

Southern Africa

2 October 2020

Highlights

Since the beginning of UNHCR's COVID-19 response in Southern Africa



455,433 people receiving soap for handwashing to prevent COVID-19



122,137 people reached with specific SGBV messaging linked to COVID-19



18,305 children and youth supported with distance and home-based learning



Distribution of masks to elderly South Sudanese refugees at Biringi settlement, Democratic Republic of the Congo © UNHCR / Jean-Jacques Soha

Population Figures

9,473,718 people of concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa, including



772,130 refugees and 312,147 asylum-seekers



6,391,489 internally displaced persons (IDPs)



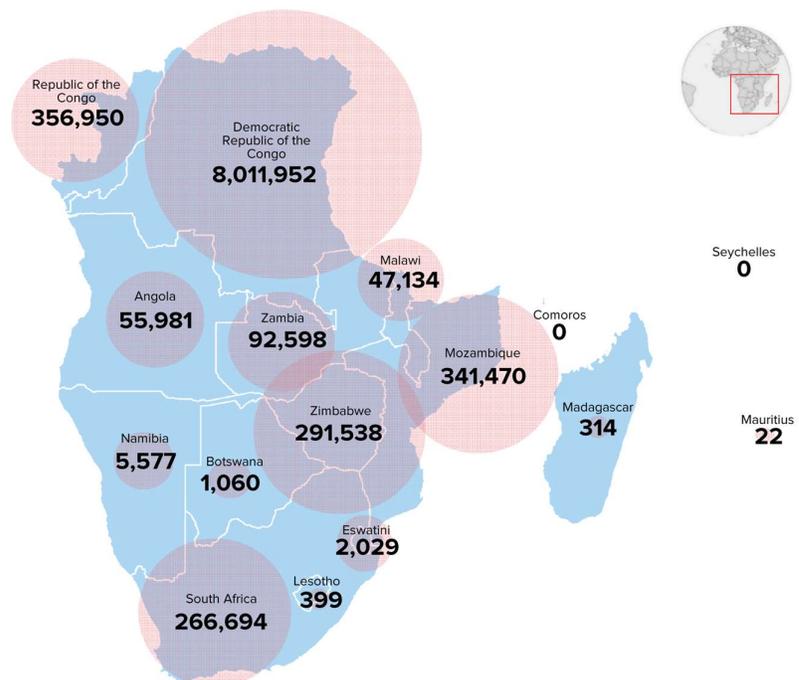
1,938,223 IDP returnees and 23,248 refugee returnees



36,481 other people of concern

(as of 01 October 2020)

People of Concern to UNHCR in Southern Africa



Operational Context

As of 28 September 2020, there have been 767,314 reported confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the 16 countries covered by UNHCR's Regional Bureau for Southern Africa. While case numbers continue to increase, the rate has slowed as compared to recent weeks, with a seven per cent decrease in total active cases. Governments in some countries across the region continue to ease restrictions that were put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19, including lifting lockdowns and movement restrictions, and reopening schools, shops, and other businesses. In most cases, basic prevention measures, such as mask wearing, screening and hand sanitizing in public spaces remain in place.

Throughout the pandemic, UNHCR and partners have committed to a 'stay and deliver' approach, continuing to provide critical protection services and assistance. Programmes have been adapted to observe social distancing and other COVID-19 mitigation measures, health protocols are in place at registration and distribution points, hotlines and community protection structures are utilized to report protection issues and assistance needs. UNHCR has focused heavily on risk communication and outreach efforts to spread information about COVID-19 prevention and services. Health systems strengthening has also been a priority, by equipping health centres and training health workers, and establishing isolation and quarantine centres to reduce the risk of transmission, particularly in camps. Additional handwashing facilities have been installed and additional soap has been distributed to promote good hygiene practices and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. UNHCR has also been providing cash assistance and core relief items (CRIs) to those worst impacted by lockdowns and other restrictions, while children and youth have been supported with virtual and distance learning to continue with their studies.

At the same time, UNHCR continues working closely with governments, the World Health Organization and other UN agencies and NGOs to promote and secure the inclusion of people of concern into preparedness and response measures for COVID-19. Given the serious impacts that COVID-19 regulations have had on livelihoods and economic opportunities, including for people of concern – refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs) and stateless peoples – in social safety nets and other social assistance programmes is particularly critical.

