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**United Arab Emirates-  
United Nations  
Partnership Proposal:  
Building Back Better  
Beyond COVID-19**

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United Nations in  
United Arab Emirates

2020

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## **Proposal Premise**

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic crisis has resulted in profound changes across the world, affecting all States and individuals. In April 2020, the United Nations General Assembly enacted a resolution instructing the United Nations system to coordinate a global response to the pandemic and its adverse social, economic, and well-being impact on all societies<sup>1</sup>. In response, the UN Secretary-General approved the UN Framework for the Socioeconomic Response to COVID-19<sup>2</sup>, and tasked UN Country Teams to develop national-level response plans that reflect national priorities while strengthening international engagement for post-COVID recovery.

The framework is designed in line with the broad objectives of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, and includes a range of actions clustered under five pillars, addressing a. the public health crisis; b. social protection and service delivery; c. economic response and recovery; d. multilateral collaboration; and e. social cohesion and community resilience. The framework emphasizes supporting persons in vulnerable situations who need support the most under the premise of “leaving no one behind”.

## **Relevance to the United Arab Emirates**

The UAE is the region’s second largest economy and maintains unmatched appeal as a globally connected economic and strategic hub for international trade and cooperation. UAE residents enjoy a high standard of living and quality of life as a result of a government bureaucracy and visionary leadership. The UAE is currently the second largest host of foreign population in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, only surpassed in 2019 by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Various factors explain the UAE’s considerable appeal to Temporary Contractual Workers, including its open and inclusive new system for long-term residence visas since 2019 and the availability of numerous work opportunities that provide Temporary Contractual Workers from low-income countries with livelihood sources that can also support their families and communities back home with remittances. As a country that hosts more than 200 nationalities<sup>3</sup> and 87.9 percent of the total population from foreign countries, the health and well-being of the Temporary Contractual Workers has of course a significant impact on the prosperity of the society as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The UAE was the first country in the region to detect COVID-19 cases and was quick to enact measures to contain its spread and enact a wide range of measures to limit its impact on the economy and society, including its foreign population. The UAE’s National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA) coordinates initiatives to contain the pandemic and mitigate its impact across the UAE in close coordination with a wide range of federal and local government institutions. The UAE continues to demonstrate perceptive capacity to manage the COVID-19 response from its onset to ensure the safety and socioeconomic wellbeing of citizens and residents in the UAE. Furthermore, the UAE, in a show of international solidarity, has provided over 1,471 metric tons of aid to 118 countries, supporting more than 1.5 million medical professionals in the process<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/74/270 and A/RES/74/306 on Global Solidarity to Fight COVID19.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations (2020) A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19

<sup>3</sup> Fact sheet retrieved from: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/fact-sheet>; Indians form the largest foreign community in the UAE, followed by Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, other Asians, Europeans and Africans.

UAE Public Policy retrieved from: <https://www.cpc.gov.ae/en-us/theuae/Pages/government.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019), Population Division, International Migrant Stock. <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/data/estimates2/estimates19.asp>

<sup>5</sup> As of 18 September 2020.

However, as the crisis continues to unfold, new policy and institutional measures continue to be needed to mitigate its impact and facilitate an inclusive economic recovery post-COVID. The UAE's new cabinet, appointed in June 2020, has a clear mandate to work in this direction. It has identified specific areas of work focusing on revival of economic activity, improving service delivery including through digital means, investing in technology production and innovation, food and water security, amongst other areas. This mandate has a significant overlap with the UN's framework to Build Back Better, with a wide range of opportunities for partnership and cooperation.

Specifically, this partnership proposal intends to mobilize the United Nations System in service of the various UAE government entities, providing global expertise and facilitating triangular experience sharing of effective and ongoing policy and programmatic innovations in the identified action areas in line with the UAE's vision 2021, national priorities, and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The partnership will also showcase the UAE's commitment to multilateral frameworks and include provisions for a stronger UAE engagement within and through the United Nations various bodies.

### **Proposal Structure**

This proposal is the result of extensive consultations within the United Nations System in the UAE and at the regional and global levels. It includes contributions from most of the over 30 UN agencies within the UAE's UN Country Team, building on existing knowledge of current national priorities as well as ongoing areas of collaboration between UN entities and various UAE government agencies.

Twelve areas of work are proposed, structured under three strategic focus areas. Gender equality and empowerment of women, inclusion including of persons of determination and older persons, youth engagement and empowerment, respect for human rights, and international cooperation are integral cross-cutting elements.

