

Subject line: Guidance for duty stations in COVID-19-affected countries entitled to Rest & Recuperation

Dear Colleagues, kindly find attached guidance for duty stations in COVID-19-affected countries entitled to Rest & Recuperation. It will be available on the UN.org/coronavirus website and on iSeek.

The World Health Organization now describes COVID-19 as a pandemic. As a growing number of countries have declared a national emergency, the situation calls for staff everywhere to work together in order to redouble efforts to contain and mitigate the spread and impact of this virus. Also, as national authorities around the world apply travel restrictions and impose quarantine on individuals entering or exiting affected countries, the likelihood of being stranded in transit is high, possibly leaving operations without the required personnel to function. It will also be important to reserve increasingly limited travel capacity for operational and medical priorities. Given that travel seriously increases the likelihood of exposing ourselves and others to COVID-19, **an important step in mitigating and reducing this risk is to minimize all travel, including travel related to Rest and Recuperation (R&R).**

In cases where R&R travel nonetheless proceeds, the need for travel should be weighed against (i) the risks to staff members travelling to areas experiencing ongoing transmission of COVID-19, and (ii) restrictions imposed by the host country and country of destination.

As the COVID-19 response rapidly evolves, many countries have taken measures resulting in persons arriving from COVID-19-affected countries being refused entry or having to enter into preventative quarantine, with some countries restricting movements internally. In many cases, flights to and from affected countries have been reduced or suspended, further complicating the normal implementation of the R&R framework. The HR Network Standing Committee on Field Duty Stations (Field Group) requests Resident Coordinators, in consultation with focal points of the UN Country Teams (UNCT) in duty stations entitled to R&R to follow the R&R implementation scenarios below. UNCTs should take into account public health issues locally and maintain their operational footprint, where possible, as well as harmonising the R&R measures across UN entities present in the duty station.

**Scenario I:** Duty stations where full travel restrictions on movement internally, as well as entering and exiting the country, are in effect.

Action recommended:

The Resident Coordinator in consultation with the UNCT is requested to defer R&R. Such a measure mitigates substantially the risk of losing operational capacity over a prolonged period of time (due to staff members not allowed to return due to mandatory quarantine requirements) or can decrease the risk of spreading the virus to R&R duty stations.

For R&R already approved but not initiated, the travel lump-sum will not be recovered and be used for the next R&R with necessary adjustments, if the staff member provides evidence of having already bought a plane ticket and cannot recover the expenditure or make changes.

Staff members who have one or more R&R travels deferred will be given the option to undertake one R&R in conjunction with a five-day period of special leave with full pay once the conditions allow R&R to resume. When R&R travel can be resumed, organizations should allow travel in a phased approach with a view to maintain operational capacity.

**Scenario II:** Duty stations where full or partial travel restrictions on entering and exiting the country to and from the approved R&R destination are in effect but internal movement is permitted.

Action recommended:

The Resident Coordinator, in consultation with the UNCT, is requested to allow R&R to be **exercised within the country**, normally in the capital city where family restrictions do not apply. Lump-sum amounts, where applicable, are to be adjusted accordingly. Where the R&R cannot be exercised within the country, Scenario I should apply. Temporary changes to the R&R destination and revised lump-sum amounts must be reported to the Field Group using the email addresses provided below.

**Scenario III:** Duty stations where there are no travel restrictions entering or exiting the country.

Action recommended:

Rest & Recuperation will **only** be allowed in designated R&R duty stations where no restrictions are in place. Should a staff member be prevented from returning following R&R travel to the designated R&R duty station, the staff member will be considered on travel status and eligible for payment of DSA for the designated R&R duty station.

A staff member wishing to exercise their R&R in a location other than the designated duty station must obtain prior approval from their head of entity. The Resident Coordinator, together with the UNCT, should establish common criteria to guide the head of entity in decision making, by which to evaluate the suitability of locations other than the designated R&R duty station, such as whether the location is subject to quarantine requirements and there is a reasonable expectation that the staff member is able to return to the duty station at the end of the R&R travel.

Staff members travelling to another location if placed in quarantine or prevented from resuming service, will not be eligible for payment of DSA.

Should the currently approved R&R destination be in a country affected by COVID-19 from where return to the duty station may be restricted, the UNCT should identify and obtain from the Field Group endorsement of an alternate destination.

Under scenarios II and III, a staff member may, **on a voluntary basis**, decide to postpone R&R travel. A staff member who defers one or more R&R travels will be allowed to undertake one R&R in conjunction with a five-day period of special leave with full pay.

Reporting requirements: The UNCT, through the RC, should inform the Acting Chairperson of the Field Group of adjustments made in accordance with the guidance above by writing to:

Mr. James Hanneman, Acting Chairperson, Human Resources Network Standing Committee on Field Duty Stations (Field Group) at [james.hanneman@undp.org](mailto:james.hanneman@undp.org), with copies to:

Ms. Martha Helena Lopez, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources, United Nations Secretariat and Co-Chair of the HR Network at [lopez22@un.org](mailto:lopez22@un.org);

Mr. David Bearfield, Director, OHR, UNDP and Co-Chair of the HR Network at:  
[David.Bearfield@undp.org](mailto:David.Bearfield@undp.org); and

Mr. Andrew Villanueva, HR Analyst, OHR, UNDP at [Andrew.Villanueva@undp.org](mailto:Andrew.Villanueva@undp.org).

This Guidance Note will be updated as the situation brought about by COVID-19 evolves.