

## Asia and the Pacific

8 December 2021



### HIGHLIGHTS

- On 15 November, the first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines donated as part of the Humanitarian Buffer mechanism of the COVAX Facility – for which UNHCR and other UN agencies supported Iran’s application - landed in Tehran. The following day, a second shipment of the vaccine landed in the country, bringing the total number of vaccines donated through the international mechanism to 1,611,600 doses. Through the Facility, Iran has received 6.7 million doses since April 2021, and to date, over 98 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered. The Government of Iran has stated that refugees in Iran would be vaccinated in cooperation with international organizations. More than 1.9 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered to foreign nationals in Iran, regardless of their documentation status.

### UPDATE ON VACCINATIONS

- In Indonesia, Jakarta has recorded a vaccination rate of above 70 per cent for the first dose and above 60 per cent for elderly. As of 30 November, 5,614 refugees received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccination, of whom 3,672 persons have completed the second dose. Refugees now have easier access to vaccines since the Ministry of Health issued a new circular in September allowing refugees to be vaccinated through private or public schemes provided there is a 70% vaccination coverage in the area they are residing. On 25 November, UNHCR assisted with the second dose of COVID-19 vaccination for twenty-six refugees living independently in Medan.
- In Malaysia, data collection on vaccination coverage among refugees and asylum-seekers is ongoing while efforts are under way to get access to actual coverage data from the official platform for vaccination registration. Currently, over 37,961 refugees and asylum-seekers have reported completion of vaccination.
- In the Philippines, UNHCR’s persons of concern were able to access COVID-19 vaccinations through local government programmes. As of 22 November 2021, a total of 169 refugees and asylum-seekers have been fully vaccinated.
- In Thailand, as of 1 December, 30,758 refugees have been vaccinated, of whom 14,644 have received one dose, and 16,114 have received two doses. In total, 33% of eligible refugees have been vaccinated. In November, 6,000 stateless persons in Thailand received second doses of vaccines.
- In India, UNHCR’s partner in Jaipur organized a vaccination camp to include refugees and asylum-seekers who had not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19.
- The Hong Kong SAR Government has completed the roll-out of free COVID-19 vaccinations for all specified groups, including all those Unified Screening Mechanism claimants and refugees who had requested a vaccination, and has commenced the roll-out of booster vaccinations for priority groups. As of 1 December, 71% of the total population of Hong Kong have received at least one vaccination. All vaccinated persons are issued with a vaccination certificate. UNHCR contacted its persons of

concern in Hong Kong to ensure they were aware of the last date for receiving first vaccinations at community vaccination centres.

## KEY ISSUES

- In Thailand, the restriction of access to camps for some NGOs creates challenges in providing services in the camps. November has seen a peak in new infections in camps, as well as positive cases among response teams, further straining existing human resources. Camp-based staff are overwhelmed as they conduct vaccinations as well as monitor and respond to new infections.
- The political situation in Myanmar has heavily impacted the national COVID-19 response – diminishing testing capacity, quarantine capacities, and essential health services. Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as stay-at-home orders, restrictions of movements and public transportations, the closure of marketplaces coupled with the current increase of prices continue to cause significant losses in livelihoods and hamper access to basic services to affected populations across the country.

## UNHCR'S RESPONSE

- In Iran, to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of refugees adopting negative coping mechanisms, between January to October 2021, UNHCR offices in Iran, in cooperation with the Government, have identified and provided cash assistance to 8,543 individuals at risk or in need, who have been affected by the pandemic.
- In Afghanistan, UNHCR continued to provide livelihood opportunities to some 2,318 persons. Those receiving assistance have continued with technical and vocational skills and trainings on entrepreneurship including provision of livelihood asset and job placement.
- UNHCR in Afghanistan has continued its protection and return monitoring activities at the official entry points with Iran and Pakistan. From 1 January to 23 November 2021, UNHCR interviewed 68,935 Afghans who entered Afghanistan from Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, of which 76% stated they received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. Those interviewed cited the reasons for leaving Afghanistan as: conflict, search for employment, family visit and medical treatment.
- In Indonesia, the distribution of 20,000 masks from the Republic of Korea was completed in November. The masks were distributed to 35 health facilities in Jakarta and surrounding areas, community interpreters and refugee representatives in Cisarua area, as well as refugees with medical illness. The masks have also been distributed to refugees and 9



On 15 November, a plane carrying Sinopharm vaccines for Afghan refugees landed at the airport in Tehran. Through the COVAX import mechanism, the UN in Iran is helping the Government protect refugees against COVID-19.  
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public health facilities and hospitals in Medan. They were also distributed to refugees in Tanjung Pinang, Batam and Makasar.

