


UNHCR COVID-19 Preparedness and Response


Highlights

- As countries all over the world battle a second wave of the pandemic, UNHCR is highlighting with a [new data visualization tool](#) how acutely vulnerable forcibly displaced populations must contend with extreme overcrowding and limited access to basics such as soap and water.
- During the opening of a virtual session of UNHCR’s annual High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection challenges, UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Gillian Triggs, [underlined the importance of inclusion for the protection of refugees and their hosts](#) in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNHCR has exceeded its original target of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) of 5.4 million persons reached with essential health services, having now reached 5.9 million people. It has also exceeded its target of 710,000 women and girls accessing sexual and reproductive services, with some 815,000 women and girls accessing sexual and reproductive services, which includes the clinical management of rape.
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, almost 727,000 individuals in households most vulnerable to/affected by COVID-19 in 44 countries received livelihood support. Some 4.7 million persons benefited from UNHCR’s cash assistance.


COVID-19 update



Over **32,000** reported cases of COVID-19 among forcibly displaced people



across **103** countries



increase of some **4,000** cases compared to previous reporting period

(numbers as of 12 November 2020)



Brazil. World Refugee Day 2020 celebration in Boa Vista
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Global Overview

Lockdowns and increased family tensions have led to spikes in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) across the world, with some UNHCR offices receiving ten times the number of usual calls for protection. Given the heightened risk and incidence of SGBV during the COVID-19 pandemic, faced mostly by women and girls, UNHCR has sought to strengthen its SGBV prevention and response programme thanks to flexible and unearmarked funding.

In Peru, UNHCR has stepped up its psychosocial support to mitigate SGBV by providing almost 1,300 activities on psychosocial support and case referrals. The municipality of Lima and UNHCR produced a series of webinars focused on new masculinity, as part of a larger strategy to prevent SGBV, targeting both, refugees and migrants, as well as the host communities. So far over 3,000 people have been reached with active engagement through social media.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has reached over 2.5 million people with COVID-19 messaging in Southern Africa, and an additional 133,000 with specific messaging on SGBV in the context of COVID-19.

UNHCR Response

Progress to date and Impact

- UNHCR continues to advocate for urgent and unreserved inclusion of refugees, displaced and stateless people in the full range of responses to the pandemic, from public health responses to national social safety nets.
- On 15 and 22 October, UNHCR facilitated the delivery of a twelve-truck and five-truck humanitarian convoy to Luhansk and Donetsk Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA) in Ukraine with COVID-19-related items and materials for WASH projects provided by UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM and NGOs.

Gaps and Challenges

- According to the World Bank, the COVID-19 pandemic might push an additional 115 million people back into poverty. A surge in extreme poverty in already fragile or conflict affected countries may lead to new forced displacement situations. In moving forward, the social economic impact will hit the displaced harder than the health impact. This is due to forcibly displaced people's status, their inability to work on par with nationals, their exclusion from social safety nets as well as stigma and discrimination.
- COVID-19 has complicated the access to solutions, both for those willing to return home, and those waiting for resettlement. Many return countries require COVID-19 testing before onward travel to areas of origin. The lack of COVID-19 testing capacity in many countries is limiting the number of returnees at one time, and also hampering efforts for the reception of new arrivals. UNHCR is working with governments to adapt testing strategies and seeking additional support to scale up testing.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Yemen

Ongoing conflict, heavy rains and flooding, the spread of COVID-19 and economic vulnerability continue to drive displacement in Yemen, with more than 25,500 families fleeing their homes so far this year. As the lead agency for Shelter and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) in Yemen, UNHCR and partners continue to support those in need of shelter and core relief items, including through coordination. From 15 to 22 October, some 3,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) and vulnerable host communities were supported with core relief items across several governorates.

Jordan

Through the [Amaali mobile application](#), UNHCR is able to mainstream the referral pathways for gender-based violence (GBV) cases, while the UNHCR Integrated Voice Recognition Helpline has managed over 200,000 monthly calls since March.

Egypt

During the last two weeks, a considerable number of refugees and asylum-seekers reported that they had not been able to pay their rents and bills for several months and were at heightened risk of eviction. In the same period, a number of families had to leave their accommodation due to lack of income. UNHCR assists an average of 10,400 families per month with cash grants to provide assistance, and to avoid resorting to negative coping mechanisms.

West and Central Africa

Nigeria

UNHCR sustains its direct assistance to refugees and host communities to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Asia and the Pacific

Afghanistan

The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Afghanistan is dramatic, with food insecurity levels now similar to those seen during the 2018 drought, according to OCHA. An estimated 14.7 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity from August to October 2020. Looking forward, it is estimated that 17 million people will be in crisis or emergency food insecurity from November 2020 to March 2021.

To mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, UNHCR secured USD 300,000 from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund's 5th Reserve Allocation for the cash for protection programme – a new activity introduced as part of UNHCR's COVID-19 response. Through this funding, UNHCR will reach around 1,400 vulnerable households. UNHCR and partners are currently carrying out the verification of vulnerable households, followed by distribution of a one-time cash grant of USD 195 per household.

