



UNDP Trinidad and Tobago

Support to the National Response and Recovery to Contain the Impact of COVID-19



1. Government Response

Trinidad and Tobago introduced early measures to stymie the spread of the COVID-19 virus. These measures have contributed to the slow spread and rapid containment of the virus nationally. To date, there have been 117 confirmed cases with 8 deaths (as of June 5th, 2020). At the end of March, gatherings were restricted to five persons or less and a Stay at Home Order was instituted. Further, in early April, citizens were mandated to wear masks once outside.

To date, supermarkets, hardware stores, retail services, wholesale stores and drugstores operate with restricted schedules while non-essential services, including restaurants, remain closed.

The government has taken the following measures to strengthen the health response to the COVID 19 crisis:

- Two specialized facilities were opened to quarantine and care for persons who contracted the virus.
- 4000 testing kits were donated by China to increase testing, with 10,000 more in transit.
- 15 thermal scanners were donated by China to be deployed at ports and airports.
- Testing was expanded to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex (EWMSC) with a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machine to supplement testing efforts.
- An additional PCR machine was placed at the Trinidad Public Health Laboratory to assist in expanding testing.

In terms of economic and financial relief provided to businesses by the government, the following were instituted:

- Value Added Tax (VAT) refunds to be paid to businesses owed.
- Grant facility provided to Tobago hoteliers to conduct upgrades during the lockdown period.
- Accelerated payments of a substantial proportion of outstanding VAT refunds and income tax refunds, and overdue payables owed by the Government to suppliers and contractors.
- Special attention to be paid to small and medium-sized businesses.

In terms of economic and financial relief:

- A Salary Relief Grant per month for three months, provided to vulnerable citizens who lost income because of the impact of COVID-19.
- Rental Assistance for an initial period of three months for persons who have been retrenched, terminated or the household income reduced as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
- Three months Food Card support for households where a family member was retrenched, terminated or income reduced during this period.
- Provision of Food Cards for families whose children were part of the School Feeding program.
- Income tax returns for persons by the Inland Revenue Department.

2. UNDP Support to Prepare, Respond and Recover

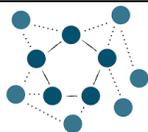
Strengthening Health Systems



- UNDP provided administrative support to the Regional Health Authorities to recruit 60 nurses for frontline COVID-19 response, and facilitated the procurement of medical equipment and PPE, including high flow nasal cannula machines, cardiac monitors, ultrasound machines, and video laryngoscopes for better intubation.

Inclusive and Multi-Sectoral Crisis Management and Response

- Through the Rapid Response Facility, support the government to meet the food and nutritional needs of the population in a partnership with FAO and WFP and to ensure adequate nutrition and food supply for vulnerable populations, and strengthening social protection systems.
- In partnership with the Prison Service of Trinidad and Tobago and to respond to the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presents to the population of incarcerated youth at the Youth



Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre (YTRC- youth detention centre), implementing a psychosocial interventions, resilience building and psychoeducation for 110 incarcerated youth through online platforms.

- UNDP has provided equipment to the Victim and Witness Support and the Gender Based Violence Units of the Police Service. This support will contribute to a more effective response to family violence given the spikes recorded in reported cases. These include online reporting and counselling. Laptops were also provided to 25 Police Youth Clubs to support online learning to at risk youth during the shutdown.
- UNDP is working with UNICEF, PAHO, the Ministry of Health, OPM (Gender and Child Affairs Division), and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to develop a 30-minute television programme series to be shown every day focusing on children, adolescents and families, their health and coping strategies during the COVID-19 period but mainly during the stay at home period.

Socio-Economic Impact and Recovery



- UNDP TTO collaborated with the University of the West Indies to produce two rapid analyses on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 with policy recommendations for the way forward. UNDP TTO convened the international community and the entire government to discuss findings, challenges and recommendations for the country via a web-based conference. This led to the convening of a virtual webinar with close to 100 senior officials from government, the international community and UNCT.
- The recovery team appointed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also benefited from these studies particularly the social protection component
- Socio-economic impact assessments will also be rolled out using tools from SEIA training to support government's response to vulnerable groups. Focus will be on persons with disabilities, specifically the hearing impaired and the visually impaired.

3. UNDP Support to UN Country Team

UNDP has partnered with PAHO to support crisis response of the Ministry of Health and the provision of equipment, PPE and health professionals. In addition, UNDP has also supported the response plan of the UNCT, which has been shared with Government.

Given the recent socio-economic framework launched by the UN, UNDP will provide technical leadership to the UNCT and is supporting the development of this framework.

4. Resources – COVID-19 Response

<i>Areas of Response</i>	<i>Reprogramming (Existing Projects) USD</i>	<i>New Resources USD</i>
Strengthening Health Systems	628,095.83	
Inclusive and Multi-Sectoral Crisis Management and Response	95,000.00	
Socio-Economic Impact and Recovery		310,000
Sub Total	723,095.83	310,000.00

Total	1,033,095.83
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The resources to support the government to contain and recover from the impacts of COVID-19 are:

- \$628,095.83 reprogrammed from the Primary Healthcare Initiative project of the Ministry of Health.
- \$95,000 reprogrammed from the Trinidad and Tobago Resilience and Peace Project.
- \$50,000 to be reprogrammed from the Primary Health Care Initiative.

- In terms of new resources, USD 300,00 was mobilized from the UNDP Rapid Response Facility and \$10,000 from UNDP contributions to the socio-economic studies.