INNOVATION
COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION

This Special Edition of the Quarterly Innovation Update highlights how UN Entities are leveraging innovative approaches to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | ICC international computing centre | IFAD Investing in rural people | International Labour Organization | INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND | International Trade Centre | ITC International Training Centre | ITU | UNAIDS

UNCDF | UNDP Empowered lives. Resilient nations. | UN environment programme | UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | UNFPA | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change | UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | unicef | unicri advancing security, serving justice, building peace

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EXPLORING AND APPLYING TECHNOLOGY
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DATA & MAPS

▶ WHO has developed a COVID-19 information dashboard that provides current and reliable data on COVID-19 cases submitted directly to WHO by countries.

▶ The UNAIDS-led Health Innovation Exchange, in partnership with Startupblink, has launched an online Coronavirus Innovation Map, which is a visual database of hundreds of innovations and solutions from around the world related to tackling the COVID-19 pandemic in fields such as diagnostics, treatment, and lifestyle changes. Listings can be added by project partners or submitted by anyone with a relevant solution. The map is used to connect innovators, investors and implementers for improved responses.

▶ UN-OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data has launched a dashboard showing confirmed cases of COVID-19 in 23 locations with a humanitarian response. The Centre has
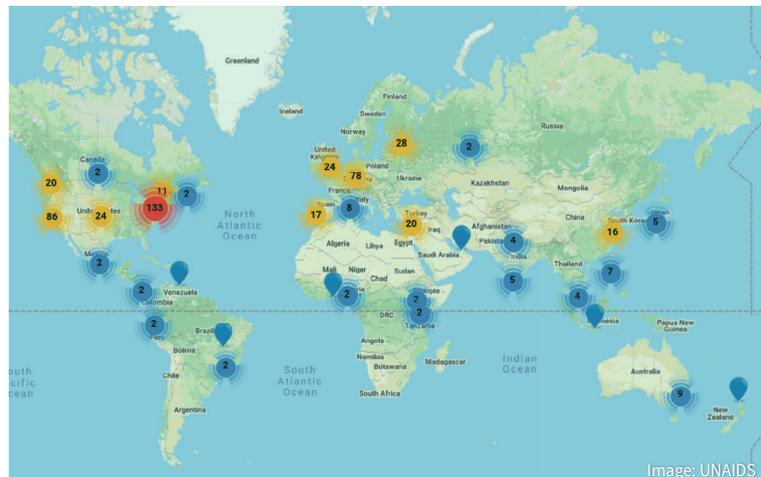

Image: UNAIDS

also answered Frequently Asked Questions on data responsibility, including sensitive data in general, in the health sector, and in the COVID-19 response specifically.

The UN Innovation Network is an informal, collaborative network of innovators from UN Agencies. To find out more about the UNIN, please visit our website, where you can also subscribe to our mailing list.

www.UNInnovation.network

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Photp: WFP

▶ **The World Bank has launched** a new dashboard to enable better <u>understanding the Coronavirus pandemic through data</u> featuring an array of real-time data, statistical indicators, and other types of data that are relevant to the coronavirus pandemic.

▶ **WFP is scaling up remote food security monitoring** to collect, analyse and visualise data on food security, health access, markets, livelihoods, and water access in near real-time. <u>The Hunger Map LIVE</u>, WFP's Global Hunger Monitoring System, is tracking the evolution of COVID-19 outbreaks in most low and lower-middle income countries and the spread of cases by income group. WFP's <u>DataViz</u> allows users to combine COVID-19 data with a variety of other data streams, such as markets, climate or hazards.

▶ **FAO has launched an** <u>open-access tool</u> to help countries mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on food and agriculture. The tool gathers and analyses real time information showing the pandemic's impact on food prices, value chains, food security and undertaken measures, with the aim of providing countries with facts to build their decisions. The tool generates, amongst others, a <u>map of food chain disruptions highlighted by newspapers' tweets</u> and a map of food prices variations.

▶ **By mid-April, 1.5 billion learners were out of school** - 370 million of those relied on schools for their only meal of the day. WFP is tracking the <u>global impact school closures are having on school children</u> in a new dashboard. These data helps WFP shape its response and communicate with key stakeholders and donors to help drive a difference in the current statistics. Going forward WFP will add information on alternative programmes and solutions that are being provided to schoolchildren during the crisis, including take home rations and door–to-door deliveries.

