



UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan

UNITED NATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Sustainable development and COVID-19

In addition to the public health and humanitarian implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis has delivered a negative shock to Palestinian socioeconomic development, putting at risk public welfare, employment and livelihoods, poverty and food security, social cohesion, financial and fiscal stability, and institutions. There is little doubt that the COVID-19 emergency threatens progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and on the 2030 Agenda in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and is exacerbating and deepening pre-existing inequalities, discrimination, and inequities. This document presents the **COVID-19 Development System Response Plan** for the United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to support the Government's efforts to address socioeconomic recovery in the short- to medium-term. This planning process has been centred on people—especially the most vulnerable—and was done in close coordination with the Government of Palestine and in alignment with guidance received from the Secretary-General, UNSDG, and UNDCO, placing at its core the fundamental human rights, voices, and agency of people. Implementation will be carried out in cooperation with the Government of Palestine, development partners, Palestinian civil society, private sector, and international agencies operating in Palestine.

The document establishes a framework for organizing the UNCT's development work over the next 12 to 18 months to **respond specifically to the COVID-19 pandemic**, with a view of the longer-term impact of the crisis and its multidimensional effects. This plan is not meant to replace or supersede UN support to Palestine in other areas not covered by this plan. **It is intended to be an interim, regularly-updated framework** that is flexible, targeted, and suited to a rapidly-changing environment.

Recognizing the challenging donor environment, the UNCT endeavoured to reprogram as much existing funding as possible to the COVID-19 response. To maximize efficiency and impact, the UNCT has also worked collaboratively to identify joint programming and to focus on the highest priority interventions. **The UNCT intends to implement US\$140.6 million in COVID-19 development response programming in the next 12 to 18 months, of which 66 percent is already funded through existing or reprogrammed resources.** In addition to the US\$140.6 million in direct programming, UNCT has also identified an additional US\$45 million in "scalable" support programmes for affected households and SMEs, comprising a portfolio of Cash for Work programmes, Cash Transfer Programmes, microfinance and revolving loan support, and direct support to smallholder agricultural producers. These support programmes can be rapidly scaled up should additional donor support be forthcoming.

Geographic scope of UNCT support. The development system response plan targets the entirety of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem). In addition, given the disproportionate needs and vulnerabilities generated by the protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza Strip, some activities are specifically tailored to address the impact of the pandemic there. Gaza-specific activities are approximately one-quarter of the total budgeted support.

Building on existing efforts

This framework is fully congruent with several local and global efforts:

- On 27 March 2020, the Humanitarian Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory released its [Inter-Agency COVID-19 Response Plan](#). This plan presents the joint strategy of the humanitarian community, including UNRWA, to respond to the immediate public health needs and

humanitarian consequences of the pandemic in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In its initial draft, the plan sought to mobilize US\$34 million to implement the most urgent and critical activities for April, May, and June 2020. A revised response plan was published on 24 April 2020 raising the request to US\$41.9 million, reflecting greater local needs.

- On 31 March 2020, Secretary-General António Guterres issued his report [Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19](#), a comprehensive analysis of the global ramifications of the pandemic on socioeconomic development. In his report, the Secretary-General identifies several priorities and principles, including accelerating the public health response, tackling the many social and economic dimensions of the crisis, and focusing on the most vulnerable people, including women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector, refugees, and other at-risk groups. The report also articulates several sustainable solutions that are applicable in Palestine, including human-centred economic stimulus, enhanced social protection, human rights protections, direct support to SMEs, and ensuring access to education, among others.
- On 9 April 2020, Secretary-General António Guterres issued his [Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#). In this brief, Mr. Guterres notes that all pandemics amplify and heighten existing inequalities and that COVID-19 is no exception to this historical pattern. The policy brief highlights the social and economic impacts of the pandemic on women across four areas—economic, health, unpaid care, and gender-based violence. These impacts are further amplified in contexts of fragility, conflict, and emergencies, where social cohesion is already undermined and institutional capacity is limited.
- On 23 April 2020, Secretary-General António Guterres released his report [COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together](#). This report recognizes how the COVID-19 pandemic is fast becoming a human rights crisis. The report sets out the critical role that human rights must play in the design of inclusive and effective responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in the future recovery. In doing so, the report translated the Secretary-General's recent Call to Action for Human Rights, which placed human rights at the heart of all action of the United Nations including in times of crisis, into concrete policy responses to the pandemic.
- On 27 April 2020, the United Nations issued [A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19](#), drafted by a United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Task Team, co-chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Development Coordination Office (DCO). This framework puts into practice the report of the Secretary-General and provides a blueprint for the United Nations' urgent socioeconomic support to countries and societies in the face of COVID-19. The five streams of work that constitute this support include:
 1. Ensuring that essential health services are still available and protecting health systems.
 2. Helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services.
 3. Protecting jobs, supporting small- and medium-sized enterprises, and supporting informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes.
 4. Guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses.
 5. Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems.

