

1. COVID-19 crisis in Work: No Child’s Business (WNCB)

The COVID-19 pandemic has a large impact on WNCB’s target population and the way we will implement our programme. Through this initial assessment with our country teams it is now becoming clear that next to the catastrophic health crisis, the mitigating actions to the pandemic in the various contexts have hugely affected our local communities and their capability to cope with crisis.

It is also clear that the crisis is still in full effect and that it is too soon to completely take stock of the situation. In the coming months it is therefore essential that the WNCB programme keeps monitoring the situation and that we allow teams to rigorously assess how the COVID-19 crisis is further affecting our target population and the achievement of our objectives.

Project teams are however taking into account the impact that the crisis is already having and we are starting to rethink the tailor made strategies in each context we work.

2. COVID-19 Health Crisis

To understand and forecast how COVID-19 is affecting our countries of implementation and to be able to have some sort of foresight into the future we are closely monitoring the health situation. The number of direct deaths due to COVID-19 in most WNCB countries is still relatively low (except for India). There are however strong indications that the pandemic is still spreading with increasing speed and specifically in India and Ivory Coast (Abidjan) the health crisis risks spinning out of control. In Jordan, Uganda, Vietnam and Mali the pandemic was kept at bay for quite a while, but continuously there are fears and signs that the virus might be re-emerging.

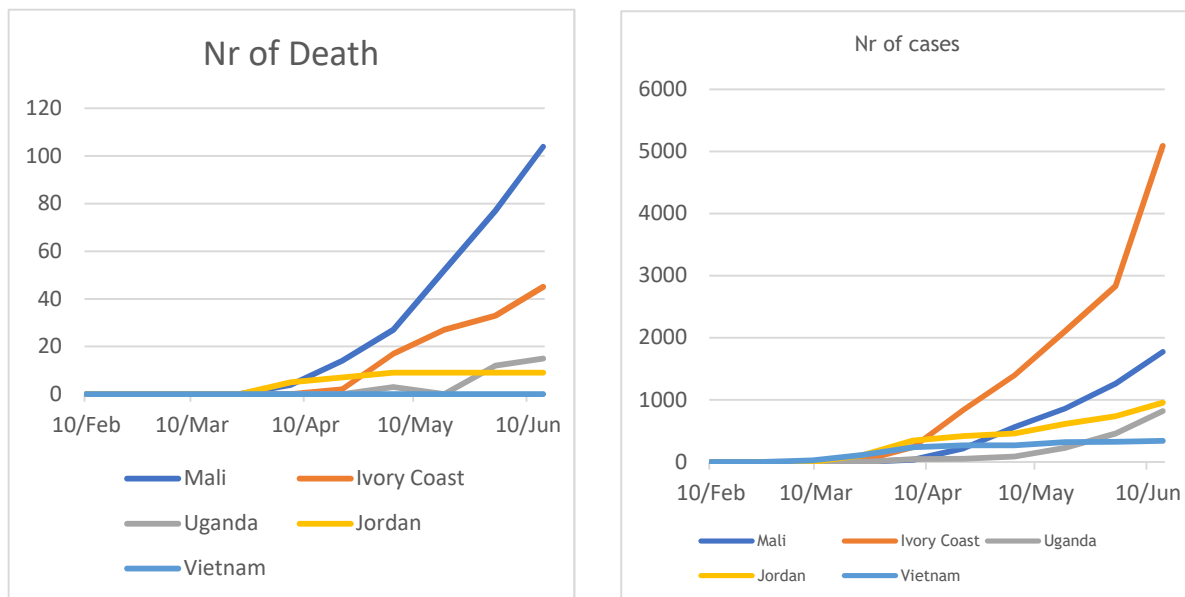


Figure 1& 2 Number of deaths and cases as per the 10th of June (source WHO)

Vietnam

As of 15 May, there have been only 312 confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) reported in Vietnam. The country team reports that the ‘Government’s *has put progressive and timely measures in place* which means that drastic action has been taken to curtail the virus and that there are only a few cases observed in Vietnam. To date, thousands of suspected cases are under surveillance and kept in quarantine.

