



A mud-filled classroom in eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal caused by unprecedented high rainfall and flooding on 11 April. ©Government of South Africa/2022

## SOUTH AFRICA COVID-19

Situation Report No.20

01/01/22– 30/04/22

unicef   
for every child

Reporting Period: 01 January – 30 April 2022

### Highlights

- UNICEF continued to support the rollout of COVID-19 vaccinations, including direct cold chain support to the Department of Health and through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) including social listening, data and evidence collection and community mobilisation and engagement. The national vaccination rate is nearing 50% but variations exist, from 36% of youth (18 - 34) vaccinated, to almost 70% of the 60+ cohort.
- Flooding in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) devastated areas in and around Durban. UNICEF is supporting immediate relief efforts, including WASH, psychosocial support and cash assistance, among others. This is coordinated as part of the UN response, working with government and partners to assess and provide the specific support required. The floods came on the back of widespread unrest that hit parts of KZN in July 2021, the impact of which is still being felt.

### Situation Overview

- On 04 April, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the lifting of the COVID-19 national state of disaster while “transitional measures” – like the wearing of face masks in indoor public spaces - remain in place for the coming 30 days. This came on the back off Omicron variant driven infections peaking in early January, which saw a higher rate of infection compared to previous waves but lower levels of severe illness and deaths.
- In April, extreme rain resulted in deadly floods in Kwa Zulu-Natal province. The damage affected ten districts in and around Durban, with more than 430 deaths – including 57 children – and close to 4,000 homes damaged or destroyed. Some 630 schools were damaged, impacting over 370,000 school children. Hospitals, major roads, transportation, and water services were also severely impacted by the flooding and a national state of disaster was declared.
- The national and provincial government have been providing immediate relief to flood victims, while women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities have been prioritised. In addition, there is a coordinated effort by partners and aid organisations to respond to the emergency.

### Situation in Numbers

Confirmed Cases: 3,808,368

Recovered: 3,663,153

Deaths: 100,407

Tests Conducted:  
24,554,412

Vaccine Reach: 34,999,285

(As of 04 May 2022)

## Summary of Emergency Preparedness and Response Actions (COVID-19)

### Education

1. In response to the flood devastation in KZN, UNICEF advocated and worked with partners, including the Department of Basic Education to ensure that information on the situation – specifically the impact on ECDs and schools – is obtained as part of the assessment. Learning and teaching support materials have been destroyed and there has been severe damage and destruction of furniture, crockery and buildings. UNICEF is supporting a national government task team, working with the KZN Provincial Education Department to ensure that learning recovery is prioritized, as well as salvaging records in schools where administrative material has been lost.
2. UNICEF's early learning and basic education response reached more than 4.2 million children from birth to 18 years. This included providing resources to support some 800,000 parents through distance and home-based learning for children during COVID-19 waves, as well as for more than 764,000 early learning and basic education educators.
3. UNICEF's technical support to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) included the coordination and planning of the education sector's COVID-19 emergency response through an embedded consultant; guidance and advice on the re-opening of schools and on the education sector COVID-19 vaccination campaigns; and support on the revision of the Standard Operating Procedures for Early Childhood Development Programmes to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19.
4. UNICEF's support on education programme adaptation and capacity resulted in the development, updating and promotion of COVID-19 content promoting a safe learning environment for teachers and learners. Training materials were developed for the Community Works Programme (CWP) to screen learners and clean classrooms, alleviating the burden on educators, while distance and home-based learning support for 3.3 million children were provided through the distribution of the *ActiveLearning@Home* series. For children under 6-years, the *Tshwaragano ka Bana and the 'Let's play, learn and grow together'* series reached 142,500 parents/primary caregivers and 780,000 children in schools through the 2Enable (online) content.
5. UNICEF's support to the Care and Support in Teaching and Learning (CSTL) pillar included the construction of 151 handwashing stations in schools and 12 Early Childhood Development centers across three provinces improving hand hygiene for 91,000 children
6. The provision of psychosocial support for learners and teachers was aligned to the back to school/reopening programme, with Childline, the DBE and Psychological Association of South Africa through which 32,000 children were reached with direct advice, support and referrals if necessary.
7. UNICEF participates at the national level in the ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund, supported by the Presidential Employment Stimulus, that disbursed funding to assist the ECD sector and its workforce following the impact of COVID-19.
8. UNICEF's response to the July 2021 unrest in KZN includes: ongoing support to the repair and reconstruction of infrastructure in 5 schools; providing play-based Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) for schools that were vandalised; mental health and psychosocial support for teachers, non-teaching staff, practitioners and facilitators on how to cope and respond to traumatic situations; supporting affected schools with the digital recovery and reconstruction of records; and expanding the national school nutrition programme to vulnerable ECD centres not covered under the current DBE programme.