The proposed areas of work are illustrative and open for further elaboration and development based on discussions with UAE counterparts and stakeholders. The intention is to showcase the types and range of strategic partnerships that can further strengthen the UAE's response to the impact of COVID-19. This proposal is expected to continue evolving as the COVID-19 situation continues to unfold across the world. Additionally, the UN Country Team will adjust its engagement based on the needs and priorities of the UAE government to address the UAE context and requirements.

The UN Resident Coordinator's Office can facilitate the outreach to the UN agencies where the UAE government determines further consultations and engagement would be most beneficial. Specific areas of partnership not articulated within this proposal and identified by the UAE government as a priority can also be further pursued.

### Focus Area 1: COVID-19 Containment and Recovery

- **Health First:** Facilitating experience-sharing on integrated health systems that include preventative care, health standards and facilities, pandemic-management tools, mental well-being, and healthy lifestyles. (SDG3)
- **Virtual Education:** Best practices on hybrid educational models to include global content cross-fertilization of curricula, and peer education. (SDG 4)
- **Responsible Business:** Work with chambers of commerce to promote labor welfare and worker-friendly corporate turnaround strategies particularly for hardest hit sectors. (SDGs 8, 10, 16).

### Focus Area 2: Accelerating Sustainable Development

- **Economic Diversification:** Provide unbiased research on economic activity, capacity utilization, and sustainable growth prospects. (SDGs 8, 9, 12)
- **Green Technologies:** Facilitate partnerships between the UN Technology assets and potential UAE counterparts to promote a green economy. (SDGs 9, 17)
- **Food Security:** Provide policy advice on sustainable agriculture, food production and supply, biosecurity, and nutrition. (SDGs 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15)
- **Climate Action:** Present policy options on: Mitigating the differential impact of climate change, decarbonization, waste management, and environmental safeguards. (SDG 13)
- **International Cooperation on Mobility:** To explore new mobility partnerships, dialogues and frameworks to respond to mobility challenges posed by COVID-19. (SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17)

### Focus Area 3: Strengthening Social Cohesion

- **Women's Empowerment:** Develop campaigns for women empowerment to respond to COVID-19, and provide technical expertise on responding to gender-based violence (SDG 5, 10, 16, 17)
- **Youth Empowerment:** Propose interventions to strengthen youth well-being, resilience, and contributions to social cohesion and societal well-being. (SDGs 4, 5, 16)
- **Child protection and well-being:** Promote targeted interventions that enhance child welfare and address issues arising from COVID-19 related social changes. (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- **Dwelling Conditions:** Assess urbanization plans in light of COVID-19, including quality of dwellings, density, and vulnerabilities from a prevention standpoint. (SDGs 9, 10, 11)

## Focus Area 1: COVID-19 Containment and Recovery

Actions proposed within this area focus specifically on providing tailored support for national efforts for the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic towards overcoming its consequences on society. COVID-19 is in its essence a public health crisis that affects the public health infrastructure and the population at large, as well as a human mobility issue. While a wide range of actions can be proposed to contain its impact, this focus area includes three actions which were identified as potential areas where the UN system can make immediate and important contributions to the government of the UAE.

### **Health First: Facilitating experience-sharing on integrated health systems that include preventative care, mental well-being, and healthy lifestyles (SDG3)**

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic requires inclusive and comprehensive health systems since positive health outcomes for the whole of society very much depend on the inclusion of its most vulnerable members, the UAE has promoted the physical and psychological health of citizens, residents, and temporary workers through a range of special health initiatives. These initiatives included specific focus on essential workers, health professionals, older persons, people of determination, children and women, amongst others. The UAE has ensured the strictest regulation and inspection of health care facilities and used its existing healthcare infrastructure effectively including through bringing in additional support from outside the country. However, the UAE has only 1.3 hospital beds per 1,000 persons, which is lower than the global average of 2.7<sup>6</sup>. This presents an opportunity for further investments in the healthcare infrastructure to serve all residents especially as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold. The proposed actions for partnership with relevant UN entities in this area include:

