



G20 Support to COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Developing Countries

Including Africa, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented and protracted global crisis requiring international cooperation and solidarity. The global economy is contracting and most developing countries including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), African countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are particularly vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of the outbreak such as social distress, acute food insecurity, rising inequalities, and severe development setback. Left unaddressed, these factors could seriously threaten the socio-economic fabrics and political stability in these countries and hinder their transformation towards sustainable development. These challenges are further heightened in fragile settings where COVID-19 is unfolding against a backdrop of significant humanitarian need, conflict and instability, environment and climate related risks, locusts and an overstretched humanitarian system.

At the Extraordinary Summit on 26 March 2020, G20 Leaders voiced their grave concern over *“the serious risks posed to all countries, particularly developing and least developed countries, and notably in Africa and small island states, where health systems and economies may be less able to cope with the challenge, as well as the particular risk faced by refugees and displaced persons.”* They committed to spare no effort to provide help to all countries in need of assistance, to strengthen capacity building and technical assistance in these areas as well as to stand ready to mobilize development and humanitarian support. Following that, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors adopted the Action Plan – Supporting the Global Economy through the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many G20 members also co-led the Coronavirus Global Response Pledging Conference to mobilize financial resources in May 2020, followed by the Global Pledging Summit in June, which raised additional funding. In April, several countries and global health organizations launched the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) was launched with objective to speed up the research, development and production of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines against COVID-19 that would be universally available and affordable.

The magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis calls for a coordinated and targeted response for developing countries, where health systems and other life-saving services can be overwhelmed by the pandemic and its socio-economic impacts jeopardizes decades of development progress. The urgency of supporting these countries and the necessity to help them recover stronger requires immediate and substantial actions. The G20 can catalyze an international mobilization while drawing its efforts on the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its central promise to leave no one behind and recover towards an inclusive and sustainable future for all.

Principles

The G20 Support to COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Developing Countries (the response) is grounded on the following key principles:

- **People-centered.** In the face of this pandemic, the people and their survival, livelihood and dignity are front and center. The Response aims to leave no one behind, combat inequalities, and seeks to minimize the impact of the pandemic on those in vulnerable situations in developing countries, including women and girls, youth, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants, refugees, displaced people, and indigenous people.
- **Global solidarity and national ownership.** The Response acknowledges the responsibility of governments, along with relevant stakeholders, for making policy and program choices, according to their national context and circumstances, that can efficiently and effectively meet their objectives of providing essential quality health services for all during an outbreak, food security and nutrition, employment supports and social protection to people in need, tackling poverty, and stimulating inclusive and sustainable growth; and considers this an essential part of the global solidarity required to overcome the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Sustainability-oriented.** The response helps developing countries to meet the immediate and essential needs of the most vulnerable, in order to recover better, with sustainable, resilient, and inclusive solutions, contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Universal coverage.** Under the primary responsibility of the State, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, we will strive to minimize collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic related to broader health outcomes, recognizing that these health outcomes must be universal and accessible to all, non-discriminatory, participative, inclusive of mental health and psychosocial support, with a specific lens on gender equality, good governance, and transparent management.
- **Voluntary basis.** The response which is a G20 collective endeavor implemented by each member on a voluntary basis, in cooperation with relevant international organizations and ensuring coordination across relevant G20 workstreams.
- **Humanitarian principles.** Internationally agreed upon humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are fully respected and adhered to by all actors engaged in the provision of humanitarian assistance, consistent with the international humanitarian law.
- **Partnerships and international cooperation.** The response intends to support and does not seek to duplicate operations against COVID-19 coordinated under the leadership of the UN Secretary General that engage governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and international organizations, including the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, and the Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to implement effective and targeted response to COVID-19 in developing countries in need.

Scope of the Response

The response helps developing countries to meet the immediate and essential needs of the most vulnerable and aims to address humanitarian, health, and sustainable development challenges in a coordinated and holistic manner and catalyze efficient international support with a short-, medium- and long-term strategic perspectives. In the most vulnerable countries, the support to humanitarian

operations and development policy actions are designed according to a nexus approach in order to coherently address vulnerabilities and protection needs before, during and after the pandemic. The response lays out concrete collective G20 actions to help developing countries meet the essential needs and priorities of the most vulnerable, monitoring and managing the pandemic and its impacts, and set the path forward for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery and future for all.

The response recognizes that LDCs and SIDS face exacerbated vulnerabilities due to COVID-19, including limited capacity to deal with intertwined shocks. The response builds on the G20 Initiative on Supporting Industrialization in Africa and Least Developed Countries, the G20 Africa Partnership and its constituent initiatives (G20 Compact with Africa, G20 support for quality infrastructure, G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment, Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, G20 #eSkills4Girls) to encourage inclusive recovery and sustainable development following the aspirational goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063, and in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA).

