



United Nations Development Programme

REVIEW OF THE UNDP COVID-19 RESPONSE IN THE ARAB STATES



RBAS WORKING PAPERS SERIES

Acknowledgements

This paper has been prepared by Fekadu Terefe and Stephen Liston with substantive inputs and review by Gonzalo Pizarro, Frances Guy, Kishan Khoday, Giordano Segneri, Aneesa Walji, Jennifer Colville, Rania Tarazi, Hassan Krayem, Mohammad Al-Batayneh, Nasrin Khan, Alexandra Fawzi, Xiaohui Gracia Chen and the Inclusive Growth Team under the overall guidance and coordination of Vito Intini, all from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This paper was finalized in Q1 2021 and reflects the situation up until that time.

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at undp.org or follow at [@UNDP](https://twitter.com/UNDP).

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or the UN Member States.

Copyright © [2021]

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval systems or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of UNDP.



Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Review of Rapid Response Facility proposals and repurposed funds	6
3. Status of SEIAs and SERPs	8
4. Summary of key findings and recommendations from SEIAs for the five pillars of the UN Framework by country grouping	10
5. Review of SERPs	22
6. Rapid Financing Facility proposals and SERPs – UNSEF Pillars and SDG links	40
7. Lessons learned moving forward	42
References	44
Annex 1: Summary of the status of SEIAs, UN SERPs and national SERPs	45
Annex 2: List of SEIAs by country	46
Annex 3: List of SERP global programmatic indicators	48



1. Introduction

The Arab region recorded its first COVID-19 case on the 29 January 2020 (in the United Arab Emirates [UAE]). One year on, by 29 January 2021, over 3.7 million cases and 64,169 fatalities had been reported.

The Arab States entered the pandemic with significant variations in health preparedness, human development, fiscal and governance capacity, and levels of economic development. Governments responded to the pandemic with immediate measures to support health care and to contain the spread of the virus, with government spending on health and emergency social protection varying relative to resources available.

The direct and indirect effects of the pandemic have had negative impacts on livelihoods and access to services (for instance, access to chronic health care treatment, maternity care, vaccinations and remote learning following school closures) especially for the poorest and most vulnerable. The pandemic has had particular impacts on informal sector workers, the poor, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of whom are not covered by or provided with adequate social protection. There have also been significant gendered impacts, with women experiencing increases in unpaid care work, loss of income and greater risk of gender-based violence.

The impacts were further compounded by the simultaneous fall in the global oil price, which had a direct effect on the governments and citizens of oil-exporting countries, and an indirect effect on the livelihoods of migrant workers and households dependent on remittances.

This report reviews UNDP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the Arab States. These are divided into three main categories: i) oil-exporting countries (OECs), ii) oil-importing middle-income countries (OIMICs), and iii) fragile and crisis countries (FCCs). Its main objectives are a) to provide insights into the socioeconomic impact assessments carried out under the leadership of or with support of UNDP and b) review the socio-economic response plans (SERPs) in terms of their alignment with the UN Socio-economic Framework (SEF) pillars, SDGs, gender, human rights, and UNDP's proposed areas of engagement "Beyond the Recovery". Rooted in the UN's five pillars of action (health, protecting people, economic recovery, macroeconomic management and social cohesion), the report provides an overview of UNDP's COVID-19 response Offer 1.0 (preparedness, response and recovery), a summary of the main findings from the UN socio-economic responses – socio-economic impact assessments (SEIAs) and SERPs – and an overview of UNDP's Offer 2.0 (social protection, governance, digital disruption and green recovery services). This analysis is based on a review of 34 socio-economic impact assessments carried out until January 2021 and 17 SERPs completed by January 2021, and wholly based on a desk review.



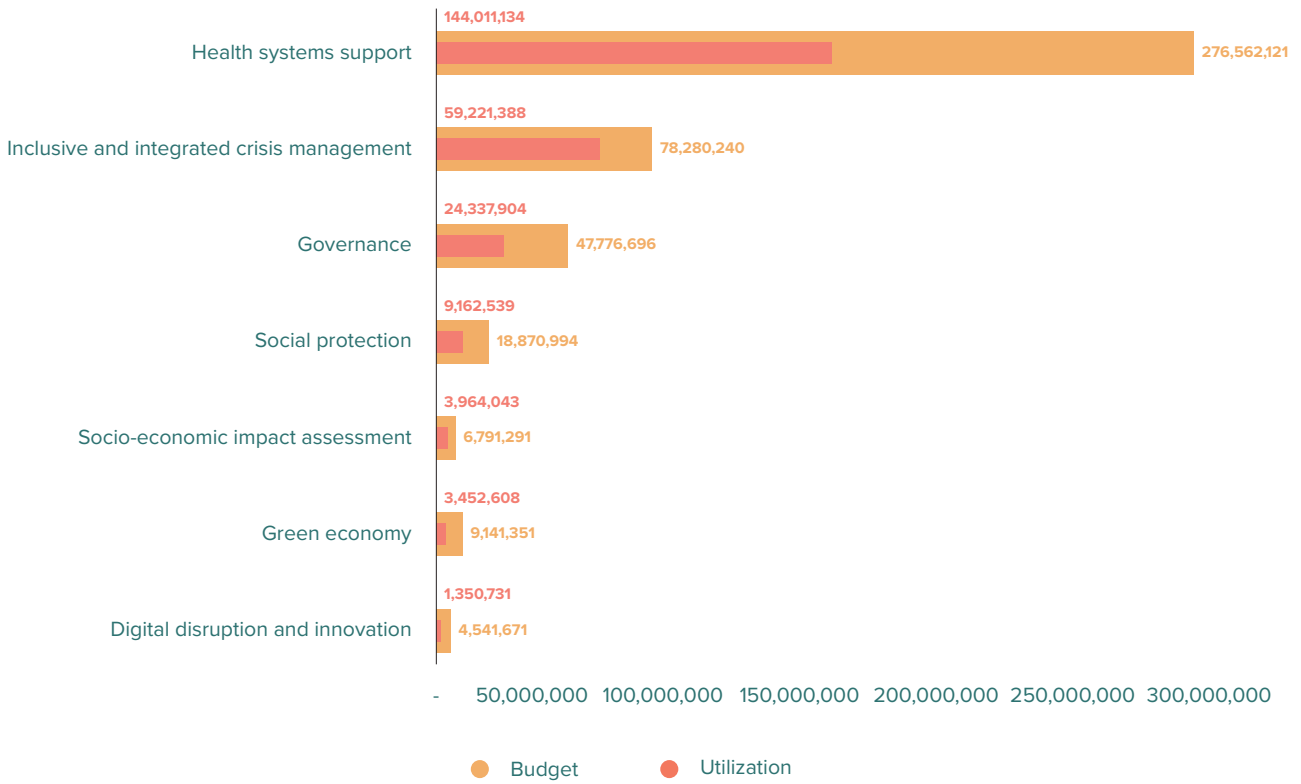
The direct and indirect effects of the pandemic have had negative impacts on livelihoods and access to services (for instance, access to chronic health care treatment, maternity care, vaccinations and remote learning following school closures) especially for the poorest and most vulnerable.



2. Review of Rapid Response Facility proposals and repurposed funds

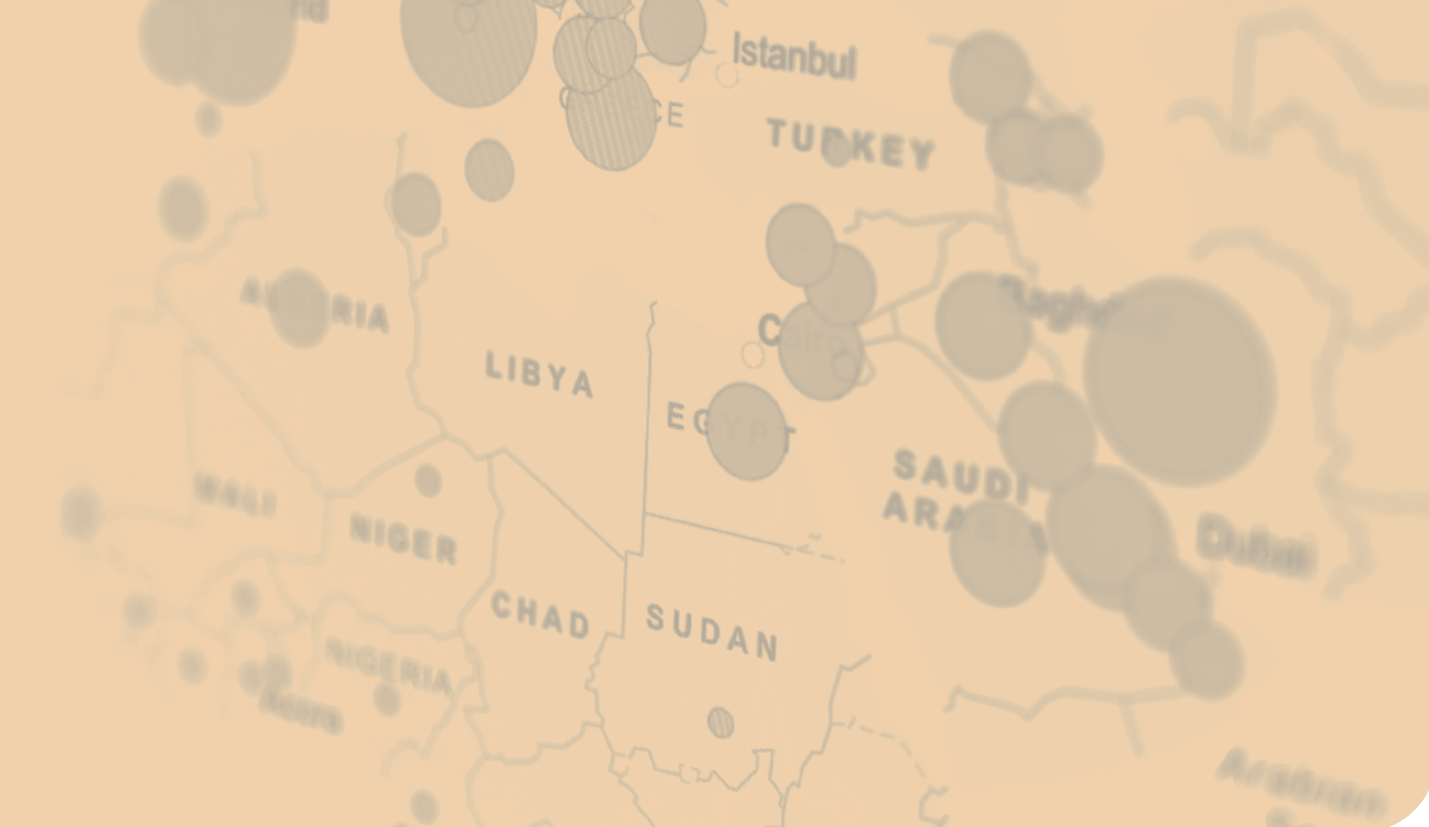
The first wave of UNDP's response to COVID-19 was enabled by repurposing existing funds to COVID-19 support, and providing access to emergency short-term funding (six months). The Rapid Response Facility (RRF) budget for seventeen country offices totaled \$442M (as at 12 July 2021) and included both repurposed and new funding. Activities focused primarily on three areas of response: health system support, inclusive crisis management and governance. Figure 1 shows the amounts budgeted and utilized for each of the three areas.

Figure 1. Utilization of budget for each area of response (updated on 12 July 2021 from UNDP COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard)



As indicated in Figure 1, utilization of the allocated budget for the 7 lines of support stands at \$245.5M (as at 12 July 2021).

This initial quick response was crucial in positioning UNDP as an important partner for the COVID-19 response, as well as the technical lead for UN country teams in developing their SERPs – a mandate explicitly given to UNDP by the Secretary-General.



3. Status of SEIAs and SERPs

From the beginning of the COVID-19 response, UNDP country offices have initiated a series of studies and assessments to understand the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and inform both national and UN's policy and programmatic response.

Of the 22 countries and territories that make up the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), 18¹ (including the UAE) have completed either a SEIA, a SERP or have produced related documents.² See Annex 1 for a full list of countries by SEIA and SERP status. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia's SERP is a 'capacity brief' developed in anticipation of a detailed SERP that is yet to be completed. Lebanon's SERP is primarily a road map to operationalize the findings of the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment and other assessments in response to the devastating explosion at the Port of Beirut.

All of the 17 countries and territories in which UNDP has a presence (including the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People – PAPP) **have completed assessments related to social and economic impacts (SEIAs)**, with some countries conducting more than one sectoral and thematic deep dive assessment – for instance, on employment/labour markets, micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), value chains, remittance flows, mental health, vulnerable households and social cohesion, as illustrated in Figure 2

- 1 Oman and Qatar did not participate. Mauritania and Comoros are under the Regional Bureau for Africa.
- 2 Somalia published a Country Preparedness and Response Plan, providing a six- to nine-month framework for the humanitarian, development and political workstreams of the UN to adapt existing programmes to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

(for a full list of completed SEIAs see Annex 2). A total of 34 assessments were completed between March 2020 and January 2021.³

In terms of methodology, the predominant approach in all country typologies for collecting data for the SEIA was a desk review. Seven countries conducted micro-

surveys to collect primary data. Four countries – Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia – used computable general equilibrium (CGE) macro-economic modelling to estimate the impact of the COVID-19 shock on various sectors.⁴ The assessments are predominantly national in scope, with a few assessments at meso (sectoral) level (e.g. Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, Yemen) and fewer still at micro level.

Figure 2. Number of SEIAs conducted and assessments completed by country typology (as at January 2021)



Figure 3. Number of SEIAs completed by type of assessment (as at January 2021)

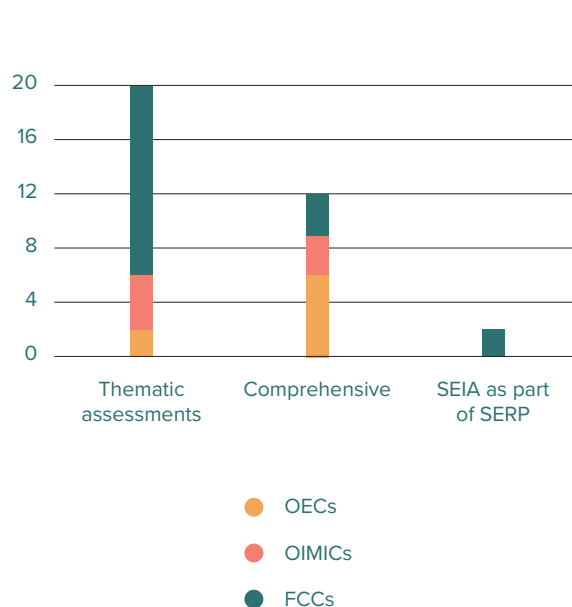
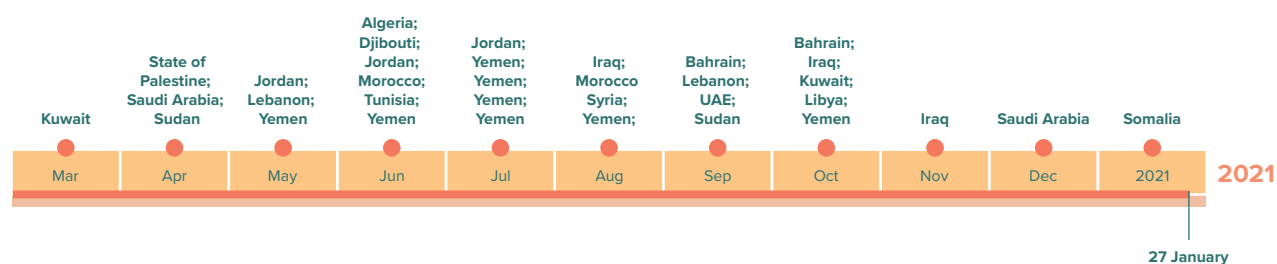


Figure 4. Timeline for completion of SEIAs



Note: Some countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, the UAE and Yemen conducted multiple sector assessments (for full list see Annex 2).

