



# **United Nations COVID-19 Socio-Economic Analysis for the United Arab Emirates**

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## United Nations COVID-19 Socio-Economic Analysis for the United Arab Emirates

### 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted people's lives in every corner of the globe in an unexpected and unprecedented manner, affecting billions regardless of privilege and wealth, social and legal status, religion, culture, customs, ability, nationality, sex, and age. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), known for its thriving economy and vibrant metropolis, is no exception.

The UAE is a high-income country and has the second largest economy in the Arab region with a GDP of USD 402.8 billion.<sup>1</sup> The country has been struggling to fully recover following the 2009 financial crisis, with several sectors experiencing headwinds particularly in the last five years. GDP growth has declined from 4.4 per cent in 2012 to 3 per cent in 2016, and 1.6 per cent in 2019<sup>2</sup>. Oil prices have fallen, on average, from USD93 per barrel in 2014 to USD57 in 2019<sup>3</sup> and even lower in 2020, while UAE production levels remained largely consistent. Furthermore, real estate over supply, regional geopolitical tensions in the Gulf, and global trade disputes and subsequent decline in cargo volumes had all affected the UAE's economic prospects prior to arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, the UAE maintains its appeal regionally and globally as an economic hub, having already attracted almost 8.6 million international migrants, recognized as temporary contractual workers, who represent with their dependents 87.9 per cent of the UAE population. The majority of migrants are men (76 per cent) between 20 and 50 years old, mainly from Asian countries such as India (40 per cent), Bangladesh (13 per cent)<sup>4</sup>, and Pakistan (11 per cent). As a result of this economic migration, the UAE is the world's second largest source of remittances after the United States, with USD44.3 billion outgoing remittances in 2018<sup>5</sup>.

Worldwide, the impact of COVID-19 has been most felt by most vulnerable segments of society and in different ways as a result of inherent dispositions, direct exposure to the health, economic, and social consequences of the pandemic, or other reasons. In the context of the UAE, vulnerable segments can include women who are most susceptible to domestic violence, children, adolescents, and youth who lost access to group-based educational and recreational activities, migrant workers who lost their livelihoods as well as dependant families who lost remittances, and persons with existing medical conditions and in need of healthcare resources diverted to contain the pandemic, among others<sup>6</sup>.

In the wake of COVID-19, the UAE demonstrates high levels of commitment and prowess in curbing the spread of the pandemic both locally and globally, capitalizing on its efficient bureaucracy and stable governance systems. The UAE was the first country in the region to report a COVID-19 case in late January 2020, and has since enacted a range of policies to contain and mitigate the impacts of this pandemic on

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<sup>1</sup> GDP in current US\$. Source: WDI, Macro Poverty Outlook 2017.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank national accounts data, accessed on 11 August 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Brent mix, average closing price.

<sup>4</sup> البيان. 2018. The UAE signed a memorandum of understanding with Bangladesh on assisted employment, under which only registered and licensed recruitment agencies in the UAE are allowed to hire Bangladeshi workers through registered and licensed recruitment agencies in Bangladesh.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, 2018

<sup>6</sup> A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19 (April 2020) page 7.

all sectors, starting with the healthcare sector. Followed with measures to mitigate the impact on economic activity, monetary policy and cash liquidity, livelihoods for Emirati nationals, social protection, and overall wellbeing of all residents. The UAE has also provided over 1,277 metric tons of aid to 107 countries, supporting more than 1.2 million medical professionals in the process<sup>7</sup>.

The UAE's initiatives to contain the spread of the virus and mitigate the impact of the pandemic are coordinated through the UAE National Emergency Crisis and Disaster Management Authority (NCEMA), in close partnership with a wide range of federal and local government institutions, the United Nations System, and other regional and international partners. These initiatives are multi-sectoral in nature, including efforts to shore-up capacities of the health sector in the UAE and abroad, enact a range of policy measures to provide liquidity and economic incentives for the private sector, and other measures intended to reduce the hardships felt by individuals as a result of the pandemic across all seven UAE Emirates.

Despite its best efforts, the unfolding impact of the pandemic continues to test containment, coping, response, and adaptation capabilities in the UAE. Particular attention is given to mitigating the impact on the travel and tourism sector, domestic trade and consumption, and impacts on different parts of the migrant population. These present key challenges as the UAE inches towards recovering from the pandemic, to which the UN system is marshalling its expertise and resources to support policymakers and other stakeholders in responding to and overcoming these challenges. These efforts are guided by identified national and subnational priorities, as well as international frameworks such as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

In view of this contextual backdrop, this analysis and its associated response framework document are broadly guided by the UN's framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19<sup>8</sup>, and structured along five key streams and broadly namely: (1) Ensuring that essential and quality health services continue to be available to all and protecting health systems; (2) Helping people cope with adversity, through social protection and basic services; (3) Protecting jobs, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and informal sector workers through economic response and recovery programmes; (4) Guiding the necessary surge in fiscal and financial stimulus to make macroeconomic policies work for the most vulnerable and strengthening multilateral and regional responses; and (5) Promoting social cohesion and investing in community-led resilience and response systems. These five streams are connected by a strong environmental sustainability and gender equality imperative to build back better.

## 2. Health First: Protecting Health Services and Systems during the Crisis

Although the UAE has a robust **public health system** and was the first country in the region to detect COVID-19 in January 2020<sup>9</sup>, it **has a relatively low level of coverage** and encatchment is comparable to that in low income countries and is half the global average. The UAE has only 1.3 hospital beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 11.5 in South Korea, 8.2 in the Russian Federation, and 2.7 in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon<sup>10</sup>. Furthermore, the pandemic has highlighted the need for more comprehensive public health

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<sup>7</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/uae-sends-medical-aid-pacific-island-countries-fight-against-COVID-19>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations (2020) A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/29/first-middle-east-cases-of-coronavirus-confirmed-in-the-uae.html>

<sup>10</sup> WHO Data, 2016 data for UAE.

systems since collective **public health outcomes for the whole of society depend on protecting and serving its most vulnerable members, in particular the large numbers of low-wage migrants are engaged in essential services and businesses.**

Indeed, the health and wellbeing of migrants in a vulnerable situation has a significant impact on overall wellbeing of the society given their percentage of the population<sup>11</sup>. In the UAE, there is a growing concern for their occupational safety and health as they face a higher risk of infection and might lack information and assistance in case of contracting the virus. Many migrants also suffer from the unique stresses of stigma and xenophobia combined with confinement and job loss that could have a **significant impact on affected persons mental health potentially leading to depression**. And for this, it is critical for mental health and psychosocial support to be integrated into essential components of COVID-19 response.

