



United Nations



Social protection responses to the COVID-19 crisis in the MENA/Arab States region

Country responses and policy considerations
Regional UN Issue-Based Coalition on Social Protection (IBC-SP)
July 2020

This paper reflects on an ongoing initiative of the Regional UN Issue-Based Coalition on Social Protection (IBC-SP). The Group, co-chaired by ILO and UNICEF, was established in June 2020, bringing forward the activities started under the previous Regional undg group. The IBC-SP gathers regional experts from ILO, UNICEF, ESCWA, FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR, WHO, UNRWA, WFP and the RCO to share knowledge, think and work together on the development of effective and inclusive social protection systems, including floors, in the MENA/Arab States region, as a key pathway for reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience to shocks and stresses, reducing poverty and achieving the SDGs. The mapping was conducted online starting in March 2020 by regional UN agencies (under the former Regional undg Group) and was updated until June 22 by a research team from the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG). Contact details: Luca Pellerano pellerano@ilo.org; Samman Thapa sthapa@unicef.org; Charlotte Bilo charlotte.bilo@ipc-undp.org

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1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 outbreak continues to spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)/Arab States region¹, with 913,226 confirmed cases and 22,500 associated deaths as of 6 July 2020. Iran has recorded the highest number of deaths in the region, with nearly 51 per cent of the total.²

The pandemic has led to huge impacts on public health and unprecedented shocks to economies, food systems and labour markets globally and in the MENA/Arab States region, threatening the income and food security of millions of workers. It is estimated that an additional 8.3 million people in the Arab

region could fall into poverty (based on pre-transfer estimates).³

Against this background, the consequences of the pandemic require responses that go far beyond the health sector, including measures to assist people and protect them against falling into poverty and food insecurity, highlighting the crucial importance of inclusive, comprehensive and stable social protection systems that respond to differentiated needs across population and income groups, and that can be scaled up rapidly in times of crisis.

Social protection systems (social insurance, social assistance and labour market measures) are critical in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as they may be used to:

- remove financial barriers in accessing essential testing and health care;
- allow infected workers to comply with confinement measures without facing income losses;
- support households, especially in informal sectors, to afford basic needs during times of reduced economic activity and growing unemployment, ensuring food security and preventing a major drop in living standards;
- help companies retain workers on payroll and retain human capital that is critical for the fast reactivation of economic activity in the aftermath of the health crisis;
- help stabilise economies and ensure sustained aggregate demand; and
- preserve solidarity and social cohesion and help prevent the escalation of social tensions.

As a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts, many countries in the MENA/Arab States region have rapidly taken measures to support socio-economic stability, prevent rising poverty and food insecurity, protect workers and those most in need against the

health and economic consequences of the health crisis, and to ensure equal access to health services and a basic income. In this context, this Technical Note aims to provide an overview of the main social protection measures carried out in the region so far.

¹ The dual term 'MENA/Arab States' is used to encompass the various definitions used by different agencies. In this note, the following countries were included: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen. See Annex 1 for an overview of the countries included in the definitions of MENA/Arab States used by different agencies.

² See the [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Situation Report– 156](#) (WHO 2020).

³ [Mitigating the impact of COVID-19: Poverty and food insecurity in the Arab region](#) (ESCWA 2020).

Scope and methodology: This Technical Note is the result of an inter-agency mapping effort by the Regional UN Issue-Based Coalition on Social Protection (IBC-SP), in partnership with the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG). It provides information on social protection measures for nationals and non-nationals, including refugees, of 21 countries in the MENA/ Arab States region (see also Annex 1.1 for an overview of the definitions used by different agencies). The focus of this mapping is on State-provided social protection, as well as benefits and services provided by UN agencies, across four main areas: 1) social insurance and labour market interventions, 2) social assistance; 3) special measures for a) foreign workers and b) refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs); and 4) Changes in administrative and operational procedures of social protection programmes, regarding: a) foreign workers, and b) refugees.

The mapping was conducted online by the regional UN agencies (under the former Regional UNDG Group) and started in March 2020. It has been updated until 22 June by the IPC-IG research team (see Annex 2 for more details on the methodology). Information was verified to the best possible extent, however we provide no guarantees of complete accuracy or comprehensiveness. It is important to highlight that this Note does not aim to analyse the effectiveness of the measures mapped. Moreover, other important dimensions, such as sensitivity to gender, children or disabilities in the policies are not analysed. However, these are aspects that should be explored in further research. Finally, given that countries are introducing new measures nearly daily, it is possible that more recent measures might be missing from the mapping.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1. Socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Macro-economic impacts

The social containment measures⁴ that were adopted, in combination with the global economic impacts of the crisis, will have long-lasting consequences for economic growth. It is estimated that real gross domestic product (GDP) will contract by an average of 4.7 per cent in 2020 in the Middle East and Central Asia.⁵ Countries' growth rates are expected to decrease even further than during the 2008 global financial crisis and the 2015 oil price

crash.⁶ The oil-exporting countries in the Arab region will suffer from reduced global demand and oil prices. According to estimates from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), at the current oil prices, the region loses nearly USD550 million every day, and the gains of oil importers in the region are negligible compared to the losses of oil exporters.⁷ Additionally, the oil-importing countries in the region will suffer from a decline in remittances, investment and capital flows from oil-exporting countries. As a

⁴ For an overview of the measures, see: <https://www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/research/research-projects/coronavirus-government-response-tracker>

⁵ *A Crisis Like No Other, An Uncertain Recovery* (IMF 2020).

⁶ *Confronting the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Middle East and Central Asia* (IMF 2020).

⁷ *COVID-19 Economic Cost to the Arab Region* (ESCWA 2020).

result, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that public debt in MENA(P) will rise to almost 95 per cent of GDP.⁸ High public debt may result in an even smaller fiscal space for social protection. In this scenario, fragile and conflict-affected States are expected to be hit particularly hard and the humanitarian and refugee crises experienced by the countries in the region are likely to intensify.

Unemployment

As a result of the closure of most businesses, suspension of salaries and near-total lockdowns, the region will see a further increase in its already high unemployment rates, which have historically affected the youth and women in particular.⁹ The International Labour Organization (ILO) projections indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic will wipe out 10.3 per cent of working hours in the Arab States in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to **6 million full-time workers** (assuming a 48-hour working week). This will directly translate into lower levels of income and increased poverty.¹⁰

While information is scant, it is estimated that 68.6 per cent of all employment in the Arab States is informal, and this figure is 67.3 per cent in Northern Africa.¹¹ Informal workers are affected by the containment measures in several ways, including the inability to access markets—especially for agricultural workers—and decreased demand for certain services, such as

tourism and domestic work.¹² At the same time, social protection coverage for these segments tends to be low as they are usually not covered by social insurance schemes.

Especially in Gulf Country Cooperation (GCC) countries, **foreign workers** play a key role in the labour market, particularly in sectors such as construction, domestic work, agriculture and food production, hospitality, services, and the care economy—including health care—many of which are providing essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the medium- to long-term, given the adverse impact of the crisis on the service sector, foreign workers are likely to be disproportionately affected by the expected job losses. While all foreign workers are potentially at risk, the most vulnerable are low-skilled/low-income workers, women foreign workers and especially domestic workers, and informal workers, who in many cases are also in an irregular migratory situation. The global economic downturn due to the pandemic and the consequences of lower oil prices in GCC countries will also have a heavy impact on remittances, which are expected to fall by 19.6 per cent (down to USD42 billion) in the MENA region.¹³ In addition, many of the foreign workers who have been repatriated might not be able to return, as some GCC countries stated that they will significantly reduce their foreign workforce.¹⁴

8 MENA(P): Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. See more in [Confronting the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Middle East and Central Asia](#) (IMF 2020).

9 In 2019, youth unemployment was 26.9 per cent against 9.8 per cent total unemployment. Male unemployment was 7.7 per cent against 18.1 per cent female unemployment (ILOSTAT).

10 The ILO has identified several key economic sectors that will be hit particularly hard by the crisis and thus experience high levels of unemployment. These include accommodation and food services, manufacturing, real estate and business activities, and wholesale and retail trade. [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition](#) (ILO, 2020)

11 The estimates for both regions are not recent and thus should be interpreted with care. The figures for Northern Africa (see ILO's definition in Annex 1) are based on surveys from Egypt (2013), Morocco (2010), and Tunisia (2014). The figures for the Arab States (as per ILO's definition) are based on surveys from Iraq (2012), Jordan (2010), oPt (2014), Syria (2003), and Yemen (2014). For more see [Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture. Third Edition](#) (ILO, 2018)

12 See also: [Impact of public health measures on informal workers livelihoods and health](#) (WIEGO, 2020).

13 [COVID-19 crisis response in MENA countries - OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus](#) (OECD, 2020).

14 Kuwait, for example, announced a reduction in the migrant share of its population from 70 to 30 per cent. See [Kuwait wants to bring down migrant population from 70% to 30%](#) (The Economic Times, 2020) and also [COVID-19 Global Roundup: Expatriate exodus in Gulf countries](#) (CGTN, 2020).

Poverty and inequality

Initial estimations released by ESCWA in March were suggesting that the expected loss of jobs and income would lead an additional 8.3 million people into poverty in the Arab States region (based on national poverty lines and pre-transfer estimates).¹⁵ Food security is particularly under threat in Lebanon, Sudan, Syria and Yemen due to a combination of reduced household purchasing power, which affects households' ability to afford adequate diets, and increased prices for wheat flour, driven mainly by Syria.¹⁶

UNU-Wider researchers estimate that a contraction in per capita income or consumption of 10 per cent could exacerbate the rising trend in poverty observed in the MENA region since 2013 up to 8.9 per cent and 24.1 per cent for the USD 1.9/day and USD 3.2/day poverty lines respectively. This would mean that poverty levels would be as high as they were in 1990.¹⁷ Moreover, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 can be expected to increase inequality in the region even further. Even before the crisis, the Middle East was already the most unequal region in the world.¹⁸

Socio-economic impacts on already vulnerable groups

While the virus does not discriminate based on wealth, income level affects coping mechanisms, leaving especially those already vulnerable at a higher risk of falling

into poverty. About 55 million people are in need of humanitarian aid in the Arab region, up to 26 million of whom are forcibly displaced (refugees and IDPs).¹⁹ Most were uprooted due to armed conflicts and wars in Syria, Yemen, Sudan, oPt (occupied Palestinian territories), Iraq and Libya.

Refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and irregular migrants are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 and other diseases due to high geographical mobility, overcrowded living conditions, insufficient hygiene and sanitation, and lack of access to decent health care services. Most livelihood opportunities available to irregular migrant and refugee breadwinners are outside of the formal labour market and hence particularly affected. In addition, irregular migrants are typically excluded from formal social protection systems.²⁰

Yet, the virus also affects other groups differently. Besides being exposed to higher health risks, **elderly people** are also at high risk of income insecurity, as they rely on different income sources, including work, savings, and financial support from their families and pensions, which tend to be low and irregular in many cases.²¹

Children in particular suffer as a result of containment measures, such as school closures, which threaten not only their access to education but also to food, potentially leading to detrimental long-lasting consequences. In some contexts, this can even increase the risk of child labour.

15 [Mitigating the impact of COVID-19: Poverty and food insecurity in the Arab region](#) (ESCWA, 2020).

16 [WFP Regional Bureau Cairo – COVID-19 Monitoring Hub](#) (WFP 2020).

17 [Estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on global poverty](#) (Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez 2020).

18 [World Inequality Lab – Part 2: Trends in Global Income Inequality](#) (UNU-WIDER World Income Inequality Database).

19 [Mitigating the impact of COVID-19: Poverty and food insecurity in the Arab region](#) (ESCWA 2020). For recent figures, see also [Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2019](#) (UNHCR 2020) and [UNRWA requires USD 149 million in 2020 for operations in Jordan](#) (UNRWA 2020).

20 [WFP Regional Bureau Cairo – COVID-19 Monitoring Hub](#) (WFP 2020). Additionally, surveys conducted by UNHCR Remote Protection Monitoring tool to assess the impact of crisis on IDPs and refugees indicated that 89 per cent of respondents in Iraq reported loss of employment and/or livelihoods as the main impact of the crisis, followed by the lack of access to humanitarian services and inability or difficulty in purchasing basic necessities, see [UNHCR COVID-19 Preparedness and Response](#) (UNHCR 2020). In Lebanon, 78 per cent of refugee households reported difficulties in buying food due to a lack of money, and 73 per cent reported having had to reduce their food consumption as a coping mechanism, see [COVID-19 Update 16 April – Lebanon](#) (UNHCR 2020).

21 See also: [HelpAge International – Coronavirus](#).

Data from the World Food Programme (WFP) show that more than 21.8 million children in the region are missing their meals due to the COVID-19 crisis.²²

A simulation exercise conducted for UNICEF MENARO on the potential impacts of the COVID-19 found that the percentage of children living in multidimensional poverty in MENA would increase from 42 per cent in the pre-COVID scenario to 52 per cent in the short term (2-3 months after the onset of the crisis) and to 50 per cent in the medium term (by the end of 2020). In absolute numbers, the COVID-19 crisis could lead additional 12 million children to experience poverty in several well-being dimensions in the short term.²³

Persons with disabilities comprise another particularly vulnerable group, many of whom have underlying health conditions

and/or are older persons. In addition, they are facing significant disruption of their usual support system and are generally much less protected by social insurance (including unemployment and sickness) and health insurance, due to exclusion from formal work.²⁴

Women not only represent a large share of those working at the forefront of the crisis—namely in the health sector—but they are also facing an increased burden of unpaid care work, due to an increased need to care for the sick and elderly people, and children who can no longer attend schools and child care centres. This is in addition to the traditional gender division of labour. In the Arab States region women spend, on average, 4.7 times more time on unpaid work than men (5 hours and 29 minutes versus 1 hour and 10 minutes)—the largest difference among all regions globally.²⁵

2.2. Considerations on the social protection systems in the MENA/Arab States region prior to the COVID-19 crisis

Prior to the current crisis, several countries in the region were substantially investing in better social protection systems, aiming at expanding coverage of pension funds and health insurance, as well as establishing better delivery channels for social and health assistance to individual households. These developments are encouraging, even though this expansion does not occur at the same pace across the entire region. They reveal an awareness by governments and demonstrate their readiness to take on more responsibility for broader social support. As the current crisis has exposed remaining

gaps, especially in terms of coverage, several countries have further expanded their social protection to include additional vulnerable groups, such as informal workers.

Before the crisis, and according to data from between 2010 and 2015, **expenditure on social protection** in the region remains rather low compared to other regions in the world. According to the ILO Social Protection Database, the North Africa region and the Arab States spent about 7.6 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively, of their GDP on social protection (excluding health

22 Based on: [Global Monitoring of School Meals During COVID-19 School Closures](#) (WFP 2020).

23 Simulations of the potential impacts of the COVID-19 on child multidimensional poverty in MENA (Ferrone et al. forthcoming 2020).

24 [Disability Inclusive Social Protection Response to COVID-19 crisis](#) (UNPRPD, ILO, UNICEF, International Disability Alliance and Embracing Diversity 2020).

25 [The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality in the Arab Region](#) (ESCWA 2020). For more on this topic, see: [The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#) (UN Women 2020); [COVID-19 requires gender-equal responses to save economies](#) (Durant and Coke-Hamilton 2020).

care and including both social assistance and social insurance). Notably, the Arab States ranked lowest across all regions.²⁶ Moreover, energy subsidies—proven to be costly and regressive—continue to receive a disproportionate share of social expenditures in most countries in the region.²⁷

Social insurance schemes are mostly limited to public and formal private-sector employees and include old-age, disability and survivors' pensions (see Annex 1.2 for an overview). Few countries like Bahrain, Jordan, KSA and Kuwait provide an unemployment insurance scheme, and it is not applicable to foreign workers. Moreover, agricultural workers are often excluded. Countries have sought to expand the limited coverage of social insurance by extending subscriptions to vulnerable occupational groups, the self-employed and workers abroad, as well as through increased enforcement of contribution requirements through labour inspections and mobile applications. Some governments are also subsidising contributions to encourage subscriptions—including to health insurance—especially among low-income workers.²⁸ A key concern, however, remains the limited access to affordable and quality health care services.

Social assistance, and especially cash transfers (most of which are unconditional), food vouchers and targeted support to access basic health care have expanded dynamically over the past years (for an overview see Annex 1.3).²⁹ Although countries are in the process of phasing out universal subsidies, some still remain

in place, such as food price subsidies and some energy subsidies—such as for liquified petroleum gas. Several countries, such as Djibouti, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Iran, have established (or are in the process of establishing) social registries, which in some cases are also integrated with social insurance or other official registries. Households and individuals are included based on poverty targeting or as members of vulnerable population categories, such as persons with disabilities. It is difficult to estimate the coverage rates of social assistance schemes, but they are likely to cover a significantly larger share of the population than social insurance or labour market programmes.

In some countries, a more elaborate policy infrastructure has allowed for a relatively rapid scaling up of emergency income support during the current crisis. However, prior analyses have shown that the social protection systems of many countries in the region have several shortcomings when it comes to shock-responsiveness, including limited coordination between social protection, disaster management and humanitarian actors, a lack of contingency funds and limited national social registries in some countries.³⁰

Gaps remain, especially in countries with a less developed social policy infrastructure, and in almost all countries with regard to migrants and refugees, who rank among the most vulnerable and least-protected people. In the GCC countries, foreign workers (mostly from South and South-East Asia) comprise most of the population. Especially female foreign workers, who often

26 [World Social protection report 2017-2019](#). See Figures 6.8 and 6.21 as well as Annex IV, Tables B.16 and B.17 of the report.

27 This is particular the case on in GCC countries as well as Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan. See: [Fiscal space for child-sensitive social protection in the MENA region](#) (Bloch, Bilo, Helmy, Osorio and Soares 2019).

28 See also: [Social Protection Reform in Arab Countries 2019 – ESCWA Report](#) (ESCWA 2019).

29 For more on the subject, see: [Overview of Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Region Through a Child and Equity Lens](#) (Machado, Bilo, Soares and Osorio 2018) and [Social Protection Reform in Arab Countries 2019](#) (ESCWA 2019).

30 [Building Shock-Responsive National Social Protection Systems in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Region](#) (Tebaldi 2019).

work as domestic workers, are particularly vulnerable in these countries, with very limited access to social protection schemes. Protection gaps often also concern single or small households, typically with elderly people and/or persons with disabilities, who are especially difficult to cover in

a crisis such as the current pandemic. Informal workers are another group that is usually not covered and which has been hit particularly hard by the current crisis. They constitute a large share of the ‘missing middle’—often neither covered by social assistance nor by social insurance measures.

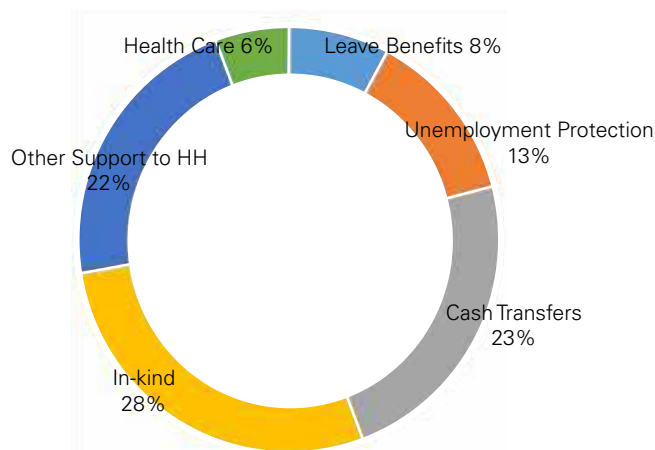
3. SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN THE MENA/ARAB STATES REGION

3.1. Summary of measures mapped

Table 1 provides an overview of the measures mapped by country (for more detailed information, see Annex 2). Figure 1 illustrates the share of social protection measures mapped as related to COVID-19 across six main areas: 1) ensuring financial protection in accessing health care; 2) leave policies; 3) unemployment protection; 4) cash transfers; 5) In-kind transfers; and 6) other support interventions for households (including several measures, such as price subsidies, fee exceptions and low-interest loans, see section 3.3.3 for more details). In total, 195 measures were mapped across these six areas, provided by governments and UN agencies. A total of 16 countries have adopted measures related to cash transfers, which is the most common measure geographically, after the ‘other support mechanisms’ category. It is worth pointing out that measures related to cash transfers include vertical, horizontal and implementation adaptations of existing interventions, as well as the introduction of entirely new ones.

