

Asia and the Pacific

9 April 2021

 **9.2** million
Persons of concern

 **4.4** million
Refugees and Asylum seekers

 **3.3** million
Internally displaced persons

 **85,446**
Returnees

 **2.3** million
Stateless persons

Highlights by country

Regional

Eleven countries in Asia-Pacific are COVID-19 Vaccines Advance Market Commitment countries and will be receiving vaccines through the COVAX facility free of charge for 20% of their population. Afghanistan and Nepal have received consignments of COVID-19 vaccine doses (468,000 and 348,000 doses respectively) through the COVAX facility.

South-West Asia

Afghanistan

- Afghanistan has received 968,000 doses (500,000 doses from India and 468,000 doses received through COVAX) and vaccinated 484,000 persons. The World Bank has also approved USD 60 million from the International Development Association to help Afghanistan purchase COVID-19 vaccines, as well as additional financing of USD 113 million, which will help reach more than 17% of Afghans. Further support from the Asian Development Bank is expected to fund the purchase of vaccines for an additional 11% of the Afghan people.
- 7 out of 11 COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan detected a new variant, which is reportedly more contagious. Commercial domestic and international flights nonetheless continue to operate. Borders have also remained open and enabled the implementation of activities under the Voluntary Repatriation programme.
- Of the 300,000 disposable face masks donated to Afghanistan by the Republic of Korea, UNHCR handed 150,000 masks on 28 March to the Ministry of Public Health for professionals and workers in isolation wards, ICU units and laboratories in isolation centres. The remaining 150,000 face masks will be distributed to vulnerable refugees, displaced persons and host communities across the country.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- On 10 March, at a joint meeting attended by UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, MoH, MFA and BAFIA, the Government reconfirmed its commitment to include foreigners (including refugees and undocumented Afghans) in the national COVID vaccination drive. However, there are challenges with availability and supply of vaccines to Iran, and efforts will be made by concerned parties to secure vaccines.
- Refugee children continue to study from home in Iran. To address the lack of ICT equipment, UNHCR procured 21,500 tablets and is working with the Government on a distribution plan.

Pakistan

- The inclusion of refugees in the Government's vaccination program has been confirmed. The first meeting of the Technical Working Group for refugee inclusion was held on 5 March. The Government indicated that the PoR card could be used in the registration system instead of the national identity card number used by Pakistani nationals. A strategy to vaccinate the unregistered population will be discussed once the vaccination for the eligible PoR card holders is completed.
- The National Command and Operation Centre stepped up the vaccination drive and imposed stricter measures across the country to control the spike in infections during the third wave of the pandemic. According to the Government, some 800,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered.
- The Documentation Renewal and Identity Verification Exercise (DRIVE) in Pakistan, which was due to commence on 1 April, was postponed to 15 April due to the worsening COVID-19 situation in the country. A press release announcing the postponement was issued, and messages, including audio

recordings in Dari, Pashto and Urdu, were posted on social media and/or transmitted by WhatsApp to refugee networks.

- The Humanitarian Response Plan is in the final stages of agreement with the Government. The refugee chapter remains relatively unchanged but a separate chapter has been included to provide focused support for Afghan Citizen Card Holders and Undocumented Afghans.

Central Asia

Kazakhstan

- COVID-19 has been officially included into the list of guaranteed free medical assistance for foreigners in Kazakhstan, including refugees, asylum-seekers and stateless persons. Starting 5 April, refugees in Almaty registered by the Government will have access to COVID vaccination. UNHCR and partners continue to advocate for the inclusion of all persons of concern (POCs) in national COVID vaccination drives.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- On 3 April, the Government announced that the country would go into a 7-day lockdown from 5 April until 11 April. UNHCR is assessing the operational impact of the lockdown, including the potential reduction of the operational footprint in the camps and remote management of some facilities. The Government has also reported an acute shortage of hospital beds, with the intensive care units in public hospitals working at full capacity.
- The planned vaccination campaign for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh initially scheduled to start on 27 March was postponed at the Government's request until COVAX facility vaccines arrive in the country. Health sector partners continued preparations for the first round of COVID-19 vaccination for refugees. Training for staff supporting the vaccination exercise was organized, including Community Health Workers who were trained on COVID-19 vaccination communication and social mobilization strategies.
- UNHCR continues to support preventative sanitation works and hygiene promotion in refugee camps. In March, over a thousand handwashing tippy taps were installed at household level. Regular disinfection of WASH facilities, including latrines, water collection points and bathing cubicles is ongoing.

Malaysia

- Refugees and asylum-seekers are included in the national vaccination plan. UNHCR is working closely with other UN agencies on supporting vaccination roll-out for non-citizens. UNHCR has also reached out to private sector primary care networks which are supporting the government roll-out as a possible avenue for supporting those without documents.

Myanmar

- In response to the rapidly evolving political situation in Myanmar, UNHCR has initiated an early warning system in areas of responsibility in the field aimed at detecting changes on the ground and potential impact on operations and on persons of concern, including with respect to changes in the security situation, rules and regulations, access to services and impact on markets. Among the primary concerns mentioned by communities is that the political situation may impact service delivery and the provision of aid from humanitarian partners, including as it relates to health services in general and the COVID-19 response more specifically. UNHCR continues to monitor the situation on the ground closely in its areas of responsibility in the field, and in coordination with partners.
- The Myanmar operation is undertaking scenario and contingency planning in light of the current political situation. COVID-19 related considerations and precautions will continue to be mainstreamed throughout. Overall, UNHCR COVID-19 related activities have largely been mainstreamed into regular programming.
- COVID-19 continues to pose additional challenges given the already fragile and disrupted government health services, and the rise in large-scale gatherings. Nonetheless, UNHCR's activities at camps, villages and displacement sites remain ongoing following UNDSS advice, including COVID-19 related activities. In Rakhine State, activities continue and new travel authorizations have been issued for both

UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations. In Kachin/northern Shan, field activities have resumed after a short suspension in early February, while field activities in the southeast remain suspended.

