



## The United Nations & COVID-19 Global Health Emergency – Oct. 13 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 WFP providing food assistance to 100,000 people that are under government quarantine in Bangladesh, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Nepal and UNICEF’s work training over 2.8 million healthcare facility staff and community health workers on infection protection and control measures.**

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.

### UNICEF

- **Over the course of the COVID-19 response, UNICEF has coordinated with authorities and partners to track and respond to misinformation and ensure that children and their families know how to protect themselves from COVID-19 and seek assistance.** To date, UNICEF has reached over 2.6 billion people with messaging on COVID-19 prevention and access to services, and 173.3 million have been engaged through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) actions, including in the most difficult humanitarian settings.



*Photo: UNICEF. “Now over 100 children will be ready to start their school year.” David Moreno, a UNICEF Education Officer, delivers footballs, soap and educational materials to a rural school in Mérida State, Venezuela.*

- Across West and Central Africa, UNICEF is working to ensure that children have access to quality education despite the pandemic, and to safely begin reopening schools. In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, almost 7 million children have benefited from distance education measures supported by UNICEF. In **Cameroon**, radio-learning has enabled more than 3,500 conflict-affected children to continue their education. In **Guinea-Bissau**, UNICEF coordinated with Ministry of Education to train 50 teachers on how to prevent and control COVID-19 infection at schools for safe reopening.
- In **Peru**, UNICEF has supported the reopening of primary health services benefiting 8,067 women and 7,564 children, distributed hygiene kits to 45,538 people, and provided direct support to 400 migrant and refugee households with children. UNICEF continues to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education on distance learning that will benefit 41,457 students.
- UNICEF is supporting infection prevention and control (IPC) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services in communities by ensuring access to WASH services for households living in affected and high-risk



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areas, at vulnerable collective sites, in reopened schools and in public spaces. **Over 2.8 million healthcare facility staff and community health workers have been trained by UNICEF in IPC, and over 54.4 million have received critical WASH supplies and services.**

### World Food Programme (WFP)

- WFP is providing short-term food assistance to people in isolation and quarantine facilities in many countries where returning populations—including migrant workers who have lost income opportunities abroad—must quarantine upon arrival. **In Bangladesh, Laos PDR, Myanmar, and Nepal, WFP has supported government quarantine measures with general food assistance to 100,000 people.** In Syria, WFP, in coordination with WHO, has started a six-month programme to provide food assistance in quarantine centres, while in Yemen, WFP supported 38 COVID-19 quarantine centres in nine governorates with rations to cover the 14-day quarantine period.
- In Iraq, [WFP's new urban livelihoods project](#) is providing short-term employment opportunities for people who lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The project, first rolled out in August, has now reached nearly 70,000 people in four cities and provides a cash stipend in exchange for work on useful community activities.
- WFP has published a September [update to its Global Response to COVID-19 plan](#). The update describes how COVID-19 has compounded threats to food security and how donor support has enabled WFP to step up to respond to the pandemic. Since the onset of the pandemic, WFP's needs have grown dramatically and have outpaced available funding. **To meet needs through March 2021, WFP requires \$5.1 billion.**

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

- **UNRWA launched a \$94.6 million COVID-19 Appeal to help mitigate the worst impacts of the pandemic on Palestine refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip until the end of December 2020, with a special focus on health, cash assistance and education. It is currently 64% funded.**
- In Gaza, UNRWA food distribution during the pandemic was featured in [this video report](#). In Jordan, Agency social workers continued contacting refugee families by phone and WhatsApp, to provide health awareness messages, support and advice on available emergency hotlines. In Lebanon, a five-week intensive summer Catch-Up program ended in August for some 8,500 school students. Tablets were distributed to 1,140 students, and 5,213 vulnerable families received communications assistance to pay for internet access. In Syria, the Agency's 25 health centers continue to operate a triage system for people with respiratory symptoms. More than 99 percent of all Palestine refugees received cash assistance and about 144,000 individuals received food baskets. In the West Bank, COVID-19 cases remain high. Quarantine centers were established in coordination with the PA Ministry of Health as part of the national response to the pandemic to which UNRWA provides support.

### Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

- [The Global Network Against Food Crises' \(GNAFC\)](#) most recent global data on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on acute hunger in vulnerable countries that were already facing food crises showed that the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), has now become the world's largest food crisis in terms of absolute numbers of the acutely food-insecure - a staggering 21.8 million people. This, as the impacts of COVID-19 related control measures aggravated pre-existing hunger drivers in the country: insecurity and armed conflict, an extended economic slump, and heavy rains and flooding.



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- In addition to the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the worst deteriorations in acute hunger in recent months have taken place in **Burkina Faso**—which has witnessed a nearly 300 percent uptick in the overall number of people experiencing acute hunger since the start of 2020—as well as **Nigeria, Somalia and the Sudan**, according to [the synthesis report](#). The report provides an update on the 55 countries that were identified by the Network in early 2020 as already being in food crises as of late 2019. Large increases in the overall number of acutely hungry people have been registered in northern **Nigeria** (a 73 percent increase, to 8.7 million people), **Somalia** (67 percent increase, to 3.5 million people) and the **Sudan** (64 percent increase, to 9.6 million people, or nearly a quarter of the country's population).
- To support countries and farmers to address persistent challenges related to food and agriculture and build back better from the pandemic, FAO has also launched the comprehensive [FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Programme](#), which aims to mitigate the immediate impacts of the pandemic while strengthening the long-term resilience of food systems and livelihoods.

### UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

- On October 5, the UN Refugee Agency chief, Filippo Grandi, called on the world's leaders to maintain levels of humanitarian aid funding for the agency's life-saving and stabilizing work around the world. Acknowledging that the economic consequences of COVID-19 are deeply affecting all countries, including those whose contributions form the "backbone" of UNHCR's yearly income, Grandi noted that such support ["will mitigate the instability likely to rise from growing pockets of marginalization, which will be much more costly to address later."](#) Conflict and persecution have not abated during the pandemic. In fact, the total number of forcibly displaced people globally has now reached nearly 80 million—up from 70.8 million the previous year and double the figure of 10 years ago. The rise in displacement is largely due to conflict and new displacements from and within the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Africa's Sahel region, Yemen, and Syria**. In the Western Hemisphere alone, 100,000 Nicaraguans have fled – the majority to Costa Rica.



Photo: UNHCR. UNHCR is supporting Afghan government counterparts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This week, UNHCR donated 26,600 disposable face masks, 1,270 N95 masks, 940 bottles of hand sanitizer, 10 boxes of disposable gloves, and 33 infrared thermometers.

- **Since March, UNHCR's staff have stayed and delivered in the field, providing aid and critical protection services to refugees and IDPs in 135 countries, including cash assistance to more than 3 million vulnerable refugees.** We have also strengthened public health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services in refugee and IDP camps and hosting areas; decongested camps and refugee and IDP hosting sites; and delivered PPE and critical medical supplies to the field, including more than 40 million masks, more than 2,000 oxygen concentrators, and 8,000 refugee housing units to serve as isolation and treatment centers. To address severe education gaps, UNHCR has also supported 750,000 students with distance learning. [Read UNHCR's report on our COVID19 response](#), detailing our life-saving protection and assistance activities implemented around the world. With COVID-19 still a threat to health systems and populations across the world, and its severe economic impacts felt heavily by the most vulnerable, including refugees and other displaced people, UNHCR continues to call on its governments and the private sector to provide support to those most in need.