

INNOVATION

COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION

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This Special Edition of the Innovation Update highlights how UN Entities are leveraging innovative approaches to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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- EXPLORE HOW THE UN USES BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS IN ITS COVID-19 RESPONSE

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AGAINST COVID-19

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- ▶ Together with Rwanda's Ministry of ICT and Innovation, [UNDP Accelerator Lab deployed five anti-epidemic robots](#) to help frontline workers fight the pandemic. The robots will support detection of COVID-19 cases including among returning citizens, test patients, and provide other services in the hospitals.
- ▶ [UNFPA Cote d'Ivoire](#) is designing an electronic nanoserver, serving as hotspot and storage device, through which midwives can access learning materials and trainings regarding COVID-19 - with or without internet access.
- ▶ UNAIDS has collaborated with WeDoctor, a Chinese medical service platform, to organise virtual sessions for building skills and expertise for COVID-19 care and management. These sessions connected over 250 African doctors from [Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda](#) with leading Chinese frontline medical experts, sharing China's experience with the COVID-19 response.



- ▶ UNODC launched the [Sport Challenge](#) campaign with the Republic of Uzbekistan, encouraging sport as a tool for developing life skills, positive values, and resilience to difficult situations, including anxiety as a result of confinement during the COVID-19 crisis. Over 20,000 individuals from ages 7 to 87 [participated in this challenge to date](#).

WE HAVE LAUNCHED A NEW UN INNOVATION WEBINAR LIBRARY
 Explore innovation-related webinars from across the UN and add your event to grow the living library



The UN Innovation Network is an informal, collaborative network of innovators from UN Agencies. To find out more about the UNIN, please visit our website, where you can also subscribe to our mailing list.

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE POPULATION GROUPS

- ▶ UNDP Montenegro [launched an app](#) that helps victims of domestic violence – a growing issue in countries with movement restrictions. Key features include a one-tap alert which is sent to the National SOS Helpline, professional support to victims, educational and informative content.
- ▶ Responding to increased family violence during the pandemic, UNODC and the Governor’s Office of the Santander Region, Colombia trained 60 volunteer mediators and public servants on violence prevention and peaceful resolution. These trainings introduced “cooling corners” where family members can seek out a space in their household to avoid conflict, facilitating dialogue among family and community members and avoiding verbal and physical violence.



Photo: WFP

- ▶ In collaboration with civil society networks, UNAIDS in Thailand is using an online tool to [monitor and report cases of violence](#) and other human rights violations among key populations and people living with HIV during the pandemic.
- ▶ UNV supported UNDP, under the lead of the Peruvian Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, mobilised 20,000 digital volunteers to [check in on 400,000 senior citizens](#) on any COVID-19 related symptoms, their emotional state and their support systems via phone. The initiative helps ensure that the elderly and other vulnerable groups are able to endure isolation, which in turn contributes to flatten the curve of new infections.



- ▶ UN Women developed a [policy brief](#) highlighting emerging trends and impacts of COVID-19 on [violence against women and girls](#) facilitated by information and communications technology (ICT). It provides examples of strategies and practices put in place to prevent and respond to online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls, and recommendations to enhance their online safety.
- ▶ After multiple coronavirus cases were confirmed in the world’s largest refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar, local law enforcement restricted access to the camp to reduce the risk to refugees. Manually approving each vehicle entering the camp could take hours. WFP’s [Humanitarian Access Project](#) was developed in 48 hours to provide each vehicle a [digital identity encoded into a QR code](#), reducing the approval time to just 30 seconds. Authorities simply need to scan each QR code to validate the driver and let them through.

EDUCATION

- ▶ With 1.5 billion children currently out of school because of COVID-19, UNEP and TED-Ed have partnered with more than [50 collaborators](#) to produce [Earth School](#), which takes parents, students and educators on an adventure consisting of 30 interactive quests to help them re-connect with nature.
- ▶ [The Climate Technology Centre and Network](#) (hosted by UNEP and UNIDO) has co-designed a series of innovative webinars with its network members to address the connection between climate change and [zoonosis](#) (pandemic), the role of institutions in promoting a [circular economy](#) as well as the role of the [private sector](#) in climate technology transfer.



