The BOS' Resilience Under COVID

NYU | ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION OFFICE
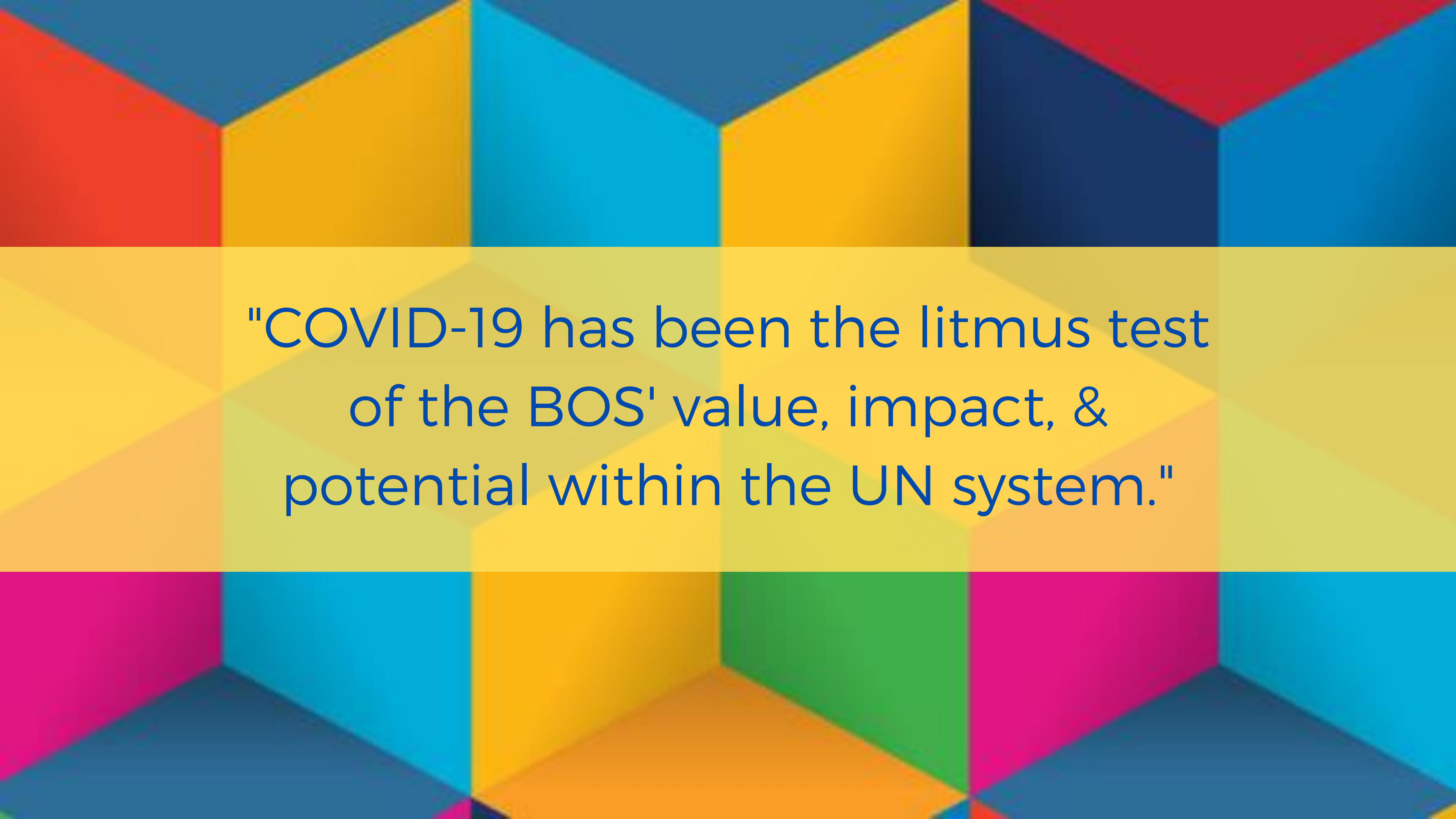
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Executive Summary

- This report summarizes 174 Covid responses from 26 UN Country Teams (UNCTs) & Operations Management Teams (OMTs) within the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) of the UN

- The BOS was developed to increase efficiencies & maximize economies of scale within the UN system's operations.

- **The BOS facilitated, accelerated, & expanded agencies' capacities & abilities to respond to Covid, maximizing efficiencies through all UN operations service lines**

- This was a joint effort with NYU's Wagner School of Public Service & the UN Development Coordination office (DCO)

Refer to the full report for the full details of Covid responses under the BOS

"COVID-19 has been the litmus test of the BOS' value, impact, & potential within the UN system."

