

**United Nations  
Comprehensive  
Response to  
COVID-19:  
Saving Lives,  
Protecting Societies,  
Recovering Better**

JUNE 2020

# Table of Contents

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<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>UNITED NATIONS COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO COVID-19</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>I. THE HEALTH RESPONSE</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>II. SAFEGUARDING LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS: HUMANITARIAN, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIOECONOMIC RESPONSES</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>III. ATTENTION TO HARDEST HIT COUNTRIES AND POPULATIONS</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>IV. RECOVERING BETTER</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>V. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION</b> .....	<b>29</b>

# Executive Summary

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Seventy-five years after the last world war, the world has found itself yet again in a global battle. This time, all of humanity is on the same side against coronavirus disease, or COVID-19. The pandemic has swiftly taken hundreds of thousands of lives, infected millions of people, upended the global economy and caused pervasive fear for the future.

The United Nations mobilized early and comprehensively, leading on the global health response, continuing and expanding the provision of lifesaving humanitarian assistance, establishing instruments for rapid responses to the socio-economic impact and laying out a broad policy agenda for action on all fronts. It has also provided operational support to governments and other partners around the world.

Now, equipped with months of experience, best practices and valuable lessons, we issue this comprehensive overview of the UN response in its entirety to date. The overview recounts our key guidance, lessons and support so far – and points the way to the crucial steps that must follow to save lives, protect societies and recover better. It amounts to a recipe for a comprehensive response to and recovery from COVID-19 that will leave no one behind and address the very fragilities and gaps that made us so vulnerable to the pandemic in the first place. It also points the way toward building resilience to future shocks – above all from

climate change – and toward overcoming the severe and systemic inequalities that have been so tragically exposed by the pandemic.

The pandemic is more than a health crisis; it is an economic crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a security crisis, and a human rights crisis. It has affected us as individuals, as families and as societies. The crisis has highlighted fragilities within and among nations. It is no exaggeration to suggest that our response will involve remaking and reimagining the very structures of societies and the ways in which countries cooperate for the common good. Coming out of this crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach driven by compassion and solidarity.

## A three-point United Nations Response

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations has pursued a strategy based on three pillars:

1. A large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive health response, guided by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and the [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#). As part of this response, the United Nations is supporting efforts to [accelerate work towards a COVID-19 vaccine](#).

[diagnostics and treatment](#) that are affordable and available to everyone, everywhere. The UN is also establishing international coordination and operational support at global, regional and country level, and supporting the scaling up of country preparedness and response operations.

2. A wide-ranging effort to address the devastating [socioeconomic](#), humanitarian and human rights aspects of the crisis, with a focus on saving lives, keeping vital services accessible, households afloat, businesses solvent, supply chains functioning, institutions strong, public services delivering and human rights at the forefront. This includes the immediate humanitarian response to support the most vulnerable people in the most vulnerable countries with life-saving assistance through a [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#). It also includes the call for a stimulus package amounting to at least 10 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product, as well as massive support to developing countries, including a debt standstill, debt restructuring and greater support through the international financial institutions. Preventing and responding to the increased levels of violence against women and girls is also critical.
3. A recovery process that builds back better. Emerging from this crisis is an opportunity to address the climate crisis, inequalities, exclusion, gaps in social protection systems and the many other fragilities and injustices that have been exposed. Instead of going back to unsustainable systems and approaches, we need to transition to renewable energy, sustainable food systems, gender equality, stronger social safety nets, universal health coverage and an international system that can deliver consistently and universally – with the Sustainable Development Agenda as our guide.

## Shaping the response

Solid science, reliable data, and analysis are critical for policy- and decision-making, especially for the tough choices required during a pandemic. The United Nations is helping to establish the knowledge base by marshalling its expertise to examine the diverse impacts of the pandemic and offering relevant information and advice.

[Policy briefs](#) are available on:

- *Populations facing particular challenges*, including children, older persons, women (including as victims of domestic violence), persons with disabilities, refugees and migrants
- *Regions facing particular challenges*, including Africa, Arab States (forthcoming), Latin America (forthcoming), and South-East Asia (forthcoming)
- *Key Thematic Areas*: women and gender equality; mental health, human rights, food security, the world of work, cities (forthcoming), tourism (forthcoming), education (forthcoming), universal health-care/preparedness (to be confirmed)

Additional policy briefs may be released as appropriate.

## Supporting delivery of the response

The United Nations system is also convening decision-makers and mobilizing its supply chains, assets, expertise and capacities around the world [to support the COVID-19 response](#).

- The entire UN system has mobilized behind the [WHO-led health response](#) to distribute medical supplies; train health workers; build testing and tracing capacities; prevent spread

# GLOBAL POLICY INITIATIVES AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSE STRATEGIES

## Secretary-General's policy initiatives




## Joint operational response strategies for UN family and partners

### 1 - HEALTH: COVID-19 STRATEGIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN (SPRP)


#### Strategic objectives

- 1 Rapidly establishing international coordination & operations support
- 2 Scaling up country preparedness and response operations
- 3 Accelerating priority research and innovation

#### Partners

**200+**   
governments, international and non-governmental organizations, research institutes and businesses

#### Funding requirements


**\$1,740m**   
required of which \$1,022m (59%) received or pledged as of June 24

### 2 - HUMANITARIAN: GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN (GHRP)

#### Strategic objectives

- 1 Contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality
- 2 Decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods
- 3 Protect, assist and advocate for refugees, internally displaced people, migrants and vulnerable communities

#### Partners

**60+**   
international and non-governmental organizations

#### Funding requirements

**\$7,320m**   
required of which \$1,440m (19.7%) received or pledged as of June 24

### 3 - DEVELOPMENT: UN SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESPONSE FRAMEWORK


#### Strategic objectives

- 1 Protecting health services and systems during the crisis
- 2 Protecting people: Social protection and basic service
- 3 Protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, informal sector
- 4 Facilitating macroeconomic response & multilateral collaboration
- 5 Supporting social cohesion and community resilience

#### Partners

**165+**   
national institutions in countries and territories with UN Country Teams

#### Funding requirements

**\$1,000m**   
required for the first 9 months of the response of which \$49m (5%) secured

of the virus, particularly among especially vulnerable populations, including in camps, prisons and detention centres; disseminate information widely about prevention and containment measures; and support national response planning and decision-making;

- The Secretary-General is using his convening power and advocacy to mobilize world leaders on critical issues such as cooperation on a vaccine, financing and debt relief – [including the 28 May largest gathering of world leaders](#) since the beginning of the pandemic;
- [Peacekeeping missions](#) are putting in place [a series of mitigation measures](#) to continue helping to protect vulnerable communities while promoting the safety, security and health of all UN personnel and maintaining continuity of operations;
- [Humanitarian agencies](#) already support more than 100 million people around the world and are placing high priority on continuing to provide life-saving help for those people, while also supporting the wider UN system's response to the pandemic;
- UN development system [framework](#): The UN system is assisting countries in five main areas: health services; social protection; jobs; fiscal and financial stimulus; and social cohesion and community resilience. Environmental sustainability is a thread running through these workstreams.
- UN country teams have mobilized to support a decisive and coherent response to the pandemic working with governments, IFIs and other partners in undertaking rapid socio-economic impact assessments and implementing rapid solutions under a 'development emergency' mode;
- UN agencies are supporting governments and partners with recommendations and guidance on public health measures, aviation,

## LINKS TO UN AGENCIES' COVID-19 RESPONSES

[UNICEF](#); [UNDP](#); [UNESCO](#); [WFP](#); [FAO](#); [WHO](#); [UNEP](#); [UNODC](#); [UNFPA](#); [UNHABITAT](#); [UN Women](#); [ILO](#); [UNHCR](#); [IOM](#); [IMO](#); [ITU](#); [IFAD](#); [UNIDO](#); [UNWTO](#); [UPU](#); [WIPO](#); [UNAIDS](#); [UNITAR](#); [UNRWA](#); [IAEA](#); [ICAO](#); [WB](#); [IMF](#)

shipping, tourism, technology, food supply and security, agriculture, and a host of other policy areas impacted by the pandemic.

