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UNICEF Europe & Central Asia Region (ECARO)

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Situation Report No. 2



1 – 6 April 2020

Highlights

UNICEF works for children and adolescents in 22 countries and territories¹ in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Region. UNICEF is also present in Italy supporting Refugee and Migrant populations.

- All countries except Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have reported cases of COVID-19; eight have declared state emergencies; school closures affect 19 of 22 countries. Affected children include 680,000 Syrian refugees in Turkey.
- Among the refugee and migrant community living in open reception centres, Greece has reported 25 people, including 3 children, who have tested positive for COVID-19². A first case has also appeared in a Roma settlement in Podgorica, Montenegro.
- While life-saving supplies are starting to arrive, global shortages and restricted air shipments mean painful delays for countries desperately needing personal protective equipment (PPEs), diagnostic tests and medical equipment such as ventilators.
- Prolonged suspension of work is affecting low income families the hardest, and UNICEF is partnering with UN agencies, the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and others around innovative models to launch humanitarian cash transfers designed to sustain the poorest families during and beyond the emergency. In Tajikistan for example, UNICEF's experience in humanitarian cash transfer modelling will help inform the implementation of a World Bank \$11.3 million financing.
- With families forced to spend more time together in confined spaces, there is a worrying surge in domestic abuse cases. UNICEF is implementing preventive measures such as positive parenting support via digital/social media channels, direct phone lines for counselling support, and deploying mobile teams in extreme situations.
- Families in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo* Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan are among the early adopters of UNICEF's freshly launched 15-day [#LearningAtHome](#) challenge, that is being widely promoted on social media. The challenge presents play-based activities to help parents keep children busy learning, while positively strengthening family connections.

¹ Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

* Source: World Health Organization (WHO) 6 April 2020. Figures do not include Italy.

² The Hellenic National Public Health Organization (EODY) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM)



43,704 COVID-19
cases in 22 countries*



1,030 COVID-19
deaths in 22
countries*



50.34 million children
affected by COVID-19-
related school and
learning centre closure

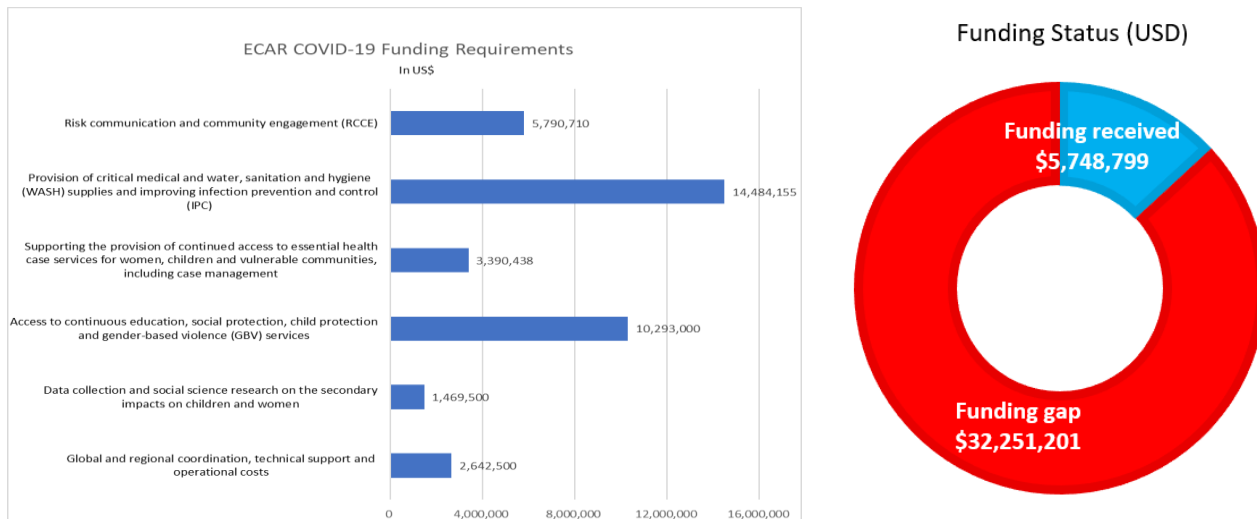


US \$38 million
funding requirement
for ECAR response

Funding Overview and Partnerships

Under UNICEF’s Global Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) for COVID-19 response, Europe and Central Asia is appealing for **\$38 million**. Against this target, the Region has raised **\$5.74 million³** or **13%** of required funding. The situation remains fluid, and as impacts of COVID-19 spread across the region, UNICEF continues to coordinate with Government and partners, updating country response strategies to respond to children’s humanitarian needs.

Although the ECA Region is largely comprised of upper-middle and high-income countries, the COVID-19 emergency has put significant pressure on Government capacities, and additional external financial support is needed. While a large part of required funding for the Region’s COVID-19 response is being leveraged from bilateral donors, international financial institutions with strategic interests in the Western Balkans, the Caucuses, and in the Central Asia sub-regions are also being approached for support. Four countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia) have long-established structured private sector fund raising (PSFR) operations, and Croatia has launched direct marketing activities to fund its COVID-19 response. In Romania, UNICEF and Realitatea TV launched a fundraising campaign this month.