Covid Responses & Services Used

Covid Responses Across Regions

AFRICA

17 UNCTs
91 Responses

South Sudan, Eritrea, Lesotho, Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Tunisia, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Cameroon, Algeria
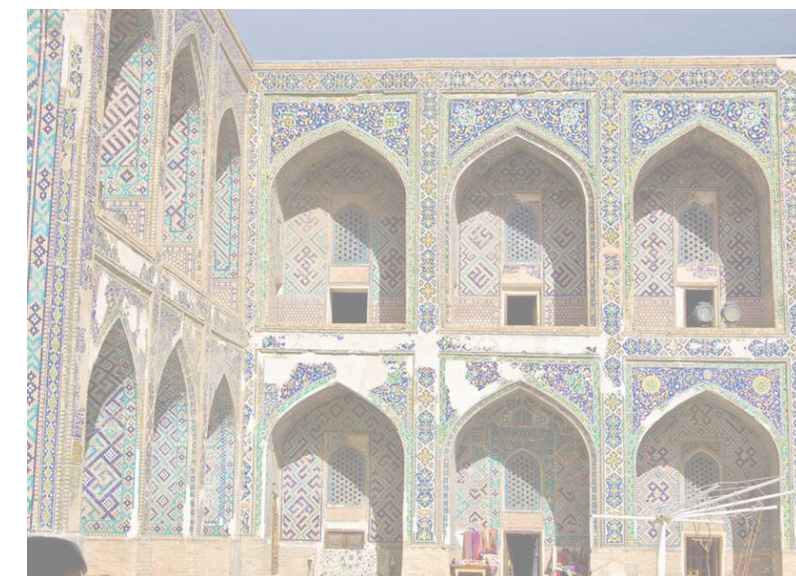
ASIA PACIFIC

