

## 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 #13|29 July 2020*

### Situation Overview

As of 28 July 2020, a total of 1 504 785 cases have been reported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) since the start of the outbreak, which now represents 9.0% of the global burden of 16 301 736 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 (650 069 deaths) have been reported in the EMR (38 730 deaths); in descending order, nine countries surpassed the Regional case fatality rate of 2.6%: Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Somalia, with Yemen recording at 29%, followed by Sudan (6.3%) and Syria (5.9%).

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

- As of 27 July 2020, according to WHO reports, there were 2195 accumulative positive cases (excluding Palestinian refugees and migrants in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries) of COVID-19 among internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and migrants in Djibouti (3), Egypt (19), Iran (1798), Iraq (20), Lebanon (263), Pakistan (17), Somalia (2), Sudan (64), Tunisia (8), Yemen (1).
- As of 27 July 2020, there were 1808 accumulative positive cases of COVID-19 among Palestinian Refugees registered with UNWRA: Jordan (9), Lebanon (54), Syria (9) including two deaths, West Bank (1687), Gaza (49). There were 956 new cases from two weeks ago, that were in Jordan (1), Lebanon (29), Syria (3), West Bank (819) and Gaza (1).
- As of 23 July 2020, according to UNHCR, there are a total of 119 cases among UNHCR persons of concern, out of whom 19 are confirmed to have COVID-19 (included in the accumulative cases above) and 100 are suspected.
- As of 23 July 2020, according to the media, there were nearly 30% of those found infected were from India, while 18% were Nepalis and 14% were Bangladeshis in Qatar.
- As of 23 July 2020, according to media, of the 6000 contact trace cases that Bahrain has conducted, more than 2600 were Indian nationals, 1260 were Bangladeshi., more than 400 came from Pakistan, with a similar number from Nepal.
- As of 17 July 2020, according to UNHCR, there have been 125 positive COVID-19 cases (included in the accumulative cases above) among the Syrian refugee population in Lebanon, including one fatality. These cases have been identified in urban areas through contact tracing and testing, where clusters of cases have been found among the local population.
- As 23 July 2020, according to UNHCR, there have been 18 confirmed COVID-19 cases among IDPs and refugees with one fatality in Iraq.

### Regional Response Actions

#### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

During the sixth Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Refugees Affairs meeting, IOM stressed the need for cooperation and coordination with international and regional organizations to ensure the provision of care and protection for IDPs, refugees, individuals in detention centres, migrants and expatriates who are unable to access safety nets. The IOM Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Office held the first-ever joint information exchange meeting between the UN Networks on Migration in

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh on 8 July 2020. The meeting focused on the labour migration scenario in both countries, the impact of COVID19 and response of the networks in synergies, outreach, and coordination. The meeting provided an opportunity for the migration networks to share experiences with the aim of continued dialogue and information exchange.

The Immigration and Border Management (IBM) team at the IOM MENA Regional Office developed a Gender Checklist for the IBM COVID-19 Response. The checklist supports ongoing efforts to ensure all Immigration and Border Management projects are responsive to the gender-specific needs of migrants and of other stakeholders, such as health officials working at points of entry (POEs). As of 22 July 2020, according to IOM's Mobility Impact Tracking in the MENA Region, around 39% of 66 monitored international airports are fully closed, 27% are partially operational and 27% are now fully operational showing a gradual reopening of airports across the region. Fewer than half of the 98 monitored land border crossing points (47%) remain fully closed with 39% only partially operational while there are seven land border crossing points classified as fully operational as of 16 July 2020. Out of 42 monitored blue border crossing points in the region, 24 of them are fully closed and 14 are partially operational in the region while only three (3) blue border crossing points are fully operational for passengers. Regional trends since April 2020 illustrate a general and slight process towards reopening of international POEs.

#### United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA launched their State of World Population 2020: Against My Will, [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/UNFPA\\_PUB\\_2020\\_EN\\_State\\_of\\_World\\_Population.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pubpdf/UNFPA_PUB_2020_EN_State_of_World_Population.pdf) which focuses on defying the practices that harm women and girls and undermine equality.

#### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

UNHCR has published the UNHCR Protecting Forcibly Displaced Women and Girls during the COVID-19 Pandemic, focusing on examples of UNHCR's gender responsive and gender based violence (GBV) prevention, risk mitigation and response interventions, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Protecting%20Forcibly%20Displaced%20Women%20and%20Girls%20during%20the%20COVID-19%20Pandemic%20-%20July%202020.pdf>. In addition, Emerging Practices: WASH and COVID 19 field practices, [https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/WASH%20Emerging%20Practices%20COVID-19\\_v5.pdf](https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/WASH%20Emerging%20Practices%20COVID-19_v5.pdf).

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

UNWRA continues to work diligently to deliver essential, lifesaving services to Palestine refugees throughout the Middle East, with their latest questions to doctors videos, [https://www.unrwa.org/covid\\_19](https://www.unrwa.org/covid_19).

#### World Health Organization (WHO)

In an effort to advance the inclusion of displaced populations and migrants within universal health coverage, a joint press statement was released on 26 July 2020 by the WHO Regional Director and the IOM Regional Director, in English: <http://www.emro.who.int/media/news/26-july-2020-member-states-must-take-action-to-ensure-the-safety-and-health-of-migrant-and-displaced-populations-warn-who-and-iom.html> and in Arabic: <http://www.emro.who.int/ar/media/news/26-july-2020-member-states-must-take-action-to-ensure-the-safety-and-health-of-migrant-and-displaced-populations-warn-who-and-iom.html>.

WHO also released the *Safe Eid al Adha practices in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance*, highlighting public health advice for social gatherings and religious practices that can be applied across different national contexts, for English: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/safe-eid-al-adha-practices-in-the-context-of-covid-19-interim-guidance>, for Arabic:

[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/333454/WHO-2019-nCoV-Eid\\_al\\_Adha-2020.1-ara.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/333454/WHO-2019-nCoV-Eid_al_Adha-2020.1-ara.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y) and for French: <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/333524>.

In search of an understanding of how refugees and migrants experience the psychosocial impact of COVID-19 and how they deal with challenges that have arisen, WHO and a consortium of research centers led by Ghent University in Belgium started a collaboration. ApartTogether is a global study to assess the public health social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and migrants. A high global response rate is essential for relevant global analysis and recommendations, so we ask you to disseminate to refugees and migrants, [https://www.aparttogetherstudy.org/?mc\\_cid=2dfa7f273d&mc\\_eid=7f7f6b4456](https://www.aparttogetherstudy.org/?mc_cid=2dfa7f273d&mc_eid=7f7f6b4456). The survey runs until **31 August 2020**.

## Country Response Actions

### Afghanistan

IOM Afghanistan successfully advocated for the inclusion of migrants and mobility in COVID-19 preparedness planning and response documents, including the National Multi-Sector Response Plan, the revised Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 and the One UN Health Plan. Seven IOM mobile health teams have supported over 28 000 patients with treatment and screening, including referrals to the Ministry of Public Health for COVID-19 case management.

According to UNHCR, hospitals and clinics continue to report challenges maintaining or expanding their capacity to treat patients with COVID-19. These challenges relate to the inadequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits and medical supplies, as well as the limited number of trained staff, which is further exacerbated by the number of frontline staff falling ill. Current laboratory capacity in the country also remains limited.

### Djibouti

IOM is monitoring migrant sites across the country. As of 16 July, 853 stranded Ethiopian migrants have been identified across 19 sites. Immediate needs include water, food, hygiene kits and non-food items (NFIs).

UNHCR continues delivering awareness sessions against COVID-19 in the village of Markazi through the Centre Médical Hospitalier d'Obock and ONARS while the Direction de l'Hydraulique Rurale ensured the supply of drinking water to all households in Markazi. In the village of Ali-Addeh, daily water production has more than doubled (30m<sup>3</sup>/d to 76m<sup>3</sup>/d) after the replacement of standpipes and solar panels.

### Egypt

IOM, through the UN Country Team (UNCT) Country Preparedness and Response Plan (CPRP), participated in an inter-agency campaign on masks, home isolation and stigma, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Population. IOM also conducted three online community awareness sessions for more than 55 migrants on myths and facts related to COVID-19, legal awareness, psychologically coping with the current situation, and available IOM support.

