



A journey through 2020: A Summary of UNICEF's Work During the Pandemic

In January 2020, with the COVID-19 at a nascent stage, UNICEF engaged at multiple levels and was part of several groups and committees that co-ordinated the pandemic response across the country. As the number of COVID-19 cases increased in early March 2020, the UNICEF Health Programme prepared a programme guidance note that detailed its preparedness and response plan. Accordingly, apart from coordination with multiple stakeholders and ensuring safety and well-being of its staff, UNICEF's response was categorized into two pillars:

Support Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and WHO in the COVID-19 preparedness and response actions

Ensure uninterrupted essential Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH + A) including immunization services, home-based care, public-private partnership for care and adapted referral systems

With COVID-19 declared a pandemic and brought under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 in India, UNICEF embarked on providing emergency response that included procurement of medical equipment and supplies as required by the Government of India (GoI), under the guidance of the World Health Organization (WHO). UNICEF was also part of several high-level committees that were entrusted with the task of developing guidelines to resume Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) services amidst the lockdown.

Broadly, UNICEF's response can be described in four stages; starting with the lockdown in March 2020, followed by unlock 1, 2 and 3 and finally stage 4 which saw the resumption of all activities including the preparation for the launch of the COVID-19 vaccine in January 2021.

Stage 1

Lockdown - Emergency response
(i) procurement (ii) formulating guidelines

Stage 2

Unlock/Reopening - Supported supervision and monitoring

Stage 3

Focus on resuming RMNCH + A services

Stage 4

Continuation of RMNCH + A services and preparation for COVID-19 vaccine launch

Timeline of activities undertaken by UNICEF in Response to COVID-19 and in Resuming RMNCH + A

PRE-LOCKDOWN

2020 January to March

PILLAR-1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Design of the Joint Response Partners Plan to COVID-19 pandemic with WHO.
- UNICEF's Programme **Guidance** note on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan.

STAGE - 1: LOCKDOWN

2020 March to June

PILLAR-1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Procurement of 3.5 million items of PPEs.
- **Strategic inputs** to NITI Aayog on COVID-19 testing, infection control and prevention. Assisted the GoI with three rounds of supportive supervision and assessment of COVID-19 Health Facilities across India.



- MoHFW issued COVID-19 frontline workers **toolkit**.
- In coordination with Sphere India, 15 state Inter Agency Groups (IAGs) were mobilized and connected with the National and State Disaster Management Agencies (NDMA/SDMAs) for deployment of trained volunteers and providing **orientation** to them on COVID-19 response needs.
- MoHFW issued **advisory** for taking care of mental health of children and psychological issues among migrants during COVID-19.
- The 1st round of a nationwide rapid assessment through U-Report to **assess** people's knowledge, attitudes and practices around COVID-19 was completed with more than 23,000 respondents.

PILLAR-2 RESUMING RMNCH + A SERVICES

2020 April to May

- By April 2020, the GoI with support from WHO and UNICEF had begun working on guidelines on **immunization** during COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines were formally notified on 27 May 2020.
- Partnership among UNICEF, WHO, Sphere India and other organizations to create **COVID-19 academy** as a virtual platform for **learning** and exchange of knowledge and ideas.
- **Development** of IPC assessment checklist for LaQshya supported facilities in 24 UNICEF programme states.
- UNICEF developed training modules and used **online training** platforms such as Zoom and CISCO Webex to successfully train over one million frontline workers on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) for COVID-19.
- Collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to support operational research on the impact of COVID-19 on MNCH services, and in supporting the healthcare workers with **psychosocial care** for health workforce resilience during COVID-19 response to ensure continuity of services.

LOCKDOWN



STAGE - 2: UNLOCK 1.0 and 2.0

2020 June to August

PILLAR-1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Procurement and installation of 10 mass thermal scanner for eight international airports.
- UNICEF co-designed a **strategy to address COVID-19** in urban slums. This included advocacy papers, technical guidelines and a workshop with states on addressing COVID-19 in urban slums.
- Established a **Community Based Monitoring (CBM) system**, engaging 13 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in 12 districts of seven states to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic condition of the marginalized families. Using Open Data Kits and Management Information System, 3,135,826 migrants were line listed and counselled on the preventive measures and quarantine protocols and subsequently linked to the COVID-19 surveillance system.
- **328 RT-PCR** and RNA Extraction Thermo Fisher test kits (328,000 reactions) were procured for the ICMR.