Situation Overview and Humanitarian Needs

With the rapid escalation in the number of cases, several Country Offices have reprioritized programmes, operational support and resources to address this unprecedented crisis. Immediate efforts have focused on preparedness and supporting health authorities to confront the wave of COVID-19 infections, and education and social sector actors to address the adverse impacts on children, young people and their families.

The first international shipments of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hygiene kits are starting to land, and countries are locally procuring supplies wherever possible. UNICEF has begun delivering supplies in Armenia, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. However, the global shortage of life-saving supplies and difficulty to secure airlifts, given restrictions on international flights, will delay the arrival of additional shipments. This is potentially devastating for countries like Moldova where ventilators and oxygen concentrators are in short supply and the rate of infection has, in one week, grown from 32 to 161 new cases a day – with almost a third of them, so far, medical staff. Other countries, like Montenegro are similarly concerned about the pandemic’s toll on health workers. As national medical resources are diverted to deal with new cases, continued access to health services such as immunization, HIV treatment and antenatal care are at greater risk. Some areas of Kazakhstan have reported interruptions in drug supplies. In Albania, lockdowns imposed by authorities have made it difficult for partners to deliver services, and for populations to access them.

School closures, shuttered businesses, and mandatory self-isolation have created uncertainty and anxiety. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, discussions around a possible salary cut for teachers and reduced social protection transfers expose the fragility of social support systems that are not designed to withstand this level of shock. The pandemic has already cost livelihoods and with that comes more poverty. All children in the region are affected by the crisis but the most vulnerable – those living in poverty, those at risk of exclusion or maltreatment and those in humanitarian and migrant contexts – are disproportionately impacted. UNICEF is especially focused on efforts to preserve existing social assistance benefits for the most vulnerable families with children, and for children with disabilities.

³ List of donors available on request

The first 25 cases of COVID-19 have been reported among the refugee and migrant population in Greece. For those living in Italy, a severely affected country, the risk remains high. UNICEF is advocating for special considerations to be given to the situation of migrants and refugees being hosted in the reception system and for families with young children outside the formal system. UNICEF has identified young migrants and refugees, especially those about to turn 18 (and at particular risk of losing child protection rights) amongst those most in need of speedy action to ensure continued protection and access to services. In Greece, UNICEF continues to call for the immediate transfer of all vulnerable refugees, including children, from overcrowded reception centres to the mainland where sufficiently available water, hygiene and sanitation would enable children and families to practice preventive measures.

With entire families at home, and as children attempt to salvage the remaining school year through lessons delivered online and via television, parents need new services and guidance to support them through this period. UNICEF has launched a 15-day #LearnAtHome challenge, offering fun activities for parents to do together with children, encouraging them to keep learning while promoting positive family relations. Families in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo*, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan are among the early adopters. With concerning reports of increases in domestic abuse cases since the lockdown, UNICEF is implementing measures to mitigate the risk before this becomes a second tragic epidemic. In Armenia and other countries, a rapid needs assessment and the translation of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Pocket Guide is helping UNICEF to anticipate GBV and take preventive action.

Finally, communicating information for people to practice behaviours to keep themselves safe requires facilitation of the diverse languages found across the ECA Region. A renewed urgency was apparent in Montenegro with the first case reported in a Roma settlement in Podgorica, where strict containment is now imperative to avoid community transmission. Access to these and other vulnerable communities, providing information in a language that is understood, as well as basic supplies such as soap and sanitizer to enable safe practices like handwashing, is a priority.

Partnerships & Coordination

UNICEF is an active partner in all countries, participating alongside WHO and other UN agencies, and Government Ministries – for example, the Ministry of Health, Education and/or Family and Social Services – and in various COVID-19 working groups and coordination mechanisms established by Government or UN Resident Coordinators Offices. In some countries, like Bulgaria, UNICEF leads the coordination of concerted response efforts by partners including UN agencies as well as the IMF, WB and EBRD. In other countries, UNICEF is assuming a leadership role in programme coordination for example: Education (in Moldova, involving UN Agencies and the WB); Child Protection (in Italy, in partnership with IOM and UNHCR); Risk Communication (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and other countries) and Humanitarian Cash Transfers (in Albania, co-leading with International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent (IFRC)). Where partnerships and coordination need to integrate multi-sectoral responses to ensure the rights of the most vulnerable children and families, UNICEF is leveraging important partnerships and ensuring strong advocacy, for example in Montenegro, presenting the case for families to have access to vital cash benefits, essential services and protection from violence; in Armenia and Georgia, in partnership with UNFPA, UN Women or through the UN Gender Theme Group, advocating for GBV prevention and response, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, partnering with Centres for Mental Health and the Association of Psychologists on psychosocial support.

In the Western Balkans, IFRC has emerged as a significant partner – for example, in Kosovo*, supporting the distribution of hygiene kits to marginalized families; in North Macedonia, in the procurement and distribution of hygiene and sanitation supplies to vulnerable communities, and in Montenegro, where 350 Red Cross personnel (staff and volunteers) will be trained on GBV, and will support the identification and referral of children exposed to violence, neglect or any form of exploitation, including child marriages.

