Key Messages: UPDATED

• People confirmed to have COVID-19: 24,766 (as of 2pm, 14 June. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
• Deaths from COVID-19: 471
• Samples tested: 55,981

Key concerns: Border crossing areas, in-country testing capacity, protective equipment for frontline workers, commodity prices, messaging and rumour management, international air services

Situation Overview: UPDATED

MoPH data shows that 24,766 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 4,725 people have recovered, and 471 people have died (16 of which are healthcare workers). 55,981 people out of the population of 37.6 million have been tested. Afghanistan has a test-positivity-rate – positive tests as a percentage of total tests – of more than 44 per cent. More than five per cent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases are among healthcare staff. The majority of the deaths were people between ages of 40 and 69. Men in this age group represent more than half of all COVID-19-related deaths. With a fragile health system, a developing economy and underlying vulnerabilities, the people of Afghanistan are facing extreme consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases are expected to continue to increase over the weeks ahead as community transmission escalates, creating grave implications for Afghanistan’s economy and people’s well-being. Kabul remains the most affected part of the country in terms of confirmed cases, followed by Hirat, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar.

On 23 March, the UN Secretary General issued a global call urging parties to conflicts around the world to implement an immediate ceasefire to protect civilians, prevent the spread of the pandemic and allow aid workers to safely help people in need. In Afghanistan, fighting continues, causing loss of life, suffering and new displacement. Afghanistan has been ranked as the least peaceful country in the world for the second year in a row, according to the 2020 Global Peace Index. In the face of the pandemic, fighting continues despite efforts towards peace, causing loss of life, suffering and new displacement. Fighting creates an immediate and long-lasting burden for civilians and exposes them to sudden and terrifying violence that leaves them vulnerable to unexploded ordnance, permanent disability and significant trauma-related needs.

Source: MoPH
Operational Issues: UPDATED

The Government of Afghanistan announced on 6 June that it was extending the nationwide lockdown for three more months, issuing new health guidelines for citizens to follow in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. According to the latest measures, citizens must wear a face mask in public places at all times, maintain a 2-meter social distance, avoid gatherings of more than 10 people, disinfect all workplaces, and ensure older people stay at home. The Government has

Cross Border: UPDATED

The Milak crossing (Nimroz) is officially open to commercial traffic and documented citizens of Afghanistan. The Islam Qala-Dogharoon land border crossings (Hirat) remain open on both sides for documented travellers and commercial traffic.

On 16 May, the Government of Pakistan announced that passenger movements of stranded nationals of Afghanistan and Pakistan are officially allowed once a week (Saturday) with a maximum of 500 people allowed to pass through the Torkham and 300 through the Spin Boldak crossing to facilitate return to their respective countries. On 13 June, 6,842 citizens of Afghanistan returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border. The process was reportedly orderly and health screening procedures were followed. Spin Boldak was not open for passenger traffic on 13 June.

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan. On 16 May, the Government of Pakistan announced that the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points would open six days a week for commercial purposes. An unlimited number of trucks are being allowed to pass per day. Government of Pakistan announced that the Torkham and Spin Boldak crossing points would open six days a week for commercial purposes and crossings of passport citizens of Afghanistan returned from Pakistan through the Torkham border. The process was reportedly orderly and health screening procedures were followed. Spin Boldak was not open for passenger traffic on 13 June.

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

Response Activities: UPDATED

Humanitarians have rapidly scale-up services to support the Government’s response to the pandemic, reaching millions of people with life-saving assistance for new and existing needs. According to media reports, on 11 June, the Government of Turkey sent 10 pieces of defibrillators, 10 pieces of oxygen regulators, 3 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machines, 10 nebulizers and 30,000 COVID-19 real time quantitative PCR diagnostic test kits, 25,000 N95 face masks and 50,000 surgical and normal masks to Kabul to support the Government of Afghanistan in its COVID-19 response.

According to COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act, child labour decreased by 94 million since 2000, but that gain is now at risk. Children already in child labour may be working longer hours or under worsening conditions, the report says. More of them may be forced into the worst forms of labour, which causes significant harm to their health and safety.

“As the pandemic wreaks havoc on family incomes, without support, many could resort to child labour,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder. “Social protection is vital in times of crisis, as it provides assistance to those who are most vulnerable. Integrating child labour concerns across broader policies for education, social protection, justice, labour markets, and international human and labour rights makes a critical difference.”

According to the brief, COVID-19 could result in a rise in poverty and therefore to an increase in child labour as households use every available means to survive. Some studies show that a one percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 per cent increase in child labour in certain countries.

“In times of crisis, child labour becomes a coping mechanism for many families,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “As poverty rises, schools close and the availability of social services decreases, more children are pushed into the workforce. As we reimagine the world post-COVID, we need to make sure that children and their families have the tools they need to weather similar storms in the future. Quality education, social protection services and better economic opportunities can be game changers.”

Vulnerable population groups – such as those working in the informal economy and migrant workers – will suffer most from economic downturn, increased informality and unemployment, the general fall in living standards, health shocks and insufficient social protection systems, amid other pressures.

