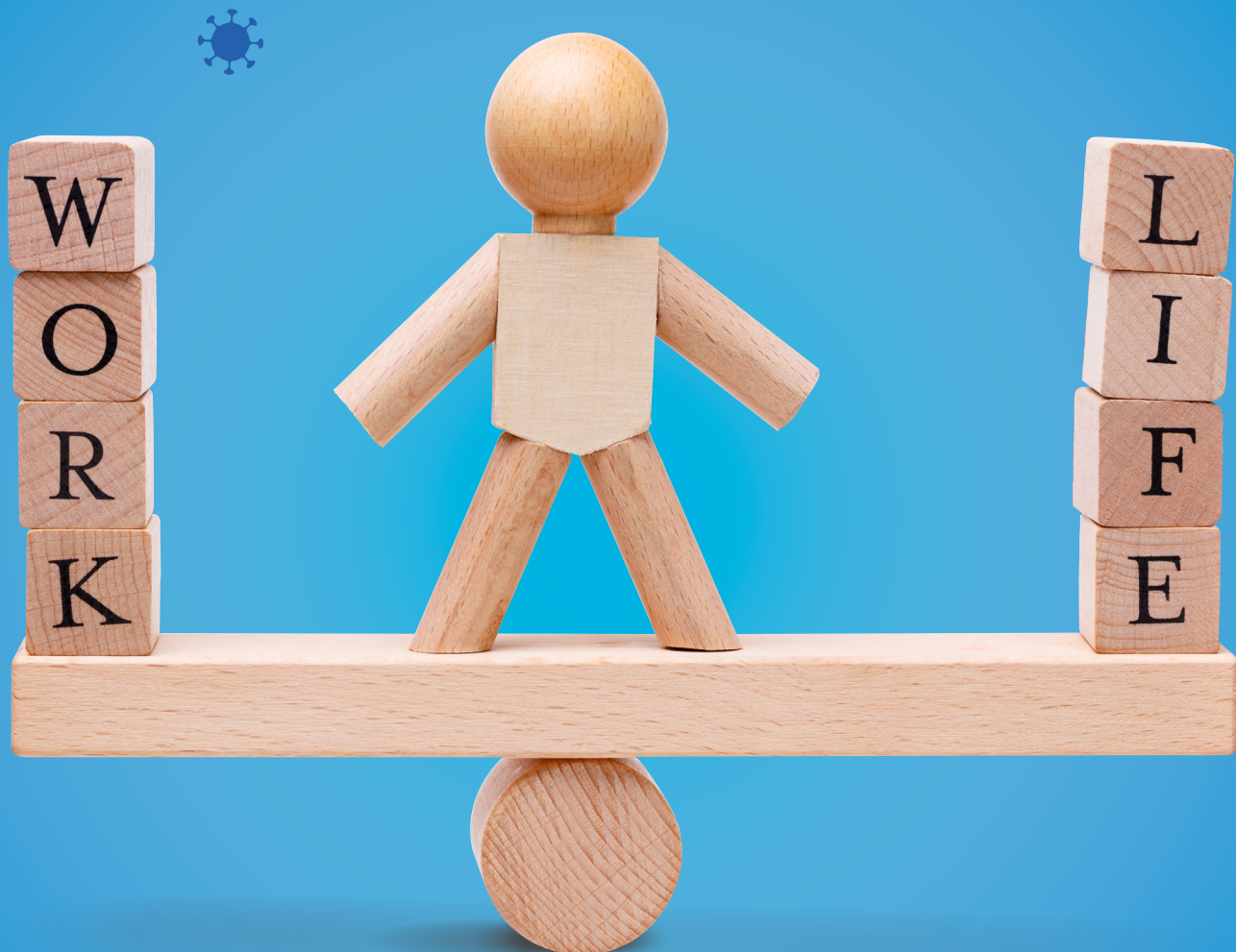


HabPost

Updates from
UN-Habitat

UN HABITAT
www.unhabitat.org
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Life in the Time
of COVID-19

Editor's note

We're delighted to bring you another issue of HabPost — and equally delighted to hear that you like what you see. With this third issue, we're about halfway through our coverage of COVID-19, and we'll soon embark on an initiative to answer your information needs on the medium to long term. In this spirit, we invite you to fill out [this new survey](#) to take stock of your impressions so far, your general sense about communication at UN-Habitat, and your preference for long-term HabPost. It's important we get a sense of what you want to read, so do take two minutes to send in your answers. We look forward to reading you.

