

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



Business for  
Gender Equality



# UNDP COVID-19 BIZ4GE

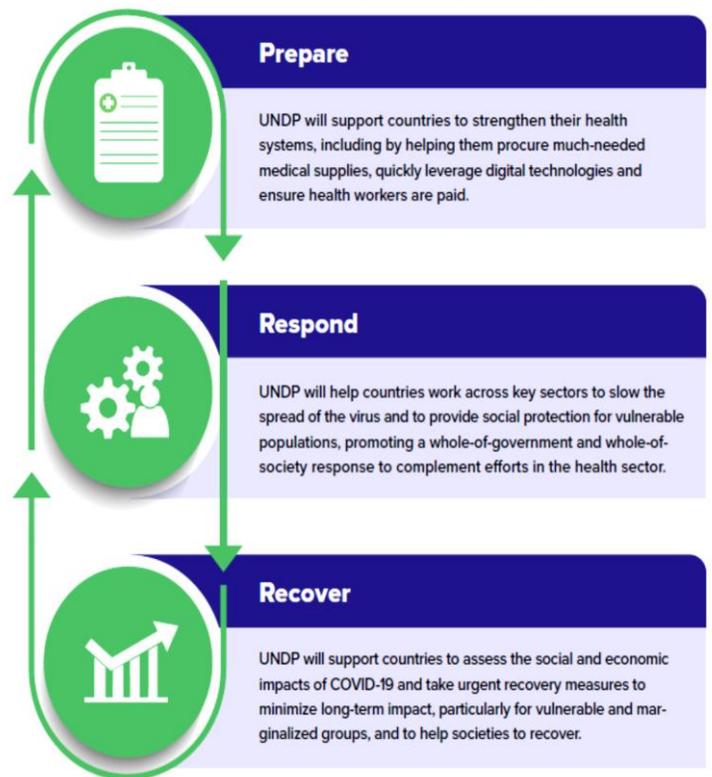
**Business for Gender Equality Programme  
for a gender responsive COVID-19 action**

Booklet for private sector partners

# UNDP'S INTEGRATED APPROACH: PREPARE, RESPOND, RECOVER

Our response is framed around three objectives. Helping countries to prepare for and protect people from the pandemic and its impacts, to respond during the outbreak, and to recover from the economic and social impacts in the months to come. For most countries, these phases will happen simultaneously and are inter-linked. How a country prepares for and responds to the pandemic, for example, will directly impact the type of recovery that will be necessary.

Alongside with UN sister entities, country partners, and civil society, UNDP will ensure gender equality is at the heart of our COVID-19 frontline objectives, priorities and service delivery



## Why a gender-responsive COVID-19 action matters to the private sector

The COVID-19 crisis will hit the economy as a whole but will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups such as the informal workers, domestic workers, migrant persons, SMEs and women-owned business, intensifying existing economic inequalities and vulnerabilities.

The costs of the response (e.g. self-isolation, social distancing measures, school closures, etc.) are not equally distributed, and private sector responses must take this into account. Economic consequences will be far-reaching and will deepen existing inequalities, including in gender inequalities since:

**Exhibit 1.** Women are **overrepresented in hardest hit sectors** (e.g. women's share of flight attendants

and travel agents is more than 70%, 56% of entry level positions in the insurance industry and more than 68% in the apparel industry globally<sup>1</sup>).

**Exhibit 2.** Women are **more affected by poverty and extreme poverty than men** (i.e. 122 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men of the same age group live in extreme poverty<sup>2</sup>).

**Exhibit 3.** Women are **overrepresented in MSMEs either as owners or workers** (i.e. there are roughly 9.3 million formal women-owned SMEs globally which is close to a third of all formal SMEs<sup>3</sup>), and are **deeply affected by informality**, especially domestic workers and migrant women, lacking access to safety nets and social protection (i.e. 92.1% of women in developing countries are in informal employment compared to 87.5% of men<sup>4</sup>).

**Exhibit 4.** Women bear the burden of unpaid care, since they perform globally 76.2% of total hours of

<sup>1</sup> McKinsey & Company (2020), IFC (2014), OECD (2019), ILO (2020), Deloitte (2019).