Photo: UN Women

▶ **An** <u>online platform providing real-time data</u> on cases of coronavirus disease in the Republic of Moldova was launched in collaboration with UNFPA in March. The dashboard, based on a global platform, was adapted for Moldova and <u>monitors several indicators</u>, including confirmed and suspicious COVID-19 cases, deaths and recoveries. The data are disaggregated by age, sex, geographical location, time of registration, including confirmed cases among pregnant women.

▶ **WFP is launching a dashboard** that shows the real-time impact of COVID-19 on WFP's operations for staff to help them anticipate problems in advance and work around them. The dashboard combines the latest outbreak statistics with real-time WFP's operational insights, such as which borders are closing and when, which offices are working remotely, and the risk of disrupting food stocks, and thereby provides a 360 view of WFP's operations.

▶ **UN Women's** <u>Women Count Data Hub</u> provides up-to-date data on COVID-19 cases, including new disaggregated data on the total number of cases by sex, by sex and age and some data on infected health workers by sex in a few countries. It also includes infographic on the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls and a resource list.

▶ **To complement what is known through official population-based statistics**, UNFPA supported the Philippines Government to develop a big data platform that captures insights about family planning awareness and perceptions on social media. The Government will be testing the platform to capture conversations and sentiment about COVID-19, and seek to analyse such conversations across demographic groups and disaggregated locations to understand people's awareness and perceptions about family planning under COVID-19, especially in geographically isolated areas.
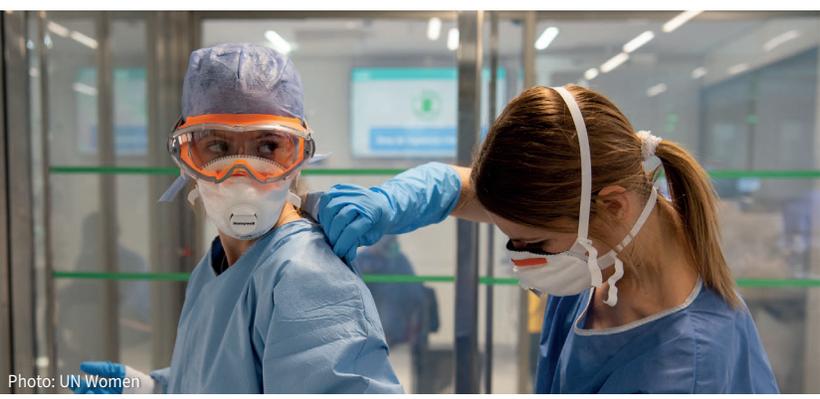
Photo: UN Global Pulse

- UN Global Pulse's previous research revealed that data from ship traffic (vessel-tracking) are a valuable source of real-time information. Global Pulse now set out to explore whether insights from Automated Identification Systems data can be included in epidemic modelling of diseases, including COVID-19, to inform more efficient and timely operational responses.

- To support decision-making in peace and security, a data-centric Field Support Group for COVID-19 Data Reporting System was established by UN-DPO in March. The process connects UNHQ with missions and field entities for rapid, targeted, and visual data-centric reporting. The system produces data reports that aim to answer the key questions "What is the impact of COVID-19 on field operations, and what must be done to mitigate the pandemic?"

- Over 50 examples of UNDP's digital responses have been collected and presented on a searchable, interactive platform. Solutions include developing an emergency response platform in Uruguay and supporting digital health services in Bangladesh. The initiatives have been sourced from across UNDP's regions and aim to facilitate exchange among offices on potential solutions, external partners, or expertise in house.

- In 2019, Pulse Lab Jakarta and UN Women conducted research on how women navigate public transportation after dark to understand the mobility patterns and perceptions of safety among women commuters. Gojek, one of the leading super apps in Indonesia, explains in an interview how they translated recommendations from the research to turn these Safe Zones into Health and Safety Points during the pandemic.

- UNCDF supports rigorous mapping and evaluation of current data practices, resulting in a comprehensive set of recommendations to optimise data access, sharing and use. UNCDF offers a variety of tools and integrations for data sharing and analytics, including ready-to-use reports that enable monitoring mobile app use, program-specific reports that can be customised and visualised to an organisation's specific needs. The application can be integrated with a government's preferred data visualisation system to create dashboards for experts to track and monitor the disease's spread.

