



War Child Uganda

Summary: COVID-19 Pandemic Programme Response



In line with War Child's global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, our work in Uganda is now focused on supporting the most vulnerable children, families and communities in the areas where we work to ensure their basic needs are met and their safety and dignity maintained in the midst of the crisis.

Crisis context

COVID-19 has spread to almost every African country within weeks, including Uganda which has now registered 83 confirmed cases. In response, the government has closed all schools and banned public gatherings to reduce the risk of transmission. This is impacting some 15 million children and youths - 10 million in primary schools, 2 million each in pre-primary and secondary schools and 314,000 students in university and tertiary institutions.

Uganda has conducted detection activities, providing testing kits, training lab technicians and strengthening public health surveillance in communities. However, the most powerful tool to prevent the spread of the disease has proven to be the basic preventative measures taken by individuals and communities.

War Child's response

War Child's response in Uganda is being conducted in two phases and implemented directly by facilitators and War Child staff.

Phase 1: This first phase is focused on information, education and communication, including raising awareness of the disease. This is through sharing reliable and scientific information that protects children and families against infection and upholds their social and emotional wellbeing. And supporting partner organisations and communities to maintain the supply of life-sustaining resources and services.

In this phase, we are also coordinating activities aimed at improving collaboration and partnerships with interagency, child protection, education, health and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) working groups in the capital and in settlements.

We are training and deploying community-based facilitators and youth volunteers to conduct door to door sensitisation campaigns on COVID-19 signs, symptoms and prevention, working

closely with the district COVID-19 taskforce. This also provides the opportunity to help assess the needs of people in settlements and inform the design of the next phase of the response.

We are also focusing on mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) activities aimed at improving family wellbeing. This is through the distribution of hygiene and education family kits to each of 15,000 families. These include: messages on COVID 19, hand-washing, how to take care of children, and how to support children's education at home; indoor games such as puzzles and blocks; and art materials such as drawing books, pencils, and crayons.

We are also adding a mental health helpline, which was originally scheduled for phase 2, but which was launched earlier to address the service gap. We have already received more than 90 calls for this service, mostly asking simple questions and some focused on violence and domestic abuse.

All these activities are taking place, and thanks to a transport restrictions exemption, we are still able to reach communities in remote areas.

Phase 2: This will be fully informed by what we have learned in phase 1, the evolving context and on War Child's theory of change. It will be conducted by local implementing partners and will only take place if the COVID-19 situation continues and outbreaks are not contained in the first phase. It is expected to start in early May and end on 31 July 2020, if required.

The work will include mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) via a call centre/counselling helpline for children and caregivers; developing, distributing and broadcasting audio and printed MHPSS messages to communities via megaphone and other channels; and organising weekly MHPSS community radio talk shows with call-in options providing MHPSS support.

It will also involve providing child protection by stationing mobile teams in every settlement to respond to extreme cases, sensitising families to child protection, COVID-19 and hygiene issues via radio talk shows and supporting reported protection cases. It will also provide cash to extremely vulnerable families facing food shortage to help avoid serious neglect and violence against children.

Lastly, it will provide education support by adapting Can't Wait to Learn (CWTL) so children can use tablets at home, distributing CWTL mini-games for math and reading via small exercise books which children can do at home and conducting phonics lessons via local community radio lessons

Support for our work

A number of donors have already shown appreciation and support for our work given the current difficult circumstances. However, additional and ongoing support remains welcome, given we will need effort and resources to step up our usual work, focusing on mental health and psychosocial support.

For further information, please see www.warchildholland.org or email info@warchild.nl