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Iran Country Office Humanitarian Situation Report End of Year 2021



Reporting Period: 1 January to 31 December 2021

Highlights

- Due to public vaccination (partly supported by UNICEF), Iran has witnessed a recent decline in COVID-19 daily hospitalization and deaths, while observers alarming the initiation a new wave with Omicron as the prevalent variant. All provinces are labeled in blue or yellow (low- to medium-risk) categories.
- On 31 December 2021, WHO reported that the cumulative COVID-19 death toll in Iran has risen to 131,606 (34 new daily deaths) and 6,037,090 total confirmed cases (1,703 new daily cases).
- In total, 116,210,697 vaccine doses have been administered. 51,194,091 individuals receiving two doses and 5,517,736 individuals receiving 3 doses (WHO weekly vaccination update, 26 December 2021)
- The 2021 HAC still faced a funding gap of 53 percent. Without sufficient funding, ICO was not able to implement many of the planned activities.

Situation in Numbers 5.5 million



children in need of humanitarian assistance

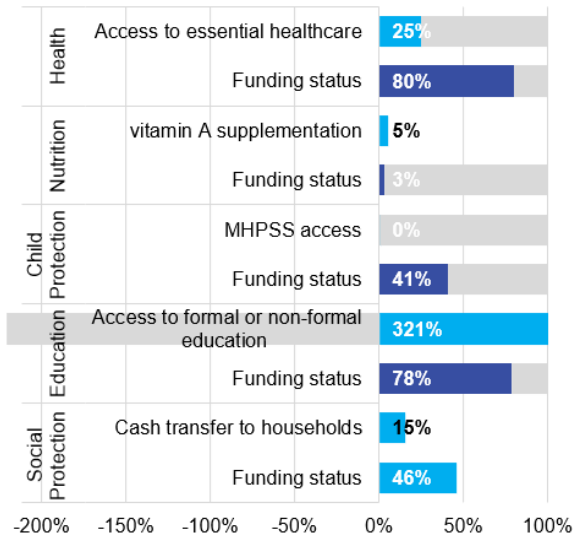


11.4 million
people in need



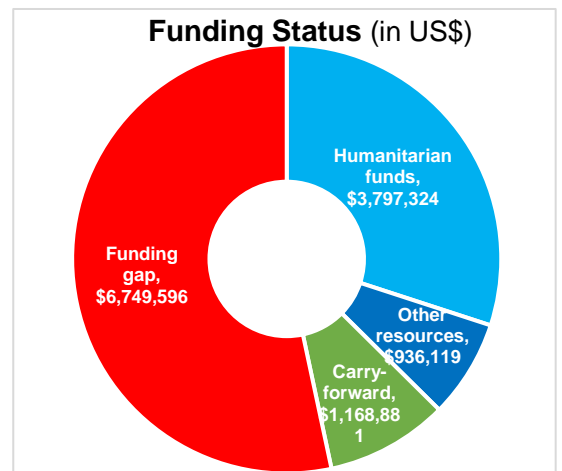
1.5 million
children to be reached

UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



Funding Status

UNICEF Appeal 2021: \$14 million



Funding Overview and Partnerships

UNICEF Iran appealed for \$14 million to sustain the provision of life-saving services for children and their caregivers affected by COVID-19 in Iran. In 2021, the Governments of Austria and Italy, the European Commission, Danish NatCom and Global Humanitarian Thematic Funding (GHTF) generously contributed to UNICEF Iran's humanitarian response. UNICEF expresses its sincere gratitude to all public and private donors for their contributions.

In 2021 HAC still has a funding gap of 53 percent. With sufficient funding, over 10,000 households could have had access to adequate nutritious foods, and over 30,000 children could have received the psychosocial support. Furthermore, 7,230 most vulnerable children could have had access to education. Given the additional funds, UNICEF would be able to support 500 schools in the most disadvantaged areas to prepare for safe school reopening. And UNICEF aims to roll out its "Cash Plus" programme in four provinces, targeting the remaining 42,400 households in need of this assistance. Addressing the funding gap will also enable UNICEF to roll out its Cash Plus programme in two additional provinces (partially in Baharestan and full coverage in Beshagard), targeting the remaining 28,900 households in need of this assistance.

Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

As of December 2021, Iran has witnessed a decline in the number of COVID-19 infections, while observers alarming the initiation a new (sixth) wave with Omicron as the prevalent variant. All provinces are categorized in blue or yellow (low to medium risk) groups. The Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education and WHO report 131,606 cumulative death toll and a total of 6,037,090 confirmed cases (31 December 2021).

