UNITED NATIONS
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UN in Ghana
COVID-19
KEY MESSAGES

Key message booklet for practitioners and media for COVID-19 response in Ghana

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Some images in this key message booklet were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they may not comply with COVID-19 safety protocols. Please acquaint yourself with the recommended safety measures and adhere to them to keep you, your family, and Ghana safe from COVID-19.

Acknowledgement
We would like to thank the members of the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) for all their work on this project, including the submission of the messages and images, and for enabling the reviews by their respective Heads of Agencies.

We would also like to express our very great appreciation to Ms. Ki J. Min, Regional Communications, FAO Regional Office for Africa, for leading the process of compilation of this booklet. Her willingness to spend time on this work and her dedication and patience have been very much appreciated.

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Accra, 2020

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UN Ghana key message booklet for COVID-19

The UN in Ghana, through its agencies, funds and programmes is deploying several interventions in support of the COVID-19 national response and recovery. This booklet is a compilation of messages from UN agencies' perspectives in the country. While we acknowledge agencies' global messages, those in this booklet have been contextualized to suit the local context. **The purpose is to use this booklet as a framework for strategic communications and to increase public understanding of the UN's positioning towards recovery and beyond.**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused and continues to wreak havoc in our world. As it spreads across continents, the UN and its partners are working to bring an end to the devastation caused by this pandemic and to help countries recover and rebuild.

Public Health

Main corresponding agency: WHO

Community guidance for managing COVID-19

How does COVID-19 spread?

- People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus
- The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a COVID-19 infected person coughs or exhales (breath out).
- These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person.
- Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth or breathing droplets from infected person's coughs

What can I do if I suspect I have COVID-19?

- Stay at home (Do not go to work, to school or to public spaces) to avoid possible transmission of COVID-19 to others in the community.
- Seek guidance from the designated hotlines within your locality
- After recovery you must stay in isolation for 14 days
- Do not resist, refuse or abscond from testing for COVID19. **TESTING POSTIVE IS NOT A DEATH SENTENCE!** Many persons who received appropriate supportive care have recovered from the disease and are alive.

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What can I do to protect members of my community from covid-19?

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand gel;
- Clean surfaces in home, and workplace regularly with chlorine or alcohol solution - for example kitchen benches and work desks
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve or use a tissue. Dispose of the tissue immediately into a closed rubbish bin, and then clean your hands
- Stay more than 1 meter away from people who have fever or cough
- Avoid traveling if you have a fever or cough

Home care

- A communication link with healthcare provider or public health personnel, or both, should be established for the duration of the home care period - that is, until the patient's symptoms have completely resolved.
- The patient and the family should be provided with ongoing support and education, and monitoring should continue for the duration of home care. Patients and families should adhere to the following recommendations.

Home care recommendations

- Place the patient in a well- ventilated single room (i.e., with open windows and an open door).
- Limit the number of caregivers. Ideally, assign one person who is in a good health and has no underlying health issues.

- Wash your hands with soap and water after any type of contact with patients or their immediate environment. Wash your hands with soap and water frequently

To contain respiratory secretions, do the following:

a. the mouth and nose should be covered with a disposable paper tissue when coughing or sneezing.

b. Materials used to cover the mouth and nose should be discarded or cleaned appropriately after use (e.g., wash handkerchiefs using regular soap or detergent and water)

How safe it is to go to the Health Facility if you are sick?

Our health facilities have set up mechanisms to separate COVID-19 and other infectious cases from other patients, you should not miss your doctor's or clinic appointments or discharge yourself against medical advice on account of fear of COVID-19 infection

For people living with or affected by non-communicable diseases:

- People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus (COVID-19).
- The risk of becoming severely ill with the virus appears to increase if you are 60+.
- People with pre-existing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) also appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus. These NCDs include:
  - o Cardiovascular disease (e.g. hypertension, persons who have had, or are at risk for, a heart attack or stroke)
  - o Chronic respiratory disease (e.g. COPD)
  - o Diabetes
  - o Cancer

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Risk factors and conditions that make people more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with COVID-19:

- Smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 as the act of smoking means that fingers (and possibly contaminated cigarettes) are in contact with lips which increases the possibility of transmission of virus from hand to mouth. Smokers may also already have lung disease or reduced lung capacity which would greatly increase risk of serious illness.
- Smoking products such as water pipes often involve the sharing of mouth pieces and hoses, which could facilitate the transmission of COVID-19 in communal and social settings.
- Conditions that increases oxygen needs or reduces the ability of the body to use it properly will put patients at higher risk of the consequences of bilateral viral pneumonia.

What should people do?

A healthy lifestyle will make all bodily functions work better, including immunity. Eating healthy diets, with plenty of fruit and vegetables, keeping physically active, quitting smoking, limiting or avoiding alcohol intake, and getting enough sleep are key components of a healthy lifestyle.

Tips for people living with or affected by NCDs:

1. Continue to take your medication and follow medical advice
2. Secure a one-month supply of your medication or longer if possible
3. Keep a distance of at least one metre from people with a cough, cold or flu
4. Wash your hands often with soap and water

5. Quit smoking and avoid using coping strategies involving alcohol or drugs
6. Safeguard your mental health

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Patient management*

- Understand the patient's co-morbid condition(s) to tailor the management of critical illness and appreciate the prognosis
- Communicate early with patient and family

During intensive care management of COVID-19, determine which medications should be continued and which should be stopped temporarily. Communicate proactively with patients and families and provide support and prognostic information. Understand the patient's values and preferences regarding life-sustaining interventions.

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Food and Nutrition Security

Main corresponding agency: FAO

- Both lives and livelihoods are affected by COVID-19. We risk a looming food crisis unless measures are taken fast to protect the most vulnerable, keep global food supply chains alive and mitigate the pandemic's impacts across the food system.
- Border closures, quarantines and disruptions to markets, supply chains and trade could restrict people's access to a healthy and sufficient diet, especially in countries hit hard by the virus or already affected by high levels of food insecurity.
- There is no need for the world to panic. Globally, there is enough food for everyone. Policy makers must take action to prevent the health crisis turning into an entirely avoidable food crisis.

To mitigate the pandemic's impacts on food and agriculture, FAO urges countries to:

- Meet the immediate food needs of their vulnerable populations;
- Boost their social protection programmes;
- Keep food supply chains flowing - for example, by not imposing measures that would restrict trade and the mobility of commodities;
- Gain efficiencies and aim to reduce costs related to trade - for example, by reducing food loss and waste, and resolving logistics bottlenecks.

Vulnerable populations

- Without social safety nets, vulnerable populations will be at more risk – hence the need for social protection programs.
- Vulnerable groups include family farmers who might be hindered from working on their land or accessing markets to sell their products or buying seeds and other essential inputs, or who are struggling due to higher food prices and limited purchasing power. They also include children who are already missing out on the school meals they have come to rely on.
- Some possible solutions: temporary cash handouts for poor farmers are essential, as well as grants to restart production. Banks can waive fees on farmers' loans and extend payment deadlines; capital can be injected into the agriculture sector to help small- and medium-sized agribusinesses, and their workforce, stay afloat. Governments can make a point of purchasing agricultural products from small-scale farmers to establish strategic emergency reserves for humanitarian purposes.

Food production and consumption recommendations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the food retail sector faces the greatest challenges in maintaining the highest standards of hygiene, protecting staff from the risk of infection, maintaining physical distancing when dealing with large numbers of customers, remaining open, and ensuring that adequate supplies of food are available on a daily basis.

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- **Food workers must be able to recognise the symptoms for COVID-19 early** so that they can seek appropriate medical care and testing, and minimise the risk of infecting fellow workers.

- **Food business operators need to produce written guidance for staff** on reporting such symptoms and on their policies for managing employees showing symptoms of respiratory illness.

- **Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the work environment should be ensured.** Good staff hygienic practices include:
  - proper hand hygiene – washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
  - good respiratory hygiene (cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; dispose of tissues and wash hands);
  - frequent cleaning/disinfection of work surfaces and touch points such as door handles;
  - avoiding close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

- **All food businesses should follow physical distancing guidance as far as reasonably possible.** WHO guidelines are to maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) between fellow workers. Where the food production environment makes it difficult to do so, employers need to consider what measures to put in place to protect employees.

- **Preventive measures should be followed when transporting and delivering food ingredients and products.** Drivers and other staff delivering to food premises should not leave their vehicles during delivery and should be aware of the potential risks involved in contact transmission of COVID-19.