FIGURE 1

Share of social protection measures by area (as a percentage), as of 22 June 2020



Note: The Figure includes measures listed in Annex 2 under 1.1; 1.2;1.3; 2.1, 2.2; 2.3 and 3.2. It also includes UN interventions comprising measures for both national populations (including IDPs) and refugees. For specific measures for foreign workers please see Section 3.4.1 or Annex 2 (3.1).

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Annex 2.

TABLE 1

Summary table of all mapped measures (click on the 'X' to learn more about the specific intervention in Annex 2).

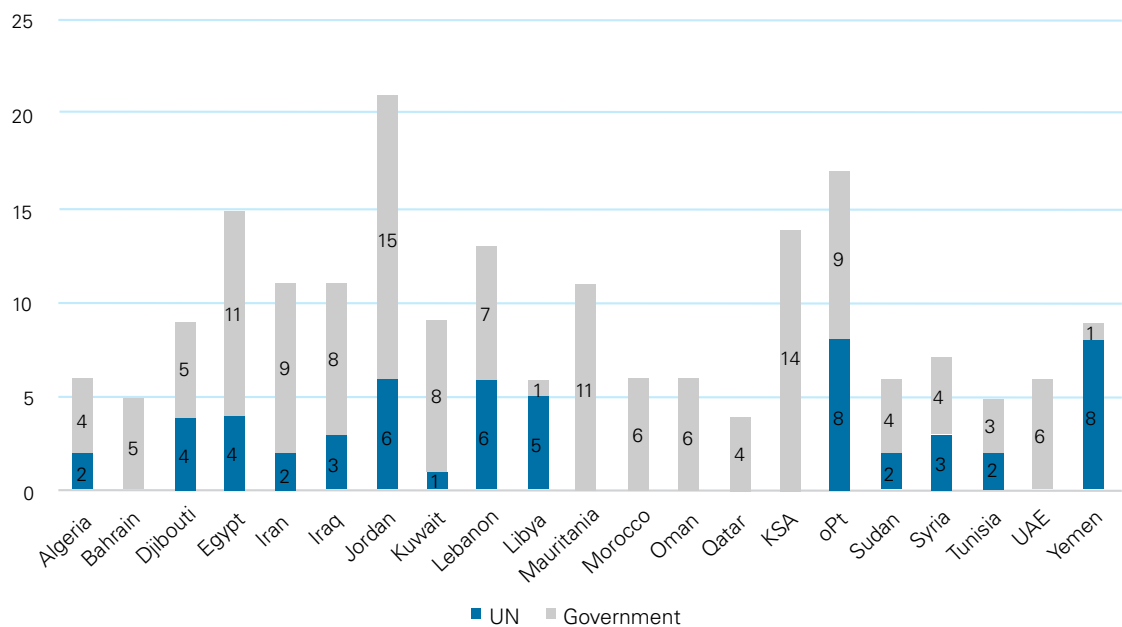
Provider	SOCIAL INSURANCE AND LABOUR MARKET				SOCIAL ASSISTANCE					SPECIAL POPULATIONS		IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES		
	Financial protection in accessing health care	Leave benefits	Unemployment insurance, wage subsidies, and others	Changes in social security contribution and benefits	Cash transfers		In-kind transfers		Other mechanisms to support household incomes		Interventions to support foreign workers	Interventions to support refugees and IDPs	Admin./ operational tweaks due to emergency	
	Gov.	Gov.	Gov.	Gov.	Gov.	UN	Gov.	UN	Gov.	UN	Gov.	UN	Gov.	UN
Algeria		X	X	X	X		X					X		X
Bahrain	X		X	X	X				X		X			
Djibouti		X	X				X	X	X	X		X		
Egypt		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X
Iran	X	X	X		X		X		X		X	X	X	
Iraq		X			X		X	X	X			X		X
Jordan		X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
KSA	X	X	X		X		X		X		X		X	
Kuwait		X		X	X		X		X		X	X	X	
Lebanon	X		X	X	X				X			X		
Libya							X	X					X	X
Mauritania					X		X		X					
Morocco	X		X	X	X		X		X				X	
OPt		X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X		X
Oman	X	X		X			X		X		X			
Qatar	X	X	X						X		X			
Sudan					X		X	X	X			X		X
Syria			X		X	X	X	X	X				X	X
Tunisia			X	X	X						X	X	X	X
UAE	X	X							X		X			
Yemen						X		X	X			X		X

Figure 2 illustrates the number of measures per country across the six areas, differentiating between measures implemented by the government and those implemented by UN agencies. The latter includes both measures for national populations, including IDPs, and interventions for refugees. It should be noted that there are likely more government

interventions that include IDPs. However, this information is difficult to identify, hence measures for IDPs are limited to UN interventions in this mapping. Most measures were mapped in Jordan. It should be kept in mind that these figures **merely provide a snapshot** of measures; there are likely to be more.

FIGURE 2

Social Protection measures per country, as of 22 June 2020



Note: The Figure includes measures listed in Annex 2 under 1.1; 1.2;1.3; 2.1, 2.2; 2.3 and 3.2. UN interventions include measures both for national populations (including IDPs) and refugees. For specific measures for foreign workers please see Section 3.4.1 below or Annex 2 (3.1)

Source: authors’ elaboration based on Annex 2.

3.2. Social insurance and labour market measures

3.2.1. Ensuring financial protection in accessing health care for all

Ensuring free-of-charge access to testing for COVID-19 and health care treatment to

all workers and their families, regardless of insurance and socioeconomic status or nationality is critical to limit the spread of infection and reduce mortality. As a response to the pandemic, many countries have taken

measures to enhance access to affordable health care, close gaps in social protection and extend financial protection in accessing testing and treatment. This includes:

- Ensuring **free treatment and, in some cases, free testing**, including for those people not covered by insurance (UAE, Bahrain, KSA, Qatar, Iran, Oman) (in some cases these measures also apply to non-nationals, see Section 3.4.1)
- **Capping testing costs** (Lebanon).
- Renewal of **health insurance**, even for those who were made redundant due to the crisis (Morocco)

3.2.2. Leave benefits: ensuring income security during inactivity due to COVID-19

Although most workers are entitled to paid sick leave, under their countries' respective labour laws, the COVID-19 crisis has exposed critical coverage gaps among large numbers of self-employed and those in non-standard employment who do not have access to sickness benefit schemes.³¹ This means that many workers have no choice but to report to work while sick (risking spread of infection) or suffer financial hardship. This may particularly affect workers on precarious contracts, including in sectors such as health care, cleaning, transportation and delivery, as well as domestic and agricultural workers.

Many countries in the region have taken emergency measures to eliminate protection gaps, in some cases covering not only those directly affected by COVID-19, but also other groups, such as those who must

stay in quarantine because they are part of risk groups or those who have to care for (sick) dependants or children. Nevertheless, it can be noted that most measures mapped are for public sector employees. The most common measures include:

- **Paid leave** for employees in non-essential services in the **public sector** (Algeria, Djibouti, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait), in some cases for special groups, such as **people with children** (Algeria, Egypt, UAE) or those with **chronic diseases** (Algeria, Egypt).
- Requiring employers to pay leave for workers in the **private sector**, including in case of self-quarantine (Algeria, Djibouti, KSA, Jordan, Qatar, Oman).
- **Not considering leave as sick leave** and not deducting it from workers' leave balance, but rather granting a **special leave** instead (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, KSA).
- **Paying part of sick leave** through social insurance organisations (Iran).

3.2.3. Unemployment protection: preventing job losses and supporting the incomes of those who have lost their jobs

Unemployment and wage protection benefits are critical to manage the crisis, which has destroyed many jobs, and is estimated to have caused a significant decrease in working hours in the MENA/Arab States region in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to approximately 6 million full-time workers.³² Some countries have taken

³¹ See also: [COVID-19 crisis: a renewed attention to sickness benefits](#) (ISSA 2020).

³² Assuming a 48-hour working week. [ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition](#) (ILO 2020).

measures to ensure that wages are still being paid, regulating their reduction or prohibiting dismissals altogether.³³ Given this scenario, several measures have been carried out in the region to ensure that workers continue to receive salaries or can access unemployment benefits:

- Supporting the full or partial **payment of salaries** for private sector workers **through unemployment funds** and through support from the government (Bahrain, KSA, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia).
- **Introducing mechanisms for retroactive registration** of informal businesses, which previously did not comply with social insurance legislation, to benefit from wage and employment protection (Jordan).
- **Providing loans by commercial banks to companies to pay salaries**³⁴, with low or zero interest (Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Qatar).
- **Facilitating access to unemployment benefits** for workers who have lost their jobs by relaxing eligibility criteria and scope of application (Iran, Jordan).
- Paying **compensation for those who have been laid off, with support from the government** (Djibouti).
- Supporting **training and new jobseekers** (KSA).

3.2.4. Modifying the payment of social security contributions and adjusting existing social insurance benefits

To ameliorate the financial implications of the COVID-19 crisis, some social insurance institutions are either reducing or postponing the contributions to be paid by both employers and employees. The adjustment of social security benefits, such as pensions, has been less common. The most common measures include:

- **Reducing the contribution rate** for employees (Jordan).
- **Temporarily suspending or postponing payment** of social insurance contributions for employees (Jordan, Oman, oPt), for employers (Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia), or both (Algeria, Kuwait).
- Suspending or **exempting companies from fines** due to delayed payments (Algeria, Lebanon, Oman).
- Increasing pensions or providing one-off benefits to **pensioners** covered by the social insurance system (Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia).

33 Examples: Banning the dismissal of any employee during the crisis, as in Jordan, [Defence Order No. \(6\) 2020](#) (Al-Mamlaka, 2020); allowing companies to reduce wages through national or company-level agreements, as in Jordan (see [Gov't issues Defence Order No. 9 to support non-working employees, employers, daily wage workers](#), The Jordan Times 2020), provided that the difference is paid at a later stage (oPt - UNICEF CO Personal Communication), guaranteeing the salaries of current employees until the end of the year even with the falling price of oil, and determining that wages have to be paid even during lockdown.

34 Note that most countries have introduced special loan schemes for small and medium-sized enterprises to maintain employment. Here are listed only those that have the maintenance of jobs as a requirement or that are meant to pay salaries directly.

3.3. Social Assistance

3.3.1. Cash transfers

Many governments have put measures in place to provide income support to the population, financed via general government revenues. While some are introducing new emergency transfers, others are using existing schemes, expanding them to new beneficiaries and/or increasing benefit values. Many countries in the MENA/Arab States region are taking measures to include those who have been hit particularly hard by the crisis, such as informal workers, who constitute a great share of the labour force in the region and are often not covered by social insurance or existing social assistance schemes.

Figure 3 shows the various COVID-19 related measures within the realm of cash transfers, the most ubiquitous being the introduction of new emergency cash transfers. It is important to note that some of these have been set up using the available infrastructure, most notably registries that already existed, to identify beneficiaries. Cash transfer measures include the following:

Vertical expansion and changes in payment frequency

- **Topping up the payments** to beneficiaries of existing programmes (Algeria, Bahrain, Tunisia, Iraq, Jordan).

Horizontal expansion

- **Expanding the number of beneficiaries of existing cash transfer programmes** (Jordan, Egypt, oPt).

- Establishing **temporary emergency cash transfer schemes** (Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, oPt, Syria, KSA, Kuwait, Mauritania, Sudan, Iran).
- **Explicitly targeting informal and daily wage workers** through cash transfer programmes (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, oPt).
- Targeting **vulnerable population groups** through emergency cash transfers: **women**, for example female headed-households, widows or pregnant women (Egypt, Kuwait, Mauritania), **elderly people** (Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia, Mauritania, Syria), households with **children or orphans** (Egypt, Kuwait, Tunisia, oPt) or **people with disabilities** (Egypt, Tunisia, Mauritania, Syria).
- **Including beneficiaries from the waiting list** (oPt, Egypt).
- Using previously-created **social registries or databases** for social assistance and social insurance to identify new beneficiaries for ongoing schemes, including using waiting lists (Jordan, oPt, Egypt, Kuwait), or new ones (Iraq, Lebanon, oPt).
- **Including beneficiaries of emergency grants in existing social assistance programmes** (Iraq—under discussion).

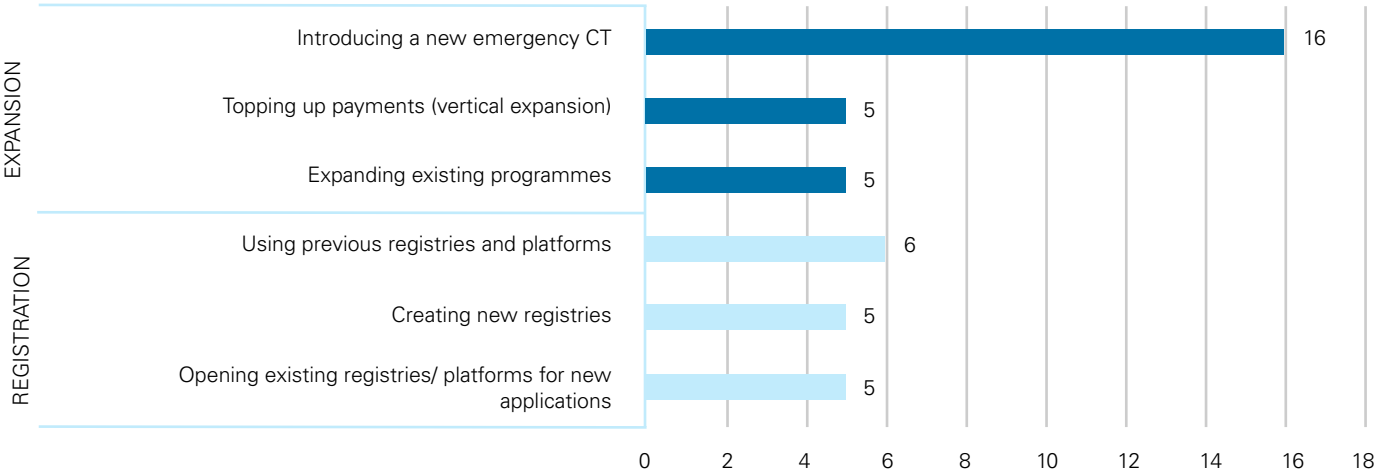
Moreover, many UN agencies have supported the expansion of complementary, emergency cash transfer schemes in the region (for specific cash transfer schemes for refugees and IDPs see section 3.4.2.):

- Complementing national social safety nets through **new humanitarian emergency cash transfers** to vulnerable populations, such as families with children under three years old who were not eligible to the national cash transfer programme (WFP in Egypt).

- **Expanding existing humanitarian cash transfers (HCTs)** to new beneficiaries in need (UNICEF in Jordan and Syria, WFP oPt), or planning new HCTs (UNICEF in Yemen, WFP in oPt).

FIGURE 3

Number of interventions related to cash transfers



Note: the Figure only considers government cash transfer interventions. Categories are not mutually exclusive. The Figure differentiates between expansion and registration strategies.

Source: authors’ elaboration based on Annex 2 (2.1)

3.3.2. In-kind transfers

Another form of support that governments are providing to those in need are in-kind transfers, mostly in the form of food, helping to ensure minimum consumption

levels. Some countries are working towards expanding their existing in-kind transfer programmes, while others are establishing emergency programmes to address the needs of their populations during this time of crisis. The main government measures include:

- Providing **food baskets** and sanitation materials for vulnerable families (oPt, Algeria, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, Iran, KSA, Kuwait, Morocco).
- Providing food aid through **voucher systems** (Djibouti, Jordan).
- Distributing **in-kind transfers** to beneficiaries of existing cash transfer programmes (Jordan, Iraq, oPt).
- Close coordination with the **third sector** (non-governmental organisations—NGOs) to provide in-kind food transfers (Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria).
- **Zakat Funds** distributing food baskets (Jordan, Sudan).
- **Ramadan-related food transfers** (Egypt, KSA, Mauritania, Oman, Sudan).

Especially in fragile and crisis-affected countries, **UN agencies** are prominent in providing in-kind transfers to the national populations (for specific measures aimed at refugees and IDPs, see Section 3.4.2.):

- Provision of **food assistance and hygiene items** for local and displaced population by **UN agencies**: WFP (Djibouti, Iraq, Libya, oPt, Sudan, Syria, Yemen), UNICEF (oPt, Syria, Yemen), UNRWA (oPt).

3.3.3. Other mechanisms to support the incomes of households (price subsidies, housing, loans, etc.)

In addition to direct food and in-kind transfers, governments in the region are implementing several other measures to support the incomes of households, including:

- **Exemption from electricity, water or other utility bills**, or delaying payment (Bahrain, Djibouti, Iraq, Mauritania, Oman, Lebanon, UAE).
- **Exempting the import fees or setting a fixed price** for food and medical supplies (Jordan, Mauritania, Qatar, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria).
- **Offering zero- or low-interest loans** (Iran, Egypt, Kuwait).
- **Postponing loan instalments** or banking bills (Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, KSA, Kuwait, Morocco, oPt, Oman, UAE).
- **Waiving** and postponing of **tax payments** (Lebanon, KSA, Iraq, Mauritania, Egypt).
- Suspending **rent payments** (UAE, KSA).
- Establishing **fuel subsidies** (Oman, Yemen).

3.4. Social protection measures for foreign workers, IDPs and refugees

3.4.1. Special measures to support foreign workers

Foreign workers across the region have limited access to social protection and health

care services or may be hesitant in accessing them, particularly if they are undocumented or have an irregular migratory status. At the same time, they are particularly vulnerable to losing their jobs and falling into destitution. As a general rule in the Arab States, if foreign

workers lose their jobs or overstay their work/residence visa, they fall into irregular status and are subject to overstay penalties, detention and deportation. This is also a consequence of the operation of the Kafala (sponsorship) system. Female foreign workers are particularly at risk.

In response, some governments in the region have taken steps to ensure that foreign workers, including those in an irregular situation, can access basic health and social assistance services:

- Ensuring that foreign workers, including those in an irregular situation, are eligible for **free testing/treatment** (KSA, Iran, Qatar). Other countries (Bahrain, Oman, UAE) are offering free tests and treatments for all residents, or certain groups (however, without clearly specifying irregular migrants).
- Ensuring that foreign workers receive their **full salaries**, even if in quarantine (Qatar).
- Providing **food transfers** to those in need, including foreign workers (KSA, Oman, Kuwait).
- Exempting foreign workers who become irregular from the **payment of penalties** and/or extending work/residence visas (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Tunisia, KSA).
- Providing **housing** to foreign workers (Kuwait).
- Postponing **payment of rent, cancelling fines**, refunding insurance amounts and security deposits (UAE).

3.4.2. Special measures to support refugees and IDPs

Refugees and IDPs are among the most vulnerable populations. They often live in precarious situations without the ability to fully isolate themselves or comply with lockdown and/or quarantine measures. This overview includes several measures explicitly targeting IDPs and/or refugees that are provided by UN agencies. It should, however, be noted that government-provided interventions for these groups may be included in the mainstream interventions presented above and not explicitly identified. Therefore, they are also not specifically mentioned in this section. For measures by UN agencies targeting the general population in humanitarian contexts, please refer to the previous Sections.

Examples of social protection measures targeting IDPs and/or refugees in response to the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Delivering **food transfers** to refugees (WFP in Algeria and Djibouti, UNHCR in Libya, UNRWA in oPt).
- Distributing **hygiene products, such as hand sanitisers** (WFP in Iran, UNHCR in Libya, UNHCR and IOM in Yemen, IOM in Iraq and Sudan).
- Distributing **vouchers** for food and hygiene products (WFP in Jordan, UNHCR in Kuwait).
- Modifying cash-based transfers to include hygiene products (UNHCR in Egypt, WFP in Jordan).

