

## 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 #11 | July 2020*

### Situation Overview

As of 1 July 2020, there are an estimated 1 070 703 reported cases (10.5% of the global burden) in all countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)<sup>1</sup>, with an estimated 24 754 deaths (5.1% of the global burden).

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

- As of 29 June 2020, there were 250 accumulative positive cases of COVID-19 among Palestinian Refugees registered with UNWRA: Jordan (8), Lebanon (15), West Bank (179), Gaza (48). There were 87 new cases from two weeks ago, that were in Jordan (2), Lebanon (5), and West Bank (80). In addition, to this there were 6 positive COVID-19 cases in the Baddawi camp in Lebanon and 3 positive cases in Gaza among refugees married to nonrefugees.

### Regional Response Actions

#### Regional Taskforce on COVID-19 and Migration/Mobility<sup>2</sup>

The third taskforce meeting took place on 29 June 2020. The discussions centered around updating the members on the short-term planned activities and confirmation of the interested agencies to participate in the follow-up discussion on the civil society organization engagement.

#### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

IOM missions around the world are working with governments and partners to ensure that migrants, whether in regular or irregular situations, as well as returnees and forcibly displaced persons, are included in all aspects of COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts. IOM has released an analysis to assess the impact of COVID-19 on migration along the Eastern Corridor (Africa), [https://migration.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/IOM\\_Eastern%20Corridor%20Migrant%20Situation\\_10062020.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8896](https://migration.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/IOM_Eastern%20Corridor%20Migrant%20Situation_10062020.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=8896). The report provides a snapshot of mobility restrictions, and current migration trends along the Eastern Corridor migration route, in addition to providing an analysis of the impact that movement restrictions have had in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. Moreover, it provides information on the main protection concerns for migrants, assistance provided and COVID-19 risk mitigation measures.

#### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

This year, UNHCR marked World Refugee Day, 20 June 2020, in a very different world – one in which we continue to face ongoing conflict and skyrocketing displacement, while struggling with an unprecedented health crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how interconnected and interdependent the world is, and that every human being has a role to play. As the world continues to struggle with this unprecedented health crisis, the global community is also coming together in an exceptional show of human solidarity and kindness. In the time of COVID-19, UNHCR and the global community celebrate refugees, the internally displaced, their hosts and the aid workers supporting them on the frontlines fighting this pandemic under

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<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Mediterranean Region of the World Health Organizations include 22 countries including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian territory, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen..

<sup>2</sup> Under the Issue Based Coalition on Migration in the Middle East and North Africa region, the Task Force on COVID-19 and Migration/Mobility is co-convened by WHO, IMO, ESCWA and ILO. The Taskforce aims to enhance coordination, response interventions and sharing of good practices and challenges among the UN to support country-level operations.

the theme ‘Everyone can make a difference, Every Action Counts.’ Four months into the COVID-19 pandemic, people across the world are adjusting to a ‘new normal’ of frequent handwashing with soap, physical distancing and wearing face masks when in public. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have stepped up to help themselves and those around them. In addition, to meet the increasing need for personal protection equipment, several operations are training and supporting displaced communities in the production of masks.

UNHCR and IOM announced on 18 June the resumption of resettlement departures for refugees. The temporary hold on resettlement travel, which was necessitated by disruptions and restrictions to international air travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, delayed the departures of some 10 000 refugees to resettlement countries.

UNHCR will hold an informal briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees, 2 July 2020, to register please follow the link at the end of the document.

#### United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA)

UNWRA held, 23 June 2020, an Extraordinary Virtual Ministerial Pledging Conference, *A Strong UNRWA In A Challenging World - Mobilizing Collective Action*, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/remarks-extraordinary-virtual-ministerial-pledging-conference-strong>, where the Secretary General of the United Nations gave his remarks. His Excellency António Guterres stated that *the Agency is not only a lifeline for millions of Palestine refugees, but also critical for regional stability*.