This week's issue of HabPost focuses on work-life balance and health and safety. Our feature story on work-life balance is filled with resources on life with children and flexible working arrangements, among others. Be sure to access it for links and tips. We also recommend you scroll further down as we answer the demand for information on health and safety including access to medical resources, support to staff in case of infection, and ways to protect yourself and your family.

Be safe, keep smiling. And Happy reading!
The HabPost Team



In the oven



Here is a list of themes for some of our issues in the making—keep an eye out for your HabPost email!

▶ **UN-Habitat's response to COVID-19 and partners response**

▶ **Reflection on the positive and broad impact of COVID-19**

In the world



As of 21 April, there were **more than 2,402,250 confirmed cases of COVID-19** infections around the world (an increase of 33 per cent since last week), **with 163,097 confirmed deaths** (up 44 per cent) according to WHO. Monitor the situation at <https://covid19.who.int/>.

Highlights:



- More than **4.5 billion people worldwide** are now living under containment to slow the spread of the pandemic.
- The **US, Spain, Italy, Germany, the UK, and France** are now the worst-hit countries. **Turkey, Russia, Belgium, and Brazil** are noticing a fast increase in cases and are among the worst-hit.
- WHO regional director for Europe declared that any steps towards **easing restrictions** must be guided by public health principles and economic and societal considerations.
- The **Kenyan Government** has begun **mass testing** in risk areas. 12,000 testing kits are being deployed to targeted areas during the first phase of the testing.
- Countries which had been praised for their handling of the outbreak such as **Singapore and Japan** are experiencing a rise in case numbers.
- Women leaders in **Taiwan, Germany, New Zealand, Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Denmark** are being praised for their response to the coronavirus.
- Last week, US President Donald Trump called to "liberate" three states from lockdowns.



**COVID-19
 RESPONSE**

Get the latest updates on Covid19 [Here](#)

Worlds (not so) Apart: of Kids, Sanity, Work, and Isolation

What were you doing last Friday? Were you looking for ways to get your offspring off your shoulders as you frantically typed your last email for the day? Were you struggling to talk to them as they've seemed to change since they're stuck home unable to see the threat outside the window? Maybe you were stranded far away from home and you longed to experience these seemingly stressful circumstances. Or perhaps you live alone, and you wondered when you'd finally get to talk to someone else than your reflection in the mirror. No matter your concern, it's a valid one.

As we discover new ways of working and living during COVID-19 – and learn to deal with them – we discover we're just not ready. We're not ready to import work home, we're not ready to manage our families' concerns, we're not ready to draw the line between work and a relaxing bath. We're also not ready to stay away from the rest of the people we need in our lives. And surely that awful wireless connection cannot be of much help – it's never fun realizing we've been talking to the frozen image of our loved ones (or that of our colleagues) for the past two minutes.

During this epidemic, we have all been asked to continue our jobs while simultaneously home schooling our children, attending to elderly relatives, and caring for the sick. When schools are shut while our jobs go on, worlds apart come together to shape a hectic living room. So, what is this crisis teaching us?

For one thing, it's reminding us that we have families. We can no longer



For one thing, it's reminding us that we have families. We can no longer assume things will take care of themselves as we step out the door in the morning.

assume things will take care of themselves as we step out the door in the morning. For our morning is now our daily reality – it only ends when we shut down our laptop as the sun sets. Another takeaway is that no matter how we look at it, it isn't business as usual. Our productivity suffers, our schedules are impacted, and so are our sleeping cycles, our daily habits, and our nerves. One thing does seem

to remain constant, and that's deliverables. When expectations remain the same but ways to meet them are disturbed, what is the way out? The answer is fairly straightforward: flexibility.

Managing work

From the moment it became clear that we would be in for the long haul, managers at the UN have been asked to exercise maximum flexibility. This is to allow families to better handle schools and day care closures as well as other disruptions to family support services. Know that flexible working arrangements, such as telecommuting from within or outside the duty station, are voluntary and at the request of the staff member. You may also be authorized to utilize your home leave,

family visit, or reserve education grant entitlement to travel to your home country or an alternate place of home leave, provided there is no cost to the organization.



Other policies remain in force such as the [policy on breastfeeding](#) and staff rules on maternity and paternity leave, though regular broadcasts inform you of exceptions to these HR matters. For instance, in light of current travel restrictions, staff members are allowed to make use of paternity leave within an extended period beyond one year following the birth of their child. [Visit this page](#) for more information. If you're a pregnant woman or have recently given birth, [this UNFPA article](#) offers guidance on what you should and can do to protect yourself and your new born.

