



Middle East & North Africa Region

COVID-19
Situation Report No. 13



Situation in Numbers



COVID-19 cases:
4.5 million total cases
489,460 active cases



Death toll:
11,891 total deaths



74 million
funding gap for UNICEF regional response

*From the first SitRep to present

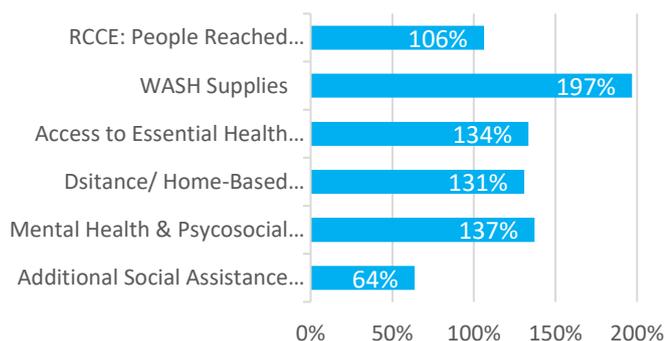
Reporting Period: 1 January – 31 December 2020

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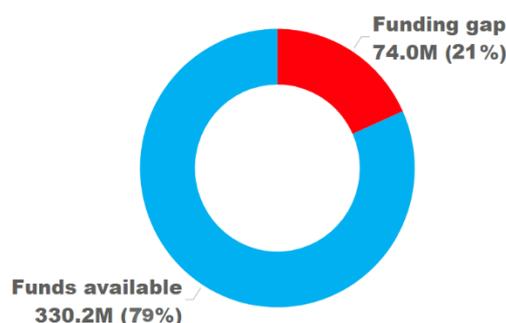
Highlights

- Co-leading “Risk Communication and Community Engagement “(RCCE) efforts, UNICEF and partners provided transparent source of authorized information on COVID-19 prevention and access to health and social services, to more than 275 million individuals. Furthermore, a total of over 40 million people were actively engaged via innovative online platforms but also community-based approaches around COVID-19.
- With significant disruption of access to health services in nine countries of the region in 2020, nearly 15 million children missed their regular immunizations schedule. However, concerted efforts of Governments and UNICEF allowed to return to pre-COVID-19 rates with nearly 12 million children vaccinated by the end of 2020 and about three million children be prioritized for the first months of 2021.
- By mid-March 2020, almost all schools in the region were closed, interrupting education for approximately 110 million children, putting their learning and well-being at risk. An estimated 1.3 million children are still in jeopardy of not returning to education altogether. UNICEF was instrumental in supporting Ministries of Education by providing alternative solutions to keep learning ongoing, reaching over 9.5 million children with distance or home-based learning at the height of the pandemic.
- The equivalent of 11 million full-time jobs were lost in the MENA region as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing the total of children living in monetary poor households to more than 60 million. In response to this new reality, more than 13 million households benefitted from new or additional social assistance measures provided by governments with UNICEF support.
- Increased poverty, reduced social interactions and limited access to services, exacerbated pre-existing children vulnerabilities and gender-based violence (GBV). In Lebanon for example, 44 per cent of women and girls surveyed reported feeling less safe in their homes. To mitigate what is considered as a “Shadow Pandemic”, UNICEF provided community based mental health and psychosocial support to more than 600,000 children, parents and primary caregivers. Moreover, 1.30 million children and adults e had access to safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse.

Summary of Programme Response Targets



Funding Status



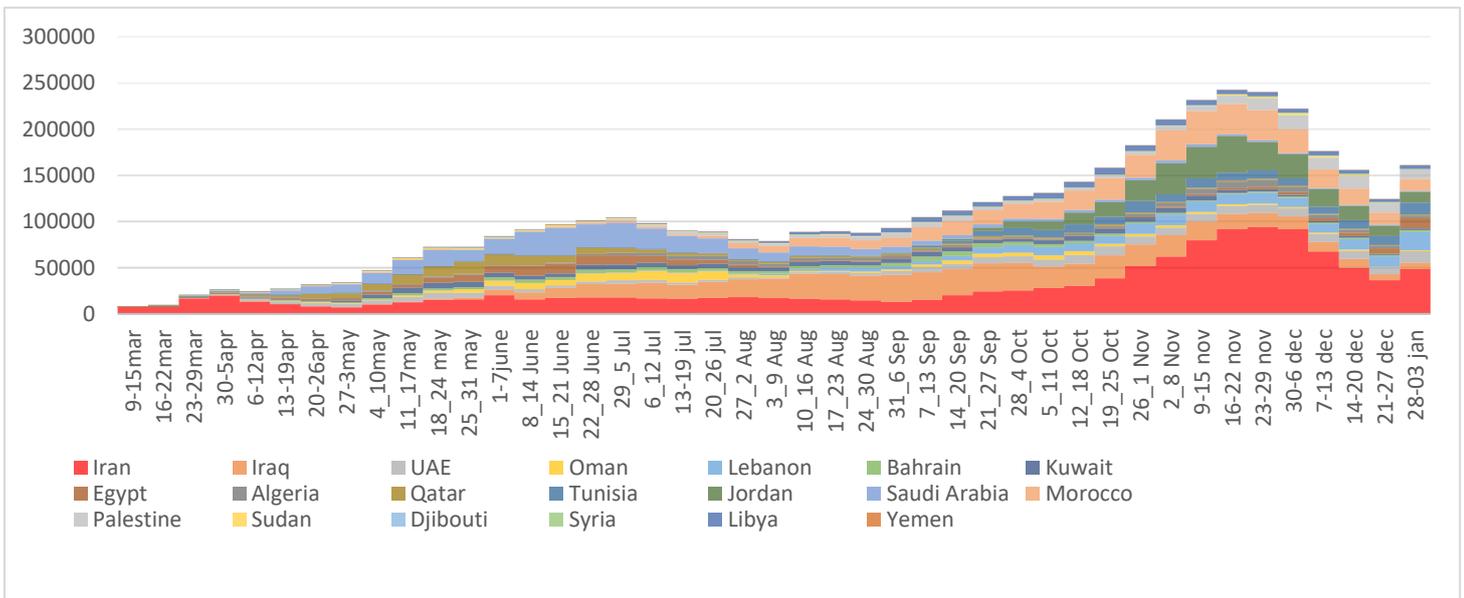
Situation Overview

Over the year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all countries of the MENA region with a total of 4,536,677 confirmed cases and 112,208 deaths reported, as of 2 January 2021. A large proportion of MENA cases and deaths were reported in Iran (27 and 49 per cent respectively), Iraq (13 and 11 per cent respectively) and Morocco (10 and seven per cent respectively). That said, the annual incidence of COVID-19 related deaths (per one million population) was the highest in Iran, Tunisia, Jordan, Iraq and the State of Palestine.

The first local COVID-19 case was reported in Iran in early February 2020 followed by Egypt and Lebanon in the subsequent two weeks. Nine countries had reported their first COVID-19 case by end of February, 10 more in March and the last country in April, being Yemen. Over the year, the region recorded three main peaks (early April, early June and mid-November) of different amplitude due to both the epidemic progression as well as the increase in-country testing capacity. While some countries such as Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia experienced a large community transmission from the first semester, others such as Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan recorded their first waves of cases in the latter part of the year.

In countries with long-drawn-out crises, such as Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Iraq and Libya, a total of 734,814 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 17,118 deaths were reported. However, 75 per cent of these cases were from Iraq and 13 per cent from Libya. Over the reporting period, the case fatality rates remained low in these two countries, but needless to say, the pandemic is far from being fully contained. Despite low compliance to preventive individual measures, a total of 11,000 COVID-19 cases were reported in Syria, 23,000 in Sudan and 2,105 in Yemen. However, their high case fatality rates, six per cent in Syria and Sudan and 29 per cent in Yemen suggest an underestimation of the accurate number of cases, which further complicates monitoring the epidemic.

At the end of December 2020 following the release of governmental measures in some countries, a sharp re-increase of new cases was recorded in the region as portrayed below. Moving forward, the first quarter of 2021 will need to focus on ongoing support to national health entities in COVID-19 contingency planning as well as the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. As of 31 December, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Kuwait had begun their vaccinations campaigns with Jordan, Kuwait and Morocco expected in the first weeks of January.



*Weekly distribution of COVID-19 confirmed cases in MENA region, January to December 2020

Socio-Economic Impact and Humanitarian Needs

The lockdown measures put in place by the countries of the region since March, to contain the spread of the COVID-19, are having a major negative impact on the economic and the societies of the Middle East and North Africa, with children being among the most affected.

The impact on the economic growth has been dramatic: in October, the World Bank forecasts estimates an overall contraction of the MENA economy by 5.2 per cent in 2020 (-6.7 per cent in per capita terms), with an expected timid recovery during 2021.

Governments' financial situations have significantly deteriorated, as a result of a combination of declining public revenues and increasing expenditures required to respond to the pandemic, with public debt projected to rise in the next few years (from 45 per cent of GDP in 2019 to 58 per cent in 2022, according to the World Bank)¹. Under these growing

¹ World Bank (2020) *MENA Economic Update* (October 2020)

pressures on their internal finance, several governments in the region will face major and growing constraints in financing their economic and social protection policies to counteract the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the new year.

The economic stagnation has been reflected in important contractions of employment. The ILO estimated that, in the first three quarters of 2020, 41 million full-time equivalent jobs have been lost, with the workers in the informal sector being the most affected. Also, the World Bank estimated that the migrants' remittances to the MENA region may have reduced by a quarter in 2020, as a consequence of COVID-19.

All these macro-trends are being reflected in the increase in rates and the number of people living in monetary poverty (with children already over-represented among the poor before the COVID-19 crisis). According to modelled estimations produced by UNICEF and Save the Children, the number of children in MENA countries living in monetary poor households (with expenditure/income levels below the respective national poverty lines) could reach 60.1 million in 2020 (under the most severe impact scenario), compared to 50.4 million before the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. This is corresponding to 33.8 per cent of the regional child population.

The important social protection responses that most countries in MENA put in place in response to the economic crisis, has only partially offset the increase in monetary poverty and need to be sustainably financed to continue to respond to the crisis generated by COVID-19.

The crisis has also largely affected the delivery and access to basic social services, fundamental to child well-being and development, including education, health, nutrition, etc. Access to basic services is reflected in the measures of child multidimensional poverty (e.g.: a measure reflecting the inadequate access for children to basic social services, housing, and basic infrastructure). A simulation study of UNICEF estimated that an additional 12 million children have fallen into multidimensional poverty, bringing the total number of multidimensional poor children to 66.6 million. In nine countries of the MENA region, this represents 52 per cent of the child population. This sharp increase is due to the large number of children who lost access to education, the deterioration of their nutrition situation and the lack of access to primary health care and immunization.

The decision of reopening schools physically in the region was much influenced by the evolution of the pandemic in the respective countries as well as the public opinion with regards to the safety of schools. The lack of sound evidence to guide education national response was not an additional benefactor. In several countries, demonstrations by teachers/unions (Jordan and Lebanon) took place, requesting safer working environments. In general, parents and children were well-informed, through social media of risks and appropriate hygiene measures at home and school. That said, schools are not fully ready to ensure safe operations, needing more space to reduce the class size and maintain physical distancing measures. Also, WASH facilities, including hygiene and cleaning items as well as personnel or service providers to disinfect premises, require upgrades.

Additional carryover concerns include health. WHO and UNICEF, based on the Johns Hopkins models, have warned that an additional 51,000 children under the age of five might be a life and death risk by the end of 2020 if the disruption of essential health and nutrition services is protracted. In the region, malnutrition among children was also witnessed, representing a near 40 per cent increase relative to the same period last year.

The pandemic has also had a major impact on maternal health services. Most countries in MENA reported a drop in maternal health services with Palestine, Syria, Morocco and Sudan reporting a significant 25 per cent plunge, as WHO reports in August 2020. This disruption was also witnessed in other sectors such as reproductive, new-born, child and adolescent services. With this in mind, data from countries with high maternal mortality rates (e.g.: Sudan and Yemen) indicate close to a 50 per cent reduction in utilization of antenatal services. Furthermore, a 50 per cent reduction in skilled birth delivery in Yemen was attributed when comparing 2020 with a year prior. Such figures remain of concern to UNICEF when planning the next steps in the post-COVID-19 era.

Studies have also shown that COVID-19 exacerbates violence against health workers as hundreds of incidents of violence and harassments were reported globally. This is not exclusive to conflict zones but also in high-income, industrialized countries as many professional associations of health-care workers have been sounding alarms. These factors have in turn increased the need for psychosocial support among health care workers, particularly in the MENA region where the majority of nurses, midwives and support staff at medical facilities are women. In Egypt for example, women outnumber men 10 to one among its nursing staff and as such, not only are women more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 but also to the potential mistreatment during this pandemic.

Lastly, with regards to child protection and GBV, the evidence is showing an increase in domestic violence and violence against children related to COVID-19. A rapid assessment in Lebanon has found that since the spread of the pandemic and a subsequent reduction in face-to-face services, 57 per cent of women and girls reported feeling less safe in their communities and 44 per cent of women and girls surveyed reported feeling less safe in their homes. Evidence collected by UN Women in nine countries² within the MENA region shows that about half of the surveyed respondents agreed that women faced an increased risk of violence because of COVID-19 lockdowns. According to WHO, nearly 40 per cent of health facilities, hospitals, and mobile medical clinics in Iraq indicated an increase in women survivors of GBV.

² Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen.

Similarly, in Tunisia, during the first weeks following the COVID-19 lockdown, calls to the toll-free numbers run by the Ministry of Women, family, children and seniors were nine times higher than usual.

Evidence shows that the economical downfall increases the risk of adoption of negative coping mechanism such as child, early and forced marriages, which disproportionately impact girls. In Yemen, service providers expressed concern that child marriage would increase during the pandemic because, for poor families, it was now more affordable to marry young girls. Similarly, in Jordan, rates of child marriage were reportedly increasing in Azraq and Zaatari camps for similar reasons.

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Over the year, through rapid and wide-reaching efforts of UNICEF and partners across the region, a total of just over 270 million (105 per cent of target) individuals were reached on COVID-19 messaging on prevention and access to disrupted health and social services. Initially, this was mainly through online and social media channels and influencers, but over time, this was increasingly expanded to mass media channels.

Across the region, extensive community engagement interventions were carried out, engaging over 40 million people in RCCE actions (95 per cent of target). A large diversity of collaborations and empowerment of various stakeholders included: a) religious leaders and communities (Sudan, Egypt, Yemen and Syria); b) local leaders (State of Palestine and Lebanon); c) youth networks (Algeria, Tunisia and Iran); d) women's organizations (Morocco and Yemen) and e) and civil society partners for community mobilisation (Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti and Syria). In addition, a total of 1,181,256 (50 per cent of target) people provided feedback through a variety of accountability mechanisms.

UNICEF MENA's real-time assessment results showed that UNICEF's RCCE messaging was seen as independent and non-partisan. UNICEF experience and expertise in Communication for Development (C4D) served as a door-opener to collaborate closely with UN agency, government, and local partners.

The Eastern Mediterranean/MENA regional RCCE inter-agency working group (WG) co-led by UNICEF, WHO, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), was formed in the early stages of the response and continues to convene every two weeks. Over time, the WG has grown to include a media sub-working group and a data strategy taskforce. It also works hand-in-hand with the regional COVAX demand planning sub-group. Some of the inter-agency group's key products include a regional RCCE framework and a comprehensive literature analysis study on norms, beliefs, and practices relevant to the prevention of COVID-19.

As vaccines will become available in a phased approach, RCCE will need to respond to the reality that vaccines will not be universally available immediately, therefore, hygiene, physical distancing, wearing a mask, and other mitigation measures, even if uncomfortable, will need to be maintained as long-term social norms that yield net benefits.

Pandemic fatigue and complacency are some of the barriers to sustained protective behaviours and practices. An accelerated approach to data-driven and localized RCCE efforts are required to create opportunities for different community groups to identify locally appropriate solutions to mitigate COVID-19 risks that reflect their economic and social contexts.

During 2020, UNICEF prioritized its support to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) activities in main three areas; the provision of WASH services/essential WASH supplies, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and IPC training to the health workers, education professionals, and municipal workers. IPC support was also provided at the time of school-reopening by ensuring the application of safety protocols.

UNICEF MENA reached nearly 18 million with critical WASH supplies in the form of hygiene kits, soap and hand sanitisers. and almost 200,000 healthcare workers received PPE supplies (including gloves and masks). Also, over 19,000 health workers and health professionals received IPC training.

To mitigate enormous services access restrictions resulting from COVID-19, UNICEF has supported the adoption of national policies supporting frontline health care workers and aiming at maintaining health and nutrition services for women, children and adolescents. According to a rapid assessment conducted between May and June of 2020 by WHO, 85 per cent of antenatal care services have been severely disrupted. Nine UNICEF MENA Country Offices (CO's) have reported low to medium disruption for new-born services throughout August and September. It was noted that nearly 15 million children missed their immunizations, however, good progress has been made and nearly 12 million were vaccinated by the end of 2020 (October onwards) and about three million children will be prioritized in the first six months of 2021. MENA countries report that immunization services have almost gone back to the pre-COVID-19 days. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yemen and Sudan managed to implement polio outbreak response campaigns following the detection of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (cVDPV).

Nutrition services to prevent and manage severe wasting in children under-five was disrupted due to COVID-19 containment measures and phobia, leading to a decrease in admissions. To support the efforts at the country level, UNICEF MENA developed a joint technical brief to show an impact of disruption of essential health and nutrition services on child mortality with WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (WHO EMRO) in June. In collaboration with WHO EMRO and UNFPA's Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA ASRO), UNICEF has sent out joint letters to Ministers of Health and conducted a virtual meeting with nine Ministers of Health to share and discuss challenges, lessons learned and way forward on how to continue health care for women and children in November 2020.

Education in 2020 has been one of the most impacted sectors by the COVID-19 outbreak with a growing fear of generational loss and regression in learning and skills region-wide. By mid-March, all 20 countries temporarily closed entire educational institutions for all age groups. In addition to the 15 million children who were already out-of-school

throughout the region before the COVID-19 pandemic, about 110 million students (6 million in pre-primary; 75 million in basic education; 15 million in upper secondary and 15 million in postsecondary) had their education interrupted throughout the year with high risks of regressing in their learning and 1.3 million additional children are at risk of not coming back to education at all.

UNICEF's advocacy throughout the year has been on "Keep Learning Going", whether physical or through remote options, in-line with global guidelines and close coordination with other UN organizations and the World Bank. The first step was to establish an open space for discussions and sharing of practices across countries involving Ministries of Education and UN agencies. With the harmonized advocacy messages and joint technical documents with sister agencies, UNICEF planned national responses together with governments by sharing and localizing technical guidance, guidelines and protocols, advocating for flexible academic calendar, focused curricula and never to leave children behind especially those difficult to reach. For example, UNICEF in Jordan continues to advocate for and continued to provide special education services for children with disability living in refugee camps, supported the government to expand the coverage of education cash grant and distributed printed materials for home study in informal tented settlements.

In a number of countries, for example, Bahrain, Egypt, KRI Jordan, Libya, Oman, Syria and State of Palestine, the Ministries of Education, together with their national and international partners, managed to introduce alternative options (on-line platforms, tv, distribution of printed materials) to keep the learning going for at least some part of the students. In other countries, where education systems were weak and or less resilient to deal with the pandemic, such as Sudan, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, schools remained closed for an extended period of time (until September/October) without an alternative in place.

