The words “coronavirus” and “COVID-19” were already being heard in Peru, but they referred to a distant threat. On 6 March, when the first case was confirmed, everything began to change.
INTRODUCTION

While millions of children and adolescents were enjoying their last days of school holidays and the media were reporting on the price of school supplies, uniforms and tuition, and on the new Congress, the words “coronavirus” and “COVID-19” were already being heard in Peru, but referred to a distant threat. However, on 6 March, when Peru’s first case of coronavirus was confirmed, everything began to change.

Within days, the president announced a state of emergency, border closures and a national stay-at-home order. On Monday, 16 March, the date set for the start of the 2020 school year, schools were closed and children and adolescents, along with their families, started a lockdown unprecedented in Peru’s history.

At one point I started thinking that I could no longer experience different things with my friends, that I could no longer do what I had planned, prepare for university, go to an institute or sign up for a workshop. Nothing.

Milagros Flores, 17 años, Carabayllo, Lima.
UNICEF, as a part of the United Nations, immediately activated a strategy to respond to the emergency, extending our support to the Government of Peru through joint actions with the Ministries of Health, Education, Women and Vulnerable Populations, Development and Social Inclusion, Justice and Human Rights, and Culture. We have also worked with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the National Migration Authority, as well as the regional governments of Huancavelica, Loreto and Ucayali, and the local governments of Carabayllo and San Martín de Porres in northern Lima.

We act in accordance with the Government of Peru’s lockdown measures, with the conviction that our work to support children’s rights knows no borders and that in situations of emergency children and adolescents must also come first.

*Whether infected with the coronavirus or not, children would be severely affected and see their futures jeopardized by COVID-19.*
THE LEAST VULNERABLE?

*If we work together, this virus is not going to beat us. We adolescents from Iquitos are stronger than this virus.*

Gruber Vargas, 16 años, Iquitos, Loreto.

While it is true that the risk of severe illness from COVID-19 in children and adolescents is lower compared to other population groups, reality has shown that the apparently “least vulnerable” are among the most affected, because whether infected with coronavirus or not, they have seen their present and future jeopardized by the pandemic. For example, the reorganization of health services
to respond to the pandemic led to the suspension of growth and development monitoring services (CRED), which in 2019 immunized and monitored the growth and development of six out of ten children under the age of three.¹

To help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of children and adolescents, UNICEF, in partnership with different ministries, has produced a series of digital guides for parents and caregivers. The aim, besides disseminating measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, was to generate positive family dynamics and promote reconnecting with adolescents during lockdown.

This material has been made accessible to parents with hearing impairments by adapting the videos into sign language. Aware that, due to its multilingualism, Peru requires culturally relevant messages, the guides were also translated into Quechua. In response to the requests for advice from parents and caregivers, we have run five Facebook Live sessions that allowed us to connect with hundreds of families and respond to different questions related to the health, education and care of their children.

¹ National Institute of Statistics and Informatics, Demographic and Family Health Survey, 2019.
As part of our communication for development strategy in indigenous communities, implemented in the sub-national regions where UNICEF works, we developed five radio and TV shorts in as many indigenous languages: Ashaninka, Awajún, Aymara, Quechua and Shipibo Konibo, as well as two Spanish dialects: Andean and Amazonian. We also developed a range of materials for community communication on the prevention of COVID-19 to help care for children and adolescents, and health promoters.

Our concern for the vulnerability of indigenous families has led us to focus our support on those communities. In the first week of July, we delivered to the Government of Peru 40 oxygen concentrators that, based on their technical features, are ideal for rural settings. These devices have been allocated to health centres in the regions of Amazonas, Loreto and Ucayali.

In addition, as part of the United Nations in Peru, we worked with the Ministry of Health to develop different protocols, guides and standards to promote breastfeeding,² protect mental

². Ministerial Resolution n.° 245-2020-MINSA
In the heart of the Amazon

With respect for their culture, we bring information to indigenous communities that most need it to prevent COVID-19.

No one left behind

Our guides were adapted into sign language in order to reach parents with hearing impairments with preventive and protective messages.

Response for a multilingual country

Our messages have been adapted to 5 indigenous languages because we know that children and adolescents in these communities are among those who most require information to protect themselves from COVID-19.

No toleres actos de violencia en tu hogar ni en las casas vecinas.
Denuncia llamando a la línea 100 o 1810.
health\textsuperscript{3} and facilitate children having time outside,\textsuperscript{4} and to acquire and distribute supplies to support prevention and response actions. Likewise, we are supporting government efforts for a speedy and safe reactivation of health services, especially those for children and adolescents.

