



# BUILD THE FUTURE

 UNOPS

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# OUR PRIORITIES

/ Our priorities are guided by our mission to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development. © UNOPS/Ricci Shryock





# A YEAR OF RESILIENCE, OF COMING TOGETHER

Words by Grete Faremo

2020 was a truly remarkable year, forever to be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lives and livelihoods were lost, economies were disrupted at unprecedented levels, and the progress made under the 2030 Agenda came under threat. At UNOPS, we sadly lost ten colleagues to this devastating pandemic: four members of UNOPS personnel and six colleagues who worked on behalf of our partners.

But 2020 was also a year of resilience, of coming together to find solutions, and responding to our biggest challenges. UNOPS was quick to adapt to the reality of COVID-19 and help our partners prepare, respond and recover. In 2020, our total delivery of projects around the world exceeded \$2.2 billion. We agreed almost \$900 million in COVID-19 response and recovery activities with partners over the course of the year, of which, more than \$200 million has been delivered.

Our focus remains resolutely on implementation. Our annual sustainability report is testament to the impact of our work: Across more than 80 countries, UNOPS-supported projects created more than 3 million days of paid work for local people. Of these, 850,000 were for women and 2.5 million were for men.





© UNOPS

**Grete Faremo**  
Under-Secretary-General and UNOPS  
Executive Director

Across the world, our common future will be defined by how we respond to climate change. In the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, we face an “environmental emergency.” To prevent the worst impacts of climate change, we need to “reset our relationship with nature.” Measuring the sustainability of our operations is crucial, and we have now reported on this for the fifth consecutive year through Global Reporting Initiative standards. This is how we contribute to a common framework, which serves to better understand the impact of our work on the health of our planet.

With our explicit mandate in infrastructure, we have strengthened our capability to champion the cause of quality infrastructure. Our infrastructure decisions today matter immensely. We face a critical juncture: Our world’s infrastructure needs are unprecedented and the resources available are limited. We need infrastructure that is resilient and can adapt and scale in the face of a changing climate, to help countries deliver on a vision for their future infrastructure, aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

When it comes to our central role in procurement, beyond the provision of goods and services, UNOPS believes there is a huge unrealized potential in using public procurement to accelerate progress to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Public spending accounts for 15–30 per cent of GDP in most countries. The sheer scale of this purchase power is a force for change. By improving the way public funds are spent, nations can enhance transparency and ensure fair competition. With greener supply chains, social and environmental safeguards can be built into the process, aiding critical efforts to combat climate change. Improved public spending can also help drive equality. By using

procurement as a policy tool, jobs and equal economic opportunity for all genders and ethnicities can be created. Workers’ rights and better employment conditions can be secured, allowing everyone a chance to prosper. UNOPS is committed to supporting governments to realize the immense potential of public procurement.

2020 also saw continued efforts by UNOPS to serve as a bridge towards the private sector, in order to expand the pool of resources available to deliver on the SDGs. Following the Secretary-General’s Financing for Development strategy, we will continue our Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation journey, to bring resources and expertise from the private sector to address the immense challenges of the 2030 Agenda.

We have also made great strides in achieving gender parity across our workforce. At the time of this report, more than 47 per cent of our personnel are women and make up 42 per cent of leadership roles. We still have progress to make in our journey to being a more equal organization, but this represents a significant achievement, even if long overdue. Moving forward, we want to ensure a broader, more diverse, and more inclusive approach.

We remain committed to ensuring that our work advances gender equality in the communities that we serve.

As we look to the future, the lessons of 2020 will be paramount in our minds. Now more than ever, we need to work together to build a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient world. Together, we can build a better future for all.

# STANDING TOGETHER TO TACKLE COVID-19

/ UNOPS supplied Ukraine's national police force with €500,000 worth of equipment and supplies to aid COVID-19 response efforts. © UNOPS



For billions of people across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic brought life as they knew it to a stop.

At UNOPS, our ways of working changed too. But our focus remained resolutely on saving and improving lives.

On behalf of our partners, UNOPS has been working to support COVID-19 response and recovery efforts around the world.

In the midst of the global pandemic in 2020, we agreed almost \$900 million worth of projects in support of the COVID-19 response, helping countries address their most pressing needs and mitigating the long-term impacts of the pandemic.



Here are some examples:

- In Myanmar, the UNOPS-managed Access to Health Fund – funded by the United Kingdom, Sweden, the United States and Switzerland – helped improve the country's testing capacity by procuring test kits
- In Brazil, funded by the government of Japan, UNOPS supported COVID-19 response efforts by procuring medical equipment for public hospitals across the country
- In Argentina, UNOPS supported the government in all aspects of COVID-19 response, from building 11 hospitals across four provinces using state-of-the-art technology, to procuring ventilators, face masks and diagnostic kits
- In the Western Balkans, funded by the European Union, we supported COVID-19 response and recovery efforts, from helping procure emergency supplies and equipment, to supporting stronger health systems in the longer term
- In Iraq, funded by the World Bank, UNOPS supported the Ministry of Health and Environment by procuring equipment and supplies through an emergency procurement procedure to support the country's COVID-19 response
- In a number of Small Island Developing States, we helped accelerate response efforts thanks to our ability to provide rapid and effective procurement services in complex and remote environments

And in addition to work based in countries, we undertook a number regional and global initiatives:

- In the Horn of Africa, with funding from the European Union, we have been supporting the Intergovernmental Authority on Development tackle the health and socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across eight countries. Here, UNOPS manages projects aimed at supporting migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and cross-border communities
- With funding from the Korea International Cooperation Agency, we are procuring medical supplies and equipment – including personal protective equipment and COVID-19 test kits – for the governments of Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. This is also allowing us to support the Ethiopia-based Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, which will support COVID-19 response efforts in a further 12 countries in Africa.
- And we worked with the Universal Postal Union, a specialized agency of the United Nations, to procure and distribute personal protective equipment for postal workers in least developed countries. This crucial work is helping protect postal workers who are critical to supply chain networks during this pandemic, but can be highly exposed.

Continuing to strengthen the capacity of healthcare services will be crucial for governments in the months ahead. As vaccination efforts are expanded, strong collaboration between all stakeholders – including the public and private sectors – is crucial to ensure that everyone receives vital COVID-19 vaccines. No one is safe, until everyone is safe.

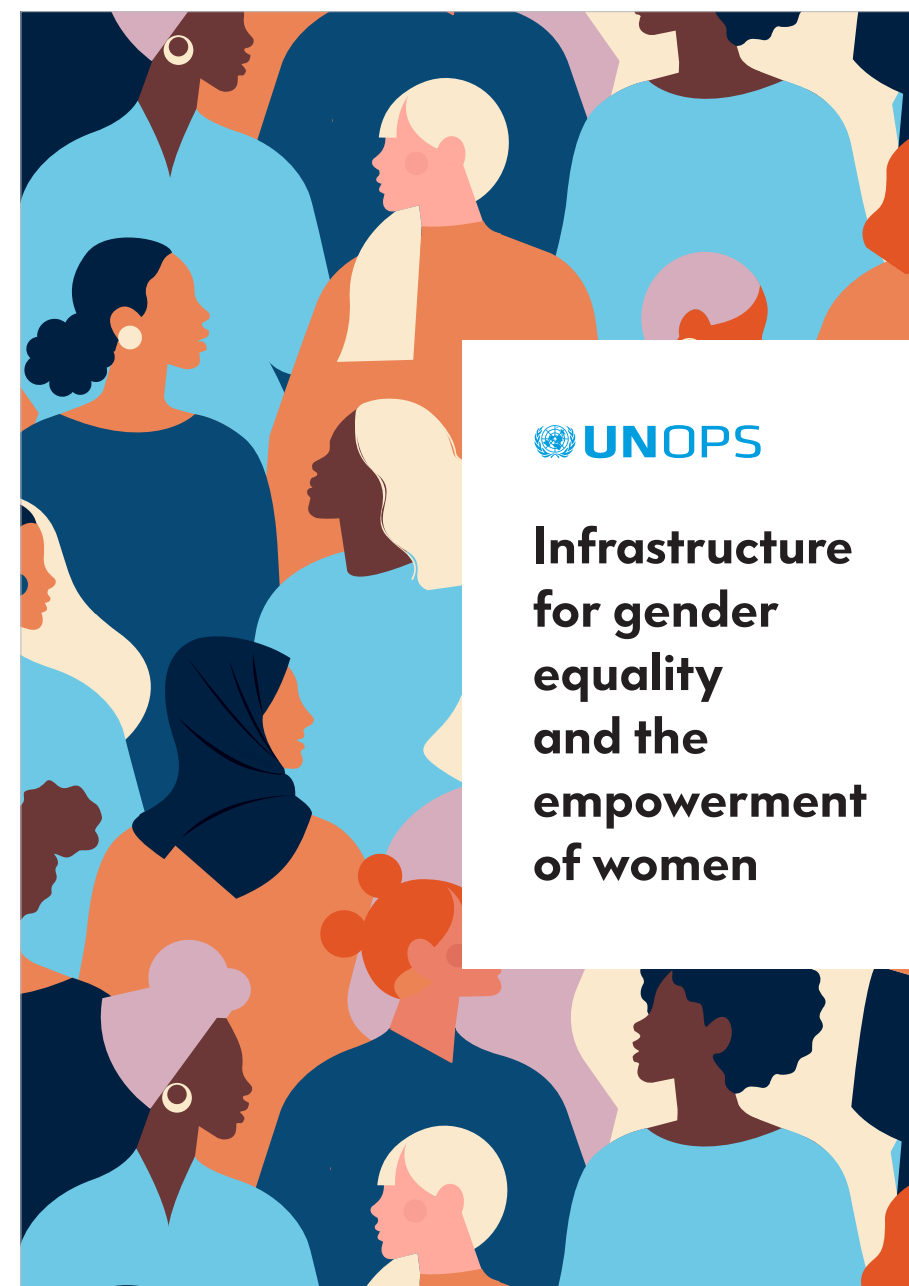
From strengthening health systems, to scaling up vaccination efforts, we need a unified global response, to defeat this virus. UNOPS continues to support our partners, to ensure that everyone, everywhere, gets access to the healthcare they deserve.



### **The future of public spending: responses to COVID-19**

Research by The Economist Intelligence Unit, supported by UNOPS, explores how the COVID-19 crisis presents a unique opportunity for governments to ensure public procurement is more inclusive, sustainable and transparent in the future.