Supporting the Global Humanitarian Response

COVID-19 is swiftly spreading in many developing countries. The most fragile countries see their already weak health systems overwhelmed and unable to provide basic health-care services and vital medical supplies, while some of them are already experiencing humanitarian crises, including instability, conflict or seasonal climatic shocks, and acute food insecurity and malnutrition with severe risks of famine. To address the humanitarian crisis caused by COVID-19, the United Nations (UN) Global Humanitarian Response Plan estimates that \$10.3 billion are required to contain the virus and meet the humanitarian needs in fragile settings. The response aims to support the humanitarian actors in developing countries through the following actions:

- Help protect and assist the most vulnerable and those most at-risk because of the pandemic, who generally suffer disproportionate impacts, including women and girls, youth, people with disabilities, the elderly, migrants, refugees, displaced people, and indigenous people.
- Support the strategic priorities of the international community conducting the humanitarian relief operations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, save lives, decrease morbidity and mortality, reduce suffering, and minimize secondary impacts of the pandemic in fragile settings; leverage synergies with national authorities and the U.N. Global Humanitarian Response Plan; and enhance cooperation and coordination among all relevant humanitarian and development actors.
- Support the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the most affected and vulnerable populations, including in fragile and conflict-affected states, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, while facilitating safe, rapid and unhindered access and movement of health and humanitarian personnel and goods.
- Facilitate the work of humanitarian actors, including through supporting the global service provision plan of the WFP as the lead agency of the Logistics Cluster, eliminating access restrictions and bureaucratic impediments, and minimizing barriers to convoys and airbridges to ensure the continued flow of food and agricultural products cargo, staff, and essential medical commodities.

- Consider exempting humanitarian assistance related to COVID-19 from export restrictions, to the extent possible, and encourage partner developing countries to remove tariffs on humanitarian assistance-related goods, to facilitate continued supplies of medical commodities, personal protective equipment (PPE), food and agricultural products, water supply and other essential goods needed.
- Promote actions in line with the humanitarian-development nexus approach, aimed at strengthening collaboration, co-ordination and coherence between all stakeholders and leverage local first responders' ability to bridge up the emergency and recovery actions in order to achieve better results for people while continuing to respect the humanitarian principles.

Responding to the Health Emergency

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted significant needs in developing countries health security preparedness and response capacities in addition to overwhelming their fragile and often underfunded health systems—already affected by other infectious diseases; health crises and challenges such as Ebola, outbreaks (malaria, dengue, cholera), and HIV-AIDS. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in Africa, fewer than 50% of Africans have access to modern health facilities, and the IHR score—the ability of a country to prevent, detect and respond effectively to health-related outbreaks and disasters—is 57%, the lowest in the world. As the Ebola 2014 outbreak in West Africa revealed, coordination is a key determinant to prevent and respond to health epidemics. Similar vulnerabilities exist in Asia and the Pacific, particularly among SIDS which are often isolated and have limited medical resources. The urgency of strengthening health systems in developing countries requires acting proactively, not only to address COVID-19 but also to maintain essential health services and be better prepared for future disease outbreaks.

We emphasize the important mandates of the United Nations' system and agencies, primarily the WHO, while considering the ongoing evaluations, its stated commitment to transparency, and the need to strengthen its overall effectiveness, in coordinating and supporting the global response to the pandemic and the central efforts of Member States therein. The response aims to tackle the following steps to help scale up essential medical commodities and provide basic health-care in developing countries:

- Support developing countries ownership, development, financing, and implementation of their National Action Plans for Health Security, to help them mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, and fully comply with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), and broadly address other infectious-disease threats.
- Strengthen health preparedness, capacity building and technical assistance; promote prevention measures, test, trace and treat COVID-19; maintain access to health-care services and clinical care; mitigate indirect health impacts, including on mental health; reinforce risk-communication and community-engagement campaigns; and run targeted and tailored-based public information to help reduce the spread of infections.

- Take action to provide adequate and equitable access for all to safe and affordable water sanitation and hygiene resources to enable critical measures such as handwashing to combat COVID-19, especially among populations most in need.
- Reduce financial barriers for essential services and accelerate timely and affordable access to healthcare resources and fair distribution of medical supplies such as diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics, PPE, and other protective measures, building on the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) initiative.
- Assess and strengthen emergency response coordination systems and processes through the integration of multi-sectoral public health systems and partnerships, including with the private sector, as well as a trained workforce for a cohesive and coordinated response.
- Facilitate investment in appropriate innovations and technologies, including telecommunications and digitalization, to protect the most vulnerable people, connect patients and support primary health care workers, support equitable access to quality and safe care, overcome the lack of infrastructure, and ensure health system continuity while fully preserving individual data confidentiality.
- Encourage developing countries to continue sharing available COVID-19-related biological materials, as well as timely, transparent and standardized data in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), while protecting individual data confidentiality.
- Reinforce gender-responsive health measures to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls, including by responding to increasing levels of gender-based violence, and prevent reallocation of resources that may have a negative impact on immunization against other communicable diseases and measures that minimize collateral effects of the COVID-19 pandemic related to broader health outcomes.
- Restore and ensure the safe delivery of routine national immunization programmes, as the COVID-19 pandemic causes important disruptions in the delivery and uptake of immunization services and threatening to reverse hard-won health progress in this area.
- Coordinate and collaborate with regional organizations and networks—including the African Union, the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project (PM), the Mercosur and relevant global health authorities — in their strategic response to COVID-19, and support multi-stakeholders partnerships, through north-south south-south and triangular cooperation, under the existing One Health approach to prevent, detect, respond to health emergencies, expand access to universal health coverage, and support duty of care to frontline health workers.