<sup>2</sup> UN Women (2018), Turning promises into action: gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

<sup>3</sup> IFC Enterprise Finance Gap Assessment Database (2011). The largest concentration of women-owned SMEs per 100,000 women is in Europe and Central Asia and East Asia and the Pacific countries.

<sup>4</sup> ILO Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture 2018.

unpaid care work, more than three times as much as men<sup>5</sup>.

**Exhibit 5.** Red flags are alerting the world since intimate partner violence and domestic violence has increased dramatically over the course of total lockdowns (in many cases of upwards of 25%<sup>6</sup>), while crowded homes, substance abuse, limited access to services and reduced peer support are exacerbating these conditions<sup>7</sup>.

When it comes to the COVID-19 effect over MSMEs and Women-Owned Enterprises, who employ one out of three people in microenterprises and 2 out of 3 in SMEs in OECD countries<sup>8</sup>, is important to acknowledge the varied challenges they face under regular circumstances and the intensified pains they suffer due to the COVID-19 crisis:

**Exhibit 6.** The cash crunch triggered by COVID-19 lockdowns could potentially accelerate the risk of bankruptcy of SMEs, since the median small business holds only 27 cash buffer days in reserve<sup>9</sup> and the formal MSME finance gap is estimated at 5.2 trillion dollars globally in 2018, while the formal women-owned MSMEs finance gap at 1.7 trillion dollars<sup>10</sup>.

**Exhibit 7.** Women face multiple financial and non-financial barriers to access financing due to biased credit processes, lack of collaterals, unfavourable lending policies, lack of working capital, reduced social networks, higher risk aversion and higher financial illiteracy, impacting negatively their possibility to access the financial and tax relief and stimulus adopted by countries in response to the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. access to credit to face liquidity constraints, debt restructuring schemes, loans to fund wage reductions, etc.)<sup>11</sup>.

It is estimated that 38% of companies across the globe have their employees working from home due to mandatory or company-wide arrangements<sup>12</sup>

COVID-19 is changing the way we work and is taking the toll on people's well-being and especially over women:

**Exhibit 8.** Both mental health issues and anxiety are on the rise. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, 75% of people say they feel more socially isolated, 67% report higher stress, 57% are feeling greater anxiety, and 53% feel more emotionally exhausted<sup>13</sup>. Both men and women have fears of the future and feel uncertain about their career pathways, adding new ingredients to the emotional COVID-19 distress cocktail, which poses redundant effects over productivity and competitiveness of businesses.

**Exhibit 9.** Women bear the double burden of care responsibilities, and school closures have put additional strain and demand on women and girls since (i.e. 1.52 billion students 87% and over 60 million teachers are now home as COVID-19 school closures expand)<sup>14</sup>. There is a blurred line between work life and family life especially to those doing work from home, which in consequence is deepening already existing inequalities in the gender division of labour.

**Exhibit 10.** The risk of Intimate Partner Violence and domestic violence has intensified during lockdowns, increasing the risk exposure especially to women as mentioned before, affecting negatively labour productivity and performance due to the emotional and physical distress caused.

<sup>5</sup> ILO Care Work and Care Jobs 2018.

<sup>6</sup> In countries with reporting systems in place. United Nations (2020), Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.

<sup>7</sup> On 5 April, the Secretary-General called for a global ceasefire and an end to all violence everywhere so that we can focus our attention and resources on stopping this pandemic. United Nations (2020), Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.

<sup>8</sup> OECD (2019), OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook 2019.

<sup>9</sup> JP Morgan Institute, Cash is King: Flows, balances and buffer days, 2016. Sample of 600,000 small businesses.

<sup>10</sup> IFC Enterprise Finance Gap Assessment Database (2011).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Mercer (2020), Business COVID-19 Survey. 1,871 respondents as of 04 April 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, R. (2020), How CEOs can support employee mental health in a crisis, Harvard Business Review, May 2020.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations (2020), Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.