Uganda

Alongside Vietnam, Uganda seems to be one of the least hit countries by the health crisis itself. The country seems well prepared to respond to any further spreading. Quarantine centres have been set up to house the suspected cases until fully confirmed negative of COVID-19 virus.

India

India has been in complete lockdown since the 25th of March as COVID-19 is spreading through the country. With the ever-rapid increasing cases, and the need to re-open the economy, there is no way to foresee how the COVID-19 outbreak can be stopped at all.

Mali

In Mali, the COVID-19 pandemic is still spreading. Initially the largest numbers were observed in large cities such as Bamako and Kayes but currently also in our communities of implementation some cases have been identified. It is unclear if further spread can be avoided as full-fledged lockdown has not been considered an option by the Malian government. This means that communities remain exposed to COVID-19 and Mali is not yet out of trouble.

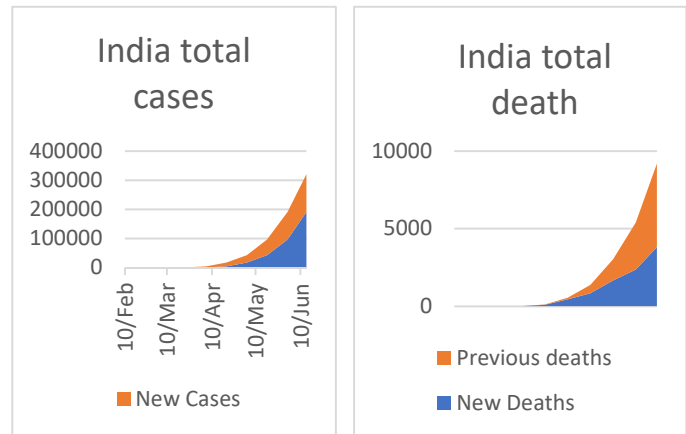


Figure 3&4 India cases and deaths (source WHO)

Jordan

Jordan seems to have curtailed the epidemic for now. The curve has been flattened and relatively few deaths have been reported. However, there is still a fear of new outbreaks due to the existence of cluster outbreaks. Access to camps where WNCB operates was still restricted as per mid-June and access to partners and group sessions inside and outside the camp is still prohibited.

Ivory Coast

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to 24 districts in the country. In June, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has tripled. The number of cases has risen from about 3,000 to 9,702 (more than 6,700 new cases in June) and at the time of reporting it was on the verge of passing the 10,000 mark.

3. COVID-19 countermeasures and its impact on the target population

As in the rest of the world in all WNCB countries the government has put in place measures to prevent further spreading of the virus. These lockdown measures have caused an unprecedented situation where workers are prevented to go to work and children cannot go to school. People in general are restricted in their movement. Services deemed non-essential have been stalled and events have been cancelled.

Particularly relevant for WNCB is that in all intervention areas government actions and social services that are meant to keep children out of child labour are not fully functional. In India for instance *'Statutory bodies under child protection such as child welfare committee, juvenile justice board and special juvenile police unit are not working in full capacity in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown.* This means that in this crisis, where children risk to be in child labour or fall back to child labour, children have reduced child protection services.

Governments have asked or obliged people to obey social distancing practices in virtually all areas where WNCB works by asking people to keep 1 to 2 meters distance from each other. Next to these measures that restrict people's movement sensitization measures have been put in place such as promotion of regular hand washing with soap, regular use of hydro-alcoholic gel and mandatory wearing a mask. As further spread significantly depends on people adopting their behaviour these measures are also supported by WNCB partners.

Although many mention the countless measures taken to curtail the health crisis, few partners refer to assistance by the government to counter the economic crisis that is arising from the health crisis. The Mali government has proposed a special fund for those affected and a decrease of taxable percentages for essential goods such as rice and milk. In Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, support for those who are affected was one of the government's priorities. Support packages are provided to people (including children) who normally sell lottery tickets, as well as to homeless people who migrated from other places of the country. The value of one package for one supported person is VDN 750,000 (~ USD 35).

