



CONSOLIDATED MULTILATERAL COVID-19 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY OFFER FINAL REPORT

March, 2021

Contents

Contents	2
List of Acronyms	3
Introduction	4
Health First: Protecting Essential Health Services and Systems	8
Macroeconomic Response & Recovery	9
Social Protection	12
Supporting Workers and Job Creation	14
Supporting Education Services	18
Protecting Vulnerable Groups, Social Cohesion and Community Resilience	21
Evidence-based Decision-making: Data and Assessments	25

List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank	MMFS	Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support
CCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry	MOPE	Ministry of Pre-school Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization	MOPSE	Ministry of Public and Secondary Education
DL	Distance Learning	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
DPO	Disabled Persons' Organizations	NPL	Non-Performing Loan
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ECA	European and Central Asian region	PWP	Public Works Programme
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
FAO	United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization	SEIA	Socio-Economic Impact Assessment
GBV	Gender Based Violence	SERP	Socio-Economic Response Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
IBS	Integrated Business Support	SOE	State Owned Enterprises
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IEC	Information, Education and Communication	UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
IFC	International Finance Corporation (part of the World Bank Group)	UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
IFI	International Financial Institution	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime
IOM	International Organization for Migration	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank	WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
ISSP	Integrated Support Services Programmes	WB	World Bank
ITC	International Trade Centre	WHO	World Health Organization
ITFC	Islamic Trade Finance Corporation	WTO	World Trade Organization
L2CU	Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan		
MICS	Multi Indicator Cluster Surveys		

Introduction

Context

In May 2020, sixteen United Nations (UN) entities and six International Financial Institutions (IFIs) delivered a Consolidated Multilateral Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Offer (the Offer) to the Government of Uzbekistan outlining consolidated deliverables to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic valued at USD 3.373 billion¹.

The Offer was in response to a national request and was guided by the UN Secretary-General's policy brief "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity". The Offer highlighted ongoing and planned support by twenty-two participating partners in seven key areas, with the overarching aim of cushioning the knock-on effects on millions of people's lives, their livelihoods and the real economy, thereby preserving momentum and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP and the World Bank co-lead the working group which pulled together the Offer under the guidance of a UN-IFI Crisis Management Team chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator.

The Offer complemented the measures taken by the Government in response to COVID-19 and the national Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) led by the Ministry of Health and WHO. In July 2020, an update of the Offer was provided to partners highlighting the status of all deliverables. By 31 December 2020 the Offer's deliverables had increased to USD 3.905 billion.

The present final report highlights the key achievements and status of deliverables within the Offer, as well as some key challenges and opportunities going forward.

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1 Multilateral partners participating in the report include six international financial institutions (ADB, EBRD, IFC, IsDB, World Bank, IMF) and sixteen UN entities (FAO, ILO, IOM, ITC, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, WHO)

Results Overview

Key figures

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%	Total number of projects: 207
IFIs	3 876 632 880	2 979 925 380	77%	
UN	29 223 985	20 281 088	69%	
Total	3 905 856 865	3 000 206 468	77%	

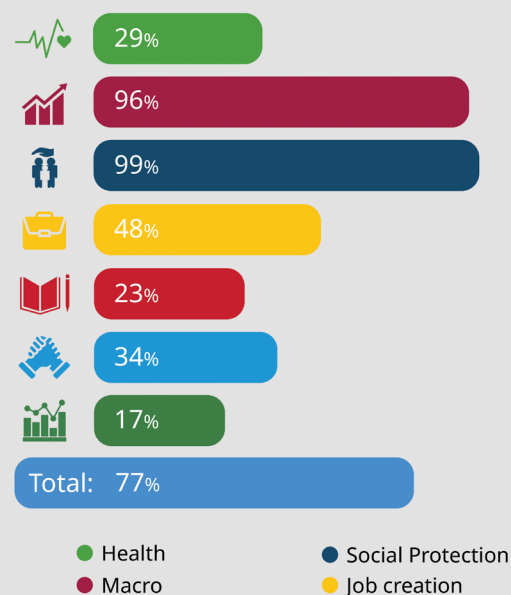
N.B. While this is the final report, delivery against the total Offer continues in 2021

Pillar overview

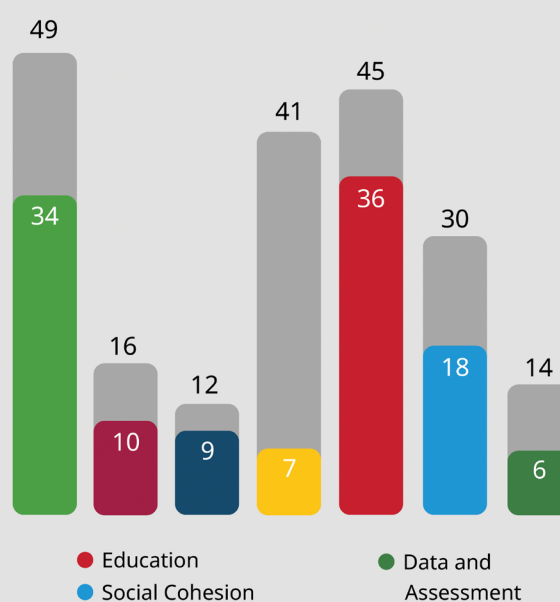
Funded offers (January 2021)

