

# **A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19**

APRIL 2020

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# Executive Summary

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This report sets out the framework for the United Nations' urgent socio-economic support to countries and societies in the face of COVID-19, putting in practice the [UN Secretary-General's Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity report](#) on the same subject. It is one of three critical components of the UN's efforts to save lives, protect people, and rebuild better, alongside the health response, led by the World Health Organization (WHO), and the humanitarian response, as detailed in the UN-led COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014, more people died from the interruption of social services and economic breakdown than from the virus itself. This should not have happened, and the world cannot let it happen again. As the world enters the deepest global recession since the Great Depression, we need to connect health needs to social, economic and environmental well-being, linking the present to the future.

We are all interconnected and need borderless solidarity. People everywhere must have access to social services and social protection; jobs, businesses and livelihoods must be protected; and a safe and equitable recovery of societies and economies must be set in motion as soon as possible, with the long-term goal of directing economies along a sustainable,

gender-equal, and carbon-neutral trajectory. Failure to do so will multiply and prolong suffering amongst the world's most vulnerable people.

This socio-economic response framework consists of five streams of work – an integrated support package offered by the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to protect the needs and rights of people living under the duress of the pandemic, with particular focus on the most vulnerable countries, groups, and people who risk being left behind.

The five streams of work that constitute this package include: 1. ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems; 2. helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services; 3. protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes; 4. guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and 5. promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems. These five streams are connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better.

To support Member States on this response, the UNDS is switching to emergency mode. A significant proportion of the UN's existing US\$17.8 billion portfolio of sustainable development programmes across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be adjusted and expanded towards COVID-19 related needs. Repurposing and reprogramming efforts have already started, in close collaboration with programme countries, donors and partners, without losing sight of the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Given the scale and scope of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, additional resources nevertheless will be required. Investments in these five streams of work, complementing the UN's health and humanitarian response, are investments in resilience and in the recognition embodied in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that all life on this planet is interconnected. This socio-economic package of support recognizes that the response to this pandemic must accelerate rather than undermine decarbonization, protect the natural capital, build resilient cities, and ensure social

equality, inclusion, and the realization of human rights for everyone, the rule of law and accountable, capable governments and institutions.

The heart of the response lies at the national and sub-national level, using existing structures. The collective know-how of the United Nations' 131 Country Teams – serving 162 countries and territories – is being mobilized to implement this framework over the next 12 to 18 months. This is undertaken under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinators, with support from UNDP as technical lead, drawing from a network of global and regional expertise and the UN Country Teams working as one across all facets of the response.

**“Let's not forget this is essentially a human crisis. Most fundamentally, we need to focus on people – the most vulnerable.”**

**UN Secretary-General's Call for Solidarity**

# I. Introduction

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The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent. Without urgent socio-economic responses, global suffering will escalate, jeopardizing lives and livelihoods for years to come. Immediate development responses in this crisis must be undertaken with an eye to the future. Development trajectories in the long-term will be affected by the choices countries make now and the support they receive.

This global framework provides the strategy and blueprint for the urgent socio-economic response, following [the Secretary-General's report](#) on the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. The focus is on the here and now at country level. Its timeframe is 12 to 18 months as an immediate development offer, to be implemented by UN Country Teams, and complementing the humanitarian response in countries where relevant and the World Health Organization (WHO)-sponsored Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan focused on the direct health response.

The 2030 Agenda must be preserved, and the SDGs must be reached. As the Secretary-General has highlighted, it is in fact development deficits,

failures in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and delays in our SDG trajectories that have made so many countries across every continent so vulnerable to this crisis. Indeed, the virus is exposing structural fragilities that would have been attenuated through more rapid, effective and universal development responses in the past. The pandemic is exacerbating and deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political, economic, and biodiversity systems, which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic. The most pervasive of these inequalities is gender inequality.

The UN Development System therefore has a dual imperative. It must respond urgently to stem the impact, and it must do so by helping governments and populations respond in a way that builds a better future. Speed is of the essence; but how we accelerate our development offer of support must be fully consistent with the principles that underpin the United Nations Secretary-General's global call. The responses should aim to protect people and planet; preserve gains across all the SDGs; ensure equality; promote transparency, accountability, and collaboration; increase solidarity; and place the voice, rights and agency of people at the center.

Throughout, humility must be exercised. In this response, we must always recognize that governments and national actors are in the lead,

appreciate the frontline role of local governments and communities and acknowledge that many other partners will often bring more financial and other resources to bear. As such, while the UN development system will make full use of our strong normative approach, expertise, programmatic assets, policy analyses and experience from around the world, we will also contribute through our convening role, partnerships and actions that enable and empower, and through advocacy and voice that connect and protect.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the intimate relationship among humans, animals and the environment. The transmission pathways of diseases, such as COVID-19, from animals to humans, highlight the extent to which humans are placing pressures on the natural world with damaging consequences for all.

Once the health crisis is over, we cannot have business-as-usual practices that increase emissions and other environmental externalities like pressure on wildlife and biodiversity. The performance and resilience of our socio-economic systems depend on the state of the natural environment and ecosystems. A mutually beneficial symbiotic relation between humans and their surrounding ecosystems is *inter alia* the answer to more resilient economies and societies. Securing the global environmental commons requires living within planetary boundaries, conserving and sustainably managing globally shared resources and ecosystems, as well as their shared vulnerabilities and risks to promote human wellbeing. As these environmental commons are intrinsically linked and ignore frontiers, managing them sustainably requires ambitious collective action and borderless solidarity.

## II. The people we must reach

Throughout our response, the guiding reference must remain the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its central promise to **'leave no one behind'**. Yet, today, the risks of leaving many behind from life-saving measures are great and grave, because time is of essence, resources are limited, social protection systems are weak, some people are too often made invisible, gender inequality is so pervasive, and also because the crisis creates risks to further exclude and discriminate. We have an obligation to ensure everyone is protected and included in the response to this crisis. Hence, our support to governments, from assessment to programming, from policy advice to advocacy will be driven by the following guiding questions:

To ensure the immediate development response reaches all those in need, a quick but comprehensive mapping of those most at risk of being left behind is critical. This includes assessing how they are disadvantaged by multiple forms of inequalities and discrimination. The information will be country-specific and depend on a range of contextual factors, including existing socio-economic, institutional and geographic realities that predate the crisis and the reach of current responses.

Outreach can be tailored in two ways: First, according to country-context (Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), Small Island Developing

OUR PURPOSE	THE UN'S GUIDING QUESTIONS
<b>Tackling the immediate emergency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Who has been targeted when devising the country's health and socio-economic response measures?</li> <li>&gt; What is the demographic and where do they reside?</li> <li>&gt; Where are the gaps?</li> </ul>
<b>Focusing on the social impact and the economic response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Which barriers keep people beyond the reach of infrastructure, employment, services, jobs and other socio-economic response measures?</li> </ul>
<b>'Recovering better'</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; How can those who are excluded, marginalized and vulnerable come into the fold? How can they be made more resilient to shocks and crises?</li> <li>&gt; How can the responses help remove and avoid exacerbating structural drivers of exclusion, inequalities and discrimination?</li> </ul>

States (SIDS) and conflict-affected contexts in need of greatest attention; Second, based on the timeline associated with the COVID-19 crisis itself – or “wave of impact” with spillover effects that expand from epidemiologically vulnerable groups to household and businesses that are forced to close or quarantine during the containment phase and to the poorest and most marginalized groups, by virtue of pre-existing exclusions on the basis of identity or other characteristics. Attention will need to be placed on populations for whom this emergency compounds pre-existing marginalization, inequalities and vulnerabilities. In all contexts, gender equality and inclusion of women in the response, in line with SDG 5, will be critical in order not to risk backsliding on limited rights gained and jeopardizing the attainment of the SDGs as a whole.

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have been indiscriminate, with whole of society impacts. Certain considerations must guide our action for a comprehensive response:

*Personal situation and status matter.* Some groups are more affected than others by the pandemic (see text box of “at-risk populations identified”). Often, these populations tend to be marginalized and excluded; depend heavily on the informal economy for earnings; occupy areas prone to shocks; have inadequate access to social services; lack social protection; are denied access to such services on the basis of age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, migrant status or other forms of discrimination; have low levels of political influence and lack voice and representation; have low incomes and limited opportunities to cope or adapt; and have limited or no access to technologies. And often these vulnerabilities intersect. People living in war-torn societies, where often health systems have collapsed, are particularly vulnerable. For these reasons, the Secretary-General has recently called for an immediate global ceasefire across the world.

*Occupation matters.* Frontline health workers, the majority of whom are women, and those providing life-saving essential services are more exposed to infection, and their safety and livelihoods may not be sufficiently protected in the responses. Those providing care (e.g. social workers, women caring for family members, migrant domestic workers), those working in food production and supply chains (migrant agricultural workers, plantation workers, food vendors, subsistence farmers, etc.), and those working in the informal sector, service sector and gig economy for transport and delivery of goods, are working in precarious conditions and will face a severe socio-economic impact from the crisis.

*Location matters.* The crisis will exacerbate inequalities especially in vulnerable settings such as refugee camps, peri-urban and urban settlements, rural areas, indigenous communities, prisons and immigration detention centres, drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, and fragile locations, such as informal settlements and slums, which are already underserved by social services, and where information and strategies such as testing, hand-washing, self-isolation and quarantine will be particularly difficult due to lack of space, water, resources and services.

*Legal status matters.* In the UN’s effort to leave no one behind, the situation of those forced to flee their homes, stateless people and people living in camps, slums or in the margins of society must be considered. The number of refugees, migrants, internally displaced and stateless amounts to over 300 million people. These population groups are often excluded as they do not have the same rights as citizens, and cannot access health, education, or participate in the formal economy on par with nationals.

*And trust matters.* Trust in governments is at different levels as shown by the many protests around the world. This hampers the response



as trust in messages from authorities on prevention are critical. The response, on the other hand, can also (re-) build trust between authorities and the population, but also among groups, by ensuring inclusivity, dialogue and grievance mechanisms, accountability, adherence to human rights and delivery.<sup>1</sup> This will enhance social cohesion, resilience and peacebuilding.

Finally, the response must also not leave any country behind. The devastating short-run and medium-term social and economic effects of COVID-19 will be felt with great intensity in all developing countries irrespective of their income level. At the same time, capacities and

resources to confront these impacts vary across the world. Our response can and must be both universal and sensitive to these differences. In particular, the allocation of our resources must pay close attention to the needs of conflict- and disaster-affected countries, the LDCs, the LLDCs and the SIDS, and countries facing economic sanctions for whom this current crisis presents specific and dire challenges. While many Middle-Income and High-Income Countries have larger capacities to confront the crisis, these countries will also benefit from access to the collective know-how and convening power of the UN to address the multidimensional consequences of the pandemic on their societies and economies.

**AT-RISK POPULATIONS EXPERIENCING THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION AND REQUIRING SPECIFIC ATTENTION IN THE UNDS IMMEDIATE DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE:**

- Women
- Older persons
- Adolescents, children and youth, especially girls and young women
- Persons with disabilities, persons with mental health conditions
- Indigenous peoples
- Migrants, refugees, stateless and internally displaced persons, conflict-affected populations
- Minorities
- Persons in detention or in institutionalized settings (e.g. persons in psychiatric care, drug rehabilitation centres, old age homes)
- Slum dwellers, people in informal settlements, homeless persons
- People living with HIV/AIDS and other people with pre-existing medical conditions
- Small farmers, fishers, pastoralists, rural workers in informal and formal markets, and other people living in remote rural areas as well as urban informal sector and self-employed who depend on market for food
- The food insecure, particularly in countries affected by prolonged conflict and crisis
- People in extreme poverty or facing insecure and informal work and incomes
- Groups that are particularly vulnerable and marginalized because laws, policies and practices do not protect them from discrimination and exclusion (e.g. LGBTI people).

<sup>1</sup> WHO, *Peace and Health*, White Paper, 2020.

# III. The United Nations offer for an immediate development response

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The UN development system is placing all of its relevant assets in support of an immediate development response to complement the humanitarian and emergency health interventions. These assets include:

## **A wide and deep presence**

The UN development footprint spans 162 countries and territories, supported by a global and regional network of expertise. This means knowledge of context and established relationships. In many of these countries, the UN's support is not restricted to the capital. It reaches local communities, in cities and villages.

## **The required knowledge**

The UN development system provides a breadth of knowhow needed to help countries address the multidimensional socio-economic aspect of the crisis. It can connect governments to expertise, in-house and beyond, in all relevant fields of the response.

## **A broad mandate**

The UN is the only global organization with mandates across the spectrum, reaching from development to humanitarian and from human rights to peace and security. This informs our assessments, analysis and integrated support.

## **A large development portfolio to build on**

The UN's existing development portfolio of programmes totals \$17.8 billion across all SDGs. A significant proportion can be adjusted and expanded for COVID-19 related needs. Such repurposing efforts have started. They can be accelerated, for example to expand social protection coverage, to extend psychosocial support, or to implement emergency job support measures.

## **A wide and flexible range of support modalities**

Support to national and local governments can therefore be tailored to capacity and needs in country and can shift over time according to the situation.

## **The ability to deliver integrated, coordinated support**

As one UN development system, and through the strengthened RC system, the UN's support is integrated, connecting analysis and responses across sectors, and building continuity between immediate measures and longer-term recovery. The support that UN Country Teams offer includes not only resident in-country capacities, but also relevant expertise sourced from other regional or global locations, including through the proposed Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs).

## **Established funding modalities for rapid disbursements**

The UN development system can make use of several funding modalities to quickly channel funds to programmatic interventions. New ones, such as pooled funds, can be established within days, notably at the country level, using globally agreed standards and procedures.