In addition, migrants, especially low-skilled, low-income migrants, and migrants in an irregular situation or those without valid documentation, often reside in suboptimal conditions and informal settings. They are predominantly exposed to overcrowded living conditions with limited access to health and other essential services and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities. This situation heightens pre-existing health, social and economic vulnerabilities. Furthermore, many migrants may not have the luxury of choosing not to go to work in order to protect themselves and their families from potential virus transmission. Such migrants often work in more crowded, high risk labour environments and are more reliant on their income.. Such conditions are not conducive to disease containment. These migrants are some of the most vulnerable and excluded populations, who experience cultural, linguistic and legal barriers that further impede their access to health, disease prevention, treatment and continuum of care, despite obligations under international human rights law, commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Global Compact on Migration, the Salalah Declaration on Universal Health Coverage 2018, among other frameworks<sup>12</sup>.

By law, the UAE requires every employer or sponsor to provide health insurance for their employees or persons under their sponsorship, and for their family members up to three children under 18.<sup>13</sup> In 2018, the Government of **the UAE implemented a new insurance plan for foreign workers, which covers work injuries, overtime pay, airplane tickets, vacation allowance, and end of service benefits**<sup>14</sup>. The pandemic will test the efficacy of this plan and other policies intended to facilitate access basic services and the concept of full inclusion, migrants in regular status can access public hospitals and clinics that provide free or very low-cost medical services. **COVID-19 testing is available and provided extensively regardless of migratory status, and the UAE has achieved outstanding success in administering over 600 tests per every 1,000 persons**<sup>15</sup>. It is however unclear whether resources have been diverted from other healthcare facilities to shore-up COVID-19-related operations.

However, **migrants in irregular status may have limited access to public health and other basic services** and might also be reluctant to access such services due to the costs of treatment, as well as fear of

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<sup>11</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>12</sup> Salalah Declaration on Universal Health Coverage 2018 [http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/health-topics/uhc/salalah\\_uhc\\_declaration\\_-\\_final.pdf?ua=1](http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/health-topics/uhc/salalah_uhc_declaration_-_final.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>13</sup> Law No. 23 of 2005

<sup>14</sup> Emirates News Agency, Emirates News Agency (2018a). UAE cabinet introduces new visa facilitation and new foreign workers insurance scheme, 13 June. Available at <http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302694495>.

<sup>15</sup> UAE Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, Count as of 16 August 2020.

potential arrest, detention and deportation. The challenges in access to COVID services may be compounded by lock-downs, mobility restrictions, and reduced access to identity documents and associated consular services for non-nationals, as well as some government and transport services. Undocumented or insufficiently documented migrants could disproportionately and unknowingly contribute to the spread of COVID-19 if they are excluded from the national response to the pandemic because of their legal status, their lack of proof of identity or their inability to pay for medical services.

**People affected by obesity, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are at a higher risk** of developing serious illness from COVID-19. Therefore, the importance of healthy diets as a frontline defence for disease prevention must be emphasized. For example, the lockdown directives in advent of infection spikes during the pandemic can contribute to unhealthy eating habits and limits to accessing a healthy diet. It is therefore essential that awareness-raising campaigns advise all segments of society to maintain a nutritious and healthy diet. Promoting healthy diets and physical activity is a priority in the UAE, and it is more so with the pandemic. This resonates with SDG target 3.4 per cent which was identified as a priority for action in the UAE.

Pregnant and lactating women (PLW) are also at higher risk for increased illness and death in outbreaks due to the physical and immune system changes that occur during and after pregnancy. Therefore, it is important to ensure universal availability and affordability of reproductive health services including Emergency Obstetric and neonatal Care (EmONC) and strict adherence to the infection prevention and control (IPC) measures.

The impact of the **unprecedented levels of mobility restrictions**, as countries try to reign in the spread of COVID-19, has only **reinforced the need for robust, systematic, and forwards-looking mobility cooperation among governments** to facilitate mobility in comparable future scenarios. Reinforcing and supporting national, regional and cross-border coordination compliant with international law and custom to enhance information sharing while upholding individual rights to privacy and data protection. Furthermore, preparedness and response planning will be crucial to halt the pandemic in the interconnected and the interdependent world we live in.

Strengthening health systems and infrastructures along mobility corridors in line with the International Health Regulations will help rebuild a sense of safety among travelers and encourage resumption of the movement of people across borders. Up until this global pandemic, imbalanced readmission policies or insufficient admission pathways were already resulting in considerable negative impacts: over-burdened and under-prepared reintegration capacities of countries of origin; gaps in border integrity and irregular migration for countries of transit and destination; risk to life during travel and upon arrival for large proportions of migrants pushed to use smuggling networks, falling prey to traffickers, lacking access to services among many others.

For the foreseeable aftermath of this pandemic, a key new factor has emerged to inform mobility cooperation policies, i.e. human security and public safety. It is therefore paramount to enhance and develop new mobility cooperation platforms and frameworks with key partner countries – especially those whose nationals contribute to the large foreign work force of the UAE. Admission and readmission of nationals and stateless persons in both the UAE and countries of origin should be at the center of their agenda inline with established laws and framework. With a view to protecting the rights, dignity, and security of the individuals concerned while serving the economies, labour markets, demographics and public safety of concerned governments and migrants alike. Addressing this would require further

**strengthening health systems and supporting the collection and dissemination of better disaggregated data by key characteristics** such as age, sex, disability, migrant status, pre-existing conditions etc., is critical for better understanding diseases and providing care and support to those most vulnerable, ensuring no one is left behind.

