

## Regional COVID-19 Crisis Management Group

### Humanitarian Settings and Vulnerable Populations Working Group

## Health of Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees, Migrants, Returnees and COVID-19

*Situation Report #14|12 August 2020*

### Situation Overview

As of 11 August 2020, a total of 1 666 999 cases have been reported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) since the start of the outbreak, which now represents 8.0% of the global burden of 19 936 210 cases reported to date. Globally, Iran remains at the 10th position of countries with the heaviest case load. Cumulatively, 6.0% of the global burden of COVID-19 deaths (732 499 deaths) have been reported in the EMR (44 189 deaths); in descending order, nine countries surpassed the Regional case fatality rate of 2.7%: Yemen, Sudan, Iran, Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Tunisia and Somalia, with Yemen recording at 28%, followed by Sudan (6.5%) and Iran (5.7%).

### Burden of COVID-19 among Refugees and Migrants

- As of 11 August 2020, there were 2438 accumulative positive cases of COVID-19 among Palestinian Refugees registered with UNWRA: Jordan (9), Lebanon (108), Syria (9), West Bank (2262), Gaza (50). There were 956 new cases from two weeks ago, that were in Lebanon (54), West Bank (575) and Gaza (1).

### Regional Response Actions

#### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen (RMRP) 2020 Appeal was launched on 05 August 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RMRP%20Appeal%202020%20V5.1%20%28002%29.pdf>. The appeal is a migrant-focused humanitarian and development multi-year strategy. It brings together multiple partners in terms of coordination, protection, capacity building, analysis and resource mobilization. The plan aims to meet the humanitarian and protection needs of an estimated 235 000 vulnerable migrants, including 75 000 projected new arrivals in Yemen. The RMRP contains an integrated COVID-19 response to ensure appropriate migrant assistance activities. This is inclusive of support for quarantine sites, personal protective equipment (PPE), and for governments' preparedness.

The IOM Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Office and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Regional Office for MENA launch a week-long regional awareness raising campaign "Saving Dignity," to mark the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, <https://www.unodc.org/middleeastandnorthafrica/en/web-stories/joint-statement-covid19-pandemic-exacerbates-vulnerabilities-of-victims-of-trafficking-in-persons.html>. The campaign was presented as part of the North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force. Members of the task force released a joint statement that called for a coordinated response to address the vulnerabilities of victims and people at risk of human trafficking considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### Médecins Sans Frontières

MSF is to join Sea-Watch on board the Sea-Watch 4, a new ship bound for lifesaving operations in the Central Mediterranean Sea, <https://www.msf.org/msf-returns-mediterranean-search-and-rescue-operations-sea-watch>.

#### United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF has developed a new page, <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/rcce>, dedicated to the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) pillar for COVID-19 response has been added to UNICEF's website, <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/>, for humanitarian emergencies.

#### United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA provided technical guidance, in the context of COVID-19, on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Midwifery Care, Supply Chain Management, and a position paper on the impact of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the Arab region. UNFPA, jointly with WHO and UNICEF, is supporting the continuity of essential Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) services especially during the pandemic. Advocacy geared toward national Ministries of Health highlights the criticality of maintaining maternal, child and reproductive health (MCH/RH) services to avoid excess morbidity and mortality. UNFPA, under the regional alliance for the Global Action Plan (GAP) for Healthy Lives and Wellbeing for All, and in partnership with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS, the UN Refugee Agency and World Organization for Family Doctors, is developing an online training programme for primary health care providers on COVID-19 management and on sustaining essential services.

#### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

The 17th virtual global consultation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) addressed the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 by discussing cooperation with development partners to mitigate the negative effects. Panelists noted the devastating socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, particularly in host countries with large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in densely populated areas, and in countries with high levels of poverty, with existing gaps in social protection and food insecurity. The NGO consultations of the following week focused on crisis communication and managing fundraising efforts during COVID-19 and the need to adjust to the ever-changing COVID-19 situation.

