



HOW ARE THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS BEING EVALUATED?


Landscape analysis of national and international evaluations and reviews of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts

THE COVID-19 GLOBAL EVALUATION COALITION | November 2021

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of how governments, and development and humanitarian actors are responding to COVID-19, and how these efforts are evaluated. The paper describes specific evaluation mechanisms and studies that are completed, planned or underway. The intended audience is evaluation agencies in the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition and other evaluation stakeholders. The analysis also provides researchers and practitioners working in international development and humanitarian response with a snapshot of how partners are learning and being held accountable for the results of their support to COVID-19.

Comments or suggestions on this draft are welcome. Please email the Secretariat: COVID19evaluation@oecd.org



The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition is a network of the independent evaluation units of countries, UN organisations, and multilateral institutions that provides credible evidence to inform international co-operation responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org

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SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

National and international institutions are evaluating their COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts through a wide range of evaluative work. The scope and scale of the collective evaluation effort mirrors that of the pandemic itself. It has become nearly impossible to draw boundaries around this body of work.

The evaluation landscape includes a variety of mechanisms with both selected/voluntary evaluations as well as those automatically triggered due to the nature or scale of the crisis. The most common types of evaluations include country response evaluations, real-time evaluations or learning exercises, cross-cutting global or system-wide evaluations, institutional reviews, project and programme evaluations, and joint thematic evaluations. Related scientific research and academic studies provide additional input. In terms of focus, these evaluations cut across the three pillars of the COVID-19 impacts: primary health response, secondary socio-economic effects, and the recovery. In addition to the evaluations, there are progress monitoring efforts, and a vast number of evidence synthesis and lessons learnt reviews that are identifying what has and has not worked to inform real-time decision-making and future preparedness.

The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate Evaluation Team has identified more than 250 COVID-19-focussed evaluations and reviews that Governments and multilateral development partners have planned or are conducting, as of November 2021. A significant number of these are conducted jointly and collaboratively among participants. The main thematic areas of interest are Health and well-being, Humanitarian response, Effectiveness, and Gender.

The preliminary conclusions based on the early evaluation plans analysis are as follows:

- **Mismatch between evaluation demand and spending:** There is clearly less information available about the evaluations of national and local COVID-19 efforts compared to those focussed on development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, despite the fact that the scale of the former is much greater. Is this due to a lack of data (as fewer countries have reported on their domestic evaluation plans), or are there fewer evaluations?
- A number of evaluations focus on **high visibility global programmes and institutions**. In particular, the WHO, COVAX/ACT-A and the United Nations pooled funds.
- Most international development and humanitarian actors have conducted or are planning an institutional review or evaluation of their own response. These target internal audiences, and some did not publish the reports, limiting the scope for lessons sharing.
- **Secondary impacts seem to be less well covered compared to direct health responses**, with the possible exception of assistance to job protection and businesses. There seem to be gaps in the social sector, including relatively fewer evaluations looking at efforts to mitigate the pandemic's impacts on quality education, environment, WASH, and mental health. Does this distribution match the allocation of resources or are there evaluation gaps that need to be filled?
- The capacity of individuals and institutions to absorb, use and act on evaluative evidence is constrained by the pandemic context itself. It seems unlikely that the absorptive capacity can match the large number of studies planned, though there is a remarkable lack of defensiveness and desire to learn as the pandemic continues and the future remains uncertain.

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PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition conducted a landscaping analysis of the main responses and evaluative efforts to COVID-19, at the national and international levels. The purpose of the paper is to support Coalition participants to understand the current landscape, target their individual engagement, and co-ordinate and align evaluative work. The intended audience is evaluation agencies of countries and multilateral institutions, who are actively engaged in responding to the pandemic especially in low- and middle-income countries. The paper also provides researchers and practitioners with a snapshot of how global partners are collaborating, learning and being held accountable for the results of their support to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

The report primarily focuses on the evaluation and monitoring efforts by development and humanitarian organisations with global geographic scope to get a top-view picture. The paper draws on the primary research conducted by the OECD Secretariat and the evaluation plans submitted by the participants of the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, including DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet), Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) members. The networks developed a common data collection tool (Annex 1), which participating governments and agencies used to submit their evaluation plans. The OECD Secretariat collected the evaluation plans of 20 bilateral and 30 multilateral participants (38 of 56 Coalition participants as of November 2021).

The team complemented these submissions by reviewing evaluation websites and evaluation list serves to identify additional evaluation plans. The database includes evaluations that are planned, postponed or under consideration. This work on COVID-19 builds on evaluation plan sharing among the members of the UNEG and EvalNet over many years to facilitate an early identification of opportunities for collaboration. Participants categorized evaluations as COVID-19 response/recovery (focus), will include some questions on COVID-19, unrelated to/unaffected by COVID-19 and, will look at COVID-19 as a contextual factor.

The database is not exhaustive and the data collection process is ongoing. The team reviewed evaluation proposals, concept notes, and terms of reference throughout late August and early November 2021. The information varies considerably in content and level of detail and many evaluation units report that they are still in the early stages of developing their evaluation plans. The details of the landscape analysis are therefore likely to change, though the typology described is durable. The information contained in this report may need to be updated as these projects progress.

INTRODUCTION: THE PANDEMIC AND ITS EFFECTS

The effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) have been vast and tragic: it currently affects 222 countries and territories, with over 258 million confirmed cases and 5.1 million dead as of November 2021 (WHO, 2021c). Even though the consequences of the pandemic are on a global scale, countries and people have been affected differently, with excluded and marginalized people falling further behind.