Myanmar

The government of Myanmar has received support from several donors, including the Republic of Korea, to increase its testing capacity. UNHCR is also contributing to the effort, with the procurement of 50,000 COVID-19 test kits which are expected to arrive in country by mid-November (in addition to 10,000 kits previously procured by UNHCR).

East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes

UNHCR remains on heightened alert as recent figures demonstrate that cases across the region are on the rise. Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda especially have seen a recent spike in

In Benue State, 16 additional emergency shelters were rehabilitated by refugee leaders, making a total of 66 shelters thus far refurbished. Also, four transitional shelters were completed, and vulnerable households received shelter kits for construction of transitional shelters as well as core relief items and cash-assistance.

[Central African Republic](#)

As part of the fight against COVID-19, UNHCR continues the distribution of core relief items and shelter kits to refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and the most vulnerable host populations in order to improve living conditions and reduce the risk of COVID-19 contamination. In the past two weeks, some 1,400 people benefited from the distribution of NFI/shelter kits composed of mats, blankets, kitchen kits, tarpaulins, etc.

[Burkina Faso](#)

UNHCR obtained from the regional authorities of the Centre North an allocation of five-hectares of land to contribute to the reduction of overcrowding in internally displaced sites in the city of Kaya and facilitate the relocation of families who were residing in flood-prone areas which will help to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection.

Americas

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, refugees and migrants now form an even greater proportion of the poorest quintile in the Americas region. This finding is based on a [partner report](#) of the Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) highlighting that while informal workers are increasingly included in social protection programmes, the majority of refugees and migrants engaged in the informal work sector do not benefit from such vital treatment, despite enhanced efforts by R4V actors to

numbers. In South Sudan, the doctor's union (SSDU) has warned that the country is most likely to experience a second wave of COVID-19 with more fatal cases if heightened efforts to fight the virus are not implemented. The SSDU has cautioned that many citizens and officials appear to have relaxed safety measures.

Major health challenges include the immediate availability of equipment necessary to detect, test and treat complicated cases, medical and personal protective equipment supplies and adequate quarantine facilities, as well as the feasibility of practicing physical distancing at the community level.

[Ethiopia](#)

While the Tigray Regional Government has announced that asymptomatic, mild and moderate cases of COVID-19 should be treated at home, WHO has assessed that this is not a feasible option in refugee camps and has recommended that isolation/quarantine centres are established in the camps. The Ethiopian Agency for Refugee & Returnee Affairs (ARRA) is constructing one isolation/quarantine centre for each camp in the Tigray region using external funds.

Europe

With sharply rising infection rates region-wide, reaching a dramatic situation in some countries, many governments reinstated movement restrictions or extended states of emergency. UNHCR continues to provide protection assistance, ensure continued access to services, and support national authorities in setting up preparedness and response plans inclusive of refugees, asylum-seekers and other persons of concern.

In a worrisome development, authorities in some countries have once again restricted the

advocate for the inclusion of refugees and migrants into national social protection mechanisms across the region. Studies in multiple regions are ongoing to derive further quantitative data for UNHCR's social protection indicator.

Peru

While the pandemic situation in the country is being stabilized, some restrictions are still in place, which continue to affect refugees and migrants who are in great need for remote support. UNHCR has answered over 75,000 calls via helplines with the support of its partners since the start of the emergency. Among the main unmet needs identified are food, shelter, access to health and other essential services, as well as lack of legal documentation.

movement of asylum facility residents. For example, in Slovakia, residents are not allowed to exit the facilities, with some exceptions. At the same time, UNHCR's access to persons of concern is reduced due to the worsening overall COVID-19 situation.

Clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region continue. UNHCR remains concerned about the situation of civilians directly impacted by the fighting, many of whom have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety. The conflict poses a direct threat to public health and safety on both sides, a situation exacerbated by rising COVID-19 infection rates. The number of infections quadrupled compared to the previous fortnight and the healthcare system is under heavy pressure. However, the regular testing and isolation of those infected has resumed.

Southern Africa

Across the region, governments continue to ease restrictions that were put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19, such as lifting lockdowns and movement restrictions including opening of international borders, and reopening schools, shops, and other businesses. In most cases, basic prevention measures, such as mask wearing, screening and hand sanitizing in public spaces remain in place. However, in South Africa, host to 94 per cent of cases in the region, there are widespread concerns over a 'second wave' of infections as observance of physical distancing and mask-wearing is becoming lax. Given reports of complacency and non-compliance with COVID-19 mitigation measures, UNHCR is redoubling its efforts to encourage people to remain vigilant and adhere to COVID-19 prevention protocols. Over the past two weeks, almost 41,500 refugees, displaced people and host community members were reached with COVID-19 related messaging across the Democratic Republic of Congo. This includes UNHCR and partners utilizing sports programmes to achieve better awareness about COVID-19 and GBV prevention. Almost 1,500 young people aged 10 to 17 in the 3 camps for Central African refugees, including almost 1000 girls, participated in these activities.

