

# ITUC-AP COVID-19 Survey

## Government Responses to COVID-19



- 1) Paid sick leave
- 2) Wage support
- 3) Income support
- 4) Mortgage, rent or loan relief
- 5) Free Health care

22 April 2020

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### Introduction

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COVID-19 could damage the global economy by directly affecting production, by causing supply chain and market disruption, and by having a detrimental financial impact on firms and financial markets. However, workers, especially those in unstable employment are the worst affected group in society. Once economic activity has been suspended or has decreased to a certain level, they will lose their jobs and hence their income. Their employers cannot afford or are not sufficiently generous to provide any relief and, in most cases, these workers are not covered by public social protection programmes. Consequently, many workers and their families may be left destitute.

The Council of the Global Unions (CGU), namely the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the 11 Global Union Federations (GUFs) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC), published its statement on 12 March 2020 calling upon governments to: “immediately extend paid sick leave entitlements, maintain incomes and extend social protections to all workers, including formal, ‘gig’, precarious and informal workers, regardless of their employment status”.

The ITUC and its Regional Organisations have been collecting, analysing and disseminating information about COVID-19, including a review of government responses, with a particular focus on the following five areas: (1) paid sick leave; (2) wage support; (3) income support; (4) mortgage, rent or loan relief; and (5) free health care; and have published three surveys relating to government responses. This ITUC-AP survey summarises the information which the ITUC and the ITUC-AP have collected from their affiliates in the Asian and Pacific region, as well as from the media as of 21 April 2020. Please visit the [ITUC webpage on COVID-19](#) to view other surveys and reports.

## Government Responses

		Paid Sick Leave	Wage Support	Income Support	Mortgage, Rent / Loan Relief	Free Health Care
EAST ASIA	<a href="#">Hong Kong- SAR</a>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Japan</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Korea</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Mongolia</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Taiwan- ROC</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SOUTH EAST ASIA	<a href="#">Cambodia</a>	X	✓	X	X	X
	<a href="#">Indonesia</a>	X	X	✓	X	✓
	<a href="#">Malaysia</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
	<a href="#">Myanmar</a>	X	X	X	✓	X
	<a href="#">Philippines</a>	X	✓	✓	X	✓
	<a href="#">Singapore</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Thailand</a>	X	X	✓	✓	X
SOUTH ASIA	<a href="#">Afghanistan</a>	No info	No info	No info	No info	No info
	<a href="#">Bangladesh</a>	✓	✓	✓	X	X
	<a href="#">India</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Nepal</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Pakistan</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Sri Lanka</a>	X	✓	X	X	✓

		Paid Sick Leave	Wage Support	Income Support	Mortgage, Rent / Loan Relief	Free Health Care
MIDDLE EAST	<a href="#">Bahrain</a>	✓	✓	No info	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Israel</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Jordan</a>	✓	No info	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Kuwait</a>	✓	No info	No info	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Oman</a>	✓	No info	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Palestine</a>	✓	No info	No info	X	✓
	<a href="#">Turkey</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Yemen</a>	X	X	X	X	X
PACIFIC	<a href="#">Australia</a>	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Cook Islands</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Fiji</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Kiribati</a>	No info	No info	No info	No info	No info
	<a href="#">New Zealand</a>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<a href="#">Samoa</a>	No info	No info	✓	✓	X
	<a href="#">Tonga</a>	No info	✓	✓	No info	✓
	<a href="#">Vanuatu</a>	X	✓	✓	X	X

## EAST ASIA

### **Hong Kong- SAR**

Hong Kong established an Anti-Epidemic Fund (1 per cent of GDP) and approved tax and fee reliefs and other one-off relief measures (1.8 per cent GDP) It is said that a part of the fund was provided to businesses as relief and to safeguard jobs. However, more detailed information should be collected from affiliates.

As of 18 April 2020, the Hong Kong government announced its fiscal measures of the total HK\$287.5 billion, around 9.5% of the city's GDP (the first round of the HK\$30 billion Anti-epidemic fund on 21 Feb., the budgetary allocation of the HK\$120 billion relief package on 26 Feb. and the second round of the HK\$137.5 billion Anti-epidemic fund on 18 April). In general, the City government relief measures for workers were decided very lately despite very prompt reliefs for businesses. It is necessary to check whether relief measures are well implemented sufficiently without anyone left behind. However, it seems that there are many loopholes to majority of workers in Hong Kong excluded from their relief package.

**Paid Sick Leave:**

There is no Covid-19 related paid sick leave. However, in accordance with the Employment Ordinance or an employment contract, a worker serving a quarantine order has an entitlement of daily allowance (4/5 of daily wage). However, non-contacted workers in self-isolation or quarantine cannot have no entitlement. Considering a large number of precarious workers and misclassified/disguised workers in Hong Kong, most workers have not been able to enjoy any paid sick leave.

**Wage Support:**

The unemployment rate in the period from December 2019 to February 2020 is 3.7% with 134,100 people out of work. The number of underemployment rate including those in unpaid leave has also risen from 47,300 to 59,100.

In the second round of the Anti-epidemic fund, the government has allocated HK80 billion job retention to pay 1.5 million workers 50% of their wages, at a maximum of HK\$9,000 a month, for six months from no later than June 2020. However, this payment will be given to employers and only cover the workers only with a Mandatory Provident Fund pension scheme, leaving more than 65% of workers out. Some employers intend to abuse the scheme by laying off their workers and then employing family members or friends.

The government pledged to create 30,000 time limited jobs including employing 10,000 new civil service jobs in 2020-2021 and 5,000 youth interns. Also the HK\$800 million has been allocated for workers' new skill training.

**Income Support:** Cash pay-out to Hong Kong permanent residents aged 18 or above.

Special allowance of the HK\$990 million for eligible Working Family Assistance / Student Financial Assistance households

Reducing salaries tax and tax under personal assessment for 2019-2020 by 100%, subject to a ceiling of HK\$20,000, benefiting 1.95 million tax payers.

Providing an extra allowance to eligible social security recipients, equal to one month's standard rate payment of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Old Age Allowance, Old Age Living Allowance or Disability Allowance.

Lower MTR fares by 20 % for 6 months from July 1, 2020.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

Paying one month's rent for lower income tenants living in public rental units of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and the Hong Kong Housing Society.

Providing various rental concession schemes, such as rental reduction by 75% for 6 months from April for eligible tenants of government properties, government land and the EcoPark.

**Free Health Care:** Hong Kong has established a low-cost public healthcare system including non-permanent residents are eligible with a valid document. Hospital authority will receive an additional HK\$3 billion.