#### World Health Organization (WHO)

Following the as a cataclysmic explosion near the main port in Beirut, which sowed devastation across entire neighbourhoods, killing more than 171 people and injuring thousands more, a statement was issued by WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) on standing with the people of Lebanon following deadly Beirut blast, <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/statement-by-whos-regional-director-on-solidarity-with-the-people-of-lebanon-following-deadly-beirut-blast.html>.

### Country Response Actions

#### Afghanistan

IOM is conducting mobility and needs assessments in over 11 670 settlements hosting returnees and IDPs. The mission is also engaging communities and mobilizing community leaders to raise COVID-19 risk awareness, demonstrate effective infection prevention and control measures, and dispel misinformation and stigma surrounding COVID-19 in each assessed community. In addition, IOM's Mobile Health Teams served 11 703 patients and screened 9114 undocumented Afghans for tuberculosis in IOM Transit Centers. Over 200 health staff are presently deployed to support the Ministry of Public Health's Response efforts.

#### Djibouti

IOM is providing lifesaving assistance to vulnerable migrants in Obock region, by providing food, and hygiene and non-food item (NFI) kits 78 migrants at the government led Masagara site, as well as medical assistance at the Migrant Response Centre.

## Egypt

IOM contributed to a study that explored population knowledge, attitudes and practices related to COVID-19. The study was conducted alongside the Ministry of Public Health, WHO and other UN agencies, with IOM's involvement to ensure that relevant data was collected to adapt the COVID-19 response to migrants' needs. IOM also conducted basic life support and first aid training for 60 migrants from different nationalities in Alexandria. The training cohort included community health volunteers and medical students to raise awareness among vulnerable migrants in different communities. IOM contributed to the development of an online campaign on masks, home isolation and stigma. The campaign was part of the United Nations Country Team Country Preparedness and Response Plan risk communication and community outreach activities. In addition, IOM organized two training sessions for 50 healthcare workers in the primary healthcare sector in Giza Governorate over four days, where participants were trained to provide advanced cardiac life support.

## Jordan

UNFPA distributed 3000 dignity kits in Za'atari Camp along with credit top-ups for mobile phones to call gender-based violence (GBV) hotlines. UNFPA's GBV programme has resumed activities in all 18 locations across the country with the provision of in-person GBV case management, psychosocial support and referral. Group activities resumed at 30% of capacity in both urban areas and refugee camps in line with Government indication on risk mitigation measures.

## Kuwait

IOM continues to liaise with foreign embassies to support the issuance of travel documents for stranded migrants who do not have diplomatic representation in Kuwait, in addition to providing food and shelter assistance to 11 victims of trafficking who are stranded in Oman and unable to return to their countries of origin due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

## Iran

With the assistance of ECHO and the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge, over 95% of all personal protective equipment and medical supply orders have been delivered, with the rest expected to be delivered soon.

## Iraq

IOM organized 63 awareness raising and sensitization sessions on COVID-19, reaching more than 2200 individuals in camp and non-camp settings in Baghdad, Diyala, Dohuk, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Najaf, Ninawa, and Qādisiyyah. IOM also distributed initial batches of infection prevention and control (IPC) and cleaning supplies alongside PPE to select clinics in Erbil. Material distribution was accompanied by an orientation on screening and triage Standard Operating Procedures. Screening and triage processes continue at health clinics prior to patient consultations in Ninawa, Erbil and Anbar.

UNFPA mobilized a total of 17 mobile teams, 42 Women Community Centres and 142 staff to assist GBV survivors. A total of 693 GBV cases were reported and 157 cases were referred to specialised services. UNFPA partners distributed 7475 dignity kits and the women centres sewed more than 2000 masks. The online case management system put in place to ensure that survivors of GBV have access to the necessary support provided more than 1816 counselling sessions. In addition, 48 vocational training sessions were provided mostly in IDP and refugee camps. UNFPA supported women centres offered awareness-raising sessions on sexual exploitation, domestic violence and prevention methods as part of the COVID-19 response reaching 1928 individuals in camps and non-camps settings. Implementing partners also conducted 28 focus group discussions on the pandemic and responded to questions from beneficiaries. COVID-19 impact assessments on MCH/RH service delivery have commenced in the country.

