Ending the polio outbreak

On 3 June 2021, the Philippine Department of Health (DOH) concluded the polio outbreak response and the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the polio outbreak controlled on 11 June 2021.

This comes after 16 months of comprehensive response actions since DOH declared a polio outbreak in September 2019 due to a confirmed case in Mindanao. Previous to that, the Philippines had been polio-free for almost two decades.

The country was also at high risk of a measles outbreak due to declining routine immunization rates: More than 2.4 million children under 5 years of age were susceptible to measles in 2020. In response to this, DOH with support from UNICEF, WHO, and other partners conducted two rounds of supplemental immunization activities (SIAs) covering 8.4 million children.

UNICEF direct support in vaccine procurement and distribution in Regions 3 and 4A

- 9 million doses of measles-rubella vaccine
- 10 million doses of oral polio vaccine
- Over 200,000 personal protective equipment

Mothers participating in an immunization campaign in Makilala, Cotabato while maintaining COVID-19 prevention measures
The conduct of SIAs faced several hurdles: lockdowns, healthcare workers in quarantine or isolation due to exposure to or testing positive for COVID-19, inaccessible roads due to typhoons and flooding in some regions, and vaccine refusals.

UNICEF provided technical support to regions and local government units in campaign planning, social mobilization, advocacy, cold chain and vaccine management, and campaign monitoring and validation. UNICEF worked with Relief International and Health Organization for Mindanao to complement government efforts in regaining public confidence in vaccines.

Collaborating with DOH and WHO, UNICEF supported real-time vaccine coverage tracking, which sped up data collection at barangay level and consolidation at national level, and enabled decision makers to immediately act on coverage bottlenecks. The tool and data visualization introduced by UNICEF have since been adopted by DOH as the official data reporting system for measles and polio immunization campaigns.
UNICEF is leading efforts to procure and supply COVID-19 vaccines as part of the global vaccine plan of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX Facility). UNICEF leverages its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world in what could possibly be the world’s largest and fastest ever procurement and supply of vaccines.

UNICEF’s role in helping COVID-19 vaccine roll-out in the Philippines covers the following components:

- **Supply and logistics:** procurement and delivery of vaccines, cold rooms, freezers, solar refrigerators, temperature-monitoring devices, syringes, personal protective equipment, hospital tents and emergency kits.

- **Technical expertise:** guidelines and policies for vaccination roll-out; cold chain management; proper disposal of used vials and syringes; data management system.

- **Training:** provision of COVID-19 vaccination training modules for all implementers; training of cold chain technicians and healthcare facility staff; training on Risk Communication and Community Engagement.

- **Demand generation for COVID-19 vaccines:** development of messages, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and guidance in handling vaccine hesitancy and refusals; combat misinformation.

UNICEF has also been working with the national government, other United Nations agencies and international development organizations to strengthen data management around COVID-19 vaccine administration and supply and logistics.
Supporting the safe return to in-person schooling amid COVID-19

Seeing distance learning as complementary to and not a replacement for in-person schooling, UNICEF has been continually initiating multi-sectoral dialogues to advocate and plan for the resumption of in-person schooling in the country amid COVID-19.

Earlier this year, UNICEF organized a second Health-Education Roundtable Discussion. Shared during the roundtable were the Philippine Pediatric Society’s recommendations, Indonesia’s experience in phased school reopening, and UNICEF Philippines’ evidence-based recommendations. The roundtable paved the way for discussions that fostered collaboration among government agencies and civil society members. As a result, a joint memorandum for guidelines on the safe resumption of classes was drafted by DOH and the Department of Education (DepEd) and is now being reviewed and polished with technical assistance from UNICEF. A similar assistance was extended to the Ministry of Education in drafting the guidelines on the safe resumption of classes in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.
UNICEF has also provided technical assistance in the creation of a risk assessment tool that is being used by DepEd in identifying low-risk areas for piloting limited in-person classes in schools. The agency provided support in refining the monitoring and evaluation tool to be used by DepEd and ensured that the tool's metrics are aligned with critical touchpoints in the WHO Checklist for School Reopening. In partnership with the Social Weather Stations, UNICEF conducted a nationwide survey on public perception on school reopening to strengthen its advocacy and influence decision makers to take urgent actions.

