



OCT
2020



HIGHLIGHTS

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EDITORIAL by the UN Resident Coordinator

We achieved an important milestone in October with the finalization and signing of North Macedonia 2021-2025 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SDCF), which reflects the UN development system's collective offer to the country in addressing its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) priorities and gaps.

This joint commitment by the UN and the Government to the people in North Macedonia, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, comes at challenging times. The implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has been significantly affected by COVID-19 and had endangered meeting SDGs by 2030. The Decade of Action, launched by the Secretary General late last year, calls for joint action to accelerate sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges. Fast and effective mobilization of all sectors of society is now more important than ever.

Building on the shared vision with the Government and drawing from broad stakeholder consultations, the UN will focus on three strategic priorities in North Macedonia in the coming years: (1) sustained and inclusive economic and social development; (2) climate action, natural resources and disaster risk management; and (3) transparent and accountable democratic governance.

These were selected due to their transformational effect; potential to assist groups left further behind; broad outreach – in terms of number of people to be reached, magnitude of change and geographic coverage; time sensitivity and whether the level of effort and resources needed is manageable; and whether they are within UN's mandate and where we can provide added value.

at: improving the **living standard** of all people in the Republic of North Macedonia through equal access to decent work, productive employment and inclusive business ecosystem under **outcome 1**; achieving universal access to **quality healthcare, education and social and child protection services** under **outcome 2**; accelerating and strengthening the climate action and improvement of the sustainable natural resources management and biodiversity – through strengthened environmental governance and disaster resilience under **outcome 3**; and supporting the rule of law improvements, enhancing policy making processes, and institutional strengthening for better design and delivery of **public services**, under outcome 4. All programmes will promote gender equality, civic engagement of youth, trust building, social dialogue, equal treatment of all, and equal opportunities for all to realize their human rights and full potential.



People are not passive recipients of services but are agents of change, which will be one of the key principles leading our engagement. UN interventions will support societal transformation for more active and responsible individual and community approach to sustainable and inclusive development. All programmes will address social norms, attitudes and believes that create barriers to change. Leaving no one behind will be our key overarching principle. We will aim to reach out to and improve the lives of a wide set of vulnerable groups with these activities.

Rossana Dudziak
UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia

KEY DATES

SEPTEMBER

- 30 UNODC met the new Deputy Prime Minister for Corruption, Crime, Sustainable Development and Human Rights to progress its programme activity in North Macedonia.

OCTOBER

- 4 October, UNHCR We Run for Refugees Team continued setting an example of solidarity by supporting runners and the Skopje Marathon.
- 5 October, on the World Teachers Day, the Ministry of Education and Science and UNICEF launched the Thank You Teacher campaign to give recognition to teachers for their critical role in delivering quality education.

- 14 -17 October, Under the slogan Jazz for Solidarity with Refugees and in partnership with UNHCR, 39. Skopje Jazz Festival sent a strong message about #solidaritywithrefugees

- 15 October On World Handwashing Day UNICEF shared video messages to promote the topic.

NOVEMBER

- 2-4 The 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe will be convened virtually, focusing on the Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets in Europe and Central Asia.

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Our contribution to achieving these priorities will be formulated around four broad outcomes aimed

COVID-19 RESPONSE CRF, impact assessments, ongoing response

COVID-19 Response Framework (CRF)

As a follow up to the North Macedonia CRF and with financial support from the British Embassy, the UN embarked on an exercise to fully elaborate and cost policy measures selected from CRF recommendations as most relevant and feasible in the current context. The measures will be discussed with national counterparts and potentially included as inputs within the process of budgetary and policy making.

