

RBAS Development **Digest**

April 8, 2020



The COVID-19 pandemic is global in scale and threatens to impact every country, not only as a health crisis in the short term but as a social and economic crisis in the immediate term and over the months and years to come, presenting a vast new challenge for the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

UNDP is working at the heart of the United Nations family and in close coordination with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams, including the World Health Organisation, to respond to country requests for support. We have rolled out a [global offer](#) reflecting our contribution to the UN system and our readiness to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the crisis, with focus on supporting health systems, inclusive and integrated crisis management, and social and economic impact needs assessment and response. Throughout UNDP's support, special attention will be given to the most vulnerable to the particular impacts of this pandemic, including women, and chances will be seized to pivot towards a stronger-than-ever embrace of digitization as a means of pursuing sustainable development.

"We are already hard at work, together with our UN family and other partners, on three immediate priorities: supporting the health response including the procurement and supply of essential health products, under WHO's leadership; strengthening crisis management and response; and addressing critical social and economic impacts." - UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner

UNDP Country Offices across the Arab States region are working in lockstep with UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams and partners to support national responses to COVID-19 through streamlined procedures and immediate resources provided through UNDP's global Rapid Response Facility on COVID-19.

Across the Arab States region, we are rolling out our offer in varied contexts, including in several countries marked by fragility and posing unique challenges to the response. We also do so with a focus on efforts to support women and girls, who will be disproportionately affected – and on the most vulnerable in diverse development contexts.

Epidemiological snapshot of the Arab States region

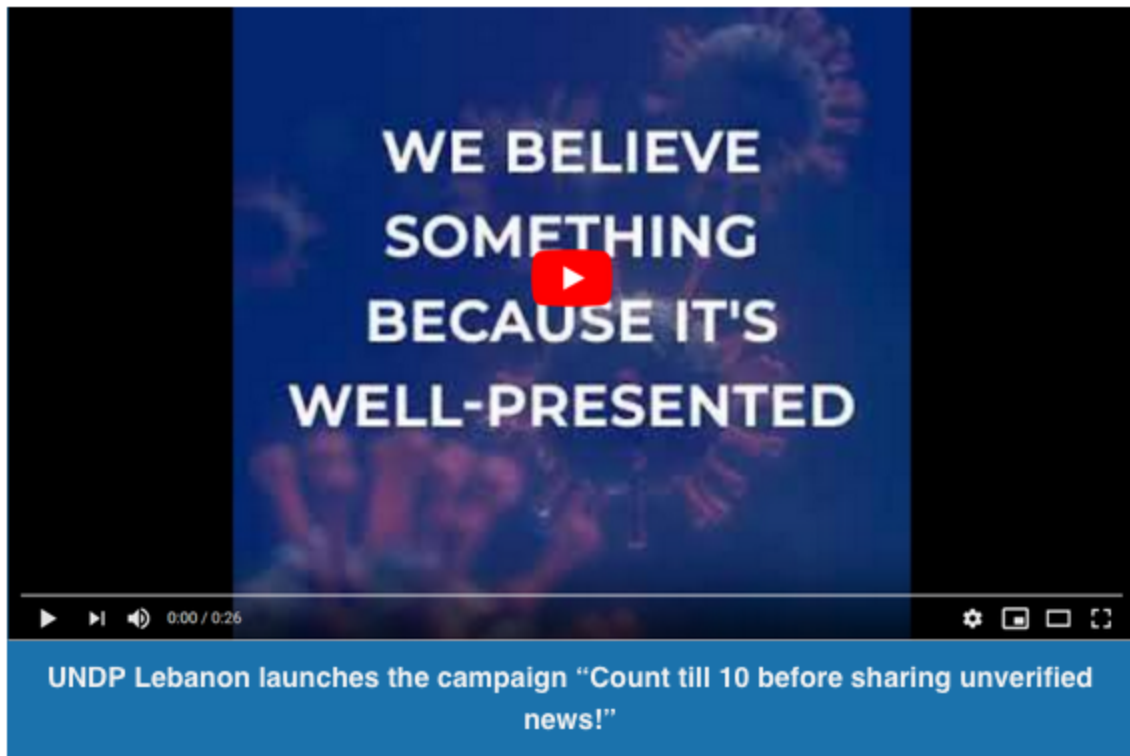
Total confirmed case of COVID-19s: 17,195

Total deaths: 566

Source: WHO, Updated as of 8 April 2020, 10:00pm CEST

This **Digest** mirrors the Regional Bureau for Arab States [COVID-19 response web page](#), and features the programmatic reflections and Country Office experiences related to COVID-19, as a means to enable mutual learning across the region and as a contribution to the global response dialogue. It also

continues to showcase our ongoing work which will continue to be adapted as a means of supporting overall priorities in a changing context, and keeping an eye on the integrated response options which ultimately have the potential to pave a way towards a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive future.



Colleagues are also invited to review the [UNDP Arab States COVID-19 response web page](#) for up-to-date stories.

Perspectives for Action

As UNDP rolled out its global offer and Country Offices raced to support national responses as part of the overall UN effort, at the regional level RBAS supplemented its ongoing support with a series of thinkpieces exploring key factors which will shape the impact across the region - and calibrate our response.

