Situation Overview: UPDATED

MoPH Figures: As of 4 June, MoPH data shows that 76,628 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are confirmed to have had COVID-19. Some 58,070 people have recovered, and 3,068 people have died – at least 91 of fatalities have been healthcare workers. Since the start of the pandemic, only 484,939 tests have been conducted for a population of 40.4 million.

Cases have steadily risen to alarming levels over the post-Eid period. The daily average number of people newly impacted has now surpassed figures seen during the peak of the first and second waves. On 1 June alone, 1,509 new cases were reported – the highest number of new cases recorded in a single day since the onset of the pandemic. Overseas testing has confirmed the presence of the variants in Afghanistan. While Afghanistan lacks in-country facilities to test for the variant that originated in India, concern over the variant’s spread is high as many of the patients hospitalised over the last two weeks have a history of recently returning from India or having contact with people who have. Afghanistan now has a test-positivity-rate – positive tests as a percentage of total tests – of 44 per cent, suggesting overall under-testing of potential cases. Due to limited public health resources, lack of people coming forward for testing, as well as the absence of a national death register, confirmed cases of and deaths from COVID-19 are likely to be under-reported overall in Afghanistan. WHO warns that widespread complacency and failure to follow public health advice in Afghanistan is creating grave risks in the community with people generally not observing physical distancing or mask-wearing protocols. In response to the rapid rise in new cases, MoPH announced a two-week closure of schools, universities and training courses from 29 May in 16 provinces, including Kabul. No other nation-wide lockdown measures are currently in place.

28 laboratories are now operating in Afghanistan – with plans to scale-up to at least one laboratory per province. National laboratories are testing 7,500 samples a day. WHO reports that laboratories have capacity to test up to 8,500 samples but low demand means technicians are currently working reduced hours.

Vaccination: Since 8 March, Afghanistan has received 968,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines – 468,000 from the COVAX facility and 500,000 directly from the government of India – enabling the vaccination of some 484,000 people. COVID-19 vaccination through MoPH has now been opened to all those above 18 years of age. Vaccination is currently available in select health facilities and through mobile vaccination teams. More than 632,800 have been vaccinated in Afghanistan through the MoPH programme to date, including some 120,320 health workers, 80,540 teachers, 29,440 people with co-morbidities and 29,440 prisoners. Of those vaccinated, 65 per cent were men and 35 per cent women. Around 11 per cent of those vaccinated have received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. China has recently announced its intention to provide a further 700,000 doses of the WHO approved Sinopharm vaccine to support the vaccination campaign.

Overall, there remains strong concern regarding equitable access to vaccines for Afghans, especially vulnerable groups such as IDPs, returnees and nomadic populations and people living in hard-to-reach areas. IOM reports that vaccination coverage is extremely limited among all migrant populations due to negative perceptions and barriers to accessing care. Much more focus is needed to ensure migrants are vaccinated on pace with settled populations given the impact mobility has as a vector for transmission, especially with the more contagious viral variants present in neighbouring countries. Additional efforts are also needed to reach women and people living in non-government-controlled areas with vaccines. Vaccine uptake remains slow and continued risk communication and community engagement efforts are needed to
ensure high-risk populations and frontline staff understand the benefits of the vaccine and can effectively dispel misinformation. Countering negative rumours about the vaccine is a priority. As cases increase, humanitarian partners continue to urge the Government to ensure laboratories and frontline staff are appropriately equipped and that procured supplies – including vaccines – go to under-resourced health centres across the entire country in a transparent manner, so that life-saving support can be delivered to those most in need.

**COVID-19 response update:** According to the One UN COVID-19 Response Update, 950 health workers have received training on ICU care and 1,700+ health workers have been trained on case management by WHO. Since the start of the pandemic, WHO has provided MoPH with over 813,000 PCR tests, more than 13.2 million surgical masks, in excess of 2,340 oxygen concentrators, 98 ventilators and 2,884 hospital beds. Close to 300 laboratory staff have been trained on PCR testing. More than 308,000 health workers (including polio workers), NGO and government staff have been trained on COVID-19 surveillance and some 310,800 health workers and mobilisers have been oriented on delivering preventative COVID-19 messages. Since the start of March 2020, WHO has medically screened more than 11.1 million people at points-of-entry.

