Key Messages: UPDATED

• People confirmed to have COVID-19: 35,928 (as of 2pm, 23 July. Source: Afghanistan Ministry of Public Health - MoPH)
• Deaths from COVID-19: 1,211
• Samples tested: 85,413

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

Situation Overview: UPDATED

MoPH data shows that 35,928 people across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan are now confirmed to have COVID-19. Some 24,550 people have recovered, and 1,211 people have died (54 of whom are healthcare workers). 85,413 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 52 per cent of all COVID-19-related deaths. Moreover, men account for more than 71 per cent of the total COVID-19 confirmed cases. 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 to be under reported overall in Afghanistan. Modelling suggests the peak has not yet passed and cases may still accelerate over the coming weeks, 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 Herat, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar provinces.

Hospitals and clinics continue to report challenges maintaining or expanding their facilities’ capacity to treat patients with COVID-19. These challenges are related to the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits and medical supplies, as well as the limited number of trained staff – further exacerbated by the number of frontline staff falling ill. Humanitarian partners urge the Government of Afghanistan to ensure healthcare staff have adequate personal protection and to share distribution plans for existing stocks of medical equipment and PPE with humanitarian partners. Current laboratory capacity in Afghanistan remains limited. There continues to be an urgent need for increased laboratory supplies, as well as to strengthen human capacity and operational support.

# People confirmed with COVID-19

<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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>875</td>
<td>971</td>
<td>2,803</td>
<td>6,036</td>
<td>6,497</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>4,425</td>
<td>2,962</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>2,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Deaths from COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age 0-19</th>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>106</td>
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<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1,211</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Coordination: UPDATED

On 17 July, the updated Global Humanitarian Response Plan was launched. The third iteration of the GHRP is seeking $10.3 billion to help 250 million people across 63 vulnerable countries and to cover the global transport system necessary to deliver relief. As of 23 July, $1.87 billion has been received towards the GHRP.

Afghanistan recently revised its Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), requesting $1.1 billion to fund life-saving assistance both to people affected by COVID-19, as well as pre-existing needs caused by the ongoing conflict and natural disaster. More than half way through 2020, the plan is just 22 per cent funded, leaving a funding gap of $877.9m. This is a serious shortfall which will slow down implementation of life-saving activities if funds are not urgently received.

Interviews with a resident of Loyawala in the southern province of Kandahar – Protection Cluster:

"With shops and bus stations closed down in the neighbourhood, we can no longer work and make money to feed our children. Some families have sent their children to live with other relatives who can feed them. We are too poor to dig a bore well, so we do not have sufficient water and there are not enough latrines. We lack everything, but my biggest concern is that there are no jobs here," said a resident of Loyawala in the southern province of Kandahar during a community discussion group organised by the Protection Cluster.

All participants, which included internally displaced people, returnees or members of the host community, stated that they were struggling to feed their family members on a daily basis, as most of them relied on daily work to survive. This year, about 10,000 people were displaced by conflict in the southern part of the country. Even before the threat of COVID-19, Afghanistan was already facing a protection crisis. People's living conditions and their overall resilience have been eroded by decades of hardship -- a situation that is only exacerbated by COVID-19.

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 4,586,632 people reached with risk communication and community engagement messages.
- More than 2.15 million people have been reached with WASH assistance.
- 510,463 people have been reached by ES-NFI partners with key messages on the prevention of COVID-19.
- Protection partners have reached 207,466 men, women, boys and girls with psychosocial support services.
- 53,527 children have been reached with home-based learning materials.
- Nutrition partners have distributed 63,310 IEC materials across the country since the start of the crisis.
- As part of WFP’s regular programming, approximately 5.5 million people have been reached with food assistance between 5 March and 15 July.*

* The tonnage of weekly food dispatched fluctuates regularly based on programme needs, use of commercial transporters versus WFP’s own fleet, capacities to distribute in the field and other factors. Weekly figures are regularly consolidated and analysed as part of WFP’s overall rolling implementation plan that ranges from two to four months.
Cross Border: UPDATED

The Milak crossing (Nimroz) and Islam Qala-Dogharoon (Hirat) crossings 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 13,495 Afghanistan nationals returned from Iran through the Milak and Islam Qala border crossing sites between 12 and 18 July 2020, a 27 per cent increase from the previous week (10,604). 5,660 people returned voluntarily and 7,835 were deported. IOM provided post-arrival humanitarian assistance to 1,332 (10 per cent) of all undocumented Afghanistan nationals returning from Iran at its transit centres in Hirat and Nimroz during the past week. IOM is highlighting the significant increase in deportations of Afghanistan nationals from Iran in recent weeks following increased cross border movement with the reopening of the Iran’s economy.