- The Government of Palestine has drafted several detailed, ministerial-level COVID-19 response plans. These include strategies from the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Social Development. The Ministry of Finance has worked diligently to secure the necessary cash flow to support the COVID-19 response and maintain public services despite a sharp reduction in revenue collection. The Prime Minister’s Office is currently leading the drafting of a national socioeconomic response strategy, and the Government of Palestine identified several priorities in its report to the Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee in June 2020.
- The [2030 Agenda](#) and [Sustainable Development Goals](#) framework issued in 2015 provide the overarching framework for all socioeconomic work in response to COVID-19.

The **UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan** is informed by several other ongoing initiatives and analyses, including by the line ministries, UN agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Office of the Quartet, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, and others. For environmental priorities, the UNCT has drawn on the expertise of the United Nations Environment Programme and their [State of Environment and Outlook Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#), published in 2020.

The **UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan** must account for a high degree of uncertainty over the next 12 to 18 months, including whether additional waves of the virus emerge and require restrictive public health measures, how the global and regional economies evolve, the quality of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation, and the severity of the Palestinian economic, fiscal, social, political, and security stresses. The political environment, as of mid-2020, is even more challenging than normal. The situation in Gaza remains fragile and may change at any time. Guidance from headquarters as well as donor priorities may also adjust, given the dynamic nature of this crisis. The strategy must remain aligned with a continuously evolving humanitarian and public health response. The overall UN response to COVID-19 will be integrated through the consolidated UNCT/HCT efforts and will be informed by the work of the humanitarian architecture, and vice versa. The UNCT planning process must therefore be unusually flexible and adaptive.

United Nations planning context and horizon

This **UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan** is intended to guide the UNCT response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the next 12 to 18 months. As such, this document addresses **only** COVID-19-related development activities during that timeframe, and it does not review or discuss the many other critical and ongoing activities in the UNCT’s existing work programmes.

In 2021, the United Nations Country Team in Palestine will commence its next planning cycle in partnership with the Government of Palestine. Reflecting the global reforms of the UN development system, the planning cycle in Palestine will produce a new strategic document called a [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework](#). The new Cooperation Framework will include both regular programming and COVID-19-related programming. The Cooperation Framework should be launched around the same time that the **UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response Plan** ends in 12 to 18 months.

Impact on the social, economic, and fiscal situation in Palestine

The COVID-19 emergency has created an unprecedented fiscal crisis for the Palestinian Authority. The PA’s monthly revenues have fallen to their lowest level in at least two decades, due to a collapse in domestic economic activity and external trade. Ongoing disputes over the monthly transfer of

Palestinian clearance revenues by Israel have also severely impacted the government's cash flow. The PA will have an estimated budget deficit—after grants and loans—of around US\$1.4 billion for 2020. A fiscal gap of that order of magnitude threatens the viability of the Palestinian Authority.

The impact on Palestinian economic productivity is also expected to be significant. Several different institutions have estimated a contraction in annual GDP of approximately 10 percent for 2020. Depending on the length of the shutdown, this contraction may be among the largest recorded.