#### World Health Organization (WHO)

First responders and frontline workers, particularly workers in health and long-term care are playing a crucial role in fighting the outbreak and saving lives. However, they are under exceptional stress, facing extreme workloads, difficult decisions, the stress of the risks of becoming infected and spreading infection to families and communities, and witnessing deaths of patients. Stigmatization of these workers is also common in too many communities. As such, WHO has developed information materials to help front line worker cope with stress, <http://www.emro.who.int/mnh/news/index.html>

In addition, WHO and IOM Regional Director’s met virtually to discuss a number of priorities for the region including operationalizing the memorandum of understanding that was signed by both organizations on 31 January 2020. In the lead up to World Refugee Day on 20 June, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of WHO was be joined by Mr Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in a press briefing where Dr Iman Shankiti, WHO representative in Lebanon also spoke about the plight of refugees and migrants in the country.

### Country Response Actions

#### Afghanistan

In response to more frequent openings of borders to allow stranded migrants to return, IOM is monitoring and reporting on ongoing cross-border population movements, cross-analysed with regional COVID-19 case data, to identify destination areas at greater risk of cross-border transmission of COVID-19. As of 13 June, 298 077 Afghans have returned from Iran and 172 889 from Pakistan, of which 86% (404,108) of returnees were male. In the 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview, it is estimated that close to a million people on the move will need humanitarian assistance by the end of the year.

While IOM teams conduct nationwide mobility and needs assessments, they are simultaneously engaging communities and community leaders in order 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. As of 16 June, IOM teams have reached 8216 villages. In addition, IOM is leveraging and re-tooling existing disaster assistance programmes to integrate COVID-19 prevention measures. Efforts include conducting public health awareness during needs-assessments and relief distribution processes and incorporating biological hazards into response strategies.

### Djibouti

IOM continues to provide support for migrants in the quarantine site in Ali Sabieh run by National Office for Assistance to Refugees and Disaster Victims, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, United Nations International Children's Fund and World Food Programme (WFP). Upon the request from the Embassy of Ethiopia, IOM is currently registering stranded migrants in the country. As migrants continue to arrive from the Arabian Peninsula and to be stranded in Djibouti, IOM continues to provide humanitarian assistance such as provision of food, non-food items and medical assistance. IOM continues to raise awareness of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in its six flow monitoring points in Ali Sabieh, Arta, Dikhil, Obock, and Tadjourah regions.

### Lebanon

As part of the expanded national testing campaign, UNHCR is supporting the Ministry of Public Health to conduct testing for COVID-19 in selected informal settlements and collective shelters hosting refugees. More than 1800 samples have been collected and so far, all test results have been negative.

### Libya

IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) conducted a Migrant Emergency Food Security Assessment in collaboration with the WFP. This assessment was designed to provide information on the food security status of migrants in order to identify the most vulnerable groups, the challenges they face, and how to best assist these populations. The assessment found that 32% of surveyed migrants had inadequate food consumption levels, with 56% reporting that they compromised their food intake, in most cases to save money.

### Palestine

West Bank: There has been an upsurge in cases in particular in the Hebron governorate. UNRWA health centres HCs in Hebron area, including Dhaisha and Bethlehem will continue the routine vaccination programme, emergency cases, distribute two months' worth of noncommunicable diseases medicines, activate the free helpline hotline for medical consultations and continue to implement triage at all facilities. More COVID-19 cases are being reported from refugee camps (Fawwar, Arroub, Azzih, Dhaisha and E/Sultan) with only two hospitalizations. UNRWA staff continue to closely monitor.

### Somalia

IOM trained 30 health workers were to conduct screenings at ports of entry in Afgooye and 12 immigration officers were trained in Hargeisa who will be deployed at Wajale and Bulligubadle land border posts.

UNHCR has raised awareness about prevention and response to COVID-19 among 240 000 persons, distributed hygiene kits to 31 000 persons, and installed 48 handwashing stands in front of health centres/hospitals/reception centres (used by some 1000 persons per day).

### Sudan

UNHCR's COVID-19 campaign turns refugee girls into radio stars: "Maaama, Maaama, wash your hands!" The girls in Al Waral refugee camp in Sudan's White Nile State, their voices are loud and clear: "Coroona, Coroona is not good!" The event is part of the community engagement by UNHCR, to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Over the past weeks, more than 120 refugee girls and boys, many dressed in colourful traditional clothes from South Sudan, participated in song contests in all nine camps in White Nile State.

