

# Asia and the Pacific

14 May 2021



**9.2** million

Persons of concern



**4.4** million

Refugees and Asylum seekers



**3.3** million

Internally displaced persons



**85,446**

Returnees



**2.3** million

Stateless persons

## Highlights by country

### South-West Asia

#### Afghanistan

- As of 22 April, more than 240,000 persons have been vaccinated, including 89,000 health workers, 38,000 teachers, 13,000 persons with comorbidities and 13,000 prisoners. The UN and INGO have received 5,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- The Afghan border remained open and enabled the implementation of activities under the Voluntary Repatriation programme. There were no reported incidents related to access to territory attributed to COVID-19. As of 28 April, 754 Afghan refugees returned through the Voluntary Repatriation programme from Iran (522), Pakistan (220), India (11), and Kazakhstan (1). The figure is higher than that in 2020, when only 302 Afghan refugees returned during the same period.
- Regular population movements across borders continued through the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points, despite the requirement to present a negative PCR COVID-19 test to cross the border from Afghanistan to Pakistan through Torkham. The requirement to present a negative PCR test is not applicable for those crossing through Spin Boldak, Islam Qala and Zaranj border crossing points.

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

- The Government re-confirmed its commitment to include foreigners including refugees and undocumented Afghans in the national COVID-19 vaccination drive and response. According to the Ministry of Health, some 80 foreign individuals (Afghans and Iraqis) with certain medical conditions have received their first dose of the vaccine.
- On 29 April, Iran closed its borders with Afghanistan over fears of the spread of COVID-19 variants. Foreign nationals are also barred from entering Iran via its Sistan and Baluchistan border crossing.
- Considering the current limitations to use cash for transferring money due to the pandemic, the Central Bank of Iran announced that debit cards can be issued for foreign nationals, including refugees (Amayesh cardholders).

#### Pakistan

- The Government approved the inclusion of foreigners including Afghan refugees in its vaccination programme. Afghan refugees with Proof of Registration (PoR) cards have begun to register for the vaccines, and some of them have received the shots since 4 May.
- UNHCR in Pakistan received USD 1.2 million from Australia for the COVID-19 emergency response which will be channelled towards WASH programmes including in school settings.

### South-East Asia

#### Bangladesh

- While refugees are included in the national vaccination plan, their vaccination remains on hold until June, pending the postponed arrival of vaccines via the COVAX facility, and it is unlikely that the entire volume of over 10 million doses will arrive immediately. According to the national eligibility criteria, some 120,000 of 884,000 Rohingya refugees would be eligible for the vaccine and humanitarian actors are advocating with the Government to prioritize the Rohingya refugees for their first vaccinations as part of the COVAX allocation.
- Due to a national lockdown, all community-based protection facilities, including Information Service Centers and Community Centers, are currently closed with the exception of limited operation in the

camp recently affected by fire. UNHCR is maintaining remote management of community-based protection activities, including through Community Outreach Members. The Interactive Voice Response system of broadcast calls to refugees is being strengthened with updated pre-recorded messages on COVID-19, including alerts on increasing transmission and required prevention measures.

### Myanmar

- According to IFRC, efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar are likely to be hampered by the current state of unrest as testing, tracing and treatment capacity has been markedly reduced in the past two months.

### Thailand

- Tham Hin camp has gone into lockdown after a positive case was confirmed on 23 April. The initial lockdown period was for 14 days (ending 5 May) but following contact tracing and further testing, two additional cases were confirmed positive on 29 April, which restarts the 14-day lockdown period. Since 22 April, no one can enter or go out from the camp.

### South Asia

#### India

- Given the current second COVID wave is more severe than the first wave, restrictions have been reinforced within the country and for movements across borders. The unprecedented surge in COVID infections across the country and lockdowns in many states have impacted refugees and asylum seekers, in particular their ability to access daily wage work in the informal sector, their access to medication and health facilities, inability to pay rents and cope with their COVID-19 related expenses.
- An increased number of refugees and asylum seekers are approaching UNHCR and partners requesting support for cash, food and non-food items. Assessments for one-time cash assistance were done for those at heightened protection risk to mitigate the negative impact on their protection situation and assistance needs. As a result of this UNHCR had to drastically scaled up its support for refugees and asylum seekers with food, non-food items and lifesaving medical support. The needs are many and in order to ensure comprehensive coverage, more resources are required for food, medical and education.
- Issuance of hard copy Refugee Certificates and Under Consideration Certificates resumed in March but has again been temporarily halted due to the lockdown imposed in Delhi since 19 April 2021.
- UNHCR and partners have scaled up psychosocial counselling support to refugees and asylum seekers as they continue to be affected by various challenges due to the second wave of COVID-19.
- In addition to psychosocial counselling, refugees and asylum seekers are affected by COVID-19 are supported for testing and treatment, food and non-food items, and funeral expenses for those who lose a family member.
- UNHCR partners continue to follow up on cases of children at risk and provide them with psychosocial support. As schools remain closed, partners continue to conduct remote online/offline classes attended by a limited number of children due to lack of electronic tools, inability to afford internet, and lack of stationery. Awareness-raising on child protection including child marriage, child labour, neglect and abuse has been scaled up and helpline numbers are shared with the community. Provision of alternative care arrangement is in place by the government for children whose parents are affected by COVID, either quarantined, hospitalized or deceased. Community support for such children is also in place.

