


## Asia and the Pacific


22 April 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

Guidelines for remote registration, refugee status determination and resettlement are being finalized by operations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. These operating procedures guide the manner in which interviews should be conducted and the communication tools that will be utilized, setting procedural safeguards, and prioritizing categories of individuals for inclusion in remote processes based primarily on the extent to which remote processes would lead to a protection benefit.

Operations in Asia-Pacific are seeking ways to enable electronic cash distribution for the most vulnerable persons of concern who have suffered from a loss of livelihoods. Issues around modalities of electronic distribution revolve primarily around the fact that UNHCR's persons of concern in many countries do not have access to national banking services.

Communication with UNHCR's persons of concern highlights that most are well informed on COVID-19 prevention measures, and the steps to take if ill. The main issues of concern raised however are primarily focused on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19.

The supply chain situation remains challenging with no major improvements from last week. In the past week, however, thanks to the swift response of private partners (in China and the UK), UNHCR secured donations of 550,000 bars of soap for Indonesia, 300,000 bars of soap for India, 213,000 for Myanmar, and 60,000 bars of soap and 4.3 tons of disinfectant for Pakistan. UNHCR has also procured essential medical equipment (syringe pumps, oxygen concentrators and suction machines) for Bangladesh.

### Highlights by country

#### Afghanistan

- Working closely with IOM and the protection cluster along the borders with Iran and Pakistan, UNHCR Afghanistan has deployed a mobile monitoring tool to gain better understanding of movements (who is coming back and why, where they are going, their intentions around self-isolation) and to share information about COVID-19. UNHCR is also supporting the Government at border points to conduct registration and health briefings, manage large crowds, and ensure proper social distancing.

#### Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs are conducting a mapping exercise in all 20 refugee settlements in the country, in order to better understand the needs of refugees. While only three per cent of the refugee population resides in these settlements, the high population density, use of shared sanitation facilities, along with the presence of vulnerable groups, including the elderly, may result in higher vulnerabilities, especially in the context of COVID-19.

#### Pakistan

- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has requested the activation of clusters including Health, Food Security, WASH, Nutrition, Logistics, Emergency Communication, Women and Children Protection. A draft Coordination Framework including sector leads is being discussed between the UN and the Government.
- UNHCR provided further inputs to promote the inclusion of Afghan refugees in relevant national strategies and plans. This includes the Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) of the Ministry of Health and NDMA, and the Socio-Economic Rapid Assessment and Response Plan to

complement the SPRP, which is being prepared by the Planning Commission in collaboration with the NDMA and the UN.

### Bangladesh

- 382 Rohingya refugees (180 women, 150 men, 52 children) - who were rescued on 15 April from a fishing trawler off the coast of Teknaf - were moved to quarantine facilities by UNHCR. Separately, a boat carrying 202 Rohingya individuals disembarked in Malaysia on 5 April. The group underwent medical screening, including for COVID-19, and all are now in quarantine. As agreed with the Malaysian Government, UNHCR will provide food and NFI assistance to these arrivals in collaboration with the Malaysian Relief Agency and MSF.
- In Bangladesh, the UN Country Team has developed a multisectoral Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP) for COVID-10 to support the National Preparedness and Response Plan (NPRP). CPRP focuses mainly on health-related needs and does not cover the broader socio-economic impacts. The Humanitarian Coordination Task Team – within the national cluster system- has undertaken an assessment and will consolidate requirements.

### Myanmar

- In northern Rakhine, the prioritization of activities for implementation in the COVID-19 context is ongoing, following the approval of 30 new Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). UNHCR is also prioritizing the technical completion of the 45 previously approved QIPs and planning for the possibility of conducting COVID-19 related awareness in the same locations.

### Malaysia

- In Malaysia, UNHCR has set up support platforms through WhatsApp in order to provide localized coordination of assistance in different states. This is expected to help organizations distribute aid more systematically and increase coverage to underserved communities. All requests are logged in a central database organized by location. Partners are encouraged to contact UNHCR to be included in these support platforms.

### Thailand

- In Thailand, on 14 April Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has pushed ahead with a proposal to set up the ASEAN Response Fund (ARF) as part of a six-point declaration to be endorsed by the 10 ASEAN leaders in a bid to fight Covid-19.

### The Philippines

- Assessment is ongoing to determine the feasibility of activities in Mindanao. UNHCR is looking at starting implementation of Quick Impact Projects by May to support Local Government Unit (LGU) preparedness measures to prevent spread of COVID-19, i.e. rehabilitating/ reinforcing WASH systems, while making sure to promote peaceful coexistence among host and IDP populations.

### India

- A refugee-women-run enterprise has started production of cloth masks based on an order placed by UNHCR. This program both seeks to address the livelihood impacts on POC and the shortage of masks.

### Nepal

- The Forum for Women Law and Development, a UNHCR partner, established a free legal helpline service providing pro-bono legal counselling and support services during the COVID lockdown. Seven Nepali lawyers are providing legal support on various issues including denial of COVID-19 relief materials. This reportedly includes individuals being denied access to COVID-19 assistance due to the lack of identity documents.
- UNHCR and its SGBV partner are in the process of increasing the number of female community workers to act as a safe and trusted channel to refer cases, should the SGBV survivor consent to this, and provide confidential access to UNHCR's 24/7 protection hotline to survivors or concerned family members.

## Funding needs

The Global Humanitarian Response Plan on COVID-19 is currently being revised to include countries that were not initially part of the UN-coordinated appeal.

UNHCR remains grateful for the swift support from donors on the COVID-19 response including the Governments of Japan, Australia and the US, the EU (ECHO and DEVCO) and CERF. We are also grateful to private donors who have rallied quickly to support with in-kind donations (hygiene items, masks, medical gowns) for COVID-19 response.

Unearmarked/broadly earmarked funding from donors such as the US, the EU, Denmark, Japan, Germany, the Republic of Korea, and private donors around the world enables UNHCR to respond in a timely and flexible manner. 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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*Refugee Housing Units have been set up at a hospital in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, to increase local capacity of health facilities.*

## Contacts

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