



COVID-19 UNDP Integrated Response to Support the Resilience of the Palestinian People



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to large-scale emergencies across the globe, representing not only a global public health crisis, but also a humanitarian and development crisis. Beyond the immediate impact on people's lives, health systems and economies, the pandemic threatens to profoundly deepen inequalities and reverse progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Given the scale and scope of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, additional investments need to be made to complement the UN's health and humanitarian response. These resilience-based investments embody the Sustainable Development Goals and spread across five streams: 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 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; and 5) promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems. The streams, which are also connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better, are presented within the United Nations framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.



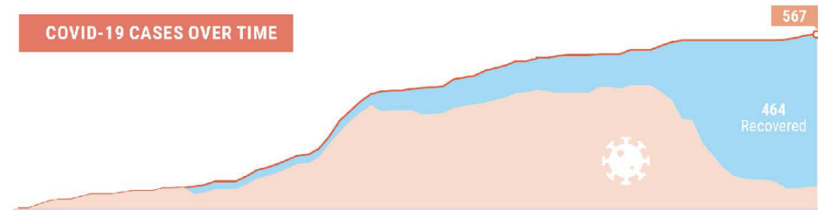
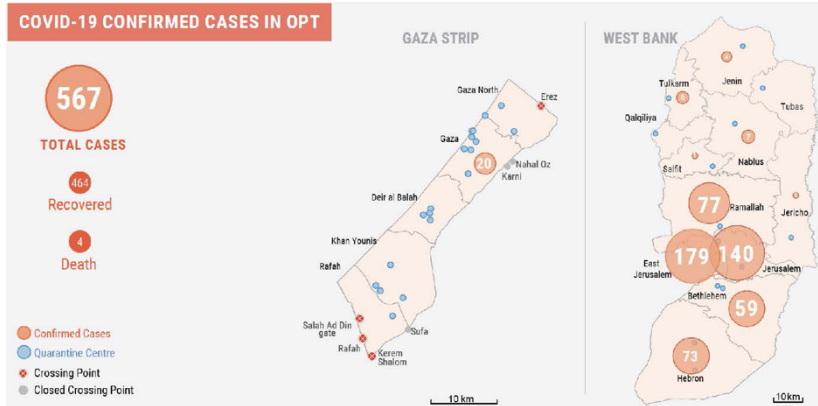
In light of the changing global context for development, UNDP globally is supporting countries around the world to prepare for and protect people from COVID-19 and its impacts, to respond during the outbreak, and to recover from the economic and social impacts in the months to come.

Working under the convening power of the Resident Coordinator's office, UNDP has been designated the technical lead in the UN socio-economic response, and is supporting the delivery of a strong UN Response.

UNDP's offer focuses on supporting an equitable, inclusive and urgent multi-sectoral response that mitigates any negative short and longer-term development impacts of COVID-19. In countries with a low number of cases, UNDP is strengthening health systems in partnership with the Global Fund and WHO, to limit supply chain disruptions, and to raise public awareness to minimize the health and development impacts. In countries battling epidemics, UNDP is supporting governments to flatten the curve through containment strategies, to improve and expand social protection, and to minimize the longer-term economic damage to affected businesses and workers. UNDP is also supporting social and economic recovery, to minimize the societal impact of this crisis while finding opportunities to shift to more sustainable development pathways.

COVID-19 in the State of Palestine

Already suffering from protracted conflict, restricted access to national resources, geographic fragmentation and intra-Palestinian divide, and decades of occupation, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic crisis on the State of Palestine will deepen vulnerabilities and drive additional households into poverty, especially those surviving on income in informal sector. Businesses are struggling to remain financially operational, while others are forced into unemployment. Unable to utilise similar fiscal and monetary tools to mitigate the potential pursuant economic downfall as witnessed in other countries on account of limited sovereignty, the Government of Palestine (GoP)'s fiscal sustainability is at risk.



