

UN Country Team in Myanmar Steps up COVID-19 Response Efforts

(Yangon, 19 July 2021) – The UN Country Team in Myanmar is stepping up its response efforts following an alarming spike in the reported number of COVID-19 cases in the country.

Even with very limited testing and people experiencing difficulties in accessing testing, 5497 new cases were reported on July 17 bringing the test positivity rate to 39.12 per cent compared to 22.34 per cent two weeks earlier. In addition, several COVID-19 variants have been detected, including the highly transmissible Delta variant.

Stay-at-home orders in over 70 townships across Myanmar have been imposed, as well as nationwide public holidays declared from 17-25 July in efforts to curb virus spread. Access to hospital beds and oxygen is limited due to insufficient supplies and manpower.

The UN Country Team is working to address the oxygen shortage through the procurement of oxygen concentrators and other necessary equipment through multiple channels.

The immediate scaling up of the provision of critical health services and COVID-19 vaccination efforts, remains an urgent priority.

WHO, UNICEF and partners are redoubling their efforts to accelerate COVID-19 vaccination availability through multiple channels, including through the COVAX facility. Myanmar is expected to receive enough COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility during 2021 to cover 20 per cent of the population which is required to be distributed according to WHO guidelines for prioritizing vaccination. The first batch of these vaccines is expected in the current round of allocations.

Efforts are underway to re-operationalize testing and COVID-19 treatment centres are being established with available resources and capacities.

Currently, COVID-19 testing is occurring in states and regions at the rate of 12,000-15,000 tests per day. With testing at limited levels, however, many cases are expected to be unreported.

The current outbreak of COVID-19 is expected to have devastating consequences for the health of the population and for the economy. A renewed 'whole of society' approach is needed now more than ever, allowing all health professionals to work in safety, and both public and private providers enabled to contribute to the response.