	Total value (USD)	Newly mobilized funds (USD)	Repurposed funds (USD)	Delivery (USD) as at end 2020
Health	340 112 969	254 667 128	64 294 841	99 531 210
Macro	2 425 560 000	1 550 550 000	875 010 000	2 325 292 000
Social Protection	58 541 800	57 380 000	1 161 800	58 170 813
Job Creation	1 069 467 222	899 079 700	170 237 522	513 859 230
Education	5 463 380	5 331 500	131 880	1 245 380
Social Cohesion	5 636 184	1 707 000	3 929 184	1 924 335
Data and Assessment	1 075 310	920 250	155 060	182 500
Total	3 905 856 865	2 769 635 578	1 114 920 287	3 000 206 468

Financial delivery by pillars (%)



Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

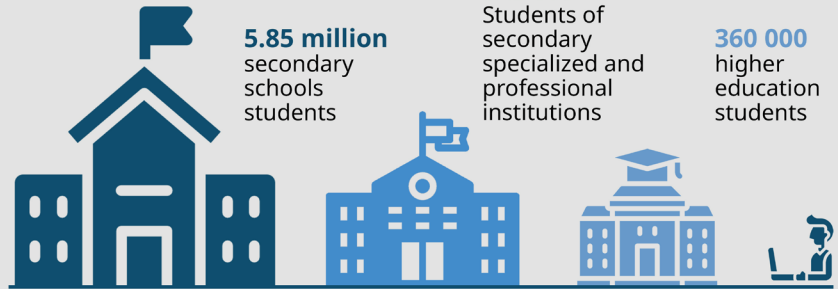


Key highlights

USD 2.3 billion



in financial support delivered to maintain macro-economic stability



5.85 million secondary schools students

728 000 Students of secondary specialized and professional institutions

360 000 higher education students

benefited from programmes which supported distance learning



1.2 million vulnerable people

benefited from improved access to social benefits through the Single Registry



500 000 additional families received social assistance

over 31 000 vulnerable people

benefited from support on income generation, employment, training, and accessing social support (including GBV, psychosocial, and legal services)



54%



46%

80 small businesses

benefited from business training, consultancy, and mentoring services

234 start-up projects

750 young people

thousands of SMEs and workers

benefited from extensive financial support from IFIs channelled through local commercial banks



260 women supported with digital, financial literacy, and on-line trading skills



1 500 women trained in handicraft production

580 returned migrants were returned and received socio-economic, physiological, and legal services



5 263 women and girls received support via the re-launched national GBV hotline



73 Uzbek women and 245 children returned from conflict zones were reintegrated into communities

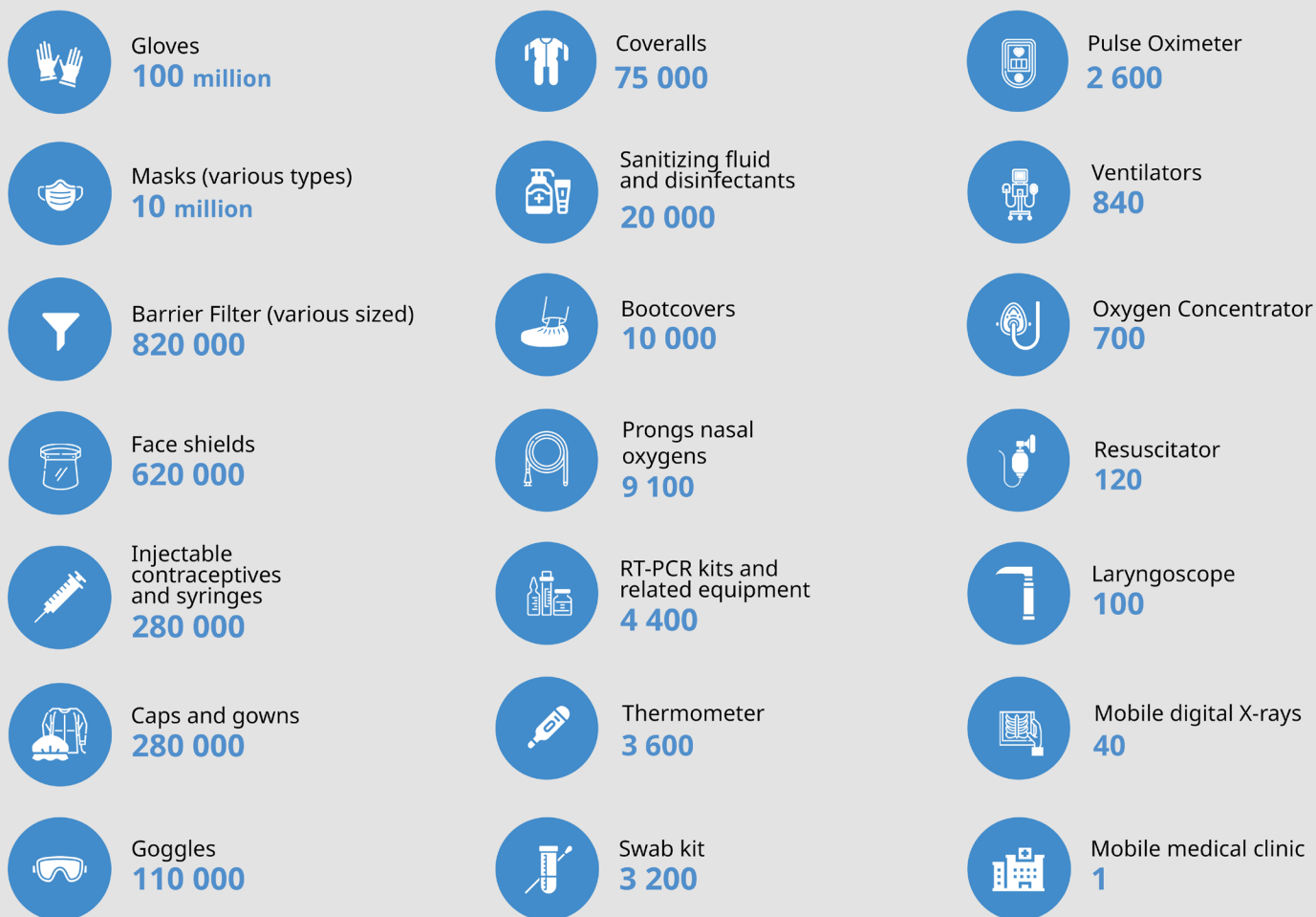


274 men

306 women

COVID-19 Health Procurement

Overview of procurement between March and December 2020, through the following agencies and organizations: ADB, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, WHO