IOM donated 19 655 medical gowns to health clinics in Cairo, as well as 3500 surgical masks and 3500 pair of gloves. IOM also distributed 1000 colouring books on nutrition and hygiene, and 3000 awareness raising flyers on COVID-19. IOM concluded its the wave of procurement and distribution of hygiene kits including cleaning products, soap and face masks. The IOM Mission also distributed essential hygiene equipment and supplies, and PPE to social care institutions in Greater Cairo, Giza, Qalyubia, Damietta, Alexandria, and Beheira, reaching more than 3500 vulnerable beneficiaries

UNHCR in Egypt successfully commenced its piloting of remote refugee status determination interviews. Since the start of these remote modalities in June, 472 remote interviews have been conducted, with most

applicants expressing appreciation to UNHCR. In the meantime, as part of UNHCR's contribution to the joint UNCT CPRP to support the Ministry of Health and Population reduce COVID-19 infection transmission, UNHCR donated 160 000 units (3200 boxes) of surgical masks for use in public health facilities to meet urgent medical needs.

#### Jordan

The epidemiological situation in Jordan has remained under control, with random testing reaching over 500 000 persons to date, including within refugee camps. While the refugee camps in Jordan remain under more stringent movement controls to combat COVID-19, additional precaution measures are being reinforced. A transit site in Zaatari camp is currently being prepared with a capacity of 120, while in Azraq 153 people are currently in the quarantine site. In addition to these sites for those returning to the camps, inpatient capacity for any potential moderate or severe cases of COVID-19 is also being increased. In Azraq, UNHCR's partner is creating inpatient capacity of 50 beds, while the inpatient treatment centre completed by an operational partner in Zaatari has capacity for 100 patients.

#### Iran

With the assistance of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and the European Union Humanitarian Air Bridge, over 95% of all PPEs and medical supply orders have been delivered to Iran, with the rest expected to be delivered in the near future. Meanwhile, the Operations Management Team has decided to implement medevac through United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS), managed by the World Food Programme (WFP) on-demand service.

#### Iraq

IOM continues to monitor and refer suspected cases in displacement settlements. The IOM Mission is also in process of designing and procuring disability inclusive hand-washing stations. IOM is also discussing the design and construction of a new isolation/quarantine area in Jad'ah 1 Camp with the health and the shelter clusters. In Laylan Camp, Kirkuk, IOM is collaborating with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to ensure healthcare and operational coverage for confirmed asymptomatic and symptomatic mild to moderate cases. This includes confirming referral procedures, coordinating face mask procurement and distribution, and planning to jointly train staff on infection prevention and control (IPC) standards. In addition, IOM continues to implement hygiene promotion and health awareness in formal camps and informal sites.

UNHCR continues to have regular contact with authorities at the federal, regional, and governorate level 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 (a total of 18 to date, including a fatality) have received assistance from UNHCR and the respective health authorities. Contact tracing and testing has been conducted, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) COVID-19 preparedness and response plans have been activated and implemented in all affected camps, including strict movement restrictions. Given the significant increase in cases and the capacity of public health facilities in certain governorates across Iraq, some Directorates of Health have stated that only moderate, severe, and critical cases will be accepted to their health facilities. Asymptomatic cases and those with mild symptoms will be advised to self-isolate at home and will receive instructions on how to proceed. UNHCR is already supporting the Directorates of Health in some governorates to conduct trainings, targeting nurses of camp-based Primary Health Care Centres. Trainings are currently taking place in Duhok, and more will be delivered across the country, with a focus on monitoring, following-up medical conditions, and home-care of positive cases in camps.

## Lebanon

The situation of vulnerable migrants continues to be concerning. While its estimated there are more than 400 000 labour migrants in Lebanon, the situation is deteriorating, and humanitarian assistance is becoming more urgent than ever for those that are stranded. IOM, with other UN partners, continues to advocate for support to urgent needs. Based on the initial findings of a vulnerability assessment, urgent needs of stranded migrants in the recent Lebanon Emergency Appeal have been outlined. IOM completed the re-mapping of the location of stranded refugee beneficiaries of resettlement programming in Australia, New Zealand, and identified requirements for the second phase of provision of medication, hygiene and COVID-19 prevention kits. In addition, IOM delivered PPE supplies (protective face masks, surgical masks, face protection shields, gloves and hand sanitizers) to the main airport authority at the Rafik Hariri International Airport and the General Security Department.