Case: Lockdown measures in the community Ivorian community of Sablé

A report shared by the Soubré health district noted that, following field activities, NGOs have pointed out that nearly 95 per cent of the population no longer observe the measures following the lifting of certain restrictions such as curfews, multi-person activities and the opening of restaurants.

This over-interpretation of the relaxation measures shows that the measures initially taken for the prevention of COVID-19 have had a considerable impact on some households living on the income they earn on a daily basis. Measures often do not promote the movement of people and prevent the movement of goods and other foodstuffs.

All this has further contributed to increased poverty to the extent that these households have not really been assisted as intended by the provisions announced by the authorities. In this context, it is feared that children are increasingly at risk of falling into the worst forms of child labour.

4. Effects of the COVID-19 crisis: heightened risks and reduced resilience to child labour for the most vulnerable.

In general, it can be stated that the community resilience has greatly reduced. In all countries there are reports that the most vulnerable will be affected heavily by the crisis. Minorities such as migrants, people working in the informal sector and refugees are hit hardest and children of these vulnerable groups face increased risks of child labour. Many people are not able to cope with the crisis as their livelihoods have been affected.

India

In India the people in our target communities are not allowed to leave their homes. This leaves them without income. Quite a lot of labourer's are migrants and are not able to benefit from the government relief programme such as food parcels. As households do not have financial buffers to deal with such a situation a lot of families are facing hunger. Children are specifically affected as they are unable to attend school and centre's where they would normally provide them with mid-day meals are also closed. The effects of schools being closed are beyond children's learning objectives and rights to proper education. As children do not attend schools, it is feared that they now face domestic violence, abuse, exploitation, child labour, child trafficking and forced labour. This means that children will need psycho-social support in a post-lockdown India.

Case: Stone and Cobbles from Rajasthan in India

The European market is the biggest taker of natural stone and cobbles from Rajasthan, especially from the WNCB project location. It is expected that the stone industry in Rajasthan may witness a massive increase of child labour. Exploitation at large scale is likely to increase as daily wage workers are expected or forced to work more hours to recover the earnings lost by companies during the COVID-19 lockdown crises. It is feared that children may be engaged in work along with their parents in this post-lockdown phase.

The Government of Rajasthan in India has issued advisories and guidelines for child protection officials to reach out to the most vulnerable children and provide protection services. However these services are very limited and the full scale of the problem in a post-COVID-19 situation should still be assessed to understand what services should be provided to whom.

Statutory bodies under child protection such as *child welfare committee, juvenile justice board and special juvenile police unit* are not working in full capacity in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown. As a consequence, marginalized children are not able to benefit from the regular safety nets of the government and are an easy target for employer and traffickers. Many children are engaged in child labour in the brick kilns, bidi industry and domestic work.

Vietnam

In their effort to contain the outbreak, the Government has imposed strict regulations including travel restrictions, school closures and shut down of non-essential service facilities and public gatherings in addition to cancellation of meetings and workshops since the end of March. Schools and educational institutions have reopened and have to meet a set of criteria to prevent further spreading

Due to the financial crisis arising from COVID-19 government social services are at risk. Vulnerable groups such as youths or communities that rely heavily on agriculture or other sectors impacted by lockdown measures particularly suffer from the suspension of economic activities due to the social distancing.

People have lost their jobs, and particularly vulnerable are the undocumented migrants who are often working in the informal sector and/or in factories. It is likely that children of parents that lose their job due to this pandemic, face a serious risk of dropping out of school as they have to start earning an income to survive. Children that are already working, are likely to fall into worst forms of child labour with reduced chances to get out of employment and go back to school. This leads to a vicious cycle of poverty in the lives of many families and children.