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

- ▶ IFAD continues to repurpose ongoing investments to shape its COVID-19 response around innovative ways to protect food security and support poor people in rural areas. In Gambia, IFAD has [repurposed project investments](#) to purchase seeds, fertiliser and sanitary kits (incl. masks) for rural farmers. IFAD also continues to develop its innovative, rapid-response Rural Poor Stimulus Facility, which will leverage financing to address the immediate challenges faced by small-scale farmers as a consequence of COVID-19.
- ▶ UNEP has created a [volunteer programme](#) through an 'Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Food Security' framework to help African youth fabricate mechanical solar dryers to buffer against perishable food losses caused by the closure of markets during the COVID-19 crisis.
- ▶ ITC published [Unsung Heroes](#) dedicated to explore how farmers are coping with the crisis. In addition, a webinar series was launched to further explore the challenges expressed by farmers and their local partners.
- ▶ In Afghanistan, UNODC supports small rural farmers, who are at risk of cultivating illicit crops, through alternate development programmes. UNODC reached out to 2,800 individuals with informational brochures about COVID-19 and hygiene products during the seasonal distribution of seeds.



Photo: UNODC

EMPLOYMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- ▶ Strengthening the rule of law during the pandemic in Kenya, UNODC supported [virtual court hearings](#). The [Chief Justice of Kenya](#) stated that courts have delivered judgements on email and heard matters using video conferencing, and this shall continue.
- ▶ In Uganda, small-and-medium sized enterprises were badly impacted when public transportation halted due to COVID-19. Through a partnership between UNCDF and SafeBoda, the main ride-hailing company in Kampala, along with support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, [UNCDF](#) is supporting the development of an e-commerce platform that will [connect market vendors to customers](#) during the COVID-19 lockdown and beyond. Targeting an initial 800 vendors, the platform will connect vendors to households that need supplies leveraging the SafeBoda transport service. The partnership intends to help SafeBoda's fleet of 18,000 riders earn income while reaching a projected 50,000 customers daily with food stuffs and good delivery. By maintaining commerce through this partnership, local value chains will be preserved while vital information and safety practices around COVID-19 will be shared via the app.
- ▶ UNAIDS and HIEx partnered with StartupBlink on a special [section on COVID-19-related innovations](#) as part of their Global Startup Ecosystem Report 2020. Drawing from the [COVID-19 innovation map](#), it celebrates countries and cities who have risen up to respond to the pandemic with innovative solutions. An expanded report on this will be launched on 1st July 2020.