Philippines

- While the Humanitarian Country Team COVID-19 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) will no longer be revised upon its expiration at the end of March, the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group recommended that ongoing response activities in Mindanao and other HRP target areas should be mainstreamed into individual agency programs. In the case of UN agencies, the activities will be incorporated into the UN Socioeconomic and Peacebuilding Framework.

Thailand

- The Thai Cabinet has approved the resolution on the Organizational Quarantine (OQ) at each Border Patrol Police based in the 7 Provinces including at the Border Patrol Police Office in Mae Sot District, Tak Province. The OQ will be a quarantine for migrant workers and Thai citizens who have entered Thailand in an irregular manner.
- 10,000 masks are currently under procurement by UNHCR which could potentially be provided to support the Government's efforts in managing an influx of individuals across the border from Myanmar into Thailand.

South Asia

India

- At present, there is no active COVID case among POCs and the operation is proactively engaging with WHO, other UN agencies and relevant government stakeholders to ensure that POCs can be included in the vaccination drive on the basis of UNHCR-issued documents and are exempted from submitting required government-issued documents which they are unable to obtain. UNHCR partners are also engaged with local authorities and other stakeholders at state level to sensitise them on the need for inclusion of POCs

Nepal

- Nepal became the first country in the Asia Pacific to vaccinate refugees against COVID-19. As of 31 March, 668 refugees over the age of 65 received the vaccination (455 Tibetans, 206 Bhutanese, and seven mandate refugees in Kathmandu). In addition, the Ministry of Health and Population instructed that documented refugees should be treated like Nepali nationals in receiving free COVID-19 testing and treatment.
- Nepal received its first consignment of 348,000 AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine doses on 7 March shipped through the COVAX facility. Also, COVID-19 vaccines donated by the Chinese government arrived in Nepal on 29 March and were handed over to the Ministry of Health and Population. China had earlier pledged to provide 800,000 doses of vaccine to the Government of Nepal.

Sri Lanka

- Over 30 POCs over the age of 60 have been vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccination roll-out is being carried out by Sri Lankan health authorities and vaccines are not available for purchase privately.



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An 83-year old Bhutanese refugee receives a COVID-19 vaccination at the Beldangi refugee settlement in eastern Nepal.

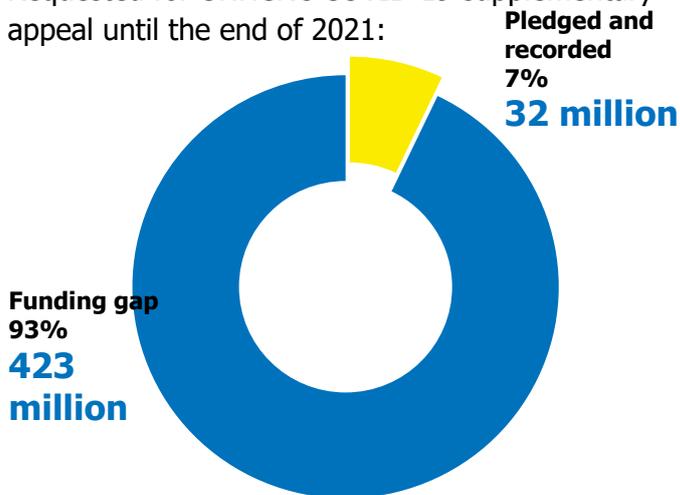
Funding needs

About half of UNHCR's COVID-19-related needs have been mainstreamed into its 2021 Global Appeal. However, with the pandemic evolving, and needs still emerging, UNHCR has in addition focused on a supplementary and limited set of activities related to exceptional socio-economic and protection impacts related to COVID-19. These activities focus on individuals who are newly-vulnerable due to loss of income or livelihood or were already vulnerable but whose situation has further deteriorated and may need additional support. Specific attention has been paid to activities that focus on women and girls due to heightened gender inequality linked to COVID-19.

USD 469 million has been mainstreamed into the 2021 Global Appeal. USD 455 million are supplementary needs included in [UNHCR's 2021 COVID-19 supplementary appeal](#). This brings the total COVID-19-related requirements in 2021 to USD 924 million, including [USD 132 million for Asia and the Pacific](#) (ExCom-approved budget (mainstreamed) of USD 87 million and supplementary budget of USD 45 million).

USD 455M

Requested for UNHCR's COVID-19 supplementary appeal until the end of 2021:



Funding as of 06 April 2021

UNHCR is grateful for the support from donors on the COVID-19 response including the Governments of the **USA, Japan, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden**, the **Republic of Korea, Germany, Denmark, Ireland**, the **Netherlands, China** and the **EU**. We also appreciate the support from private donors, UN pooled funds, and development partners that provided support for COVID-19 response in the region.

Moreover, we are grateful to donors who provide unearmarked contributions to UNHCR, which enable operations in Asia to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include **Norway, Sweden**, the **Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium** and **private donors in Spain**.

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