**Information provided by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine in connection with the preparation of the report on the central role of the State in responding to pandemics and other health emergencies, and the socioeconomic consequences thereof in advancing sustainable development and the realization of all human rights**

The response to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic around the world, including Ukraine, foresaw introduction of measures to protect public health and measures for socio-economic protection of economic entities.

Among the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic are persons with low-income, isolated rural population, persons with comorbidities, disabilities, homeless people, elderly people living alone or in social institutions, and migrants with limited access to health services, asylum seekers, children, drug addicts, detainees and others. This means that additional efforts are needed to protect the health, well-being and human rights of vulnerable groups. In connection with the crisis caused by COVID-19, the Ukrainian government has allocated a special one-time cash benefit of UAH 1,000 for those receiving the lowest pension.

Usually, 75% of the amount of pension payments to those who are in nursing homes or psychoneurological dispensaries, goes to the needs of the institution. However, special cash payments are an exception to these rules. In order to strengthen social protection for the period of taking measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19, on April 8, 2020 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted the Resolution No 264. Also, the Government has allocated funds for payment of cash benefits for children under 10 to parents who are private entrepreneurs. The benefit will be paid during the quarantine and a month after its cancellation for children under 6 years of age in the amount of UAH 1,779, and for children aged 6 to 10 years (inclusive) - UAH 2,218. Ukraine was also able to provide assistance for employees, private entrepreneurs (PEs) and legal entities stipulated by the Law "On Social Support of Insured Persons and Businesses for the Period of Restrictive Anti-Epidemic Measures Introduced to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 of 04.12.2020 No 1071-IX.

Restrictive anti-epidemic measures applied in the country take into account the assessments of the benefits/risks of the measures implemented, both on the intensity of transmission of the infectious disease and on the ability of the health care system to respond to the challenge in this particular situation. Decisions on the implementation of anti-epidemic measures take into account the principles recommended by the World Health Organization.

In addition to restrictive anti-epidemic measures, a number of other measures are applied to improve the effectiveness of anti-epidemic restrictions. In particular, there is an improvement in communication with the public and civil society by increasing social advertising, informing about the incidences of the disease, introducing additional electronic information tools, building the capacity of the National Hotline on COVID-19, creating an open database and verifying sources. Also, in order to effectively respond to the spread of coronavirus disease on the territory of Ukraine, control over the observance of anti-epidemic measures by individuals (bringing to administrative responsibility) and business entities (bringing to administrative responsibility and issuing orders for temporary prohibition of activities) is being strengthened.

In order to provide quality care to patients with coronavirus disease, there is a constant planned expansion of the health care system, including expansion of the bed stock, expansion of the number of beds supplied with oxygen, preparation of reserve capacity for deployment of beds, provision of medical devices, strengthening the capacity of state and municipal laboratories to conduct testing, improvement of the contact person management system, etc.

The decision to apply additional restrictive anti-epidemic measures on the territory of Ukraine is made by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine after appropriate consultations with representatives of the health care sector, central executive bodies concerned, in particular the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs, National Security and Defense Council and others.

Close attention is paid to key groups. Two important documents have been elaborated and successfully implemented - the National Strategic Plan for Elimination of Risks Related to the Spread of COVID-19, aimed at ensuring the continuity of HIV services, and the National Strategic Plan for Elimination of Risks associated with the spread of COVID-19, aimed at ensuring the continuity of anti-TB measures.

In 2020, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF) provided additional funding to reduce the risk of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV and TB diagnosis and treatment programs.

The situation with counteracting the spread of COVID-19 in the penitentiary system is as follows. According to the Ministry of Justice, about 53,000 persons are being held in penitentiary and remand prisons in Ukraine today. 28,000 workers must be added to this figure. Thus, there are 81,000 persons who are in close contact with each other, and therefore constitute another risk group that needs to be kept in mind when it comes to countering COVID-19.