It is also crucial to **link population mobility with disease surveillance**, including at land, air and sea points of entry, so as **to manage, protect, and assist travelers with health conditions**, prevent and control infection, and ensure travel safety and the recovery of transport and aviation sectors. This is particularly relevant for the UAE as a hub for international transport, trade, and logistics, thereby necessitating strengthening of governments' systems and capacities. A particular area of concern is Humanitarian Border Management and Integrated Border Management Services, **with a focus on a rights-based approach** that is gender-responsive and age-sensitive considering the significant migrant population in the country. This would also require supporting and enhancing inter-agency coordination and cooperation among all concerned and mandated ministries involved in border management, and in line with international frameworks and national laws.

Following the COVID-19 crisis, improving biosecurity has become more important than ever in light of future pandemic threats and cross-species transmission. Despite significant progress made in recent years, the **control system of animal and plant diseases and pests in the UAE is still vulnerable**. There is a need for scientific review on future threats and risks related to food and agriculture sectors with potential pandemic impacts similar to COVID-19, as well as for development of biosecurity assessment and monitoring tools. In this regard, an initiative to prevent potential pandemics through strengthening the implementation of biosecurity improvement for emerging transboundary threats on food and agriculture sectors is needed.

Evidence suggests to COVID-19 potentially originating from an animal source, as have an estimated 60 per cent of human infectious diseases. This pandemic emphasizes the need to prepare for, prevent, detect and respond to such diseases in areas where the next pandemic is likely to take hold. Preventing dangerous spill overs involving working with communities in high-risk hotspots. The 73<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly Resolution on COVID-19 response requested an urgent strengthening of the tripartite collaboration (with FAO, WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health [OIE]) using a One Health<sup>16</sup> approach to prevent the emergence of new zoonotic reservoirs from the current COVID-19 pandemic and to propose targeted interventions to tackle future pandemics. Capacity of countries in the sub-region need to be strengthened to **prepare for, prevent, detect, respond to and mitigate the risk of emerging infectious diseases**. A Tripartite coordination group is considered important to address pandemic threats and priority zoonotic diseases and to support national platforms focusing on priorities, among others, brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, biosecurity, food safety, and antimicrobial resistance. GCC sub-region was an epicentre of the 2012 outbreak of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), with activities such as camel racing festival with increased animal-human interaction.

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<sup>16</sup> [One Health](#) is a collaborative, multisectoral, and trans-disciplinary approach - working at local, regional, national, and global levels - to achieve optimal health and well-being outcomes recognizing the interconnections between people, animals, plants and their shared environment.

### 3. Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services

With respect to the broader social impact, **COVID-19 has aggravated vulnerabilities for at-risk groups**, including low income and female-headed households, people of determination<sup>17</sup>, unemployed persons, particularly women, young people and children, older persons, and migrants in vulnerable situations with limited access to health and other social protection services. There are 82,491 persons benefitting from social assistance in 2017, receiving on average just over USD 9,000 per year<sup>18</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges regarding efforts to achieve gender equality and women’s empowerment, perpetuating inequalities, and contributing to economic challenges<sup>19</sup>, which is a key element of the ‘Strategic Goal 1.2: Cohesive and Prosperous Families’ in the UAE Vision 2021.

It is estimated that 61 per cent of health care and social workers in the UAE are women and thus face increased risks of infection with COVID-19 due to their heightened exposure.<sup>20</sup> Female social and health workers have a double caring role, as they have to look after their families and communities and are requested to support with the COVID-19 response in order to cope with the additional needs of the health system. Given women’s front-line interaction with communities and their participation in much of the care work, they face a higher risk of exposure<sup>21</sup>. With children at home, women across the region are picking up the burden of unpaid care work, from home schooling children, to looking after older persons and the sick, to ensuring high levels of cleanliness in the home. The International Labour Organization (ILO) data in the Arab States region highlights that women spend 4.7 more time on unpaid care work than men and this ranks highest amongst all regions.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, **women are likely to be disproportionately affected by lay-offs** as a result of cultural stereotypes that prioritize retaining men in employment as primary breadwinners, **thereby contributing to a prolonged dip in women’s engagement in the paid economy**. Many industries in the formal economy directly affected by quarantines and lockdowns—travel, tourism, hospitality, restaurants, food production—have relatively higher rates of female labour force participation. In addition, many informal sector jobs such as domestic workers and caregivers are mostly done by women who typically lack health insurance and have limited access to a social safety net to fall back on.<sup>23</sup>

Global rates of violence against women have spiked at home during the COVID-19 crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) data on the prevalence of violence against women and girls ranks the Eastern Mediterranean Region as the second highest globally, with an estimated 37 per cent of ever-partnered

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<sup>17</sup> Under the National Policy for Empowering People with Special Needs, people with special needs or disabilities will be referred to as ‘people of determination’ to recognize their achievements in different fields. <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/special-needs#:~:text=sign per cent20language per cent20 per centE2 per cent80 per cent93 per cent20ZHO-,Who per cent20are per cent20people per cent20of per cent20determination per cent3F,their per cent20achievements per cent20in per cent20different per cent20fields.>

<sup>18</sup> UAE Statistical Yearbook for 2018. [https://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Lists/D\\_Reports/Attachments/53/fullbook2018.pdf](https://fcsa.gov.ae/en-us/Lists/D_Reports/Attachments/53/fullbook2018.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> UNESCWA, [The impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in the Arab Region](#). E/ESCWA/2020/Policy Brief.4, March 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority, The UAE Government’s Initiatives to Combat the COVID-19 Crisis; Second Edition (April – June) 2020, p.140.

<sup>21</sup> <https://arabstates.unfpa.org/en/publications/impact-public-health-emergencies-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-reproductive-rights>

<sup>22</sup> ILO (2018). Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work.

<sup>23</sup> UN Women, Women and COVID-19: Five things governments can do now. Anita Bhatia. 26 March 2020.

women having experienced physical and/or intimate partner violence at some point in their lives.<sup>24</sup> This is likely to increase with the confinement measures taken in the region, resulting in higher anxiety and depression. The life-saving essential health, social, justice and policing services in the Arab states region are overall not meeting the minimum standards as set by global guidance. The current COVID-19 crisis has negatively affected these services. For example, such as life-saving care and support to violence survivors (i.e. clinical management of violence and mental health and psycho-social support) may be disrupted in shelters and in tertiary level hospitals when health service providers are overburdened and preoccupied with handling COVID-19 cases.

