Key Messages: UPDATED

- People confirmed to have COVID-19: 37,424 (as of 2pm, 13 August. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
- Deaths from COVID-19: 1,363
- Samples tested: 97,778

Key concerns: Border crossing areas, in-country testing capacity, protective equipment for frontline workers, maintaining essential health services, public complacency, sustained prevention and mitigation measures, messaging and rumour management

Situation Overview: UPDATED

According to data from Johns Hopkins University, more than 20 million people across the world have tested positive for COVID-19, and the growth rate continues to accelerate. MoPH data shows that 37,424 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 26,714 people have recovered, and 1,363 people have died (58 of whom are healthcare workers). 97,778 people out of a population of 37.6 million have been tested. Almost 10 per cent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases are among healthcare staff. The majority of the deaths were people between the ages of 40 and 69. Men in this age group represent more than 51 per cent of all COVID-19-related deaths. Moreover, men account for 71 per cent of the total COVID-19 confirmed cases although this may be the result of over-representation of men in testing. Due to limited public health resources and testing capacity, as well as the absence of a national death register, confirmed cases of and deaths from COVID-19 are likely under reported overall in Afghanistan. Kabul remains the most affected part of the country in terms of confirmed cases, followed by Hirat, Balkh, Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces.

Complacency and failure to follow public health advice is creating grave risks in the community with people generally not observing physical distancing protocols. Recent modelling on COVID-19 projections, developed by the Centre for Humanitarian Data in collaboration with Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory and released on 29 July, suggests an increase in the number of cases in Afghanistan, including an increase in the number of severe cases and deaths, in the coming weeks if current preventative measures are maintained. Modelling further suggests a significant increase in severe cases (potentially up to 5x the number) should current preventative measures be lifted, creating grave implications for Afghanistan's economy and people’s well-being.

Source: MoPH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 0-19</th>
<th>Age 20-29</th>
<th>Age 30-39</th>
<th>Age 40-49</th>
<th>Age 50-59</th>
<th>Age 60-69</th>
<th>Age 70-79</th>
<th>Age 80+</th>
<th>Unspecified</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
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<td>6,268</td>
<td>1,966</td>
<td>6,171</td>
<td>1,621</td>
<td>4,608</td>
<td>1,456</td>
<td>3,160</td>
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<tr>
<td># People confirmed with COVID-19</td>
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<td>3,160</td>
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<td>37,424</td>
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<tr>
<td># Deaths from COVID-19</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>1,363</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Hospitals and clinics continue to report challenges maintaining or expanding their facilities’ capacity to treat patients with COVID-19 as well as maintaining essential health services. WHO notes that it is important to ensure healthcare workers have the proper personal protection to carry out services. In addition, effective and accurate risk communication messages are needed to re-assure people that it is safe to seek treatment at hospitals and health centres and that health centres are carrying out proper infection prevention and control measures. Current laboratory capacity in Afghanistan remains limited. Humanitarian partners urge the Government of Afghanistan to ensure laboratories are appropriately equipped and that procured supplies go to under-resourced health centres in a transparent manner, so that life-saving support can be delivered to those most in need.

WHO notes that when health systems are overwhelmed, as is being seen in Afghanistan, both direct mortality from the outbreak and indirect mortality from vaccine-preventable and treatable conditions increase dramatically. WHO stresses the need to balance the demands of responding directly to COVID-19, with simultaneously engaging in strategic planning and coordinated action to maintain essential health service delivery, mitigating against the risk of system collapse.

Response Activities: UPDATED

Humanitarians have rapidly scaled-up services to support the response to the pandemic, reaching millions of people with life-saving assistance for new and existing needs. For a detailed update of all cluster response activities in Afghanistan please see the latest Operational Situation Report.

Key cumulative COVID-19 response figures include:
- Health Cluster partners have reached almost 4.7m people with risk communication and community engagement messages
- More than 2.2 million people have been reached with WASH assistance
- More than 516,000 people have been reached by ES-NFI partners with key messages on the prevention of COVID-19
- Protection partners have reached almost 2243,000 people with psychosocial support services
• Nearly 68,000 children have been reached with home-based learning materials
• Nutrition partners have distributed almost 67,000 IEC materials across the country since the start of the crisis
• Close to 327,000 people have been reached with COVID-19 specific food assistance by FSAC partners between the beginning of May and 31 July

**Cross Border: UPDATED**
The Milak (Nimroz) and Islam Qala-Dogharoon (Hirat) crossings with Iran are officially open to commercial traffic and movement of documented Afghanistan nationals. According to the Border Monitoring Team of the Directorate of Refugees and Repatriation (DoRR), a total of 10,251 Afghanistan nationals returned from Iran through the Milak and Islam Qala border crossing sites between 2 and 8 August, a 29 per cent decrease from the previous week (14,508). 5,616 people returned voluntarily and 4,635 were deported. IOM provided post-arrival humanitarian assistance to 645 people or 6 per cent of all undocumented Afghanistan nationals returning from Iran at its transit centres in Hirat and Nimroz during the past week. IOM notes that a reduction in assistance provided by IOM at transit centres is related to funding constraints for the cross-border return programme.

