



BUSINESS GUIDE COVID-19

LAST UPDATE: 8 APRIL 2020



Overview of the crisis

“Countries battling the pandemic at home are rightly prioritizing people living in their own communities. But the hard truth is they will be failing to protect their own people if they do not act now to help the poorest countries protect themselves. No one is safe until everyone is safe.”

– **António Guterres**, United Nations Secretary-General

CONFIRMED CASES	CONFIRMED DEATHS	AFFECTED COUNTRIES	WHO RISK ASSESSMENT
1.14 M	63 k	209	Very high

Source: World Health Organization, as of 6 April 2020. [World Health Organization Situation Report](#)

On 11 March 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 was a pandemic. WHO is calling all partners to seize the window of opportunity and act immediately to assist all countries to rapidly detect, diagnose and prevent the further spread of the virus.

The world is facing an unprecedented challenge that affects people, communities and economies everywhere. The COVID-19 pandemic is above all a health crisis that requires decisive action to suppress the spread of the virus. However, it also has significant socio-economic implications that are particularly devastating to micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

WHO has developed a [Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan \(SPRP\)](#) to help stop further transmission of COVID-19 and to mitigate the impact of the outbreak in all countries. The SPRP takes what has been learned so far about the virus and translates that knowledge into strategic action that can guide the efforts of all national and international partners when developing context-specific national and regional operational plans.

Complementing the WHO SPRP, the [COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) is designed to fight the virus in the world’s poorest countries and address the needs of the most vulnerable. Coordinated by the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it brings together existing appeals from the WHO and other UN partners.

The UN Secretary-General report [Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19](#) provides further detail as to how the private sector can contribute.

The United Nations calls on all businesses and corporations to take three primary actions:

- Adhere to health and safety guidelines and provide economic cushions to workers, including through ensuring worker safety and social distancing and secure wages for those working from home.
- Provide financial and technical support to governments by contributing to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund.
- Repurpose their facilities and business plans to focus on meeting the needs of this crisis.

This Guide offers companies an overview of how the private sector can join with the UN to take collective action to stem the pandemic.

How can the private sector help?

Business can play a vital role in response and recovery efforts in countries affected by COVID-19 first by protecting their staff, community and clients by prioritizing containment and following the recommendations of the national health authorities and WHO to contain the virus. They should raise awareness of transmission and prevention and put in place policies and guidance, e.g. on travel, telecommuting, social distancing, reporting symptoms, non-contact methods for doing business etc. Secondly, companies should ensure they have updated business continuity plans in place for the company but also for suppliers.

Further you can support the response in three key ways:

- Financial contributions;
- In-kind donation of priority materials;
- Joint advocacy.

Financial contributions

We are all affected by the growing COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization is leading and coordinating the global effort, supporting countries to prevent, detect, and respond to the pandemic.

Currently the greatest need is to ensure all countries are prepared to combat the spread of the virus - especially those with weak health systems. Financial donations support WHO's work to track and understand the spread of the virus; ensure patients get the care they need and frontline workers get essential supplies and information; and accelerate efforts to develop vaccines, tests, and treatments.

To help WHO and other responders fight the pandemic, people and organizations can donate to the [COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund](#). Donations will support countries to respond to COVID-19, especially countries with weak health systems, poor access to global markets and fewer resources. Donations received will go towards funding the activities of the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, which include among others:

- Putting in place activities to track and understand the spread of the virus;
- Ensuring patients get the care they need
- Buying and shipping essential supplies such as masks, gloves and protective wear for frontline workers
- Accelerating efforts to develop vaccines, tests and treatments.

For corporate and foundation giving, please contact COVID19Fund@unfoundation.org

The UN Secretary-General has also launched the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (COVID-19 MPTF Fund) which is a UN inter-agency finance mechanism to support low- and middle-income programme countries in overcoming the health and development crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fund complements the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and the Consolidated Global Humanitarian Appeal for COVID-19, helping to safeguard progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The [United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund \(COVID-19 MPTF Fund\)](#) targets those most vulnerable to economic hardship and social disruption, and supports three objectives:

- Tackle the health emergency
- Focus on the social impact, and the economic response and recovery
- Help countries recover better

It will ensure strong interlinkages and synergies across humanitarian, recovery and development action, with a focus on country-specific challenges and opportunities. For more information please contact Ms Olga Aleshina, Senior Portfolio Manager, olga.aleshina@undp.org.