- The ILO is providing policymakers with reliable estimates on labour market indicators, using innovative modelling techniques. Estimates show that almost 25 million jobs could be lost worldwide and between 8.8 and 35 million additional people may be in working poverty worldwide. Income losses for workers are expected to be between USD 860 billion and USD 3.4 trillion by the end of 2020. The ILO is using an innovative nowcasting model to estimate the number of working hours lost due to the crisis. As of 1 April 2020, the global estimate indicates that working hours will decline by 6.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to 195 million full-time workers.

Image: UN Global Pulse

UN INNOVATION NETWORK

FRONTIER TECHNOLOGIES

▶ **UNAIDS is supporting** one of the innovators of the Health Innovation Exchange platform in implementing an **AI-based system for COVID-19 detection**. Infervision, which specialises in AI-powered diagnostics from medical imaging, adapted its technology to support doctors to diagnose cases of COVID-19. By calculating required information in less than 10 seconds (as opposed to the 15 minutes of a manual interpretation), this AI solution has detected tens of thousands of coronavirus cases in China and Europe.

▶ **To make video conferencing a more personal experience**, ITC-ILO adopted a more immersive form of communication and collaboration through **virtual reality conferencing** using the Oculus Quest Headset Devices. Ten trainers took their first training of trainers certification leveraging this new technology and are ready to partner up with other UN Entities to accelerate these immersive learning and training experiences. **Contact ITC-ILO** if you want to organise your next virtual event in a more immersive way.

Image: ITC-ILO

In Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp, WFP is improving the coordination of international humanitarian response with **blockchain technology**. Over 46,000 refugees now have the potential to collect assistance from multiple humanitarian organisations all at once. WFP plans to scale the use of blockchain to all refugees in Cox's Bazar over the next 18 months.

Photo: IOM

▶ **Members of UN Global Pulse's data science team** worked with researchers from WHO and the MILA-Quebec AI Institute to map the **landscape of AI applications that are being built to tackle the pandemic**. The research focused on three specific areas: 1) individual patient diagnosis and treatment; 2) protein and drug discovery related research; and 3) the socio-economic impact of the disease.

▶ The India-based Accelerator of the **Health Innovation Exchange**, launched by UNAIDS and partners, has focused on the COVID-19 pandemic: The CIDA COVID-19 Innovation Deployment Accelerator was formed and shortlisted 150+ innovations which can be deployed within 30 days to respond to the pandemic. One of these is **Docturnal**, a mobile phone-based AI cough acoustics tool used for mass screening of TB has been repurposed for mass screening of COVID-19 and reviewed for roll-out.

▶ **UNICRI is researching the use of** AI, drones, big data and related technologies to enhance surveillance capacities as part of national efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular emphasis on measures that law enforcement and security services can take to ensure that this is done in a responsible and human rights compliant manner.

Photo: OCHA

Photo: Unicef

APPS

▸ **WHO has launched dedicated chatbots** with partners **WhatsApp**, Facebook and **Viber** to keep people safe from coronavirus. These easy-to-use messaging services enable WHO to get information directly into the hands of the people that need it. Users learn how to protect themselves and test their knowledge on coronavirus through an interactive quiz that helps bust myths. The chatbots are available in over 25 languages. **UNDP, WHO and UNICEF partnered with WhatsApp** to provide accurate information to communities and local governments on **WhatsApp's Coronavirus Information Hub**.

▸ **UNFPA joined a global coalition** to develop and disseminate an immediate and digital response for healthcare personnel – particularly midwives – to protect themselves, women and newborns from COVID-19. The coalition is launching tools through the **Safe Delivery App**, which provides guidance for midwives on how to handle the most common childbirth complications. Through this app, midwives can access information, animated videos, checklists and guided training.

▸ As part of WFP's first home-delivery campaign, **WFP's E-Shop app** in Somalia is helping maintain social distancing during the pandemic. With the E-Shop app, people can redeem their WFP cash-based assistance online: They fill a shopping cart at participating grocery stores, select home delivery, and check-out. Local transporters take the goods directly to beneficiaries. The app helps keep beneficiaries safe and supports local businesses during an unstable economic time.

▸ **UNCDF is supporting** the deployment, awareness, and dissemination of a **remote screening platform** called DiagnoseMe to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Burkina Faso.

