Media Update
28 March 2020

UNICEF
PRESS RELEASE

Despite challenges, UNICEF continues to ship vital supplies to affected countries amid soaring number of COVID-19 cases

COPENHAGEN/NEW YORK, 27 March 2020 – As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to grow, UNICEF is procuring and shipping vital supplies, including desperately required personal protective equipment (PPE), to countries affected.

UNICEF is engaged with approximately 1,000 suppliers and industry leaders across the world, to find a solution to current market constraints. Despite the extreme market conditions, including aggressive buying and emerging export restrictions, UNICEF has managed to secure availability from April to June from suppliers for key products, such as 26.9 million surgical masks, 4.8 million respirators, 6 million coveralls, 7.1 million surgical gowns, 1.5 million goggles and 29,000 infrared thermometers.

“While the speed and scale of the outbreak is posing countless challenges, we continue employing every effort to ensure that UNICEF supplies reach those in need as quickly as possible,” said Etleva Kadilli, UNICEF’s Director of Supply Division in Copenhagen. “Protecting healthcare workers remains a top priority. These are the heroes on the frontline who continue tirelessly providing care and support to children and families affected in this unprecedented global crisis.”

Since the start of the outbreak, UNICEF has shipped more than 4.27 million gloves, 573,300 surgical masks, 98,931 N95 respirators, 156,557 gowns and 12,750 goggles in support of countries as they respond to the pandemic.

Recent shipments have included:
UNICEF has delivered around US$2 million worth of hospital equipment and personal protective equipment to Hubei Province, China to aid the Government response there to COVID-19. Supplies included 150 defibrillators, 200 electrocardiogram monitors, 35 portable ultrasound systems, 100 infusion pumps, 40,000 N95 masks, 20,000 gowns and 13,000 goggles.

Since 1 March, three shipments – weighing around 8 metric tons - of PPE supplies have successfully arrived in Tehran, Iran. Supplies have been distributed to hospitals and health facilities in six most affected provinces, with 18.5 tons of PPE items expected to arrive in the country over the coming days.

This week, UNICEF successfully shipped 14 metric tons of PPE items to Pakistan to protect frontline health workers including 114,300 surgical masks, 12,681 gowns and 449,868 gloves.

Other shipments in the pipeline include PPE to D.P.R of Korea, Eritrea, Indonesia, Palestine and Venezuela and oxygen concentrators to South Sudan, DRC, Eritrea, Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Despite Europe being one of the regions hardest hit by COVID-19, UNICEF’s Supply Division in Copenhagen, the largest humanitarian warehouse in the world, remains fully operational: the warehouse operates with shifts 7 days a week and continues to produce kits including supplies for health, water, hygiene and sanitation, early childhood development and education. Teams across the division are working hard to increase access to COVID-19 supplies while continuing to support other ongoing programme operations and respond to emergencies including in Yemen, Syria and DRC.

The speed and scale of how the outbreak is spreading around the world are increasing pressure on markets and bringing unprecedented challenges to UNICEF supply operations.

Increased restrictions on international transport are having an unprecedented impact on freight operations globally – disrupting supply chains and causing bottlenecks, delays and higher costs in the delivery of lifesaving supplies for humanitarian and development programmes.

To address these challenges, UNICEF is reviewing global cargo aircraft capacity and coverage and is working with our offices around the world, freight forwarders and partner organisations to prioritise shipments and
arrange charter operations as required for delivery of emergency and critical supplies.

UNICEF has also taken preventive measures by decentralising some of its critical stocks, moving supplies including Emergency Kits and other essential relief supplies from Copenhagen to the hubs in Dubai, Panama, and Accra, with similar arrangements being organised for the Eastern and Southern Africa region.

On Wednesday, UNICEF launched an appeal for US$651.6 million to support its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Notes for editors:
Multimedia materials available here: https://weshare.unicef.org/Package/2AM408W4FV9P

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