## Child and Social Protection

1. The Department of Social Development (DSD) and UNICEF Real Time Monitoring Tool (RTMT) was used in KZN to assess the impact of the flooding on households. Field teams, consisting of child and youth care workers, reported on the immediate impact to inform response. Feedback showed that livelihoods had been affected and access to power and safe water restricted, while flood damage slowed the emergency response to some areas. UNICEF cash-based interventions were disbursed through partner Future Families to support 160 households affected by the floods.
2. UNICEF continues to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the safety and well-being of children through partner Childline South Africa's monthly reports. These highlight the challenges that children face and in turn enable targeted programming for impact and effective resource allocation.
3. Peacebuilding engagements and mediations were held with members of the religious sector and communities as part of the ongoing response to the unrest and violence that took place in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal last year. A total of 155 representatives of the religious sector were trained in Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Free State on care and response to violence against children. The community engagements, including peacebuilding community sessions, were broadcast on national television on two separate occasions and on social media.
4. UNICEF provided food relief and social relief through distress packages that were given to communities in three provinces, namely the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Gauteng, reaching 521 children. Relief efforts ranged from providing school uniforms to children living in difficult circumstances, by providing lunch programs during the holiday and weekends for children, direct food supplies to families affected by poverty as well as supplying sanitary pads.

## Health and Nutrition

1. UNICEF supported the national cold chain system strengthening COVID-19 and routine immunization work. Five cold chain consultants appointed by UNICEF are supporting the provincial health authorities in the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out, childhood immunization and cold chain activities in KZN, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, North-West and Gauteng provinces. This includes technical input into forecasting of vaccines and ancillary supplies, vaccine stock management, supervision visits with onsite mentoring and conducting and co-facilitating capacity building sessions on effective vaccine management.
2. UNICEF improved active case finding to recognize and treat children with acute malnutrition before they become severely wasted, using the family Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC). This was implemented in Gauteng and Kwazulu-Natal, with 92 community health workers being trained, who in turn reached some 1,851 households with children under five years. Health and child nutrition messages were provided to mothers and caregivers during the training.
3. UNICEF supported the revision of the Maternal and Child Health COVID-19 guidelines. The revised guidelines incorporated the latest evidence, data and clinical prevention and treatment for pregnant women, mothers and infants diagnosed with COVID-19 and has been approved by the National Department of Health.
4. UNICEF implemented the peer mentor program in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Limpopo provinces. An additional 5,794 pregnant and breastfeeding adolescent girls and young women were enrolled and are receiving peer education and psychosocial support services. One peer mentor lost her home and belongings in the KZN flooding and is being assisted to rebuild by both government and the mothers-to-mothers programme.

## WASH

1. UNICEF and partners launched a WASH response in support of the flood relief efforts in KwaZulu-Natal province. The work focuses on supporting efforts to ensure access to safe water, to hygiene supplies for affected families, to safe sanitation and handwashing and to safe solid waste management. WASH interventions will be complemented by a WASH Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) programme.
2. UNICEF in collaboration with partners – EnviroSan and Media In Education Trust (MIET) – finalized the installation of 10 handwashing with soap stations in schools in Mpumalanga, North-West and Limpopo provinces. This improved access to handwashing for 3,493 people. Social distancing markers, and stickers above each tap encouraged optimal COVID-19 related handwashing practices.

## Communication & Partnerships

### Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)

1. Following the KZN floods, graphics with life-saving information promoting handwashing, water safety, breastfeeding and child-support services were developed in English and isiZulu and circulated through provincial government's health and environmental safety structures, community radio, social media and partner networks.
2. The first weekly social listening report of online narratives around the flooding was generated using digital monitoring tools developed by the regional office to track online COVID-19 engagements. This tool serves as an early warning system, enabling UNICEF to intervene if divisive and toxic narratives related to the disaster emerge. An ongoing community radio response is being developed with Children's Radio Foundation and its four partner stations, with 190,000 listeners in affected districts.
3. The Zwakala campaign played a critical role in providing clear and facts-based information about the COVID-19 vaccine to young people, to increase the number of vaccinations in this age group. Zwakala, with government as a vaccination partner, hosted 4 activations in Johannesburg and Durban where nearly 1,500 vaccinations were administered. With partner, the Community Organising Working Group (COWG), the campaign started a "Month of Activations" targeting 14 areas in Johannesburg with low vaccine uptake. This included using trained mobilisers and extending vaccine services for documented and undocumented alike.
4. In partnership with Children's Radio Foundation (CRF), youth reporters at nine partner stations ran interactive shows to promote the COVID-19 vaccine. A report showed that 9 out of 10 youth listeners changed their opinion about the safety of the vaccine after engaging in interactive youth radio programming. Reporters are supported through a WhatsApp discussion group and bi-weekly fact sheets. CRF uses public service announcements and audio clips from youth discussions as the basis for shows. Of 723 listeners who provided feedback, 89% reported that the youth radio show changed their opinion about the safety of the vaccine; of those, 78% said they were no longer concerned about vaccine safety and 74% indicated that listening to the show convinced them to go and get vaccinated.
5. The weekly social listening report continued to be distributed through online channels, including the SACoronavirus website, and presented to, among others, the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Social and Behaviour Change. It served as a strong baseline for content development and creative work streams in crafting communications. The reports also informed weekly national communication priorities identified by the national vaccine Demand Acceleration Task Team (DATT), formed to strengthen vaccine roll out.
6. The RCCE team submitted three abstracts on UNICEF's COVID-19 response to the International Social and Behaviour Change Summit (SBCC) to be held in Morocco in December. In addition, the team contributed to the development of a fourth, by the National Department of Health Social Listening