They include measures to curb the spreading of the coronavirus and increase quality of health services [1] scaling up of public health capacities; [2] expansion of access to collectively financed paid sick leave, sickness benefits, and parental and care leave); measures to improve quality of education during pandemic [3] creating safe spaces for education at schools); measures to save income fallouts [4] temporary basic income; [5] expansion of the unemployment benefit, including a reemployment subsidy; [6] provision of social services associated with the care economy; [7] expansion of Community Works Program); and job-retention measures [8] "14.934 MKD per worker with a reemployment subsidy" measure and [9] grants for start-ups established by women and for existing micro, small and medium enterprises managed by women). The full policy document will be published on www.un.mk once the consultations with national counterparts are completed and their feedback incorporated.

Impact assessments and analyses

UN entities continue to support CRF with specific and detailed analysis focused on issues within their respective field of expertise.

The **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations (FAO) elaborated a comprehensive and holistic COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme designed to proactively and sustainably address the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic in the food and agriculture sector. The Programme identifies six priority areas for joint action aimed at

safeguarding the development and resilience of the food and agriculture sector including:

- 1) Ensuring quality data and analysis for effective policy support to food-systems and Zero Hunger).
- 2) Pro-poor COVID-19 responses for an inclusive post-pandemic economic recovery).
- 3) Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond)
- 4) Protecting and boosting smallholder resilience for recovery.
- 5) Preventing the next zoonotic pandemic.
- 6) Food systems transformation.

UN Women supported the **Rapid gender assessment:** The impact of COVID-19 on women and men in North Macedonia in the framework of project for promoting gender-responsive policies and budgets, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).

Direct response support (October)

UN continues to provide direct support for COVID-19 response in North Macedonia at various levels. Some examples from October include:

UNICEF organized an introductory webinar on the WASH self-assessment tool for schools on 8 October. Supported by the Ministry of Education and Science and presented by the Institute of Public Health, 54 participants representing both the schools and municipalities had the opportunity to learn how to use the tool. The online WASH self-assessment tool has been developed by UNICEF and it is integrating the existing paper tool used by the Institute for Public Health and the national protocol for reopening schools in times of COVID-19.

Financially supported by the City Experiment Fund, **UNDP** is launching a portfolio design process to develop and test innovative, experimental solutions to support Skopje's COVID-19 recovery through green, inclusive and resilient local economic development.

Over 120 participants from the Ministry of Interior and the weapons-selling companies were trained in using the upgraded Weapons Registration and Stockpile Management Software (WRMS) within UNDP training module. This training is essential for proper registration of firearms in North Macedonia.

NON COVID-19 RELATED AGENCY UPDATES

UNESCO organised an impact-assessment meeting on Fighting the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property in Venice, Italy, 20-21 October 2020 to evaluate the state-of-art of the regional cooperation on the fight against the illicit traffic of cultural property in South-East Europe, including North Macedonia. The meeting was organised as part of a programme developed by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe in cooperation with the Italian Carabinieri – Cultural Heritage Protection Department, which especially focus on strengthening coordination among relevant institutional stakeholders.

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UNDP opened its first Accelerator Lab in North Macedonia - a three-person team that will support the country office in designing innovative development solutions to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. The lab will work within UNDP's global learning network of 90 Accelerator Labs, supporting 114 countries.

UN Women has supported several initiatives in this period: UN Women North Macedonia supported the Ministry of Defense in the development of the strategic framework of the second National Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325. UN Women is also providing support to the development of the NAPs operational plans.

On the International Day of Rural Women, 15 October, UN Women supported the meeting of the Working Group for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to discuss how to mainstream gender in the strategic policies and programmes of the Ministry.

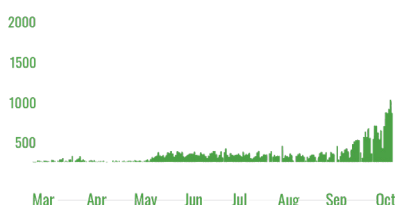
On the same occasions and within the frame of the regional UN Women project on ending violence against women, UN Women North Macedonia office contributed to the webinar: Intersectional solutions to eliminate violence against women and girls living in rural areas, through showcasing the example of the work of the shelter centre for the protection of survivors of DV in Strumica and surrounding villages.