The deteriorating fiscal sustainability will have a serious impact on the ability to ensure social safety networks are sustained, including cash transfers to vulnerable households and the salaries and pensions of government workers, including front-line health workers. More than 70 percent of households in Gaza, and 10 percent of households in the West Bank, depend on cash and in-kind assistance, and 21 percent of the Palestinian labour force works in the public sector, including 43 percent of employed women. The Palestinian economy is expected to incur losses of about US\$2.5 billion three months into the COVID-19 pandemic. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that a one-month shutdown would lead to a decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 1.2 percent compared to 2019, while a three-month shutdown and a six-month shutdown would lead to contractions of 5.1 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. Thus, it is predicted that the GDP will decline by 14 percent in 2020 compared to 2019.

There is also a gender dimension for the crisis. Because of pre-existing gender-based inequalities, the crisis creates risks to further exclude and discriminate. Women and youth will likely experience more difficulty finding new jobs or entrepreneurship opportunities for their economic recovery, not to mention that women are increasingly shouldering unpaid care work, including child care, caring for the sick and home schooling. This would also contribute to the decline in women's participation in the labour force and market.



Transformative Resilience Approach to Prepare, Respond and Recover

UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/ PAPP) is leveraging its extensive presence and global and regional networks across the humanitarian and development sectors, to build the resilience of the Palestinian people by effectively preparing for, responding to and recovering from the COVID-19 crisis.

This approach elaborated in detail below, is firmly nestled within the overall UNDP's programmatic framework of 'Transformative Resilience', which places national ownership and leadership, self-reliance, and Palestinian identity at its core. The interventions envisioned under the COVID-19 Prepare, Respond and Recover approach is well aligned with UNDP's programmatic focus: responsive and inclusive governance to increase access to quality basic services, public goods and rights; access to sustainable and inclusive economic opportunities; and climate change adaptation / mitigation and disaster risk reduction, sustainable use of natural resources and energy.

The transformative resilience approach through these pillars entails operationalizing the humanitarian-development (H-D) nexus on the ground through comprehensive and targeted interventions that address the multidimensional needs of vulnerable households, communities and institutions and ensures that no one is left behind. Overall, UNDP's response aims to protect and support people and preserve the gains across all SDGs by keeping an eye on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its core focus of 'leaving no one behind'.

Although the Palestinian government's pre-emptive containment measures have contributed to preventing a rapid outbreak, the potential socio-economic repercussions are as important to mitigate alongside protecting public health. As such, UNDP is supporting the Palestinian government across three main pillars:



