



AUG 2020



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EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

Summer is time for holidays and recharging, but also an opportunity to reflect, plan and prioritize for the future. COVID-19, its associated challenges and impact have defined the first half of 2020 – globally and in North Macedonia. On top of this, Macedonians have gone to the polls in July to elect their representatives for the next four years – a remarkable and responsible task that needs to be followed by a prompt formation of a new Government. Regardless of its composition, the leaders and representatives of Macedonian people will have to act ambitiously and decisively to address the old and new challenges and seize the opportunities ahead.

we need to build an economy that will be inclusive, open to the world and stimulating young generations to return to and stay in North Macedonia.



Fourth, addressing climate change impact and environmental issues such as air pollution and exposure to natural disasters – will require an all-of-society approach and trade-offs that will not always be easy. For this the buy-in and contribution of all Macedonian citizens will be essential; it is a priority of today for the future.

Access to comprehensive, reliable and disaggregated data that is transparently available to everyone is key for being able to make the right choices and design effective policies. Policy makers need data to understand the needs of all and support evidence-based policy design; civil society and experts need them to be able to provide meaningful contribution to policy making; and citizens need data to hold their Governments accountable.

As presented during the first [Voluntary National Review](#), the country highlighted five sustainable development goals (SDG): 1. Poverty, 4. Education, 8. Jobs and Economic Growth, 13. Climate Action and 16. Rule of Law and Strong Institutions. Except for SDG 3 (Health), which requires additional attention, these remain equally important over the coming years.

The UN will continue supporting North Macedonia in these important endeavours towards sustainable development for current and future generations.

Rossana Dudziak
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

KEY DATES

JULY

30 Launch of the UNICEF study on [the impact of COVID-19 on children](#) in North Macedonia.

AUGUST

4 Constitutive session of the Assembly of North Macedonia.

6 Inauguration of WHO-supported [National Epidemics and Emergency Operations Centre](#).

10 Closure of the EU-funded project [Improving Municipal Governance 'Go Local'](#) (2017-2020)".

12 FAO organized [1st Accreditation Webinar](#) on "Direct Access to Climate Finance: Supporting national entities in the Republic of North Macedonia engaging with the GCF through the accreditation process".

24-28 Online [Summer School on Refugee Law and Migrations](#), organized in partnership between UNHCR and the Faculty of Law "Iustinianus Primus" (Refugee Law and Migrations Center) and the International Institute of Humanitarian Law San Remo (Italy).

Health remains a top priority for the country. It requires a more strategic approach and increased investment, particularly in human resources and in primary healthcare. The key will be to build or revamp robust information and performance management systems; assess and address risks; and increase preparedness. COVID-19 reminded us of our shared responsibility to protect health: as a society and as individuals we share the responsibility to prevent the loss of life and to contribute to communal systems of care and support.

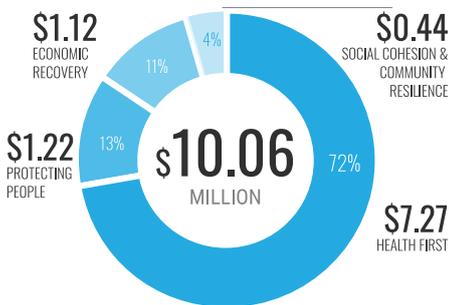
Second, we need to do our best to prevent generational gap and [restore and enhance formal education](#). This is another top priority to which we have dedicated special attention in this issue of the Bulletin (see page 4).

Third, measures to intensify green and sustainable economic growth that is driven by innovation need to be strengthened and particular priority placed on decreasing the gap between men and women. It should be boosted by a competitive private sector that is catalysed by efficient public administration and responsible public spending. It should be market driven, but operating within a rules-based system, with effective law enforcement and zero tolerance for corruption and impunity. And finally,

COVID-19 RESPONSE CRF, impact assessments, ongoing response

COVID-19 RESPONSE SUPPORT THROUGH UN

Grants breakdown by CRF pillar (in million US\$)



Available grants vs. socio-economic gap (per CRF)



* 'Gap' refers to UN funding gap – \$22.4/€19 million – for immediate strategic socio-economic priorities defined in the CRF.