▸ **U-Report, UNICEF's free mobile platform**, which is used by over 10 million young people in 68 countries, is sharing information related to COVID-19. Through SMS, Viber, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp users can ask U-Report questions about the coronavirus and receive preprogrammed answers from experts. The new **U-Report COVID-19 Information Chatbot** strengthens UNICEF's ability to assess needs, tackle misinformation, and in partnership with governments share reliable information on where communities can seek assistance. To date, U-Report's COVID-19 bot has been accessed by over 2.2 million people across 43 countries.
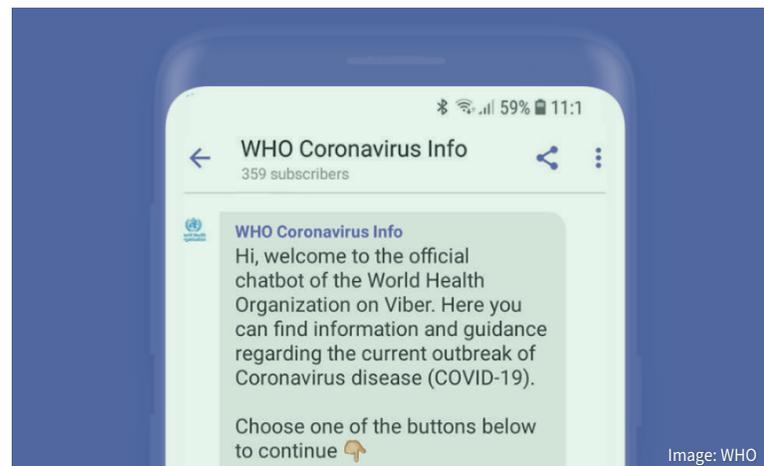

Image: WHO

DIGITAL FINANCE

▶ UNCDF, working with UNDP and the Better than Cash Alliance, is bringing its expertise on responsible digital payments to help governments and partners introduce technology channels to pay emergency workers reliably and on time. Digital P2P (Person-to-Person), P2B (Person-to-Business) and B2P (Business-to-Person) payments can help maintain social distancing and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Drawing on lessons learnt from digitising payments to Ebola response workers, the Better Than Cash Alliance is currently responding to requests from government and corporate members to accelerate responsible digital transfer payments.

▶ UN Women is a member of the Digital Finance Task Force, which has published a special newsletter highlighting emerging uses of digital financing to respond to the crisis around the world. UN Women also coordinated the publication of the SG's Policy Brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women, which includes references to innovative virtual solutions and the use of mobile banking for cash transfers.

▶ Digital money opportunities are increasingly seen as a viable option to transfer benefits to the people WFP serves. WFP conducted a data review to understand its ability to either communicate with or serve beneficiaries through mobile numbers. This data now allows WFP to reach, communicate and serve the beneficiaries better.

LEVERAGING INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AGAINST COVID-19
e.g. innovation in business processes, learning and communication

▶ On 18 March, WHO together with partners launched one of the largest ever clinical trials to find an effective treatment for COVID-19. By enrolling patients from over 90 countries, the Solidarity trial aims to generate the robust data needed to show which treatments are most effective. The trial provides simplified procedures to enable even overloaded hospitals to participate, with no paperwork required.

▶ UNDP's Accelerator Labs are modelling how they can source solutions at the local level, feed them into the global network for fast learning, and so generate more elevated insights into what works. This includes scaling the "Corona in Iraq" platform developed by a young Iraqi developer, which plots the spread of COVID-19 cases across the country.

▶ The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the importance of universal connectivity. GIGA, an initiative launched by UNICEF and ITU to connect every young person to the internet, is supporting the immediate response to COVID-19 as well as looking at how connectivity can create stronger infrastructures in the time after COVID-19. In education, and by supporting country partners to identify, support and deploy digital public goods, this means ensuring all children can access quality education. The GIGA team has accelerat-

Photo: UNDP

ed work on key initiatives, with a focus on providing connectivity and necessary services to 11 high-impact countries through September. GIGA Initiatives supporting communities during COVID-19 include critical software and content, broadband connectivity, and digital financial services.

COVID-19
s p e c i a l
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Photo: UNIDO

- Under UNHCR's Digital Access Inclusion and Participation workstream, the Innovation Service has adapted existing guidance and created new tips and tools for operations. Given the changes in operational contexts – and physical distancing – this guidance has focused on how to maintain engagement with communities through remote and connected channels

- UNIDO's response to the COVID-19 crisis is structured in three phases. In the short-term, UNIDO helps Member States respond to the health emergency. In the mid-term, it provides advice on how to mitigate the impact of the disruption of productive activities and on reactivating production and supply chains. UNIDO's actions are already delivering tangible results: In China, robot delivery vehicles were deployed to help with emergencies; an Armenian apparel manufacturer has started producing masks; and Tunisia's entrepreneurs have swung into action against COVID-19. UNIDO is also developing a COVID-19 contingency plan dashboard to support Member States in monitoring its operations, which will be launched shortly. In the aftermath of the crisis and the long-term, UNIDO provides development support to Member States in the recovery phase.

