

Asia and the Pacific

11 November 2020

 **9.5** million
Persons of concern

 **4.4** million
Refugees and Asylum seekers

 **3.2** million
Internally displaced persons

 **137,489**
Returnees

 **2.3** million
Stateless persons

Highlights by country

South-West Asia

Afghanistan

- More than six months into the pandemic, people across Afghanistan have used up savings, taken on new debt and now face additional risks such as eviction, according to a [recent NRC report](#). More than 80 per cent of the most vulnerable displaced families surveyed reported that debt is leading to difficulties in paying rent and other housing expenses. This has prompted increased levels of borrowing to cover food, education and rent. NRC warns that protection challenges are likely to worsen as families adopt negative coping strategies, including child labour, early marriage and decreased food consumption. UNHCR's cash for protection programme (in response to the COVID-19 pandemic) aims to target the most vulnerable and 2,839 families have been reached so far out of 10,000 targeted.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR Iran has increasingly witnessed reductions in people's purchasing power and in their ability to address basic and daily needs. The Statistics Center of Iran (SCI)'s latest report on food prices (from September 22 – October 21) showed significant increases, with the prices of almost half of the 53 items in the SCI basket rising by over five percent compared to the previous month and over 49 percent compared to the same month last year. Through its hotlines, UNHCR continues to receive calls from vulnerable refugees and refer them to services to address their most urgent needs.

Pakistan

- UNHCR has so far [provided emergency cash assistance to over 50,000 vulnerable Afghan refugee families](#) impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan. The UNHCR emergency cash programme follows the Government of Pakistan's Ehsaas emergency cash programme, where vulnerable Pakistani families receive a one-off cash grant of Rs.12,000 (approximately \$77). UNHCR is targeting 70,000 of the most vulnerable refugee families. This assistance is being carried out in close collaboration with the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and with the Pakistan Post.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- Information Service Centres have experienced a gradual increase in the number of visitors in the camps in Cox's Bazaar. As well as questions related to COVID-19, there has been an increase in questions from the refugee community's on other issues, such as cyclone preparedness (after a depression in the Bay of Bengal which saw extensive rain between 22-25 October).

- UNHCR and community-based protection partners continue to work with the refugee community to conduct awareness-raising sessions on COVID-19 prevention and response, and hygiene promotion in the refugee camps. Cumulatively since March, UNHCR-supported Community Outreach Members (COMs) have reached 172,356 refugees with key messages on COVID-19.
- Preparation of the 2021 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis is underway. A virtual workshop last week – facilitated by the Strategic Executive Group Co-Chairs and the Inter-sector Coordination Group (ISCG) – brought together key stakeholders – UN, NGOs and donors from Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, and consultations with the Government at all relevant levels will follow.

Myanmar

- The Government of Myanmar has received support from various donors to increase its testing capacity. Three firms from the Republic of Korea donated 4,500 Antigen Rapid Diagnostic Tests and 1,000 PPE sets to Myanmar on 22 October, and China-based companies in Myanmar donated some 200,000 surgical masks and CCTV sets to the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS) on 26 October. UNHCR is also contributing to building the capacity of testing in the country with the procurement of 50,000 COVID-19 tests which are expected to arrive in country by mid-November.

Indonesia

- With thanks to contributions from Japan, Australia and UNAIDS, UNHCR Indonesia began distribution of surgical and N95 masks to refugees as well as 15 hospitals and 12 Puskesmas (sub-district level health service providers) which have been providing access to medical service for refugees in Jakarta and greater Jakarta area.
- UNHCR is conducting virtual discussions with groups of refugees via Zoom, including a “Town Hall” with Refugee Representatives and is planning larger meetings with the wider refugee community (up to 500 participants).

East Asia and the Pacific

Republic of Korea

- UNHCR has received a donation of 1.9 million N95 masks from the Government of Korea. The items will be distributed in the region, with the majority going to Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Funding needs

UNHCR's revised COVID-19 emergency appeal was launched on 11 May, in line with the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (updated on 17 July). 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



UNHCR's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Mr. Indrika Ratwatta hands over emergency cash assistance to an Afghan refugee at the Pakistan Post Office in Islamabad.

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.

Contacts

Hyeon Cho, Donor Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, chohy@unhcr.org