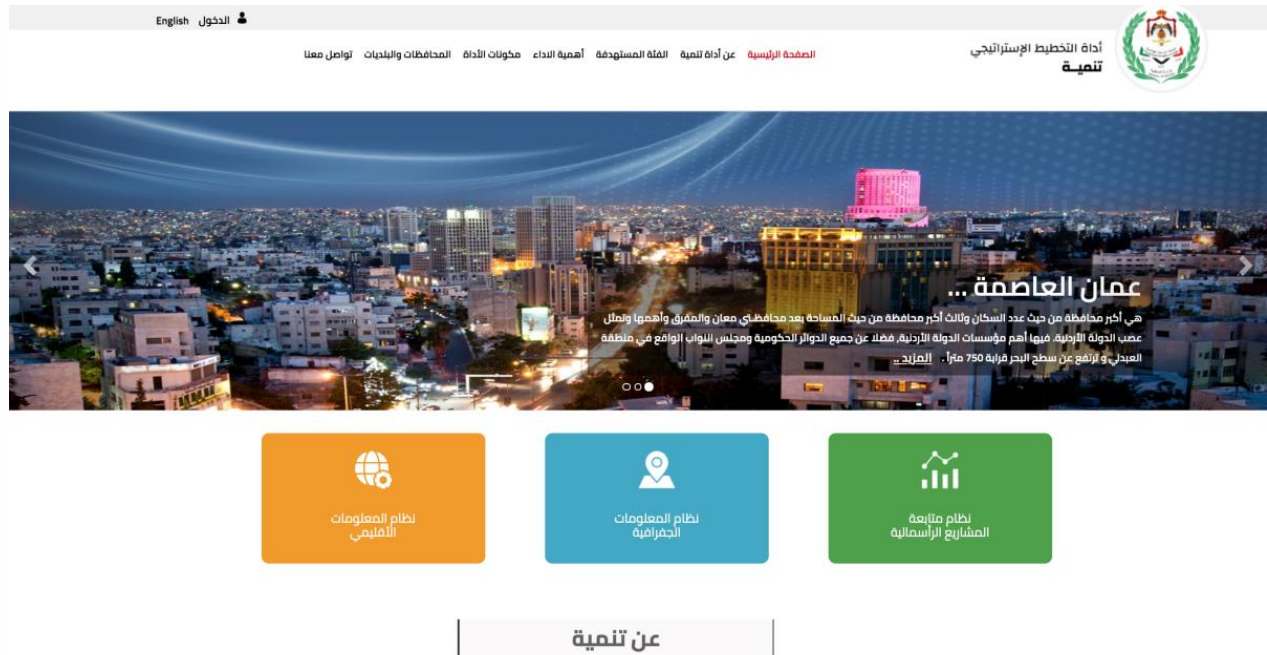# Harnessing Governance into the COVID-19 response

Why is Governance important in the COVID-19 health crisis?

UNDP has been supporting world-wide Governmental responses to the COVID-19. The health dimension of the pandemic underpinned declarations of state of emergency in numerous countries, which generally did not have Governance perspectives embedded. Yet, effective Governance is more acutely needed in emergency contexts. The restrictions often encompass setting rules and incentives such as enforceable orders, directives or recommendations to shape social behaviors and accomplish public interest objectives within a Human Rights-restricted framework. In this context, maintaining a system of check and balances in Governance cannot be undermined, especially while the Government plans service delivery, builds trust in public institutions, develops clear socio-economic recovery policies and rebuilds social connectivity.

How is UNDP's Inclusive Participation and Institutional Strengthening Pillar (IPIS-Governance) responding to the COVID-19 crisis in Jordan?

IPIS-Governance COVID-19 value proposition in Jordan addresses UNDP's corporate flagships: realization of Rule of Law, inclusive participation, gender sensitivity, transparency and accountability, social cohesion and institutional strengthening with a focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable. The pillar recognizes the importance of integrating a

comprehensive Governance response, which goes beyond public health, as an investment into future pathways for recovery, with the vision of leaving no one behind. The IPIS-Governance Pillar has re-oriented, repurposed and introduced digital initiatives which support the Government's immediate COVID-19 response without losing focus on medium and long-term corporate objectives and development implications. This is in alignment with the UN Secretary general's urgent call for a "whole-of-society" and "whole-of-government" approach.

What are UNDP's focus areas of governance-related response in Jordan?

Focus area 1: Strengthening national and local core governance functions for crisis management and service delivery

1. Providing data information and digital support for crisis response

UNDP repurposed the Vocational Licenses IT system, which is managed by the Ministry of Local Administration, to assist the Government on its Covid-19 response. This system was designed and implemented by the UNDP supported "Property Tax Project" within the Ministry of Finance and operates in close partnership with the Ministry of Local Administration, Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship and others. The repurposing involved mapping small business which supply goods and services otherwise not available during the full lockdown. Requests for information about private sector business and service providers continue as the Government progressively implements its COVID-19 strategy, covering more than 28 sectors. The system has processed over 38,000 requests nation-wide. The UNDP Property Tax project has also been providing support to the Government in transitioning from cash to digital payments to improve service delivery.

2. Setting up a Network of Local Governments

The Minister of Local Administration, in partnership with UNDP, set-up a Network of Local Governments to deliver a sub-national response to the COVID-19 crisis. A Mayors' WhatsApp group for over 100 Municipality mayors across the country has been activated to disseminate key messaging related to health, psychosocial advice, environment, gender and other topics directly related to the pandemic. The Mayors' network plays a pivotal role in distributing these messages to municipal staff and community members, towards building community resilience and alleviating the response burden on the central government while strengthening the role of municipal administration. UNDP is in the process of activating the Public Relations Management (PRM) component of its "Tanmiah Tool" to provide municipalities with online outreach services and a consultation channel; facilitating citizens in submitting their service requests or/ and feedback via an online platform.