## Enabling the response

The UN is mobilizing in many other ways to address key dimensions of the emergency and to create conditions in which all people – especially those in precarious situations – can be reached.

[Global ceasefire and diplomacy](#): The UN Secretary-General's call for a global cease-fire, issued on 23 March, urges warring parties in all corners of the world to pull back from hostilities. The appeal has resonated widely and been endorsed by nearly 180 Member States, over 20 armed movements and other entities, diverse regional organizations, religious leaders, NGOs and more than 800 civil society organizations. UN Special Representatives and Envoys continue their efforts to overcome spoilers to translate stated intentions into durable ceasefires. On 5 April, noting that violence was not confined to the battlefield, the Secretary-General also issued a [global call](#) emphasizing the need for an end to all violence against women everywhere, including in the home. The call was positively received, including by 146 Member States who responded to the call and committed to including prevention and response to violence against women as part of their national COVID response plans, and by civil society.

### [“Verified” campaign on misinformation:](#)

Alongside the pandemic, the world is experiencing an infodemic of misinformation – a war on science, a surge of stigma, a tsunami of hate, and ramped-up efforts to exploit young people spending more time online. The new United Nations “Verified” initiative aims to share clear, compelling content, and fight lies with fact-based advice and solutions. [EPI-WIN](#), WHO’s Information Network for Epidemics, provides regular resources and updates aimed at both the general public and the health-care, travel and tourism, business, food and agriculture sectors.

## Funding the response

In addition to UN-agency-specific appeals, there are three major system-wide, costed response plans with accompanying appeals that guide what we as an Organization do to support people on the ground:

[Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#) to address immediate health needs. The plan was produced by WHO and partners and is being financed through government budgets, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and WHO’s [Solidarity Response Fund](#), which is open to corporations and individuals. It covers WHO’s response for 2020 but does not include what governments require against their national plans.

➤ **Resources needed:** \$1.74 billion until December 2020

➤ **Resources raised to date:** \$1,022m including pledges as of 24 June

[Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) to ease the impacts in over 63 highly vulnerable countries and is being regularly updated. The plan is being coordinated by OCHA with over 60 IASC partners, including WFP, FAO, WHO, IOM, UNDP,

UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR and UNICEF, and complements appeals of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs.

➤ **Resources needed:** \$7.32 billion

➤ **Resources raised to date:** [\\$1.44 billion](#) as of June 24

The [UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund](#) for the socio-economic response and recovery in middle- and lower-income countries. While a significant proportion of the UN’s existing \$17.8 billion portfolio of sustainable development programmes is being repurposed towards COVID-19 needs, additional funds are required. The Fund supports the rapid implementation at country level of the UNSDG framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. It was elaborated in April 2020, following the Secretary-General’s call for Global Solidarity.

➤ **Resources required:** \$1 billion for the first nine months

➤ **Resources raised to date:** [\\$49 million](#) secured

## Sustaining the response

The world is still in the acute phase of the pandemic, and second peaks are already occurring in some places. Wide-ranging health measures and other efforts will be needed for months and years to come. This challenge demands uncommon political will, unprecedented levels of funding and rarely seen heights of solidarity within and among countries. The United Nations will continue to consult with Member States and all stakeholders to consider how best to maintain the effort over the long term, including what political and institutional arrangements may be needed for this immense and complex multilateral undertaking.

# FACTS ON UN FAMILY SUPPORT ON THE GROUND

as of early June



Source: Situation Reports (May / June) from WHO, Inter-Agency Supply Chain Cell, UNICEF (as of 28 May), WFP, UN OCHA, UN DCO and others



# United Nations comprehensive response to COVID-19

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Seventy-five years after the last world war, the world has found itself yet again in a global battle. This time all of humanity is on the same side. Coronavirus disease ([COVID-19](#)) is caused by a newly discovered coronavirus, the characteristics of which are still not fully known. As of 24 June, the pandemic has now reached every country and taken over 470,000 lives with 9 million [cases](#). Every day, some 126,000 new cases are confirmed and over 4,300 more lives are lost.

The pandemic is more than a health crisis. It is fundamentally a human crisis. No-one is untouched. No single individual, sector nor society has been spared. No economy has gone unscathed. Some of the most vulnerable communities have suffered disproportionate impacts. How we respond to this crisis – in which all of humanity is confronted by the same urgent threat – will have consequences for us and for future generations. Coming out of this crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach that is driven by unity and compassion. Global solidarity in the response is not only a moral imperative, it is a practical necessity in an interconnected world, where none of us is safe until all of us are safe.

## The three-point United Nations response

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations has pursued a [three-point response](#).

1. First, a large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive **health response**, guided by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) and the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, emphasizing solidarity with developing countries and special attention to people at greatest risk. Universal access to health is a critical global public good and controlling the pandemic is the main pre-requisite for global recovery. Ultimately, we need a COVID-19 vaccine, diagnostics and treatment that are affordable, safe, effective, easily-administered and universally accessible – for everyone, everywhere. A world where COVID-19 is no longer a threat to humanity requires the most massive public health effort in history. To that end, data and resources must be pooled and politics set aside.
2. Second, a wide-ranging effort must **safeguard lives and livelihoods** and address the devastating **humanitarian, human rights and social and economic** dimensions of the crisis with a focus on providing

immediate humanitarian assistance, expanding services to the most vulnerable, keeping households afloat, businesses solvent, supply chains functioning, institutions strong, public services delivering and human rights at the forefront. Policies must take into account **the most affected** and least resilient. At a national level this entails dedicated measures to address the needs and rights of women, older people, children, low-wage earners, persons with disabilities and vulnerable groups. At a global level, it requires a comprehensive stimulus package amounting to at least ten percent of global GDP and massive support to developing countries in the form of an across-the-board debt standstill, debt restructuring and greater support through the international financial institutions.

3. Third, a recovery process that builds back better, leading to more equal, inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies and societies as well as an international system that can protect and deliver on critical global public goods. Recovery is an opportunity to address the climate crisis, inequality of all kinds and gaps in our social protection systems. Instead of going back to unsustainable systems and approaches, we need to transition to renewable energy, green infrastructure, sustainable food systems, social inclusion, gender equality, and stronger social safety nets, universal health coverage, better preparedness for health emergencies and multi-hazard risks. At the global level, we need to put in place an international cooperation architecture that is designed for the problems and challenges of the 21st century.

# I. The Health Response

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## Control the pandemic, contain the virus

The first aim is to suppress transmission of the virus to [control the pandemic](#). Most people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Some people, particularly older people and those with underlying medical conditions are more likely to develop serious illness. Until specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19 become available, the only effective response, according to WHO guidelines, is a comprehensive approach that actively detects, tests, isolates and cares for every case, and to trace and quarantine every contact. This will require physical distancing measures, fact-and science-based public information, expanded testing, increasing capacity of healthcare facilities, supporting healthcare workers, and ensuring adequate supplies.

To slow down transmission, countries have implemented a number of public health measures, including restrictions on movement, public gatherings, and economic activity. As they consider lifting or adjusting these measures, they need to take into account six criteria in order to minimize the risk of resurgence: 1) Disease transmission is under control; 2) Health systems are **able to detect, test, isolate and treat** every case and trace every contact;

3) Outbreak risks are minimized in vulnerable places, such as nursing homes and health facilities; 4) Schools, workplaces and other essential places have established preventive measures; 5) The risk of importing new cases can be managed; 6) Communities are fully educated, engaged and empowered to live under a new normal. **Every person has a role to play** to protect lives and stop the virus.

