Rapid Increase in Number of Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

As of 29 September, 4,102 cases (194 fatalities and 1,074 recovered) were confirmed by the Syrian Ministry of Health. The epidemiological situation in Syria seems to have rapidly evolved through widespread community transmission, as 92% of the announced cases cannot be traced to a known source. The testing is low across Syria – 37,000 tests were performed in laboratories across the country as of 19 September – particularly in remote areas. It is therefore likely that the actual number of cases may far exceed official figures.

Fourteen Palestine refugees have tested positive and five refugees have died from COVID-19. Ten UNRWA staff have tested COVID-19 positive and six staff remain in quarantine.

2020/2021 scholastic year launched on 13 September 2020

103 UNRWA-run schools reopened across the country for 50,249 (male: 25,628 and female: 24,621) Palestine refugee students with small class load of Syrian nationals. During the first two weeks, catch-up materials were used to help compensate for lost formal education time that occurred due to COVID-19 towards the end of the previous academic year. Self-learning materials were finalized for the whole academic year should the schools close again due to upsurge in pandemic. Awareness sessions for school principals were conducted by Agency doctors to sensitize them on the criteria for referring school students with suspected COVID-19 symptoms to UNRWA health clinics. SMS awareness messages on COVID-19 prevention were sent out to all students and staff.

• UNRWA distributed personal protection equipment to 120 sanitation laborers.
• An increased number of sterilization activities was conducted and hand sanitizers were available.
• UNRWA emergency plan phase two was implemented in September, resulting in the suspension of a number of health services, including all telemedicine activities.
• Awareness messages in Arabic to students, parents, and the refugee community at large were posted weekly on SFO’s Facebook page.

UNRWA health facilities are operating a triage system for people with respiratory symptoms, through a dedicated team of health staff.

COVID-19 Response and Impact on UNRWA Operations in Syria

• A total of 7,000 telemedicine calls were received in September adding to a total of 25,220 calls received since the service became available.
• 388 home deliveries of NCD medications were made in September bringing the total since March to 1,895.
• UNRWA emergency plan phase two was implemented in September, resulting in the suspension of a number of health services, including all screening activities, women’s pre-conception care and pre-natal examinations, NCD examinations, dental curative consultations and mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) screening.
• Awareness sessions for school principals were conducted by UNRWA doctors to agree on the criteria for referring COVID-19 suspected students to UNRWA clinics.
• 42,000 reusable masks were distributed to UNRWA students and Education staff.
• “Let’s proceed safely” initiative was conducted for 80 children in Alliance, Damascus to increase awareness on the importance of safe hygiene practices.
• Awareness messages in Arabic to students, parents, and the refugee community at large were posted weekly on SFO’s Facebook page.
• During September 2020, one disability inclusion training was conducted on 30 September for 10 CBO volunteers in Damascus. Assistive devices were provided to 23 persons with disabilities.
• An increased number of sterilization activities was conducted and hand sanitizers were distributed to each classroom in every school.
• UNRWA distributed personal protection equipment to 120 sanitation laborers.
• 839 TVET students (373 female and 466 male) commenced their scholastic year on 27 September 2020 following disruptions due to COVID-19 preventative measures.
• 75 instructors were trained on the techniques of e-learning.
• As of 30 September 2020, the UNRWA COVID-19 Appeal requirements were 41.5% funded with Syria portion being 28% funded.

UNRWA requires US$ 212.8 million to sustain the delivery of humanitarian assistance, basic services and protection interventions to the 438,000 Palestine refugees estimated to remain in Syria. As of 30 September 2020, a total of US$ 51.5 million were pledged or received from donors and partners, representing 24.2% per cent of total requirements.

Emergency Appeal Requirements in Syria for 2020

UNRWA requires US$ 212,845,582 to sustain the delivery of humanitarian assistance, basic services and protection interventions to the 438,000 Palestine refugees estimated to remain in Syria. As of 30 September 2020, a total of US$ 51.5 million were pledged or received from donors and partners, representing 24.2% per cent of total requirements.

438,000 Palestine refugees remain in Syria

52% female

31% children

126,000 of Palestine refugee households in Syria live in absolute poverty

91%

2/3 of Palestinian refugees were displaced at least once since 2011

40%

56 Palestine refugees returned from Lebanon and Jordan

29 Palestine refugees returned from other countries