



UN-Habitat launches COVID-19 Response Plan and Campaign targeting the world's most vulnerable communities

Nairobi, Kenya 23 April 2020 – The continuing spread of the COVID-19 crisis threatens the most vulnerable in cities and communities, particularly the one billion people living in slums and informal settlements, including refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. To address the crisis, UN-Habitat is launching an urgent COVID-19 Response Plan for 64 countries focusing on immediate action in poor and densely populated areas. This is supported by the COVID-19 Campaign to mobilize support among national, city and local governments and community leaders through its network of urban professionals, grassroots organizations and businesses.

Over 95 per cent of the world's coronavirus cases are in urban areas with nearly 1,500 cities affected. People in informal settlements are particularly at risk as they live in overcrowded conditions, lack adequate housing and basic services such as water and sanitation and many are informal workers surviving from one day to the next. This makes it extremely hard to implement measures to slow transmission such as physical distancing, self-quarantine, handwashing or community-wide lockdowns.

UN-Habitat, which has over 40 years of urban experience, much of it in humanitarian situations, is working with its partners on the ground including mayors, governors, transport and utility providers, women, youth and community organizations and NGOs to urgently deliver the USD 72 million Response Plan in Africa, the Arab States, Asia Pacific, and Latin American and the Caribbean.

This catalytic support will amplify the impact of ongoing initiatives by central and local governments, communities and other UN agencies. Funding requirements will be updated as the situation evolves and needs are further assessed.

Over 70 per cent of the support will be used to help informal settlements to improve affordable access to water and sanitation, raise awareness about COVID-19, and support initiatives to prevent people becoming homeless by providing temporary shelter or alternative income generating activities. Ensuring safe transport and repurposing buildings to isolate those infected are other priority areas.

To make sure that urban responses, such as provision of water, food, housing, health services and livelihoods, are targeted at the most vulnerable and high risk areas, UN-Habitat will assist with data collection, mapping of existing and emerging hot spots and analysis working with its network of local and global partners. This will help evidence-based decision making by local governments and key stakeholders.

As the pandemic plunges the world's economy into a global recession, UN-Habitat is focusing on policies and measures to mitigate the local social and economic impact of COVID-19 and is



working with a coalition of global thought leaders and stakeholders in public and private spheres.

UN-Habitat has already provided seed funding of over USD 1.3 million for scaling up projects in 13 countries with community preparedness, outreach and hygiene support. The agency has also jointly launched, with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Metropolis, a #BeyondTheOutbreak virtual live learning series for mayors and local leaders to share urban solutions.

“The UN-Habitat team is working night and day to help city and community leaders on the frontline of this pandemic to reduce the risks in informal settlements and help the most vulnerable.

“With our extensive network of partners as well as our in-house experts, UN-Habitat is working closely with cities and communities to find innovative and targeted solutions to provide water and sanitation and safe transport and to mitigate the economic impact on the urban poor,” said UN-Habitat’s Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif.

“We want to help build up the resilience of our community partners to respond to specific and varied challenges over the coming months and beyond.”

At the global level, UN-Habitat is sharing good practice and solutions and identifying successful policy, legal measures and governance approaches to respond to current needs and long term resilience.

In Africa, UN-Habitat will support 20 countries, prioritizing the coordination of emergency preparedness and response, improving access to food and basic services including water, sanitation and hygiene, and promoting entrepreneurship. UN-Habitat’s response in 11 countries in the Arab region focuses on improving water, sanitation, and hygiene, ensuring safe transport, securing livelihoods, vulnerability assessments and risk area mapping.

In 17 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, the agency will collate, analyse and produce relevant data, improve hygiene, water, sanitation and health facilities and raise public awareness. And in 16 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, UN-Habitat will strengthen the capacity of local authorities, help mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on the urban poor and join regional efforts to bring investment to vulnerable areas.

To amplify the impact and broaden the reach of the Response Plan, UN-Habitat is launching a COVID-19 Campaign ‘Take action with us in cities and communities’ which calls on civil society organizations, community groups, professional, academic and research institutions, businesses and local authorities to commit online to acting in solidarity to fight the pandemic in cities and helping the most vulnerable communities. The Campaign will provide a central place to network and share solutions, initiatives, good practice, lessons and stories from partners and strengthen integrated action to improve the resilience of cities and communities.



The Response Plan and the COVID-19 Campaign provide a roadmap and rallying point for the combined commitment of UN-Habitat and its network of urban actors to support cities' proactive responses to protect their populations, halt the pandemic and work towards recovery and resilience.

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