


Asia and the Pacific


14 October 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

- Utilization of health services in Afghanistan has dramatically decreased during the pandemic according to WHO, indicating that many severe medical cases that required hospital care were unable to receive treatment for a variety of reasons. These reasons include health staff falling ill with COVID-19, overwhelmed health facilities focusing on COVID-19 response, patients' unwillingness to attend health facilities, and movement restrictions. These unaddressed medical conditions will likely result in increased mortality as well as an increase in needs in the remainder of the year and into 2021.
- Facilitated returns to Afghanistan have been affected by border closures and limited air travel. From 1 January to 2 October, UNHCR assisted the return of 1,282 Afghan refugees from Iran, Pakistan and other countries including Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and the Russian Federation under its facilitated voluntary repatriation programme. The number of Afghan refugees who returned in 2019 under UNHCR's facilitated voluntary repatriation programme was 8,079, demonstrating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on returns.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- Since September, UNHCR and NGO partners have been proactively reaching out to vulnerable refugees to ensure they are enrolled in the insurance scheme and for eligible refugees to receive health insurance support. In addition, UNHCR, together with the Government, is exploring other ways to support more refugees to enrol in the health insurance scheme, including through cash assistance for vulnerable groups.
- Partners are facing implementation challenges due to significant fluctuation in the market resulting in increased prices/devaluation of the currency and restrictions due to COVID-19 that may impact activities such as vocational skills training.

Pakistan

- Schools reopened as of 30 September and the Government is conducting COVID-19 tests for teachers, students and non-teaching staff. According to the Ministry of Education, the infection rate is less than 1% in schools. Some schools with active COVID-19 cases and those who failed to comply with safe school reopening guidelines were instructed to close again. Refugee village schools have also begun to reopen, while class sizes have been reduced by half to maintain social distance. UNHCR offices are working to ensure that schools are fully complying with reopening guidelines.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- UNHCR's child protection partners, with increased engagement of community-based structures, have provided psychosocial support sessions to 3,722 children and adolescents while case management follow-up activities supported 3,003 children in the last two weeks. To tackle domestic violence against children, positive parenting sessions were conducted for 1,603 parents and caregivers. Community Psychosocial Volunteers conducted 2,451 sessions on COVID-19 and how to improve well-being, reaching 8,753 individuals.

Myanmar

- Poor health services disproportionately affect conflict-affected, stateless and impoverished families and, at the same time, mitigation measures to prevent and contain the virus have limited the ability of households to be self-sufficient. This affects internally displaced persons in particular who rely on daily wage jobs outside of camp settings.
- Most humanitarian activities in northern Rakhine have been suspended, and there has been some disruption to the delivery of essential services across Rakhine state. The UN in both Yangon and the western region moved to emergency mode as of 1 October, with UN premises in these regions restricted to critical personnel only.

Malaysia

- According to preliminary findings from the cash-based intervention (CBI) post-distribution monitoring, 91% of households report using one or more negative coping strategies to meet basic needs, despite the lifting of Movement Control Order in June. While some 62% of households reported being able to earn income in September, only 54% reported being able to meet at least half of their basic needs.
- Some 80% of the 134 Learning Centres have reopened, with most operating at half capacity utilizing online learning for older children, dual school sessions, classroom rotation, and teachers going to the community to meet students. Distribution of some 1,000 tablets to students is ongoing, with priority placed on secondary level students, with plans under way for additional tablets.
- Renovation work at the UNHCR Reception Centre is on track for completion in December. The new Reception Centre allow for more efficient processes, significantly reduced waiting time, improved space and facilities for refugees and asylum-seekers and a better working area for staff.

The Philippines

- Cotabato City started implementing a 'No Digital ID, No Entry' policy on 28 September, which is an additional challenge to local mobility. Due to stricter quarantine protocols in most areas in Bangsamoro, partners' movements are limited, causing delay in activities, such as face to face coordination and validation exercises. However, quick impact projects continue to be implemented in target municipalities through partners.

Thailand

- In the Thai/Myanmar border camps, concerns regarding the outbreak in Myanmar have led to stricter protocols for camp residents. Camp commanders and local government have instituted a variety of measures, including a curfew, restrictions in movement from one camp section to another, checkpoints, and closed access to camps.

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 partner NGO Relief Singapore donated 300,000 reusable masks to Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

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.

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