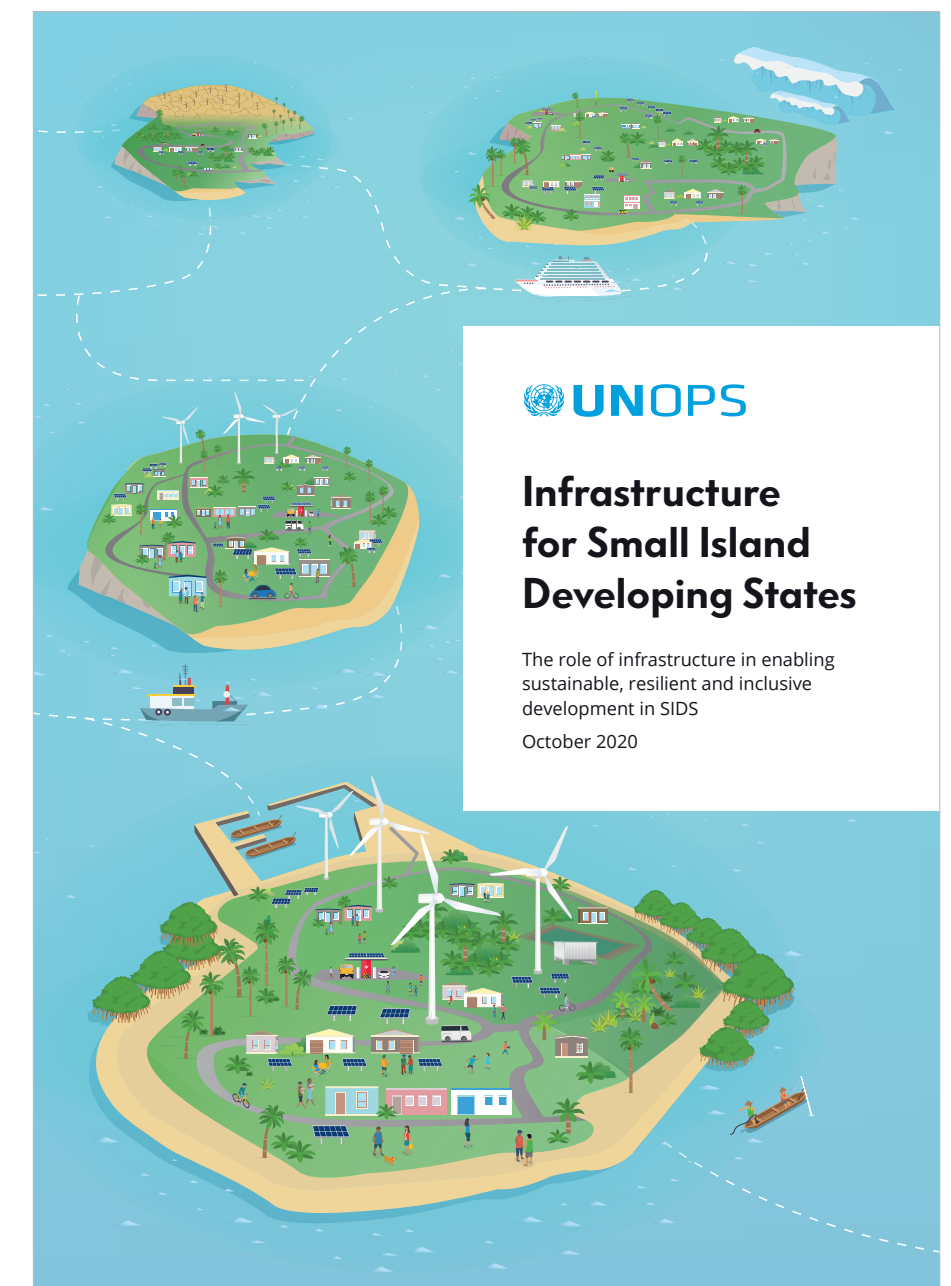
[Read the report online](#)



### **Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women**

The report calls on the global community to change the way infrastructure is planned, delivered and managed to empower women and girls and take us one step closer to realizing the 2030 Agenda.

[Read the report online](#)




### **Infrastructure for Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**

The report highlights ways SIDS can harness their unique resources to help islands overcome vulnerabilities, advance development and reap long-term benefits from infrastructure investments.

[Read the report online](#)





Today's world requires new approaches and partnerships that harness the potential of technological change. UNOPS, with a mandate in infrastructure, is a vital part of this future.

By demonstrating how solutions can be delivered on the ground, UNOPS makes a meaningful contribution, bringing innovation to bear as we strive to build a better future for all."

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General

# Our partners

UNOPS is dedicated to supporting its partners by providing services that increase the effectiveness of peace and security, humanitarian and development projects worldwide.

To advance the 2030 Agenda and support the achievement of the SDGs, we aim to engage in collaborative partnerships with a focus on sharing our expertise in infrastructure, project management, procurement, human resources and financial services.

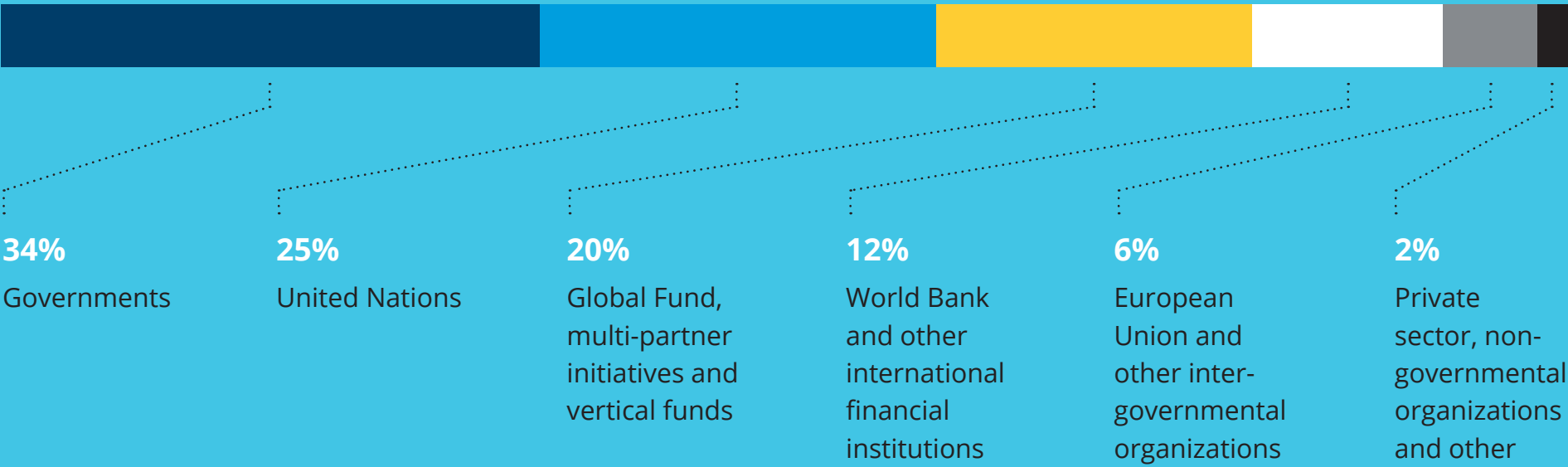
Our partners choose to work with us to complement or expand their own capacities, reduce risks, bring an impartial and trusted advisor, and improve efficiency, speed, quality and/or cost-effectiveness.

UNOPS is highly motivated to meet the expectations of its partners, and as a service provider, our partners' priorities

and needs dictate the scope, focus and location of our work. Whether building on current partnerships or creating trust in new ones, UNOPS aims to ensure that mutual understanding and the pursuit of common goals underscore all of our relationships.

UNOPS support to governments in 2020 represented \$750 million of our portfolio, demonstrating a clear demand for our services. Government partners included Argentina, Canada, Guatemala, Honduras, Japan, Myanmar, Norway, Peru, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Within the UN family, which represented 25 per cent of our portfolio, our largest partner was the UN Secretariat, specifically the Department of Peace Operations, to which we provided a range of services.





# Sustainability

Sustainability is at the forefront of UNOPS work around the world. We aim to help our partners maximize the positive impact and sustainability of their projects, to better serve communities in need.

**/** In The Gambia, UNOPS is supporting the government to address environmental and socio-economic challenges associated with urbanization, ensuring women are part of the process. © UNOPS/Jason Florio





# How we measure our success

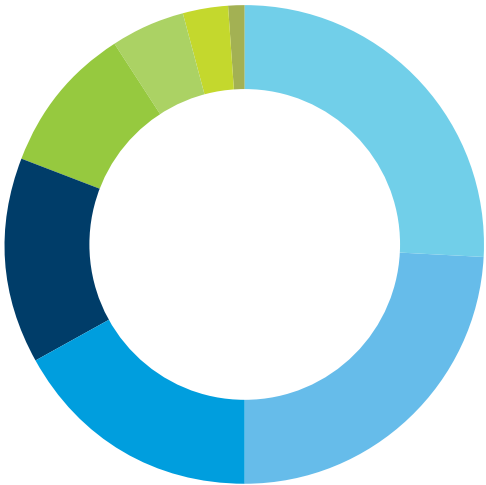
The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework measures the impact of UNOPS work on the environment and the societies in which we work, underscoring how our operations contribute to sustainable development around the world.

Through GRI, we speak a common reporting language to both those inside and outside of the United Nations. Here, we reaffirm our commitment to measuring ourselves against international standards.

Full details of how we assess our work against GRI standards, including all relevant topics, indicators and datasets, are available in the GRI index, which accompanies this report.



- 1. Improved irrigation infrastructure in Niger will help ensure farmers like Hamza have enough water to irrigate their lands. © UNOPS/Ricci Shryock
- 2. Newly constructed water points have helped improve access to clean water for communities living in remote areas of East Darfur. © UNOPS/Elise Laker
- 3. New school facilities are benefiting more than 24,000 Afghan children, including 14,500 girls. © UNOPS



Emissions by source, 2020

|     |                    |
|-----|--------------------|
| 26% | Vehicle fleet      |
| 24% | Fuel combustion    |
| 17% | Air travel         |
| 14% | Electricity        |
| 10% | Refrigerants       |
| 5%  | Entitlement travel |
| 3%  | Steam for heating  |
| 1%  | Public transport   |



The jobs we create

Our commitment to sustainability is underlined by the jobs we create in the communities where we work.

In 2020, over 3 million days of paid work were created through projects we supported and of these, 850,000 were for women and 2.5 million were for men. The majority of this was related to our work in infrastructure.

By providing employment opportunities to local people, we help support more sustainable outcomes. And by providing an income and training people in important skills, we increase the potential for future employment, as well as the chance that these salaries are spent locally.

The knowledge we bring

We contribute to social sustainability and national capacity by passing on technical skills and experience to the people we work with on the ground.

We take pride in the fact that our expertise is grounded in international best practices.

In 2020, we provided over 38,000 days of technical advice to stakeholders across a range of our projects.