## **Strong partnerships for greater reach and impact**

Beyond its own expertise and resources, the UN can use its significant reach to help mobilize the vast network of partnerships required for a whole of society, whole of world response. The UN has extensive connections with civil society organizations, women's groups and volunteer groups. Many of these organizations are facing their own challenges and the UN will work to address their specific fragility. But many often play an indispensable leadership role in the response, notably in reaching out to vulnerable people, and in getting to remote places. They can amplify responses.

In many countries, the UN has established close relations with the private sector, which are instrumental for the economic recovery toward sustainable development, within a whole-of-society approach.

Of great importance as well in this moment is *the partnership the UN has with the International Financial Institutions (IFI)*. It is of particular value in the areas of impact assessments and

analysis, financing and resource-mobilization, policy advocacy on urgent macroeconomic measures to provide relief especially for the poorest and conflict-affected countries and for those that are at high risk of or in debt stress; effective programme design and delivery, and planning for the longer term.

## **An impartial, normative approach**

The UNDS will work to ensure that all responses to COVID-19 and its impacts are implemented with a sense of humanity and the protection of human rights and dignity of all people, without discrimination. The integration of international norms and standards in the design and implementation of socio-economic responses is as critical as ever. It is a matter of effectiveness and sustainability. The application of a gender lens in designing socio-economic responses is especially important, given the role that women are playing as frontline healthcare workers, including healthcare providers and caregivers, as community leaders and in the informal economy.

## **An operational infrastructure fit for purpose**

The UN development system has a robust operational infrastructure around the world that can be fully mobilized and expanded quickly to support this offer. The system's logistics and procurement capabilities are being ramped up. With additional resources, they can support accelerated delivery while ensuring duty of care for staff.

# IV. Delivering socio-economic support under emergency conditions

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The UNDS is **switching to emergency mode**, helping countries within the coming 12-18 months to shore up health systems, prevent a breakdown of food systems, restore and build back better their basic social services and other measures to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable populations. At the same time, the UNDS continues to advise Member States on the economic and social measures that need to be taken to recover quickly and to establish better conditions for ending poverty and achieving the SDGs. The socio-economic support of the UN is designed to operationalize critical areas outlined by the Secretary-General in his recent report “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19”. As such, the UNDS complements the other two efforts to save lives and protect people - through the public health and humanitarian responses.

The substantive narrative presented in this section is simple but urgent: The UNDS will start by protecting the **health system** itself during the COVID-19 crisis; at the same time, and equally urgent, it will help protect people through **social protection and basic services; protect jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the vulnerable workers in the informal sector**

through economic recovery; help guide the necessary **surge in fiscal and financial stimulus** to make the macroeconomic framework work for the most vulnerable and foster sustainable development and **strengthen multilateral and regional responses**; promote **social cohesion** and build trust through social dialogue and political engagement and **invest in community-led resilience and response systems** (see Graph 1). These five streams are connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender imperative to build back better.

Under each pillar, the UNDS presents tangible **deliverables and activities** that countries can make use of in their own efforts. They are intended to support a comprehensive approach of member States towards the socioeconomic challenges of the pandemic. Response efforts include: coordination of international engagement; data and analytics, including comprehensive multi-dimensional and gender-responsive analysis and forecasting; sector specific and cross-sector policy advice, technical assistance on design and delivery of context-specific solutions; facilitation of partnerships and dialogue, capacity building and access to expertise; coalition building, notably on financing; and direct project implementation and delivery as required.

## CHART 1: FIVE PILLARS OF THE UNDS RESPONSE



**1 HEALTH FIRST:**  
Protecting health services  
and systems during the crisis



**2 PROTECTING PEOPLE:**  
Social protection and  
basic services



**3 ECONOMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY:**  
Protecting jobs, small and medium-  
sized enterprises, and the informal  
sector workers



**4 MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND  
MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION**



**5 SOCIAL COHESION AND  
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

### IV. 1. HEALTH FIRST: PROTECTING HEALTH SERVICES AND SYSTEMS DURING THE CRISIS

**Health systems are being overwhelmed by the COVID-19 outbreak.** When health systems collapse, deaths from the outbreak itself can quickly be exceeded by deaths from preventable or treatable conditions, no longer managed by a failing health system. It is therefore crucial to **maintain essential lifesaving health services** even while addressing the pandemic.

**Countries need to make difficult decisions** to balance the demands of responding directly to COVID-19, while simultaneously maintaining essential health service delivery, mitigating the risk of system collapse. The UNDS is there to support Governments in making these difficult choices. Establishing effective patient flow (including screening, triage, and targeted referral of COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 cases) is essential, for example.

Countries with the weakest health systems have the narrowest room to maneuver. **At least half of the world still does not have full coverage of essential health services** and about 100 million people are still being pushed into extreme poverty because of health costs.

Faced with these choices, the UNDS will promote a two-phase strategy. First, targeted actions to allow countries to **maintain essential lifesaving health services** even as they surge to meet the spike in demand for acute care. Second, a complementary effort targeting **health systems recovery, preparedness and strengthening** with a focus on primary health care and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and preparedness for future waves of COVID-19.

### The Response: What the UNDS offers

The UNDS provides assistance to every Government in the world in the health field, from specialized technical advice and early warning to large scale service delivery operations in fragile settings. In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNDS will prioritize **support to countries to maintain essential health services** and the systems that support them. The UNDS will mobilize its entire technical and operational strength at global, regional and country levels for a world immobilized by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Specific areas of response by the UNDS to assist Governments in maintaining essential health services and systems will include:

**Providing analytical and policy support, and rapid technical guidance:**

These services encompass a range of fields including: health services and systems assessments; data systems and tools for rapid impact assessments; essential health services from primary care level to hospital level; post-hospital patient management, including shifting service delivery platforms, workforce management, medications, supplies, as well as reducing financial barriers and enhancing the quality of services data. These also include guidance on: maintaining essential preventive outreach services, covering immunization work (including polio), maternal health, HIV/TB prevention and treatment, and community campaigns such as bed net distribution; support to inclusive health response for people with disabilities, those vulnerable and marginalized; maintenance of humanitarian services in camp and camp-like settings in the context of the pandemic; and COVID-19 and heatwave related advice to support the health sector.

**Programme implementation and technical support:**

In parallel with COVID-19 operations, supplies and logistics support, the UNDS will provide direct procurement and distribution for core essential health service supplies, including supplies for curative and essential preventive services; support for large scale health service delivery through local technical assistance networks and volunteer support; support for training and capacity building for workforce surge and redeployment in light of local COVID-19 case burden; and support to joint programming, capacity building and knowledge management on

disability-inclusive responses. In some conflict settings, the UNDS will assist in field-based health-care facilities with the appropriate level of expertise and capacity to deliver safe primary care and advanced supportive care.

**Support on tracking and reaching vulnerable populations:**

These activities encompass community engagement to improve health information, as well as access to essential services, particularly for women, young people and those who fall outside of government systems, including refugees. The UNDS will work in particular with youth and women's organizations, religious and traditional leaders, volunteer groups, and persons living with disabilities and organizations of other at-risk populations such as HIV populations, through the [Global Partnership on HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination](#), which is a partnership that governments have joined to take action against HIV-related stigma and discrimination. The UNDS will also work with communities on risk mitigation in locations and for populations who are vulnerable, have cultural or language barriers to access information and are unable to practice social distancing because of living in camps or in congested urban settings. The UNDS will provide special support for pregnant women and women caring for newborns and young children, as well as tailored health care interventions for survivors of gender-based violence, women with disabilities and women living with HIV/AIDS (leveraging the HIV community-led response networks in 80 countries).

The UNDS COVID-19 response will be mobilized around several global health milestones in recent years, including the movement for the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Primary Health Care, and the implementation of the

SDG3 Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Wellbeing for All. The infrastructure that was developed as part of these efforts will focus on ensuring essential services are maintained and health systems strengthened to prepare for recovery. In summary, the UNDS is ready to repurpose a significant proportion of its current portfolio to address the essential health needs of hundreds of millions of people in 100 priority countries struggling to meet the health challenges alongside the COVID-19 response.

#### PUTTING HEALTH FIRST IS CRITICAL

Health systems are being overwhelmed by demand for services generated by the COVID-19 outbreak. When health systems collapse, both direct mortality from the outbreak and avertable mortality from other conditions increase dramatically. We propose three priority mitigating actions to Governments:

- Mobilize support to maintain essential health services and systems during and following the outbreak by prioritizing services, shifting service delivery and actively managing health workforce, supplies and data to support essential clinical and outreach services.
- Reduce financial barriers for essential services and accelerate access to emerging technologies such as diagnostics, vaccines and treatments that will support the safe delivery of effective essential services.
- Focus on the most vulnerable through ensuring the continuity of services in fragile settings and supporting efforts to fill gaps in tracking and reaching vulnerable populations in all countries.

## IV.2. PROTECTING PEOPLE: SOCIAL PROTECTION AND BASIC SERVICES

**During the Ebola outbreak, more people died from the interruption of social services than from the virus itself.** Hence, it is of utmost importance to ensure that the population everywhere continues to have access to social services and social protection.

**The COVID-19 crisis impacts the world's poorest and most vulnerable hardest**, with significant intergenerational implications for poor families. As demonstrated during the 2008 financial crisis, countries with strong social protection systems and basic services suffered the least and recovered the fastest. Over the next few months, governments around the world will need to adapt, extend and scale-up cash transfers, food assistance programmes, social insurance programmes and child benefits to support families, among others.<sup>2</sup>

However, **4 billion people – accounting for 55 percent of the world population, including two out of three children** – have no or inadequate social protection to start with. Social protection responses must consider differentiated impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups, women and men and those surviving on income in the informal sector, as well as those now shouldering additional unpaid care work. Therefore, the scope of the challenges ahead requires an extraordinary scale-up of support.<sup>3</sup>

The **United Nations development system is the world's largest international actor on social protection and basic services.** The UNDS serves 162 countries and territories and reaches tens of millions of people through basic services, social transfers and other forms of social

<sup>2</sup> Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? A rigorous review of impacts and the role of design and implementation features. Bastagli et al. ODI. 2016.

protection. The UNDS has extensive expertise and experience in supporting governments in developing social protection systems, including social protection floors and delivery of quality social services and to support such services across humanitarian and development contexts.

## **The Response: What the UNDS will do**

The UN's response in the field of social protection and basic services will support governments to adapt, extend and scale-up services in six areas:

**Scale up and expand resilient and pro-poor social protection systems:** the UNDS will support governments to rapidly design, adjust, scale up and implement cash transfer programmes to respond to immediate economic impacts of COVID-19. This includes supporting the shift to digital payments for governments, UN agencies and private sector. Several UN agencies already manage large-scale cash transfers with or on behalf of governments, i.e. \$2 billion in cash-based transfers delivered in 2019. Others have expertise in expanding national contributory social protection mechanisms with government, employers and workers or community-based social protection services, especially for informal workers.

**Maintain essential food and nutrition services,** with a focus on infants and young children, women and particularly vulnerable populations, including those living with HIV/AIDS. COVID-19 and related measures have an impact on the quality of diets and nutrition. This can quickly translate into increased mortality, morbidity and malnutrition among the population groups with the highest nutrition needs.<sup>4</sup> UNDS support will

take a life-cycle approach, starting with efforts to promote and support maternal health, adequate breastfeeding practices for infants, nutrient-rich diverse diets and responsive feeding practices for young children, amongst others. The UN response in this area will also foster facility- and community-based programmes for the early detection and treatment of children and women impacted by malnutrition (wasted), including the use of simplified protocols and therapeutic and supplementary foods for the treatment of child wasting. The UNDS will work with governments and private sector partners to secure affordable healthy food options for children, women and families, as well as vulnerable populations, including those living with HIV/AIDS. This will encompass an array of options including food-support, cash-support, and vouchers coupled with volunteer-supported social behavior change communication programs to improve children and women's diets.

**Ensure continuity and quality of water and sanitation services,** which will be highly affected by reduced workforce, disrupted supply chains, and payment challenges through close collaboration with national and local WASH authorities. This includes brokering solutions for those households relying on vendors, markets and community sources of water in order to ensure a water 'safety net' for all households that are vulnerable to water disruptions and may require rationing of tanker-supplied and bottled water. Women-headed households are at particularly risk to increased health risks caused by poor access to clean water and sanitation as they are more likely to have inadequate housing. Children with disabilities and those living in humanitarian settings also require special attention, especially in cases of overcrowding of shelters.

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3 Towards universal social protection for children: Achieving SDG 1.3. UNICEF and ILO. 2019.

4 Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition. High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE), March 2020.



**Secure sustained learning for all children, and adolescents, preferably in schools:**

About 90 percent of the total number of school children in the world have been directly affected by school closures, with an estimated 370 million school children missing out on school meals. The UNDS will work with national education authorities and private sector education service providers to support preschools and schools that can safely remain open, while assisting governments to scale up digital and other forms of remote learning. Several UNDS agencies are working with multiple partners to scale up innovative approaches to continue learning at all levels during the crisis, via parenting programmes, tv, radio, various digital platforms and other delivery mechanisms. Furthermore, support will be provided to allow for a safe and quick return of children to schools. This includes re-instating school meals, for the estimated 370 million school children missing out on school meals and offering “back to school” packages. For example, some UN entities are currently providing school meals to 17 million children in 61 countries and technical assistance to 70 governments. Others offer back to school packages, which include cash transfers and other interventions to incentivize and support the return of vulnerable children, particularly girls, as schools reopen. Furthermore, given the critical role of education professionals in ensuring learning, the UNDS will support teachers through professional training programmes on alternative learning methods.