- Paying **cash transfers** to refugees (UNHCR in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Tunisia, WFP in Egypt, UNRWA in Jordan and Lebanon, IOM in Lebanon), or IDPs, or both (UNHCR and WFP in Iraq, UNHCR in Yemen).
- Vertical expansion—**increased benefits for refugees and IDPs** (WFP in Iraq).
- **Temporarily** expanding number of beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance programmes (WFP in Iraq, UNICEF in Jordan and Syria, UNHCR in Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia, Yemen).

3.5. Administrative/ implementation measures

Countries in the MENA/Arab States region are undertaking several administrative measures to reduce human-to-human contact, thus helping to limit the spread of COVID-19 among programme beneficiaries and staff. These measures encompass registration and verification, as well as delivery/payment channels.

Registration

- Setting up **online platforms for people to register for new programmes** (Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Morocco for non-RAMED households, Syria).
- Using **call lines, text messages and WhatsApp** to register individuals and inform them about payments (Morocco, Kuwait).
- Using **mobile applications** for workers to register and apply for sick leave (KSA).
- Using **existing online platforms** for beneficiaries to register (Jordan—allowance for daily workers).

Verification and conditionalities

- Waiving or **easing the proof requirements that require physical contact**, such as

medical revisions, to receive social assistance (Algeria, KSA).

- **Lifting labour requirements** on cash-for-work activities and **conditionalities** for food assistance (WFP in Sudan).

Payment of social security contributions

- Enhancing **online services** to pay social security contributions for both employers and employees (Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia).

Delivery and payment of benefits

- Exempting pensioners from ATM cash **withdrawal fees** (Egypt).
- Allowing **proxies** to receive benefits on behalf of beneficiaries, for example for pensions (Algeria, Morocco).
- Increasing the **number of available payment points, including in rural areas** (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, WFP in Syria).
- Increasing the **available opening hours** of payment/distribution sites (Algeria, UNICEF in Yemen) or **advancing payments** to avoid crowds (Tunisia, UNICEF in Yemen).

- Using digital means such as **e-wallets and bank transfers** to disburse benefits (Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco).
- Paying **vouchers** instead of in-kind transfers (Jordan).
- Distributing food baskets through the **military corps** (Jordan).
- Using **door-to-door benefit delivery for food, including school meals** (WFP in Libya,

UNHCR in Iraq, UNRWA in Gaza, WFP Yemen).

- Converting **school meals into cash** (WFP in Egypt, Tunisia).
- Delivering two-months' worth of **food assistance** (WFP in Sudan).
- **Strengthening crowd management** instructions on social distancing for beneficiaries (UNICEF in Yemen).

4. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the MENA/Arab states region very hard, with particularly severe consequences for those already vulnerable and socially excluded. Acknowledging the crucial role of social protection in mitigating the crisis, both governments and UN actors in the region have taken a variety of measures, as outlined above. However, despite these efforts, the region faces several key **challenges**:

- **Limited fiscal space** (oil-exporting countries were already facing challenges before the pandemic; with the further decrease in oil revenues, these will be further intensified).
- **Reaching those not previously registered** in social assistance or social insurance programmes (especially informal workers).
- **Retaining jobs**, which will be critical for households to maintain their incomes and recover quickly after the crisis.
- Difficulty in reaching **conflict-affected areas** and a high number of **refugees and IDPs**, often living in crowded camps and hence more susceptible to the virus.

- **Exclusion of informal workers, including non-nationals**, from national social protection schemes.

In light of these challenges, the following policy recommendations should be considered:

Access to health care

- Ensuring **free-of-charge access to testing for COVID-19 and health care treatment** to all workers and their families, **regardless of insurance, socioeconomic or migration status**. Offering health care is not only a **human rights obligation**, but also a **public health** concern to contain the spread of the virus. In addition, it should be ensured that care-rationing choices should not be made based on nationality or displacement status.

Social insurance and labour market

- Extending **coverage and adequacy of sick leave cash benefits** by introducing **new eligibility criteria to include** persons in quarantine without symptoms and parents whose children are affected by school

closures. Moreover, **eligibility conditions should be reduced** (for example, waiting periods to access benefits or the need for medical certificates). Finally, a **reduction of employer costs** related to paid leave obligations should be reconsidered, for example through reimbursement of paid leave costs through tax credits, or direct payments.

they should be extended; for example, by reducing eligibility criteria. Where they offer low compensation or are short-lived, an increase in duration/benefit levels should be considered (as in countries such as Albania³⁹). For informal workers, complementary measures, such as emergency cash transfers, are also crucial (for more on this, see next page).

- **Wage subsidy and job retention mechanisms** to retain workers on the payroll are crucial for securing income for workers (especially those who cannot work from home). This includes **subsidies for temporary contract reduction** or suspension (as was carried out in Jordan, Brazil³⁵ and South Africa³⁶) among other measures.³⁷ The example of Jordan further shows how to contribute to formalisation by extending benefits to businesses that were previously not registered in the social insurance system.
- **Deduction in social insurance contributions** are vital to allow companies the necessary resources to cover payroll costs.³⁸ In the medium to long term, however, those who can contribute should do so to decrease financial pressure on the social insurance system.
- Where **unemployment benefits exist**,
- Where unemployment insurance does not exist, governments should invest in **establishing emergency funds to provide unemployment benefits** to all people affected, as was done in Iran, but also in other countries, such as Belize⁴⁰ and Costa Rica⁴¹. Given that **lump sum severance payments** are often more common than unemployment insurance schemes, governments could also consider topping up the severance amount, allowing anticipated or gradual withdrawals (as in Peru⁴² and Colombia⁴³).
- If possible, **include self-employed formal (registered) workers in the unemployment schemes** described above. Other measures can include **emergency low-interest credit lines** for self-employed workers. Repayment of loans could be made contingent on self-employed workers' future income to mitigate concerns of

35 Through the Emergency Benefit for the Preservation of Employment and Income (Benefício Emergencial de Preservação do Emprego e da Renda—BEm), Brazil's Ministry of Economy will pay part of the wages of workers whose working hours were reduced or whose contracts were suspended, for up to 90 days. The receipt of BEm will not be deducted from unemployment insurance in case of dismissal, but the share of forgone earnings that it replaces is lower for higher-wage workers. See: [Protección social y respuesta al COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe. II Edición: Asistencia Social](#) (Rubio, Escaroz, Machado, Palomo and Sato 2020).

36 In South Africa, the scheme is not fixed, but the share of forgone earnings that it replaces is lower for higher-wage workers: [COVID-19 Temporary Employee / Employer Relief Scheme](#) (Department of Labour 2020).

37 Other options to be considered: replacing a share of the earnings forgone by the worker due to hours not worked, over a maximum period of time, or providing low-interest loans to companies conditional on not dismissing any workers (as in Iran). Other important support mechanisms for businesses that are not part of this Note include: decreased loans, tax reliefs and rent deferrals.

38 For more on this topic, see: [Social Protection Response to the COVID-19 Crisis: Options for Developing Countries](#) (Gerard, Imbert and Orkin 2020).

39 The Albanian government has doubled unemployment benefits. See: [Qeveria pagesë direkte për të vetëpunësuarit sa 2 herë rroga e deklaruar; dyfishon pagesat e ndihmës ekonomike dhe papunësisë](#) (Exit News 2020).

40 Belize allocated USD75 million to the COVID-19 Unemployment Relief Programme, which aims to support all unemployed persons who lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, as well as those who had been unemployed even before the COVID-19 crisis. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for providing the funds to the programme, which is being carried out through borrowing, both locally through the Central Bank, and internationally through relations with the international financial institutions. See also: [Protección social y respuesta al COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe. II Edición: Asistencia Social](#) (Rubio, Escaroz, Machado, Palomo and Sato 2020).

41 Costa Rica introduced the Bono Proteger programme, which will provide monthly transfers for both informal workers and those in the formal labour market who have lost their jobs, had their contracts suspended or had a reduction in working hours. [Decreto Ejecutivo N° 42305-MTSS-MDHIS](#)

42 For more, see: [Decreto de Urgencia N. 038-2020](#), which establishes complementary measures to mitigate the economic effects of COVID-19.

43 For more, see: [Decreto Legislativo n. 488 de 27 de marzo de 2020](#).

increasing indebtedness (as in Jamaica⁴⁴ and Uruguay⁴⁵).

- **Support workers, in both private and public sectors, with their family obligations by allowing flexible work arrangements as well as special leave policies.** For those who cannot work from home, child care options that are safe and appropriate in the context of COVID-19 should be offered (for example, emergency on-job childcare).⁴⁶

Social assistance

- Provide **in-kind** and **especially cash transfer programmes** through **vertical** (increased benefits) and **horizontal** (increased caseload) **expansion**. Given the large share of informal workers in the region who are often in vulnerable employment and without access to existing social protection systems, special efforts must be—and have been—taken to include informal workers. To this end, it will also be key to **undertake comprehensive socioeconomic impact assessments** to understand the primary and secondary impacts of the crisis and identify and target newly affected and vulnerable groups.
 - **Outreach and enrolment:** Information and communication is key, and new strategies might need to be considered to reach all vulnerable groups through, for example, local actors (as detailed below) and the use of technology, which can facilitate self-enrolment quickly and relatively safely. However, in some contexts, these processes can exclude individuals who lack access to the Internet, a computer or smartphone, unless alternative systems are set up (see also next point).
 - **Payment and delivery systems:** most countries in the region have already adapted programmes to ensure social distancing and avoid crowds, for both cash and in-kind benefits⁵¹. For the medium term, it is advisable for cash transfers to shift to digital payment systems to the extent possible, for example by allowing beneficiaries to register their existing
- A few additional points to be considered:
- **Leveraging existing databases:** In some cases, **existing social registries** with information on poor and vulnerable people can be used to identify additional beneficiaries, as done in Egypt⁴⁷, as well as

44 For more, see: [We Care—Jamaica](#)

45 Small and medium enterprises are offered favourable conditions for debt refinancing, subsidised by the National Development Agency: [Más medidas de apoyo para micro y pequeños empresarios: subsidio directo y seguro por cese de actividad](#) (ANDE 2020).

46 For more, see: [Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19](#) (UN Women, UNICEF and ILO 2020).

47 The WFP in Egypt is providing a cash transfer to beneficiaries originally not eligible for the Takaful programme.

48 The new programme Ingreso Solidario is using data from the SISBEN single registry to identify poor and vulnerable households who were not beneficiaries of other social protection programmes.

49 The Government of Brazil is using data from the Single Registry of Beneficiaries (Cadastro Único) to assess eligibility to the new emergency cash transfer (Auxílio Emergencial).

50 In the case of Bono Universal.

51 For example, school meals can be provided as take-home rations, as done by the WFP in Libya and Yemen. Other options include shifting to home delivery or disbursing cash instead of school meals.

bank accounts. For those without bank accounts⁵², digital accounts can be opened (as was done in Brazil⁵³). This will also be key for countries' shock-responsiveness in the long run. Yet, safe alternatives need to be considered for those who do not have access to mobile phones with a stable Internet connection.⁵⁴

- **Conditionalities:** Conditionalities of cash transfers and public works programmes should be removed or made more flexible (as was done in the Philippines⁵⁵), especially when they require physical contact, such as school attendance or routine health check-ups.

Specific considerations regarding foreign workers:

To ensure quality of treatment and non-discrimination for foreign workers (particularly for low-skilled/low-income workers and domestic workers) the following steps should be considered:

- Uninsured foreign workers or those who are undocumented should have access to testing and subsequent treatment if needed.
- Foreign workers should be able to benefit from **employment retention schemes** and support packages on equal footing with nationals (as was done in Portugal, for example⁵⁶).
- Provide cash to buy food and access to

emergency accommodation and adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services to foreign domestic workers and casual workers, many of whom are likely to have an irregular status.

Specific considerations regarding refugees and IDPs:

Many of the considerations listed above also apply in humanitarian contexts. However, refugees and IDPs are at particular risk, as they often live in camps or informal settlements with limited access to health and social protection services.

Some considerations related to social protection for refugees and IDPs include:

- At minimum, facilitate the **inclusion of IDPs in government social protection responses**, when not yet included.
- **Where possible, scale up existing interventions** by, for example, re-including previously excluded beneficiaries,
- Make adjustments to **avoid large gatherings and human-to-human contact**, especially in **camps**. For beneficiary registration, where not absolutely necessary for operational continuity, biometric data collection should be avoided;
- **Implement complementary hygiene and other WASH-related interventions**, especially for those living in camps or camp-like settings. This should include the distribution of

52 According to the Global Financial Inclusion Database in 2017, only about 37 per cent of the population in the MENA/Arab States region had access to a bank account or a mobile money service. See: [DataBank – Global Financial Inclusion](#) (World Bank, n.d.).

53 The Brazilian public bank Caixa Econômica Federal is responsible for the payment of the emergency cash benefit. For individuals that do not have a bank account, a digital account was automatically opened, through which individuals can access the money and make transfers and payments without the need to withdraw the money via an ATM.

54 This can be the case for the elderly in particular, who at the same time are more at risk of contracting COVID-19. Allowing proxies to collect benefits might be an option in these cases. For more information, see [How older people can safely collect pension payments during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (Kelly, Lloyd-Sherlock, Juergens 2020) and [Responding to crisis with digital payments for social protection: Short-term measures with long-term benefits](#) (Rutkowski, Mora, Bull, Guermazi, Grown 2020).

55 The Flagship 4Ps CCT programme waived conditionalities, continuing the provision of full cash grants over the crisis period. See also: [DSWD temporarily waives 4Ps conditionalities](#). Philippine Information Agency (Broño 2020).

56 In Portugal, the government decided to regularise all foreign workers who had pending residential visa requests, granting them access to the health system and the same social rights available to nationals. For more information, see: [SEF vai legalizar todos os estrangeiros em situação irregular em Portugal](#) (ECO 2020).

essential personal hygiene items, including soap and disposable towels.

increased indebtedness must be followed up with progressive tax reforms, together with improved social protection systems.

Cross-cutting policy considerations across programmes:

- **Shock-responsive social protection:** Those with stronger social protection systems are in a better position to expand and adapt existing mechanisms. The crisis provides the opportunity to enhance the shock responsiveness of systems immediately, in such a way that new features can also be used in the future.⁵⁷
- **Timeliness and scale:** Needs cut across the whole income distribution; some may be temporary in nature, but it is important to quickly reach those affected. While there are no perfect solutions, the main focus of short-term responses should be on reducing exclusion errors, ensuring that no one is being left behind.
- **Complementarity and coordination:** The different measures require coordination among different stakeholders, across different State levels but also including non-State actors, such as NGOs, religious organisations and workers' organisations in all sectors, including agriculture, which can play a key role in identifying those most in need, and disseminate important information.⁵⁸
- **Fiscal space:** The crisis has demonstrated the need to quickly and sustainably expand fiscal space for social protection. In some countries, international support will be required to ensure an adequate immediate response to the crisis. In others,
- **Gender-sensitive social protection:** Responses need to consider gendered aspects alongside disability, age and other characteristics of marginalised groups in needs assessments and decisions on targeting, design and implementation. Moreover, it will be crucial for social protection programming to integrate approaches to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.⁵⁹
- **Design tweaks:** Measures, such as online services, need to be further enhanced and improved for both social assistance and insurance to contain the further spread of the virus, providing alternatives to those without access to technology.
- **Communication and grievance redressal mechanisms:** The population needs to be informed not only about the virus, but also about available support, their requirements and benefit structures. Moreover, grievance redressal mechanisms are key for all interventions, requiring call lines or online channels.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ For more on shock-responsive social protection, see: [Programme Guidance: Strengthening Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems](#) (UNICEF 2020).

⁵⁸ See also: [Social Protection Response to the COVID-19 Crisis: Options for Developing Countries](#) (Gerard, Imbert, Orkin 2020).

⁵⁹ For more, see also: [Gender-Responsive Social Protection during COVID19: Technical note](#) (UNICEF 2020).

⁶⁰ As in the case of the SSC in Jordan, but also in other countries, such as Argentina, where it is possible for those who were rejected for the emergency cash transfer (Ingreso Familiar de Emergencia) to request a review of their application by the Internet or phone on pre-defined days, according to the last number of their identification document. See also [Ingreso Familiar de Emergencia \(IFE\): cómo pueden reclamar quienes fueron rechazados para el cobro del Bono de Anses de ARS 10.000](#) (Infobae 2020).

ANNEX 1. Background Information

Annex 1.1. List of countries included in the definition of the MENA/Arab States region, according to selected agencies

COUNTRIES	AGENCIES				
	World Bank (a)	UNICEF (b)	ESCWA (c)	ILO (d,e)	UNDP (f)
Algeria	X	X	X	X	X
Bahrain	X	X	X	X	X
Djibouti	X	X			X
Egypt	X	X	X	X	X
Iran	X	X			
Iraq	X	X	X	X	X
Jordan	X	X	X	X	X
Kuwait	X	X	X	X	X
Lebanon	X	X	X	X	X
Libya	X	X	X	X	X
Mauritania			X		
Morocco	X	X	X	X	X
Oman	X	X	X	X	
Qatar	X	X	X	X	
Saudi Arabia	X	X	X	X	X
Somalia			X		X
oPt *	X	X	X	X	X
Sudan		X	X	X	X
Syria	X	X	X	X	X
Tunisia	X	X	X	X	X
UAE	X	X	X	X	
Yemen	X	X	X	X	X

*West Bank and Gaza (World Bank); State of Palestine (UNICEF); Palestine (ESCWA); Occupied Palestinian Territory (ILO) and Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP).

Sources:

- (a) The World Bank, Middle East and North Africa: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/mena>
- (b) UNICEF Middle East and North Africa: <https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/northafrica.html>
- (c) ESCWA, Middle East: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/where-we-work/middle-east/index.html>
- (d) ILO, Arab States: <https://www.ilo.org/beirut/countries/lang-en/index.htm>
- (e) those marked in blue: Northern Africa, based on the ILO 2017 World Social Protection Report: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_604882/lang-en/index.htm
- (f) UNDP, Arab States: <https://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/bas/en/home/covid-19-pandemic-response/undp-covid-19-response-by-country-in-the-arab-states.html>

Annex 1.2. Overview of social insurance systems in the MENA/ Arab States region across its 9 branches

	Algeria	Bahrain	Egypt	Iraq	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	OPt*	Oman	Qatar	KSA	Sudan	Syria	Tunisia	UAE	Yemen
Old age	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI**	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Survivors	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	...	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Invalidity/ Dis- ability	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI**	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI
Employment injury	SI	SI	SI	...	SI	SI	...	SI	EL	...	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	SI	...
Sickness	SI	...	SI	...	...	...	SI	SI	SI	SI	...	...	...	...	EL	...	SI	...	...
Medical care	SI	...	SI	...	...	...	SI	SI	SI	SI	...	...	...	...	SI	...	SI	...	...
Maternity	SI	...	SI	...	SI	...	...	EL	EL	SI	...	...	...	...	EL	...	SI	...	...
Unemployment	SI	SI	SI	...	SI	SI	...	SP	SI	SI	...	...	...	SI	SP	...	...	...	...
Family	SI	...	...	...	...	...	SI	UNI	SI	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	SI	...	...

Notes: SI = social insurance; EL = Employer Liability; SP = severance payment; UNI = universal; * In OPT, this applies only to public sector workers as the implementation of the social security law for the private sector was put on hold. ** Lump sum only.

Source : Authors' elaboration based on [ISSA country profiles](#) and ILO World Social Protection Report [database](#)

Annex 1.3. Overview of non-contributory social protection programmes in the MENA/Arab States region

UCT	In-kind	Subsidies	CCT	School feed- ing	Housing	Non-cont. health insur- ance	Health care benefits	CFW	Edu. fee waivers
Algeria	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Bahrain	X	X			X				
Djibouti	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Egypt	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Iran	X	X		X		X	X		
Iraq	X	X							
Jordan	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Kuwait	X	X	X	X	X				X
Lebanon	X	X					X		X
Libya	X	X			X		X		
Morocco	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
oPt	X						X		X
Oman	X	X	X		X				
Qatar	X	X	X	X	X				
Mauritania		X	X	X		X	X		
KSA	X	X	X	X					
Sudan	X		X	X	X	X			X
Syria	X								
Tunisia	X	X	X	X			X		
UAE	X	X			X				X
Yemen	X		X				X	X	X

Notes: UCT = Unconditional Cash Transfer ; CCT = Conditional Cash Transfers ; CFW = Cash-for-work

Source: Authors' elaboration based on [Overview of Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Region Through a Child and Equity Lens](#) (Machado et al 2018). For Mauritania: [The State of Social Safety Net](#) (World Bank 2018); and Social Protection Country Profile: [Mauritania](#) (ESCWA 2016).