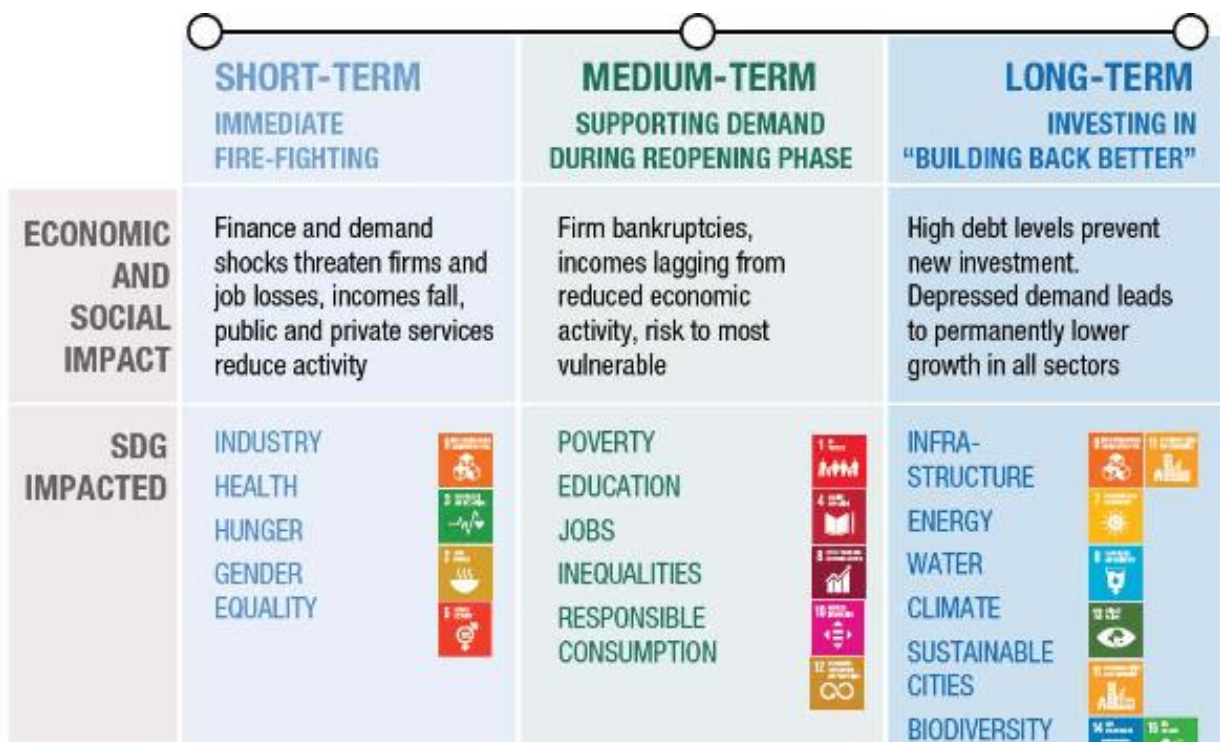
Updated estimates from World Bank suggests the pandemic has led to 97 million more people being in extreme poverty in 2020, living at or below USD 1.90 a day with around 60% living in South Asia (World Bank, 2021a). 270 million people were estimated to have gone hungry in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). Millions of enterprises face an existential threat and nearly half of the world's 3.3 billion global workforces are at risk of losing their livelihoods (ILO, FAO, IFAD, WHO, 2020). Informal economy workers are particularly vulnerable because the majority lacks social protection and access to quality health care and have lost access to productive assets. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many are unable to feed themselves and their families. ILO estimates the earnings of 1.6 billion informal workers have declined by 60% due to lockdown and movement restrictions (ILO, 2020).

“The COVID-19 crisis is global, but its consequences are unequal, hitting the poorest hardest. Calls for international support to developing countries that would match the ambition of the Marshall Plan remain unanswered. It is too early to say how history will judge the role of development co-operation in the global response.”

Jorge Moreira da Silva

Director, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD

Figure 1: The COVID-19 economic and social shock and its consequences



Source: OECD (2020), Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021: A New Way to Invest for People and Planet

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The widening gap in accessing and affording vaccines means low and middle-income countries continue to be vulnerable – which increases vulnerability for all as new COVID-19 variants arise and spread. As of September, 2021, in high-income countries, 1 in 2 people (59.32%) have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine whereas only 1 in 38 people (2.65%) have in low-income countries (UNDP, 2021).

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This section provides an overview of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, looking at how countries are financing efforts to reduce the spread of the virus, treat people and cope with the secondary effects of containment measures such as lockdowns and school or business closures. This is not a comprehensive review of the global efforts (which are far too vast to describe here), rather it provides a basic outline of the efforts as context for the following discussion of how these efforts are being evaluated.

A. National responses to COVID-19

It goes without saying that (save for a handful of aid-dependent economies) it is at the national level and subnational level where the vast majority of COVID-19 response and recovery efforts take place.

National, regional, and local governments have demonstrated flexibility and adaptability in process and are synchronizing policy actions to manage and recover from the crisis (OECD, 2021b). Governments globally have expanded, innovated and supplemented their social protection policies in response to the crisis. An estimate of 3333 social protection measures either are planned or have been implemented across 222 countries and territories as of May 2021 (Gentilini, U. et al., 2020). However, these social protection measures were found to be quickly oversubscribed and failed to reach the most vulnerable. Policy measures taken by developing countries to support vulnerable populations, such as cash transfers, largely reflected their economic structures and limited fiscal capacity (OECD, 2020a).

Disparities in capacities to finance and manage the containment and other measures to suppress the pandemic have limited countries' abilities to soften the blow of the pandemic's socioeconomic effects. The inequality in spending capacity is stark. On average, COVID-19 social protection spending per capita has been USD 4 for low-income countries, USD 28 for lower middle-income countries, USD 57 for upper middle-income countries, and USD 695 for high-income countries (Gentilini, U. et al., 2020). According to the OECD, advanced economies have managed to implement large monetary and fiscal stimulus packages, allowing debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratios to rise by 20 to 30 percentage points of GDP in OECD countries (OECD, 2020b). Based on the forecasted recession by the OECD, it is estimated that developing countries would have required an additional USD 800 billion to USD 1 trillion to respond to the crisis at a comparable magnitude of spending. This includes USD 100bn in low-income countries, or 5% to 6% of the GDP of these countries; low-income economies represent about USD 85 billion of this gap, or 6% of their GDP. Sub-Saharan Africa, as a whole, would need to increase its packages – of about 1% of GDP – by about 6% of its GDP, or USD 100bn, in line with the magnitudes found by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and others.

According to the WHO COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Monitoring Framework, 91% of countries have a COVID-19 National plan and 97% of countries have a functional multi-sectorial multi-partner coordination mechanism for COVID-19 preparedness and response (WHO, 2021f). As an example, to address the provision gaps challenges brought by COVID-19, the United Kingdom government provided £15 worth of weekly shopping voucher spendable in supermarkets while schools are closed as a means of supporting the 1.3 million children that would receive benefits-related free school meals at their school.