³ The approach adopted by countries as to what constitutes an SEIA varies. For example, the approach to SEIA in Bahrain is a dynamic set of surveys and focus groups instead of one report with a title. The analyses started in June 2020 and are still ongoing. The scope is adjusted as the challenge evolves. For more see: https://www.bh.undp.org/content/bahrain/en/home/presscenter/articles/2021/COVID19_Socio_Economic_Impact_Assessment_in_Bahrain.html.

⁴ The UN country team in Egypt prepared an SEIA and used CGE modelling to aid discussions with the Government, which has not yet been published.



4. Summary of key findings and recommendations from SEIAs for the five pillars of the UN Framework by country grouping

Key findings

The overall picture emanating from the SEIAs is that the shock caused by COVID-19 – including the government response to contain and mitigate its effects – combined with the fall in oil prices in 2020, are having significant effects on government budgets, health systems, access to services, enterprises and livelihoods, with a particular impact on vulnerable groups (migrants, IDPs, refugees, informal workers, people with disabilities) and with significant gender implications.

Economic growth across all the Arab States was negative in 2020 (-4.2 percent), with the notable exception of Egypt (which registered a growth of 3.6 percent), with contractions ranging from -59.7 percent (Libya) to -1 percent (Djibouti) (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2021). Fiscal pressure is increasing as government revenue falls due to lower oil prices and reduced economic activity. At the same time, greater government expenditure is needed to strengthen health systems, expand social protection to cover the most vulnerable, support businesses' liquidity (and their employees), and stimulate economies. Together, this is expected to have a significant effect on fiscal deficits (for example, CGE modelling indicates that Algeria will experience a fiscal deficit of between

6.0 percent and 9.1 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); and Morocco more than 7.4 percent).

The crisis has had a direct impact on economic sectors such as hospitality (hotels and restaurants), tourism, construction and transport, in which many of the jobs are filled by casual workers. Smaller companies also tend to be more affected. All the enterprises that took part in a business survey in Jordan reported cash flow challenges, and reductions in demand and supply; for 53 percent of businesses, direct financial assistance was seen as the most urgent form of support. Similar challenges were observed in other countries for which survey data is available. In Egypt, 45.4 percent of enterprises reported experiencing shortages of inputs and a similar proportion reported an inability to fulfil contractual obligations. In one survey in Somalia, over 90 percent of respondents reported cashflow challenges. A similar proportion of respondents delayed payments to suppliers, landlords and tax authorities as a result of cashflow difficulties. In another study in Somalia, 70 percent reported disruptions to the supply of inputs, raw materials or finished goods for resale. In Iraq, over 95 percent of respondents (N=2017) reported a decline in turnover.

Many low-income service sector workers risk destitution following the loss of their daily wage/income, particularly those from vulnerable segments of society such as informal workers, migrants and refugees. In many cases, women are overrepresented in the jobs most impacted by the crisis. For instance, in Algeria, 62 percent of working women work in the informal sector. In Lebanon, which hosts the highest share of refugees per capita in the world,⁵ the COVID-19 crisis had a particular impact on Syrian workers: 60 percent of the Syrian refugees were permanently laid off compared with 39 percent of Lebanese workers. In Iraq, approximately 68 percent of the labour force is engaged in informal activities. In Jordan, a recent report indicates that the informal sector contributes about 25 percent of GDP and employs around 46 percent of the total workforce (Al-Quds Center for Political Studies, 2019).

This will increase multidimensional poverty. The loss of income and reduced access to primary health services and education could have significant protracted effects. Estimates from survey data in Syria show reductions of 50 percent and 90 percent in access to health care and education respectively. Health care services for children, such as immunization and malnutrition prevention, have seen a reduction of almost 50 percent in some cases. In Iraq, income poverty is expected to increase by 11.7

percentage points – or by over 50 percent – taking the poverty rate up from 20 percent in 2017-2018 to just over 31 percent in 2020.

The pandemic has exacerbated underlying inequalities prevalent before the onset of the pandemic, with the economic, social and health impacts of the pandemic disproportionately borne by poorer, more vulnerable segments of society across the region. These inequalities impact on efforts to reduce infections (crowded housing, inability to work remotely, access to good hygiene), the severity of the virus (age, underlying health conditions, access to treatment), and access to coping strategies (savings and social protection). In the absence of government responses to address and mitigate these inequalities, the pandemic is likely to increase intergenerational levels of poverty.

As a result, while the impacts have been felt across the region, the extent and type of impacts differ according to the underlying economic, institutional and political characteristics of countries. The next section presents the impacts by country classification: OECs,⁶ OIMICs,⁷ and FCCs.⁸

Not all of the impact assessments are aligned with the pillars of the UN Socio-Economic Framework for the Response to COVID-19 in Libya (UNSEF). This is mainly due to the thematic nature of most of the assessments. They mostly focus on a single sector (e.g. impact on MSMEs, finance, social cohesion) and do not fall neatly under the pillars indicated in UNSEF. The summary of the level of alignment between SEIA focus areas and UNSEF pillars is indicated in Table 1.

⁵ The country's 1.5 million Syrian refugees are equivalent to a quarter of the Lebanese population.

⁶ Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

⁷ Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia.

⁸ Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, PAPP, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Table 1. Alignment of SEIAs with the five pillars of the UNSEF

Country typology	Level of alignment	Health First	Protecting People	Economic response and recovery	Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation	Social cohesion and community resilience
OEC	None	2	2	2	2	2
	Partial	1	1	1	1	1
	Full	2	2	2	2	2
OIMIC	None	4	4	3	4	4
	Partial					
	Full	1	1	2	1	1
FCC	None	4	3	3	3	3
	Partial	1	1			1
	Full	2	3	4	4	3
Total	None	10	9	8	9	9
	Partial	2	2	1	1	2
	Full	5	6	8	7	6

Note: Figures refer to the number of countries.

4.1.1 OECs

The first case of COVID-19 in the Arab States region was reported in the UAE on 29 January 2020. OECs entered the pandemic with some of the highest levels of human development in the region, as well as the highest levels of health infrastructure and human resources for health (HRH – physicians, nurses, midwives, etc.). Nonetheless, the economies have been significantly affected by the fall in oil prices in 2020. This, combined with containment measures, has adversely impacted the livelihoods and welfare of migrant workers – the Gulf Cooperation Council countries host some of the world’s largest numbers of migrant workers per head of population (e.g. 88 percent in the UAE, 76 percent in Qatar and 74 percent in Kuwait) (World Bank, 2021). Initial reported COVID-19 cases were overrepresented among foreign workers – for instance, migrant communities accounted for 73 percent of all confirmed cases in Saudi Arabia and 64 percent of recorded cases in Oman; in Kuwait, Indian nationals alone accounted for 57 percent of total cases. The higher exposure of migrants to the virus at the onset of the pandemic reveals the multifaceted precarity of most migrants in the region. Female migrants, especially domestic workers, were particularly vulnerable.

The list below provides a summary of the main impacts of the pandemic on OECs across the five pillars of the UNSEF:

- **Health First:** Adverse impact on access to health services in general (not only COVID-19 related). High levels of infection among migrant/expatriate workers (particularly women) due to the nature of their work and their crowded living conditions.
- **Protecting People:** Exacerbation of vulnerabilities of at-risk groups, including low-income and female-headed households, children and adults with disabilities, unemployed persons and vulnerable migrant workers; concerns for occupational safety and increased incidence of mental health problems such as depression (particularly among women).
- **Economic response and recovery.** Increase in the level of unemployment (job losses). Disruptions to supply chains resulting in the closure or suspension of activities of many enterprises, especially MSMEs. Disproportionate burden of care on women and girls, jeopardizing their access to education and work opportunities.

- **Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation:** Slowdown in economic growth; increased fiscal deficit due to decline in oil revenue and increased public debt; contraction of the economy; decline in private and government consumption, and gross capital formation.
 - **Social cohesion and community resilience:** Considerable strains on social cohesion, magnifying existing tensions and fault lines while, at the same time, creating new ones, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations living in densely populated informal urban areas. Particular concerns over reports of discrimination, stigma and xenophobia linking migrants and migration to the spread of the virus.
- Serious impact on the operation and survival of businesses/enterprises (including MSMEs).
- **Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation:** Significant impact on economic growth, debt, balance-of-payments and fiscal deficits. In some countries, CGE modelling identifies economic contraction of between 2.5 percent and 5.8 percent (Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia).
 - **Social cohesion and community resilience:** High impact on vulnerable groups, including refugees and migrants. There is a need to support focused and transparent coordination and inclusion of populations.

4.1.2 OIMICs

The first case of COVID-19 in OIMICs was reported in Egypt on 14 February 2020. Relative to OECs, OIMICs entered the pandemic with lower levels of health preparedness and health infrastructure, and lower levels of HRH. OIMICs are heavily reliant on service industries (including tourism) and remittances as important sources of foreign exchange receipts, both of which have been impacted by the pandemic. The relative share of informal employment is also high in OIMICs, ranging from 45 percent in Jordan to 80 percent in Morocco. Overall, countries in this category have fewer resources, poorer infrastructure and higher rates of underemployment compared with OECs. Measures to contain the virus, such as restrictions on movement, have impacted livelihoods and increased poverty among low-wage earners, informal workers, migrants and refugees.

The list below provides a summary of the main impacts of the pandemic on OIMICs across the five pillars of the UN Framework:

- **Health First:** Priority given to COVID-19 has adversely affected access to regular and primary health care, increasing the risk of maternal, neonatal and infant mortality, reducing the rates of infant vaccinations, and increasing the risk of the resurgence of certain childhood illnesses.
- **Protecting People:** Income Poverty and multidimensional poverty are likely to increase. Informal sector workers, migrants/IDPs/refugees, women and children most affected by loss of income and access to services are likely to suffer more.
- **Economic response and recovery:** The informal sector, tourism, construction, transport and microenterprises are particularly vulnerable.

4.1.3 FCCs

The first case of COVID-19 in FCCs was reported in Lebanon on 21 February 2020 (the last country in the Arab States to report its first case was also in this country grouping: Yemen, on 10 April 2020). The impact of the pandemic was more pronounced in FCCs, with many countries experiencing the crisis on top of other crises (conflicts, financial crises, political upheavals, health emergencies, pest infestations, natural disasters, etc.). In addition, the capacity of these countries to respond is significantly limited. Countries in this grouping generally have very weak health systems and limited HRH – for example, the availability of medical doctors per 10,000 population ranges between 0.2 (Somalia) and 22.7 (Lebanon), compared with 25.8 in Kuwait and 23.4 in Jordan.

The impacts of the pandemic will hit FCCs the hardest due to their poor and volatile economic performance over recent years and dependence on external humanitarian support. Moreover, while these countries require the most investment, they have the scarcest levels of financial resources. Countries in this group have adopted a range of different policy measures, depending on their capacity: on the one hand, Sudan, with the help of the donor community, has adopted a sizeable fiscal stimulus package, while other countries (such as Yemen) have put in place very limited measures, if any at all.

Remittances, a lifeline for many households across FCCs, were expected to fall, putting additional strains on families. Low levels of technological adoption and Internet connectivity have limited alternative livelihood and learning opportunities. The closure of schools has left many children without access to online platforms.

The list below provides a summary of the main impacts of the pandemic on FCCs across the five pillars of the UNSEF:

- **Health First:** The capacity to respond to the pandemic is significantly compromised by the destruction of infrastructure, years of under investment in equipment and medicine, and a lack of health workers. This requires direct support for the refurbishment of health facilities, access to equipment and medical supplies, and COVID-19 testing capacity.
- **Protecting People:** Key populations like migrants and informal sector workers fall outside of State-sponsored social protection schemes. A significant proportion of students do not have access to distance learning. Increased domestic work burden and care-giving responsibilities for women and girls.
- **Economic response and recovery:** Many businesses will fail if the disruption of normal business operations continues. Vulnerable groups in particular have experienced hardship – e.g., the loss of income for migrants and refugees, compounded by the lack of social protection, youth unemployment and an increase in gender-based violence (GBV). Households receiving income from the public sector will be much less affected.
- **Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation:** GDP is falling, unemployment is increasing, government budgets are tightening and remittances are expected to fall.
- **Social cohesion and community resilience:** Exacerbation of existing and sometimes deeply rooted political, economic, social and security challenges. Some geographic regions voicing dissatisfaction over the ‘marginalization’ regarding the government response.

4.2 SEIA recommendations

While SEIAs have produced a wide range of policy recommendations, there are a number that are common across country SEIAs; these include:

- a. Ensure free and universal access to health care, including for refugees and migrants, prioritizing the most vulnerable for prevention and treatment. Scale up awareness campaigns. Where needed,

provide rapid self-testing for COVID-19, and support expanded laboratory testing and investment in medical infrastructure and supplies, with a focus on the provision and maintenance of essential health services. In addition, improve the management of medical waste and enhance private sector engagement in the COVID-19 response.

- b. Review policies and increase fiscal space to support expansion of social protection to ensure key populations such as migrants and informal sector workers do not fall outside of State-sponsored social protection schemes. Explore innovative finance instruments such as social, diaspora and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) bonds.
- c. Prioritize business support for those most in need through the development of clear and transparent approaches. This includes grants, interest free loans, tax holidays, supporting the cost of social insurance for employers, and subsidizing wages to enable employers to maintain their workforce. Other measures include providing technical support to help businesses develop contingency plans and access alternative supply chains and markets (including online); supporting the transfer of personnel from the most vulnerable sectors to those that are less affected; and expanding microfinance opportunities and improving access to digital banking and fintech services.
- d. Governments across the region will require technical support and capacity development to support economic diversification, public financial reform, debt management, progressive taxation policies, data-collection and fiscal analysis. Countercyclical stimulus spending can be channelled to reduce digital divides, improve infrastructure (including for renewables), and ensure cash-for-work/labour opportunities for vulnerable groups. Bonds such as SDG, social, green and diaspora bonds can help to mobilize revenue for projects.
- e. Promote inclusive social dialogue, advocacy and political engagement to reduce social tensions and address the ‘infodemic’⁹ propagated by the multiple channels of information. Mainstream key groups into decision-making and ensure the inclusive participation of women, ethnic and religious minorities, and people with specific needs. Provide amnesty for migrants overstaying their visas and

⁹ An infodemic is an overabundance of information, both online and offline. It includes deliberate attempts to disseminate misinformation to undermine the public health response and advance alternative agendas.

a moratorium on refugee evictions by landlords or municipalities.

- f. Prioritize the reopening of schools and address barriers to remote learning to prevent a generation of children missing out on education.¹⁰
- g. Incorporate digital technologies into health care, social protection, governance and business management to increase efficiencies and access to these services, and create new opportunities.

4.3 SEIAs and human rights-based approaches

In April 2020, the United Nations issued the 'UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19' (UN-SERF), followed by the 'Checklist for a Human Rights-Based Approach to Socio-Economic Country Responses to COVID-19' ('the checklist'). These tools are designed to ensure that those most at risk of being left behind are protected and included in the response to the COVID-19 crisis. Most of the SEIAs analysed the economic impact of COVID-19 on one or more vulnerable groups, although none of these were comprehensive and were generally narrower in scope than suggested in the checklist (see Figure 5).