ANNEX 2. Overview of measures

Notes about methodology and scope:

- Sources consulted: ESCWA¹, World Bank², IPC-IG, socialprotection.org and partner organisations³, ILO⁴ and ISSA⁵ as well as UN agencies' websites.
- The mapping is focused on social protection measures within the realm of financial access to health care, social insurance, labour market and social assistance. Broader macro-economic, fiscal or public health responses are not the focus of this note.⁶ Both announced and implemented measures, as well as those at sub-national (regional) level, were included. Social protection measures provided by (I)NGOs or civil society were also not included.
- In-kind transfers include school feeding programmes.
- For measures that specifically target foreign workers and refugees/IDPs, see tables 4.1 and 4.2 respectively.

1. Social insurance and labour market measures

1.1. Measures to ensure financial protection in accessing health care (e.g. free access to testing, free access to treatment, broadening of health insurance, etc.)

Country	Summary	Provider	Source / Date
Bahrain	1. The King of Bahrain ordered the Ministry of Health to cover the treatment expenses of COVID-19 patients, including testing and quarantine services, for all citizens and residents. [1,2]	Gov.	[1] https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/2209106/82-year-old-recovers-coronavirus-kuwait-bahrain-offers-free-medical-treatment (31 March) [2] https://www.moh.gov.bh/COVID19/Details/4014 (22 March)
Iran	1. The Government will cover all health care expenses of COVID-19 patients. [1]	Gov.	[1] mshrg.h.ir/1060436 (April 13)
KSA	1. The Ministry of Health announced that it will offer free COVID-19 testing and treatment services to everyone in the country, including workers in an irregular situation. [1,2,3]	Gov.	[1] https://www.arabnews.com/node/1650026/saudi-arabia (30 March) [2] https://bit.ly/368HDk2 (30 March) [3] https://arabic.cnn.com/health/article/2020/03/30/saudi-arabia-royal-of-the-treatment-covid19-free (30 March)
Lebanon	1. The General Director of the National Social Security Fund issued a memorandum related to the laboratory diagnosis of COVID-19, setting the laboratory examination fee at LBP150,000 maximum (all laboratories are recommended to abide by this fee). The test is free at the Rafik Hariri Hospital (a public hospital). [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/3evmfcD (12 March)
Morocco	1. On 19 March, the second meeting of the Comité de Veille Economique agreed that workers in the formal sector (covered by the National Insurance Fund—CNSS) dismissed due to the crisis will remain covered by health insurance. [1,2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV13ZPlx6Wo (27 March) [2] https://www.finances.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?fiche=4990 (28 March)
Oman	1. The Capital Market Authority in Oman has launched an initiative to expand the services covered by the health insurance scheme, including medical tests and treatment costs for insured members with COVID-19 (both nationals and expatriates) under their medical insurance coverage. The insurance scheme will cover up to the beneficiaries' available annual benefit limits in their respective policies. The insurers will apply the unified standard price schedule and national guidelines set by the Ministry of Health (MoH). [1]	Gov.	[1] https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/oman/covid-19-patients-in-oman-to-be-covered-by-insurance-1.71803739 (1 June) [2] https://www.thearabianstories.com/2020/06/04/expats-in-oman-need-not-pay-a-single-ryal-for-covid-19-treatment-minister/ (4 June)
	2. Additionally, for those without health insurance or sponsors, the government will offer free treatment (for residents and citizens) [2]	Gov.	

Qatar	1. Treatment for COVID-19 is provided to anyone free of charge—the possession of a health card and/or the Qatar ID (QID) is not necessary to be tested and/or receive treatment. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://m.gulf-times.com/story/659481 (28 March)
UAE	1. The Ministry of Health and Prevention announced that confirmed cases of COVID-19 without insurance coverage will not pay for health care costs at any health care facility. [1] 2. Free COVID-19 tests will be provided for Emirati citizens, and their domestic workers along with (persons with disabilities), pregnant women, and residents over the age of 50 years, in addition to those who have symptoms associated with the virus and those in close contact with the confirmed cases. [2]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://www.khaleejtimes.com/coronavirus-outbreak/coronavirus-cases-in-uae-to-be-treated-free-of-cost-insurance-not-necessary- (6 February) [2] https://gulfnews.com/uae/health/free-covid-19-tests-in-the-uae-for-these-categories-1.71456471 (12 May)

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- 1 See: [COVID-19 Stimulus Tracker](#) and survey on measures for people with disability (internal document, in Arabic)
 - 2 See: [Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures](#) (Ugo Gentilini et al).
 - 3 See: [Social protection responses to COVID-19 \(Taskforce\)](#) Online Community.
 - 4 See: [ILO's Country Policy Responses](#) and [Social Protection Monitor](#) databases.
 - 5 See: [ISSA's Coronavirus country measures database](#).
 - 6 For macro-economic responses, see: [ILO's Country Policy Responses database](#).

1.2. Leave benefits and other measures-related to payment of salaries during sickness/quarantine and special business closure

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. As of 22 March, at least 50 per cent of the public administration workforce at the central level as well as in local authorities, whose presence in the workplace is not considered essential for the continuity of service, are being placed on paid leave, excluding staff from certain sectors that require continuity. Pregnant women and women raising children, as well as people with chronic illnesses and those with medical vulnerabilities, are considered a priority for exceptional leave [1]. This decision is also applicable to workers in the private sector. [2]	Gov.	[1] http://www.aps.dz/algerie/103314-decret-executif-relatif-aux-mesures-de-prevention-et-de-lutte-contre-la-propagation-du-virus (22 March) [2] https://www.algerie360.com/coronavirus-en-algerie-50-des-travailleurs-du-secteur-prive-en-conge-paye/ (23 March)
Djibouti	1. A presidential decree (2020-63/PR/MTRA) has been introduced, requesting exceptional measures for businesses with 11 workers or more, including paid leave. [1,2] 2. All civil servants and employees in the parastatal and formal private sectors are paid during the containment period. [3]	Gov.	[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#DJ (23 March) [2] http://ccd.dj/w2017/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/decret-2020-63-PR-MTRA.pdf (23 March) [3] UNICEF Djibouti Personal Communication
Egypt	1. Some public employees in non-essential services are allowed to take a special leave. Eligible categories include employees with chronic illnesses; pregnant women; mothers of children under 12 years old; mothers of children with disabilities (regardless of age); and people with disabilities. Those without chronic illness can be allowed a special leave if they present a medical certificate. [1,2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.dostor.org/3033219 (17 March) [2] http://moe.gov.eg/adv/State_holidays_2019-2020.pdf (17 March)
Iran	1. The Social Security Organisation guarantees a wage compensation of 50 per cent to workers taking sick leave. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#IR (24 April)
Iraq	1. Public servants have been given a paid leave. [1] The Kurdistan region suspended public service until 2 May. [2]	Gov.	[1] ACTRAV report [2] https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2886090 (15 April)
Jordan	1. During the quarantine period, an official license was granted to public and private sector workers (except for some essential sectors). Employers cannot calculate this period as annual leave or sick leave and cannot deduct it from workers' vacation balance. [1,2,3]	Gov.	[1] https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/labour-ministry-announces-2-week-official-paid-leave-public-sector-employees (17 March) [2] https://maqar.com/archives/393391 (17 March) [3] https://bit.ly/2XeB3om (17 March)
KSA	1. The Ministry of Health announced that all workers who entered the country as of 13 March will be quarantined and will be considered on sick leave during the time they remain in quarantine, which can be done through a mobile application. [1] 2. Private-sector employers were required to provide a compulsory two-week sick leave for pregnant women, sick people and returnees from abroad (who must self-quarantine if they returned after 13 March). The mandatory sick leave will also be given to people with respiratory and chronic diseases, tumours and immunodeficiency, who work in the private sector. In addition, workers who take immunosuppressant drugs will be granted sick leave. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/MediaCenter/News/Pages/News-2020-03-14-001.aspx (14 March) [2] https://gulffnews.com/world/gulf/saudi/coronavirus-mandatory-two-week-leave-for-pregnant-women-sick-people-in-saudi-arabia-1.70427653 (16 March)

Kuwait

1. Private sector workers will receive their monthly wage, regardless of whether businesses were closed. Target: Kuwaiti nationals in the private sector (except telecommunication and banking sectors) and with regulations set by the Government. The main condition is that the company doesn't end the contract of the workers.
Duration: Six months from the month of issuance (May 2020) of the decree by the Kuwaiti Parliament. [2]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/banking-finance/442406-kuwait-sets-up-33m-fund-to-tackle-spread-of-coronavirus>
(9 March)
[2] <https://www.aljazeera.com/articles/1589900408428045200/> (20 May)

2. The Kuwait Civil Service Commission (CSC) has asked all government agencies to prohibit quarantined employees from starting work. It has also emphasised that salaries for Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti employees will continue to be paid during any quarantine period, and it will not affect their employment situation. [2]

Gov.

oPt

1. In Israel, procedures for claiming leave due to quarantine or COVID-19 infection have been centralised at the Ministry of Health. Days taken will be deducted from accumulated sick leave balance. [1] Compliance with existing sick leave rules by employers with Palestinian workers is low. [2,3]

Gov.

- [1] https://www.kolzhut.org.il/en/Sick_Days_for_Employees_in_Quarantine_due_to_Coronavirus (18 March)
[2] <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-high-court-bars-state-from-giving-62m-in-sick-pay-owed-to-palestinian-workers-1.8128675> (14 November)
[3] https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-ed_norm/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_705016.pdf (2019)

Oman

1. Oman's Supreme Committee issued a decision on 14 April requiring employees in private sector enterprises that have been closed to take their annual leave. Employers must pay full salary to employees who have been quarantined during the compulsory quarantine period. [1]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=512ad6e8-16a5-4304-b8b0-27502b4bfc1d&filterId=a0a999b0-98fb-48d2-ab63-ffb5496dad3> (14 April)

Qatar

1. All workers in isolation, quarantine, or receiving treatment will still be paid their basic salary and receive their allowances, such as food and housing, irrespective of whether they are entitled to sick leave benefits. [1]

Gov.

- [1] <https://bit.ly/2VfkSXO> (14 April)

UAE

1. On 8 April, the UAE Cabinet adopted a resolution to grant paid leave to some categories of employees at the Federal Government. The resolution stipulates that married Federal Government employees may take full paid leave to care for their children below the age of 16. The age condition shall not apply to people of determination, as well as in cases where a spouse is subject to self-isolation or quarantine that requires no contact with family members, upon a decision from the Ministry of Health and Prevention.

Gov.

- [1] <https://wam.ae/en/details/1395302835563> (08 April)
[2] <https://u.ae/ar-AE/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-the-covid-19-outbreak/paid-leave-for-select-federal-government> (05 May)

The resolution also applies to employees whose spouses work in vital health-related occupations, such as doctors, nurses, paramedics and other technical jobs that require exposure to infected people, as well as employees of quarantine centres, throughout the emergency period in the country. [1,2]

1.3. Unemployment insurance, wage subsidies and other measures to support to payment of salaries

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. The Council of Ministers will outline the measures approved by the Council to increase the national minimum wage from DZD 18,000 to DZD 20,000 and reduce the income tax on salaries below DZD 30,000. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2T45Cvv (09 May)
Bahrain	1. As part of the economic and financial package, the salaries of all employees in the private sector will be paid for three months (starting from April 2020) through the unemployment insurance fund. It will cover 100,000 of Bahrain's private sector employees (total cost of BHD215 million, with a monthly average of over BHD70 million). [1,2,3]	Gov.	[1] https://www.moh.gov.bh/COVID19/Details/3982 (18 March) [2] https://arabic.cnn.com/health/article/2020/03/17/coronavirus-bahrain-exempt-individuals-and-institutions-fees-3-months (17 March) [3] https://www.newsofbahrain.com/bahrain/63441.html (17 April)
Djibouti	1. As per decree (2020/63), certain categories of employees in the private sector who lost their jobs or had a reduction of work time due to COVID-19 can be entitled to government compensation. [1] According to the "Arrêté 2020-049/PR/MTRA" workers placed in partial activity could receive a compensation of up to 70 per cent of their wages despite the reduction in working hours—30 per cent being paid by the State, and the remaining 40 per cent by the employer. [2,3] The employers will receive money from the government and must pay their employees. [2]	Gov.	[1] http://ccd.dj/w2017/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/decret-2020-63-PR-MTRA.pdf (23 March) [2] https://www.presidence.dj/texte.php?ID=2020-049&ID2=2020-04-29&ID3=Arr%EA%E9&ID4=8&ID5=2020-04-30&ID6=n (29 April) [3] https://www.ilo.org/africa/technical-cooperation/free-movement/WCMS_746362/lang-fr/index.htm (29 May)
Egypt	1. Emergency benefits are paid for formal workers in the tourism sector. It is estimated that the benefits will cover 900,000 workers. [1,2]. As of 30 April, 48,968 individuals had received the subsidies. The total cost of the first phase was EGP57.2 million. [3] Around 3 May, the Manpower Minister said that a second batch was being released: around EGP7,762,320 was distributed to 7,314 beneficiaries. This emergency grant is financed by the Employees Emergency Fund. Initiated in 2002, the Fund provides financial help to workers who have not received salaries from their employers due to companies going bankrupt because of economic crises. [4]	Gov.	[1] https://sis.gov.eg/Story/145437/Manpower-min.-EGP-500-monthly-salary-for-irregular-workers?lang=en-us (07 April) [2] https://bit.ly/2S4jFRd (17 April) [3] http://www.manpower.gov.eg/news.html [4] http://www.riad-riad.com/en/publications/employees-emergency-fund-egypt-and-its-expected-role-during-covid-19-outbreak (1 April)
Iran	1. Iran planned to allocate IRR50,000 billion (USD305 million) as of 6 April to the Unemployment Insurance Fund, to aid those who have lost their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The workers of 10 economic sub-sectors subject to the Labour Law, the Social Security Act and the Unemployment Insurance Law, are eligible for the benefit for three months. Self-employed people who have insurance, such as construction workers, carpet weavers, public transportation operators and drivers, are not eligible for unemployment benefits. [1,2] 2. Businesses affected by the COVID-19 outbreak (10 main economic sectors) can get loans at a 12 per cent interest rate, with a repayment period of 2 years. One of the conditions for receiving these loans is "maintaining employees." [2] 3. Around 3,300,000 pensioners and retired people under social security can benefit from a new system that allows them to buy up to 2,000,000 Toman from all shops, with reimbursement over 2 years at zero interest. [3]	Gov.	[1] https://financialtribune.com/articles/domestic-economy/102718/iran-allocates-305m-to-support-those-who-have-lost-jobs-amid (06 April) [2] https://www.bbc.com/persian/business-52096880 (11 April) [3] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#IR (24 April)

Jordan

1. The Jordanian Social Security Corporation (SSC) announced that workers on unpaid leave can apply for disbursement of unemployment benefits, provided they meet the relevant conditions and work in certain sectors, such as tourism, transportation and trade. [1]

2. On 17 April, the Prime Minister of Jordan announced 3 wage support programmes (Tadamon 1, Tadamon 2, and Musaned), based on Defence Order No. 9. [4, 5] The Tadamon programmes are for companies that had to reduce wages by 50 per cent, while the Musaned programmes are for companies who had to suspend activities without pay (as allowed through Defence Order No. 6). [4] They aim at reaching 400,000 vulnerable Jordanian families. Self-employed, irregular and daily workers are eligible for these, including Gazans and Children of Jordanian mothers. [2]

Tadamon 1:

- Support for businesses who have contributed to the Insurance system for at least 12 months;
- Employees will be granted an unemployment allowance consisting of 50 per cent of their salaries from April and May, in amounts ranging from JOD165 to JOD500;
- Employers will only be required to pay 20% per cent of the deductible wage, no more than JOD250 per month. [2].
- 83,000 individuals benefited as of 31 May. [3]

3. Tadamon 2:

- Support for the uninsured, for businesses not registered with the SSC, or for those whose contributions lasted for less than a year;
- Employees will be granted an unemployment allowance of JOD150 per month for April and May;
- Employers will be required to pay a one-off registration fee (JOD140) for each worker, and JOD50 monthly in contribution to the unemployment allowance.
- 124,000 individuals benefited as of 31 May. [3]

4. Musaned

- **Musaned 1** - unemployment insurance for insured employees who have stopped working for their employer due to COVID-19. Employees will be granted unemployment insurance consisting of 50 per cent of their salary in amounts ranging from JOD150 to JOD350 for 3 months. Beneficiaries must have made at least 36 contributions [4]. As of 31 May, 11,272 insured Jordanians whose companies froze activities had benefited from the programme. [3]
- **Musaned 2** - Jordanian and non-Jordanian members of the SSC are allowed to retrieve a maximum of JOD450 from their unemployment insurance savings, to be distributed in monthly payments for 3 months; beneficiaries must have at least JOD90 in their savings accounts [11]. As of 31 May, 41,157 people had benefited from the programme. [3]
- **Musaned 3** - Jordanian and non-Jordanian members, as well as voluntary members of the SSC with an income not higher than JOD500, are allowed to spend an advance from their insurance funds. This can be up to 5 per cent of their insured income, at a maximum of JOD 450, to be distributed in 3 monthly payments, provided that they have made at least 12 contributions. [4,5] As of 31 May, 48,731 individuals had benefited from the programme. [3]

5. To support small and medium enterprises that are facing potential closure, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) established a fund for soft/low-interest loans, with the Jordan Loan Guarantee Corporation acting as guarantor. Companies accessing these loans cannot fire workers for the duration of the loan. [6]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/tax/me-tax-legal-news/2020/middle-east-tax-other-measures-response-to-covid-19.html>
- [2] <https://bit.ly/3ctrFmE> (17 April)
- [3] <https://www.facebook.com/440617256007442/posts/3019635531438922?d=n&sfns=mo> (31 May)
- [4] <https://marsadtalemi.com/?p=6856> (19 April)
- [5] <https://bit.ly/3evxima> (17 April)
- [6] <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#JO> (April)

Gov.

Gov.

Gov.