**Support the continuity of social services and access to shelters.** The UNDS will work with national and local social services to ensure continuity of the first line of response for children, women, and families at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect and family separation. Fear, worry and acute stressors coupled with diminished availability of social workers and case

workers leaves women and children exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. UNDS programmes that support prevention as well as a continuum of care for children and women experiencing violence are available in school or health settings, in alternative care settings, in child justice or in community settings, and can be extended. Specific programmes to support shelters are also available for expansion, especially in fragile humanitarian situations, as well as in camps and densely populated urban areas where social distancing and other preventive measures are not possible.

**Support victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).**

The UNDS will support national authorities, civil society and women’s organizations in ensuring that basic essential services are maintained, such as maternal health care, sexual reproductive health programmes and services for survivors of GBV, and that new methods are rolled out as part of the response. Quarantine and isolation policies, coupled with financial stress on families, individuals and communities, exacerbate domestic violence. It is estimated that this could affect at least one third of all women.<sup>5</sup> Care and support to GBV survivors may be disrupted when health service providers are overburdened.<sup>6</sup> Against this background, the joint UN Package on Essential Services to end GBV will be implemented, which is being adapted to respond to the needs at the community level, for example in the area of police and justice services. The UNDS will support distribution of information how to prevent GBV or where to seek help. Shelters will be expanded, referral systems improved and hotlines and other options will provide remote support. In this context, the Spotlight Initiative to Eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls has already started to intensify its support to these and other measures. Adoption of a do-no-harm approach and GBV risk analysis will be mainstreamed into all preparedness and response activities to COVID-19,

5 Analytics show a potential 30% increase in domestic violence, repeating a pattern familiar from Ebola and other crises.

6 For instance, NGO assistance of GBV victims in Jinzhou received three times more reports of domestic violence in February 2020 compared to the same month last year, while at the same time shelters for GBV survivors in some villages were repurposed for other needs during the COVID-19 outbreak, and in some countries GBV hotlines and judicial processes are offering reduced services. Sixth Tone (2020) Domestic Violence Cases Surge During COVID-19 Epidemic (available at <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1005253/domestic-violence-cases-surge-during-covid19-epidemic>)

including for marginalized and vulnerable groups, like the elderly, people with disabilities, LGBTI individuals. The UNDS will continue to work with its vast network of women's organizations across 69

countries to respond to the crisis and provide critical, flexible funding to support CSOs and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) who can help to address GBV in the context of the pandemic.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION AND BASIC SERVICES MUST BE SCALED UP

A range of social protection programmes and basic services will need to be scaled-up by governments over the duration of the crisis. This represents a critical moment to implement a social protection floor and the opportunity reach all groups of society with basic services.

We propose the following principles in the scaling up of policies and programmes:

- **Country-driven.** The starting point will be what countries need and want to do. The UNDS will support governments to make policy and programme choices that will efficiently and effectively meet objectives of providing social and economic protection to people in need, preventing poverty and deprivation and providing economic stimulus.
- **Human-rights based social protection.** Under the primary responsibility of the state, this implies universal coverage of all services under a transparent management with participation of all relevant stakeholders, non-discrimination of any of its users and a specific lens on gender equality.
- **Humanitarian principles.** Where the UN and its humanitarian partners are undertaking humanitarian activities, the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence are essential and will not be compromised, especially in conflict contexts.
- **People-driven.** The UNDS will support solutions that ensure that affected people's needs are met in a timely and effective manner.
- **Risk-informed and embracing innovation.** Actions will be underpinned by an appraisal of possible risks to beneficiaries. Risk-informed decisions to use innovative methods to ensure continuity of services will be upheld.
- **Analysis-driven with adequate benefits.** Decisions to provide technical and system-strengthening support to a country will be based on analysis undertaken with government of that country's social protection problems and possible solutions.
- **Systems-driven.** The UNDS will focus on the use and strengthening of existing government social protection systems and services and contributing to building nascent systems where appropriate. This can help efficiency and delivery; and build systems for the longer term.
- **Sustainability-oriented.** The UNDS will help countries to meet the needs of the most poor and vulnerable with sustainable solutions, enabling shifts from short-term to long-term responses and towards nationally-owned solutions with sustainable and equitable financing.
- **Partnerships-driven.** The UNDS will seek explicit agreement with partner agencies and governments about the goals and rationale for collaboration in this field, including technical assistance from different agencies to national social protection systems in different contexts.

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### 3. ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: PROTECTING JOBS, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES, AND VULNERABLE WORKERS IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

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**The COVID-19 crisis is plunging the world economy into a recession with historical levels of unemployment and deprivation.** The crisis could lead to a decline in 195 million full-time equivalent workers in the second quarter of 2020 alone.<sup>7</sup> Hence, this pandemic is also a jobs and livelihoods crisis that threatens the SDG progress. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), farm workers, the self-employed, daily wage earners, refugees and migrant workers are hit the hardest. Jobs in the service industries are affected, including in culture and tourism. A global economic recession will impact global population movements and hence affect countries with high levels of migration and high remittance flows compared to their GDP.

**Most vulnerable workers are in the informal economy, constituting 60 percent of the global workforce. They have no or limited access to social protection,** nor do they have the economic security to take sick leave, get treated if required, or cope with lockdown.<sup>8</sup> New business models, such as the platform and gig economy with non-standard employment relationships, also tend to reduce benefits and protection for workers. This has created the risk of growing informality, which underscores the need to redefine social protection systems to guarantee universal coverage of the basic elements associated to decent work.

**There are also important gender dimensions. Because of pre-existing gender-based inequalities, women will likely experience**

**more difficulty finding new jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities for their economic recovery.** Women are overrepresented in some services most impacted by the crisis, mostly lacking social protection. They bear a disproportionate burden in the care economy. Women also represent approximately 70 percent of frontline workers dealing with the pandemic in the health and social sector, many of whom are migrant workers.

**Economic recovery is about protecting jobs and workers; ensuring decent work; and protecting productive assets, productive units and productive networks during the crisis.** Ensuring the continued or improved functioning of small producers, informal workers and SMEs across sectors is vital to ensure production of, and access to, food and other essential goods and services.

**Policy decisions across multiple sectors and mitigation of adverse policy effects, including on essential services, are needed to avoid disruption and permanent job losses.** Supporting income and employment for workers needs to be a core element of stimulus packages along with promoting decent work. These policy actions, based on social dialogue, would be critical in preventing disruptions in massive employment sectors that would present immediate existential threats to essential services; and hence could result in riots, violence and erosion of trust in institutions and governments.

**Environmental considerations should also be taken on board across all sectors of response and recovery efforts.** Stimulus packages should support the transition to a healthier, resource efficient green and circular economy, founded on sustainable consumption and production patterns anchored to sustainable value chains.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/WCMS\\_740877/lang--it/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/WCMS_740877/lang--it/index.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Less than two-thirds of all countries have a social insurance and/or social assistance scheme in place providing sickness benefits. <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=40>

## The Response: What the UNDS will do

The UN's response in the field of economic recovery will focus on protecting and improving the productive sectors, protecting jobs and promoting decent work. The UNDS response will include:

**Integrated, country-specific policy advice and programme support.** Focussing on protecting workers and sectors who are most impacted by the crisis<sup>9</sup> and on how to prevent the collapse of economic activity and jobs, i.e. by assisting businesses to contain massive layoffs and protecting households and individuals through expanding social protection, teleworking and work sharing policies. Furthermore, the UN will put at the service of countries its know-how on how to stimulate a more inclusive economy and boost employment once the recovery is underway.

**Scaling-up employment intensive programming.** Examples of the key service lines that can be rapidly repurposed and scaled-up include the [Employment-Intensive Investment Programme](#), which operates in immediate aftermaths of shocks. It can immediately scale up activities in about 19 countries, creating about 55,000 short-term jobs (average 40 working days), benefitting about 270,000 vulnerable people. Another example is the [Better Work Programme](#), a partnership between the ILO and International Finance Corporation (IFC) to improve working conditions in the ready-made garment industry for 2.4 million workers (80 percent female) in 1700 factories across nine countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is currently repurposing to prioritize factories that continue production or resume production after a temporary suspension. The joint programme "[Promoting Decent Employment for Women through Inclusive Growth Policies and Investments in the Care Economy](#)" will be re-positioned and scaled up to understand the gender

employment impacts of COVID-19 and to design gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages, including investments in the care economy.

**Support to young people and social partners in entrepreneurship and social innovation in response to COVID-19,** building on its youth leadership and volunteer empowerment programmes. The [Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth](#) is a recent example of the UN's efforts to coordinate action at global, regional and local levels. This includes strong engagement of, social partners, governments, civil society, youth organizations, volunteer groups and the private sector for crisis response and sustainable development. The UNDS also provides links with labor market institutions such as Public Employment Services to implement relevant mitigation programmes such as the Youth Guarantee that was implemented after the 2008 crisis.

**Support on strategies to green fiscal stimulus packages.** The UNDS will mobilize the [Partnership for Action on Green Economy](#) (PAGE) that provides integrated support on green jobs, economic and environmental issues to plan early response and recovery phase of the crisis. PAGE is operational in 20 countries worldwide and could be used as a vehicle to support peer learning and knowledge transfer on policies that stimulate growth and recovery in the wake of COVID-19.

**Rapid and gender-responsive socioeconomic assessments and labor market and business environment diagnostics.** The UNDS response can support assessments of unemployment benefit programmes, using behavioral insights to measure improvements needed to effectively reach informal workers, as well as a survey of responses by Public Employment Services for labor markets adjustments during the current crisis. The UNDS is currently conducting a Global Survey on Youth Employment and COVID-19 to bring youth voices to the forefront of action and policy responses.

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9 Such as travel, trade, culture, tourism, labor intensive manufacturing and construction sectors.

## SAFEGUARDING FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS THROUGH THE CRISIS

The COVID-19 crisis will engulf some of the world's poorest and most malnourished populations, in a context of scarce public resources, weak public health systems and insufficient social protection. **821 million people suffer from chronic hunger**, of whom more than 100 million people in over 50 countries already suffer from crisis or emergency levels of hunger. **Containment and suppression measures are likely to be less effective among the chronically hungry** and the consequences of their imposition far more severe. Safeguarding food value chains has special urgency in these countries. **Preserving access to food for rural and urban populations who are already malnourished and physically less robust is an essential part of the health response.** Food production, and related informal and formal labor, transportation, and marketing services are principal sources of income and livelihoods for more than two-thirds of the populations in the LDCs and several large middle-income countries. Even local disruptions to food systems can lead to political crises with lasting repercussions.

The UNDS, in partnership with governments, donors, research institutions, NGOs and many other development partners from both North and South, has developed **an array of standards, tools and mechanisms for monitoring, compiling data, conducting rapid assessments and analyses to monitor food value**

**chain functioning** at all levels of the global economy and to provide ready mechanisms for triggering and coordinating rapid policy response.

These mechanisms include the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification ([IPC](#)), Food Security Information System ([FSIN](#)), the Global Animal Disease Information System/Agricultural Information Management System ([EMPRES](#)), Global Information and Early Warning System ([GIEWS](#)), Vulnerability Analysis and Monitoring Unit ([VAM](#)), the Food Security Cluster ([FSC](#)), the [Global Network against Food Crises](#), and the Agricultural Market Information System ([AMIS](#)). All this data and information is being made available through a single integrated geo-spatial platform that links emergency monitoring information to known biophysical and socioeconomic information, shipping price and weather data and AI-based analytics. It provides a comprehensive picture of food value chains, their state of functioning and potential for disruption. Risk typologies are linked to real-time information to enable rapid policy response.

We encourage governments to make full use of this array of tools and instruments **to safeguard food supply chains for the world's most vulnerable populations.**

**Advice on nature-based solutions for development, including for SMEs**, building on its support to countries to access over \$1 billion grant from vertical funds in 2018-2019, which leveraged an additional \$1.2 billion for 91 countries from the IFIs, United Nations entities, the private sector and Governments. Funds mobilized in 2019 from the Global Environment

Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Adaptation Fund are expected to benefit 37 million people through integrated initiatives.

**Business linkages support**<sup>10</sup> that has proved to be particularly effective and impactful in the agricultural and tourism sectors, helping subsistence farmers and small tourism operators

<sup>10</sup> Business linkages between large enterprises, such as transnational corporations (TNCs) and local suppliers can be a channel for the transfer of technology, knowledge and skills to host economies. <https://unctad.org/en/Pages/DIAE/Enterprise%20Development/Business-Linkage-Programme.aspx>

to turn their activities often in the informal sector into prosperous businesses – particularly women-led businesses. The UNDS response includes a joint approach towards advising governments on how to integrate migrant and refugee populations into their entrepreneurship policies. The Business Facilitation program,<sup>11</sup> which is implemented in 37 countries, could be quickly adapted to new emergencies.

**Investments to improve productivity and working conditions in micro and small firms.** For instance, the UNDS will repurpose its global [SCORE](#)<sup>12</sup> Programme by utilizing extensive global network to deliver relevant information and services to MSMEs. It includes SME support programmes, deployment of SME surveys, COVID specific Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training, business continuity planning, entrepreneurship support, manager-worker dialogue and on-line delivery channels and training thereby enhancing sustainability and ensuring decent work. The UNDS support to micro and small businesses, especially women-owned enterprises, will include support (including advocacy<sup>13</sup>) to become part of the global economy through capacity building and by integrating their proposed solutions in procurement.<sup>14</sup>

**Technical support to women micro and small entrepreneurs** through unconditional cash distributions via digital wallets. The [Trade, Gender and Development programme](#) includes a program supporting entrepreneurial skills development, and a trade and gender assessment toolbox for countries to evaluate the gender impact of policies, including COVID-19 related ones.

