

## Asia and the Pacific

27 May 2020



**9.2** million  
Persons of concern



**4.4** million  
Refugees and Asylum  
seekers



**2.9** million  
Internally displaced  
persons



**83,930**  
Returnees



**2.3** million  
Stateless persons

### Overview

A week after the first COVID-19 case was confirmed, there are now 25 confirmed cases among refugees in Kutupalong camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and 369 among the host community. 139 refugees are in quarantine, with ongoing contact tracing, though limited to family contacts. Contact tracing is being expanded beyond immediate families/households through community engagement. No refugee or host community case has required ICU care yet. The number of COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh has more than doubled over the past two weeks to 35,585.

UNHCR opened two isolation and treatment facilities last week with a total of 200 beds. The total capacity provided by humanitarian actors will reach 1,100 beds by mid-June, contributing towards the goal of a minimum 1,900 beds in Cox's Bazar District. Modelling projections, however, indicate that as many as 10,000 hospital beds could be needed at peak. Community health care has been strengthened by recruitment of additional community health workers who will support home-based care of mild/moderate COVID-19 cases should the health facilities be overwhelmed. Testing is being undertaken for all adults with respiratory symptoms who accept being quarantined/isolated, in addition to those who present with symptoms and signs meeting the COVID-19 case definition. Community surveillance of deaths from all causes is being strengthened; so far, there has not been an increasing trend.

Across the region, UNHCR is seeking innovative opportunities to enhance communication and engagement with its persons of concern. Several initiatives are being developed, considered, or piloted in the region, including the WhatsApp Chatbot (with Turn.io) and the "MyUNHCR" platform.

### Highlights by country

#### South-West Asia

##### Afghanistan

- UNHCR in Afghanistan has joined the "Salam for Safety" campaign by WFP and UN Women focusing on physical distancing that focuses on women and girls. Through the campaign, printed materials carrying messages on how to maintain physical distancing are being produced in conjunction with several agencies. These posters will be set up in several locations including border crossing points and Priority Areas of Return and Reintegration (PARR) locations. Separately, ten Afghan refugees returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran during the course of the week through UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation programme. Easing of movement restrictions continued to be observed across the country, including in Kabul.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a USD 40 million grant to support the Government of Afghanistan's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant will help increase Afghanistan's capacity to manage the virus by funding the construction of 15 hospitals and the rehabilitation of five existing medical facilities, supporting procurement of medicines and equipment, and training at least 3,000 health workers and support staff, of whom 900 will be female.

##### Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR in the Islamic Republic of Iran is pursuing options with Qatar Airways and EU Humanitarian Air Bridge, and with WFP locally, to seek ways to reduce transportation costs of upcoming PPE shipments in June to help meet the needs in the country.

## Pakistan

- UNHCR Quetta has telephone access to project sites and is monitoring remotely. However, due to movement restrictions imposed by the Government, physical access to project sites is limited. UNHCR partners have also adopted teleworking modalities and are following up on activities remotely. UNHCR Peshawar remains operational and staff have continued to stay and deliver. As with elsewhere in the region, most persons of concern in Pakistan are daily wage earners and have been severely impacted by the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19. UNHCR Quetta reported that livelihood opportunities for daily wage earners are almost non-existent in Balochistan due to COVID-19 restrictions. In order to mitigate the impact of the lockdown on livelihoods, many persons of concern resort to borrowing. However, recent relaxations on the strict rules may provide some relief.
- UNHCR Pakistan attended the first inter-agency logistics and supply meeting in Islamabad, which was also attended by the World Bank who briefed on their funding / projects in support of the Government. The Ministry of Health acknowledged the possibility of a World-Bank-facilitated procurement mechanism, which could help the country to receive complex items.
- On 20 May, the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and UNHCR, in partnership with Pakistan Post, began the first disbursements of UNHCR's emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable refugee families impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## South Asia

### India

- While access to medical centers for COVID-related treatment is available, UNHCR's persons of concern reported difficulties accessing medical care for non-COVID, non-emergency issues as a result of movement restrictions or limited services on offer. The Government opened up a phased and limited routine Outpatient Department services which will address this issue.