* The numbers are approximate based on data provided

Next Steps

From 1 January 2021, all outstanding UN activities foreseen in the Offer are being folded into the Joint Work Plans under the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2021-2025 (UNSDCF). This gives additional credibility to the UNSDCF and ensures UN and partner programme coherence. At the same time, the UNSDCF implementation structure includes broad (outward and inward looking) coordination mechanisms, which will ensure that close cooperation with IFIs and other development actors will continue.

Likewise, the IFIs will continue to support the Government to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic in the country through their ongoing partnership and programmes with the Government of Uzbekistan.

Throughout 2021, the UN and IFIs will continue to closely cooperate on their COVID-19 socio-economic response and support measures through constant dialogue and exchange of news and updates, including during the regular Crisis Management Team meetings.



Health first: Protecting Essential Health Services and Systems

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	322 255 000	85 645 000	26% ²
UN	14 857 969	13 887 210	93%
	337 112 969	96 532 210	29%



Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

** All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms*

Further details on the COVID-19 health response and continued support to maintaining essential health services can be found in the accompanying SPRP report.

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2 The delivery rate is explained by a USD 200 million loan by ADB and AIIB in support of the Ministry of Health and the Agency for Sanitary and Epidemiological Wellbeing, that has been recently signed but disbursement has not yet started. Delivery will continue in 2021.



Macroeconomic Response & Recovery

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	2 425 000 000	2 325 000 000	96%
UN	560 000	292 000	52%
	2 425 560 000	2 325 292 000	96%



Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

** All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms*

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

The initiatives under this pillar focused on loans from IFIs and were aimed at maintaining the macroeconomic stability, continuity of critical infrastructure, and continuation of ongoing structural reforms (especially in the SOE sector).

The WB supported the Government with USD 700 million in loans to overcome a short-term cash crunch following unprecedented health and social expenditure demands, which helped mitigate the negative economic and social impacts of the crisis while also supporting the continued implementation of the 2017-2021 Action Strategy.

ADB's USD 500 million budget support enabled the Government to cushion the adverse impact of the pandemic on population and economic performance,

resulting in increased social protection and economic growth in 2020. Moreover, ADB's USD 200 million budget support allowed the Government to have the fiscal space to further pursue reform agenda priorities in the energy sector.

IMF's USD 375 million financial assistance under the Rapid Credit Facility and the Rapid Financing Instrument helped cover Uzbekistan's fiscal and balance of payments needs and mitigate the impact on its foreign exchange reserves. It also provided resources to support increased crisis spending for healthcare, social protection, and public support for affected firms and households.

IsDB supported food security in the country by providing a USD 50 million loan through the Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) for procurement of fertilizers for growing wheat.

Most significant challenges and priorities

The resilience of Uzbekistan's economy to the global pandemic was supported by robust external and fiscal buffers such as access to external financing and a positive outlook for the commodity market (especially gold). Although the Uzbek economy was one of the few globally to show a positive economic growth during 2020 despite the pandemic, its GDP decelerated by about 4 percentage points compared to 2019.

The crisis inflicted long-lasting damages, from the tragic loss of human life to a suffering workforce, heavier debt burdens, firms' and banks' financial vulnerabilities, higher poverty, and deeper inequalities. Women, youth, and other vulnerable people have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and could face additional hardships. Bold policy action is needed to support the recovery, build a more diversified and resilient economy, and help the most vulnerable. The premature withdrawal of fiscal stimulus to the economy could trigger liquidity problems and insolvencies, worsen balance of payment needs, undermine the recovery, and further compound social and economic costs.

Where inflation expectations are well anchored, accommodative monetary policies should continue. Financial policies must ensure macro-financial stability by addressing higher inflation and containing excessive risk-taking. Maintaining policy credibility with sustainable, and transparent macroeconomic frameworks is critical, given growing public debt burdens.

In the medium to long term the Government must make efforts to prevent the insolvency of most micro- and small enterprises and manage growing banking non-performing loans (NPLs) and private bank problems. Moreover, the bankruptcy of most SMEs and insolvency of private banks should be avoided by continuing providing enough resources for post-crisis economic recovery and implementing government plans to reform and restructure state-owned enterprises (SOE). Finally, sustaining lifelines is a necessary interim step to limit workers' exit from the labour force and prevent the bankruptcies of viable firms. As lifelines unwind, fiscal efforts should be targeted toward workers' retraining and investment.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: Continued fiscal support is needed to mitigate the adverse effects of the pandemic on economic activity, especially SMEs/jobs, exports, and GDP growth.

Gap 2: There is a need to ensure that business, trade networks, and jobs are preserved to support economic recovery, with an increased focus on small private enterprises. The support to SMEs to save more jobs could also be strengthened by engaging representatives of small business into government.

Gap 3: Stimulus to the economy and to support households is fiscally onerous, and as such the criteria for the prioritization of government support could be further developed. Citizen participation in budget preparation and aid distribution needs to be strengthened to ensure transparency and higher efficiency.