Mali

As for the already precarious economic situation, people face many obstacles to earn an income and families are depleting their family resources. Borders are closed and merchants are struggling to continue transporting goods to and from communities towards neighbouring countries.

Schools have been closed from mid-March until June 2nd. Due to the closure of schools, children have no other occupation and are likely to revert to gold mining sites in the intervention areas which continue to operate. The risk that children start working is therefore very high.

Uganda

Uganda has been in a lockdown since the end of March with only a slow re-opening for essential services. A lot of resources in terms of money, personnel, equipment are aimed at managing the spread of COVID-19, leaving few resources for other sectors including social protection of children. The government directed that ministries should reduce personnel working during these days to avoid overcrowding of offices. Moreover, due to the response to COVID-19 a lot of government

efforts are focused on prevention of the virus. Resources are aiming at managing the spread of COVID-19, leaving few funds and manpower for other work, including social protection. This has implications for the fight against child labour since the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is not able to do monitoring at the moment. Neither can local governments do monitoring in the mines in WNCB intervention areas since they are focusing at meeting the basic needs of the community, with food being a main issue at the moment.

In Karamoja region (where WNCB is implemented) people experience the consequences of the COVID-19 lockdown. The crisis is exacerbated due to desert locusts since February 2020. Insecurity is further arising from cattle raiding which has sprung up more recently (as it had gone silent for some time in recent years).

The target community in Moroto District has been hit hard by the effect of COVID-19. In Nakabaat village the government has dispersed all the miners from the mining areas who are currently scattered in the nearby villages. Many households in the community are not able to earn from mining and are in lack of basic needs including food. This situation forces miners to continue their mining activities illegally which puts them at risk of prosecution which leads to tensions and possible conflict between the community and the government.

All schools were closed on March 2020. The Ministry of Education is not certain when schools re-open. The government has started to use radio to continue classes remotely. But most vulnerable families do not have a radio. In Karamoja, children are not able to learn online since many families cannot afford improved technologies like smart phones and computers or even TVs. As a result, most of the children who were in school have been left idle and prone to working in the mines for longer hours. This has implications for children returning to school. There is a risk that more children may be stuck in mining even when the schools have re-opened. Additionally, the school closure will directly affect completion of the syllabus and the learning outcomes shall be affected negatively.

Many families do not have food for the children and the children are likely to be exposed to child labour like mining gold and marble or to engage in selling firewood and charcoal to get income to buy food for the households. The government has directed all businesses and shops that are not selling food items, to cease their operation. This means that households who depend on the sale of these non-essential items do not have income or reduced cash flows.

As the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development together with the responsible local governments gave their commitment, we anticipate that when this pandemic is eliminated, they will continue to support the fight against child labour.

Jordan

Rates of child labour are expected to increase significantly. The teams observed that forms of child labour started to re-appear upon the start of re-opening businesses. Worst forms of child labour are also expected rise, such as street children needing to earn income.

The closure of schools prevented all children from accessing education services. Although the government provided alternative distance learning alternatives, vulnerable children are not likely to have accessed such services.

People that work in the informal sectors and daily paid workers but also monthly paid workers in the private sector have been affected. Many have lost their jobs and others have received partial payments, especially with the enforced (emergency) laws that gave the employers the opportunity to reduce pays to certain percentages. The Jordanian government has started a COVID-19 crisis related social protection package with services that help people that earn income from daily paid wages. However, the services do not meet the needs of most people affected and is only a one time financial injection and not a long term solution.

Ivory Coast

The unprecedented pandemic has considerably increased unemployment and poverty rates. Many people lost their jobs and are now adding to the already significant number of people who were unemployed.

In view of the overcrowding in classrooms, it is proving difficult to comply with all measures, particularly physical distancing in schools, despite the provisions announced by the Ministry of Education. Some parents do not have the resources to provide masks of sufficient quality and quantity to their children. It has been observed that access to classrooms has been denied to pupils who do not wear masks.