KSA	1. The government will cover 60 per cent of salaries in private sector industries affected by the pandemic—of up to SAR9,000—for three months (though an extension is possible). This will cover 1.2 million Saudis and will be managed through the national unemployment assistance system Sanad, with the first payments sent to companies on 3 May. If the employer has benefited from any government subsidy, the termination of the employee's contract is not legitimate [1,2,3]. The aid is conditional on the employer's continuation of the payment of salaries once this aid is stopped. If the employer has five or less employees, then all of them will be covered, otherwise it's up to 70 per cent of the employer's national workforce [2]. Almost SAR320 million have been distributed to over 40,000 Saudi citizens as of May. [4] 2. The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) has launched a SAR5 billion initiative including: supporting employment with around SAR2 billion; supporting training with SAR800 million; supporting 100,000 new jobseekers with SAR1.5 billion. [5] 3. An Employment Support initiative, to which SAR 1 billion was allocated, will subsidise wages of workers employed since July 2019, with a two-year support from 30 per cent to up to 50 per cent of the monthly wage of a Saudi employee whose salary ranges between SAR4,000 and SAR10,000. [6] 4. The government will pay the minimum salaries of independent workers in the transportation sector who are registered with the Public Transport Authority but are not under the umbrella of any company and whose activities were affected by the precautionary measures. [7,8] 5. On 6 April, MHRSD, in collaboration with HRDF, launched a new initiative to support freelancers and those working in the gig-economy, and provide them with a monthly payment up to SAR3,000 for 2 months. [7,8]	Gov.	[1] https://www.arabianbusiness.com/banking-finance/444303-saudi-government-to-cover-60-of-private-sector-salaries-hit-by-covid-19 (03 April) [2] https://www.mof.gov.sa/en/mediacenter/news/Pages/News_03042020.aspx (03 April) [3] https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&news-id=2069887 (03 April) [4] https://www.arabnews.com/node/1668536/saudi-arabia (02 May) [5] https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/MediaCenter/News/Pages/News-2020-04-01-005.aspx (01 April) [6] https://www.hrdf.org.sa/News/4429 (05 April) [7] https://www.ugentilini.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/County-SP-COVID-responses_May22.pdf (22 May) [8] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#SA (22 May)
Lebanon	1. The Lebanese Central Bank issued a circular making it easier for struggling entrepreneurs and businesses to access loans. Circular No. 547 enables commercial banks to provide loans to companies to pay salaries and debts accumulated in recent months or that will be accumulated in the coming weeks. Special conditions for the loans: zero interest, both in dollars and in Lebanese pounds, for five years starting from 1 June. [1,2] 2. More than 30,000 farmers and 6,600 vocational workers will get a one-time payment LBP4.5 million each (USD1,125 million). [3]	Gov.	[1] http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/economics/2020/03/23/coronavirus-bank-of-lebanon-approves-special-loans-b49da77d-4131-468d-b5d3-5268aad320bd.html (23 March) [2] https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/tax/me-tax-legal-news/2020/middle-east-tax-other-measures-response-to-covid-19.html [3] https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/lebanon-parliament-endorses-300m-aid-package-200528190122422.html (28 May)
Morocco	1. A new unemployment benefit, replacing the existing one, will be provided to employees of companies whose activities have ceased entirely, as well as to those of companies that needed to reduce their staff. [1] The benefit level is fixed at MAD1,000 for the month of March and to MAD2,000 for each of the following three months. [2,3] Benefits will be transferred directly to the recipients' bank account or by postal order. One week after the announcement by the GoM (26/03/2020), 113,000 companies had registered for these benefits, covering more than 700,000 workers. [4] 2. According to Law 25/20 of 21 April, companies with less than 500 employees, which had to stop their activities and whose revenues fell by more than 50 per cent compared to the same period in 2019, will be considered companies 'in difficulty'. Those whose revenues decrease between 25 per cent to 50 per cent or with more than 500 employees will go to a special commission that will decide whether they should receive government assistance. These businesses will be able to pay up to 50 per cent of their employees' salaries (which includes the MAD2,000 from the unemployment benefit—see above) without paying taxes or fees to social insurance. [5,6,7]	Gov.	[1] https://www.finances.gov.ma/CommuniquésEtAnnonces/cabinet/corona-virus-cve/srf-papier5.pdf (19 March) [2] https://www.lebrief.ma/5261-covid-19-voici-comment-les-salaires-profiteront-de-l'indemnité-cnss (24 March) [3] https://twitter.com/IPC_Ig/status/1255927419229409283 (30 April) [4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UV13ZPlx6Wo https://www.ecoactu.ma/cnss-indemnite-coronavirus/ (27 March) [5] https://leseco.ma/indemnite-forfaitaire-de-la-cnss-plus-de-700-000-salaries-inscrits/ (02 April) [6] https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2020/04/299936/morocco-approves-legal-framework-to-support-formal-sector-employers/ (18 April) [7] https://www.medias24.com/complement-d-indemnite-des-entreprensees-en-difficultes-voici-la-circulaire-dgi-9680.html (22 April)

1. The Minister of Labour launched a Fund to provide support to workers affected by the pandemic. A two-month temporary employment programme will be launched for unemployed workers, noting that agreements have been concluded with the relevant authorities to maintain the employee and employee wages for the months of March and April. In partnership with the World Bank, the initiative aims to employ 10,000 workers for 3 to 6 months and indicated that the Ministry will cover 30 per cent of the wages for 20,000 workers. [1,2]
2. Financial aid of USD100 for 3 months will be distributed to female workers in nurseries and creches that have stopped working (and whose salaries have been cut off). [3]

Gov.

- [1] <https://bit.ly/2AxXAEQ> (11 May)
- [2] <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2020/04/15/1329689.html> (15 April)
- [3] Communications with MOSD

Qatar

1. On April 5, the Qatar Development Bank (QDB) launched the National Guarantee Programme that provides guarantees to local banks to grant interest-free loans to private companies affected by COVID-19. The programme aims to support the payment of wages and rents by companies in the private sector. Companies wishing to benefit from the programme are required to be fully owned by the private sector and registered in the Wage Protection System. The scheme is run in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Qatar Central Bank (QCB) and all banks operating in the country.[1]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#QA> (April)

Syria

1. MOSAL allocated a bank account in its favour to attract financial contributions and allocate it to support efforts to reduce the burdens on workers and address the social repercussions indicating that the value of the amount of 'unemployment allowance' will be determined according to the data and numbers that will be collected. [1]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.sana.sy/?p=1135808> (12 April)

Tunisia

1. The government will allocate an amount of TND300 million in aid for unemployed workers. [1,2] The government will pay up to TND200 of the wages of workers that are in 'technical unemployment' (for those who cannot continue their work). Employers can register through an online platform. [3,4] Another platform for a similar assistance measure was instituted for self-employed workers. As of 22 April, there were 176,000 applications, 40,000 of which have been already accepted. [5]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.akhbaraman.net/news/arab-world/2020/03/22/ندوة-عن-مبادرات-دعم-الاقتصاد-في-البحر-المتوسط> (22 March)
- [2] https://twitter.com/IPC_IG/status/1258851560945311745 (8 May)
- [3] <https://www.businessnews.com.tn/elyes-fakhfakh-mesures-sociales-en-faveur-des-professions-en-omage-tenique.520.96939.3> (31 March)
- [4] <https://www.audit-consultancy.com/2020/04/04/le-chomage-technique-en-temps-de-covid-19/> (4 April)
- [5] <https://www.leconomistemaghrebin.com/2020/04/23/aides-exceptionnelles-deblocage-commence-a-partir-de-lundi-prochain/> (23 April)

1.4. Modifying social security contribution payments and adjusting existing social security benefits

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. The National Social Insurance fund (CNAS) has extended the deadline for the payment of employers and independent contributions until the end of May and September, respectively, while still covering paid leave and unemployment benefits for some. Penalties from previous late payments not made on time have also been suspended for six months starting from April 2020. [1,2,3]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2xG9j2I (15 April) [2] https://www.algerie-eco.com/2020/04/15/covid-19-les-delaies-de-paiements-des-cotisations-sociales-prolongees/ (15 April) [3] http://www.aps.dz/ar/economie/86238-19 (15 April)
Bahrain	1. The Ministry of Social Development and Labour doubled the value of the disability allowance (social insurance), which benefits 12,000 persons with disabilities who are registered on the Ministry's lists. They received BHD200 instead of BHD100. A budget of BHD2.5 million has been allocated to this initiative. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.argaam.com/ar/article/articledetail/id/1365542 (9 April)
Egypt	1. The variable wage pension will be re-adjusted by adding 80 per cent of the special allowances that are not included in the basic wage of the pensioners who have ended their service between 1/7/2006 and 30/6/2016.[1] 2. Pensioners will receive five bonuses (variable income) at a total cost of EGP35 billion this year. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/3ddoC2o (21 April)
Jordan	1. The SSC has suspended old-age insurance for private-sector employees for three months (starting 1 March). It reduced subscription rates from 21.75 per cent to 5.25 per cent for employees. [1] 2. Companies that owe contributions to SSC from the past (arrears amount to JOD340 million) will be legally allowed to make such payments in the future [2] Note: Half of the Maternity Insurance Contributions in 2020 will be used to support vulnerable groups, mainly the elderly and sick people. The allocated amounts will be used for cash transfers and in-kind benefits. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/services/tax/me-tax-legal-news/2020/middle-east-tax-other-measures-response-to-covid-19.html [2] https://bit.ly/3ddoC2o (18 March)
Kuwait	1. Postponement of contributions of non-state-owned enterprises, as well as those insured to the pension insurance for 6 months. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2882518&language=ar (01 April)
Lebanon	1. According to Law No. 6, of 5 March 2020, concerning facilitations in paying social security contributions, the below apply (among others): • Reduction of 100 per cent of social security contributions until 31 December 2020, and reduction of 85 per cent for unpaid contributions related to the period from 1/1/2001 until 31/12/2019 if payments started before 5 May 2020 • The unpaid contributions for the abovementioned period (1/1/2001 until 31/12/2019) shall be paid on instalments for up to 5 years with a 5 per cent interest rate (other conditions apply) • The unpaid contributions will be exempted from additional interest rates specified in law 144 of 31 July 2019, if payment started before 5 May 2020 • Employers may request rescheduling for their unpaid contributions, except for the above-mentioned period (conditions apply); • Persons who already paid interest on delayed contributions may receive refunds for the interest percentage. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2xcpy8c (28 April)

Morocco	1. Morocco's Economic Monitoring Committee decided to suspend the payment of social security contributions (CNSS). [1,2]	Gov.	[1] https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/2184371/morocco-supports-private-firms-fight-against-covid-19 (17 March) [2] http://laquotidienne.ma/article/economie/coronavirus-toutes-les-reponses-a-vos-questions-sur-les-mesures-fiscales-bancaires-sociales-priees-par-le-maroc (1 April)
oPt	1. The Palestinian Authority has stopped collecting contributions from Palestinian workers, leaving compliance with sick pay rules to employers instead. Note: For workers in the West Bank and Gaza, there are no sick leave provisions. [1]	Gov.	[1] Personal ILO communication
Oman	The Public Authority for Social Insurance has taken the following measures: 1. Postponing the due payments of the monthly contributions (March, April, May and June 2020) for the employer and employee. [1] 2. Exemption from fines that will result from the delay in paying the due contribution for the months mentioned above only; or resulting from delay in registering their Omani employees/ or the notification from the end of their services. [1]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2ynfl3t (15 April)
Tunisia	1. For businesses and companies operating in the formal sector, there will be a deferral of 3 months of the employer's contribution to the social security scheme for the 2nd trimester, on the condition of keeping the employees. [1,2] 2. 130,000 pensioners who receive a pension of less than or equal to TND 180 will benefit from a financial aid of TND 100, thus having a total of TND 280. [3]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://www.tap.info.tn/fr/Portail-Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9%20A9/12474660-des-mesures-pour (22 March) [2] https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2020/03/23/446550/tunisie-cnss-la-declaration-des-salaires-et-le-paiement-des-cotisations-au-titre-du-1er-trimestre-de-2020-aurent-lieu-dans-les-dela-habituels/ (23 March) [3] https://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2020/04/03/tunisie-versement-de-100-dinars-a-pres-de-133-milles-retraites/ (3 April)

2. Social assistance

2.1. Cash Transfers

[illegible]

Jordan	1. Expanding Bread Subsidy Cash Compensation Programme to National Aid Fund (NAF) beneficiaries. The NAF started the registration in early March of the existing Bread Subsidy Cash Compensation Programme, targeting 4.5 to 5 million citizens with a small amount of money per year (JOD27 per individual, paid only once). [1] Payments will occur over April-November 2020 and will take the same form as the Takaful Programme. Approximately 400,000 online applications have been received. Children of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanian men and Gazans who are registered with the passport department can apply. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2TlbLDK (3 March) [2] https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/400000-families-applied-online-bread-subsidy (19 March) [3] https://bit.ly/3bv20tI (07 April) [4] https://bit.ly/2vq6SBw (17 April) [5] https://bit.ly/2ABoewK (03 June) [6] https://bit.ly/2zvVs179 (30 March) [7] https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/fast-access-to-cash-provides-urgent-relief-to-those-hardest-hit-by-covid-19/ (9 April) [8] UNICEF Jordan Personal Communication (12 June) [9] https://bit.ly/30YCzFS (5 May)
	2. On 16 April, the Minister of Social Protection announced a social protection programme to support daily wage workers to be carried out by the NAF. - The programme is financed via donations collected from citizens and the private sector through the newly formed 'Emergency Response Fund—Himat Watan'; - The benefit amount consists of JOD70 per month for 2-member households and JOD136 per month for households consisting of 3 members or more paid for 3 months. It will be delivered through e-wallets; - Applications for the programme are made through the pre-existing bread support cash assistance application website/Takmeely Platform; [4]; - As of 3 June, 230,000 households have benefited, and an additional 50,000 are expected to receive aid. [5] - The National Unified Registry is used to verify applicants' information [9]	Gov.	
	3. Until 14 April, 150,000 families received cash and in-kind aid provided by the Zakat Fund, for a total value of approximately JOD2 million. These are a combination of old and new beneficiaries. Priority is being given to daily wage workers. [6]	Gov.	
	4. The 'Hajati' Cash Transfer programme, specifically tailored to Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian families, was expanded to cover 18,000 additional vulnerable children. A database maintained by UNICEF Jordan with information on 38,000 of the poorest and most vulnerable households was used to identify households not receiving Hajati but who were in urgent need of financial support. [7]	UN	
	5. NAF is already providing regular cash transfers to 146,000 households: 45,000 benefit from the Takaful cash transfer programme, and 101,000 benefit from NAF monthly cash transfer programs. The Jordanian government will add 10,000 new Takaful beneficiaries who were already planned for 2020. Moreover, a temporary (six-month) benefit top-up will be provided for existing NAF beneficiaries whose benefits are below a certain threshold. The World Bank finances the programme and UNICEF provides technical support [8]. The NAF has also announced that all cards for beneficiaries of the recurrent cash assistance programme that have expired will be regarded as valid until the end of May and can still receive their cash assistance. [3]	Gov.	
KSA	1. The disbursement of SAR1.850 billion was directed as Ramadan aid to beneficiaries and beneficiaries of social security at the amount of SAR1,000 for the family and SAR 500 for the dependent. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://mlsd.gov.sa/ar/node/586866 (7 May)

Kuwait

1. Between 16 March and 10 April, the Kuwaiti Zakat House/Fund provided financial aid to 4,124 families (total value: KWD980,000). The first phase (16-19 March) targeted widows, divorced women, orphans, and the elderly. The second phase (31 March-9 April) targeted low-income families with no fixed income or whose income was affected by the crisis. The Zakat House sent text messages to all registered families to update their private data through the attached link and enter their bank account numbers so that the Zakat House could transfer the value of the aid. Families who do not have accounts in local banks were encouraged to open accounts and then register through the Zakat House website in anticipation of any new precautionary measures that the State may take to limit the spread of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. [1]

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.aliarida.com/articles/1586545929022243600/> (10 April)
 [2] https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ehh3ggvzK/ (27 April)
 [3] <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBG2A6AtpH/> (7 June)

2. The 'Fazaa El-Kuwait' programme, based on public and private donations and implementation through NGOs/charities/volunteer teams, has been set up. It includes cash transfers and in-kind grants. As of 30 May, KWD5,230,110 were distributed via cash assistance to impacted families through rent payments, general cash assistance and distribution of shopping cards: 331,273 food baskets, 495,123 meals and 405,682 hand sanitizers were distributed. [2]

Gov.

Lebanon

1. Lebanon's Parliament ratified an LBP1.2 trillion (USD300 million) aid package for low-income families and vital sectors including agriculture and industry. Half will go to the Emergency National Social Solidarity Programme, providing a monthly cash assistance of LBP400,000 (about USD100) to about 200,000 families for 7 months until December. People with disabilities, victims of landmines and explosions, parents of public-school children in need will be prioritised, as well as non-food voucher households in the NPTP (around 28,000 households). [1].

Gov.

- [1] <https://www.aliazeera.com/aiimpact/lebanon-parliament-endors-es-300m-aid-package-200528190122422.html> (28 May)
 [2] UNICEF Lebanon Personal Communications (3 June)
 [3] <http://www.socialaffairs.gov.lb/MSASubPage.aspx?News=2381> (21 May)

A new social registry has been developed, and the beneficiaries of the new emergency cash transfer are being identified through this registry, currently covering 1 in 3 households in Lebanon. [2]

The information collected for the registry is audited by the Ministry of Interior and Central Inspection, and then the government presidency establishes a mark ranging from 'most in need' to 'least in need' and after that the army will take over the distribution. [3]

Note: The new database will be a mix of the NPTP and the new social registry. Discussions are still ongoing. There had been prior discussions to distribute in-kind transfers, which were replaced by cash transfers. Discussions around the World Bank's upcoming emergency social safety net programme (potentially USD450-600 million), are still ongoing with the government and UN Agencies. The programme initially started as a response to the economic deterioration and financial collapse to support households through NPTP; but became even more urgent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. [2]

Mauritania

1. The Mauritanian president announced the creation of a special fund for social solidarity and combating COVID-19 on 26 March, which includes 7 measures. According to the official news agency, the Mauritanian State contributes to this fund with MRU25 billion (about USD670 million). This fund is open for donations by other local or international actors. This allocation includes a package of MRU5 billion (approx. USD134 million) to support 30,000 households headed by women, the elderly, and people with disabilities—20,000 of which are in Nouakchott—with a monthly financial aid for three months. [1,2] The fund is also aimed at helping artisanal fishers, those carrying out 'small jobs', the most vulnerable households which receive electricity and all inhabitants of cities that receive water from fountains. [3]

Gov.

- [1] <https://arabic.cnn.com/business/article/2020/03/26/mauritania-coronavirus-electricity-water-bills> (26 March)
 [2] <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#MR> (April)
 [3] <https://www.bcm.mr/presentation-1110> (02 April)

Morocco	1. Régime d'Assistance Médicale (RAMED) beneficiary households operating in the informal sector and with no income because of the COVID-19 Fund, determined as follows: • MAD800—approx. USD80, for households with 2 people or less; • MAD1000—approx. USD100, for households with 3 to 4 people; • MAD1200—approx. USD120, for households with more than 4 people. [1] This first phase targeted people who already had a valid card. In a second phase, starting on 23 April, informal workers without a valid RAMED card were able to register for the government's benefit. All benefits lasted 3 months [2,3,4]	Gov.	[1] https://www.medias24.com/voici-les-mesures-urgentes-de-soutien-aux-travailleurs-et-menages-de-l-informel-8921.html (27 March) [2] https://www.finances.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?-fiche=4996 (27 March) [3] https://www.finances.gov.ma/fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?-fiche=5027 (21 April) [4] https://twitter.com/IPC_IJ/status/1255927425214689280 (30 April)
	oPt		
	1. In April, the Ministry of Social Development included 10,000 new families who were on the waiting list in the Cash Transfer Programme (CTP). After this procedure, the number of households covered by the programme reached 114,658. The benefit amount ranges from ILS750 to ILS1,800 per household and is paid every three months. The first payment in 2020 started in April and already included the new beneficiaries, who received a message confirming the receipt. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.watania.net/news/152488 (14 April) [2] http://qudsnet.com/post/484905 (20 April) [3] https://qudsnet.com/post/485619 (29 April) [4] http://www.alquds.com/articles/1589624732855676300/ (16 May) [5] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000116920/download/?ga=2.148451703.1553168201.1593019233-15280377.1585587622 (May)
	2. The Ministry of Social Development announced an urgent financial aid of ILS500 (one-off) for families affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The benefit targets everyone who has lost their job and has no source of income, or who has an income of less than ILS1,400. Potential beneficiaries registered their information in a new form provided by the Ministry, which feeds into a database, and has been distributed to social development offices and their directorates, in addition to the municipalities and the Workers' Union. A total of 9,504 low-income households were considered eligible. The total cost of the intervention was ILS4,752 million, provided by the Ezz Waqf Fund. [2,3]	Gov.	
	3. On 16 May, the Ministry of Labour started the distribution of cash assistance to 40,000 workers affected by the COVID-19 crisis. A total of 276,000 workers in the West Bank and Gaza registered through a digital platform launched by the Ministry. A technical committee was created to verify the eligibility conditions. The benefit targets: workers in the local market; workers affected by COVID-19 (mainly daily wagers); workers in the most affected areas; workers who are less than 65 years old; married couples with more than 2 children; workers in Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugee camps. The sectors benefiting from the aid are distributed as follows: construction, tourism, services, transportation, kindergarten, the trade sector (workers who work at merchants), industry and crafts, agricultural workers, quarries, spinning, weaving, and health. Groups excluded from the programme: workers inside the Israeli settlements and Israeli industrial areas; workers who are more than 65 years old; people receiving benefits of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Economy; public employees. The Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Social Development crossed their databases to identify the beneficiaries. The Waqfa Fund finances this intervention, in coordination with the General Union of Transportations Workers Syndicates. [4]	Gov.	
	4. WFP is preparing to inaugurate a Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) pilot programme in the Gaza Strip. With support from DG ECHO, WFP will provide direct cash to 1,114 new households to cover their essential needs such as food, shelter, health care and education. The selection of households who live below the deep poverty line gives priority to households with a high ratio of dependents, those headed by women, those suffering from chronic illness and those with disabilities and elderly people. [5]	UN	
Sudan	1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has proposed an SDG6 billion (USD110 million) programme to support 30 per cent of the population for one month, through cash and in-kind transfers. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/language/index.htm#SD (April 13) [2] UNICEF Sudan Personal Communication (June 4)
	As of 8 June, a geographical targeting approach was used for the cash and food transfers in Khartoum. The city was divided in 3 groups: A (ineligible areas), B (areas with access to shops, which will receive cash), and C (areas in which people will receive food baskets). Food transfers were distributed and prepaid cards are being distributed in preparation for the cash transfers. [2]		