Gap 4: As the global economic outlook is improving, policies must restore confidence, support jobs, and boost growth. To catalyze a resilient recovery, policies must promote structural change, further reforms (especially in agriculture, land and SOEs) and use opportunities to invest in more productive subsectors, and support more inclusive and greener growth. This calls for action to reduce monopolization and increase competition and private sector participation, expand digitalization, create jobs and improve infrastructure.

Gap 5: Broader but essential policies should also aim to enable universal access to health care and education, address illegal financial flows and tax avoidance, improve governance; and fight corruption and money laundering.

Contributing agencies:

World Bank Group (WB and IFC), IMF, ADB, FAO, IsDB.



Social Protection

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	57 000 000	57 000 000	100%
UN	1 541 800	1 170 813	76%
	58 541 800	58 170 813	99%



Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

** All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms*

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

The initiatives under this pillar were primarily aimed at the expansion of social assistance while improving the efficiency and transparency in the delivery system.

The World Bank transferred USD 56.9 million through its COVID-19 Emergency Response Project to support the expansion of low-income family allowances and unemployment benefits to support populations affected by the crisis. With the help of this funding, as well as funding from other IFIs (such as the IMF), the Government was able to extend the coverage by social assistance benefits by about 50 per cent by the end of 2020.

UNICEF and the World Bank supported the nationwide rollout of an electronic Single Registry, which currently covers 1.2 million households. UNICEF also provided the necessary hardware to address the most acute needs of the roll-out and the WB project supported assessment and proposed recommendations to minimize exclusion

errors emerging during implementation of the Single Registry. Digitization of processes that related to applying, assigning and paying social allowances were streamlined, replacing the subjective criteria on eligibility assessment with more transparency and objectivity. As a result, 400,000 applications are received and processed monthly. Around 250,000 households with children have directly benefited from the programmes delivered through the Single Registry.

UNICEF, as part of the UN Joint Programme on Strengthening Social Protection in Uzbekistan, led the development of a concept for future institutional structures of the social protection system, which envisages an inclusive and shock-responsive system providing a comprehensive, needs-tailored and accessible system. In the same programme, ILO assessed the impact of COVID-19 on the socio-economic situation (income, labour markets and access to social protection); the findings of the assessment

have guided post pandemic policy measures. Also, within this programme, UNDP led the introduction of a social and human rights model of disability assessment, launched micro-grants social initiative programme for 11 civil society organizations, carried out an analysis of the accessibility and affordability of public services and a review of women with disabilities and their access to employment opportunities and created strategic partnerships (including with the Association of Disabled People of Uzbekistan; an umbrella organization bringing together 27 DPOs).

UNICEF carried out an empirical study on the impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing. Preliminary findings were reported to the Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction and resulted in the Ministry's commitment to cooperate on establishing child poverty monitoring and introducing child poverty reduction measures into the National Strategy on Poverty Reduction. The study will also provide assessment of the extent to which current social protection programmes can cope with the challenges caused by the pandemic as well as offering additional social protection response measures.

Most significant challenges and priorities

According to the World Bank and UNICEF up to 900,000 additional people have fallen into poverty in Uzbekistan following the pandemic. It is estimated that around 14 per cent of the population could not afford enough food, and food insecurity is strongly correlated with lost income during the crisis³. The contraction of economic activity resulted in a fall in demand for labour and in August 2020 new online job listings were 74 per cent below 2019 levels, with tourism, recreation, entertainment, production, energy, beauty,

fitness, and sports being the most affected sectors⁴. Employment opportunities abroad also decreased and active employment fell from 88 to about 73 per cent, while from April through August 2020 zero per cent of respondents in the L2CU survey reported considering migration⁵. However, by June 2020 wage employment almost re-attained its 2019 level, whereas employment disruptions in self-employment remained substantial⁶.

Due to the loss of jobs and reduced incomes, the capacity of workers and employers to make social insurance contributions decreased. Although the Government took several measures to provide cash assistance to families affected by the pandemic, there were reports of challenges to ensuring fair, transparent and accountable distribution of the cash to final beneficiaries. Additionally, the Government announced plans to increase the total number of beneficiaries of regular low-income family allowances by 50 per cent by the end of 2020. Nevertheless, this measure is not sufficient to address existing social assistance coverage gaps (e.g., 75 per cent of eligible low-income families were not accessing low-income family benefits)⁷.

While the government expanded public works, regular social assistance, unemployment benefits and provided several ad-hoc cash transfers, there is room for more optimal responsiveness. To respond to the increased demand for social assistance from

3 WB's estimates based on L2CU data

4 ibid

5 ibid

6 ibid

7 UNICEF (2019), Building Better Future: a child sensitive social protection system for Uzbekistan. <https://www.unicef.org/uzbekistan/en/reports/building-better-future>

individuals and households there is a need to extend the coverage of the social assistance to workers in informal employment.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: Increased need for unpaid childcare will disproportionately affect approximately 30 per cent of female waged employment in the private sector. Women in waged employment in the public sector, particularly those working in education and the social sector, who constitute 69 per cent of all waged employment in the public sector, will also be affected. Thus, it is expected that more women will be left without income and/or will be pushed into informal working.

Gap 2: The lack of social protection coverage for self-employed workers makes them particularly vulnerable to shocks and crisis. Most of them are neither covered by social insurance nor other protection mechanisms associated with formal wage employment, and do not qualify for narrow poverty-targeted social assistance schemes where they exist.

Gap 3: COVID-related income shocks at the household level, even if only temporary, have devastating effects on children, particularly those living in poor households, with disabilities, and with limited assets. Reduced household income forces poor families to cut back on essential health and food expenditures, increases the risk of child labour, leads to stress, anxiety, a higher risk of domestic violence and placement of children in institution-based care.