- Drivers need to be aware of physical distancing when picking up deliveries and passing deliveries to customers and of the need to maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness and to wear clean protective clothing. Drivers also need to be aware of the need to ensure that all transport containers are kept clean and frequently disinfected, foods must be protected from contamination, and must be separated from other goods that may cause contamination.

- **Practical measures that may be used by retailers include the following:**

  - Regulating the numbers of customers who enter the retail store to avoid overcrowding;
  - Placing signs at entry points to request customers not to enter the shop if they are unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms;
  - Managing queue control consistent with physical distancing advice both inside and outside stores;
  - Providing hand sanitizers, spray disinfectants, and disposable paper towels at store entry points;
  - Using floor markings inside the retail store to facilitate compliance with the physical distancing, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving counters and tills;

More guidance can be found here.

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Nutrition: Maintaining a healthy diet

Ensuring a balanced diet can contribute to a strong immune system.

- Eat a variety of foods within each food group and across all the food groups
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Consume a diet rich in whole grains, nuts, and healthy fats such as in olive, sesame, peanut or other oilsrich in unsaturated fatty acids.
- Watch your intake of fats, sugar, and salt.
- Continue to practice good food hygiene.
- Drink water regularly.
- Limit consumption of alcohol.

Handling animals or animal products

As a general practice, good food hygiene throughout the food chain is essential for public health and will aid in the prevention and control of infectious diseases.

- **Personal hygiene and biosecurity measures** must be taken at any place of human gathering where there are animals and animal products. Regular cleaning and disinfection of equipment and areas where animals are handled, and control of pests and rodents is always good biosecurity practice.
- **People should not handle, slaughter, dress, sell, prepare or consume meat** that originates from wild animals or livestock that are sick or that have died from unknown causes. Raw wild meat or uncooked dishes based on the blood of wild animals should not be consumed. These practices place people at high risk of contracting a number of infections.
- As a general practice, when caring for any kind of animals, always wash your hands before and after you interact with them.

- As a general practice, good food hygiene throughout the food chain is essential for public health and will aid in the prevention and control of infectious diseases.
- Meat from healthy livestock that is cooked thoroughly remains safe to eat.
- Any unusual morbidity or mortality of animals should be reported to the animal health authorities.

What is FAO doing in response to COVID-19?

As part of its COVID-19 response, FAO's priorities are:

1. support countries to anticipate and mitigate the pandemic's impacts on their populations' food security and livelihoods;
2. contribute to discussions on mitigating COVID-19's impacts on global food trade and markets;

- **FAO, IFAD, and WFP are supporting the Ministry of Food and Agriculture to develop an analytical paper on the implications of COVID-19 to Ghana's agricultural sector** and will propose short- to long-term measures to address and mitigate impacts.
- FAO is working with countries and regional organizations to make sure that **agricultural and food commodities continue to flow across borders and inside countries** to avoid shortages and price increases;
- FAO is providing **policy advice, guidelines and best practices** to countries on: ensuring food supply chains' continuity and protection; protecting vulnerable populations' food security and nutrition; food safety; and ensuring readiness to rapidly detect COVID-19 in animals and animal products, if need be;

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- FAO has been collecting information and carrying out analysis, at regional and country level, on the likely consequences of the pandemic on agriculture and food security. This has informed the development of a regional strategy as well as country specific COVID-19 preparedness and response plans.
- **FAO is convening a series of policy dialogues** to engage the public and private sectors, farmer organizations, development finance institutions and other partners on the risks of COVID-19 to food supply chains in Africa and the complementary roles each actor could play to avoid those risks.
- **Under the One Health Tripartite partnership, FAO is working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).** The One Health vision is a unifying force to safeguard human and animal health, to reduce disease threats and to ensure a safe food supply through effective and responsible management of natural resources.
- **FAO is strengthening laboratory networks to support early detection of animal diseases** – providing reagents, protocol guidance and training. FAO has a global network of Reference Centres that can be used for consultation, research and laboratory analysis.

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Food Security, Nutrition, Logistics and Common Humanitarian Services

Main corresponding agency: WFP

More than 821 million people around the world go to bed hungry, of whom over 100 million suffer from acute hunger due to man-made conflicts, climate change and economic downturns. These are the people who will suffer most due to the economic or logistical consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mitigation Measures:

Nutrition

- **Eat safe and nutritious foods to keep healthy.** Well- nourished bodies are better able to resist infection through improved immunity and the integrity of cells and tissues. Nutrients that boost immunity and help maintain the integrity of sensitive tissues include vitamin A, C and E, and zinc. Rich sources include beef liver, yellow fruits and vegetables, green leafy vegetables, nuts and edible seeds, citrus fruits, avocado, sweet peppers, seafood, fish, chicken

- **Separate nutrition facts from fiction, myths and misconceptions** at a time when a healthy diet is more important than ever. No one food or supplement can prevent illnesses or supply the body's needs, so a variety of foods are needed for a nutritionally adequate diet.

- **Drink lots of water daily to keep hydrated;** water is essential for life. Avoid soft drinks, sodas and drinks with high sugar content. Exercise regularly and have enough rest.

- **Adhere to the personal hygiene habits being promoted to prevent the COVID19 infection** such as washing hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water or hand sanitizers; these are relevant for avoiding other kinds of infection.

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Food Security

- Partners should work together **to monitor food prices and markets**, and to transparently disseminate information which will help to both strengthen government policies and avert public panic.

- Stakeholders in the food security sector should join forces to **address high post-harvest losses at the farm level and in the food distribution network** in order to overcome supply chain challenges which have emerged as a result of restrictions in movements.

- **Sustainable market linkages** among smallholder farmers, farmer-based organisations, aggregators and industrial processors will ensure production surplus are bought up from the farmers to urban and regional markets and also process grains into stable and highly nutritious foods. This will significantly improve farmer incomes and food security

- Everyone, especially women, youth, and peri/urban dwellers should strive to **grow nutritious vegetables** which contribute to improve nutrition and additional income at household level.

School Feeding

- Safety-net systems are critical lifelines to help stem the negative economic and nutritional impacts of COVID-19. School feeding is one of the leading safety nets in Ghana that can and should be leveraged to promote food security. **Governments and partners need to work together to ensure that school children and their families continue to receive food assistance in the form of cash or dry food commodities** that addresses their food and nutritional requirements during the COVID-19

crisis. Priority may be given to food insecure areas as well as epicentres of the pandemic;

- **Schools must look at how they can reopen** better – with improved learning and more comprehensive support for children at the school including health, meals and nutrition, psychosocial support and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Supply Chain and Common Humanitarian Services

- COVID-19 has led to acute and drastic shortages of essential medical supplies and a breakdown of global supply chains. For humanitarian assistance and personnel to be available in needed areas, **countries need to support the UN's life-saving airlink of humanitarian personnel and supplies across regions.**

What is WFP Doing To Mitigate Impact of COVID-19?

WFP is on the frontlines, working to maintain food assistance programmes that provide a lifeline to poor, marginalised and hungry people and in the most food insecure areas.

Analysts are constantly monitoring markets, food prices and trends to provide food security information. Through these analyses, WFP can quickly build a picture of where the most vulnerable people live, what they most require and how best to meet their food needs.

In collaboration with government partners, WFP is contributing to the reduction of post-harvest losses at household level through improved post-harvest management technologies, to mitigate food losses during the COVID pandemic.

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WFP is pre-positioning at least 3 months of food assistance and nutritious food supplies and coordinating with partners to ensure that supply chains of specialized nutritious food are not disrupted by transport and internal or border restrictions.

In addition to maintaining chronic and acute malnutrition prevention and treatment programmes during the pandemic, WFP continues to evaluate and identify vulnerable people to adjust nutrition support.

Working closely with WHO, WFP is building treatment centres and providing logistics support to the humanitarian and health response at a time when commercial air transport is at a virtual standstill. WFP is transporting aid workers and medical supplies on behalf of the entire humanitarian community, to needed areas.

WFP is engaged with other development partners to support government to provide a holistic social protection response to vulnerable people directly and indirectly affected by COVID 19. A joint communique on an effective back to school procedure has been issued by the WB, UNICEF, UNESCO and WFP, outlining measures that need to be put in place. Other Social Protection Interventions such as LEAP, is providing assistance to vulnerable households in order to maintain their food security. This is done through cash transfers and does not expose beneficiaries to risks of COVID 19.