These shocks will reverberate throughout the economy. In addition to the direct health impact, the crisis will affect household welfare via reduced labour income and loss of livelihoods and higher consumption prices, particularly for food. The risk and uncertainty characterizing the socioeconomic environment during and after the COVID-19 outbreak will lead to harmful risk-coping strategies by households and enterprises—strategies such as cutting investments, returning to subsistence agriculture, deferring needed maintenance, finding inferior input substitutes, increasing savings, or selling assets. Such strategies will fragment and interrupt economic value chains in the longer term, especially in informal economic sectors such as food production and distribution.

COVID-19 will worsen an already challenging employment environment. Around 320,000 individuals work in the informal sector, while roughly 133,300 workers commute to Israel and the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. With most sectors facing recurrent lockdowns in a protracted pandemic scenario and with access to Israel and the settlements uncertain on a day-to-day basis even under normal circumstances, these individuals—most of whom support large households—have very precarious employment conditions. The unemployment rate reached 24 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019: 14 percent in the West Bank and 43 percent in Gaza.

The impact of COVID-19 will fall hardest on the most vulnerable. Women disproportionately work in insecure, lower-paid, part-time, and informal employment, with little or no income security, social protection, or health insurance. Women are also more likely to lose their jobs than men, many livelihoods that women rely on will be at greater risk due to movement restrictions and government response strategies. Vulnerable sectors include small enterprises and cleaning, caring, cashiering, and catering. Small-holder farmers (also predominantly women) are likely to face challenges in accessing markets due to travel restrictions; food prices may rise accordingly. Small-scale farmers and herders are facing unprecedented challenges in securing production inputs due to the disruption of informal marketing and credit for both inputs and outputs.

We must be clear that the macroeconomic and fiscal challenges facing Palestine due to the COVID-19 pandemic are far beyond the capabilities of the UNCT to address on its own. All actors—Israel as the occupying power, the Palestinian Government, civil society, international donors, the private sector, and others—must mobilize and deploy vast resources to avert a development catastrophe.

The response and recovery will be complicated by the different operating spaces in East Jerusalem, Area C of the West Bank, Gaza, and elsewhere—each of which requires specific approaches. Also, the extent of the human rights obligations of the different authorities (Israel, PA, and the *de facto* authority in Gaza) differs, including for the fulfilment of economic and social rights of the population in each area, due to their different level of effective control. For Gaza for example, recovery strategies should allow larger freedom of movement, bolstering the Strip's health networks, ensuring continuity of critical WASH and energy infrastructure, and providing broad economic support. Each operational area also has specific protection and access considerations, which will impact vulnerable groups differently, such as women and child survivors of violence, female-headed households, the disabled,

persons in conflict with the law, rural and Bedouin women and men, refugees living in overcrowded camps, and the working poor, among others.

Due to the protracted humanitarian crisis that pre-dates COVID-19, a system of social protection for Palestinian refugees in Gaza is already in place through UNRWA and for non-refugees through the Ministry of Social Development. Several external donors are also active in Gaza. The UNCT's COVID-19-related development activities in Gaza will need to be tailored accordingly.

Cross-cutting themes: human rights, gender, youth, and the environment

The United Nations Country Team has identified four cross-cutting themes to guide its development response to COVID-19 based on the context of Palestine. These themes are human rights, gender, youth, and the environment, each of which will be mainstreamed across the programme areas described below.

Given the Palestinian context of occupation and conflict, it is especially crucial to apply a human-rights-based and gender sensitive approach to the COVID-19 response. A human-rights-based and gender-responsive approach will ensure public participation, community-level engagement, a focus on the most vulnerable and excluded, and better targeted programming, including accountability frameworks and corresponding measures. Furthermore, applying a human-rights-based approach entails following a course of action guided by the normative obligations that Palestine accepted following its accession to the core international human rights treaties and by the authoritative recommendations issued by the expert bodies that oversee implementation of these treaties. At this point in time, Palestine has received comprehensive lists of recommendations on issues such as women's rights, children's rights, and racial discrimination.

A key principle of human-rights-based approaches is non-discrimination and equality. The immediate health emergency response, as well as the longer-term efforts towards recovery, should not directly or indirectly discriminate against individuals or groups. There is also the need to avoid unintended consequences of policies and programmes and to protect against third-party discrimination.