Contributing agencies:

ILO; UNDP; UNICEF; WB, IOM



Supporting Workers and Job Creation

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	1 064 491 250	512 150 000	48%
UN	4 975 972	1 709 230	34% ⁸
	1 069 467 222	513 859 230	48%

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41

Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

* All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

The initiatives under this pillar were aimed at ensuring the financial sustainability of SMEs, providing business advisory skills and knowledge to help SME withstand the crisis, ensure continuity of employment and training, expansion of public works programmes, and supporting business startups.

ADB extended a USD 367 million Trade Finance Product (TFP) for Uzbekistan banks to withdraw under the TFP programme for financing the operations of corporates and SMEs. The banks used USD 230 million from this fund in 2020 to support business enterprises which in turn helped them retain jobs and avoid massive layoffs.

EBRD provided USD 220 million in Trade Facilitation limits and cash advances to three state owned and one private commercial bank to strengthen their operational and financial sustainability. EBRD also provided a USD 100 million liquidity facility under its

Vital Infrastructure Support Programme for electricity generation companies to cover their urgent working capital and liquidity needs with the aim of supporting a stable supply of power for businesses and households.

UNDP, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), initiated a Business Clinic and «1094» hot-line services to help businesses respond to the crisis with rapid, on-demand consultancy. UNDP also supported the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to increase its capacity



8 The delivery rate is explained by a recent launch of a USD 2.1 million JP on Unleashing young people’s and vulnerable communities’ creativity and innovation through strengthening their adaptive capacity to address the economic and food insecurities in exposed communities of the Aral Sea region, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a number of initiatives that will continue throughout 2021 and thereafter.

to improve the skills and qualifications of returning labour migrants, unemployed persons, and other vulnerable groups. Over 500 video lessons were prepared on 12 core working professions and competencies, which are taught in the “Ishga Marhamat” Mono-Center, which will help to transfer the educational and training process to distance learning modes⁹. UNDP launched an Integrated Business Support (IBS) service aimed at providing small enterprises with tailored practical support, including business coaching and consultancy services on various topics such as financial planning, developing marketing strategies, and staff management – benefiting 80 small businesses in Samarkand, Fergana, Djizzak, Kashkadarya and Namangan regions. Furthermore, the fifth cycle of UNDP’s youth “Startup initiatives” received over 905 online applications, resulting in 234 projects and 750 youth undergoing online training mentorship services.

The World Bank, through the Strengthening the Social Protection System project, supported the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to upgrade and equip the “Ishga Marhamat” Mono-Centers (2 in Tashkent and 28 centers in other regions) with training materials, appliances, furniture and IT equipment to upgrade 12 vocational training courses.

The ILO supported the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to review procedures and enhance the overall institutional performance of the quality of its Public Works Programme (PWP) as a means to address unemployment.

UNECE worked with the Government on an assessment of the country’s readiness to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which contributed to

building the resilience of the national economy to the social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most significant challenges and priorities

Due to the pandemic, the official unemployment rate rose to 15 per cent in July 2020, compared to 9.1 per cent in August 2019. Unemployment among women and youth was higher at 17.4 per cent and 20.1 per cent respectively, and the crisis has been more disruptive for self-employed and informal labour, especially in urban areas. Formal employment started recovering in mid-August once the lockdown measures were lifted, though recovery in the informal sector was slower, with the share of households reporting self-employment falling by 67 per cent in April. After an easing of restrictions, the unemployment rate recovered significantly to 10 per cent by the end of 2020 (Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations).

The new wave of the pandemic that is currently unfolding around the world poses a risk of new lock-down measures. Such measures would halt the recovery of business operations, generate a new wave of supply and demand shocks, and disrupt the labour market. Furthermore, in 2021 many anti-crisis measures, including tax and other deferrals, will expire, which will put an extra strain on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). While aggregate demand and supply have been steadily recovering, it is not clear whether companies will recover sufficiently

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9 <https://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/05/new-national-e--platform-for-distance-vocational-learning-is-on-.html>

to be able to cover these deferred taxes and charges.

The pandemic has hit human capital, adversely affecting both education and health outcomes. In particular, school closures may lead to learning gaps that will undermine productivity gains. Boosting investment in human capital and finding innovative solutions to promote remote learning will be crucial. Support for those who have lost their job and are not equipped with the right skills to re-enter the labour market is also needed. It is also important to strengthen the capacity of Employment Services Centers, which will play a key role in orienting the unemployed towards the right programmes, to support their return to employment.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: The low level of adaptability of the workforce to adapt to the crisis and to meet emerging needs. Upskilling programmes to build a relevant workforce with the required level of technical and digital skills, and creating effective skills development programmes aimed at the jobs of the future are essential.

Gap 2: Modernizing the agriculture sector, improving the performance of agricultural value chains, increasing productivity and efficiency among targeted smallholders, and enabling various actors to increase their investments in profitable value chains are critical gaps.

Gap 3: Ensuring a smooth transition to a digital economy by introducing measures to enhance government capacity to deliver public services more effectively, reengineering

of business processes to increase and accessibility, improving affordability of public services delivery, strengthening digitalization of government operations, and introducing reforms and innovative instruments which support job creation and advance e-commerce among SMEs.

Gap 4: Investments in low carbon business models and the green economy will be critical for a recovery stage with job creation, and will require financial instruments that incentivize climate proof investments, such as green sukuk (i.e., “green bonds”), SME-level financial assistance, and concessional lending conditional on ‘greening’.

Gap 5: Real time and robust data collection and analytics capacity related to labour market impact assessments during and post emergency situations to underpin evidence-based decision making is needed.