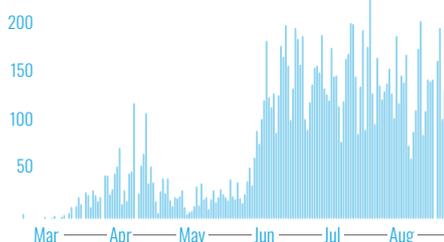
** Health first pillar gap does not include funding requirements for the ongoing health-related response identified under the nine pillars of the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP).

Commentary Funding for the UN System implemented or channelled COVID-19 response remains skewed towards health and macroeconomic support, with financing for the remaining socio-economic categories, such as economic recovery, social protection and community resilience, lagging behind. A greater portion of the resources are new funds dedicated for response. Financial data includes secured funding and announced funding pending approval. Source: UN North Macedonia

LATEST EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA (21 July 2020)



Daily new cases reported



For latest data see covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/mk

COVID-19 Response Framework (CRF)

North Macedonia CRF was recently updated to provide explicit information about the funding gap for proposed UN interventions, currently available funding and ongoing UN interventions in response to COVID-19. The development of the fully elaborated and costed policy proposals for priority interventions suggested in the CRF is ongoing, in response to the Government request.

Impact assessments and analyses

UN continues to undertake thematic analyses to assist with evidence-based policy interventions focused on the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

United Nations' Children Fund (UNICEF) conducted a study on the social and economic effects of COVID-19 on children in North Macedonia, including a rapid impact analysis and corresponding policy proposals. Additional 16,000 children are below the poverty threshold due to COVID-19; child poverty has increased from 29.3% to 33.3%, a rate not seen since 2010. Government measures have mitigated poverty incidence among children, though children have not been directly targeted. Poor children are most exposed to food poverty, domestic violence and foundational learning losses. Education system swiftly shifted to distance learning, but with unequal learning opportunities due to lack of unification. Vaccination was almost uninterrupted, however access to hospital care for newborns, children and mothers was delayed, and diagnostics and control of chronic conditions and, to an extent, mental health, was mostly neglected. The key bottleneck in the health response is the lack of human resources.

International Labour Organization's (ILO), together with partners, published a report on the impact of COVID-19 on Macedonian enterprises: 82% were severely affected by the crisis, 43% have had their revenues halved and 11% shut down. Microenterprises were the most vulnerable (19% shutdown), while 50% of large companies, though more resilient overall, reported a revenue decline higher than 50%. A considerable number of enterprises, mainly micro and small, cannot survive more than three months if the situation remains the same, predominantly in sectors affected by the ban on operations and curfew restrictions. All companies made business adjustments, mostly with working hours reduction (69%), paid annual leave (43%), organizational changes (28%) and innovative access arrangements for customers and/or suppliers e.g. e-commerce (28%). Despite job retention measures, 9% of companies had to lay off workers, with 4% dismissing more than 40% workers. Key policy recommendations include further increase of favourable loans, expanded and more inclusive wage subsidy schemes; uninterrupted (potentially digital) administrative services and more diverse

and decisive economic measures within an overall improved business environment.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) issued a second regional food market situation and policy bulletin. Europe and Central Asia's (ECA) regional production will remain close to the five-year average in 2020, but decline compared to 2019 record high. The wheat production, where ECA's global share accounted for 40% between 2015-2109, is forecast to decline by 6.1% in 2020. Prolonged logistics and trade/market disruptions continue to pose operational challenges along ECA agrifood value chain, with negative impact on transportation, storage, sales, financial situations, input availability and labour markets. ECA countries have implemented a range of response policy measures, including green corridors; digital marketing; market intervention policies (e.g. price control, building grain reserves, transport subsidies); special movement permissions and extended financial support for agricultural workers, as well as social support packages for vulnerable populations.

