



## The United Nations & COVID-19 Global Health Emergency – May 12 Update

Secretary-General Guterres stated, “COVID-19 is the greatest test” since World War II; “it is more than a health crisis. It is a human crisis.” The UN chief [released a plan](#) to counter COVID-19, which emphasizes the need for countries to act in concert and outlines ways to suppress transmission of the virus, safeguard people’s lives and their livelihoods, and learn from the crisis to build back.

**Provided below is a snapshot of UN efforts overseas to combat COVID-19. This week’s edition includes information on the UN’s updated Global Humanitarian Response Plan, new data from the ILO detailing COVID-19’s impact on the world’s labor markets, and a successful UNDP wheat farming program in Sudan’s food insecure White Nile State.**

*This reference document is by no means comprehensive of all the UN’s work; it is meant to illustrate the various ways the “UN Family” confronts a global pandemic, based on both its past actions and new methods. This document will be updated regularly but please reach out if you have any questions. For further background, the United Nations has also developed a [resource](#) to monitor the latest updates.*

### UN Population Fund (UNFPA)

- In Madagascar, UNFPA and the Ministry of Public Health have stepped in to [provide free transportation](#) for pregnant women visiting hospitals in Antananarivo and Toamasina. This helps improve women’s access to life-saving maternal health services. The free transport for pregnant women is available 24 hours a day and is expected to serve around 5,000 women during Madagascar’s anticipated month-long lockdown.
- With more than 130,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Turkey, UNFPA has brought [mobile health care](#) to those who live in close quarters in tent settlements and container housing, many of whom are seasonal migrants and Syrian refugees.



*Photo: UNFPA. Female health workers are critical to global efforts to contain coronavirus, particularly among pregnant women.*

### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

- An updated version of the [UN’s Global Humanitarian Response Plan \(GHRP\)](#) was released on May 7, with total financial requirements increasing from \$2 billion to \$6.7 billion. The significant increase is due to a rapid evolution of needs among a number of newly affected countries with ongoing humanitarian crises, the increased cost of essential health and other supplies, as well as air and sea transportation.
- In Bangladesh, UNHCR and its partners have built hand-washing stations, erected isolation and treatment centers, and carried out trainings for more than 2,000 health staff in camps hosting some 850,000 refugees.



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- In **Sudan**, UNHCR has delivered soap and other hygiene items to more than 320,000 refugees, internally displaced persons, and host community members.
- In **Jordan**, UNHCR is supporting the Ministry of Education in its efforts to roll-out two online learning platforms that will enable refugees and host communities to access online learning opportunities.

### International Labour Organization (ILO)

- As of April 29, ILO [estimated](#) that as job losses escalate [nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods](#). **There is expected to be a drop of 10.5% in working hours in the second quarter of 2020 compared to pre-crisis levels—the equivalent of 365 full-time jobs based on a 40-hour work week—significantly worse than previously estimated.** Almost [1.6 billion informal economy workers are significantly impacted](#) by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a 60% decline in their earnings.
- ILO programs on the ground continue to work with governments to understand and address the impact of COVID-19 on employment. For example, as part of the [Employment-Intensive Investment Program \(EIIP\)](#), the ILO is conducting rapid surveys on the impact of COVID-19 on the labour markets in Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq, with a focus on refugee, migrant, and national workers employed in the informal sector. The ILO Regional Office for Arab States is working to operationalize [the EIIP Guidance on employment-intensive works in response to COVID-19](#) and looking at ways of reshaping and re-designing models of EIIP to help boost employment and income during and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

### UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

- UNRWA [released](#) a revised emergency appeal on May 8 seeking \$93.4 million to address the [ongoing needs](#) of Palestine refugees created by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the growing socio-economic challenges, which are especially acute [in Lebanon](#), where the country is facing massive economic shocks. The new appeal will begin to address the longer-term impacts of the pandemic, including rising unemployment, job loss, and the investments necessary to preserve the quality and effectiveness of UNRWA's health and education systems.
- In **Jordan**, UNRWA delivered essential medications door-to-door to 62,700 Palestine refugee patients with life-threatening illnesses to reduce the number of refugees seeking assistance at health clinics.

### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- In **Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**, IOM's counter-trafficking teams conducted door-to-door and small group outreach sessions in order to raise awareness on COVID-19 and the heightened risks of human trafficking during the pandemic. Individual case management and counselling support services are also still ongoing at the Women and Girls' Safe Spaces, with physical distancing measures in place.
- To address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, **IOM Lebanon delivered multi-purpose cash assistance to over 500 vulnerable Syrian refugee households living across Lebanon** and has provided cash for rent assistance to 131 families living in North Lebanon.
- IOM **Libya** has published preliminary findings of an April 2020 migrant food security assessment. The recently released [Libya Migrant Emergency Food Security Assessment](#) in coordination with WFP, highlights how measures implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in a rise in food prices and scarcity of some types of food, negatively impacting the food security, safety, and wellbeing of migrants, refugees, and IDPs.



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- In **Afghanistan**, IOM is actively [responding](#) to COVID-19 in close partnership with the Ministry of Public Health and the WHO with over 100 health staff deployed to border level surveillance, health facility-based interventions and mobile health teams.

### UNICEF

- UNICEF launched an updated global “Humanitarian Action for Children” appeal calling for \$1.6 billion to carry out the programs and interventions required to respond to COVID-19’s effects on children worldwide. Further details are available [here](#).

- **To date, UNICEF and partners have reached over 1.6 billion people with COVID-19 messaging**; reached over 11.5 million people with critical WASH supplies; sent critical supplies to 52 countries that are actively responding to the pandemic; reached over 79.8 million children with distance/home-based learning; and reached over 830,000 children, parents or caregivers with community based mental health and psychosocial support.



*Photo: UNICEF. In Afghanistan, Saeeda and her children are overjoyed to have received 12 bars of soap, a crucial tool in the prevention of COVID-19. UNICEF has supplied more than 84 tons of soap to the most vulnerable families.*

- UNICEF launched a new report entitled [“Lost at Home: The risks and challenges of internally displaced children and the urgent actions needed to protect them”](#) which presents the scale and scope of the internal displacement of children and their families around the world.

### United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

- In **Iraq**, local peace committees created by UNDP in areas wrested from ISIL control are now working with mayors to protect populations from COVID through decontamination and public information.
- In **Sudan’s** conflict-impacted White Nile State (home to more than 265,000 refugees), **UNDP has successfully piloted wheat farming in the south—a first for the area, which is especially vulnerable to food shortages and job losses due to COVID-19.** This program employs a workforce of almost 1,400 laborers and farmers to open new land for wheat cultivation, and an additional 2,700 households provided equipment and training to develop small, single-family farms while commercial operations expand.
- UNDP **Armenia, Uzbekistan, and Uruguay** have entered into partnership agreements with the Coca-Cola Foundation, **which is donating \$120 million worldwide to address the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- UNDP **Nigeria** signed a partnership agreement with the Aliko Dangote Foundation to provide financial contributions through the UN Nigeria’s COVID-19 Basket Fund. The Foundation will contribute \$3.8 million for procurement and rapid deployment of medical equipment and supplies. **UNDP Nigeria has also partnered with Maersk, which contributed \$200,000 for procurement of ventilators.**
- UNDP **Georgia** is working with the Georgian company CaucasPack to produce and supply protective face masks to frontline healthcare staff, civil servants, and other at-risk personnel in the capital, Tbilisi, as well as more remote regions. **The first 16,000 face shields are to be distributed this week.**