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**From the UN in Myanmar Resident
and Humanitarian Coordinator,
Ola Almgren**



October 13, 2020

Dear reader,

I hope this message finds you in good health and spirit.

It is wonderful to be able to open our first newsletter by congratulating the World Food Programme for having been awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize for its work in saving lives and changing lives, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. WFP has been in Myanmar for nearly two decades, at present assisting the Government's COVID-19 response and assisting people whose lives are impacted by conflict and natural disasters. The entire UN Family is proud of this award. Please read more here about the [WFP program in Myanmar](#).

Unfortunately in recent weeks, Myanmar has seen a rapid increase in the number of persons who have tested positive to COVID-19, especially but not limited to Yangon and Rakhine. In response to these developments, the government is appropriately putting stringent measures in place to curb the further spread of the virus. We support these measures but we also realize that they add stress to our every-day life and that of our families. I hope you are coping well in these exceptional circumstances and I am sure we all look forward to the time when some of these measures can be relaxed once they have had the desired effect in curtailing the further spread of the virus.

The United Nations Country Team in Myanmar continues to take energetic steps to support the government in its fight against COVID-19 ever since it was first declared a public health emergency of international concern in January 2020. Since then, our contribution has grown manifold in terms of UN agencies and programmes involved and I take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to the donors behind our response. We look at the crisis not only through a public health lens but also address humanitarian and socio-economic effects of the pandemic. The broader coalition of partners that has come together across these dimensions is absolutely essential to achieve our common objective of supporting the national response to the pandemic.

As we remain vigilant in our efforts to tackle the effects of COVID-19, we also have the safety and welfare of our personnel at the centre of our attention. This is why the UN Country Team has recently adapted its operating mode to the changing circumstances. It is important that you understand that the measures put in place by the Country Team are precisely intended to allow us to continue our most important programmes, including in support of the national response to COVID-19. At the same time it helps us to adhere to the containment measures put in place by the government and to increase the level of protection for our staff and programme beneficiaries. We will continue to support national efforts to curtail the spread of the virus, treat those who fall ill, and begin the path to social and economic recovery.

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter.

Ola Almgren
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Myanmar youth urged to make their voices heard on UN Day.

UN Day on October 24 marks the anniversary of the entry into force of the 1945 UN Charter. The UN was founded to support collective action to realize peace, development and human rights for all. This year the UN has been encouraging people to ask how we can build a better world: [UN75: 2020 and Beyond - Shaping Our Future Together](#)
In Myanmar UN Day will be focusing on creative ways to allow youth voices to be heard with a public speaking event and a competition for secondary school students.

Youth make up nine million people in the working age population of 15-24, the largest of any age category in Myanmar. More youth are living and working in rural areas compared to urban areas. But youth rates of unemployment are higher than any other age group.

Among key steps forward to ensure youth access to decent jobs in Myanmar are:

- Youth Employment Strategy
- Youth career counseling
- Access to quality TVET and other skills development programmes opportunities including job placement
- Access to Labour Market information
- Skills Matching
- Opportunities for digital jobs, green jobs, entrepreneurship and self-employment for youths
- Ensuring transitioning from informal to formal economy
- Innovative approaches for youth in fragile settings and in rural economy.
- Ensuring Gender and inclusiveness

To achieve this, the UN will encourage and facilitate the dialogue to foster collaboration between the Government, Workers and Employers organizations, the Private sector and youth organizations .

For more information - Mr. Selim Benaissa, Chief Technical Adviser, Myanmar Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (my-PEC) ILO-Yangon (benaissa@ilo.org)

...and International Day of the Girl in Myanmar

[UN Women](#) and [Plan International](#) collaborated for International Day of the Girl on October 11, to raise awareness about the diverse range of adolescent girls' voices and action for an equal future. The theme for IDG 2020: "My Voice, Equal Future" reimagines a world shaped by young girls' visions and solutions towards a future they are hopeful for, and as a generation of activists to accelerate social change.

For more information: Lesly Lotha: lesly.lotha@unwomen.org



The needs of older people amid the Covid19 outbreak.

Speaking at a virtual conference organized by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on 1st October, UN Resident Coordinator Ola Almgren raised awareness for the special needs of older persons during the current pandemic. At the conference held on the occasion of the UN International Day of Older Persons, the Resident Coordinator echoed the message of the UN Secretary General and reminded the audience that policy and programmatic interventions need to reflect these needs, while empowering older people to contribute to their own well-being. He also emphasized the vital role of health and social workers in contributing to the health of older persons, with special recognition of the nursing and midwife professions, which deserve far greater support.

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UNHCR reinforces national health response to COVID-19

Medical equipment and supplies, forming part of a US \$2.3 million donation to the Government of Myanmar aimed at bolstering the national health response to COVID-19, arrived in Rakhine State mid-September and was handed over to the State Government. The specialized medical equipment, which include 18 portable ventilators as well as 350,000 PPE sets (e.g. surgical gloves and masks, N95 masks, face shield, etc.), will protect front-line health workers and save lives where it is needed the most. Since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in Myanmar, UNHCR has increased prevention and response activities in displacement sites in Kachin, Shan, Rakhine and in the South East including through running awareness campaigns and scaling-up health, water sanitation, and hygiene services in camps and busy market areas. UNHCR has also extended support to the State Health Departments to equip 350 quarantine facilities benefitting over 40,000 people. UNHCR is working on the procurement of 48,000 COVID testing kits to add to the 10,000 already donated. Read more about the response [here](#).

For more information: ferry@unhcr.org

The UN in Myanmar assesses the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

Understanding the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 is essential for designing effective policies and measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and recover better.

