Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Myanmar’s Positive Discipline Taskforce has developed online training and tailored global resources to design a comprehensive information package on positive parenting. Corporal punishment is common in both homes and schools across Myanmar which is why a Positive Discipline Taskforce has been established. The Taskforce aims to educate both teachers and the wider community on alternative ways to discipline children. UNICEF as a member of the Taskforce chaired by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and along with other non-government organizations, is developing a positive discipline curriculum to be rolled out across the country. A Training of Trainers (ToT) based on the curriculum has been delivered for DSW staff and child protection practitioners in multiple states and regions. To supplement the curriculum, UNICEF has launched a set of informative posters which will be further modified into short, easy to use formats including pamphlets and an e-training module. These resources, alongside the 12 global parenting tips that were translated into Myanmar and 12 other ethnic languages last month, make up a comprehensive package on positive discipline.

MHPSS e-training module for Department of Social Welfare and non-government organization frontline workers

After the successful delivery of the online orientations to adapt case management and alternative care in the context of COVID-19 by UNICEF and Save the Children, useful feedback was received. Participants from DSW and non-government organizations (NGOs) across multiple regions indicated their need for additional support and training in the area of MHPSS for children. In response UNICEF with its MHPSS partner Metanoia and with the support of USAID and the Government of Japan, has developed a three-day e-training module with a maximum 10 people per session. This training is open for all the frontline workers delivering MHPSS as well as those interested in delivering this specialised service. This week, the first batch of training was rolled out with participation from DSW and NGOs in Chin, Kachin and Rakhine States.
UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement release a set of comic books to raise awareness of COVID-19 among children

UNICEF has developed a set of nine comic books to convey simple messages for children on what COVID-19 is and how they can protect themselves from it. Using the format of comic books ensures the messages are interesting, engaging and tailored for children. Across the country, children are finding themselves in new and challenging settings with schools resuming, stay-at-home orders in place in some townships and mandatory quarantine for movement between states. The books can be used by children themselves, or by their parents, caregivers, teachers and case workers as a recreational and educational resource for children. The books have been endorsed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) who will mobilize their vast network to distribute them across the country. The nine comic books also form part of a COVID-19 information package developed by UNICEF and its partners to protect street children during the pandemic (you can read more about UNICEF’s work with street children below).

Case Management

Child protection training for Medical Social Workers and volunteers working in quarantine facilities across Myanmar

In collaboration with Save the Children, UNICEF has developed multiple new resources and training packages to build the capacity of frontline personnel, particularly those working in quarantine facilities responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The resources include, an e-training module for Medical Social Workers which helps them to adapt a child-focused response when needed. To supplement the module, UNICEF and Save the Children are rolling out online training for 300 Medical Social Workers in the coming weeks.

A child protection e-training module for youth volunteers working in communities and quarantine centres is under development. The module includes practical tips for identifying and reporting cases of child abuse, key considerations for children during quarantine, isolation and hospitalisation, as well as promoting positive parenting during COVID-19. Volunteers have been engaged by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Ministry of Health and Sports in the county-wide COVID-19 response. With this module, UNICEF aims to inform young volunteers on basic child protection ‘WHATs’ and ‘HOWs’, so that they can assist in addressing child protection concerns.
Support for Vulnerable Groups

Adolescents in Northern Rakhine State take action to help their communities

A group of 10 adolescents from Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships in Rakhine State joined a ‘facemask making training’ last month and are now actively producing 2,000 facemasks to help others. The group of 10 boys and girls are part of adolescent groups organized by Community and Family Services International (CFSI) who have received various life skills training and life-saving information. In April, alongside a number of child protection implementing partners, CFSI participated in an online Training of Trainers (ToT) programme to make hand sanitizers and facemasks. CFSI then introduced the ‘facemask making training’ to the adolescent groups as a community development activity. The facemasks will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in local communities.

