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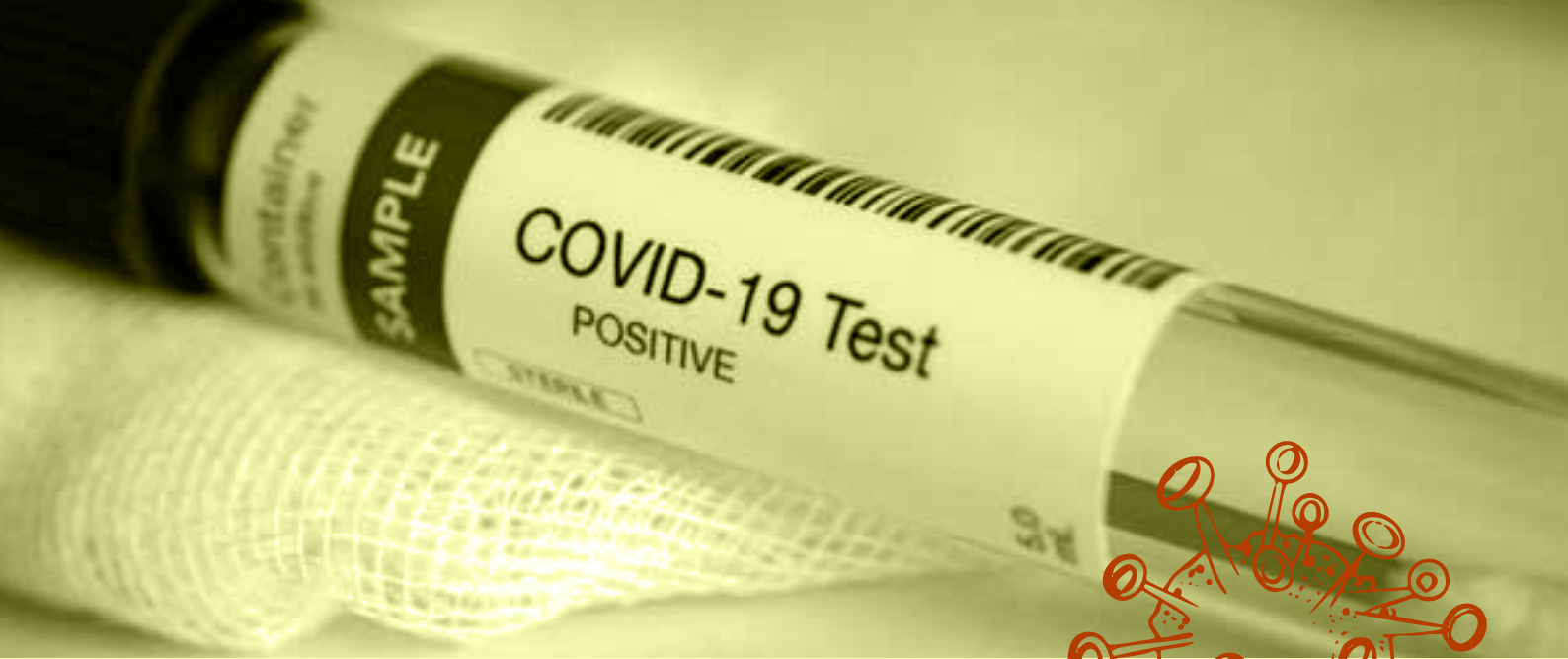


PROJECT BRIEF

STRENGTHENING UGANDA'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TO COVID-19:

**Boosting National Resilience To Multi-Hazard Induced
Disaster Risks And Pandemics**





BACKGROUND:

COVID-19 has spread rapidly to almost every corner of the world and deepened inequalities. Moreover, it continues to threaten to undo progress on sustainable development and humanitarian responses more broadly.

In Uganda, the COVID 19 outbreak has evolved, initially dominated by imported cases then progressing to sustained community transmission. The Country only registered 3,038 confirmed cases over six months (March to August 2020), while it progressively took four months (September to December 2020) to register 22,021 cases (88% of the national case count at the time). Initial peaks observed in May 2020 were associated with the clusters in border districts, majorly from the trans-national truck drivers. Intense actions neutralized the clusters and resulted in a sharp decline.

