COVID-19 Data Explorer: Global Humanitarian Operations
Monthly Highlights, 31 October 2020

1. Epidemiological Update

Cases and deaths continued to rise during the month of October for the 63 countries of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP). By the end of the month, these countries accounted for 31 per cent of cases and 40 per cent of deaths – almost 500,000 – worldwide. Deaths in countries in the GHRP totaled 79,000 for the month, a 20 per cent increase compared to September, trending with global figures of 18 per cent.

Cases in countries in the GHRP increased by approximately 2.7 million, or 24 per cent, from almost 11.5 million at the beginning of the month to over 14.1 million by November. Global figures, however, rose by over 36 per cent during the same period, highlighting the difference in country-specific dynamics. The greatest increase in cases occurred in Brazil (749,000) while the greatest average number of cases per day per 100,000 people was in Dominican Republic (48), followed by Iran (43) and Peru (41).

Of GHRP totals, roughly 48 per cent of the cases and 76 per cent of the deaths were disaggregated by sex in 41 countries - indicating that 47 per cent of cases and 38 per cent of deaths were female.

2. Humanitarian Access

As of late October, more than 1,000 UN and INGO staff were unable to deploy to their duty stations due to visa restrictions, work permit issues, and/or lack of clarity on new bureaucratic procedures. Visa restrictions continued to affect INGOs disproportionally, with an estimated 90% of pending or denied visas concerning INGO staff. While these figures are likely underestimated and the issue pre-dates the pandemic, twelve countries report especially difficult situations: Cameroon, Colombia, Iraq, Nigeria, Syria, Libya, Mozambique, Myanmar, Venezuela, Yemen, Philippines, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

No full suspension of operations has been reported due to bureaucratic impediments. However, costs have increased as humanitarian actors navigate the pandemic environment. With the resumption of commercial flights, movements of humanitarian goods and workers has been eased and the World Food Program has begun to draw down its airlift operations.

3. Collateral Impacts

Among the 25 countries with a Humanitarian Response Plan, vaccination campaigns are disrupted in 20, including seven countries where 100 per cent of the campaigns have been postponed or cancelled. While gaps in the administration of many vaccines have heightened the risk of vaccine-preventable diseases, some of which may be more severe than COVID-19, especially for children, the impact on polio eradication is already clear: precise year-to-date figures for 2019 and 2020 show a case increase of 30 per cent for wild poliovirus and 440 per cent for vaccine-derived poliovirus. Of the 27 countries with ongoing polio outbreaks, 20 are in the GHRP. Of these, 7 had no cases in 2019, demonstrating the increased risk of further international spread.

Food security indicators in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, northeastern Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of Congo remain extremely worrying. In Yemen and Nigeria, the number of people without enough food to eat has increased, by 820,000 and 6.2 million respectively. In Burkina Faso, recent Integrated Phase Classification data shows more than 11,000 people in Phase 5, or famine conditions. Although food insecurity has myriad causes, health and socio-economic effects may be critical and long-term. These contexts require urgent attention.

4. Funding Update

By the end of October, funding for the plans included in the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO), which includes the GHRP, had reached $14.97 billion, or 38 per cent of total requirements ($39.29 billion). This is $1.84 billion more than reported in September. Despite this high level of funding in absolute terms, requirements have grown by $13.44 billion when compared to the same time last year. The percentage of needs covered (38 per cent) is lower now than at the end of October 2019 (53 per cent). The plans in the GHO aim to provide assistance to 258.9 million of the estimated 433.2 million people in need.

Sources: Epidemiological Update (World Health Organization, Our World In Data, Global Health 50/50); Humanitarian Access (Multiple Sources); Collateral Impacts (Multiple Sources, Global Polio Eradication Initiative, World Food Program); Funding Update (OCHA).