Direct response support (July/August)

The National Epidemics and Emergency Operations Centre was inaugurated on 6 August with the assistance of the World Health Organization (WHO). The Centre will provide focused support with contact tracing, epidemiological surveillance and situation monitoring.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has launched a two-week media campaign #SupportSmallBusinesses and an online business support and mentorship platform for business community. The Improving Municipal Governance project 'Go Local', which supported 81 municipalities in improving their capacities, processes and practices with innovative digital solutions and enabled implementation of 40 locally-prioritised development projects, came to a close. Some 80 more people who lost jobs due to COVID-19 remain to be trained.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, provided an online video trainings for 110 gynaecologists and gynaecologists-obstetricians for treatment of pregnant women during COVID-19 and donated over 200 hygiene kits to vulnerable groups in Tetovo, Shtip, Kumanovo, Skopje, Prilep and Debar.

UNICEF provided an additional 1,830 hygiene packages to the most vulnerable families in Bitola, Gostivar, Ohrid, Kumanovo, Skopje, Stip, Strumica and Veles, and to vulnerable Roma households without IDs, and donated the remaining three ventilators and personal protective equipment. It also supported the development of by-laws for telehealth counselling services. See the UN tracker.

PARTNERSHIPS Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Partnerships for Agenda 2030

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) calls for strengthened and broadened partnerships to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Since the launch of SDGs in 2015, numerous and diverse global alliances have been formed to accelerate partnerships. These include various global forums, platforms and initiatives for multi-stakeholder engagement on SDGs such as the [High-Level Dialogue on Energy](#) or other topics; initiatives aimed at greater private sector participation such as the [UN Global Compact](#); or platforms showcasing multi-stakeholder partnerships such as the [SDG Partnerships Platform](#).

Financial architecture for development that was [redefined in 2015](#) is continuously enriched with new financial vehicles – for example the [Joint SDG Fund](#), the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund](#), the [Start-up Fund for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) – to enable various stakeholders to financially contribute in addressing key global challenges.

The UN plays a key role in advocating for and facilitating partnerships around SDGs: it brings various actors together to jointly discuss key challenges and solutions, it facilitates the formation of specific partnerships to address development issues, and develops platforms and tools to support greater collaboration and joint action on SDGs.

National level engagements

At the national level, the achievement of Agenda 2030 and national development goals requires an inclusive engagement of a broad range of stakeholders: local authorities, legislative, judicial and other independent state oversight bodies, civil society and community organizations, businesses and philanthropic organizations, trade unions and employers' organizations, the scientific and research community, volunteer groups, bilateral and multilateral partners, including international financial institutions, and media.

Moreover, partnerships beyond the countries' borders – regional, sub-regional and transboundary cooperation – are key to achieve the desired sustainable development outcomes.

The [repositioning of the UN Development System](#) has called for a strengthened UN role in stimulating new partnerships across societies and around SDGs, which goes beyond co-implementation and funding. To enable this reinvigorated UN role in facilitating partnerships around SDGs, it is key that UN planning tools – like the 2021-2025 North Macedonia Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF) – are developed together with a broad range of development actors. That is the only way to ensure that SDCF:



July 3 meeting of the extended Joint Steering Committee to discuss and endorse strategic priorities of the 2021-2025 North Macedonia UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Credit: UN RCO North Macedonia

(I) reflects a shared vision and strategic priorities of the UN, framed within the broader partnership landscape;

(II) involves all strategic partners with whom the UN will work in pursuit of development solutions;

(III) includes all approaches UN and partners will take to accelerate progress towards Agenda 2030; and

(IV) the financial and non-financial commitment of the UN and broader development community is placed within a wider context of resources required to reach SDGs in a country.

by a general consultation. The events will provide space for development actors to exchange views on the role and key focus areas for the UN in North Macedonia over the next five years and pave the road for further dialogue.