Gap 6: Support women and youth, especially the most disadvantaged, with cash assistance to offset the opportunity costs of the time spent on upgrading their skills in vocational training programmes.

Gap 7: The banking system should continue to provide adequate access to financing to support the full recovery of SMEs, and for the Government to introduce a more targeted approach to supporting SME financing that is in line with strategic priorities, including innovations and digitalization, green recovery and inclusiveness.

Contributing agencies:

ADB, EBRD, IsDB, IFC, ILO, ITC, UNDP, UNECE, WB



Supporting Education Services

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	4 075 380	75 380	2% ¹⁰
UN	1 388 000	1 170 000	84%
	5 463 380	1 245 380	23%

Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

* All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

The initiatives under this pillar were aimed at ensuring safe continuity of learning at all stages of education.

ADB provided support to The Ministry of Public Education to improve distance learning, develop online learning assessment systems and build teachers' capacity, and to provide its recommendations on Continued Learning with EdTech Solutions.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Public and Secondary Education (MOPSE) and Ministry of Pre-school Education (MOPE) to develop and broadcast Distance Learning Programmes, including by developing 4500 video lessons in three languages, skills-oriented programmes during the summer holidays, and 5000 blended learning lessons during the last semester of the year. UNICEF also supported MOPE and MOPSE to develop Safe School Re-opening /Operations Guidelines, Information, Education and Communication

(IEC) materials as well as training materials for teachers and the school community to implement the guidelines. UNICEF also supported MOPE to develop "catch up" programmes to address learning losses and to ensure remote learning complements face-to-face teaching once schools re-open. Following a detailed Census-based Situation Analysis of the conditions of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in schools and preschools in the country by UNICEF, which identified key gaps and immediate needs, the Government has now allocated nearly UZS 900 billion in the 2021 state budget for improving WASH conditions in schools.



10 The delivery rate is explained by a USD 4 million WB project to ensure learning continuity that has been offered by the World Bank and is waiting to be implemented.

The World Bank, through the Early Childhood Development Project, purchased non-contact thermometers for all preschools and is planning to develop teaching and learning materials to build knowledge on WASH and healthy lifestyles. Through the World Bank's Modernizing Higher Education Project, the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education developed and successfully launched two online platforms aimed at administering and managing graduate admissions and student transfers online.

With support from UNODC, MOPE developed the Zorbs animated series into the school's curricula as a multimedia application which reached 2 million children and gave them skills in conflict resolution, critical thinking, empathy, and teamwork. In partnership with UNODC, the Ministry of Physical Culture and Sports held sport challenges for over 20,000 people who posted videos of themselves doing physical activity on social media networks.

Most significant challenges and priorities

At the outset of the pandemic the Government decided to close schools until the end of the academic year. This resulted in more than 13,800 preschools, 9,700 general secondary schools, 1,500 secondary specialized and professional institutions and 98 higher educational institutions closing, affecting 1.4 million preschool children, 5.85 million students in secondary schools, 728,000 students in secondary specialized and professional institutions, and 360,000 students in higher education institutions. To ensure uninterrupted learning, the authorities introduced various types of distance learning (DL).

The Government decided to open schools and preschools in October 2020 and by end-December, 90 per cent of preschools and all general secondary schools were open. The immediate challenge was ensuring that the schools adhered to Safe Preschool/School Re-opening guidelines (prepared jointly by the Ministry of Health, Ministries of Preschool and Public Education, UNICEF and WHO), including availability of hygiene materials, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene, and community awareness on social distancing and hygiene practices.

Assessing the learning losses then reversing these losses through remedial education or "catch up" programmes should be an immediate priority. Moreover, institutionalizing distance and online learning as part of the regular education system by introducing "blended learning", enhancing the capacity of teachers and school managers to implement distant and blended learning, and customizing "catch up" programmes will also be critical. Finally, maintaining adherence to safe school operations guidelines will be both important and challenging.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: Only slightly more than a third of the households in Uzbekistan have access to the internet and only a few teachers are skilled in using ICT for teaching or conferencing purpose. Use of internet-based, online education resulted in serious equity issues in education continuity.

Gap 2: Students, teachers and parents were not prepared for the pandemic and investments in disaster preparedness are needed.

Gap 3: Due to a lack of detailed data on WASH, identifying gaps and supporting educational institutions to prepare for safe school operations was challenging.

Gap 4: Addressing learning losses due to compromised lessons during the last term of the academic year has put significant stress on parents, children and teachers.

Gap 5: Without monitoring and evaluation, scaling up or continuing education programmes is a challenge; and without adequate IEC and communication for development activities, effective outreach is not possible.

Gap 6: Given the Government's multiple requests to multilateral and bilateral agencies to help develop alternative learning methods, there will be a risk of a fragmented and inconsistent approach.

Contributing agencies:

UNICEF, UNESCO, UNODC, World Bank, ADB



Protecting Vulnerable Groups, Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	N/A	N/A	N/A
UN	5 636 184	1 924 335	34% ¹¹
	5 636 184	1 924 335	34%

Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

* All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

The initiatives under this pillar were aimed at alleviating the pandemic’s impact on the most vulnerable, including women, victims of gender-based violence, children affected by conflict, people and children in closed facilities, as well as first line law enforcement and people with a duty of care.

UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM, jointly implemented a programme to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support (MMFS) and civil society organizations (CSOs) to better respond to target groups’ needs, implement efficient policies and measures, and deliver basic socio-economic protection and services, including: i) technical and financial support to unemployed informal sector workers (particularly youth and women, with disabilities, women-headed families); ii) legal and psychosocial support to families

repatriated from armed conflict zones and children leaving specialized correctional institutions; iii) inclusive legal, psychosocial, and direct support to women and girls, including GBV survivors, through shelters, hotlines, and awareness raising; iv) socio-economic, psychological, and legal support to vulnerable returning migrants/ migrants’



11 The delivery rate is explained by the recent launch of a USD 3.5 million UN Joint Programme on Strengthening human capital and the resilience of youth in Karakalpakstan in the face of the health and socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 by expanding opportunities for participation and social innovation skills development. The JP was initially on the SERP’s list of Unfunded offers and has succeeded in mobilizing funds from the Multi-Partner Human Security Fund for Aral Sea region (MPHSTF). Delivery against this programme will continue in 2021, and will be reported through relevant UN mechanisms.

family members. In total, more than 31,000 vulnerable people (14,192 (or 46 per cent) of whom are women) benefited from the direct support on income generation, employment, training, accessing social support, including GBV, psychological and legal counselling services. In particular:

- UNDP provided technical, consultancy and mentoring support to unemployed and informally employed women and youth. Integrated Support Services Programmes (ISSP) helped 260 women develop digital skills, financial literacy and online trading skills. Nearly 400 women and youth in Karakalpakstan, Kashkadarya, Ferghana and Syrdarya launched family-based businesses. The Handicraft Training Center was established in Syrdarya region to train 1,500 unemployed women, and over 9,400 users registered on private digital platforms focused on consultancy and job searches. **In total, UNDP provided support to 10,235 beneficiaries, 3,106 women and 7,129 men.**

- UNFPA provided equipment, food and hygiene items to 14 rehabilitation centers for survivors of gender-based violence, reaching 2,139 women and 95 children with psychosocial support. UNFPA, in coordination with the National Gender Commission, and the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Mahalla and Family support and relevant regional authorities of Karakalpakstan, Samarkand, and Bukhara, piloted multi-sector response mechanisms to gender-based violence. UNFPA also created the “No to violence” Telegram channel, Instagram and Facebook pages, which broadcast GBV statistics from shelters and contact details of service providers, reaching

5,000 subscribers. **In total, UNFPA provided support to 14,702 beneficiaries, 7,994 (54 per cent) of whom were women.**

- UNICEF worked with MMFS to ensure the integration of 95 repatriated children and reintegration services for 356 girls and boys leaving closed institutions. Supervision was provided to 350 community specialists working with children from closed institutions, and 57 specialists from regional and district Ministry divisions were trained to develop individual reintegration plans and become case managers of reintegration services. Regional and district level MMSF specialists in 14 regions were trained to monitor and supervise reintegration services provided by community specialists and other local stakeholders. **In total, UNICEF provided support to 456 children, 261 (57 per cent) of whom were girls.**

- IOM provided community outreach and reintegration assistance to vulnerable returned migrants and their families, implementing activities in five regions (one NGO per region received a sub-grant of UDS 7,000 to conduct a needs assessment). Overall, 284 male and 224 female returned migrants were covered for needs assessment. NGOs delivered psychological, legal and socio-economic counselling to 580 returned migrants (274 men and 306 women). In kind reintegration assistance was given to 60 returned migrants (35 men and 25 women). Overall, 60 beneficiaries received grants to a total value of USD 154,103 to start new entrepreneurship activities in 25 diverse areas. **In total, IOM provided support to 5,640 migrants and their families, of whom 2,831 (50 per cent) were women.**

UNODC equipped Government counterparts with tools and online training programmes to mitigate the social consequences of COVID-19 from a health and human rights perspective, to prevent transmission to first line law enforcement and those with a duty of care. Personal protection equipment, including facemasks, gloves, antiseptics and thermometers were delivered to border control services, border liaison offices and port control units to support their daily activities.

UNICEF cooperated with the Child Rights Ombudsperson to set up a hotline to address child rights violations, especially during lockdowns. UNICEF also supported 73 Uzbek women and 245 children who had returned from armed conflicts zones in the Middle East by supporting their reintegration into their communities, including the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services.

Most significant challenges and priorities

While the immediate national socioeconomic response measures target vulnerable groups, there is a need to address the disproportionate impacts on highly vulnerable members of society with targeted assistance, including those in the informal labour market, people with disabilities, the elderly, families recently returned from armed conflict zones, women and children in closed institutions, and returning migrants (especially women living in difficult situations).

Quarantine restrictions have created barriers to social support services, which have increased the potential for vulnerable families to become over-stressed or abusive.

Survivors of GBV during lockdown could not go out to seek help, and so hotlines and online resources became a source of support to them. Shelters that support survivors of GBV are also facing shortages of funds to accommodate increasing demands.

Many vulnerable women and children who have been repatriated from armed conflict zones were further affected by dire socioeconomic conditions during the pandemic, when child and family protection services began to respond more slowly to their needs. In such a difficult time, vulnerable families need particular support from the guardianship authorities, family support specialists, social workers, and paraprofessionals who are usually involved in their protection.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: Civil society groups operating at the grassroots level require funding to carry out human rights monitoring and reporting in partnership with the Ombudsperson's office. Closer cooperation between volunteers, civil society groups and local administrations and self-governance bodies should be supported, especially during the verification of lists of vulnerable individuals that require state assistance.

Gap 2: Increase preventive monitoring of penitentiary institutions and pre-trial detention centres by the Ombudsperson and implement the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms and UNODC policy guidance on the need to decrease the prison population, release vulnerable prisoners and use deprivation of liberty as a measure of last resort due to the increased risks of contracting COVID-19 in closed facilities.