## Japan

As of 7 April, the Government of Japan adopted the Emergency Economic Package Against COVID-19 with the total value of JPY108.2 trillion (20 percent of GDP), subsuming the remaining part of the previously announced packages (the December 2019 stimulus package) and the two COVID-19-response packages announced on February 13 and March 10 respectively); (i) develop preventive measures against the spread of infection and strengthen treatment capacity (expenditure of 0.5 percent of GDP), (ii) protect employment and businesses (15.1 percent of GDP), (iii) regain economic activities after containment (1.6 percent of GDP), (iv) rebuild a resilient economic structure (3 percent of GDP), and (v) enhance readiness for the future (0.3 percent of GDP).

**Paid Sick Leave:** Sickness and injury allowance is applicable to a sick leave due to COVID-19. It may be required to check whether there is any extended or new measure for all including an uninsured.

### Wage Support:

1. Wage replacement programme for firms with paid leave schemes (up to JPY8,330) as well as self-employed and freelancer (JPY4,100 per day) upon certain conditions.
2. Raising the subsidy rates of the Employment Adjustment Subsidy from 2/3 to 9/10 for SMEs and from 1/2 to 3/4, respectively, for those do not dismiss employees between April and June.
3. Relaxed qualifications for the Employment Adjustment Subsidy, which provides SMEs and large corporations a financial support that covers 2/3 and 1/2 of the cost of special paid leaves, respectively.
4. Aids to households including supports for work leaves for parents in relation to the school closure.

### Income Support:

1. Abe pledged a cash payment of JPY100,000 (\$930) to everyone in Japan instead of JPY300,000 subsidy for a household affected by Covid-19.
2. Under certain conditions, employee's pension contribution payment can be made in instalments.
3. Tax policy to extend deadline for personal income tax, gift tax and consumption tax payments. Also, deferrals on tax payments for individuals and business impacted by COVID-19 upon request.
4. (Child Care) The government will take care all additional costs at after-school child care centres that accept children from the morning during the school closure.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** So far, any programme to waive or ease loan including mortgage payments or rents has been identified yet. However, Japanese government requested the Private Bank Association for allow affected people a flexible arrangement for repayment. Note also Japanese government has introduced various special or emergency loan programme to individuals and companies.

**Free Health Care:** In accordance with a decree to apply the infectious Disease Act to COVID-19, enforced on 1 February, the cost of provision of medical care has been shouldered by the government. Japan has 2 statutory schemes on health care: National Health Insurance and Employees' Health Insurance. According to the ADB (2019) the weighted (actual subprogram beneficiaries divided by the total intended beneficiaries of social protection) coverage of health insurance in Japan (2015) was 57 per cent. In this regard, we need to check those who are excluded from the protection, especially most vulnerable groups such as migrant workers.

## **Korea**

As of 16 April, the total value of packages against Covid-19, has been introduced by the Korean government, is KRW 141 trillion (USD 115 billion, 7.4% of GDP) including emergency support of KRW 20 trillion for households and damaged industries and the supplementary budget of KRW 11.7 trillion (USD 10 billion, 0.6% of GDP).

Comparing with March 2019, there are 195,000 job losses in March this year. Over 150,000 people filed for their unemployment benefits only in March 2020. The number of temporary layoffs is 1.6 million in March.

**Paid Sick Leave:** Ministry of Health and Welfare provides financial supports for those who cannot work for hospitalisation or quarantine/isolation due to the infection. Also, the Ministry of Employment and Labour provides financial support to employers who provide paid leaves for workers affected by the virus.

### **Wage Support:**

1. Ministry of Employment and Labour provides financial supports for those who need to take leaves for parental purposes due to the extended school closure.
2. Ministry of Employment and Labour provides various subsidies to individuals and companies to retain employment.
3. Ministry of Employment and Labour provides a financial support scheme to employers who adopt flexible working arrangements.

### **Income Support:**

1. Consumption coupons for the poor, emergency family care and employment retention support (KRW 3.5 trillion), announced on 17 March.
2. Relief checks to households in the bottom 70 % income bracket (around 14 million households), of up to KRW 1 million (USD 820) per household, announced on 30 March.
3. Another one-time-relieve package of the total KRW 9.7 billion, including a second extra budge of 7.6 trillion (USD6.3 billion), for shopping coupons and gift certificates to 14.78 million households, about half of the nation's total households, announced on 16 April.
4. There is a national employment insurance. The insured will have his/her unemployment benefit. Those who are not covered by the employment insurance including workers in

unpaid leaves, workers in misclassified employment, etc will get financial supports for 2 months.

5. Tax policies: (i) increase of tax deduction for individuals for the use of credit and debit cards; (ii) consumption tax cut for auto purchases; and (iii) loans and financial guarantees for self-employed and people affected by the virus.
6. Social security contribution relief with three-month payment deferrals and 30 % contribution rate deductions for small business and low-income households.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. Tax policy: Korean government will provide tax benefit to lessors who waive or cut down rent payment of his/her lessees.
2. Extension of loan maturity as well as deferment of interest payment Affected SMEs and self-employment.

**Free Health Care:**

1. Testing: COVID-19 testing is free for suspected patients, infected patients and those who are required to take a test.
2. Medical costs for COVID-19 are paid by central and local governments with national health insurance service.
3. The national health insurance service is a statutory national health insurance scheme to cover 63.3 per cent (ADB, weighted coverage as of 2015). All foreigners who stay longer than 6 months should also enrol. However, medical costs are not completely free. We need to check those who are not covered by the insurance.

**Mongolia**

**Paid Sick Leave:** Some paid sick leave only for workers covered by the national health insurance

**Wage Support:** The Mongolian government approved a subsidy to retain employment by supporting firms to pay 200,000MNT to employees for 3 months. However, this will not cover the self-employed and workers without unemployment insurance. For the first 3 months of this year, 5,200 people received unemployment benefits.

**Income Support:** Mongolia has its national unemployment insurance with a small coverage. Increase of the monthly 'Child Money' allowance of MNT20,000 to children aged under 18 to MNT30,000 for 3 months. Exemption of employers' social insurance contribution by private enterprises and companies and exemption of personal income tax for 6 months from April. Exemption of social insurance contributions by self-employed individuals for 6 month until October. Temporary postponement of the repayment of soft mortgage loans from the government, decided 3 April.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** The government's decision to make deferrals on consumer and business loan repayment and their interests for 90 days in 18 March to cover 1,069 individual borrowers (MNT36.6 billion) and 126 companies (MNT109.8 billion). The Bank of Mongolia lowered its policy rate by 2 % points from 11 to 9 percent.

**Free Health Care:** Mongolia has its own national health with a large coverage.

## Taiwan-ROC

The total value of the economic stimulus package, pledged by the government as of 3 April, is NT\$1.05 trillion (US\$34.64 billion), 5.4% of its national GDP – NT\$210 billion from a special budget, NT\$140 billion from the general budget and NT\$700 billion in loans to affected industries.

According to the government, they has injected NT\$81.6 billion to help 1.92 million workers (16.6% of its working population) to keep their jobs.