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Gender and Human Rights

Main corresponding agency: UN Gender Team

Policies and public health efforts must treat the gender-specific impacts of COVID 19 appropriately. The collective response strategy should avoid reproducing and perpetuating inequalities between genders and ensure that existing social norms, power relations and gender division of labour are all taken into account, as well as the different vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys related to exposure and treatment of COVID 19. The UN Gender Team in Ghana is encouraging stakeholders to consider the following recommendations for effective prevention, protection and response:

- **Ensure that human rights are at the heart of the response.**The fight against the virus will only be successful if it protects the most vulnerable and less privileged people in society. It is important, therefore, to undertake the appropriate actions to assess and reduce the potential negative impacts of preventive measures, such as confinement and lockdown, on individuals and vulnerable populations and specifically on women and girls.

- **Particular attention should be given to the potential increase of gender-based violence cases.** Evidence in other countries have demonstrated an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 outbreak. In Ghana, early data show signs of an increase in the number of reported GBV cases. GBV, including intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence in situations of confinement and movement restrictions could be particularly dangerous. The continuity of services to survivors must first and foremost be assured. Contributors to the response against COVID-19 must prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and be trained on how to receive and treat GBV incidents. In addition, clear channels for seeking help and support for victims should be outlined and widely disseminated. Designated safe spaces, havens, shelters (existing or new) should also be provided for victims.

- **Ensure that the national response is based on an in-depth gender analysis.** Reliable data will help responsible authorities identify the differentiated impacts on women and men, boys and girls and the most vulnerable communities. It is important to consider the roles, responsibilities, and pre-existing dynamics affecting the lives and opportunities of women and men in Ghana, and to engage and consult with women's groups and gender advocates in designing the preparedness and response plans. This would help in identifying their needs related to access to information, availability of medicines, and women and men's different capacities to access support services and daily supplies by telephone or at the community level.

- **Ensure that the response is based on reliable disaggregated data.** It is essential to collect disaggregated data (as a minimum by sex, age, income level and migratory status…) and analyse it accordingly to understand the differences in exposure and treatment and devise appropriate prevention, protection and response strategies. Disaggregated data collection concerning the effects of the pandemic on the rights of individuals and households should start, as soon as possible, to fully understand the economic and social impact to facilitate equity in response and recovery efforts.

- **Give special attention to vulnerable populations.** This includes people (especially women) living with disabilities or HIV, migrant women (Kayaye) experiencing hardship as a result of the containment measures as well as refugees and asylum seekers, adolescent mothers etc. who are especially vulnerable to the effects of negative stereotypes, discrimination and GBV. Access to health care, including for those who need to access medicines for conditions that are unrelated to COVID-19, should also be duly taken into consideration. This is especially important for people living in refugee or displacement camps, quarantine facilities, prisons, shantytowns, immigration detention centres, etc.

- **The right to information should be guaranteed for all.** Dissemination of accurate and necessary information about COVID 19 must be made available in different languages and formats to be accessible to all persons including, the poor, illiterate, persons with disabilities. Specific information should be provided for female caretakers in quarantine (who may be unable to avoid direct contact) and the specific information needs of pregnant women should be prioritized.

- **Ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability, and good quality of facilities, goods, and health care services to all.** In this context, it is important to ensure the continuity of health services for women and girls, with emphasis on complete sexual and reproductive health information and services. Menstrual hygiene products, obstetrics and other primary health care products are well stocked, available and accessible to all without discrimination.

- **The participation of women and girls in all the decision-making proceses to fight the COVID-19 epidemic should be immediate.** This is particularly important for risk mitigation and response services given women's frontline interaction with communities, as healthcare workers or caretakers, and the role that they play in the surveillance of health security, detection mechanisms, and prevention.

- **Develop strategies targeted at the economic empowerment of women in Ghana.** Lockdowns affect mostly the informal sector of which women make up about 90%. Thus, strategies must be put in place to alleviate the pandemic's impact on women's livelihood and jobs and take supportive measures, notably in assisting them to re-establish themselves over a longer period and reinforce their resistance to future blows. Such measures must include social protection packets that address women and girls in vulnerable situations, including

female head-of-households, health professionals, domestic care workers, Kayaei refugee women as well as financial support measures for companies owned by women.

- **Promote girls' re-entry to school when the lockdowns and movement restrictions are lifted.** The school closures affect girls and boys from disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately and as result, they may not be able to return to the education system. Unplanned pregnancies which are also on the rise during school closures exacerbate the risks for adolescent girls.

- **Ensure proper and effective coordination of the gender sensitive response strategies for maximum results.** The national response should prioritize and promote effective coordination of all the strategies that will be outlined to respond to the different segments from government as well as relevant sectors and stakeholders, including support from CSOs and the private sector. This will help prevent duplication, ensure maximum use of resources, ensure resources reach the right target groups and also ensure that vulnerable groups are not unduly exposed to risk in accessing critical support.

- **Use Culture as a vehicle.** The national response should involve cultural and creative people and institutions to ensure that cultural sensitivity and approaches are involved in the response to ensure that men, women boys and girls have a better appreciation and understanding in their contexts to cooperate in fighting the pandemic.

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Gender, Youth & Sexual and Reproductive Health

Main corresponding agency: UNFPA

During this global pandemic, the world cannot forget the most vulnerable, including kayayei, adolescent girls, persons with disabilities etc. Supporting people affected by humanitarian crises is not only the right thing to do – it is the smart thing to do – to save lives and avoid COVID-19 from cycling back around the globe. We must keep the virus from spreading and ensure that women and girls' needs and rights are included in all aspects of the humanitarian response to COVID-19. The protection of humanitarian workers must also be upheld.

Maternal and Newborn Health & COVID-19

- To date, there is no scientific evidence about the increased susceptibility of pregnant women to COVID-19. There is also no evidence to support vertical mother-to-child transmission of COVID-19.
- Pregnant women should take the same preventive actions to avoid infection recommended for all adults.
- We must maintain continuity of maternal health and other sexual and reproductive health services, including antenatal and postnatal care and access to safe birth, especially in epicenters of the pandemic where access to services may be impacted.

- Health workers must be protected from contracting COVID-19 and be provided with personal protective equipment to treat infected patients.
- Pregnant women with respiratory illnesses must be treated with utmost priority due to increased risk of adverse outcomes.
- Pregnant women with symptoms of COVID-19 should be prioritized for testing.
- Antenatal, neonatal and maternal health units must be segregated from identified COVID-19 cases.
- To date, there are no indications of sexual transmission of COVID-19, but novel coronavirus is transmitted, among other ways, through droplet infection and secretions from the mouth and nose that can contain the virus.

Modern Contraceptives and Other Medical Supply Needs, including for COVID-19 Prevention, Protection, and Response

- Sexual and reproductive health services are being severely impacted by the pandemic and must be prioritized. The closing of borders and constraints in manufacturers' production and delivery capacities are disrupting the supply chains of contraceptives, essential maternal health medicines and other essential medicines including antiretroviral (ARV) drugs.
- During public health emergencies, human and financial resources are often diverted from other health services (including sexual and reproductive health) to respond to the infectious disease outbreak.
- Family planning information, counselling and services (including emergency contraception) are lifesaving and should be available and accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Gender Equality and Addressing Gender-based Violence (GBV) and COVID-19

- Women represent 70% of the global health and social sector workforce. Special attention should be given to their health and psychosocial needs as frontline health workers, as well as to how their work environment may expose them to illness and discrimination.
- In times of crisis such as an outbreak, women and girls may be at higher risk of intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic violence.
- Women can be less likely than men to have power in decision-making around the outbreak, and as a consequence their sexual and reproductive health needs may go unmet.
- Life-saving care and support to gender-based violence survivors, such as psychosocial support and clinical management of rape, must remain available.
- The COVID-19 pandemic may increase women's domestic burden, making their share of household responsibilities even heavier. Boys and men play a critical support role in sharing domestic burden.
- As family tensions rise due to economic stress, women and children are at a heightened risk of domestic violence. Call the DOVVSU Hotline 0551000900, when you identify any suspected case of violence.

Adolescents and Young People & COVID-19

- In times of crisis, adolescents and young people have specific needs, including sexual and reproductive health needs, and may not be able to access services and support if health centers, schools and other facilities are closed.
- School closures and movement restrictions may lead to emotional unrest and an increased risk of violence at home.
- If parents or caregivers contract COVID-19, are quarantined, or pass away, adolescents will need to be protected and receive support.
- Young people exposed to COVID-19 are as likely as older people to become

infected and contagious. They should strictly follow WHO and national guidelines to prevent exposure to the virus and reduce the risk of infection.