Dealing with children

Two weeks ago, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern held a special press conference just for children to let them know that – worry not – her government considered the [Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny to be essential workers](#). With a smile on her face and in an attempt to ease the fear of children of her country, she indicated that the holiday rabbit would potentially be quite busy at home with his own family this year. In Norway, Prime Minister Erna Solberg conducted a similar exercise by holding a 30-minute press conference for kids and answering their questions frankly. What can be learned from these interventions?

We know that together with the elderly, the very young are the most vulnerable population: they will be stressed if parents are stressed. Engaging with

them as equals and acknowledging their fears is the first step towards address their anxiety. Just like some world leaders are doing, becoming a role model for children is essential, so take their questions seriously and address them as the concerned persons they are.

There is a lot of content available online to help you manage your interaction with your children. UNICEF has put together [eight detailed tips to talk to your children about COVID-19](#), where they notably highlight the importance of asking open questions and listening, being honest, showing them how to protect themselves, and offering reassurance. WHO has put together a [cheat-sheet on helping children cope with stress](#), and you'll find a stove of information on keeping your children healthy on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website](#), but also on how to help them continue learning.

To make your job as a parent easier, the Italian Children's Museums have teamed up to create a comprehensive guide for children. Available in 17 languages, [the Curious Guide for Courageous Kids](#) talks to kids in a friendly manner and relies on drawings to get the message across. Similarly, [this comic](#) from the non-profit American National Public Radio is designed just for kids and available in English, Spanish, and Chinese. And if you'd like to keep your children busy, [Audible](#) is making available audiobooks for free in six languages for as long as schools are closed. Titles include Harry Potter and some other literary classics – we know we'll be listening.

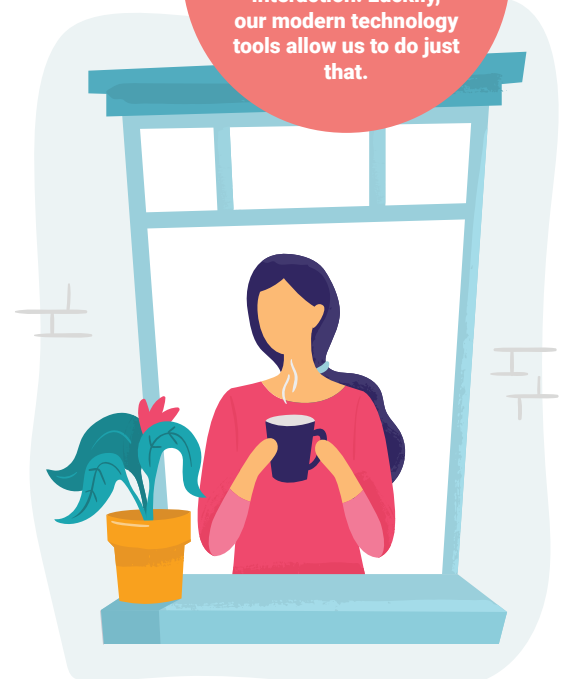
Handling isolation

While a lot of us are dealing with families at home, some are alone or are stranded away from their families. If you belong to the latter category and wish to return home, we recommend you contact your embassy to see whether flights are organised in view of current travel restrictions imposed by many countries.

In general, the key to fighting physical isolation lies in engaging in social interaction. Luckily, our modern technology tools allow us to do just that. But these tools can also quickly become a source of stress, so make sure you take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories on COVID-19. Being alone at home means spending more time wondering what to do apart from work, and along with it a risk to panic over the latest news. Take deep breaths, stretch, exercise, try meditation (psst! we hear it can [help achieve the SDGs](#) – isn't that an all-round win-win?), and avoid consuming alcohol. Make time to unwind and do the other things you love to do. You might be stuck home but your interests should remain intact.

COVID-19 has been changing the way we work, the way we live at home, and how we go about our daily lives. Understanding ourselves and others will help us manage our needs, our expectations, and our fears. Now is a time to be empathetic and flexible. We might just come out of this crisis with an improved, more resilient version of ourselves.

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This week, we've asked **Amrita Jaidka**, Programme Management Officer at ROLAC, how she's been handling work and her private life, and we've tried to understand how **Saidou N'Dow**, Head of the Legal Office at OED, foresees Ramadan this year.



