

Key Messages: **UPDATED**

- **People confirmed to have COVID-19: 714** (Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- **Deaths from COVID-19: 23**
- **Tests completed: 4,470**

Key concerns: Border crossing areas, measured lockdowns, protective equipment for frontline workers, commodity prices, floods, messaging and rumour management, international air services

Situation Overview: **UPDATED**

MoPH data shows that 714 people across 27 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 43 people have recovered and 23 people have died. 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. Hirat is still the most affected part of the country, followed by Kabul. MoPH reports that 4,470 tests have been conducted. Altogether, the Government plans to expand to 15 testing facilities across the country within the month. WHO reports that testing kits are being sent from Kabul to regional testing hubs on a needs-basis but due to global shortages, it is not possible to stockpile testing kits and supplies in each region. Despite the global shortages, new supplies are regularly arriving in-country. Yesterday, WHO provided medical equipment and supplies to MOPH including: 10,000 gowns, 600 packs of gloves, 1,500 face shields, 200 soft frame goggles, 100 infrared thermometers, 1200 packs of surgical masks, 60 packs of respiratory masks, 20 packs of hazard bags and 21 supplementary kits of emergency medicine that will cater to 120,000 patients. WHO also delivered 27 hospital beds, 31 oxygen concentrators, 21 intubation and 11 autoclaves. With funding from the donors, including the EU, more supplies, including \$1.8m worth of testing kits and 60,000 additional PPE kits will arrive in the coming weeks.

Response: **UPDATED**

The Global Humanitarian Response Plan, released in March, is in the process of being updated. At the country-level, the humanitarian community has begun the process of revising of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan in light of COVID-19. In the meantime, activities from April-June are outlined in a \$108.1m [COVID-19 Multi-Sector Humanitarian Country Plan for Afghanistan](#), which was released in March 2020.

The health response is supported by 350 WHO polio surveillance staff, 1,000 polio surveillance focal points, and 34,000 polio surveillance volunteers within health facilities, the private sector and communities. These personnel are supporting efforts to enhance surveillance systems and early detection.

IOM, UNHCR, WHO and other partners are strengthening logistics, health (screening and surveillance) and monitoring assistance in border areas, in support of the Government. Border monitoring teams have been put in place along main crossing points from Iran and Pakistan. Some 670 sets of personal protective equipment have been provided to government and humanitarian personnel, while some 82 government and humanitarian offices have been provided with hygiene kits. However it is understood that gaps still remain. UNHCR additionally plans to mobilise some 100 refugee housing units; 500 tents and 12,000 NFI kits to augment medical service provision in these areas. Distribution of hygiene materials among those in displacement sites continues with some 3,500 households in Gulan settlement receiving support and an additional 200 refugees and asylum seekers being provided with cash top-ups to facilitate purchase of hygiene items

The Protection Cluster will be working with REACH to do assessments in informal settlements and will focus on Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19-related stigmatisation of people coming from Iran and Pakistan. The Nutrition Cluster has developed [guidance for partners and nutrition care providers for the COVID-19 response](#). The Ministry of Education and Education in Emergencies Working Group has recently published an [Alternate Education Service Delivery Plan](#). The focus of the plan is on the provision of distance and other alternative learning modalities for primary and secondary students through radio and TV, as well as building the capacity of teachers; conducting a community awareness campaign to promote prevention measures with specific focus on high risk areas; promoting improved hygiene and sanitation situation in schools/CBEs in high risk areas when schools re-open; and providing mental health and psychosocial support for children.

Funding: UPDATED

On 14 April, the [International Monetary Fund](#) announced the plans to provide immediate debt service relief under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust. Afghanistan is among the 25 countries who will receive debt relief under the announcement. The [Asia Development Bank](#) has also announced it is tripling its funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic globally. a \$20b package will address the immediate needs of ADB's developing member countries and help counter severe macroeconomic and health impacts due to COVID-19. The package includes \$2.5b in concessional and grant resources. More information on the specific allocation for Afghanistan is still to come.

Development partners are also undertaking efforts to re-programme some of their existing funds and activities to address humanitarian needs being aggravated by COVID-19. The World Bank is preparing to mobilise a three-phased response to COVID-19 that is focused on immediate relief, recovery, and resilience. These preparations are considering how to support and sustain the health system (through the MoPH), mitigate the fiscal shock, and provide livelihood protection and/or cash or food transfers in urban and rural areas. Around \$100m has been approved for the health response and the World Bank has indicated that it will frontload some \$200m from its planned resource allocation to mitigate the fiscal shock. The Bank is exploring how to reprogramme funds from the existing IDA/ARTF programme towards COVID relief. The World Bank will engage with humanitarian actors to coordinate on issues such as coverage and delivery modalities especially in geographic locations outside of the Citizen's Charter Programme. On 11 April, the European Union also announced that it is committing EUR 50m in additional funding to strengthen Afghanistan's health system.