Photo: UNCDF





Photo: UNICEF

- ▶ UNDP and Jumia Food Uganda have launched an [e-commerce platform to connect micro, small and medium-size businesses with consumers](#).
- ▶ Around 436 million enterprises worldwide are facing serious disruption and, in many instances, closure. This has severe impacts on incomes and jobs, especially for 1.6 million informal workers. The ILO has established an Enterprises Innovation Facility (eif) to pave the way with innovative solutions and ideas that support enterprises of all sizes. The eif provides practical tools and advice on how to adopt new business models, technology and techniques that enhance productivity and sustainability, strengthen the capacity of enterprises to survive and stimulate growth and longevity. The ILO [COVID-19 Enterprises Resources webpage](#) is continuously updated with examples of the impact on enterprises, responses, state policy measures, and e-learning courses.
- ▶ Communication during a crisis needs to be human-centred. ITC-ILO supported the ILO with the implementation of a [First Person COVID-19 stories](#) project which will cover 100 testimonials from workers, employers and governments from around the world.
- ▶ As the specialised agency on industrial development, UNIDO is extending its virtual assistance to small-and-medium sized enterprises through continued learning by publishing, amongst others, [the UNIDO Technical Cooperation Risk Management Dashboard](#); sharing relevant policy advice, including through the [World Economic Forum](#); and the hosting of webinars, such as, how to deal with infectious waste.
- ▶ ITC-ILO launched a [free course to support small-and-medium sized enterprises](#) during COVID-19 and facilitate the implementation of strategies to minimise the negative impact of the crisis.
- ▶ The UNWTO Global Guidelines to [Restart Tourism](#) and Priorities for Tourism Recovery were released during the UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee. Innovation and sustainability were identified as strategic priorities for the COVID-19 recovery and new technologies and digitalisation recommended to raise confidence through travellers' journeys.
- ▶ [The UNWTO Tourism Data Dashboard](#) shows measures to support travel and tourism in COVID-19 times. This interactive board allows users to track the evolution of measures and tourism indicators by country.
- ▶ ITC developed a [resource pack](#) including a First Aid Toolkit for Business Survival, a webinar series coping with COVID-19, a video competition of COVID-19 business innovators, and a survey to young entrepreneurs to help ITC design new services for them, all accessible via [COVID-19 Impact Tracker](#).
- ▶ [UNFPA Benin](#) and [Sèmè City](#) co-created a Task Force to fight COVID-19 and its economic impact in Benin. This initiative aims to provide local solutions to ensure health-care services to women and increase the economic resilience of youth entrepreneurs.



Photo: UNWomen





COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

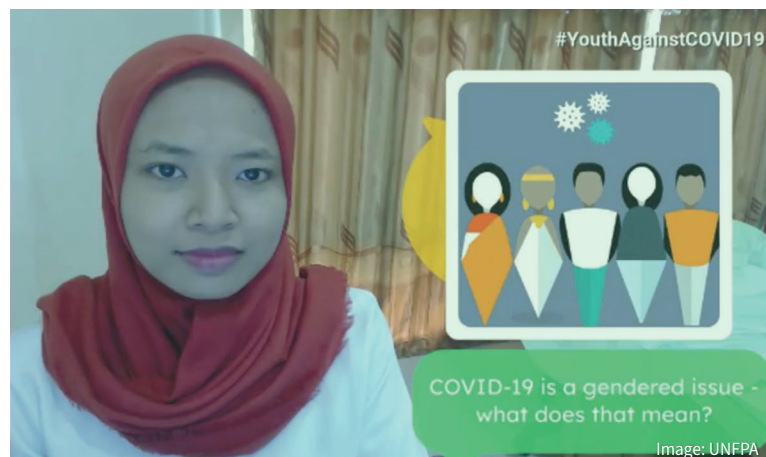
- ▶ The UN in Sri Lanka has created the social campaign #HumansofHopeSL to promote a narrative of resilience, solidarity and positivity. With a reach of over 5 million followers, Sri Lankans share stories supporting the recovery and combating stigma on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). The UN in Sri Lanka has also mobilised big data analytics for real-time tracking and tracing of online misinformation. Findings revealed that as many as 1 in 10 social media posts on COVID-19 was misinformation or hate speech.
- ▶ UNFPA and Prezi's [#YouthAgainstCOVID-19](#) campaign produced over 100 videos on COVID-19's impact on sexual and reproductive health. [UNFPA Guatemala adapted the campaign](#) to engage indigenous leaders in remote areas with limited connectivity.
- ▶ The UN in Kosovo (Pursuant to UNSCR 1244) is working with partners to share COVID-19 related information on [VocUp](#) an online cross-cultural platform designed to serve the needs of Serb and Albanian communities, which has been adapted to translate information in either language.