Summary of UNICEF's ECA Region Preparedness and Response Actions

Supplies: All countries have felt the impact of serious supply chain disruptions and airport closures. Nonetheless, through UNICEF's efforts, critically required PPEs (e.g., masks, gloves, gowns), hygiene equipment (e.g., alcohol based sanitizer, soap, hygiene kits), and medical devices (e.g., Pulsioximeters, ventilators) have been delivered in Armenia, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo*, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, with additional orders pending. While PPEs are generally destined for healthcare workers, hygiene items are meant for communities. In Montenegro, UNICEF and the Red Cross distributed hygiene kits to 2,000 vulnerable households with children in the Roma and Egyptian community. In Turkey, UNICEF distributed hygiene and sanitation supplies to an estimated 8,000 women and children still stranded at the Turkey/Greece border.

Donors are playing a key role in enabling procurement. In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF is working closely with Government, WHO and ADB to secure medical supplies, especially PPEs, offshore and through the local market. UNICEF is working closely with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to reallocate resources from a GAVI-funded existing project to prioritize COVID-19-related supplies. In North Macedonia, UNICEF has reallocated existing funds from planned activities that have been disrupted by the crisis and is in process of procuring 10 respirators in response to an urgent request from the Government.

Provision of Healthcare and Nutrition Services: As Governments divert medical staff, equipment and resources to hospitals treating COVID-19 patients, many health facilities have suspended most regular services. UNICEF's emergency response insists that it is imperative for basic healthcare, and for mental health and nutrition services to be available for children and families. Some examples of challenges and solutions include:

- In Croatia, a lack of PPEs resulted in disruption of home visits to newborns and new mothers, the suspension of antenatal courses for pregnant women, and the withdrawal of access to early childhood intervention (ECI) services in institutions for children with developmental delays and disabilities. Taking into consideration the lack of ICT capacity and equipment, UNICEF has piloted an Augmentative and Alternate Communication (AAC) approach which provides support via telephone and mail. UNICEF has also prepared and made available online, recommendations on breastfeeding during the COVID-19 outbreak, guidance on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), and guidance on immunization for the MoH, the Paediatric Association and the Public Health Institute.
- In Italy, through INTERSOS and Medicines du Monde (MDM), UNICEF is ensuring refugees and migrants can access health and psychosocial information through the [MDM hotline](#). In addition, an MDM doctor was seconded to the Caritas health clinic and is seeing patients.
- In Kazakhstan, a website for mental health support and counselling was launched in April <https://COVID-19.mentalcenter.kz> as a joint initiative of UNICEF, the National Mental Health Centre and the MoH. In the first 24 hours, 3,395 visits were registered (97% from Kazakhstan and 3% from other countries), and 20 online individual consultations were provided. An online capacity building workshop was conducted for 75 mental health specialists on providing online counselling during the COVID-19 emergency.
- In Montenegro, UNICEF is reaching out to the MoH to share the Executive Director's statement and global guidance on routine immunization during COVID-19. Guidance on nutrition during COVID-19 is being translated and will be shared with national counterparts.
- In Serbia, in partnership with the MoH and Association of Roma Health Mediators, UNICEF has supported Roma Health Mediators to intensify contacts with families through proactive phone calls and by providing information about COVID-19 prevention.

Infection, Protection and Control (IPC)/WASH Services: UNICEF is working with partners to support a scientific approach and practical solutions designed to prevent the spread of infection. UNICEF-supported activities to promote WASH and IPC services are focused on the most vulnerable communities where the lack of basic hygiene items makes practising safe behaviours extremely difficult. Some examples of UNICEF's work include:

- In Armenia, UNICEF worked with MoH to release an order guiding schools and preschools on necessary preventive measures for disinfection of educational facilities, toilets and cafeterias. UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Emergency Situations to ensure COVID-19 and other pandemic preparedness and responses are elaborated in school disaster management guidelines and plans, and remote assistance is provided to school and preschool administrators.
- In Croatia, UNICEF is distributing 7 pallets of hygiene supplies for families affected by the Zagreb earthquake who are temporarily living in student dorms and therefore at increased risk.
- In Serbia, UNICEF delivered 1,700 hygiene kits to Roma settlements, with an additional distribution planned for April.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF is providing necessary hygiene supplies for all 23 quarantine centres across the country. UNICEF has also pre-positioned emergency supplies to address immediate needs of 10,000 people, including 4,000 children in case of emergency, and is on standby to release WASH supplies, if requested by the Government.
- In eastern Ukraine, UNICEF distributed 145 hygiene kits to 13 health institutions. A needs assessment of cleaning/hygiene material for healthcare facilities was initiated for Government Controlled Areas (GCA)/Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCAs) and availability of water treatment chemicals in water treatment facilities is being monitored. UNICEF is developing the content and preparing a hygiene promotion campaign to be conducted in the coming weeks. In western Ukraine, UNICEF has complemented UNHCR activities by providing 50 Roma families with hygiene kits and hygiene messages.