Our work also involves supporting migrant children and adolescents living in northern Lima. In order to help ensure their inclusion process is not disrupted, we have continued to promote their participation in spaces of artistic expression, reflection, and integration with their Peruvian peers. Participants have created videos with messages of mutual care, from their adolescent perspectives, that have been shared on digital platforms.

Children and adolescents, without any distinction, must be at the centre of the COVID-19 response. For that, we are generating and disseminating evidence on the impact that this pandemic will have on the lives of children and adolescents living in Peru, especially those living in poverty. We are also advocating for effective and timely social protection responses to prevent families from taking measures that affect

\textsuperscript{3} Ministerial Resolution n.\textdegree{} 363-2020-MINSA
\textsuperscript{4} Supreme Decree n.\textdegree{} 083-2020-PCM
A REALITY THAT COVID-19 WILL EXACERBATE

- In 2018, 28 per cent of children and adolescents and 20.5 per cent of adults were living in monetary poverty. The pandemic has worsened this situation, especially in urban areas.
- In that same year, 4 out of 10 children under 36 months of age had anemia.
- According to data from 2015, a quarter of the population aged 5 to 17 was engaged in economic activities.
- A survey from 2010 found that women and girls dedicated 7 out of 10 hours to domestic work. Men, only 3.
- Another survey conducted in 2018 showed that 6 out of every 10 migrant families were living in overcrowded households; less than half of migrant children and adolescents attended school; only one in five had health insurance; and one third of adolescents were working.

the comprehensive development of children and adolescents, such as reducing the quantity and quality of their diet, resorting to child labour and domestic work or investing less in their health and education, among others.

5. Data from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics.
ENSURING LEARNING

I see that they pick up digital technology quickly. I think this education modality shows the potential and creative capacity of our students, something we hadn’t seen before.

Edgard Bendezú, teacher, Huancavelica.

The lockdown has demanded a response to ensure the right to education of more than 8 million children and adolescents in basic
education, and to maintain progress made through early child development (ECD) programmes.

Since the beginning of this emergency, UNICEF has supported the design and implementation of the I Learn at Home strategy, which began on 6 April and faces many challenges due to persisting inequalities in Peru. We are particularly concerned that not all children and adolescents from peri-urban and rural areas can benefit from virtual education. Only one third (29.8 per cent) of households have Internet access, a percentage that drops to 2.1 per cent in rural areas.

The challenges are huge, even more so for a country that needs culturally relevant responses. In this respect, UNICEF has provided pedagogical support to develop the content of radio sessions for rural secondary schools, which have benefited 130,615 students. Likewise, we have supported teachers from targeted schools to overcome the challenges of distance education, thus contributing to provide 15,463 school students with quality virtual education.

The support of our UNICEF ambassadors has been critical at this time. Through them we have reached students with encouraging messages to face the challenges of distance education with optimism, and also their parents and caregivers with guidance to support their children’s learning in this new context for all actors involved.

During the months of the pandemic, children and adolescents spend more time connected to social networks, either to study or to socialize. As such, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, we developed a guide for parents and caregivers to help ensure that the online experiences of their children are safe.

Aware that social isolation due to COVID-19 can also have a profound impact in the emotional health of children and adolescents, we promoted spaces through which they could channel their emotions in creative ways. With the support of our UNICEF ambassadors we promoted playful activities so that children and adolescents can use art to communicate the hygiene and social distancing measures they are taking and how they are learning from home.
The challenges are huge, even more so for a country that needs culturally relevant responses.
The coronavirus also puts adolescents deprived of their liberty at risk. At the beginning of the pandemic, youth facilities had exceeded their capacity by 130 per cent, which made social distancing, essential in this context, difficult. In response, UNICEF has advocated and provided technical assistance for the implementation of presidential pardons and other measures for adolescents deprived of their liberty. According to official data from the National Youth Centres Programme, as of 23 June, 444 adolescents had already been released, while 1,737 were still in custody.

PROTECTED IN LOCKDOWN?

_The protection agenda cannot be postponed. We need the government to redouble its efforts and consider protection services as essential as public health or safety services._

Ana de Mendoza, UNICEF Representative in Peru.
Another major problem evidenced by the coronavirus was violence against children and adolescents that would have increased during the lockdown. From 16 March to 31 May, the Mobile Emergency and Urgent Care Service Teams of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP) handled 2,021 cases of violence against children and adolescents. According to the MIMP, out of the 299 cases of rape against children, 276 involved girls and 23 boys.