**Digital payments support.** The UNDS already sees dramatic increase in demand from governments for COVID-19 related digital payments support<sup>15</sup> and it builds on its

experience from digitizing payments to Ebola Response Workers, which is crucial for countries with low number of bank accounts and high rates of mobile phone coverage.

**Assistance to address trade challenges and facilitating trade flows.** The UNDS encourages and supports countries to upscale their [Aid for Trade](#) assistance to meet the COVID-19 challenges, particularly to mitigate the income loss in developing countries.<sup>16</sup> The value added to trade (VA2T) programme works with more than 10,000 MSMEs across 56 countries focused on the most affected sectors including apparel, agribusiness and tourism. The UNDS work on shipping Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and benchmarks will help countries to monitor and analyze supply chain movements, especially the blockages of critical goods due to COVID-19 types of emergencies. ASYCUDA implemented in 40 countries is a key element to support measures taken by countries, promoting minimal personal contact (Customs-Agents-Trade Community), and ensuring business continuity. For instance, its cooperation with OCHA in preparing a software to identify the most urgent material needed in case of natural disaster could be adapted to COVID-19.

**E-commerce and digital solutions to allow secure access to services needed at the time of crisis, particularly by vulnerable groups.** These services include financial services for sending/receiving remittances, grants, and short-term bridge loans to micro and small businesses, and digital payments of emergency funds to individuals and households. E-trade readiness assessments have already been done for 25 LDCs and can provide a better basis for seizing advantages from digital solutions. The [E-Trade for Women initiative](#) helps women digital entrepreneurs in developing countries to become a force for change and economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

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11 <https://businessfacilitation.org/>

12 Sustaining Competitive and Responsible Enterprises (SCORE) is an ILO global programme that improves productivity and working conditions in small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

13 ITC SheTrade initiative and website could be leveraged <http://www.intracen.org/itc/women-and-trade/SheTrades/>

14 The UNDS guidelines and tools, such as the Empretec skills development workshop and the Farming-as-a-Business training, can be redesigned into online tools and deployed quickly in a new country.

15 <https://www.uncdf.org/how-digital-payments-improve-lives-lead-to-inclusive-growth-migration>

16 Aid for Trade is bilateral official development assistance provided to developing countries to address trade and supply-side related challenges.

## PROTECTING JOBS AND WORKERS IS CRITICAL

A lesson learnt from previous crises is that support to workers' incomes and employment needs to be at the core of the emergency and recovery effort. How to protect the jobs and incomes of the most vulnerable workers, including SMEs, the self-employed, daily wage earners and migrant workers? **We propose three pillars for policy action, which will be supported by the UNDS country-specific and integrated policy advice and programming:**

**First, active fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate the economy and employment overall**, countering declines in aggregate demand and the deleterious impacts in the labour market; sectoral policies to counteract the negative effects brought about by lockdowns and the contraction of international trade and global chains disruptions; and **investments in the care economy** (health and education), where women represent three quarters of total employment, are now more important than ever.

**Second, providing immediate financial support for SMEs, self-employed and others informally employed, at a much greater scale, through:**

- grants, loans and tax relief to enterprises, which are time-bound, non-bureaucratic and linked to the maintenance of jobs;
- extensions to debt moratoria on payment to utilities, rent, interest rate waivers and bridge loans and grants, suspending credit registries;
- employment retention schemes (wage subsidies, work-sharing, government paid leave, salaries paid directly by government for quarantine and lockdown affected enterprises);

- paid sick/holiday leave, supplemented by governments if necessary; and
- support to reconverting production towards immediate needs for enterprises to remain in business by helping them in reaching customers through ICT tools and platforms, consolidating their supply chains, and developing contingency plans to ensure business continuity.

**Third, protecting vulnerable workers through:**

- Cash transfers and in-kind transfers to informal workers and self-employed, including domestic workers and casual workers, relying on existing social protection systems where possible (i.e. increasing payments and coverage);
- Ensuring provision of health services and information for groups not well connected to established services, including migrant workers and refugees;
- Social insurance for vulnerable groups;
- Access to care services for workers who are required to continue working during lockdowns;
- Support for young workers who are hard hit, including measures to ensure continuity in apprenticeships,
- preventing discrimination, exclusion and violence in the workplace when vulnerabilities are exacerbated; and
- Linking these target groups to social protection schemes where available, so that the disruption in income and the increasing childcare burdens can be mitigated.

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## IV. 4. MACROECONOMIC RESPONSE AND MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION

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The global economy has entered the deepest economic recession since the Great Depression,<sup>17</sup> with the possibility of a financial crisis, with major implications for vulnerable population groups and households, some of which are already bordering on poverty. COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on already weak economies through containment measures put in place to control its spread. This unprecedented crisis requires unprecedented measures—a massive counter-cyclical fiscal and financial effort is urgently needed everywhere. The Secretary-General has called for a comprehensive multilateral response amounting to the equivalent of 10 percent of global GDP.

### Macroeconomic Response: A Fiscal and Financial Surge

A three-step approach is essential for the socio-economic response to the COVID-19 crisis. First, a rapid assessment of the potential impact of the crisis is needed in order to quantify the spending necessary to contain it. Second, an assessment of the fiscal space available for increasing spending, as it will in large part determine the government's capacity for action. Third, an analysis of policy priorities and available policy measures considering both financing and implementation constraints faced by governments is equally required. The possible implications of the proposed policy measures will need to be accounted for as well.

- 1. To properly assess the scope and scale of the needed increase in expenditure, a clear understanding of the various channels of economic impact is essential.**

First, countries' initial measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 through quarantines, travel restrictions and lockdown of cities have resulted in a significant reduction in aggregate demand, with impacts on service sectors such as tourism, retail, hospitality, and civil aviation. They have also led to disrupted labour markets and supply chains with the risk of partly dissolving the productive structure and lowering pay. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the ongoing destruction of global value chains – with negative impact on tax revenues. Traditional labour-intensive services and supply-chain-based manufacturing sectors have taken a substantial hit, resulting in increased layoffs and unemployment.

Second, some financial and trade responses are particularly hurting developing and emerging economies. The continued spread of COVID-19 is triggering capital flight to safe assets from several developing countries, and in turn weakening their currencies and increasing volatility in financial markets and putting pressures on the highly dollarized banking systems of some countries. In prioritizing the welfare of their own citizens, countries are engaging in beggar-thy-neighbour policies, and tariff and non-tariff measures, while export bans, especially those imposed on medicinal and related products, are continuing. This would slow countries' actions to contain the virus and recover from the crisis.

Third, deceleration in GDP growth will be significant. The IMF's baseline projection for global economic growth is -3 percent for 2020, with a projected cumulative output loss of \$9 trillion during the crisis. This would be the largest contraction since the Great Depression – with a drop of 6.3 percentage points with respect to the pre-pandemic economic growth projections.<sup>18</sup> This will be a tremendous blow to developing

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<sup>17</sup> IMF, 2020, Global Economic Outlook, April 14, 2020 <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2020/04/14/weo-april-2020>

<sup>18</sup> IMF, <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/04/14/the-great-lockdown-worst-economic-downturn-since-the-great-depression/>



and emerging economies that already face binding constraints of debt and limited fiscal space. Lower commodity prices can reduce commodity exporting countries' fiscal revenue, worsen their trade position and put depreciation pressure on their currencies. Many countries are expected to face an increase in borrowing, including those receiving soft loans, extending guarantee to private sector loans, or other form of loans to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

**2. Large-scale fiscal measures, supported by targeted monetary easing, will be needed to contain the spread of the disease, ease the shock to jobs, reduce layoffs and guarantee minimum living standards, with a special focus on vulnerable population groups:**

First, investments to strengthen health and social protection systems and move towards universal health care and universal social protection systems should be stepped up. Vulnerable population groups must be placed at the centre of such measures and they must be informed by a gender analysis. It is also important to mitigate disruptions in education through investing in support for e-learning capabilities particularly in under-privileged communities and school-systems.

Second, it is important to counteract the reduction in aggregate demand, protecting the most vulnerable productive actors. Governments will need to step up their spending and investments, over the medium-term, while avoiding pursuing a one-size-fits all policy given the heterogeneous productive structure in developing countries. These could include tax deferrals, postponing social contribution payments, providing wage subsidies to maintain workers on payroll, temporary suspension of loan repayments, and loan guarantees, subsidized loans or direct grants to SMEs conditional on maintaining employment. Monetary transfers to households losing their income during lockdowns, and support

measures to self-employed workers, female-headed households, informal workers and other vulnerable populations, including migrants and refugees, also enter in this category.

Third, it is essential to support the stability of the financial system and avoid a credit crunch. Initially, this can be done by supplying sufficient liquidity to the banking system, including through the significant lowering of interest rates by central banks in some countries. Capital controls may be required as well in some instances to stem the capital flight. Financial support can be provided to those in need by deferring payments on individual loans and mortgages as well as government fees.

**3. Finally, key implications of the proposed policy measures will need to be analysed as well, to ensure that policy-makers are aware of policy trade-offs and that the desired impacts of such measures are sustained over time without causing economic and social instability and environmental degradation.**

First, policymakers will need to consider the impact on fiscal and public debt positions. Several developing countries and countries with economies in transition will need debt relief and/or deferral of debt payments or debt cancellations. Such measures could be coordinated with multilateral organizations like the IMF, World Bank Group, and other Multilateral Development Banks and groups of countries, such as the G-20. Tools of debt sustainability analysis will need to be redesigned to support countries in a medium to long-term framework.

For example, Middle-income countries (MICs) will experience sharp drops in GDP. In addition, the bulk of the employment losses will be felt in MICs, which implies important losses of income leading to greater informality and poverty. Hence, MICs require greater policy space

to confronting the effects of the Pandemic. On the one hand, this means having the capacity to use fiscal policy both as a tool to maintain livelihoods in the current conditions and as a linchpin for recovery. This entails access to debt relief, debt re-structuring mechanisms and debt condonation as rising public debt will be inevitable. At the same time MICs must maintain external stability. Internal expansion and external stability are interdependent goals. Maintaining external stability means having the legitimacy to implement capital controls to avoid capital outflows. It also means having access to foreign exchange and liquidity to meet debt obligations and import needs. International coordination is key to sustain the external stability of MICs.

Second, coordination among central banks will be critical. Policymakers will have to assess the impact of an accommodative and expansionary stance on the balance sheets of central banks, banks and non-financial corporate sector—the impact on the balance sheets of the non-financial corporate sector could be severe where general liabilities in foreign currency surpass assets in foreign currency. In addition, the effect of rapidly rising capital outflows and exchange rate and financial market volatility cannot be ignored. Capital controls may be needed.

Third, the policy response needs to build a bridge to recovery, ensuring social and environmental sustainability within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Policymakers should not lose sight of the urgency of climate action, which provides an unprecedented opportunity to unlock massive economic and social benefits and accelerate structural transformations for sustainable development. Bold climate action could trigger \$26 trillion in economic benefits by 2030, create over 65 million new jobs and avoid 700,000 premature deaths from air pollution.<sup>19</sup> In addition it is imperative that fiscal and monetary measures in response to the pandemic do not support economic activities that cause environmental degradation or do not offset negative externalities.

The long-term behavioural impacts of monetary incentives to firms and households are also important. Fiscal policies can also shift the balance of incentives in favour of more sustainable choices and behaviour as the recovery takes hold. The UNDS will continue helping countries to conduct development finance assessments and to design and implement Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) in pioneer countries.

### ADDRESSING DEBT IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES IS CRITICAL

The size of fiscal and financial stimulus needed in each country is significant. It ranges in the order of several percentage points of GDP. All economies will need the fiscal space to finance response measures. Yet, many developing countries, especially those that are already heavily indebted will be unable to raise the resources needed. Forty-four percent of the poorest countries were already at high risk of debt distress or under debt distress before the pandemic hit. Several oil-exporting countries, as well as tourist dependent countries, are now likely at high

risk of debt distress. Many middle-income countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will likely require debt restructuring.

A first step is to suspend debt payments (including principal, interest and fees) and free those resources for the immediate crisis response for any developing countries requesting it. In addition to bilateral creditors suspending debt service payments from the poorest countries, as just agreed in the G-20, they would also suspend debt payments from other developing

<sup>19</sup> The Global Commission on the Economy and the Climate, New Climate Economy Report 2018.

countries that request forbearance. Private creditors should join this moratorium on comparable terms to avoid the public sector bailing out private creditors, and national legislation should be extended to include safeguard against non-cooperative creditors. Debt to international financial institutions should also be included, though IFIs will likely need support from their shareholders to do so, in order not to threaten their AAA ratings and curtail their ability to provide fresh financing during the crisis. In parallel, developing countries should be able to access hard currencies easily, which would provide them with the ability to buy emergency supplies. This could include increased use of bilateral swap lines, or new issuance of Special Drawing Rights.

Beyond the immediate crisis response and moratorium, a new debt relief programme will be needed, considering high debt levels and unmet financing needs for the SDGs even before the pandemic hit. The IMF has already cancelled debt service payments in 25 of the most vulnerable countries for next six months, through its Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust. Much more will be needed.

In the medium term, a comprehensive and faster mechanism to restructure debt will be needed to facilitate economic recovery and SDG achievement in developing countries. This will involve revisions of medium to long-term country debt sustainability assessments, based on more detailed assessments of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, associated financing needs and SDG achievements. At the multilateral level, efforts to establish a fair and effective mechanism to address sovereign debt restructurings in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner, and through shared debtor and creditor responsibilities, should be redoubled.

The UN can support such efforts in several ways:

At the global and regional levels, the UN, which is not itself a creditor, provides a neutral forum for inclusive dialogue among sovereign creditors

and debtors. Such discussions will be needed to address the fallout from the crisis and discuss a way forward. These discussions can build on existing UN initiatives, such as the UNCTAD Principles of Promoting Responsible Sovereign Lending and Borrowing, and UN discussions on sovereign debt workouts. The Financing for Development Forum, which includes annual discussions on debt issues, can provide a regular platform for such a dialogue.