#### Nepal

- Nepal has witnessed a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases over the past month – from 152 new cases per day on 1 April to 5,727 new cases per day on 30 April. In addition, the RT-PCR test positivity rate has increased from 4% to 36% over the same period. The total number of confirmed cases in Nepal reached 323,187 on 30 April, of whom, 3,279 have sadly died.
- In order to control the outbreak, prohibitory orders have been imposed in more than 18 districts across the country. Only essential services are allowed to operate, with schools, markets and transportations services remaining closed. The vaccination drive has also been suspended following the enforcement of the prohibitory order in Kathmandu. All domestic and international flights are suspended until 14 May.

- UNHCR Nepal continued weekly virtual operational meetings with all partner NGOs serving the refugees to ensure continuity of protection and assistance delivery and effective specific case interventions and coordination for all refugee groups during the ongoing movement restrictions.
- Due to the escalating COVID-19 pandemic situation and the movement control orders that have been imposed in many districts of the country, UNHCR Nepal transferred cash support (CBI) in April to all Bhutanese and mandate refugees.
- UNHCR is continuing to closely monitor the overall access of refugees to health services in Nepal, including timely medical responses for non-COVID-19 related urgent health issues during pandemic. UNHCR continues to coordinate with the Government and local authorities to make sure refugees are included in PCR testing and COVID-19 treatment, including vaccinations.



*Pakistan approved the inclusion of foreigners including Afghan refugees in its vaccination programme, and some of them started to receive the shots since 4 May.. @ UNHCR/ Zikrea Saleah*

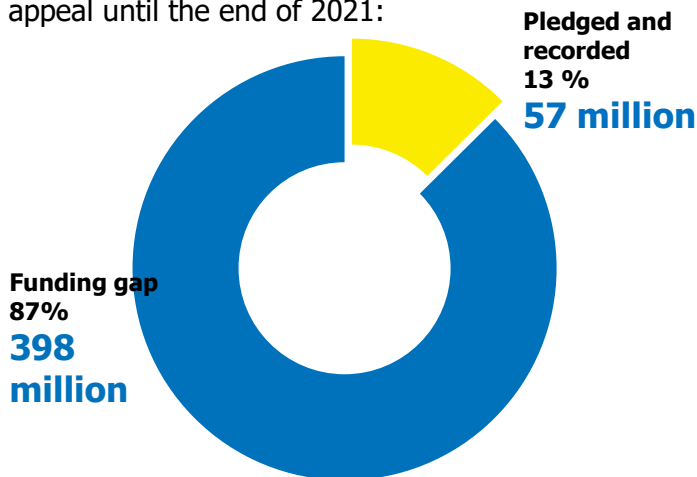
## Funding needs

About half of UNHCR's COVID-19-related needs have been mainstreamed into its 2021 Global Appeal. However, with the pandemic evolving, and needs still emerging, UNHCR has in addition focused on a supplementary and limited set of activities related to exceptional socio-economic and protection impacts related to COVID-19. These activities focus on individuals who are newly-vulnerable due to loss of income or livelihood or were already vulnerable but whose situation has further deteriorated and may need additional support. Specific attention has been paid to activities that focus on women and girls due to heightened gender inequality linked to COVID-19.

USD 469 million has been mainstreamed into the 2021 Global Appeal. USD 455 million are supplementary needs included in **UNHCR's 2021 COVID-19 supplementary appeal**. This brings the total COVID-19-related requirements in 2021 to USD 924 million, including **USD 132 million for Asia and the Pacific** (ExCom-approved budget (mainstreamed) of USD 87 million and supplementary budget of USD 45 million).

### USD 455M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 supplementary appeal until the end of 2021:



Funding as of 11 May 2021

UNHCR is grateful for the support from donors on the COVID-19 response including **African Development Group, Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, Education Cannot Wait, EU, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America**. We also appreciate the support from private donors, and UN pooled funds that provided support for COVID-19 response in the region.

Moreover, we are grateful to donors who provide unearmarked contributions to UNHCR, which enable operations in Asia to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include **Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland** and **private donors in Republic of Korea and Spain**.

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