**Paid Sick Leave:** Ministry of Labour has instructed employers to pay at least minimum wage to workers on leave. NT\$12.7 billion to compensate people placed under quarantine. Ministry of Labour approved a special unpaid leave for 14 days for the parental purpose. The Ministry also decided to give tax benefit to employers who are willing to provide the paid leaves.

**Wage Support:** Subsidies issued for payroll and overhead costs for businesses whose income has dropped by at least 50%.

- Wage subsidy: 40 % of a monthly salary, not exceeding NT\$20,000(US\$644)
- Overhead subsidy: NT\$10,000 per worker.

Employers should not lay off workers, or cut wages by more than 20%.

Paid training programs at the minimum hourly wage for 120 hours, up to NT\$18,960 (US\$629), for workers in unpaid leave from travel agencies, hotels, amusement parks and B&Bs as well as tour guides.

As of 18 April, the total number of workers on unpaid leave is 14,821.

**Income Support:** Cash handouts of NT\$30,000 (US\$994.96) for the self-employed or freelancers under the labour insurance system only. In order to get the cash handout, they must have been exempted from paying individual income taxes and their insured monthly salary under the labour insurance system should not exceed NT\$24,000 per month.

Subsidy of NT\$10,000 per month for 3 months for taxi and tour bus drivers. (around 92,000 taxis and 16,000 bus drivers).

Coupons, issued by the end of April, worth up to the NT\$1,000 per person per month for three months. Considering its 25% discount on purchase, the total purchasing value of coupons would be at least NT\$4,000 per person.

NT\$8.7 billion to cover a three-month NT\$1,500 increase in the monthly subsidy to elderly people and children with disability.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Various loan subsidies for businesses and individuals affected by Covid-19.

**Free Health Care:** Taiwan has a statutory health insurance scheme with almost universal coverage.



## SOUTH EAST ASIA

### **Cambodia**

Companies severely affected by COVID-19 will be given tax holidays of six months to one year. Hotels and guesthouses in important tourism area will be exempted from February to May 2020.

**Wage support:** Garment workers whose factories close because of the COVID-19 outbreak will receive 60 per cent of the minimum wage, which rose to \$190 per month this year, as wage replacement. A third of that will be paid by employers, and two-thirds by the state.

### **Indonesia**

Indonesia will issue government regulation in lieu of law (Perpu) that will boost state spending by USD24.6 billion or IDR405.1 trillion and widen the budget deficits to 5.07 per cent of GDP in the nation's fight against COVID-19. The government will allocate IDR75 trillion for health care, IDR110 trillion for social protection and IDR70.1 trillion for tax incentives and credit for enterprises. IDR150 trillion will be set aside for economy recovery programme including credit restructuring and financing small and medium business. Indonesia poorest household will receive free electricity and discount to help them cope from COVID-19 starting April 2020. Workers in the manufacturing industry will not have to pay income taxes for six months against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Government of Indonesia established a new scheme called 'Pre-employment Card Programme'. The programme has been prepared to primarily aim at up-skilling 2 million young workers by paying a lump-sum allowance of IDR500,000 (\$US34.32) per participant to cover accommodation and transportation costs during the training programme. IDR3 trillion to finance contributions to the national health insurance scheme for 30 million non-salaried workers.

**Income support:** Rp 1 million will be given to 5.6 million informal and micro-firm workers for 4 months, and income tax will be frozen for people on low incomes.

**Access to health:** The government has allocated Rp 75 trillion to healthcare spending.

**Special features:** The state-owned electricity company will supply free electricity to 24 million households with the lowest electricity consumption and a 50% discount for 7 million more in the next category, covering a third of all users for three months. Staple food relief will be extended to 4.8 million more people, on top of the existing 20 million recipients.

### **Malaysia**

On 27 March, Malaysia has announced an economic stimulus package worth MYR250 billion (USD58 billion) to weather the impact of COVID-19. The stimulus package comprises special allowance for healthcare providers, one-off-cash aid and microcredit scheme for small and medium size enterprises. Additional stimulus package was released on 6 April worth MYR10 billion (USD2.3 billion) to help struggling small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The allocation for the previously announced wage subsidy programme will be increased to MYR13.8 billion from the original MYR5.9 billion. This was applicable to companies with local workers earning below MYR4,000. In companies with 200

workers or more, the wage subsidy would be MYR600 per head, whereas companies with between 76 to 200 workers would be entitled to MYR800 per head. Companies with up to 75 workers would be entitled to MYR1,200 per worker. The aid would be given for the of three months for all companies registered with the Companies Commission of Malaysia, before 1 January 2020.

**Paid sick leave:** Employees as defined by the Employment Act receive sick pay.

**Wage support:** A maximum 3-month wage subsidy of RM\$ 600 (EUR 130) will be paid to workers whose monthly salary is less than RM\$ 4,000 and whose employers have suffered a 50% drop in business this year.

**Income support:** The same applies to platform workers, self-employed and freelancers.

## Myanmar

Since March 18, the government has unveiled an initial stimulus package that includes MMK100 billion ((USD70 million) loan fund and has eased deadlines for tax payments and granted tax exemption for Myanmar - owned business have been badly affected by the global pandemic. The fund draws 50 billion Kyats from the country's revolving fund and another 50 billion Kyats from the social welfare fund.

More than USD25 million is being provided by the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT), European Union, United States and Australia to support Myanmar's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including cash grants totalling millions of dollars to affected or vulnerable groups. The assistance will benefit workers who have lost their jobs, internal migrant workers and those returned from abroad, mothers, the elderly and people displace by conflict. It is also included technical support and the supply of medical equipment. Many of those targeted will receive one-off or ongoing cash payment distributed through the Wave Money Mobile platform.

**Mortgage/Loan:** MMK 100 billion, including the loan fund.

## Philippines

**Paid Sick Leave:** There is no specific COVID-related paid leaves. What's provided under DOLE Labour Advisory No. 11, Series of 2020, is that the leaves of absence of workers during the quarantine period are to be charged against their leave credits, the financial assistance may be used to cover remaining unpaid leaves of affected workers.

### Wage Support:

1. A one-time financial assistance equivalent to Php 5,000.00 shall be provided to affected workers in private establishments that have adopted flexible work arrangements or temporary closure, regardless of employment status (from January 2020 until the lifting of social distancing measures on 14 April unless extended).
2. The program shall also provide affected workers access to available job opportunities suitable to their qualifications through job matching, referral and placement services either for local or overseas employment, employment coaching, and labour market information. More details are available here <https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/department-order-no-209-guidelines-on-the-adjustment-measures-program-for-affected-workers-due-to-the-coronavirus-disease-2019/>.

