


Asia and the Pacific


10 June 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

On 8 June, according to media reports, a vessel carrying 269 people was intercepted near Langkawi island, in Malaysia territorial waters. Seventy per cent of these people are reported to be women and children. The passengers and crew were arrested. They received food and water from the authorities and reportedly transferred to a detention/COVID quarantine centre in Langkawi. UNHCR has offered its support to the Government and is seeking access to the disembarked persons.

Two positive COVID-19 cases have been reported in Myanmar among people who had returned from Bangladesh. Both were transferred to a transit camp by the authorities where they were tested and they are reportedly being treated at a hospital in Maungdaw, Rakhine State. Contact tracing is under way.

UNHCR in Bangladesh is establishing a Monitoring and Support Team (MST) to stay in touch daily with colleagues and family members in self-isolation or quarantine. The MST will ensure systematic communication and information flow, so that it can monitor the colleague's situation, advocate for them, and ensure that they receive the support needed. The first international movements through the UN COVID-19 MEDEVAC Coordination Centre have also taken place, involving the departure of two UN staff members to Europe. Decisions on these cases are made by the Coordination Centre at WHO in Geneva.

Highlights by country

South-West Asia

Afghanistan

- UNHCR provided 10 family tents and 13 Refugee Housing Units in Bamyán, Nangarhar and Herat provinces in Afghanistan for screening, use as an Out-Patient Department, storage, and accommodation for doctors and medical personnel, as well as registration areas for returnees from Iran. A total 339 hand washing stations have been set up by UNHCR's partners across eight provinces. In coordination with the Department of Public Health, UNHCR and partners distributed an additional 5,600 hygiene kits (so far 31,125 hygiene kits have been distributed in 8 provinces), 33 PPEs and installed six water tankers in government offices in Badakhshan Province. Hygiene promotion activities continued for 75,000 people residing in IDPs sites in Herat Province.
- Lockdown measures continue to impact the mobility of humanitarian organisations, affecting access to humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian partners remain active in responding to crises throughout the country and continue to urge the Government to employ a national approach to these movement issues so that individual negotiations are not required on a case-by-case basis.

Pakistan

- The first cash distributions in Baluchistan commenced on 28 May. Post Offices were closed for several days during the Eid break, but the first group of refugee households started to receive the one-time cash assistance. The second group of 5,000 households commenced on 3 June and the third group of 13,000 households will follow in due course.
- Following the COVID-related suspension of the VolRep program, a small number of Afghan refugee families in Pakistan have enquired about return. UNHCR Pakistan, in consultation with the Government and UNHCR Afghanistan, is taking preparatory actions towards re-commencing voluntary repatriation as movement restrictions allow, planning for July. The VolRep operation will be limited in number and VolRep Centers may only be open for 1-2 days a week (instead of 5 days a week).

South Asia

Nepal

- UNHCR Nepal has established a coordinated service delivery mechanism, including access to health, psychosocial support and justice, to respond to SGBV cases for refugees and other marginalized groups living in Kathmandu during the COVID-19 crisis.
- The influx of Nepalese workers from India to their hometowns in Nepal has posed a challenge in managing the arrivals in the government-designated quarantine centers along the southern belt. With the resumption of trains in India, at least 4,000 Nepali migrants have been crossing the border daily through the known entry points.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- There has been no considerable increase in the number of confirmed cases in refugee camps in Bangladesh, presumably due to the change in procedures. Previously, persons of concern with mild and flu-like symptoms were tested, accounting for most of the identified cases. Under the new procedures, individuals whose samples are taken need to agree to stay in isolation and treatment centres until their results are released, which many refugees are not comfortable doing. Tests have consequently gone down from 20-30 to 3-4 daily. UNHCR is advocating with the authorities to return to the previous testing system.
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- The Deputy Commissioner for Cox's Bazar has declared the entire municipality as a "Red Zone" from 6 to 20 June to control the spread of COVID-19. All gatherings have been banned, people are restricted to their homes, and private and public transportation has been suspended, apart from vehicles carrying necessities. Efforts are under way to clarify the scope of the restrictions, how they will apply to the movements and activities of the UN and humanitarian community, and whether the agreed level of critical activities and movement can be sustained under the new restrictions..
- UNHCR is working with humanitarian partners to establish a medical facility in Cox's Bazar, which will be an extension of the UN clinic. The facility will include five beds (including one ICU), one triage facility for examinations, as well as oxygen and ventilation capacities.

Myanmar

- In northern Rakhine, UNHCR and UNDP have jointly conducted COVID-19 awareness sessions and distributed information education and communication materials in 35 out of 41 villages that are currently accessible. In north-east Myanmar, UNHCR delivered 260 beds to the Kachin State Government for quarantine facilities across the state, following delivery of NFIs in previous weeks..
- In Rakhine State, UNHCR and other agencies continue to face access constraints adding to challenges of carrying out regular as well as COVID-19 activities. The onset of the monsoon season also requires a scaling up of wet weather preparedness, further complicating matters.

Malaysia

- A considerable number of new infections in the past week are among migrants in detention. This has perpetuated a public narrative inaccurately connecting COVID-19 infection to illegal immigrants, and refugees, fuelling discrimination towards these communities.

East Asia and the Pacific

Japan

- An NGO platform called Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SNMJ) established an "Emergency Support Fund for Migrants and Refugees" for those ineligible for the Government's COVID-19 100,000 yen cash support program. On 27 May, SNMJ announced over 6 million yen was donated over the past two weeks and SNMJ decided to provide a 30,000-yen cash handout to 186 people including asylum applicants and those under provisional release.

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 China Sub-Office Hong Kong SAR teamed up with a local partner to distribute personal protective equipment to refugees including hand sanitizer, thermometers and cash vouchers to support their needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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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