

# Impact of COVID-19 on Mothers and Children



Using **Past Learnings** -  
To Guide Present Actions

- Dr Luwei Pearson

# What we know for now and from past

- **Nearly 35 million babies are to be born over next 3 months -**
  - Amidst lockdowns, restricted access, overburdened health systems, anxiety, isolation, fear of stigmatization and hospital acquired infections
  - **Many women might end up delivering at home or alone in hospitals**
- **117 million children likely to miss measles vaccine**
  - When measles resurgence is a global concern
    - 10 million cases, 142,000 measles deaths in 2018
  - **23 countries have already suspended measles campaign**



# What we know for now and from past

- **Nearly 1.5 billion children and youth are affected by school closures -**
  - Unprecedented scale, with 188 countries imposing countrywide closure
  - **Longer the school closure – greater is the risk of drop outs and child labor**
- **50 million children can fall into extreme poverty this year**
  - Adding to existing 386 million children already living in extreme poverty
- **Impact of confinement on mental health and safety -**
  - Anxiety and acute stress can impair cognitive development + long term impact
  - **Increased risk of being exposed to violence and abuse by care givers**

# What we know for now and from past

- **Potential impact on the functioning of health systems –**
  - **Disruption of routine services** – community, outreach and in health facility
  - **Community health workers being pulled out for surveillance and contact tracing**
  - **Overwhelmed health facilities** – refusal for admissions, early discharges, delays in emergency C-section, concerns around patient safety
  - **Health workforce** – burnout, anxiety/mental health issues, inadequate PPE, risk of infection further depleting workforce

***Underfunded health systems with limited fiscal space - Risk of diverting resources***

# UNICEF focus and priorities for COVID response

- **What are the guiding principles for UNICEF response?**
  - Besides the direct affect of virus, **secondary impact is even greater**
    - Liberia: full immunization coverage during EBOLA fell from 73% to 36%
    - Sierra Leone: hospital deliveries and C-sections reduced by 20% during EBOLA
  - Long term **impact disproportionately more on poor**
  - **Need Multisectoral response** to mitigate impact of -  
Impoverishment, interruption in education, undernutrition, mental health issues with overstretched health systems



# How UNICEF is helping – Globally and Locally...

## ■ **Controlling the spread and mortality due to COVID-19**

- Risk communication including addressing of misinformation
- Procurement - PPE, Oxygen concentrators, Testing kits, WASH supplies, soap/hand sanitizers, antibiotics and ORS.
- Infection prevention and control in health facilities
- Programmatic guidance to regions and countries for supporting governments – with WHO

## ■ **Mitigating and addressing secondary impact on Women and Children**

- Maintaining access and continuity of basic health, nutrition and WASH services
- Supporting continued learning and safe return to schools
- Protecting and prioritizing the most marginalized – social protection and mental health

# How IPA can support and guide actions...

- **Biggest Strength** – Ears and Feet on the ground, reach and connect with families
- **Credible role at policy table** and as part of government thinktanks
- **Advocacy with governments/ donors/ corporates**
  - Mitigating secondary impact – ensuring continuity, mitigation and restoration of services
  - Sustaining resource allocation from government and mobilizing additional funding
- **Capacity building** – both for government and private sector providers
- **Address misinformation**, share credible information with families and on social media
- **Adding to the evidence base and knowledge gaps around COVID -19**

**Children are Not the Face of COVID-19**

**But...**

**Still Run the Risk of Being its Biggest Victims**





**Thank you.**