Cross Border Concerns: UPDATED

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

As of 13 April, Johns Hopkins University reports that there are 73,303 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iran. The Milak crossing (Nimroz) is formally open only to commercial traffic and documented citizens of Afghanistan; 900 individuals used this border crossing to return to Afghanistan yesterday. The Islam Qala-Dogharoon land border crossings (Hirat) remain open on both sides for both individuals and commercial traffic. Approximately 1,300 people used this border crossing to return to Afghanistan yesterday. With current heavy rain and other weather events, it is anticipated that these numbers may have further decreased today.

The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Ministry of Transport have developed a provisional plan to transfer returnees from the borders to their provinces. The plan only focuses on Islam Qala (Hirat) and Milak (Nimroz) borders in its first phase. As a first option, the plan prioritises efforts to slow down returns through negotiations with Iran. While acknowledging such political initiatives may not gain quick traction, the plan focuses on registration of returnees at the borders; coordination with provincial authorities to have returnees transferred to their respective provinces and transport to take them there; establishing mobile health centres in the borders; providing advice on home quarantine and undertaking residence tracing and health checks for 14 days after returnees' arrival in their home.

As of 13 April, according to Johns Hopkins University there are 5,716 people confirmed to have COVID-19 in Pakistan. Pakistan's border remains closed to all except commercial vehicles. Pakistan has announced that it is now facilitating 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). Humanitarians remain hopeful that border crossing for commercial traffic will be maintained according to the announced schedule; this is critical for maintaining the flow of humanitarian food and relief items from storage sites in Karachi.

IOM remains concerned about future uncontrolled waves of returnees arriving at the border after some people pushed their way through reception areas without undergoing health screening last week. Among those who are screened, temperature checks are performed but often critical questions regarding contacts and other potential symptoms are not. Registration of undocumented returnees is improving in coverage but remains incomplete due to unwillingness of many returnees to wait to register. The Government's capacity for documenting and tracing of passport and Tazkera-holding returnees remains unclear.

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.

Yesterday evening, stricter measures were announced in Kandahar by the Provincial Committee of Corona Virus Prevention. These measures include the daytime closure of all businesses, excluding health centres, pharmacies and

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bakeries. Shops and businesses can continue their work from 12am to 6am. The announcement followed a large community meeting involving Provincial officials, line ministries, NGOs, UN representatives, community and business leaders. Assurances have been received that freedom of movement for UN and NGO staff who are carrying valid organisational IDs will continue.

Additional measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 came into effect in Kabul on 8 April and were extended for two weeks from 12 April. A two-week extension is also in effect for Jalalabad. Reports indicate that despite reassurances by the government that these should not limit critical program movements of NGOs and the UN, newly introduced lockdown measures have impacted on mobility for some staff members.

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.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) continues to make arrangements for an international airbridge. UNHAS has received an initial \$3.7m in funding from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and is now in the process of securing flight approvals for an international service with three flights per week between Kabul and Doha. Flights into Doha will accommodate transiting passengers only. UNHAS has secured a 50-seater aircraft (EMB145) which will serve both international as well as domestic locations, depending on demand. The aircraft and crew have arrived in Kabul and flights are planned to start on 21 April, pending successful negotiations on landing permits and air space. UNHAS instructions on booking procedures will be disseminated shortly. Domestic UNHAS flights in Afghanistan are still operating normally and flights to Hirat are currently departing three times per week. Twice weekly UNHAS helicopter services have been introduced to move staff to and from Jalalabad.

Emirates Airlines has [announced](#) limited passenger flights to carry passengers outbound from the UAE; this will include flights three times a week from Dubai into Kabul starting from 16 April.

UNAMA has announced a planned flight to Doha on Friday, 17 April. Priority will be given to UN staff and to those passengers who had previously been booked on the 7 April flight, if seats are available. UNAMA is also considering a second flight on the 18th of April, subject to demand. Both UNAMA flights are contingent on negotiations and will be confirmed in coordination with the development of the UNHAS air-bridge to optimise limited UN resources. Expressions of interest on this flight must be communicated to the UNAMA Passenger Booking Office.

[More Information: UPDATED](#)

WHO

- [WHO's latest information on COVID-19](#)
- [Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19](#)

Inter-Agency Standing Committee

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

UN and others

- [Ministry of Education Alternate Education Service Delivery COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan](#)
- [Afghanistan: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and response](#)
- [COVID-19: A Gender Perspective on the Growing Humanitarian Crisis](#)
- [Guidance Note on IMAM IYCF Programming in the context of COVID-19 in Afghanistan](#)
- [Afghanistan COVID-19 Access Impediment Report \(1 Mar-7 April 2020\)](#)
- [IOM dashboard on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human mobility](#)

Social Media Campaign

- [Avaaz signature campaign in support of the UN Secretary General's global ceasefire appeal](#)

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