A word from the Director

As Africa grapples with new peaks of COVID-19 infections amidst a third – sometimes fourth – wave, thinly stretched health systems remain overwhelmed, even as they fight back. ‘Vaccine famine’ is today’s reality, reminding us that sustainable solutions require homegrown capacities to produce vaccines against COVID-19, and the next health crisis.

Grounded on actions to promote inclusion, homegrown innovation, and the use of digital technology, this edition of the RBA Digest spotlights some of UNDP’s work with the African Union, governments, partners and people on the ground to tackle vaccine inequity, respond to crisis impacts and prepare for future shocks. We press ahead, taking action on the roadmap to building back better.

Ahunna Eziakonwa

Spotlight: Access to vaccines in Africa

Africa’s pace towards herd immunity is slow. But, new momentum is injected as the African Union acquires 400 million vaccine doses, and distribution commences with Togo being the first country to receive its bulk just a few days later. UNDP Africa is advocating for local vaccine manufacturing on the continent and is playing a role in addressing vaccine equity ensuring accessibility for vulnerable groups, like prisoners in Madagascar.

Register for UNDP’s special UNGA side event on vaccine equity...

Reviving tourism opportunities

To stem the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry in Africa, UNDP partnered with the Afrochampions in support for creating Panabios, a pan-African AI solution facilitating the reopening of borders. This offers standardized and trusted testing and vaccines management creating safe ways to reopen economic sectors like tourism. COVID-19 has forced Small Island Nations to re-imagine their tourism industry models, with Mauritius and Seychelles building adaptive capacity and championing sustainable conservation principles and innovative tourism practices.

A continued response to the emergency

Following findings from its COVID-19 Socioeconomic Impact Report, UNDP’s Uganda Country Office supported government to deploy medical personnel and public health specialists across the country, and piloted a youth program to implement sustainable and commercially viable ideas and models to the response. Our work delivering critical COVID-19 medical supplies worth US$14 million has continued to grow in The Gambia.

Read more about UNDP in Uganda...

Tech helps countries and people face the ‘new normal’

UNDP is increasing efforts to digitize the development and crisis response. From Eritrea’s COVID-19 mobile applications to Lesotho mobile technology for village health workers, we are working to strengthen surveillance and disease control. Innovation is brewing in Eswatini where refrigeration and cold chain technology that protects the environment is supporting delivery of safe vaccines, including for COVID-19.

Right to health, right to life

As outlined in the African Regional Judges’ Forum, COVID-19 has intensified disparities for marginalized and vulnerable populations. UNDP is supporting a rights-based approach, investing in the fight against gender-based violence in Zambia; and, through a database on persons with disabilities ensuring that issues concerning those most at risk do not go unexamined.

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