# The COVID-19 Global Private Sector Facility

The COVID-19 Global Private Sector Facility is a mechanism for coordinated action and global transfer of knowledge to enable economic actors to adapt rapidly to the COVID-19 economy, that:

- » Maintains open and robust lines of communication and flow of data
- » Establishes transnational connections and networks between actors where appropriate
- » Aids replication of successful models
- » Identifies common needs across countries and develops a global coordinated solution
- » Works to address issues arising in transnational systems that need coordination across disparate actors
- » Maintains a “global” perspective and identifies critical learning
- » Acts as an advocate to its peer organizations operating at the global level

# The UNDP COVID-19 Business for Gender Equality Programme

A failure to adopt a gender responsive COVID-19 action will have an impact on the effects of the crisis and future recovery, beyond the specific effects on women, since this is a multidimensional crisis (i.e. Health crisis, care crisis and economic crisis).

The main purpose of the UNDP COVID-19 Gender Service Offer for the Private Sector is to safeguard the resilience and viability of the private sector, ensuring structural barriers affecting women are addressed to prevent the exacerbation of gender inequalities due to the COVID-19 crisis, in order to preserve and advance the SDGs.

The UNDP COVID-19 Business for Gender Equality Programme recognizes that private sector companies have varied capabilities, and that all contributions, either financial or non-financial, large or small, are important.

These contributions range from philanthropic donations linked to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, through to catalytic support in response to the crisis such as shifting production lines or investing in R&I.

A gender responsive COVID-19 action from private sector recognises that the Covid-19 crisis has a profound socio-economic impact over people and economic activity in general, but in particular over highly vulnerable groups and especially over women.

Immediate gender responsive business action is required on three spheres along the three tracks (i.e. prepare, respond, recover):

- 1 Protecting employees and contractors in the **workplace**,
- 2 Protecting income and jobs and supporting business continuity of the weakest links of the supply chain, especially MSMEs and Women-Owned Business (**marketplace**), and
- 3 Sharing solutions with the **community** in which they operate in order to safeguard their licenses to operate.



# The What and the How

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTION	PREPARE 	RESPOND 	RECOVER 
 <p><b>PROTECT WORKERS</b> [WORKPLACE]</p> <p>Companies should ensure the health and well-being of both female and male workers (including their contractors) irrespective of type of contract and work modality</p>	 <p>We support companies with <b>COVID-19 employees' needs and impact assessments</b> in order to ensure they monitor:</p> <p>(1) Emotional distress and impacts on productivity due to work-life [un]balance of employees working from home</p> <p>(2) Domestic violence and intimate partner violence cases during lockdown</p>	 <p>We support companies in their efforts to <b>ensure employee and contractors well-being</b> through:</p> <p>(1) <b>Sensitisation</b> (virtual talks) to promote work-life balance with shared responsibility, mindful masculinities and prevention of domestic violence and intimate partner violence (GBV)</p> <p>(2) <b>Advisory</b> for the design of gender-responsive measures for improved work-life balance and zero GBV cases for employees working from home (Ex: Flexible working arrangements, masculinities, GBV protocols)</p> <p>(3) <b>Connecting</b> companies with specialized <b>public authorities and institutional hotlines for GBV Reporting and Referral</b></p>	 <p>We support companies for a safe return to work <b>assessing the impact of work-life balance and GBV prevention and action measures</b> taken during COVID-19 and inform decision making for a resilient organisational management</p>
 <p><b>PROTECT SUPPLY CHAIN</b> [MARKETPLACE]</p> <p>Companies should protect incomes and jobs of women, low-income persons, migrant persons and other highly vulnerable stakeholders linked to their value chains, supporting the business continuity of the most vulnerable links of their supply chains, particularly MSMEs and Women-owned business (WOB), through enhanced policies and operations, improved business models and targeted financial support</p>	 <p>We support companies to identify and monitor the most vulnerable links of their supply chains <b>through COVID-19 suppliers' impact assessments targeting MSMEs and Women-Owned Business</b></p>	 <p>We support companies in their efforts to address liquidity needs of their suppliers and ensure business continuity (e.g. working capital, subsidize wage reductions, pay tax obligations, pay credit obligations).</p> <p>Companies will channel their contributions through the <b>“COVID-19 Window for MSMEs and Women-Owned Business Liquidity”</b> through which suppliers (MSME and WOB) will have access to:</p> <p>(1) Direct grants with gender responsive targeting mechanisms</p> <p>(2) Concessional credit (low interest rate, preferential terms and grace periods) with a gender responsive credit scoring mechanism</p> <p>(3) Financial guarantees, in order to increase the probability to access commercial financing</p>	 <p>We support companies to increase the resilience of their supply chains through a combination of customized <b>Business Development Services (BDS) for MSMEs and Women-Owned Business</b>:</p> <p>(1) Suppliers Development Programs (SDP) (1-on-1 remote advisory)</p> <p>(2) Business skills virtual training</p> <p>(3) Access to markets and Inclusive Business Development</p> <p>(4) Digital transformation. Companies can channel their contributions to the <b>“COVID-19 Window for MSMEs and Women-Owned Business Digitisation”</b></p> <p>MSMEs and Women-owned business will have access to BDS and financing mechanisms in ex-change of their</p>