From March 2021, Uganda started registering an increase in the number of new cases per week. The current upsurge remains localized to Gulu, Arua, Kitgum, Wakiso, Kampala and has quickly spread to other districts and regions. Since June 2021, Uganda has been implementing a National COVID-19 Resurgence Plan to curb the 2nd wave of the pandemic. Uganda is sandwiched between neighbouring countries that are experiencing an exponential rise in the incidence of COVID-19. Being a landlocked country and transit route to many countries, the risk of importing new variants is very high from highly burdened territories.

Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, Uganda is also faced with multiple hazards that often trigger disasters, including floods, landslides, drought, livestock and crop diseases, lightning, windstorms, and population movements. Since 2019, Uganda has experienced extended torrential rains, which caused an unprecedented rise in the water levels of all the major lakes and rivers. This occasioned extensive flooding of communities neighbouring lakeshores and riverbanks and consequent displacement. Currently, over 45,000 persons need resettlement, in addition to other emergency requirements by victims of landslides, drought, and other disasters that continue to undermine the resilience of individuals and communities.

In response, UNDP Uganda, in partnership with the National Emergency Coordination and Operation Center (NECOC), with the financial support from The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have begun efforts to support the ongoing management of COVID-19 and building resilience capacity under the coordination of the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda (OPM). This project will be instrumental in enhancing the national response to multi-hazard induced disasters with benefits that stretch beyond COVID-19. This includes optimizing the efficiency of systemic processes within NECOC and its regional, district and supportive cross-border mechanisms.

This project will focus on vulnerable communities living on Uganda's border exposed to multiple hazards and risks, including the high risk of contracting COVID-19 or any other pandemic due to their proximity to transport hubs and receiving refugee population.

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“What we don't know about Africa and COVID-19 is far less important than what we do know. Because the things we do know are amazing and important and have surely contributed to Africa's overall success in weathering this disease.”

Solomon Zewdu
Deputy Dr. for Global Development in Ethiopia & Africa
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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APPROACH AND FOCUS AREAS

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

The framework of ongoing support between UNDP Uganda and the OPM has three major priorities and four areas of investment:

-  **Strengthen evidence-based decision making to enable coordinated prioritization of resources towards the most impactful control efforts** **01**
-  **Expand risk mitigation efforts to decrease health and social-economic shocks caused by the pandemic** **02**
-  **Build up local institutional capabilities in response to COVID-19 and future emergencies, including epidemics or pandemics** **03**

POLICY, PLANNING AND BUDGETING



Deepening communications channels: This programme rollout aims to support the OPM for enhanced coordination of responses to disasters across sectors, ministries, departments, agencies, and local governments. The support to OPM will also identify critical communication needs and limitations followed by the launch of a strategic engagement process for all key actors.



Streamlining multi-sector planning: The investment will provide technical advice to the OPM for leadership for coordinated multi-sector planning, forecasting response needs, effective management, and utilization of stimulus packages from Government and development partners. With it, local capabilities to respond to current and future emergencies will expand. In addition, given the high refugee and cross-border migration from neighbouring countries, the programme aims to ramp up the Government COVID-19 response capacity, therefore alleviating some strains put on the health care systems.



Facilitating test expansion: Deliverables will also address the Ministry of Health (MOH) request to build on the technical support given by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI). UVRI serves as the only centre in the country to expand urgently needed testing capabilities specifically for cross-border long-distance truck drivers. The focus will be given to strengthening the information flows between the sub-national and national arms of the NECOC through test analysis.



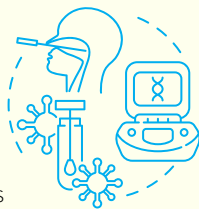
Safeguarding vulnerable communities: UVRI is a national institution and a regional partner for the foundation 'TB, HIV and Global Health Research and Development' - a subsidiary of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. These initiatives also work to strengthen the capacity for future emergency preparedness. Considering Uganda's current policy on refugees, it is estimated that the influx of refugees will continue to create ongoing demand for COVID-19 testing capabilities. Therefore, this investment will contribute to the prevention and containment of COVID-19, alleviate suffering, and protect the most vulnerable populations - including refugees, host communities, subsistence farmers, children, women, and persons in transit.