Some countries can achieve these conditions with their own resources but developing countries need support. The United Nations system has mobilized fully to assist governments, partners, and communities, including through:

- **Delivering medical supplies:** The United Nations has mobilized its extensive procurement and logistics capacities and network of supply chains, especially WHO procurement and WFP delivery capabilities, putting them at the disposal of developing countries. This entails working through a dedicated [COVID-19 Supply Chain taskforce](#) as well as with partners, not only procuring supplies but supporting shipment through eight air-hubs and on [United Nations “Solidarity Flights”](#). **Medical supplies** – personal protective equipment, testing and diagnostics supplies, and biomedical equipment such as ventilators – have been delivered to more than 130 countries. Over 250 million items of

personal protective equipment (PPE) alone have been shipped or are in the process of being shipped by the supply chain team. [Nearly 70,000 cubic meters of supplies](#) are in a 6-week pipeline for shipment, equaling over 100 planeloads. One hundred more planeloads will go to the countries that need supplies most, before the end of July.

- **Supporting the front line health response:** At country-level, the United Nations is providing medical supplies, installing hand-washing stations, training medical staff and, in some cases paying their salaries, constructing quarantine sites and medical checkpoints and supporting local contact-tracing efforts (e.g. by providing motorcycles and fuel and by monitoring flows of especially vulnerable populations). Over [10 million diagnostic items](#) have been procured, [with millions more in the pipeline](#). Over 100 emergency medical teams have been deployed to support national efforts and ten million diagnostic items have been procured. The UN is also boosting laboratory testing capacity, building hospitals with ICU facilities and supporting national and local authorities with public health messaging and information for communities. As part of this, healthcare and frontline workers must be equipped and protected. The United Nations is [supporting efforts to ensure](#) that they have adequate personal protective equipment and the resources they need to do their job.
- **Providing technical support and guidance** to support countries in their health response. This includes the [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#), which covers the public health measures needed to slow or stop transmission of the virus, care for those with the disease in all countries affected by the pandemic or at risk, and to ensure the continuity of essential health and service. The plan outlines the public health measures

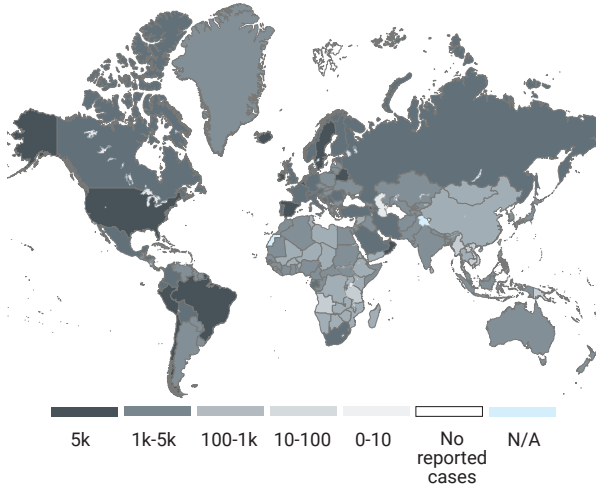
that the international community stands ready to provide to support all countries to prepare for and respond to COVID-19, taking what we have learned so far about the virus and translating that knowledge into strategic action that can guide the efforts of all national and international partners when developing context-specific [national and regional operational plans](#).

More than 60 highly specialized experts have deployed to advise national counterparts on the fight against the pandemic.

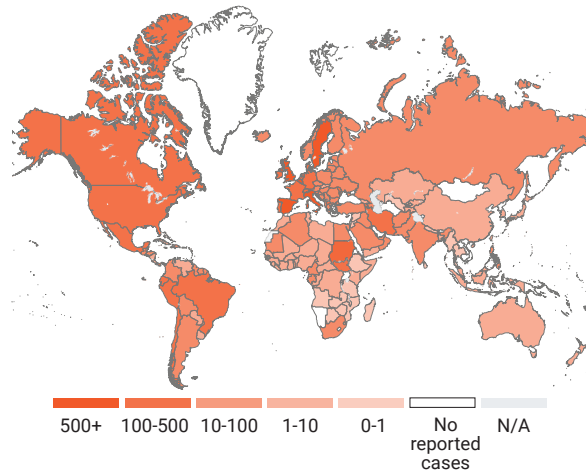
- **Promoting effective communication and reliable information:** Misinformation and disinformation have complicated the health response. [‘Verified’](#) is a UN initiative to combat COVID-19 misinformation by increasing the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information. The initiative produces a daily feed of compelling, shareable content around three themes: science – to save lives; solidarity – to promote local and global cooperation; and solutions – to advocate support for impacted populations. It calls on people around the world to become “information volunteers” and share UN-verified, science-based content to keep their families and communities safe and connected. [EPI-WIN](#), WHO’s Information Network for Epidemics, provides regular resources and updates aimed at the general public as well as tailored information for healthcare, travel and tourism, business, food and agriculture sectors. It also aims to debunk myths that emerge on social media. At country-level, the United Nations is supporting governments’ communications efforts in traditional and social media outlets, including by translating health information and guidance into languages accessible to indigenous communities, minorities, migrants and refugees and even by [joining forces with musicians](#) who have broad followings

# COVID-19 TRENDS

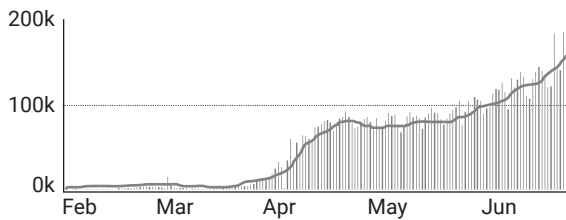
## Total confirmed cases per 1 million population\*



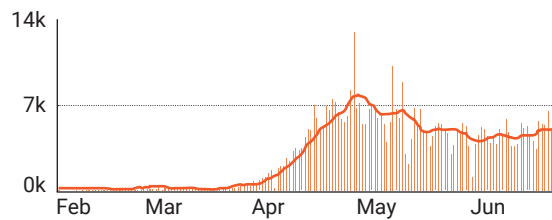
## Total deaths per 1 million population\*



## Daily new confirmed cases



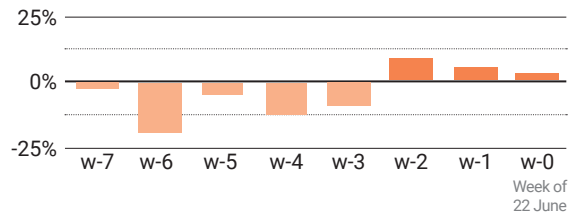
## Daily new deaths



## Weekly change in new confirmed cases



## Weekly change in deaths



## Regional trends for confirmed cases and deaths

Trend	New cases	Total Cases	Regions	Total Deaths	New deaths	Trend
	May vs June avg.			May vs June avg.		
▲	114.3%	201,178	African Region	4,595	1.9%	▲
▲	80.7%	856,650	Eastern Mediterranean Region	19,041	1.9%	▲
▼	-19.6%	2,490,815	European Region	190,903	-1.7%	▼
▲	43.3%	4,092,526	Region of the Americas	212,517	-0.7%	▼
▲	116.3%	541,041	South-East Asia Region	16,360	7.8%	▲
▼	-6.4%	202,489	Western Pacific Region	7,257	-0.1%	▼

Source: WHO (22 June 2020)

\* The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

(e.g. in West Africa). 2.44 billion [people](#) have been reached with [dedicated messaging on COVID](#). [59 United Nations Information Centers \(UNICS\)](#) are working with national institutions, civil society and local media to enhance UN messaging regarding Covid-19. More than 90 courses on virus detection, management and treatment have been made available in nearly 30 languages.

- **Ensuring extra support for the most vulnerable groups.** Migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities and those on low-income are more likely to suffer devastating consequences from this pandemic, especially in 63 countries with weaker health systems and/or those facing conflict, natural disaster or other humanitarian challenges. Women also face specific challenges as the vast majority of front line health care workers. In addition to providing immediate assistance to the most vulnerable, the United Nations has launched a [special appeal](#) and issued a series of dedicated [policy briefs](#) (see below for more detail) to focus attention and resources on these groups.