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE): A main part of UNICEF's response across ECA Region is leading the design and implementation of RCCE activities. At the core of messaging is prevention of infection and preserving safety and security in the home. RCCE activities are targeted to specific audiences (e.g., children, adolescents, parents), and recognise the role of young people as conveyors of such messages. Initiatives deploy a multimedia approach, combining video, press releases, social media assets, and so on. Some examples of RCCE activities and results over the past week are:

- In Armenia, UNICEF launched a parenting website www.babycef.am with resources (in Armenian), where users can find press releases, web articles, social media assets and key messaging on handwashing, social distancing, mental health, coping mechanisms, and so on.
- In Azerbaijan, UNICEF's COVID-19 prevention messaging in Farsi focused on prevention is targeting users across the national border before access closed.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, through social media, UNICEF reached 500,000 people with messages on protection, reaching the same number during the [#LearningAtHome](#) campaign.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF provides parents with advice and messaging on mental health. Digital campaigns, [#LearningAtHome](#) and [#LearningFromHome](#) were launched on March 28 and generated 4 new articles on the website, 16 posts on Facebook, 4 new videos on YouTube, 3 visuals on Twitter and 5 videos and visuals on Instagram, resulting in a total of 1,102,642 people reached in just one week.
- In Croatia, UNICEF's social media campaign aimed at parents, schools, and health professionals, focuses on protecting children and families and supporting continuity of health care, education and social services: 16 communication materials have been produced to date, and social media presence and recognition has increased up to 500% since the website launched in March.
- In Georgia, UNICEF reached over 250,000 people on COVID-19 prevention through home-based learning, play and/or stimulation, while a dedicated webpage on COVID-19 topics, created on UNICEF's website generated over 30,000 visits and 38,000-page views.
- In Kazakhstan, UNICEF reached 16,000 and engaged 1,700 people through social media and a website. Online consultations held by the National Mental Health Centre with UNICEF support was widely covered in local media. UNICEF created a dedicated COVID-19 web sub-page and uploaded new materials, including videos on how to support children at home. [#LearningAtHome](#) was launched and the first challenge was posted with National Ambassador Dinara Saduakasova <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-oiCSIJzph/> and <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=215098353138264>, reaching 334,793 people.
- In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF produced multilingual cartoons and a video spot for young children on handwashing and room cleaning, aired on TV and through social media. Similar videos were created for Health and Nutrition, Child Protection, ECD and Education. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-W1J-SH27F/>.
- In Moldova, as a member of the National Risk Communication Group, UNICEF is working with WHO and the Government to produce materials on prevention and response. Multimedia materials on digital resources reach 500,000 users weekly, with topics including hygiene, youth engagement, positive parenting, and learning at home.
- In Montenegro, publications in Montenegrin, English and Albanian, available on UNICEF's website, are supporting national efforts. In the past week, 16 social media posts, 6 Instagram stories on coronavirus were published with topics like: [#PlayAtHome](#) campaign and young reporters' video messages (e.g., [#HelpOlderPeopleToStayHome](#)). Posts reached 213,461 people (Facebook, Instagram), tweets appeared 36,703 times in Twitter feeds, receiving 4,429 engagements.
- In North Macedonia, messaging and digital activation campaigns continue to engage over 10,000 people weekly. In under a month over 620,000 people were reached and 40,000 engaged on local social media platforms, with over 72,000 unique users (69,000 new) engaging with content published on UNICEF's local website. New risk communication and community engagement content and campaigns have included: [#LearningAtHome](#), mental health and wellbeing of children and families impacted by COVID 19, and how teenagers can protect their mental health during the COVID-19 emergency. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B966Aw6JMkl/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B99lr52pipZ/> <https://www.facebook.com/gordana.kadija/videos/10216237285820576/>
- In Serbia, UNICEF developed and disseminated materials on preventing COVID-19, and seeking assistance and psychosocial support for children, young people and parents. Information is available on UNICEF Serbia's landing page: <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/korona-virus-COVID-19>, and as of 6 April, had reached 2,582,664 people.
- In Tajikistan, through engagement with national stakeholders and the development community, UNICEF positioned itself as lead agency on RCCE efforts in the country, bringing together stakeholders and formalizing a strategy and plan with the Government. UNICEF has produced materials for different media platforms and community outreach, including: in print, (310,000 materials, with almost 70% distributed across the country reaching an estimated two million people); three COVID-19 TV spots (on state media with 98% coverage broadcasting at least once a day, reaching approximately 1.5 million people); three COVID-19 cartoons aimed at children (on state media with 98% coverage broadcasting at least once a day, reaching approximately 1.5 million people) and digital media reaching around 200,000 people across all platforms.
- In Turkey, UNICEF is supporting a wide range of RCCE initiatives, specifically targeting children, youth and adolescents and their

families, parents, and caregivers, with information on protection from infection, coping with the effects of self-isolation, protecting and promoting mental health and wellbeing, and adapting to distance learning.

