



Asia and the Pacific


19 August 2020

 **9.2** million
Persons of concern

 **4.4** million
Refugees and Asylum seekers

 **2.9** million
Internally displaced persons

 **83,930**
Returnees

 **2.3** million
Stateless persons

Overview

In collaboration with the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, UNHCR is preparing to resume facilitated voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan. UNHCR in Pakistan will process the returns on Mondays and Tuesdays and returning refugees will be able to cross through Torkham and Chaman/Spin Boldak crossing points on the same day. Once in Afghanistan, returnees will receive a cash grant covering costs for transport and initial reintegration (around USD 250 per person) and will be able to access basic services at one of three encashment centres in Nangarhar, Kabul, or Kandahar.

In Pakistan, Proof of Registration (POR) Card modification centers, run by the National Database and Registration Authority, which had been closed since March due to COVID-19, were able to resume activities on 17 August to facilitate issuance and modification of POR cards for Afghan refugees across the country.

Highlights by country

South-West Asia

Afghanistan

- Undocumented Afghans continue to spontaneously return to Afghanistan from the Islamic Republic of Iran, without UNHCR support. The Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation Border Monitoring Team reported that 18,692 Afghans returned from the Islamic Republic of Iran through the Nimroz (Milak) and Herat (Islam Qala) borders between 19-25 July, a 39% increase from the previous week. Since 1 January 2020, the total number of undocumented Afghan returnees from Iran was reported to be 404,868 individuals.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR's persons of concern report increasing difficulties in meeting the costs of internet and equipment needed for children to continue their education. Some have reported having to take their children out of school.

Pakistan

- UNHCR has commenced WASH activities in 24 Refugee Villages through a partner, to carry out information dissemination, support the reactivation of Water Management Committees, and distribute soap and PPEs to refugee communities via pre-identified community structures. Education partners are also assessing schools and meeting with local communities to prepare for school reopening, to ensure that protocols are followed and to disseminate information, education and communication materials and PPEs.
- Despite limited field movements, UNHCR colleagues in Pakistan are conducting outreach missions to refugee villages and urban clusters to monitor ongoing interventions, including WASH, livelihoods, health, legal assistance, and cash assistance. The field teams closely liaise with refugee communities, partners, District Administration and law enforcement agencies to ensure timely support for refugee communities. Ongoing outreach activities are being conducted with the use of PPE by staff and ensuring that social distancing recommendations are closely followed.
- UNHCR launched the MADE51 project (which promotes refugee-made artisan products) in Pakistan. The project will employ 100 refugee artisans to produce high-quality crafts, working through local social enterprises to bring the products to market.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- Testing in the camps in Bangladesh through sentinel sites has increased in recent weeks and reached 120 tests per day as of 10 August. This increase is largely owed to the work of refugee community health volunteers who are engaged in community-based surveillance and providing targeted counselling to refugees identified with COVID-like symptoms.
- In Cox's Bazar district, there has been some limited easing of the general lockdown measures that were in place nationwide further to a circular issued by the Government. With the ease of lockdown measures, partners have been seen to gradually increase their presence in camps.

Myanmar

- UNHCR and WFP held a handover ceremony of 20,000 COVID-19 testing kits to the Ministry of Health and Sports as part of a broader UN programme to provide over 95,000 test kits to the Government. Meanwhile, the delivery of four WHO-designed COVID-19 commodity packages (comprising 75 types of medical items including 18 ventilators, medicine and 250,000 PPEs) has commenced. The items will be donated to the Ministry of Health and Sports along with other key ministries as part of nationwide efforts to prevent and respond to COVID-19.
- On 29 July, UNHCR, along with IOM, provided bedding materials to a national partner for use in non-government-controlled area (NGCA) quarantine facilities in Kachin State.
- A steady increase in migrant returns was reported, with 9,840 migrants returning from Thailand between 17 July and 3 August. According to a rapid assessment conducted by IOM, with support from UNHCR, UNDP, and community partners, 65% of respondents' households were not receiving any remittances from employers while 15% of respondents experienced discrimination. Some 63% of respondents reported their intention to re-emigrate to former countries of employment.

Malaysia

- As part of the investment into digital infrastructure to support the shift towards blended education models, UNHCR provided some 1,000 tablets, 50 laptops, SIM cards and data packages for its partners and supported the production of videos for online learning. Partners also received support for 'cluster classrooms' and financial assistance is being arranged for smaller learning centres to ensure that they are not left behind.

Philippines

- UNHCR is implementing quick impact projects for IDPs in two of the Sagonsongan transitory sites in Marawi to rehabilitate water systems and enhance their capacity, which saw a reduction in water supply following the opening of a COVID-19 facility in a neighboring site. UNHCR is also undertaking awareness raising and risk communication on COVID-19 through its partners, including hygiene promotion.

Thailand

- The "COVID-19 Impact Assessment: Urban Refugees and Asylum-seekers in Thailand" report was released publicly on 13 August. The report outlines the findings of a COVID-19 rapid needs assessment and post distribution monitoring exercise for UNHCR's cash support programme conducted with 180 urban asylum-seeker and refugee families. It is being shared with relevant stakeholders, including the Government, UNCT, NGOs, donors, embassies, the academic community, as well as the general public.
- As Thailand has reported no local transmission for over 80 days, UNHCR has started partial resumption of in-person registration and refugee status determination (RSD) activities. RSD interviews are being conducted for prioritized cases that benefit from in-person processing. Registration activities are being conducted in-person on a first-come, first-served basis, unless protection needs or vulnerabilities dictate that a case should be prioritized. UNHCR is also working at the site of its partner, Bangkok Refugee Centre (BRC), to deliver new UNHCR cards to beneficiaries.



In Bangladesh, Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi work to produce 100,000 cloth masks for use in combatting COVID-19.

Funding needs

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