## **A vaccine, diagnostics and treatment for all**

The second aim of the health response is to have new COVID-19 tools such as **vaccine, diagnostics and treatment that are affordable, safe, effective, easily-administered and universally available – for everyone, everywhere**. A world where COVID-19 is no longer a threat to humanity requires the most massive public health effort in history. Data must be shared, production capacity prepared, resources mobilized, communities engaged, and politics set aside.

- **Advocacy for universal access:** Human health is the quintessential global public good. As such, the Secretary-General has [called](#) for **universal access to treatments, diagnostics and vaccines** for COVID-19. This requires cooperation in the development, production and equitable delivery stages and should cover vaccine, therapeutics and diagnostics. Member States have endorsed this principle and requested the Secretary-General to recommend options and take steps to this end ([General Assembly Resolution 74/274](#) on International cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19 ). In this regard, WHO has launched a [Solidarity Call to Action](#) that lays out the actions needed to advance the pooling of knowledge, intellectual property and data that will benefit all of humanity.
- **Vaccine development:** The Secretary-General joined the WHO and partners to launch the [Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator](#) (ACT-A) to speed up the development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. The UN is committed to ensuring all people have access to all the tools. Nine vaccine candidates have entered the human trial phase, while there are more than 100 candidates in development. In addition to rapid development, deployment, and delivery of new diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines, the ACT-A includes a specific WHO-led programme to ensure equitable access and allocation of these new products. The work of the ACT-A pillars, each led by 2-3 agency partners, is supported by two Special Envoys; and a WHO-hosted support hub. The [COVID-19 Technology Access Pool \(C-TAP\)](#) will compile, in one place, pledges of commitment made under the Solidarity Call to Action to voluntarily share COVID-19 health technology related knowledge, intellectual property and data.

## Preparedness

The third aim is to strengthen **pandemic preparedness, management and response** globally. The costs of COVID-19 already outweigh those of all previous epidemics combined and there are [growing risks of other epidemics](#) that spread rapidly and are difficult to contain. COVID-19 has exposed dangerous gaps in preparedness and health coverage and access. Only one third of countries have put in place the capacities required under International Health Regulations (2005). Pandemic preparedness and response require a standardized outbreak alert system linked to concrete actions by national and local health authorities.

- **Advocacy:** The Secretary-General is advocating for universal access to health and, within that, pandemic preparedness to be seen as a global public good with commensurate global and national-level investments. Public health systems should evolve towards a more

holistic focus on universal health coverage and primary healthcare, social protections, and affordable and sustainable access to essential services. The gaps should be closed in data, scientific information-sharing, pathogen-sharing, and epidemiology. Strong solidarity and support from G20/OECD countries are needed for prevention and preparedness in lower income and fragile countries.

- **At country level,** the United Nations is providing **technical and operational guidance and tools** to support countries in strengthening their public health emergency management systems. This ranges from tools and approaches for emergency response planning, to coordination and financing, risk communications and community engagement, health surveillance, including case finding and contact tracing, clinical management, infection prevention and control and laboratory testing.

## II. Safeguarding Lives and Livelihoods: humanitarian, human rights and socioeconomic responses

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COVID-19 has disrupted billions of lives and endangered the global economy, leading to a [record global recession](#). The health response has necessitated difficult decisions for every country and society. The human impacts of lockdowns and suspensions of social and economic activity are and will be disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable countries and groups. It is important for governments to ensure that these decisions are transparent, trusted and understood and that additional measures are undertaken to cushion the impact on people's lives, their livelihoods and the economy, to minimize inadvertent harms, and to keep human rights considerations to the fore.

This is a human crisis and human beings must be at the centre of the response. Poverty could rise by 500 million people – the first increase in three decades – with [70-100 million](#) at risk of falling back into extreme poverty. It is estimated that the global economy will lose \$9 trillion over the course of 2020/21 with developing countries standing to lose \$220 billion in GDP in 2020 alone.

We need a [major act of solidarity with developing countries](#). We need a focus on low-wage and informal economy workers, small and medium enterprises and the most vulnerable. Households and small businesses must be kept afloat. Countries should consider actions

such as direct provision of resources to support workers and households, provision of health and unemployment insurance, scaling-up of social protection, and support to businesses to prevent bankruptcies and job loss. Resources need to go directly into the hands of people to ensure support reaches those entirely dependent on the informal economy and countries less able to respond. Specific measures from cash transfers to credits and loans must target women. We also need world leaders to commit to ban tariffs, quotas or non-tariff measures, remove restrictions on cross border trade and waive sanctions imposed on countries to ensure access to food, essential health supplies, and health and humanitarian workers.

The Secretary-General has issued a series of United Nations [policy briefs](#) that can help guide Member States and other actors with regard to many of the critical decisions they face, in particular in terms of support to those most in need. At country-level, the United Nations is providing a wide range of concrete support, including food; medicine; water and sanitation; hygiene kits; shelter; cash assistance; and extra protections (e.g. toll-free hotlines) for those at physical risk, including of domestic violence. [155 million children](#) have been supported with remote/home-learning. 14 million [households](#) have been reached with cash grants and 12 million are receiving additional social assistance



from governments with UN support. 45 million [people](#) have received psychosocial support. \$20m has been reprogrammed from the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls to take services online and increase support to frontline organizations.

Some of the primary components of the UN policy agenda and operational responses include:

## Immediate health and humanitarian needs in the most vulnerable 63 countries

The COVID-19 [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) is the international community's primary planning and fundraising vehicle for an urgent and coordinated response to the pandemic in the world's most fragile settings, i.e. 63 countries already facing a humanitarian or refugee crisis, or with high levels of vulnerability. The plan covers the actions of UN agencies and NGOs and is articulated around three inter-related strategic priorities, namely to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality; to decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods; and to protect, assist and advocate for refugees, internally displaced people, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. Key actions have included: supply of personal protective equipment, diagnostics and treatment material; improvements to water and sanitation, particularly in camp and camp like settings; risk communications; protection services, including for gender-based violence and child protection and psychosocial support; ensuring targeted and tailored support to the most vulnerable. The updated plan requests \$7.32 billion for immediate life-saving interventions and for the

logistical backbone to support implementation. To date, \$1.44 billion has been received. [See below under Resource Mobilization]

## An immediate relief package for developing countries

Developing countries need enormous and immediate support to weather this crisis. From the outset, the Secretary-General has [advocated strongly](#) for a relief package amounting to a double-digit percentage – more than ten per cent – of the global economy so as to enable developing countries to fight the pandemic, while keeping their communities, businesses and economies afloat (see the [UN Secretary-General's Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity report](#)). The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have released emergency financing and the G20 has suspended debt service payments for the poorest countries.<sup>1</sup> But more is needed and, to that end, on 28 May, the Secretary-General co-convoked nearly 50 Heads of State and Government, the leaders of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Institute for International Finance, the OECD, the special envoys of the United Nations and the African Union and others – the largest gathering of leaders since the pandemic began – at a High-Level Event on Financing For Development In The Era Of COVID-19 And Beyond. [Six work-streams were created](#) that will pursue various aspects of this agenda over the next six months, including on liquidity; debt; action by private creditors; external finance; ending illicit financial flows; and rebuilding differently and better.

- **Liquidity:** So that developing countries have the resources they need to fight the pandemic, the UN is pushing to expand [liquidity in the global economy](#) and maintain

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<sup>1</sup> As of mid-June, World Bank has allocated \$17bn to 105 countries, with target to reach \$160bn within 12-18 months. Similarly, IMF has allocated \$25bn to 69 countries, with target to reach \$100bn within 12-18 months.

financial stability to safeguard development gains and strengthen the recovery for the benefit of current and future generations.

