

Asia and the Pacific

9 November 2021

 **9.8** million

Persons of concern

 **4.2** million

Refugees and Asylum seekers

 **3.5** million

Internally displaced persons

 **158,000**  **2.3** million

Returnees

Stateless persons

HIGHLIGHTS

- In Iran, the Ministry of Health and COVAX countersigned their agreement for the supply of 1.6 million doses of Sinopharm vaccine from the Humanitarian Buffer, paving the way for delivery of the airlift in the week of 22 November 2021.
- In Bangladesh, following the trend in the previous month, the COVID-19 test positivity and death rate significantly decreased in both the refugee camps and the host community in Cox's Bazar district since August 2021. With authorities lifting lockdown measures, all humanitarian activities were permitted to resume in the camps from 9 September, and learning centres partially reopened on 22 September.
- After more than a year of COVID-19 lockdown, the Indonesian government has lifted several restrictions in the Java-Bali region following a reduction in the COVID-19 indicators since September. Bali will welcome international arrivals from 14 October 2021 after more than a year of COVID-19 lockdown, as well as the Riau Islands. Both provinces have among the highest vaccination coverage in Indonesia.

UPDATE ON VACCINATIONS

- In Afghanistan, nearly a quarter of refugee and asylum-seekers families received the second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. In October, however, no new refugee and asylum-seekers have been vaccinated due to the lack of availability of the COVID-19 vaccine in the country.
- In Iran, close to 500,000 foreign nationals – including refugees and undocumented Afghans - have been vaccinated.
- In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 vaccination drive was postponed due to the ongoing Oral Cholera Vaccination (OCV) vaccination in the camp. Once complete, the COVID-19 vaccination campaign will resume in December. So far, 33,386 refugees aged 55 years and older have been fully vaccinated.
- As of 5 October, Indonesia reached the 150 million mark in COVID-19 vaccine shots administered. The single dose vaccination rate amongst the elderly in Java and Bali reached 40 per cent as of 10 October, an increase of 8% compared to the previous month.
- Vaccination for migrants and refugees have continued in all states across Malaysia. While large vaccination centres are expected to close down by the end of October, access to vaccinations would still be available via government primary care clinics and selected private general practitioners throughout the country. UNHCR, through its partner, has commenced the provision of vaccinations to 12-17 year-olds, including refugees, at their primary care clinic.
- Thailand has fully vaccinated almost 45% of its population (some 32 million individuals). By the end of October, 12,628 refugees have been vaccinated in refugee camps, including 2,495 who were fully vaccinated and 9,747 who received the first dose. 450 urban refugees have been fully vaccinated and 64 have received the first dose. Moreover, over 6,000 stateless have received their first dose.

- In Nepal, 86% of eligible persons of concern have completed the COVID-19 vaccinations thanks to the inclusion of refugees in the vaccination roll-out by the Government.
- Through a UN-led vaccination drive in Sri Lanka, UNHCR in collaboration with RCO, IOM and the Government, successfully administered the second dose of COVID-19 vaccines to 323 refugees and asylum-seekers in October. In parallel, Government-led vaccination drives continue to be conducted across the country for different age groups, reaching some 300 asylum-seekers and refugees.
- In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Covid-19 has been officially included into the list of guaranteed free medical assistance refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. UNHCR and partners continue to raise awareness on importance of vaccination, more importantly that all recognized refugees can benefit from the mass vaccination programme currently implemented in the country. In Tajikistan, UNHCR's advocacy efforts to ensure inclusion of refugees to the national vaccination campaign against Covid-19 have been positively accepted by the Government. The vaccination of refugees under way; so far, 3,954 refugees have got their first dose and 3,715 their second dose.