However, examples of good practice are emerging; these include:

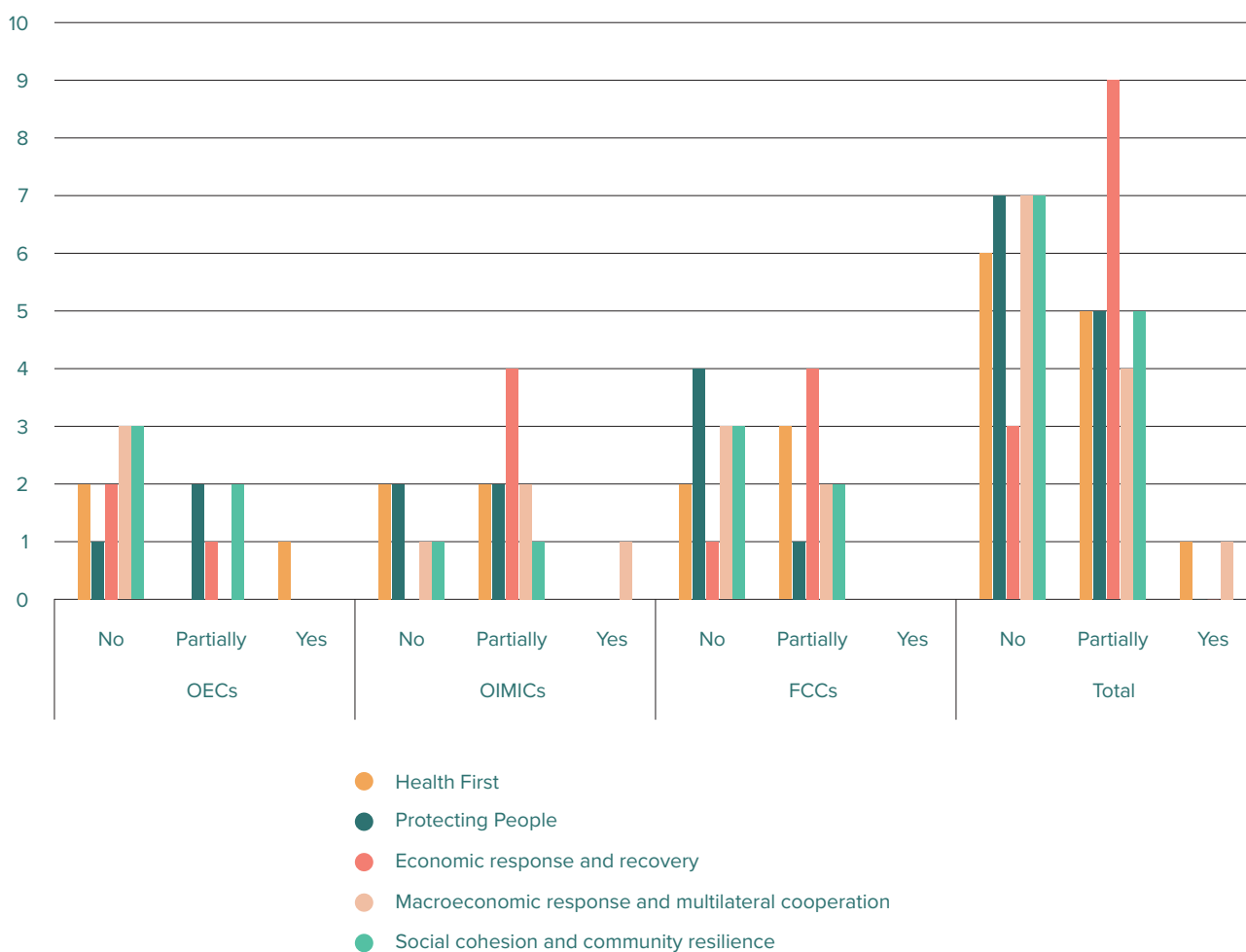
- UNDP Iraq (*Impact of COVID-19 and Social Cohesion*) – This report has a strong focus on the differential impacts of COVID-19. It explicitly considers broader issues of governance and human rights.
- Sudan (*Socio-Economic Impact Assessment*) – Rather than taking a national-level approach, this report notes the regional disparities in access to resources such as water, health and education, and the greater impact on poorer households. It also

looks specifically at vulnerable populations such as nomadic people.

- Jordan (*COVID-19 Impact on Micro and Small Enterprises*) – Given that proportionately more women, refugees and poorer people are employed by micro-enterprises and home-based businesses, the report was well-positioned to address some aspects of the disparities in the economic impact of COVID-19. It went further than most other reports, analyzing the effectiveness of the Government's financial support measures in assisting these more vulnerable groups.
- Tunisia (*Impact Economique du COVID-19 en Tunisie*) – Similar to the Jordan report above, this report looks particularly at the impacts on the most vulnerable and examines their prevalence in different industries. It also recognizes that refugees and irregular migrants have specific needs and challenges.
- Saudi Arabia (*Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and how to Build Back Better*) – This report emphasizes that pandemic response and all social protection and basic service policies "must be grounded in human rights, humanitarianism, refugee law, and focused on the equity of all people". It explicitly refers to the need to leave no one behind and includes a wide range of vulnerable groups such as children in detention, children in rural areas, migrants and people on the move, as well as women.
- Somalia (*Somalia Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SEIA of COVID-19*) – The report emphasizes the need for far greater attention to the role that women play in political, public and business life. The report goes beyond the immediate and proximate links between gender and COVID-19 to note that the broader social status of women in all aspects of life makes them (and children) more vulnerable to exogenous shocks.

¹⁰ in Libya, 81 percent of children do not have access to online schooling, in Somalia only 12 percent of students have access to remote learning channels (radio, TV, Internet) and in Jordan almost half of the country's 4 million students struggled to follow online educational modules due to the lack of access to the Internet and/or computers.

Figure 5. The extent to which SEIAs applied a human rights-based approach



Lessons and recommendations

While many SEIAs have incorporated good practices, they have, to a large extent, failed to systematically integrate a human rights-based approach. This would involve:

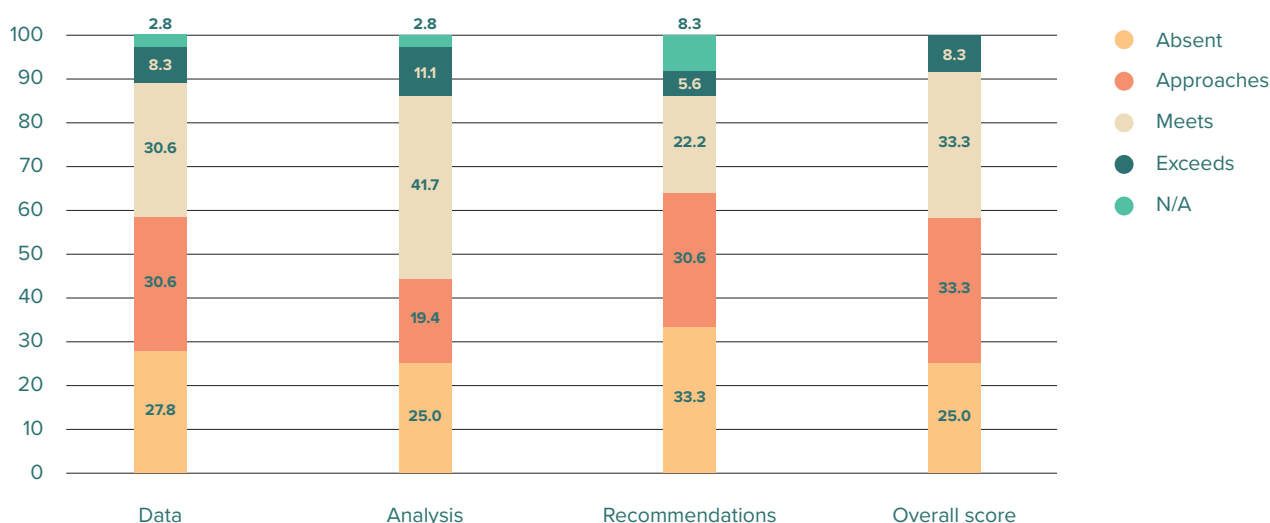
- i. Incorporating the human rights-based approach into the impact assessment itself by encouraging the participation of rights-holders, duty-bearers and other human rights stakeholders in the assessment process. Meaningful participation in the impact assessment is as important as the outcomes, and rights-holders should play an active role in the impact assessment process.
- ii. Paying greater attention to equality and non-discrimination, with comprehensive mapping of at-risk groups experiencing the highest levels of socioeconomic marginalization and/or discrimination. While many SEIAs did, to some extent, disaggregate data – for instance, across age and gender – there was little analysis of the differential impacts and the reasons for them; there was limited focus on the effects of, for example, health security/lockdown measures (and how these were implemented) or uneven access to health and WASH facilities.
- iii. Paying particular attention to accountability, recognizing the entitlements of rights-holders and the responsibilities of duty-bearers for upholding these rights.

4.4 Gender analysis in SEIAs

Based on the preliminary assessments of the completed SEIA documents, almost 42 percent of the studies had a sufficient level of gender responsiveness (meets or

exceeds);¹¹ however, this drops to about 30 percent for recommendations. Figure 6 summarizes the findings.

Figure 6. Findings from gender analysis of SEIAs*



*The analysis is based on criteria used by the global gender team to assess all published SEIAs by UNDP. 'approaches' indicates at least one gender-responsive measure, 'meets' indicates the presence of several gender-responsive measures and 'exceeds' indicates that most of the measures are gender-responsive.

Good practices are emerging, including:

- *The assessment on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Bahrain: Analysis of Survey Data from Bahrain and comparative experiences.* This assessment exceeds expectations with regards to gender data and analysis. In addition to including a section dedicated to gender and age disaggregation in both Bahraini and non-Bahraini (Bangladeshi) communities, the assessment provides data on care providers and receivers, categorizing men and women across different age groups by their care burden. Unfortunately, no recommendations were provided and the results did not make it through to the SERP.
- *Lebanon's Rapid Socio-Economic Impact Assessment.* This looks at the socio-economic impact across the five pillars of the socio-economic response, and includes sex-disaggregated data in most sections and varying degrees of gender analysis for most pillars. Furthermore, issues relating to SGBV, migrant domestic workers and the

LGBTQ+ community are included. However, gender was not included in the macroeconomic pillar.

Lessons and recommendations

- The methodologies of some studies included interviews with both men and women and the sample was disaggregated by sex; however, the analysis did not include sex-disaggregated data nor gender analysis, which is a missed opportunity. These studies could potentially be revisited (e.g. 'COVID-19 impact on households in Jordan' and the 'COVID-19 digital SEIA results' for Yemen, as well as some of the sub-studies – for instance, on solar energy and beekeeping).
- Even where there is better gender analysis, this is not always reflected in the recommendations.
- Links between the SEIAs and the SERPs are not always obvious. In some cases, they are clearly highlighted – e.g. Egypt's use of the

¹¹ Disclaimer: The scoring was based on a preliminary assessment of the SEIA studies. There was not always an opportunity to look at methodologies when these were provided in a separate document. Country contexts differ in terms of acceptance or resistance to gender issues, especially if governments are involved; this is not taken into account in the scoring.

‘leave no one behind’ study to influence SERP recommendations – but this is the exception rather than the norm. A sense that SEIAs are contributing to wider programme response might help to focus recommendations.

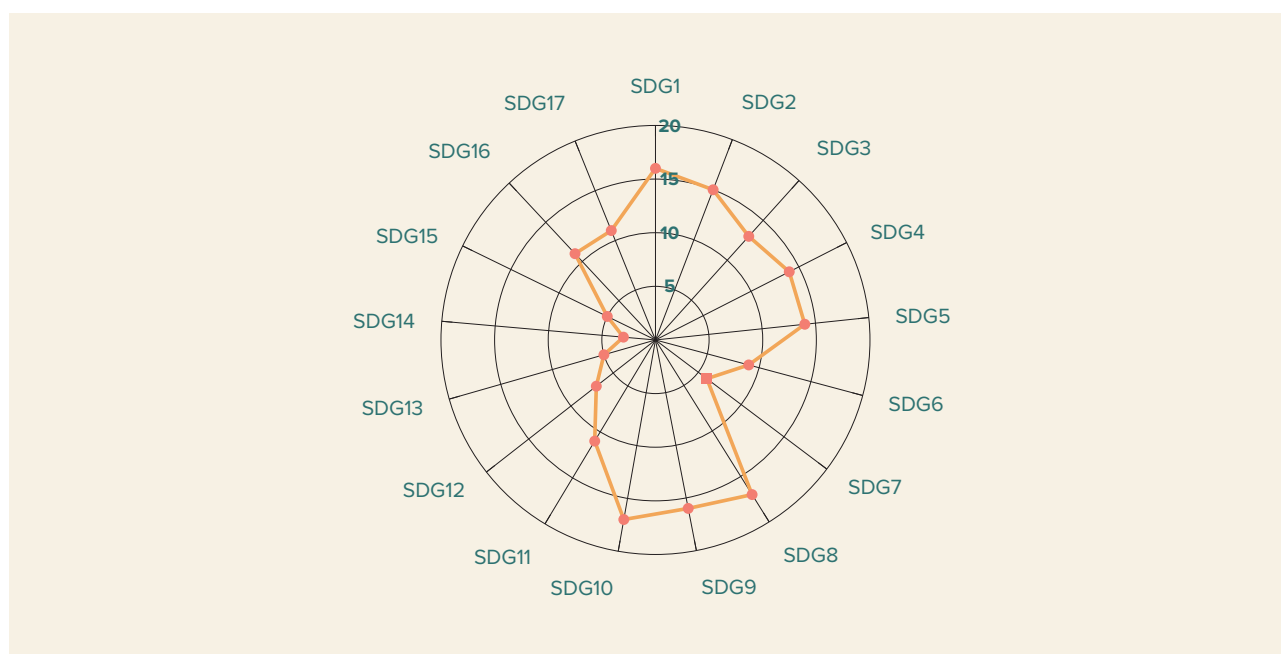
4.5 Links between SEIAs and SDGs

The overall picture that emerges from the review of SEIAs is that the shock caused by COVID-19 has a direct impact

on the attainment of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. Given the nature of the SEIAs, it is not surprising that they tend to address the SDGs anchored in the social and economic, governance and partnership pillars.

With that caveat in mind, COVID-19 appears to have had the greatest impact on the SDGs that relate to ‘prosperity’.¹² The pandemic had an impact on SDGs 8 and 10 in all countries; SDG 9, with the exception of Algeria, was mentioned by all countries, particularly targets 1 and 2 (see Figure 7 below and Table 2).

Figure 7. Number of SEIAs addressing each SDG



No poverty (SDG 1) is also one of the most cited objectives since all the countries, with the exception of Kuwait, mentioned the loss of income, the increasing difficulty in accessing basic services, food shortages and, more generally, an increase in vulnerability due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Table 2).

A closer look at the SDG targets addressed by the SEIAs reveals the following:

- **SDG 1:** Lebanon stated that COVID-19 had an impact on all five targets under this goal. Even if not explicitly mentioned in the reports, the pandemic has had an impact on all the SDG 1 targets in Iraq and Syria. The impacts on target 1.2 are also mentioned by most countries.

- **SDG 2:** All countries and territories, with the exception of PAPP and Kuwait, reported impacts on this goal. Of the five SDG 2 targets, Sudan reported impacts on four of them. Target 2.1 is directly or indirectly impacted in all countries that prioritize SDG 2 (which is related to the general impact of COVID on SDG 1).
- **SDG 3:** The impacts on SDG 3 were common across most of the reports, with the exception of those from Djibouti, Tunisia, Kuwait and PAPP. Most countries that made mention of SDG 3 highlighted the impact of the pandemic on targets 3.4 and 3.8 in particular.

¹² The 2030 Agenda is usually grouped into five ‘P’s: People - SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; Prosperity - SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; Planet - SDGs 6, 12, 13, 14, 15; Peace - SDG 16; and Partnerships - SDG 17.

- **SDGs 4 and 5:** These are addressed in all the SEIAs except for those from Djibouti, Tunisia and PAPP. The pandemic and the measures put in place to contain it have highlighted the digital divide that exists among students. As women make up the largest share of informal workers in the region, they have been particularly affected by the pandemic; their economic plight has been compounded by the increase in GBV during lockdown. Looking more closely at the targets, targets 4.5 and 5.2 are mentioned by most of the countries. Frequently girls are forgotten or ignored when it comes to education and end up staying at home. With containment measures, girls are even more likely to take on domestic roles and more prone than normal to violence.
- **SDG 6:** Only 9 of the 17 countries reviewed mentioned an impact on SDG 6, and the majority identified target 6.2 as the most affected by the pandemic.
- **SDGs 8 and 10:** As a result of job losses and slower economic growth, targets 8.1 and 8.5, as well as targets 10.1 and 10.3, have been particularly affected.
- **SDG 11:** Of the 17 countries reviewed, 11 mentioned an impact on SDG 11, with target 11.1 directly or indirectly cited by 10 of the 11 countries (the UAE being the exception), especially in relation to COVID-19's impact on vulnerable groups.
- **SDG 12:** This goal is not one of the main focuses of SEIAs, as it was only addressed by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen, which predominantly reported the impact of COVID-19 on targets 12.4 and 12.5.
- **SDGs 16 and 17:** Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, PAPP and Tunisia did not report any impacts on SDG 16. Of the countries that did, most reported impacts on target 16.1. More than half of the countries reviewed mentioned the impacts of the pandemic on SDG 17. Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Tunisia made no direct or indirect reference to this goal. Many countries appeared to report an impact on target 17.1, as well as on target 17.13. Somalia, unlike other countries, stated that the pandemic is likely to have a positive impact on SDG 17.¹³ Indeed, it was reported that COVID-19 has helped to drive the development of strong partnerships between government, the private sector and non-government actors.

