As of 05 August 2020, a total of 959,935 COVID-19 cases have been confirmed, with 17,683 deaths reported in the region.

The devastating explosion in Beirut on 04 August 2020 is certain to amplify an already dire humanitarian situation across Lebanon. The incident occurred when Lebanon was contending with the impacts of COVID-19, an ongoing economic emergency, rising unemployment and civil unrest. While the impacts of the explosion on Lebanon’s more than 400,000 labour migrants and estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees is unclear, the effects of the explosion and destruction of the port will significantly increase needs.

The Regional Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen (RMRP) 2020 Appeal was launched on 05 August 2020. The appeal is a migrant-focused humanitarian and development multi-year strategy. It brings together multiple partners in terms of coordination, protection, capacity building, analysis and resource mobilization. The plan aims to meet the humanitarian and protection needs of an estimated 235,000 vulnerable migrants, including 75,000 projected new arrivals in Yemen. The RMRP contains an integrated COVID-19 response to ensure appropriate migrant assistance activities. This is inclusive of support for quarantine sites, personal protective equipment (PPE), and for governments’ preparedness.

The IOM MENA Regional Office and the World Health Organization (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office issued a joint statement to ensure the safety and health of migrants and displaced populations in the context of COVID-19. The statement emphasized that universal health coverage needs to include all migrants and displaced persons, regardless of their legal status, to effectively tackle COVID-19 and other public health threats. They also appealed to governments to create the necessary conditions for migrants and returnees to be able to seek health care without fear of legal repercussion.

IOM’s appeal for the MENA region
72,898,000 USD

Funding contributions to COVID-19 to date:
over 54.5 Million USD, including 22 million USD reprogrammed funding.

Key Regional Updates

He walked for many days chasing the European dream, now he is back to Morocco doing business: Zakaria’s story

Morocco - Unable to support his family and provide for himself, Zakaria, a 23-year-old Moroccan man, embarked on a journey to Greece through Turkey hoping to build a better life in Europe. Now, he is back in Morocco doing business.

Prior to his departure, Zakaria used to work as a receptionist in a luxury hotel in Marrakech but he was not happy with the working conditions.

“I studied very hard to get the job and I left my family home to settle in Marrakech, but I wasn’t making enough money”, he explained. “I had to send money back home and pay for my daily expenses, which left me little or no money at all.”

“When I started seeing how happy young European people are when they were coming to the hotel, the dream of going to Europe started to grow fast. I resigned and decided to travel to Turkey,” Zakaria said.

After convincing his parents of the plans that he had in mind, Zakaria flew to Istanbul. “Before deciding to go to Turkey, I asked a few people and did some research to learn about the best and easiest roads to Europe,” he explained.

From Istanbul, he travelled to another coastal city where he found a temporary job in a Spanish restaurant. “I worked for three months to collect more money for my journey. Before the end of my legal stay in Turkey [90 days for Moroccan citizens], I asked my employer for support to get a work permit, but he refused,” Zakaria recalled.

Five days before the end of his legal stay in Turkey, Zakaria travelled back to Istanbul and then took a train to a city near the Turkish-Greek border where he met three Algerian people who had similar plans. They accepted him to join the group.

“We spent the night in a hotel near the border and the following day, we bought food and flashlights and headed towards the Turkish-Greek border during the night”, he recalled.

“We walked for 17 nights in a row. We slept during the day and walked during the night until we reached the Greek city of Thessaloniki. It was a tiring journey. My family thought I died.”

Once in Greece, Zakaria encountered many challenges. “I used to sleep in the streets, plus my mother had some health problems, so I decided to return to Morocco,” he said. Having no means to return home, Zakaria contacted IOM Greece and was assisted to voluntarily return to Morocco through the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme.

Upon his arrival in Morocco, Zakaria attended several counselling and mentorship sessions organized by IOM and received reintegration assistance to set up a sheep farming business in the rural area of Beni Mellal.

“Although it is difficult to accept the fact that I failed to achieve my dream, IOM’s reintegration assistance enabled me to have a source of income once again and to help my family,” he concludes.

Zakaria is one of the 23 Moroccan returnees who have been supported towards a sustainable reintegration under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration in North Africa since June 2019.

The EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration was launched in December 2016, with support from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. It is the first comprehensive programme bringing together 26 African partner countries, the EU and IOM around the shared goal of ensuring that migration is safer, more informed and better governed for both migrants and their communities.
More than six months since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the region, high caseloads continue to be reported. As of 05 August 2020, a total of 959,935 cases have been confirmed and out of which 17,683 fatalities have been reported. A total of 780,240 cases have recovered to date. The MENA region accounts for 5.2 per cent of the global disease burden of COVID-19 and 2.5 per cent of the global fatalities. Over the last two weeks, the number of new cases has dropped significantly, due to a decline in the number of new cases in some countries. Despite this decline, some countries like Iraq, Morocco and Saudi Arabia still show an increase in the number of new cases. Egypt, on the other hand, has reported a decline in the number of new cases for seven consecutive days.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to significantly impact regional movement in the form of various mobility restrictions. To date, according to IOM’s Mobility Impact Tracking, around 40 per cent of monitored international airports are fully closed, 27 per cent are partially operational and 27 per cent of these Points of Entry (PoE) are now fully operational showing the reopening of at least a part of the monitored international airports in the region. Fewer than half of the 98 land border crossing points remain fully closed and 38 per cent are only partially operational, while there are eight (8) land border crossing points classified as fully operational as of 30 July 2020. Out of 42 monitored blue border crossing points in the region, twenty-four (24) of them are fully closed and fourteen (14) are partially operational, while only three (3) blue border crossing points are fully operational for passengers.
**COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The IOM MENA Regional Office and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Office for MENA launch a week-long regional awareness raising campaign “Saving Dignity,” to mark the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (Tip). The campaign was presented as part of the North Africa Mixed Migration Task Force (NAMMTF). Members of the task force released a joint statement that called for a coordinated response to address the vulnerabilities of victims and people at risk of human trafficking considering the COVID-19 pandemic.

In **Egypt**, IOM contributed to a study that explored population knowledge, attitudes and practices related to COVID-19. The study was conducted alongside the Ministry of Public Health, WHO and other UN agencies. IOM’s engagement ensured that relevant data was collected to adapt the COVID-19 response to migrants’ needs.

IOM in **Kuwait** continues to liaise with foreign embassies to support the issuance of travel documents for stranded migrants who do not have diplomatic representation in Kuwait.

**Tracking Mobility Impacts**

In **Libya**, IOM, through its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), published the COVID-19 Mobility Tracking 3 (June 2020). The exercise is part of IOM’s Mobility Tracking activities and aimed to understand the socio-economic impact of mobility restrictions and curfews on vulnerable people on move in Libya. It noted significant socio-economic impacts related to restrictions on freedom of movement and observed resulting loss of livelihoods.

In **Syria**, IOM continues to support local partners operating under the United Nations Humanitarian Needs and Assessment Programme (HNAP), which conducted its 19th round of COVID-19 Transit Point Mapping. A total of 28 out of 44 transit points (eight internal and 20 international) were open between 13 and 27 July 2020. All internal points reported the presence of temperature screening, and five had COVID-19 awareness campaigns. Three (3) of the seventeen active international border crossings are not conducting temperature screening. HNAP partners also conducted the sixteenth round of its COVID-19 Rapid Assessment to assess COVID-19 mitigation efforts and access to basic services over the last two weeks across all areas of control at sub-district level. Most subdistricts across all areas of control (AoC) report insufficient COVID-19 related medical services. In terms of COVID-19 mitigation measures, compulsory mask wearing remains low across most sub-districts.

In **Yemen**, IOM’s DTM continues to monitor countrywide COVID-19 mobility restrictions alongside movements due to COVID-19. From 15 to 28 July 2020, 14 households moved from Aden, Lahj and Taizz due to COVID-19 concerns, bringing the total number of people who have cited COVID-19 as a reason for displacement since 31 March 2020 to 679 households. They primarily moved to Lahj, Al-Dhale and Abyan governorates. No irregular Yemeni returnees from KSA were permitted to return during the period. Approximately 547 new migrants arrived in Shabwah and Lahj between 01 and 25 July 2020, with a trend of reduced migrant arrivals during the COVID-19.

**Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE)**

IOM in **Egypt** conducted basic life support and first aid training for 60 migrants from different nationalities in Alexandria. The training cohort included community health volunteers and medical students to raise awareness among vulnerable migrants in different communities. IOM also contributed to the development of an online campaign on masks, home isolation and stigma. The campaign was part of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) Country Preparedness and Response Plan risk communication and community outreach activities.

In **Libya**, IOM conducted five focus group discussion sessions covering COVID-19 in migrant’s communities for 54 individuals in Tripoli. Tripoli teams also distributed six (6) COVID-19 posters and 20 flyers in Arabic during their outreach and awareness activities.

**Points of Entry (POE)**

In **Sudan**, IOM conducted a joint needs assessment mission in Red Sea State in coordination with the Federal Ministry of
Health and WHO. The assessment aimed to evaluate Port Sudan Airport and Sawakin Sea Port for COVID-19 mitigation measures. Additionally, a training was conducted, and Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) materials were distributed to staff at the PoEs.

**NATIONAL LABORATORY SYSTEMS**

IOM in Yemen launched activities to expand COVID-19 testing. The activities started with frontline health workers in Aden governorate with plans to expand to Marib governorate. The first set of 500 test kits arrived in Aden during the reporting period and will be utilizing GeneXpert testing systems. To address some of the issues with access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, activities planned for Marib will focus on enabling the identification and testing of active faces within communities and outside of health facilities. These activities will be implemented in conjunction with RCCE activities implemented by IOM’s rapid response teams.

**INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL (IPC)**

IOM in Morocco supported more than 20 government facilities of the Entraide Nationale (National Social Services) with clothes, food supplies, beds, hygiene and cleaning equipment to ensure the protection and access to services for local at-risk populations and migrants. IOM also ensured hygiene promotion during the distribution to vulnerable groups through the inclusion of hygiene kits among the packages offered.

IOM in Syria has increased water provision from 25 litres per day per person to 35-39 litres per day per person. Food/NFI distribution points were also moved to open areas, such as stadiums or mobile points, with distribution sessions rearranged to avoid crowding.

In Tunisia, IOM donated new COVID-19 PPEs to the Governorate of Medenine. The donation is planned to be distributed to primary schools across the governorate. IOM also ensured the provision of shelter and different types of assistance, including food vouchers, hygiene kits, medical and psychosocial support to 107 migrants in two IOM shelters.

In Libya, a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) was provided to IOM staff by a National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) trainer. A total of 13 IOM medical staff were trained on IPC and COVID-19 case management. IOM’s Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) team also performed a thorough fumigation, disinfection, and cleaning intervention in urban areas, at disembarkation points and at detention centres (DC). During the activity, NFI’s and hygiene kits were distributed to 60 migrants at the DCs.

IOM in Iraq distributed initial batches of IPC and cleaning supplies alongside PPE to select clinics in Erbil. Material distribution was accompanied by an orientation on screening and triage Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Screening and triage processes continue at health clinics prior to patient consultations in Ninawa, Erbil and Anbar.

IOM in Yemen is launching community shielding activities, starting in Marib Governorate, that aim to provide displaced families with 800 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) kits.

**LOGISTICS, PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT**

IOM in Syria is in process of finalizing procurement of 700,000+ USD worth of PPE in support of IOM implementing partner staff, monitoring staff, and project locations across the North West of Syria (NWS). IOM is also providing 700 metres square (m2) of warehouse space in NWS in support of an OCHA-led distribution of PPE for partners in the area.

**CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM)**

In Yemen, IOM conducted 3,028 household surveys across 28 Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) hosting sites in Marib Governorate. The surveys aim to identify persons at high risk of COVID-19. IOM is also supporting 90 women to create 31,500 masks for IDPs. In Syria, IOM is supporting its partners in NWS to maintain social distancing in reception centres and ensure 4m2 space for every individual.

**CASE MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUATION OF SERVICES**

In Egypt, IOM organized two training sessions for 50 healthcare workers in the primary healthcare sector in Giza Governorate over four days. Participants were trained to provide advanced cardiac life support (ACLS). This training was organized in collaboration with the Giza Governorate and Giza Health Directorate.

In Tunisia, IOM donated PPE and hygiene equipment to Kasserine Governorate. IOM provided food and shelter and non-food items (NFI) to eight (8) migrants of different sub-Saharan nationalities at the vocational training centre in
Kasserine. IOM also assisted three (3) Pakistanis and 19 Egyptians confined at different quarantine centres in the city of Sfax.

IOM Libya responded to the needs of migrants who contracted COVID-19 and their families by establishing a holistic response that includes MHPSS, Migration Health Division (MHD), Migrant Resource and Response Mechanism (MRRM), DTM and Protection Unit services. The MHPSS team provided assistance through psychological first aid, follow-up counselling and psychoeducation to nine migrants from different nationalities, including the families and friends of migrants identified positive for COVID-19.

PROTECTION

IOM in Kuwait continues to provide food and shelter assistance to 11 VoT who are stranded in Oman and unable to return to their countries of origin due to COVID-19 mobility restrictions.

In Yemen, IOM continues to be approached by migrants requesting assistance and support to return to their country of origin. However, many countries of origin are not accepting migrant returns from Yemen. IOM, together with the humanitarian leadership in the country, continues to advocate for the resumption of flights under IOM’s Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) programme as a lifesaving solution for these individuals. To support migrants in the interim, IOM is in the process of registering 1,500 migrants for a cash for work programme in Aden Governorate.

ADDRESSING SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS

In Yemen, IOM, through an implementing partner, is scaling-up PPE manufacturing and COVID-19 awareness raising activities in affected communities. In the coming weeks, IOM aims to carrying out livelihood assessments across Marib, Hadramaut, Aden, Lahj and Taizz governorates, to inform cash for work and livelihood interventions.

IOM in Morocco continues to work with national and regional authorities to analyse the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on migrants. The mission is further developing regional plans to address identified issue and facilitate the development of strategies and mechanisms that improve services to migrants, especially in the Oriental, the Tanger-Tetouan-Alhucemas and the Souss-Massa regions.

With thanks to our current donors

For more information, please contact ROCairo@iom.int