KEY ISSUES

- In Myanmar, despite declining positivity rates, the overall COVID-19 situation remains of concern across the country, particularly given the limited response capacity and the poor health infrastructure in place. On 27 October, 1,003 new cases were reported by de facto authorities, bringing the total number of recorded COVID-19 cases in the country to over 500,000 by the end of the month – around 7 per cent more cases since the end of September. Among the reported cases, 18,697 people have died.
- In Indonesia, the Government issued more detailed instructions on COVID-19 vaccination for refugees through a decree at the end of September that allows refugees with UNHCR-issued identity documents to access the national COVID-19 vaccination scheme, provided that at least 70 per cent of the population in the area where refugees reside have received a first vaccination dose. However, it has not been implemented equally throughout the country. There are several cities or areas where access to vaccinations is still pending approval from the local government and the local refugee task force despite the vaccination rate having passed the 70 per cent threshold.
- Schools and learning centres in Malaysia continue to reopen gradually and in stages in line with the National Recovery Plan, with the majority of the refugee learning centres reopening from 18 October. The main challenge faced by the majority of the learning centres is space constraints, and to address this issue, the learning centres have established dual sessions (morning and afternoon), class rotation schedule, and prioritizing in-person learning for younger children.

UNHCR'S RESPONSE

- In Afghanistan, UNHCR provided Cash for Protection (one-time multi-purpose cash assistance to meet basic needs) to 71,043 persons (10,149 households) including 18,515 persons (2,645 households) in October. UNHCR also provided livelihood opportunities to 2,819 persons who have continued with technical and vocational trainings and trainings on entrepreneurship including provision of livelihood assets and job placement.
- UNHCR is helping to ensure that vulnerable refugees in Iran who are eligible for a free-of-charge insurance booklet are informed, enrolled in the scheme and have insurance coverage. To date, 92,475 vulnerable refugees have enrolled in the scheme. UPHI enrolment provides access to COVID-19 treatment and hospitalization at subsidized costs.

- UNHCR held an awareness-raising session for refugees in Mashhad, Iran, on livelihoods challenges during the pandemic, the impact on women, and risk mitigation. Participants were women aged 20-45 with children, and they also took part in a focus group discussion to discuss challenges, as well as the community capacities that could be activated.
- In Bangladesh, Community Health Workers made some 1,200,000 visits to refugees (including repeat visits) in October with messages on COVID-19 prevention and identified over 8,700 individuals with mild to severe COVID-19 symptoms whom they referred to health facilities. The Community Health Workers conducted a further 53,000 small group sessions in the camps promoting vaccine acceptance.
- Preventative sanitation work and hygiene promotion in Bangladesh continued in October, with over 7,000 hands-free handwashing devices installed at household level. Over 109,000 WASH facilities and public spaces were disinfected. Refugee Hygiene Promotion Volunteers reached some 215,000 refugees with COVID-19 messages, ranging from hygiene practices to mask wearing. A further 32,000 refugees were reached with key messages on COVID-19 through small group and one-on-one discussions with community group volunteers, Community Outreach Members elected community representatives, imams, and female religious teachers.
- In Bangladesh, UNHCR continued to support two Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Isolation and Treatment Centres and one Intensive Care Unit providing services to both refugees and Bangladeshis. In October, the facilities saw the lowest occupancy rates in 2021. Patients continued to receive mental health support through psychologists, and their families through psychosocial volunteers.
- In Myanmar, despite field activities having been curtailed due to various COVID-19 related and other access challenges to a significant degree in some areas, UNHCR has continued to be able to deliver throughout the reporting period. In northern townships of Rakhine State, UNHCR has reached over 6,000 IDP and other affected community members with COVID-19 related (e.g., PPE distribution) and/or NFI support. In the South-East, UNHCR through its implementing partner, carried out COVID-19 prevention awareness raising sessions benefitting 35 community leaders in five villages. Hand sanitizer and masks were distributed during the sessions. The community leaders will in turn conduct awareness raising sessions with community members, including IDPs, returnees and host community. During October in the North-East, over 25,000 people benefitted from various COVID-19 related support, including through the provision of medical supplies and PPE items (e.g., face masks, hand sanitizer, gowns, among other items).
- In Indonesia, UNHCR provided COVID-19 cash allowance to 2,850 household or 5,215 refugees who live independently without any support. This was the third round of COVID-19 allowance distribution covering two months.
- In Malaysia, UNHCR and its partners supported access to basic needs through the provision of short-term, multi-purpose cash grants and food aid for highly vulnerable refugees. Some 3,412 households will receive small cash grants to access basic needs in 2021, while food packs will be provided to 3,300 households nationwide.
- In the Philippines, UNHCR provided 25 boxes of surgical masks and 25 surgical gowns to the City Civil Registrar's Office in Zamboanga to augment the PPE needed by its team for the upcoming verification activities. UNHCR also provided PPE to partners who regularly receive and assist asylum-seekers and refugees, including face masks and surgical gowns for frontline staff of the Department of Justice's Refugees and Stateless Persons Protection Unit and.
- In Thailand, UNHCR continued to support information-sharing and on COVID-19 prevention and outreach sessions in the camps. In addition, partners provided support on mental health concerns,