UNHCR Response

Health and WASH



52 additional handwashing facilities established since March 2020 in **Zimbabwe**



1,054 people received soap for handwashing and COVID-19 prevention in **Botswana** since March 2020

UNHCR and partners continued efforts to strengthen health systems and services across the region to prevent and respond to COVID-19, with health training on COVID-19 being a focus in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** over the past weeks. In Haut Uele Province, 20 laboratory technicians were trained by UNHCR and the Government, while in Ituri Province, UNHCR and partners organized a workshop about infection prevention and control measures targeting 15 border monitors. UNHCR's partner also trained 97 community outreach workers and 20 community leaders at refugee camps in Nord and Sud Ubangi Provinces on COVID-19 prevention and awareness-raising techniques. Also in the health response, UNHCR supported ongoing screening initiatives to identify possible cases of COVID-19, conducting over 188,000 screenings for Burundian refugees in South Kivu Province, while over 17,000 people were screened in the four camps hosting refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) in Nord and Sud Ubangi Provinces. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, UNHCR has supported training for 529 health workers on COVID-19 prevention and response.

Support to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) systems remains a priority in Southern Africa, as a key element in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. In the **Republic of the Congo (RoC)**, 48 offices and public services frequented by refugees and host populations were disinfected in Bétou, while UNHCR's partner continued to conduct COVID-19 community-based surveillance and hygiene promotion activities through door-to-door visits.

During the past week, 105 households were visited in Bouémba, including 70 asylum-seeker households and 35 host community households; 225 households visited in Djambala including five refugee households and 220 host community households; and 105 households in Gamboma, all from the local host community. Meanwhile in **Zimbabwe**, five pit latrines were completed to ensure greater access to individual toilets for people at the isolation centre, and a clean-up exercise of communal areas in Tongogara camp was also organised to ensure good environmental health hygiene. Communal water points and handwashing facilities were disinfected to reduce the spread of infection. UNHCR has installed 52 additional handwashing facilities in Tongogara refugee camp in Zimbabwe since the beginning of the COVID-19 response, to support increased handwashing and reduce the possible spread of the virus. WASH activities also continued in the **DRC**, where UNHCR began a waste management activity in Ituri Province for a site hosting over 13,000 IDPs, to significantly reduce health risks including the transmission of COVID-19, among IDPs and host communities. The activity is expected to continue until mid-October, after which UNHCR will introduce a more sustainable waste management system in the site.

In **South Africa**, UNHCR supported a distribution of soap to 16,190 people from the refugee and host communities in KwaZulu Natal Province, in a mass distribution of items donated by Unilever. People in care homes, hospices, crisis centres, children's homes and homeless shelters received the packets of bars of soap to maintain hygiene levels necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The soap was also distributed door-to-door in refugee-hosting communities. Additionally, in **Botswana**, a fresh round of distributions of soap, sanitizers and face masks took place for refugees living in Dukwi camp. Since the COVID-19 response began, UNHCR has provided additional soap to 1,054 people and hand sanitizers to 457 people in Botswana.

Protection, Communication and Community Engagement



153,816 people reached with COVID-19 risk communication since March 2020 in **Republic of the Congo**



42,769 people reached in **Zambia** since March 2020 with specific SGBV messaging linked to COVID-19

Risk communication and awareness-raising on COVID-19 continues across the region, reaching refugees, IDPs and host community through community-based protection groups and community mobilizers, information sessions, flyers and leaflets, reaching about 2.5 million people across the region. An additional estimated 700,000 people have been reached through radio spots and shows. The region's largest campaign continued in the **DRC** reaching more than 1.5 million people since March 2020, not including those reached via radio messaging. Among the key messages over the past two weeks, UNHCR continued to share specific messaging on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention and response linked to COVID-19, reaching 3,350 refugees, displaced people and host community members in South Kivu Province; 355 host community members in Haut-Uele and Ituri Provinces; and over 600 IDPs and host community members in Tanganyika. Since the beginning of the response, UNHCR and partners have reached 33,701 people in the DRC with specific messages on SGBV related to COVID-19. Similarly, in **Zambia**, UNHCR focused efforts on community awareness-raising about SGBV referral pathways amid the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting sessions in four outreach centres reaching 163 people. This makes a total of 42,769 people reached in Zambia with COVID-19 messaging focused specifically on SGBV.