4 UNCTs
44 Responses

Bhutan, Timor-Leste, Nepal, & Iran

LATINAMERICA & CARIBBEAN

3 UNCTs
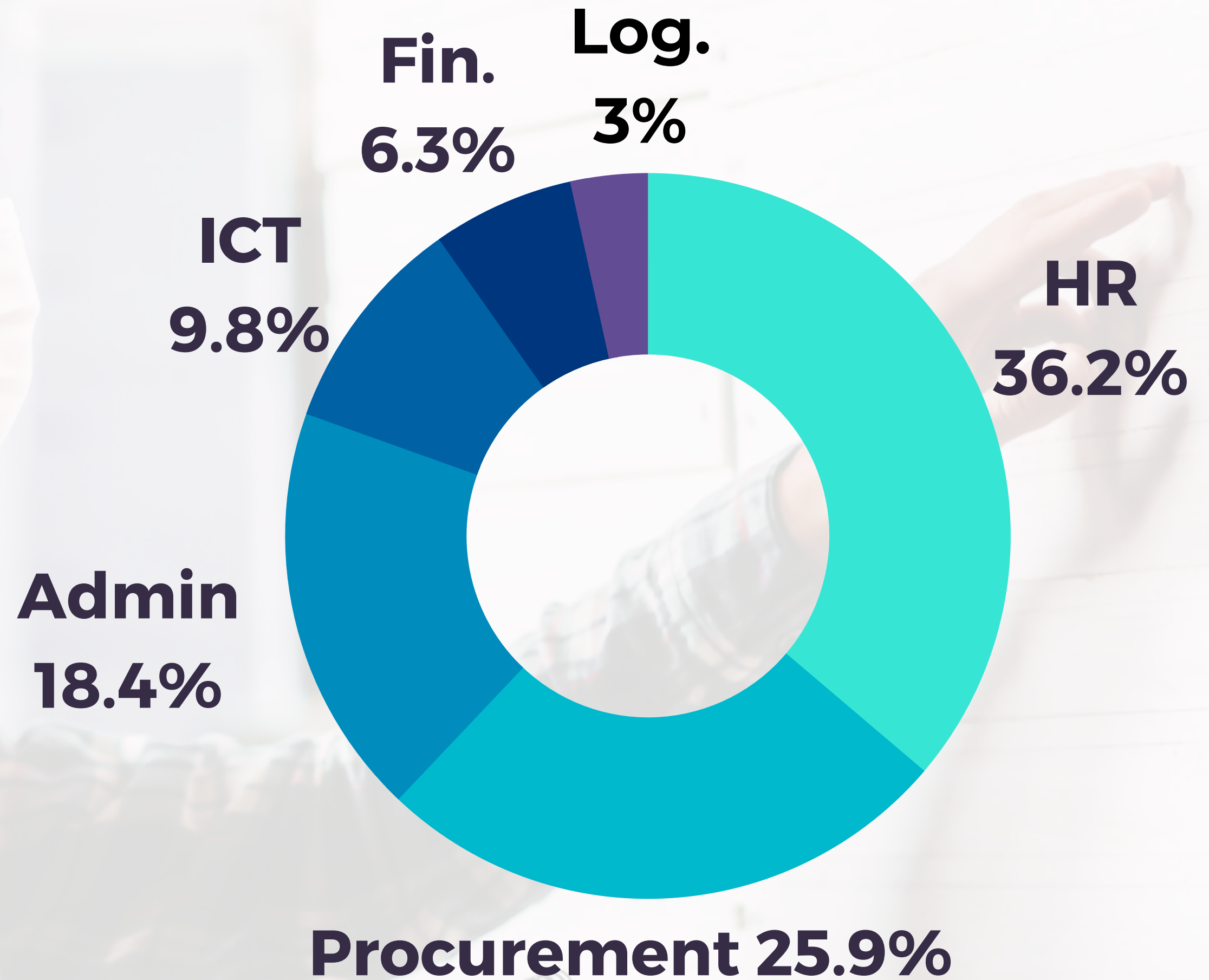**31 Responses**

Chile, Colombia, & Guatemala

EASTERN EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA

2 UNCTs
8 Responses

Serbia & Ukraine

Covid Responses Across Service Lines

Fin. 6.3%

Log. 3%

ICT 9.8%

HR 36.2%

Admin 18.4%

Procurement 25.9%

Services used for Covid Responses

HUMAN RESOURCES

1. Training
HR Support to Covid-19 Response
2. Benefits Administration
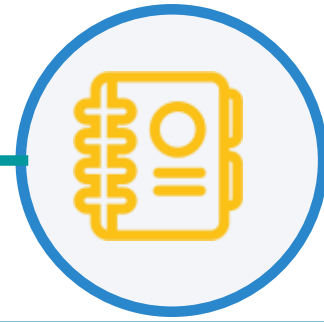a. Health Awareness Programs
3. Staff Wellbeing
a. Medical Svs. & Dispensary
b. Staff Counselling Svs.
c. Human Resources Survey

PROCUREMENT

1. Goods & Services
a. Joint Procurement Services
b. Vendor Assessments & contract management services

ADMIN

1. **Premises Management**
a. Cleaning Svs.
b. Generator Maint. Svs.
c. Joint Business Continuity Plan
d. Management of Common Premises
e. Management of Premises UN
2. Security Svs.
a. Security Svs. (Outsourced)
3. Travel, Conf. & Accommod.
a. Accommod. Svs (Outsourced)

ICT

1. **Data & Communicat.**
a. Internet Connectivity & VSAT Svs
b. Email Svs Cleaning Svs.
2. Inhouse ICT Support
a. Help Desk (First Line Support Services)

FINANCE

1.Payments Svs.
a. Cash disbursements & transfers
b. Payments Processing

LOGISTICS

1. **Freight Forwarding & Customs**
a. Harmonized Customs Clearance
b. Freight Forwarding Svs.
2. Warehouse Management
a. Storage & Warehouse Management Svs.

Human Resource Responses

HR Service Responses

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
1st most used	19	63

- Supported country-wide staff care plans with procedures for quarantine, screening, isolation, & evacuation
- Working from home approaches & contingencies
- Mapped & prioritized high-risk & vulnerable staff & dependents
- Increased communication channels to maintain staff informed of the changing context
- Generated new policies & SOPs
- The BOS increased the cost-efficiencies of these responses & leveraged agencies' capacity to scale them rapidly
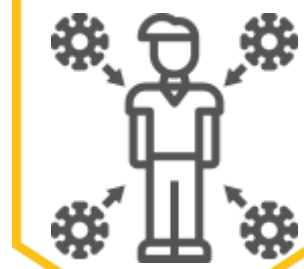
HR Services Used

CATEGORY: STAFF WELLBEING

COMMON SERVICES:
1. MEDICAL SVS. & DISPENSARY
2. STAFF COUNSELLING SVS.
3. HEALTH AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Used by 11 UNCTs
23 times:
Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chile, Colombia, Eritrea, Iran, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, & Uganda

CATEGORY: TRAINING

COMMON SERVICES:
HR support to covid-19 response

Used by 16 UNCTs
36 times:
Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Iran, Nepal, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, & Zimbabwe

CATEGORY: BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMMON SERVICES:
HEALTH AWARENESS PROGRAMS

Used by 2 UNCTs
4 times:
Iran & Nepal

Procurement Services

Procurement Services Summary

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
2nd most used	19	45

- BOS' procurement Task team's & OMTs facilitated the supply of essential materials & supplies

- Joint procurement of medical supplies, medicines, personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, testing kits, radio handsets, among other supplies

- Country Teams extended existing LTAs to allow agencies to respond to the need for scaled-up & timely procurements

- Existing LTAs allowed maximization of speed & pricing through the efficiencies of economies of scale

- Through the BOS UNCTs & OMTs collaboratively lifted additional funds to deliver procured items

Procurement Services Used

Category:
Goods & Services

Common Services Used:

JOINT PROCUREMENT

Used 39 Times by 17 UNCTs

Algeria, Bhutan, Burundi, Colombia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Guinea, Iran, Lesotho, Morocco, Nepal, Rwanda, Serbia, Tunisia, Ukraine, & Zimbabwe