Moreover, the UN has already put forward innovative initiatives and instruments to free resources for SDG and climate investments. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has proposed to swap Caribbean external debt for annual payments into a resilience fund, which can be a source of funding for investments for the crisis response and the SDGs. Now is the time to implement propositions such as these and consider similar initiatives for other regions.

At the national level, Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) provide a toolkit to better link planning and financing processes. This includes a better assessment and incorporation of financial and non-financial risks in financing policies. UN support to countries' debt management could be complemented by technical advisory service to support developing countries at a time of debt restructuring. The UN is working with governments to propose design of gender-responsive fiscal stimulus packages by identifying entry points for both cushioning the impacts of the crisis and for ensuring economic recovery.

Next year's 2021 Financing for Sustainable Development Report (the FSDR) of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development (which includes more than 60 UN agencies and international organizations), will focus on COVID-19 and its impact on development financing. It will include analysis and recommendations on debt sustainability and SDG investment considering the pandemic.

## **Multilateral/Regional Collaboration: Trade Policies, Connectivity, Policy Coordination and Environmental Commons**

As the UN Secretary-General has noted, “a large scale, coordinated and comprehensive multilateral response is needed now more than ever”. COVID-19 is a global problem and confronting the effects of the pandemic will require global and coordinated efforts supported by regional initiatives and regional institutions. While the level and intensity of the impact of COVID-19 varies across the world, countries under sanctions may be particularly affected.

Four areas of regional coordination are particularly relevant:

**First, regional cooperation on trade policy to coordinate and harmonize trade measures** that impact on supply chains and connectivity must be prioritized for it would contribute to lowering the cost of fighting the crisis and set the stage for a quicker economic recovery, while ensuring that trade policy initiatives “do no (cause) harm” to others. This highlights the potential of regional platforms, such as Africa’s Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Pan Arab FTA, to generate significant economic gains and contribute to structural transformation and rebuilding economies, including through the opportunities they provide for pooled procurement of essential drugs and medical supplies, as well as for enabling local pharmaceutical production given the scale generated by one single market.

**Second, improved connectivity and lower transaction and transport costs need to be promoted.** Stepped up multilateral and regional cooperation in facilitating trade and strengthening logistics, especially fast-tracking customs procedures for the import of medical

supplies/critical products/essential goods, can strengthen the effectiveness of the emergency response. A regional approach is also needed to strengthen air cargo capacity and maintaining borders open for humanitarian assistance. Facilitation of e-commerce and cross-border digital services, including regional payment systems to offset the adverse impacts of lockdown policies is essential. Harmonized approaches to regulation and other dimensions of fintech to overcome logistics disruptions are also critical.

**Third, monetary coordination and financial stability through regional coordination must be strengthened, to avoid, for example, a “beggar-thy-neighbor” policy.** The regional and sub-regional financial institutions have traditionally been important providers of liquidity, complementing global financial institutions in financing investment; the provision of regional public goods, stable and counter-cyclical finance; and the pooling of international reserves. Countries will need to harness existing regional capacity to complement other sources.

**Fourth, cooperation to strengthen environmental resilience will be crucial to avoid future pandemics.** The performance and resilience of socio-economic systems depend on the state of the natural environment and ecosystems. As the environmental commons ignore frontiers and are intrinsically linked, managing them sustainably requires concerted and integrated collaborative action and policy measures to promote sustainable consumption and production, “just transitions”, deep decarbonization and build environmental protection into key economic areas (such as agriculture, transport, energy, buildings and construction, and telecommunication). This coordinated and collaborative approach strengthens the response to future crises while enabling countries to pursue the SDGs, build resilient economies and address climate change.

## The Response: What the UNDS will do

**Analytical, advisory and technical assistance services**, using the UN's global and regional macroeconomic analyses to help design an immediate crisis response in the economic and financial domain, as well as policies for a more sustainable recovery. This offer will leverage all of the UNDS' analytical tools and products, including global and regional economic forecasting and policy messages as well as outlooks and analyses of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. Global and regional macroeconomic modelling will be used to simulate the impact of emergency and medium-term responses and recovery policies.

**Stepped-up technical support to member States in improving the evidence base for policy making, including in the emergency response.**

This includes strengthening statistics and data analytics, including gender data; multisectoral policy analysis; leave no one behind (LNOB) policies; gender analysis; SDG financing, including through integrated national financing frameworks; institutional development and public administration and service delivery; and multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships.

**Advice on social expenditure monitoring and mapping of budgets for social development priorities to assist governments in rebalancing public expenditures.** The UNDS will also deploy its technical support and analytical tools to help governments improve debt management over the medium to long term while stepping up expenditures to meet the SDGs.

**Conduct of comprehensive impact assessments at the household level, and to undertake context-specific socio-economic impact analyses of the crisis.** This will help governments identify

appropriate and effective rapid fiscal and financial response measures. The UNDS will also advise governments on formulating emergency stimulus packages that would contribute to economic transformation and greater sustainability as countries move into the recovery phase. The UNDS will continue to use its convening power, at national, regional and global level, to facilitate dialogue between governments, IFIs, development partners, private sector and other stakeholders with the view to adopting common positions and responses to COVID 19 socio-economic impacts. COVID-19 observatories and platforms are also being established to discuss best practices and support coordination at the regional level, including as part of proposed Regional Collaborative Platforms (RCPs). These will provide information online, policy analysis and recommendations, serving as a basis for communication among countries on responses and policy actions.

The five Regional Commissions have each launched important knowledge management tools and products for their respective regions (see Annex II).

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## IV. 5. SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

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**Communities will bear the brunt of the socio-economic impact of COVID19. They also hold the key to flatten the curve, respond to the pandemic and ensure longer-term recovery. They will need investment.** At the same time, just when that social capital— the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively - is at a premium, the pandemic will place considerable strains on social cohesion, magnifying existing fault lines and creating new ones.

The urgency of responding to the current crisis needs to consolidate not sideline important ongoing processes of social dialogue and democratic engagement in many countries and ensure that the limited gains made on gender equality in the past decades are not rolled back. It is important to base the socio-economic response to COVID-19 on well-tailored social dialogue and political engagement, grounded on fundamental human rights such as peaceful assembly, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, freedom of expression, press freedom, gender equality and the inclusion of women, amongst others.

Communities must be at the center of all efforts to strengthen social cohesion. The impact of COVID-19 on the life of urban communities and on vulnerable and marginalized populations is expected to be massive, especially in poor and densely populated informal urban areas and slums. One billion people live in slums, where living conditions are affecting the health of the urban poor dramatically, where people are unable to self-isolate and where their livelihoods depends on income from day-to-day work in the informal sector.<sup>20</sup> Some communities may also face compounded crises, such as a major COVID-19 surge on top of conflict and disasters such as hurricanes and tropical cyclones. The risk of social upheaval as the stresses of the COVID19 crisis are fully felt in these vulnerable communities is immense.

The UNDS can support States and societies in their endeavor to foster social cohesion during and after the pandemic. In many countries of the world, the UN has capacity to reach out to partners and actors, including women leaders, from all walks of life and ideological corners to facilitate social dialogue and political consensus, including over matters which may be unpopular or controversial. In this context, the UN development system will pay close

attention to the impact of COVID-19 on fragile political transitions and in countries already facing problematic security conditions, on top of weak health systems and climate change.

The capacity to mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID19 will largely depend on local governments and tailored community-led solutions and responses that include women and youth. The UN's engagement with local development spans over community-based service delivery, participatory planning and local oversight of services as well improving the resilience of cities and communities to withstand shocks, whether from economic downturns or climate related disasters.

The success of post-pandemic recovery will also be determined by a better understanding of the context and nature of risk. In view of the COVID-19 crisis, this includes developing and maintaining a global mapping of encroachment, illegal trade, wet markets, etc. that are pathways for future pathogen transmission and thus potential future zoonoses identified. It will also mean supporting efforts to arrest ecosystem encroachments and harmful practices, restore degraded ecosystems, close down illegal trade and illegal wet markets, while protecting communities that depend on these for their food supply and livelihoods. This will be delivered in part by adhering to existing CITES and CMS guidance as well as by delivering an ambitious agreement at CBD COP15.

## **The Response: What the UNDS offers**

The UN's work in this field is nurtured by its experience in supporting member states in the implementation of the SDGs and in strengthening institutions and fostering inclusive, just and peaceful societies, which is reflected in SDG 16. This includes mitigating the risks of corruption and

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<sup>20</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/sdg-11-synthesis-report-2018-on-cities-and-communities>

clientelism, for instance when large cash transfers are involved, as well as broader challenges for democratic governance and the rule of law as the epidemic continues to unfold. The UN is ready to repurpose its social cohesion portfolio at the country level, to reinforce peace and stability and strengthen social dialogue<sup>21</sup> and democratic engagement processes.<sup>22</sup> In more than 50 countries, the UN's peace and development advisors are available to support member states in conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity, based on well-established methodologies and tools. And 'Accelerator labs' in more than 60 countries bring multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary approaches to countries seeking creative solutions to local problems.

The UNDS is a critical player in promoting **community and urban resilience**, providing a rights-based response to development, and supporting investments in empowered and resilient community-led response systems, working with and through a wide variety of stakeholders and tailored according to needs and context. Over the years, UN agencies have engaged with community-led organizations in more than 70 countries to address the HIV epidemic and have supported communities in over 190 cities in 50 countries in community-led slum upgrading initiatives. Special attention is given to women's organizations to ensure they are equally part of local assessments and solutions, leveraging the UN's access to more than 11,000 women's CSOs in 170 countries. All these capacities can help bridge the humanitarian – development nexus, particularly in fragile and low-income contexts where national and local governments may require enhanced support.

Specific areas of the UNDS to assist national and local governments in strengthening social cohesion and community resilience include:

**1. Inclusive social dialogue, advocacy, and political engagement.** The UNDS will use its expertise and convening power to foster social dialogue

and consensus about key measures related to the socio-economic response to COVID-19. At the national level such support will include: Rapid deployment of multidisciplinary expert teams to help open up dialogue spaces and facilitate participatory national responses; leveraging the UN's networks and partnerships to bring together representatives of state institutions with a wide range of non-state actors such as civil society leaders, women and youth activists, representatives of migrants and diaspora groups, faith based organizations and religious leaders, employers' organizations and business owners, trade unions, academia, think tanks and others to co-create recovery strategies; facilitating national and regional dialogues on the importance of press freedom and media independence for building social trust particularly in times of crisis; engaging culture entrepreneurs and practitioners to create spaces enabling communities to maintain social ties through artistic expressions; and support to national actors in the design of national and local responses that are gender and conflict-sensitive and strengthen social cohesion, trust and confidence.

Social cohesion in households and communities depends on mutual intergenerational support. While response measures are impacting all ages, young people carry a heavy burden due to closure of schools and loss of employment that may, as in prior economic shocks, disproportionately impact on youth. Women are increasingly shouldering unpaid care work, including caring for the sick and home schooling. The UN development System can offer its existing platforms, including the UN Youth Strategy, to strengthen solidarity – including between different generations – and marshal it to slow the spread of COVID-19 and increase support for the response across all age groups.

The UNDS will also mobilize its experience helping community representatives, in particular women and youth, access information and a space at the table when decisions regarding

21 <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/workers-and-employers-organizations-tripartism-and-social-dialogue/lang--en/index.htm>

22 <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/conflict-prevention/strengthening-social-cohesion--conceptual-framing-and-programmin.html>

the scope and shape of the response to the epidemic are taken, and also act as a bridge between excluded populations and the state. In many countries, the UNDS supports digital engagement platforms which can be a useful tool to mobilize community engagement under conditions of social distancing, using traditional and new media, facilitating access to data bundles and communication packages for community leaders. Examples are digital data-platforms like U-Report, which contain perceptions and opinions surveys, generates needs assessments and feedback loops as well as tracking misinformation and rumors.

UN organizations will leverage their portfolio of women's political participation activities in many countries and activate communications resources and tools to amplify women's voices in the social dialogue on the socio-economic impact of COVID 19. To this end, the UN Trust Fund to end violence against women, with its active portfolio of 144 projects in 69 countries, can support social dialogue across civil society on the socio-economic impacts of COVID 19. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian fund will also have a dedicated window for COVID-19 response.

Finally, the UN Development System will harness its existing tools and platforms on world of work issues to support the immediate COVID-19 response. The UN's work with Employers and Business Membership Organizations (EMBOs) in some 100 countries can be used to identify key policy challenges, develop policy proposals to decision-makers and engage in social dialogue on the socio-economic response to COVID-19. The UNDS will also leverage existing support to trade unions representing 15 million workers in over 60 countries, to build institutional capacity to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 crisis

on workers. It will scale up its programmes on support to social dialogue in 35 countries and continue to monitor and supervise fundamental principles and rights at work, particularly freedom of association and discrimination.<sup>23</sup>

**2. Empower community resilience, participation, and equitable service delivery.** In this area, national and local governments can make use of the UN's comprehensive know-how in community development, decentralization, local government finance<sup>24</sup>, slum upgrading and disaster risk reduction, in both urban and rural settings.<sup>25</sup> A focus of the UNDS lies in empowering and connecting community-based organizations and networks into community-led response systems. A wide spectrum in well-tested rapid assessment tools and methodologies are available to generate community-data (disaggregated by age, gender, etc), and community-level mapping, capturing otherwise invisible acute vulnerabilities, as well as issues of acceptability and equity of assistance. This information can be integrated into broader data and monitoring platforms as a basis for advocacy, and more targeted responses. Geospatial and innovative data collection techniques provide a 'heatmap' of informal urban settlements and slums that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 impacts and to predict movements from urban poor in distress seeking refuge in their rural areas of origin. City resilience or urban profiles<sup>26</sup> generate an understanding of how the response can be tailored to the complex urban systems, how people relate to their built environment, and how to connect community-level and urban resilience<sup>27</sup>. Existing initiatives on community-based disaster risk reduction must be expanded to reach vulnerable and marginalized groups with appropriate and intelligible risk information. Innovative community engagement through mass media, digital media, local arts and culture will be pursued.