SUPPORTING GOVERNMENTS

- ▶ At the request of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, ECLAC launched the [COVID-19 Observatory](#), a knowledge platform providing analysis of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the region, monitoring policy responses and tools for strengthening the region's data ecosystem. The Observatory tracks emergency measures and recovery policies that countries are implementing and includes a geoportal visualisation tool, which disaggregates the information by measure, date and implementing government organisation. The Observatory also provides analyses of the socio-economic impacts that the crisis and the recovery measures could have at different levels. Data and information are collected

and analysed with the regional Development Coordination Office and the Resident Coordinators in Latin America and the Caribbean. The geoportal also includes a gender tab, updated in collaboration with UN Women, to map policy responses to impacts on women and gender equality.

- ▶ UN-DESA is assisting Governments to monitor the pandemic, estimate its impacts and inform policies to mitigate it by using country-level macroeconomic models and National Statistical Systems with timely and reliable information. This includes the launch of a new [UN COVID-19 Data Hub](#), as part of a broader initiative helping national statistical offices (NSO), to leverage modern technologies and data management practices. A [website](#) also provides guidance, actions, tools and best practices to ensure the operational continuity of data programmes by [NSOs](#).
- ▶ [The SDG Lab](#) at the UN Office at Geneva spearheaded a collaborative, multi-stakeholder process with public financial players and impact investors on financing COVID-19 response and recovery. The process facilitates knowledge sharing and design of instruments for delivering financing/liquidity to impact entrepreneurs in developing countries. Find out more [here](#).



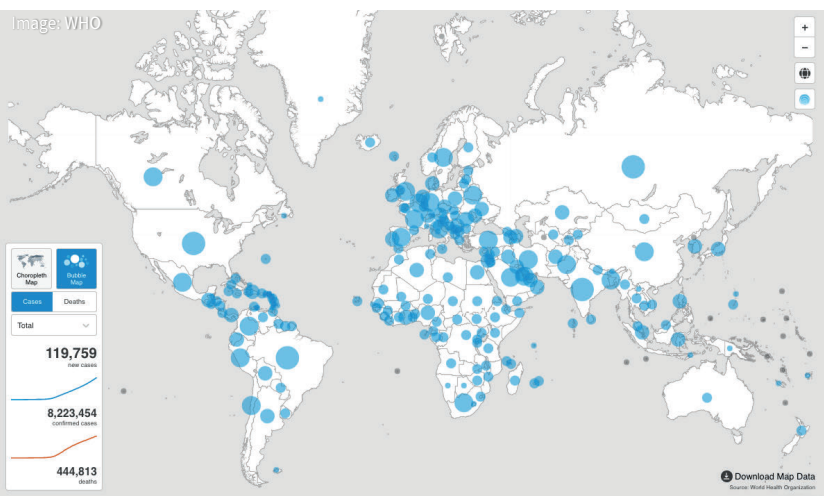
SUPPORTING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE THROUGH DATA AND INFORMATION

- ▶ The UN in Moldova has developed a big data platform to support COVID-19 response efforts. Through existing UN partnerships with telecoms, the platform provides analytics to monitor the evolution of the pandemic and informing policy.
- ▶ [The UN International Computing Centre](#) worked with the [UNDP Crisis Bureau](#) to build and deliver a [data warehouse solution](#) that sources information from the World Health Organization and the Johns Hopkins University - displaying it in mapping visualisation dashboards.
- ▶ UN-DPO has developed the primary Field Data Reporting System, including a [National Case Analysis dashboard](#) and an AI-driven ChatBot. The system supports the decision-making of the Field Support Group and reporting to Member States. UN-DPO has also created [dashboards](#) for UN missions with data on the spread of COVID-19 and will help missions collect data to track the impact of their interventions to prevent the spread of the virus.
- ▶ Radio remains the most reliable and affordable medium of accessing and sharing information in most of the developing world. UN Global Pulse used the [radio monitoring technology it developed](#) to extract transcripts containing [COVID-19 keywords](#) and analyse them. The research showed promising results for monitoring the health emergency, its social and economic impacts, and the spread of infodemics.