EXPECTED OUTCOMES

To implement the targets outlined by the UNDP framework agreement with the OPM, and to further optimize systemic processes within NECOC, this programme aims to achieve the following goals:

Expand capacity for COVID-19 testing and increase border surveillance in Kampala City, high-risk cross border points, and transportation corridors:



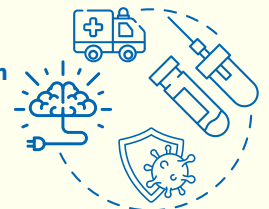
- Resources will be channeled towards providing rapid assessments to gauge levels of COVID-19 in Uganda. This action will supplement the vital community assessment work already taking place in the country.
- Investment - both financial and intellectual- will contribute to pandemic prevention and containment targeted at vulnerable communities. Reinforcements will be provided to border committees for more effective surveillance. This will include cross-border capacity building for analysis and will produce important lessons for related disasters such as Ebola, locusts, floods, drought, etc.
- This support will leverage UNDP's past and ongoing investment in activating NECOC, including the current efforts to equip its district, regional and border support mechanisms.

Strengthen national coordination capacities for emergency response and recovery with a robust Knowledge Management System for the NECOC:



- UNDP will support creating a more vigorous and updated early warning system to promote resilient infrastructures. This blueprint will be housed within NECOC and mapped on the national and local levels.
- UNDP technical teams will contribute to the establishment of a bespoke epidemic preparedness, response, and recovery system through harnessing synergies across sectors and actors. Through this work, Uganda will have significantly improved its long-term ability to manage emergencies while building its best practices, insights, and partnerships.

Establish a Think Tank to further curate vital information from the emergency response and coordination ecosystem:



- UNDP will fortify pathways for strengthening risk management by forming a Think Tank comprised of critical experts to further provide support to NECOC. Specialists will consult on the economic and governmental impacts of the pandemic.
- This Think Tank will have an auxiliary team of eight researchers from Makerere University supported by eight research grants. UNDP will also provide a Senior Gender Advisor who will ensure gender analysis is integrated into all policy and programmatic work produced by the Think Tank and NECOC (ie: policy briefs, academic articles, etc.).
- A small interdisciplinary portion of the Think Tank will function in-house at the OPM. This will secure those consistent independent analyses is provided quickly to improve governmental response times. Such support will foster heightened knowledge management and policymaking for a stronger national resilience disaster risk.





DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2021

- Official launch of the project.
- Support the conducting of periodic rapid risk assessments and local level surveillance in hotspots for COVID-19 detection and reporting. Community-based healthcare workers will also be provided motorbikes or bicycles for increased mobility through hotspots.

DECEMBER 2021

- Design a multi-sector strategy to inform short, medium, and long-term capacity development for disaster risk reduction and mitigation.

AUGUST 2021

- Provide small grant funding to support research by members attached to the Think Tank.
- Provide a grant to the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) to strengthen timely testing and collaboration between sub-national and national arms of the NECOC.

