

## TARA- A case of building resilience and not leaving any child behind against COVID-2019

From UNICEF Office of Uttar Pradesh, Submitted by C4D, Education and Health



**BACKGROUND:** Declared as a pandemic, the Corona virus and COVID-2019 has changed the landscape of life. With new cases popping up daily, Uttar Pradesh in India is observing the third phase of lockdown in a bid to stop the spread of the virus. The entire focus of government and development partners has been on stopping transmission and minimising lethal impact on the most at risk elderly population over 60 years. The Risk Communication & Community Engagement (RCCE) strategy adopted by UNICEF and government partners, envisioned to engage with the vulnerable population including children while coupling the purpose of prevention education and alternate way of child learning during the lock down of schools.

Communication for Development, Education with technical support from Health conceptualised a 10-episode video series Tara Hai Tayyar. Children with special needs became a specific rightsholder segment in addition to the larger child and youth population. In this series, Tara is a seven years old girl who lives with her father and fondly calls him Appa. This family, undergoing the perils of current lockdown, presents many imitable acts of wisdom, innovation and kindness. Keeping in view the children with special needs (CWSN) along with sign language with the video. Puppet forms were specially made keeping in view the different needs in COVID-2019. The content management and production has been handled without even a basic studio set up and this has been a learning and enriching experience. Keeping in view the constrained media platforms during lock down, mobile, digital and social media was mainly opted. The Tara Hai Tayyar series is available in MP4 WhatsApp, MP3, high-res and a sign language version.

### CONTENT MAP:

Episode	Theme	Key Messages
1	Corona	Key information about Corona virus and COVID-2019
2	Handwashing with Soap	Importance of Handwashing with Soap; When to wash hands, Steps of handwashing with soap
3	Social Distancing and Use of Mask	What/why and how to do social distancing; Staying socially connected while staying at home; Use of mask
4	Engagement and learning during lockdown	Keeping a daily routine; Doing things together with family; Learning continuity: Teacher-Parent and child interactions; Managing emotions and keeping the home environment stress free

5	Saluting Corona Yoddha (Warriors)	Select inspiring stories of COVID-19 champions
6	Mental Health (stigma, discrimination)	Identify harmful language and behaviour leading to stigma; Treating all people with dignity whether they are COVID survivors, children from COVID affected family, children of families engaged with combating COVID-19 or belonging to hotspot/containment areas; Blaming and shaming people will only make the situation worse and hiding of virus
7	Mental Health (Children affected by COVID-19)	Different children will respond differently to COVID-19; Reinforce and focus on positive memories and unique skills and strengths; Minimizing watching negative news; Identify an exercise/activity/story to do and maintain a chronicle of activities
8	COVID-19 and child abuse (including online abuse)	Various kinds of vulnerabilities, increased risk of violence due to lockdown, migrant situation, loss of income, isolation, existing dysfunctional family situations; Preventing cyberbullying, risky online behaviour and sexual exploitation; Access to safe spaces and helpline numbers
9	COVID-19 and girls (impacts related to child marriage)	<b>COVID -19 worsens</b> existing inequalities for girls (loss of schooling, child marriage, child labour, trafficking); Unburden girls; Availing schemes and support systems, helpline numbers
10	Thank you!	Thanking those who deserve a big thank you (Doctors, Police, Sanitation workers, FLW, vendor, Elderly, young, teachers etc); Stay safe and stay together

**Dissemination and outreach:** A pool of digital platforms was created broadly tapping platforms of education department, particularly engaging managers and special teachers for systemic reach up-to CWSN children and their families. Besides this, about 20 major children and youth platforms joined including Community Radio Stations, National Service Scheme, Bharat Scouts and Guides, Uttar Pradesh State Livelihoods Mission (UPSRLM), National Health Mission, Department of Women and Child (DWCD) and grassroots organisations. Over five million mobile and social media users were reached with each episode. It's five episodes have been tweeted by the Union Health Minister, India (2.2 Million followers on twitter), while DD-India, DDUP and Zee TV have relayed them in various formats.

**RESULTS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:** With 20 percent reach among the cohort of hearing impaired children, this series has steadily reached CWSN. Uttar Pradesh has 25084 children (6-14 age) as per UDISE, 2018-19 while 206067 is total number of children with special needs. The fifth episode of Tara reached 5020 children with hearing impairment while reaching 11782 CWSN as a whole. Over 3600 coordinators and special educators are making this special drive possible.

Lets see what does it mean for our adorable children and their families!



**T**anishka, standard two, has hearing impairment. Her mother **A**arti proudly admires her to invariably follow Tara series and says, “she is the one insisting in family to wash vegetables, use sanitiser and so forth”.

**A**rnab’s mother is happy that he is coping well during the lock down and owing to Tara, he animatedly observes practices like playing at home, hand wash, use of mask.



**S**urendra, Std five, Banda, says that he likes the video and knows now that we should wash our hands in order to steer clear of the virus.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** This initiative brings us range of lessons that will improve media and social mobilisation interventions in any future disaster situations.

- **Inclusive approach to the affected population-** This pandemic of huge proportion has impacted everyone. This initiative, adapted for children with special needs, is a testimony of the rights-based approach in programming. The duty bearer government department and functionaries, through their close engagement, have gained practical experience and capacity that may be applied in future.
- **Infotainment media for CWSN-** Adapting puppet drama for this video series, a rational media choice was made. The icons, tonality of messages gave impetus on learning through entertainment and participation. Call out for child-level creative and fun activities is a feature that is further being strengthened.
- **Production-** This set out an example of producing infotainment material in a crisis situation. By optimising teamwork and use of digital technologies the deficit of having no studio and production systems was overcome.
- **Reach, platforms, mapping-** A whopping reach up-to 20 percent CWSN population in Uttar Pradesh could be possible by tapping the presence of education department functionaries dedicated for the CWSN. Looking at the potential of this network, a more structured capacity strengthening may be undertaken to address various disasters.
- **Resources and cost efficiency-** This model has proven to be highly cost effective. Per CWSN child, every episode has costed 4.20 INR (0.05 USD). Looking at the whopping reach of over 5 million population with the same production cost, the initiative has been highly cost effective.

**Link to the Series:** [https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/nagupta\\_unicef\\_org/EoPO4pKsobhBsUCa7KubUQEBtBRDvNcnTd3nc1wGVcRrNA](https://unicef-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/nagupta_unicef_org/EoPO4pKsobhBsUCa7KubUQEBtBRDvNcnTd3nc1wGVcRrNA)

**Acknowledgement: Sangya Ojha and Hashim Haider from The Puppetarians for creating the series.**

**TARA, APPA, SHERU, DOCTOR UNCLE, TINKU & THE ADORABLE STARCAST OF TARA HAI TAYYAR**