Photo: UN Global Pulse

- ▶ What are some basic health data management precautions that all organisations should take in the COVID-19 response? What constitutes sensitive data generally and in the health sector specifically? These are just some of the questions addressed in UN-OCHA's [FAQs on Data Responsibility in the COVID-19 Response](#), developed with members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Sub-Group on Data Responsibility. This [tip sheet](#) provides further advice on using online conferencing tools responsibly.
- ▶ In an article published in *Nature*, experts from UN Global Pulse, WHO, UNESCO, and ITU explored more than 200 projects to understand [how AI applications can support COVID-19 response](#). They propose a framework to categorise multidisciplinary AI research and discuss steps towards creating meaningful impact.
- ▶ UNDP has collected [more than 100 examples](#) of how country offices use digital to respond to the crisis.
- ▶ The Online Volunteer Platform of UN Volunteers provides innovative digital services in support of the UN System's COVID-19 response. For example, Online Volunteers supported UNDP's research activities in the areas of health system support and support to Small Island Developing States, enabling UNDP to quickly deliver on its policy and programme offer.



- ▶ UN-DPO has repurposed activities to include sanitisation, risk communication, and PPE production in conflict-affected communities. The [UN Mine Action Service](#) (UNMAS) in [Afghanistan](#) has created educational materials on how to access COVID-19-related information, while UNMAS in Iraq is looking for innovative approaches to grant-based clearing operations and conducts remote risk education campaigns, such as developing an interactive online quiz.
- ▶ UN Global Pulse worked with its Expert Group on Governance of Data and AI on a comprehensive collection of [COVID-19 related data privacy and protection resources](#). It also worked with partners in WHO and the MILA- Quebec AI Institute to expand previous research on [mapping the landscape of AI applications against COVID-19](#).
- ▶ UNICEF is working with partners all around the world to increase data and analytical capacity. It is currently producing insights for the country offices in Colombia, Côte

d'Ivoire, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mozambique, Mexico, Nigeria, and Ukraine. This expanded, accelerated focus of Magic Box is helping UNICEF gather and analyse real-time information - allowing for timely and relevant action, by better identifying and representing the needs of the most vulnerable.

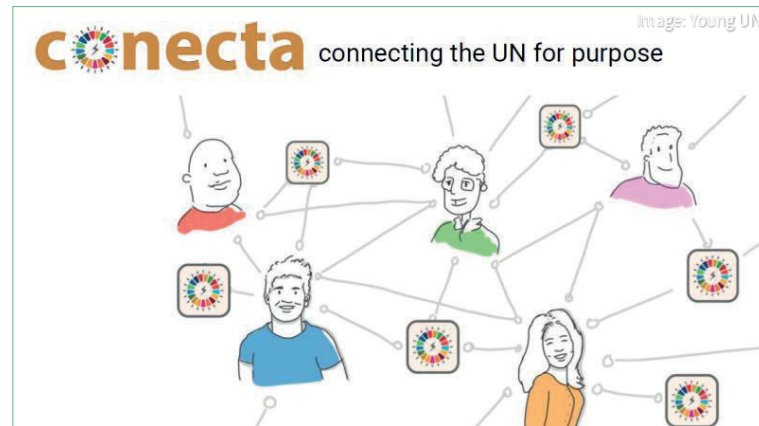
- ▶ UNICEF's Big Data initiative Magic Box has been studying and predicting the [effects of mobility on COVID-19 response](#). Through partnerships with private sector companies and leading research groups, [Magic Box](#) is working to provide data, tools and insights that allow timely monitoring of social distancing; evidence on the suitability and sustainability of mobility reductions for low income settings; and models that allow a better understanding and balancing of the potential impact of these measures on the disease as well as on the underlying communities.



