Key Messages: UPDATED

- People confirmed to have COVID-19: 843 (Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- Deaths from COVID-19: 30
- Tests completed: 4,470

Key concerns: Border crossing areas, measured lockdowns, protective equipment for frontline workers, commodity prices, floods, messaging and rumour management, international air services

Situation Overview: UPDATED

MoPH data shows that 843 people across 27 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 54 people have recovered and 30 people have died.

Of the 843 people who are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19, 32 are girls (age 0-19), 34 are boys (age 0-19), 595 are adult men and 182 are adult women. Men between the ages of 20-39 have the highest rates of infection (381 of the confirmed cases), followed by men between the ages of 40-49 (98 of the confirmed cases). The average age of people confirmed to have COVID-19 in Afghanistan is 35 years. Cases are expected to increase rapidly over the weeks ahead as community transmission escalates, creating grave implications for Afghanistan’s economy and people’s well-being. Hirat is still the most affected part of the country, followed by Kabul. MoPH reports that 4,470 tests have been conducted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People confirmed to have COVID-19</th>
<th>843</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of deaths from COVID-19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people recovered</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of tests conducted</td>
<td>4,470</td>
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</tbody>
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Response: UPDATED

The Global Humanitarian Response Plan, released in March, is in the process of being updated. At the country-level, the humanitarian community has begun the process of revising of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan in light of COVID-19. In the meantime, activities from April-June are outlined in a $108.1m COVID-19 Multi-Sector Humanitarian Country Plan for Afghanistan, which was released in March 2020. WHO has issued an update to its Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. The update provides guidance for countries preparing for a phased transition from widespread transmission to a steady state of low-level or no transmission.

IOM, UNHCR, WHO and other partners are strengthening logistics, health (screening and surveillance) and monitoring assistance in border areas, in support of the Government. Border monitoring teams have been put in place along main crossing points from Iran and Pakistan. Some 670 sets of personal protective equipment have been provided to government and humanitarian personnel, while some 82 government and humanitarian offices have been provided with...
hygiene kits. However, it is understood that gaps still remain. UNHCR additionally plans to mobilise some 100 refugee housing units; 500 tents and 12,000 NFI kits to augment medical service provision in these areas. Distribution of hygiene materials among those in displacement sites continues with some 3,500 households in Gulan settlement receiving support and an additional 200 refugees and asylum seekers being provided with cash top-ups to facilitate the purchase of hygiene items. More than 100 community health supervisors and workers have participated in COVID-19 trainings on personal protective measures in Nimroz and Herat conducted by IOM, in coordination with the Provincial Public Health Directorate. Additional trainings are planned in these locations in the coming weeks and similar trainings will also be provided for community health workers in Kandahar and Nangahar.

While implementing activities to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, humanitarians continue to respond to other ongoing and emerging humanitarian needs. More than 14,500 people have been affected by floods across 17 provinces since the start of the year. An additional 600 people have also been affected by landslides and more than 800 by avalanches. Since 24 March alone, humanitarian partners provided emergency shelter and household items to 6,104 flood-affected families. While minor logistical issues were encountered due to COVID-19 related movement restrictions, humanitarians continue to work closely with government authorities to ensure critical operations continue.

### Secondary impact of COVID-19 in Afghanistan - Prices

Beyond the immediate impact of COVID-19 on the country’s health situation, measures introduced to prevent its spread have had significant impact on market dynamics. Prices for key food items such as wheat, wheat flour and cooking oil, which saw a surge in late March, have remained at elevated levels. WFP’s market monitoring data, which compared prices of key commodities across 8 major markets between 14 March and 15 April, shows that the price of wheat flour has increased by 15-18 per cent; the price of cooking oil has increased by 17 per cent; and the price of rice and pulses by 2-4 per cent. During the same period the purchasing power of casual labourers and pastoralists has deteriorated by 20 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively. In Kabul alone, the purchasing power of casual labourers has declined by as much as 31 per cent. This decline in purchasing power is reportedly associated with inability to work due to lockdown measures.

Further spikes in food commodity prices may be seen in the coming months due to border closures by other countries to curtail the spread of the virus. Even in a good harvest year, Afghanistan suffers from a national wheat grain deficit of at least one million metric tons. Typically this gap is offset through imports, primarily from Kazakhstan, at a rate of 100,000 to 120,000 metric tons of wheat per month. As a precautionary measure to minimise the economic impact of the pandemic, Kazakhstan has recently introduced an overall monthly export cap of 200,000 metric tons for wheat grains. This is expected to create a significant gap in the availability of staple food supplies in the domestic market in Afghanistan.

