

FINAL AS DELIVERED
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Joint Boards Town Hall
“Contribution to the UN-System Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”
April 21, 2020

As the Deputy Secretary General and my colleagues have said, this global emergency has united us —internally, within our own organizations, and across the UN family as a whole, and with our government and NGO partners worldwide.

In fact, **interagency collaboration** has been the hallmark of the global response from the very start.

To support the response, UNICEF is proud to lend our expertise, our partnerships with governments and businesses alike, our programmatic reach in 190 countries, and our longstanding experience in emergencies.

On the immediate public health response being led by WHO...

Thank you first to WHO and its people, who are doing extraordinary work, including with their UNICEF counterparts.

We're scaling-up our **community engagement** to promote simple but effective health interventions, like handwashing and social distancing.

We're delivering **handwashing supplies, soap, and hygiene and medical kits** to schools and clinics, and in shelters and camps.

Despite extreme market conditions, our Supply Division is maintaining a growing pipeline of vital **supplies** like gowns, masks, gloves and oxygen concentrators.

More than \$192-million worth of supplies have been procured so far, and we've made or scheduled deliveries to 54 countries, with more in the pipeline.

As Achim mentioned, UNICEF is supporting the WHO-led Supply Chain Interagency Coordination Cell to align procurement across agencies. As part of this, we're leading a joint, UN-wide tender process to urgently access substantial quantities of these critical items for the global response. This is joint work.

With WFP, we're scaling-up **school-feeding programmes** to support children missing out on school meals, and our treatment programmes for **malnutrition**. This is joint work.

And through the IASC, we're developing **guidance for our teams in low-resource settings**. Each context — from camps, to urban slums, to rural areas — require tailored approaches. We must support our teams on the ground with clear, consistent guidance.

As we work on these immediate needs, UNICEF is also working with our partners to shore-up vital health, education and social services over the long-term.

We must not allow COVID-19 to roll back decades of development progress in areas like education, health and protection. We do not want to regress 30 years. We want to use innovation to move us faster to the future. Complacency is over.

This includes **distance-learning** for children who can't access school — including using online, radio, television and SMS platforms — including for those living in refugee camps and in conflict areas.

It includes **psychosocial counselling** for children and young people to support their **mental health** as they grapple with the stress of lost family income, containment measures, and missed school.

This is all joint work and programming with host governments.

We're working with WHO to help local authorities shape **contextualized health responses** that fit the needs of each community — particularly for countries with weaker healthcare systems — and to apply the lessons we have learned from Ebola. This is joint work.

We've developed new programme guidance to ensure that our country offices and implementing partners are supporting **women and girls** in this emergency, and protect them from violence, abuse, teenage pregnancy and child marriage. The rights of girls and women must not be forgotten. This is joint work.

And we're joining our agency partners to respond to the long-term **socio-economic** needs of families and communities who will be hit hard by the looming recession and economic fallout of COVID-19.

As the Secretary-General reminded us in his report last week, the economic fallout will reverberate for years to come.

We're working with UNDP to bring together our social policy and analytical tools to support the most vulnerable communities and families over the long term. This is joint work.

And we're working with WFP and Germany on a joint programme to scale-up social protections for the most vulnerable people in fragile settings. Cash transfers, for example, can quickly help families secure food, health care and other basic household needs. We hope to finalize the programme in the coming weeks. And this is joint work.

Across all of this work, we need our Member States to carry back to your capitals a few messages on how they can help us.

First. On **supplies**, we continue to face widespread transportation and logistical challenges — including rising freight costs and high prices for raw materials needed for PPE. Some of your governments have already worked with the private sector to step-up free cargo services to deliver supplies and goods where they're needed most We need **more** governments and businesses to work together to ease these costs, while increasing transportation flows.

Second. On **humanitarian access**, we need governments to work with UN Resident Co-ordinators to help fast-track exemptions for personnel and supplies. Our existing humanitarian and aid operations must continue.

Third. We're asking children and their families to wash their hands, but there is still a critical lack of **public water infrastructure** in the countries where the pandemic will be hitting next. Please help us advocate not only to keep public systems strong as we deal with the pandemic now — but to invest in these systems over the long term.

And **fourth.** We need increased **and** flexible **funding**.

Through the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and UNICEF's revised HAC appeal — one of our largest appeals ever. While more governments are stepping-up each week, our appeal is still only about 20 per cent funded.

Through our ongoing efforts with the World Bank and other international financial institutions to summon more funding to support children's needs.

And through joint funding vehicles like the UN's Response and Recovery Fund and the WHO's Solidarity Fund, developed by the UN Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Fund.

We call on our Member State partners to urgently support us with more flexible funding that we can apply to this rapidly evolving crisis and build stronger systems for the future. Our teams in 192 countries are in good spirits, very committed and working hard.

Everyone at UNICEF looks forward to working with you, and our partners across the system, to meet these needs, and support children and their communities as they build stronger systems in the decades ahead.