		<p>mechanisms (e.g. credits, leasing, factoring)</p> <p>MSMEs and Women-owned business will have access to these financing mechanisms in exchange of their commitment of keeping their workers in their payroll</p>	<p>commitment of keeping their workers in their payroll</p>
 <p><b>SHARE SOLUTIONS</b> [COMMUNITY]</p> <p>Companies should share their capabilities, either human, financial, technical or technological, to address the COVID-19 challenges with non-commercial and commercial solutions; through leveraged Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, social impact investments and new business models with triple impact (i.e. social, financial and environmental return)</p>	 <p>We support companies in their efforts to <b>scan potential opportunities</b> for the development of non-commercial and commercial solutions to the COVID-19 crisis</p> <p><b>Non-commercial solutions:</b> Initiatives associated to the deployment of CSR strategies such as in-kind donations, financial contributions to procure PPE and medical equipment (meeting WHO standards) and/or the support to social causes or social projects.</p> <p><b>Commercial solutions:</b> business solutions linked to the core business including the shifts of production lines, the alternative use of idle capacity, the increase of production levels of essential goods and services and the development of business models with triple impact (i.e. social, financial and environmental return) that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.</p>	 <p>We support companies in their efforts to deploy CSR and core business strategies in response to COVID-19, through two modalities:</p> <p><b>Non-commercial solutions:</b></p> <p>(1) <b>Joint advocacy:</b> Raise awareness of employees, customer base, suppliers and social media followers joining the UNDP-led campaign “Share the Care” and “Zero Violence Staying at Home”.</p> <p>(2) <b>Share data for evidence-based decision-making:</b> we connect companies willing to improve the availability, quality, and use of COVID-19 data with governments, data centres and think tanks.</p> <p>(3) <b>Implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions for strengthening the health system and for funding social services for women:</b> either (a) <b>in-kind contributions</b> (PEP and healthcare supplies donations to reach female healthcare workers) or (b) <b>financial contributions</b> to (i) procure PEP and medical equipment and/or (ii) support projects and local organizations providing social empowerment services to women and girls (e.g. support to GBV victims, counselling services, rapid skilling, training)</p> <p>Companies will channel their donations through the <b>“COVID-19 Window for Resilient Health Systems and Social Services for Women”</b></p>	 <p>We support companies in the <b>assessment of the impact of gender-responsive non-commercial and commercial solutions</b> delivered in response to COVID-19</p>

**(4) Implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Actions based on employee**

**engagement:** through (a) **social innovation** processes for the design of gender-responsive solutions (SDG Accelerator Labs) or (b) through **corporate volunteer schemes** to support MSMEs and Women-Owned Business with advisory and technical services, and children with closed schools through thematic tutorship according to employees' skills and expertise, and (c) **Crowdfunding campaigns** (small employee donations to purchase PPE and medical equipment or support projects and local organizations providing social empowerment services to women and girls

**Commercial solutions:**

(1) Shift production lines/business models or use idle capacity for healthcare supplies production ([SDG Accelerator Labs](#) and governmental liaison)

(2) Sell PEP and medical equipment complying with WHO standards to the UN System and governments ([UN Global Marketplace](#))

(3) Gender-responsive product and service design ([SDG Accelerator Labs](#))