**Socio-economic impacts:** In addition to pre-existing problems, the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 have translated into a dramatic deterioration in food insecurity. The recently released IPC analysis estimates that 12.2 million people – more than one third of the population - are in crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity. Cumulative precipitation has been below average over the wet season with reduced precipitation and higher temperatures likely to affect farmers and pastoralists, as well as water availability over the next few months. Food prices are already higher than normal due to COVID-19 and are likely to increase further given the dry spell’s likely impact on first and second crops in 2021. Water scarcity is already being seen in a number of areas.

**Cross Border:** **UPDATED**

**Border Crossings: Since 29 April**, the Iranian Government has imposed an indefinite lockdown with border closures. The border remains open only to commercial traffic and movement of documented nationals returning home to Afghanistan. According to the Border Monitoring Team of the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR), a total of 33,812 Afghan nationals returned from Iran through the Milak and Islam Qala border crossing sites between 21 and 27 May. Of these, 16,234 people returned voluntarily and 17,578 were deported. Since the start of the year, a historically significant influx of 473,480 people returned to Afghanistan from Iran, sparking new concerns about transmission of COVID-19 variants and overall absorption capacity of existing health resources. A sharp drop in remittances to Afghanistan has also been observed.

The border with Pakistan reopened on 20 May after a two-week lockdown by Pakistan. Between 21 and 27 May 2021, a total of 381 undocumented Afghans returned from Pakistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak borders (368 returned voluntarily and 13 were deported).

**More Information – Links:** **UPDATED**

**WHO**
- WHO’s latest information on COVID-19
- Infection Prevention and Control Guideline for COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign
- Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Weekly Epidemiological Update (18 May 2021)
- COVID-19 situation updates for week 19 (9 - 15 May 2021)
- What fuels unproven use of COVID-19 therapies?
- Afghanistan: Attacks on Health Care (January 01 - April 30 2021)

**Government of Afghanistan:**
- Ministry of Public Health: COVID-19 Dashboard

**Inter-Agency Standing Committee**
- IASC-endorsed COVID-19 guidance – new materials available
- Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak (available in English, Dari, Pashto)

**UN and others**
- Relief Web: COVID-19 Response Page
- OCHA: Global Humanitarian Overview 2021, March Update
- UN: Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 (September)

**OCHA**
- Asia Pacific COVID-19 - Humanitarian Data Portal
- Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan - 2020 Quarter Three Dashboard (Jan - Sep 2020)
- Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021 (December 2020)
- Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 (January 2021)
- Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Planned Response 2021
- Agricultural livelihoods and food security in the context of COVID-19: Results from household surveys in 11 countries with high pre-existing levels of food insecurity
- IRC: Ending the hunger crisis: Response, recovery and resilience
- IRC: Analysis shows 87% of COVID-19 vaccine doses have been given in wealthier countries, despite surges in cases in conflict-affected countries, warns IRC
- MSF: Year in Review 2020
- MSF: Gasping for Air: The deadly shortages in medical oxygen for COVID-19 patients, MSF Briefing Paper, May 2021
- IOM: Despite positive efforts, too many migrants face challenges accessing COVID-19 vaccines

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.
• Red Cross Red Crescent: We need new extraordinary steps to increase access to COVID-19 vaccines and we need them now
• IFRC: Asia: 5.9 million COVID-19 infections overwhelm hospitals
• UNICEF: The COVAX Facility will deliver its 65 millionth vaccine dose this week. It should've been at least its 170 millionth. The time to donate excess doses is now
• UNICEF: COVID-19 Response and WASH Lessons Learned in Afghanistan
• UNICEF: Guidelines for restarting PSS activities in emergency setting
• UNICEF: COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths: age- and sex-disaggregated data, May 2021
• HRW: “Years Don't Wait for Them”: Increased Inequalities in Children’s Right to Education Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic
• World Vision: Breaking the Chain: Empowering girls and communities to end child marriages during COVID-19 and beyond
• IOM: DTM (COVID-19) Global Mobility Restriction Overview - 10 May 2021
• UNHCR Asia and the Pacific COVID-19 External Update (13 May 2021)
• UNHCR: Afghanistan: Border Monitoring update - COVID-19 Response (March 2021)

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