The fear that child labour has become a reality is becoming clear in a rapid analysis of data collected during the partial lockdown organized by the International Cocoa Initiative. In the analysis of the data the assessment used *'a simple means comparison of child labour identification rates, we see that the percentage of children identified in child labour increased from 16% to 19.4% during the partial lockdown, compared to the same months in previous years in the same communities. This represents a 21.5% increase in child labour identification and this difference is statistically significant'*¹. The authors furthermore state that by in June 2020, schools in Côte d'Ivoire have already re-opened, and some of the lockdown measures had been eased. They state that *'While these changes may help to reverse the trend observed, the number of new COVID-19 cases in the country continues to rise, and the economic impacts of the pandemic and continuing partial lockdown are likely to continue to be felt'*.

5. WNCB's Contribution to the Response

Through their presence in the communities WNCB partners have contributed significantly to the COVID-19 response itself, sometimes focusing specifically on target communities of the WNCB programme and in other cases contributing to a larger nation-wide effort to prevent COVID-19 from spreading further.

WNCB partner staff report further that they have assisted in most common forms of COVID-19 response activities such as awareness raising, distribution of food and items, and health system support. In some cases, projects have started psychosocial services to children who were previously in child labour or are at risk to (re-)enter child labour. In most cases there was no direct financial input to the response effort. As the partners are trusted in their communities and have a (moral) responsibility towards the target groups, they are well placed to contribute to certain response activities. By doing so, WNCB supported the overall response significantly while still aiming to protect children from exploitation, eliminate child labour and get children back to school as soon as possible.

The **Jordan** WNCB team has contributed to COVID-19 awareness raising and has started psychosocial support activities for children. In **India** WNCB partners have contributed to COVID-19 awareness raising activities, they have distributed food and household items and they have provided community health system support. In **Mali** WNCB partners have contributed to the response by raising awareness about COVID-19. In **Uganda** the partners have contributed to COVID-19 awareness raising in the community and they have been engaged in distribution of food and items to the most vulnerable households. They also started provisional psychosocial support to children previously engaged in child labour. In **Vietnam** partners gave support to COVID-19 awareness raising, distribution of items, psychosocial support and health system support. In **Ivory Coast** the partners have mostly contributed to awareness raising and general effort coordinated by the government to prevent further spread and treat COVID-19 patients.

¹ https://cocoainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ICI_rapid-analysis-COVID-impact-child-labour-identification_1July2020-1.pdf

Case 1 Uganda: Local awareness raising

To respond to the COVID-19 crisis the WNCB partners had to find ways of supporting the communities as it became clear that the crisis will definitely impact the WNCB programme. As a result, the partners have continued to reinforce government efforts in creating awareness on health practices that communities can adapt as a way to manage COVID-19. Coupled with messages on healthy practices, are messages on child labour. Currently, Nascent is utilizing SMS platform to reach the grass root leaders and key influencers with messages in the local language on health precaution and safe practices to combat the spread of the pandemic as well as keeping children free from child labour. In doing this, Nascent is filling an information gap left by the Ministry of Health messages and the presidential addresses which are all done in English thus excluding communities who are not familiar with English, but also those without televisions and radios.

Case2 Ivory Coast: Specific Assistance within the Target community

At the level of the Nawa (Soubré) region, several awareness-raising campaigns on compliance with precautionary measures have been carried out by civil society organizations (including WNCB partners) with the involvement of the region's administrative and health authorities. Local radios have been trained by WHO on rumour management and COVID-19 related measures. Programmes are organized to get communities to ask questions for a better understanding of the symptoms of the pandemic. The various sensitisations carried out by local NGOs had led communities from the very beginning of the disease to observe the measures ordained by the Ivorian authorities.

A space within the Soubré General Hospital is being set up to take care of cases that will be confirmed. A plea has been made to the Prefect of the Nawa Region in order to obtain equipment for the hospitalization and isolation room for COVID-19 patients. Similarly, senior officials and businessmen from the Nawa region (members of the diaspora) have been solicited by partners for greater involvement in disease prevention initiatives. As these senior people role models they enjoy genuine trust in the community on whom they have a great deal of influence. They can therefore play a significant role in changing attitudes and practices in their home communities.