January 2022

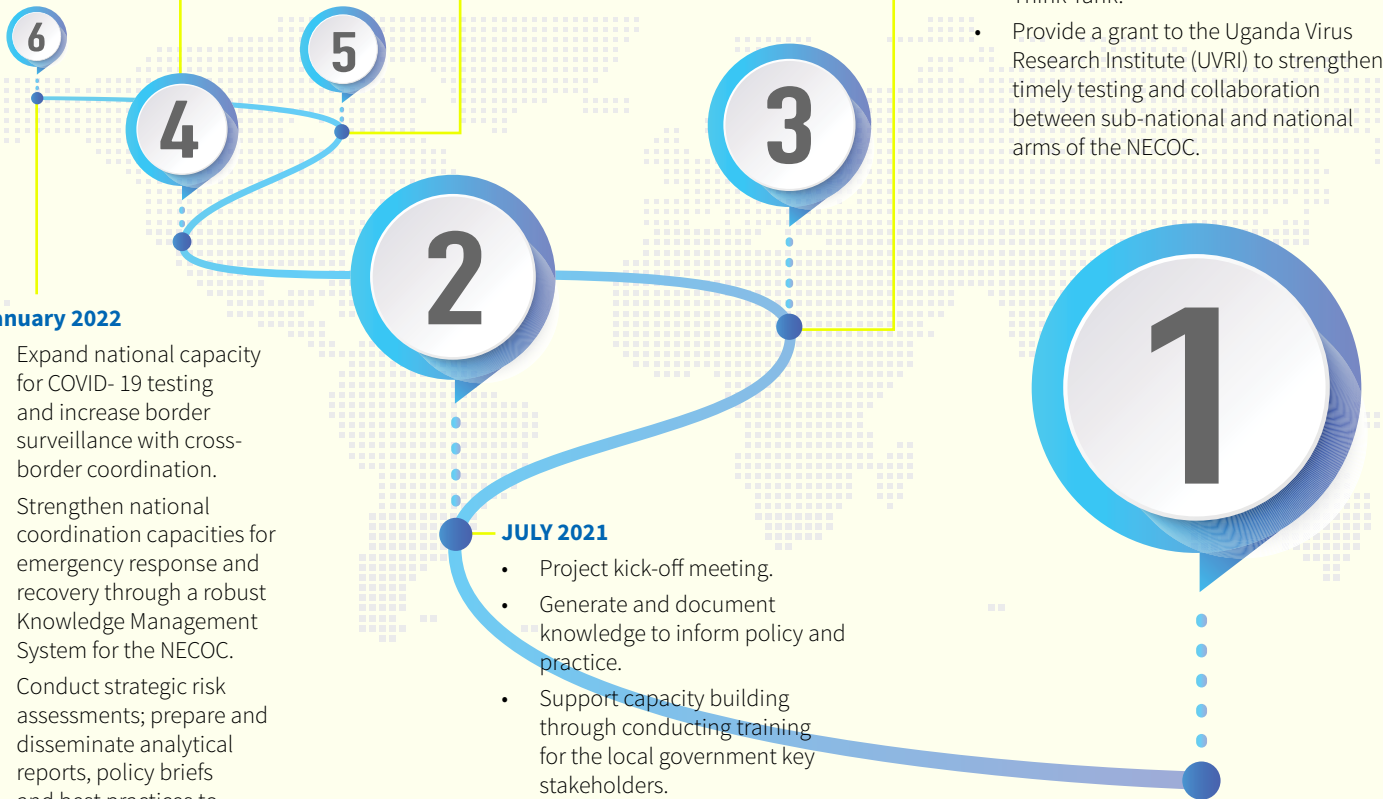
- Expand national capacity for COVID-19 testing and increase border surveillance with cross-border coordination.
- Strengthen national coordination capacities for emergency response and recovery through a robust Knowledge Management System for the NECOC.
- Conduct strategic risk assessments; prepare and disseminate analytical reports, policy briefs and best practices to inform policy, planning, budgeting and stakeholder engagement on COVID-19 and other disasters.

JULY 2021

- Project kick-off meeting.
- Generate and document knowledge to inform policy and practice.
- Support capacity building through conducting training for the local government key stakeholders.
- Facilitate strategic communication and engagement of stakeholders within government, community security organizations, the private sector, academia, development partners, cultural institutions, and faith-based organizations.

JUNE 2021

- Recruit and deploy a multidisciplinary team of four specialists - two Resilience Specialists, one Knowledge Management Specialist and one Communications Specialist. This core team will form a Think Tank at NECOC. The team will also be able to consult on cross-border disaster risk coordination.



About UNDP Uganda

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustices 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.

In Uganda, UNDP supports the Government to achieve sustainable development, create opportunities for empowerment, protect the environment, minimize natural and man-made disasters, build strategic partnerships, and improve the quality of life for all citizens.

About NECOC Uganda

The NECOC is an institutional structure hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister with a mission to ensure rapid, effective, and efficient response to disaster and emergency situations through issuance of timely warnings and mobilizing adequate capabilities for response. To enable NECOC achieve its mission, Government and partners continue to work to improve and enhance coordination structures at national, regional and district levels and building capacity and expertise for disaster and emergency preparedness to mitigate the adverse impact of disasters to people, infrastructure, and livelihoods of Ugandans, and build resilience of communities.

Key Contacts

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