- Young people can play an important role in mitigating risks and community outreach in times of crisis. With the right training on COVID-19 and its transmission, young people can work with health authorities to help reduce the spread of infection.
- Some adolescents and youth are at increased risk of contracting the disease or suffering disproportionately from its effects, most notably: adolescent girls, single adolescent parents, kayayei, young migrants, young refugees, homeless young people, those in detention or living in crowded areas, young people with autism and young people with HIV.

Census & COVID-19

- A national effort must be made to ensure that even where census is delayed, census planning and preparations are not cancelled, but continue apace in order to safely proceed with implementation when the pandemic is under control.
- While new census methods, including online, register-based, and hybrid approaches are being used across the world, these demand extensive planning and preconditions that cannot be created at short notice. Hence, National Statistical Offices are discouraged from shifting to new census approaches that have not been planned well in advance. A simple postponement of the planned census approach is most prudent.

What is UNFPA doing in response to COVID-19?

- UNFPA is augmenting the efforts of Government to support vulnerable groups such as Kayayei, kayayei in Tema Station, a popular market in Accra which is home and workplace to over a thousand kayayei. The kayayei are provided with food, toiletries, sanitary towels, personal protective equipment (PPEs), Veronica buckets so as to maintain good sanitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNFPA is assisting the Kayayei to be registered with National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) to enable them access basic health service with dignity. The Fund in collaboration with "Help us help kayayei", "KayaCare" and "Hope for Her" initiatives for an innovative enumeration exercise to enable the Country have a database on Kayayei in every market which will in turn assist in the provision of assistance to them and ensure that the dreams of Kayayei are fulfilled even in the new normal.

- Pandemic or no pandemic, COVID-19 or No COVID-19, pregnant women cannot postpone the arrival of their babies hence UNFPA and its partners have been ensuring continuity in provision of essential maternal health services.

- UNFPA is strentherning the capacity of state and non state actors to respond SGBV issues.For example,the Domestic Violence and Victims' Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service was supported to re-activate a 24/7 helpline service on phone number 055-1000-900. The helpline is available for persons who needed to report cases of abuse, get information about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and domestic violence, or seek assistance for themselves or others who are facing abuse.

- UNFPA during the pandemic continued Empowering Young People, especially Adolescent Girls. UNFPA's COVID-19 response made room for innovation and learning and brought together the entire UN system, CSOs, Government Officials and Young people themselves to be building skills and sharing knowledge under the E-Youth Impact Series.
- UNFPA is prioritizing its support to countries with weak public health and social support systems, including countries in humanitarian situations.
- As the global custodian and distributor of emergency reproductive health kits, UNFPA is working to pre-position these life-saving supplies and dignity kits in strategic locations to meet humanitarian needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On the ground, UNFPA's priorities are:
  - Ensuring women and girls have access to modern contraception (if they want it), and can give birth safely
  - Facilitating support for gender-based violence survivors
  - Strengthening health systems
  - Ensuring (as far as is possible) essential supplies are bought and delivered without interruption.
  - Provide risk communication and community engagement for primary COVID-19 prevention and stigma reduction

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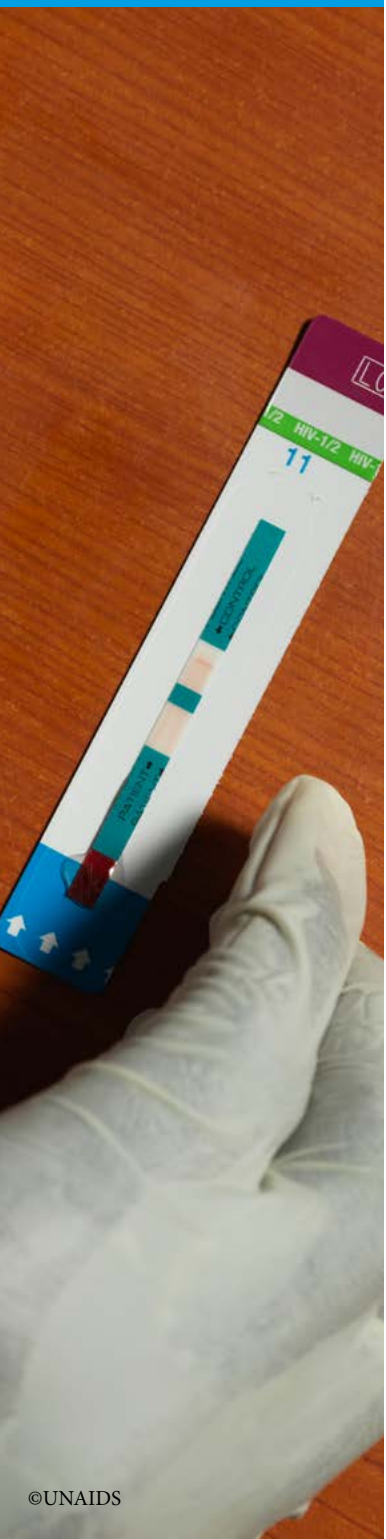

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HIV (human immunodeficiency virus)

Main corresponding agency: UNAIDS

HIV and COVID-19

COVID-19 is a serious disease and all people living with HIV should take all recommended preventive measures to minimize exposure to, and prevent infection by, the virus that causes COVID-19.

- As in the general population, older people living with HIV or people living with HIV with heart or lung problems may be at a higher risk of becoming infected with the virus and of suffering more serious symptoms.

- We will actively learn more about how HIV and COVID-19 together impact on people living with HIV from countries and communities responding to both epidemics. Lessons in rolling out innovations or adapting service delivery to minimize the impact on people living with HIV will be shared and replicated as they become available. Until more is known, people living with HIV—especially those with advanced or poorly controlled HIV disease—should be cautious and pay attention to the prevention measures and recommendations. It is also important that people living with HIV have multimonth refills of their HIV medicines.

Here are some guidelines for people living with HIV during the COVID-19 pandemic to stay healthy and safe.

1. Stay safe

- For safe, preventive measures, please check the public health chapter

2. Stay informed

- For source of COVID-19 information, please check the public health chapter

3. Be prepared

- You should have a supply of your necessary medical supplies on hand—ideally for 30 days or more. The World Health Organization HIV treatment guidelines now recommend multimonth dispensing of three months or more of HIV medicines for most people at routine visits, although this has not been widely implemented in all countries.
- Know how to contact your clinic by telephone in the event that you need advice.
- Know how to access treatment and other supports within your community.
- This treatment could include antiretroviral therapy, tuberculosis medication (if on tuberculosis treatment) and any other medication for other illnesses that you may have.
- Key populations, including people who use drugs, sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people and prisoners, should ensure that they have essential means to prevent HIV infection, such as sterile needles and syringes and/or opioid substitution therapy, condoms and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Adequate supplies of other medications, such as contraception and gender-affirming hormone therapy, should also be obtained.
- Not all countries have implemented policies to allow for longer prescriptions. Be in touch with your health-care provider as early as possible. Consider

working with others in your community to persuade health-care providers and decision- makers to provide multi-month prescriptions for your essential medicines.

- Discuss with your network of family and friends how to support each other in the event that social distancing measures are put in place. Make alternate arrangements within your community for food, medicines, care for children or pets, etc.
- Help others in your community and ensure that they also have an adequate supply of essential medicines.
- Check that you know how to reach your local network of people living with HIV by electronic means. Make a plan for telephone and for social media connections in the event that public health measures call for people to stay home or if you become ill.

4. Support yourself and people around you

- The outbreak of COVID-19 may cause fear and anxiety—everyone is encouraged to take care of themselves and to connect with loved ones. People living with HIV and their communities have decades of experience of resilience, surviving and thriving, and can draw on their rich shared history to support their families and communities in this current crisis. Pay particular attention to your mental health by:
- Avoiding excessive exposure to media coverage of COVID-19. Only read information from trusted sources.
- Taking care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and, where possible, avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Making time to unwind and reminding yourself that negative feelings will fade. Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories—it can

be upsetting to hear about the crisis repeatedly. Try to do some other activities you enjoy in order to return to your normal life.

- Connecting with others. Share your concerns and how you are feeling with a friend or family member.

