

These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.

As detailed in [Analytical Snapshot #23](#), nearly all countries worldwide have enforced travel/movement restrictions in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. Measures such as border closures, curfews and internal lockdowns have had wide-ranging implications for both internal and international migrants, leaving many unable to return to their countries/areas of origin or to reach their intended destinations.



Unable to return home



Many migrant workers in different parts of the world are unable to return home, stuck in their countries/areas of work without employment. With little or no assistance from their countries of origin or destination, thousands are stranded in [crowded, squalid living environments](#), putting them at a [higher risk](#) of contracting COVID-19.

- ⇒ Migrants in Gulf States, who make up significant proportions of several countries' populations, are already [disproportionately affected by the pandemic](#). Nepal [put a stop](#) to all citizens returning home, leaving the many Nepalese workers in Gulf States trapped. India also recently halted the repatriation of its citizens from the Gulf. But some destination countries, such as Kuwait and Bahrain, are [conducting repatriation flights](#) in coordination with some countries of origin.
- ⇒ For aspiring labour migrants and those who had gone back to their countries of origin to process their documents, border closures mean they are [stuck in their countries of origin](#) without work and at risk of becoming indebted.
- ⇒ International migrant workers are not the only ones affected by travel restrictions and lockdowns; internal labour migrants in countries such as India have been [stuck in cities and industrial areas](#) without work or income since the country's lockdown came into force. Millions of people in India migrate from rural areas in [search of work](#), with many ending up in a range of sectors, such as domestic work, construction, transportation, among others. Some Indian states, such as Uttar Pradesh, have recently [sent buses](#) to return stranded migrant workers.



Visa extensions for stranded migrants

To help migrants cope with the current travel restrictions, including lockdown measures and border closures, several countries have granted visa/permit renewals, extensions or [temporary amnesty](#). For example, Thailand has implemented [a 3-month extension](#) until end of July to foreigners holding all types of non-immigrant visas. New Zealand has also [extended visas](#) for migrant workers that were expiring at the beginning of April. The Russian Federation's Presidential Decree "to regulate the legal status of foreign nationals for an interim period of three months" [was welcomed by IOM](#), as it allows migrants to retain their legal status, find work more quickly and not have to pay for permits.



Asylum seekers refused entry

Asylum seekers have been heavily impacted by the current pandemic, as many countries have closed their doors to all foreigners, including those seeking protection.

Hundreds of Rohingya, for example, remain [stranded](#) in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman sea, after being denied entry into Malaysia. Various organizations, [including the UNHCR](#), have expressed concern and called for responsibility sharing by States to avoid a repeat of the [2015 crisis](#) when thousands of Rohingya were abandoned by smugglers and left stranded at sea.

In Latin America, the closure of borders has left many migrants stuck in transit countries; thousands of migrants are remain [in Panama after Costa Rica closed its borders](#), while many are stranded between the Honduras/El Salvador border. Border areas in Mexico also continue to host [stranded asylum seekers](#) who are no longer able to cross into the United States.



IOM assisting stranded migrants



In various parts of the world IOM is assisting thousands of migrants who have been affected by movement restrictions and unable to work or return home.

- ⇒ In Niger, border closures have resulted in a surge of stranded migrants; a [joint initiative](#) between IOM and the EU is offering support to more than 2,300 of these migrants, hosted in IOM's six transit centres.
- ⇒ In Panama IOM, in collaboration with the government and UNHCR, is [providing humanitarian assistance](#) to migrants stranded in three immigration reception stations at Panamá's borders with Colombia and Costa Rica.
- ⇒ Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a key transit country for migrants traveling from Greece to other countries in the EU, has around 8000 migrants stranded in the country because of COVID-19-related movement restrictions. With IOM support, [a 1000-bed camp](#) for homeless migrants is now operating.
- ⇒ In countries such as Thailand, IOM has also been tracking the number of stranded migrants. Between March 26 and 23 April 2020, IOM recorded [660 stranded migrants](#) across five locations in the country.



— NEW ISSUE BRIEF —

In a new [IOM Issue Brief](#) by the Immigration and Border Management Division, recommendations cover immigration, consular and visa procedures, including the need to adapt regulations to uphold legal frameworks, while incorporating necessary adjustments for migrants to stay in compliance with immigration rules. This entails, for example, governments to, when possible, allow 'for regular stay after expiry of a specific visa or residence permit', and to 'facilitate regular stay of general visa holders' among other recommendations. Read more [here](#).

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

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