3. Support to Community policing "Safe Distance" initiative

UNDP supported the initiative "Safe Distance" lead by the Community Policing Department within the PSD. UNDP provided Jordanian police officers with more than 7,000 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits to facilitate safe monitoring and implementation of social distancing measures against COVID-19 In public spaces.

4.   UNDP Crisis risk and early warning system (CREW) Dashboard

This initiative will be complemented by reorienting the database Tanmiah tool within the Decentralization and Local Development Support Project (DLDSP) to be used as a socio-economic observatory to monitor and measure impact of short-medium-long term repercussions of the COVID-19. The current indicators will be realigned to retrieve data most relevant for analysis of the current situation and policy shaping.

Focus area 2: Rule of Law, Human Rights and Security

5.   MA degree module on Entrepreneurship

UNDP, in partnership with the University of Jordan and the Hague Academy (The Netherlands) has developed an MA degree module on Entrepreneurship. The module, due to be launched in the summer of 2020, will be open to eligible public officials and representatives of local CBOs who are currently pursuing the EU-funded MA in Local Administration and Development. The course will build capacities to further support the entrepreneurship ecosystem at the local level towards local economic development.

6.   Gender Justice Microfinance – towards a Financial Inclusion Sector

UNDP in partnership with the Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice conducted a scoping review on "The Impact of Microloans on Jordanian Women". The review recognizes the shortage of information of women imprisonment and focuses on the regulatory framework, policies, jurisprudence, and data available on imprisonment of women for failing to repay debts, in order to facilitate the development of policy recommendations.

The scoping review highlighted the need for an in-depth research which maps existing stakeholders, identifies the drivers and root-causes for applying for loans and profiles borrowers and type of loans. The research will shape the support of gender focused policy

development for microfinance companies. The full-fledged study will also present alternative solutions for imprisonment for debts, while ensuring protection of the rights of creditors.

Since micro-finance borrowers fall under the eligibility criteria for the small claims jurisdiction, the initiative will also aim at linking judicial proceedings for cases of debt cases to the UNDP small claims project, to guarantee access to justice and effective remedies to women. The phase II of the Small Claims project will be replicated in courts country wide.

The RoL response to COVID-19 under the work on small claims, will involve the introduction of on-line hearings towards testing the feasibility of digital solutions to other more complex cases. This will also improve women's access to justice by directly addressing the social stigma and fear of intimidation associated with regular court settings. The initiative will also contribute to achieving gender justice by providing legal financial assistance and advice to both women debtors, and microloans' applicants through an online legal and financial counseling hub.

Finally, the fully-fledged study will guide policy to address the necessary legislative reforms for tax and microloans systems which need to be reviewed to allow financial inclusion systems to be equitable and gender focused. Only with equal access to the full range of needs-based financial services (savings, credit, insurance, payments) and the related financial education, do women stand a chance of social and economic empowerment.

Focus area 3: Elections

7.   Electoral related consultations

UNDP is working with the Ministry of Political and Parliamentary Affairs conduct consultations meetings regarding the planned elections, in light of the COVID-19 crisis. The process aims at capturing the opinions of civil society organizations, youth and women-led groups, political parties and independents through an online platform to deliberate on decisions regarding the elections. Through this platform UNDP will support active citizenship, strengthen citizens engagement in politics and decision making and encourage participatory dialogue which will contribute to the legitimacy of and trust in the electoral process and institutions.

Focus area 4: Inclusion, Accountability and Voice

8.   "TAKATOF" – Together we stand

UNDP is working with the Centre for Strategic Studies within University of Jordan to pioneer a weekly on-line community outreach and engagement initiative titled "TAKATOF". This initiative will comprise a series of episodes in the form of Podcasts/You Tube episodes which will recognize and acknowledge the contribution of community led initiatives in the context of the COVID-19 at both the short and medium terms, promoting social solidarity and civic responsibility. It seeks to support community well-being, psychological and mental health,

recognize and address marginalization of vulnerable groups and other negative social impacts of the Covid-19 crisis such as increasing rates of gender-based violence against women; and violent extremism. The initiative will also highlight how decentralization and community support play are integral to strengthening resilience, social cohesion and sustainability of the Jordanian response.

9.   On-line community centers

Combatting the COVID-19 pandemic must also include dialogue for mitigating discrimination, stigma and xenophobia. UNDP will support relaunching on-line community-centers to address social dysconnectivity. In Jordan, there are a panoply of community centers, e.g., knowledge hubs (run by MoDEE), Youth centres (run by MOY), Princess Basma satellites (JOHUD), Business incubators and community centre (KHF). This crisis has resulted in suspension of activities at these centres, therefore, UNDP aims at reviving some of the services through these centres via remote alternative.

10.   Online Trainings on PVE

UNDP readjusted its PVE & Social Cohesion trainings in response to COVID-19 to pilot online training modules with 5 Community Based Organizations in Ma'an, Jordan. The trainings had 55% female participation. The training courses are part of the UNDP PVE and Social Cohesion program administered across the country, which will enable CBOs to apply for grants to support community led responses to COVID-19.

11.   Ad-hoc info-sheets updates

The first edition of the ad-Hoc info-sheet updates covered the implementation of the National Defense Law, in English and Arabic, sharing statistics on detentions and number of COVID-19 cases. The analysis illustrated how the strict lockdown measures were effective in "flattening the curve".