Evidence is gradually mounting that child labour is rising as schools close during the pandemic. Temporary school closures are currently affecting more than 1 billion learners in over 130 countries. Even when classes restart, some parents may no longer be able to afford to send their children to school. As a result, more children could be forced into exploitative and hazardous jobs. Gender inequalities may grow more acute, with girls particularly vulnerable to exploitation in agriculture and domestic work, the report says.

The brief proposes a number of measures to counter the threat of increased child labour, including more comprehensive social protection, easier access to credit for poor households, the promotion of decent work for adults, measures to get children back into school, including the elimination of school fees, and more resources for labour inspections and law enforcement.

COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act – ILO, UNICEF:

NEW YORK/GENEVA, 12 June 2020 – Millions more children risk being pushed into child labour as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, which could lead to the first rise in child labour after 20 years of progress, according to a new brief from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF.

According to COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act, child labour decreased by 94 million since 2000, but that gain is now at risk. Children already in child labour may be working longer hours or under worsening conditions, the report says. More of them may be forced into the worst forms of labour, which causes significant harm to their health and safety.

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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.
extended the closure of schools for three months. Additionally, all hotels, parks, sports complexes and other public places will remain closed for three months, while public transport facilities, such as buses, carrying more than four passengers will not be allowed to travel. Restaurants and coffee shops will only be allowed to carry out service delivery and takeaways. Measures to contain the spread of the virus continue to differ across provinces, with provincial authorities maintaining the authority to decide on and implement their lockdown measures. In light of the newly announced nationwide preventative measures, provincial authorities are currently reviewing their lockdown measures.

While provincial lockdown measures continue to impede humanitarian movement, in the last few weeks, the situation significantly improved, with less obstructions reported. This is mainly due to the above-mentioned leniency in the enforcement of lockdown measures as well as due to previously established provincial solutions to facilitate movement. Humanitarian partners remain active in responding to crises throughout the country and continue to urge the Government to employ a national approach to these movement issues so that individual negotiations are not required on a case-by-case basis. For additional information on access constraints, please see the C-19 Access Impediment Report.

On 2 May, the Government of Afghanistan announced the suspension of all commercial domestic flights until the end of June. However, on 5 June, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) announced that it had received clearance to resume UNHAS flights from Jalalabad Airfield (JAF). The flights to Jalalabad are currently operating on Mondays and Thursdays, depending on demand.

On 9 June, Emirates (airlines) announced that it had received approvals to carry passengers on flights to Kabul in Afghanistan, starting from 25 June. Passengers can book to fly between destinations, with a connection in Dubai, as long as they meet travel and immigration entry requirements of their destination country.

UNHAS airbridge connecting Kabul and Doha is operating regularly on Sunday, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. On 31 May, Qatar Airways authorities announced that they will approve Mondays and Thursdays, depending on demand.

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More Information – Links: UPDATED

WHO
• WHO’s latest information on COVID-19
• WHO COVID-19 Global Dashboard
• COVID-19 Partners Platform

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: Asia Pacific COVID-19 - Humanitarian Data Portal
• OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 (June 2020 Revision)
• UN: UN supporting ‘trapped’ domestic violence victims during COVID-19 pandemic
• UN: Enhancing access to services for migrants in the context of COVID-19
• OCHA: UN ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment reiterates the importance of inclusive humanitarian response
• UN-HABITAT: Innovative new platform tracks cities’ readiness and response to COVID-19
• UNESCO: Women scientists share knowledge and initiatives to address COVID-19
• UNESCO: Learning in the COVID-19 era

FAO: World Day Against Child Labour 2020 – preventing child labour in agriculture during COVID-19 and beyond
• Cordaid: COVID-19 and Global Health
• Medair: Fighting COVID-19 with information
• HRW: Pandemic Threatens Progress on Child Labor
• UNHCR: Mental health and psychosocial support in refugee operations during the COVID-19 pandemic
• ILQ, UNICEF: COVID-19 and child labour
• WHH: Weltungerhilfe Covid-19 Appeal
• IFPRI: Water in the COVID-19 crisis
• FAO: Bimannual Report on Global Food Markets
• FAO: COVID-19 – From a Global Health Crisis to a Global Food Crisis?
• Save the Children: In this extraordinary time, routine healthcare is essential
• IFRC: Prevention and response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in COVID-19
• IFRC: COVID-19 Impact on Trafficking in Persons
• IFRC: Drought and Flash Floods Emergency Plan of Action Operation Update (Afghanistan)
• IOM: COVID-19 – Impact on IDPs
• EU: Asylum Trends and COVID-19 (Issue 2)
• DFID: Rapid Review of Physical Distancing and Alternative Disease Control Measures in South Asia
• UNHCR: Asia and the Pacific COVID-19 External Update
• REACH: Research Methodology Note – Informal Settlements Assessment (Afghanistan)
• USAID: Afghanistan - Complex Emergency Fact Sheet
• UN Women: Gender Alert on COVID-19 Afghanistan
• UNICEF: Polio Social Mobilisers step-up to aid (Afghanistan)
• Save the Children: COVID-19 – An additional three million children in Afghanistan need help to survive in 2020

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