



This third issue of our COVID-19 special newsletter covers the period from 15 April to date. It provides new updates of the work of the UN Agencies in Albania in response to the pandemic, in particular to reaching those furthest behind, advocating for women and children at risk and adjusting programmes to better assist Albania's response and recovery against COVID-19. Previous issues of this special newsletter can be accessed here: [\[Issue I\]](#) [\[Issue II\]](#)

## UN'S IMMEDIATE SOCIO-ECONOMIC REPOSENSE TO COVID-19 IN ALBANIA

Following the Secretary-General's launch on May 4th of the [UN's global framework for immediate social-economic response to COVID-19](#) the **UN Country Team in Albania** established a task force to develop a socio-economic response programme for the next 12 to 18 months.

▶▶▶ **UN Women** has completed a rapid gender assessment with a special focus on vulnerabilities emerging from the impact of COVID-19. The findings are scheduled to be circulated in the week of 11 May.

As part of the EU funded regional programme on ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey, UN Women carried out a mapping of needs of women's rights organizations who support survivors of violence. Thanks to this exercise, those organizations validated their action plans prior to starting implementing as of May.

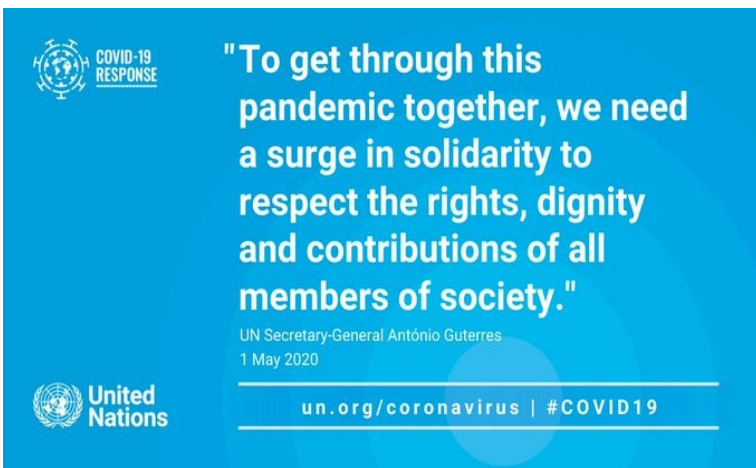
**UNHCR** is currently in the planning phase for an assessment on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and Asylum-Seekers, to be conducted jointly UNHCR partner RMSA and the Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship.

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** is currently working with EBRD on the socio-economic assessment of the COVID-19 negative impact in Western Balkans countries. The assessment in Albania is being carried out in collaboration with INSTAT.

In addition, the ILO has published repositories of [country responses](#) (see [Albania's policy response](#)) and sectoral impacts and responses that mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the economies and labor markets.

ILO's [3rd Monitor](#) provides updated global estimates and analysis of the World of Work in the context of the pandemic with recommendations for specific policy responses to protect workers and employment.

**FAO** is monitoring and evaluating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis to the food supply, food security and food production. Weekly surveys have been conducted with main producers, wholesalers and processors in sectors of agricultural production, livestock and agritourism. ■



**"To get through this pandemic together, we need a surge in solidarity to respect the rights, dignity and contributions of all members of society."**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres  
1 May 2020

[un.org/coronavirus](https://un.org/coronavirus) | #COVID19

**UNDP** will lead the overall task force ensuring engagement of the full breadth of the UN family to covering the five pillars of the programme:

1. Protecting health services and systems - led by **WHO**
2. Social protection and basic services - led by **UNICEF**
3. Protecting jobs and small and medium sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive actors - led by **UNDP**
4. Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration - led by **UNRCO**
5. Social cohesion and community resilience - led by **UNDP**

We are highlighting some of the ongoing assessment works that will inform the development of the joint UN Albania socio-economic response:

**WHO** is carrying out an analysis of the Health System response to COVID-19, including lab capacities in Albania. ▶▶▶

UN's joint programmes **Leave No One Behind Programme (LNB)** and **Improving Municipal Social Protection Service Delivery (IMSPSD)** are supporting municipal social care authorities to respond to the situation of vulnerable groups with provision of aid packages with food and hygiene supplies.

**UNDP** has now delivered aid packages to 1850 families in 18 municipalities under the joint LNB and IMSPSD programmes.

**UNICEF** handed over to the Education authorities 46,000 disinfection kits needed to start the school in May (for selected grades and limited timeframe).

On May 4th, **UNOPS** delivered 1st part of a €4M worth of emergency aid, funded by the **EU**. It included 220,000 protective gloves, 2000 face shields & protective goggles and 1,000 liters of disinfectants. The remaining supplies include 10,000 test kits and other key supplies including ICU ventilators and ambulances.