- **Debt:** So as to [prevent debt crises](#) in all countries at risk, including middle income countries, since such crises risk undermining both the COVID-19 response and sustainable development for years to come, the UN is promoting to address debt vulnerabilities for all developing countries that request support to free fiscal resources to save lives and livelihoods for billions around the world.
- **Action by private creditors:** The UN is [engaging with private creditors](#) on the need to create a space in which they can proactively engage in effective and timely solutions to the looming debt crisis and avoid the significantly higher cost to investors and societies that would result from a disorderly wave of defaults.
- **External finance:** Prerequisites for enhancing [external finance for inclusive growth and creating jobs](#), including measures to enhance long-term finance, FDI, portfolio investment, and lower the transactions costs of migrant remittances. Countries have already committed to reduce remittance fees to less than three percent (SDG target 10.c), but this crisis requires us to get closer to zero.
- **Ending illicit financial flows:** Measures to expand fiscal space and foster domestic resource mobilization by [preventing illicit financial flows](#), base erosion and profit shifting, and facilitating contributions of the digital economy in the emergency and beyond.
- **Rebuilding differently and better:** Ensuring a [sustainable and inclusive recovery](#) by aligning recovery policies with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the Paris Agreement on climate change. In addition there is

the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 to mitigate the social and economic impact on people in 162 countries covered by 129 UN Resident Coordinators (UNDS).

## A framework for the immediate socio-economic responses

The [Secretary-General's Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity report](#) is being implemented through a [framework consisting of five work-streams](#): 1. protecting existing health services and strengthening health systems' capacity to respond to COVID-19; 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 recovery programmes; 4. guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macro-economic 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 action to meet the need for environmental sustainability, if countries are to recover and "build back better", and be better prepared to address future shocks, including pandemics.

## We are all in this together: human rights approaches ensure better outcomes

The COVID-19 pandemic is a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis. As such, human rights must guide COVID-19 response and recovery. A human rights lens can help beat the pandemic, putting a focus on those at risk of being left behind. The virus does not discriminate, but its impacts do – exposing deep

weaknesses in the delivery of public services and structural inequalities that impede access to them. The [policy brief](#) underscores how governments and others can ensure better outcomes for everyone by keeping human rights considerations to the fore in their responses. This holds both for the public health emergency and the broader impact on people's lives and livelihoods. There are six key messages in the brief. First, the public health response should be acutely sensitive to unintended socio-economic impacts and care must be taken to mitigate those impacts where possible. Second, the response must not discriminate; it needs to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized for if the virus persists in one country or one community, it remains a threat to us all. Third, an effective response requires people to be informed and involved in decisions that affect them. Compliance depends on transparency. Fourth, emergency measures should be necessary, reasonable, time-bound and proportionate, and be seen as such. The best response is one that responds proportionately to immediate threats while protecting human rights and the rule of law. The pandemic should not be used as a pretext for restrictions on civic space or other measures not warranted by the virus itself. Fifth, international solidarity is critical to an effective response. Sixth and finally, by respecting human rights in this time of crisis, we will build more effective and inclusive solutions for the emergency of today and the recovery for tomorrow, in keeping with the [Call to Action on Human Rights](#). At country-level, the United Nations, led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), is working to embed human rights at the heart of the response of states, UN partners, civil society and the private sector, and to ensure that the human rights impacts of COVID-19 are

effectively addressed during the recovery phase, with targeted action to support the marginalised and most vulnerable. This includes, for instance, monitoring specific human rights concerns that take on added urgency in the context of Covid-19, such as crowded conditions in prisons. [OHCHR has produced targeted guidance for States](#) and other partners to guide responses and mitigate these human rights challenges.

## A global ceasefire

The fight against this virus emphasizes the folly of war. On 23 March, the Secretary-General [appealed](#) for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world to focus together on the true fight – defeating COVID-19. He called on warring parties in all corners of the world to pull back from hostilities to help create corridors for life-saving aid, open windows for diplomacy and bring hope to those who are most vulnerable. The call has [resonated widely](#), with endorsements from nearly 180 Member States, as well as over 20 armed movements and other entities, along with diverse regional organizations, religious leaders and a broad coalition of international and local NGOs and more than 800 civil society organizations. At country-level, United Nations envoys leading [26 Special Political Missions](#), and [13 peacekeeping operations](#) have enhanced their engagement with all relevant parties to promote a ceasefire. However, these tentative steps away from violence have been fragile, with many ceasefires now elapsing or being reversed. Meanwhile, in a number of conflict contexts, the violence has intensified as the COVID-19 toll has continued to mount. Time is running out to act.

## Ending violence everywhere – including in the home

The Secretary-General has also urged all governments to make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of their national response plans. On 5 April, he issued a [global call](#) emphasizing the need for an end to all violence against women everywhere, including in the home. There is increased demand on domestic violence helplines and emergency shelters. Nearly one in five women worldwide has experienced violence in the past year. Many are now trapped at home with their abusers. The humanitarian access for sexual and gender-based violence service providers has been also restricted. Over 140 governments have supported this call. At country-level, the United Nations, with [UN Women](#) in the lead, is undertaking rapid assessments of violence against women and girls as well as strengthening access to essential and quality services for women survivors of violence.

## Combatting misinformation and hate speech

To defeat COVID-19 and build a more sustainable and equitable world, we need communities to come together to stand up against hate and to ensure that accurate information guides decision-making. The Secretary-General has [appealed](#) for an all-out effort to end hate speech globally and called on everyone to spread kindness, building on his [strategy and plan of action on hate speech](#). In the context of COVID-19, he specifically called on: political leaders to show solidarity with all members of their societies and build and reinforce social cohesion; educational institutions to focus on digital literacy at a time when billions of young people are online – and when extremists are seeking to prey on captive and potentially despairing audiences; the media, especially social media companies, to do much

more to flag and, in line with international human rights law, remove racist, misogynist and other harmful content; civil society to strengthen outreach to vulnerable people, and religious actors to serve as models of mutual respect. Journalists and media workers are crucial to helping the public make informed decisions. The United Nations is calling on governments – and others – to guarantee that journalists can do their jobs throughout the pandemic and beyond. Every person must fight the stigma, discrimination, racism and xenophobia created by this pandemic. Trust in science and institutions are the necessary vaccines against [misinformation](#) that impedes the fight against the virus. At country-level, UN Country Teams and UN Information Centers are engaging with local communities to provide verified information on Covid-19, for instance by running [social media campaigns](#), engaging local storytellers, holding [online workshops](#) for journalists, government officials, youth leaders, and others on the frontlines of the response to the virus.

## Food security and nutrition

The COVID-19 crisis threatens the food security and nutrition of millions of people, many of whom were already suffering. More than 820 million people were already chronically food insecure and an additional [130 million people](#) could suffer acute hunger in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic. Around [70-100 million people](#) may fall into extreme poverty. Were this to happen, the total number of people who are acutely food or nutrition insecure would rapidly expand and we would be facing a large global food emergency. In the longer term, we face possible disruptions to the functioning of food systems, with severe consequences for health and nutrition. Already those systems were in crisis due to such factors as climate change, instability, locust plagues and other stresses.

With concerted action, we can not only avoid some of the worst immediate impacts but do so in a way that supports a transition to more sustainable food systems that are in better balance with nature and that support healthy diets – and thus better health prospects - for all. The [policy brief](#) recommends a focus on 1) Saving lives, focusing where risks are most acute with better surveillance, assistance to most vulnerable, proactive pre-positioning, keeping trade corridors open, designating food and nutrition services as essential, and meeting liquidity needs of small producers; 2) strengthening social protection systems, safeguarding access to nutritious food, especially for young children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, older people and other at-risk groups; 3) investing in transforming food systems, with a shift towards more sustainable food systems practices.

At country-level, UN agencies such as the [World Food Program \(WFP\)](#), which is already providing food security assistance to [100 million people every day](#), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have stepped up assistance in places where markets have been affected by COVID-19. Combinations of in-kind and cash assistance have been scaled up as has technical support to governments for shock responsive social protection measures, [tools to support policy analyses at country and global level](#) and assessing the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture, value chains, food prices, and food security.