UNHCR has completed the first phase of expansion works in three public hospitals to accommodate critical COVID-19 cases. The hospitals will be gradually equipped with newly procured medical equipment and supplies, with the aim to be operational in July. An additional ward rehabilitated by UNHCR is fully operational in Beirut (Rafik Hariri hospital) with a 72- bed capacity. UNHCR is also supporting with the Government's efforts to expand capacity at isolation facilities. Moreover, the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing campaign in informal settlements and collective shelters was completed at the end of June, with nearly 3600 samples collected over 147 sites country-wide, and all test results coming back negative.

In coordination with UNRWA, the Ministry of Public Health is carrying out random screenings of 4000 persons (both refugees and non-refugees) in Palestine refugee camps to measure the nationwide spread of COVID-19.

## Libya

IOM Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism and Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) teams conducted #InformedMigrants and COVID-19 awareness and information sessions for 77 migrants in Al-Zawiya and Ain Zara. The teams also hosted focus group discussions and information sessions on the impacts of COVID-19 and stress management for embassy representatives, community leaders and female migrants. IOM continues to support four primary health care centres with medicines, medical consumables and health education materials on COVID-19. In a week, 275 IDPs benefitted from primary health care consultations. A total of 642 IDPs were provided with primary healthcare medical consultations. IOM also launched a MHPSS helpline to provide remote psychosocial support to migrants confronting mobility issues, including due to COVID-19 lockdowns. The MHPSS helpline will provide counselling and psychosocial support to migrants, including quarantined migrants, in need of MHPSS assistance. In addition, IOM delivered PPE sets to migrants held in detention centres to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic amongst migrants in detention. Non-food items and hygiene kits were also distributed to 792 migrants at the detention centres. Fumigation, disinfection, and cleaning campaigns continue at disembarkation points and detention centres.

Meanwhile, UNHCR and partner International Rescue Committee (IRC) recently supported the reopening of the primary healthcare centre in Gergaresh, Tripoli, which was closed by the government when a state of emergency was declared as the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in March. With support of UNHCR and IRC, a catchment area of at least 30 000 people, including high concentrations of refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, as well as migrants and Libyans, will be provided with medical and protection services. UNHCR and IRC have procured personal protective equipment, sanitizers, medical and office equipment to support the centre; with a generator to follow. Furthermore, given the already dire living conditions in detention centres, UNHCR partners are continuing distributions of core relief items and hygiene kits to person of concern in detention centres, having thus far distributed over 13 000 hygiene kits to persons of

concern. At present, there are an estimated 1200 refugees and asylum-seekers held in detention centres, where physical distancing is not realistic nor practiced.

#### Morocco

In addition to food basket distributions, IOM's implementing partners in Morocco other than Association for the Fight against AIDS provide psychosocial support, medical assistance and sensitization on public health measures enforced by the Ministry of Health. To urgently respond to the needs of vulnerable migrants in distress, IOM collaborated with active civil society partners in Morocco and other institutional partners, in coordination with local and national authorities. This collaboration was to provide assistance from 1 April to 14 June 2020, to more than 10 708 beneficiaries, including 3235 women and 1431 unaccompanied and separated children.

#### Palestine

West Bank: More cases are being reported from refugee camps in Fawwar, Arroub, Azzih, Dhaisha, E/Sultan and more.

#### Somalia

IOM has reached over 22 000 IDPs and 15 400 additional people in Mogadishu and other areas with COVID-19 awareness messages and has screened over 3 000 people for COVID-19 at POEs.

As part of UNHCR's ongoing COVID-19 response, 500 PPE's and 10 temporary housing units were handed over to medical facilities in Somaliland at a ceremony attended by the Vice President and the Minister for Health on 8 July. The targeted facilities included Hargeisa Group Hospital, Berbera General hospital as well as Iftin, Saxardid and DAMI-B health centres.

#### Sudan

IOM published its tenth Mobility Restriction Dashboard on 9 July 2020, highlighting that COVID-19 has now spread to all of Sudan's 18 states. IOM has collected data on POE and timelines for mobility restrictions. POEs along land borders have also been updated to reflect repatriations

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported about 2500 asylum-seekers, mostly from Eritrea, arrived in eastern Sudan during the first half of 2020, according to the latest update from the UNHCR. The number is less than half of the registered during the same period of 2019 and the lowest compared to the previous five years. The closure of borders as part of COVID-19 containment measures is one of the main causes for the reduction, according to UNHCR. A large number of refugees and asylum-seekers in the region are facing increasing challenges as result of the economic and humanitarian impact of COVID-19. According to UNHCR, hundreds of Eritreans, including minors, have left Shagarab camps, Girba and Kassala and returned to their country. According to UNHCR, Sudan hosts about 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers, including 880,000 South Sudanese and 120 000 Eritrean refugees. As of 9 July, the inter-agency refugee response in Sudan is underfunded, with only 28% of the requirements covered, according to UNHCR.