- Many WFP country offices use biometric data to identify beneficiaries. This fingerprinting procedure puts people at risk of transmission of COVID-19 and in response, WFP developed a software version that allows country offices to turn off biometric authentication. WFP is investigating how to authenticate beneficiaries using contactless biometric technology or self-registration using mobile devices.

COMMUNICATION

- A key focus has been on strengthening UNHCR's Risk Communications and Community Engagement to ensure that communities have access to information on prevention and treatment. UNHCR leveraged diverse partnerships to experiment in this area alongside the private sector, social enterprises and anthropologists.

- UNODC is providing advice, support and guidance on how the UN can protect itself from being a vector for COVID-19 disinformation spread. Work to date has included analysing and safeguarding key social media and IT accounts thus protecting the public and the reputation of UN Offices. UNODC's work is also guiding proactive counter-disinformation strategies by senior UN leadership.

- UNDP's Accelerator Lab in India and UNV's VForce in India are working on using data & intelligence, gamification and social media to promote caring for the elderly. The campaign has spread across social media platforms like TikTok & Instagram.

- The International Trade Centre in The Gambia engaged young leaders from its community-based tourism initiative under the Youth Empowerment Project, providing funding and resources to undertake awareness campaigns, initiating the first critical step towards prevention of COVID-19.

- UNFPA is teaming up with Prezi to help teach young people around the world about #COVID19 and what they can do to keep their friends, families, and communities safe. The video series will feature youth sharing how COVID-19 affects them, how to protect their sexual and mental health, and ways to support each other.

#YouthAgainstCOVID19
Irem Tumer
UNFPA
Photo: UNFPA

LEARNING

▶ Through a digital taskforce, ITC-ILO took its full learning operations on-line in less than two weeks. As a result, no learning had to be cancelled throughout this crisis. Colleagues who are interested to make similar acceleration in digital learning transformation can join the upcoming E-learning Design Lab. As more organisations are looking to upscale digital solutions in a more strategic way the Centre started to engage with partners in the design and development of institutional capacity development services, which will be robust after the COVID-19 crisis too.

▶ COVID-19 has created the largest online-learning experiment ever undertaken and many learning organisations are scrambling to find online resources to continue curriculums. UNEP's InforMEA is ramping up efforts to make free, self-paced online courses available to introduce students to international environmental law and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Beyond self-study, InforMEA is seeking to engage educational institutions to use the courses in a blended-learning approach, where students take the courses as an introduction and teachers use virtual class-time on additional materials and discussions.

SUPPORTING TEAMS
e.g. tips on remote working and maintaining team spirit

TRAINING & WORKSHOPS

▶ The UN Innovation Network held a two-part webinar series on Taking Conferences and Workshops Online. The first webinar explored principles for designing online workshops and collaboration sessions. 500 colleagues from across the UN joined the webinar. The second part was an interactive, facilitated workshop in which participants practiced remote workshop tools and techniques hands-on themselves. Colleagues generated 50 ideas on how to build personal connections in digital workshops.

▶ To support colleagues in their transition to working from home, UNDP hosted *Working from Home 101* webinars, which covered essentials such as how to manage your day, how to collaborate with your team remotely, followed by a live demo of key tools used at UNDP. Further training sessions included psychosocial support workshops and webinars for remote team management. In addition, UNDP's external platform DigitalNow created a curated list of content for working from home. Original content includes a

5-min interview with a colleague from UNDP China, who reflected on managing her team remotely, and six steps for making online events more productive and engaging.

▶ Based in Italy, the UNSSC got real-life insights on the impact of COVID-19 on working life and has been working with experts to translate these first hand experiences into actionable learning. The free, self-paced UN Leadership in Times of Uncertainty Programme is designed to support the UN staff and includes modules on building resilience to change, introduction to innovation and leading through communication. The Helping Teams Navigate Uncertainty Programme examines managing and structuring work from home, managing teams remotely and remote coaching practices for managers.