B. Global Response and Recovery Efforts: International development co-operation and humanitarian assistance

The pandemic has put development cooperation to the test in unique ways: it has affected every aspect of ways of working, partnerships and business models and put unprecedented strain on public finances. Against this backdrop, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 has suddenly become much more challenging (UN, 2020). Development co-operation agencies and humanitarian organisations responded to the health and different aspects of the pandemic through bilateral and multilateral channels and trusted partnerships while also making efforts to ensure business programme continuity. They disbursed new funds quickly and were flexible in reprogramming existing funds to address the emerging needs in the early phases of the crisis. Budget support proved to be a rapid and efficient means to provide financing to governments (Johnson & Kennedy-Chouane, 2021).

According to data available on DEVEX's funding platform, the global funding committed by governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, development banks, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector to combat the virus and its impact is exceeding \$21.7 trillion as on June 2021 (DEVEX, 2021). Many DAC members indicated they would protect official development assistance (ODA) budgets and some plan to increase ODA budgets for 2021, while others have announced reductions. At the same time, other sources of finance, including foreign direct investment, trade and remittances plummeted as the pandemic froze economies around the world (OECD, 2021a). Given the global economic impacts of the pandemic, it is not certain that ODA volumes can rise or even hold steady over the coming years to meet the growing needs.

Some of the largest initiatives of the international response are listed below:

Bilateral donor responses

Total funding commitments and disbursements by providers of development co-operation for COVID-19 have been difficult to track and determine, but initial and partial estimates from an OECD survey suggest that Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members mobilized USD 12 billion for COVID-19 support to developing countries¹. Assistance from official donors rose to an all-time high of USD 161.2 billion in 2020, up by 3.5% in real terms from 2019 (OECD, 2021a), boosted by additional spending mobilised to help developing countries grappling with the COVID-19 crisis.

UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund

The United Nations (UN) COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (COVID-19 MPTF) is a UN inter-agency finance mechanism launched by the UN Secretary-General to support low and middle income countries in overcoming the health and development crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund is designed to offer fast and flexible finance well suited to meeting the shifting demands of this rapidly developing and multidimensional global crisis. The Fund complements the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and the UN OCHA's Consolidated Global Humanitarian Appeal for COVID-19. It leverages on the expertise and delivery capacities of UN Agencies and harnesses on the resources of the public and private sectors to bridge the gaps in country preparedness and response plans and safeguard progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. As of August, 2021, the Fund has programmed USD 82 million to 99 projects spanning 78 countries (UN COVID-19 Gateway, 2021).

Global Humanitarian Response Plan: COVID-19 (GHRP)

The COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan is a joint effort by members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), including UN, other international organizations and NGOs with a

¹ These numbers will be updated as data become available in late 2021 and are expected to increase.

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humanitarian mandate, to analyse and respond to the direct public health and indirect immediate needs in low and middle-income countries. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) coordinates the efforts. It aggregates relevant COVID-19 appeals and inputs from WFP, WHO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF and NGOs, and it complements other plans developed by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The GHRP builds on a joint analysis of the immediate health and non-health needs of vulnerable populations and offers a multi-partner multi-sectoral response to the pandemic. The plan managed to secure 40% of the total requirement of the response plan (USD 3.80bn out of the requested 9.50bn), and has as its largest recipients respectively Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Lebanon (OCHA, 2021). GHRP accounts for one of the major international humanitarian aid for the crisis. On 31 December 2020, the GHRP officially concluded, marking a moment for stocktaking.

Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator partnership and COVAX

The ACT Accelerator is a global collaboration launched in April 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the European Commission, France and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It brings together governments, global health organisations, manufacturers, scientists, private sector, civil society and philanthropy, with the aim of providing innovative and equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines. There are four pillars of work: diagnostics, treatment, vaccines and health system strengthening.

In 2020, a substantial focus of ACT Accelerator was on developing and evaluating a sound product portfolio by investing in R&D, product assessment, and market shaping, while laying the groundwork for large-scale procurement and in-country delivery. Now that an initial set of effective and affordable COVID-19 tools is available, resources are increasingly focused on optimizing their public health impact. In 2021, ACT Accelerator aims to fully leverage these existing tools and available volumes, then expand manufacturing, while continuing to invest in further R&D and product optimization. The original ACT Accelerator investment case published in September 2020 outlined a total requirement of USD 38.1 billion to fully fund its work. Based on the refreshed strategic priorities outlined for 2021, the Pillars have adjusted their resource needs to USD 33.2 billion. As of 23 July 2021, donor contributions amount to USD 17.8 billion and the ACT Accelerator continues to require an additional fund of USD 16.6 billion in 2021 to deliver on its full promise (WHO, 2021a).

COVAX is the vaccine pillar of the ACT Accelerator that aims to ensure equal and fair access to vaccines to all countries. It is coordinated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO with UNICEF being the delivery partner. COVAX acts as a platform to support the research, development and manufacturing of a wide range of COVID-19 vaccine candidates. It aims to deliver 2 billion doses of vaccine (to 20% of population of 190 countries) by the end of 2021 (Berkley, 2020). As of September 2021, it has delivered 243 million doses to 139 economies (GAVI, 2021a).

Gavi has created two instruments- COVAX Facility and COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) to support the delivery of ACT-A vaccines. The COVAX facility monitors the COVID-19 vaccine landscape to identify the most suitable vaccine candidates based on scientific evidence and uses the collective purchasing power of self-financed countries and funded countries to negotiate highly competitive prices from manufacturers and shares risk among the many participant countries. The COVAX AMC mechanism focus is to ensure the 92 middle- and lower-income countries get equal



access to COVID-19 vaccines as higher-income self-financing countries and at the same time. AMC is funded mainly through Official Development Assistance (ODA), as well as contributions from the private sector and philanthropy. During the COVAX AMC Summit in June 2021, AMC has raised about USD 2.4 billion exceeding the original USD 2 billion target thus securing 1.8 billion fully subsidised doses for delivery to lower-income economies in 2021 and early 2022 (Joi, 2021).

COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund

The COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund was launched in March 2020 by WHO and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation to facilitate direct financial contributions from the private sector and individuals to the COVID-19 response efforts of WHO and its partners (African Union/African CDC, the Big 6 Youth Organisations, CEPI, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, WFP and others). The allocations of the fund are decided by WHO in lines with Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. As of March 31, 2021, more than 662,000 leading companies, organizations and individuals have committed over USD 243.1 million in flexible funding to support the WHO-led global response effort. Out of which USD 169 million were allocated to WHO, USD 20 million to WFP and USD 10 million each to UNHCR, CEPI and UNICEF. About USD five million were disbursed to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and World Organization of the Scout Movement (UNF, 2021). The funds are mobilized in alignment with WHO's three Strategy Pillars to ensure global and regional coordination of response efforts, support vulnerable countries and communities, and accelerate work on vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI)

The G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative is a temporary suspension of debt service payments by the bilateral official creditors for the 73 low- and lower middle-income countries that request the suspension. The DSSI aims to ease the financing constraints of these countries and help them to concentrate their resources to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of millions affected. The World Bank and the IMF are supporting the implementation of the DSSI. As of 8 March 2021, more than 60 percent of the eligible countries have made requests for the debt service suspension. In 2020, 43 countries are estimated to have benefited from US\$5.7 billion in debt service suspension (IMF, 2021). The G20 has also called on private creditors to participate in the initiative on comparable terms. The suspension period, originally set to end on December 31, 2020, has been extended through December 2021 (World Bank, 2021b).

Philanthropic response

Philanthropic foundations provided financial contributions, policy and non-financial support during the COVID-19 pandemic. The OECD DAC survey on Provider's response to COVID-19 indicated that, by end-April 2020, the foundations had already committed approximately USD 1 billion as an immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis toward developing countries and global public goods. The funds mainly targeted the health, education (e.g. distant learning) and other social sectors. In addition, some foundations had allocated funds domestically, towards high-income countries or not yet allocated, amounting to USD 579 million (OECD 2020c). The foundations also provided increased flexibility by lifting administrative obligations in the usage of funds, continued usual pay-outs, provided technical capacity and in-kind contributions and supported with large-scale fundraising.

Overall COVID-19 financing perspective

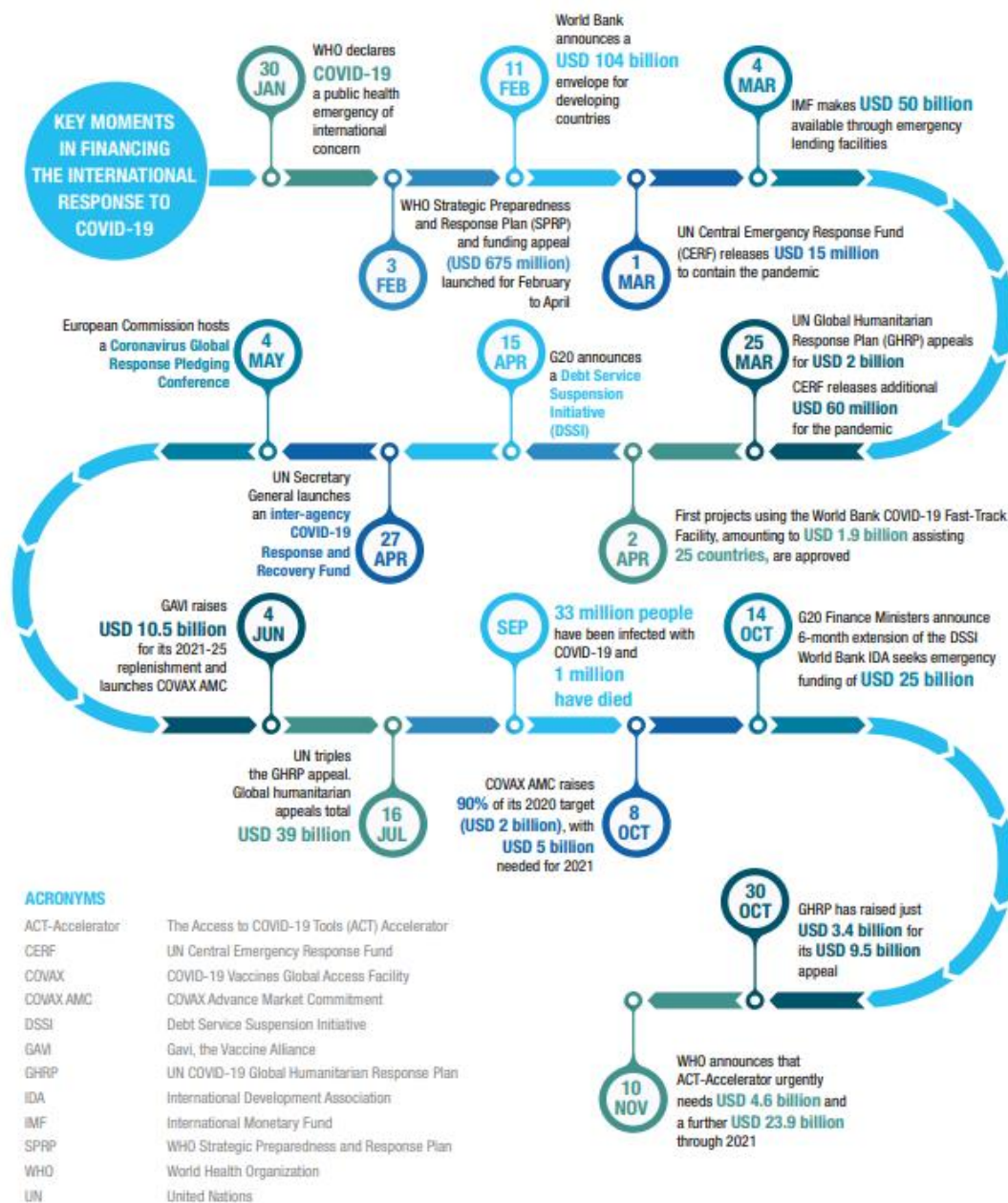
According to the OECD, the global response to support developing countries, despite promising early commitments for debt relief and emergency financing, is largely inadequate (OECD, 2020b). Without a significant scale-up of finance, pre-pandemic gaps in financing for sustainable development, stabilisation of

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fragile economies and humanitarian response, among other needs, will only continue to widen. There are signs that a funding crisis is on the horizon.