As a part of our technical assistance provided to the I Learn at Home strategy, we supported the production of seven videos on socioemotional

The purpose of the guides is to disseminate measures to prevent coronavirus and promote positive family dynamics.
skills, getting along at home and prevention of violence against children and adolescents. We also helped produce four shorts on SISEVE, the platform for reporting cases of school violence.

The lockdown and its impact on the economy has put at risk the right of children to maintain contact with their parents and receive economic and material support, especially when they do not live under the same roof. We supported the MIMP in the production of two videos that remind parents who do not live with their children of the importance of maintaining mutual communication and continuing to provide the economic and material support their children need for their comprehensive development.
MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

During the second week of May UNICEF launched the “Mission Possible” campaign, an initiative that the television network Grupo ATV made its own. The technical and professional teams of both institutions worked around the clock to highlight the impact of the coronavirus on the lives of children and adolescents and to encourage public solidarity with children from indigenous communities in the Amazon who, despite living so close to rivers, do not always have access to safe water and have limited access to hygiene products that are essential to protect themselves from the virus.

While we were working, in coordination with ATV, to give children a space in the media agenda and promote solidarity, we were processing donations, and expediting the acquisition of supplies for
communities in Ucayali and peri-urban areas of regions where we work. Through the joint efforts and public support and solidarity, this MISSION BECAME POSSIBLE and raised US$ 150,000 during a special TV show that brought together the channel’s journalists, UNICEF ambassadors, and Peruvian and international artists and athletes.

The proceeds were used to purchase hygiene kits for indigenous communities. To date, UNICEF has delivered these kits to more than 10,000 people living in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon. Along with the kits, UNICEF staff have visited the communities to provide guidance on the correct use of the supplies and on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. There are also plans to distribute education and psychosocial support kits to children and adolescents from peri-urban neighbourhoods to help them channel the emotions they may experience during lockdown and support their home learning.

In addition to the significant amount of funds raised, this campaign has provided UNICEF with an extraordinary opportunity for advocacy and media coverage of the impact of COVID-19 on children and adolescents. The partnership with ATV allowed us to reach 66 per cent of the target population of adults over 25 and reach 18 million on social media. This campaign is valued at US$ 800 000 of donated broadcast time and more than US$ 1 million in free press.
AND WE CONTINUE WORKING TO:

- Provide cash transfers to 350 vulnerable families who have not received any government subsidies.
- Deliver food packages to families who foster children and adolescents, to help strengthen alternative care.
- Along with the Ministry of Health, develop a national health communication strategy based on what Peruvians think and feel.
- Promote, together with the Peruvian Press Council, a major campaign to change behaviours necessary for this stage of the pandemic.
- Continue disseminating messages and advice during this “new normal” in which children and adolescents remain at home.
- In this new context, facilitate the participation of adolescents in virtual platforms.
Children in the Andes walking for hours to pick up the signal of a radio station that broadcasts their classes show that reimagining and building an inclusive Peru with equal opportunities is an ethical obligation as well as a strategic decision.

The virus has taken its toll on Peru, as in most countries in the region, but it’s also giving an opportunity to close gaps. Today, more than ever, there is consensus that social investment is essential to provide quality public services and to build a social protection system that is universal, sensitive and efficient to address the challenges of each age group, and with a strengthened capacity to respond to emergencies like the current one.
We can no longer put off investing in children. To invest in every child is to invest in their present and future, and to ensure the sustainable development of Peru. Let’s act on the lessons left by the pandemic to come together to create a country of opportunities where every child and adolescent can make their dreams come true.

For more information on COVID-19 go to:

www.unicef.org/peru/coronavirus/covid-19
THANK YOU FOR JOINING US DURING THIS TIME

Our work is possible thanks to the support of thousands of people who contribute to our campaigns, to the permanent support of our national UNICEF ambassadors: Gastón Acurio, Francisca Aronsson, Júnior Béjar Roca, Gian Marco, Dina Paucar, and Marco Zunino; as well as international cooperation partners, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the private sector.

**International cooperation**
- Government of Canada
- Government of Sweden
- Government of Denmark
- United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund
- Government of the United States of America
- United Nations in Peru

**NGO partners**
- Acción por los Niños
- ADRA Perú
- Plan Internacional
- Prisma
- Salud Sin Límites
- Terre des Hommes Suisse
- Warmi Huasi
Private sector partners

- Banbif
- Banco de Crédito
- BBVA
- Boost
- Brapex
- CaixaBank
- Official Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Peru
- Peruvian Press Council
- Cuy Arts
- Diners Club
- Directo
- Evalúa
- Greenprint Consultants E.I.R.L.
- Grupo ATV
- Joinnus
- Kimberly Clark
- Mediadoor
- Nokia
- Orbia
- Telefónica
- Wunderman Thompson