The impact of school closure and the importance of face-to-face interaction and teachers' role was felt by almost all members of societies in the region through the increased role of parents in home-schooling as well as concerns with mental health and protection issues. The outbreak surfaced disparity and unpreparedness of this region's education systems, in terms of offering to offer remote learning, teachers' digital skills, inclusive education and reaching the more isolated students and parental involvement. In collaboration with education focal points, UNICEF developed a Teachers Preparedness Training Package that covered COVID safety precautions in the classroom, child protection and well-being, and re-establishing learning benchmarks. The protection and well-being module explores the relationship between well-being, teaching, and learning introduces teachers to Psychological First Aid (PFA) and discusses violence against children in and out of the classroom, how to identify a child in distress, intervene safely, and make referrals. The Ministry of Education (MoE) in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) delivered the training package to over 2,000 teachers, administrators, and affiliated child protection staff (and put it on its electronic teaching platform). Discussions have been held with the Ministry of Education in Iraq and several Other Gulf Area Countries on adapting the module to their respective contexts. Lebanon and the State of Palestine pioneered remote case management, building on child-helplines and existing casework networks.

In 2020, many countries have prioritized continuity of education and preparation for exam grades for Grades 9 and 12, including implementation of safety protocols in conducting exams. UNICEF supported several countries to administer the 2019/2020 final exams as part of safe school operations during the pandemic, using both online and school-based modalities. In the State of Palestine, for instance, where schools were opened for exams in July, UNICEF provided more than 90,000 students and teachers with information on how to protect themselves from the risk of COVID-19 infection in exam rooms. In Algeria, reusable masks and hygiene kits for 40,000 secondary school students and education staff were distributed in preparation for the exams in September in the most marginalized parts of the country. In Yemen, UNICEF was instrumental in conducting the Grade 9 and Grade 12 exams for over 480,000 students across 14 governorates in 4,287 exam centres by operationalizing the safety protocols and supported 1,600 exam staff with incentives and provided the Ministry of Education personal protection equipment (4,200,000 masks, 63,305 litres of hand-sanitisers and 300,000 gloves), raising awareness on exam procedures and physical distancing measures.

To prepare and support school reopening, UNICEF and partners developed a regional plan of action for a "Back-to-School campaign", building on the global framework. UNICEF played a key role in convening the regional education group of UN sister agencies and planning online meetings with Ministries of Education where countries shared their plans, practices and challenges of safe school reopening and continuity of learning for all. The plan focused on guidelines and checklists for schools, preparedness training for educators, including IPC and MHPSS in schools, and community awareness-raising. For example, in Iran, one of the countries most affected by COVID-19, UNICEF helped to revise national IPC and hygiene/sanitation protocols, train teachers and procure supplies for 1,000 schools in less developed areas.

In line with child protection principles that no child falls out of the social security and safety network, UNICEF ascertained that over 450,000 parents and children benefited from COVID-19 specific mental health and psychosocial support programmes. Social media platforms provided regular advice to parents in Arabic, Farsi and French, keeping family harmony and structured routines for learning and social interactions. Prioritizing case management systems to include parenting support as well as psychosocial first aid in schools was ultimately UNICEF's focus related to mental health interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coordinated efforts were with the justice sector agencies to take urgent action to protect children in detention and identify areas needing further support launched as another area of emphasis UNICEF. This included promoting initiatives to mitigate the negative health outcomes of the pandemic for children in detention and to use the opportunity to accelerate justice sector reforms. By the end of 2020, more than 3,000 children have been released from detention in 13 countries. These countries include Algeria, Djibouti, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, State of Palestine, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen.

Emergency protection measures were undertaken to support children without family care. In the region, more than 20,000 children have registered for UNICEF's support in alternative care and family reunification. In Sudan, UNICEF, in

collaboration with Civil Society organization partners, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the State Council of Child Welfare (SCCW) reintegrated 11,290 separated and unaccompanied minors living in religious schools, 581 of which were girls, with their families in the Darfur, the Kordofan states, Blue Nile, White Nile and the Eastern States. Egypt, Morocco and Iraq have developed specialised assistance packages for children in residential care, including psychosocial support, IPC, family reunification and regular monitoring. In situations when national social protection responses were effectively unable to respond, UNICEF also scaled-up Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) responses, ranging from very challenging contexts such as Yemen and Syria, but also Jordan, Egypt and Morocco. In Yemen, from June to July 2020, 1.43 million existing Emergency Cash Transfer (ECT) beneficiaries received a one-time COVID-19 top-up, almost doubling their benefit level. Nearly half (48 per cent) of those who collected their payments were female.

At the core of UNICEF's protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) work is accountability to women, girls, men, and boys in the communities we serve. The movement restrictions and lockdowns that resulted from COVID-19 prevention measures highlighted reliance on technology-driven solutions for feedback and reporting channels and that the most trusted mechanisms are predominantly through gender-based violence (GBV) and child protection (CP) programming. It is critical to continue investing in GBV services and system strengthening to enable survivors of SEA, or those at risk, to access quality, survivor-centred response services. This is particularly important as seen in previous public health emergencies, the risks associated with scaling up a humanitarian response are a direct correlation of the increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

During the reporting period, UNICEF MENARO has been at the forefront of implementing the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC³) and UNICEF guidance on PSEA. This included the IASC Action Plan to Accelerate PSEA in Humanitarian Action and the PSEA IP Procedures across the region. Country Offices have invested in strengthening internal and partners'⁴ capacity to scale up prevention, reporting and response mechanisms and procedures, including community-based complaints mechanisms and access to survivor assistance. In 2020, UNICEF country offices expanded access to safe reporting channels to an additional 1.3 million women, girls, men, and boys. In Yemen for instance, staff working for grievance and redress mechanisms have been trained on handling disclosure of SEA and making safe referrals whilst in Iraq, inter-agency information and referral hotlines have established clear SOPs for handling SEA allegations, including reporting and referral according to the wishes of the survivor. Alternatively, in Lebanon, key messages on the prevention of sexual exploitation and violence have been incorporated into guidance for quarantine centres and safety audits were conducted to identify GBV and SEA risks and implement mitigation measures. Additionally, messages on PSEA have been incorporated in RCCE in Libya and Country Offices across the region have invested in increasing access to survivor assistance through modalities such as helplines and remote case management. This has included referrals to health services, in addition to continued partnerships with government and CSO partners to deliver quality, survivor-centred services through face-to-face means in adherence to all IPC measures.

Given the scale of COVID-19's socio-economic impacts in MENA, UNICEF supported a significant expansion of social cash transfer responses to cushion the blow on families and children. UNICEF swiftly supported governments to design and develop effective modalities for delivering emergency national cash transfers – including in Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan and Lebanon. It is estimated that over 13 million households benefited from such cash transfers implemented with UNICEF's support. This included technical support on targeting (Morocco, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan and Lebanon) as well as helping advise and/or set-up rapid registration/verification systems (e.g.: Iraq) as well as payment (Jordan) and grievance redressal mechanisms (Morocco and Jordan).

Across all these contexts, UNICEF supported COVID-sensitive implementation measures such as spacing out payment schedules/sites and more widely adopting innovation to facilitate contactless registration and payments wherever possible. While these efforts helped to ease the immediate socio-economic stress on families and children, UNICEF has also increasingly worked to leverage these gains in expanded cash transfer coverage to help strengthen national social protection systems so that they are more shock responsive and effective in reaching vulnerable people when crises such as COVID-19 strike. UNICEF has been at the forefront of supporting such reforms in national social protection policies, programmes and systems in countries such as Tunisia, Jordan, Iran and Iraq. As an example, in Tunisia, as part of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF has implemented – with the financial support from the German Development Bank and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (KfW/BMZ) - social cash transfers reaching 357,000 under 5 and school-aged children (also tied to Back to School efforts). This is also being used as an opportunity to strengthen various parts of the social protection system such as targeting, monitoring and information management (MIS).

Several governments in MENA, who also face more difficult economic circumstances as a result of the collapsing oil prices in early 2020, are struggling fiscally and making some crucial choices to cut and reprioritize public spending. In this context, UNICEF has been working to protect social sector spending—with a focus on continuity of access to health and education and expanded social protection. To this end, UNICEF has generated evidence on public finance aspects of this crisis and playing a lead role in United Nations-wide advocacy efforts in countries such as Egypt and Iraq. In Lebanon and Tunisia, UNICEF also engaged international financial institutions with concrete proposals to either protect key areas of social sector spending or ensure conditionalities for social spending in concessional financing packages.

To address the impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, UNICEF strengthened collaboration with other UN agencies and regional actors to ensure coherent response and advocacy efforts. Co-led by UN Women and ESCWA, UNICEF

³ [WHO | IASC Guidelines for mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings](#)

⁴ Across 14 countries, UNICEF has over 460 partners delivering lifesaving, essential services including health, WASH, child protection, GBV, education, and social policy.

contributed to the development of regional advocacy resources to influence response plans, including the development of an initial inter-agency policy brief on the gendered impact of COVID-19 in the Arab States region.

UNICEF Country Offices Programme Response

In each country where it has a presence, UNICEF intensified its support to the COVID-19 response as follows:

ALGERIA

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

The Ministry of Vocational Training and UNICEF organized the official start of education and professional training on December 14th, 2020. This new school year marks the strengthening of cooperation in COVID-19 response, UNICEF supported the purchase of sewing materials (fabric and elastics), for the confection of 650,000 face masks in the training centres which were distributed for the trainee students. In the framework of this cooperation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs was supported with 5,000 face masks distributed in Koranic schools.

With the Ministry of Health, the KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) analysis of the impact of RCCE activities on COVID-19 prevention was launched in collaboration with MoH and the research institution in charge of the survey is recruited.

The Ministry of Health is preparing a COVID-19 vaccination campaign, UNICEF is supporting the communication component through a national consultant mobilized to develop a communication plan taking into consideration the national context, social resistance and rumours circulating on social media.

In partnership with the Algerian Muslim Scouts, 8 million people were engaged through community-level prevention, hygiene campaign and via social media and videos developed by Scouts in the 48 wilayas (territorial collectivities).

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

The Sahrawi Health Authorities were supported by UNICEF with 600 gowns for medical staff. Additionally, UNICEF supported the Sahrawi Education authorities with a second batch of essential hygiene and prevention supplies composed of 124,486 reusable masks, 10,000 litres of soap, 3,460 bottles of hand sanitisers and disinfectants. This purchase is underway, and these products will be distributed to high-risk schools, centres for children with special needs, staff employed in health and education facilities and communities in the most vulnerable areas that have been targeted in the five Sahrawi refugee camps.

Continuity of health care for women and children

The national diagnostic capacities were supported by UNICEF with automatic RT-PCR equipment purchased through Supply Division and set-up in Algeria Pasteur Institute. This equipment will allow increasing the number of COVID-19 diagnostic tests by about 2,000 per day. In addition, WHO CO is supporting the supply of 7,000 reagents for the same equipment.

The WHO and UNICEF are jointly supporting the Ministry of Health in COVID-19 vaccination preparedness through technical assistance to ensure: a) Cold Chain Assessment, b) Development of a Communication Strategy, c) Development of a Training Plan and d) Technical support for SARS-CoV2 vaccine supply through an MoU signed between UNICEF and the Ministry of Health on December 15th.

ICT equipment was provided by UNICEF to Sahrawi Health Authorities to support the COVID-19 emergency committee to monitor the epidemiological situation

DJIBOUTI

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

Thanks to the USAID and EU financial support over the reporting period, UNICEF supported the elaboration of the country RCCE plan implemented through multiple channels including social media. A total of 442,297 people were reached with RCCE messaging, among whom 302,139 were engaged and feedback collected from 1,270 people. Since March 2020, 40 per cent of UNICEF Djibouti Facebook post were dedicated to COVID-19 reaching an overall of 431,507 viewers and a daily engagement of 37,789. UNICEF support extended to integrate specific COVID-19 prevention messages into polio and measles nationwide social mobilization campaigns, therefore, contributing to boosting the continuity of COVID-19 prevention during routine services.

Telethon and a hackathon organized in partnership with WHO helped to mobilize high governmental personalities, influencers, medical staff, parliamentarians, youth and reached many people live with COVID-19 prevention messaging while 11,000 people followed it through social media.

25 posters produced and disseminated to raise awareness on the safety measures including in school settings.

A total of 64 pieces of digital communication materials produced and disseminated, coupled with various events such as breastfeeding week and World Mask Day with children at the forefront showcasing the proper way of wearing and

disposing of used masks, to keep up with the COVID-19 barrier measures during breastfeeding and also prevent the reuse of contaminated masks while maintaining a safer environment.

The “Back-to-School” campaign to accompany the safe return to school in the COVID-19 context.

Youth engagement through the enrolment of 10,680 teenagers in face-to-face interactions with the facilitation of 410 peer adolescents initially trained to pass on COVID-19 related messages, this was coupled with a Facebook live gathering of youth to discuss the virus attracting 17,000 followers.

From five regions, 170 community members were trained on COVID-19 key messaging and later performed door-to-door visits reaching 2,500 households.

A total of 30 journalists trained on behaviour change and prevention of the spread of rumours and social listening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) supplies and improving infection and prevention control \(IPC\)](#)

Thanks to USAID, Japan and the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) financial support, UNICEF Djibouti has contributed to improving the availability of WASH services for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 by setting up 350 handwashing with soap stations also equipped with solutions in public areas, schools and health facilities in Djibouti city and 5 regional cities of the country. This was made possible through a partnership with local NGOs and the Djibouti City Council.

UNICEF has also set up WASH services coupled with hygiene promotion focusing on handwashing with soap in government-led quarantine sites for migrants and land travellers, reaching more than 600 migrants every month. Also, 7,601 vulnerable households received hygiene kits during the door-to-door promotion of confinement measures.

Additionally, five water pumps were rehabilitated to keep improving the access to water in rural areas and ease the practice of handwashing with soap by the population. UNICEF has contributed to improving the IPC in health facilities through the provision of IPC materials as well as training 250 health care providers and community health workers. UNICEF efforts were extended to include large-scale disinfection in school settings as well as setting handwashing with soap stations in 50 schools before the re-opening of school.

[Continuity of health care for women and children](#)

Thanks to Japan, the EU and USAID funds, UNICEF has secured the essential commodities (vaccines, nutrition supplies and essential drugs) nationwide as per the pre-pandemic action plan, despite the difficulties generated by the COVID-19 confinement. 14,000 COVID-19 test kits, 50 oxygen concentrators and 25,000 PEP kits were procured and delivered to the Ministry of Health as a contribution to the COVID-19 screening, testing, case management as well as health care providers protection.

UNICEF paired up with WHO to support the Ministry of Health (MoH) in organizing a multi-agency catch-up vaccination campaign to capture the defaulters during the lock-down and after the lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown, two nationwide vaccination campaigns (measles and polio) were carried up despite the challenging COVID-19 context. A total of 250 health care providers and community health workers were trained on IPC measures, 50 handwashing stations were provided to health facilities and this intervention is still on-going to assure a safer environment in health facilities.

[Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services](#)

The financial support from Japan, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and USAID has permitted UNICEF to work closely with the Ministry of Education to develop the Education sector COVID-19 Response Plan as a designated agency on sector coordination and within this plan. As such, the development and dissemination of 1,980 TV-based learning contents during the COVID-19 lock-down despite the closure of schools and a national teacher training for 523 pre-service teachers (38 per cent female) was supported by providing a mode of learning, all contributing to the continuity of learning for 94,752 children (46 per cent girls).

UNICEF has also supported the development of the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction which includes aspects of health emergencies based on experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic. Key support included strong advocacy on the importance of schools being open as safe and protective spaces for children during the pandemic, which resulted in the successfully phased reopening of schools in September with a nation-wide Back-to-School Campaign. ‘Child-friendly’ handwashing posters as a critical part of IPC in school settings were developed and disseminated. As many as 70 adolescents were engaged as agents for change in the COVID-19 response through the reinforcement of their competencies (36 sessions on life skills), enabling the adolescents to promote healthy behaviours and preventive measures of COVID-19 in their communities using their local languages.

In the area of child protection, UNICEF’s continued partnership with Caritas has helped to keep providing alternative care to 513 vulnerable children, living on the street or on-the-move as well as unaccompanied and/or separated minors, in terms of food assistance, hygiene kits, health care and family reunification services. Also, the partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has helped 6,702 refugee children (25 per cent girls) to keep accessing child-friendly space and are receiving psychosocial services as well as helping family tracing for unaccompanied and/or separated

children. A total of 12 children with disabilities benefitted from school transportation while 96 children were reached through home visits as well as 13 foster parents benefitted from community-based mental health and psychosocial support.

Social policy and social sector financing

UNICEF contributed financially (thanks partly to EU support) to the distribution of food vouchers to 3,917 vulnerable families (49 per cent headed by women of which 60 per cent include children) from the 65,000 registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs' COVID-19 response programme. These families were reached through the existing national cash transfer system which has been effective in assisting the extremely poor households during the last three years in the country. This experience has enabled UNICEF to detect some areas of improvement at the registration stage during which some targeted families were negotiating to have items not primarily included in predefined vouchers' items list – therefore raising some human dignity concern. UNICEF will take advantage of this experience to improve the cash modality intervention in humanitarian response.

EGYPT

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

COVID-19 required a swift response to raise awareness and advocate on crucial behaviours aiming at reducing the spread of the virus. This effort materialized through campaigning as well as documenting the concrete achievements from UNICEF amid the crisis. The strategy was based on: The Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP), The Global COVID-19 Advocacy Framework and The Global COVID-19 Narrative. UNICEF Egypt has been co-leading the risk communication and community engagement pillar of the CPRP as part of its COVID-19 emergency response, during which UNICEF has led and co-led eight social media campaigns, reaching 65,839,096 people and engaging 3,224,523. The key messages covered by the social media campaigns were: a) COVID-19 awareness and preventive measures; Home isolation, social isolation and physical distancing; The importance of hygiene and healthy practices; b) healthy nutrition, food safety and household disinfection; c) safe reopening of schools; d) the wellbeing of pregnant women; e) social isolation and physical distancing; f) combating rumours and stigma; g) the importance of wearing masks; h) promoting social distancing while minimizing disruption to learning; i) providing psychosocial support to children during quarantine; j) preventive measures in schools and the continuity of education and k) giving a voice to children to speak about their reflections about the pandemic and how the emergency is affecting their lives while ensuring their mental and physical wellbeing is treated as a top priority in the response.

Due to its immediate and timely response, UNICEF was identified early by Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in Egypt as a trusted information provider, at the same level as WHO and the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), positioning as a verified reliable information provider.

In partnership with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) to engage with girls and boys on positive gender roles and maintaining healthy practices during COVID-19, a total of 32,380 girls and boys were reached with an average of seven per cent engagement rate (51 per cent female and 49 per cent male with a focus on age groups from 13 to 17 years old were engaged through the National Girls' Empowerment Initiative's Facebook Page (Dawwie).

Over 9,000 volunteers were trained on COVID-19 prevention engaged with peers and community members reaching over 800,000 people online with an engagement rate of eight per cent⁵.

UNICEF supported the MoHP in reaching additional 644,330⁶ people with interactive consulting and guidance services on health and nutrition best practices for pregnant and lactating mothers within the COVID-19 context with an average rate of post engagement of 191,358 using the MoHP 1,000 Days Facebook page.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

The procurement and delivery to the MoHP of more than seven million pieces of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), enough to protect an estimated 119,011 health staff members for a week was conducted by UNICEF. This included 3,000 coveralls; 22,350 N95 face masks; 40,100 face shields; 3,980,418 gloves; 407,615 gowns; 1,948,650 surgical face masks and five ventilators. UNICEF also procured and distributed 155,000 gloves and 149,200 face masks to childcare institutions.