- Integrated Public Health Policies for pandemic prevention, to include elements such as psychological first aid to be rendered by frontline health workers, detecting air-borne pollutants, safe medical supplies and waste management, care for persons with pre-existing conditions, pregnant and lactating women, amongst others.
- Inter-regional exchanges on best practices and lessons learnt, revolving around “what works” in early detection and containment. Emphasis on preparedness plans for high-risk sectors such as international travel, hospitality and tourism, and the like.
- Options for promoting healthy lifestyles during pandemics, particularly given closure of public facilities for sport and exercise such as gyms and swimming pools, as well as group sports. This also includes addressing issues relating to nutrition and obesity.
- Strengthening the national core capacity of International Health Regulations (IHR) for preparedness and response to address health security and ensure the health system can continue providing essential health care for all including temporary contractual workers, regardless of status, before, during, and after the pandemic.
- Implement remote surveys to assess perception and psycho-social impact of COVID-19 on Temporary Contractual Worker populations, which is used to inform messaging, provision of services, and identification of most at-risk individuals and groups.
- Strengthening inter-agency (immigration, customs, health etc.) and cross-border coordination in line with principles of integrated border management will further ensure appropriate prevention, management and containment of the pandemic at points of entry. While enhanced and adapted facilities, tracing, tracking, and referral are regularly addressed by the government with

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<sup>6</sup> WHO Data, 2016 data for UAE.

additional support to particularly vulnerable travelers (e.g. children, victims of trafficking, asylum-seekers and others).

- Support South-South and/or triangular cooperation for sharing best practices and methodologies related to the health response to COVID-19.

**Virtual Education: Best practices on hybrid educational models to include global content cross-fertilization of curricula, and peer education.**

In the foundational years of education, the impact of school closures might be the strongest on pupils, both girls and boys, and their families. Simulations in developing countries participating in the Programme for International Assessment (PISA) suggest that without targeted support, a loss of learning by one-third (equivalent to a three-month school closure) during Grade 3 might result in 72 per cent of students falling so far behind that by Grade 10 they will have dropped out or will not be able to learn anything in school. This is a profound risk facing over half a million pupils in the UAE, requiring a diligent follow-up and preparation in order to mitigate the risks and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Consequently, the proposed actions for collaboration with the UN include:

- Undertake a hybrid capacity absorption plan that targets pupils in nurseries and schools, with particular attention to the online and in-person roles of social workers, child protection specialists, psychologists, activity teachers, nurses, and school managements.
- Developing tools and instruments for measurement of attainment and progress in online education at school and university levels and propose measures to capitalize on virtual classrooms for skill development across curricula and topics.
- Provide options to ensure equitable access to education for all children regardless of residency status or financial abilities of the parents.
- Introduce mechanisms for socialization among communities of pupils, per interest and learning area, as well as across schools and regions for creative and recreational reasons. This can include online mentoring, peer-education, and coaching by older pupils.
- Support the UAE in integrating awareness of the SDGs and leadership know-how to engage on the SDGs within the UAE education system.
- Facilitate for the UAE access to the knowledge sets and know-how on different methodologies for remote/virtual education, as well as inclusion of UAE capacities in global engagements to support the UAE's advancement and access to global know-how in virtual education.

**Responsible Business: Work with chambers of commerce to promote labor welfare and worker-friendly corporate turnaround strategies particularly for hardest hit sectors. (SDGs 8, 10, 16).**

Over 4.2 million workers, including temporary contractual workers, are employed in medium to high-risk sectors which are affected by the COVID-19 crisis, such as retail, aviation, construction, tourism, and hospitality. As a consequence, hundreds of thousands of foreign workers have already left the UAE or applied for repatriation, despite a number of measures enacted by the federal and local government to preserve workers' livelihoods to the extent possible. UAE authorities also continued to remind employers' of their responsibilities to settle due wages and other entitlements of workers and to pay for travel costs if a worker does not wish to work for a new employer or does not find another job and wishes to return home. However, as the COVID-19 crisis has shown, these measures need to be further supplemented to ensure the welfare of foreign workers. Working closely with UN partners, the supplementary measures can include:

- Support holding multi-stakeholder engagements and dialogue, including with workers, on the role of businesses in facilitating and accelerating economic recovery through retention of workers, exploring options for worker-friendly corporate turnaround, business process reform, and worker-friendly actions.
- Support integrating workers providing essential services into the UAE's COVID-19 socio-economic response regardless of workers' status. Particular emphasis needs to be given to low-wage, temporary and informal sector workers, including construction and domestic workers.
- Provide advisory services in relation to the living and working conditions of temporary contractual workers, to protect their health, rights, and interests, as well as prevent exploitation, and safeguard their dignity in times of crisis.

