



Impact of Covid-19 on DPPA and on the Multi-Year Appeal



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The Covid-19 pandemic has added significant stress to a multilateral system that was already under strain from major geopolitical tensions and growing global mistrust among States and between governments and their people. Further erosion of trust in government institutions, stalled peace processes, postponed or cancelled upcoming elections, the difficulty of undertaking good offices and mediation remotely, the spread of the virus in camps for refugees or internally displaced persons and political repression in the guise of measures to address the crisis all represent potential threats to the maintenance of international peace and security. In some settings, the uncertainty created by the pandemic may encourage conflict parties to press for a military advantage, leading to the escalation of violence and complicating efforts to fight the pandemic. Similarly, terrorist groups may use the distraction caused by the pandemic as an opportunity to attack civilians or infrastructure.

While the pandemic has significant political implications everywhere, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) is particularly concerned over its devastating potential in fragile and conflict-affected countries. As DPPA, we must approach this crisis with a prevention lens. We are paying close attention to the impact of Covid-19 on fragile political transitions, such as Sudan's, as well as on countries already facing a rapid deterioration of security, including Burkina Faso and Niger. We are also placing a particular focus on mitigating the impact of the pandemic on women and girls.

In the face of the pandemic, DPPA, at UN headquarters and in the field, has adapted its operations in order to continue providing support to Member States and partners. The Department is closely watching the impact of Covid-19 and government responses in individual countries, especially those hosting our Special Political Missions (SPMs).

DPPA's Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 and its accompanying Multi-Year Appeal (MYA) are more relevant than ever to answer the challenges posed by the pandemic. The Department has adopted a theory of change that emphasizes a risk reduction model. To that end, DPPA aims to influence the trajectory of countries away from violence and instability, to improve the chances that stakeholders will adopt peaceful solutions and gradually build sustainable peace. As such, DPPA is closely monitoring the risks of the pandemic on peace and security and is undertaking several initiatives at Headquarters and in the field as described below.

DPPA's response to the Secretary General's call for a global ceasefire

The Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire made on 23 March has been endorsed by over 115 Member States, as well as regional organizations, religious leaders and a broad coalition of international and local NGOs, and civil society platforms. The medical and humanitarian crises created by Covid-19 have led to potential opportunities for exploring trust- and confidence-building measures. The Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire aims to capitalize on such possibilities. The ceasefire call has resonated with conflict parties in many situations, including in Colombia, Cameroon, the Philippines, South Sudan, Ukraine and countries in the Middle East. Much work remains to be done to turn endorsements of the call into a tangible reduction in violence on the ground.

United Nations Special Envoys and Representatives are engaging with conflict parties, including through virtual platforms, to try and consolidate tentative positive signals and encourage other reluctant conflict actors to move towards ceasefires. The acting Special Representative in Libya, for example, has recently been in contact with both Prime Minister Serraj and General Haftar to urge de-escalation. In Yemen, where the first confirmed Covid-19 case was reported on 10 April, the Special Envoy continues to engage with the parties to try and overcome the distrust and move towards a ceasefire. And in Cyprus, while all crossing points have been closed, the office of the Special Adviser has encouraged greater cooperation to address Covid-19, and both Cypriot communities have shown a willingness to use the Technical Committees more actively in this regard. In Sudan, we hope to see initial steps towards ceasefires in the Jebel Mara (Darfur), and in the two conflict areas of Blue Nile State and Southern Kordofan, which would result in increased humanitarian access, as well as their engagement in the broader political processes. To amplify the Secretary-General's call for global ceasefire, DPPA has continued to make MYA funding available to field missions for launching local initiatives to curb the spread of Covid-19.

Response of SPMs and DPPA support

Our 30 SPMs vary in size and footprint and are located in regions that are in different stages of the pandemic. All missions have adapted to working under new conditions in line with updated contingency and business continuity planning. As part of the interagency Field Response Coordination Group, DPPA is supporting efforts to develop scenarios pertaining to the security situations of field missions and contingency plans related to the impact of Covid-19.

However, political engagement with national stakeholders through remote means is proving challenging in some parts. The current work of SPMs is guided by four key objectives: (1) to support national authorities in their response to Covid-19; (2) to protect our personnel and their capacity to continue critical operations; (3) to ensure that our own personnel are not a contagion vector; and (4) to help protect vulnerable communities and continue to implement mission mandates. These priorities are shared between DPPA and the Departments of Peace Operations and of Operational Support to provide unified guidance and support to all field missions.