5. Stop stigma and know your rights

- Stigma and discrimination is a barrier to an effective response to COVID-19. This is a time where racism, stigma and discrimination can be directed against groups considered to be affected.
- Your workplace, access to health care or access to education, for you or your children, may be affected by the COVID-19 outbreak if social distancing measures are put in place in your community. Find out your rights and make sure that you and your community are prepared.

6. Treatment of COVID-19

- Treatment of COVID-19 is an active area of research and several randomized clinical trials are ongoing to determine whether antiretroviral medicines used for treating HIV might be useful for treating COVID-19. Many other possible treatments are also being tested in well- designed clinical trials. Since those trials have not ended, it is too early to say whether antiretroviral medicines or other medicines are effective in treating COVID-19.

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Children's Rights

Main corresponding agency: UNICEF

"Children are the hidden victims of this pandemic. Lockdowns and school closures are affecting their education, mental health and access to basic health services. The risks of exploitation and abuse are higher than ever, for boys and girls alike. For children on the move or living through conflicts, the consequences will be unlike any we have ever seen. We must not let them down." - Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore, 25th March 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on children

Children are among the most vulnerable sections of society impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several factors resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic have hampered a child's rights to health, to learn, play, to be safe, and to enjoy wholesome childhood. These include reduced or loss of household income, school closures and an interruption in learning – affecting long-term economic prospects, limited access to essential services and other measures. For children receiving a daily meal through the government's school feeding programme, there is the added burden on the household to ensure additional feeding at home. This combined with a reduced income places increased stress on parents. Prolonged impact of COVID-19 pandemic may result in a higher rate of student dropouts, particularly amongst adolescent girls, and an increased risk of the occurence of domestic and sexual and gender-based violence.

Children who are already marginalized, excluded and displaced, including children

with a disability, living in densely-populated areas such as urban slums or camps, without access to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, or technological connectivity – are particularly vulnerable at this time.

How we can support and enable the rights of our children during this time

These are four ways in which we can seek to protect and enable the rights of children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Keeping children healthy and well nourished
2. Practice good sanitation and hygiene to keep our immune system strong
3. Keep children learning
4. Protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse

1. Keeping children healthy and well nourished

Ensuring children eat well during this time enables him or her to build their immunity, and to remain physically active, and healthy. Eating a nutritious diet along with regular exercise provides the foundation for a healthy active life. Here are a few tips:

Good child nutrition

- UNICEF and the WHO recommend exclusive breastfeeding from the time baby is they are born until she or he is six months. Breastmilk is enough for all their growth and health needs.
- For children six months and above, as far as possible provide a wide variety of foods.
- Foods with sugars, including processed foods may be less expensive but they may lead to long-term health issues for your child. As much as possible give your child fruits and vegetables, meat, fish, egg and pulses

(beans, lentils, peas), as well as rice and tubers (potatoes, yam, etc).

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

- Teach your children to cough and sneeze into a disposable tissue (make sure to throw it away after each use!) or to cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands
- Encourage your daughters and sons to wash their hands regularly with soap under running water for at least 20 seconds. Alcohol hand rub or hand sanitizer can be used if water is not available.
- Regularly clean and disinfect all surfaces using soap and water.
- Help children to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed and un-sanitized hands.

Practice Social Distancing

- Keep your children away from others who are sick or keep them home if they are ill.
- Teach them to use non-contact greetings
- Ensure your children maintain physical distancing with other people when in public.

Immunization and other essential health care services

- Keep your child up to date with immunizations in order to ensure protection from other viruses and bacteria causing diseases.
- Follow the guidance provided by your healthcare provider on all essential services for you and your baby. You can refer to your maternal and child health records book for more information on how to care for your baby.
- If your child is having any of the COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat and breathing difficulty, call 112 and follow the instructions from the health care provider.

Properly dispose of solid waste

- Large volumes of solid waste are generated daily domestically and by institutions and industries. This waste, if not properly disposed of, may create environmental and health hazard to the public. As more people are now staying home to keep safe due to the COVID-19 pandemic, more domestic waste is expected to be generated. Let us dispose of our solid waste properly. Avoid indiscriminate disposal of waste in open drains and other unapproved places. Call your service provider for your solid waste management issues and to see how to respond given COVID-19 preventative measures (e.g. lockdowns).

3. Keeping children learning

Read Together

- While schools are closed, take time to read together as a family. Read anything in print: a newspaper, song books, packaging boxes, Bible, Koran etc. Sit down as a family and take turns reading. This emphasizes the importance of reading for your child, gives your child practice reading outside of school, and also provides quality family time together.

Math around you

- Even simple math exercises will help stimulate your child's brain and keep their learning progressing while schools are closed. As you take part in ordinary daily life, look for opportunities to encourage your child to think about math around them! (Examples include thinking like: if five birds are in the tree and three fly away, how many remain?; how many sticks are in ½ the firewood pile; pour 75% of the water bucket into a separate bucket; how many cups of rice would be left in the sack if you cooked 4 cups; etc)

Encourage Play

- Young children need time to play to build muscles, increase flexibility, and gain coordination. Play also supports children in learning positive social interaction and in following instructions. Take time out to provide structured playtime for your children.

Sing a Song

- During this time of lockdown, sing a song with your child. Teach your children rhymes, stories, and jokes. All of these no-cost activities help to lift one's spirits and also support cognition and stimulation for young children. Singing is good for you and your child!

A space for learning

- Define a space in your house (a small table or a corner of the room) where your child can set up his or her schoolbooks and can organize himself/herself for learning every day. Setting aside a specific place for learning will help structure things and will help your child organize themselves and learn better.

Educate yourself

- The Ministry of Education/Ghana Education Services have launched a free on-line learning platform and Ghana Learning TV for all SHS students and are working to provide similar for JHS, primary, and KG students as well as radio broadcast lessons for students who don't have access to television or internet. Find out what services are available to your child and ensure he or she participates in distance schooling either through radio, mobile phone, television, or internet – whatever means available.

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4. Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse

Parenting tips during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

a) One-on-one time

School shutdown is also a chance to make better relationships with our children and teenagers. One-on-One time is free and fun. It makes children feel loved and secure and shows them that they are important.

b) Keep it positive

It can be hard to feel positive when our kids or teenagers are driving us crazy. We often end up saying "Stop doing that!". But children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.

c) Get structured

COVID-19 has taken away our daily work, home and school routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and for you. Making new routines can help.

d) Bad behavior

All children misbehave. It is normal when children are tired, hungry, afraid, or learning independence. And they can drive us crazy when stuck at home.

e) Keep calm and manage stress

This is a stressful time. Take care of yourself, so you can support your children. Millions of people have the same fears as us. Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling. Listen to them. Avoid social media that makes you feel panicked.

Online child sexual exploitation and unwanted contact:

With several schools conducting remote learning online, more children and young people will have an increased online presence and could be put at an increased risk of exposure to inappropriate content and / or of online child exploitation and abuse.

Here are some tips to help parents manage their children's increasing use of tech at home and keep them safe online.

a) Use parental controls
Software tools that allow you to monitor and limit what your child sees and does online.

b) Set time limits
With most school-aged children using online platforms or programs for schoolwork, ensuring a healthy balance between non-school related online activities and offline time is more important than ever.

c) Stay in open areas of the home
Device-free zones in the home can help you monitor and manage who your child interacts with online.

For example, you can establish rules like:

- no devices in the bedroom or bathroom
- all screens off at least one hour before planned bedtime
- all family members switch off at dinner time
- devices charged overnight in a place your child cannot access.

d) Know the apps and games your kids are using Check that apps, games and social media sites are age-appropriate for your child.

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e) Check the privacy settings on the games and apps your child is using and make sure their profiles are turned on to the strictest privacy settings

f) Co-view and co-play with your children online

Do your part to protect children. If you or your child detect;

A. Child sexual abuse image or video
B. Inappropriate contact with child/grooming
C. Indecent and obscene digital material sent to a child
D. Cyber bullying against children
E. Sextortion of a child

If you find child sexual abuse material online, don't ignore it, Report it.