Gap 3: Regular independent monitoring of closed institutions and residential institutions for children by the Child Rights Ombudsperson and CSOs to promptly identify and respond to child rights violations with the establishment of a multi-sectoral and sustainable referral mechanism based on “the best interest of the child” principle.

Gap 4: Most of the funding for service delivery for GBV survivors finished by the end of 2020 and continued advocacy is needed to ensure funding for these activities. Furthermore, momentum should be gathered to finance and implement a dedicated programme addressing GBV through extended partnership with the Government, NGOs, business and development partners.

Gap 5: Human rights protection in the legal framework introduced during the lock-down period needs a timely review to ensure the integration of human rights into the ongoing legal reforms, and a functioning mechanism to deal with Child Rights violations during the pandemic needs to be put in place.

Contributing agencies:

OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, IOM



Evidence-based Decision-making: Data and Assessments

	Total value of offer (USD)	Total amount delivered as at end 2020 (USD)	%
IFIs	811 250	55 000	7%
UN	264 060	127 500	48%
	1 075 310	182 500	17%¹²

6	14
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Number of completed projects (out of total number of initiatives)

** All amounts here are as at end 2020. Delivery is ongoing in 2021 and will be reported through relevant multilateral reporting mechanisms*

Key Accomplishments and Achievements

WB and UNICEF-supported Listening to the Citizens of Uzbekistan (L2CU) surveys were adjusted to measure the impacts of the pandemic, extrapolate lessons and provide tools to guide the anti-poverty and recovery efforts of the Government.

UNDP undertook a Socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) of the pandemic on the wellbeing of the population and the business environment. The assessment was conducted in several iterations to track the evolution of the crisis and its impact on the economy and well-being. The findings of the assessment helped shape the Government's response measures at various phases of the pandemic.

The World Bank is also conducting an empirical study on firms' hiring and youth employment challenges, which will contribute to deepening the understanding of the key challenges faced by employers in creating

jobs (especially the skills demanded among first time labour market entrants).

UNICEF, jointly with the State Committee on Statistics, continued implementation of the MICS with development and pre-tests of the questionnaires in three languages. Currently, Uzbekistan is the only country in the ECA region with active on-going work for the MICS, with new modules being introduced, including on living with COVID-19.

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12 The delivery rate is explained by a few initiatives that have recently started, including a USD 650 000 ADB assessment of adopted policy responses and their adequacy for recovery and to build back better, as well as a number of surveys and studies that are still ongoing.

Uzbekistan became the number one country for the UNICEF-supported U-Report in the ECA region, with over 117,000 U-Reporters. During the pandemic U-report became an effective instrument for quick dissemination of reliable information among youth. Findings of the U-report are actively used for decision making among national partners. For example, the findings of one of the polls stimulated a reduction in university tuition fees for 2020-2021 by 10 per cent.

UNICEF supported the Government to carry out a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) analysis in preschools and schools, and a rapid assessment to understand the outreach and impact of Distance Learning programmes in ECCE and school education. Based on the WASH analysis, safe school/preschool Re-opening/Operations Guidelines and associated information, education and communication (IEC) materials were developed and distributed.

UNFPA continued to support the State Statistics Committee in preparation for the population and housing census. A questionnaire was developed and tested, methodological documents developed, IT equipment procured and trainings for newly recruited Census Department staff were conducted.

UNODC conducted a Rapid survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the changing patterns of drug use and the provision of services for people who use drugs. It also assessed the government response to this situation in order to inform national counterparts and support an adequate response to the pandemic and understand its consequences for drug users.

Most significant challenges and priorities

Rapid changes due to the pandemic have underscored the need for improved systems for high-frequency data collection systems to monitor the well-being of the population in real time, especially in the areas of employment, food security, vulnerabilities, remittances, business climate and other critical issues. This should entail adjusting existing regular surveys, as well as designing dedicated studies and surveys that aim to capture the immediate impact of the pandemic.

Improved consistency and transparency of government entities in collecting data and use of methodologies should be pursued. The latest mortality rate statistics for 2020 point to inconsistencies in COVID-19 related data, which may be due to insufficient testing capacities. At the same time, independent media and bloggers are being put under pressure when they question official statistics on the infection and mortality rates. Furthermore, tools for systematically communicating COVID-19 related guidance with civil society and the public need to be strengthened.

Critical gaps and recommendations

Gap 1: There is a strong need to capacitate service-providers and sensitize governmental bodies, religious leaders and CSOs on the need for reliable and accessible data and comprehensive analyses.

Gap 2: There is a need to mainstream assessments and their findings into all development programmes.

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Gap 3: Support the Government with the digitalisation of data collection and distribution, monitoring (MIS), the introduction of open data and the provision of social services.

Contributing agencies:

WB, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA

Gap 4: Support resource mobilization activities for ensuring the safety of enumerators and those engaged in surveys and data collections activities during the COVID pandemic.

Gap 5: Strengthen the openness and accessibility of government data, including working with the mass media and improve communication practices around sensitive topics.

Gap 6: Ensure the safety and security MICS personnel (in particular, interviewers) during the implementation of face-to-face MICS activities, including providing additional resources to purchase Personal Protective Equipment, COVID-19 medical insurance, and vaccinating frontline workers.

Gap 7: There is a growing need for a comprehensive Gender Assessment that would provide data on COVID-19's impact on women in all areas of social life.

Gap 8: Evaluate distance-based data collection tools and experiences for better monitoring of vulnerability and targeting, such as MICS, L2CU, U-Report.

Gap 9: WASH rapid assessments in schools and health facilities have revealed major gaps in schools and health facilities during the current COVID pandemic and raises the demand for a pandemic response.



**Consolidated Multilateral COVID-19
Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Offer
Final Report**

Uzbekistan
March, 2021