Furthermore, the **enforcement of movement restrictions to reduce transmission of the virus has also exposed migrants to a greater risk of harassment and violence including gender-based violence.** Many workers in essential services are experiencing heightened work pressure and longer working hours, particularly migrant domestic workers as their employers spend more time at home due to the movement restrictions. There is therefore growing concern over the exacerbated vulnerabilities of women migrant workers in the domestic work and care sectors. The outbreak's unequal impact on women and girls, especially migrant women, and their essential role in responding to COVID-19, requires a coordinated response that must address the gender dimensions of the outbreak in order to stem the tide of the epidemic, and to protect women's health, livelihoods and safety.

Due to the severe impact of COVID-19 on business and economy, many migrants have lost their jobs or work visas and have been stranded with little funds, waiting for repatriation, while others have been detained. **The safety, health and dignity of the migrants in detention in the context of COVID-19 are also of great concern.** In some cases, migrants have been stranded in overcrowded facilities with limited access to water, preventive measures and equipment, and sometimes for a prolonged duration, which have heightened the risk of infection for all involved: detainees, detention staff, their families and their communities.

In 2018, a successful amnesty campaign gave migrants who violated the Entry and Residency Law the option to regularize legal status by paying a fee, applying for a new six-month visa without a sponsor if they wanted to remain in the country for work purposes, or voluntarily exiting the country without legal consequences or fines. The UAE government also allowed migrants who entered the country without authorization to leave voluntarily with a temporary ban of two years to re-enter the country<sup>25</sup>. Although the government recently announced its cancellation of an extension until December<sup>26</sup>, the UAE Cabinet gave considerations for the expiration of residency visas and identity cards of expatriates whose stay in the country was affected by the coronavirus pandemic and who were given three months grace period to renew their documents. Also in 2018, the UAE also announced a humanitarian initiative allowing Syrians, Yemenis and Libyans to apply for a self-sponsorship for a one year renewable residency (also called wars and disaster residency). This residency was renewed in October 2019, and the UAE is yet to announce whether it will be renewed in 2020.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>

<sup>25</sup> United Arab Emirates, Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship, 2018. Protect yourself by changing your status". UAE Makes People Happier, 8 August. Available at <https://www.ica.gov.ae/en/media-centre/news/2018/8/8/protect-yourself-by-changing-your-status-uaemakes-people-happier.aspx>.

<sup>26</sup> UAE cancels visa extension for expatriates (Arab News, 11 July 2020)

On the other hand, **forced returns may pose additional challenges for migrants and strains on already stretched health systems in countries of origin** if not duly coordinated with countries of origin or return. This may exacerbate limited capacities to adequately protect returnees and their communities and thereby expose returning migrants, health and social workers, and other members of returnees' communities to serious public health risks. Furthermore, returning migrants may face additional risks during pre-departure, transfer and upon return, such as lack of access to adequate personal protective health equipment and care, poor water and sanitation systems, and discrimination and stigma in communities of return. In some contexts, returned migrants may also be at risk of experiencing protracted displacement, vulnerability to trafficking in persons, and extreme financial hardship with increases to already high levels of unemployment. It should also be noted that the decline in remittances that their families in countries of origin have depended on will also lead to pushing communities further into poverty. Considering regularization and timely extension of residence and work permits during the pandemic, as a way to facilitate migrants' access to rights and protect public health, is crucial.

Such financial insecurity opens space for labour exploitation and trafficking in persons. Essential services to support victims of trafficking have been curtailed and the traffickers take advantage of people's increased socio-economic vulnerabilities for exploitative purposes. **Referral mechanisms, which are essential for identification of victims of trafficking and their access to rights, are impacted as vital cogs slow down or cease to work.** As a result, the identification of victims and subsequent referral to protection schemes becomes more challenging. In-person counseling, representation and assistance, including legal aid, are reduced to a minimum or subjected to lengthy waiting times and backlogs. Consultations, when possible, are offered online, which may introduce further barriers to accessing support.<sup>27</sup>

To contain the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world have implemented measures, including a severe reduction in the transportation of goods (ground, ocean freight and air freight), services that rely on transport, as well as movement of labour domestically and internationally. These factors have induced overall disruptions in the logistics of the supply chains, impeding the shipment of food and agricultural inputs, threatening food security and nutrition, particularly for the most vulnerable population segments<sup>28, 29</sup>. However in the UAE, the supply of products to consumers was little affected and, with the exception of the very first days, the usual consumption and supply patterns remained unchanged, but this does not mean that maintaining the food supply during the crisis did not have a huge financial cost, nor that the pandemic would not have a lasting impact on value chains. **The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of food systems, and the importance for the UAE to be even more attentive to food security and resilience.** Priorities in the medium and long-term include enhanced food production capacity of the UAE, to reduce vulnerability of the country from future international food supply disruptions and cost fluctuations. Strategic actions focus not only on production but also on post-harvest, processing, marketing and consumers.

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<sup>27</sup> UNODC policy guidance note on the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons, Preliminary findings and messaging based on rapid stocktaking [https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS\\_Thematic\\_Brief\\_on\\_COVID-19.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID-19.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> FAO. 2020. Responding to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on food value chains through efficient logistics. Rome.

<sup>29</sup> FAO launched policy brief series, presenting a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the pandemic's impacts on food trade, food supply chains and markets but also people's lives, livelihoods and nutrition. The collection of policy briefs can be found [here](#).

Migrant workers often rely on their employers for the provision of food, shelter, and essential goods, particularly when they reside in labour camps in remote areas or for live-in domestic workers. These migrants might face increased challenges in securing enough food, water, and sanitation supplies particularly during quarantine. Furthermore, as their employers are also impacted by the economic slowdown, they may have reduced or stopped providing supplies, leaving the migrants isolated with little options for support while they have no income and are not allowed to leave the camps. There is a growing concern over the situation of migrant workers who might face loss of income, non-payment or delayed payment of wages, and as a result find themselves unable to obtain food and basic necessities with the risk of becoming destitute. Daily wage earners, workers in the hospitality sectors where wages and businesses have been most impacted by the enforcement of COVID-19 related measures, in addition to **day labourers, freelancers and other vulnerable migrant workers with little savings, can face increased challenges in obtaining access to enough food.**

