DEC COVID-19 APPEAL

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) launched a specific Coronavirus Appeal on 14 July 2020. By the end of August 2020, the collective fundraising campaign had raised over £22.5 million, including UK Aid Match.

For this specific Appeal, and contrary to other DEC Appeals in response to emergencies already unfolding, the approach was proactive, based on the idea that responding as early as possible with preventative measures was the most effective way of stopping the pandemic. Prioritising countries in anticipation of humanitarian needs from the Covid-19 epidemic was challenging and decisions had to be made with a 'no regrets' approach based on the likely humanitarian impact of an outbreak in each country\(^1\).

The resources mobilized via the Coronavirus 2020 Appeal were allocated to the 14 DEC Member Charities already working in 7 fragile states in Asia (Afghanistan and Bangladesh for the Rohingya crisis), the Middle East (Yemen and Syria) and Africa (DRC, Somalia and South Sudan). These 7 countries were therefore selected as priority countries facing a critical situation exacerbated by the Covid-19 crisis. The funds were used either to adapt on-going projects, or to develop new projects to respond to anticipated health-related and other impacts of the pandemic,

\(^1\) - As data about prevalence of COVID at the time of the decision were not available and/or accurate in most of the countries, DEC secretariat used the INFORM COVID-19 Risk Index and the Global Health Security Index in order to identify countries most at risk from health and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19.
or to cope with the impacts of the measures taken to stop it. Special attention was given to specific due diligence and protection measures for staff and partners.

A first allocation of £13m was made in July 2020, of which DEC Member Charities budgeted £10.9m for Phase 1 programmes (14 June 20 - 31 January 21). A second allocation was disbursed in November 2020. Phase 2 programmes will run from 1 February 2021 - 31 January 2022.

**OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW**

This Real-Time Response Review (RTRR) conducted in November 2020 aimed to contribute to real-time collective learning and identify lessons and adjustments for the second phase of the response. The three specific objectives of the RTRR were:

- **Objective 1:** Better understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on contexts (evolving and diversified needs, access constraints, etc.), and on Member Charities, their partners and key stakeholders.

- **Objective 2:** Analyse adjustments that have already been made and those that are still needed in humanitarian programming in each country and at the global level.

- **Objective 3:** Facilitate discussion between Member Charities about lessons and innovative ideas related to the Covid-19 response.

**COUNTRY CONTEXT**

At the time when countries were being selected for funding from this appeal, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is faced with multiple vulnerabilities and risks, was ranked very high (9th out of 189) in the INFORM Covid-19 Risk Index. The DRC has experienced conflict for more than 2 decades. This has resulted in challenges such as ethnic divisions, poverty, human rights violations, and internal displacement. With over 5 million displaced persons, DRC has the vast majority of IDPs and the largest number of displaced people in Africa, as reported by UNHCR. At the beginning of 2020, the underdeveloped health-care system was already dealing with Ebola, Cholera, Measles and Malaria outbreaks.

The first case of Covid-19 was confirmed in the DRC on March 10, 2020 in Kinshasa. Public health specialists, the Congolese authorities and the international community were concerned that there might be a massive outbreak of Covid-19. A state of emergency was declared from March to August, but a total lockdown was only instigated in Gombe (Kinshasa). Movement was restricted throughout the country, and borders were closed, as were airports, ports and schools.

At the time of this Review, 335 deaths have been recorded out of 12,858 cases of contamination. The measures taken to contain the virus have had a significant impact on already vulnerable population and fragile health systems.

Save the Children distribute individual kits to hospitals.
### CORE HUMANITARIAN STANDARDS COMMITMENTS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ENGAGEMENTS</th>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Although the virus did not spread as it had been feared it might early in the year, the decision to allocate resources for Health and WASH activities made full sense as part of a “no regrets” approach in the context of DRC. The question now is whether to continue to disseminate broad prevention messaging about Covid-19 or whether to adopt a more specific approach, taking into account the impacts of the pandemic in the country.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Timeliness of aid in the context of uncertainty and global disruption of the supply chain was an issue and DEC Member Charities did what they could to overcome the various constraints. If changes are to be made to programmes for phase 2, flexibility is key to ensure timeliness.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The community-based approach to prevention and surveillance supported by the DEC Member Charities contributes to better preparedness and strengthens local capacities. However, Covid-19 is seen as the latest “business” for local authorities and internationals, highlighting the importance of previous experiences in the acceptance of present and future responses.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Communicating with communities in order to raise awareness and deal with rumours is a key aspect of the response in DRC. DEC Member Charities are actively working on these issues through a wide range of approaches and media (social media, churches, community workers, etc.).</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Teams pay for past mistakes when they arrive in areas where previous responses have gone badly, as is the case in some places in DRC. This highlights the importance of putting in place safeguarding and accountability measures in order to avoid any misconduct.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>DEC Member Charities are involved in various coordination systems at national and regional levels with aid actors as well as with national and local authorities. This coordination is effective despite the fact that meetings are organised at a distance.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>The engagement of DEC Member Charities with the DEC RTRR underlines their willingness to learn and improve. Changes already introduced for phase 2 show that they are capable of doing so.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Duty of care, as implemented by DEC Member Charities in this response, has been central in order to minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission amongst staff and partner organisations. Working from home and using new distance-learning or distance-supporting approaches has introduced new ways of working that will certainly last beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>No specific information was collected related to this issue.</td>
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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM A BROAD TO A MORE SPECIFIC APPROACH TO COVID-19 PREVENTION

Building trust and involving the community are necessary in order to prepare for sensitive future phases such as blood testing for seroprevalence studies and vaccination campaigns.

- Prevention messages could be much more focused on at-risk groups (e.g., co-morbidity cases, elderly people) instead of the initial approach, which was more general.

- Special attention should be given to monitoring the secondary impacts of Covid-19 on specific groups such as vulnerable children, young girls and teenagers.

FROM A COVID-SPECIFIC RESPONSE TO A BROADER APPROACH TOWARDS EPIDEMICS

- Even though there are very few confirmed cases of Covid-19, it makes sense to continue supporting a community-based approach to prevention and surveillance systems that are useful for other epidemics.

- The use of social media to reach young people is an interesting development, given the substantial number of mobile phones in the country and should be strengthened.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION & TRUST

- The quality of the information shared is also of paramount importance: the specific characteristics of Covid-19 should be explained (high transmission but low morbidity - apart from for some population groups), rumours should be monitored and messages adapted according to the evolution of the pandemic.

- Communicating with communities to raise awareness and combat rumours is essential in DRC and efforts should continue to be made, using different media, communicating through various opinion leaders and targeting different population groups.

- The role of faith-based organisations and churches is of key importance in such a context. The partnership with EAC, who in turn are working with other churches and mosques, is an effective way to counterbalance the population's lack of trust in the authorities.

EACH HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PREPARES THE NEXT - FOR THE BETTER OR FOR THE WORSE

- Some DEC partners are considering the idea of preparing the future vaccine campaign against Covid-19 through the sensitization of communities, given that they might initially be reluctant to get vaccinated.