The COVID-19 pandemic is a global threat that requires urgent action and international cooperation. The pandemic is already causing dramatic changes in specific countries as well as the international community. It is not only affecting health systems but is also having extensive negative macroeconomic implications.

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

Sida’s development cooperation is directly or indirectly contributing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact in low- and middle-income countries. 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.

Within the COVID-19 response, Sida commits to its standing as a flexible donor. A substantial part of the funding is channelled as core or programme support, which enables partners to adapt their on-going efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sida continues to actively support its partners in these adjustments and is also taking new initiatives to meet the challenges that have emerged.

Sida's development cooperation is based on and must be permeated by five perspectives of development:

- the perspective of people living in poverty
- human rights-based approach
- conflict perspective
- environment and climate change perspective
- gender perspective

Sida takes on an active role and leadership in donor coordination – the principles on aid effectiveness are essential for an efficient response. As an example, Sida is engaged in the Joint Team Europe approach for a coherent European response to COVID-19. The joint approach is coordinated by the EU delegations in partners countries.

Until the beginning of May 2020, Sida has allocated SEK 224 million (approximately USD 22.9 million) as COVID-19 specific support to existing partners. The humanitarian support amounts to SEK 120.5 million out of the total allocation.

The Swedish humanitarian assistance is based on the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This means that the assistance should be solely based on needs and independent of political considerations. Sweden adheres to the principles on flexibility (The Grand Bargain) and provides unearmarked funding early in the year.

Sida’s humanitarian strategic partners (UN organisations, NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) have received SEK 500 million in such flexible programmes or country support for 2020. Sida has also contributed SEK 580 million to 18 Country-Based Pool Funds and 383 million to the Rapid Response Mechanism. Both mechanisms can be used for COVID-19 interventions.

**EXAMPLES OF NEW SUPPORT: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

**UN global appeal/UNHCR (SEK 30 million)** will improve access to primary and secondary healthcare as well as water and sanitation for refugees and internally displaced people. The support will also be used for protective equipment for healthcare professionals and strengthen risk communication, community engagement and protection services. A large proportion of the support aims to ramp up cash payments for people particularly vulnerable to economic shocks.

**UN global appeal/UNICEF (SEK 40 million)** will strengthen risk communication and involve local communities in reducing the spread of the virus. The efforts will improve access to clean water and hygiene as well as protective equipment for healthcare personnel.
The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) appeal (SEK 30 million) includes support to hospitals and healthcare facilities with equipment and capacity to isolate patients. The appeal is also funded by Sida’s support to the Swedish Red Cross (SEK 5.3 million).

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (SEK 3.9 million) will contribute to improved access to sanitation and hygiene in refugee camps in Jordan.

Action Against Hunger (AAH) (SEK 6 million) will improve access to healthcare, psycho-social support, water and sanitation in Liberia and Sierra Leone. AAH will also distribute food in Sierra Leone.

Save the Children (SEK 3 million) will support mobile clinics and information campaigns in Afghanistan.

Plan International (SEK 2.3 million) will in Zimbabwe work with water, sanitation and information on COVID-19 in two informal settlements in Harare that are particularly vulnerable due to high population density and low incomes.

EXAMPLES OF NEW SUPPORT: LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

DKT International (SEK 20 million) will ensure continued access to contraceptives and products for safe abortion in Eastern and Southern Africa, since the access to such products has decreased during the pandemic.

UNICEF Bangladesh (SEK 15 million) will focus on risk communication and digital participation in urban areas. UNICEF also supports the government of Bangladesh in, for example, procurement of protective equipment, and will target specific groups, such as children, schools, religious leaders and health staff, with communication on COVID-19.

HelpAge International (SEK 4.3 million) addresses the needs of elderly people affected by COVID-19 in low-income countries. HelpAge has developed guidance material, including accessible formats for health workers and for those with lower literacy levels. In addition, HelpAge supports elderly people without bank accounts, to enable them to collect their pension safely and securely.

UN Women (SEK 1.2 million) in Ethiopia will support the national COVID-19 response plan and work with the Ethiopian Network of Women Shelters and other actors. The aim is to create temporary shelters in Addis Ababa and provide full services for survivors of gender-based violence.

Water Aid Bangladesh (SEK 5 million) will install additional hand washing facilities in urban slum areas and increase the general public’s access to information about hygiene and handwashing.

EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATIONS OF ON-GOING PROGRAMMES

All Sida support is currently being reviewed in light of the pandemic to ensure it maximises both short- and long-term outcomes. A large share of Sida’s development cooperation is being adjusted and adapted to prevent or address the effects of COVID-19.

UNOPS is managing the “Access to Health Fund” in Myanmar, which has taken a central role in preparedness and response to the pandemic. The fund has invested in various COVID-19 related programmes, including infection control and personal protection items, risk communication and surveillance, contact tracing and testing.

International Labor Organization (ILO) is revising its efforts due to the pandemic. Among other things, ILO is cooperating with its partners to find solutions that mitigate lost employment and livelihood for workers in low-income countries.

Internews enables journalists and media in the Democratic Republic of Congo to report on COVID-19. Internews will produce information material in five languages which will be distributed to 83 local radio stations and social media across the country.

A regional collaboration in Asia between UN Women, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Legal Commission (ICJ) is now redefined to enable documentation of violations of human rights and gender equality abuse in the light of the pandemic.

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