workstream, and presented on the country's social listening process at the SBCC Summit's ESAR Regional Consultation in March. This will help to document good practice and to inform related work in the future.

7. UNICEF and CRF co-hosted a national meaning-making webinar for youth researchers to validate findings from the multi-country Children and Young People's Participatory research project on mental health. Critical local insights included that mental health is perceived as a foreign, external concept, and is considered a 'privilege'.
8. In partnership with World Vision, youth, faith and community leaders in 11 priority sites, across five provinces have been trained to promote COVID-19 vaccine uptake and strengthen local systems of community feedback. As part of the project, the new "Make WASH fun" methodology – developed by Clowns without Borders – is being piloted in the Western Cape, to invigorate hand hygiene promotion and COVID-19 prevention.

## Communication

1. UNICEF, as deputy-chair of the UN Communications Group (UNCG), worked with the UNCG to communicate the joint UN response to the KZN floods. This follows similar work following the July unrest response in 2021. Broader communication support related to the UN's work on the "District Development Model" in eThekweni district, KZN, also continues.
2. Communication support – through the activation of various visibility platforms for a range of initiatives, launches and commemorations during the first quarter of 2022 included:
  - a. Breastfeeding Week – including messaging that highlighted the advantages of breastfeeding for healthy infants during the pandemic.
  - b. The launch of the Education Plus Initiative – focusing, among other issues, on addressing the gaps caused by COVID-lockdown school closures.
  - c. Africa Vaccination Week launch – emphasising the importance of routine immunisation catch-up and continued COVID-19 vaccination
  - d. The signing of the United Nations Strategic Cooperation Development Framework between the UN agencies in the Government of South Africa
  - e. Launch of podcasts by the Children Radio Foundation, supported by UNICEF focusing on the post-July-unrest recovery
3. Media work related to the broad ranging impact of COVID-19 on children's lives included the positioning of an [op-ed](#) by UNICEF's Representative and the CEO of Afrika Tikkun, as well as multiple media appearances in [broadcast](#), radio and print / online outlets.

## Funding Overview and Partnerships

- UNICEF support to the Department of Health COVID-19 vaccination cold chain management work received a significant boost in March thanks to generous [funding from the Japanese Government](#).
- Vital support from Proctor and Gamble has enabled UNICEF to continue work with the Department of Basic Education in rehabilitating schools affected by the unrest in 2021, in-turn improving access to classrooms for children in KZN province.
- Following the KZN flooding, UNICEF South Africa launched an in-store campaign with Cotton On to raise urgent funds for the relief effort.
- The UNICEF South Africa CEO Network met in March to share information on and to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on children's physical and mental wellbeing.

## Challenges

- A growing sense that “COVID is over”, continued fatigue with measures to contain the pandemic and the juxtaposing fear of an impending 5<sup>th</sup> wave of infection driven by Omicron subvariants have created a polarized and charged environment that poses a challenge for increasing vaccine demand. Despite nearly 50% of the adult population vaccinated, the rate of vaccination is low among young people (18-34), the least vaccinated cohort. UNICEF’s youth focused vaccine promotion work continues, including through the Zwakala campaign and other initiatives.
- The broader impact of COVID-19 – with disrupted education affecting learning outcomes, the stress on the physical and mental wellbeing of children, as well as the impact of the pandemic on other communicable diseases and routine immunization – continue to be felt. UNICEF is driving programmatic interventions for children in response to the child rights issues exacerbated by the impacts of the pandemic
- Reaching children, caregivers and families affected by the KZN floods with a holistic package of support remains a challenge. Damage to key infrastructure – primarily water and sanitation – poses a knock-on concern for disease outbreaks in areas impacted. UNICEF continues to adapt and scale-up its response in KZN with partners to mitigate the immediate and mid to longer-term impact on children.

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