Transparency in information and decision-making, and meaningful participation of communities, including those most vulnerable, will ensure that the recovery efforts in Palestine are grounded in the realities and needs of all people, avoid unintended breaches of human rights, build trust in government and among communities, and be more effective. Consequently, decision-making will be more informed and sustainable and more effective, accountable, and transparent. The Palestinian Government and the UNCT share this objective.

Women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will be in a particularly vulnerable situation. For example, in the case of lockdown and quarantine women and girls are disproportionately burdened by care-work, such as household chores and caring for children, older persons, and the sick. Because of their dominant role as caregivers, women tend to take over new roles to ensure the survival and welfare of their families. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, these roles expose women to greater health risks, for instance by taking care of sick or elderly family members. The pandemic will severely impact women's economic participation. Women's involvement in the labour market in Palestine is already low and this may be exacerbated by the current crisis, reinforcing low participation in the formal sector and lack of labour and social protections.

Household coping strategies can have significant downstream effects. For example, unpaid care-work impacts women and girls' access to health, work, education, rest, and leisure. There is already

evidence emerging from Palestine that violence against women and girls is increasing due to lockdown and quarantine measures.

It will be important for the socioeconomic response plan to assess the different obstacles in access to services and impact on women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health, protection services, financial resources, information, decision-making, and meaningful participation. It would also be important to assess the impact on women working at a disproportionately higher rate in sectors that are designated essential, such as health care providers and female workers in settlements, the working poor, women working in the informal sector and/or receiving daily wages. Attention must be paid to how gender in this context intersects with other factors such as age, ethnicity, disability, marital status, religion, migration status, among others.

The environment is another cross-cutting theme identified by the UNCT in consultation with the Government of Palestine and other local stakeholders. The challenges of environmental protection and governance are greatest in contexts affected by conflict and crisis, where planning is difficult and governance mechanisms are contested. The impact of COVID-19 will greatly exacerbate the challenges in conflict and crisis settings like Palestine, leading in turn to disproportionately damaging effects on the environment. Mindful of constraints to development planning and environmental governance, many environmental issues must be resolved urgently, to prevent irreversible damage to ecosystems and human health. As noted in UNEP's State of Environment and Outlook Report for Palestine, published in 2020, "[f]rom an economic and human security perspective, growth and job creation are of high importance. In seeking to develop a low-carbon, resource-efficient and socially inclusive economy, Palestinians can draw on relatively high levels of tertiary education, and high and growing human development indicators. Initially it will be important to focus on making the traditional sectors more sustainable and cleaner, to allow time for just transition."¹

COVID-19 related environmental priorities will include treatment of wastewater and solid waste contaminated by the novel coronavirus in quarantine centres and hospitals, enhancing sustainable agricultural livelihoods, monitoring and mitigating wastewater contamination, sustainable water use, and many others. To "build back better" in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental considerations must be embedded into UNCT activities, along with policies anchored on human rights and responsive to the needs of women and youth.

Organizing the development system response

In a global letter to all United Nations Resident Coordinators and UNDP Resident Representatives, dated 27 April 2020, Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner outlined roles and responsibilities at the country level. This section serves to incorporate this guidance into the specific context of Palestine.

The United Nations Resident Coordinator leads the **UNCT COVID-19 Development System Response** effort in support of the Government of Palestine. The RC will ensure that the United Nations Country Team responds in an integrated way and in full alignment with the specific priorities and needs of the Palestinian Government and people, including refugees. This includes the drafting of an updated Common Country Assessment and Cooperation Framework with the Government of Palestine to be completed in 2021, which incorporates a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach. The convening role of the RC in maintaining relationships with regional actors, Member States, the international financial institutions, and other constituents such as civil society actors is critical. Among

¹ UNEP. (2020) [State of Environment and Outlook Report for the occupied Palestinian territory](#).

other things, the RC is responsible for developing and communicating a clear, coherent, whole-of-system, UN development response.