UNICEF: The new report *A Neglected Tragedy: The Global Burden of Stillbirths* places North Macedonia among countries with greatest percentage decline in still births rate (62) between 2000 and 2019, as well as the best performer in the Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand. The stillbirth rate in the country declined from 10.8 still births per 1,000 total births in 2000 to 6.2 in 2009 and 4.1 in 2019.

LATEST EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA (3 Nov 2020)

32,436 CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES
1,004 COVID-19-RELATED FATALITIES
15,568 CONFIRMED CASES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE
482 FATALITIES PER 1,000,000 PEOPLE

Daily new cases reported



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

2021-2025 SDCF SIGNED

On the day when the United Nations (UN) commemorates the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter, Bujar Osmani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Rossana Dudziak, UN Resident Coordinator in North Macedonia, signed the 2021–2025 North Macedonia SDCF.

The UNSDCF is a key strategic document that will guide the work of all UN agencies working in the country in the next five years. It was developed in close cooperation with the Government, following an extensive consultations process with organizations and individuals from all walks of life.

NEW UN WEBSITE LAUNCHED

To further enhance the visibility of the work of the UN family in the country, a new UN Country team [website](#) has been launched on UN Day. The new website integrates several information sharing platforms within the UN System, which offer greater access, well-structured and up-to date information on the UN agencies, funds and programmes that are active in North Macedonia.

In addition to information about the UN Country team members, the new website includes all necessary contact information and links for all UN agencies, funds and programmes.



CELEBRATING UN DAY: 75 TREES FOR 75 YEARS OF UN

On 2020 UN Day, representatives of UN entities family, together with Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, other Government members, diplomats and officials from the Public Enterprise National Forests planted 75 trees near Veles Lake as part of the UN75



campaign marking UN's 75th anniversary.

This year's celebrations includes an outdoor activity in accordance with COVID-19 protection protocols and aimed to illustrate:



- the need for joint work in improving the quality of life of all citizens in the country;

- the need everyone to contribute towards achieving SDGs, regardless of the scale of their action;

- the important role of small scale action for the achievement of SDGs;

- the need to ensure sustainability in every action and initiative taken.

The tree planting was organized in consultation with the Public Enterprise National Forests at a location that was affected by forest fires in 2019. Thanks to their expertise, tree types and planting time and conditions were chosen based on the practices needed for the seedlings to have the best chance to survive and thrive.

In the following years, representatives of the UN will visit the location around UN day and check the progress of the seedlings. Visits will be documented to demonstrate what it means to have sustainable

approach and how we can shape our future together.

In 2025, when SDCF implementation is completed, UN will invite the same people present at the planting to jointly visit the location near Veles lake and see the fruits of the joint action for themselves.

During the celebration week, an online campaign was implemented, focusing on small actions that everyone can do, even from the comfort of their homes, to directly contribute to North Macedonia reaching its SDG targets and to build a fairer, cleaner and safer society, where no one is left behind.



IN FOCUS COVID-19 challenges and opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and in North Macedonia and presents an unprecedented challenge to the delivery of essential medical care, the economy and education. COVID-19 has also greatly confused our ability to predict and plan for the future. How long will the pandemic last? What will the world be like when it is over? The great degree of uncertainty has staggered COVID-19 response.

Baseline vulnerability at the forefront of the COVID-19 crisis in North Macedonia

Vulnerable groups in North Macedonia before the onset of COVID-19 are at a disproportionate risk of experiencing negative health and socioeconomic impacts. Socially disadvantaged individuals may develop multiple serious health conditions at a younger age compared to individuals from other groups. They are less likely to seek treatment and care due to social exclusion or fear of catastrophic out-of-pocket costs: 5.5% of people in North Macedonia reported unmet need for medical examination in 2018, which is higher than the European Union (EU) average (3.6%). At the outset of the epidemic, non-communicable diseases were estimated to account for 95% of deaths.[1] Aging, high prevalence of non-communicable diseases and underlying risk factors such as obesity, tobacco consumption and unhealthy diet all contribute to COVID-19 complications. In 2018, 41% North Macedonia population (854,000 people) lived at risk of poverty or faced social exclusion, which was substantially higher than in the EU (21.8%)[2]. Against this backdrop of health and socioeconomic disparities, the potential for socio-economic and health disruption caused by the pandemic in North Macedonia has been considerable. If the epidemic becomes protracted, social protection and loss of access to quality health care and productive assets will become a major burden for the country.