23 <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/applying-and-promoting-international-labour-standards/lang--en/index.htm>

24 <https://www.unCDF.org/article/5477/guidance-note-covid19-local-governments>

25 <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/community-engagement-standards>

26 <http://urbancrises.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1.-Urban-Profiling-For-Better-Responses-to-Humanitarian-Crises-1.pdf>;  
<http://urbancrises.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/4.-Building-Urban-Resilience-in-the-Face-of-Crisis.pdf>

27 <http://www.urbanresiliencehub.org>



Open source softwares, such as Rapid Pro, are also used to create chatbots and inter-active voice response virtual support mechanisms. Other important services in this area are hot-lines and instant messaging services run by local women's organizations. They offer online chat rooms for immediate support to survivors of violence, or to amplify messages around the COVID-19 response, including on the imperative of the equal sharing of the burden of care in the response and recovery of COVID-19.

The UN is partnering with community-led organizations in dozens of countries in all regions of the world to promote direct community-led prevention, support, and recovery services to the most vulnerable and most hard to reach people. This is in line with UN Human Rights Guidance and includes some of the poorest regions and countries, where they are sometimes the only entity providing health information and services. Amongst such partners are organizations that currently provide direct HIV and tuberculosis health services to their communities, including information, prevention, treatment, and support. Further, in more than 40 countries, the UNDS is working in partnerships with community-led HIV treatment observatories and other monitoring platforms that can be rapidly expanded to cover monitoring of COVID policies, health system practices, and socioeconomic situations. The UNDS will build on the existing community-led infrastructure of HIV prevention and treatment programmes to integrate and deliver much needed access to COVID-related testing, treatment, and other essential health services, reduce stigma, act on gender based violence,

particularly where the health and social protection system infrastructure is absent, and reach some of the most vulnerable and most hard to reach people within their communities.

All of this will be underpinned by a global, regional and national coalition of partners to support implementation and financing of integrated community-led response and recovery, complementing social protection cash transfers with systems of community grants. In this context, the UNDS proposes to repurpose existing slum-upgrading programmes like the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme and numerous small grant programmes supported by UN organizations across 125 countries. The UNDS will also re-purpose Village, Savings and Loans Associations through digital technology and mobile money wallets, enabling women to advance community priorities.

**3. Support to governance, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.** In designing responses to COVID-19, there will be risks of opportunistic or unintended restrictions on public freedoms, threats on privacy, curtailment of free speech, overreach of emergency powers and heavy-handed security responses that may undermine democracy and last longer than strictly necessary. It is essential that the pandemic is defeated while protecting civil and political rights. For instance, the UNDS will have a critical role to support the judiciary, engage with security services to advise on human rights compliant interventions and provide capacity and protection to National Human Rights Institutions to monitor and engage governments with targeted advisories.

# V. How we will deliver the response

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To ensure a development response of unprecedented speed, these principles will guide our actions:

- Transaction costs must be minimized to the extent possible, by using existing platforms, capacities, institutions and systems.
- Flexibility must be enhanced, by drawing on programming and operational modalities usually reserved for high risk / conflict / humanitarian responses.
- Risks must be taken and managed, by making full use of entity specific and joint risk management tools, and by speeding up the sharing of information on what work and what doesn't all at all levels.
- Coherence and discipline must be everyone's focus, by working with and through collective initiatives and frameworks, including when it comes to resource mobilization.

## How we organize ourselves

The heart of the response lies at the national and sub-national level, using existing structures. It is undertaken under the leadership of the Resident Coordinators, with support from UNDP as technical lead, and the UN Country Teams working as one across all facets of the response. The

Resident Coordinator, in her/his joint capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, will also drive coherence between this response and humanitarian interventions, as well as the health response, under the technical lead of WHO. The Emergency Relief Coordinator working with the Interagency Standing Committee and humanitarian partners coordinates and supports partners in the humanitarian response and provides leadership and guidance to RC and HCs on matters relating to humanitarian assistance.<sup>28</sup> In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, as well as existing IASC Protocols, UNHCR will support national authorities to coordinate the refugee response.

## How we design our response

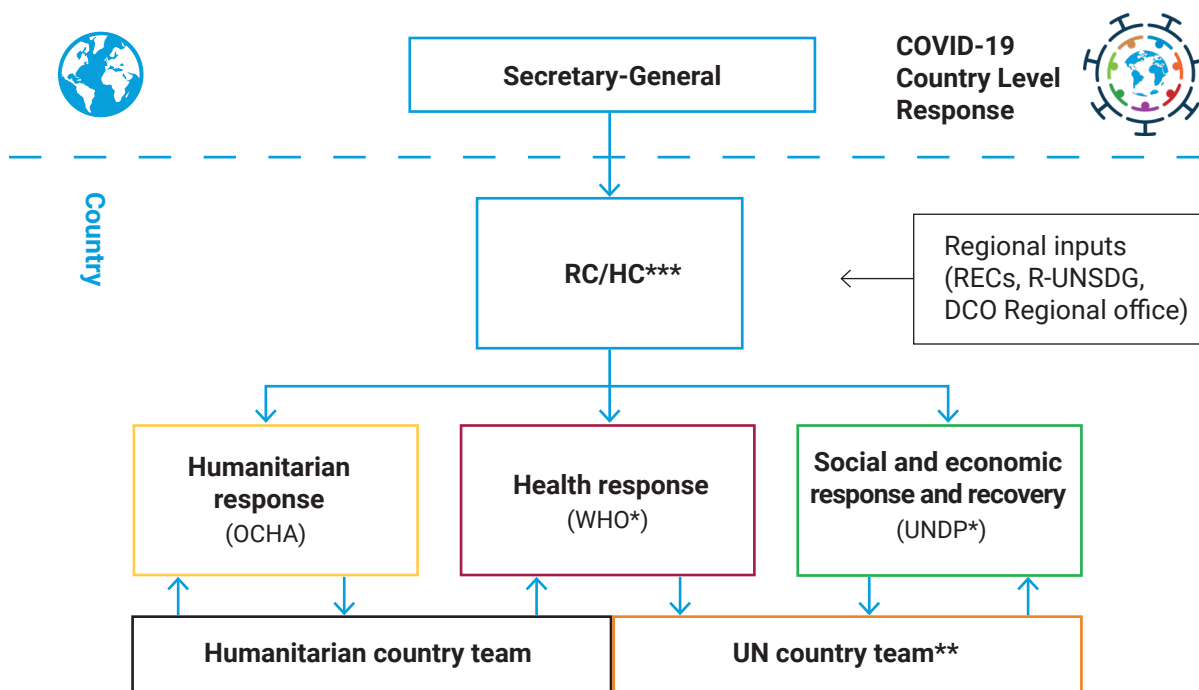
Each UN Country team will quickly elaborate its COVID-19 response against this Framework's pillars. The country response should articulate:

- The rapid assessment of the situation (informed by a gender lens and including risks to the most vulnerable) and assessment gaps;
- The UN country team's COVID-19 programmatic portfolio, with gaps identified as needed to inform the use of relevant funding instruments;

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28 GA resolution 46/182

## CHART 2: COVID-19 COUNTRY LEVEL RESPONSE



\* Technical Lead

\*\* irrespective of the physical location of the entity

\*\*\* In 29 countries, RCs also serve as Humanitarian Coordinator appointed by the Emergency Relief Coordinator

- The UN country team's COVID-19 non-programmatic support to countries, notably in terms of analysis, policy advice, communication and messaging;
- The engagement with the IFIs and with other key partners notably in terms of coherence of policy advice and resource mobilization.

In consultations with governments, all UN entities will continue and accelerate the *repurposing of their programmatic portfolio* and assess which interventions and partnerships can be re-oriented and/or scaled up to support the response. This will be done in a manner which keeps sight of the task to advance long term sustainable development and tackle structural deficits that have made

societies so vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19. The aim is to anchor, as soon as possible, the socio-economic response to COVID-19 firmly in national development plans and in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (Cooperation Framework).

Regional and headquarters leadership should enable and support those efforts, including with regards to engagement with donors and governing bodies and any adjustments needed to operational or administrative procedures.

New programming should only be explored if and when capacity and funding are readily available, and implementation can begin within the time-frame of this response. If this means that some projects should be stopped and their resources

repurposed for a completely new COVID-19 relevant intervention, UN entities should do so, in consultation with governments and donors.

The human rights implications of the pandemic call on the UNDS to be proactive in ensuring that its efforts, as well as the local, national and international efforts it supports, address human rights concerns and advance human rights in the “recover better” phase, as framed by the Secretary-General. To this end, with support and guidance from OHCHR, the UNDS will continue to assess the human rights impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the extent to which responses respect human rights by using the 10 human rights indicators (see Annex I).

*The response anticipates revisions to the Common Country Analysis (CCA) and Cooperation Framework in the aftermath of the crisis when its long-term implications become fully visible.* Adjustments related to the response, notably in terms of risks and targets, can be reflected through the annual review process and joint work plan adaptations.

## How we assess

Because time is of essence, we must assess, programme and respond almost simultaneously rather than sequentially. As such, all relevant existing assessments should be immediately shared within the UNCTs, through the RC office and with governments, and with headquarters. New assessments, when needed, should be done collaboratively to the extent possible. UNDP, in particular, will ensure the integration of multi-dimensional perspectives into existing and new assessments.

The focus of assessments (new or updated) will be to identify the groups who are at high risk of being left behind, and/or could be harmed by the

responses and the extent to which the responses may aggravate or reduce inequalities or grievances, and infringe on their rights or expose them to human rights violations. As part of our promise to “do no harm” and be conflict-sensitive, this will include an analysis of the human rights and gender impacts to inform the design of policies that address these risks, protect development gains and reduce the risk of social violence in the coming months and beyond.

*This will involve a human rights-based approach to data collection, where the participation of these groups and others is actively solicited and facilitated and data is disaggregated in line with prohibited grounds of discrimination under international human rights law, such as age, sex, migratory status, health status, socio-economic status, place of residence and other factors as nationally relevant.*

## How we implement

The focus is on the rapid expansion of the socio-economic impact response, simultaneously with the humanitarian and health interventions as an integrated, coherent emergency package. All three responses are necessary now to save lives. The nexus between humanitarian and development work, including operational synergies, has never been more relevant, and the need for humanitarian and development collaboration and coherence more acute.

As such, under the oversight of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, and without detriment to the humanitarian response, the response should explore the use of established humanitarian delivery channels to expand support (e.g. cash transfers/social protection systems). In light of movement restrictions, the

UN development system will also make full use of existing adaptive and remote programming and M&E modalities and should budget for them accordingly<sup>29</sup>. All relevant existing operational modalities, including harmonized approaches to cash transfers, mutual recognition procedures, must be used to expedite implementation. To this end, all UN entities, including pooled fund administrators, will accelerate efforts to implement fast track procedures.

## How we promote international norms and standards

The UNDS will support Member States to implement existing and new normative commitments on human rights and gender equality. To this end, the UNDS has developed a set of 10 key indicators to monitor and assess the human rights implications of the COVID-19 crisis, including socio-economic impacts and leave-no-one-behind aspects. Furthermore, the UN System is linked to many national human rights systems and networks which can provide rights-based advice to governments and can act as a bridge between excluded populations and the state. The UNDS, and the ILO, in particular, also monitor fundamental principles and rights at work, in particular freedom of association and discrimination, and the impact of measures taken in response to the crisis, through well-established independent experts and tripartite committees.

The current pandemic and previous animal-human infection epidemics also highlight the extent to which humans are placing pressures on the natural world with damaging consequences for all. This interaction includes the unsustainable exploitation of wild animals for human use. The pandemic has indicated, more than ever, how important it is that Member States support the effective implementation

of sustainable management of wildlife trade as globally agreed through the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

## How we fund the response

In light of the magnitude of the needs, the urgency of the task and in the absence of comprehensive data on financing needs, UNCTs will first and foremost look to re-purpose existing budgets in interventions that can be adjusted to support the socio-economic response. This will be done in consultation with Governments. A significant proportion of the UN's existing development portfolio of US\$17.8 billion across all SDGs will be adjusted and expanded for this purpose.

However, the magnitude of the crisis will require large additional resources to face this threat. The WHO's global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, sets out the key priorities for the health response across the world. The initial plan, costed at \$675 million, is now under major upwards revision. This plan is the document-of-reference on establishing the priority actions and financing needs for the health response. These health interventions will be financed through multiple financing channels, above all Governments' own budgets, the WHO 'Solidarity Fund', and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, launched by the Secretary-General and coordinated by OCHA with IASC partners, sets out the key priorities for the humanitarian response. The plan, costed initially at \$2 billion, will be reviewed periodically as needs become more apparent. The Global Humanitarian Response Plan is the primary vehicle for raising resources for the immediate COVID-19 related health and multi-sectoral needs<sup>30</sup> in 40-50 "priority" countries, including the health response

<sup>31</sup> These include, inter alia: call centers and beneficiary feedback systems, third party monitoring, satellite imagery/GPS tracking

<sup>30</sup> Water, sanitation & hygiene, food security & livelihoods, nutrition, education, logistics, air assets

identified in WHO's global plan. Whilst humanitarian interventions would normally focus on existing humanitarian populations of concern, in some cases these delivery channels may be expanded substantially to accommodate newly vulnerable populations across the country in need of humanitarian assistance. The probability of food scarcity, for example, and therefore, the number of people in need of emergency nutritional assistance, is high. In other cases, humanitarian actors will remain focussed on existing target populations and the development system will extend assistance to the newly vulnerable COVID-19 affected populations.