UNHCR is in regular contact with authorities to ensure that all refugees, IDPs, returnees, and stateless persons are included in national COVID-19 prevention and response plans, particularly with regards to access to treatment and health facilities. So far, all confirmed COVID-19 cases of UNHCR's persons of concern have received assistance from UNHCR and the respective health authorities. Contact tracing and testing has been conducted, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management COVID-19 preparedness and response plans have been activated and implemented in all affected camps, including strict movement restrictions. In addition, UNHCR is supporting the Directorates of Health in some governorates to conduct trainings of nurses working in camp-based primary health care centres.

### Lebanon

A massive explosion at the city's port on Tuesday left at least 171 people dead and 5000 injured while hundreds more are still missing. The blast caused widespread destruction, displacing some 300 000 people according to UN estimates. UNHCR said some of the severely affected areas included neighbourhoods that hosted refugees and that it had received unconfirmed reports of several refugee deaths. Many of Beirut's intensive care units were already near capacity with COVID-19 patients before the blast put three hospitals out of use and damaged two others. UNHCR is expediting its efforts to expand hospital bed and intensive care units' capacity. The agency is also making its in-country stocks of shelter kits, plastic sheets, and other relief items available for immediate distribution and opening its reception centres across the country for critical cases. The explosion came at a time when Lebanon was already in the midst of a severe economic crisis that had pushed many Lebanese and refugees deeper into poverty. The port where the blast occurred was the main entry point to the country for many essential supplies as well as food aid for the region. The World Food Programme (WFP) said the damage was likely to exacerbate the country's already grim economic and food security outlook.

UNHCR has completed the first phase of expansion works in three public hospitals which will be equipped to accommodate critical COVID-19 cases. An additional ward rehabilitated by UNHCR is fully operational in Beirut with a 72-bed capacity. UNHCR is also supporting the government's efforts to expand capacity at isolation facilities. Moreover, a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing campaign in informal settlements and collective shelters was completed at the end of June, with nearly 3 600 samples collected over 147 sites country-wide; all test results were negative.

As the public health impact of the Beirut blast becomes clearer, WHO is calling for US\$ 15 million to cover immediate emergency trauma and humanitarian health needs and ensure the continuity of the response to COVID-19 across the country, <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/who-requires-us-15-million-to-support-immediate-beirut-blast-response-and-ensure-vital-health-and-disease-prevention-activities-are-maintained.html>. In addition, WHO has dispatched a plane carrying 20 tonnes of WHO health supplies has landed in Beirut, Lebanon, to support the treatment of patients injured by the massive blast. The supplies will cover 1000 trauma interventions and 1000 surgical interventions for people suffering from injuries and burns resulting from the blast, <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/who-requires-us-15-million-to-support-immediate-beirut-blast-response-and-ensure-vital-health-and-disease-prevention-activities-are-maintained.html>.

Three hospitals in Beirut were put out-of-service by the blast, and two sustained significant damage. Rafik Hariri University Hospital sustained minor damage during and is still receiving patients. UNRWA Sibliin isolation center has received Palestinian refugees as well as persons with other nationalities; and both confirmed COVID-19 patients and persons who are required to quarantine but have not tested positive. In addition, some refugees are first isolated in Rafik Hariri Hospital and only transfer to Sibliin isolation center when they no longer need the hospital's additional medical supervision.