2.2. In-kind transfers

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. In-kind distribution campaign of food and hygiene items to the most vulnerable families, including those living in isolated areas and impacted by the lockdown. This distribution is being carried out, for the most vulnerable regions, through a 'solidarity caravan'. [1]	Gov.	[1] http://www.aps.dz/algerie/103607-covid-19-une-caravane-de-solidarite-au-profit-des-categories-demunies-envoyer-depuis-alger (1 April)
Djibouti	1. The Government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity, decided to provide food aid through a voucher system to vulnerable families who were already part of the social registry (FDJ10,000—USD56.5—per month per family during 3 months). This assistance has been extended to daily wage workers who can no longer work because of containment measures. A total of nearly 64,000 poor households were targeted (the number of daily worker households reached is not yet available). [1,2,3] 2. WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Solidarity (MASS), in response to the pandemic, has started a new phase of distribution of vouchers to vulnerable populations affected by the November 2019 floods, for a value of FDJ10,000 per household to 4,500 households in Djibouti City. WFP and MASS staff finalised the voucher distribution on 1 April. These households received their vouchers to be redeemed at retailer sites to receive food in the various neighbourhoods of Djibouti city. In addition, UNHCR, ONARS and MASS agreed to include refugees in the cash assistance programme. [3,4]	Gov.	[1] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Djibouti%20COVID19%20Sitrep%203.pdf (9 April) [2] http://www.alqarn.dj/site/more/10090 (2 April) [3] UNICEF Djibouti Personal Communication (29 April) [4] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Djibouti%20COVID19%20Sitrep%203.pdf (9 April)
Egypt	1. On 2 May, the Egyptian NGO, Masr ElKhaire, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, announced the launch of the Ramadan food basket campaign with an initial phase of distributing 65,000 food baskets, each basket being enough for a family of 5 for 6 days. [1]. A second convoy of food aid is being sent to 18 governorates of Lower Egypt, the Delta, and coastal cities; it targets the delivery of over 2 million meals, scheduled to distribute 125,000 food baskets along with some medical protection tools. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2WDTxVWP (2 May) [2] https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4747908 (8 May)
Iraq	1. Food assistance and nutrition support for 652,661 individuals including refugees and IDPs in the form of in-kind and cash transfers by WFP. The combination of both modalities came in response to current disruption to local bank and financial service providers. [1] 2. On 7 April, the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched a new solidarity initiative campaign called "1 Million Food Basket". The campaign aims to distribute food baskets to people in need who were affected by the lockdown/preventive measures and economic downturn, including those included in the national social safety net (cash transfer) programme. [2] 3. The NGO department in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers provided 135 local organisations with financial, food and medical assistance and sterilisation materials. A total of 118,741 beneficiaries were supported as of 2 April (data are still arriving through the electronic platform that was prepared for this purpose). [3] On 26 April, there were 1,891,976 beneficiaries (different non-standardised, in-kind grants) through NGOs in Iraq. The Council of Ministers refers to these efforts as the "National Campaign of NGOs and Volunteering Groups to Respond to COVID-19 Impact". [4]	UN Gov. Gov.	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/iraq http://www.cabinet.iq/ArticleShow.aspx (TBC) [2] https://bit.ly/2Zja4Z (7 April) [3] http://molisa.gov.iq/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=9476 [4] http://www.ngoao.gov.iq/uploads/DOC/5th.pdf (21 April)

Iran	1. Procurement of hygiene kits for vulnerable children, including those without caregivers, children with disabilities and street children (Iranian and non-Iranian): Procurement is in progress and the requested quantities will be delivered to the Ministry of Cooperative, Labour and Social Welfare to distribute between SWO and NGOs. The hygiene kits will address the needs of 51,000 children living with disabilities in 906 Rehabilitation Centres and 10,000 children without caregivers in 650 Nurseries and Child Care Centres throughout the country, and also the large number of street children scattered in the capital, whose identity and numbers are not fully known. [1]	Gov.	UNICEF Iran Personal Communication (11 April)
Jordan	1. NAF beneficiary households received bread for free (one time) as well as water, gas and basic medicines. [1,2] 2. The Social Security Corporation (SSC) will provide in-kind support (food parcels or food vouchers) to about 100,000 (other reports indicate 35,000-50,000) vulnerable families with individuals over the age of 70 and casual workers. Food parcels have a monetary value of JOD40 to JOD50. The programme may be extended to persons with chronic illnesses. SSC might also expand the list to include families whose breadwinners have lost their work, especially those working in the informal sector, in case the government decided to extend the suspension. The programme is financed through utilising 50 per cent of maternity insurance revenues. [3] Applicants can registry through an online platform, and beneficiaries are selected according to the criteria and data of the unified national registry at the National Aid Fund. As of 16 April the SCC, in cooperation with the Jordanian Armed Forces and the Jordan Red Crescent Society, distributed over 25,000 food vouchers. [4] 3. 80,000 families received cash and in-kind assistance provided by Zakat Fund with a total value of approximately JOD2 million. [5]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://www.albawaba.com/news/jordan-begins-food-delivery-residents-covid-19-lockdown-1346611 (24 March) [2] http://alrai.com/article/10529901 (24 March) [3] https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/govt-working-ensure-smooth-flow-bread-delivery-%E2%80%94masri (24 March) [4] https://bit.ly/3ac7zMc (29 March) [5] https://bit.ly/2z8ttDZ
KSA	1. The 'Ramadan Iftar' initiative (Ramadan meals) is a national initiative funded by the social fund of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development and directed at those affected by the pandemic during the holy month of Ramadan. Benefits consist of hot or dry meals or food baskets, according to each category of beneficiaries, and the conditions of the curfew in each region. The Ministry invited all private sector companies, businessmen, businesswomen, and citizens to contribute to the community fund to support these societal humanitarian initiatives. [1] 2. The Community Fund of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development has also distributed food baskets under the name "Our Food is One", which aims to help all affected families of citizens and others in all regions and governorates of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia who were affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, and alleviate this crisis by distributing food baskets to them (more than 142,000 food baskets were distributed to families in need, benefitting both citizens and residents alike). Through this initiative, the Community Fund seeks to help the most vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic—poor people, people with disabilities, widows, divorced women, prisoners' families and the elderly, ensuring their stability, providing them with a decent living, and supporting and assisting them in overcoming this crisis. [2]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://mlsd.gov.sa/ar/node/549894 (22 April) [2] https://mlsd.gov.sa/ar/node/517614 (12 April)

Kuwait	1. As of 27 April, the Ministry of Social Affairs reported the following in-kind interventions: 307,605 food baskets benefiting 276,741 families and affected workers in Ministry of Health quarantine; 393,858 sanitisers; 254,576 warm meals for hospitals, government entities and quarantine locations. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.instagram.com/p/B_ehh3qgvzK/ (27 April) [2] https://www.alanba.com.kw/newspaper/sharevideo.aspx?vid=87619 (30 March) [3] shorturl.at/qqtEE (15 March)
	2. Three-months' worth of support/meals for people living in nursing homes and who need social care. Workers in these nursing homes also receive food support. [3]	Gov.	
	3. General Authority for Disability Affairs—The 'Friends of PwD' team distributed 1,200 food baskets to persons with full disabilities. [2]	Gov.	
Libya	1. Food assistance and nutrition support for 90,000 people, including IDPs and migrants, by WFP. Boxes of date bars are being delivered by the Ministry of Education to replace school feeding. [1,2]	UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/libya [2] https://cdn.wfp.org/2020/school-feeding-map/index.html
Mauritania	1. The army will deliver food for around 20,000 families in Nouakchott, which is in lockdown, using 150 vehicles over a period of 5 days. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://senalioune.com/nouakchott-larmee-deployee-pour-la-distribution-de-laide-alimentaire-dans-la-lutte-contre-le-coronavirus/ (10 April)
	2. The Ministry of Public Service has given out food as well as sanitary products (disinfectants) to trade unions so that they can distribute them to their members in need. [2]	Gov.	[2] http://www.fonctionpublique.gov.mr/?Distribution-de-produits (10 April)
	3. The Nouakchott Regional Council announced a campaign to distribute aid to poor people in the nine provinces of the capital, in addition to the workers of the lower-income council. This includes the distribution of food baskets, comprising rice, sugar, dairy products, oils, and dates, to the lower-income workers of the council. [3]	Gov.	[3] https://alakhbar.info/?q=node/25222 (10 May)
	4. The Mauritanian Ministry of Fishing and Maritime Economy distributed 10 tons of fish to the families most in need in the inland states (far from the coast) that were affected by the measures to combat COVID-19, and in preparation for Ramadan. [4]	Gov.	[4] https://al-ain.com/article/ramadan-mauritania-gouvernement-mechants-prices (26 April)
Morocco	1. Moroccan government institutions, with the support of UNFPA, have delivered "Salama kits" containing hygiene products and COVID-19 prevention assistance to different people that can be vulnerable [1]; pregnant women and those who assist with childbirth, people with disabilities [2], people in prisons [3], teachers and those involved with education at distance, and [4] female victims of violence. [5]	Gov.	[1] https://morocco.un.org/fr/39719-donner-la-priorite-aux-populations-vulnerables-face-covid-19 (01 April) [2] https://morocco.un.org/fr/40831-les-populations-agees-et-en-situation-de-handicap-face-covid-19 (10 April) [3] https://morocco.un.org/fr/43227-la-dgpr-et-unfpa-donnent-le-coup-denvoi-la-phase-iii-de-loperation-salama-au-maroc (24 April) [4] https://morocco.un.org/fr/43618-covid-19-le-departement-de-leducation-nationale-et-lunfpa-lancent-conjointement-la-phase-iv (29 April) [5] https://morocco.un.org/fr/44306-protoger-les-femmes-survivantes-lavolence-des-risques-du-covid-19 (05 May)
Oman	1. "Salat Al Khair" initiative: The Public Authority for Consumer Protection has launched a food basket composed of 19 essential food items, sold at a subsidised fixed cost of approx. OMR9 (approx. USD23). The food baskets were delivered during Ramadan to vulnerable families. The initiative was financed through private donations and subsidies provided by shopping centres. [1,2]	Gov.	[1] https://twitter.com/pacp_oman/status/1248131810082664448/photo/1 (9 April) [2] https://www.omandaily.om/?p=779975 (5 April)

oPt	1. MoSD initiatives: - Expansion of the National Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) to cover additional 70,087 beneficiaries to meet their food needs for three months—e-voucher; MoSD will also distribute hygiene items; - Top-up of hygiene materials in the West Bank and Gaza; - Food aid to 522 families of divorced or abandoned women (or whose cases are still in court over alimony)—female headed households; - Hygiene kits to the elderly and people with disabilities in the West Bank and Gaza. - Food and hygiene items for the residents and workers of 47 residential centres that are still operating in the crisis in the West Bank and Gaza. [1]	Gov.	[1] UNICEF SOP Personal Communication (12 April) [2] https://www.facebook.com/basr1960/posts/3797316227008347 (27 April) [4] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000116920/download/?ga=2.148451703.1553168201.1593019233-15280377.1585587622 (May) [5] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20Q4%20Palestine%20Country%20Brief%20.pdf (April)
	2. UNICEF initiatives: - Provided the MoSD with hygiene materials to 14 residential centres for children. UNICEF will explore options to expand this intervention to cover the rest of the residential centres (26 in the West Bank and 7 in Gaza); - Provision of hygiene kits for the 250 children with disabilities who have been released from their care centres in the West Bank; - Mechanism in Gaza with the WFP to distribute hygiene kits to beneficiaries of e-vouchers, exploring the possibility of expanding to include the West Bank beneficiaries; - Provision of hygiene kits to the Quarantine Centres in the Gaza Strip and support where water is needed. [1]	UN	
	3. MoSD initiatives: - MoSD, in cooperation with international and local partners, distributed e-vouchers for approximately 70,000 registered households. - MoSD, in cooperation with international and local partners, distributed food parcels to more than 150,000 vulnerable registered households; - MoSD, in cooperation with international and local partners, provided 46 residential centres for persons with disabilities, children and the elderly with necessary food and hygiene supplies.[1]	Gov.	
	4. In May, 314,173 poor, food-insecure people received Cash Based Transfers (CBT) in the form of electronic food vouchers: 223,762 in Gaza and 90,411 in the West Bank. This included around 40,000 of the newly-targeted people who redeemed their vouchers in May. WFP distributed electronic vouchers to 67,600 newly-registered beneficiaries who have been affected by COVID-19. As of May, 40,000 were able to redeem their vouchers. Almost all of the targeted affected people (99 per cent) live in the West Bank, where the closures and movement restrictions have been more impactful on the labour force. Women head nearly half of the targeted households in the West Bank; 12 per cent are older adults and 9 per cent are persons with disabilities. WFP provided an extra monthly cash top-up (USD5) per capita to 165,000 people who are regularly assisted through its CBT assistance in Gaza and the West Bank. This aims at alleviating the impact of COVID-19 on people's already fragile livelihoods, helping them offset some of their scarce resources to spend on other essentials, such as health care and hygiene. [4]	UN	
	5. UNRWA will also provide food to 10,445 refugee households in the West Bank for three months. [5]	UN	

Sudan	1. Two million people will continue to receive WFP food assistance and nutrition support, including nutrition supplements for children under 5 years old in forms of in-kind and cash-based transfers. [1]	UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/sudan [2] UNICEF Sudan Personal Communications (12 April) [3] UNICEF Sudan Personal Communication (4 June)
	2. Through the Ministry of Finance, in-kind support is provided to public sector employees through the ministry's poverty reduction unit. [2]	Gov.	
	3. The President of the Zakat Chamber indicated, on 28 April, that the headquarters of the Zakat Chamber allocated SDG 2 billion and SDG 666 million to distribute food baskets, debt relief for individuals and Ramadan meals as well as Eid/Holiday treats for low-income families [4]. A total of 57,428 beneficiaries were reached, targeting poor and in-need populations, especially 'tea women' and workers relying on transporting goods with wheelbarrows. [3]	Gov.	
Syria	1. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs announced that it will provide food and health baskets, as well as cash support to the most vulnerable, including elderly people and persons with disabilities. An online platform has been set up for registration. Moreover, the Ministry uses the data from the targeted programmes implemented by the Ministry as well as from the disability card programme. As of 29 April, 305,695 people had registered in the government's online assistance database. The government is currently analysing the data. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.sana.sy/?p=1143163 (29 April) [2] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/syria [3] https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/8061/file/MENA%20SitRep_COVID%2019%20#1_31%20March%202020.pdf (31 March) [4] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID-19%20Update%20No.3_Syria_25Mar2020_FINAL.pdf (25 March) [5] UNICEF Syria Personal Communication (12 April)
	Volunteer teams from various governorates in coordination with neighbourhood committees and administrative units and with the ministries of Social Affairs, Labour, Local Administration, Environment and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent are working to help distribute food baskets, with the participation of several NGOs. They have distributed 80,000 food and health baskets so far in Damascus, its countryside, Tartus and Latakia. [2]		
	The Government further indicated that so far, in coordination with civil society actors, it has provided 700,000 families with food assistance and 300,000 families with hygiene kits. [1]	UN	
Yemen	2. The Government has increased access approvals to humanitarian actors for food and in-kind distribution. Four million people inside Syria will continue to receive WFP food assistance and nutrition support through in-kind and CBT. [2,3,4] UNICEF is working with WFP to jointly provide e-vouchers for hygiene items for children in accelerated learning programmes in the form of a UNICEF-funded top-up to the on-going WFP voucher for the food programme. This joint response was expected to be launched by mid-May, targeting around 45,000 children in Curriculum B programmes in eight governorates of Aleppo, Damascus, Hassakeh, Hama, Homs, Latakia, Rural Damascus and Tartous. [5]	UN	
	3. UNICEF will provide hygiene baskets (one-time distribution) for families with children who have severe disabilities in urban and rural areas who currently do not receive any cash assistance from UNICEF, with an initial target of 13,200 families. [5]	UN	
	1. Twelve million people will continue to receive WFP food assistance and nutrition support in the form of in-kind and cash transfers. [1]	UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/yemen [2] UNICEF Yemen Personal Communication
	2. UNICEF: Cash Plus and IMSEA case managers continue to provide awareness messaging on COVID-19 along with hygiene materials reaching over 50,000 individuals from the poorest and most marginalised groups. [2]	UN	

2.3. Other mechanisms to support household income—price subsidies, housing, loans, etc.

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Bahrain	1. The government announced that it will pay individuals' and businesses' electricity and water authority utility bills for three months, starting in April 2020 (up to the costs incurred during the same period in 2019). [1] 2. The Bahrain Central Bank issued a directive to commercial banks directives calling all banks and financial institutions to probe rescheduling loans and postponing loan instalments. Banks have also been requested to offer a six-month deferral of repayments without interest or penalty, and to refrain from blocking customers' accounts if a customer has lost his/her employment. [2]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://www.moh.gov.bh/COVID19/Details/2969 (17 March) [2] https://www.cbb.gov.bh/media-center/central-bank-of-bahrain-requirement-measures-as-part-of-precautionary-efforts-to-contain-covid-19/ (18 March)
Djibouti	1. The population has benefited from a deferral of deadlines for payment of utilities (water, electricity and internet) until the end of the containment period. [1] 2. WFP and MASS staff finalised the voucher distribution on 1 April, providing the vouchers door-to-door to 4,500 beneficiaries to prevent any risk of COVID-19 contagion. [2]	Gov. UN	[1] UNICEF Djibouti Personal Communication [2] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Djibouti%20COVID19%20Sitrep%203.pdf (9 April)
Egypt	1. Four billion EGP to finance labour tax: the government announced an aid package, increasing the tax exemption limit up to EGP15,000 from EGP8,000 (equivalent to USD952 from USD508), as well as reducing the tax brackets for low- and middle-income groups. It also aims at setting the total annual income exemption cap at EGP22,000 (USD1,396). It has also announced a new debt relief initiative for individuals at risk of default, to waive marginal interest on debt under EGP1 million (USD63,469) if customers make a 50 per cent payment. [1,2] 2. The Central Bank directed banks to provide preferential loan rates for low-income and middle-class families (reduction from 10 per cent to 8 per cent). The reduction is also valid to SMEs, and the industry and tourism sectors. [3] 3. The Central Bank directed to set the percentage of personal consumer loans at a maximum of 50 per cent instead of the previous 35 per cent of the total monthly income, including mortgage loans for personal housing. [4] 4. The Ministry of Local Development indicated that it decided to delay the collection of loan instalments for all small projects that benefitted from loans through the National Local Development Fund, in addition to a 6-month delay for those who benefitted from the "Your Project" national programme, which also targets small-scale, self-employed persons. [5]	Gov. Gov. Gov. Gov.	[1] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2laAE6Jw38WwgaNSfoguhtv29qYUaon/view (4 April) [2] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/language/index.htm#EG (1 May) [3] https://www.cbe.org.eg/ar/BankingSupervision/Pages/Circulars.aspx [4] UNICEF Egypt Personal Communication (9 April) [5] encurtador.com.br/EMOQ8 (5 May) [6] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/egypt