In **Angola**, awareness campaigns on COVID-19 prevention were carried out with a focus on handwashing as a key prevention measure. 1,434 refugees were reached in the last two weeks, out of which 857 were children. 4,274 pamphlets and 61 posters were also distributed by UNHCR's partner to refugee and host communities in and surrounding Lóvuá refugee settlement. UNHCR's health partner also trained 17 community mobilizers, 13 of which were deployed in selected villages in Dundo to strengthen outreach efforts in host communities. Meanwhile in **RoC**, UNHCR's partner organized two educational talk sessions on preventive measures against COVID-19, prevention of domestic violence, and maintenance of physical hygiene among adolescents, reaching 68 people. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 response 153,816 people from both the refugee and host community have been reached by UNHCR with COVID-19 messaging in RoC.

Assistance



625 people received cash assistance in **Eswatini** since March 2020 to offset the economic impacts of COVID-19



16,508 people reached with additional core relief items for COVID-19 in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Months of COVID-19 restrictions have had severe economic impacts on vulnerable populations, including refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs. Lost income as a result of limitations on movement and economic activity has meant that the number of people requesting assistance from UNHCR has increased significantly, notably among those who had previously been self-sufficient, as they now struggle to put food on the table, pay rent, or cover the cost of utilities. In **Eswatini**, UNHCR's partner carried out cash distributions for people of concern in urban areas, combined with soap, sanitizers and masks. The partner is also continuing awareness-raising programmes on COVID-19 prevention and response measures. 625 people are part of the cash-based intervention programme supported by UNHCR in Eswatini to offset the economic impacts of COVID-19. Similarly, in **Botswana**, a third round of cash distributions for urban-based refugees took place, reaching 26 families who are not part of UNHCR's regular assistance programme.

Meanwhile in Nord Ubangi Province, in the **DRC**, UNHCR and partners distributed soap, kitchen sets, mosquito nets and blankets to 1,774 refugee and host community households (8,304 people) living in and out of camps. The CRIs will enable refugees from CAR and their hosts to improve their living conditions, especially at a time when there are dwindling resources and price hikes due to COVID-19 restrictions. Across the country, UNHCR has supported 16,508 families with additional CRIs during the COVID-19 response.

Mask-wearing continues to be a key prevention measure in the fight against COVID-19, and the wearing of masks is required by government regulations in many countries of the region. UNHCR is supporting people of concern and host communities to comply with this important measure by providing reusable cloth face masks. In the **DRC**, UNHCR distributed over 8,300 reusable masks to IDPs staying in the Kigonze and the ISP IDP sites in Bunia, Ituri Province. The masks were fabricated by South Sudanese refugees in Haut-Uele Province and urban refugees in Goma, North Kivu Province. They were produced in the framework of UNHCR projects which aim to facilitate access for vulnerable people to quality masks at an affordable price while also constituting a source of income for refugees during this period where other sources of income – especially in the informal sector in which many refugees work - have drastically reduced. The distribution targets displaced persons aged four and above in the three displacement sites in Bunia, which is the location with the most COVID-19 cases in the Province. UNHCR has so far distributed 76,982 to vulnerable people in the DRC to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Education



1,286 children and youth supported with home-based learning in **Zimbabwe** since March 2020



500 students supported with distance learning since March 2020 in **Malawi**

Schools remain closed in many countries in the region, and UNHCR and partners continue to take measures to help students keep up with their studies. In some countries, lessons have resumed for students in certain grade levels classes, or governments have announced plans for imminent re-opening, in which cases UNHCR has been supporting schools to implement COVID-19 prevention measures. In **Malawi**, through the Girls Get Equal Movement, two study groups comprising of Form Three and Form Two students have been meeting to enhance their studies in Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Physical Science. This is expected to help students catch up with lessons in light of COVID-19 school closures. In Malawi, UNHCR has been supporting 500 students with distance learning. In the month of September in **Zimbabwe**, UNHCR supported 217 students in Grade 7 Primary and O level Secondary School with study packs to ensure they are prepared for exams in December 2020. UNHCR supports 1,286 children and youth with home-based learning in Zimbabwe. Moreover, students in Zimbabwe restarted formal classes on 28 September in Tongogara refugee camp under strict COVID-19 regulations, as directed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. UNHCR ensured that the students have access to piped

water, handwashing stations at all entrances and sanitiser. The students' desks have been arranged to ensure social distancing.