▶ The WFP Innovation Accelerator provides innovation support to WFP, other UN Entities and external organisations. Recent activities in times of COVID-19 include remotely providing innovation support services; developing a train

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the trainer programme for virtual/remote facilitation and project management; and "moonshot" and "out-of-the-box" ideas using design thinking and exponential technologies to rethink the Future of Crisis Management.

▶ UNICC has launched the UN Digital Academy, a new learning platform to deliver training on new technologies to staff and stakeholders. The UN Digital Academy offers curated content on productivity tools, accessibility features, app development, data science and cloud computing through an interactive learning environment customised for the UN family. Learners can access courses virtually anytime and from any device.

▶ WFP, UNHCR and UNDSC rapidly redesigned their week-long innovation bootcamp from an in-person event into a virtual bootcamp held across 3 countries.

▶ UN Secretariat's "Innovation Fridays" are an ongoing series of briefings covering a wide variety of innovation initiatives and topics across the UN. Innovation Fridays are an example of #NewWork in action. Upcoming sessions include discussions on the new remote working reality and innovation in the COVID-19 response to help staff and teams cope in this difficult situation and support one another.

TEAM SPIRIT

▶ To lighten the load and keep the team connected, UNICEF Innovation hosts regular virtual events for all team members. From the safety of their homes, the team has taken virtual tours of each other's home cities or recent holiday destinations, virtual sketching and mindfulness sessions, competed in trivia and group games, and got virtually together for coffee, lunch and cooking and eating dinner together. Contact the team to learn more.

▶ Divisions in ITC have launched virtual trivia games to increase people's interaction, maintain team spirit and decrease stress levels associated with the crisis.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING

▶ UNHCR's Innovation Service has traditionally adopted online collaboration tools and is used to being geographically dispersed. During this time, we've leveraged our internal communications means and networks to share our learning and tools for what makes 'working-from-home' work for us.

▶ UNOV staff are working with colleagues in New York to find alternatives to physical meetings and are testing technologies for remote interpretation. Until meetings resume, UN interpreters have volunteered to translate web content related to the COVID-19 situation.

▶ As a result of the postponement of all meetings and conferences, the UNFCCC Secretariat has rapidly become fully operational remotely and replaced in-person meetings with virtual ones. Actions taken include testing the Delphi method, a structured communication technique to build consensus; using creative combinations of virtual meetings and collaborative tools; and conducting webinars instead of working group meetings. To address issues of accessibility, security and data privacy, UNFCCC is rolling out VOICE, a secure, web-based video conferencing solution, custom-built in-house with funding from the German Government.


Image: Unicef

Photo: IMF

SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES

▶ IFAD is also exploring the establishment of a new, rapid response Rural Stimulus Facility. The facility would be a significant innovation in leveraging resources, including IFAD's own resources, and supporting the specific needs of IFAD's borrowers and target groups, within the context of broader UN efforts. It would target key constraints faced by small-scale farmers due to COVID-19, including through digital agricultural advisory services, access to rural finance and the provision of inputs for agriculture and livestock.

▶ UNFPA is supporting National Statistical Offices around the world to address the implications of the COVID-19 on the preparations and implementation of the 2020 census round. The pandemic threatens the successful conduct of censuses in many countries when reliable population data are more crucial than ever to guide national-level decision-making and accountability. UNFPA has created a dashboard that allows visualisations of the implications of COVID-19 on the censuses.

▶ To support Member States, IFAD is also repurposing existing projects to incorporate new approaches that address a COVID-19 context. For example, new solutions are being developed to support access to rural finance and liquidity, as well as access to inputs. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, EUR 1 million has been reallocated within an existing IFAD project as emergency response to procure and distribute seeds. This is just one of at least 40 ongoing projects that has already proposed or made adjustments.

▶ The IMF launched a COVID-19 policy tracker which summarises the key economic responses governments are taking to limit the human and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tracker includes 193 economies;

views listed do not represent those of the IMF. The IMF also created a hub with all the information available around the Fund's work confronting COVID-19. The site includes several useful blogs, latest news and information on how the IMF is helping countries support the people and the economy during this crisis.

▶ ITU's COVID-19 response webpage includes information on support to Member States and industry such as #REG4COVID, the Global Network Resiliency Platform, which is a place to share and pool experiences, ongoing initiatives, and innovative policy and regulatory measures designed to help ensure communities remain connected, and that we harness the full power and potential of ICTs to save lives.

Photo: IFAD

▶ Security and privacy are essential for ensuring quality delivery of financial services. UNCDF supports regulators to implement requirements to protect new and existing users of digital services from poor security or fraudulent activities. It also supports regulators to identify and help financial institutions that have the farthest reach into vulnerable and rural populations; these include electronic money and microfinance institutions.