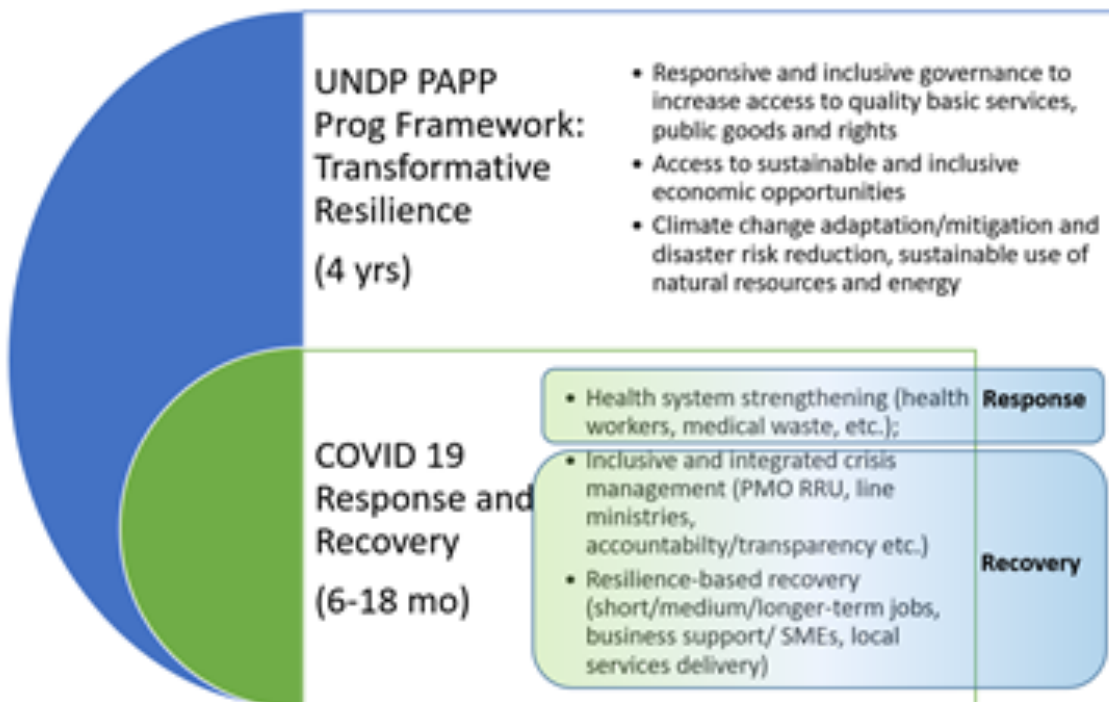
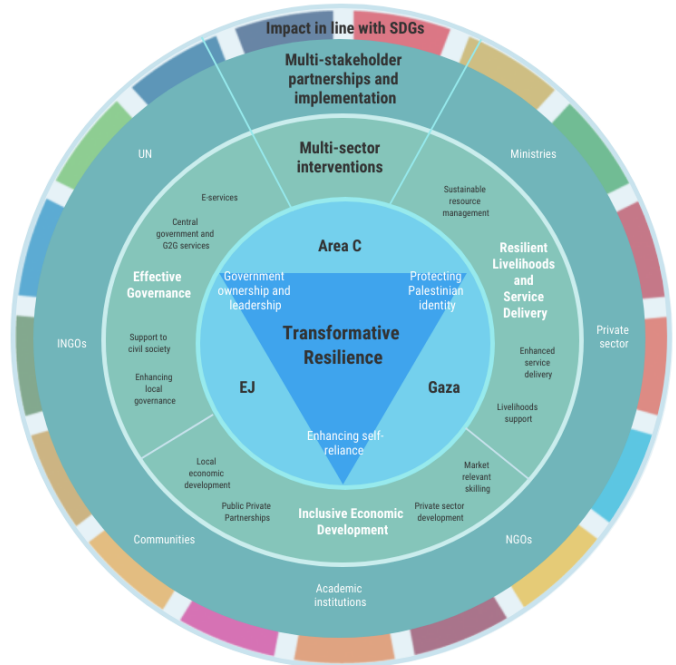
Enhance the preparedness of the health system for COVID-19 while also ensuring the continuity of essential healthcare provision.



Support the government's leading role in inclusive and integrated crisis management and assessing and planning for the medium- to long-term socioeconomic recovery.



Develop and implement resilience-based recovery measures especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups.





Pillar 1: Enhance the preparedness of the health system for COVID-19, while also ensuring the continuity of essential healthcare provision

As part of the UN's wider response to support the GoP in enhancing the preparedness of the Palestinian healthcare system to respond to COVID-19 during and post-pandemic, UNDP is coordinating with the Ministry of Health and other relevant line Ministries, UN agencies, and civil society actors to re-programme its interventions to fill immediate gaps in the government's health response.

- **Increasing the number of healthcare staff** to ensure COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related healthcare services are provided, through re-programming and expanding cash for work and dignified job creation projects in Gaza. UNDP is deploying over 700 health workers including doctors, nurses, lab technicians, and others such as cleaners to health facilities. Investment is needed to fill the gaps related to healthcare and expand support in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.
- **Supporting the health and environment departments at municipalities** with the sterilisation and disinfection of public facilities and markets, by deploying over 330 workers in Gaza.
- **Improving healthcare waste management** by working with the Ministry of Health and Joint Service Council for Solid Waste to install much needed medical waste treatment devices in the Gaza Strip to reduce the further spread of diseases. UNDP is also strengthening the institutional and operational setup for solid waste management (including medical waste) in Gaza. UNDP has assisted in the training of 3,200 Ministry of Health personnel, including doctors, nurses, medical laboratory specialists and cleaners, on medical waste management. UNDP's support in the West Bank includes installing treatment facility (Autoclaving and shredding equipment) and medical waste containers for six hospitals in main five districts and training of health care workers and service providers on how to safely handle health care waste.