In Rakhine State, CFSI works with humanitarian organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontiérs (MSF) to support the adolescent groups initiative. Through this collaboration, another 2,000 masks are being developed by the adolescent group for MSF. MSF have been working with CFSI to ensure the design of the masks is high quality and meets their requirements. This collaboration between UNICEF, CFSI and MSF provides opportunities for adolescents and youth to not only learn new skills, but to make a meaningful contribution to their community and at the same time, generate some income. One youth commented that “it is noble work as it can help in life-saving efforts” while another stated, “we will be able to contribute in making efforts to prevent COVID-19 in the communities.”

UNICEF joins the call of MSWRR in providing support to street children in the context of COVID-19

Due to rapid urbanization, the phenomenon of street children is increasingly visible, and the protection concerns for this vulnerable group are also on rise. Not only are street children at an increased risk of infection from COVID-19, many of them have been unable to earn an income due to lock down measures, putting them at increased risk of multiple deprivations. Beyond the context of COVID-19, street children continue to face challenges including limited or no access to education, limited opportunities or prospects of stable employment and high risk of exploitation.

Myanmar’s Department of Rehabilitation (DoR), MSWRR with coordination and technical support from UNICEF is leading a Country Taskforce for the Protection of Street Children. This programme aims to respond to the urgent needs of street children during the time of COVID-19 and to prepare individual plans
that ensure children and their families are supported. UNICEF and other Taskforce members also provided a child protection training for DoR staff. This week the Taskforce launched a study on the current situation of street children across Yangon. Based on the findings from the study, the Taskforce will develop and roll-out a plan to respond to children and their family’s basic needs. To support this plan a child protection package has been developed. The package includes a set of nine COVID-19 comic books, colouring books with messages on COVID-19, crayons, cartoons on COVID-19, cloth masks, soap and hand gel. Child protection service mapping information, with numbers of various service providers including MHPSS helplines, COVID helplines, and legal aid is also provided.

Door-to-door awareness raising in Central Rakhine
In the townships and camps of Central Rakhine State UNICEF’s implementing partner Relief International (RI) alongside local Child Friendly Space (CFS) animators and case workers, have been going door-to-door to share important messages about COVID-19. During the outreach, Mp3 Audio messages that share COVID-19 information are linked to community members phones, and families are informed of a dedicated helpline run by RI in local languages. The helpline provides assistance and facilitates case management for child protection issues and mental health and psychosocial support for residents of Myaebone Township and Taung Paw internally displaced persons (IDP) camp.

In Myaebone Township, 446 households were reached in 337 ‘door to door’ sessions which included 529 girls, 553 boys, 123 women and 141 men. In Taung Paw IDP camp, 331 households took part in 163 ‘door to door’ session, made up of 252 girls, 303 boys, 76 women and 31 men.

Children and Armed Conflict
CTFMR meets with military generals
29 May 2020 the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting for the six grave violations against children in armed conflict (CTFMR), co-chaired by UNICEF, had its first online meeting with Myanmar’s Inter-ministerial Committee for the Prevention of Underage Recruitment. The Committee, which is spearheaded by the Tatmadaw at the technical level, includes representatives from eight other Ministries. The purpose of the meeting was to follow up on key advocacy points from the January 2020 visit of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC) to Myanmar. Constructive discussions led to an agreement on measures to prevent the informal use of children by the Tatmadaw in Rakhine State, of which cases have spiked in recent months. The CTFMR reiterated the need for the Government of Myanmar to sign and implement a joint action plan on other violations the Tatmadaw is listed for in the Secretary General's Annual Report on CAAC namely, killing and maiming of children and, rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Another steep incline in the number of mine incidents during the month of May
After a reduction in landmine incidents during April in what was thought to be caused in part by COVID-19 lock-down measures, the number of incidents during the month of May has spiked to almost the highest for the year. Thankfully the impact of these incidents in resultant injuries and deaths (17 and 4 respectively) is less than all other months of 2020, excluding
April. Between April and May the casualties have doubled: reaching 20 in May, compared to 10 in April. Children make up 41% of the May casualties.