3. Temporary wage employment for underemployed, self-employed and displaced marginalised workers who have lost their livelihood or whose earnings were affected. The duration of work is limited for a period of 10 days to be paid with wages equivalent to 100 per cent of the prevailing highest minimum wage in the region. See more details here <https://www.dole.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DO-210v2.pdf>
4. Unemployment benefits equivalent to a half of workers' average monthly salary credit for a maximum of two months to some 30,000 to 60,000 workers projected to lose their jobs as a result of the possible layoffs in, or closures

#### **Income Support:**

1. Cash aid between PHP5,000 to PHP8,000 will be given to vulnerable sectors of society such as persons with disabilities, senior citizens, pregnant mothers, homeless persons and workers in informal sectors as part of the government's PHP200 billion worth of aid (USD3.9 billion).
2. The deadline for the filing of income tax returns has been extended to May 15 without penalties.
3. About 9.7 million senior citizens will get 6 months of their pension in advance this April to help them cope with the coronavirus pandemic.

#### **Free Health Care:**

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) announced it will continue to cover the cost of COVID-19 treatment of members and dependents until 14 April 2020. Covered by the package are those admitted starting 31 January. More details here <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/does-health-insurance-cover-covid-020001050.html>

Until 14 April, PhilHealth was shouldering in full the hospitalisation of COVID-19 patients. But from 15 April onwards, the new case rates shall apply which limited the treatment cost PhilHealth would pay for people hospitalised due to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as follows:

For mild pneumonia, the package set is P43,997; P143,267 for moderate pneumonia; P333,519 for severe pneumonia and P786,384 for critical pneumonia.

The Social Security System mobilised existing P1.2 billion to cover unemployment benefits for displaced workers. This will cover unemployment insurance benefits to projected 30,000 to 60,000 workers who will lose their jobs as a result of the possible layoffs in, or closures of, private companies hit by the economic fallout.

### **Singapore**

**Paid Sick Leave:** Singapore has full-pay sick leave and hospitalisation up to 60 days for Singaporeans or permanent resident workers covered by the Employment Act.

#### **Wage and Income Support:**

There are wage protection measures guaranteeing 8 per cent, capped at SGD3,600 for three months. (1) Self-employed on leave of absence or stay home notice get SGD100/day for 14 days. (2) Strengthened welfare to low-income families: (A) cash pay-out of SGD300, 200 or 100 to all aged 21 and above based on three categories of income level; (B) SGD 100 to

parents with children aged 20 and below; (C) top-up 20 per cent of the Workfare Income Supplement SGD100 - 480 to entitled workers formal and informal included; (D) top-up shopping voucher Passion Card SGD100 for all aged above 50; (E) grocery vouchers of SGD100 to residents aged above 21 in one-to-two-roomed public housing flats; (F) rebated 100 per cent top up in GST voucher for households in one-to-two-roomed public housing flats; (G) rebates of 1.5 - 3.5 months of Service and Conservancy Charges to households in one-to-two-roomed public housing flats; (H) cash out SGD1,280 to households in three-roomed public housing flats; (I) cash out of SGD1,780 to households in five-room public housing flats of combined monthly income SGD6,500 various amount. There is 14 days' wage protection for the self-employed on leave or stay-home notice.

Employers of workers in quarantine get SGD100 (USD68.5) per day throughout the duration of their quarantine. The benefit will also be paid to self-employed workers (Ministry of Manpower of Singapore 2020). Launch a Jobs Support Scheme worth SGD1.3 billion (USD890 million) to help firms retain local workers. Wage subsidy for all firms will be 75 per cent of gross monthly wages, for the first SGD4,600 of wages paid in April 2020, for each local employee, made on the Central Provident Fund payroll for the months of October to December. Payments to employers will be made by the end of July

## Thailand

On 24 March, the Thailand's cabinet approved a package of stimulus of USD3.56 billion. The measures include (USD1.2 billion) for 3 million workers outside of the social security scheme, who will be also be offered soft loans as well as tax breaks. On 7 April, the Thailand's Cabinet approved a package of economic measures worth THB1.9 trillion (SGD82.5 billion) to alleviate the impact of the Corona Virus outbreak. THB600 billion will be for public health works and relief measures and the rest for rebuilding the economy and job creation. THB600 billion will be for public health works and relief measures and the rest for rebuilding the economy and job creation. THB 400 billion plan to strengthen the community economy and boost local infrastructure development.

**Income support:** THB600 billion to ease people's plight for 6 months, to help farmers and support public services.

**Loan:** THB500 billion of loans at a 2 per cent interest rate to SMEs. And 6-month debt moratorium in principal and interest for SMEs, for loans not exceeding THB100 million.

Tax measures will include a reduction in the rate of contributions to the social security fund of employers and employees from a rate of 5 per cent to 0.1 per cent of wages for 3 months (and maintain the same contribution rate of the government at 2.75 per cent of wages and reduce the contribution amount of the insured people while the government pays the same amount). The Thai social security agency will cover all medical costs of those infected with COVID-19. In addition, Health insurance premiums deduction increased to THB25,000 from THB15,000. Workers covered by SSF get increased unemployment compensation up to 50 per cent of salaries.

## SOUTH ASIA

### **Afghanistan**

No information is available for Afghanistan.

### **Bangladesh**

BDT50 billion (USD5.9 million) to help export-oriented industries to counter the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. This fund was allocated for paying wages and allowances to the readymade garment workers and employees only.

In addition, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has also announced stimulus packages to the tune of BDT677 billion to counter the adverse effects of coronavirus on the country's economy. The total amount of financial assistance would stand at BDT 727 Billion (USD8,573 million), which is nearly 2.52 per cent of the country's GDP.

### **India**

**Paid Sick Leave:** Government of India announced the nationwide lockdown up to 15 April which has extended to 3 May. During the lockdown, government requested employers for not making deduction in worker's salaries. However, it is only request and, in many cases, will depend on employer's discretions only.

**Wage and Income Support:** The government announced INR17 trillion relief package for providing a safety net for those hit the hardest by the Covid-19 lockdown.

States have been asked to use the Building and Construction Workers Welfare Fund to provide relief to construction workers and Pradhan Mantri Kisan Yojana to provide relief to farmers and agriculture workers.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Reserve Bank of India has issued an advisory to all banks for giving relief to its customers.

**Free Health Care:** Insurance coverage of up to 500 thousand has been announced by various state governments for their medical staff who are on the forefront of fighting COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Nepal**

**Paid Sick Leave:** Council of Ministers met on 29 March and has decided to provide relief package for those affected by the nationwide lockdown.

**Wage Support:** Employers directed to pay salaries of wage workers of organised and unorganised sectors.

#### **Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. Government urged landlords to exempt rent to tenants (especially wage-earning tenants) for a month.
2. Rebate on house rent tax on the waived rent from house owners.

3. Telecom service providers (Nepal Telecom and private Telco) should offer 25 per cent discount on data and voice call throughout lockdown.