SUPPORTING TEAMS

STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES

- ▶ In collaboration with [Apolitical](#), UNIN is preparing to launch a self-paced e-mail bootcamp to help UN colleagues adjust long-term to remote and hybrid work arrangements, strengthen their capacity to host virtual meetings, manage teams and maintain a healthy work-life balance. UN Entities are warmly invited to contribute content they have developed in their organisation.
- ▶ Young UN launched [conecta4covid](#), a UN-wide skills matching platform to support the COVID-19 response. COVID-19 related projects that need an extra hand can submit requests for help and colleagues interested in volunteering their time and skills can join the talent pool to support colleagues from across the UN. To date, conecta4covid has gathered more than 130 colleagues from across the UN, who are supporting projects in economic forecasting, web development, survey analysis and recovery management. The platform, which is part of the broader [conecta vision](#) to collectively journey to the [Next UN](#), is open to all UN system employees from around the world.



- ▶ The IMF iLab in collaboration with the Institute of Capacity Development launched CD Connect, a new community of practice focused on the effective delivery of capacity development. In the launch event, staff members spoke about their recent experiences delivering capacity development virtually: how they approached it, what lessons were learnt and plans for the future. The new community of practice is designed to help shorten the learning curve by tapping into shared experiences.



- ▶ UN-DPPA's Innovation Cell has been curating and hosting monthly online lab sessions on foresight methodologies, including on strategic foresight with the European Union Institute for Security Studies and speculative design with the design fiction creative "Making Tomorrow". These labs aim to promote thinking about new approaches and methods – all the more relevant in the context of COVID-19 – for colleagues working in the peace and security pillar. In collaboration with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the Innovation Cell also produced a [research guide on innovation](#), focusing particularly on open source tools on design thinking, behavioural insights and foresight for staff and delegations.
- ▶ The IMF iLab launched a "Campfire Series," a new virtual series of events for staff to gather, learn and explore. The events feature external experts to share enlightening ideas, including a session on doing human-centred design with globally distributed teams through digital workshops, and an interactive masterclass on how to use the power of framing and reframing problems to start exploring new possibilities that start with a question, not an answer.
- ▶ UN-OCHA has developed a training on visualising COVID-19 data. [Quick Tips for Visualising Data](#) covers 1) why to visualise data; 2) understanding the data; 3) choosing the right visualisation; and 4) designing thoughtfully. The accompanying [glossary](#) of almost 40 terms relevant to data use within the humanitarian sector explain terms such as microdata and the mosaic effect.
- ▶ IFAD continues to invest in its Innovation Challenge winners, incl. projects that harness data or support projects and beneficiaries in a COVID-19 context. In the 'pilot-to-scale' phase, which is designed around the [UN Innovation Toolkit's "Pilot-to-Scale" tool](#), teams receive support to pilot or refine their tested concepts for scaling. The teams are applying their solutions to the new COVID-19 reality by finding new ways to apply concepts in countries, expanding datasets, building tools and disseminating results, knowledge or training.

