Protecting ourselves and others through proper handwashing and hygiene practices has never been more important. But for many children, basic water and hygiene facilities remain out of reach. UNICEF Myanmar is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic together with the Ministry of Health and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation and Ministry of Education and other partners. Here are some of the highlights of UNICEF's work:

**Critical WASH supplies**

**Disability in quarantine**

When the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Myanmar on 23 March at Tedim Township of Chin State, the Government began setting up quarantine facilities around the country, to contain the transmission of the virus. Hakha's quarantine centres have limited amounts of water available for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. “I lived on a daily dish of curry from the generous local communities who kindly looked after the people in quarantine. So I had to make some food on my own during my stay too, and it wasn’t easy for me to even get water for cooking rice in my condition, since the main water source point was far from my room,” says U Myint Htay, who retired from military service when he lost his right leg in a landmine explosion in 1993. UNICEF and Karuna Myanmar Social Services are providing the centres with hand washing basins, bars of soap and COVID-19 messages.

**Disinfecting, washing and encouraging physical distancing for protection**

UNICEF is working closely with Kachin State Health Department and Department of Rural Development and township development affairs, as well as local religious and civil society organisations Karuna Myanmar Social Services, Kachin Baptist Convention, Nyein Foundation (Shalom) and other partners operating in non-government-controlled areas. At the beginning of April, UNICEF Myitkyina Field Office facilitated the prepositioning and delivery of drums of bleach, 125 hand washing stations, 75,000 bars of hand washing soap and to the Kachin State Health Department and the State Development Affairs through the Department of Rural Development. These supplies, that are procured with support from USAID and the Government of Japan will be used in Kachin State's remote townships and IDP camps and urban areas.
Handwashing stations

Getting clean, staying safe - handwashing stations in Kayin State

Kayin State is one of Myanmar’s highest risk areas for Coronavirus (COVID-19) infection as it hosts the busy trade hub at the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border point crossing between Kayin State and western Thailand. At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, thousands of Myanmar migrants began returning from Thailand through this checkpoint. The Myanmar Government provides social services to returnees, but there is a huge gap in covering the entire state population. UNICEF in Kayin State is working with the Myanmar Government departments of Rural Development, Health and Education to provide humanitarian services to the most vulnerable people. So far, UNICEF, with the generous support from the Government of Japan, has installed 30 handwashing stations which can provide access to handwashing facilities to about 9,000 people that may have to be isolated in quarantine centres. UNICEF also distributed IEC materials, such as posters and stickers with lifesaving information, at critical areas such as quarantine centres, hospitals, public markets, bus terminals and government offices in Hpa-An and Hlaing Bwe Townships. So far, over 6,000 handwashing stations have been installed with UNICEF support countrywide.

Water supplies

Water essential in COVID-19 response

In the midst of the current COVID-19 global pandemic, it is vital that people have adequate water; not only access to a supply of clean drinking water but also sufficient water flow to enable proper handwashing with soap. UNICEF and Solidarites International are working to deliver and treat emergency drinking water for people inside the camp. Over 37,000 litres of water were transported by boat on the first day of this emergency response. UNICEF Myanmar’s WASH activities in Rakhine State are supported by the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance, the Government of Japan and UNOCHA’s Central Emergency Response Fund.
Messages on prevention and access to services

Vital health messages reach remote ethnic groups

Access to reliable health information is critical, particularly during this time of COVID-19 in the world. Myanmar’s diverse demography features 135 official ethnic minority groups, many residing in remote areas and facing geographical, economic and social challenges. Language barriers can prevent people in these groups from receiving important and timely government health advice. Through partnerships, UNICEF is helping to bridge the gaps, to keep people informed and safe. UNICEF’s Office in Shan State, in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Literacy and Cultural Association, is producing COVID-19 health messages in 10 different languages, namely Shan, Gon Shan, Ahkar, Larhu, Lisu, Palaung, Kokang, Wa, Chinese and Myanmar.

Funding

With US$6.6 million, UNICEF’s WASH Programme would be able to support:

- **2 million** people with critical water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improved Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- **Over 1,200** people with safe and clean environment in schools and healthcare facilities in rural, peri-urban and urban areas;

- The production of **2 million** IEC materials (posters, banners, pamphlets) to accompany WASH facilities and targeted interventions to support high risk locations/institutions;

UNICEF Myanmar acknowledges USAID/OFDA, the Government of Japan, Department for International Development (DFID) and Unilever for their generous contributions to support the WASH activities and to curb the impact of COVID-19 on children.

Fact sheet – [UNICEF COVID-19 WASH response](#)