

## 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 #5\6 May 2020*

### Situation Overview

As of 6 May 2020, there are an estimated 213 376 reported cases (6.1% of the global burden) in all countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)<sup>1</sup>, with an estimated 8115 deaths (3.3% of the global burden).

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

- As of 5 May 2020, there were 60 positive cases of COVID-19 among Palestinian Refugees registered with UNWRA: Jordan (4), Lebanon (7), West Bank (34), Gaza (15) This is an increase of one new case since last week from Lebanon.
- The Ministry of Health of Bahrain as of 4 May 2020, has reported 1347 migrants have tested positive for COVID-19, this is 68% of total cases that have tested positive in the country.
- The Ministry of Health Oman reported that 63% of positive cases are among migrants.
- The Ministry of Health of Saudi Arabia, on 5 May 2020, reported that 76% of all new confirmed cases were among migrants.

### Regional Response Actions

#### United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

The UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) supports and coordinates with partners sexual and reproductive health (SRH), gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, and wellbeing for vulnerable populations in the context of COVID-19 including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants. The UNFPA ARSO developed a position paper entitled *Expected impact of public health emergencies on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights in the Arab States Region: The case of COVID-19* on the expected impact of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the Arab States region and calling on governments to address obstacles and barriers to service provision enabling women and girls to continue accessing much needed services irrespective of their status.

#### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

UNHCR has further increased its support to governments in key sectors such as health, water and hygiene to strengthen national infection prevention and response capacity. To address growing levels of anxiety in communities, UNHCR is enhancing existing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) mechanisms and developing new ones for refugees, IDPs and other persons of concern. Since more than 61% of refugees live in urban environments where local authorities, mayors, city administrators and their local partners are at the forefront of providing protection and assistance, UNHCR contributed to the Live Resource Guide for Municipal Migrant and Refugee Sensitive COVID-19 Responses by the Mayors Migration

Council [https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/e/2PACX-1vRqMtCR8xBONCjntcDmiKv0m4-omNzJxkEB2X2gMZ\\_uqLeiiQv-m2Pb9aZq4AIDvw/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/u/1/d/e/2PACX-1vRqMtCR8xBONCjntcDmiKv0m4-omNzJxkEB2X2gMZ_uqLeiiQv-m2Pb9aZq4AIDvw/pub). The guide contains examples of city actions to serve refugees and migrants during the COVID-19 crisis including a concrete working checklist of city policy actions.

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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..

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

The UNWRA Health Department is leading the agency's COVID-19 response and issues a daily COVID-19 email newsletter, <https://us10.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=354e66081503459e50f2236ec&id=c804f1b343>, with the latest epidemiological figures and highlights from the fields' health programmes activities. A Ramadan campaign, launched in cooperation with External Relations and Communications Department, aims to raise the awareness of Palestine refugees and staff about healthy lifestyle practices during the holy month of Ramadan and how to cope with the COVID-19 crisis through a series of infographics posted on all UNWRA social media platforms. In addition, a monitoring tool has been developed through the health information system (e-Health) to track the numbers and diagnoses of patients who show respiratory symptoms and who are treated via the triage system that the health centres started to implement at the beginning of the crisis.

UNWRA Health programme finalized the establishment of quarantine centres in UNWRA facilities in Lebanon and Palestine to establish quarantine areas in cooperation with the ministries of health, WHO and other stakeholders such as Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF).

## World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO published a further guidance on *WHO interim guidance note Health system response to COVID-19 in the context of internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants and returnees in the Eastern Mediterranean Region*, <http://applications.emro.who.int/docs/EMCSR279E.pdf?ua=1&ua=1>.

## Country Response Actions

### Afghanistan

Working closely with the International Organization for Migration (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 and to share information about COVID-19. UNHCR is also supporting the Governments at border points to conduct registration and health briefings.

### Egypt

In an effort to strengthen community-based delivery of basic psycho-social support to persons affected by the COVID-19, the UNHCR Community-based Protection team facilitated the first phase of the MHPSS training for community leaders and volunteers, drawing on the expertise of an UNHCR MHPSS officer.