Given that this development response plan is aimed at short- to medium-term socioeconomic recovery and adaptation, the United Nations Development Programme/PAPP will play a central role. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UNDP has close relationships with the Prime Minister's Office including the establishment of the Socioeconomic Recovery and Response Unit in relation to the Government's socio-economic recovery plans. UNDP and its partners have critical and existing or new programming on livelihoods, job creation, and economic development throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Accordingly, UNDP will act as technical lead in the socioeconomic response under the leadership and in support of the Resident Coordinator.

Finally, the United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory will work closely with the RC and UNDP to ensure that the UNCT is able to deliver results in a timely and flexible manner. Given the highly constrained funding environment, the UNCT will increase its interagency collaboration and programming, including on monitoring, analysing, and reporting on the impact of COVID-19 on Palestinians.

Guiding principles for adaptation, mitigation, and recovery

The UNCT has agreed to several core principles regarding its support to the Palestinians. The UNCT recognizes that for the near future, the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency, first and foremost. By effectively addressing the health emergency, authorities will save lives and improve well-being—as well as shorten the duration of necessary restrictions on fundamental human rights and on social and economic life. Strong and resilient health systems are therefore vital, with universal health coverage being at the heart of all interventions during the emergency, transition, recovery, and development stages.

As of July 2020, global public health experts believe that the COVID-19 pandemic has now evolved into a medium-term crisis: the disease will not be overcome for many months to come. In this context, health systems will need to build capacities for adaptation and to allow as much economic and social life to continue as is prudent. Working with the WHO and the relevant public health authorities, the UNCT must support strong COVID-19 surveillance systems, reduce the prevalence of the disease, build health and medical capacities, ensure testing is adequate for at-risk populations such as refugees and Palestinians working in Israel, and deliver coordinated and effective risk and public health communications to the public.

Development system response: activities and funding

With the above situational analysis and principles in mind, the UNCT proposes the following framework for organizing the UN development response in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. We have grouped activities into five thematic areas that are relevant to the local context in the coming 12 to 18 months. These five areas are fully aligned with the guidance received from the Secretary-General, the UNSDG, and DCO; and they are complementary to the HCT response effort. The UNCT has identified these priorities in consultation with the relevant line ministries and with the Prime Minister's Office.

The situational analysis above identifies many direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 on health systems, the economy, families, workers, women, youth, and other vulnerable individuals—and the strain that the COVID-19 pandemic will place on the delivery of government services and other services. Based on its situational analysis and on careful consultations with the Government of

Palestine at all levels, the United Nations system has identified a set of priority interventions, mostly reoriented from existing programming to be responsive to the impact of the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is a health-related crisis, but one that threatens education, household welfare, livelihoods, and service delivery. The five priority areas and four cross-cutting themes reflect the UNCT’s deep and collective understanding of the Palestinian context. The activities were selected based on the principles described above—especially targeting the most vulnerable households and communities—and on consultation with local partners on their own identified priorities. Broadly speaking, UNCT activities provide analytical and policy support, enhance programme implementation and technical support, and strengthen the recovery by “building back better.”

As noted above, the UNCT recognized the challenging donor environment and endeavoured to reprogram as much existing funding as possible to the COVID-19 response. To maximize efficiency and impact, the UNCT has also worked collaboratively to identify joint programming and to focus on the highest priority interventions. The UNCT has produced a matrix of activities to accompany this report. Table 1 shows a summary of the proposed financing across the five sectors, indicating both reprogrammed resources and the additional funding that will be sought. **The UNCT intends to implement US\$140.6 million in COVID-19 development response programming in the next 12 to 18 months, of which 66% is funded through existing or reprogrammed resources.**

In addition to the US\$140.6 million in direct programming, UNCT has also identified an additional US\$45 million in scalable support programmes for affected households and SMEs, comprising a portfolio of Cash for Work programmes, Cash Transfer Programmes, microfinance and revolving loan support, and direct support to smallholder agricultural producers. These support programmes can be rapidly scaled up if donors can be identified.