**Free Health Care:** Health ministry to be accorded additional budget for procurement of medical supplies.

## **Pakistan**

**Paid Sick Leave:** The government (Baluchistan, Sindh, Punjab and KPK are four different governments within Pakistan) have issued notification to employers to pay the employees full salaries regardless of their status if they are contract workers or daily wage workers.

**Wage Support:** Respective governments have announced that they will pay PKR17,500 Baluchistan Government, 12,000 Sindh Government, 4,000 Punjab Government and 3,000 KPK Government per family for which they have drawn a criterion.

**Income Support:** PWF (ITUC / ITUC-AP affiliate) is actively working along with respective state governments and ensuring that nobody will remain hungry and providing ration kits.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** The Government have appealed the landlord to take the rent in instalments after the corona crisis and have also notified the banks to extend the dates of credit card payment without any interest.

**Free Health Care:** The government is providing free health care to workers affected from COVID-19.

## **Sri Lanka**

**Paid Sick Leave:** A Ministerial level task force has constituted which advised the Government that the wages should be paid before the factory is closed. The task force has also decided that non-attendance of workers due to curfew cannot be considered as leave and cannot be reduced from employee's personal leave and wages for the month of March was paid in full. However, the Government needs to take decision for the month of April, as there is a chance of deduction in salaries.

**Wage Support:** COVID-19 Healthcare and Social Security Fund has been constituted by the Government of Sri Lanka.

**Income Support:** Samrudhi beneficiaries can avail an interest free advance of LKR10,000 by all Samrudhi Bank Associations

**Free Health Care:** Sri Lanka has a universal public health system that provides quality medical services to all citizens.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

### **Bahrain**

**Wage Support:** Payment of salaries for Bahrainis working in the private sector to be financed from the unemployment fund

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. Payment of electricity and water bills for Bahraini individuals and companies.
2. Exemption of industrial and commercial entities from paying rent to the government.

**Israel****Income Support:**

1. Grant to self-employed (NIS2.6 billion): A grant of up to NIS6,000 (about EUR1,500) in March and NIS8,000 in April for the self-employed.
2. Grant to people aged 67 and over: A grant of up to NIS4,000 in March and April for people aged 67 and over, who have lost their job during the crisis. Grants will be paid in addition to the old-age pension.
3. Broadened eligibility to unemployment benefits. Employees put on involuntary unpaid leave for at least 30 days are entitled to unemployment benefits after 5 days (NIS14 billion). The time required to have been employed to be eligible for unemployment benefits has been reduced to 6 months instead of 12 months.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Mortgage payment deferral: The Ministry of Finance instructed banks to allow for a 4-month postponement of mortgage payments (15 March).

**Free Health Care:** In Israel there is a mandatory health care.

**Jordan****Income Support:**

1. Tax policy - Ministry of Finance announced postponement, until the end of the year of the collection of sales taxes on all domestic sectors, and imports related to health, and the supply of medicines.
2. Introduction of price ceilings on essential products.
3. Postponement of 70 per cent of the value of customs duties for selected companies and the reduction of social security contributions from private sector establishments.

**Kuwait**

Kuwait government has submitted to parliament a draft law for funds. The details on how these funds will be disbursed have not been made public yet.

**Oman**

**Income Support:** Suspension of municipal taxes and some government fees (until end-August) and postponement of loan servicing for borrowers of Oman Development Bank and SME support fund for six months.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Suspension of rent payments for companies in industrial zones (for the next three months).

**Palestine**

No information is available for Palestine.

## Turkey

**Paid Sick Leave:** Administrative leaves are provided promptly for those who are 65+ years, pregnant and for those who have chronic diseases. Thus, the biggest risk group could have a chance to be in self-isolation without any concern regarding the work.

### Wage Support:

1. Short Work Allowance will be implemented. Regarding this application, working times will be reduced by 1/3 and workers will be paid their wages while benefiting from the public health insurance. The required procedure to benefit from it expedited while the cover has been enhanced for this particular period of time so that everyone can get an advantage from it.
2. The minimum wage support will be provided in total of TRY7 billion for the minimum wage earners.
3. Performance payments of health workers will be paid from its maximum wage by 3 months. This implementation has been executed immediately.

### Income Support:

1. TRY1,000 cash support will be provided for 2 million families with low income.
2. The minimum retirement salary will be increased to TRY1,500, which was TRY1,000 before. This corresponds to 50 per cent increase in the salary.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** All the credit card payments are postponed for 3 months.

### Free Health Care:

1. Health System is Free in Turkey. Public Health System serves equal, free and easily accessible during this crisis just like its everyday pattern before. Free access to the Public Health System is not an outcome of the outbreak; it was already free for many years. Corona treatment is free even at the private hospitals.
2. Private health institutions and hospitals turn into a public base for COVID-19. Turkey have transparent, safe and effective Free Health System which can be utilised by every single citizen.

## Yemen

No information is available for Yemen.

## PACIFIC

### Australia

**Paid Sick Leave:** The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has already introduced (and proposes to further introduce) a range of temporary variations to modern awards to provide increased flexibility for employers and employees during this challenging time. More details here <https://www.smartcompany.com.au/business-advice/legal/covid-19-modern-awards-hospitality-clerks-pandemic-leave/>.



There are no dedicated/additional paid leaves related to COVID-19. Instead, employers and employees are encouraged to explore options such as: (1) taking accrued annual leave; (2) taking any other paid leave (such as long service leave or paid leave available under an award, enterprise agreement or employment contract); Accessing paid sick leave entitlements upon medical certificate 10 days for fulltime continuing employees (3) directing employees to take accrued annual leave in certain circumstances taking any other paid leave by agreement between the employee and the employer; (4) Employers can choose to provide special paid leave to employees who are affected by the outbreak, for example if employees are required to be quarantined.

Paid leave to "vulnerable" categories are out of annual leave if they have it, or sick leave if entitled to get it.

Casuals don't get holiday leave or sick leave (about 2 million, over half are women). ACTU is calling for a two weeks paid leave for all workers, permanent, casual and contract who are forced to either self-isolate as a result of COVID-19. See details here: <https://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/media-releases/2020/actu-calls-for-two-weeks-paid-special-leave-for-all-workers>.

#### **Wage Support:**

1. Flat payment of \$1,500 per eligible employee fortnight of eligible employer (over the next 6 months) from 1 May backdated to 30 March. This doesn't cover everyone (e.g., casuals with less than 12 months service and temporary visa workers). Complete details here [https://www.actu.org.au/media/1449028/cv04-41-jobkeeper\\_factsheet.pdf](https://www.actu.org.au/media/1449028/cv04-41-jobkeeper_factsheet.pdf).
2. Provision of up to \$100,000 wage subsidies to eligible small and medium-sized businesses, and not for-profits (NFPs) that employ people, with a minimum payment of \$20,000.
3. Wage subsidy support for small business to retain their apprentices and trainees (50 per cent of the apprentice's or trainee's wage for 9 months from 1 January 2020 to 30 September 2020). Employers will be reimbursed up to a maximum of \$21,000 per eligible apprentice or trainee (\$7,000 per quarter).