“A coordinated international response involving the business sector will be critical in efforts to support people and companies affected by COVID-19, limit further disruption to the economy and facilitate business continuity for a swift recovery. For every decision maker, the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact can provide ideas and inspiration in uncertain times.”

– **Lise Kingo**, CEO and Executive Director, United Nations Global Compact

In-kind donations

COVID-19 Disease Commodity Packages (DCPs)

Companies wishing to contribute to the relief efforts by providing in-kind goods should consider supporting WHO's [COVID-19 Disease Commodity Packages \(DCPs\)](#). DCPs are a series of disease specific datasheets that list the critical commodities and the technical specifications for each commodity per disease.

The DCPs are based on three standard intervention pillars: surveillance, prevention and control, and case management. The COVID-19 DCP includes commodities for a range of activities including Sample Collection and Diagnostics; Triage / Screening (PPE); Supportive Treatment; PPE and Health Care Facilities.

Each of these activities requires specific commodities. The commodities are listed with the technical specifications which have been determined by WHO technical experts in consultation with external experts. Please contact connectingbusiness@un.org for more information.

Other goods and services

To donate other goods or services, particularly medical equipment, please submit offers to connectingbusiness@un.org. Please be as specific as possible - describe what you wish to donate, time-frame for delivery, and clarify if you will cover shipping and other expenses associated with delivery. We will then guide you to the most appropriate recipient organizations. Companies with employees, suppliers or customers in an affected region, or those with existing partnerships, should reach out and provide support directly to these groups through their existing channels. All donated items must meet WHO standards and respond to the priority list of needs.

How business can partner with the UN in support of the [COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#)

Depending on their sector, location and interests, companies may wish to partner with specific UN entities. The following overview summarizes responding agencies' focus areas and provides links for further information on how to directly support their work combatting the pandemic:

- **FAO** will (i) stabilize access to food by supporting rural incomes and preserving ongoing critical livelihood assistance to vulnerable households; (ii) ensure continuity of the critical food supply chain, and (iii) ensure people along the food chain are not agents of COVID-19 transmission.

“COVID-19 is taking so much away from us. But it’s also giving us something special – the opportunity to come together as one humanity – to work together, to grow together.”

– **Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Director-General, World Health Organization

- **IOM’s** COVID-19 Response Page provides an overview of plans, funding requirements, key resources, and bi-weekly situation reports for IOM’s response to COVID-19 which ensures that migrant-inclusive approaches and support to vulnerable groups are fully integrated into overall COVID-19 response efforts. IOM’s response will protect, assist, and advocate for refugees, IDPs, migrants and host communities, particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and receive COVID-19 assistance, access to key services and information.
- **UNDP** will support countries to strengthen their health systems, including by helping them procure much-needed medical supplies, quickly leverage digital technologies and ensure health workers are paid. UNDP will support countries to assess the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 and take urgent recovery measures to minimize long-term impact, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, and to help societies to recover. This includes impact assessments on micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises and using digital technologies for business continuity. In partnership with national, regional and global financial institutions and the private sector, UNDP will work with Ministries of Finance, financial regulators and sectoral ministries to help ensure finance gets where it is most needed as governments, business, and communities prepare, respond and recover.
- **UNFPA** will ensure the continuity of national and local health system capacity to provide access to integrated quality sexual and reproductive health to ensure safe delivery, mental health and psychosocial support, family planning and gender-based violence services. In addition, UNFPA will provide risk communication and community engagement for primary prevention and stigma reduction, strengthening risk-reduction messages and addressing the needs of women of reproductive age in quarantine. For more info please refer to [Safe Delivery - Even Now Coronavirus Disease \(COVID- 19\) Global Response Appeal](#)
- **UN-Habitat** will support preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic among the most vulnerable populations in urban settlements, especially in informal settlements and slums.
- **UNHCR** will assist governments in meeting humanitarian standards and ensure that the needs of all those seeking protection are taken into account. Additionally, UNHCR will undertake targeted messaging in camps, settlements and host communities at highest risk on hygiene practices; increase WASH facilities, hygiene supplies and urgent procurement of medicines and medical supplies; and enhance inpatient and outpatient services, intensive care capacity and burial facilities. Contact privatesectorpartnership@unhcr.org.
- **UNICEF** will strengthen Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities to ensure women, children, and their families know how to prevent COVID-19 and are encouraged to seek assistance while also contributing to an improvement in Infection, Prevention and Control practices in communities, educational and health facilities. UNICEF will also ensure children and women have continued access to essential health care, education, child protection, and gender based violence (GBV) services. UNICEF is also developing guidance documents for business. A [“Guidance for Employers on Flexible Work Arrangements and Other Good Workplace Practices \(COVID-19\)”](#) is already available. Another Practical Guide for Business on ‘How Business Can Help Reduce the Impact of Covid-19 on children and Families’ will be available soon on UNICEF’s dedicated website.
- **WFP’s** long-standing experience and vast expertise in emergency response, logistics and supply chain, emergency telecommunications, nutrition and other key areas, is being used to help through this unprecedented crisis.
- You may also support relief efforts by donating to [country-based pooled funds \(CBPF’s\)](#). Through CBPF’s, funding is provided to national and international NGOs, organizations of the Red Cross / Red Crescent, and UN agencies and IOM.