Weekly coordination meetings are held on a regular basis to enable each structure to take stock of the activities carried out and the difficulties encountered. These meetings provide a framework for sharing experiences and developing synergy between the different initiatives relating to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Nawa region.

Case 3: Jordan COVID-19 awareness raising by UNICEF Jordan

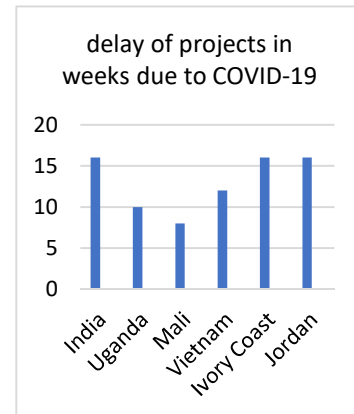
When the first case was observed in Jordan, UNICEF entered into partnership with the government of Jordan to raise public awareness on prevention measures and initiated a national campaign called Elak-0-feed. The overall objective of the national campaign was to inform, engage and empower the public through timely and consistent provision of key messages on COVID-19. The strategy focused on 3 pillars: 1) Risk Communication, 2) Community Engagement, and 3) Advocacy. Hence, the national campaign was created to be one reliable source of information to counter misinformation, rumours and myths. This was critical in reducing the spread of the virus and stemming the panic in the communities. The strategy then shifted to behaviour change, communication and adaptation of social norms to the ongoing situation. Activities targeted children, youth, parents and the target community through specific packages. This is helping the project partners to deliver impactful messages that promote the psychosocial wellbeing, resilience and acceptance of the current lifestyle, address stigma, discrimination, violence and cyberbullying with sensitivity and evidence-based messages, while also promoting health-seeking behaviour.

6. Project delays

All projects report that their efforts to implement planned project activities in the community (outcome 1a and 1b of the WNCB theory of change), have come largely to a standstill for a period of time. Inter-city and inter-country travel bans, assembly bans, and containment were almost impassable obstacles to the implementation of project activities.

When the COVID-19 crisis started most partners were still preparing field work for the baseline studies. Under normal circumstances the finalization of a baseline is a pivotal moment to fine tune and kick start the implementation of community activities as baseline knowledge allows local teams to make some essential choices in implementation and address root causes and barriers to achieve desired outcomes effectively.

Only in **Mali** the quantitative baseline data was gathered completely before the crisis. In **India** some project partners finalized data collection, but it was not possible to finalize to complete baseline study. Both in India and Mali, the capacity to analyse data efficiently was also reduced as most partners were and are unable to work effectively and start collaborating. At the same time a lot of partners also put focus on aiding in the response to COVID-19.



In **Jordan, Uganda and Vietnam** lock-down measured are slowly eased and this means that the projects will be able to conduct their data collection for the baseline in the months of July & August. In **India and Ivory Coast** the baseline is still halted.

Although community implementation is also still largely obstructed it needs to be well assessed how COVID-19 response activities and WNCB community activities can overlap. In **Jordan** the crisis in the refugee camps is so dire that they will need to start implementing some essential activities even though the baseline has not yet been conducted.

The efforts to advocate for child rights have been slowed down but the programme is specifically focusing on mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis on children in child labour. Project teams are keeping track on effects of the crisis on the community and are ensuring that the activities are organized in such a way they take into account the heightened risks mentioned.

Most activities that had been planned in the Netherlands and at international level to engage companies and governments in the fight against child labour (outcome 3 and 4 of the theory of change) could take on, albeit in a slightly different way (online). However, similar to the countries where we operate, in the Netherlands we also have experienced that companies and governments tend to shift their priorities, and first focus on getting their own house in order.

7. Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Child Labour in the countries

The way the crisis will evolve in each country will determine how each country programme can proceed and what activities are most relevant in a post-lockdown situation. As the crisis prolongs Households, communities and governments face the decision how they will proceed with the COVID-19 mitigation measures. In some contexts, it is even discussed to what extent it is realistic to keep the outbreak at bay at all, when this means people will suffer other consequences such as hunger and dire economic outcomes.

Knowledge and Research

In Uganda, Mali and India project teams propose that the effects of the crisis on child labour are thoroughly researched so awareness can be created about effects of the crisis on child labour. It is mentioned that *'putting emphasis on knowledge and evidence into public domain for creating groundswell of support among parents and community members against child labour and that the increase in capacity of partners to influence individual behaviour and the institutions helps to curb the menace of child labour'*.

Enhanced problem analysis

In most contexts the starting point (baseline figures) will be taken into account in both baseline assessments (qualitative and quantitative). Besides this it might be interesting to see how the research strategy can include findings on the impact of the crisis on the communities and what we can learn about the crisis programme wide.

Ensuring that children at risk to child labour benefit from Stakeholder Action

It is at this stage unclear how our target group will benefit from the type of relief activities by governments or other stakeholders. But it is advisable to assess per community where WNCB works if and how WNCB partners can link-up to a variety of actions that aim to relieve the 'most vulnerable' people. If WNCB ensures that specifically children at risk to child labour in our target communities are supported through these policies, we might help to reduce the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on these children, i.e. avoid more children to enter child labour and/or withdraw children from work and (re)integrate them in the education system.

Taking into account COVID-19 by mainstreaming the crisis in our Theory of Change

In all countries it is suggested to reinforce already planned activities and ensure that the impact of the COVID-19 crisis can be taken into account in all these activities. Examples of activities in which effects of the crisis can be taken into account are '*capacitating local partners on child protection mechanisms, sharpen advocacy skills to advocate with government about heightened cases of abuse, violence, child labour and child trafficking*'.

Psychosocial services

Additionally, the Uganda and India team propose to already start with provisional psychosocial support to vulnerable children and families affected by the crisis and specifically support children previously engaged in and/or at risk of (re)entering child labour. Moreover, it is mentioned that it is of highest importance to ensure that children can go back to school as soon as possible in a post COVID-19 situation.

Cash Transfer Programming

In India it is suggested that possibly cash transfers can help the most vulnerable to get through the crisis as best as possible.

8. WNCB programme wide

It is difficult to define how to deal with the COVID-19 context programme wide. Ivory Coast and India are still in the midst of the crisis. In other countries there are signs and/or fears that COVID-19 is not yet fully under control and that there are risks of further spreading. It is certain that WNCB work will be hampered for quite a while longer by ongoing COVID-19 measures. This also becomes clear as very few partners have already identified how to proceed in a post-lockdown situation.

This might also be because the crisis has not nearly come to an end. It is to be expected that there will be setbacks throughout the coming years of implementation due to second waves and local outbreaks. For the WNCB programme it is therefore very important not to make quick decisions and ensure that problems arising from the COVID-19 crisis are taken into account in the theory of change of each context through a proper problem analysis including barriers and assumptions. To be able to do this we will encourage the following actions programme wide:

1. **Data gathering and monitoring:** Gathering insights in the effects of COVID-19 on the ground through already planned baseline assessments
2. **Improved learning through knowledge sharing:** Ensure that all project teams are up to date with the most relevant information about COVID-19 in the contexts of operation (both country teams and working groups that are implementing activities in the Netherlands).

Ensure that each team does a barriers and assumption analysis to understand the priorities in each operational context.

3. **Further understanding our barriers and key assumptions:** Encouraging country teams to use the research budget in WNCB to further investigate barriers and assumptions and have complete understanding of the problems.
4. **Strategy design:** Contextualize the theory of changes and ensure that COVID-19 mitigating measures are mainstreamed in our strategies.
5. **Adjusting work plans:** According to an evidence base, consider which existing programme activities have become more relevant and require upscaling and thus reallocation of budget.