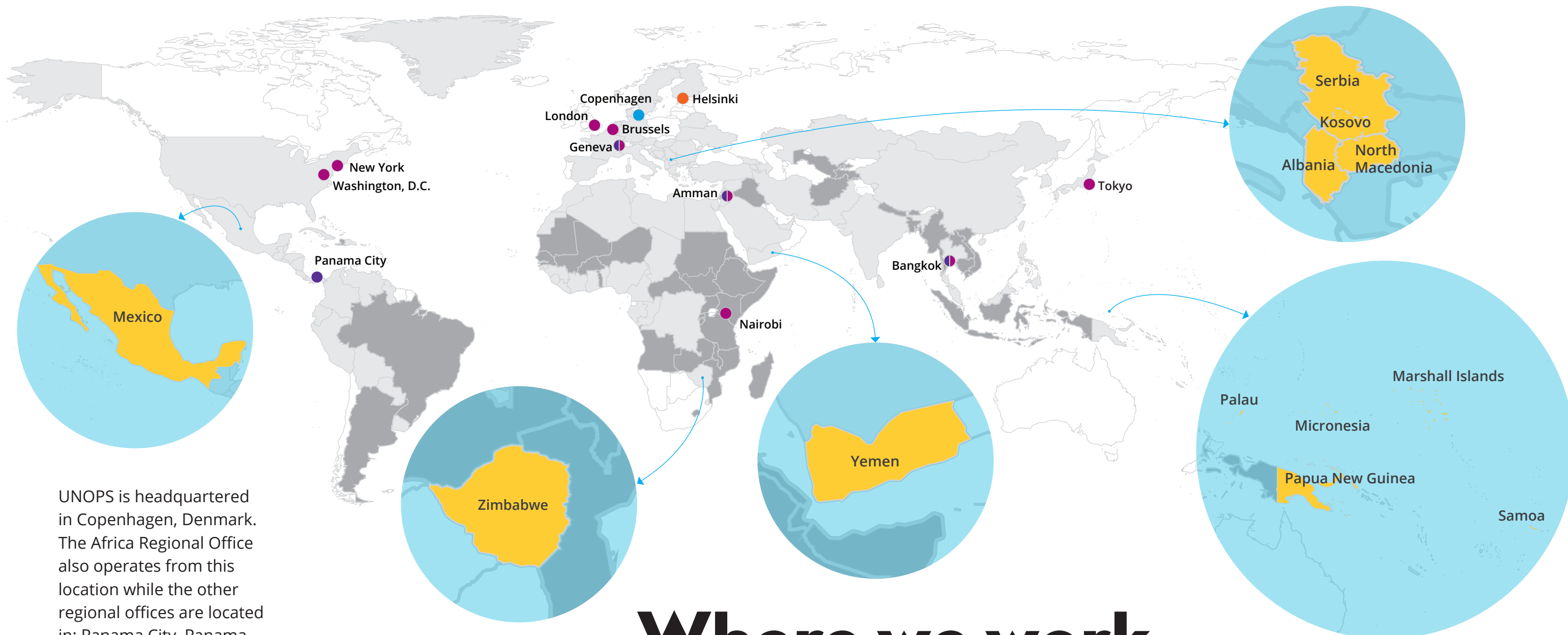
Building local economies

One of the most reliable ways we help develop local economies is through our expertise in procurement. We encourage local procurement across all of our projects and track these results.

In 2020, almost \$600 million worth of procurement activities went to local suppliers. The use of local suppliers reduced emissions produced during transportation, in turn, reducing the total environmental impact. In addition, these activities directly supported local businesses, ensuring that we help our partners strengthen local and national capacity within the same communities.

Our climate

UNOPS has been climate neutral since 2012. To achieve this, we carefully monitor the effect we have on the environment. Measuring our impact on the planet is a foundation of sustainability. In 2020, UNOPS operations emitted 9,316 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, the common unit for describing greenhouse gas emissions. In comparison, 14,128 tonnes were reported in 2019. All of UNOPS emissions are offset using certified emission reductions, with Gold Standard certification developed under the United Nations Clean Development Mechanism.



UNOPS is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Africa Regional Office also operates from this location while the other regional offices are located in: Panama City, Panama (for Latin America and the Caribbean); Amman, Jordan (for the Middle East); Bangkok, Thailand (for Asia and the Pacific); and Geneva, Switzerland (for Europe and Central Asia).

UNOPS supports partners across the globe, working in some of the most challenging and complex environments. In 2020, our personnel were present in more than 80 countries.

UNOPS has liaison offices that help facilitate our global outreach, including in Amman, Copenhagen, Bangkok, Brussels, Geneva, London, Nairobi, New York, Tokyo and Washington, D.C. UNOPS Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3I) office is in Helsinki.

- UNOPS HQ, which includes the Africa Regional Office
- Liaison offices
- Regional offices
- UNOPS S3I office

*This map is for illustrative purposes and does not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of UNOPS concerning the legal status of any country or territory or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries.*

2020 countries and territories of delivery

**Standing together to tackle COVID-19**

In the midst of the global pandemic in 2020, we agreed almost \$900 million worth of projects in support of the COVID-19 response, helping countries address their most pressing needs and mitigating the long-term impacts of the pandemic. See page 4

Mexico – A powerful tool for positive change  
See page 19

The Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa – Pacific Small Island Developing States' unique position in the pandemic  
See page 22

Albania, Kosovo,\* North Macedonia, Serbia – Strengthening responses to COVID-19 in the Western Balkans  
See page 25

Yemen – Finding light amid Yemen's darkest times  
See page 29

Zimbabwe – Supporting post-disaster recovery in Zimbabwe  
See page 33

*\*referred to throughout in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)*

# Where we work



# UNOPS

/ In 2020, we delivered over \$2.2 billion worth of projects on behalf of our partners. © UNOPS/Jason Florio

Our **mission** is to help people build better lives and countries achieve peace and sustainable development.

Our **vision** is a world where people can live full lives supported by appropriate, sustainable and resilient infrastructure and by the efficient, transparent use of public resources in procurement and project management.







# How we work

We are focused on implementation, committed to UN values and private sector efficiency. We are the only part of the UN not receiving core funding.

Our partners call on us to supplement their own capacities, improve efficiency and transparency, reduce risks, boost cost-effectiveness and increase quality.

**In 2020, UNOPS delivered over \$2.2 billion worth of projects on behalf of our partners.**

**1.** More than 120 projects supporting COVID-19 response efforts are underway or completed in over 70 countries and territories. © Getty Images/ Peter Cade  
**2.** Phyu Phyu Htway and her son pictured at a new healthcare

centre in Kyaikhto Village, Mon State. © UNOPS/ Sebastian Higginson  
**3.** Residents of Saint-Louis, Senegal help build temporary shelters for people who have lost their homes to floods. © UNOPS/ Aldi Diassé





## / UNOPS in numbers

more than

**\$1.3 billion**

worth of goods and  
services were procured  
for our partners

almost

**\$600 million**

worth of procurement  
budgets went to  
local suppliers

over

**3 million**

days of paid work  
were created for  
beneficiaries

more than

**2,300 kilometres**

of roads constructed  
or rehabilitated

**114 schools**

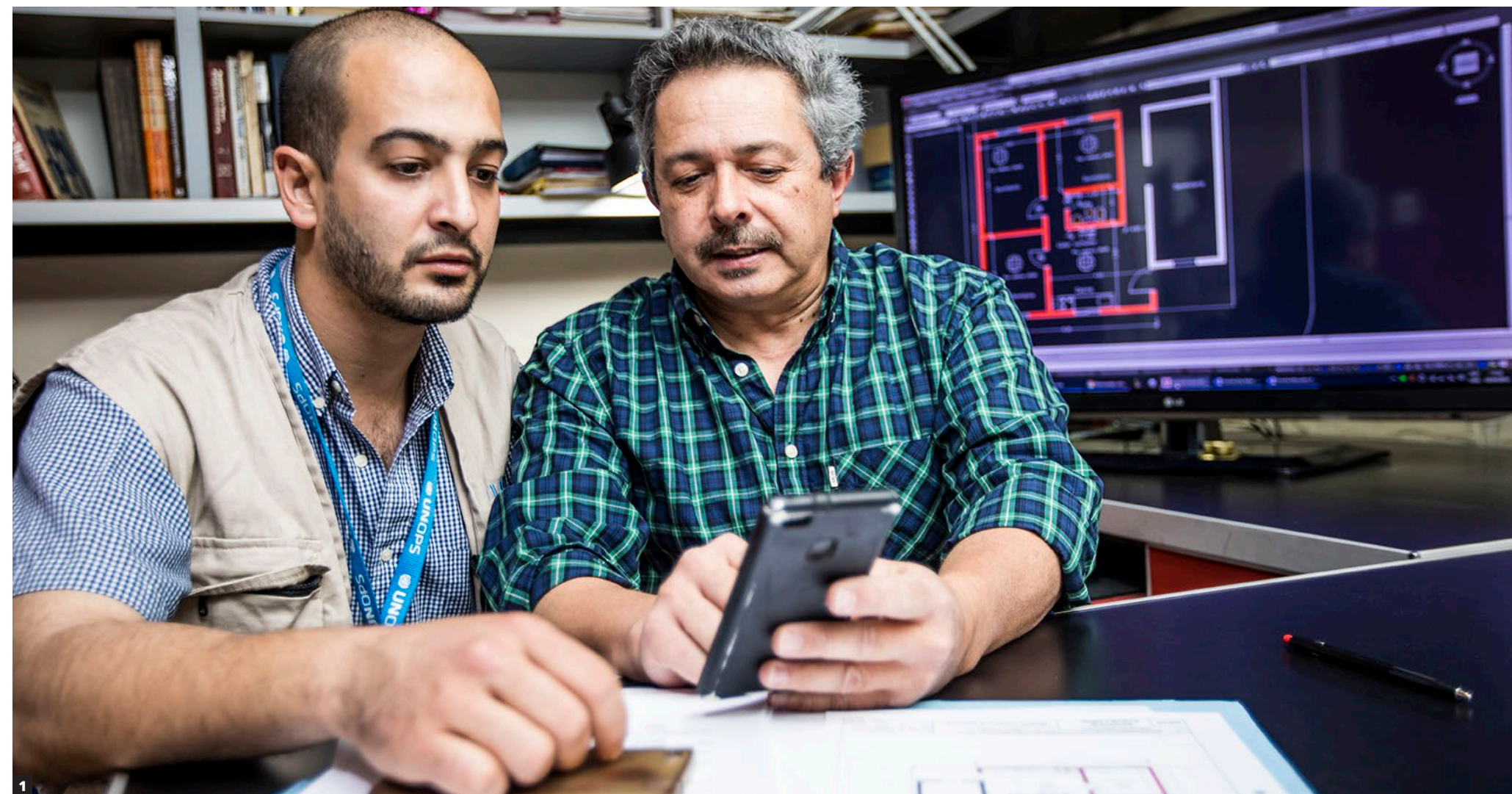
constructed or rehabilitated

# Our services

Each of our service lines has a focus on sustainability and national capacity development. Our financing model promotes lean, effective delivery. Our flexible structure and global reach means that we can quickly respond to partner needs while gaining the benefits of economies of scale. We tailor support to the needs of our partners, delivering a key element of a project, offering expert advice, or managing entire projects or programmes.