Adel Abdellatif and Ellen Hsu set the overall scene with [a regional analysis](#) focused on health systems, institutional capacity and fragility, previewing a concept note currently in development and activating an important area for policy advocacy in support of work across the region. Kishan Khoday outlined linkages between [climate action and the COVID-19 response](#) across the region, foreshadowing the urgent need and opportunity to strongly incorporate sustainability in the response. Jennifer Colville and Roxani Roushas shed light on early and agile actions of Acclabs teams in Iraq, Egypt and Sudan [to source solutions, enhance access to information and test evidence-based approaches](#). Farah Choucair shared a personal and policy reflection calling for urgent and scaled-up efforts [to address the digital divide](#). We are also pleased to share a reflection by Oumayma Raimi-Rodé, of the Morocco Country Office, [on ethical considerations in times of distancing](#), and the importance of considering gender dimensions during these challenging circumstances.

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Together these pieces underscore the breadth of UNDP's integrated response and highlight the importance of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach which complements targeted support for the Health sector led by WHO.

Prepare, Respond, Recover

RBAS Country Offices showed impressive responsiveness and creativity rolling out early and rapid support for counterparts along the three lines of UNDP's

offer: prepare, respond and beginning to plan for recovery – and in robust coordination across UN Country Teams.

UNDP Yemen Resident Representative Auke Lootsma shared how UNDP Yemen is contributing to the UN response in the midst of crisis – echoing the Secretary General’s call for a ceasefire.

UNDP Libya Resident Representative Gerardo Noto shared a perspective on how UNDP continues supporting all Libyans and strengthening the UN Libya response to the Coronavirus.

UNDP Jordan is working with partners to combat the spread of COVID-19 and to support the country’s health system through a new project, introducing advanced medical waste disposal technologies to improve medical waste management in healthcare facilities.

UNDP Somalia set up a communications hub as a first line of COVID-19 defense to raise awareness about the virus by producing videos, animations, radio broadcasts and social media graphics. First products include **videos** to promote hand-washing.

UNDP Algeria shared a "Staff Morale" video by featuring colleagues from the Country Office and reflecting on a few plus-sides of telecommuting.

UNDP Lebanon partnered with the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation International to launch a campaign to combat the spread of fake news about COVID-19, including through television spots urging the public to “count to ten before sharing unverified news”. The country office and UNDP’s Regional Goodwill Ambassador Michael Haddad also teamed up with UNICEF to roll out the “**safe hands**” campaign.



UNDP Iraq engaged recently trained women sewing professionals to produce facemasks to combat spread of COVID-19; these are vital to the response, especially to ensure the safety and protection of health professionals.

UNDP Sudan provided urgent support to the Prime Minister's office to ensure that key government offices can function remotely, thereby enabling business continuity of core government functions.

Accelerator labs have emerged across the region as vital and agile resources in the response. In Iraq, the Lab is working with developers on a symptoms-tracking app; in Sudan, the Lab is collecting consumption data to advise regulatory bodies; in Tunisia, the Lab is preparing to join a national hack-a-thon with government, academia and private sector partners; the Lab in Libya is mapping solutions across sectors for the rapid production of personal protective equipment; in Algeria, new online platforms, set up with multiple partners are supporting public info; In Egypt, innovation colleagues are working on developing behaviorally informed interventions to support adherence to policies regarding physical distancing, hand washing.

In Other News

The “Arab Region Youth Arts & Music Initiative” (AYAMI) takes off with a song about the SDGs featuring young talents from across the region

With the overall objective to raise awareness among children and youth on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and motivating them to become drivers of related efforts, [AYAMI](#) places art and music at its core, as powerful, yet simple, tools to communicate complex messages and engage people and communities. The initiative launched with a song and a music video, featuring seven young talented singers from different Arab countries who previously starred in the Arabic version of the world-famous franchise "The Voice Kids: Ahla Sawt". The young singers aim to inspire their peers, promoting a strong sense ownership of the SDGs with their song "My Goals". Plans to produce a video featuring the youth signing together were deferred due to the COVID-19 response, however with agility the team opted for an animation to bring visibility to these important messages. [Watch the video.](#)

The Arab States region doubles capacity in renewables in just two years

The Arab States region has doubled its capacity to produce renewable energy in the space of just two years, says a new report by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE), yet accelerated action is needed to achieve ambitious targets for renewables set by Arab countries for 2035 – and to step up the efforts towards overall climate action. [Read more.](#)

Arab Youth Center & UNDP Partner to Engage Youth as Champions for Development across the Arab States Region

Abu Dhabi, 22 March 2020 – The Arab Youth Center (AYC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) announced today that 11 youth delegates from the Arab States region have commenced their roles as Youth Development Delegates to support countries across the region to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Youth Delegates are the first cohort in a new initiative between AYC and UNDP which seeks to empower youth and support development progress across the Arab States. [Read more.](#)

More from the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States:

[Regional Hub Knowledge Center](#)

[Regional Bureau for Arab States web page](#)