In a significant number of other countries where the scale of the humanitarian impact of COVID-19 remains limited, RCs and UNCTs will in fact be entrusted with the humanitarian response. All these arrangements will be calibrated country-by-country under the local leadership of the RC or HC, working with UNCTs and HCTs. The humanitarian response will be reflected in the Global Humanitarian Response Plan coordinated by OCHA and updated as needed based on humanitarian needs as they evolve.

The UN development system's socio-economic response outlined in this framework, is expected to be financed from multiple sources. These include the Secretary-General's new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund<sup>31</sup> which is intended to manage resources for multi-agency/joint programming responses; agency-specific resource-mobilization efforts organized around agency Appeals or Trust Fund initiatives; Government-sponsored country-level Appeals (for example, Bangladesh and Niger have already launched appeals) or UNCT-sponsored country level pooled funds.

Existing funding instruments like the Joint SDG Fund, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Spotlight Initiative and Vertical Funds like GAVI are also potential funding sources and partners for

joint or complementary programming for this work. Finally, IFI financing of Government priorities may also be entrusted to parts of the UN development system for implementation.

While multiple sources will need to be used, resource mobilization efforts at the country level will be part of a joint resource mobilization process under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator and reporting on these funds should also form part of the Country Team' collective reporting platforms.

## **How we report and share information**

Sustaining Member State and donor support will be critical, in each country and at the global level. Our response therefore must inspire trust, and it must be transparent and accountable towards authorities and the population.

Therefore, in each country, the RC and the UNCT will ensure that their existing reporting and information sharing platforms, including UN INFO, are updated with their Covid-19 response. Likewise, adjustments decided on the RC system budget to allow RCs to re-orient coordination funds accordingly will be fully reported on the Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF).

Dedicated COVID-19 response information will be provided in the relevant funding instrument reporting instruments, including the MPTF office Gateway, for both the COVID-19 MPTF as well as for the other funds that are adjusting their portfolio accordingly.

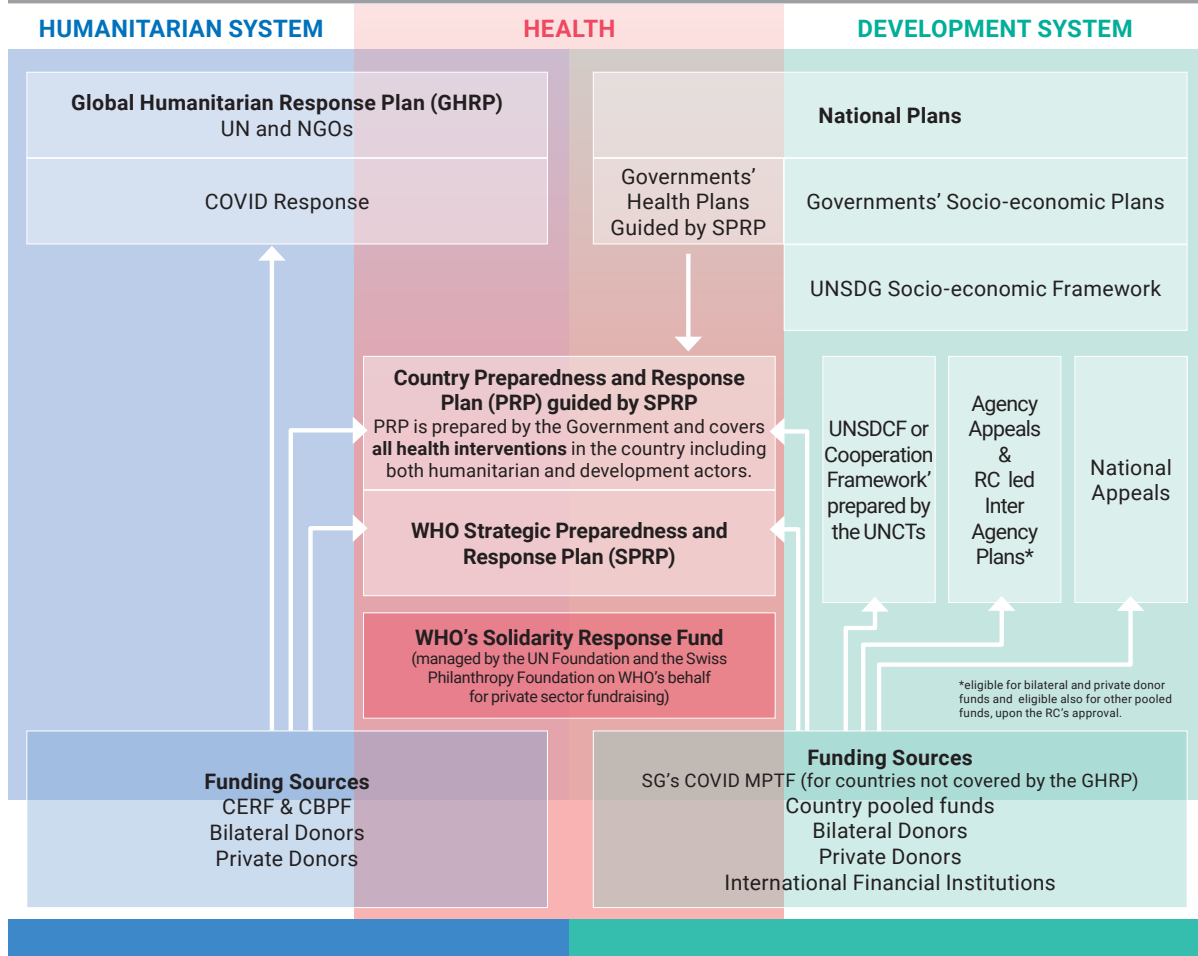
In addition, for our partners and the world to have full and comprehensive access to information on our COVID-19 interventions, this socio-economic response will be linked online with the humanitarian response, and included as part of the WHO partners' platform.

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<sup>31</sup> The UN Secretary-General's new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund has called for the inclusion of the gender marker in the development of proposals to ensure that we build back better.

# CHART 3: COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY FINANCING MODELS

(info as of 23 April)



# VI. Building back better - towards sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda

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**“We simply cannot return to where we were before Covid-19 struck, with societies unnecessarily vulnerable to crisis. We need to build a better world”**

**UN Secretary-General, April 2, 2020**

The pandemic has reminded us, in the starkest way possible, of the price we pay for weaknesses in health systems, social protection and public services. It has underscored and exacerbated inequalities, above all gender inequality, laying bare the way in which the formal economy has been sustained on the back of an informal economy and invisible and unpaid care labor. It has highlighted ongoing human rights challenges, including stigma and violence against women.

The actions taken now by countries as they respond to the spread and impact of COVID-19 will be fundamental in laying the foundations for a **fair and sustainable transition** to a new **social contract** in the years ahead – one capable of avoiding, mitigating, withstanding and recovering from such extreme crises in the future. We have a historic opportunity to advocate for change, for macroeconomic choices and fiscal policies that are pro-poor and place peoples’ rights at the center, greater investment in public services and other measures that curb inequalities.

**The current health crisis is a signal of an unsustainable economic model – with unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.** There is an increasing recognition of how multiple economic, social and institutional drivers exacerbate environment risks and risks of unplanned, under-serviced urban development, impacting on human health and increasing the burden on health services. Beyond direct health responses, the fiscal and financial responses to COVID-19 provide an opportunity for initiating a transformational and green recovery with the creation of green jobs. Fundamental to a transformational and green recovery will be early action on a longer-term agenda to address climate change, avoid habitat loss and fragmentation, reverse the loss of biodiversity, reduce pollution and improve waste management and infrastructure.

**Addressing the linkages between nature and health:** Never before have so many opportunities existed for pathogens to pass from wild and domestic animals to people, causing diseases transmitted from animals to humans, or zoonoses. Over 30 new human pathogens have been detected in the last three decades alone, 75% of which have originated in animals.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, 60% of all known infectious diseases in humans are zoonotic.<sup>33</sup> Globally, about one billion cases of illness and millions of deaths occur every year from zoonoses.<sup>34</sup>

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32 WHO EMRO | Zoonotic disease: emerging public health threats in the Region | RC61 | <http://www.emro.who.int/fr/about-who/rc61/zoonotic-diseases.html>

33 UNEP Frontiers Report 2016 [https://environmentlive.unep.org/media/docs/assessments/UNEP\\_Frontiers\\_2016\\_report\\_emerging\\_issues\\_of\\_environmental\\_concern.pdf](https://environmentlive.unep.org/media/docs/assessments/UNEP_Frontiers_2016_report_emerging_issues_of_environmental_concern.pdf); Pg. 18

34 WHO EMRO | Zoonotic disease: emerging public health threats in the Region | RC61 | <http://www.emro.who.int/fr/about-who/rc61/zoonotic-diseases.html>



The current pandemic and previous zoonotic epidemics highlight the extent to which humans are placing pressures on the natural world with damaging consequences for all.

**Building a better, post-pandemic future will require social and economic interventions today for more resilience.** Recovery efforts must accelerate rather than undermine decarbonization, the protection of natural capital, gender and social equality and inclusion, the realization of human rights for everyone, and strong, capable national and sub-national governments and institutions – all critical, systemic elements to avoiding such an outbreak again.

Rather than being put aside as aspirational in a time of crisis, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement offer a framework for a fair and sustainable transition, as they recognize the interconnected nature of all life on this planet. Beyond the socio-economic frame of the current response, the role the environment and natural capital will play in the path to recovery is a policy choice that warrants further elaboration, as do good governance, gender equality and empowerment, and the protection and promotion of human rights for all.

At the same time, keeping a clear focus on recovery will be a critical component of each of the five pillars above, as illustrated below:

- 1. Health First:** Recovering better requires a new outlook on how to achieve the SDGs on health care –including flagging the links between health and nature. Steps to recovery will include helping primary care systems to get back on their feet in a stronger and more resilient position, strengthening monitoring and information systems to understand recovery needs, and supporting civil society and private sector engagement to optimize services and better meet people’s needs. Strategies to address zoonosis and the link between wildlife trade, food systems and health will be part of this renewed agenda.<sup>35</sup>
- 2. Protecting People, Social Protection and Basic Services:** Recovering better should include strengthening progress towards universal social protection, building on the increase of coverage during the COVID-19 response, redesigning social protection systems so they are more responsive to shocks, including climate shocks, and strengthening care systems so they respond to the needs of women and men throughout their lifecycle.
- 3. Protecting Jobs and Economic Recovery:** In addition to re-doubling efforts to create green, sustainable jobs, a job-rich recovery will require increased fiscal spending on public employment programmes to promote greater labor market resilience to future crises while combatting discrimination and addressing inequalities. This encompasses ensuring decent work, equal treatment with respect to rights and benefits among workers in different contractual arrangements and the self-employed, as well as unpaid care workers. The recovery phase will highlight the scope and limits of existing productive development strategies – bringing the potential of green economy solutions, e-commerce and the digital economy into sharper focus.
- 4. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Cooperation:** this pandemic underscores the important role of public policies in dealing with crisis. Recovering better will require creating the fiscal space to address the SDG agenda; investing in health, social protection, sustainable infrastructure and

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35 <https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/117/8/3888.full.pdf>

crisis preparedness, while directing the economic recovery along a significantly more sustainable and carbon-neutral trajectory and closing the digital divide. In recovering better, multilateral and regional collaboration will be critical on issues including data; technology innovation and transfer, closing the digital divide, sustainable finance, debt management, and crisis preparedness. For example, a coordinated push towards the suspension of debt repayments from those countries that need it will be critical.

**5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience:**

The assessments of the next 12 months will help to expose structural vulnerabilities and inequalities. It is an opportunity to reverse the trend of shrinking civic space; institutionalize community led-response systems; rely on social dialogue; empower local governments; scale-up community and city level resilience; and enhance legal and institutional frameworks. During and after this pandemic, public institutions, democracy, multilateralism, social dialogue and the rule of law will all be tested. Hard-won gains on equality, human rights, and civic freedoms could be lost and inequalities increased. While states have an obligation to control the pandemic, doing so should not be a pretext for discrimination, repression or censorship, including targeting women, human rights defenders, or environmental defenders. Gender equality commitments must be put into practice and good governance strengthened.

**There will be no return to the “old normal”.** The massive fiscal and financial repurposing made by governments in these weeks and months, including the redirection of fossil fuel subsidies to aid the response, are a glimpse of the future. They suggest that the status quo and business-as-usual are policy choices, not inevitable constraints on sustainable development. The linkages between health and nature are clear, as is the need to bridge the lessons learnt from this crisis to the climate crisis ahead.

Recovering from this pandemic **must not come at the expense of tackling other burning issues.** We need to do everything possible to ensure that our efforts to support countries ravaged by COVID-19 do not divert resources from other existing crises – addressing the needs of refugees and other vulnerable groups; tackling the global climate emergency; ending violence against women and girls; and putting an end to discrimination in all its forms.

How stimulus plans are implemented matters to what this recovery will look like. The global recovery needs to be fair; it needs to be green, and above all, it must be inclusive.