#### **Income Support:**

1. Over a period of six months starting 27 April, a time-limited supplement of \$550 will be automatically paid every two weeks to existing and new recipients of: Jobseeker Payment; Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy; Parenting Payment; Partner Allowance; Sickness Allowance; Farm Household Allowance.
2. One-off payments (31 March; 31 July) - Two payments of \$750 will be given to people living in Australia who: get social security income support; get veteran income support; are eligible concession card holders.
3. Early access to super - People affected by COVID-19 can access up to \$10,000 tax-free of their superannuation until 30 June and a further \$10,000 in the next financial year. In significant number of situations, especially low paid and for women workers this is not a feasible option.

4. Small and medium businesses and not-for-profits that employ people will now receive a full rebate on income tax withholdings, up to \$100,000.
5. State and territory governments also announced stimulus packages, together amounting to A\$11.5 billion (0.6 per cent of GDP), including payroll tax relief for businesses and relief for households, such as discount utility bills, cash payments to vulnerable households, and support for health spending.

For example, The State Government of Tasmania will provide a one-off emergency relief payment of \$250 for individuals and up to \$1,000 for families who are required to self-quarantine. This will be available to informal casual workers and those on low incomes

#### **Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. Australian states and territories announced a six-month moratorium on evictions for both residential and commercial.
2. The Australian Banking Association has mandated that Australian banks defer the loan repayments of small businesses for six months, to help those that are struggling stay open and keep people in jobs. The package will apply to more than \$100 billion of existing small business loans.

The Big Four (NAB, CBA, Westpac and ANZ) have extended deferral payments of mortgage for up to six months

**Free Health Care:** Medicare is Universal public health care insurance and guarantees all Australian health care at low or no cost. Gap payments in some case. Pharmaceutical benefits scheme PBS subsidies cost for most medicines.

Australia announced a AUD2.4 billion (USD1.56 billion) health package that proposes setting up fever clinics and offering cost-free facilities for people to consult doctors over video calls.

Separately, the Commonwealth government has committed to spend almost an extra AUD5 billion (0.3 per cent of GDP) to strengthen the health system and protect the vulnerable people, including those in aged care, from the outbreak of COVID-19.

The Commonwealth government has also agreed with the States and the Territories to share the public health costs incurred by the States and Territories in treating the COVID-19.

Temporary measures to ensure the continuity of aged care, amounting to an additional AUD544.6 million, have also been introduced. States and Territories are also putting in place individual policy packages.

#### **Cook Islands**

**Paid Sick Leave:** Support for self-isolation - Provision of two weeks of minimum wage if under self-isolation instruction from Ministry of Health – to be paid via employer.

This support will only cover self-isolation as defined under the public health guidelines, where the employee is: (i) not sick, cannot perform work remotely and has been advised by the Ministry of Health to self-isolate; and (ii) not sick but has to care for dependents who are

required to self-isolate or who are sick with COVID-19. In cases where the affected employee is not sick and can perform work remotely whilst in mandatory isolation, they will continue to be paid as per their usual rate of pay in agreement with their employer

**Wage Support:**

1. A wage subsidy at the minimum rate to all employers who are affected by COVID-19 for a period of up to three months. Wage subsidy is based on minimum wage for 35hrs/weekly over a period of 3 months:
  - \$266 per week for a full-time employee working 20 hours per week or more; and
  - \$133 per week for a part-time employee working between 5 and 19 hours per week.
2. Activation (training) - wage subsidy for an additional 3 months to businesses that provide official training for their employees to be paid from 1 July to 30 September. To assist businesses in upskilling their employees to improve their productivity for recovery phase. The training subsidy is based on minimum wage for 35hrs/weekly, available only to those businesses qualified for the wage subsidy. Employees have to be enrolled in an official training by the 1 July 2020 and to commence by 30 July 2020. If training has occurred prior to these dates, the payment will only be available from 1 July 2020. All training courses must be endorsed or provided by an approved training entity and must run for a period of at least two months, at a minimum of 10 hours per week. Courses may include those provided through the Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute, University of the South Pacific, and other courses offered by recognized official organisations, such as those offered by online institutions.
3. Cash grants, one-off payments to businesses that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 crisis of up to \$15,000 from 1 April 2020.
4. Reduction in individual employee Cook Island Superannuation Fund (CINSF) contributions from 5 to 3 per cent for a 3-month period. from 1 April to 30 June 2020.

**Income Support:**

1. A one-off payment of \$400 to those most vulnerable including pensioners, caregivers and those unable to work to support preparations for further social distancing measures to come (or to those who are currently on the welfare list).
2. One month of benefits at the minimum wage to be provided to all individuals who have become unemployed due to the impact of COVID-19.
3. An income tax credit of \$2,000 for accommodation providers with up to 10 beds.
4. Childcare support - for each child (age 0-16), currently already on the child benefit, an additional \$100 on top of the current \$50 will be allocated for every fortnight during closure of school outside of the school holidays. Application process not required. For each child, not currently on the child benefit, an allocation of \$100 will be allocated for every fortnight during closure of school outside of the school holidays. Application process required.
5. Electricity subsidy of 100 per cent for households on Rarotonga and Aitutaki for 3 months starting from the 19 March 2020 meter reading.
6. Employment Services scheme to assist individuals in finding new employment as soon as possible.
7. The plan includes tax relief in three stages:  
Stage 1:

- Provisional Tax Adjustments – Re-estimates of provisional tax obligations to be permitted. If circumstances have changed due to COVID-19, early refunds can be arranged if provisional tax has been overpaid; and
- Individuals and businesses that are unable to pay their tax – instalment arrangements can be set up. Alternatively, applications for a write-off due to serious hardship can be made, where businesses and individuals know they won't be able to pay the full amount;

Stage 2:

- Provisional tax threshold increase from NZD 2,000 to NZD 5,000; and
- Income tax credit of NZD 2,000 for registered tourist accommodation providers with less than 10 beds;

Stage 3:

Further work is being undertaken to develop tax relief measures for Stage 3, which will include:

- Introducing an asset write off; and
- Double deductions for qualifying expenditure. More details are provided here: <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/193-economic-planning> or here: [http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM\\_Documents/COVID-19/Cook\\_Islands\\_Economic\\_Response\\_to\\_COVID-19.pdf](http://www.mfem.gov.ck/images/MFEM_Documents/COVID-19/Cook_Islands_Economic_Response_to_COVID-19.pdf).

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Cash flow support - Government will provide low interest loans to businesses on a case-to-case basis.