2020 June to August

PILLAR-2 RESUMING RMNCH+A SERVICES

- Organized and supported multiple events related to **breastfeeding week** celebrations to raise awareness on importance of breastfeeding in the context of COVID.
- UNICEF created **dashboards** based on the Sick and Newborn Care Unit (SNCU) online software, Sample Registration System (SRS) and Health Management Information System (HMIS) data. Advocacy based on SNCU performance indicators led to "No Rotation Policy of SNCU Staff".
- **National Technical Guidelines** on Immunization and Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH + N) were drafted to support MoHFW, leading to partial resumption of services. The Govt announced the initiation of early identification and treatment of children with acute malnutrition, Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), as priority action.
- Started mid-year **LaQshya/WASH and IPC** assessment in 50 UNICEF supported districts of India.
- UNICEF also drafted the **Heat Wave Mitigation Guidelines for Children** and the **Guidelines for Integrated Diarrhoea Control Fortnight (IDCF)** campaign.

- **Collaborations** with FOGSI, IAP and NNF to train Ob-gyns on Clinical Practice Guidelines and trainings for perinatal and paediatric COVID-19 management. Using the online tools 35,000 obstetricians and gynaecologists were trained across six regional platforms on infection control and infection transmission prevention.
- Online training sessions were held by **COVID-19 Academy**, an initiative by Sphere India for over 2,000 participants from multiple stakeholder groups such as NGOs, CSO and Community-based Organizations (CBOs) on **safe environmental sanitation and hygiene** and IPC during COVID-19.
- **Training of doctors** and counsellors and support establishment of psychosocial call centres in KEM Hospital, Pune and TISS, Mumbai.



➤ STAGE - 3: UNLOCK 3.0 and 4.0

2020 September

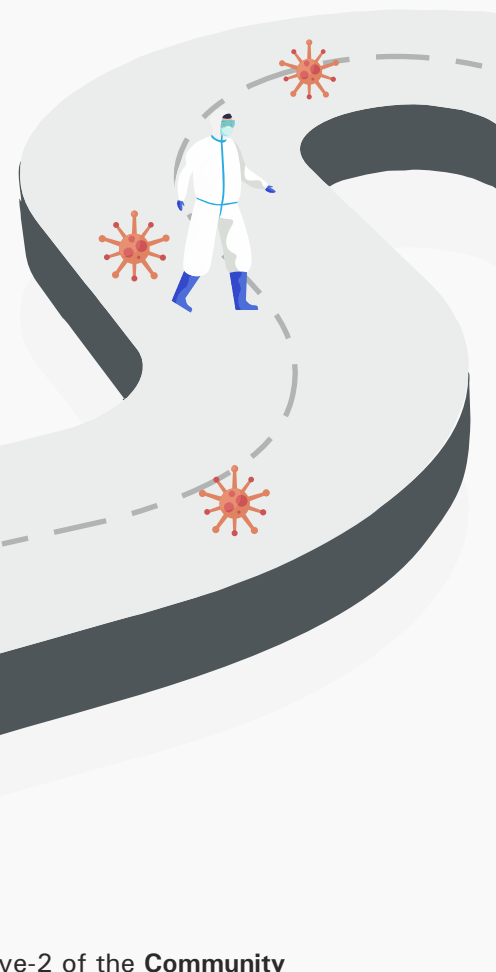
PILLAR-1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Procurement of 3,014 oxygen concentrators through the supply division. The MoHFW tested these concentrators in two hospitals. These concentrators were ready to be distributed to 19 states and union territories of India.



PILLAR-2 RESUMING RMNCH+A SERVICES

- Shifting the Adolescent School Health Programme online with support from WHO, UNESCO and NCERT. In July, training resumed and as of October 2020, 40 National Resource Group (NRG) trainers and 1,800 state resource trainers were trained.
- Wave-2 of the **Community Based Monitoring** on socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on marginalized population had been completed in August – September 2020.





STAGE - 4: RESUMPTION OF ALL ACTIVITIES

2020 October to December

PILLAR-1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- UNICEF supported the MoHFW and the states on the development of strategy, planning, capacity building, updating monitoring tools and cold chain needs assessment for the introduction of COVID-19 vaccine(s). On 16 January 2021, the vaccination drive in India started.
- MoHFW issued **Guidelines** on Managing Mental Illness in Hospital Settings during COVID-19.
- UNICEF partnered with the **National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)** to develop an information manual on “Psychosocial Care for Frontline Health Workers” and a first responders manual titled “Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) for Children affected by COVID-19”.
- Procured and delivered 1,471 mannikins for **training on newborn care and pneumonia management** to 15 states. These mannikins have been used during trainings and webinars.