Under the Food Security sector, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced that, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, unconditional food assistance will be extended to 120 000 refugees in addition to 100 000 casual workers, registered with the Ministry of Manpower from host communities who are facing unprecedented challenges in meeting their basic needs. WFP will also scale up assistance to 8000 of the most vulnerable pregnant and lactating Syrian female refugees and their infants under the age of two.

### Jordan

UNFPA has provided sexual and reproductive health services in Azraq and Zaatari refugee camps and continues to operate utilizing a critical-package due to COVID-19 restrictions and precaution measures. Emergency services for high-risk pregnancies and emergency obstetric care services have been prioritized. The reproductive health sub-working group is preparing for remote services to ensure women and girls' choices and rights to sexual and reproductive health are respected regardless of their COVID-19 status, including access to contraception, antenatal and postnatal care in camps and host communities.

UNFPA, together with UNHCR as co-chair of the GBV information management system taskforce, released a preliminary analysis of GBV trends in Jordan during COVID 19. The number of GBV survivors

seeking help decreased by 68% in the first two-weeks of the crisis, while women are facing an increased risk of domestic violence. Trends will be monitored to inform service delivery modalities and national measures to mitigate against the risks will be used. UNFPA Jordan released a Briefing Note on the *Impact of the Crisis on Women and Girls in Jordan*, with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and GBV, along with a set of recommendations for decision-makers in the country with relevance for the Jordanian host community as well as the refugee population. UNFPA also initiated a rapid assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on SRH and GBV, including the impact in refugee camps and urban areas within Jordan. UNFPA also produced information, education and communication materials were produced to inform communities of existing support; this has included the production of a video targeting people with different kinds of disabilities, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCvmNWmVo8o&feature=youtu.be>.

The UNWRA Health Programme has resumed its family planning services and has begun to dispense noncommunicable diseases' (NCD) medicines to patients or their representatives inside the health centers in addition to providing immunization services. Additional services will resume gradually during the coming days.

### Iraq

UNFPA continues to support reproductive health services in nine refugee camps, six camps for IDPs and seven static clinics for returnees, serving 5684 individuals in the past two weeks. Furthermore, UNFPA supports five delivery rooms and two maternity hospitals where 408 normal deliveries and 114 caesarian sections were successfully performed.

### Lebanon

UNHCR is committed to funding the temporary expansion of six government hospitals and one private hospital, all seven are part of the UNHCR contracted hospital network since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. These expansions will contribute to enhancing the hospitals' response capacity to treat COVID-19 infected patients, including refugees, through the provision of 285 additional hospital beds, and 39 additional intensive care unit beds in the initial phase.

### Palestine

UNFPA has supported the establishment of alternative delivery modalities, such as mobile outreach and home visits, where SRH services have been shut down or severely curtailed for Palestinian refugees both in Gaza and the West Bank. UNFPA co-leads the SRH Working Group with the Ministry of Health, to support effective coordination of SRH partners' response and has prepared a situation report. UNFPA Palestine and Ministry of Health conducted an assessment of the impact on SRH services due to COVID-19.

West Bank: UNWRA continued its medical consultations, where they saw from 1 March to 3 May, 160 662 of which there were 70 417 cases with respiratory symptoms. UNRWA health centres resumed registration of new antenatal cases specifically targeting women with high-risk pregnancies. In addition, lab tests resumed for blood glucose and haemoglobin concentrations at 24 gestation weeks.

Gaza: UNWRA continued home delivery of medicines to patients over 70 years old and/or with diabetes reaching 12 295 patients and total consultations at the medical points were 51 806 up to 4 May 2020. There were 160 visits home visits to provide health services to disabled cases (elderly, injured, and mental health cases) from 31 March to 4 May 2020. UNRWA health centres resumed registration of new antenatal cases as well as some urgent physiotherapy services. A pilot for a support group for type one diabetes through the Zoom application was conducted at the Maghazi health centre. Another pilot for NCD support groups was initiated at two health centres, the Japanese and Beach health centres, through WhatsApp application

and Facebook. Educational videos were produced to educate the NCD patients on various issues related to medication and disease management during Ramadan.