### Funding:

UNHCR and ICVA have jointly launched a PSEA Outreach and Communication Fund to provide rapid, targeted financial support to NGOs to develop and disseminate PSEA outreach and communication materials. Applications will be accepted until 15 May 2020.

On 14 April, the International Monetary Fund announced the plans to provide immediate debt service relief under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust. Afghanistan is among the 25 countries that will receive debt relief under the announcement. The Asia Development Bank has also announced it is tripling its funds to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic globally. The $20b global package will address the immediate needs of ADB’s developing member countries and help counter severe macroeconomic and health impacts due to COVID-19. The package includes $2.5b in concessional and grant resources. More information on the specific allocation for Afghanistan is still to come.

### Cross Border Concerns: UPDATED

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

As of 16 April, Johns Hopkins University reports that there are 76,389 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Iran. The Milak crossing (Nimroz) is formally open only to commercial traffic and documented citizens of Afghanistan; 661 individuals used this border crossing to return to Afghanistan yesterday. The Islam Qala-Dogharoon land border crossings (Hirat) remain open on both sides for both individuals and commercial traffic. 1,913 people used this border crossing to return to Afghanistan yesterday; including 120 deportees and 1793 spontaneous returns.

As of 16 April, according to Johns Hopkins University there are 6,505 people confirmed to have COVID-19 in Pakistan. Pakistan's border remains closed to all except commercial vehicles. Pakistan is facilitating the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan through the Torkham and Chaman border crossing points three days per week (on Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Yesterday, four of the eight trucks waiting on the Pakistan side of the border crossed into Afghanistan. It is hoped that the four remaining trucks will cross through on Friday. Facilitation of these trucks to cross the border has mitigated potential pipeline breaks thus far. Humanitarians remain hopeful that border crossing for
commercial traffic will be maintained according to the announced schedule to ensure the flow of humanitarian food and relief items from storage sites in Karachi.

**Operational Issues: UPDATED**

A number of provinces have instituted measures to limit the exposure of residents to COVID-19. Throughout the country, these ‘measured lockdowns’ have resulted in closures of sections of each city and/or movement limitations. These include limits on the number of people travelling together and the imposition of curfews. Limitations on inter-city travel have also been implemented.

On 13 April, stricter measures were announced in Kandahar by the Provincial Committee of Corona Virus Prevention. These measures include the daytime closure of all businesses, excluding health centres, pharmacies and bakeries. Shops and businesses can continue their work from 12am to 6am. Assurances have been received that freedom of movement for UN and NGO staff who are carrying valid organisational IDs will continue. Additional movement restrictions remain in place for Kabul and Jalalabad. In Kabul these measures will remain in place until 29 April, at which point they will be reassessed. Reports indicate that despite assurances by the Government that these would not limit critical program movements of NGOs and the UN, newly introduced lockdown measures continue to impact on the mobility of some staff members. Humanitarian partners continue to urge the Government to employ a national approach to these issues so that individual negotiations are not required on a case-by-case basis. The closure of government institutions due to movement restrictions may create new coordination challenges for humanitarian agencies.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) continues to make arrangements for an international airbridge. UNHAS has received an initial $3.7m in funding from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund and is now in the process of securing flight approvals for an international service with three flights per week between Kabul and Doha. Flights into Doha will accommodate transiting passengers only. The newly secured aircraft and crew have arrived in Kabul and flights are planned to start on 21 April, with subsequent flights scheduled for 23 and 26 April, pending successful negotiations on landing permits and air space. UNHAS intends to maintain flights every Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday. UNHAS instructions on booking procedures will be disseminated shortly.

Emirates Airlines has announced limited passenger flights to carry passengers outbound from the UAE; this will include flights three times a week from Dubai into Kabul starting from 16 April, depending on passenger demand.

**More Information: UPDATED**

WHO
- WHO’s latest information on COVID-19
- WHO COVID-19 Strategy Update
- WHO COVID-19 Global Dashboard

Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- IASC-endorsed COVID-19 guidance – new materials available

UN and others
- Ministry of Public Health: COVID-19 Dashboard
- Operation Mercy: COVID-19 Kids Story Book in Pashto and Dari
- Afghanistan Nutrition Cluster: Guidance for partners and nutrition care providers for the COVID-19 response
- Ministry of Education and Education in Emergencies Working Group: Alternate Education Service Delivery Plan
- IOM: Dashboard on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on human mobility

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