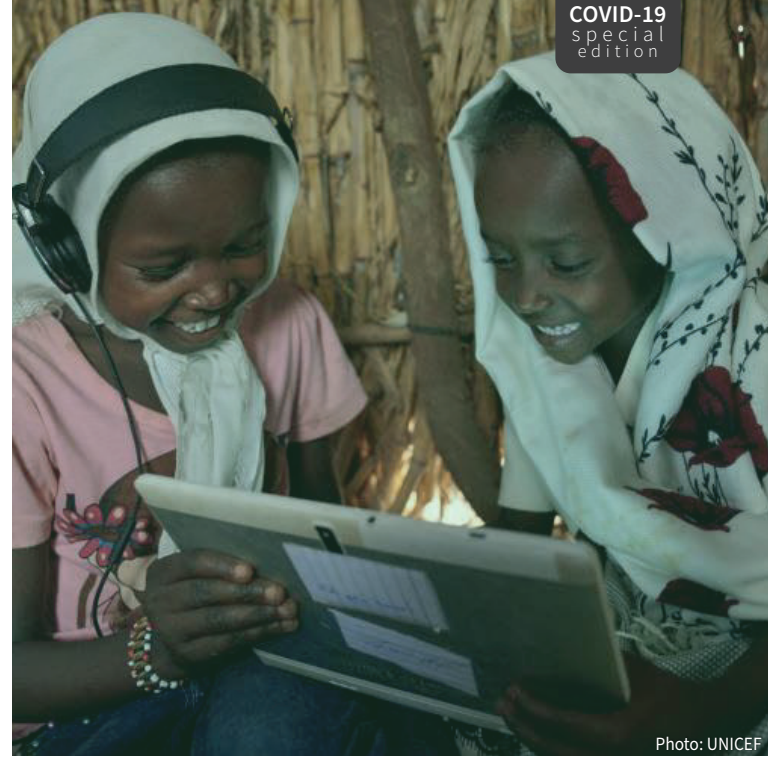


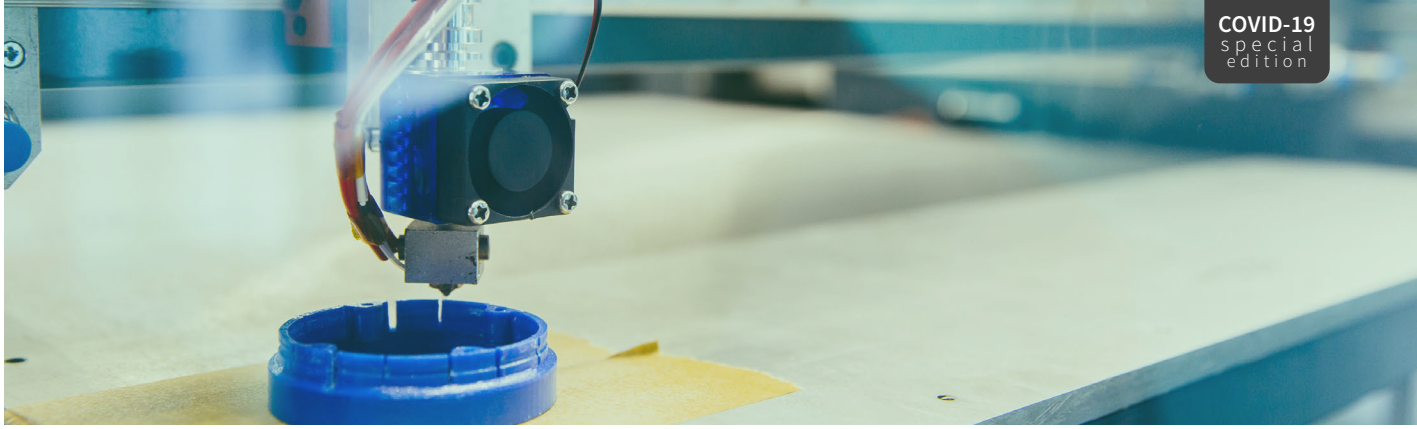
Photo: UNICEF

- ▶ UNDP has developed trainings for virtual meeting organisers and participants to support colleagues in hosting more productive meetings online.
- ▶ WFP's Innovation Accelerator has developed and deployed a Virtual Facilitation Expert Training (Train the Trainer) for WFP staff and other UN Entities who are interested. [Contact the team](#) to find out more.
- ▶ ITC-ILO's recent Master of Development programme was shaken up by COVID-19. Adapting to the new situation, students learnt the universal language of lockdown and tapped into every opportunity to learn, become [Masters of Resilience](#) and change the future. Check out the [visual teaser](#).



Photo: ITC-ILO





ENSURING EMPLOYEE'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- ▶ At the UN Office at Geneva, the Department for Conference Management's Innov8 Team has been analysing how smart sensors could potentially be used as a people-counting solution to [optimise queue times](#) and to trigger automated alerts on physical distancing at key locations.
- ▶ The UN International Computing Centre designed a [Crisis Communications app](#) using Microsoft Power Apps to support its staff and contractors, all currently working remotely. The ability to locate staff at a moment's notice and to send alerts during a crisis is critical, with personnel sheltering in place at home or elsewhere. Users enter their current location and other work status details and can receive critical alerts.