The **UAE possesses a solid strategic framework to sustain food systems and address food-related risks.** In line with the National Food Security Strategy (NFSS), the UAE aspires to be among the top 10 most food-secure countries by 2021 and the number one country by 2051, based on the Global Food Security Indicator and its capacity to acquire foodstuff from the international market even at higher costs. The NFSS maps five strategic directions: facilitate global agri-business trade and diversify international food sources; enhance sustainable technology-enabled domestic food supply across the value chain; reduce food loss and waste; sustain food safety and improve nutritional intake; and enhance capacity to respond to food security risks and crises. These strategic frameworks, along with priority initiatives associated to it, have effectively allowed managing unprecedented challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UAE used a variety of instruments to ensure food supply chains remain active and reduced the risks associated with international markets in time of crisis. The UAE holds sizable food reserves. The UAE holds food stocks for six months and is gradually becoming a regional food trade hub, ensuring that at any given time there is access to considerable food stocks that can be redirected to domestic use if necessary. The UAE has established a large food processing industry that needs pipeline stocks, which can be used as reserve stocks in times of supply disruption<sup>30</sup>. The national air carriers have also been dedicating specific trips to fish-producing countries in order to import aquatic products. **Local food production has also been considered strategic and benefitted from support measures.** For example, UAE fishers have been granted an exceptional lift of a fishing ban on some species, to ensure they could maintain an income while contributing to the supply of the local markets. The local aquaculture industry, heavily impacted by the closure of restaurants and hotels, also exhibited resilience by re-orienting production to the supermarkets and retail channels. In the meantime, the fish markets that initially closed progressively resumed their operations after implementing preventive measures.

**Food security is closely linked to water security, as recognized by the recent decision of the UAE government to merge these two challenges under the leadership of the Minister of State for Food and Water Security.** The potential to increase local production on a sustainable manner depends on the ability of the various Emirates to utilize efficiently the freshwater resources and to improve the utilization of non-conventional sources for water, including saline and brackish water as well as Treated Sewage Effluents (TSE). The UAE promotes technology-based agriculture initiatives to transform the water-energy-food nexus. For instance, thanks to integrated aquaculture such as aquaponics or integrated

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<sup>30</sup> See [COVID-19 and the impact on food security in the Near East and North Africa: How to respond?](#)

irrigation-aquaculture, it is possible to produce more food from the same plot and with the same quantity of water, while benefiting from synergistic effects between crops and fish and reinforcing overall food security.

Outlook on **human settlements resilience and water will provide a thorough analysis and assessment of the water situation in urban cities, approaches, best practices and challenges to water resources management and planning in urban design.** This will help in building more resilient water systems in case of crisis (such as pandemics and extreme weather events due to climate change) but also to respond to challenges with regard to the expansion of urban areas and establishment of new human settlement areas in post COVID-19 era.

Regarding the **education sector**, the Universities in UAE attracted a total of 77,463 international students,<sup>31</sup> mainly coming from India, Jordan, Syria and Egypt. Moreover, 11,200 Emiratis are currently enrolled in foreign higher-educational systems, the vast majority in the United Kingdom and the United States<sup>32</sup>. **While most universities and higher-education institutions have switched to remote learning, many students remained stranded away from their home countries due to airports and border closures.** Moreover, many have faced challenges with higher living expenses with the closure of campuses as well as sometimes a lack of support networks to provide assistance. Since international students are usually not allowed to work full-time while studying, many resort to their savings or depend on scholarships and family support that can be impacted by the economic crisis due to COVID-19.

#### 4. Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises, and Informal Sector Workers

**It is estimated that employment across the GCC could fall by around 13 per cent, with peak-to-trough job losses of some 900,000 in the UAE** due to the recession as lockdowns to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and the ramifications of low oil prices hit the non-oil economies<sup>33</sup>. The estimate shows that this could **result in the population declining by around 10 per cent in the UAE** and possible labor shortages in the future. Many migrants in the UAE are engaged in sectors that are considered essential and maintained their activities even under the difficult conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The country made significant progress on its labor migration policies to facilitate job flexibility, allowing workers to have freelance work permits and short-term contracts in the technology<sup>34</sup>, media, and education sectors<sup>35</sup>, and to work for more than one employer at the same time without the need to obtain approval from any of the employers in 2018<sup>36</sup>. **Around 62.9 percent of total employment (4,249,000) in the UAE are employed in organized with high and medium-high risks of solvency**, such as in construction, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing<sup>37</sup>. Furthermore, 76.6 percent of employed women work in high and medium-high risk economic activities compared to 60 percent for men. Other important sectors employing large

<sup>31</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2020, Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students. Available online: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow>

<sup>32</sup> Op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Oxford Economics (22 May 2020) Research Briefing: Africa and Middle East: GCC expat exodus – from a trickle to a deluge

<sup>34</sup> Dubai, Dubai Development Authority, 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Masudi, 2018.

<sup>36</sup> Ministerial decision No. 31 of 2018 established a new system for part-time contracts.

<sup>37</sup> ILO (2020) COVID-19: Labour Market Impact and Policy Response in the Arab States [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_744832.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_744832.pdf)

numbers of migrants include service activities, transportation and storage, accommodation and food service activities. On the other hand, female migrants are often engaged in domestic work (almost 25 per cent of them in the Emirate of Dubai), in addition, many also work in wholesale and retail trade, services activities and the education sector<sup>38</sup>.

The UAE government launched the Emiratisation campaign which aims at the inclusion of Emiratis in the various sectors of the labour market, particularly in the private sector in order to overcome the structural division in the labour market and over dependence on foreign nationals. Emiratisation is a key performance indicator of Vision 2021 and is part of the six pillars of the National Agenda on building a competitive knowledge economy in line with Vision 2021. **Emiratisation is also expected to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.**<sup>39</sup> For this purpose, the UAE has established the Tawteen programme<sup>40</sup> and introduced a quota system for private sector employers. Some of the positions are localised by the government, such as data entry positions, occupational health and safety officers, and public information officers. However, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of the sudden decline of migrant workers and the drop in population on the ongoing Emiratisation remain yet to be known.