Following the pandemic and its impact on the economy, the availability of food and nutrition services has reduced for thousands of children, women, and families. This has resulted in a negative impact on the quality of diets and nutrition practices, causing increased malnutrition among the population groups with the highest nutrition needs, including under-five children.¹

The pandemic continues to substantially impact the mental health of children and families by disrupting social connectedness, daily routines, and access to resources. The socio-economic pressure caused by COVID-19 has provided grounds for the development of a wide range of coping behaviours (such as school dropout, and child labour/marriage) which will have long-term consequences on children's wellbeing.² In such situations, the importance of community resilience in emergency settings has become more evident for ensuring the mental health and wellbeing of children and their parents/caregivers and social protection support schemes.

Given that schools have been closed since early 2020, distance learning was provided through the Ministry of Education (MOE) online learning platform (known as SHAD), national TV, and printed materials. Schools are currently advised to be at least partially open but there are no data on how this is being implemented and how much of the schoolwork is still being done online. According to the MOE, 21 percent of the student population, or 3.2 million students (out of 14 million), do not have access to the SHAD platform. Considering the digital devices and internet access required, children with multiple vulnerabilities, such as children with disabilities and those from low-income families living in disadvantaged areas, are more likely to lose access to distance education through online modalities and are at at-risk of school dropout.⁴

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Health

The Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME) initially requested the procurement of 1 million COVID-19 diagnostic test kits in late 2020. Noticing the urgency for procurement of test kits, UNICEF Iran procured 2,258 packs of test kits and benefited 216,768 individuals. Since then, the capacity of MOHME was strengthened and further needs were covered by the Ministry.

The MOHME managed to procure some of the HIV rapid diagnostic kits through other resources and reduced its request from UNICEF to 20,000 kits. UNICEF procured these test kits through the Global Humanitarian Thematic Funds. UNICEF continues to support MOHME in providing specific HIV/AIDS

prevention, treatment, and care services to adolescents and youth under its differentiated service delivery plan to cover approximately 500 adolescents living with HIV/AIDS and approximately 2,500 adolescent boys and girls affected by HIV/AIDS through capacity building, technical assistance and awareness raising.

Nutrition

In response to the nutritional needs of children under five at risk of Vitamin-A deficiency, 1,362,000 mega doses of Vitamin-A supplements were procured and distributed in eight food-insecure provinces during 2021. The funds provided enabled UNICEF in reaching the target for its indicator on Vitamin-A supplementation. However, there is still a funding gap of 97 percent. Further funding will enable UNICEF to advocate for enhancing the food and nutrition security of the most vulnerable children through the distribution of food vouchers in priority provinces.

Child Protection

UNICEF continued supporting the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), both technically and financially, in strengthening community resilience in the face of natural and man-made disasters and related social harms. UNICEF continues supporting IRCS to conducting a needs assessment, developing an action plan for establishing and operationalizing the “Red Crescent Houses”, developing relevant training packages and building on the capacity of IRCS volunteers and selected community members on the developed packages. A consultant has been recruited to conduct a needs assessment, developing an action plan, and developing training packages. However, due to the Afghan Refugee Crisis, the regular activities under the workplan with IRCS were delayed. The consultant is currently conducting the need assessment and the activity is expected to be fully implemented by the end of 2022 covering 2,000 children in Tehran.

Additionally, UNICEF Iran supported MOHME, MOSY, MOE, DCHQ and IRCS to provide the Remote Stepped Psychosocial Care and Support (RESPECT) for 1,178 vulnerable young individuals and parents affected by COVID-19 crisis in 31 provinces throughout the country.

Education

In support of safe return to in-person education, UNICEF delivered masks, sanitizers, and gun thermometers for 231,042 children. UNICEF also continues to partner with the Ministry of Education and Special Education Organization to ensure better access to education for the most at-risk children including children with disabilities, refugee children, and out-of-school children through supporting the implementation of WASH and IPC standards and protocols in 3,923 schools (954 regular schools and 2,969 special schools).

UNICEF procured and distributed digital learning equipment and devices to facilitate the access to distance learning for students with special needs. As part of this project, 32 schools for children with special needs were equipped with digital learning studios for the development of accessible distant learning materials, 4,123 students with special needs were provided with assistive learning devices, and 1,266 students were provided with tablets.

Social Protection

The Cash Plus programme (conditioned, with soft conditionality) was rolled out in the two provinces of Khuzestan and Kermanshah to provide immediate support to more than 6,500 households with children in the lowest three deciles based on household income and benefit 7,147 children. While the programme provides immediate support to these vulnerable households, it also serves as a tested model for national scale-up and for developing an integrated child-sensitive national social protection system, including for the identification of capacity gaps in the system.