The State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine applies the following documents:

• Order of the Ministry of Justice “On prevention of the spread of coronavirus COVID-19 on the territory of penitentiaries, remand prisons, health care facilities of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine”;

• Order of the State Institution “Health Center, Department for Execution of Criminal Punishments “On Approval of the Plan of Anti-Epidemic Measures to Prevent the Introduction and Distribution of Acute Respiratory Disease Caused by the New Coronavirus in 2020 in Penitentiary Institutions and Remand Prisons” of March 12, 2020 # 57-OД / 08 / OД-20;

• Letter of the Department for Execution of Criminal Punishments dated March 17, 2020 No 1 / 1–243 / тв.

In particular, in 2021, Ukraine received funding from the GF, where human rights issues are among the key areas of cross-sectoral nature and contribute to measures to combat the spread of COVID-19. Also, Ukraine has expressed its readiness to join the Global Partnership to eliminate all forms of discrimination and stigma related to HIV and has chosen 4 key areas of activity - these are activities in health care facilities, in justice system, at the community level and households, and in crisis and humanitarian situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together with European partners, the Ministry of Health is implementing a number of assistance projects.

Ukraine has joined the mechanism of global access to vaccines COVAX.

In April 2020, UNDP in Ukraine initiated monitoring of access to public information, with a special focus on COVID-19 response measures at the local level. In addition, work has begun on integrating coronavirus-related stigma and discrimination into the agency's activities through the Commissioner's Network of Regional Offices.

UNDP has assisted the Government to set up Crisis Management and Coordination Centers, in collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the technical coordination of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. UNDP has therefore launched a campaign to promote solidarity and good deeds during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as a joint initiative with the independent online resource platfor.ma to help young women and men aged 14 to 22 cope with self-isolation, social distancing and quarantine restrictions while staying at home.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law of Ukraine of March 30, 2020 № 540-IX “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine aimed at providing additional social and economic guarantees in connection with the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-2019)” (hereinafter - Law № 540).

In pursuance of its provisions, the Government has adopted a number of regulations aimed at supporting business, working citizens and vulnerable groups.

In order to support individual entrepreneurs, tax and administrative benefits have been introduced for business and citizens in connection with the imposed quarantine measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Law of Ukraine of March 17, 2020 № 533-IX). In particular, individual entrepreneurs, self-employed persons and members of a farm business were exempted from accrual, calculation and payment of the single contribution for March and April 2020. Whereas penalties do not apply for incomplete or late payment of the single contribution, as well as late reporting for this period. Relevant legislative initiatives under Law № 540 were extended until 31 May 2020.

In order to support entrepreneurs who may lose income due to quarantine, a new type of assistance was introduced for children under 10 years of age for individual entrepreneurs who have chosen the simplified taxation system and belong to the 1st and 2nd groups of single tax payers, do not use hired labor and pay the single social contribution (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 22.04.2020 № 329). Such payment was provided from May to September 1 and was renewed for the period of November-December 2020 (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 25.11.2020 № 1171). Payment of this benefit is set at the subsistence level for children of appropriate age groups.

The initiative of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskiy to provide material assistance in the amount of UAH 8,000 to insured persons who may lose income due to quarantine has been implemented. From December 2020 to February 2021, the Pension Fund of Ukraine transferred UAH 3,847,720 thousand to JSC Oschadbank for such assistance to be credited to 480,965 applicants.

The mechanism for obtaining a housing subsidy has been simplified (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of March 25, 2020 № 247), namely via:

* a ban on the termination of housing subsidies for the period of quarantine;
* assignment (without an application) of a housing subsidy for the next period to all households that received it during the heating season of 2019-2020;
* taking into consideration the amount of unemployment benefits instead of the salary of the persons fired due to quarantine, which they received at the previous place of work, while assigning a housing subsidy to such persons;
* calculation of the subsidy during the quarantine period, while taking into consideration the increased by 50% social standards for the use of electricity, natural gas for cooking and water heating, hot and cold water, drainage coursed by forced permanent staying of citizens at home and increased consumption of the relevant services.