The adverse impacts on climate action (SDG 13) and clean and affordable energy (SDG 7) were only reported, directly or indirectly, by Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Yemen. Jordan made no mention of SDG 13 but reported the challenges in access to heating, which is indirectly linked to SDG 7. Somalia's SEIA suggested that COVID-19 is likely to have a positive impact on SDG 13 as result of reductions in industrial activity and pollution. Of the 17 SEIAs that were reviewed, only Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, the UAE and Yemen reported the impacts on SDG 15; and only Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the UAE mentioned SDG 14.

¹³ None of the national surveys conducted in Somalia related exclusively to a particular SDG or target.

Table 2. SEIA links with SDGs

Countries	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
<i>Algeria</i>	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	X					X	
<i>Bahrain</i>	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X							
<i>Djibouti</i>	X	X						X	X	X							
<i>Egypt</i>	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X					
<i>Iraq</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Jordan</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
<i>Kuwait</i>				X	X			X	X	X						X	X
<i>Lebanon</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Morocco</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
<i>PAPP</i>	X							X	X	X							X
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Somalia</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
<i>Sudan</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X				X	X
<i>Syria</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X					X	X
<i>Tunisia</i>	X	X						X	X	X							
<i>UAE</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
<i>Yemen</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X





5. Review of SERPs

5.1 Common areas of intervention

Across the Arab States, UNDP has worked closely with the UN system to produce 17 SERPs at country level.¹⁴ These SERPs operationalize and cost¹⁵ the UN's socio-economic COVID-19 response and recovery initiatives. For two countries, Lebanon and Sudan, the response plans are still in draft. Saudi Arabia published a 'capacity brief' in advance of a more detailed SERP in the pipeline. The majority of the SERPs were completed in July and August – see Annex 1 for the status of SERPs in the region.

Despite countries tailoring their UN country team SERPs to their own specific needs and capacity to respond, there are certain areas that are common across all countries. These include support to MSMEs, strengthening social protection systems, strengthening the capacity of the health sector, and ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The most common support and recovery actions in SERPs are to:

- Provide social and economic support for people in precarious situations
- Support the protection of jobs, MSMEs and informal sector workers
- Provide material and technical support to strengthen institutional capacity

¹⁴ The only country yet to publish its SERP is Sudan.

¹⁵ Not all SERPs indicate the cost of implementation.

- Support local awareness-raising campaigns through community media, civil society and individual/group volunteers to reach vulnerable populations with information about COVID-19 and address misinformation
- Support women and youth empowerment.

The following sections summarize the major areas of intervention identified in the SERPs by country typology.

5.1.1 OECs

All of the OEC countries have published SERPs. Saudi Arabia published a 'capacity brief' while the United Nations in Saudi Arabia conducted a detailed SEIA, which was completed in November 2020. The finalized SEIA will inform a comprehensive UN country team SERP. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia follow the five UN pillars; Kuwait partly follows them; and the UAE SEIA follows the UN Socio-Economic Framework (SEF) pillars, but the SERP does not. Two of the five SERPs are costed at a total of \$66.29 million (Algeria and Kuwait). For Kuwait, the budget is limited to the first six months of the implementation of the Response Plan. Two countries have adopted a clear Building Forward Better approach, two only partially, and one country did not provide any data on this.

The most common areas of intervention identified in the SERPs include:

- Adopting mitigation measures to prevent health care system collapse; minimizing virus transmission; improving coordination and adopting a whole-of-government approach among the various national stakeholders; providing health sector technical and institutional capacity-building and training; and deploying health care specialists
- Strengthening protection of vulnerable groups
- Enhancing protection for migrant/expatriate workers; capacity development; dissemination of appropriate information; knowledge management (production of policy notes); childhood development and child protection systems, including health, education, social protective services; multidimensional needs of migrant/expatriate workers; situational analysis for education
- Expanding education and continuous learning
- Expanding social protection and basic services

- Protecting jobs; supporting informal sector workers; protecting employment and income of women and disadvantaged groups; developing and scaling up digital remittance channels; Public Private Partnerships; protecting migrant workers' rights
- Providing support to the private sector, especially entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs); providing employability training and psychological counselling
- Building the capacity of institutions and business associations
- Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems
- Supporting youth and women's economic empowerment for social cohesion and improved societal well-being

5.1.2 OIMICs

All five OIMIC countries have published a UN country team SERP. Two of the published SERPs follow the five UNSEF pillars and the remaining countries applied their own approaches while trying to link them with the UNSEF pillars. All SERPs are costed, with the UN response plan estimated at a total of \$799 million. Two countries align with the 'Building Forward Better' approach.

The main areas of focus across the country grouping include:

- Investing in continuity of basic services, such as maintaining essential health, education and public services
- Strengthening social protection systems – 'adapt, extend and scale up'
- Enhancing the focus on vulnerable groups – ensuring people with disabilities, informal sector employees, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have access to public and social services
- Reducing poverty, especially multidimensional poverty
- Providing integrated policy advice (based on global best practices) and technical assistance to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on the labour market, supporting MSMEs and other high-risk sectors, and enhancing the employability and skills of young men and women

- Supporting institutional capacity-building
- Promoting the application of digital technologies
- Supporting youth and women's socioeconomic empowerment
- Expanding livelihood options for vulnerable groups and MSMEs.
- Strengthening social cohesion among communities and enhancing access to government services
- Rehabilitating medical facilities and supplying equipment and medication
- Providing support to SMEs, entrepreneurship, cash-for-work (for the most vulnerable/front-line workers) and agriculture/farmers

5.1.3 FCCs

Seven out of the eight FCC countries have published UN country team SERPs. Sudan is the only country that is yet to finalize its SERP. Five of the seven completed SERPs are aligned with the five pillars of the UNSEF. Six SERPs have been costed, with UN country team Response Plans totalling \$5.84 billion, of which UNDP's total is estimated at \$204 million.¹⁶ Two of the SERPs have a clear Building Forward Better approach, four have partially adopted this approach, and one shows no evidence of this.

Common areas of intervention identified in the SERPs include:

- Supporting essential health care systems (medical infrastructure, payment to front-line staff, medical equipment, medical waste)
- Supporting the most vulnerable populations
- Supporting livelihoods and resilience

- Supporting government service delivery (e.g., digital platforms), increasing awareness of COVID-19 (via journalist training), and facilitating communication between communities, and between communities and government (to inform response and reduce tensions)

As seen earlier (5.1.1–5.1.3), irrespective of country typologies, there are areas of interventions that are common across all countries. These include support to MSMEs, strengthening social protection systems and strengthening the capacity of the health sectors.

5.2 Alignment of SERP pillars with UNSEF Pillars

Similar to the SEIA findings, most countries have aligned their SERPs with the five UNSEF pillars and budgeted accordingly but, in some cases, UN country teams have adopted their own groupings/pillars and/or did not follow the UNSEF structure. Table 3 summarizes the extent to which the UN country team SERPs are aligned with the UNSEF pillars.

Table 3. Alignment of SERPs with the UNSEF pillars by country category

Country typology	Are they aligned?	Number of countries				
		Health First	Protecting People	Economic response and recovery	Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation	Social cohesion and community resilience
FCC	Yes	4	4	4	4	4
	Partially					
	No	2	2	2	2	2
OEC	Yes	2	2	2	2	3
	Partially	2	1			
	No	1	2	3	3	2
OIMIC	Yes	3	2	2	2	2
	Partially		1	1	1	1
	No	2	2	2	2	2

¹⁶ Not all SERP budgets have disaggregated activities by agency.

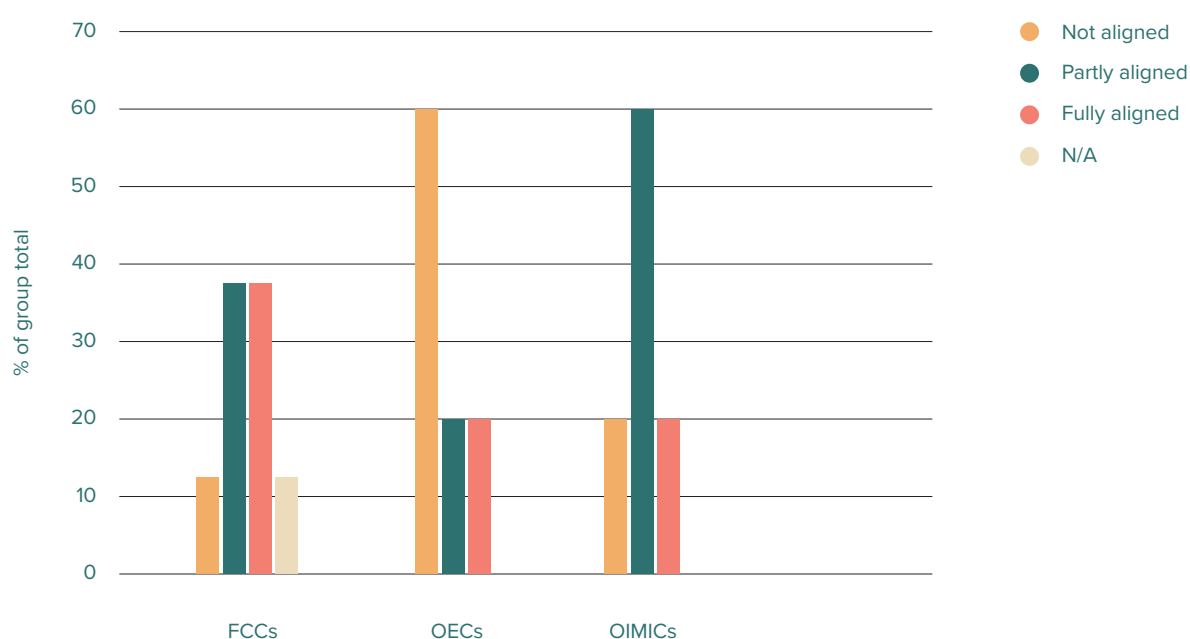
Country typology	Are they aligned?	Number of countries				
		Health First	Protecting People	Economic response and recovery	Macroeconomic response and multilateral cooperation	Social cohesion and community resilience
Total	Yes	9	8	8	8	9
	Partially	2	2	1	1	1
	No	5	6	7	7	6

5.3 Alignment of SERPs with SEIAs' key recommendations

Although the variety of purpose and focus of SEIAs makes comparisons difficult, overall, the recommendations from the SERPs and SEIAs are broadly aligned (either partially or fully), although this differs somewhat from country to country. Of the 17 SERPs, 11 make direct reference to the SEIA and in two cases (Libya and Syria) the SEIAs are an integral part of their respective SERPs. Nonetheless, the link between SEIAs and the SERPs could be strengthened

through further cross referencing, methodological structuring and programmatic focus. The absence of full alignment between SEIA and SERP recommendations is explained by the limited scope of SEIAs (most are thematic), and the fact that in some countries SERPs preceded SEIAs – although, logically, these should have come after. The other reason is that SERPs refer to many other reports and recommendations from other studies. Figure 8 highlights the degree of alignment between SEIA recommendations and SERPs.

Figure 8. Alignment between SEIA recommendations and SERPs



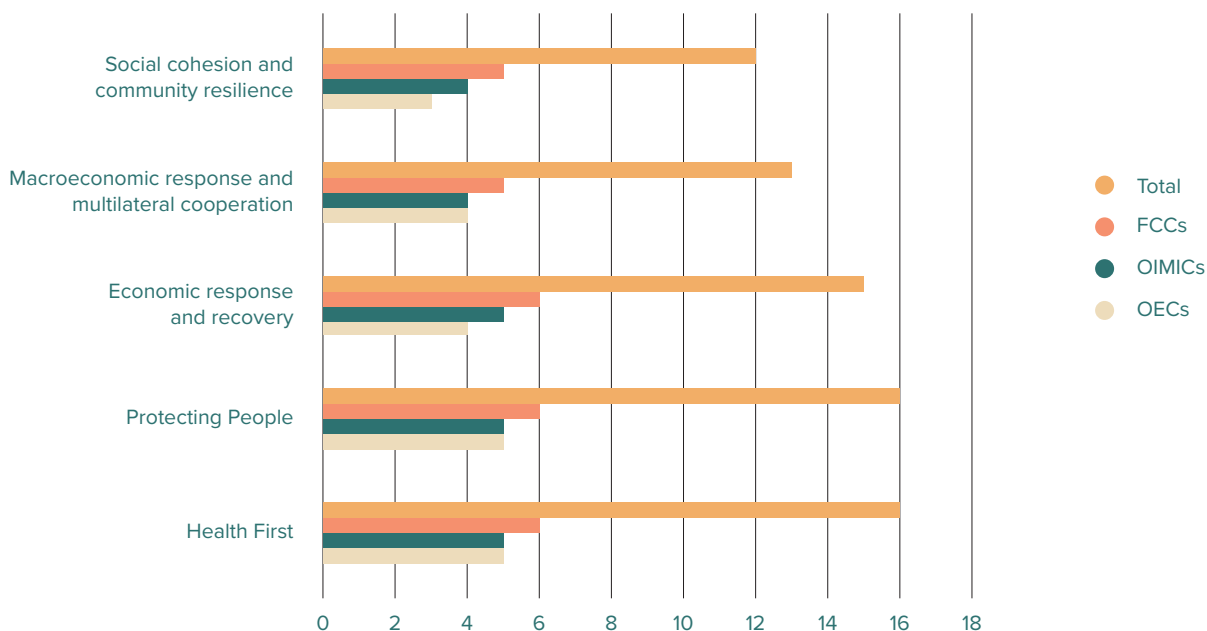
5.4 Alignment between SERP pillars and UNDP's Offer 2.0 pillars

This section examines the extent to which the main pillars of UNDP's response and recovery efforts reflect the five UNSEF pillars. UNDP's four pillars, as outlined in its COVID-19 Response Offer 2.0, include governance, social protection, green economy and digital disruption.

5.4.1 Governance

A preliminary review of the governance dimensions of the SERPs shows that governance-related interventions are reflected in all five pillars in almost all countries, though not to the required extent. Figure 9 shows the number of countries for which the SERPs reflect governance-related issues in each of the SEF pillars.

Figure 9. Links between governance pillar of Offer 2.0 and UNSEF pillars



Despite the inclusion of governance-related issues under each pillar, the scope of governance analysis in SERPs in the region was limited. Some countries avoided governance or social cohesion and focused on the other pillars: health, economic recovery and social protection. For example, Egypt covered the following pillars: prosperity, people, the planet and women, emphasizing the protection of vulnerable groups; and Djibouti did not cover any aspects of governance.

However, many countries covered some aspects of governance under the social cohesion and community resilience pillar. In Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, this involved a focus on identifying the most vulnerable groups and adopting targeted protective measures. Under the social cohesion pillar, the UAE also prioritized the protection of women, youth and children. Other countries opted for facilitating and enhancing the participation of community-based organizations, and youth and women’s groups in all COVID-19 related sensitization and response activities – Sudan’s SEIAs, for example, highlighted the importance of wider participation, and Iraq’s SERP stressed the need to promote the inclusive participation of communities, civil society and vulnerable populations in decision-making processes related to improved service delivery. Syria and Yemen also stressed the importance of local community participation in their SERPs. Bahrain added inclusive participation, accountability and transparency. Libya, on the other hand, listed other aspects such as mediation, dialogue, support to civil society organizations, and the development of COVID-19 response protocols for electoral operations and polling procedures for municipal elections.

