The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis of our time and one of the greatest challenges we have faced since World War Two. Since its emergence in Asia late last year, the virus has spread to practically every continent except Antarctica. Cases are rising daily in Africa,Americas, and Europe.

Countries are racing to slow the spread of the virus by testing and treating patients, carrying out contact tracing, limiting travel, quarantining citizens, and cancelling large gatherings such as sporting events, concerts, and schools.

The pandemic is moving like a wave.

But COVID-19 is much more than a health crisis. By stressing every one of the countries it touches, it has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars.Many of our communities are now unrecognizable. Dozens of the world’s greatest cities are deserted as people stay indoors, either by choice or by government order. Across the world, shops, theatres, restaurants and bars are closing.

Every day, people are losing jobs and income, with no way of knowing when normality will return. Small island nations, heavily dependent on tourism, have empty hotels and deserted beaches. The International Labour Organization estimates that over 25 million jobs could be lost.

UNDP response

Every country needs to act immediately to prepare, respond, and recover. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has launched a US$2 billion global humanitarian response plan in the most vulnerable. Developing countries could lose at least US$220 billion in income, and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has called for $2.5trillion to support them.

Drawing on our experience with other outbreaks such as Ebola, HIV, SARS, TB and malaria, as well as our long history of working with the private and public sector, UNDP will help countries to urgently and effectively respond to COVID-19 as part of its mission to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities and build resilience to crises and shocks.

 The UNDP has been supporting countries since the very early stages of this crisis, donating more than two million surgical masks and providing life supporting medical equipment such as X-ray machines, infrared thermometers, infusion pumps, protective suits, gloves and hand sanitizer. We are supporting health systems in countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Nigeria, Paraguay, Panama and Ukraine.

 In China the UNDP has launched a social media campaign to spread information about COVID-19 amongst vulnerable communities such as the elderly and other disadvantaged people in 40 different minority languages.

In Lebanon the UNDP has been supporting the government as it develops a Disaster Risk Management Plan. And in Vietnam they are working with the government to communicate with ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, with a focus on the rural areas on China’s border.

Working with social media apps such as WhatsApp, WHO and UNICEF have created an information hub that will get real time healthcare to billions around the world.

In the Arab state UNDP is working with governments and citizens to deliver essential services, and fight misinformation.

It will require all of society to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to cushion the potentially devastating impact it may have on vulnerable people and economies.

We must rebuild trust and cooperation, within and among nations, and between people and their governments.

UNDP’s support will also help ensure that the responses of individual countries are comprehensive as well as equitable and inclusive, so that no one is left out and countries can continue to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

On 15 April, IOM launched a USD 499 million COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan(SPRP) to support vital preparedness, response and recovery activities in over 140 countries. IOM will support countries that may need additional resources – financial, technical or operational – to help ensure that further COVID-19 infections are prevented, and to assist health systems so they have increased capacity to cope with additional requirements.

The SRP comprises a wide range of activities in all regions of the world including:

\* emergence of humanitarian needs in new settings;

\* cross-border coordination;

\* capacity-building for government staff on disease surveillance;

\* setting up or enhancing hand-washing facilities at entry points;

\* support with case management;

\* monitoring and mapping of people’s movements within and across borders;

\* improvement of displacement sites to ensure site safety and hygiene and that livelihoods are sustained;

\* and the dissemination of information on how to stay healthy, specifically targeting migrants, refugees and displaced persons.

The new appeal complements and is aligned with the WHO’s COVID-19 Global Preparedness and Response Plan as well as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19, led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).