In addition to ensuring business continuity, it is imperative for me to understand how my team members in the countries are doing and to be accessible to them

“ I have been in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) for 10 months now, supporting the regional operations from Panama City, and working with the different teams at the regional, country, and project levels. Our motto in the Operations Team since 2019 has been to support each other, and we continue to do this now on a personal and professional level. As the region and the world adapt to changes in working conditions, colleagues in LAC continue to be connected to each other on an ongoing basis through Skype for business, WhatsApp, Teams, and the telephone. We also work using platforms such as OneDrive, Google Drive, and so on. In this regard, it is business as usual.

However, it is not business as usual. We adapt to “social distancing”, to the increase in workload related to domestic chores, the challenges that parents have with young children and trying to teach them whilst also trying to work, worrying about family and friends, and not knowing how much worse the situation with the pandemic will get. We wonder whether there will be civil unrest, when the pandemic will end, or when a vaccine will be found. And in addition to ensuring business continuity, it is imperative for me to understand how my team members in the countries are doing and to be accessible to them, so I touch base with them on a daily basis to check in on how they are getting on with their work, but also personally. The key words are flexibility, availability, and kindness.”

Amrita Jaidka,
Programme Management Officer, ROLAC

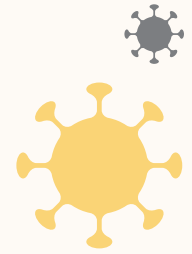


Worship will become a private affair, without the large congregations we're used to.

“ Ramadan is usually the ultimate communal fest when we break fast together, pray together, empathize with one another about our hunger pangs, and then feel guilty for complaining about the lack of food and the long hours. We usually do it all, side by side with our normal office routines amid the never-ending meetings, constant deadlines and the ubiquitous smell of food in the Gigiri Complex during lunch and coffee breaks. But the current global coronavirus pandemic means many such traditions will be done differently. The long office hours without food or drinks, the endless meetings, the deadlines to meet will continue to be done and met remotely in the comfort of our homes and with the help of our most trusted friends and family members these days: our phones and office laptops.

Worship will become a private affair, without the large congregations we're used to. The Taraweeh prayers and iftars (breaking the fast), which were once enjoyed with all our loved ones and fellow worshippers, will now take place with only the people we're in isolation with. This Ramadan, families and friends will be separated in a month that is usually made easier with companionship, giving, sharing and caring. But it's a small sacrifice to make to prevent the spread of the virus and ensure everyone is safe and healthy.

Saidou N'Dow,
Legal Officer, Head, OED

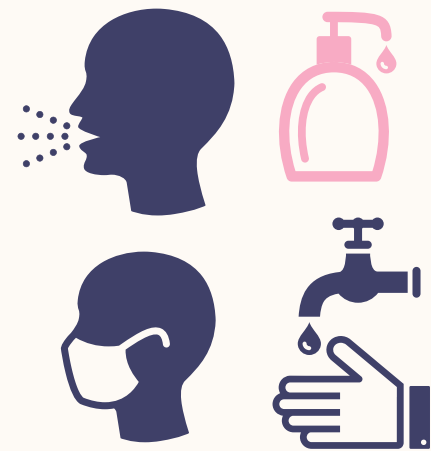


Health & Safety

What should you do to stay safe and healthy, and what to do if you can't?

1. How can I protect myself?

COVID-19 is spread from person to person through small droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or exhales. You can also become infected by touching contaminated surfaces or objects and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Wash your hands frequently, maintain physical distance, avoid touching your face, and practice respiratory hygiene to reduce the risk of contamination. In many places, authorities are recommending or requesting people to wear masks. Get one at your local pharmacy or [make your own](#). 🧴



2.

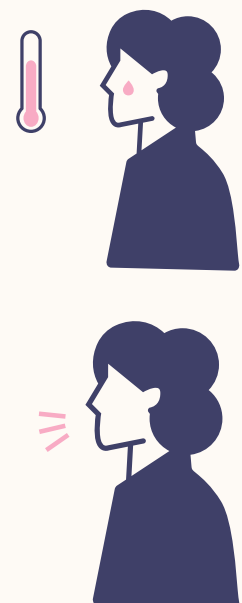
So, I should be wearing a mask?



Whilst there is no consensus on whether it is actually useful to wear a mask as a preventive measure, the Kenyan government has put in a directive last week that everyone must wear a mask in public. Those not doing so could be subject to a penalty and/or imprisonment. You may want to know that another law currently **forbids private car owners to carry more than 50 per cent of the declared passenger capacity** – that's one passenger and the driver for a five-seater. **All occupants are expected to wear a mask.** For other countries, please consult your local health authorities.