**1.** UNOPS architects at work designing new social housing for families in Argentina. © UNOPS/John Rae

**2.** A schoolgirl drinks water at a newly constructed water point in East Darfur. © UNOPS/Elise Laker







## Our main areas of expertise include:

### Infrastructure

We plan, design, construct and maintain a wide range of sustainable and resilient infrastructure solutions.

From transport, energy, health and education infrastructure, to advising governments on ways to make infrastructure more effective, our experts can help improve the outcomes on investments in infrastructure, for the benefit of local populations and national development.

### Project management

We manage projects and programmes of every size while simultaneously enhancing the capacity of developing countries to manage their own initiatives.

With more than 25 years of experience gained through thousands of projects, UNOPS brings the agility and technical expertise needed to get the project done – on cost, on schedule and meeting quality requirements.

### Procurement

Through transparent and effective methods, we specialize in finding new ways to help governments make public procurement more efficient. We are experts in rapid and

transparent procurement, whatever the size, scale, product or service you need.

We advise governments to ensure that public procurement reaps benefits for the whole of society. This includes providing solutions to address fraud and corruption, increasing competitiveness and effectiveness.

### Financial management

We have provided trustee and fund management services totalling more than \$2 billion on behalf of governments and multilateral institutions since 2010.

Our services include managing grants and pooled funds and providing advice and oversight for project and programme budgets.

### Human resources

We offer flexible and tailored human resources solutions to UN partners where speed and efficiency are essential.

We provide specialist human resources support in peace and security contexts, during rapidly changing humanitarian emergencies, or for longer-term development, based on the needs of partners.

# How we contribute

UNOPS contributes to broader efforts to help partners realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through three focus areas:

**Enable partners to do more with less** through efficient management support services, delivered locally or as global shared services.

For example, UNOPS supports mine-action, humanitarian, stabilization and explosive management activities, as well as capacity-building on national actors and United Nations missions, and the weapons and ammunition management work of the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and partners in 19 countries and territories around the world. Totalling around \$240 million, UNOPS helped its main partner, UNMAS, deliver a range of results, including:

- In the Central African Republic, 23 armouries and temporary storage kits were constructed and rehabilitated and training was provided to 52 officers in weapons and ammunition management and explosive ordnance disposal.

- In Iraq, over 1,000,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared by rendering safe 766 units of explosive ordnance, 27 improvised explosive devices (IEDs), 289 victim-operated IEDs and 78 explosive remnants of war.
- In Libya, technical assistance and specialized training was provided to national authorities on physical stockpile management and countering the proliferation of illicit weapons.
- In Somalia, specialized training was delivered to almost 4,500 troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on subjects ranging from IED threat awareness to search and detection.

**Help people achieve individual, local, national and global objectives** through effective specialized technical expertise grounded in international norms and standards.

In Senegal, as part of the \$30 million World Bank-funded Saint-Louis Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project, UNOPS is implementing the \$2.3 million Relocation of the Displaced Populations of the Langue de Barbarie Project, in partnership with the government. As part of the project, more than 400 shelters will be built which will provide housing to more than 1,400 people, as well as serve as a temporary school and be used for offices. Together with the government, UNOPS has developed designs for a permanent settlement for the people displaced from the Langue de Barbarie. In 2020, 62 per cent of UNOPS infrastructure projects reported an output enabling equal access, 57 per cent enabled equal access for women, and 26 per cent enabled equal access for persons with disabilities.

**Support countries in expanding the pool and effectiveness of resources available to achieve the 2030 Agenda.** UNOPS is working to further partnerships between the public and private sectors. One way we do this is by partnering with private sector organizations whose resources and expertise can complement our work in countries and regions around the world.

For example, UNOPS continued to develop its Sustainable Investments in Infrastructure and Innovation (S3I) initiative and explore opportunities for collaborative partnerships to mobilize alternative funding sources for the 2030 Agenda, particularly in the areas of affordable housing, renewable energy, and water and sanitation.

In 2020, UNOPS S3I committed to building more than 250,000 sustainable and affordable homes in Guinea and Ekiti State, Nigeria, working closely with the respective governments. The homes will incorporate green technology and will be built using local skills and equipment, providing thousands of new employment opportunities for local people and contributing to local economic development. UNOPS has committed to help build more than 1.3 million homes over the next decade, in Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, India, Pakistan and across the Caribbean.



# OUR PROJECTS

## CASE STUDIES

1. Mexico
2. The Pacific
3. Western Balkans
4. Yemen
5. Zimbabwe

Children collect water at a camp for people displaced by floods in Saint-Louis, Senegal. © UNOPS/Aldi Diassé







CASE STUDY 1

# A powerful tool for positive change

Faced with widespread medicine shortages, UNOPS is procuring billions of dollars worth of medicines and medical supplies for the people of Mexico.

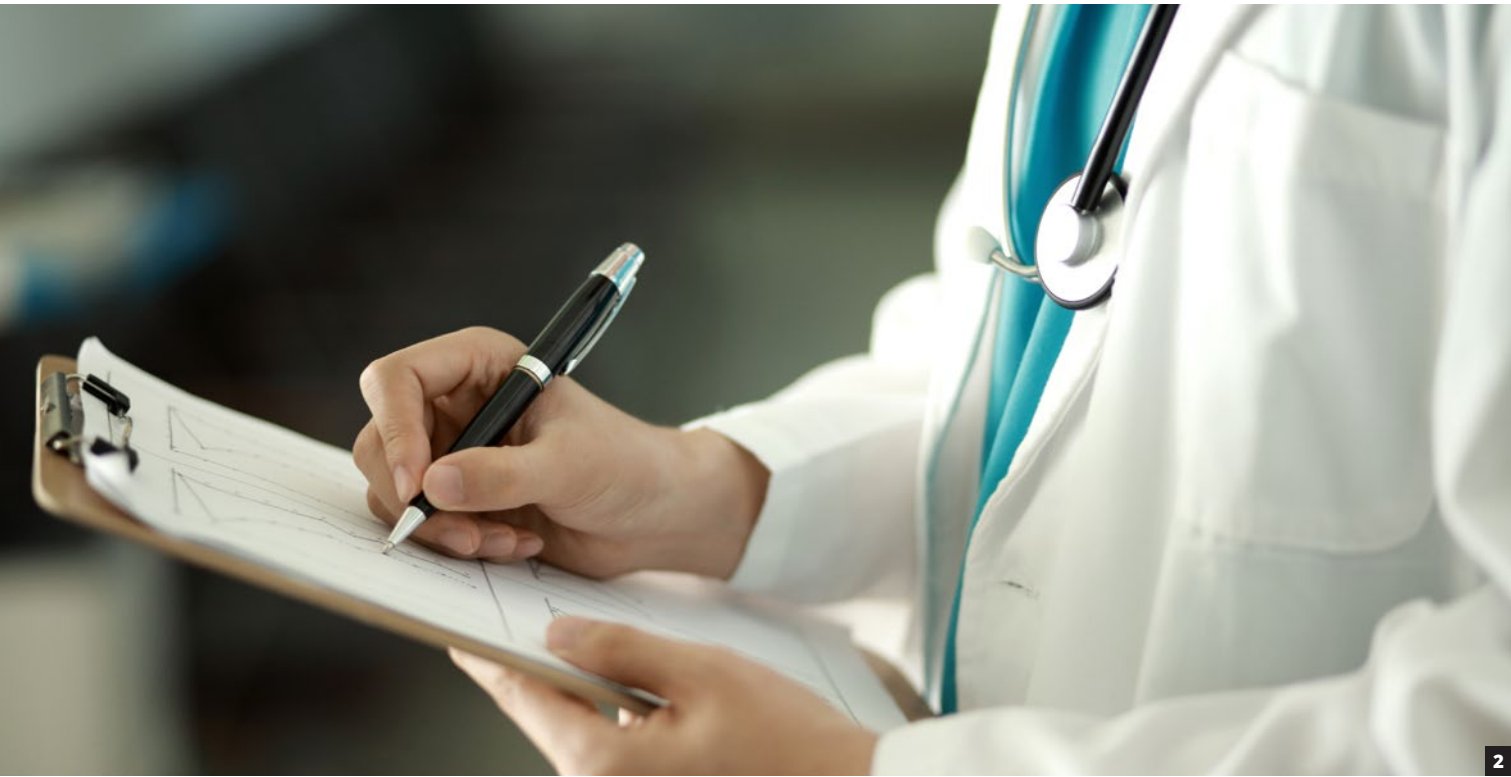


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**As a UN institution, UNOPS offers the possibility to obtain good quality medicines at low prices and without corruption. We are going to solve the problem of medicine shortage."**

**Andrés Manuel López Obrador**  
President of Mexico

- 1. UNOPS has purchased over 2,000 kinds of medicines and medical supplies on behalf of Mexican health institutions. © Getty Images/Rowan Jordan
- 2. In 2020, UNOPS signed a \$6 billion agreement with the government of Mexico to improve the procurement of healthcare supplies. © Getty Images/RunPhoto
- 3. More efficient and transparent procurement processes play an important role in improving healthcare services. © Getty Images/David Sacks



2



3

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly spread from country to country, healthcare systems around the world were crippled as governments struggled to provide enough access to essential medicines, equipment and healthcare supplies for all.

Pandemic or no pandemic, improving access to safe, effective and quality medicines and vaccines remains one of the most complex problems that stands in the way of better public health. While affordability plays an important role in access to medicines, access also depends on the effectiveness of public procurement practices – where the level of transparency and supply chain management play an equally important role.

COVID-19 dramatically exposed widespread challenges in public procurement. Governments had to rethink their approaches to what they buy, how they buy and who they buy from.

Mexico, home to more than 120 million people, still has persistent health challenges in the delivery of public services. Reports of high prices and periodic shortages of medicines have plagued the public health system – one of the largest in the world. These challenges, brought on in part by alleged corruption and a lack of competition in drug distribution and regulations, have worsened healthcare inequalities.

To help maximize the efficiency, transparency and effectiveness of the procurement of medicines in Mexico, UNOPS partnered with the government in a landmark \$6 billion agreement in 2020 to purchase medicines and medical supplies on behalf of Mexican health institutions.

UNOPS Regional Observatory for Medicine Prices will be used to provide a comparison of medicine prices from official sources in 21 countries – achieving the best prices and more effective use of public finances.