## The impact on work

As of mid-May 94 percent of the world's workers were living in countries with some type of workplace closure measures in place to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. While certain sectors and industries have successfully moved online, pointing the way towards exciting innovations

in the world of work, at least 300 [million](#) workers have lost their livelihoods and many more remain at risk. In the formal economy alone, 305 million fewer workers were employed in the second quarter of 2020 as compared to 2019. The unprecedented increase in unemployment and underemployment is having a dramatic impact on the livelihoods, well-being and mental health of workers and their families. Small and medium-sized enterprises – the engine of the global economy – are suffering immensely and many may not recover. Decades of progress on women's labour force participation may also be set back. Impacts vary considerably between groups of people and countries and depend to a large extent on government interventions. The most vulnerable groups are at risk of becoming even more vulnerable, and poor countries risk falling even further behind. The sectors that have been among the worst affected – service, hospitality, tourism and the informal sector - all disproportionately employ women, who have also borne the brunt of the increase in care burdens and unpaid work. The [policy brief](#) highlights the needs for 1) immediate support for at-risk workers, enterprises, jobs and incomes to avoid enterprise closures, job losses and income decline, and mitigate the shift in work and labour into the domestic sphere; 2) attention to both health and economic activity upon the return to work, with safe workplaces and provisions for the rights and needs of women and populations at risk; and 3) pursuing a recovery with better jobs through a human-centred, green and sustainable, inclusive approach that harnesses the potential of new technologies to create decent jobs for all. At country-level, the United Nations, with the [International Labor Organization](#) at the forefront of these efforts, is providing policy advice, analysis and training to governments and other related institutions, often focusing on measures to support vulnerable groups in the labour market (e.g refugees, women and workers in informal

employment) or to raise their awareness about their specific exposure to the virus and to put in place measures to protect them (e.g. efforts to raise awareness amongst farm workers).

## **The role of and impact on cities**

Cities and local governments are playing a unique front-line role, in terms of bearing the burden of health facility response, shouldering and innovating amidst dramatic shifts to daily lives, enduring the economic impacts and blows to markets and championing solutions for eventual recovery. Due to their sheer size and role as connective hubs for global travel between people and goods, urban areas are at the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak, with [95% of all cases thus far in cities](#). But COVID-19 is not just an urban health crisis — it is a crisis of urban access, urban equity, urban finance, environmental sustainability, joblessness, public services and local government leadership. The policy brief (forthcoming) will present recommendations to national governments and policymakers for socio-economic response and recovery

measures that ensure urban areas and local governments emerge from this crisis more resilient, empowered, inclusive and as central engines for equitable economic growth and green recovery.

## **The impact on tourism**

The tourism sector has undoubtedly been one of the hardest hit by the pandemic, putting livelihoods of millions of people and places that sustain them at risk. Some of the hardest hit countries and communities are already fragile economies, including small island developing states, least developed countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The policy brief (forthcoming) will present a set of recommendations to policy makers for socio-economic recovery measures across the broad and complex tourism ecosystem. The brief will include a call for urgent action and support to workers in the tourist sector, many of them women, and for building a more resilient, inclusive and low carbon sector — mindful of the role the sector plays in achieving the SDGs.

# III. Attention to hardest hit countries and populations

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The United Nations has since the outset of this pandemic advocated for special attention to those countries and groups with least ability to cope with the virus and its repercussions. This includes the 63 countries already facing a humanitarian or refugee crisis, or with high levels of vulnerability, and the hardest-hit groups (women, children, older persons, those with disabilities, those with mental health considerations, those who are on the move and others). A series of policy briefs has been issued to raise the profile of these countries and groups:

## The Impact on Africa

The full impact of COVID-19 on Africa will not be known for some time. Initially it was thought that early and decisive responses at regional, national and community levels, guided in part by recent experience of Ebola and HIV/AIDS, had kept numbers lower than the worst-case scenarios but the pandemic is now accelerating in some countries. The risks on the continent are considerable, with low testing, sanitation and medical capacities and difficulties in applying sanitary and physical distancing measures. Indirect consequences are likely to include food insecurity, loss of income and livelihood, a debt crisis, and political and security risks. The [policy brief](#) calls for strong solidarity with and support for Africa's health systems and equitable access to vaccines and

treatment once they have been developed; economic measures to protect livelihoods and sustain businesses, including in the informal sector; safeguarding food access for the most vulnerable and keeping the agriculture sector functioning; and maintaining peace and security. Across all these areas, it is important to ensure inclusion and participation of women and girls, as well as respect for human rights of all. It underlines the importance for African countries of an across-the-board debt standstill, as well as a global response package amounting to at least 10 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product. For Africa, that means more than \$200 billion for an effective response and foundations for recovery.

## The Impact on Latin America

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) has become a hot spot of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is hitting a region characterized by weak and fragmented health systems, and profound inequalities in access to social protection. The health crisis is expected to result in the worst recession in a century and a sharp rise in unemployment, poverty, undernutrition and inequality, heightening social unrest and political conflict. Prior to the pandemic, the development model of LAC was already facing severe structural constraints and vulnerabilities. The policy brief (forthcoming) may point to how to build back

better, with a new sustainable model in four integrated dimensions: social, economic, environmental and political. This requires building back with equality, including in gender and with special attention to the most vulnerable groups, anchored in a human rights perspective and the protection of the region's rich natural ecosystems. New policies must be implemented with transparency, greater accountability and inclusiveness to support democracy, strengthening the rule of law and fighting corruption and organized crime. At the international level, the immediate multilateral response should be expanded to help all LAC countries, regardless of the fact that most of them are considered as middle-income. A Global Green New Deal, underpinned by the 2030 Agenda, should be the basis for relaunching multilateral cooperation for sustainable development.

## **The Impact on Arab States**

In the Arab region, while early and decisive actions have to-date kept transmission and mortality rates lower than the global average, the pandemic has magnified many long-standing challenges and inequalities. The region has deep inequalities, especially with respect to the role of women, and is home to particularly vulnerable communities and population groups but it also has important sources of resilience, including a very youthful population. Given the diversity of Arab economies, some are better equipped than others to address the immediate health impact and weather the socio-economic repercussions of the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis represents an opportunity to address long-standing structural weaknesses and to build back better. The policy brief (forthcoming) will urge special attention to issues such as: vulnerable groups, including refugees and IDPs; resolving underlying conflicts, violence and corruption that undermine development efforts; inclusive and sustainable recovery plans that address

underlying inequalities and gaps in social protections; changes to production and consumption patterns to render them more sustainable; realising the untapped potential of women and young people in the region; giving a boost to small and medium enterprises as the engine of recovery; strengthening the social contract, and building more responsive institutions; continued international support, including humanitarian, financing, trade and technology; pursuit of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Sendai Framework as roadmaps for better recovery.

## **The Impact on South-East Asia**

In South-East Asia, the impact of COVID-19 has been less pronounced than in other parts of the world because governments of the subregion have acted swiftly to contain the pandemic and avoid its worst effects. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has highlighted the unsustainability of the existing development pathway, exacerbating existing risks and revealing new challenges, including peace and security. The policy brief (forthcoming) may point to how countries have demonstrated adaptation, inclusion and resilience, giving much cause for hope. As the recovery gains momentum, the UN stands ready to work together with the governments of South-East Asia, ASEAN and the global community to work towards a sustainable future. The cooperation between the UN and ASEAN will be an important vehicle to tackle challenges.