Iran	1. Credit purchase plans are provided to 4 million low-income households without fixed income. Injured workers, such as construction workers, seasonal workers, day labourers, peddlers, taxi drivers and restaurant workers (identified by the MCLSW and its 52 Welfare databases) will be paid a sum of 1.5 to 2 million Tomans without the need for a guarantor. Out of the 12 per cent loan interest rate, the Programme and Budget Organization pays 8 per cent. The repayment of the credit is to be made within 24 months. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://baztab.ir/697439/ [2] https://bit.ly/2XS0kGR [3] https://bit.ly/3bivxxZz (27 April) [4] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#IR (April)
	2. Interest-free loans of 1,000,000 Tomans will also be provided to 23 million households which register with the Subsidies Organisation [2]. Applicants can register by sending an SMS to the Targeted Subsidies Organization. [3]	Gov.	
	3. Launch of a system for 3,300,000 pensioners and retired people under social security organisation to buy up to 2,000,000 Toman from all shops and its reimbursement during 2 years at zero interest rates. [4]	Gov.	
Iraq	1. The Municipality of Baghdad and municipal departments in the provinces are directed to suspend the collection of levies and other financial dues from residents to ease the financial burden caused by the coronavirus. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://gds.gov.iq/iraqs-crisis-cell-extends-curfew-announces-additional-measures-to-contain-covid-19/ (22 March) [2] https://baghdadtoday.news/ar/news/115632/ (4 April)
	2. Some additional measures were announced in early April, such as the exemption of monthly loans payments for specific groups, including farmers. [2]	Gov.	
	3. Waiver from electricity bills for Iraqi citizens. [2]	Gov.	
Jordan	1. The Central bank offered a three-month grace period for fees on bounced checks, and a grace period on private loans until the end of 2020. [1]; 3] Banks have decided to continue to postpone the instalments of individual (retail) financing for the month of May 2020, without any additional fees or commissions for deferral. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/34JWQYc (16 March) [2] https://bit.ly/36bug2u (14 May) [3] https://bit.ly/2Saaq1N (9 April)
	2. The government has set limits on commodity prices for fruits, vegetables and other basic food supplies. [4]	Gov.	[4] https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/govt-sets-commodity-price-limits-protect-citizens (19 March)
KSA	1. Postponement of taxes and government dues (for locals and residents) [1]. New special provisions will allow the delay of rent requests by 3 months. This can be demanded from 20 March to 20 September. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.spa.gov.sa/viewfullstory.php?lang=en&news-id=2049654 (20 March) [2] World Bank's Living Paper Living Paper (April 3 2020).
	2. Social security beneficiaries who are orphans or people with disabilities, among others, are exempted from paying housing development benefits for three months. [3]	Gov.	[3] https://mlsd.gov.sa/ar/node/514848 (11 April) [4] https://www.khaleejtimes.com/coronavirus-pandemic/20200422/coronavirus-uae-announces-483-new-cases-103-recoveries- (23 April)
	3. Saudi Arabia's Monetary Authority has instructed the Kingdom's banks to delay, by three months, the payment of instalments due on all financing facilities extended to Saudi employees, without additional fees. [4]	Gov.	
Kuwait	1. The Central Bank of Kuwait has decreed that banks reduce the interest rates of loans and postpone their payment for the next six months without interest for SMEs and individuals. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#KW (April)

Lebanon	1. On 24 March, the Lebanese PM directed the government to extend grace periods and delay the collection of taxes, as well as water, electricity and telephone service bills until the end of the emergency/lockdown period. [1] 2. The cabinet approved an urgent draft law to waive taxes for six months. The ministry of finance announced the extension of all deadlines related to payment of taxes and fees. [2] 3. The Minister of Economy announced the food basket that will be supported in cooperation with the Central Bank, and the mechanism that will be implemented, which will lead to a decrease in the prices of basic food commodities for the Lebanese citizens and to maintain food security. It will include sugar, rice, materials for making vegetable oils, grains, sesame, yeast, milk for individual consumption, canned food, livestock, fodder, veterinary medicines and vaccines, dairy and cheese industries, fertilizers, seeds and seedlings. The mechanism controls the price from origin to consumer. The Central Bank of Lebanon distributed two circulars addressed to banks and financial institutions regarding a mechanism to support the financing of imported food and raw materials. [3]	Gov. Gov. Gov.	[1] https://www.alminasapress.com/news/177968 (March 24) [2] http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/economics/2020/03/23/coronavirus-bank-of-lebanon-approves-special-loans-b49da77d-4131-468d-b5d3-5268aad320bd.html (23 March) [3] https://bit.ly/3dsLbAJ (28 May)
Libya	1. The Ministry of Economy adopted a regulation controlling the price of 16 food items such as fruits, vegetables and meat, to be revised every three months. [1]	Gov.	[1] shorturl.at/hAF48 (23 April)
Mauritania	1. The Mauritanian President announced the creation of a special fund for social solidarity and combat against COVID-19, which includes seven measures. According to the official news agency, the Mauritanian State contributes to this fund with MRU25 billion (around USD670 million) and is directed at covering many taxes, such as: custom taxes and fees on wheat, oils, powdered milk, vegetables and fruits for the remainder of the year. [1] 2. Water and electricity bills for poor families for 2 months have been paid. [1] 3. The Government covered the costs of village water for the rest of the year for citizens of all villages. [1] 4. All municipal taxes on behalf of freelancers and small activities have been dismissed. [1] 5. All the taxes and royalties for the rest of the year for the heads of families working in the traditional fishing sector in relation to their activities will not have to be paid. [1] 6. In a step to stop the rise in commodity prices during the month of Ramadan and to face the repercussions of the precautionary measures for COVID-19, the Mauritanian Ministry of Trade agreed with merchants to determine and reduce prices of basic consumer items during the holy month. [2]	Gov. Gov. Gov. Gov. Gov. Gov.	[1] https://cnn.it/34Japat [2] https://al-ain.com/article/ramadan-mauritania-government-measures-prices (26 April)
Morocco	1. Formal workers in the CNSS faced with unemployment will also be able to delay their bank payments by three months, which can be renewed once if justified properly. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.finances.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?-fiche=5004 (4 April)
oPt	1. The government announced, through the Palestine Monetary Authority, and in agreement with banks operating in Palestine, that the loan repayment would be postponed for four months without any additional interest. [1]	Gov.	[1] UNICEF SOP Personal Communication (April 12)
Oman	1. The National Fuel Support Card shall be given to the low-wage Omani workforce in the private sector temporarily until the end of the impacts of the current closures. [1] Only nationals will receive this benefit. [2] 2. For Omani private-institutions and companies, including SMEs, the postponement of the repayment of bank loans and various financing loans, without interest, has been put in place, as well as postponing the payment of water and electricity bills until the end of June (3 months) to be paid later. [1]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://twitter.com/Oman_GC/status/1250517196075339777/photo/1 (15 April) [2] https://www.clydeco.com/insight/article/covid-19-middle-east-employment-an-update-on-new-government-initiatives (28 June)

Qatar	1. The government has announced that it will exempt food and medical goods from customs duties for six months (provided that this is reflected in the selling price). Price and profits for sanitisers and antiseptics have been set. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/3etR3dL (15 March)
Sudan	1. The Ministry of Industry and Trade launched a campaign called "My Commodity" to provide 11 basic commodities with prices 30-40 per cent below the market prices. The distribution will be made through the National Number and at cooperative societies in neighbourhoods and workplaces. For areas with no cooperative societies, coordination with service committees will take place. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/3afXyxl (16 April)
Syria	1. Citizens have a card to buy subsidised food from supermarkets run by the Trade Foundation. As part of the COVID-19 response, the government is making sure to continue to offer essential foods at prices much lower than the market price. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://www.sana.sy/?p=1141904 (26 April)
UAE	1. Utility bills: - The Dubai Government announced measures including a 10 per cent discount on utility bills and waivers on the down payment for trade license instalments. [1,2] - Abu Dhabi Executive Council is providing a dynamic economic stimulus package to support economic activity, reduce the costs of living, facilitate business in the emirate and protect the UAE's economic stability. The economic stimulus package includes allocating AED5 billion for water and electricity subsidies for citizens. [2,3]. - Economic stimulus package (for individuals affected by COVID-19): the ability to pay water and electricity bills in easy instalments without service charges has been put in place until 30 June. [2,3] 2. Exemption/postponements of fines - Economic stimulus package: exempting individual and commercial real estate registration fees for this year. [2,3] - Economic stimulus package (for individuals affected by COVID-19): postponement of the payment of outstanding instalments and interest on existing loans (personal, cars, real estate financing) and credit cards by granting eligible clients a grace period of up to 3 months until June 30 2020, without calculating any additional fees. [2,3] - Economic stimulus package (for individuals affected by COVID-19): suspending the forfeiture of mortgaged property until 30 June 2020 for defaulted clients. [2,3] - Economic stimulus package (for individuals affected by COVID-19): bank accounts will not be frozen until 30 September for customers who have lost their jobs. [2,3] - Dubai Free Zone Council: cancelling fines. [3,4] - Dubai Free Zone Council: refunding amounts and security deposits. [3,4] 3. Rent: The Dubai Free Zone Council has announced the postponement of rental payments for six months. [3,4]	Gov.	[1] World Bank's Living Paper Living Paper (April 24) [2] https://www.meed.com/gcc-economies-react-to-covid-19 (15 March) [3] https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/justice-safety-and-the-law/handling-the-covid-19-outbreak/economic-support-to-minimise-the-impact-of-covid-19 (19 May) [4] https://www.arabianindustry.com/supply-chain/news/2020/mar/29/dubai-free-zone-council-unveils-new-economic-stimulus-package-6357000/ (29 March)
Yemen	1. The authorities have also reduced prices of gasoline (to YER220/litre in Aden and YER295/litre in Sana'a) and Diesel prices to (to YER240/litre in Aden and YER345/litre in Sana'a). [1]	Gov.	[1] UNICEF Yemen Personal Communication (27 April)

3.1. Special services/interventions to support migrant workers

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Bahrain	1. Social assistance: migrant workers are included in the electricity and water bill suspensions. [1] 2. Access to health care: According to the law, migrant workers have the same access to health care as nationals and can receive free testing. [2] 3. The LMRA announced the termination of monthly work fees and fees for issuing and renewing work permits for a period of three months, starting from 1 April. [3] According to the issued Royal Directives, all citizens and residents in Bahrain might have access to free testing and treatment. [4]	Gov.	[1] https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/wealth/story/Bahrain_announces_113bln_package_to_back_economy-SNG_170358188/ (14 March) [2] https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-allows-private-hospitals-to-do-covid-19-tests-1.71494376 (14 May) [3] http://blog.lmra.bh/en/2020/04/03/lmra-announces-termination-of-monthly-work-fees/ (3 April) [4] https://www.prinewswire.com/ae/news-releases/combatting-the-coronavirus-bahrain-offers-health-amp-economic-success-story-886015040.html (16 April)
Iran	1. Treatment of COVID-19 will be free for non-Iranian citizens, including Afghan immigrants. [1] 2. Extension of foreigners' work permits which have expired. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2wNjySG [2] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#IR (April)
Jordan	1. Children of Jordanian women, married to non-Jordanian men and Gazans who are registered with the passport department can apply for the Bread Subsidy Cash Compensation Programme (see 2.3). [1] 2. Gazans and children of Jordanian women are eligible for the Tadamon programmes. [2] 3. Non-Jordanians are eligible for Musaneed programmes. [3] 4. Registered workers who have decided to go back to their countries will be exempted from residency fines or any other related fees and fines. For expats that travel, any fines incurred relating to expired residency permits or unpaid workers' permits will be exempted, regardless of how they entered the Kingdom or if their current residence in the country is unlawful. [4]	Gov.	[1] https://bit.ly/2XJtqrG (16 March) [2] https://bit.ly/2XWjilMz (19 March) [3] https://bit.ly/2xSdzfO (17 April) [4] https://bit.ly/2ZiL1Yn (27 April)
KSA	1. Access to health care: The MOH announced that will offer free health care to everyone in the country, including workers in an irregular situation. MOH issued awareness guidelines in Filipino, Urdu, English, French, Russian and Portuguese. [1] 2. Workers in an irregular situation: foreign workers are exempt from fines if their residency permit expires by 30 June; residency permits have been extended for three months without charge. [2] 3. Waiving exit and return visas, allowing the return of those who were unable to do so, as well as visa renewal fees. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://www.moh.gov.sa/en/Ministry/MediaCenter/News/Pages/News-2020-03-17-001.aspx (17 March) [2] https://bit.ly/35kzd4B (4 April)

Kuwait	1. Workers in an irregular situation: The government announced an amnesty period between 1-30 April for foreign workers with expired residency permits who wish to return home. [1] The government stated it will extend some visas for migrant workers and/or will not collect fines for visa violations (overstay) during the shutdown. It will also provide free shelter, with free meals and drinks. [2,3] 2. The Ministry of Social Affairs announced the allocation of new electronic website links to provide food assistance for migrant workers in the private sector affected by the measures taken to prevent the outbreak of COVID-19. [4]	Gov.	[1] www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-03/30/c_138931821.htm (30 March) [2] Ministry of Interior Circular no. 288/2020 dated 26 March 2020. [3] https://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/commerce-ministry-says-strategic-reserves-sufficient/ (12 March) [4] https://www.aljarida.com/articles/158860106458743300/ (5 May)
Oman	1. Distribution of 2,000 food baskets containing rice, wheat, oil, sugar and other essential items and that the assistance to Omani and expat families (as of 6 April). [1] 2. Formal foreign workers covered by the Health Insurance scheme will benefit from the expansion of medical care benefits, including free tests and treatments for COVID-19 [2]. Additionally, the treatment of migrants not covered by the insurance programme and without sponsors will be paid by the government. [3]	Gov.	[1] https://omannews.gov.om/Arabic_NewsDescription/ArtMid/437/ArticleID/11215 (6 April) [2] https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/oman/covid-19-patients-in-oman-to-be-covered-by-insurance-1.71803739 (01 June) [3] https://www.thearabianstories.com/2020/06/04/expats-in-oman-need-not-pay-a-single-riyal-for-covid-19-treatment-minister/ (04 June)
Qatar	1. Access to health care: During the crisis, treatment is provided free of charge—the possession of a health card and/or Qatar ID (QID) is not necessary to be tested and/or receive treatment. [1] 2. Paid leave: All workers in isolation or quarantine, or who are receiving treatment, will still be paid their basic salary and receive their allowances irrespective of whether they are entitled to sick leave benefits. [1] 3. Salaries: the government announced a QAR 3 billion loan scheme to pay the salaries of workers and rents of the employers, and mandates that quarantined workers receive their salary in full (including foreign workers). [1] 4. Any residency permits that expire while workers are outside of the country will be renewed automatically. [2] 5. Qatar has set aside over USD800 million to pay the wages of foreign workers who are in quarantine or undergoing treatment for COVID-19. [3]	Gov.	[1] ILO Qatar Personal Communication and https://www.alia-zeera.com/news/2020/04/qatar-pay-workers-quarantine-full-salary-200401110548709.html (1 April) [2] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#QA (May) [3] http://www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/qatar-pay-sick-workers-wages-amid-labour-camp-lock/ (2 April)
Tunisia	1. Migrants will be able to remain in the country without penalties despite the expiration of their visa. Those that are vulnerable will be able to claim financial aid. [1] 2. After registering on a website, migrants (as well as all foreigners) will be able to receive in-kind or cash assistance, through a TND400,000 fund. [2,3]	Gov.	[1] https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/societe-africaine/coronavirus-la-tunisie-prend-des-mesures-en-faveur-des-etrangers-notamment-des-africains-subsahariens_3907013.html (10 April) [2] https://www.webmanagercenter.com/2020/04/24/449030/covid-19-des-aides-aux-profit-des-tunisiens-a-letranger-et-aux-etrangers-residents-tunisie-pour-faire-face-a-la-pandemie/ (24 April) [3] http://kapitalis.com/tunisie/2020/04/28/coronavirus-plateforme-pour-venir-en-aide-aux-etrangers-bloques-en-tunisie (28 April)
UAE	Free COVID-19 tests will be provided for domestic workers and residents over the age of 50 years, among other groups, as well as those who have symptoms associated with the disease or have come into close contact with confirmed cases. [1]	Gov.	[1] https://gulfnews.com/uae/health/free-covid-19-tests-in-the-uae-for-these-categories-1.71456471 (12 May)

3.2. Special services/interventions to support refugees and IDPs

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. Provision of monthly in-kind food assistance and nutrition support for 133,672 Sahrawi refugees. Five months prepositioning of stocks to prepare for supply chain disruptions. Market monitoring to inform programmatic shifts. [1] 2. UNHCR has prepared an emergency cash assistance plan for the delivery of cash assistance to asylum-seekers at specific risk. [2]	UN UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/algeria [2] UNHCR Algeria Personal Communication
Djibouti	1. WFP has distributed two-months' worth of food assistance to 18,500 refugees. [1] 2. Jointly with IOM, UNICEF will provide needed assistance to migrants' children under-18 sheltered together with 250 migrants in a temporary camp near Djibouti city. Immediate assistance will be provided, while also working to speed up the repatriation of those willing to return to their home country (majority to Ethiopia). [2]	UN UN	[1] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/b74773c9b4a34e1383d681a87c-cccfdd6/download/ (6 April) [2] https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/8061/file/MENA%20SitRep_COVID%2019%20#1_31%20March%202020.pdf%20.pdf (31 March)
Egypt	1. Provision of unconditional humanitarian assistance to 150,000 vulnerable refugees (Syrian and non-Syrian). This will involve the transfer of unrestricted cash transfers directly to beneficiaries through financial providers across the country to facilitate access and minimise mobility. [1] April update: In response to growing needs due to COVID-19, WFP extended general food assistance (GFA) to an additional 20,000 vulnerable refugees, in partnership with UNHCR. In collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower, GFA was also provided to 40,512 casual labour workers, adding to a total of about 147,779 refugees, asylum seekers and casual labour workers in April. [3] 2. UNHCR is disbursing its monthly multi-purpose cash assistance for the month of May to 10,595 families and individuals which is supplemented with a special payment of EGP50 for hygiene items. [2]	UN UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/egypt [2] UNCHR Egypt Personal communication [3] https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000115853/download?ga=2.87772187286593808.1592174600-1229507281.1585664672 (April)
Iran	1. Provision of Hygiene items and IEC material for current WFP beneficiaries (31,000 Afghan and Iraqi Refugees). [1]	UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/iran
Iraq	1. Assistance for COVID-19, provided in cash and amounting to IQD240,000 (approximately USD200), will target eligible Syrian refugees, refugees and asylum-seekers of other nationalities, IDPs and returnees throughout Iraq. It will be provided through Eye-Pay (for those who have iris registration) or mobile e-wallets (for those who have no iris registration). A new digital, safer money option will also be available. [1] WFP is also implementing vertical expansions for IDPs and refugees in Iraq. [2] 2. IOM is providing hygiene products and hand sanitisers. [3]	UN UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/iraq [2] Personal communication with WFP. [3] Personal communication with IOM.