Devex analysis flags two key takeaways from the analysis of the COVID-19 humanitarian financing data: First, the available data indicates a relatively bleak picture: funding for the COVID-19 humanitarian response has not been at the scale, speed or flexibility required to meet increasing needs, nor has enough funding gone directly to NGO implementers with greatest access to hard-to-reach, vulnerable populations. Second, inadequate reporting has obscured a complete understanding of where and which organisations funding is flowing to, and how quickly it is actually being disbursed to implementing agencies. Norad's evaluation department has also conducted an initial analysis of Norway's funding, which flagged similar concerns about data (NORAD, 2020) and the COVID-19 Coalition's early synthesis report highlights these issues as well.

Figure 2: Key moments in financing the international response to COVID-19



Source: OECD (2020), Development Co-operation Report 2020: Learning from Crises, Building Resilience

EVALUATING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

As countries work together to respond to and mitigate the protracted health crisis, evaluations and reviews have become imperative. The lessons learned and evidence gathered aid in supporting a more effective response and provide a basis for building accountability for results.

Types of evaluation

A wide range of evaluative work is being undertaken nationally and globally. This includes country-level assessments, real-time evaluations and learning, institutional evaluations, project and programme evaluations, joint thematic evaluations, and system-wide evaluations. These evaluations aim, in one way or another, to understand the extent to which planned results have been achieved and how different efforts have contributed to address the health, social, and economic crises. These plans show a mix of “mandated” evaluations – evaluations that were automatically triggered due to the characteristics or significance of COVID-19 related work – as well as evaluation topics that have been proposed by evaluation units based on the perceived learning and accountability needs.

Another emerging area of work in addition to the progress monitoring efforts undertaken are the evidence synthesis, and lessons learned reviews (timely summaries of learnings from a wide range of global evaluations evidence based on the past responses to the pandemic) that are helping identify what has worked and what hasn't to inform better decision-making.

In addition, there is also scientific and academic research work ongoing on the effectiveness of public-health measures (lockdown policies, social-distancing behaviour), clinical management of COVID-19 and pandemic related conditions, diagnostics and health-system strengthening and management. The COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-making (COVID-END) hosts an inventory of evidence syntheses on COVID-19 covering the full spectrum of contexts where the pandemic response is playing out, including low-, middle- and high-income countries.

Evaluation topics

The preliminary analysis and insights as of November 2021 are as follows:

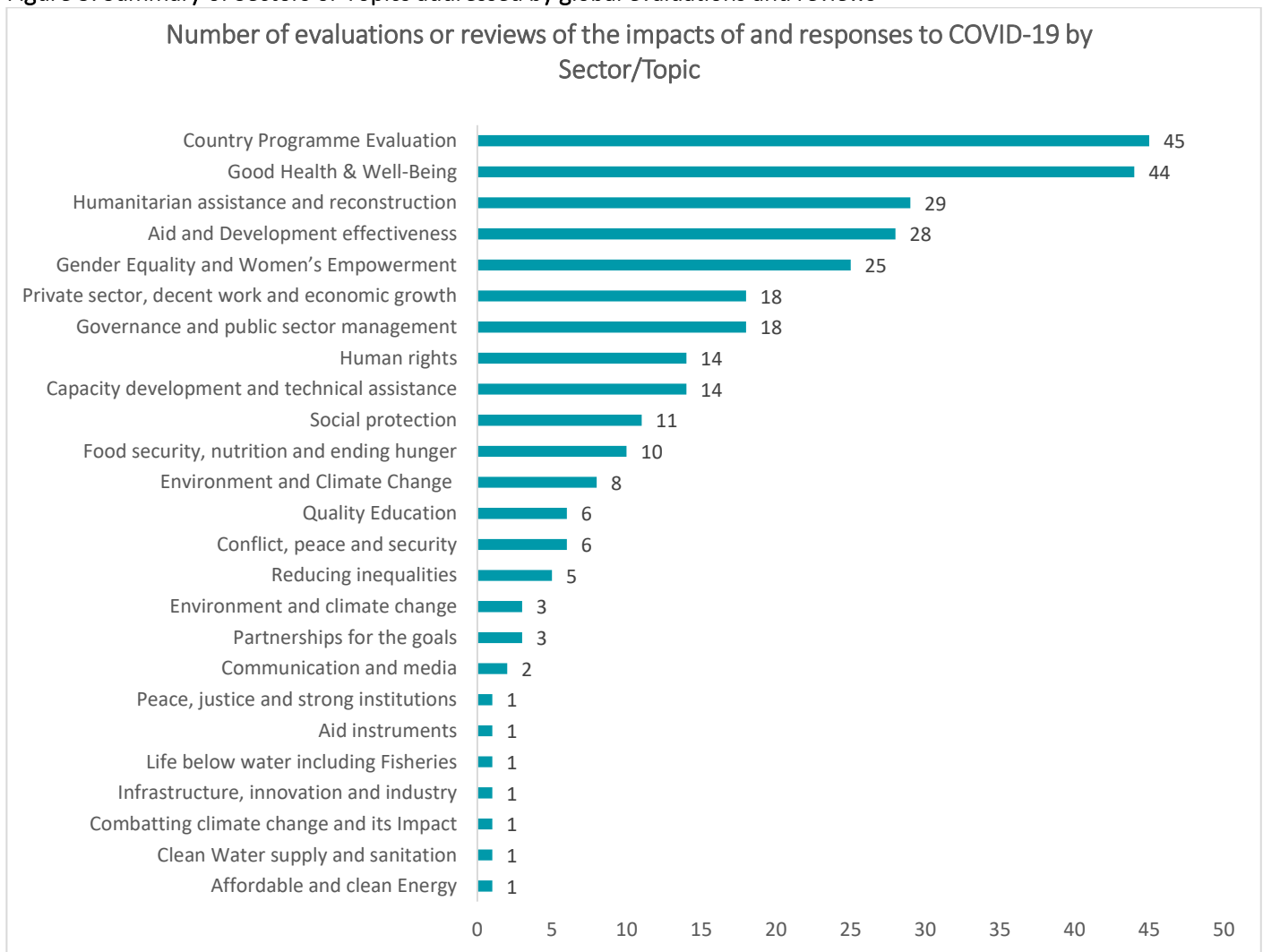
- 152 evaluations are planned globally or under-consideration focussing on COVID-19 response and recovery and 144 additional evaluations plan to cover questions related to COVID-19
- A substantial number of COVID-19 focussed evaluations are planned jointly (involving multiple countries or institutions)
- The main thematic areas of interest are Health and well-being, Humanitarian response, Effectiveness and Gender.
- Africa and Latin America are the most frequently mentioned regions of focus

It appears from a passing review that sectors such as Clean Water and Sanitation; Rural development; Trade; and Sustainable ecosystems; or topics like Inequalities or Protection of Vulnerable Groups, have been overlooked. However, one should take care in drawing conclusions about apparent gaps in topic coverage, given the limited information provided about the evaluations. Many evaluations (including those classified under “aid effectiveness” will in fact touch multiple sectors or topics).