**WHO** has supplied the Virology Laboratory at the Institute of Public Health with 3000 testing kits for COVID-19.

**UNFPA** procured and handed over supplies of [personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) to address the emergency situation to protect health personnel, serving pregnant women and newborns in two maternity hospitals in Tirana.

These PPEs will serve 26 obstetricians and gynecologists, 18 neonatologists, 120 midwives and 70 neonatology nurses for a one-month emergency period.

In collaboration with LDS Charities, UNFPA is procuring a larger quantity of these protective items for mid-term needs of health staff of the Albanian maternity hospitals. More information [here](#). ■



EU Delegation Ambassador Soreca and UN Resident Coordinator Williams handing over the supplies to Minister of Health Manastirliu.

## ENHANCING ALBANIA'S NATIONAL CAPACITIES TO COMBAT COVID-19

**WHO** has provided continuous support to the MoHSP and the COVID-19 Technical Community and Task Force with regular and ad-hoc information and technical guidelines on nCoV/COVID-19 including: critical preparedness, readiness and response activities; country-level coordination, planning and monitoring; surveillance, rapid response teams, and case investigation; national laboratories; clinical care; infection prevention and control; risk communication and community engagement; essential resource planning; early investigation protocols; PoE and mass gathering; health workers; maintaining essential health service and system.

WHO supported the establishment of a dedicated COVID-19 phone **call green line '08004040'** run by the National Centre of Medical Emergencies. Additional support was provided to establish a communication and coordination platform between **MoHSP** and other health institutions related to COVID-19 response.

UN's joint LNB Programme has activated an online network of professionals of 8 development and community centers for children with disabilities, operating in the municipalities of Pogradec, Lushnje, Bulqize, Diber, Shijak, Ura Vajgurore, Përmet, and Saranda to enable them with methods and techniques for the provision of online specialized social services for these children during COVID-19.

From 6-27 April, WHO run trainings for 7054 medical and nursing staff of universities and regional/municipality hospitals on the full set of skills and knowledge on detection and treatment of COVID-19.

**UNICEF** ran the second series of an online training for 50 representatives of local education directorates in the country who serve as focal points for children dropping out of schools. Trainings focused on dealing with social-emotional care for children during the COVID-19 situation.

**FAO** is supporting the Ministry of Agriculture to develop a Market Information System (MIS) for agricultural products and main inputs aiming to mitigate the risk of supply chain disruptions and price volatility especially in current situation.

As local governments are at the forefront of this crisis and efforts are needed to strengthen local capacities to continue to deliver as well as respond. **UNDP** is working to identify and apply the best approach for these institutions to adapt to the new reality with focus on digital solutions & contingency planning in the framework of UNDP's STAR and ISDA projects. Additionally, UNDP has updated its Programme in support of DRR in Albania to incorporate health and biological risks to ensure the responsiveness and resilience of governance systems. ▶▶▶



▶▶▶ **UNDP** via LNB programme has supported health authorities to providing daily COVID-19 situation reports in sign language.

**UNIDO** is assisting several SMEs aiming to ensure business continuity such as access to financial packages (bank loans) in order to cover operating costs for the introduction of innovative renewable energy solutions, promoting green and circular economic recovery.

**UNODC** continues to support law enforcement agencies with provision of free access to a cutting-edge digital learning platform for operational staff in the area of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. ■

## ADDRESSING GENDER CONCERNS

With **UNDP** support, two standardized protocols to assist all Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs) for managing urgent and non-urgent cases of domestic violence cases in the COVID-19 situation have been approved by the **MoHSP**.

The 1-st protocol aims to standardize the actions needed to be performed by all CRM members to ensure an immediate, comprehensive and accountable response.

The 2-nd aims to assist local authorities at municipal level, members of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) responsible for prevention and management of domestic violence cases, in particular members of the Multidisciplinary Technical Team (MTT), in adequately handling domestic violence cases during the period of natural disaster due to the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

**UNDP** supported 15 municipalities to launch online competitions under the motto "Together for healthy and non-violent families, even in emergency situations". The aim is to engage men, boys, women and girls and increase their awareness on gender-based violence and promoting healthy relationship through art.