Over the past few months the UN in Myanmar has conducted a number of studies focusing on impacts of COVID-19 across various sectors, population groups, and geographic areas. While different in focus and scope, these studies all confirm that COVID-19 is not only a health crisis, but one that has affected livelihoods, social cohesion, and the way people live their lives.

However, they also illustrate the remarkable resilience of the people in Myanmar in terms of adapting to the changes brought by the crises. The key findings of the UN's impact studies are summarized in a Monthly Digest, which can be accessed [on the UN in Myanmar website](#).

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Coordinating the UN contribution to Covid-19 in Myanmar.

The UN in Myanmar is working closely with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) under the technical leadership of WHO, to formulate and update the COVID-19 public health response and coordinate the UN contribution.

Since April 2020, UN agencies involved in the COVID-19 public health response have met on a bi-weekly basis to discuss, take joint action and coordinate emerging issues related to COVID-19 response. This work-stream is jointly led by WHO and UNOPS with UN RCO providing secretariat support to this ongoing work. A first working draft of the *COVID-19 Country Preparedness and Response Plan* (CPRP) was developed in April as a swift response to the emerging situation in order to make an inventory of UN assistance options to the Myanmar government. An interim update report on this plan is in its final stage and highlights key UN support implemented to date.

This plan will provide the strategic focus and outline the priority needs and resources required to respond to the COVID-19 crisis over a time span till October 2021.

For more information: stephanie.bleeker@one.un.org

Digital marketing holds promise for tourism in Myanmar

With the tourism industry decimated by COVID-19, the International Trade Centre, a UN agency working in Myanmar since 2012 (www.intracen.org), has provided remote support to young staff of the [Ministry of Hotels and Tourism](#) (MoHT), in both Kayah State and Tanintharyi Region, by upgrading their crisis communication skills on digital media. <https://www.intracen.org/covid19/Story/Digital-marketing-holds-promise-for-tourism-in-Myanmar/>

For more information Guilia Macola: gmacola@intracen.org

UNDP helps Myanmar to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and looks beyond the pandemic

UNDP has been assisting Myanmar to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 since the early days of the pandemic. For the duration of the pandemic, UNDP has assisted the national counterpart ministries and organizations to enhance capacities to cope with the new reality, such as supporting them with ICT equipment for remote working capability as well as to hold online learning platforms. UNDP also distributed hundreds of thousands of health system supplies – from face shields to walk through temperature scanners, pulse oximeters and oxygen concentrators – coordinating with various regional governments so these critical supplies reach citizens, including marginalized communities, so that no one is left behind. An online Chatbot application has been developed to strengthening online COVID-19 information sharing mechanisms.

Looking beyond the pandemic, UNDP has held socio-economic assessments and launched an information exchange platform to better understand market demands for local businesses. For post-COVID-19 and to meet the "Build back better" theme, UNDP has taken a major role in resource planning and mobilization of Socio-Economic Recovery Framework (SERF) by the United Nations in Myanmar, supporting Myanmar in the recovery phase. <https://www.mm.undp.org/content/myanmar/en/home/coronavirus/beyond-recovery--towards-2030.html>

For more information: nadia.nivin@undp.org.

UN-Habitat observes World Habitat Day in Myanmar

Every year, the first Monday of October is observed as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. This year, World Habitat Day observes the pressing theme of HOUSING FOR ALL. At the peak of the COVID-19 emergency response, more than 3.9 billion people, or half of the world's population, were asked or ordered to stay at home by their governments to prevent the spread of the virus. Having an adequate home is now, more than ever, a matter of life and death. The COVID-19 crisis made it evident.

UN-Habitat released [a video](#) highlighting the theme and bringing attention to the issues of evictions, forced resettlement, and informal settlements. The video was produced in partnership with Bedar-Urban Poor Network, a



community organization working with residents of informal settlements in Yangon and Green Lotus, an NGO dedicated to promoting sustainable development in Myanmar.

Yangon hosts 423 informal settlements with an estimated population of approximately 400,000 people. COVID-19 has exacerbated key challenges for these residents making the realization of the right to adequate housing an immediate necessity.

(Pic: A group of children living in an informal settlement located at Hmaw Set Ward (Dala township, Yangon)

For more information: Oddy Angelo: odicea.angelobarrios@un.org

From UN HQ:

[Statement by the Secretary General Antonio Guterres on WFP Nobel Peace Prize:](#)

[UN World Food Programme wins 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, as hunger mounts](#)

[The World Food Programme: a three-year experiment that became indispensable](#)



Click here to see how you can
[Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

In the media:

- [Courage in the eye of the Myanmar COVID-19 storm.](#)
- [Myanmar joins the world's biggest conversation.](#)
- [Feature on WFP Myanmar in Global New Voice. \(Scroll down to Opinion\)](#)
- [Susu on Weekends One News TV talks to WFP Country Director, Stephen Anderson and Former WFP Director, U Tun Myat.](#)
- [Young UN voices for Myanmar: register now.](#)
- [Mizzima: Learning lessons from COVID-19 in Myanmar:](#)



The world needs solidarity. Your contribution counts.

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great challenge, including the worst global health crisis in its history. Will it bring the world closer together? Or will it lead to greater divide

and mistrust? Your views can make a difference. You can be part of the world's biggest conversation by taking part in the "UN75 survey."

Covid-19 is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation across borders, sectors and generations. The UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has said: *"Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face."*

Your responses to this survey will inform global priorities now and going forward.

[Click here to take the two minute survey now](#)



This newsletter is produced on behalf of the UN Country Team in Myanmar

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