Rehabilitating water and sanitation in 25 primary health care (PHC) facilities that were engaged in COVID-19 triage was carried out by UNICEF, who alongside MoHP, trained 1,755 doctors, nurses and community health workers in infection prevention and control (IPC) and trained 1,293 health professionals⁷ in detection, referral and management of COVID-19 cases.

In partnership with the private sector, UNICEF delivered 56,000 litres of chlorine and soap to 3,733 health facilities, 4,365 community schools and 277 childcare centres nationwide benefiting more than an estimated 3,000,000 people.

⁵ Please note that engagement on the ground started in December and figures will be reported during the next SitRep.

⁶ The figure reported in the RAM is 600,000 people. Due to the time lag in reporting, the figures reported in the SitRep represent the updated results as of 31 December 2020.

⁷ The figure reported in the RAM is 1,118 health professionals. Due to the time lag in reporting, the figures reported in the SitRep represent the updated results as of 31 December 2020.

UNICEF nationally supported 14,521 children and 9,791 employees in 618 care institutions to improve infection prevention and control, following a developed protocol for COVID-19 prevention/response at care institutions.

Special support was given to the most vulnerable. Around 6,000 people living with HIV were provided with personal hygiene kits, and 9,829 Syrian refugee families were reached with COVID-19 prevention measures. Also, 37,141 students enrolled in community schools in Assiut, Suhag Fayoum, Qena, Alexandria and Matroh locations benefitted from hygiene kits and soap bars.

Continuity of health care for women and children

A total of 86 online and face-to-face trainings were facilitated by UNICEF for health managers, supervisors, doctors, nurses and community health workers (CHWs), reaching over 5,200 health staff. The sessions covered key topics related to organization and monitoring of essential maternal and child health and nutrition services in the context of COVID-19 as well as the provision of services to children with disabilities and the less fortunate. The online sessions were instrumental in re-organizing the work of primary health services during the outbreak. Also, UNICEF trained 196 CHWs on prevention measures and community support during COVID-19 including mobilization of communities to continue accessing health services. The trained CHWs reached over 7,000 Syrian families and raised their awareness of the COVID-19 outbreak, improved their knowledge on preventive measures, and encouraged them to send their children to schools.

An estimated 722,604 caregivers⁸ of children aged 0-23 months received Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) messages through social media and community platforms.

A total of 1,675,277 women and children⁹ received essential health care, including prenatal, delivery and post-natal care, essential new-born care, immunization, treatment of childhood illnesses and HIV care through a UNICEF-supported programme.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

UNICEF has actively contributed to the joint efforts of MoHP and the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE) for the safe reopening of schools during COVID-19. A guideline was jointly developed with WHO to support a safe return to schools. UNICEF efforts were largely acknowledged by MOHP during a launch workshop for school reopening.

In collaboration with MoETE, UNICEF has successfully rolled out the Teachers Preparedness Training Packages (TPTP) developed by UNICEF MENA to 58 master trainers and 3,312 teachers representing 777 schools in three governorates (Ismailia, South Sinai and North Sinai). The training package, including three modules: a) Safe School Operations; b) Wellbeing and Protection and c) Back to Learning, aimed at equipping teachers with necessary skills to deal with the challenges that might arise due to resuming schools in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A comprehensive model designed by UNICEF and endorsed by MoETE defined stakeholders' roles/accountabilities to create a learning-oriented, skills-based, and violence-free culture in schools. The implementation toolkits responsive to COVID-19's needs, through UNICEF's technical support, are being developed and partially incorporated in the teacher preparedness packages.

UNICEF distributed sanitization and cleaning products to 915 community schools in five governorates (Assuit, Qena, Sohag, Fayoum and Alexandria) to support the implementation of precautionary measures as part of Safe School Operations Guidelines.

Reaching 12,104 vulnerable children enrolled in community schools (7,020 Egyptian, 5,084 refugees) through distance/home-based educational materials, UNICEF enhanced their home learning environment and to support their continuity to learning under the pandemic.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) was supported by UNICEF with supplies and capacity-building packages for nearly 400 Child Protection stakeholders, including 100 trained on GBV risk mitigation, to ensure continuity of child protection services.

63,408 children and caregivers were accordingly provided with MHPSS through phone-counselling (85 per cent Egyptians and 15 per cent refugees), overachieving the target by over 76 per cent due to increased need for MHPSS during the pandemic and in partnership with governmental and community-based structures. A total of 33,557 persons were also reached with PSS social media messaging and more than 33,000 calls to families of the government's Takaful and Karama cash transfers program with COVID-19-related/stress management messaging.

The Ministry of Justice and Prosecution Office is provided with technical support from UNICEF to review cases of children in conflict with the law in detention facilities/closed and semi-closed institutions for children in conflict with the

⁸ The figure reported in the RAM is 581,160 care givers. Due to the time lag in reporting, the figures reported in the SitRep represent the updated results as of 31 December 2020.

⁹ The figure reported in the RAM is 1,446,593 women and children. Due to the time lag in reporting, the figures reported in the SitRep represent the updated results as of 31 December 2020.

law and decided on a case by case the application of alternative measures to deprivation of liberty and whether it is safer for the children to stay in the institution or with their families (in case any of the family members contracted the virus) and cease the admission of new cases to the institutions.

Social policy and social sector financing

One-off humanitarian cash grants were provided to 634 households whose basic rights and living conditions (access to essential goods, education, shelter, health care, etc.) are threatened or have been disrupted.

UNICEF designed a phone-based four rounds real-time monitoring survey, which aimed at understanding the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on households with a specific focus on children. The topics included access to health services (infants, mothers) and nutrition, child protection, adolescent's and youth's response to the crisis. The telephone interviews covered a sample of 1,500 respondents that had a child in their household. As of December 2020, three rounds have been completed and information shared with the relevant ministries.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) was supported by UNICEF in its social protection response to the crisis. UNICEF has seconded two senior advisors that report directly to the Minister. One advisor led the response through the Takaful and Karama and managed its expansion to reach a total of 3,416,375 families. Since the start of the COVID-19, a total number of 437,052 families were included in the programme to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic, with the reassurance of continued financial support to all beneficiaries. The second advisor focused on the contributory social protection mechanisms (social insurance, pension) as a platform to mitigate the impacts of the crisis on families and COVID-19 policy coordination. The advisor coordinated the structuring of the database of casual workers, expected at 12 million while the currently registered in the National Organization for Social Insurance is only 417,000 workers. Moreover, the ministry responded to the requests from companies, which have been identified as negatively impacted by COVID-19, with the postponement of 60 per cent social insurance payments and continues the payments of pensions through e-wallets.

Under the umbrella of the Resident Coordinator's (RC) office, UNICEF developed and proposed structural benchmarks conditionalities on social protection spending to be added in the new IMF emergency loan of 2.8 billion agreed with the Government. UNICEF also proposed, under a common fundraising effort by the RC office, the launch of a back-to-school one-off cash grant for families with children targeted with the national cash transfer scheme, Takaful and Karama programme (TKP). In addition and in-line with the existing collaboration with the Ministry of Finance regarding transparency and accountability on the national budget, UNICEF developed several knowledge products, i.e. snapshot infographic of the government of Egypt's budget allocation to respond to the crisis, video in which the head of the fiscal transparency and citizen engagement team presents the Government's COVID-19 measures.

Gulf Countries (Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

The third annual Ramadan Campaign was coordinated with UNICEF through a tailored landing page, which allowed for contributions towards UNICEF's COVID-19 response as well as on-going programmes in Yemen and Syria. The Campaign enlists the backing of high-profile UNICEF supporters to draw attention via their channels, including members of the Leadership Circle and social media influencers. This year's adaptations to the pandemic yielded a total of \$200,000. The campaign was accompanied by a communication effort that marks the importance of the holy month in the lives of supporters.

In partnership with TikTok, UNICEF reached more than 2.3 million viewers through a series of Ramadan live stream events from 10 to 24 May. UNICEF supporter and renowned musician Jad Rahbani and several TikTok influencers and celebrities interacted with viewers to raise awareness on COVID-19 and to encourage donations for MENA regional response to the pandemic.

In partnership with Qatar Charity and the Government's Supreme Committee for Crisis management, UNICEF Qatar developed and launched a series of nationwide campaigns aimed at children and families. Over 1,000,000 persons were reached through this messaging campaign, addressing the impact of COVID-19 on children and families. Topics included risk communication, mental health and PSS, protection of children and wellbeing. UNICEF Qatar leveraged pre-existing key materials and messaging at global, regional and local levels while ensuring the content is accurate, relevant to the context in Qatar, stressing that the messages were both cultural and gender-appropriate.

Partnering with the Saudi-hosted Gamers Without Borders, UNICEF was involved with a six-week online gaming tournament. Players competed for a \$10 million charity prize fund and donated their prizes to their partner of choice. Through social media engagement, UNICEF raised COVID-19 awareness and promoted UNICEF's response to the tournament participants and viewing audiences. UNICEF received \$3,947,000 through the partnership with the Saudi Arabian Federation for Electronic and Intellectual Sports (SAFEIS). The contribution supported UNICEF's Global COVID-19 response as well as Sudan and the State of Palestine in the MENA region.

In the United Arab Emirates U.A.E., UNICEF collaborated with the Community Development Authority (CDA) and Ministry of Education (MoE) to launch a social media campaign and outreach effort entitled, "Safe Summer", targeting children, adolescents and caregivers. Through booklets, short stories and interactive games, the initiative aims to raise awareness of children and families of nutrition, physical activity, hygiene practices, mental health and well-being and child protection, in the context of COVID-19 in the summer months. The information was disseminated across public

and private schools across the U.A.E. through the MoE's digital platform, community clubs and centres as well as facilities for persons with disabilities. Following the campaign, UNICEF and partner jointly developed a child rights toolkit to use in schools addressing three age cohorts.

UNICEF in the U.A.E., UNICEF, UNESCO, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and Mohammed Bin Rashid Global Initiatives launched an awareness initiative providing educational messages in Arabic. Through 15 cartoon videos, the campaign targets children aged 5 to 15, in the UAE and the wider region, with basic information about COVID-19 prevention, e-learning and mental health. The videos were shared by the four partners, media partners and influencers through various social media networks.

[Supporting access to continuous education, child protection and GBV services](#)

In the U.A.E., UNICEF made substantial progress in scaling up prevention and response services to address violence faced by children as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic by working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to strengthen the criteria for licensing child protection professionals, provided technical assistance for new cohorts of child protection specialists in the MoE and providing technical assistance to finalize the anti-bullying policy in schools. The U.A.E. has developed a country strategy on ending violence against children which is awaiting approval. Collectively these efforts have systematically strengthened the implementation of the child rights law.

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, UNICEF engaged in a series of advocacy efforts at all levels of society, from parents and caregivers to service providers and decision-makers. In partnership with the UN Country Team, a package of 14 training and webinar packages were delivered to the public and service providers through the National Family Safety Programme (NFSP) to address violence in the home, schools and community. UNICEF-led sessions focused on challenges in remote hotline service provision and focusing on adolescent girls in gender-based violence services. UNICEF in Kuwait worked more substantively with the UN Country Team in Kuwait to undertake the first multi-stakeholder consultation on migration in Kuwait. UNICEF focused on the impact of migration on children and families. All country teams in UNICEF have established UN Migration Networks which were served as a useful platform to share technical expertise and to engage with the Government jointly on the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration.

[Supporting access to Education, Child Protection and GBV services](#)

UNICEF Qatar partnered with the World Innovation Summit for Health ([WISH](#)) to deliver a [special Summit Day](#) dedicated to Children on 20 November as part of this year's virtual Global WISH Summit to commemorate the 2020 World's Children Day. The High-Level event opened with a [special address](#) from UNICEF's Executive Director Henrietta Fore and Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al-Thani of Qatar vice chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. The day addressed pressing issues affecting children today, including child & adolescent health during COVID-19, with a focus on protecting vulnerable children. Additionally, the public health approach to addressing violence against children as well as child development in the information age were topics discussed. It brought together government, academic, civil society/NGO and other experts from around the world, including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and other international, regional and Qatari experts to discuss these pressing and timely topics. At the heart of the whole event, were children and young persons, with [special performances](#) from America's Got Talent winner Kodi Lee and the Qatar Music Academy. It is estimated that approximately 70,000 people visited the virtual summit. This event has laid the groundwork for UNICEF and other key stakeholders to actively engage in a dynamic coordination mechanism to support the government to strengthen child protection systems in Qatar. More information about the event can be accessed [here](#).

Also, a total of 240 nursery teachers & assistant teachers, representing 166 nurseries (75 per cent of the total number of licensed nurseries in Qatar) participated in nationwide training. Participants' responses to the training evaluation demonstrate increased knowledge of brain development in the early years, the importance of early stimulation through play and communication, and the main concepts of the Care for Child Development. The Nursery Training was an important entry point for UNICEF to engage with the childcare workers and gain a new insight towards improving outcomes for children through the systemic strengthening of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services during and after the COVID-19 crisis in Qatar. Given this, UNICEF Qatar is engaging with the Ministry of Administrative Development, Labour and Social Affairs (MADLSA) in a broader discussion to take a more comprehensive and systematic approach in this programmatic. This is going to include, but not limited to, strengthening the work on parenting support interventions in Qatar; improving teacher-parent relationships; enhancing teacher well-being and self-care as well as that of children and parents, and strengthening national guidelines for re-opening nurseries to ensure the provision of nurturing care and quality early learning while adhering to the health and safety requirements to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in nurseries. A wide range of enrichment resources were made available to the participants by UNICEF following the training, focusing on the issues that emerged during the workshop, such as early childhood disabilities, communicating with parents and global ECD websites to name a few. Moving forward, UNICEF Qatar will follow up with the MADLSA to build on this preliminary training in a more systematic way to strengthen the capacity of the ECD workforce in Qatar.

In the U.A.E., UNICEF with technical support from UNICEF MENA and HQ, partnered with the Ministry of Education to adapt and contextualize Teacher Training and Preparedness Package (TPTP) for the national context. The has been rolled out in the Emirate of Sharjah reaching 450 participants comprised of teachers, social workers and school administrators and over 2,100 teachers and nurses under the Ministry of Education. The positive uptake of the training

has resulted in the integration of the toolkit in the training platform of the ministry, accessible to many more teachers. The TPTP is now being planned for further roll-out in KSA, Bahrain and Kuwait.

In partnership with Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences Academy (KFAS), Enara, Kuwaiti Institute for Digital Innovation, supported the creation of two online platforms – one for teachers and another for parents – to share tips for online education during COVID times, to share advice on how to motivate and keep children safe while using digital technology for learning, to post lesson plans, educational materials, pedagogical advice, suggestions for adaptations and accommodations in instructional delivery during the times of online and distance learning.

IRAN

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

From the onset of the pandemic, UNICEF Iran supported RCCE response through a partnership with different ministries and organizations, including the Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MoHME) the Ministry of Education (MoE), SWO, Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS), the Ministry of Cooperatives Labour and Social Welfare (MCLSW), the Ministry of Interior (MoI), municipalities and the Prison's Organization. The RCCE response reached out to more than 25,000,000 and engaged more than 10,000,000 (49 per cent girls) and targeted the most vulnerable social groups namely children in challenging settings, children with disabilities (CWD), children in conflict with the law, adolescents with high-risk behaviours, incarcerated mothers, and lactating women.

UNICEF Iran's Instagram with 424,000 followers (65 per cent increase for 2020) ranked as the most popular UNICEF Instagram account in the MENA region and UN Instagram in Iran.

More than 240 gender-sensitive communication and educational materials for the prevention of COVID-19 were produced and distributed by UNICEF, including videos, print materials, capacity building training packages, infographics, and online games. It further supported different campaigns, competitions and workshops, related to COVID-19 prevention, engaging the communities, providing a platform for children to share their voices and build the capacity of frontline social workers and counsellors. These materials were shared mainly through UNICEF online platforms, online and offline platforms of 31 medical universities all around the country, online and offline training workshops, national TV, private sector partners' online platforms, as well as adolescent wellbeing clubs.

Stress, anxiety, fear of loss of parents, missing friends and families were addressed in Psychosocial Support (PSS) interventions for children and adolescents during the COVID-19 outbreak. UNICEF supported MOHME's Mental Health Department to develop 24 gender-sensitive educational communication materials for children and adolescents of three age groups (6 to 10, 11 to 14 and 15 to 18). As a result, children received PSS education through digital books, games, and print materials. 15 online 'parenting during COVID-19 videos and online booklets were produced to enhance the parenting skills of parents.

A remote psychosocial counselling programme was initiated by UNICEF. So far more than 140 PSS counsellors from the State Welfare Organization (SWO), Adolescent Wellbeing Clubs (AWBCs), Prisons' Organization and MoSY are trained. As a result, around 1,500 children and 197 incarcerated mothers in women prisons in 31 provinces received PSS support through trained counsellors and social workers. In another intervention, 15,000 children living on the street were trained on COVID-19 preventive and protective messages and received educational child-friendly brochures. Moreover, through a nation-wide competition for artworks, 6,000 children, more than half being girls, shared their voices on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and how it has affected their lives.

Beyond the public health domain, COVID-19 caused major secondary impacts on children and their caregivers. The lack of parenting skills during COVID-19, Violence Against Children (VAC), unhealthy eating habits, increase in drug abuse among adolescents and youth and decrease in the use of rehabilitation services by CWD were identified as the secondary impacts of COVID-19. Accordingly, UNICEF redirected its RCCE response to address those challenges. This gender-focused joint RCCE programme with SWO provided 33,000 CWD, mainly girls, the opportunity to share their experience and their messages creatively while benefiting from rehabilitative and developmental aspects of the programme. SWO and UNICEF Iran are working to design training workshops for the SWO rehabilitation workforce for its remote rehabilitation programme, the establishment of online communication and educational platforms.

In support of the MoHME in conducting a nationwide RCCE campaign for safe schooling measures during COVID-19. 44 video messages, separately targeting girls and boys, UNICEF has shared through the national online schooling mobile application (Shad) and 100,000 schools.

Furthermore, UNICEF is supporting MoHME's breastfeeding program with COVID-19 preventive measures campaign reaching out to 500,000 mothers around the country.

In response to the decline in routine vaccination rates, UNICEF is supporting the MoHME's national immunization campaign. The campaign includes: a) in-person follow-ups with parents by MoHME health personnel; b) distribution of information and guidance for parents and vaccinators for COVID-19 precautions during vaccination as well as guidance for centres for precautionary measures in the centres; c) production of videos and 4) development of the mobile application.

Moreover, the '[We Are All Champions](#)' art competition was launched by UNICEF and the Ministry of Interior as part of the Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) to promote children's engagement and participation across the country. The competition called on children and adolescents aged 3 to 19 to submit a painting or miniblog to express their feelings of admiration to 'their champions', such as health workers, firefighters, shop-keepers and grandparents who are working hard to help families and communities survive during the COVID-19 outbreak. 4,272 pieces of work including paintings and mini blogs, were submitted to this competition from different provinces of which 70 were awarded.

With the support of the Ministry of Interior, COVID-19 awareness-raising materials were disseminated across the CFCI network (including 10 large and megacities with high outreach) to disseminate across their networks and communication channels to the citizens in their cities. Also, COVID-19 awareness-raising materials were disseminated across the Iranian Innovation Ecosystem with the support of the Pardis Technology Park.

[Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) supplies and improving infection and prevention control \(IPC\)](#)

Compounded with the US sanctions, the COVID-19 outbreak has adversely affected the situation of the most vulnerable groups of children, as well as the required services for their care and protection. UNICEF Iran prioritized preventing the transmission of coronavirus among vulnerable groups of children. UNICEF procured IPC supplies, such as hand and surface disinfectant liquids, sanitiser gels, soap, masks, gloves, diapers, temperature guns and pulse oximeters for 11,556 children in alternative care and 4,044 children with disabilities throughout the country, in partnership with the SWO.