Some countries covered additional aspects of governance. Jordan, for example, stressed the importance of improving access to justice, supporting the digitalization of judiciary services and procedures, supporting governance through effective institutional development, and supporting fundamental civil and political rights. Somalia also emphasized fundamental freedoms and rights, gender and digital governance. Bahrain focused on the development of digital services like the Bahrain Digital Development Report, which includes analysis of how the digital sector can advance inclusion and equality. Algeria, on the other hand, focused on strengthening the quality of services and governance of the health system and, in a broader sense, emphasized access to information and knowledge, digital connectivity, cost effectiveness, the importance of attracting investment in ICT infrastructure and research and innovation, and the optimization of management systems and production lines which have a positive effect on governance. Tunisia covered aspects of human rights, gender, youth participation, local community engagement and voluntarism under the social cohesion pillar. The ‘Lebanon Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF)’, asserted that the country must develop a new governance model that breaks the capture of State institutions by political elites and ensures that these institutions serve people’s needs and can respond to the crises the country faces. Lebanon’s fragility and entrenched governance challenges pose a risk to the country’s stability.

Governance was rarely extended to the other pillars, with the odd exception here and there. For instance, Jordan stated in its report that the United Nations will continue to work closely with authorities and partners to prepare, recover and strengthen the response to the COVID-19 emergency, and that investments in health coordination will include joint preparedness and planning. Other aspects under health include strengthening early warning, developing accurate data reporting backed by enhanced national-level monitoring mechanisms, and disseminating accurate information to combat misinformation and increase trust in government.

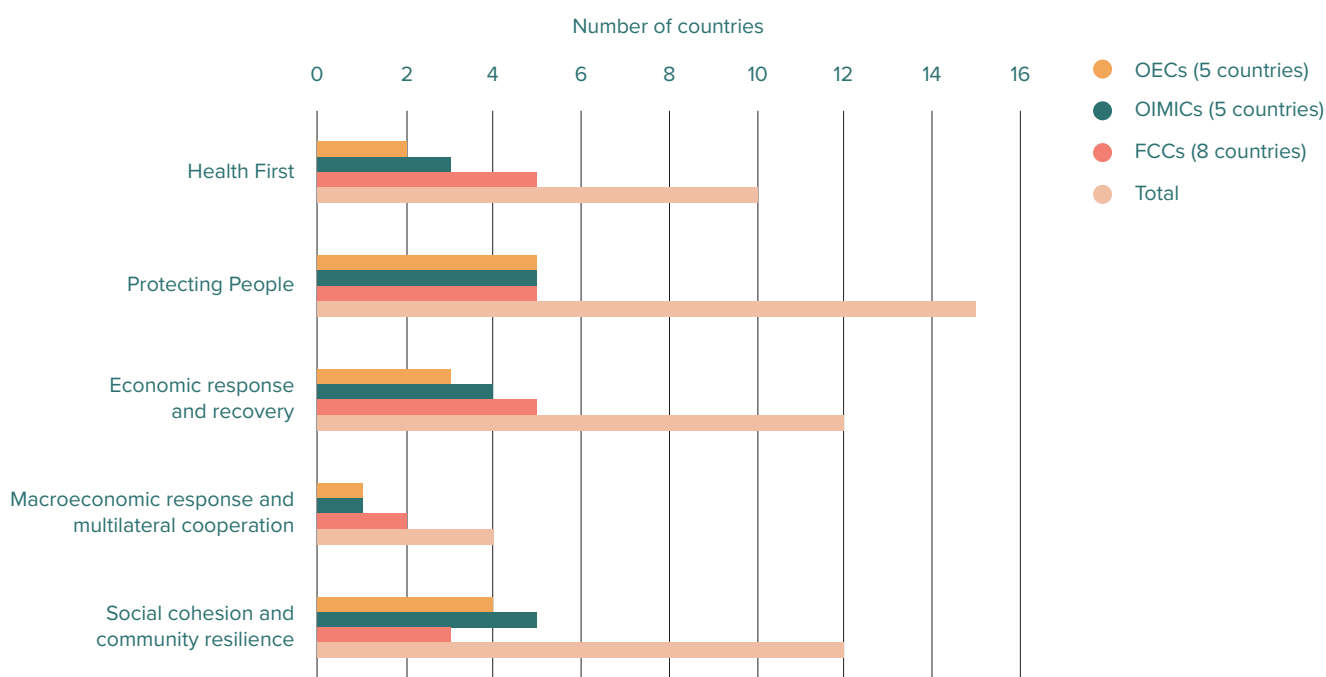
Under social protection and basic services, local governance is essential for improving service delivery, reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission on public transportation (personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies, sanitizing vehicles and stations) and installing public hygiene facilities. Under economic recovery and

macroeconomic response, many aspects of economic governance can be introduced and be more effective in generating new jobs, supporting SMEs and formulating policy development support towards an inclusive response and recovery.

5.4.2 Social protection

There is strong overlap between the ‘social protection’ pillar of UNDP’s Offer 2.0 and the ‘Protecting People’ UNSEF pillar. Indeed, the analyses of SERPs show that social protection is prominent across all pillars, with the exception of the ‘macroeconomic management’ pillar, where it is not explicitly stated. However, one cannot ignore the fiscal policy implications of extending social protection systems, which all countries aim to achieve but with no clear indication of the budget implications.

Figure 10. Links between social protection pillar of Offer 2.0 and UNSEF pillars



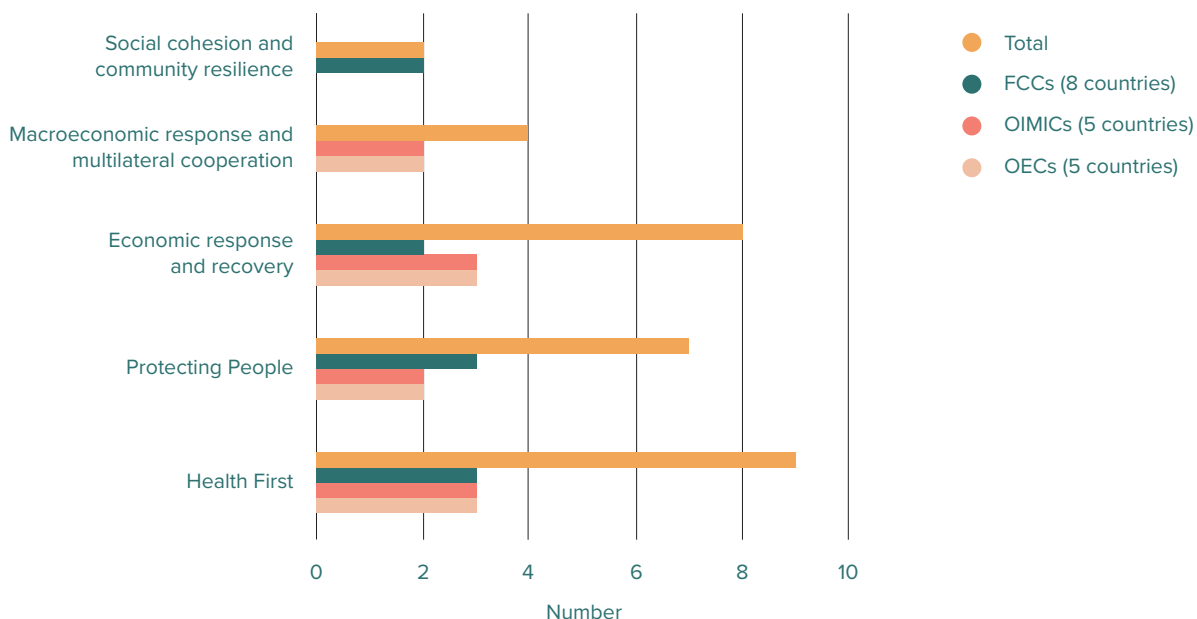
Unsurprisingly, there is strong overlap between the social protection pillar of Offer 2.0 and the SEF ‘Protecting People’ UNSEF pillar across all country typologies. However, Figure 10 shows that there are slight differences between the country typologies in terms of the links between the other UNSEF pillars and social protection. In OECs and OIMICs, social protection is more commonly used as a means of ensuring social cohesion, while in FCCs

social protection interventions are more prominent under the ‘economic recovery’ and ‘health’ pillars.

5.4.3 Green economy

Figure 11 summarizes the extent to which issues related to ‘green economy’ were reflected in each of the UNSEF pillars, as observed in the SERPs.

Figure 11. Links between green economy pillar of Offer 2.0 and UNSEF pillars



It is encouraging to note that green economy was captured in almost all of the pillars, but not all SERPs demonstrated its cross-cutting nature:

a. Multidimensional risks and integrated solutions: None of the SERPs in the Arab region discussed the convergence of the pandemic with the climate crisis. This is particularly important for the Arab region, with temperatures rising faster than the global average and with future climate shifts threatening the long-term sustainability of economic recovery. SERPs in Yemen and Iraq, however, provided good examples of the multidimensionality of the pandemic response, addressing the converging impacts of conflict and displacement, and mainstreaming green solutions like sustainable energy as a means of building back better from both the pandemic and conflict. While most SERPs in the region included a vision for adopting sustainable energy solutions and green economy measures under the 'economic recovery' pillar, most did not advance solutions that integrate climate adaptation. This is key for the resilience of climate-dependent sectors like agriculture and related livelihoods, as well as the long-term resilience of new infrastructure planned as part of the economic recovery. None of the SERPs included actions to prevent future zoonotic outbreaks through better ecosystem management, or paid any attention to the role of air pollution as a source of underlying respiratory conditions for tens of millions in the region – key issues highlighted by various UN agencies.

b. From immediate impacts to strategic opportunities: Most SERPs highlighted the environmental risks from waste generation in the health response to the pandemic. While this immediate impact is an important one, many SERPs lacked as strong a focus within other pillars, where more attention could have been paid to the potential upsides of green solutions within social and economic recovery efforts. Some SERPs, such as those in Yemen, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, did a better job of this, outlining a vision for engaging green solutions for socioeconomic recovery and long-term resilience-building. But most only partially touched on the strategic opportunities from green solutions. The 3RF recovery plan in Lebanon is a good example of mainstreaming the vision for a green transition into broader recovery investments, including green solutions as part of new infrastructure and private sector recovery investments. Moving from a focus on environmental impacts to a strategic assessment of green solution opportunities can enhance UN country team analyses and actions moving forward. In particular, the UN methodology for Strategic Environmental Assessments can help UN country team to map out green solutions more extensively.

c. Upstream impact and transformational change: As noted above, most SERPs in the Arab region addressed environmental sustainability in terms of the growing waste management challenges and green economy solutions for livelihoods. However, a key priority for environmental

sustainability noted by the UN-SERF was to exploit the opportunities within macro-economic policies to catalyze a green transition out of the economic crisis. Very few SERPs in the region, for example, explored opportunities for ‘debt-for-nature swap’ mechanisms, despite growing levels of debt coming out of the crisis, nor did they propose new green fiscal tools. Likewise, only modest reference was made in SERPs – as in Algeria’s case - to the protracted crisis in conventional oil/gas sectors and the ways the United Nations could help accelerate the transition to a low carbon energy future.

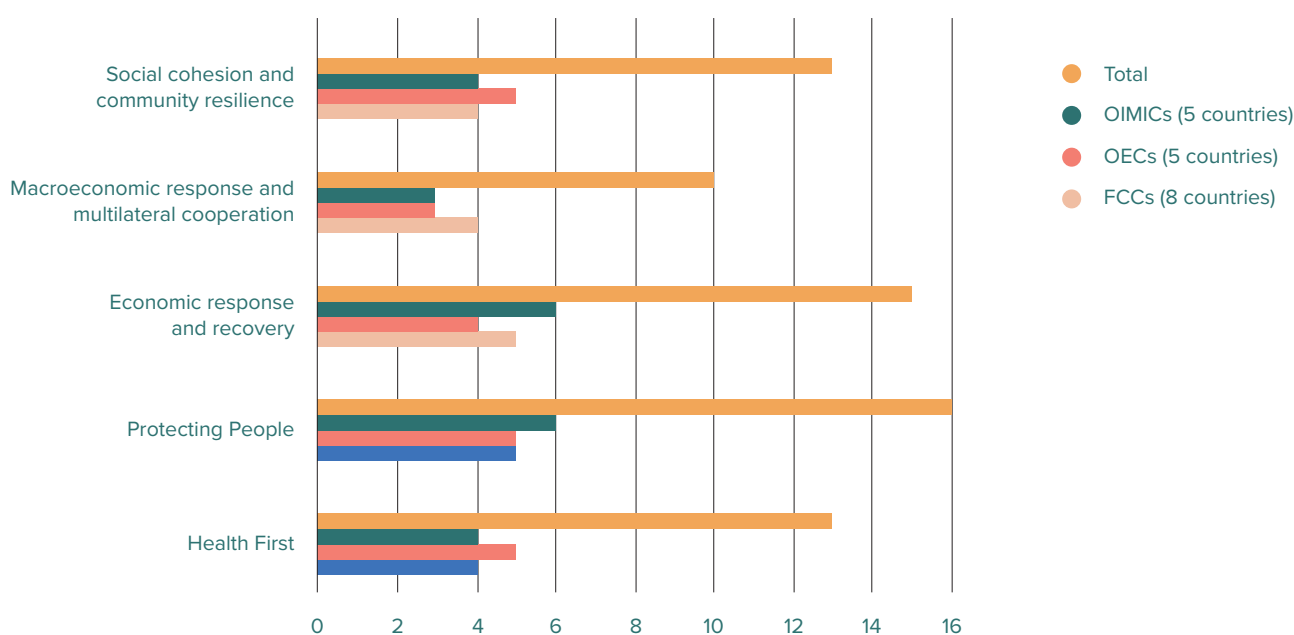
- d. UN country team processes: The UN-SERF, launched in 2020, included a focus on environmental sustainability. To build on this, many UN agencies such as UNEP and UNDP made a concerted effort to advance a green recovery vision as part of their outreach with Member States. The SERPs can be an important platform in this regard, to express a common UN position at the country level on the importance of environmental sustainability. However, in the Arab region most UN SERPs have only modestly integrated environmental sustainability and green recovery. UNDP has played an important role in leading efforts to integrate green measures into UN country team SERPs. Alongside UNEP’s lead role in UN country team processes, UNDP has been a

key agency in raising environmental sustainability priorities in UN country team processes. This benefited greatly from the advice of UNDP’s Regional Hub, channelling guidance in line with the green recovery vision of UNDP’s global Offer 2.0. In moving to SERP implementation, UN country teams should bring together key agencies like UNDP, UNEP and FAO to advance the green solutions agenda, including ways to mobilize and repurpose UN country team member agencies’ country programming on the environment for the pandemic response. This was called for by the UN-SERF but, to date, UN country teams have only achieved modest results.

5.4.4 Digital disruption

Digitalization appears in most of the five pillars in almost all countries as part of their crisis response – from enabler of business continuity to cross-sectoral catalyst for system transformation (see Figure 12). There are common priorities as well as some points of differentiation in terms of breadth and depth, mostly determined by varying levels of digital maturity and differences in national priorities. While digitalization emerged as a means of fostering solutions tailored to specific issues (e.g. service delivery), there are also opportunities for digital transformation at strategic and systemic levels.

Figure 12. Links between digital disruption pillar of Offer 2.0 and UNSEF pillars



Based on a review of SERPs, e-governance and online education are identified as key priorities in 11 and 15 countries respectively. Regionally, seven Arab countries

initiated digital maturity assessments to measure the level of their digital governance readiness and identify key entry points to advance their digital transformation agenda.

E-governance became a top priority in response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as for preparing for any future COVID-19 waves or similar crises.

All OECs are enhancing their e-governance capacity, as reflected in many international indicators. Algeria, for instance, is digitalizing its public service delivery, while Saudi Arabia seeks more widespread use of e-platforms for governance and is promoting cross-border collaboration.

The focus of OIMICs, on the other hand, is on digital capacity development for evidence-based decision-making and enhanced public service delivery. Djibouti is enhancing digital governance and information systems to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. Egypt is establishing a COVID-19 geographic information system (GIS)-based platform that consolidates data from different government entities. Jordan is supporting the development of ICT systems for business continuity, social safety nets and transitioning to an e-system for its judiciary. Morocco is aiming to digitalize its public administration.

FCCs are also working on e-governance to enhance public service delivery. For example, Iraq is working on developing a national digital road map, and Lebanon is supporting e-governance, while Syria is developing a registration system for e-governance.

The regional hub will produce a regional digital maturity report to provide a snapshot of the digital readiness for countries across the three typologies.

Among the 15 countries prioritizing online learning, most are supporting the design and delivery of digital content. Jordan is applying a holistic approach to supporting vocational and higher education, while countries such as Bahrain and Djibouti are planning online/remote learning systems for students.

