



Reporting Period: 16 June - 29 July 2020

Highlights

- As of 29 July 2020, a total of 174,081 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 2,919 associated deaths, were reported in West and Central Africa Region (WCAR).
- 22 out of the 24 countries in the region are reporting community transmissions.
- 109,000 healthcare facilities staff and community health workers were trained in infection prevention and control procedures, exceeding the initial target.
- Since May, 19 countries re-opened schools to allow students to better prepare for final exams.

Situation Overview and Needs

The COVID-19 pandemic continues its progression in West and Central Africa (WCAR). WCAR accounts for 24% of confirmed cases and 24% of deaths in Africa Region. The top 5 countries in WCAR reporting the highest number of confirmed cases are: Nigeria (41,180), Ghana (33,624), Cameroon (16,829), Côte d'Ivoire (15,655) and Senegal (9,805) representing 67% of all confirmed cases. In WCAR, West Africa accounts for 69% of all confirmed cases.

The number deaths associated to COVID-19 is increasing in many more countries even those which used to report low deaths. As of 29 July 2020, 15 countries are reporting a case fatality rate (CFR) which is higher than the African Continent CFR of 1.68%. Chad (8.13%), Liberia (6.17%), Niger (6.10%), Mali (4.93%) and Burkina Faso (4.79%) are the top five countries that report the highest CFR.

Due to the combined effects of food insecurity and COVID-19, as well as the locust threat, the number of people in need of emergency food assistance could climb to 57.6 million people in the Sahel and West Africa countries from July to August 2020 (Source: WFP). On 17 July, UNICEF and WFP joined forces to issue an alert on the unprecedented impact of food insecurity and COVID-19 on child malnutrition, warning of more than 15 million expected cases of acute malnutrition in 2020.

West and Central Africa Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation Report No. 5

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Situation in Numbers

 174,081 confirmed cases in West and Central Africa

 2,919 deaths (CFR: 1.68%)

 128 million Children and youth affected by COVID-19 school closures

 US\$ 424.0 M funding required

Country	Confirmed Cases	Deaths	Transmission classification
Nigeria	41,180	860	Community transmission
Ghana	33,624	168	Community transmission
Cameroon	16,829	388	Community transmission
Cote d'Ivoire	15,655	96	Community transmission
Senegal	9,805	198	Community transmission
Democratic Republic of the Congo	8,930	212	Community transmission
Gabon	7,189	49	Community transmissions
Guinea	7,055	45	Community transmission
Mauritania	6,208	156	Community transmission
Other	27,606	747	
Total WCAR	174,081	2,919	

Source: WHO and Countries MoH, 29 July 2020

Coordination and Partnerships

In West and Central Africa, UNICEF continues to support governments in the development and implementation of their COVID-19 response plans. UNICEF's Regional Office and all UNICEF Country Offices have developed dedicated response strategies that contribute to outbreak control as well as to mitigate secondary impacts of the pandemic. These include support to Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), provision of critical WASH-Infection Prevention Control (IPC) materials and the continuity of essential health and social services for children, adolescents, women and vulnerable populations. UNICEF is leading the coordination of regional partners' support on RCCE pillar, and co-leading on Operational Coordination, case management, WASH/IPC, and logistic & operational support.

UNICEF's COVID-19 response

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

Community feedback, regional trend analysis, challenges in prevention measure compliance, rumors around the disease origins and remedies, and stigma against infected people and health workers continue to increase in certain areas. As a result, the UNICEF-lead WCAR RCCE working group has addressed these issues across the region through support materials and tools and new interactive and adaptable training modules for COVID-19 key actors through a new regional e-learning platform. The training materials, benefiting national RCCE coordination mechanisms, focus on adapted RCCE approaches and how to tackle misinformation, stigma and discrimination, namely those against health workers and certain groups such as migrants, IDPs and refugees.

The WCAR and ESAR regional RCCE groups have produced an interagency guidance note on working with communities in refugee and IDP camps and informal settlements to find local adaptations to COVID-19 prevention and response measures. UNICEF is also working on a global video to fight stigmatization, namely against migrants, displaced persons and refugees, using a social cohesion success story during COVID-19 in DRC.

Medical and WASH supplies, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

In coherence with UNICEF's global WASH response framework, the Regional Office is supporting country offices in four main areas:

1. Support to government-led WASH/IPC coordination, including through WASH clusters;
2. Hygiene programming with a focus on handwashing;

3. IPC in health care facilities, schools, communities and households;
4. Analysis of the gains and impact of WASH response to ensure long lasting changes.

At least 5.2 million people have already been reached with critical WASH services out of 15 million people targeted (35 % progress). A total of 109,000 healthcare facilities staff and community health workers were trained in infection prevention and control procedures, exceeding the target by 6 per cent. The regional WASH/IPC response is 31 % funded with USD 37 million received (out of a total requirement of USD 118 million).

