




Asia and the Pacific


9 February 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

- UNHCR has modified ongoing activities to ensure protection services can continue during the pandemic. Interventions for persons with specific needs and cash assistance programs for refugees have been modified to enable case assessment by phone. In addition, Community Based Protection Monitoring is now primarily conducted through household-level interviews rather than focus group discussions. UNHCR has also developed a COVID-19 questionnaire together with the Protection Cluster to assess the impact of, and needs due to, the pandemic.
- The Government of Afghanistan and the UN are preparing for the rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine across the country, including the development of a National Vaccine Deployment Plan. According to OCHA, while GAVI had provided funding through the COVAX facility to cover vaccine costs for up to 20 per cent of the population, the World Bank and Asia Development Bank have recently committed to provide funds to cover an additional 40 per cent of the population. The World Bank also approved two grants totalling to USD 85 million for Afghanistan. The two grants aims to (1) improve access to and quality of water supply in Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat and strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation to deliver sustainable services and contribute to national efforts to manage COVID-19 and other disasters; and (2) improve the delivery of core infrastructure, emergency support, and social services to communities through strengthened Community Development Councils.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- Refugee children continue to study from home. In view of connectivity issues and lack of sufficient ICT equipment, UNHCR procured some 21,500 tablets for distribution to vulnerable refugee and host community schoolchildren in refugee hosting areas.
- Refugees living in urban settings can access testing and treatment at MoH designated 16-hour centers – those enrolled in universal public health insurance only have to pay 10% of the treatment cost at MoH-affiliated hospitals, while others will pay a fee similar to Iranian nationals. While refugees have access to treatment in private hospitals in principle, this is not covered by UPHI and hence is prohibitively expensive.
- The cost of housing has been one of the major challenges faced by refugees. Given the loss of income and the absence of job opportunities due to the pandemic, refugees report being obliged to move to remote areas with cheaper prices.

Pakistan

- Cash distribution to the most vulnerable refugee families concluded on 31 December 2020. In total, 75,104 refugee families have received assistance, which mirrors the Government's Ehsaas emergency cash program. Vulnerable refugee families received Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77) to cover a four-month period. Cash assistance was disbursed in 55 districts and 54 refugee villages across Pakistan through an innovative partnership with the Pakistan Post.
- COVID-related health problems the government-run health facilities and major hospitals remain open and accessible to persons of concern in Pakistan. A second wave of COVID-19 started in late October and peaked between November and mid-December. During this period, Pakistan reported around 3,500 new cases a day with steep increase in hospitalization and mortality and hospital capacity under strain. However, in last two weeks of January, case numbers started to decline to their current level of less than 2,000 per day. Health facilities in all the refugee villages are functional.

- Registration, documentation issuance and distribution are currently suspended in the country office Islamabad as a precautionary measure to prevent COVID-19. The country office is only processing urgent or emergency cases.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- The humanitarian community, authorities and refugee volunteers continue information dissemination in the camps regarding health and safety precautions during the pandemic. Notably, refugees have begun seeking information about possibilities and modalities for future vaccinations.
- In the Rohingya refugee camps, UNHCR has begun to implement the 'Girl Shine' model, a program conceived in response to assessments indicating that adolescent Rohingya girls are at heightened risk of GBV during the pandemic. The program is aimed at supporting, protecting and empowering adolescent refugee girls against GBV through the provision of skills and knowledge to identify and seek timely support in GBV incidents or at-risk situations.

Indonesia

- According to the Ministry of Health, UNHCR's persons of concern now have free access to COVID-19 related health care following a Circular from Ministry of Health that health facilities can request reimbursement for COVID-19 related services if patients provide UNHCR documentation.