**Public perception on school reopening**

- **64% of parents** support in-person classes in low-risk areas
- Modular distance learning is the prevailing (80%) modality
- followed by online distance learning (18%)

*Source: UNICEF-SWS Survey, May 2021*

**Schools in minimal or low-risk areas**

As of 20 July 2021, 57% (27,103) of schools nationwide are in minimal or low-risk areas. Of these, 5,445 have adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) standards according to the WASH in Schools Three Star Approach of DepEd.

UNICEF is assisting the Early Childhood Care and Development Council Secretariat in the design and planning of phased reopening of Child Development Centers (preschools). UNICEF also advocated successfully to have teachers and school personnel moved up in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program framework of DOH. Teachers and school personnel are now included in the A4 priority. On 5 August, DepEd's latest update showed that 171,738 (20%) teaching and non-teaching personnel of Schools Division Offices and Regional Offices nationwide have been vaccinated with at least one dose.
Teleconsultation and digital tools used for child protection, mental health and psychosocial services amid COVID-19

In the first semester of 2021, UNICEF consolidated partnerships with the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, Council for the Welfare of Children, Commission on Human Rights and specialized non-governmental organizations to adjust service delivery models and scale up delivery of child protection services across the continuum of care.

As of March, 77,186 users were reached with essential information on health and protection, psychosocial support and case management. A chat-based modality facilitating provision of counselling services to adolescents and youths was also launched in Facebook, reaching 2,089 individuals (284 boys, 219 girls).

Access to the Philippine General Hospital–Child Protection Units (PGH–CPU) was enhanced in 10 cities and 55 hotspot areas through teleconsultation to facilitate continued and better access to multi-disciplinary services. From June 2020 to April 2021, 1,818 victims of violence against children (VAC) and their families were provided with child protection services; 223 VAC cases were served through teleconsultation (203 girls, 20 boys).

Modules of the evidence-based parenting programme Masayang Pamilya (MaPa) are being integrated in the Electronic Family Development Sessions of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and in Residential Care and Foster Care programmes. Parenting tips sheets – translated in 12 Philippine languages, freely available online and disseminated through social media – have also reached 92,584 individuals through MaPa weekly posts on Facebook; messaging on violence prevention have reached 16,625 parents and caregivers. MaPaChat, an online parenting support group for parents of 2- to 17-year-olds, was piloted on 40 families in Valenzuela City and has been programmed for scale up.

To generate additional evidence on the situation of children in the context of COVID-19, a baseline survey on VAC commenced in June in Valenzuela City, while studies to assess adaptations and disruptions of child welfare services will commence in August.
At the peak of armed conflict between the Philippine Armed Forces and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in Mindanao in April 2021, some 13,000 families or 66,000 individuals including 35,000 children were displaced from their homes and relocated to 55 temporary evacuation sites in the Province of Maguindanao.

As of 17 May, some 9,000 families or 45,000 individuals remain displaced with over 3,000 families continuing to live in 28 evacuation sites, according to the Philippine Ministry of Social Services and Development.

Snapshot of UNICEF response to emergency needs

**Emergency Response**
- US$300,000 worth of relief supplies contributed by UNICEF alongside technical support and funding for field-based civil society organization partners to address critical emergency gaps, benefitting some 20,000 children and 30,000 women and caregivers

**WASH**
- 2,000 family hygiene and dignity kits provided, benefitting 9,970 people
- 2,000 water kits for 10,000 people
- 1,000 tarpaulin sheets for privacy while bathing, especially for women and girls
- six emergency toilets installed; daily water quality testing carried out for water trucked to the sites by local government authorities

**Child Protection**
- 18 safe spaces set up for young children and adolescents
- 11 tents
- 21 early learning kits
- 91 recreation kits
- 80 volunteers trained, including animators for children under UNICEF’s psychosocial support programme
- community-based psychosocial support provided for some 4,000 children and 2,000 caregivers

**Health and Nutrition**
- over 13,000 children under 5 years of age (7,940 girls and 5,073 boys) systematically screened for vaccination status and malnutrition
- over 18,000 parents and caregivers counselled
- malnourished children referred to local health services for treatment
- face masks provided to families and rural health units for protection from COVID-19
The Bicol region suffered the brunt of devastation left by typhoons Rolly and Ulysses, which came only two weeks of each other in November last year. The Province of Catanduanes was the worst hit.

One of the major devastations from the typhoons were the busted water pipelines that served 20 barangays – with an estimated 1,243 households and 7 schools – within the Municipality of Baras, forcing communities to collect water from shallow wells and other unsafe and inaccessible sources. An assessment by the Baras Water District identified the need to replace at least 900 meters of water transmission lines.