## **People on the move**

The impact of COVID-19 is disproportionately hard for millions of people on the move, such as migrants in irregular situations, victims of trafficking in persons, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing persecution, war, violence, human rights violations or



disaster. The [policy brief](#) details how this impact presents itself as three interlocking crises: a health crisis whereby people on the move may lack the tools to protect themselves against the virus; a socio-economic crisis exacerbating the risks to their already precarious livelihoods; and a protection crisis that engenders human rights issues and stigmatization. This harsh impact contrasts with the outsized role many people on the move play in responding to the crisis, for instance, as essential workers in the health sector and in keeping our food supply going. The rights and health of refugees, migrants, displaced and stateless persons must not be overlooked in the response to this pandemic. Migrants and refugees may be confined to camps and settlements, or living in urban slums with overcrowding, poor sanitation, and overstretched or inaccessible health services. People fleeing war or persecution may encounter additional difficulties in accessing safety and protection, including health care. The tightening of border controls, travel restrictions or limitations on freedom of movement may complicate their access to protection measures. The policy brief on COVID-19 offers four basic tenets to guide our collective response. First, excluding people on the move from our COVID-19 response is costly in the long-run whereas inclusion pays off for everyone. Only an inclusive public health and socio-economic response will help suppress the virus, help to restart our economies and ensure we stay on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Second, an effective response to COVID-19 and protecting the human rights of people on the move are not mutually exclusive. Third, no-one is safe until everyone is safe. Lifesaving humanitarian assistance, social services and learning solutions must remain accessible, as must safe diagnostics, treatment and vaccines, without discrimination based on migration status. Fourth, people on the move are part of the solution and we should use this crisis as an opportunity to leverage their full

potential. At country-level, the United Nations is providing a wide array of assistance to people on the move, including cash assistance, emergency food supply, health surveillance and treatment. For example, UNHCR has embarked on new cash-based interventions in 40 countries and scaled up its existing cash assistance in 25 operations to address the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the forcibly displaced. IOM has ramped up its cross-border coordination and capacity building to strengthen health surveillance at entry and exit points in dozens of states

## Impact on women

The crisis is having a substantial impact on women. Women play a disproportionate role in responding to the virus, including as frontline healthcare workers and carers at home. Women disproportionately work in insecure labour markets and are harder hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19. Nearly 60% of women work in the informal economy, at greater risk of falling into poverty. Women's unpaid care work has increased as a result of school closures and the increased needs of older people. To reduce the impact on women, gender expertise must be built into response teams, public health messaging must target women and support given to women on the frontlines. To help recovery, women must lead with equal representation and decision-making power. Measures to protect and stimulate the economy must target women. We must recognize unpaid care work as a vital contribution to the economy. The [policy brief](#) provides greater details on the differential and disproportionate socio-economic impacts of the pandemic on women. It details specific actions on prevention of violence against women – including designating domestic violence shelters as essential services, moving support services online, increasing investment to organizations on the front line of response, and

undertaking widespread prevention and awareness campaigns. On the economic front, stimulus packages should specifically target women by putting more cash in their hands, providing tax breaks for their businesses and enlarging social protections related to health, education, and care work. In the longer term, it is important to rebuild economies that are inclusive, equal and resilient. This should include placing unpaid care work as valued and recognized in the formal economy. At country-level, the United Nations, is supporting [women-owned enterprises](#), focusing on economic sectors impacted by COVID-19 that employ women, including tourism and hospitality, the agriculture sector and from rural communities, and offering virtual learning courses through online classrooms.

## The impact on children

Children may well be among the biggest victims of the crisis in the long run because their education, nutrition, safety and health will be significantly undermined by the socioeconomic impact and by unintended consequences of the pandemic response. Moreover, the harmful effects of this pandemic will not be distributed equally but will be most damaging for children in the poorest countries, and in the poorest neighbourhoods, and for those in already disadvantaged or precarious situations, including children already at risk of abuse, stricken by poverty, caught up in conflict or displaced from their homes. More than 1.1 billion children and youth are still out of school (from a high of 1.6 billion). Nearly 310 million (down from 360 million) children who rely on school meals must now look to other sources for daily nutrition. [70% of priority countries](#) (45 of 64 countries) have postponed at least one of their regular vaccination campaigns, which creates tremendous risks for the emergence / re-emergence of other critical illnesses down the line. The world must act urgently, and

collectively, to prevent a broader child-rights crisis. Hundreds of thousands of additional children could die this year as a result of the looming global recession. This would reverse the 2-3 years of progress in reducing infant mortality. Governments must preserve opportunities for young people. The [policy brief](#) proposes measures to minimize the impact, including: rebalancing the combination of interventions to minimize the impact of standard physical distancing and lockdown strategies on children in low-income countries and communities and expanding social protection programmes to reach the most vulnerable children; prioritizing the continuity of child-centred services, with a particular focus on equity of access – particularly in relation to schooling, nutrition programmes, immunization and other maternal and newborn care, and community-based child protection programmes; and providing practical support to parents and caregivers, including how to talk about the pandemic with children, how to manage their own mental health and the mental health of their children, and tools to help support their children's learning. At country-level, the United Nations is providing significant support, such as UNICEF support to access to remote learning and cash assistance for families via mobile cash transfers, as well as online and offline learning materials, including for physical exercise, to help improve children's physical strength, health and mental wellbeing during school closures.

## The impact on older persons

in addition to being at highest risk from a health perspective, older persons are also facing social isolation, discrimination, difficulty accessing services and a variety of other knock-on effects of the virus and the response. The threat to older persons in developing countries and fragile settings is especially worrisome. Older people have the same rights to life and health as everyone

else. They may face great suffering and isolation under lockdowns and restrictions. We must not treat older people as invisible or powerless. Many older people depend on an income and are fully engaged in work, in family life, in teaching and learning, and in looking after others. Their voices and leadership count. They contribute immeasurably to their families and communities in various roles, and commonly sacrifice their own well-being as care workers or in helping children and grandchildren. This is especially true of older women. The [policy brief](#) calls for tackling the threat to their lives and health without discrimination on the basis of their age; strengthening their social inclusion so as to avoid isolation during physical distancing; integrating their needs and rights in overall socioeconomic and humanitarian responses; and ensuring that they participate in the decisions that affect their lives and, to that end, prioritizing disaggregated data and best practices. Policies must consider that the majority of older people are women, who are more likely to enter this period of their lives in poverty and without access to healthcare.

## Impact on Persons with Disabilities

The pandemic is intensifying the inequalities experienced by the world's one billion people with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are less likely to access education, healthcare and income opportunities or participate in the community, and now are among the hardest hit in this crisis in terms of fatalities. We must guarantee the equal rights of people with disabilities to access healthcare and lifesaving procedures during the pandemic. Governments must consult and engage with people with disabilities and put them at the centre of response and recovery efforts. The [policy brief](#) lays out ways in which the virus is disproportionately impacting people with disabilities- who constitute one billion of the world's population- both on the health and socio-economic fronts. It identifies four

priorities that should guide COVID-19 response and recovery programmes if they are not to overlook this population: 1) combining mainstreamed and disability-specific measures across the response; 2) ensuring that information, facilities, services and programmes are accessible; 3) meaningful consultation with and active participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations; and 4) establishing accountability and committing to investments that support disability-inclusive outcomes. Including persons with disabilities in the COVID-19 response and recovery will better serve everyone and is a vital part of achieving the central promise of the 2030 Agenda—to leave no one behind. In sum, responses to the pandemic must be disability-inclusive and accessible.

## Mental Health impact

Although the COVID-19 crisis is, in the first instance, a physical health crisis, it also has the seeds of a mental health crisis. Psychological distress in the face of this pandemic is widespread with some populations particularly affected. Good mental health is critical to the functioning of society at the best of times. Mental health services are therefore an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded. Policies must support and care for those affected by mental health conditions and protect their human rights and dignity. Lockdowns and quarantines must not discriminate against those with poor mental health. The [policy brief](#) recommends three areas for action in this respect: 1) consciously including this issue in response plans taking a whole-of-society approach; 2) ensuring widespread availability of emergency mental health and psychosocial support; and 3) building mental health services for the future, overcoming the long-standing underinvestment in this area.

As we recover, we must shift more services to the community, and make sure mental health is included in universal health coverage.

### **Other vulnerable communities**

Gay, lesbian, transgender, and bisexual people are discriminated against and face violence in many countries, including from their families, which can intensify under movement restrictions. COVID-19 is exacerbating difficulties for LGBTI people, including discrimination and stigma. We must ensure LGBTI people can fully enjoy their human rights, notably access

to health care services, and are protected from violence and persecution. It is important to ensure safety and health for sexual and gender minorities. People affected by HIV must have uninterrupted access to HIV prevention services. Those living with HIV, TB and other chronic illnesses must be given at least 3 months or more of lifesaving medicines. Special attention must also be paid to the particular challenges faced by indigenous peoples in the context of COVID-19. The Secretary-General has [advocated](#) for measures to address the plight of hundreds of thousands of the world's seafarers who are marooned at sea.