VENDOR ASSESSMENTS & CONTRACT MGT SVS

Used 6 times by 3 UNCTs

Burkina Faso, Cameroon, & Guatemala

Administration Services Responses

Administration Services Summary

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
3rd most used	14	32

- Business continuity plan (BCP), served as a base for system-wide COVID responses

- BCPs were fundamental for in-country preparedness for transitioning to working from home, preparing for emergencies, increasing security, & facing economic challenges

- UNCTs worked & negotiated LTAs with hospitals & hotels for adequate staff care & the use of their facilities

- Another commonly used Administration service was cleaning services, under premises management of shared & UN premises

Administration Services Used
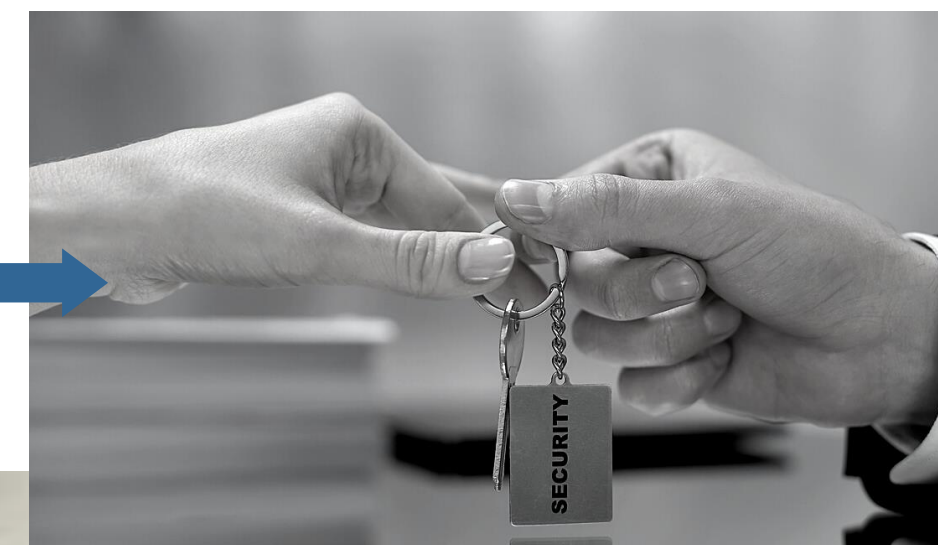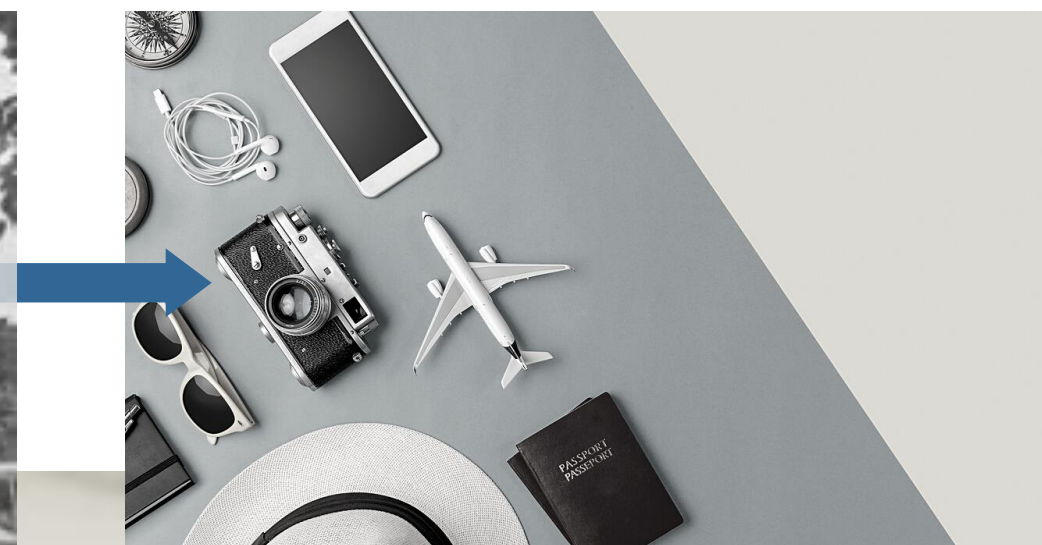
PREMISES MANAGEMENT

COMMON SERVICES USED:
CLEANING SERVICES, , GENERATOR MAINTENANCE SVS., JOINT BUISNESS CONTINUITY PLAN, MGT. OF COMMON PREMISES & UN PREMISES

11 countries used these services 24 times

Angola, Chile, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Lesotho, Liberia, Morocco, Nepal, South Sudan, Zimbabwe

TRAVEL CONFERENCING & ACCOMMODATION

COMMON SERVICES USED:
ACCOMMODATION SERVICES & TRAVEL SERVICES

5 UNCTs used these services 7 times

Ethiopia, Liberia, Nepal, Tanzania, & Uganda

SECURITY SERVICES

COMMON SERVICE USED:
SECURITY SERVICES (OUTSOURCED)