## Focus Area 2: Accelerating Sustainable Development

Despite its negative impact on societal well-being and economic activity, COVID-19 presents an opportunity to redouble efforts towards advancing sustainable development and the internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals. The four action areas under this focus area are detailed below.

### **Economic Diversification: Provide unbiased research on economic activity, capacity utilization, and sustainable growth prospects. (SDGs 8, 9, 12)**

The UAE is one of the first countries in the world to implement a contingency plan to contain the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis. The Central Bank has created a comprehensive economic support plan to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses and consumers. Furthermore, several federal and local government authorities have adopted plans and policies to soften the economic impacts of the crisis and to bolster the economy. The UN can partner with relevant UAE counterparts to complement these efforts by proposing the following:

- Support the UAE's economic analyses through economic modeling that accounts for externalities and whole-of-society impact and benefits. This may prove instrumental in validating key economic assumptions to inform decision making by a neutral non-commercial entity.
- Undertake research, expert consultations, and in-depth analysis on potential opportunities for economic diversification and growth in promising sectors and sub-sectors and the skill sets needed for this diversification. This will include an assessment of current capacities, competitive advantages regionally and globally, and trends in international investment, skills mobility and trade.
- Promote the UAE as a destination for innovative and creative green investments, showcasing the UAE's policies post COVID-19 and ongoing efforts and innovations towards a more sustainable future, in line with the joint UN-UAE Future Possibilities Report 2020<sup>7</sup>.
- Support the UAE in analyzing cross-border and regional economic cooperation opportunities in alignment with the UAE's national priorities and COVID-19 response.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/20200720\\_un75\\_uae\\_futurepossibilitiesreport.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/20200720_un75_uae_futurepossibilitiesreport.pdf)

**Green Technologies: Facilitate partnerships between the UN Technology assets and potential UAE counterparts to promote a green economy. (SDGs 9, 17)**

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development gave the UN a noteworthy mandate in strengthening international cooperation in the area of technology transfer, particularly to address key sustainable development challenges. In this regard, the UN has a number of assets to provide technical support and advisory services to member States in this area, such as the UN Technology Innovation Labs, UN Technology Bank, and the UN Technology Transfer Facilitation Mechanism. Indeed, technology and innovations present opportunities to address sustainable development challenges including those associated with overcoming the impact of the pandemic. In this regard, the proposed actions for partnership with the UN may include:

- Facilitate communications and collaborations between the various UN assets working on green technologies with universities, research institutions, and other stakeholders in the UAE to identify potential areas for engagement.
- Organize international convenings in partnership with the UAE government on the contributions of green technologies for sustainable development, technology-based solutions for developmental challenges, and innovation partnerships with the private sector.
- Promote research and development within the UAE towards increasing the production of technology and innovation in the UAE, and facilitate triangular cooperation for sharing Emirati green technologies with both developed and developing countries.
- Promote climate-smart agricultural good practices that contribute to expanding the UAE's agricultural sector, with emphasis on green technologies for climate adaptation.

**Food Security: Provide policy advice on sustainable agriculture, food production and supply, biosecurity, and nutrition. (SDGs 2, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15)**

The UAE is committed to ensuring food security for every citizen and resident, as evidenced by its National Food Security Strategy 2051 that brings together the public and private sector to achieve sustainable food security. The government is promoting research, technologies and intelligence tools to develop the food industry and increase its domestic food production capacity. It is also implementing public awareness programs, which focus on food consumption, in order to promote healthy diets and reduce food loss and waste. In support of these endeavors, the following areas for collaboration with the UN are proposed:

- Promote knowledge exchange in sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and livestock sectors; promoting research, technology and innovation; and assessing food safety and pest control systems.
- Improving biosecurity, including animal and plant diseases and pest control systems, detecting, preventing and responding to zoonotic pathogens, possible food contaminants and invasive alien species.
- Strengthen sustainable water management systems, including surface and ground water resources, saline and brackish waters utilization for agriculture, and non-conventional water resources.
- Expand support provided by the UAE Water Aid initiative to improve access to water and sanitation to countries in crisis in the region and across the globe.