Almost all countries are supporting enterprises, especially SMEs, by improving digital services and enhancing their digital capacities, under the economic recovery pillar. Kuwait, for example, hosted a hackathon for local SMEs to generate innovative solutions. Egypt is enhancing e-commerce industry value chains.

Vulnerable groups are supported through online platforms and digital finance, including digital remittances, e-payment and e-vouchers. Bahrain is exploring digital remittance channels for migrant workers. Kuwait is developing digital applications to address the multidimensional needs of migrant/expatriate workers. Egypt is digitalizing social security systems for expanded beneficiaries and supporting cyber safety campaigns against the misuse of social media to protect women and girls from trafficking and exploitation. Iraq is improving emergency preparedness and early warning systems to benefit vulnerable groups.

Libya is supporting the development of a telemedicine system for remote diagnosis of vulnerable populations and is also providing e-vouchers for food, with possible expansion to other uses. Psychosocial support is also being provided in Iraq and Jordan, while Syria is supporting the continued provision of remote mental health services with the expansion of digital online services.

In terms of macroeconomic management, Algeria is positioning digital transformation as a cross-cutting theme, touching on tax reform, financial reform, economic revival and employment. Lebanon is focusing on insurance and digital finance, including an online aid tracking system to enhance the transparency of its multiple aid tracking frameworks. The UAE and Iraq are promoting climate-smart agriculture to support the expanding agricultural sector and ensure food security.

Although almost all countries identified digitalization as a tool for socioeconomic response and recovery, there is an opportunity to further expand digitalization activities. For example, Djibouti identified mobile money as a solution for providing social protection during emergencies, but has not been able to implement it due to a lack of suppliers and high costs. Yemen also identified a number of challenges to increasing social protection, e.g. the need for further development of digital payment modalities and capacity-building for microfinance institutions to support the digitalization of operations. The regional hub is working to provide e-governance capacity development courses to government staff.

According to the SERPs, the OECs tend to have a more strategic perspective on digital transformation, with a focus on the policy level and support for digital interventions that have the potential to become long-term sustainable solutions. For example, Algeria envisions digitalization as a strategic outcome, enabling a transition to digital public service delivery. Investment in ICT infrastructure, research and innovation is also evident: Djibouti is working on digital transformation with a national strategic e-governance consultant. OIMICs are also implementing various projects across sectors. For example, Egypt is enhancing the digital economy for SMEs, developing an 'Industrial index' to monitor the performance of the manufacturing sector through online surveys, upgrading e-commerce industry value chains and facilitating market access for local food products through contract farming and e-commerce. It is also developing the digital skills of young people with disabilities to increase their employability. Jordan has identified opportunities for digital transformation in public and social services as well as business and economic initiatives, and is exploring catalytic innovative financing instruments to improve the impact investment ecosystem. This shift to a more strategic approach will enable countries to fully leverage the potential of digital transformation.

The SERPs also aim to bridge the digital divide, with a focus on the connectivity rights and digital empowerment of vulnerable groups. For example, Jordan is providing crisis support to improve ICT in vulnerable urban areas and for refugee children and other marginalized groups. Iraq is conducting digital skills training to provide income-generation opportunities for refugees, IDPs, host communities and other marginalized groups, including women-headed households. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and the UAE all focus on the digital empowerment of women by providing ICT equipment, training on digital literacy and occupational and entrepreneurship skills, as well as technical and funding support, and digital platforms. Digital capacity-building for people with disabilities is included in the SERPs for Egypt, Iraq and Syria.

International collaboration offers an opportunity to explore and scale up new and emerging localized applications of digital technologies. The Saudi Arabia-based Digital Cooperation Organization, for example, is working with UNDP to explore potential cross-border engagement to support the digital transformation agenda. The UAE is promoting itself as a destination for innovative and creative green investments towards a more sustainable future.

5.5 Links between SERPs and SDGs

The review of the 17 completed SERPs shows some commonalities in terms of the SDGs they aim to address. All of the analysed SERPs had strategic response and recovery objectives that have a direct impact on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and, with the exception of Algeria, SDG 6 (see Figure 13 and Table 4). This does not come as a surprise as evidence shows that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on these SDGs (UNDP, 2020).

The list below provides details of individual SDG targets addressed by the strategic response and recovery objectives outlined in the SERPs:

- **SDG 1:** All the countries are implementing activities that will impact SDG 1; nine of them are or will be implementing activities that will have a positive impact on all the targets under this goal.
- **SDG 2:** Somalia's SERP outlines activities that address all the targets. For the other countries, the strategic response and recovery objectives outlined in the SERPs focus on SDG targets 2.1 and 2.4.
- **SDG 3:** Overall, the SERFs will have the biggest impact on targets 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4.
- **SDG 4:** Target 4.1 appears to be the focus of most activities and/or measures to address this goal.
- **SDG 5:** The implementation of mitigation activities will likely contribute to the achievement of targets 5.2 and 5.5.
- **SDG 6:** Activities focusing on SDG 6 are presented in all SERPs, except for Algeria, which does not mention any strategic response or recovery objectives that would contribute to progress towards this goal.
- **SDG 7:** For countries with activities that would contribute directly or indirectly to SDG 7, targets 7.2 and 7.3 are the main beneficiaries.
- **SDG 8:** Mitigation activities will contribute most to target 8.3, which is unsurprising given the economic impact of COVID-19 and, more specifically, the impact on vulnerable populations and MSMEs.
- **SDG 9:** Mitigation activities will contribute most to targets 9.2 and 9.3.
- **SDG 10:** Activities that contribute to progress on SDG 10 will all have some positive impact on targets 10.2 and 10.4, and the majority will also contribute to target 10.3.
- **SDG 11:** For countries implementing activities that contribute to progress towards SDG 11, targets 11.1 and 11.3 will benefit the most from these activities.
- **SDG 12:** With the exception of Somalia and Yemen, all the countries highlighted projects or activities that would contribute positively to SDG 12, especially target 12.5, which appears to be directly or indirectly targeted by all these countries – except for Syria and Tunisia, which only targeted targets 12.4 and 12.6 respectively.
- **SDG 13:** Only about half of the reviewed SERFs (9 out of 17 countries) presented activities that would have a positive impact on climate action and the achievement of SDG 13. For these countries, the current crisis appears to have the greatest impact on target 13.2.
- **SDG 14:** Only Algeria, the UAE and Saudi Arabia proposed mitigation activities that would contribute to the achievement of SDG 14, and the majority of these activities contribute to target 14.7.

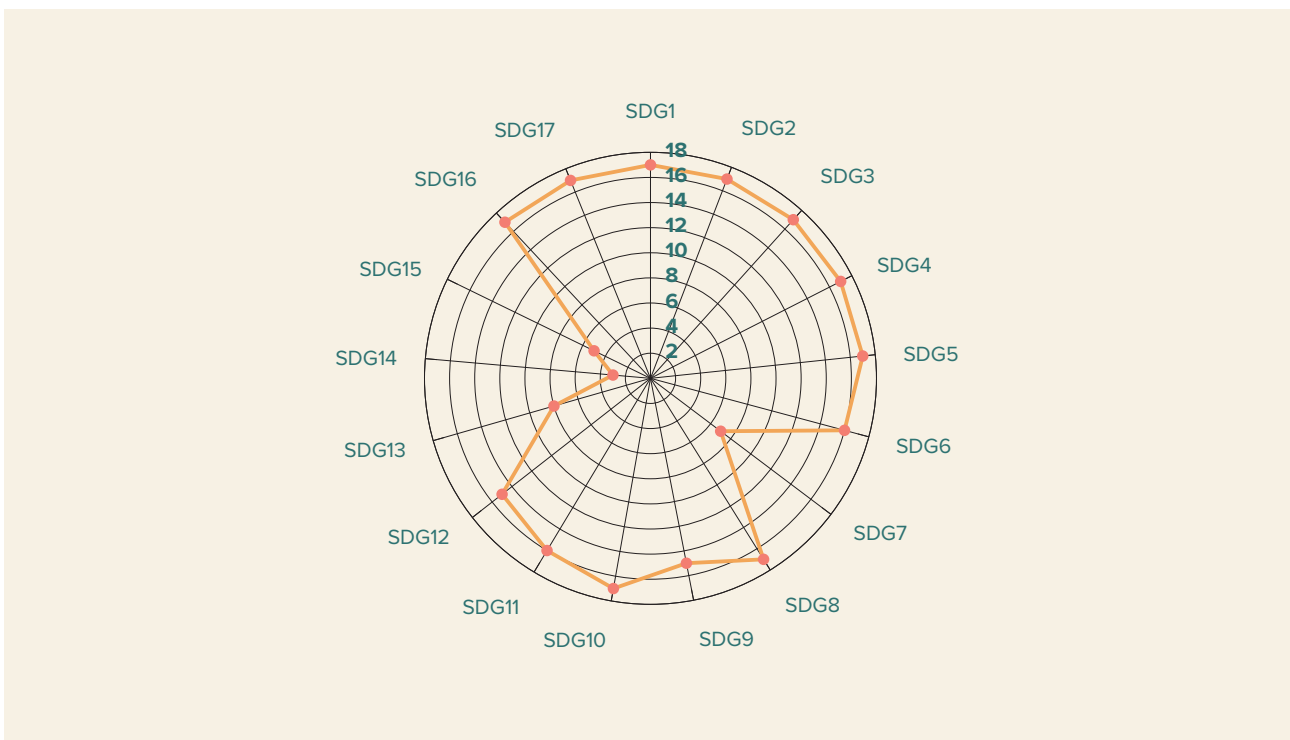
- **SDG 15:** Only Algeria, Iraq, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Somalia proposed activities that address SDG 15.
- **SDG 16:** Targets 16.2 and 16.6 are the most common targets for SDG 16 in the SERP analyses.
- **SDG 17:** The main SERF focus for this goal is target 17.17.

PAPP, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Libya and Yemen presented activities that would contribute to the achievement of SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 and 17, while Syria, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, Egypt, Somalia, Tunisia and Morocco provided strategic objectives that would impact all of

these SDGs except for SDG 7. Of the above-mentioned SDGs, Algeria only targeted SDG 11. Bahrain and Djibouti did not present any activities that would have an impact on SDGs 7 and 9.

It should be pointed out that all UN COVID-19 related activities in Saudi Arabia, whether new COVID-19 mitigation activities or those that are already under way and/or could benefit from COVID-19 mitigation efforts, will have an impact on the achievement of all the SDGs. This is also the case for the UAE, except for SDG 7, which none of the activities address directly. Algeria outlines activities that will also contribute to most of the SDGs, except for SDGs 6 and 11, which are not mentioned in the SERP.

Figure 13. Number of SERPs addressing each SDG



The level of detail on the links between SERPs and the SDGs varies from country to country. There are some SERPs that do not make explicit references to the links. Despite this, there are some commonalities. In FCCs, the most common links (explicit or implicit) are to SDGs 1, 3,

5, 6, 8, 9 and 16; in OIMICs, the most common links are to SDGs 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16; while in OECs, the most prevalent links are to SDGs 3, 5, 8, 10 and 16. Overall, most SERPs are linked to SDGs 3, 5, 8 and 16.

Table 4. SERP links with SDGs

Countries	SDG 1	SDG 2	SDG 3	SDG 4	SDG 5	SDG 6	SDG 7	SDG 8	SDG 9	SDG 10	SDG 11	SDG 12	SDG 13	SDG 14	SDG 15	SDG 16	SDG 17
<i>Algeria</i>	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Bahrain</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X				X	X
<i>Djibouti</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X				X	X
<i>Egypt</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
<i>Iraq</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
<i>Jordan</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Kuwait</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Lebanon</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
<i>Libya</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Morocco</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>PAPP</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Somalia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X	X
<i>Syria</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
<i>Tunisia</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
<i>UAE</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>Yemen</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X

5.6 SERPs and human rights-based approaches

SERPs across the region, while not fully incorporating all elements of the human rights-based approach, for the most part take into consideration different forms of vulnerability and apply a ‘leave no one behind’ approach. Moreover, the SERPs tend to integrate issues such as governance and human rights (often found under the social cohesion chapter of the SERP, although not always). Consequently, the SERPs tend to demonstrate a much clearer understanding of human rights than the SEIAs.

Examples of good practices drawn from SERPs in the region include:

- *Djibouti – Plan de Reponse du Systeme Nations Unies sur l’impact du Covid-19* – The SERP notes the impacts of restrictions on movement on the ability of vulnerable groups to access basic needs such as food, health care and WASH. It also highlights the protection concerns linked to these restrictions. These types of analyses are not embedded in all SERPs but are very important from a human rights perspective. Moreover, the inclusion of a chapter on ‘social cohesion, peace and security’ provides a broad view of a number of interlinked issues that raise a range of human rights concerns. As a result, this SERP creates a strong foundation for early response programming that takes into account human rights concerns covering both socioeconomic and civil-political rights.
- *Egypt SERP* – Pillar two in the report contains a robust analysis of the different ways that vulnerable groups have experienced – and will continue to experience – the impacts of the pandemic. The vulnerabilities identified are wide-ranging, from those of people in uncertain or irregular employment to people with disabilities and detainees. This broad approach facilitates inclusive and comprehensive response planning.
- *Iraq SERP* – The report aligns itself with the “Guiding principles for the rollout of the UN Framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 at country level”. Consequently, the report has a clear direction that incorporates a broad range of human rights considerations in its analysis and actions for early recovery.
- *Jordan – Socio-Economic Framework for COVID-19 Response in Jordan* – This has a section, ‘who must be reached’, which sets out a number of vulnerable sectors of the population that will be addressed in programming including refugees, older people

and people with disabilities. The analysis in the social cohesion section is particularly strong on human rights issues, as it considers the impacts of the pandemic and the response on a range of rights including on the freedom of movement, the freedom of assembly, and press freedom and access to justice.

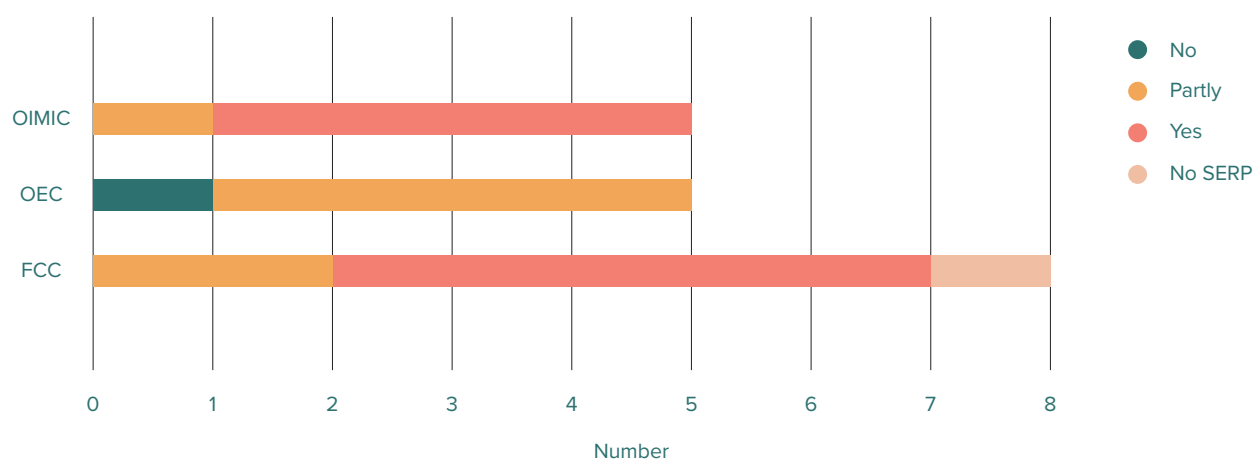
- *Algeria SERP* – The SERP focuses on economic and health impacts including on various vulnerable groups, and notes that mental health impacts need to be taken into account. And while there is no local data to demonstrate some of the impacts on those groups, the report uses findings from other relevant contexts to extrapolate the likely additional impacts.

5.7 Gender analysis of SERPs

Although in general terms the SERPs are predominantly gender sensitive (see Figure 14), there is great variety in the quality and extent of gender analysis. The more gender-sensitive SERPs build on sound analysis of vulnerable groups – e.g. Syria and Egypt.