The analysis presented here is based on the early evaluations plans shared voluntarily by the participants many of which are at the early stages of development (for instance, most did not include a terms of reference). These topics and focus areas may be better covered once evaluators develop plans that are more detailed.

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Figure 3: Summary of Sectors or Topics addressed by global evaluations and reviews



Source: COVID-19 Coalition Secretariat Evaluation Plans Database, November 2021

A. Project and programme evaluations (national and subnational)

Countries are in the process of establishing evaluation frameworks and accountability mechanisms to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness and impact of their national (and in many cases sub-national) COVID-19 programmes. Countries are now adopting operationally agile and decentralized evaluations methods to assess the effectiveness and results of policy measures including cash transfers, behaviour change communications, subsidies or support to protecting jobs, tax related measures, efforts to address increasing violence against women and children. A review of the International Initiative (3iE) for Impact Evaluation database identified some 30 COVID-related impact evaluations that are planned or ongoing. Bangladesh and Colombia have shared plans for a number of evaluations of their national COVID-related programmes including in social protection and business support. The OECD reports that governments are evaluating some of their education support, including effectiveness of remote learning tools.

Unfortunately, we suspect that many more evaluations have been conducted or are underway, but that most of these evaluations are not yet “on our radar”, primarily because they are commissioned or managed by decentralized evaluation units or partners outside of the Coalition.

Some of the evaluations and reviews already completed in this category include:

- impact evaluations of social protection and of tax related measures (VAT) by Colombia
- Do Human Restriction Mobility Policy in Indonesia Effectively Reduce the Spread of COVID-19? (Satyakti, Yayan)
- Behavioral Implementation and Compliance of Anti-Epidemic Policy in the COVID-19 Crisis (Fu, Chengzhe; Liao, Liao; Huang, Weijun)
- more than 20 programme-level evaluations from the International Labour Organization (ILO)
- the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) (United Kingdom) review of UK Aid spending and procurement
- real time assessment reports of country and regional offices (Latin America and Caribbean, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, Middle East and North Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa) of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

An initial survey of OECD governments identified some 60 evaluations of COVID-19 related measures among member governments (OECD, forthcoming). The main topics covered are:

- **Emergency preparedness:** Governments’ ability to anticipate the pandemic before it arises and be prepared in case of an emergency. This includes topics linked to disaster risk assessment, anticipation and foresight capacities, critical sector preparedness and procedures to follow in case of emergency.
- **Management of crisis response:** Policies and actions aimed at dealing with the crisis as it arises such as crisis communication, the governance arrangements countries have put in place to manage the crisis, and the measures deployed to coordinate a whole-of-society response.
- **Response and recovery:** Policies aimed at minimizing the impacts of the pandemic and economic crisis on citizens and businesses, and subsequently, supporting the economy for recovery and reducing welfare losses. These policies include lockdown and restriction measures taken in order to limit the spread of the virus, economic and financial support to households, businesses and markets to lessen the impact of the economic downturn, health measures aimed at protecting and treating the population, as well as social policies aimed at protecting the most vulnerable populations.

Box 1: The Impacts of Expanding Cash Transfers during a Pandemic: Evidence from Colombia’s Ingreso Solidario Program

Colombia launched the *Ingreso Solidario* (Solidarity Income), an unconditional cash transfer programme benefitting one million households in poverty during the pandemic. The program aimed at supporting the lower middle-income populations (2.6 million) that were not previously enrolled in other existing social assistance programs. The evaluation identified impacts on recipients’ financial health, food access and security, political attitudes, and other outcomes, providing valuable evidence to support ongoing social protection policy work.

Source: Londoño-Vélez and Querubin (2020)

B. Country or institutional response evaluations, syntheses and reviews

Some of the evaluations and reviews already completed in this category include:

- internal reviews by four bilateral agencies (unpublished)
- real-time evaluation by Enabel (Belgium)
- a review of 150-plus evaluations by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- process evaluation of three donor agencies’ responses in Bolivia

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- a real-time evaluation by the Independent Evaluation Department of the Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- fast-track assessment of the European Union (EU) initial response to the COVID-19 crisis in partner countries and regions unpublished summary (forthcoming)
- an internal stock-taking by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- several lessons learnt reports from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- real-time assessment of the UNICEF response to COVID-19: Global synthesis report
- early evaluation of the World Bank's COVID-19 response to save lives and protect poor and vulnerable people (forthcoming)

National evaluations

While some high level reports on the overall response of particular countries have been produced, many governments have not yet started to take stock (as the COVID-19 era continues). Those that have been conducted take the form of Parliamentary inquiries or similar exercises rather than formal evaluations.

Many national COVID-19 response plans in low and middle-income countries are executed through multi-sectorial, multi-partner co-ordination mechanisms, connecting COVID-related programmes and policies across most areas of government. We have so far not identified any evaluations of such mechanisms, though partners in Mozambique have shared lessons (OECD, 2020).

Development and humanitarian agency institutional evaluations

As listed above, bilateral and multilateral humanitarian and development agencies are conducting evaluations to understand the extent to which objectives and results were achieved and provide emerging lessons on the relevance of their support, the design and implementation of operations. Many are also focusing on internal lesson learning, with reviews and reflection exercises designed to assess overall institutional responses, including human resources, risk management, decision making, efficiency and speed of response, and the organisation's preparedness. Boxes 2 and 3 provide examples.