- In Ukraine, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and Public Health Centre with information and content development of Government communication channels on COVID-19, reaching over five million people daily. A RCCE plan for the MoH was also developed. UNICEF facilitated a partnership between Viber, the most popular messenger in the country, and the MoH which sends updates on COVID-19 to 3.5 million users daily. UNICEF also adapted the campaign 'Simple Things Save Live', with posters and videos placed and disseminated nationally outdoors (e.g., streetlights, billboards, videoboards, screens at malls), and through digital channels, reaching an estimated 8 million people nationwide. UNICEF parenting content (e.g., celebrity mothers, experts on psycho-social support, breastfeeding, health, and disability) are being disseminated via infographics, videos and FB LIVE streams are have reached two million parents. [#LearningAtHome](#) campaign was launched by the country's First Lady , together with Ministry of Education <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-rxeu2gN-J/?fbclid=IwAR2EwO8wp0xE-V-xWX4Q-20W4eAz5NL893EA-zxFtzZRVkUyJDTiqwPVtDM>
- In Uzbekistan, UNICEF reached over two million families through social network channels. Partnerships with television networks are being leveraged to reach the entire population of 32 million.

Engaging Adolescents and Young People: UNICEF in ECA Region has long-engaged adolescents and young people as crucial partners for the achievement of sustainable economic and social development, and for the identification of innovative solutions to the challenges facing countries and communities. With the COVID-19 pandemic as the greatest challenge facing the world today, UNICEF is amplifying the voices and energy of youth in spreading knowledge on staying healthy, engaged, positive and kind. As examples:

- U-Report surveys on COVID-19 were carried out by adolescents in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo*, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, among others, ensuring that the concerns of young people are brought to the attention of decision makers across the ECA Region.
- In Armenia, through young people and partners working with youth, UNICEF is encouraging adolescents to tell their stories on staying at home through the [#CopingWithCOVID-19](#) social media channel, hosted by UNICEF, WHO and the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth.
- In Georgia, UNICEF, in partnership with the Human Rights Centre (HRC), is in the process of developing video material in three languages (Georgian, Azeri, Armenian) targeting adolescents which will be disseminated through TV channels and social media
- In Italy, skills building through socio-recreational activities (e.g., yoga class, capoeira, music) reached between 500 to 1,200 users and engaged over 200 to 300.
- In Kazakhstan, a first online session for about 25 volunteers of Almaty Youth Friendly Services and some UNICEF volunteers was organized to sensitize youth on the COVID-19 related updates, hygiene messaging, discuss innovative solutions for spreading the relevant messages to the public and reaching the most vulnerable. More sessions are being planned with UNICEF experts to equip volunteers and build their capacity as well as provide materials.
- In Kosovo*, UNICEF Innovations Lab organized online "Activate Talks" through social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to bring together adolescents and youth innovators, experts and thought leaders to showcase the latest solutions and continue delivering results for young people during self-isolation. This week, five speakers engaged 39,764 adolescents and young people.
- In Kyrgyzstan UNICEF volunteers are supporting the development of video lessons and initiating social media challenges.
- In Moldova, UNICEF is contributing to the first UN Taskforce meeting on the use of big data in the COVID-19 response.
- In North Macedonia, a youth design thinking workshop initiative started. 22 young volunteers are engaged in the online workshop which will continue this week and is expected to identify initiatives that will be launched to a wider group in mid-April.
- In Serbia, over 4,300 users activated UNICEF's COVID-19 U-Report chat bot through Facebook and Viber.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF's Second Decade team has been supporting on-ground partners to conduct awareness raising among adolescents through the network of Adolescent Innovation Labs, their alumni and as well as multiple digital platforms within skills and participation components of the adolescent programme. Around 100 adolescents conducted peer to peer outreach and reached around 2,040 people with messages on COVID-19. Partners also reached around 10,000 people through their digital platforms.
- In Turkey, UNICEF has been collaborating with Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), the regional GAP Administration and youth associations to use their social media and other communication channels for dissemination of relevant messages to adolescents, young people and their parents. UNICEF is working closely with MoYS to use its YouTube channel and nation-wide network of

youth centres to further disseminate messages related to COVID-19 as well as provide opportunities for virtual learning and engage young people in national efforts to fight the pandemic. The MoYS-initiated live YouTube programme is providing a platform for youth engagement.

- In Ukraine, a U-report poll conducted among young people aged 14-35 revealed low awareness about COVID-19 prevention and confirmed concerns about stigma associated with infected people. 26% of respondents reported fear of possible psychological pressure, negative attitudes or aggressive behaviour towards those with coronavirus. 31% believed people would react to current events with panic and fear. Social media are key sources of COVID-19 information for half of the respondents. The data was used by UNICEF, MoYS, MoH, and other partners, to shape their messaging and create new communication channels in TikTok and Instagram to deliver youth-friendly content on COVID-19. In total 6,836 young people participated in this poll: <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/unicef-poll-only-quarter-young-respondents-know-how-act-when-encountering-first>.
- In Uzbekistan over 65,000 U-reporters are engaged in raising awareness. Messaging focuses on mental health and psychosocial support of young people.

Access to Continuous Learning: Across the region, UNICEF continues to support the Ministries of Education (MoE) and related Government agencies in establishing and improving online learning systems. UNICEF is paying special attention to ensure that transforming classrooms into digital learning spaces does not deepen inequalities that leave the most vulnerable children behind.

