

UN-Habitat Covid-19

Key messages

The impact of COVID-19 has been felt across the globe in a wide range of countries and very different environments. The pandemic has already affected countries in every region, making this a truly global situation where every country must take steps to prepare and respond. UN-Habitat has a clear added value in supporting national and local authorities as they take up this challenge.

- ▶ **It is clear that the pandemic will hit the world's most vulnerable people the hardest—many of them living in informal settlements and slums in cities.** These areas are densely populated, with overcrowded public transport systems, little or no waste management, an absence of basic services and poor housing. Recommended measures to prevent COVID-19 transmission such as hand washing and social distancing are often impossible in these areas, and health facilities are minimal.
- ▶ **Governors and mayors play a major role in urban areas stopping the pandemic spreading while keeping their cities functioning in terms of food supplies, support to the most vulnerable and access to health care.** They need to work with urban health experts, government agencies at all levels, sanitation experts, social scientists, innovators and urban planners. It is essential that the coordination of the international response is decentralized to the major urban areas, tailoring the response to the urban context and working closely with local governments.
- ▶ **Local governments must be supported to work with these communities as a priority.** Critical measures can involve the relocation of mobile health care clinics closer to affected communities, and mapping health facilities for improved access to testing and treatment.
- ▶ Local authorities should aim to work with community associations to improve hygiene and sanitation. **UN-Habitat's expertise in water and sanitation, transport, other basic services and slum upgrading along with its wide networks can support such measures.**

- ▶ The economic consequences for those in informal settlements will be long-lasting. As cities suspend daily activities and restrict movement, day labourers and those in informal employment will lose their income. This can result in people being forced to leave their homes due to their inability to pay the rent. Without any social benefits, they will be unable to care for their families. **UN-Habitat's work on housing rights, security of tenure and combatting forced evictions can help to develop effective policy measures and collaborative solutions in this respect.**
- ▶ **Communities need to be trained and supported** to recognize signs of illness, facilitate home care and self-quarantining, engage in community tracing and prevent the further spread of the disease as well as to carry out data collection. This work can complement the work of local and national authorities and should be developed within national frameworks for action.
- ▶ **UN-Habitat works with a wide range of networks to collaborate with and support national and local authorities in working in informal settlements**, which can be mobilized for capacity building, information distribution and exchange, assessment of community health and social facilities and community-led initiatives.
- ▶ **What we do today will change the cities of tomorrow, to make them safe and inclusive, and resilient for future crises.** Looking forward, UN-Habitat is supporting many cities to develop innovative planning and expansion models that focus on compactness and connectivity, as well as decentralized local access to all basic services and infrastructure, including health, which could contribute towards slowing the spread of pandemics.