In **Zambia**, the Ministry of General Education announced the re-opening of schools as of 21 September. In preparation, UNHCR organized back-to-school awareness-raising sessions for student heading back to classes, to ensure that children are aware of COVID-19 protocols and that they are provided with cloth face masks to wear. 4,030 students returned to school in Mayukwayukwa refugee settlement, and 5,896 students returned in Meheba refugee settlement.

Challenges

As the COVID-19 response in the region enters its sixth month, there is a notable fatigue with COVID-19 prevention measures, leading to complacency or non-compliance in wearing masks, respecting restriction of movements, self-isolation, social distancing and other prevention measures. UNHCR and partners are renewing efforts in risk communication and community engagement and seeking innovative approaches to strengthen impact. This is especially important as restrictions are being gradually lifted, and people of concern along with the host community are returning to work and school. At the same time, concerning reports of rising xenophobia and stigmatization of refugees continue to be noted in the region, impacting on the physical safety of people of concern as well as on social cohesion and peaceful coexistence with local communities. This is not limited to health stigmatization, but also linked to the increasing economic pressures in refugee-hosting areas amidst the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions.

Finally, while UNHCR and partners have been working tirelessly to reach people of concern and host communities with scaled-up assistance and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, funding shortfalls across the region have had a notable impact on operations. For example, funding gaps have resulted in cuts to radio programming in UNHCR's risk communication campaign in the DRC, hindered UNHCR's ability to provide the necessary resources for home-based learning in Zambia, and halted UNHCR's high-demand cash assistance programme in South Africa. Nearing the end of the year, additional funding is still required to sustain critical COVID-19 programming, maintain important protection and basic service delivery, and increase support to livelihoods and self-reliance programming for people of concern economically impacted by COVID-19.



Health promoters in Tongogara refugee camp, Zimbabwe, using bicycles to distribute face masks in their sections of the camp ©World Vision/ M. Maworera

Financial Requirements

On 7 May 2020, the UN launched a revised inter-agency [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) seeking USD 6.69 billion, which includes USD 745 million for UNHCR's operations in affected countries through December 2020 and as reflected in UNHCR's [revised Coronavirus emergency appeal](#). As of 2 October, USD 466 million has been pledged and recorded towards UNHCR's appeal.

In Southern Africa, US\$ 31.2 million is needed under the revised Coronavirus emergency appeal. As of 2 October 2020, the region has received earmarked funding totalling USD 8 million, accounting for approximately 26 per cent of financial needs. The Regional Bureau for Southern Africa is grateful to donors who have earmarked contributions to operations in the Southern Africa region for COVID-19 response, including the United States of America (USA), European Union, Unilever, Education Cannot Wait, UN Malawi SDG Acceleration Fund and private donors.

GLOBAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND PLEDGES TO THE UNHCR COVID-19 APPEAL | USD

USA 186.3M | Germany 62.7M | EU 47M | UK 26.5M | Japan 25.1M | African Development Bank 18.3M | Denmark 14.6M | United Nations Foundation 10M | Private donors 11.6M | CERF 6.9M | Canada 6.4M | Education Cannot Wait 4.7M | Unilever 6.3M | Qatar Charity 3.5M | Spain 3.4M | France 3.4M | Ireland 3.3M | Saudi Arabia 3M | Sweden 3M | Sony Corporation 2.9M | Austria 2.5M | Finland 2.4M | USA for UNHCR 2M | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe 1.7M | Latter-day Saints Charities 1.6M | Norway 1.4M | Australia for UNHCR 1.4M

UNHCR is also grateful to the donors that have provided unearmarked support. Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees, the internally displaced, stateless persons and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk.

UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS | USD

Sweden 76.4M | Private donors Spain 52.9M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | United Kingdom 31.7M | Private donors Republic of Korea 27.2M | Germany 25.9M | Private donors Japan 17.9M | Switzerland 16.4M | France 14M | Private donors Italy 12.4M | Italy 10.6M

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Global Financial Requirements: UNHCR Coronavirus Emergency Appeal