Malawi

20 health workers, including clinical officers, medical assistants and nurses have been trained over the past two weeks on response to gender-based violence, including in the context of COVID-19. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, some 160 health workers have been trained in Malawi on COVID-19.

Coordination and partnerships

UNHCR resumed its consultations with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the COVID-19 response with a session on “Challenges and responses to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the context of COVID-19”. Grainne O’Hara, UNHCR’s Director of the Division of International Protection highlighted [UNHCR’s recently published policy on GBV](#) and underlined the impact of SGBV that was even before the pandemic an underattended and under resourced protection issue. June Munala, Senior Advisor on SGBV at UNHCR Kenya shared perspectives from UNHCR’s field experience by highlighting dedicated actions and strategies undertaken to respond to the increased SGBV cases during the pandemic, such as integrating SGBV in national/sub-national COVID-19 response plans, e.g. in Zimbabwe. Manisha Thomas from the Women’s Refugee Commission focused on the impact of SGBV on women and girls with disabilities, as they were already up to ten times more likely to experience SGBV before the pandemic. Hamida Jahamah from Plan International Jordan underlined the impact of the pandemic on adolescent girls.

GRF pledges



A number of states, organizations and businesses have demonstrated a remarkable adaptability to the COVID-19 pandemic by

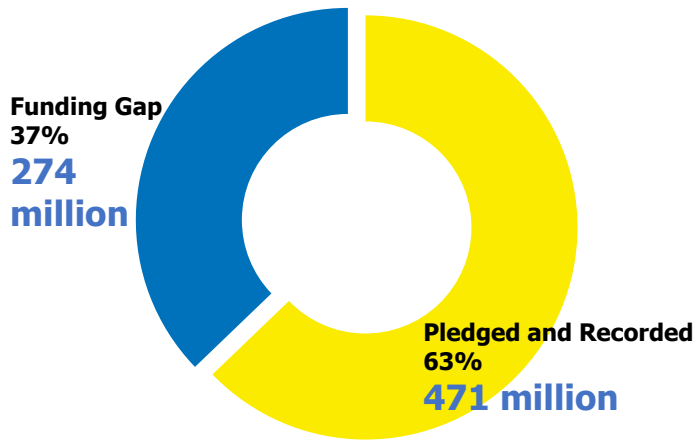
accelerating the implementation of some key pledges made at the [Global Refugee Forum \(GRF\)](#). For example, the [Poverty Alleviation Coalition](#), which includes UNHCR, the World Bank and 13 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have pledged to increase the income of 160,000 refugee and host-community households. Recognizing the economic impacts of COVID-19 on displaced populations, the Coalition has continued to deliver economic recovery and self-reliance programmes during lockdowns. The government of Malawi pledged to include refugees in its National Development Agenda. With support from UNHCR and a USD 10 million grant from the Global Partnership for Education, it is now including refugees in its COVID-19 education response.

Financial Information

On 17 July, the second revision to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) was launched, seeking USD 10.3 billion to support global humanitarian response through December 2020. UNHCR seeks USD 745 million for all refugee and internally displaced operations worldwide. While the initial appeal focused on preparedness and prevention, the revised appeals are increasingly focused on response activities to address the immediate public health, protection and humanitarian assistance needs in countries already facing humanitarian situations. Within the GHRP, UNHCR’s focus is on meeting the needs of refugees, stateless, the internally displaced and host communities. As the impact of the pandemic on affected people is increasingly severe, especially in certain areas such as livelihood and education, additional resources will be needed in 2021 to mitigate the devastating impact of COVID-19.

USD 745M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally until the end of the year:



Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme:

Sweden 76.4M | Private donors Spain 66.8M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | Private donors Republic of Korea 34M | United Kingdom 31.7M | Germany 25.9M | Private donors Japan 25.1M | Japan 23.8M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors Italy 15.7M | France 14M | Private donors Sweden 11.7M | Italy 10.6M

Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees, the internally displaced, stateless persons and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

More information:

[Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19](#)
(launched 17 July 2020)



[Global Focus COVID-19 Situation page](#)
(including UNHCR's Coronavirus emergency appeal and sitreps)



[UNHCR COVID-19 data portal](#) (including global guidance, sitreps and links to other UNHCR COVID-19 related sites)



Total contributed or pledged to the COVID-19 appeal:

USD 471M

Including:

United States	\$186.3M
Germany	\$62.7M
European Union	\$34.1M
United Kingdom	\$25.7M
Japan	\$25.1M
African Development Bank	\$18.3M
Private donors	\$18.0M
Denmark	\$14.6M
United Nations Foundation	\$10.0M
Unilever	\$7.9M
CERF	\$6.9M
Canada	\$6.4M
Education Cannot Wait	\$3.9M
Qatar Charity	\$3.5M
Spain	\$3.4M
France	\$3.4M
Ireland	\$3.3M
Austria	\$3.1M
Saudi Arabia	\$3.0M
Sweden	\$3.0M
Sony Corporation	\$2.9M
Finland	\$2.4M
USA for UNHCR	\$2.3M

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