▶ UNODC directly supported Member States with actionable intelligence, leading to an investigation and countering of a probable fraudster selling N95 anti-viral masks. UNODC has also provided public guidance through online counter child sexual abuse conferences and media appearances in Spain, Latin America and the USA. UNODC continues to work with law enforcement and judicial communities in Member States to identify and prevent unique challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

▶ The UNWTO's World Tourism and Travel Council, in collaboration with partners, is hosting discussions on the future of tourism. Webinars, hosted for all continents and upon request, inform member states about innovative and digital approaches for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on tourism.

▶ ITC's institutional strengthening team is connecting trade promotion organisations from across the world to share emerging good practices to face the crisis and resources for small businesses such as market information, so that they can learn from each other in real-time.

▶ WFP is supporting government and partners through WFP's digital services on COVID-19 related projects, including technical guidance on how to rapidly and accurately deliver food and cash to their populations.

▶ In Libya, the Emergency Telecommunications Team has expanded its inter-agency common feedback mechanism Tawasul ("dialogue" in Arabic) to serve as the Ministry of Health's official information hotline on COVID-19. The call centre also helps humanitarian agencies know what affected populations need and integrate this in their programming decisions. A similar project is underway in the Central African Republic, where - in addition to the hotline - the Team is working to create a chatbot solution which would give people access to health information without overburdening the hotline.

▶ UNDP's Accelerator Lab in Paraguay is developing a proposal to help the government mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19. With a focus on the informal sector, the team is surveying the larger network to map multiple solutions being implemented around the world.

▶ The Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development has released the Agenda for Action: For Faster and Better Recovery outlining immediate measures that governments, industry, the international community and civil society can take to shore-up digital networks, and strengthen capacity at critical connectivity points with the aim of strengthening a collective response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Image: UNFPA

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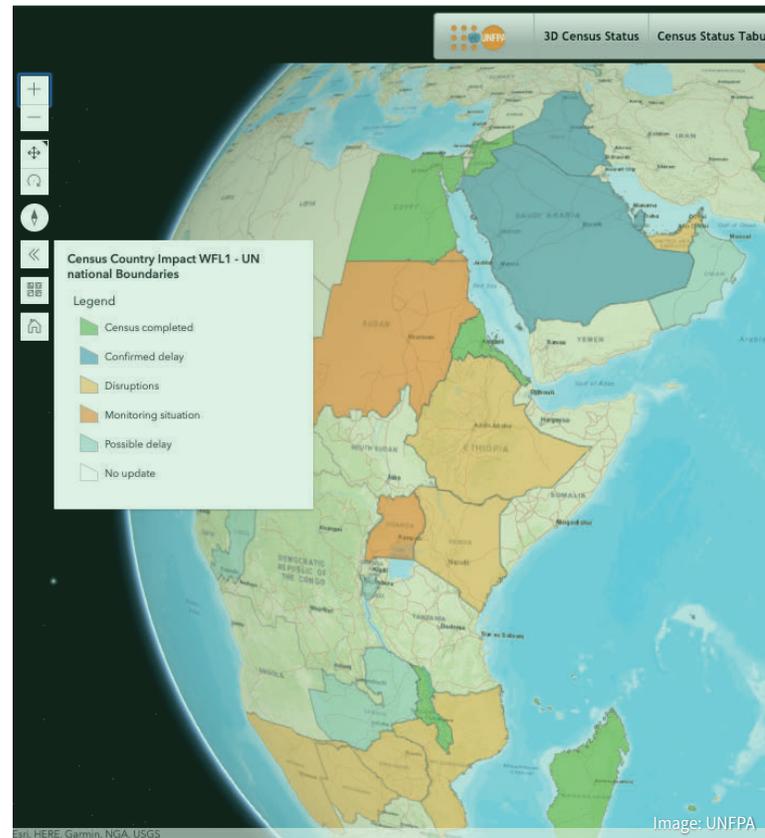
Image: WHO

PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND VIRTUAL EVENTS

▶ A new storybook that aims to help children understand and come to terms with COVID-19 has been produced by a collaboration of more than 50 organisations. With the help of a fantasy creature, Ario, "My Hero is You, How Kids can fight COVID-19!" explains how children can protect themselves, their families and friends from coronavirus. More than 1,700 children, parents, caregivers and teachers from around the world shared stories that supported the creation of the book to ensure that it would resonate with children from different backgrounds and continents.