To allow for physical distancing, the gatherings were small, but inspiring. The children's creativity made them sing, rhyme, and even rap. Organized by UNHCR together with the Commission for Refugees and Plan International, the song contests raised awareness in the crowded camps about how refugees can protect themselves and those around them. Nearly 60% of the inhabitants of White Nile's camps are children (93 000 girls and boys). The big exciting day for the participants came on June 20, World Refugee Day, as the best songs from the contest went on air on Radio White Nile. Refugee boys and girls became radio stars, and many more people could hear their raps, rhymes and songs. For over a week, three times a day, the clear voices of the children will be heard on the radio in camps (AM 1584) and in the nearby villages (FM 98). UNHCR's campaign targets refugees and nearby local resident communities. In addition, the radio station is planning longer programmes on COVID-19, *every boy and girl can make a difference, every radio spot counts*.

### Syria

IOM is increasing the frequency of sanitization of reception centres along with the provision of water, soaps and hygiene materials. Additionally, a 15-bed isolation facility for COVID-19 cases in an IOM managed camp will be completed within the next two weeks.

The health programme in Syria field started implementing the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs project *Health & Wash* in response to COVID 19 transmission. This project aims to provide 1800 of UNRWA staff with full personal protective equipment (PPEs) and to distribute hygiene kits to households for the next six months. In addition, UNRWA's Health Programme is in continuous coordination with the Ministry of Health and WHO, as well as other UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations on all issues relevant to the actions taken to protect people, including Palestine refugees in camps, from COVID-19. All health centres continue to implement the triage system to isolate patients with respiratory symptoms from others, and only urgent cases are referred to hospitals. In addition, hotlines remain functional and offer telemedicine services to patients before they visit the health centres, where staff continue to offer health awareness to patients, as well as the provision of psychosocial support by 15 psychosocial counselors.

### Tunisia

IOM, in coordination with the Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity, provided 180 food baskets to vulnerable migrants residing in the IOM migrant shelter in Zarsis through its sub-office there. In Gabes, IOM distributed 465 vouchers to a total of 93 migrants that were deemed to be in very vulnerable situations. IOM's sub-office in Sfax also ensured the distribution of 300 food vouchers to the Moroccan migrant community there, and provided food vouchers to 70 migrants in the city of Bizerte.

### Yemen

UNHCR continues procuring PPEs or partnering up with displaced communities to produce PPE. In Sana'a, UNHCR has begun work with 14 refugee and IDP tailors to produce 30 000 face masks, out of which 9000 will be distributed to displaced communities and frontline workers. The tailors will be able to sell the remaining masks at a lower price than that of the market, so that they are more affordable to those with lower incomes. At a time when the socio-economic situation is so fragile, the production of masks represents an important livelihood opportunity.

### 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.

To register for UNHCR's informal briefing on the Global Compact on Refugees, 2 July 2020: [https://unhcr-events.webex.com/mw3300/mywebex/default.do?nomenu=true&siteurl=unhcr-events&service=6&rnd=0.7210938552385464&main\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Funhcr-events.webex.com%2Fec3300%2Feventcenter%2Fevent%2FeventAction.do%3FtheAction%3Ddetail%26%26EMK%3D4832534b000000042d120aadf97016f28a54e6ecc8be969ec2fa4d71f14f6e63682459bdf2dbbf14%26siteurl%3Dunhcr-events%26confViewID%3D165121169933999355%26encryptTicket%3DSDJTSwAAAAARagXZfkj\\_Otq7rJIU3E2\\_ea-FUoDSx--rlwxQ5\\_Jk3YA2%26](https://unhcr-events.webex.com/mw3300/mywebex/default.do?nomenu=true&siteurl=unhcr-events&service=6&rnd=0.7210938552385464&main_url=https%3A%2F%2Funhcr-events.webex.com%2Fec3300%2Feventcenter%2Fevent%2FeventAction.do%3FtheAction%3Ddetail%26%26EMK%3D4832534b000000042d120aadf97016f28a54e6ecc8be969ec2fa4d71f14f6e63682459bdf2dbbf14%26siteurl%3Dunhcr-events%26confViewID%3D165121169933999355%26encryptTicket%3DSDJTSwAAAAARagXZfkj_Otq7rJIU3E2_ea-FUoDSx--rlwxQ5_Jk3YA2%26)

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### 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.