1 UNCT used this service 1 time

Eritrea

ICT

Services
Responses

ICT Services Summary

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
4th most used line	9	17

- Working from home required active ICT responses to support staff in the adapted working modality

- UNCTs relaunched LTAs to negotiate better rates & speed for internet connectivity for staff working from home

- Teams used common LTA's to achieve discounted prices for internet access & connectivity packages

- UNCTs achieved up to 50% discount rates, others provided dongles, modems, data bulk packages for staff, digital signatures, & took an inventory of all the staff that required laptops

- UNCTs mapped various applications for teleworking & teleconferences & held training sessions to improve telecommuting skills such as Docusign, Zoom, Webex, & Microsoft Teams

ICT Services Used

Common Categories

Data & Telecommunications Infrastructure

Common Services:
1. Internet Connectivity & VSAT Svs.
2. Email Services

8 UNCTs used this service 13 times
Cameroon, Chile, Ethiopia, Liberia, Morocco, Rwanda, Tanzania, & Zimbabwe

Inhouse ICT Support

Common Services:
1. Help Desk (First line of Support)
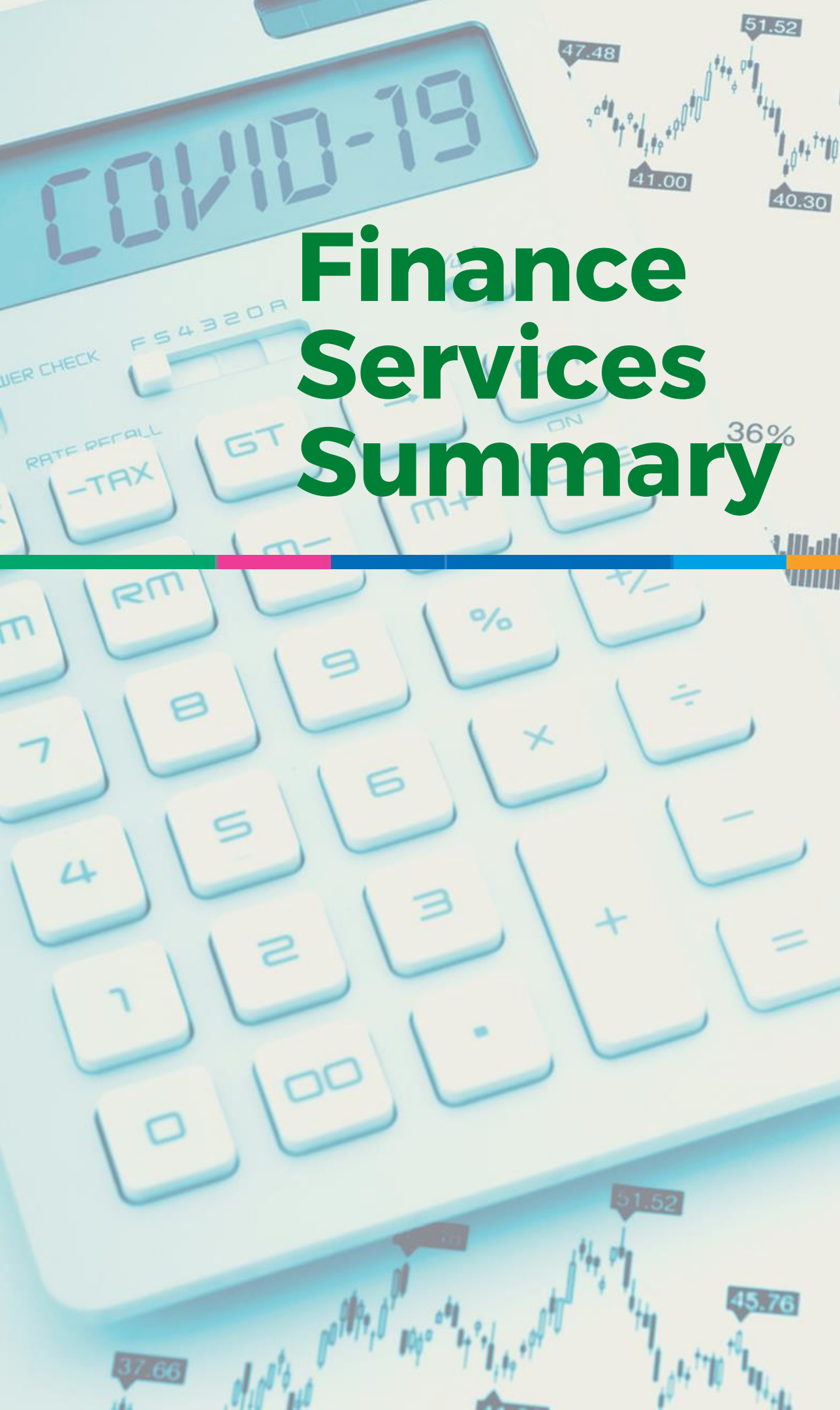
2 UNCTs used this service 4 times
Iran & Zimbabwe

Finance Services Responses

Finance Services Summary

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
5th most used	7	11

- **Responses addressed the need to provide staff with cash & salary advances.**

- These responses stand out as creative responses that considered & foresaw the staff's needs during the pandemic.