\$6 billion

landmark agreement will support the government's response to medicine shortages over the next four years

+2,000

types of medicines and medical supplies purchased on behalf of Mexican health institutions



4



5



6

- 4. Mexico aims to guarantee access to healthcare to the majority of the population by 2024. © Getty Images/Marcos Elihu Castillo Ramirez
- 5. Better medical procurement can help the government achieve its development priorities and

- address medicine shortages. © Getty Images/Shana Novak
- 6. A sustainable model for procurement will help make supply chains more resilient. © Getty Images/Peter Dazeley

Signed at a critical time as the country grappled with COVID-19, the four-year agreement will support the country's national development priorities to guarantee access to healthcare for the majority of the population by 2024.

Through efficient procurement mechanisms, UNOPS will encourage competition, equal participation and transparency in the procurement process. The first set of medical supplies and medicines were purchased in December 2020. By 2021, we seek to supply medicines and medical supplies for 26 federal states.

Drawing on our expertise in public procurement and a successful track record in the region, UNOPS support will also help to promote transparency and efficient spending in Mexico's public health sector. A sustainable procurement model is being developed that will increase the resilience of supply chains on behalf of the Institute of Health for Wellbeing, which is responsible for providing health coverage for around 65 million vulnerable people without social security.

"This will be a game changer for quality healthcare and value-for-money for the people of Mexico," says UNOPS Executive Director Grete Faremo.

By procuring billions of dollars worth of medicines and medical supplies, UNOPS is supporting the government's response to medicine shortages, but importantly is also improving transparency and value-for-money – making public spending a powerful tool for positive change.





CASE STUDY 2

# Pacific Small Island Developing States' unique position in the pandemic

The Marshall Islands. Micronesia. Palau. Papua New Guinea. Samoa. They span the Pacific Ocean and face a unique set of challenges in this pandemic.



29%

of the households in Papua New Guinea have access to safe and adequate sanitation

15%

of the globe's surface is scattered by the Pacific Small Island Developing States – among the most vulnerable countries in the world

Across the globe, COVID-19 has claimed millions of lives, destroyed livelihoods and decimated economies. But for Pacific island countries, geographic isolation and early border closures offered initial protection from the coronavirus – however, that protection was fragile.

When the coronavirus reached most of these small countries, they faced a risk of rapid transmission within their borders. Their vulnerabilities were exacerbated by remote locations, limited resources, high transportation costs and the sporadic movement of goods.

As this devastating pandemic unfolded around the world, it became evident that these fragile health infrastructure systems were ill-equipped to cope with infectious disease outbreaks. Under-resourced health services serve small populations scattered across numerous atolls and island groups, covering thousands of kilometres. Medical supplies and equipment are in short supply and often only available in hospitals located in the most densely populated areas. This means that people who live in remote places have to travel long distances, at great cost, to access care.

//

**By operating in several countries in the Pacific, our understanding of the challenges in this area and our readiness to step in and take immediate actions put us in a unique position to respond."**

**Samina Kadwani**

UNOPS Director for Thailand, Indonesia and the Pacific

Over the course of this pandemic, health workers have expressed growing unease over the lack of personal protective equipment for medical staff and basic medical supplies. The limited number of ventilators and intensive care unit beds being of particular concern.

## On the ground and ready to respond

"When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we were already working with, among others, the World Bank in Papua New Guinea to support the local Department of Health facing a tuberculosis outbreak, and we were rehabilitating community health clinics in Palau through the India-UN Development Partnership Fund," said Samina Kadwani, UNOPS Director for Thailand, Indonesia and the Pacific.

UNOPS is implementing a range of initiatives to help Pacific island governments mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks and respond to the demands of the pandemic through mobilizing quickly and leveraging existing partnerships in the region.





- 1.** Only 29 per cent of households in Papua New Guinea have access to adequate sanitation facilities. © Getty Images/Neleman Initiative
- 2.** Small Island Developing States in the Pacific make up 15 per cent of the planet's surface. © Getty Images/Marc Dozier
- 3.** Despite their remoteness, the rate of COVID-19 transmission in Pacific island countries has been high. © Getty Images/Reinhard Dirscherl



- 4.** To help the islands mitigate COVID-19 outbreaks, UNOPS teamed up with the World Bank to deliver essential medical supplies, personal protective equipment and equipment. © Getty Images/ Bob Krist
- 5.** In Papua New Guinea, UNOPS is providing logistical support for the safe transportation of COVID-19 lab specimens. © Getty Images/ Marc Dozier
- 6.** UNOPS is working with the India-UN Development Partnership Fund to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in Palau. © Getty Images/Norimoto Sasaki

With \$33 million in World Bank funding, efforts include the procurement of essential medical supplies, personal protective equipment and laboratory equipment across the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea and Samoa.

Additionally, in Papua New Guinea, UNOPS is providing logistical support for the safe transportation of COVID-19 lab specimens. And further south in Samoa, the organization is providing waste management solutions for the safe disposal of hazardous medical waste.

In Palau, UNOPS has joined forces with the India-UN Development Partnership Fund, managed by the UN Fund for South-South Cooperation, to strengthen healthcare infrastructure. This includes the physical rehabilitation of community health centres as well as the procurement of air-purifying equipment and a heavy-duty vehicle for transporting medical waste.

The efforts underway in the Pacific countries go beyond addressing immediate health needs. They strengthen healthcare across the region towards longer-term sustainable development – to help build the future for Pacific islanders.





CASE STUDY 3

# Strengthening responses to COVID-19 in the Western Balkans

In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Like countries in every corner of the world, Western Balkan governments are racing to source emergency supplies and equipment to slow the spread of the deadly coronavirus.





**With the help of UNOPS, the EU was the first donor to secure ventilators for the country at a time of high demand and short supply around the world. In this challenging context, the EU showed that it values the lives and health of the citizens of North Macedonia as those of EU citizens."**

**Samuel Žbogar**

EU Ambassador to North Macedonia



In Albania, Kosovo,\* North Macedonia and Serbia, the European Union joined hands with UNOPS to support governments' response efforts to this rapidly evolving health pandemic that has already claimed over 1,800 lives in this part of the world by mid-August 2020.

"We have been trained to cope with infections, to fight against these types of diseases. But, I can say freely that we have never faced an epidemic of this magnitude, fought a disease that is surrounded by so many unknowns," says Dr. Biljana Petreska, Infectious Disease Specialist at the University Clinic for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions in Skopje, North Macedonia.

The crisis has put medical personnel under immense pressure and created an immediate need for space, supplies and equipment to treat the growing number of coronavirus patients. They worked under these extraordinary circumstances while simultaneously trying to keep pace with the needs of people suffering from a range of other diseases.

"We had to have high-intensity training because we have never had to deal with a pandemic like this before," says one health worker from Kosovo who prefers to remain anonymous.

"We know they have COVID but we also get them with other illnesses like heart and lung problems and many others [...] Unfortunately the existing equipment we have cannot cope with the demand of the new emergency," the worker adds.

To help ease the unexpected pressure, the European Union mobilized millions of euro in funding. Within days of the pandemic being declared, UNOPS began emergency procurement procedures, with deliveries of items starting just a few weeks later.

"All this assistance serves not only as an immediate support for Serbia's fight against COVID-19, but also as part of the





**We are working under maximum stress because our COVID hospitals are full and we are having to refurbish old hospitals and university buildings to accommodate COVID patients [...] we receive patients of all ages."**

Health worker in Kosovo\*

EU's continued support to the Serbian healthcare system. Many thanks to UNOPS for being our reliable and efficient partner throughout the most difficult period in helping us to help citizens of Serbia," says Sem Fabrizi, EU Ambassador to Serbia.

Procured items included furnished and equipped triage containers, ventilators and devices for artificial ventilation, COVID-19 test kits, laboratory equipment, personal protective equipment and other items essential for the response.

"The strength of UNOPS response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Serbia and North Macedonia was our capacity to implement a complex multi-pronged strategy that allowed us to launch our response plans within days. This included simultaneous dialogues with governments and the donor, harnessing relationships with suppliers and thorough

market research," says Michela Telatin, UNOPS Serbia Head of Office.

Brendan Keirnan, UNOPS Pristina Head of Office, notes: "When the pandemic hit, UNOPS team and experts mobilized immediately and worked tirelessly around the clock with partners to strengthen capacity at clinical hospitals and public health institutions so that they could offer an even higher standard of care in response to the COVID-19 pandemic."

"In Kosovo, we have invested about 5 million euro to provide the health authorities with medical supplies and equipment for the most critical needs. We take pride in it, as we managed to deliver all the supplies as planned, in the midst of the pandemic and despite many challenges. This would not have been possible without tireless efforts made by UNOPS Kosovo colleagues," says Riccardo Serri, Acting Head of the EU Office in Kosovo.

Efforts to strengthen health capacity will be crucial in the uncertain months and years ahead. The sudden demand for medical supplies and other equipment has exposed global inequalities in access. The unexpected emergency revealed a critical gap in medical equipment and supplies as well as the challenges of procuring these things in time to keep up with demand. It has shifted the balance of power from buyer to supplier and has encouraged governments to take a hard look at their procurement processes in a way that goes beyond meeting the immediate needs during the pandemic, to establishing health infrastructure and procurement approaches that will be sustainable in the longer term.

"I know that we will fight this pandemic and see it go away. But, nothing will be the same as before. I am convinced that we will appreciate more the things that we used to take for granted. The contact with other people and the freedom of movement. The responsibility for our personnel and the public's health. And certainly the solidarity with others," says Dr. Petreska.



1. UNOPS has helped procure 100 equipped triage containers to support COVID-19 response efforts in the Western Balkans. © UNOPS
2. A cargo plane arrives at an airport in Serbia carrying vital medical supplies. © UNOPS
3. A total of €4.9 million worth of equipment and medical supplies were delivered to Serbia. © UNOPS
4. Medical equipment is delivered in Kosovo.\* © UNOPS

\*referred to throughout in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)



**+€17 million**

in total funding

In the Western Balkans, the European Union mobilized the following to support COVID-19 response efforts:

**€4.9 million**

for Serbia

**€4 million**

for North Macedonia

**€5 million**

for Kosovo\*

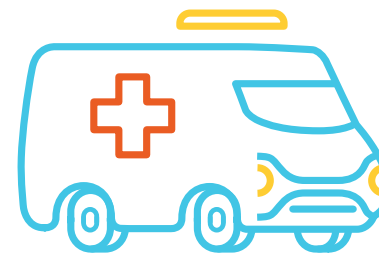
**€4 million**

for Albania



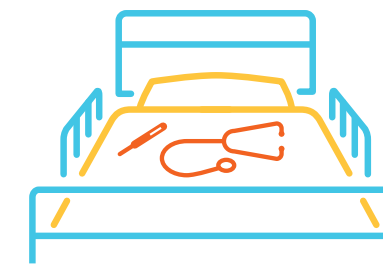
### 155 ventilators

to treat patients with respiratory complications. A ventilator pushes air, with extra oxygen, into patients' lungs. It gives the person time to fight off the infection and recover.