“While health authorities are the most trusted to respond to the crisis, “employers” are next before health insurance, education, pharmaceutical, government, NGO’s and the media.”

– Edelman Trust Barometer, March 2019

Joint advocacy

Business leaders should use their positions of influence for joint advocacy, and work together with the UN and governments to identify and share innovative solutions. Key messages include:

- To combat COVID-19, companies can accomplish much more through collective action and joint advocacy than when acting independently.
- For example, business leaders can use their positions of influence to encourage governments to maintain open trade and promote humanitarian corridors to ensure the movement of essential supplies and humanitarian personnel by air, land and sea.
- Business can engage in joint activities through country-based networks such as the UN Connecting Business initiative (CBI), UN Global Compact Networks, and local Chambers of Commerce.
- Companies interested in finding opportunities to support joint advocacy and collective action at the local level should contact connectingbusiness@un.org for contacts or introductions in a specific country.

Global call to creative industries

For the first time ever, the United Nations has issued an [Open Brief Global Call to Creatives](#) everywhere to help spread public health messages in ways which will be effective, accessible and shareable and help flatten the curve. Companies can leverage their talent to develop and distribute key public health messages across their platforms. Brands can integrate existing messages into corporate communications, donate media space, and share information with employees.

Commercial offers

If your offer is commercial in nature, please refer to the [UN Global Marketplace](#) for more information.

Critical reminders

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is engaging more than ever with private sectors globally to ensure the supply of personal protection equipment (PPE), to aid in the fight against the outbreak. The world is facing severe shortages of PPE and the WHO discourages stockpiling of PPE in countries and areas where transmission is low, and calls on all countries and companies to work with the WHO to ensure the fair and rational use of supplies.
- All response activities should be guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Business should give special attention to the most vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples. By responding to women's needs and supporting women's leadership, companies can speed global progress on fighting the pandemic.
- Stakeholder engagement is key to corporate engagement in humanitarian response. Ensuring communities are at the centre of, and driving humanitarian action, is critical to ensuring appropriate and timely aid and protection reaches the people most in need. Working collaboratively with existing local institutions, social networks and civil society is critical in this endeavour.
- Business contributions to the UN response efforts must comply with the [Guidelines on Cooperation between the UN and the Business Sector](#)

We are here to support

For more information on how businesses can help please contact:

Karen Smith, Programme Coordinator, Connecting Business initiative connectingbusiness@un.org

Where to find the latest information

For an updated list of maps, situation reports, research, events and guidance, please visit:

[Connecting Business Initiative](#)

Updated business guides and further resources and guidance for the private sector

[International Chamber of Commerce](#)

[International Labour Organization](#)

Practical advice for the world of work

[UN Global Compact](#)

Special Appeal to Business and COVID-19 Response Initiative

[World Economic Forum](#)

COVID Action Platform

[World Health Organization](#)

Includes situation dashboard, country and technical guidance, global research and latest situation reports

Developed with the support of the [Connecting Business initiative](#) and the [UN Global Compact](#)