Hotlines

For incidents of online abuse, please report to CERT-GH (Ghana National Computer Emergency Response Team). You can do this via:

- Online Form https://cybersecurity.gov.gh/cert
- SMS to shortcode 292 on all networks
- Email report@cybersecurity.gov.gh
- WhatsApp on 050 160 3111
- Call CERT-GH on 292

To report child abuse and domestic violence, call DOVVSU Call Centre: 0551000900

or

Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection Helpline of Hope: 0800 800 800 or 0800 900 900

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Urban development and management

Main corresponding agency: UN-HABITAT

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt across the globe in a wide range of countries and very different environments. The pandemic has already affected countries in every region, making this a truly global situation where every country must take steps to prepare and respond. **UN-Habitat has a clear added value in supporting national and local authorities as they take up this challenge**.

- **It is clear that the pandemic will hit the world's most vulnerable people the hardest—many of them living in informal settlements and slums in cities.** These areas are densely populated, with overcrowded public transport systems, little or no waste management, an absence of basic services and poor housing. Recommended measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission such as hand washing and social distancing are often impossible in these areas, and health facilities are minimal.

- **Governors and mayors play a major role in urban areas stopping the pandic spreading while keeping their cities functioning in terms of food supplies, support to the most vulnerable and access to health care.** They need to work with urban health experts, government agencies at all levels, sanitation experts, social scientists, innovators and urban planners. It is essential that the coordination of the international response is decentralized to the major urban areas, tailoring the response to the urban context and working closely with local governments.

- **Local governments must be supported to work with these communities as a priority**. Critical measures can involve the relocation of mobile health care clinics closer to affected communities, and mapping health facilities for improved access to testing and treatment.

- Local authorities should aim to work with community associations to improve hygiene and sanitation. **UN-Habitat's expertise in water and sanitation, transport, other basic services and slum upgrading along with its wide networks can support such measures.**

- The economic consequences for those in informal settlements will be long-lasting. As cities suspend daily activities and restrict movement, day labourers and those in informal employment will lose their income. This can result in people being forced to leave their homes due to their inability to pay the rent. Without any social benefits, they will be unable to care for their families. **UN-Habitat's work on housing rights, security of tenure and combatting forced evictions can help to develop effective policy measures and collaborative solutions in this respect.**

- **Communities need to be trained and supported** to recognize signs of illness, facilitate home care and self-quarantining, engage in community tracing and prevent the further spread of the disease as well as to carry out data collection. This work can complement the work of local and national authorities and should be developed within national frameworks for action.

- **UN-Habitat works with a wide range of networks to collaborate with and support national and local authorities in working in informal settlements**, which can be mobilized for capacity building, information distribution and exchange, assessment of community health and social facilities and community-led initiatives.

- **What we do today will change the cities of tomorrow, to make them safe and inclusive, and resilient for future crises.** Looking forward, UN-Habitat is supporting many cities to develop innovative planning and expansion models that focus on compactness and connectivity, as well as decentralized local access to all basic services and infrastructure, including health, which could contribute towards slowing the spread of pandemics.

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Migration

Main corresponding agency: IOM

Migration and COVID-19

- **COVID-19 Does Not Discriminate; Nor Should Our Response**. IOM urges that all – including migrants regardless of their migratory status – are included in efforts to mitigate and roll back the impact of COVID-19. Migrants must be seen as both potential victims and as an integral part of any effective public health response. It is particularly important that all authorities make every effort to confront xenophobia, including where migrants and others are subject to discrimination or violence linked to the origin and spreading of the pandemic
- **Migrants and people on the move face the same health threats from COVID-19 as host populations but may face particular vulnerabilities due to the circumstances of their journey and the living and working conditions in which they may find themselves.** It is crucial that government authorities at national and local levels take all measures necessary to protect the health of all those living in unsafe conditions and the most vulnerable regardless of their migratory status. Measures should include adequate prevention, testing, and treatment; continued and increased access to emergency shelters and services; and suspensions of evictions.
- **It is critical that measures, such as border closures, be implemented in a non-discriminatory manner, in line with international law, and prioritizing the protection of the most vulnerable.**

Enforcement policies and practices, must be carried out in accordance with human rights obligations and may need to be adjusted to ensure they are compatible with effective public health strategies and maintain adequate conditions. It is vital that any limitations on freedom of movement do not unduly affect human rights and the right to seek asylum, and that restrictions are applied in a proportionate and non-discriminatory way.

- **The inclusion of all migrants and marginalized groups is necessary in all aspects of the response to COVID-19, whether we are looking at prevention, detection, or equitable access to treatment, care or containment measures, or safe conditions of work**. Risk communication messages on how to protect everyone need to engage with all communities and be available in languages and media formats that are understandable and accessible by all.
- **It is important that migrants are included in measures that are being introduced to mitigate the economic downturn caused by COVID-19.** The impact of the closing of activities due to the pandemic may particularly affect low-wage workers and those in the informal sector, including youth and women, who may lack access to social protection, paid sick leave, or lost earnings support. Domestic workers may be more acutely affected by social distancing measures and isolation in employers` homes, and subject to discrimination.
- **Specific attention is needed for those workers -many of whom are migrants, who continue ensuring indispensable services for people during the pandemic, such as those in domestic work and the service industry, to ensure safeguards of their entitlements and fundamental rights at**

work. We welcome measures taken by Member States to extend working visas and other appropriate steps to alleviate constraints faced by migrant workers and their families due to the business closures, and to ensure the continuing protection of their international human rights, including their labour rights.

- Only with an inclusive approach, truly leaving no-one behind, will we all be able to overcome this global crisis of unprecedented magnitude and proportions.

What is IOM Ghana doing to assist:

- IOM Ghana is part of the UN Country Team and various COVID-19 emergency response sub-groups established in the country under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator to support the Government of Ghana in its national response. IOM Ghana works to ensure that migrants are included in the response and recovery plans, especially in migrant-prone and border communities. Together we ensure that our response does not discriminate and does not leave anyone behind.
- IOM's response plan includes interventions on Coordination and Partnership, Risk Communication and Community Engagement, Disease Surveillance, Points of Entry, National Laboratory System, Infection Prevention and Control, Protection, and Addressing Socio-Economic Impact.

- IOM works to ensure that the return of stranded migrants is safe and dignified.
- IOM assesses Points of Entry to enhance their capacities in COVID-19 response and recovery.
- IOM integrates COVID-19 prevention and protection messages in its safe migration awareness raising interventions especially in migrant- prone and border communities. This includes also a focus on anti-stigma and psychosocial support. Additionally, IOM Ghana uses its social media to spread accurate and up-to-date information.
- IOM ensures that beneficiaries of ongoing programmes, including those related to assisted voluntary return and reintegration and counter-trafficking, continue to be assisted through interventions such as psychosocial support. This is done while also respecting hygiene protocols and safety measures as recommended by WHO and the Government of Ghana.
- Last but not least, IOM has introduced strict hygiene protocols at all its premises in Accra to ensure that the safety and health of staff, beneficiaries, and partners are secured.

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Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Main corresponding agency: UNHCR

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global challenge that must be addressed through international solidarity and cooperation. In as much as this is a public health crisis, it has had an enormous socio-economic impact on everyone. Refugees and asylum seekers who are already on the path of recovery from the trauma of forced displacement have not been spared either. The impact on their livelihoods has been dire.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency is concerned about the economic impact of the pandemic not just for refugees and asylum seekers but also for the communities that host them.

In light of this, UNHCR, in partnership with other agencies, has been undertaking programs aimed at responding and mitigating the impact of this pandemic, whilst ensuring that established structures guarantees building back better for all, particularly refugees and asylum seekers.

Response activities include the following:

1. UNHCR has been advocating for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in national prevention and response programs.
2. Ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to social protection mechanisms and support services.
3. UNHCR has provided hygiene and sanitation products such as hand-washing stations, soap, disposable towels, thermometer guns, masks, etc. in refugee camps. These facilities are also extended to the immediate hosting communities.

4. To enhance the inclusion of refugees in the national health systems, UNHCR has supported health facilities in hosting Regions and Districts with Personal Protective Equipment such as surgical masks, disinfectants, thermometer guns etc. in the Central, Western, Bono and Volta Regions, as well as high-density suburbs in Greater Accra where refugees are located. The support is to ensure that the national health systems maintain its robustness during and beyond this crisis to deliver quality healthcare services to the population in need.
5. UNHCR has been engaged in awareness-raising at all camp locations through the use of brochures, posters, radio broadcasts, etc. including translated documents to languages spoken by the refugees.
6. As governments take measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, UNHCR remains vigilant to protect refugees and asylum seekers from any form of stigmatization or xenophobic violations should restrictions on entry, travel, and freedom of movement be imposed.
7. In order not to compromise the protection situation of refugees and asylum seekers, especially women, girls, and the youth, UNHCR will continue with regular livelihoods support and advocacy for socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers to ensure they are economically empowered and progressively attain self-reliance.