In partnership with MCLSW, UNICEF procured hand sanitisers liquid and gel sanitisers for about 4,500 who either live and/work on the street, 20 per cent of them being Afghan children, in nine cities, and for 6,000 CWD, and 600 children diagnosed with cancer in 31 cities. Those items are distributed according to the KOMAK ICT platform which is owned by MCLSW for arranging the social supports during COVID-19 crises through NGOs.

Furthermore, UNICEF supported the Prisons' Organization's COVID-19 response to address the needs of 1,108 children and adolescents in Juvenile Correction and Rehabilitation Centres (JCRC) and 197 incarcerated mothers and their infants in women's prisons throughout the country, through procurement and distribution of diapers, latex gloves, masks, temperature guns and pulse oximeters.

Additionally, UNICEF [delivered hygiene items](#) including 30,000 hand sanitisers, 12,000 sanitizing gels, 30,000 liquid hand soaps, 11,988 sanitary pads, 33,000 detergent powder, 33,000 dishwashing liquid as well as 300,000 masks to the Ministry of Interior during October 2020 under the CFCI partnership to support 30,000 vulnerable children through 88 distribution centres (facilitation offices, charities and NGOs, municipalities) in 38 cities across six developing provinces.

Moreover, UNICEF has been assisting the Government in the most affected provinces by procuring vital Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for medical personnel in hospitals. UNICEF has procured and delivered a total of 63.5 metric tons of PPE items since the beginning of this pandemic in the country, reaching 5,850 frontline healthcare providers.

[Continuity of health care for women and children](#)

A total of 2,258 COVID-19 test kit packs (with 96 test kits each), targeting 216,768 individuals, were procured with the support of ECHO and Japan. Further, to ensure the continuity of the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) program, and easy access to the HIV diagnostic equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic, 200,000 HIV rapid test kits were procured and disseminated through the Primary Healthcare Centres.

Furthermore, 2,000,000 Mega-doses of Vitamin A supplements (200,000 IU) were procured and distributed in eight provinces to vulnerable under five years children. Two brochures for parents on healthy eating of children (under 2 and 2 to 5) were developed and will be disseminated through various platforms such as the PHC system. Additionally, a brochure on breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic was developed and disseminated via the PHC.

Refah Chain Stores and UNICEF launched the '[For Mothers](#) Campaign' with a focus on COVID-19. In March 2020, under this partnership, 6,000 food and hygiene packages were distributed among families and mothers living in poorer areas in Tehran and the areas affected by 2020 floods in the south of the country.

Furthermore, the [JoinUs4Kids Campaign](#), a tripartite private-public collaboration between UNICEF, the Ministry of Interior, Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce (ISCC), UNICEF managed to provide 2,172 food packages to the vulnerable children in the less-privileged Sistan and Baluchestan province. As part of UNICEF's COVID-19 response, this campaign, backed by a comprehensive nutritional need assessment, was strongly supported by the ISCC's members.

Moreover, through UNICEF Iran advocacy with the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, 26,518 packages of complementary foods for 200 children of incarcerated mothers for 100 days were delivered to the Society for Protection of Prisoners in October.

With the financial contribution of UNICEF Iran private sector partners, 160 nebulizers were procured for children with Cystic Fibrosis disease, a genetic disease that mostly affects the lungs and leads to [difficulties in breathing](#) and frequent lung infections. The children with cystic fibrosis are now doubly impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services](#)

Despite the rapid reaction of the government to launch its online learning platform (SHAD), the COVID-19 caused long periods of school closures across the country and posed major challenges for access to education, especially for about three million children with no access to online education. In close collaboration with UNESCO, UNICEF advocated for a risk-informed and inclusive education response, addressing the educational needs of all children in the country. UNICEF provided MoE with technical support in the areas of distance learning and safe school operations mainly through translating global best practices, UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO relevant materials into Persian, and preparing thematic reports for MoE. UNICEF's education response, organized around the two pillars of inclusive distance learning and safe school operations, was integrated into the UNICEF-MoE work plan (2020-2022) signed in October.

UNICEF advocated for in-person education and mobilized €800,000 from the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) to ensure implementation of health protocols and safe school reopening in 1,000 schools in five less-developed provinces of the country. In partnership with MoHME and SWO, UNICEF supported the development of a parenting package during the COVID-19 outbreak for parents (or caregivers and foster parents) of children and adolescents aged 4-9 and 10-19 years. 20 SWO social workers from six pilot provinces (Tehran, Markazi, Kohgiluyeh & Boyer-Ahmad, West Azarbaijan, Ilam, and Kermanshah) participated in a four-session remote workshop to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for the provision of parenting counselling services to parents, caregivers and foster parents of children in alternative care. UNICEF supported SWO by procuring recreational packages containing toys (games, puzzles, educational and interactive games, etc.) among 17,107 children in family-based foster care settings to support their emotional wellbeing and reduce negative mental health consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak. The package also included IPC items to promote hygiene practices and prevent transmission of the virus.

Moreover, in partnership with the Prisons' Organization, training packages for provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) to juveniles in Juvenile Correction and Rehabilitation Centres (JCRCs) and incarcerated mothers in women's prisons were developed, and 62 social workers/counsellors from 31 provinces were trained on provision of PSS to the above-mentioned groups. Furthermore, in partnership with the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, [the call for the National Innovations for Children Award](#) was launched and over 80 innovative solutions for challenges faced by children and adolescents during COVID-19 were submitted and reviewed. The finalists will be selected and awarded in 2021.

[Social policy and social sector financing](#)

UNICEF supported the analysis on the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 in partnership with the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) and UNFPA. This analysis used available administrative data and additional household surveys administered through pretested application and telephone call centres. The final product will provide five thematic analysis with policy recommendations on the impact of COVID-19 on children's education, the economic situation of people aged 15 to 64, fertility and childbirth, as well as prevalence of COVID-19 infection in Iran and the psychological pressures and violence against children.

UNICEF and Social Policy from the Regional Office (UNICEF MENA) advisor participated in a technical meeting with the Statistical Centre of Iran and UNFPA to review and examine a questionnaire for the analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on the population. The data collection phase is in progress however the analysis of data will be carried out with delay by the end of February 2021 due to COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

As the co-chairs of UNDAF Resilient Economy Pillar, UNICEF and UNDP under the leadership of the UN RC conducted a rapid socio-economic analysis which projected the scale and complexity of socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. Additionally, the UN recovery program is being developed including three main pillars: a) health (lead by WHO); b) upscaled social protection (lead by UNICEF) and c) economic recovery (lead by UNDP).

UNICEF advocated for cash transfers to support vulnerable children and their households in the provinces most affected by COVID-19. The government's COVID-19 response and recovery plan included cash transfers ranging between \$13 to \$40, depending on the size of the household, to four million households. However, given multidimensional deprivations, an additional 7.5 million households require upscaled social protection services. Therefore, UNICEF has provided technical and financial support to roll out Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) – soft conditionalities – to complement and enhance the efficiency of the existing social protection schemes. This Cash Plus initiative aims to improve health, nutrition and education of children under 18 years old in deprived areas against the negative economic effects of COVID-19, and determine a road-map to upscale the conditional cash transfer during the different crises (natural & economic crises) at the national level to improve shock responsiveness of the system.

The scalable model aims to provide complementary social protection for a minimum of 42,000 households with approximately 84,000 children who are in the three lowest income groups with children under the age of 18 in four pilot cities (Khorramshahr city in Khuzestan province, Harsin city in Kermanshah province, Baharestan city in outskirts of Tehran province and Bashagard city in Hormozgan province). The model will support these households to benefit from expanded social protection through conditional social cash transfers and/or in-kind assistance.

IRAQ

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

Under the leadership of the C4D and External Communication Sections, and with very strong collaboration from all programme sections, UNICEF coordinated a series of UN-wide Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) activities to increase trust and social cohesion, and ultimately reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19. UNICEF coordinated and led, RCCE response in Iraq, resulting in a work-plan currently under implementation across all the UN agencies and NGOs, in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health.

As of December, over 65 million people were reached and at least one million people were engaged through UNICEF's posts on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter platforms, primarily with COVID-19 related content.

A total of 37 million people were reached through targeted communication and engagement initiatives aiming at raising awareness on COVID-19 amongst all segments of the population, including young people, adolescents, women and children in the most vulnerable areas. UNICEF-led awareness campaigns addressed, among others, handwashing, breastfeeding, Back to Learning (B2L) and immunization, including through TV/radio interviews, mobile teams, social media activities and production/distribution of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials. The overall target population included, *inter alia*, ten IDP and two refugee camps in Dohuk, benefitting 90,316 (51 per cent female) and 41,520 (51 per cent female) individuals respectively, as well as host communities and returnee areas in Ninewa, benefitting a total of 30,370 individuals (51 per cent female).

On the occasion of the Global Handwashing Day, an estimated 5.7 million affected people (52 per cent female) in camps, off camps and in host communities - in Ninawa, Dohuk, Erbil, Kirkuk, Anbar, Basrah, Muthanna, Missan, Thi Qar, Diwaniya and Baghdad - were reached with key messages on hand hygiene via physical interventions, TV, radio stations, YouTube, and social media.

Global WASH events (World Water Day, Global Handwashing Day and World Toilet Day) were linked up with COVID-19 and celebrated in Domiz camps, in partnership with the Directorate of Health (DoH), on 21 March, 15 October and 19 November 2020 respectively, benefitting 41,520 refugees (51 per cent female).

As of December, 41,284 young people (3,007 offline and 38,277 online, including a total of 45 per cent girls) led community engagement activities through UNICEF-supported civil society organizations (CSOs) and Directorates of Youth in the north, centre and south of Iraq. As a result, their peers, families and communities, including in hard-to-reach areas, received fundamental information on handwashing practices, COVID-19-related health threats, mental health issues and stress management, as well as access points to life-saving services for adolescents and youth experiencing GBV during the pandemic, including information on key referral pathways.

UNICEF also worked on rumour tracking, enabling the development of evidence-based information to combat false statement, misinformation and stigmatization through local media, online and offline channels. 343 young people (107 girls) from the center, south and north of Iraq actively engaged in tracking and debunking rumours and myths around COVID-19, including through the development and dissemination of seven bulletins.

Young people were also engaged through the U-Report COVID-19 chatbot to reduce misinformation and provide vital information around the symptoms, transmission and prevention of COVID-19. Furthermore, the reach of Voices of Youth increased since its launch in early 2020, with 103 young people (61 per cent girls) across Iraq serving as active contributors; as a result, 37 videos and 72 blogs covering key health and hygiene promotional messages, including social distancing, were produced throughout the reporting period.

Additionally, UNICEF-supported the Directorates of Labour and Social Affairs (DoLSA) in four governorates - home to the high rates of COVID-19 spread - with training, tools, and financial support to roll out awareness-raising campaigns targeting social protection network beneficiaries on the prevention of COVID-19 and to address negative coping strategies affecting children. Eighty social workers were trained, and the campaign benefited over 30,000 households, with a focus on households with children and persons with disability. As part of the campaign social workers were trained to administer a survey on the situation of children, and the data collected was used to develop a brief analysis for advocacy and to inform the government response at the governorate level.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

UNICEF coordinated and provided technical expertise for the training of 14,000 workers at Public Health Care Centres (PHCCs) across Iraq on general WASH and specialized IPC modules. UNICEF also disseminated key messages and information on the above-mentioned modules through the circulation of 20,000 copies of IPC guidelines/booklets to the trained PHCCs staff, thereby raising their awareness on, and enhancing their knowledge of, the procedures in place to promote continuity of care while limiting the spread of COVID-19.

UNICEF distributed Personal and Protective Equipment (PPE) to a total of 2,750 municipal workers from 17 municipalities in Baghdad to mitigate their exposure to COVID-19 transmission.

To promote hand hygiene, thereby limiting the spread of COVID-19, UNICEF provided and installed 82 handwashing facilities in 50 health care facilities (HCFs) within the Muthanna governorate. A total of 12,000 health workers and patients in six Health Care Facilities (HCFs) in Erbil and 18,000 health workers in 15 HCFs in Baghdad, along with a total of 8,000 students (49 per cent female) from the University of Technology.

UNICEF provided 30 schools in Baghdad (21,000 school children, including 50 per cent girls) and 20 schools in Erbil (13,394 school children, including 52 per cent girls) with no-touch hand hygiene stations.

A total of 50,000 soap bars were distributed by UNICEF to 100 HCFs, benefitting 20,000 (of which 52 per cent female), including staff.

UNICEF supported a five-time distribution of 9,900 hygiene kits in Domiz refugee camps (7,500 in Domiz 1 and 2,400 in Domiz 2) as well as a one-time distribution of 41,411 soap bars, benefitting a total of 41,520 refugees (51 per cent female).

In Jada'a, Salamiya and Hama Allil IDPs camps in Ninewa, 43,069 children (53 per cent girls) and their families were reached by UNICEF with the distribution of hygiene kits monthly; hygiene promotion activities; daily disinfection of communal WASH facilities; provision of basic WASH services for the isolation and quarantine centre in Salamiya and Hama Al Ali camps; construction of WASH infrastructures at the quarantine centre in Jada'a 1 camp; installation of 33-foot pedal handwashing stations.

3,691 IDPs (51 per cent female) in the camps of Anbar and Salah Al-Din were provided by UNICEF with critical hygiene and prevention items, including soap, hand-sanitisers, safe water handling storage and disinfectants.

UNICEF provided 5,243 schools and centres with disinfectants and protective equipment to safely conduct grade 12 exams for 412,254 children (46 per cent girls).

[Continuity of health care services for women and children](#)

Through the provision of technical support to planning, provision of critical supplies and equipment (including refrigerators, cold boxes, freezers, cold rooms, fridge tags and spares) and funding of catch-up and outreach activities, UNICEF vaccinated 462,280 infants against measles in 10 UNICEF-supported governorates.

UNICEF provided supplies and equipment, funding and technical expertise for the development of guidelines and standards, as well as training of health personnel, 171,982 women benefited from antenatal and postnatal care in public facilities in 10 UNICEF-supported governorates.

Through the provision of technical support and supplies, UNICEF-supported services as a result: a) 44,952 children 6-59-month old were screened for growth in IDP/refugee camps; b) 548 cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) were identified in IDP/refugee camps and referred for management; c) 1,426 cases of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) were identified in IDP/refugee camps and received proper treatment and d) 22,061 pregnant and lactating mothers benefited from Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling in IDP/refugee camps.

[Supporting access to Education, Child Protection and GBV services](#)

To offset the learning losses due to schools' closure during the entire year, UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Education (MoE) – both at Federal (FGI) and at Kurdistan Region (KRI) levels – to establish alternative delivery mechanisms through education television (ETV), online portals, self-learning materials as well as through up-gradation of the available infrastructure for remote learning, thereby benefitting an estimated 2.9 million children and adolescents.

In partnership with Directorates of Education and NGOs, such as Terres des Hommes, Sabe' Sanabul Organization for Relief and Development and Al-Aghsan Foundation for Agriculture and Environment Development, 144,000 children in camps, returnee areas and those out-of-school in Erbil, Mosul, Anbar and Dohuk are being provided with blended learning, combining face-to-face with remote and home-based learning.

A total of 1,402 teachers (40 per cent female) received training on Psychosocial Support (PSS), Positive Discipline (PD) and Pedagogy with UNICEF's support.

Online content was created with UNICEF reinforcement through the recording of 1,800 lessons, along with the creation of broadcast content. Big Bad Boo's 1001 nights animated life skill series was broadcasted in camp and other settings, reaching 50,000 pupils.

Sustained by UNICEF, the MoE (both federal as well as in the Kurdistan region) in launching a 'Back to learning' (B2L) campaign focusing on the safe reopening of schools, promotion of health and hygiene measures, blended learning approach, and enrollment of children and adolescents, especially those who are out of school. The ongoing campaign has resulted in the enrollment of 4,445 out-of-school children so far.

In Erbil, UNICEF's *Innovation Lab* partner together with the Directorate of Youth introduced e-learning through GSuite, a digital platform that provided young people with easy access to learning opportunities. 2,277 adolescents (144 per cent girls) registered and benefited from life skills and social innovation skills sessions on leadership, communication,

business start-ups, IT and English, all facilitated by a certified trainer for each set of skills. The learning materials were delivered in Kurdish and Arabic, with audio and video contents and interactive exercises. Young people also registered in the Online Entrepreneurship Training Course in Erbil, and 102 young people (68 girls) enrolled in business startup incubator sessions, with a focus on business ideas and planning, marketing, financial management, partnership and sponsorships.

Continued work with its NGO partners, UNICEF delivered core child protection prevention and response services to vulnerable groups. In this regard, 25,250 individuals were reached with core child protection services (PSS and case management), including 22,124 individuals (29 per cent girls; 31 boys; 24 women; and 3,435 men) receiving psycho-social support (PSS). A total of 3,126 children (48 per cent girls) and 231 women received case management services. Also, 396 parents/caregivers (58 per cent women) received structured parenting sessions through parenting programs approved by the Child Protection Sub-Cluster.

Awareness-raising sessions on child protection issues were delivered to 4,690 individuals (30 per cent girls; 37 per cent boys; 17 per cent women and 15 per cent men), while capacity building on basic child protection and referral mechanisms targeted 212 teachers and community members (63 per cent women).

As a result of UNICEF's advocacy and support with legal services, 237 juveniles (including 10 per cent girls) have been released from detention.

UNICEF also provided GBV prevention and response services to vulnerable groups and survivors of GBV. In this regard, 13,824 individuals (35 per cent girls; 16 per cent boys; 37 per cent women and 12 per cent men) were reached with GBV prevention and response services, including PSS, case management and referral to specialized services.

In response to COVID-19 socio-economic impacts and the consequent rising poverty, UNICEF advocated with, and supported closely, the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to enhance the coverage and response capacity of the social protection system. UNICEF provided evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on poverty and vulnerability and provided technical assistance to the MoP and MoLSA on the design and implementation of a one-time *ad hoc* cash transfer benefiting 2.1 million households affected by COVID-19 socio-economic impacts.

As the lead agency on the social protection sector within the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan, UNICEF identified synergies with WFP and ILO; the advocacy efforts with government and work with sister agencies culminated in the development of a joint programme to accelerate the reform of social protection over the period 2021-2024, including within the context of COVID-19 response.

Data collection and analysis of secondary impacts on children and women

In collaboration with the World Bank, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Planning in developing an assessment of COVID-19 impact on poverty and vulnerability. The assessment, which was launched by the MoP in July, shows that two out of five children are living below the poverty line, doubling the 2018 rate and that one in two children is deprived in more than one wellbeing dimension.

JORDAN

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNICEF, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), Royal Health Awareness Society (RHAS) and the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), continued to lead a collaborative effort to unify messaging through the national COVID-19 campaign,¹⁰ which represents the most reliable source of information, countering misinformation and rumours, and promoting proper health practices and procedures. During the reporting period, the campaign reached an estimated two million people through social media. As part of the campaign, 5,000 'Bebo and Gigi'¹¹ themed children's kits were produced.

Community engagement activities were carried out in the last week of December in the cities of Amman, Zarqa, Agaba and Irbid, with volunteers engaging children and adults to keep the public updated about key information related to the COVID-19 situation. With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Culture implemented so far a social media campaign, Hayatna Ahem, through which key messages on COVID-19 are being shared with the general public; the campaign has reached 2.7 million individuals and engaged more than 65,000 individuals in two weeks.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

UNICEF continued supplying water, averaging 45-55 litres per person per day, to over 113,000 refugees residing in Azraq, King Abdullah Park (KAP) and Za'atari refugee camps to support COVID-19 handwashing and hygiene practice infection and prevention control measures.