▶ ITU is drawing upon expertise from the AI for Good Global Summit community and has launched an AI for Good Webinar Series delving into promising use cases of artificial intelligence in healthcare and other global challenges. The first three episodes in this series focus on global pandemic response and how AI and ICT can be used to combat COVID-19.

▶ To protect and prepare UN Staff for the current remote working situation, UNODC published a video in early March, on how cybercriminals may seek to exploit new remote work realities. UNODC also ran an information session aimed at helping staff protect themselves, their children and the UN from cybercrime – particularly the unique sexual exploitation threats posed to children from exclusively online working, reaching around 6,000 colleagues.

▶ ITU started a series of World Summit on the Information Society Forum webinars with some webinars addressing tech and COVID-19 issues. Themes include amongst others cybersecurity, online educational resources, child online protection, and resources for journalists.

▶ UNCDF published a guidance note on implementing local innovative finance responses in days, rather than months and years. A complimentary podcast, explores what measures local governments can deploy to address finance challenges and rapidly fast-track the deployment of finance solutions to strengthen their COVID-19 response.

▶ As part of the IMF's iLab's continuing efforts to support the work of the Fund during the COVID-19 Crisis, a new series of virtual events was launched for staff titled the iLab Spark Series. The brief events feature a 10 minute 'Spark' presentation from a staff member contributing to COVID-19 work, tools or projects followed by a Q&A session. Topics of recent 'Spark' presentations include using real-time SWFIT data to forecast economic trends related to the COVID-19 crisis, leveraging machine learning algorithms to help country teams obtain crisis data, and insight into the experience of the IMF's China country team as COVID-19 unfolded.

UN INNOVATION NETWORK

UPCOMING EVENTS

▶ The Office of the Special Advisor USG Hochschild and the ITU are launching a series of webinars on Digital Cooperation during COVID-19 and Beyond every Wednesday, at 9.30am EST, from 15 April until 13 May. The first webinar explored the topic of "Connectivity: Situation Assessment"; subsequent webinars will discuss issues such as digital inclusion, digital human rights and digital safety in the context of COVID-19 and beyond. Contact the office of the Special Advisor/ITU for more information.

▶ UN-DPO launched the (un)Data Virtual Seminar Series to engage UN Staff in interactive discussions with experts on data, technology, and peace, including case study analyses, tools and methodologies that can be applied to day-to-day work. Sessions will include The Political Impact of Internet Shutdowns (15th April); and "The New Tech Normal - Social and Political Outcomes of COVID-19" (29 April).

The next two episodes of the ITC's Trade Forward Podcast will discuss the impact of the crisis on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and untapped opportunities laying ahead.

INNOVATION CHALLENGES & CALLS
Launched by UN Entities

INNOVATION CHALLENGES & CALLS

▶ The UN Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism have launched a call for Technology Solutions for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts. The Call is looking for proven, affordable and scalable technology solutions that can accelerate progress towards providing basic health functions.

▶ UNESCO launched the CodeTheCurve hackathon to bring together students, educators, researchers and others to develop solutions to address three COVID-19 challenges: 1) access to distance learning; 2) information and data management; and 3) social and health issues

▶ The 2020 edition of UNAIDS' Health Innovation Exchange annual event will be taken online. The call for innovations with potential to impact SDG3 "Good Health & Wellbeing" was expanded to include an additional focus on COVID-19 related innovations. The call closed on 6 April and the top innovations will be presented through the virtual Health Innovation Exchange in May.

▶ UNWTO, supported by WHO, launched the Healing Solutions - Tourism Challenge to identify ready-to-implement solutions to mitigate the COVID-19 impacts on tourism and provide support to travellers, businesses and authorities. Apply by 22nd April in one of three categories for a chance to pitch your idea to Member States in May.

▶ UNDP partnered with Hackster to launch a global innovation call to develop accessible, replicable and low-cost solutions to COVID-19. For two months, this global network of engineers, innovators and big tech companies will be collaborating on the design of open-source innovations.

▶ UNDP's Accelerator Lab in Azerbaijan, UNDP Ukraine, Colombia and Turkey hosted virtual hackathons to find new solutions to fight the pandemic. And UNDP's Administrator Achim Steiner joined the Global Hack as the track lead for #SolidarityinAction.

WANTED: #TEKKIEHEROES

Image: UNDP