



UNited

to Leave No One Behind

A monthly newsletter of the UN Philippines

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Message from the Resident Coordinator

On 15 November 2021, about a hundred public schools in the Philippines reopened for face-to-face classes. The UN Country Team rejoiced as we had been advocating for this for a long time since schools in the country were shuttered as a result of the pandemic. We were concerned that Filipino children were being left behind by millions of children all over the world who had been able to return to school sooner.

Prolonged school closures have a significant impact on children's physical and mental health. Without the safety net that school often provides, children are more vulnerable to abuse, gender-based violence including sexual exploitation and child marriage, and child labour that they may experience at home, especially in the stressful context of the pandemic. The most vulnerable children, and those who are unable to access remote learning, are disproportionately impacted and are at risk of never returning to the classroom.

I commend the Department of Education (DepEd)'s leadership that enabled the start of in-person classes and its coordination with relevant agencies, including the Department of Health

(DOH). And I thank all my colleagues for their unflagging efforts to make this possible--a shining example of their commitment to Leave No One Behind.

This month, we bring you more stories of how our partners are taking charge and taking action to improve their lives and their communities: Jade, a member of Women Waste Warriors in Paco, Manila, who recycle PET bottles into urban garden pots; Gladys, who participates in a community-based COVID-19 surveillance and tracking system; medical volunteers like Dr. Javier who make sure that the homeless get their COVID-19 vaccine; Dionalan, who leads his fellow women and men farmers to find other ways to make a living amid the pandemic; John, who goes around persuading fellow fisherfolk to stop using dynamite for fishing; Teresita, who travels to join a workshop so that she can prepare her family for the next big storm; Tawi-Tawi police officer Jaiton, who tells law enforcers about the importance of mental health; and Norjana, displaced by the Marawi siege, who vows that she will rebuild her life in her new home.

We will continue to bring you these remarkable stories as we UNite to leave no one behind.

Gustavo Gonzalez



Photo: Children in the Municipality of Malilipot in Albay Province play and receive psychosocial support and other social welfare services in Child-Friendly Spaces set up by the UNICEF following the impact of Typhoon Goni.

Credit: OCHA/Martin San Diego



Community Support To Covid-19 Response



Filipino nurse Carmela Pangwe (center) conducts an orientation on COVID-19 prevention and home care management organized by Families Choice for Health and Development at a mining community in Ucab village, Itogon municipality, Benguet province in the northern Philippines.
Credit: WHO/Rolox de la Pena



Community supports COVID-19 surveillance and contact-tracing

“This health tracker has been very helpful for us to monitor our family members, especially our children,” says Gladys Gapongli, a homemaker and wife of a small-scale miner in Itogon, Benguet in northern Philippines. “Now we can know and record if they are ill during this pandemic.”

Gladys’ household is one of 400 beneficiaries of the Home as Active Advocate and Network to COVID-19 Prevention and Control (“HAAN COVID”) project, implemented by Families Choice for Health and Development under WHO’s Civil Society Organization (CSO) Initiative in the Philippines.

In the Ilocano language, *haan* means no, creating a strong message of ‘No COVID’ in the gold mining communities of Benguet where the organization operates.

The HAAN COVID project is a community-level response to the surge of COVID-19 cases in the mining areas in Benguet in October 2020.

In early 2021, Families Choice pioneered an innovative health reporting and community surveillance system to address contact tracing data gaps among vulnerable groups. Using the COVID-19 handbook developed by WHO Philippines, the organization created hard copy logbooks (“Home Health Trackers”) for miners and their families to record their daily health status and activities.

Read more: [Community innovation to support surveillance and contact tracing](#)

Community Vaccinations



A resident of Metro Manila receives his COVID-19 vaccine at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City
Credit: WHO/Kace Cabali



Vaccinating the homeless

On a humid Manila day, a shoeless man in black shorts, black t-shirt, and blue football club cap eased himself down, out of an iconic Philippine jeepney and into a wheelchair. This was a good day. Today, he received a dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

Robert is one of nearly 3 million homeless people in the National Capital Region (NCR), to which the City of Manila belongs. With money earned by begging, he pays for food, and anything left over goes into medicines. Diabetes has cost him some of his toes and fingers.

Despite his health needs, he is not comfortable dealing with officials or health workers.

“I haven’t asked for help from the barangay (village) clinic because I get embarrassed when I go there. When people see me, they are disgusted by my appearance. It is hurtful when I see people being disgusted by how I look, or just because I

roam the streets, am homeless and don’t have an address,” Robert said.

Today, he is at the gymnasium of the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman, Quezon City which has been turned into a vaccination centre to reach those who might miss out on life-saving vaccines because of stigma, a lack of money or residential address, access to vaccination registration, or other barriers.

“This vaccination drive is a huge relief for us, especially since the vaccines are free. We hope that everyone gets vaccinated. It’s a relief knowing that eventually, everyone will be vaccinated,” said Robert.

Medical volunteer Dr Patrick Javier said, “There’s a certain stigma to being homeless and we try to make sure people feel as welcome as possible and that their situation is not a hindrance to getting vaccinated. Like anybody else, they deserve to be vaccinated.”

Read more: [Community vaccinations help overcome stigma and practical barriers](#)



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