¹⁰ The national COVID-19 campaign is headed by the National Risk Communication and Community Engagement Taskforce, whose members include the World Health Organization, MOH, UNICEF, the National Council for Family Affairs and the Royal Health Awareness Society.

¹¹ Cartoon characters.

In Azraq Camp, UNICEF, in coordination with partners, completed a blanket distribution of 8,567 cleaning kits for use at home, benefitting 33,136 individuals (49 per cent female). In KAP Camp, UNICEF completed a blanket distribution of 125 cleaning kits and 553 soap bars, benefitting 552 individuals (47 per cent female). In Za'atari Camp, UNICEF completed a blanket distribution of 15,360 cleaning kits and 71,560 soap bars, benefitting 71,542 individuals (49 per cent female).

To support individuals under self-isolation in their shelters or public areas in all camps, UNICEF and partners distributed an additional 2,603 bars of soap, 461 bottles of hand sanitiser, 1,497 cleaning kits, 702 hygiene kits¹² and 180 jerry cans to approximately 5,677 individuals (49 per cent female).

Continuity of health care for women and children

UNICEF, in collaboration with the MoH, supported the provision of mobile immunization for vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian children and women in informal tented settlements (ITSs). Through a country-wide remote immunization campaign, a total of 1,707 children under five (50 per cent female) were vaccinated according to the MoH immunization schedule, and 137 women of reproductive age were vaccinated against tetanus.

UNICEF provided essential health and nutrition services in Za'atari and Azraq camps, including newborn care, immunization, and treatment of childhood illnesses to 5,169 children (45 per cent girls) and one boy and one girl with severe acute malnutrition.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

To support students in taking their Tawjihi exams, UNICEF provided transportation to 306 students (45 per cent female) in camps, starting 31 December. This support will continue until the end of the examination period on 16 January 2021.

UNICEF distributed [Learning Bridges](#) materials to children in Grades 4-9 children in the camps to be used for six weeks, reaching over 5,910 children (56 per cent female) in Za'atari and Azraq camps in the first round of distribution, 4,601 children (62 per cent female) in the second round of distribution, and a total of 993 children (45 per cent female) with the European Justice Centre (EJC). UNICEF also provided 500 family activity kits¹³ to families with children in self-isolation in Za'atari camp and 268 kits in Azraq camp during the reporting period. This enabled children to continue learning and to catch up with lost learning during school closures.

A total of 3,206 students (45 per cent female) in the non-formal education drop-out programme in 2020 were supported by UNICEF.

Since November 2020, UNICEF has resumed in-person learning support to 778 children with disabilities (43 per cent female) in the Makani centres. This support allowed them to access learning opportunities during school closures.

A total of 7,000 young people (70 per cent female) enrolled in online courses on the Youth Learning Passport platform.¹⁴

Since January 2020, 51,287 young people (64 per cent female) have signed up to access volunteering opportunities through UNICEF Jordan's [Nahno](#) (National Youth Engagement and Volunteering Movement) platform. The volunteer opportunities offered included online awareness sessions on COVID-19, peer-to-peer educational support for home learning and aid distribution to vulnerable households throughout Jordan.

As part of UNICEF Jordan's support to Home-based Businesses (HBBs) in Za'atari and Azraq Camps, 200 young entrepreneurs (56 per cent female) with businesses ideas received capacity building training. Of these ideas, 40 HBBs (47 per cent female-owned) were established and supported between March and December 2020. Examples of successful projects include wood recycling, sustainable toy making, online marketing and advertising services,¹⁵ and bicycle repair.

In December, UNICEF launched the [Nahno Youth Led Initiative Fund](#), which will enable youth to lead their volunteering projects by receiving the necessary technical support, mentoring, coaching and seed funding to design, plan and implement new opportunities and activities.

As part of the UNICEF Jordan's Learning to Earning Pathway and COVID-19 response in vulnerable areas of Jordan, 355 young women participated in the training and production of non-medical face masks between June and December 2020. The project enabled women to generate an average income of 300 Jordanian Dinars (\$432) per month, and up to a total of 2,571 Jordanian Dinars (\$3,626) per person for the whole period. Of these women, 94 per cent stated that participating in the project generated sufficient income for them to cover their own and their families' basic needs without external support.¹⁶

¹² A hygiene kit includes soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste for adults and children and sanitary napkins. A cleaning kit includes bleach, bucket, brush, cleaning cloth and laundry powder

¹³ The kits include education boardgames, coloring materials and story-telling books.

¹⁴ The UNICEF Youth Learning Passport is a global digital learning platform, offering young people the opportunity to continue learning and skills development at home. It is available free-of-charge through this [link](#).

¹⁵ A business specializing in online marketing and advertising services targeting all business owners (barbers, retailers, etc.).

¹⁶ 80 per cent of these young women live in households with 4 to 9 family members and 81 per cent have family members under 18 years of age in their households.

During December, UNICEF Social Innovation Mobile Incubators reached 265 young people (53 per cent female) aged 6-18 years old in informal tented settlements (ITSs) across Jordan, introducing them to and allowing them to participate in activities, including virtual reality and cinema (educational videos on science, history and space).

UNICEF supported a total of 863 Tawjiji¹⁷ students (52 per cent female) in camps with smartphones and internet data packages to support their access to the Learning Passport platform and remote education.

On 15 December, UNICEF launched an online winter market in collaboration with a Jordanian platform to spotlight social enterprises, including three enterprises from Azraq and Za'atari camps, to a wide international audience.

Social policy and social sector financing

In December, UNICEF provided winterization cash assistance in the amount of 25 JD (\$35) per child, to a maximum of 250 JD (\$353) per household, to a total of 30,017 children (50 per cent girls) from 6,759 vulnerable households.

UNICEF commenced preparatory activities related to the National Aid Fund (NAF) Takaful programme¹⁸ expansion, which aims to include 130,000 Jordanian households impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. The activities included the development of a new registration form, establishing the management information system for the registration process, and conducting trainings for enumerators and NAF staff on the new registration system. The registration processes started during the first week of December and will continue until mid-January 2021; thus far, 570,000 applications have been received.¹⁹

Data collection and analysis of secondary impacts on children and women

As part of UNICEF Jordan's Participatory Action Research (PAR) initiative, UNICEF has trained 311 young researchers (67 per cent female) aged 15-24 years old to design studies and carry out remote data collection. Information collected by the young researchers informs UNICEF Jordan's programme response efforts and provides insight on the impact of the pandemic from the perspectives of youth in Jordan. A total of 1,020 (60 per cent female) youth were engaged in online focus group discussions and 4,038 (74 per cent female) were surveyed. Youth programming was found to be effective in linking young people with access to earning opportunities through formal and informal training. The evaluation also identified areas for development.²⁰ UNICEF is working to improve youth programming based on the findings.

In partnership with the World Bank to implement surveys in Jordan, UNICEF explored the impact of COVID-19 on household welfare factors such as income, adjustments made concerning the purchase of food and non-food items, and access to key services. The report is expected to be completed in February 2021.

In December, UNICEF, along with the MOE, launched the publication of a [Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children](#), which identifies the profiles of out-of-school children in Jordan and those at risk of dropping out. Over 120 government officials, donor governments, and NGO and UN colleagues participated and discussed sector achievements and challenges around school dropout.

LEBANON

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

With WHO and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), UNICEF led the National RCCE Taskforce, coordinating the response of 40 partners (government counterparts, UN agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations and academic institutions). UNICEF provided technical guidance on the development and implementation of the RCCE Strategic Plan and the accountability scale-up work plan, a Message Bank and a monitoring and reporting mechanism, defining, developing and implementing preparedness and response RCCE activities. UNICEF also supported MoPH in the establishment of a call centre as a main COVID-19 communication platform for community needs. Frontline workers were trained on interpersonal communication skills and provided with guidance to address community concerns, managed referral to services, and conduct awareness-raising on healthy and protective behaviours.

Building RCCE capacity of 7,427 actors including frontline workers, government staff, community stakeholders, volunteers, scouts, youth groups, religious entities and private sector enterprises was performed with UNICEF coordination. As part of this, UNICEF trained municipalities across all eight governorates on the development of municipal response and action plans, quarantine guidelines, and on monitoring compliance of businesses with COVID-19 guidelines. Over 3.3 million people were reached with messages on COVID-19 protective and preventive behaviours, and information on access to services.

Co-leading the RCCE external communication task, UNICEF coordinated the development, production and

¹⁷ General Secondary Education Certificate Examination

¹⁸ Jordan's largest social protection programme providing complementary income support to vulnerable households.

¹⁹ 130,000 Jordanian households will be selected from the total number of applications received.

²⁰ The main areas of change and development identified from the PAR included the need to provide youth with certification/accreditation for their coursework or training; make improvements in delivery elements i.e hours and outreach; focus on engaging young people with disabilities; address the youth's knowledge gaps in mental health, climate action, digital literacy and other areas; enhance girls' participation and support in changing social norms; encourage a shift in perception of vocational programs; improve Nahno outreach to youth led initiatives; and enhance linkages between UNICEF programs.

dissemination of life-saving information around COVID-19. More than 40 videos, four awareness campaigns and IEC materials were disseminated through different media channels reaching on average four million people.

To counter the spread of misinformation, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, WHO and UNDP, launched the “Fact Check Lebanon” campaign in July, reaching over two million. The website and mobile application designed to disseminate objective, accurate information to counter rumours reaches around 10,000 people per day.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving IPC

A total of 9,500 IPC kits to families for home isolation were provided by UNICEF, containing disinfection materials and PPE sufficient for a family of five up to 15 days, and 5,300 household disinfection kits to households sharing facilities with affected individuals. The kits included guidance on home isolation and proper disinfection, and local volunteers trained by UNICEF provided COVID-19 awareness information.

UNICEF and MoPH set up a hotline for vulnerable people who tested positive to request IPC kits for home isolation. By the end of the reporting period, up to 2,000 requests were received per day, and local partners responded to them by distributing kits and sharing information within 48 hours.

IPC/PPE supplies for medical staff, cleaners and patients in 20 isolation centres and 12 Long-Term Care Facilities across Lebanon were provided by UNICEF. Additionally, UNICEF provided cleaning, laundry, wastewater, water and COVID-19 infectious solid waste collection and management services in the centres.

Continuity of health care services for women and children

Amidst a decrease in routine immunization due to lockdown restrictions and caregivers’ fear of accessing health facilities due to COVID-19, UNICEF conducted intensive community mobilization through social media initiatives, resulting in a renewed increase in children being vaccinated²¹. Also, UNICEF launched the second phase of the measles campaign and vaccinated, in collaboration with WHO and MoPH, reaching 230,202 children.

Over 350,000 PPE²² items to medical teams at the points of entry were provided by UNICEF, adding 189 Primary Health Care Centres (PHCCs), 586 dispensaries, 28 Qadaa offices, 450 nurseries, and four isolation centres, and distributed over one million fabric masks to a vulnerable population, along with information on their proper use, cleaning and disposal.

A total of 197,181 individuals at border crossing points were screened, tested and provided COVID-19 prevention and home isolation guidance by UNICEF. Out of the 11,604 children who crossed, 10,230 received missing measles and polio vaccines.

Infant and young child feeding (ICYF) practices were reviewed and contextualized by UNICEF in light of COVID-19, provided prenatal and breastfeeding support to 17,873 caregivers and reached over 55,000 people with information on access to Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health services. Also, UNICEF and partners developed IEC materials on sexual reproductive health targeting over 40,000 persons of reproductive age and provided technical support to the mental health psychosocial response action plan.

The establishment of the Nutrition sector was conducted by UNICEF who acts as its lead.

Supporting access to Education, Child Protection and GBV services

Mobilizing 3,607 youth to support the COVID response, UNICEF included the production and distribution of over 2,4 million fabric masks, head and shoe covers and protective gear, and preparation and distribution of 162,879 food parcels and hot meals to vulnerable families. UNICEF also supported youth in conducting WASH-related assessment, rehabilitation and installation of water tanks, as well as in conducting cleaning and public safety campaigns.

Guidelines were revised and tools for case management by UNICEF who focused on psycho-social support (PSS), safe space and community-based activities and adapted the implementation modality to continue reaching the most vulnerable through a blended face-to-face and remote modality. More than 400 frontline workers were trained on the revised modality to ensure at-scale quality responses, and, with support from health partners, around 100 staff providing case management were trained on the use of medical PPEs.

With partners, UNICEF reached 5,077 girls and boys with case management services, 6,758 with focused PSS, and 19,316 girls and women with safe space activities. Further, 16,639 girls and boys and 7,977 caregivers were reached with community-based PSS, and 101,838 children and caregivers were sensitized on COVID-19 to promote their health and psychosocial wellbeing. UNICEF also provided PSS to children and caregivers affected by COVID-19 and identified caretakers who were put on standby to care for separated children in case of isolation of the caregiver. To support families and children placed in isolation centres, UNICEF provided PSS kits and adolescent girls and women hygiene kits, and equipped centres with a play space for children. Regular CP/GBV assessments were conducted to better understand the challenges and needs of families and children while providing psychosocial support to children and their

²¹ 50,401 children under five were vaccinated with Measles, 67,161 were vaccinated with Penta 1, 057,595 were vaccinated with Penta 3, 291,903 with OPV, 72,207 with IPV and 177,893 with MMR at primary healthcare centres, dispensaries, land border points of entry and UNHCR facilities.

²² Including 35,496 boxes of gloves, 15,630 protective goggles, 1,920 N95 masks, 90,800 boxes of surgical masks, 2,874 Infrared thermometers, 71,120 bars of soap, 6,312 bottles of liquid soap, 9,526 bottles of bleach, 29,747 surgical gowns, and 93,410 bottles of hand sanitisers.

caregivers.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the Education Sector led by UNICEF conducted a Learning Readiness Rapid Assessment (LeaRA) with parents/caregivers of more than 25,000 refugee children enrolled in non-formal-education (NFE) activities to assess the access to IT devices and internet, the literacy of caregivers as well as preferred access pathways to distance learning. Results indicated that while 92 per cent have internet access, over 25,000 children require some form of learning support, and informed the design of NFE remote learning support to children.

During remote learning Phase 1 (April to July), UNICEF supported around 17,700 out-of-school children, including children with disabilities, who had initially registered in NFE, with distance/home-based learning and educational supplies, to engage and retain them in learning until regular programmes resume. UNICEF distributed PSS kits to 6,000 vulnerable households and provided PSS/wellbeing activities as needed. Key messages on health and wellbeing reached around 63,300 children and their caregivers, including children in NFE programmes and around 1,200 children benefitting from specialized services. Between September and December, UNICEF reached around 22,000 children with NFE phase 2, consisting of the regular NFE programmes implemented remotely, and including learning modules, PSS activities and life skills in addition to messages on COVID-19.

As part of the support to formal education, UNICEF provided textbooks and supplies across all levels in second shift schools and selected levels in first shift schools. UNICEF also provided all public schools with hygiene material to ensure safe re-opening including thermometers, masks, face shields, soap, hand sanitisers and bleach. Special educators and a paraprofessional team in the Inclusive Pilot schools started their visits in blended learning beginning November 2020. UNICEF also developed a Standard of Procedures (SOP) for preventive measures for school canteens.

Social policy and social sector financing

Given the deepening of the economic crisis, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF provided a one-off end-of-year cash grant to over 70,000 vulnerable children across Lebanon. The grant supported more than 15,000 Lebanese households identified as vulnerable under the Government's National Poverty Targeting Programme and more than 30,000 non-Lebanese households identified as vulnerable under UNICEF programmes, to protect their children's wellbeing in response to the COVID-19 exacerbated the economic crisis.

To support the most vulnerable children living with disabilities during the economic now exacerbated by COVID, UNICEF commenced new social assistance to approximately 1,000 children with disabilities receiving specialized services.

LIBYA

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

The nationwide behaviour assessment for an evidence-based response on RCCE aiming to understand COVID-19 related attitudes, knowledge and practices about transmission and prevention was concluded. The assessment targeted Libyans and non-Libyans and will inform the MoH's, the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) and subsequently the RCCE WG's upcoming campaigns.

In preparation for the new academic year, UNICEF supplied 25,000 colouring books creatively illustrating COVID-19 to school children, to be distributed through the NCDC.

During the reporting period, UNICEF launched the "Masks Protect Campaign" and "Draw Your Mask" contest, calling upon children to submit drawings that aim to raise awareness about the importance of wearing masks. The campaign rolled out across social media engaging 421,054 subscribers. Additionally, billboards displaying the same message were established in Sebha, Benghazi, Tripoli, Alkoms, Ajdabiya and Albayda.

An audience of 154,192 Facebook members were reached with video interviews about young Libyans sharing their experience with school closure and curfews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

Cleaning and disinfection kits were distributed to 11,491 people (40 per cent children and 31 per cent female) in camps for Internally Displaced People in Tripoli, Bani Walid, Tarhouna and other collective centres. The kits, which included soap and bleach, will support hygiene practices to limit the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

To ensure the safe reopening and return to schools, 172 schools were disinfected as well as water facilities benefitting 92,750 people and students.

In coordination with the education section, the NCDC and the Ministry of Education (MoE), IPC training was provided to 75 officers from education authorities on epidemiological frameworks and IPC protocols.

UNICEF provided 5,000 hand sanitisers and 500 personal protective equipment (PPE) including gloves and masks, to protect staff from COVID-19 infection in water institutions in Tripoli and Benghazi.

Continuity of health care for women and children

During the reporting period, UNICEF distributed the second batch of PPEs, 115,600 face masks and 17,040 bottles of hand sanitisers to 213 vaccination centres across 27 municipalities in the eastern region of the country. Also, PPEs for front line healthcare workers were dispatched to Zwara's and Suq Alkhamis' COVID-19 isolation and triage centres to ensure health worker safety for an estimated two months.

To support the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccine, 804 cold boxes and vaccine carriers were dispatched to the NCDC for 278 vaccination sites. In cooperation with the NCDC, the cold chain inventory was completed for all 700 vaccination centres nationwide, and analysis is ongoing to ascertain the gaps and develop an improvement plan. This exercise will help in facilitating the quality introduction of the COVAX vaccine in the country in 2021.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

In support of the safe reopening of schools, UNICEF in partnership with the MoE conducted a two-day workshop "Prevention and Control Measures in Schools" in Tripoli. The workshop was attended by 70 participants from the Ministries of Education and Social Affairs, including health officers from municipalities of western Libya, private school principals and Early Childhood Development personnel.

In collaboration with the MoE, 20,000 soap bars and PPEs including 92,000 face masks and 920 five-litre hand sanitisers, were distributed to 1,064 schools in 38 municipalities in the East.

UNICEF and its partners enrolled 267 new children (65 per cent girls) in non-formal education classes conducted through a blended distance and in-person modality in eastern Libya.

With the support of implementing partners, community-based mental health and psychosocial support were provided to 422 children (45 per cent girls), parents and caregivers in Tripoli and Misrata.

Training on gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation and referrals for survivors, including the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), was completed by 656 women and men, including UNICEF personnel and partners.

In Tripoli, Benghazi, Sebha and Zwara, 1,606 children (52 per cent girls) had access to safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse through child-friendly spaces, community centres managed by local implementing partners and Bayti centres; community centres that promote an integrated child protection-education approach to services for vulnerable children.

In Misrata, cash assistance was provided to 389 families displaced from Derna and Sirte.

