


Asia and the Pacific


17 June 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

In several countries in the region, UNHCR's persons of concern continue to express a need for cash assistance to assist them with food, rent, and basic supplies, stressing their inability to meet these basic needs. Urgent assistance was specifically requested for rent support, including requests for UNHCR to intervene in negotiating with landlords.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNHCR plans to roll out an additional cash-based intervention in response to the COVID-19 pandemic through its main government counterpart in the coming weeks. Through this intervention, UNHCR will provide unrestricted and unconditional Multi-Purpose Cash through gift cards to some 2,000 eligible persons of concern registered in the government database. Families will receive assistance of USD 306 per month for two months.

Highlights by country

South-West Asia

Afghanistan

- A survey on urban refugees and asylum-seekers highlighted concerns regarding limited savings and the inability to meet basic needs as a result of COVID-19. Survey results also pointed to a high prevalence of anxiety and psychological distress amongst UNHCR's persons of concern.
- UNHCR also highlighted the concerns of seasonal workers who have now lost income intended to see them through the winter. In the Central Highlands, weather conditions typically mean that most people work for only six months of the year, using their savings to cover the winter months. With the first two months lost, families are increasingly anxious about their ability to save enough money to survive during the winter months.

Islamic Republic of Iran

- UNHCR has developed a reception strategy for gradual return to the office and resumption of in-person critical components of case management activities, including possible alterations to its premises to safeguard persons of concerns and staff. Considerations on in-person case management include an assessment of the nature of each case as well as the availability of hygiene measures. These activities now include Resettlement, Child Protection and SGBV.

South Asia

India

- UNHCR continues to scale up messaging on prevention and response through various communication channels. However, serious gaps remain for persons of concern, especially vulnerable populations. Gaps include cash-based interventions, food/ration distribution, PPE for frontline partners and refugee workers including safety measures for women and girls who are caregivers for those quarantined at home, support for home quarantine patients and families, and psycho-social counselling.
- Working through a partner, UNHCR continues to facilitate COVID-19 testing and admission through national systems for cases in need of hospitalisation. However, in parts of India, it is becoming increasingly challenging to find beds and testing given the increased demand.

South-East Asia

Bangladesh

- The Government has introduced a new colour-coded system designating areas as Red, Yellow and Green Zones, based on the rate of COVID-19 infections, with associated restrictions on movements and commercial activity. Most of Cox's Bazar District and Dhaka – including the areas where most UNHCR colleagues live and work – have been designated Red Zones. In light of this, UNHCR will continue with modified working arrangements through 30 June. Areas adjacent to the camps (Ukhiya and Teknaf) in Cox's Bazar have also been designated as red zones and agencies have faced challenges in reaching the camps.
- Child protection partners in Bangladesh are reporting psychological distress, physical abuse, an increase in aggressive behaviour among children towards family and others, an increase in domestic violence, and increased risks of child marriage and child labour. The closure of all Multi-Purpose Centers, Learning Centers and Child Friendly Spaces for a long period of time also appears to have resulted in an increase in the number of children involved in illegal activities. Parents and adolescents are requesting the re-opening of these services to help address these issues.

Myanmar

- UNHCR delivered 260 beds to the Kachin State Government to be used in quarantine facilities across the state.
- Over 99,000 migrant workers have returned home to Myanmar, primarily from Thailand and China, since late March, spurred by concerns regarding COVID-19 in countries in which they were working.

Malaysia

- UNHCR is working with partners, the local community, and authorities to address xenophobic sentiments against Rohingya refugees and has contacted the central Government and relevant parties to raise concerns about risks to safety and protection of the Rohingya community.



UNHCR and its partner delivered core relief items for 55 displaced families in Barangay Matalin, Malabang, and Lanao del Sur in the Philippines. The solar lamps, plastic tarpaulins, and mosquito nets were given to the Ministry of Social Services and Development - Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) in support of its work in assisting vulnerable persons and improving its response to IDPs during the coronavirus pandemic.

Funding needs

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

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.

Contacts

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