### Sudan

Healthcare services are available in all twelve camps hosting 275 250 refugees, run by State Ministry of Health, Sudanese Red Crescent, MSF and Agricultural Research Corporation in White Nile, South Kordofan, East and North Darfur: supported by UNHCR and WHO. The camp clinics are providing full range of primary healthcare integrated services in addition to public health interventions such as health promotion, vector control, outbreak investigation and response.

Rapid response team (RRTs) were trained earlier in all localities hosting refugees, IDPs and returnees to handle the investigation, collect samples and advice on response. In White Nile, WHO supported trainings on strengthening the epidemiology surveillance system and linking it with RRTs reporting and investigation for 40 community health workers and is planning to conduct COVID-19 case management and infection prevention trainings for medical staff serving in camp clinics.

No confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in refugee camps.

### Syria

UNFPA reproductive health static clinics and mobile teams in 14 governorates serving host communities and IDPs provided reproductive health services, psychosocial support, medication, and individual awareness sessions on prevention and control of COVID-19. UNFPA ensures that all health workers have gloves, masks and hand sanitizers in accordance with WHO Covid-19 IPC standards, along with infection prevention and control measures for reproductive health clinics (operated by implementing partners) including measures against overcrowding. Special attention is being paid when treating pregnant women, and all facilities and mobile teams' vehicles are disinfected. UNFPA is also investing in the development of an e-voucher system targeting pregnant and lactating women and replacing distribution of kits in targeted locations. UNFPA is establishing a partnership with WFP building on their existing e-voucher system. The e-voucher modality will be designed in a way that allows recipients to access an extra amount of money for hygiene products replacing the distribution of the kits.

### Yemen

Protection cluster is scaling up its COVID-19 prevention through communication with communities (CwC) in Marib, where 63% of all newly displaced have fled to. Some 10 000 brochures have been distributed, accompanied with awareness-raising campaigns, training outreach workers and volunteers. Similar activities are ongoing for refugee communities in the South, such as the Basateen neighborhood in Aden, Kharaz refugee camp in Lahj and Mukallah, Hadramaut. Continuous efforts are being made to maintain regular programmes while incorporating COVID-19 prevention awareness-raising and other measures (such as hygiene kits). CwC orientation training on COVID-19 for camp coordination, camp management (CCCM) partners covering 145 sites was conducted in Aden. The trainers will then return to their respective sites and conduct the same orientation and awareness sessions at community level with focus on IDPs site committees. In addition, community isolation spaces for those with COVID-19 symptoms will be constructed in 30 IDP sites in Hajjah and Hudaydah governorates through the Ministry of Public Health and Population and WHO. Shielding spaces in the IDP sites for most vulnerable without COVID-19 symptoms are currently under discussion in the CCCM Cluster.

UNHCR completed the distributions of hygiene items of soap, detergent and water buckets for 28 000 refugees and host community member families in Basateen neighborhood, Aden governorate. UNHCR also distributed extra soap to nearly all (8700) residents in the Kharaz refugee camp, Lahj governorate. In Mukalla, Hadramaut, the newly recruited community health workers led a door-to-door educational

campaign against COVID-19, reaching 136 (about 702 refugees) out of the total 5000 refugee families targeted. Provision of reproductive health services continued in all the 189 UNFPA-supported health facilities across the country, while reinforcing infection prevention and control in maternal and emergency obstetric care in all supported health facilities servicing Yemeni host communities and IDPs. The challenges of providing quality emergency obstetric care services in a humanitarian context and now the additional burden of Covid-19 can be seen in this story about UNFPA's work in Yemen, <https://yemen.unfpa.org/en/news/delivering-triplets-war-torn-yemen-under-shadow-pandemic>.

### Way Forward

- Ensuring that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is utilized during the outbreak response for COVID-19 among all partners.
- 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 in their country and avoid any type of drastic action such as deportation.
- Activate the Taskforce on COVID-19 and Mobility/Migration under the United Nations Inter-Agency Issue-Based Coalition (IPC)
- 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 respective organizations on the situation of 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.

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