Case Management

Child protection case management continues for communities

In Myanmar, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and UNICEF’s implementing partners remain active responding to child protection cases in communities. Due to lockdown and semi-lockdown, inter-township and state movement restrictions and other public health measures, DSW case managers and NGO case workers face challenges in mobilizing necessary services for affected children and families, as well as keeping themselves safe from the virus. Although logistical and operational difficulties have had some impact on the efficiency of case management response DSW case managers have followed up cases of child sexual abuse in family quarantine and in the townships under lockdown. With DSW case managers called on to coordinate support for children and women in quarantine centres in many States and Regions, DSW case managers’ capacity to respond to child protection cases was stretched. Nevertheless, DSW case managers and NGO case workers have responded to 66 child protection cases in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine in April. A number that has increased when compared with the previous three months of the year.

Capacity building for the Government of Myanmar and civil society

After 13 online sessions over three weeks of May, UNICEF and Save the Children (SCI) have concluded the first round of training on two guidance notes for adapting case management and alternative care interventions in the context of COVID-19. A total of 243 frontline workers (188 females and 55 males) from government and non-government organizations across 10 regions and states received the training. The feedback from the trainings has been positive and frontline workers provided valuable insights on their areas of priority in responding to the pandemic. Current priority is given to raising community awareness of COVID-19 and ensuring those in need are referred to appropriate health care services. The findings also highlight gatekeeping and facilitating appropriate alternative care for children as the lowest priority. UNICEF will tailor further trainings and support accordingly to ensure the provision
of high value technical assistance during the pandemic, as well as to ensure capacity building in areas where frontline workers have highlighted as being a lower priority. This initiative is supported by the Government of Canada.

**Mental Health and Psychosocial Support**

*Mobilizing community action for COVID-19 awareness raising in Rakhine State*

Between 4 - 17 May 2020, community-based psychosocial support and case management teams in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships in Rakhine State have facilitated COVID-19 awareness sessions. These sessions have reached over 3,700 individuals from 26 village tracts (45 villages). Through the delivery of consistent and regular awareness sessions, UNICEF and its implementing partner Community and Family Services International, are creating behaviour change that will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in these vulnerable communities.

**MHPSS helpline for frontline workers (plus update on child and caregiver’s helpline)**

UNICEF in collaboration with Metanoia, has launched a dedicated mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) “Self-Care” helpline for frontline workers responding to COVID-19. This helpline aims to provide support for workers, including health professionals and social welfare staff who are deployed in the field, especially those working in quarantine centres and hospitals, as well as teachers working in schools when they re-open. First-responders and frontline workers, particularly those in health and long-term care, play a crucial role in fighting the outbreak and saving lives. Ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of these workers now and in the future, is a critical factor in sustaining COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery in Myanmar.

This helpline is the second launched by UNICEF and Metanoia since the pandemic began. The first helpline for children and caregivers was launched on 13 April 2020 and has since received calls from across the country including Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Rakhine, Sagaing, Shan, Yangon, Ayawaddy. Most calls have required the provision of emotional/psychosocial support to children, basic counselling and information about COVID-19.

**Child Protection Kits provide support for children and their families in the South-east of Myanmar**

In the south-east region of Myanmar including Mon, Thaninthary and Kayin, UNICEF supports service provision for wide range of vulnerable groups. In its response to COVID-19, UNICEF has provided Child Protection Kits to displaced people who have fled conflict, migrants returning from Thailand, sexual abuse victims, as well as other children in need of protection. In the last month, 360 Child Protection Kits have been provided across the region, including
to a 13-year old girl and her family who were staying in a quarantine centre in Kayin State. The child, her sister and their mother had returned from Thailand where they had been living since the girl was born. The family made the tough decision to return to Myanmar due to the threat of COVID-19. With the children speaking only basic Myanmar (they are fluent in Pao and Thai) and with limited job prospects for the mother, the family faces multiple challenges in re-establishing themselves in Myanmar. The Child Protection Kit they received includes toys, soap, clothes and other essential items which the family continues to use now that they are living with their grandmother in a local Pao village. Follow-up case management services will be provided by the Department of Social Welfare.

**Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC)**

Myanmar’s Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) moves to online training

UNICEF and its partner World Vision has designed and is piloting online trainings on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) of the six grave violations against children in conflict. There is a training for new monitors, as well as a refresher training for existing monitors. The trainings aim to pass on key information on MRM in order to widen and strengthen the coverage of reporting of and response to grave violations against children and to maintain an activate network despite the movement restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 crisis. 23 monitors from conflict-affected Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states have been trained and more training sessions are scheduled for the coming weeks. The work of the monitoring and reporting of grave violations has been supported by USAID.

Conflict in Kayin State destroys COVID-19 checkpoint and leaves 71 families displaced

UNICEF is providing support to approximately 71 families who have been displaced in Kayin State after skirmishes between the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and the Karen National Union (KNU) Brigade 5, over COVID-19 checkpoints set up by the KNU. Through its partner on the ground KMSS, UNICEF is responding to the urgent needs of the displaced families by providing Child Protection Kits, COVID-19 colouring books and Child Friendly Space Kits. These kits provide essential products such as hygiene items, as well as recreational materials for children. Food has been provided by a local political party in the area.

Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) continue to plague Myanmar’s children however, have COVID-19 movement restrictions caused a reduction in the number of incidents?

In the first quarter of 2020 Myanmar experienced a significant increase in the number of landmine and ERW incidents and casualties. The number of victims in the first quarter reached nearly half of the total incidents for 2019. April however, has provided some respite for communities who have experienced the lowest number of incidents for the year so far. With 14 casualties, including three children from 11 incidents, the month of April has experienced a 65% decrease in the number of casualties when compared with the hardest hit month
this year (January) which experienced 40 casualties including 15 children from 16 incidents.

With COVID-19 movement restrictions in place in Myanmar since the beginning of April, this reported decrease in incidents may be as a result of a reduction in people movement across the country. However, reports of people leaving internally displaced person (IDP) camps to return to their homes in conflict affected communities amid fears of becoming infected by COVID-19 have also been received, creating heightened risk of landmine and ERW incidents in conflict affected areas.

Child Justice

Factsheet for children in conflict with the law during COVID-19

UNICEF in collaboration with the International Legal Foundation and with support from the European Union, has developed a COVID-19 factsheet that guides adolescents on their rights and responsibilities under the law during the pandemic. The factsheet provides a practical guide for adolescents and children on how they can protect themselves during the pandemic, what they should do if they come into contact with the law, including if they are detained or required to go to court. The factsheet also provides information on accessing legal aid, including phone numbers to call in each state UNICEF works.

The information in the factsheet will be disseminated in Myanmar and English via a social media campaign, through UNICEF’s U-Report platform and the dissemination of printed posters by child protection partners.

Migration related detention of children

UNICEF conducted a high-level meeting with the Minister of Labour, Immigration and Population (MoLIP) on 15 May 2020. A major milestone in government policy towards the elimination of migration related detention of children was confirmed by the Minister of MoLIP during the meeting. It was stated that children will no longer be prosecuted and detained for a breach of immigration law in Myanmar. This assurance is a significant step in Myanmar’s commitment and progress towards enhanced protection of children’s rights particularly, detention as a last resort. A principle that is in line with international standards of juvenile justice and Myanmar’s Child Rights Law.

Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Since mid-April UNICEF, in close collaboration with the Inter-agency Network on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) has trained 1,813 individuals including over 1,000 females and 176 government officials on PSEA. UNICEF has received an overwhelmingly positive response to the training. Participants commented on the wide benefits of the sessions, from increased knowledge on the survivor-cantered approach, to the basic
requirements for a PSEA policy. Participants also suggested rolling out the training for adolescents in communities, universities and for the general public. A participant from the Southern Wa, Self-administered area of Myanmar commented, “It is great to receive this kind of PSEA training during this critical time and we are very glad to join. Attending the online training is the first time ever for us, so it was full of excitement to handle the technical and communication issues, but it was very helpful for us and we gained new knowledge about PSEA.”

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