- Other measures facilitated COVID preparedness, extra personal & medical expenses, & transitioning to working from home

Finance Services Used

Common Category: Payment Services

Cash Disbursement & Transfers

6 UNCTs used this service 9 times

Bhutan, Burundi, Guatemala, Liberia, Tanzania, & Zimbabwe

Payments Processing

1 UNCTs used this service 2 times

Chile

Logistics
Services
Responses

Logistics Summary

Rank	UNCTs	Num. of Responses
6th most used	5	6

- Many logistics efforts were categorized under the Procurement service line & were not counted twice
- **This line's uses are estimated to be substantially more significant since the role logistics plays in procuring global supplies**
- LTAs supported COVID responses in supplying imports, contributing to common operational responses, & improving cost savings & efficiencies

Logistics Services Used

FREIGHT FORWARDING & CUSTOMS

Common Services:
1. Harmonized Customs Clear.
2. Freight Forwarding Svs

12% of respondents or 3 UNCTs used these services 3 times
Angola, Burundi, & Serbia

WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT

Common Service:
1. Storage & Warehouse Management Svs.
8% of respondents or 2 UNCTs used this service 3 times

Nepal & Ukraine

Conclusion

- **These examples are estimated to be a small fraction of the BOS's total benefits & impact during COVID**.

- Further research is required to determine the actual breadth & depth of the BOS' impact within COVID

- UNCTs & OMTs are invited to submit their ongoing responses to a live document of Covid responses: http://tiny.cc/covidresponse

- This report underlines the vast reach & value of the BOS within the UN system.

- **In a post-pandemic world, the BOS will continue playing a fundamental role**

- This report underscores the BOS' potential to create opportunities & innovative solutions that may otherwise be more costly, time-consuming, or non-existent

Success Stories

Serbia procures 15 cargo planes & scales up digital tools

In a month & a half, Serbia's team coordinated flying in 15 cargo planes with 720 tons of ventilators, protective equipment, & COVID-19 tests. The first plane landed on April 18th, 2020. The Country team assisted the Government of Serbia in transporting medical goods & supplies. The Prime Minister of Serbia & the Head of EU organized official media events. This effort was possible with the financial support from the delegation of the EU, UNDP, & UNOPS.

Procurement Platform

Serbia created a joint procurement software platform that offers the following services: 1) Overview of the UNCT procurement activities; **2)** Coordinates & maps the joint procurement activities; **3)** Identifies funding gaps against the UN Country Preparedness & Response plan (CPRP); **4)** Supports the procurement activities & funding under the UN CPRP different pillars.