- In Armenia, learning at home is being achieved through a mix of digital and non-digital platforms and mobilizing local funding for provision of IT equipment to children from vulnerable families with no access to computers and internet online learning and provides a viable alternative for children without online access.
- In Azerbaijan, television programming and video lessons via the MoE's social media channels in Azerbaijani and Russian have been extended to pre-schoolers.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNICEF conducted a rapid needs assessment to define main issues, gaps and priority actions to ensure the continuum of learning for all children and the quality of online education during COVID-19 pandemic.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF joined efforts with the Roma organization "Amalipe" to support access to distance learning for vulnerable Roma children during the COVID-19 emergency.
- In Croatia, UNICEF developed content available online and on TV. Recommendations on adapting distance teaching and learning for children with disabilities were shared with the MoE and funds were provided to buy tablets for children who would otherwise be unable to access online platforms.
- In Georgia, UNICEF is developing communication materials to support cognitive, emotional, and motoric development of young children using various platforms (social media, TV, radio, preschools/municipalities).
- In Italy, five UPSHIFT classes were held with 30 students and 4 teachers from catch-up schools involved in the incubation of 11 start-up enterprises.
- In Kosovo*, Early Childhood Development and Education online platforms are being finalized. UNICEF is supporting the MoE to develop the new online platform dedicated to pre-school educators working with children 0-6 years of age and their parents. UNICEF's [#WhileAtHome](#) social media campaign promoted the importance of reading to children and the [#LearningAtHome](#) reached 85,962 people.
- In Kyrgyzstan, with UNICEF's support, the Ministry of Education and Science endorsed the Anti-Crisis Plan which will introduce remote learning tools to ensure access to continuous learning for all children and successful completion of the 2019-2020 academic year.
- In Moldova, meetings between UNICEF and the MoE on supporting measures to address the impact of COVID-19 crisis resulted in an agreement by Government to provide educational materials for parents of young children, online training of educators, and the development of an educational supplies package for pre-schoolers.
- In Montenegro, digitization of formal education curriculum and UPSHIFT through the Learning Passport (developed by Cambridge University, Microsoft, and UNICEF Montenegro) will be expanded to encompass formal and informal education.
- In North Macedonia, UNICEF supported the upgrade of the e-classroom platform to cover both pre-school and secondary education with video lessons. The platform is currently being updated to structure all content by the level of education; a system for nationwide content creation and dissemination is established. TV classrooms for pre-primary and primary schools are being broadcasted on national television broadcasting for children aged 3 to 14.

- In Serbia, UNICEF supported the MoE to develop a national response plan to support pre-school education for children and their families. Weekly activity-based parenting messages and relevant materials for learning through play will be delivered through social media, national television broadcasts, and distance learning platforms.
- In Tajikistan, with support from the Global Partnership for Education, UNICEF is coordinating the development of the National Education Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19. The draft document is currently being reviewed by the Local Education Group including donors and development partners together with the Ministry of Education and Science.
- In Turkey UNICEF is providing support to the Ministry of National Education to ensure technical capacity and infrastructure of the national distance learning program is adequate to meet the increased demand for online learning.
- In Ukraine, rapid consultation with education officials in eastern Ukraine, GCA and NGCA confirmed the limited preparedness and adherence to school protocols. UNICEF delivered hygiene kits to 14 institutions, benefitting 54 children.
- In Uzbekistan, over 65,000 U-reporters are engaged in raising awareness of mental health and psychosocial support of young people. U-Reporters are also providing feedback the the effectiveness of Government's communication campaigns.

Access to Child Protection and Preventing Violence: Family members forced to be in close proximity for an extended period, the burden of stress brought on by economic uncertainty, and the sudden withdrawal of social interaction and access to basic services, are all contributing to a surge in violence in the home. UNICEF is working with partners to prevent and respond to violence against children whether at home, institutions or in alternate care.

- In Albania, UNICEF worked closely with the Agency on the Rights and Protection of the Child for the development of the draft guidelines on child protection measures during the COVID-19 outbreak, which are expected to be adopted in the coming days by the Minister of Health and Social Protection.
- In Armenia UNICEF is working with the Government to identify and address the needs of children in residential care institutions, and children left without parental care due to the COVID-19 virus, and who need access to alternative care arrangements.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF is supporting the Bulgaria Animus Association to improve functionality and access to the public of the national free child help line, via on-line chat, improve access to psycho-social consultations, and support strengthened protection in alternative care for children.
- In Croatia, UNICEF joined a consultation call with 10 NGOs providing counselling and psychosocial support. Through discussions, a rapid assessment and identification of priority needs was conducted, and a joint platform is proposed to be created to generate synergies and prevent duplication in disseminating materials and providing mental health and psychosocial support.
- In Georgia, UNICEF partnered with a national broadcast channel to develop a special programme targeting children with disabilities and their parents/caregivers to ensure continuation of rehabilitation activities. UNICEF-trained social workers are supporting vulnerable families in Abkhazia, Georgia including through a hotline to provide psychosocial support.
- In Italy, UNICEF with partner CNCA continues to provide support to foster families and children remotely, including psycho-social support and stress management during the quarantine. A calendar of virtual meetings has been developed to allow foster families to share their experiences and continue to stay in touch. UNICEF is encouraging use of U-Report and GBV infographics to prevent violence among the asylum applicants, with the website content available in 15 languages.
- In Kazakhstan, 1,400 posters providing COVID-19 preventive messages in Russian and Kazakh, were sent to 154 residential institutions housing children without parental care, and children affected by migration, and children with disabilities. Key messages to parents on providing a safe environment for children and ensuring wellbeing in the family are being prepared.
- In Kosovo*, UNICEF and partners have reached around 300 children (230 with disabilities, 50 in foster care and 20 in correctional facility) who have benefited from virtual psychosocial activities, online education and social mobilization activities. In addition, around 500 parents and foster parents of children with disabilities have benefited from psychosocial and counselling support activities.
- In Kyrgyzstan, UNICEF, in coordination with UN agencies, international donors, is planning interventions for emergency support to residential care institutions, and psychosocial support for vulnerable families. Reporting is envisioned through dedicated hotlines and prevention media campaigns that address the root causes of violence against children.
- In Moldova, UNICEF has requested the Ministry of Health Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) to release available data on child protection needs and related activities. UNICEF is reviewing the possibility to deliver aid to inmates and staff of detention facilities under the Ministry of Justice and in the Transnistria region.