Myanmar

- UNHCR continues to follow the situation in Myanmar closely following the events that occurred on 1 February. UNHCR remains focused on delivering protection and assistance to its persons of concern in Myanmar.
- Operational challenges continue to be exacerbated by the public health situation, with COVID-19-related restrictions impeding humanitarian access. As a result of the pandemic, UNHCR temporarily reduced the number of field visits in the South East, Kachin and northern Shan, with response efforts carried out in accordance with protection and social distancing considerations. Remote activities were also bolstered to minimize risks to both community members and staff.

Thailand

- Remote processing continues to take place for registration, RSD, resettlement, and other core protection processes. Cash based interventions are ongoing to help address heightened protection needs and vulnerabilities during the pandemic. Based on the recent lockdown and evidence of urban persons of concern facing increased hardship and difficulties in meeting their basic needs, UNHCR has increased CBI support by 20% as a stop-gap measure.

South Asia

India

- UNHCR India continues to engage with community representatives and refugees to assess and respond to needs arising from the pandemic. Persistent issues raised by refugees include increasing financial difficulties, situational stress during the pandemic, inability to meet basic needs, deteriorating coping skills, and challenges to maintain emotional well-being.

Nepal

- UNHCR is holding weekly virtual meetings with partner NGOs to ensure continuity of protection and assistance delivery and effective specific case interventions and coordination for all refugee groups despite the lockdown. UNHCR also maintains daily contact with persons of concern through a 24/7 hotline service.
- Nepal began its nationwide COVID-19 vaccine drive on 27 January 2021 after receiving one million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine from the Indian Government. Some 430,000 frontline workers including health professionals, security personnel, ambulance drivers, health volunteers, and waste management workers from all the seven provinces are being immunized in the first phase. The Ministry of Health and Population has stated that the second priority has been given to all persons above 55 years of age and those from the 40-to-54 age group with comorbidities. Refugees who meet these conditions will be included in the second phase.

Sri Lanka

- On 28 January, India donated 500,000 COVID-19 vaccines to Sri Lanka. Since its arrival, inoculation of frontline healthcare workers, armed forces and police have commenced across the island

Funding needs

UNHCR's emergency response to COVID-19 was launched in March 2020 through the Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which was an inter-agency effort coordinated by OCHA. UNHCR's total requirements for COVID-19 were \$745 million, and as of the beginning of December, the appeal was funded at 64% (\$477 million).

For 2021, about half of UNHCR's COVID-19-related needs have been mainstreamed into its 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.

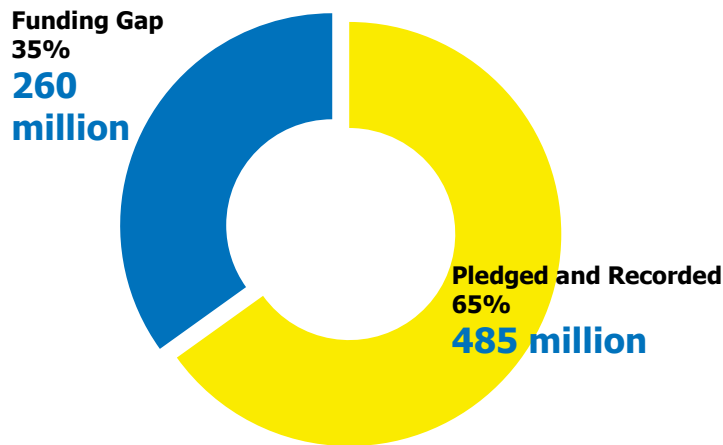
USD 469 million has been mainstreamed into the 2021 Global Appeal. USD 455 million are supplementary needs included in [UNHCR's 2021 COVID-19 supplementary appeal](#). This brings the total COVID-19-related requirements in 2021 to USD 924 million, including [USD 132 million for Asia and the Pacific](#)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



At a post office in Peshawar, Pakistan, vulnerable Afghan refugee families receive cash assistance.

USD 745M

requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 response globally until the end of 2020:



Funding as of 13 January

UNHCR is grateful for the robust support from donors on the COVID-19 response including the Governments of **Australia, Canada, China, 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.

Contacts

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