

# UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) Abridged COVID-19 Response and Recovery Strategy

*Leave no one and no place behind*

## Regional context

Home to some of the world's most vibrant economies with strong growth rates, Asia-Pacific is one of the fastest urbanizing regions yet is also home to the largest concentration of urban poverty, with one third of urban dwellers living in slums or slum-like conditions (ESCAP and UN-Habitat 2015). These are among the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic, lacking access to proper hygiene, water, sanitation and health facilities (WASH). The informal economy accounts for 68% of employment in the region (ILO 2018), and so the majority are forced to continue working to provide food and other necessities for their families, being highly at risk from infection as well as transmission to others. The sweeping lockdowns of cities, contracted trade and mobility between and within countries, along with the onset of climate-related disasters have brought tremendous hardships to territories and people.

Governments are grappling with the immediate impacts and need to respond in a way that balances a mix of public health interventions, social protection and economic stimulus. With extensive expertise and practice providing improved access to WASH, disaster risk reduction, capacity building and support to community-based organisations and governments, UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is ideally placed to support the COVID-19 response and recovery in urban areas, in particular within informal settlements. Our framework for action presented below builds on these strong partnerships, providing an integrated approach to respond and recover from COVID-19 and related disasters in the short, medium and long-term, helping to build back better and enhance progress already made towards achieving the SDGs.

## Actions currently taking place on the ground



In **Myanmar**, working with community groups and small businesses, the Rakhine Settlements Support Programme has installed 5 public handwashing stations in key locations across Sittwe. In addition, Information Educational and Communication (IEC) materials were distributed to communities that self-financed their handwashing stations at the evening market and city bus terminal.



In **Sri Lanka**, UN-Habitat is providing support to Provincial Councils and Local Authorities to develop and manage a database for service provision, while facilitating meetings on emergency response.

In the **Philippines**, the Rebuilding Marawi through Community-Driven Shelter and Livelihood Recovery Support project has kept open three cooperatives for the many families who rely on them for basic goods like rice, while taking necessary measures against COVID-19 including face masks, physical barriers between cashier and customer, and posters on social distancing.

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In **Nepal**, unemployed home-based workers are now with jobs supporting the COVID-19 crisis, producing face masks, hand sanitizer and coverall suits for municipalities and local communities.

In **Cambodia**, the Project for the Support for Improving Living Environment and Disaster Prevention Capacity has installed 14 clean latrines in communities, providing training on handwashing and social distancing.

## Proposed actions

In line with UN-Habitat's overarching COVID-19 support framework, ROAP supports country-level responses focussing on the following eight sectoral entry points:

- 1. Mapping, spatial analysis, smart technology.** Understanding and analysing existing urban systems to provide a more effective response, setting the foundation for a more resilient recovery.
- 2. Adapting response to urban areas.** Providing advocacy and advisory services on emergency preparedness, response and recovery covering key topics such as safe mobility in urban areas, and isolation requirements.
- 3. Fast track learning for cities and communities.** Localizing the response through decentralization mechanisms to capture knowledge from local governments, communities and service providers.
- 4. Urban transport and mobility.** Ensuring people are able to access their livelihoods and health centres without increasing risk.
- 5. Mitigating economic impact.** Improving resource allocation through re-orienting or scaling existing programmes, promoting sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship development.
- 6. Community-driven response in informal settlements and slums.** Improving communication and access to information, strengthening community support networks and governance mechanisms to reduce stigma and foster solidarity.
- 7. Housing.** Supporting density reduction and optimizing isolation efforts in vulnerable areas, including informal settlements.
- 8. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.** Providing access to affordable basic services to ensure the protection of the life and livelihoods of vulnerable communities, together with local governments and utility providers.

## For partnership with UN-Habitat, please contact:

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