(4) Invest or access funding for product /service /new business model development through the **"COVID-19 Gender-Lens Investing Window"** (Investment vehicles: Grants, equity, social bonds) ([SDG Impact](#))

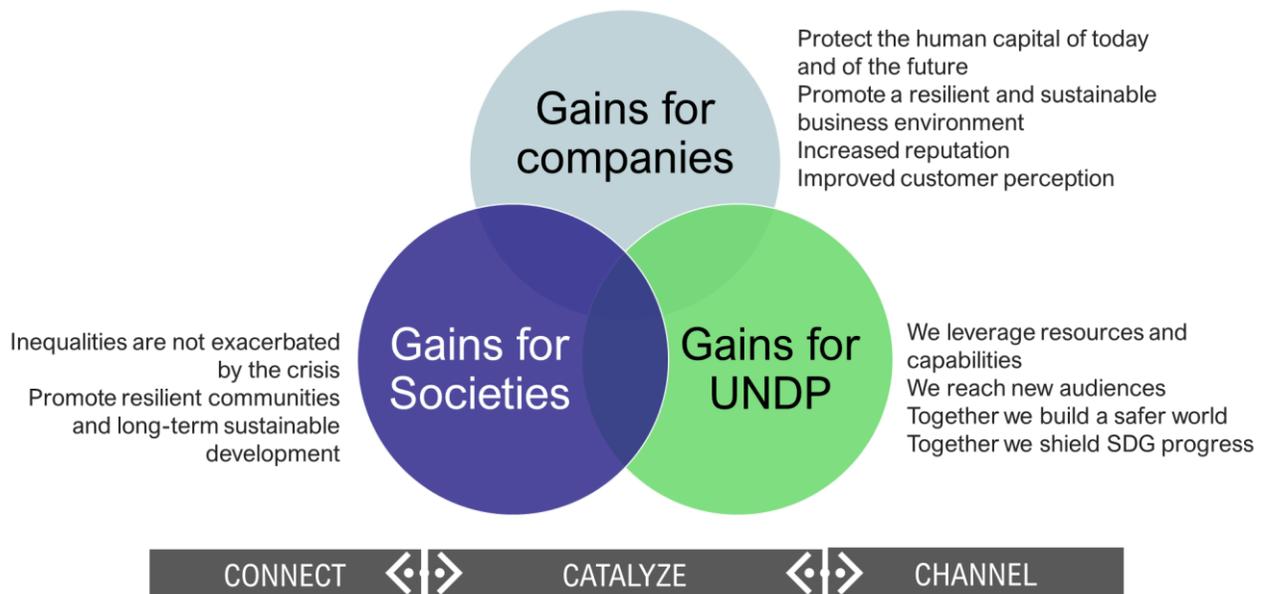
# UNDP value added

UNDP plays a central role in the COVID-19 response since we have been appointed by the UN Secretary General as the lead-agency for the COVID-19 socio economic recovery. From this perspective UNDP accounts for a unique capacity to:

- » **Connect** a wide range of public, private and non-state actors,
- » **Catalyse** financial and non-financial contributions maximizing the impact of both public and private efforts, and
- » **Channel** financial and non-financial contributions in the most efficient and effective way, maximizing final impact and social return. UNDP's COVID-19 Private Sector Gender Offer is grounded on a triple-impact gender responsive model where all companies, UNDP and societies win.

## UNDP is uniquely positioned to support a gender-responsive COVID-19 action

- 1 A worldwide presence** in 170 countries and territories, which gives us the ability to address the scale of COVID-19 needs globally
- 2 Our role as SDG integrators** leveraged by our [Global Policy Network](#) connecting UNDP's 17,000-strong workforce, [country platforms](#) in 50 countries
- 3 We leverage the strengths and capabilities of business** on behalf of a better, viable and sustainable world
- 4 We have more than a decade of experience** supporting the private sector in the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment in their workplaces, marketplaces and communities with the [Gender Equality Seal for Private Sector](#)
- 5 We provide a concrete way to engage with a trusted UN partner** with actions in the workplace, marketplace and community in response to COVID-19 and we facilitate principles-based business management towards the achievement of the SDGs



### For more information

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