Precise information on the number of migrant domestic workers in the GCC region is unavailable, but they are estimated to be at around 3.77 million, 38 per cent of whom are women<sup>41</sup>. In 2016, the estimated number of domestic workers in Abu Dhabi and Dubai is 306,100, 71.5 per cent of whom are women<sup>42</sup>. The UAE continues making efforts in regulating domestic work and enhancing protection for domestic workers, specifying regulations for recruitment agencies and employers regarding hiring practices, and sets employer and employee obligations, working conditions, and standard employment contracts. In addition, the law includes provisions on inspections, penalties, end of service compensation, and termination of contracts. There is a concern however in relation to the **non-fulfillment of contractual obligations, such as the non-payment of wages or lapse in residency status during times of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This would make them even more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.**

Migrants are disproportionately affected by this economic downturn. Migrant workers in irregular status are more likely to be employed in short-term or informal occupations and/or precarious work, which translates into loss of jobs and income, non-payment or delays in the payment of wages, and deficits in occupational safety and health. Foreign nationals are often the first to be dismissed from their employment, vulnerable to becoming irregular status or forcibly returned, and not directly included in the rescue/ economic stimulus packages put in place to respond to the crisis. This is particularly true for especially **migrants in irregular situations**, who rarely have access to benefits and safety nets to

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<sup>38</sup> Dubai Statistics Center, 2019

<sup>39</sup> Vision 2021 and Emiratisation

<https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/jobs/vision-2021-and-emiratisation#:~:text=Emiratisation per cent20aims per cent20to per cent20increase per cent20the,productive per cent20activities per cent20C per cent20decent per cent20job per cent20creation.&text=Read per cent20about per cent20Emiratisation per cent20in per cent20Abu per cent20Dhabi per cent20and per cent20Dubai.>

<sup>40</sup> Federal Law No. 8 of 1980 also known as the Labour Law as amended; Tawteen programme is administered by the UAE Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation

<sup>41</sup> GCC Non-National population employed in domestic services by sex (2017-2018) <https://gulfmigration.org/gcc-non-national-population-employed-in-domestic-services-by-sex-2017-2018/>

<sup>42</sup> Tayah M and Assaf H (2018) The Future of Domestic Work in the Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Estimate is based on the growth rate in the number of domestic workers between 2008 – 2011 for Abu Dhabi and 2000 – 2011 for Dubai. Source: Abu Dhabi Statistics Centre; Dubai Statistics Centre

help cope with these challenges, such as health and unemployment insurance, or paid sick leave even prior to the pandemic. This leaves them **acutely vulnerable and even unable to meet their basic needs**, such as purchase of food and payment of rent. Furthermore, movement restrictions are also increasing the difficulties faced in sending remittances, spreading economic and social vulnerabilities beyond borders. Therefore, the burden of job losses is falling onto them due also to the heavy labour dependence on migrant populations in industries most vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, including travel and tourism, hotels and restaurants, and real estate and logistics<sup>43</sup>. In addition, some of the individuals holding the self-sponsorship residency have faced difficulties securing job opportunities in the country to self-sustain their families' needs.

**Tourism, and tourism-dependent industries (including in the food producing sector such as aquaculture), have been also hard hit by COVID-19.** According to the UAE government, the total contribution of the travel and tourism sector to the UAE's GDP was AED 159.1 billion (USD 43.3 billion) which is 12.1 per cent of GDP, and the total contribution of the travel and tourism sector to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 10.4 per cent of total employment, which was 617,500 jobs<sup>44</sup>. The pandemic, and related travel and movement restrictions have driven down demand while inflicting heavy jobs losses on the sector. By 20 April 2020, the UN World Tourism Organization reported that 100 per cent of global destinations had imposed travel restrictions, representing the toughest restrictions on international travel in history and the worst crisis that the tourism sector has faced since 1950<sup>45</sup>. In just the first 3 months of 2020, COVID-19 had led to a 22 per cent drop in international tourist arrivals. Depending on how long travel restrictions last and speed of containment, tourist arrivals are expected to see declines of 58 per cent to 78 per cent, which could potentially result in direct job losses of between 100-120 million<sup>46</sup>. ILO also projected that specific affected subsectors, including accommodation and food services which employ 5.8 per cent of the workforce, are the most likely to experience drastic declines in economic output and would require specific targeted containment and support measures<sup>47</sup>.

## 5. Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration

IMF's Policy Tracker platform provides general overview of the key economic policy responses to the COVID-19 outbreak (fiscal, monetary, and macroeconomic) taken by the UAE government to limit the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With regard to the fiscal policy responses, the authorities have so far announced **about AED 26.5 billion (US\$ 7.2 billion or 2 per cent of GDP) in various fiscal measures**. These include: (i) AED 16 (US\$4.4 billion) approved<sup>48</sup> by the federal government to support the private sector by reducing various government fees and accelerating existing infrastructure projects; (ii) AED 1.5 billion (US\$0.4 billion) in measures by the government of Dubai to reduce

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<sup>43</sup> France 24 (21 July 2020) Dubai expatriates race for new jobs after virus layoffs

<https://www.france24.com/en/20200721-dubai-expatriates-race-for-new-jobs-after-virus-layoffs>

<sup>44</sup> <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visiting-and-exploring-the-uae/travel-and-tourism#:~:text=Tourism per cent20and per cent20economy,-In per cent202016 per cent2C per cent20the&text=The per cent20total per cent20contribution per cent20of per cent20the,cent per cent20of per cent20GDP per cent20in per cent202027>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/news/COVID-19-travel-restrictions>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.unwto.org/news/COVID-19-international-tourist-numbers-could-fall-60-80-in-2020>

<sup>47</sup> The impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_741468.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_741468.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> <https://wam.ae/en/details/1395302832332>

government fees, provide additional water and electricity subsidies, and simplify business procedures; and (iii) AED 9 billion (US\$2.5 billion) announced<sup>49</sup> by the government of Abu Dhabi as part of the ongoing “Ghadan-21” fiscal stimulus program. The **new initiatives provide for water and electricity subsidies as well as credit guarantees and liquidity support to small- and medium-sized enterprises**. In addition, the government of Abu Dhabi has announced a reduction or suspension of various government fees and penalties, as well as a rebate on commercial lease payments in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

For monetary and macroeconomic responses, the Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) has reduced its policy interest rate twice by a combined 125 basis points so far this year. Furthermore, CBUAE has announced an AED 256 billion<sup>50</sup> (USD 70 billion or 20 per cent of GDP) package of measures comprising: (i) halving of banks’ required reserve requirements from 14 per cent to 7 per cent; (ii) zero-interest rate collateralized loans to banks (AED 50 billion); (iii) allowing the use of banks’ excess capital buffers (AED 50 billion); (iv) 15-25 percent reduction in provisioning for SME loans; (v) increase of loan-to-value ratio for first-time home buyers by 5 percentage points; (vi) limiting bank fees for SMEs; (vii) waiver of all payment service fees charged by CBUAE for six months; (viii) raising the limit on banks’ exposure to the real estate sector from 20 to 30 percent of risk-weighted assets, subject to adequate provisioning; and (ix) allowing banks to defer loan repayments till end-2020. Other measures continue to be enacted, such as relaxing the net stable funding ratio of commercial bank from 100 per cent coverage to 90 percent in August 2020<sup>51</sup>, a measure expected to last until Dec 2021 initially.