While DPPA has adjusted its way of working, we are resolved to staying the course in the implementation of our mandates in the fragile environments where we are deployed. Implementation of mandates in SPMs is impacted by measures taken to limit the spread of the virus. The limitations to movement have forced most SPMs to resort to telecommuting and “virtual diplomacy”, however, political engagement with national stakeholders through remote means remains a challenge for some SPMs.

DPPA’s tools

Action-oriented analysis

Covid-19 is a new “stressor” that has the potential to trigger or exacerbate conflict or violence. DPPA is paying close attention to the implications of Covid-19 in mission settings, contexts facing high security risk, and countries with fragile political transitions. Covering both mission and non-mission settings, DPPA is preparing weekly updates for the Executive Committee, chaired by the Secretary-General, on the political impact of Covid-19. Together with missions and Resident Coordinators (RCs), the Department is also drawing up scenarios for the Executive Committee on how a significant outbreak could affect local and regional dynamics.

UN peace processes and mediation

Covid-19 responses have diverted international attention and resources away from mediation and conflict prevention initiatives. Special Envoys and SRSGs are pursuing political opportunities resulting from the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire but any political gains are fragile and easily reversible in the absence of concerted international action. Restrictions on movements have affected confidence-based mechanisms as well as the ability to engage in face to face diplomacy to de-escalate potential conflicts.

DPPA was quick to adapt to the evolving situation and took steps to continue supporting political processes, including through the use of digital tools and platforms to engage with conflict parties as well as other stakeholders, especially women. The Mediation Support Unit (MSU) and its Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers are providing remote support where required and have deepened their engagement through the utilization of digital tools in its work (e.g. the Digital Mediation Toolkit, <https://peacemaker.un.org/digitaltoolkit>).

Below are some examples of support provided by the Standby Team since the eruption of the pandemic:

- In Libya, the International Follow-up Committee established in Berlin and the International Follow-Up Committee on Libya (IFCL) Political Working Group (co-chaired by Germany, Turkey and the League of Arab States) met remotely on 2 April and 16 April, respectively. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) continues to engage the parties on the economic track, including women;
- In Yemen, a concerted effort is being made by the Special Envoy to engage the parties through virtual means and restart the formal peace process;
- In Afghanistan, the government and the Taliban managed to engage through virtual means on a prisoner release in April, though there remain disputes over the lists and identities of those released.

Electoral assistance

Despite the current challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department has continued to coordinate UN electoral assistance to Member States by using flexible arrangements, as necessary and where possible. Many countries have postponed upcoming elections (both national and local levels) and referenda, including seven where the UN provides electoral support (national elections in Armenia, Bolivia, Malawi and Ethiopia; local elections in Papua New Guinea-Bougainville, Paraguay and Solomon Islands). Many countries are also considering how to proceed with holding elections using different mitigating measures.

UN entities providing electoral support are coordinating to assist authorities, where requested, in contingency planning, procurement (including materials to limit the spread of Covid-19), public messaging and facilitating consultations among stakeholders. DPPA's Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) is utilizing desk reviews in place of Needs Assessment Missions to minimize staff travel and exposure. DPPA will continue to provide remote support to electoral projects in the field. Other planned activities in support of regional organizations and their Member States have all been scheduled for the second half of the year as the Department continues to monitor developments around the world.

Working with partners

Collaborative efforts with partners, including regional and sub-regional organizations, UN partners and civil society organizations remain crucial in the current context. DPPA continues to produce regional analyses, strengthen the mediation capacity of regional and sub-regional organizations, and support its regional offices. DPPA is keen to deepen its relationships with UN actors on the ground and offers tailored support to RCs and the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) in their efforts to promote nationally owned peacebuilding initiatives. Special emphasis is placed on partnerships with the World Bank and other international financial institutions to jointly address the socio-economic impact of Covid-19. With the support of its 10 liaisons presences around the world, DPPA is tailoring its political analysis, maintaining its partnerships with regional actors, and ensuring coordination of UN responses.

Impact of Covid-19 on women and girls

Following the Secretary-General's additional call to end violence against women and girls as the pandemic spreads, targeted efforts are also being made to bring increased attention to those disproportionately affected by conflict, while emphasizing the shared responsibility to protect civilians. Covid-19 has a disproportionate effect on women and girls, particularly those living in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

The Department continues to push for further concerted, strategic commitment to address the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. We advocate for gendered analysis and sex-disaggregated data of conflict but also of crisis causes and consequences, including Covid-19. DPPA is in regular contact with the gender advisers and gender focal points in the field and has made MYA funding available to them. Together with the wider UN system

and partners, DPPA continues to support women's participation in political processes and all matters of peace and security. However, a reduced UN footprint and social distancing measures continue to constrain community outreach, deployment of observers and protection efforts.