Participation of all interested parties is highly encouraged. The consultations aim to further intensify dialogue among development actors in North Macedonia and the UN to build a common basis for collaboration and partnerships on key national sustainable development priorities.

For more information, please contact Lilian Kandikjan at lilian.kandikjan@un.org.

2021-2025 SDCF consultations

Aligned with the outlined approach, various stakeholders' views have been solicited during 2020 as part of the 2021-2025 North Macedonia SDCF preparation. Key development actors, ranging from political party leaders to individual citizens and representatives of vulnerable groups, were consulted in the preparation of the North Macedonia Common Country Analysis, a context analysis document that forms an analytical baseline for 2021-2025 SDCF. Their views and inputs were collected via interviews, focus groups and perception surveys.

The early draft of the SDCF strategic priorities and outcomes was consulted with key government and civil society partners, international financial institutions and development partners within select Sector Working Groups' meetings in June. This was also discussed by the extended Steering Committee of the [2016-2020 Partnership for Sustainable Development](#), the current UN development planning framework in North Macedonia. Feedback and inputs were also solicited from other, ongoing activities.

North Macedonia 2021-2025 SDCF consultations will continue in September with thematic discussions on the themes of digitalization, innovation and public services; aging population, emigration and growth; and environment and climate change, followed

2021-2025 SDCF KEY UPCOMING MILESTONES

- **1st half September 2020** Ongoing consultations
- **2nd half September 2020** SDCF draft finalization
- **October 2020** Government review and endorsement
- **October-December 2020** Finalization of supporting SDCF documents (funding framework, communications and advocacy, data and business operations strategy)
- **November 2020** Signing (UN, Government)
- **January 2021** Implementation commences
- **March 2021** Resource mobilization strategy finalized

IN FOCUS Returning to school, vital for children's wellbeing

Impact of the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented global disruption to education. There is overwhelming evidence of negative impact of school closures on children's learning, safety, health and wellbeing. North Macedonia, as many other countries, is faced with the challenge of planning for beginning of the new school year in these very uncertain times.

When schools closed in March, the education system quickly shifted to distance learning. This was critical to ensure that children did not fall too far behind in learning. However, the preliminary findings on [experience and attitudes towards distance learning introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), commissioned by the Ministry Education and Science and UNICEF, with financial support from the UK Government and implemented by Reactor, revealed that most teachers could not contact some of their students at one point during distance learning.

The use of digital technologies poses a problem related to insufficient access, especially for students who either do not have a computer or share the computer with other family members. Also, teachers have noted that a significant number of students did not take distance learning seriously and that it was difficult to motivate them. The crisis has cast light on deep inequalities, not just in who has a device and internet, which are critically important, but also who has the skills to self-direct their learning and whose parents have the time to spend to assist with learning.

The [recently conducted study](#) on social and economic effects of COVID-19 on children in North Macedonia revealed that not all teachers had ICT skills needed to plan and implement distance learning and that the education budget was among those that underwent cuts despite a slight increase of Government expenditures in May 2020 budget supplement.

Before COVID-19, a learning crisis persisted, with more than half of all fifteen-year-olds in the country failing to meet basic proficiency levels in reading and math. Without ambitious action in education and persistent focus on the most vulnerable children, the COVID-19 pandemic will further deepen the ongoing learning crisis, with catastrophic implications for generations of learners, as well as for economic productivity and social cohesion in North Macedonia.

Framework for reopening schools

When teaching resumes in September, the Government will have to ensure that all children are either in school and learning, have access to unified approach to distance learning, or to blended approach of distance and classroom-based learning. [Schools must look at how they can reopen better](#) – with improved learning and more comprehensive support for children in school, including health, nutrition, psychosocial support and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. It should be consistent with the country's overall COVID-19 health response to protect students, staff, teachers and their families.