### **Climate Action: Present policy options on: Mitigating the differential impact of climate change, decarbonization, waste management, and environmental safeguards. (SDG 13)**

The National Climate Change Plan of the UAE 2017–2050 has identified a range of priorities to reduce the carbon footprint and make important steps to slowing down and reversing climate change as a fundamental pillar of its better future. The UAE has made great strides in incorporating renewable energy into its energy mix, expanded medical waste disposal programmes, and supported a wide range of environmental presentation programmes on land and in sea. However, continuing increases in temperature, largely associated with climate change, can contribute to water scarcity, drought, rising sea level and aridity in the UAE. This has the potential to intensify any existing environmental issues, and undermine gains made towards addressing climate change related problems. Building on the progress made and addressing environmental issues, the UN identifies the following action areas for partnership:

- Expand environmental protection programmes to mitigate the impact of climate change, airborne pollutants, and other risks on urban locations, agriculture and aquaculture, as well as natural life.
- Advise on integrated medical supplies production and waste management, as a byproduct of the COVID-19 response.
- Promotion of decarbonization, compactness of cities and application of circular economy principles to create jobs during the recovery and simultaneously reduce waste and costly consumption patterns and ensure future-proof cities in UAE.
- Strengthening data collection processes on natural hazards present in the UAE and increasing preparedness to manage risks posed by slow and quick onset natural hazards.
- Strengthen early warning systems alongside community and national-level response capacities to mitigate and/or manage the impacts of climate change.
- Engaging in policy dialogue with relevant countries around effective disaster risk reduction strategies in situations where climate change is a threat multiplier, including efforts to incorporate mobility dimensions into planning and responses.
- Explore the role the UAE can play in climate financing/climate insurance tools to support climate resilience.
- Mapping community coping mechanisms to develop community-owned resilience plans than engage both foreign communities and Emirati nationals. Building on this and supporting focus area 3: strengthening social cohesion, there could be efforts to integrate technical expertise from both UAE and diaspora communities to strengthen resilience plans and DRR protocols.

### **International Cooperation on Mobility (SGDs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17)**

Temporary contractual workers play important roles in the society and economy of the UAE, and therefore supporting and facilitating existing and new mobility systems and partnerships becomes critical to ensure organized supply of human capital and wellbeing of the workers in such a critical time. Such efforts can also include comprehensive and state-level coordinated responses to the challenges posed by COVID-19 to regular mobility. Specifically, this could include select areas for collaboration with UN entities such as:

- Facilitating dialogues and closer cooperation with key countries of origin to ensure rights-based, coordinated and safe and dignified return and readmission of Temporary Contractual Workers

not (or no longer) in possession of right to stay in the UAE. Enhanced cooperation in the fields of identity verification and post-arrival support to sustainable reintegration could be explored.

- Promoting access to and availability of assisted voluntary return of those willing to but unable to finance their return while enforcing employers' responsibilities to cover associated costs.
- Developing new short-term and targeted labor market visa schemes with key countries of interest, to facilitate intake of experts in those professions lacking expertise due to COVID-19 restrictions. Cooperation with employers in the private sector enhanced to increase options for regularization/job search/application to those Temporary Contractual Workers stranded or unemployed due to COVID-19 measures.

### **Focus Area 3: Strengthening Social Cohesion**

The government of the UAE has introduced pioneering innovations to institutionalize efforts to strengthen social cohesion, ensure tolerance and happiness amongst its residents, and work diligently to facilitate a harmonious, stable, and prosperous society. These efforts are applaudable and represent an important asset especially given the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the UAE with some 200 nationalities residing in the country. Consequently, the United Nations envisions the following contributions:

#### **Women's Empowerment: Develop campaigns for women empowerment to respond to COVID-19, and provide technical expertise on responding to gender-based violence (SDG 5, 10, 16, 17)**

The UAE is a regional and global leader in its efforts to empower women and advance gender equality. It has adopted several policies and campaigns to protect women from the COVID-19 pandemic, with a commitment to promoting women's rights and providing health care services that enhance their physical and psychological well-being. These measures include ensuring remote working arrangements for pregnant women and for women with children below Grade 9; dedicating special hospitals and health centers for pregnant women to avoid infection, and; providing free COVID-19 tests to pregnant women. It should also be noted that women comprise 61% of the UAE's healthcare sector workforce, and thus face increased risks of infection with COVID-19 due to their heightened exposure. To supplement these efforts, the following is proposed for purposes of partnership with the UN:

- Amplify messages and advocacy materials developed by the UAE, and produce new materials in partnership with UAE government entities, such as the General Women's Union and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, to ensure a joined up UN-UAE approach in messaging in empowering women to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to ensure their health and psychological well-being of their families and communities.
- Support existing UAE initiatives focused on supporting and protecting women during the COVID-19 pandemic, and empowering women to play key roles in the response and recovery.
- Provide technical expertise on criminal justice responses to gender-based violence and ensuring that policies and legal instruments are effective in this regard.
- Conduct context-specific, gender-sensitive individual and community needs assessments to identify emerging or changing protection gaps to inform planning and response.
- Ensure that response planning prioritizes continuity of care for all including women temporary contractual workers, those who are vulnerable and victims of trafficking through remote counselling and contact, strategic delivery of supplies and materials, and direct assistance.