Table 1: Proposed Financing for COVID-19 Development Response in Palestine

Sector	Funded or reprogrammed	Additional funding sought	Total	Scalable support programmes
Health	20,728,680	18,295,016	39,023,696	
	53%	47%		
Social Protection	11,395,400	4,295,000	15,690,400	13,550,000
	73%	27%		
Governance and Basic Services	21,375,000	8,750,000	29,975,000	
	71%	29%		
Education	885,000	5,640,000	7,680,000	
	14%	86%		
Livelihoods and Economic Recovery	37,519,067	11,830,000	49,349,067	31,500,000
	78%	22%		
Total	91,803,147	48,810,016	140,713,163	45,050,000
	65%	32%		

We understand that these five priority areas will inevitably overlap and that specific activities will likely fall under multiple priority areas and across different types of assistance. These groupings are not intended to be definitive, or to be bright-line distinctions, but rather give a broad sense of the priorities of the United Nations Country Team and rough indication of funding levels. The UNCT commits to coordinating across sectors to the greatest appropriate extent.

Development system response: health

To support the health system response to COVID-19, WHO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN Women, and WFP propose approximately US\$39 million in total support, of which US\$20.7 million is already funded or reprogrammed from existing resources. The UNCT will seek US\$18 million in additional funding. Beneficiaries include the Ministry of Health, Palestinian

refugees, and communities and vulnerable populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

A core task in the next 12 to 18 months is to strengthen health systems to address the pandemic. Strengthening health systems will involve building and maintaining the capacity of primary health care systems to test and detect all suspected COVID-19 cases as rapidly as possible. Such capacities will help suppress transmission and optimize life-saving actions and utilization of health care resources. COVID-19 surveillance systems should be stood up, while ensuring interoperability with other related surveillance systems. The health system should be supported to provide safe and effective clinical care to effectively isolate all COVID-19 cases, protect health care workers and their families and deliver essential medical supplies.

UNCT activities will support supply-chain, manufacturing, and distribution systems for essential medical equipment and supplies and monitor that quantities are sufficient, accessible, affordable, and provided on the basis of non-discrimination. Key equipment and supplies include disinfectants and sanitization products, masks, ventilators, oxygen concentrators, and medicine, among others. Medical supply chains unrelated to COVID-19 have also been disrupted and warrant attention.

COVID-19 has drawn resources from and impacted the provision of regular health services. Therefore, UNCT activities will support the restoration of full health care operations and the return of the health care workforce to primary health care clinics. Maintaining immunization rates will be essential, as will the continuity of primary health care services to women, children, disabled persons, the elderly, refugees, and vulnerable communities, including sexual and reproductive health services and services to survivors of sexual violence. The UNCT will assist in monitoring quality of care, patient safety, infection, and prevention procedures in all health facilities, including UNRWA health centres and in refugee camps.

Beyond the health sector itself, the UNCT will support whole-of-government capacity to sustain and enforce measures such as quarantines, movement restrictions, isolation, and closures of work and schools. Palestinian authorities, UNRWA, and NGOs in East Jerusalem need capacity to continue educating communities about public health instructions, such as movement restrictions, mask-wearing, and hand-washing. To support these initiatives, UNCT activities will include public outreach and programme monitoring to strengthen health and safety consciousness of Palestinian workers, including those working in Israel, on risk-mitigation and prevention measures.

Development system response: social protection

FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN Women, WFP, and WHO propose approximately US\$15.7 million in total support to enhance social protection, of which US\$11.4 million is already funded or reprogrammed from existing resources. The UNCT will seek US\$4.3 million in additional funding. Beneficiaries include the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Palestinian civil society organizations, Palestinian refugees, and communities and vulnerable populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In addition, the UNCT has identified US\$13.5 million in scalable support programmes such as Cash for Work programmes, Cash Transfer Programmes, agricultural support, and other income support for affected households and SMEs.

Protecting vulnerable households during the pandemic and the recovery period is another top priority. UNCT will work with the government to strengthen social protection systems, including enhancement of sick leave, basic income and severance pay, increasing the use and scope of cash transfers, and food

security interventions, including for refugees. UNCT will also assist the Government of Palestine in modernizing its social protection systems and promoting the transfer of technology, including effective identification and registration of beneficiaries, strengthened payment systems, to upgrade public administration. Direct support to Palestinians includes efforts to adapt, extend, and scale-up cash transfers and food-assistance programmes, and to maintain essential food and nutrition services.