Rakhine State has shouldered 55% of total casualties in 2020 after experiencing 26% in 2019. This year, casualties have reached 131% of the same period of 2019. Figures from the first five months of 2020 show that the number of casualties (130) countrywide have reached 57% for the whole year of 2019.

![Image of Landmine/ERW incidents in Myanmar by month (2020)](image)

**Landmine/ERW incidents in Myanmar by month (2020)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Injured</th>
<th># of incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total # of incident = 73**
**Total Casualties = 130**

Child Justice

**Release of children charged with offences under Counter-Terrorism Law**

Two children supported by UNICEF’s legal aid implementing partner Thazin Legal Aid Group were released by the juvenile court in Rakhine State’s Mrauk-U Township on 3 June 2020. The children were charged under the Myanmar Counter-Terrorism Law for alleged association with the Arakan Army which was recently declared a “terrorist organization” by the Myanmar government. The children had been arrested on different occasions for picking firewood in an area next to active fighting and/or IED explosions. Both cases were closed by the court due to lack of evidence supporting the conviction.

Despite specific provisions for the protection of children during armed conflict in the Child Rights Law (2019), a worrying trend in the number of children being arrested in Rakhine State on charges related to the Counter-Terrorism Law have been observed. Currently UNICEF’s justice team and legal aid partners are supporting 18 children in Rakhine State charged under the Counter-Terrorism Law. All children have been released after their initial police custody and are currently under their parents’ supervision where they will remain for the duration of the trial.

**UNICEF supports juvenile courts during COVID-19**

Juvenile courts have responsibility and authority that allows them to ensure the protection of children’s fundamental rights and their equal protection of the law at every stage of criminal proceeding. This authority cannot be suspended during COVID-19. While restrictive measures are necessary to limit the spread of COVID-19, certain fundamental human rights including the right to life and liberty as well as the right to be free from torture are non-derogable and cannot be waived under any circumstances.
To ensure that juvenile courts continue to operate without major delays during the pandemic, especially in the case of critical hearings and emergency applications, UNICEF is working closely with the Myanmar Union Supreme Court (USC) to support juvenile judges in their day-to-day work. On 10 June UNICEF together with the USC, facilitated the first in a series of workshops with juvenile judges. The comments and suggestions from these discussions will be reflected in an operational guidance note for juvenile judges during COVID-19. The guidance note will be developed jointly by UNICEF and USC. One of the challenges presented by the judges is that many court rooms are small, making it difficult for juvenile courts to implement social distancing guidelines. UNICEF has supported the Mandalay juvenile district court with COVID-19 information, education and communication materials, as well as prevention items such as masks, sanitizers, cleaning products and plastic partitions, to ensure social distancing guidelines can be adhered to and work can carry on. This ensures no unnecessary delays and children are safe while attending court.

Gender Based Violence

UNICEF and Plan International team up with 125 youth to raise awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) and address the ‘shadow pandemic’

In the first week of June, UNICEF and Plan International launched a virtual youth-led campaign aimed at empowering adolescents and youth to become leaders in educating their peers and communities about the COVID-19 pandemic and; to support and protect each other, especially girls, young women and women, from violence and abuse during social isolation. The campaign is being piloted in Kachin State and Mandalay region where 125 youth leaders living in camps for internally displaced people and other communities, are raising awareness among their peers. Awareness topics include COVID-19, protection, sexual and reproductive health and rights, girls and peace, gender and gender-based violence (GBV). When speaking with a youth leader from Myitkyina, Kachin State, they reflected on the oppression and stigma that many girls face in their community stating, “they are being told what to do and how to behave since they are young. They are not able to reach their capability...” Through the peer-to-peer program and “… discussions on GBV, the girls understand, and they realise what is happening and it gives them motivation.” GBV incidents in Myanmar during quarter 1 of 2020 increased by approximately 32% when compared with quarter 4 of 2019. Through these youth leaders, the ‘Shadow Pandemic’ of GBV and violence against children is being addressed at a community level.

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