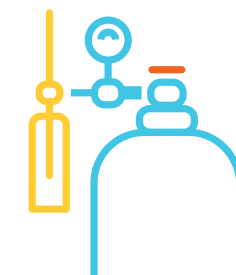
### 15 advanced life support ambulances

to provide urgent care and pre-hospital life support. These vehicles can help save lives and transport patients safely to health facilities.



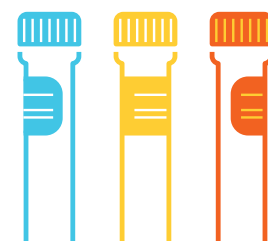
### + 35,500 pieces of other medical equipment

such as infrared thermometers, fully equipped ICU beds and defibrillators, to sustainably strengthen overall health capacity.



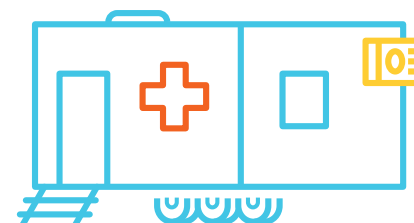
### + 1,400 pieces of respiratory support and oxygen equipment

for the effective delivery of oxygen therapies to help manage complications caused by COVID-19.



### 69,000 reagents for COVID-19 tests

reagents are used in labs to test patient swab samples and help determine a positive or negative result. They improve the speed and efficiency of testing.



### 100 equipped triage containers

for the monitoring and care of patients, potentially infected with the coronavirus. These containers play an important part in the battle against COVID-19 as they help keep potentially infected people separated from larger health institutions.



### + 5 million pieces of personal protection equipment

like face masks and surgical gloves, to help keep people safe from the coronavirus.

\*referred to throughout in the context of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999)





CASE STUDY 4

# Finding light amid Yemen's darkest times

Across Yemen, restoring access to critical services – such as electricity – is desperately needed to improve health services and basic living conditions.



## Did you know?

Due to the lack of electricity for water pumping, many rural households travel long distances to fetch water – a task that falls disproportionately on women and girls.



**1.** Off-grid solar energy solutions are helping provide electricity for schools, hospitals, streets and households across Yemen. © UNOPS

**2.** More than 200,000 Yemeni households will benefit from access to electricity powered by solar energy. © UNOPS

**3.** A newly installed solar energy system at Khadija School in Lahij Governorate has helped improve children's learning environment. © UNOPS

**4.** A small solar energy system is handed over to a family from Tuban District. © UNOPS

Well into its fifth year of conflict, the humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to worsen. In mid-2020, around 24 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance – representing 80 per cent of the population. Over 3.5 million people have been displaced from their homes while over 19 million people lack access to basic health services.

Throughout the country, the provision of public services, such as electricity, have come to a virtual standstill. Long-lasting power outages have crippled development efforts, wreaking havoc on other critical services such as education, water and sanitation, and healthcare.

Today, with only 10 per cent of the country connected to the public electricity grid, a large majority of the population is deprived of reliable access to electricity.

Ibrahim Saleh, originally from the city of Taiz in southwestern Yemen, left his children behind and migrated north to the Wesab District in the Dhamar Governorate in search of work.

"We suffered from a lot of things: the high prices, the embargo [...] at night we struggled with darkness. There was no electricity," describes Ibrahim.

Ibrahim is just one of millions who lived in darkness as soon as the sun set.





**Due to war and other factors, power cuts caused a huge problem for us in terms of delivering newborns and offering nursery services. Activity at the centre used to come to a complete halt during power cuts.”**

**Dr. Mumtaz Abdo Mohamad Chafih**

General Surgeon and Manager of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Ash-Sha'ab Hospital (formerly known as Aden Hospital)



**I used to leave home in the morning and return in the evening. I entered the room but it was too dark to see. It was part of our struggle [...] We used to sleep, drink and eat in the dark.”**

**Ibrahim Saleh**

A resident of Wesab District, Dhamar Governorat



In an effort to relieve the ongoing crisis, UNOPS partnered with the World Bank to restore access to critical urban services in selected cities across Yemen. Restoring key services – including energy, water and sanitation, transportation and waste management – is critical to improving health, basic living conditions and local economic activity.

The two organizations are working with local implementing partners to provide off-grid solar electricity solutions for schools, hospitals, streets and households.

“This [solar] project offered a radical solution to our electricity crisis, allowing us to offer quality services to women, as now the hospital is operational 24 hours,” says Dr. Chafih. “We can also perform major and regular cesarean sections.”

At home, solar panels and light installations helped ease Ibrahim immediately. “I felt secure and relieved. I could turn the light on and see what was around me [...] I can read [...] cook my dinner and eat comfortably,” he says.

In addition to working with three local implementing partners, UNOPS is engaging with local authorities, institutions and communities to facilitate local ownership and promote sustainability. Citizens, especially women, have a voice in identifying projects. Decisions on the most pressing needs are made at the community level.

By restoring critical services while simultaneously rebuilding local capacity, up to 1.4 million Yemenis are expected to benefit from improved services and living conditions.

“We are proud to support the World Bank to revitalize critical urban services in cities across Yemen and improve living conditions for people in need,” says Bana Kaloti, UNOPS Regional Director for the Middle East.





**Our life improved a lot thanks to solar energy. We are able to get things done, and afford to go to sleep whenever we feel tired. Without solar energy we had to get all our work done before it got dark.”**

**Wafa’a Salem**

Resident of Bir Amer-Dar el Manasrah village in Tuban District, Lahj Governorate

**5.** Only 10 per cent of Yemen is connected to the public energy grid. © UNOPS

**6.** Ibrahim installs a new light at his home in Wesab District, Dhamar Governorate. © UNOPS

## Project details

In an effort to relieve the ongoing crisis, UNOPS, with funding from the World Bank, is working to restore access to critical services through two projects.

### The Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project

Financed by a \$150 million grant from the World Bank’s International Development Association (IDA), UNOPS developed an integrated, multi-sectoral approach to service delivery to restore access to critical urban services in select cities across Yemen.

The three-year project aims to restore access to critical urban services for 1.4 million beneficiaries. This includes providing solar power solutions to more than 70 health facilities, 80 schools and 100 water facilities; rehabilitating 400 kilometres of roads; installing and operating LED street lights; and improving waste management services. The project will create 1.5 million days of temporary employment.

As part of the COVID-19 emergency response components added to both projects, the Yemen Integrated Urban Services Emergency Project quickly facilitated the delivery of equipment, tools, infrastructure and personal protective equipment to support Yemen’s fight against COVID-19.



**Light has brought life back. It’s the source of life. Without light, you might as well be blind.”**

**Ibrahim Saleh**

A resident of Wesab District, Dhamar Governorat

### The Yemen Emergency Electricity Access Project

With a \$50 million grant from the IDA, UNOPS is working to restore electricity supply to 1.3 million Yemenis, including 200,000 households, 220 health facilities, 280 schools and 40 potable water wells.

The three-year project will finance distributed solar solutions to provide urgently needed access to electricity in rural and peri-urban areas in Yemen. The project is implemented in collaboration with the local private sector, including microfinance institutions, and solar equipment suppliers and installers.

Implemented in collaboration with other UN agencies as part of a broader coordinated COVID-19 response in Yemen, the Contingency Emergency Response Component was added to the project in mid-2020 to help fast-track access to electricity, so essential lifesaving services can continue.

For more information on our projects in Yemen, please visit <https://ye.unopsmr.org/>





CASE STUDY 5

# Supporting post-disaster recovery in Zimbabwe

In March 2019, Cyclone Idai hit south-east Africa, bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall. When it was all over, a trail of destruction and devastation was left in its wake.





2



3

**1.** Local construction workers help build a storm drain as part of the Bwerudza Irrigation Scheme in Chipinge District. © UNOPS/ Andrew Njihia

**2.** In March 2019, Cyclone Idai destroyed critical infrastructure and also the homes of 50,000 families in eastern Zimbabwe, directly affecting 270,000 people. © World Bank/Dorte Verner

**3.** A \$72 million recovery project was set up to help communities rebuild and become more resilient. © World Bank/ Dorte Verner

**4.** Village health workers like Tambudzai Vhumisai from Chimanimani received bicycles from UNICEF to improve their access to remote areas. © UNICEF/Karel Prinsloo

Lives lost. Livelihoods destroyed. Infrastructure in ruins.

When Cyclone Idai made landfall, it was one of the deadliest cyclones to ever hit Africa, killing more than 1,000 people across Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

In eastern Zimbabwe, flash flooding and landslides damaged and destroyed critical infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, farmlands and homes. It caused more than \$600 million in damage. More than 50,000 households were destroyed, directly affecting 270,000 people – including displacing 60,000 people. The cyclone also cut off communities from basic services.

The Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP) – funded by a \$72 million grant from the World Bank's International Development Association – was launched to help communities recover in the immediate aftermath of the disaster and to build the foundation for long-term resilience and regional recovery.

UNOPS is responsible for the overall management of the project, and is the fund manager and an implementing organization. The Food and Agricultural Organization, the International Organization for Migration, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization are working together to address food security, livelihoods, health, education, and water and sanitation needs.

Work is focused on nine districts directly affected by the cyclone: Chimanimani and Chipinge (the two hardest hit areas), as well as Bikita, Buhera, Chikomba, Gutu, Mutasa, Mutare rural and Mutare urban.

As part of the four-year project, basic healthcare services are being revitalized, including building awareness on health issues such as malaria, diarrhoea and malnutrition. Village health workers are receiving intensive training in essential health information and in basic maternal, newborn and child



**+383,000**  
people received health assistance

**+4,500**  
households had access  
to water and sanitation  
services restored

//

**We used to face serious challenges. Previously when you fell ill, you would have to go to Gwenzi Clinic and incur transportation costs, in addition to the cost of accessing medication at that clinic."**

**Betty Mukumba**

Resident of Mariseta village (Chipinge District)

health services. They are also being recruited into mobile medical teams that travel to different villages and provide needed healthcare services.

"I suffer from stomach pains and dizziness. I have been treated free of charge here at the mobile clinic," says Betty Mukumba, a resident of Mariseta village in Chipinge District.

The cyclone also damaged or cut off access to services aimed at combatting gender-based violence. Implementing



partners worked to raise awareness of gender-based violence issues and provided services to support survivors.