The first cash-transfer was made to the identified households to register and build their trust to participate in the programme. At the initial phase, the programme reached 2,500 out-of-school children, and 4,546 children at risk of leaving school due to the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. In addition, eighty-one children with disabilities and 464 adolescents between 15-18 will receive vocational education training to ease their learning to earning.

The third draft of the Standard Operation Manual (SOM) for the Roll-out of the cash transfer programme in Harsin and Khorramshahr cities was developed together with the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare (MCLSW) and with the technical support of the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), outlining the design and implementation features, operational rules and procedures, tools and instruments for the cash transfer cycle.

Furthermore, the non-cash support mechanism was initiated based on the immediate needs identified by an e-committee including provincial authorities, MOE, MCLSW and other actors in the field based on the situation analysis and in line with the objective of the programme. For example, summer classes started in July to support 106 children who were out of school due to their academic weakness, and 4,652 at risk of drop-out from school due to economic conditions or falling behind the curriculum due to COVID-19 interruptions. The summer classes included in-person COVID-19 compliance educational support and targeted make-up exams. Hence, the next three instalments were released to 7,147 children identified with soft conditionality in July and the next one was released in September. Approximately 1,000 additional children will be provided with educational packages, stationary, and counselling sessions. However, the funding and the support mechanisms of this part of the program is through MCLSW/SWO ongoing schemes supported by government through in-kind resources.

C4D, Community Engagement, AAP

Throughout 2021 and concurrent with the fourth and fifth waves of COVID-19, UNICEF Iran supported a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) response to ensure the dissemination of safe, timely, and tailored information to communities. These materials were shared mainly through UNICEF online platforms, online and offline platforms of 31 medical universities across the country, online and offline training workshops, state TV channels, private sector partners' online platforms, as well as adolescent wellbeing clubs.

Close to 2 million individuals were reached in 2021 through three videos on the promotion of routine vaccination aired from UNICEF's Instagram, as well as MOHME's available platforms and health and vaccine centres. In addition, 5,000 banners and 84,000 posters were produced and distributed among over 60 cities in 31 provinces, including 63 Universities of Medical Sciences and 30,000 affiliated health and vaccine centres, to raise COVID- and vaccination awareness among health workers and parents.

In collaboration with MOHME and national NGO partners, UNICEF Iran supported the provision of 2,500 educational materials, brochures, booklets, and pamphlets, design, and production of a comprehensive mobile application for education, empowerment, and awareness-raising for families with children with disabilities (CWD) affected by COVID-19. These activities have been ongoing in 56 cities in Iran among identified disadvantaged families, single-headed household families, and Afghan refugee families living with autism.

UNICEF supported MOHME's Adolescents Health Department and the Ministry of Education in developing 100 gender and age-sensitive educational communication materials including videos, banners, and posters for the wellbeing of children and adolescents, with themes such as healthy eating, physical activities, mental health, controlling chronic diseases, school re-opening, and COVID-19. Based on MOHME reports more than two million students and parents watched these videos on MOE SHAD digital platform, and more than 10,000 posters were distributed among 63 Universities of Medical Sciences across 31 provinces. Moreover, ICO has supported the Drug Control Headquarters (DCHQ) to produce 4 short gender-sensitive videos for adolescent boys and girls on the prevention of drug use during COVID-19 pandemic.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

Since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF Iran website and social media channels have been actively engaged in improving the knowledge and information of the general public and media on COVID-19 prevention and response, highlighting the needs of the most vulnerable children. The dedicated COVID-19 section remains to be the highest visited page in the UNICEF-Iran website, offering over 100 COVID-19 informative articles/infographics in Persian.⁷ Our website received more than 4.5 million individual visitors and about 6.5 million page visits in 2021.⁸ UNICEF increased its audience engagement on social media by updating content on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook, with a newly opened LinkedIn account, as well as

posting material on APARAT (Iranian video-sharing platform) and YouTube channels. Followers of UNICEF Iran's Instagram page reached a record high of 574,000 in December 2021, marking the highest number of Instagram followers among all UN agencies in Iran and UNICEF offices in the MENA region.⁹ UNICEF Iran webpage with a Persian article containing key information for parents on COVID-19 recorded the highest public visit ever among all UNICEF websites globally, with over 1.5 million visitors, and placed Iran among the top three countries. The Persian material on COVID-19 was also shared with other UNICEF offices in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey, upon their request, for sharing with Persian audiences. The outreach of UNICEF Iran's social media accounts is estimated at 20 million individuals per year, with the number expected to further grow as followers increase on different platforms.

In 2021, several articles produced by UNICEF and WHO on a variety of topics were translated for the Iranian public and posted on the UNICEF Iran website and social media, including how to amuse young children during lockdown, tips for families on strengthening mental health during the pandemic, how to protect children from digital media harm, how to manage stress for adolescents and youth, pregnancy and COVID, and many more. These articles have been reposted by several national media outlets, further increasing the outreach.