- ▶ Since the outbreak of the pandemic, worldwide shortages of personal protective equipment supplies have put a strain on operational activities and protecting staff. To address this, the UN-DOS' Technology Infrastructure Support team in Brindisi has started 3D printing masks and face shields, which are distributed to essential staff at the Global Service Center (GSC). The team is also working with UNHQ regarding the distribution of face shields to the field. 3D printing could have a significant impact on supply chain operations post COVID-19: shortening them, allowing for manufacturing on site and distancing operations from the carbonised economy. 3D printing is already in use at the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the GSC is supporting the implementation in other missions.
- ▶ The BYOD Lounge Series connects UNFPA colleagues socially to share artistic expressions, including musical performances, poetry and art.



INNOVATION CHALLENGES & CALLS

- ▶ To expand capacities to visualise the future of its work, UN-DPPA's Innovation Cell and Artivive launched an [open call for global artists](#) to create posters exploring their vision of the future of peacemaking and peacebuilding, utilising augmented reality technology. The Artwork will be exhibited at UNHQ.
- ▶ Recognising the capability of technology to help respond to the pandemic, UNIDO is seeking scalable solutions to cope with the impact of COVID-19 in developing countries through an open [Global Call: Innovative Ideas and Technologies vs. COVID-19 and beyond](#). The Call offers an opportunity to identify innovative solutions tackling COVID-19 effects in developing countries and make their economies more resilient, in alignment with the SDGs.



Image: UN-DPPA





- ▶ ITC's Youth Empowerment Project in the Gambia launched three challenges to contribute to the COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Firstly, a [poetry challenge](#) to promote messages about prevention of COVID-19; secondly, the HackCovid Challenge with HackWeakEnd in partnership with the [Information Technology Association of The Gambia](#); and thirdly, the [KMC Mayor Challenge](#) to support young entrepreneurs with smart and effective solutions to help address the challenges caused by COVID-19.
- ▶ WFP's Accelerator programme is now fully virtual. After the first virtual innovation bootcamp for the UN Digital Solutions Centre, the Accelerator is hosting bootcamps for [UNFPA](#); the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and USAID with a specific COVID-19 focus.
- ▶ In support to the Secretary-General's initiative in assisting Member States during the COVID-19 crisis, UN-DESA has reached out to the [Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation](#) to request inputs to the [UN Call for Technology Solutions](#) for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts. The call looks for proven, affordable and scalable technology solutions that can accelerate progress towards providing basic health functions, especially for vulnerable people.

- ▶ The [UNWTO Healing Solutions for Tourism Challenge](#) concluded with a [Digital Pitch Session](#) of the [top 9 ready-to-implement solutions](#) to support health, economy and destinations. These were chosen among 1,183 projects from 110 countries featuring innovations in Virtual and Augmented Reality, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Blockchain. UNWTO Member States representatives and over 9,000 people participated in the event. UNWTO is now connecting solutions to Member States for piloting.
- ▶ Following a [Call for Innovations](#), UNFPA in partnership with WFP's Innovation Accelerator is supporting nine Country Office teams to leverage virtual reality, behavioural insights, gamification and more to [end preventable maternal deaths](#) during and beyond COVID-19.
- ▶ **Building on the results** from the COVID-19 Pulse Check conducted in April, the UN Innovation Network, #NewWork, UN-DCO, UNLOCK and Young UN are preparing to launch the #BuildBackBetter Challenge. This UN-wide ideation and crowdsourcing challenge aims to unleash the creativity and experience of colleagues from across the UN to share, innovate and scale solutions to challenges UN Entities are experiencing in the COVID-19 response. Collaboration, peer learning and joint ideation are critical elements for success. Stay tuned for more!