- In Montenegro, UNICEF and partners will explore development of a chat-based tool for women and children to report violence.
- In Serbia, UNICEF prepared COVID-19 Guidance for prevention of unnecessary separation of children from families and securing psycho-social support and supervised alternative care in cases when separation is in the best interest of the child in relation to parent's/caregiver's hospitalization. Work of partners is being reprogrammed to provide in-person and remote (online or phone) outreach and psychosocial support, including increased monitoring of GBV.
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF is planning to assess closed and semi closed institutions to identify needs and capacity to support for the most marginalized children in case of the outbreak. A comprehensive plan (including distance learning) on supporting children in institutions is being mainstreamed under the National Education Response Plan.
- In Turkey UNICEF adapted the global COVID-19 parenting tips as well as the Technical Note on Protection of Children during Coronavirus Pandemic developed by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, the IASC Interim Briefing Note on Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak, and the Note on GBV Case management for use by Turkish and refugee audiences and disseminated this material through its social media and website, as well as via the Child Protection Working Group.
- In Ukraine, UNICEF together with partners, is developing a free online course on psycho-social support to children and positive parenting, including on prevention of violence. The course is aimed at teachers, school psychologists, other community professionals and caregivers.
- In Uzbekistan, UNICEF has supplied personal hygiene and health materials to children in residential care institutions and provided psycho-social support to children in residential care institutions.

Social Protection: While social protection systems in ECA are relatively advanced, coverage is limited, and benefit levels inadequate to meaningfully reduce child poverty. Reforms aimed at reducing dependency and eliminating extreme poverty have resulted in more precisely targeted programmes to help the very poorest families. However, this concentrated focus often means that many families, including the working poor, are left without support. In this COVID-19 emergency, it is evident that disaster risk management (DRM) systems are not linked to social protection programmes in a way that triggers a safety net for all vulnerable families, and to ensure a shock-responsive social protection programme, operational rules and procedures need to be adjusted and new tools introduced. As experience of previous emergencies has shown, existing legislative frameworks and administrative systems could be the backbone for efficient and effective response. UNICEF is therefore supporting several Governments to introduce the flexibility needed in social protection programmes to enable a response that meets the needs of all vulnerable families with speed and agility when emergency strikes. As some examples of the emerging social protection work:

- In Albania, UNICEF is advocating with national government for humanitarian cash transfers for most vulnerable families in selected municipalities. UNICEF will engage with EU, WB and other UN agencies to make sure that the social protection system is responding to families affected by COVID-19.
- In Armenia, UNICEF hosted a UN sector coordination meeting on social protection and psychosocial support to identify needs, ongoing initiatives, and to coordinate response. This group will be expanded.
- In Azerbaijan, UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to develop a set of proposals on additional measures to provide social protection to vulnerable populations. This includes extending payments of social allowances to children and adults with disabilities as well as to families receiving social assistance whose entitlements were scheduled to end in March. This measure will ease social assistance grant procedures for new applicants and compensate salary losses resulting from the COVID-19 economic downturn.
- In Georgia, UNICEF is collecting data and will conduct an in-depth assessment of socially vulnerable and at-risk groups of children nationwide.
- In Montenegro, to ensure relevant findings and recommendations (including financing options), the ongoing UNICEF-supported comprehensive social protection system assessment (using UN inter-agency Core Diagnostic Tools) will be refocused to take into consideration the COVID-19 crisis.
- In Moldova, discussions are ongoing with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research to re-allocate some of the funds for school meals to in-kind or cash-transfers to vulnerable families with children during the closure of schools.
- In Montenegro, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare welcomed UNICEF's offer to provide psychosocial support to children without parental care or children affected by domestic violence through a Child Helpline operated under the Ministry. An additional psychologist will provide support to children in response to the increased stress, trauma and violence. The Parenting for Lifelong Health Programme continues for 119 parents in 5 municipalities. Six tips for positive parenting in times of COVID-19

were developed by the Parenting for Lifelong Health Group of Experts with the support of UNICEF, WHO, and other partners. These have been posted on UNICEF's website <https://www.unicef.org/montenegro/roditeljstvo-u-doba-COVID-19>.