This application was shared & scaled-up globally. Sierra Leone, Moldova, Belarus, &, Guatemala built the same or similar platform, & 12 other countries were in conversations to implement a similar strategy.
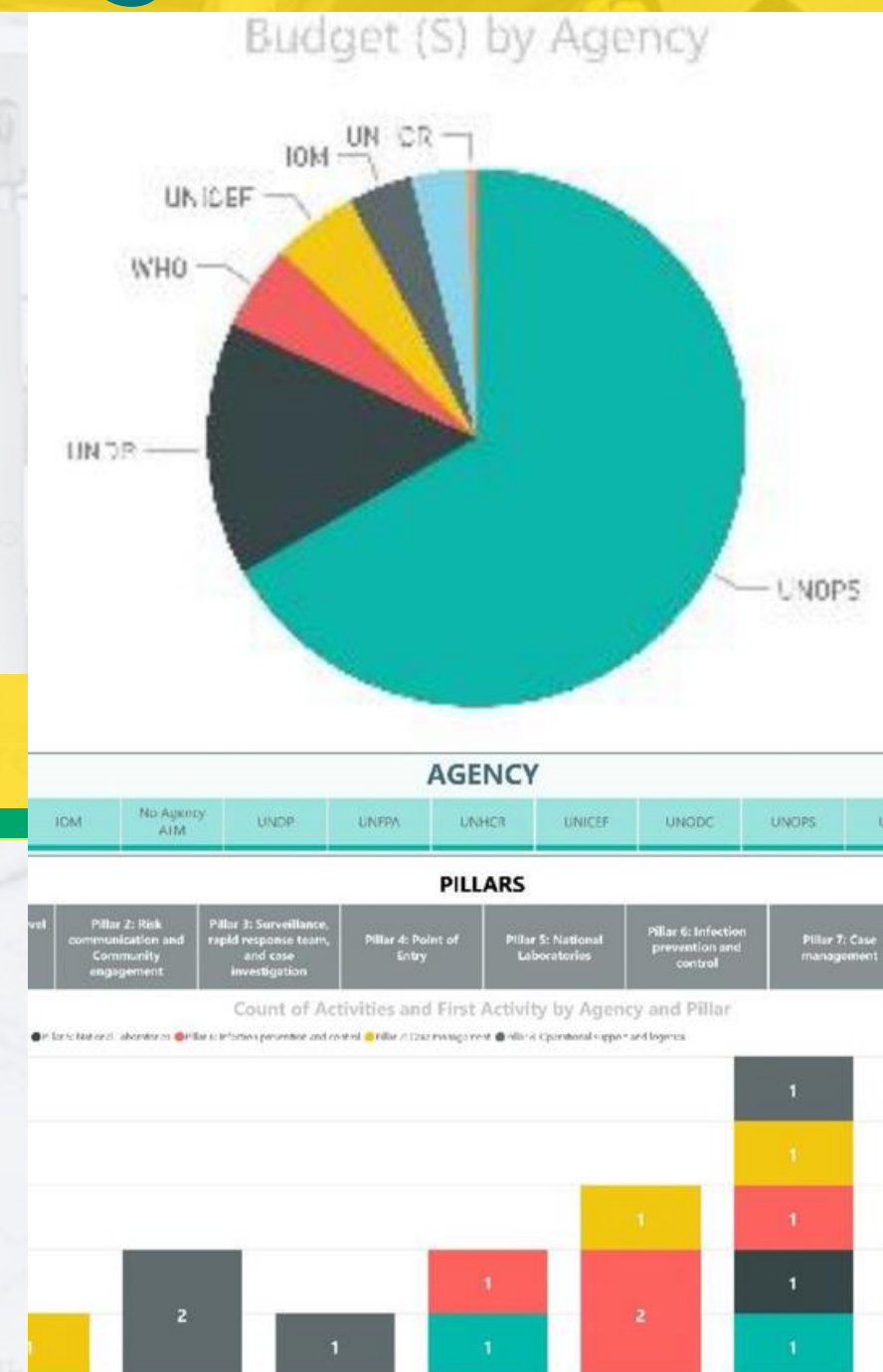
The platform has two components: a data entry & a Power BI dashboard for data visualization
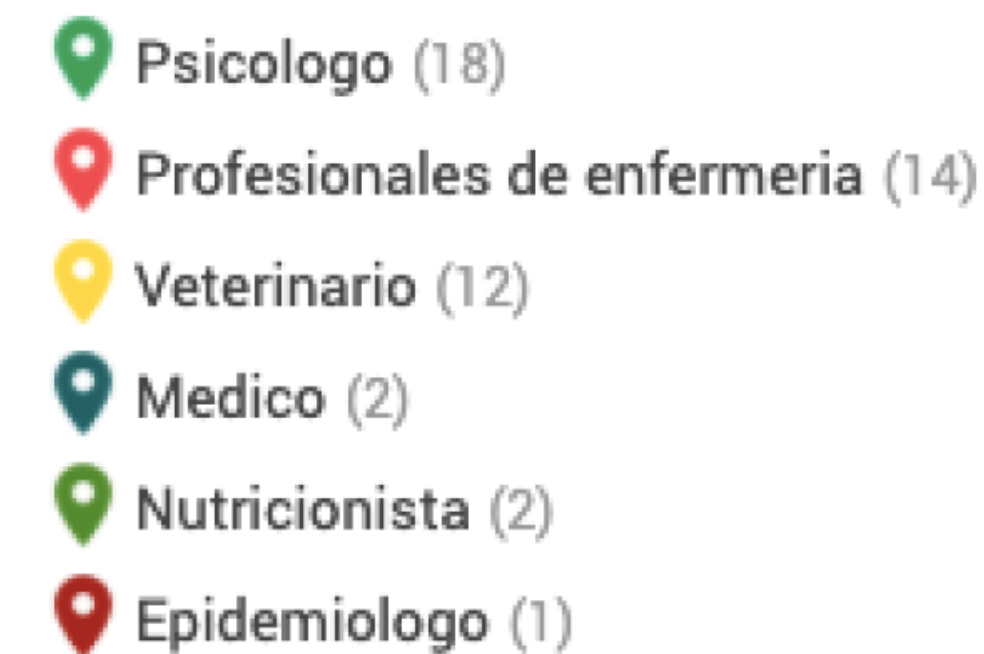
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Colombia's Online Platform

The Resident Coordinator's office of Colombia developed an online platform to deal with the pandemic & provide three services:
1) Allows staff to anonymously report cases of COVID-19 symptoms. The agency's duty of care focal points have access to the platform & create & update cases
2) Anonymously identifies high-risk staff to take preventative health measures
3) Maps UN staff & dependents with health & sanitary training.