Box 2: Ireland's review of its Tanzania & the Great Lakes sub-Region Strategy 2017-21

Ireland commissioned a Review of its programme in Tanzania and the Great Lakes sub-region (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Seychelles, and Comoros) that sets out a strategic programme of work in agriculture, nutrition, health and governance. The programme supports cross-sectoral work in gender and environmental sustainability. The Review studies how the programme has aligned resources (influencing, financial, human), having a particular focus on women and girls, and what early signs of progress are evident in the positioning of gender equality and women's empowerment within the strategy delivery and how they responded to COVID-19.

Source: Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs (2021), Mission Strategy of the Embassy of Ireland, Tanzania 2017–2021.

Real-time Evaluations

Evaluation units are also working to provide evaluation evidence for the response as it is ongoing, making this "real time" evaluative work, in addition to the ex-post evaluations that will look at longer-term effects. The goal is to help shape ongoing and future support to developing member countries based on real-time evidence-informed policies. The real-time evaluation (RTE) methodology adopted is often used during periods of crisis or emergency, specifically to identify early lessons and provide feedback to decision makers while a response is ongoing. ALNAP has published a paper, "From Real Time Evaluation to Real Time Learning" which reviews the RTL approaches that have been adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic and draws out lessons and implications for future evaluation practice. Box 3 provides two examples.

Box 3: Real-time evaluations

3.1 Belgian Development Co-operation Evaluation

Enabel- Belgian Development Agency conducted a real-time evaluation of Belgian development cooperation in 14 partner countries to document Enabel's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in real time. The study assessed the effects of the pandemic and reviewed the relevance and coherence of Enabel's real-time response and interventions with focus on adaptability in responding to the health crisis. The evaluation includes a global analysis and covers three in-depth case studies (Benin, Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger). The key lessons learned emphasised on the merit of adaptability and flexibility in procedures, long-term programming, clear and simple communications strategy, close collaboration with central and decentralised institutional partners while implementation of a response and good relations between donor and development agencies.

Source: Enabel (2020), Results of the evaluation of Enabel's response to the Covid-19 pandemic

3.2 Real-Time Evaluation: ADB's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Independent Evaluation Department (IED) is conducting a real-time assessment of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide timely evidence on the implementation of ADB's interventions to address the health, social, and economic crises. The evaluation will analyse a range of evidence gathered from reports from developing member countries (DMCs), literature and project document reviews, interviews, data analysis, and country-level assessments.

Source: ADB (2020), Real-Time Evaluation: ADB's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

C. Joint Thematic Evaluations and Cross-Cutting Themes

Development and humanitarian evaluation units are collaborating to foster synergies and avoid duplication of work by planning joint evaluation efforts across cross-cutting thematic topics. The thematic areas of interest in these joint evaluations include humanitarian assistance, cash-transfers and social protection programmes, gender equality, vaccine equity, and coherence and effectiveness of COVID-19 response.

Many national and development cooperation response efforts have identified the COVID-19 recovery as a potential opportunity to support a climate resilient economy and the Coalition is currently conducting a scoping study on Building Back Greener as an expected topic of future joint evaluation.

Box 4: Joint Evaluation of the Protection of Rights of Refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic

A joint evaluation is carried out under the auspices of the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition by UNHCR, Finland, Colombia, Uganda and ALNAP to study how the COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the protection of the fundamental rights of refugees, and how effective international cooperation and the combined response of key actors has been to avoid exclusion and discrimination is ongoing. The purpose of the evaluation is to identify emerging good practices, innovations and adaptations to protection responses. The Reference Group is chaired by Susanna Moorehead, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Chair and Gillian Triggs, Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees. The findings of the evaluation are intended to be presented alongside the Global Compact Refugees high-level officials meeting at the end of 2021.

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Source: COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition (2020), *Joint Evaluation of the Protection of Rights of Refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic*

D. Global evaluations and other major accountability exercises

The following major global evaluations and reviews have been identified:

- **WHO-Independent Panel for Pandemic, Preparedness, and Response (IPPR):** An independent panel was established by the World Health Organization (WHO) in September 2020 to review the effectiveness, functioning and implementation of the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19. The panel examined the state of pandemic preparedness, global responses and its wide-ranging impacts and provided recommendations to improve capacity and build resilience for health system strengthening. The panel's report, "*COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic*" lauded the efforts of health care workers, rapid development of vaccines and open data and science collaboration however pointed at the inadequate and slow global funding, absence of coordinated global leadership, gaps in social protection policies and failures in preparedness, containment and quick response to the pandemic.
- **Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan:** An independent assessment of the collective results achieved by member organizations of the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)** to measure how humanitarian reform efforts have contributed and to review the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of funding spent against the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP). The evaluation is led by OCHA, with a Management Group comprising of ALNAP, ICVA, IOM, SCHR, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. The terms of reference document is finalised.
- **System-Wide Evaluation of the UNDS Response to COVID-19 and MPTFs:** A coherent system-wide evaluation is planned of the United Nations Development Systems (UNDS) response at the country level to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 including evaluation of the coherence and strategic relevance of the role played by the pooled funds in support of the UN Country Teams (UNCT) response. The evaluation will address the extent to which UNCTs have been able, through the socio-economic response plans (SERP) and the cooperation frameworks (CF) achieve or maintain a coherent and sustained focus on progress toward the achievement of SDGs during the pandemic and how effective Multi-Partner Trust Funds such as the Joint SDG Fund, the Spotlight Initiative Fund, and the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund and pooled financing instruments have been for mobilizing resources and planning and implementing programs. The Terms of Reference (TOR) document covering the objectives, scope and methodological approaches is finalised (UN, 2021c).
- **Evaluation of COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund (COVID-19 SRF):** United Nations Foundation (UNF) and the Evaluation Office of the World Health Organization (WHO) will be jointly managing the evaluation of COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund. The evaluations aims to assess the architecture, functioning and results of the fund to date including the extent to which the Fund has responded to needs, what it has achieved, and how efficiently it has operated. The evaluation will document achievements, best practices, challenges, gaps, and areas for improvement; assess factors responsible for achievements and for gaps; and make recommendations related to the planned closure of the Fund and the set-up and administration of a similar fund.