People's perception and behaviors do matter: How communication can be used to stem the spread of COVID-19

Every day we learn about ways how people can make a difference during the pandemic through social distancing, isolation, mask use and quarantine in different contexts. This points to critical need for preparedness planning and capacity building on

risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), backed by relevant and consistent messaging on this topic.

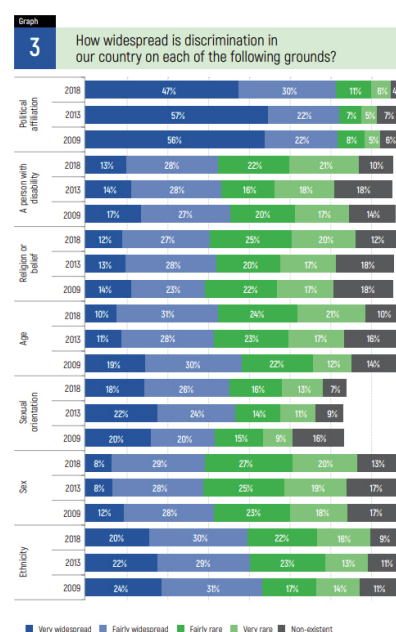
COVID-19 will not be the last public health crisis we will face. We need to set ways to communicate differently and involve local leaders, especially those from the hardest-hit communities, to develop interventions that work in crucial public health decisions. WHO in North Macedonia and its partners have developed and applied two rounds of behavioral insight surveys to understand and guide COVID-19 messaging. The goal is to create positive social and behavior change, community engagement, shielding high risk populations, and program prioritization and decrease people's resistance to public health initiatives.

Our behavior is the most powerful treatment we have until there is a vaccine. Our response to the virus has not required entirely new behaviors. Activities like washing hands or keeping distance from someone with the virus are already well established. But convincing people about the severity of the virus has been a challenge. There are also a lot of emotions that have become tied up with COVID-19 and the virus has not been a fair or equal opportunity invader. Not everyone has the same access to information, resources and support. For example, return to work is a choice for some and not for others.

Information on insights, risks and data from North Macedonia

North Macedonia has adapted a survey tool made available by WHO/Europe to the context of the COVID-19 situation in the country and is now conducting a serial, cross-sectional study to assess the public's risk perceptions and behaviors related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The complete publication of the results from the and analysis from the behavioral insights study undertaken in second week of September 2020 will be shared soon, but preliminary results are already available. People have the highest worries about the economic impact of the pandemic, but they are also most afraid of losing those close to them. National response to COVID-19 gains to be innovative and communicate preventive measures in a way that matters to people. Some ethnic groups perceive

the pandemic as riskier and are more afraid, but they still disagree with the restrictions. They also demonstrate lower trust in local authorities. We need to ask ourselves why that is the case and how to address that. It is important to consider these variations within the community and provide additional, tailored interventions that address these specific conditions and beliefs. This will not only incentivize behaviour that is more adjacent to the recommendations regarding the pandemic more but may also help them feel appreciated and in turn, increase their trust, and contribute to the impact of joint, communal response to the crisis.



SOURCE: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/c/439679.pdf>

[1] World Health Organization. 2019. Primary health care organization, performance and quality in North Macedonia. Available at: https://www.who.int/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/403020/MKD-PHC-report-160519.pdf. Accessed on 20 June 2020.

[2] Eurostat. People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. 2018. Available at: <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/mui/submitViewTableAction.do>

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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www.un.mk

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