Jordan	1. A total of 20,500 of the most vulnerable Palestine refugees residing in Jordan (Jerash camp) that do not hold Jordanian citizenship (targeting within this group the elderly, female-headed households and families with children under the age of five years) will receive a one-time cash assistance of JDS50. [1,5]	UN	(1) UNRWA Personal communication (2) WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/jordan (3) UNHCR Jordan Personal Communication (4) https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/fast-access-to-cash-provides-urgent-relief-to-those-hardest-hit-by-covid-19/ (9 April) (5) https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/unrwa-provide-cash-assistance-palestine-refugees-jerash-camp (27 April)
	2. Cash transfers continue to be provided to 480,000 refugees in refugee camps. Approximately 100,000 additional refugees in communities will be supported. [1]	UN	
	3. A food-restricted voucher is extended to hygiene products so refugees can purchase items as needed. Hand sanitisers have been made available for refugees to use inside contracted supermarkets in the camps. [2]	UN	
	4. UNHCR will provide emergency cash relief to families who are not on the current basic needs cash list, as a short-term intervention due to loss of livelihoods and wider economic opportunities with the country in lockdown. Led by the Basic Needs Sector, co-chaired by UNHCR, a task force was created to coordinate an emergency response to refugee needs. Twenty-eight agencies and organisations have joined the Basic Needs and Food Security COVID Response Task Force. The Task Force has developed a programme and approach that includes a common eligibility and targeting model and a single pool of identified families for the response that all humanitarian partners will draw from. [3]	UN	
	5. The 'Hajati' Cash Transfer programme specifically for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian families was expanded to cover 18,000 additional vulnerable children. A database maintained by UNICEF Jordan with information on 38,000 of the poorest and most-vulnerable households was used to identify households not receiving Hajati but who were in urgent need of financial support. [4]	UN	
Kuwait	1. Following high unemployment trends in various sectors, UNHCR provided 26 refugee and asylum-seeker families (82 people) who are not included in the monthly cash assistance programme with multi-purpose vouchers. Additionally, 11 families received a one-time, three months up-front cash payment in addition to multi-purpose vouchers. [1]	UN	[1] UNHCR Kuwait Personal Communication
Lebanon	1. An initial emergency cash assistance will be made available to Palestine refugee families with children aged 6 years and younger. This will cover an estimated 76,000 persons. [1]	UN	(1) https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2020/May-19/506058-clarification-from-unrwa-on-payment-of-relief-assistance-to-palestine-refugees.aspx (19 May)
	2. Palestine refugees in need of medical assistance are covered through UNRWA's hospitalisation programme and through its primary health care centres that also dispense a range of standard medications free of charge. [2]	UN	(2) UNRWA Personal Communication (March) (3) WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/lebanon (4) https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/8386/file/UNICEF%20MEN-ARO%20COVID-19%20Situation%20Report%20No.%202%20-%201-15%20April%202020.pdf (15 April)
	3. An additional caseload of 1,200 households will be added to existing refugee caseloads (676,000 individuals). E-card distribution was suspended or postponed; alternative modalities of food assistance are currently under discussion. If refugees cannot access ATMs in April, WFP will provide in-kind aid for potentially 40,000 Syrian households in informal settlements. Extended ATM loading extended from 6 to 14 days. Faster redemption in-place by April. Shop loading spread increased from 1 to 4 days. [3]	UN	(5) UNHCR Lebanon Personal Communication
	4. UNICEF, with support of partners, reached 270,000 Syrian refugees living in Informal Settlements and Collective Shelters through a door-to-door handwashing awareness campaign supported by the distribution of soap. [4]	UN	
	5. UNHCR and UNRWA are planning to increase the number of families—currently at 34,500 (approximately 712,500 individuals)—reached through its monthly Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance Programme (MCAP). In addition, the operation is planning to provide temporary cash assistance (April-June) to 11,500 poor refugee families not currently receiving food or multi-purpose cash assistance. [5]	UN	

Beneficiaries eligible to receive UNRWA services In Lebanon should receive LBP112,000 from distribution points; Palestinian refugees received LBP640,000 from the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance and LBP 162,000 per person in food assistance. As of 1 June, 36,783 transactions worth LBP20.7 billion (54 per cent of allocated funds) were processed. [6]

6. IOM provided over 500 vulnerable Syrian Refugee households living across Lebanon with Multi-Purpose Cash assistance and 131 households living in North Lebanon received Cash for Rent assistance in April. [7]

UN

[6] UNRWA Lebanon's COVID-19 outbreak situational report (1 June)
[7] https://migration.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/iom_covid-19_sitrep_2_mena_29_april_2020.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8625 (16-29 April)

Libya	1. UNHCR: As part of its COVID-19 response activities, on 8 April UNHCR, through its local partner, LibAid and in coordination with UNICEF, WFP and IOM, distributed CRIs to 66 displaced refugee families in Tripoli. Assistance included hygiene kits, mattresses, blankets, nappies, solar lamps, clothing and food. Earlier in the week, 90 additional displaced refugee families were provided with similar assistance. The distributions were arranged to avoid large crowds and ensure social distancing, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So far this year, UNHCR has distributed CRIs to over 2,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Libya. [1] 2. IOM provided several non-food items and hygiene kits to migrant and IDP communities. [2] 3. Food assistance and nutrition support for 87,000 people, including IDPs and migrants by the WFP. Phased prioritisation plan in place based on access and need. Upon government request, a 5 per cent increase is expected in response to COVID-19 in different areas across the country. SBCC information materials are added to food baskets for beneficiaries to consider. [1] 4. UNHCR has begun a series of extra emergency distributions in Tripoli, to assist some of the most vulnerable people during Ramadan, and as war and COVID-19 present new threats. The assistance package being distributed includes hygiene kits, purification tablets provided by sister agency, UNICEF, and a food basket (designed for one month). The distribution is the first of a series planned during Ramadan. In the first week, nearly 500 people will be reached with assistance. The aim is to reach up to 4,000 persons during Ramadan. [3]	UN	[1] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Update%20Libya%20%2810%20April%202020%29.pdf (10 April) [2] https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/march_2020_iom_monthly_update.pdf (31 March) [3] https://unsmil.unmissions.org/unhcr-steps-help-during-ramadan-displaced-libyans-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-war-and-coronavirus (3 May)
oPt	1. UNRWA: In Gaza, 4,188 families received their food baskets via the new house-to-house delivery modality for food distribution on 14 April. [1] 2. UNRWA: In Gaza, home delivery of essential medicines to the patients aged over 70 and/or with diabetes reached the homes of 6,668 patients. [1] 3. UNRWA: In West Bank, door to door essential medicines distribution was carried out at Biddu and surrounding villages in cooperation with Local council. [1]	UN	[1] https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa_covid-19_update_15_april_2020_-_english.pdf (15 April)
Sudan	1. IOM supported access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in public places and community spaces most at risk, such as Ethiopian, Nigerian and Somali migrant communities [1] and has so far provided two schools in Khartoum with PPE materials, hygiene kits, and conducted COVID-19 awareness raising sessions to 106 children and youth. [2]	UN	[1] https://migration.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/iom_covid-19_sitrep_1_mena_15_april_2020.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8615 (April) [2] https://sudan.iom.int/sites/default/files/IOM%20Sudan%20COVID-19%20Response%20SITREP%20%23%201%20%20%2823%20March-31%20May%202020%29.pdf (June)

Tunisia

[1] UNHCR's CO Communication

UN

1. Starting from April 2020, UNHCR's cash assistance replaced the distribution of food vouchers for vulnerable refugees hosted in shelters and urban areas. Multipurpose cash for temporary supported cases is expected to be extended until the end of the year, subject to availability of funds. A list of vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers is being prepared: they will receive cash transfers under the rates and modality of the multipurpose cash transfer, as part of the COVID-19 response. [1]

2. UNHCR is working closely with the Tunisian Government, especially with the Ministry of Social Affairs, to promote the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the COVID-19 related social protection measures that the government seeks to enact. In this regard, UNHCR shared a list of 600 individuals with the Ministry of Social Affairs who could benefit from the government assistance programme. [1]

UN

Yemen

UN

1. UNHCR has been distributing hygiene kits to displaced people in areas at risk to help prevent against COVID-19 to 2000 households in the Al-Khawkhah district [1] and to 8,800 people in the Kharaz refugee camp. [2].

2. UNHCR has expanded the targeting criteria for refugees beyond the regular recurrent assistance and is assisting 14,000 refugee and asylum-seeker households who may have lost their livelihoods due to COVID-19 prevention measures, with a one-off cash assistance at a transfer value of USD170. The almost 2,100 refugee and asylum-seeker families benefiting from regular cash assistance received a 3-month advance in April, to allow them to comply with prevention measures and recommendations to stay at home. [3]

3. Funding permitting, an additional 3-month assistance will be provided to the 21,000 refugee households who may have lost their livelihoods. To complement the ongoing large-scale IDP cash assistance, UNHCR is also planning to support an additional 45,000 vulnerable IDP households living in sites at high-risk of infectious diseases and in overcrowded urban centres. An integrated program of cash for burials and PSS is under funding review, targeting 5,000 refugee and IDP households. [3]

UN

4. Integrated social protection activities aim to target the most vulnerable - including IDPs - with cash assistance and case management to facilitate referral to services including health care, nutrition, and protection (including psychosocial support) as per the needs identified. This will take into consideration any COVID-19 impacts, including movement restrictions and service slowdown. [4]

UN

5. After the announcement of the first positive COVID-19 case, IOM scaled up its COVID-19 prevention messaging during hygiene promotion awareness sessions. Nearly 5,000 hygiene kits were distributed during approximately 2,600 awareness sessions on prevention of cholera, COVID-19, water-borne diseases and safe hygiene practices in Marib, Lahj, Taizz, Abyan and Shabwah governorates (as of April). [5]

UN

- [1] <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/75341> (9 April)
- [2] <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/75172> (3 April)
- [3] UNHCR's CO Communication
- [4] UNICEF Personal Communication (13 May)
- [5] https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/en_iom_yemen_situation_report_april_2020.pdf (April 2020)

4. Implementation measures

4.1. Administrative/operational tweaks to existing social protection interventions in emergency contexts (e.g. payment modalities, use of digital technologies, etc).

Country	Summary	Provider	Source/ Date
Algeria	1. On 22 March, the Algiers Agency of the National Social Insurance Fund (CNAS) announced measures to facilitate online use, relating in particular to applying for sick leave, medical checks and revisions, the use of the 'CHIFA card' and contribution payments, which can all be done online. [1] Retirees and elderly people are able to receive their pension by proxy, allowing another person to cash in the cheque in their place. [2] Employers can pay their dues to the national social insurance fund (CNAS) more easily (through cheque) at any CNAS office, without needing to go to the agency upon which they depend. [3] The post offices will remain open for longer to withdraw wages or pensions allowing people to respect social distancing rules. [5] 2. Medical revisions of disability pensions and pensions for work accidents and occupational diseases are postponed until June. The beneficiaries of these programmes will continue receiving their benefits without the need for a medical revision check-up. [3] 3. The government has also decided to set up committees composed of members of the local community to identify vulnerable households, assist the government in the distribution of their assistance, and act as a focal point for the government to take up the complaints from the communities. [4] 4. To avoid crowding in post offices, beneficiaries can receive the solidarity allowance at any time, without deadlines. It has reached 30,400 beneficiaries as of April 23. [6]	Gov.	[1] https://www.algerie-eco.com/2020/03/23/coronavirus-la-cnas-prend-des-mesures-de-facilitations-pour-ses-usagers/ (23 March) [2] http://www.aps.dz/societe/103266-possibilite-pour-les-retraites-et-pensionnes-agees-de-relever-leurs-pensions-par-procurateur (20 March) [3] https://www.algerie-eco.com/2020/03/23/coronavirus-la-cnas-prend-des-mesures-de-facilitations-pour-ses-usagers/ (23 March) [4] http://www.premier-ministre.gov.dz/ressources/front/files/pdf/com-muniques/com-2020/03/com-29-03-2020-1-fr.pdf (29 March) [5] https://www.algerie1.com/actualite/coronavirus-algerie-poste-prolonge-les-horaires-douverture-de-ses-guichets-jusquau-debut-du-mois-du-ramadhan (20 April) [6] http://www.aps.dz/regions/104344-adrar-plus-de-30-400-beneficiaires-percoivent-des-jeudi-l-allocation-de-solidarite (23 April)
Egypt	1. To facilitate payments, pension payments are spread over different days (depending on the level of the benefit) and schools are being used as payment sites. [1] The Ministry of Social Solidarity has elaborated a schedule for the disbursement of the pensions in order to reduce crowding over the first week of April [2]. The Ministry of Social Solidarity will also cover ATM cash withdrawal fees for pensioners while exempting those with banking cards from these fees. The Ministry has announced that pension cards may be used for essential services. [2,3] 2. For the informal workers' allowance, applicants enlist through a new registry from the Ministry of Manpower's database. [4] 3. All take-home entitlements will be converted into unconditional cash to limit human interaction, starting in October 2020. There has been coordination on HIV-COVID-19 responses to find measures to support PLHIV families facing direct and indirect burden on economic, financial and health activities. [5] 4. Provision of unconditional cash to 138,000 family members of community school students and teachers. All take-home entitlements will be converted into unconditional cash to limit human interaction, beginning with the new semester in October 2020. There has been coordination on the HIV COVID-19 response to find measures to support PLHIV families facing a direct and indirect burden on economic, financial and health activities. [5]	Gov.	[1] World Bank's Living Paper (April 17) [2] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a2laAE6Jw38VwqaNSfoguhtv29qYUaon/view (4 April) [3] UNICEF Egypt Personal Communication (9 April) [4] https://www.dostor.org/3084736 (10 May) [5] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/egypt
		Gov.	
		UN	
		UN	

Iran	1. To receive the unemployment benefits (see 1.3), applicants are urged to fill out online forms at the newly designed website (bimebikari.mcls.gov.ir) within 30 days, rather than going personally to the ministry's bureaus. [1] The government has also cancelled the monitoring of time and attendance for those subject to unemployment benefits up to 20 May, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. [2]	Gov.	[1] https://financialtribune.com/articles/domestic-economy/102718/iran-allocates-305m-to-support-those-who-have-lost-jobs-amid-6-april [2] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang-en/index.htm#IR (20 May)
Iraq	1. UNHCR: Ongoing distribution of assistance and provision of services through new modalities, which have been established to ensure continued distribution. This includes door-to-door and tent-to-tent distribution to avoid mass gatherings. Registration activities continue to be implemented remotely and through limiting the number of individuals in the registration centres that are still open. Legal assistance and counselling are continuously provided through telephone lines. [1]	UN	[1] https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unhcr-iraq-covid-19-operational-response-7-apr-2020 (7 April)
Jordan	1. A temporary remote assistance mechanism was introduced to ensure that households can access food assistance and nutrition support until their e-cards are issued and delivered after the end of curfew. [1] 2. The Social Security Corporation has created an online platform to apply for food vouchers or parcels. Over half a million people have applied. Beneficiaries are selected according to the criteria and data of the unified national registry at the National Aid Fund. Social Security Corporation employees, in cooperation with the Jordanian Armed Forces and the Jordan Red Crescent Society, have distributed over 25,000 food vouchers. [2] 3. Cash assistance for daily workers will be delivered through digital means. Application for the programme started on 16 April through the pre-existing 'bread support cash assistance' website. The programme will support 200,000 households whose members are no longer able to work due to the health crisis. [3, 4] 4. UNICEF Jordan has leveraged existing systems to transfer funds. Under a partnership with 26 humanitarian organisations (Common Cash Facility), households registered with the UNHCR can quickly and safely access Hajati cash using an iris scan. Furthermore, by coordinating with other cash providers, payment dates are staggered to avoid overcrowding and to reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 at ATMs. [5]	UN Gov. UN UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/jordan [2] https://bit.ly/2KvtZa (8 April) [3] https://bit.ly/2yq6SBw (17 April) [4] https://bit.ly/2XMJfyQ [5] https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/fast-access-to-cash-provides-urgent-relief-to-those-hardest-hit-by-covid-19/ (9 April)
KSA	1. The MOH developed a mobile application (Sehhaty), through which the workers need to register and apply for the sick leave. [1] 2. For April, no beneficiary will be removed from the list of beneficiaries of the social security pension for vulnerable groups for failure to fulfil the conditions and eligibility criteria. The list was reverted to the one for the previous month. [2]	Gov. Gov.	[1] https://covid19awareness.sa/en/apps-for-your-health-2 (31 March) [2] https://mlsd.gov.sa/ar/node/479964
Kuwait	1. The Public Authority for Manpower adopted a mechanism to receive requests for registration of unemployment insurance through WhatsApp during the partial lockdown. [1]	Gov.	[1] http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/pam-adopts-mechanism-to-receive-requests-during-partial-lockdown/ (2 April)
Libya	1. Upon government request, 18,379 children who used to benefit from a school feeding programme will receive their school snacks via home delivery. [1]	UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/libya

Morocco	1. For RAMED assistance (see 2.1), households will need to register through SMS. They will receive all information indicating the location and time to receive the benefit to avoid crowding. [1] A website for informal workers outside RAMED cards has been set up for registration. [2] For formal workers who are totally or partially unemployed, the benefit will be received through bank transfers or by mail, limiting the number of people that need to leave their homes. [3] 2. A measure allowing members other than the head of the household to receive the cash transfers was also announced for informal workers, in case the head of the household is unable to go or is deceased. [4] 3. Mobile units were launched to reach distant rural places that would face additional difficulties in receiving aid. [5]	Gov.	[1] https://www.medias24.com/voici-les-mesures-urgentes-de-soutien-aux-travailleurs-et-menages-de-l-informel-8921.html (27 March) [2] https://www.finances.gov.ma/fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?fiche=5027 (21 April) [3] https://www.finances.gov.ma/fr/Pages/detail-actualite.aspx?fiche=5004 (4 April) [4] https://www.lesiteinfo.com/maroc/aides-aux-ramedistes-nouvelles-mesures-exceptionnelles/ (11 April) [5] https://www.leconomiste.com/flash-infos/covid19-cam-des-agences-mobiles-pour-la-distribution-des-aides-de-l-etat (10 April) [6] https://morocco.un.org/fr/40831-les-populations-agees-et-en-situation-de-handicap-face-covid-19 (26 April)
oPt	1. UNRWA: In Gaza, food distribution through the usual distribution centres has been suspended, and are to be replaced by door-to-door deliveries of outstanding rations to 70,000 families to avoid contamination at potentially crowded distribution sites. [1]	UN	[1] https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/weekly_programmes_update_released_on_10_april.pdf (10 April)
Sudan	1. A double distribution approach has been established to provide food assistance and nutrition support, spanning two months instead of one to reduce the number of times beneficiaries need to go to the distribution points). [1] 2. Labour requirements lifted on cash-for-work activities. [1] 3. Two million people who continue to receive WFP food assistance and nutrition support have seen it turn from conditional to unconditional. Measures to ensure safe distributions have been taken. [1]	UN UN UN	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/sudan
Syria	1. The frequency of distribution was increased to reduce the total number of beneficiaries at each site at any given time. Capacity allowing, two distribution shifts per day and an increase in the number of food distribution points have been provided. [1] 2. The government has launched an online platform to register the most vulnerable groups and disrupted workers who are affected by the measures taken to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. [2]	UN Gov.	[1] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/syria [2] https://www.sana.sy/en/?p=189807 (12 April)
Tunisia	1. On 19 March, the National Pension and Social Security Fund (CNRPS) decided to advance the payment of retirement pensions issued for the benefit of retired seniors through the Tunisian post, as part of the preventive measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 and to avoid crowding. [1] 2. It has also been determined that employers and independents who have a bank card should pay their dues online. [2] 3. Low-income households are set to receive a TND200 benefit through new mobile payment delivery mechanism via e-wallets [3], launched on 5 May. [4] 4. Due to the suspension of the national school feeding programme (NSFP)—which covers more than 260,000 children—the government is working on the harmonisation of databases to integrate vulnerable families into current social protection support. The goal is to top up the cash transfers made by the MAS, equivalent to the cost of the food basket initially served in schools. [5]	GOV. Gov. Gov. UN	[1] https://www.tap.info.tn/fr/Portail-Soci%C3%A9t%C3%A9/C3%A9t%C3%A9/12462196-la-cnrps-avance-la (19 March) [2] https://www.businessnews.com.tn/la-cnss-annonce-des-mesures-exceptionnelles,520,96553,3 (23 March) [3] https://www.businessnews.com.tn/tunisie-mise-en-place-du-porte-feuille-digital,541,98160,3 (April 23) [4] https://twitter.com/IPC_IL/status/1258851575201779712 (5 May) [5] WFP internal documents and https://www.wfp.org/countries/tunisia

1. To mitigate risks, the following measures are being taken by UNICEF concerning the emergency cash transfer project:
- Strengthened scheduling of beneficiaries at payment sites;
 - Extension of working hours at payment sites until 9pm;
 - Increased opening of payment sites to seven days a week, instead of six;
 - Start outreach (mobile) payments earlier in the cycle, instead of postponing until the second half of the cycle;
 - Strengthened crowd management, including instructions for beneficiaries on social distancing provided by the payment site staff. [1]
2. In response to the curfew, the school feeding programme modality from WFP has been shifted to take-home rations, covering more than 393,000 children. [2]

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[1] UNICEF Yemen Emergency Cash Transfer Project Newsletter, 23 March 2020

[2] UNICEF Yemen Personal Communication (27 April)



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