A common purchasing group was created under the OMT & carried out two tenders for UN joint purchases of $700k. Agencies supported each other through technical expertise, cash, medicines, & equipment. The UNCT developed a Business Continuity Plan to perform critical functions with reduced personnel during the outbreak. The RC's office prepared guidelines for agencies to prepare facilities to return to work, essential field missions, & manage COVID cases in the workplace; it also stablished a CMT with relevant stakeholders (RC, HRC, OMT Chair, WHO, UNDSS, ONIC, UN Mission) & held weekly UNCT meetings to brief on COVID situations & Duty of Care.

Psicologo (18)
Profesionales de enfermeria (14)
Veterinario (12)
Medico (2)
Nutricionista (2)
Epidemiologo (1)

1. Mapping UN staff by age and location

Sistema de Naciones Unidas - Colombia
Duty of Care Dashboard

NEPAL'S COMPREHENSIVE COVID RESPONSE

Nepal took numerous joint measures, some responses included: **1)** Establishing a Crisis Management Team; **2)** Carrying out a UNCT-wide Table-top Exercise: **3)** Testing of Agency Business Continuity Plans & remote working modalities; **4)** Activating the Humanitarian Country Team & relevant clusters; **5)** Crafting the Country Preparedness & Response Plan (CPRP)
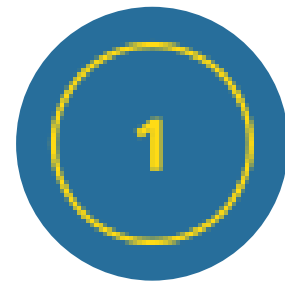
1 Administrative

Covid National & Deputy Coordinator

The Resident Coordinator & Change Management Team (CMT) nominated a COVID coordinator & deputy coordinator. The coordinators developed a work plan for strengthening the first line of defense in the Kathmandu valley & seven provincial centers.
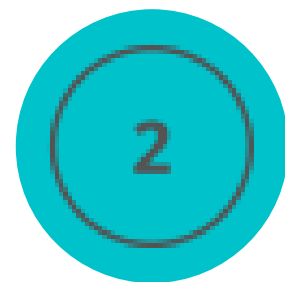
2 Townhalls

13 Townhalls with 550 people each

The UNCT organized regular townhalls for all UN staff, providing the latest COVID-19 information, sharing updates on the most recent SOPs, & supporting mechanisms. Thirteen Townhalls were organized (with an average of 550 participants per meeting) there have also been townhalls in almost all provinces for staff based outside of Kathmandu.

3 Staff Wellbeing

Stress & Violence counsellors & LGBTQ+ focal points

1) Hired **three external stress counselors** who counseled 51 UN personnel from March-August 2020; **2)** Named two focal points for the LGBTQ+ staff to address stress, anxiety, & concerns; **3)** Recirculated a resource guide with a list of agency-specific focal points; **4)** Developed suggested measures to support colleagues suffering from violence; **5)** Set up support groups around domestic violence, where staff can call in anonymously for sessions with a counselor

4 Medical Support

Addressing Staff's Medical Needs

1) IDENTIFIED PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN KATHMANDU TO TREAT & ISOLATE PATIENTS & OFFER HOME CONSULTATIONS; **2)** IOM OFFERED THREE DOCTORS FOR CONSULTATIONS; **3)** WHO ESTABLISHED AN EMAIL TO ADDRESS HEALTH RELATED QUESTIONS; **4)** CREATED A STAFF DATA BANK OF STAFF & DEPENDENTS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT IN PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE.

Tanzania's action's during the Pandemic

Tanzania took a series of actions during the pandemic. Following are some of the main responses:

STRESS INTERVENTION

The CMT established a Stress Intervention of one field stress counsellor & two referral counsellors. The staff counselor has been one of the most important posts on the plan. Below are the key outputs:

ISOLATION CENTERS

Set up a health care setting for UN staff & dependents who are COVID positive can isolate in hotels or selected facilities as per the guideline of the government. In Dar Es salaam the isolation centers was used only by three Covid positive UN staff patients

COMMON PROCUREMENT

The total purchased amount of supplies was $1.8M, including $57K for the isolation centers. Agencies & government used existing LTAs as follow:

MEDICAL STAFF

Recruited doctors & nurses for consultations & positive cases. Currently there is only one case at the hospital.

CALL CENTERS

Established an online UN Covid hotline in English & Swahili. There were a total of 49 callers; 43 callers had illnesses & called for help, & 6 were callers requested testing for travel purposes.

MEDEVAC & TRANSFERS

Created a Medevac identification system. The Medevac that was prepared twice was canceled, once by the UN & the second by the patient, in the latter case the patient passed away. Assisted in four internal air transfer's. Even though all the four were immediately & timely transferred to the main Hospital in Dar Es Salaam, some of them have passed away several days later in the hospital.