The most effective SERPs from a gender point of view are those that link directly to the SDG 5 targets, those based on sound gender analysis (e.g. PAPP) and those with imaginative ways of supporting governments in delivering on gender (e.g. Tunisia seeking to support the Ministry of Women to deliver outcomes on health, social protection and economic recovery).

Figure 14. Gender sensitivity of SERPs



5.8 SERP budgets and funding gaps

Of the 17 SERPs, 13 have costed plans for the UN system,¹⁷ totalling about \$6.7 billion, with an unfunded budget of \$2.31 billion.¹⁸ The majority of the funding is required for the six FCCs (\$5.84 billion); Lebanon¹⁹ has the largest SERP budget (\$2.59 billion) followed by Iraq (an estimated \$1.44 billion). Figure 15 shows the SERP budgets and funding gaps for each country, and Figure 16 shows the funding gaps relative to the total estimated budgets.

¹⁷ Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, PAPP, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia.

¹⁸ The funding gap is not indicated in Lebanon's SERP (3R Framework).

¹⁹ The response plan largely focuses on the reconstruction of Beirut following the explosion at the Beirut port.

Figure 15. SERP budgets and funding gaps (\$ million)

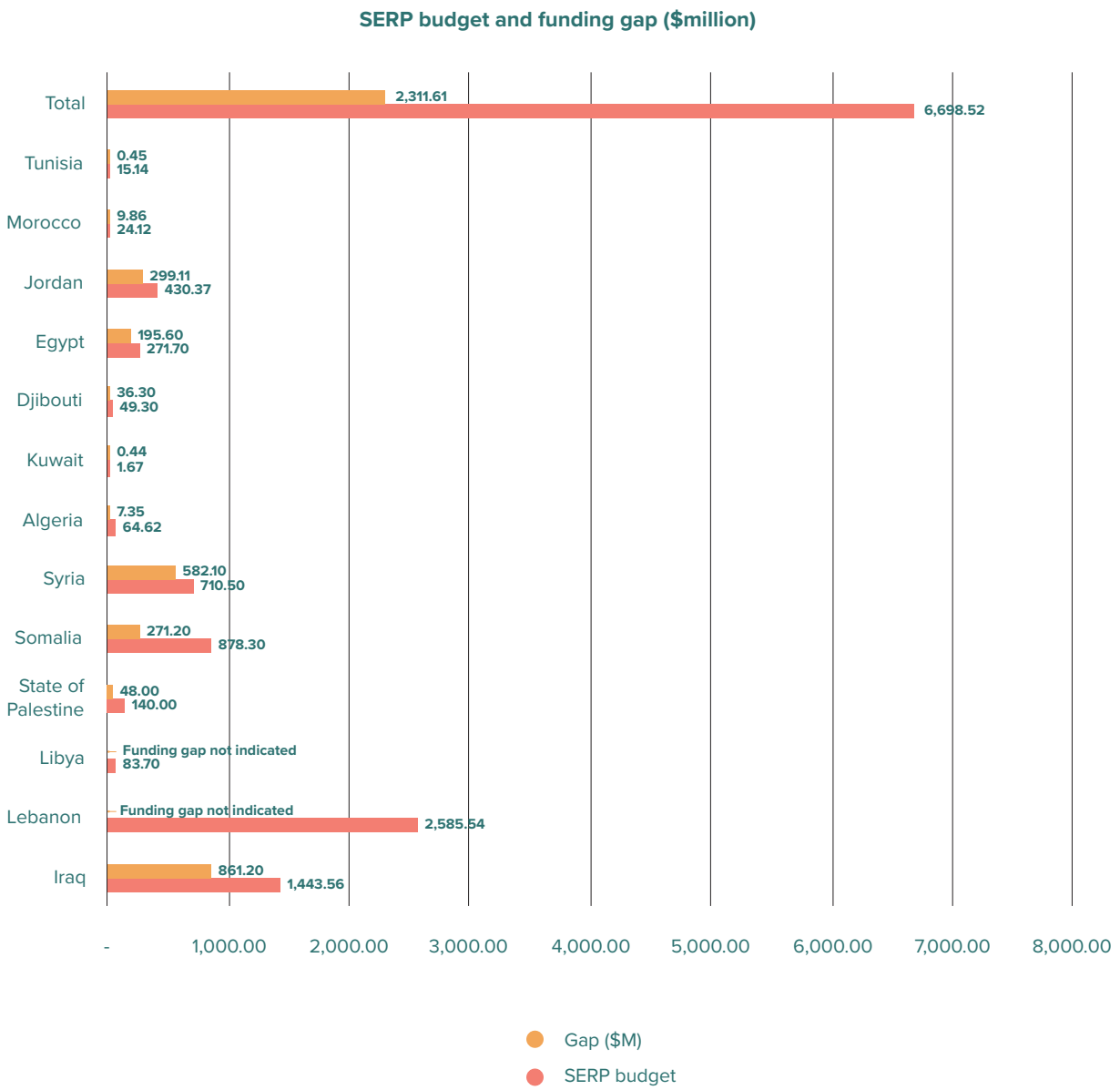
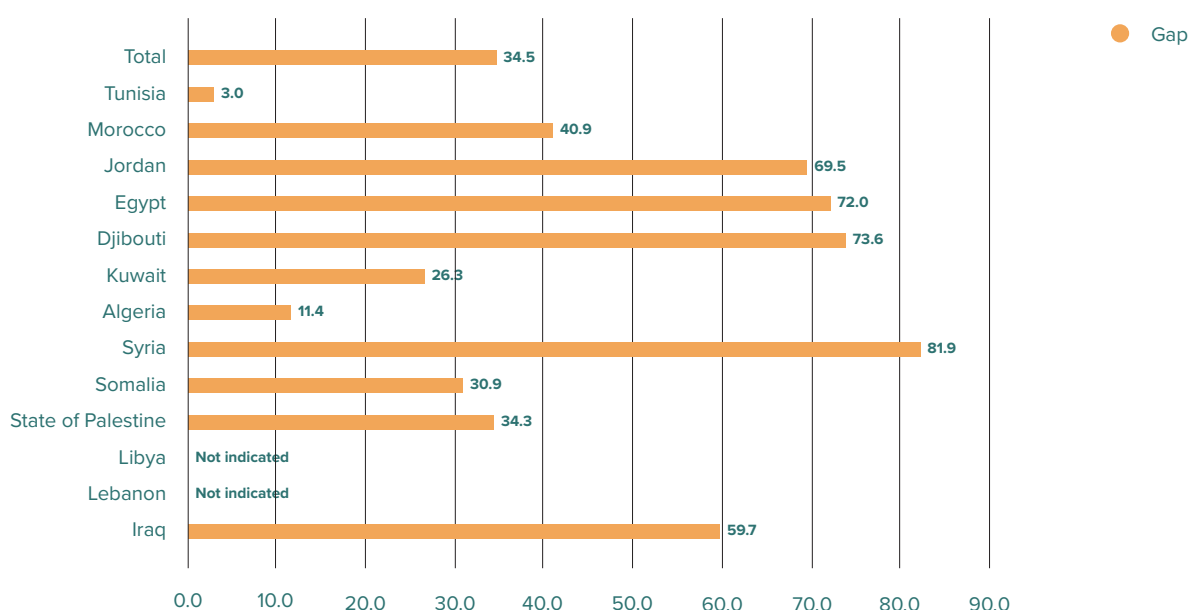


Figure 16. SERP funding gap (as a percentage of total SERP budget)*

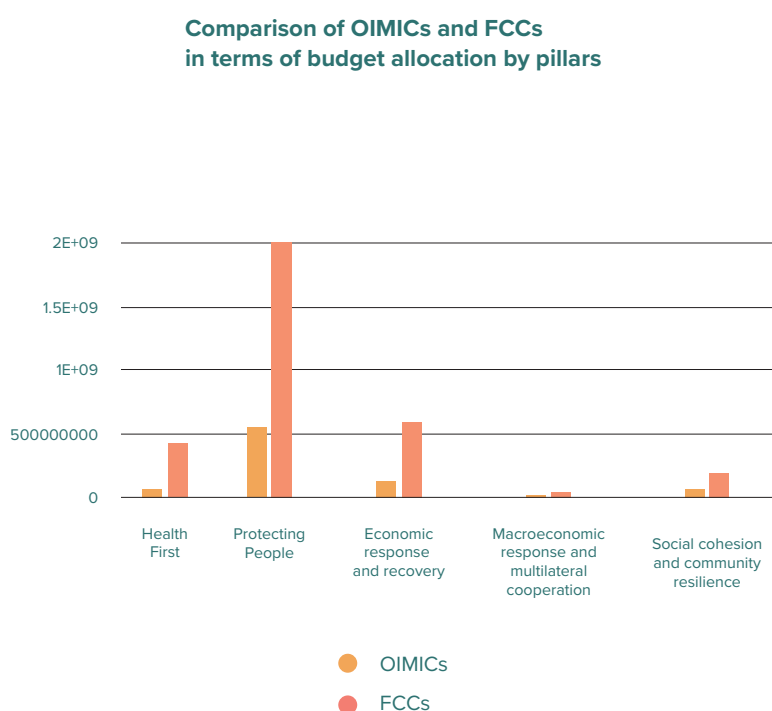


*Libya and Lebanon did not disclose their funded/unfunded budget.

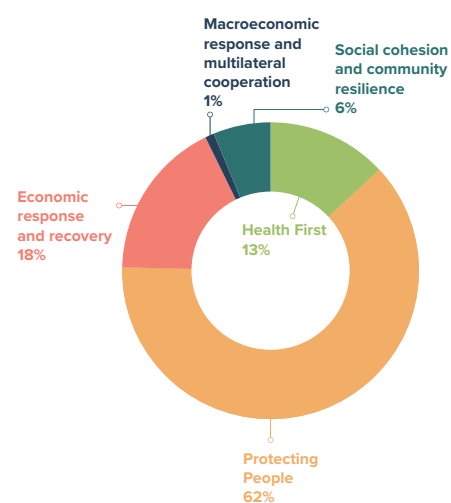
The analyses of the SERP budget by UNSEF pillars give an idea of where the future interventions lie. Figure 17 below provides the relative funding requirements for SERPs for the five pillars and a comparison of financial resource requirements for FCCs and OIMICs. The majority of funds for the SERPs – both for OIMICs and FCCs – will

be directed to social protection, followed by the economy and health. Among the OECs, Kuwait and Algeria have attempted to provide an indication of the SERP budget. For Kuwait, the cost of implementing SERP activities is for the first six months of the plan only.

Figure 17. Financial allocations by SERP pillars



SERP budget by SEF pillars for which data is available

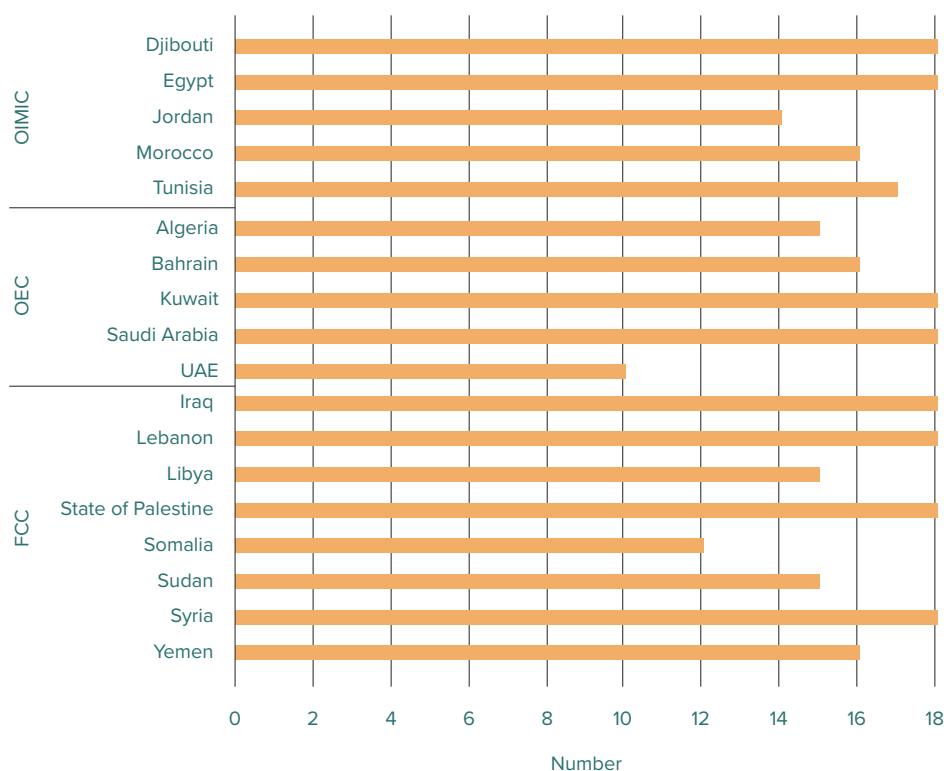


5.9 Monitoring and reporting on UN SERPs

The implementation of SERPs is monitored through quarterly reporting against a globally identified set of 18 UNSEF programme indicators (listed in Annex 3). As of 15 March 2021, all countries have reported on the status of their programme indicators, but with varying levels of detail

(some reporting on more indicators and sub-indicators than others). As indicated in Figure 18, of the countries that submitted reports, UAE reported on the least number of indicators (with 10 indicators), with the highest number coming from Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, PAPP, Iraq and Egypt (18 out of 18 indicators) followed by Tunisia (17 indicators), and Morocco and Bahrain, with each reporting on 16 indicators.

Figure 18. Number of UNSEF programmatic indicators reported by UN country teams (15 March 2021)







6. Rapid Financing Facility proposals and SERPs – UNSEF Pillars and SDG links

6.1 Overview of the Rapid Financing Facility proposals

Fourteen countries and territories in the Arab region prepared Rapid Financing Facility (RFF) proposals: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, PAPP, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. Of these, five chose social protection as the main area of focus, four chose digital disruption and innovation, three chose governance, one country chose green economy, and one chose continued health support.

6.2 Key observations

All the RFF proposals that focused on governance, green economy and digital disruption came under the economic response and recovery' UNSEF pillar (Pillar III). Most of the RFF proposals with a focus on social protection also fell under *Pillar III*, except for Somalia and Jordan, which came under Protecting People (*Pillar II*) and macroeconomic management (*Pillar IV*) respectively. If we look at the breakdown, 10 RFF proposals came under *Pillar III*, two under *Pillar II*, one under *Pillar I* (health) and *Pillar IV*, and none under *Pillar V* (social cohesion).

Nevertheless, a close look at the outputs of the RFF proposals reveals that the links with the five UNSEF pillars are not as intuitive as for the areas of focus, and that sometimes none of the pillars are fully suited to the output (e.g. output 1 for

Morocco²⁰). If one compares the outputs with the areas of focus, a different pattern emerges: among the 39 outputs, 8 fall under *Pillar I* (Health First), 4 under *Pillar II* (Protecting People), 19 under *Pillar III* (economic response and recovery), 5 under *Pillar IV* (macroeconomic response) and 3 under *Pillar V* (social cohesion). Of the 10 RFF proposals whose area of focus fell under economic response and recovery (*Pillar III*), only four of the outputs focused on this pillar (Algeria, Djibouti, PAPP and Sudan).

Of the 14 countries that have prepared an RFF proposal, 13 have published a SERP. More generally, as indicated above, all countries in the Arab region have published SERPs, except for Sudan. The RFF proposals fully or partially address the priorities expressed in the SERPs, except for Tunisia's, which focuses exclusively on green economy.

6.3 Reporting on RFF by UNSEF pillars

The RFF enables the United Nations to organize country programming in response to COVID-19 and repurpose funding based on the five UNSEF pillars (Health First, Protecting People, economic recovery, macroeconomic management, social cohesion). Once the funds are allocated, countries use the COVID-19 tag to enable effective monitoring and reporting on RFF-funded projects.

RFF-funded projects are monitored through the COVID-19 monitoring dashboard.²¹ Reporting on results has also been streamlined into the UNDP COVID-19 monitoring mechanism using the mini-ROAR²² and COVID-19 indicators that can be tracked if data is properly disaggregated.