Impact of Covid-19 on the MYA

The pandemic has affected DPPA's ability to implement the MYA portfolio as originally planned. The Department is in the middle of a re-programming exercise to adjust its priorities and re-assess the risk management and mitigation strategies of all its projects. Demand for our services might take a different form but is expected to remain high in 2020. New requests for MYA support are also anticipated to emerge from the pandemic.

The MYA's agility and flexibility make it an ideal tool in times of crisis. For example, thanks to its thematic windows, it can respond to the pandemic in quick, agile and innovative ways:

1/ Technology and Innovation Window: The Innovation Cell continues to pioneer and leverage new methodologies to support our work. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, innovative and digital approaches to prevention, mediation and peacebuilding and sustaining peace have become even more relevant. The new context has made direct interaction, including traditional shuttle diplomacy with conflict parties and peace constituencies, difficult. This puts new technologies for safe and comprehensive dialogue at the forefront of diplomacy and mediation. DPPA has been working on a series of tools, including digital focus groups and social media mining to support its work, whilst also developing its knowledge of both the possibilities and limitations of digital communication in peace process engagement.

2/ Local Peace Initiative (LPIs): To support SPMs in the delivery of their mandates with targeted mediation/dialogue initiatives at the local level, aimed at building trust in broader peace and reconciliation/dialogue processes. LPIs put a strong emphasis on inclusion (e.g. women, youth and/or minorities) and on the participation of civil society.

3/ Rapid Response: To enable DPPA's response in crisis-type situations and meet short-term needs such as the ones arising out of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. This window covers a variety of early warning, good offices, mediation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities.

Priorities under the MYA for the remainder of 2020

The following activities under the MYA are in need of funding:

- To provide operational and technical support to peace negotiations to over 30 SPMs and more than 100 RCs;
- To fund deployments of the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers to support Member States, SRSGs and Special Envoys, peace operations, etc.;
- To fund all our work advancing partnership with regional and sub-regional organizations;
- To support RCs and UNCTs with political analysis, dialogue and mediation;

- To programme at least 17 per cent of the annual MYA budget in support of WPS activities;
- To coordinate UN electoral assistance to Member States and conduct training to regional and sub-regional organizations;
- To maintain our 10 liaison presences across the globe;
- To fund all our innovative work (including the Innovation Cell, LPs, and on climate security);
- To use Rapid Response funding to support SRSGs and Special Envoys to seize windows of opportunity, especially in the context of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, and;
- To continue supporting core work of the Department such as backstopping positions at Headquarters, etc.

As the Covid-19 crisis unfolds, the Department will strive to keep its partners regularly informed through the Donor Group and other fora, including the newly launched *Talking Prevention* series.

Monitoring risks

DPPA has developed a 2020 risk register for the MYA. For DPPA's work, the impact of the pandemic cuts across several political, reputational, operational and financial risk categories. These relate to the need for DPPA to manage risks such as stalling political processes; impact on upcoming elections; challenges of undertaking good offices endeavours remotely; the possible perception that the UN is not doing enough to combat Covid-19; the absence of contingency measures; a lack of support to SPMs; urgent functions overshadowing important planning and oversight functions; and significant funding shortfalls. The Department will update its risk register regularly. DPPA will also collect data against its Results Framework on a six-monthly basis. Mid-year, DPPA will focus on making necessary adjustments to the Results Framework taking into account the constraints imposed by the pandemic.

Covid-19 crisis requires agile and flexible planning approach. As such, DPPA has adapted its planning tools to focus on the most pressing and realistic priorities and opportunities. Moving away from the usual practice of producing annual workplans, divisions are developing quarterly plans. Covering a shorter time period, these work plans enable greater flexibility to DPPA and help monitor risks.

Financial resources required

The new MYA is the most ambitious appeal for funding the Department has ever issued, targeting \$45 million for 2020 to meet increased demands and sustain our operations. By 30 April, the Department had received \$17.9 million in contributions and hard pledges, leaving a funding gap of \$27.1 million (Appeal 40% funded). In light of the impact of Covid-19 on the MYA and its operations, DPPA will communicate its new funding target in July 2020. With competition for resources intensifying, the MYA is more important than ever. The MYA has no funding reserve, and DPPA relies heavily on contributions coming in throughout the year.

For more information on DPPA's Multi-Year Appeal, please contact: dppa-donorrelations@un.org