## Libya

IOM conducted five focus group discussion sessions covering COVID-19 in migrant's communities for 54 individuals in Tripoli. Tripoli teams also distributed six COVID-19 posters and 20 flyers in Arabic during their outreach and awareness activities. A five-day Training of Trainers was provided to IOM staff by a National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) trainer. A total of 13 IOM medical staff were trained on IPC and COVID-19 case management. IOM's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene team also performed a thorough fumigation, disinfection, and cleaning intervention in urban areas, at disembarkation points and at detention centres. During the activity, NFI's and hygiene kits were distributed to 60 migrants at the detention centres. IOM continues to respond to the needs of migrants who contracted COVID-19 and their families and has established a holistic response that includes mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), Migration Health Division, Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and Protection Unit services. The MHPSS team provided assistance through psychological first aid, follow-up counselling and psychoeducation to nine migrants from different nationalities, including the families and friends of migrants identified positive for COVID-19.

Through its partner International Medical Corps, throughout the month of July 2020, UNFPA continued supporting the provision of essential reproductive health services in AlQadesseya and Fashloum primary healthcare centres in Tripoli and AlJadid as well as in Sabha through mobile medical units. The teams assisted a total of 800 women and 2 men and conducted 12 MHPSS consultations, as well as several awareness sessions in the three primary healthcare centres on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and COVID-19 and pregnancy, reaching 2737 individuals, and triaged a total of 883 cases, according to NCDC guidelines. UNFPA's "Psychosocial Support Hotline 1417" addressed over 245 calls related to psychosocial support and legal consultations related to emotional, domestic and physical abuse issues during the week, referring over 29 individuals to receive further specialized services. Women and Girls Safe spaces were supported in Tripoli, and Benghazi, while partners also supported livelihood training sessions in Sabha and case management one-to-one consultations, and remote awareness sessions on gender-related topics. Through its partner Huna Libya, UNFPA conducted an awareness-raising campaign on forced and early marriage titled "I have the right to choose – نختار حقي من" reaching over 1 200 000 people through social media and web articles.

UNHCR and International Rescue Committee (IRC) recently supported the reopening of a primary healthcare centre in Tripoli, with a catchment area of at least 30 000 people to be provided with medical and protection services.

## Morocco

IOM supported more than 20 government facilities of the Entraide Nationale (National Social Services) with clothes, food supplies, beds, hygiene and cleaning equipment to ensure the protection and access to services for local at-risk populations and migrants. IOM also ensured hygiene promotion during the distribution to vulnerable groups through the inclusion of hygiene kits among the packages offered.

## Oman

UNFPA's SRH telemedicine hotline service, in cooperation with WHO, Ministry of Health and the Omani Society of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (OSOG), was extended to address the critical needs of pregnant, lactating and women at reproductive age. The bilingual service is used by both nationals and migrant workers.

## Pakistan

UNHCR is working with other UN Agencies in a joint program to engage young people in the COVID response. Several refugee youth are participating with Pakistani youth in training sessions that are aimed at

fostering a better understanding of IPC and their responsibility within the wider community. The sessions also cover coping with the psychological and emotional challenges that have emerged, with a focus on building solidarity and supporting other youth. It is expected that youth will be fully engaged as educators and agents of change in their communities, thereby assisting with psychosocial support for the people who might have lost their confidence due to change on their livelihood/ economic support structures because of COVID.

### Palestine

UNFPA scaled up mobile clinics to provide essential SRH services to around 26 000 people living in particularly vulnerable locations and, through its partners conducted home visits for essential SRH services and SRHR community awareness activities. IPC training was provided to 42 SRH service providers in Gaza. An emergency SRH action plan will be developed reflecting the complementarity and roles of all partners in providing services in the context of Covid-19. In addition, UNFPA supported 3900 women and girls to receive GBV services (psychosocial, legal, SRHR) through 8 established safe spaces in the West Bank including Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. Support to GBV survivors was extended to start vocational training inside the shelter. In Nablus shelter, GBV survivors tried to cope with stress by learning embroidery, producing embroidered masks for sale. “Stars of Hope”, a local NGO, conducted an assessment on disability inclusion in essential GBV services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and will support GBV service providers to increase their awareness toward women and girls with disabilities and empower women and girls with disabilities and their families toward the GBV available services.