**Free Health Care:** Health-care services are mostly free to citizens and range from public health (inclusive of primary care) to secondary care.

**Global Supply Chains:** Anecdotal reports at this stage suggest that the Cook Islands will only experience minor disruptions to supply.

## Fiji

**Paid Sick Leave:** The government will pay 21 days leave for people earning less than \$30,000 if they test positive with COVID-19.

The FTUC is disappointed that there is no immediate assistance to workers in the budget other than helping themselves to their retirement funds. Full FTUC statement is available here: <http://www.ftuc.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PRESS-RELEASE-COVID-19-SUPPLEMENTARY-BUDGET-RESPONSE-WORKERS-GROSSLY-HOODWINKED.pdf>.

### Wage Support:

1. From 6 April 2020, workers in the hospitality sector who have lost their jobs or have had their hours cut since 1 February 2020 can — for now — access an initial \$1,000 dollars from their FNPF accounts, with additional funds to be considered as the situation unfolds further. If any worker does not have this full amount available, the government will directly subsidise the difference.

2. All those employees affected by nationwide physical distancing requirements, along with employees who have been placed on leave without pay or had their hours cut, will be able to access an initial \$500 dollars from their FNPF accounts. The government will also subsidise the difference for any Fijians who do not have this full amount available (*FTUC noted that this is a Government that is telling workers to fend for themselves by withdrawing from their own retirement fund in these difficult times, yet make it look like it is Government assistance*).
3. For those affected in the informal sector in the lockdown areas, government will also be providing a one-off relief payment of \$150 dollars for all those who have a street trader or hawker license.

**Income Support:**

1. Reduction of employers FNPF Statutory Contributions from ten per cent to five per cent, from 1 April 2020 until 31 December 2020 (FTUC slammed the move and noted that this is tantamount to a 5 per cent pay cut for workers and result in lesser savings in the FNPF).
2. A 300 per cent tax deduction will be afforded to employers for wages and salary paid to employees who are self-quarantined, with approval from the Ministry of Health. For those who are not compensated by their employer during self-quarantine, government will provide \$100 dollars in relief.
3. 100 per cent of electricity costs up to the first 100 units will be covered by Energy Fiji Limited and government, leaving subsidised customers responsible for just the nine per cent VAT.
4. Sick leave.
5. Fijians in the informal sector who are confirmed to have contracted the virus will be paid a one-off sum of \$1,000 dollars.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. Loan repayments for six months for any Fijian who has lost their jobs or had their hours reduced. Mortgages, personal loans and even hire purchase payment plans from stores will qualify.
2. Landowners can reduce rent for business from \$1,000 to \$500 and the \$500 being lost can be claimed and the government will carry the burden.
3. Banks will waive all charges on minimum balances in customer's accounts and remove the minimum purchasing requirement for electronic transactions.
4. \$5 million dollars for SME credit guarantee scheme; \$60 million loans available to banks for SMEs and customers.
5. For students repaying tertiary education loans, all repayments will be suspended until 31 December 2020.
6. A tax deduction will be given to cover any deductions made to existing rent contracts, (commercial). This reduction will apply for rent payable between 1 April and 31 December 2020.
7. Reduce stamp duty rates for Fiji resident taxpayers for mortgages from 1.7 per cent to zero per cent. Foreign nationals will see their mortgages' stamp duty reduced from five per cent to zero per cent (*FTUC noted that this will not lead to any impact*) +L30.

### **Free Health Care:**

1. In general, public health care is free or at very low cost for all persons in the country. However, medications and supplies is limited.
2. Additional \$40 million dollars to enhance our health system's capacity to respond to this pandemic – on top of the \$347.5 million dollars allocated to the health sector in this financial year.

### **Kiribati**

The small island nation of Kiribati has declared a state of emergency and gone into partial lockdown, with schools closing from 30 March. No COVID-19 economic or health measures have been announced.

UNICEF extended support to the government:

1. Worked with government and other partners to develop an SMS platform whereby text messages on COVID-19 were sent to about 50,000 people throughout the country.
2. Risk communication support to the government in developing training for awareness outreach in communities.
3. Installation of handwashing facilities at the main hospitals in Tarawa and Betio, including community campaign on proper hand washing.
4. Developing an education contingency plan to cater for possible school closure.

### **New Zealand**

**Paid Sick Leave:** For those employees who fall ill with COVID-19, are supporting someone dependant on them for care who has COVID-19, or has been directed to self-isolation, will receive the same amount as wage subsidy (see under column L). It will be paid to employers to pass onto their employees who need to self-isolate for 14 days and for the entire period of sickness for those who contract COVID-19.

Eligibility is open to all firms, the self-employed, and for contractors, but not for those who can work from home. Full time workers will receive \$585 per week under the scheme. See notes under the column "wage support".

### **Wage Support:**

1. Wage subsidies will be available for all employers who have experienced at least a 30 per cent decline in projected or actual revenue; made best efforts to retain employees and pay them a minimum of 80 per cent of their normal income for the subsidised period; and have taken active steps to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Wage Subsidy is a lump sum and covers 12 weeks payment per employee at a flat rate:

- (A) \$585.80 for people working 20 hours or more per week.
- (B) \$350.00 for people working less than 20 hours per week.

The wage subsidies will apply to all employers in New Zealand – including self-employed people – providing they do not already work from home and cannot perform their jobs remotely. More details are available here <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/covid-19-support.html>.

2. Allocated NZ\$100 million to help redeploy workers in the aviation sector.

**Income support:**

1. Those on social welfare will receive a \$25 across the board permanent increase to main benefits, from 1 April 2020 and are permanent.
2. A doubling of the amount paid in 2020 through the Winter Energy Payment which beneficiaries and superannuants receive (this change is temporary).
3. From 1 July 2020, working families with children who are not receiving a main benefit and have some level of employment income each week will no longer satisfy the hours test to receive the In-Work Tax Credit. More details here <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2020-03/Income%20support%20factsheet.pdf>.
4. The employer will not be liable to income tax or GST on the subsidy received from the Ministry of Social Development and will not be entitled to an income tax deduction for wages paid out of the wage subsidy.
5. Business tax changes include a provisional tax threshold life, the reinstatement of building depreciation and writing off interest on the late payment of tax.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:**

1. The Government, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, and retail banks have agreed a six-monthly principal and interest payment holiday for mortgage holders, and a business finance guarantee scheme for SME customers whose incomes have been affected by COVID-19, in which the government covers 80 per cent of the credit risk.
2. The Minister of Finance announced on 23 March 2020 a six month freeze on residential rent increases and increased protections for tenants for termination of tenancies. This has been applied as law through the COVID-19 Response (Urgent Management Measures) Amendment Act.
3. The government and the banks will also implement a NZ\$6.25 billion (USD3.62 billion) business finance guarantee scheme for small and medium-sized businesses, to protect jobs. The scheme will include a limit of NZ\$500,000 per loan and will apply to firms with a turnover of between NZ\$250,000 and NZ\$80 million per annum.
4. The government has also committed to a temporary law change to enable businesses to put existing debt into hibernation for six months.