As COVID-19 raced around the world in 2020, several implementing organizations shifted some of their existing funding to activities to help Zimbabwe tackle the pandemic. This included helping build the capacity of community-based medical personnel to monitor, trace and investigate COVID-19 cases, rehabilitating an isolation ward at a church-supported hospital, providing personal protective equipment to village health workers and providing access to safe water for handwashing.

Data on the movement, needs and vulnerabilities – as well as the health risks associated with COVID-19 – of displaced persons is also being monitored, with the information taken into consideration for activities implemented under ZIRP.

In Chimanimani, some of the most damaged schools will be rehabilitated and re-equipped to provide students with a safe learning environment. Other critical community infrastructure is also being rehabilitated, including water and sanitation systems, roads and irrigation networks.

"When Cyclone Idai hit, we had reached our wits' end," says Fatima Mutsiya, who owns a plot of farmland in Chipinge District that is irrigated by a nearby weir damaged by the cyclone.

"We could no longer afford to send our children to school or feed them," says Fatima. "When the weir was rehabilitated, our livelihoods were restored and our lives have been transformed."

Cash transfer and food distribution are also being used to fight food insecurity among vulnerable households. The restoration of agricultural crops, as well as the provision of veterinary services and supplementary feeds for livestock, are helping to restore livelihoods.



# OUR PEOPLE

We work hard to recruit and retain the best expertise.

Our partners rely on our professionalism, skills, expertise and innovative ideas to successfully complete projects in some of the most challenging locations around the world.

/ In March 2021, 47 per cent of UNOPS personnel were women. © UNOPS/  
John Rae





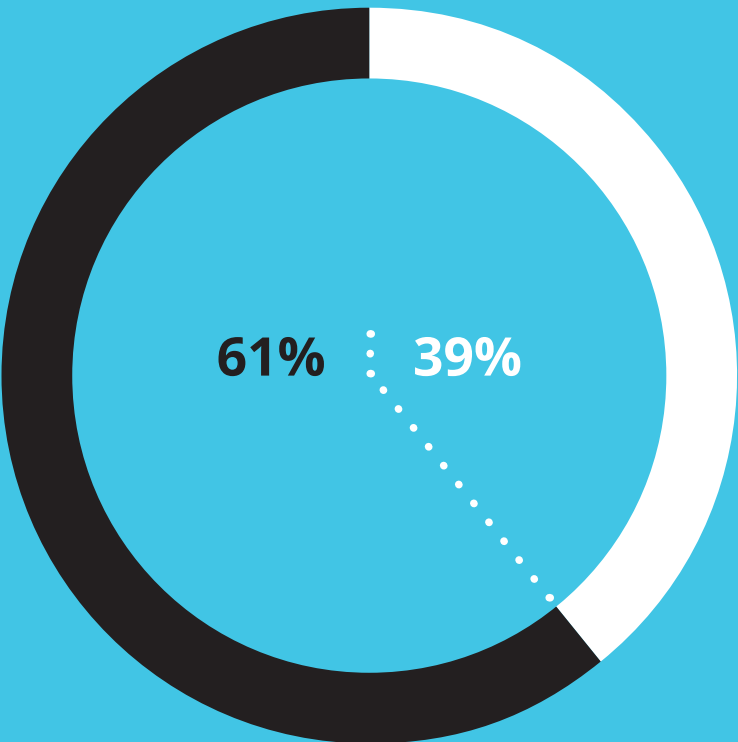
As members of the UN family strive towards gender equality, we report our personnel data and turnover rate by gender. This helps us to better identify issues and take targeted steps to improve.

In December 2018, 39 per cent of UNOPS personnel were women. In March 2021, 47 per cent of UNOPS personnel were women.

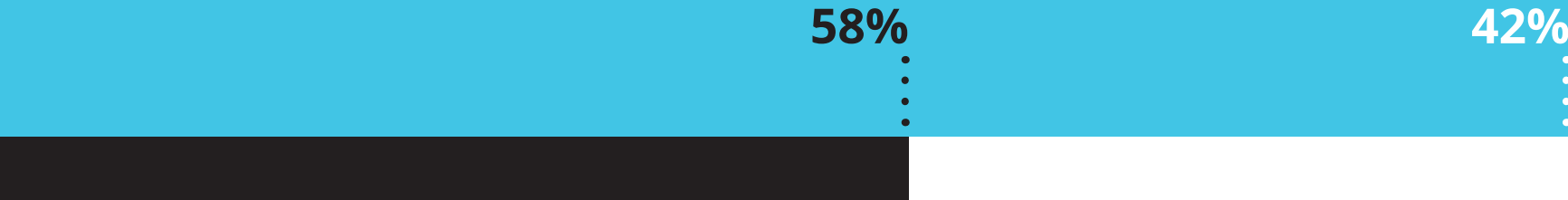
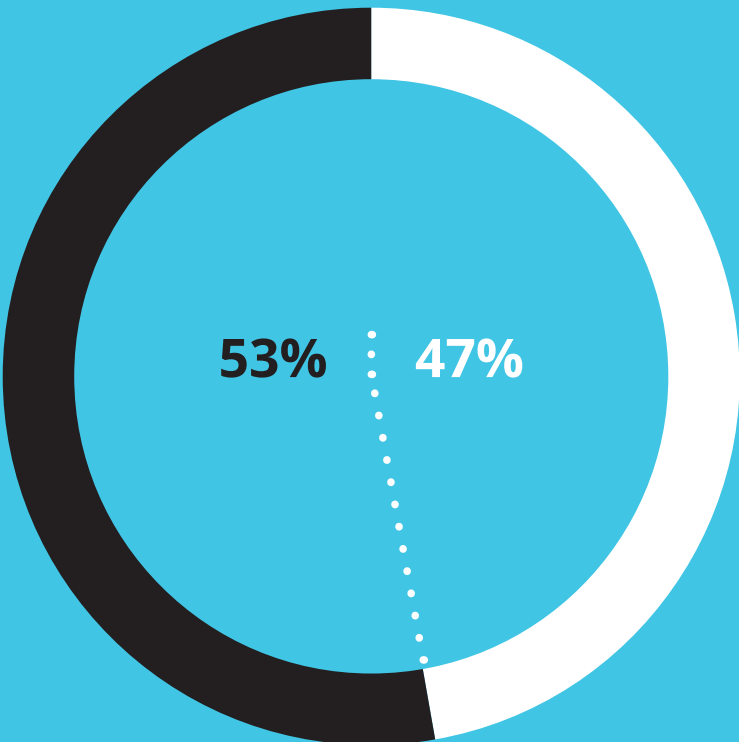
We still have progress to make in our journey to being a more equal organization, but this represents a significant achievement, even if long overdue. Moving forward, we want to ensure a broader, more diverse, and more inclusive approach.



December 2018



March 2021



Women in leadership roles

In March 2021, 42 per cent of leadership roles were held by women. We recognize that we have work to do to achieve gender parity at UNOPS and we are committed to addressing this situation.



# Don't wait for the next pandemic to fix public procurement

By Andrea Calvaruso

COVID-19 has shown the importance of public procurement. Here's why transparency in public procurement is vital – and how to encourage it.



When it comes to health procurement, every dollar counts. Every dollar saved is money that can be reinvested. Reinvested to buy more medicine. Reinvested to buy more equipment. Reinvested to improve or increase health infrastructure.

In other words, reinvested to save more lives.

As COVID-19 spreads across the world, countries need the same thing: medical supplies and equipment. Test kits to help determine who is infected with COVID-19 and prevent it from spreading uncontrollably. X-ray machines to check the lungs of people battling the virus. Face masks and personal protective equipment to protect frontline

healthcare workers. Hand sanitizer and soap so that each person could do their part to slow the spread of the virus.

And eventually, a potential treatment or even vaccine for COVID-19.

Unfortunately, there are those who seek to unfairly profit from this pandemic. Stories of sky-high prices for much-needed equipment and supplies, as well as instances of inferior quality equipment and supplies being delivered, are, sadly, not uncommon.

And while COVID-19 may be the first global pandemic we've personally experienced, it surely won't be the last one that occurs.

## / ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Calvaruso is the Officer In Charge of UNOPS Guatemala. He is an anthropologist with a Master's degree in health and 30 years of experience in the development sector. Andrea has previously served as an advisor to different embassies, United Nations organizations and the European Union on topics including state modernization, democratic governance, social development and security.





That's why we must ensure that the process used to purchase vital medical supplies and medicine is robust. It must be transparent. It must be fair. It must be efficient and cost-effective. And it must be free of corruption.

Corruption and a lack of good governance are strongly linked – they feed off each other in a vicious circle. A lack of good governance principles and structures provide more opportunities for corruption to thrive. And in turn, corruption prevents good governance principles and structures from being put in place or enforced.

Let's look at Guatemala. According to Transparency International, it's a country with a high risk of corruption in public procurement. A few years ago, major cases

of corruption affecting medicine procurement in the country's Social Security Institute (IGSS) were discovered. Some suppliers were unfairly benefiting from government procurement, putting medicine supplies for millions of Guatemalans at risk.

We worked with IGSS to build a culture of transparency, laying the foundation for a more efficient and transparent procurement process.

To do this, we carried out a comprehensive analysis of the supply chain, using the Procurement Efficiency Assessment Tool, which generated a short-, medium- and long-term action plan. We also trained more than 600 IGSS staff in best practices for public procurement and project management.

**1.** Efficient and transparent public procurement processes are vital for strengthening access to healthcare. © Getty Images/ Ruchuda Boonplien

**2.** In Guatemala, UNOPS helped train 600 people in public procurement best practices. © Getty Images/ Ronnakorn Triraganon

To increase competition among suppliers, UNOPS also conducted a tender process for medicine procurement, which resulted in 62 bidders participating – compared to 11 bidders in a previous tender process conducted by IGSS.

The tender process helped establish new criteria for prices and quality, as well as provided for more favourable supply conditions. All of this helped IGSS be seen as an influential buyer in both national and international markets.

Utilizing electronic reverse auctions – an online, real-time dynamic auction between a buying organization and a number of suppliers – also played a key role. As part of this, suppliers competed against each other to be awarded a contract by submitting successively lower bids during a scheduled period of time.

Although widely used in the private sector, reverse auctions aren't commonly used in a UN context or in the public sector. But adopting this standardized, electronic process can help increase transparency during the public procurement process, as well as reduce costs and increase savings.

As COVID-19 has shown, a well-functioning, transparent public procurement system free of corruption is vital during times of emergency – it can mean the difference between receiving enough life-saving equipment and medicine or coming up short.