The UAE economy is being affected by the spread of COVID-19 as well as the sharp decline in oil prices. According to the updated **IMF forecasts of 14 April 2020, GDP growth is expected to fall to -3.5 percent in 2020 and pick up to 3.3 per cent in 2021**<sup>52</sup>. However, despite policy measures, real GDP in the Middle East and Central Asia region in July 2020 is projected to fall by 4.7 percent in 2020, which is 2 percentage points lower than in the April 2020 Regional Economic Outlook<sup>53</sup>. Under a lower-for-longer oil price scenario, current fiscal and external positions could deteriorate further. The recovery of the non-oil sectors can be compromised by a potential decline in expatriate workers. For post-COVID-19 recovery, further efforts are needed to strengthen inclusion and address social risks and incentivise labour allocation in the recovery.

According to last World Bank’s economic update on UAE in April 2020<sup>54</sup> (before the World Expo 2020 postponement to October 2021), **fiscal deficit could reach as much as -7% of GDP essentially due to oil price fall**. The reliance of Dubai on sectors sensitive to the international economic environment – tourism, leisure, transportation – will probably disproportionately affect the most vulnerable migrant workers. However, as noted by the World Bank, *“understanding of poverty and inequality in the UAE is limited due to sparse access to information from representative household and labour markets surveys”*<sup>55</sup>.

UAE’s global efforts to contain the COVID-19 crisis have demonstrated the important role of regional and global cooperation and solidarity towards resilience-building in fragile and crisis affected countries. The

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<sup>49</sup> <https://gulfnews.com/uae/revealed-15-point-economic-stimulus-package-in-abu-dhabi-1.1584340605165>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.centralbank.ae/sites/default/files/2020-03/CBUAE>

<sup>51</sup> <https://english.alarabiya.net/en/coronavirus/2020/08/08/COVID-19-UAE-central-bank-temporarily-relaxes-rules-on-bank-liquidity-funding.html>

<sup>52</sup> IMF, World Economic Outlook Database April 2020

<sup>53</sup> IMF, Regional Economic Outlook Update: Middle East and Central Asia, July 2020

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/publication/uae-economic-update-april-2020>

<sup>55</sup> Idem.

UN is well positioned to promote this catalytic role with the UAE as a key partner to protect people affected by crises in the region and beyond. This partnership can further harness the UAE's wealth of information, innovative approaches, evidence-based policy options, development solutions and technologies, as well as the country's financial contributions to advance the sustainable development agenda globally. To this end, establishing knowledge platforms by coordinating coherency of actions across data, statistics, and policy advice are essential to identify means to mitigate impacts and for development of future action/investment plans and strategies. A "SDG Financing Framework" promoting sufficient financing in food systems can enable wider opportunities, considering the unique role that impact investing can play in resilience building and development, and that supporting the specific food and agriculture sectors can unlock enormous economic, social and environmental potential.

## 6. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience

Investing in **social cohesion and community resilience is critical to help prevent outbreaks of social tensions**, especially in a country with a diverse migrant population like the UAE. Prolonged emergency situations, restricted mobility, as well as enforced social distancing measures can prove emotionally and psychologically taxing and trigger protests among the population, as well as potentially exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, inflame injustices, and reduce the social capital that binds communities together that is a source of resilience in the face of adversity<sup>56</sup>. There are, furthermore, increasing reports of discrimination, stigma and xenophobia linking migrants and migration to the spread of the virus in the GCC and across the region. Migrants also face social exclusion, denial of access to goods and services and many other human rights violations, abuses and violence, such as verbal and physical assaults, boycotting of businesses, discriminatory movement restrictions and quarantine policies, as well as xenophobic rhetoric from public figures and the media<sup>57</sup>.

Another key issue relates to opportunities of those worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and containment measures to have a **voice and participate in decisions around appropriate responses and further mitigation measures**. These measures can restore any lost trust in governance structures emerging from their management of the pandemic and mitigation measures for the impacts of mobility restrictions, employment conditions and livelihoods, enforcing the law, and other disenfranchisements. Such efforts must also include active participation the role of private sector actors to protect human rights, including to address alleged reports of worker abuses by employers/companies during the pandemic.

Adopting a **lifecycle approach is also critical to ensure an age-differentiated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on different age groups**. For instance, some key issues for adolescents and youth population include continuity of health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as education, training, and transition to the labour market support services. This affects their psycho-social well-being and raises questions addressing questions on prospects for family formation, employment and livelihoods, and overall wellbeing and quality of life. Another group is older persons who may be more vulnerable to COVID-19 and therefore are more likely to require healthcare and hospitalization if infected. Broadly

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<sup>56</sup> ILO How to mainstream conflict-sensitivity, social cohesion and peacebuilding in COVID-19 socio-economic/labour market assessments

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms\\_742185.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_742185.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> IOM, Combatting Xenophobia is Key to an Effective COVID-19 Recovery <https://panama.iom.int/en/news/combating-xenophobia-key-effective-COVID-19-recovery>

speaking, older persons have weaker immune systems and higher prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and cancer, causing them to be more vulnerable to COVID-19. The pandemic is straining health systems and the limited availability of well-trained health personnel could result in the health service needs of older people being put behind those of younger age groups. Therefore, it is important to recognize their social, cultural, and economic contribution and to strengthen intergenerational solidarity and reinforce social cohesion. Older persons in the UAE already represent 38.6% of all cases benefitting from government social assistance in 2017<sup>58</sup>.

