

Key Messages: **UPDATED**

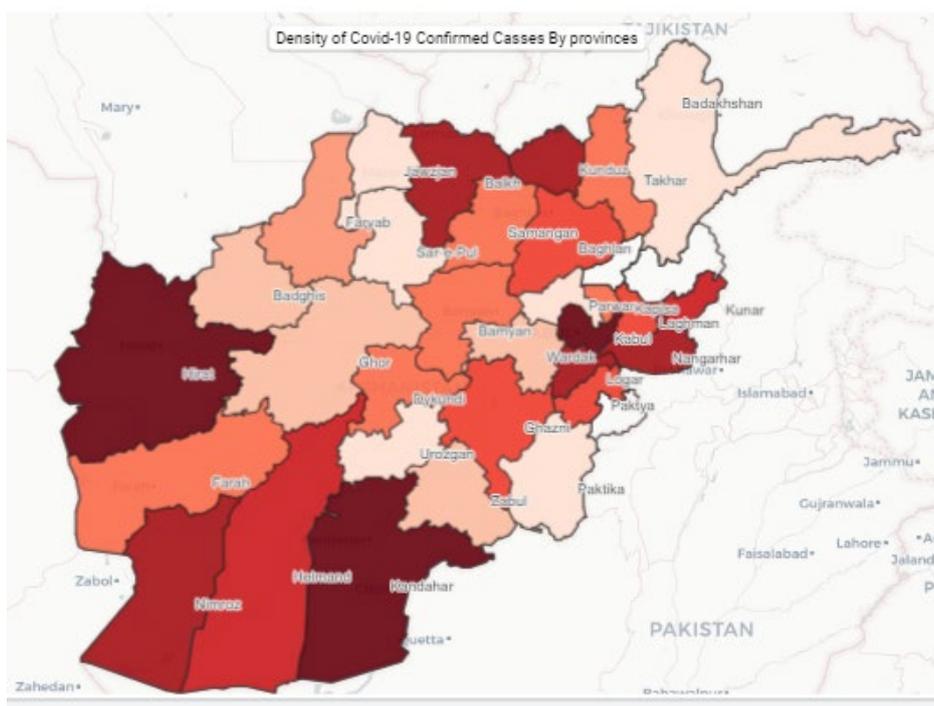
- **People confirmed to have COVID-19: 1,221** (as of 4pm, 23 April. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- **Deaths from COVID-19: 42**

Key concerns: Border crossing areas, in-country testing capacity, protective equipment for frontline workers, commodity prices, floods, messaging and rumour management, international air services

Situation Overview: **UPDATED**

MoPH data shows that **1,221 people across 33 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 168 people have recovered and 42 people have died. Six healthcare workers have also died from COVID-19.** Of the 42 people who have died from COVID-19, 41 had at least one underlying disease, the most common of which are cardio-vascular disease and diabetes. The majority were between ages of 40-69. Men between the ages of 40-69 represent 60 per cent of all COVID-19 related deaths. Cases are expected to increase rapidly over the weeks ahead as community transmission escalates, creating grave implications for Afghanistan's economy and people's well-being. Kabul is now the most affected part of the country, followed by Hirat.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) started airbridge service connecting flights from Kabul to Doha today. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. Subsequent flights are planned for 30 April. UNHAS intends to maintain flights every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday, pending demand. UNHAS has circulated updated booking guidance.



Source: MoPH

	Age 0-19		Age 20-29		Age 30-39		Age 40-49		Age 50-59		Age 60-69		Age 70-79		Age 80+		Total
	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Women	Men											
# people confirmed with COVID-19	44	47	92	250	56	275	47	151	40	96	23	67	5	14	4	10	1221
# deaths from COVID-19	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	6	0	6	3	13	0	5	3	0	42

Beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19 on the country's health situation, measures introduced to prevent its spread continue to have significant impact on market dynamics. 22 April market monitoring carried out by WFP found that the average price for wheat flour in main city markets continue to rise; wheat flour prices are higher by 20 and 25 per cent compared to 14 March and up 5 per cent from last week. Cooking oil prices also continue to rise; 20 per cent higher compared to 14 March, and 3 per cent higher than last week. Rice and pulses prices are higher by 4-8 per cent compared to 14 March, and up 2-4 per cent than last week. Purchasing power of casual labour and pastoralists has deteriorated by 21 and 14 per cent respectively compared to 14 March due in large part to the increase in wheat prices and decreased wages.

Surging food prices amid lockdowns hit poor families most

The COVID-19 situation in Afghanistan is quickly transforming into a food and livelihood crisis. Food prices in urban markets across the country have increased significantly since mid-March and many vulnerable families facing lockdowns ordered by authorities to quell the spread of the coronavirus do not know where their next meal will come from.

"I cannot stay at home. I need to go out every day to make money to buy food," Mahfooza from Baharak District, Takhar, said. Her family, already amongst the most food-insecure families in the community, was selected for seasonal support, before COVID-19 struck the country.

According to officials, some 125,000 families – or 870,000 people – rely on daily wage labour in the capital Kabul. Together with urban poor and families in protracted displacement, they find themselves in the near impossible situation of having to choose between trying to find work to buy food or heed the orders of the authorities and stay indoors, often in crowded and unhygienic conditions.

"If the shops are closed and the bakeries are not operating, there will be no customers and we will die from hunger before we get killed by the virus," says Masooma who relies on begging to bring up her six children after her husband left for Iran and never sent home any money.