PILLAR-2 RESUMING RMNCH+A SERVICES

2020 October to December

- During the month of November, UNICEF actively supported the launch of **SAANS Campaign on World Pneumonia Day**. The support to the MoHFW included development of guidelines, state progress cards, awareness generation materials, and support organizing multiple advocacy events, that included academia, UN agencies, civil society partners, professional associations and government, across the country.
- UNICEF also supported restoration of **vitamin A supplementation** round in 11 of the 12 states.
- Following the continued efforts of UNICEF, the Ministry of Women and Child Development issued the operational guidance in November 2020 with the directive on national restoration of **Anganwadi Services**.
- Under the guidance of MoHFW, Maternal Health division, designing and costing of **Midwifery Lead Care Units (MLCU)** was initiated for six states with the support of IQVIA.
- Initiated the procurement process for **mannikins** to support skill labs at State Midwifery Training Institutes (SMTIs).
- Started end year **LaQshya/WASH/IPC** assessment in 50 UNICEF-supported districts of India.
- UNICEF advocated for the **India Newborn Action Plan 2020-2030** which came about in November 2020. Several webinars were held and around 8,000 pediatricians and 25,000 nurses were trained on critical maternal and newborn care.
- UNICEF fully supported the **EMTCT campaign** rolled out by NACO on 1 December 2020 which is also the World AIDS Day.



KEY LEARNINGS

One of the key learnings in handling the COVID-19 response as well as overcoming programmatic challenges was the successful coordination at every stage. UNICEF adopted a collaborative approach in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Working closely in a boundary-less manner with the GoI, WHO, private sector, foundations and CSOs yielded quick and sustainable results. In a critical situation such as the pandemic, UNICEF adopted a “need-based” and “supportive” approach with various agencies of the government by providing support only to the extent that was needed instead of imposing. Ownership of relief efforts by the GoI and the systematic support provided by them to all the stakeholders ensured streamlining of activities. UNICEF was thus able to leverage its technical expertise and deliver on its core strength, alongside WHO, which took the lead in the pandemic response. All activities discussed in this booklet were planned, communicated, implemented and monitored with the full support of the GoI and state governments.



Re-imagining Partnerships During the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020 was a year of strategic partnerships, wherein UNICEF leveraged time, skills and capacity of wide-ranging partners to improve relevance of UNICEF, partners and government counterparts in the changing and complex situation that demanded multisectoral coordinated action. Partners and platforms helped UNICEF mobilise and deliver life-saving response and at times go beyond our mandate to implement COVID-19 response strategy in a hugely dynamic situation.

UNICEF is very grateful for such partnerships with various professional associations and academic institutions that have ensured timely delivery of COVID-19 emergency response as well as in resuming RMNCH + A services. UNICEF would like to thank all its funders, donors and partners for their commitment and trust.

UNICEF also acknowledges the contributions of several NGOs, CBOs and CSOs who have ensured the last mile service delivery, and have been our eyes and ears on the ground during this unprecedented year.

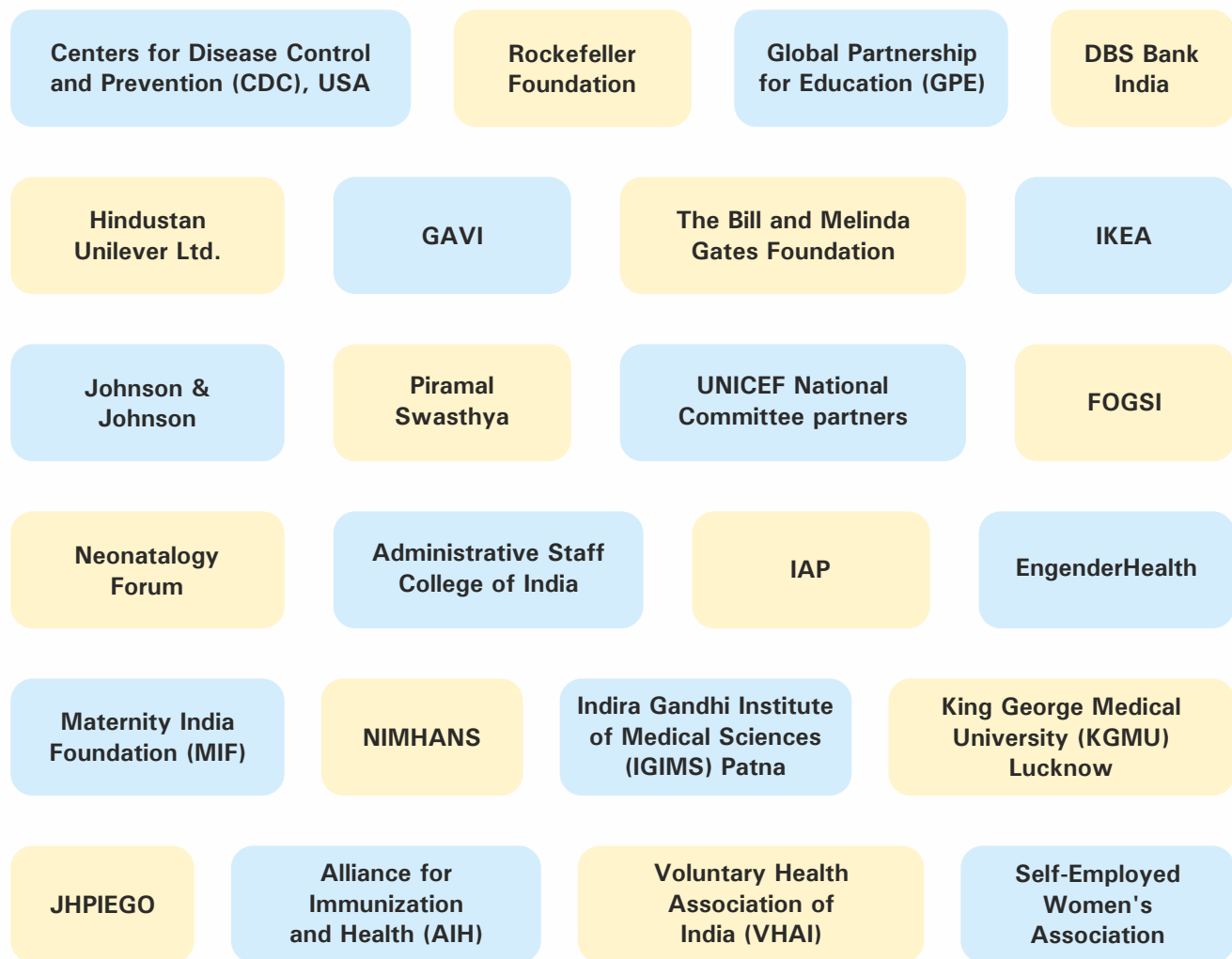
Funders and Donors for emergency response and procurement:

Government of Japan

Government of Germany (BMZ/KFW)

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

USAID



National Civil Society Organizations

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), the Alliance for Immunization and Health (AIH), the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) and the Envisions Institute of Development (EID), COVID-19 Academy, an initiative by Sphere India.

National and Field-Based Partnerships with BMGF, UNFPA, UNDP and the Piramal Foundation.

The partnership with Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj has been scaled up to engage Press Information Bureaus and Panchayati Raj Institutions at state level.

Professional Associations Instrumental in Resuming Essential RMNCH + A Services: Indian Academy of Paediatrics (IAP), National Neonatology Forum (NNF), Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India (FOGSI) and Ekam Foundation in Tamil Nadu.

Psychosocial and Mental Health Support to staff as well as healthcare workers in collaboration with NIMHANS, Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) Patna and King George Medical University (KGMU) Lucknow.

National Quality of Care Network to showcase the quality improvement work in the field of newborn and maternal health.

Immunization Partnerships: KfW Bank, BMGF, GAVI, WHO, UNDP and ITSU

Results achieved through the Response to COVID-19 Pandemic in India, 2020



660 million children and their families across India have been reached with accurate information on how to stay safe from COVID-19 through a mix of regular and innovative channels.



UNICEF has **prioritized addressing misinformation** and communal tensions to ensure communities continue to observe physical and social distancing, while social cohesion is valued and that discrimination does not become further entrenched.



UNICEF disseminated **timely, accurate and transparent information** on COVID-19 among the target population through community engagement, effective use of social media and engaging influencers for positive messaging and wider visibility.



4 million people have been regularly sharing concerns and seeking clarifications on COVID-19 through established feedback mechanisms.



61.8 million people have been engaged in activities that facilitate two-way communication, meaningful participation and local action on COVID-19 through digital and non-digital platforms related to the various elements of the response.



3.6 million people across India have been reached with critical WASH supplies (including hygiene items) and services.



2.5 million healthcare facility staff and community health workers have been trained in IPC.



WASH assessments have been conducted for healthcare facilities and quarantine centres. UNICEF is working with state governments to adapt existing schemes during the lockdown to ensure that essential health and nutrition services continue.



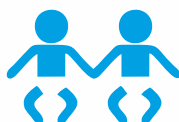
34,700 healthcare workers within health facilities and communities provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).



Over 333,000 children and their caregivers have been provided with psychosocial support as a result of UNICEF's support, including training of child protection functionaries and counsellors together with government.



1.48 million healthcare providers have been trained in detecting, referral and appropriate management of COVID-19 cases.



102,400 children (6-59 months) have been admitted for treatment of SAM.



19.7 million children and women receiving essential healthcare, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal care, essential newborn care, immunization, treatment of childhood illnesses and HIV care in UNICEF supported facilities.

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