- In Malaysia, now that restrictions of movement have been lifted for fully vaccinated individuals, UNHCR has resumed in-person RSD interviews to a limited extent. Remote RSD interviews and RSD decision notifications will continue as a parallel process for individuals where in-person interviews are not yet possible. Individuals with protection and specific needs or other vulnerabilities are being prioritised for RSD at this time across the board, both for in-person and remote processing.
- In the South-East of Myanmar, UNHCR and partners distributed PPE items to rural community health centres. Items included 528 boxes of masks, 408 bottles of hand sanitizer/ spray, 100 surgical gowns, 12 bottles of antiseptic disinfectants and five packets of surgical caps. In addition, three COVID-19 awareness raising sessions were held in three villages in Kayin State. Masks and hand gels were distributed to the participants during the session. Moreover, during a mission in Chin State, UNHCR distributed NFIs to over 130 families (560 persons), and PPE items to over 150 families (680 persons) residing in in displacement sites.
- In Rakhine State, UNHCR has reached over 5,712 IDPs and other affected community members with COVID-19 related response (e.g., surgical masks) and/or NFI support. In addition, items including 4,000 bars of soap and 4,300 cloth masks were handed over as part of the 16 Days of Activism events.
- In Thailand, UNHCR continues to provide cash-based intervention to vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in urban areas. The total number of households that received CBI support in November is 1,082, covering 2,969 persons (0.1% lower than the previous month). In addition, UNHCR distributed 1,665 face masks to the urban population.
- Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) was undertaken twice a week in refugee camps in Thailand to raise awareness with the people in the community about COVID-19 and preventive measures. UNHCR's partner disseminated leaflets about covid prevention, vaccination, and how to use masks properly, and home visits were made for elderly persons. Those who have not been vaccinated are a prioritized target group.
- As schools in India begin to re-open, youth and children of UNHCR's persons of concern continue to be facilitated for admissions in schools and universities including through provision of education support letters by UNHCR. UNHCR's partner in Delhi conducted an awareness session for children on safety measures to be taken when returning to schools.
- In Sri Lanka, UNHCR administered the monthly subsistence allowance to refugees for two months as a pre-cautionary step due to the slight influx of COVID-19 cases.
- In Tajikistan, UNHCR and its partners continued to implement core protection activities while promoting access to basic rights and services, facilitating economic inclusion in partnership with the private sector, and providing life-saving assistance. In November, UNHCR through its partner distributed CBI and medication to the most vulnerable refugee households while also supporting those newly arrived in 2021. Psycho-social counselling as well as advocating for the inclusion of refugees in national public health responses, social safety nets and emergency assistance have continued as part of protection and community-based activities.

## FUNDING NEEDS

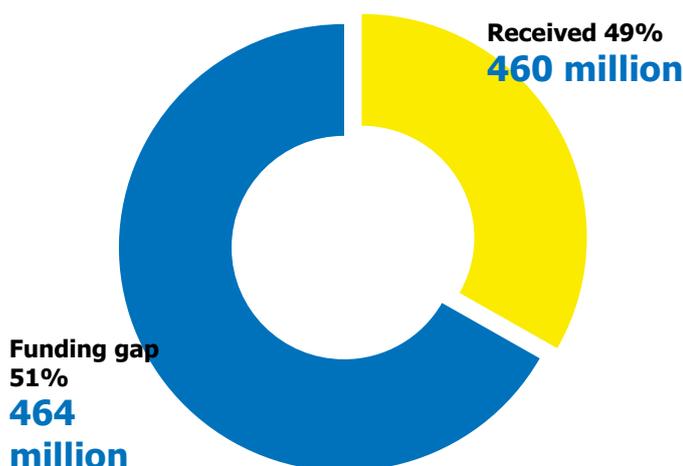
About half of UNHCR's COVID-19-related needs have been mainstreamed into its 2021 Global Appeal. However, with the pandemic evolving, and needs still emerging, UNHCR has in addition focused on a supplementary and limited set of activities related to exceptional socio-economic and protection impacts related to COVID-19. These activities focus on individuals who are newly

vulnerable due to loss of income or livelihood or were already vulnerable but whose situation has further deteriorated and may need additional support. Specific attention has been paid to activities that focus on women and girls due to heightened gender inequality linked to COVID-19.

USD 469 million has been mainstreamed into the 2021 Global Appeal. USD 455 million are supplementary needs included in **UNHCR's 2021 COVID-19 supplementary appeal**. This brings the total COVID-19-related requirements in 2021 to **USD 924 million**, including **USD 132 million for Asia and the Pacific** (ExCom-approved budget (mainstreamed) of USD 87 million and supplementary budget of USD 45 million).

## USD 924M

Requested for UNHCR's global COVID-19 response until the end of 2021 (inclusive of mainstreamed activities and UNHCR's COVID-19 supplementary appeal). Funding received is as of 7 September.



UNHCR is grateful for the support from donors to its COVID-19 response including the **USA, the African Development Bank Group, Canada, the EU, Unilever (UK), Austria, China, Education Cannot Wait, France, UN COVID-19 MPTF, USA for UNHCR, Country-Based Pooled Funds, Germany, and Japan**, among many others. We also appreciate the support from private donors, UN pooled funds, and development partners that provided support for COVID-19 response in the region.

Moreover, we are grateful to donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to UNHCR, which enable operations in Asia to respond in a timely and flexible manner. These donors include **Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, France, Switzerland, Ireland, Belgium, Italy**, and

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