offline and on-ground monitoring and tracking of rumours.

Community engagement on COVID-19 safety protocols continued in partnership with local CSOs (Dawah Academy, Bido, RISE Ghana, Community Radio, Theatre for Social Change). A total of 187,300 people were reached with messaging on prevention through van announcements, market stalls, interactive theatre performance, advocacy meetings with religious and community leaders. Video clips, InfoJingles and posters on COVID-19 preventive behaviours continued to be distributed.

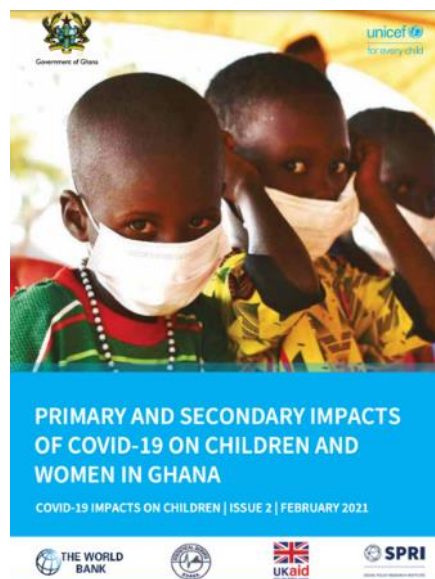
The Agoos platform continued to provide critical information to adolescents and young people in Ghana. Over 109,801 calls were received from 10,847 callers in March 2021. A second participatory workshop for Agoos platform was held in Tamale on March 24-25 to co-create content with 40 adolescents, young people and youth organizations operating in Northern Ghana. Through the U-Report platform, UNICEF also received feedback from young citizens on vaccine hesitancy.

UNICEF also continued to support the deployment of the Talking Books (an operated handheld audio device) in the Jirapa Municipality of the Upper West Region of Ghana targeting pregnant, lactating and nursing mothers to ensure access to essential health messages and services during the COVID-19 crisis.

Social Policy

UNICEF, in collaboration with the World Bank and Ghana Statistical Service has disseminated a report on the analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on households and children based on phone interviews. This report is the second of a series of bulletins on children's well-being in Ghana amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The study, which focuses on the vulnerable and poor, is expected to inform policymakers with timely evidence on child-related issues in the ongoing crisis. The sample size of the participants selected for this report was 5,032 children aged 0-17 years (49.1% females) living in 1,873 respondent households, representing all 16 regions (in rural and urban areas) in Ghana.

The report shows that the effects of the pandemic on multiple dimensions of children and women's wellbeing have been substantial. For example, the percentage of households with at least one child younger than 15 years sick during the seven days preceding the survey had increased compared to June, which was correlated with having fewer meals than usual. The share of children exposed to physical punishment in their households had continuously increased from 18.3% before March 16, 2020, to 26.1% and 28.9% in June and September, respectively. There was an increase trend of students being engaged in long distance education between June and September 2020. Children, parents or caregivers had more contact with teachers (48.3% in September against 37.9% in June).



Social Protection

UNICEF supported the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme with a pilot testing of different communications approaches to reach targeted beneficiaries and communities. This was conducted with 16 CSOs in 32 districts, reaching 2,800 beneficiaries and 5,600 community members. This has resulted in an updated communications strategy that LEAP will start to roll-out in its ongoing programme.

In March, UNICEF and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) organized a workshop to develop a new legal framework for social protection – the Social Protection Bill. Participants included stakeholders from the Social Protection Directorate, the Ghana National Household Registry and the LEAP programme. This enabled a final review and incorporation of key elements into the Bill, including in relation to the use of social cash transfers and emergency responsive social protection. The next steps for the Bill is the approval by the MoGCSP, followed by submission to the Cabinet for approval.



A beneficiary of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty cash transfer Programme in Eastern region.
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In partnership with the MoGCSP and the World Bank, UNICEF has also supported the monitoring and evaluation of vulnerable households identified late 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministry deployed mobile money transfers for the first time. UNICEF has helped refine this payment modality and provided operational support with the actual delivery of the transfers. So far, over 45,000 beneficiaries have received transfers ranging from 110-550 GHC depending on their type of vulnerability.

Supplies

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service with financial and technical support for the preparation and submission of the COVAX Cold Chain Equipment (CCE) application. The CCE application covers the cold storage gaps identified at the national level and 51 sub-national and district levels in the vaccine supply chain as a result of the deployment of COVID-19 vaccines.