In February 2021, a project to replace the 900-meter transmission lines commenced, supported by the Central Emergency Response Fund and with A Single Drop for Safe Water (ASDSW) as implementing agency. Partnerships were forged to address various project challenges.

While waters pipes could only be sourced from Manila, UNICEF and ASDSW were able to secure these from a supplier at cost for PHP857,000 while the provincial government covered the cost of transporting the pipes from Manila to Baras.

UNICEF supported labour services, valued at around PHP105,000, for the installation of the pipes, which were bigger than the pipes being replaced and would improve water pressure and volume capacity. The Water District office also mobilized additional community members and workers who maneuvered through long and challenging terrain while carrying long and heavy pipes.

The local government is planning to extend the project’s reach to cover four more barangays. The Office of the Municipal Mayor already has provided small distribution pipes for the expansion.
UNICEF Education COVID-19 Case Study: Philippines – Providing youth a second chance to complete their education

The case study on education in emergencies in the Philippines particularly discusses UNICEF’s support to learning continuity for the non-formal Alternative Learning System (ALS) programme of DepEd.

Strengthening COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control in Home and Community Settings: The UNICEF experience – Case study

Discusses challenges, actions, targets, impact, next steps and scale-up plans from the UNICEF-supported COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control training delivered online and offline for healthcare personnel, community workers, caregivers and households.

Making the 4Ps Inclusive for All Children of Currently Enrolled Households – Social policy brief

Why lifting the three-child limit for benefit entitlement makes sense in accelerating poverty reduction and improving school participation and completion of children in 4Ps households.

Public Budgeting for Children’s Rights in the Philippines: A resource book

Public budgeting processes simplified with key guidance on policies and steps for child-centered public finance in the Philippines.

The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Households in the National Capital Region of the Philippines

Describes the social and economic impact of COVID-19-related containment measures on households with children in NCR, the correlations between this impact and different sectors, and the capacity of households to meet basic needs before and after the outbreak. It also identifies policy and programme recommendations to reduce and/or mitigate the pandemic’s social and economic impact.

Unhealthy Food Marketing to Children in the Philippines – Study

Identifies the marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic drinks to Filipino children aged 5–17 years as part of UNICEF’s actions to address increasing rates of overweight and obesity among children in the Philippines.

The Market for Highly Processed Food and Drink: Driving children’s diets in the Philippines

Analysis and trends in sales of highly processed food and drink as part of UNICEF’s actions to address increasing rates of overweight and obesity among children in the Philippines.


Annual Report: UNICEF Philippines achievements in 2020
Outlines the work of UNICEF in the Philippines in 2020 with support from the Governments of Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America—from emergency support to avert further COVID-19 transmission to quality healthcare, adequate nutrition, immunization, adolescent health and early childhood development amid the pandemic.

Situation of Children with Disabilities in the Context of COVID-19 – Survey results and analysis
Findings from an online survey that looks into the situation of these children and their families at the height of quarantine restrictions, and key recommendations to ensure that their rights are upheld during the pandemic.

Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics 2019 National Report of the Philippines
Data and insights on learning outcomes in the Philippines for Grade 5 learners to help strengthen evidence-based reforms for basic education.

Barriers to Access and Complete the Alternative Learning System among Adolescents in the Philippines – Research and policy briefs
Explores reasons why out-of-school adolescents in the Philippines are not enrolled in or do not complete DepEd’s Alternative Learning System (ALS) programme. The attendant policy brief outlines recommendations on how to improve access to and completion of ALS.

UNICEF-Supported DOH MR-OPV Vaccination Tracker
A data visualization platform that tracks coverage of measles and polio vaccination campaigns in real time, enabling the government to react quickly or course-correct where needed.

Philippines Kids Online: The online experiences of children in the Philippines – Opportunities, risks and barriers
Understanding the behavior, risks and practices of children navigating the Internet to inform and promote better and safer online environments for children.

National Study on Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in the Philippines
Understanding the patterns, trends, and different modalities that online sexual exploitation and abuse of children is operationalized in the country.

Philippine National Implementation Guidelines for Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies
The guidelines include infectious disease settings and guide to field-level service providers in the delivery of psychosocial care services for future emergencies, alongside the COVID-19 pandemic response.