On 3 January 2021, the unification of the exchange rate was enforced by the Central Bank of Libya devaluing the Libyan Dinar against the US Dollar and all major currencies, where the majority of basic goods, supplies and food items are imported. In a UNICEF survey, conducted in October 2020, 55 per cent of the respondents stated that their savings would be able to sustain their families for less than a month. UNICEF will closely monitor the situation on the ground to assess if cash value needs to be revised accordingly.

MOROCCO

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

Several communication initiatives and campaigns were conducted featuring adolescents, youth, key media figures, celebrities and influencers from various fields. The campaigns, conducted through TV, Radio, and the UNICEF Morocco social media channels and website, aimed at both preventing and raising awareness on the risks of COVID-19 and at strengthening children's and families' resilience. 23,510,000 people were reached with messages on prevention and access to services including adolescents and youth, children with disabilities and migrants, the latter of whom were also reached through community-based interventions in targeted regions.

The broadcast of hand-washing videos on the education TV channel and "Telmid" website was supported by UNICEF.

More than 2,136,000 people participated in COVID-19 engagement actions on UNICEF and our partners' social media channels. Of these, a total of 10,899 people have shared their concerns and ask questions through two-way communication put in place based mainly on UNICEF and partners social media channels.

To prevent secondary impacts of COVID-19 on adolescents and youth, UNICEF partnered with a child psychiatrist to develop a series of videos to prevent cyberviolence as well as to provide adolescents and youth and parents with tips to better deal with the psychological impacts of COVID-19.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

The Ministry of Health (MoH) was provided by UNICEF with essential IPC material (hydroalcoholic gel, gel wall dispensers and electronic thermometers) covering 1,255 priority primary healthcare facilities in six regions.

More than 64,000 people were provided with hygiene items and services including children without parental care, migrants, children on the move, single mothers and students in vulnerable areas to support mainstreaming of blended education mixing distance and face-to-face learning.

During this reporting period, more than 1,800 migrants, including families and children on the move, were provided with critical WASH supplies in hygiene kits distributed by UNICEF's partner civil society organizations.

Continuity of health care for women and children

With UNICEF's partners' technical support and advocacy, a ministerial circular was published by MoH covering the continuity of health care services for women and children in the context of COVID-19. Addressed to regional and central Health Ministry directors, the circular outlines directives on the adaptation of primary health care to respond to the COVID-19 epidemic and protect essential services; ensure continuity of care, particularly for maternal and child health at the facility level. The ensured access to care in remote and hard to reach areas with the support of local authorities and address contingency planning.

In 2020, 199 health workers participated in a 15-day e-course on nutrition care management and an additional 450 workers benefitted from online training in maternal, newborn and child health. These trainings were developed with support from UNICEF and delivered through the National Public Health School distance learning platform.

Almost four tons of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were procured and donated to MoH to contribute to their national PPE pool for the protection of health professionals

The national capacity for COVID-19 testing was supported by UNICEF through the procurement of 46,000 PCR tests.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

More than 1.1 million students were supported by UNICEF to access distance learning by procuring tablets for vulnerable children and supporting access by lower secondary students to Life Skills and Citizenship Education. Distance learning materials and video clips were provided through the MoE national distance learning platform "TelmidTice" and dedicated TV programs.

Through UNICEF and partners advocacy, 633 children have benefited from individual follow up and identification of needs thanks to cooperation and coordination between civil society organizations, the government and the judiciary.

As a result of UNICEF's advocacy efforts, the Public Prosecution Office has published instructions to all prosecutors of the Kingdom on how to implement children's rights during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through a partnership with the University Mohamed V and supported NGOs, more the 10,600 children, parents and primary caregivers, (including 1,216 children with disabilities, and more than 1,300 migrant families and children-on-the-move) received community-based mental health and psychosocial support to cope with fear and isolation and to better care for themselves and support their children.

6,420 parents of children with disabilities received capacity building on parenting and learning support through UNICEF's civil society partners.

More than 26,950 children were sustained by UNICEF with appropriate alternative care arrangements with the assistance of local civil society organizations.

A total of 1,663 migrant families and children on the move have been supported by UNICEF and its civil society with foodstuffs and sanitary kits.

The training of 68 civil society partners on GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors was supported by UNICEF during the reporting period.

Social policy and social sector financing

With UNICEF's support, Morocco made significant progress toward a comprehensive social protection system starting with the operationalization of the Integrated Public Policy for Social Protection. UNICEF also provided support for temporary cash transfers to vulnerable households affected by the pandemic, including children. Nearly six million households, which include 4.9 million children, received three emergency transfers by the Government (with an average of 100 USD per month per household).

Advocated for the waiver of water and electricity bills for three months for lower-income households was carried out by UNICEF which contributed to a decision by the Government to postpone payment of all utility bills until the end of the COVID-19 emergency.

More than 1,500 vulnerable families were provided with cash transfers through UNICEF direct support administered by its civil society partners.

Continued technical support to national partners in terms of social protection responses to COVID-19 was carried out by UNICEF, contributing to a high-level strategic discussion in Parliament on the main options for implementing and financing universal social coverage. This was particularly beneficial in terms of medical coverage and family allowances. This discussion was conducted with the collaboration of WB, WHO, and the African Development Bank (AFD).

Data collection and analysis of secondary impacts on children and women

In 2020 UNICEF supported the High Commission for Planning (HCP) on evidence generation related to the impact of COVID-19 on households, with a focus on children. In this regard, two round household survey were conducted by phone on the socio-economic and behavioural impact of the COVID-19, including the impact of government cash transfers for the most vulnerable.

Based on data collected through the surveys, a report on the social, economic and psychological impact of COVID-19 on children was produced and widely disseminated.

In collaboration with the National Observatory of Human Development (ONDH), a study of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) was conducted. It includes a specific chapter on the impact of COVID-19 on the living conditions of the NEETs.

The ONDH was supported by UNICEF in producing a modelling study on the impact of COVID-19 on child monetary poverty in Morocco.

In collaboration with the National School of Public Health, a study protocol on the needs of migrant children in access to healthcare, including in connection with COVID-19, was approved in October 2020.

With UNICEF's support, the HCP established a platform for rapid and remote surveys to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the impact of COVID-19 (and similar crises in future) in Morocco.

OMAN

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

Oman's 1.7 million high-risk and hard-to-reach expatriate workers, many of whom do not speak Arabic or English, were intended for when UNICEF developed a risk communications strategy. Messages were disseminated in 10 languages via SMS text notifications and trusted community influencers.

The inter-ministerial RCCE Committee was supported by UNICEF in developing and implementing a parenting communication strategy. The strategy addressed the secondary impacts of COVID-19 by providing parents with access to reliable information. It complemented government messaging on COVID-19 prevention and containment measures, as well as messaging on overall health, including mental health and nutrition (including breastfeeding). The Committee created a hashtag – #ForOmansChildren – to promote related content.

The Committee also started drafting a broad social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategy which addresses violence against children, the inclusion of children with disabilities, and early childhood development, as well as the impact COVID-19, has had in these three areas.

At the height of the lockdown in Oman, UNICEF launched a "parents4parents" social media campaign. Over two months, parents from all walks of life in Oman shared short video clips directed towards other parents encouraging the COVID-19 response and recovery phases, with the overall aim of promoting positive parenting.

Messages were developed and disseminated messages for the public via UNICEF social media channels, and amplified government messaging. Particular attention was paid to addressing misinformation and dispelling rumours. UNICEF's messages were also amplified via government and private sector channels, including radio and TV. UNICEF Oman has a monthly reach of more than 235,000 people through its social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn).

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

The government was supported by UNICEF in drawing up guidelines for the return to Early Child Development Centres and nurseries. The work was guided by a risk-based approach to maximize the educational, developmental and health benefits for children, teachers, staff, and the wider community while minimizing the potential for an increase of COVID-19 cases in the community. UNICEF is now supporting the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) in implementing the guidelines.

UNICEF worked with the MoSD and other partners to ensure the proper functioning of the children's hotline and the case management system (CMS) within the COVID-19 context. UNICEF provided online training for social workers on how to conduct remote case management during COVID-19. UNICEF also established and is operating a communications platform to provide up-to-date information to social workers.

Drawing on assets developed by UNICEF, the Ministry of Education developed guidelines on providing psychosocial counselling in schools during COVID-19. The ministry also used UNICEF assets to develop a manual on online safety for parents, teachers and students.

UNICEF partnered with Oman Technology Fund (OTF) to organize the COVID-19 Youth Technology Challenge. The Challenge empowered young people in Oman and across the region to design technological solutions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their lives by improving remote access to quality education, learning essential skills, and decent jobs.

Social policy and social sector financing

The impact of COVID-19 and the drop in oil prices has caused a severe economic slowdown in Oman. The government is implementing structural reforms and expenditure cuts that have the potential to impact the provision of social services for children. UNICEF, therefore, initiated a Fiscal Space Analysis (FSA) to identify potential financing sources for the social sectors that include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Islamic Finance, PPP/privatization and subsidy reforms. UNICEF started this work by conducting an Economic Briefing for Social Sector Spending in Oman. The FSA will offer the government policy options for addressing public finance barriers for children to enable them to have access to quality services and to reach their potential. In addition to the FSA, UNICEF is building the capacity of technical staff in the key ministries engaged in public financing for children (PF4C) with training on the principles, objectives and tools of PF4C. The training will also allow UNICEF to establish partnerships across ministries working on PF4C.

SUDAN

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

Communication and Advocacy continued on the part of UNICEF to promote the safety of families and children during the pandemic with videos and posts on various digital platforms. The content was produced to encourage physical distancing, wear face masks, address stigma and mental health and continuity of learning to ensure children are protected from violence, early marriage and exploitation.

A dedicated Coronavirus/COVID-19 information centre was created on the website to provide accurate information and address rumours. As result, UNICEF Sudan's Facebook page and website were both selected as a trusted source for COVID-19 information as part of Facebook's global campaign to combat misinformation.

A total of 75,985 people were reached by UNICEF via Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials.

217 community figures were trained to lead to 74,474 individuals to engage in COVID-19 prevention discussions.

The Health Promotion Unit of the Ministry of Health, with the coordination of UNICEF and WHO, completed the review and update of the 'Safe Return Protocol'. This process was undertaken with representation from a variety of different sectors including line ministries, INGOs and local NGOs. The protocol was then re-branded and named 'Behavior Change for Prevention of Covid-19 Protocol'.

20 million people reached with awareness-raising messages on COVID-19 via SMS across three mobile networks (Zain, Sudani and MTN).

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

A total of 488,157 people in COVID-19 high-risk sites (253,341 females) were reached with WASH IPC supplies, COVID-19 focused hygiene promotion and sanitation and water supply facilities. The supported individuals included the visitors and staff of isolation/health centres, IDPs, refugees, rural/urban population, entry point arrivals, school children, prisoners and health/hygiene promotion officers as follows: a) 40,578 patients and medical staff in 73 isolation centres/quarantines and health centres were supported with WASH services including IPC supplies and rehabilitation/connection of water, sanitation and handwashing facilities; b) 71,750 people in COVID-19 high-risk areas including crowded IDPs sites, emergency areas and arrivals entry points have access to additional expanded basic water facilities and distribution systems through the construction/rehabilitation of water supply and distribution systems and provision of operation and maintenance and water chlorination services to facilitate community physical distancing; c) 8,750 entry point arrivals and COVID-19 high-risk areas were supported with sanitation package through emergency sanitation facilities interventions; d) 281,828 IDPs, South Sudanese Refugees, rural/urban population, entry points arrivals and prisoners were supported with COVID-19 focused hygiene promotion with a focus on physical distancing and handwashing with soap, installation of handwashing facilities and distribution of IPC supplies including, handwashing soaps, face masks, hand sanitisers, water jerricans, chlorine supplies and IEC materials and e) 93,377 schoolchildren and staff were supported during grade eight exams with COVID-19 prevention-focused hygiene promotion, erection of handwashing stations, disinfection of the exam classrooms, distribution of handwashing soap and hand sanitisers.

A video and press release documented UNICEF Sudan's procurement and shipping of 14.25 metric tonnes of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items to protect health personnel and essential workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 response across Sudan.

Continuity of health care for women and children

The service of 3,000 health facilities was maintained for the provision of lifesaving health and nutrition services while at the same time supporting the COVID-19 response.

National health guidelines were developed and implemented which became critical to maintaining essential services. These emphasized the prioritization of high impact health and nutrition services and adherence to mitigation measures to protect health workers and their communities from COVID-19.

With partners, UNICEF implemented a nationwide polio campaign, mass measles (LLIN) distribution campaign in 12 states, polio (IPV) campaign in four states and yellow fever campaign in the White Nile (WN) in addition to routine H&N services, amid the pandemic.

With partners, UNICEF reached 8.2 million (97.2 per cent) of children under five with poliovirus immunization and reached 9.2 million people with LLIN distribution.

UNICEF maintained stocks of vaccines for children, including for vaccination campaigns. This included 9.6 million doses of the oral polio vaccine, 3.6 million doses of the tuberculosis vaccine, 4.5 million doses of measles immunization and 1.9 million doses of IPV vaccines.

Nutrition services continued with more than 1,500 community management of acute malnutrition outpatient therapeutic programme (CMAM OTP) sites, screening 3.5 million children U5 were for malnutrition and reaching 235,000 SAM children, 92 per cent of which were discharged as cured.

Through both community and facility platforms, 722,646 mothers have received counselling for optimal infant and young child feeding practices.

Approximately 270 Health workers from Khartoum and 25 from Al Jazeera state were provided with technical support from UNICEF-organized trainings on COVID-19 prevention and 21,564 mothers of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) affected children were trained on mother-led mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening.

[Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services](#)

An interview was published explaining how UNICEF is supporting the Federal and State Ministries of Education in Sudan to ensure continuity of learning and the safe reopening of schools.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development announced a National Plan for the release, family tracing and reunification of children as young as five studying and living in Khalwas (Quranic boarding schools) across the 18 states of Sudan. UNICEF welcomed this with a [press release](#).

In collaboration with CSOs and government partners, the MoSW and Sudan State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW), UNICEF has supported 11,675 separated and unaccompanied minors (661 girls) to be reunified with their families in Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, White Nile and eastern states. 82,223 people (46 per cent girls, 42 per cent boys and 7 per cent women) have received family and individual-based PSS services through mobile teams and remote PSS. UNICEF in collaboration with the Sudanese Family and Child Protection Unit (FCPUs) administration and the law enforcement authorities was able to release 1,172 children (4 per cent girls) from FCPUs in all the states in Sudan. Around 6,691 children (8 per cent girls) living and working on the streets, mainly in Khartoum, received food and other basic services in collaboration with the MoSW and SCCW in the states and civil society organizations which are playing a major role in providing such services. GBV prevention and response services were provided to 843 GBV victims (26 per cent girls, 16 per cent boys and 36 per cent women) in collaboration with the MoSW, MoH and FCPUs.

The Ministry of Education in Sudan, with UNICEF support, developed protocols for running safe operations in schools amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the renovation of several school water and sanitation facilities was conducted as well as providing supplies such as masks and tents were distributed to ensure the safety of students and education stakeholders upon school reopening.

Around 214,200 students were able to continue their learning through access to review lessons for Grade 8 & Grade 11 through remote learning, and dedicated sessions in sign language for 512 children with hearing impairments. Over 30,500 previously out of school children (47 per cent girls) accessed education in schools and 203,253 emergency-affected children received adequate educational materials.

[Social policy and social sector financing](#)

The Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MoLSD) in Sudan, with the support of UNICEF and partners, rolled out a temporary social assistance programme during the three-month COVID-19 lockdown period. The programme included food and hygiene assistance for families living in peri-urban areas of Khartoum and cash cards for families across Sudan. By the end of November 2020, the programme reached 570,000 families with food and hygiene assistance and 140,000 families with cash assistance. UNICEF continues to facilitate lessons learning and knowledge generation by reviewing MoLSD's social protection response to COVID-19. The results of the reviews are used to inform UNICEF's future capacity-building support to MoLSD and partners.

Financing was secured by UNICEF for a new government-led cash transfer programme in Kassala and Red Sea states. The "Mother and Child Cash Transfers for the First 1,000 Days of Life" is a joint collaboration between UNICEF and the MoLSD with an initial target of 100,000 pregnant women whose children under two years are vulnerable to acute malnutrition due to increasing poverty and food insecurity. The programme uses innovative cash plus approach where cash assistance is combined with knowledge and skills as well as linkages with services related to the first 1,000 days of life including health, nutrition, water and sanitation.

SYRIA

[Risk Communication and Community Engagement \(RCCE\)](#)

In the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF has been spearheading an increasingly stepping up Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), as key to containing the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial focus on rapid response through strategy formulation and messaging has been shifting to strengthening effective coverage through inter-agency coordination and evidence-based programming. The main priorities throughout the reporting period consisted of a) improving knowledge and practice of preventive behaviours, through community system strengthening and social media; b) improving health-seeking behaviours, through linkages between communities and the Health System/Health Care Providers; and c) generating demand and implementing communication campaign for COVID-19 vaccines introduction.

To date, almost 14 million people have been reached through RCCE activities and messaging on the prevention of COVID-19 and access to services. Additionally, 835,473 people have been engaged on COVID-19 through RCCE actions, such as on community-based dialogues and key influencer engagements; establishment and expansion of community influencers' networks (religious platforms, community/natural leaders, adolescent and youth networks). Additionally, over 4,500 community workers and volunteers have been trained on COVID-19 RCCE through awareness-raising, social mobilization, and community participation.

In northwest Syria, given the rapid spread of COVID-19, UNICEF, jointly with WHO, implementing partners and cluster partners (e.g., Food Security and Livelihood, Early Recovery, Protection, WASH and other clusters) developed and implemented an intersectoral approach under the COVID-19 taskforce. UNICEF's RCCE intersectoral plan was to ensure proper risk communication and community engagement measures in the governorates of northwest Syria.

UNICEF and WHO are working closely with MoH to develop the 2021 RCCE response plan engaging more than 10 ministries and counterparts, in-line with findings and recommendations from the COVID-19 response intra-action review. The Demand Generation and Communication (DGC) component of the global COVAX Facility for COVID-19 vaccines deployment is being supported through Readiness Assessment and Technical Assistance planning, including recruitment of designated consultant and a media agency for DGC plan development, knowledge management, capacity building, and campaign implementation.

[Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\) supplies and improving infection and prevention control \(IPC\)](#)

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, UNICEF strengthened IPC measures in communities, schools and health care facilities. Of note, UNICEF supported the distribution of soap as part of the WFP food distributions. As a result, 3.5 million people in vulnerable communities, especially in the households headed by women and other groups with limited or no income source distributions, benefited from the provision of soap alongside key risk-communication messages as part of monthly food distribution, demonstrating value for money with equity.

Increased water quantities through emergency water trucking to the most vulnerable communities continued to be delivered by UNICEF, including areas in East Ghouta, Al Hol camp and Al-Hasakeh city, five camps in northern rural Aleppo, and Al Zhouria in Homs (more than 2,600m³ per day).

In health care settings, UNICEF supported the light rehabilitation of WASH facilities in 17 health care facilities, including three isolation centres in Al-Hol, Areesheh, and Mahmudli camps in northeast Syria. Also, UNICEF distributed much need IPC items to 1,000 facilities, including hospitals, health centres, and isolation centres.

In schools, UNICEF supported the national exams by providing exam and accommodation centres with cleaning and sterilizing items and water trucking. In light of schools reopening, UNICEF, under the School Reopening Framework's Implementation Plan continued to support the delivery of soap, chlorine bottles, and IPC kits to 11,500 schools. Additionally, 55 schools in East Ghouta were supported with water trucking.