UNICEF also facilitated the procurement and shipment of syringes and safety boxes for the next shipment of COVID-19 vaccines.

UNICEF has ordered various quantities of PPEs and Hand Washing Stations (HWS) for an amount of US\$148,500 to be delivered to partners in Greater Accra, Volta, Oti, Central, Northern and North East regions in Ghana. The distribution of the PPEs and HWS started in the Volta and Oti regions.



Pharoah Semanhyia, UNICEF Supply and Logistics Officer, checking the cold chain data sheet at a COVID-19 vaccination center in the Ashanti Region. The cold chain equipment was provided by GAVI to support vaccination efforts.
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Dr. Mrunal Shetye, UNICEF Chief of Health and Nutrition, checking cold room storage of COVID-19 vaccines at the Ghana Health Service Regional Cold Room in the Ashanti Region.
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Funding Overview and Partnerships

Since the beginning of the crisis in March 2020, UNICEF has been supporting the national response thanks to the strategic support of development partners and private donors such as the World Bank (PEF), the UK Government, USAID, the Government of Japan, China International Development and Cooperation Agency, Standard Chartered and the Mastercard Foundation.

Recently, the Government of Denmark and Global Affairs Canada allocated thematic funds to support the Humanitarian Action for Children in Ghana. In March 2021, the Government of Korea cooperated with UNICEF to donate KF94 face masks to the Ghana Health Service, targeting health personnel.

In 2021, UNICEF is requesting US\$26.9 million to reach 2.4 million people in need. UNICEF's strategy in Ghana involves protecting children and their families from exposure to COVID-19, minimizing mortality and supporting the continuity of services across all social sectors, while ensuring preparedness for potential humanitarian crises. As of March 2021, the 2021 UNICEF HAC in Ghana presents a funding gap of \$17M.

UNICEF continues to coordinate closely with the UN Country Team in Ghana on the implementation of its support to the national COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response Project.

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Annex A - Summary of Programme Results - Ghana

Sector	UNICEF and IP's Response	
	2021 target	Total results*
Nutrition		
Children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment	16424	805
Primary caregivers of children aged 0 to 23 months receiving infant and young child feeding counselling	350,000	52,317
Adolescent girls receiving iron and folic acid or multiple micronutrient supplements	1,000,000	419,248
Health		
Children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF - supported facilities	500,000	11,600 (women) 30,170 (children) 41,770 (Total)
People who received diagnostic and treatment services for COVID-19	30,000	932
Water Sanitation & Hygiene		
People accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene	30,000	/
Children accessing appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces	40,000	/
People reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies (including hygiene items) and services	50,000	/
People reached with key hygiene messages, services and/or supplies, including handwashing with soap	340,000	75,690
Child Protection		
Children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support	120,000	1087 (girls) 851 (boys) 781 (women) 858 (men) 3577 (Total)
Women, girls and boys accessing gender-based violence risk mitigation, prevention or response interventions	120,000	117 (girls) 8 (boys) 125 (Total)
People with access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse	3,500	25
Unaccompanied and separated children reunified with their primary caregiver or provided with family-based care/alternative care services	3,500	343 (girls) 129 (boys) 472 (Total)
Education		
Children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	1,383,576	677952 (girls) 705624 (boys) 1,383,576 (Total)
Schools implementing safe school protocols (infection prevention and control)	10,545	10,545
Social Protection		
Households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and funding	256,500	33,4000 households under LEAP + 60.000 people under emergency mobile transfers
Communication for Development / Communication / AAP		
People participating in engagement actions for social and behavioural change	1,000,000	187,300
People reached through messaging on key health behaviours, available social services and response to COVID-19	6,000,000	9,000,000
People who shared their concerns and asked questions/clarifications to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms	200,000	3,410

Annex B – Funding Gaps – Ghana

Sector	HAC fund requirements	Available HAC funds 2021	Funding Gaps
Health	\$1,900,000	\$1,542,740	(\$357,260)
Nutrition	\$2,372,597	\$387,120	(\$1,985,477)
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	\$1,175,000	\$479,799	(\$695,201)
Education	\$5,780,805	\$2,340,588	(\$3,440,217)
WASH	\$8,140,000	\$3,729,501	(\$4,410,499)
Social Protection and cash transfers	\$5,030,000	\$19,184	(\$5,010,816)
C4D, Community engagement and AAP	\$2,550,000	\$710,820	(\$1,839,180)
Total	\$26,948,402	\$9,209,751	(\$17,738,651)