UNICEF recently launched its Global Framework for Urban WASH. In collaboration with HQ, UNICEF WCARO organized regional webinars (in English and French) on the framework and took the opportunity to discuss the Interim technical note on WASH for COVID-19 response in slums and informal urban settlements prepared by UN HABITAT and UNICEF. Case studies on urban WASH and COVID response were presented from DRC, Ghana, Liberia and Mauritania.

Supply

To date, UNICEF WCARO has carried out procurement services (PS) worth USD 10.3 million, covering 17 countries. Funding from these services has come primarily from the World Bank, GAVI, The Clinton Health Access Initiative and national government budgets. UNICEF also worked with the Islamic Development Bank to develop an MoU template for procurement services.

In line with new supply guidance for COVID-19 operations, handwashing facilities are recommended at every service delivery point. This includes warehouses and facilities where UNICEF teams operate.

UNICEF is working together with the African Union and CDC-Africa to create a common basket (fund) for COVID-19. This emergency stockpile is intended to be positioned on the continent to give national governments more flexibility in preparedness and response to future epidemics or disease outbreaks.

UNICEF is also working with GAVI and government counterparts are joining forces to advocate for WB loans for COVID-19 response to include vaccine financing needs.

Provision of Healthcare Services

Vaccine stock in WCAR countries improved slightly, although 10 countries (vs. 14 the previous month) still had a stock-out of at least one antigen at federal level. Benin and Sao Tome and Principe are the two countries most affected by stock-outs, of 4 antigens at federal level (though fortunately not yet affecting service delivery at the level of health facilities).

Although air freight has not returned to the same schedule as before COVID-19, and flight postponements are regularly announced, supplies from manufacturers based in Europe and Asia have been in place since mid-June.

Approximately 61% of cold chain equipment (CCE) ordered through the Cold Chain Equipment Optimization Platform initiative in 18 countries, has now been received, 76% of which is installed and operational.

UNICEF WCARO continues to provide technical support on immunization, prioritizing risk communication focused on MAPI. The RO is also monitoring the spread of rumors and misinformation around vaccination linked to the spread of COVID-19 and fear of accessing immunization services.

Nutrition

A rapid analysis of the Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) pipeline situation showed that eight countries (Chad, Gambia, Senegal, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau) are likely to have stock outs in the coming two months based on new Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) admissions recorded in the first quarter, and remaining targets to be reached by the end of the year. To face with those risks, UNICEF is actively seeking new funding to cover needs, while the RO Supply and Nutrition teams give support to reduce the supply lead-time and encourage an accurate monitoring of the Nutrition pipeline.

Due to the combined effects of food insecurity and COVID-19, as well as the locust threat, the number of people in need of emergency food assistance could climb to 57.6 million people in the Sahel and West Africa countries from July to August 2020 (Source: WFP). On 17 July, UNICEF and WFP joined forces to issue an alert on the unprecedented impact of food insecurity and COVID-19 on child malnutrition, warning of more than 15 million expected cases of acute malnutrition in 2020.

UNICEF WCARO continues to actively facilitate and support the regional coordination platforms, especially the Nutrition-In-Emergency sub-group, the Regional Nutrition Working Group and the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group.

The 4th version of the Regional Nutrition Technical Guidance Note is under development, with new elements on vitamin A-supplementation and nutrition surveillance. The addendum covering the Seasonal Malaria Prophylaxis Campaign (SMC) coupled with massive acute malnutrition screening activities for children under five is in its final validation phase by WHO. Once approved, the guidance note will be widely circulated among partners.

Education

At least 19 out of 24 countries in WCAR have re-opened schools to allow students to prepare for final exams. UNICEF continues to support the development of Back to School campaigns across the entire region.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, UNICEF has supported around 38 million children with distance/home-based learning opportunities, out of a total target of 59 million affected children. Approximately 20,000 out of 100,000 schools are implementing the Safe Schools Protocol.

A good example of an inclusive distance learning approach can be observed in Cote d'Ivoire, where sign language is included in all video-lessons for deaf children and distribution of school materials included braille material.

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has allocated more than USD 73 million to UNICEF in 11 countries of WCAR, which represents 87% of the total resources mobilized for UNICEF's COVID education response in the region.

Child Protection

The child protection response in WCAR continues to evolve and take into account longer-term systemic and programme implications for highly vulnerable children who are victims of violence, exploitation and abuse, including children who are denied access to justice, children living on the streets, and children sent away from their homes for Koranic education. Since the beginning of the response, over 1.7 million people and children have been reached with online and in-person messaging through social workers on the prevention of violence against children, positive parenting practices and access to child protection services during COVID-19.

As of 17 July, over 2,600 children have been released from detention across the region through UNICEF advocacy in 10 countries, including CAR, DRC, Gabon, Guinea, Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, Benin, Niger and Nigeria. At least 1,200 children living on the streets have been reached across Mali, Cameroon, Guinea, CAR, Cote d'Ivoire and Chad. In total, nearly 18,000 children without parental care have been provided with alternative care.