- In Tajikistan, a donors' meeting on social protection was conducted under UNICEF and EU's leadership. Key areas for joint intervention/response were discussed. Partners agreed on the situation assessment and the design of emergency cash transfer programmes.
- In Ukraine, a policy note on socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 on vulnerable children and families, along with additional evidence-based background material, were translated into Ukrainian and shared with the IMF, WB, EU and EIB. The special focus on the needs of children with disabilities during the pandemic was widely shared through UNICEF's Child and Youth Friendly Municipality Network (22 municipalities) and the situation of children and families are being monitored to inform programme and advocacy. A funding proposal is being developed to address the needs of front-line social workers across the country. The urgent need to enhance data collection and analysis on COVID-19 cases was advocated through various Government channels.
- In Turkey, Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) for Refugees payments continue despite school closures, reaching more than 500,000 children. UNICEF partners with Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) to disseminate SMS messages to ESSN and CCTE beneficiaries in Arabic and other languages, reaching at present an estimated 350,000 households (approximately 1.7 million individuals).
- In Uzbekistan, UNICEF is working with the WB to assess the impact of COVID-19 on children's wellbeing and supporting the Government in identifying vulnerable families for social protection through Single Registry Platform, which has been piloted successfully in one region.

Data Collection Analysis and Research

- In Armenia, as part of UN Multi-Sector Response framework, UNICEF in coordination with UNDP and with involvement of the WB, ADB, EU, is contributing to a joint COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment methodology, which is under drafting.
- In Bulgaria, UNICEF is providing technical assistance to partners to monitor the cases of violation of child rights as well as emerging issues.
- In Georgia, UNICEF developed a tool that allows the Government to project COVID-19 spread, expected hospitalization and artificial ventilation needs.
- In Italy, an internal monitoring system was set up to keep track of impact of COVID-19 on unaccompanied minors, young migrants and refugees, with inputs collected weekly. The first children on the move COVID-19 U-report poll has been planned for the coming week focused on the challenge to ensure legal status/protection during this time.
- In Montenegro, the second round of the UNICEF-supported IPSOS⁴ public perception survey was finalized, and key findings were received and shared with Government and press release published in all media on 3 April. The survey is broadly used as public opinion monitoring tool from various stakeholders including the Government and Institute of Public Health.
- In Serbia, UNICEF designed a phone-based survey to measure the social impact of COVID-19 on families with children, to be launched in April and to be subsequently monitored
- In Tajikistan, UNICEF provided a knowledge team to support the Government of Tajikistan to finalize Rapid Assessment Tool aimed at Risk Communication and Community Engagement.

Internal and External Media

Azerbaijan: Television broadcast: Representatives of WHO and UNICEF called on Azerbaijani citizens to rally and follow all recommendations. Coronavirus infection control measures in the country must be respected by all.

http://cbc.az/ru/v_story/video1585150149

Bosnia and Herzegovina: UNICEF landing page on COVID-19: <https://www.unicef.org/bih/COVID19>

Bulgaria, Radio interview with UNICEF on how to talk to children about COVID-19:

<https://bnr.bg/blagoevgrad/post/101248700/saveti-kak-da-govorim-s-decata-za-COVID-?fbclid=IwAR1aU9jGk2H177r55qvdpeT6veBB2KHlMFhInsCMUpfQv7TjpuWXq2GSs-4>

⁴ IPSOS is a global market research and a consulting firm with worldwide

Croatia: Television broadcast: Distribution of UNICEF COVID-19 supplies: https://www.presscut.hr/videoclip/MP4/2020/2020-03/2020-03-30/VideoClip_B34F424F-405D-4410-A925-21F85617076F_3946308.mp4]

Georgia: Facebook messages on COVID-19 safety: <https://www.facebook.com/unicefgeorgia/>

Italy: UNICEF Response Coordinator blog post <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/COVID-19-support-refugee-migrant-children-italy/>

Kazakhstan: 3:08 Interview with UNICEF Deputy Representative:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qtsv7sj966Y&feature=youtu.be>

Kosovo*: Children with disabilities in quarantine: <https://www.unicef.org/kosovoprogramme/stories/letter-quarantine-children-disabilities-are-always-isolated>

Kyrgyzstan: Distribution of UNICEF supplies <http://kabar.kg/news/abr-peredal-minzdravu-kr-20-tys-meditsinskikh-perchatok/>

Moldova: U-Report: <https://moldova.ureport.in/opinion/1648/>

Montenegro: UNICEF survey on public compliance with COVID-19 prevention measures: <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/unicef-ovi-mladi-reporteri-objasnjavaju-mjere-drustvene-distance-i-porucuju-sstanimo-doma>

North Macedonia: Press release on UNICEF psychosocial support: <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/press-releases/new-helplines-providing-psychosocial-support-parents-and-children>

Serbia: Delivery of UNICEF supplies <https://www.nedeljnik.rs/unicef-nabavlja-50-respiratore-i-zastitnu-opremu-za-borbu-protiv-koronavirusa/>

Turkey: UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador on talking to children about COVID-19 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STX5_4huygU

Uzbekistan: Launch of #LearningAtHome <https://uzreport.news/society/yunisef-learningathome-uyda-organamiz-chellenjini-boshladi>

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