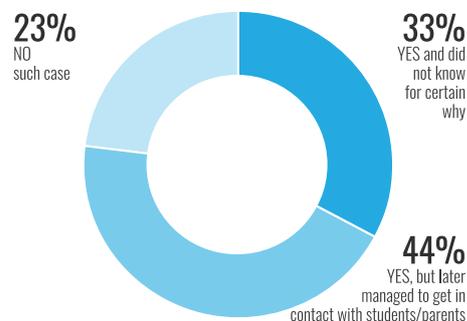
Schools should look into opportunities to improve hygiene measures, including handwashing, respiratory etiquette (i.e. elbow coughing and sneezing), physical distancing, cleaning procedures for facilities and safe food preparation practices. Staff need to be trained on physical distancing, school hygiene practices and recognition of symptoms. In collaboration with the Bureau of Education Development, UNICEF is preparing trainings and support for WASH for school management, teachers and technical staff, including cleaners, and education departments in municipalities. This will help schools get ready and maintain proper hygiene practices.

It is important that schools provide opportunities for transforming pedagogy and school ethos: new ways of teaching and learning, new ways of communicating with children and families and new roles to increase the overall level of care for student well-being. There are many valuable lessons learned already and more to come, which should be used for education planning and reform processes for years to come. This is an opportunity to reimagine the education, and to this it requires a planning process that continuously assesses the situation, encourages recording and documenting intervention processes and results, and monitors and evaluates practices to improve their effectiveness and sustain what works.

There are significant challenges ahead for teachers, school management, education authorities and decision-makers at local and national level. Failing to address them will have a life-long impact on children, young people, families, communities and the society more broadly in social and economic terms. See www.unicef.org/northmacedonia for more information.

ACCESS TO STUDENTS DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

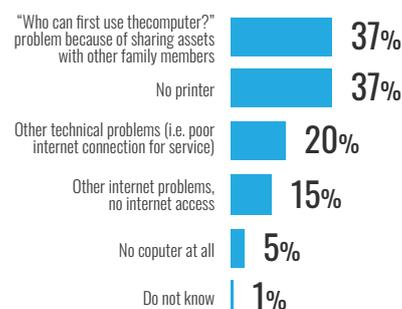
Were there any students and/or parents that the school could not get in contact with during the distance learning?



Source: MoE/UNICEF, answers provided by primary and secondary school teachers, N=6,362

TECHNICAL OR EQUIPMENT CHALLENGES

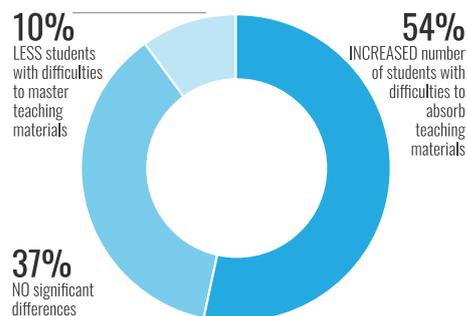
Which of the listed difficulties did you face as a parent in relation to access to equipment or technical problems?



Source: MoE/UNICEF, answers provided by parents, primary school teachers, N=3,394

PERSONAL EVALUATION OF HOME SCHOOLING

How would you personally evaluate the home schooling compared to the period when classes were held at school?



Source: MoE/UNICEF, answers provided by primary and secondary school teachers, N=6,362



UN 75
2020 AND BEYOND

SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great challenge, the worst global health crisis in its history. Through the largest global discussion, we aim to define global priorities and the way forward. HAVE YOUR SAY AND JOIN THE CONVERSATION. TAKE THE SURVEY!

MACEDONIAN

ALBANIAN

ROMANI

ENGLISH

The latest version of the Sustainable Development Bulletin is available on UN North Macedonia website. For additional information, please contact rco-northmacedonia@un.org.

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