Increase in mobility restrictions

As governments around the world continue to try to contain the spread of COVID-19, the number of mobility restrictions, both internationally and domestically, has risen sharply in recent weeks. This has included measures such as border closures and the enforcement of quarantines and lockdowns. By early April, more than 9 in 10 people globally lived in countries with travel restrictions. And recent estimates by IOM show that by April 23, 2020, COVID-19-related travel restrictions had reached 52,262, implemented by 215 countries, territories and areas. The number of restrictions has significantly increased since 1 April 2020, when they stood at 43,781.

Nearly all global destinations impose restrictions

A new report by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows that by 6 April 2020, 96% of global destinations had introduced travel restrictions:

- 100% of Africa
- 100% of Asia and the Pacific
- 100% of Middle East
- 93% of Europe
- 92% of Americas

Training of border staff

As part of its response to COVID-19, IOM continues to train officials on surveillance in airports, sea ports and land border crossings.

In countries such as Costa Rica, in anticipation of increased migration flows from Nicaragua and Cuba, IOM has provided technical assistance on how to implement safe and appropriate border management measures.

While in Bangladesh, IOM is supporting the government “at sea, land and air borders through the provision of equipment, training of health and immigration staff, and strengthening inter-agency coordination at points of entry.”

NEW IOM Migration Data Portal Page

The newly released thematic page, Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic, compiles and analyses existing data on migrants, including in the countries hardest hit by COVID-19.

Restrictions at airports

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is providing regular updates on airports around the world. The website lists countries and the restrictions they have imposed at airports.
Implications for gender-based violence

Some refugee camps have seen a rise in gender-based violence, as GBV services are scaled back and as restrictions on movement prevent those affected from seeking help.

In Cox’s Bazar, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees continue to live, there has been an increase in both intimate partner violence and child marriage. Strictly enforced movement restrictions are limiting the ability of women and girls to access support services.

In response and to mitigate the increased risk of gender-based violence, some Rohingya women have self-mobilized to raise awareness on COVID-19 in the camps, including conducting door-to-door visits.

Discriminatory movement restrictions

The manner in which some countries/areas have implemented mobility restrictions is coming under increasing scrutiny, particularly in relation to migrants, including refugees.

Recent media reports show that measures such as curfews, in some locations have targeted specific groups of migrants. This has raised concerns that harsh restrictions aimed at migrants could hamper their ability to access basic care and services.

The UN Network on migration recently released a statement emphasizing that “any limitations on freedom of movement do not unduly affect human rights and the right to seek asylum, and that restrictions are applied in a proportionate and non-discriminatory way.”

Suspending immigration

While travel restrictions have been widely imposed around the world, some countries, such as the United States, have gone further—suspending immigration altogether. The United States’ government, on April 23 2020, temporarily suspended immigration to the country for a period of 60 days, but with some exemptions, such as seasonal farm workers, who can still enter the country.

This COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot has been produced by IOM Research (research@iom.int).

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