# Annex 1: 10 key indicators for monitoring human rights implications of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has many human rights implications for civil, economic, political, social and cultural rights. Responses to the pandemic should be consistent with international human rights standards and address key human rights concerns. The following list of 10 thematic indicators has been developed<sup>1</sup> to support national and international efforts towards a human rights-based policy response to the crisis, as well as an early warning tool. A few complementary indicators are suggested as well which could support further operationalization of the indicators or more comprehensive measurement, depending on available capacity. Special efforts should be made to disaggregate relevant indicators by sex, age, disability, national origin, nationality, migratory status, race/ethnicity, income, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	INDICATOR
<p><b>Rights to health and life</b></p>	<p><b>1. Proportion of adopted/implemented COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plans containing systematic mapping of most vulnerable and marginalized groups and special measures for their protection and access to health services/equipment, including for:</b></p>
<p>Use maximum available resources at national and international levels to ensure availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health care to all who need it and including for conditions other than COVID-19 infection; and ensure that the right to life is respected throughout.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• older persons</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leaving no one behind</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• persons with disabilities, special health conditions or requiring specific health services (e.g. pregnant women, vaccination of children, people living with HIV, people using drugs)</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure special measures are taken to protect most vulnerable and marginalized groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• migrants (including undocumented), refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, homeless, travelers, population in slums or other informal settlements, conflict affected populations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender</b></p>	
<p>Ensure gender-specific intervention and protection. Mitigate impact of the crisis on women and girls, including on their access to sexual and reproductive health/rights, protection from domestic and other forms of gender-based violence, financial resources, decision-making and access to an effective remedy</p>	

<sup>1</sup> OHCHR developed the indicators framework in consultation with a sub-group of the Crisis Management Team, which includes DCO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WHO, IAEA, WFP, World Bank, FAO, ICAO, IMO, DOS, DPO and DGC.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	INDICATOR
<p><b>Rights to information and participation</b>            Ensure access to accurate and timely information at all stages of the crisis, and allow meaningful participation of the affected populations in decisions on COVID-19 related policy responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>people in detention or institutionalized settings (e.g. prisoners, migrants and asylum seekers, persons in psychiatric care, geriatric care, drug rehabilitation centers etc.)</b></li> <li>• <b>Indigenous peoples and minorities</b></li> <li>• <b>LGBTI persons</b></li> <li>• <b>women and girls who are pregnant or have given birth</b></li> </ul> <p>Complementary indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Number/proportion of UNCT having carried out a rapid human rights impact assessment of country preparedness and response to COVID-19, including: comprehensive mapping of vulnerable/marginalized groups and gender analysis; identification of measures to mitigate negative impact on these groups; and assessment of policy and resources gaps for implementing these mitigation measures.</li> <li>&gt; Number/proportion of identified vulnerable/marginalized groups participating in the State’s formulation/implementation of COVID-19 policy responses affecting them, including through relevant representatives (e.g. community leaders, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations).</li> <li>&gt; Number/proportion of countries that adopt health measures pursuant to the International Health Regulation, that ensure human rights and dignity of international travellers (International Health Regulations, 2005)</li> <li>&gt; Number/proportion of countries that have adopted ethical/human rights consistent guidelines on admission/ treatment of COVID-19 patients in intensive care units</li> </ul>

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	INDICATOR
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Number of countries where the health system has been impacted by COVID-19 and is impeding access to other <i>essential health services</i><sup>2</sup> by the public, including women’s access to sexual and reproductive health (for instance, birth, pre- and post-natal care) and/or children immunization (e.g. DTP3) compared to the situation before the pandemic</li> <li>3. Number of recorded cases of physical, sexual or psychological violence against women, girls and boys, elderly and LGBTI persons, including offline and online violence and violence by intimate partners, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and proportion of these victims that have access to appropriate services and interventions.</li> <li>4. Proportion of vulnerable groups receiving relevant COVID-19 information, including in appropriate, accessible, language and format and adapted to their specific needs (e.g. older persons, persons with disabilities, children, refugees, IDPs and migrants, indigenous peoples and minorities).</li> <li>5. Number of recorded acts of COVID-19 related censorship, digital shutdown, deliberate dissemination of inaccurate or misinformation; killings, detention, harassment, and other attacks against human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, trade unionists, medical and other experts, and whistle-blowers motivated by their COVID-19 related actions.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Addressing discrimination, racism and xenophobia</b></p> <p>Ensure that responses to the COVID-19 pandemic do not fuel xenophobia, stigmatisation, racism and discrimination</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Number of recorded acts of discrimination, harassment, racism or xenophobia relating to COVID-19; and number of statements by public officials that engage in or fuel such acts.</li> </ol>

<sup>2</sup> Countries should identify essential services that will be prioritized in their efforts to maintain continuity of service delivery (see <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/covid-19-operational-guidance-for-maintaining-essential-health-services-during-an-outbreak>).

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	INDICATOR
	<p>Complementary indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Adoption/implementation of public information campaigns, including statements by political and civil leaders, contributing to eliminate COVID-19 associated stigma, discrimination, racism and xenophobia within the population.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rights to social protection and decent work</b> Ensure income security, affordable health care, support for family, children and dependents, and targeted social assistance for the most marginalized or vulnerable.</p>	<p><b>7. Adoption/implementation of measures to ensure occupational health and safety for those who cannot work from home or remotely, including workers in health care settings, law enforcement and civil protection officials, employees of essential businesses (supermarkets, groceries, food providers, etc.) and related provision of adequate protective equipment, health checks, reasonable working hours, mental health and ethical support and counselling.</b></p>
<p><b>Right to adequate food, water and sanitation</b> Ensure availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of essential food items and safe drinking water and sanitation, including access to soap, despite the pandemic, lockdowns and other constraints</p>	<p>Complementary indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Proportion of countries that have national occupational safety and health plans or programmes for health workers;</li> <li>➤ Number of new probable and confirmed COVID-19 cases in health workers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Right to education</b> Ensure access to free and compulsory primary education and to secondary and higher levels of education</p>	<p><b>8. Adoption/implementation of country measures, including by businesses, to ensure equal access to social protection floors to victims of COVID-19 related crisis, provision of basic income, including for workers and migrants in the informal economy, aid for affordable housing, access to food, water, health care, education (for example, alternative accessible teaching methods) and care-giving support during quarantines/lockdowns, especially for older persons, children, single parents and persons with disabilities.</b></p>
<p><b>Right to adequate housing</b> Ensure accessibility, affordability and quality of housing and security of tenure</p>	

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES	INDICATOR
	<p>Complementary indicator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number of countries that institute bans of evictions, rents and mortgage relief measure, or other specific measures to address housing-related impacts during the COVID-19 pandemic, including measures to ensure frontline workers with restricted mobility and homeless people have access to shelters designed and equipped to prevent COVID-19 infection and to facilitate access to health care; complementary post-crisis extension of mortgage freeze and rent reduction/freeze for affected persons.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Right to liberty and security, fair trial, and freedom of movement, especially for people living in institutions</b></p> <p>People in quarantine, detention or institutions (e.g. older persons, persons with disabilities, prisoners, migrants, refugees, people who use drugs, children) should have access to relevant information, adequate food/water, health care, education and measures mitigating impact of possible closure of courts</p>	<p><b>9. State’s adoption/implementation of alternatives to deprivation of liberty, in particular in situations of overcrowding (e.g. greater use of alternatives to pre-trial detention, commutation of sentences, early release and probation, alternative measures to immigration detention) as a COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measure.</b></p> <p>Complementary indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Number/proportion of detention centres / institutions monitored by independent bodies, including National Human Rights Institutions and National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs);</li> <li>➤ Recorded cases of people in detention or institutions that are unable to access treatment for COVID-19 or failure of institutions to implement precautionary measures;</li> <li>➤ Number/proportion of overcrowded prisons and other detention centres in a country during the COVID-19 pandemic</li> </ul>

## HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

### **State of emergency, emergency legislation, and conduct of parties in armed conflict**

Since a state of emergency leads to derogations of human rights, it must be exceptional, temporary, and only proclaimed when the situation amounts to a public emergency threatening the life of the nation. No derogations are permissible under certain rights. Extraordinary measures that result in restrictions to human rights must meet the tests of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination.

## INDICATOR

**10. State of emergency is officially proclaimed through proper legal procedures and details the rights being derogated and the duration, geographic, and material scope of application. Proportion of States that have informed the UN or a regional organisation of the imposition of a state of emergency.**

Complementary indicators:

- Recorded cases of unlawful, disproportionate, unnecessary, or discriminatory restrictions or excessive measures (such as broad measures not directly linked with public health objectives and potentially violating other rights, such as the right to privacy, freedom of expression and other fundamental freedoms, right to seek asylum, breach of non-refoulement principle) or under pre-existing vague legislation (such as counter-terrorism laws);
- Number of armed conflict situations and parties that have agreed to a ceasefire to facilitate COVID-19 responses and recorded cases of civilian casualties;
- Recorded cases of attacks against health and humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (e.g. ambulance, hospital, health centres, humanitarian convoys) in conflict contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic)



# Annex 2: UN Sustainable Development Group Assets for COVID-19 response

Entity	Full	Link to COVID-19 pages
<b>DPPA</b>	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs	<a href="https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus**">https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus**</a>
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<a href="http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/">http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en/</a>
<b>IAEA</b>	International Atomic Energy Agency	<a href="https://www.iaea.org/covid-19">https://www.iaea.org/covid-19</a>
<b>ICAO</b>	International Civil Aviation Organization	<a href="https://www.icao.int/Security/COVID-19">https://www.icao.int/Security/COVID-19</a>
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development	<a href="https://www.ifad.org/en/covid19">https://www.ifad.org/en/covid19</a>
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization	<a href="https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus">https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus</a>
<b>IMO</b>	International Maritime Organization	<a href="http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx">http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx</a>
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration	<a href="https://www.iom.int/covid19">https://www.iom.int/covid19</a>
<b>ITC</b>	International Trade Centre	<a href="http://www.intracen.org/covid19/">http://www.intracen.org/covid19/</a>
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunications Union	<a href="https://www.itu.int/en/Pages/covid-19.aspx">https://www.itu.int/en/Pages/covid-19.aspx</a>
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	<a href="https://www.unocha.org/covid19">https://www.unocha.org/covid19</a>
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	<a href="https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID-19.aspx">https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID-19.aspx</a>
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS	<a href="https://www.unaids.org/en/covid19">https://www.unaids.org/en/covid19</a>
<b>UNCDF*</b>	UN Capital Development Fund	<a href="https://www.uncdf.org/article/5452/covid-19">https://www.uncdf.org/article/5452/covid-19</a>

<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	<a href="https://unctad.org/en/Pages/coronavirus.aspx">https://unctad.org/en/Pages/coronavirus.aspx</a>
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs	<a href="https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/covid-19.html">https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/covid-19.html</a>
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme	<a href="https://www.undp.org/coronavirus">https://www.undp.org/coronavirus</a>
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction	<a href="https://www.undrr.org/drr-and-covid-19">https://www.undrr.org/drr-and-covid-19</a>
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa	<a href="https://knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/">https://knowledge.uneca.org/covid19/</a>
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	<a href="https://www.unece.org/covid-19.html">https://www.unece.org/covid-19.html</a>
<b>UNECLAC</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	<a href="https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19">https://www.cepal.org/en/topics/covid-19</a>
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme	<a href="https://www.unenvironment.org/covid-19-updates">https://www.unenvironment.org/covid-19-updates</a>
<b>UN ESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	<a href="https://www.unescap.org/covid19">https://www.unescap.org/covid19</a>
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	<a href="https://en.unesco.org/covid19/">https://en.unesco.org/covid19/</a>
<b>UN ESCWA</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	<a href="https://www.unescwa.org/publications/socioeconomic-impact-covid-19-policy-briefs">https://www.unescwa.org/publications/socioeconomic-impact-covid-19-policy-briefs</a>
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund	<a href="https://www.unfpa.org/search/site/coronavirus">https://www.unfpa.org/search/site/coronavirus</a>
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme	<a href="https://unhabitat.org/covid-19-pandemic">https://unhabitat.org/covid-19-pandemic</a>
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	<a href="https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html">https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/coronavirus-covid-19.html</a>
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund	<a href="https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19">https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19</a>
<b>UNIDO</b>	United Nations Industrial Development Organization	<a href="https://www.unido.org/unidos-comprehensive-response-covid-19">https://www.unido.org/unidos-comprehensive-response-covid-19</a>

<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	<a href="https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/covid-19.html">https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/covid-19.html</a>
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services	<a href="https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/covid-19-stay-up-to-date-with-the-latest-on-unops-support-to-response-efforts">https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/covid-19-stay-up-to-date-with-the-latest-on-unops-support-to-response-efforts</a>
<b>UNPBSO</b> ††	United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office	<a href="https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus**">https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus**</a>
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	<a href="https://www.unrwa.org/covid_19">https://www.unrwa.org/covid_19</a>
<b>UNV</b> †	United Nations Volunteers	<a href="http://www.unv.org/News/UN-Volunteers-join-COVID-19-response">http://www.unv.org/News/UN-Volunteers-join-COVID-19-response</a>
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	<a href="https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response">https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response</a>
<b>UPU</b>	Universal Postal Union	<a href="http://www.upu.int/en.html">http://www.upu.int/en.html</a>
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme	<a href="https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic">https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/covid-19-pandemic</a>
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization	<a href="https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019">https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019</a>
<b>WIPO</b>	World Intellectual Property Organization	<a href="https://www.wipo.int/covid-19/en/">https://www.wipo.int/covid-19/en/</a>
<b>WMO</b>	World Meteorological Organization	<a href="https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/coronavirus-covid-19">https://public.wmo.int/en/resources/coronavirus-covid-19</a>

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\* Click on home page to find specific articles on COVID-19

\*\* UN website

† United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), includes the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

†† The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding includes the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office