### Somalia

The Site Management Support Working Group has been activated in Somali region to respond to the recent outbreak of COVID-19 in IDP sites according to IOM.

More than 150 000 Somalis have been forced to flee their homes since late June, according to UNHCR, including some 23 000 in the last week alone due to flash flooding in the country’s southern regions. Extreme flooding this year has displaced over 650 000 people across the country with communities in Hirshabelle and South West States the worst hit. Many of the newly displaced families are now living in overcrowded, makeshift shelters with little protection from the harsh weather and food is in short supply and malnutrition among children is on the rise. Sanitary conditions are poor and access to medical care scarce. While there has been no reported COVID-19 outbreak, testing is limited, and the risk of widespread transmission is high.

UNFPA continues to provide leadership and support for the continuity of and access to quality life-saving essential SRH information and services for women, adolescents and youth during the pandemic including support to the De Martino Hospital in Mogadishu, the Government-Designated National Referral Center for COVID-19 case management and isolation for the entire country. University students received training to become knowledge-sharing champions on reproductive health issues such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV and family planning in the context of COVID-19. UNFPA continues to strengthen the GBV one Stop Centres across the country which integrate care for survivors of GBV with reproductive health services. A newly released GBV/female genital mutilation (FGM) Rapid Assessment on the impact of COVID-19 highlights the increased risk of exposure for women and girls to higher levels of both GBV and FGM as measures to contain the spread of the pandemic, including lockdowns, school disruptions, limit their mobility. In addition, UNFPA supported the development of GBV COVID-19 messages including guidelines and dissemination using service sites and during the distribution of dignity and hygiene kits. As the country sees a rise in FGM during the COVID-19 lockdown, medical doctors, religious leaders and civil society leaders were mobilized for radio talk shows to reach out to more people for the #EndFGM campaign.

## Sudan

IOM conducted a joint needs assessment mission in Red Sea State in coordination with the Federal Ministry of Health and WHO, to evaluate Port Sudan Airport and Sawakin Sea Port for COVID-19 mitigation measures. Additionally, a training was conducted, and PPE materials were distributed to staff at the POEs

UNFPA, through the Sudanese Family Planning Association Khartoum, supported 145 GBV survivors residing in two Safe Houses for Eritreans and Ethiopians in Khartoum. Protection materials such as masks, soap, and hand sanitizer for two months were provided in addition to offering referral services for medical treatment, transportation, and psycho-social support. COVID-19 impact assessments on MCH/RH service delivery have commenced in Sudan.

## Syria

The United Nations Humanitarian Needs and Assessment Programme partners conducted the sixteenth round of its COVID-19 Rapid Assessment to assess COVID-19 mitigation efforts and access to basic services over the last two weeks across all areas of control at sub-district level. Most subdistricts across all areas of control report insufficient COVID-19 related medical services. In terms of COVID-19 mitigation measures, compulsory mask wearing remains low across most sub-districts. IOM has increased water provision from 25 litres per day per person to 35-39 litres per day per person. Food/NFI distribution points were also moved to open areas, such as stadiums or mobile points, with distribution sessions rearranged to avoid crowding. IOM is also in the process of finalizing procurement of US\$ 700 000 worth of PPEs in support of IOM implementing partner staff, monitoring staff, and project locations across the North West of Syria.