Agencies will develop a specific programme targeting the smallholder farmers and cooperatives—especially those employing women and youth—to support continuity of formal and informal employment as well as the availability of food, especially fresh, perishable foods in local markets, also through reinforced links between these producers and the market. Such programming will promote environmentally sustainable, climate resilient approaches to food production.

UNCT will work with the government to support equitable delivery of social protection, adequate monitoring of delivery, and public outreach, particularly to meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalized women, girls, men, boys, and refugees, during the crisis at the immediate, intermediate, and longer terms. Vulnerable groups such as children, persons with disabilities, and women at increased risk of violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect due to COVID-19 must be protected through social protection services.

Development system response: governance and basic services

To support continuity of basic services and to enhance the government’s COVID-19 response and recovery, OHCHR, UNDP, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNMAS, and UNRWA propose approximately US\$30 million in total support, of which US\$21.4 million is already funded or reprogrammed from existing resources. The UNCT will seek US\$8.6 million in additional funding. Beneficiaries include the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the Palestinian Water Authority, Palestinian civil society organizations, Palestinian refugees, and communities and vulnerable populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

The UNCT is providing direct support to the Prime Minister’s Office and the line ministries as they develop and implement their COVID-19 response plans. Efforts will monitor and support the delivery of basic services, like solid waste collection, electricity, water, sanitation services, and security with special attention to the most vulnerable groups and marginalized geographical locations, including refugee camps.

Activities will also promote accountability for the actions of the security forces, with a view to safeguarding civic space during the pandemic and with a view to ensuring the enjoyment of fundamental human rights of due process and movement.

UNCT will work with authorities to include women and empower local communities including in refugee camps, so that they can meaningfully participate as partners in the prevention and implementation measures to tackle the spread of the disease, as well as in addressing the socioeconomic impact. Activities will support public and private services required for effective business operations, including agricultural extension, veterinary controls, food safety and sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, and trade licensing. UNCT will also support local governments to manage safe urban mobility and transport, with a focus on those serving most vulnerable communities, while observing any movement restrictions.

Development system response: education

To support the education system response to COVID-19, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UNFPA, UNRWA, and WFP propose approximately US\$6.5 million in total support, of which US\$0.8 million is already funded or reprogrammed from existing resources. The UNCT will seek US\$5.6 million in additional funding. Beneficiaries include the Ministry of Education, Palestinian refugees, and communities and vulnerable populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

Education systems have been particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. UNCT activities aim to strengthen these education systems, including for refugee children. Activities will build on the global framework for school reopening and the regional action plan; help develop a framework on school reopening for Palestine focusing on safe operations, blended learning, well-being, and protection; and reach the most marginalized, including in schools in refugee camps.

Activities will help set up a system to adapt home schooling modalities as a regular part of schooling and to support female and male teachers, parents, and caregivers. UNCT will help authorities improve distance-learning and home-schooling options and support, taking into consideration that there will be huge inequities and differences within families on the extent to which they can help their children learn. Support will target female and male teachers as well as working mothers and fathers in strengthening the quality of children's learning and overall wellbeing at home. Activities will also strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through distance learning and entrepreneurship with a view to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the most affected sectors

The UNCT will also deliver education services directly. For example, activities will help the Palestinian authorities and UNRWA develop and implement "catch-up" programmes to mitigate and recover quickly from lost schooling time during school shutdowns. UNCT will monitor that children's healthy lifestyles and nutritional needs are being met in partnership with MOH and key partners, and deliver programming to provide inclusive and equitable education and prevent a rise in school drop-outs, discrimination, violence, child labour, and early or forced child marriage. UNCT will also deliver psychosocial support to teachers, parents, and schoolchildren during the crisis as well as caregivers (mainly mothers) upon their return to school. Investments will improve schools' WASH facilities and distribute cleaning and hygiene kits, while developing standard procedures for school cleaning.