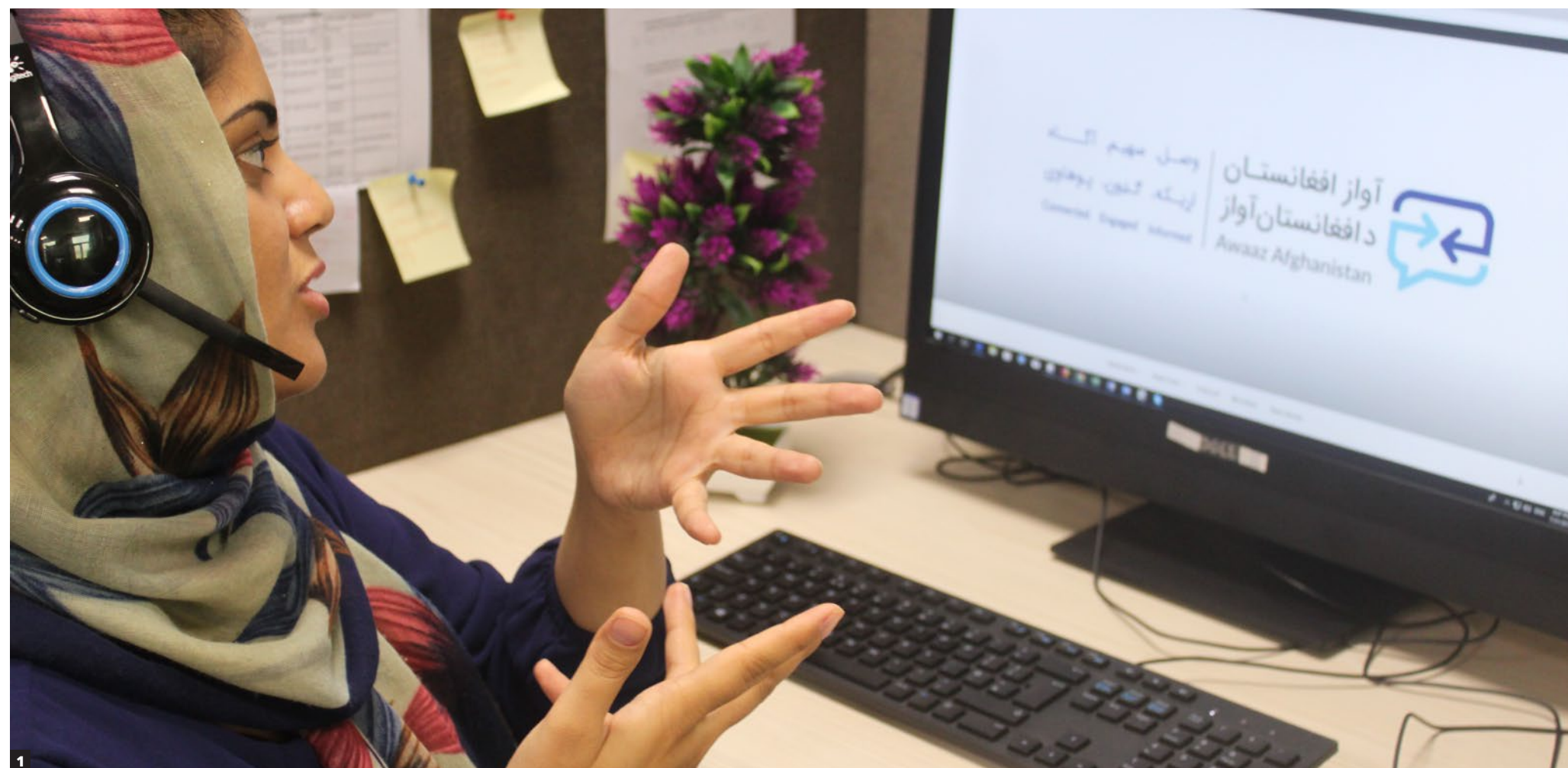
And we shouldn't wait for the next global pandemic to apply the lessons of this one.



# Holding humanitarian service providers accountable

By Hannah Milde and Silvia Sánchez Ruiz

The word 'accountability' is widely used in the humanitarian community – here's why it matters and how to foster it.



In Iraq, decades of conflict have left 4.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Afghanistan now has 9 million people estimated to be in humanitarian need.\*

In both countries, humanitarian actors work to help and support the people who need it most. But these same humanitarian actors must also be held accountable to the people they seek to assist.

On behalf of local and international partners in Afghanistan and Iraq, UNOPS runs inter-agency information and accountability call centres. Awaaz Afghanistan\*\* and the Iraq Information Centre\*\*\* provide life-saving information to those affected by conflict or natural disaster. People can call – free-of-charge – to seek advice on shelter and

food, request legal or cash assistance, report misconduct, and seek out mental health and psychological support for trauma or ending abuse.

But these centres aren't only about providing information on assistance. Both centres play an active role in keeping humanitarian service providers accountable to the people they're meant to be helping.

And accountability is not just a vague concept. When taken seriously and implemented correctly, it's crucial for the humanitarian community to respond to local needs in the best way possible.

## / ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hannah Milde is the Project Manager for Awaaz Afghanistan. She previously worked as an Associate Programme Officer with United Nations Mine Action Service and as an Information Management Officer with UNOPS in Kabul, Afghanistan. She also worked as a Transparency and Project Officer with UNOPS in Denmark.

Silvia Sánchez Ruiz is the Project Manager of the Iraq Information Centre. She previously worked as a delegate with the Red Cross in The Gambia, Senegal and Timor-Leste, and as a Programme Officer with UN Volunteers in Chad.



## Listen. Take action. Get feedback. Repeat.

It sounds simple, but facilitating two-way communication isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. The best communication method varies depending on the context, geography and demographics, as well as the caller's needs, feedback or complaints.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, communication channels have been carefully chosen so that they are in line with the preferences of affected communities to ensure continuous engagement.

In Afghanistan, in-person contacts with community leaders and aid organizations aren't always feasible, particularly in hard-to-reach and conflict-affected areas. As such, the preferred method of communication is by telephone.

On the other hand, in Iraq, face-to-face outreach activities\*\*\*\* are regularly conducted in camps and in urban areas. However, the safest way people can receive information, as well as report issues or problems, is through the call line. This ensures that their personal information is protected.

Often, the issue a caller seeks to report is merely the tip of the iceberg. Information centre operators actively listening and asking the right questions can help uncover different, underlying problems – for example, a caller requesting health assistance can help uncover water quality issues in the caller's village.

Information like this is shared with humanitarian aid organizations to help them improve the projects and programmes intended to meet people's needs.

And the information provided by these centres is vital for identifying needs and gaps in services. Documenting local protection issues and allegations of fraud help guide



national and international humanitarian actors working together to ensure needs of affected people are being met nationally.

In Afghanistan, for example, a community member called Awaaz Afghanistan and said that food delivered to a local community didn't reach the intended recipients: 54 families affected by a drought. The centre referred the case to the humanitarian organization responsible for the programme.

The organization then sent someone to the community to meet with the caller and investigate the issue. They found that a community elder had taken the food and sold it in a local market, pocketing the money. After consulting with the community, the organization agreed on a better way to distribute food assistance to avoid a similar issue in the future.

In Iraq, a man living in an internally displaced person camp who was eligible for cash assistance called the Iraq Information Centre to report that the company he used inside his camp to receive the money took a commission – which it wasn't allowed to do. Unable to leave the camp due to COVID-19 restrictions, he didn't have the option to find an alternative company.



- 1.** Information centres in Afghanistan and Iraq help deliver life-saving information to people affected by conflict or natural disasters. © UNOPS
- 2.** A team meeting underway at the Iraq Information Centre. © UNOPS
- 3.** People can call the centres free of charge and request advice on a variety of issues. © UNOPS

The centre shared this information with the relevant organization. After investigating, they found that this was an issue not only in the caller's camp, but other camps as well. To prevent this from happening in the future, the organization changed the way cash assistance was paid out, shifting from using a private money transfer company to using a direct transfer method involving project partners.

These examples show that a single phone call can have a big impact on the way humanitarian actors respond – and affect an entire community.

*\*Figures for Afghanistan are as of June 2020 and figures for Iraq are as of April 2020.*

*\*\*Funded by the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP).*

*\*\*\* Funded by ECHO, the Iraq Humanitarian Pooled Fund, the Office of the UN Iraq Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UNHCR, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United States Agency for International Development, WFP and the World Health Organization.*

*\*\*\*\*During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNOPS takes measures in line with World Health Organization guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus. When not able to engage in face-to-face activities in person, community engagement activities are conducted online. Social media is used to share awareness-raising information and to conduct polls in order to collect feedback.*



# Solutions we help provide

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"I am well aware of the important role UNOPS plays to support the transparency, relevance and effectiveness of highly complex projects in different neighbouring countries. I am pleased that the municipality and the Ministry of Transport and Public Works are relying on UNOPS to implement the tramway project."

Lenín Moreno  
Former President, Ecuador

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"We made great savings with the implementation of the new procurement systems through the United Nations and UNOPS, and this is a breakthrough in the prevention of corruption that never existed before."

Juan Orlando Hernández  
President, Honduras

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"We want UNOPS to help our government make sure that those who participate in tenders are prestigious companies with an ethical dimension."

Andrés Manuel López Obrador  
President, Mexico



# S3I

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“This S3I project constitutes an important support for the programme of affordable housing championed by the government, which is both intensive in labour and in capital, thus representing an economic stimulus that will have a positive effect on reducing unemployment in the country.”

Dr. Ibrahima Kassory Fofana  
Prime Minister, Guinea

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“We are focusing on financing and investment frameworks that will unlock private sector financing. We are very excited about this project [with UNOPS] and we look forward to unlocking similar partnerships that will allow us to fulfil our duties as leaders and pave the way for adequate, decent and affordable housing for Kenyans.”

Uhuru Kenyatta  
President, Kenya

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“I believe we are all well aware of the challenges Ghana and most of Africa face when it comes to the provision of decent, well-planned and organized housing for our citizens [...] I believe that with the signing of this project agreement [with UNOPS], we shall be ushering into existence new dawn for Ghana and our citizens.”

Nana Akufo-Addo  
President, Ghana

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“This groundbreaking housing initiative is not just a regular project but a massive undertaking that has my full support, and will undoubtedly change for the better the lives of millions of people.”

Imran Khan  
Prime Minister, Pakistan

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“UNOPS vision to expand its development programme to the islands of the Caribbean is perfectly aligned with the region’s vision for economic, social and cultural prosperity, driven by knowledge, excellence, innovation and productivity.”

Gaston Browne  
Prime Minister, Antigua and Barbuda



# OUR COMMON WORLD






We are a member of the Community and support the mission of GRI to empower decision makers everywhere, through GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards and its multi-stakeholder network, to take action towards a more sustainable economy and world.



## Your feedback is important to us!

For any questions, comments and/or suggestions on this publication please contact: [sustainability@unops.org](mailto:sustainability@unops.org).  
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