According to UNHCR’s latest border monitoring report (covering the period between 12 and 18 July), 31 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Islam Qala and Milak border crossing points and 54 per cent of returnees interviewed at 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 by authorities to return to Afghanistan, movement restrictions related to the lockdown, and lack of access to medical services. 90 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. 13 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Milak border crossing point and 19 per cent at Islam Qala reported that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. 80 per cent of returnees interviewed at the Torkham border crossing stated that they had not received information about COVID-19 upon arrival in Afghanistan. The monitoring findings shows that the information gap at Torkham remains very high and further efforts are required to provide new arrivals with the information they need to stay safe. Spin Boldak and Ghulam Khan border crossings remain closed for pedestrian movement,

Pakistan continues to facilitate the movement of cargo trucks and containers into Afghanistan. Since 22 June, two border crossing points (Ghulam Khan and Torkham) have been open six days a week (every day except Saturday) to facilitate trade between the two countries. While the Spin Boldak crossing point has officially remained closed for commercial traffic since mid-June, the border opened on 22 July on an exceptional case for trucks in both directions. On 2 July, Mohammad Sadiq, Pakistan’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, announced that Pakistan would reopen Angor Adda and Kharlachi border crossings with Afghanistan on 12 July to boost trade between the neighbours. Both are now operating.

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 in place. According to reports, public health advice is not being followed and enforcement has been lenient. In most cities, shops and restaurants are open. 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. In the second quarter of 2020, the Humanitarian Access Group (HAG) recorded a total of 227 incidents impacting access of humanitarians, compared to 193 in the first quarter of 2020. According to the Q2 Access Report, while the high incident numbers in March and April 2020 can be explained by government-imposed lockdown measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 (which led to 29 and 31 movement restrictions respectively), the high incident numbers in May were no longer directly linked to COVID-19, but rather stemmed from interference attempts and conflict activity. 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. For additional information on access constraints, please see the latest HAG Quarterly Access Report (Q2).

The Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority announced that domestic flights have resumed after a three-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 15 July, Kam Air resumed its regular domestic flights to provinces across Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) has reduced domestic flight days from five to four days a week. UNHAS no longer conducts regular domestic flights on Mondays; however, all locations are still served during the week. UNHAS will adjust the schedule based on user demand. UNHAS will continue to support any required evacuation and relocation flights during all days of the week.
International commercial air travel has resumed with Emirates Airlines providing round-trip international flight services to/from Kabul. Emirates Airlines announced that effective from 10 July, all passengers travelling with Emirates from Afghanistan have to carry a COVID-19 negative certificate issued by a local government-approved laboratory to be accepted on the flight. Certificates must be issued no more than 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. Ariana Airlines and Kam Air have also resumed their international flights.

The UNHAS airbridge connecting Kabul and Doha continues to operate on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Flights into Doha accommodate transiting passengers only. This service is planned to continue until the end of September 2020, or until regular commercial international flights consistently resume. The next UNHAS flight is planned for Sunday, 26 July.

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)
- IASC Proposals to Address the Inconsistency in Unlocking and Disbursing Funds to NGOs in COVID-19 Response

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
- OCHA: UN issues $10.3 billion coronavirus appeal and warns of the price of inaction
- UN: COVID-19 Recovery Must Address New Exploitation Risks, Secretary-General Warns in Message for World Day against Trafficking in Persons
- UN DESA: Economic and social challenges and opportunities
- UNDP: Temporary Basic Income: Protecting Poor and Vulnerable People in Developing Countries
- UNAIDS +2 more: New COVID-19 Law Lab to provide vital legal information and support for the global response
- DI: Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020
- UNHCR: Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE): Guidance for Call Centers during COVID-19
- UNICEF: Monitoring attendance during school closure and re-enrolment and attendance after school re-opening
- UNICEF: Childcare in a global crisis: the impact of COVID-19 on work and family life
- IFAD: IFAD Annual report 2019
- Interpeace: Peace and Conflict in a COVID-19 World - Implications for International Responses (June 2020)
- CGDev: Global Poverty and Inequality After the Pandemic
- FAO launches Hand-in-Hand geospatial data platform to help build stronger food and agriculture sectors
- IMF: The COVID-19 gender gap
- IOM: COVID-19 - Impact on IDPs - Weekly Update
- AAH: The seeds of a future hunger pandemic?
- MMC: Quarterly Mixed Migration Update Asia, Quarter 2
- ECHO: Afghanistan – Growing acute food insecurity and malnutrition amid escalati ng conflict
- HLPTF: A Brief Guide to Ownership Documents in Afghanistan - July 2020
- AJSC: Afghan Journalists Safety Committee Report 2020
- UNHCR: Afghanistan Border Monitoring update - COVID-19
- IOM: COVID-19 Creates New Challenges for Migrants in Afghanistan and Abroad
- UNHCR: Afghan doctor helps refugees fight COVID-19, one phone call at a time
- UN Women: Gender Alert on COVID-19 in Afghanistan
- OCHA: HAG Quarterly Report (Afghanistan)

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