As with the health system response, good public outreach and monitoring will contribute to the successes of these interventions. Activities will raise awareness and distribute information on the pandemic, hygiene, healthy lifestyles, and psychosocial measures to school children and their families. UNCT will also advocate for equal sharing of domestic chores and care duties amongst male and female siblings/household members, so all can participate in alternative education initiatives.

Development system response: livelihoods and economic recovery

FAO, ILO, OHCHR, UNDP, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN Women, UNEP, and WFP propose approximately US\$48.2 million in total support to promote livelihoods and economic recovery, of which US\$37.4 million is already funded or reprogrammed from existing resources. The UNCT will seek US\$10.8 million in additional funding. Beneficiaries include the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Social Development, the Palestinian Monetary Authority, Palestinian civil society organizations, Palestinian refugees, and communities and vulnerable populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In addition, the UNCT has identified US\$31.5 million in scalable support programmes such as Cash for Work programmes, Cash Transfer

Programmes, microfinance and revolving loans, agricultural support, and other income support for affected households and SMEs.

Activities in this sector will promote economic recovery and livelihoods. Among other things, they will strengthen the capacities of relevant government authorities to monitor performance of producers, consumers, and markets to adopt policies, especially those targeting informal and export sectors. UNCT will deliver technical assistance and support aimed at protecting and sustaining small and medium enterprises through supporting revenues, preserving, and protecting the employment relationship, and ensuring acceptable levels of business continuity.

UNCT will also deliver cash-for-work and income support schemes to the most vulnerable—including refugees, informal producers, and informal workers—and vulnerable households recovering from the pandemic. Among affected sectors include the informal sector, women-led enterprises, and agriculture. UNCT will target fragile private businesses and sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, and agri-food sectors, through cash and non-cash incentives support, the development of alternative work modalities, risk management plans, and workplace preparedness and compliance with safety and health measures. At an individual level, activities will target furthest-left-behind groups of women in the labour force including the working poor, informal workers, women association and cooperatives, workers in settlements, women with disabilities, and similar. UNCT will also contribute monitoring and advocacy around equal access to support programmes for women, youth, small business owners, and other potentially disadvantaged or marginalized recipients. Critically, the UNCT will support the functioning and continuity of food production and supply chains, reactivating investment and restoring operating capital. Environmental sustainability and climate-resilient practices will be incorporated into programming.

Monitoring and assessing impact on SDG attainment

The COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly cause a sharp erosion in SDG attainment across Palestine. As a result, the UNCT has an urgent need to establish, with the government, a precise baseline understanding of SDG attainment in Palestine prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and to establish a common set of indicators for research, planning, and programming going forward. Moreover, once public health considerations can be addressed, the RCO, UNCT, and Palestinian authorities will need to conduct a scientific impact assessment across multiple socioeconomic, environmental, and governance dimensions. These analytic exercises must produce demographically- and geographically-disaggregated data to improve joint analysis by relevant UN sister agencies, at both micro- and macro-levels, on the economic impact of COVID-19.

The humanitarian and development actors must work closely together on how to streamline and coordinate data collection and analysis efforts, while respecting that the information and analytic requirements of the humanitarian and development systems will overlap to some extent, but to different extent remain distinct. Moreover, the UNCT will need to coordinate their data and monitoring work closely with PCBS and the line ministries.

- **Baseline assessment:** The RCO will publish a Development Atlas to establish a baseline understanding of socioeconomic development levels just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Rapid impact assessment:** The UNCT is supporting the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in their COVID-19 Impact Rapid Assessment household survey, which will be completed in August 2020.
- **Longer-term impact assessment:** The UNCT will develop a methodology for a broad-scope impact assessment on key SDG indicators, to conduct when public health considerations

permit. Tools might include Big Data; telephone and web-based surveys; remote sensing; key informant interviews.

The UNCT commits to pool resources and work together to monitor SDG erosion and to develop a methodology for a common impact assessment. With this information, PCBS and its partners can update the SDGs indicator's matrix, which was last updated in February 2020.