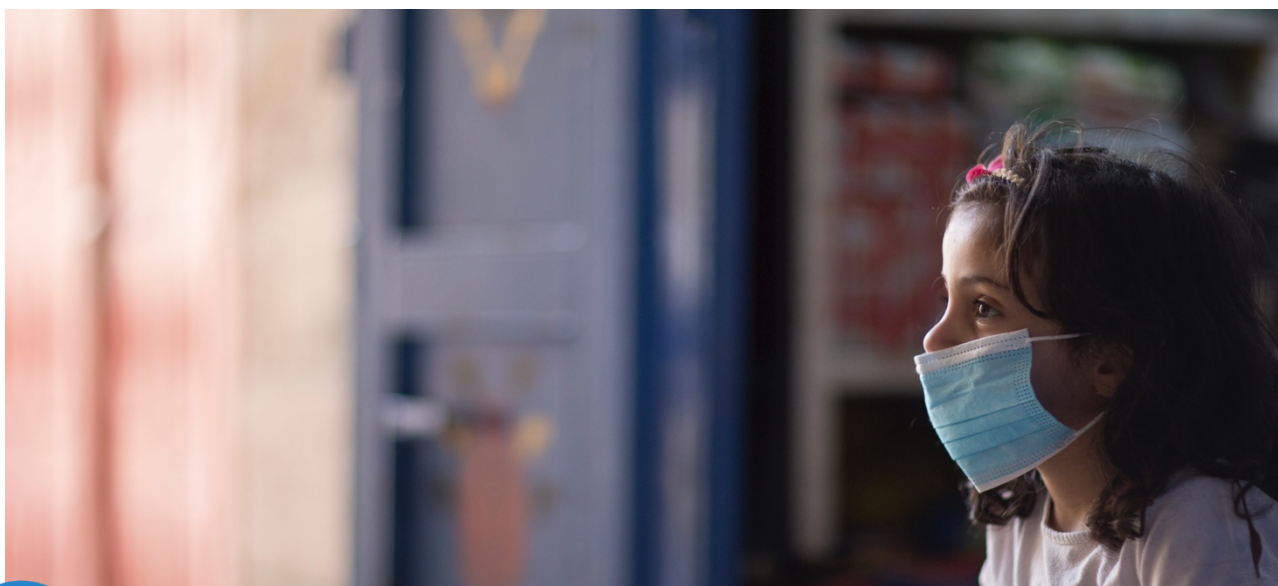
Pillar 2: Support the government's leading role in inclusive and integrated crisis management and assessing and planning for medium to long-term socio-economic recovery

The medium - to longer-term¹ social and economic impact of this crisis will be profound for the State of Palestine. UNDP is working with the GoP through the Prime Minister's Office and key ministries, to understand the social, economic, environmental, and political impacts of the crisis, to find ways to mitigate them with sustainable, resilient and rights-based solutions.

- **Facilitating the development and operationalization of the Socio-economic Response and Recovery Unit** housed at the Prime Minister's Office to support the government's capacity to coordinate and respond to emerging socio-economic needs. Comprised of a team of experts, the unit will provide coordinated responses to ensure the social safety of the most vulnerable communities and groups, and the rapid recovery of MSMEs and key economic sectors, including sectoral and systemic activities. Key functions include:
 - Identifying and filling any data gaps, predominately at the household/community level, and/or sectoral level.
 - Designing and developing a socio-economic recovery roadmap including evidence-based and gender responsive interventions.
 - Facilitating technical coordination across key ministries to centralise government recovery efforts and strengthen line ministries' capacities to effectively respond to their respective constituencies.

¹ Short term interventions (6-9 months), medium term is up to 18 months.

- Establishing an information management system to monitor and track socio-economic responses and interventions.
- Supporting the PMO's leadership in aid coordination.
- **Supporting line ministries with individual response plans and mitigation interventions required to support socio-economic recovery**, including the Ministry of Jerusalem Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Economy and the Ministry of Local Government.
- **Strengthening accountability and transparency in government responses**, including supporting the sustainability of independent media outlets to continue much needed public health communication campaigns, fighting misinformation, and fostering public debate around the government's responses.