For the period of quarantine and restrictive measures related to the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), as well as within 30 days after the quarantine is lifted, the extension is provided (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from 08.04.2020 № 264) for the deadlines for:

* payments for the new period of the priorly assigned state social assistance, without the need for citizens to personally apply to the social protection authorities;
* new applications for certain types of the state aid;
* payments of state social assistance to persons with disabilities from childhood, children with disabilities, persons with disabilities, in cases when the deadline for the review by MSEX (medical and social examination) or MAC (medical advisory commission) is missed.

A one-time cash benefit in the amount of UAH 1,000 was established for certain categories of the population from April 1, 2020 in connection with the emergency situation in Ukraine, due to the occurrence and spread of acute respiratory disease COVID-19 (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 01.04.2020 № 251).

Social protection of internally displaced persons who were not employed during the quarantine period was strengthened. The Government also introduced a mechanism of non-application of the rules on termination of payment to cover living expenses, including the payment of housing and communal services in case of their unemployment (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 17.06.2020 № 491).

In order to take measures for preventing the spread of COVID-2019, to address the impact of the emergency in Ukraine, the Ministry of Social Policy has introduced a daily monitoring of the epidemic situation in establishments and institutions of the social protection system, offices of children’s affairs, institutions of social protection of children, rehabilitation centers.

A surcharge was set for employees of social service providers of the state/communal sector who directly provide social services at the place of residence/stay of their recipients (at home) in the amount of up to 100% of the salary (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 29.04.2020, № 375). In pursuance of paragraph 4 of this Resolution, the Order of the Ministry of Social Policy of 22.05.2020, № 321 approved the relevant list of positions of employees of social service providers of the state/communal sector. Thus, at present a surcharge of up to 100 % of the salary will be available to: social educator/social worker, home come social worker, social officer, welfare officer, physical rehabilitation specialist, practical psychologist/psychologist.

In order to strengthen the protection of health workers under conditions of the fight against COVID-19, additional safeguards were put in place (insurance benefits) in the event of the establishment of a disability group or in the event of their death.

Thus, in the case of establishing a disability group within one calendar year due to COVID-19, insurance benefits are set at least 300 times of the subsistence level, and in the event of death - at 750 times of the subsistence level.

In 2020, in order to support insured persons under the conditions of the fight against COVID-19, including health workers, financial assistance to the Social Insurance Fund of Ukraine (the Fund) was provided from the state budget in the amount of over UAH 2,1 billion, including:

* UAH 233,3 million – for insurance payments in case of illness or death of health workers in connection with infection with COVID-19;
* UAH 107,2 million – to pay insured persons for temporary incapacity for work during their stay in self-isolation, as well as to pay one-time assistance to family members of medical and other health care workers in the event of death due to COVID-19 infection that occurred in the line of service;
* UAH 1,807,7 million – for the payment of material security arrears resulting from the lack of funds in the Fund in connection with the implementation of measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19.

It is also envisaged that temporary disability benefits are paid in the amount of 100% of the average salary (income) to health care workers, who are in health care facilities, as well as in self-isolation under medical supervision in connection with measures to prevent the spread COVID-19, as well as localization and elimination of its outbreaks and epidemics, regardless of the insurance period.

In order to provide targeted assistance to vulnerable groups during the quarantine period the Ministry of Social Policy launched a new social project Online Information Platform "Help is Near", the main purpose of which is to create conditions for involving charities and NGOs, businesses and volunteers in providing assistance to vulnerable groups of the population while ensuring coordination of such provision. This platform is filled in by structural units for social protection of the population of regional and Kyiv city state administrations with information on the needs of vulnerable groups. Data are entered into the Information Online Platform "Help is Near" on the basis of the calls received at hotlines; written requests from citizens as well as information obtained through additional ways of identification of the needs.

In addition, the Ministry of Social Policy together with the National Network of Grocery Stores ATB held an action to provide grocery kits for the elderly, persons with disabilities, children with disabilities.

During 2020, increase of the subsistence minimum was ensured at a rate exceeding the inflation rate. The subsistence minimum increased by 8% (consumer price index in 2020 was 105%).

In accordance with the increase in the subsistence minimum, the amount of the minimum pension, state social assistance, including for persons with disabilities, families with children, was increased.

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