Tracking and mapping links with SDGs

In tracking the milestones, the data provided by countries based on RFF results is categorized by indicators that can be linked to key SDGs, which can then support evidence-based monitoring for COVID-19 response/actual expenditures. The data, if properly disaggregated, could help to track spending for each country (see Table 5), vulnerability information (generally based on social protection), and challenges related to the attainment of SDGs (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13 and 16). However, key gaps in disaggregated data make it difficult to effectively connect budget spending with specific SDGs.

SDG indicators are, in general, slow moving and there is often a lag in reporting. The RFF cannot be expected to yield immediate results for the SDGs. Therefore, it will be necessary to conduct several impact assessments over time to effectively measure the impacts of the funding mechanism.

Table 5. Utilized funds and links to SDGs

Category	Countries	Linked SDGs	Amount used
Socio-economic impact assessments	Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia	SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13 & 16	\$5.1M
Health systems support	Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, PAPP* Sudan, Syria and Yemen	SDGs 1, 4, 5 & 6	\$103.5M
Inclusive and integrated crisis management	Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, PAPP, Somalia, Sudan and Tunisia	SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13 & 16	\$24M
Governance	Iraq and Lebanon	SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13 & 16	\$3.5M
Green economy	Iraq	SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 & 13	0
Social protection	Jordan, PAPP, Sudan and Syria	SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13 & 16	\$5M
Digital disruption and innovation	RBAS regional programme and Lebanon	All related SDGs that require digitization and innovation	\$1M

*Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People.

²⁰ Output 1: Public institutions' digital services offerings enhanced to keep up with the administration's modernization requirements and citizen's needs.

²¹ Tagging used in the COVID-19 monitoring dashboard: 1.1 # People accessing vaccinations, maternal health and nutrition programming; 1.2 # Health facilities supported (immunization); 1.3 # Countries protecting health systems; 1.4 # Health workers receiving UN support; 2.1 # People reached (WASH); 2.2 # Children supported with distance learning; 2.3 # Children receiving meals; 2.4 # Countries with GBV measures; 2.5 # Beneficiaries of social protection schemes; 3.1 # Countries reinforcing UN-supported employment policies; 3.2 # Companies/workers supported; 3.3 # Countries with fiscal stimulus packages; 3.4 # Beneficiaries of good supply protection regimes; 4.1 # Countries with socioeconomic impact assessments; 4.2 # Countries with macro policies for at-risk population; 5.1 # Employment organizations supported with institutional capacity-building; 5.2 # Community organizations capacitated for resilience; 5.3 # Social dialogue spaces facilitated for at-risk populations.

²² In 2020, UNDP produced a semi-annual version of the Result-Orientated Annual Report (ROAR) – the 'mini-ROAR' – to collate the lessons learned by country offices from their COVID-19 response work.



7. Lessons learned moving forward

UNDP's analytical and programmatic response has shown that pre-existing vulnerabilities and inequalities across Arab societies must be addressed if countries are to build a more resilient future based on sustainable and inclusive development.

The quick response and funding opportunities provided to country offices were crucial in positioning UNDP as an important partner for the COVID-19 response, as well the technical lead for UN country teams in developing their socioeconomic response plans.

The variations in thematic focus and methodology of the socioeconomic impact assessments highlight the adaptability and appropriateness of the SEIAs to the highly heterogeneous nature of the region. Nonetheless, further integration of the SEIAs' and SERPs' focus and recommendations would strengthen the complementarity of the two instruments.

The socio-economic impact assessments and socio-economic response plans highlight both the differences in context and commonality of needs across the region and across vulnerable groups. There is a particular need to focus on those being left behind, including informal workers, the poor, migrants, refugees, IDPs and people with disabilities, as well as address the significant gender implications across all country groupings.

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis have revealed the significance of the governance gap on health sectors, public administrations, local governments and data management.

The resort to digital services is not a 'silver bullet', but rather a partial and incomplete response if it is not based on a strategic plan for digital transformation, skills training and enhanced governance.

Gender analysis in both the SEIAs and SERPs needs to be further strengthened, with strong variations across countries. Some of the better examples and practices that could be emulated across the region come from FCC countries. In addition, more attention needs to be paid to gender dimensions in the overall recommendations.

Similarly, SEIAs would benefit from greater integration of a human rights-based approach, by incorporating a human rights-based approach into the assessment itself, including the active participation of rights-holders and duty-bearers.

UNDP is implementing Integrated National Financing Frameworks in six Arab countries in cooperation with other parts of the UN system, to ensure that financing for the COVID-19 recovery is fully aligned with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. This support needs to be expanded to more countries in the region.

Looking forward, UNDP is now supporting countries and communities to build forward better towards a greener, more inclusive and more sustainable future. Extra commitment from UNDP to protect hard-won socioeconomic gains and address new fragilities and crises will be required. UNDP will continue its vital stabilization work in countries in conflict and crisis, where the pandemic has exacerbated already dire situations.

The Report of the Global Health Summit Scientific Expert Panel, which was launched in May 2021, provides a vision for a future in which global preparedness and response systems must be grounded in the principles of scientific inquiry, data sharing, equity, multilateral cooperation, sustainability, public trust and transparency. These are also the principles that must drive the RBAS's work to address persistent and emerging vulnerabilities as well as future risks in the region.

References

Al-Quds Center for Political Studies (2019) *State of the informal economy in Jordan: Opportunities for integration*. www.alqudscenter.org/uploads/publications/pdf/en/2391_20200225035852-2.pdf.

International Monetary Fund (2021) *Middle East and Central Asia: Regional Economic Outlook: Arising from the Pandemic: Building Forward Better, Statistical Annex*. www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/REO/MCD-CCA/2021/April/English/statsapp.ashx.

United Nations Development Programme (2020) *Compounding crises: Will COVID-19 and lower oil prices lead to a new development paradigm in the Arab region?* <https://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/en/home/library/crisis-response0/undp-regional-report--compounding-crises--will-covid-19-and-lowe.html>.

United Nations Development Programme (2020) *Beyond Recovery: Towards 2030*. UNDP Offer 2.0.

World Bank (2021) *International migrant stock (% of population)* <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.TOTL.ZS>.

Annex 1: Summary of the status of SEIAs, UN SERPs and national SERPs

Country	Status of SEIAs		Status of UN country team SERPs		Status of national SERPs	
	Completed	In pipeline	Completed	In pipeline	Completed	In pipeline
OECs						
Algeria	Yes		Yes			Yes
Bahrain*	Yes *		Yes			
Kuwait*	Yes *		Yes			
Saudi Arabia	Yes		Yes			
UAE	Yes		Yes		Yes	
OIMICs						
Djibouti	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Egypt	Yes		Yes			
Jordan	Yes		Yes			
Morocco	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Tunisia	Yes		Yes		Yes	
FCCs						
Iraq	Yes		Yes			Yes
Lebanon	Yes		Yes			Yes
Libya	Yes		Yes		Yes	
PAPP	Yes		Yes		Yes	
Somalia	Yes*		Yes		Yes	
Sudan	Yes			Yes	Yes	
Syria	Yes		Yes			
Yemen	Yes		Yes		Yes	

* According to UNinfo, UN country team SEIAs in these countries are recorded as 'ongoing' or 'in draft', but some thematic impact assessments have been conducted.

Annex 2: List of SEIAs by country²³

Country	SEIA
Algeria	Analyse rapide de l'impact socio-economique du COVID-19 sur L'Algerie
Bahrain	The impact of COVID-19 on financial transactions and consumer behaviour in Bahrain: an initial analysis
	An assessment on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Bahrain
Djibouti	National Solidarity Pact
Egypt	Leaving No One Behind in the time of COVID-19 - Preliminary mapping of potential socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and guidance for policy responses in Egypt through a vulnerability lens
Iraq	Impact of COVID-19 on Iraqi economy
	Impact of the oil crisis and COVID-19 on Iraq's fragility
	Impact of COVID-19 on social cohesion in Iraq
	Impact of COVID-19 on social protection in Iraq
Jordan	Impact of COVID-19 on environmental sustainability in Iraq
	COVID-19 impact on households in Jordan
	Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on enterprises in Jordan
Kuwait	COVID-19 Rapid Impact Assessment on micro and small enterprises beneficiaries
	A preliminary assessment of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the economy of Kuwait
Lebanon	The effects of COVID-19 on mental health, food consumption and relationship dynamics in Kuwait
	Rapid Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
Libya	Rapid assessment of the impact of COVID 19 on vulnerable workers and small-scale enterprises in Lebanon (undertaken in partnership with International Labour Organization (ILO), Fafo Research Foundation, UN Women, some non-governmental organizations (NGOs))
	Assessment incorporated in United Nations Socio-Economic Framework for the Response to COVID-19 in Libya (UNSEF)
Morocco ²⁴	Social and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis on Morocco—preliminary analysis
PAPP ²⁵	Economic note on Gaza: crossings update and impact of COVID-19 (UN info)
Saudi Arabia	Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and how to Build Back Better
	Diagnostics paper
Somalia	Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and measures taken in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
	Somalia SEIA for COVID-19
Sudan	COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment for Sudan
	The potential of Sudanese diaspora remittances
Syria	SEIA not published; the SERP ("Framework for immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19") captures socioeconomic impact assessment results
Tunisia	A study on "Economic impact of COVID-19 in Tunisia: Analysis in terms of vulnerability of households and micro and very small businesses"
UAE	United Nations COVID-19 socio-economic analysis for the United Arab Emirates (UN info)

²³ See the following link for more on the SEIA in Bahrain: https://www.bh.undp.org/content/bahrain/en/home/presscenter/articles/2021/COVID19_Socio_Economic_Impact_Assessment_in_Bahrain.html.

²⁴ The UN country team in Morocco, in collaboration with the High Commission for Planning and the World Bank, also produced a "Note stratégique : Impact social et économique de la crise du Covid-19 au Maroc". https://www.hcp.ma/Note-strategique-Impact-social-et-economique-de-la-crise-du-Covid-19-au-Maroc_a2582.html.

²⁵ "Comprehensive Response to Socio-Economic Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Palestine Under Occupation", consisting of five separate reports focusing on MSMEs and employment; social protection; resilience and access to basic services; and responsive governance has been published. These have not been included in the analyses.

Country	SEIA
Yemen	COVID-19 Digital SEIA results
	A synthesis report on micro, small and medium enterprises in Yemen with potential COVID-19 impact analysis
	Food industry value chain
	Solar energy systems value chain
	Handloom and textile value chain
	Meat and poultry value chain
	Pottery value chain
	Beekeeping value chain - A market study with potential COVID-19 impact analysis

Annex 3: List of SERP global programmatic indicators

Pillar 1: Health First: Protecting health services and systems during the crisis indicator

Indicator 1.1: Number of people accessing essential (non-COVID-19-related) health services, disaggregated by sex, age group and at-risk populations

- a. Vaccination programmes
- b. Maternal health
- c. Nutrition programmes

Indicator 1.2: Number of health facilities that received UN support to maintain essential immunization services since COVID-19 disruptions, disaggregated by type of health worker and type of support:

- a. Modified routine immunization sessions to eliminate risk of infection
- b. Immunization catch-up sessions, including through outreach and mobile services
- c. Provision of immunization training and supplies
- d. Reporting on vaccine stock status
- e. Supporting surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases
- f. Other

Indicator 1.3: Whether the country is protecting health services and systems:

- a. with a set of core essential services to be maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic
- b. with a multisectoral mental health and psychosocial support technical working group
- c. with the implementation of health sector policies informed by SEIAs focused on at-risk populations

Indicator 1.4: Number of community health workers receiving UN support to maintain essential services since COVID-19 disruptions, disaggregated by type of support:

Type of health worker

- a. Health workers based at health care facilities
- b. Community health workers

Type of support

- c. Rapid training to provide essential maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH) services
- d. Provision of PPE and risk communication and community engagement material
- e. Provision of MNCH supplies (e.g., oral rehydration salts, antibiotics) and MNCH communication material
- f. Remuneration for community health workers
- g. Establishing community-based health delivery points
- h. Ensuring supportive mechanisms
- i. Connecting community health workers to GBV prevention and response information and services
- j. Other

Pillar 2: Protecting People: Social protection and basic services

Indicator 2.1: Number of people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies (including hygiene items) and services, disaggregated by sex, age group and at-risk population

Indicator 2.2: Number of children supported with distance/home-based learning, disaggregated by sex

Indicator 2.3: Number of primary school children receiving meals or alternatives to meals, such as take-home rations, disaggregated by sex and transfer modalities

- a. Meals
- b. Take-home ration as alternative to meals
- c. Cash based transfer as alternative to meals

Indicator 2.4: Whether the country has measures in place to address GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic, which:

- a. integrate violence prevention and response into COVID-19 response plans
- b. raise awareness through advocacy and campaigns, with targeted messages to both women and men
- c. provide options for women to report abuse and seek help without alerting perpetrators
- d. ensure continued functioning of shelters for victims of violence and expand their capacity
- e. ensure women's access to justice through police and justice responses to address impunity of perpetrators and protect women and their children.

Indicator 2.5: Number of beneficiaries of social protection schemes and services related to the COVID-19 pandemic, disaggregated by type of programme, territory (rural/urban), sex, age group and at-risk population

- a. Cash transfer programmes
- b. Cash-for-work (productivity)
- c. Food and nutrition schemes
- d. Legal aid services
- e. Human rights protection services
- f. Psychosocial support service

Pillar 3: Economic response and recovery: protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises and informal sector workers

Indicator 3.1: Whether the country reinforces UN-supported employment policies and a regulatory environment conducive to economic recovery and decent work, especially in high-risk COVID sectors for:

- a. Women
- b. Youth (15-29)
- c. Own account workers and family workers (as proxy for informal workers)
- d. Migrant workers
- e. Workers with disabilities

Indicator 3.2: Number of private sector companies and formal and informal sector workers supported during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

- a. MSMEs
- b. Private sector companies, excluding MSMEs
- c. Formal sector workers
- d. Informal sector worker

Indicator 3.3: Whether the country is adopting fiscal, monetary and legislative stimulus packages for COVID-19 economic response and recovery that are:

- a. Climate and environmentally sensitive
- b. Gender responsive

Indicator 3.4: Number of direct beneficiaries of food supply protection regimes that are designed to:

- a. Protect livelihoods by addressing food supply bottlenecks
- b. Improve protective measures for food supply worker

Pillar 4: Macroeconomic responses and multilateral cooperation

Indicator 4.1: Whether the country undertook SEIAs in response to the COVID-19 crisis, with a focus on vulnerable groups, for at-risk populations:

- a. Macro-meso economic needs assessment
- b. Labour market impact assessment
- c. Multisectoral and sectoral needs assessment
- d. Fiscal and public debt assessment
- e. Human impact needs assessment for at-risk populations
- f. Gender-sensitive impact assessments

Indicator 4.2: Whether the country is implementing policies informed by socio-economic impact assessment, for at-risk populations:

- a. a) Socio-economic policy, including employment
- a. b) Labour market policies

- a. c) Fiscal policy
- a. d) Social protection policy
- a. e) Women's empowerment policy
- c. Advocacy and political engagement spaces at national level
- d. Advocacy and political engagement spaces at sub-national level

Pillar 5: Social cohesion and community resilience

Indicator 5.1: Number of organizations benefiting from institutional capacity-building so that governments, employers' and workers' organizations can work together to shape socio-economic policy responses

- a. Employers' and business organizations
- b. Trade unions

Indicator 5.2: Number of community-based organizations capacitated to respond to and mitigate the pandemic, fight against COVID-19-related domestic violence, racism, xenophobia, stigma and other forms of discrimination, and prevent and remedy human rights abuses

- a. Women's organizations
- b. Youth organizations
- c. Urban community-based organizations, networks, associations and slum federations
- d. National human rights institutions
- e. Religious community organizations
- f. Indigenous community organizations
- g. Community-based organizations in fragile and conflict-affected countries
- h. Community organizations representing other at-risk populations
- i. Community-based organizations providing livelihoods support and basic services delivery

Indicator 5.3: Number of social dialogue, advocacy and political engagement spaces facilitated with participation of at-risk populations and groups:

- a. Social dialogue spaces at national level
- b. Social dialogue spaces at sub-national level



Copyright © UNDP 2021

All rights reserved

United Nations Development Programme
1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10075, USA