#### Syria

IOM continues to support local partners operating under the United Nations Humanitarian Needs and Assessment Programme, which conducted the eighteenth round of COVID-19 Transit Point Mapping. The mapping includes updated status of internal transit and international border crossing points, including the presence of temperature screening facilities. IOM initiated procurement of more than \$US 700 000 worth of PPE in support of IOM implementing partner staff and project locations across the North West of Syria. Water provision has also increased from 25 litres per day per person to 35-39 litres per day per person. In

addition, IOM supported the fifteenth round of a COVID-19 Rapid Assessment to assess COVID-19 mitigation efforts and access to basic services.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 UNHCR has quadrupled its emergency response and support through its cross-border operation from Gaziantep, Turkey. In total this year (January to June), as of end-June, UNHCR had reached its target of 90 000 NFI kits to be sent across the border to Syria (trans-shipped). In addition, 37 360 tents (93% of the 40,000 target) have been trans-shipped so far. In addition, at the end of June, UNHCR's partner opened one community centre in Aleppo governorate to primarily serve the IDP returnee population, providing a set integrated protection services such as child protection, case management, legal aid and services for persons with specific needs. The opening of the centre brings the total number to 126 countrywide. In addition, 11 clinics in community centres continue to provide medical consultations and 14 UNHCR-run primary health care facilities Damascus, rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Hasakeh are fully functional and providing health services to persons of concern. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, more than 43 300 medical consultations have been provided. UNHCR's response is closely coordinated with the health sector ensuring it is in line with WHO's recommendations and other partner services, and advocates for the inclusion of refugees in the country preparedness and response plans.

UNWRA reported nine confirmed cases of COVID-19 were detected among Palestine refugees in Syria, of which seven cases are currently being treated at hospital, and the other two have died at Alassad Hospital.

#### Yemen

IOM scaled up IPC support at displacement sites, including the distribution of 1885 basic hygiene kits in 15 IDP sites in Abyan. This was coupled by the establishment of 30 handwashing stations in five (5) IDP hosting sites in the governorate, hosting 664 households. In total, 160 handwashing stations have been established at sites in Ibb, Taizz and Abyan. Water trucking activities in 59 sites in Al Hudaydah and Taizz are also providing 8340 people with daily access to clean and safe water. IOM, who manages the Shelter and NFI Contingency Pipeline, prepositioned Emergency Shelter Kits, family tents, NFIs and hygiene kits across Hudaydah, Hajjah, Sa'ada, Ibb and Marib hubs. The availability of these supplies ensures partners have the capacity to support the emergency needs of more than 10 000 households. In addition, IOM and partners are continuing to conduct COVID-19 vulnerability surveys in Marib, reaching 10 994 households to date. In addition to scaling up Risk Communication and Community Engagement activities at displacement sites, the IOM CCCM team has also initiated a mask production project with IDPs in 22 sites in Ibb governorate.

IOM is providing support to 22 health facilities and nine mobile health teams across Abyan, Al Jawf, Aden, Al Baydah, Al Dhale'e, Amanat Al Asimah, Lahj, Marib, Sa'ada, Shabwah and Taizz governorates. Through these health facilities, 6911 people, including 2331 migrants, have received health services, ensuring that primary healthcare, cholera treatment, MHPSS as well as minor and major surgeries are accessible to affected populations during the COVID-19 outbreak. IOM also distributed 39 984 soaps and 2322 long lasting insecticide (mosquito) nets in Marib.

UNHCR and partners are continuing with active surveillance and screening for COVID-19 like symptoms at entry points at Kharaz Refugee Camp and the four registration centres. Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, some 18 000 screenings (by thermo-scan) have been conducted for arrivals and visitors, and those with symptoms were referred to health services. Furthermore, COVID-19 awareness-raising campaigns have reached thousands of refugees and host community members in Kharaz, Basateen neighbourhood in Aden, as well as Mukalla and Hadramout (major migratory entry points).

## 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.

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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.