UNICEF Iran developed several human-interest stories on its COVID-19 response including on nurses who received UNICEF-procured PPE and vulnerable children receiving UNICEF hygiene items during COVID. The videos on maintaining routine vaccination of children during COVID-19 were posted on digital platforms of ICO and shared with the public.

Several RCCE videos, out of 100 videos produced by UNICEF, MOHME and MOE on the promotion of wellbeing among children and adolescents especially during COVID, were posted on the UNICEF Iran website and social media.

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Annex A

Summary of Program Results

Sector	Overall Needs	UNICEF and IPs response			Sector response		
		2021 target	Total results	Change since last report	2021 target	Total results	Change since last report
Health							
# of children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities	800,000	80,000	2,258 ¹	N/A			
# of adolescent girls and boys tested for HIV and who received the result of their last test	N/A	600	544	N/A			
# of pregnant women tested for HIV and AIDS	736,000	100,000	20,000 ²	N/A			
Nutrition							
# of children aged 6 to 59 months receiving vitamin A supplementation every six months	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,362,000 ²	N/A	1,000,000	1,362,000	N/A
Child Protection, GBVIE & PESA							
# children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support	3,533,664	2,800,000	1,288 ³	1,178			
# of social service workers trained on specific knowledge and skills to deliver essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic with UNICEF support in the reporting year	N/A	1,000	0	N/A			
Education							
# of children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	N/A	72,000	231,042 ⁴	231,042			

¹ UNICEF Iran CO has procured 2,258 packs of test kits and 216,768 people have been reached. Since then, the capacity of MOHME was strengthened and further needs were covered by this Ministry. No further needs to be covered by UNICEF Iran HAC.

² Actual unit costs appeared to be lower than expected due to the USD to IRR exchange fluctuations.

³ As explained in the narrative, the target for community resilience will be met after operationalization of Red Crescent Houses by the end of 2022.

⁴ ICO has reprogrammed ECHO 2020 fund in order to address the growing needs of the education system during COVID-19 disruptions.

# of schools implementing safe school protocols (infection prevention and control)		500	3,923 ⁵	3,923			
Social Protection & Cash Transfers							
# of households reached with cash transfers through an existing government system where UNICEF provided technical assistance and funding	24,000,000	42,000	6,500 ⁵	N/A			
C4D, Community Engagement & AAP							
# of people reached with messages on access to services	24,000,000	4,120,000	4,000,000	N/A			

Annex B

Funding Status

Sector	Requirements	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2021	Other resources used in 2021	Resources reprogrammed from 2020	\$	%
Health	1,618,200 ⁶	201,400	36,895	183,294	1,196,611	74% ⁷
Nutrition	1,566,000	50,000	0	0	1,516,000	97%
Child Protection	498,800	0	0	205,000	293,800	59%
Education	1,508,000	283,000	899,224	0	325,776	22%
Social Protection & Cash Transfers	8,853,120	3,262,924	0	780,587	4,809,609	54%
Total	14,044,120	3,797,324	936,119	1,168,881	8,140,996	58%

5 With the generous support of Austria and internal resources mobilized (\$1.4million) rollout of this program could only start in two provinces covering 6,500 households (7,500 reported in mid-year sitrep was a rough estimate based on the rapid situation analysis). More households would be covered upon receiving further funding.

6 An activity was fully achieved and was removed from the Health section of the Iran HAC 2021. Additionally, MoHME became self-sufficient in providing COVID-19 test kits and reduced the number of required HIV diagnostic test kits, so the net amount of US\$ 1,090,400 is removed from the needs in Health section, reducing the required fund for this section to US\$527,800 (which will be adjusted in the next HAC revision).

7 According to the abovementioned point, funding gap is reduced to 20%.

Endnotes

1. WHO COVID-19 update based on secondary data and reports from MoHME, 2021
2. World Bank, 'Iran's Economic Update - April 2020', World bank, April 2020; and Islamic Parliament Research Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran, <<https://rc.majlis.ir/fa>>, accessed 15 October 2020.
3. Ministry of Education, 2021
4. See: <www.behzisti.ir/news/11526/>; and <www.icana.ir/Fa/News/398095/>
5. see: <<https://sccr.ir/print/10858/1/4>> and <<http://president.ir/fa/114189/printable>>, accessed 15 October 2020.
6. This figure varies depending on the source. See: <www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/823181/>, accessed 4 October 2020.
7. Confirmation email from Division of communication HQ (DoC)
8. Visible data of followers from UNICEF and UN agencies Instagram accounts, also confirmed by MENARO communication advisor