Pillar 3: Develop and implement resilience-based recovery measures especially for vulnerable and marginalized groups

With UNDP's extensive experience in supporting the GoP to strengthen institutions, uphold rule of law and human rights, mitigate risks of disasters, overcome crises and build resilience, while ensuring the inclusion of those left furthest behind, UNDP has adjusted its on-going projects, and expanded its interventions towards immediate, medium- and longer- term socio-economic recovery measures. This includes cash for work and labour intensive interventions, particularly targeting women and youth, as well as diversifying revenue streams for local government units (LGUs) and fostering local economic development through support to SMEs and promoting public-private partnerships.

- **Supporting livelihoods and short-term jobs linked to longer-term employment through**
 - Cash for work modalities, labour intensive interventions, and decent job opportunities focusing on areas of need such as public and basic services. (For example, those employed are given the opportunity not only to earn an income to meet the needs of their families, but also gain the experience and expertise to improve their employability in the future).
 - Digital literacy, economic empowerment and skilling programmes targeting women and youth.
 - Support to small scale farmers and women in agriculture, through provision of essential inputs, technical capacity building and linkages to markets amidst current closures.

- **Protecting and promoting businesses, including**
 - Support businesses that could respond to demand created by COVID-19, such as production of PPE, sterilisers, hygiene material, etc., as well as food production/ processing.
 - Provide comprehensive support to SMEs (focusing particularly on women-owned businesses), including technical expertise and access to financial and non-financial resources for grants or no-interest loans, integrating their products and services into public procurement and supporting the adoption of e-commerce and digital solution. Well-being and childcare support services will be provided to women-owned businesses in coordination with relevant UN agencies.
 - Support SMEs to ensure business continuity/development, including risk-sharing grants to alter business models towards emerging needs/opportunities in the local market.
 - Foster public-private partnerships towards local economic development, including rehabilitating cultural assets for private sector operation to support tourism development.

- **Enhancing capacity of local actors (incl. LGUs, schools and civil society) to deliver services, including**
 - Develop capacities of local actors on crisis management to support continuity of vital service provision.
 - Ensure ministries' responses extend to 'out of reach' areas (e.g. supporting the Ministry of Education response in East Jerusalem private and Waqf schools).
 - Improve the fiscal sustainability of LGUs through cost-saving/ revenue generating initiatives, including domestic solar energy production.
 - Support local government in coordinating and communicating with local stakeholders, including participatory decision-making, to strengthen community ownership, through digital means where appropriate.
 - Strengthen the role of local government in recovery interventions, particularly in marginalized communities.



Partnering for an Integrated Response

As a critical player and the technical leader on the overall UN socio-economic response to the pandemic, we collaborate closely with the UN Resident Coordinator’s office and UN Country Team to support an integrated UN response to COVID-19, via the biweekly COVID-19 taskforce, the humanitarian cluster coordination system, the SDG and UN operations task forces which UNDP chairs.

UNDP is working with the Palestinian government, through the Prime Minister’s Office, to ensure our actions continue to strengthen the capacities of line ministries to maintain core functions, and to plan, coordinate, communicate and finance socio-economic recovery responses that meet the needs of the Palestinian people. UNDP is also engaging with its funding partners, private sector and civil society organizations as well as universities / start-up incubators to solicit innovative solutions, reduce misinformation, provide academic counselling and enhance e-learning.

The total funding requirement for UNDP's response is US\$82,645,557, US\$8,716,452 are available from activities in ongoing projects and additional resources, with a gap of US\$73,929,105.

The UNDP COVID-19 programme will be implemented for a duration of 6 to 12 months, pending unforeseen evolutions in the pandemic.

OUTPUT	BUDGET	AVAILABLE	GAP
PREPARE	\$14,288,577	\$3,256,072	\$11,032,505
RESPOND	\$5,513,220	\$250,000	\$5,263,220
RECOVER	\$62,843,760	\$5,210,380	\$57,633,380
TOTAL	\$82,645,557	\$8,716,452	\$73,929,105