## South-East Asia

### Bangladesh

- UNHCR is continuing to assist 16,000 vulnerable families in the host community with one-time cash grants, at the request of district authorities. The beneficiary database has been finalized, and discussions are ongoing with financial service providers. The Bangladesh team has also completed translation of the audio book "My Hero is You" in Burmese/Rohingya, distributed to education, SGBV, child protection, communicating with communities partners and made it available for wider use by other stakeholders. This book was a project developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings. "My Hero is You" is a story developed for children around the world, offering a way for children and parents to think together about questions the pandemic raises.

### Myanmar

- The Inter-Cluster/Sector Coordination Group-approved guidance on quarantine and isolation in camp settings, which was developed with the support of UNHCR Shelter/NFI/CCCM Cluster Coordinator and Protection Sector Coordinator, has been shared with all operational partners. The interim operational guidance aims to clarify several concepts around quarantine and isolation and lay out risks and recommendations for the humanitarian community to consider.

### Indonesia

- UNHCR is mapping refugee-led initiatives (learning centres, information centres, sports club, etc.) in Jakarta and the surrounding areas. UNHCR will engage with these initiatives to help support dissemination of information, gathering feedback and possible support for distribution of assistance.

### Malaysia

- Restriction of movement, increased immigration raids, reduced community interaction and loss of livelihoods in Malaysia make it difficult for women and children-at-risk to access help, exacerbating the risks of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual exploitation. In response, UNHCR is working closely with key partners in training frontliners and refugee community support networks to identify signs of distress, make safe referrals, and integrate child protection and SGBV responses into current health/ mental health services and aid distribution programmes.

- Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) procedures have resumed under the Conditional Movement Control Order. National Registration Department offices accept walk-ins and appointments.

### Thailand

- Data collection for a Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA) / Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) exercise commenced. The exercise, led by UNHCR in coordination with Protection Working Group partners, has been complex to develop, owing to the combination of both RNA and PDM elements and the logistics associated with remote surveying for a significant number of households. It will be used to assess the impact of COVID-19 on urban refugees and asylum-seekers in Bangkok and Chonburi, and to inform programme and protection planning. The exercise is also being used to assess the role and impact of cash-based interventions (CBI) support.

### Philippines

- UNHCR provided the Bangsamoro Government's Ministry of Social Services and Development with PPEs (N95 masks, medical masks, gloves) for use by its social workers in assisting IDPs and vulnerable persons. UNHCR also provided 28 tablets to the Ministry to support the facilitation of its work amid the pandemic. This intervention forms part of UNHCR's regular activities in Mindanao that have been modified due to the adoption of digital/remote working modalities.

### Funding needs

**UNHCR's revised COVID-19 emergency appeal** was launched on 11 May, in line with the revised Global Humanitarian Response Plan. Of the USD 745 million total revised financial requirements for UNHCR, the total needs in Asia-Pacific stand at **USD 96.3 million**. The requirements per country to support COVID-19 preparedness and response in the region are as follows.

**Afghanistan:** USD 11,085,150 | **Islamic Republic of Iran:** USD 16,199,400 | **Pakistan:** USD 19,256,030

**Bangladesh:** USD 25,487,008 | **Myanmar:** USD 8,900,000 | **Indonesia:** USD 3,536,871 | **Malaysia:** USD 4,526,273 | **Philippines:** USD 450,000 | **Thailand:** USD 2,139,090

**India:** USD 2,077,500 | **Nepal:** USD 1,461,200

**Kazakhstan:** USD 270,000 | **Kyrgyzstan:** USD 470,000 | **Tajikistan:** USD 440,000



At Golra post office in Islamabad, Pakistan, the Federal Minister for the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) presents cash assistance to an Afghan refugee affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNHCR continues to be grateful for the robust support from donors on the COVID-19 response including the Governments of **Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Sweden, UK, USA**, as well as the **EU (ECHO and DEVCO)** and **CERF**. We also appreciate the support from private donors who have rallied swiftly to provide a range of in-kind donations for COVID-19 response in the region.

We are also grateful to donors who provide unearmarked contributions to UNHCR, which help support operations in Asia and enable us to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include **Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK, Germany, Switzerland**, and **private donors in Spain and the Republic of Korea**.

UNHCR continues to appeal to donors not to deprioritize funding for the regular programmes in Asia-Pacific as our ongoing activities are critical to support the over 9.2 million persons of concern in the region.

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