In northeast Syria, as the spread of the COVID-19 continues, in Al-Hol camp, UNICEF and partners keep supporting infection prevention and control (IPC) measures by implementing IPC protocols and providing training to focal points, ensuring a clean and safe environment for 44,760 Internally displaced persons in Al-Hol through disinfecting all communal facilities including kitchens, toilets, and showers, in addition to the camp gate, and garbage bins.

In northwest Syria, UNICEF WASH has taken multiple preventive and preparedness measures against COVID-19. Firstly, reaching at least 1.7 million people with hygiene supplies such as soaps and hygiene kits to promote improved hygiene behaviour as well as supporting the increase of per capita water supply from 25 to 35 litres for 1.85 million people to support additional handwashing and cleaning, as a preventive measure against COVID-19. Finally, UNICEF supported the restoration of 52 Health Care Facilities (HCFs) in Aleppo and Idleb that benefitting some 609,380 people.

[Continuity of health care services for women and children](#)

During the reporting period, UNICEF and partners successfully responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by a) supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the application for GAVI proposal for vaccines; b) distributing more than 26 million PPE items; c) supporting 1,410 health workers and community volunteers on the use of PPE and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures; d) supporting the establishment of a field hospital in Al-Fayhaa Sports City in Damascus to serve COVID-19 patients in need of oxygen treatment only, to keep intensive care units accessible for critical cases and e) procuring 30,000 rapid tests for Covid-19 and 70 oxygenators.

Positive achievements continued to be witnessed in primary health care (PHC), a total of 1,787,419 free medical consultations were delivered to women and children in the Whole of Syria through 120 fixed points and mobile teams in 14 governorates reaching 99 per cent of the planned target.

Despite the challenges with containment measures for COVID-19, UNICEF continued the provision of nutrition and health care services during the reporting period, reaching 111,385 caregivers of children younger than old years old, with messages on breastfeeding, IYCF and healthy diets through national communication campaigns.

Through UNICEF support in 2020, over one million children under-the-age-of-five, including 228,100 pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) were screened for acute malnutrition, reaching 90 per cent of the annual target. Around 623,200 of them (56 per cent children and 40 per cent PLWs) were provided with micronutrients. As a result of screening activities, more than 15,596 children were identified and treated for severe acute malnutrition SAM.

UNICEF continued playing a significant role in preventive interventions for women and children to improve Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) with a focus on complementary feeding and promotion of diet diversity, while supporting COVID-19 preventive measures, reaching over one million caregivers, including PLWs. COVID-19 related messages were included in the IYCF communications since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, which started in March 2020.

[Supporting access to continuous education, child protection and GBV services](#)

Due to COVID-19, all in-person learning was stopped in mid-March, resulting in many children facing more than a six-month gap in their education. Due to restrictions on the movement of supplies, many children were not able to access or receive learning material at home. Additionally, Syria's most vulnerable children do not have internet access, personal computers, TVs or even radio at home, amplifying the effects of existing learning inequalities.

Throughout the reporting year, UNICEF implemented safe school protocol for COVID-19 prevention and control in 10,164 schools across Syria. 1,290,740 children benefited from the provision of COVID-19 school safe protocol sanitization materials through the provision of soaps, chlorine, cleaning kits etc. Additionally, 9,809 children and education personnel were provided with protective equipment, including masks, gloves, thermometers, etc. To ensure implementation of COVID-19 precaution measures, technical support was provided on developing school safety protocol: 81 educational staff received professional development on implementing school safe protocol, also, 5,443 admin and health staff received training on COVID-19 prevention measures, this included training of trainer trainers from School health directorate to train MoE staff at the governorate level.

UNICEF worked to ensure Curriculum B (CB) children retention in formal education and prevent dropping out of school through conducting summer classes for 74,137 CB children. CB summer classes were conducted by MoE and funded by UNICEF to fill the educational gap that COVID-19 presented. The CB summer classes gave the children a second chance to catch up on learning that they may have missed during the lockdown. School health supervisors conducted daily visits to 1,237 schools to ensure the implementation of COVID-19 precaution measures.

To strengthen resilience, UNICEF invested in enhancing the capacity of CB ministerial and technical committees which contained representatives from seven directorates at MoE central levels and related departments at the DoE governorate level. As part of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF enhanced the collaboration between the members of the committees and improve the quality of their technical inputs for decision making. UNICEF shared resources like UNICEF MENARO Teacher Training Program (TTP) that contains self-learning materials for teachers concerning school health and protection, and other pedagogical materials related to accelerated learning which ensured the quality of the committee's deliverables such as the CB teacher training manual and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In addition, remedial lessons were provided to 5,950 children, to compensate for the educational loss in public schools. Through various teaching pathways, 4,500 children were supported with distance or home-based learning.

As part of UNICEF's comprehensive response, 760,000 children were provided with COVID-19 awareness materials, including; 500,000 colouring books and 260,000 memory games. The awareness materials were developed by UNICEF and they were distributed in partnership with WFP in Northeast Syria to help ensure that families and children receive COVID-19 information that is accurate and supportive.

In child protection, 10,847 children were reached by UNICEF partners with remote psychosocial support services (PSS); 5,435 parents were reached with remote (and face-to-face) COVID-19 related PSS services. Additionally, 344 children benefitted from alternative care services during COVID-19. Throughout the reporting period despite the restrictions, 1882 UNICEF and partner NGO staff were trained on GBV and PSEA.

Moreover, UNICEF trained 147 case managers working with partner NGOs in Quneitra and Daraa, rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Tartous, Latakia, Aleppo, Deir Ezzor and Qamishli on implementing remote child protection case management services and provided them with practical steps and tools to follow up the cases during COVID19. The training focused on prioritizing cases that needed immediate intervention and continuous follow-up and introduced modalities of remote case management. The training oriented case managers on COVID-19 and means of protection of oneself and others and provided them with basic PSS, prevention and management of SEA, GBV and how to deal with unaccompanied children during COVID-19.

[Supporting access to social protection and promoting adolescent participation and development](#)

Since the beginning of the outbreak of the pandemic, 91,262 children (47 per cent girls) in 69,689 households (HHs) were supported through an emergency Cash Transfer for Basic Needs (CTBN) programme under COVID-19 response. In 2020, UNICEF also vertically expanded this programme by increasing the amount of the payments by 60 per cent to help vulnerable families navigate financial hardships resulting from an economic crisis and COVID-19 related restrictions.

In collaboration with WFP, as part of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF has provided vouchers for hygiene items for 45,821 vulnerable children (48 per cent girls) living in 33,750 HHs in eight governorates. The vouchers were in the form of top-ups to the ongoing WFP voucher for food programme.

As part of social protection interventions and in cooperation with the WASH programme, UNICEF supported 9,509 families with children with severe disabilities in the governorates of Aleppo, Al-Hassakeh, Homs, Rural Damascus, Latakia and Tartous.

During the reporting period, as part of the COVID-19 response, Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) activities were conducted widely to disseminate messages about preventive measures against the pandemic, including sanitizing, physical distancing and the importance of wearing masks.

More than 170,141 young people (10 to 24 years of age, 52 per cent girls) participated in different forms of engagement activities, including a) sterilizing shelters and school, cleaning streets and public places b) posting stickers on bread bags, grocery shops, schools and public spaces with the messages about the importance of physical distancing and using PPE; c) awareness-raising campaigns in coordination with WASH, health and C4D programs and d) supporting the youth innovative ideas, etc. One of the innovative ideas included the project which involved a group of young people, which participated in designing and writing a colouring storybook with simplified messages targeting children in rural areas and a total of 225,000 copies is being printed to be distributed in all governorates.

THE STATE OF PALESTINE

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

In 2020, UNICEF, in cooperation with the MoH, WHO, and other public and private sector partners established a national task force to assist in the government's efforts in preventing and mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in the State of Palestine. This task force is leading the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Plan. Throughout the year, the RCCE team continued developing messages on COVID-19 prevention and to correct misinformation. These messages were shared by UNICEF, the UN and over 30 partners across multiple channels and platforms, including social media platforms, radio networks, and national TV stations. It also included 32 billboards, 2.5 million SMS messages targeting marginalized and high-risk communities, five animated children's TV shows, and over 100,000 risk communication brochures. To date, COVID-19 posts have been shared on the UNICEF State of Palestine social media platforms that received some 42.1 million content views and 3,456,000 people digitally engaged.

Under the safe back-to-school operations, UNICEF cooperated with the MoE to produce and disseminate three social media videos and TV spots, print and distribute 3,000 posters, and develop the back-to-school protocol.

Two online stories were published to document the UNICEF response to ensure a safe return to school amidst the pandemic. The first story was on UNICEF [support for conducting Grade 12 general examinations](#), and the second was on [the safe back to school support to the Palestinian MoE](#).

In partnership with civil society organizations (CSOs), UNICEF designed and published 50 interactive social media posts on Facebook containing questions on people's knowledge and attitudes towards COVID-19. These posts received over 200,000 views and 19,000 engagements.

A total of 10 community-based CSOs and 530 youth were trained on COVID-19 preventative measures, tracking and reporting rumours.

Eight community committees across eight governorates were formed and trained on successful approaches to reporting and combatting COVID-related stigmas.

In the Gaza Strip, UNICEF distributed communication hygiene-related flyers in 18 quarantine centres, benefiting 2,040 individuals. All these flyers were age and gender-sensitive, 1,130 of these flyers were male-customized, 750 female-customized and 160 were children-customized. Furthermore, UNICEF distributed more than 2,000 WASH-related posters and flyers in Kufur Aqab town in East Jerusalem.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

In the Gaza Strip, UNICEF distributed 86,520 water bottles (1.5 litres each) in 18 quarantine centres, benefitting 4,587 individuals (3 per cent girls, 4 per cent boys and 34 per cent women).

UNICEF distributed hygiene kits to 18 quarantine centres in the Gaza Strip, benefitting 2,040 individuals (8 per cent children and 37 female).

Also, in the Gaza Strip, UNICEF distributed e-voucher top-ups for redeeming hygiene items at local shops for 18,014 families, benefitting 108,084 individuals. UNICEF also provided e-voucher top-ups for 4,496 vulnerable families benefitting 26,967 individuals in the West Bank. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the total number of persons provided with e-vouchers reached were 135,051.

A total of 850 hygiene kits were provided by UNICEF to schools in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. These hygiene kits were distributed to Grade 12/Tawjihi examination halls benefitting 78,000 students.

Quarantine centres in the Gaza Strip were provided with 200 bedding kits by UNICEF, benefiting a total of 214,597 people. Each bedding kit included four winter blankets, six pillows, four mattresses and one mat.

Both medical and waste management supplies were supplied by UNICEF to 50 quarantine centres in West Bank to ensure safe and proper waste management during the COVID-19 emergency response. The number of beneficiaries thus far has reached approximately 18,711 (2 per cent girls, 4 per cent boys and 25 per cent women).

Thus far, 5,000 health professionals and 73,682 people benefited from the COVID-19 medical supplies delivered, across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This includes the delivery of ICU equipment to support and equip 22 units throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip public hospitals. These included 65 Oxygen Concentrators with accessories, 57 Intensive Care Unit equipment including monitors, bed mattresses, ventilators, infusions pumps, syringe pumps, 1,402 testing kits, 374,858 items of personal protection equipment, 1,000 IPCs items and 197,450 items of medical drugs including micronutrient supplements.

Continuity of health care services for women and children

UNICEF through local partners in the Gaza Strip supported the provision of maternal and child health care services focusing on high-risk women. During the reporting period, 39,020 pregnant and lactating women and children under five received ante and post-natal care and 197,381 pregnant and lactating women received Tele-counselling sessions on infant and young child feeding during COVID-19.

In the Gaza Strip, UNICEF through a local partner provided treatment for 196 children with severe acute malnutrition.

Supporting access to Education, Child Protection and GBV services

In East Jerusalem, 400 secondary students (63 per cent girls) continued to receive remote remedial education.

Psycho-social and protection services, including case management, group and individual counselling, life skills education, child-parent interaction and expressive arts, allowed UNICEF to reach 12,756 people (in the Gaza Strip 23 per cent children and 19 per cent adults, with 6 per cent adults in the West Bank)

UNICEF provided 1,722 adults (21 per cent girls and 16 per cent boys) including access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse.²³ Furthermore, 426 service providers (62 per cent women) were trained on remote psychosocial counselling. UNICEF also provided 330 children without parental or family care with alternative care services.

UNICEF procured 3,496 tablets with offline self-paced and self-learning packages developed by the MoE to enable vulnerable children in Grades 1 to 4, who do not have access to the internet, to access remote learning.

With UNICEF's support, 49,934 MoE staff (60 per cent female) in 2,250 PA schools were trained to operationalize the "COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools Protocol". School health committees were established in 190 schools and 2,826 committee members were trained on how to develop and implement school-based action plans/initiatives to prevent the spread of infections.

The MoE, in coordination with UNICEF, was provided with a Zoom account to support the training of school counsellors on how to provide mental health and psychosocial support for children.

TUNISIA

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

In close coordination with the Ministry of Health and WHO, UNICEF supported the development and dissemination of 120 communication materials on topics ranging from virus transmission and preventive measures to health and education continuity and the protection of children during the pandemic, reaching over 7.5 million people. This was made possible in partnership with the private sector and with funding including contributions received from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the German Development Bank and Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (KfW/BMZ).

To date, UNICEF Tunisia social media platforms have reached a total of 33 million impressions with the various communication material developed within the country (Facebook 27,738,969 impressions, Instagram 5,076,485, Twitter 39,965, LinkedIn 25,402, website 44,512 user sessions).

²³ Whilst the result is reported against the PSEA indicator, the reported calls were about physical or sexual violence that children experienced but which were not committed under the PSEA accountability (ie, alleged perpetrators were not humanitarians). Callers also report other child protection and gender-based violence concerns, as well as anxiety and psychological stress linked to COVID-19 pressures.

UNICEF partnered with the Scouts Association to carry out community engagement activities across the country, raising awareness among the wider public and in some of the most remote communities on preventive measures against COVID-19. Activities have so far been carried out in 24 regions, reaching approximately 100,000 people and about 80 schools, with the partnership being funded through USAID.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

UNICEF mobilized over \$8 million to support safer operations and the continuity of basic social services. This included the procurement of a) 83 tons of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to support frontline health workers (funding including Japan, Sweden and USAID); b) 100,000 COVID-19 PCR tests; c) 62 water tanks for health clinics; d) 30,564 individual WASH kits for children and staff of centres hosting children; e) 624 institutional WASH kits for the disinfection of the same facilities (with funds from USAID); f) 11,030 non-contact thermometers for schools, preschools and health care centres (with funding including Japan, Sweden and USAID) and g) 1,500 sprayers to support the disinfection of schools (through funds from Italy). Key results include the continuity of basic services for all centres covered as well as a successful return to school in presence of over 2.1 million children following the re-opening of all public schools nationwide in September 2020.

Continuity of health care for women and children

At the end of 2020, the Ministry of Health validated a UNICEF-supported assessment of the routine immunization cold chain, undertaken in 2019. Identifying important challenges for the quality of the vaccination cold-chain, including the quality of equipment and human resource capacity, the data became instrumental in national planning for the COVID-19 vaccine introduction, jointly supported by UNICEF and WHO.

Using funds from Japan raised in 2020, UNICEF has started responding to the most urgent needs in the cold chain by including approximately 200 pharmaceutical refrigerators and a refrigerated truck for vaccine distribution. Whilst directly contributing to the national strategy for the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccine, these efforts are undertaken with a view of strengthening the overall immunization system and ensure the quality and continuity of routine immunization.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

As part of the national "Back-to-School" campaign in September 2020, thanks to UNICEF support, 2.1 million children and approximately 300,000 educational staff have access to information on COVID-19 preventive measures and educational institutions' health protocols. With funding from USAID, UNICEF printed 1 million flyers, 150,000 posters for classrooms (one poster per classroom), and 42,000 copies of COVID-19 protocols (early identification, tracing and case referral) for all 13,500 public schools, day-care centres and Kottebs nationwide.

Responding to urgent requests from the Ministry of Education to support with essential preventive and disinfection equipment for schools nationwide both during the one-month national exams period in May 2020 and the official school reopening in September 2020, UNICEF played a key role among partners by being almost the sole immediate player.

Since September 2020, over 2 million children are attending school at a 50 per cent schedule. UNICEF provided technical support for the adaptation of all curricula and programmes from primary to upper secondary, contributed to training 60 inspectors and teachers in the production of TV-based educational material, and supported 150 disadvantaged children with refurbished ICT devices to access online education opportunities.

Contributing to the advocacy for the liberation of children deprived of their liberty during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF yielded the result with the early release of 86 children.

Undertaking a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on parents' and children's mental health, UNICEF supported the establishment of a hotline for psychosocial support to families, responding to increased risks of violence during the pandemic: between April and October 2020, the line received 1,804 calls concerning children.

The development of SOPs for case management and coordination during crises situations was supported by UNICEF with the organization of two events by the Ministry of Women in November 2020 aimed at raising audiences' awareness of the effects of COVID-19 on the realization of children's rights in Tunisia.

Social policy and social sector financing

Technical advocacy, in partnership with UNICEF and international partners, to scale up the national social safety nets programme during the first wave of COVID-19 (March-May 2020) contributed to the following mitigation measures: a) temporary top-up cash transfers to over 1 million households and b) publication in May 2020 of two decrees removing the threshold of a maximum of three children/household eligible for support and including all children under-the-age-of-5, previously exempt from support.

UNICEF undertook an analysis on the impact of the COVID-19-related general lockdown on child poverty, estimating a sharp increase in child monetary poverty from 21 per cent to between as high as 29 per cent by the end of 2020. To help mitigate the negative socio-economic impacts of the crisis on children, the KfW/BMZ provided an €11.8 million donation in August 2020 to sponsor the social protection system with the Ministry of Social Affairs: 307,650 school-aged children from poor households received funding to their back to school in 2020. This also included 50,000 0-5 year-old-children in December 2020 as part of an eight-month programme. In total, approximately 10 per cent of all children in

Tunisia were reached with UNICEF/KfW top-up cash transfers in 2020. Already, this policy advocacy dialogue has mobilized over USD6M for additional social protection measures targeting children through the national budget.

YEMEN

Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)

In partnership with WHO, the Ministry of Public Health and Population's (MoPHP) Health Education Centre (HEC), and other government and NGO partners, UNICEF led the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) pillar of the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan in Yemen.

Mass Media interventions through television and radio flashes, public service announcements, and discussion and phone-in programmes were aired on 18 television channels and 44 radio stations across the country, reaching over 16.5 million people.

A total of 4.4 million people were reached directly with COVID-19 messages by December 2020 through interpersonal communication interventions adhering to COVID-19 prevention protocols supported by social media and mass media interventions. 713,549 house-to-house visits and mother-to-mother (M2M) Club sessions were conducted.

Working with the Ministry of Endowment, Imams facilitated sessions in over 5,000 mosques, especially during Friday (Jumma Prayers), regularly reaching about 3.6 million people with messages on protection from COVID-19 and how to care for an infected person. These religious leaders, mostly female religious (morshydat), also reached 1.6 million people in community gatherings and women social events to sensitize on COVID-19 prevention practices.

Religious leaders, community volunteers, and M2M club members created over 11,000 WhatsApp groups to ensure dialogue with community members and motivate people to adopt COVID-19 prevention behaviours.

Health facilitators, who are central to the education system, were trained focal points to guide schools in the COVID-19 RCCE interventions aimed at students in school and parents at the community level reaching 180,000 people through school-based activities, home visits, and community awareness sessions.