# IV. Recovering better

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The COVID-19 crisis pandemic has underscored the world's fragilities, which extend far beyond the realm of global health. Disproportionately impacting communities and countries already in precarious circumstances, it has exposed the deep inequalities in societies and economies with attendant gaps in social protection systems. In many cases, such inequality and exclusion has contributed to pent-up grievances and social instability. Recovery is an opportunity to address inequality, exclusion, gaps in social protection systems, the climate crisis and the many other fragilities and injustices that have been exposed. Instead of going back to unsustainable systems and approaches, we need to transition to renewable energy, sustainable food systems, gender equality, stronger social safety nets, universal health coverage – and an international system that can deliver. Coming out of this crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach driven by compassion and solidarity. Responses to the pandemic should avoid locking in – or even worsening – already unsustainable inequalities, reversing hard-won development gains and poverty reduction. The world must ensure that lessons are learned and that this crisis provides a watershed moment for health emergency preparedness and for investment in critical 21st century public services. We must deal decisively with those issues that make everyone unnecessarily vulnerable to this and future crises.

Public funds must be properly used, avoiding corruption that diverts resources and undermines public trust in institutions. The recovery must respect the rights of future generations, enhancing climate action aiming at carbon neutrality by 2050 and protecting biodiversity. Spending to revitalize economies should accelerate the decarbonization of our economy and privilege the creation of green jobs. The United Nations is urging governments to put women and girls at the centre of their recovery efforts. COVID-19 could reverse the limited progress that has been made on gender equality and women's rights.

The United Nations, and our global network of regional and country offices, will support all governments to ensure that the global economy and the people we serve emerge stronger. Guided by the global UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, UN country teams are implementing immediate measures to meet the most pressing socio-economic needs and mitigate the most exigent socio-economic impacts. In the medium and long term UNCTs are working with government on actions that connect their response to the 2030 Development Agenda, as well as to policy and institutional measures that would help countries remake its society and economy to be future fit—to seize new opportunities and manage emerging risks. We have a framework for action

– the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We must keep our promises for people and planet.

## **Recovery must go hand-in-hand with climate action**

Recovery [needs to go hand-in-hand with climate action](#). We cannot postpone climate action because climate change is not on hold. 2020 remains critical for making progress on the climate emergency: we need to decarbonize the transport, buildings and energy sectors; transition away from fossil fuels and clear the air we breathe by stopping coal; ensure that vulnerable populations are protected from the impacts of extreme climate events; and create the jobs needed to build resilient and sustainable infrastructures. And we have to halt biodiversity loss. The better we manage the health of our ecosystems, the better we manage human health and the spread of zoonotic diseases. The continued erosion of wild spaces, primary forests and ecosystems has brought us uncomfortably close to “reservoir hosts”. We need to restore our soils and forests, stop deforestation and learn again how to manage sustainably our land, oceans and protected areas.

Recovery can help to steer the world onto a safer, healthier, more sustainable and inclusive path. This entails: investing in the physical protection of people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change; spending to revitalize economies should accelerate the decarbonization of all aspects of our economy and privilege the creation of green jobs. Taxpayers’ money should not be used to subsidize fossil fuels or bail out polluting, carbon-intensive industries. Now is the time to put a price on carbon and for polluters to pay for their pollution. Public and private funds should invest in

the sustainable future, not the past. Financial institutions and investors must take climate risks fully into account. All countries, especially the big emitters, are urged to present enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions to cut global GHG emissions by 45% in 2030 and adapt to rising temperatures and strategies to reach net zero emissions and enhance the resilience of people and planet by 2050.

## **An international cooperation architecture designed for the problems and challenges of the 21st century**

The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened not only our health and health systems, but also the global economy, social protection, human rights, stability and the sustainable development prospects of billions of people. It brings home the depth of our interconnectedness and the gaps in our ability to provide critical global public goods, such as public health, sustainable development, a clean environment and healthy planet, a functioning global economy, and peace for all. On the other hand, where the resolve and vision exist, we have the ability to come together as a global community to forge collective solutions to shared problems. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement were clear expressions of global resolve to create a better, more equal, more inclusive and more sustainable future. But it will take a concerted effort to build the world these agreements envisage, especially as we emerge from this pandemic. As we chart a course out of the COVID-19 crisis and towards a better future, we must also strengthen and renew the structures for cooperating at the global level so that we are better prepared for the next such crisis.

# V. Resource Mobilization

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There are three main avenues for which the UN is seeking specific funding in response to the pandemic:

## **Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan: To address immediate health needs**

The [plan](#), produced by WHO and partners, sets out the priorities for the global health response and outlines the public health measures that all countries need to implement to prepare for and respond to COVID-19. The financial requirements cover WHO's response for 2020 but do not include what governments require against their COVID-19 national plans or COVID-19 multiagency plans towards national authorities' response, for which WHO encourages direct bilateral support. The plan will be financed through several channels, above all Governments' own budgets, the [Central Emergency Response Fund \(CERF\)](#), and WHO's [Solidarity Response Fund](#), which allows corporations and individuals to directly contribute. It has raised \$1,022 million as of 24 June (including pledges).

Priorities under the plan include

1. Limit human-to-human transmission
2. Identify, isolate, and care for patients early, including providing optimized care for infected patients

3. Identify and reduce transmission from the animal source
4. Address crucial unknowns regarding clinical severity, extent of transmission and infection, treatment options, and accelerate the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines
5. Communicate critical risk and event information to all communities, and counter misinformation
6. Minimize social and economic impact through multisectoral partnerships.

Achieved through:

1. Rapidly establishing international coordination to deliver strategic, technical, and operational support through existing mechanisms and partnerships
2. Scaling up country preparedness and response operations, including strengthening readiness to rapidly identify, diagnose and treat cases; identification and follow-up of contacts when feasible; infection prevention and control in health-care settings; implementation of health measures for travelers; and awareness raising in the population through risk communication and community engagement
3. Accelerating priority research and innovation to support a clear and transparent global process to set research and innovation priorities to fast track and

scale-up research, development, and the equitable availability of candidate therapeutics, vaccines, and diagnostics.

## **Global Humanitarian Response Plan: To fight the impact in the most vulnerable countries**

The plan, coordinated by OCHA with IASC partners, sets out the priorities for the COVID-19 response in vulnerable and poor countries. It is the primary vehicle for raising resources for the immediate COVID-19 related health and multi-sectoral needs in more than 63 priority countries. It brings together appeals and requirements from WFP, FAO, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR and UNICEF, and was informed by and complements the appeals of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs. As part of the plan the UN is looking to governments to fund the global logistical support setup by WFP to serve the needs of the entire humanitarian community allowing aid and health workers to stay and deliver.

Priorities under the plan include:

1. Contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and decrease morbidity and mortality.
2. Decrease the deterioration of human assets and rights, social cohesion and livelihoods.
3. Protect, assist and advocate for refugees, internally displaced people, migrants and host communities particularly vulnerable to the pandemic.

The plan was costed initially at \$2 billion, of which \$100 million is for country-specific NGO response. Donors have generously pledged \$1.44 billion so far. A second iteration of the Plan includes nine additional countries and was issued on 7 May with a total appeal for \$7.32 billion as of 24 June. Details on funding can be found [here](#).

## **COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund**

The Secretary-General launched the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to support rapid social and economic recovery in middle and lower-income countries. It is designed to complement on-going efforts by the UN development system to repurpose a significant proportion of its \$17.8 billion portfolio of sustainable development programmes towards COVID-19 needs, with additional investments in socio-economic responses. The Fund is designed to enable rapid action across the five pillars of the UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19, and to generate practical solutions that can inform larger flows from other actors. The [financial requirements of the Fund](#) are projected at \$1 billion in the first nine months and will be subsequently reviewed.

The five pillars under the framework and in which the Fund invests 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 macro-economic 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 pillars are connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better.