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Infrastructure, Project Management, Procurement, Financial Management and Human Resources

Main corresponding agency: UNOPS

Impact

- COVID-19 has posed a serious challenge to Ghana's health system to respond to the pandemic. Medical personnel are under pressure. Supplies and equipment are in urgent demand. Targeted support is required to meet the urgent needs for medical supplies and infrastructure to cope with the influx of patients requiring specialized treatment.

Health Perspective

- Shortage of medical equipment and supplies has been endangering health workers and patients since the onset of COVID-19 pandemic. Health workers struggle with increasing and urgent demands for medical equipment and supplies as patient caseloads mount. Thus, it is essential to supply the right medical items to the right medical location at the right time to mitigate the effects of COVID-19.
- Poor or ill adapted infrastructure can elevate the risk of infection to frontline workers as well as enabling unsafe contacts between other patients and those with COVID-19. Indeed, safe health infrastructure can mean the difference between infection among patients and towards health workers and prevention in times of pandemic.

What UNOPS can do in response to COVID-19 in Ghana

1. Emergency Procurement of Medical Supplies

- Procurement is an integral mandate of UNOPS. As part of efforts to facilitate access to medical supplies, UNOPS can work with partners to help ensure medical supplies continued to flow into Ghana during COVID-19
- UNOPS can provide procurement support in response to the COVID-19 in many countries, working with partners to assess needs and determine logistics requirements. To better respond to the unprecedented demand for medical equipment and supplies, UNOPS is actively increasing its centralised procurement capacity through the establishment of a wide range of Long-Term Agreements (LTAs).
- UNOPS LTAs with suppliers can enable a faster response to COVID-19 supply requirements by enabling call-off order requests with pre-approved suppliers. UNOPS has LTAs for vehicles and paramedic ambulances, masks, mobile clinics, medical incinerators, prefabricated healthcare infrastructure and mobile clinics, and containerised biosafety labs. New LTAs, based on WHO specifications, are being established with a wide range of PPE, Diagnostics, Oxygen Therapy and Medical device suppliers.
- UNOPS Global Procurement platform UN Web Buy Plus can offer the government and partners a range of products, enabling them to benefit from UNOPS efficiency and expertise in public procurement. With a focus on sustainability and economies of scale, our user-friendly system simplifies complex procurement processes, allowing partners to focus on addressing the crisis.

- UNOPS can activate its Emergency Procurement Procedures (EPP) to enable a faster response to requirements related to the COVID-19 crisis. Under the EPP, additional flexibility is granted in procurement while adhering to essential public procurement principles, including assessing market availability and logistics constraints in a constantly changing environment through our market intelligence and networks so that a contract can be awarded to an appropriate supplier without delay.

2. Enhancing Medical and Healthcare Infrastructure

- As the only UN Agency with a mandate to deliver infrastructure, UNOPS has a long history of strengthening healthcare systems infrastructure, including in response to health emergencies. Our team of qualified advisors, architects, engineers and project managers bring industry best practices to addressing health facility needs. For instance, UNOPS created a safe environment during the Ebola response and recovery by rehabilitating medical facilities and building permanent triage and isolation units in response to tackling the long-term health system infrastructure needs in West Africa.
- Areas of potential support include: provision of prefab healthcare facilities, mobile clinics and biosafety labs; solutions for hospital overflow accommodation; assistance in the design and implementation to repurpose public spaces into medical response operations; preparation of triage assessment facilities; and setting up decontamination and disposal facilities.

How does UNOPS ensure project implementation in response to COVID-19?

- Consulting partners (remotely) to understand their priorities for the on-going engagements in the light of the COVID-19 crisis (Objectives, results, outputs, approach, timeline, etc.) and focusing on them. In situations

where there are joint programs with other UN agencies, jointly reviewing project plan and developing contingency plans based on anticipated impact on delivery, timelines and cost;

- Proactive and open line of communication with partners and stakeholders, reinforce communication to keep them informed on progress, issues, and risks;
- Keeping a positive approach and choose words wisely to assure the partner that UNOPS is doing its best under extreme circumstances;
- Explaining that impact on project implementation is to be expected but clear picture will only be known after a full analysis of the impact of COVID-19 crisis is assessed;
- Explaining measures taken and to be taken by UNOPS based on scenarios to limit impact of COVID-19 on project implementation and expected results;
- Reassuring them that UNOPS is monitoring the situation and taking all possible measures to reduce impact on project implementation;
- Identifying risks related to COVID-19 and assess their impact on on-going engagements;
- Re-assessing other risks (non COVID-19 related) for on-going engagements and monitor and manage them.

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Inclusive and Integrated Crisis Management and Response

Main corresponding agency: UNDP

The spread of COVID-19 is a health crisis but it is not just a health crisis. It is a social, economic and political crisis that will leave deep scars, and we have duty of care to the 7 billion people on this planet.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize that health and development are intrinsically linked, and that investments in health and other areas of development are mutually reinforcing. The SDGs take into account widening economic and social inequalities, rapid urbanization, threats to the climate and the environment, the continuing burden of HIV and other infectious diseases, and emerging challenges.

Partnership between WHO, UNDP and other UN agencies to support governments fight COVID--19 illustrates how the core competencies of the UN health and development agencies can come together to support multi-sectoral responses for health and deliver shared gains across the 2030 Agenda.

UNDP will help countries to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19, as part of its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and build resilience to crisis and shocks.

UNDP will support countries to set up a multisectoral whole-of-society approach to face the challenges beyond the health sector, to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to mitigate the potentially devastating impacts, it may have on vulnerable populations and economies.

To tackle this pandemic, we must rebuild trust and cooperation, within and among nations, between people and their governments, to reinvigorate and strengthen the international system.

UNDP's support will also help ensure that the responses of individual countries are not just comprehensive, but equitable and inclusive so that no one is left out and so that countries can continue to make progress in achieving the SDGs.

COVID-19 is not only a health crisis, but a development issue
COVID-19 is a critical issue for UNDP. It is as much a health and development emergency as it is a human security crisis.

In order to deliver on its mission of eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and building resilience to crisis and shocks, UNDP is helping countries to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19 in order to safeguard progress on universal health coverage and strengthen sustainable and resilient systems for health.

How UNDP is helping affected countries
UNDP is helping affected countries in three ways.

The first is supporting countries to strengthen their health systems to respond to COVID-19, which includes the procurement of health products and medical supplies, rapidly supporting health infrastructure, and management of health waste. For instance, in Ghana, UNDP is working with the Ministry of Health to support the preparation of self-made hand disinfection in accordance with WHO guidelines and to promote effective management of hazardous medical waste.

The second is setting up a whole-of society response bringing all local and national authorities, civil society and private sector around the table. This includes people from sectors whose primary mandate is not health – for example, those covering education, transport, public services and social welfare. For example, in Ghana, UNDP is supporting inclusive communication about risks to safe-guard human rights and protect vulnerable groups.

The third is addressing the socio-economic and human rights impacts of COVID-19 and safeguarding progress towards achieving the SDGs, including addressing stigma and discrimination arising from its spread and supporting marginalized people and vulnerable populations. The impact of COVID-19 on national economies, particularly vulnerable ones, is a key concern. That is why we will work across all sectors to mitigate its economic consequences. UNDP is working with the Ghana Statistical Service to assess the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and support recovery pathways.

Collaboration with the private sector and our investment in innovation and digital development will be critical to implement the solutions being designed with countries, including to expand access to healthcare, to enhance digital system for financing and banking and digital solutions for access to information and services.

UNDP's experience in responding to health crises

UNDP's programmatic and policy offers builds upon past experience with the Ebola and Zika epidemics as well as pandemics including HIV, TB and malaria, and our long history of working together with countries and communities – with the public and private sector -- to prepare for, mitigate, and tackle complexity and crisis with the necessary urgency.

UNDP has extensive experience in supporting countries during health crises. Examples include in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak, where salary payments were Facilitated for around 50,000 health workers and medical waste management facilities were provided and installed.

In Iraq, UNDP supported the rehabilitation of hospitals and health facilities. In Zimbabwe, UNDP has helped health facilities go solar. In South Sudan and Ghana, UNDP supported medical waste management among others.

