



Asia and the Pacific


28 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

- The socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Afghanistan is dramatic, with food insecurity levels now similar to those seen during the 2018 drought according to OCHA. An estimated 14.7 million people were experiencing acute food insecurity from August to October 2020. Looking forward, it is estimated that 17 million people will be in crisis or emergency food insecurity from November 2020 to March 2021, 5.5 million of whom are at 'emergency' level food insecurity (IPC 4). According to WFP's market monitoring, the average wheat flour price increased by 9% between 14 March – 14 October, while the cost of pulses, sugar, cooking oil and rice increased by between 18-25%. The price increases were accompanied by a declining purchasing power among casual labourers and pastoralists (7% and 11%, respectively, compared to 14 March).
- A proposal to secure USD 300,000 from the 5th Reserve Allocation for the cash for protection programme – a new activity introduced as part of UNHCR's COVID-19 response – has been approved by the Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan. Through this funding from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund, UNHCR will reach around 1,400 vulnerable households through its cash for protection programme. UNHCR and partners are currently carrying out the verification of vulnerable households, following which the distribution of a one-time cash grant of USD 195 per household will take place.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- Refugees who were without an income during the pandemic have resorted to borrowing money from relatives and friends and have now accumulated considerable debt. Consequently, they are compelled to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as selling household items and taking children out of school. Through its hotlines, UNHCR continues to receive calls from refugees who have been laid off by employers due to the economic slowdown, and now are unable to find another source of income.

Pakistan

- UNHCR began the renewal process of asylum-seeker certificates and refugee cards for the registered population residing in Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh and Pakistan Administered Kashmir. Distribution is in progress, engaging only one member of concerned families to receive the documentation on behalf of all, thus ensuring compliance with COVID-19 protocols for social distancing. UNHCR is planning to start the refugee cards' renewal process for other areas in Pakistan.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- On 19 October, UNHCR, in the presence of Government officials, inaugurated the expansion of Sadar hospital with an additional ward of 20 beds for critical COVID-19 patients. With a relatively low number of newly identified cases, bed occupancy in the Severe Acute Respiratory Infection Treatment Centres (SARI ITCs) is presently at 10% with 527 active beds. The Transit Center quarantine facility is at 41% occupancy.
- Health, WASH, protection, and Site Management Support agencies, government authorities and refugee volunteers continue with information dissemination among the community, promoting hygiene, social distancing and the need to wear face masks in public places.

- UNHCR partners supporting livelihood initiatives have completed cash distributions to the host community as part of the broader COVID-19 response. Over 5,500 local Bangladeshi households have received cash grants. The initiative will reach at least 35,887 families by year-end with financial support in monthly instalments or one-off payments in both Ukhiya and Teknaf upazillas. The programme includes 16,887 families identified through the existing social protection programme of the Government, and 19,000 families identified based on assessments conducted in early-2020 using a set of socio-economic criteria.

Myanmar

- The Government of Myanmar has received support from several donors to increase its testing capacity. In October, 95,000 COVID-19 test kits were received from the Republic of Korea (in addition to 250,000 kits from Korea in September); more than 25,000 tests arrived from Singapore; and, a set of diagnostic equipment and detection reagents were donated by the Chinese Red Cross. UNHCR is also contributing to the effort, with the procurement of 50,000 COVID-19 test kits which are expected to arrive in country by mid-November (this is in addition to 10,000 kits previously procured by UNHCR).

Indonesia

- UNHCR has completed the first phase of the remote UNHCR ID card renewal verification, a process which has been adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The unit is now working on remote verification phase two, which will be completed by 31 December.

The Philippines

- UNHCR Philippines will roll out the pilot community-based protection monitoring (CPBM) mechanism in three pilot areas in Marawi City beginning in October 2020, in a phased approach. The initiative seeks to build the protection monitoring capacities of IDP volunteers as well as of the local government. This will help to: ensure ongoing protection monitoring during the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19; assess the needs of IDPs in several sites given the limitations faced by UNHCR staff and partners; and ensure the delivery of assistance to IDPs.

South Asia

Nepal

- UNHCR provided one-time COVID cash assistance to refugees in Nepal. UNHCR opened bank accounts for all refugees prior to the COVID-19 emergency.

Sri Lanka

- Remote refugee status determination and resettlement activities have been temporarily suspended due to an increase in cases and re-imposed curfew/lockdown in some areas.

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



As part of its COVID-19 prevention and response in Tajikistan, UNHCR, together with WHO and the Embassy of Japan, handed over lab equipment to the Ministry of Health.

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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