Story provided by WFP

Response: **UPDATED**

Humanitarians in the country continue to scale up responses to COVID-19 needs. IOM will provide 200 water reservoirs for 200 families in the Reigration IDP site and will install six handwashing points close to three health facilities in IDP sites in Hirat. DoPH and WHO have distributed 100,000 leaflets and 25,000 posters on COVID-19 awareness in the country's north; and WHO has trained 3,000 health staff and village elders on COVID-19 community engagement messages. UNHCR is looking into requests to help strengthen registration and other services at border crossing points between Afghanistan and Pakistan. For a more comprehensive update of response activities, please see the [operational Situation Report](#).

Funding: **UPDATED**

The global Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has released new funding to support FAO Afghanistan as part of the FAO's global project to support COVID-19 response. The project is aimed at ensuring time-sensitive and season-critical agriculture-based livelihoods through safeguarding the function of main markets for agricultural produce/inputs, live animals/livestock. It also includes targeted livelihoods packages and cash-for-work/unconditional cash transfers.

The government of [Germany](#) has also announced an additional €1.4m in funding to WFP; €500,000 will be dedicated to supporting UNHAS to continue critical air services, while the remaining €900,000 will go to providing emergency food assistance to cover the needs of more than 45,000 people for two months.

The EU has also announced €2.7m in funding to [UNICEF](#) to provide life-saving treatment to those affected by acute malnutrition in hard-to-reach areas of Afghanistan. With this support, UNICEF will work with partners to reach 20,180 children under five in hard to reach areas with life-saving treatment for severe acute malnutrition. The EU has also announced they will provide €2.8m to [WHO](#) to fight COVID-19 including by supporting surveillance, IPC, case management and risk communication; continue essential trauma care services; and address urgent humanitarian needs across the country. The funding will enable WHO to reach 400,000 vulnerable people, including IDPs and returnees.

Cross Border Concerns: **UPDATED**

The Milak crossing (Nimroz) is formally open only to commercial traffic and documented citizens of Afghanistan; the Islam Qala-Dogharoon land border crossings (Hirat) remain open on both sides for both individuals and commercial traffic. While the number of people returning from Iran this week has been in line with average return rates, IOM emphasises the scale of humanitarian needs of returnees returning from Iran. Close to 100 per cent of returnees are in

need of humanitarian post-arrival assistance to return to their areas of origin, compared to the 20 per cent previously estimated.

An analysis of information collected during [UNHCR's border monitoring process](#) from 6-15 April shows that a vast majority of people returning from Iran are coming back to Afghanistan due to the lack of employment opportunities in Iran and due to COVID-19-related fears. Those returning from Pakistan are predominantly coming back to Afghanistan to reunite with family members.

On Tuesday, Pakistan temporarily opened its border at Torkham to facilitate the return of Pakistani nationals. 500 Pakistani nationals were facilitated to return to Pakistan; 90 citizens of Afghanistan were also facilitated to return home. Pakistan has announced twice weekly border opening, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, to allow Pakistani nationals to return.

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan through the Torkham and Chaman border crossing points three days per week (on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. At Spin Boldak border crossing, two trucks remain on the Pakistan side of the border. Over the next few weeks, food security partners hope to move more than 1,400MT of food assistance through the northern Torkham border and 117MT through Spin Boldak crossing. Humanitarians emphasise the critical importance of maintaining a reliable flow of traffic for humanitarian cargo and advocate for special consideration to expedite humanitarian food and relief items through border crossings.

Borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan remain open only for commercial traffic and crossings of passport holders back to Afghanistan.

[Operational Issues](#): **UPDATED**

A number of provinces have instituted measures to limit the exposure of residents to COVID-19. Throughout the country, these '**measured lockdowns**' have resulted in closures of sections of each city and/or movement limitations. These include limits on the number of people travelling together and the imposition of curfews. Limitations on inter-city travel have also been implemented. On 19 April, Nangahar provincial officials announced further COVID-19 related travel restrictions for entry and exit of Jalalabad City. Under the new measures, city entry and exit may only take place between 0600-0800 and 1600-1800. The new directive applies to NGO movements as well. While an overall approval for NGO official travel within the city remains in effect; NGOs have reported delays and complications, the majority of which have been resolved by contacting OCHA personnel who maintain direct lines of communication with ANSF and provincial authorities and continue to advocate for universal application of the official policy. Humanitarian partners continue to urge the Government to employ a national approach to these issues so that individual negotiations are not required on a case-by-case basis. The closure of government institutions due to movement restrictions may create new coordination challenges for humanitarian agencies.

[More Information – Links](#): **UPDATED**

WHO

- [WHO's latest information on COVID-19](#)
- [WHO COVID-19 Global Dashboard](#)
- [Interim guidance: Safe Ramadan practices in the context of COVID-19](#)
- [Interim guidance: Preparedness, prevention and control of COVID-19 for refugees and migrants in non-camp settings](#)

Inter-Agency Standing Committee

- [IASC-endorsed COVID-19 guidance – new materials available](#)

UN and others

- [UN Women: Policy Brief: The impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)
- [GVB Sub-cluster Guidance: Adaptation of dignity kits for COVID-19](#)
- [ICCT: Interim guidance on home isolation in overcrowded settings in Afghanistan](#)
- [Ministry of Public Health: COVID-19 Dashboard](#)
- [Relief Web: COVID-19 Response Page](#)
- [IOM: Dashboard on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human mobility](#)

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