Reaching an estimated 8.5 million people through 451 vehicles mounted with megaphones, and public address systems reinforced key COVID-19 messages, particularly in communities with poor access to mass media. This UNICEF strategy maximized the reach of messages and reduced the possible spread of infection.

Strengthening the complaints and feedback mechanisms to enable accountability for the COVID-19 response, UNICEF with health experts and volunteers addressed questions and concerns on COVID-19 for over 40,692 people, and the MoPHP hotlines and phone-in programmes aired on community radio stations. Key questions from these systems and other monitoring and tracking tools expedited the development of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) booklet to aid engagement and management of rumours and misconceptions by frontline community-based resources.

Two rounds of a Rapid Assessment study were conducted in April and July 2020 on COVID-19 knowledge, attitudes, risk perceptions, and behaviour adoption. These guided development and regular revision of location-specific response strategies as well the development of communication materials and tools. Other planned rounds of the assessment stalled due to the increased focus on responding to the Polio outbreak.

COVID-19 messaging for parents and guardians provided additional support for improved behaviour practices during lockdowns.

Provision of critical medical and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies and improving infection and prevention control (IPC)

UNICEF procured and distributed personal protective equipment (PPE) to 35,763 health care providers out of a target of 25,000 health workers, in addition to establishing specific triage facilities for infection prevention and control in 64 health facilities.

IPC materials and hygiene supplies were distributed to MoPH by UNICEF to 13 isolation centres in 12 governorates within Aden Hub.

The cumulative beneficiaries reached across Yemen by UNICEF were 279,888 people as the agency continued providing trucked water with the amount of 147 m³ per day to 7,964 IDPs, locations in Dhamar and Amran.

UNICEF continued distributing consumable hygiene kits and reached cumulatively to 244,046 in Aden, Saada, Al Jawf & Amanat Al Asima.

Orchestrated by UNICEF, continued water quality monitoring activities in Al-Jawf through NWRA for water sources and water points the total beneficiaries 1,658 (570 IDPs and 1,088 HC) in Al-Maton district.

A total of 17,843 people were reached by UNICEF through community-led cleaning campaigns for IDPs, vulnerable groups, and other affected communities, In Sada'a, Ibb, Taiz. Cumulatively UNICEF reached 139,121 people by supporting solid waste collection and disposal.

UNICEF completed the garbage landfill construction for 5,700 beneficiaries in AIKhamis villages in Munabih district – Saada governorate.

UNICEF reached 1,611 IDPs with family latrines through rehabilitation or desludging in IDPs camps in Hajja & Aden.

Until the end of December, UNICEF continued to support fuel and electricity to operate water and sanitation networks in different cities.

Continuity of health care for women and children

UNICEF sensitized 7,244 health workers (60 per cent of 2020 target) out of planned 12,000 on COVID-19 guidelines on the resumption and continuity of health and nutrition services.

3.4 million women and under-five children were reached with maternal new-born and child health services through fixed, mobile and outreach platforms while observing COVID-19 precautions.

Nationwide and sub-nationwide polio vaccination campaigns were completed, reaching over 5 million (93 per cent of target) and 1.2 million children aged 0-59 months (96 per cent of target). Additional 1.1 million children aged 6 weeks to 15 years were vaccinated against diphtheria in five governorates in the South as part of the response to the diphtheria outbreak. In collaboration with UNICEF Regional Office and WHO, the Country Office published a paper on Lessons from Yemen while conducting diphtheria and polio campaigns in COVID-19.

UNICEF supported the development of protocol and guidelines on continuity of facility and community-based nutrition services and related activities such as training, supervision, and SMART surveys. While services utilization was affected in the early stages of COVID-19 due to fear of the virus, combined staff orientation and provision of PPE and education at the community level positively impacted, and service utilization trends normalized.

UNICEF supported 4,146 outpatients' therapeutic programmes, 131 Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFCs), 147 mobile teams, and 24,648 Community Health and Nutrition Volunteers (CHNV) reach 8,750 villages and hard to reach areas. The inputs reached 3.6 million children with screening services; 231,062 children U5 with treatment for severe acute malnutrition without complication (88 per cent of annual target); 22,566 U5 children with treatment for severe acute malnutrition with complication; 472,898 children received deworming tablets; 2.4 million mothers received Iron Folate supplementation, and 739,235 received micronutrient powder. Vitamin A supplementation was provided to 1,375,051 million children U5.

Supporting access to continuous education, social protection, child protection, and GBV services

The national school exams and the 2020 Back-to-Learning campaign provided opportunities for reinforcing the distribution of face masks, handwashing soap, and hand sanitisers to vulnerable children and their teachers to ensure a safe school environment.

The national school exams and the 2020 Back-to-Learning campaign provided opportunities for reinforcing the distribution of face masks, handwashing soap, and hand sanitisers to vulnerable children and their teachers to ensure a safe school environment.

In juvenile justice areas, UNICEF was engaged in advocating to release children from overcrowded detention centres and institutions to prevent the spread of COVID 19 among the children. A total of 545 children had been successfully released and followed up by social workers from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour.

Shifting to the remote MHPSS support to minimize the risks for children caregiver in contracting the COVID-19, UNICEF included the dissemination of common MHPSS messages endorsed by MHPSS Technical WG through SNS, radio and TV programme. As well, the distribution of MHPSS posters and brochures which include hotline numbers as well as the provision of PSS counselling for children and families through hotlines and distribution of home-based PSS activities kits for the children. UNICEF and its partners reached 31,027 children and caregivers affected by COVID-19 during 2020.

During 2020, 86 per cent of the 1.4 million beneficiaries receiving emergency cash transfers were reached with PSEA key messages. The messages were disseminated through posters at cash pay points and by the trained case management assistants who conduct face-to-face outreaches to the communities' beneficiaries. Also, 70 call centre agents managing the cash transfer hotlines have been trained on SEA and how to receive and refer SEA allegations for further action.

In 2020, 350 UNICEF and the partner staff completed the online training on GBV risk mitigation and referral for survivors, ensuring the program is safe for girls, boys, women, and men.

UNICEF supported 427,650 (45 per cent girls) to take national examinations for Grades 9 and 12 on 15 August 2020 in 14 Yemeni governorates and 4,250 exam centres. UNICEF provided personal protection equipment (4,200,000 masks, 63,305 litres of hand-sanitiser, 4,287 thermometers, 300,000 gloves), raised awareness on procedures of exams and physical distancing measures, and supported 1,600 exam staff with incentives.

In support of the Ministry, UNICEF facilitated the development of a National COVID-19 Education Response Strategy/Plan. The plan was endorsed by the Minister of Education in May 2020 and operationalized to focus on preparing schools for reopening (safe school protocol) coupled with alternative learning modalities (e-learning with lessons uploaded on TV channel).

The distribution by UNICEF of disposable masks to 256,874 children and 11,105 teachers; 5,000 washable masks, and 3,000 comic books was accounted for at the start of the new school year in Aden. In Sana'a and Sa'ada, 1,200 teachers (80 male and 396 female) were trained on Safe School protocols in September using the TOT package finalized by the Education Cluster. 40 MoE staff were also trained from the central level.

The coordination mechanism was strengthened with regular task force meetings through 2020 with the participation of MoE, UNICEF, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE, the German Development Agency (GIZ) and WFP.

The Education Cluster in collaboration with the Global Education Cluster and support from UNICEF has undertaken a secondary data review and organized a JENA exercise (Join Education Needs Assessment) countrywide to measure the impact of Covid-19 and school closure on children.

[Social policy and social sector financing](#)

UNICEF successfully implemented the Humanitarian Cash Transfer (HCT) initiative to provide immediate support to some of the most marginalized and disadvantaged communities in Yemen due to the ongoing socio-economic crisis and the extended impact of COVID-19 on families. The HCT initiative expands upon the beneficiary list of Muhamasheen living in slums under the Integrated Model of Social and Economic Assistance and Empowerment (IMSEA) project to include Muhamasheen ('the marginalized ones' in Arabic).

Preliminary results show that 5,499 eligible Muhamasheen households collected their cash. This represents 95 per cent of the targeted population for the first payment cycle. As part of the initiative, UNICEF call centre remains open for beneficiaries to submit grievances.

The cash assistance was distributed through UNICEF Project Management Unit (PMU) in close collaboration and technical guidance from the Social Policy section. The Social Welfare Fund (SWF) was responsible for conducting outreach activities to households to ensure they understood the project's objectives, processes, and COVID-19 preventative measures. These measures included a) service providers must wear face masks and gloves; b) organized queues to maintain social distancing and c) the provision of hand sanitiser at payment sites.

Additionally, all communication materials included information for beneficiaries on the COVID-19 preventative measures when visiting payment sites.

[Advocacy](#)

UNICEF – both the regional and country offices – continue to engage and work in close cooperation and coordination with governments, WHO, Inter-Agency taskforces/other UN agencies, Centres for Disease Control, INGOs, local NGOs and other stakeholders including donor agencies, World Bank and others to avoid overlaps and optimise complementarities.

[External Media](#)

MAIN COVID-19PAGE

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19-19\)](#)

[مرض فيروس كورونا \(19-COVID-19\)](#)

CAMPAIGN PAGES

[#MaskUp](#)

[لا تنسوا الكمامة](#)

PRESS RELEASES AND STATEMENTS

[فتاة وقتى سيسنفيدون من الدعم الإضافي لبرنامج بناء القدرات للأطفال الأكثر ضعفاً في ليبيا 36,000](#)

[36,000 girls and boys to benefit from the additional funding towards the Resilience Building Programme for Vulnerable Children in Libya](#)

[الاتحاد الأوروبي يساهم بمبلغ 7,5 مليون يورو لبرامج اليونيسف الداعمة للأطفال والعائلات الأكثر هشاشة في سوريا](#)

[The European Union contributes €7.5 million towards UNICEF programmes supporting the most vulnerable children and families in Syria](#)

[UNICEF appoints the singer Yara Regional Ambassador](#)

[اليونيسف تُعين الفنانة يارا سفيرة إقليمية في الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا](#)

[The Regional Health Alliance: A partnership towards achieving Health For All By All](#)

[تطلق اليونيسف نداءً للحصول على مبلغ قياسي بقيمة 2.5 مليار دولار أمريكي للاستجابة للاحتياجات الإنسانية لدى الأطفال ولجائحة "كوفيد-19" في الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا](#)

[UNICEF appeals for a record US\\$2.5 billion to respond to children's humanitarian needs and the COVID-19 pandemic in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

[Ted Chaiban, UNICEF MENA Regional Director's closing remarks at International Volunteer Day Regional Event "Together We Can": Experiences of volunteers responding to COVID-19 in the Arab States](#)

PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

[العمل الإنساني من أجل الأطفال للعام 2021](#)

[Humanitarian Action for Children 2021](#)

[العمل الإنساني من أجل الأطفال في الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا](#)

[Humanitarian Action for Children in the Middle East and North Africa](#)

ARTICLES AND BLOGS

[As temperatures drop, the children of Syria need your support](#)

[Harmful and healthy relationship dynamic in families](#)

[WASH project to benefit over 400,000 people](#)

[For every child and young person; inclusive high-quality education](#)

[Volunteers. United](#)

Funding Overview, Resource Mobilization & Partnerships

At the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March 2020, UNICEF MENA launched the COVID-19 appeal at \$92.4 million while UNICEF country offices reallocated flexible funds from regular resources to kickstart prevention activities and procure urgent emergency supplies. By May and July 2020, as COVID-19 cases escalated swiftly across the region, the appeal increased to \$287.1 and then \$356.9 million, respectively.

UNICEF MENA's latest appeal for \$356.9 million seeks to support government efforts and interventions to prevent the spread of the virus and respond to those that have been affected through the provision of critical supplies and adequate health care, as well as responding to the socio-economic impacts of the disease. As of 31 December, UNICEF has received \$330 million accounting for 93 per cent of the target. That said, at the end of December, 11 out of 16 country offices in MENA still urgently needed an additional \$74 million to meet their 2020 funding requirements and support governments, communities and children in stopping the spread of the virus (*see table below).

UNICEF MENA would like to express its sincere gratitude for the generous contributions from its public and private partners throughout 2020, including the Governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, the United States of America, the European Union, Kuwait, France, Switzerland, Austria, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Korea, Poland, and Bulgaria; the World Bank, UN OCHA, the WHO, the Education Cannot Wait Fund, UNDP, GAVI the Vaccine Alliance, UNOPS, the Global Partnership for Education, UNHCR, and UNAIDS as well as UNICEF Committees in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Ireland, Switzerland, Korea, Spain, France, and Hong Kong. UNICEF MENA also accessed generous flexible contributions received centrally to address immediate funding gaps of critical interventions.

The UNICEF MENA Regional Office convened 21 mobile operators from 15 countries to engage them in supporting the COVID-19 response by accelerating work on RCCE, helping facilitate distant learning, and support the delivery of cash transfers. A regional partnership was secured with mobile telecommunications company Zain to develop common programmes for children in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and South Sudan where co-creation workshops are being convened to identify national partnership strategies. In Jordan, Zain has committed to providing access to UNICEF's Learning Passport at no-cost across its network.

UNICEF Egypt expanded its relationships with both local and international private sector partners, mobilizing \$1.3 million, receiving in-kind support with an estimated value of \$2.3 million and undertaking joint advocacy and programme delivery. Through an unprecedented partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce, private sector companies supported the UNICEF COVID-19 response in Egypt reaching over 3.1 million people through the provision of essential equipment such as PPE, ventilators, disinfectant, soaps and sanitisers to frontline health workers, as well as information books for children on good hygiene.

Over the past year, UNICEF GAO collaborated with UN Resident Coordinator Offices and UN Country Teams in Bahrain, Kuwait, the K.S.A. and the U.A.E. to offer coordinated technical support to Governments. UNICEF contributed to socio-economic diagnostic papers in each of the countries, ensured a focus on children, child protection, education and social protection in a series of "UN Response Offers" to Government and participated in high-level webinars to address emerging priorities including mental health webinars in the context UN75 (UAE and Bahrain), education and inclusion (Kuwait), migration (Kuwait).

Along with UNICEF's public partnerships division globally has worked to strengthen its partnership with the Islamic Development Bank and its officers around the world. UNICEF at the regional and country office level held a series of consultations with the Islamic Development Bank's (ISDB) 10 regional hubs to strengthen in-country communication and coordination, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This increased dialogue has resulted in an agreement for UNICEF to support procurement of supplies with IsDB financing in several countries, some of which leveraged the \$2.3 billion COVID-19 3R Package (Recover, Restore, Restart), its Lives and Livelihoods Fund, the Transform Fund as well as the joint UNICEF and IsDB Global Muslim Philanthropy Fund for Children.

Despite its challenges, COVID-19 provided UNICEF Iran with new partnership opportunities with national associates. Among others, UNICEF began to support the COVID-19 response of the Ministry of Cooperatives Labor to address the needs of 13,800 working or on-the-street Iranian and Afghan (refugee) children by procurement of health and hygiene supplies and RCCE materials. Also, in addition to leading the RCCE pillar and co-leading the Pro-Health Group under UN Iran Crisis Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP), UNICEF acts as the Convening and Administrative agent for a Joint Programme including UNDP, UNFPA, UNAIDS and Relief International (INGO) funded for € 8 million by ECHO for a multi-sector programming response to COVID-19 in Iran. UNICEF further coordinated the implementation of the health component of this joint programme with MoHME. UNICEF is taking the lead to coordinate another joint programme, including UNDP and UNFP, with ECHO in 2021.

Funding Status^{*24}

Country	Requirements	Funds available	Funding gap	
			\$	%
Algeria	\$1,405,000	\$3,174,345	\$0	0%
Djibouti	\$7,935,000	\$3,169,443	\$4,765,557	60%
Egypt	\$30,916,000	\$6,183,347	\$24,732,653	80%
Iran	\$17,210,970	\$8,974,449	\$8,236,522	48%
Iraq	\$11,837,000	\$12,741,156	\$0	0%
Jordan	\$22,709,753	\$21,046,288	\$1,663,465	7%
Lebanon	\$58,902,507	\$43,711,129	\$15,191,378	26%
Libya	\$16,100,000	\$13,738,603	\$2,361,397	15%
Morocco	\$5,070,000	\$4,201,570	\$868,430	17%
Oman	\$360,000	\$147,456	\$212,544	59%
State of Palestine	\$16,065,645	\$18,398,332	\$0	0%
Sudan	\$24,535,000	\$52,408,537	\$0	0%
Syria	\$30,581,925	\$30,226,617	\$355,308	1%
Tunisia	\$8,100,000	\$22,580,785	\$0	0%
Yemen	\$103,257,802	\$87,704,543	\$15,553,259	15%
MENARO	\$1,906,000	\$1,819,611	\$86,389	5%
Total	\$356,892,602	\$330,226,211	\$74,026,902	21%

* Funding available includes COVID-19 related top-ups to existing contributions, as well as re-programmed funding negotiated and approved by the donors for contributions originally issued for non-COVID-19 purposes. Resources mobilized in excess of the immediate requirement are not reflected here and the funding gap is \$0 and 0 per cent respectively.

[1] World Bank (2020) MENA Economic Update (October 2020)

For information on the funding status of the US\$1.93 billion global UNICEF appeal, visit:

www.unicef.org/coronavirus/donors-and-partners

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Annex: Summary of Selected Programme Results

Programme Response Targets	2020 target ¹	Total UNICEF results	Results in the reporting period ▲ ▼
Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)			
Number of people reached on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services	258,170,000	274,468,529	▲ 2,977,881
Number of people who participate in COVID-19 engagement actions	42,923,500	44,336,082	▲ 3,749,552
Number of people sharing their concerns and asking questions/clarifications for available support services to address their needs through established feedback mechanisms	2,375,000	1,331,852	▲ 150,596
Infection prevention control (IPC)/ WASH			
Number of people reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services	11,322,774	22,300,193	▲ 4,290,292
Number of healthcare workers within health facilities and communities provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	75,125	207,410	▲ 9,356
Number of healthcare facility staff and community health workers trained in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)	19,924	29,282	▲ 9,933
Continuity of essential health and nutrition services			
Number of healthcare providers trained in detecting, referral and appropriate management of COVID-19 cases	17,150	11,490	▲ 175
Number of children and women receiving essential healthcare, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal care, essential new-born care, immunization, treatment of childhood illnesses and HIV care through UNICEF supported community health workers and health facilities	7,462,158	9,963,607	▲ 1,550,566
Number of caregivers of children aged 0-23 months reached with messages aiming to protect breastfeeding in the context of COVID-19 through national communication campaigns	3,577,670	4,680,438	▲ 1,762,252
Number of children 6-59 months admitted for treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM)	665,400	469,535	▲ 133,496
Continuity of education, child protection, social protection and social sector financing and gender-based violence services			
Number of children supported with distance/home-based learning	7,264,557	9,509,630	▲ 3,567,449
Number of schools implementing safe school protocols (COVID-19 prevention and control)	31,766	38,610	▲ 9,410
Number of children without parental or family care provided with appropriate alternative care arrangements	19,062	40,309	▲ 26,313
Number of children, parents and primary caregivers provided with community based mental health and psychosocial support	442,153	606,390	▲ 150,287
Number of UNICEF personnel and partners that have completed training on GBV risk mitigation and referrals for survivors	3,434	8,683	▲ 1,155
Number of children and adults that have access to a safe and accessible channel to report sexual exploitation and abuse	306,650	1,310,644	▲ 6,699
Number of households receiving humanitarian cash transfers through UNICEF response to COVID-19	174,500	1,510,147	▲ 1,453,120
Number of households benefitting from new or additional social assistance measures provided by governments to respond to COVID-19 with UNICEF support	20,837,000	13,281,557	▲ 104,300