**Free Health Care:** New Zealand residents and some work visa holders benefit from free or subsidised public health services, testing for COVID-19 is provided only through the public health system for free.

A dedicated \$500 million fund was announced that includes:

- \$32 million for extra intensive care capacity and equipment at hospitals.
- \$50 million in support for GPs and primary care, and \$20 million to improve video conferencing and telehealth consultations.
- \$20 million for more Healthline capacity.

## Samoa

**Income Support:** The support for the private sector includes:

1. A temporary exemption on import duties on most commonly bought food items for households.
2. Duty concessions to be applied to an expanded list of agricultural and fishing materials.
3. A grace period of three months to be applied for all loan payments.
4. A six-month moratorium on pension contributions for the hospitality sector.

Support for citizens includes:

1. Establishment of the Emergency Price Control Board to keep wholesale and retail prices in check and bring them down, if necessary.
2. A temporary reduction of utility bills (both electricity and water) for six months through September 2020.

**Mortgage, Rent or Loan Relief:** Provision of financial assistance to members of the National Provident Fund in the form of a refund of their loan payments for March 2020.

**Free Health Care:** The government has been stepping up its efforts to increase the level of preparedness and prevention. Temporary quarantine facilities have been established in key areas. There is a dire need for testing kits, medical consumables, as well as other clinical equipment and medication, to prepare for the confirmation/arrival and treatment of COVID-19.

## Tonga

**Wage Support:** From 60 million, \$16.4m has been set aside to assist affected businesses in the primary, secondary and tertiary economic sectors (called COVID-19 Business Economic Emergency Relief Fund).

The primary objective of this relief fund is to provide economic relief assistance, encourage business continuity plan and support recovery of local businesses in the formal and informal sectors that are affected by COVID-19.

Businesses eligible to apply must meet the following criteria:

1. Business has lost expected revenue in the month of January through March 2020 due to COVID-19.
2. Business was registered before March 2020 or your business is an informal business.
3. The principal place of business is in Tonga.
4. Business is not a state-owned enterprise.
5. Business was not operating as an essential business during the State of Emergency period.

For affected workers: Government has allocated \$5.0 million as Employment Support, available to all affected employees due to the impacts of COVID-19 crisis. The support is intended to provide a wage subsidy to those who have been laid-off from work. This support excludes government employees.



**Income Support:** The Government of Tonga announced as part of its Economic and Social Stimulus Package of 60 million Tongan pa'anga (5.3 per cent of GDP) for FY2020 on April 2, 2020:

1. A 3-month moratorium on Government Development Loans & TC Gita Recovery Loan Fund.
2. Deferral of retirement contributions and hardship allowances for laid-off employees (up to 3 months).
3. Needs-based financial assistance, tax and duty relief during the pandemic.
4. Assistance with the payment of utility bills by public enterprises.

The new package will be re-evaluated as the situation evolves.

Commercial banks are assisting their customers affected by the COVID-19 virus on a case by case basis and depending on individual customers' circumstances by: (i) reducing or suspending the principal loan repayments to interest only loan repayments; (ii) restructuring loans to businesses that have reduced business hours, in affected sectors such as tourism and related industries like transportation and to individuals who have been laid off; (iii) extending the terms of loans to reduce repayments; (iv) reducing loan interest rates on a case by case basis; and (v) providing access to short-term funding, if required. The NRBT is also building awareness and expectations through.

**Free Health Care:** Tongans receive free medical and dental treatment. Over a third of the government's economic and social stimulus package will be directed to the health sector.

**External support:**

1. The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs has this week announced NZD4 million to the Government of Tonga in general budget support. This is in addition to NZD100,000 previously provided and another NZD1 million to be given to Tonga's Ministry of Health to support implementing its CoViD-19 prevention plan.
2. The Asian Development Bank today, 7 April announced a grant of \$470,000 to help finance a response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Tonga, where the country's main hospital has limited capacity to quarantine and isolate cases.

## **Vanuatu**

**Wage Support:**

1. Supporting jobs through the Employment Stabilization Payment, which will reimburse employers (who have accurate and up to date VNPF payment records) up to VT 30,000 per employee on their payroll each month for a period of four months (starting from March 2020). Employees who earned less than 30,000vt per month, will be paid the same salary that they previously received.
2. Employers will receive a payment of 15 per cent of the amount they are reimbursed for wages under this payment as an added incentive to keep their staff employed.
3. Small to medium businesses with a turnover of less than VT200 million will have access to onetime payment equal to the value of the fees of a full year business license.
4. Assistance to transport sector to facilitate market to major centres such as Port Vila.

**Income Support:**

1. On March 27, the Vanuatu National Provident Fund (VNPF) offered Hardship Loans, an interest-free withdrawal from a member's account for 6 months of up to 100,000 vatu, after which the member either chooses a repayment plan with interest or permanently withdraws the funds with a penalty. By April 8, it was estimated that 800 million vatu (almost USD7 million) would be released to approximately 15000 members.
2. Supporting businesses by deferring of a number of taxes and charges in 2020. This includes Road Tax, Work Permits fees, Business Licenses fees (except for commercial banks), Residence Permit charges and Rent Tax.
3. A range of other fees and charges will be cancelled.
4. Reducing the turnover tax of commercial banks from 7 per cent to 5 per cent.
5. The requirement to pay turnover tax on zero rated or exempt VAT sales will be removed.
6. The business license reform measures will be backdated to begin on 1 January 2020, and or those businesses who have already paid these taxes, license fees, and charges, you will be refunded.
7. Granting of school fee exemption in 2020 in addition to other packages such as increasing internet capacity to schools for students to study on line.
8. Tax Relief –The following taxes will no longer be required to be paid in 2020: Road Tax, Work Permits, Business License, Residence Permits, Rent Tax (due in June). Additional other fees will be looked at (at a later date).
9. Price-based subsidies if needed to support producers of copra, kava, cocoa and other commodities.
10. Support to the transport sector to facilitate farmers' access to major market centres such as Port Vila and Luganville.

**Free Health Care:** The government, using its existing budget envelope and with help from Australia, China, New Zealand, UNICEF, WHO, other NGOs/CSOs and some local businesses, is: expanding health facilities, restocking personal protective equipment and supplies, and further training healthcare workers, especially in Port Vila; and spending on community education and awareness.

With the assistance of Australia, France and New Zealand, COVID-19 tests are analysed in the French special collectively of New Caledonia as needed.

The government is working to provide flights and cover arrival and short-term quarantine costs in Port Vila of repatriated ni-Vanuatu before they return to their homes elsewhere in Vanuatu.

Information as of 21 April 2020