The COVID-19 pandemic is a global threat that requires urgent action and international cooperation. Sida is contributing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impacts in low- and middle-income countries – by adjusting on-going programmes and issuing new support, both within long-term development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

**SIDA’S SUPPORT TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES RELATED TO COVID-19**

Until 25 June 2020, Sida had allocated **SEK 797 million** (approximately USD 85 million) as COVID-19 specific support to existing and new partners. The humanitarian support amounts to SEK 146.8 million out of the total allocation. Apart from this, a significant part the programmes funded by Sida have been adjusted to address the pandemic, directly or indirectly.

Within the COVID-19 response, Sida commits to its standing as a flexible donor. A substantial share of Sida’s support is channelled as core or programme support, which enables partners to adapt their on-going efforts to respond to the pandemic.

Sida collaborates with a broad range of partners, including national institutions, multilateral organisations, CSOs, private sector and academia, to support partner countries in their response to the pandemic. Development effectiveness, including alignment and donor coordination, is a core pillar in Sida’s support to partner countries. Sida is, for example, engaged in the Joint Team Europe approach for a coherent European response to COVID-19.

The importance of a well-functioning multilateral system has been accentuated during the pandemic – to which Sida is a long-standing and significant donor. Financial support has been channelled through the UN’s three-pronged response to COVID-19: i) the health response; ii) the humanitarian response through UN’s global appeal, and iii) the socio-economic response.

Sida supports several trust funds within the World Bank Group (WBG) which are undergoing reprogramming to respond to COVID-19. This is in addition to the WBG’s initial response for the crisis, supported by Sweden.

Sida’s humanitarian strategic partners (UN organisations, NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement), received SEK 500 million in flexible programmes or country support for 2020. Sida has also contributed SEK 580 million to eighteen Country-Based Pool Funds and SEK 383 million to the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), that can be used for sudden onset or deteriorating humanitarian crises. All three mechanisms can be used for COVID-19 interventions.

To manage the COVID-19 pandemic, research and evidence is needed. There is a particular need to understand and mitigate its consequences in low- and lower middle-income countries. Sida supports global research cooperation to address the pandemic, including transdisciplinary approaches involving health, natural, social and data sciences. Sida also contributes to strengthen local research capacity.

Efforts against corruption are vital during a crisis like the current pandemic. Extraordinary disease outbreaks tend to expose weaknesses in the public sector and thereby create opportunities for corruption. Sida is addressing anti-corruption as an integral part of the COVID-19 response.

**EXAMPLES OF NEW SUPPORT: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

In Syria, the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (SEK 3.8 million)** will provide silage feed to cattle herders that are affected by the crisis. This will reduce the risk of animal health deteriorating during the winter season. The aim is to maintain animal productivity and help households to keep their livestock.

**Islamic Relief (IR) (SEK 3 million)** will provide personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to frontline health workers and ambulances to the Ministry of Public Health in Afghanistan. IR will also raise awareness about COVID-19 and provide health and hygiene items and cash assistance to vulnerable households.
EXAMPLES OF NEW SUPPORT: LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

To enable the World Health Organization (WHO) to scale up its technical and operational support to countries’ response to COVID-19, Sida is allocating an additional SEK 60 million to the organisation. Half of this is global support, and half is allocated to WHO’s work in the African region. The latter will ensure continuity of essential high-quality information and services regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, increase access to contraceptives and strengthen monitoring systems for SRHR during the pandemic.

Flexible social protection is important to mitigate the negative economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. By adding SEK 29 million to the UNICEF Social Protection Programme in Ethiopia, social safety nets will be expanded, targeting women and children living in poverty in urban areas.

In Bolivia, Helvetas and other NGOs (SEK 3 million) contribute to the national COVID-19 response in the water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and solid waste sectors. The aim is to prevent the spread of COVID-19, focusing on sanitation, cleaning and disinfection services in the municipalities La Paz, El Alto and Montero.

In partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDCR) (SEK 28.6 million), Sida supports the COVID-19 Global South Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Innovation Program. The program will fund research on how to develop and scale up ethical and evidence-based AI and data science approaches in COVID-19 response and recovery.

Oxfam (SEK 5 million) supports climate adaptation in rural areas in Zimbabwe. The aim is to increase access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene, which is crucial during the pandemic, as well as to food and nutrition. This will contribute to better health and secure livelihoods in “climate resilient villages” in three districts.

EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATION OF ON-GOING PROGRAMMES

All Sida support has been reviewed in light of the pandemic and a large share of Sida’s development cooperation is being adapted to address the effects of COVID-19.

Global Partnership for Education (GPE) will redirect SEK 2.5 billion to ease the consequences of the pandemic within education systems in 67 low-income countries. This will enable continued education for children and youth when schools are closed. It will also support teachers, protect students and prepare the education system to reopen again when possible.

FOJO and IMS have adapted their media program in Ethiopia due to the pandemic. The support enables, among other things, the production of webinars about safety for journalists and fact-checking of COVID-19 information.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina, an innovation component in the UNDP program has been adjusted to equip mechanical engineering faculties at four universities with 3D-printers, to produce supplies for personal protective equipment (PPE) for hospitals. In the future, the printers can be used for innovation within green economic development.

The civil society organization Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) has launched a survey of over 1000 health centres across Afghanistan. The purpose is to assess their level of preparedness to respond to COVID-19 regarding, inter alia, availability of protective equipment. Data from the survey will be compiled and published to inform relevant actors on gaps in the COVID-19 response.

Within the on-going cooperation with the World Bank trust fund MDTF Jobs, efforts have been initiated to, for example, analyse the effects of the pandemic on the global labour market, identify vulnerable workers and households, and contribute to new national policies that will mitigate the effects.

COVID-19 has a disproportionate impact on people who are already marginalised. Frontline AIDS Rapid Response Fund assists in urgent situations where LGBTQ people have limited access to health care services, including HIV services, because of stigma, discrimination and threats of violence. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the number of applications has increased significantly.

This Sida brief is complementary to “Sweden’s global COVID-19 response” published by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.