UNFPA continues to support reproductive health service through its implementing partners, including in the community wellbeing centers, emphasizing protection of service providers, as each service provider is required to wear facial masks and gloves in both static clinics and mobile teams. Support was provided to the Ministry of Health to produce information, education and communication materials to raise awareness about COVID-19 with a lens on reproductive health. Beneficiaries in need of information on family planning or any other reproductive health topics can call implementing partners through widely disseminated phone numbers. The community well-being centers continued to provide GBV prevention and response services, including case management, psychosocial support, awareness raising, vocational training, and recreational activities, to beneficiaries, taking into consideration the precautionary measures against COVID-19. To extend the reach and ensure adherence to social distancing measures, online service provision has been conducted to raise awareness on COVID-19, stress management, and reproductive health and GBV related topics such as family planning, and early marriage. In addition, UNFPA broadcasts audio-visual products produced jointly with the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Health to raise awareness amongst women and young people regarding COVID-19

## Tunisia

IOM donated new COVID-19 PPEs to the Governorate of Medenine for primary schools across the governorate, as well as the provision of shelter and different types of assistance, including food vouchers, hygiene kits, medical and psychosocial support to 107 migrants in two IOM shelters. In addition, IOM donated PPE and hygiene equipment to Kasserine Governorate, providing food and shelter and NFIs to eight migrants of different sub-Saharan nationalities at the vocational training centre in Kasserine. IOM also assisted three Pakistanis and 19 Egyptians confined at different quarantine centres in the city of Sfax.

## Yemen

IOM launched activities to expand COVID-19 testing, beginning with frontline health workers in Aden governorate with plans to expand to Marib governorate. The first set of 500 test kits arrived in Aden and

will be utilizing GeneXpert testing systems. To address some of the issues with access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, activities planned for Marib will focus on enabling the identification and testing of active faces within communities and outside of health facilities. These activities will be implemented in conjunction with RCCE activities implemented by IOM's rapid response teams. IOM also conducted 3028 household surveys across 28 IDP hosting sites in Marib Governorate. The surveys aim to identify persons at high risk of COVID-19. IOM is also supporting 90 women to create 31 500 masks for IDPs. IOM continues to be approached by migrants requesting assistance and support to return to their country of origin. However, many countries of origin are not accepting migrant returns from Yemen. IOM, together with the humanitarian leadership in the country, continues to advocate for the resumption of flights under IOM's Voluntary Humanitarian Return programme as a lifesaving solution for these individuals.

Awareness raising through social and mainstream media amplifies the reach of existing GBV tele-counselling services including coronavirus awareness and protection services related to women in prisons. Distribution of free-face mask and hand sanitizers during community awareness sessions helps prevent community transmission of COVID-19. UNFPA reaches an average of 250 000 beneficiaries per month and is using this outreach to raise awareness about COVID-19.

### Way Forward

- Coordination among UN partners through the newly established Taskforce on COVID-19 and Mobility/Migration under the United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition.
- Ensuring that all refugees and migrants are included with the Universal Health Coverage is framework among all partners during the outbreak response for COVID-19.
- Ensure continuity of care for non-COVID-19 essential health services in camps and camp-like settings.
- Recommend to all countries to support the duty of care to all refugees and migrants.
- Support countries with improving the testing strategy and enhancement of testing capacity.
- Improving the reporting of COVID-19 cases among IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees, through the Health Clusters and in collaboration with other clusters.
- Provide guidance to country offices on desegregated COVID-19 data where possible to identify reported cases among IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Provide collective and timely information to our partners on cases of COVID-19 among IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Support Country Offices to develop guidance notes/briefs for their respective governments on COVID-19 as a whole-of government and whole-of-society approach toward IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees.
- Ensure all UN strategic and policy level documents incorporate IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees, using a whole of government and society approach.
- Promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants in all country level policies and strategies in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Contact

Dr Ali Ardalani ([ardalana@who.int](mailto:ardalana@who.int)) and Dr Tonia Rifaey ([rifaeyt@who.int](mailto:rifaeyt@who.int))

### Disclaimer

The aim of this situation report is to provide an overview of what partners working in the COVID-19 response for IDPs, refugees, migrants and returnees are doing in order to aid in better planning, coordination and response. The information in this document is gathered from online sources as well as partners' reports and is for internally use only.