- **Multi-stage evaluation of COVAX:** GAVI is planning a multistage and multiyear evaluation focusing on the process, governance, impact and design of Advance Market Commitments (AMC) and COVAX (Gavi, 2021b). The first evaluation focusses on the evaluability, evaluation design and baseline. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a foundational component to help inform, steer and shape future evaluation work and provide an independent assessment of the state of readiness / evaluability for an evaluation of the COVAX Facility and COVAX AMC, with suggestions on areas to strengthen / prepare to facilitate good quality future evaluation and learning work. GAVI is also conducting an evaluation of its initial response to COVID-19 under the Respond and Protect program and the design, roll out, and implementation of its Maintain, Restore, and Strengthen (M&R&S) program.
- **MOPAN (OECD) study on the Multilateral System and COVID -19:** Analytical study to identify how new and existing co-ordination mechanisms were used to promote coherence across Multilateral Organizations at the headquarters (HQ) level and the country level and what innovations, barriers and constraints can be observed. The study is implemented in two phases- the first phase will describe how the multilateral system has coordinated to respond to COVID-19, identifying strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. The second will delve deeper into constraints and enablers of coordination. The study will look at the implications for the next phase of pandemic preparedness and response as a global public good.

Box 5: Review of the functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) during the COVID-19 Response

The WHO Director-General convened a review committee in September 2020 under the International Health Regulations (IHR) to initiate an impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation of the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19. The aim is to review the functioning of the IHR during the COVID-19 response and the status of implementation of the relevant recommendations of previous IHR Review Committees. The report published on April 2021 emphasised the need for robust accountability mechanism for evaluating and improving compliance with IHR obligations, early response and timely actions, international coordination and cooperation and sustainable financing.

Source: WHO (2021g), IHR review

E. Results-based monitoring efforts

Owing to the protracted nature of the pandemic, a wide range of monitoring efforts are established to ensure transparency and track real-time results and inform decision making.

- **COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** aims to assess performance and provide recorded information to support analysis of progress against the COVID-19 SPRP and related Strategy Update, across the eight pillars of the public health response. Its main objective is to establish and maintain **a set of global and country indicators to support strategic thinking, operational tracking, real-time evidence-based decision making and advocacy and transparency between countries/territories/areas, donors, UN agencies and partners** involved in the response. The real-time dashboard provides a global overview of the resources deployed, risk communication, infection control, laboratories set up, operational support and logistics and country/area level coordination, planning and monitoring (WHO, 2021e).

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- **Independent Oversight Advisory Committee of the WHO's Emergencies Programme** provides oversight and monitoring of the development and performance of the programme and guides the activities. The committee submitted the Interim report on WHO's response to COVID-19 (WHO, 2020).
- **Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB)** is an independent monitoring and accountability body created in May 2018 and co-convened by WHO and World Bank in response to recommendations by the UN Secretary General's Global Health Crises Task Force to ensure preparedness for global health crises. The GPMB's annual report overviews the status of the world's preparedness and response capacity to disease outbreaks, monitoring the progress of relevant research and development, and making specific high-level recommendations. The GPMB released its second report, "*A World in Disorder*" in September 2020 providing an assessment of the global COVID-19 response and urging for five actions to improve effectiveness of health response-responsible leadership, engaged citizenship, agile systems for health security, sustained investment, and robust global governance for preparedness (Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, 2020).

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HOW ARE THE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS BEING EVALUATED?

Annex 1: Data Collection framework

Evaluation title	
Agency(s)/Entity(s)	
Start year	
End year	
Partner country(s)/Region(s)	
Sector (list provided)	Communication, Conflict, Debt, Economy, Environment, Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, Other, Social Development & Health Services
Topic (list provided)	Affordable and clean Energy, Agriculture and rural development, Aid and Development effectiveness, Capacity development and technical assistance, Clean Water supply and sanitation, Communication and media, Conflict, peace and security, Country Programme Evaluation, Environment and Climate Change, Life below water including Fisheries, Food security, nutrition and ending hunger, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, Good Health & Well-Being, Governance and public sector management, Human rights, Humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, Infrastructure, innovation and industry, Microfinance and financial services, Partnerships for the goals, Poverty reduction, Private sector, decent work and economic growth, Quality Education, Reducing inequalities, Regional programme, Responsible consumption and production, Sustainable Ecosystems and land use, Vocational Training, COVID-19, Conserve and sustainable use of oceans and maritime resources, Peace, justice and strong institutions, Civil Society, Budget Support, Debt related action, Multilateral aid, Triangular Cooperation, Combatting climate change and its Impact, Aid instruments
COVID-19 (select from drop-down)	Evaluation of COVID-19 response/recovery (focus), Evaluation will include some questions on COVID-19, Evaluation is unrelated to / unaffected by COVID-19, Evaluation delayed due to COVID-19, Evaluation will look at COVID-19 as a contextual factor, No response
Status (select from drop-down)	Completed, Ongoing, Finalising
Contact Person (for internal use only)	
Email ID	
Link to Agency Evaluation Portal (URL)/TORs	

Annex 2: About the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition

The COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition (the Coalition) is a network of the independent evaluation units of countries, UN organisations, international NGOs and multilateral institutions that provides credible evidence to inform international co-operation responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, thus helping to ensure that lessons are learned and that the global development community delivers on its promises. The Coalition has 56 participants (as of September 2021) and is led by a core group made up of the evaluation units of: the ADB, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, UNDP, UNICEF, the United States, and the WHO (observer). The OECD Development Cooperation Directorate (EvalNet Secretariat) and the ALNAP Secretariat provide research, communication and facilitation support to the Coalition.

The Coalition has taken a phased and modular approach to support individual and collaborative evaluations and syntheses and to inform real-time COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The Coalition is supporting several different types of evaluative work, both individual and collective. The first phase of work focused on drawing evidence from past evaluations to inform the COVID-19 response and recovery; the Coalition published five Lessons from Evaluation briefs. In early 2021, the work began to shift into a new phase focused on evaluating the current response and recovery efforts and supporting real-time learning.

Coalition participants are planning more than 250 COVID-19-specific evaluations. Future work in 2021 and beyond will evaluate the overall response, consolidate learning and inform future pandemic responses. This will include additional syntheses that capture lessons on key themes.



This paper has been produced by the evaluators of the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition.

Comments on this paper are welcome and may be sent to the Secretariat:

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