Country: Ethiopia

Committe: Jr. Unicef

Agenda Item: Impact of Covid-19 on Children

The coronavirus has been rapidly spreading across different parts of the world. The pandemic will have a severe impact unless coordinated preventive measures are undertaken.

Results showed that the majority of the population in Ethiopia are aware of the pandemic. Most people practiced handwashing with soap and water. But there is limited physical distancing in religious institutions, shops, and coffees where many people come together. Besides, staying at home remains a challenge among the majority. Still, there is a belief that the pandemic is a “punishment of God”, while others believe that it is an illness of the old and does not affect the children. In general, applying the recommended COVID-19 prevention measures, including the physical distancing, seem non-attainable as the majority continue to overlook government suggestions.

Ethiopia is exceptionally vulnerable to the pandemic beccause of its relatively rare health systems, insufficient infrastructure, population mobility, and susceptibility to social and political unrest. Thus, it becomes a priority for the nation to implement effective intervention strategies to contain the rapidly transmitting virus. After the first COVID-19 case on 13 March 2020, the Ethiopian government has adopted different measures endorsed by the World Health Organization. These measures include informing the public about regular handwashing with water and soap, physical distancing, contact tracing, self-isolation and quarantine measures. Also, the government has announced school and workplace closures, limited public gatherings and establishing COVID-19 task forces at different levels.

In terms of children and child care, health care service provision has been modified to managing COVID-19 cases, and this has been affecting the provision of maternal and child health services.

Other than these, inside the borders, The measures included are travel restrictions, suspension of international flights, international border closure, mandatory quarantines, flexible working arrangements, suspending public gathering and sports, closure of schools and universities, requirements for social distancing and others. In spite of all the measures taken, the country reported the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the East Africa region. As of October 22, 2021, Ethiopia reported 361,027 confirmed cases and 6,316 COVID-19 related deaths. Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia comprised more than 50% of total confirmed COVID-19 cases within the country. The government of Ethiopia has identified RMNCH services as essential health services for improving maternal, neonatal and child health. Considerable achievements in reducing maternal mortality ratio, under-5 and infant mortality rates have been documented during the last two decades in the country by implementing essential health services. Maintaining access and utilization of essential health services in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial to prevent unfavourable outcomes and protect the gains made over the past years in reducing maternal, infant and child mortality rates. In April 2020, the Ministry of Health-Ethiopia set a guide for maintaining essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethiopia has been going on taking some measures. including maintaining and wearing face mask, using hand sanitizers, physical distancing and developments in child-care services as well as vaccination coverage among children aged 15-23 months.

When we consider the upcoming solutions apart from what has been done, we could provide private lessons for parents not to use violence against their children for violence towards children while they are in lockdown. We could raise awareness of families while applying psychological treatment to children exposed to domestic violence. Due to the long-term closure of schools and house arrest, children's adequate communication with their peers and activities in open spaces such as limited source of playgrounds. These changes are a unique process for children who are experiencing a great change in their lives. In this process, it is possible for children to experience anxiety, anger, irritability and fear.

Besides, we could create an aid fund for children who are poor during the quarantine period to easily access health services, basic hygiene and medical products and for public health in global perspectives. For children who receive insufficient education in the online education process, we could do class repetitions and studies in the face-to-face education process. We could create a separate fund to enable children who do not have access to internet or technology products to participate in online education. We could also raise awareness of families in order to reduce internet addiction created by quarantines among children. Children could be allowed to chat online with their friends under parental control. To implement these, some funds and charities are required with the help of other countries as we consider the situation of the country.