

# Asia and the Pacific

15 January 2021

 **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

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR is implementing the second round of Cash for Basic Needs (COVID-19) assistance in conjunction with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA). Since refugees are now legally allowed to open a bank account, this joint cash-based intervention (CBI) is being implemented through the “bank transfer” modality. Under this project, some 3,400 households will receive a one-off bank transfer to cover basic needs. Meanwhile, the number of COVID-19 deaths in Iran has significantly decreased since the implementation of stricter restrictions on movements and business hours, which are still in place.

#### Pakistan

- UNHCR carried out a public health facility needs assessment in Peshawar in relation to COVID-19 at district and provincial levels. Equipment gaps were identified and procurement is under way to respond to the identified needs. UNHCR and the provincial department of health and district health department also identified the need for ambulances to strengthen existing referral systems from Refugee Villages to secondary and tertiary hospitals – an ambulance will be delivered in response in the coming weeks.
- In Quetta, UNHCR is advocating for the inclusion of Afghan refugees in the national health system, including for COVID-19, and is continuing to support public health facilities.
- Over 80,600 vulnerable Afghan refugee families have been identified to receive UNHCR’s emergency cash assistance through the Urgent Money Orders (UMOs) issued by Pakistan Post. As of 31 December 2020, 73,916 of these families have already collected their cash. This intervention with Pakistan Post and Ministry SAFRON mirrors the Government’s own Ehsaas emergency cash program, where vulnerable Pakistani families receive Rs.12,000 (approximately USD 77) to cover a four-month period.

### South-East Asia

#### Bangladesh

- During the reporting period, all the facilities run by UNHCR’s GBV partners in 20 camps that offer multi-sectoral case management service were fully functional with the presence of case workers and psychosocial counsellors in the facilities. In addition, various small-scale activities gathering small numbers of children, parents/caregivers and volunteers across the camps took place over the reporting period, in compliance with COVID-19 health instructions.

#### Indonesia

- UNHCR is increasing efforts to renew UNHCR ID cards and distribute electronic copies of the renewed card. Contacting persons of concern is a primary challenge as refugees and asylum-seekers are unable to legally register phone numbers using their UNHCR identity document. As UNHCR works to renew documents, the office issued a circular letter to the government and counterparts stating that UNHCR is extending the expiry date of all UNHCR Identity Cards which expire between 1 December 2020 and 30 June 2021 for an additional six months. UNHCR will continue to share the electronic copy of the documents until conditions allow for the resumption of in-person services and requests.
- UNHCR’s persons of concern with COVID-19 will receive treatment free of charge, including access to Government isolation facilities. UNHCR will cover the cost of those who continue to require medical assistance after no longer testing positive.

## Malaysia

- The registration helpline in Malaysia has received over 10,000 queries since its commencement in August 2020. UNHCR continues to receive and process referrals of vulnerable individuals requiring registration, with 888 instances of emergency registration facilitated. Refugee status determination and resettlement interviews and voluntary repatriation counselling continue to be conducted online. Separately, the Communications and Multimedia Ministry in Malaysia is expanding the translation of government COVID-19 communication materials into different languages, including the Rohingya language.

## Thailand

- Due to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 cases in Thailand, UNHCR has reintroduced remote case working modalities for registration, RSD, resettlement and protection counselling in all but exceptional cases. Similarly, UNHCR's implementing partner, Bangkok Refugee Centre (BRC), has reintroduced preventive measures that were previously implemented in March 2020. These include appointment-only visits to the BRC facility, the suspension of CBI home visits, revised education provision and the maintenance of the medical hotline. Following the new outbreak, restrictions have been imposed in several provinces. In some cases, this included new arrivals undergoing 14-day quarantine if arriving from certain areas of Thailand, including Bangkok.

## The Philippines

- The situation in parts of Mindanao, including the island provinces of the Bangsamoro region, remains fragile due to periodic internal armed conflicts and generalized violence. However, due to quarantine protocol restrictions and the increasing number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Mindanao, UNHCR and partners' movements on the ground continue to be limited, causing delays in priority activities such as face-to-face coordination meetings and validation exercises, among others.

## South Asia

### India

- UNHCR data shows that approximately 18% of refugee school-going-age students have been reached with educational kits and tablets/mobile devices during COVID-19. There is urgent need to provide support to the remaining students in order to ensure that they continue to study and can go back to schools when they are re-opened. Thus far, 1,600 refugee youths have been supported with remote accelerated learning programmes such as remedial, language classes, and bridge classes, while 2,200 refugee children have been supported with educational kits (stationary materials, books etc.) to enable their learning at home. About 9,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 years need regular education support as there is an increased risk of possible drop-out after school resumes.
- Reported GBV cases are being followed-up by UNHCR and partners for multi-sector responses (health, psychosocial, legal, security, etc). As part of UNHCR's SGBV/CP response, 173 female refugee volunteers have also been provided with mobile phones to spread awareness on gender-based violence, child protection and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), to act as psychosocial first aid service providers and to facilitate reporting and referrals. Refugee volunteers have been jointly trained by UNHCR and partners on GBV prevention and response.

### Nepal

- Following a meeting of the UNHCR Representative with the Secretary of Health on 26 Nov 2020, the Ministry of Health and Population issued on the same day an instruction that refugees with refugee documents shall be treated like nationals and receive free COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- UNHCR has finalized a project to enhance the coordinated service delivery mechanism to respond to GBV cases for refugees and other poor and marginalized groups living in Kathmandu, while also improving access to justice for the most vulnerable during COVID-19. Through the project, a partner will provide capacity development training and protective equipment to strengthen the existing GBV response mechanisms.

## East Asia and the Pacific

### China

- A Project Assistance Agreement to support UNHCR's emergency shelter and education programmes in Afghanistan was signed by China International Development Cooperation Agency's (CIDCA) Vice Chairman and the Representative in early January 2021. The project aims to strengthen emergency preparedness and contribute to pandemic recovery through the procurement of over 1,800 tents, 3,000 core relief item kits and the distribution of backpacks to approximately 25,000 school children in priority areas of return and reintegration.

### Funding needs

**UNHCR's revised COVID-19 emergency appeal** was launched on 11 May, in line with the 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



*In Afghanistan, UNHCR donated various supplies in Nangarhar province including two ventilators to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

UNHCR is grateful for the robust support from donors on the COVID-19 response including the Governments of **Australia, Canada, China, 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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