- Make prevention and response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) part of all COVID-19 response plans, while advocating for domestic violence shelters as essential services.
- Designate safe physical spaces and online means for women to report abuse confidentially and access protection services.

**Youth Empowerment: Propose interventions to strengthen youth well-being, resilience, and contributions to social cohesion and societal well-being. (SDGs 4, 5, 16)**

The UAE has been a leader in promoting and empowering adolescents and youth, which is particularly critical during times of challenge such as this pandemic. The UAE has launched initiatives and campaigns to inform youth of their role during COVID-19, and to share insights on the future of education and work. Special initiatives have also been launched to promote the mental health and well-being of adolescents and youth, including to increase awareness about digital safety. To supplement these efforts, the following areas of UAE-UN collaboration are proposed:

- Formulate programs to enhance the culture of volunteering for promoting sustainable development and better future for new generations. These programs shall incorporate online mentoring and be tied to educational programs.
- Propose policy options to safeguard important intangible cultural heritage practices, such as literary Arabic recitals and poetry, traditional crafts, and group-based social practices impacted by the pandemic.
- Design dedicated programs for online socialization and creative production among youth, in lieu of group in-person activities such as group sports or cultural events that are rendered more difficult due to social distancing.
- Engage youth in sustainable development activities and other activities relating to international affairs, cultural diplomacy, promotion of happiness and tolerance, and gaining global exposure including through UN-facilitated exchanges.
- Encourage engagement between Emirati youth and foreign youth around volunteering towards areas of common interest aligned with sustainable development and international cooperation frameworks.

**Child protection and well-being: Promote targeted interventions that enhance child welfare and address issues arising from COVID-19 related social changes. (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)**

Childhood is a most critical period for individual development and well-being, towards enabling societies to develop their human capital and overall prosperity. The UAE is a regional leader in early childhood development and overall child well-being, with a range of measures to promote children's welfare in a stimulating, stable, and empowering environment. The proposed strategy focusses on initiating and sustaining child-centered services that can mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The proposed interventions intend to compliment these efforts to help children maximize on learning and development opportunities to reach their full developmental potential. Key actions for potential partnerships with relevant UN entities include:

- Assess and support interventions to prevent and mitigate child abuse and broader violence against children at-home broadly, including protection of children online and in virtual spaces; strengthen child protection systems in the country and promote national parenting programmes.

- Promote integration of mental health and whole-of-family psychosocial support in state services and programmes towards supporting development of social and behavioral change interventions.
- Promote early childhood care and well-being, including through alternative learning methods and child-friendly public spaces, amongst other targeted interventions.
- Ensure access to language and child appropriate messaging and information on COVID-19 to children and their families, as a part of broader safety and well-being counselling support, including for people of determination.

**Dwelling Conditions: Assess urbanization plans in light of COVID-19, including quality of dwellings, density, and vulnerabilities from a prevention standpoint. (SDGs 9, 10, 11)**

The UAE is a highly urbanized country with 87% of the population living in urban areas which is expected to reach 92.4% by 2050. The concentration of the COVID-19 pandemic in urban areas exposed some of the vulnerabilities in urban systems. This is particularly acute for specific subgroups, such as Temporary Contractual Workers who were most affected by the suspension of economic activities, enforcement of confinement measures, and isolation in their over-crowded dwellings. Considering the circumstances, the following actions are envisioned in partnership with the UN:

- GIS mapping of urban vulnerabilities and hot-spots, and assessment of municipal services to avoid disruption of essential services in emergencies.
- Developing a multi-hazard resilience plan and disaster risk reduction protocols at the neighborhood level, with action plans and inventory of resources to act as community-led mechanisms prepared for any outbreak or emergency.
- Develop local economic development strategies for cities to help to enhance public investments in climate-resilient infrastructure with high-job multipliers and foster productive and diversified – and therefore more resilient – city economies.
- Conduct an assessment on local mobility governance using local mobility governance indicators to allow for organized exchanges between the seven Emirates on the way they address various mobility management protocols and associated governance mechanisms.

Members of the United Nations Country Team in the UAE