3. What if I am infected?

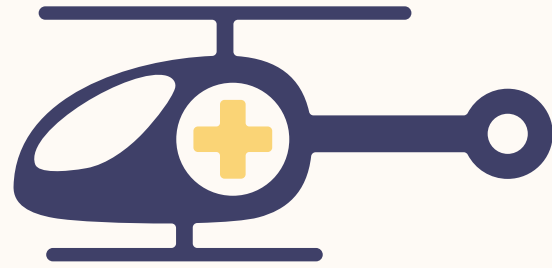
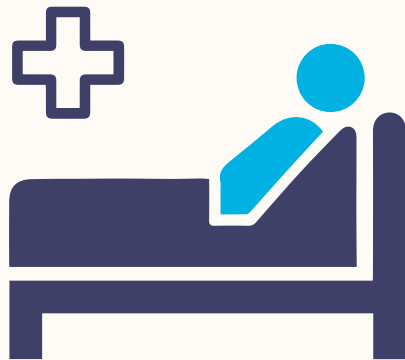
The Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health launched a self-reporting portal to ensure early diagnosis and rapid access to treatment. Access it at <https://medical.un.org>. Also **remember to communicate and inform the Joint Medical Services (JMS) if you fall sick, and self-isolate.** JMS are here to provide support and medical resources. Remember to connect with colleagues and loved ones if you have health concerns, especially if you live alone. The **JMS 24/7 emergency call line is +254 724 255 378.** You may want to access the following site for more information on how to seek help: <https://medical.unon.org/node/135>.



4.

Are there enough medical resources where I live?

To date, there is no approved medication that treats COVID-19. But with good supportive care, including oxygen supply and a ventilator if needed, lives can be saved. JMS is collaborating with various entities, including the Government of Kenya, private hospitals, and other various service providers to offer sufficient support for UN personnel. This includes assessment, testing, or hospitalization for symptoms potentially linked to the COVID-19 infection. The Nairobi Aga Khan University Hospital has the appropriate level of care including intensive care and advanced medical treatment such as mechanical ventilation if needed. In Kenya and everywhere else, it is recommended that personnel make use of their telehealth services. Cigna's [Telehealth Connection](#) is for instance offered to all personnel covered under the UN Medical Insurance Plan so that they may talk to a doctor or nurse 24/7.



5. What about medical evacuation?

Internationally recruited staff and their dependants may be evacuated in the case of an acute illness from their duty station or mission area. Locally recruited staff are expected to avail themselves of medical facilities available locally. However, in the instance of an acute life-threatening medical emergency that COVID-19 could give rise to, medical evacuation will be considered. Authority to approve a medical evacuation is delegated to heads of departments of offices away from HQ and the decision to evacuate will be taken upon the recommendation of the UN medical officer. If this service is used, the staff member's absence would be charged to sick leave entitlements. More information about medical evacuation of staff members and eligible family members, can be found [here](#). Given that healthcare workers are currently under immense pressure, secretariat staff members are also allowed an extra 7 days of uncertified sick leave.

6. How can I keep informed of local developments?

Stay on top of the latest health information in your country and community by monitoring communication from the UN system, your embassy, [WHO's website](#), and official communication by local authorities.



Resources



Medical

Joint Medical Service (JMS)

+254 20 762 1717 (Hotline)

+254 724 255378 (JMS 24/7)

+254 728 961 939 (Staff Counsellor)

Email: unon-jms-medicevacuation@un.org

<https://medical.unon.org>



Security and emergencies

UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)

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(UNDSS Security Operations Centre - 24/7)

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+ 254 (0) 720 629 999 OR +254 (0)733 629 999;

+254 20 762-26666 (UNDSS Security Control

Room - 24/7)

+254 (0) 722 667112 (DPU Command Centre)



Links

Travel: <https://hr.un.org/page/travel-health-information>

UN FAQ: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-faqs>

UN information page: <https://hr.un.org/page/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

UN-Habitat COVID-19 website: <https://unhabitat.org/covid-19-pandemic>

UNICEF information page: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19>

WHO MythBusters: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

WHO Situation reports: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

WHO Q&A list: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>



ICT

UNON Helpdesk

icts.servicedesk@un.org or 020 762 1111



We want you!

HabPost is what you make it. We have a **new survey** for you this week, so we want to hear from everyone. Let your voice heard by completing the survey or contact us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org.



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UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



IMPLEMENTING
THE NEW
URBAN AGENDA



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**



UN-Habitat's response to COVID-19