It is also clear that **risk factors for violence against children are increasing** under conditions of containment<sup>59</sup>. As the UN policy brief 'The Impact of COVID-19 on children' notes, while children are not the face of this pandemic, they risk being its biggest victims. Conditions of isolation and social distancing especially in the early years can have devastating impact on the lives of children. The pressure on parents and caregivers can also affect parenting practices adversely. This is further augmented with the closure of schools, given the risk of fall in educational attainment levels particularly for special needs education requiring individual coaching and direct observation. Access to education is not always guaranteed to migrant children, and this situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Equally of concern is the constraints on social interaction and the impact it can have on children's overall wellbeing and development as educational systems progressively adopt telecommunications technologies in schooling and delivery of learning opportunities.

In response to these challenges, **digital solutions are increasingly relied on** to accommodate and social distancing policies. However, these digital solutions carry an inherent risk of changing human behaviour and cultural production of society at large. Therefore, it is important to advocate for and inclusive and innovative participation in cultural life as well as to support policies that invest in cultural production and digital distribution platforms as well as awards and promotional support for creative and cultural production. An example of these include the #ResiliArt movement which focused on the impact of COVID-19 on Female artists in the Gulf Countries.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on the culture sector and had dire consequences on artists and all cultural professionals, including on intangible heritage practices. The impact of cancellation of festivals, rituals and traditional practices on communities has been profound, as these are essential for social cohesion and dialogue. This has had a major impact on society, the economy, and politics - it affects the fundamental right of access to culture, the social rights of artists and creative professionals, and the protection of diversity of cultural expressions. The pandemic has prompted an **unprecedented acceleration in the digitization of access to culture online and the move to the digital sphere. The repercussions of the mobility restrictions are also major on intangible cultural heritage.**

Moreover, the transference of living heritage through the generations relies on education as well as on appreciation of built heritage sites. The UAE is among the few countries in the region with high number (9) of elements included on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>60</sup>, exposure to which is often channelled through school-organized and similar activities. Moreover, in November 2019, the UNESCO General Conference approved the establishment of the International Centre for Capacity-Building in

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<sup>58</sup> UAE 2018 Statistical Year Book, p.127.

<sup>59</sup> COVID-19: Protecting children from violence, abuse and neglect in the home. (The alliance, End Violence against children, UNICEF, WHO.

<sup>60</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE?info=elements-on-the-lists>

Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Arab States at the Sharjah Institute for Heritage, as a 'Category 2 Centre' under the auspices of UNESCO. This further illustrates the efforts of the UAE in the safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in line with 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ratified in 2005. The lockdown has been an opportunity for some practitioners of living heritage to pass on their know-how. Many practitioners turned to online platforms. Innovative steps have been taken to promote certain languages or pass down certain living heritage elements and crafts via digital means to the young generation, which is an area where Artificial Intelligence – another area where UAE is pioneering in the region - can play a game-changing role. Further impact studies to measure and define the economic and social repercussions of the health crisis on the cultural sectors and cultural practices are needed more than ever.

## Annex 1: Available Tools for COVID response offered by the UN system

### Health and Wellbeing

*COVID-19: How Can Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Include Marginalized and Vulnerable People*

*Handbook for public health capacity-building at ground crossings and cross-border collaboration;*

*IASC Interim Guidance on Scaling-Up COVID-19 Outbreak Readiness and Response Operations in Humanitarian Situations Including Camps and Camp-Like Settings*

*UNFPA Technical Brief: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Maternal and Newborn Health & COVID-19*

*COVID-19 Technical Brief for Maternity Services*

*UNFPA Technical Brief: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Modern Contraceptives and Other Medical Supply Needs, Including for COVID-19 Prevention, Protection and Response*

*UNFPA Technical Brief: Impact of Public Health Emergencies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in the Arab Region: The COVID-19 case*

### Food security

*UN Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition*

*Food Systems Transformation: Building to transform during response and recovery*

Answers to frequently asked questions <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/en/>

Policy briefs <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/resources/policy-briefs-test/en/> in particular

FAO. 2020. Legal considerations in responses to COVID-19 to mitigate the risk of disruption to fisheries and aquaculture food systems. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9421en>

FAO. 2020. How is COVID-19 affecting the fisheries and aquaculture food systems. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8637en>

SOFIA 2020 addendum <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9349en>

*Trade and Food Safety Standards: Facilitating and accelerating food and agricultural trade during COVID-19 and beyond*

### Gender and Population

Tools available: ***Key Migration Terms Guide in Arabic***, Capacity Building Training materials on Migrant Sensitive Reporting (already used in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia)

[Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration](#)<sup>61</sup>

[UN Secretary-General's Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)

[COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

[COVID-19 and the Care Economy: Immediate Action and Structural Transformation for a Gender-Responsive Recovery](#)

[Meeting basic needs of women and girls with disabilities during COVID-19](#)

[Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19](#)

[Addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women migrant workers](#)

[UNFPA Technical brief: Ageing and COVID-19 in the Arab region: Leaving no one behind](#)

[UNFPA Technical brief: Implications of COVID-19 for Older Persons: Responding to the Pandemic](#)

[UNFPA Technical Brief: COVID 19 A Gender Lens](#)

[UNFPA Technical Brief: Gender Equality and Addressing Gender-based Violence \(GBV\) and Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Prevention, Protection and Response.](#)

[Inter-Agency Technical Brief: COVID-19 and essential services provision for survivors of violence against women and girls](#)

[UNFPA Technical Brief: Adolescents and Young People & Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)

[ESCWA Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Young People in the Arab Region](#)

[Interagency Guidance Document: Statement on COVID-19 and Youth](#)

## Migration

[Toolkit for Development Partners: Integrating Migration into COVID-19 Socio-economic Response;](#)

[Policy guidance note on the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons, Preliminary findings and messaging based on rapid stocktaking](#)

[Addressing the Economic Fallout of COVID-19: Pathways and Policy Options for a Gender-Responsive Recovery](#)

[Migration and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for Practitioners](#)

[Situation Report on International Migration, the GCM in the Context of Arab Region, 2019](#)

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<sup>61</sup> ILO-UNOAC, Media-Friendly Glossary on Migration, Middle East Edition, November 2017.