UNITED NATIONS SUPPORTS FRONTLINE HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AGAINST COVID-19

Ensuring the protection of healthcare workers, volunteers and individuals is one of the main priorities for the Government of Myanmar in its efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. The United Nations in Myanmar and its partners are supporting efforts to prioritise the safety of frontline healthcare workers.

The Access to Health Fund, funded by the United Kingdom, Sweden, United States and Switzerland and managed by the UN’s Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is supporting the Ministry of Health and Sports (MoHS), ethnic health providers and communities with the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). In April, over 150,000 surgical gloves and more than 500,000 surgical masks were procured to help protect frontline healthcare workers. An additional 2,000 person/days of PPEs will be handed over to the Ministry soon. Furthermore, UNOPS’s Access to Health Fund plans to provide at least 50,000 coveralls in mid-May to support MoHS and ethnic health providers in Myanmar’s conflict-affected areas.

With support from the Women and Girls First (WGF) Programme, funded by Australia, European Union, Germany, Finland, Sweden and Italy, and the Access to Health Fund, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has also provided protective supplies, including 12,000 surgical masks, hand sanitizers, face shields and PPEs to Maternal Reproductive Health Division of the Department of Public Health in Nay Pyi Taw. Additionally, a total of 1,500 PPE kits have been provided for State Health Departments in Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Shan and Rakhine states.

UNFPA supports the MoHS to keep health systems functioning and plans to provide a further 3,000 PPE kits for midwives to maintain the provision of sexual and reproductive health and rights services. This will be the first phase of PPE support to midwives, in addition to making available training resources for COVID-19 adapted service provision to pregnant women.

To counter the economic impact of COVID-19 and integrate women in the public health rapid response, UN Women in collaboration with Finn Church Aid Consortium (FCAC) is supporting women to transition their livelihoods activities towards mask production. FCAC has been retraining women to produce nonmedical cloth masks from 100 per cent cotton fabric in accordance with guidelines issued by MoHS. Twenty-five women have already been retrained in Sittwe and Mrauk-U townships. The tailors have already achieved a production capacity of 1,500-2,000 masks per week. The first batch of masks were handed over to humanitarian organizations in Rakhine and distributed to people in quarantine centers in Sittwe and volunteers managing the centers.

The United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government and people of Myanmar to prepare and respond to COVID-19. While maintaining ongoing development and humanitarian programming, the United Nations has reprogrammed support and significantly scaled up efforts on COVID-19 preparedness and response.

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