Learning the lessons from HIV, we must join forces to reject misinformation and stigma, anchoring our responses and advocacy in science, evidence, human rights and solidarity.

Preventing crises

Prevention is key. It is critical that we strengthen the capacity of vulnerable regions, vulnerable countries and vulnerable communities to best cope with crises of any sort, and to mitigate their impact as much as possible.

While the world is focusing on dealing with the current COVID-19 crisis, it is vital that we also consider ways to prevent such a crisis again. In the longer term, UNDP will look at innovative ways to support countries to put in place early warning systems to prevent and better manage such crises and ensure that the world makes full use of the lessons learned from this crisis.

How UNDP is working with WHO and other UN agencies

UNDP's response to COVID-19 is part of a wider and coordinated UN efforts. UNDP believes it is critical to work with WHO and other UN agencies, and will continue to do so. COVID-19 is a clear demonstration of the critical importance of the multilateral system. Without the multilateral system, it would be extremely difficult – if not impossible – for the world to tackle the crisis in the coordinated way necessary to mitigate its impact.

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Education, Culture, Science, and Freedom of Expression

Main corresponding agency: UNESCO

The COVID-19 outbreak is a global public health crisis. It resonates deeply also at the heart of UNESCO's mission. COVID-19 tells us scientific cooperation is key when dealing with a global public health issue. It tells us that continued education must be ensured when so many children today cannot go to school. It is a stark reminder of the importance of quality, reliable information, at a time when rumors are flourishing. It tells about the power of culture & knowledge to strengthen human fabric and solidarity, at a time when so many people around the world must keep social distance and stay at home. UNESCO is fully committed to supporting governments for distance learning, open science, knowledge and culture sharing, as fundamental means to stand together and tighten the bonds of our shared humanity.

EDUCATION

In the wake of the global pandemic, the traditional approach to teaching and learning (face-to-face) with very little parental involvement is broken by school closure and maintaining social distance not to mention partial or complete lockdown when it becomes necessary.

The traditional approach to teaching and learning i.e. face-to-face, made us to neglect new approaches brought about as a result

of technological advances and abandon the critical roles of parents and other actors; and to explore how to build our institutions to cope with the new era of conducting the processes of teaching and learning.

About 9.2 million basic school and 0.5 million tertiary education students have been affected. It is worthy to commend the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ghana Education Service (GES) and relevant Agencies for the timely intervention in rolling out a comprehensive strategy to ensure that learning does not stop for the school children and students across the various levels of education. The strategic measures include the implementation distance and online learning plan, currently in motion for some levels of education; including iCampus and broadcasting lessons on Ghana Learning TV for estimated 1 million SHS learners. Development of digital content for estimated 8.2 million KG-JHS learners across TV, radio, and online.

Our only option is to employ technological approach to teaching and learning, i.e. virtual learning which require careful management of the socio-emotional traits for effective learning to take place. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) then becomes the underpinning factor for exploring and ensuring efficient and effective virtual learning. SEL is the mechanism through which learners, teachers and parents acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. It is therefore important for all stakeholders in education to ensure that:

1. **All members of the learning community are provided with reliable, evidence-based information about COVID 19, how to avoid its spread and how to build SEL skills** – Teachers, learners and their families require simple and factual information on how to stay healthy in order to restore a sense of certainty and control, and provide a course of action. Provide locally adapted resources to support educators, parents, and anyone who works with children and youth to sustain learning with a focus on SEL skills using television, radio, mobile learning platforms and other means where possible, and as relevant.

2. **Support and care for teachers, and prioritize teacher training on SEL** – national authorities need to ensure that proper attention is given to SEL as part of teacher professional development during confinement on the use and development of distance learning modalities. Create avenues and opportunities for teachers to acquire and leverage ICT skills to deliver digital scalable learning solutions that are fun, rewarding, multisensory, immersive, experiential, and performance-based.

3. **Harness the outreach of digital media, radio and television for the dissemination of key messages that foster individual and community resilience** - Engage with relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies , especially those promoting and delivering distance learning during the crisis and beyond, to broadcast messages of tolerance, encouraging mutual support and fostering compassion, showing similarities with contexts in other countries.

4. **Contextualize psychosocial support and SEL in emergencies and crisis-affected contexts** – Undertake careful needs assessment to contextualize interventions, adapt curriculum and teaching and learning methods

to the situation of school closure and home isolation; adjust the content to address emerging and rapidly changing issues. Ensure that SEL is integrated into both formal and non-formal education and training and employ use of appropriate to promote and transmit healthy behaviour to learners. Keep gender and social inclusion in focus to prevent and reduce gender-based and domestic (including sexual) violence and discrimination, which often rise in emergency situations.

5. **Sustaining the quality of Education** - efforts must be put in place by relevant actors to support the teaching and learning processes to deliver quality through institutionalizing feedback mechanisms to measure learning and track performance.

6. **Ensuring equity in learning** - evidence based information on the location and spread of the available tools (television, radio, internet, smartphones, tablets, computers, etc.) for delivering the virtual learning must be explored and factored in to the delivery of interventions to ensure that no learner is excluded (including learners under non-formal education). This require careful reflection on the impact of the available interventions and enablers of virtual learning.

7. **Technology and virtual learning cannot replace the teacher** - technology and virtual learning are enablers of the processes of teaching and learning, but cannot replace the teacher. As such, systems must be established to enable teachers to be connected to share experiences, support each other and be supported to facilitate teaching and ensure learning; whilst teachers are able to connect to their students and parents

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

1) Disinformation spreads: Getting reliable health information about the COVID-19 outbreak can be a life-saver. Yet disinformation and rumours can spread just as fast as the virus itself. Now that many of us are spending much more time online, let's think critically about the information we are receiving and sharing, especially on the coronavirus.

2) Quality journalism: Getting reliable health information about the COVID-19 outbreak can be a life-saver. Rumors and false information can help further spread the virus. To counter this epidemic, it is important to rely on information coming from professional and ethical newspapers, TV and radio channels, and news websites. Quality journalism is now more crucial than ever.

3) Fact-checking for social media content: Getting reliable health information about the COVID-19 outbreak can be a life-saver. If you are not certain about what you see on social media about the coronavirus, do not share it or like it. Do some fact-checking by cross-checking sources or by visiting the World Health Organization's website. If it is proven to be false, don't hesitate to let people know by commenting and adding the source.

4) Access to information: Getting reliable health information about the COVID-19 outbreak can be a life-saver. In a times of crisis, it is essential to guarantee freedom of expression and the right to public information, in particular to counter the spread of disinformation.

5) Don't discriminate, educate! Racism and discrimination are spreading alongside the new coronavirus. Remember that the virus has no ethnicity, no gender, nor social class. Let's stand together as one community of human

beings and flatten the curb of racism. Our diversity can unite us for a better, more inclusive and peaceful world.

6) Against COVID-19, leave no one behind! During the coronavirus pandemic, leave no one behind. The most vulnerable and isolated people need our best of care and solidarity. Don't hesitate to reach out to them. Send them messages or give them a call, to let them know they are not alone. This might be an invaluable support to them

CULTURE

1. At a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture has brought people together, keeping them connected and shortening the distance between us.

2. Culture has provided comfort, inspiration and hope at a time of enormous anxiety and uncertainty rekindling the human spirit, spirituality and resilience.

3. The Coronavirus Pandemic could be a re-set button for all individuals, families, communities and nation states to prioritize and invest in what really counts and matters.

SCIENCE

Let's respect biodiversity! Research has pointed to the fact that disturbances of various species of fauna and their natural habitat can lead to transmission of zoonotic diseases and there is a consensus among researchers that this is the case for COVID-19. At the same time, humankind turns to biodiversity for solutions to most of our health problems. In the quest to speed up the tests

for COVID-19, bacteria discovered in the depth of the ocean years ago by are being used in the rapid test for COVID-19. Biodiversity is intimately link to our survival. Let's protect and conserve it!

Support for Open Science, sustainable and innovative solutions. Faced with COVID-19, which has defied geographical borders, countries are relying on each other for scientific sharing of information. World leaders are making evidence-based decisions in their responses to COVID-19 based on sound scientific information. Governments should continue to support open science in order to encourage dissemination of research results and technological innovations across borders. Citizens should look to scientific facts in order to debunk misinformation.

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For more information:

United Nations in Ghana
Africa UN Knowledge hub for COVID-19
Ghana COVID-19 updates

UN Ghana website

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