including a training on mental health for CBOs. UNHCR through its partner distributed masks to 405 refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas.

- UNHCR continued to provide cash-based intervention (CBI) to vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas in Thailand. The total number of households that received CBI in October is 1,083 (2,973 persons). CBI is provided to UNHCR's persons of concern through cash cards via monthly deposit and the amount distributed varies based on family composition and vulnerabilities. CBI helps refugees meet their basic needs, particularly given the marked decrease in informal income opportunities due to the pandemic.
- In India, as part of awareness-raising on COVID-19 prevention and child protection, UNHCR's partner in Chennai began conducting activities such as colouring sessions and quizzes targeting children in the camps. So far 200 children have been reached in 9 camps. UNHCR provided 503 kits including books and stationery to Afghan students in Delhi to support their education. Food ration support continued for 25,445 persons of concern; distribution by partners is in progress.
- In Hong Kong SAR, further to two earlier rounds of PPE distribution to UNHCR's persons of concern, UNHCR undertook a distribution exercise to issue shopping vouchers to persons of concern for use towards replenishment of PPEs.



An elderly refugee receives her first dose of COVID vaccination during Thai Red Cross campaign on 25 October 2021 in Tham Hin Camp, Thailand ©UNHCR/ Morgane Roussel-Hemery

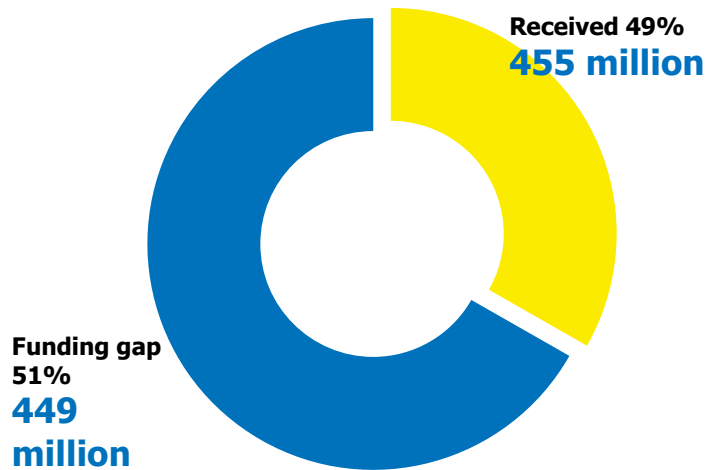
FUNDING NEEDS

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 924M

Requested for UNHCR's global COVID-19 response until the end of 2021 (inclusive of mainstreamed activities and UNHCR's COVID-19 supplementary appeal). Funding received is as of 1 November.



UNHCR is grateful for the support from donors to its COVID-19 response including the **USA, the African Development Bank Group, Canada, the EU, Unilever (UK), Austria, China, Education Cannot Wait, France, UN COVID-19 MPTF, USA for UNHCR, Country-Based Pooled Funds, Germany, and Japan**, among many others. We also appreciate the support from private donors, UN pooled funds, and development partners that provided support for COVID-19 response in the region.

Moreover, we are grateful to donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to UNHCR, which enable operations in Asia to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include **Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium, Italy**, and private donors in **Spain, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Italy**, among many others.

Contacts

Michael Prendergast, Assoc Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for Asia- Pacific: prenderm@unhcr.org