Further to the issuance of [dedicated protocol](#) on uninterrupted provision of services by emergency shelters (see also our last newsletter) **UN Women** is supporting the state social service, shelters and local government units to ensure that staff in the shelter is well informed on the steps that should be taken if a beneficiary has symptoms of COVID-19 infection. The protocol is translated in English, to facilitate knowledge exchange among countries in the sub region and beyond ([Click here](#))

In collaboration with the **OSCE**, UN Women held an online consultation with 25 CSOs from across the country, who are members of the Coalition "Women, Peace and Security". The conversation addressed issues related to the safety of women and girls in the context of the Covid-19 emergency. As a result, the Coalition approached relevant stakeholders and appealed for cooperation with CSOs that are involved in protecting and promoting women's rights at national and local levels. ■

## CHILD PROTECTION

**UNDP** has activated its network of professionals of development centers for children with disabilities operating in 8 municipalities, to support them with methods of providing online specialized social services for these children during COVID-19 in partnership with Municipalities.

Number of children in detention facilities continued to drop from 20 to 17, due to **UNICEF's** advocacy and the gradual thinking shift of justice professionals. All the checks performed by the medical personnel following anti-COVID protocols have not identified any case of infection, neither among the children, nor among the personnel.

The Working Group on Child Protection in Emergencies co- led by **UNICEF** and **World Vision Albania** is working on a mapping of child protection interventions and data collection tools to measure the impact of the interventions as well as identifying a set of minimum criteria for online psycho-social support to children. ■

## EDUCATION

**UNICEF** continues to support the Ministry of Education and Youth on the overall coordination of the sector's response, revitalizing structure established after the earthquake, distance learning approach and safe return to school for Matura students and teachers.

**UNICEF** co-led the education coordination meeting on COVID -19 situation working on the preparation for scenarios for school opening ensuring academic progress with a focus on the most vulnerable children as well as safety measures.

The Framework for Reopening Schools, translated in Albanian language, was shared by UNICEF and World Bank with the Ministry of Education and Youth, to serve as a guiding tool on reopening schools. ▶▶▶



▶▶▶ UNICEF's supported platform [Akademi.al](#) (the only open source digital platform working under agreement with MoE) has now produced and made available for free over 700 videos and other didactic materials.

The content will assist all students, including children with hearing disabilities. 2.500 additional lessons are expected to be delivered by the end of the project. The same lessons are also aired through the main public TV for a bigger reach with the most vulnerable children.

As part of its prevention programme, UNODC has disseminated information on parenting during COVID-19 to support the families of the region in coping with the situation. For better outreach, the materials were translated in the local languages. ■

## MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

IOM is working to improve availability and access of migrants to sanitary services in the context of the COVID-19 situation. Five furnished containers have been procured and installed at the Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centers for irregular migrants in Kapshticë, Korçë and Gërhot, Gjirokastër.

UNHCR is providing support for about 90 asylum seekers (mostly families) sheltered in 2 temporary accommodation centers in Kapshtica dhe Kakavija. Hygiene and cleaning materials, food packages and hot meals have been provided. In addition, case management (including legal, administrative and psychological support) as well as counselling and guidance related to COVID19 has been provided to refugees and asylum-seekers. ■

## COMMUNICATIONS

UN Albania and the Embassy of Sweden run a joint communication campaign on how the COVID-19 crisis is having a substantial impact on women and why gender drive a faster recovery and build a better future for everyone.

[A joint video message](#) (pictured below) from UN Resident Coordinator and Ambassador of Sweden in Albania was shared on social media.

### Gratë dhe Kriza e Koronavirusit



Një Mesazh nga Elsa Håstad, Ambasadore e Suedisë në Shqipëri dhe Brian J. Williams, Koordinator i Përhershëm i OKB në Shqipëri

As part of joint UN programme EAW, UN Women, produced a [Public Service Announcement](#) to prevent violence against women in the time of COVID-19 when there has been a surge of domestic violence cases worldwide. The video, released on 27 April, is currently being broadcasted on the Albanian Public TV. ▶▶▶

▶▶▶ WHO is working with MoHSP in support of COVID-19 communication campaigns, including production and broadcasting of video spots and posters through different channels (social media and TVs), to provide necessary information on the COVID-19 disease.

This May, UNFPA applauds [midwives](#) and celebrates mothers, and calls for partners and governments around the world to take every possible step to ensure their safety and health.

In marking the **World Day for Safety and Health at Work**, on 28 April, ILO delivered awareness rising messages in social and print media for employers to pay attention on the safety of all workers and due to the COVID-19, especially as more business are now opening following the ease of measures against COVID-19. See article [here](#). ■

## UN BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND STAFF SAFETY

The UN family has remained operational through activation of Business Continuity Plans with staff working from home and fully respecting measures taken in the country.

A guidance plan on a phased return to work in the office work as of 18 May, in line with the eased Government's measures is approved by the Crisis Management Team. A detailed guidance on Travel Protocol is in place. ■



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