According to UNHCR’s latest border monitoring report (covering the period between 26 July and 8 August), 31 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Islam Qala and Milak border crossing points and 55 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Torkham border crossing point said they faced problems during the COVID-19 outbreak in neighbouring countries, such as lost work/wages, discrimination/stigmatisation by local communities, lack of access to markets, pressure from authorities to return to Afghanistan, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, and lack of access to medical services. 92 per cent of respondents returning from Iran and 95 per cent of respondents returning from Pakistan stated that they had received information about COVID-19 in the respective countries, mainly through TV, radio, religious leaders and local communities. 11 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Milak border crossing point, 15 per cent at Islam Qala, and almost 73 per cent interviewed at Torkham border crossing reported that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. Spin Boldak and Ghulam Khan border crossings remain officially closed for pedestrian movement.

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan. Since 12 July, four border crossing points (Ghulam Khan, Torkham, Angor Adda and Kharlachi) have been open for trucks six days a week (every day except Saturday). On 12 August, Spin Boldak border crossing was also opened to facilitate trade between the two countries.

Borders with Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan remain open only for commercial traffic and crossings of passport holders back into Afghanistan. Humanitarians emphasise the critical importance of maintaining a reliable flow of traffic for humanitarian cargo from all neighbouring countries and are advocating for special consideration to expedite humanitarian food and relief items through border crossings.

**Operational Issues: UPDATED**
A nationwide lockdown remains officially in place. According to reports, public health advice is not being followed and enforcement has been lenient. Measures to contain the spread of the virus continue to vary across provinces where local authorities are responsible for implementation. Provincial lockdown measures continue to periodically impede humanitarian movement. For more information on access constraints, please see the latest HAG Quarterly Access Report (Q2). Humanitarian partners remain active in responding to crises throughout the country, including flooding and conflict-related displacement, and continue to urge all parties to the conflict to facilitate unimpeded access to civilians so humanitarian assistance is not delayed.

Commercial domestic flights have resumed after a three-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has reduced domestic flight days from five to four days a week. UNHAS will continue to support any required evacuation and relocation flights during all days of the week.

International commercial air travel has resumed with Air Arabia, Ariana Airlines, Kam Air, and Emirates Airlines providing round-trip international flight services to/from Kabul. Emirates Airlines announced that effective from 1 August, all passengers travelling to Dubai, including those in transit, must have a negative COVID-19 test certificate issued by an Emirates-approved laboratory to be accepted on the flight. The test must be taken a maximum of 96 hours before departure. Passengers are encouraged to check with airlines on flight restrictions for international flights, as well as travel and immigration entry requirements of their destination country.

The UNHAS airbridge connecting Kabul and Doha continues to operate on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. UNHAS has been closely monitoring demand on the Doha Airbridge and noted a significant reduction in passenger loads with the resumption of commercial flights. However, since there is still inadequate clarity on continuity and predictability of services from commercial airlines, UNHAS is fully committed to
support the Doha Airbridge until 30 September 2020 as per the initial plan. The next UNHAS flight is planned for Sunday, 16 August.

**More Information – Links: UPDATED**

**WHO**
- WHO’s latest information on COVID-19
- WHO COVID-19 Global Dashboard
- COVID-19 Partners Platform
- Timeline of WHO’s response to COVID-19

**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**
- UN: Comprehensive Response to COVID-19
- Relief Web: COVID-19 Response Page
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 (June 2020 Revision)
- OCHA: Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2018-2021 (June 2020 update) - Infographic
- UN SG: Inequalities, Global Poverty Could Grow for Years, Secretary-General Warns at Security Council Teleconference on ‘Pandemics and Sustaining Peace’
- UNFPA: Youth leading the way in COVID-19 solutions - Statement by UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem
- MSF: Responding to COVID-19, Global Accountability Report
- UNICEF, WHO: Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in schools: Special focus on COVID-19
- UNICEF: How are Countries Preparing to Mitigate the Learning Loss as They Reopen Schools?
- ECW: Stronger Together in Crises - Annual Results Report
- Plan International: Setting the agenda: Girls platform for action
- SC: Leading Children’s Organizations Call for Immediate Release of Children Together With Their Families
- SC: From grief to influence: channelling the power of children and youth
- IsDB: How the textile industry can help countries recover from COVID-19
- UNHCR: Global COVID-19 Emergency Response
- UNHCR: Afghanistan Border Monitoring update - COVID-19 Response
- ACT Alliance: Enabling Health Workers to fight COVID-19 safely and securely (Afghanistan)
- UNAMA: Access to information more urgent than ever during COVID-19

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