Supporting a Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic and its intertwined health, social and economic impacts require immediate measures and exceptional actions, while continuing to address underlying structural vulnerabilities. While addressing urgent needs, the G20 aims to pave the way towards a strong, sustainable, and inclusive recovery for all. The *G20 Action Plan for Supporting the Global Economy through the COVID-*

19 Pandemic sets out key principles and commitments to drive forward international economic cooperation to tackle this crisis. The G20 supports countries in need that are enduring unprecedented development setbacks to overcome challenges they face in critical areas, including debt vulnerability, financing for sustainable development, illicit financial flows, inclusive and sustainable growth, job creation and social protection, education, food security and nutrition, and environmental sustainability. The COVID-19 crisis must be an opportunity to build resilience against future crises and shocks, as well as to accelerate the global transformation towards sustainable development, and lay the foundations to resilient, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable economies. The response supports developing countries in the provision of basic economic and social services that are integral to the emergency response to COVID-19 and their sustainable development pathways through the following actions:

- Support developing countries efforts to overcome the macroeconomic shock, fiscal and external imbalances caused by COVID-19, restore fiscal space and sustainability in the medium and long term, and enhance environmental sustainability, to recover stronger in line with their national sustainable development strategies, the Sustainable Development Goals and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) , where applicable.
- Support the design and development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) as toolkits to link planning and financing processes at national level and support developing countries in their efforts as envisioned in the G20 financing for sustainable development framework.
- Support the full implementation of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and a possible extension beyond 2020 to help low-income countries face the increasingly acute health and socioeconomic needs, reduce their vulnerabilities to shocks, ensure debt remains sustainable, and maximize development impact.
- Work to ensure that sufficient, safe, affordable food and healthy diet continue to be available and accessible to all people, as per the G20 Extraordinary Agriculture Ministers Meeting Statement on COVID-19; reduce food loss and waste; guard against any unjustified restrictive measures that could threaten food security, nutrition and food safety; refrain from introducing export restrictions on food and agricultural products purchased for non-commercial humanitarian purposes; and avoid unnecessary food-stockpiling without prejudice to domestic food security consistent with national requirements, while contributing to the sustainability and resilience of food systems in the long-term.
- Support developing countries in their efforts to reinforce social protection floors and safety nets to reach all groups of society, promote decent work and formalization, and mobilize resources to minimize labor market disruptions caused by the pandemic with a strong focus on the most vulnerable and most affected to tackle inequalities.
- Support developing countries to rapidly design and implement temporary basic income or other direct support programs such as cash transfers, as appropriate, to respond to the significant socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable households, workers, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and populations in vulnerable situations, including women, especially in the informal economy where millions of livelihoods are at risk due to restrictive health and economic measures.

- Leverage the Aid-for-Trade initiative in supporting developing countries' efforts to build productive capacities and trade-related infrastructure, providing technical assistance and capacity building to these countries, and supporting regional integrations—such as the African Continental Free Trade Area—to further facilitate trade and investment for sustainable development, and strengthen global and regional supply chains.
- Align regional connectivity, universal access and the preservation of infrastructure networks through better maintenance, the supply of connectivity services and capacity building with the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment and the G20 Guidelines on Quality Infrastructure for Regional Connectivity to facilitate the flow of essential goods and services and the efficiency of value chains at local, national and regional levels, as appropriate.
- Strengthen the resilience of MSMEs, women, young and rural entrepreneurs, and vulnerable groups; increase their access to finance, including through micro-finance, adequate credit lines and guarantees; and promote responsible digital payments and new technologies in line with the work of the G20 Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.
- Support policies to reduce inequalities and boost access to quality education and employability including of women, young people, and the most vulnerable, both in urban and rural contexts, and prioritize quality education for all and youth safety during school closures and provide guidance to re-open schools and higher education institutions as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Assist developing countries with their policies to strengthen occupational safety and health measures, including mental health psychosocial supportive measures to facilitate return to work, reopen business and schools in safe and decent conditions after lockdown.
- Encourage developing countries to account for the pandemic's impact on women in their policies addressing post-pandemic challenges as well as to endorse quality education and learning programs for girls with a focus on the acquisition of relevant key competences and the digital skills gap.
- Encourage the international community to adopt an inclusive gender-responsive approach that gives a prominent role to women and girls, in addition to people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, at all levels of decision-making and implementation.
- Facilitate the flow of remittances and advance towards our goal “to reduce to less than 3 percent the transaction cost of migrant remittances and to eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5percent by 2030” as per the G20 Action Plan on the 2030 Agenda.
- Support developing countries in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on extreme poverty by sharing experiences and promoting international development cooperation.

Way Forward

The G20 and its Development Working Group continue to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries and support their efforts, in coordination with developing countries, with relevant stakeholders and international organizations, avoiding duplication of existing efforts, and coherently with the G20 Action Plan – Supporting the global economy through the COVID-19 pandemic - and the Financing for Sustainable Development Framework.