Impact of COVID-19 on Mothers and Children

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

- Dr Luwei Pearson

unicef for every child
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?
  
  o 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

  o Long term impact disproportionately more on poor

  o 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.