UN-Habitat's support to
Preparedness and Response strategies
in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Kenya

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Supporting COVID-19 Pandemic Efforts

ACRONYMS

KISEDP	Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan
WHO	World Health Organisation
Kenya's MOH	Kenya's Ministry of Health
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
CDC	US Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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Introduction

1.1 Background

Since late 2019, when the first case of COVID-19 was identified[1], cities around the world have been facing varying impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and have employed different measures to respond to the growing risks. While strategies might differ between countries and cities, the key objectives remain the same: to prevent, suppress, and slow transmission of the virus.

In 2020, UN-Habitat began supporting efforts in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic in Kakuma-Kalobeyei, Turkana County, Kenya – through UN-Habitat's role as technical lead for the Spatial Planning & Infrastructure Development component under the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Programme (KISEDP). The support stems from UN-Habitat's recognition of the role of urban management systems in either (1) contributing to the exacerbation of COVID-19's transmission or (2) "prevent[ion], suppress[ion], and slow[ing]"[2] transmission of the virus.

1   WHO, 2020a.
2   IASC, 2020, pg. 12.

Photo Above: UN-Habitat participated in site visits to schools identified as potential (temporary) healthcare facilities in Kakuma-Kalobeyei.
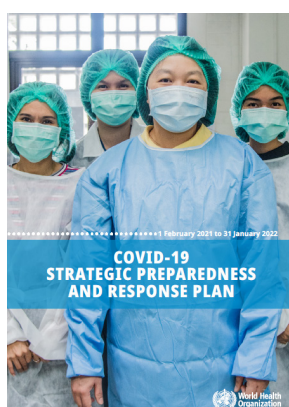
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The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was confirmed in March 2020[3], while the first case of COVID-19 in Kakuma-Kalobeyei was confirmed in May 2020[4]. During the earlier months of the pandemic, the Government of Kenya (GOK) released a series of measures in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the country[5]. UNHCR also responded with developing preparedness and response strategies for Kakuma-Kalobeyei[6]. The report will cover UN-Habitat's two key spatial strategies across different scales developed to provide spatial insight into preparedness and response strategies in the earlier months of the pandemic in 2020: (1) Repurposing study of existing facilities through accessibility studies, and (2) Spatial outbreak investigation. The objective is to cover the processes in the development of these strategies and its implementation, and share insights and lessons learnt in the context of Kakuma-Kalobeyei.

1.2 COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Kakuma-Kalobeyei

Report Above: WHO's COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan document.

The World Health Organisation's (WHO) 2021's *COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (2021)*[7] noted that COVID-19's transmission "is highly clustered", and spread can come from a small group of infected persons.[8] In addition, WHO explained that one key reason for the increased transmission rates observed in last quarter of 2020 was a lack of "robust public health infrastructure" capable of (1) detection of infected cases, and (2) quarantine and support of their contacts to "break chains of transmission".[9] Furthermore, WHO shared that humanitarian settings may face additional difficulties due to low resources and capacity – which can, for example, lead to reporting limitations on transmission rates.[10] Recognising these limitations, WHO called for "strategic shifts, investments, and partner support to foundational health system capacities including financing; data management, collection, and analysis".[11]

Furthermore, UN-Habitat and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) recognised that close to 95% of global COVID-19 cases have come from urban areas and that "[p]andemic preparedness in cities and towns is more urgent than ever for reducing disaster risk".[12] Moreover, UN-Habitat noted that the impact of COVID-19 will be particularly devastating in the informal settlements worldwide where refugees, internally displaced people, and migrants, typically dwell and where they often face overcrowded conditions and a lack of basic resources like water and soap.[13]

Hence, it is critical to explore the role of spatial lenses in supporting preparedness and response strategies in the COVID-19 pandemic. *UN-Habitat's COVID-19 Response Plan*[14] shared that it is critical to develop and provide evidence-based urban data, mapping, and knowledge for informed decision making[15], which can in turn support health infrastructure.

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3   Kenya's Ministry of Health (MOH), 2020.
4   UNHCR, Kenya MOH, 2020, pg. 3.
5   President of the Republic of Kenya, 2020.
6   UNHCR, 2020.
7   https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-WHE-2021.02
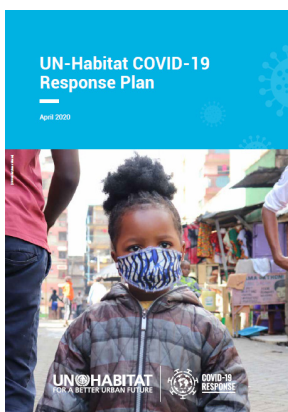8   WHO, 2021, pg. 3.
9   WHO, 2021, pg. 4.
10 WHO, 2021, pg. 5.
11 WHO, 2021, pg. 7.
12 UN-Habitat Executive Director and UN Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2020.
13 UN-Habitat, 2020, pg. 2.
14 https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-covid-19-response-plan
15 UN-Habitat, 2020, pg. 5.

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Report Above: UN-Habitat's COVID-19 Response Plan document.

Integrated spatial lenses in preparedness and response can be achieved by[16]:

- Generating and integrating community data to shape local responses, mapping emerging hotspots, reorganising informal markets and transport hubs as well as public spaces and buildings for health and emergency services;

- Mobilizing an extensive network of global and local partners to support data collection, mapping and analysis using smart technologies enabling a more targeted response to emerging priority needs including water and sanitation, food, housing, health services and livelihoods;

- Fast tracking learning, training and capacity building on how cities and communities are dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, in terms of preparedness, response and recovery.

In Kakuma-Kalobeyei, the settlements possess various spatial factors which compound the risk of clustered transmissions for communities living in the area. Refugee settlements, including Kakuma Refugee Camps and Kalobeyei Settlement, are located alongside host communities – with a total population of 245,223 host and refugees in the area.[17] Settlements in the area face diverse challenges such as overcrowded conditions[18] and/or lack of equitable access to water[19], and a universal lack of integrated utilities in households[20]. Additionally, these factors make it necessary for host and refugee communities to travel in overcrowded conditions to access their basic needs and necessities such as water and food aid, which can contribute to increased contact and risk of transmission. Hence, UN-Habitat proposed two key spatial strategies across different scales to provide spatial insight: (1) *Accessibility studies of Existing Facilities for Repurposing*, and (2) *Spatial outbreak investigation*.