

IRAN entered its fifth COVID-19 wave in June 2021, as the Delta variant reached the country, with over 3.2 million cases and more than 84,000 deaths by the end of the month. **As per the latest updates, 2,762 refugees had contracted COVID-19 by the end of June 2021, with 211 deaths reported both in settlements and urban areas.** Iran, as one of the self-financing participant countries of the COVAX facility, received the second batch of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine with 1,452,000 doses manufactured by Catalent Anagni of Italy on 16 May. By end June, Iran's homegrown COVIRAN BAREKAT vaccine had received the license for emergency public use, and a new production line for the vaccine was launched. Working closely with the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrant's Affairs (BAFIA), UNHCR continued to provide emergency support to the Government of Iran's COVID-19 response.



UNHCR and the Government of Iran continued to provide **ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** to help bolster Iran's health system. As part of the government's inclusive policy, refugees and foreign nationals are being included in the COVID-19 **National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP)**. However, due to challenges with international procurement of vaccines linked to sanctions, the government is facing constraints in operationalizing the NDVP.

As such, UNHCR (in collaboration with the UN country team (UNCT) supported the government (Ministry of Health and Medical Education) in the formulation of a request for the supply of vaccines for 20% of the mentioned population through the **COVAX Humanitarian Buffer** which is currently under review by the inter-agency decision making committee. The submission was backed by support letters from UNHCR, WHO and UNCT.



In 2021, in order to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of refugees adopting negative coping mechanisms, between May to June, UNHCR offices in the field in co-operation

with BAFIA have identified and assisted 3,782 individuals at risk or in need, who have been affected by the pandemic.



Thanks to the Government of Iran's inclusive health policies, refugees continued to have access to free COVID-19 testing in designated Ministry of Health affiliated centers. **If refugees are enrolled in the Universal Public Health Insurance (UPHI), they can also access to subsidized treatment and hospitalization** and only pay the franchise fee of 10%. However, UNHCR continued to receive reports of uninsured refugees facing challenges in affording COVID-19 treatment costs. By June 2021, a total of 79,082 refugees had enrolled in the UPHI, out of which 72,389 (60% out of 120,000) refugees were vulnerable and special disease cases for which UNHCR pays the fee (and thus received a free UPHI booklet).



UNHCR and BAFIA continued to communicate with communities to share information on hygiene and health practices through refugee focal points, UNHCR-hired lawyers, psycho-social counsellors and other partners. Remote community engagement continued to

take place via virtual focus group discussions, online awareness raising sessions, and key informant interviews over the phone.



By end of June 2021, UNHCR has supported **704 refugees** to return to their countries of origin from Iran. Additionally, 604,000 undocumented Afghans have returned to Afghanistan since the beginning of 2021, an increase of more than 69% compared to the same period in 2020, potentially due to losses in livelihoods linked with COVID-19 in Iran.



UNHCR has strengthened its hotline capacity so that refugees continue to access **protection services** such as counselling, referrals or inclusion into relevant programmes. In June 2021, **2,482 refugees approached UNHCR, with assistance being one of the main topics of concerns of refugees.**

The mental health situation of refugees has also noticeably deteriorated due to the pandemic. UNHCR offices continued to provide refugees with virtual one-on-one and group sessions with **psychosocial counsellors**. If necessary, cases are referred to specialized mental health services. UNHCR-Hired Lawyers also continued to provide assistance via phone.



10.05 M needed in 2021 for COVID-19 measures in Iran

With your support, we can help prevent the virus from spreading.

In 2021, UNHCR is seeking USD 10.05 million for its COVID-19 response in Iran, which has been mainstreamed into its wider programmes. This is part of UNHCR's global funding needs and feeds into the wider UN appeal.

In Iran, strengthening and promoting the inclusion of refugees in national systems can help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable.

Support for UNHCR's regular activities, as part of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), further complements the emergency response to COVID-19, by strengthening inclusive national systems, notably for health, and mitigating the virus' socio-economic impact.