Social Protection

UNICEF Burkina Faso and implementing partners have begun preparatory activities to distribute emergency cash transfers to 4,000 vulnerable households in the communes of Barsalogho and Bourzanga. These communities were affected by both COVID-19 and floods. UNICEF is in contact with the local authorities and is mobilizing volunteers to register beneficiaries. A major challenge is the ability to access certain targeted communities due to insecurity and poor road conditions as a result of the floods.

Adaptations to ongoing UNICEF programmes

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

In Burkina Faso, despite an initial decrease in routine vaccination coverage due to limited access to health services and stigmatization of health workers, C4D and health teams were able to successfully conduct a second-round polio campaign, a measles campaign, and re-establish routine immunization to pre-COVID coverage levels. Results were achieved through a national integrated COVID-19 immunization plan, a strong rumor management system, coordinated capacity-building for media, health workers, mobilisers and vaccinators, a reinforced data collection system, and digital engagement, mass media and community engagement interventions with strong support from traditional and religious leaders.

Provision of Healthcare Services

Data available as of end April 2020 shows a decrease of around 8% for Penta 3 coverage across the region.

Despite ongoing transmission of COVID-19, routine vaccination continues to take place in every country even under challenging circumstances – in Cameroon, for example, a measles catch-up vaccination is taking place in the conflict-affected Extreme Nord and North West/South West regions, reaching 2,419 children under five.

In Burkina Faso, where outbreaks were reported earlier in the year, localized response activities took place and outreach services have continued during COVID-19. The Measles and Rubella Initiative funding has been transferred to Equatorial Guinea and Gabon to strengthen routine immunization.

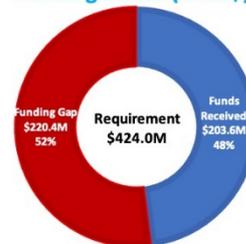
Nutrition

A two-session-webinar was organized for UNICEF country offices in WCAR to share lessons learned on the treatment of wasting by community health workers (CHWs). The webinar, which was attended by more than one hundred participants, aimed to help mitigate the high risk of disruption of nutrition services at health facility level.

Funding Overview

UNICEF's West and Central Africa region has raised USD 203.6 million out of the required USD 424.0 million to respond to COVID-19. The funding gap against UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) in the region stands at 52 per cent.

Funding Status (In US\$)



External Media

UNICEF partnered with other UN organizations to raise media and public attention on the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable children in the region. A joint statement with IOM and other members of the UN Network on Migration was issued on 3 July to alert people of the increasing vulnerability of migrants during COVID-19. It called for the urgent need to expand the availability of flexible and safe regular pathways for migrants in vulnerable situations. A joint UNICEF / WFP press release and call for action was issued on 17 July to sound the alarm on the deteriorating situation of child malnutrition worsened by COVID-19 across the Sahel in West and Central Africa. The statement and press release were published in various media in Africa and beyond as a result of these combined efforts, such as CNBC Africa, AfricaNews and others.

On the digital front, UNICEF West and Central Africa published a story about successful vaccine charter flights. The story spoke of the difficulty of delivering much-needed supplies on time to countries where vaccine stocks were running low due to logistical challenges of COVID-19 containment measures including border closures.

On social media, the #Covid19Diaries continue, so far showcasing more than 50 young people who share their feelings and dreams during the pandemic with peers across the world via the video diaries. More than 6.1 million people were reached during the first weeks of the initiative, mobilizing young people from West and Central Africa and beyond, including Eastern and Southern Africa, Caribbean islands and Asia. Videos were seen over 580,000 times and generated more than 370,000 engagement. A young Ghanaian's diary was aired in the US on NBC during a UNICEF USA fundraising event.

West and Central Africa COVID-19 information site : <https://www.unicef.org/wca/coronavirus>

UNICEF in action in West and Central Africa



Central African Republic: CAR receives its first UNICEF-supported shipment of medical supplies for COVID response in Bangui



Côte d'Ivoire: A UNICEF staff talks with young children with masks to protect themselves against the coronavirus, in Morovine, Côte d'Ivoire.



DRC: Health workers during a UNICEF-supported measles vaccination campaign in Goma, DRC



Gambia: UNICEF distributes WASH supplies to the Juvenile Home in Banjul in response to COVID 19 pandemic



Ghana: UNICEF Chief of Field Office Margaret Gwada assists a mother who just received a birth certificate for her child in Tamale in Ghana.



Guinea-Bissau: UNICEF supports national red cross volunteers for door-to-door coronavirus sensitization activities in Guinea Bissau



Mauritania: UNICEF supports national red cross volunteers for door-to-door coronavirus sensitization activities in Guinea Bissau



Niger: In northern Niger, UNICEF supports women leaders for the social mobilization and community engagement activities, focusing on COVID prevention.

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